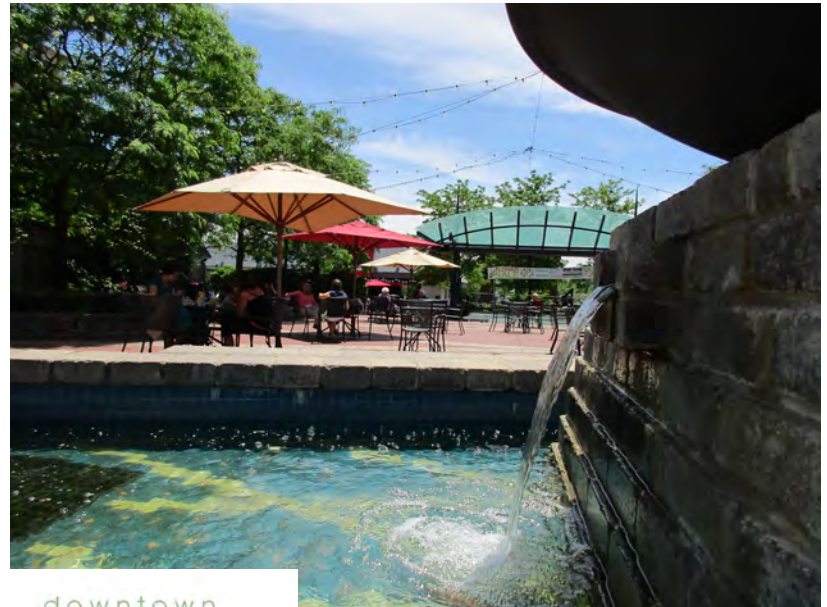
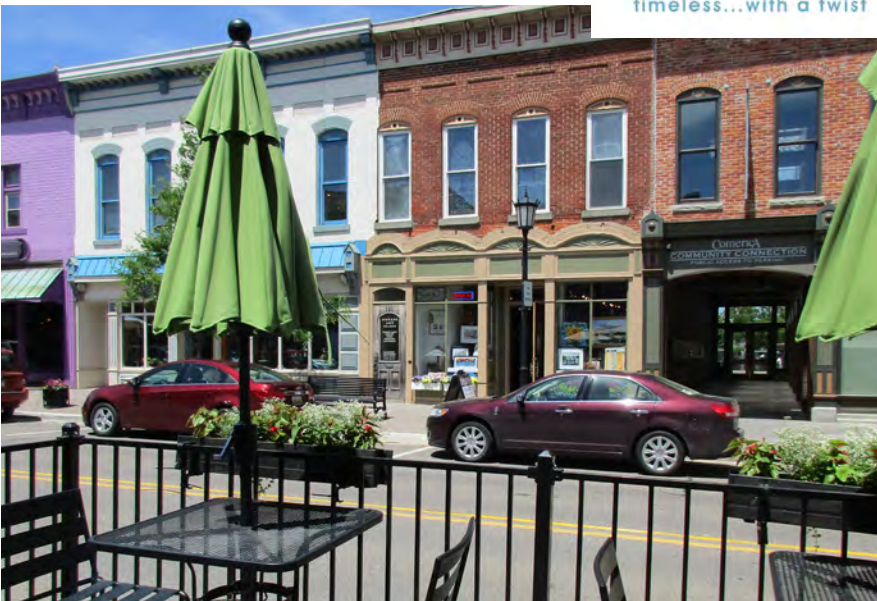


# City of Northville Downtown Strategic Update

2017



downtown  
*Northville*  
  
timeless...with a twist





# Acknowledgments

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## Executive Summary

The 2017 Northville Downtown Strategic Plan Update represents an opportunity to both reflect on the community's progress toward the goals set forth in its 2006 Strategic Plan, and to develop a new set of goals and strategies aligned with the maturing organizational role and capacity of the Northville Downtown Development Authority. The successful accomplishment of an impressive number of the projects outlined in the 2006 plan, including significant investment in urban design and physical features, demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to implementation that will continue to serve the Downtown and the City.



This plan seeks to build upon those accomplishments by fully exploring and leveraging their economic potential. "Users" of the downtown, both residents and visitors, were intensively surveyed about their experience. The updated physical analysis was refined to focus on circulation, parking, and business inventory. Retail and residential market analyses were conducted to relate the built assets of the community's core to the local economic conditions. These developments point to new opportunities for the Northville Downtown Development Authority and others to continue to shape the City's always evolving future.

## Planning Process

The City of Northville retained a team of professional planning, economic development, and market experts to facilitate the planning process. The study area was most intensely focused on the area within the DDA boundaries. However, consideration extended to adjacent areas as warranted by their relationship to the Downtown in general and the DDA district specifically. Northville Downs, Foundry Flask and Equipment, and portions of adjacent streets are therefore also considered. The Action Program that was produced as a result of the planning process is designed to provide guidance for the community's decision-making over the next 7-10 years.

The process of developing a Downtown Strategic Plan relies on a collaboration of community and business members. To assist with the preparation of the Plan, a Steering Committee was formed that consisted of members of the Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, Arts Commission, downtown business owners, residents, and representatives from the Planning Commission and Historic District Commission. These individuals met throughout the process providing valuable insight and input into the plan and recommended actions.

As ideas and actionable recommendations were being developed, two meetings were held in joint session with the City Council, Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority, and the Historic District Commission to present findings and elicit comments.



## *A Decade of Accomplishments*

There have been many accomplishments over the last decade that have made downtown Northville more beautiful, lively, and convenient for its residents and visitors. Below is a list of improvements made downtown.

### *Downtown Design Committee*

- Town Square
- Streetscapes on Main and Center Streets
- Pedestrian cut-throughs that link streetscape to parking lots
- CVS
- Facade and signage assistance
- Design and implementation of wayfinding system
- Developed conceptual design plan for Downtown Northville
- Encouraged outdoor seating downtown
- Improved maintenance
- Encouraged rehabilitation of downtown buildings
- Improved nonmotorized connections
- Incorporating directional signage from adjacent highways and major roads (underway)
- Implementing historic markers program (underway)

### *Marketing Committee*

- Walking map of downtown
- Business directories designed and installed
- Brand and image development
- Website update
- Special events
- Planned advertising
- Marketing and Promotions Plan

### *Business Mix Committee*

- Business Investment Guide
- Business Assistance Program for physical improvements
- Technical assistance grants for professional resources
- Educational workshops for business owners

### *Organizational Committee*

- Reviewed and amended DDA bylaws
- Annual planning sessions
- Department and organizational partnerships
- Professional memberships
- Developed volunteer base

### *Redevelopment*

- Neighborhood south of Cady Street

### *Local Government*

- Parking turnover study
- Upper floor development
- Parking occupancy study

## *Project Activity Timeline*

### *April 2016*

- Kick-off meeting

### *June 2016*

- Downtown survey: patron intercept (n=189)
- Fieldwork: business and parking spot inventory
- Field work: physical assessment

### *August*

- Stakeholder interviews (n=14)
- Downtown survey: online (n=882)

### *September 2016*

- Follow-up downtown survey: online (n=311)

### *October 2016*

- Retail and Residential Target Market Analysis

### *November 2016*

- Implementation Strategy

### *May 2016-February 2017*

- Downtown Steering Committee meetings
- Two Joint Committee meetings
- Town Hall Meeting

Toward the end of the plan process, a Community Information Meeting was convened at the Northville Community Center to present the findings of the retail market assessment and the residential target market analysis, and to review suggested next steps. In addition to their time spent, the resulting Action Program is a product of the activities described on the next page.

## **Results**

In-person (patron intercept) and online surveys asked participants their views on downtown Northville's image, vitality, barriers, and desired improvements. In general, residents are happy with downtown Northville's clean and historic image but voiced that it is lacking vitality due to limited retail and entertainment options and hours of operation. This opinion was confirmed by stakeholder and survey responses suggesting improvements that included greater business and dining variety along with extended hours of operation.

The Retail Market Study finds that the Northville market trade area, bounded by I-96, M-14, Territorial Road, and Pontiac Trail, can support up to 50,000 square feet of new retail enterprises, as well as a boutique hotel. The findings report that Northville can also support small event venues, retail basics, and has the potential to fill vacant niche retail opportunities such as chocolates shops and homemade soaps. The majority of respondents found the downtown accessible, stating that parking is adequate and that the downtown is pedestrian-friendly. The full Retail Market Study and exhibits are available as a separate report prepared by Land Use | USA.

The findings from the Residential Target Market Analysis (TMA) are broken down into aggressive and conservative scenarios. Based on a model that tracks lifestyle preferences and migration patterns, the aggressive scenario estimates that there is a maximum annual market potential for up to 50 attached units and 129 detached units throughout the City of Northville. The attached units are further broken down into formats such as townhomes, row houses, lofts, flats, multiplexes, and midrise buildings. This housing market recommendations were confirmed when respondents to a second internet-based survey noted their preferences for mixed-housing neighborhoods and opportunities for residential lofts and flats.

## **Future "Preferred" Vision**

From community engagement exercises there has emerged consensus on a broad collective vision for the downtown. The preferred vision for Northville is a downtown that maintains its historic character and its well-maintained atmosphere. Residents would like to see a more diverse array of retail, dining, and entertainment options that span all ages and income

groups. They envision mixed-use development that includes second floor housing units above ground floor commercial. Most importantly, they prefer development that can reconcile its architectural quality with the historic character of the city.

## Action Program

Based on the results discovered through the community engagement process, review of existing conditions, and market assessment, the Action Program is organized into five broad categories of opportunities. Each action item includes the specific tasks necessary to achieve it, the recommended time frame, and the party responsible for completing the task.

The Action Program also addressed recurring concerns about what the DDA can and cannot control in an effort to reposition downtown Northville. Included in the analysis is a matrix that explains for each of the broader categories what is within the DDA and the City's control.

The five Action Plan categories include:

- Design
- Marketing Mix
- Parking
- Economic Restructuring
- Organization

The Design action items are extensive. The tasks include implementing nonmotorized and streetscape improvements, burying overhead utilities, and upgrading traffic signalization. The Market Mix actions call for preparing an infographic of the Retail Market Analysis and Residential TMA, and sharing this data through an informational meeting with local Realtors and regional developers. Another Marketing Mix action strategy invites the DDA to sponsor a Creative Arts and Industry master plan.

The recommendations for the residential action items include streamlining the Planned Unit Development process and allowing for density bonuses in the PR-1 (Performance Regulated Industrial) zone. Redevelopment action items recommend advancing the community vision for the Cady Street Corridor and the Northville Downs properties previously prepared by the Planning Commission. To improve organizational efficiency, action items include filling DDA board member positions; conducting semi-annual work program review joint sessions with the DDA, Planning Commission, City Council and the Historic District Commission; and designating the DDA to coordinate events in the Town Square. In addition, the DDA should evaluate the feasibility of a Principal Shopping District as well as a contractual agreement with the City to increase capacity and determine a methodology for sharing costs.



*Photo: Northville Art House, an example of Northville's art scene*



*Photo: Outdoor seating creates a more vibrant sidewalk*

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# Strategic Plan Overview





## The Purpose of a Strategic Plan

Commonly referred to as the Downtown Development Authority Act, State of Michigan Act 197 was passed in 1975. The Act was created at a time in American history when downtowns were declining, and it was designed primarily to help spur economic growth and encourage commercial revitalization and historic preservation. The City of Northville established the Northville Downtown Development Authority in 1978. Its members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council and the Authority's annual budget requires City Council approval.

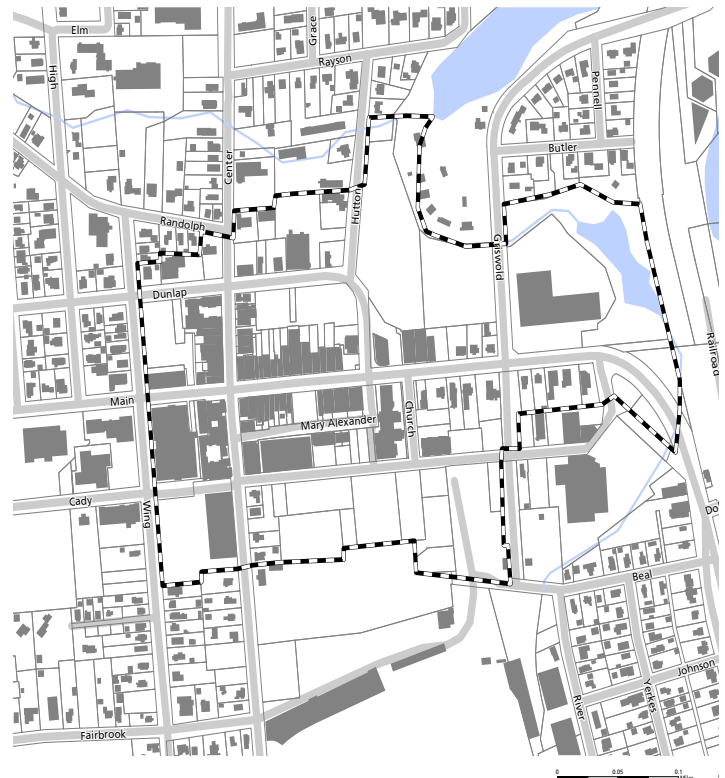
DDAs have the responsibility to plan and execute programs and projects, and they achieve this through the preparation and adoption of a development plan and the use of tax increment financing. The Act is powerful because it gives DDAs the necessary legal, monetary, and organizational authority to revitalize business districts through a variety of public and public-private initiatives.

Of course, the tools that DDAs use depend on the specific opportunities and problems they face, and the priorities the community and the board decide upon. To determine the particular problems that affect Northville's downtown, the DDA sought the community's input through various surveys, interviews, and public meetings. With this input, the DDA identified programs and projects that focus attention on these priorities.

The City and DDA contributed both time and funding to the plan. A goal of the planning process was to engage various downtown constituencies including community stakeholders, downtown patrons, and residents of both the City and the market area. As a result, the framework for the strategic plan included stakeholder interviews, patron surveys, online surveys, joint review sessions, and a Community Informational Meeting. It also includes consideration of areas outside of the DDA district, such as Northville Downs, Foundry Flask and Equipment, and adjacent streets, as warranted by their relationship to the district and their importance to the Downtown.

This plan is a compilation of the community's input, a physical assessment of the DDA, a review of the community master plan and zoning ordinance, and retail and residential market analyses. When examined together, this plan aims to guide Northville towards an improved downtown experience for local merchants and residents for the decades to come. The strategic update culminates with an action program that gives the Northville DDA concrete steps for achieving its proposed goals.






Map: Northville DDA boundary



NORTHVILLE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

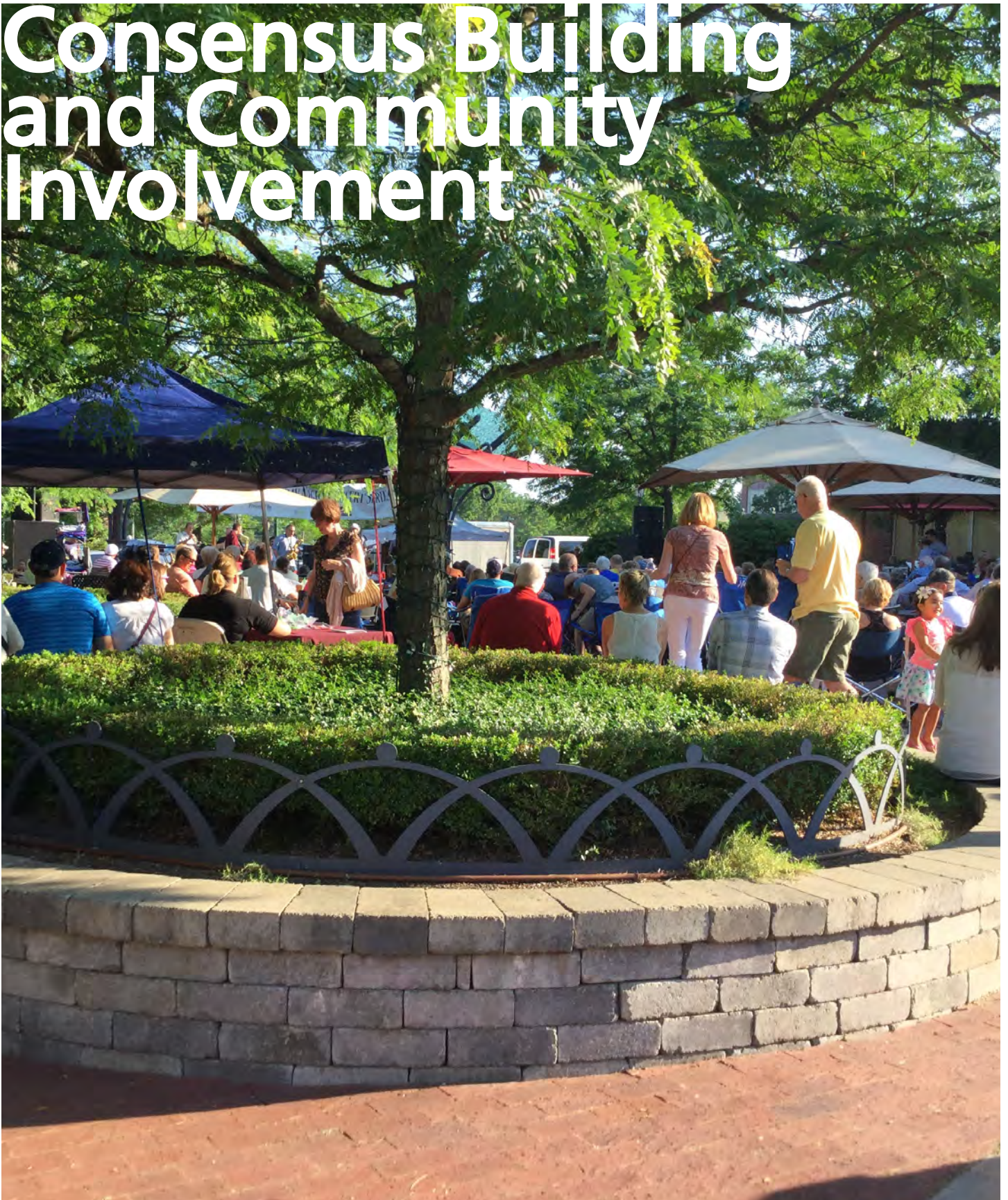
### Northville Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Boundary

Data Sources: Michigan CGI Data Library, City of Northville

-  DDA Boundary
-  Parcels
-  Building Footprints
-  Rivers
-  Roads



# Consensus Building and Community Involvement





Stakeholder input is key to the planning process. The opportunities for feedback presented during the strategic planning process proved to be very successful, demonstrating a high level of participation and devotion to the Northville community. With over 1,000 people engaged, including those both on the streets of Downtown and throughout neighboring communities, this outreach process has garnered a solid base of knowledge from which Northville can direct its efforts to improve the Downtown district.

Together with the assistance of a broadly representative Downtown Steering Committee, the following opportunities for input included:

- Stakeholder interviews (n=17)
- Downtown survey: patron intercept (n=189)
- Downtown survey: online (n=882)
- Follow-up downtown survey: online (n=311)

## Stakeholder Interviews

The Steering Committee developed a list of stakeholders to be interviewed to gain a qualitative understanding of their particular perspectives, which included business owner, building owner, resident, realtor, school official, and contractor. These interviews were conducted largely online and asked a series of open-ended questions about participants' perception of downtown Northville's image, vitality, barriers, and areas of improvement. The following section summarizes their responses in attempt to identify common themes. Twenty-nine stakeholders identified by the Steering Committee were contacted and 17 responded for a response rate of 55%.

### *Question 1: Image of Downtown*

The most common words used to describe the downtown were "clean," "inviting," and "quaint." While stakeholders are generally impressed with its attractiveness and historic elements, some say it's quiet and sleepy and that its small town vibe has "few things that fulfill specific needs" for patrons.

Perhaps partially due to its family-friendly atmosphere, some have said that the downtown "streets roll up early" and that it could benefit from more convenient business hours such as evenings and weekends. This could also explain why one stakeholder remarked that businesses are "struggling to grow." The contrary desires of diverse downtown patrons are summarized nicely by one resident who thinks "there is an important balance of tradition and historical elements," but they could be "blended with some initial attempts to appeal to a more modern or contemporary perspective."

It was also remarked that the downtown is “lacking a coherent brand identity that stalls efforts to market it” more broadly.

### *Question 2: Assessment of Downtown’s Vitality*

Stakeholders who rated the vitality of the business district gave it rather average scores. Again, they mention that a lack of vitality is due to hours of operation. Some offer examples of the downtown bustling in the mornings on both week days and weekends, but that foot traffic dies down in the evenings, and even compare Northville negatively to a much livelier downtown Plymouth. While most properties are occupied, there lacks a diversity and uniqueness of stores and services to draw patrons downtown. One stakeholder suggests that keeping services and offices out of the retail first floor could improve foot traffic.

### *Question 3: Improvements*

The improvements suggested by stakeholders touch on several related issues. A common request was for a greater variety of businesses, including brand name retailers and restaurants. In addition to a more diverse mixture of unique retail, there is a specific request for these businesses to stay open later in order to attract outside patrons and make Downtown a more convenient place to shop for residents.

There is a desire “to combat the perception that Northville is a quiet town and find more ways to keep people in town longer.” Stakeholders mention building condos or lofts which would inevitably increase the amount of people that frequent downtown establishments, and possibly support more business. Second to this improvement are requests for repaired roads and improved pedestrian connections that lead to Downtown, in particular a better connection to Ford Field. Parking lot improvements were requested infrequently but consistently, and according to a stakeholder, are “becoming a bigger issue each year.”

### *Question 4: Desired New Businesses*

These responses are mixed but provide some insight about the types of businesses the community wants to see. A few stakeholders would like to see activities or stores geared toward children and families, for examples stores with children’s clothing or toys, a movie theatre, and/or a bowling alley.

Retail and restaurants were the most common responses. Stakeholders mentioned a few types of retail, including a hardware store although the respondent also noted that it “is unlikely because it is so hard to compete with big box stores.” The types of retail suggested reflect the diversity of the community’s shopping needs, and they also share an affinity for small

businesses. One stakeholder said explicitly that he/she supports restrictions on chain businesses and that only local businesses “should have the opportunity to thrive in our town.” Despite the range of retail requested, the stakeholders used adjectives such as “niche,” “independent,” and “unique” to describe the type of retailers. The retail requests suggest more clothing options for men, millennials, children, and athletes.

The range for types of restaurants was also broad. One respondent reported wanting more casual options with dining outside, a butcher shop with a deli, and another for upscale restaurants because there is “room for more.” Or, there could be space allotted to pop-up dining, venues, food trucks, and brew pubs.

**Question 5: Barriers**

A few stakeholders mentioned that the racetrack takes up a lot of space and is “unsightly and not very welcoming” especially as people enter Northville.

The discussion of other barriers was divided on the level of difficulty in developing downtown. Speaking from professional experience, one stakeholder said that developing in Northville is not difficult, while others note that “the City drags things on too long for developers.” Others echo this idea, reiterating the City government’s “unsupportive attitude”

Barriers	Suggestion
High property values/lease rates	Create a database for landlords to compare lease prices, improve parking and pedestrian connection to make a higher up-front cost worthwhile
Lack of cohesive public policy	Provide match grants for business improvements, replace First Fridays with an equally popular event, offer grants or incentives for businesses to locate to Northville, streamline procedures for development
Perception of quiet town	Increase residential density near downtown, support and promote events to surrounding communities, zone for retail on the ground level, change business hours to accommodate evening and activities/events, allow for pop-up retail and dining
Resistance to changing Northville’s small-town image	Equal support for out-of-the-box business, encourage unique dining experiences, expand outreach to ensure the city is capturing all residents’ input, not only the most vocal
Infrastructure	Improve bicycle lanes and amenities, create short-term parking spots for patrons that are separate from employee’s spaces, advertise free parking spots

*Table: Stakeholder respondents reported barriers and suggestions to downtown development*

towards existing businesses. These comments reveal that one of the communication barriers is a lack of coordination between the City and business community. The City and the DDA could jointly evaluate the utility of hiring a contract economic development professional to assist with projects and serve as a liaison among the various entities. To facilitate internal coordination in the public sector, a regular meeting among the DDA, City, Planning Commission, and Historic District Commission could be held to determine areas of coordination, communicate about current projects, and identify milestone future events.

Still others note it could be a combination of high costs for land acquisition and lease rates coupled with low foot traffic, due to relatively low housing density near the downtown to support business, that deter developers from investing in Northville. Another common response is that Northville's image of itself is limiting, warning the City that it "can't be afraid of out-of-the-box-thinking" and in those cases the local government can be a "bottle neck to a new level of excitement." In addition to complaints about local government, there is a general belief that older, more established residents are also resistant to any proposed changes to the downtown business profile as demonstrated by the quote "we have been surprised at our fellow residents' hesitancy (and sometimes downright refusal) to accept any type of change. "



*Photo: The Great Lakes Food, Art, & Music Fest held at Ford Field in June 2016*

### *Question 6: How Local Government Can Help the Downtown District*

Some stakeholders voiced concern that local government's processes and procedures are inaccessible, and that they hinder anyone "straying too far from the 'image' of Northville." However, most comments focused on what the City could do to assist downtown redevelopment and revitalization.

Stakeholders tend to believe that the City government could improve marketing and coordinating community festivals, parades, and other events to make the permitting process easier. The City and other relevant agencies should advertise events in addition to posting on social media and the DDA website because those platforms may exclude those who are not digitally active. One person remarks that City government is on the right track by supporting Victorian festivals and the Buy Michigan Now festival, yet adds that "a lot of people I know are unaware that events are taking place." And another stakeholder alludes to quality over quantity of events, stating that working more closely with the Chamber "to host fewer but better events" could prove beneficial.

Several comments pointed to needs which could be served by a business assistance team. It was recommended that the City could "provide matching funds for business improvements" and/or other business incentives. These could include grants, loans, or programs such as the reinstatement of the former facade assistance programs as well as technical assistance in areas such as marketing, advertising, business finance, and



operations. It would be the community resource capable of fulfilling one respondent's suggestion for a property database that allows for comparison among lease rates and terms. Tax abatements were advised only with the warning that the City must also understand the pros and cons to incentives.

Some recommendations are to make parking more accessible because it appears that parking "spots are taken by 9 am" by employees of local businesses. Another recommendation voiced in earlier responses is to allow retail on the ground floor to generate more foot traffic.

### *Question 7: Influential Areas*

When asked specifically about improvements in the Downtown district, the responses were varied.

Three of 14 responses call for more parking, especially long term parking for employees and "short-term parking in more desirable lots." A couple of stakeholders would like the City to keep up the events; one said, "I really think the City is on to something with the Friday Night Concerts, Food Trucks, and Beverage Tents. It really seems to bring people into town and I am sure it supports the local retailers." Events would also draw more residents downtown, and perhaps those from surrounding areas, if children's activities were incorporated. Two related requests are to increase downtown green space and that a pedestrian-only shopping district would be good addition and a positive influence to downtown." More generally, a resident wants to see the city "grow the sense of community that we have."

Some improvements call for better maintenance, for instance, cleaning up the corner of Griswold and Cady where the Downs discards debris. Additionally, better maintenance is warranted along 7 Mile (between Northville Road and Marilyn).

### *Question 8: Northville as a Good Place to Invest*

Five out of 17 stakeholders replied unequivocally that Downtown is a good place to invest. The responses differed by homeowner and business owner, with the former more positive than the latter. One stakeholder voiced the concern that "most small businesses do not stay for very long." Other respondents think investment opportunities are good, but attached qualifiers to their replies. For instance, one comment was "Yes, if the foot traffic is there," or that it "would be better with a greater variety of housing options." There is a missing middle in the housing market, meaning there is either affordable housing or high end housing, and that a mix of housing types close to downtown would enliven the space.

Replies allude to concerns heard in previous questions. Northville may not be perceived as a place to invest because it "is often viewed as a daytime



*Photo: The Comerica Connection is another example of efforts to make Northville more pedestrian-friendly*

## Section Two

business district only,” and that it would be a better place to invest but it is “stagnant.”

### *Question 9: Transportation Issues*

While some think that overall the parking options are more than adequate in comparison to other downtowns, a few would like to see a parking deck. One reply envisions a parking deck near the post office, or renting a portion of Northville Downs and providing bikes or shuttles to downtown destinations. As discussed earlier, patrons find that the best spots are taken by employees all day and believe metered, short-term parking would alleviate some of the parking shortage for patrons. One stakeholder acknowledges that there is free parking in Northville and that parking concerns could be eased with better advertisement.

Moreover, pedestrian connections, specifically near Kroger, could encourage people to walk downtown instead. Another suggestion is to enforce the parking commitments made by downtown entities, as one reply implies that businesses are not abiding by the rules and taking up parking for other consumers.

*Photo: Pedestrian amenities such as benches and trees for shade improve the downtown experience*



*Question 10: Routine Downtown Shopping*

About half of the stakeholders say they shop downtown routinely. Even those who do not shop downtown routinely note that they do occasionally go for one service or another, for example, to get a haircut, to dine, or to visit the cobbler. Those who shop elsewhere express that the shops do not fit their needs, the “prices are offensively high,” and the volume of goods is too low. The perception overall is that there is limited shopping downtown and the current retail does not provide a big enough draw. Dining downtown seems to be a more popular activity than shopping as both shoppers and non shoppers report visiting restaurants downtown.

*Question 11: Green Space*

There is a clear consensus that stakeholders would prefer to see more green space downtown. Those who disagree say that Ford Field is close enough to make additional green space “redundant,” and funds would be better used to improve Ford Field, namely by adding restrooms.

One stakeholder stated that parks are “not the best utilization of prime downtown areas.” However, another stakeholder affirmed the power of public space by observing that a recent downtown renovation that included wi-fi, seating areas, and a fire pit “has helped to draw residents to their downtown.”

The majority of replies repeated the sentiment that more green space “would be nice,” and list several potential sites:

- Northville Downs (most popular)
- Begonia Brothers spot
- E. Cady Street (linear park)
- Center/Main
- Downs and Cady Street

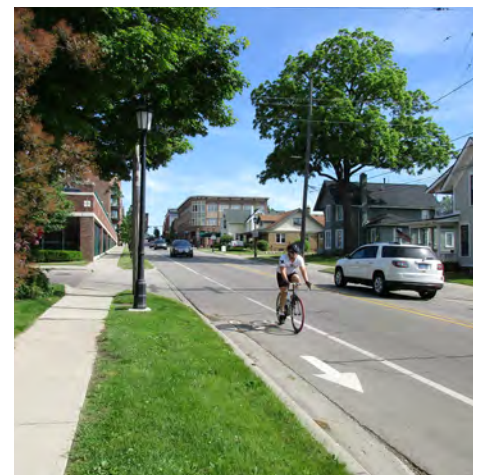
Some of those who acknowledge the proximity and size of Ford Field still prefer other parkland downtown.

*Question 12: Pedestrian-friendliness*

Overall, stakeholders contend that pedestrians feel safer than bicyclists; some stakeholders say they feel “extremely comfortable.” One commenter states that even though he/she doesn’t bike ride, “it seems we provide reasonable spaces/lanes for them.” Others noted that “bikes do not seem to have any place on most streets” and signs do not ensure that motorists will watch out for them.



*Photo: Narrowing the street slows down cars and creates a safer environment for pedestrians when crossing the street*



*Photo: Bicyclists have their own lane but still share the street with cars*



### Question 13: Other Downtowns

When asked what other downtowns Northville stakeholders visit, the most frequent answer was Plymouth. It was described as more “alive” than Northville; one stakeholder even used the word “progressive.” Some features that attract Northville residents to downtown Plymouth are Kellogg Park, the events held there, and the variety of restaurants, retail, entertainment, and activities. Other popular downtowns are Birmingham, Ann Arbor, Detroit, and Royal Oak, with the same claim that these downtowns are more vibrant, active, and the restaurants stay open later. When referring to Plymouth and Ann Arbor’s downtown, one stakeholder feels that there “is always something to do or eat.” In reference to frequent visits to Detroit, one stakeholder states, “I can actually meet up with people past 9pm.”

### Question 14: Downtowns that Capture What Northville is Missing

The most common answer provided by stakeholders for frequently visiting other downtowns is because Northville is missing a variety of dining and shopping destinations. Participants cite “food trucks,” “rooftop dining,” a “Mexican restaurant,” and a bar with “folk, Irish, and jazz” music. In addition to the style of dining, responses demonstrate that they appreciate the “great variety of price points” offered in other downtowns. The other common response was that more unique retail opportunities lie in other downtowns that are more reasonably priced. In particular, responses note clothing, jewelry, home wares, and antique stores that they have found in other places.

### Question 15: Other Issues

The positive responses revolve around Northville being a clean, safe, and friendly city. One stakeholder even wrote, “My family is blessed to live here.”

*Table: Stakeholder respondents reported strengths and assets of downtown development*

Strengths	Assets
Attractive	Clean, well-maintained, historic, relatively low commercial vacancy in the core
Pedestrian-friendly	Ample amenities, safety is a priority, well connected network
Family-oriented	Pedestrian safety, Ford Field, low crime rates
Opportunity	Untapped potential both in terms of expanding access to existing business as well as new ventures
Events	Farmers’ Market, First Friday’s, Friday night concerts, Skeletons are Alive!, Buy Michigan Now Festival



Negative issues refer to responses reiterated through the interviews. Small businesses struggle in Northville, they are out-of-date, and they close too early.

Only a couple comments discussed the Farmers' Market. A stakeholder suggested that the Farmers' Market be held on the weekend because it is more convenient for working families and/or individuals. Another stakeholder mentions that Farmers' Market is in need of repair.

One stakeholder recommends starting a river walk once the race track is redeveloped, as it would be "a great way to expose the Rouge River" that could continue north onto Beal Street.

## Conclusion

While the stakeholders' responses highlight an array of desires for downtown Northville's future, there is general consensus that in its current state, the Downtown district is not dynamic enough to capture residents' attention and meet their retail needs. The stakeholders would like to see more diverse retail options, extended store hours to accommodate working individuals and families, and a more coordinated effort to market and expand on downtown Northville's events.

## Downtown Survey Results

A Downtown Survey was developed for the purpose of gaining public feedback regarding many features of Northville's core business district. The survey asked what visitors like and dislike about downtown Northville, how often they visit, and the average length of their stay. Nine (9) total questions were developed by the Downtown Survey Committee. Seven questions were related to Downtown's attributes and amenities, and two questions provided demographic information. With this information, the DDA can make improvements that better accommodate their patrons to boost both business sales and the overall satisfaction with shopping and dining experiences.

The survey was administered in two ways: a patron intercept survey conducted on the streets of downtown Northville, and an online link distributed through the City's website, social media channels, and partners.

### *Downtown Survey: Patron Intercept*

The patron intercept survey was conducted in Downtown Northville on June 21, 24, and 25, 2016. Downtown users were "intercepted" on the sidewalks within the DDA boundary and asked to complete a three minute survey about the downtown.



*Photo: Weekly farmers' market*

## Section Two

A total of 189 responses were obtained during the 11am - 3pm and 5pm - 9pm time frames. The surveys occurred on a Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday in order to gather data on both weekday and weekend patterns. The Friday and Saturday surveys were conducted simultaneously with the three-day event, "Great Lakes Food, Art, & Music Fest," an installation of the Friday Night Summer Concert Series, and "The Great Beer Run" 5K race. The Tuesday surveys coincided with a "2016 Tunes on Tuesday" performance.

### Age

The largest age group among the patron survey respondents were ages 55 to 64. The 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 were the next significant age groups. Least likely to participate were those aged 20 to 24.

The patron survey results across all age groups reveal a consistent pattern in the residents' likes and dislikes about downtown Northville. The primary purpose of visiting, across all age groups, was to dine. The second most common answer, except for the age group 35-54, was entertainment with about 15-20% of each age group responding this way.

When asked what people liked about Downtown, 76% agreed the atmosphere was enjoyable. Convenience, cleanliness, and safety were the next top three factors, with cleanliness and convenience more important to those aged 22 and over. Those under 21 like that Downtown is a "fun place" (65%) and its "restaurant variety" (58%).

When aggregated across all age groups, the most common dislike is "not enough stores," especially for those aged 22 and older. However, almost as popular was the comment that "Stores are not open late enough." For age groups 22 and over, the biggest complaint is limited stores hours. For those under age 22, the most popular response was parking. Even as participants rated parking among their top three "dislikes," 9 out of every 10 people claimed to have no issues parking on the day of the survey, which is impressive considering the large events coinciding with the survey.

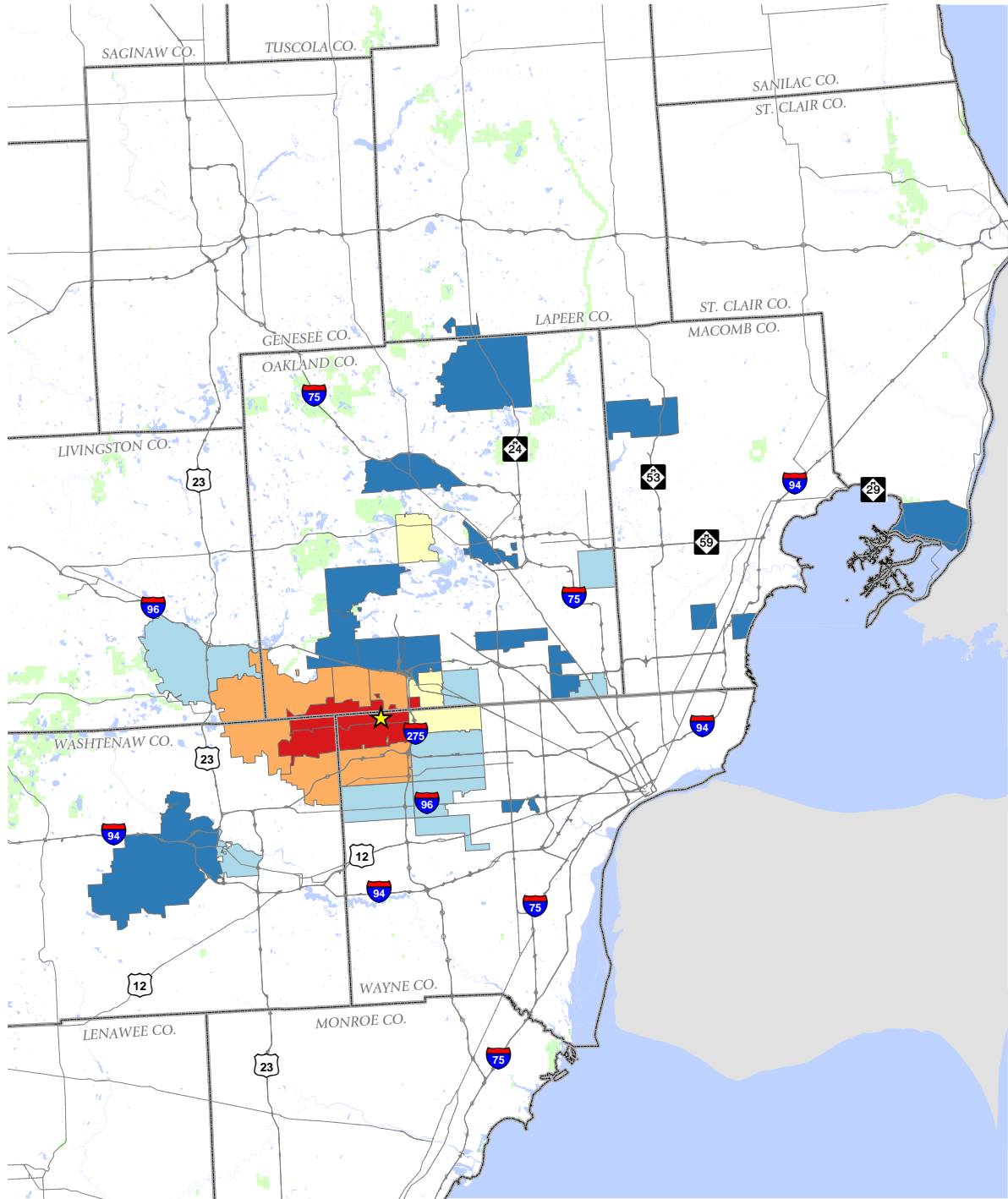
Retail remains the largest point of contention with respondents, as the most popular dislike was store hours, followed by the number and variety of stores and restaurants.

In terms of frequency, those aged 55 and above visit Downtown slightly more often, with about one-third visiting three to four times per week, while only about 30% of younger age groups visit that often. Regardless of age, about two-thirds of respondents spend about 1-2 hours in the downtown.

### Location

As part of the patron intercept survey, the location where the survey was taken was noted by the corresponding "block number" developed as part

Map: Patron intercept survey responses by zip code



NORTHVILLE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

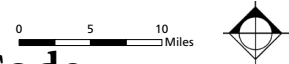
## Patron Intercept Survey Responses by Zip Code

Data Sources: Michigan CGI Data Library, U.S. Census Bureau

- County Boundaries
- Roads
- Lakes/Ponds
- DDA District

### Number of Responses per Zip Code

- 1 Response
- 2 - 3 Responses
- 4 - 5 Responses
- 6 - 8 Responses
- 31 Responses (48168)
- 68 Responses (48167)



NOT SHOWN ON MAP:  
 Kalamazoo, Michigan  
 Midland, Michigan  
 Orlando, Florida  
 Winchester, Virginia  
 Wooster, Ohio  
 Summitville, Indiana  
 Fort Wayne, Indiana  
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin

## Section Two

of the 2006 Strategic Plan and carried forward in this plan. This provided the general location where the survey occurred in the downtown.

When considering location, the survey results reveal similar responses. Across all blocks, dining is the primary purpose for being downtown; although there is more variation amongst the top three responses, they still generally remain dining, entertainment, and walking.

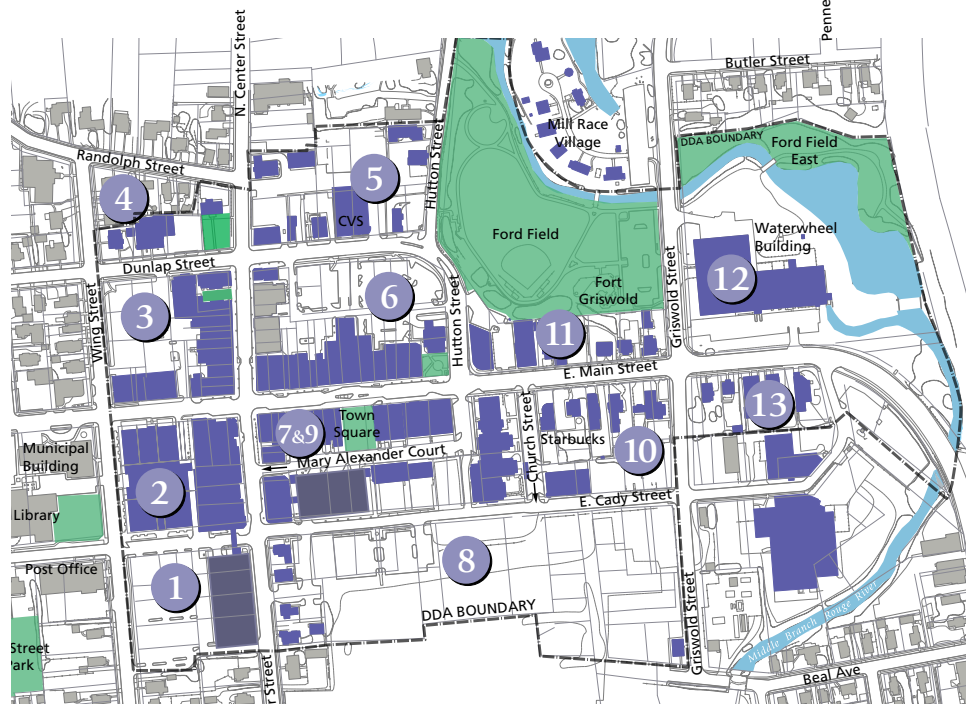
Atmosphere remains the most popular feature of downtown Northville regardless of location. In Block 5, the second most common result was "events" (50%), whereas the other locations report convenience, cleanliness, and safety as the second most common response.

Again, the most common complaint was not enough stores, but this varied by location. Respondents from Blocks 2 and 3 and Blocks 10 and 11 reported "not enough stores" as the most common response, at 48% and 44% respectively. Respondents from Block 5 and Blocks 6 and 7&9 reported "stores' hours" as their number one dislike.

Duration of time spent Downtown does not vary much by location. In each block, the most common response was 2 hours, although many planned to stay 4 hours or more if they lived immediately near Downtown or were attending one of the events. About 1 in 5 people surveyed in Block 5 and Blocks 2 and 3 expected to stay downtown for 4 or more hours.

Thirty-seven percent of those surveyed in Blocks 2 and 3 visit the downtown 3-4 times per week, which is more than any other block, followed by Blocks 6 and 7&9 at 31%. While these percentages are promising, 30% of those

Graphic: Block numbers





surveyed only visit once a month. Similarly, in Blocks 10 and 11, 25% of participants visit once monthly. Also, parking difficulty remains low. The highest percentage of trouble parking was in Block 5, with 28% of people responding this way.

### Day of the Week

Friday and Saturday had a better response rate, with the highest rate on Friday, while Tuesday had fewer survey participants. There were fewer downtown users on Tuesday when compared to the weekend, which should come as no surprise since there were multiple public events occurring both Friday and Saturday. People were also slightly more likely to respond in the 11 am - 3 pm time frame than in the evenings. The blocks bounded by Main Street on the west, Cady Street to the south, Dunlap Street to the north, and Church/Hutton to the east (Blocks 6 and 7&9) were exceptionally busy when compared to other blocks.

There was significantly less activity occurring in the blocks west of Main Street (Blocks 2 and 3), and especially those east of Hutton and Church Streets (Blocks 10 and 11).

There is little variation among responses when categorized by day. The largest difference being that parking is listed as a “dislike” by 41% of respondents on Tuesday afternoon and 26% on Friday afternoon but it was not listed as a problem on Saturday.

Somewhat surprisingly, when surveyed on Fridays, 12% of respondents expected to spend 4 or more hours downtown, but not a single respondent recorded that on a Saturday. The Saturday patrons were more likely to only visit once per month than those who responded on Tuesday or Friday.

### *Downtown Survey: Online*

The online version was open from mid- August until mid-September to capture the opinions of Downtown patrons who were not intercepted in person. Online responses were received from 882 people.

The age distribution is fairly evenly divided among age groups 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64 accounting for about one-quarter of respondents each. The least likely to take the survey were those aged 24 or younger.

The online survey participants share the sentiment that they primarily visit Downtown to dine (46.7%). Unlike those intercepted, the online respondents state shopping as the second likely purpose for being downtown (10.3%), whereas entertainment falls much lower on the list for them at 3.2%.

Online replies overwhelmingly agree that atmosphere is what they like most (71.1%), although they voiced more strongly that they like downtown

Northville's restaurant variety (40.5%). Their dislikes have a strong overlap with patrons as well. Over a third (39.2%) say there are "not enough stores" and following that is "store variety" (33.6%), and then "store hours" (31.4%). This echoes the patrons answers. Survey takers overwhelmingly report that increased variety of retail shops would increase their frequency to Downtown (61.1%).

Again, the most common answer for duration of visit was two hours (26.4%) which is in line with the results of the patron intercept survey. Patrons are only a little more likely on average to stay 4 hours or more at 11.8% compared to online respondents at 7.7%.

The online survey reveals that about 75% of people do not have trouble parking. While that seems high, almost 90% of patrons report not having trouble parking. However, with the online survey it is not clear what day of the week or time the residents were trying to park.



Photo: Genitti's restaurant downtown

### Follow-up Survey

The follow-up survey was also conducted online and received 311 responses. The purpose of this survey was to drill down deeper into previously given answers from survey participants. For example, the first survey uncovered a desire for more retail variety; this survey asks specifically which type of retail. A summary of the results is below.

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents live within the Northville zip code, 48167. The respondents are broken down fairly evenly amongst age groups 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64 with about 20% representation from each age group. No one under the age of 22 responded.

### Retail

The first distinction the survey wishes to make is the difference between residents' satisfaction with the *number* or retail options and the *variety* of options. With regard to the number of retail options, the participants are split. Almost an equal number of respondents are "satisfied" and "very satisfied" (40.8%) as those who are "unsatisfied" and "very unsatisfied" (39.9%). The gap in sentiment widens when speaking to variety. Almost 49% of respondents are unsatisfied with the variety of retail options, compared to 36% who are satisfied. When given an open-ended question on identifying missing retail in Northville, the most common response was women's apparel, followed by men's and children's apparel. Moreover, there is strong consensus that residents do not want to accommodate national chain retailers with almost one-third saying it is not appropriate, and 51.6% responding that just a few are appropriate to serve as anchors with name recognition. The preference is still to support local business.

The survey also sought to find the hours of opening and closing times that better accommodate shoppers. Respondents' most commonly stated that on Mondays through Saturdays, they preferred retail establishments to open between 9 am - 10 am, and to close between 8 pm - 9 pm. On Sunday, the preferred hours are opening between 10 am - 11 am and closing at 6 pm. This does recommend quite a shift from current operating hours, considering most stores close around 5 pm. However, over 83% of respondents said if the retail hours matched their preferences, they would shop downtown at least one additional time per month, and over 75% said they would shop downtown at least two additional times.

### *Restaurants*

Again, the survey distinguishes between the *number* and *variety* of restaurants in downtown Northville. The majority (61.6%) of respondents are satisfied with the number of dining opportunities, compared to 28% who are unsatisfied. Over half of the participants (52.4%) are satisfied with the variety of restaurants, but still over one-third (35.2%) are not satisfied. When asked what type of restaurants are missing, the number one response was farm-to-table (50.8%), followed by ethnic cuisines (44.3%). The most popular ethnic cuisines were Indian (19.9%), Italian (14.4%), and Chinese (12.2%). About one-third of respondents also wanted to see family-friendly restaurants (36.5%), cafes (35.2%), and microbreweries (27.0%).

Participants were then asked for desired opening and closing hours for restaurants. The table below shows the top five restaurant types and the most popular hours of operation. The results show that respondents would like restaurants to provide dining and nighttime entertainment as well. A vast majority of respondents want restaurants to stay open until 10pm, with the exception of microbreweries staying open until 2am. It is important to note, that very few people want to have a 24-hour establishment in Northville and 0% reported wanting chain restaurants, which is in line with their preference for little to no national chain retailers.

Type of Restaurant	Open By	Open Until
Farm to table	12pm (62.9%)	10pm (89.3%)
Ethnic	12 pm (63.3%)	10pm (92.0%)
Family-friendly	12pm (69.2%)	10pm (90.3%)
Café	12pm (72.3%)	10pm (77.9%)
Microbreweries	6pm (76.5%)	2am (72.3%)

*Table: Desired opening and closing hours for restaurants*

### *Housing*

To support a diverse and active downtown, Northville needs denser housing stock surrounding the downtown. Survey takers largely agree. Fifty-seven percent (57%) favor a mixed-housing neighborhood near the downtown. The number of respondents who were “unsure” or reported “no” to this type of development was equal at 21.9%. They were then asked to pick a housing type that was needed in Northville; 60.1% stated “lofts and flats” while 46.5% said “townhouses.” These answers reveal a demand for alternative housing types, at least within proximity to the downtown. Yet, it is not that simple. Over 50% of respondents still feel that detached homes are needed in Northville. Perhaps this finding also reveals conflicting desires among residents for the future of Northville’s housing stock. The Target Market Analysis discussed in Section Four finds that the demand for more detached homes is lower than ever, but this survey may reflect the desires of single-family homeowners to maintain and build upon Northville’s traditional image.

### **Conclusion**

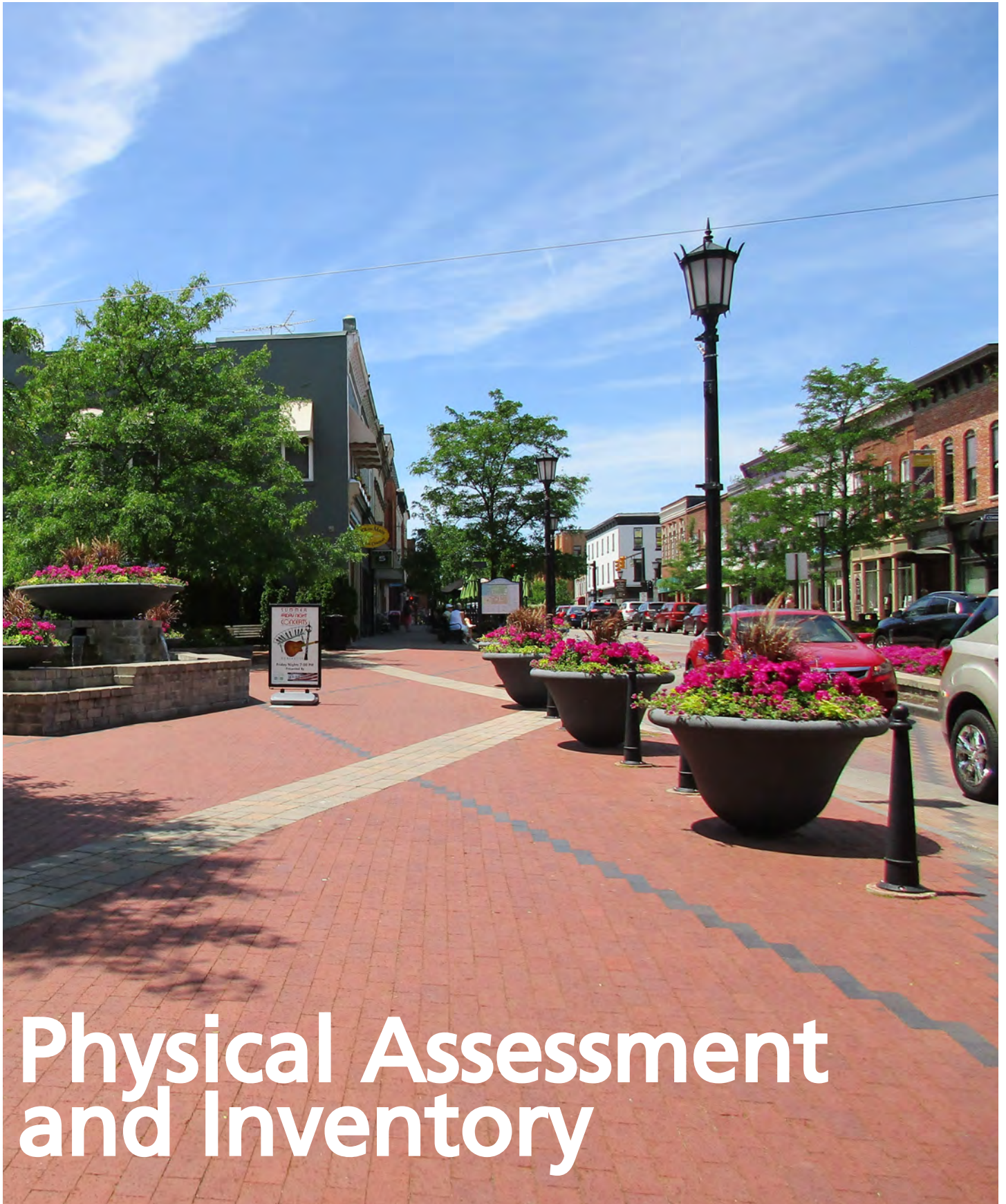
When the survey results are aggregated across all age groups, locations, and days of the week, the most reported change that would increase a patron’s frequency of visits to downtown is a greater “variety of retail.” Over one-third of those intercepted replied this way, and this finding is confirmed by almost two-thirds of online participants reporting the same. For both groups, the second most common response is “increased variety of restaurants” and “extended store hours.”

The residents of Northville are responding in unison that they want a more dynamic downtown that fulfills their diverse retail, culinary, and social needs. The responses suggest a desire for the convenience of downtown retail that can accommodate family, children, millennials, young professionals, and the elderly’s shopping preferences. They also repeatedly mention that extended retail store hours could also accomplish this. In addition, they want Downtown to be a place that has nighttime entertainment options for adults. Northville residents want to be social in their own city. They have expressed this by requesting restaurants, bars, entertainment, and retail options that open later.



*Photo: Residents state a need for a type of housing besides detached, single family*





# Physical Assessment and Inventory

## Introduction

The City of Northville has many valuable assets. It has a significant number of high-quality historic buildings. It is pedestrian-friendly and has a pleasant small town atmosphere. People—particularly families—are drawn to the numerous events held periodically throughout the year.

At the same time, there are many aspects that could be emphasized and improved upon to make the downtown more vibrant. The retail and restaurant mix needs more variety in order to draw a broader group of people into the downtown and keep them there longer. It gets perhaps a little too quiet at night. There is a minor perception that more parking is needed. The connections around the downtown area are awkward at times, especially the connections from Main Street to at Ford Field. The Farmers' Market could also be more centrally located with greater offerings.

This physical assessment takes many factors into account. These include the various “character zones” of downtown, an inventory of businesses and land uses, approaches and entrances to the downtown, vehicular circulation and parking, pedestrian orientation and walkability, and the character defining features that provide downtown Northville with its unique identity.

## Character Zones

Upon entering downtown Northville from any direction by car, there is a sense that this is a pleasant small town with a prominent historic character. A closer look at a slower pace reveals this is certainly true, but there are essential details that could enhance this appeal and there are some aspects of the downtown that detract from this initial impression. In order to better understand the components of the downtown, it was divided into eight zones with distinctly different character shown in the Character Zones Map.

### *Downtown*

This is the center of the downtown business district and is made up of four distinct blocks. It is bordered by Dunlap to the north, Wing Street to the west, Cady Street to the south, and Hutton Street to the east. Land uses include retail, commercial, institutional, office space, and surface parking lots. There are sizeable parking lots on the outer ring of this district, immediately adjacent to the downtown on the north, south, and west sides. Pedestrian linkages from large parking lots to the streets have been improved in the downtown. In particular, the enhancement of the Comerica Community Connection provides an architecturally interesting through-way, complete with historical photos of Northville, between



## Section Three

the Marquee parking lot and Main Street. This is shown on the Physical Assessment map.

The two major merchant-oriented streets are Main and Center. Center is most active between Main and Dunlap, and Main is most active between Center and Hutton. This L shaped area is the heart of the downtown commercial district. Any new development on Main west of Center will expand this activity, making it more of a T shape, and pulling people to this end of the downtown where many stores and restaurants must compete for pedestrians.

The downtown architecture has a strong sense of history with many one- to three-story buildings dating from the mid to late 19th century, as well as some new structures that draw on the surrounding historical character. The 120 W. Main Street Building, on the western edge of downtown, is a good example of a recently-constructed building that fits well within the historic context of downtown. There are also a number of buildings with more contemporary facade treatments.

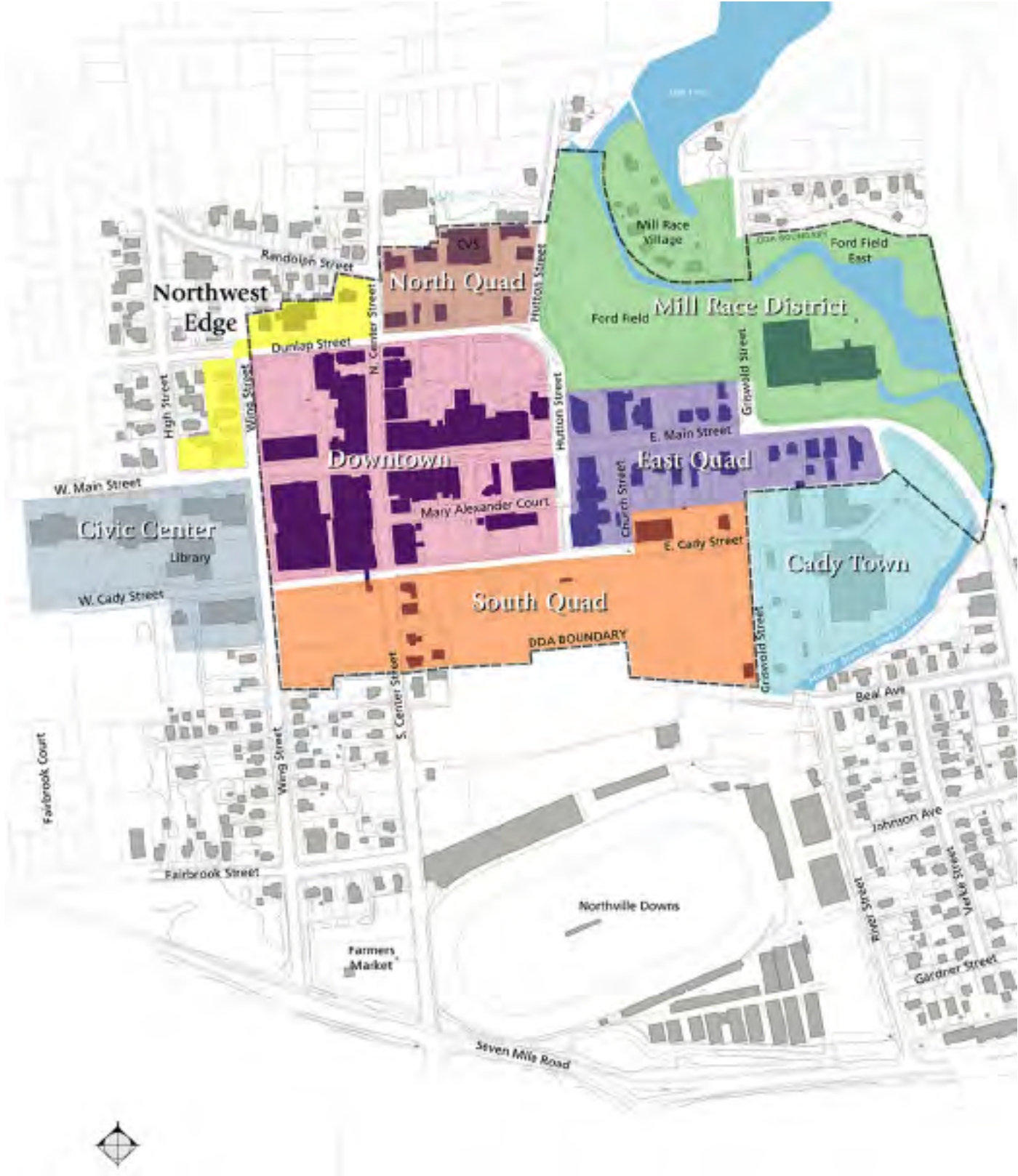
There is an emphasis on pedestrian-friendly accessibility exemplified by the shortened crossing distances, particularly at East Main and the Town Square area where a landscaped median serves as a pedestrian refuge island, and at various intersections with bump-outs or curb extensions. There are also numerous benches throughout the downtown area to offer a respite to pedestrians.

At the heart of the district is the Town Square, a major focal point for activities or for simply taking a break while shopping. The redesign of the Town Square included a modern bandshell structure, overhead string lights, seating, an expanded median around the clock tower, and decorative pavement that ties the park together with the north side of Main Street and the south side of Mary Alexander Court. The detailed pavement pattern

*Photo: Heart of downtown*



Map: Character zones





flows into the street, emphasizes the importance of the pedestrian, and calms traffic in the area.

The downtown area includes Mary Alexander Court. Some businesses front on this street and some back up to it. There are decks off the back of some of the Main Street stores. This street serves as the primary service and delivery route for businesses that back up to it. In some ways, it feels like an alley or service area, and in others it has the potential to become a vibrant area with its own unique character. The character has been improved by the renovation of the Town Square, which feels as if it flows into Mary Alexander Court as the Bandshell is open and can be viewed from the south. The two restaurants currently fronting the Court, Wok Asian Bistro and Koji, are open later into the evening hours and offer the opportunity for a thriving nightlife with its own image and unique view of the Town Square.

South Center Street is on a steep slope with few active uses, making it less pedestrian-friendly than other streets in this district. MainCentre in particular, with its recessed entries, presents an austere facade on South Center Street. The CadyCentre building, while attractive and nicely detailed, is separated from the focus of activity downtown by a half block of less active uses. The relatively steep slope itself, on both sides of the street, is a challenge for wheelchair access, bicyclists, and some pedestrians.

Nonmotorized access from other directions is on a level grade and is more interesting from a retail perspective. There are numerous shops and eateries when entering from the east or the north. Although this segment of West Main Street is less active than East Main Street and North Center Street, the many businesses within Northville Square can be an asset for this section of the downtown, pulling pedestrians to this portion of the downtown.

### *Civic Center*

The Civic Center area is immediately to the west of downtown. Though it is outside of the DDA boundary, it still serves as a vital part of the downtown, and offers major services to the area. These include the Library, the Senior Community Center, the Post Office, the Old Village School, the Art House, and the City Hall and Police / Fire Station. The combined result is a concentrated activity area of essential services. Except for the Old Village School, the architecture in this area is more modern than much of the historical downtown. Buildings are also set back from the street rather than abutting the edge of the sidewalk. The intermediate intensity of the form and use of this district provide a nice transition from the bustling commercial environment of the downtown into the adjacent neighborhoods.

Nonmotorized access into town from this district is straightforward along Main, emerging from the west side residential area. The climb up the



*Photo: Old Village School is a part of the Civic Center zone, just west of the DDA boundary*

slope along Wing north of Cady poses more of a challenge, but with the establishments at Northville Square, it represents an area of interesting potential and positive change. Several opportunities for shopping and dining are held within the Square and offer those within or near the Civic buildings a certain convenience. Northville Square can act as an anchor for the Civic Center, downtown, and South Quad zones.

### *South Quad*

The South Quad is bordered by Wing Street to the west, Griswold to the east, surface parking north of Northville Downs to the south, and Cady Street to the north, with a small addition above Cady from Church to Griswold. Currently, much of this area serves as free all-day parking for the downtown in surface lots, the lower-level of the Cady Street parking deck, and the upper-level of the MainCentre parking deck.

The parking west of South Center Street is more developed and formalized with a large surface lot and a large two-level deck, although the lower portion of the parking deck is private. The Victorian building and the Presbyterian Church addition on the north side of Cady Street stand out as examples of quality architecture in this zone. There is one paved surface lot east of South Center along Cady, as well as a large gravel parking lot. This area looks more temporary and transitional than the area to the west of South Center. Compounding the sense of transition and unkempt uses is the unattractive view across the vast gravel parking lot leading to Northville

## Section Three

Downs. Streetscape improvements should continue to be implemented at a less intense level on South Center from Cady Street to Edward N Hines Drive, except where improvements are already completed. The expensive, yet dramatic, improvement of burying overhead utilities should be considered.

Nonmotorized access into town from the south is reasonably good with a gentle uphill grade along South Center Street, a relatively wide street in this area with room for bicycles. It is, however, a stretch of road that is exposed, with limited visual interest. Cady Street serves as a side street that leads to small, quiet pedestrian access points into downtown along the stretch between South Center Street and Church Street.



*Photo: CadyCentre, a multi-story, brick building, is an example of Northville's great building stock and redevelopment potential*

### *Cady Town*

Cady Town is bordered by the river to the south, Griswold Street to the west, the DDA boundary behind the shops on Main Street to the north, and the entrance to downtown along Main Street to the east. It is the first view on the east side entrance into downtown.

Except for a small segment on the eastern edge, this district falls outside the DDA boundary, but it is an area of strong potential and influence directly adjacent to the downtown area. This is an interesting area due to the proximity of the river, the large area of open space, the interesting tight curve on Cady Street, and the industrial character of the historic Belanger Building. The recent redevelopment of the Belanger Building into the new Village Workshop offers small business incubator space, classes, and even hosts events and has the power to transform this zone into an active, commercial and small business destination with its adaptive reuse.

Though currently somewhat stark due to the open view across the parking area to the west, there is a strong nonmotorized connection up Griswold from Beal Town and the southeast neighborhoods into downtown.

### *East Quad*

East Quad encompasses the area directly east of downtown from Hutton Street south to Cady along Main and includes Church Street. This has a distinctly different character from that of the downtown district. The buildings tend to be a mix of detached structures surrounded by yards or parking. Some of these are historic 19th century houses, while others are contemporary offices of one or two stories. A majority of the buildings sit back from the sidewalk, with the exception of the newer structures. A large historic landmark building, the First Presbyterian Church of Northville, sits prominently between Hutton and Church Streets.

This area lacks cohesion due to the diverse building types, ages, styles,



colors, and setbacks. The area is made more prominent by its close proximity to the heart of the downtown. On one block the character is random with many gaps, while the next block is a tight urban configuration. In addition, parking lots with entrances from Main Street have no buffering or separation from the sidewalk, increasing their negative visual impact on the streetscape. A plan to design an improved streetscape is recommended for the north side of East Main Street, from Hutton Street to Griswold.

The signal at Griswold and Main Street should be upgraded as possible to from span wire to the more reliable and attractive mast arms. Ideally, this decision would also include the establishment of a general policy to replace span wire traffic signals with mast arms as opportunity allows. Here, too, the potential to bury or relocate overhead utilities should be investigated.

There is a moderately challenging grade rising up from Griswold along Main Street. Though not daunting compared to South Center Street south of Main, the grade and lack of cohesive character makes it less interesting for nonmotorized travel than the tighter urban core of the downtown. Addressing this transitional appearance can provide a more consistent image.

### *Ford Field & Mill Race District*

This district includes Ford Field, the Mill Race Village, Ford Field East, the Waterwheel Building which houses businesses of various types, and the river and pond directly behind. This is a lower section of town in elevation, displayed most prominently by the steep embankment along the west and south sides of Ford Field. While this embankment is a fascinating geologic feature, it has also proven to be a barrier separating the activities of downtown from those going on in Ford Field. Adding to that sense of separation is the thick mass of trees growing along the ridge. There are access stairs off of Hutton Street, but this connection to the downtown has been criticized previously for lacking a clear linkage.

The Waterwheel Building houses a variety of businesses and serves as a good example of adaptive reuse, as it was formerly the Ford Plant. The adjacent Ford Field East is park-like, although it is removed from other parts of town and not easily accessed. To do so requires traversing a parking lot and crossing a small pedestrian bridge into a secluded green area and pathway along the river. The path comes to a dead end within sight of Main Street on the backside of the factory.

The nonmotorized connections from the Mill Race District to downtown include Hutton and Griswold Streets, as well as traversing Ford Field to the stairs that lead up to the Hutton / Dunlap Street intersection. The Hutton Street connection weaves through pleasant quiet neighborhoods. Griswold Street is the main corridor leading from the numerous homes



*Photo: The entrance to Ford Field*

## Section Three

*Photo: Mill Race Village provides some green space and nonmotorized connections to downtown*



to the northeast of town. It is a long downhill stretch coming into town; conversely, it is a long uphill stretch going back.

The nonmotorized connection from Mill Race Village is a direct pleasant walk, up the Hutton Street stairs and into town. Less direct, though more accessible, connections lead to the west along the path that follows the river up to Hutton, or east to Griswold and up to Main. The path along the river is the most pleasant and interesting of the two due to its transition from natural beauty into historic downtown. The Griswold Street route is more exposed and leads past a parking lot on Griswold and along a stretch of Main Street that is less cohesive than the urban core.

This property's location relative to the downtown and its recreational value make it worthy of a concentrated effort to maximize its use. A community-based design process that includes a determination of historically significant components could be sponsored by the DDA to prepare a preferred master plan. Policies affecting this preferred use could be re-evaluated, and the plan incorporated into the Northville Parks and Recreation 5-Year Master plan so that portions of the plan are eligible for MDNR grant funding.

### *North Quad*

The North Quad used to be predominantly a large parking area surrounded by a variety of active Northville businesses in a typically suburban layout, including CVS Drugs, New Bangkok Cuisine, and a drive-through Comerica Bank, among others. The character of this area has been improved with the relocation of the CVS from the north side of the parking lot to front on Dunlap. CVS acts as a small scale version of an anchor store and helps to block the sight of the parking lot from the street. The character of this district can be improved by further development along the street frontage

and encouraging shared and condensed parking within the center of the block, thereby limiting the number of driveway entrances on the street. Streetscape improvements should continue at a less intense level on North Center from Dunlap to Lake Street, with surface parking lots buffered and overhead utilities buried as possible.

The sight line looking east toward Ford Field is blocked by the mass of trees lined along the ridge on the east side of Hutton Street. Someone unfamiliar with the area might be unaware of a large recreation area so close by.

The nonmotorized connection along North Center Street leading in from the north emerges from a well-scaled and well-defined streetscape into a stretch at Rayson Street that is rather long, exposed, and lacking in unity before reaching Dunlap Street. It is primarily a gentle uphill climb that pitches up sharply just before reaching Randolph Street.

### *Northwestern Edge*

This is an L shaped area that wraps around the northwest edge of downtown. It includes the American Legion Hall to the east and continues west past Casterline Funeral Home and Northville Watch & Clock, and turns the corner south on Wing to follow the line of businesses in residential buildings that lead to the Garage Grill & Fuel Bar on West Main Street. Though not within the DDA boundaries on the west side of Wing Street, it is the dividing line and buffer between the distinctly larger scale commercial downtown area and the quiet smaller scale historic residential neighborhoods on the west side.

The nonmotorized connections here are, on the whole, straightforward and they lead out of a pleasant historic neighborhood. This connection does, however, include the imposing and largely unscreened parking lot with minimal edge treatment bordering Wing and Dunlap Streets.

## Approaching and Entering Downtown

There are four immediate approaches to the downtown: Center Street from both the north and south, and Main Street from both the east and west. Randolph Street offers an alternate access from the northwest at 8 Mile Road. Each of them offers a unique perspective on the initial impression upon entering into the heart of Northville.

### *Center Street from the South*

The long uphill approach begins at the Seven Mile Road crossing. The Northville Downs racetrack's visual prominence makes quite an impression. The view to the right is of a rather stark solid fence surrounding the track,



*Photo: CVS is located in North Quad and is an example of a chain store meeting the community's architectural request*



## Section Three

and the view to the left is of a large unimproved surface parking area (used for the Farmers' Market one day per week, Thursdays, May through October). Neither of these are a positive aesthetic introduction to the City.

A "Welcome to Northville" sign is the only indication that one is entering the downtown. Passing Fairbrook Street, the view softens somewhat on the left with housing and vegetation, but on the right, the imposing racetrack structure yields to more unimproved surface parking. There is an open view across the lot and up the hill to a few of the downtown buildings on Cady Street.



*Photo: This is the view when entering on Center Street heading north*

The City parking deck to the west, just before reaching Cady Street, does a nice job of shielding the parked cars from immediate view, and it also draws on materials and design characteristics of the downtown area, particularly in its use of brick. However, the entire edge along the deck is devoid of activity. On the right are some well kept businesses housed in unremarkable residential buildings. Most prominent are the multi-story brick buildings at Cady Street on both sides of the road: CadyCentre and MainCentre. They create a sense of enclosure on the street and indicate a defined entry into downtown. Both structures have a pleasant sense of detail, though MainCentre is less effective because of its contemporary facade and recessed entries that are set back from the sidewalk.

Center Street is congested with traffic during peak hours. The slow traffic is actually a benefit for downtown businesses as motorists are more aware of the variety of downtown stores and are traveling slowly enough to make last minute decisions to stop and shop.



*Photo: Signage from Main Street*

### *Center Street from the North*

This also is a long incline approach to the downtown. It begins with a well-landscaped median and landscape setback near the Kroger grocery store. Also in this vicinity is a newly-constructed two-story building that employs downtown-like façade, sidewalk, and landscape treatments with minimal setbacks. This creates a welcoming entrance. Traffic traveling eastbound on Randolph Street feeds onto North Center Street at a key gateway entrance point. The approach along Center graduates from a long series of detached businesses north of Dunlap Street immediately to a block of attached two- and three-story buildings between Main and Dunlap. The effect is one of sharp transition and immediate identification entering the downtown core.

North Center Street is three lanes wide until it reaches Dunlap, where it narrows to two. This results in a traffic-calming effect appropriate for the downtown. As a pedestrian, approaching the downtown from the north on Center Street has its challenges. With a few exceptions, the sidewalks are too close to the road with no buffer between the sidewalk and the curb, snow is often piled on the sidewalks by the Department of Public Works,



and residents often place their garbage cans on the sidewalks for pick up. All of these conditions make it difficult to use the sidewalks to get into town.

### *Main Street from the East*

Entering the downtown from the east, South Main emerges from a median-divided residential boulevard with the C & O railroad corridor along the east side. The railroad is screened with trees and vegetation. South Main crosses the river, swings a long arching left, and rises up toward downtown.

Once across the river, the mill pond and the adjacent adapted Waterwheel Building comes into view on the right. On the left is an open view across a stark parking area to the Foundry Flask and Equipment Co. and the newly renovated Belanger Building. Further up East Main is a line of detached businesses on the left. Griswold Street is a major north / south crossing point with a greater percentage of traffic funneling in from the north.

The roadway itself is overly wide in this area, which allows for the opportunity to create space for an identity feature. The overall sense in this area is that the scale is too broad. It should be reduced to a more human scale with a defined entry image.

### *Main Street from the West*

Residents probably use this entry more than visitors, but it is still an active entryway. It emerges from an historic residential neighborhood and transitions through the Civic Center area, crossing Wing Street into downtown. It is the quietest of the four entryways. Maintained sidewalks along tree-lined streets facilitate a trip downtown for pedestrians, neighborhood residents, and Northville Public Schools employees looking to walk, shop, or dine.

### *Randolph Street from the Northwest*

Though considerably more distant from the City center than the other entrances, the intersection at Randolph Street is the gateway to downtown for eastbound travelers along 8 Mile Road. This two-lane street is a pedestrian- and bike-friendly route into the downtown, featuring sharrows and sidewalks along the length of the right-of-way. The residential land use and plentiful canopy trees create a pleasant entry experience. In this case, the welcome sign serves a wayfinding purpose as well as identification; a short landscaped median on Randolph is aesthetically pleasing and well-designed to complement the sign without obstructing it across several lanes of roadway.



*Photo (above): The downtown has attached buildings that are 2-3 stories. (Below) As you drive out the buildings become detached, and less convenient for shopping*



### Inventory of Businesses and Land Uses

The existing combination of businesses and land uses has changed since the adoption of the last strategic plan. Some businesses have closed, others have moved, and new buildings have been constructed, altering the fabric of the downtown. A thorough inventory was conducted to determine the current number of operational businesses, the first floor land uses, and the hours of operation for retail and restaurant establishments.

#### *Inventory of Businesses*

All businesses were recorded within the DDA boundary, including the name of business, address, first floor land use, and hours of operation for retail and restaurant establishments. A handful of vacant storefronts were identified, although only four were found within the DDA boundary. Street addresses were recorded and used to map the location of each business while the first floor land use helped to classify the businesses by groups. Along the major corridors, particularly for Main Street and Center Street, retail and restaurant establishments anchor the first floor land uses, while office and institutional uses are found on the second and third floors.

A total of 88 retail and restaurant establishments were counted within the DDA boundary, including the Garage Grill and Fuel Bar, which is just outside of the DDA jurisdiction in the Northwest Edge and adjacent to the district. A total of 71 office and institutional establishments were recorded in the same area, with a predominant emphasis on office, rather than institutional, uses. Only twelve land uses in the downtown were described as institutional, which included the Northville Masonic Temple, Northville Eagles, Marquis Theater, First Presbyterian Church, Casterline Funeral Home, American Legion, and a handful of banks and educational uses.

#### *Hours of Operation*

The hours of operation were recorded and assessed for retail and restaurant uses in the downtown. A noted concern in the 2006 plan, similarly echoed in the current update, is the trend of businesses closing early in the late afternoons and evenings. It was therefore important to inventory the hours of operation for these local businesses and assess the existing patterns of daily closures.










The L-shaped area of the downtown core is exceptionally evident when examining the patterns of hours of operation, as seen in the Hours of Operation Matrix. Within the downtown, active clusters of businesses are found along North Center Road and East Main Street, as well as within the Northville Square development, and these drive the majority of operational businesses from day-to-day. Some businesses in the North Quad zone remain active, including New Bangkok Cuisine and the CVS pharmacy. The Starbucks located in the East Quad zone is the only business that remains

Map: Business inventory



# Business Inventory

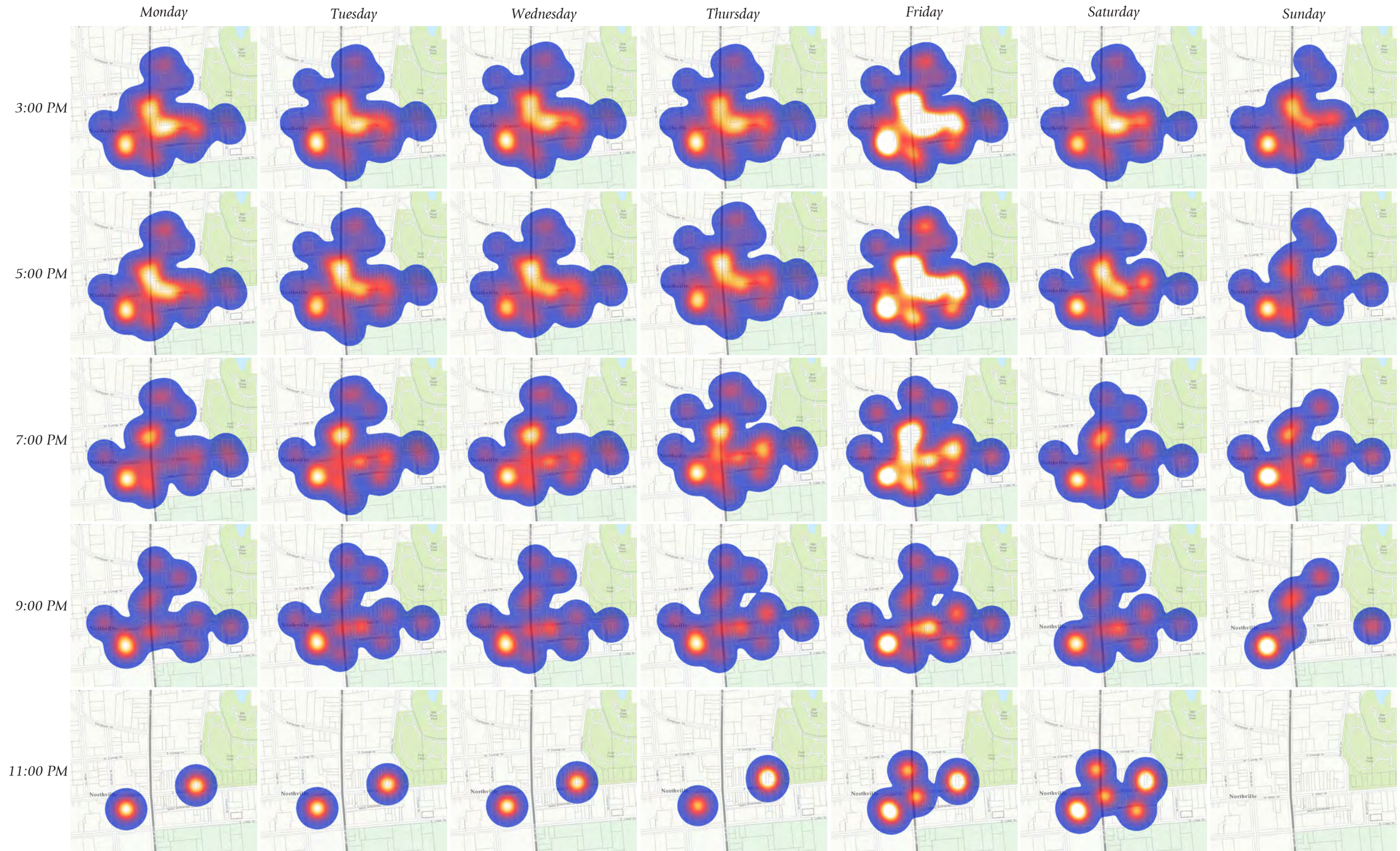
Data Sources: Michigan CGI Data Library, City of Northville

-  DDA Boundary
-  Parcels
-  Building Footprints
-  Rivers
-  Roads
-  Institutional
-  Office
-  Retail
-  Restaurant



Section Three

hours of operation heat map matrix



Graphic: Hours of operation heat map matrix



open outside of regular business hours, and therefore, acts as the only business with any pull factor in this area. Less active zones include the South Quad, Civic Center, Northwest Edge, and Mill Race District.

Most businesses within the downtown operate within standard business hours, but many close their doors soon after the evening commute. On Mondays through Fridays, at least 50% of the downtown retail and restaurant establishments will remain open after 5 pm but these numbers are further reduced by half by 7 pm as highlighted in Appendix E, Hours of Operation Table. On Saturdays, only 48% of businesses remain open past 5 pm, which is reduced to 33% by 7 pm. This could be significant loss of potential sales, especially when considering the most popular reason to visit downtown Northville is to dine. For visitors who come on Saturday evenings to enjoy a nice dinner, only one-third of retail and restaurants will be open for them to explore. On Sundays, the numbers are even smaller: only 26% of retail and restaurants remain open at 5 pm and 21% at 7 pm. Later into the evenings on any given day, the same handful of restaurants illuminate the downtown with active businesses, but this represents a significantly small grouping of downtown businesses.

Businesses in the downtown area should collaborate with one another to create one day per week, or twice per month, when extended store hours could drive a new campaign of shopping, eating, and visiting. These days could coincide with regularly scheduled downtown events or surround a seasonal theme, such as “Summertime Saturdays” or “Festive Fridays.” A significant group of businesses could remain open later into the evenings when people are actively dining in the downtown, creating synergy among the downtown businesses and land uses, while providing additional retail options for downtown visitors. Another measure of demand could be a “sticky note” program, offering would-be customers the chance to let the keepers of a closed shop know when missed sales opportunities are occurring by leaving a sticky note on the business door.

This issue is also related to the more general idea of coordination events across the various facets of downtown. The DDA is an appropriate entity to coordinate the events calendar, book activities, and handle the operational aspects of occurrences in the Town Square and other locations in the downtown. This level of involvement with the downtown’s programming builds relationships with individual business owners and yields an overall sense of familiarity with the intricacies of their setting that can help address barriers and resistance to more standardized regular hours.

## Circulation and Parking

### Street Patterns

Downtown Northville is generally a two-way grid pattern. This allows for many circulation options. The exceptions are: Church Street flows one way from East Main to Cady, and Mary Alexander Court flows one way from

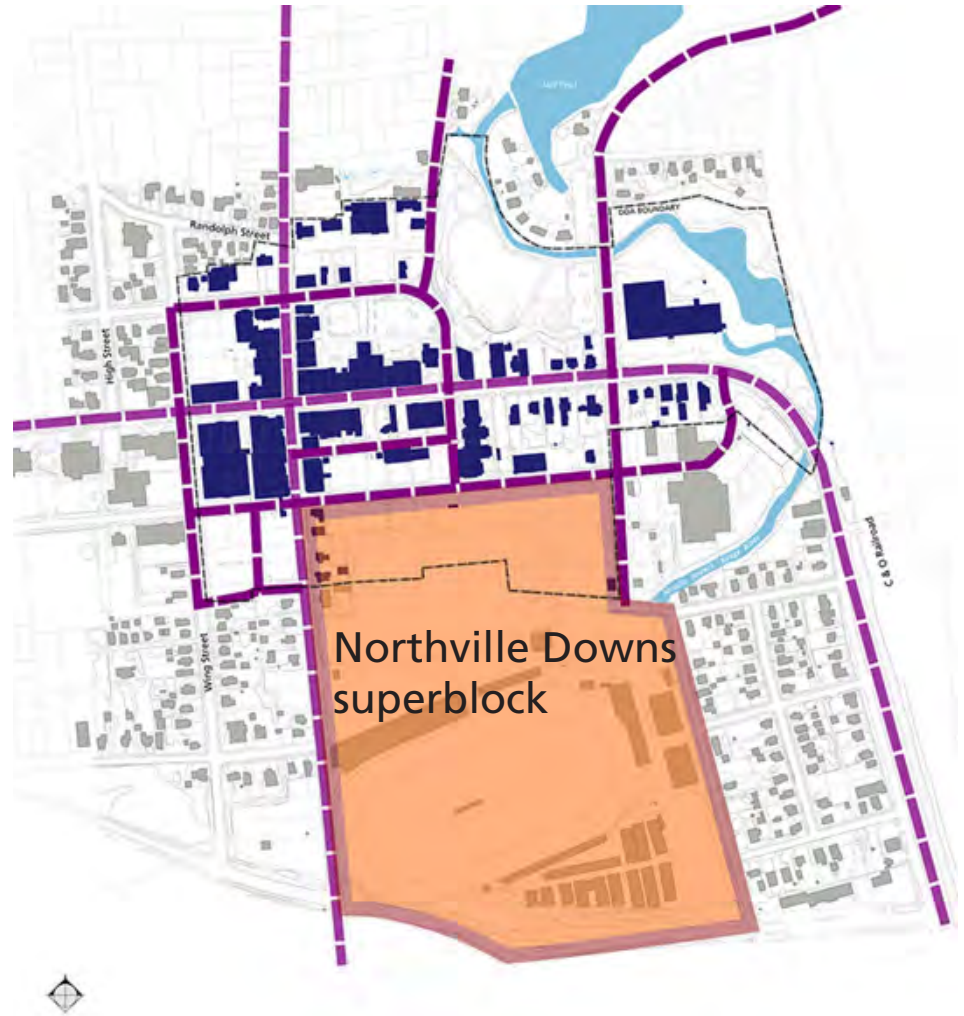
Graphic: What factors would increase your frequency of visits to Downtown Northville?

Online Survey

Patron Intercept Survey



Graphic: Street pattern circulation



Hutton to Center. A key focal point occurs at the Town Square area of Main Street, where there is a pedestrian island with an historic clock and plantings placed within it. This both slows traffic and signals to drivers that pedestrians are a priority in the downtown.

There are fewer circulation options on the south side of downtown at the Northville Downs superblock. Here the limited number of cross-town streets causes undue pressure on the main streets in downtown. The graphic entitled "Street Pattern Circulation" shows how cars can freely move around the downtown compared to the limited number of choices around the Northville Downs where there is no thoroughfare.

### *Nonmotorized Orientation*

For a pedestrian, Northville is a compact and eminently walkable community. It prides itself on its pedestrian-friendly environment. There are numerous benches placed throughout the downtown, intersections

that offer refuge and shortened crossing distances, and the overall walking distances are short enough to encourage residents and visitors to wander through town.

Through years of study and observation, urban designers have concluded there is a marked drop-off rate in the willingness of a pedestrian to walk beyond a five minute or quarter mile range. The Physical Assessment map delineates a quarter mile radius, the distance most people are willing to walk for many common occasions. The circle encompasses the entire downtown and extends well into the adjacent neighborhoods. About 80% of people will not walk a greater distance unless conditions are very good and interesting. Neighborhoods and downtowns—those among the very best, of which Northville qualifies—pedestrians may be willing to take a ten-minute walk (half-mile radius).

If there are any significant physical barriers, such as difficulty getting across railroad tracks, dead-end streets, sidewalks that abruptly end, the radius drops significantly. In a town like Northville with a well-connected grid pattern, the quarter mile radius is a very reasonable distance that people will be willing to walk. It is important to note that this willingness will also decrease when the routes are not stimulating and do not provide the ability to rest in the shade or find a bench. This is critical for children and many older adults.

Numerous pedestrian cut-throughs provide important linkages from parking areas to Main and Center Street. Some cut-throughs are more attractive than others, but all play an important role in providing access from parking areas to shops so customers can actually “park once” and easily connect to their destinations. Cut-throughs are found in Blocks 2, 3, 6, 7&9, although the majority are within block 6. Several of these cut-throughs are privately owned. The DDA should continue its ongoing discussions with property owners to ensure that these cut-throughs remain open and viable. Options to ensure public access can include easements, purchase, or development agreements, to name a few.

Another component influencing the likelihood of a pedestrian to walk the quarter mile distance is the continuity of building facades and the minimization of automobile conflict points. The Walkability Assessment map breaks down the streets within the five-minute walking radius into four categories according to their pedestrian experience. Streets rated “A” are very pedestrian-friendly, walkable streets with connected building facades and minimal driveways interrupting the sidewalk. Streets rated “B” are still within a viable business district, but one that is less pedestrian-friendly due to an absence of connected building facades and presence of multiple curb cuts, adjacent parking lots, and increased interaction with vehicles. Streets rated “C” are primarily vehicular in nature and are used for building service and deliveries. These streets are not very walkable. Finally, streets rated “D” are alleys. These often contain dumpsters or loading docks, are typically unsightly, and have trucks pulling in and out of the driveways.



*Photo: Pathways through Ford Field*



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The aim of a downtown is to create a loop of streets rated “A.” Having a loop of walkable streets creates a pleasant circular route for visitors to continue walking through the downtown area. “A” streets, due to the uninterrupted facades, typically see higher levels of pedestrian traffic and therefore command higher rents per square foot than other similar buildings on “B” and “C” streets. Currently, the “A” streets in Northville form a “T” within the core of downtown. This means that pedestrians likely walk within this area but probably do not venture outside of it unless it is to return to their vehicles.



The Walkability Assessment map illustrates the pedestrian cut-throughs in the core of downtown. There are three connections from the parking area on Block 6 to the North Center Street business area. An ideal mid-block pedestrian cut-through also exists from the Block 3 parking lot to the West Main Street businesses. Owners of the Northville Square have created an internal cut-through to connect the Block 1 parking area to their internally accessed shops and to the West Main Street businesses. This north-south connection continues through the 120 West Main building into the Old Church Square public parking lot. The two pedestrian cut-throughs connecting East Cady Street to East Main Street are well designed and direct. However, only a limited number of customers choose this route due to the perceived distance, lack of visual interest, and the uphill climb.



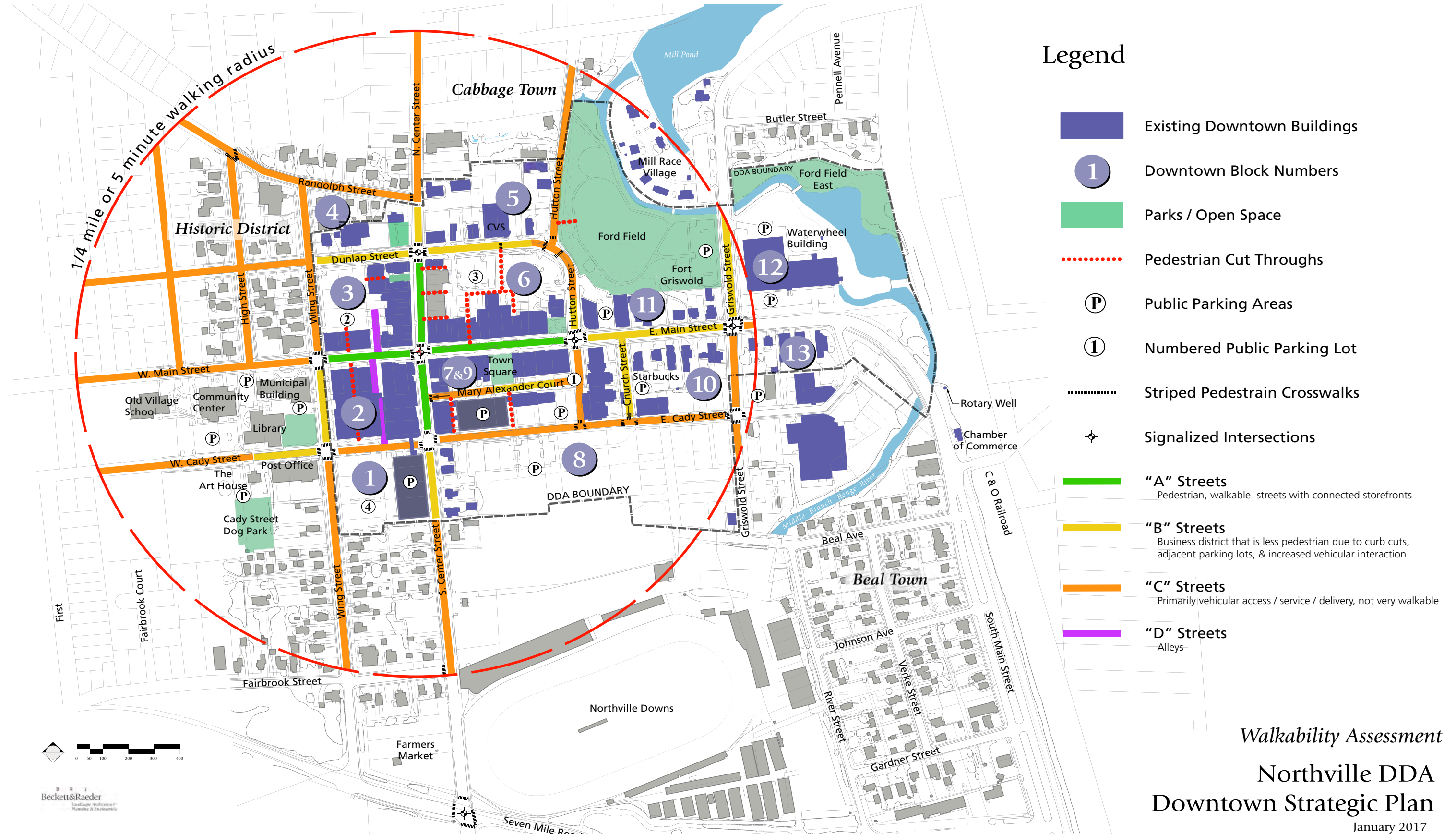
*Photos: Pedestrian alleys create a shorter distance from the parking lot to the storefronts.*

The newly constructed Comerica Community Connection provides a direct pedestrian cut-through from the Marquee Lot in Block 6 to the shops on East Main Street. This access route is architecturally interesting and contains historic photographs of Northville. The connection is well-integrated into the façade architecture of the East Main Street shops, and is visually prominent in the Marquee Lot, guiding visitors from the parking to the cut-through. The Marquee Lot has been improved with additional sidewalks that further direct visitors to the Comerica Community Connection.

Northville has become a destination for numerous bicycling and running clubs due to its terminus on Hines Drive. Cyclists can ride nearly twenty miles one way between Dearborn at its southeast end and Northville at its northwest end along this popular vernal river route. Northville is also a popular stopover for mountain bikers using the nearby Maybury State Park bike trails. Individuals and groups often begin and end their ride in downtown Northville, riding out Main Street to Beck and from there to the park’s entrance. Less active, but still used, is the road route west along Seven Mile to Whitmore Lake.

This volume of bicycling activity represents an opportunity for Northville to develop a relationship with the cycling community. A respite station serving cyclists can catch the attention of itinerary planners, and nearby offerings for refreshment, supplies, and entertainment can convert this public investment into support for the private sector. Wayfinding enhancements will help integrate these varied nonmotorized connections into a coherent network.

Graphic: Walkability Assessment



Legend

- Existing Downtown Buildings
- 1 Downtown Block Numbers
- Parks / Open Space
- Pedestrian Cut Throughs
- P Public Parking Areas
- 1 Numbered Public Parking Lot
- Striped Pedestrian Crosswalks
- ⊕ Signalized Intersections
- "A" Streets  
Pedestrian, walkable streets with connected storefronts
- "B" Streets  
Business district that is less pedestrian due to curb cuts, adjacent parking lots, & increased vehicular interaction
- "C" Streets  
Primarily vehicular access / service / delivery, not very walkable
- "D" Streets  
Alleys



Beckett&Raeder  
Landscape Architecture  
Planning & Engineering

Walkability Assessment  
Northville DDA  
Downtown Strategic Plan  
January 2017



Map: Parking Inventory

NORTHVILLE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

# Parking Inventory

Data Sources: Michigan CGI Data Library, City of Northville

- DDA Boundary
- Parcels
- Building Footprints
- Rivers
- Roads
- Private Lots
- Public Lots
- Number of On-Street Spaces per Road Segment





## Parking

Parking is adequate within the downtown area and surrounding character zones. Parking options are available immediately surrounding the downtown in the South Quad area, and multiple surface lots and parking structures are found within the downtown zone also. On-street parking exists in each of the character zones, conveniently adjacent to businesses and public gathering spaces. On-street parking, surface lot parking, and parking structures were inventoried for the entire DDA district, as illustrated in the Parking Inventory map.

The City has done a good job of providing on-street parking in downtown. Business owners benefit from on-street parking because it is the most convenient and valuable type of parking. Parking on the street serves another purpose as well, acting as a natural traffic-calming device. These spaces serve as a buffer between pedestrians using sidewalks and cars moving along the street. Survey respondents, both those familiar with the parking conditions and those who were experiencing them, agreed that adequate parking is available in the downtown. The data clearly indicated that parking does not represent an impediment to visiting.

No matter how well executed, parking management remains a priority in any successful downtown, and there will always be issues to address. In Northville, the use of on-street and other close-in parking spaces by employees of downtown businesses creates the perception that parking is inadequate. There is also a difference in perception between those willing to park far off in a shopping mall parking lot contrasted with those disinclined to park a half block from a store in the downtown even if it is closer than the mall.

The hesitancy to use perimeter surface lots may also be in part due to the lack of interesting pedestrian connections. An example is the abundance of parking options in the South Quad area that require the pedestrian either to walk up Center through the inactive block between Cady and Main, or through the service-oriented Mary Alexander Court area. Improving north / south connections may provide incentive to park in perimeter lots, thereby easing the demand in the downtown area.

There are parking areas ringing the downtown, both in surface lots and two-level decks. There are also on-street parking spaces. With minor exceptions, most of the surface parking lots are either unscreened or do not have pleasing identifiable edges. This kind of streetside appearance looks unkempt and unappealing. Public parking should be readily identifiable, aesthetically pleasing, and consistent in appearance to distinguish it from private parking areas. A good example is the recently re-designed Marquee parking lot in Block 6. The addition of planting islands with pedestrian walkways and a larger setback from the road including a sidewalk and



*Photo: Rear parking helps to preserve the streetscape*



*Photo: Full surface parking lot in the middle of the day*

## Section Three

plantings have improved the aesthetics of this lot. The walkways through the parking lot lead visitors from the Comerica Community Connection to Main Street shops and the Town Square. Design standards could be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance to encourage uniform development of such appealing features as buffers, vegetation, and connectivity.



*Photo: A streetscape with historic lampposts, a bench, awnings, active storefronts, and flowers is truly pedestrian-friendly*

Maintenance is another parking management issue which must be addressed. Northville's substantial parking assets require a methodical approach to ensure that they receive the attention they need to continue to serve their role in the community. They should be evaluated for structural and cosmetic issues, and a work plan developed that addresses priority, phasing, and funding of improvements. These assets commonly comprise a significant portion of a DDA's budget, and funding streams should be clearly delineated and matched with project activities. A maintenance manual should be developed that outlines the long-term approach needed to optimize the life of this capital investment.

### Character Defining Features

#### *Parks and the Public Realm*

Downtown Northville has a limited number of public gathering spaces. Ford Field is a successful active recreation area. The Town Square is a medium-sized plaza with a modern bandshell, tables with umbrellas, plantings, decorative lighting, and a fountain. It hosts live music events that draw many visitors to the heart of downtown. Entrances to shops and a public restroom surround the well-maintained Old Church Square. The park next to the Library on the northeast corner of Wing and West Cady Street is a quiet green area with canopy trees and an exceptional specimen elm. The role of several of these parks as community gathering spaces could be strengthened.



*Photo: Tree-lined sidewalks provide shade for pedestrians.*

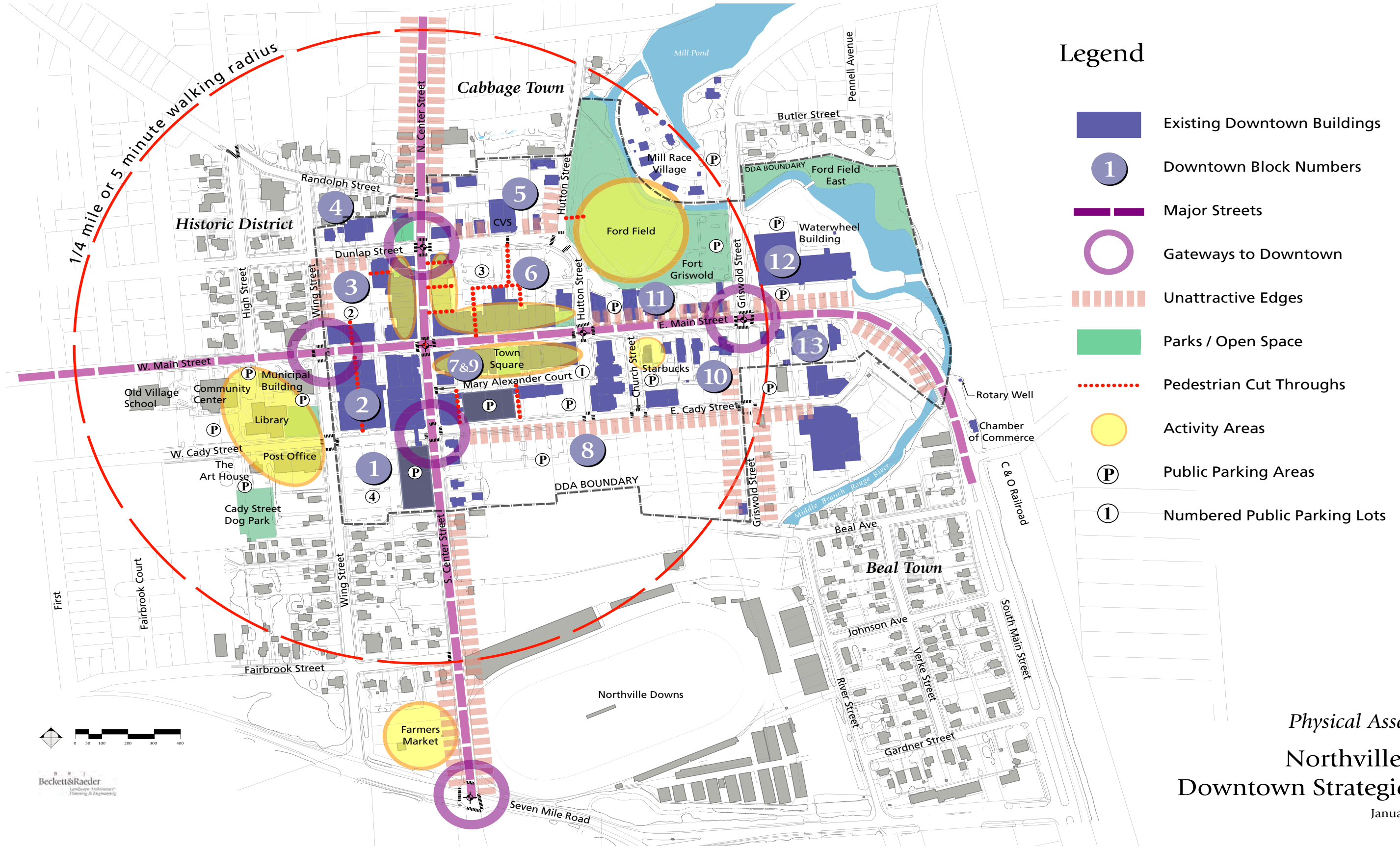
The prevalence of sidewalk cafes and outdoor dining has improved in the past years and should be continued. Hutton Park for instance, the once-small public park at the northeast corner of Hutton and East Main Street, is now used by Poole's Tavern for outdoor café seating. The DDA also implemented a Platform Dining program for restaurants to build outdoor seating in the parallel parking spaces outside of their cafes. Dining platforms currently exist at Table 5 (126 East Main) and LeGeorge (124 East Main). Outdoor sidewalk cafes contribute to the feeling of a vibrant downtown and help draw interest to the restaurants.

#### *Landscape, Lighting, Paving, and Street Furniture*

At the time of the previous physical assessment in 2006, many of the trees downtown were weak and noticeably suffering. Poor pruning practices



Graphic: Physical assessment



Physical Assessment  
 Northville DDA  
 Downtown Strategic Plan  
 January 2017



had resulted in many trees appearing unnatural and misshapen. There was a general lack of healthy tree canopy and many of the trees blocked window displays and storefront signs. Since then, the DDA has undertaken a Streetscape Enhancement Project that has made many improvements, including replacing trees. Now, the downtown sidewalks display a lovely mix of filtered sunlight and shade from healthy tree canopies. The project also implemented curb bump-outs to improve pedestrian crossing distances and provide for outdoor dining, replaced crumbling and buckled sidewalks, improved lighting energy efficiency and uniformity, and created a more cohesive look between planters and site furnishings. This has greatly improved the aesthetics of the downtown core.

However, the improvement of the streetscape in the core creates greater disparity between the recently improved areas and those that were not renovated. Streetscape improvements should be continued in phases throughout the DDA boundary to further improve the image of downtown. Alleys represent another opportunity to implement upgrades and create multimodal connections between the streetscape and the parking lots.

### *Downtown Wayfinding Signage*

Phase I of the wayfinding project recommended in the 2006 Strategic Plan was completed in the fall of 2015. The intent of the project is to provide visitors to Downtown Northville with assistance in reaching their desired destinations, increase community identity, support and enhance the community's sense of place, and to create an overall unified signage and wayfinding system. Phase I included the fabrication and installation of 20 Downtown Directional signs and 27 Downtown Parking signs. Phase II signs are located just outside of the downtown and are designed to direct visitors to the Northville Community. Primarily located on 7 and 8 Mile Roads, the ten signs will be installed in the summer of 2017. Entry signs and business directories which are consistent with the wayfinding design would further the cohesive image.

### *Other Opportunities*

Community character is the long-term result of efforts large and small, and two additional efforts with the potential to significantly impact the overall impression of the downtown merit mention here. The first is the Historical Marker program which integrates historic photos of Downtown into public areas. This was recommended in the 2006 Strategic Plan and has progressed since; its enhancement of the downtown warrants continuation. The second is a mural project. The "Old Glory" mural commissioned after the September 11 terrorist attacks and restored in 2014 demonstrates the community-building potential of such an undertaking. Where appropriate, a mural project which has received the support from the community and the Historic District Commission can seek to build upon such physical and the relationship-building success.

Graphics: Wayfinding signage

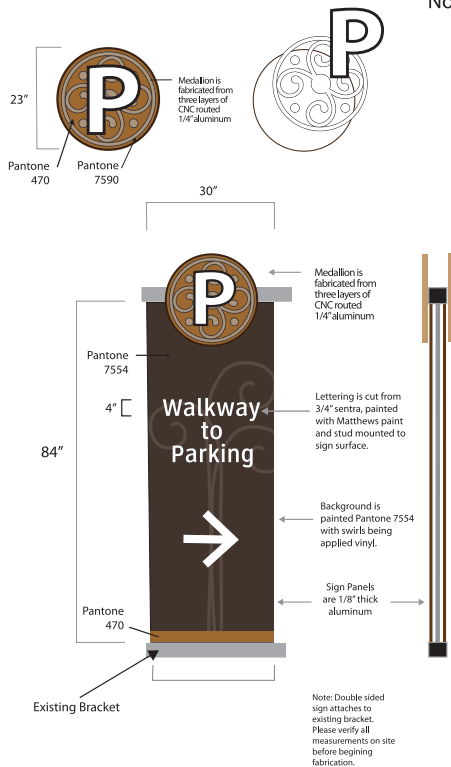


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Note: All vector sign patterns will be supplied by Bizzell Design Inc.



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 SHEET # 1-7  
 SEPT. 1, 2016