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ENABLING BETTER PLACES

USERS' GUIDE TO ZONING REFORM



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A digital copy of this document is available at: www.miplace.org/resources and www.cnu.org/our-projects/project-code-reform
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Marquette, image credit: Mary Madden

Are you ready to rewrite your entire zoning code?

Yes? Then this document **IS NOT** for you (although it is still a good place to start).

No? Not quite ready or unsure of where to start? Then **THIS IS** the document for you.

Most of today’s zoning codes were written to guide the post-war housing boom many cities and villages experienced. While these codes were able to accommodate unprecedented growth, many had unintentional consequences that hampered the ability to develop more of the walkable, vibrant streets and neighborhoods that were the historic hearts of many villages and cities. It is often illegal in a city’s zoning code to build a replica of a beloved street or neighborhood. Furthermore, the process of a coding update can be expensive and time consuming, requiring significant municipal capacity. Those communities short on funds and staff may not be able to effectively overhaul their codes or fully engage with stakeholders, and as a result they could miss out on the type of investment they desire.

Each Michigan community has its own unique qualities, challenges and opportunities. However, similar geographic, economic, and cultural forces have resulted in common concerns regarding local zoning codes. In response to these concerns, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RCC®), the Michigan Municipal League (MML), and the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) collaborated to develop this Guide.

Enabling Better Places: Users Guide to Zoning Code Reform is intended to be used by Michigan communities who are planning to make incremental changes to their codes. Many code reform processes seek to overhaul the entire code. This all-or-nothing approach has the significant potential to become a contentious and arduous process for all involved. It can daylight simmering community tensions, create strong NIMBY (“Not In My Backyard”) reactions, and can lead to other, unresolved, community issues.

This Guide does not advocate for or against a type of code framework; it is neither explicitly form-based nor is it use-based. Rather, it advocates for codes that enable vibrant, livable urban conditions. These solutions may be integrated into an existing use-based code, or may be the first step toward an eventual form-based code.

Any code reform process can be challenging. This Guide is intended to help planning directors and local governments take a concrete first step in the process, with the few essential code changes necessary in order to enable better places. “If you do nothing else, do this,” is the mantra behind these suggested changes. This Guide is intended for local governments at the very beginning of the code reform process: those who are engaging with their code in an initial manner and need guidance on where and how to begin.

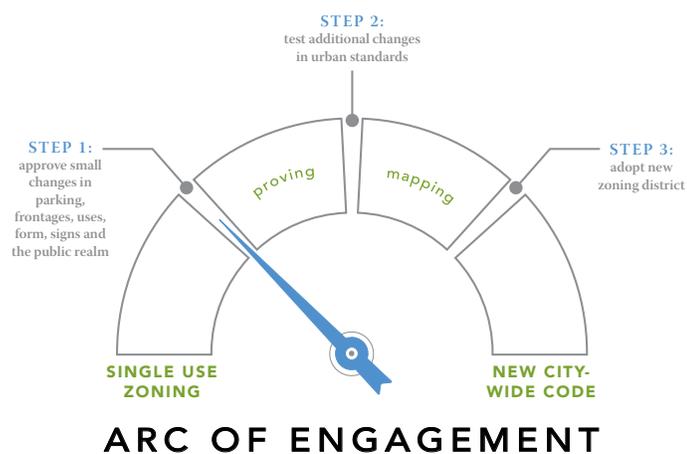


Figure 1. As the illustration above indicates, a local government may engage with the zoning reform process over a period of time. This Guide covers all three steps the process, or may be the only step required. The short-term fixes in the Guide are indicated by the needle on the gauge above.

The diagram to the left illustrates a four-step approach to zoning reform, changing a code from single use to a new and improved city-wide regulation in stages. Step 1, on which this Guide is based, involves implementing the smallest but most necessary changes to issues such as parking, frontages, uses, building form, and the public realm, for the purpose of making the greatest impact with the most fundamental of changes. Step 2 involves testing additional changes to the urban standards in specific locations. The stage between Steps 1 and 2 can be thought of as a “proving” stage, where the local government learns what is working and what needs adjusted. Step 3 involves the task of adapting the incremental changes that have been proven successful in one or more key districts, which requires a mapping stage to define districts. And finally moving beyond Step 3 to implement a new city-wide zoning code, including a complete mapping of the entire community to ensure the code is fully locally calibrated.

Enabling Better Places: Users' Guide to Zoning Code Reform

is a resource for Michigan local governments looking to provide place-specific incremental code changes that address the most problematic barriers first, build political will, and ultimately create more walkable, prosperous, and equitable places for residents of all ages. It provides recommended zoning code changes at the beginning of the process (Step 1 of the Arc of Engagement on page 5) and lays the foundation for further incremental efforts (Steps 2 and 3 of Figure 1 on page 5). It recognizes that communities each possess their own unique qualities and characteristics, and the right regulations will help preserve those special places while also better positioning themselves to adapt to economic challenges and future opportunities.

Instead of guaranteeing a great place, the Users' Guide to Zoning Code Reform provides approaches that enable a great place. This is a significant difference: guaranteeing a great place requires a complex code that takes into account a range of issues, while enabling a great place focuses only on the most critical land use elements required for vibrant, walkable places. Even making small zoning code revisions or clarifications can remove significant barriers to creating great places.

Appropriate regulations support jobs, foster economic development, support the development of attractive places for talent, and serve populations of all ages. Although intended as a small element of a comprehensive zoning ordinance, the detail and clarity provided in this Guide will support the RCC[®] principles of proactivity, predictability, and efficiency in the development review process.

Adopted master and downtown plans are a community's guiding framework for growth, redevelopment, and investment. Zoning is the primary tool for the implementation of those plans; a carefully considered code – reflective of the community's vision – is vital to a streamlined development review process. Zoning, street standards, and other codes dictate where and how much parking is built, the width and location of sidewalks, where buildings are placed, and how they are used. They also shape other components of the built environment to create a thriving neighborhood or fragment a community.



Image: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/PentH20RentalAccommodations/photos>

Enabling Better Places: Users' Guide to Zoning Code Reform

provides Michigan communities the following resources:

- Overview of Michigan cities and villages, based upon size and structure
 - How to use the Guide within the different place types
- Strategic principles of code reform
- Text amendments that may be made based upon context, staff, and political capacity
 - The amendments are organized by content
 - They are further refined by short-term and mid-term changes
- Resources
 - How to use the templates
 - Main street district template
 - Downtown district template
 - Adjacent neighborhood district template
 - Samples of national brands in a main street or downtown format
 - Outside resources on code reform

The coding changes recommended in this Guide are for an urban (city or village) context only. The companion document, *Enabling Better Suburbs: Users' Guide to Suburban Zoning Code Reform* will be completed in 2019.

Allowing local communities to set their pace for code reform enables them to prioritize their coding efforts, respond to their community's vision and needs, and foster greater community learning and understanding. In this way, the code reform process meets planners, mayors, and planning commissioners and their residents where they are: politically, financially, and administratively.

Enabling Better Places: Users' Guide to Zoning Code Reform is focused on incremental zoning reform. This deliberate process enables a community to create regulatory change in a single neighborhood or district before moving to the next update, building political will and community support throughout the process. Zoning reform is designed to reduce costs for development. For example, reduced parking requirements lower the market barriers to entry and support small-scale developers, which can enable an incremental, responsive approach to neighborhood and downtown revitalization.

This Guide brings cost-effective and accessible Michigan-specific coding tools to financially challenged communities, enabling them to take a thoughtful, nuanced approach to creating places for their residents. This incremental approach and responsiveness to local conditions, embraces the existing culture, and helps prepare for change so that residents have a stake in that change. To ensure the coding suggestions reflected local conditions, the team undertook a multi-step process to ensure Michigan-specific conditions were reflected.*

1. **Michigan context.** Workshop with five Michigan communities of various sizes and capabilities to learn about specific planning, and zoning challenges and opportunities. The five communities included:
 - a. Albion
 - b. Kalamazoo
 - c. Muskegon
 - d. Saginaw
 - e. Traverse City
 2. **Learning from the cities.** The team identified the five most common obstacles to livable walkable places that Michigan communities were facing:
 - a. **Parking:** balancing parking supply and demand and locating it in areas that enable vibrant, walkable streets and retail areas.
 - b. **Form:** the visible shape of the building or structure.
 - c. **Usage:** the separation of uses creates problems in communities that historically featured a mix of compatible uses.
 - d. **Frontage:** how the building faces the street is critical to supporting or detracting from the vibrancy and character of main streets and downtowns.
 - e. **Public realm:** areas that are not in private ownership, including streets and rights-of-way, open space, and public facilities, e.g., the space between the buildings.
 3. **Grounding in place.** Understanding where in the community zoning changes might be applied is essential. Code requirements differ with each context; the requirements needed for a main street are different than those needed for a residential neighborhood. Coding is not a “one-size- fits-all” process: understanding the character of the place is crucial to designing a coding framework that enables good urbanism.
 4. **Common Michigan placetypes.** The Michigan Municipal League provided a virtual tour of hundreds of Michigan urban places: the beautiful, the good, and those with challenges. Three “urban” place types emerged: 1) Main Street District, 2) Downtown District, and 3) Adjacent Neighborhood District (downtown adjacent and Main Street adjacent residential neighborhoods).
 5. **Simplify the code.** Specific code changes for each place type were established to respond to the obstacle identified for the “problem area” (parking, form, use, frontages, and public realm).
 6. **Recommended coding changes.** The resulting Michigan-specific strategies are found in the Fixes by Topic section, which identifies incremental steps a city or village could implement in each of the critical coding areas.
 7. **Explanatory text.** Developing or modifying a zoning code is not a simple exercise. To ensure maximum responsiveness to local conditions, explanations are added to some of the model zoning districts. These are found in the blue sidebar of the model districts in Resources.
- Essential to this approach is progress toward an ultimate vision or aspirational goal of a code reform effort. The Users' Guide to Zoning Reform provides coding language in critical areas to address what Michigan communities have found to be the most pressing coding problems, but fixing these issues will not guarantee vibrant, diverse places. For some cities and villages, a comprehensive coding reform may be necessary. However, engaging in such a process will be easier and more equitable after incremental zoning code changes have built political will and established momentum.

* The coding changes recommended in this Guide are intended for compact urban areas.



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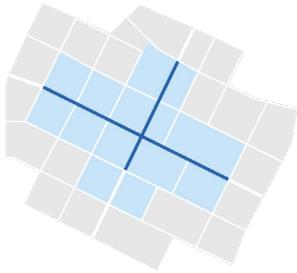
The Wedding Gallery
(517) 855-2929

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Williamston, image credit: Mary Madden

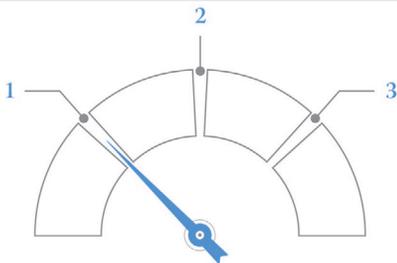
USING THIS GUIDE

This Guide is structured to enable a planning department or local government to address a series of steps in determining where and how to engage in the code reform process and enact change.



1. Determine the Place Type

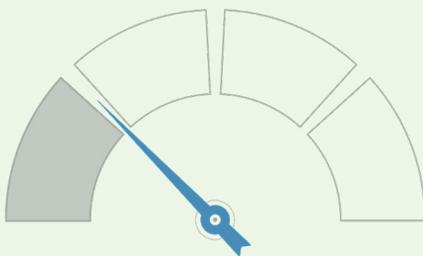
Determine the Place Type where changes will be targeted. See the section describing “Place Types” on page 14. This Guide provides tools for downtowns, main streets, and adjacent neighborhoods.



ARC OF ENGAGEMENT

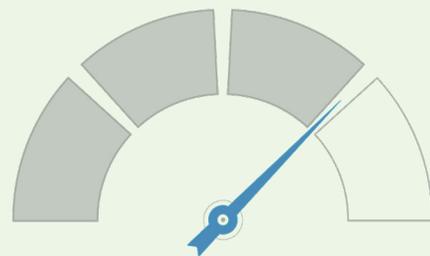
2. Gauge Support and Capacity

Determine the municipality’s point in the arc of engagement, see page 5, level of political support, and staff capacity. “Building Support” on page 11 describes building capacity amongst all stakeholders.



Initial Steps of Code Reform

Use the incremental fixes detailed in this section to make small improvements to your existing code. Add new fixes over time and as you build more capacity and support, graduate from Stage 1 to Stage 2 Fixes.



Strong Political Support and Staff Capacity

Select the model zoning district[s] from the Resources section of this Guide and edit them for local use. Explanatory text for various topics is found in the blue side bar of each model district.

PRINCIPLES OF CODE REFORM

Code reform is not a one-size-fits-all solution. This Guide will help you get started with an incremental process that is unique for each place and condition, yet built on a foundation of shared principles.

Know who you are.

Understand what is possible!

- What is the staff capacity to administer, or the political will to enforce proposed code changes?
- Does the local market support the changes?

Know where you are.

Localize solutions!

- Customize decisions about height and mapping for the local context.
- Pay attention to the local market – how much retail space or downtown housing can the community support?

Keep it simple.

Don't overcomplicate the effort!

- Don't regulate things that are addressed by other health and safety codes.
- Don't try to anticipate every possible situation.
- Don't attempt to predict future market demands.

Focus on the basics.

A little change can go a long way!

- Get quality buildings in the right places to define the public realm – the uses can and will change over time.
- Locate parking on the street or behind the buildings.
- Design for people; accommodate cars.

Use the correct tool.

Code reform is not a silver bullet!

- Don't expect zoning changes to fulfill every community aspiration or solve every community problem.

Change can be difficult.

Move forward together!

- Make sure the key players understand why code reform is being undertaken.
- Recognize that “business as usual” will produce the usual results.
- Let go of regulations that are no longer relevant. These may include legacy standards that were put in place to micromanage a specific use or to address a specific problem that no longer exists.

Don't bite off more than you can chew.

This is just a beginning!

- Focus on key areas – this Guide will not address your entire city or village.
- There are many other important issues that are not covered here, but may be important for you to consider now or in the future.

BUILDING SUPPORT

If you're reading this Guide, you've likely recognized the need for zoning code reform in your community. But making that change happen requires support from a variety of stakeholders and decision-makers.

How can you build the support you need?

The following tasks need not be thought of as sequential, and may apply in total or only in part, when applied to your local community.

Task A: Identify the needs and how code reform can help

The code reform provided in this Guide is designed to enable communities to thrive. If you think your community can do more to be attractive, livable, walkable, and vibrant for all ages, begin with identifying specific community goals that are not currently being met by your existing regulations and use that as a starting point for the conversation. Assistance in identifying community goals can be found through the MEDC Redevelopment Communities® program at <https://www.miplace.org>, and from AARP Livable Communities program at <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/>.

Task B: Link the code reform potential to stakeholders' interests

You know your community best. Determine what might interest key decision makers in making necessary changes in your codes. For example, your local and elected officials might be concerned with:

- **Avoiding the “plans that sit on the shelf” syndrome:** Your municipality may have invested a great deal of time and money in creating a plan or set of plans that have not advanced past adoption. Since zoning serves as the regulatory tool to bring these plans to life, aligning your ordinance with your vision increases the likelihood of making plans a reality.
- **Ensuring that collaborative efforts, such as corridor plans and area-wide redevelopment efforts, are worthwhile and effective:** Working from a consistent code reform approach, such as that found in this Guide, creates consistency, which helps attract desired development, coordinated character, and ease of use for all stakeholders involved.

- **Supporting the success of TIF districts and other types of focus or redevelopment areas:** This code reform approach encourages investment in focus or redevelopment areas by upholding best economic development design practices and simplifying development regulations.
- **Increasing opportunity for individuals and the community as a whole:** This code reform approach enables more land use flexibility while meeting larger community goals, such as livable, age-friendly communities, increased housing choices, and placemaking.

Task C: Identify and address possible points of resistance

The key to addressing resistance is understanding and directly speaking to local concerns associated with making changes to the zoning ordinance. Some of the common fears you'll likely encounter include:

- **High costs and capacity limitations:** This Guide provides a menu of specific strategies to meet your needs, which can be incorporated in less time and at a lower cost than full overhaul of your zoning ordinance.
- **Increased vulnerability to legal threats:** This code reform approach has been created and vetted by experts. Moreover, the proposed zoning strategies of code reform are tried and true models that have been successfully tested in other places.
- **Public support:** This code reform approach is easier for the public to understand, since it reduces complexity and better supports community goals by being easy to tailor to local wants and needs. This approach also typically gives property owners more flexibility in using their property, allowing for more access to wealth generation and quality of life opportunities.

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)



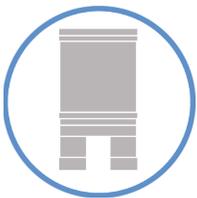
A dwelling unit, limited in size, that is accessory to the principal dwelling unit on a property. ADUs may be located within the same building as the principal dwelling unit or in an outbuilding. They may be occupied by the household of the principal dwelling unit or rented.

Architectural Design Standards



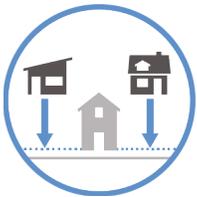
Requirements specifying building materials, stylistic details, and/or facade variations. Architectural treatment requirements are often added to design guidelines but rarely result in positive outcomes while they increase the cost of construction.

Blank Walls



An expanse of wall without doors or windows. At the ground and second story, blank walls greater than 30 feet long are detrimental to the vibrancy of main streets and downtowns.

Build-To [Line]



A horizontal regulatory limit that specifies buildings must meet an exact setback.

Downtown District



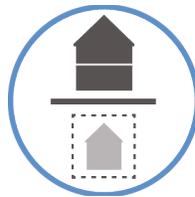
A place type describing a dense, mixed-use district that is greater than 4 blocks long by 3 blocks wide. Downtown district describes the downtowns of cities with a population over 30,000 people. Some smaller cities and villages have downtown districts, but most have a Main Street Corridor at their center.

Encroachment



Any structural element that breaks the plane of a vertical or horizontal regulatory limit, extending into a setback, into the public right-of-way, or above a height limit. Encroachment is often used to describe awnings, signs, and balconies that project over sidewalks. It is also used to align buildings by their facade, allowing porches and similar elements to extend forward and be afforded a greater variety.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)



The ratio of a building's floor area relative to the size of the property the building is on. FAR is often used to limit building intensity, however it is not an accurate predictor of building size because it fluctuates with lot size. FAR can be a useful tool when addressing buildings over 8 stories, but controlling lower buildings is more accurate using setbacks and height regulations.

Home Occupation



A business, located within a residential dwelling unit, that is an accessory use to the residential use.

Housing Types



Categories of houses defined by their physical aspects, including square footage, height, range of setbacks, lot size, and number of dwellings per lot. Housing includes single-family, townhouse, duplex, tri-plex, and multi-family configurations. Each of those configurations may be attached to other buildings on one or both sides, or completely detached from other buildings.

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

Liner Building



A shallow building shielding parking and service areas from sidewalks. Liner buildings maintain a pleasant, walkable streetscape without large, expensive buildings.

Main Street



A place type describing a mixed-use area, oriented along a single street, or two intersecting streets, 2 blocks or longer in length. For cities and villages with populations less than 30,000 people, the main street corridor may be known colloquially as downtown. For cities and villages with populations over 30,000 people, they may have one or more main street corridors in addition to their downtown district.

Pedestrian-Scaled Lighting



Lighting that illuminates sidewalks, crosswalks, and paths, at an intensity and frequency to support the level of pedestrian activity anticipated. Most street lighting is automobile-oriented, with high intensity lights on tall poles, spaced far apart and oriented to travel lanes. Pedestrian-scaled lighting has lower poles, typically less than 14 feet, and is spaced more frequently, such as every 50 or 75 feet on main streets and every 100 feet in main street adjacent neighborhoods. The lower height and more frequent spacing allows lower intensity lights to be used, which reduces glare to pedestrians and light spillage into residential dwellings.

Place Type



An area with distinct characteristics, used as shorthand to describe the place. In regulatory application, a place type is an area defined by a boundary within which specific regulations are applied. Place type names are determined by the context, but often describe types of neighborhoods, main streets, and centers like downtowns.

Public Realm



Areas that are not in private ownership, including streets and other rights-of-way, open space, and public facilities.

Shared Parking



Parking that is shared between two or more independent uses. When parking is provided individually for each separate use, the parking lots are often empty or underutilized. Parking can be combined between adjacent or nearby uses, especially when they have peak utilization periods that do not coincide, such as professional office and multi-family residential. Combining parking typically reduces the number of spaces between 20 and 60%, resulting in smaller and less frequent parking lots, space that can be replaced with more active buildings and uses.

Adjacency Requirements



A collection of regulations that transition the scale and intensity of buildings and uses from one district to another. Adjacency requirements often include height, setback, and use restrictions where a lot in a higher intensity district directly abuts a lot in a lower intensity district.

Yield Streets



Low-speed streets where two vehicles travelling in opposite directions cannot pass each other and one vehicle must move partially into on-street parking areas to permit the other vehicle to pass. Yield streets are most common in residential areas and ensure vehicle speed is low, which increases the safety of other roadway users.

PLACE TYPES

While every place is different, there are state-wide similarities amongst these contexts, with key distinctions being made at the local level. Recommendations in this Guide vary by character and location and where they should be applied; Place Types differ in their scale, intensity, uses, and other physical characteristics.

This Guide is aimed at three Place Types common across Michigan.



Main Streets

A mixed-use area, oriented along a single street or two intersecting streets, 2 blocks or more in length. For cities and villages with populations less than 30,000 people, the main street corridor may be known colloquially as downtown. For cities and villages with populations over 30,000 people, they may have one or more main street corridors in addition to their downtown district, such as the Lakeside Business District in Muskegon. Main street examples are plentiful across Michigan, including Albion, Cheboygan, Clawson, Dundee, Grayling, Hart, Houghton, Saugatuck, Three Rivers, and Trenton.

Mt. Pleasant, image credit: mountpleasantwow.com



Downtowns

A dense, mixed-use district that is greater than 4 blocks long by 3 blocks wide. The downtown district describes the downtowns of cities with a population over 30,000 people. Some smaller cities and villages also have downtown districts, but most have a Main Street Corridor at their center. Downtown district examples include those of Bay City, Flint, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Sault Ste. Marie, and Saginaw.

Jackson, image credit: MEDC



Adjacent Neighborhoods

A primarily residential neighborhood located near a downtown or main street. Adjacent neighborhoods historically include a wider variety of housing types, including duplex and multi-family, than newer residential areas. Their adjacency provides vibrancy to downtowns and main streets. Adjacent neighborhood examples are found around most Downtown districts, including Grand Rapids, Holland, Jackson, Muskegon, Pontiac, and Saginaw.

Troy, image credit: thepernatteam.com

AREAS OF REFORM

Code reform can cover a broad range of topics. To narrow the scope, this Guide focuses on five key topics that have the most significant impact on the success of Michigan main streets, downtowns, and adjacent neighborhoods.

Recommendations for each place type are organized into topics for ease of use.



Streetscape

Streetscapes are designed according to the intensity of land use through which the street passes. In downtowns and main streets, streetscape design should focus on the success of businesses as much as it might focus on vehicular movement. In neighborhoods, streetscape design should focus on the safety and comfort of residents ahead of vehicular movement.



Form

Regulations that control the form of buildings, including setbacks, height, lot size, lot coverage, and similar restrictions. In many places regulations designed for suburban setbacks and buffers have been applied to downtowns, main streets, and adjacent neighborhoods, reducing the value of existing buildings and properties.



Use

Restrictions on the use of buildings and properties, and the ability to combine multiple uses, both on the parcel and within a single building.



Frontage

The design of building facades and yards that face the sidewalk. Frontage quality affects the likelihood that people will walk along a street. This is independent of architectural style. Most issues relating to frontage are regulated to increase vibrancy, which is reflected in the amount of pedestrian activity.



Parking

The amount and location of parking. The effects of parking requirements are often underestimated in their ability to improve or detract from the success of downtowns and main streets.

MAIN STREETS AND DOWNTOWNS

Main streets and downtowns share similar characteristics when considering incremental fixes. **Generally, the fixes address issues affecting vibrancy, or the intensity of pedestrian activity in an area.** Main streets and downtowns require cross-shopping to be successful, where customers of one business become aware of other surrounding businesses by walking past them. Successful pedestrian areas can absorb a few minor issues, but as issues add up, pedestrians will spend less time walking. Consider how tightly managed a mall interior is, where customers are directed past other shops to get to anchors or the food court. Similarly, as the smaller shops or anchors in a mall close, customers will quickly switch to areas where there are active shops or will stop visiting a corridor when the anchor is gone. Managing a main street or downtown is similar. Park-once environments encourage cross-shopping, rather than having separate, small parking areas for each building. Main streets and downtowns benefit from on-street parking, which is both convenient and can generate income to reinvest in the streetscape.



Owosso, image credit: MEDC



Ypsilanti, image credit: MEDC

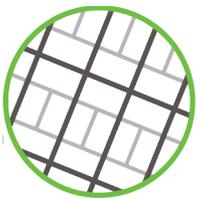
MAIN STREETS AND DOWNTOWNS

Streetscape

Streets provide the public space for any main street or downtown. Simple changes to the zoning code and street design standards can help transform streets from being primarily places for cars to being places for people. Some of the following recommendations require coordination with additional agencies and are likely difficult to achieve if attempted on state funded roadways. Changes on locally controlled roadways are a good first step.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Maintain existing streets and alleys.



Small blocks with separate service access via alleys are integral to the success of downtowns and main streets. Abandoning streets and alleys reduces walkability and a district's future potential for success. In most instances, abandonment is at the request of large users. In some rare cases alley or street abandonment may be justifiable, but the process should not be easy or used frequently.

2. Permit encroachments into public rights-of-way.



Many downtown and main street businesses rely on awnings and signage that project into the public right-of-way and use of the sidewalk for seating. In some locations, encroachments have been disallowed or subject to a revocable permit. The ability to encroach and the guarantee of a reasonable permit duration are important to the success of urban businesses.

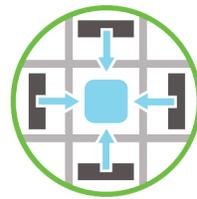
3. Establish on-street parking.



On-street parking supports businesses and provides a layer of safety to pedestrians. On-street parking spaces represent significant revenue as well as cost savings for businesses. Rather than building off-street parking at additional cost, on-street spaces are public, easily accessed, and conveniently located. Existing on-street parking has historically been removed for additional travel lanes or to accommodate curb cuts. When the capacity is no longer needed and curb cuts have been abandoned, on-street parking is often not replaced. Wherever possible, on-street parking should be added.

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Provide off-site stormwater options.



Stormwater is an outlier in the streetscape category, but streets play a significant role in stormwater management. When downtowns and main streets were first established, stormwater was not regulated. It is a reasonable expectation that buildings will cover the vast majority of these properties. As private investment attempts to revitalize these areas, stormwater management cannot easily be added on site, and where it can be added it comes at a significant cost, in the form of underground storage. To allow for revitalization, off-site stormwater options should be made available within downtowns and main streets. Ideally, stormwater is managed collectively over a larger area. Where this is not the case, fee in lieu options may be added, which may fund streetscape retrofits to add storage and address water quality or fund area-wide facilities.

2. Develop public realm standards.



The quality of sidewalks, lighting, furnishing, and plants in streets and open space impacts the success and vibrancy of downtowns and main streets. Districts should have a relatively unified look and feel, supporting a comfortable pedestrian environment. Where standards are missing, each new development might miss the mark or create a character that detracts from a cohesive environment. Careful attention should be paid to creating a pleasant environment, however excesses should be avoided. Keep standards minimal and reasonable. Business improvement districts and DDAs may assist with improvement standards. Policies should include minimum sidewalk width, on-street parking, street trees, pedestrian scaled lighting, furnishings, and use of the right-of-way for retail.

MAIN STREETS AND DOWNTOWNS

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes (cont.)



3. Return 1-way streets to 2-way.

In many downtowns the street network consists of pairs of one-way streets. Often these streets were 2-way streets, converted in the past to increase vehicular movement capacity throughout the downtown area.

Along with increased capacity, 1-way streets tend to increase vehicle speed, making them more dangerous to pedestrians. From a business perspective, one-way streets significantly reduce business-related traffic where they benefit from either the morning or evening commuter movement, but not both. In most places, paired 1-way streets are not necessary for traffic movement and many cities have converted their 1-way streets to 2-way streets, increasing the success of downtown businesses.



4. Implement complete streets policy.

Pedestrian and cyclist safety and comfort impacts business success in downtowns and main streets. A comfortable environment produces more traffic, which correlates with increases in customers. While many communities have adopted complete street policies to support pedestrians and cyclists, few have made meaningful headway in implementation. Downtowns and main streets are the perfect environment to begin implementing complete streets; they benefit greatly from complete street projects and are places where drivers are already expected to proceed cautiously.



Boyne City, image credit: MEDC

5. Reduce travel lane width.



Retail streets and neighborhood streets both benefit from slow moving vehicles. From a safety standpoint, slowing cars is critical to saving lives. From a business standpoint, slowing cars increases business visibility and makes the sidewalk a safer and more pleasant place for customers to walk. While

posting a lower speed limit is important, driver speed is more directly influenced by the width and number of lanes. Travel lanes should be right-sized to 10 feet in business districts, with exceptions where bus routes require additional width.

6. Right-size the number of travel lanes.



For the same reasons discussed in item 5, the number of travel lanes should be right-sized. The most vibrant main streets consist of 2 travel lanes moving in opposite directions, which is easily and speedily crossed by pedestrians. Vibrant districts may also

survive 3-lane sections where a turn lane is necessary. Each additional travel lane reduces the potential success of downtown districts and main streets.



East Tawas, image credit: George Thomas

MAIN STREETS AND DOWNTOWNS

Form

Buildings shape the public spaces of main streets and downtowns, and that contribution should not be underestimated. Minor text amendments can go a long way toward ensuring desirable building forms are located in appropriate contexts.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Permit 100% lot coverage.



Most main street and downtown buildings occupy most if not all of their lots. This is especially true with small historic properties. Lot coverage restrictions are not appropriate in these districts. Most technical considerations are addressed in building and life safety codes. Impervious surface may be an additional consideration, however stormwater management in these areas is better handled on a district basis, not a per-property basis as is common in residential areas. To address this issue, remove maximum lot coverage within downtowns and main streets.

2. Eliminate buffer requirements.



Buffers required between different uses reduce main street and downtown vibrancy by separating businesses. Adjacency of buildings and businesses creates vibrancy and pedestrian comfort. Buffers, particularly vegetative buffers, are incompatible with the goals of these districts. Uses and buildings should not be required to be buffered on main streets or in downtowns.

3. Eliminate architectural treatment requirements.



Many communities adopt requirements aimed at creating architectural interest in new development but outcomes are typically unsuccessful and costly. These requirements often include vertical or horizontal changes in facade (articulation), dimensioned building elements, and prescriptive style requirements. The key to success in downtowns and main streets is the treatment of the ground floor shop front, especially frequent entries, signs and the amount of clear, non-reflective glazing.

4. Minimum facade height.



Street enclosure – the framing of a street by building facades – significantly impacts the success and comfort of downtowns and main streets. Comfortable streets feel like outdoor rooms, where the height of buildings is at least half the width of the street. While this is not easily achievable, particularly on larger streets, enclosure of the sidewalk space can be more easily addressed. Along sidewalks, ensure that building facades are no less than 24 feet high. A common misstep is to require a minimum number of stories, but this can cause development stagnation. A minimum facade height achieves the goals of enclosure and avoids the economic pitfall of minimum story requirements.

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Eliminate density / FAR and unit size restrictions.



Per-property density or floor area ratio restrictions are unnecessary in main street and downtown districts where intensive activity and vibrancy are goals. Height and setback requirements address issues of building bulk. The building code and fire code address issues of residential unit size and life safety. Additionally, parking requirements often restrict development intensity. Density and FAR (Floor Area Ratio) requirements typically restrain the business and housing market as they are often set unreasonably low and with a limited product type in mind that may not fit market demand.

2. Adjacency requirements.



Where main streets and downtowns abut residential districts, adjacency requirements may be used to address compatibility issues. While Stage 1 identifies the incompatibility of buffers within these districts, transitions to residential districts in height, intensity, and setback may be politically necessary. Adjacency requirements may include compatible height restrictions and side yard setbacks within 50 feet of residential districts.

MAIN STREETS AND DOWNTOWNS

Use

Zoning's purpose has historically been to separate incompatible uses. Regulations cleaning up industry and manufacturing in the last century this has become almost irrelevant, particularly in the main street or downtown context. To encourage economic development and a robust local economy, uses should be able to change within a single building without the barriers of a change of use permit. The short-term fixes below can enable that to happen.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Permit mixed-use.



Main streets and downtowns include a mix of uses within the district and often within the same property or building. Mixed-use must be permitted within the district, and should be permitted within the property and building, but not required. The building code addresses issues of use separation and compatibility; additional regulations concerning the mix of uses are not necessary, and could stifle development if the market shifts.

Ground floor commercial requirements are a common pitfall when establishing mixed-use districts. Non-residential ground floor uses may be required along the primary retail corridor, typically no longer than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, but should not be required throughout the district. In the greater downtown area, permitting residential as a single use should be allowed, which provides population support for area businesses.

2. Simplify uses.



In main street and downtown areas, a very broad collection of uses is necessary to ensure a vibrant business and pedestrian environment. These uses change frequently over time. When businesses change tenants or ownership, they should not be subject to new zoning requirements. Ideally, uses are regulated by category, such as commercial, office, lodging, residential, civic, institutional, and industrial, and not specifically, such as coffee shop, ice cream parlor, and barber shop. Where there are specific uses that need to be restricted, list only those uses specifically disallowed or restricted rather than attempting to list all permitted uses.

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Permit temporary uses.



Activating and maintaining a vibrant main street or downtown requires experimentation from time to time as public preferences change. Allowing temporary uses and structures lowers the barrier to business success in adaptation. Temporary uses permit short term, unplanned uses and does not trigger parking requirements and other use-specific conditions. Temporary structures should permit small, non-permanent structures to test business ideas or activate underutilized spaces without the cost of site and building development. Temporary uses and structures should be permitted for at least 2 years with the option to renew.

2. Publicly accessible parking.



Surface parking lots and parking garages that are not lined with active uses are detrimental to the vibrancy of main street and downtown districts. However, in many cases parking demand necessitates parking as a primary use to service the district. To discourage underutilized parking facilities and provide parking for the district, require private parking lots and structures to provide publicly accessible parking. This encourages shared parking and park-once function for the district.

3. Permit multi-family.



Housing within walking distance of downtowns and main streets is vital to success, especially outside of peak hours. However many commercial districts exclude residential, either in stand alone or mixed-use formats. Multi-family housing should be permitted throughout the district, with the exception of ground floor facades along the main street sidewalk. Note that downtown districts have main street corridors embedded within them - the primary shopping street - where ground floor residential may be restricted. Elsewhere within downtown, this ground floor restriction should not be used.

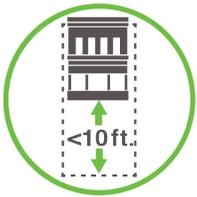
MAIN STREETS AND DOWNTOWNS

Frontages

The single most important regulation in the heart of a city or village may be how the building meets the street. Issues listed below, like minimum transparency requirements and functional entries, should be at the top of the list for downtown or main street revitalization, as they are critical to commercial success while creating a more vibrant environment.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Establish a maximum front setback.



Buildings must be located adjacent to sidewalks in main streets and downtowns. When buildings are set back too far from the sidewalk, streetscape enclosure is eroded and vibrancy suffers. In these districts, a maximum front setback is necessary, rather than a minimum front setback. A maximum front setback is different than a build-to line, allowing for flexibility while ensuring streetscape enclosure. A 10 foot maximum front setback works for most main streets and downtowns.

2. Require functional sidewalk facing entries.



Buildings that are located along sidewalks must have functioning entries facing onto sidewalks. While this seems obvious, often buildings are built close to sidewalks but are only accessed from parking areas. Businesses and property managers pay the most attention to areas around entries. When there are no entries from the sidewalk, maintenance suffers. To achieve sidewalk-adjacent entries, require that at a minimum, the main building entry is from a sidewalk. Entries from parking may be provided as secondary entries. Buildings that are greater than 100 feet wide may be required to provide additional entries, such as one for every 70 feet of building facade along the sidewalk.

3. Restrict blank walls.



Blank walls - expanses of wall without clear windows or doors - are simply boring. When areas of blank wall are located along sidewalks, people are less likely to walk along them and the areas may become unsafe. While some existing blank walls can be mitigated with murals, this strategy doesn't completely alleviate the problem. New blank walls, at the ground and second floor, should not exceed 30 feet in length along sidewalks.

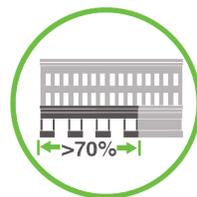
4. Require minimum transparency.



In downtowns and main streets, buildings with very few windows and doors reduce vibrancy. Similar to blank walls, walking along these buildings is boring and can be dangerous if there are very few openings. Require a minimum 50% ground floor facade transparency (clear glass windows and doors at the street level measured between the bulkhead - about 2ft above grade - and the sign band - about 10 feet above grade) within the downtown and main street area. This percentage is calculated across the full building facade facing onto the sidewalk. Along the main street (including within downtowns), a minimum 60% ground floor transparency may be required to further enhance vibrancy. In addition to percentages of transparency, mirrored and heavily tinted glass should be prohibited at the ground floor. Pedestrians need to see inside buildings at the ground floor to keep their interest and feel safe. Tinted and fake windows, and displays with walls behind are not sufficient. Where shading is a concern, awnings or galleries can be used to shade the glass while also protecting pedestrians.

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Require minimum frontage occupation.



Missing teeth, or gaps in a continuous line of buildings along a sidewalk, reduce vibrancy in downtowns and main streets. As with issues of glazing and blank walls, gaps between buildings where parking, service, or storage areas are exposed are uninteresting to pedestrians. If the gap is large enough, it will encourage people to turn around. To address this issue, require that new buildings and existing building additions along the main street fill a minimum percentage of the lot width along the sidewalk, typically 70%.

MAIN STREETS AND DOWNTOWNS

Parking

Balancing parking supply and demand and controlling parking location is essential for creating main streets and downtowns where people from ages 8 to 80 feel comfortable walking to and from places. A few simple fixes in the code can make an enormous difference, lessening the impact of off-street parking on sidewalks and removing barriers to changes of use and redevelopment.

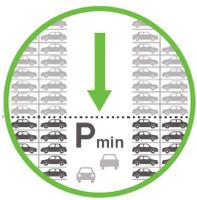
Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Require parking to be located behind buildings.



In pedestrian-oriented main streets and downtowns, parking should always be located behind buildings, in structures, or on-street. When parking lots are located between buildings and the sidewalk, it is unpleasant to walk along the sidewalk, curb cuts interrupt the sidewalk, trees are typically reduced, and there is the added danger of vehicles pulling in and out. To address this condition, require that all off-street parking be located behind buildings relative to the sidewalk. Along side streets, it may be acceptable to locate parking adjacent to the sidewalk if it is not at the corner and is accessed via driveway.

2. Reduce minimum parking requirements.



Most minimum parking requirements are determined politically rather than through study of actual need. In nearly every example, the supply of parking currently available is greater than the demand for parking. Mismatch is particularly important where buildings are older and properties are small, and it is difficult or impossible to add new parking. In these conditions many businesses, especially food & beverage businesses, are denied permits or are required to make costly renovations or secure off-site parking. To alleviate this condition, reduce minimum required parking ratios within downtown districts and main street corridors.

3. Limit new curb cuts.



Properties with multiple curb cuts along the sidewalk interrupt pedestrian flow and reduce vibrancy. In most cases, properties can provide access along a side street or from an alley. Where separated ingress and egress are required, one or both may be provided along a side street or from an alley. To address this issue, reduce vehicle and service access point allowances along primary retail streets by requiring access from side streets and alleys where available, and require neighboring parking lots to connect to each other.

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Permit shared parking.



Where eliminating minimum parking is not feasible, multiple users should be allowed to share parking spaces to protect against excessive parking. Shared parking has been tested in numerous developments and further studied by the Urban Land Institute (ULI), who recommends that shared parking reductions be determined by analyzing the overlapping usage patterns for different business types. For instance, multi-family housing and professional office have very little overlap in peak usage and can significantly reduce the total number of parking spaces needed when they share a parking lot. Similarly lodging, restaurant, retail, governmental, and religious users each have independent patterns of demand that can help optimize parking. To address this issue, adopt the ULI's shared parking model and permit parking reductions where lots are shared between multiple users. Shared parking promotes a park-once situation where customers are more likely to find and frequent new businesses near their original destination and trip-chain to accomplish more tasks at once.

2. Eliminate minimum parking.



As discussed in the short-term recommendations, minimum parking requirements are not determined by actual usage. Parking usage studies, including those from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), have been focused on suburban retail centers which generate about 40% or more parking demand than main streets and downtowns. In recent years, municipalities have begun to accept that parking minimums have not been an effective tool, neither in accurately predicting parking need nor in successfully producing great places. In most cases, lenders and tenants will demand a minimum number of parking spaces. Municipalities should be focused on where that parking is located, not how much parking there is. To address this, within downtown districts and main street corridors, eliminate minimum parking requirements.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Implementing small fixes may be the only viable means of zoning reform in adjacent neighborhoods. Generally, reform is aimed first at reviving the natural, historic mix of housing types typically found in older, traditional neighborhoods, followed by cleaning up streetscape issues that can lead to neighborhood decline. Many categories in this section are similar to those in downtowns and main streets, however the context of the recommendations differs. This Guide focuses on adjacent neighborhoods only, that is those neighborhoods abutting downtowns and main streets. These are neighborhoods that were developed prior to 1950 in which historic property patterns and buildings were developed including: single family homes of multiple sizes, duplexes, triplexes, and small apartment buildings. Over time, many of these neighborhood patterns have been made illegal through zoning, yet their success and legality are critical to the success of downtowns and main streets.



Lansing, image credit Mary Madden

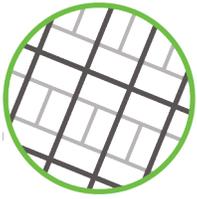
ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Streetscape

Streets provide the foundation for any neighborhood and this is one way the adjacent neighborhood is quite different from the downtown or main street. Simple changes to the zoning code and street design standards can help segue from the main street or downtown to the quieter residential neighborhood.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Maintain existing streets and alleys.



Within neighborhoods, existing streets and alleys should not be abandoned or closed to public access. Alleys are key to providing parking access where lots are 50 feet wide or less. Within neighborhoods, land uses that request closure of an alley are likely out of scale with the neighborhood. While closing or abandoning streets is less likely, it too should be avoided. Adopt policy to retain existing alleys and streets.

2. Implement “20 is plenty” on neighborhood streets.



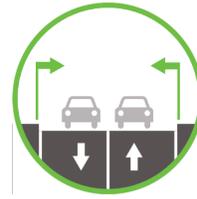
Neighborhood streets should be calm and safe, with drivers easily able to stop for kids darting across the street and slow walkers. Safety and the ability to react increase as vehicle speed decreases. At 20 mph, about 10% of pedestrian strikes are fatal increasing to 50% at 30 mph. The “20 is plenty” campaign has raised significant awareness about vehicle safety on neighborhood streets around the world. In the US, some cities have adopted citywide 20 mph speed limits on neighborhood streets, accompanied by an information campaign. While posting new speed limits will not influence all drivers, basing design speed goals and posting limits at 20 mph where authorized to do so is a positive first step that can be followed by Stage 2 fixes.



Detroit, image credit: Michelle and Chris Gerard

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Reduce travel lane width.



Retail streets and neighborhood streets both benefit from slowly traveling vehicles. From a safety standpoint, slowing cars is critical to saving lives. While posting a lower speed limit is important, driver speed is more directly influenced by the size and number of lanes. Travel lanes should be right-sized to reflect a target speed of 20 mph, typically 9 feet in residential districts with exceptions where bus routes require additional width. Prioritizing restriping or roadway modification may be timed to coincide with other street improvements.

2. Permit yield streets.



Many historic neighborhoods were developed with narrow, yield streets where two vehicles heading in opposite directions cannot pass each other without one pulling into an adjacent parking lane. Yield streets significantly slow vehicle speed. Where yield streets have been converted by restricting parking or making them one-way, convert them back to yield streets.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes (cont.)

3. Develop public realm standards.



The quality of open space, rights-of-way, and associated streetscape elements impact the long term maintenance and overall viability of neighborhoods. Neighborhoods should have a relatively unified look and feel, supporting a comfortable pedestrian environment. Careful attention should be paid to creating a pleasant environment, however excesses should be avoided. Keep standards minimal and reasonable. Policies should include minimum sidewalk width, on-street parking, street trees, and pedestrian scaled lighting.

4. Implement complete streets policy.



Pedestrian and cyclists represent a significant percentage of neighborhood roadway users, whose safety and comfort should be addressed. While many communities have adopted complete street policies to support pedestrians and cyclists, few have made meaningful headway in implementation. Neighborhood complete streets are often more easily implemented than along larger roadways because travel lanes may be shared with cyclists. Bicycle boulevards and vehicular traffic diversion are relatively low cost. And in many cases the greatest impact comes from planting street trees and adding appropriate lighting and signage. Adjacent neighborhoods are strong complete street targets and typically they can connect business districts with more remote neighborhoods.



Front Street, Traverse City, image credit: Joey Lax-Salinas



Leverette Street, Corktown, image credit: Susan Henderson

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Form

A primary concern in historic neighborhoods is how lot size and setback regulations applied in the mid-20th century and after have created non-conforming conditions for existing properties and structures. It should be a priority to match the zoning regulations to the existing context.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Make existing lots conforming.



In many cities, historic lots with existing buildings have been made non-conforming through zoning. In the mid-20th century, many communities adopted suburban standards that did not reflect the existing platting. With this process, many existing lots became non-conforming. Adopt language to

bring existing lots with structures into conformance with zoning. Example: *Existing lots with dwellings made non-conforming by zoning standards specifying minimum lot size or dimension are hereby deemed to be conforming lots instead. Existing dwellings made non-conforming by zoning standards specifying minimum setbacks are hereby deemed to be in conformance with setback requirements and may be modified in their present position.*



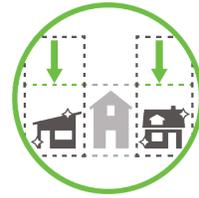
2. Permit new buildings to align with existing buildings.

Broad adoption of suburban zoning standards has often resulted in front setback requirements that exceed the average front setback in existing neighborhoods.

Setting new buildings back further than existing buildings is detrimental to neighborhood character. To address this, permit new buildings to either meet the minimum setback or align with neighboring buildings.

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Modify minimum lot size and setback standards to match existing lots.



As discussed in Stage 1, historic lots with existing buildings made non-conforming through zoning should be made conforming. To fully protect the historic pattern that originally established the neighborhoods they are in, lot size and setback standards should be modified to reflect existing lots and structures in the neighborhood.

2. Eliminate specific design standards for townhouses and multi-family buildings.



Design standards that require vertical or horizontal alignment changes in townhouses and multi-family buildings, intended to avoid large or monotonous building facades, result in erratic design that is more visually distracting than monotonous buildings.

3. Eliminate density / FAR and unit size restrictions.



Per-property density or floor area ratio restrictions are unnecessary in adjacent neighborhoods. Height, setback, and building footprint requirements address issues of building bulk. The building code and fire code address issues of residential unit size and life safety. Additionally, parking requirements often restrict development intensity.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Use

Home occupations and accessory units can be a sensitive topic, but in areas near downtown or main street, the uses and building types are especially beneficial. They can boost the local economy by incubating entrepreneurship, permitting aging in place, and assisting with home ownership.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Permit additional housing types near downtowns and main streets.



Historically, neighborhoods adjacent to downtowns and main streets developed a broad range of housing types to fulfill the needs of a diverse population seeking housing near areas of employment and activity. Over time, zoning has restricted housing choice, especially for townhouse, duplex, tri-plex, and other small multi-family buildings that are compatible with their neighborhood context. These forms of housing provide variety in price and formats that are more attractive to seniors and young adults. To address this issue, permit, at a minimum, townhouse, duplex, and multi-family units within 500 feet of downtowns and main streets. To further address the issue, larger areas of the municipality should permit “missing middle” building types like townhouse, duplex, triplex and small multi-family buildings.

2. Permit home occupations.



Home-based businesses have been an historic means of distributed job creation and are becoming increasingly popular. When disallowed, many home businesses simply occur under the radar, which can lead to nuisances. Especially where neighborhoods are more intense near downtowns and main streets, home-based businesses should be permitted. While home-based businesses like daycares are well established, new manufacturing technology and delivery systems are expanding the scope of home businesses. Once permitted, nuisances can be avoided through minimal regulations that address issues of signage, size (accessory to the residence), customer and employee allowances and hours of access, noise and fumes, and material storage.

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Permit accessory dwelling units.



Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are an integral part of any housing affordability strategy, and are aimed at providing a low-cost rental unit as well as stabilizing the income of homeowners. Adjacent neighborhoods are ideal locations for permitting ADUs due to their mix of housing types, and often there is an historic stock of existing ADUs. In many instances, ADU regulations require that the property owner live on premise and regulates maximum size, which avoids initial neighbor fear of unmonitored rental units and conversion of single family housing to multi-family housing. Accessory dwelling units should be permitted within the primary dwelling unit or in an accessory building. Avoid additional fee and parking space requirements that can make the already expensive prospect of building an ADU unattainable.

2. Consider small scale neighborhood commercial.



Most in-town neighborhoods historically included small scale neighborhood commercial in the form of corner stores or professional offices. Typically these uses were located along busier streets which bounded or bisected the neighborhood. Over time single family zoning has tended to make these uses illegal, and often the grandfathered business has closed, eliminating the ability to establish a new business. In areas without this historic pattern, small business may be desirable along major streets and adjacent to parks, providing services to the surrounding neighborhood. Consider permitting small scale neighborhood commercial on existing or historically commercial properties, and in areas that may provide neighborhood services.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Frontages

Frontage issues in the neighborhood are quite different than the urban environment. Providing safe and comfortable sidewalks, and requiring new buildings to face the street are the primary issues found in adjacent neighborhoods. Most of the buildings in these areas have pleasant frontages, so regulations should focus on assuring infill structures meet the same standard.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Require functional sidewalk facing entries.



Buildings that are located along sidewalks should have functioning entries facing onto sidewalks. While this seems obvious, many instances are found where entrances are oriented toward parking, especially in multi-family situations. When there are no entries to the sidewalk, yard maintenance suffers and public perception of safety decreases. To achieve sidewalk-adjacent entries, require that, at a minimum, the main building entry is from a sidewalk. Entries to parking may be provided as secondary entries. Buildings that are greater than 100 feet wide may be required to provide additional entries, such as one for every 70 feet of building facade along the sidewalk.

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Require minimum frontage occupation.



Missing teeth, or gaps in a regular pattern of buildings spaced along a sidewalk, reduce vibrancy and cohesion in neighborhoods. Many missing teeth are due to empty lots, but development may create new gaps that are not easily filled. To address this issue, require that multi-family buildings and townhouse developments fill a minimum percentage of the lot width along the sidewalk, typically 60%.



Adrian, image credit: MEDC

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Parking

Adjacent neighborhoods are one location someone could choose to live without a car – or a family may benefit from only one car. With the average cost of car ownership in 2017 at \$8,469 annually, quality of life can be greatly improved by the reduction of a single vehicle. Therefore the parking ratios in these areas should not be as high as the suburban context.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Require vehicle access from alleys where available.



Alleys exist to provide vehicle and service access to properties. Where there are existing alleys, require driveways be accessed from the alley, not the street. Eliminating front driveways could add space for on-street parking or street trees and reduce sidewalk disruptions.

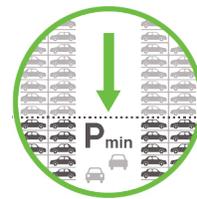
2. Require parking be located behind buildings.



Adjacent neighborhoods are characterized by highly visible entrances and other active areas of homes. When garages are permitted to dominate the facade of the house, they remove activity from the sidewalk and eyes on the street, eroding neighborhood character and safety. To address this issue, require that parking areas be located behind buildings relative to the sidewalk, or setback a minimum of 20 feet from the front facade.

Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

Alt 1. Reduce minimum parking requirements.



Most minimum parking requirements are determined politically rather than through study of actual need. In nearly every example, the supply of parking currently available is greater than the demand for parking. Mismatch is particularly important where buildings are older and properties are small.

Single family housing on larger lots are not affected by this, but smaller lot single family, townhouses, and multi-family are impacted. To address this within adjacent neighborhoods, reduce minimum parking for all housing. Ideally the minimum parking is reduced to 1 off-street space per unit. On-street parking provides visitor spaces and often additional parking for the unit if needed. The curb space provides at least 2 parking spaces for single family detached housing and 1 parking space for townhouses.

Alt 2. Eliminate minimum parking.



In recent years, municipalities have begun to accept that parking minimums have not been an effective tool, neither in accurately predicting parking need nor in successfully producing great places. In most cases, lenders and tenants will demand a minimum number of parking spaces. Municipalities should

be focused on where that parking is located, not how much parking there is. To address this, within in-town neighborhoods, eliminate minimum parking requirements.



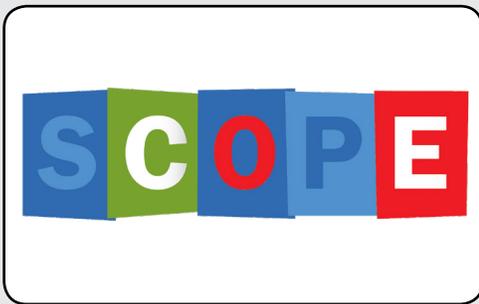
Corktown, image credit: Susan Henderson

This section contains three model zoning districts that may be used alone, or combined into a code for urban areas. **This is Step 3. of the Arc of Engagement on page 5**, and provides local government with a suggested model that they can tailor to their specific local context, with the guidance of the municipal attorney. It may follow on the quick fixes in the previous section or be used independently.



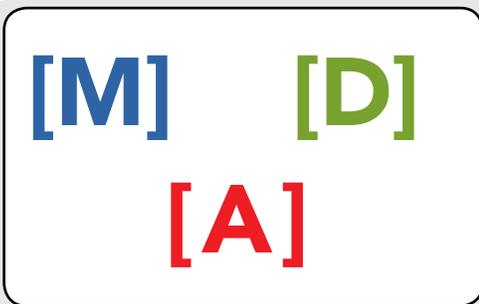
1. Determine Place Type

Determine the intensity of the zoning area based on the descriptions of “Place Types” on page 14 and page 32.



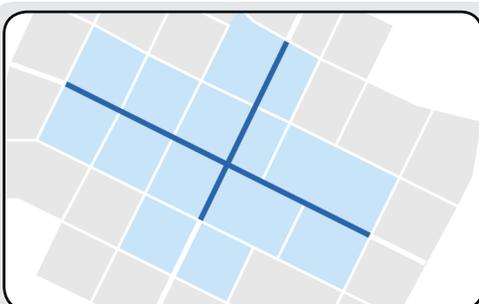
2. Determine Scope

Some communities may only need to update their Downtown zoning, while others want to provide sensitive transitions to the adjacent neighborhoods. The scope of needed zoning reform determines the sections to use and how to combine them appropriately. See the process described on page 33.



3. Select the District[s]

Three sample zoning districts are provided that may be combined as described in the Scope section. They are designed for a range of Michigan cities and villages, but must be calibrated for the local context. The sample zoning districts begin on page 34.



4. Map the District[s]

Applying the districts is the final step in the process and requires both observation and negotiation with landowners and neighbors. See the mapping examples that begin on page 52.

1. Determine Place Type

Place types are described in detail on page 14, relative to various Michigan cities and villages. This section builds upon those descriptions and illustrates how various zoning districts may be combined to reflect the context of Michigan municipalities.

Zoning Solutions

As mentioned in the Quick Start on the previous page, the urban portions of Michigan’s cities and villages vary in character, intensity, and size. Zoning works best when it combines the three models offered here to reflect the local context. The largest cities will have a robust downtown area that has one or more main streets within it, and a transition zone that steps down to lower density neighborhoods. Many communities may only

have a main street or two, with a medium density neighborhood between that and the single-family neighborhoods. The smallest communities may only have two or three blocks of main street that are adjacent to single family areas. In the Scope section on the next page, the zoning combinations are discussed in more detail.



Image credit: MEDC

Jackson

Jackson is a classic mid-sized Michigan city. Founded in the early 19th century, it enjoys good urban block structure in the center with a compact downtown that is approximately 4 blocks by 6 blocks. Michigan Ave and Jackson St both have main street character, and the downtown is surrounded by apartments and small lot single family.



Image credit: City of Albion

Albion

Albion is an excellent example of a classic Michigan main street place type. Superior St forms the spine of the downtown, and the adjacent neighborhoods have civic uses and single-family detached housing. Downtown Albion doesn’t have an adjacent neighborhood district, although one might be helpful to provide a step down to the neighborhood.



Image credit: MEDC

Fowler

Fowler represents many Michigan villages with its regular square grid, three blocks of Main St, and commercial agricultural uses. Single-family residential occurs on the back half of the Main Street blocks, but because of its low intensity, a transition area is not necessary.

2. Determine Scope

Determining the scope for local use depends on more than just observing the place type. The community may be robust in character, with a variety of districts, but without political support or staff capacity it may be challenging to incorporate more than one new district at a time. The following pages have templates for these new zoning districts that may be combined for the local context.

Main Street Alone

Main Street as a single new zone is the least demanding way to initiate code reform. Most communities have support for the revitalization of their main streets, and these areas usually have adequate on street parking, existing multistory buildings, and diversity of use. They have frequently suffered with the introduction of 20th century zoning rules, so providing legal support for their restoration usually enjoys community buy-in.

MS + Adjacent

The next logical addition is often the Transition Neighborhood District since it provides a step down in intensity to single-family neighborhoods.

As mentioned in the Place Type description on page 14, these areas usually have historically been a blend of medium density houses, including most of the “missing middle” building types like townhouse, duplex, triplex, and small multi-family buildings. As Main Street or Downtown place types transition to the neighborhood, special attention must be given to height, parking and use.

Three Zones

The Place Type section describes how a Downtown District is usually larger than just the main street(s) that are primarily retail. In most Michigan communities, the larger downtown has a robust, office, housing, and institutional presence. Buildings are still very urban, but may not have shopfronts along the street.

In mid-size communities, all three zones are important, and the Adjacent Neighborhood District is even more crucial in providing a sensitive change to the single-family neighborhoods.



Grand Haven, Image credit: MEDC

MAIN STREET DISTRICT [M]

A. Scope

1. District boundaries are assigned according to the District Boundary Map.
2. The Primary Retail Corridor is assigned according to the District Boundary Map.

B. Conflicting Ordinances

1. Where there appears to be a conflict between these standards and any other sections of the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Standards, or Public Works Standards, the requirements specifically set forth in this district prevail. This district does not prevail over Life Safety Codes.

C. Intent

1. These regulations are designed for the following purposes:
 - a. To promote the health, safety, and welfare of the general populous;
 - b. To implement the Master Plan;
 - c. To provide for walkable streetscapes where active facades address sidewalks and parking and loading are located behind buildings;
 - d. To promote small, incremental development, alongside larger developments;
 - e. To promote infill redevelopment that results in a walkable, vibrant, and diverse mixed-use corridor, allowing for shopfronts, sidewalk cafes, and other commercial uses at the street level with offices and residences overlooking the main street; and
 - f. To promote a park once environment in a compact, walkable form.
2. Additionally these regulations seek to reduce barriers that may disadvantage individuals unfamiliar with the complexities of development, land use regulations, and the myriad requirements, agencies, and goals involved in maintaining a stable city, region, and state.

D. Permitted Uses

1. Multiple uses within a single site or building is permitted.
2. Uses are designated with (P), (R), or (N), indicating the following:
 - a. (P) The use is permitted.
 - b. (R) The use is permitted, provided it complies with the use restrictions specified.
 - c. (N) The use is not permitted.
3. Temporary Uses
 - a. Temporary uses require a Special Use Permit.
 - b. Special Use Permits for temporary uses have a period of 2 years after which point they may be renewed.

Scope

Successful main streets tend to be around 1/4 mile in length, but may be as short as a single block.

Depending on the community, a Main Street District may include more than one primary retail corridor. The Main Street District should be mapped along both sides of the street including one or more lots in depth but generally not more than one block to either side of the main street.

Restricted Uses

Conditional uses can be unpredictable in implementation. Restricted uses are a preferred method where the restrictions are clearly defined and can be implemented by right if complied with.

MAIN STREET DISTRICT [M]

MAIN STREET CORRIDOR USE TABLE

Use	Permission	Restriction
Residential		
Single-family detached	N	
Single-family attached	R	Along the Primary Retail Corridor residential uses must be above or behind non-residential.
Duplex, Triplex	R	
Multi-family	R	
Accessory dwelling units	P	
Commercial		
Automobile sales	R	On-site vehicle storage is prohibited.
Adult entertainment	N	
Gas stations	N	
Storage facilities	N	
Off-street parking facilities	R	Facilities, surface or structured, must have ground floor commercial uses along the Primary Retail Corridor.
General Office	P	
Personal and Professional Services	P	
All other commercial uses	R	<p>The following restrictions apply to all commercial uses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building footprint must not exceed 35,000 sq. ft. Larger buildings may be permitted by Special Use Permit. 2. Drive-thrus and access lanes are not permitted between buildings and sidewalks. 3. Storage of non-retail materials and the making, assembling, remodeling, repairing, altering, finishing, or refinishing of its products or merchandise is permitted provided: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. These activities are completely enclosed within the premises occupied by the establishment. b. These activities are clearly accessory to sales and display activities.

MAIN STREET DISTRICT [M]

MAIN STREET CORRIDOR USE TABLE

Use	Permission	Restriction
Lodging		
Hotel	P	
Bed and Breakfast, Short Term Rentals	R	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The owner's primary residence must be on site. 2. No more than 5 guest rooms are permitted. 3. The maximum length of stay is 14 days.
Industrial		
Heavy Industrial	N	
Artisanal Manufacturing	R	<p>Storage of non-retail materials and the making, assembling, remodeling, repairing, altering, finishing, or refinishing of its products or merchandise is permitted provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These activities are completely enclosed within the premises occupied by the establishment. 2. These activities are clearly accessory to sales and display activities. 3. Levels of traffic, noise, smoke, vibrations, odor, fumes, and glare must not exceed those levels which are customary for retail uses within the district.
Institutional	P	
Civic Open Space		
Plaza	P	
Square	P	
Green	P	
Playground	R	Playgrounds are permitted within a square or green, or accessory to institutional or child care uses.

Artisanal Manufacturing

The primary sales and display activity should be in the shopfront space, adjacent to the street. Accessory activities may occupy a larger sq. ft. area, but should not be located in the retail shopfront.

MAIN STREET DISTRICT [M]

E. Lots and Yards

1. Lot Area:
 - a. No minimum lot area is required.
2. Front Yard:
 - a. No front yard is required except where sidewalks are less than 8 feet in width in which case a front yard is required to provide the remaining sidewalk width to achieve a minimum of 8 feet.
 - b. Buildings must be located within 15 feet of the lot line along the Primary Retail Corridor for a minimum of 70% of the lot width. Exceptions may be permitted by the Planning Director for:
 - i. Conflicts with existing utilities.
 - ii. Forecourts, not to exceed 30% of the lot width.
 - c. Front yards along the Primary Retail Corridor must be paved except where they exceed 8 feet in depth in which case they must be a minimum of 50% paved.
 - d. Fencing is not permitted in front yards along the Primary Retail Corridor.
3. Side Yard:
 - a. No side yard is required.
4. Rear Yard:
 - a. Lots abutting adjacent districts must have a minimum 20 ft. rear yard except where alleys are present.

F. Site Development

1. Existing streets and alleys must be maintained.
2. Street trees must be planted along adjacent sidewalks within 4 feet of the curb at a maximum spacing of 40 ft on center.
3. Street furniture, where provided, must be located within 6 feet of the curb.

G. Off-street Parking and Loading

1. On-site parking is not required. (Note: parking should be managed and coordinated by the DDA or other district authority)
2. Any parking requirements may be achieved on street along lot lines and within 600 feet of the parcel.
3. Off-street parking lots must be located to the rear of buildings.
4. Off-street parking and loading access is limited as follows:
 - a. Parking and loading access must be from an alley where available.
 - b. Parking and loading access may be from a side street if an alley is not available.
 - c. Where parking and loading access is only available from the front lot line, it is limited to a maximum 20 feet in width.
 - i. Parking access from the front lot line must provide access to parking lots on adjacent parcels.
 - ii. Access points from the front lot line must be at least 100 feet apart.
5. Cross-access between off-street parking lots must be provided.
 - a. Alleys are considered to provide cross-access between adjacent off-street parking lots.

Forecourts

Forecourts are good building frontages for lodging, office, and general mixed use. The court area may be used as a vehicular drop-off or an entry plaza. The forecourt may not be used for parking.

Parking

Management

Parking should be managed and coordinated by the Downtown Development Authority or other district authority.

MAIN STREET DISTRICT [M]

H. Building Height

1. Building height is limited by stories above sidewalk grade.
 - a. Ground floor stories exceeding 20 feet are considered two stories.
 - b. Mezzanines exceeding 30% of the ground floor area are counted as a story.
 - c. Upper stories exceeding 16 feet are counted as two stories, and an additional story for every multiple of 16 feet.
2. Building height is limited to XX feet **DETERMINE LOCALLY**.
3. Building height is limited to the maximum permitted height of adjacent residential districts within 50 feet of those districts.
4. Building facades must be a minimum of 20 feet in height along the Primary Retail Corridor.
5. Rooftop equipment and access does not count towards building height.

I. Signs

1. Projecting signs may encroach into the right-of-way.
 - a. Vertical clearance must be a minimum of 8 feet in height.
2. Sidewalk signs are permitted during open hours of the tenant.
3. The following signs are prohibited:
 - a. Off-premise business signs.
 - b. Free standing signs.

J. Building Standards

1. Buildings must have one functional entry for every 60 feet of facade along the front lot line and 100 feet of facade along side lot lines, or fraction thereof, along sidewalks.
2. Building facades oriented towards sidewalks must have a minimum of 15% glazing for all upper floor facades.
3. The ground floor building facade along the Primary Retail Corridor must be configured as follows:
 - a. 50% clear glass is required along the ground floor facade.
 - b. Building entries may be recessed from the facade up to 8 feet in depth.
 - c. Awnings may project into the right-of-way to within two feet of the curb.
 - d. Display windows may project into yards.
 - e. The first 30 feet of ground floor building depth along the Primary Retail Corridor must be used for retail and related display, dining, lobby or waiting areas, or open office.
4. Facade elements above the ground floor may project into yards.
5. Commercial activities, including food service and seating, may occupy yards.

Building Height

Maximum heights must be determined locally.

In addition to existing context, [building construction logic] local market conditions should also be considered when setting this limit.

MAIN STREET DISTRICT [M]

DEFINITIONS

PRIMARY RETAIL CORRIDOR: The principal retail street that accommodates a mix of uses in a compact, walkable form.

PLAZA: A publicly accessible open space that is primarily paved and oriented towards group assembly and activities. The space is defined by building frontages.

SQUARE: A publicly accessible open space that is primarily landscaped and oriented towards passive recreation. The space is defined by building frontages.

GREEN: A publicly accessible open space for unstructured recreation, spatially defined by landscaping rather than building frontages.

FORECOURT: A portion of the front yard that is extended in depth up to 30 feet from the front lot line to provide for pedestrian access and use in commercial activities.

STREET FURNITURE: Elements located within the right of way between the curb and lot lines including, but not limited to, lighting, bike racks, seating, newspaper boxes, and mailboxes.

SIDEWALK SIGN: A temporary sign, which may be an A-frame or sandwich board type sign, placed on the sidewalk area within the public right-of-way and associated with the abutting commercial establishment.

Definitions

The definitions provided are likely needed for updating the existing zoning code. Other words are considered to be used as commonly defined.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICT [D]

A. Scope

1. District boundaries are assigned according to the District Boundary Map.
2. The Primary Retail Corridor is assigned according to the District Boundary Map.

B. Conflicting Ordinances

1. Where there appears to be a conflict between these standards and any other sections of the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Standards, or Public Works Standards, the requirements specifically set forth in this district prevail. This district does not prevail over Life Safety Codes.

C. Intent

1. These regulations are designed for the following purposes:
 - a. To promote the health, safety, and welfare of the general populous;
 - b. To implement the Master Plan;
 - c. To provide for walkable streetscapes where active facades address sidewalks and parking and loading are located behind buildings;
 - d. To promote small, incremental development, alongside larger developments;
 - e. To promote economic opportunity/viability, consumer services, and housing options for the [city/village] and surrounding area;
 - f. To promote infill redevelopment that results in a walkable, vibrant, and diverse mixed-use district, including retail, office, institutional, and residential; and
 - g. To promote a park once environment in a compact, walkable form.
2. Additionally these regulations seek to reduce barriers that may disadvantage individuals unfamiliar with the complexities of development, land use regulations, and the myriad requirements, agencies, and goals involved in maintaining a stable city, region, and state.

D. Permitted Uses

1. Multiple uses within a single site or building is permitted.
2. Uses are designated with (P), (R), (C), or (N), indicating the following:
 - a. (P) The use is permitted.
 - b. (R) The use is permitted, provided it complies with the use restrictions specified.
 - c. (C) The use may be permitted, subject to administrative approval.
 - d. (N) The use is not permitted.
3. Temporary Uses
 - a. Temporary uses require a Special Use Permit.
 - b. Special Use Permits for temporary uses have a period of 2 years after which point they may be renewed.

Scope

Larger cities and villages include a downtown area that is more than 2 blocks deep and 4 blocks long. In these instances the Downtown District applies. The Downtown District include one or more primary retail corridors, similar to the Main Street District. In the Downtown District, the primary retail corridor is supported by a larger mixed-use district which permits but has less emphasis/focus on retail.

The Downtown District may be only a few blocks larger than a Main Street District, or it may be a large mixed-use district. The Downtown differs from the Main Street in that it anticipates a larger and more intensive mixed-use area. This must be locally analyzed and mapped.

Restricted Uses

Conditional uses can be unpredictable in implementation. Restricted uses are a preferred method where the restrictions are clearly defined and can be implemented by right if complied with.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICT [D]

DOWNTOWN USE TABLE

Use	Permission	Restriction
Residential		
Single-family detached	N	
Single-family attached	R	Along the Primary Retail Corridor residential uses must be above or behind non-residential.
Duplex, Triplex	R	
Multi-family	R	
Accessory dwelling units	P	
Commercial		
Automobile sales	R	Not permitted along the Primary Retail Corridor
Adult entertainment	N	
Gas stations	R	Not permitted along the Primary Retail Corridor
Storage facilities	R	Permitted on upper stories only.
Off-street parking facilities	R	Facilities, surface or structured, must have occupiable ground floor space along the street facade. Along the Primary Retail Corridor, commercial uses must be located along the street facade.
General Office	P	
Personal and Professional Services	P	
All other commercial uses	R	<p>The following restrictions apply to all commercial uses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building footprint must not exceed 35,000 sq. ft. along the Primary Retail Corridor. Larger buildings may be permitted by Special Use Permit. 2. Drive-thrus and access lanes are not permitted between buildings and sidewalks. 3. Storage of non-retail materials and the making, assembling, remodeling, repairing, altering, finishing, or refinishing or its products or merchandise is permitted provided: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. These activities are completely enclosed within the premises occupied by the establishment.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICT [D]

DOWNTOWN USE TABLE

Use	Permission	Restriction
Lodging		
Hotel	P	
Bed and Breakfast, Short Term Rentals	R	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The owner's primary residence must be on site. 2. No more than 5 guest rooms are permitted. 3. The maximum length of stay is 14 days.
Industrial		
Heavy Industrial	N	
Artisanal Manufacturing	R	<p>Storage of non-retail materials and the making, assembling, remodeling, repairing, altering, finishing, or refinishing or its products or merchandise is permitted provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These activities are completely enclosed within the premises occupied by the establishment. 2. Levels of traffic, noise, smoke, vibrations, odor, fumes, and glare must not exceed those levels which are customary for retail uses within the district.
Institutional	P	
Civic Open Space		
Plaza	P	
Square	P	
Green	P	
Playground	P	

Artisanal

Manufacturing

The primary sales and display activity should be in the shopfront space, adjacent to the street. Accessory activities may occupy a larger sq. ft. area, but should not be located in the retail shopfront.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICT [D]

E. Lots and Yards

1. Lot Area:
 - a. No minimum lot area is required.
2. Front Yard:
 - a. No front yard is required except where sidewalks are less than 8 feet in width in which case a front yard is required to provide the remaining sidewalk width to achieve a minimum of 8 feet.
 - b. Buildings must be located within 15 feet of the lot line in the Downtown District for a minimum of 70% of the lot width along the Primary Retail Corridor and 50% of the lot width elsewhere in the district. Exceptions may be permitted by the Planning Director for:
 - i. Conflicts with existing utilities.
 - ii. Forecourts, not to exceed 30% of the lot width.
 - c. Front yards must be paved except where they exceed 8 feet in depth in which case they must be a minimum of 50% paved.
 - d. Fencing is not permitted in front yards along the Primary Retail Corridor.
3. Side Yard:
 - a. No side yard is required.
4. Rear Yard:
 - a. Lots abutting adjacent residential districts must have a minimum 20 ft. rear yard, except where alleys are present.

F. Site Development

1. Existing streets and alleys must be maintained.
2. Street trees must be planted along adjacent sidewalks within 4 feet of the curb at a maximum spacing of 40 ft on center.
3. Street furniture, where provided, must be located within 6 feet of the curb.

G. Off-street Parking and Loading

1. On-site parking is not required. (Note: parking should be managed and coordinated by the DDA or other district authority)
2. Any parking requirements may be achieved on a street abutting the site, or within the same or an adjacent block.
3. Off-street parking lots must be located to the rear of buildings.
4. Off-street parking and loading access is limited as follows:
 - a. Parking and loading access must be from an alley where available.
 - b. Parking and loading access may be from a side lot line if an alley is not available.
 - c. Where parking and loading access is only available from the front lot line, it is limited to a maximum 20 feet in width.
 - i. Parking access from the front lot line must provide access to parking lots on adjacent parcels.
 - ii. Access points from the front lot line must be at least 100 feet apart.

Forecourts

Forecourts are good building frontages for lodging, office, and general mixed use. The court area may be used as a vehicular drop-off, entry plaza, or planted courtyard. The forecourt may not be used for parking.

Parking

Management

Parking should be managed and coordinated by the Downtown Development Authority or other district authority.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICT [D]

5. Cross-access between off-street parking lots must be provided.
 - a. Alleys are considered to provide cross-access between adjacent off-street parking lots.

H. Building Height

1. Building height is limited by stories above sidewalk grade.
 - a. Ground floor stories exceeding 20 feet are considered two stories.
 - b. Mezzanines exceeding 30% of the ground floor area are counted as a story.
 - c. Upper stories exceeding 16 feet are counted as two stories, and an additional story for every multiple of 16 feet.
2. Building height is limited to **DETERMINE LOCALLY**.
3. Building height is limited to the maximum permitted height of adjacent residential districts within 50 feet of those districts.
4. Building facades must be a minimum of 20 feet in height along the Primary Retail Corridor.
5. Rooftop equipment and access does not count towards building height.

I. Signs

1. Projecting signs may encroach into the right-of-way.
 - a. Vertical clearance must be a minimum of 8 feet in height.
2. Sidewalk signs are permitted during open hours of the tenant.
3. The following signs are prohibited:
 - a. Off-premise business signs.
 - b. Free standing signs.

J. Building Standards

1. Buildings must have one functional entry for every 60 feet of facade along the Primary Retail Corridor, 75 feet of facade along the front lot line, and 100 feet of facade along side lot lines, or fraction thereof, along sidewalks.
2. Building facades oriented towards sidewalks must have a minimum of 15% glazing.
3. The ground floor building facade along the Primary Retail Corridor must be configured as follows:
 - a. 50% clear glass is required along the ground floor facade.
 - b. Building entries may be recessed from the facade up to 8 feet in depth.
 - c. Awnings may project into the right-of-way to within two feet of the curb.
 - d. Display windows may project into yards.
 - e. The first 30 feet of ground floor building depth along the Primary Retail Corridor must be used for retail and related display, dining, lobby or waiting areas, or open office.
4. Awnings may project into the right-of-way to within two feet of the curb.

Building Height

Maximum heights must be determined locally.

In addition to existing context, [building construction logic] the local market should also be considered when setting this limit.

5. Display windows may project into yards.
6. Porches and stoops may project into yards.
7. Facade elements above the ground floor may project into yards.
8. Commercial activities, including food service and seating, may occupy yards.

DEFINITIONS

PRIMARY RETAIL CORRIDOR: The principal retail street that accommodates a mix of uses in a compact, walkable form.

PLAZA: A publicly accessible open space that is primarily paved and oriented towards group assembly and activities. The space is defined by building frontages.

SQUARE: A publicly accessible open space that is primarily landscaped and oriented towards passive recreation. The space is defined by building frontages.

GREEN: A publicly accessible open space for unstructured recreation, spatially defined by landscaping rather than building frontages.

FORECOURT: A portion of the front yard that is extended in depth up to 30 feet from the front lot line to provide for pedestrian access and use in commercial activities.

STREET FURNITURE: Elements located within the right of way between the curb and lot lines including, but not limited to, lighting, bike racks, seating, newspaper boxes, and mailboxes.

SIDEWALK SIGN: A temporary sign, which may be an A-frame or sandwich board type sign, placed on the sidewalk area within the public right-of-way and associated with the abutting commercial establishment.

Definitions

The definitions provided are likely needed for updating the existing zoning code. Other words are considered to be used as commonly defined.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS [A]

A. Scope

1. District boundaries are assigned according to the District Boundary Map.
2. The Adjacent Neighborhoods District is assigned according to the District Boundary Map.

B. Conflicting Ordinances

1. Where there appears to be a conflict between these standards and any other sections of the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Standards, or Public Works Standards, the requirements specifically set forth in this district prevail. This district does not prevail over Life Safety Codes.

C. Intent

1. These regulations are designed for the following purposes:
 - a. To promote the health, safety, and welfare of the general populous;
 - b. To implement the Master Plan;
 - c. To provide for walkable streetscapes where active facades address sidewalks and parking and loading are located behind buildings;
 - d. To promote small, incremental development, alongside larger developments;
 - e. To promote infill redevelopment that supports main streets and downtowns by providing for a sufficient residential population within walking distance.
 - f. To provide a transition in intensity from main streets and downtowns to adjacent residential neighborhoods.
2. Additionally these regulations seek to reduce barriers that may disadvantage individuals unfamiliar with the complexities of development, land use regulations, and the myriad requirements, agencies, and goals involved in maintaining a stable city, region, and state.

D. Permitted Uses

1. Multiple uses within a single site or building is permitted.
2. Uses are designated with (P), (R), (C), or (N), indicating the following:
 - a. (P) The use is permitted.
 - b. (R) The use is permitted, provided it complies with the use restrictions specified.
 - c. (C) The use may be permitted, subject to the approval of the Hearings Office.
 - d. (N) The use is not permitted.
3. Temporary Uses
 - a. Temporary uses require a Special Use Permit.
 - b. Special Use Permits for temporary uses have a period of 2 years after which point they may be renewed.

Scope

Many place types include a primary retail corridor or main street district [see Main Street District] that is surrounded by single-family residential neighborhoods.

The Adjacent Neighborhoods District may be as shallow as a 1/2 block area that steps down from the main street to the single-family area. This must be locally analyzed and mapped.

Restricted Uses

Conditional uses can be unpredictable in implementation. Restricted uses are a preferred method where the restrictions are clearly defined and can be implemented by right if complied with.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS [A]

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS DISTRICT USE TABLE

Use	Permission	Restriction
Residential		
Single-family detached	P	
Single-family attached	P	
Duplex, Triplex	P	
Multi-family	R	Limited to a maximum of 12 units per building.
Accessory dwelling units	P	
Commercial		
Automobile sales	N	
Gas stations	N	
Storage facilities	R	Permitted on upper stories only.
Off-street parking facilities	R	Off-street parking is limited to surface parking lots. Surface parking lots must be set back 12 feet from sidewalks and be lined with buildings or an evergreen vegetative buffer.
General Office	R	See all other commercial uses
Personal and Professional Services	R	See all other commercial uses
All other commercial uses	P	Tenant spaces are limited to 5,000 sf max.
Lodging		
Hotel	N	
Bed and Breakfast	R	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The owner's primary residence must be on site. 2. No more than 5 guest rooms are permitted. 3. The maximum length of stay is 14 days.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS [A]

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS DISTRICT USE TABLE

Use	Permission	Restriction
Industrial		
Heavy Industrial	N	
Artisanal Manufacturing	R	Storage of non-retail materials and the making, assembling, remodeling, repairing, altering, finishing, or refinishing or its products or merchandise is permitted provided: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These activities are completely enclosed within the premises occupied by the establishment. 2. These activities are clearly accessory to sales and display activities. 3. Levels of traffic, noise, smoke, vibrations, odor, fumes, and glare must not exceed those levels which are customary for retail uses within the district. 4. Tenant spaces are limited to 5,000 sf max.
Institutional	R	Parking lots are limited to 30 spaces.
Civic Open Space		
Plaza	N	
Square	P	
Green	P	
Playground	P	

Artisanal

Manufacturing

The primary sales and display activity should be in the shopfront space, adjacent to the street.

Accessory activities may occupy a larger sq. ft. area, but should not be located in the retail shopfront.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS [A]

E. Lots and Yards

1. Lot Size:
 - a. No minimum lot area is required.
 - b. Lots must not exceed 150 feet in width.
2. Front Yard:
 - a. No front yard is required.
 - b. Front yards exceeding 6 feet in depth must be 50% impervious.
3. Side Yard:
 - a. A 6 ft side yard setback is required where abutting residential districts.
4. Rear Yard:
 - a. Lots abutting residential districts must have a minimum 20 ft. rear yard, except where alleys are present.
5. Lot Coverage:
 - a. Building footprints may not exceed 60% of the lot area.

F. Site Development

1. Existing streets and alleys must be maintained.
2. Street trees must be planted along adjacent sidewalks within 4 feet of the curb at a maximum spacing of 40 ft on center.
3. Street furniture, where provided, must be located within 6 feet of the curb.

G. Off-street Parking and Loading

1. One off-street parking space must be provided for each dwelling unit.
2. Off-street residential parking may be provided within the same block.
3. Off-street non-residential parking may be achieved on street along lot lines and within 600 feet of the parcel.
4. Off-street parking must be located to the rear of buildings.
5. Off-street parking and loading access is limited as follows:
 - a. Parking and loading access must be from an alley where available.
 - b. Parking and loading access may be from a side lot line.
 - c. Where parking access is not available from alleys or side lot line, access may be provided from the front lot line.
 - i. Driveway width is limited to 20 feet.

H. Building Height

1. Building height is limited by stories above sidewalk grade.
 - a. Ground floor stories exceeding 20 feet are considered two stories.
 - b. Mezzanines exceeding 30% of the ground floor area are counted as a story.
 - c. Upper stories exceeding 16 feet are counted as two stories, and an additional story for every multiple of 16 feet.
2. Building height is limited to XX feet **DETERMINE LOCALLY**.
3. Structure height is limited to the maximum permitted height of adjacent residential districts within 50 feet of those districts.
4. Rooftop equipment and access does not count towards building height.

Building Height

Maximum heights must be determined locally.

In addition to existing context, [building construction logic] and local market/economic conditions should also be considered when setting this limit.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS [A]

I. Signs

1. Projecting signs may encroach into the right-of-way.
 - a. Vertical clearance must be a minimum of 8 feet in height.
2. Sidewalk signs are permitted during open hours of the tenant.
3. The following signs are prohibited:
 - a. Off-premise business signs.
 - b. Free standing signs.
4. Signs are limited to 12 sf in area per sign.
5. A maximum of 2 signs are permitted per tenant.

J. Building Standards

1. Buildings within 20 feet of a sidewalk must have at least one functional entry along a sidewalk.
2. Building facades within 20 feet of sidewalks must have a minimum of 15% glazing.
3. Porches and stoops may project into yards.
4. Facade elements above the ground floor may project into yards.
5. Commercial activities, including food service and seating, may occupy yards.
 - a. Outdoor commercial activities are prohibited between 10:00 pm and 8:00 am.

ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS [A]

DEFINITIONS

PLAZA: A publicly accessible open space that is primarily paved and oriented towards group assembly and activities. The space is defined by building frontages.

SQUARE: A publicly accessible open space that is primarily landscaped and oriented towards passive recreation. The space is defined by building frontages.

GREEN: A publicly accessible open space for unstructured recreation, spatially defined by landscaping rather than building frontages.

STREET FURNITURE: Elements located within the right of way between the curb and lot lines including, but not limited to, lighting, bike racks, seating, newspaper boxes, and mailboxes.

SIDEWALK SIGN: A temporary sign, which may be an A-frame or sandwich board type sign, placed on the sidewalk area within the public right-of-way and associated with the abutting commercial establishment.

Definitions

The definitions provided are likely needed for updating the existing zoning code. Other words are considered to be used as commonly defined.

MAPPING

Mapping the district[s] is a critical part of implementation success. Main Street Districts should be easy to observe, characterized by existing buildings built close to the sidewalk that are inhabited by a mixture of active uses. It is important to map the Primary Retail Corridor along the urban streets of the Main Street District. The district should typically extend one full block to either side of the Primary Retail Corridor but may either extend one half of a block or beyond one block to capture additional commercial properties.

The Downtown District is larger and may not be as regular as the samples below; it will require careful mapping. Downtown Districts include one or more Primary Retail Corridor(s), mapped along portions of the downtown with active ground floor uses, similar to, and may be combined with, a Main Street District. The Primary Retail Corridor should be mapped without breaks along it, however it should be applied conservatively. The Downtown District typically encompasses a large area, well beyond the Primary Retail Corridor.

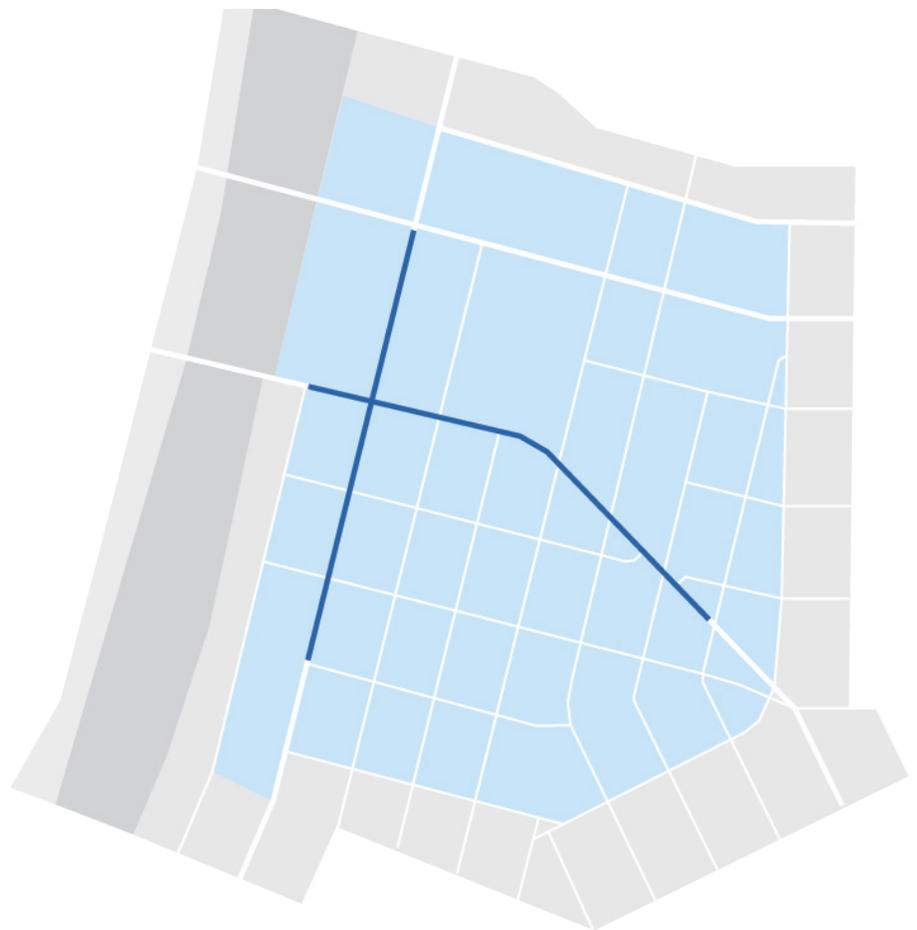
Saginaw Example

Downtown District

With a robust downtown, Saginaw could be mapped as the Downtown District shown in blue. There are also two intersecting main streets within the downtown, along E Genessee Ave and Washington Ave, mapped as Primary Retail Corridors in dark blue lines.

The edges of the Downtown District might be mapped as the Adjacent Neighborhood District, where appropriate, and are shown here in light gray. This would provide additional density in support of downtown business, while providing a sensitive step down in scale to the adjacent neighborhoods.

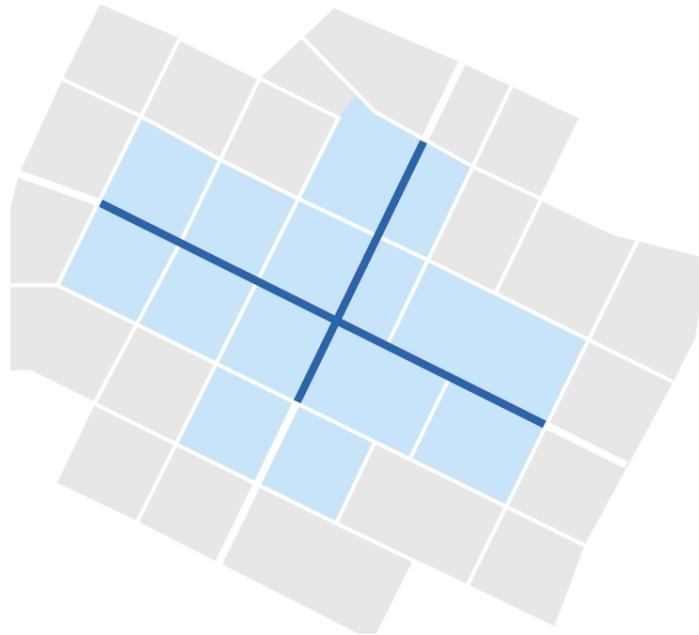
-  Downtown District
-  Adjacent Neighborhood
-  Primary Retail Corridor



Howell Example

Main Street District

Howell has two intersecting Main Streets, along Grand River Ave and Michigan Ave. This area is virtually one block deep, and then segues directly into single-family neighborhoods with some neighborhood services and institutional uses. It could be mapped as the Main Street District in blue, with two Primary Retail Corridors in dark blue. An Adjacent Neighborhood District could be added within the first block outside of the Main Street District, transitioning to single family neighborhoods, shown in gray.

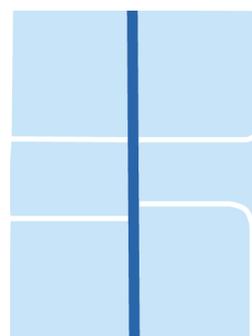


- Main Street District
- Adjacent Neighborhood
- Primary Retail Corridor

Fowler Example

Main Street District

The village of Fowler has a three-block Main Street District with a mixture of retail, service, dining, and institutional uses a half block deep on either side. This transitions directly into the neighborhood behind. This example would simply be mapped as a three-block Main Street District with the Primary Retail Corridor identified with a dark blue line, and the district in light blue. An Adjacent Neighborhood District is not appropriate locally.



- Main Street District
- Primary Retail Corridor

BRANDS BEHAVING

Most national chain restaurants, stores, and hotels have multiple building prototypes, including those that are appropriate for an urban, pedestrian-friendly context: street-oriented, compact building footprints with limited or shared off-site parking. This Resource establishes the preferred format for such development within Main Street or Downtown Districts.



Hampton Inn



Holiday Inn Express



Courtyard by Marriott



Target



H&M



Trader Joe's



Waffle House



Chili's



Taco Bell



CVS



Kroger



Kroger

Bottom left image courtesy of Geoff Ferrell, all other images on this page courtesy of Mary Madden

OUTSIDE RESOURCES

The following resources offer a broader context to the topic of code reform. A variety of model ordinances and guidance tools for reforming development regulations are available from various sources. These examples suggest a range of possible expanded code reform efforts and may be useful in envisioning future initiatives.

- [The Project for Lean Urbanism](#) has developed a [Lean Code Tool](#) that provides zoning code hacks that intentionally lighten red tape. This compact coding tool offers a contrast to the excessive controls, redundancies, contradictions, delays, and unintended consequences found in conventional codes (and some form-based codes, for that matter). While the Lean Code Tool is a guide to text amendments for existing ordinances, it still needs to be calibrated to local capacity and conditions, and should be viewed as a introductory “quick fix” as compared to the recommendations found in this guide.
- [The Center for Applied Transect Studies](#) supports the [SmartCode](#), a model transect-based planning and zoning ordinance developed on a framework of environmental analysis. The SmartCode is a comprehensive regulatory tool that addresses all scales of planning, from the region to the community to the block and building. The SmartCode differs from other form-based codes in that its community-scale and block-scale are written explicitly for zoning, in order to directly encourage walkable mixed-use neighborhoods, combat sprawl, preserve open lands, and reduce energy use and carbon emissions. The one-size fits all coding template requires calibration for local conditions.
- [The American Planning Association’s](#) 2009 guidebook (PAS Report 556, [Smart Codes: Model Land-Development Regulations](#)) delivers a broad reference point for understanding land development regulation, including 21 model codes focused on a variety of topics promoting Smart Growth Principles including encouraging mixed uses, preserving open space and environmentally sensitive areas, providing a choice of housing types and transportation modes, and making the development review process more predictable. The guidebook offers an overview of the structure of land-development regulations and provides guidance on developing model smart growth ordinances.
- The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s](#) Smart Growth program has developed an extensive [website](#) for a range of coding tools, audits, model codes, and other helpful publications. Many of these tools and codes suggest modest to complete regulatory overhauls, and would therefore require larger initiatives than that outlined in this guide.
- The [AARP](#) has developed a [Livable Communities](#) initiative supporting the efforts of neighborhoods, villages, cities, and rural areas to be great places for people of all ages. As part of the initiative, their [Roadmap to Livability](#) 6-part workbook collection provides a framework of broad livability best practices, community listening sessions, housing, transportation, health services and community supports, and economic development strategies that can then be adapted to the specific needs and preferences of a local community. Each workbook provides planning tools to help complete a livability project, as well as implementation funding recommendations.
- [The Form-Based Codes Institute](#) provides a resource page for those interested in form-based codes, a specific urban coding approach which represents the most holistic version of land development regulation reform. Their [Resources](#) offer a variety of ways to increase understanding of form-based code terminology and usage, review a library of best practice sample codes, connect with supporting organization and technical assistance, and access additional information.

CONTRIBUTORS

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AARP LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

AARP Livable Communities supports the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities and rural areas to be great places for people of all ages. We believe that communities should provide safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.



American Planning Association
Michigan Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF PLANNING

The Michigan Association of Planning exists so that Michigan will consist of healthy, safe, attractive, and successful communities built first and foremost on quality community planning.



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