

# IMLAY CITY | An Agricultural Community for the Future

Imlay City  
S.E.E.D./ ABC Committee

Community Revitalization Plan

Archive DS  
Architects + Urbanists  
Detroit+Toronto



November, 2015  
Final Report



## Acknowledgements

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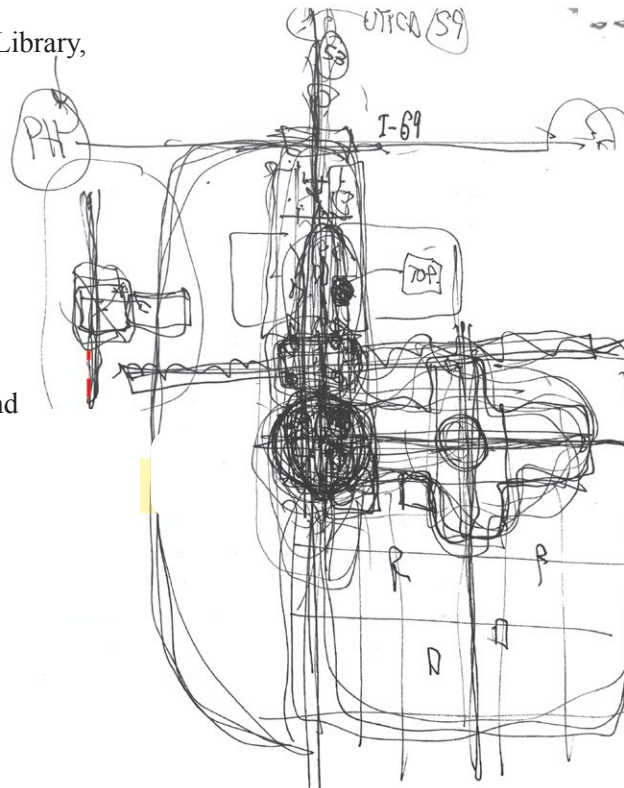
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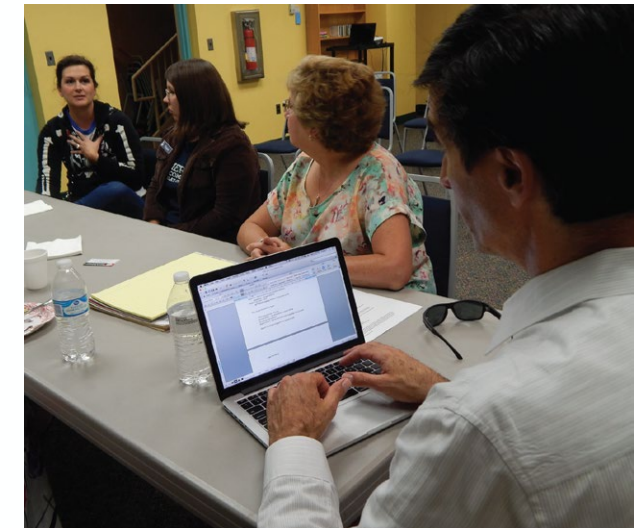
Original Concept Sketch by Archive DS



Mark Nickita (third from right) leading a walking tour



Dorian Moore (right) during the public discussion



Robert Freedman (right) interviewing the public

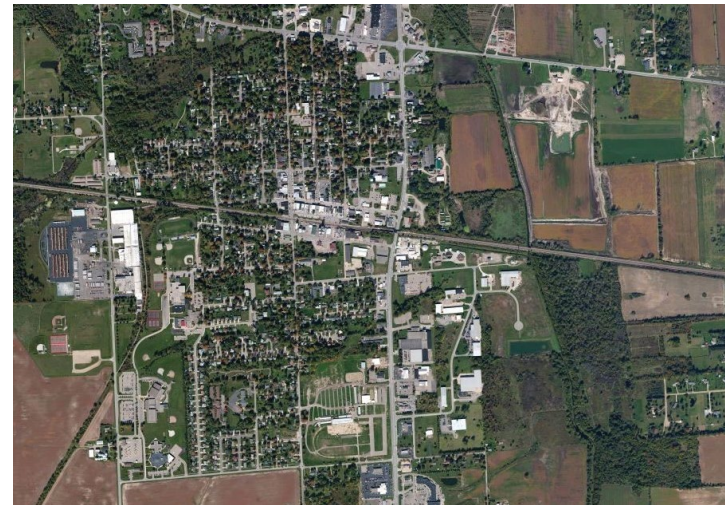


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Vision for the entry to downtown Imlay City with new community garden and art installation



The existing entry to downtown Imlay City. One of the focus areas of the Community Revitalization Plan



Small Business Entrepreneurs  
& Economic Development

*Imlay City, Imlay Township and Attica Township are blessed with being located at the crossroads of two major Michigan roadways and the region draws over 70,000 travelers a day. This ease of travel places the Imlay City region within a 30 minute drive from 284,000 people (2010 Census). Along with its optimal location, our community is 30 miles from the Canadian border with its international waterways. There is also rail service running directly through the City.*

*Our region's population is diverse both ethnically and demographically. There is a favorable mix of families with children and senior citizens residing in the area. It is the support of the community and the strong base of volunteers and service organizations that create the 'small town' atmosphere enjoyed by all.*

*The region is blessed with land that is perfect for agriculture and transportation resources that are ideal for economic development. The community supports small, family-owned businesses and the mix of agriculture, industry and retail give Imlay City a stable tax base with plenty of resources for entrepreneurs and residents.*

*At the geographic heart of the city is the Eastern Michigan State Fairgrounds, a 41 acre park that is home of the Eastern Michigan State Fair and Woods N' Water Weekend. These events provide entertainment and educational opportunities for 60,000 visitors and are a celebration of the region's rich agricultural background.*

*The Imlay Team is excited to provide our community with a comprehensive Revitalization Plan that understands the importance of agriculture as it relates to the past while looking forward to future economic and community development using our current resources and assets.*

*Placemaking is essential to the attraction of homeowners and businesses to our region and the continued evaluation, improvement and building of recreational spaces will help make the Imlay City region a desirable place to locate. Residents need public spaces where they can gather, socialize and be entertained. Vibrant public spaces encourages families, youth and retirees to remain in our region and encourages others to locate within the three communities.*

*Amenities, like infrastructure improvements, are also important to 'placemaking' and for the retention and attraction of businesses and residents. Traffic-calming measures and beautification projects on the M-53 corridor along with communication improvements will encourage commerce, development of businesses and tourist travel.*

*As the population of the region grows, businesses will begin to thrive as the demand for goods and services increases. A steady or growing population encourages the manufacturers, retail, service and food establishments already in the region to remain and potentially improve their facilities. Entrepreneurs looking to start a business will be encouraged by the vibrant and business-friendly atmosphere and locate within the area.*

*With this promising vision of the future, the commitment of the community and the continued collaboration between Imlay City, Imlay Township and Attica Township our region will continue to thrive and develop economically and culturally.*

Best Regards,

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# Imlay City: An Agricultural Community for the Future

*“Imlay City: A small town with a big heart.”*

*- Imlay City resident at the community workshop*

Residents, business owners, and employees all love Imlay City. The quote above, from the community workshop is a testament to the overall feeling towards the city. Imlay City affects its area at the regional level. It links townships of varying character. This presented the design team with many unique issues to address when undertaking placemaking initiatives. Among these issues were:

- Bringing together three communities along common themes
- Coordinating with the efforts of community organizations, business leaders, and City departments working to enhance the identity of Imlay City
- Developing a community vision for the three municipality area while focusing on the enhancement of the Imlay City area

This document can be applied to the city as a whole, but has been focused on the core area, and depends on the individual stakeholders and the community for follow-through. The Community Revitalization Plan (CRP) should be used to guide development decisions and approval processes in the future.

Imlay City started out in the mid-1800's as an agricultural market town strategically located along the Port Huron and Lake Michigan Railway line. For close to 100 years its economy was closely tied to the land and the farmers in the surrounding townships. After the Second World War farming practices changed, with smaller family-owned farms giving way to larger farm business. Imlay City's economy diversified and became less dependent on agriculture.

Even though the community no longer depends on farming the way it did in the past, Imlay City's residents have never forgotten their agricultural roots. They live surrounded by farmland, smell the crops and the pickles in the air, shop at the local farmers' market and walk and drive through the streets that are still reminders of their heritage.

Now, as Imlay City prepares a vision for its future, many residents feel that it's time to once again embrace agriculture as a way of solidifying the city's identity and helping to focus its economic development efforts moving forward.

The major task for the design team was to create a revitalization plan that would allow the major plan components to be achieved, while at the same time uncovering additional opportunities that would aid in the enhancement of the Imlay City area. Below are the primary components.

## Primary Components of the Community Revitalization Plan:

1. Develop place-based economic development strategies
  - a. Repurpose the old DPW building as the new Farmers' Market
  - b. Market the Sign Shop as Maker Space or Incubator
  - c. Locate new Fire Department Facility and repurpose current Fire Hall
2. Create an entrepreneur-friendly environment with an agricultural focus
  - a. Provide an environment that encourages job skills development
  - b. Develop avenues that encourage agri-education and agri-art
  - c. Improve utilization of Fairgrounds with continued collaboration and marketing
3. Technology improvement for the downtown
4. Implementation of M-53 Corridor Plan components
  - a. Redesign of the Downtown Gateway
  - b. Develop a new truck route plan for the area east of M-53
  - c. Create traffic-calming measures such as the Railway Bridge improvements
5. Foster continued collaboration with local government partners
  - a. Further develop recreational parks and opportunities
  - b. Create or expand pedestrian pathways
6. Develop a marketing/ branding campaign
7. Provide an environment that will attract health care providers

## The Community Workshop

One of the significant aspects of the Community Revitalization Plan (CRP) process is the importance of incorporating as many ideas from the community as possible. As a part of this process of idea gathering, the design team conducted a one day community workshop. The workshop was held September 21, 2015 from 10 am. to 8 pm. at the Ruth Hughes Memorial District Library. During the workshop the team interviewed community stakeholders to gather feedback and ideas for the design concept.

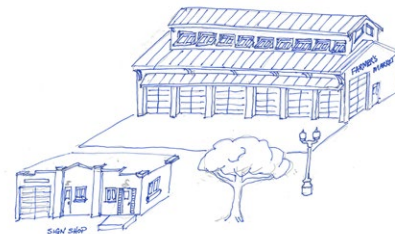
More than 100 people attended the event. These stakeholders included residents, business and building owners, members of city departments, civic leaders within the community, church members, and senior citizens. The comments and ideas from the interviews and the public input were recorded on large newsprint paper, graphically identifying thoughts and visions that were passed on by the public and public officials (see adjacent images).

After the interviews, the large 30"X 40" annotated newsprint sheets were placed in the design team area, displaying all of the stakeholders points and ideas. This area acted as a source of ideas and was utilized by the design professionals to incorporate the stakeholders recommendations into the development concepts for the overall plan area. Key themes that were developed include:

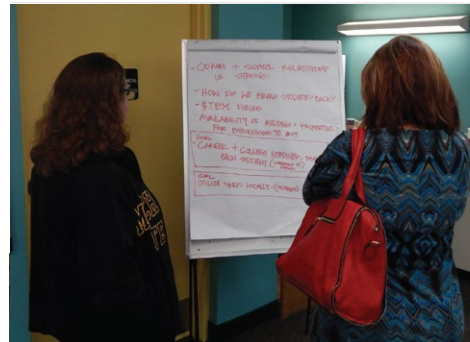
- More shops and restaurants in downtown
- Better sidewalks and bike lanes on the street
- Splash Pad
- Pickle Factory Tours
- We want to live here when we grow up
- We need to make sure there are reasons for people to stay in our community
- Should take advantage of our strategic location in the middle of a great agricultural area
- Convert the old silos into new uses



Discussion with public attendees



Concept input from public officials



Viewing list of community-generated ideas



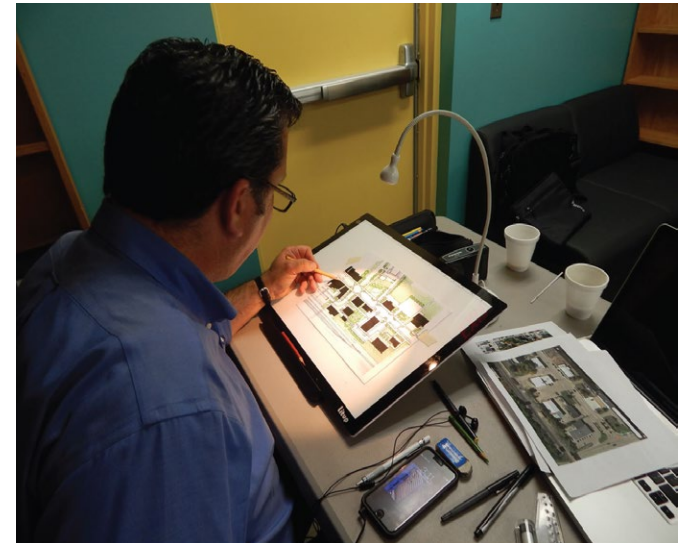
Design team and stakeholders tour the downtown



Participation from local school children



Participants at the final presentation



Mark Nickita of Archive DS sketches a concept plan



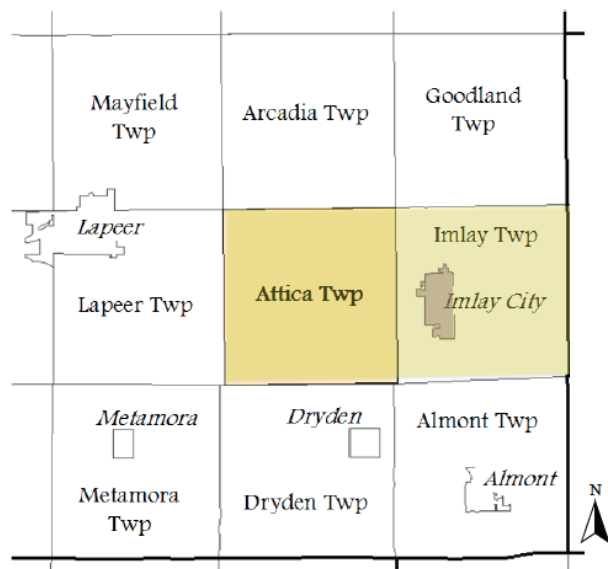
## Regional Context

Within the overall regional context there exist relatively few dominant destinations. Imlay City can become a regional draw as well as an anchor specific to the northern metropolitan area. Uncovering the characteristics that make the area unique aids in positioning the community within the region.

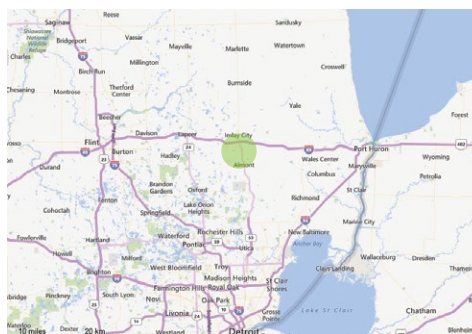
## Local Context

As shown in the accompanying graphic, there is a natural link between Imlay City and the surrounding townships. Strengthening the Imlay City area has the potential to create one of the most interesting and vibrant destinations in the eastern part of lower Michigan.

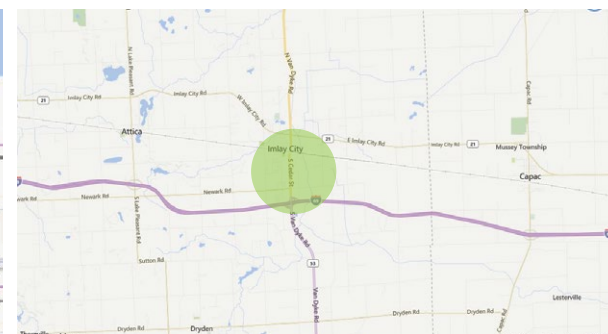
The proximity to Port Huron, Flint, and Detroit's northern suburbs is significant. All three are a 20-30 minute drive away with a population of 300,000. The Thumb's agricultural assets are nearby, directly north on M-53 which can supplement Imlay City, the agricultural hub of the area.



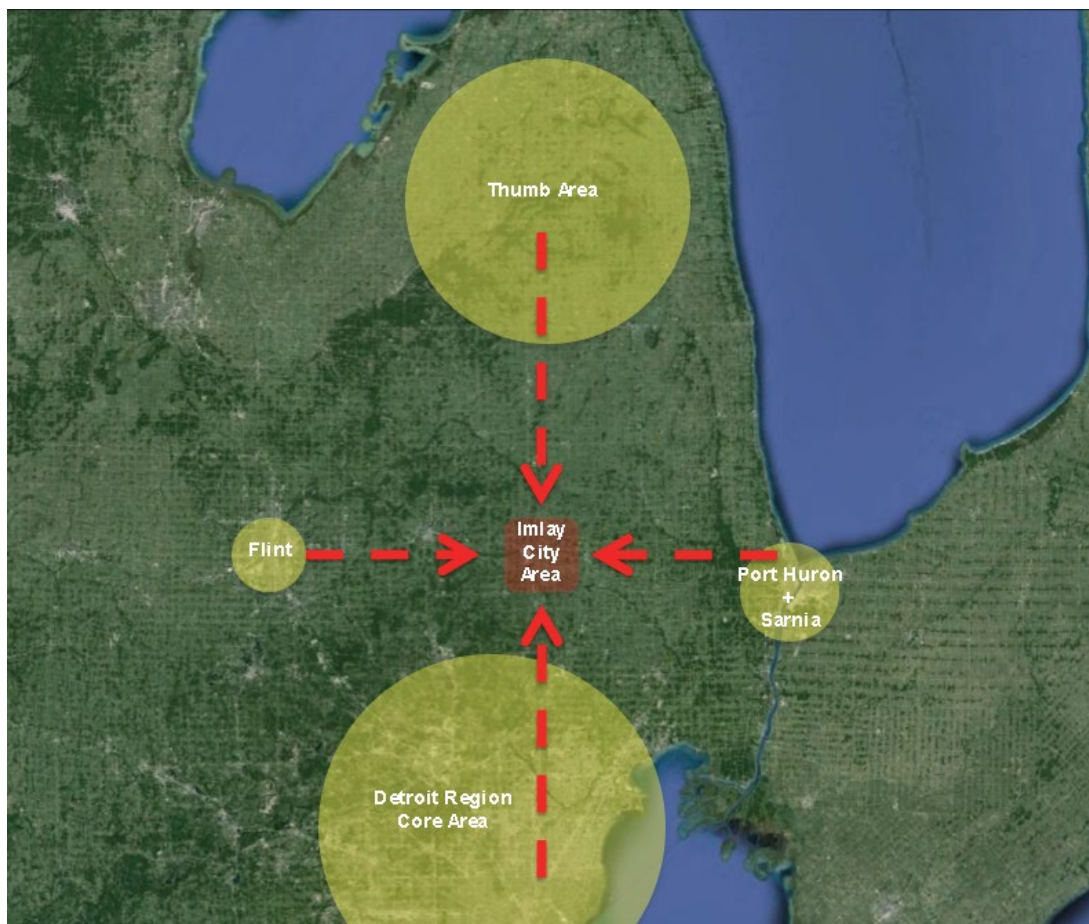
The three municipalities within the regional context



Imlay City Area - Overall Context



Imlay City Area - Local



The Imlay City Area- Adjacent Linkages

## Site Conditions

As part of the inventory and analysis of the site area, the design team focused on the assessment of the existing core area's conditions at the micro scale and in the overall context at the regional scale.

To be successful, any design strategy must address the issues of the immediate site as well as its overall context. In order to fully understand the potential of the plan area, one must consider its strengths and also the issues that will need to be addressed.

The strengths of the core area include:

- Within walking distance of quality residential environments and commercial corridors and the activity and amenities that they provide
- Located along the well known M-53 corridor with convenient access to other important destinations within the region
- Direct connection to Interstate I-69 which leads to all of the major expressways in the area
- A significant employment sector within the area
- A “love of Imlay spirit” that pervades the region

A significant advantage of the Imlay City area is the potential of the existing downtown structure. A well developed downtown consists of various housing types and a diversity of uses and destinations.

There are single use structures that are historically a part of the area. Enhancement will come by expanding multi-family options, which will in turn drive demand for services.



Downtown



Residential



Historical Resources



Landscape



The Rail Corridor



Major Employers



Non-Motorized Paths



Terminated Vistas



Underutilized Buildings



Reuse Structures



The Fairgrounds-Event Space



Unique functions



## Observations - Assets/Liabilities

### Assets

In Imlay City, there are many existing assets that can serve as catalysts or precedents for the new planning approach and redevelopment strategy. In many instances, these elements will be actual built fabric (both buildings and infrastructure) that reinforces a traditional town environment. Also, the very strong cultural psychology of the area plays a significant role in how it is defined. Imlay City is a very-much loved place. It has key assets that should be built upon.

- Strategic and logistical location within the northern Detroit region
- Strong commercial and residential districts adjacent to the downtown
- Strong ethnic culture and agricultural elements
- Direct accessibility from major streets and freeways
- Major event space within walking distance of residents and the downtown.

### Liabilities

The negative aspects of the area center around economic abandonment in the downtown and traffic/circulation issues. In some respects, solving one of these liabilities could also dramatically change the impact of the other on the area. These liabilities, though general in nature, take specific form along the M-53 corridor and will need to be addressed on an individual level.

- Truck traffic
- Perception of downtown as a gap in an otherwise strong area
- Underutilized industrial properties
- Auto-oriented commercial areas



## Observations - Opportunities

### Opportunities

The opportunities in Imlay City are numerous. From adaptive reuse of existing structures to new ways of thinking about local commerce, when one looks at the city from a fresh perspective, the possibility of reshaping the physical and social structure of the entire area is great. The opportunities lend themselves to small, incremental, yet bold moves. These opportunities are uncovered and explored through a thorough study of relevant precedent and an in-depth analysis of the physical and cultural characteristics of the place in order to:

- create a destination
- create a symbol of community pride and gathering
- create an example of adaptive reuse as an anchor for community development

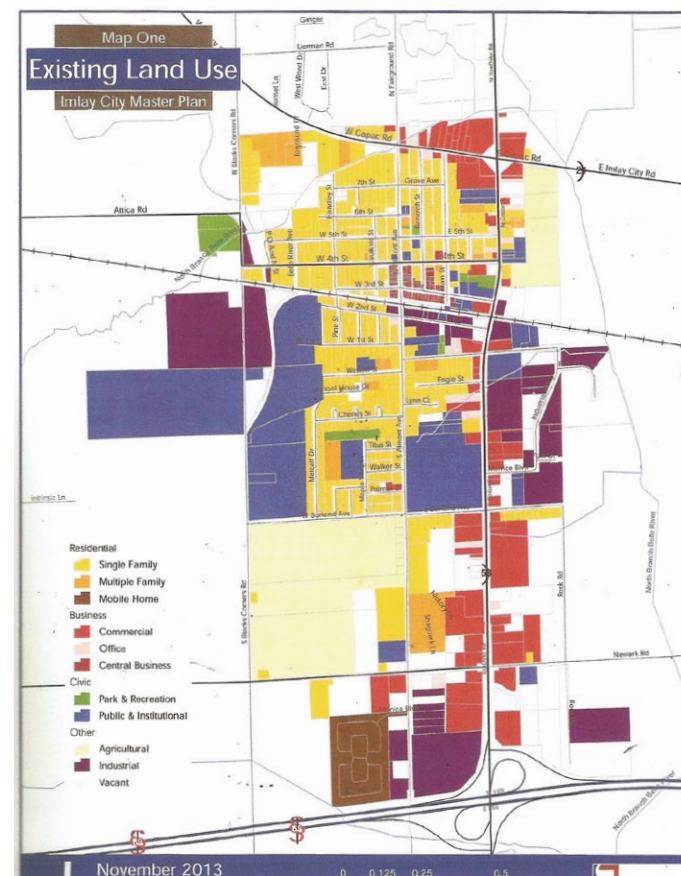
Based on our observations the following items were identified by the design team as opportunities to provide an environment that would give the Revitalization Plan the highest chance of success.

1. Create agricultural art installation guidelines and demonstration projects
2. Redevelop the 3rd St. and M-53 intersection (see pg. 29)
3. Streetscape improvements (underway)
4. Complete Streets implementation
5. Redirection of truck traffic along M-53(see pg. 41)
6. Redevelop the railway overpass to become a community-friendly asset
7. Rezone the industrial properties for mixed use opportunities

## Assessment - Existing Planning Documents

### Master Plan Review Observations

The existing Masterplan was reviewed to establish continuity with previous decisions made for Imlay City. Based on the design team's observations, portions of the Masterplan were identified for updating. The land use orientation of the Masterplan is further developed and expanded in the Community Revitalization Plan.



The existing 2013 Masterplan focuses on land use.



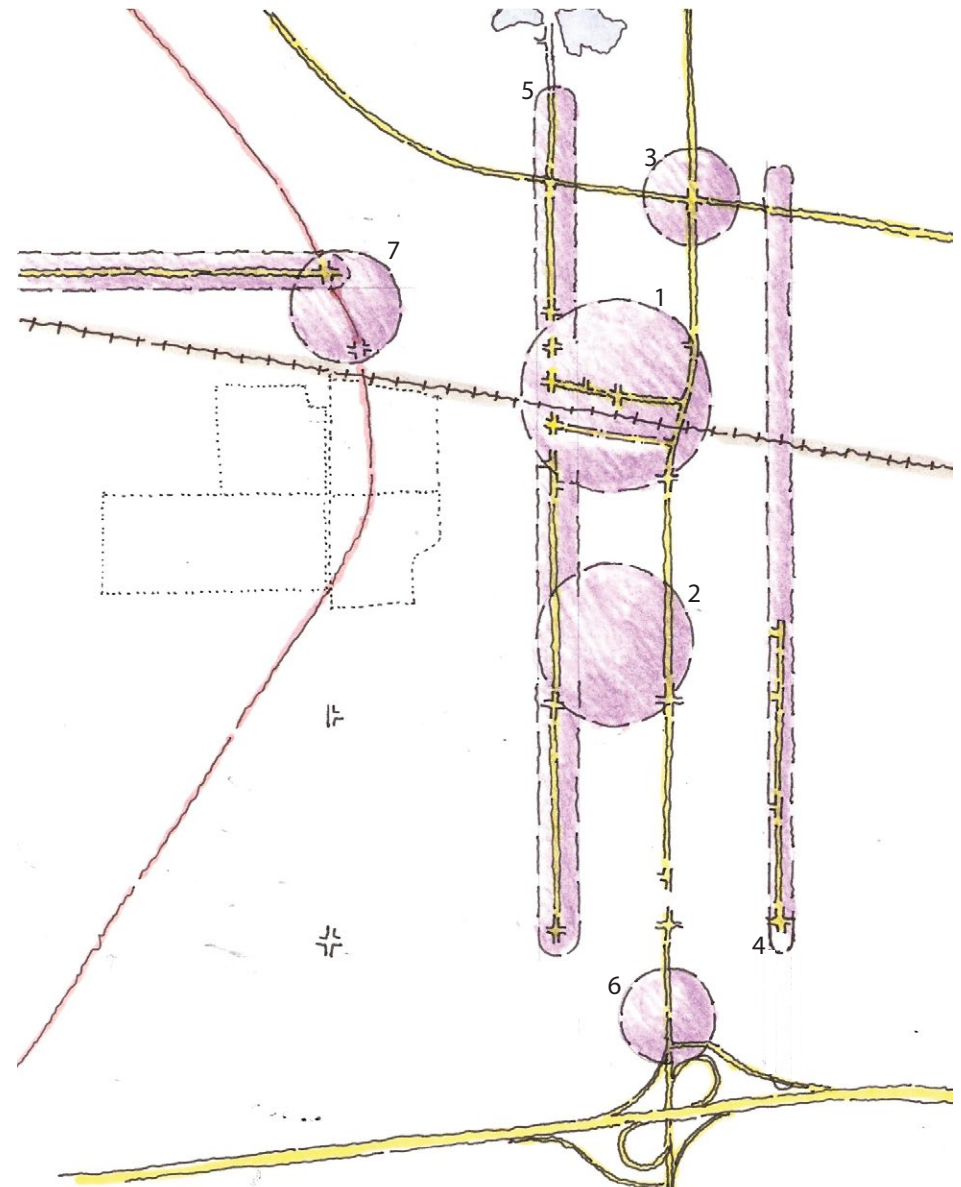
## Organizational Structure

The design team recognized that there is an underlying structure to Imlay City and the downtown. In order to capitalize on this condition, focus should be placed in areas that have the highest potential to aid in the Community Revitalization Plan efforts by establishing the physical conditions that can best accommodate the plan's goals:

1. Downtown and 2nd St.
2. The Fairgrounds
3. North Gateway
4. Potential Truck By-Pass
5. Almont St. non-motorized connection to Imlay Township
6. South Gateway
7. Polly Ann Trail and non-motorized connection to Attica Township
8. Areas that have terminated vista view corridors



Concept sketch showing organization of the western core area based on terminated vistas/ focal points (item 8 above) and nodes that could be highlighted (depicted in yellow in the image above).



Focus areas identified during the information gathering phase



## Site Analysis - Overview

Site and context analysis is the cornerstone of successful urban design. The design team examined the existing infrastructure, the history of the site, land use patterns, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, commercial street frontage, available development parcels, surrounding developments, and previous planning concepts for the area. The thorough review of these components created the framework used by the team to assess and incorporate the stakeholder comments.

A thorough analysis of the site conditions uncovered opportunities that were not initially evident. Imlay City has a variety of unique conditions that could lead to positive opportunities for the entire region.

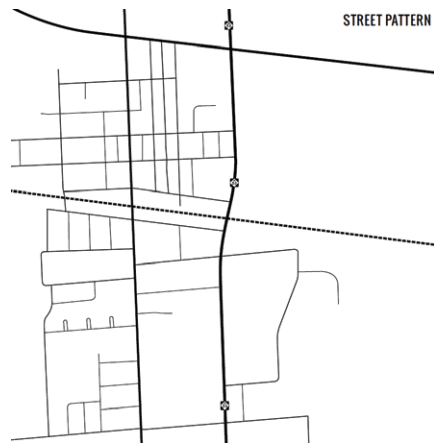
**Figure Ground Analysis:** The study uncovered a number of physical characteristics about the built form of Imlay City. Specifically, there are distinctive types of buildings and densities. Also, the central core has an identifiable grid system where as the rest of the city does not.



**Figure Ground:** This graphic illustrates the relative density of the built structures in the overall project area. The drawing provides, at a glance, the strengths and challenges of the existing physical urban fabric.



## Analysis Scans: Street Grid, Agriculture, Residential, Commercial



**Street Grid:** The network of streets within Imlay City helps to shape the neighborhood and commercial district fabric. It is interrupted by large, industrial infrastructure and institutional facilities, primarily along the rail corridor. The grid provides convenient access to commercial from residential areas. This is a critical factor in determining the long-term, mixed-use viability of the Imlay City area.

**Analysis:** The north side of the rail corridor has a tighter street grid, indicating a smaller and more traditional planning structure. The south side of the city has large blocks and a less defined grid, indicating a less connected circulation system.



**Agriculture:** Agriculture will likely be a key component for the revitalization effort. The infrastructure of farming lands can be the catalyst for tourism and education. Access to this traditional resource from the larger region is a crucial factor in identifying the area's potential for job growth through potential expansion of existing agriculturally oriented businesses.

**Analysis:** The agricultural uses are primarily on the east side of the city, specifically east of the M-53 corridor. The north agricultural land use is directly adjacent to the rail corridor while the south is separated.



**Residential:** The single-family residential structures located throughout the core of Imlay City establish its traditional neighborhoods. The overall context includes a number of neighborhoods primarily separated by the east/west rail corridor. Most have excellent access to the downtown and the commercial areas along M-53.

**Analysis:** The north residential neighborhoods have a smaller block structure and a more condensed amount of housing. The south area is more dispersed with larger lots and less dense housing types.

Virtually all of the residential uses are on the west side of the M-53 corridor.



**Commercial Activity:** Along M53 there is a variety of commercial activity. These stores and businesses provide important amenities to the overall Imlay City area. Currently, commercial activity along M53 near the downtown is an underutilized suburban, auto-oriented type. However, the area could physically accommodate more retail space as well as potentially incorporate mixed-use structures if allowed through a change in zoning.

**Analysis:** The primary commercial areas are located north and south along the M-53 corridor, generally on the east side. Additionally, there are commercial areas along two points west of M53 adjacent to the rail corridor and along Capac Road.

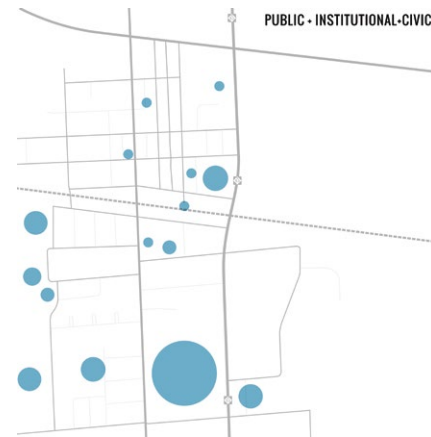
## Analysis Scans: Gateways, Public, Industry, Focal Points



GATEWAYS

**Gateways:** The visual organization of a corridor is an often overlooked element. The experience of the pedestrian, biker or driver can be greatly enhanced through the proper disposition of municipal entry points consisting of landmarks, public spaces, and public art. The street grid condition within the Imlay City area supports opportunities to enhance the district around a series of architectural focal points. These act as gateways located at key locations and intersections.

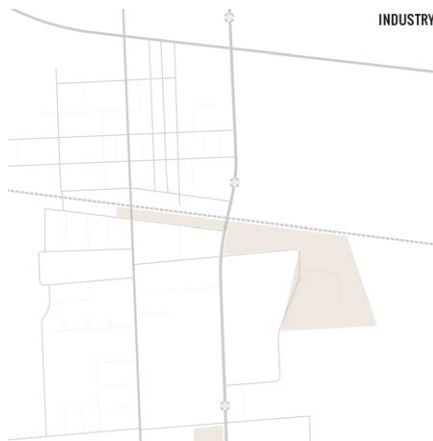
**Analysis:** Points are generally located along M-53 and Almont Street as the primary access to the community is from a north and south direction.



PUBLIC - INSTITUTIONAL-CIVIC

**Public, Institutional, Civic:** Schools, municipal and public facilities within the city contribute to its ability to become a destination as well as being valuable assets for the community residents and workers.

**Analysis:** There is a collective group of public, civic and institutional uses generally located around the downtown. Additionally, the larger of these uses are located on the south side of the rail corridor. There is also a grouping on the west side, south of the rail corridor.



INDUSTRY

**Industry:** The rail corridor provides the establishment of a major employment generator in the area. It has historically created the opportunity for industry to locate nearby, primarily adjacent for direct access.

**Analysis:** Industrial areas are located directly adjacent to the rail corridor, specifically on the south side. The majority of these uses are on the east side of the M-53 corridor.



TERMINATING VISTA

**Terminated Vistas:** The visual organization of an area is an often overlooked element. The experience of the pedestrian, biker or driver can be greatly enhanced through the proper disposition of landmarks, public spaces, and public art at key, visible locations. The varying street grid conditions within the area expose opportunities to organize the district around a series of potential locations for terminated vistas, or the visual end of a street or view corridor.

**Analysis:** As part of the older street grid of the city, there are a number of visual terminations on houses, churches or commercial buildings. These are primarily located in a cluster within and around the downtown.



## Development Drivers - Analysis

This sketch illustrates the major large-scale elements that can affect the economic, physical and structural development of Imlay City. These large-scale elements can also be used as regional draws that will benefit both Imlay and Attica Townships.

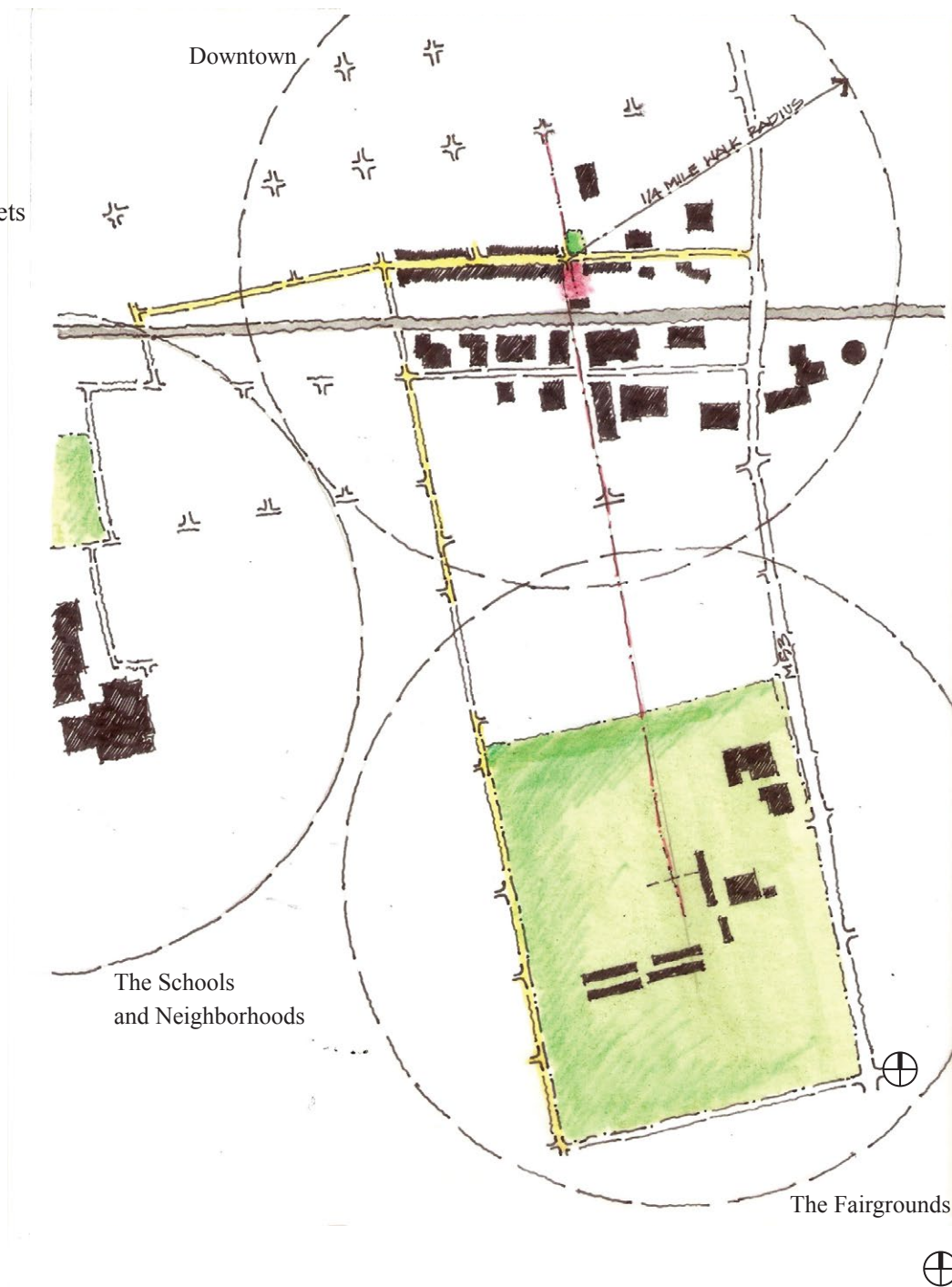
As key anchors in the city, enhancing these areas will aid in strengthening the city as a whole. Additionally, identifying opportunities for them to act in a collective manner will also be beneficial for economic development.



## Pedestrian Shed/Walkability Analysis

A five minute walk or approximately 1/4 of a mile (5 Minute Walking Radius) has traditionally been used as a measure of the distance that the average American will walk comfortably. In developing concepts for redevelopment within the CRP area, this criteria was considered to promote a walkable environment and provide connectivity to nearby assets from the downtown.

The pedestrian sheds identified in the diagram to the right each have a number of businesses and assets that work collectively. The CRP is intended to identify opportunities where all of these areas can further develop, physically and economically, as well as work together through stronger walkable connections.





## Precedent Studies -

Based on the thorough analysis outlined on the previous pages, the input from the community, and our meetings with the S.E.E.D. / ABC Committee, the design team studied a variety of precedents that relate to achieving the overall goal of the revitalization plan. The major areas of study included: maker spaces, adaptive re-use of existing structures, mixed-use structures, multifamily structures, and walkability/non-motorized systems. The study of these conditions provided the community workshop participants insight into the possibilities for redevelopment that would potentially be incorporated into the study area.

### Precedent - Walkability/ Non-Motorized Systems

The Imlay City downtown area and the M-53 corridor have the potential to accommodate additional mobility options. Incorporating Complete Streets elements could accommodate bikers and roller blading as well as pedestrian activity and can take on a variety of forms. The precedent study identified various accommodations for these systems.



Non-motorized and Complete Streets precedents are especially applicable to the conditions on M-53



Designated Bicycle Pathways



Bicycle Lanes - Separated, Curbed Lanes - One-Way



Bicycle Lanes - Separated, Curbed Lanes- Two Way



Pedestrian Promenade and Gateways



Pedestrian/ Bicycle Paths along Streetfronts



## Precedent - Entrepreneurial Spaces

Currently, entrepreneurial activity is a key ingredient in emerging urban areas. The design team studied numerous examples where space has been dedicated for the creative process of manufacturing goods and providing services. These efforts become the foundation of a local economy by focusing on the diverse talents of individuals within a community.

The precedent examples illustrate how simple structures, placed in various locations, can be utilized for many uses that create opportunities for entrepreneurs. They also are excellent at assisting in placemaking. They include places to sell items, farmers' markets, food and beverage production, as well as places for seating in gathering areas.



The Sign Shop on 3rd Street is designated to become an entrepreneurial incubator space that could also incorporate these smaller maker display spaces on the outside.





## Precedent - Adaptive Re-use

For urban districts, such as 3rd St. in Imlay City, that have various existing structures, adaptive re-use opportunities should be considered. Existing structures provide redevelopment potential that may not be available with regards to a new structure. Some of these advantages include cost savings, historical value, unique characteristics and location.

These precedent images illustrate the potential for an area that contains numerous existing buildings to become redeveloped with adaptive re-use projects. Adaptive re-use simply means adapting an existing structure for a new use or a variation of its original use.

### Potential Uses

Adaptive re-use projects can incorporate many uses including retail, residential, office and institutional. Many industrial, manufacturing and institutional structures are versatile and can accommodate new uses. Additionally, these spaces are often large, open areas and provide unique conditions for the new users.

### Alternative Office Uses

Current trends in the office market indicate that there is increasing demand for unique spaces, especially for creative users. These types of office environments often are the result of adaptive re-use projects.



Structures, such as this one along the rail line and 2nd Street are prime candidates for adaptive reuse



Before



After • Restaurant/Bar



Before



After • Residential Condominium Lofts



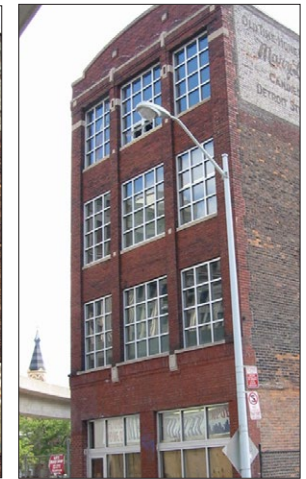
Historic Manufacturing Structure-  
Building Exterior



Building Interior - Retail



Before



After • Office and Retail



## Precedent - Multi-Family Residential Structures

By definition, a neighborhood or district should include a variety of housing types and sizes for the diverse demographic that is encouraged to be a part of the community. Multi-family developments or condominiums appeal to young couples, empty nesters and single professionals because of their specific characteristics. These include minimal maintenance and appropriate size for their requirements. Imlay City's downtown and some areas of the surrounding neighborhoods could accommodate some of these project types.

### Townhouse Condominiums

Townhouses are a typical urban neighborhood housing typology often referred to as rowhouses and sometimes brownstones. They are essentially houses that are connected along the sidewall. They can also consist of two units stacked on to each other, which provide additional densities. In some areas of the city these types of housing units would be considered appropriate alternatives to single-family houses. Specifically, empty nesters find townhouse condominiums attractive because of the low maintenance of the site.

### Loft Condominiums

Loft residential units can be incorporated into existing buildings or can be created in new structures. This popular unit type is appropriate for the area, specifically, within the former industrial zone near the abandoned rail corridor. Characteristics of loft units typically include high ceilings, exposed structure and mechanical systems and large windows with an abundance of light. Sizes can range from 600 square feet to a few thousand square feet.

Parking is an important element for all of these projects. It is usually included on site for a residential use. Parking requirements can be accommodated by including one or two stories of parking with a minimum amount of retail as a liner at the street level along the sidewalk frontage.



Loft/ townhouse along a commercial avenue



Loft-style townhouse within a neighborhood



Townhouses along a residential street



Loft building developed on underutilized land- former parking lot



Townhouse built to connect with the sidewalk



Townhouse located in a residential neighborhood



## Precedent - Infill Mixed-Use Structures

This type of development provides options for projects to incorporate multiple uses within one structure or geographical area.

Many of these types of buildings exist in and around the center of Imlay City. They include vacant and underutilized structures. Typically, within a building, the uses include retail activity along the first floor with upper floors that include residential or office uses.

A mixed-use district refers to the concept of numerous adjacent buildings in a defined area, with a variety of uses for each building.



The traditional downtown of Imlay City shows the historical application of mixed use structures working together to create an environment.



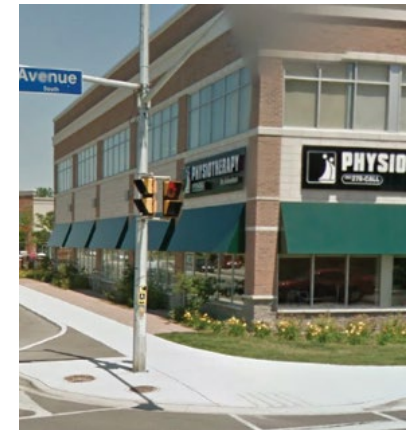
Historic structure redeveloped into office and retail



New infill building adjacent to existing structures



Residential buildings with live/ work uses on the street



Office space upper floors/ retail space lower



Residential buildings with ground floor retail uses



Residential, retail, and office space surrounding public space for users



## The Imlay City Brand

Imlay City has numerous notable characteristics. It has a rich agricultural history, but is also currently known for one of the top-rated Farm-to-Table restaurants in the country, an annual Blueberry Festival, the Eastern Michigan State Fairgrounds, and for having a major agricultural employer (Vlasic Pickles). The strengthening of these existing attributes with the addition of a new Farmers' Market and community garden program will only help to solidify the brand. The design team looked to build upon these inherent successes to create the Imlay City brand. For the enhancement of the Imlay City environment the design team employed four branding concepts: Agri-business, agri-tourism, agri-art, and agri-education. By focusing on these areas and assets, Imlay City can become an example of Agrarian Urbanism, a movement which promotes the seamless intermixing of small town and agricultural life.

### Agri-Business

The agriculturally-oriented business development centers around two major themes: Providing opportunities for start-ups in underutilized and “forgotten” spaces and finding new business opportunities for the existing industrial infrastructure. The Department of Public Works building that is designated for conversion to a farmers' market is one example that exists in Imlay City.

Imlay City has some wonderful old agricultural-related buildings on 2nd Street that are no longer in operation. An important component of the plan is to build on Imlay City's agricultural roots and to preserve its authentic agricultural character.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a placemaking research consultancy, talks about the importance of this:

“When people become involved in the design, creation, and upkeep of places, they develop a vested interest in using and maintaining these spaces. When they have a true sense of “ownership” or connection to the places they frequent, the community becomes a better place to live, work, and visit.” - *PPS.org*

A good example of reusing old feed mills is the Old Cop-op Feed Mill building in Schomberg ON (about 45 minutes north of Toronto). The Schomberg Co-Op feed mill shut down in the 1980's and was restored and converted into 2500 square feet of retail space and restaurants. It is frequented by locals and visitors.



Imlay City can be at the forefront of the new Agrarian Urbanism movement [2]



Buildings along 2nd Street in Imlay City are prime for agri-business use



Entrepreneurial opportunities in vacant lots



The Old Feed Mill conversion- Schomberg, Ontario, Canada [1]



## The Imlay City Brand (continued)

### Agri-Recreation + Tourism

Agricultural themes can be combined with the requirements for new recreational facilities to provide unique options for residents and visitors.

Agri-tourism is a very broad term that includes any agriculturally-based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm or farming community. This can include a wide variety of activities, such as buying produce direct from a farm stand, picking your own fruits and vegetable, navigating a corn maze, feeding animals, visiting a farmers market or staying at a bed and breakfast (B&B) on a farm or in a rural community. It can also include related activities such as riding horses, tasting local honey, learning about wine or canning, taking a food-related factory tour or shopping in gift shops and farm stands for local and regional produce or hand-crafted gifts. (Wikipedia)

Imlay City is well positioned to implement an Agri-tourism plan. Located just over an hour north of Metro Detroit, in the center of a highly productive agricultural area, the City can package a number of different activities and programs for day trips, weekend get-aways and longer-term vacations.

Imlay City is a prime location for Bed & Breakfast establishments. The charming historic houses that line the city's many tree-lined streets are perfect for such a use. As in many rural communities, B&B's can team up with a local farmer and offer multiple farm tours as part of their stay package. Other local attractions include the historic charm of the Downtown, the local Farmers' Market, and other potential amenities such as a Public Art program, as well as Festivals and tours (for example a Vlasic Pickle Factory tour).



Agricultural festivals and fairs are another great opportunity for attracting visitors and bringing together the local community. Imlay City has long been known for its very successful annual Blueberry Festival. However, during the Workshop Focus Group meetings, many people commented that the area is no longer known for its blueberries and that perhaps it was time to start a new festival. Many people suggested that a general Agricultural Fair would be appropriate because the area is known for a wide variety of crops. Others felt that the presence of the Vlasic Pickle factory, and the fact that the town is known as the home of Vlasic Pickles would make a Pickle festival, such as the one in Pittsburgh, PA (Picklesburgh) a natural fit. This festival is described in more detail on page 26 of this report.

In a paper by Michigan State University entitled *Fairs and Festivals – Great Places to Promote Agriculture and Utilize Many Resources*, Nancy Thelen explains that:

County fairs and local festivals provide a great venue for promoting agriculture to consumers. With advance planning you can provide exhibits, which tell consumers about agriculture and expand on it as other volunteers decide to join in to help... With only 1.8 percent of the population providing food for the other 98 percent, there is a huge opportunity to provide information and education about agriculture and food production. Most fairs and festivals draw a large audience who are not familiar with where their food comes from and the variety of food grown and processed in Michigan.”

[http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/fairs\\_and\\_festivals\\_great\\_places\\_to\\_promote\\_agriculture\\_and\\_utilize\\_many\\_re](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/fairs_and_festivals_great_places_to_promote_agriculture_and_utilize_many_re)



## The Imlay City Brand (continued)

### Agri-Education

Agricultural education can become an important element that creates new outreach programs and draws visitors and potential new residents and businesses to the community.

During the Workshop Focus Groups, one of the comments that was repeated most often was the desire to create training, jobs and opportunities for young people so that they can stay in Imlay City.

Several people suggested that it would be a good idea to create an Agricultural Education Center – and to locate it in a renovated warehouse building within the City limits. Another location that was suggested was to locate this facility at the Fairgrounds where it could also be a tourist attraction during festivals.

There are formal programs in the State of Michigan that offer Agricultural related programs. One option might be to attract a satellite campus from one of the universities or colleges to teach out of the facility in Imlay City.

Another option would be to create a more grass-roots type education center that is aimed at increasing awareness about our food system. Such a center could also be housed in a renovated building in or near downtown and could serve to educate local residents in longer term courses as well as attracting visitors for tours and short-term lectures, presentations and exhibits aimed at increasing our awareness of the food we eat and how it is produced.

One potential precedent is the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, (<https://www.stonebarnscenter.org>) a non-profit organization that aims to create a food system that is healthy, sustainable, and which benefits all people. On an 80-acre farm just outside of New York City, the Center offers cooking classes for all ages, organizes a seasonal market, and operates two food venues. All profits support farm operations and community education programs, and the Center encourages anyone to visit and see the benefits of a sustainable farm.

<http://foodtank.com/news/2013/05/forty-organizations-that-are-shaking-up-the-food-system>



Examples of Agri-Education facilities that can be developed by public and/ or private entities in Imlay City[3] [1]



## The Imlay City Brand (continued)

### Agri-Art

Agricultural influenced art installations can become a unifying theme throughout the Imlay City area and can be used to enhance interconnected destinations and routes to adjacent communities. These can be used to augment the Community Gardens program and the forthcoming Butterfly Garden.

Public Art is another great way to enhance and promote a local community. In the past, public art was seen as something that only large, established cities would promote. However, over the past decade, more and more smaller communities are implementing public art programs – often with a local twist or theme – and seeing what a powerful influence they can have on both the local residents and visitors alike.

Imlay City should explore the possibility of implementing a public art program with an agricultural theme at strategic locations throughout the downtown. Such a program has the potential to become a draw for tourists – but equally as important it becomes a symbol of local pride. If the community members are involved in the creation of the public art plan – then they become ambassadors for the program. If the local community loves what they see then they help to spread the word.

There are some great resources for communities interested in implementing a public art program, including:

-Americans for the Arts

(<http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/developing-public-art-in-oregons-rural-communities-a-publication-of-the-arts-build-communities>) and-  
Curating Cities (<http://eco-publicart.org/trio-building/>)



Examples of Agri-Art installations that can be used to enhance gateways and public spaces in Imlay City [1]



## The Imlay City Brand (continued)

At the Imlay City Community Workshop (September 21, 2015), there was a great deal of interest expressed, both during the Focus Group meetings and at the final presentation, in creating a new “brand” for the city—something that the city is or should be well known for that will help with marketing efforts and “put Imlay City on the map.” The most common theme or set of ideas for branding had to do with Agriculture since that was so much a part of Imlay City’s past and because of its strategic location in the middle of the “thumb” which contains some of the best farmland in the country. There was also a lot of talk about making better use of the Fairgrounds property, and possibly creating a new Festival as part of the branding effort.

In a recent article about branding for cities, Robert Jones - consultant director at international brand consultancy Wolff Olins – says that if you want to turn your location into a destination – and a place where people want to live and work– you should definitely consider branding it.

“A strong identity is vital if you are vying with other places for attention in tourism and business or relaunching an area after a regeneration initiative.... Branding a city is not just about the logo but the intricate details — as small as clean streets and as deep as getting a city's residents to feel proud to be brand ambassadors. When citizens are proud, visitors are encouraged to find out what the fuss is all about and then tell the world... Look at the key assets. The magic formula is to make something about the city tangible and make people switch on to that ...”

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2008/oct/01/city.urban.branding>

In an article about city branding, economic development consultant and author Peter Kagayama (<http://www.lmc.org/page/1/EmotionalTruthMayJune2014.jsp>) stresses the importance of local buy-in. Using the example of Gonzales, California, where some tried to brand the City as the “Wine Capital of Monterey County”, he found that most people did not have a connection with that identity.

“They were far more invested in their advanced agricultural businesses and their central position in the agricultural identity of the region. If the locals don’t buy in and believe the stated identity, it is very hard to get others to believe it”.

### Identity

During the final workshop presentation, Archive DS presented a couple of examples of cities (Suffolk, VA and Pittsburgh, PA) that have used an association with a strong corporate brand to help emphasize an important aspect of the City’s economy and history. This does not have to be the entire branding effort, but could play a supporting role or help to launch an important Festival that helps support and strengthen the city’s image and brand.

A good example of how people associated some commercial brands with place was demonstrated in a brief article and map in Atlantic Magazine entitled *Linking Brand to Place*:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/06/map-the-most-famous-brand-from-every-state/277129/>

This example is at the State level – but it can also work at to help brand cities and towns.

On the following pages are examples of where cities have used a strong corporate brand to help their identity: Suffolk, VA and Pittsburgh, PA.



## The Imlay City Brand (continued)

### Suffolk, Virginia, Home of Planters Peanuts (and the original Mr. Peanut)

When a member of the Archive DS team was working in Suffolk as a consultant in the 1990's, the amalgamated City of Suffolk was looking for a new image. Many people in the City wanted to move away from their roots as an agricultural community and the original home of the Planters Peanut Company and the Mr. Peanut icon while many others felt that it was an important symbol in the community and should be celebrated as part of Suffolk's identity. When an icon is as recognizable as Mr. Peanut (see Times Square Billboard below) it can't hurt to have your city associated with it. People who have never heard of the place suddenly say – oh “Suffolk – the home of Mr. Peanut” and they automatically have an association with the place.

While Planters is still a going concern and major employer in Suffolk, their influence has faded over time.

[http://www.redorbit.com/news/science/526718/after\\_100\\_years\\_planters\\_influence\\_has\\_faded\\_as\\_suffolk\\_has/#XzzTRlMrIwXtSOMB.99](http://www.redorbit.com/news/science/526718/after_100_years_planters_influence_has_faded_as_suffolk_has/#XzzTRlMrIwXtSOMB.99)

However, the influence of the Mr. Peanut icon and Suffolk as a peanut city still remains strong. This is expressed annually in the Suffolk Peanut Festival. <http://www.suffolkpeanutfest.com>



Mr Peanut @ Times Square

[More details](#)

The Peanut Fest and the iconic Mr. Peanut- Suffolk, VA [1]

### Precedent: Pittsburgh, USA.

A great example of a city that has also made good use of an association with a well known international brand is Pittsburgh, PA. Although best known as a Steel town (and as the home of the Pittsburgh Steelers NFL football team), Pittsburgh has always had a diversified economy and was and is home to many other fortune 500 companies including Heinz.

A few years ago the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP), the non-profit organization behind some of Pittsburgh's most successful, popular and imaginative events, decided to launch a new Festival in Pittsburgh to help celebrate a big part of Pittsburgh's heritage and its love of ethnic food – Picklesburgh. <http://www.picklesburgh.com>

On the Picklesburgh website there is a quote from a *Business Week* article that states how: “The pickle has made something of a comeback. Fueled in part by the artisanal movement, an interest in unprocessed foods, and the trend in ethnic flavors, a new crop of pickle merchants have revitalized the iconic cuke. Borrowing from Eastern European customs and marrying them to those of Indian, Chinese, Korean, and other pickling traditions, the new picklers offer both an urban sophistication and a folksy, homespun allure. Sold at farmer's markets across the country and in gourmet specialty stores, these new pickle crossbreeds are finding their way onto the menus of trendy, upscale restaurants and pickle bars.” – *Business Week*



“Picklesburgh” branding with Heinz- Pittsburgh, PA [1]

## The Imlay City Brand (continued)

### Implications for Imlay City

Imlay City has deep agricultural roots and a great strategic location at the base of the thumb area of the state – well connected by highways in all directions and about an hour drive from greater Detroit. Imlay City has also been home to Vlasic Pickles since the factory moved there in the 1950's. Although the Vlasic Brand has changed owners a couple of times (it is now owned by Pinnacle Foods) – it remains a strong, identifiable brand in the minds of consumers and the Vlasic Pickle Mascot (the Vlasic Stork) is ranked among the top 25 coolest snack mascots of all time.

<http://ca.complex.com/pop-culture/2013/04/the-25-coolest-snack-mascots-of-all-time/vlasic-stork>

When you combine all of that with the growing interest in natural and artisanal foods and that people in urban areas are looking for opportunities to visit places where food is actually grown and produced, it makes a sense for Imlay City to explore branding opportunities that speak to all of these trends.

Whether as part of the city's larger branding exercise, or as part of an annual Pickle Festival, there are many great reasons for Imlay City to celebrate its agricultural roots. Aligning themselves with a very well known international symbol may very well be a good way to put Imlay City on the map. Vlasic Pickles/Pinnacle Foods should be approached to see if they may be willing to sign on as a lead sponsor in the same way that Heinz did for the festival in Pittsburgh.



Vlasic- A branding opportunity for Imlay City [1]



## Place-Making Principles for Economic Development

Based on the site analysis and branding directives, the design team developed several location-specific design principles for the Imlay City Area. It is believed that, through these areas of focus, a framework can be put in place as a decision-making tool for the future. The team developed a streamlined, two-tier approach to Placemaking:

### Short-term strategy -

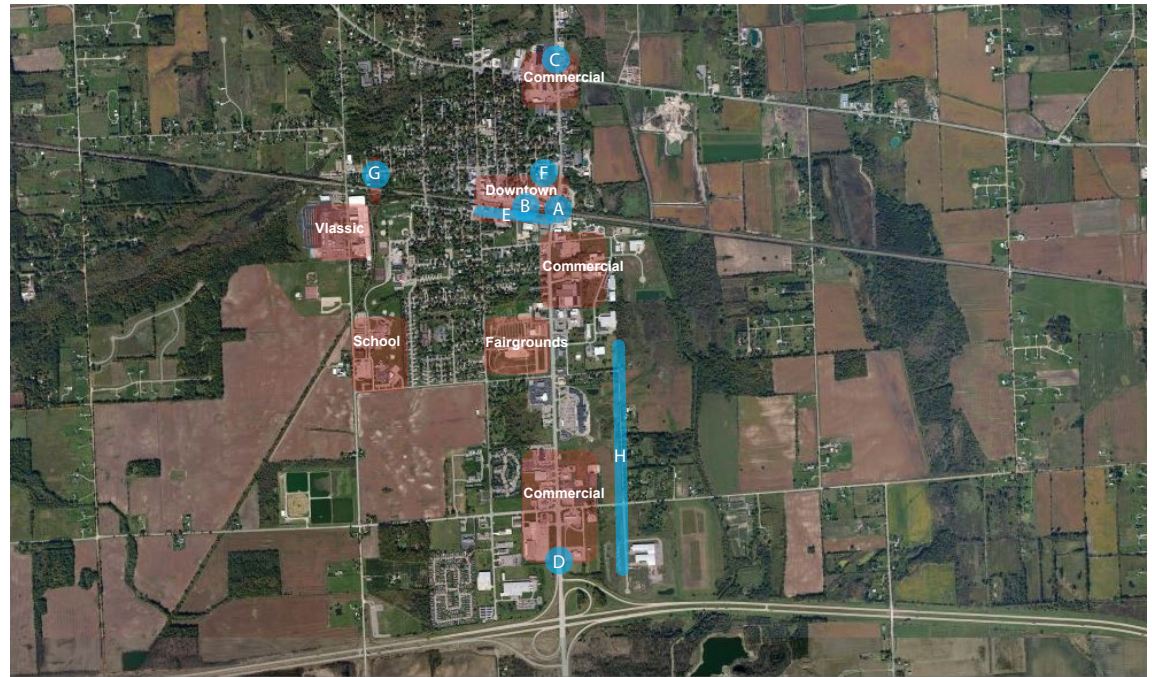
- Branding opportunities and business recruitment
- Traffic calming initiatives - Complete Streets
- Increase non-motorized enhancements
- Street edge development – pedestrianization of the sidewalk condition
- Landscape concepts – streets trees, passages, parkettes, public space, edges, walls
- Adaptive reuse of existing facilities

### Long-term strategy-

- New infill development opportunities
- Truck traffic repositioned over time

The end result of this approach should be as follows:

1. The Downtown developed as a focus for mixed-use activity and integrated with the development of M-53
2. Encouraged entrepreneurship through flexible, innovative spaces for new businesses
3. Re-established vacant industrial area, 2nd Street, as an asset for the downtown district through creative adaptive reuse
4. Resolved vehicular and pedestrian issues through walkable and non-motorized initiatives
5. Enhanced areas of transition along the M-53 corridor by implementing improvements that facilitate walkability



**Placemaking Development Plan- Zone Concept**  
Primary Placemaking and Development Areas and Major Influences



# Placemaking Development Zone A

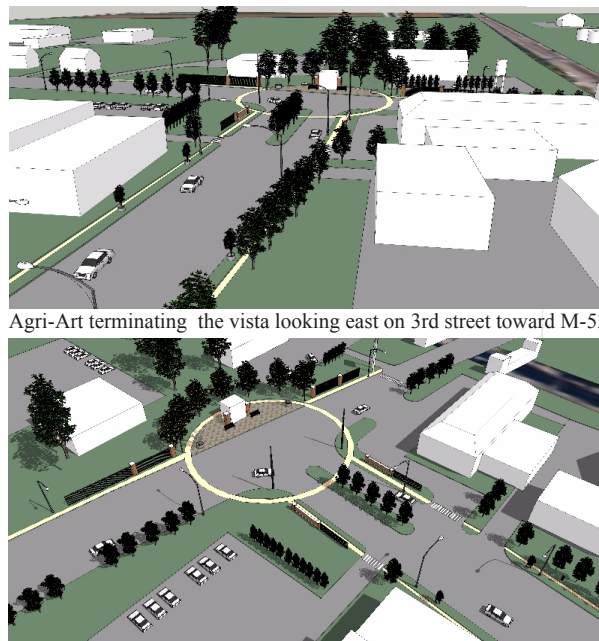
## Downtown Gateway - 3rd and Cedar Streets

The intersection of 3rd and Cedar Streets is a significant point within the city core. It is the primary gateway to the downtown district from the area's most highly traveled street – Cedar/M-53. Currently, the connection to the downtown is obscured and easily overlooked. An opportunity exists where a redesign of the intersection can provide an identifiable and noteworthy signal to direct visitors to the downtown and to provide a prominent entrance into the area's primary business district. Key elements that exist in the area that help to create a distinction are the rail bridge, the width of Cedar Street/M-53 at that point and the median/landscaping condition at the intersection.

A redesign of the intersection could include elements that would signify the gateway and make clear its prominence within the city. A narrowing of the street and enhancement of the vegetation are potential improvements that could be part of the infrastructure changes. Additionally, the corner could be developed with agri-art installations in the near term to emphasize the important of the intersection as well as assist in establishing the agricultural orientation of the city. In the longer term, new mixed-use infill development on all sides of the intersection would create the appropriate urban condition that emphasizes this place, along Cedar/ M-53, as a direct part of the downtown district.

### Legend

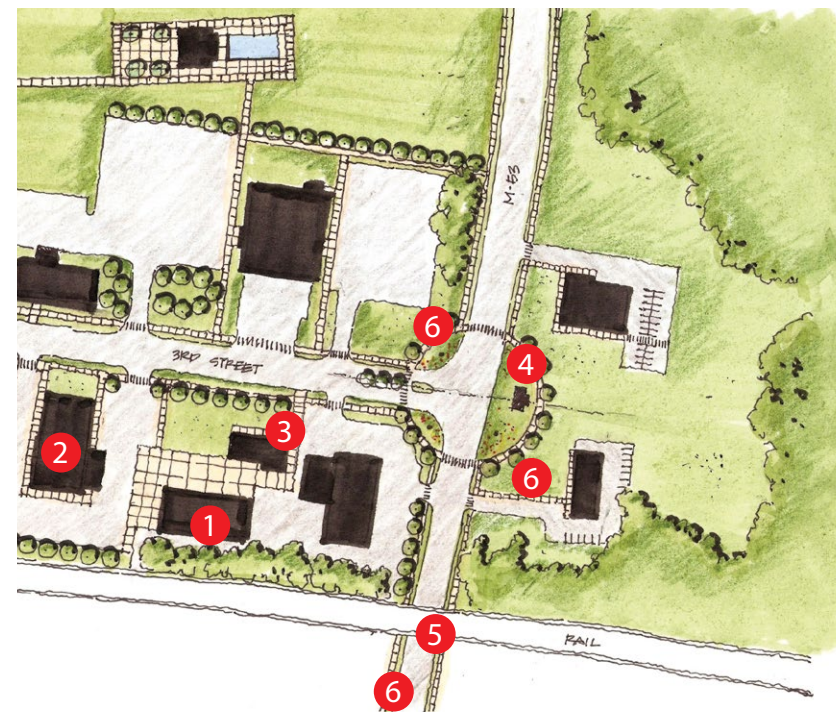
- 1- Renovated DPW building into a farmers market
- 2- Renovated firehouse into a community center
- 3 - Renovated sign shop into an agri-business incubator
- 4 - Agri-art installation and public green space
- 5 - Renovated rail bridge
- 6 - Pedestrian realm enhancements



Agri-Art terminating the vista looking east on 3rd street toward M-53



Existing condition 3rd Street and M-53



Proposed plan at 3rd Street and M-53



## Placemaking Development Zone A

### Downtown Gateway- The Railway Bridge

The railway bridge that spans M-53/ Cedar St., near downtown Imlay City, is an important opportunity. Once renovated it can become a key placemaking element. It can serve as the first signifier for people entering this area of the city, the downtown district.

The introduction of striking graphics, signage, color, lighting and pedestrian/ non-motorized infrastructure can create the sense of arrival when approaching downtown Imlay City from the south.



Existing railway bridge along M-53



Example of art installation on a rail bridge



Proposed bridge and non-motorized treatments



## Placemaking Development Zone B

### Community Center

#### Imlay City Square - Farmers' Market

The area directly in front the Historical Museum (formerly the train station) has the potential to be redeveloped as a central town square. The Placemaking Development Concept identifies a location for a focal point on axis with Main Street, creating a terminated vista. This could consist of a fountain, sculptural element, agri-art installation, or a clock tower.

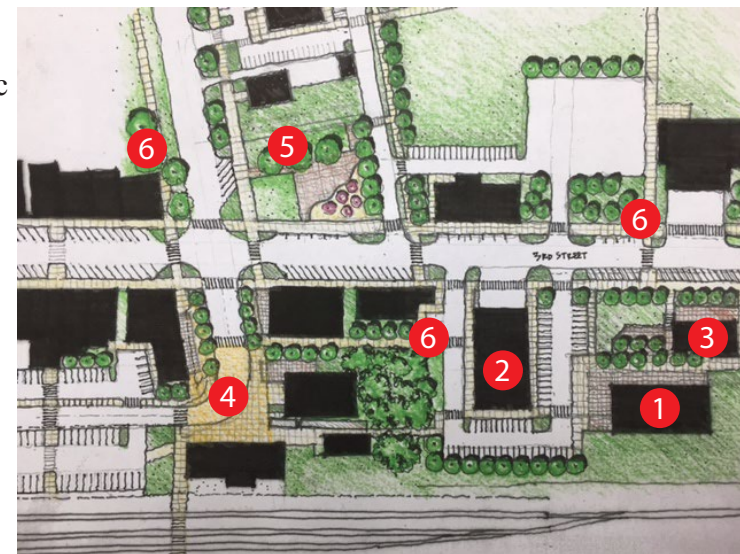
Additionally, the pavement could be redeveloped as a woonerf, a pedestrian and automobile shared space. The paved area would be pedestrian and automobile accessible during typical, daily use and could be closed off to become the town square during designated times and for special events and festivals.

The surrounding buildings have the opportunity for outdoor seating as supplemental activities for potential restaurants and cafes. A place where festivals, outdoor activities, seating and special events can occur.

Adjacent buildings, proposed for redevelopment, could be pedestrian-linked to the new public space and assist in creating an exciting core for the downtown.

### Legend

- 1- Renovated Department of Public Works building into a farmers market
- 2- Renovated firehouse into a community center
- 3 - Renovated lettering shop into an agri-business incubator and maker space.
- 4 - Imlay City Square
- 5 - Public space, park and urban beach
- 6 - Pedestrian connections and enhancements to walkability and landscaping



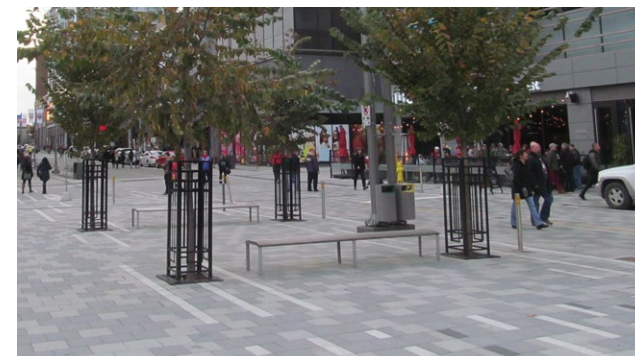
Imlay Square and Farmers' Market Area



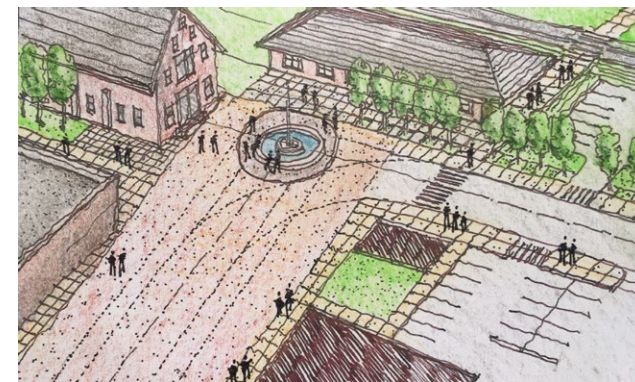
The "Kitchen Design Building" - this prominent historical structure can connect the agricultural past to the present



Plan view of Imlay SquarePedestrian/ vehicular shared space



Pedestrian/ vehicular shared space plaza example



Imlay Square Pedestrian/ vehicular shared space plaza



## Placemaking Development Zone B-continued

### Community Center

#### Imlay City Square - Farmers' Market

There are three municipal structures along 3rd Street that are proposed for renovation, they include the firehouse, the sign shop and the Public Works building. With the renovation of these structures, collectively with civic oriented uses, a unique synergy will be created as an important focal point within the city.

### Firehouse Building

Plans are that the firehouse functions will be relocated into a newly constructed building within the city and that this structure will be repurposed. As it is adjacent to the current civic space which includes a park and swimming pool, this structure is proposed to become a recreational facility.

### Sign Shop Building

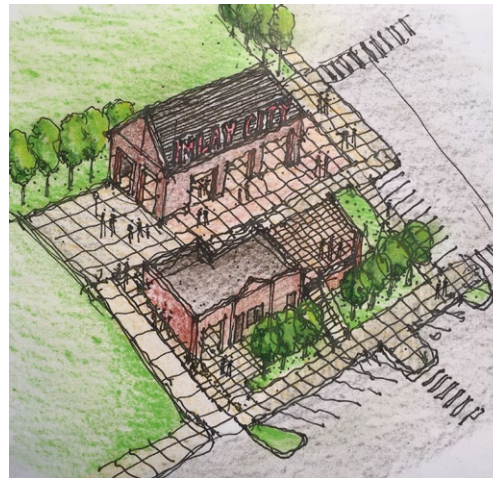
This structure is proposed to be redeveloped as a business incubator/ maker space. Additionally, there is an opportunity to include, within the structure, an agriculturally oriented center promoting and educating visitors and locals on all of the activities and initiatives of the various agri-art, education, recreation and business activities that are happening with the Imlay City area.

### Legend

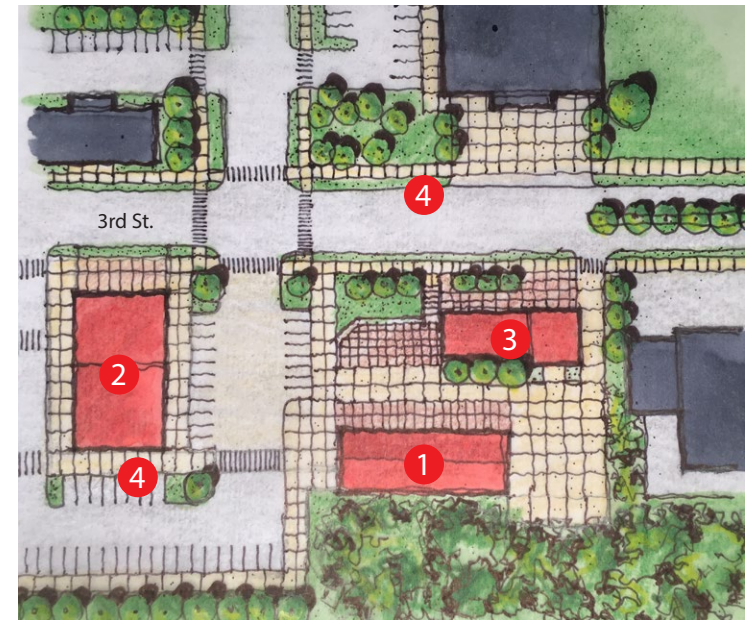
- 1- Renovated Department of Public Works building into a farmers market
- 2- Renovated firehouse into a community center
- 3 - Renovated sign shop into an agri-business incubator and maker space
- 4 - Pedestrian connections and enhancements to walkability and landscaping



Existing Condition- Zone B- Firehouse, DPW Building and Sign Shop area



Proposed concept sketches (annotated plan and aerial) of renovated DPW building (Farmers' Market) and Sign shop (agri-business incubator) area reimagined as an integrated pedestrian oriented system.





## Placemaking Development Zone B - Continued

### Community Center

Imlay City Square - Farmers Market

### Public Works Building

Plans include renovating the structure into a farmers market that will include an interior and exterior selling area that can be utilized during all four seasons.



Exterior of the existing Sign Shop



Interior of the existing Department of Public Works Building



Concept sketch of the proposed Sign Shop conversion to Agri-business incubator



Interior of the conversion to the new Farmers' Market



## Placemaking Development Zone C

### North Gateway - Cedar and Capac Streets

The access point into Imlay City from the north is currently an open, auto-centric intersection without definitive characteristics that identify the entrance into the city. As this is a transitional location from the northern, rural condition to the traditional neighborhood and business corridor within Imlay City proper, there is an opportunity to emphasize the specific location as a distinctive gateway from the north.

Concepts to be considered for the enhancement of this gateway are to develop vertical architectural features that align and emphasize the unique diagonal configuration of the intersections landscape. Additionally, there is an opportunity to develop vegetation and green installations that will identify with and call out the agricultural orientation of the community. These elements can also work to define the edges of the adjacent developments on all four corners. With an addition of new pedestrianized infrastructural elements integrated throughout, this intersection can create a distinctive new face for the Imlay City's northern gateway which will clearly depict an arrival to the city.

#### Legend

- 1- Agri-art installations at all corners to signify entry
- 2- Re-establishment of greenspace, from asphalt, at all corners
- 3 - Vertical element at all corners
- 4 - Pedestrian connections and enhancements to walkability and landscaping



View of auto-oriented development at North Gateway - Existing Condition



Pedestrian and landscape enhancements at North Gateway



## Placemaking Development Zone D

### South Gateway - I-69

The area just north of the I-69 and the M-53 interchange is largely an automobile-oriented developed part of Imlay City. Because of its proximity to the Interstate expressway, it is the primary entrance to visitors, residents and workers in the City.

In the short term, there is an opportunity to enhance this southern gateway by making it more pedestrian-oriented by increasing walkable infrastructure on both public and private land areas. This would create additional sidewalks as well as walking paths that connect each of the developments in the area.

Long term, the area can include infill redevelopments that incorporate mixed-use buildings and an increase in density for new developments.

Also, there is an opportunity to address the street condition and provide some Complete Street improvements, a potential Road Diet and increased landscaping. Lastly, gateway signage could be added as a way to identify the formal entrance to the city from the south and to assist in establishing the agricultural brand of Imlay City.



View of South Gateway (area in red) - Existing Condition



View of South Gateway proposed with entry signage and agri-art installation (see area in red above)



## Placemaking Development Zone D

### Transforming a Suburban Arterial- An example for M-53

The accompanying images illustrate how, through incremental public and private investment, a typical suburban strip corridor can be transformed into a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment. The inclusion of Complete Streets principles will aid in traffic calming and a better perception of the corridor environment along M-53.

These types of Complete Streets applications also can be used to direct more town-scaled and pedestrian accommodating development.



Existing condition along M-53



Conceptual example of a Complete Streets application on M-53



# Placemaking Development Zone E

## Grainery District - 2nd Street

The character of Imlay City includes an inherent rural and agricultural orientation. One of the most prominent places where this is evident is on 2nd Street, which is lined with grain manufacturing structures along the rail corridor.

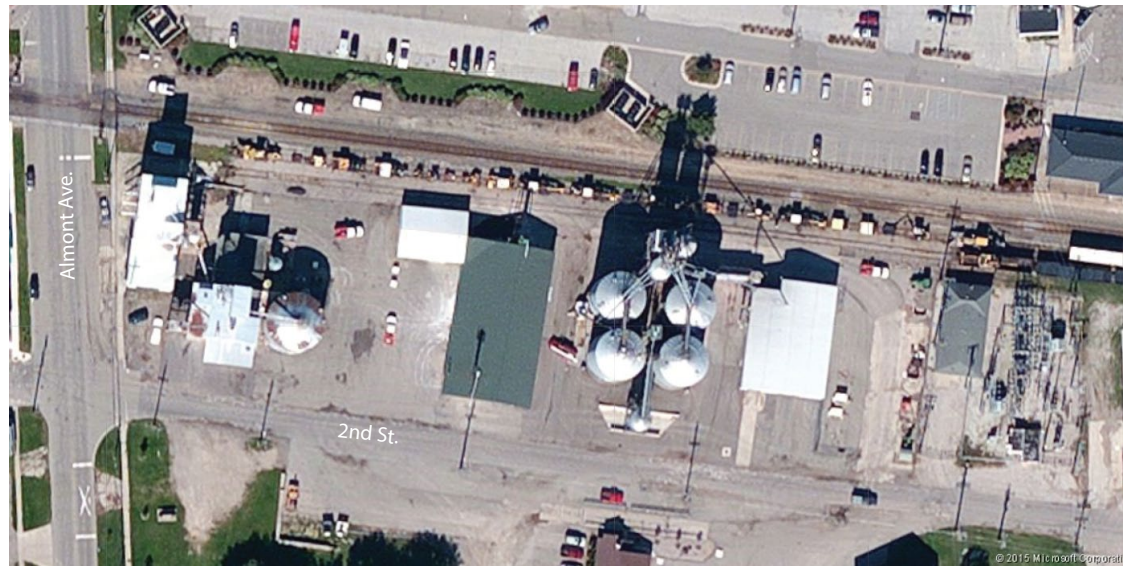
Currently empty, this collection of intriguing structures has the potential of being a new and dynamic area, redeveloped with a number of innovative reuses that enhance and celebrate the distinctive agrarian architecture.

This Grainery District, incorporating live, work and recreational uses, can become one of the most interesting new redevelopment areas in the entire state.

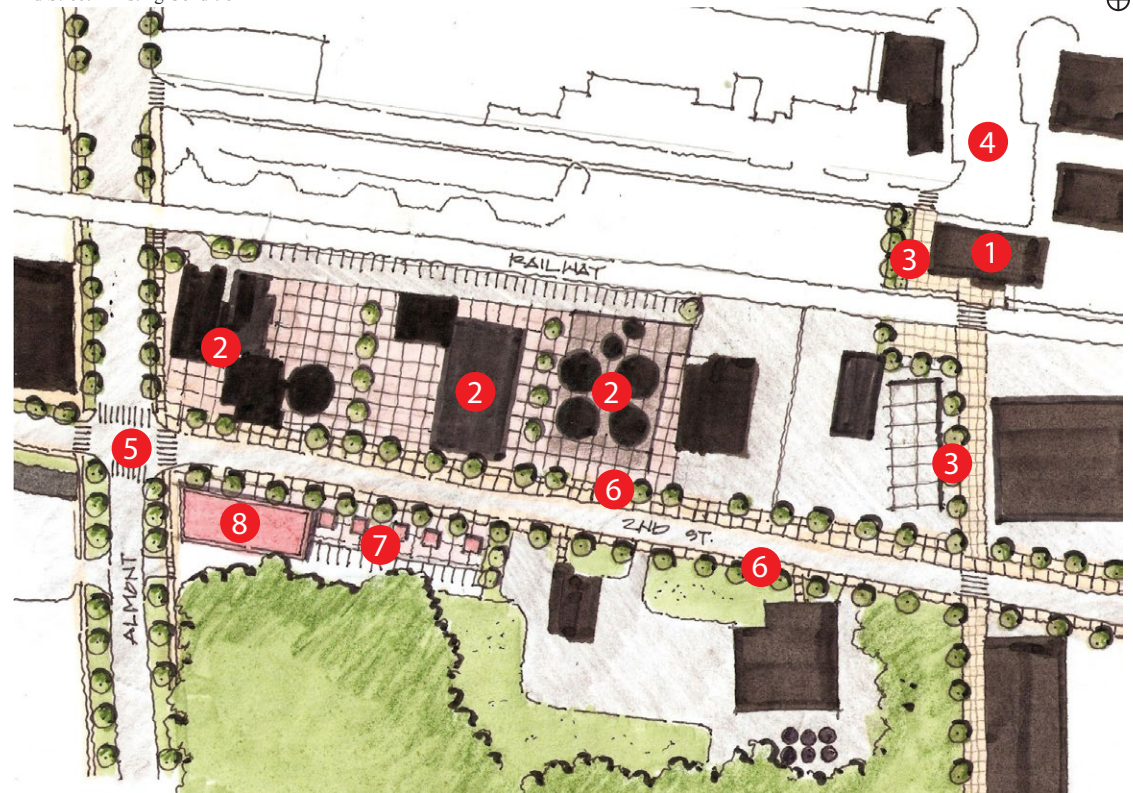
Additionally, this district would celebrate the agricultural orientation of the community and potentially incorporate agri-business, education, art and recreational elements.

### Legend

- 1- Renovated museum
- 2- Renovated grain facilities into entertainment, gallery, restaurant, and office facilities
- 3 - Extension of pedestrian facilities
- 4 - Imlay Square
- 5 - Intersection enhancements for gateway condition at 2nd Street
- 6 - Pedestrian connections and enhancements to walkability and landscaping
- 7 - Maker/ seller spaces (see page 17 for examples)
- 8 - Mixed use incubator or maker space building



2nd Street- Existing Condition



2nd Street- Proposed Condition



## Placemaking Development Zone E - Continued

### Grainery District - 2nd Street

The following are potential elements that may be incorporated into the developing district.

Strategies for redevelopment include:

- define the street edge with a new street, curb and gutters
- add pedestrian elements - sidewalks, crosswalks
- add pedestrian connections to the downtown district/ 3rd Street to the north
- graphics, painting, murals, colors to the structures
- lighting for the structures to establish nighttime drama
- add non-motorized pathways

Potential uses for the district:

- retail
- restaurant/ cafe
- office/ coworking/ maker spaces
- gallery/ museum
- recreational
- educational



Example of an industrial facility aesthetic treatment



View looking east of existing industrial grain facility buildings along 2nd Street



Proposed Grainery District looking east



# Placemaking Development Zone F

## Recreation and Civic Space Redevelopment

The civic area to east of the Imlay City Municipal building includes a number of civic amenities and recreational elements. This large area of public land is well located. The underutilized land area is directly visible from the active adjacent Cedar Street and across from the hub of the Downtown District. Assets on the site include the municipal building, swimming pool, playground and greenspace.

In the near term, enhanced public uses and activities would create a higher level destination beyond what already exists. Potential opportunities could include enhancements to the swimming pool, the municipal building, the park, and a firehouse redevelopment.

In the long term, there is an opportunity to create new public and private developments on this land area that can enhance the overall parcel and support the city core.

Strategies and concepts for the overall site include:

- converting the firehouse into a recreational/community center
- enhancing the swimming pool by creating a stronger connection to the downtown
- increase access to the site by creating new streets and block structure
- create a stronger connection to the downtown and the neighborhood by increasing pedestrian-oriented elements
- refine parking areas, create shared parking conditions, pedestrianize and add agri-art elements to the surface lots
- incorporate community gardens
- consider infill mixed-use developments on some of the newly created city blocks

### Concept A- Short-Term

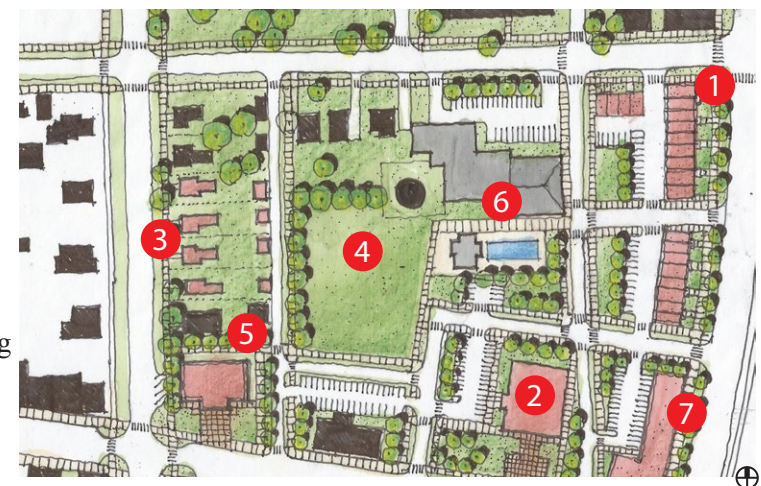
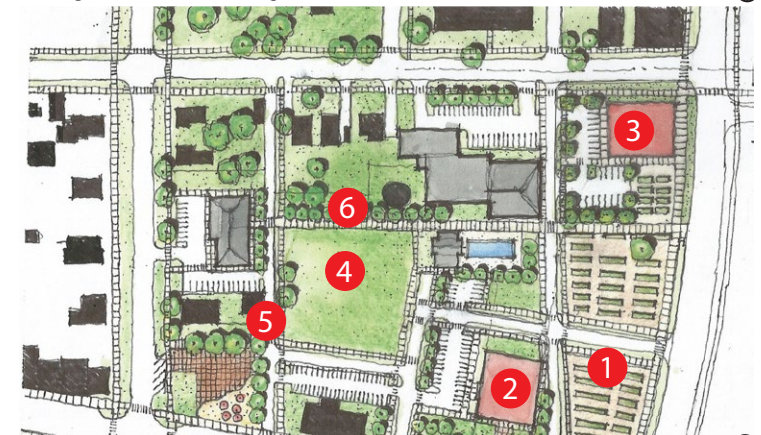
- 1- New community gardens
- 2- Existing community center
- 3- New mixed use building
- 4- Outdoor green
- 5- Public park and urban beach
- 6- Pedestrian connections and enhancements to walkability and landscaping

### Concept B- Long-Term Opportunities

- 1- New residential townhomes
- 2- Existing community center
- 3- New Single Family Residential
- 4- Outdoor green
- 5- New City Hall
- 6- Pedestrian connections and enhancements to walkability and landscaping
- 7- New Mixed- Use or Clinic building



Existing recreation and civic space





# Placemaking Development Zone G

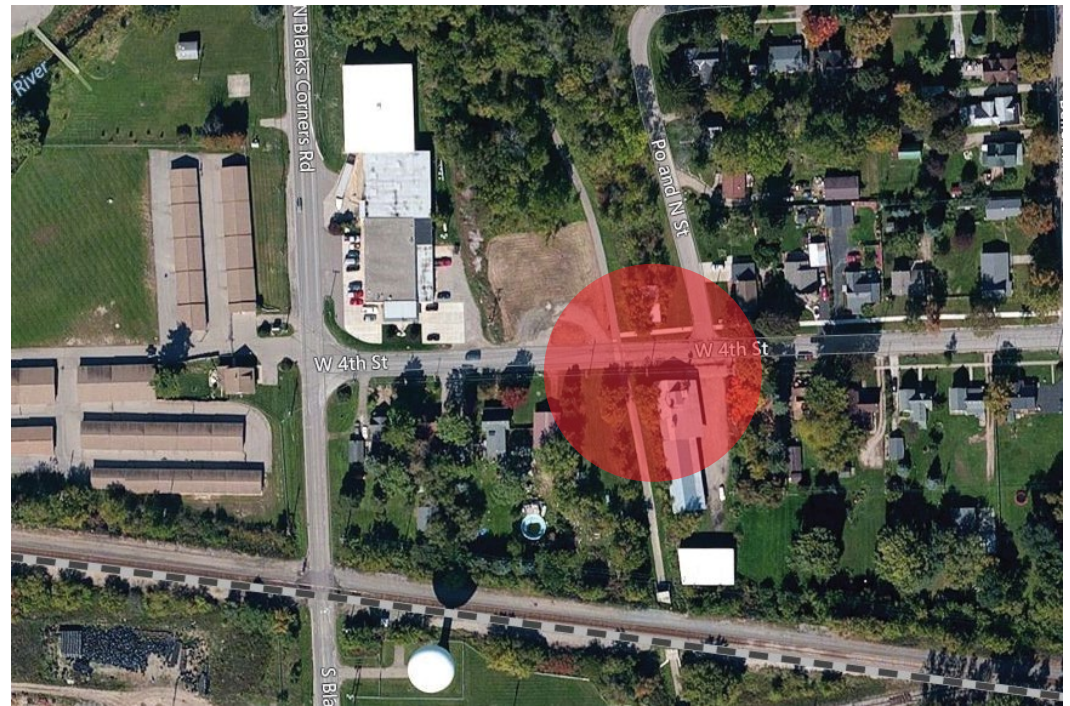
## Polly Ann Trail Node

The non-motorized connection to the greater region is a great asset to the area. There is an opportunity, as the Polly Ann Trail crosses 4th Street, for a nodal point to be developed. Within the west neighborhood, a focal point can be established and become an exciting place for pedestrians and bikers to meet and gather.

Specifically, the underutilized structure along the old rail corridor can become an interesting redeveloped amenity in the neighborhood. An adaptive reuse possibility for the historic railroad structure could become a cafe, retail or office space. Also, the node could include the creation of an enhanced public space which would support the node and any new business activities.

Additionally, the vacant lot could become a parking lot for bikers that are driving to utilize the non-motorized trail or a potential infill multi-family housing project.

A precedent example for the development concept exists in Carmel, Indiana. The Monon Trail, similar to the Rails to Trails Polly Ann Trail, has a trail head stop adjacent to the downtown. An existing rail structure there has been redeveloped as a restaurant with outdoor seating along the trail (below right).



Polly Ann Trail at west 4th Street with existing building



Existing underutilized building at 4th St. and Polly Ann Trail



Precedent Example: An existing rail building redeveloped into an amenity for the Monon Trail, Carmel, Indiana.





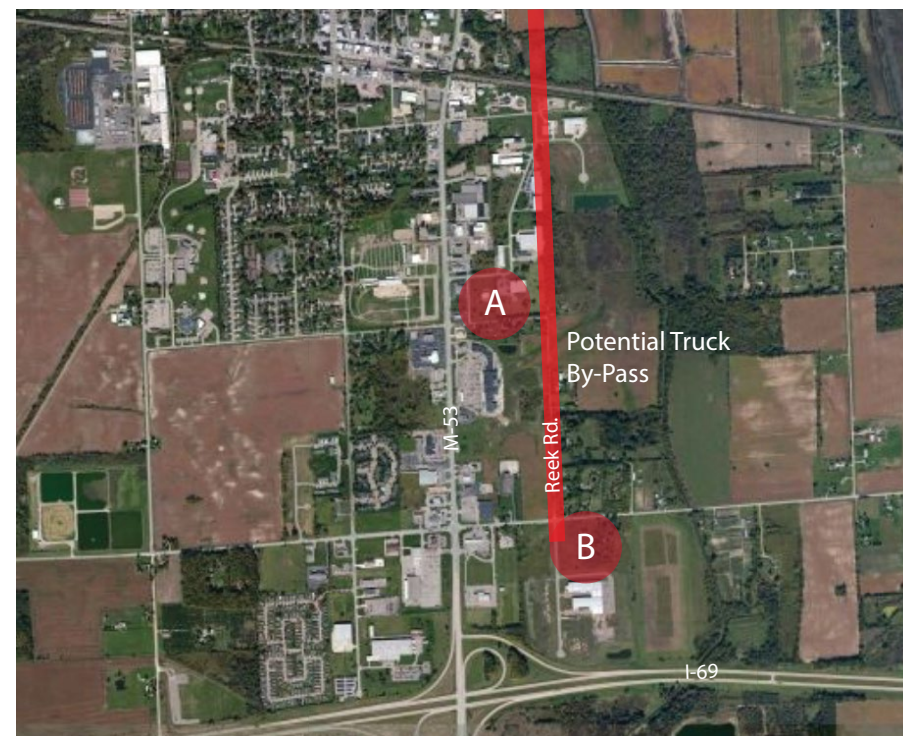
## Placemaking Development Zone H

### Truck By-Pass Alternative- New Fire House Locations

The prominence of heavy truck traffic has continued to be an overall hindrance for the M-53 corridor, just north of the I-69 access point. A potential alternative route to the corridor can alleviate some of the traffic intensification.

There is an opportunity to develop a by-pass for truck traffic east of the M-53 corridor. This idea would require a number of traffic studies and analysis of the environmental impact on the adjacent land users, but would be a worthwhile investigation.

There is a need for a new firestation at some point in the future. A number of locations are being considered. The options (A and B in image to the right) are located in the southern portion of the city.



Location of potential truck by-pass and new firehouse locations



Precedent Example: Small town firehouse appropriate for Imlay City



## Design Conclusions

The Redevelopment Plan process concluded with a series of design directives that are intended to be the basis for the redevelopment strategy. These conclusions assist in establishing a vision for the community, the city and interested developers.

### **Establish Imlay City as a Regional Destination**

The quality downtown core area and the quality of built form surrounding it establishes its importance. The design team identified this area as a primary element within the overall context. Specifically, this area makes the connection between the three municipalities by acting as the focal point. With the renovation of the existing industrial buildings along 2nd Street and land prime for infill opportunities facing M-53, it acts as the heart for the overall revitalization area.

### **Development of Public Spaces to Display Agricultural Heritage and Local Talents**

The vacant land in the area provides opportunities for new types of public spaces for display of homegrown entrepreneurial talent and to respond to the call for new infill development as the opportunities arise. This new way of thinking about public space will aid in solidifying the brand for the area.

### **Promote Pedestrian Accessibility and Scale**

To encourage pedestrian-oriented elements within the area, the design team identified opportunities to increase areas where new development would increase the walkable environment. The scale of the buildings, active sidewalks, open public spaces, and non-motorized infrastructure all would support a more pedestrian-friendly environment. The team identified where pedestrians currently travel within the core and adjacent neighborhoods and looked to encourage additional pedestrian connections. This would be specifically targeted for promotion within the redeveloped area.

### **Integrate New and Existing Structures**

One of the primary assets within the core area is the quality of some of the existing industrial and commercial structures.

The charrette team was encouraged by the development opportunities of the vacant and underutilized buildings. Therefore a development approach that promotes infrastructure connections short term, and infill projects around existing structures long term is critical to achieve the potential vision for the area.

## Design Recommendations - Immediate Actions

The first and most crucial step on any implementation strategy is to decide and commit to the agreed upon results of the design process. Once there is commitment to the recommendations, prioritization must occur. This creates a "road map" for the realization of the vision.

The following recommendations were identified as steps to implement a successful redevelopment of the Imlay City Community Revitalization Plan area. These will assist in establishing an integrated series of urban elements that will enhance the quality of life within the adjacent neighborhood and potential mixed-use district.

### **Encourage the Redevelopment of the Existing Industrial Buildings on 2nd Street**

Unique structures are always an asset to a community, rooting it to the past and embracing unique characteristics. The existing industrial buildings should be considered an important part of the community structure and be promoted as an important element for its future.

### **Encourage Private/Public Participation for Infrastructure Development**

Private/public participation can be a logical system for development projects specifically regarding providing amenities for the non-motorized trail system into the existing street and park infrastructure.

### **Encourage Private Developer Involvement for Market-Rate Mixed-Use**

Development based on the understanding and potential of the mixed-use and residential market, developers should be encouraged to consider Imlay City as an optimal location for new infill development.

### **Establish City Ordinances and Zoning that Support the Vision**

Working with the City and the business community, there are potential zoning and ordinance change options that may encourage development and permit the implementation of the vision.

## Implementation Strategies

A primary objective of the Plan was to create consensus for the future development of the Imlay City area. This future development should be planned to be mostly “market-based” and driven by entrepreneurial activity and developer interest. Additionally, the plan should consider the interests of Imlay Township and Attica Township and look for opportunities to integrate procedures and create partnerships to achieve similar goals, especially with regard to infrastructure improvements.

The redevelopment of existing towns, neighborhoods, and districts presents numerous challenges to the project coordinator. The implementation of many of the concepts from a redevelopment plan requires a level of commitment and resilience to meet the goals for success. Overall, there are two key preconditions to consider: wherever possible, the project promoter, non-profit development group or municipality should get control of as much land or buildings as is feasible. This allows for the maximum ability to direct projects that align with the community vision for future development. Secondly, the municipality needs to be engaged so that it takes a partnership and leadership role in the implementation. This may entail establishing directives that can assist in making the vision a reality such as rezoning the area, infrastructure investment and identifying sources for potential gap funding for projects. Through the involvement of the public sector, regeneration of underutilized areas can become attractive to private developers.

One of the primary goals of the Plan was to maximize the use of underutilized land parcels within the focus area. Specifically, the area offers great opportunities that speak to developer interests and marketability for investment interests. The charrette process incorporated ideas of uncovering ways that Imlay City can be utilized to encourage investment and development activity while being responsive to the interests of the residents. Thoughtful development would also have the added benefit of increasing tax revenue to the City and Townships.



Images of the character and quality of Imlay City



## Implementation Strategies - Public/Private Initiatives

Generally traditional towns lend themselves to relatively small-scale infill development, essentially to repair and reinforce the existing built fabric. Opportunities offered to developers would be for projects that would infill vacant lots or buildings.

### **Public – Private/Partnership:**

In the plan, public-sector participation should be employed as a means of engaging the resources of the private-sector. This plan is to be market-based and entrepreneurial-based. Therefore, implementation of the redevelopment plan is to be achieved through a mix of specifically targeted public and private sector actions.

The primary public-sector players in this case would be organizations that have established relationships in the area such as the S.E.E.D./ ABC Committee, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University in conjunction with the Imlay City Municipal leadership, which is expected to use their resources to facilitate the development of the local infrastructure of utilities, services, and streetscaping, and to facilitate the enhancement of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Private-sector participation in the implementation will be in the financing, development and marketing of the majority of the development and re-development opportunities. There are also numerous businesses within the area that should be approached for creative partnering. Businesses such as Vintech and Vlastic can be strategic resources for guidance and assistance in the realization of the plan.



The SEED/ ABC Committee

## Implementation Strategies - Development Responsibilities

### **Public/Private Development Responsibilities:**

#### **The S.E.E.D./ ABC Committee would:**

- Identify the scope of potential entrepreneurial activity currently taking place
- Develop incentives to encourage expanded entrepreneurial activity
- Identify city or state-owned properties that could be assembled and then reconfigured according to market demand
- Market the offerings to appropriate for-profit and not-for-profit developers
- Work with the City to undertake necessary infrastructure improvements
- Enforce plans and guidelines outlined in this report for the proposed redevelopment to ensure that potential developers have a clear understanding of the form of development being sought
- Undertake a program of infrastructure improvements that set the stage for the design recommendations outlined in the report
- Review the development approval process to minimize hassle to developers, while at the same time ensuring the development of quality districts

#### **Private developers would:**

- Acquire properties at fair-market value
- Supplement assembly where appropriate by private acquisition
- Develop and market the land in accordance with the redevelopment plan and development guidelines
- Develop detailed plans, based on the guidelines in this report
- Purchase fair market value parcels for development from the City, finance, construct/ renovate and market the new facilities

## Conclusion

The intention of this document has been to recommend and illustrate strategies that would offer the area the prospect of regional importance and an enhanced quality of life for residents. It should be stressed, once again, that the Community Revitalization Plan is a beginning, not an end. It is not a framework plan or zoning ordinance document, but is meant to guide both in the future.

Imlay City is at a critical juncture. Rural development is the next frontier of metropolitan planning. A cautious, deliberate approach to the entrepreneurial potential of the area must be married to a comprehensive and proactive approach to development in the area. The S.E.E.D./ ABC Committee should capitalize on the demand for “places” within the region by building an image of an interesting, welcoming, mixed use regional center. The revitalization plan will:

- Create catalytic projects as outlined in this plan document
- Create an identity for the site/area
- Create connections to existing amenities
- Create an environment that encourages innovative development
- Create a destination
- Create a symbol of community pride and gathering
- Create an examples of adaptive reuse as anchors for community development

The Community Revitalization Plan is a strategy in which the City, and by extension the adjacent Townships, regains its vibrancy. Imlay City will become welcoming, attractive, pedestrian friendly, and alive with activity. It will be an area of diverse interconnected zones, accessible by the automobile and yet coming completely alive when experienced on foot.

### Sources:

- [1] Google Images
- [2] *Agrarian Urbanism*, by Andres Duany
- [3] *Carrot City* by Gorgolewski, Komisar, and Nasir

