

MICHIGAN TALENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

# The Central Market & Main District

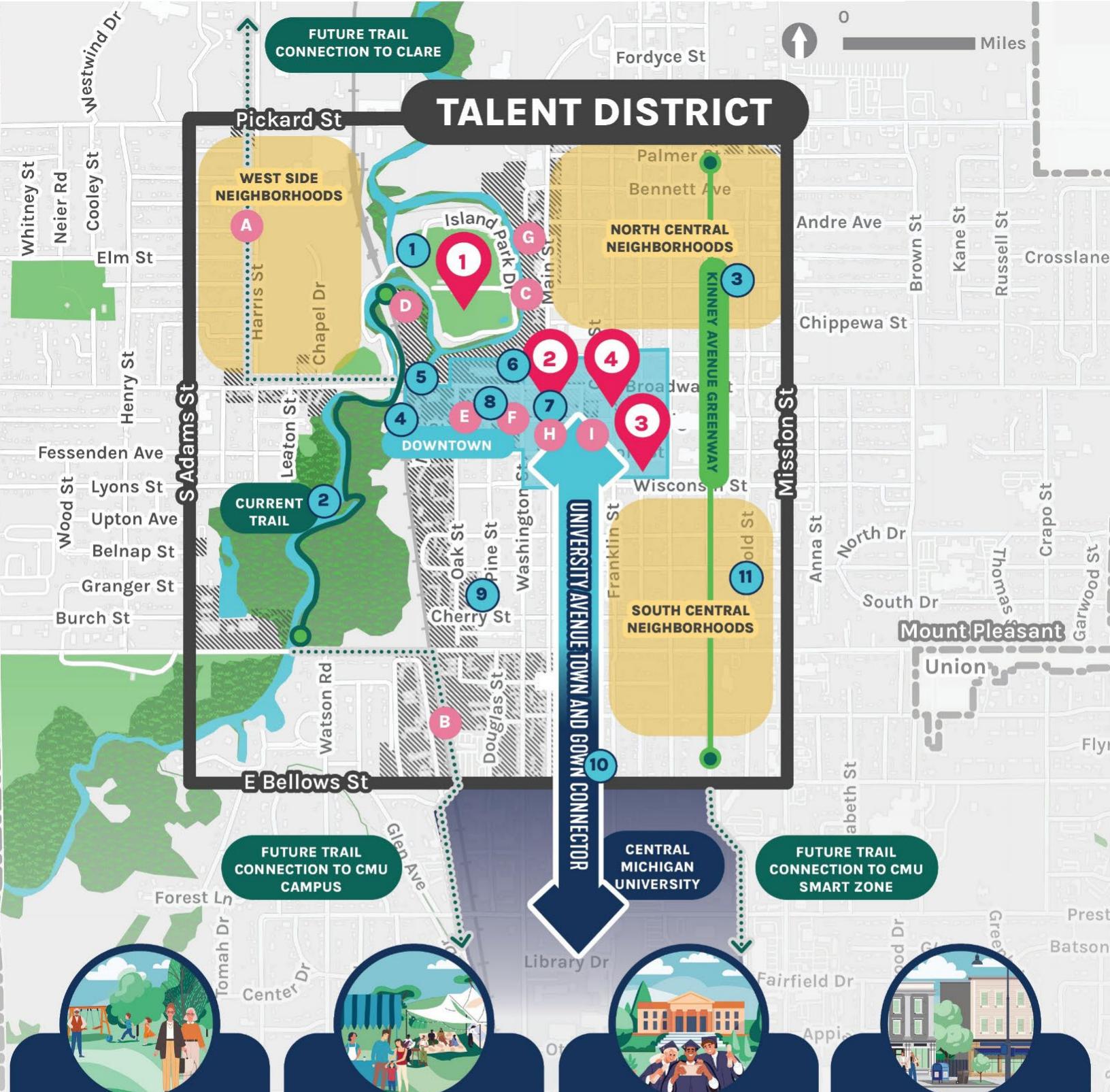
A Food, Entertainment & Innovation Hub for Local Businesses and Sustainable Living in the heart of Michigan



*Mt. Pleasant*  
[meet here]

# Contents

|                                                                    |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>2 LOCATION .....</b>                                            | <b>5</b>  |
| Why This Area was Chosen as the Site of the Local Talent Plan..... | 5         |
| <b>3 TALENT PLAN .....</b>                                         | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>3(1) TALENT PLAN .....</b>                                      | <b>8</b>  |
| How the District Supports the Goals of the MTP .....               | 8         |
| <b>3(2) TALENT PLAN .....</b>                                      | <b>9</b>  |
| How the Projects Support the Goals of the MTP .....                | 9         |
| Proposed Activities for Funding .....                              | 9         |
| Proposed Match Activities.....                                     | 15        |
| <b>4 IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY .....</b>                   | <b>18</b> |
| Implementing and Maintaining These Projects Longterm.....          | 18        |
| <b>7 PROJECT CONSORTIUM INFORMATION .....</b>                      | <b>19</b> |
| <b>8 ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES + PROJECT READINESS.....</b>              | <b>20</b> |
| Identifying the Activities These Projects Address .....            | 20        |
| <b>9 ZONING AND CODE RESTRICTIONS .....</b>                        | <b>20</b> |
| How the Zoning Code Support High-Density in the Project Area ..... | 20        |
| <b>10 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE .....</b>                    | <b>23</b> |
| Project's Timeline and Sustainability Post Grant Funding .....     | 23        |
| <b>11 MEASURABLE OUTCOMES .....</b>                                | <b>23</b> |
| Goals and Outcomes .....                                           | 23        |
| <b>CLOSING REMARKS.....</b>                                        | <b>24</b> |
| <b>APPENDICES .....</b>                                            | <b>24</b> |



**Link Green**  
At the heart of Middle Michigan's vast ecosystem of parks and trails, the Talent District connects people to a wealth of natural and cultural treasures in the Region. The GKB trail with its planned north and south connections will ensure accessibility to nature.

**Farm Fresh**  
Talent looks for vibrant spaces and is hungry for healthier lifestyles. The Mt. Pleasant Farmers Market proudly serves the community, and needed updates will create a renewed space for social connections and innovation together with other public space improvements.

**Grow Local**  
Young professionals are reshaping the job market with flexible, purpose-driven careers and entrepreneurial ventures that fuel innovation and social impact. A new Downtown Food Business Program and Business Incubator will help local talent get there.

**Live Sustainably**  
The Talent District connects our emerging talent at Central Michigan University through neighborhoods of unique character to the lively & amenity-rich downtown core. Mixed-use developments and retrofits of historic buildings will bring more life into the area.

# ASSETS THAT ATTRACT + SERVE TALENT



## Link Green

### CURRENT

- 1 Parks and Green Spaces 
- 2 GKB Riverwalk Trail/Access Adventure Trail
- 3 Kinney Avenue Greenway

### FUTURE

- A GKB North Trail Connector\*
- B GKB South Trail Connector
- C Michigan Water Trail
- D Passenger Rail Station



## Farm Fresh

### CURRENT

- 4 Downtown Core & Civic Center 
- 5 GreenTree Co-op Market
- 6 Town Center Event Space

### FUTURE

- 1 Farmers-Market Pavilion & Kitchen Incubator\*\*
- E Downtown Streetscape & Parking Facilities \*
- F Cat's Meow Art Alleyway\*



## Grow Local

### CURRENT

- 7 MMDC
- 8 Chamber of Commerce

### FUTURE

- 2 MMDC Business Incubator\*\*
- 3 Downtown Food Business Program\*\*



## Live Sustainably

- 9 High-Density Areas 
- 10 Redevelopment of Priority Sites
- 11 Iconic, Historic Neighborhoods 

### FUTURE

- G Waterfront-Oriented Developments
- H New Mixed-Use Building (221 W Michigan)\*
- I Retrofitted Mixed-Use Building (115/117 S University)\*
- 4 New Housing in Historic Building (200 E Broadway)\*\*



## 2 Location

### WHY THIS AREA WAS CHOSEN AS THE SITE OF THE LOCAL TALENT PLAN

The area identified as the Central Market & Main District represents the city's strongest concentration of assets that attract, retain, and support talent. **Strategically centered in Downtown Mt. Pleasant and bounded by Central Michigan University (CMU) and Mission Street**, the district naturally connects the city's largest population of emerging talent with a thriving hub of local businesses, cultural amenities, and public spaces. This District is already one of the most walkable, high-amenity places in the region, making it the ideal foundation for transformational placemaking.

“As a resident of the Downtown and a young professional, I cannot speak highly enough of the impact living in this area has had on my life. My wife and I leave our apartment every day and find a new adventure- from our morning walks through the City parks to the concerts and festivals that take place right outside our window.”

Boomer Wingard, Mayor

Within these boundaries – defined by Pickard Street to the north, Bellows Street to the south, Adams Street to the west, and Mission Street to the east – the district integrates high-density and missing-middle housing, diverse businesses, and access to natural and cultural amenities. This area offers a **vibrant mix of character-rich spaces, walkability, and opportunities for community, culture, and modern work-life balance**. Graduates and young couples can live in apartments or townhomes with access to parks, businesses, and restaurants without the upkeep of a yard.



Townhomes at University Avenue



Fire Up! Fest at Downtown Mt. Pleasant, September 19, 2025 (Photo from "Fire Up Fest" Courtesy of Dan Gaken)

Families seeking more space will find that the West Side, North-Central and South-Central neighborhoods are a perfect fit. These areas have a more traditional neighborhood look and feel while still being within walking distance of the Downtown amenities and with the additional benefit of being connected through the city parks and the Kinney Avenue Greenway.

The Central Market & Main District holds several of the City's parks including Island Park, Nelson Park, Millpond Park, and a portion of Chipp-a-Waters Park – all interconnected by the *GKB Riverwalk Trail* (*Attachment O*). Future expansions will connect the local trail to the region's *MidMichigan Community Pathway* (*Attachment N*) per the *Greater Mt. Pleasant Area Non-Motorized Plan* (*Attachment M*).

This green and accessible system of shared-use pathways is a beloved city amenity as it represents its interconnectivity through **greenscapes that surround the Chippewa River**. Future plans set forth by the *Chippewa River Strategic Plan* (*Attachment P*) include designating the river as a formal Michigan Water Trail: the first in Isabella County (*Attachment Q*). Furthermore, the Passenger Rail Project plans for a station in Mt. Pleasant will assist even further with the city's nonmotorized plans.

The "Town and Gown" connector on University Street is the link between Downtown and CMU's campus with unique gateways located on the north with a traffic calming island, and on the south node, with MEDC Priority Redevelopment Sites. This **bikeable and walkable street** fosters stronger ties between students and the city's business & cultural hub. Together, these areas form Mt. Pleasant's Talent District – a cohesive geography that supports MTP goals by **enhancing walkability, supporting locally owned businesses, encouraging higher-density development, and improving quality of life**.



Children playing in the Chippewa River



Kinney Ave Greenway



"Town and Gown" North Gateway (yellow chair produced by City Streets Department staff)

## 3 Talent Plan

Mt. Pleasant offers the best of both worlds: a vibrant and energetic lifestyle paired with the warmth of a true "hometown" feel. Surrounded by lakes, rivers, forests, and rich farmland, this community blends natural beauty with modern amenities – making it a place where residents, talent, businesses, and visitors thrive.

More than 21,000 residents have chosen Mt. Pleasant for its quality of life. It's one of Mid-Michigan's most walkable communities, ranked 14th out of Michigan's 65 most populous cities, where the arts are celebrated, parks are cherished, and entrepreneurs are supported.

### MID-MICHIGAN WALKABILITY SCORES

|              |    |
|--------------|----|
| Mt. Pleasant | 54 |
| Bay City     | 54 |
| Saginaw      | 42 |
| Midland      | 30 |

<https://www.walkscore.com/MI/>

The close-knit, diverse community and welcoming spirit create an environment where everyone knows your name and newcomers quickly feel connected.



Students at Central Michigan University (CMU) describe Mt. Pleasant as a "home away from home," a place that's "not too big, not too small – just right."

Mt. Pleasant is alive with experiences that make living here unique. From concerts and events at the Soaring Eagle Casino to cheering on Central Michigan University's Chippewas with the rallying cry "Fire Up Chips!," energy and pride fill the air. Outdoor enthusiasts enjoy hiking, biking, and kayaking along the Chippewa River or exploring more than 1,000 acres of parkland and 19 nature preserves.

Downtown shines as the city's heartbeat, with nearly 100 locally owned businesses, eclectic dining, art galleries, and specialty shops. Annual events keep the streets bustling – from Art Walk Central and the Craft Beer Festival, to festive holiday celebrations complete with flying pancakes and lighted parades in the winter. It's a place where creativity thrives and small-town charm meets big-city energy.

Culture runs deep here as well. The Ziibiwing Cultural Center, the Midwest's premier American Indian museum, celebrates the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Each summer, the Tribe's annual Powwow fills the city with music, dance, storytelling, and authentic foods, sharing traditions that enrich the community.



Photo from "Fire Up Fest" Courtesy of Dan Gaken

# 3(1) Talent Plan

## HOW THE DISTRICT SUPPORTS THE GOALS OF THE MTP

Mt. Pleasant's talent district directly advances the Michigan Talent Partnership's (MTP) vision as the chosen area is the heart of the community with high-density, high-amenity neighborhoods that attract and retain talent while fostering business opportunities. The City has been heavily working on creating policies and regulations that help us improve upon these offerings. The new *Character-Based Zoning Ordinances* adopted in 2018 (*Attachment H*) and the new *Master Plan* adopted in 2020 and updated in 2025 (*Attachment G*), focus on improving walkability, increasing housing and public spaces, enhancing storefronts, and supporting investments in existing buildings.

One signature example of **higher-density** development in the district is The Broadway Lofts, completed in January 2022. Located within the District, next to City Hall and across from Island Park, the project added 48 workforce housing units in the heart of downtown while also introducing 13,000 square feet of ground-level retail. Its anchor tenant, GreenTree Co-Op Market – a 50-year-old local grocery cooperative – provides daily amenities for residents and models sustainable business. This project has gained national recognition, receiving the Jack Kemp Excellence in Affordable and Workforce Housing Award in 2023, and serves as a cornerstone for Mt. Pleasant's strategy to bring people, energy, and opportunity into the district.



The Broadway Lofts

**The district's amenities** further strengthen its appeal. The downtown boasts a variety of dining options offering something for everyone – from hometown bars and casual cafés to eclectic eateries and fine dining experiences. Shoppers can explore specialty boutiques and art galleries that reflect Mt. Pleasant's local character and entrepreneurial spirit. Just steps away, parks, green spaces, and the Chippewa River provide opportunities to unwind, combining the energy of a traditional downtown experience with the tranquility of nature.

The talent district also prioritizes **business ownership and economic opportunity**, supported by the work of the Middle Michigan Development Corporation (MMDC), Mt. Pleasant Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), Great Lakes Bay MichiganWorks!, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Mt. Pleasant Chamber of Commerce. MMDC provides technical assistance, resources, and connections to help entrepreneurs start, grow, and sustain their businesses in Mt. Pleasant. From guiding small businesses through financing and permitting to fostering partnerships with local and regional stakeholders, MMDC ensures that entrepreneurs have the tools they need to succeed. Their support not only strengthens the local economy but also grounds the talent district in authenticity and community-driven ownership.

By combining density, amenities, vibrant street life, and entrepreneurial opportunity, Mt. Pleasant's Talent District represents transformational placemaking that aligns seamlessly with the Michigan Talent Partnership's goals. It is not just a development initiative – it is a long-term investment in people, community, and the future of Mt. Pleasant as a hub for talent in Michigan.

## 3(2) Talent Plan

### HOW THE PROJECTS SUPPORT THE GOALS OF THE MTP

#### Proposed Activities for Funding

##### Mt. Pleasant Farmer's Market & Downtown Food Business Program

The City of Mt. Pleasant proposes to reconstruct and modernize its Farmer's Market Pavilion, transforming it into a year-round community and business hub that includes a new incubator kitchen. The current pavilion, located in Island Park, was constructed in the 1970's and the community's needs are rapidly outgrowing the space. The new pavilion will be relocated slightly south of its current location to better connect with Downtown and will serve as a central gathering place that blends local food, entrepreneurship, and cultural programming – key ingredients for attracting and retaining talent.

The new pavilion will be a flexible, multi-use space designed for vendors, events, and community gatherings. Features such as a second-story rentable event space, food truck hookups, outdoor dining, and social areas will create a welcoming atmosphere for residents, students, and visitors. A cornerstone of the project is the incubator kitchen, which will support food startups, giving them access to professional-grade equipment, training, and mentorship. By lowering barriers for food entrepreneurs, the kitchen will foster sustainable employment and strengthen the local economy, helping retain local graduates and attract new talent. Additionally, a pilot program will subsidize kitchen construction in existing buildings to help entrepreneurs open or expand businesses in the talent district.

Rendering of Proposed Pavilion. See attachments for detailed plan.



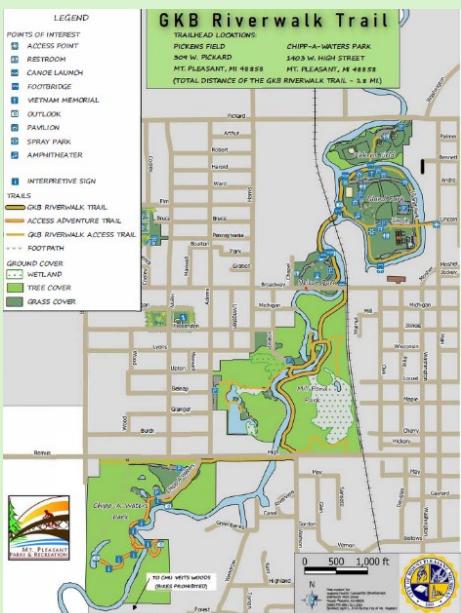
Inspiration – “The Back Lot” in Petoskey. Photo courtesy of ExploreMichigan

## 3A-I Supporting Walkability and Transit Rich Areas

Locating the Farmer's Market pavilion slightly south from its current location will make it more visible from the existing pedestrian bridge behind City Hall and make it more accessible to downtown. Nearby parking options, including City Hall and Town Center, will also support accessibility.

In addition to these parking options, the Farmer's Market location at Island Park is uniquely positioned within the City's extensive, interconnected trail system. Mt. Pleasant maintains a well-developed network of shared-use paths and sidewalks that connect neighborhoods, parks, schools, and the Central Michigan University campus to the Downtown core. The GKB Riverwalk Trail and other pathways run directly through Island Park, linking the market to residential areas of the city.

These trails provide safe, nonmotorized routes for pedestrians and cyclists, ensuring that the market is accessible without reliance on a vehicle. The trail network also positions the pavilion as a regional destination for active transportation with its proposed connections to the Mid-Michigan Pathway, which will link Clare, Mt. Pleasant, and Shepherd.



## 3A-II Supporting the Creation of High-Density Districts

The reconstruction of the Farmer's Market Pavilion will serve as a destination anchor for Downtown Mt. Pleasant, making the district more attractive for new investment in housing and mixed-use redevelopment. Its visibility and public realm improvements will create conditions that are ideal for higher-density, mixed-income residential development nearby.

The addition of the incubator kitchen further strengthens the district's potential for density by fueling business creation and local entrepreneurship. Affordable kitchen access will help create small food-based businesses suited to fill ground-floor spaces in mixed-use developments, increasing demand for walkable housing, enabling greater housing choice as laid out by the Statewide Housing Plan for Region G.

With direct access to local food businesses, public markets, and cultural events, residents are encouraged to choose urban housing over suburban alternatives. Together, the pavilion and incubator kitchen create a dynamic environment where public amenities, small business growth, and private housing investment reinforce one another.

### This project directly advances the City's Master Plan goals:

-  **(3.6)** promoting a vital mix of Downtown businesses
-  **(4.1)** developing family-serving facilities and activities for all ages
-  **(5.1)** increasing tourism and citywide visibility
-  **(5.2)** enhancing employment opportunities and training for higher-paying jobs

Together, the market, incubator kitchen, and gathering space will form a vibrant destination that retains talent and supports entrepreneurs.

### 3A-III Improving Quality of Life

The new Farmer's Market Pavilion in Mt. Pleasant is designed to be a transformative project that enhances community life and directly supports the attraction and retention of talent. The pavilion will serve as a year-round destination that blends food, culture, and community activity.

The new pavilion will provide a flexible, multi-purpose space capable of hosting farmers markets, concerts, festivals, art fairs, and community gatherings in all seasons. A second-story addition will create a rentable event and meeting space, offering a modern venue for community organizations, private functions, and professional networking. Around the pavilion, new infrastructure will support food trucks, outdoor dining, and comfortable seating areas, creating a lively, active environment that fosters a sense of place and social connection. In warmer seasons, overhead garage-style doors will remain open to maintain the link between the pavilion and outdoor spaces.

By extending the usability of the space into colder months and integrating it more closely with Downtown, the pavilion will significantly enhance quality of life in Mt. Pleasant. Residents and visitors will enjoy expanded access to fresh, local food, diverse cultural programming, and welcoming public spaces. Families will have new opportunities to engage in multi-generational activities, while young professionals and local college graduates will find the kind of vibrant, walkable, and amenity-rich environment that encourages them to stay in the community.



### 3B Supporting Locally Owned Businesses

The reconstruction of the Farmer's Market Pavilion and the addition of an incubator kitchen will significantly expand opportunities for locally owned businesses in Mt. Pleasant. With approximately 34,000 visitors per season, the farmers market already provides a high-traffic venue for local vendors, enabling small businesses, growers, and artisans to reach new customers. The new pavilion design and location will extend seasonal usability, increase attendance, and draw customers to nearby businesses.

The addition of an incubator kitchen will fill a critical gap in the region's entrepreneurial infrastructure. Currently, the nearest shared commercial kitchen facilities are in Grand Rapids (Downtown Market Incubator Kitchen, 84 miles away) and Flint (Flint Food Works, 92 miles away) – both more than an hour and a half from Mt. Pleasant. The new incubator kitchen will give Mid-Michigan businesses access to professional-grade equipment and a pathway to grow without the prohibitive cost of building their own facilities.

Usage of the kitchen will be structured to balance accessibility and sustainability. The space will be available to any qualified user through an application process (modeled after Flint Food Works' system) to ensure the kitchen is used for legitimate business development. A modest application fee will be required, along with hourly or monthly rental fees to cover operational costs, similar to practices in other incubator kitchens such as Grand Rapids. Rates will be structured to remain affordable for small startups, ensuring that cost does not become a barrier to participation.



**Flint Food Works Incubator Kitchen. Photo courtesy of The Kitchen Door**



**Grand Rapids Downtown Market Incubator Kitchen. Photo courtesy of The Kitchen Door**

To take local entrepreneurship even further, the project also includes setting aside a portion of the funds to kick off a Downtown Food Business Program, in which business owners can access financial assistance to retrofit existing inventory (Downtown has a surplus of office spaces) into restaurants. The Program will pay for a portion of the cost to build a kitchen space within existing Downtown buildings, allowing new entrepreneurs to take the next step into opening their own space.

Together, the Farmer's Market Pavilion, incubator kitchen, and Downtown Food Business Program will provide the physical space, supportive infrastructure, and customer base needed for locally owned businesses to thrive, directly aligning with the Michigan Talent Partnership's goal of creating vibrant, entrepreneurial districts that attract and retain talent.

**[This grant] gives me hope to continue the arduous process in making my dream come true and hopefully bringing a wonderful gathering space for people of different cultures to come together and enjoy.**

Christy Moses, Owner of Central Fusion



## MMDC Incubator Space

The new home of the Middle Michigan Development Corporation (MMDC) at 111 S University not only hosts this important organization but also has concrete plans to open a business incubator space on the second floor. This new space will serve as a natural expansion of the services that MMDC already provides to support new local businesses.

### 3B Supporting Locally Owned Businesses

This investment directly supports the growth of locally owned businesses by providing the professional infrastructure, services, and collaborative environment that freelancers, entrepreneurs, and startups need to thrive.

The renovated space will include two private offices, a conference room with seating for approximately 12 people, high-top workstations, standard workstations, a restroom, and a small kitchenette. Secure, code-based entry will provide convenient access, and tenants will also have the option to establish a professional mailbox at this address.

Currently, the space is not suitable for use due to water damage from a leaking roof, inadequate lighting, and insufficient infrastructure for comfortable work. However, renovation plans are underway to address these issues and create a dynamic, professional environment.

MMDC has received strong interest from young professionals and entrepreneurs who are seeking a collaborative, growth-oriented workspace. Freelancers are looking for a place to work outside the home, while startup founders have expressed the need for a business address that protects their personal privacy and supports their professional image. By lowering barriers to entry, providing flexible space, and fostering connections between entrepreneurs and MMDC's technical assistance services, the incubator will play a vital role in nurturing locally owned businesses.

## 200 E Broadway Housing

This iconic historic building located in the heart of downtown has been listed as a MEDC Priority Site for several years. Owned by a local business owner and developer since 2023, the building now has a bright future with the owner's vision to remove the fake facade that currently covers the building's historical characteristics, rehab the ground floor, and convert the upper stories into 14 residential units. Additionally, the owner is partnering with a local business entrepreneur who plans to open a new restaurant and food business that will provide a unique eating experience for Mt. Pleasant residents and beyond.



Current Façade



Proposed Rendering

## 3A-II Supporting the Creation of High-Density Districts

This redevelopment will add significant new housing density in the city's walkable core, expanding opportunities for talent to live Downtown within close proximity to jobs, cultural amenities, and public space. The upper-story residential units will contribute to a more active and sustainable district by ensuring that Downtown remains lively beyond traditional business hours, supporting both local businesses and the broader economy. Due to the location within a historic structure, the new housing units will be uniquely designed. Options will include studio units, two-bedroom units and lofts – a typology not yet found within the city limits.

This redevelopment directly aligns with Region G's Regional Housing Partnership goals. Specifically, Goal 4.1, "increase the supply of the full spectrum of housing that is affordable and attainable to Michigan residents" and Goal 4.6 "Increase missing middle and workforce housing stock to facilitate greater housing choice".



Proposed Loft Concept

## Proposed Match Activities

The City of Mt. Pleasant is undertaking a series of strategic initiatives designed to align with the Michigan Talent Partnership's priorities and further strengthen the community's vitality. Through targeted investments in walkability, housing, quality of life, and small business support, the City is building on recent successes to create a more connected, inclusive, and economically resilient talent district. These efforts include expanding safe and accessible nonmotorized infrastructure, encouraging high-density housing and mixed-use developments, transforming underutilized spaces into vibrant community destinations, and reinvesting in the success of locally owned businesses. Together, these match activities reflect a coordinated vision for fostering a walkable, transit-rich, and opportunity-filled environment that supports residents, attracts talent, and enhances Mt. Pleasant's role as a regional hub.



### 3A-I Supporting Walkability and Transit Rich Areas

The City of Mt. Pleasant's planned shared use path from Nelson Park to Hannah's Bark Park directly supports the Michigan Talent Partnership's goal of **creating walkable, transit-rich districts**. This project, which represents an investment of approximately **\$2 million**, will remove on-street parking along the East side of N Harris Street to make room for a 10-foot-wide nonmotorized pathway with two-foot safety buffers on each side. This investment significantly **expands safe, accessible infrastructure** for walking and biking while reducing reliance on cars.

The pathway will connect key community amenities – including Nelson Park, Hannah's Bark Park, and nearby neighborhoods – while also tying into Downtown. The removal of parking along the north side of Broadway between Chapel Drive and Harris, and along Harris itself, ensures that pedestrian and bicycle mobility is prioritized. To improve safety, a rapid flashing beacon will also be installed at the Harris and Pickard intersection, supporting safe crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.

Beyond serving as a standalone project, the shared use path is designed with future connectivity in mind, laying the groundwork to tie into the broader Mid-Michigan Pathways system. This will integrate Mt. Pleasant into a regional network of trails and nonmotorized routes, expanding access for residents, students, and visitors and further positioning the community as a destination for active transportation.

## 3A-II Supporting the Creation of High-Density Districts

Following the lead and success of the Broadway Lofts, the project at 221 W Michigan will continue to increase access to more affordable housing and a wider range of housing options in the city's Downtown core.

One block away from City Hall, this currently vacant site has been listed as a MEDC Priority Site for a while and has been purchased by a Michigan-based emerging developer listed on Forbes 30 under 30. Driven by the goal of bringing development into areas that need investment, this local developer has committed to assisting Mt. Pleasant.

The land has received support from the Planning and City Commissions through the approval of a rezoning that will allow the site to be constructed with a greater number of housing units than previously permitted. The overall investment of approximately **\$7 million will create 22 units**, including efficiency units and barrier-free units, as well as more affordable commercial units for smaller businesses as the current inventory lacks such options.



Current Vacant Site



Rendering of Future Development

## 3A-III Improving Quality of Life

A major project completed by the City in October 2024 was the redevelopment of an underutilized parking lot and green space that is now known as Town Center. Designed to enhance year-round community engagement, this **\$2+ million project** includes an expansive green space, a multi-purpose event hub with curbless streets, universally accessible public restrooms, improved pedestrian lighting, and sustainable infrastructure. Since its completion, it has served as a welcoming destination for residents and visitors alike, stimulating downtown foot traffic and economic vitality.

Following the efforts with Town Center, the City, in collaboration with MMDC, also secured **\$4,000** from the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) for a mural to transform an existing alleyway, known as "Cat's Meow Alley", into a vibrant public space. Plans for the space in the near future include approximately **\$10,000** for bistro tables and seating, and overhead string lights.



Town Center



Current "Cat's Meow Alley"

Adjacent to MMDC's new home, the two existing buildings at 115/117 S University received local investment to assist the new owner in converting the obsolete structures into mixed-use buildings. The local art entrepreneur is opening her business at the ground-floor level, together with a cider bar. The top story will have two rental units. The project has received local support from the Downtown Fire Suppression Program and Downtown Facade Improvement Program. The City Commission has also approved property tax exemption through the Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act (OPRA).

### 3B Supporting Locally Owned Businesses

Since 2016 the Downtown Tax-Increment Financing District has been providing financial assistance to property and business owners to improve their building facades and signage. Since July 2023, 5 buildings have taken advantage of this local program, leveraging approximately \$30,000.



**“**A thriving downtown is the canvas upon which a community tells its story, and I believe the proposed investments will add even more vibrancy, energy, and creativity to ours. **”**

Sara Beauchamp-Hicks, Owner of 115/117 S. University



**Photo of Broadway Street Courtesy of Dan Gaken**

# 4 Implementation and Sustainability

## IMPLEMENTING AND MAINTAINING THESE PROJECTS LONGTERM

Implementation of the Central Market & Main District will be guided by a coordinated, long-term strategy that combines public and private investment, strong community partnerships, and ongoing management to ensure sustainability over the coming years. After the grant period, the District and its relevant projects will be incorporated into the next iteration of the City's Master Plan in 2030.

### **Farmer's Market & Incubator Kitchen**

The City of Mt. Pleasant has extensive experience managing public facilities, programming community spaces, and maintaining capital investments, and has both the staff capacity and financial resources necessary to ensure the long-term success of these projects.

Implementation of the Farmer's Market Pavilion and incubator kitchen projects will be guided by various departments at the City including Engineering, Planning & Community Development, Building Safety, and Parks & Recreation. The implementation team will ensure that construction is completed on time and to modern standards for safety, accessibility, and resiliency. Once complete, the project will transition into the City's established operational framework for public facilities.

Ongoing maintenance of the pavilion and kitchen will be managed by the Parks Department, which has the staff and expertise to oversee custodial needs, building systems, grounds upkeep, and seasonal repairs. Programming and daily activation of the pavilion – including the farmers market, concerts, festivals, and rental events – will be the responsibility of the Recreation Department, which has a proven track record of coordinating community activities and maximizing facility usage.

Financial support for both operations and maintenance will come from the City's parks and recreation budgets, which already provide sustainable funding for a range of community amenities. The incubator kitchen will generate modest revenue through rental and application fees, and the pavilion's second-story event space will also serve as a revenue source through rentals to community groups, professionals, and private events. These additional revenues will help offset operational costs and ensure that the facility remains financially sustainable into the future.

### **Downtown Food Business Program**

The Downtown Food Business Program will be implemented as a pilot program and be tested while funds are available. If successful, the city will discuss the continuation of the program through the Downtown TIFA or other revenue sources. City staff in partnership with MMDC will oversee both the implementation of the pilot program and continuation of the program after grant funds are spent.

### **200 E Broadway Housing**

The housing project at 200 E Broadway will largely be implemented by the developer with monitoring by the City in regard to grant reporting. Once completed, the developer will be responsible for maintaining the property through the sale or rental of the housing units.

# 7 Project Consortium Information

The Central Market & Main Consortium is united in a shared vision: to strengthen our region's ability to attract and retain top talent. Together, we recognize that talent is the driving force behind economic growth, innovation, and community vitality.

**MMDC** has long prioritized strategies that support both businesses and individuals by fostering an environment where emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, and young professionals can thrive. Through programs that reduce barriers for recent graduates, including MMDC's Michigan Centered Talent Retention Program and Coming Home: Middle Michigan events, it serves to connect talent with employers while also investing in placemaking. MMDC is committed to ensuring that people who come to Mt. Pleasant not only build careers here but also choose to stay and grow.

**CMU, Mid Michigan College and the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College** complement this strategy with a strong focus on preparing graduates for success in the workforce and encouraging them to see our community as a place where they can live, work, and make a lasting impact. From career readiness initiatives to partnerships with local employers, our educational partners play a critical role in building the pipeline of skilled professionals who fuel our regional economy.

**Great Lakes Bay MichiganWorks!** Also plays a crucial role in further developing and supporting that talent pipeline and will be another essential organization to assist in developing this talent district so that it extends beyond downtown and creates a lasting impact on overall growth of the community.

As developers, business owners, and community partners, we share this commitment by creating spaces, opportunities, and experiences that make our region welcoming and competitive. **CMURC, the SBDC, and the Mt. Pleasant Chamber of Commerce** also serve as business resources within the community, ensuring that startups and small businesses have the resources they need to succeed – providing another reason for talent to stay rooted in our community. **The Mt. Pleasant Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau** also highlights the many wonderful amenities that make Mt. Pleasant not only a great place to visit, but a great place to put down roots.

Together, our coalition is dedicated to aligning resources, programs, and investments to achieve one goal: making the Mt. Pleasant region a destination where talent wants to build their futures.

Please see Attachments B and C for Project Consortium Information items 5 and 6, respectively. See Attachment D for Consortium Members Contact Information.

# 8 Eligible Activities + Project Readiness

## IDENTIFYING THE ACTIVITIES THESE PROJECTS ADDRESS

- I. The reconstruction of the Farmer's Market Pavilion will involve planning, engineering, permitting review, and other local assessments to support implementation.
- II. The Mt. Pleasant Farmers' Market has demonstrated strong community engagement, with approximately 34,000 visitors per season. Its wide range of programs – from cooking demos and health initiatives to family-friendly events – reflects robust stakeholder support and its role as a festive community gathering place.
- IV. The housing project at 200 E Broadway will improve utilization of mixed-use and commercial property, including, but not limited to, the conversion of commercial space for affordable housing.
- VI. The new incubator kitchen, Downtown Food Business Program, and MMDC incubator space will all provide support for small businesses and emerging entrepreneurs, including access to credit and professional development.
- VII. The new Farmer's Market Pavilion will enhance parks, green space, community recreation, promotion of local artists or art installations, and outdoor social spaces.



# 9 Zoning and Code Restrictions

## HOW THE ZONING CODE SUPPORTS HIGH DENSITY IN THE PROJECT AREA

The City of Mt. Pleasant adopted a new *Character-Based Zoning Ordinance* in 2018 (*Attachment H*), following a community outreach process that began in 2016. The new code significantly increased the opportunities for mixed-use neighborhoods, missing-middle housing, and urban forms of development, especially within the Talent District: including Downtown, main commercial corridors, around city parks and adjacent to CMU.



Photo of Planapalooza Community Engagement Process within City Hall in 2016

**This zoning overhaul is today an effective tool to improve walkability through the creation of mixed-use neighborhoods, increase density at key locations, and remove parking regulations, all of which bring Mt. Pleasant towards the goal of achieving a higher-quality built environment.**

As such, within the city's Downtown core, the new character-based zoning ordinance created the *CD-5 Urban Center Character District*, with the goal to further the character of Downtown, supporting it as a higher density mixed-use area. The creation of vibrant, mixed-use districts ensures that talent can live, work, and socialize in walkable neighborhoods – an amenity that today's workforce values when choosing where to live and build their careers.

To complement the zoning regulations, city staff and consultants developed a *Focused Downtown Planning Study (Attachment I)*, which illustrated the great potential of redevelopments, the reuse of existing buildings, and infill developments on vacant parcels and parking lots (*Downtown Parking Map, Attachment K*) that can contribute to adding more residents within the downtown core and create more opportunities to attract new residents to this amenity-rich space.

City's efforts on Downtown did not stop there. The city's *Vision 2050 Master Plan* adopted in 2020 and updated in 2025 (*Attachment G*), the new *Downtown Strategic Plan (Attachment J)*, and *Redevelopment Ready Community* designation further align zoning reforms with redevelopment priorities, reinforcing density and housing variety downtown and along key corridors.



**Mt. Pleasant Character-Based Code: CD-5 Urban Center Character District**



**Focused Downtown Planning Study: ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN FOR PARKING LOT #5 INFILL (Attachment I)**



**Character-Based Code Studies: Synoptic Survey (CD-5: Urban Center)**

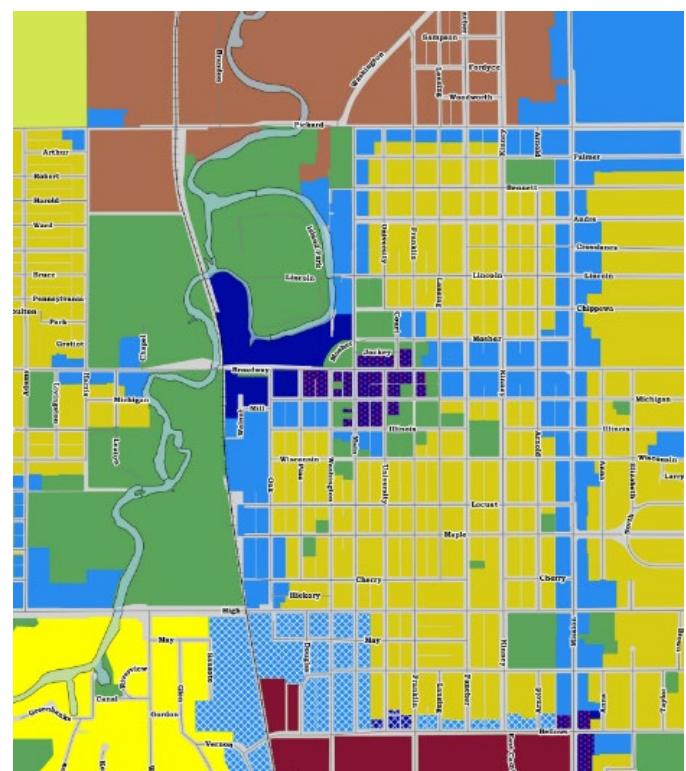
Aside from the Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan goals, the city has gone through major reforms to advance missing-middle housing along Mission Street, adjacent to CMU, Downtown, and the city parks.

The CD-4 General Urban Character District is the zoning tool to achieve that. Such districts allow for all forms of housing developments, from single-family homes in small lots to duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and small multiple-family apartments. By allowing a diverse range of housing types, the ordinance makes it easier for students, young professionals, and families to find attainable housing in walkable, amenity-rich areas, directly supporting Mt. Pleasant's efforts to retain local college graduates and attract new talent.

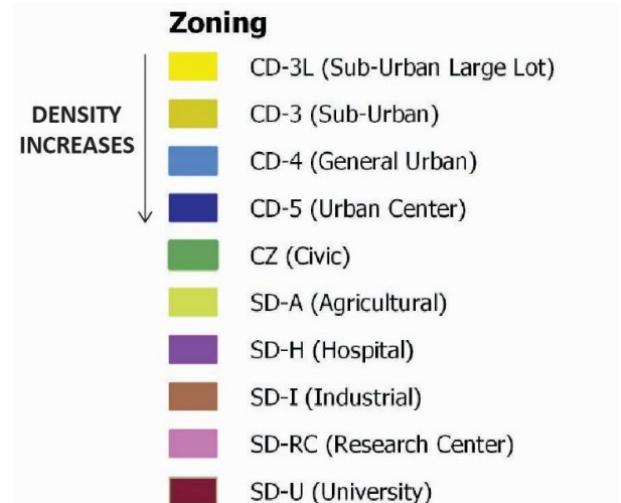
The *Mission Street Improvement Plan* (Attachment L) set goals and strategies to improve the corridor design and land use framework to create more housing units close to where shops and services are already located. A recent zoning text change was also approved by the City Commission to allow developments including bungalow courts and pocket neighborhoods in such locations. This density allows for housing to remain affordable while also supporting local businesses and the growth of amenity-rich neighborhoods. **These new housing options expand affordability while offering the kind of neighborhood character and amenities that help retain talent, including young families and graduates, who might otherwise relocate for housing elsewhere.**



**Mt. Pleasant Character-Based Code: CD-4 General Urban Character District**



**Zoning Map (Excerpt)**



# 10 Project Implementation Timeline

## PROJECT'S TIMELINE AND SUSTAINABILITY POST GRANT FUNDING

| Farmer's Market/Incubator Kitchen |                                                                         | Downtown Food Business Program |                                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| JAN 2026                          | City Solicits Bids for Architectural Design, Engineering and Permitting | JAN 2026                       | Begin Program Outreach                  |
| 2/1/2026                          | Proposals Due                                                           | FEB - APR 2026                 | Program Drafting and Approval           |
| APR - OCT 2026                    | Survey, Design and Permitting                                           | JUN - AUG 2026                 | Program Announcement & Application Open |
| 11/1/2026                         | Engineer Submits Complete Biddable Package to City                      | SEP - OCT 2026                 | Selection and Funding Disbursement      |
| 1/12/27                           | Construction Contract Letting Due                                       | OCT 2026 – 2027                | Implementation and Evaluation           |
| 5/1/2027                          | Construction Start Date                                                 |                                |                                         |
| 11/1/2027                         | Construction End Date                                                   |                                |                                         |
| 1/1/2030                          | Maintain Facilities and Programming Using City Staff and Funds          |                                |                                         |

| 200 E Broadway Housing |                                    | MMDC Business Incubator |                          |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| FEB - APR 2026         | Design and Permitting              | NOV 2025                | Construction Begins      |
| JUN 2026               | Construction Begins                | MAR 2026                | Construction Ends        |
| DEC 2026               | Construction Ends                  | APR 2026                | Space Available For Rent |
| JAN 2027               | Announce Housing for Rent/Purchase |                         |                          |

## 11 Measurable Outcomes

### GOALS AND OUTCOMES

#### Farmer's Market/Incubator Kitchen

- Extend usage of the Farmer's Market pavilion by 6 months.
- Maintain a consistent number of vendors at the Farmer's Market each week.
- Host 20 events at the Farmer's Market pavilion per year.



#### Downtown Food Business Program

- Create 3 commercial kitchens in Downtown Mt. Pleasant through 2027.

#### 200 E Broadway Housing

- Create 14 housing units by 2027.

# Closing Remarks

Mt. Pleasant's Central Market & Main District is more than a place on the map – it is the heartbeat of a community determined to grow by nurturing people, opportunity, and connection. This application reflects a shared vision: that talent is attracted not only by jobs, but by the kind of place where life feels full, welcoming, and rooted in possibility.

The proposed projects – a reimagined Farmer's Market Pavilion with an incubator kitchen, a Downtown Food Business Program, new incubator space for entrepreneurs, and the transformation of 200 E Broadway into vibrant housing – are all designed with one purpose: to make Mt. Pleasant a place where students choose to stay, families choose to grow, and entrepreneurs choose to build their dreams. Together, these investments transform spaces into experiences, and experiences into reasons for talent to call this city home.

Here, the Chippewa River winds through parks and trails that connect neighborhoods, the downtown hums with the creativity of local businesses, and the community gathers to celebrate culture, music, and food. The Central Market & Main District builds on these strengths, weaving them together into a destination that is energetic, walkable, and authentically Mt. Pleasant.

This is not just a development plan – it is a promise to future generations. A promise that Mt. Pleasant will continue to be a community where opportunity is accessible, where local ideas can grow into lasting enterprises, and where quality of life inspires talent to put down roots. With the support of the Michigan Talent Partnership, Mt. Pleasant will carry this vision forward, creating a legacy of connection, creativity, and belonging that ensures talent not only arrives here, but chooses to stay.

# Appendices

- Attachment A Farmer's Market Pavilion Drawings & Rendering
- Attachment B Lead Applicant Information
- Attachment C Letter of Support and Commitment from Chief Administrator
- Attachment D Consortium Members Contact Information
- Attachment E Budget
- Attachment F Letters of Support and Commitment
- Attachment G City of Mt. Pleasant Master Plan 2050
- Attachment H City of Mt. Pleasant Zoning Ordinance Text and Map
- Attachment I Focused Downtown Planning & Zoning Study
- Attachment J Downtown Strategic Plan
- Attachment K Downtown Parking Map
- Attachment L Mission Street Improvement Plan
- Attachment M Greater Mt Pleasant Area Non-Motorized Plan
- Attachment N MidMichigan Community Pathway
- Attachment O GKB Riverwalk Trail Map
- Attachment P Chippewa River Strategic Plan 2021
- Attachment Q Michigan Existing Watertrails Map