URBAN VILLAGES IN DETROIT

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Figure 3. Deserted Housing in Detroit. Alex Maclean (2009)

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1. Introduction

An urban village is a dense, self-sustaining, walkable community that has a strong residential component and includes a combination of retail, dining, leisure, and commercial uses. An urban village offers a "place of belonging" that instills a sense of "pride in the community" to both residential and business occupants. Initially, the urban village group focused on creating villages that had similar physical attributes of a modern day neotraditional development. It was later determined that the field research would consist of exploring the physical landscape of Detroit. The first group task was to divide the city into six sections. After dividing the city, each member took a section and visited the assigned areas to gather data. Each member also took several pictures of the designated sites to share with the rest of the group.

The group collectively discovered that some areas of the city were very vibrant while others were desolate. As we looked deeper into successful areas it was discovered that certain places were strong communities because of its residents and not necessarily its physical landscape or infrastructure. The focus shifted and the group began to identify potential village locations using criteria based on the social rather than the physical characteristics of a community. However, this scenario is more feasible in cities that have a growing population rather than a shrinking population, as is the case in Detroit. It will be important from a planning perspective to not only discuss the physical characteristics of urban villages but also the pulse of a village, which are the people and culture.

The report will begin with a discussion on how a shrinking city will determine the future landscape of Detroit. In conjunction with a shrinking city the 3rd and 4th section demonstrates how an urban village can provide a solution to Detroit's infrastructure problem. Section 5 identifies various physical features that are important for urban villages. Section 6 discusses the social

context of urban villages such as "place" making, mixed income, history and immigration are important in building a community.

Section 7 discusses national case studies that could serve as blue prints for areas in Detroit. Section 8 later relates the case studies to local initiatives that would work well with creating urban villages. Section 9 identifies the feasibility of different village development throughout the city and categorizes them as short term or long-term projects. The final section explains how urban villages would be beneficial for the entire metro-Detroit region.

2. Shrinking City Concept

There are a variety of circumstances that have shaped Detroit into a shrinking city. A shrinking city is defined as a city that was built to serve a population that no longer exists. Therefore the supply of built environment in a shrinking city exceeds the demand that the current population can support. A shrinking city is often noted as having an excess amount of vacant buildings and land. Some of the vacant properties include historic landmarks that are broken to the point beyond repair or are too expensive to rehabilitate. There are several challenges facing shrinking cities and planned development is not always successful.

Detroit was once the 4th largest city in the United States, however there has been a drastic shift in population from the central city to the surrounding suburbs over last 50 years (Herron). Industrial cities within the rustbelt have been especially hard hit with decline and blight. Industrialization once led the forefront in Detroit's population growth due to access to raw materials and proximity to rail and waterways. Industrial sites have now become empty brownfields. There are a variety of reasons why Detroit has been faced with a never-ending number of vacant buildings and empty lots. Reasons vary from the loss of population to the suburbs to deindustrialization and racial segregation (Appendix B). Detroit's peak population occurred in 1953 with around 1.8 million individuals living in the city. From 1955 to 1960 Detroit lost 25% of its population (Kerr,

67). Individuals moved to areas that were 50% less dense than the city (Gallagher, 42). As a result of population shifts into the suburbs Detroit no longer had the density to support neighborhoods and businesses scattered throughout the city.

The decrease in density left areas of Detroit to become vacant and deteriorate. Vacant buildings are often visually undesirable for individuals passing by and can cause adjacent housing

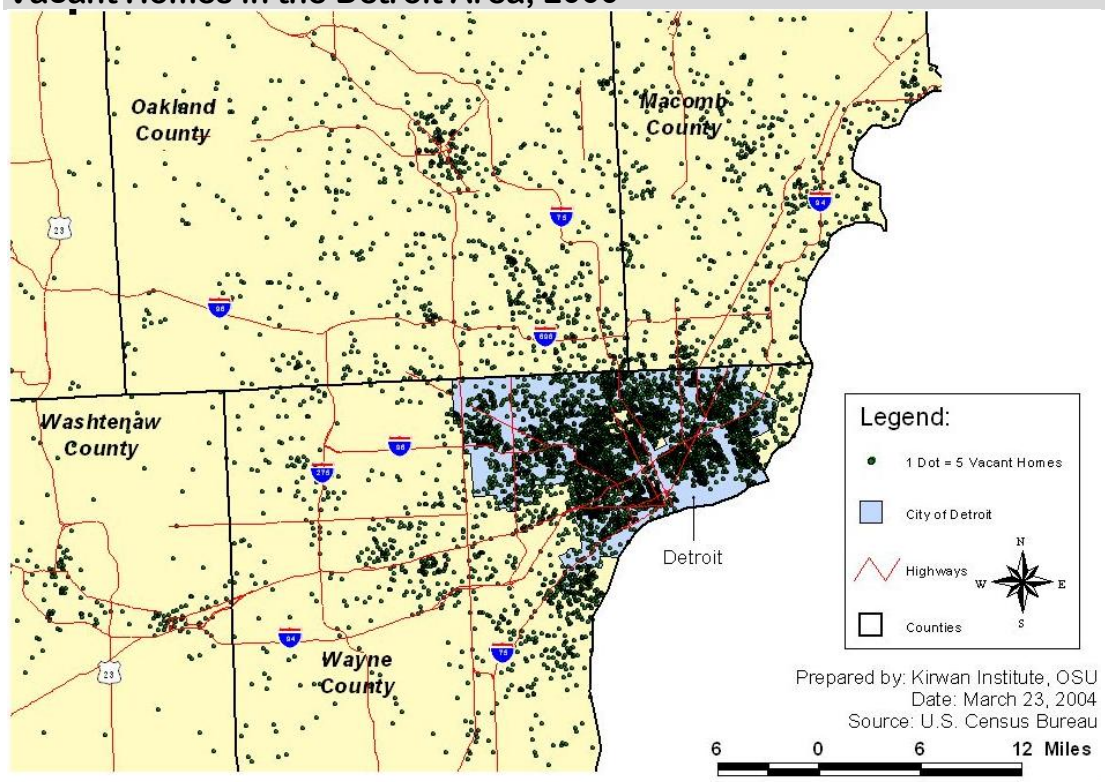


Figure 1. U.S. Census Bureau. Kirwan Institute. 2004

values to decrease. The exact number of vacant properties in Detroit is unclear but the Kirwan Institute compiled data from the 2000 Census and created a map where one dot represents five vacant homes (Figure 1). The map visually represents the vast amount of vacant housing located within and around the city of Detroit. It is estimated that 2,400 structures become newly vacant every year in Detroit (Byles). Detroit has no hope of becoming sustainable until it confronts the fact that it is a shrinking city that may never regain its lost population.

The surplus amount of vacant property and inefficient use of infrastructure pose several challenges and opportunities for the city of Detroit. There are various methods and ideas conceived to meet these challenges needed to right-size the city. In order to encourage development and density in a shrinking city the zoning may have to be altered to meet these demands. For the urban village concept individuals can be encouraged to move into dense areas if amenities and services are in close proximity. Once individuals are located in the village, a small-scale Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) may be initially set up for each village. An UGB would work in urban villages as an "officially adopted and mapped line that separates an urban area from its surrounding greenbelt of open lands, including farms, watersheds and parks". This would discourage growth outside of the village. Another method that could be used to encourage growth in urban villages is zoning for Planned Unit Development (PUD). PUD is a form of land use regulation that allows a variety of mixed uses in a designated area (Appendix B). Zoning for a PUD includes creating a floating overlay district that may be less restrictive than the existing zoning requirements. These types of zoning would help concentrate individuals in an urban village. However, it is likely that there will be individuals living outside of these villages. Areas located outside of villages should be zoned medium density residential. For areas where no development is intended the area "should be changed to a new category — zero-occupancy — and all municipal services cut off" (Rybczynski). These are some feasible ideas yet it is important to keep the planning process flexible in order to accommodate unforeseen change.

An urban village design has the potential to harmonize different neighborhoods in Detroit while enhancing a sense of community. There are several tough questions that first need to be answered including: What do we do with abandoned structures? How do we push individuals into denser areas? Where are the urban villages going to be located? These may be among the first few steps needed to address the issue of shrinkage in Detroit.

3. The Village Solution to Detroit's Infrastructure

The city of Detroit relies on a highly archaic infrastructure system. Designed almost 100 years ago, the Detroit Public Lighting Department is on the verge of ruin. With a massive city-wide distribution system designed to bring utilities to a 140 square mile area, Detroit was once set to keep a thriving city going for generations to come. With an increase in sprawl over the past 50 years, Detroit now has a city-wide system with 40% of the land vacant and scattered throughout the city. From the standpoint of providing basic utilities, this is a complete nightmare.

The facts are simple: it is expensive to provide utility lines that handle the load of 1.8 million people 60 years ago to an area that now holds less than half that. It is also expensive to provide upgrades and routine maintenance for areas when there are little funds available. Therefore the city and utility companies find themselves in a pinch. With the population dispersed in patches through the city and the system failing, it is hard to even find the place to start re-working the system.

The entire utility system is financially supported by customer payments (Appendix C). If a distribution system or substation begins to fail, there may not be enough funds available to fix the issue due to a weak customer base. Utility providers must make the executive decision to fix the issue and raise rates to cover costs, or alternately discontinue service to that area. Urban villages that focus on high density can assist with shifting the current population to concentrated areas within the city. When this occurs, utilities can be provided to these concentrated areas, which can help reduce weak customer base sections of the city and decrease the carrying cost deficits.

Urban villages provide Detroit with a solution to the scattered population issue. Building upon Detroit's strongest neighborhoods, the city can be transformed from a scattered ruin to a series of vibrant, community-oriented areas. With concentrated population, the question of whether or not it will be feasible to fix power stations or water lines will no longer be an issue.

In June of 2000, Detroit suffered a massive blackout due to the failing of two of their three main lines, leaving people stranded on the people mover, stuck in elevators, traffic goers without lights to guide intersections, and vulnerable senior citizens without air conditioning. This is what happens when necessary maintenance is overlooked as a result of not having enough money allocated to fix problems. If people were moved into urban villages, it would become easier to identify existing lines and pipes to be upgraded and which new ones should be added.

Detroit Substation Area

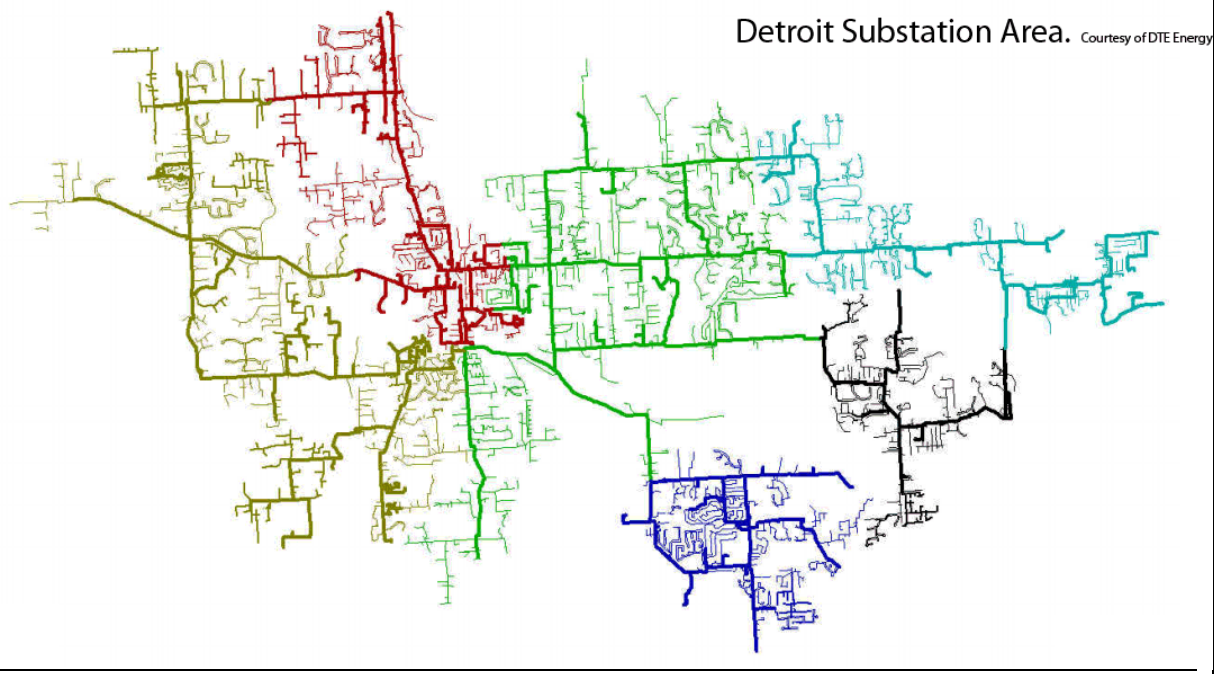


Figure 3. Asgeirsson. DTE Energy. 2009

This DTE Energy substation area map shows that there are some areas where power usage is heavy and others where it is hardly even exists (Figure 3). Looking at this, it is easy to see where the strongest and weakest areas are. The idea of concentrating power to save infrastructure cost and provide a better service not only makes sense, but is necessary to deter further utility outages.

Figure 4 demonstrates the Power Distribution that Detroit is currently using. The data is not scientific, rather it is to serve as an example of how some areas have a great demand for power and others have little. It is a safe assumption that other utilities such as natural gas, water, and even

cable television are going to be similar. In the style of the DTE substation map, the thicker lines represent "main" utilities distribution lines and the thinner lines represent power drawn from those lines. Some areas with multiple green "branches" of utility customers are well served, but others that use little of what can be provided are a waste. This old model does not work. However, by moving to an urban village mode, Detroit can cut down on the number of lines used drastically while distributing the utilities more evenly. This will provide better, more reliable service to the residents. In addition, upgrades and maintenance will not be as expensive and much more feasible.

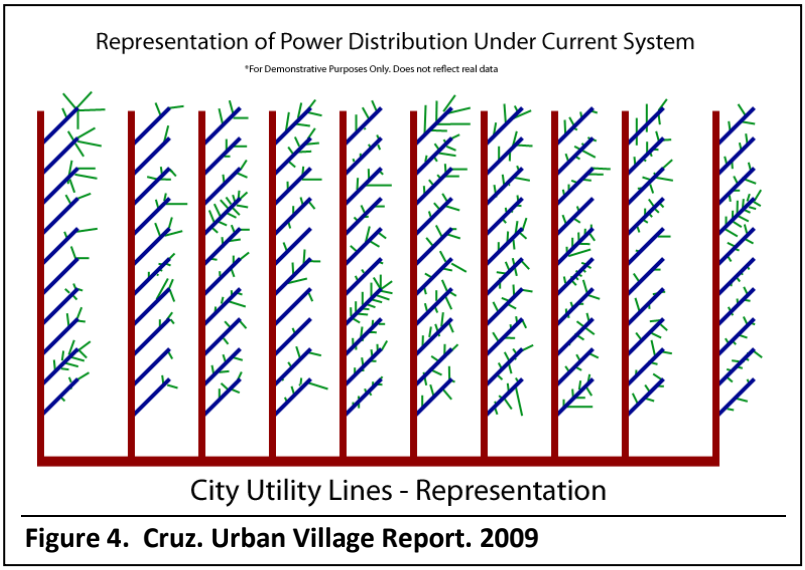


Figure 4. Cruz. Urban Village Report. 2009

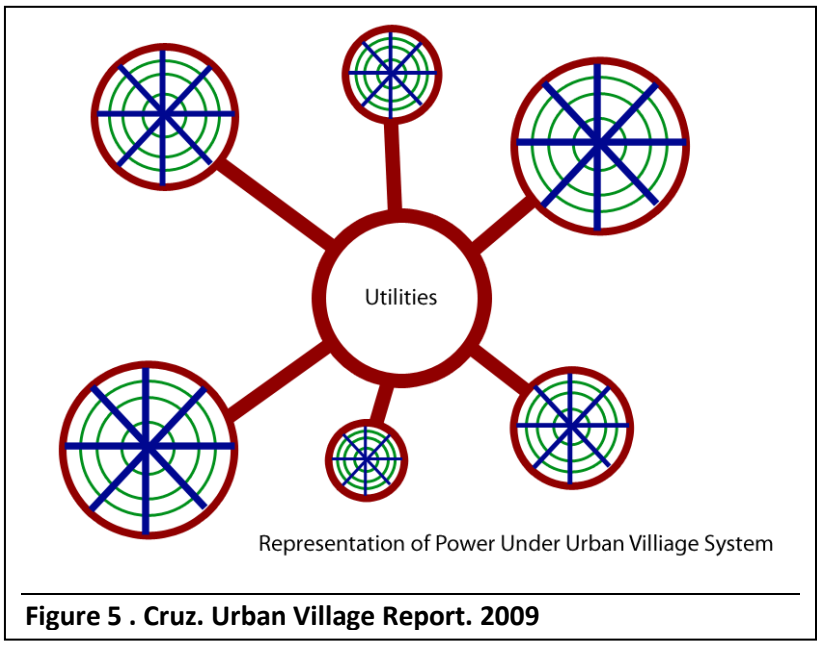


Figure 5 . Cruz. Urban Village Report. 2009

The urban village model would allow each existing substation to serve a "village" area within the City of Detroit (Figure 5). Granted, this is a utopian model and real-life practice will not necessarily provide an evenly distributed model such as the one demonstrated in Figure 5. Using this model as the basis will help create realistic and achievable solutions. Along with the change of infrastructure comes the chance for sustainability.

4. Sustainability and Infrastructure

Despite the fact that 40% of Detroit is vacant land, the land is not being used to its full potential. Lots once used for residential, industrial or other purposes are now vacant or brownfields. While some of this land is being used for positive purposes, such as urban farming and agriculture, much of it is being used as a dumping ground for trash and other waste or just left overgrown. While the image in Figure 6 was taken in a dilapidated east-side neighborhood, it could easily be mistaken for any section of rural America. With population scattered about, the forestry and vacant land is scattered about as well. There is little that can be done with small plots of land in terms of shaping landscape or improving sustainability. More options will be available once the population is consolidated, and open space will become easier to manage.

The urban village model addresses this directly. By shifting population into a series of common areas, unused land will be put to better use. Likewise, lands that have become polluted or brownfields can be better accessed in order to see what measures are necessary for their restoration and future role in the city.



Figure 6. Conveniently Misplaced

With the consolidation of greenspace and residences, a few fundamental issues that add to a sustainable society can be addressed. For example one of these issues would be the need for parks and green spaces within the villages. A city block that today is home to only a few residences could one day be Detroit's own Battery Park. This will help to provide happier, healthier lifestyles for the residents as well as add to the overall property values of the surrounding areas.

With new development also comes the opportunity to incorporate sustainability into the new urban layout. Transportation, economic development and walkability are all part of what can be achieved by giving consideration to sustainable urban planning and development. By moving to the urban village model, Detroit can start to incorporate these features with modern infrastructure.

At the very core of the "sustainable community" school of thought is the ease and ability to maintain infrastructure to sustain and continue (if not improve) Detroit's existing quality of life. Moving population into the village model does not solve the problem completely, but it is a starting point. The help of local organizations will be essential not only in shaping a sustainable landscape, but in keeping the citizens actively involved. Fortunately, many organizations are already working on improving sustainability in Detroit's communities today. The *Greening of Detroit* has been busy planting trees along Jefferson Avenue and continues to look for new opportunities to beautify the city. *Fusion Detroit* is working to get the future leaders of Detroit interested in sustainable communities. *Summer in the City* involves youth volunteers on a regional scale to help make Detroit greener during their summer vacation from school. *Detroit LISC* has been a big supporter of the sustainability efforts as well, taking the stance:

> *"True Sustainable Communities are more than aggregations of green spaces, buildings, and houses lining neighborhood streets. They are, in effect, places where human opportunity and social and economic vitality combine to transform mere physical environments into living spaces where people want to reside, do business, work, worship, and raise families." (Detroit LISC)*

The 20th century saw a sharp rise and fall of the city of Detroit, going from a booming industrial powerhouse to a neglected checkerboard of grey spaces, green spaces and power lines leading to nowhere. Detroit has not prioritized sustainability to date, however with the move to a village system and help from community groups, the city can identify sustainability as an achievable goal. Sustainability will work hand in hand with a new infrastructure system ready to power Detroit in the future.

5. Physical Features of an Urban Village

There are various physical features that create a successful urban village. Urban villages are considered to be compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods that are pleasurable to live and work. These types of places are becoming ever so popular as people have begun to enjoy inner-city living once again and truly appreciate "good urbanism." In an urban village everything you need is within walking distance; amenities like dining, retail, city services, public transportation and recreation to name a few. Places for people to meet and relax are paramount. Everything in an urban village should be easily assessable and accompanied by a reliable transportation system that services the traveling needs of residents. Urban villages contrast from sprawling suburbs where everything is spread apart and land is segregated by different uses. Urban village living is pedestrian-oriented; there is of a sense of community and place, where people are happier and more friendly. An urban village is a pleasurable place to both live and work. In each pocket of the city one can find evidence of this type of cohesion, it is the people of our great city that will need to develop and implement a framework that will move Detroit progressively towards sustainable living.

A. Retail and Dining

There are various advantages to having retail and dining located within an urban village. Primarily, retail and dining supports the needs of residents – from clothing to groceries to eating a meal. Secondly, retail and dining caters to others visiting the village – from employees of neighboring businesses to eventually those that travel to the village to shop and dine. There are varying levels of retail and dining for many urban villages. In a small village supported only by neighborhood residents, the demand will fall primarily on basic needs such as a grocery store, pharmacy, convenience store, basic restaurants such as cafés, diners, family restaurants, and in this day and age, a fast-food restaurant. In larger areas supported by anchor institutions with a high

level of employees, the demand for specialized retail varying from clothing, shoes, hats, antiques, furniture and souvenirs. Dining options will also encompass more restaurants specializing in different ethnic cuisines and price points.

Many of Detroit's neighborhoods are underserved for retail options. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) suggests a ten principle approach for rebuilding neighborhood retail (Appendix D). The report suggests that for a neighborhood to prosper, a group or individual must have a vested interest in improving the area. The ULI also addresses the fact that in many neighborhoods with poor commercial districts, the same market conditions that originally caused the decline continues to exist today. For this reason, it is important to have a commitment between both the private and public sector to maintain efforts on revitalization for the long-term sustainability in retail. This addresses the issue of keeping a clean, safe, and friendly area surrounding the commercial district even if the neighborhood as a whole is in transition.

Retail follows residential stability and growth. Therefore, it is important to center growth in and around already stable neighborhoods. Promoting retail and dining growth in such areas should provide an attractive place for new occupants as well as retain current residents.

Different forms of retail require different levels of residential population, pedestrian traffic, vehicular traffic, and workers in their trade area. For instance, a convenience store such as 7-Eleven requires ½-mile radius of 5000 residents per square mile for freestanding sites (7-Eleven.com). While a 7-Eleven may not be the major retail tenant that people think of when envisioning an urban village, it is important to note that their locations are based off a careful analysis of the surrounding area. It is also important to note that retail stores do not have to be developed in the cookie cutter suburban style and can be adapted to fit multiple building styles.

B. Leisure Activity

Leisure activity refers to time spent away from domesticated activities, such as work or school. Leisure activities vary depending on what the individual enjoys. Leisure activity is important and valuable for residents and cities because it provides an opportunity to partake in activities and enjoy unique experiences that create a sense of place. Urban villages often incorporate leisurely activities that contribute to the overall character of the community. Leisure activities are often unique to the specific area and can attract visitors from outside the village and city.

Like many cities, most of Detroit's nightlife and leisure activities exist in the city's downtown district. The city has great downtown sporting venues, and parks such as Belle Isle and Chene Park. Areas such as Hart Plaza and Campus Martius also act as leisurely locations where numerous events are held throughout the year. Detroit is also home to the second largest theatre district in the United States, including the Fox Theatre, the Opera House, Masonic Temple Theatre, Orchestra Hall, and the Fillmore Theatre. Detroit's Midtown area, known as the cultural center, is host to the Detroit Arts festival as well as the Detroit Institute of the Arts, Detroit Science Center, Detroit Historical Museum, Museum of African American History, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit and the Detroit Public Library. Cultural locations often become the site for leisure activity. Mexicantown is an example of a leisure site that is home to venues for entertainment, restaurants, shops and clubs. Overall leisure activity is necessary to create a third place in an urban village where individuals can "hang out" in between work and home.

C. Walkability

Walkability is a key feature of an urban village and is used to determine how easily an individual can walk from point A to point B. Walkability provides a variety of benefits including: accessibility, consumer cost savings, public cost savings (reduced external costs), more efficient land use, community livability, improved fitness and public health, economic development, and

support for equity objectives (Littman). Walkabilty is an essential component for urban villages as it increases social interaction and reduces gas emissions.

In order to benefit a pedestrian's experience traffic speeds need to be lowered, street width should be reduced, one-way streets should be changed to two-way, street parking increased, and large boulevards should contain pedestrian-friendly islands to ease crossing. Detroit could benefit by providing walkable communities in urban villages. Walkability will allow individuals to rely on their feet or public transit rather than an automobile in order to get around the village or city. Due to the density and close proximity to stores and businesses residents may find it easier and more enjoyable to walk down the street to pick up a few items for dinner. With an increased number of individuals walking along the sidewalks and additional eyes upon the street there will be an increased sense of safety.

D. Density

Density is defined as the number of individuals living within a defined area. One of the main objections in creating urban villages is encouraging a dense population that can support businesses, services, infrastructure, etc. Chosen villages may need to be rezoned as medium or high density residential and mixed use. Allowing higher density in urban villages may be the first step in encouraging concentrated growth and redevelopment. An urban village cannot create density out of thin air. There has to be desired physical and social attributes located within a village in order for individuals to locate there. Concentrating populations in villages will encourage infill development and in turn there will be less vacant and deteriorated land in the area. Vacant land outside of villages could be combined and readapted into a greenbelt for example. A declining population would no longer have such tremendous affects on sustainability for Detroit. As mentioned in Section 3 directing services into villages may also persuade individuals to live in dense locations.

E. Mixed Use and Residential

The Detroit region must be a place where everyone - regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. - has the opportunity to thrive. This is not only a moral imperative but an economic imperative as well. Regional success occurs where diversity of opportunity exists. Attention must be paid to these troubling indicators of inequality and opportunity isolation that plague the city, region, and state. Therefore, mixed income housing is important when considering the residential factors to incorporate into urban villages.

When identifying urban villages it is important to look at the market analysis. Analysis should be considered for population growth (or lack thereof) along with the identification of target markets that would be attracted to living in dense areas. Groups that may be drawn to living in these types of areas would be young single professionals or married couples with no kids, and retirees. Also, high density is another factor that must be incorporated into the residential component of urban villages in a city like Detroit.

Mixed housing includes lofts, townhouses, apartments and condos. Multiple uses are also important. A mix of retail and residential uses will turn the area into a "24 hour city" where offices are active during the weekday and housing keeps the area busy in the evening and weekends. Mixed uses are very important in attracting individuals to live in a village setting. Walkability and convenience of close proximity shopping are key residential qualities that will attract buyers into an urban village.

> *"Town centers and urban villages must be more than a brand name. They must connect with people at an emotional level and must be perceived by the community as belonging to it. The integration of multiple uses creates the diverse urban character that people identify with and enjoy." (Gupta and Terzano, 59*)

F. Public Transportation

Public transportation is a necessary physical feature in the design of an urban village. Public transit comes in various forms including buses, light rail and trolleys. A light rail system would be

an efficient method of linking urban villages located throughout the city. Public transportation would also discourage the use of an automobile and in turn create a more energy efficient alternative. Taking public transportation will also be more affordable than paying for gas, insurance and maintenance for an automobile. Individuals may further be encouraged to walk to transit stops and jump on bus or tram that takes him/her to work across the city or into the suburbs. A transit system that crossed into the metropolitan area would further encourage regionalism and rider usage.

Detroit does operate a light rail in the downtown region called the 'People Mover.' The People Mover is an inefficient mode of transportation since it only services a 2.9 mile area and travels in a circle around the downtown and does not easily link to the remainder of the city. The city's main source of transportation is the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT). DDOT is the major bus transit carrier in Southeastern Michigan as well as the largest transit carrier in the entire state of Michigan. Along with the DDOT buses, are the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) buses. SMART is the suburban bus system that primarily provides service outside the city; however, some routes travel through the city (Appendix E).

G. Anchors

Anchors are an important factor in stabilizing neighborhoods and cities. Anchors can be defined as large institutions or businesses of sorts that serve as major employers for the area. Local anchors may also provide social benefits such as affordable housing or urban farms. Anchors may include universities, hospitals, retail districts, parks, community organizations and churches. It is important that urban villages have anchors that will promote the success and sustainability of the area. Anchors have the ability to draw people into an area and as a result create "spill over" into adjacent businesses. Anchors may also have some type of investment in the area that encourages its longevity. For example Wayne State University owns property outside the campus boundaries. These sites were redeveloped and now serve local communities.

6. Social Context of Urban Villages

A. Immigration

Typically, people tend to surround themselves with others that share the same values. Commonly this is found in pockets of the city where immigrants settle. When individuals move to a new country and are faced with many uncertainties a support network is very important. Therefore, if there is already a concentration of foreign-born residents in a particular area other natives of that country will tend to gravitate to those settled areas.

B. Sense of Community

A sense of place is a power psychological tool that is very important for an urban village. Sense of community is related to the social characteristics that need to exist for a successful village. When there is a sense of community people will care more about the state of their neighborhood.

C. Mixed Income

An urban village will offer a diversity of residential units. It is important for a community not to concentrate wealth or poverty but rather have a distribution of income levels throughout the village. This can be done by creating a variety of residential housing. By providing affordable housing and mixed income units, lower income families may have better access to services as well as a strong voice in community building.

D. Community Involvement

A key element for the success in planning an urban village or proposing changes to existing villages is civic engagement. This is particularly important in a city like Detroit where the residents are constantly pummeled with negative images of leadership as well as dismal media portrayals of Detroit that flood the televisions, the internet and newspapers on a daily basis. Therefore, it is very important to engage citizens so that they can establish trust with the process of development as well as develop a personal commitment to the success of their community. For example, both Corktown and Mexicantown have neighborhood groups that oversee much of the economic and physical

development that takes place in their respective areas. Communities can also be highly valuable constituents for the urban planners. "Community members have knowledge of what will work and not work and can suggest changes for improvement. Also, reaching consensus through an extensive public process can prevent lawsuits and the associated delays, attorney's fees, and general frustration" (Faga, 235).

7. Case Studies

Detroit is currently in the process of re-establishing itself as a more livable community. Major objectives for the city include planning and spurring new development, promoting an overall sense of place, and examining successful projects from cities such as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington. The case studies provide feasible ideas that can be used in the creation of villages throughout Detroit.

A. SouthSide Works, Pittsburgh

SouthSide Works, Pittsburgh, PA
Town Center/ Urban Village on a Redevelopment Site
http://www.southsideworks.com/
37.2 Acres
Land Use:
Office 524,860 Sq. Feet
Retail 288,143 Sq. Feet
Residential 83 Units
Total Cost: $208,700,000

SouthSide Works was designed to complement the historic fabric of the adjacent neighborhoods in both scale and building materials. The city of Pittsburgh is also attempting to reposition its economy as postindustrial and focus on economic development efforts to retain young people, knowledge workers, and other members of the "creative class." The project was a public private partnership between Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the Soffer Organization – who won the development rights to the parcel in 1996. The site was developed to complement the historic neighborhoods that surround the area. The site attracts many users and contains a variety of "third places" such as a cinema, bookstore and coffee shops.

> *"SouthSide Works is a pedestrian-orientated urban village that consists of retail shops, restaurants, offices, apartments, and a cinema that are orientated around a*

> *central square and a landscaped open space in Pittsburgh's historic South Side neighborhood. Located on a 37.2-acre brownfield redevelopment site that is approximately 1.5 miles from Pittsburgh's central business district (CBD) and that had previously been occupied by an LTV Steel mill, the project extends the scale of a vibrant historic neighborhood to the city's underused riverfront, while incorporating ample green space."(Gupta and Terzano, 176)*

Detroit is also trying to reposition its economy from a post manufacturing state. Detroit has many feasible brownfield sites and certainly plenty of square footage to accommodate a project similar to SouthSide Works. The intent of SouthSide Works would be feasible in an area around Midtown Detroit or in close proximity to Wayne State University and the medical anchors of Detroit. The case example of SouthSide Works resonates well with the "15 by 15" plan of Detroit whose strategic goal is to attract the "creative class" to move into the city.

Features of SouthSide Urban Villages
Neo-traditional concept
Project was designed to complement the extant historic neighborhoods
Mixed use
Office space houses university research and spin-off companies
Intended to serve "creative class"
Businesses ranging from
Fine dining
Retail
Antique shops
Tattoo parlors

B. Seattle, Washington

The city of Detroit must recognize the need for more open space and green space in its urban core areas, which in turn can promote pedestrian activity and recreation. The city of Detroit has the fortune of being able to model such plans on other major U.S. cities to determine how they provide this necessary space. Seattle was one of these cities that developed a comprehensive land use plan to promote open space within the city; they did this in 1994. The main initiative of the plan included creating open space through public and privatized underused land in the city; with a goal of development in these areas and also urban villages.

The city of Seattle puts a large focus on open space, and greenways to keep most of the thirty-eight urban villages close in proximity. The city itself defines open space as areas used for recreation, wildlife habitat, growing food, or simply a place for quiet contemplation; many residents also consider open space as a cultural resource.

The city of Seattle has a citywide goal of one acre of "breathing room" open space for every 100 citizens. According to the city's "Department of Planning" Seattle's Comprehensive Plan: Reports on Growth, "the plan has goals to provide at least one acre of usable open space for every 1,000 households within urban villages and open space within an eighth to a quarter of a mile of residents in urban villages." In November of 2000, Seattle residents took a majority vote to create new parks and open spaces. This included $26 million for park acquisitions, $100 million for the development of new and existing parks, and the transformation of underutilized city-owned properties into park space and new urban villages.

Since 1994, Seattle had acquired 461 acres of open space for parks, community gardens and green spaces. This in turn would link various communities together through alleys of connectivity known as greenways. In addition, the city currently had 12 acres of community gardens or P-patches, including 10 gardens that had opened earlier in 1994. The comprehensive plan draws on the cohesive efforts that the city created to solidify its urban villages; creating more home ownership, better avenues of recreation and more safety for its residents.

Public participation in the development of the city's comprehensive plan is another way that Seattle encouraged the inclusion of village communities. The city views citizen involvement as a way of taking responsibility for the larger community and understanding that individuals have the power to change the community for the better. Seattle's comprehensive growth efforts have provided various programs and opportunities for residents to get involved and participate in the development of the community. There are also a significant number of non-profit organizations that connect volunteers to areas that have the need for more developmental assistance

An important element of defining an urban village within the city of Seattle was the number of home ownership and safety factors, that were vital for continued growth. The plan promotes home ownership in order to foster a sense of community, investment in housing, and minimizing the

displacement of low-income residents due to gentrification. The city also has an overt interest in protecting the quality of housing whether occupied or unoccupied to maintain attractive and livable neighborhoods; keeping neighborhoods suitable for continued growth.

As illustrated in Figure 7, Seattle has set very proactive efforts to build upon its comprehensive plan. In studying the diagram it can be seen that the number of home ownership went up in various areas from 1999-2000; mainly in areas close to recreational lands such as parks and other types of open spaces. The numbers are expected to increase as the city adopts more programs and development strategies to reclaim land available for development. In order to focus on future growth, consistent with the urban village strategy, Seattle has limited higher density zoning designations to urban centers and urban villages. It has promoted movement throughout the city towards lower densities by providing a patchwork of villages linked by greenways. The city adopted six strategic requirements as the basis for establishing urban villages and area boundaries.

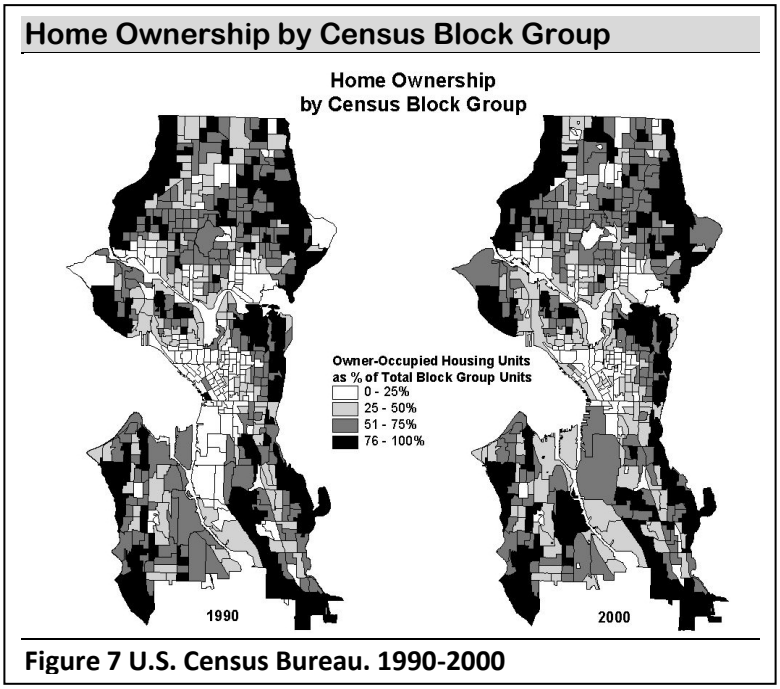


Figure 7 U.S. Census Bureau. 1990-2000

- Areas defined by a strong historical, cultural, geographic, or business relationships
- Natural or built barriers (e.g., major topography change)
- Manageable size of area, manageable complexity of issues for resources available
- Generally agreed upon neighborhood boundaries
- The Urban Village Strategy
- The appropriateness of the area for the issues being addressed in the plan

C. Portland, Oregon

Portland Oregon is another U.S. city where planning ventures have been extremely successful in re-shaping the development of the city. In determining the various pockets of the city of Detroit, we divided the city into various geographical sections to illustrate the various styles of living; this helped the group to decide exactly what elements to incorporate as a village theme in the city of Detroit. The areas were divided into regional sections such as southwest, southeast, northwest, northeast, etc.

The city of Portland is often cited as an example of successful regional governance and planning. The city is divided into five areas which include north, northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest, the diversity extends past those boundaries as each pocket has its own distinct flavor making the city specialized as a exemplary planning community. Another important element about Portland is the inter-connectivity of the city with its suburbs, which is paramount in establishing sustainability.

The residents of Portland value what their city has to offer; plentiful shopping areas, entertainment, services and amenities within walking distance. Portlanders appreciate being able to "do errands on foot" and "walk to everything they need" is seen as the main vehicle of livability that makes the city "warm, neighborly, and convenient." As a premier city of planning, people want to see the many pedestrian paths, bridges and sidewalks increased as walkability is a very important element in the continued success in the city for being considered a modern urban village. The downtown district of the city is nearly all



Figure 8. Varied Distribution of Green Space and Connectivity of Neighborhoods in Portland

walkable and accessible which lends way for greater pedestrian access to and along the Willamette River. Portland wanted to build up its amount of green space in order to create connectivity between the city, the villages and the entire region.

As the city of Portland redeveloped its infrastructure, it began to draw a larger population base because of the higher standards of living it afforded its residents and by the creation of its urban villages. The city was able to develop each area in different ways in order to cater to specific population densities. Portland also managed to incorporate smart growth in the creation of many of its villages**.** As the greater Portland metropolitan population area is expected to double in the next few years the city has also become a leading authority on reducing sprawl, according to "Moving to Portland" by Susan Mathens, "Perhaps no city in the United States is cited as often as Portland for progressive anti-sprawl works and measures".

The city of Portland took on a specific vision for revitalizing its communities. According to an article published in Smart Growth Online regarding revitalization initiative projects in the city of Portland dealing with buildings and other abandoned, and or brownfield structures.

> *"This project is about the preservation of a building, a community and a vital urban neighborhood. Creating a mix of new retail and residential space contributes to the value of livability of the entire community."*
> *(Thomas Badrick, President, Sunnyside Neighborhood Association)*

Piedmont is a perfect example of urban village cohesion as it is a popular urban village boasting easy access to other popular neighborhoods such as Humboldt, Alberta, Arbor Lodge, Boise, Eliot and Kenton to name a few. Piedmont neighbors the interstate *Max Rail* train allowing for convenient commuting between the area and downtown Portland and other neighborhoods. The downtown district is less than 5 minutes by car, by bike is about 20-25 minutes; Interstate 5 runs directly alongside of Piedmont. The area of Piedmont is also home to one of the oldest parks in the Pacific Northwest, Peninsula Park. The beautiful park is prized by locals and painstakingly maintained by them as well, the park helped Portland to coin the name as the "City of Roses."

Much like Seattle, the city of Portland has incorporated its own strategic requirements per the success of its urban villages:

- Compacting the design of a cityscape
- Smaller city blocks
- The small to medium-size buildings that do not block the sky or tower over pedestrians
- The design of the park blocks and how they are incorporated into the design of the city, providing linkages
- The riverfront and its walking trails

In creating Portland's villages, the city focused its northwest section as a trendy, shopping district; it was once considered to be unsafe after dark but has since become a stylish safer neighborhood. The area in Detroit that this could be compared to is the Midtown and New Center areas. The southwest section of the city of Portland is comprised of high-rise buildings, various local dining and other small amenities, which would be comparable to the emergence of a more lively downtown area in Detroit; with dining establishments and theatre becoming part of the canvas of recreational events including Campus Martius Park.

North Portland is an area that delivers diverse businesses and freelance artwork on the sides of semi-rundown buildings. Detroit's closest area of compatibility would be the eastside district just west of the Historic Indian Village where the Heidelberg Project has become a popular tourist attraction and various types of businesses are spurring up from resale shops, to clothing stores. Portland's northeast side marks an area of gentrification, where neighborhood associations have become common. The southwest section of Portland showcases nice homes and plentiful shopping incorporating walkability as the main mode of transportation, which is comparable to Detroit's northwest side and the Livernois Corridor, which opens to the many quaint shops and restaurants in Ferndale; all very walkable and promoting this interconnectivity between city and suburbs.

8. Detroit Initiatives

Detroit has begun to make strides in the area of redeveloping its neighborhoods and communities, as well as the infrastructure that the city was built upon. The city is under a new governing board, and new development options are being explored. The city has adopted concepts that have worked in other U.S. cities that will hopefully attract and maintain residents to the city. According to an article published by the National Housing Institute's ROOFLINES Publication, a group of planners and NHI researcher Allan Mallach visited Detroit to examine the city's vacant space and make recommendations on how to organize the city better for the future. The article addresses the conclusion of how the planner's vision would affect the city and promote a more village like atmosphere within the city's communities:

> "*The team proposed relocating many of the city's far-flung residents, who live in Small, highly distressed residential pockets amid a sea of weedy vacancy, into urban villages. As these villages are developed the rest of the city should be designated for agricultural or recreational purposes, they said Corridors would connect the Urban Villages and give residents access to the open spaces" (Allan Mallach)*

It is also important to explore projects and initiatives that are currently occurring throughout Detroit. These initiatives can help define what is already being done in Detroit and provide a basis for positioning local urban villages.

A. Midtown, Detroit

The Midtown area of Detroit is a special area within the City of Detroit. It has clearly defined boundaries due to the surrounding freeways. Although the New Center Area is often grouped with Midtown, Midtown is located north and west of I-75, south of I-94, and east of M-10. Woodward Ave is the major corridor running through the middle of Midtown, connecting it to the central business district (CBD) of Detroit to the south, New Center directly to the north, and as far north as Pontiac.

Midtown is home to many cultural, medical, and educational facilities that the City of Detroit has to offer. Midtown is home to Wayne State University (WSU), the College for Creative Studies, and branches of both Michigan State University and the University of Michigan. It is home to the Detroit Medical Center (DMC) and the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center. Midtown is also home to various museums and concert halls. The major organizations within Midtown provide over 15,000 full-time jobs, nearly 5000 part-time jobs, and over 34000 students of higher learning – undergraduate, graduate, and medical students. (UCCA)

Currently, New Center is home to Detroit's Amtrak station, which supports a handful of passenger trains each day. There will soon be a commuter line running daily between Ann Arbor and Detroit; and future plans to expand the system to include commuter trains from as far as Pontiac to the north. This rail-based transportation is planned to link into one of two proposed mass transportation developments to run on Woodward Avenue. The developments are proposed to be either light-rail transit (LRT) or streetcars. The LRT line will run from the CBD to Eight Mile – the northern border of Detroit. The streetcar proposal will run from New Center to the CBD. Regardless of which development comes to fruition, Midtown is poised to receive an influx of transportation-oriented development (TOD) around the transit stops.

Midtown is positioned to be the most vibrant area in the entire metropolitan Detroit area. It currently meets nearly all of the urban village features and there are major development plans currently underway. Most notably is the "15:15 Strategy" aimed at attracting and retaining 15,000 new, young, talented people to live and work in the greater downtown Detroit area by 2015. The 15:15 Strategy is an effort supported by the Hudson Webber Foundation, local and national philanthropic groups, and the city's largest anchor institutions – WSU, DMC, and Henry Ford Health System (in New Center).

The City of Detroit has a disproportionately low number of young, college-educate residents; and in eight to ten years employment opportunities in the city will dramatically increase as roughly half of its major employers' college-educated employees will retire (Hudson Webber Foundation). Midtown finds itself in a perfect storm. Major developments ranging from mass transportation, educational and medical improvements and expansions, and philanthropic efforts to transform the area provide Midtown Detroit with more resources than anywhere else in the metropolitan region.

Only time will tell if Midtown will develop into a 24-hour major urban center. At this point, Midtown offers more cultural resources, and is receiving more financial resources for development, than anywhere else in the metropolitan region. Its success will not be judged on meeting lofty goals of 15,000 new residents by 2015, but by incremental improvements and organizations working together to develop Midtown under one common vision.

B. Neighborhood Stabilization Plan, Detroit

The Detroit Neighborhood Stabilization Program Plan (NSP) is a strategy for effectively utilizing and implementing federal funds made available through the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. Congress enacted the Act in July 2008 in response to the national foreclosure and subprime lending crisis. Its purpose is to address the impacts of foreclosures in the hardest hit communities, foster market recovery, and stabilize neighborhoods. Out of the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas, Detroit recorded the highest number of foreclosed properties at over 67,000 – 65% of which are still vacant. Detroit's allocation is $47 million out of the $3.92 billion made available through the Act.

The NSP was founded in order to strategically utilize the funds to stabilize neighborhoods hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis, devise proactive remedies for anticipated future foreclosure activity, and to foster market recovery for enhanced quality of life. Approximately 30% of the

allocated money will be used for demolition activity. Areas adjacent to new developments and blighted, vacant properties will receive demolition priority. By concentrating these efforts on target neighborhoods, rather than on the city as a whole, the opportunity for sustained impact is significantly higher.

Neighborhood Stabilization Plan- Target Areas in Detroit

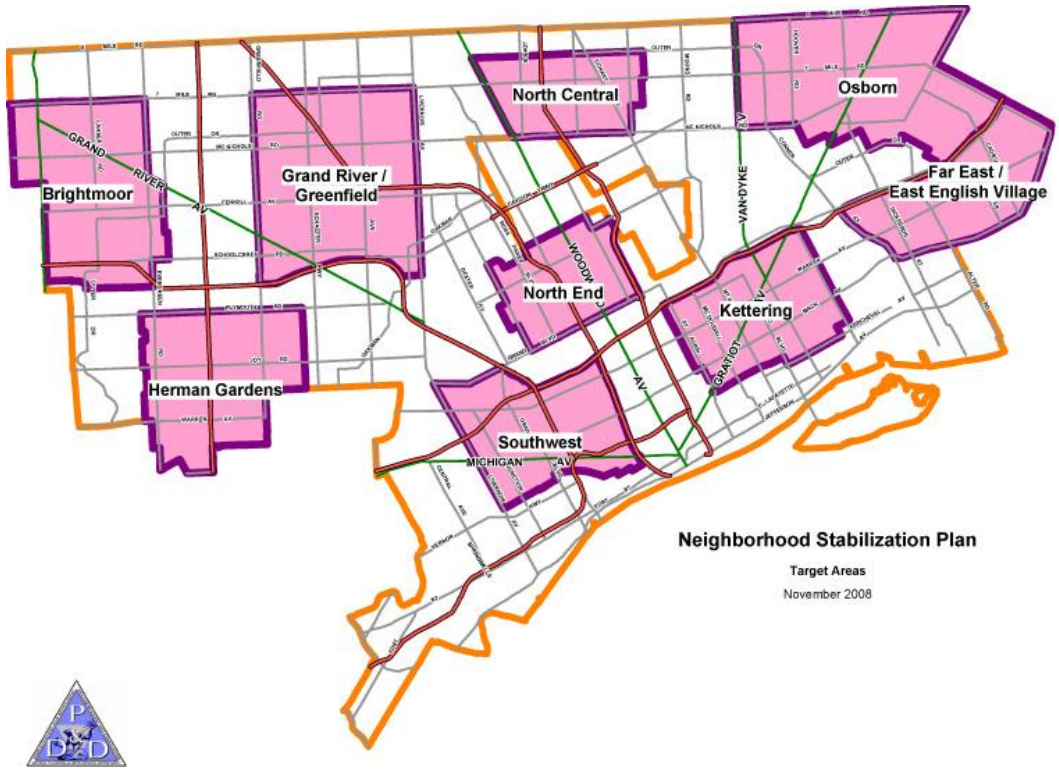


Figure 9 Neighborhood Stabilization Plan. 2008

The targeted neighborhoods identified by NSP are Brightmoor, Grand River/Greenfield, Herman Gardens, Southwest, North End, North Central, Osborn, Far East/East English Village, and Kettering (Figure 9).

- In Brightmoor, the NSP funds will focus on the demolition of vacant units for future land use; and they will be used to stabilize residential areas near the more stable Grandmont – Rosedale neighborhood.

- In the Far East/East English Village area, the NSP funds will be used strategically to aid in acquisition and rehabilitation efforts where a modest investment can have a major impact.

- In the Grand River/Greenfield area, funds will be used for spot demolition and to aid in acquisition and rehabilitation efforts to reverse the decline in housing values. It is noted that there has already been significant investment for commercial uses on multiple corridors within the area to improve the business district and to stabilize the housing stock.

- The Herman Gardens area is home to an old public housing site bearing the same name. The NSP's focus is to stabilize the surrounding area to ensure the success of the proposed Garden View Estates while concurrently improving the surrounding neighborhoods.

- Addressing blight through concentrated demolition is the primary focus for Kettering. Vacant land will also be assembled for future land uses.

- NSP's efforts in the North Central will focus on rehabilitating vacate homes to attract homebuyers to an area near the proposed Shoppes at Gateway Park retail development located at Eight Mile and Woodward.

- In the North End, NSP will focus on maintaining stabilization in the historic Boston Edison district. Funds will also assist demolition and land assembly for future development in the surrounding neighborhoods.

- In Osborn, one of the few areas in the city to experience population growth, NSP funds will assist spot demolition, stabilize troubled communities, and protect disadvantaged children in the area.

The NSP's strategically targeted neighborhoods align with many of our proposed urban villages. This commonality suggests that these areas are not only prime for such development, but also that the City of Detroit realizes the potential within many of their communities and is willing to do their part to improve said areas.

C. RiverWalk, Detroit

In Detroit the concept of "Green City's" has become very important in the city and incorporating it in its urban infrastructure, and of course on a global scale. Detroit is redeveloping its underused land; turning it into green spaces and clustering it along established communities within the city. In June of 2007 the first 3.5 miles of a 5.5 promenade known as the Detroit RiverWalk opened. The path runs from the Ambassador Bridge to Belle Isle, and is situated directly along the river. The RiverWalk is 62 feet (18 ¾ m) wide in most places, it has enough space to accommodate lanes for pedestrian and wheeled traffic such as bicycles and skating

recreation. Located at different intervals are fishing piers, benches, and pavilions which, offer scenic views of the riverfront.

As part of the design, the RiverWalk promotes recreation and a sort of "greenway" in the midst of a bustling downtown area. The eastern portion of the walk links various riverfront developments, including Hart Plaza, the Renaissance Center, GM Plaza and Promenade; it also provides a connection with Tri-Centennial State Park, which is a very scenic park that has a plethora of seating and green space all within minutes of downtown Detroit. Rivard Plaza features covered seating, free parking, a carousel, and beautiful cityscapes along with butterfly gardens and bike rental. The RiverWalk is an urban design that was created to supplement new retail and encourage new downtown residential development; the plan includes a west walk that will link the downtown area with many downriver communities such as River Rouge. Since the creation of the RiverWalk, various dining establishments have been built. The area has also become a major connector of downtown pedestrian traffic and promotes walkability and tourist activity that boost the local economy within the city.



Figure 10. Detroit River Walk. *Detroitves.com*

9. Urban Village Sites

A. Feasibility

Highly Feasible Level I

The area is already very successful and contains a majority of the physical and social characteristics of a village. Small additions could be made which would be low cost and developed in the short term less than 6 months.

Mid Level Feasibility Level II

The area is strong but would need improvements to infrastructure. Cost would be mid level and the improvements could be made within the next five years due to time of planning.

Low Feasibility Level III

The area is weak in terms of "community" and the infrastructure would need to be mostly rebuilt. The costs would be high and the projected outcome would be five years and beyond. We would not recommend these areas unless improvements had already been made in Level I and II areas.

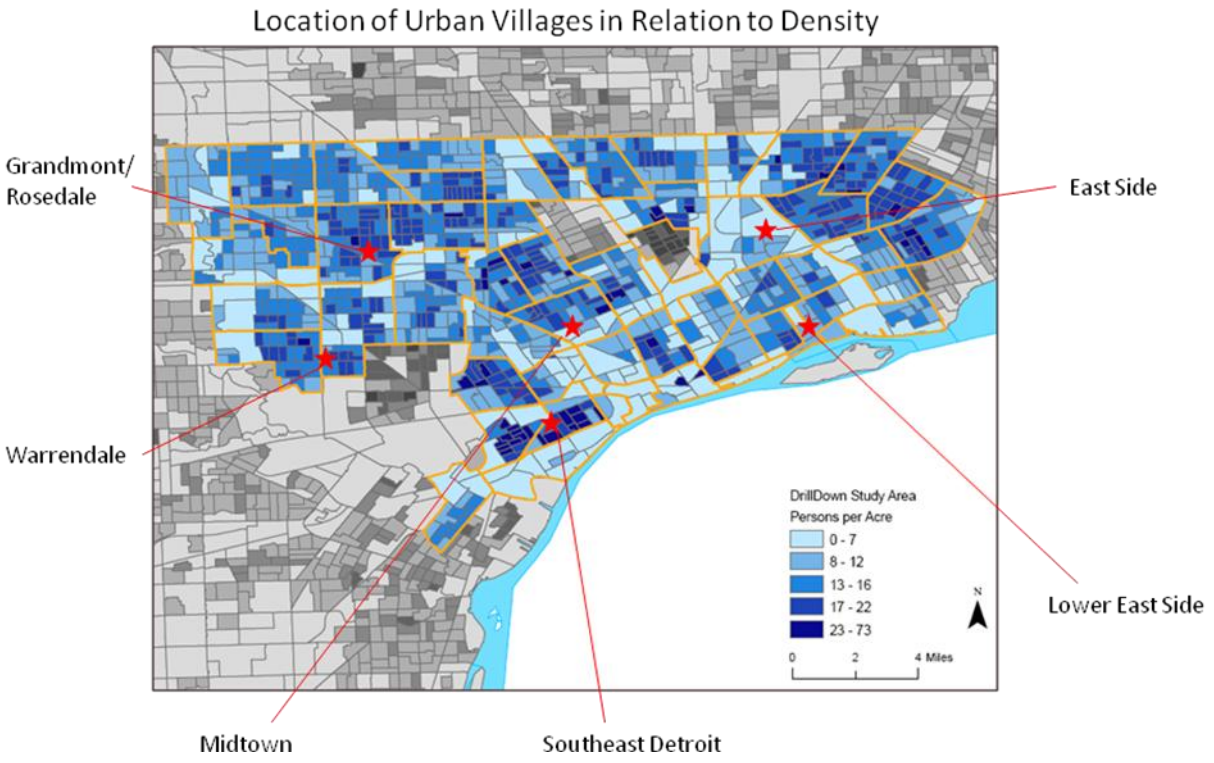


Figure 11. DEGC. Density Map

B. Southwest Detroit

Feasibility: Level I

In proposing an urban village site in the city of Detroit, the southwest side is perhaps one of the best places to begin. The area has many abandoned building and brownfield sites that could be redeveloped into small businesses, public space, and or residential dwellings. The city could model such development on many of Portland's structures that were revitalized to create places that people

wanted to utilize rather than building entirely new structures. Many of the older structures offer a sense of culture and place that cannot be captured with the building blocks of the new era. The abundance of land in Southwest Detroit is very plentiful as many vacancies are present. There is also prime real estate along the Detroit River that could be developed much like Figure 8 detailed Portland and its riverfront development's various means of connectivity. It is also important to point out that Detroit's waterway serves to be an international boundary that could increase trade in the city through tourism dollars and immigration, and spur a diverse variety of new development.

As the city of Detroit continues to build upon these and other development ventures, the city will eventually inherit more solidified urban villages and or pockets that are sustainable for its residents that can compare to the city's notable communities like "Sherwood Forest, Rosedale Park, and Lafayette Park" The city is moving forward toward the notion of sustainability and cohesiveness as communities become closer-knit and surpass traditional boundaries.

Mexicantown

The Mexicantown area of Southwest Detroit would be a prime location for an urban village. The area has a large concentration of immigrants who take pride in their community and therefore work to keep it safe and economically viable. The support networks found here are very strong which is what makes it one of the safest neighborhoods in the Detroit area. Mexicantown is densely populated which adds to its appeal and has a strong network of schools. The area is very walkable, particularly Vernor Avenue, which stretches for miles and contains a mix of businesses – many of which are independent, self-sustaining, family owned operations.



Figure 12. Mexican Town. Sandlin. 2009

Its vast amount of much diversity, walkability, shopping and dining — as well as its close proximity to Downtown businesses and Dearborn's shopping — makes Southwest Detroit a livable neighborhood, at a scale that is uncommon most anywhere else in Metro Detroit. West Vernor is remarkably walkable. In fact, on Saturdays and Sundays, cars become second-class citizens slowed to a crawl due to the many people out and about on foot. Southwest Detroit is growing fast. Immigrants, primarily from Mexico but also from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the Middle East, are flocking to the area creating a vibrant mix of people and an energy that is visible every day on its "Main Street," West Vernor.

Nowhere else in the metro area does Latino culture dominate. The sheer number of people in the area has inspired community groups, small businesses and even the auto industry to keep raising the bar on what is possible for the Mexicantown. Statistically, it has one of the lowest crime rates of any Detroit neighborhood. It is also the most densely populated and the one with the most densely developed commercial districts in the city (University of Michigan School of Public Policy).

Corktown

The city's oldest neighborhood, founded in 1834 by Irish immigrants, has had its challenges, yet through it all Corktown has remained one of Detroit's most stable neighborhoods. When the Major League's Detroit Tigers left the corner of Michigan and Trumbull in 1999, many feared it would mean the end for this neighborhood. But loyalty, community pride and tradition persevered. "That sense of neighborhood pride saved Corktown when we were at a point of losing a lot of our housing" says Kelli Kavanaugh, a longtime community activist who has lived in Corktown for several years. Many people — now the third or fourth generations of the area's Irish and Maltese immigrants — live in the homes they grew up in or have stuck around in the neighborhood, says Jim Brunell, a resident who lives half a block away from his dad. However, Corktown is also home

to a diverse population. The 2000 census portrays the neighborhood as 50.3 percent white, 35.2 percent black, and 24.3 percent Hispanic or Latino (of any race). Last year, the Detroit News cited Corktown as one of the two most racially balanced neighborhoods in metro Detroit.



Figure 13 Sandlin. Corktown. 2009

In addition to its diversity, stability and history, location is another reason Corktown is so desirable. From Corktown, you can get to Eastern Market and Midtown in a few minutes, to Mexicantown and Downtown in less than five and there is direct access to the Lodge, I-75 and I-96, meaning the suburbs are just 15 minutes away.

Corktown is very walkable which makes it attractive as an urban village. The city not only has a mixed residential district but it also has a variety of commercial properties. The area also is home to a creative class. Residents say one of Corktown's strengths is its proximity to some of the city's premier public schools, including Burton International (Pre-K through 8), and Cass Tech High School, both magnet schools. Corktown also has a very low crime rate, which makes it an attractive location. A strong community network is part of the low crime rate because neighbors have a strong commitment to the conditions of their neighborhood and are active in their Neighborhood Watch program.

A fierce sense of loyalty and pride is common among Corktown dwellers. Brunell says that's in part because most people there, whether they have deep family roots or are newcomers, have spent a good deal of money and elbow grease restoring and refining their homes. "We are very unique and very different here," he says. "We are proud and defend Corktown, and rightfully so.

Current Plans

There have been plans to develop and build up the already vibrant southwest neighborhoods of Detroit. Southwest Detroit is one of the more vibrant areas in the city, encompassing the Corktown, Mexicantown, Springwells, and Del Ray neighborhoods.

Greater Corktown Development Corporation is taking steps towards making the southwest neighborhood a vibrant community. The incorporation of parks and greenspace is just one example of how the area is attempting to make change:

> *Currently there is on-going development for the Greenway project. The Corktown-Mexicantown Greenlink will develop greenway linkages connecting the Greater Corktown and Mexicantown/Hubbard Communities to Detroit's West Riverfront. The Corktown-Mexicantown GreenLink will connect with the Southwest Detroit Riverfront Greenway, which in turn connects to the Rouge Gateway Greenway. It will provide an important connection north to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and the University Cultural Center Association's (UCCA) Midtown Loop.*

Other non-profits have joined together as well to improve the conditions of southwest. Detroit Local Initiatives and Southwest Detroit Development Corporation have also made steps towards making the neighborhood more vibrant:

> *The Southwest Detroit Development Collaborative (SDDC) has partnered with a group of urbanists to design and launch a unique Community Mapping Project that will help redevelop vibrant, sustainable neighborhoods for the future. A grant given by the Detroit Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), to the SDDC's Community Mapping Project, will allow CDCs and nonprofits in Southwest Detroit to have access to a valuable high-tech GIS (Geographic Information Systems) mapping tool. While the Community Mapping Project is a pilot program, the SDDC hopes that it can be the framework for a comprehensive database with a website and online interface that will one day be accessible to all CDCs, businesses, residents, civic leaders and other community organizations.*

Currently Southwest Housing Solutions has collaborated with NeighborWorks to conduct neighborhoods surveys of existing physical conditions, as well as interview residents who live in the

Hubbard Farms area. The purpose of conducting these surveys is to gain an understanding of the concerns of the residents. The data that will be collected with help Southwest Solutions better assess the area and its residents.

Southwest Detroit has already made changes and is attempting to transform the community into a safe, sustainable, vibrant community. The area contains many commercial and leisure aspects such as restaurants and stores. Vernor contains many mixed-used buildings, all within a walkable distance. With many business corridors and a large number of non-profits organizations, Southwest Detroit would be a great location for an urban village.

C. Grandmont

Feasibility: Level I

The Grandmont – Rosedale area has a high feasibility level for becoming an Urban Village. The area consists of multiple neighborhoods surrounding the junction of Grand River and the Southfield Freeway (M-39) in northwest Detroit. The neighborhoods include North Rosedale Park, Rosedale Park, Grandmont #1, and Grandmont. The nearly 1.7 square mile area is bordered by McNichols to the north, Greenfield and Hubbell to the east, Schoolcraft to the south, and Evergreen to the west.



Figure 14. Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation

These neighborhoods consist of custom-built homes from the 1920's and 1930's. They are characterized by a variety of styles and many are located on well-maintained, tree-lined streets. The area has a population of approximately 11,686 and an average housing value of $119,989 as of 2007. The community ranks higher than the Detroit

average for education attainment for those with some college experience, associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees (Grandmont-Rosedale Neighborhood)

The Grandmont – Rosedale area is home to seven elementary schools and two high schools, Communication and Media Arts High School and Cooley North Wing, which is a Center-based Special Education High School with an enrollment of approximately 125 students with autism and cognitive impairments (Cooley North Wing).

Grand River is the major commercial corridor running through the neighborhoods, and the intersection at Greenfield is home to a Walgreens and a Rite-Aid Pharmacy, a few strip malls, and the old Tower Center Mall Shopping Center. The large parking lots surrounding most of this development is a disadvantage to creating a walkable shopping district; however, the Tower Center Mall Shopping Center is built to the site line on the northeast corner of this intersection and a shuttered commercial building on the southeast corner is built to the sidewalk. These two buildings along with dense buildings further southeast on Grand River will prove invaluable in creating a more walkable shopping area.

The Grandmont – Rosedale area would be a good location for a village due to the fact that it already meets many of our criteria for an urban village. It contains retail and dining, commercial districts, walkability, density, housing, and transportation. The major pieces are in place. Numerous neighborhood associations as well as a larger organization – the Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation (GRDC) – support the area. The GRDC's goal is "…to create a stronger more vital community for all who live and work…" by improvements in housing and real estate revitalization. While

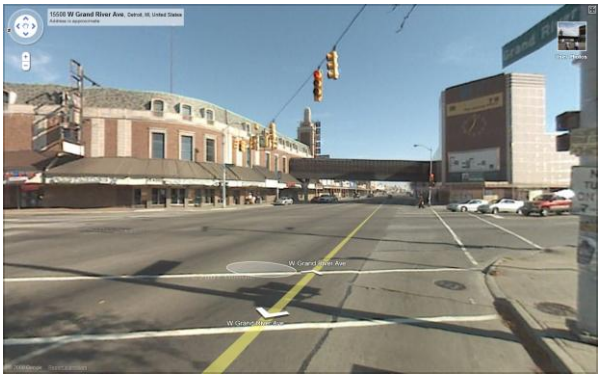


Figure 15. Google Maps. Tower Center Shopping Mall

the GRDC has accomplished a long list of physical improvements in the area such as renovations and acts of beautification, this area is not as much about revival as it is about sustainability, longevity, and improvement. The neighborhoods contain occupied houses and most of the commercial areas are successful. The next step for this area is to define more of an urban center to increase commercial activity. A goal of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program is to, "develop medium density residential to complement the mixed use node at the intersection of Grand River and Greenfield."(City of Detroit) To improve the intersection, streetscape improvements such as landscaped medians will help slow traffic, beautify the area, increase pedestrian traffic and safety, and create a signature appearance that lets people know they have arrived at this urban center.

Looking further into the future for this urban village, mass transportation may play a vital role. According to the direction2035 transit plan by SEMCOG, both Grand River and Greenfield have proposed bus rapid transit lines (RTCC). This will make these crossroads in the northwest area of Detroit a major junction for people travelling both in, out, and around the city. The Greenfield line will run north and south from the Troy/Birmingham area, through Detroit, to Dearborn. The Grand River extension will travel from downtown Detroit to the northwest suburb of Novi, where it will then junction with another line heading north. While this is only a proposal at this time, it is important for the community to keep in mind when contemplating their own transportation needs as well as additional visitors to the area.

Developing the neighborhoods in the Grandmont – Rosedale area as well as improving the urban center of Grand River and Greenfield is a positive for the City of Detroit. The neighborhoods in this community should be celebrated for their sustainability and publicized to create a better image of the City of Detroit. While this area is just a small pocket of the large land mass that is Detroit, if developed, publicized, and marketed correctly, it could increase its population and

number of visitors. This would improve an already stable neighborhood and attract more businesses and people to the city.

D. Warrendale

Feasibility: Level II

Warrendale would be a moderate location for an urban village in Detroit. The Warrendale neighborhood is currently bound by Joy Road, Ford Road, the Southfield freeway and the Rouge River. It also boarders both Dearborn and Dearborn Heights and is easily accessible by the Southfield freeway. The Warrendale neighborhood has the potential to become a site for an urban village due to the social and physical features available in area. The residents of Warrendale are "34 percent white and 31 percent are African-American, with the remainder being a mix of Arab, Asian, Hispanic and Native American" (Nemecek). A number of Arab immigrants are emerging in the population and have invested in shops, restaurants and the neighborhood. The immigration pattern is related to the large population of Arab Americans living in Dearborn. Immigration and a sense of place have helped shape Warrendale into a viable location for an urban village.

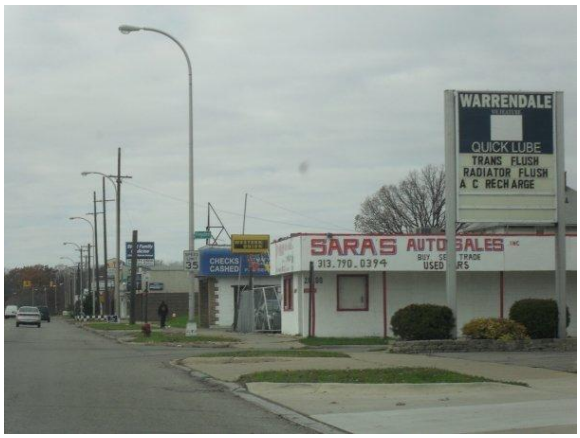


Figure 16. Commercial Area on Warren. Gougherty

The physical attributes of Warrendale make the area a feasible location for an urban village. The main commercial district is located along Warren where many small businesses have taken root. There are a dense variety of restaurants, bars and small shops located along this street. Although this commercial area is full of activity, the streetscape is in poor condition and some stores are vacant or change ownership often. The commercial area has sidewalks, which link throughout the residential neighborhoods making Warrendale quite walkable. The residential area

surrounds Warren on both sides and follows a grid pattern filled with single-family houses. The housing condition varies drastically with some houses that are well maintained while others are vacant and rundown. Warrendale has been especially hard hit with foreclosures and a number of houses have become recently vacant. Warrendale neighbors the River Rouge Park, which is the largest park in Detroit. It is also in close proximity to anchor institutions such as the University of Michigan, Dearborn and the Henry Ford Community College. Warrendale could be quite capable of becoming an urban village with the inclusion of greenspace and anchors.

E. Lower East Side

Feasibility: Level II & III

The east side of Detroit is as diverse as the city itself. Different income levels, ethnicities, and landscapes all reside in the area of the city that is east of I-94 and north of I-375. Some of the cities' strongest and weakest neighborhoods are here as well, with expensive homes in gated communities to some of the most crime-ridden neighborhoods in the country. Because of this, there is a strong area that we can build up on based on the existing community, as well as an area that may be a complete lost cause.

The area overall is flatland, with a good deal of industrial, residential, and waterfront property. Most of the waterfront communities are either gated or non-interacting with other areas, and would not make good village locations despite their strengths. Regardless of all of the industrial areas, there is good green tree cover on the east side. The residential areas are especially well covered in this regard. The typical neighborhood street layout is that of a grid pattern, allowing motorists to drive through neighborhoods easily.



Figure 16 East Side. Cruz. 2009

The weakest area of the east side is the neighborhood around the intersection of Mt. Elliott and Palmer Ave, which in turn would have a feasibility level of III. This area includes the infamous run-down industrial complex that was once the world headquarters of Packard Motors. While this area would be ripe for re-development, it is also one of the most challenging areas to pursue. Adding another hazard to the mix, if you live here you have an 11% (at least) chance of being a victim of a violent crime (rape, murder, aggravated assault, etc) in a year (Walletpop.com, 23).

Efforts would be best focused on the East English Village and Indian village area and would have a feasibility level of II. These areas have stayed strong through the years. While many Detroiters live where they do out of a lack of options, the people in these neighborhoods do so because they have chosen to do so. They have made a commitment to the city, to their neighborhoods, and to their neighbors. This close-knit community already has many aspects of what we look for in an urban village, and it is an excellent base to build off.

F. East Side

Feasibility: Level III

The city of Detroit has prominent neighborhoods that can be worked into urban villages, yet has just as many neighborhoods that are dilapidated and run-down, and would be hard to develop into urban villages. One of the designated studied areas is on the eastside of Detroit, and borders between 6 mile, 7mile, Van Dyke, and Mound Rd.

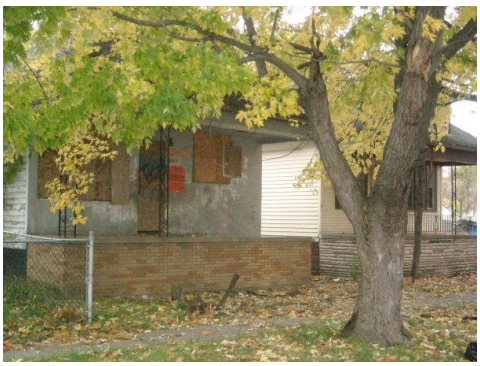


Figure 17. East Side. Cook. 2009

The area is burdened with abandoned houses, vacant factories, deteriorated roads, and empty lots. The neighborhood lacks the essential characteristics of an urban village. There are no leisure aspects, and the only commercial in the area that exist are gas stations and liquor stores. The idea of walkablity would be pointless, as there are no events or

activities that one would walk to. This neighborhood lacks a sense of community like many Detroit neighborhoods. Many aspects of the area would possibly have to be demolished, and start anew. At the moment, there is no way to create an urban village in the condition that the area is in.

It seems as though, the one and only prominent feature of the area is Perfecting Church, with pastor Marvin Winans, who is a member of the popular Winans family. Churches can be looked at as the focal points of communities, and even as anchors. Having the church as an anchor might be a good way to build up this community.

10. Urban Villages Working in a Region

Detroit has not had the best luck working collaboratively with surrounding metropolitan areas. There are negative stigmatizes held by both Detroiters and suburbanites about areas where the individual does not inhabit. There are various organizations that have attempted to bridge these gaps through regional planning. Such organizations include the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), OneD, Detroit Regional Chamber, Local Initiative Support Coalition (LISC), Metropolitan Affairs Coalition, etc. These organizations among others attempt to enhance southeast Michigan as a whole by providing social, economic and environmental benefits. The regional efforts cross township boundaries since it is understood that both Detroit and its suburbs depend upon one another for support and success. The creation of urban villages could have the potential to strengthen and generate regional ties with Detroit and its suburbs.

Urban villages in Detroit could have a variety of outcomes on metropolitan areas. The use of a public transportation system that connects the villages and surrounding townships may be among the most feasible of outcomes. The use of reliable and efficient public transit across city lines would increase investment from a number of locales. Easy access to the villages can make these areas regional destinations and cultural attractions. Residents from outside the city may be inclined to experience a unique side of Detroit while spending money in local businesses. It is

therefore important to preserve and enhance the character of a local village community. First ring suburbs may also consider turning some of its neighborhoods into urban villages. Urban villages must also interconnect with each other and surrounding areas in Detroit to a create cohesiveness impact. Density will be encouraged within the villages yet surrounding areas may continue to support single family housing at a lower density. New development may be limited in these areas in order to encourage development in the villages. Urban villages will play a large part in linking the city together as a whole and to the region.

11. Conclusion

There is no denying that changes must be made in order to improve the deteriorating conditions of the city of Detroit. The possible scenarios for improving Detroit from a physical dimension are virtually limitless. Many organizations from around the region tout differing strategies ranging from greenways, to urban farming, to homesteading, to urban villages. An ideal solution would be for these groups to collaborate in an effort to put all of their creative ideas together to produce a plan that incorporates their different visions. Detroit finds itself in a unique position compared to other cities. What is most often looked at as a major liability and negative factor – vacant land – could prove to be Detroit's invaluable asset that fully developed cities cannot compete with. Detroit has the ability to almost completely re-plan and rebuild a major city rather than retrofit modern amenities into an existing congested urban fabric.

Urban villages can succeed even if Detroit's population continues to decline. However, that is under the premise that the loss of population is not coming from within the neighborhoods comprising the urban villages. For this reason, it will be important that an urban village plan is implemented within the city government and is of the utmost importance for preserving the future of Detroit. Detroit is currently working in the right direction with the Neighborhood Stabilization Plan. NSP funds will be used for spot demolition, acquisition/rehabilitation and financing

mechanisms to reduce vacancy rates and reverse the decline in housing values. (City of Detroit) Furthermore, the city should establish a set of zoning plans to encourage development that is consistent with that of urban villages rather than allowing strip malls in designated urban villages.

Detroit should also take this opportunity to learn from cities that have already implemented changes. Planners from Detroit can look at the benefits of greenways and urban parks in Seattle and Portland to establish a plan that is unique to Detroit. If a major retail and entertainment development is proposed, Detroit can look to another city within the Rustbelt – Pittsburgh – for information in successfully integrating it into adjacent neighborhoods and districts – something Detroit has had problems doing in the past, most notably the Renaissance Center.

It is time to take a new approach to realizing a new, prosperous Detroit. In the past, the downtown has been the focal point for success or failure in regards to development in Detroit, but if a series of smaller urban villages are able to succeed, then the City of Detroit also succeeds.

12. Appendices

Appendix A

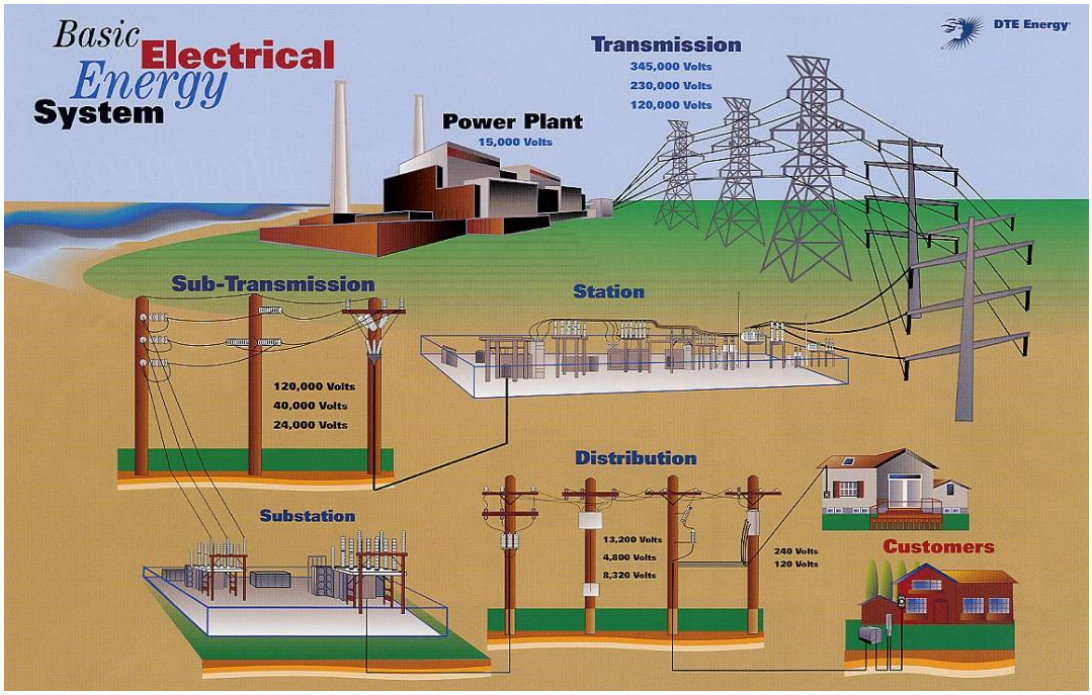
The Top Ten Influences on the American Metropolis of the Past 50 Years
1. The 1956 *Interstate Highway Act* and the dominance of the automobile
2. *Federal Housing Administration* mortgage financing and subdivision regulation
3. Deindustrialization of central cities
4. Urban renewal: downtown redevelopment and public housing projects (1949 Housing Act)
5. Levittown (the mass-produced suburban tract house
6. Racial segregation and job discrimination in the cities and suburbs
7. Enclosed shopping malls
8. Sunbelt-style sprawl
9. Air conditioning
10. Urban riots of the 1960s
The American Metropolis at Century's End: Past and Future Influences. Fishman . 2000

Appendix B

Approval Criteria for Planned Unit Developments
1**. Superior Design**: The PUD represents a more creative approach to the unified planning of development and incorporates a higher standard of integrated design and amenity than could be achieved under otherwise applicable zoning district and subdivision regulations, and solely on this basis modifications to the use and design standards established by such regulations are warranted.
2. Meets PUD Requirements: The PUD meets the requirements for Planned Unit Developments set forth in this Ordinance, and no modifications to the use and design standards otherwise applicable are allowed other than those permitted herein
3. Consistent with City Plan: The PUD is generally consistent with the objectives of the City Comprehensive Plan as viewed in light of any changed conditions since its adoption.
4. **Public Welfare:** The PUD will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, morals, or general welfare.
5. Compatible with Environs: Neither the PUD nor any portion thereof will be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other properties in its vicinity, seriously impair property values or environmental quality in the neighborhood, nor impede the orderly development of surrounding property
6. Natural Features: The design of the PUD is as consistent as practical with the preservation of natural features of the site such as flood plains, wooded areas, steep slopes, natural drainage ways, or other areas of sensitive or valuable environmental character.
7. Circulation: Streets, sidewalks, pedestrian ways, bicycle paths, off-street parking, and off-street loading as appropriate to the planned land uses are provided. They are adequate in location, size, capacity, and design to ensure safe and efficient circulation of automobiles, trucks, bicycles, pedestrians, fire trucks, garbage trucks, and snow plows as appropriate without blocking traffic, creating unnecessary pedestrian-vehicular conflict, creating unnecessary through traffic within the PUD, or unduly interfering with the safety or capacity of adjacent streets.
8. Open Space and Landscaping: The quality and quantity of public and common open spaces and landscaping provided are consistent with the higher standards of design and amenity required of a PUD. The size, shape, and location of a substantial portion of total public and common open space provided in residential areas render it useable for recreation purposes
9. Covenants: Where individual parcels are to be later sold, adequate provision has been made in the form of deed restrictions, homeowners or condominium associations, or the like for:
10. Public Services: The land uses, intensities, and phasing of the PUD are consistent with the anticipated ability of the City, the school districts, and other public bodies to provide and economically support police and fire protection, water supply, sewage disposal, schools, and other public facilities and services without placing undue burden on existing residents and businesses
11. Phasing: Each development phase of the PUD can, together with any phases that preceded it, exist as an independent unit that meets all of the foregoing criteria and all other applicable regulations herein even if no subsequent phase should ever be completed. The provision and improvement of public or common area improvements, open spaces, and amenities--or the provision of financial sureties guaranteeing their improvement--is phased generally proportionate to the phasing of the number of dwelling units or amount of non-residential floor area.

Warrenville, IL :: Planned Unit Development.

Appendix C

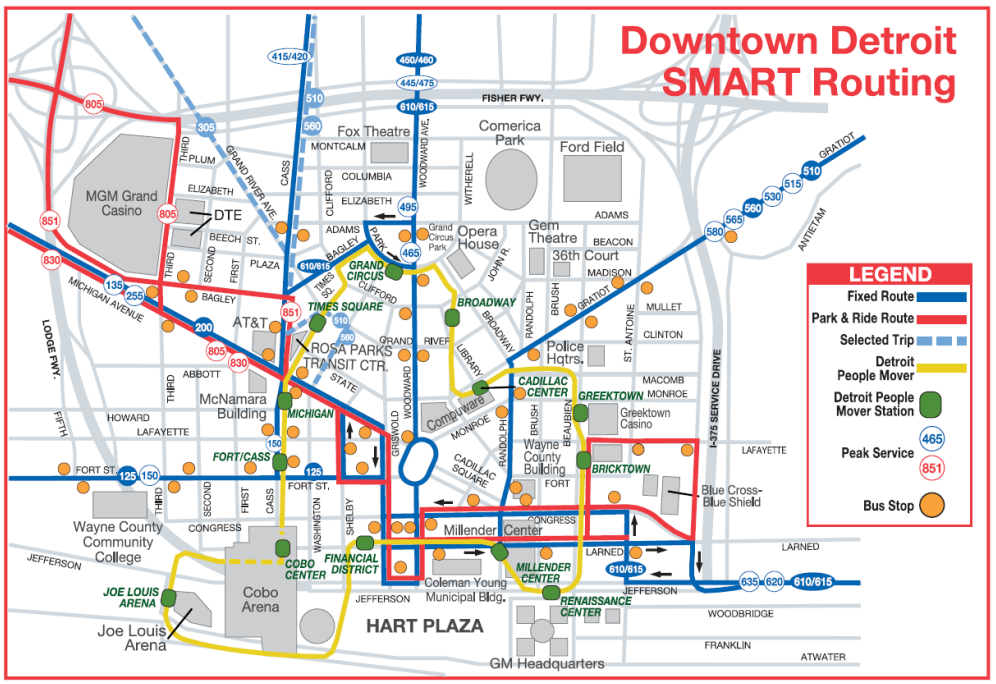


Asgeirsson. DTE Energy. 2009

Appendix D

Ten Principle Approaches for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail
1. Great Streets Need Great Champions
2. It Takes a Vision
3. Think Residential
4. Honor the Pedestrian
5. Parking is Power
6. Merchandise and Lease Proactively
7. Make it Happen
8. Be Clean Safe and Friendly
9. Extend Day into Night
10. Manage for Change
Urban Land Institute. Beyard

Appendix E



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