

CITY COUNCIL DRAFT: JANUARY 2017



# Auburn Road Corridor Plan



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- Public Participation Summary
- Market Analysis Report

# Process

The easternmost section of Auburn Road, formerly known as "Olde Towne", is one of the oldest areas of what was formerly Avon Township. While commercial development has continued to grow throughout the rest of the city, this district has remained relatively consistent in its "old town" character and vacant sites prime for redevelopment. The two-lane Auburn Road is under the jurisdiction of MDOT and the corridor lacks defined driveways and parking areas.

While there had been previous studies for Auburn Road, and especially a design and new code for the Brooklands district, there had been little implementation. The City undertook this planning process to refresh the previous plans, provide direction for both the roadway and properties along it, and to outline specific actions to implement recommendations. Key steps in the 10 month process are listed below:

- ▶ A Market Analysis was conducted that included stakeholder interviews, a resident survey, cluster analysis, and demand forecasting.
- ▶ Public open houses were held in May (input on visioning and alternatives); October and November (draft plan)
- ▶ A Steering Committee made up of local residents, business owners and property owners, planning commissioners and city council members was established and met four times to lead the plan's direction and endorse the vision and recommendations.
- ▶ The Planning Commission and City Council vetted preliminary ideas at a September joint meeting. Both bodies conducted public hearings during the plan adoption process.



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While the previous plan for this area was titled "Olde Towne" after discussion by the steering committee and public, most identify the area as the Brooklands, the area's historic subdivision name, which is this plan's recommended name for future branding.

*City of Rochester Hills*

# Past Plans

## Olde Towne Urban Design Strategy (1999)

A robust, well-designed plan that illustrated development concepts that may have been aggressive at the time. Though many of the underlying ideas were sound, the timing was not. Little from this plan was able to come to fruition and some lessons can be learned from that process in terms of aggressiveness and outlining priorities and realistic steps to implementation.

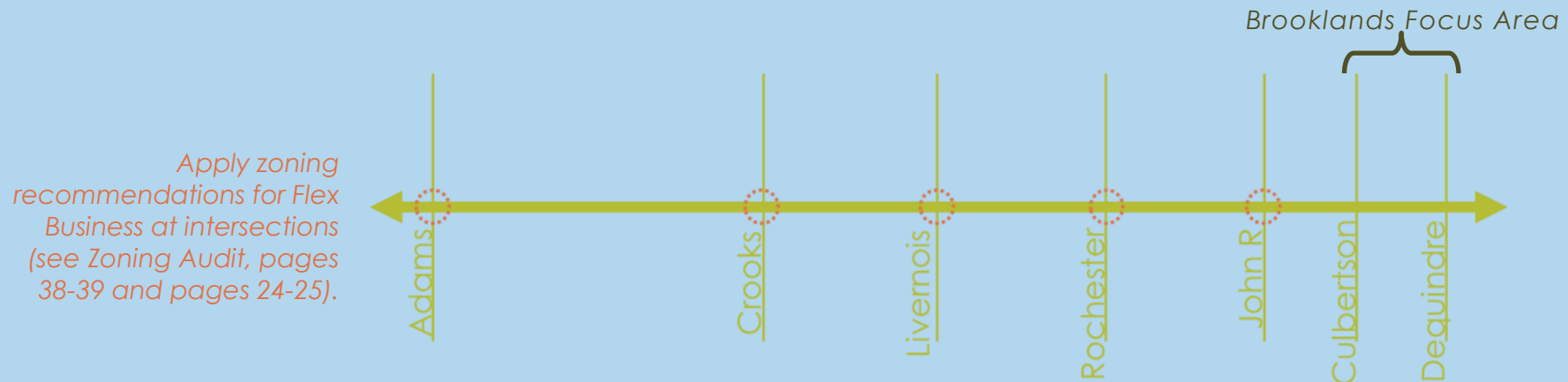
## Master Land Use Plan (2013)

This plan provides the basis for the optional Flexible Business districts that were adopted in the zoning ordinance. Street frontages in the plan for the Brooklands (Olde Towne) recommend 0' front yard setbacks, parking in the side and rear. Building design standards include a minimum 20' building height and façade recommendations consistent with this plan.

A key objective from the comprehensive plan particularly calls out the improvement of the Brooklands (Olde Towne) district:  
*“Encourage infill development and the improvement of existing retail areas in the Olde Towne area to create an Urban Village and to strengthen Olde Towne as a primary commercial area serving the surrounding neighborhoods.”*

## Project Scope

This plan's focus was on the Brooklands district (Culbertson to Dequindre) with other recommendations for key intersections on Auburn Road.



# Public Involvement

Don't close my street AND Please close my street

Height should be a maximum of 2 stories

Wide sidewalks, bike lanes, and gathering spaces are important

Favor traffic over parking

More sit-down restaurants and cafes (retail/services)

Better pedestrian crossings

Pave the alleys

Many residents, business owners, and city officials provided input at the three public open houses. Others provided comment through the surveys and online. Public input helped shape the final plan recommendations.

Most of the input favored changes to the design of Auburn Road and recommendations for development along it. There was both concern and support with the city's concept, dating back to the 1990's, to close some of the street intersections between Culbertson and Dequindre. Some of the most frequent comments are listed below. For a full summary of comments received during the process, please see the Public Participation Summary in the Appendix.

## What the Public Said

- ▶ Majority support road redesign; but some prefer 5 lanes, others "do nothing"
- ▶ Most enthused about a public space along Auburn Road
- ▶ Several requests for better lighting and sidewalks along the corridor
- ▶ Mixed opinions on street closures; some support, some opposed, some wanted different locations
- ▶ Some noted problems with code enforcement and noise; desire dense walls as buffers to residential neighborhoods
- ▶ Sidewalks need to be consistent
- ▶ Incentives are needed for redevelopment
- ▶ Auburn Road needs to be redesigned in the Brooklands to stimulate redevelopment
- ▶ Concepts to relieve congestion at the major intersections (Adams, Livernois, etc. should be planned as well)
- ▶ Need for more and better organized parking

# Plan Goals

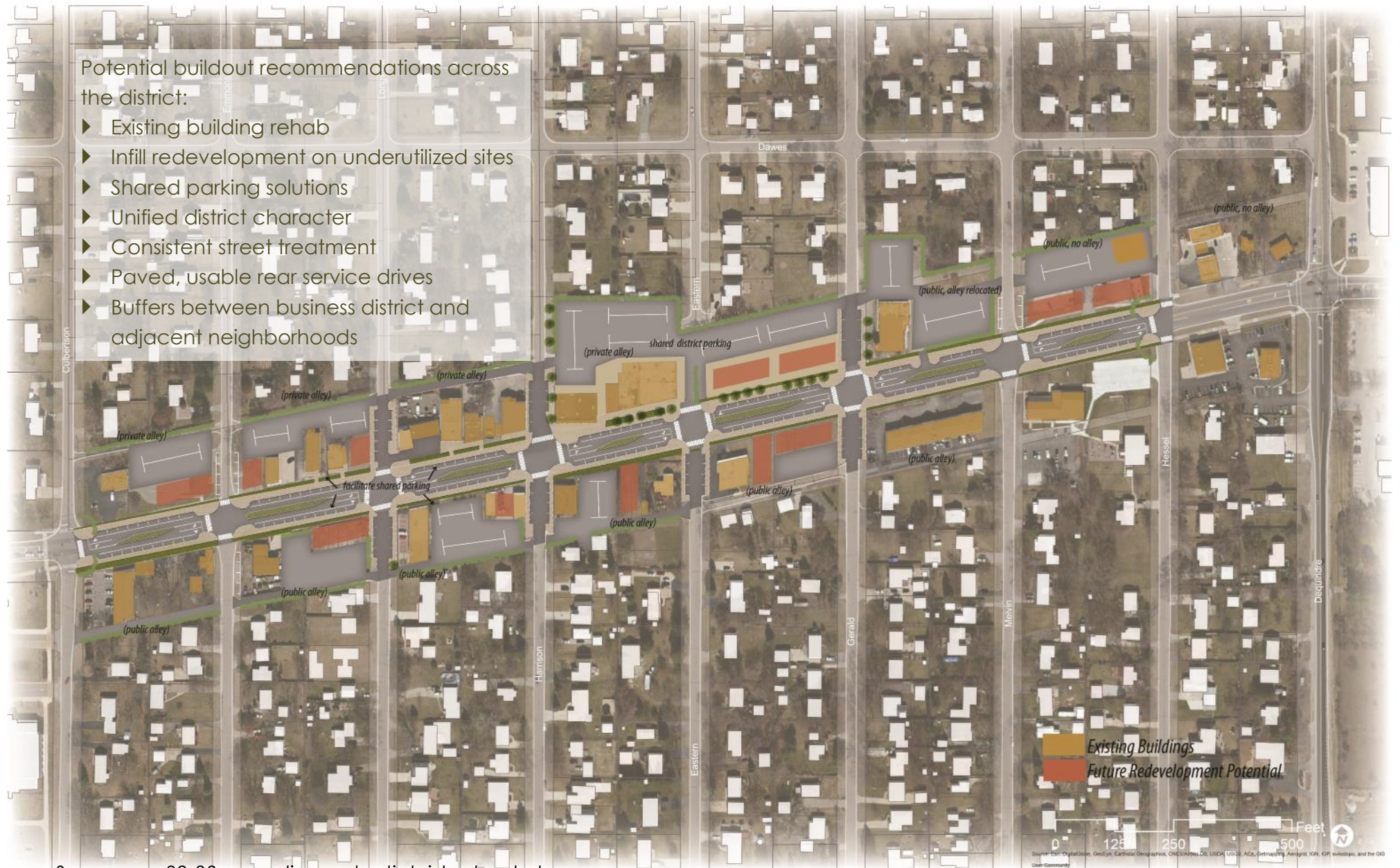
The following goals were developed and refined throughout the planning process to provide a framework for the recommendations that follow.

- ▶ Strengthen the overall district brand as a unique destination
- ▶ Moderately intensify development to maximize the potential of the district
- ▶ Calm traffic, particularly in neighborhoods
- ▶ Redesign Auburn Road into a safe and attractive place for vehicles and pedestrians
- ▶ Create a more walkable environment that supports nearby residents, local businesses and commerce, and encourages new development opportunities
- ▶ Organize parking and provide additional parking supply
- ▶ Help stimulate desired redevelopment along the corridor
- ▶ Create clear transitions and borders between the residential neighborhood and the commercial corridor
- ▶ Provide safe pedestrian crossings
- ▶ Bring more green elements, landscaping, public open space and plazas to the corridor
- ▶ Promote city and property owner collaboration to support reinvestment

# Schematic District Plan

Potential buildout recommendations across the district:

- ▶ Existing building rehab
- ▶ Infill redevelopment on underutilized sites
- ▶ Shared parking solutions
- ▶ Unified district character
- ▶ Consistent street treatment
- ▶ Paved, usable rear service drives
- ▶ Buffers between business district and adjacent neighborhoods



See pages 32-33 regarding potential side street closures.



# District Character Vision



- ▶ Enhanced streetscape
- ▶ Clear crosswalks
- ▶ Improved landscaping
- ▶ Defined street edge and pedestrian zone
- ▶ On-street parallel parking
- ▶ Median with left-turn pockets

This summarizes key takeaways from the complete Market Analysis, which is included as an Appendix to this plan.

# Market Assessment



Auburn Road is within driving distance to population concentrations throughout the Detroit Metropolitan Area and beyond making it an attractive place to potentially live and operate a full range of businesses. To the west of the study area along Auburn are substantial shopping opportunities. To the east along Auburn Road in Shelby Township is commercial activity that can be characterized as older and shares many of the issues associated with the Rochester Hills section.

The challenge for the community moving forward is to recognize how the population and economy are changing and to set policies and take actions that expand activity and vibrancy of the study area section of Auburn Road.

## Overall Findings

- ▶ Reasonable interest in further investment by current property owners and businesses in the study area
- ▶ Most of the patrons that frequently come to the study area live relatively nearby
- ▶ Average household incomes of residents of the surrounding area, city and study area are relatively high: \$118,000 (mean)
- ▶ Relatively low achievable rent levels for commercial space that hinders reinvestment, dispersed pattern of building structures, and signs of disinvestment in nonresidential spaces providing market uncertainty.
- ▶ Auburn Road's assets include underutilized and

The market assessment developed by The Chesapeake Group is based on information gathered through a variety of means:

- ▶ A review of secondary information, independent research and proprietary computer modeling
- ▶ Interviews with stakeholders
- ▶ Cluster Analyses
- ▶ A survey of residents of the Rochester Hills area
- ▶ Demand Forecasting defining opportunities for various activity for the study area

### Market Context:

- ▶ *Demographics:* 2 large clusters driving market, mobility, changing lifestyles
- ▶ *Technology:* manufacturing evolving, relocation of industry
- ▶ *Retail:* On demand, internet, automated, delivery
- ▶ *Housing:* smaller size, diverse types of units, factors of choice, increasing rental market

underdeveloped land, a reasonable number of well recognized food service establishments, new business investment, and limited first floor vacancies.

- ▶ There is a negative perception of the area by shoppers in the market area

## Resident Survey Results

More than 400 households interested in the future of the Auburn Road area responded to the survey. The survey indicates that:

- ▶ The average household spends about \$130 per week on groceries. More than four of ten households spend more than \$125.
- ▶ About 82% of the households frequent either Meijer, Kroger or Hollywood Market for grocery purchases. Meijer is in a dominant market position with 47% of the households.
- ▶ About two-thirds eat lunch or dinner outside the home at least as once per week. The majority of both lunch and dinner trips for food purchased or consumed at food service operations is made somewhere other than within the Auburn Road study area of Rochester Hills. Yet, Johnny Black's Public House is identified by 6.7% of the market as the preferred food service establishment for dinner which is the largest market share identified by respondents.
- ▶ Local non-chain food service establishments are the preference when eating dinner and lunch outside the home. (The study area has had significant recent investment by these types of operations.)
- ▶ About 43% of the households purchases fresh items from non-box or non-supermarket chains at least twice per month. Baked goods, meats, produce, and fruit are the products purchased by most in non-box or non-supermarket

operations or settings.

- ▶ About one-third of all residents make apparel purchases at Kohl's.

Study area patron characteristics and opinions:

- ▶ About six out of every ten households have someone who comes to Auburn Road in Rochester Hills at least once each week. About two-thirds comes for shopping or food service establishments.
- ▶ On the other hand, only about one-fourth of the households have someone who comes to the study area section of Auburn Road at least once per week. About one quarter of the households rarely or never come to the study area section of Auburn.
- ▶ The difference in the frequencies reflects the noted substantial concentration of retail along Auburn west of the study area.
- ▶ The most frequent users of the study area section of Auburn come from a smaller geographic area than those who come infrequently.
- ▶ Generally, patrons come to the study area section of Auburn Road for shopping, food services or vehicle/ machinery parts and services reflecting the tenant mix.
- ▶ Those who come most frequently are generally older than those who come less often. Almost three-fourths of those who come with the greatest frequency are over 55.
- ▶ For those who come frequently, the older the person the lower the average income.
- ▶ The shopping options and shopping experience along Auburn Road does not fair well in the opinion of the respondents. More than one-half of all define the shopping options and experience along Auburn Road as being "poor"

or 'fair." On the other hand, they find the shopping options and experience elsewhere in Rochester Hills as being either "very good" or "excellent."

- ▶ In general, restaurant options, housing options, personal and professional services and walking experience are viewed favorably.

## Housing Findings

- ▶ Many current residents are likely to move within the next five years for reasons ranging from household demographic changes to fiscal and physical issues. As few as one-fourth and as many as one-half of residents may move within a five years period.
- ▶ When moving, at least one-third of all household will seek a significantly different unit than that in which they currently reside, including small units.
- ▶ 59% of those likely to move want a walkable environment for recreation, shopping and other activity.

The Auburn Road study area of Rochester Hills is a reasonable option for many of those area residents who desire to move at present and the foreseeable future that want walkability and a different scale unit.

- ▶ For market rate housing, the greatest potential for the study area is to meet the needs of those 45 to 64 with incomes generally split between those \$50,000 to \$75,000, \$75,000 to \$100,000 and \$100,000 and above.
- ▶ Based on historical permit pattern for Rochester Hills as well as the movement of existing households defined through the survey, the study area could add between 45 and 55 new market rate housing units between 2016 and 2026.
- ▶ The majority of the units are expected to rents or associated mortgage (and if applicable condominium) payments in the range of \$1,100 to \$1,250.

- ▶ There is no discernable housing demand for market rate units with less than two bedrooms. Seven out of ten units should have either two bedrooms and den or work space or three bedrooms.
- ▶ For townhouse or other multi-story unit style housing, 50% of the units should have master bedrooms on first floors.

## Non-Retail Goods and Services

As defined, new housing units are expected for Rochester Hills in general and for the study area corridor. Additional "roof tops" and households create additional demand for employment activity within the area. Based on current employment patterns, underutilized land and space in the study area, the emerging technology that provides opportunities for new "industrial" activity, and growing service needs of residents as a result of continued aging of the population, the study area is a good location from which to capture some proportion of additional demand. It is estimated that:

- ▶ 11,500 square feet of additional traditional professional and personal service office space could be marketable.
- ▶ Medical "urgent care services" or "outpatient" service space is likely to create demand for an additional 4,000 to 5,500 square feet of space.
- ▶ In addition and assuming that the study area can create incubator space opportunities for emerging technology driven activity such as 3D printing which will also occupy "office" space, 5,000 to 10,000 square feet of additional space could be added.

## Retail Goods and Services

The forecasting of retail goods and related services space is based on the objective of meeting the needs of the current and future residents of the study area and surrounding areas as well as the ability to capture such space in the corridor without negatively impacting other businesses within Rochester Hills and the Auburn Road study and adjacent areas. The forecasting of retail goods and related services space concluded:

- ▶ There are two markets served by area retail goods and related service activity. The first is the local market, generally residents of Rochester Hills and Shelby Township that reside in close proximity to the study area and some employees who work but do not live in either Rochester Hills or Shelby Township. The second is a market composed of those who come to the area from outside of the immediate area. These markets were confirmed by the survey of residents.
- ▶ Residents of the combined markets will generate or spend about \$125 million in sales for retail goods and related services in 2016. These sales go to establishments both within and outside of Rochester Hills, the County and even Michigan. It is estimated that these sales support more than 367,000 square feet of space at any and all locations.
- ▶ By 2026, the combined market area residents will spend roughly another \$2 million in sales based on growth. This will support an additional 6,000 square feet of space.
- ▶ The Auburn Road study area is expected to be able to capture roughly 6,000 square feet of retail goods and related services space associated with the growth in the market as well as roughly 35,000 square feet from the current spending. The total of just over 40,000 square feet is in

addition to the existing space in the study area and contiguous areas of Auburn Road in Shelby Township.

The following represent potential opportunities for new operations or for expanded product lines for existing operations for the study area.

- ▶ Tire & Vehicle Parts Dealers
- ▶ Floor Covering Stores
- ▶ Nursery, Garden Center and Supply Stores
- ▶ Pharmacies and Drug Stores
- ▶ Cosmetics, Beauty Supplies, and Perfume Stores
- ▶ Shoe Stores
- ▶ Specialty Grocery Store
- ▶ Food Service Contractors
- ▶ Full-Service Restaurants
- ▶ Limited-Service Restaurants
- ▶ General Automotive Repair
- ▶ Reupholstery and Furniture Repair
- ▶ Miscellaneous Personal Services

# Market Opportunities



- ▶ The market evaluation identified several factors that support redevelopment along the corridor, particularly the east end of the district where the city can work with Shelby Township across Dequindre for corridor/district improvements.
- ▶ Property/ business owners are open to redevelopment, desire support from the City.
- ▶ Capital improvements to the roads and rear service drives are critical to stimulate redevelopment.
- ▶ Provide employment opportunities.
- ▶ Expand available services while providing opportunities to walk.
- ▶ Expand the opportunity for development of technology driven space and housing.
- ▶ Seek partnerships to secure opportunities or recruit interests that further quality development.
- ▶ Require private sector investment to match public sector investment in infrastructure.

## Study Area Opportunities:

- ▶ Housing: 45-64 new units
- ▶ Office and tech-driven industrial space: 20,500-27,000 square feet
- ▶ Retail goods and services: 41,000 square feet

# Market Recommendations



## Public Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships as well as private sector partnerships are essential to achieve objectives. Public-private and private-private partnerships will be essential to overcome specific issues including potentially site development that ensures existing businesses can relocate either permanently or on a temporary basis. Public involvement in parking and lighting through lease arrangements may be necessary to allow for some short-term Return-On-Investment (ROI) in order to focus on long-term ROI or simply to provide capital to finance private development.

## Recruitment

Two forms of recruitment may be essential to seize the range of opportunities: investor/developer and tenant recruitment.

It may well be that additional interests need to be attracted to Auburn Road to accomplish the objectives for specific sites. In many cases, developer recruitment will be more cost-effective and less time-consuming than individual tenant recruitment. Redevelopment of some parcels and development of other parcels may require partnerships between the current owners and others, someone to buy the property, and/or other investors to bring it to fruition. This may be necessary for many reasons including insufficient interests by current property owners, insufficient fiscal capacity, and inexperience. Recruiting other local and outside interests can result in purchase agreements, shared

development of property with dual equity positions and other arrangements.

The need for and level of “pre-screening” potential contacts for any recruitment is a fundamental issue in the process. Consideration must be given to the available data bases, the cost-effectiveness of the “pre-screening,” and the likelihood of success with obtaining accurate information from a “pre-screening” process. Generation of the initial list of developers essentially involves pre-qualification as the developers sought should have experience doing similar projects as well as appropriate fiscal capacity. Thus, the research involves identifying developers through their projects. The most appropriate ways of doing this for non-local interests are through:

- ▶ Contact with professional organizations that track creative development.
- ▶ Tapping libraries associated with professional organizations that deal with unique situations like the American Planning Association.
- ▶ Review of focused development publications.
- ▶ Internet research based on articles about desired types of efforts from around the country and world.

An evaluation by the consulting team and comments from the public identified the following key observations about the design of the Brooklands district today.

## Physical Assessment



- ▶ Overall the district lacks cohesion.
- ▶ Many of the buildings are dated and do not project the high quality design that has become synonymous with the rest of Rochester Hills.
- ▶ The relationship between where public realm ends and private realm starts is ill-defined.
- ▶ The district lacks public open space.
- ▶ The rear yards of commercial buildings and neighborhoods adjacent are not clearly delineated.





# Design Opportunities

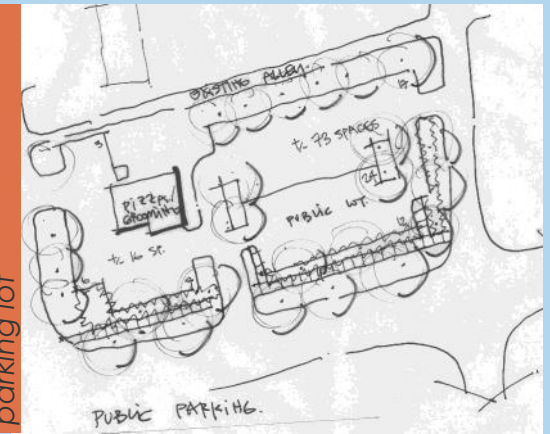
- ▶ Each site could be better designed to maximize its potential for new businesses, circulation, and site design.
- ▶ Create a cohesive district through streetscape treatments.
- ▶ Vacant parcels provide key development opportunities to stimulate further reinvestment.
- ▶ Define a street edge with two-story buildings to enhance the presence along the road.

The recommendations on the following pages are broken down into two categories: design improvements in the public realm and private realm.

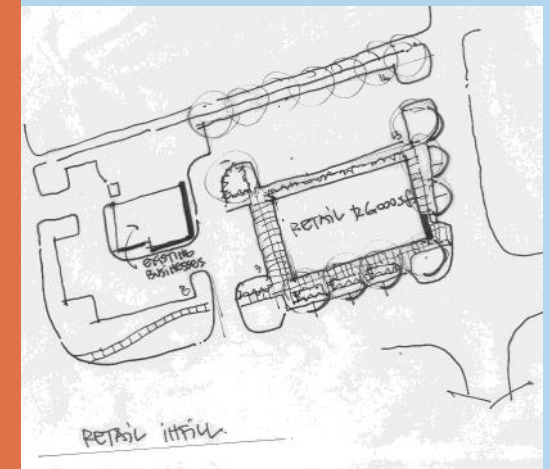
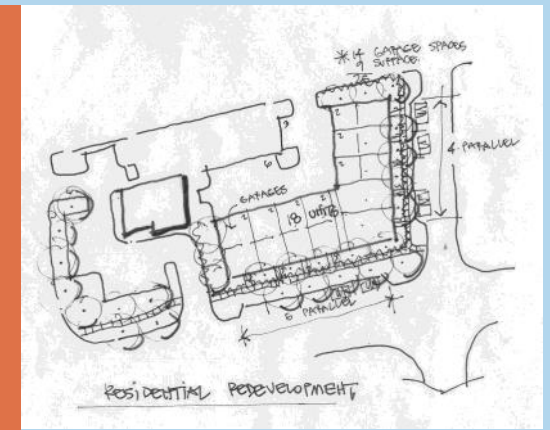
## ▶ Catalytic Site: Redevelop the city-owned property at Emmons and Auburn

This city-owned site could be redeveloped to spur further investment on the corridor. In the short term the City should continue to use the lot as district parking. In the long term the lot could be sold to be developed into mixed use or attached housing using the guidelines and regulations of the district to encourage others to do the same or be used as a gathering space or park.

Short-Term: Continue use as parking lot



Long-Term: mixed-use redevelopment or open space



# Recommendations—Public Realm



The public realm are those spaces that are open for all to use. These spaces could include parks and plazas, but also include areas like sidewalks and rear service drives. In the Brooklands area significant improvements are recommended to these public spaces, activating the sidewalk through landscaping improvements, parking organization, and enhanced features like lighting and possibly the addition of plaza space. The rear service drives are also an area of the corridor that could be activated. They provide rear access to businesses, safe passage for kids to and from school without having to walk along moving traffic on Auburn, and possible event and festival areas once the business corridor becomes more established as a walkable area.

*The Brooklands district should be designed to be inviting to pedestrians and non-motorized users as well as vehicles. Sidewalks should be lined with interesting buildings and spaces, with a mix of uses that give people somewhere to go. Development should be pedestrian-friendly in its orientation and relationship to the sidewalk.*

- ▶ Reinvest in streetscape:
  - ▶ Outdoor Seating
  - ▶ Lighting
  - ▶ Pavement Treatment
  - ▶ Landscaping
- ▶ Pave rear service drives and provide consistent buffers
- ▶ Manage stormwater through low-impact design

## Streetscape

Streetscape elements include inviting building facades, landscaping, sidewalks, street paving, street furniture, signs, awnings, and street lighting. Simple improvements to the streetscape will significantly improve the pedestrian environment and further emphasize the intended district character.

- ▶ The sidewalk environment should accommodate ample space for pedestrians, street furniture, prominent storefronts, and outdoor dining where feasible. Street trees and other elements that create a comfortable separation between parking and drive lanes and the pedestrian areas should also be included.
- ▶ Receptacles, planters, benches, pedestrian-scale lighting, and other such amenities should be strategically placed throughout the district.
- ▶ Bike racks should be provided near entrances to buildings.



*Example Enhanced Streetscape*

► Catalytic Project: Create new public gathering space



Explore opportunities to close a street segment to recapture space for outdoor gathering



Example Plaza Space



Example Gathering Space

## Rear Service Drives

The existing rear service drives are inconsistent along the corridor. Their condition varies widely; there are many different kinds of fencing, paving, and levels of maintenance. In order to make them attractive for pedestrians, more consistent design treatments should be applied.

The photos below illustrate different levels of development; the rear service drive does not have to be especially ornate, but it does need to be clean and tidy with a screened trash enclosure. The rear service drives are also an excellent opportunity to manage stormwater drainage by installing permeable paving, landscape areas. The change in paving will indicate a change in use, cueing people that the space is shared by pedestrians, service vehicles and shoppers. Back entrances to the shops should be as inviting as the front.

There are many irregular areas in the rear service drives that provide parking. Providing consistent boundaries, landscaping and paving will unify the spaces and make it easier for people to find their way around. Parking spaces should be clearly delineated. Where rear service drives may be realigned to accommodate parking, continuous pavement treatment and pedestrian access should be provided.

Brick or decorative masonry walls are recommended along the entire length of both rear service drives or as screen walls where there is rear yard parking across the drive. If dense landscaping is provided, a fence could be an alternative to a masonry wall.

*Over time, some of the rear service drives have become privately held (see map on page 8) This plan recommends private rear service drives be dedicated to the City through incentives such as a commitment for reconstruction and maintenance including snow plowing.*

Examples of "Active" Rear Service Drives



## Low-Impact Design

- ▶ Low-impact design is a method to naturally treat stormwater runoff. Rain Gardens and Bioswales should be considered along sidewalks, parking lots, and rear service drives. Larger drainage areas may require a combination of facilities and overflow areas should be provided for larger rain events. Plant species should be salt tolerant, provide aesthetic benefits and be low maintenance. Sidewalks should be designed to direct runoff into these areas, and maintenance agreements should be included as part of any approval.
- ▶ Porous pavement may be considered instead of impervious applications (i.e. asphalt or concrete) in parking areas or rear service drives. To function properly, porous pavement requires adequate subsurface soil conditions, overflow connection to a storm sewer or other final discharge location and routine vacuum maintenance. Porous pavement should not be installed in areas where there is a potential for soil contamination.
- ▶ Permeable pavers can be used wherever feasible to mitigate stormwater runoff. The change in pattern and material will also delineate the spaces between vehicle-only space and vehicle/pedestrian shared space between buildings and street curb.



*Low-impact stormwater design*



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# Recommendations—Private Realm



The private realm is the space which is owned by private citizens. This could be existing buildings, parking lots or vacant lots. The Brooklands area is filled with many small businesses that could benefit from facade improvements that help promote the walkability of the corridor. Adding or improving the windows that face the corridor to show off merchandise and encouraging window shopping is one way to encourage patrons to walk the corridor. Additionally, adding landscaping beds, appropriately sized and designed signage, and better lighting are also potential private investments that will add to the overall aesthetic of the corridor. Better organization of rear lots will aid in visitor navigation and help in decreasing the number of vehicles entering the residential neighborhood looking for parking.

- ▶ Initiate a façade improvement program
- ▶ Optimize existing rear parking areas
- ▶ Reduce impacts of parking on neighborhood
- ▶ Revisions to zoning will ensure future redevelopment matches the desired character

▶ Short-term Façade Improvements: Current building owners could rehabilitate their facades without pursuing full-scale redevelopment



Before



After (potential enhancement)

▶ Short-term Façade Improvements



Before



After (potential enhancement)



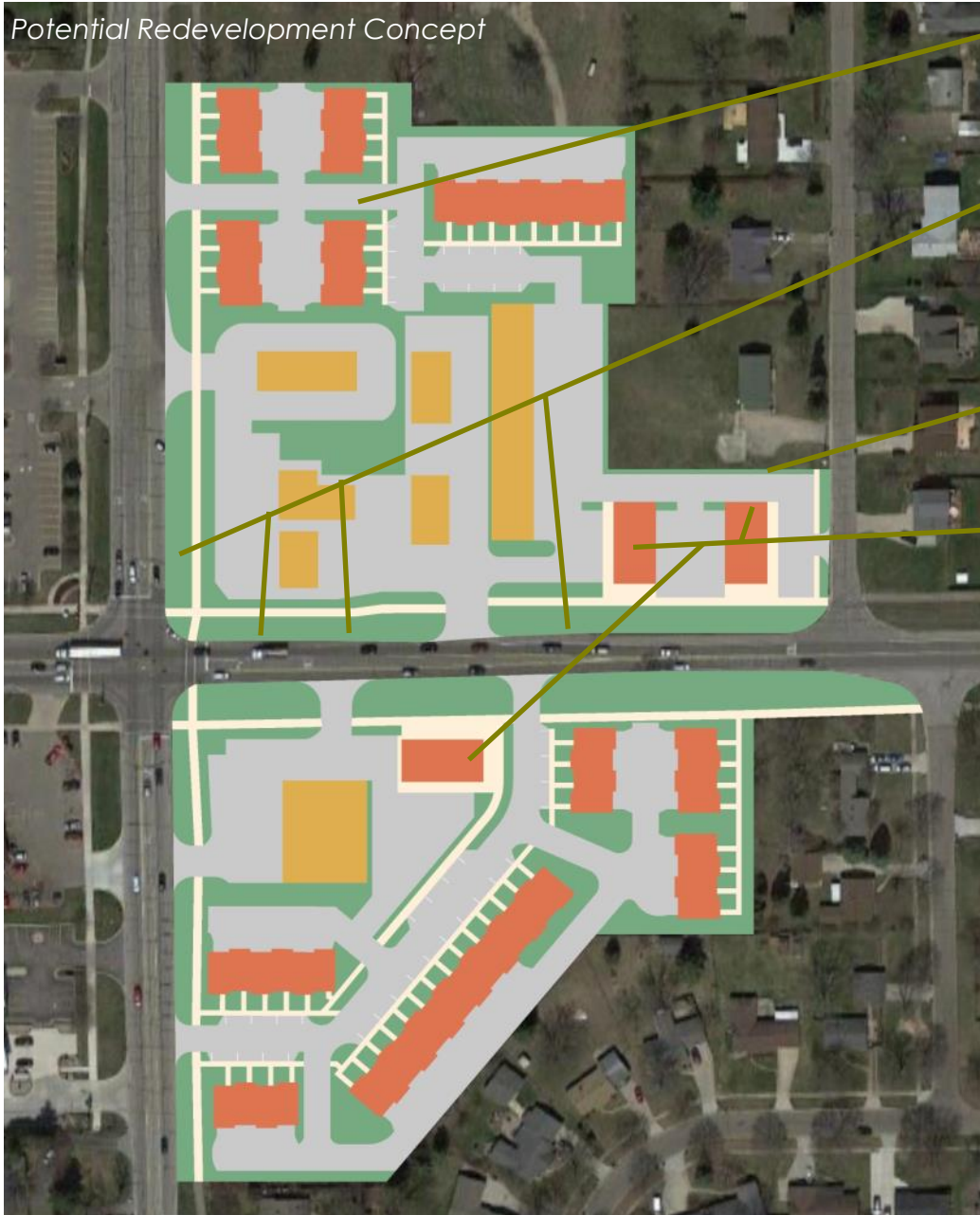
Before



After (potential enhancement)

# Recommendations—John R

Potential Redevelopment Concept



Attached residential units (similar to Barclay Circle)

Consolidate access points (close to intersection and those that create conflicts)

Buffer from adjacent single-family

Office/service uses

Existing



These two illustrative intersection designs are intended to show redevelopment potential as permitted through the Flexible Business zoning districts. Intersections like these on Auburn Road outside the Brooklands district can benefit from improved site design, access, and mixture of uses. Threading in simple design elements like lighting, signage and landscaping that are similar to those used in the Brooklands are will help make Auburn Road feel like one cohesive corridor. These illustrations are examples that could be arranged in different ways to achieve the same goals.



# Recommendations—Adams

## Potential Redevelopment Concept

Intersection analysis was not part of this project but this concept is adaptive so that if the intersections are improved with roundabouts, the concept to have the buildings in the front with access and parking in the side and rear remains.



Outdoor seating amenities

Better defined parking with landscaping

Infill buildings closer to street

Improved 8' pathway

Driveways spaced away from intersection

Rear Shared Access

Buffer from adjacent single-family

## Existing



# Transportation Assessment



Auburn Road from Culbertson to Dequindre in the area known as the Brooklands is a two-lane roadway with unlimited opportunities to turn left and a lack of delineation when it comes to pedestrian space, parking lanes, and drive aisles. The capacity of the road, meaning the amount of vehicles two lanes of traffic can sufficiently move, is appropriate. No additional lanes are needed at this time, in fact adding lanes would adversely effect the goals of this study, but the team explored other options to help improve traffic flow.

The design team toured the study area multiple times noting the issues with the transportation components of the design. During these assessments, the following three major issues surfaced:

## ► Lack of walkability/ bikeability

There are varying degrees of sidewalk along the corridor. Some areas have small poorly located walks and some have none. What does exist is hard to locate and uncomfortable to use due to its size, location near active traffic lanes or crumbling condition. There are pedestrians and cyclists that traverse the corridor, but they are forced to do so in unmarked zones causing crash potential.

## ► Poorly designed parking

The parking conditions within the right-of-way is fairly haphazard. There are limited delineated parking spots, much of the Brooklands corridor is one large access point without curb or gutter, so vehicles are not funneled into parking areas. Some businesses use angled parking and others manage parallel. Parking between and behind businesses is also similarly disorganized with some paved lots and other unimproved areas that allow for parking. This kind of parking schemes leads to confusion and an insufficient use of available parking areas.

## ► Poor access management

Due to the lack of consistent curbs and sidewalks to define intersections and access points, traffic movements are haphazard. It is difficult to tell where patrons of the local businesses or residents of the neighborhoods should turn into and out of. Since these movements can happen at any moment, anywhere along the corridor, greater crash potential exists. No new curb cuts should be permitted along Auburn Rd in the Brooklands area. Driveways should be required to be located off side streets or rear service drives.



# Transportation Opportunities



This unimproved corridor area has many potential opportunities when it comes to right-of-way and infrastructure. By improving the road, sidewalks, rear service drives, and parking it will give the area character is lacking. Providing basic delineation of space between pedestrians, parking and travel lanes will encourage further pedestrian activity and create a safe zone for them to interact with local business.



## Medians

The addition of medians will add organization to the left turn pockets, slow traffic, and add additional character and green space. The medians should be designed as raised planters or hardscaped with planters placed on top. Should the city decide to close access to some of the side streets, this could give the opportunity for longer more visually striking medians.



*Example Medians*

# Transportation Recommendations



## Right-of-Way Improvements

Throughout the planning process the design team in combination with the steering committee, city staff and officials, MDOT, and the public evaluated different right-of-way schemes that aided in achieving project goals: calm traffic, improve pedestrian design, redesign “open” front parking, improve safety, and protect the neighborhoods

The alternatives considered all maintained a minimum of a two-lane cross section with and without left turn lanes along with options for angled on-street parking, slip roads with angled parking, island parking, on-street parallel parking and schemes with and without center medians. Input supported the final recommendation of on-street parallel parking and a combination of center medians and left turn bays to aid in traffic flow. A detailed drawing of the preferred alternative is provided on the following page.



*Preferred Alternative: Parallel Parking*

- Evaluation Criteria:
- ▶ MDOT acceptance
  - ▶ Impact on traffic flow
  - ▶ Amount of Parking
  - ▶ Aesthetics

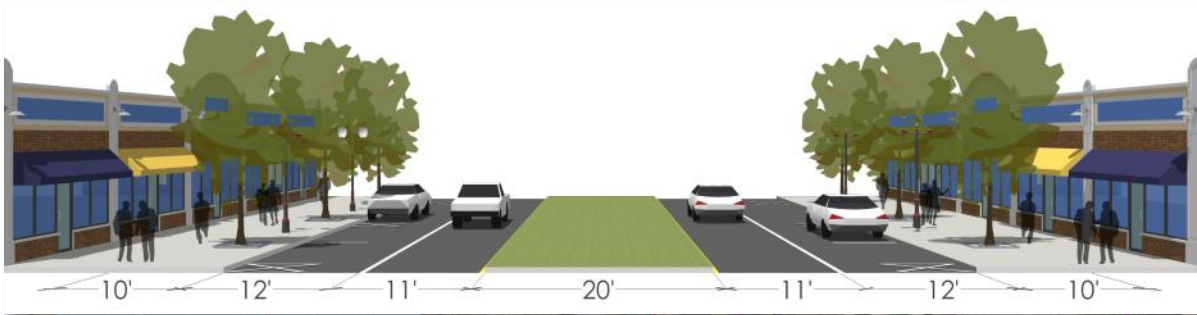
## Additional Alternatives Considered



*Angled Parking*



*Slip Road*



Traditional Parallel Parking



Proposed Parallel Parking

On-street parallel parking should be delineated with "X" pavement markings between every other space to make pulling in and out easier, especially for those not comfortable with backing into a parallel parking space. A buffer zone in between the travel lane and parking lane allows for door swings and easier entries and exits for drivers.

## Gateways

Gateway treatments at Dequindre and Culbertson will help signal to drivers that they are entering a cohesive business district and calm traffic to assist in pedestrian activity and the act of parking itself. Strategically placed and enhanced with signage, landscaping, lighting and construction materials, crosswalks should be enhanced at these locations.

## On-Street Parking

The addition and organization of on-street parallel parking will aid in providing parking that is clear and safe to use for the entire district. It will provide additional structure to the roadway and make obvious delineation of traffic lanes. Parallel spaces are also recommended for cross streets, but only the length of the business district. The streetscape should change to help delineate residential neighborhoods from the business corridor.

In addition, in the long-term, select cross streets could be evaluated for closure to capture additional parking spaces.

## On-Site Parking

Parking, one of the most requested improvements sought during engagement, will not only be accommodated on street, but also behind the current buildings. It is recommended that specific sites be dedicated for communal parking lots through a shared parking agreement or formal parking association. Allowing for some encroachment into the residential lots behind the Auburn Road businesses will allow for larger, but few scattered lots. There is also opportunity for businesses to create paved lots behind their current buildings where they will not have improved rear service drives to access them. Adding additional curb cuts to Auburn Road for parking access is not recommended.



*Example Gateway treatments*

## Parking Expansion and Design

Parking in the Brooklands Business District should be accommodated on site. In only the rarest of occasions (and as illustrated on the framework map) parking may be extended beyond the rear service drive to adjacent parcels. The following criteria should be used when considering expanded parking requests:

- ▶ Demonstrate a community benefit
- ▶ Reduce impacts on neighborhood (light, views, traffic)
- ▶ Provide extensive green buffer with masonry wall adjacent to residential uses

## Non-Motorized

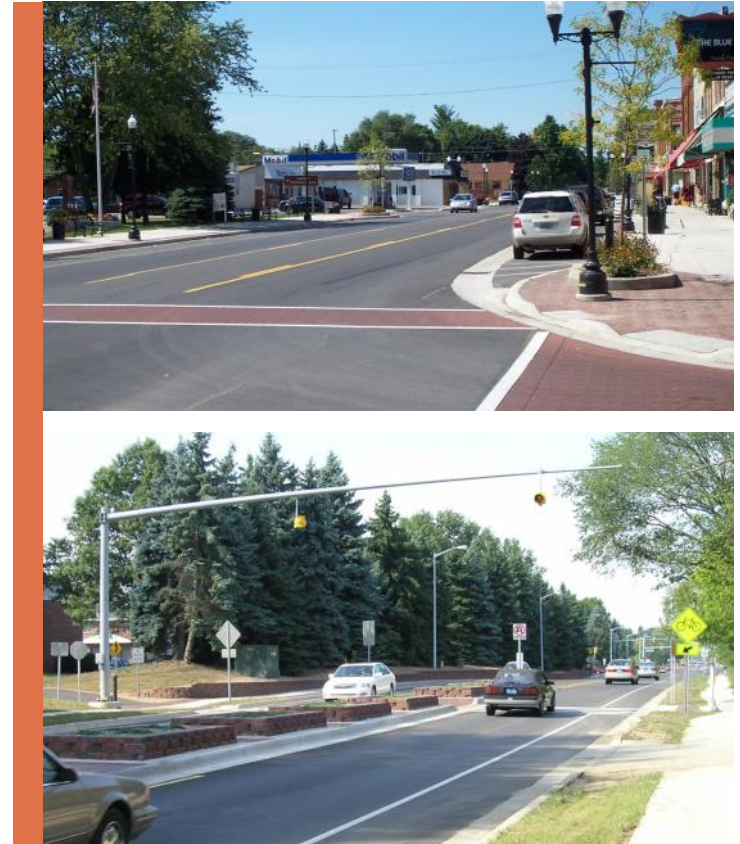
Non-motorized transportation will be supported through the addition and enhancement of continuous sidewalks on both sides of the road through the Brooklands area. These sidewalks will provide safe refuge for pedestrian and bicycle movement. Paving the rear service drives along the corridor will also provide additional non-motorized space that removes pedestrians and cyclists from proximity to moving traffic on Auburn. This also provides, as requested by residents, connection for safe passage from Reuther Middle School to the Brooklands neighborhoods.

## Intersections

Intersection treatments for the most part will remain the same with signalized crossings at the book ends of the corridor. A new mid-district crossing is being recommended in the area where a public plaza or central parking scheme will be developed, somewhere in the vicinity between Longview and Gerald. This crossing should include high visibility crosswalks, signage, flashing beacons and extra landscaping to make motorists aware of the crossing. This additional crossing will allow for the free flow of pedestrians to the businesses on both the north and south sides of Auburn Road. Adding in left turn bays at intersections will help traffic flow freely with less stop-and-go from left-turn queues.

## Street Closures

In certain scenarios the closure of access to Auburn Road from select side streets in the Brooklands may be a useful tool. Street closures can aid in improving safety on Auburn Road by having fewer curb cuts and to reduce traffic conflicts associated with left turns that impact traffic flow and potential for crashes. The closure will also allow for longer more aesthetically pleasing medians and additional on-street parking spaces. The area which is closed can also be used to create a much desired centralized public space or plaza area. Lastly the closure also works to keep some of the commercial traffic out of the residential neighborhoods.



*Example Crossings*

### Considerations for closures:

- ▶ If adjacent rear service drives are public or private
- ▶ Where parking or public space is most desired or needed
- ▶ Impact on traffic operations and neighborhood
- ▶ Design of closure; one-way, full closure, Auburn Rd or rear service drive access

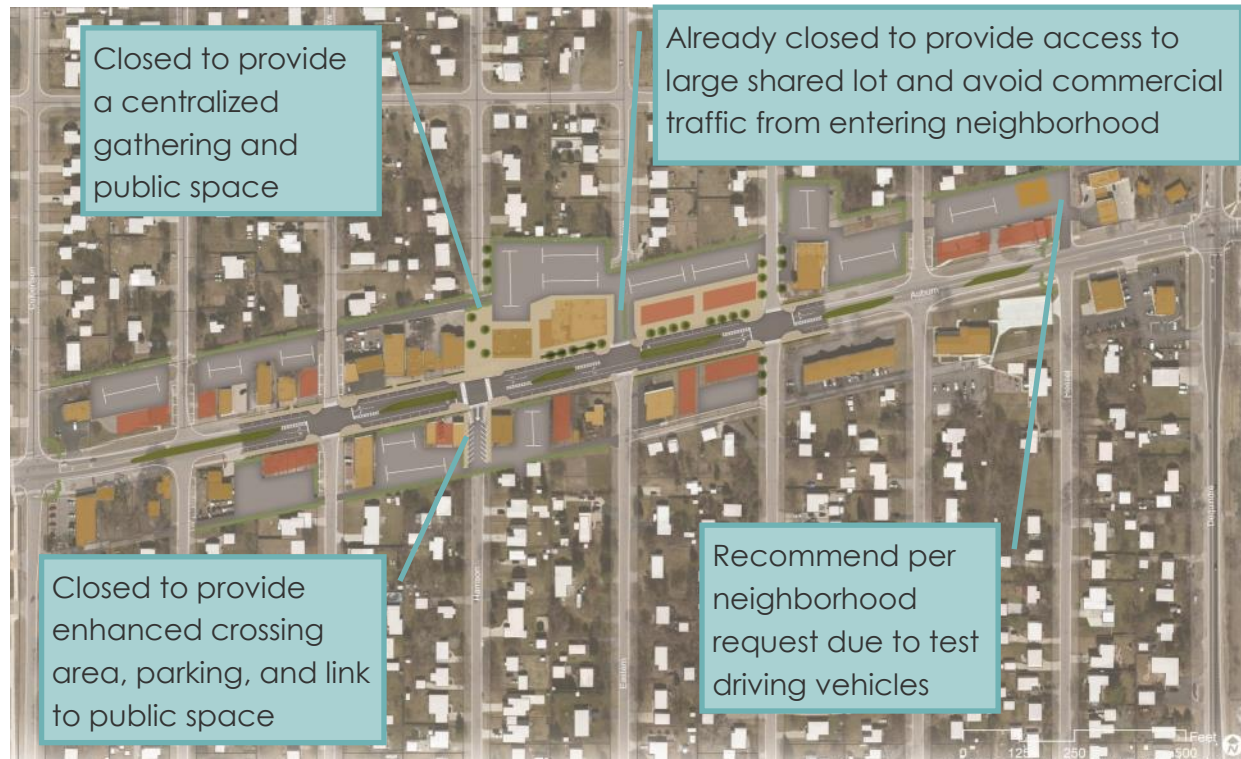


Some considerations for street closures include whether or not the street is adjacent to a public or private rear service drive to allow for traffic circulation through the drive; where parking and/ or public space is most desired or needed; the closures impact on traffic operations for the residents and surrounding businesses; and the design of the closure and whether it will be a one-way closure, full closure and whether access will be provided to the rear service drive or to Auburn Road.

The closures suggested are provided as an option. Further study is needed before any street is considered for closure, including temporary treatments to monitor and test impacts.



*Traffic Calming: An alternative to full closure would be to prevent vehicles from entering the neighborhood but to allow them to exit; Or, to build "chicanes" to slow traffic and mark the entrance to the neighborhood.*



# 5. Implementation

Implementation of this plan for the Brooklands District will be accomplished gradually and through a variety of means. Many of the recommendations will occur as the private sector redevelops individual sites and buildings. The city should look to initiate the corridor redevelopment by implementing the roadway improvements in the near future. Some recommendations in the property along Auburn Road can be accomplished through public/private partnerships as redevelopment of the parcels occurs. The recommendations below are classified by their location and are summarized in the chart below (inside the street right-of-way or on private property). For more detail, see the Recommendations sections of the previous chapters and the following pages.

<b>Right-of-Way</b>		<b>Private Property</b>	
<i>Public property owned by the city or MDOT</i>		<i>Property owned by private citizens, like buildings and vacant lots</i>	
Auburn Road ROW (MDOT)	Side Street and Rear Service Drives	City Regulations and Programs	Land Owners/ Developers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved pedestrian crossings</li> <li>- Organized on-street parking</li> <li>- Left-turn bays</li> <li>- Medians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional on-street parking</li> <li>- Traffic calming</li> <li>- Gateways to distinguish the edge of the parking/ business zone</li> <li>- Marked pedestrian crossings</li> <li>- Rear service drive improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes to zoning regulations</li> <li>- Technical support to a business group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Redevelop consistent with the plan</li> <li>- Create a business group Task Force</li> <li>- Shared parking agreements with others on the block</li> <li>- Invest in improvements</li> </ul>

Auburn Road is a state route. This means the MDOT is responsible for maintenance and any reconstruction. While improvements to the segment through the Brooklands needs to be redesigned, and several of the major intersections need to be improved to reduce peak hour congestion, MDOT does not have any funds allocated for that level of improvement for Auburn Road. MDOT has expressed interest in turning over jurisdiction to the city. However at the time this plan was prepared, the city would expect funds be made available to make some improvements before it would consider designation of Auburn Road as a city street. The city and MDOT should continue to have discussions about this potential turnback.

### *Right-of-Way – Auburn Road*

- ▶ The City should continue to work with MDOT on right-of-way improvements for on-street parking, pedestrian facilities, supporting parking, and supporting vibrant businesses.
- ▶ Because expectations to upgrade stormwater to fully meet the current standards may be a barrier to redevelopment, the City could work with property owners on a stormwater system for both private property and the road (see sidebar).
- ▶ A preliminary estimate is around \$3 million to rebuild Auburn Road between Culbertson and Dequindre including the median/three lanes, on-street parking, and redesign of the former front yard parking as illustrated. The next step would be to take the recommended concept and prepare engineering construction plans; that fee could be expected to be in the \$300,000 range. These fees includes a typical portion for stormwater upgrades. More comprehensive upgrades to stormwater in the right-of-way and for the rear service drives may be desired by the City, but would be an additional cost.

### *Right-of-Way – Side Streets and Rear Service Drives*

- ▶ Parking can be striped on side streets and traffic calming such as curb bump outs/chicanes and different pavement colors implemented to better distinguish the Auburn Road commercial district/ Brooklands District from adjacent neighborhoods.
- ▶ Rear service drives should be paved to provide additional circulation for parking with adequate buffers from adjacent residential properties.

## CIA

In order to facilitate streetscape improvements and revitalization in the Brooklands, the City may help a newly formed merchant association transition into a Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) as a financing tool.

A CIA, through a Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA), would capture state, county, and local tax increases resulting from the redevelopment of sites within the district. A CIA helps fund qualifying public infrastructure improvements, marketing initiatives, and economic growth projects.

## Stormwater Design

One of the impediments to redevelopment is the cost associated with upgrades to meet current stormwater design standards. The City may look to treat stormwater upgrades in a similar fashion on zoning non-conformities whereby some level of reasonable upgrade is expected but might not be the same as is expected for a new development in other parts of the city. The City may also work with MDOT so that stormwater improvements and low impact design materials/landscape is integrated with redesign of the Auburn Road right-of-way, side streets, rear service drives and new parking lots.

For example, a preliminary assessment identified that there are portions of the Ireland Drain within segments of the Auburn Rd ROW. The cost estimate includes extending the Drain that runs from Hessel to Eastern Streets, west to Culbertson. In terms of drainage in the alleys, while there is a storm drain along the south side alley (from Emmons to Hessel) there is no storm drain along the mostly private alleys on the north side. So improvements to the north alleys would require installation of a storm drain.

## Private Property – Private Development, City Regulations and Programs

- ▶ *Revise zoning districts.*
  - Revise the Commercial Improvement district (as outlined in the Zoning Audit that follows)
  - Require the flexible business overlay at key intersections outside the Brooklands.
- ▶ One of the challenges is to allow some level of parking expansion in the rear, but still protect the integrity of the neighborhoods. Changes to zoning regulations to establish conditions upon *parking expansion and design* is one recommended tool (as outlined in the Transportation Recommendations section).
- ▶ *Streamline the Approval Process.* The developers will probably be working closely with a general contractor or project manager who is also responsible for preparing and coordinating detailed work plans. Careful timing and sequencing of interdependent events requires considerable skill. Time is money, and unnecessary delays in the permit review process can interrupt the entire schedule. Therefore, the City's role in the process should be streamlined as much as possible.
- ▶ Explore partnerships with Oakland County's Business Assistance Team to help spearhead business engagement.

## Business Improvement Organization

The City and local businesses should continue to move forward with discussions on forming a coalition, shared parking authority, or a separate Corridor Improvement Authority. At a minimum, the businesses should work towards formalizing themselves into a business association to provide an avenue for dialogue and to explore options for corridor-wide improvements and revitalization.

Financial Incentives	Soft Incentives
- Property Tax Abatement	- Affordable Utilities, Renewable Energy
- Business Tax Credits	- Workforce Training & Development
- Small Business Loan Programs	- Employee Recruitment & Screening
- Investment Tax Credits	- Small Business Incubator Space
- Revenue Bonds	- Site Location Assistance
- Tax Increment Financing	- Regulatory Assistance, Permit Coordination
- Economic Development Funds	- Collaborative Marketing
- Infrastructure Improvements	
- Brownfield Remediation	
- Job Creation Rebates	
- Low Interest Loans	
- Revolving Loan Fund for Façade Improvements	
- City provided design services for façade improvements	

- ▶ *Get Organized.* Create a Task Force with a board, chair, and subcommittees comprised of property owners, existing business owners, real estate brokers, lending institutions, and local developers. "Champions" need to be identified to help lead the transformation. City staff could be a resource. Create an email list of Task Force members for easily sharing information and resources.
- ▶ *Host Quarterly Task Force Meetings.* Ask existing businesses to host the meetings, and include time for networking with refreshments. Invite speakers with expertise in relevant

services, such as marketing, website development, social media, real estate appraisal and brokerage, lending, etc. Some of these meetings could be coordinated with the Chamber. Representatives of from Oakland County (Planning and Economic Development, One Stop Shop, and Business Assistance Team), and MDOT would be good choices to present or facilitate a Q&A session.

- ▶ *Agree on a Purpose.* Formulate a clear and concise mission statement, the purpose of the Task Force, input on planned public projects, ideas for shared parking, troubleshooting issues with city staff, etc. All Task Force members and the businesses should agree to promote and support the entire corridor and its interests as a whole.
- ▶ *Facilitate One-on-One Lunch Meetings.* Leverage relationships to meet with any landowners who have not already been engaged in the process. Explain the different plans for Auburn Road and the Brooklands area, potential code changes, redevelopment ideas, benefits, and why their involvement is important. Discuss impediments and challenges, and work together to identify possible solutions and strategies. Topics could include marketing, facades, parking, branding, hours of operation, property maintenance, illumination, etc.
- ▶ *Retain a Commercial Real Estate Broker.* Retain the services of one commercial real estate broker that represents all properties within the district, and share the cost among all vested stakeholders. Deputize the broker with responsibility for the listing information, establishing asking prices, actively recruiting developers and anchor tenants, promoting the corridor at conferences, etc.
- ▶ *Package Financial and Soft Incentives.* Task Force members should work with the City to assemble a diverse package of incentives and financial resources, including potential

Priority	Action
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Right-of-way improvements</li> <li>▶ Zoning changes</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Formation of a CIA</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Redevelopment of City Lot</li> </ul>

grants, loans, bonds, gifts, tax rebates, etc. Below is a summary of incentives commonly used in recruiting private investment. Soft incentives do not compensate well for an absence of financial incentives in marketing material, so could fall flat if packaged alone. (see table above)

#### Marketing of the Plan

- ▶ *Create and Convey a Unique Brand.* To begin, establish The Brooklands District on city issued maps, wayfinding logos/signs etc. Then, if there is interest and funding, work with a marketing expert on development of a corridor brand and images to delineate and market the district.
- ▶ *Social Media.* One marketing option is to work with the City or Chamber's social media pages (such as Facebook) that can be used to share information and news, and to celebrate victories.
- ▶ *Media Releases.* The best way to get the story printed accurately is to have Task Force members write the articles and then ask the media to print them as-is concerning events or development.
- ▶ *Recruiting Developers and Tenants.* The Real Estate Broker, if retained by the Task Force, could make a dedicated effort in recruitment. Recruitment should go far beyond just creating cut sheets and posting them on the brokerage website. The Broker should be committed to identifying candidates, making repeated phone calls, sending letters

# Zoning Audit *and Recommendations*

with information packets, following-up with more phone calls, rolling out the red carpet for site tours, and facilitating the process of negotiation and real estate transaction.

## Next Steps

- ▶ Seek MDOT TAP competitive grants for funding multi-modal, parking, streetscape, and other non-motorized improvements
- ▶ Partner with MDOT to pursue safety and access management funds to help close driveways and relocate the front yard parking and any funding that is designated for upgrades to stormwater.
- ▶ Continue to communicate with MDOT for accelerated application of its annual maintenance costs toward a potential partnership to improve Livernois to Dequindre as a possible transfer of jurisdiction for that segment from MDOT to the City.
- ▶ Direct CDBG funds towards streetscape improvements.
- ▶ Take the recommended right-of-way concept and prepare engineering construction plans.

The relevant sections of the zoning ordinance were reviewed for compatibility with the recommendations of this plan. The following recommendations are provided for future amendments to the ordinance.

## Overview

The entirety of the Brooklands Business District (except for two parcels zoned B5 Automotive Business) is zoned Commercial Improvement (CI), adopted in the 1980s and subsequently amended. Since the 2006 Master Plan, optional Flexible Business (FB) overlay districts were adopted for many of the remaining business districts along Auburn Road and elsewhere in the city. The CI

## Other studies and analysis required:

- ▶ Traffic operation analysis for any street closures,
- ▶ Additional traffic studies of intersections alternatives for Adams and John R
- ▶ Storm water runoff analysis and possible area redesign
- ▶ Additional follow-up with neighbors should street closures be pursued
- ▶ This plan should be integrated into the upcoming Master Plan update.

district references the FB-2 district for its uses and building design standards. This plan recommends the CI district be revised to better meet the vision of this plan for the Brooklands as well as updating and requiring the FB standards along the other portions of Auburn Road.

## Uses

- ▶ Drive-through are currently conditional: these are too auto-oriented for this district. Recommend they not be permitted.
- ▶ Limit residential first floor non-retail uses in district core.

## Schedule of Regulations (Article 5)

- ▶ Table refers to Article 6 CI for this district; list the dimensions here for consistency.
- ▶ 25' rear setback is too deep. Rear service drives serve as a buffer between adjacent residential, and several parcels have 0' rear setback

already. Incorporate stronger landscape/buffer standards instead (see below)

- ▶ Front setback currently 0-10'. Consider amending to a setback of 10' only if it is used as "public" space: extension of pedestrianway, outdoor seating, etc. Provide better planning commission conditions for varying from 0' build-to line.

#### *Building Design (Article 8)*

- ▶ Ground floor building height, minimum 12 with "15 feet being preferred". Amend to make that more of a requirement, "preferred" allows too much leeway.
- ▶ Clarify architectural features encroachment between CI chapter and FB chapter. CI (Section 138-6.303) says only buildings built prior to 1986 may project not more than 3 ft. into ROW. FB (Section 138-8.502E) says otherwise.
- ▶ Add "Primary entrance shall be on Auburn Road, secondary entrance from parking lot or rear service drive"
- ▶ Recommend adding Frontage standards applicable to CI as they

are applicable to other FB overlays: then can more strongly clarify entries, frontage building percentages, projections etc.

#### *Parking (Article 11)*

- ▶ Not currently required to pave; recommend required to pave or use permeable hard surfaces.
- ▶ Required to meet regular off-street parking for FB: allow more flexibility for demonstrating the demand (mixed-use areas are less likely to have the same parking demands as auto-oriented areas).
- ▶ Allow tuck under/building integrated parking.
- ▶ Good shared parking standards
- ▶ Current FB standards:
  - 1.5 spaces per residential dwelling unit
  - 1 space/400 sq. ft. non-residential
  - Article 11 is 125% max, FB 200%, recommend 125% across the board
- ▶ Proposed parking standards (more detail for "non-residential"):
  - Sit down restaurants: 4 spaces/1000 sq. ft.

- Diner/carry out restaurants: 2 spaces/1000 sq. ft.
- Retail/office: 3 spaces/1000 sq. ft.

#### *Signs*

- ▶ As permitted for the B-2 district, regulated outside zoning
- ▶ Includes building-mounted specific requirements for buildings located within one foot of right-of-way
- ▶ Utilize FB sign regulations instead of B-2

#### *Landscaping*

- ▶ Add buffer requirements for CI for a 42" decorative masonry wall or a fence (if covered by a maintenance agreement) and 5' vegetative buffer around parking lots to minimize noise and obstruct views to neighborhoods.