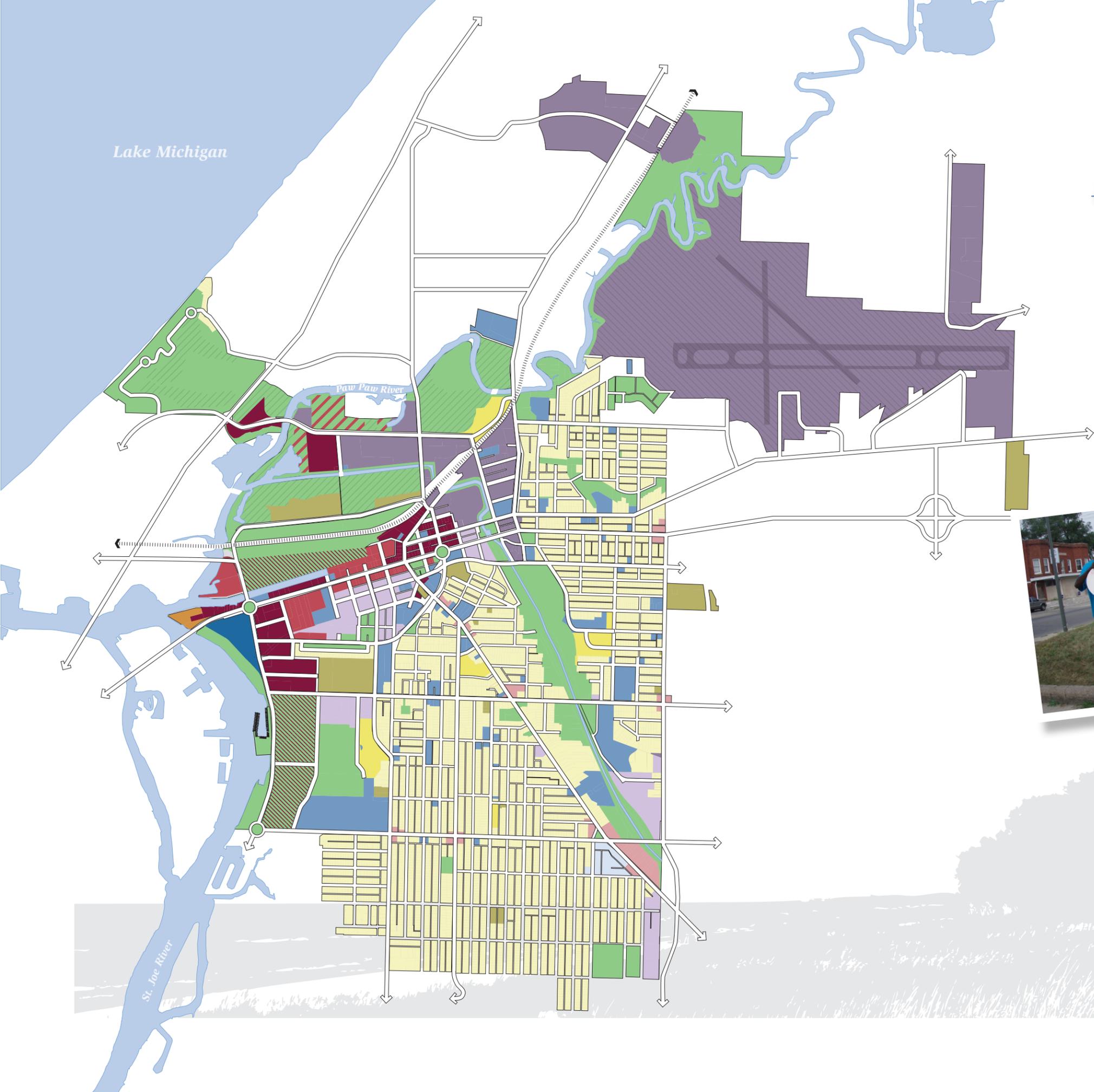


# City of Benton Harbor MASTER PLAN

Adopted January 3, 2011



PREPARED BY



WITH ASSISTANCE FROM





**OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK**  
**175 W. TERRITORIAL ROAD, BENTON HARBOR, MI 49022**  
**(269) 927-8408**

EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF BENTON HARBOR, MICHIGAN HELD ON THE 3RD DAY OF JANUARY 2011.

The following Consent Calendar item was moved by Commissioner Marshall and supported by Commissioner Shaw.

**ADOPTION OF THE MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, The Master Plan provides recommendations and long-range plans for key components of the community including land use, transportation, community facilities, natural resources and environmental features, arts and culture, community and historical resources, and urban design and community character, and;

WHEREAS, In addition, the plan will help spur and guide economic development and growth within the city, and;

WHEREAS, The Master Plan is the City's official policy guide for physical improvement and development, and;

WHEREAS, The Plan considers not only the current needs and issues with Benton Harbor, but also presents a plan for guiding new improvements and developments for the next 15 to 20 years, and;

WHEREAS, the following community outreach activities were completed during the planning process:

- June 24, 2009 – Planning Commission Initiation Workshop, MPAC Meeting and Workshop
- July 1 to September 30, 2009 – Online Questionnaires
- July 10, 2009 – Youth Workshop
- July 23, 2009 – Initial Neighborhood Workshop
- August 17 to October 4, 2009 – Community Service Providers Questionnaires
- September to January 2010 – DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Community Workshops
- October 13, 2009 – Master Plan Advisory Committee Meeting
- December 5, 2009 – Facilitated Community Workshops
- January 13, 2010 – Community Visioning Workshop
- March 23, 2010 – Public Meeting
- May 6, 2010 – MPAC Meeting

- May 19, 2010 – Open House
- July 28, 2010 – Planning and Economic Development Committee Meeting
- August 3, 2010 – Planning Commission Meeting
- August 16, 2010 – City Council Meeting (followed by 63 day review period)
- October 21, 2010 – Public Hearing

WHEREAS, Houseal Lavigne conducted a presentation to the Planning and Economic Development Committee and conducted one-on-one presentations of the draft Master Plan to City Commissioner on July 28, 2010.

WHEREAS, The Planning Commission on August 3, 2010 received a presentation on the draft master plan and voted to send the draft master plan to City Commission for review and distribution to adjacent communities and the county, and;

WHEREAS, On August 16, 2010, the City Commission of the City of Benton Harbor approved City staff to distribute the City's Draft Master Plan to adjacent communities, county and utility companies.

WHEREAS, On August 16, 2010, the City Commission asserted its right as found in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 as amended, to be the final step in approving or rejecting of the final master plan following approval of said Master Plan by the Planning Commission.

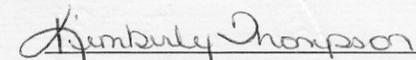
WHEREAS, On October 21, 2010, the Planning Commission, held a Public Hearing for the Draft Master Plan.

WHEREAS, On November 2, 2010, the Planning Commission adopted the Draft Master Plan by a unanimous vote.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, The City Commission approves and adopts the City of Benton Harbor Master Plan prepared by Houseal Lavigne Associates.

The motion on Consent Calendar carried on the following roll call vote. Yeas: Commissioners Marshall, Joseph, Henry, Knowles, Hightower and Mayor Cooke. Nays: Commissioners Shaw, Seats and Mayor Pro-Tem Muhammad. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: None.

I, Kimberly Thompson, Acting City Clerk of the City of Benton Harbor, Michigan hereby certify that the attached is a true, compared and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by the City Commission of the City of Benton Harbor, Michigan on January 3, 2011.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kimberly Thompson, Acting City Clerk  
Seal

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Section One:</b> Community Outreach	<b>5</b>
<b>Section Two:</b> Master Plan Vision	<b>19</b>
<b>Section Three:</b> City-Wide Plans	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>77</b>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to everyone who participated in the planning process for the City of Benton Harbor Master Plan. This Plan was made possible by the contributions and insights of the residents, business persons, property owners, and representatives from various groups and organizations.

This project was funded in part by the Michigan Coastal Management Program, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Michigan Department of Transportation, Cities of Promise, and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

## City of Benton Harbor Planning Commission

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Emma Kinnard  
  
Chris Cook  
  
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Nicol Brown, Staff Representative  
  
Ron Carter, Staff Representative  
  
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# INTRODUCTION

## ***Background***

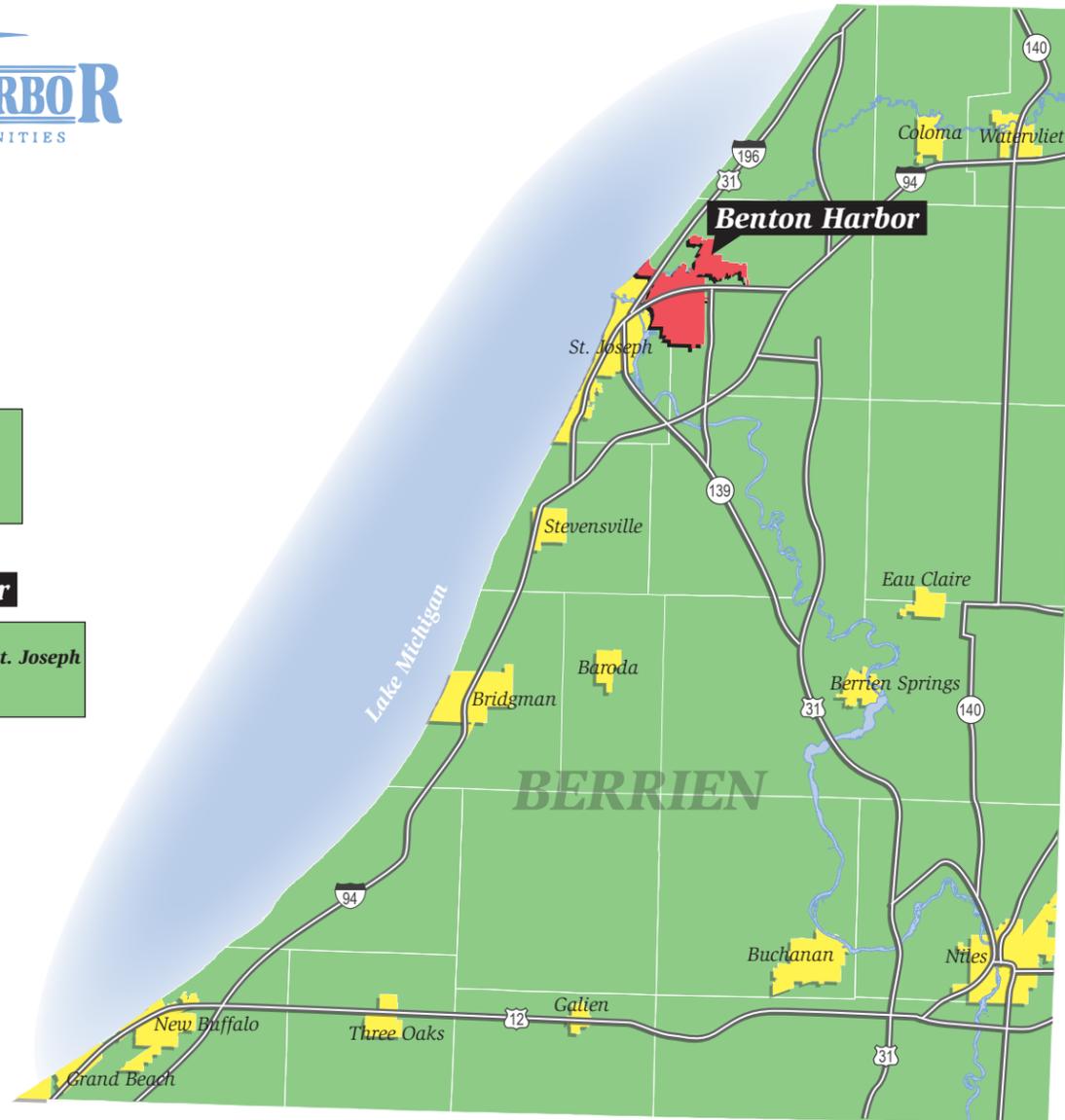
In April 2008, a group consisting of City Department Heads, City Commissioners, Benton Harbor-based organizations, and citizens participated in a strategic planning session. As an outcome of the session, it was recommended that the City develop a new Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance update to assist in the long-term and successful development of the community. In addition to the strategic planning session, the need for a new Master Plan was also a recommendation of the Cities of Promise effort. These recommendations combined with community and staff input, provided the City with the impetus to create a new Master Plan.

## ***Purpose of the Master Plan***

The Master Plan provides recommendations and long-range plans for key components of the community including land use, transportation, community facilities, natural resources and environmental features, arts and culture, community and historical resources, and urban design and community character. In addition, the plan will help spur and guide economic development and growth within the City.

The Master Plan is the City's official policy guide for physical improvement and development. The Plan considers not only the current needs and issues within Benton Harbor, but also presents a plan for guiding new improvements and developments for the next 15 to 20 years. The Plan establishes the ground rules for private improvements and developments. It also provides the framework by which the City can review and evaluate private development proposals. In addition to private improvements, the Plan presents a number of public improvements that can help to ensure that local dollars are spent effectively.





The Master Plan consists of the following sections:

**Introduction**

**Section One:** Community Outreach

**Section Two:** Master Plan Vision

**Section Three:** City-Wide Plans

- Land Use and Development Plan
  - Residential Areas
  - Commercial Areas
  - Industrial Areas
- Transportation Plan
- Natural Resources, Environmental Features, and Open Space Plan
- Community Facilities Plan
- Arts and Culture Plan
- Urban Design/Community Character Plan

**Appendix**

- Market and Demographic Analysis
- Community Outreach Summaries
- Existing Transportation Conditions

**Existing Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance**

The existing Master Plan for the City of Benton Harbor was adopted in 1998. Although the document assisted the community in guiding growth and redevelopment efforts over the past 12 years, it is recommended that Master Plans are reviewed and updated every five years. Due to budget constraints, the 1998 Master Plan was not updated as recommended.

In addition to an outdated Master Plan, the City's current zoning ordinance was adopted in 1965. Without any significant updates, the zoning ordinance does not reflect the land uses that exist in the community today. After this Master Plan is formally adopted, the next step in the planning process is to update the ordinance. An updated zoning ordinance will eliminate uncertainty and potential discrepancies between the Master Plan's recommended land use and the zoning ordinance.

**Michigan Planning Enabling Act**

The following section of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act relates directly to the creation of Master Plans. The section is included to present the legal foundation and purpose for the creation of a Master Plan in the State of Michigan. Pursuant to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008, Section 33.1) a Master Plan is defined as the following:

*A Master Plan shall address land use and infrastructure issues and may project 20 years or more into the future. A master plan shall include maps, plats, charts, and descriptive, explanatory, and other related matter and shall show the planning commission's recommendations for the physical development of the planning jurisdiction.*

**Planning Process**

To update the City of Benton Harbor's Master Plan, the planning process incorporated a multi-step work program that was community driven and included public participation at each step. Public participation was the cornerstone of the planning process.

The planning process involved extensive citizen participation and outreach, in an effort to strengthen the sense of community stewardship for the Plan. A Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) was formed to work with City staff and the Consultant Team throughout the process. The MPAC was composed of individuals including elected and appointed officials, City staff, business owners, representatives from governmental agencies, business associations, and a resident from each City ward.

The planning process included documenting the City's existing conditions to provide a concise and accurate assessment of strengths, weaknesses, issues and opportunities, the formulation of a vision and the preparation of plans for all components of the city including land use, transportation, community facilities, parks and open space, arts and culture, and urban design.

**Community Setting**

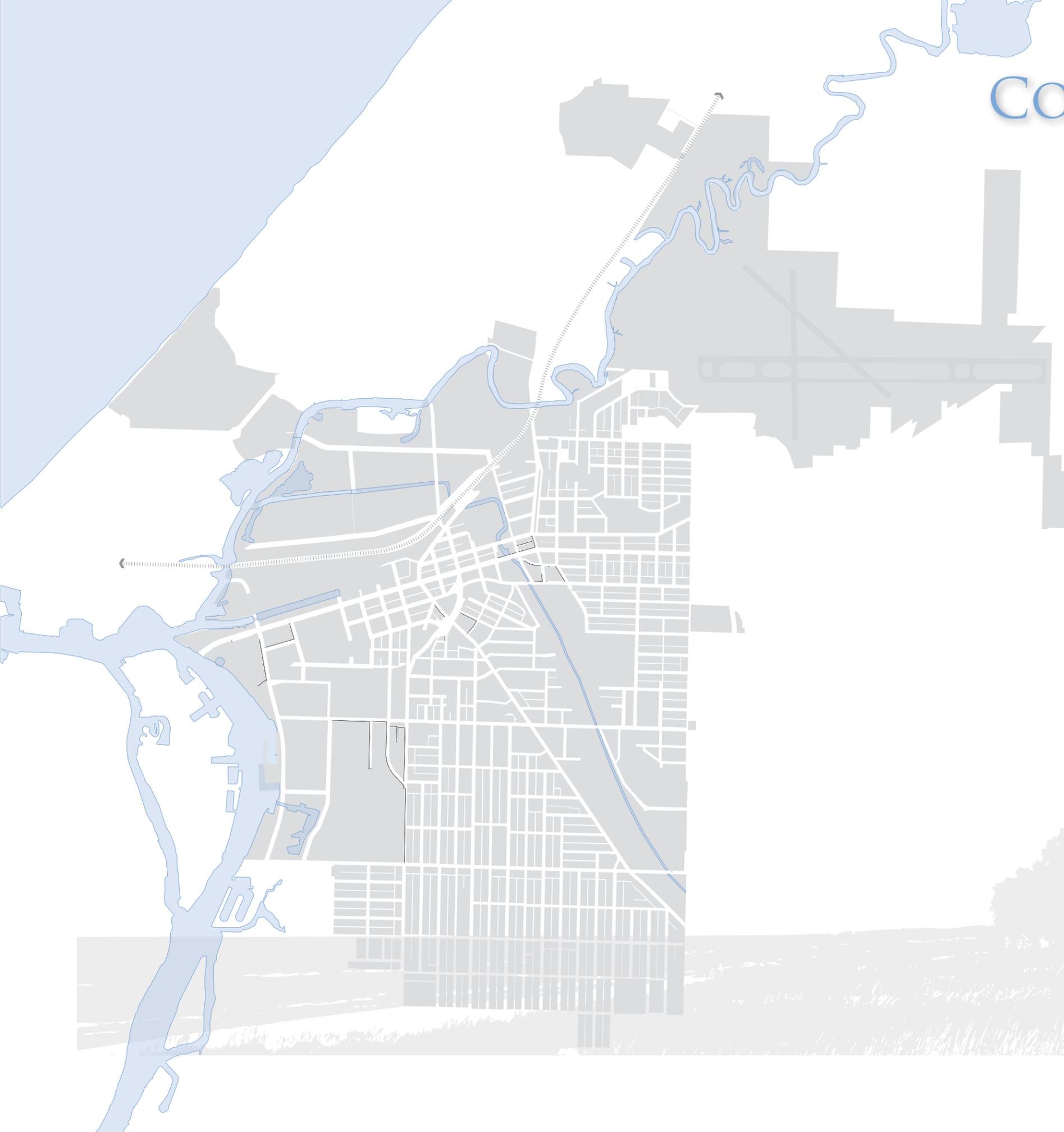
The City of Benton Harbor is located in Berrien County in southwestern Michigan. Benton Harbor's location and proximity to large metropolitan areas such as Detroit and Chicago contribute to its potential for an attractive and thriving economic base. According to the City, 54% percent of U.S. manufacturing and 65% of Canadian manufacturing are within 500 miles of Benton Harbor. One of the area's largest employers (and the country's largest producer of home appliances), Whirlpool Corporation, is located in Benton Harbor. The Southwest Michigan Regional Airport (BEH), which is owned by the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, is another transportation and economic asset for the community.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the City of Benton Harbor has a total area of 4.5 square miles. The City's location along Lake Michigan, and both the Paw Paw River and the St. Joseph River create a unique setting for the community. These water bodies provide excellent environmental, recreational, and economic opportunity for residents and visitors.

Beginning in the 1960's, the City of Benton Harbor began to experience decline as industries and residents began to move out of the City. In 1986 Benton Harbor became the focus of state government attention and was designated an enterprise zone. An enterprise zone encourages business activity by offering tax abatements and exemptions for commercial and industrial entrepreneurs.

Currently, the City of Benton Harbor is experiencing a tremendous amount of revitalization, transformation, and redevelopment. Large developments and significant reinvestment activity such as the on-going Harbor Shores development, the rehabilitation of buildings and new businesses opening within the Arts District, the expansion of the airport, and the reconstruction and streetscaping of Main Street through the City are some of the key projects underway in Benton Harbor.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH





# COMMUNITY OUTREACH



The plans and recommendations of the Master Plan are based upon community input received throughout the process. City Staff, the Master Plan Advisory Committee, and several other groups, organizations, businesses, and residents contributed their thoughts and ideas about the City of Benton Harbor through a variety of activities.

The following community outreach activities were completed during the planning process:

- **June 24, 2009** - Planning Commission Initiation Workshop
- **June 24, 2009** – MPAC Meeting and Workshop
- **July 1 to September 30, 2009** - On-Line Questionnaires
- **July 10, 2009** - Youth Workshop
- **July 23, 2009** - Initial Neighborhood Workshops
- **September to January 2010** - DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Community Workshops
- **October 13, 2009** - Master Plan Advisory Committee Meeting
- **December 5, 2009** - Facilitated Community Workshops
- **January 13, 2010** - Community Visioning Workshop
- **March 23, 2010** – Public Meeting hosted by the MPAC
- **May 6, 2010** – MPAC Meeting to review Draft Plans
- **May 19, 2010** – Open House to review Draft Plans
- **July 28, 2010** – Planning and Economic Development Committee Meeting
- **August 3, 2010** – Planning Commission Meeting
- **August 16, 2010** – City Commission Meeting
- **October 21, 2010** - Planning Commission Public Hearing
- **November 2, 2010** - Planning Commission Meeting
- **January 3, 2011** - City Commission Meeting

This section includes summaries for each of the community outreach activities conducted. Copies of the actual handwritten comments and questionnaires submitted during the process are on file with the City's Community and Economic Development Department.



Page 6 Section 1: Community Outreach

## Planning Commission Initiation Workshop

During the Planning Commission meeting on June 24, 2009 in the City Council Chambers, the Consultant presented the Master Plan planning process. After a review of the scope of work and questions and comments from members of the Commission, the consultant led a group exercise to gather input from the Planning Commission.

### Themes Discussed

The majority of the Planning Commission's issues dealt with attracting and retaining jobs and businesses, improving streets and infrastructure, improving the quality of the housing supply, cleaning the City and improving safety, adding public transit, and continuing to improve the Downtown. Although many issues dealt with the Downtown area, many members stated that it was also very important for the City to continue to improve the areas outside of the Downtown.

A summary of the responses for each question is summarized below.

### Identify five issues or concerns confronting the City of Benton Harbor.

A range of issues and concerns were discussed by the Planning Commission. The majority of the issues dealt with attracting and retaining jobs and businesses, improving streets and infrastructure, improving the quality of the housing supply, cleaning the City and improving safety, adding public transit, and continuing to improve the Downtown. Although many issues dealt with the Downtown area, many members stated that it was also very important for the City to continue to improve the areas outside of the Downtown.

**Business.** The need to improve the tax base and provide jobs within the City and the surrounding area were the primary issues stated by the Commission. Several members stated that they would like to see more businesses and a larger variety of retail in the City, especially within the Downtown. Desired stores included national retailers, "mom and pop" stores, and grocery stores. Some stated that there is a need to lower the tax rate to attract new businesses into the community.

**Infrastructure.** The need to improve street surfaces, sidewalks, and water and sewer utilities within the City were noted by many members. A member noted that the City should create an Asset Management Plan for improving all of the main streets that enter the Downtown area.

**Image.** There were several comments related to the need to improve the appearance and cleanliness of the City. Some mentioned that improved code enforcement would improve the look of homes, businesses, and streets and sidewalks in the City. Related to the appearance of the City, many members discussed the need to improve the overall image of Benton Harbor. The need to improve the perception of Benton Harbor and the desire to create a marketing plan for the City were cited as concerns of members. Others noted that there are crime and safety issues within the community that need to be improved.

**Schools and Parks.** In terms of community facility issues, members noted that there are specific issues that need to be addressed with the school system and public parks. Some members discussed the need to improve the parks and recreational facilities within the City to provide more youth recreational opportunities. Others stated the school district was in need of improvement and that the school district needs to improve the quality of its programs.

**Transportation.** Transportation issues focused upon the need to improve public transit in the City and that public transit should connect residents from all neighborhoods with the Downtown area. Other transportation issues focused upon the need to create a walkable city with connected sidewalks and trails.

**Housing.** The need to improve the quality of housing within the City was mentioned by several members. Some noted the need to add more housing within the Downtown area, specifically live/work units. The lack of quality housing, and attractive affordable housing was an issue stated by several on the Commission.

### List in order of importance the three most important issues discussed thus far.

Most Planning Commission members listed the need to provide more jobs and increase the City's tax base with new commercial uses and businesses as the most important issue. Other top issues included the need to improve how the City is perceived, the image and cleanliness of the City, and the desire to improve infrastructure, roads, and utilities throughout the community.

### Identify three projects or actions you would like to see the City undertake.

The Commission would like to see the following projects completed by the City: install sidewalks, parks, and infrastructure in neighborhoods; build on vacant lots and fill vacant buildings; attract "mom and pop" stores in the downtown; attract new businesses in the community; re-open the canal; add more residential in the downtown; demolish all blighted properties; and establish better code enforcement.

### What are the primary strengths and assets of Benton Harbor?

Although most of the discussion dealt with issues and concerns that should be addressed in the Master Plan, the last question focused on the strengths of the City. The following strengths and assets of Benton Harbor were mentioned by the Commission: the City's location near Chicago/Detroit/Indiana; its location along Lake Michigan and bounded by rivers; the opportunity for new development; the new Harbor Shores development; and the City's diversity.

## MPAC Meeting and Workshop

After the Planning Commission Initiation Meeting, the Consultant met with the Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC). The committee consisted of a cross-section of the community, including City Staff, elected and appointed officials, residents from each ward, and business owners. This group acted as the consultant's "sounding board" throughout the process to ensure that the Master Plan is truly reflective of the entire community. This initial meeting with the MPAC occurred on June 24, 2009 at the offices of Michigan Works!

### Themes Discussed

The MPAC discussed themes similar to those identified by the Planning Commission. A wide range of issues were discussed from improving Downtown; updating parks and recreation; improving educational opportunities; job creation; and improving code enforcement. Many MPAC members believed that improved enforcement would improve the appearance, image, and quality of housing, streets, and commercial areas of the City.

A summary of each of the comments received for the four questions are summarized below.

### Identify five issues or concerns confronting the City of Benton Harbor.

Similar issues and concerns raised by the Planning Commission were discussed by the MPAC. The following is a listing of the main issues and concerns discussed.

**Downtown.** Several members wanted to see the City focus its efforts on improving, redeveloping, and attracting new businesses and residents into the downtown area. Some mentioned that there is a lack of market rate housing (apartments) for working professionals within Downtown.

**Business.** Overall, members of the MPAC want to see more jobs brought into the area and new businesses in the City. Specifically, members would like to see new entertainment, grocery, dry cleaners, and pharmacy.

**Parks and Recreation.** Members would like to see more parks and open space added within the community and they also desire existing parks to be improved with new, updated recreational facilities. Some would like to see a new waterfront park created along Lake Michigan and the areas along the rivers improved with public open space. Others noted that the City should create a city-wide trail system connecting all areas of Benton Harbor.

**Schools.** Several issues dealing with the education system in the City were discussed. Many believe that the schools are operating below acceptable standards. Members also stated that there should be more after-school programs and activities designed for teenagers.

**City Services and Infrastructure.** The poor quality of streets, sidewalks, stormwater management, and water and sewer services were mentioned by several members as key issues. Some members would like to see improvements made to the police and fire services to improve their capabilities. Issues regarding public transportation were also noted, including the need to expand public transit. Members also stated that there was a need to create a Master Plan for the City to provide for long-range planning. Some mentioned the need for the City and Cornerstone Alliance to coordinate and work together on more projects. It was also mentioned that appointed and elected officials should be well-informed and inspired to provide effective leadership.

**Image and Appearance.** Many would like to see the City improve its code enforcement procedures to improve the look and cleanliness of the community. Members would also like the City to create a vision for the area and set clear goals. Many still believe that there are safety concerns and crime issues in the City that need to be effectively addressed. Members would also like to see the City continue its blight elimination program and rehabilitation programs for vacant homes.

**Housing.** In addition to the need to continuously provide high-quality affordable housing, many wanted to see better code enforcement on rental properties. The need to rehabilitate vacant or unattractive homes within the City was also mentioned by several members as an important housing issue.

**Residents.** Some believe that there is a divide between long-time residents and new residents/developments. The City should be aware of this divide as they make decisions for the community.

**Funding.** Almost every issue or concern discussed has a funding component associated with it. Most wanted to see the City continue to explore alternative funding sources to improve services within the community without raising taxes. Some members stated that the City's current tax rate is too high.

**List in order of importance the three most important issues discussed thus far.**

Although all issues and concerns discussed by the MPAC will be reviewed during the planning process, the following are the three most important issues as ranked by the group. The biggest concerns for the Committee dealt with educational issues. Many wanted to see the school system improved, and the educational opportunities increased for residents. The second most important issue was the need to maintain and attract more jobs to the area. The third most important issue was the need for the City to improve its code enforcement. Many believed that improved enforcement would improve the appearance, image, and quality of housing, streets and commercial areas of the City.

**Identify three projects or actions you would like to see the City undertake.**

The following is a list of projects that members of the MPAC would like the City to undertake. No single project or action emerged as a consensus priority. The list of identified projects/ actions included: create community sustained agriculture; bring a minor league baseball team to the City; create a waterfront boardwalk with parks and restaurants; rebuild a residential block and eventually an entire neighborhood; raise the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) scores at Benton or Harbor High School; develop vacant downtown parcels and buildings; rebuild the infrastructure; attract more commercial business; revamp the educational system; control rental properties; improve public transportation options; identify funding options for the Downtown Development Authority (DDA); build an outdoor/indoor skating rink; complete the blight elimination project; prioritize ordinance enforcement; build an asset management system for streets and city facilities; develop downtown green space; reduce taxes to attract businesses; create a program where qualified residents can attend college for free; build a single Berrien County public transit system; require leadership training for all elected officials; empower neighborhood block clubs; create a recycling program; utilize Bill Strickland's model for job training; create a leadership group to build job growth; and develop Main Street.

**What are the primary strengths and assets of Benton Harbor?**

The following are the primary strengths and assets of the City that were mentioned by members of the MPAC: the City's location along the water (Lake Michigan, Paw Paw River, St. Joseph River); Benton Harbor's location near Chicago, Detroit, and Indiana; the City's diversity; agriculture; history; Harbor Shores; opportunities for growth; small town character with big city mentality; architecture of downtown buildings; Whirlpool; it's transportation hub; and its people – the residents of Benton Harbor.

**Youth Workshop**

A Youth Group Workshop was held on June 10, 2009 with approximately forty students. The youth workshop was conducted as an open discussion where students were asked to break into small groups to discuss topics and then share their thoughts with the entire group. After a review of the purpose of the Master Plan and the planning process, questions similar to those used during the previous community meetings were used to facilitate discussion.

**Themes Discussed**

The Youth Workshop addressed several topics of concern among Benton Harbor's young adults. Participants identified the key issues of improving school facilities and education opportunities, improved services and infrastructure within residential neighborhoods, and the redevelopment of Downtown Benton Harbor. Other issues and concerns dealt with unemployment, crime, homelessness, low income housing, and the need for adaptive reuse of vacant structures in the City.

The responses for each question are summarized below.

**Identify five (5) issues or concerns confronting the City of Benton Harbor.**

The Youth Workshop addressed several topics of concern among Benton Harbor's young adults. The concerns of youth workshop participants, such as schools, infrastructure and the development of Downtown Benton Harbor, were similar to those of the Planning Commission. Participants also indicated a concern with the topics of employment, low income and no income housing, and adaptive reuse in the city center.

**Schools.** The majority of youth workshop participants expressed some concern relating to the City's school facilities. Much of the discussion centered on the perceived need for a new Benton Harbor High School as well as the clean-up, maintenance, and upgrade of existing facilities. Other school-related comments identified a need for more after school activities and activities during the summer. A suggestion by one student encouraged the City to establish a local YMCA.

**Infrastructure.** The Youth also addressed the City's need to improve local infrastructure. A significant number of comments related to the disrepair of the City's streets as well as the need for a cleaning and maintenance program in order to help clean up the public spaces and beaches. Broadway Park and Jean Klock Park were specifically identified as needing improved maintenance by several participants. Other comments identified the need for better public transportation, an increased police presence to help combat violence and crime throughout the City, and additional street trash cans and other public furniture to further beautify Benton Harbor.

**Downtown Benton Harbor.** Youth workshop participants also expressed an interest in Downtown Benton Harbor. Several participants expressed a desire for the creation of a Main Street area. It was indicated that this would be a good place for new shops and informal meeting areas and would provide an outlet for entertainment and the creation of additional jobs. Many students acknowledged the surplus of abandoned buildings and lots not only in the Downtown, but throughout Benton Harbor. Some participants mentioned the possibility of the adaptive re-use of these buildings, and in cases where this was not possible, complete redevelopment. The cleanliness and maintenance of the Downtown area was also identified as a concern.

**Employment.** The majority of the youth are worried about the current lack of employment opportunities in Benton Harbor. While comments related to a poor overall job market, many participants also referred to a shortage of jobs for teens specifically.

**Crime.** Crime was an issue that was raised numerous times during the workshop. Particular attention was paid to crimes involving narcotics. Some of those surveyed worried about general violence within the community as well. The need for an increased police presence was mentioned as a means of eliminating the problem of narcotics and violence in Benton Harbor.

**Housing.** The need for additional, high-quality low income housing development was cited by several participants. Comments also indicated that the City's homeless population was of concern and several participants identified the need for a homeless shelter.

**List, in order of importance, the three (3) most important issues discussed thus far.**

The majority of youth workshop participants indicated that the employment shortage in Benton Harbor was their most significant concern. Many of the youth surveyed cited a concern for the job security of their parents and expressed dissatisfaction regarding job opportunities for teens in the area. Crime was also a significant topic of concern amongst the youth, particularly with regard to narcotics- related crime within the City. The City's infrastructure, schools, and need for additional recreation opportunities were also top issues among participants.

**What are the greatest assets and strengths of Benton Harbor?**

Comments indicated wider agreement among the youth of Benton Harbor regarding the greatest assets and strengths of their city. Specific programs, such as Youth Build and Michigan Works, were cited as programs that had made positive impacts in the community and participants indicated a strong desire to establish similar programs. The location of Benton Harbor is also viewed as an asset. Students cited access to three different bodies of water and its location relative to recreational amenities such as the beach as a community asset. A strong sense of community pride was also indicated in comments by participants, focusing attention on the number of good people within the community as well as high profile figures from Benton Harbor who serve as role models to the City's youth.

**Initial Neighborhood Workshops**

Two Community/Neighborhood Workshops were held at two different locations on July 23, 2009. In an effort to reach as many residents as possible, two identical Community Workshops were offered at different times, one in the morning and one in the evening.

These were the first workshops designed specifically for the general public. The purpose of these initial workshops was to allow residents to share their thoughts before preliminary plans and recommendations were prepared.

**Themes Discussed**

The most common issues discussed at both meetings dealt with the high percentage of rental homes in residential neighborhoods, the need to improve energy conservation throughout the city, the condition of the city's infrastructure, the need to improve school facilities and educational opportunities, the current lack of senior services, the desire to support local entrepreneurs, the need for City staff and elected/appointed officials to provide true representation of the residents, and the need for the City to be accountable for its actions.

The following is a summary of the Neighborhood Workshops held in the morning and in the evening.

## ***Morning Community/ Neighborhood Workshop***

During the morning meeting on July 23rd, 2009 at the Harbor Harvest Urban Ministries (formerly Peace Temple United Methodist), Mr. John Houseal, Principal of Houseal Lavigne Associates presented the Master Plan planning process. After a review of the process and questions and comments from members of the public, Mr. Houseal led a group exercise to gather input from those in attendance. Four questions were used to facilitate discussion. The following is a summary of the responses for each question.

### ***Identify five issues or concerns confronting the City of Benton Harbor.***

Those in attendance provided a list of issues that were similar to those provided by members of the Master Plan Advisory Committee and the Planning Commission. The majority of the issues dealt with improving communication between residents and the government, improving the City's accountability, attracting and retaining jobs and businesses, improving the quality of the housing supply, improving safety, and improving the education system.

**Government.** Many workshop attendees discussed a variety of concerns with local government, especially regarding its accountability. Attendees wanted to see the City hire a grant writer, improve accountability for the City and its employees, improve police training, show true representation of the community, and keep up-to-date with its plans and ordinances. Some residents also stated that they would like to see the City improve its tree trimming service. Attendees also stated the need for the City to create its own local judicial system. Some attendees wanted to see Commissioners hold meetings with neighborhood block groups. Overall, attendees wanted to see the government improve its communication with residents.

**Business.** Those in attendance wanted to see more jobs for local residents, and that new construction projects within the City be required to employ local residents. An attendee would like to see the City support local food production that could provide jobs in the community. There was also a desire to see improved vocational rehabilitation and job training.

**Community.** Attendees desired to see the City's unity improved and that an increased effort be made to create more programs for youth. One resident summarized that statement by asking, "How do we reach our youth?" Similar to the need to provide programs for youth, attendees wanted to see programs and services offered for seniors. Attendees also stated that future grants should benefit the African-American community, and that the City should review the racial make-up of its workforce. Some wanted to see an improved long-term drug rehabilitation program offered in the City.

**Infrastructure.** Infrastructure issues included the need to lower the cost of utilities, and the need to improve City Hall and the High School while maintaining those facilities in their current locations.

**Schools and Parks.** In terms of community facility issues, attendees wanted the local school system improved. Specifically, attendees would like to see City Park renovated.

**Housing.** The need to increase owner-occupied homes in the community, and the need to add more affordable housing into the City were both mentioned. An attendee stated that the City should offer "dollar homes" in the City.

### ***List in order of importance the three most important issues discussed thus far.***

When asked what the most important issues were, residents listed the need to increase the percentage of owner-occupied homes; improve energy/conservation/production/and environmental programs; have the City provide true representation of residents; and provide overall personal accountability.

### ***Identify three projects or actions you would like to see the City undertake.***

Workshop attendees would like to see the following projects completed by the City: create a community court; adhere to laws, regulations, and policies; pursue grants; improve and repair parks; rehab housing with local contractors; go by charter; create financial partners; create more home ownership; create business ownership programs; improve education; improve the police department; create jobs; keep youth off of the streets; improve recreation; hire a grant writer; rehab the City Hall and add two fire bays; enhance local businesses at Fair and Empire; and repair softball field at Hall Park.

### ***What are the primary strengths and assets of Benton Harbor?***

The following strengths and assets of the City were mentioned by workshop attendees: the City's location; residents; land; beach; churches; manufacturers; interstates; sea port; and rail.

## ***Evening Community/ Neighborhood Workshop***

An evening workshop was held for residents at Benton Harbor High School. The meeting was structured and facilitated identical to the morning workshop. After a review of the process and questions and comments from members of the public, Mr. Houseal led a group exercise to gather input from those in attendance. Four questions were used to facilitate discussion. The following is a summary of the responses for each question.

### ***Identify five issues or concerns confronting the City of Benton Harbor.***

Those in attendance provided a list of issues that were similar to those provided by members of the Master Plan Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission, and those in attendance at the morning community meeting. The majority of the issues dealt with the need to improve education, the desire to attract businesses and job opportunities, the need to provide quality housing, and the desire to support local food growing opportunities.

**Business and Job Opportunities.** Attendees wanted to see more jobs brought into the City, especially for youth that return from college. It was noted that the City should also support local entrepreneurs within the community. Related to business growth, attendees wanted to see greater accountability for the job tax credits.

**Government.** Overall, many in attendance listed issues about how the current government has operated in the past. Issues regarding a lack of effective code enforcement, a desire for improved communication between residents and elected officials, overall accountability, creating an Americans with Disability (ADA) home assistance program, and the need to update outdated city documents and ordinances were mentioned by several attendees.

**Infrastructure.** The need to improve street surfaces, the desire to see better telecommunications, the desire to improve tree trimming within the City, and the need to control the utilities within the right-of-way were mentioned by attendees as important issues dealing with infrastructure.

**Schools.** Attendees wanted to see the education system improved within the City. Specifically, residents expressed a need to see teachers hired within the schools that show a greater sense of care for the students.

**Local Food Production.** There was discussion regarding the need to improve resident's ability to produce and sell their own food within the City. One attendee wanted to see the City's regulations for growing its own food removed and overall greater food self-sufficiency within Benton Harbor.

**Housing.** The need to improve the quality of housing within the City was mentioned by a number of the attendees. Overall, those in attendance discussed the need to improve the quality of housing in Benton Harbor.

### ***List in order of importance the three most important issues discussed thus far.***

When asked what the most important issues were, residents listed the need to improve education, the desire to support local entrepreneurs, the need to improve city infrastructure, and the need to provide programs and activities for seniors.

### ***Identify three projects or actions you would like to see the City undertake.***

Those in attendance would like to see these projects completed by the City: hire a code enforcement officer; hire a new police chief; improve tree trimming; make business ownership more available; improve education with residents on what is happening; create a system that retains the City's talent; build more affordable housing; work with economic planners to create job opportunities; work with educators to prevent high school dropouts; develop program to aid existing family and neighbor community gardeners to expand food production; develop and install a network of local neighborhood food stands to sell/distribute food to neighbors; and develop an Agricultural Renaissance Zone.

### ***What are the primary strengths and assets of Benton Harbor?***

The following strengths and assets of Benton Harbor were mentioned by attendees: the City's location; the water system; residents/people; diversity; spirit; lake front property; Jean Klock Park; a tradition of family ties and intergenerational cohesiveness; faith in God and the future; deep family roots in gardening and small-scale farming; neighborhoods; and churches.

## ***DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Community Workshops***

In an effort to increase citizen participation and improve community outreach, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Workshop packets were created to allow residents and community groups to conduct their own workshops and provide direct input into the planning process. In total, 10 packets were created for distribution. Each group was asked to address the following:

- Identify five (5) issues or concerns confronting the City of Benton Harbor.
- List, in order of importance, the three (3) most important issues discussed thus far.
- Identify three (3) projects of actions that you would like to see undertaken within Benton Harbor.
- What are the primary strengths and assets of Benton Harbor?

The following summary identifies the common themes exposed by comments from the three groups. While each group identified a unique set of issues, their comments underscored a number of over arching issues. The concerns discussed here represent those issues to which all three groups dedicated a significant amount of commentary.

### ***Common Themes***

**Housing and Community Appearance –** Workshop participants indicated that the poor condition of properties throughout the community is contributing to a poor image of the community among both residents and visitors. Participants indicated that lax code enforcement and/or inadequate property maintenance codes have allowed many properties to remain in disrepair. Absentee landlords and a low rate of home ownership were also identified as contributors to the poor appearance of housing throughout the community. Several comments called for additional affordable housing development in the City. Other comments cited the need for the concentrated redevelopment of all vacant properties within a targeted area.

### **Leadership –**

According to participants, coordination and collaboration within local government may be contributing to an unclear vision for the City’s future, which in turn may be contributing to a lack of motivation among residents. Furthermore, the public view of local government may be negatively influenced by a general lack of communication to residents of any clear vision or game plan that may exist. Both the perception of unstable leadership and poor communication combine to yield a sense of frustration among residents that can limit civic involvement and hinder a City’s ability to improve.

### **Economic Development –**

There appears to be a general desire to attract new businesses and development to the City. Many commented on the need for new development in the Downtown area. The focus of economic development within the community is on expanding job opportunities in Benton Harbor for residents of Benton Harbor. Several participants indicated support for improving the business climate through the use of various incentives. Others indicated that the City should serve as an example by establishing a residency requirement for City employees and giving preference to Benton Harbor businesses when contracting out work. The adjacent two waterways and Lake Michigan and the City’s proximity to regional transportation, agricultural areas, and natural resources were often listed as strengths.

### **Education –**

As an expansion on the topic of economic development, participants noted the issue of workforce development. Several participants indicated a need for job training to provide local residents with the skills needed by local employers. The education system within Benton Harbor was also viewed as a concern facing the community. Many comments indicated a desire for a link between the community’s school system and other community services and programs. For example, some participants indicated a need to establish a work study and/or volunteer youth programs.

### **Infrastructure –**

The condition of the City’s infrastructure was often characterized as poor. Several comments called for the improvement and long-term maintenance of local streets and sidewalks. Water treatment infrastructure was also commonly identified as an issue.

### ***Summary of DIY Workshops***

The following is a summary of the comments received from each DIY workshop.

#### ***New Territory Arts Association (NTAA) Attendees: 4***

##### **Top Issues**

Participants of this workshop identified a range of concerns confronting the City, the majority of comments related to:

- A perceived lack of government stability and leadership;
- Lack of building code enforcement and poor property maintenance;
- Negative perception or image of the City; and,
- A poor education system.

##### **Projects and Actions**

Desired projects and actions identified by the NTAA dealt with the topics of:

- **Education** – Establishing a program to link education achievement to the welfare system, establishing a performance-based school model; establishing work study and/or volunteer youth programs; creating an art school in the Downtown; and expanding worker education programs.
- **Business Recruitment** – The need for additional retail, particularly within the Downtown; developing the City center and Riverview Drive; and creating incentives to attract redevelopment.
- **Housing** – The creation of more affordable housing within the City; expanded enforcement of property maintenance codes; and the targeted redevelopment of blighted properties within a defined area of the City.

##### **Strengths and Assets**

According to the members of the NTAA, the strengths of Benton Harbor lie in its:

- Proximity to local waterways, Lake Michigan, productive agricultural areas, and other natural resources.
- Access to a regional transportation system and potential function as a hub for multiple modes of transportation.

#### ***Cornerstone Alliance Attendees: 8***

##### **Top Issues**

The most significant issues among Cornerstone Alliance participants included:

- Unstable and inharmonious local government and leadership;
- Poor financial management and instability;
- Perception of an unstable local business climate;
- Water and sewer issues in Benton Charter Township;
- Need for a better education system (including expanded workforce and life skills education); and,
- Poor condition of housing and properties throughout the City.

##### **Projects and Actions**

The projects and actions most desired by participants included:

- Reducing the millage rate and otherwise working to improve the local business climate;
- Improving the local and regional infrastructure related to water treatment;
- Developing a transparent financial strategy to address budget issues; and,
- Improving MEAP scores among local students.

##### **Strengths and Assets**

According to the members of the Cornerstone Alliance, the City’s primary strengths include:

- Improvement to Downtown including the Main Street renovations and Arts District revitalization;
- Location with respect to Jean Klock Park and Lake Michigan, and the potential for related tourism; and,
- The core of existing businesses and the cooperative spirit fostered between the Cornerstone Alliance, Harbor Shores, and one another.

#### ***Third Ward Attendees: 9***

##### **Top Issues**

Residents of the Third Ward identified a range of issues facing the City including:

- Water bills;
- Low rates of home ownership;
- Lax policing and code enforcement;
- A need for business ownership and employment within the City (including City contracts);
- Lack of a residency requirement for City employees and officials;
- Minimal opportunities for community input in local government;
- The City’s lack of engagement with the women of Benton Harbor; and,
- A disconnect between Benton Harbor and the neighboring City of St. Joseph.

##### **Projects and Actions**

Desired projects and actions identified by participants included:

- Street and sidewalk repair;
- Attracting development and creating jobs for City residents;
- Improving community outreach on behalf of the City; and,
- Enhancing law enforcement with improved technology, training, and outreach.

##### **Strengths and Assets**

According to residents of the Third Ward, the City’s primary strengths include its:

- Residents and communities;
- Location in a highly productive agricultural area; and,
- Location near the Lake Michigan waterfront.

#### ***Hull Middle School Students Attendees: 70***

##### **Top Issues**

Students identified a range of issues facing the City including:

- Need for more police protection to deal with safety and crime issues throughout the City and within the school system.
- Need to solve drug and alcohol issues including drug dealers, gangs, and illegal drug use.
- There are not enough activities or facilities for youth.
- A lack of employment opportunities.

##### **Projects and Actions**

Desired projects and actions identified by students included:

- Improve law enforcement.
- Opening a youth facility for activities such as a YMCA, rolling rink, teen center, boys and girls clubs, arcades, and stores and shops.
- Support local businesses in providing more jobs.
- Improve the school system.
- Improve the residential neighborhoods and homes.
- Improve the streets and sidewalk system.

##### **Strengths and Assets**

According to the students of Hull Middle School, the City’s primary strengths include its:

- Community facilities such as the Soup Kitchen, Dial-a-Ride, Library, homeless shelter, schools, boys and girls club, and parks.
- The parade was noted by many as an asset of the City.
- New developments, including new housing and the Harbor Shores project.
- The school basketball team.
- The schools and the teachers are an asset to the community.
- The police department.
- Residents and family were also noted as strengths of Benton Harbor.

## Facilitated Community Workshops

In addition to the DIY workshops, the City promoted and helped facilitate neighborhood led community workshops in five separate locations throughout the City:

- **Ward 1** - Benton Harbor High School, facilitated by Frederick Roseburg
- **Ward 2** – Urban Harvest Ministries, facilitated by Sandra Douglas
- **Ward 3** – Thurgood Marshall Homes, facilitated by Emmna Kinnard
- **Ward 4** – Morton Hill Elementary School, facilitated by Corey Bell
- **Pipestone** – Health Department, facilitated by Rich Hensel

A total of 15 people participated in the five workshops. The following is a summary of the key issues, important projects, and strengths of the community that were identified by participants.

### Top Issues

Attendees identified a range of issues facing the City including:

- **Education** - The devaluing of education. The school district is fiscally-strapped and is not ready to handle or support students achieving beyond expectations.
- **Youth Activities** - Youth are not seen as a priority and there is a lack of youth activities.
- **Community Facilities** - Lack of health facilities. The issue of teen pregnancy was also stated.
- **Jobs** - Lack of jobs and employment. There is a need for more job training. The lack of jobs leads to drugs, and crime.
- **Attitudes** - Negativity in the community and a lack of opportunity. It was stated that community organizations do little action.
- **Taxes** - Tax issues including an Ad Valorem property tax rate. A tax planning group and a business development group should be formed. Some also stated that there is inefficient land use for a tax base.

- **Housing** - The condition of the housing and residential neighborhoods. There is a need for quality, energy efficient housing for ownership. Better code enforcement is needed. A housing assessment study should be created, and vacant homes should be addressed. The City also needs to attract quality residents.
- **Government** - A lack of transparency from government to citizens and a lack of citizens actually working in city services. There also needs to be better leadership. It was also stated that city finances are poorly handled.
- **New Developments** - How will Harbor Shores affect existing citizens?
- **Safety** – There is a lack of police to follow-up problems concerning loud music, speeding, law enforcement.
- **Appearance** – There is garbage in alleys and streets are in poor condition. Residents should be responsible for their property, such as keeping the lawn mowed and house painted. Cars should not be allowed to park on front yards.

### Projects and Actions

Desired projects and actions identified by attendees included:

- Creation of a community-wide mobilization effort and comprehensive education system.
- Task force to identify and map youth and family activities and services.
- Develop a commercial and recreation shipping canal with capital equipment.
- Develop along the riverfronts.
- Plant flowers around the City.
- Improve transportation system by bringing a ship docking facility.
- Utilize the airport and attract passenger and freight operations.
- Skating rink/community center (one per ward)
- Retail incubator

- New grocery store
- Hire more police
- Repair sidewalks and streets
- New schools (new middle school, and/or high school)
- Attract a large corporation to set up in the city, particularly in the downtown area.
- Conduct a neighborhood revitalization overhaul. Re-zone/revitalize low-income housing. It was also suggested that the city develop neighborhood zones for rental free areas.
- City should do a better job marketing itself.

### Strengths and Assets

According to attendees, the City’s primary strengths include its:

- The residents of Benton Harbor.
- Growing of collaborations and activities for youth and the energy of youth.
- Improved neighborhoods and pride. Some neighborhoods are stabilizing.
- Potential opportunities for residents from Harbor Shores and block grant projects.
- Resources including the lakefront, rivers, airport, rail, and highways.
- Location.
- The city is a taxing entity.
- Dial-a-Ride
- Good neighborhood associations
- Rich history

## Master Plan Advisory Committee Meeting

On October 13, 2009 the Existing Conditions Report was presented to members of the MPAC and the public at City Hall. Approximately twenty residents, business representatives and members of the committee attended the public meeting.

The purpose of the MPAC meeting was to review the Existing Conditions Report and for the consultant to give a presentation of the key findings and preliminary issues and opportunities. Existing conditions were presented based upon reconnaissance, public meetings, and research, for the following topic areas: land use and development, residential areas, commercial areas, industrial areas, transportation, parks and environmental features, community facilities, arts and culture, sustainability, and overall quality of life.

Based upon input received from the MPAC and the public, the report was updated and posted on the project website for public viewing.

## Community Visioning Workshop

On Wednesday, January 13, 2010, a Visioning Workshop was held with the public at Michigan Works! with approximately 80 attendees. The purpose of the meeting was to work with the public to begin forming visioning

The Visioning Session involved the Consultant Team, members of the Master Plan Advisory Committee, elected officials, business owners, and members of the community. The session included small group working sessions which reviewed and discussed conditions and potentials within the City.

The larger group was separated into ten (10) smaller working groups. Each group worked together to develop “visions” for the future of the community. Although attendees were encouraged to discuss any issue that they desired, to assist each group, the following are suggested areas of discussion were given:

- Transportation
- Parks, Open Space and Recreation
- Commercial, Retail, and Shopping
- Employment, Jobs, and Industrial
- Residential, Neighborhoods
- Community Facilities

Each group was provided a large base map of the City, a map of the airport and its area, and several markers by which the group could illustrate their ideas on the map. In addition to the map, each group nominated an official “note-taker” who wrote down the groups ideas. At the conclusion of the workshop, a spokesperson from each group briefly presented key ideas and concepts that their group created.

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions written by each of the ten groups.

## GROUP ONE

### Transportation

- New development should consider transportation as a primary concern.
- Public transportation needs to be supported by more than just the City of Benton Harbor. There is also a need for more feasible line hauls and more bus stops.
- There should be safe pedestrian sidewalks and crossings. There is also a need for better snow removal and sidewalk clearing.
- Develop walking and biking trails that connect all available parks and open space. This would also word towards the creation of a unified park system with emphasis on accessibility.

### Commercial, Retail, and Shopping

- Focus on Main Street and include form-based building codes.
- SOMA development (South of Main Street).
- It is critical to attract a grocery and general sundry/drug store to the City (that are accessible).
- Flip the numbers of convenience/liquor stores compared to the number of general stores.

### Employment, Jobs, Industrial

- Emphasize tourism and hospitality.
- Attract destination hospitality services.
- Business/Art District must appeal and be accessible to all residents.
- Encourage micro-business and micro-lending.
- Encourage the film industry in the area in a Southwest Michigan Studio.

### **Residential, Neighborhoods**

- Emphasize code enforcement.
- Quality starter/reasonably priced homes.
- Mixed use neighborhoods are critical.
- Establish historical housing district.
- Establish community land trust to facilitate homeownership.

### **Community Facilities**

- The group asked “Where do you need to locate social/health services?” There is a need for multiple locations, or is that the best solution? There is a need to increase access.
- Enrichment Program for Benton Harbor High School students. The start of cultural change. Mentoring programs can be key.

### **Other Category**

- Establish urban gardening community that promotes self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship.
- Encourage grass-roots activism for the community.

### **GROUP TWO**

#### **Transportation**

- There is a need to have more Dial-a-Ride stops in the City.
- Use “complete streets” in future street improvements. Complete Streets policy includes the provision of pedestrian and bicycle paths and amenities in new road construction projects.
- A Walkable community should be a goal. Currently, the City has inadequate pedestrian and bicycle transportation.
- Advocate a transportation authority at the county level.
- Should work towards high-speed rail with a stop in Benton Harbor (Chicago – Detroit Corridor).

#### **Parks, Open Space and Recreation**

- Create an official park district and system.
- Create “rails to trails” using Boulder, Colorado as an example.
- There should be an emphasis on creating walking paths.

#### **Commercial, Retail, and Shopping**

- A number of desired businesses were noted including: a grocery store (which would provide access to fresh produce), a flea market, a farmers market, an open air market, and Maxwell Street vendors.
- Community participation in creating opportunities and entrepreneurship is key.

#### **Employment, Jobs, Industrial**

- Expand downtown to emphasize both sides of Main Street to include and draw-in all neighborhoods.
- Entrepreneurship was noted by the group as was micro-enterprise.
- Tourism and hospitality.

#### **Residential, Neighborhoods**

- The City should turn Union Street into a Boulevard – one way into the City.
- Review traffic patterns to direct people into the City.
- Continue the Main Street improvements into the neighborhoods including lighting, landscaping, and creating a cohesive feel.

#### **Community Facilities**

- Construct a recreational center that is open to the public.

### **GROUP THREE**

#### **Transportation**

- Reconnect the ship canal to help ships get in and out of Benton Harbor. This needs to be more extensive than the current proposal. This would increase commerce and help the economy. Benton Harbor is already producing; there needs to be better commercial output.
- Keep expanding public transit. SWMPC has done a great job starting to expand this, and keep expanding with increased stops at the courthouse, and health department. Also add benches, new sidewalks, and weather protection amenities.
- Add walking and bicycling amenities. Ensure that “complete streets” language is in the Master Plan.

#### **Parks, Open Space and Recreation**

- Need to have reliable security at youth events (a solution may be to pay volunteers).
- More security is needed at Union Park. We should improve security to reduce littering and should also increase lighting in the park.
- Highland Park and Hull Park aren’t used as much as Union Park. These parks are in need of improvement.
- Increase walking trails especially along Ox Creek. This should also connect to Harbor Shores.
- Improve the ravine, especially from Colfax to Broadway. The City should work to stop the dumping that occurs in the ravine.

- Children and families must be a priority for Benton Harbor.

- Benton Harbor High School should open its facilities for residents. Currently, there are limited activities for children especially in the winter for the south side of the City.

#### **Commercial, Retail, and Shopping**

- Benton Harbor residents need to own our own grocery stores and gas stations.
- Grocery stores are needed in Benton Harbor that serve fresh produce grown in Benton Harbor. The resources are already here we just need to market them.
- Urban gardening is necessary.
- Build a farmers market.

### **Employment, Jobs, Industrial**

- The City should support jobs for felons. There is not enough being done with the existing prisoner reentry program. The City should encourage an opportunity center program for prisoners. To keep prisoners out of trouble put them to work beautifying the City (with strong supervision).
- We need a “cultural change” that promotes work and school as a valuable thing.
- Young people need opportunities to make ends meet. They are stealing to get money. They need jobs and need to accept less than perfect jobs.

### **Residential, Neighborhoods**

- Snow removal should be enforced especially around schools.
- Money is needed for current home owners like many of the city programs.

### **Community Facilities**

- Historical buildings need to be kept.
- Benton Harbor High School should not leave the City of Benton Harbor. There is so much potential for the building and it needs to be used more. Maybe there is a need to renovate the school. The City needs to support recreation at the High School and use the swimming facility. There may also be an opportunity to hold concerts at the football stadium to raise money for the renovations.
- BoBo Brazil Center should be renovated and utilized to its fullest potential.
- Do something with the theatre on Main Street.

### **GROUP FOUR**

#### **Transportation**

- Dial-a-Ride takes too long to arrive and there is noise pollution when they honk. The hours of public transit/Dial-a-Ride should be expanded. Especially on the weekend until at least 10pm.

#### **Parks, Open Space and Recreation**

- It is not about the structure of the streets, it is about developing a strong foundation for our community to prosper and thrive on its own by empowering our people through education. We also would like to see a new school board.

#### **Commercial, Retail, and Shopping**

- The City should develop a riverfront “by the city”.
- New businesses should include sidewalks, benches and lighting.

#### **Employment, Jobs, Industrial**

- Educate residents so that they are prepared for jobs when it happens.

#### **Residential, Neighborhoods**

- Urban gardening should be promoted. Create ordinances for gardening on lots.
- Enforce structural zoning ordinances.

#### **Community Facilities**

- The schools should be improved. Schools should remain in the city limits and be centrally located.
- More funding for police.
- Drug treatment and prevention.

#### **Other Category**

- The people are not heard and listened to.
- Let the people of Benton Harbor take ownership of their City and all it has to offer.
- Stop paying those from other areas to come in and tell us what we already know.
- The school should be centrally located within the City.
- Implement and enforce college prep courses within the high school.
- Infrastructure upgrades should be ongoing.

### **GROUP FIVE**

#### **Transportation**

- Public parking should be located off-street and close to businesses and parks. Handicap parking in all parking locations according to the codes.
- More bus stops for businesses and social services, schools, and banks.

#### **Parks, Open Space and Recreation**

- A new linear park should be created along Ox Creek (Main Street to Empire) with a walking path.
- Reestablish Edwards Park.
- Improve Riverfront Park and its parking area.
- Community gardens should be built near public schools and parks.

#### **Commercial, Retail, and Shopping**

- The City should encourage neighborhood commercial districts such as small business (mom and pop) and convenience stores (stop and shop).

#### **Employment, Jobs, Industrial**

- Maintain the current industrial areas for future industry including small business incubators.

#### **Residential, Neighborhoods**

- The City should support market rate homes with large lots.

#### **Community Facilities**

- New fire stations and a police station are needed.

## **GROUP SIX**

### **Transportation**

- Dedicated bike lanes on newly paved streets in the city should include “complete streets”. This should include access for pedestrians, bikes, wheelchairs, and baby strollers. The trail network should have a theme of beauty and link it with the nodes to connect beautiful parks and streets.

### **Parks, Open Space and Recreation**

- Community/neighborhood gardens should be built where vacant homes are. Vacant homes should be removed to make more parks that are better, and larger.
- Cleaner beaches and more lifeguards.
- Public bathrooms that are clean, safe and accessible.
- Trails that link with larger a larger trail network and bike paths.
- No more littering.

### **Commercial, Retail, and Shopping**

- Riverview Drive should be rerouted instead of up against the river’s edge. Create a strip of highly desirable, developable properties along the river. Construct a mixed-use condo, with recreation, businesses and restaurants.
- Local/neighborhood stores with fresh produce for neighborhood restaurants.
- More accessible shopping for the disabled.
- Better signage.
- Bus stops where people are/want to go with covered bus shelters.
- Small shops should be downtown with nice places to eat and visit such as clothing stores, specialty shops, cultural, museums, skating rinks, amphitheatre for concerts, and more stores for youth.

### **Employment, Jobs, Industrial**

- Jobs in beautifying the City including entry level jobs to get people started.
- Small businesses need to be encouraged.
- Celebrate African American culture, churches, clothing, and food in the downtown. “What is it like to be African American in the 21st Century?” “What do we love?””What does our art look like?”

## **Residential, Neighborhoods**

- Too much/many burned out homes. These burned out homes need to go. In the area of Britain/Catalpa/Thresher there are a lot of homes that need to be rehabilitated or removed. At least one accessible/zero step entrance is needed for each home. The City should enforce the code that requires this.
- Increase safety/accessibility, social-recreation opportunities.
- Better streetscapes for all neighborhoods.
- Programs for low cost roof replacement.
- Better sidewalks are needed and they should connect to trails.
- Each ward should have a small park or recreation facility in walking distance.
- Community gardens should be located throughout the City.
- There should be better upkeep of apartments, and the apartments should be more energy efficient and affordable.
- The City should teach people how to maintain a home.

### **Community Facilities**

- We like community facilities centrally located in the downtown. Keep the library where it is but continue to make improvements as planned. Currently it is not accessible for disabled. The library should also have Wi-Fi and better restrooms. The library is in a good location, as is City Hall. The way residents use City Hall has changed over the years. For example, bill paying is not done as much in City Hall as it once was. Regarding the police department, police tickets are not a large revenue producer. Police programs and buildings should be higher profile. The City should address the stigma of crime.
- School accessibility for disabled seniors is not as good as it should be. Schools should have improved restrooms and parking that accommodates accessibility. Schools should also remain in the center of the City and they should not be moved to the outer edges. Safety around schools should be improved. Schools should also serve better lunches and have better heat and air-conditioning. Sidewalks around the school should be improved and should be kept clear of snow in the winter.

### **Other Category**

- The City should have more parades.
- When the City hires businesses to clean the city, those businesses should do a better job.

## **GROUP SEVEN**

### **Transportation**

- Bus stops should be located near any new grocery stores.
- Dial-A-Ride is important for the City,
- The City should have a water taxi between Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, and primarily a connection to the hospital.
- Regular commercial flights at the airport should be encouraged.

### **Parks, Open Space and Recreation**

- There should be a basketball complex along the railroad tracks.
- Community gardens should be built and the City should support backyard “urban” gardening.
- Encourage non-profits and other groups to adopt parks and improve their care.
- Improve parking for walking path (south end).
- No parking fees for Benton Harbor residents for Jean Klock Park and no one-way access.
- Free Dial-a-Ride to Harbor Shores. Harbor Shores should also include walking paths and fishing piers.
- Commercialize Main Street.
- Home-grown community development.

### **Commercial, Retail, and Shopping**

- The City needs a new grocery store to draw in residents from neighboring communities. Specific types of grocery stores cited by the group include Trader Joe’s, Penzeys Spices.

- Commercialize Main Street.

- Home-grown community development.

## **Employment, Jobs, Industrial**

- Small business should be encouraged in industrial parks.
- There is a need for a walk-in medical service that is open 24/7.
- Promote solar and wind energy.
- Free recycling depot for rehab materials on various city owned empty lots. Place dumpsters, picked up weekly, for recycling and refuse.

### **Residential, Neighborhoods**

- Affordable housing that keeps people in their homes, paying for repairs, insulation, windows, and furnaces.
- Abandoned homes should be torn down.
- Zoning laws should be updated and enforced.
- The City should promote building upscale condominiums near Benton Harbor High School.
- Retirement homes should go near any future grocery store.
- Focus should be on home ownership versus rental and add more Section 8 housing as well as supporting Habitat for Humanity.

### **Community Facilities**

- The City should build a new fire station and update municipal infrastructure.

### **Other Category**

- Job training for construction, landscaping, rehabilitation, and alternative energy.

## **GROUP EIGHT**

### **Transportation**

- The City should construct angled parking on Main Street.
- There is a need for accessible parking in each lot (5 per 200 spaces).
- Bus system with an established bus route.
- Parking meters will provide revenue.
- The City should improve snow removal.

### **Parks, Open Space and Recreation**

- Union Park and Broadway Park needs new equipment.
- Hull Park needs to have its baseball fields and basketball courts upgraded.
- The City needs to do a better job utilizing its fourteen (14) designated park opportunity areas.

### **Commercial, Retail, and Shopping**

- Mom and pop convenient stores should be located in all neighborhoods.

### **Employment, Jobs, Industrial**

- Infrastructure needs to be improved to support business.
- Existing buildings should have upgrades to support office space and to entice businesses.

- Schools have a shortage of help including aids, janitorial services, landscaping, and supervisors.

### **Residential, Neighborhoods**

- Homes should be fixed block by block.

- Homes should be preserved and the City should make sure they are brought up to code. In addition to homes, lawns should also be well kept.

- The City should require landlord/tenant educational meetings.

- Code enforcement.

### **Community Facilities**

- The City should upgrade the fire station and the police station.
- All schools should have better curb appeal and building upgrades. Adequate teachers and school supplies should also be provided.
- A recreation center, or community center, including activities such as swimming, a skating rink and trade schooling that teaches skills such as auto mechanics, welding, electricity, and carpentry should be built.

## **GROUP NINE**

### **Transportation**

- There is a need for an Amtrak Station in Benton Harbor.
- Dial-a-Ride should be a bus station that is more accessible for pedestrians.
- There should be more pedestrian sidewalks and there should be improved snow removal.
- Canal development.
- More bus shelters should be located in all neighborhoods.
- Reopen the airport to commercial flights.
- Parking enforcement needed.

### **Parks, Open Space and Recreation**

- Maintain the City’s current parks and open spaces.
- Clean up Ox Creek and other waterways.
- Install a walking trail in Harbor Shores.
- Urban farms in every ward.
- Overall beautification of the city.
- Improved waste management is needed.
- More direct connection from neighborhoods to Harbor Shores (pedestrian and bikes) is needed.

### **Commercial, Retail, and Shopping**

- A new grocery store is needed near the intersection of Britain Avenue and Pipestone Street in the old Rite Aid building.

- A new Laundromat is desired.

- Code enforcement of businesses should be improved.
- Grocery stores and Laundromats should be in every Ward.
- Reduce the number of liquor stores in the City.
- There is a need for more healthy food stores.
- Expand a Farmers Market in downtown and in all wards.

### **Employment, Jobs, Industrial**

- Rezone to remove and relocate undesirable industry and sanitation uses.
- Dumping in waterways is an issue that needs to be resolved.
- Tax incentives for businesses are needed.
- The modern plastics building should have a business operating out of it.
- Renewable energy such as wind turbines and hydroponic farms should be encouraged.
- Major tourist attraction is needed in Downtown.

***City of Benton Harbor Master Plan***

### Residential, Neighborhoods

- Code enforcement within residential neighborhoods is a key issue.
- There is a need to improve the quality of rental properties.
- More affordable housing is needed downtown and in neighborhoods.
- The City should encourage either the rehabilitation or the removal of abandoned homes.
- The Riverwatch Motel should be condemned.

### Community Facilities

- The City should support a church district at Broadway Avenue and Pipestone Street. This would also support an historic preservation district.
- Benton Harbor High School should be renovated.
- City Hall should not be moved to the All Phase building. City Hall should remain in the city core.
- Maintain all City schools.
- Need an art school in the arts district.
- History of Benton Harbor museum is needed downtown.

### Other Category

- There is a need for more police presence on street (pedestrian or horse mounted).
- Incentives to keep water treatment plant in Benton Harbor.
- Need a recycling center and program.
- Need to have design standards as part of any zoning updates.
- Site planning standards are needed for pedestrian access.
- There is an inequity in the tax base because the taxes are too high for new businesses.

### GROUP TEN

#### Transportation

- An asset is the availability of water, rail and ground transportation. This is an opportunity for building a transportation and logistics industry in the City.

#### Parks, Open Space and Recreation

- More parks and recreational activities including for-profit businesses such as Chuck E Cheese, and roller-skating.
- Develop Hull Park with rides and picnic facilities.

#### Commercial, Retail, and Shopping

- Attract new grocery stores. Bring more fresh produce into the city through more centrally located farmers markets and stores.

#### Residential, Neighborhoods

- Better code enforcement and rental unit inspection funded by inspection fees.
- Dilapidated buildings and vacant lots should be turned into parks.
- Rents are too high for what you get.
- The safe routes to school program still has some major room for improvement – unsafe sidewalks, snow not cleared.
- Clear trash from the ravine near LaSalle Avenue. Group Ten noted that this could be a beautiful neighborhood if cleaned up.

#### Other Category

- Need for infrastructure improvements including water, sanitary sewer, storm water, roads and sidewalks.
- Eliminate undersized mains, restore fire hydrants, and replace and add valves. It was suggested that all of these projects be combined to create one single project.
- The City needs to consider a new water tower with larger capacity.
- The City should encourage a mini-campus for Lake Michigan College in Benton Harbor.

### Public Meeting Hosted by the MPAC

On March 23, 2010 the MPAC hosted a public meeting at the Carl Brown Center located at 200 Paw Paw Avenue. Approximately 30 residents, business representatives and members of the MPAC attended the public meeting. The purpose of the public meeting was to review the preliminary vision for the Master Plan and the key topic areas to include within the specific chapters of the Plan.

Preliminary ideas and future recommendations for each of the following chapters were discussed: land use and development, residential areas, commercial areas, industrial areas, transportation, parks and environmental features, community facilities, arts and culture, sustainability, and overall quality of life.

Those in attendance were generally in support of the preliminary areas of focus presented. The input received during the meeting from members of the MPAC as well as staff was used to create the draft Master Plan recommendations.

### MPAC Meeting

A meeting was held with members of the Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) on May 6, 2010 at 200 Paw Paw Avenue. The meeting was designed as a “working meeting” where representatives of the consultant team discussed each page of the Draft Master Plan. Members of the MPAC provided thoughts, opinions and comments throughout the meeting.

Based upon the input received at this meeting, the Draft Plan was revised and updated and presentation boards were created for the public open house.

### Open House

A public open house was held on May 19th, 2010 at 200 Paw Paw Avenue to present the preliminary plans and recommendations of the Draft Master Plan. Approximately 50 residents attended the workshop. Based upon the input received from the open house, clarifications were made, and more substantive suggestions will be presented to the Master Plan Advisory Committee for their thoughts and options.

The majority of those that attended the Open House provided positive feedback regarding the draft plans and recommendations. Most of the concerns expressed at the Open House were from residents concerning when certain plans and/or actions could occur, and how could they be funded. Many discussions between the consultant team and the public dealt with the implementation steps that could be used for the recommendations.

The following summarizes the main points expressed and discussed during the open house for each of the presentation boards.

#### Land Use and Development Plan (Presentation Board One)

The following are the main points that the public made concerning these draft plans:

- Overall, residents expressed support for the land use and development plan.
- Residents discussed how the plan protected and improved residential neighborhoods, added greenspace, extended waterways, and strengthened the industrial/commercial areas.
- A resident noted that historic districts should be created (Pipestone, Territorial, Colfax)

#### Residential and Commercial Plan (Presentation Board Two)

No written comments provided for this board.

#### Transportation and Circulation Plan (Presentation Board Three)

The following are the main points that the public made concerning these draft plans:

- A resident would like to see roundabouts installed at Pipestone and Jefferson/Broadway, and at Empire and Pipestone.

#### Arts and Culture Plan (Presentation Board Four)

The following are the main points that the public made concerning these draft plans:

- Overall, residents expressed support for the arts and culture plan and how it was important for youth.
- Residents cited the need to write that public art already exists in Benton Harbor and that it is effective.
- A resident noted that the Plan should also acknowledge the private school system and the non-profit/community agencies that provide arts and culture education, not just the public school system.
- It was also noted that an introductory paragraph about how residents are the most essential City resource.

### **Community Facilities Plan (Presentation Board Four)**

The following are the main points that the public made concerning these draft plans:

- Support public building improvements (Library, Armory, City Hall, Water Plant, and relocate Public Works)
- Similar to the comment under arts and culture, a resident asked to include the entire educational system in the plan (i.e. public and private)
- A resident noted the need to study the development of the ship canal
- Maintaining City parks is important

### **Urban Design and Quality of Life Plan (Presentation Board Five)**

The following are the main points that the public made concerning the quality of life plan:

- A resident noted the need to actively seek a medical clinic.
- A resident liked the recommendation of creating a museum in the City.
- There is a desire for an outdoor performing arts center in the Arts District.
- There is a need to collaborate between all governments, groups, organizations and stakeholders to implement the recommendations.
- There should be an emphasis on historic preservation and a resident suggested that residents should be trained to do restoration projects.

### **Illustrative Riverfront Concept (Presentation Board Six)**

The final presentation board is of an illustrative riverfront concept. The following are the main points that the public made concerning this concept:

- Overall, residents expressed support for the concept.
- Residents noted the desire to see more commercial development along Riverview Drive (shown in the concept), and a boardwalk (also shown in the concept).
- Residents stated that this concept would have a tremendous benefit on the High School.
- A resident asked what the recommendations would be for the boat yard and the electrical substation on Main Street.
- A resident would like to see the canal extended to the Paw Paw River.

Following the open house a meeting was held with the MPAC. The purpose of the meeting was to review the comments received by the public and to provide final comments regarding the Draft Plan. After reviewing the comments received, and discussing in detail the recommendations of the Draft Master Plan, the MPAC approved the document to begin the formal adoption process.

### **Planning and Economic Development Committee Meeting**

The Draft Master Plan was presented to the Planning and Economic Development Committee on July 28, 2010.

The consultant gave a presentation of the Draft Plan reviewing the Community outreach undertaken and highlighting the key recommendations of the plan. Following the presentation, members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee and the public provided comments.

The owner of New Products, an industrial use along Klock Road and their representative, expressed concerns with the existing land use map stating that they would like to perpetuate the owner's ability to retain jobs within the Benton Harbor community. The owner stated that recently they have employed approximately 100 to 160 employees; a third has been City residents.

The Committee suggested changing the Draft Plan to accommodate New Products in an effort to retain jobs.

### **Planning Commission Meeting**

On August 3, 2010 the Draft Master Plan was presented to the Planning Commission. After a presentation of the Draft Master Plan's key recommendations, members of the Planning Commission and the public provided comments.

Maintaining the existing industrial uses along Klock Road was a key concern discussed at the meeting.

At the conclusion of this meeting, the Planning Commission voted to forward the Draft Master Plan to the City Commission for their review and consideration for distributing the Draft Plan for public comment.

### **City Commission Meeting**

On August 16, 2010 the Draft Master Plan was presented to the City Commission. After a presentation of the key recommendations of the Draft Master Plan, City Commissioners and the public provided comments.

The following are the key areas of concern that were discussed at the City Commission Meeting.

- The existing industrial uses along Klock Road should remain industrial.
- Existing land uses near McAlister and Empire, Catalpa and Columbus, May and Columbus should be reviewed for accuracy.
- Text should be added to stress the importance of the airport as a regional transportation hub.
- A skating rink should be listed as a proposed community facility.
- Text should be added to discuss the importance of local entrepreneurship.
- A future train station should be shown near the Arts District.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the City Commission voted to formally distribute the Draft Master Plan for public comment. The City Commission also passed a resolution to have the Draft Master Plan return to the City Commission after the Planning Commission's approval of the document for final adoption.

### **Public Comment Period**

As required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act a copy of the Draft Master Plan was distributed to local units of governments, the regional planning commission, public utility companies, and the County. These entities were provided 63 days to submit any comments regarding the Draft Plan to the Planning Commission.

The Draft Plan was posted on the project website, and a link was distributed to adjacent communities, governmental agencies and utility companies.

During the public comment period, the City received a number of comments from residents, governmental agencies, property owners, property owners' representatives, and City Commissioners.

Overall, comments received during the public comment period were in support of, and complimentary of, the Draft Master Plan. Although feedback was generally positive, there were two areas of concern that were expressed by some entities. The primary areas of concern included the following:

- Maintaining existing industrial uses along Klock Road.
- Maintaining current commercial shipping operations at the existing Central Dock.

Formal comments were received from the following:

- Local residents and business owners
- The St. Joseph River Harbor Authority
- Berrien County Planning Commission
- MDOT
- Southwest Michigan Regional Airport

### *Planning Commission Meeting and Public Hearing*

A meeting was held on October 21, 2010 with the Planning Commission. The purpose of the meeting was to review the comments received during the formal public comment period.

The consultant presented an overview of the primary concerns provided as well as recommended changes to address these concerns.

Following the presentation, a public hearing was held to allow for comments from the community.

Key areas of concern included:

- Maintaining existing industrial uses along Klock Road.
- Maintaining current commercial shipping operations at the existing port.

After the public hearing, the Commission decided that a revised version of the Draft Plan that incorporates all of the desired changes be brought back to the Commission for final review.

### *Planning Commission Meeting*

A meeting was held with the Planning Commission on November 2, 2010 to review the final Draft Master Plan and to consider its adoption.

The consultant presented the revised Draft Master Plan that included the Planning Commission recommendations that were provided on October 21, 2010.

After discussion and feedback from the public the Planning Commission voted unanimously to adopt the Master Plan.

### *City Commission Meeting*

The City Commission voted to formally adopt the Master Plan on January 3, 2011.

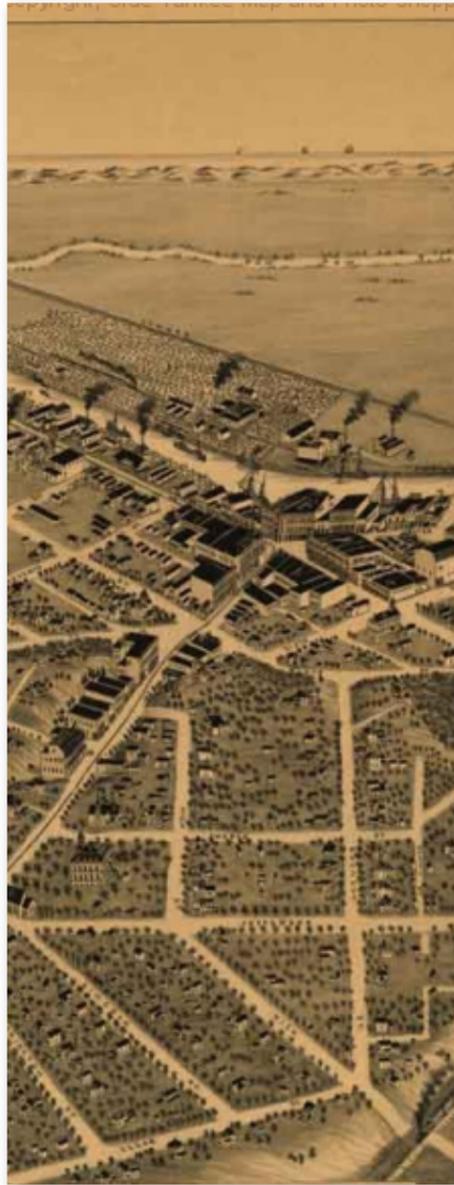




# MASTER PLAN VISION







## Master Plan Vision

The Master Plan Vision is written not as the City of Benton Harbor is today, but what the City hopes it to become by implementing the recommendations of the Master Plan. The vision incorporates the main ideas and recurring themes that were discussed by the public throughout the planning process. It is important to note that although the vision does not include all of the specific projects and actions suggested by the various groups and participants that many of these “specifics” have been incorporated into the Master Plan recommendations.

By implementing the recommendations of the Master Plan, the City of Benton Harbor over the next ten years will experience a tremendous resurgence of community pride, identity, overall image and appearance. Benton Harbor will experience new job growth, new residential and commercial development, improvements in parks and open space, a decrease in crime, the creation of stronger residential neighborhoods, a healthier population with more healthy food options, improved communication between the city and residents, more educational opportunities, and an overall improved appearance and cleanliness of the city.

## A Vision for Benton Harbor

### Residential Areas

The City will work with homeowners within each ward to improve all **residential areas and neighborhoods** in the community. The City will continue to **pursue and obtain grant funds** to conduct an analysis of each home in the city, which will result in the identification of each blighted and unsafe structure in the neighborhoods. Once identified, the City will remove each blighted and unsafe structure to **improve the safety, appearance, image, and pride** of the neighborhoods. In addition to removing unsafe structures, the City will also **target specific architecturally significant residential structures** for rehabilitation and reuse as owner-occupied residences. In an ongoing effort to improve residential areas, the City will **establish minimum design standards** for new residential construction that will ensure high-quality, attractive homes. The City will also continue to recognize the importance of enforcing existing zoning, building and property maintenance code for all residential structures.

The City will also improve opportunities for homeownership assistance programs through a variety of funding sources to support residents transferring from rental to homeownership. In addition, the city will **establish funding programs** to assist with property maintenance and repair. The city will also begin to budget for and implement improvements to infrastructure including streets, sidewalks, and utilities to provide adequate service to all residential properties.

### Commercial Areas

By working with property owners and neighborhood groups, the City will work towards two key planning strategies to improve neighborhoods.

- The City will begin to create a network of “neighborhood greens” that include open space, playgrounds, and urban gardens in areas that are deficient in open space.
- The City will re-establish neighborhood **commercial areas** to provide local shopping opportunities for residents. These areas should be safe, attractive, easily accessible, neighborhood-based shopping areas.

In addition to the neighborhood shopping areas, the City will continue to **improve the Arts District as a mixed-use area** including commercial, office, entertainment and residential uses, and support the strengthening of commercial and office uses along the Main Street corridor. The City will **target tourism and recreation/entertainment based commercial uses adjacent to or near waterways developed in a low impact manner to protect water quality**. Similar to the preservation of important residential structures, the City will **prioritize the rehabilitation of architecturally significant buildings** in commercial areas. To support attractive, high-quality commercial developments, the City will also revise its antiquated zoning standards to allow more contemporary development practices.

### Employment

To improve existing industrial areas and employment opportunities the City will establish **industrial/business parks** within the city near Paw Paw Avenue, and areas adjacent to the airport. Once these industrial/business parks are in place, the City will work with property owners to **relocate existing heavy industrial uses from areas near the waterways**, from key redevelopment sites, and near residential neighborhoods into designated industrial/business parks. The City will also begin to identify and target contaminated industrial sites for remediation. To improve the compatibility and appearance of existing industrial properties the City will **establish industrial building minimum design standards**. Industrial properties will also incorporate improved screening and buffering from all properties, especially residential uses.

In an ongoing effort to increase employment opportunities for Benton Harbor residents, the City will **establish an industrial recruitment program** that encourages businesses to employ Benton Harbor residents. By working with adjacent communities to attract business into the City or within the region, employment opportunities will be created that benefit the entire area.



### **Arts and Culture**

The **Arts District** will continue to develop as the cultural, heritage, historical, and artistic center of the City. The district will continue to be a popular destination for residents and visitors, build off of its successes, and **continue to support a mix of uses** including restaurants, dance studios, galleries, entertainment, and residential uses. The City will work to **establish a new Benton Harbor Museum** that showcases the City's rich history. As new infill development and renovations occur within the District, the historic architecture and character of the existing buildings will continue to be reflected in new buildings. Building upon the success of the Arts District, the City will also **develop a Main Street Entertainment District** that capitalizes on proximity to the arts district and stimulates reinvestment along Main Street.

In addition to supporting the Arts District, the City will continue to **market historical facilities**, landmarks, and structures that preserve the culture of the city. The City will also continue to work with developers and property owners to **incorporate public art** and artistic displays as part of development projects throughout the city.

By using **arts and culture** as a resource for economic development, visitors will be drawn into the city and jobs will be created for local residents. The City will continue to **promote arts and culture** to residents and visitors by continuing to hold events and programs. Overall the City will continue to work with local businesses, the school district, other education providers, and non-profits to preserve and strengthen arts and culture education opportunities for youth.

### **Parks, Recreation and Environmental Features**

The City will improve and expand upon **parks, recreation, and environmental features** throughout the community. The City will work with the Benton Harbor Parks and Recreation Department to **maintain existing public parks**, improving and adding recreational amenities as needed. In addition to working with the recreation department, the City will continue to maintain and **promote Jean Klock Park** and the Harbor Shores golf course as local and regional destinations.

To provide improved parks and recreation services for residents, the City will **develop new parks and open space areas**, especially within areas that are currently underserved by parks and recreation and based on potential conservation areas. The City will not focus solely on adding new parks into underserved neighborhoods, but will also work to maximize the benefit of the rivers as public amenities by **improving public access to the riverfront** and providing public open space adjacent to the waterways.

The opportunity will be explored to extend the ship canal from the Paw Paw River and create waterways from the St. Joseph River along the riverfront. Improving and protecting wetlands and other natural areas will help alleviate stormwater issues in the City. In all developments and redevelopments, the City should look for opportunities to improve infiltration, encourage the reuse of water, and reduce water runoff.

Combined with the new waterways, a connection will be made to improve the natural open space/wetland areas adjacent to the High School, thus creating a community asset for both recreational and educational purposes. The City will also connect these areas to the future "neighborhood greens" and a **connected greenway system** that runs throughout the city's ravines, wooded areas, and along waterways.

### **Sustainability**

The City will continue to promote **sustainability**. As part of assisting City policy and decision making, the City will consider the three pillars of sustainability: 1) environment; 2) economy; and 3) society. To promote sustainability, the City will identify and protect environmental and ecologically sensitive areas, including wooded areas, ravines, and waterways, from the impacts of development.

The City will **use smart growth principals**, green building techniques, LEED certification, and best management practices in new developments. The City will also **promote recycling programs**, policies, and education to increase and educate the public, including elected and appointed officials, on the importance of sustainability.

### **Transportation**

The City will improve its streets, sidewalks and trails to create an efficient **transportation** network for cars, public transit riders, bicyclists and pedestrians. The City will implement a **local street system maintenance** program, making scheduled improvements to improve streets, sidewalks and utilities. The City will **implement "complete streets"** policy when improving streets. In addition to creating new streets, the City will close the portion of River Road, south of Main Street to create redevelopment sites and more opportunities for public open space fronting the river.

The City will continue to **ensure adequate, affordable, high-quality public transit** in Benton Harbor. The City will work with and support Dial-a-Ride in their efforts to provide bus service throughout the City. In addition to vehicle and public transit improvements, the City will also continue to **create an interconnected sidewalk and trail system** throughout the community connecting residential areas to community facilities.

The City will work with the **Airport Authority** to support both passenger and freight air traffic at the Airport. New light industrial/businesses park uses such as warehousing, office, and distribution will be located nearby to capitalize on the excellent access to the airport and the interstate system.

### **Community Facilities**

The City will continue to support existing **community facilities and service providers** in their efforts to provide high-quality, affordable opportunities for residents. The City will actively pursue the development of a shared use **indoor recreation facility** with groups such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club. In addition to recreation services, the City will continue to support churches and religious institutions within residential neighborhoods. The City will **work with the school district** to identify space and facility needs within the community, and to facilitate cooperative educational opportunities especially with local business for entrepreneurship classes. Overall, the City will **maintain adequate City facilities** making improvements, expansions, and new construction when necessary.

# CITY-WIDE PLANS





# CITY-WIDE PLANS

This section includes the City-Wide Plans for the City of Benton Harbor. These Plans cover the entire City and represent the “core” of the Master Plan. The City-Wide Plans should be used as a foundation for City policy. The Plans ensure that the community as a whole is examined and planned for in a manner that seeks to improve the many components that contribute to the overall quality of life in the City.

This section includes the following:

- **Land Use and Development Plan**
  - Residential Areas
  - Commercial Areas
  - Industrial Areas
- **Transportation Plan**
- **Natural Resources, Environmental Features, and Open Space Plan**
- **Community Facilities Plan**
- **Arts and Culture Plan**
- **Urban Design/Community Character Plan**
- **Quality of Life Framework Plan**



**Land Use and Development Plan**  
Page 25



**Arts and Culture Plan**  
Page 43



**Natural Resources, Environmental Features, and Open Space Plan**  
Page 47



**Transportation Plan**  
Page 53



**Urban Design/Community Character Plan**  
Page 61



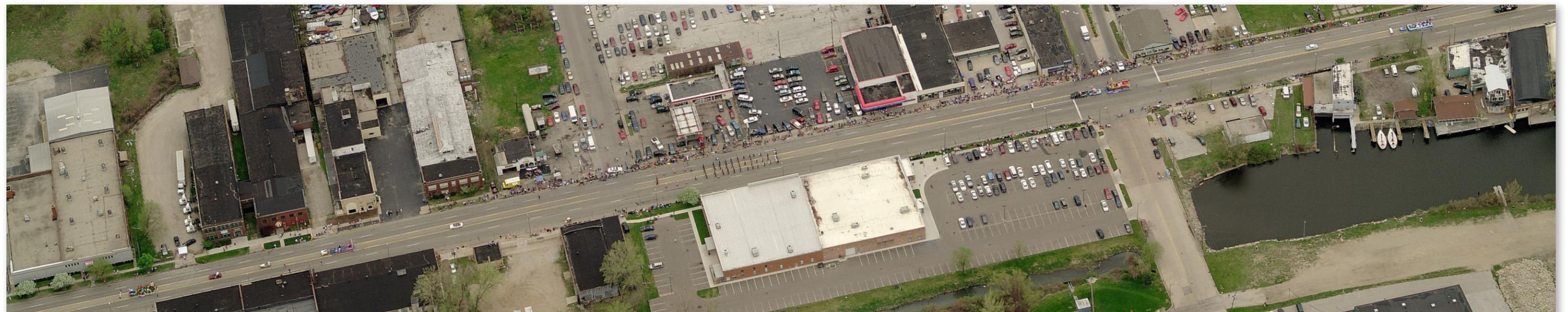
**Sustainability Framework Plan**  
Page 65



**Community Facilities Plan**  
Page 69



**Quality of Life Plan**  
Page 73



# EXISTING LAND USE

The City of Benton Harbor consists of a variety of land uses, however, the pattern of these land uses establish unique areas within the City. In general these existing land uses create a predominately residential area in the southern and northeastern sectors of the City. The Harbor Shores project, the riverfront and lakefront areas comprise the western areas of the City, with the industrial area, a Main Street Commercial Corridor, and an Arts District centrally located near Main Street. The airport is ideally isolated in the northern area of the City.

## Residential

The City has varied residential types and neighborhoods with home sizes ranging between small single family homes, modest townhomes, large Victorian-era mansions, two- and three-story mixed use buildings, and mid-rise apartment buildings. Homes in Benton Harbor also vary largely by age and condition. While a significant portion of the community's residential units are distressed, these areas represent significant potential in Benton Harbor's future. Recent developments of both market-rate and affordable housing highlight that potential.

The Harbor Shores project represents the most significant development in the City's history. There are over 800 residential units of new construction housing planned within the project ranging in housing type, size, and product.

Significant strides regarding in-fill housing have also been made by local community organizations. The Benton Harbor Housing Commission's (BHHC) acceptance of a HOPE VI award in 2004 has proved to be a significant decision in City's renaissance. The BHHC has utilized the funds to construct approximately 70 affordable housing units and an additional 55 homes on the former Whitfield site are planned. The Cornerstone Alliance's work in renovating the Columbus School building will also yield another nine apartments for homeless residents.

In 2010, Harbor Habitat for Humanity will be celebrating its 15th year of operation. Over this period of time Harbor Habitat has helped revitalize local communities and place some 90 families in new homes. Currently, Harbor Habitat has begun initiatives to continue strategic development and has been exploring partnerships with various agencies on large scale development. In 2008, the first 10 homes of the 21-home Crystal Estates Subdivision were completed with the remaining 11 expected to be completed in 2009. In 2010, Harbor Habitat expects to build its 100th home.

## Commercial and Office

Commercial uses include the corridor commercial along Main Street, the Arts District, and the neighborhood commercial that is located at certain intersections within the residential neighborhoods. Parcels developed with office uses are also identified on the figure.

## Industrial

This category includes heavy industrial properties, manufacturing, storage, warehouse and distribution. Currently, much of the property south of Harbor Shores, north of Main Street includes large acreage with heavy industrial uses including outdoor metal scrap piles and storage. Industrial uses are clustered in several locations rather than being centralized in a single area.

## Parks and Open Space

City-owned parks, private parks, and open space areas are included in this land use category. Open space includes heavily wooded areas, and ravines that run through the community. Some of the existing parks are well maintained, while other parks are in need of renovation.

## Public/Semi-Public Uses

All government buildings, properties and uses that are considered public such as community centers are included in this land use category.



### Land Use Legend

- Single Family Residential - Detached
- Single Family Residential - Attached
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Office
- Schools / Religious Institutions
- Public / Semi-Public / Utilities
- Healthcare
- Parks / Open Space
- Golf Course
- Industrial
- Airport
- Port
- Vacant

# LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT PLAN

To improve the overall land use pattern and future development opportunities within the City, the following have been identified as key areas of focus. Over the next ten years, if the City is successful in implementing these areas of focus, the community will see significant improvement.

### Land Use Classification

**Parks and Open Space**

All public parks and large open space areas.

**Golf Course**

The Harbor Shores Golf Course.

**Single-Family Detached**

Includes areas predominately developed for single-family detached homes.

**Single-Family Attached**

Includes townhomes and duplex housing.

**Multi-Family Residential**

Includes apartments, condominiums, but can also include single-family attached homes.

**Mixed-Use**

Includes multi-story developments consisting of retail/commercial uses on the ground floor with residential or office uses above.

**Health Center**

Includes Mercy Health Center, however, medical office uses are also appropriate in commercial and mixed-use areas.

**Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation**

Similar to the mixed-use classification, this area can also include open space, recreation, and residential uses. The overall emphasis for all development in this classification is to ensure the riverfront is an amenity for the community. This can be achieved by improving public access to the river, maintaining views of the water, and utilizing green building techniques.

**Commercial**

Primarily includes retail and commercial uses, however, commercial service and office uses are also appropriate.

**Neighborhood Commercial**

This classification includes commercial and retail uses that primarily service the daily shopping and commercial service needs of the local residential neighborhoods.

**Public/Semi-Public**

Includes government properties, utilities, schools, religious institutions, and other community facilities.

**Light Industrial/Business Park**

Intended for uses similar to and compatible with storage, distribution, warehouse, light assembly, research, office, and light manufacturing.

**Compatible Transition**

These areas can accommodate a wide variety of appropriate land uses – open space, recreation, multi-family residential and low intensity commercial. New industrial development is not recommended. These areas should prioritize compatibility with nearby non-industrial uses and be sensitive to environmental features and conditions.

**Office Park**

Intended to accommodate larger scaled office development that could include several buildings in a “campus” setting. Maintaining a public open space along the St. Joseph River that is easily accessible to residents is important. Retail, restaurant, or other commercial components may be appropriate as an accessory use.

**Business/Commercial Service**

Business, office, and service uses that should be compatible with adjacent land uses.

**Port**

This land use designation reflects the location of the Central Dock and is intended to accommodate its existing commercial shipping dock operations. If redevelopment of the port area occurs in the future, a river-oriented commercial/recreation/mixed-use development would be most appropriate.



- Legend**
- Single Family Detached
  - Single Family Attached
  - Multi-Family Residential
  - Mixed-Use
  - Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation
  - Commercial
  - Neighborhood Commercial
  - Parks & Open Space
  - Golf Course
  - Public/Semi-Public
  - Office Park
  - Business/Commercial Service
  - Light Industrial/Business Park
  - Compatible Transition
  - Southwest Michigan Regional Airport
  - Port
  - Health Center
  - Railroad
  - Water

## Land Use and Development Areas of Focus

- Support and strengthen residential neighborhoods.
- Relocate heavy industrial and incompatible uses from the downtown area and high profile sites to more appropriate industrial and business park areas elsewhere in the city.
- Strengthen neighborhood commercial nodes that provide local shopping opportunities.
- Extend the ship canal from the Paw Paw River and create waterways from the St. Joseph River.
- Create “neighborhood greens” within residential areas that provide open space, playgrounds and urban gardens, and stormwater management.
- Support existing businesses, attract new businesses and provide employment opportunities.
- Support new mixed-use developments along the riverfronts, and within the Arts District, to include an appropriate mix of residential, retail, office, and entertainment activity.
- Protect residential properties from adjacent non-residential uses.
- Strengthen commercial, retail, and office uses along the Main Street Corridor.
- Enforce existing zoning, building and property maintenance codes.
- Support airport operations and locate appropriate businesses adjacent to the airport.
- Include “complete streets” techniques.

The Land Use and Development Plan builds upon the City’s existing land use pattern and incorporates the vision, goals and objectives that were created based upon public input. The Plan also incorporates the recommendations of a Market Analysis that was undertaken as part of the process. An overview of the analysis can be found in the **Appendix** of this document.

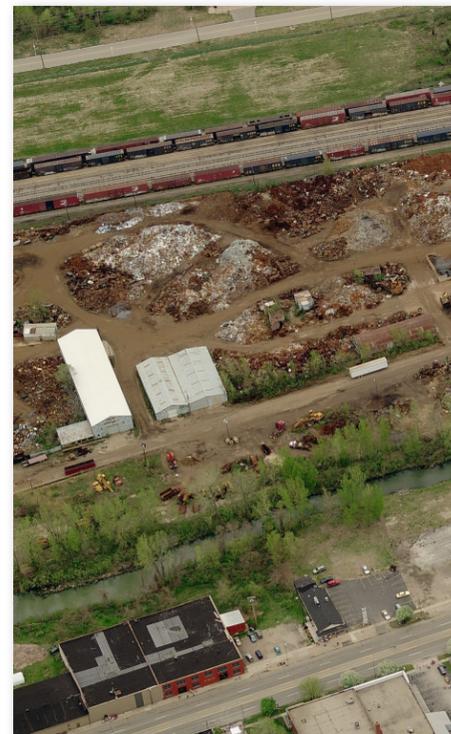
### a. Support and strengthen residential neighborhoods.

As outlined in greater detail in the Residential Framework Plan, the City of Benton Harbor should continue to work with residents, property owners, non-profit agencies, and developers, to support and improve residential neighborhoods. Specific strategies for undertaking this step include the following:

- Identify and Remove Blighted Homes** – The City should conduct a detailed inventory and assessment of all existing residential properties. The inventory would assist the City in identifying the locations of all blighted properties. Once identified, the City should remove the blighted structures to improve the residential neighborhoods.
- New Housing** – A combination of infill redevelopment and larger residential projects should occur throughout the City. The City should continue to work with HOPE VI, non-profit agencies such as Habitat for Humanity, and their partners to continue to rebuild homes in existing residential neighborhoods. It is important that the new homes blend in with the existing desired character of the community, and that consideration be given to block by block development rather than single property projects. New housing should be encouraged in the Arts District to attract artists and others desiring a live/work residential product.
- Mix of Housing Options** – Currently, the majority of the residential properties in the City are detached single-family homes. Although the Land Use Plan is in keeping with this primary residential type, high-quality, appropriately scaled multi-family residential should be encouraged. Multi-family residential includes single-family attached, apartments, and condominiums/lofts. A mix of housing types will provide residents different housing options to suit their lifestyle needs.

### b. Relocate heavy industrial and incompatible uses from the downtown area and high profile sites to more appropriate industrial and business park areas elsewhere in the City.

Currently, a number of heavy industrial businesses are operating on highly visible opportunity sites. In addition, some industrial businesses are located near or within residential neighborhoods. The City should begin discussions with the owners of these businesses to determine if relocation to another more appropriate site within the City is an option. If relocation is possible, the City and/or the property owner should begin to study the environmental conditions of the existing site, and if necessary, assist the landowner in obtaining funding to clean up the site. If relocation is not feasible at this time, the City should work with property owners to improve the appearance of the properties, and/or to increase screening/buffering between adjacent properties and along corridors.



### c. Strengthen neighborhood commercial nodes that provide local shopping opportunities.

Neighborhood commercial businesses, called “commercial nodes”, should be developed at the corner parcels of key intersections within residential neighborhoods. The remnants of neighborhood commercial nodes, or local shops, exist at some intersections, however, the majority of these properties/buildings are vacant, in need of improved maintenance, or do not provide the desired commercial services envisioned by local residents.

The City should encourage retail uses to locate within these nodes that serve daily shopping needs and quality food and produce. As these nodes are developed, the City should ensure that they are well maintained and utilize quality site design and effective screening from adjacent residential properties.



### d. Create “neighborhood greens” within residential areas that provide open space, playgrounds and urban gardens.

In an effort to create neighborhood focal points and to establish parks and open space within walking distance (1/4 mile) of each home, a system of greens and greenways is recommended. Opportunities for neighborhood greens should be explored, especially in conjunction with the removal of blighted homes. It is important that neighborhood greens are designed with resident input. They should be well maintained and designed to have proper security lighting and excellent visibility from adjacent streets. These greens may consist of a combination of open space, playground features, and urban gardens.



Example of New Playground (Palos Heights, Illinois)

### e. Support existing businesses, attract new businesses and provide employment opportunities.

The City should support existing businesses and market the area to attract new businesses and employment opportunities to the community. The Land Use Plan identifies a light industrial/business park designation. Appropriate uses in this designation include light industrial, office, warehouse/distribution, and storage. These uses should be focused within downtown, the Main Street Corridor, neighborhood commercial nodes, and industrial/business park areas. It is important that adequate infrastructure, such as roads and utilities, are maintained and provided at these locations.

To attract new businesses, the City should market the existing vacant buildings or properties within the commercial and business areas of Benton Harbor. Job creation was a consistent goal heard throughout the public outreach process and it is important that job opportunities be sought out and located in the community. The City should also promote the use of “business incubators” which would assist residents in starting their own businesses.

In addition to local initiatives, the City should also consider economic development from a regional perspective. For example, the City should work with adjacent communities to attract business and employers into the area. The City should work with adjacent communities to attract a new industrial/business park to locate near the intersection of I-94 and I-196. Such a development has the potential to benefit not only Benton Harbor, but the entire region.

**f. Support new mixed-use developments along the riverfronts, and within the Arts District, to include an appropriate mix of residential, retail, office, and entertainment activity.**

As identified on the Land Use Plan, specific areas have been identified for future mixed-use development. These areas have been identified due to their potential to create unique, pedestrian-friendly environments, consisting of a mix of uses and high-quality developments.

Mixed-use developments should include a combination of residential, retail, office, and entertainment uses. Typically, these projects are multi-story, with non-residential uses located on the ground floors, and office and/or residential uses above. These areas should be designed to encourage walkability. Buildings along the riverfronts should be designed to incorporate the water as a true amenity, maintaining views, and providing outdoor seating overlooking the water and designed to reduce runoff to the waterways.

Within the Arts District, the City should continue to implement its vision for the area. Mixed-use projects have already started in the Arts District, and this Plan supports the continuation of mixed-use projects throughout the entire District. Mixed-use projects would add residential opportunities, many of which would be live/work units to attract and support local artisans. Additional residential units would also provide pedestrian activity during the day and into the evening which would support restaurants and other entertainment uses.

**g. Protect residential properties from adjacent non-residential uses.**

Currently, industrial or commercial properties are located adjacent to residential properties. Many of these parcels lack appropriate screening or buffering. The City should work with property owners to improve screening and buffering wherever necessary to minimize negative impacts on adjacent residential properties. Screening and buffering may include additional landscaping, fencing, or a combination of the two. Potential negative impacts to adjacent homes may include light pollution, noise pollution, unsightly views, odors, as well as pedestrian or vehicle cut-through traffic.

**h. Strengthen commercial, retail, and office uses along the Main Street Corridor.**

The City should build off of the success of the recent streetscaping and resurfacing project along Main Street to actively market new commercial, retail, and office uses to locate in the corridor. New commercial, retail and office uses along this corridor would strengthen the image of the area, provide employment opportunities, and add entertainment and shopping opportunities.

Existing properties that are underutilized or current uses that may be incompatible with the vision for the corridor should be improved or relocated. For example, the City should work with the public utility company to create a long-term plan to relocate the utility station adjacent to Main Street near 10th Street. In the short term, the City should work with the utility company to improve screening between the facility and Main Street.

**i. Enforce existing zoning, building and property maintenance codes.**

Although the City does enforce its current building and property codes, the City should seek funding sources to improve its enforcement capabilities. Additional funding would allow the City to hire and train additional inspectors and code enforcement officers. Additional staff would allow for more frequent and regular inspections of a larger number of properties. If all existing codes and ordinances were enforced, the appearance of many properties in the community would be greatly improved. For those properties that are beyond repair, the City should continue to seek funding to demolish blighted properties such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds used in 2009.

In addition to hiring more staff, the City should conduct a comprehensive review and upgrade of its zoning, occupancy, maintenance, and business license codes and regulations. Improved regulations would assist the City in providing efficient and up-to-date reviews and inspections based upon the most up-to-date practices.

**j. Support airport operations and locate appropriate businesses adjacent to the airport.**

The City should continue to work with the Southwest Michigan Regional Airport (BEH) Authority to support existing operations and expand service. The airport is a tremendous community asset and it should be strengthened and marketed and as a regional transportation hub.

As a representative on the Airport Authority Board, the City should continue to support airport operations and seek opportunities that create economic development opportunities for Benton Harbor. The City should encourage the airport to increase cargo activity and increase passenger service.

In addition to supporting airport operations, the City should locate appropriate businesses on parcels adjacent to and near the airport. The City should market the vacant parcels within its current municipal boundary, over those outside of Benton Harbor. As illustrated on the Land Use Plan, light industrial, warehousing, office parks, and distribution businesses are recommended in this area. These uses would benefit from the excellent location near the airport and proximity to the interstate system.

**k. Extend the ship canal from the Paw Paw River and create waterways from the St. Joseph River.**

To further capitalize upon the City's waterways, the City should plan for the extension of new waterways into the community. The Land Use Plan recommends that the City work towards 1) the extension of the ship canal from the Paw Paw River, and 2) the creation of new waterways from the St. Joseph River.

A long-term goal for the Master Plan is to extend the ship canal between Riverview Drive (Paw Paw River) and 10th Street. This "resurrection" of the old ship canal would become a focal point of the City. Extending the canal into the downtown area, just west of the Arts District, would have the potential to create exciting waterfront redevelopment opportunities. Desired uses along the canal would include mixed-use developments (residential, retail, office), public parks, and boat slips/marinas. All developments should be designed to incorporate the canal in their design, creating outdoor seating areas and maintaining views of the water.

In addition to the extension of the ship canal, the Master Plan recommends the creation of new waterways from the St. Joseph River south of Main Street. Currently, much of the area is vacant, or underutilized, and waterways extending into the area, would create redevelopment opportunities for mixed-use, open space, and marinas/boat slips. Such a project would also represent a major reinvestment in the City, south of Main Street, in an area very close to the High School and nearby residential neighborhoods.

A potential concept may include connections with the existing neighborhoods; provide neighborhood shopping and employment opportunities, add new public parks and greenways, provide civic/festival areas, and include office/retail areas. New trails should lead from the neighborhoods into the area, with connections to a boardwalk around a wetland, the Charles Gray Community Teen Center, and linkages to the St. Joseph River. An important goal would be to tie the new development with the High School, for example, outdoor classes could be taught and sailing classes could be held for Benton Harbor High School students.

**l. Include "complete streets" techniques.**

Ensure that all new development include "complete streets" techniques and design elements. The City should work with developers and property owners to ensure that all new developments have provisions for public transit. New roads in the City should also be designed to accommodate non-motorized transportation options such as walking and biking.

To further capitalize upon the City's waterways, the City should plan for the extension of new waterways into the community. The Land Use Plan recommends that the City work towards 1) the extension of the ship canal from the Paw Paw River, and 2) the creation of new waterways from the St. Joseph River.



# ILLUSTRATIVE RIVERFRONT CONCEPT

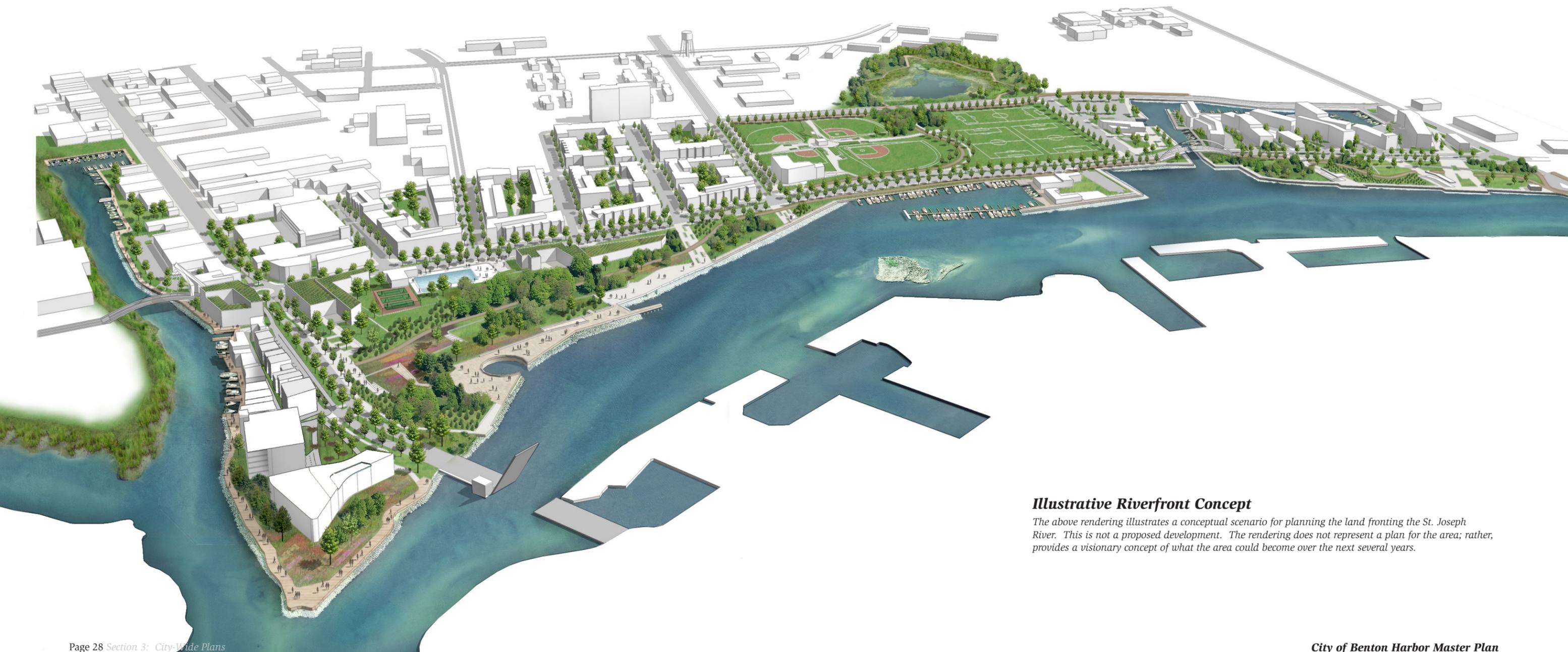
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In addition to the extension of the ship canal, the concept illustrates the creation of new waterways from the St. Joseph River south of Main Street. Currently, much of the area is vacant, or underutilized, and waterways extended into the area, would create redevelopment opportunities for mixed-use and marinas/boat slips.

Such a redevelopment project would also represent a major reinvestment in the City, south of Main Street, in an area very close to the High School and nearby residential neighborhoods.

The potential redevelopment shows connections with the existing neighborhoods; provide neighborhood shopping and employment opportunities, and new public parks and greenways, civic/festival areas, and office/retail areas.

New trails are shown leading from the neighborhoods into the area, with connections to a boardwalk around a wetland, the community center, and linkages to the St. Joseph River. An important goal should be to tie any new development with the High School, for example, outdoor classes could be taught and boating classes could be held for Benton Harbor High School students.



## ***Illustrative Riverfront Concept***

*The above rendering illustrates a conceptual scenario for planning the land fronting the St. Joseph River. This is not a proposed development. The rendering does not represent a plan for the area; rather, provides a visionary concept of what the area could become over the next several years.*

# ILLUSTRATIVE RIVERFRONT CONCEPT



**Illustrative Riverfront Concept**

The above rendering illustrates a conceptual scenario for planning the land fronting the St. Joseph River. The rendering does not represent a plan for the area; rather, provides a visionary concept of what the area could become over the next several years.



**Aerial Photograph - Existing Conditions**

# LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for land use and development throughout the community. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funding through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.

Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Support and strengthen residential neighborhoods.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and remove blighted homes</li> <li>Support new housing</li> <li>Support a mix of housing types and options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Residents and property owners</li> <li>Non-Profit Agencies (Habitat for Humanity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants for construction</li> <li>State and Federal funding sources</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Relocate heavy industrial and incompatible uses from the downtown area and high profile sites to more appropriate industrial and business park areas elsewhere in the city.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin discussions with heavy industry owners in highly visible, redevelopment areas to identify ways to improve appearance, screen businesses, or consider relocation to other more appropriate sites in the City.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Business owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider offering developer incentives</li> <li>Create a Facade and Site Improvement program to fund/assist in funding site improvements.</li> </ul>
Strengthen neighborhood commercial nodes that provide local shopping opportunities.	Short to Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development regulations to allow for neighborhood commercial nodes in recommended areas.</li> <li>Market and attract desirable commercial uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Adjacent residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Extend the ship canal from the Paw Paw River and create waterways from the St. Joseph River.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preliminary engineering studies</li> <li>Acquisition or discussions with property owners where extension is proposed</li> <li>Market proposed development opportunities adjacent to the new waterways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners, developers and residents</li> <li>School District</li> <li>NTAA and DDA</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants for construction</li> <li>State and Federal funding sources</li> </ul>
Create "neighborhood greens" within residential areas that provide open space, playgrounds and urban gardens and stormwater mitigation.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify underserved areas</li> <li>Parcel acquisition</li> <li>Work with neighbors to design park and desired amenities</li> <li>Consider urban gardens, play features, and stormwater</li> <li>Work with neighbors to assist in maintenance</li> <li>Identify areas with stormwater issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents</li> <li>Local businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants to create neighborhood greens</li> </ul>
Support existing businesses, attract new businesses and provide employment opportunities.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support existing businesses and open lines of communication between the City and owners.</li> <li>Market and attract desirable new businesses</li> <li>Maintain adequate infrastructure and services</li> <li>Work with adjacent communities for economic development and promote business incubators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local businesses and property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Adjacent communities and the County</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance, NTAA and DDA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Support new mixed-use developments along the riverfronts, and within the Arts District, to include an appropriate mix of residential, retail, office, and entertainment activity.	Short to Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development regulations to allow for mixed-use in recommended areas</li> <li>Provide developer incentives to allow for high-quality mixed-use developments</li> <li>Support live/work units in the Arts District</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Residents</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> <li>NTAA and DDA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer Construction</li> </ul>
Protect residential properties from adjacent non-residential uses.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update development regulations</li> <li>Create a Facade and Site improvement program that assists in funding screening</li> <li>Review site plans to ensure minimal negative effects on adjacent properties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Businesses</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facade and Site Improvement Program</li> </ul>
Strengthen commercial, retail, and office uses along the Main Street Corridor.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development regulations</li> <li>Market and attract desirable uses</li> <li>Improve screening of utility station</li> <li>Begin discussions with owners of unattractive, or incompatible uses to improve appearance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers and businesses</li> <li>Utility Company</li> <li>NTAA and DDA</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal funding</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Enforce existing zoning, building and property maintenance codes.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain funding to add code enforcers</li> <li>Update zoning and regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City staff (code enforcers)</li> <li>Property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal funding (ARRA funds)</li> </ul>
Support airport operations and locate appropriate businesses adjacent to the airport.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue participation on Airport Board</li> <li>Support airport operations</li> <li>Market and attract businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SWMRA</li> <li>Airport Authority Board</li> <li>Adjacent communities and property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal funding</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Implement Complete Streets Techniques	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt Complete Streets policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners, developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded</li> <li>State and federal funding</li> </ul>

# RESIDENTIAL FRAMEWORK PLAN

To support and improve residential neighborhoods and housing throughout the City for all residents, the following have been identified as key areas of focus. If implemented over the next 10 to 15 years, housing will be greatly improved, and existing residential neighborhoods will be strengthened.

## Residential Framework Plan

### Areas of Focus

- Inventory and remove blighted and unsafe structures.
- Improve opportunities for homeownership assistance programs through a variety of funding sources to support residents transferring from rental to homeownership.
- Establish funding programs to assist with property maintenance and repair.
- Target specific residential structures that are architecturally significant for rehabilitation and reuse as owner-occupied residences.
- Establish minimum design standards for new residential construction.
- Support infill development.
- Introduce new market-rate homes into residential neighborhoods.
- Continue to support affordable housing.
- Improve infrastructure throughout residential areas including streets, sidewalks, and utilities.
- Create a network of "neighborhood greens" that include open space, playgrounds, and urban gardens and stormwater management.
- Re-establish neighborhood commercial areas.
- Enforce existing zoning, building and property maintenance codes.

## Residential Classification

### Single-Family Detached

Includes areas predominately developed for single-family detached homes.

### Single-Family Attached

Includes townhomes and duplex housing.

### Multi-Family Residential

Includes apartments, condominiums, but can also include single-family attached homes.

### Mixed-Use

Includes multi-story developments consisting of retail/commercial uses on the ground floor with residential or office uses above.

### Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation

Similar to the mixed-use classification, this area can also include open space, recreation, and residential uses. The overall emphasis for all development in this classification is to ensure the riverfront is an amenity for the community. This can be achieved by improving public access to the river, maintaining views of the water, and utilizing green building techniques.

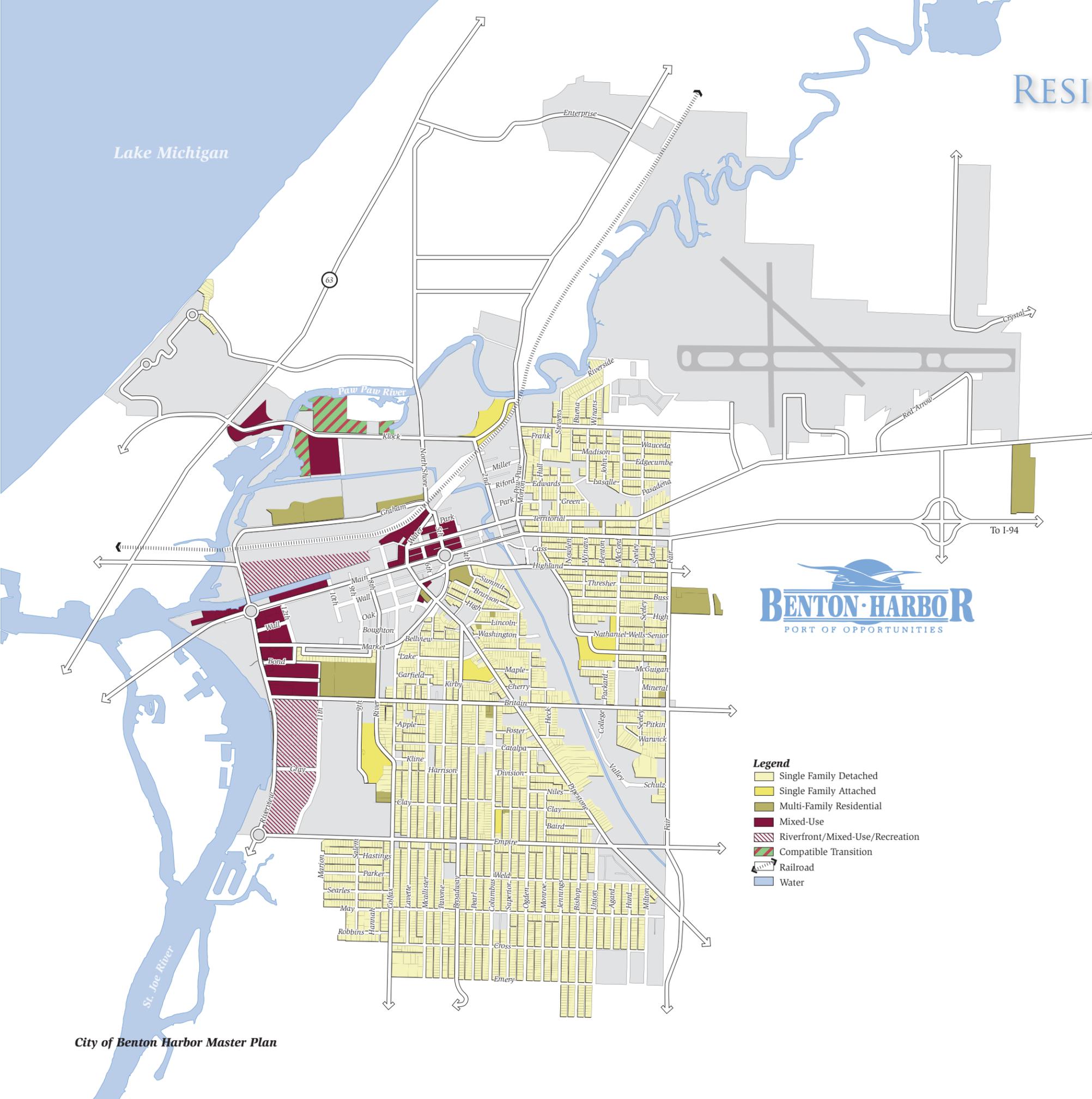
### Compatible Transition

These areas may be appropriate for residential uses, as well as other compatible uses such as parks and open space, recreation, and low intensity commercial. These areas should prioritize compatibility with nearby non-industrial uses and be sensitive to environmental features and conditions.



### Legend

- Single Family Detached
- Single Family Attached
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mixed-Use
- Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation
- Compatible Transition
- Railroad
- Water



**a. Inventory, and remove blighted and unsafe structures.**

The City should conduct a detailed inventory and assessment of all existing residential properties. The inventory would assist the City in identifying the locations of all blighted properties, vacant properties, and homes in need of structural improvements.

Once parcels are inventoried, the City should work with homeowners to identify potential assistance programs that property owners can apply for to improve structures. If the structures are identified as blighted or being structurally unsound, the City should remove/demolish blighted structures.

The City should also continue to work with other agencies, such as the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to seek and obtain Federal funding. In January, the Authority was successful in obtaining funds offered through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program II (NSP2). The Authority has proposed to use NSP2 funds to acquire foreclosed, abandoned, vacant, and blighted properties within Benton Harbor. Through the program, acquired homes will either be rehabilitated, demolished, or land banked for future use.

The City should also consider widening future parcels as redevelopment occurs. Not only will blight be removed from the neighborhoods, but opportunities would be created to allow lots to be “resized” to better meet market demands. For example, residential blocks that currently consist of relatively narrow parcels, could be re-subdivided to consist of less parcels on wider, more marketable sized lots. Another approach would be to demolish the structures and to hold the property by acquisition/land banking. The land banks would help create smaller neighborhoods with more green spaces and improved neighborhood amenities such as playgrounds and urban gardens while reserving lots to be conveyed to developers as housing market demand grows.

**b. Improve opportunities for homeownership assistance programs through a variety of funding sources to support residents transferring from rental to homeownership.**

As new residential developments occur within the City, especially as recommended in this Plan for the western section of the City along the St. Joseph River, programs should be created to increase local home ownership. The City should create incentive programs that assist local residents in purchasing residential units within new projects.

**c. Establish funding programs to assist with property maintenance and repair.**

The City should continue to seek out and apply for grants to assist homeowners in home repairs, maintenance, and other rehabilitation efforts. The City currently works with other governmental agencies to seek grant funding for these programs. For example, in 2010, the City was awarded a Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) grant to allow residents within a designated residential area of the City to rehabilitate their homes to apply for assistance. Through this program, a home rehabilitation involved a variety of repairs including roofing, siding, electrical, lead paint restoration, plumbing, heating, insulation, windows, and other necessary improvements to bring the home up to minimum housing quality standards.

In addition to homeowners, the City should implement a rehabilitation program for rental residential structures. A potential incentive program to assist owners of rental properties to make necessary repairs and maintenance to their residential units would assist both renters and owners of rental properties.

**d. Target specific residential structures that are architecturally significant for rehabilitation and reuse as owner-occupied residences.**

The City should conduct an inventory and assessment of older, architecturally significant residential structures. Currently, many architecturally significant structures exist within the residential neighborhoods that are vacant or underutilized. Several of these structures are older multi-family residential buildings that are vacant and in need of repair. After identifying these structures, the City should work with property owners to identify assistance options to improve the structures instead of allowing the buildings to sit vacant or be demolished. Many of these structures, if improved, have the potential to add character to the community, while also providing new multi-family housing options within existing neighborhoods.

**e. Establish minimum design standards for new residential construction.**

Zoning standards, development regulations, and design guidelines should be established to prescribe a specific built form and quality-design for all new residential developments. Specific architectural elements should be required in certain areas, such as within the Arts District, while other elements should be prohibited. New residential homes should be designed to “blend in” with adjacent homes and the surrounding neighborhood. Improved zoning and development regulations should be created to encourage high-quality design and construction for all residential developments throughout the City.

**f. Support “in-fill” development.**

The existing housing supply in the City of Benton Harbor is primarily composed of single-family detached units. While many of these homes suffer from deferred maintenance or neglect, it is the recommendation of this Plan that redevelopment efforts, seek to preserve the current housing balance. Single-family residences not only provide opportunities for home ownership, the presence of well maintained single-family properties serve to stabilize and promote reinvestment in entire neighborhoods.

To further stabilize residential neighborhoods, redevelopment of “in-fill” sites should be encouraged wherever possible. The 1999 Master Plan identified more than 1,000 infill opportunities in residential areas. While some redevelopment has occurred, many blocks continue to be negatively impacted by vacant lots and/or structures in need of repair or replacement. In an effort to promote infill development, the City should consider implementing incentive programs such as the City of Milwaukee’s “New Home Catalogue”. The program offers original house plans at no charge to purchasers of vacant “in-fill” lots. The house plans are specifically designed to meet city building standards and can be fast-tracked for permitting.



**g. Introduce new market-rate homes into residential neighborhoods.**

Policies and procedures that facilitate reinvestment including zero or no interest loans, tax breaks, permit fee waivers, infrastructure improvements, and other mechanisms should be encouraged. Opportunities may also exist to “bundle” infrastructure projects to ensure that adequate sidewalks, street surfaces, and utilities are available as new homes are constructed.

Ideally, infill development should be strategically targeted on specific blocks when possible as opposed to scattered development over multiple locations. The best opportunity to facilitate reinvestment over a larger area is to first stabilize a whole block or neighborhood. While block-by-block reinvestment is still speculative from a financial perspective, the comfort level of buyers and investors lies in the fact that there are others sharing in the risk and potential benefit.

**h. Continue to support affordable housing.**

In addition to introducing new market-rate homes into residential neighborhoods, the City should continue to coordinate with non-profits and other agencies in their efforts to construct affordable housing. Similar to the strategy discussed above, the City should encourage non-profits to construct/improve homes on a block-by-block basis, rather than single-lot projects.

The City should continue to support agencies such as Habitat for Humanity, and their partners, including residents, volunteers, and local religious institutions in their efforts to construct new homes in Benton Harbor. Habitat for Humanity has worked with the City of Benton Harbor and the Benton Charter Township since 1996. During that time more than 90 homes have been constructed.

The City of Benton Harbor’s Housing Commission should continue to operate public housing units and scattered site single-family residences. The Housing Commission should also be supported in their mission to administer programs for public housing and residents seeking home ownership. The City should continue to pursue funding through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOPE VI program to support the renovation or replacement of larger public housing projects.

**i. Improve infrastructure throughout residential areas including streets, sidewalks, and utilities.**

The City should continue to work with property owners, MDOT, and developers to improve the City’s infrastructure. Throughout the community outreach activities, residents expressed a desire to see streets, sidewalks and utilities improved in the local neighborhoods. A Capital Improvements Program (CIP), typically designed for 5-years and tied to the City budget, should be created to assist in planning for infrastructure improvements.

The Master Plan recommends creating continuous sidewalks throughout the City, especially within residential neighborhoods, and for connections to schools, shopping areas, and community facilities. The City should begin to budget for a Sidewalk Replacement Program which identifies sidewalks in need of repair and priorities for replacement/repair on an annual schedule. Improved pedestrian crossings at existing signalized intersections, including brick pavers, lighting, and signage are also recommended to promote walkability.

In addition to sidewalk repairs and replacements, the City should also include street repairs, resurfacing projects, and utility upgrades within the CIP. Due to the potential for high costs associated with such capital improvement projects, the City should bundle these projects together to minimize costs. The City should also seek grant opportunities to assist in funding infrastructure projects.

**j. Create a network of “neighborhood greens” that include open space, playgrounds, and urban gardens.**

In an effort to create neighborhood focal points and to establish parks and open space within walking distance (1/4 mile) of each home, a system of neighborhood greens and greenways is recommended. Opportunities for neighborhood greens should be explored, especially in conjunction with the identification and removal of blighted homes, and parcel acquisition by the City. Once blighted structures are removed, the opportunity will exist for the creation of neighborhood greens. It is important that these neighborhood greens are well maintained and designed to be highly visible from adjoining streets with proper security lighting. These greens may be simply open space areas, or they may include playground features and urban gardens.

Urban gardens can provide, local neighborhood growing opportunities. The City should work to provide water service near the garden for watering and irrigation.

The City should also find opportunities to utilize new and existing green areas to reduce and treat stormwater. This will reduce the strain on existing infrastructure.

**k. Re-establish neighborhood commercial areas.**

Neighborhood commercial businesses, called “commercial nodes”, should be developed at the corner parcels of key intersections within residential neighborhoods. The remnants of neighborhood commercial nodes, or local shops, exist at some intersections, however, the majority of these properties/buildings are vacant, in need of improved maintenance, or do not provide the desired commercial services envisioned by neighbors.

The City should encourage retail uses to locate within these nodes that serve daily shopping needs and quality food and produce. As these nodes are developed, the City should ensure that they consist of quality site design, high property maintenance, and effective screening with adjacent residential properties.

**l. Enforce existing zoning, building and property maintenance codes.**

Although the City does enforce its current building and property codes, the City should seek funding sources to improve its enforcement capabilities. Additional funding would allow the City to hire and train additional inspectors and code enforcement officers. Additional staff would allow for more frequent and regular inspections of a larger number of properties. If all existing codes and ordinances were enforced, the appearance of many properties in the community would be greatly improved. For those properties that are beyond repair, the City should continue to seek funding to demolish blighted properties such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds used in 2009.

In addition to hiring more staff, the City should conduct a comprehensive review and upgrade of its zoning, occupancy, maintenance, business license codes and regulations. Improved regulations would assist the City in providing efficient and up-to-date reviews and inspections based upon the most up-to-date practices.



# RESIDENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for improving homes and residential neighborhoods throughout the community. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funding through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.



Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Inventory, and remove blighted and unsafe structures.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and remove blighted homes</li> <li>Support new housing</li> <li>Support a mix of housing types and options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Residents and property owners</li> <li>Non-Profit Agencies (Habitat for Humanity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants for construction</li> <li>State and Federal funding sources</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Improve opportunities for homeownership assistance programs through a variety of funding sources to support residents transferring from rental to homeownership.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create homeownership programs</li> <li>Research other programs from other communities</li> <li>Create incentive programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners and residents</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding sources</li> <li>Consider offering developer incentives for local homeownership</li> </ul>
Establish funding programs to assist with property maintenance and repair.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create programs</li> <li>Research other programs from other communities</li> <li>Create incentive programs</li> <li>Pursue funding/grant sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants for maintenance and repair</li> <li>State and Federal funding sources</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Target specific residential structures that are architecturally significant for rehabilitation and reuse as owner-occupied residences.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an inventory and assessment</li> <li>Work with property owners to identify assistance options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funding (private investment)</li> <li>State and Federal funding to do inventory and assessment</li> </ul>
Establish minimum design standards for new residential construction.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create residential design standards and guidelines</li> <li>Update zoning and development controls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time to coordinate activities and consultant/staff required to create design guidelines and update zoning controls</li> </ul>
Introduce new market-rate homes into residential neighborhoods.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with developers to construct new market-rate homes</li> <li>Provide adequate infrastructure/coordinate with private projects</li> <li>Support block redevelopment as opposed to single-lot projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Non-Profit Agencies (Habitat for Humanity)</li> <li>Benton Harbor's Housing Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-Profit Agencies</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> <li>State and Federal funding (i.e. HUD HOPE VI)</li> </ul>
Support infill development.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with developers to promote infill development</li> <li>Implement a "new home catalogue" program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Residents and property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Improve infrastructure throughout residential areas including streets, sidewalks, and utilities.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a CIP</li> <li>Budget for and pursue funding to implement the CIP</li> <li>Create continuous sidewalks</li> <li>Create a Sidewalk Improvement Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>MDOT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> <li>MDOT funded</li> <li>State and Federal grants (i.e. Safe Routes to School)</li> </ul>
Create a network of "neighborhood greens" that include open space, playgrounds, urban gardens, and stormwater management.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify underserved areas</li> <li>Identify stormwater problem areas</li> <li>Parcel acquisition</li> <li>Work with neighbors to design park and desired amenities</li> <li>Work with neighbors to assist in maintaining the property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents</li> <li>Local businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants to create neighborhood greens</li> </ul>
Re-establish neighborhood commercial areas.	Short to Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development regulations to allow for neighborhood commercial nodes in recommended areas.</li> <li>Market and attract desirable commercial uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Adjacent residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Enforce existing zoning, building and property maintenance codes.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain funding to add code enforcers</li> <li>Update zoning and regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City staff (code enforcers)</li> <li>Property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal funding (ARRA funds)</li> </ul>

# COMMERCIAL FRAMEWORK PLAN

To support existing desirable commercial businesses and to attract new commercial and retail uses into the City, the following have been identified as key areas of focus. If implemented over the next 10 to 15 years, shopping and commercial opportunities will be greatly improved.

## Commercial Framework Plan

### Areas of Focus

- a. Continue to improve the Arts District as a mixed-use area including commercial, office, entertainment and residential uses.
- b. Re-establish safe, attractive, neighborhood-based shopping areas.
- c. Continue to support the strengthening of commercial and office uses along the Main Street corridor.
- d. Prioritize the rehabilitation of architecturally significant buildings in commercial areas.
- e. Provide local entrepreneurship programs with local businesses. i.e.: "Business Internship Placement Program"
- f. Identify and target businesses that will fulfill the daily shopping needs of residents, without having to shop in an adjacent community.
- g. Work cooperatively to support and strengthen local business groups and business organizations.
- h. Target tourism, recreation/entertainment based commercial uses adjacent to or near waterways.
- i. Revise antiquated zoning standards to allow more contemporary development practices.

## Commercial Classification

### Commercial

Primarily includes retail and commercial uses, however, commercial service and office uses are also appropriate.

### Neighborhood Commercial

This classification includes commercial and retail uses that primarily service the daily shopping and commercial service needs of the local residential neighborhoods.

### Mixed-Use

Includes multi-story developments consisting of retail/commercial uses on the ground floor with residential or office uses above.

### Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation

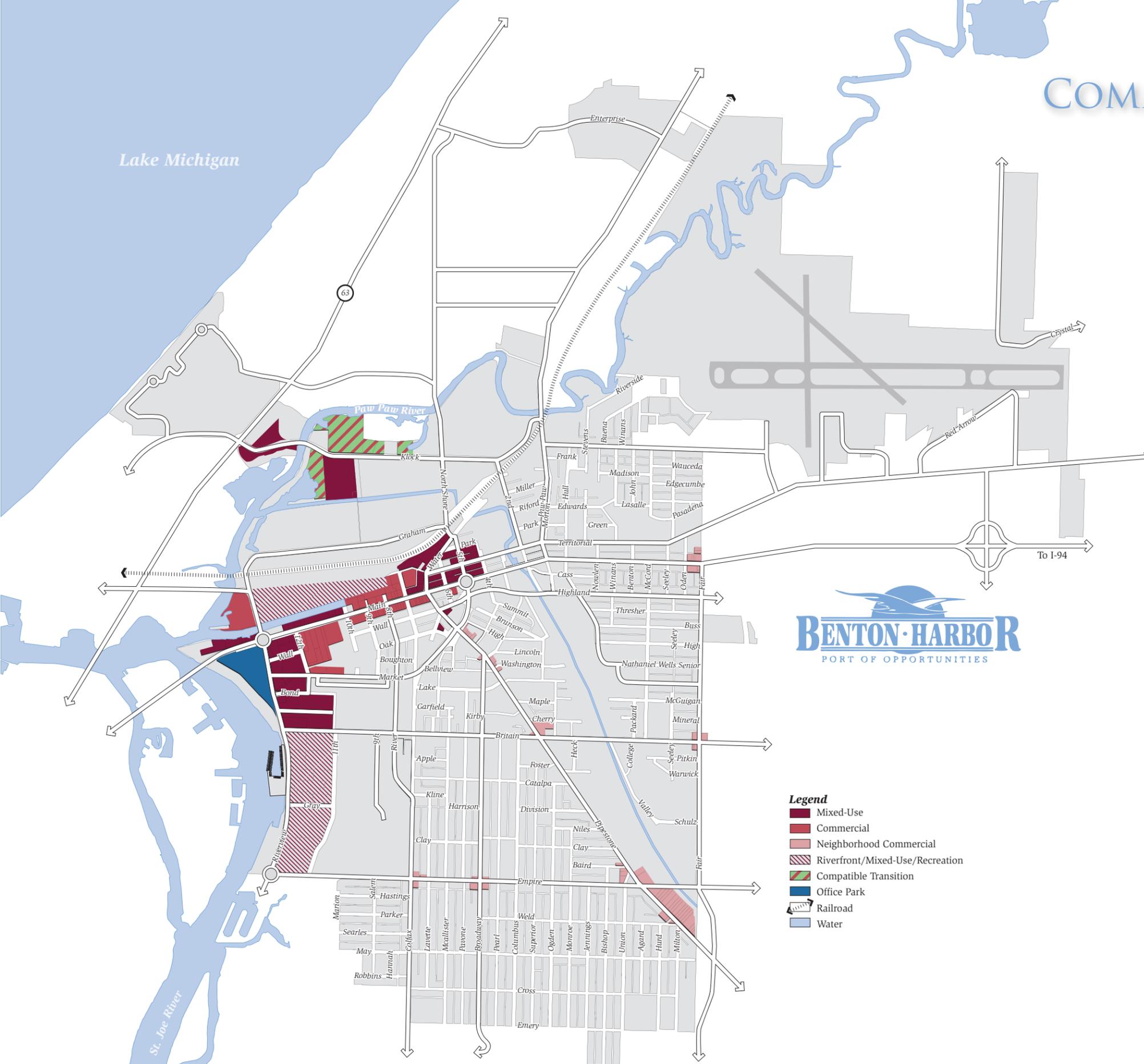
Similar to the mixed-use classification, this area can also include open space, recreation, and residential uses. The overall emphasis for all development in this classification is to ensure the riverfront is an amenity for the community. This can be achieved by improving public access to the river, maintaining views of the water, and utilizing green building techniques.

### Compatible Transition

These areas may be appropriate for low intensity commercial uses, as well as other compatible uses such as parks and open space, recreation, and residential. These areas should prioritize compatibility with nearby non-industrial uses and be sensitive to environmental features and conditions.

### Office Park

Intended to accommodate larger scaled office development that could include several buildings in a "campus" setting. Maintaining a public open space along the St. Joseph River that is easily accessible to residents is important. Retail, restaurant, or other commercial components may be appropriate as an accessory use.



- Legend**
- Mixed-Use
  - Commercial
  - Neighborhood Commercial
  - Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation
  - Compatible Transition
  - Office Park
  - Railroad
  - Water



**a. Continue to improve the Arts District as a mixed-use area including commercial, office, entertainment and residential uses.**

The City should continue to implement its vision for the Arts District as a mixed-use area. Mixed-use projects have already started in the Arts District, and this Plan supports the continuation of mixed-use projects throughout the entire District. Mixed-use developments should include a combination of residential, retail, office, and entertainment uses. Typically, these projects are multi-story, with non-residential uses located on the ground floors, with office and/or residential uses above.

**b. Re-establish safe, attractive, neighborhood-based shopping areas.**

Neighborhood commercial businesses, called “commercial nodes”, should be developed at the corner parcels of key intersections within residential neighborhoods. The remnants of neighborhood commercial nodes, or local shops, exist at some intersections, however, the majority of these properties/buildings are vacant, in need of improved maintenance, or do not provide the desired commercial services envisioned by neighbors.

The City should encourage retail uses to locate within these nodes that serve daily shopping needs and quality food and produce. As these nodes are developed, the City should ensure that they consist of quality site design, high property maintenance, and effective screening with adjacent residential properties.

**c. Continue to support the strengthening of commercial and office uses along the Main Street corridor.**

The City should build off of the success of the recent streetscaping and resurfacing project along Main Street to actively market new commercial, retail, entertainment and office uses to locate in the corridor.

New commercial, retail, entertainment, and office uses along this corridor would strengthen the image of the area, provide employment opportunities, and add entertainment and shopping opportunities. Examples of potential entertainment uses that would be appropriate in this corridor include theaters, museums, restaurants, and recreation activities such as roller rinks, and indoor community space.

**d. Prioritize the rehabilitation of architecturally significant buildings in commercial areas.**

The City should continue to maintain and promote its heritage by identifying important commercial buildings to prioritize for rehabilitation and reuse. By doing so, future development decisions and policy decisions will lead to the preservation and education of its past through architecture and building form. As stated throughout, wherever possible, high-quality structures possessing desirable architectural character should be reused as opposed to new construction that may not fit into the existing character of the neighborhood.

Many commercial buildings in Benton Harbor have unique architectural elements. Whenever these structures can be preserved, renovated, and reused, the City should encourage their preservation. The current architectural style and urban design of many of these commercial buildings adds to the character and identity of the City.



**e. Provide local entrepreneurship programs with local businesses. i.e.: “Business Internship Placement Program”**

It is strongly recommended that the City continue to work with other agencies and the local business community to attract and maintain employment opportunities for residents.

To improve employment opportunities and job training, the City should create a local entrepreneurship program with local businesses. Such a program would provide an excellent opportunity for local students to learn about business and develop job skills. A “business internship placement program” could offer students credits while they develop job-place training skills.

**f. Identify and target businesses that will fulfill the daily shopping needs of residents, without having to shop in an adjacent community.**

Throughout the community outreach activities conducted during the planning process, the need to attract new businesses that fulfill the daily shopping needs of residents was expressed time and time again. The City should actively pursue developers and appropriate businesses to locate into the recommended commercial areas. A quality grocery store is an example of an appropriate business, that was cited throughout the outreach process as a highly desirable business to attract into the City.

**g. Work cooperatively to support and strengthen local business groups and business organizations.**

Within the City of Benton Harbor exists a number of active local business groups and organizations that are working towards the betterment of the community. The City should continue to support these local organizations and work with them to identify potential partnering opportunities or assistance. The City should consider organizing meetings to bring these groups together to aid in establishing relationships and networking opportunities.

**h. Target tourism, recreation/entertainment based commercial uses adjacent to or near waterways.**

The City should use its excellent location along Lake Michigan and two rivers, as a tool to attract tourism. Buildings along the riverfronts should be designed to incorporate the water as a true amenity, maintaining views, and providing outdoor seating overlooking the water. The City should also increase opportunities for boating and water activities, which will also attract tourists to Benton Harbor.

**i. Revise antiquated zoning standards to allow more contemporary development practices.**

The City’s current zoning code and development regulations are out-of-date. The City should update its antiquated zoning standards to allow more contemporary development practices. The goal of the new zoning standards should be to create documents that are easily understood by city staff and officials, the public, and the development community. The standards should allow for development practices that address market trends, include best management practices, remove outdated standards, create updated definitions, and consolidate duplicate or unnecessary classifications. In addition to allowing more contemporary development practices, overall, the zoning standards and development controls should support the goals and vision of the Master Plan.



# COMMERCIAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for improving shopping opportunities throughout the community. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funded through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.

Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Continue to improve the Arts District as a mixed-use area including commercial, office, entertainment and residential uses.	Short to Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development regulations to allow for mixed-use in recommended areas</li> <li>Provide developer incentives to allow for high-quality mixed-use developments</li> <li>Support live/work units in the Arts District</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Residents</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> <li>NTAA and DDA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer Construction</li> </ul>
Re-establish safe, attractive, neighborhood-based shopping areas.	Short to Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development regulations to allow for neighborhood commercial nodes in recommended areas.</li> <li>Market and attract desirable commercial uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Adjacent residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Continue to support the strengthening of commercial and office uses along the Main Street corridor.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development regulations</li> <li>Market and attract desirable uses</li> <li>Improve screening of utility station</li> <li>Begin discussions with owners of unattractive, or incompatible uses to improve appear.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers and businesses</li> <li>Utility Company</li> <li>NTAA and DDA</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal funding</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Prioritize the rehabilitation of architecturally significant buildings in commercial areas.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an inventory and assessment</li> <li>Developer incentives/property owner incentives to preserve and rehab</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal funding</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Provide local entrepreneurship programs with local businesses. i.e.: "Business Internship Placement Program"	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a local entrepreneurship program such as a Business Internship Placement Program</li> <li>Work with schools to create programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners and business owners</li> <li>Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal funding</li> </ul>
Identify and target businesses that will fulfill the daily shopping needs of residents, without having to shop in an adjacent community.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively pursue developers and desired uses such as a grocery store to locate in the City</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers and property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Work cooperatively to support and strengthen local business groups and business organizations.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support existing businesses and open lines of communication between the City and owners.</li> <li>Market and attract desirable new businesses</li> <li>Maintain adequate infrastructure and services for business parks</li> <li>Promote business incubators</li> <li>Work with adjacent communities for economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local businesses</li> <li>Business groups and organizations</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Adjacent communities and the County</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> <li>NTAA and DDA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Target tourism, recreation/entertainment based commercial uses adjacent to or near waterways.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development controls</li> <li>Promote riverfront development and boating opportunities</li> <li>Work with other groups and agencies to create and support a marketing campaign</li> <li>Support tourism and events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners and developers</li> <li>NTAA and DDA</li> <li>Community groups and organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers</li> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Revise antiquated zoning standards to allow more contemporary development practices.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain funding to add code enforcers</li> <li>Update zoning and regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City staff (code enforcers)</li> <li>Property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal funding (ARRA funds)</li> </ul>





**a. Establish industrial/business parks within the City.**

The City should establish, through zoning and marketing efforts, key industrial/business park areas. As identified on the Land Use Map, the City should focus industrial uses and business parks in areas near Paw Paw Avenue and areas adjacent to the Airport. Uses in these locations may include industrial, light industrial, storage, warehouse, and distribution. The Land Use plan also recommends an area, south of Main Street, near 11th Street, as an office/business park area.

In addition to supporting airport operations, the City should locate appropriate businesses on parcels adjacent to, and near the airport. The City should market the vacant parcels within its current municipal boundary, over those outside of Benton Harbor. As illustrated on the Land Use Plan, light industrial, warehousing, office parks, and distribution businesses are recommended in this area. These uses would benefit from the excellent location near the airport and proximity to the interstate system.

**b. Relocate existing heavy industrial uses from areas near the waterways, from key redevelopment sites, and near residential neighborhoods into designated industrial/business parks.**

As discussed in the Land Use and Development Plan, the City should relocate existing heavy industrial uses from highly visible sites. In addition to these sites, some industrial businesses are located near or within residential neighborhoods.

The City should begin discussions with the owners of these businesses to determine if relocation to another more appropriate site within the City is an option. The City should consider a number of variables in the potential relocation of the use including but not limited to its appearance, access, buffering, and number of employees. If relocation is possible, the City and/or the property owner should begin to study the environmental conditions of the existing site, and if necessary, assist the landowner in obtaining funding to clean up the site. If relocation is not feasible at this time, the City should work with property owners to improve the appearance of the properties, and/or to increase screening/buffering between adjacent properties and along corridors.

**c. Establish an industrial recruitment program that encourages businesses to employ Benton Harbor residents.**

The City should work with local industrial businesses to establish an industrial recruitment program with a focus on employing Benton Harbor residents. Such a program would provide an opportunity for residents to develop on-the-job skills while providing potential incentives to the business. Potential incentives may include free advertising and name recognition through events and other City marketing materials.

**d. Establish industrial building minimum design standards to improve compatibility and overall property appearance.**

To improve compatibility and overall property appearance of industrial properties, the City should establish minimum industrial design standards. The minimum design standards should be created to allow more contemporary development practices; overall, the zoning standards and development controls should support the goals and vision of the Master Plan.

**e. Improve screening and buffering of existing industrial areas from all properties.**

The City should work with existing industrial business owners to improve screening and buffering on their properties, especially if adjacent to non-industrial/business uses. Screening and buffering may include landscaping, fencing, or a combination. Improved screening of buildings, parking areas, loading areas, dumpsters, and outdoor storage areas would improve the appearance of these uses, as well as, assist in minimizing potential noise, light and air pollution.

**f. Ensure appropriate infrastructure to service industrial areas including streets and utilities.**

The City should continue to assess the infrastructure and utilities servicing industry and businesses in the community. Infrastructure includes streets, water and wastewater, and utilities. A key marketing strategy for the City is to ensure that businesses will be provide affordable and efficient infrastructure and utilities.



**g. Work with adjacent communities to attract business into the City or within the region which will benefit the area.**

In addition to local initiatives, the City should also consider economic development from a regional perspective. For example, the City should work with adjacent communities to attract business and employers into the area. The City should work with adjacent communities to attract a industrial and employment users to Benton Harbor and the surrounding region.

**h. Require all industrial developments to meet specific performance standards for noise, air, and odor pollution.**

The City should perform regular code enforcement and review of industrial and business properties to ensure compliance for noise, air and odor pollution standards. The City should work with existing industrial users to comply, and in addition, State and Federal standards should be followed.

During the development review process, City staff should review proposed industrial and business projects to ensure compliance with all standards and requirements.

To assist businesses in meeting these standards, the City should promote the use of smart growth principles, best management practices, and alternative energy.

**i. Identify and target contaminated industrial sites for remediation.**

As discussed in the overall land use and development plan, the City should work with property owners and businesses to relocate heavy industrial businesses from high profile opportunity sites to other more appropriate locations in the City.

The City should begin discussions with the owners of these businesses to determine if relocation to another more appropriate site within the City is an option. If relocation is possible, the City and/or the property owner should begin to study the environmental conditions of the site, and if necessary, work to obtain funding to clean up the site.

**j. Maintain existing commercial shipping dock operations.**

The Plan supports maintaining the current commercial shipping dock operations at the Central Dock site. Altering the industrial use/ shipping dock operations of the Central Dock to another use would jeopardize the continued federal dredging of the Harbor by the US Army's Corps of Engineers. The commercial shipping activity within the Harbor classifies it as a deep water port worthy of federal funding and attention. Dredging of the 1.5 miles of Harbor is currently paid 100% by federal funds without any state or local match required. This dredging allows for commercial and recreational boating from the Bicentennial Bridge to the end of the piers.

Should redevelopment of the port area occur in the future, a river-oriented commercial/ recreation/mixed-use development would be most appropriate.



# INDUSTRIAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for improving employment opportunities and the appearance of industrial areas throughout the community. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

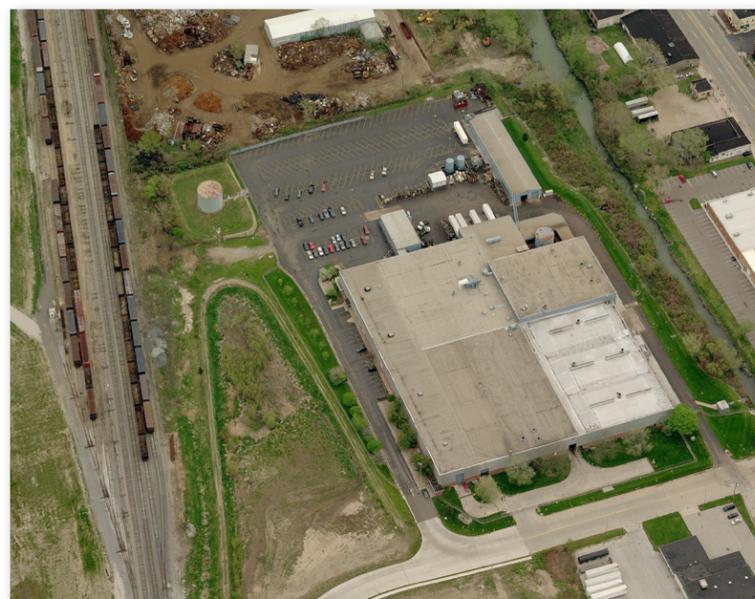
Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funding through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.



Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Establish industrial/business parks within the city near Paw Paw Avenue and areas adjacent to the airport.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development controls</li> <li>Market and attract desirable industry and businesses to locate on vacant parcels/buildings in industrial/business park areas</li> <li>Support employment opportunities</li> <li>Require appropriate screening and buffering</li> <li>Provide adequate infrastructure and utilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Business community</li> <li>Airport</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Developer funding (private investment)</li> </ul>
Relocate existing heavy industrial uses from areas near the waterways, from key redevelopment sites, and near residential neighborhoods into designated industrial/business parks.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin discussions with heavy industry owners in highly visible, redevelopment areas to identify ways to improve appearance, screen businesses, or consider relocation to other more appropriate sites in the City. Consider a number of variables including, but not limited to, the property's appearance, access, and number of employees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Business owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider offering developer incentives</li> <li>Create a Facade and Site Improvement program to fund/assist in funding site improvements.</li> </ul>
Establish an industrial recruitment program that encourages businesses to employ Benton Harbor residents.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create program</li> <li>Consider tax incentives</li> <li>Provide recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools</li> <li>Businesses</li> <li>MichiganWorks!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Establish industrial building minimum design standards to improve compatibility and overall property appearance.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create industrial design guidelines and standards</li> <li>Create a Facade and Site Improvement Program</li> <li>Assist property owners in using the program</li> <li>Work with existing businesses</li> <li>Consider this when conducting development and site plan reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business owners</li> <li>Property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Developer funding (private investment)</li> </ul>
Improve screening and buffering of existing industrial areas from all properties.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Facade and Site Improvement Program</li> <li>Assist property owners in using the program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business owners</li> <li>Property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funding (private investment)</li> </ul>
Ensure appropriate infrastructure to service industrial areas including streets and utilities.	Medium to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Capital Improvement Program and budget for its recommendations (CIP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MDOT</li> <li>Utility Companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Developer funding (private investment)</li> </ul>
Work with adjacent communities to attract business into the city or within the region which will benefit the area.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with adjacent communities to create a cooperative approach to economic development</li> <li>Consider the creation of a regional economic development committee or to work with Berrien County or the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjacent communities</li> <li>Berrien County</li> <li>Southwest Michigan Planning Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County, State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Require all industrial developments to meet specific performance standards for noise, air, and odor pollution.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update zoning and development controls</li> <li>Create performance standards, or utilize existing State and Federal standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal government/environmental agencies</li> <li>Businesses and property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Developer funding (private investment)</li> </ul>
Identify and target contaminated industrial sites for remediation.	Medium to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with property owners to assist them in options for remediation</li> <li>Assist by providing contacts, and potential funding sources</li> <li>Assist with potential relocation to other suitable site in the City</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses and property owners</li> <li>State and Federal government/environmental agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Developer funding (private investment)</li> </ul>
Maintain existing commercial dock operations at the Central Dock	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with the St. Joseph River Harbor Authority to support dock operations and to ensure the federally funded dredging of the Harbor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St. Joseph River Harbor Authority</li> <li>Berrien County</li> <li>St. Joseph</li> <li>State and Federal governments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal funding to pay for dredging of the Harbor</li> </ul>

# ARTS & CULTURE PLAN

*To support and celebrate Benton Harbor's arts and culture, the following have been identified as key areas of focus. If implemented over the next 10 to 15 years, arts and culture will be proudly displayed and preserved throughout the community.*



## **Arts & Culture Plan**

### **Areas of Focus**

- a. Continue to market and support the Arts District as the key area within the City that promotes arts and cultural activities.
- b. Support and market historical facilities, landmarks, and structures that preserve the culture of the City.
- c. Develop a Main Street entertainment district that capitalizes on the arts district and stimulates reinvestment along Main Street.
- d. Work with developers and property owners to incorporate public art and artistic displays as part of development projects throughout the city.
- e. Use arts and culture as a resource for economic development, drawing visitors into the City and providing job training/skills for local students.
- f. Promote arts and culture to residents and visitors by continuing to hold events and programs within the City and the Arts District.
- g. Continue to work with local businesses, educational system, and non-profits to preserve and strengthen arts and culture education opportunities for youth.
- h. Continue to seek alternative local, state and federal funding sources to support arts and culture in the community.
- i. Seek to establish a Benton Harbor Museum that showcases the rich history of the community.



**a. Continue to market and support the Arts District as the key area within the City that promotes arts and cultural activities.**

Over the last decade, the City has made tremendous progress in developing the Arts District. The City should continue to support the area's vision to be the cultural, artistic, and historical core of the Benton Harbor.

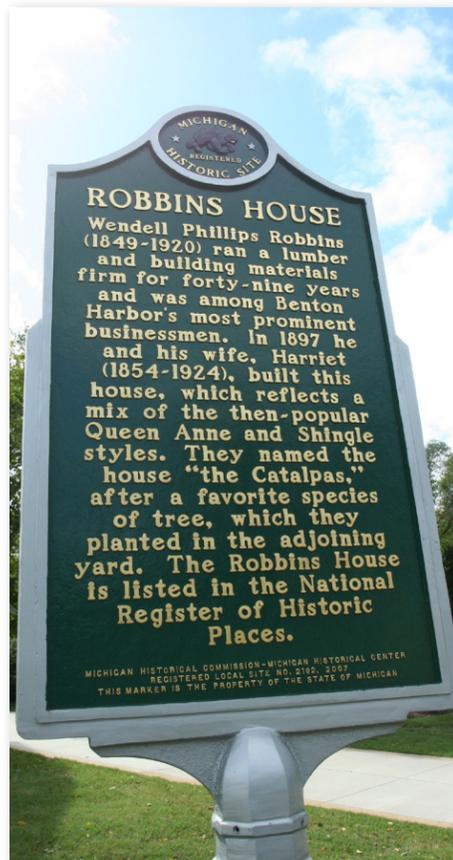
The City should partner with other agencies, groups, and business owners involved with arts and culture to create an environment that encourages a thriving community. Community stakeholders, developers, and designers also play an important role in creating the proper environment, from the types of uses, the types of programs and activities, building architecture, live/work units, business incubators, the creation of plazas and open areas, and streetscaping.

The City should work with local businesses and property owners as well as the New Territorial Arts Alliance and other groups having an interest in the area. The City should work with, and meet with on a regular basis, these stakeholders and others to ensure on-going communication, and opportunities for assistance and marketing support. In combination with this, the City should support events and festivals within the Arts District.

Continuing to attract artisans, dancers, sculptors, and others to live and work in the district should be an important goal for the City to support the success of the area. Increasing the number of residents living in the District will benefit new and existing businesses, aid in creating an active pedestrian atmosphere, and assist in safety by providing "eyes on the street" throughout the day and evenings.

**b. Support and market historical facilities, landmarks, and structures that preserve the culture of the City.**

The City of Benton Harbor should continue to support, preserve, and educate the public about its rich history. Buildings possessing historically or architecturally significant features should be preserved to: maintain a desired character; improve the appearance of the community; and preserve the history of the city. A few historically significant homes, primarily, along Pipestone Street, have been designated as historical landmarks. The City should work with other property owners interested in becoming designated to assist in preservation efforts.



**c. Develop a Main Street entertainment district that capitalizes on the Arts District and stimulates reinvestment along Main Street.**

Building on the success of the Arts District, and the recent reinvestment completed with the Main Street construction project, the City should support the creation of an entertainment/theatre district along Main Street, west of the Arts District. An entertainment/theatre district along Main Street would support the Arts District while providing an additional marketing tool to attract both visitors and residents into the Downtown area. New entertainment and theatre uses should be encouraged to locate on properties closest to the Arts District, and develop the district westerly towards 10th Street.

Currently, this section of Main Street consists of a mix of older architecturally significant buildings, although many are vacant or underutilized, a few newer buildings in good condition, and some vacant properties. The area should be developed as a pedestrian-friendly area, that encourages businesses to have outdoor seating areas and a strong relationship to the street. Development should reinforce walkability within the District and connectivity to the Arts District, the potential Ship Canal extension, and nearby residential neighborhoods.

**d. Work with developers and property owners to incorporate public art and artistic displays as part of development projects.**

Public art and artistic displays should be installed throughout the City as either stand-alone focal points or as part of new development. Public art should be located within public parks and plazas. The City should consider requiring developers to install public art as a component of their larger projects depending on the size, scope, and location of the proposed development.

The incorporation of public art into the Jean Klock Park renovation, and the City's western gateway sign on Main Street, are excellent examples. There are many benefits to this objective including the strengthening the city's image, the creation an artistic and cultural character, and the creation of a "sense of place". In addition, this also provides an economic opportunity and recognition for local artisans.

*Example of Public Art Display (Naperville, Illinois)*



*City of Benton Harbor Master Plan*

**e. Use arts and culture as a resource for economic development, drawing visitors into the City and providing job training/skills for local students.**

Arts and culture are important to the local and regional economy. Therefore, the City should view arts and culture as a resource for improving economic development. Arts and culture related businesses provide direct economic benefits the City by creating jobs, attracting investments, providing educational opportunities, and generating tax revenues. Arts and culture businesses also stimulate the local economy through tourism and consumer purchases.

In addition, arts and cultural amenities contribute significantly to local quality of life. These amenities further help to attract artisans, young professionals, and others to live and create in the City.

**f. Promote arts and culture to residents and visitors by holding events and programs within the City and the Arts District.**

The City should support existing events and look for opportunities to introduce new programs and festivals to celebrate and embrace the history and culture of Benton Harbor. The City already has a number of events that occur throughout the year, primarily in the Arts District and within the downtown area.

The potential exists for additional community event and festival space to be created as part of future redevelopment efforts along the St. Joseph River. If a large redevelopment occurs along the river, the City should work with future developers to include open space, and community gathering areas, such as an amphitheatre into the site design.

Overall, arts and cultural events and programs benefit residents and attract visitors into the community. Therefore, the events should also be seen as an economic development tool for the city to support local businesses.

The City should partner with other groups, such as the New Territory Arts Association (NTAA), to promote the arts and culture of Benton Harbor. Founded in 1998, the NTAA is a grassroots organization dedicated to the revitalization of Benton Harbor through the Arts and the promotion of the Arts District. Promoting arts and culture in the city is important not only for the success of the Arts District, but also the culture and heritage of residents.

**g. Continue to work with local businesses, the educational system, and non-profits to preserve and strengthen arts and culture education opportunities for youth.**

It is important to provide opportunities for arts and culture education and teach art skills and arts appreciation to local youth. The City should work with local schools (public and private) to preserve and strengthen arts education in the schools. The City should also assist in bringing schools and local businesses together to offer partnership opportunities for classes. Events such as the Benton Harbor Children’s Art Fair are excellent examples of programs already being held in the City. Other examples include the New Territory Arts Association Scholarship Fund that provides assistance with art education for community youth. The Fund assists with tuition for classes at The Citadel Dance Center, Water Street Glasswork’s “Fired Up!” program, and other regional art education programs.

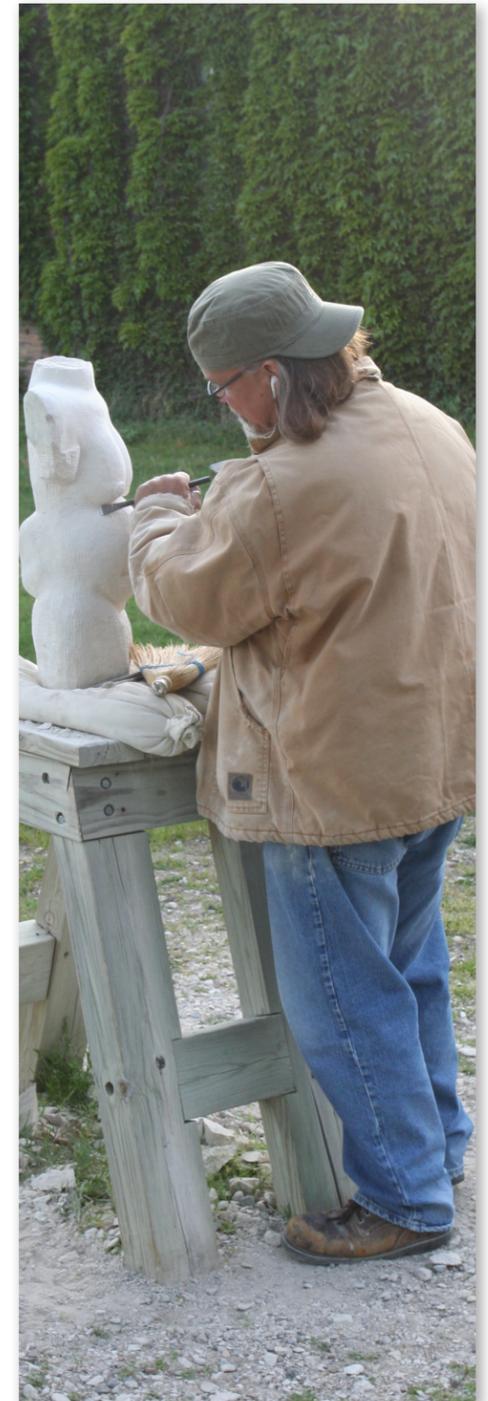
**h. Continue to seek alternative local, state and federal funding sources to support arts and culture in the community.**

The City should research and submit for grants and private sector contributions to support arts and cultural activities in the community. It is important that the City monitor the potential grant cycles and types of grants include those that are available each year.

Examples of potential arts and cultural grants currently available include those offered by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. In 2010, the Council redistributed nineteen regional planning agencies in the form of “mini-grants.” Mini-grants offer up to \$4,000 to nonprofit organizations, municipalities and schools to support a wide variety of arts and cultural programs. In addition to grants, private sector contributions should also be pursued. The City or arts and cultural agencies within the community should work cooperatively to raise private sector contributions.

**i. Establish a Benton Harbor Museum that showcases the rich history of the community.**

The City should continue to direct development in the arts district in such a manner that the shared vision for the arts district as the cultural, historical, and artistic center of the community is achieved. A Benton Harbor Museum would be an excellent community facility that would support the City’s vision for preserving and educating Benton Harbor’s history. The museum should be located within the Arts District or the Downtown area.



# ARTS & CULTURE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for improving arts and culture throughout the community. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funding through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.

Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Continue to market and support the Arts District as the key area within the City that promotes arts and cultural activities.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly meetings coordinated with representatives</li> <li>Events and festival support</li> <li>Appropriate zoning and development controls</li> <li>Website and marketing support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Territorial Arts Alliance (NTAA)</li> <li>Downtown Development Authority (DDA)</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> <li>Local artisans, business owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal City costs, however, may require City staff time. In addition, may involve City website developer to assist in marketing efforts.</li> </ul>
Support and market historical facilities, landmarks, and structures that preserve the culture of the City.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inventory existing historical structures</li> <li>Identify potential new historical structures</li> <li>Assist property owners in designations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Berrien County Historical Association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal City costs, however, does require City staff time.</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Develop a Main Street entertainment district that capitalizes on the arts district and stimulates reinvestment along Main Street.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate zoning and development controls</li> <li>Market the area to potential entertainment businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>NTAA</li> <li>DDA</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal costs, however, does require City staff time.</li> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Work with developers and property owners to incorporate public art and artistic displays as part of development projects throughout the city.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Local artisans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> <li>Developer Impact Fee, based upon size and scope of project</li> </ul>
Use arts and culture as a resource for economic development, drawing visitors into the City and providing job training/skills for local students.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider arts and culture in policy and future land use decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal City costs, however, may require City staff time.</li> </ul>
Promote arts and culture to residents and visitors by continuing to hold events and programs within the City and the Arts District.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with groups to support events and programs</li> <li>Coordinate events and programs schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Territorial Arts Alliance (NTAA)</li> <li>Downtown Development Authority (DDA)</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> <li>Local artisans, business owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NA</li> </ul>
Continue to work with local businesses, educational system, and non-profits to preserve and strengthen arts and culture education opportunities for youth	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate meetings with school district and local artisans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools</li> <li>Local artisans, business owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal City costs, however, may require City staff time.</li> <li>NTAA Scholarship Fund</li> </ul>
Continue to seek alternative local, state and federal funding sources to support arts and culture in the community.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in identifying grant opportunities and grant submittal preparation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NTAA</li> <li>DDA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal grant funds</li> <li>Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs Grants</li> </ul>
Seek to establish a Benton Harbor Museum that showcases the rich history of the community.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with historical groups and organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Berrien County Historical Association</li> <li>Local business groups and residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal grant funds</li> <li>Private donations</li> </ul>



# NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES PLAN

To preserve and protect parks and open space in Benton Harbor, the following have been identified as key areas of focus. If implemented over the next 10 to 15 years, a well-balanced active and passive recreational and parks system will be in place.

## Natural Resources, Parks and Environmental Features

### Areas of Focus

- a. Work with the Benton Harbor Parks and Recreation Department to maintain existing public parks, improving and adding recreational amenities as needed.
- b. Develop new parks and open space areas within the city.
- c. Continue to maintain and promote Jean Klock Park, and the Harbor Shores golf course as local and regional destinations.
- d. Maximize the benefit of the rivers as public amenities by improving public access to the riverfront and providing public open space adjacent to the waterways.
- e. Extend the ship canal from the Paw Paw River and create waterways from the St. Joseph River.
- f. Create a connected greenway system that runs throughout the city's ravines, wooded areas, and along waterways that connects residential neighborhoods to parks and community facilities.
- g. Improve the natural open space/wetland areas adjacent to the High School, thus creating a community asset for both recreational and educational purposes.
- h. Look for opportunities to create "neighborhood greens" in residential areas that contain open space, playgrounds, stormwater management, and urban gardens.
- i. Encourage new developments and redevelopments to be designed to reduce and treat stormwater to protect the waterways and to reduce/prevent flooding.

## Parks and Open Space Classification

### Boat Launch Sites

This Plan recommends relocating the existing St. Joseph River boat launch to a new waterway that will allow for more open space along the river. The Plan also supports Harbor Shores proposed boat launch.

### Boat Slips

Potential areas for new boat slips along the St. Joseph and Paw Paw Rivers.

### Existing Trails

Includes existing trails within the City, both on-street and off-street trails.

### Proposed Trails

Builds upon the existing trails system, providing linkages to all areas of the City along a combination of both on-street and off-street trails.

### Existing Parks

Includes existing City of Benton Harbor parks.

### Proposed Parks

Includes recommended park sites, primarily active (recreational) areas with facilities and trails.

### Golf Course

The recently constructed Harbor Shores Golf Course.

### Open Space

Includes all larger areas of open space, this Plan recommends these area as either private open space or public open space.

### Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation

A goal of this classification is to ensure the riverfront is an amenity for the community. Parks and open space, including passive (trails, wetlands), and active (marinas, boat slips, waterways, sports fields, gathering/concert areas) uses are appropriate in this area.

### Recreational Amenities

Although not identified on the figure, the City should continue to work with residents to identify what recreational amenities are desired and in what locations. During the outreach exercise, residents identified a need for a roller rink (which could be part located indoors in a commercial use), as well as the need for improved soccer fields, baseball fields, and playgrounds.

### Compatible Transition

These areas are appropriate for parks, open space, and recreation, as well as other compatible uses such as residential and low intensity commercial. These areas should prioritize compatibility with nearby non-industrial uses and be sensitive to environmental features and conditions.



- Legend**
- Boat Launch Sites
  - Proposed Boat Slips
  - Existing Trails
  - Proposed Trails
  - Existing Parks
  - Proposed Parks
  - Golf Course
  - Open Space
  - Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation
  - Compatible Transition
  - Railroad
  - Water

**Potential Concept Plan of a New Community Park**

This graphic illustrates a potential park site within the City of Benton Harbor. This concept illustrates a new park along the St. Joseph River near the High School. A new park in this location would be within walking distance of the majority of residential neighborhoods south of Main Street. It is important to note, that although this concept is shown for this location, the size, shape, location, and scale of a new community park should be flexible and therefore could be located in other areas of the City.



**a. Work with the Benton Harbor Parks and Recreation Department to maintain existing public parks, improving and adding recreational amenities as needed.**

Although the City, through its Parks and Recreation Department, has park space located throughout Benton Harbor, there are areas within the community, particularly within the residential neighborhoods that are not within a ¼ mile (typically a 5 minute walk) of public parks.

Because these neighborhoods are considered built-out, acquiring land for new park sites will be necessary. There may also be opportunities to create new parks in areas with several blighted structures and vacant parcels. The City should continually monitor opportunities for the acquisition of property for the development of tot lots and smaller parks in some of the underserved residential areas of the City.

New public parks and greenways should also be acquired along the St. Joseph and Paw Paw Rivers and Ox Creek. Improving public access to the rivers should be an important overall objective for the city. The creation of public open space along these waterways would improve preservation and access.

Primarily through the parks and recreation department, and by working with private athletic organizations, the City should continue to provide recreational opportunities. The City should update its 1997 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. By working with residents to update the plan, the City can identify what park improvements are desired and needed to provide recreational amenities to all areas of the City. In addition to working through its parks and recreation department, the City should continue to work with other agencies and athletic associations to offer recreational programs in the City. Input from these groups should be part of the update to the parks and recreation master planning process.

To assist in maintenance of the parks, the City should pursue grants and alternative funding sources, and also work with local neighborhood and religious groups to assist in the maintenance of the parks.

**b. Develop new parks and open space areas within the city.**

New parks and open space should be created within underserved areas of the city and to preserve existing environmental features. As discussed previously, there are some areas where homes within the residential neighborhoods are located more than ¼ mile (typically a 5 minute walk) from active parks and open space. Within these areas, the City should acquire blighted homes and/or vacant parcels to create neighbored parks (greens). These new parks should include playgrounds and opportunities for urban gardens. The parks should be highly visible from the street and should be designed with neighborhood input.

Environmental areas, such as the waterways, ravines, and heavily wooded areas that exist throughout the community should also be acquired and preserved as open space. Another tool to be explored is the establishment of conservation easements to allow for the development of key properties while preserving valuable environmental assets. These areas are excellent opportunities for environmental education, trails, and also add to the character of Benton Harbor.

**c. Continue to maintain and promote Jean Klock Park, and the Harbor Shores golf course as local and regional destinations.**

The City's recent improvements to Jean Klock Park are impressive and the park is a tremendous asset for the community. The park has become not only a local attraction, but a regional destination. The City should continue to maintain the cleanliness of the park and undertake scheduled inspections and repairs to all facilities in the park. The addition of the art displays, new amenities, landscaping, parking area, and the cleanliness of the beach have made the park an asset for the entire community.

In addition to maintaining the park, the City should market the park as a regional destination while also continuing to provide local trail connections for residents. As shown in the proposed trail plan, future trails are planned to connect residential neighborhoods with Jean Klock Park. These connections will provide safe and convenient walking and biking opportunities to the beach for all residents of Benton Harbor.

The City should also work with Harbor Shores to assist in the marketing and promotion of the Jack Nicklaus Golf Course. According to Harbor Shores, the vision for the golf course and it's Harbor Shores Golf Club is to become a showcase for the Midwest. When completed this year, the 18-hole course will feature holes with views of Lake Michigan; holes bordering the Paw Paw River, Ox Creek and its wetlands; and holes through rolling hills, ravines, and wooded areas. Because of its economic potential in bringing visitors to the community, the City should view the golf course not only as a recreational opportunity, but as an economic tool for Benton Harbor.

**d. Maximize the benefit of the rivers as public amenities by improving public access to the riverfront and providing public open space adjacent to the waterways.**

The St. Joseph and Paw Paw Rivers are significant environmental features and tremendous assets for the City. The waterways were consistently identified by residents as top community assets throughout the planning process.

The City should undertake projects and support private developments that engage the rivers. Enhancing the rivers as community amenities for residents to enjoy, not just for the tenants/property owners of new projects along the river should be an important objective of the City.

Existing riverfront parks, pavilions, picnic shelters, walkways, and facilities should be improved and maintained to ensure they are safe and attractive for residents. Overall, the City should expand public access to the rivers as adjoining properties are developed or redeveloped through easements, property acquisition, or dedications and enhance these properties with paths, trails, fishing piers, boat slips, shelters, lookouts, pavilions and other public amenities.



*Example of Riverfront Access (Algonquin, Illinois)*

**e. Extend the ship canal from the Paw Paw River and create waterways from the St. Joseph River.**

To further capitalize upon the City's waterways, the City should plan for the extension of new waterways into the community. The Land Use Plan recommends that the City work towards 1) the extension of the ship canal from the Paw Paw River, and 2) the creation of new waterways from the St. Joseph River.

A long-term goal for the Master Plan is to extend the ship canal between Riverview Drive (Paw Paw River) and 10th Street. This "resurrection" of the old ship canal would become a focal point of the City. Extending the canal into the downtown area, just west of the Arts District, would have the potential to create exciting waterfront redevelopment opportunities. Desired uses along the canal would include mixed-use developments (residential, retail, office), public parks, and boat slips/marinas. All developments should be designed to incorporate the canal in their design, creating outdoor seating areas and maintaining views of the water.

In addition to the extension of the ship canal, the Master Plan recommends the creation of new waterways from the St. Joseph River south of Main Street into the western portion of the City. Currently, much of the area is vacant, or underutilized, and waterways into the area, toward downtown would create redevelopment opportunities for mixed-use and marinas/boat slips. Such a project would also represent a major reinvestment in the City, south of Main Street, in an area very close to the High School and nearby residential neighborhoods. The project should include connections with the existing neighborhoods; provide neighborhood shopping and employment opportunities and new public parks and greenways, civic/festival areas, and office/retail areas. New trails should lead from the neighborhoods into the area, with connections to a boardwalk around a wetland, the community center, and linkages to the St. Joseph River. An important goal would be to tie the new development with the High School. The school could utilize the area to offer environmental education classes, outdoor learning centers, boating classes, and maritime/boating maintenance and repair classes.



**f. Create a connected greenway system that runs throughout the city's ravines, wooded areas, and along waterways that connects residential neighborhoods to parks and community facilities.**

The City should acquire and preserve ravines, heavily wooded areas, and public access along waterways to create an interconnected greenway system. As recommended in the Land Use Plan, the future improvement of the wetland adjacent to Benton Harbor High School should be included in this interconnected greenway system. These areas add significantly to the character of the community, and their preservation should be a goal of the City.

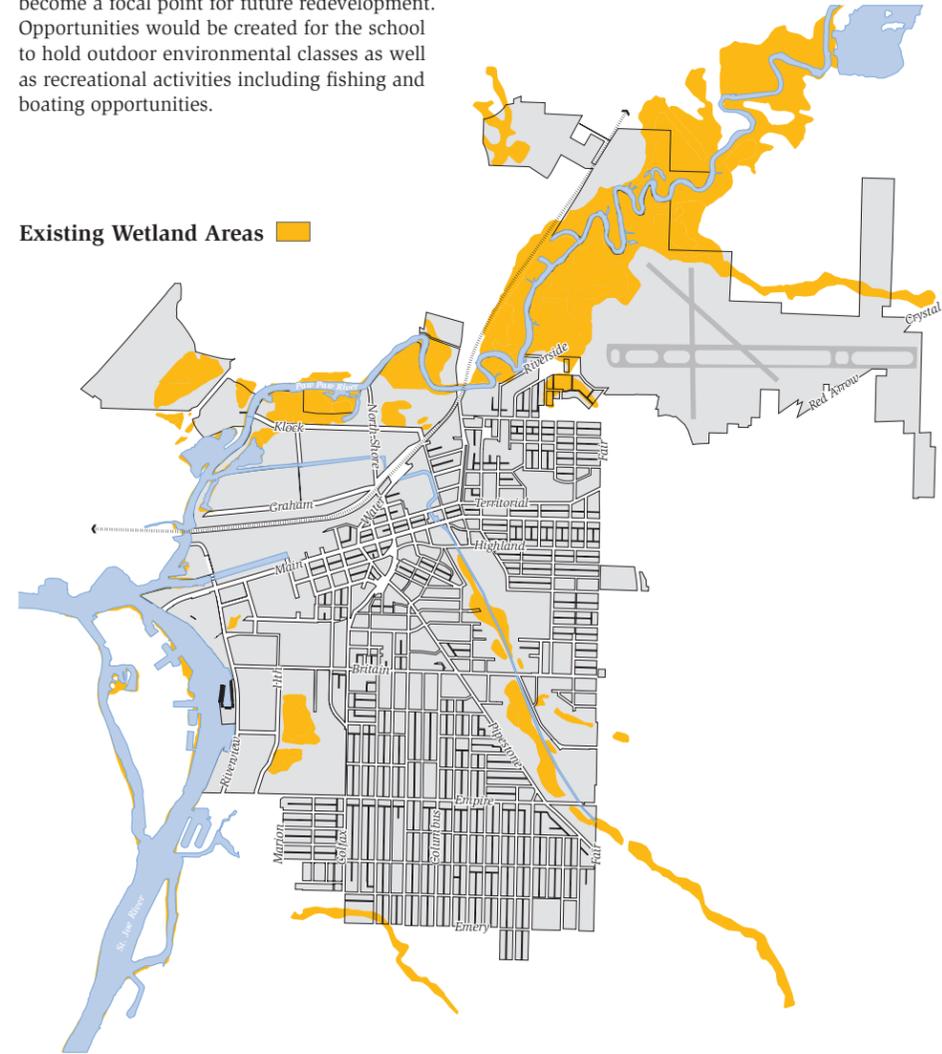
An interconnected greenway system also provides an excellent opportunity for a multi-use trails. The City should continue to coordinate with other agencies, private developers and adjacent municipalities to create a connected multi-use trail system. The trail/bike path should connect the community with the downtown area, Arts District, Jean Klock Park, community facilities, parks, and schools. As new development or redevelopment occurs, the City should continue to identify opportunities for trail extensions and connections and work with developers and property owners to construct the trail. Depending on the location, and right-of-way available, the trail may be either off-street, or on-street. On-street trail connections should have appropriate lane markings and signage to encourage trail usage, and alert vehicles to the addition of bike lanes.



*Example of Riverfront Trail System (Geneva, Illinois)*

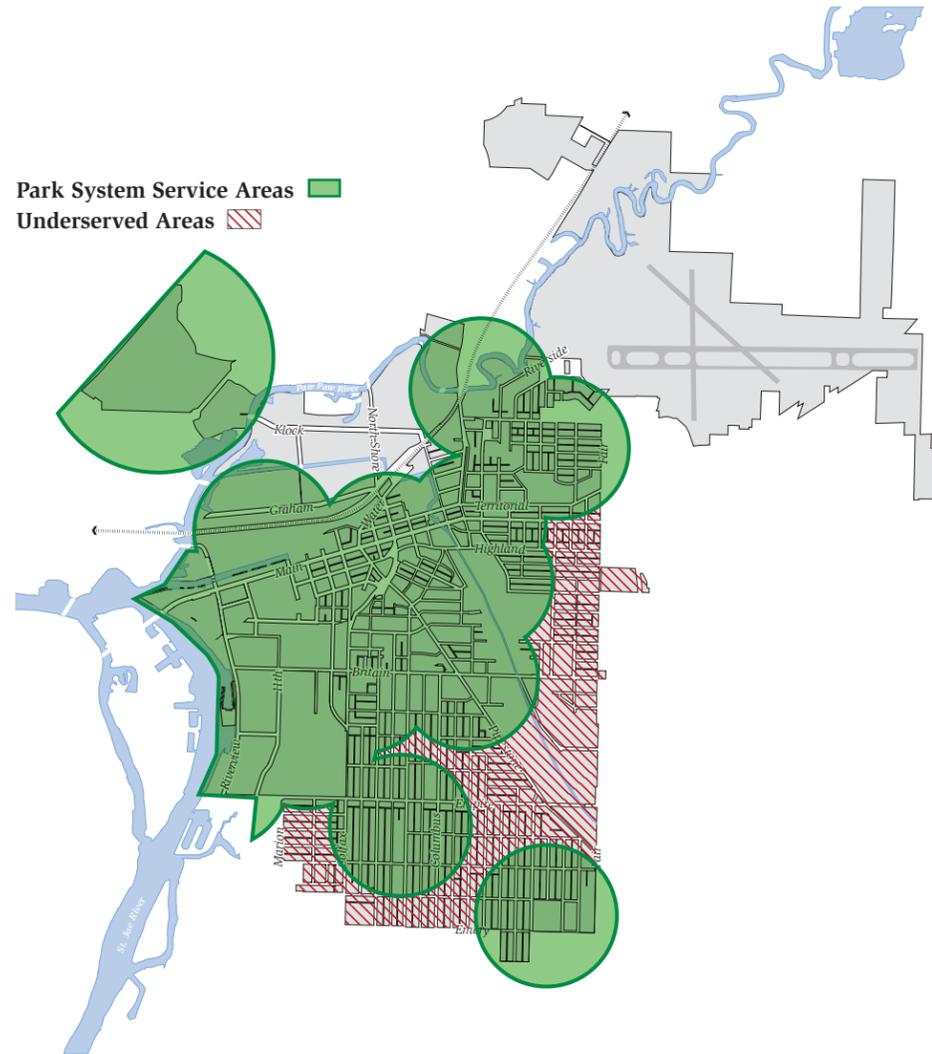
**g. Improve the natural open space/wetland areas adjacent to the High School, creating a community asset for both recreational and educational purposes.**

The City should work to improve the existing wetland area northwest of Benton Harbor High School. Public access should be improved and the area should be converted into a public asset including open space, park features, and a boardwalk/trail that loops the property with connections to the community and the school. Tied into an overall redevelopment plan for the area, an improved wetland area could become a focal point for future redevelopment. Opportunities would be created for the school to hold outdoor environmental classes as well as recreational activities including fishing and boating opportunities.



**h. Create “neighborhood greens” in underserved areas of residential neighborhoods.**

In an effort to create neighborhood focal points and to establish parks and open space within walking distance (1/4 mile) of each home, a system of neighborhood greens and greenways are recommended. Opportunities for neighborhood greens should be explored, especially in conjunction with the identification and removal of blighted homes, and parcel acquisition by the City. Once blighted structures are removed, the opportunity will exist for the creation of neighborhood greens.



It is important that these neighborhood greens be designed to have proper security lighting, are highly visible from adjoining streets, and be well-maintained. These greens may be simply open space areas, or may also include playground features, and urban gardens. Urban gardens can provide, local neighborhood growing opportunities. The City should work to provide water service near the garden for watering.

**i. Encourage new developments and redevelopments to be designed to reduce and treat stormwater to protect the waterways and to reduce/prevent flooding.**

The City should encourage new developments and redevelopments to be designed with green technologies and best management practices to protect and improve water quality. Developments should include amenities and features in their designs that reduce and treat stormwater and runoff. This will not only protect the quality of the water and waterways, but also aid in reducing and preventing flooding.

# NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

**Purpose of this Table**

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for improving and protecting natural resources, parks and open space in the City. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

**Table Key**

**Strategy**

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

**Timeframe**

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

**Key Steps**

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

**Potential Partners/Stakeholders**

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

**Potential Funding Sources**

A preliminary list of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funding through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.



City of Benton Harbor Master Plan

Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Work with the Benton Harbor Parks and Recreation Department to maintain existing public parks, improving and adding recreational amenities as needed.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget and schedule maintenance</li> <li>Upkeep of existing amenities</li> <li>Work with residents to determine desired amenities</li> <li>Pursue alternative funding sources to construct/maintain parks</li> <li>Update the Parks Master Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents</li> <li>Schools</li> <li>Park users, athletic groups and organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants for funding park renovations</li> </ul>
Develop new parks and open space areas within the city.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify parcels for acquisition</li> <li>Develop a plan for future acquisitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants for park acquisition</li> </ul>
Continue to maintain and promote Jean Klock Park, and the Harbor Shores golf course as local and regional destinations.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget and schedule maintenance</li> <li>Upkeep of exiting amenities</li> <li>Potential website link to City website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential State and Federal grants</li> </ul>
Maximize the benefit of the rivers as public amenities by improving public access to the riverfront and providing public open space adjacent to the waterways.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zoning and development controls</li> <li>Property acquisition/easements</li> <li>Market new appropriate development</li> <li>Site designs for new open space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funding (private investment)</li> </ul>
Extend the ship canal from the Paw Paw River and create waterways from the St. Joseph River into the western portion of the city.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preliminary engineering studies</li> <li>Acquisition or discussions with property owners where extension is proposed</li> <li>Market proposed development opportunities adjacent to the new waterways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Residents</li> <li>School District</li> <li>NTAA and DDA</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential State and Federal grants</li> </ul>
Improve the natural open space/wetland areas adjacent to the High School, thus creating a community asset for both recreational and educational purposes.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parcel Acquisition or easements</li> <li>Perform engineering studies</li> <li>Meet with school to begin dialogue, and incorporate comments and goals for the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School District</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants to improve wetland area and install trail system and other amenities</li> </ul>
Look for opportunities to create “neighborhood greens” in residential areas that contain open space, playgrounds, stormwater management, and urban gardens.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify underserved areas</li> <li>Identify stormwater problem areas</li> <li>Parcel acquisition</li> <li>Work with neighbors to design park and desired amenities</li> <li>Work with neighbors to assist in maintaining the property</li> <li>Ensure zoning allows for urban gardening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents</li> <li>Local businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants to create neighborhood greens</li> </ul>
Create a connected greenway system that runs throughout the city’s ravines, wooded areas, and along waterways that connects residential neighborhoods to parks and community facilities.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify parcels that should be acquired, or where easements should be acquired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Local businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants to create the greenway system</li> </ul>
Encourage new developments and redevelopments to be designed to reduce and treat stormwater, to protect the waterways and to reduce/prevent flooding.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the City’s zoning ordinance and development controls to include incentives for using best management practices and green building technologies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>City (to update controls)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants to establish best management practices</li> <li>Work with developers to include this in the design of their projects</li> </ul>



# TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION PLAN

To create a well-balanced and efficient transportation and circulation system for vehicles, pedestrians/bicyclists, and public transit, the following have been identified as key areas of focus. If implemented over the next 10 to 15 years, a well-balanced transportation system will be in place.

## Transportation & Circulation

### Areas of Focus

- Budget for and improve the conditions of streets and sidewalks throughout the city. Ensure they are maintained, and snow is removed.
- Construct an interconnected trails and sidewalk system throughout the city that links residential neighborhoods to community facilities.
- Support and improve public transit service to increase the number of routes and destinations served while also improving bus shelters within the city.
- Minimize unnecessary curb cuts, and promote access management along main corridors throughout the city.
- Erect wayfinding and directional signage at key intersections in the city to improve wayfinding for visitors entering the city.
- Implement complete streets policy techniques and design standards that create streets that better accommodate vehicles, public transit and pedestrians/bicyclists.
- Support existing boat slips and attract/construct new slips and marinas to increase boating opportunities in the city.
- Close River Street and establish Riverview Drive as the primary north-south route along the St. Joseph River.
- Work with the airport to support its current operations and to encourage increased passenger and freight operations to create a regional transportation hub.
- To control traffic, and to reduce cut-through traffic within residential neighborhoods, utilize traffic calming measures.
- Explore the potential of a parking structure.
- Pursue the development of a train station.

## Transportation and Circulation Classification

### Principal Arterials

Principal Arterials generally carry long distance, through-travel movements. They also provide access to important traffic generators, such as major airports or regional shopping centers. BL-94 (Main Street), M-139 (Fair Avenue), and Pipestone Street are classified as principal arterials.

### Minor Arterials

Similar in function to Principal Arterials, except they generally carry trips of shorter distance and to lesser traffic generators. There are many road segments in the City that are classified as Minor Arterials including M-63, Territorial Road, Paw Paw Avenue, Britain Avenue, 2nd Street, Klock Avenue, Colfax Avenue, Empire Avenue and Riverview Drive.

### Collector Streets

Collectors tend to provide more access to property than do arterials. Collectors also funnel traffic from residential areas to arterials.

### Local Streets

Local roads primarily provide access to property. A majority of City streets are classified as Local Streets.

### Boat Launch Sites

This Plan recommends relocating the existing St. Joseph River boat launch to a new waterway that will allow for more open space along the river.

### Boat Slips

Potential areas for new boat slips along the St. Joseph and Paw Paw Rivers.

### Existing Traffic Signal

Current signalized intersections. The City should continue to monitor traffic flow to study if new signals are needed.

### Roundabout

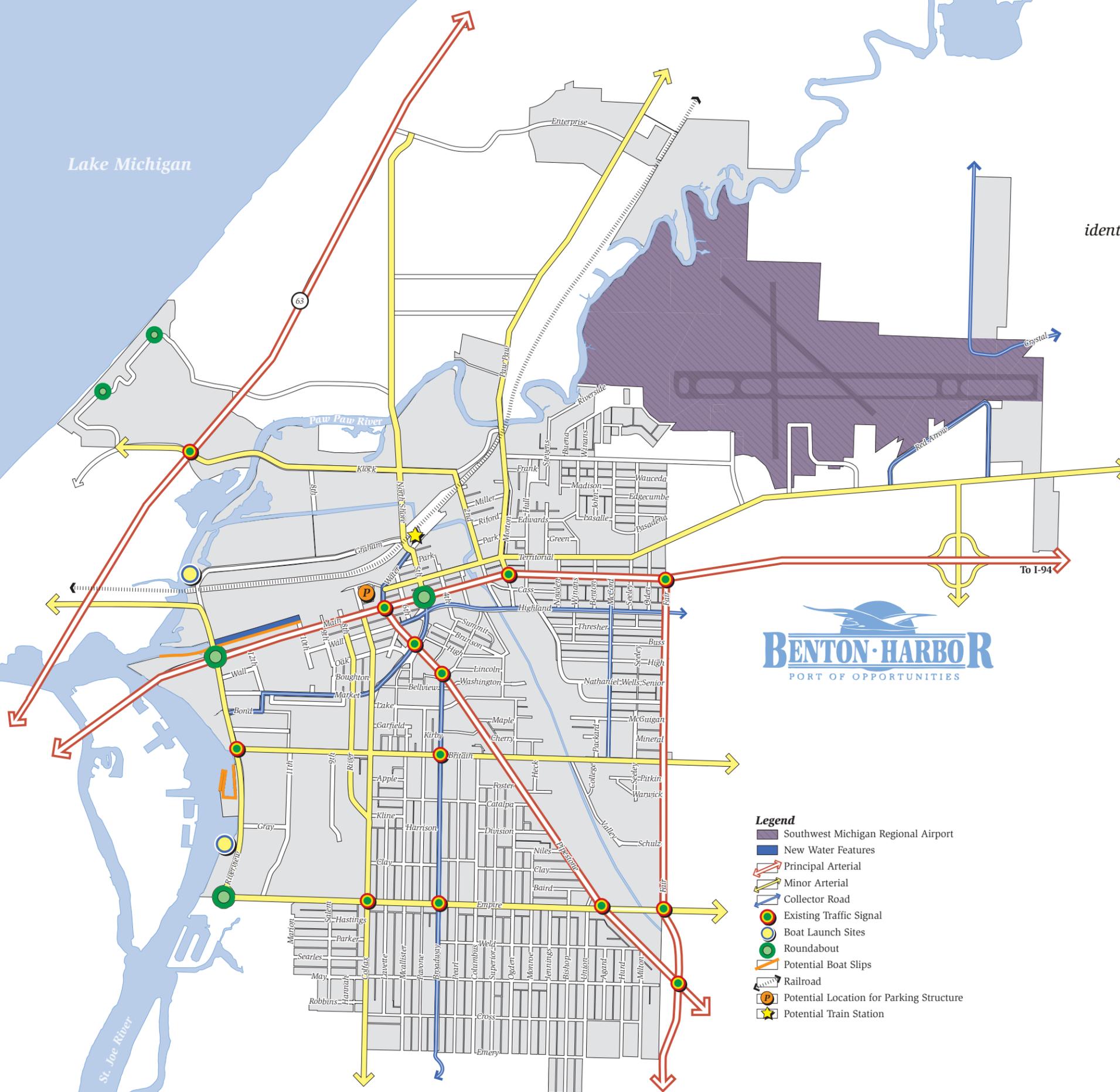
A Roundabout, or traffic circle, is a circular intersection where traffic moves in one direction around a central island. The City should monitor traffic flow to determine if new roundabouts are needed.

### Potential Parking Structure

When demand arises, a future parking structure serving the Downtown/Arts District should be explored in the area.

### Potential Train Station

The City should pursue the establishment of a train station near the Downtown/Arts District.



- Legend**
- Southwest Michigan Regional Airport
  - New Water Features
  - Principal Arterial
  - Minor Arterial
  - Collector Road
  - Existing Traffic Signal
  - Boat Launch Sites
  - Roundabout
  - Potential Boat Slips
  - Railroad
  - Potential Location for Parking Structure
  - Potential Train Station

There is a strong interrelationship between the road system and land use patterns. Transportation routes within the City affect the movement of people and can shape the very character of the community. Successful commercial corridors should be free of unsightly clutter and be easy to navigate, while streets in residential areas should encourage drivers to intuitively drive at a low speed.

The transportation network includes not only the roadway system for automobiles, but also transit vehicles and sidewalks and pathways for non-motorized traffic. The adequacy of a road may influence development and redevelopment trends along a given route. Conversely, the type and intensity of land use will strongly influence traffic volumes. Therefore, it is important to consider transportation when planning for the future to ensure that these interrelated systems can support the goals of the community.

This plan relies on a range of approaches to help ensure the future transportation system operates safely and efficiently, but also in context with the character of the City. The overall objective of the transportation plan is to provide a transportation system that:

- Supports the land use and economic development policies of the City;
- Promotes safe and efficient transportation movements; and,
- Supports multimodal transportation uses.

The City's transportation system connects property owners to their families, friends, neighbors, jobs, and communities. Transportation is also the key to economic development, connecting businesses with customers and suppliers. A more detailed analysis of the City's existing transportation conditions is included in the **Appendix** at the end of this report.

It is essential that the City creates a Transportation Plan which insures mobility, continued economic growth, desired quality of life for citizens and visitors alike, and promotes safe and balanced transportation choices. This includes maintaining and upgrading infrastructure and transportation systems within the City to meet the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. The goal of transportation management is to implement complete street policy techniques and design standards that create streets that better accommodate vehicles, public transit, and pedestrians/bicyclists.

**a. Budget for and improve the conditions of streets and sidewalks throughout the city. Ensure they are maintained and that snow is removed.**

The first step of the Transportation Plan should be to develop a database for City street and sidewalk conditions, maintenance schedule, and budget. Existing streets vary in condition, but generally all are in need of some level of maintenance, repair, or reconstruction. Reconstruction can be timed with future water/sewer or other construction projects.

The condition of all city streets and sidewalks should be improved throughout all areas of Benton Harbor. To assist the City, a Capital Improvement Program should be created and appropriate funds allocated to make necessary repairs and upkeep.

Part of the Capital Improvements Plan should be a Sidewalk Improvement Strategy that outlines the anticipated schedule for improving sidewalks within the community. Such a strategy would allow the City to appropriately budget for making the most necessary sidewalks improvements first, as funds become available. Potentially sidewalks that lead to schools, are in or near community facilities and shopping areas, or create safety concerns are examples of sidewalks that should be a high priority. As new development occurs, the City should require developers to install new sidewalks in front of their projects along the public rights of way.

**b. Construct an interconnected trails and sidewalk system throughout the city that links residential neighborhoods to community facilities.**

Benton Harbor should continue to create an interconnected trails system that connects residential neighborhoods to community facilities. The system should include a combination of off-street trails, on-street trails and city sidewalks.

To provide a comprehensive City trail system, it is recommended that the City develop/update a multi-use pathway plan that also incorporates larger regional trail plans. The trail plan should include:

- Conducting a comprehensive inventory and analysis of all non-motorized paths (i.e. existing trail system, sidewalk, cross walks).
- Identifying gaps in the current trail and sidewalk system.
- Identifying and prioritizing key areas and points of interest within the City that should be accessible.
- Prioritizing where and when new sidewalks should be built. Priorities for pathway and sidewalk construction should consider the relationship to the overall planned system; what are the most crucial links to community/activity centers, school, businesses, and neighborhoods; and aesthetic qualities along the roadway. Pathways should not necessarily be limited to public rights-of-way.
- Establishing routes that link parks, community facilities, schools, businesses, employment centers, and neighborhoods and provide connections in and outside the City.
- Establishing east-west connections to the waterfront and downtown along Highland, Britain, and Empire Roads.
- Establishing north-south connections for residential areas to the south of Main Street to downtown along Colfax, Broadway, and Pipestone Roads.
- Developing a 10-12 foot wide non-motorized path along Riverview Drive from Empire Road to Jean Klock Park.
- Investigating feasibility and cost of providing pedestrian greenways along water courses to link downtown, residential areas, and Lake Michigan.
- Identifying roads that are suitable for bicycling. Consider formally designating bike lanes along key routes.

The strategies outlined in the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study, Structure for Non-Motorized Transportation Subcommittee should be implemented where possible. In addition to ensuring a comprehensive system of sidewalks, pathways, and bike lanes, the City can accommodate non-motorized transportation by:

- Improving signalization specifically for pedestrian crossings.
- Ensuring ADA-compliant curb ramps are provided at all intersections.
- Installing/improving crosswalks at intersections and mid-block where appropriate.
- Ensuring consistent maintenance of facilities to repair cracks, holes, and other issues.
- Requiring site plans be designed to ensure the pedestrian will feel comfortable walking within a site or to neighboring properties.
- Reducing vehicle speeds to create a more walkable pedestrian friendly environment in appropriate locations.

In addition to the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study, the City should also continue to work with and implement the trail recommendations of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC). Currently, the SWMPC is updating its 9 County Bike Map. The update will facilitate the development of a comprehensive, regional non-motorized transportation plan for MDOT's Southwest Region. The City should continue to work with SWMPC on this project to ensure that the City's local trail plan is part of the overall 9-county non-motorized transportation vision. This will benefit both the City and the region in securing private and governmental funding for implementation.

As the trail system is developed, the City should follow the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards. The AASHTO standards are the industry standard for bicycle facility design.

It is important that the multi-use trail be designed with connectivity to residential neighborhoods and key destinations within the City. To encourage use, pedestrian connections should be made from the multi-use trail system to Downtown and the Arts District, Jean Klock Park, the riverfronts, public parks, schools, other community facilities, and employment centers.



**c. Support and improve public transit service to increase the number of routes and destinations served while also improving bus shelters within the city.**

The City should continue to support and promote efficient, affordable, and reliable public transit service. All new developments and redevelopments should incorporate provisions for public transit service.

It is important to consider transit as a valuable asset to the transportation system because it offers an alternative to the private automobile, especially for those without an automobile, offering an affordable form of transportation. The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) completed a comprehensive transit plan called “Berrien County Transit Study” in May 2009 ([http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/berrien\\_county\\_transit\\_study\\_final.pdf](http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/berrien_county_transit_study_final.pdf)). This plan identifies the role that transit can play within Berrien County. As the population ages, maintaining a strong transit system will grow increasingly important to assure the mobility of our senior population.

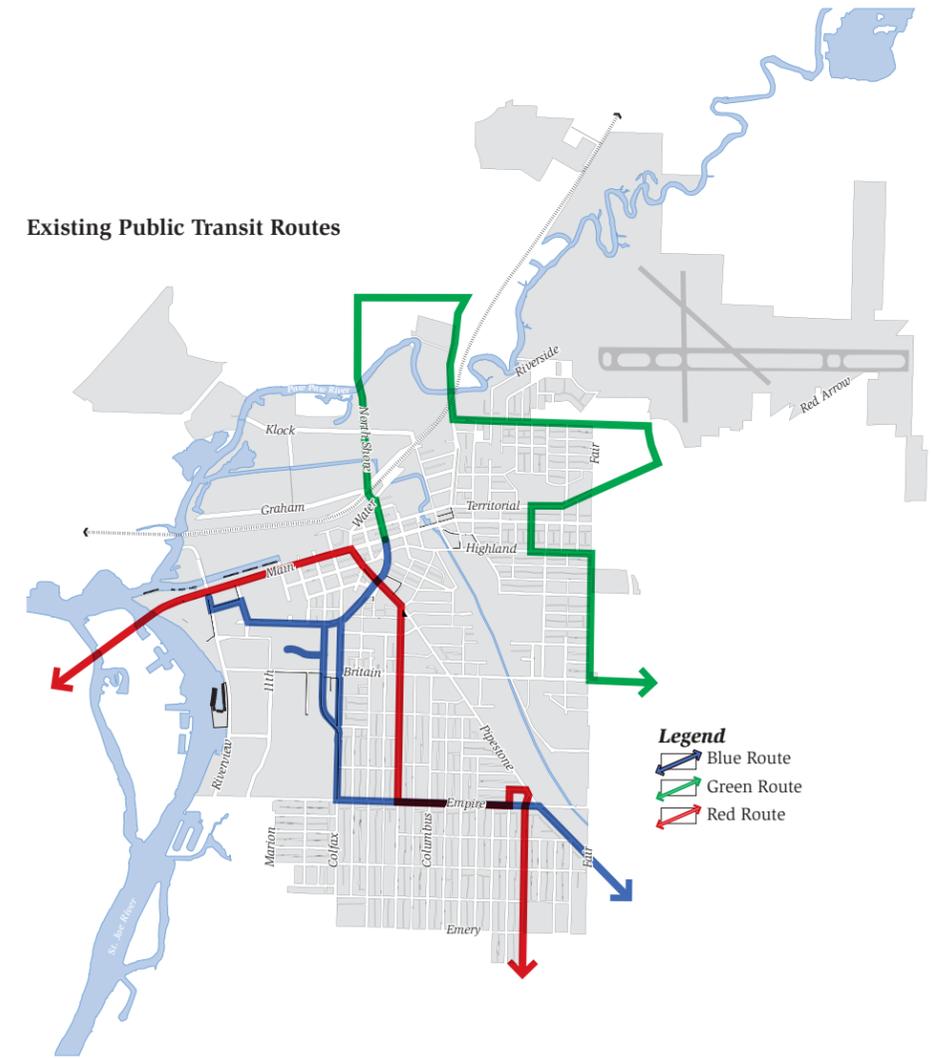
Within the City of Benton Harbor, the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) operates three fixed routes and provides dial-a-ride services. Funding is provided via fares and a millage, along with grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Transit routes should continue to coincide with existing and planned key destination points in the City, including shopping nodes and community facilities along these routes. Currently, the three fixed route coverage includes:

- Blue Route – provides service from downtown to a number of commercial destination southeast of downtown, covering the area southwest of Pipestone Street
- Green Route – provides weekday-only service from downtown to the commercial areas to the southeast of downtown, covering the area northeast of Pipestone Street
- Red Route – provides broader coverage, with more limited stops, to downtown Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, and the Stevensville park-and-ride lot

The City should also work with the Authority to construct improved bus shelters throughout the community at key locations. Throughout the planning process, residents often noted the need for more covered bus shelters, with lighting, improved seating and informational/ridership information displayed.

The following are key implementation strategies for improving public transit in Benton Harbor:

- Transit oriented design, which is an approach that assures pedestrian-friendly and bus-friendly locations and maneuverability, should be encouraged by developers to enhance transit opportunities.
- Continued evaluation is recommended to ensure that service is provided to needed areas of the City to serve particular segments of the population, such as the elderly and the physically challenged.
- Utilizing the service should be encouraged to cut down on vehicular traffic.
- The City should work in collaboration with the TCATA to improve public transit service by providing updated bus stops with shelters at key pick-up and drop-off locations and to increase the number of routes and destinations served as can be supported by the demand. One immediate consideration would be seasonal service to Jean Klock Park during the summer.
- Development along transit routes should be designed to support transit through increased intensity of development, improved pedestrian connections, and appropriate locations of buildings and parking. Sites should be designed so that multiple buildings are oriented toward one another, providing a focus for pedestrian connections and easy access transit stops.
- Surface parking should be located to the sides and back of buildings in a manner that still offers convenient vehicle parking without becoming the dominant feature of the site.



**d. Minimize unnecessary curb cuts, and promote access management along main corridors throughout the city.**

Access management, as defined by MDOT, is a set of proven techniques that help do the following:

- Reduce the number of crashes and improve safety;
- Reduce traffic congestion;
- Preserve the flow of traffic;
- Preserve the public investment in roads; and,
- Enhance the value of private land development.

Within the Benton Harbor, poor access management has resulted from incremental commercial development along major corridors where individual businesses have established their own separate driveways that are typically located within close proximity to one another. This issue raises safety concerns and impedes the flow of traffic.

The City should either create an Access Management Plan of its own or follow the key principles of access management when making land use and development decisions. Establishing and implementing a plan for access management will consolidate the number of access points along major roadways and enhance their ability to accommodate traffic. Access management improves safety and traffic flow for both automobiles and pedestrians.

**Access Management Strategies**

The following are key strategies that the City should include in its access management plan.

- Implement access management along arterial routes, consistent with MDOT’s Access Management Guidebook. Access management strategies may include: Restricted access driveways (right-in/right-out), limiting the number of conflict points, reducing curb cuts, shared drives, aligning drives on the opposite sides of streets, etc.
- The number of access points allowed along major roadways affects traffic flow, ease of driving, and crash potential. Every effort should be made to limit the number of driveways along major roadways and encourage access from adjoining streets. Frontage drives, rear service drives, shared driveways, and connected parking lots should be used to minimize the number of access points, while preserving the property owner’s right to reasonable access.
- Along commercial corridors, rear yard parking lots should be shared and alleys or rear service drives used to connect adjacent commercial sites. Those developments which generate enough traffic or have sufficient frontage to warrant more than one driveway should locate these second access points on a side street or create a shared access point with adjacent uses where practical.

**Implementation**

An access management plan will aid in decreasing accidents, increasing efficiency, and improving the look and character of corridors throughout the City. Creating an access management plan before development occurs provides clarity to private property owners and can help ensure successful implementation of recommendations. According to MDOT, the following actions are recommended to improve access management:

- Notify MDOT of local rezoning or changes in land use along state routes.
- Include MDOT in local site plan review and approval processes for projects along state routes.
- Applications for driveway permits should be reviewed by road agencies prior to the site plan approval.
- Roadway reconstruction and resurfacing projects need to adequately address access issues.
- Access management education should be made available about traffic impacts that result from local land use decisions.

It is important to note, that the City should work closely with MDOT along streets within the State’s jurisdiction. Representatives from MDOT, the City, and design consultants should work together to evaluate proposed improvements such as traffic signal spacing, geometric design, and restrictions on driveways and median openings. All modes of transportation (pedestrians, bicycles, private automobiles, commercial trucks, and transit) should be considered in evaluating access management.



**e. Erect wayfinding and directional signage at key intersections to improve wayfinding for visitors entering the City.**

To assist resident and visitor mobility through the community, directional and wayfinding signage should be installed at key locations. This type of signage creates a sense of place by assisting with pedestrian and automobile traffic flow through Benton Harbor and to specific sites/locations. Examples include exit/entrance signage, community facility and park locations, schools, athletic fields, the Arts District, bike trails, and Downtown.

Currently, the City has wayfinding and signage in some locations, however, these signs should be improved and additional signs installed at key points to improve wayfinding. Wayfinding signage not only helps to establish an identity for the area, but will also enhance the City’s branding efforts.

The City should begin to work with property owners to acquire easements, or agreements to install wayfinding signage at key intersections. The City should also work with other governmental agencies and utilities to install directional signage within street right-of way.

**Gateways**

The entryway into the City provides visitors their first, and sometimes strongest, impression of the City. It is a reflection of its residents and businesses. Therefore, attractive gateway features should be considered at the City boundary of all state highways and principle arterial roadways, specifically at the intersections of:

- Main Street eastbound at St. Joseph River
- State Highway 63 southbound at Klock Road
- Main Street (BL-94) westbound at Fair Avenue
- Empire Avenue westbound at Fair Avenue
- Pipestone Avenue northwestbound at Fair Avenue

These points represent where the heaviest traffic flow occurs around the City’s edge. Entryway treatments would establish an identity for the City for the greatest numbers of people with visually attractive signage, facades, lighting, and landscaping. Entryway signage helps to attract and direct visitors, and serves to define the “edge” of a community. The community may benefit from clarifying and establishing a unique identity through entryway treatments.

Secondary entryway locations could be added at minor arterial entry points into the City, including:

- Paw Paw Avenue southbound at Enterprise Way
- Territorial Road westbound at Fair Avenue
- Riverview Drive northbound at Empire Avenue
- Colfax Avenue northbound at Emery Avenue
- Britain Avenue westbound at Fair Avenue

**Wayfinding**

In addition to entryway features, a comprehensive wayfinding system is recommended to improve accessibility for residents, visitors, and workers within the City. Wayfinding and directional signage at key intersections and routes should be implemented within the City to help visitors and residents locate the downtown and the various districts within the City (waterfront, riverfront, neighborhoods, parks, etc.).

Wayfinding is provided by a consistent signage system that points travelers in the direction of their destination. It is important that all these signs look the same because the sign becomes a “brand” and the user quickly learns what to look for to find the next piece of information. Entryway treatments previously discussed are also a form of wayfinding because it indicates arrival to the destination.

*Example of Wayfinding Signage (Milwaukee, Wisc.)*



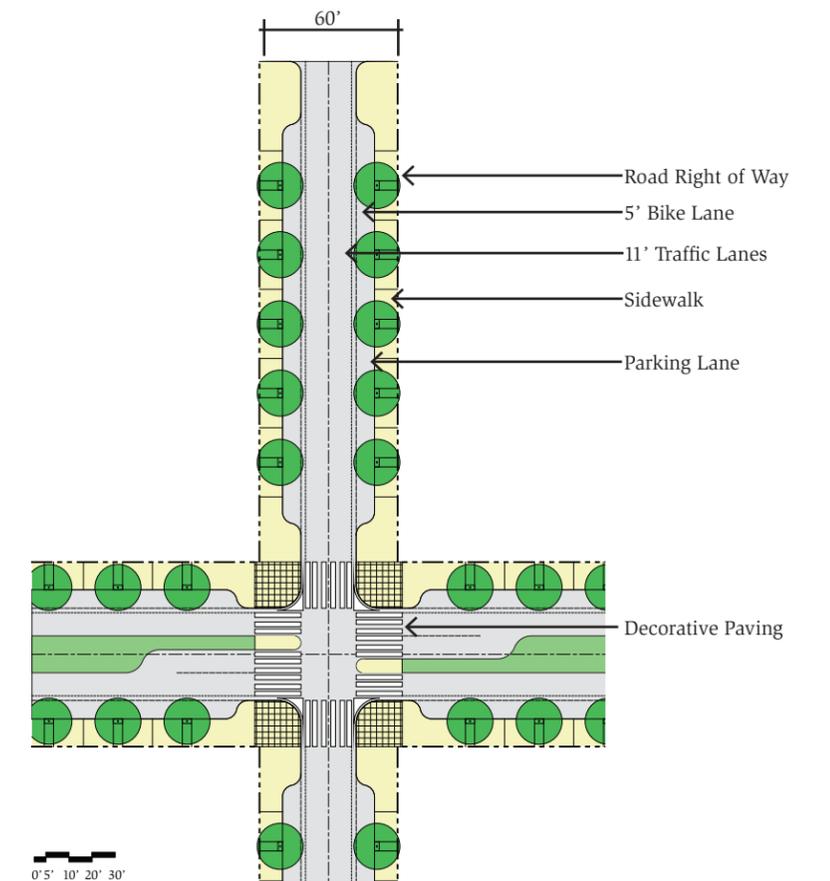
**f. Implement complete streets policy techniques and design standards that create streets that better accommodate vehicles, public transit and pedestrians/bicyclists.**

Complete streets is a term that promotes streets that are safe and convenient for all users, including vehicles, pedestrians, public transit riders, and bicyclists. Promoting pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit as an alternative to the automobile reduces negative environmental impacts and promotes healthy living.

The City should ensure that all future street projects, including design, planning, reconstruction, and rehabilitation be designed in a balanced, responsible, and equitable fashion. These street projects should accommodate and encourage travel by bicyclists, public transit riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

In addition to utilizing complete streets policy and techniques for local streets, the city should work with MDOT to undertake these techniques when improving state routes through Benton Harbor.

**Example of Complete Streets Components**



**g. Support existing boat slips and attract/construct new slips and marinas to increase boating opportunities in the City.**

The City of Benton Harbor's location along the St. Joseph and Paw Paw Rivers creates a tremendous opportunity for attracting boaters to the area. The Land Use Plan recommends improving existing public boat launches and adding new launches as well as additional boat slips.

The Plan recommends that the existing Benton Harbor Boat Launch be relocated within a larger redevelopment of the entire area, and the existing launch combined with its large surface parking area be converted to park space and additional boat slips. This would improve public access, create green space, and provide additional boat slips.

The City should also encourage the creation of additional boat slips and marinas wherever possible along the rivers and in the Harbor Shores development. The Land Use Plan supports the proposed Harbor Shores boat launch on the Paw Paw River. The Plan also recommends that additional boat slips be installed along the potential extension of the ship canal and the waterway from the St. Joseph River. Providing public boat slips and a boat launch near the Benton Harbor High School will create opportunities for the nearby residential neighborhoods to access the water.

**h. Close River Street and establish Riverview Drive as the primary north-south route along the St. Joseph River.**

To create a larger redevelopment site along the St. Joseph River, this plan recommends closing River Street. Currently, all of the properties that use River Street are vacant. An existing Chase Bank building does have an access point on the south end of River Street, however, the property also has two additional access points on Riverview Drive. Closing River Street would shift the primary north-south access along the St. Joseph River to Riverview Drive. A traffic study may be needed to determine if any changes are required for Riverview Drive. This could also entail developing plans for the redevelopment of the riverfront.

As part of the recent Main Street improvements, a roundabout was constructed at the intersection of Main Street and Riverview Drive. Establishing Riverview Drive as the primary route would further strengthen the area as a "gateway" into the City.

If River Street is closed, streetscaping should be improved along Riverview Drive. Landscaped medians do exist along this segment of the road, however, the medians are in need of improvement, the street surface is in need of repair, and overhead utility lines should be buried. If large redevelopment projects occur in this area, these streetscaping improvements should be tied into a combined street resurfacing project.

**i. Work with the airport to support its current operations and to encourage increased passenger and freight operations.**

The Southwest Michigan Regional Airport is an important asset for the community. The City should continue to strengthen and market the airport as a regional transportation hub.

The City should continue to work with the City of St. Joseph (joint ownership) and the Southwest Regional Airport Authority to support the airports operations. Having representation on the Southwest Regional Airport Authority is an excellent opportunity to ensure ongoing communication with members from St. Joseph, St. Joseph Charter Township, Benton Charter Township, Royalton Township, and Lincoln Charter Township. In addition to supporting airport activity, an overall goal of the City should be to encourage light industrial, office, and distribution businesses to locate near the airport. The City should work with other agencies, such as Cornerstone Alliance, to market and attract desirable businesses to locate near the airport.

If passenger service operations are increased, and if a future train station is constructed in the City, providing bus transit service between the airport and the Downtown area should also be pursued.



**j. To control traffic, and to reduce cut-through traffic within residential neighborhoods, utilize traffic calming measures.**

Traffic calming is a way to visually and physically impede speeding in residential areas. The physical change in the road parameters and the psychological change in the “feel” of the road reduce the speed of vehicles. Traffic calming measures are generally separated into two groups:

1. Volume control measures which attempt to address cut-through by blocking certain movements.
2. Speed control measures which cause drivers to slow-down and be more attentive.

Some of the common traffic calming measures described in this section may be appropriate in certain situations within the City after considering a number of factors such as traffic volumes, cost, maintenance, and impact on emergency access.

For practical reasons, only vertical and horizontal narrowing techniques are presented as they are the most pertinent and cost-effective for traffic calming. While horizontal deflection techniques (e.g. traffic circles, roundabouts, chicanes, etc.) have been used effectively along Main Street and Riverview Drive, such techniques are less applicable in residential areas and are not presented here. An excellent resource of information about traffic calming is the web site [www.trafficcalming.org](http://www.trafficcalming.org).

- **Speed Humps.** Speed humps are raised areas across a roadway that are intended to reduce vehicular speed and are designed according to a safe vehicle speed (15 to 20 mph). They are raised between 2 to 4 inches in height and are 14 to 22 feet in length. Specifications on speed hump design are site specific and dimensions are unique to each location. Speed humps are relatively inexpensive (\$2000-2500) and an effective means to slow vehicle speeds. Studies have shown a decrease of 20-25% in vehicle speeds, usually very near the 25 mph posted speed of residential areas. Speed humps have the disadvantage of providing a rough ride for all drivers and they can require regular maintenance in areas damaged by snow plows.

- **Speed Tables and Raised Crosswalks.** These measures, similar to speed humps, are constructed with a table or flat portion in the center. Speed tables have an extended flat section and provide a smoother ride than a speed hump. They can create a street environment that is pedestrian-friendly by being used in combination as a raised crosswalk. They provide visual enhancement, reduce vehicle speed, and enhance the use of non-motorized transportation. Their design is identical to speed humps, with the extra wide flat section on top that varies from a few feet to 8 to 10 feet wide for a raised crosswalk. Speed tables do not slow vehicles as significantly as speed humps and installation costs are slightly higher as well.

**Street Narrowing, Bump Outs, or Chokers.**

There are a variety of curb modifications and landscaping features which can be used to narrow the traveled portion of a street. These features are often installed at intersections to reduce speed and/or redirect traffic or at mid-block locations where curb extensions create areas for on-street parking. They provide larger areas for landscaping, enhance the neighborhood, facilitate loading and unloading, and optimize the pedestrian crossing locations. These facilities do require bicyclists to briefly merge with vehicles and eliminates some on-street parking.

- **Center Island Narrowings.** Similar to the previous group, but the narrowing is accomplished by placing a center island to narrow the roadway. These too can be landscaped and be used as gateways into neighborhoods and pedestrian crossing refuges. They have similar installation costs, benefits, and disadvantages as bump outs. Center island narrowings can also limit the use of snow removal equipment.

- **Street Closures.** Street closures are an option to eliminate cut-through traffic, but are highly constrictive and affect the network traffic flow by eliminating neighborhood traffic from using the street as well. Street closures are generally applicable only where there are extreme issues with traffic volumes, other traffic calming measures have proven to be ineffective, and access to homes and businesses can be otherwise provided. Another option in this realm includes partial closure by providing a dead end, essentially creating an artificial cul-de-sac to maintain access but eliminate cut-through traffic.

- **Limiting Turning Movements.** Limiting turning movements to and/or from a street during peak hours can be used to reduce cut-through traffic. These restrictions are generally enforced with signage that prohibits certain movements at intersections only during certain time periods and days of the week. This access management technique can also be used to improve safety for vehicles and pedestrians.

- **Perimeter Treatments.** Visual and physical treatments can be used to communicate a message to drivers entering a residential neighborhood to slow down. Traffic signs, intersection narrowing, boulevards, textured pavement surfaces such as brick or stamped concrete, and landscaping features are often used to create this effect. Entry treatments are used to increase driver awareness to changes in roadway environment and speed limit reductions in for local streets.

It is important to highlight the presence of traffic calming measures by landscaping and treating the street edges. These measures complement the engineering design by softening the appearance of speed humps and enhancing the appearance of more aesthetic measures such as chicanes and traffic circles. Also, landscaping measures can enhance engineering measures and make them more effective and safer by highlighting their presence. Traffic calming devices should be designed in coordination with emergency services to ensure that safe emergency vehicle access is maintained to all areas. Details such as mountable curbs and gutters can often help resolve access problems. A risk management program should be implemented to minimize liability issues through proper location, design, signage, marking and lighting of traffic calming devices.

The balance between a pedestrian-friendly community and providing safe and efficient movement for vehicular traffic needs to be maintained. Where streets and roads run through areas with high pedestrian traffic (downtown, neighborhoods, etc.), traffic calming should be considered to improve pedestrian safety and control vehicle speeds.

The goal of the City should be to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety by implementing calming devices to reduce vehicle speeds and protect pedestrians. Traffic calming measures should be examined from an area-wide perspective and a comprehensive traffic calming program to provide more walkable neighborhoods and streets, especially along roads that may parallel busy arterial should be developed. Traffic calming measures should be used as speed controls rather than volume controls to prevent the diversion of through-traffic to parallel residential streets.

**k. Explore the Potential of a Parking Structure**

As parking demand rises and the amount of developable land within Downtown and the Arts District lessens a parking structure should be considered. Due to the cost of constructing a parking structure the City should explore public/private partnerships to build and maintain such a facility.

A potential location is illustrated behind the Arts District, north of Main Street, near Colfax Avenue. This location would provide parking within walking distance (1/2 mile) of the majority of the Downtown area and all of the Arts District.

**l. Pursue the development of a train station.**

The City should pursue the development of a train station to improve public transit and transportation options in the community.

A potential location is illustrated within the Arts District near the site of the original train station. If this train station is constructed, the City should work with other transit agencies to ensure bus service route connections are established.



Example of Train Station (Tinley Park, Illinois)

# TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for improving transportation and circulation throughout the community. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funded through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.



Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Budget for and improve the conditions of streets and sidewalks throughout the city. Ensure they are maintained, and snow is removed.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Capital Improvement Plan to budget and schedule maintenance</li> <li>Upkeep of existing amenities</li> <li>Require developers to install sidewalks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City working with property owners/developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants for funding park renovations</li> </ul>
Construct an interconnected trails and sidewalk system throughout the city that links residential neighborhoods to community facilities.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify parcels that should be acquired, or where easements should be acquired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners and developers, and County</li> <li>Southwest Michigan Planning Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants to create the interconnected trails system</li> </ul>
Support and improve public transit service to increase the number of routes and destinations served while also improving bus shelters within the city.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to meet with the Twin City Dial Transit Authority (Dial-a-ride)</li> <li>Assist in identifying locations for additional service, particularly, where larger developments are planned in the future</li> <li>Coordinate location of improved bus shelters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Twin City Dial Transit Authority</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Transit riders</li> <li>County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time to coordinate activities</li> <li>Pursue grants for shelter improvements</li> </ul>
Work with the airport to support its current operations and to encourage increased passenger and freight operations.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zoning and development controls</li> <li>Market parcels for light industrial use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Southwest Regional Airport Authority</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time to coordinate activities and representation on Authority</li> </ul>
Minimize unnecessary curb cuts, and promote access management along main corridors throughout the city.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with MDOT to coordinate access management</li> <li>Consider creating an Access Management Plan or follow the principles of access management</li> <li>Review development proposals for compatibility and identify improvement areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>County</li> <li>MDOT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time to coordinate activities and to review proposed land use plans to ensure compatibility</li> </ul>
Erect wayfinding and directional signage at key intersections in the City to improve wayfinding for visitors entering the City.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a consistent sign theme and design</li> <li>Locate and erect signs at key locations</li> <li>Pursue easements/acquisitions for placement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Artisans</li> <li>Property owners (private and public)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal costs, including construction and staff time</li> </ul>
Implement complete streets policy techniques and design standards that create streets that better accommodate vehicles, public transit and pedestrians/bicyclists.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review development proposals for compatibility</li> <li>Plan for complete streets as part of city street resurfacing projects wherever feasible</li> <li>Work with MDOT to ensure complete streets policy implemented on State Routes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>County</li> <li>MDOT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants to implement techniques</li> <li>Work with developers to utilize complete streets policy in their developments</li> </ul>
Support existing boat slips and attract/construct new slips and marinas to increase boating opportunities in the city.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work towards the addition of new boat slips and marinas</li> <li>Work with developers to create new waterways as envisioned</li> <li>Work with the school district to utilize marinas/boat slips as educational opportunities</li> <li>Market the boat slips, launches and marinas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Harbor Shores (proposed boat launch)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time to coordinate activities</li> <li>Pursue grants to build additional boating slips, boat launches, and marinas</li> </ul>
Close River Street and establish Riverview Drive as the primary north-south route along the St. Joseph River.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct preliminary engineering to close River Street</li> <li>Ensure appropriate access and egress</li> <li>Market the redevelopment site for development or public open space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjacent property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include in the City's Capital Improvements Program, or require future developers to complete as part of larger redevelopment project.</li> </ul>
To control traffic, and to reduce cut-through traffic within residential neighborhoods, utilize traffic calming measures.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider traffic control measures in street repairs and new road construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include in the City's CIP</li> <li>State and Federal funding sources</li> <li>As part of private development projects</li> </ul>
Study the potential of a parking structure.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study the potential demand, location and costs</li> <li>Explore public/private partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers, property owners and businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultant services for study</li> <li>Pursue public/private partnership for construction, maintenance and operation</li> </ul>
Pursue the development of a train station.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin communications with rail company and Amtrak</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rail company, Amtrak, property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the rail company and Amtrak to identify potential funding sources</li> </ul>

# URBAN DESIGN & COMMUNITY CHARACTER

To improve the overall appearance, image, and character of Benton Harbor, the following have been identified as key areas of focus. If implemented over the next 10 to 15 years, the image, design, and community character will be greatly improved.

## Urban Design & Community Character

### Areas of Focus

- a. Implement streetscaping improvements along key corridors.
- b. Build upon the City's heritage and founding character by identifying and targeting architecturally significant and aesthetically pleasing structures throughout the City that should be prioritized for rehabilitation and reuse.
- c. Design and implement a city gateway enhancement initiative to announce arrival into the city at key locations.
- d. Develop and implement a wayfinding signage throughout city to assist motorists and pedestrians/bicyclists.
- e. Encourage high-quality design and construction for all new developments in the city.
- f. Improve the appearance of existing commercial and industrial buildings and properties through façade improvement programs, relocation of incompatible uses from highly-visible sites, or improved screening and buffering.
- g. Identify key intersections for improvements including landscaping, pedestrian lighting, benches, pedestrian cross-walks. (possibly unique/neighborhood designs)

## Urban Design Classification

### Existing Gateway

Identifies the City's existing gateway features. Currently, these are primarily stand-alone signs, with the addition of an art display along the St. Joseph River and Main Street. The City should not only add new gateway features as proposed, but should also improve and add to existing gateways (i.e. improved landscaping, signage, and decorative lighting).

### Proposed Gateway

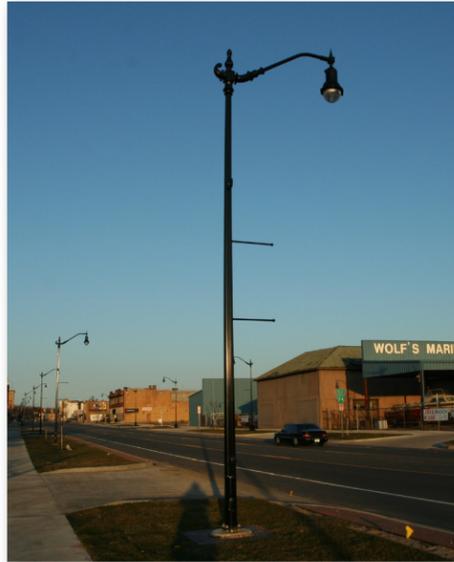
Gateways into the City should include an appropriate entry monument sign with high-quality landscaping that identifies the City of Benton Harbor and welcomes people to the community. These gateway features should relate specifically to the site and should emphasize and symbolize the qualities of the community which set the tone for the architectural quality expected in the City.

### Streetscape Enhancements

The City's primary corridors should be improved through the implementation of a streetscape enhancement program. Public rights-of-way should be improved with street trees, parkways, connecting sidewalks, pedestrian and vehicular-scaled lighting, improved pedestrian cross-walks, banners, plantings, street furniture, and other pedestrian amenities. An attractive streetscape will maintain and improve the City's overall character, image, and identity.



- Legend**
- Existing Gateway
  - Proposed Gateway
  - Streetscape Enhancements
  - Railroad



**a. Implement streetscaping improvements along key corridors**

In a similar design as what has recently been completed along Main Street, the City's key corridors, (those along collector or arterial streets), should be improved with streetscape enhancements. Public rights-of-way should be improved with street trees, grass parkways, connecting sidewalks, pedestrian and vehicular scaled lighting, improved pedestrian cross-walks, banners, plantings, street furniture, and other pedestrian amenities.

An attractive streetscape can have a tremendous impact on the overall character, image, and identity of a community. In addition to key corridors, the City should also extend streetscaping into residential neighborhoods. Streetscaping would create a sense of connection with the neighborhoods, beautify local streets, and provide a public improvement project that directly benefits residents.

In addition to streetscaping, the City should work with utility companies to bury overhead utility lines. Overhead utility lines run through the majority of the city's key corridors including Main Street and Pipestone Street. Burying the overhead utilities would greatly improve the appearance of the corridors. Although burying overhead utilities is an expensive project, the City should coordinate with utility companies to include the burying of utilities into planned street resurfacing or right-of-way improvements.

Also, the City should require developers and utility companies to screen utility boxes from the street either through landscaping, fencing, or both. The existing utility station at 304 West Main Street should also be better screened, especially due to its highly visible location along Main Street.

**b. Build upon the city's heritage and founding character by identifying and targeting architecturally significant and aesthetically pleasing structures throughout the city that should be prioritized for rehabilitation and reuse.**

As a component of the urban design and community character plan, the City should continue to maintain and promote its heritage by identifying important buildings to prioritize for rehabilitation and reuse. By doing so, future development and policy decisions will lead to the preservation and education of the past through architecture and building form. As stated throughout, wherever possible, high-quality structures possessing desirable architectural character should be reused as opposed to new construction that may not fit into the existing character of the neighborhood.

Many buildings along Main Street, in the downtown area, within residential neighborhoods, and along Pipestone Avenue have unique architectural elements. Whenever these structures can be preserved, renovated, and reused, the City should encourage their preservation. The current architectural style and urban design of many of these buildings adds to the character and identity of the City.



**c. Design and implement a City gateway enhancement initiative to announce arrival into the city at key locations.**

Gateways/Entry features should be installed at key entry points at the City limits to notify both residents and visitors that they are now entering the City of Benton Harbor. These gateway features should include attractive monument signage, appropriate lighting, and well-designed and maintained landscaped features such as plantings and seasonal flowers. In addition to installing new gateway features, the City should also improve existing gateway features.

*Example of Gateway Feature (River Forest, Illinois)*



**d. Develop and implement a wayfinding signage throughout city to assist motorists and pedestrians/bicyclists.**

In addition to City-wide gateway features, the City should install wayfinding signage to assist circulation. These signs should be installed at locations to direct motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians to community facilities and destinations. Signs should be installed along the multi-use trail system and at key intersections to direct trail users and visitors to key destinations including the Arts District, the Downtown area, and schools. These signs will help improve wayfinding and add to the community's "sense of place".

*Example of Wayfinding Signage (St. Charles, Illinois)*



**e. Encourage high-quality design and construction for all new developments.**

Zoning standards, development regulations, and design guidelines should be established to prescribe a specific built form and quality-design for all new developments. Specific architectural elements should be required in certain areas, such as within the Arts District, while other elements should be prohibited.

To encourage high-quality design and construction throughout the city will require improved zoning and development regulations. Certain areas, should be developed with specific goals in mind, such as within the Arts District and Downtown area. A physical “street wall” (where buildings are at or near the sidewalk) should be required along Main Street, the Arts District, and within other areas of downtown. Design guidelines should be created for key areas of the city, similar to what has been created to guide Harbor Shores, including commercial areas, downtown, and the Arts District. Design guidelines would help to ensure that future development and improvement results in a high quality and desired character.

**f. Improve the appearance of existing commercial and industrial buildings and properties through façade improvement programs, relocation of incompatible uses from highly-visible sites, or improved screening and buffering.**

To improve the overall appearance and image of Benton Harbor, the City should work with existing commercial and industrial property owners to improve the condition of their buildings. Many existing businesses along the City’s key corridors are in poor condition and are need of façade improvements. In addition to façades, overall sites should be improved with new parking areas, and improved screening and landscaping. The City should implement a Façade Improvement Program to assist property owners in building and site improvements.

**g. Identify key intersections for improvements including landscaping, pedestrian lighting, benches, and pedestrian cross-walks.**

The City should improve key intersections within the community with new streetscaping. By installing pedestrian cross-walks, pedestrian scaled lighting, landscaping, and benches, a pedestrian-friendly environment will be created. In addition, these key intersections, although based upon a consistent theme, could have more unique neighborhood designs/elements that will assist in building neighborhood pride.

*Example of Intersection Improvements  
(Glencoe, Illinois)*



*Example of Intersection Improvements  
(Naperville, Illinois)*



# URBAN DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for promoting high-quality urban design and community character. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funded through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.

Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Implement streetscaping improvements along key corridors.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Streetscape Improvement Plan</li> <li>Pursue funding to implement</li> <li>Identify improvements on a CIP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Residents and local businesses</li> <li>MDOT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants for construction</li> </ul>
Build upon the City's heritage and founding character by identifying and targeting architecturally significant and aesthetically pleasing structures throughout the City that should be prioritized for rehabilitation and reuse.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and target architecturally significant and aesthetically pleasing structures</li> <li>Market those properties for rehabilitation and reuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal costs, will require staff time</li> <li>Consider offering developer incentives for rehabilitating a targeted structures.</li> </ul>
Design and implement a city gateway enhancement initiative to announce arrival into the city at key locations.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Gateway Enhancement Initiative that includes the desired designs, themes, and materials for new gateway features.</li> <li>Identify if parcel acquisition or easements are required for the proposed locations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and local businesses</li> <li>Local Artisans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time to coordinate activities and consultant required to design features.</li> </ul>
Develop and implement a wayfinding signage throughout city to assist motorists and pedestrians/bicyclists.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Wayfinding Signage that includes the desired designs, themes, and materials.</li> <li>Identify locations for wayfinding signs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and local businesses</li> <li>Local Artisans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time to coordinate activities and consultant required to design features.</li> </ul>
Encourage high-quality design and construction for all new developments in the city.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zoning and development controls</li> <li>Create Design Guidelines to assist in the quality of new construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time to coordinate activities and consultant required to create design guidelines.</li> </ul>
Improve the appearance of existing commercial and industrial buildings and properties through façade improvement programs, relocation of in uses from highly-visible sites, or improved screening and buffering	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a Façade and Site Improvement Program</li> <li>Create Commercial Areas Design Guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local businesses</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time to coordinate activities and consultant required to create Commercial Areas Design Guidelines.</li> </ul>
Identify key intersections for improvements including landscaping, pedestrian lighting, benches, pedestrian cross-walks.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key intersections for improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Residents and property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue grants to implement the improvements</li> <li>Require developers to install improvements as part of larger redevelopment projects.</li> </ul>



# SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK PLAN

*To assist in meeting the City's environmental, social, and economic needs without compromising future generations to meet those needs, the following have been identified as key areas of focus to provide a guiding framework for sustainability in the community. If implemented over the next 10 to 15 years, the image, design, and community character will be greatly improved.*



### **Sustainability**

#### **Areas of Focus**

- a. As part of assisting in city policy and decision making, consider the three pillars of sustainability: 1) environment; 2) economy; and 3) society.
- b. Promote local food growing initiatives.
- c. Identify and protect environmental and ecologically sensitive areas of the city from the impact of development or adjacent development to include but not be limited to wooded areas, ravines, and waterways.
- d. Use smart growth principals, green building techniques, LEED certification, and best management practices in new developments.
- e. Promote recycling programs, policies, and education to increase recycling in the community.
- f. Encourage private sector reinvestment in green technologies and energy efficiencies and promote the use of alternative energy.
- g. Lessen the amount of water used and wastewater generated through reuse and use reduction.
- h. Educate the public, including elected and appointed officials regarding the importance of sustainability.

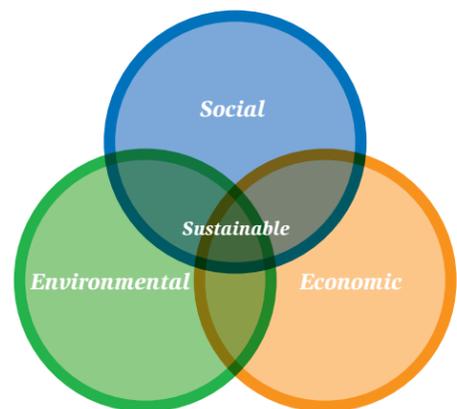
**a. As part of assisting in City policy and decision making, consider the three pillars of sustainability:**

- 1) environment;**
- 2) economy; and**
- 3) society.**

The City should support sustainable development and consider sustainability when making policy decisions. The term sustainability has many definitions and interpretations; however, most generally follow that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations which states: “sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

To meet the intent of this definition, it is generally accepted that it requires the reconciliation of environmental, social, and economic demands, which are referred to as the “three pillars” of sustainability. These pillars are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually reinforcing. As development proposals are brought to the City for consideration, decision-makers should identify how the project is expected to affect these three pillars. The City should work with the applicant to ensure that the project is environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable.

**Three Pillars of Sustainability**



**b. Promote local food growing initiatives.**

Benton Harbor has historically been a major distribution point for fruit in the country. The Master Plan recommends the following strategies to improving fruit distribution and overall local food services in the city: 1) attract a major grocery store; 2) promote urban gardening in the city; 3) support the Fruit Industry, Fruit Market and Farmers Market; and 4) work towards the recommendations of the City’s 2009 Local Food Plan.

1. The difficulty for residents to purchase quality, fresh produce was cited as an issue throughout the community outreach efforts. Currently, the majority of grocery shopping occurs within approximately eleven mini-marts within the City limits. In general, residents do not have a wide variety of fresh produce to choose from at these mini-marts. The City should actively pursue a major grocery store to locate within the City.
2. The City should work with local residents, gardeners, farmers, and businesses to promote local food growing initiatives. To promote urban gardening, this Plan recommends that the City locate urban gardens within proposed neighborhood greens within the residential neighborhoods.
3. The City should continue to support the fruit industry, Benton Harbor Fruit Market and the Farmers Market. The City should explore the potential of developing a fruit distribution hub in the City. A hub would attract industry, tourists, and local residents. Currently, the Farmers Market is held on Wednesdays at the Mercy Center. In addition to supporting this farmers market, the City should attract another farmers market held on another day elsewhere in the City, possibly in the downtown or Arts District.



4. In addition to developing urban gardening opportunities, the City should implement the recommendations of the City’s Local Food Plan prepared by Mr. Christopher Bedford in 2009. The following are the four goals of the City’s Local Food Plan.

- To provide a healthy diet for all people in Benton Harbor.
- To develop community food self-sufficiency.
- To create a just local food distribution system.
- To promote local food entrepreneurship and job creation.

According to the Local Food Plan, the City spent over \$35 million on food in 2008. An estimated \$18-20 million in the form of SNAP benefits (food stamps) mostly spent outside of the city. If the City was able to retain 10% of its food expenditures, household income might increase 20% on average. The Local Food Plan has four specific recommendations to assist the City in retaining 10% of its food expenditures.

- Develop urban gardens throughout the community.
- Create a local food distribution system including installation of EBT machines at the Farmers Market, development of a food mover truck to bring fresh food directly to residents.
- Develop a food business incubator at the Mercy Center.
- Create a food preservation and processing renaissance zone in the City to create a year-round local food supply.

It should also be an important goal of the City to support the sale of locally grown produce restaurants located in Benton Harbor and the region.

**c. Identify and protect environmental and ecologically sensitive areas of the city from the impact of development or adjacent development to include but not be limited to wooded areas, ravines, and waterways.**

Benton Harbor consists of heavily wooded areas, ravines, and waterways that add significantly to the character of the community. The City should work to not only preserve these areas, but also improve them through ongoing maintenance programs, or new recreational/leisure amenities such as multi-use trails, boardwalks, or environmental education signage. New developments along or within these areas should also incorporate the environmental features into their design whenever feasible.

The City should look to protect and restore habitat areas within the community. Wooded areas, wetlands, ravines, and waterways are examples of habitat areas that should be preserved.

Established woodlands areas should be protected to protect air, water and soil quality, to buffer air and noise pollution, to improve storm water infiltration, to moderate climate, and to preserve the aesthetics of the City. Woodlands are an important landscape feature that protects the health, safety and quality of life of Benton Harbor for residents.

Recently, as part of the Jean Klock Park renovation, a wetland area was restored as part of the golf course construction. The restoration of the wetland is an example of preserving and protecting environmental features and habitat areas. The Master Plan also recommends the preservation of the wetland between Britain Avenue and Empire Avenue, west of the High School. The City should work towards the preservation of the wetland and provide public access, environmental education opportunities, and a potential boardwalk.

**Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs)**

To assist in identifying the location of environmental and ecologically sensitive areas, the City should refer to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory for the SWMPC’s Green Infrastructure project. Potential Conservation Areas are located along the Paw Paw River Corridor and the Ox Creek Corridor. Both of these corridors are classified as having “high” potential conservation area ranking (on a scale of medium, high, higher, and highest). PCAs are defined as places dominated by native vegetation that has

various levels of potential for having high quality natural areas and unique natural features (visit [www.swmpc.org/swmi.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/swmi.asp) to see a map showing the locations of PCAs in the community).

**Watershed Protection and Improvement**

The City is located within the Paw Paw River and St. Joseph River Watersheds. As recommended throughout the Plan, the City should consider future developments effect on water quality and ensure that techniques are used to preserve and protect waterways. Protecting watershed resources protect the health, safety, and welfare of residents.

**Paw Paw River Watershed Management Plan (2008)**

The Management Plan identifies the Paw Paw River Watershed (PPRW) as a priority for protection and preservation among southern Michigan watersheds because a relatively high percentage of its natural land cover remains in spite of increasing development pressure throughout the region. The Nature Conservancy has identified the Paw Paw River mainstem and certain tributaries as high-quality representative aquatic systems important for conserving freshwater biodiversity in the Great Lakes Basin.

**Ox Creek**

Ox Creek is a warmwater stream that joins the Paw Paw River. The designated uses of warmwater fishery and other indigenous aquatic life and wildlife are impaired due to sedimentation, heavy metals and toxic organic compounds. The Ox Creek Watershed contains the most urbanized portion of the PPRW with over 2000 acres of impervious surface. Ox Creek is impacted by historic industrial uses which have contaminated land and groundwater. Further, insufficient management of stormwater runoff created by impervious surfaces leads to sedimentation, polluted runoff and altered hydrology. Currently, MDNRE and EPA are working on developing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) document to characterize pollutants and their sources. Then the TMDL will identify actions needed to attain water quality standards in Ox Creek.

To assist in protecting water quality, the City should consider appropriate recommendations in the Paw Paw River Management Plan. It is essential to plan for land uses with respect to existing natural features, soils, and drainage patterns to lessen the impacts to water quality.

A few municipalities within the Paw Paw River Watershed boundary have implemented specific protection regulations, however, the majority of the watershed does not have environmental overlay districts (including Benton Harbor). Some jurisdictions in the watershed do have ordinances that mandate building setbacks along water bodies which provides protection of water quality.

In the Management Plan, Benton Harbor is identified as a high priority urban management area, specifically the downstream portions of Ox and Sand Creek subwatersheds. High priority areas are considered to contain a majority of the urban related pollutant sources impairing or threatening water quality.

The following tasks are identified in the Management Plan to protect and improve water quality in the high priority urban areas:

**Tasks within 1-5 years**

- Utilize stormwater best management practices
- Enact stormwater and post construction control ordinances (refer to Low Impact Development for Michigan: A Design Guide for Implementation and Reviewers)
- Identify and correct illicit connections or discharges to stormwater systems
- Utilize best management practices for road maintenance
- Enact a phosphorus lawn fertilizer ban

**Tasks within 6-10 years**

- Increase or expand household hazardous waste disposal options
- Properly maintain and design municipal sewer system infrastructure

**St. Joseph River Watershed Management Plan**

In the fall of 2002, the Friends of the St. Joe River, a nonprofit were awarded a grant to develop a Watershed Management Plan for the entire St. Joseph River Watershed. The plan united stakeholders in both Michigan and Indiana in a concerted effort to address water quality issues and natural resource protection across jurisdictional boundaries. The fundamental objective of the project was to provide the community with a plan that facilitates and guides implementation of desired goals for water quality improvements and protection. Another important objective of the project was to create a management plan that met the EPA’s

new requirements for the quantification for the sources of pollutants and expected reductions in pollutants with the implementation of BMPs.

Overall, the City should implement plans and policies to improve and protect water resources:

- Protect stream corridors by utilizing riparian buffers to assist in flood control, protect the streambanks from erosion, remove pollutants from storm water runoff, provide food and habitat for wildlife, prevent sediment from settling, provide tree canopy to shade streams, and promote desirable aquatic organisms, scenic value and recreational opportunities.
- To improve flood control, the City should work with the County, adjacent communities, and the region to protect the floodplain.
- Wherever possible, the City should minimize impervious surface by utilizing green infrastructure and low impact development techniques.
- Encourage the use of native plants to protect air, land and water resource quality in new developments and redevelopments.

**d. Use smart growth principals, green building techniques, LEED certification, and best management practices (BMP) in new developments.**

**Use Smart Growth Principles**

The City should encourage the use of smart growth principles and best management practices for both public and private projects. As new development proposals are brought forward, the City should encourage developers and public agencies to follow the principles of smart growth.

The principles of smart growth are:

1. Create range of housing opportunities and choices
2. Create walkable neighborhoods
3. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration
4. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong a sense of place
5. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective
6. Mix land uses
7. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices

9. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities

10. Take advantage of compact building design (Source: Smart Growth Network)

**Utilize Best Management Practices**

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are a combination of conservation measures, structures, and management practices intended to prevent or reduce erosion and the amount of pollution entering the water system and minimize negative impacts on surface and groundwater flow. BMPs serve to minimize adverse impacts on neighboring land or water systems.

**Promote Low Impact Development (LID)**

The City should refer to the “*Low Impact Development Manual for Michigan*” written by Southeast Michigan Council of Governments as a guide. Low Impact Development (LID) is the cornerstone of stormwater management with the goal of mimicking a site’s presettlement hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source. The manual provides communities, agencies, builders, developers, and the public with guidance on how to apply LID to new, existing, and redevelopment sites.

**Encourage LEED certification.**

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certification is a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Coalition (USGBC) to certify “green” buildings and developments. A green building is generally defined as one that is environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building’s life-cycle. From conception to construction, the building’s materials and maintenance allow for high performance and sustainability.

Projects are evaluated on several elements of its design, construction and materials. There are four levels of LEED certification based on the number of credits a project earns during the evaluation process: LEED-Certified, LEED-Silver, LEED-Gold, and LEED-Platinum. The USGBC has recently created LEED-ND, a Neighborhood Development Rating System which integrates the principles of smart growth, urbanism and green building at the neighborhood level. The City should enact a green building ordinance or should revise their development review process to encourage or require green building techniques.

*Example of Best Management Practices (Lisle, Illinois)*



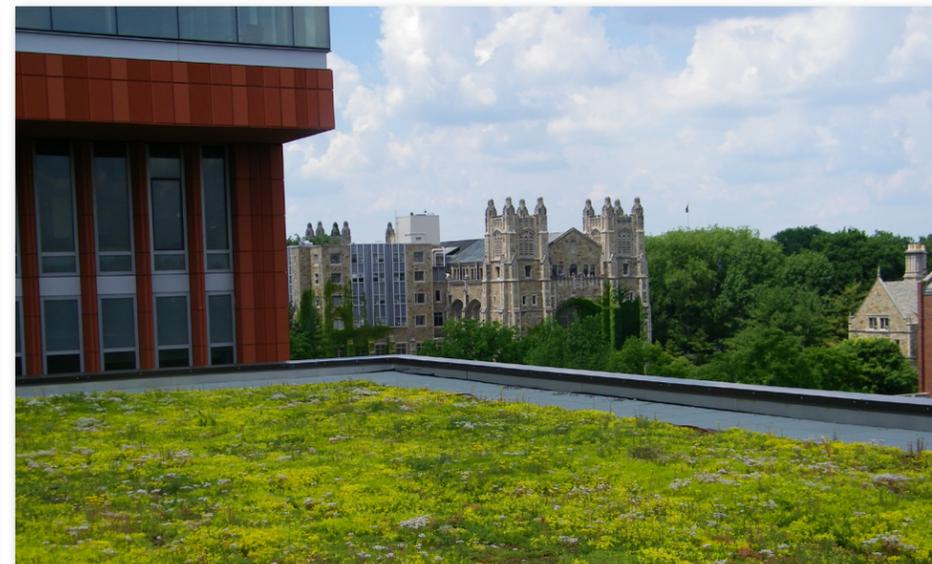
**Support Alternative Energy**

Residents and businesses should be encouraged to use alternative energy, such as solar and wind power, and other renewable energy sources. In an effort to support industries and businesses in using renewable energy, the City should explore the potential to designate Benton Harbor a Renewable Energy Renaissance Zone (RERZ). Designation as a RERZ can promote renewable energy operations in the city and enhance industry. These zones differ from Michigan’s original renaissance zones because they can be located anywhere in Michigan, but require a company located within a RERZ to have a its renewable energy facility located within that zone.

The City should educate the public regarding the benefits of alternative energy and work with developers to include these energy sources in their projects. The City should also explore the potential to begin to convert all City vehicles to hybrid or electric vehicles.

Implementing one, or a combination of these techniques, would allow the City to lead by example and show its commitment to the environment and sustainability.

*Example of Greenroof (University of Michigan)*



**e. Promote recycling programs, policies, and education to increase recycling.**

The City should work with other agencies, including the County and Township to promote recycling programs, policies and education. Increasing recycling opportunities for residents and business is a recommendation of the sustainability plan to lessen the amount of recyclable materials that go to area landfills. The City should explore the addition of different levels of recycling programs and their associated costs to determine what recycling programs are feasible. Recycling programs may be drop-off, or as demand increases, it may become feasible to implement city-wide pickup services. In addition to improving recycling programs, the City should also work with the school system to ensure that the benefits of recycling are taught to students.

The City should encourage businesses to reduce their overall use of materials while increasing their reliance on recycled materials. Commercial, office and industrial buildings should provide an easily accessible area that serves the entire building and is dedicated to the collection and storage of non-hazardous materials for recycling.

**f. Encourage private sector reinvestment in green technologies and energy efficiencies and promote the use of alternative energy.**

The City should promote increased energy efficiency for both new construction and upgrades to existing structures. The City should consider the creation of an environmental policy which deals specifically with energy-efficient building design and construction. Such a policy could outline the need to upgrade the energy efficiency of existing buildings. Part of this policy may be to improve programs assuring energy efficiency in new construction.

Builders and residents should be educated about the importance and cost-savings associated with energy efficient housing and City codes should be updated to allow for best management practices.

**g. Lessen the amount of water used and wastewater generated through reuse and use reduction.**

The City should work with residents, businesses, and public agencies to lessen the amount of water used and wastewater generated. Programs and policies to encourage reuse and reduction of water should be promoted by the City.

Access to clean water and improved sanitation is one of the key factors in improving health and economic productivity. To ensure access to clean water the City should establish polices and adequate infrastructure that prevents water degradation and improves the efficiency of water consumption. The City should encourage wastewater reuse which can assist in lessening the amount of water used and the amount of wastewater generated.

**h. Educate the public, including elected and appointed officials regarding the importance of sustainability.**

The City should take a leadership role in coordinating educational opportunities for the public, as well as elected and appointed officials about the importance of environmental sustainability. Hosting training seminars, workshops, and providing educational materials are examples of educational initiatives the City should pursue. Keeping the public and officials current on the latest trends and techniques being used to promote sustainability will assist in future decision making.

# SUSTAINABILITY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for promoting sustainability. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funded through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.



Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
As part of assisting in city policy and decision making, consider the three pillars of sustainability: 1) environmental; 2) social; and 3) economic sustainability.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a detailed Sustainability Plan</li> <li>Consider how a proposed project promotes sustainability</li> <li>Educate the public, staff, and developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Residents and local businesses</li> <li>Elected Officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Promote local food growing initiatives.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively pursue attracting a grocery store</li> <li>Work to promote urban gardening</li> <li>Locate urban gardens in neighborhoods</li> <li>Support the fruit industry</li> <li>Attract an additional farmers market</li> <li>Implement the recommendations of the Local Food Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Farmers and the farming/fruit growing community</li> <li>DDA and NTAA</li> <li>Mercy Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Identify and protect environmental and ecologically sensitive areas of the city from the impact of development or adjacent development to include but not be limited to wooded areas, ravines, and waterways.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve maintenance and open community access</li> <li>Preserve/purchase environmental areas</li> <li>Create a park plan/site plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and property owners</li> <li>Park and Recreation Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Use smart growth principals, green building techniques, low impact development, LEED certification, and best management practices in new developments.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate staff, officials, public and developers about Smart Growth principles</li> <li>Encourage smart growth</li> <li>Encourage best management practices</li> <li>Encourage LEED certification</li> <li>Promote Low Impact Development (LID)</li> <li>Support alternative energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and local businesses</li> <li>Staff and elected officials</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>USGBC</li> <li>Utility companies</li> <li>The County</li> <li>Michigan DNR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Promote recycling programs, policies, and education to increase recycling in the community.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote recycling programs</li> <li>Explore the addition of new programs</li> <li>Work with the school system to promote and educate recycling</li> <li>Encourage businesses to reduce waste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>Businesses</li> <li>Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Encourage private sector reinvestment in green technologies and energy efficiencies and promote the use of alternative energy.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote energy efficiency</li> <li>Create an Environmental Policy</li> <li>Educate builders and the public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local businesses</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> </ul>
Lessen the amount of water used and wastewater generated through reuse and use reduction.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish policies and adequate infrastructure</li> <li>Encourage wastewater reuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners and residents</li> <li>Businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Educate the public, including elected and appointed officials regarding the importance of sustainability.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host training seminars and workshops</li> <li>Provide educational materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff and elected officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local funding</li> </ul>

# COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

To support existing community service providers and to attract new community facilities into the City, the following have been identified as key areas of focus. Over the next ten years, if the City is successful in implementing these areas of focus, residents will enjoy excellent community facilities.

## Community Facilities

### Areas of Focus

- a. Support existing community facilities and service providers in their efforts to provide high-quality, affordable opportunities for residents.
- b. Actively pursue the development of a shared use indoor recreation facility with groups such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club.
- c. Support churches and religious institutions within residential neighborhoods.
- d. Work with the school district to identify space needs, and facility needs within the community, and to facilitate cooperate educational opportunities especially with local business for entrepreneurship classes.
- e. Support existing health care providers and attract new medical and health care providers to locate within the city.
- f. Maintain City facilities making improvements, expansions, and new construction when necessary and work with utility and telecommunications companies to provide high-quality service.
- g. Create a marketing campaign that promotes all community facilities and services offered within the City.
- h. Continue to work with both the Fire Department and the Police Department to ensure that adequate facilities, services, and staffing are in place to provide high-quality, effective services.

## Community Facilities Classification

### Parks and Open Space

Includes all public parks and large open space areas.

### Community Facilities

Includes government facilities and indoor community centers. Although new community facilities are not specifically identified, the City should work with community service providers (both public and private) to attract new facilities in appropriate locations.

### Religious Institutions

Includes all religious institutions that have been inventoried.

### Schools

Includes all existing schools within the City.

### Health Center

Includes Mercy Health Center, however, medical office uses are appropriate in commercial and mixed-use areas.

### Utilities/Infrastructure and Telecommunications

Includes all utilities and utility facilities in Benton Harbor. The City should continue to work with utility and telecommunications companies to ensure high-quality service is available in the community.

### Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation

Similar to the mixed-use classification, this area can also include open space and recreation such as community facilities, and residential uses. The overall emphasis for all development in this classification is to ensure the riverfront is an amenity for the community. This can be achieved by improving public access to the river, maintaining views of the water, and utilizing green building techniques.

### Existing Facilities in Future Mixed-Use

Existing community facilities located within parcels recommended for future mixed-use areas can remain, however, as redevelopment occurs, these facilities can remain as part of larger mixed-use projects or relocated to other areas within the City.



### Schools

- 1 Lake Michigan College - MTEC
- 2 Morton Elementary
- 3 McCord Elementary
- 4 MLK Freshmen Academy
- 5 Calvin Britain Elementary
- 6 St. Matthew's Lutheran School
- 7 Benton Harbor Charter School
- 8 Benton Harbor High School
- 9 Sterne Brunson Elementary
- 10 Dream Academy
- 11 Mildred C. Wells Academy

### Religious Institutions

- 10 First Presbyterian Church
- 11 Martin Temple
- 12 Zion Temple Church of God
- 13 Beautiful Gate Baptist Church
- 14 Pentecostal Peace Temple
- 15 Golden Night Baptist Church
- 16 Pleasant Grove Baptist Church
- 17 Wright Temple
- 18 Hopewell Baptist Church
- 19 Arc of Covenant Church
- 20 Community Church of God
- 21 Mt. Zion Baptist Church
- 22 St. Paul Church
- 23 Reed Temple
- 24 Peace Temple Methodist Church
- 25 Progressive Baptist Church
- 26 Bethel Christian Church
- 27 Benton Harbor Church
- 28 Bethel Restoration Center
- 29 First Congregational Church
- 30 Greater Faith Church
- 31 Pentecostal Power Church
- 32 St. John's Catholic Church
- 33 Ebenezer Baptist Church
- 34 Abundant Life Church
- 35 Tabernacle Church of God
- 36 St. Mark Baptist Church
- 37 Benton Harbor Street Ministries
- 38 Missionary Baptist Church

### Community Facilities

- 39 Berrien County Health Dept.
- 40 Community Center
- 41 Charles Gray Community Teen Center
- 42 Post Office
- 43 Social Security Office
- 44 Michigan Works
- 45 Berrien County Family Services
- 46 Senior Citizens Center
- 47 Salvation Army
- 48 City Hall
- 49 Dial - A - Ride
- 50 BoBo Brazil Community Center
- 51 Harbor Habitat for Humanity
- 52 Don P. Mitchell Bldg.
- 53 Citadel Music and Dance Center
- 54 Public Works

### Healthcare Centers

- 55 Mercy Health Center

### Legend

- Boat Launch Site
- Southwest Michigan Regional Airport
- Community Facilities (Government/Indoor Centers)
- Utilities
- Religious Institutions
- Schools
- Healthcare Center
- Cemetery
- Parks & Open Space
- Riverfront/Mixed-Use/Recreation
- Compatible Transition



**a. Support existing community facilities and service providers in their efforts to provide high-quality, affordable opportunities for residents.**

Recognizing the importance of community facilities, service providers, and non-profit organizations, the City should continue to support their activities. The City should continue to maintain its facilities and properties including budgeting for improvements and on-going maintenance as necessary to maintain high-quality properties. Overall, the City should work within its own departments to monitor staffing and equipment needs to ensure that a long-term facility plan is in place to accommodate current and future needs.

The City should continue to support existing community centers such as the Bobo Brazil Community Center, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Benton Harbor Housing Commission Community Center. Although the Bobo Brazil Community Center is in need of major building repairs, the City should continue to support the use of the building as a community facility. The City should pursue alternative funding sources, such as grants to assist in needed building maintenance and building repairs.

The City should support the Benton Harbor Housing Commission Community Center and their services. The Community Center recently underwent a complete overhaul which included the addition of a gym, several new and remodeled office suites, a new maintenance building, a stage, and a computer learning center. This facility now serves as a combination Neighborhood Network facility and Teen Center and is one of the biggest community centers in Benton Harbor.

The City should continue to support the numerous non-profit organizations that provide service to local residents. Examples of non-profit organizations in the Benton Harbor community include the Benton Harbor Public Library, Berrien Community Foundation, Boys and Girls Club, Center for Partnership of Lifelong Learning, Citizens for Progressive Change, Council for World Class Communities, Curious Kids Museum, Readiness Center, Salvation Army, Senior Citizens Center, Senior Nutrition Services, United Way of Southwest Michigan, Volunteers Center of Southwest Michigan, and the YMCA.

As illustrated on the recommended Land Use Plan, the area along the St. Joseph River and Riverview Drive is identified as a key redevelopment site. The community facilities that currently exist in this area, including the Social Security Office, Post Office, and Benton Harbor Charter School are appropriate uses to remain in the recommended mixed-use area. The City should encourage these providers to work with potential developers towards a larger redevelopment of the area. Ideally, these uses should be located within new, mixed-use buildings.

**b. Actively pursue the development of a shared use indoor recreation facility with groups such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club.**

In addition to supporting existing community facilities and services, the City should attract and support expanding or adding to the community facilities in the City. New facilities could include the expansion of already established organizations, or new organizations that do not yet have a presence in the City. The City should also encourage partnership opportunities to combine facilities. Partnerships may be between public agencies, private businesses, or between each other.

An example of a desired facility the City should attract into Benton Harbor an indoor recreation facility with groups such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club. Facilities designed for youth and seniors are especially desired by residents as stated throughout the public outreach meetings. It is important that these facilities be safe, inviting, and include activities and programs that are attractive for residents.

In addition to supporting public and semi-public agencies, the City should also consider working with the private sector to attract community services especially indoor recreational opportunities. Indoor recreational opportunities, such as gymnasiums, training facilities, roller rinks, and other similar activities are appropriate uses for commercial areas.

**c. Support churches and religious institutions within residential neighborhoods.**

The City of Benton Harbor provides a wide variety of religious institutions and places of worship. Representing a range of faiths and belief bases, many of the religious institutions in Benton Harbor are neighborhood based and are located within residential areas. Many of the churches are well-maintained and can be considered anchors within the neighborhoods. The City should accommodate the improvement and expansion of these facilities, provided they do not negatively impact surrounding residential neighborhoods (i.e. traffic, parking, etc.)

**d. Work with the schools to identify facility needs, and to facilitate cooperate educational opportunities especially with local business for entrepreneurship classes.**

Throughout the outreach activities, residents commented often on how important the schools were to their quality of life. The City should continue to work with and support both the public and private school systems in the community including Lake Michigan College. In addition to supporting these facilities, the City should bring the schools and local businesses together to identify partnership opportunities. The City should encourage both groups to consider entrepreneurship classes with local businesses that earn students school credits.

**e. Support existing health care providers and attract new medical and health care providers to locate within the city.**

The City should continue to support existing health care providers in the community and attract new providers to locate in Benton Harbor. A number of health centers and clinics are located within the community, including the Berrien County Health Department and Mercy Health Center. These facilities should be supported and the City should actively pursue additional medical and health care providers. Medical and health care providers should be located along bus routes to provide easy access for transit riders.

**f. Maintain City facilities making improvements, expansions, and new construction when necessary and work with utility, fiber optic, digital communication, and telecommunication companies to ensure high-quality service.**

The City should continue to plan for, budget, and implement infrastructure improvements throughout the City including street resurfacing, sidewalk repairs, and utility (water and sewer) upgrades. According to the City, the wastewater collection lines are in need of repairs and upgrades in many areas. These lines should be replaced when street reconstruction occurs. Part of the replacement should include state-of-the-art infiltration monitoring equipment to replace older, outdated monitoring equipment.

Similar to the replacement of wastewater collection lines, the City should replace water distribution mains as part of the street resurfacing projects. Together, these improvements would assist in providing consistent water pressure throughout the City. Overall, the City should continue to evaluate and replace infrastructure as necessary in conjunction with new development and other capital improvement projects.

The City should also work with utility, fiber optic, digital communication, and telecommunication companies to ensure that high-quality service is available in the community. The availability of a high-quality data transmitting network would not only serve existing residents and businesses, but would also be an asset to the City and ensure Benton Harbor is on the cutting edge of providing “high-tech” infrastructure.

**g. Create a marketing campaign that promotes all community facilities and services offered within the City.**

The City should continue to work with other governmental agencies, organizations, athletic groups, non-profit agencies, arts and cultural groups, and others to market and promote Benton Harbor’s community facilities and services. Supporting the facilities and attracting users/visitors to these community amenities is important for their on-going success. Marketing campaigns could include information posted on the City’s website, links to other services websites, banners, community message/event boards, and directional/informational kiosks and signage.

**h. Continue to work with both the Fire Department and the Police Department to ensure that adequate facilities, services, and staffing are in place to provide high-quality, effective services.**

The City should work closely with the Fire and Police Departments to ensure that their facilities are of high-quality and in appropriate locations to provide the best service possible. Representatives from these Departments should be part of the development review process to ensure that their needs are met in future projects. For example, the Fire Department should provide a review of the proposed parking and circulation design to ensure the provision of proper truck turning radii while the Police Department should review the proposed development to identify potential safety and security issues.



# COMMUNITY FACILITIES IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for providing community facilities. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funding through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.



Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Support existing community facilities and service providers in their efforts to provide high-quality, affordable opportunities for residents.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support community service providers and non-profit organizations</li> <li>Continue to maintain city facilities</li> <li>Monitor staffing and equipment needs</li> <li>Support community centers</li> <li>Pursue funding sources to reopen Bobo Brazil Community Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community service providers</li> <li>Non-profit organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Volunteers</li> </ul>
Actively pursue the development of a shared use indoor recreation facility with the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attract new community service providers</li> <li>Meet with the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club or other groups to encourage a new indoor recreation center in the community.</li> <li>Support private sector agencies providing indoor recreational opportunities such as training areas, gyms, and roller rinks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community service providers</li> <li>Private sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Volunteers</li> <li>Non-profit organization funding</li> </ul>
Support churches and religious institutions within residential neighborhoods.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodate new facilities and expansions, however, the City should ensure minimal negative effects on adjacent properties/neighborhoods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Religious institutions</li> <li>Residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NA</li> </ul>
Work with the school district to identify space needs, and facility needs within the community, and to facilitate cooperate educational opportunities especially with local business for entrepreneurship classes.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the school system</li> <li>Look for partnership opportunities</li> <li>Encourage schools and the business community to work together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools</li> <li>Business community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal City cost/staff time</li> </ul>
Support existing health care providers and attract new medical and health care providers to locate within the city.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support existing health care providers</li> <li>Attract new health care providers</li> <li>Locate new medical and health care facilities along bus routes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical and health care providers</li> <li>Public Transit</li> <li>Berrien County Health Department</li> <li>Mercy Health Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NA</li> </ul>
Maintain City facilities making improvements, expansions, and new construction when necessary and work with utility, fiber optics, and telecommunications companies to ensure high-quality service.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan for and budget for infrastructure improvements</li> <li>Evaluate and replace infrastructure as necessary in conjunction with other projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Utility companies</li> <li>Property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Create a marketing campaign that promotes all community facilities and services offered within the City.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market and promote Benton Harbor's community services/facilities</li> <li>Create a marketing campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business community</li> <li>Non-profit and other organizations</li> <li>DDA and NTAA</li> <li>Schools</li> <li>Community service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Continue to work with both the Fire Department and the Police Department to ensure that adequate facilities, services, and staffing are in place to provide high-quality, effective services.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include representatives from these departments in the development review process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fire Department</li> <li>Police Department</li> <li>Developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal City cost/staff time</li> </ul>

# QUALITY OF LIFE

*Although not typically included in a City's Master Plan, this section identifies recommendations to improve quality of life issues within Benton Harbor. Throughout the community outreach process, residents expressed a desire to see many basic quality of life issues addressed and improved. The following have been identified as key areas of focus. Over the next ten years, if the City is successful in implementing these areas of focus, residents, businesses and visitors will experience a higher quality of life.*

## Quality of Life

### Areas of Focus

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| a. Increase job opportunities.  | f. Support educational opportunities.  |
| b. Support a local health initiative.   | g. Improve public safety and security.   |
| c. Improve communication between residents and the city.  | h. Encourage the use of "green technology", smart growth principles, LEED certification, and best management practices in all areas of the city. |
| d. Improve communication within city departments, with other governmental agencies and adjacent communities such as the Township, County, MDOT, and St. Joseph. | i. Seek grants and alternative funding sources.  |
| e. Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the city.  | j. Improve code enforcement.   |
|   | k. Implement and monitor the progress of the Master Plan.  |



**a. Increase job opportunities.**

It is strongly recommended that the City take a proactive role in attracting and supporting employment opportunities for residents. Throughout the community outreach process, the importance of providing jobs for residents was cited often as an important goal.

The City should work closely with the business community, including groups, agencies, and businesses owners. By working together, the City can take a leadership role in actively attracting and marketing new businesses to locate in the community. The City should also work with existing businesses to maintain an on-going dialogue with a focus on identifying potential concerns or issues that the City should be aware or may be able to provide assistance.

The City should consider implementing specific strategies for improving employment. Examples of strategies include: promoting “green jobs”; working with businesses and the school system to create entrepreneurship programs; and marketing currently vacant office and business space (buildings and sites) to new businesses.

By implementing the strategies discussed above, the City will be not only increasing job opportunities, but also supporting locally owned businesses.

**b. Support a local health initiative.**

The City should consider a proposed project or policy decision’s impact on the physical and mental health of its residents.

Throughout this Master Plan, recommendations have been provided that support a local health initiative. The following are examples of strategies the City should implement to improve the health of its residents.

- Attract a major grocery store;
- Promote urban gardening in the city;
- Support the Fruit Industry, Fruit Market and Farmers Market; and
- Work towards the recommendations of the City’s 2009 Local Food Plan.
- Construct an interconnected trail system that provides safe walking and bicycling routes throughout the City.
- Preserve and improve existing parks and open space, while creating new parks.
- Support existing community service providers, clubs and organizations, including recreation and athletic groups, and attract new providers.

**c. Improve communication between residents and the City.**

The City of Benton Harbor should assume the leadership role in implementing the new Master Plan. In addition to carrying out the administrative actions and many of the public improvement projects called for in the Plan, the City may choose to administer a variety of programs available to local residents, businesses and property owners. For the Master Plan to be successful, it must be based on a strong partnership between the City and residents. The City should be the leader in promoting the cooperation and collaboration needed to implement the new Master Plan.

The City should also consider additional techniques for responding quickly to public questions and concerns regarding planning and development. For example, the City might consider special newsletter or Web page features that focus on frequently raised questions and concerns regarding planning and development or new City projects.

**d. Improve communication within City departments, with other governmental agencies and adjacent communities such as the Township, County, MDOT, and St. Joseph.**

In addition to improving communication with residents, the City should also improve communication within its own departments, with other governmental agencies and adjacent communities including the County, the Township, MDOT, and St. Joseph. The City should be the leader in promoting the cooperation and collaboration needed to implement the new Master Plan. The City’s “partners” should include:

1. Other governmental and service districts, such as the Benton Harbor Area Schools, Public Library, the police and fire departments, Benton Township, Lincoln Charter Township, Hagar Township, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, Berrien County Planning Commission, the private utility companies, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), etc;
2. Builders and developers, who should be encouraged to undertake improvements and new construction that conform to the Plan and enhance the overall quality and character of the community; and
3. The entire Benton Harbor community, since all residents and neighborhood groups should be encouraged to participate in the on-going planning process, and all should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions on improvement and development decisions within the community.

**e. Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the City.**

An overall goal of the City should be to improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of Benton Harbor. Throughout the Master Plan, specific strategies are identified to assist the City in improving the appearance and image of the community. The following are examples of strategies the City should undertake to improve it’s attractiveness:

- Work with volunteer groups to conduct “clean-up” days of parks and riverfront properties.
- Create and implement a Facade and Site Improvement Program to improve the appearance of commercial and industrial buildings, parking areas, sites, dumpsters, outdoor storage areas and loading areas.
- Create a Streetscape Improvement Program to install new landscaping, lighting, banners, pedestrian amenities, and brick paver crosswalks along key corridors.
- Improve Code enforcement for all buildings and properties in the City.

**f. Support educational opportunities.**

The City should continue to work with the public and private school systems to ensure high-quality educational opportunities for residents. The City should communicate regularly with Benton Harbor Area Schools, Benton Harbor Charter School, Dream Academy, Martin Luther King Freshman Academy, and Lake Michigan College to identify needs or partnership opportunities. An example of a specific strategy that the City should undertake to support educational opportunities is to work with the school system to create entrepreneurship classes and programs with local businesses.

*Example of Interactive Play Feature (Lisle, Illinois)*



*Example of Farmers Market (Michigan)*



*Example of Multi-Use Trail System (Aurora, Illinois)*



**g. Improve public safety and security.**

The City should continue to work with the fire and police departments, and other agencies, to improve public safety and security. The City should include representatives from the fire and police departments in the planning and development review process as new projects are presented to the City. For example, the police department should provide site plan reviews based upon safety and security (i.e. sightlines, location of security lighting, location of landscaping, and pedestrian access/egress points). The fire department should provide site plan reviews based upon their needs which may include access and egress points and proper turning radii for fire and emergency vehicles.

The City should also consider a homeownership assistance program for police officers to live within the Benton Harbor community. For example, a similar program exists in the City of Chicago. The program should be designed to assist police officers in living in the residential neighborhoods to improve public safety and security.

**h. Encourage the use of smart growth principles, LEED certification, and best management practices.**

**Use Smart Growth Principles**

The City should encourage the use of smart growth principles and best management practices for both public and private projects. As new development proposals are brought forward, the City should encourage developers and public agencies to follow the principles of smart growth.

**Utilize Best Management Practices**

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are a combination of conservation measures, structures, and management practices intended to prevent or reduce erosion and the amount of pollution entering the water system and minimize negative impacts on surface and groundwater flow. BMPs serve to minimize adverse impacts on neighboring land or water systems.

**Encourage LEED certification.**

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certification is a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Coalition (USGBC) to certify “green” buildings and developments. A green building is generally defined as one that is environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building’s life-cycle. From conception to construction, the building’s materials and maintenance allow for high performance and sustainability. The four levels are LEED-Certified, LEED-Silver, LEED-Gold, and LEED-Platinum.

The City should enact a green building ordinance or revise its development review process to encourage or require green building techniques.

**Support Alternative Energy**

Residents and businesses should be encouraged to use alternative energy, such as solar and wind power, and other renewable energy sources. In an effort to support industries and businesses in using renewable energy, the City should explore the potential to designate Benton Harbor a Renewable Energy Renaissance Zone (RERZ). Designation as a RERZ can promote renewable energy operations in the city and enhance industry. These zones differ from Michigan’s original renaissance zone because they require a company to have a renewable energy facility anywhere in Michigan.

The City should educate the public regarding the benefits of alternative energy and work with developers to include these energy sources in their projects. The City should also explore the potential to begin to convert all City vehicles to hybrid or electric vehicles.

Implementing one, or a combination of these techniques, would allow the City to lead by example and show its commitment to the environment and sustainability.

**i. Seek grants and alternative funding sources.**

While many of the projects and improvements called for in the Master Plan can be implemented through administrative and policy decisions or can be funded through normal municipal programs, other projects may require special technical and/or financial assistance.

The City should continue to explore and consider the wide range of local, state and federal resources and programs that may be available to assist in the implementation of planning recommendations.

**j. Improve code enforcement.**

Although the City enforces its current building and property codes, the City should seek funding sources to improve its enforcement capabilities. Additional funding would allow the City to hire and train additional inspectors and code enforcement officers. Additional staff would allow for more frequent and regular inspections of a larger number of properties. If all existing codes and ordinances were enforced, the appearance of many properties in the community would be greatly improved. For those properties that are beyond repair, the City should continue to seek funding to demolish blighted properties such as American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds used in 2009.

In addition to hiring more staff, the City should conduct a comprehensive review and upgrade of its zoning, occupancy, maintenance, business license codes and regulations. Improved regulations would assist the City in providing efficient and up-to-date reviews and inspections based upon the most up-to-date practices.

**k. Implement and monitor the progress of the Master Plan.**

It is important to emphasize that the Master Plan is not a static document. If community attitudes change or new issues arise which are beyond the scope of the current Plan, the Plan should be revised and updated accordingly.

Although a proposal to amend the Plan can be brought forth by petition at any time, the City should regularly undertake a systematic review of the Master Plan. Although an annual review is desirable, the City should initiate review of the Plan at least every two to three years. Ideally, this review should coincide with the preparation of the annual budget and capital improvement program. In this manner, recommendations or changes relating to capital improvements or other programs can be considered as part of the upcoming commitments for the fiscal year. Routine examination of the Plan will help ensure that the planning program remains relevant to community needs and aspirations.

The City should:

1. Make copies of the Plan document available for public purchase;
2. Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate;
3. Assist departments and elected/appointed officials in the day-to-day administration, interpretation and application of the Plan; and
4. Maintain a list of current possible amendments, issues or needs which may be a subject of change, addition or deletion from the Master Plan.

*Example of Solar Power (UK)*



# QUALITY OF LIFE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## Purpose of this Table

This table identifies specific implementation strategies for each of the key areas of focus to provide a long-range plan for improving quality of life. The City should use these strategies as a guideline to begin to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. It is important to note that these strategies are written to be flexible and that are in many cases a starting point by which the City should create more detailed steps, or undertake more detailed reports, studies and programs. To assist in funding many of these recommendations, the City should continue to monitor available grants and submit grant applications that will assist in implementation.

## Table Key

### Strategy

Based upon key area of focus discussed in the plan.

### Timeframe

Although the timing of each will depend on a variety of factors, an estimated time to complete the recommendation is provided based upon potential complexity and scope of the recommendations. This table provides three potential timeframes: short (1 to 3 years); medium (3 to 5 years); and long (5 years plus).

### Key Steps

Based upon the recommendations of this plan, however, these are written to allow for creativity and flexibility.

### Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Identifies potential groups or agencies that could be involved in implementing this strategy.

### Potential Funding Sources

A preliminary list of potential funding sources and/or potential groups or agencies that could assist in funding the strategy. Many of these strategies could be funding through state and/or federal funding, or through private development as part of new projects.

Strategy	Timeframe	Key Steps	Potential Partners/Stakeholders	Potential Funding Sources
Increase job opportunities.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively attract and market new businesses to locate in the community.</li> <li>Maintain an on-going dialogue with businesses</li> <li>Promote “green jobs”</li> <li>Create entrepreneurship programs</li> <li>Market vacant office and business space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education providers</li> <li>Businesses, agencies and non-profits</li> <li>Cornerstone Alliance</li> <li>DDA and NTAA</li> <li>State of Michigan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (through development projects)</li> <li>Local business contributions</li> <li>Educational system</li> <li>State and Federal Funding</li> </ul>
Support a local health initiative.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote local food growing initiatives</li> <li>Create system of trails/sidewalks</li> <li>Provide parks and open space</li> <li>Provide indoor and outdoor recreation</li> <li>Attract medical offices/uses</li> <li>Protect the environment including waterways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers and property owners</li> <li>Local businesses and residents</li> <li>MDOT</li> <li>School system (public and private)</li> <li>Farmers</li> <li>Recreation providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local, State and Federal funding</li> <li>Local businesses, residents, and volunteers</li> </ul>
Improve communication between residents and the city.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote cooperation and collaboration needed to implement the new Master Plan</li> <li>Create a special newsletter or Web page features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and businesses</li> <li>City Staff</li> <li>Elected and appointed officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local, State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Improve communication within city departments, with other governmental agencies and adjacent communities such as the Township, County, MDOT, and St. Joseph.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create and maintain contacts</li> <li>Hold annual or quarterly meetings</li> <li>Distribute updates and news announcements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Groups such as Benton Harbor Area Schools, Public Library, Benton Township, Lincoln Charter Township, Hagar Township, the SMPC, Berrien County Planning Commission, private utility companies, MDOT, developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NA</li> </ul>
Improve the cleanliness and attractiveness of the city.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Streetscaping</li> <li>Identify and preserve architecturally significant structures</li> <li>Design and implement gateways</li> <li>Encourage high-quality construction</li> <li>Facade improvements</li> <li>Identify key intersections for improvements</li> <li>Conduct “clean-up” days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Local businesses and residents</li> <li>MDOT</li> <li>Non-pro</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (through development projects)</li> <li>Facade Improvement Programs</li> <li>State and Federal Funding</li> </ul>
Support educational opportunities.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold annual meetings with educational providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public and private educational providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Improve public safety and security.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support their efforts including new equipment and facilities</li> <li>Consider a homeownership assistance program for police in residential neighborhoods</li> <li>Include police and fire representatives in plan reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police and Fire Departments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and Federal funding</li> <li>Developer funding (as part of new projects)</li> </ul>
Encourage the use of “green technology”, smart growth principles, LEED certification, and best management practices in all areas of the city.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate about Smart Growth principles</li> <li>Encourage smart growth, best management practices, LEED certification, and Low Impact Development (LID)</li> <li>Support alternative energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents and local businesses</li> <li>Staff and elected officials</li> <li>Developers</li> <li>USGBC</li> <li>Utility companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developer funded (private investment)</li> <li>State and Federal funding</li> </ul>
Seek grants and alternative funding sources.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and seek alternative funding sources</li> <li>Consider hiring a grant administrator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City Staff</li> <li>Local businesses, groups, organizations, non-profits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local, State and Federal funding</li> <li>Local matches from City, and other groups, businesses, and organizations</li> </ul>
Improve code enforcement.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain funding to add code enforcers</li> <li>Update zoning and regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City staff (code enforcers)</li> <li>Property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State and federal funding (ARRA funds)</li> </ul>
Implement and monitor the progress of the Master Plan.	Short to Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make copies available for public purchase</li> <li>Assist the public in explaining the Plan</li> <li>Assist departments and elected/appointed officials in the day-to-day administration</li> <li>Maintain a list of current possible amendments,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City Staff</li> <li>Elected and appointed officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NA</li> </ul>



# APPENDIX

## MARKET ANALYSIS EXISTING TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS





## Introduction

A market overview and analysis has been conducted to identify the general trends, supply, demand, and potential for residential and commercial uses. This overview analysis examines Benton Harbor's competitive position within the market, identifies the issues the community is facing and will likely face, and creates a foundation to assist with future land use designation and planning objectives. Demographic shifts and employment trends have been related to changes in demand for goods, services, and residential development in the City and surrounding region. The market analysis is comprised of four primary sections: 1) Demographic Overview, 2) Labor and Employment, 3) Residential Market Assessment, and 4) Retail Market Assessment.

## Demographic Overview

For purposes of this analysis, market and demographic data related to the City of Benton Harbor is assessed independent of and in comparison to the broader area of Berrien County, within which the City of Benton Harbor is located. In an effort to accommodate for anticipated demographic shifts within the City and the surrounding area, 2009 data, within both the City of Benton Harbor and Berrien County is contrasted with 2014 projections. While projections can be made beyond this time frame, the degree of accuracy in which market potential can be assessed would be reduced. Market data for this analysis were obtained from ESRI Business Analyst, a nationally recognized provider of market and demographic data.

## Population and Households

Table 1 summarizes projected changes in population and the number of households in the City of Benton Harbor and Berrien County. Both areas are anticipated to lose population over the next five years, however, it is projected that losses in Benton Harbor will occur at a faster pace. Benton Harbor's 2009 median household income is estimated to be over 53% lower than that of the county.

- Benton Harbor's population is projected to decrease by 2.8% over the next five years to 10,176 in 2014.
- The population of Berrien County is projected to decrease less significantly (-0.8%) reaching a 2014 population of 160,734.
- Within both areas, it is estimated that the number of households will have decreased by a slightly smaller proportion of -2.6% and -0.4% respectively.
- Benton Harbor's median income is anticipated to increase by 6.7% between 2009 and 2014, rising from \$22,163 to \$23,637. This is a slightly lower increase than that of Berrien County (7.6%).

While population projections are based on current trends and projected development patterns, this does not necessarily make a projected decrease in an area's population a certainty due to proactive measures that municipalities may take, such as development incentives and other planning initiatives. Although projections show that population may slightly decrease, the percentage of Berrien County's population that is made up from residents of the City of Benton Harbor remains consistent at approximately 6.5%.

## Population by Age

Charts 1 and 2 illustrate projected population change by age group over the five year period between 2009 and 2014. As a whole, both the City of Benton Harbor and Berrien County are gaining in population among young adults and older individuals, while the youth and middle-aged populations are shrinking. While the Benton Harbor youth population is decreasing, it remains considerably larger than that of Berrien County.

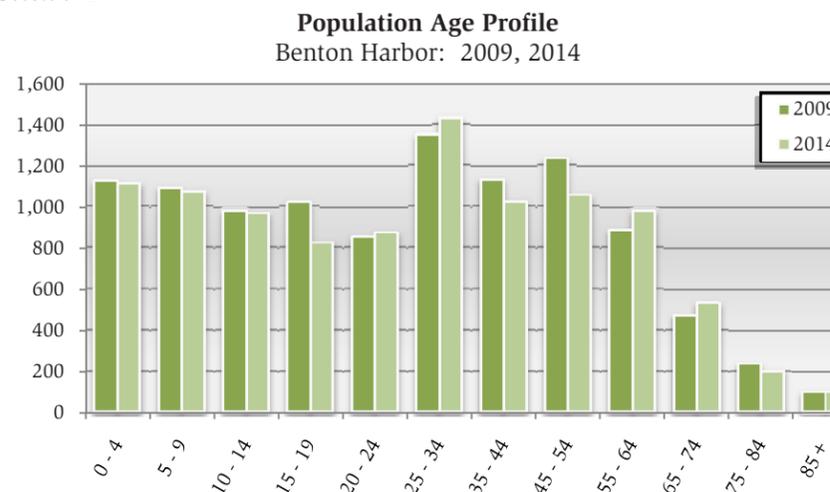
- In 2009, over 48% of Benton Harbor's population was under the age of 25 compared to less than 33% of Berrien County.
- For both areas, decreases in the under 25 population are projected to be offset by increases among those aged 25 to 34.
- The largest increase in population is expected to occur among individuals aged 55 to 74 in both the City of Benton Harbor (11.1%) and Berrien County (13.2%).
- The largest decrease in population is expected to occur among individuals aged 35 to 54 in both the City of Benton Harbor (-12.1%) and Berrien County (-10.2%).

Table 1

Demographic Summary									
Benton Harbor & Berrien County: 2009, 2014									
	2009		2014		2009 - 2014				
	Benton Harbor	Berrien County	Benton Harbor	Berrien County	Benton Harbor		Berrien County		
<b>Population</b>	10,472	162,101	10,176	160,734	(296)	(2.83%)	(1,367)	(0.84%)	
<b>Households</b>	3,544	64,269	3,452	64,028	(92)	(2.60%)	(241)	(0.37%)	
<b>Families</b>	2,359	43,312	2,282	42,900	(77)	(3.26%)	(412)	(0.95%)	
<b>Median Age</b>	26.1	39.6	26.5	40.1					
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$22,163	\$47,628	\$23,637	\$51,230	\$1,474	6.65%	\$3,602	7.56%	
<b>Average Household Income</b>	\$31,506	\$56,728	\$32,771	\$57,442	\$1,265	4.02%	\$714	1.26%	
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$10,982	\$22,863	\$11,484	\$23,307	\$502	4.57%	\$444	1.94%	

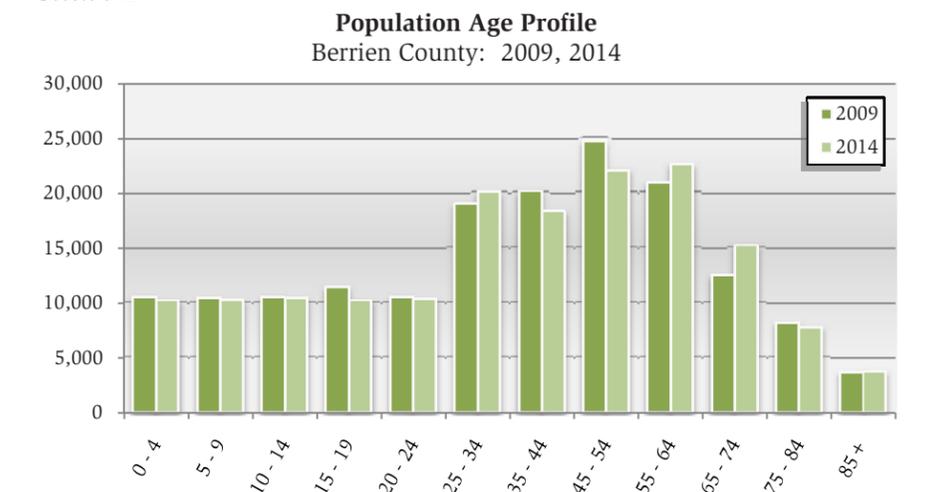
Source: ESRI Business Analyst and Houseal Lavigne Associates

Chart 1



Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Chart 2



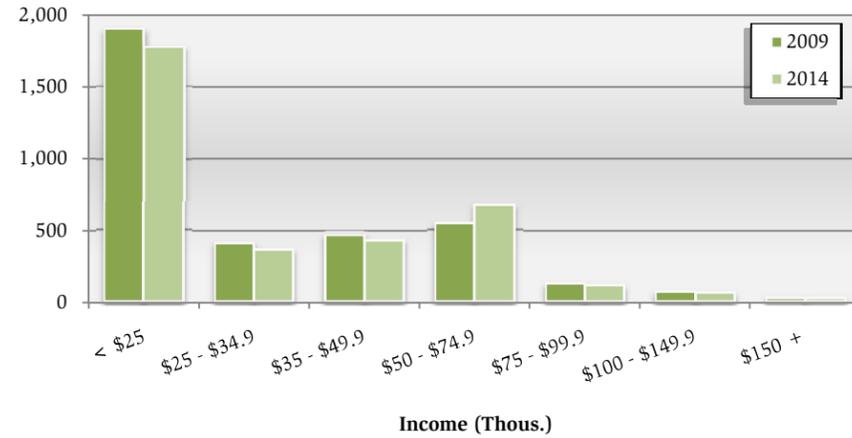
Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

### Households by Income

Charts 3 and 4 represent projected household growth according to income levels from 2009 to 2014. While the City of Benton Harbor's median household income is anticipated to increase over the next five years, the majority of households are projected to remain in the lower income categories. As a whole, upper income households are projected to increase within Berrien County as the number of lower income households decreases.

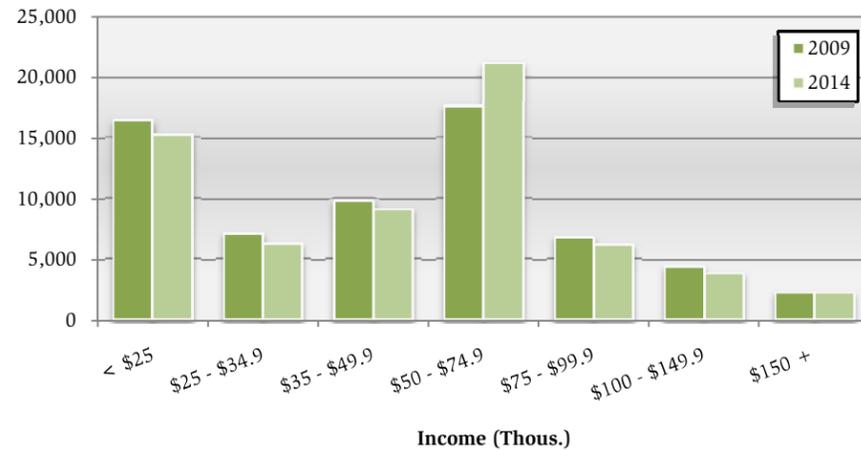
- In 2014, it is projected that nearly 52% of Benton Harbor households and less than 24% of Berrien County households will earn less than \$25,000 or more annually.
- The proportion of middle income households in Berrien County is projected to increase over the next five years from 28% in 2009 to 33.1% in 2014.
- The most significant increase among Benton Harbor households is anticipated to occur among those earning between \$50,000 and \$74,999. This household population is projected to increase by 129 households, or 23.5%. A similar increase of 20.3% is projected for Berrien County.

**Chart 3** Households by Income  
Benton Harbor: 2009, 2014



Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

**Chart 4** Households by Income  
Berrien County: 2009, 2014



Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

### Age by Income

Charts 5 and 6 illustrate the projected change in household population according to the age of the head of household and household income. Changes projected to occur between 2009 and 2014 are shown as they pertain to each respective household age cohort within both the City and larger county.

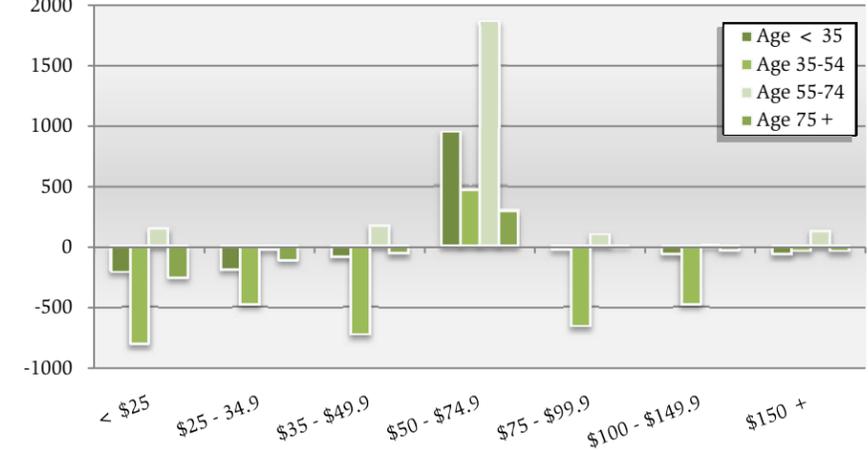
- Within both the City of Benton Harbor and Berrien County, the only positive household growth is projected to occur among households earning between \$50,000 and \$74,999. This increase is anticipated to occur across all age groups.
- Both areas are also projected witness slight increases in the number of householders ages 55 to 74.
- For both areas, the most significant decrease within every income group is projected to occur among householders aged 35 to 54. The sole exception to this observation is among households earning more than \$150,000 annually, where growth is minimal.

**Chart 5** Households by Income  
Benton Harbor: 2009, 2014



Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

**Chart 6** Households by Income  
Berrien County: 2009, 2014



Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

**Table 2**

**Major Employers in the City of Benton Harbor<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Employees</b>
Whirlpool Corporation	Manufacturing	3,300
Lake Michigan College	Educational Services	490
Meijer, Inc.	Retail Trade	450
Walmart	Retail Trade	424
Child and Family Services of Southwestern Michigan	Health Care and Social Assistance	350
Gast Manufacturing, Inc.	Manufacturing	327
Atlantic Automotive Components	Manufacturing	229
Chemical Bank	Finance and Insurance	181
Lowe's Home Improvement	Retail Trade	168
Riverwood Center	Health Care and Social Assistance	160
JC Penny Company Inc.	Retail Trade	140
City of Benton Harbor	Public Administration	134
Modar, Inc.	Manufacturing	120
Ausco Products, Inc.	Manufacturing	120
Orchard Grove Extended Care Centre	Health Care and Social Assistance	120
New Products Corporation	Die Casting	115
Best Buy	Retail Trade	110
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,938</b>

<sup>1</sup> Employers with a Benton Harbor address and over 100 workers.

Source: Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce; Lannert Group

## **Labor Force and Employment**

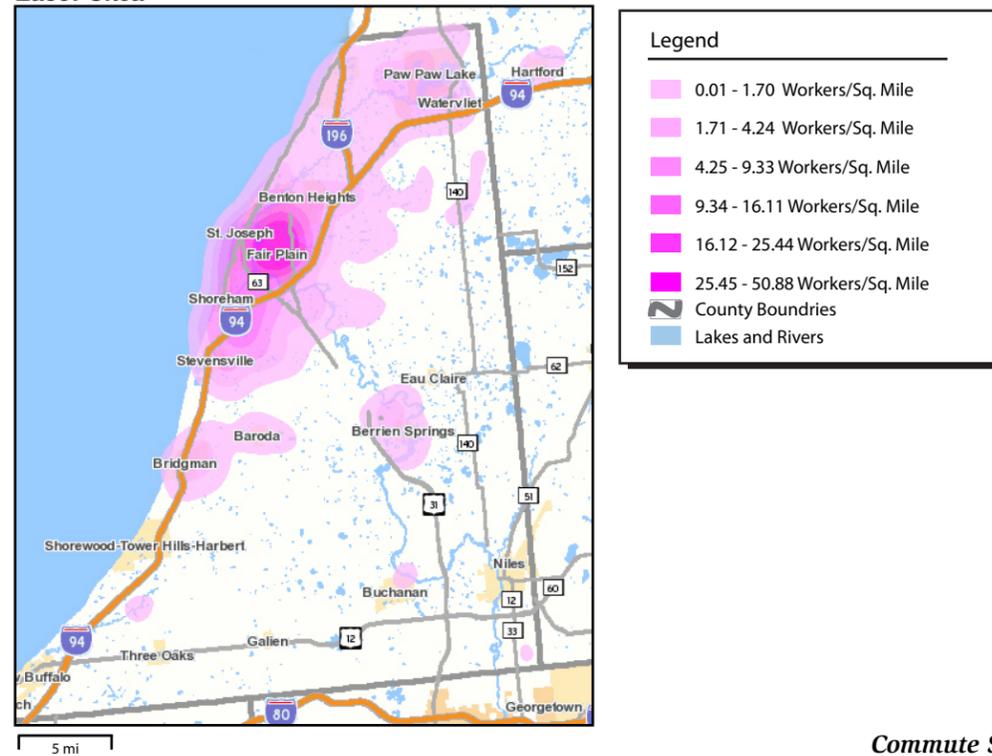
### **Major Employers**

The City of Benton Harbor has a variety of businesses and industries that make up the economic core of the city. In 2009, there were an estimated 2,955 individuals employed within the City of Benton Harbor. Approximately 20.4% of all jobs in Benton Harbor are in the manufacturing sector which comprises the largest proportion of local workforce. The health care and social assistance sector is also a large employer within Benton Harbor with approximately 16.5% of all primary jobs within the city. Other notable industries within the City of Benton Harbor that provide a large number of jobs include the accommodation and food services (14.0%), retail trade (11.3%), and educational services (10.6%).

As indicated in Table 2, over 6,800 jobs in Benton Harbor come from 16 businesses employing over 100 workers. The industry within which these employers are located is also listed. The industry is based on categories from the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) which is commonly used as a means of organizing economic indicators such as employment data. Generally speaking, the NAICS groups businesses based on the processes involved in creating the goods and services they provide. NAICS replaces the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system formerly utilized to categorize businesses.

# CITY OF BENTON HARBOR LABOR SHED AND COMMUTE SHED, 2006

**Labor Shed**



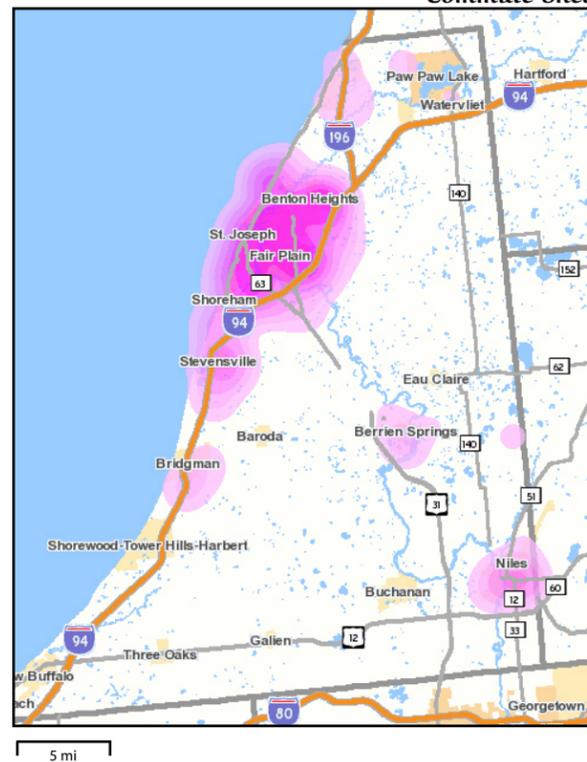
- Legend**
- 0.01 - 1.70 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 1.71 - 4.24 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 4.25 - 9.33 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 9.34 - 16.11 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 16.12 - 25.44 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 25.45 - 50.88 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - County Boundaries
  - Lakes and Rivers

## Where Workers Work

The adjacent figure depicts where people who work in the City of Benton Harbor live within the region as measured by the number of workers per square mile (See 'Labor Shed'). Less than 10% of residents that live in the City of Benton Harbor also work within the City. Approximately one-in-ten jobs (9.5%) of the jobs offered in Benton Harbor are performed by workers who live in Benton Harbor. A similar proportion of Benton Harbor workers also reside in the neighboring unincorporated community of Fair Plain (9%) and the City of St. Joseph (6%). No other communities within the region have a significant proportion (more than 3%) of residents who work in Benton Harbor. It is estimated that approximately 74% of Benton Harbor's workforce resides in Berrien County.

The figure on this page also highlights where residents of the City of Benton Harbor work within the region as measured by the number of workers per square mile (See 'Commuter Shed'). Approximately 9.8% of Benton Harbor residents work within the City. A similar proportion of residents also work in nearby Benton Heights (9.6%) and St. Joseph (8.7%). No other communities have a significant proportion (greater than 4%) of Benton Harbor residents working within their boundaries. It is estimated that approximately 65.4% of the City's residents have jobs located within Berrien County.

**Commuter Shed**



- Legend**
- 0.01 - 1.39 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 1.40 - 3.46 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 3.47 - 7.62 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 7.63 - 13.16 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 13.17 - 20.78 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - 20.79 - 41.56 Workers/Sq. Mile
  - County Boundaries
  - Lakes and Rivers

Over 90% of the estimated 3,000 jobs offered in Benton Harbor are performed by non-residents. By Benton Harbor residents work in communities throughout the region with no single community employing more than 10% of the City's employed population. To put these figures in perspective, the labor and commuter sheds of neighboring St. Joseph exhibit similar traits where the majority of local residents are travelling outside of their community for work. These labor and commuter shed characteristic indicate that the regional job market is somewhat dispersed. There may be opportunity to employ Benton Harbor residents at jobs in Benton Harbor provided the local population is equipped with the proper education and/or training.

**Table 3**

**Employment Projections**  
Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties: 2006, 2016

Industry	2006	2016	Change		Estimated Benton Harbor Job Growth 2006 - 2016 <sup>1</sup>
			Number	Percent	
<b>Total, Wage and Salary Employment</b>	<b>97,140</b>	<b>100,600</b>	<b>3,460</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Goods - Producing Industries</b>	<b>24,890</b>	<b>23,530</b>	<b>-1,360</b>	<b>-5.5%</b>	<b>-41</b>
Natural Resources and Mining	130	130	0	0.0%	0
Construction	3,560	3,670	110	3.1%	3
Manufacturing	21,200	19,730	-1,470	-6.9%	-44
<b>Service - Providing Industries</b>	<b>72,260</b>	<b>77,070</b>	<b>4,810</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>144</b>
Wholesale Trade	3,110	3,360	250	8.0%	8
Retail Trade	11,000	11,210	210	1.9%	6
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities <sup>2</sup>	4,170	4,200	30	0.7%	1
Information	1,040	1,010	-30	-2.9%	-1
Finance and Insurance	2,740	2,830	90	3.3%	3
Real Estate and Rental & Leasing	870	900	30	3.4%	1
Professional and Business Services	8,170	9,200	1,030	12.6%	31
Education and Health Services <sup>3</sup>	22,510	24,450	1,940	8.6%	58
Leisure and Hospitality	9,360	10,110	750	8.0%	23
Other Services	3,590	3,880	290	8.1%	9
Government <sup>4</sup>	5,700	5,920	220	3.9%	7

<sup>1</sup> Based on estimated local share of 2006 regional labor force (3%)

<sup>2</sup> Includes US Postal Service

<sup>3</sup> Includes State & Local Government Hospitals and Education

<sup>4</sup> Excludes US Postal Services and State & Local Hospitals and Education

Source: Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives; Houseal Lavigne Associates

**Regional Employment Projections**

Benton Harbor is located in the Benton Harbor Workforce Investment Area (WIA) which includes the counties of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren. In 2006 (the most recent year for which data is available), it was estimated that this region employed an estimated 97,140 workers. It was also projected that the region's employment base would grow by 3.6% between 2006 and 2016.

- Employment in the service sector is projected to increase by 6.7% while goods producing industries are anticipated to decrease in employment by -5.5%.
- As indicated in Table 3, it is anticipated that the regional employment base will have gained 1,940 jobs in the Health Care and Education Services industry by the year 2016. This represents a 12.6% gain in employment for this industry and is the largest numeric increase of any industry in the region.
- Professional and Business Services and Leisure and Hospitality are projected to add 1,030 and 750 jobs to the regional economy over the ten year period between 2006 and 2016.
- It is anticipated that the manufacturing sector will have shrunk by 1,470 jobs (-6.9%) by the year 2016.

Given Benton Harbor's share of the regional labor force in 2006, the City has the potential to experience an increase of over 100 jobs between 2006 and 2016. This number could increase dependent upon the City's ability to position itself to attract reinvestment and potential relocation of businesses to the Community.

**Significant Industries in Berrien County**

According to the latest data from the US Census Bureau, private firms in Berrien County employed an average of approximately 51,474 workers between October 2007 and October 2008. Table 4 identifies the ten largest industry subsectors by employment within Berrien County.

- Food Manufacturing sector was the most significant growth subsector within the local economy, increasing in employment by nearly 19%.
- Growth in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services and the Ambulatory Health Care Services (which includes outpatient health care services) subsectors was positive.
- At over \$4,000 per month, these two subsectors also offer the second and third highest average earnings among Berrien County's significant industries.
- Growth in retail related jobs (General Merchandise Stores) was also significant at 6.9%. At approximately \$1,771 per month, earnings in this subsector are considerably lower than other major industries.

**Table 4**

**Top 10 Industries Ranked by Greatest Employment**  
Berrien County: 2007Q4 - 2008Q3

Industry	Average Quarterly Employment	Growth in Employment (%)	Average Monthly Earnings (\$)
All NAICS subsectors	51,474	-10.1%	\$3,058
Food Services and Drinking Places	4,354	-4.4%	\$1,113
Hospitals	3,196	-6.4%	\$2,878
Administrative and Support Services	2,900	-6.2%	\$2,078
Machinery Manufacturing	2,327	-6.4%	\$4,552
Ambulatory Health Care Services	2,228	2.3%	\$4,246
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,185	1.2%	\$4,015
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	1,867	-2.2%	\$3,508
Food Manufacturing	1,778	18.6%	\$2,798
Food and Beverage Stores	1,633	-0.1%	\$1,517
General Merchandise Stores	1,400	6.9%	\$1,771

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics

## Residential Market Assessment

### Housing Tenure

Table 5 details housing tenure projections for the City of Benton Harbor and Berrien County. The proportion of vacant properties in the Benton Harbor (23%) is higher than that of the larger county (18%). The number of vacant properties is expected to increase in both areas. Conversely, owner occupancy rates are projected to decrease for the City of Benton Harbor (37% in 2009) while remaining relatively stable for Berrien County (near 71%).

#### City of Benton Harbor

- It is estimated that in 2009, the City of Benton Harbor had approximately 4,620 total housing units, with approximately 76.7% of those housing units being occupied. This is down from an occupancy rate in 2000 of 83.9%.
- Out of the total occupied housing units, approximately 37.0% were owner-occupied and 63.0% were renter-occupied.
- With the current projection of a decrease in population over the next five years, the number of occupied housing units is also projected to slightly decrease to 74.7%.
- The housing units within the City of Benton Harbor comprise approximately 5.9% of the total housing stock in Berrien County.

#### Berrien County

- In 2009 it is estimated that the total number of housing units in Berrien County was 78,139.
- Approximately 82.2% of the county's housing units were occupied.
- As with the projected population decrease for Berrien County, the number of occupied households is expected to decrease to 81.7%, while the number of vacancies is projected to increase to 18.3%.
- Of the county's occupied housing units, it was estimated that 72.1% were owner-occupied and 27.9% were renter-occupied.
- These proportions are projected to remain consistent over the next five years with the proportion of owner-occupied units declining slightly to 71.2%.

### Housing Stock

Housing characteristics for Benton Harbor and Berrien County are summarized in Table 6. The housing stock within the City of Benton Harbor has a higher proportion of renter-occupied units and multi-family units than the housing stock of the surrounding county. One- and two-bedroom homes are also more numerous.

- Approximately 65.4% and 74.3% of existing housing units are detached single family homes in Benton Harbor and Berrien County respectively.
- Single family detached homes, which include townhomes, rowhomes, and duplexes, comprise near 2% of the housing stock in both areas.
- Multi-family units comprise nearly 32.5% of all units in Benton Harbor, nearly twice the proportion in Berrien County (17.5%).
- In both Benton Harbor and Berrien County, two- and three bedroom units are most common comprising approximately two-thirds of all housing units. Three bedroom homes comprise a larger proportion of Berrien County housing stock.

Table 5

Housing by Tenure Benton Harbor, Berrien County: 2009, 2014								
	Benton Harbor				Berrien County			
	2009		2014		2009		2014	
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>4,620</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4,620</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>78,139</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>78,343</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Occupied Housing Units</b>	<b>3,545</b>	<b>(77%)</b>	<b>3,452</b>	<b>(75%)</b>	<b>64,269</b>	<b>(82%)</b>	<b>64,028</b>	<b>(82%)</b>
<b>Owner Occupied</b>	1,312	(37%)	1,308	(38%)	46,316	(72%)	46,005	(72%)
<b>Renter Occupied</b>	2,233	(63%)	2,144	(62%)	17,953	(28%)	18,023	(28%)
<b>Vacant Units</b>	<b>1,075</b>	<b>(23%)</b>	<b>1,168</b>	<b>(25%)</b>	<b>13,870</b>	<b>(18%)</b>	<b>14,315</b>	<b>(18%)</b>

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Table 6

Housing by Type and Number of Bedrooms Benton Harbor, Berrien County: 2000				
	Benton Harbor		Berrien County	
	Units	%	Units	%
<b>Units in Structure - All Units</b>	<b>4,502</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>73,445</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Single Family Detached</b>	2,944	65.4%	54,563	74.3%
<b>Single Family Attached</b>	61	1.4%	1,633	2.2%
<b>Multi Family</b>	1,463	32.5%	12,818	17.5%
<b>Mobile Home &amp; Other</b>	34	0.8%	4,431	6.0%
<b>Number of Bedrooms - All Units</b>	<b>4,502</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>73,445</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Studio</b>	199	4.4%	854	1.2%
<b>One Bedroom</b>	794	17.6%	7,528	10.2%
<b>Two Bedrooms</b>	1,519	33.7%	21,265	29.0%
<b>Three Bedrooms</b>	1,371	30.5%	30,883	42.0%
<b>Four Bedrooms</b>	447	9.9%	10,487	14.3%
<b>Five + Bedrooms</b>	172	3.8%	2,428	3.3%

Source: 2000 US Census

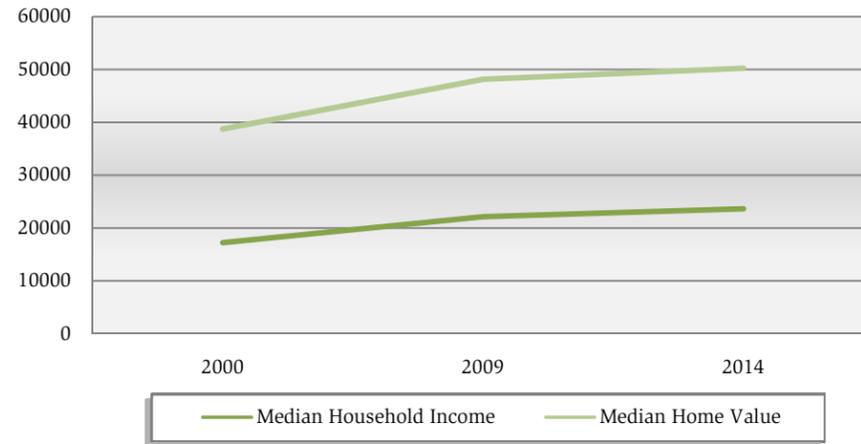
### Home Value

As shown in Chart 7, Median household income and median home value are projected to increase over the next five years although at a slower rate than the last nine years. Median incomes are expected to keep pace with median home values indicating that affordability remains constant. While overall affordability is unchanged, changes in lending practices have impacted the ability of many potential buyers to obtain financing. Individual circumstances such as credit score, equity in existing home, savings etc. are determinant factors. This analysis cannot account for individual buyer and lending institution variables and is based on a determination of the percentage of households matching benchmark age and income criteria.

### Housing Trends

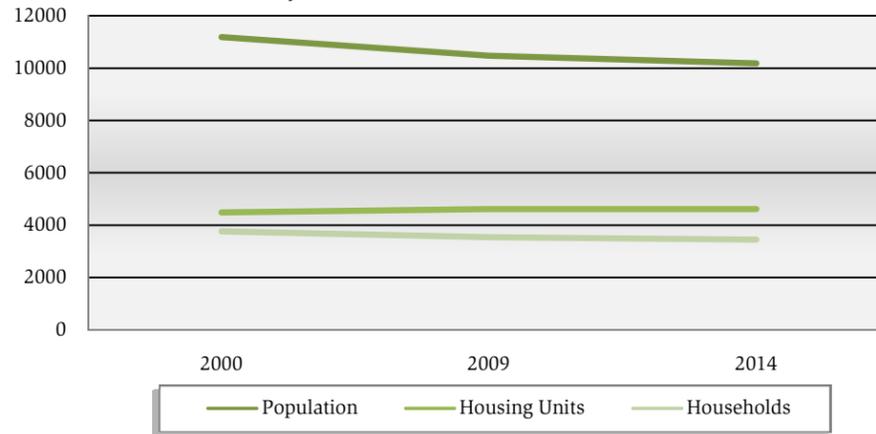
The trends over the next five years indicate a decline in population, static housing starts and a slight decrease in the total number of households (See Chart 8). This is consistent with projections for an increase in the number of vacant housing units.

**Chart 7**  
Median Income and Home Value  
City of Benton Harbor, 2000 - 2014



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

**Chart 8**  
Population and Housing Projections  
City of Benton Harbor, 2000 - 2014



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

### New Construction Activity

Chart 9 depicts a negative trend in the number of new construction residential building permits issued for both single family and multi-family units in Benton Harbor and Berrien County between 2003 and 2008 (the most recent data available at the time of this analysis). This is true for both single family homes as well as multi-family units, which include single family attached units such as townhomes, rowhomes, and condominium units. At the county level permitting activity was relatively stable in the early to mid 2000's before dropping off considerably in 2007 and 2008. These trends generally mirror regional and national data.

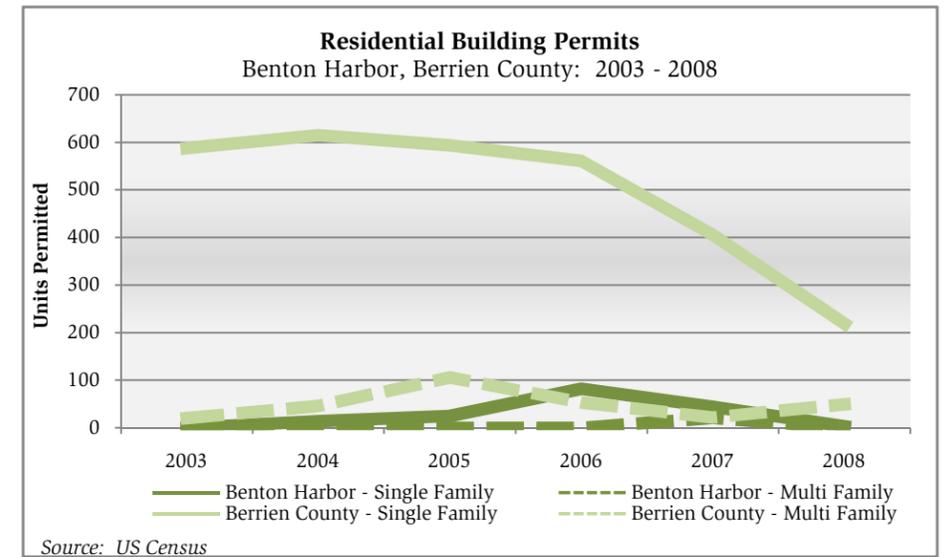
#### Benton Harbor

- An average of less than 15 units per year were permitted between 2003 and 2008.
- 89% of all units permitted in Benton Harbor between 2003 and 2008 were single family homes.
- The total number of permits issued within Benton Harbor has fluctuated, going from 0 in 2003, to a high of 82 in 2006, and back to 3 units in 2008.
- Permitting activity in the City of Benton Harbor comprised 6% of all units permitted in Berrien County over the six year period between 2003 and 2008.

#### Berrien County

- 91% of units permitted within Berrien County between 2003 and 2008 were single family homes.
- The four year period prior to 2007 was relatively stable in regard to home construction with between 600 and 700 units permitted each year.
- 2005 was the most active year for new construction permits in nearly 600 single family homes and over 100 multi-family units permitted.
- The number of units permitted in 2008 was 62% lower than the high point of activity in 2007 and 56% lower than in 2003.
- Multi-family housing permits have comprised an average of 10% of total units permitted in the county.

**Chart 9**



Source: US Census

### Home Sales

The current downturn in the housing market has caused the number of home sales to decrease within the region. Sales prices and time on the market have also decreased slightly, but in comparison to some areas has remained relatively stable (See Table 7 and Chart 10).

- Between 2004 and 2008, the number of residential home sales within both Benton Harbor and Southwestern Michigan declined by 26% and 19% respectively.
- In 2008, there were as estimated 281 homes sold in Benton Harbor, 26% less than the five year high of 378 sales in 2007 and 18% less than in 2004.
- The 2008 average sales price of units sold in Benton Harbor was 6% less than in 2009 and 1% less than in 2004.
- The 2008 average sales price of units sold in Southwestern Michigan was 9% less than in 2009 and 2% greater than in 2004.
- Within Benton Harbor, the average number of days a unit was listed on the market did not vary by more than 21 days between any two consecutive years.
- Within Berrien County, the average market time for a unit was consistently near four months.

**Table 7**

### Historic Home Sales Benton Harbor, Southwestern Michigan<sup>1</sup>: 2004 - 2008

Home Sales	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Benton Harbor</b>	342	366	372	378	281
<b>Southwestern Michigan</b>	3,436	3,402	3,595	3,169	2,556

Average Sales Price	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Benton Harbor</b>	\$82,044	\$84,967	\$86,278	\$86,952	\$81,443
<b>Southwestern Michigan</b>	\$177,895	\$192,707	\$198,794	\$199,613	\$182,274

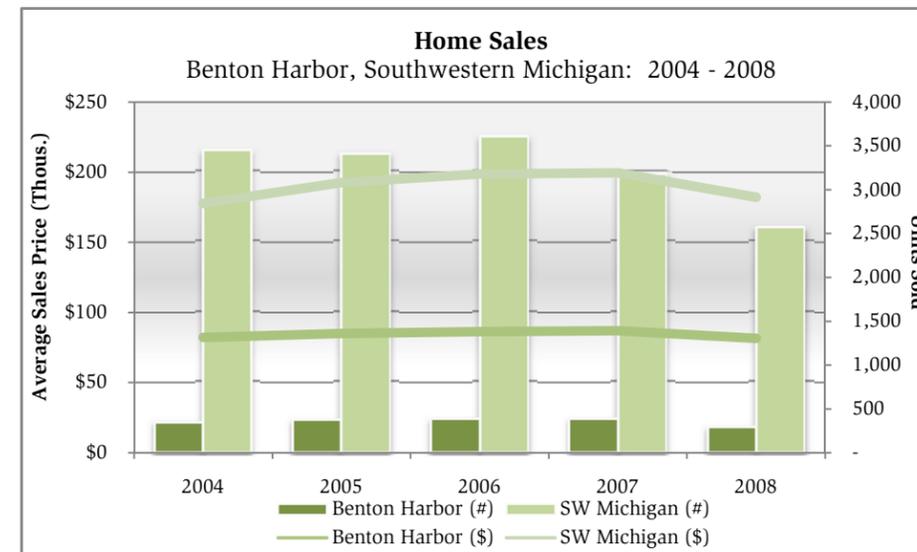
  

Average Market Time	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Benton Harbor</b>	96	107	97	104	102
<b>Southwestern Michigan</b>	129	126	123	127	127

<sup>1</sup> Southwestern Michigan region is comprised of Berrien County school district and some school districts in neighboring counties.

Source: Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors; Houseal Lavigne Associates

**Chart 10**



## Defining the Residential Market Area

For the purposes of this study, the primary Residential Market Area is defined as the City of Benton Harbor, Benton Charter Township, the City of St. Joseph, and St. Joseph Charter Township. This area represents the geographic area from which housing development in Benton Harbor is most likely to attract potential home buyers. Demographic projections for the residential market area have been used to assess potential demand for residential development within Benton Harbor.

### Harbor Shores

The subject of several economic impact studies, the Harbor Shores development project is a 530-acre mixed use development that spans Benton Harbor, St. Joseph and Benton Charter Township. The project could be characterized as a luxury resort development and will include 826 units of housing (to be constructed over three phases), 44,000 square feet of commercial space, two hotels (80 to 200 rooms), 83 acres of new park and public space, and a 200-acre golf course. Construction is anticipated to be complete in the year 2018. This development is anticipated to attract a mix of 70% seasonal residents and 30% full-time residents. The residential portion of the development will feature both single-family and multi-family homes priced from \$170,000 to \$600,000.

Resales dominate the competitive market with little new construction present in the market area. The Harbor Shores development is one of two properties currently marketing in the market area and is the most significant residential development in the region. While the Harbor Shores project is a significant project, the price points and housing product envisioned indicate that it would not directly compete with housing for sale in other areas of Benton Harbor.

### Housing Demand

In order to stimulate the Benton Harbor housing market and in turn the City's overall economy, there is a need for an increase in higher priced market rate housing. The price points of new development required to recoup construction costs essentially preclude new market rate units. However, reinvestment in the existing housing stock could increase the value of those homes by as much as 20%. This will require a concentrated and well coordinated effort by the City, property owners, investors, lending institutions and others. Policies and procedures that facilitate reinvestment including zero or no interest loans, tax breaks, permit fee waivers, infrastructure improvements, and other mechanisms will be necessary.

Ideally, blocks should be targeted for reinvestment rather than isolated infill properties. Doing so allows for the stabilization of an entire area and also increases the likelihood of attracting buyers from outside the City. This is due to the fact that, while infill development has a positive influence, it does not always result in additional development or stabilization of a block. While block-by-block reinvestment is still speculative from a financial perspective, the comfort level of buyers and investors lies in the fact that there are others sharing in the risk and potential benefit.

It is important to note that infill development should still be encouraged; however, the potential for attracting higher income households that will stimulate the local economy is rooted in market rate neighborhood reinvestment. This translates to increased consumer expenditures in Benton Harbor which in turn attracts retailers which in turn facilitates additional reinvestment.

For purposes of analysis, a calculation of the number of market area households that could afford homes priced 20% above the Benton Harbor average was conducted. Next the number of units that the Benton Harbor market could potentially capture was calculated. An analysis of projected household change by age and income over the next five years is highlighted in Table 8.

### Minimum Income Requirement

Given a sales price of near \$98,000, the minimum household income necessary to afford a home at this market supportable price point is estimated to be between approximately \$35,000 and \$100,000. This considers the ability to put at least 10% down on a purchase and acceptable benchmarks of percentage of income allocated toward housing (30%).

A maximum income threshold of \$100,000 has been used, so as not to overstate the market. Those individuals earning greater than \$100,000 may consider purchasing a home in Benton Harbor, but will likely seek units at the higher end of the price spectrum, the majority of which are located elsewhere in the market area. Given these income thresholds, there will be an estimated 505 additional households in the market area that could purchase a home in Benton Harbor.

### Home Purchase Eligibility

Although it is anticipated that several hundred households will have the minimum income necessary to purchase a home, not all of these households are necessarily eligible homeowners. Only a portion of income qualifying households are in the financial position to obtain a mortgage and finance a home. According to market data for the Midwest region, approximately 55% of the 25 to 34 year old age cohort and 82% of the 55+ cohort have the propensity to purchase a home. Given these assumptions, it is projected that nearly 360 area households are will be in the market for a home at the price points found in Benton Harbor.

### Housing in Benton Harbor

While the demand for quality housing at higher price points may exist, current home sales data suggest that existing households in these age and income groups are not currently pursuing housing options in Benton Harbor. The City would likely benefit from a market driven approach that provides incentive to reinvest in Benton Harbor's housing stock and improves market-rate housing values.

Table 8

Residential Demand Analysis Market Area, 2009 - 2014									
Single Family Home Minimum Income Requirements	2009-2014 Household Growth by Age & Income	< 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 +	
<b>Sales Price<sup>1</sup></b>	\$98,000	<b>2009 HH Income Base</b>	1,259	2,784	2,940	3,695	3,174	2,036	2,242
<b>Downpayment</b>	10%	<b>&lt; \$15,000</b>	-60	7	-80	-119	16	44	-58
<b>Loan Amount</b>	\$88,200	<b>\$15,000 - \$24,999</b>	-28	13	-58	-70	7	47	-62
<b>Interest Rate</b>	7.00%	<b>\$25,000 - \$34,999</b>	-25	-15	-61	-67	-25	16	-40
<b>Monthly Mortgage Payment</b>	\$587	<b>\$35,000 - \$49,999</b>	-18	10	-99	-97	-14	36	-32
<b>Annual Mortgage Payment</b>	\$7,042	<b>\$50,000 - \$74,999</b>	12	275	39	70	248	186	78
<b>Annual PMI</b>	\$459	<b>\$75,000 - \$99,999</b>	-3	-3	-51	-104	-19	28	-5
<b>Annual Property Taxes</b>	\$2,000	<b>\$100,000 - \$149,999</b>	-9	-6	-40	-84	-18	24	-13
<b>Housing Costs as % of Income</b>	30%	<b>\$150,000 - \$199,999</b>	-6	-4	-4	-3	17	5	-6
		<b>\$200,000 - \$249,999</b>	-3	-1	-5	6	6	3	-5
<b>Minimum Income Required</b>	\$31,667	<b>\$250,000 - \$499,999</b>	-3	-1	-8	1	4	2	-1
		<b>\$500,000 +</b>	-1	0	-2	2	2	0	-1
		<b>Income &amp; Age Qualifying Households</b>	<b>25-34</b>	<b>35-44</b>	<b>45-54</b>	<b>55-64</b>	<b>65-74</b>		
			282	-111	-131	215	250		
		<b>Percent of Market Purchasing Homes Target Households</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>83%</b>		
			156	-83	-103	179	209		
		<b>Potential Home Buyers</b>						<b>357</b>	

<sup>1</sup> 120% of 2008 average sales price for Benton Harbor.

Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

## Retail Market Assessment

The retail analysis utilizes a comparison of consumer expenditures and retail potential for the City of Benton Harbor and Berrien County. While it is possible that future retail patterns may shift, this analysis will give an appropriate indication of possible future retail potential within the immediate area.

Exactly how far a consumer will travel and where retailers are located, is primarily dictated by store type and characteristics of a retail node. The International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) and The Urban Land Institute (ULI) categorize shopping centers utilizing several criteria. The following is an overview of shopping center classifications.

- Large Regional and Super Regional Malls containing department stores (Macys, Nordstrom), fashion and apparel (Talbots, Ann Taylor) and home furnishings (Restoration Hardware, Crate and Barrel) attract customers from a trade area that can extend up to 25 miles.
- Lifestyle Centers include some of the same users as Regional Malls, including large format bookstores (Borders, Barnes & Noble), but do not have anchors. The typical trade area is approximately 8 to 12 miles.
- Community Centers include big box discount stores (Target, Meijer), home improvement stores (Home Depot, Menards), Sporting Goods (Sports Authority, Dicks) and attract from a three to six mile trade area.
- Neighborhood Centers typically attract from within three miles or a drive of less than 10 minutes and are anchored by a grocery store (Country Fresh, Kroger).

Table 9 provides additional information on retail center types and characteristics.

### Retail Environment

Opportunities for the development of new retail are somewhat limited within the City of Benton Harbor due to established retail centers in neighboring areas. Main Street is the City of Benton Harbor's most significant commercial corridor and is adjacent to the burgeoning Arts District. Independent galleries, restaurants and shops have opened in the last several years and anchor this area.

The Orchards Mall located approximately 3 miles (or an 8 minute drive) in Benton Charter Township represents the largest concentration of retail space in the area. The center is anchored by Elder-Beerman and JC Penney.

Nearby Fairplain Plaza is home to anchors Target, Old Navy, TJ Maxx, and Dunham's Sports. Also in this area are several major freestanding retailers including Wal-Mart, Meijer, Lowe's Home Improvement, Home Depot, Best Buy, Staples, Office Max, Pier 1, and a Celebration Cinema.

Retail in Downtown St. Joseph is a concentration of independently-owned boutiques, restaurants and art galleries. Along Hilltop Road and Niles Road (M-63), strip mall development and freestanding chain restaurants have developed over the last several years (Walgreens, Chili's).

### Traffic Counts

Traffic counts play a significant role in the success of a given retail location. Larger national retail tenants typically require a minimum average daily traffic (ADT) count of between 20,000 and 30,000 vehicles per day when considering a new location.

- Main Street (Business Loop of I-94) – between Downtown Benton Harbor and St. Joseph (west of Colfax Avenue) 10,500 ADT; 7,400 ADT in Downtown Benton Harbor (east of Colfax Avenue).
- State Route 63 – 8,300-9,300 ADT north and west of Downtown Benton Harbor near the proposed Harbor Shores development.
- Interstate 94 – near Pipestone Road (and the Orchards Mall) 50,400 ADT

• **Table 9**

Shopping Center Characteristics								
Type of Shopping Center	Concept	Square Feet (including)	Acreage	Typical Anchors		Anchor Ratio	Primary Trade Area Mileage	Approximate Drive Time
				Number	Type			
<b>Convenience</b>	Convenience	10,000 to 30,000	3 to 8	1	Convenience store, mini market, deli, coffee shop	30-50%	0-3 miles	Less than 5 minutes
<b>Neighborhood</b>	Convenience, Personal Services	30,000 - 150,000	3 to 15	1 +	Supermarket	30-50%	3 miles	5-7 minutes
<b>Community Center</b>	General Merchandise, Convenience	100,000 - 350,000	10 to 40	2 +	Discount department store, supermarket, drug store, home improvement, large specialty/discount apparel	40-60%	3-6 miles	Up to 15 minutes
<b>Regional Center</b>	General Merchandise, Fashion (mall, typically enclosed)	400,000 - 800,000	40 to 100	2 +	Full-line department store, junior department store, mass merchant, discount department store, fashion apparel	50-70%	5-15 miles	Up to 30 minutes
<b>Superregional Center</b>	Similar to regional center, but has more variety and assortment	800,000 +	60 to 120	3 +	Full-line department store, junior department store, mass merchant, fashion apparel	50-70%	5-25 miles	Up to 45 minutes
<b>Fashion/Specialty Center</b>	Higher end, fashion-oriented	80,000 - 250,000	5 to 25	N/A	Fashion	N/A	5-15 miles	Up to 30 minutes
<b>Lifestyle Center</b>	Upscale national chain specialty stores, dining and entertainment in outdoor setting	Typically 150,000 - 500,000 but can vary	10 to 40	0-2	Not usually anchored in the traditional sense but may include book store, large-format specialty retailers, multiplex cinema, small department store	0-50%	8-12 miles	Up to 30 minutes
<b>Power Center</b>	Category-dominant anchors, few small tenants	250,000 - 600,000	25 to 80	3 +	Category killer, home improvement, discount department store, warehouse club, off-price	75-90%	5-10 miles	Up to 20 minutes
<b>Outlet Center</b>	Manufacturers' outlet stores	50,000 - 400,000	10 to 50	N/A	Manufacturers' outlet stores	N/A	25-75 miles	Up to 90 minutes

Source: International Council of Shopping Centers; Houseal Lavigne Associates

- Traffic counts play a significant role in the success of a given retail location. Larger national retail tenants typically require a minimum average daily traffic (ADT) count of between 20,000 and 30,000 vehicles per day when considering a new location.

### Retail Market Area

The location of retail uses in the City of Benton Harbor and the greater market area, influences shopping habits and expenditures. For example, the proximity of the regional commercial node anchored by the Orchards Mall in nearby Fair Plain is a primary factor defining the market area for potential commercial development in Benton Harbor. For purposes of analysis, the market area is defined as the area comprised of the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Benton Harbor Charter Township, and St. Joseph Charter Township. This represents the area from which existing and prospective retail uses located in the City of Benton Harbor are most likely to compete and from which Benton Harbor residents currently travel to obtain goods and services.

### Retail Gap Analysis

To assess the potential for retail development in the City of Benton Harbor and the immediate surrounding area, the analysis compares household spending (demand) to the amount of sales (supply). This provides an indication of “surplus” or “leakage” for each retail category. Simply put, a surplus indicates that there is at least enough space to accommodate demand and leakage indicates that consumers are spending dollars outside of the market area.

Capacity for additional supply does not necessarily translate to development potential of a specific site or location. Market considerations, the presence of competition and site-specific considerations must also be considered.

As shown in Table 10, residents of Benton Harbor spend approximately \$3.3 million annually outside of the City. Within the City of Benton Harbor, in 2009, there are approximately 3,544 households. With an estimated retail demand of \$43,467,610, this equates to a potential annual expenditure per household of \$12,265, with a current supply of only \$11,342 per household. This figure includes all categories of retail, eating and drinking establishments.

In analyzing existing retail supply and demand for the larger trade area (See Table 10), there is currently a retail surplus of approximately \$198.7 million. Within this area, there are approximately 18,126 households contributing to a current retail demand of \$349,060,493. This demand equates to a potential annual expenditure per household of \$19,257, with a current supply of \$30,218 per household. This indicates that the trade area draws customers from other areas.

Taking the retail gap analysis, it is possible to relate this to sales per square foot and typical store size estimates in order to derive a preliminary indication of development potential. While sales-per-square-foot revenues vary by individual retailer, general assumptions of supportable square footage can be made by using a benchmark average. Average sales per square foot range from \$250 to \$325 per-square-foot. The use of a per-square-foot amount on the higher end of this range allows for a more conservative approach so as not to overstate retail potential. As shown in Tables 10, when a per-square-foot amount of \$300 is applied, demand is effectively translated to an estimate of the potential number of square feet that could be supported within either the City of Benton Harbor or the larger market area.

This analysis indicates limited potential for new retail development within the City of Benton Harbor given current conditions. There is some potential for new development within the categories of food and beverage stores, gasoline stations, and food service/drinking places. With few exceptions, local demand within Benton Harbor is not enough to support additional stores. Any new retail space will likely come in the form of small, independent businesses. There is a possibility that retailers specializing in grocery, deli and convenience items would find the Benton Harbor market appealing.

The regional retail market appears to be fairly saturated as summarized in Table 10. Using the benchmark of \$300 sales per-square-foot, the larger market area has a surplus supply of over 675,000 square feet of retail space than is warranted by the local resident population.

### Retail Outlook

The retail market implications for municipalities such as Benton Harbor are largely reliant on the ability to establish a retail environment where one does not currently exist. Locations such as The Orchards Mall and Fairplain Plaza will continue to capture a large part of the market. However, given the significant amount of leakage from the local market, accompanied with the demand for certain uses, Benton Harbor has the potential to support new commercial development within the city boundaries. A well positioned grocery store similar in size to an Aldi’s, could be supported along with additional restaurants (number dependent upon size and type) and small locally owned/operated niche retailers. Development support is based on the fact that these types of uses typically draw from the most localized market or shortest drive time. Concentrating uses within a designated commercial district or corridor would pose the best prospects for success and the ability to act as a catalyst for additional development. The Arts District is beginning to establish a base from which to build and is evidence of the City’s potential to attract commercial businesses.

Other uses including a gasoline station could be supported in the local Benton Harbor market, but would not need to be part of a centralized commercial node. Such a use would be best located on the corner of arterials with high traffic counts.

**Table 10**

Retail Demand Analysis Benton Harbor, Market Area: 2009				
<b>Summary Demographics</b>				
	<b>Benton Harbor</b>	<b>Market Area</b>		
2009 Population	10,472	44,919		
2009 Households	3,544	18,126		
2009 Median Disposable Income	\$19,197	\$31,834		
2009 Per Capita Income	\$10,982	\$20,644		
<b>Industry Summary</b>				
	<b>Retail Gap</b>		<b>Potential<sup>2</sup></b>	
	<b>Benton Harbor</b>	<b>Market Area</b>	<b>Benton Harbor</b>	<b>Market Area</b>
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink <sup>1</sup>	\$2,412,229	(\$203,508,935)	52,845	(633,737)
Total Retail Trade <sup>1</sup>	(\$1,001,961)	(\$194,091,594)	41,464	(602,346)
Total Food & Drink	\$3,414,190	(\$9,417,341)	11,381	(31,391)
<b>Industry Group</b>				
	<b>Retail Gap</b>		<b>Potential<sup>2</sup></b>	
	<b>Benton Harbor</b>	<b>Market Area</b>	<b>Benton Harbor</b>	<b>Market Area</b>
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers <sup>3</sup>	(\$17,600,556)	\$7,310,219	N/A	N/A
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$1,028,319	\$3,710,761	3,428	12,369
Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$790,189	(\$2,655,245)	2,634	(8,851)
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	\$745,377	(\$13,105,980)	2,485	(43,687)
Food & Beverage Stores	\$3,826,400	(\$1,715,341)	12,755	(5,718)
Health & Personal Care Stores	\$1,128,575	(\$134,614,640)	3,762	(448,715)
Gasoline Stations <sup>3</sup>	\$4,159,261	(\$20,698,014)	N/A	N/A
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	\$515,836	\$404,214	1,719	1,347
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	\$394,669	\$1,026,506	1,316	3,422
General Merchandise Stores	\$3,646,582	(\$34,335,904)	12,155	(114,453)
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$363,387	\$581,830	1,211	1,939
Food Services & Drinking Places	\$3,414,190	(\$9,417,341)	11,381	(31,391)

<sup>1</sup> Excludes non-store retailers such as mail-order businesses and vending machine sales.

<sup>2</sup> Based on average sales of \$300 per square foot.

<sup>3</sup> Demand for automotive related retailers cannot be readily translated to square foot potential.

Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

### ***Office Uses***

Demand for new office space within Benton Harbor will likely be related to commercial nodes with medical uses and select areas of the Downtown. The Education and Health Services industry is projected to be the single largest contributor to job growth in the local economy. Medical facilities such as the Riverwood Center or Lakeland HealthCare's Mercy Health Clinic often serve as the anchor of small commercial nodes where medical service providers can benefit from proximity to a localized customer base.

There is also potential demand for office space in Downtown Benton Harbor associated with the resurgence of the Arts District. The need for office uses, including both professional and personal service providers, will be tied to the success of retail and residential development in Downtown Benton Harbor and the Arts District. While existing office space is available, additional space in the Downtown could be included as a component of new mixed use development. New office development is not likely as a standalone use.

# EXISTING TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS

There is a strong interrelationship between the road system and land use patterns. Transportation routes within the City affect the movement of people and can shape the very character of the community. Successful commercial corridors should be free of unsightly clutter and be easy to navigate, while streets in residential areas should encourage drivers to intuitively drive at a low speed. The transportation network includes not only the road system for vehicle, but also transit vehicles and sidewalks and pathways for non-motorized traffic. The adequacy of a road may influence development and redevelopment trends along a given route. The type of land use will also strongly influence traffic volumes. Therefore, it is important to consider transportation when planning for the future to ensure these systems can support the goals of the community. The benefit of a transportation plan is to assist in establishing priorities for future road and non-motorized facility improvements based on the functions they serve.

## **Public Streets**

National Functional Classification (NFC) is a planning tool which Federal, state, and local transportation agencies have used since the late 1960s. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) developed this system of classifying all streets, roads, and highways according to their function. The FHWA publication, Highway Functional Classification: Concepts, Criteria and Procedures, provides the basis for much of the following information. For the NFC map of the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph Urbanized Area, see the appendix.

- **Interstate:** Includes freeway and expressway routes that are intended to move traffic to regional, statewide, and out-of-state destinations. I-94/US-31 is the only route near the City designated as Interstate.
- **Principal Arterials:** Principal Arterials generally carry long distance, through-travel movements. They also provide access to important traffic generators, such as major regional airports or regional shopping centers. BL-94 (Main Street), M-139 (Fair Avenue), and Pipestone Street are classified as principal arterials.
- **Minor Arterials:** Similar in function to Principal Arterials, except they generally carry trips of shorter distance and to lesser traffic generators. There are many road segments in the City that are classified as Minor Arterials including M-63, Territorial Road, Paw Paw Avenue, Britain Avenue, 2nd Street, Klock Avenue, Colfax Avenue, Empire Avenue and Riverview Drive.
- **Collector Streets:** Collectors tend to provide more access to property than do arterials. Collectors also funnel traffic from residential areas to arterials. There are several road segments in the City classified as Collectors, including Broadway, Union Street, Market Street, Red Arrow Highway, and Highland Avenue.
- **Local Streets:** Local roads primarily provide access to property. A majority of City streets are classified as Local Streets.

## **Non-Motorized Paths**

Non-motorized paths include sidewalks, trails, and multi-use pathways that are to be used exclusively for walking, biking, rollerblading, and other modes of non-motorized travel. Non-motorized paths include:

- **Sidewalks** – Typically, five-foot wide concrete surface along one or both sides of a public street for the purpose of providing for pedestrian circulation. Sidewalks should be separated from the roadway by at least five feet with 10 feet being preferred. In the City, sidewalks are common throughout both the downtown and most residential areas, with some gaps in continuity.
- **Multi-Use Paths** – Designated pathways that can accommodate higher volumes of pedestrians than sidewalks and more appropriate for multi-use such as joggers and bicyclists. The Federal standard for all new pathways is ten foot in width, though high use pathways are often wider. There are limited areas of multi-use pathway in the City.
- **Bike Lanes** – A portion of a street designated for exclusive use by bicyclists distinguished from the automobile travel lanes by paint stripes, signs, or other similar devices. Bike lanes are typically 4 feet wide. There are few streets within the City that have dedicated bike lanes.

## **Public Transit**

It is important to consider transit as a valuable asset to the transportation system because it offers an alternative to the private automobile, especially for those without an automobile, offering an affordable form of transportation. The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) completed a comprehensive transit plan called “Berrien County Transit Study” in May 2009 ([http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/berrien\\_county\\_transit\\_study\\_final.pdf](http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/berrien_county_transit_study_final.pdf)). This plan identifies the role that transit can play within Berrien County. As the population ages, maintaining a strong transit system will grow increasingly important to assure the mobility of our senior population.

Within the City of Benton Harbor, the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) operates three fixed routes and provides dial-a-ride services. Funding is provided via fares and a millage, along with grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Transit routes should continue to coincide with existing and planned key destination points in the City, including shopping nodes and community facilities along these routes. Currently, the three fixed route coverage includes:

- **Blue Route** – provides service from downtown to a number of commercial destination southeast of downtown, covering the area southwest of Pipestone Street
- **Green Route** – provides weekday-only service from downtown to the commercial areas to the southeast of downtown, covering the area northeast of Pipestone Street
- **Red Route** – provides broader coverage, with more limited stops, to downtown Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, and the Stevensville park-and-ride lot

## **Safety**

The design of the transportation network is dictated by a number of national and local standards intended to ensure that a balance is struck between cost, safety, and traffic operations. Reducing conflict points is the easiest method to improve safety but can negatively impact traffic operations. For example, prohibiting turns at an intersection eliminates conflict points but reduces the efficiency of traffic operations. Generally speaking, crashes are random events caused by a variety of issues not usually related to the design of the roadway. Weather, time of day, experience of drivers, speed, alcohol, etc. are all things that can contribute to crashes. A review of crash histories was performed to identify if there are any unusual cluster of crashes at a particular location that may indicate an inherent issue that needs to be investigated to determine if any corrective actions can be considered to reduce crashes.

A cursory review of crash data for both vehicles and pedestrians was reviewed for the three year period from 2007 to 2009. This review was intended to identify the locations of crashes, types and severity of crashes, and note any potential locations of concern based on the data. This review did not include a review of engineering plans or signal timing but was instead intended to identify any obvious issues that might contribute to crashes, such as limited sight distance. A majority of crashes were located at intersections, as is typical. The data obtained from the Michigan Traffic Crash Facts database of the Michigan State Police Office of Highway Safety Planning (<http://www.michigantrafficroashfacts.org>) noted a total of 707 crashes in the City over this three year period (see Table A-1).

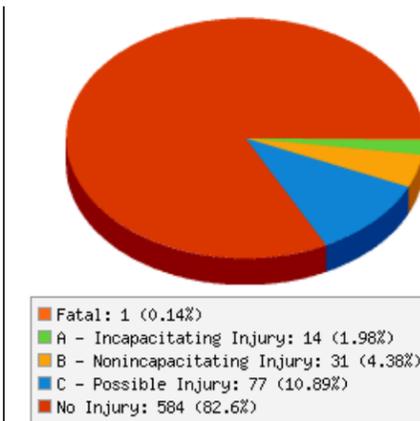
Table A-1. Vehicles crashes by type and month, 2007-2009.

2009, 2008, 2007		Crash Type											Total Crashes
		Single motor vehicle	Head-on	Head-on / left turn	Angle	Rear-end	Rear-end left turn	Rear-end right turn	Sideswipe same direction	Sideswipe opposite direction	Other/unknown	Uncoded & errors	
Accident Month	January	16	1	3	12	18	0	0	6	6	8	0	70
	February	9	3	3	24	15	1	0	12	3	11	0	81
	March	10	2	1	6	14	0	0	4	3	7	0	47
	April	11	1	1	5	12	1	2	4	1	13	0	51
	May	10	1	4	12	13	0	0	4	5	9	1	59
	June	17	3	3	11	12	2	0	8	6	9	0	71
	July	13	1	4	8	11	2	1	6	4	10	0	60
	August	6	1	0	10	14	0	1	13	2	9	0	56
	September	6	1	2	8	12	2	0	4	8	7	0	50
	October	5	3	2	15	8	1	1	6	3	5	0	49
	November	6	1	1	7	11	2	0	2	3	7	0	40
	December	22	0	3	16	11	0	0	6	3	12	0	73
Total Crashes		131	18	27	134	151	11	5	75	47	107	1	707

Source: Michigan Traffic Crash Facts, Michigan State Police Office of Highway Safety Planning.

In addition to noting the types of crashes, a review was done of the severity. Crash severity is described by the types of injuries sustained by the driver and/or other vehicle occupants. These injuries are broken out into injury codes as follows:

- K (fatal) – any injury that results in death
- A (incapacitating injury) – any injury (other than fatal) that prevents the injured person from walking, driving, or continuing normally. Examples of type A injuries includes broken bones, trauma injuries, etc.
- B (non-incapacitating injury) – any injury that is not incapacitating but evident to observers at the scene of the crash. Examples of type B injuries includes cuts, bruises, etc. that are visibly obvious.
- C (possible injury) – any injury reported or claimed that is not fatal, incapacitating, or non-incapacitating. Examples of type C injuries could include sore muscles, discomfort, etc.
- O (no injury) – no harm noted, reported, or claimed



Crash injury summary 2007-2009. Source: Michigan

As noted in figure A-1, a majority of the crashes were extremely minor, with no injury reported (82.6%) or type C (10.9%). The single fatal accident reported in the City involved a single vehicle where the operator was under the influence of alcohol and ran off the road and struck a tree. Reviewing both the crash numbers and severity shows no obvious issues at any location within the City at this time. A more thorough review of individual crash reports and engineering drawings may identify minor issues that would be correctable to improve safety but are unlikely to eliminate crashes.

A review was also done to identify crashes involving pedestrians/bikes. As with vehicle crashes, these are generally random events resulting from one or both parties being distracted, not yielding, etc. A cluster or large number of vehicle/pedestrian crashes can be indicative of issues that warrant a more detailed investigation. For the 2007-2009 period, there were a total of 19 pedestrian-involved (15 type A, B, or C) and 13 bicyclist-involved (10 type A, B, or C) crashes in the City. There were 2 bicyclist and 6 pedestrian type A injuries, with no fatalities.

Pedestrian and bicyclist accidents, 2007-2009.

2009, 2008, 2007		Accident Month												Total Crashes
		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
Crash: Pedestrian	No pedestrian involved	69	80	46	48	54	69	58	56	49	48	39	72	688
	Pedestrian involved	1	1	1	3	5	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	19
Total Crashes		70	81	47	51	59	71	60	56	50	49	40	73	707
Crash: Bicyclist	No bicyclist	70	81	46	51	56	68	57	54	50	49	40	72	694
	Bicyclist involved	0	0	1	0	3	3	3	2	0	0	0	1	13