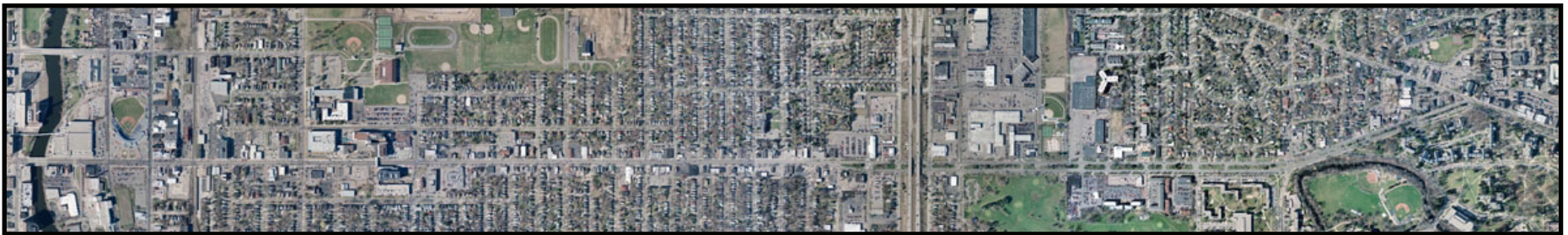




# DRAFT

## MICHIGAN AVENUE CORRIDOR CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



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## **Michigan Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority Exploratory Committee DRAFT Summary and Recommendations**

### **Committee Purpose**

The exploratory committee was established to consider the unique opportunity presented by recent passage of the Corridor Improvement Act to revitalize the Michigan Avenue Corridor, from the Pere Marquette railroad crossing to Grand River Avenue. Committee members were asked to articulate a bold vision for the future of the Michigan Avenue Corridor, and develop a preliminary plan to achieve that vision by building upon the corridor's current strengths.

### **Planning Process**

The exploratory committee met with staff from the City of Lansing, Lansing Township, and the City of East Lansing for more than a dozen working sessions between March and December of 2008. In addition, the committee solicited stakeholder input by conducting a survey of community members and holding a series of three public work sessions. Members of the exploratory committee also took a bus tour of the entire corridor, and met individually with various key stakeholders.

Planning staff from the three municipalities provided considerable support for the work of the committee. Without their diligence, this plan would not have been completed. We commend not only the product of this staff work, but also the demonstrated capacity for regional cooperation that the Michigan Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority can continue to build upon.

### **Highlights of Conceptual Plan**

The conceptual redevelopment plan for the Michigan Avenue Corridor incorporates the values and ideas expressed through the public and committee process. To provide a context for further refinement

and implementation, the committee wishes to emphasize the following key features of an ideal plan:

•**DRIVEN BY BOLD VISION** – While refinement and ultimate implementation of the plan will necessarily be incremental, development along the Corridor will only be successful if driven by a clear vision for the future; development decisions made unilaterally will undermine the achievement of a long-range vision.

•**SHAPED BY OPEN PROCESSES** – It is crucial to cultivate an open, transparent, and rich set of processes for providing information, generating ideas, gathering input, and making decisions as the plan is further refined and implemented; the Authority must build upon the initial scope of resources utilized by the exploratory committee process.

•**HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE** – The Authority should acknowledge that specific identified goals (e.g., about transportation, design/appearance, business development, etc.) are not discrete; the detailed plan and timeline for its implementation must recognize the various elements of a vital corridor as interdependent (e.g., transportation improvements have implications for neighborhood quality of life, etc.).

•**SENSITIVE TO SCALE** – The detailed plan must take into account the multiple geographic scales that define the corridor; some actions will be taken uniformly along the full corridor, while others will be focused on a more narrowly defined 'node' or specific neighborhood (e.g. unified but still unique).

### **Key Recommendations**

**The members of the exploratory committee unanimously recommend that the sponsoring municipalities join to establish a single formal Corridor Improvement Authority.**

The Corridor Improvement Authority Act of 2005 represents a unique, "once in a generation" opportunity for the collaborative, com-

prehensive redevelopment of Michigan Avenue into the “Main Street of the Capital Region.” The committee commends the three sponsoring municipalities and Michigan State University for their leadership and cooperation in launching this process. To make the most of this opportunity, the committee makes the following recommendations:

**1. The three jurisdictions must reach agreement on the intended scope of the Corridor Improvement Authority for development planning and action. If efforts of the Corridor Improvement Authority are limited to planning streetscape improvements and related cosmetic and beautification activities, it will likely achieve only modest success.** To fully realize the potential of the Corridor Improvement Act, the Corridor Improvement Plan should have a broad scope that addresses not only such design features but also fundamental functional improvements to the Corridor in terms of residential development, neighborhood connection, business formation and support, transportation planning, and so on.

**2. The Authority must have capacity to work in conjunction with existing planning functions of the three municipalities and unite those functions into one singular vision.** The exploratory committee consisted of representatives from each of the three municipalities, and its members varied widely in background and levels of participation. Because of this, the committee was reliant on planning staff support to allow the exploratory committee process to work within the confines of the existing planning policies of each individual municipality. Members in the Authority should be committed to the long-range vision of the master plans of each entity, and to guiding those master plans into a singular vision for the Michigan Avenue Corridor.

**3. The Authority must employ numerous transparent and interactive processes for gathering information, sharing information, gathering input, generating ideas, and especially making decisions.** This is essential for building upon the initial steps taken

by the committee in stakeholder engagement. Rich and innovative decision-support processes (which could be supported in part by MSU) will enable the full mobilization of the Capital Area community to redevelop the Michigan Avenue Corridor.

We note that the process undertaken by this committee will need to be expanded prior to the completion of the development plan. First, in addition to efforts to seek input from throughout the community, the Authority must engage additional stakeholder groups that are crucial to revitalizing the Michigan Avenue Corridor. These include the private development community (property owners and potential new investors), ongoing regional planning efforts (e.g., Tri-County Regional Planning, county drain commission, etc.), and the Capital Area Transportation Authority. The committee also did not access specific parcel-level data information, which will be necessary for forecasting potential revenue available for Corridor improvements and developing an achievable timeline for implementation. We recommend the Authority address both of these issues as it continues the work of finalizing a detailed plan and outlining an implementation strategy.

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## Chapter 1: Key Findings

This document will serve as a foundation for the Michigan Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority. As the name suggests, its goal—in the broadest sense—is to improve Michigan Avenue from downtown East Lansing to Pere Marquette Street in Lansing. In order to chart an achievable course toward a prosperous and exciting future, this report examined Michigan Avenue as it is today and generated a public discussion concerning what Michigan Avenue should be in the years and decades to come.

Common themes and ideas emerged through this process. The Michigan Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority Exploratory Committee has determined that

### But it was also determined that

1. The attractiveness of Michigan Avenue is diminished by vacant commercial properties and buildings with deteriorating facades; sidewalks in disrepair; a lack of consistent signage and streetscape elements; and a lack of green vegetation.
2. The corridor is divided by the U.S. 127 overpass which disrupts the connection between the state capitol and Michigan State University and as acts as physical and symbolic barrier between communities.
3. That Michigan Avenue does not adequately serve the needs of all visitors, especially pedestrians and bicyclists.
4. There is a desire for additional mixed-use infill development that would add vibrancy to the corridor.

1. Michigan Avenue is a commercial corridor of regional importance economically, historically, and culturally, and functions as a gateway to mid-Michigan and the entire State of Michigan.

2. Michigan Avenue links 2 of Michigan's most important institutions: the state capitol and Michigan State University.

3. Michigan Avenue is a home to unique local businesses that are closely connected to the communities they serve.

4. Michigan Avenue is also a home to nearly 25,000 people who live in its many walkable, urban neighborhoods.

5. Michigan Avenue is full of exciting opportunities for redevelopment

6. Michigan Avenue is not one thing to everyone who visit it, but many.

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By looking at Michigan Avenue as it is, and imagining it as it might be, the Exploratory Committee developed the following goals to guide the future actions of the Michigan Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority:

1. Recognizing the importance of the physical appearance of the corridor, the Authority will work to improve the streetscape and landscape of Michigan Avenue. It will promote the installation of signage, street furniture, lighting fixtures, and other appurtenances that distinguish the corridor as a unique place. It will work to protect historically and architecturally significant buildings while encouraging progressive design practices. It will support the creation of streetscapes that welcome visitors and ensure a vibrant experience for pedestrians.
2. Recognizing that successful economic development begins at home, the Authority will strive to nurture existing local businesses along the corridor and create opportunities for local entrepreneurs who want to invest in the future of the corridor and surrounding communities.
3. Recognizing the regional significance of Michigan Avenue, the Corridor Improvement Authority will pursue its objectives through collaboration between governmental entities, private enterprise, local organizations, and citizens. It will become a leading example of power of regionalism and inter-jurisdictional cooperation.
4. Recognizing the benefits of a healthy natural environment, the Authority will conduct its activities and pursue its objectives in a way that protects natural resources and improves environmental quality. It will endeavor to make mid-Michigan a greener, more livable place by supporting efforts to improve air and water quality; and promote recreational amenities and healthy, active lifestyles.
5. Recognizing the advantages of safe, efficient, and convenient transportation systems that serve multiple modes of travel, the Authority will support efforts to build a transportation system that serves the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, public transit users, and motorists.
6. Recognizing that strong neighborhoods make for strong local commerce and a vibrant streetscape, the Authority will promote the development of higher-density residential and mixed-use residential/commercial in strategic locations to complement and strengthen the desirable characteristics of existing neighborhoods.

## Chapter 2: Introduction

### What is a Corridor Improvement Authority?

The Corridor Improvement Authority Act (CIAA) was passed by the Michigan legislature in 2005 and amended in 2007. It provides for the creation of a public economic development corporation that will work to “correct and prevent deterioration in business districts, encourage historic preservation, promote economic growth.” The act requires that all corridor improvement authorities allow for mixed use and high density residential, that they expedite permitting, and that they support nonmotorized transportation. It also allows multiple municipalities to collaborate and establish one, unified authority. Working together, different local units of government that share a corridor are able to leverage their investment by defraying some of the costs of redevelopment and sharing resources that can be invested in improvements. A multiple jurisdiction corridor improvement authority also embraces the fact that many of the challenges facing communities ignore political boundaries and should be addressed through regional cooperation.

The authority itself is a body corporate that may, among other things, secure funding for improvement projects; acquire, improve and operate real property; and develop plans to protect the properties from deterioration and promote economic growth in the development area. These initiatives can be quite broad and can serve to improve the aesthetics of the corridor by installing new landscaping, burying utility lines, or improving building façades. The authority can also work to improve the function of the corridor by marketing and supporting corridor businesses, improving transportation systems, and improving wayfinding.

A board composed of local property owners, residents, and business owners, will oversee these projects and act as responsible stewards of the Authority’s resources.

### The Process

After leaders from each of the municipalities and Michigan State University launched this initiative, an exploratory committee was formed to draft a conceptual development plan for Michigan Avenue. The committee felt that community involvement and support would be crucial if the authority was to succeed, and so they tasked themselves with encouraging public participation. Invitations to public workshops were mailed to property owners on the corridor, local media carried publicized the committee’s activities, and a website was created both to provide the public with progress reports and to gather feedback through a web based survey.

After members of the community and stakeholder groups were notified of the committee’s activities, a series of 3 public workshops was conducted during the summer of 2008. The first session was attended by more than 30 members of the community who identified the corridor’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. At the second public workshop, the committee used these comments as a basis for discussion of a vision for the future of Michigan Avenue. At the final public workshop, goals and objectives were presented to members of the community for additional deliberation. Results of these workshops are contained in Appendix A. Participants at these meetings were excited by the possibility to initiate positive change along the corridor, and the discussions were spirited.

## The Conceptual Development Plan

From information gathered through these public workshops and other sources, the exploratory committee and staff has drafted the Conceptual Development Plan presented below. It is a foundational document on which the Authority will base future plans and decisions, but it has been written to allow the flexibility that the authority will require to meet ever shifting challenges. As such, the Conceptual Development Plans provides a snapshot of the corridor as it now exists and articulates the vision, goals, and broad policies that will nudge it toward a prosperous and vibrant future.

It is now the task of the exploratory committee and staff to present the Conceptual Development Plan to each Municipality involved. The legislative bodies of the Charter Township of Lansing and the cities of East Lansing and Lansing will be asked to hold public hearings and then ratify the plan and appoint representatives from each locality thereby creating the official Michigan Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority. After the Authority has been formally created, it will further clarify its mission by prioritizing objectives, establishing organization processes, determining funding mechanisms, and proposing specific economic development and public

infrastructure projects. Specific steps that need to be taken immediately to implement the authority are described in the Section 4.1 *Actions for Immediate Implementation*.

Quotes from a survey Participant:

“I like the *IDEA* of Michigan Ave as the main corridor running the length of the center of town, connecting the capitol with MSU. There’s so much potential for Michigan Ave to regain its former glory.”

“I like the cute, quaint businesses, such as Magdalena’s or Gone Wired, which are locally owned and very casual.”



Local residents offer feedback to Committee members



Diane Wing (President) and Faron Supanich (Vice President) begin our first workshop in August of 2008

56% of survey participants drive to and around Michigan Ave and 15% of survey participants get around Michigan Ave by bicycle.



## Implementation

The Michigan Avenue Corridor *development area* will be implemented from the intersection of Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue in East Lansing to the eastern limit of the City of Lansing's Downtown Development Authority at the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Pere Marquette. Although the exact northern and southern boundaries of the authority will be established by each municipality through ordinance, the development area can extend as far as 500 feet in either direction of the center line of the corridor.

Initiatives proposed for the development area may be funded through a variety of means. An authority can issue bonds, receive grants and charitable donations, levy special assessment, and use Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Tax Increment Financing is often much more appealing to affected properties than special assessments because it avoids the creation of new taxes. Instead, TIF enables a taxing entity, like a city or township, to "capture" additional tax revenue generated by increases in the value of properties throughout an entire TIF district. Rather than being absorbed into a jurisdiction's general fund, those revenues (which would have been collected anyway) are targeted for reinvestment back into the TIF district.

If planned and invested wisely, the TIF continuously regenerates and builds itself. In this case, improvements made along the corridor will add value to nearby properties as well as those further away on Michigan Avenue. The Authority would use Tax Increment Financing, which has been used by governmental entities to bury overhead utility lines, repair sidewalks, install signs, support the improvement of building facades, and to nurture local business development through incubators and marketing initiatives. An improved physical and commercial environment should inspire local property owners, residents, and business owners alike to pursue even more redevelopment and investment along the corridor; thus serving as a catalyst for future growth.

## What is Tax Increment Financing?

The Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district is an area where future tax growth (new taxes) will be captured by the TIF district for implementation of improvements within the district. The proposed district would stretch from the railroad by Clara's on the West to Grand River Avenue on the East.

The Corridor Improvement Authority Act (CIAA) allows a multi-municipality Authority to capture new taxes on a single corridor, and up to 500' feet of depth on side street.

The Authority can be funded through bonding as well as directly through the TIF.

TIF capture is used for public infrastructure improvements: Beautification, burying utilities, streetscape improvements, signs, landscaping, design and organizational development.

The Authority does not create a new tax. It captures new tax revenue.

No government agency loses any existing tax revenue.

The duration of the TIF is determined by the goals and costs of the proposed improvements.

Goals for the corridor will be determined by the stakeholders in the corridor area and improvements in the corridor will be paid for by the new taxes from new development on the corridor.



## Chapter 3: Michigan Avenue Today

Before proceeding with a vision for the improvement and redevelopment of Michigan Avenue, it is important to inventory and document the corridor as it exists today. From end to end, Michigan Avenue varies greatly in its physical character, its function, and the image it projects. This is perhaps one of the most significant strengths with which Michigan Avenue is endowed. People living on Michigan Avenue and in surrounding neighborhoods come from a broad cross-section of America. They represent many different communities, vocations, and interests. From regional health care facilities to neighborhood barbers, businesses on the corridor operate at different scales in many different industries to meet the demands of consumers throughout the tri-county region.

At times, though, variation poses a challenge to redevelopment and the pursuit of a common vision for the future of Michigan Avenue. Participants at public workshops often expressed concern about the lack of consistent urban design along the corridor. Some felt that this inconsistency made the corridor seem disorderly and unattractive. Similarly, the corridor does not accommodate all commuters consistently. Pedestrians must contend with uneven sidewalks and a streetscape that is unwelcoming. Bicycle lanes and parking facilities are not provided for bicyclists.

The following provides detailed, if brief, discussions of these and other issues. In performing this study the corridor was divided into 3 sections, all of them roughly equal in length. Although Michigan Avenue was divided in such a way partly out of convenience, the boundaries of each section are actual meaningful. The eastern most study area focuses primarily on East Lansing and Michigan State University. The second study area is bounded by U.S. 127 on the east on Sparrow Hospital on the west. The third study area runs from Sparrow Hospital to the edge of the City of Lansing DDA boundary at Pere Marquette. Each study area is described in terms of its land use, social and economic activity, physical form, and transportation systems. Please refer to map below for discussed area.





## Study Area 1: Grand River to Clippert

The portion of the corridor is defined by several dominant features: Michigan State University to the East; Frandor shopping center, U.S. 127, and the Red Cedar Golf Course to the West. Of the three study areas, average median household income for all census blocks in this section was the lowest at \$19,562. This is undoubtedly influenced by the large proportion of students living in this area. Study Area 1 also houses the largest number of people with 7,023 residents. Of these, many are students living in rentals and university dormitories. There are a total of 1,977 Households residing in 2,080 Housing Units within this area.

### Land Use

Land use in this study area is a mix of single and multi-family residential, big box commercial, small retail and service-oriented commercial, institutional, and recreational uses.

Starting at the west end, Clippert runs north and south along the edge of the Frandor Shopping Center and the Red Cedar Golf Course and is a transportation connector to both the Lansing River Trail and the 127 expressway. This area is characterized by Frandor's big box retail and associated parking as well as the green space and recreational elements that surround Frandor to the south and east.

Moving east there are development opportunities at Frandor Plus, the former Dollar nightclub site, and the former Sawyer's Pontiac dealership. These sites would be ideal for mixed use retail and residential developments and may be desirable for office as well. Redevelopment here, if done strategically through master planning, would create a dynamic entrance into the two cities while capitalizing on the proximity to the expressway, University and Capital.



Further east, the corridor is flanked on the north by the desirable Chesterfield Hills Neighborhood and on the south by student apartments and the Michigan State University Brody Complex. There are a few commercial buildings mixed into this area and a small concentration of commercial buildings at the intersection of Harrison Road and Grand River Avenue. From here to Grand River Avenue, the entire south side of the corridor is Michigan State University Campus, with the Red

Cedar River coming very close to the street near Harrison and some of the campus' most beautiful historic architecture beyond that to the east. The north side of the street along this section is a mixture of student housing and commercial buildings. At the end of the Corridor is Grand River Avenue, with the historic People's Church and the site for the future City Center II mixed-use development that will include a hotel and theater.

### **Social and economic activity**

As mentioned before, nearly 5,500 people were estimated to be living in this area during the 2000 Census. Those individuals were members of 1,256 households. Households are significantly larger in this section of the corridor than the corridor average or the other two sections. The large number of students living in dormitories and rental housing likely skews household size. Median household income is \$19,652—the lowest of the three sections. With senior housing, stable owner occupied neighborhoods, and students, the population of this area is diverse. That said the presence of Michigan State University and the student population is very significant.

Residents in this area enjoy access to several parks and recreational facilities including the Red Cedar Golf Course, River Trail, and Ranney Park. The Frandor shopping center features many national and local retail stores and restaurants. Despite its convenient location, the availability of various types of retail and service businesses, and its apparent draw as a shopping destination, the shopping center itself was not perceived as an inviting, walkable, urban environment.

### **Physical form/design/character/landscape**

This segment of the corridor has a wide (mostly 50') median with grass and trees. Wide verges between the sidewalk and

the road provide a comfortable separation for pedestrians from automobile traffic traveling on as many as 3 lanes in each direction. Trees planted in the verge provide some additional screening of the roadway. The median makes it easier to cross the street and also creates a pleasant and cohesive image for this section of the corridor, which actually has many distinctly different characteristics. Those characteristics are most evident in the variety of uses. You will see residential, institutional and commercial uses all in close proximity to one another through this section although they are rarely found together in mixed-use structures. Architectural styles also vary, from University buildings, to multifamily housing, and commercial structures to historic homes.



Typical strip development on Michigan Avenue



Large scale commercial at Frandor



Multimodal Harrison Road

The variety adds visual interest to this section of the corridor and is tied together with consistency in the median and pedestrian walks.



### Transportation systems

The U.S. 127 overpass dominates the western end of this section of the corridor and acts as de facto gateway for travelers leaving the City of Lansing and entering East Lansing and Lansing Township. Several participants in public workshops commented on the difficulty posed by the overpass for pedestrian and bicycle commuters. And many respondents characterized the overpass as a psychological or symbolic barrier between the cities of East Lansing and Lansing rather than a gateway that invites unfettered movement between these communities.

This section of the corridor has three west-bound lanes and three east-bound traffic lanes. Some work has been done to consider reducing the number of lanes or the width of the median to provide a buffer between the corridor and the Chesterfield Hills neighborhood.

With only one small exception, well maintained sidewalks run along both the north and south sides of this section of the corridor. This section of the corridor is not served by on street bike lanes.

### Study Area 2: U.S. 127 to Sparrow Hospital

A little over one mile, average median income for households in census blocks around this section of Michigan Avenue is \$31,102, 2,806 people in 1213 households (or 2.31 people/household) on 297 acres or 11 people on each acre, in 1329 dwelling units (91% occupancy rate) at a density of 5 dwelling units per acre.

#### Land Use

Although isolated pockets of residential land uses persist from earlier decades, current land use along the midsection of the corridor is predominantly non-residential. Within this category there are many different types of activities that are accommodated throughout this section of the corridor—several leaving distinctive imprints on the overall land use of the area. Car lots for example (particularly the two at the east end of this section) create large, paved open spaces amidst smaller scale commercial storefronts. Newer commercial developments, which are sporadically dispersed throughout this section, often occupy larger lots and devote much more surface area to off street parking. Aside from aesthetic considerations (discussed later) these tracts of assembled land may represent an opportunity for larger redevelopment projects are envisioned.

Although residential land uses are not prevalent along this section of the corridor, it is important to recognize that the commercial and institutional land uses which do dominate the frontage of the corridor are surrounded by well-established residential neighborhoods. Generally speaking, these residential neighborhoods extend from the first or second block off of Michigan Avenue to the next largest arterial roads north and south of Michigan Avenue (Saginaw to the north and Kalamazoo to the south). On average, these neighborhoods have urban densities of 5 dwelling units and 11 persons per

acre.

### **Social and economic activity**

As mentioned above, neighborhoods along this section of the corridor tend to be stable and are often represented by active neighborhood organizations. Taken altogether nearly 3,000 people reside here with an average median income of \$31,102 (2000 Decennial Census). Community facilities in this area include the Foster community center which provides community meeting space, hosts community events, and programs a variety of recreational activities for all age groups.

Many of the existing commercial establishments serve the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. Small retailers, restaurants, entertainment and cultural venues, and neighborhood service providers line the north and south sides of this section of the corridor. Of this entire section, the 2000 block from Fairview to Clemens was repeatedly identified in public workshops as the single most vibrant and active commercial node along the corridor. In fact, many participants expressed the opinion that they would like to see more of this section of the corridor look and act like the 2000 block.

### **Physical form/design/character/landscape**

This section of the corridor is characterized by older commercial and residential buildings. Many of the residential buildings have been converted over time into commercial buildings. The conversion process has resulted in some peculiar architectural features as single story “modern” commercial storefronts have been grafted onto single family homes that were built before the Second World War. Some buildings that were constructed during this period for commercial purposes remain relatively unaltered and lend this part of the corridor some historical character and an authentic

urban feel. Participants in the public workshops most closely associated buildings in the “2000 block” area with this type of construction and streetscape.

In several places older buildings have been replaced by newer construction that is much more suburban in appearance and function. These sites tend to consist of one story buildings setback as much as 50 feet from Michigan Avenue to accommodate relatively large parking lots. As many members of the community have commented, the transition between buildings of different architectural styles is not orderly and distracts from an overall sense of place. Identifying historically significant buildings and encouraging new development and façade improvements that respect and enhance the appearance of existing buildings could correct this problem.



Different architectural styles:  
Above: Commercial strip with large setback  
Left: No setback gives an ‘urban feel’

The streetscape along the mid-section of the Michigan Avenue includes sidewalks and many street trees. The sidewalks tend to extend from the building line to face of curb, and very rarely include a verge or planting areas. Due to this design, street

trees are often found growing in the middle of the sidewalk rather than along the outer edge of the sidewalk area, next to the curb. Their trunks surrounded by concrete, the trees have caused the sidewalk to heave and buckle in many spots.

Ornamental streetlights line both sides of Michigan Avenue throughout this section, and banners can be affixed to them. Bus stops are situated periodically, most of them unsheltered and without seating. Bicycle racks, trash receptacles, and street furniture can be found along this section of the corridor, but only sporadically.

### **Transportation systems**

Though the automobile is the predominant form of transportation, several different other modes of transportation are found along this section of Michigan Avenue. CATA route 1 connects both ends of the corridor and a late night service, the Entertainment Express, accommodates express travel between downtown East Lansing and Lansing. Automobile traffic is accommodated by 4 directional traffic lanes and a center left-hand turn lane. Sidewalks provide pedestrian access on the north and south sides of Michigan Avenue for most of distance between Holmes and U.S. 127. There are isolated spots between Mifflin and Detroit streets where public sidewalk is absent. Where present, there are many locations where sidewalks have fallen into disrepair and/or are not ADA accessible. Bicyclists must share traffic lanes with motorists or use the sidewalk as there are no bike lanes on either side of the road. Despite these less than ideal conditions, cyclists use Michigan Avenue to travel from the one end of the corridor to the other.

## **Study Area 3—Sparrow to Pere Marquette**

**Land use** in this study area is a mix of single and multi-story commercial, small retail and service-oriented commercial, institutional, and recreational uses.

Starting at the west end, Pere Marquette runs north and south along the edge of an historic train depot building that has been renovated as restaurant. This area is characterized by a mix of commercial land uses including several State of Michigan departmental offices, small entertainment venues, restaurants, bars, retail sales outlets, and hospital related service providers. Although there are some potential opportunities for redevelopment, many of the properties along this section of Michigan Avenue are occupied. Local businesses like Jon Anthony Florist, Stobers Cocktail Lounge, Moriarity's Pub, and Clara's Restaurant are fixtures along this section of the corridor and major contributors to the foot traffic and vitality of this area. Despite the presence of a handful of entertainment and nightlife destinations, visitor traffic and activity is heavier during the day and falls substantially after 5:00PM.

### **Social and economic activity**

Total Population within this area is 3,649, with 1,581 total households living in 1,738 housing units, in 2000 there were 157 total vacancies.

### **Physical form/design/character/landscape**

Many of the buildings along this section of the corridor were constructed before the middle of the Twentieth Century. They were constructed in a style that many visitors would recognize as distinctly early-twentieth century urban and attractively vintage. The recently constructed Michigan State Housing Development Authority office building is an exception this

prevailing style. In a few instances, facades have been modified or adulterated with modern materials and finishes. Recently, however, this process seems to have ceased and even reversed as property owners have elected to restore or recreate building facades in the vintage style. Several sites in this area are quite unique and of potential historic value.

The continuity of architectural character has been further reinforced by streetscape improvements made during the recent completion of the City of Lansing combined sewer separation project. Sidewalks have been improved with the addition of brick pavers and new, ADA compliant curb-cuts. An extensive “rain garden” storm water management system has been installed throughout this section of the corridor. These gardens filter storm water runoff and provide desirable landscape features. These features include trees and other vegetation, street furniture, and interpretive signage. Many survey respondents and public workshop participants considered these enhancements to be attractive amenities that should be replicated in other sections of the corridor.



Above: The ‘rain garden’ storm management system  
Left: An unique building facade



traffic, and accommodates on-street, parallel parking. There is a major intersection at Pennsylvania and Michigan which experiences high volumes of east-west and north-south traffic. Pennsylvania, along with one-way roads Cedar and Larch, are major arterials that route traffic onto this section of Michigan Avenue.

Public transit is provided by CATA route 1 and the late night Entertainment Express service. Sidewalks, many of which were replaced or repaired during recent infrastructure projects, run along both the north and south sides of this section of the corridor. This section of the corridor is not served by on-road bike lanes. Several participants in public workshops expressed a desire for better bike facilities, including on-road bike lanes, while some participants wanted more on-street parking.

#### **Michigan Avenue Corridor Facts and Figures**

Median income: \$23,760  
Total population: 9,377  
Median age: 29.9  
Total housing units: 3,183  
Owner occupied housing: 31.5%  
Renter occupied housing: 60.45%  
Vacant housing: 8.04%

#### **Transportation systems**

This section of Michigan Avenue has 5 lanes for automobile



## Chapter 4: Michigan Avenue 2030

The Michigan Avenue Corridor extends for nearly 3.5 miles, crosses the political boundaries of 3 municipalities and passes through diverse neighborhoods. The corridor is not static: it changes as its surroundings change. From one end to the other, Michigan Avenue flows through areas that possess different characteristics: different appearances, different densities, different amenities, elicit different feelings.

As we learned during our public outreach sessions, Michigan Avenue is a lot of things to a lot of people, and each one of those stories is important. From those stories, several common themes emerged. We repeatedly heard members of the community talk about the need for an economically vital Michigan Avenue that could be a destination for people from all over the region, the state, and indeed the world. We heard of the need for a transportation network that supports pedestrians and bicyclists. We heard about the need to make Michigan Avenue a pleasant and exciting place to be. Although the corridor is many things, we offer the following vision in an attempt to articulate a shared future for this great thoroughfare.



Diverse land uses and modes on Michigan Avenue

### Vision Statement

By 2030, the Michigan Avenue Corridor will be a premier, regional destination for work, leisure, education and recreation for local residents and visitors.

Attractive streetscapes lined with trees, street furniture, lighting, and public art will welcome visitors and engender a cohesive sense of place throughout the entire corridor.

The underpass at U.S. 127 will be a conduit between the communities of Lansing, Lansing Township, and East Lansing that is a welcoming gateway and invites and enables the free movement of people between jurisdictions.

The corridor will be thoroughly multimodal, offering safe, convenient, and clean transportation options along its entire extent.

A diverse mix of local and national businesses will serve the needs of area residents and provide unique cultural, culinary, retail and entertainment destinations to visitors and residents alike.

The corridor will remain a “front door” to socially and economically diverse neighborhoods where homeowners and renters, young and old, blue and white collar, can live and socialize together.

The corridor will link recreational facilities through a network of parks, paths, and other green spaces.

The corridor will function to enhance environmental quality and enable the responsible stewardship of natural resources.

Redevelopment and investment will benefit the entire corridor and the region.

Working across municipal boundaries, the corridor will be a leading example of regional cooperation and collaborative problem solving.

### **Goals Statement**

Making this vision a reality won't happen through any single redevelopment project: it will be the cumulative product of many smaller, coordinated initiatives that transform Michigan Avenue incrementally into the place described above. To ensure that these initiatives or actions complement one another and are aligned with our vision, the exploratory committee believes that these initiatives should achieve the following goals:

1. Support cooperation and collaboration between governmental entities, private businesses, local organizations, and residents.
2. Use environmentally sustainable development practices to protect wildlife habitat, preserve green space, reduce resource consumption, conserve energy, and improve the water quality of local watersheds.
3. Develop a safe and efficient “multi-modal” transportation network that balances the needs of all user groups and emphasizes non-motorized options along the corridor.
4. Improve streetscape and landscape features in order to strengthen the image of the corridor as a destination, encourage pedestrian circulation, and support a vibrant urban experience.
5. Support the growth of existing businesses along the corridor and create opportunities for new, homegrown enterprise.
6. Promote the development of higher-density residential and mixed-use residential/commercial buildings in strategic locations to complement and strengthen the desirable characteristics of existing neighborhoods.

## Chapter 5: Strategies for implementation

This section of the Conceptual Development Plan recommends some initiatives and implementation actions to be pursued over several different periods of time. It begins by suggesting steps to be taken immediately in order to ratify the plan and establish a functional Michigan Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority. From there it suggests actions to be taken over longer periods of time. These items are offered provisionally, and may be modified or removed from the Plan during the process of ratification. Each implementation action includes a description of the action, the parties tasked with the action, the timeframe in which it is to be initiated, and its geographic location (where relevant). Longer term actions are organized by the goal that they support. The order of the goals in what follows has NOT been ordered in any particular way, i.e. the order of the goals does not reflect the importance or priority of a particular goal. For a prioritized list of actions, please refer to the Implementation Actions matrix. This document can be found in Appendix C.

### Actions for Immediate Implementation (not goal specific)

1. Complete public hearings as required by statute; review and approve Conceptual Development Plan. **Timeframe:** Immediate; **Responsible Party:** City Councils and Township Board; **Location:** N/A.
2. Dissolve Exploratory Committee and appoint Representatives to the Official Michigan Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority. **Timeframe:** Immediate; **Responsible Party:** City Councils and Township Board; **Location:** N/A.
3. Draft and approve intergovernmental agreement establishing a multi-jurisdictional Corridor Improvement

Authority. **Timeframe:** Immediate; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff; City Councils and Township Board; **Location:** N/A.

4. Maintain Corridor Improvement Authority website to inform the public of ongoing activities and events. **Timeframe:** Immediate; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff; **Location:** N/A.

### Goal 1 Actions for Implementation – Cooperation & Collaboration

1. Establish a subcommittee or working group to identify, engage, and create partnerships with third party organizations, agencies, and educational institutions that can provide expertise and guidance to the Authority. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA; **Location:** N/A.
2. Create policies and procedures that eliminate conflicting zoning and building regulations between the 3 jurisdictions, and enable faster review of development proposals. This may take the form of an overlay district. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, planning and zoning staff from each of the 3 municipalities, legislative bodies and planning commissions from each of the 3 municipalities; **Location:** TBD.
3. Meet with representatives from stakeholder groups on a regular basis. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA, CIA staff; **Location:** N/A.

### Goal 2 Actions for Implementation – Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability

1. Establish an environmental subcommittee. **Timeframe:**

- Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA; **Location:** N/A.
2. Establish operating procedures and guidelines for the Authority that will reduce natural resource consumption conserve energy, and encourage recycling. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA; **Location:** N/A.
  3. Create policies and procedures that encourage temporary re-use of vacant land for small “pocket parks” and programmed recreation when redevelopment is not imminent. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, planning and zoning staff from each of the 3 municipalities, planning commissions from each of the 3 municipalities, community organizations; **Location:** TBD.
  4. Promote the replacement of all seasonal and permanent street lights with LED lights. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, public services staff, Board of Water and Light; **Location:** TBD.
  5. Create plan for connecting local and regional parks, recreational facilities, and wildlife habitat areas through a network of greenways and non-motorized paths. **Timeframe:** Medium; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, consultant, local organizations, **Location:** TBD.
  6. Review applicable watershed management plans and identify opportunities to support those initiatives. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff & CIA, **Location:** N/A.
  7. Integrate best management practices for stormwater management into development and design guidelines. **Timeframe:** Medium; **Responsible Party:** planning and public works staff from each of the 3 municipalities, Ingham County Drain Commission; **Location:** N/A.
  8. Pursue re-tasking of the Red Cedar Golf Course for unstructured recreation, wildlife habitat, stormwater management, and flood mitigation. **Timeframe:**

Medium; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, planning and public works staff from each of the 3 municipalities, planning commissions from each of the 3 municipalities, community organizations, Ingham County Drain Commission, MDEQ, **Location:** Study Area 1.

### Goal 3 Actions for Implementation – Transportation

1. Establish a transportation subcommittee. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA; **Location:** N/A.
2. Create and implement a wayfinding plan. **Timeframe:** Short to medium term; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, consultant, **Location:** corridor-wide.
3. Identify and prioritize bicycle parking sites, and work with public and private partners to provide secure bicycle parking throughout the corridor. **Timeframe:** Short to medium; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, MSU Bike Project and similar organizations, **Location:** N/A.
4. Support and participate in efforts by the City of Lansing, City of East Lansing and other stakeholders to adopt and implement a non-motorized transportation plan. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA; **Location:** N/A.
5. Study the benefits and feasibility of creating on and off-road bicycle facilities along the Corridor. **Timeframe:** Short to medium term; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, consultant; **Location:** corridor-wide.
6. Identify, prioritize, and reconstruct dilapidated sidewalks and install ADA compliant curb cuts and ramps. **Timeframe:** Medium to long; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, public works departments from Lansing and East Lansing, Ingham County Road Commission, MDOT, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, **Location:** corridor-wide.



7. Engage regional transportation organizations to study the feasibility of constructing light rail to connect downtown Lansing with downtown East Lansing. **Timeframe:** Long; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, MDOT, CATA, TCRPC; **Location:** corridor-wide.

#### Goal 4 & 6 Actions for Implementation -- Streetscape and Development

1. Establish an urban design and project review subcommittee. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA; **Location:** N/A.
2. Establish institutional procedures that enable consistent application of design guidelines across political boundaries. **Timeframe:** Medium; **Responsible Party:** planning and public works staff from each of the 3 municipalities, planning commissions and legislative bodies from the 3 municipalities; **Location:** N/A.
3. Identify specific areas for higher-density residential and commercial infill development and work to create neighborhood-scale masterplans where applicable. **Timeframe:** Short-medium; **Responsible Party:** CIA; **Locations:** TBD.
4. Identify opportunities for redevelopment including vacant properties and properties in tax foreclosure. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff; **Locations:** TBD.
5. Create corridor-wide and special area design guidelines that address architectural characteristics (including building placement and scale), land use, street and landscape features, access, parking, lighting, stormwater management, and responsible use of natural resources. **Timeframe:** Short to medium term; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, consultant; **Locations:** TBD.
6. Identify historically significant buildings and structures and

create a system of incentives for property owners to restore the historic character of historic building facades and other architectural features and appurtenances. **Timeframe:** Medium; **Responsible Party:** CIA staff, consultant; **Locations:** TBD.

#### Goal 5 Actions for Implementation – Economic Development

1. Establish business development subcommittee to work with public and private economic development organizations to support existing businesses on the corridor and promote new start-ups. **Timeframe:** Short; **Responsible Party:** CIA; **Location:** N/A.
2. Create a comprehensive strategy to market businesses on the corridor to the region and beyond. **Timeframe:** Short to medium; **Responsible Party:** CIA, public and private economic development partners, consultant; **Location:** N/A.
3. Explore the feasibility of creating financial instruments to directly support the creation and expansion of local businesses on the Corridor. **Timeframe:** Medium; **Responsible Party:** CIA, public and private economic development partners, consultant; **Location:** N/A.
4. Study the feasibility of creating a high-tech business incubator. **Timeframe:** Medium; **Responsible Party:** CIA, public and private economic development partners, consultant; **Location:** N/A.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This document is the product of an inclusive public input process led by volunteer committee members from each of the three jurisdiction. More information on the process and updates on the corridor are available at [www.michiganavecorridor.com](http://www.michiganavecorridor.com). Information continues to be gathered for use by the future Corridor Improvement Authority. Today there are two classes at MSU that are working on additional data gathering processes. CATA has just launched an effort to do a multi-modal transportation study of the corridor, Lansing is working on a Master Plan update and the Ingham County drain commissioner is planning for improvements to the drain at Frandor. As stated earlier, this Conceptual Development Plan is a foundational document on which the Authority will base future plans and decisions. However, it has been written with the flexibility to adjust recommendations as more information becomes available and new challenges arise. As such, the Conceptual Development Plan articulates the vision, goals, and broad policies of a diverse community of stakeholders working together toward a prosperous and vibrant future.

