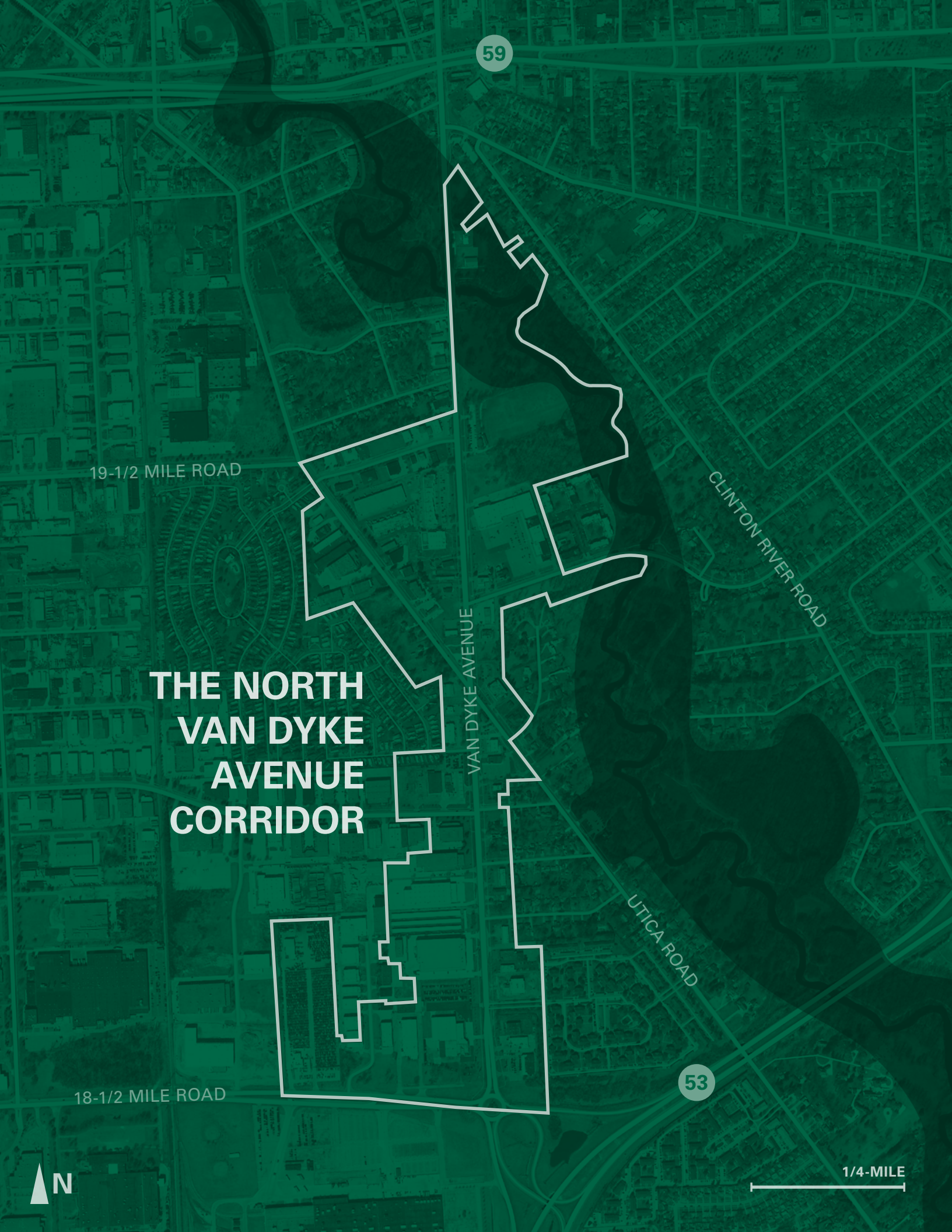
# NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE

## MASTER PLAN

MAY 2021

DESIGNWORKSHOP

CITY OF Sterling Heights


59
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
VAN DYKE AVENUE
THE NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE CORRIDOR
UTICA ROAD
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

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CLINTON RIVER
TRAIL OPPORTUNITY
ENVIRONMENTAL
STOP TRUCK TRAFFIC
CORE
HOBBY INDUSTRIALIST INCUBATOR
MOBILE HOMEPARK
CLINTON RIVER
ACTIVE, INCLUSIVE, SAFE
VAN DYK

# PROJECT INTRODUCTION



The North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan was completed over the course of eight months, from September 2020 through April 2021. The Plan is built on the foundation of the community's ideas and preferences and driven by the City's commitment to make the most of this important part of Sterling Heights.

# LETTER TO THE STERLING HEIGHTS COMMUNITY

May 5, 2021

Dear Existing and Future Residents and Business Owners of Sterling Heights,

In August 2020, the city of Sterling Heights and the Van Dyke Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority partnered with Design Workshop—a planning, urban design, and landscape architecture firm—to create the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan. This master plan is designed to reimagine the future of the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor between 18-1/2 Mile Road to the south and M-59 to the north.

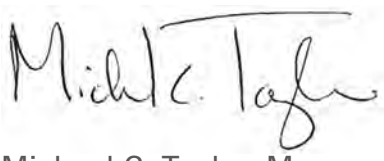
This area of the City has tremendous potential, and this Master Plan leaves no part of the North Van Dyke Corridor untouched. The plan envisions a more pedestrian friendly Van Dyke roadway including bike lanes, on-street parking, increased crosswalks, additional pedestrian connections and enhancements that encourage walkability and additional well-connected green spaces. The plan also establishes a new model for urban living with higher density residential options within walking distance to convenience, entertainment and experiential retail uses.

The Plan features a new inclusive, artful and uplifting brand for the North Van Dyke Corridor that focuses on the area's vibrancy and industrial and environmental assets. The branding can be utilized on street signage, street furniture, pedestrian markers and more.

I am grateful for all of you who participated in the City's public engagement process, whether online during virtual meetings, or as a part of the online comment pages. Your input is critical in the development and success of the North Van Dyke corridor.

Moving forward, the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan will be an essential tool to guide the future investment and development of the North Van Dyke corridor, providing the basis for future zoning ordinance language and placemaking decisions. Thank you for being a part of this important process.

Sincerely,



Michael C. Taylor, Mayor
City of Sterling Heights

A view looking east across the bridge crossing the Clinton River along Riverland Drive

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS

### CITY ADMINISTRATION + COUNCIL

Michael C. Taylor, Mayor

Liz Sierawski, Mayor Pro-Tem

Deanna Koski, City Council

Michael V. Radtke Jr., City Council

Maria G. Schmidt, City Council

Henry Yanez, City Council

Barbara A. Ziarko, City Council

### CITY STAFF

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City Development Director, CIA Board Member

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Community Relations Director

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City Planner, Development Manager

## CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY (CIA)

Luke Bonner
Senior Economic Dev. Advisor

Robert Artymovich
Board Member

Michael D'Agostini
Board Member

Thomas Kavulich
Board Member

## CONSULTANT TEAM

**DESIGN WORKSHOP, INC.**

**MANNIK SMITH GROUP, INC.**

## THE STERLING HEIGHTS COMMUNITY

The City of Sterling Heights, the Corridor Improvement Authority, and the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan planning team thank members of the Sterling Heights community for their participation in this effort and for contributing their ideas for the future of this corridor.

Your inspired ideas and desires for the future of Sterling Heights and North Van Dyke Avenue are the foundation of this plan and the greatest asset the community has to realize the vision outlined in this master plan.

## SITE HISTORY

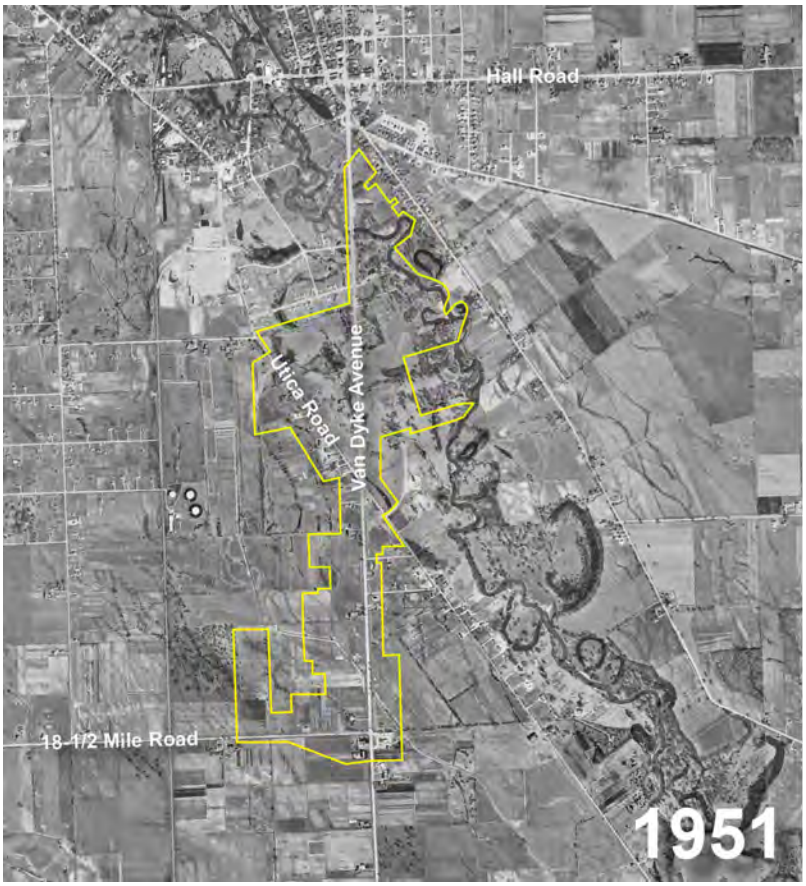
Van Dyke Avenue runs north-south through the City of Sterling Heights. It was initially planned as one of the main "spokes" that traveled from downtown Detroit through the sparsely developed northern communities and farmlands. With the construction of the M-53 bypass and the massive expansion of M-59 decades ago, the northernmost segment of Van Dkye Avenue (between 18-1/2 Mile Road and the City of Utica boundary) no longer serves as the same key connector. This essentially left a 1.5-mile stretch of the once prominent roadway to languish throughout the latter part of the 20th century and through to today, even amidst significant residential and industrial growth in around it.

The corridor is currently dominated by strip malls and auto-oriented uses like gas stations and repair shops. A Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) district was established in 2006 to increase the quality of developments and investment in this area of the City. Due to the Great Recession of the late 2000's, the CIA initially struggled to generate tax revenue, and investment was limited. However, in the last several years, the CIA has started generating more significant revenue due to a number of new investments (including retail and industrial development), and the CIA itself has invested in façade improvements, developed a small gateway park at a former gas station/contaminated site, and re-branded the corridor.

The City's current zoning regulations, plans and policies call for an increased and branded aesthetic for developments but did not inspire transformative redevelopment that is more prominently focused on pedestrians and other modes of transportation.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

City leaders see great unrealized potential in this commercial corridor. The City sees an opportunity to reimagine North Van Dyke Avenue as a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, and cohesive place with a distinct identity that draws people in regionally. The objective of this master plan is to provide a vision and guidance for the transformation of North Van Dyke Avenue into a place that feels organic, reflects the cultural diversity of the City, provides a modern interpretation of a "Main Street," and creates a roadway that is livable and experiential.





After the construction of the M-53 bypass in the 1960's the role of this segment of Van Dyke Avenue changed and development sprung up around the corridor.

# THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS + ENGAGEMENT

From the outset of this planning process, the City of Sterling Heights has been committed to partnering with the community to envision the future of the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor.

## THE PROJECT TEAM

The project team was led by the City of Sterling Heights and the Corridor Improvement Authority under the direction of the Office of Planning, the Office of Building, and the Office of Community Relations.

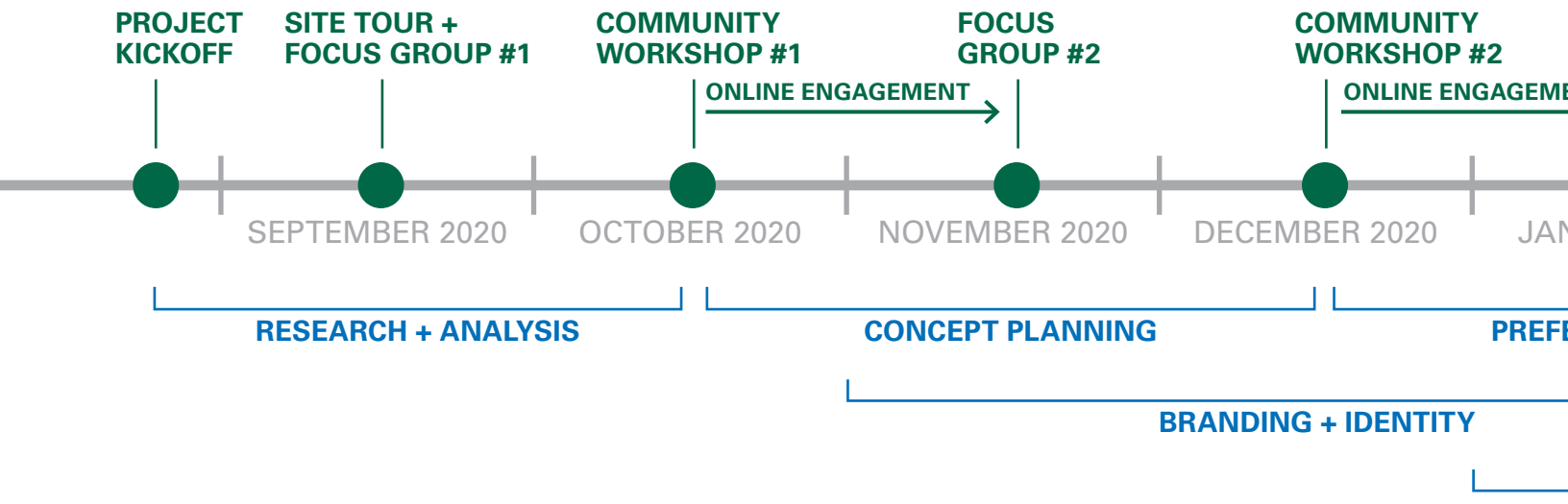
The City partnered with Design Workshop, a planning and design consultant, to administer the planning process and lead the development of content for this plan.

## PROJECT TIMELINE + PHASES

This master plan was developed over the course of eight months, from September 2020 through April 2021 and includes planning, traffic analysis, a market and economic study, and place branding.

### FROM KICKOFF TO VISION PLAN

In August 2020, the full planning team, including members of the City staff and the consultant team held a virtual project kick-off meeting to officially launch the planning process. At this kick-off, the team established key objectives, a project schedule, a community engagement plan, and major project milestones. Over the course of eight months, the planning team immersed itself in the conditions and possibilities of the site to develop a master plan vision that was tailored to North Van Dyke Avenue.



### PLAN ADOPTION

With this master plan completed, the City and community of Sterling Heights have a roadmap for steering investment and redevelopment along North Van Dyke Avenue. The master plan will be officially adopted by the Corridor Improvement Authority in 2021.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

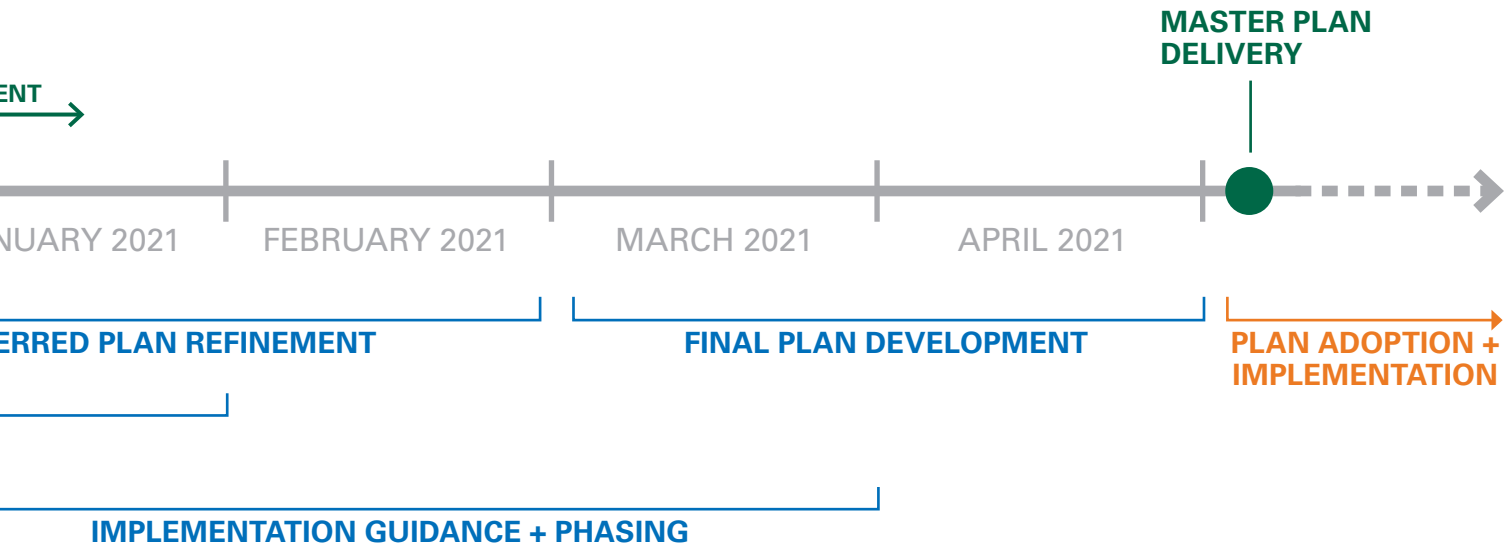
Understanding that a successful vision for the future of North Van Dyke Avenue would come from community stakeholders, the City organized the planning process to be open, accessible, and collaborative in its partnership with the community. While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented traditional, in-person events, the project team was equipped to facilitate conversations and events in a virtual/online format and developed several mixed-media engagement tools and techniques to ensure broad accessibility and creative engagement.

### FOCUS GROUPS

To develop a deeper understanding of the site, constraints, and opportunities, the planning team hosted two focus group sessions with key stakeholders, including corridor property and business owners, local residents, City engineers, local community groups, City Council members, board and commission members, and more.

### VIRTUAL COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

At two key milestones of the master plan development, the planning team hosted virtual community workshops, involving a presentation of findings and ideas, live surveys to test assumptions and conceptual designs, and open conversation to invite feedback and community input on the direction of the master plan.



## VIRTUAL + ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

With the COVID-19 pandemic preventing traditional, in-person planning meetings, workshops, interviews, and events, the planning team transitioned to a multi-faceted online engagement campaign, offering community members a variety of tools and platforms to get involved in the planning process.

### PROJECT WEB-PAGE

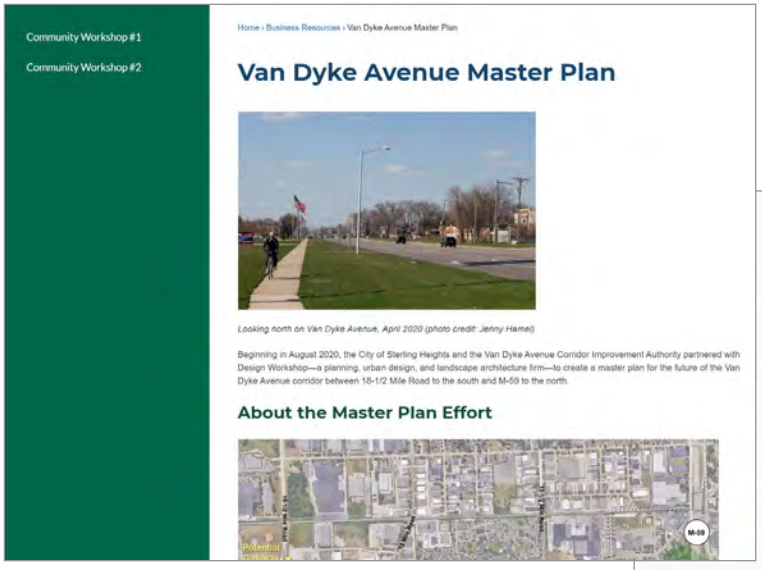
Working with the City's Community Relations Director, the planning team established a "one-stop-shop" project webpage on the City's website where all project information, updates, engagement links, and resources could be found. The team created a short and simple URL for easy sharing: www.sterling-heights.net/VDA

### COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITY MAPPING

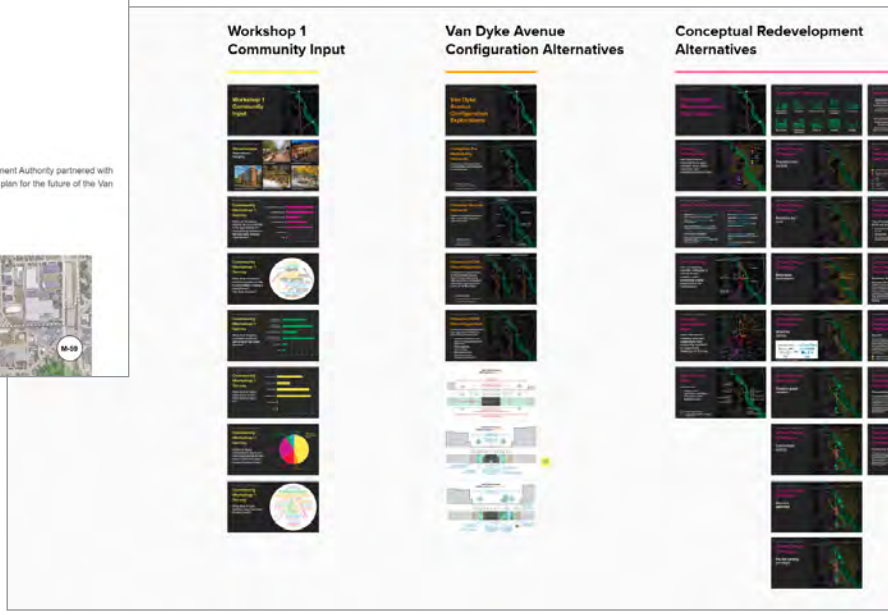
Launched in the first community "Visioning" workshop, the Opportunity Mapping exercise gave community participants the opportunity to submit their ideas and experiences of the corridor to the planning team via a virtual map of the site. This exercise was designed to replicate physical collaborative mapping typically offered at community workshops.

### VIRTUAL PIN-UP BOARD

Creating a virtual pin-up board with Mural, an online collaboration tool, was another way to engage




Master Plan web-page hosted on the city's website and reachable with a simple, easy-to-remember web address.



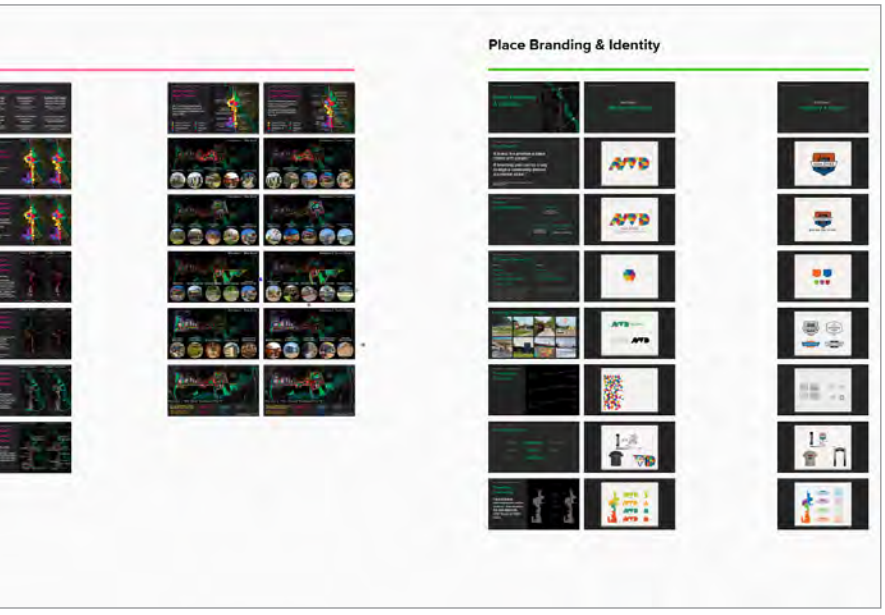

Using the online collaboration tool, Mural, the planning team created a virtual pin-up board and invited community members to visit and contribute notes via virtual "stickies" that could be posted alongside the planning content.

community members with the planning team's progress and proposals. Participants were invited to visit the board and add virtual "sticky note" comments to the materials to express opinions and share ideas.

## VIRTUAL WORKSHOP RECORDINGS + SURVEYS

Recognizing that the virtual workshop time and format may not be accessible to all community members, the planning team posted recordings of those workshops, along with all workshop materials to the project webpage and invited participants viewing these materials after the workshop to submit their ideas and feedback via an online survey.

To replicate one of the most effective in-person engagement exercises, the planning team created a virtual mapping exercise, inviting community members to drop pins on a map identifying experiences with the corridor and ideas for its future.



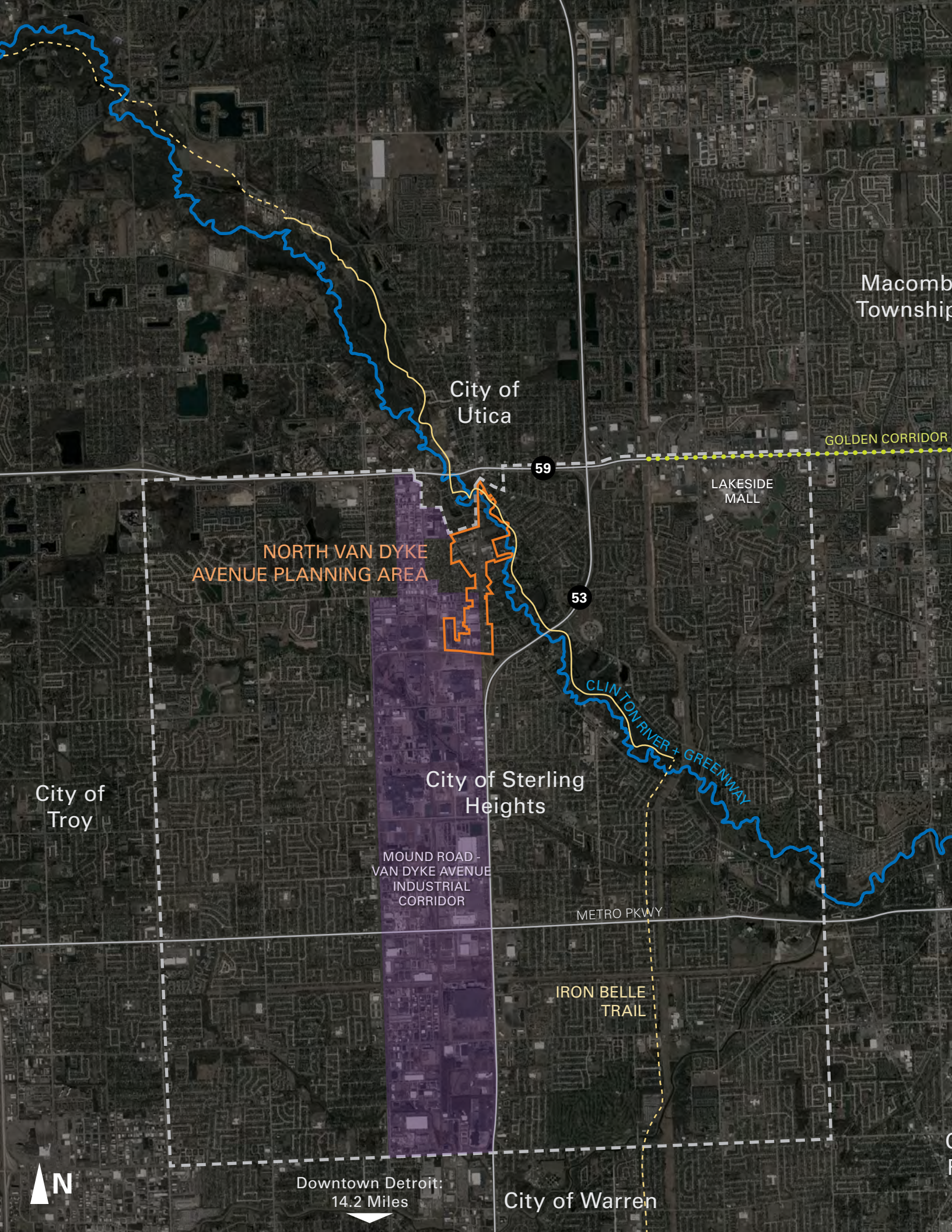



City of Utica
AUBURN ROAD
HALL ROAD
59
CANAL ROAD
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
TRIANGLE DRIVE
RIVERLAND DRIVE
VAN DYKE AVENUE
19 MILE ROAD
CLINTON RIVER
UTICA ROAD
MOUND ROAD
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

# NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE TODAY



In this chapter, the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan site is explored within its context and in its present condition. Understanding the existing challenges and opportunities helps the City, community, and planning team to chart a course forward for this important corridor.

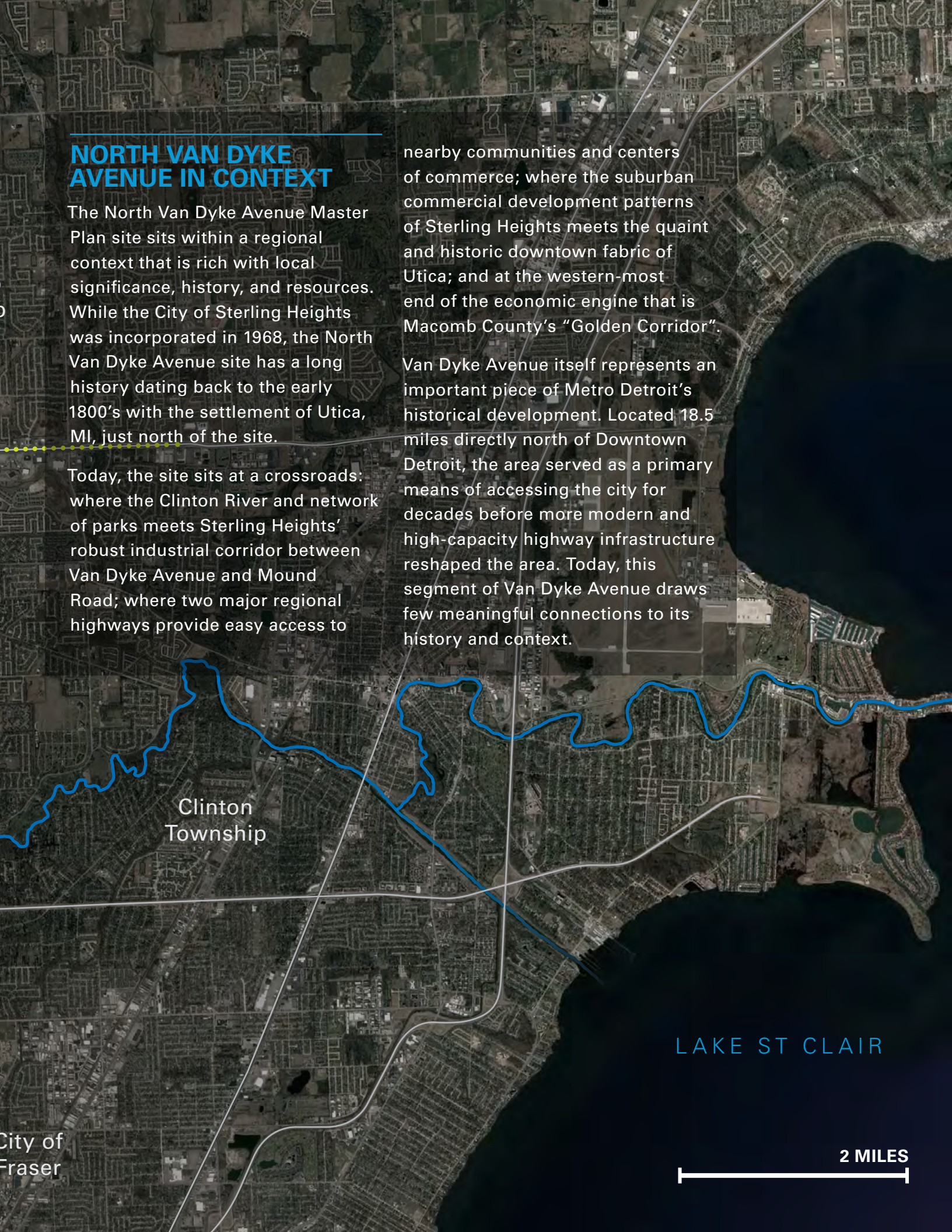

City of Utica
Macomb Township
GOLDEN CORRIDOR
59
LAKESIDE MALL
NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE PLANNING AREA
53
CLINTON RIVER GREENWAY
City of Troy
City of Sterling Heights
MOUND ROAD - VAN DYKE AVENUE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR
METRO PKWY
IRON BELLE TRAIL
N
Downtown Detroit: 14.2 Miles
City of Warren

## NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE IN CONTEXT

The North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan site sits within a regional context that is rich with local significance, history, and resources. While the City of Sterling Heights was incorporated in 1968, the North Van Dyke Avenue site has a long history dating back to the early 1800's with the settlement of Utica, MI, just north of the site.

Today, the site sits at a crossroads: where the Clinton River and network of parks meets Sterling Heights' robust industrial corridor between Van Dyke Avenue and Mound Road; where two major regional highways provide easy access to nearby communities and centers of commerce; where the suburban commercial development patterns of Sterling Heights meets the quaint and historic downtown fabric of Utica; and at the western-most end of the economic engine that is Macomb County's "Golden Corridor".

Van Dyke Avenue itself represents an important piece of Metro Detroit's historical development. Located 18.5 miles directly north of Downtown Detroit, the area served as a primary means of accessing the city for decades before more modern and high-capacity highway infrastructure reshaped the area. Today, this segment of Van Dyke Avenue draws few meaningful connections to its history and context.



## THE STERLING HEIGHTS COMMUNITY

Sterling Heights—Michigan's fourth largest city—is situated only fifteen miles north of downtown Detroit in Macomb County. The city comprises diverse residential and commercial communities and is part of the larger Metro Detroit area, representing roughly three percent of the metropolitan area's estimated 4.32 million residents. The city was officially incorporated as Sterling Heights in 1968, during a broad trend of suburbanization that swept the nation.

### COMMUNITY COMPOSITION

With a high quality of life and low cost of living, Sterling Heights has become an attractive destination for businesses and residents and has been growing in population over the past decade.

Sterling Heights is bounded by the City of Utica and Shelby Township to the north, the City of Warren to the south, the City of Troy to the west, and Clinton Township to the east. Its northeastern-most quadrant is home to a portion of the Clinton River and necklace of parklands that surrounds it. This river system and greenway run, in one form or another, from Lake St Clair to the east to a collection of lakes in northern Oakland County. All of Sterling Heights is encompassed within the River's watershed.

The City of Sterling Heights is largely a single family "bedroom community" from a land use perspective, with notable exceptions. The city hosts several commercial centers, mostly located at the intersections of its mile-grid road layout, including the Golden Corridor and Lakeside Mall to the north, and several commercial developments along Van Dyke Avenue. The city is also known for the large strip of active industrial land stretching the full length of the community from north to south, between Mound Road to the west and Van Dyke Avenue to the east. Within this patchwork of major industrial lands, Sterling Heights proudly hosts research, manufacturing, and assembly facilities for major automobile and defense companies and suppliers.

### RECENT INVESTMENTS

As part of a larger, multi-year capital improvement campaign, the City of Sterling Heights recently invested tens of millions of dollars in improvement projects in and around the City's municipal center, located less than two miles southeast of the

**Dodge Park**
Recent investments in Dodge Park and adjacent municipal center have created a beloved community destination for Sterling Heights.

North Van Dyke Avenue master plan site. This included more than $50 million of investment in the city's facilities and parks, including a new community center and a renovation of the City's signature Dodge Park along the Clinton River and greenway.

## SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES + DESTINATIONS

The City's neighboring communities include the City of Utica, Shelby Township, Clinton Township, The City of Warren, the City of Troy, and the City of Fraser.

### MACOMB COUNTY

The City of Sterling Heights is located in Macomb County. Consistently one of Michigan's fastest growing populations, Macomb County is part of the Detroit Metropolitan Area and is the State's third most populated county. The County is characterized by numerous urban clusters, expansive networks of industry and commerce, and abundant agricultural lands. Population growth is spurred by affordable housing, excellent schools and universities, and access to health care facilities and expansive parkland.

### CITY OF UTICA

The City of Utica has a long and storied history within Macomb County and Metro Detroit. As one of the oldest settlements in the region, the City has played a vital role in the history of Sterling Heights and the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor's development. Today, Utica's historic downtown sits just north of the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor and serves as an inspirational destination for economic activity and traditional urban design. Recent investments such as Jimmy John's Field create significant opportunities to draw people from the larger region to the area.

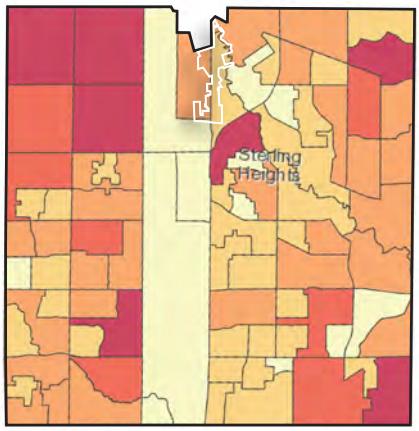

**The Golden Corridor** Branded signage along M-59 identifies and promotes the City's "Golden Corridor" commercial district.

### THE LAKESIDE MALL

The Lakeside Mall is a two-story, 180-store shopping center located two miles east of the North Van Dyke Avenue site. The mall property recently changed hands and is undergoing a revitalization program. Plans for transforming the property from an enclosed shopping mall to a more mixed-use retail center are in development and the property is likely to undergo transformation in the near future.

### THE GOLDEN CORRIDOR

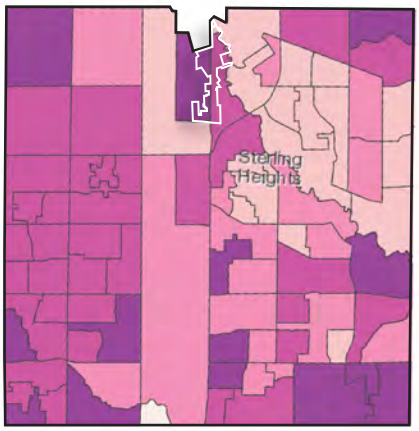
The City of Sterling Heights is home to a portion of the regional Golden




**Population Distribution (2020)**

FEWER PEOPLE — MORE PEOPLE

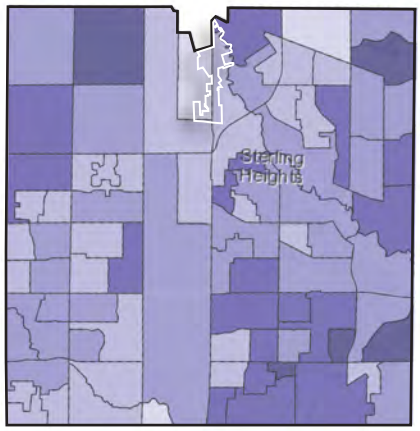
450 1,200 1,900 2,600 3,400




**Diversity Index (2020)**

LESS DIVERSITY — MORE DIVERSITY

3.5 16.6 31.2 42.9 56.2




**Median Age (2020)**

YOUNGER — OLDER

33 38 43 47 52

Demographic and economic data from ESRI and ArcGIS shows the concentrations of people in Sterling Heights, largely in the corners of the community in single family neighborhoods and apart from the industrialized central corridor (seen in the maps as the central vertical bar in contrast with the rest of the city). North Van Dyke Avenue sits at the center-top of that corridor.

Corridor—a stretch of roadway between M-53 and I-94 designated as "golden" because of its immense economic impact in Macomb County and Metro Detroit. The Golden Corridor stretches through Utica, Shelby Township, Sterling Heights, Clinton Township, Macomb Township and Mt. Clemens and is home to shopping, dining and retail as well as colleges, hospitals, a minor league baseball park, a major performing arts center and bustling industry. More than 100,000 vehicles travel the Golden Corridor every day. M-59 is inarguably one of the largest economic hubs of Macomb County.

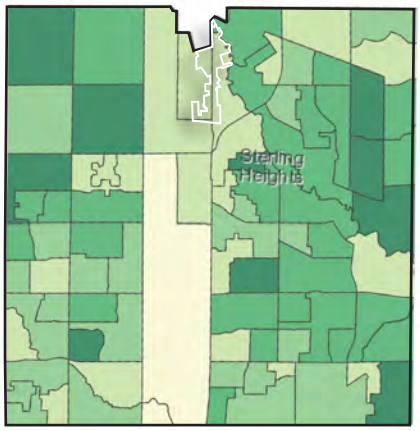
## THE COMPOSITION OF STERLING HEIGHTS

According to U.S. Census data, the local area, defined for this plan's purposes as those lands within a 5-minute drive of the corridor, has a 2020 residential population of 28,404 which has grown by 2 percent since 2010 or 0.17 percent annually. Growth is expected to increase over the next five years to 0.18 percent annually reaching a population of 28,786 by 2025. The City's total population has grown by 0.24 percent annually since 2010 while the regional area and county have grown nearly twice as fast.

### AGE

The median age in the local area is 41.4, which is roughly the same as the median age of surrounding areas. Age distribution is skewed towards millennials with 25 to 35 year olds accounting for over 16 percent of the population. The next largest age groups is 35-45 year olds who account for over 14 percent of the population followed by 45-55 year olds at 13 percent.

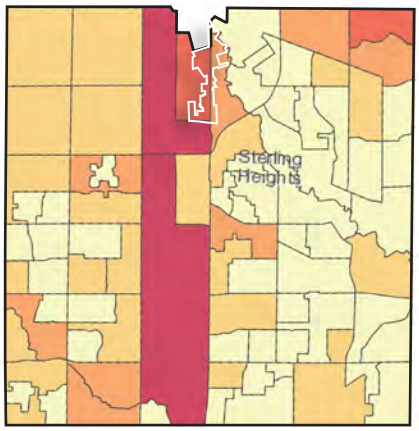
Although the senior population currently only accounts for 11.3




**Median Income (2020)**

LOWER INCOME — HIGHER INCOME

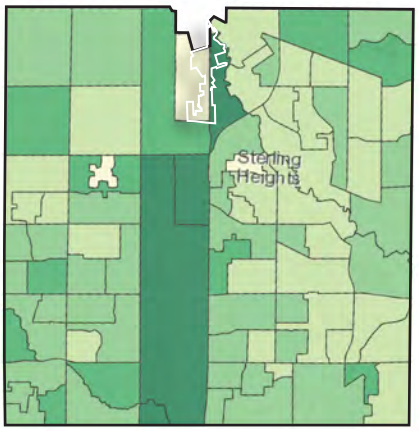
$9K $35K $61K $80K $104K




**Total Businesses (2020)**

FEWER BUSI. — MORE BUSI.

17 48 98 206 359




**Housing Affordability (2020)**

MOST AFFORD. — LEAST AFFORD.

310 231 168 104 32

percent of the population, this age segment is expected to grow the fastest over the next five years to account for nearly 20 percent of the population by 2025.

Age segmentation and projections are similar for the City and surrounding areas with the 65+ age cohort growing faster than other age groups.

## EDUCATION

Educational attainment in the local area is higher than the City, County and State with 31% of residents having graduated high school, compared to the City and State average of about 29%.

## HOUSEHOLDS

There are 11,245 households within the local area which has grown 2.39 percent since 2010, trailing well behind household growth in the city, region, and county. Annual growth is expected to increase slightly to 0.29 percent over the next five years, which will still be lower than the predicted annual growth rates of the city, region, and county.

The local area has a similar average household size than surrounding areas at 2.52 people per household. Household size within the local area is predicted to stay the same through 2025.

## INCOME

The area's median household income (MHI) is roughly the same as surrounding areas at $62,502. MHI is expected to grow 1.21% annually reaching $66,383 by 2025, trailing behind expected increases to MHI within the City of Sterling Heights and the region.

The largest household segment by income distribution is those earning $50,000 to $75,000 annually at 17 percent. The second largest segment is households earning between $100,000 and $150,000 annually, which accounts for 16% percent of all households.

## NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE'S IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

North Van Dyke Avenue sits at the intersection of residential neighborhoods, an industrial corridor generating billions of dollars of products annually, a historic town center, the Clinton River and greenway, and one of the region's most successful commercial corridors. All of these neighbors and adjacent uses have contributed to the character of the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor today and will continue to impact and drive its future growth and redevelopment.

### WHERE TWO HIGHWAYS MEET

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor sits directly between two state highways—M-53, to the south and M-59, to the north. The corridor's proximity to these two major roadways presents a unique opportunity to provide easy vehicular access to future development within the district. However, this needs to be balanced with the impact the proximity has on present traffic levels and the present nature of the road as a connector between destinations, rather than a destination itself.

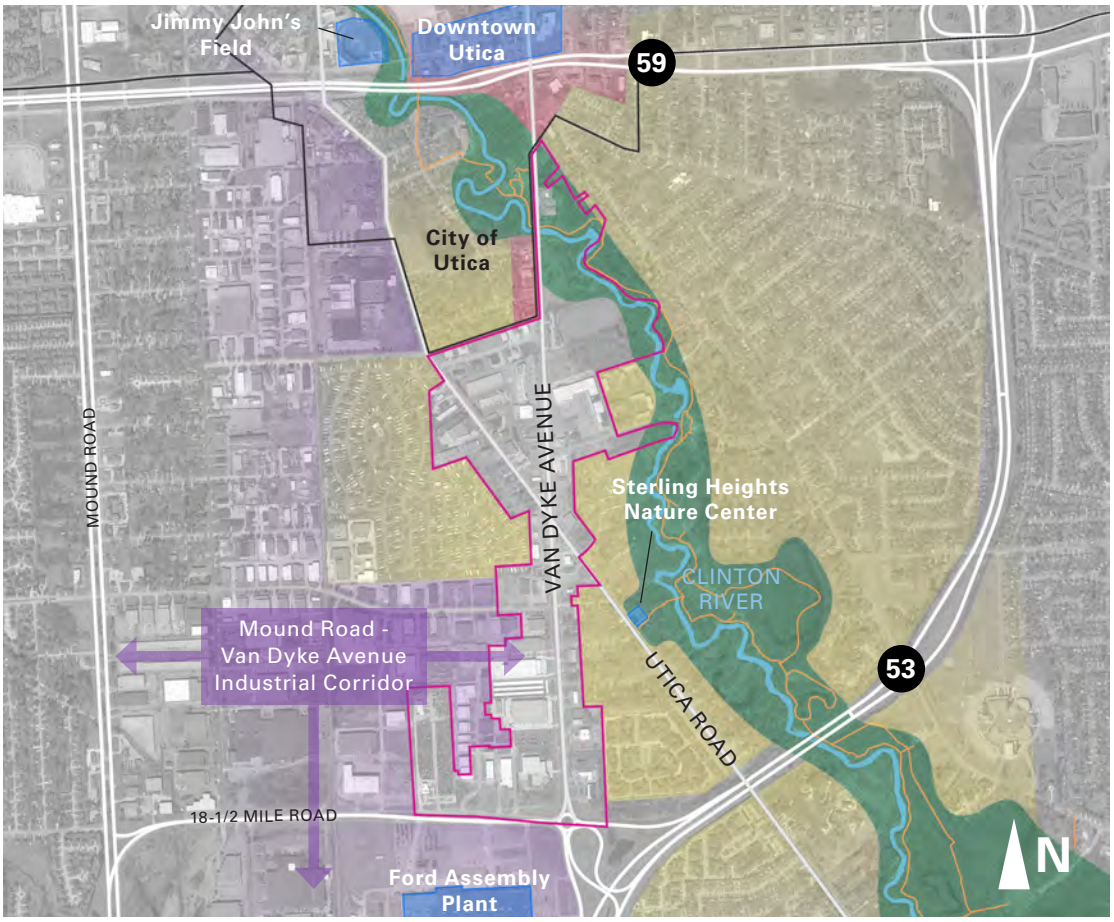
### ADJACENT RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

At the time of planning, the earliest remaining development on site includes a handful of single family homes at the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road.

Throughout the middle of the Twentieth Century, American cities experienced substantial de-urbanization as suburbs like Sterling Heights grew to accommodate increasing demand for single family living in quiet residential neighborhoods.

The residential neighborhoods around the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor primarily developed in the 1950s through the 1970s and characterize suburban development patterns that reigned at the time.

| | Local (5-Minute Drive from site) | Sterling Heights | Macomb County | Detroit Metro Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2010 Population** | 27.841 | 129,638 | 840,624 | 4,290,294 |
| **2020 Population** | 28,404 | 132,912 | 877,280 | 4,361,870 |
| *2010-2020 Annual Growth* | 0.17% | 0.24% | 0.41% | 0.15% |
| **2025 Projected Population** | 28,786 | 135,210 | 898,058 | 4,406,503 |
| *2020-2025 Annual Growth* | 0.18% | 0.34% | 0.24% | 0.24% |
| **2020 Median Age** | 41.4 | 42.8 | 41.8 | 41.0 |

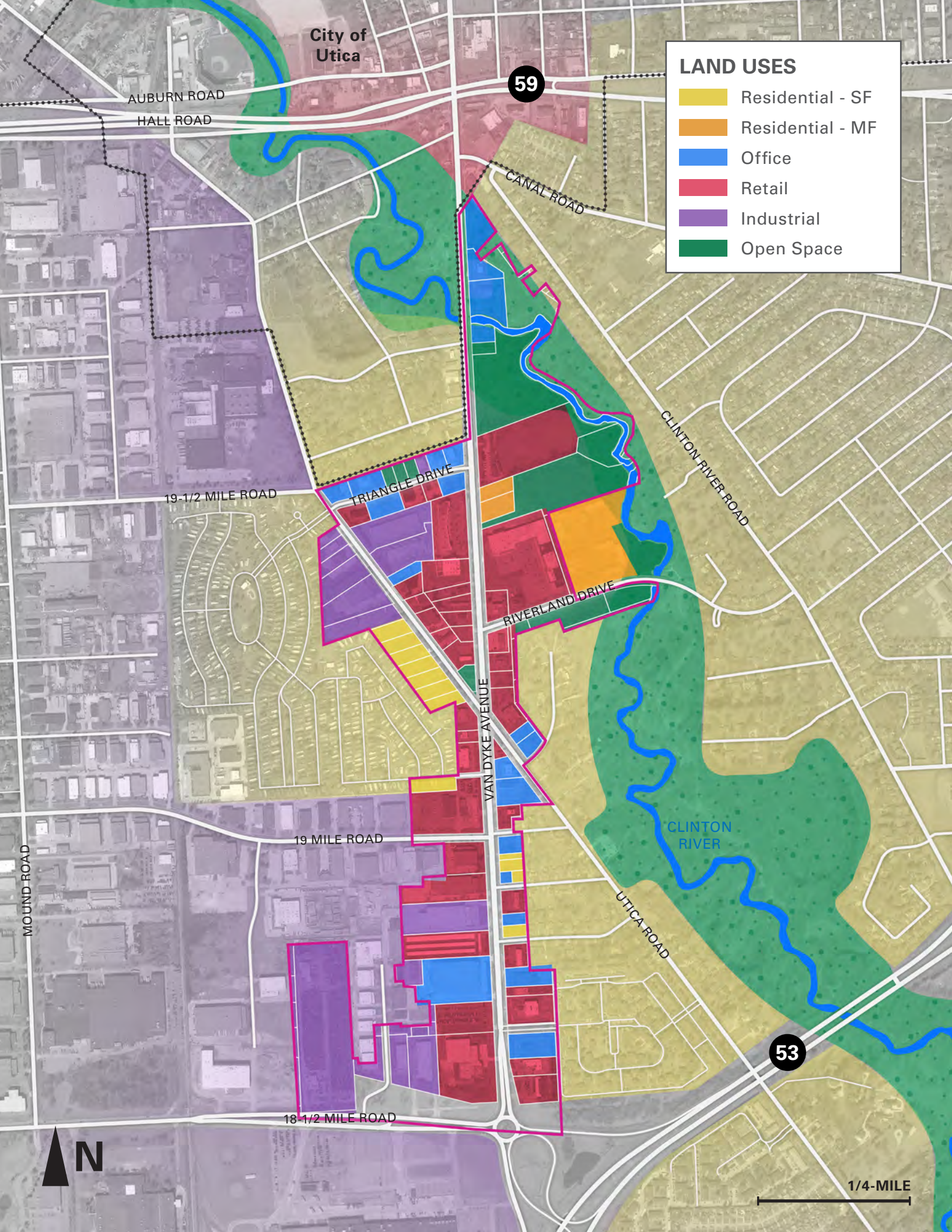



## MOUND ROAD - VAN DYKE AVENUE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

The City of Sterling Heights is home to numerous large industrial facilities, including automobile assembly plants (e.g. Stellantis Chrysler's Sterling Heights Assembly Plant, Ford Motor Company's Axle Plant), defense contractors, and a universe of suppliers supporting them. The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor sits at the northeastern corner of the mile-wide, six-mile long industrial and manufacturing corridor between Mound Road and Van Dyke Avenue and from M-59 to 14 Mile Road. The uses in the south of the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor reflect the character of this industrial area throughout the city.

## THE CITY OF UTICA

The City of Utica is among the most historic settlements in the region, dating back to 1817. As a historic commercial center, and an outpost of Detroit, the City has a small, well-preserved "downtown", stretching a quarter-mile from east to west along Auburn Road, just north of the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor and M-59. The City operates a park within the Clinton River greenway and adjacent to Van Dyke Avenue which is enjoyed by both communities. The City is the new host to Jimmy John's Field, a small baseball stadium hosting a regional league of four teams and drawing visitors to the area throughout the season.


City of Utica
59
AUBURN ROAD
HALL ROAD
CANAL ROAD
LAND USES
Residential - SF
Residential - MF
Office
Retail
Industrial
Open Space
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
TRIANGLE DRIVE
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
VAN DYKE AVENUE
CLINTON RIVER
19 MILE ROAD
MOUND ROAD
UTICA ROAD
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

# CORRIDOR COMPOSITION

Today, the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor is mostly built-out with auto-oriented commercial uses and surface parking. North of Utica Road, the corridor intersects with the Clinton River and greenway to the east.

## LAND USES

Today, the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor is mainly composed of retail, industrial, and small office development. Situated among these uses, a few single family residential parcels remain on site, representing the earliest remaining development along the corridor. Adjacent to the Clinton River greenway and where the most significant flood risk exists, parcels have been scarcely developed. As part of an ongoing redevelopment initiative from the Chaldean Community Foundation, the corridor will soon host a new mixed-use multifamily development along Van Dyke Avenue, north of the Riverland Shopping Center. The corridor is home to one formal, half-acre park north of the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road.

## REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

While the area was connected to the regional context early on in its history by the now defunct Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal, today's traffic is almost entirely vehicular. The corridor is well-positioned between two highways for good vehicular and freight access to the larger Metro Detroit region. Van Dyke Avenue is served by the region's SMART bus service, and its close proximity to the expanding regional trail system along the Clinton River provides opportunities for easy pedestrian and cyclist access in the future.

### MAJOR HIGHWAYS

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor is situated between state highways M-53, to the south and M-59, to the north. M-53 stretches from Detroit, to the south, to the northernmost portion of the "thumb" within the Mitten-like shape of Michigan's southern landmass. M-59 runs east-west across the north of the Detroit Metro area, spanning a distance between Interstates 94 to the east, and 96, to the west. Access to both M-53 and M-59 is provided to Van Dyke Avenue traffic directly to the south and north of the district boundary, respectively.

**Pros and Cons**

While providing valuable regional access to Van Dyke Avenue businesses, the presence of the two major roadways (M-53 and M-59) and the traffic they experience create high levels of vehicular collisions on-site, as described in the next chapter.

A bus stop with bench and bike rack on Van Dyke Avenue

While data for the routes serving the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor were not available, system-wide ridership increased by 20% over the two years between December 2017 and December 2019 according to SMART.

### TRANSIT SERVICE

Van Dyke Avenue and Sterling Heights are served by Metro Detroit's Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transit (SMART) bus service. SMART Route 510 connects northern Detroit (8 Mile Road) to central Shelby Township via the Van Dyke Avenue corridor and the Lakeside Mall. The route has thirteen stops along the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor, split between the eastern and western sides of the road.

Metro Detroit's SMART bus service plays an important role in connecting the region and offering an alternative to car ownership for lower-income populations, seniors, and those who prefer transit.

## CLINTON RIVER + GREENWAY

The main branch of the Clinton River spans some 83 miles from Lake St. Clair to the southeast, through the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor, to Crystal Lake, west of Pontiac, MI. The river's rivershed drains over 760 square miles of land area, including most of Macomb County. The river crosses under the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor approximately 1,900 feet south of its intersection with M-59. Throughout most of Sterling Heights, the river sits within an undeveloped green corridor ranging in width from 300-2,500 feet. The tightest segments of this corridor exist at the Van Dyke Avenue bridge crossing the river and behind the Riverland Woods Apartments, just beyond the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor district boundary. The river's greenway contains several City parks, including the North Clinton River Park, the Clinton River Park Playground, Gerald N. Donovan Park, Dodge Park, and Utica's Clinton River Heritage Park, to the northwest of the corridor.

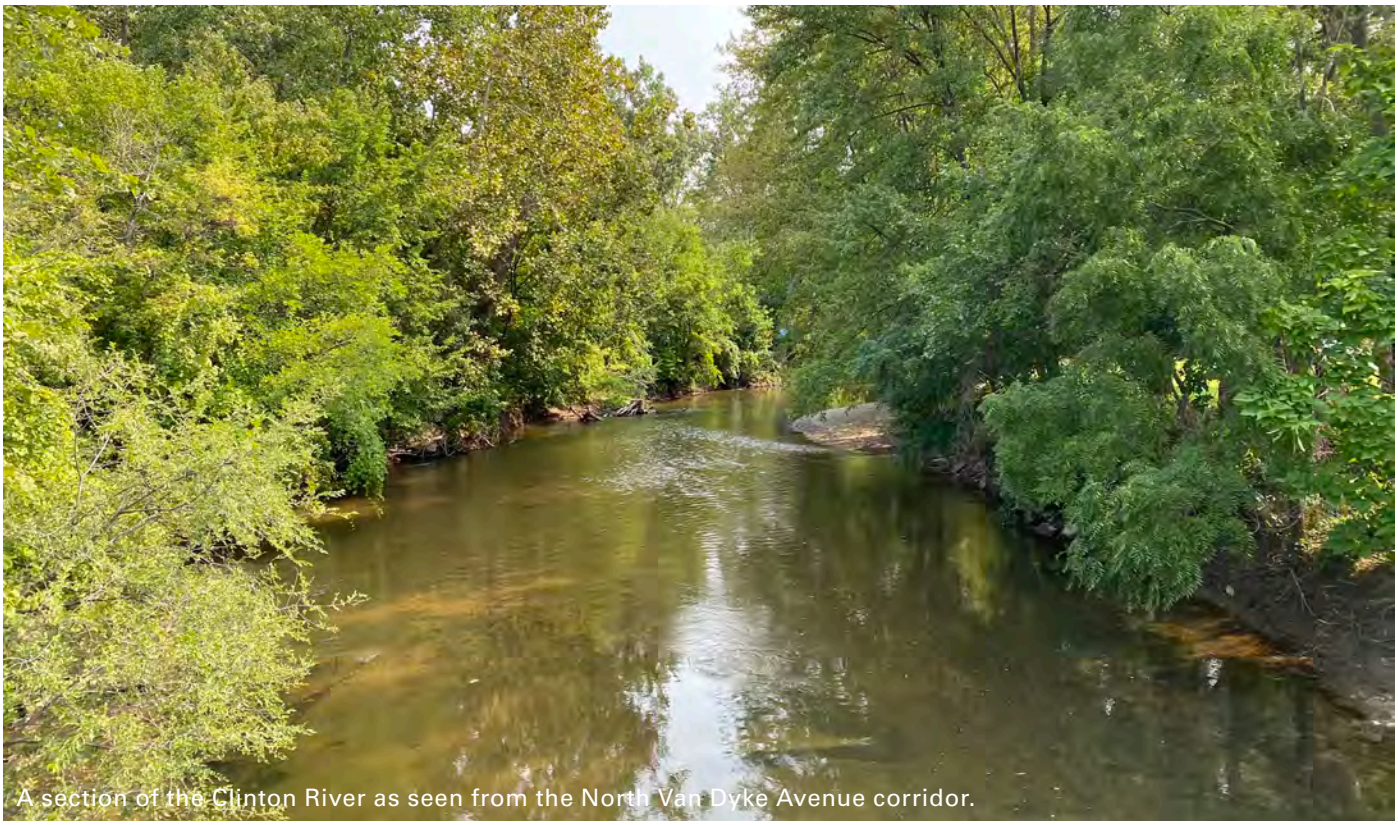
The river's greenway also contains the Clinton River Trail, which provides a pedestrian and bicycle connection throughout the river segment within Sterling Heights and will soon provide hundreds of miles of regional access as the trail gets incorporated into the statewide Iron Belle Trail.

## CORRIDOR ORGANIZATION + DESIGNATIONS

In addition to several natural and jurisdictional boundaries, the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor is defined by regulatory, tax, and administrative districts that will play a role in its growth and redevelopment.

### TAX-INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICT

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor has been designated as a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district. TIF districts are uniquely allowed to capture and spend incremental growth in taxed value from investments made since a base year valuation (2006) within the district to facilitate improvements.



A section of the Clinton River as seen from the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor.

## THE CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

The City implemented the Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) in 2006 with the goal of bolstering the quality and quantity of development along North Van Dyke Avenue. The CIA operates the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district that covers the master plan area, along with programs designed to promote and unify the district such as a facade improvement program, streetscape design guidelines, and a district branding initiative. The CIA is controlled by a board of local officials, residents, and business owners and operates under established goals, including:

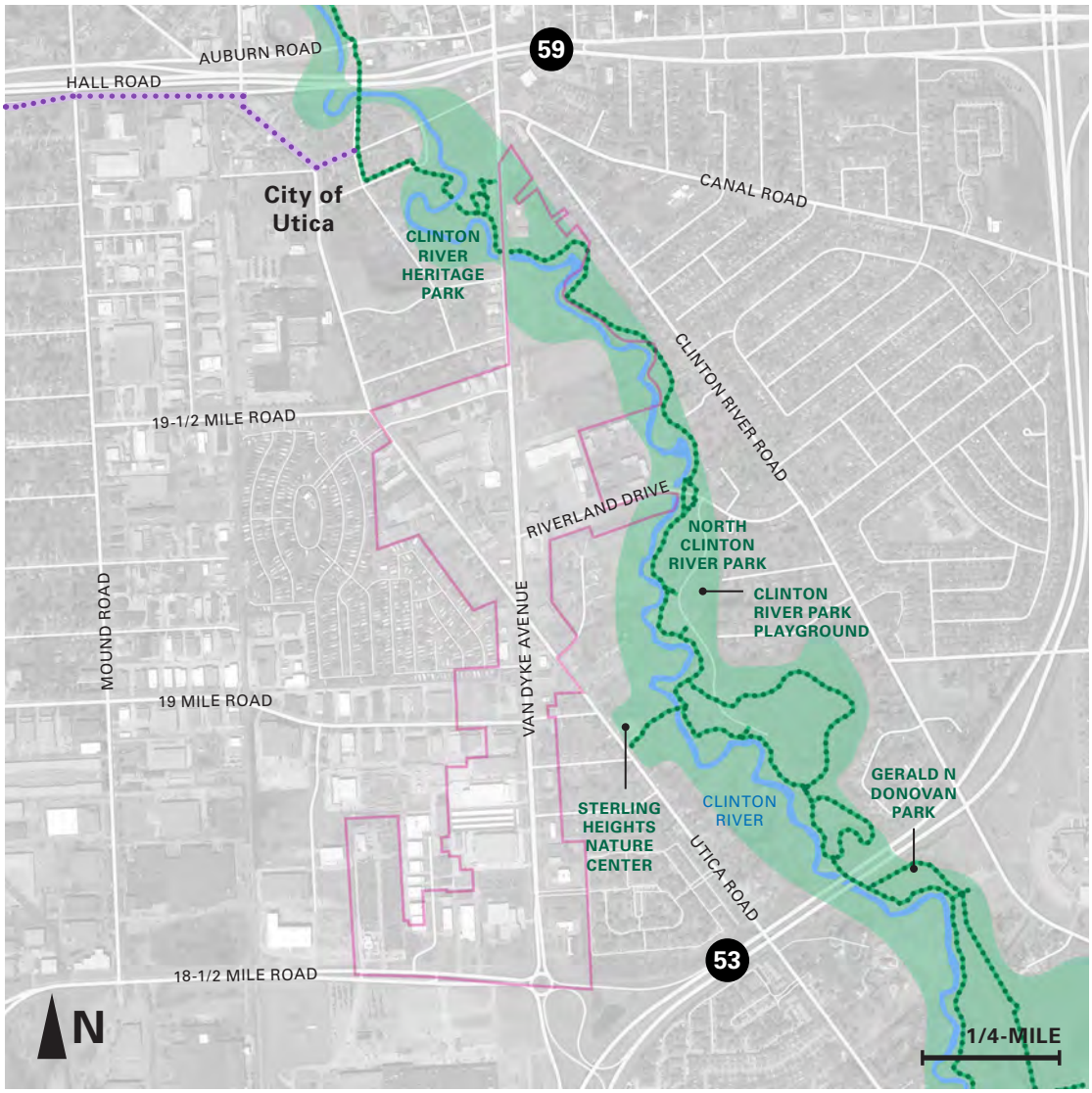
- Enhancement of the public spaces within the district
- Delineation of the district through a consistent theme/style along the right-of-way
- Provision of a unified building style to be implemented through development and redevelopment of properties within the district
- Economic growth and increased property values

## THE NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE OPPORTUNITY ZONE

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor is part of an Opportunity Zone, as defined by the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. For more information on Opportunity Zones and potential benefits it offers to redevelopment within the corridor, see Chapter 5: The Path to Transformation.

Clinton River Trail

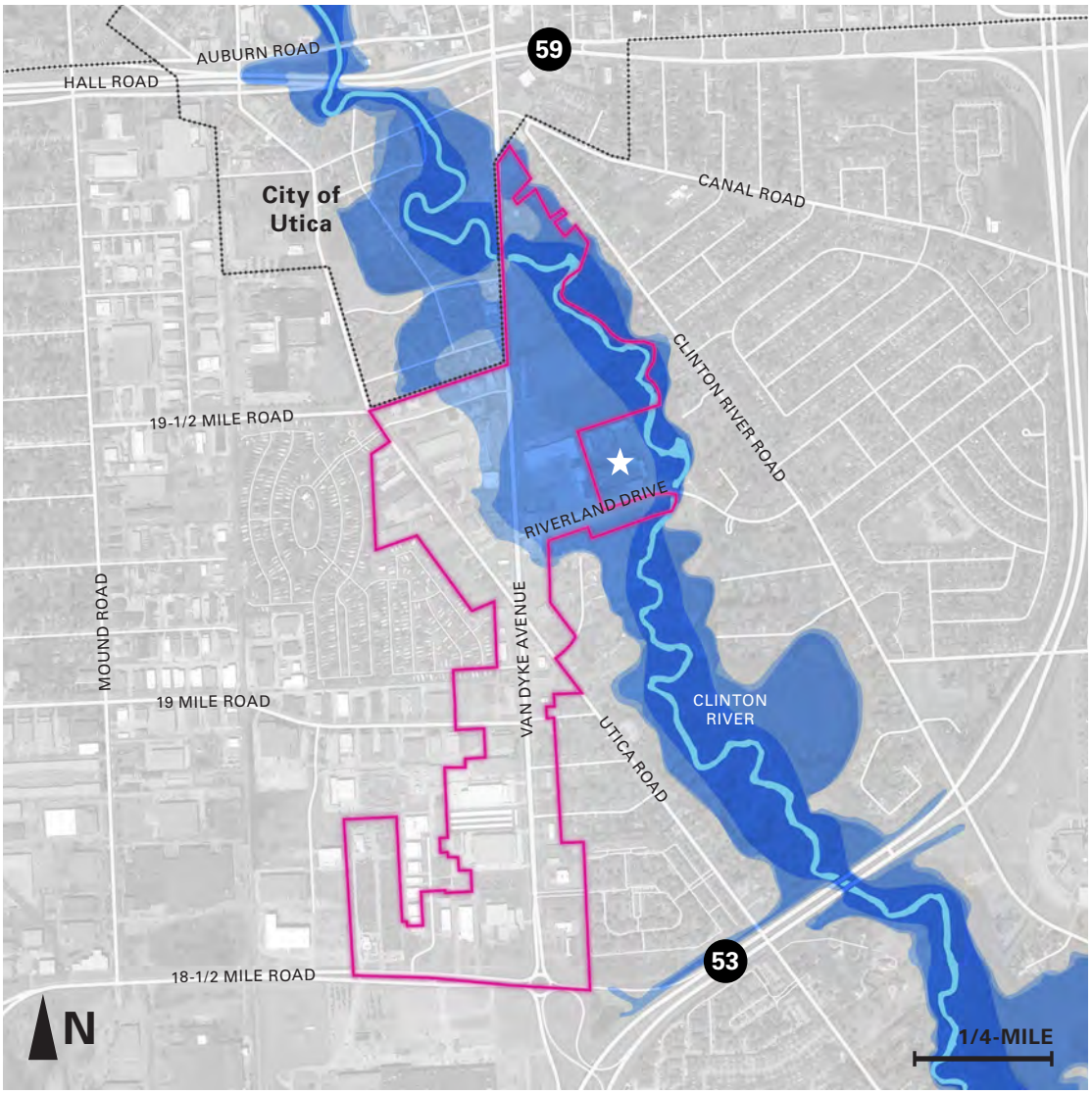
Proposed Dobry Drive Trail Extension




## THE CLINTON RIVER TRAIL SYSTEM

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor is located adjacent to the Clinton River, the park system that encompasses it, and the regional trail network running along its eastern edge. The existing trail winds through Sterling Heights, connecting neighborhoods, commercial centers, the City's Municipal Center, and some of the community's most beloved parks and civic resources, including Dodge Park, Clinton River Park, and the Sterling Heights Nature Center.

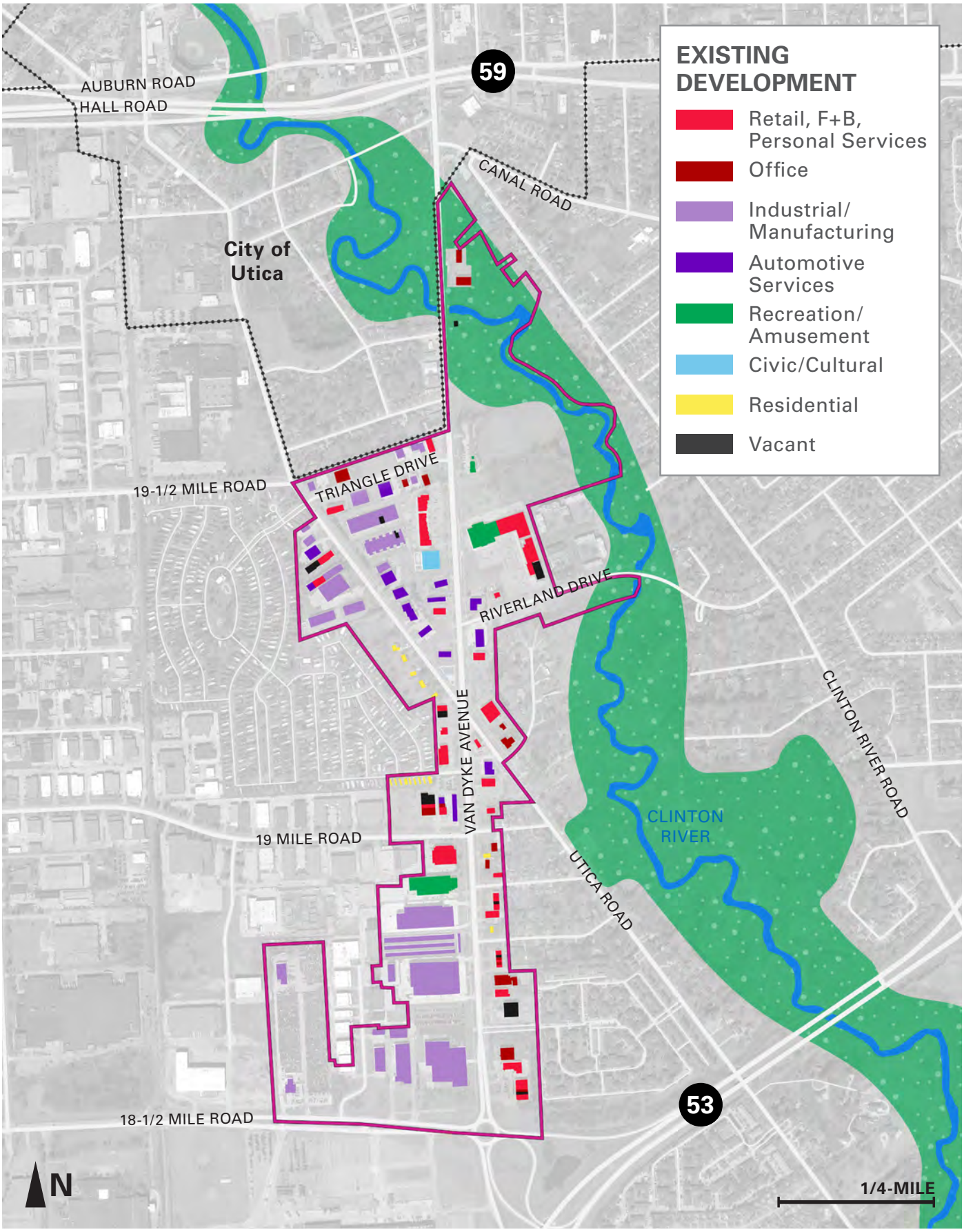
In 2019, the Clinton Trail system was incorporated into the 1,200-mile long regional Iron Belle Trail. This association and suite of improvements and connections will connect the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor and the whole of Sterling Heights to a massive regional network of recreation resources. A future extension of the regional trail system westward, through the City of Utica and westward along Dobry Drive is also in the planning phases.




## THE FLOODPLAIN

While the Clinton River serves as a tremendous natural resource and its adjacency to the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor should be celebrated in any redevelopment effort, its close proximity also presents challenges associated with flooding. While the floodway hugs the river fairly tightly, as much as 37% of the corridor's acreage exists within either the 100-year or 500-year floodplain. While much of this acreage is presently undeveloped, some encompasses significant existing commercial development.

Historical projects, such as the adjacent Riverland Woods Apartments (denoted with a star in the above plan) have successfully mitigated the flood risk with site and architectural design strategies. Similar mitigation strategies will be required for any future development within the 100-year floodplain.


EXISTING DEVELOPMENT
Retail, F+B, Personal Services
Office
Industrial/ Manufacturing
Automotive Services
Recreation/ Amusement
Civic/Cultural
Residential
Vacant
AUBURN ROAD
HALL ROAD
59
CANAL ROAD
City of Utica
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
TRIANGLE DRIVE
RIVERLAND DRIVE
VAN DYKE AVENUE
19 MILE ROAD
CLINTON RIVER
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
UTICA ROAD
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

## EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

Today, the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor comprises a mix of single-use parcels and developments that are arranged in a suburban configuration. Existing development has taken shape over approximately 70 years, with the first single family residential properties developing along Utica Road and Van Dyke Avenue in the 1950s. Over time, the corridor became more commercialized and industrialized until reaching its nearly built-out (if low density) present condition. Developments in the form of national convenience and automotive services retailers continue to open along the corridor at a fairly slow pace.

### AN AUTO-ORIENTED CORRIDOR

Anyone visiting the corridor today will immediately understand that its development is geared towards drivers. Whether serving workers who are employed at local commercial or industrial development or patrons visiting restaurants, convenience stores, personal service shops, or one of the many automotive service stations, the corridor is designed to be accessed by cars. Today, development is mostly small, single-story, and pushed back from the road to make way for large setbacks and/or parking lots facing the street. Existing properties largely ignore context and neighbors and instead orient themselves towards site-specific driving and parking patterns.

### AN INDUSTRIAL LEGACY

Today, a large amount of the development on site could be described as industrial. This includes manufacturing facilities, assembly plants, warehouses, industrial offices, printers, showrooms, etc. These uses are located to the west of Van Dyke Avenue and form the northeastern corner of the massive industrial corridor spanning the height of Sterling Heights between Mound Road to the west and Van Dyke Avenue to the east. It is assumed that portions of the corridor will continue this industrial legacy in perpetuity.

### DISPERSED DESTINATIONS

While a great deal of the corridor's present development includes industrial facilities, small offices, common local and national retailers, and automotive service stations, there are also a handful of destinations that might bring in patrons from around the city or region. Businesses like an indoor Go-Kart facility, an indoor children's arcade, ethnic restaurants and markets, a driving range, and a popular modern barbershop concept operate within the existing strip malls and commercial/industrial development pushed back from the street. While these uses are good for the corridor and can help catalyze investment and bring in new foot traffic, current access and development configurations limit visibility, growth, and the quality of experience they are able to offer.

# RIGHT-OF-WAYS + THE PUBLIC REALM

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor contains several right-of-ways that are controlled by different public and private entities. Proposing new development and public realm improvements along and within these right-of-ways requires permission and participation from all levels of government with jurisdiction over them.

Re-envisioning public right-of-ways requires consultation and partnership between multiple levels of government and neighboring jurisdictions to ensure alignment and cooperation from concept through construction.

## SITE RIGHT-OF-WAYS COMPOSITION + OWNERSHIP

The two primary right-of-ways within the master plan study area are Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road. Both provide connectivity through the corridor, City, and region. Several other local streets connect to Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road along the corridor and provide access to neighborhoods, commercial centers, and industrial areas within and immediately outside Sterling Heights.

A view of the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road

### VAN DYKE AVENUE

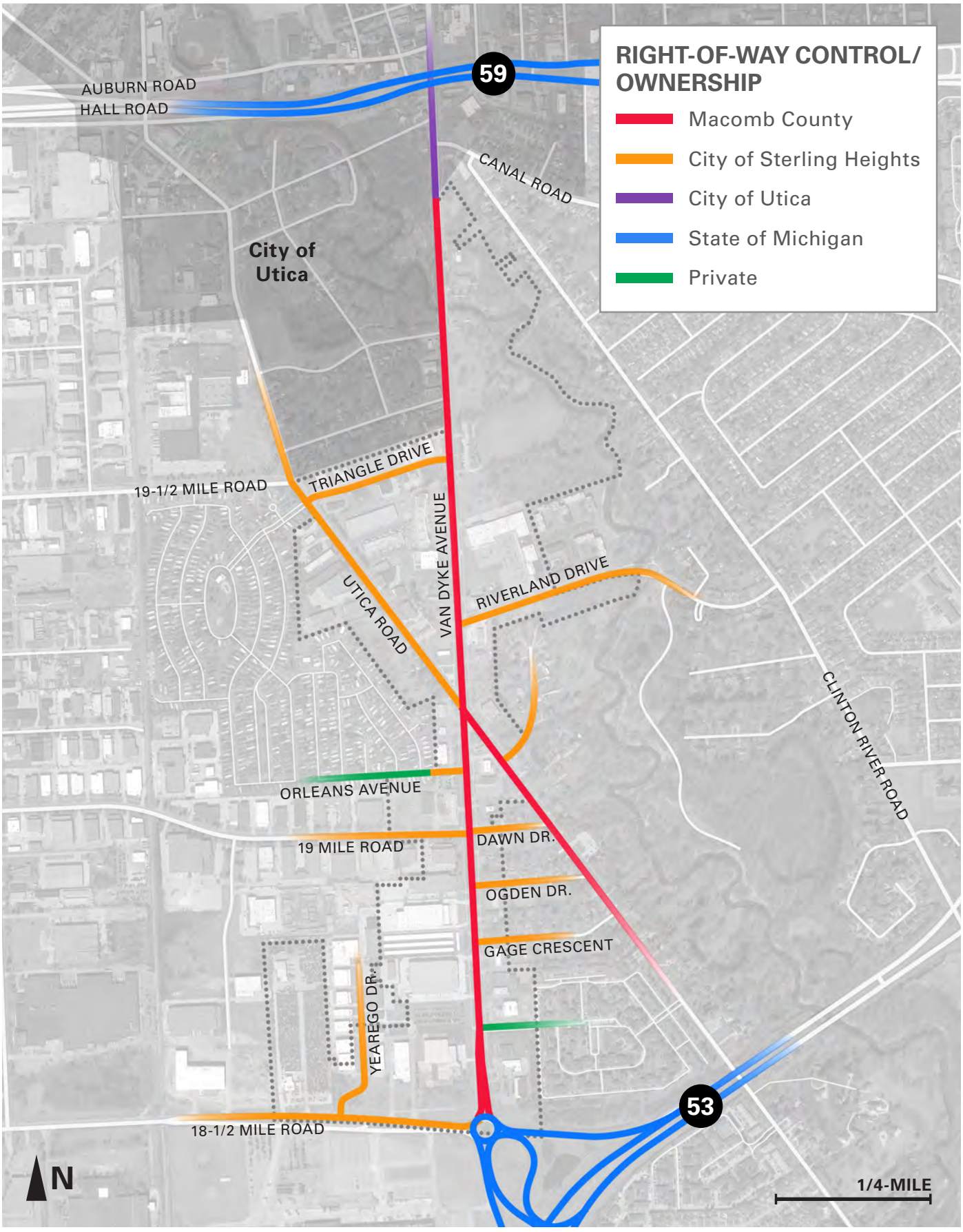
Van Dyke Avenue is owned and controlled by Macomb County. The right-of-way traverses the City of Sterling Heights in a north-south direction, terminating in Detroit to the south and up through Washington Township and the Village of Romeo to the north. Van Dyke provides access to both M-53, to the south and M-59, to the north (both state highways) and intersects with Utica Road in the center of the study area.

### UTICA ROAD

Utica Road serves as the second major vehicular access road through the North Van Dyke Avenue study area. The segment to the west of Van Dyke is City owned and controlled, while the segment to the east is controlled by Macomb County. North of the study area, Utica Road crosses into the City of Utica, where it is owned and controlled by that municipality. To the southeast, Utica Road connects the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor to Dodge Park and the Sterling Heights municipal center.

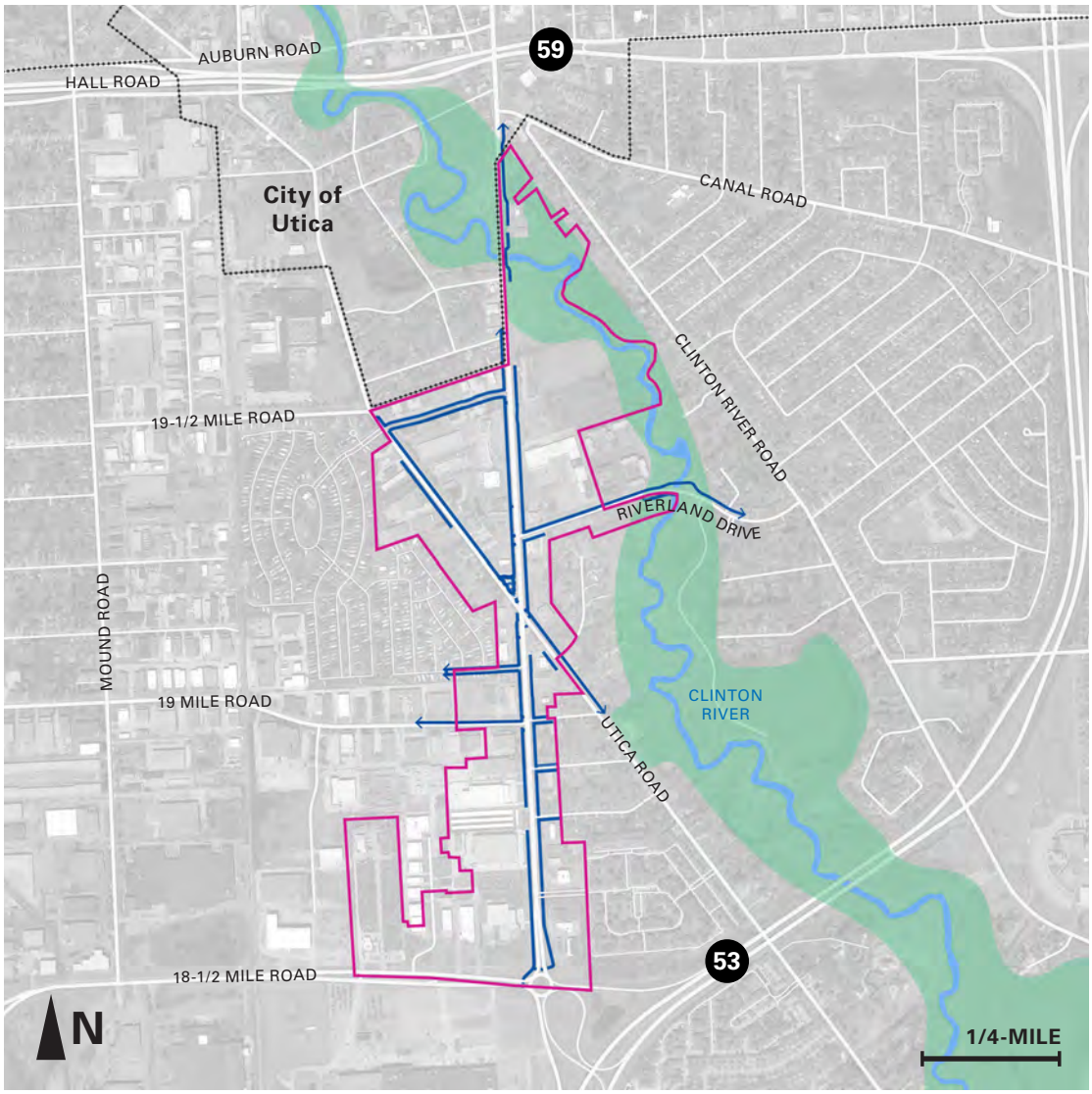
### OTHER INTERSECTING STREETS

Several other City of Sterling Heights and private roads intersect with Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road within the study area. The primary roads intersecting perpendicularly are 18-1/2 Mile Road (forming the southern boundary of the study area), 19 Mile Road, Riverland Drive (the only vehicular connection crossing over the Clinton River to the east of the study area), and 19-1/2 Mile Road.


RIGHT-OF-WAY CONTROL/ OWNERSHIP
Macomb County
City of Sterling Heights
City of Utica
State of Michigan
Private
59
AUBURN ROAD
HALL ROAD
CANAL ROAD
City of Utica
TRIANGLE DRIVE
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
VAN DYKE AVENUE
UTICA ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
ORLEANS AVENUE
19 MILE ROAD
DAWN DR.
OGDEN DR.
GAGE CRESCENT
YEAREGO DR.
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

Existing on-site sidewalks

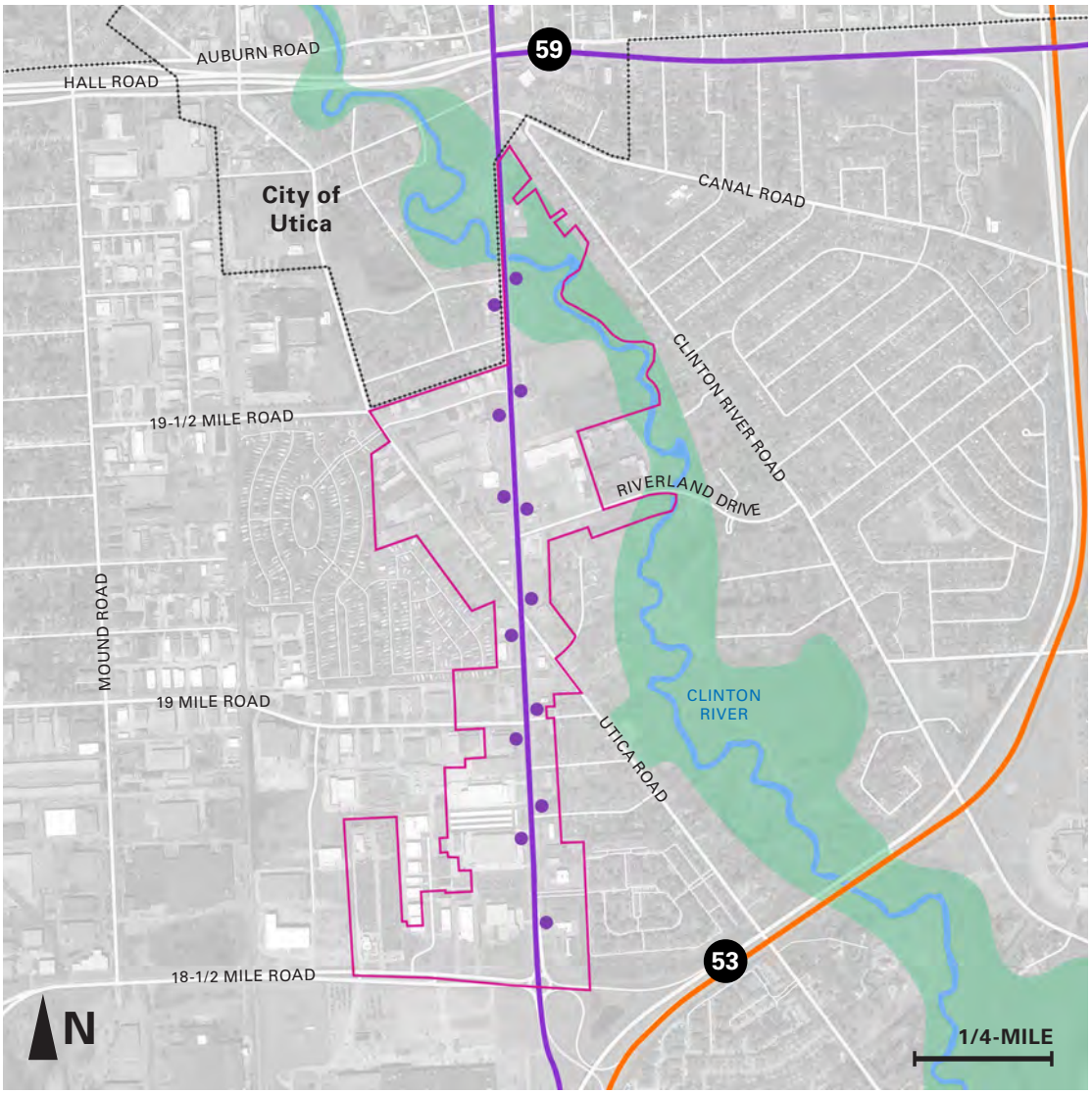
*(where line is incomplete, gaps in sidewalk exist)*




## PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor today comprises a network of sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure that is piecemeal, disconnected, and under-sized for the scale of the district. The few pedestrians and cyclists that can be seen on-site share a narrow 5-foot sidewalk and frequently encounter sidewalks that dead-end at intersections or mid-block.

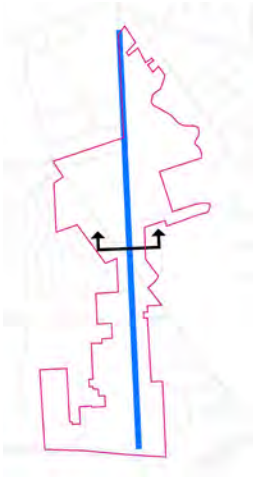
Sidewalks have sporadic street furniture such as benches and transit signage. Most of the existing furniture is positioned near regional transit stops. The sidewalks do not presently feature trees to provide shelter from sun and weather. There are currently two defined public connections to the Clinton River and greenway, via a sidewalk on the northern side of Riverland Drive and a trail head at the Van Dyke Avenue bridge in the northern part of the corridor.




## REGIONAL TRANSIT

Van Dyke Avenue is fortunate to be served by existing regional transit service via Southeast Michigan's Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) bus system. SMART Route 510 bus stops serve the 1.5-mile long corridor approximately every 1,000 feet, providing transit access throughout the district and the region. While the bus service does not appear to be well-used by the community, it does provide alternative means of access to jobs in and around the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor and provides opportunities for enhancing ridership to further diversify access to, through, and from the corridor.

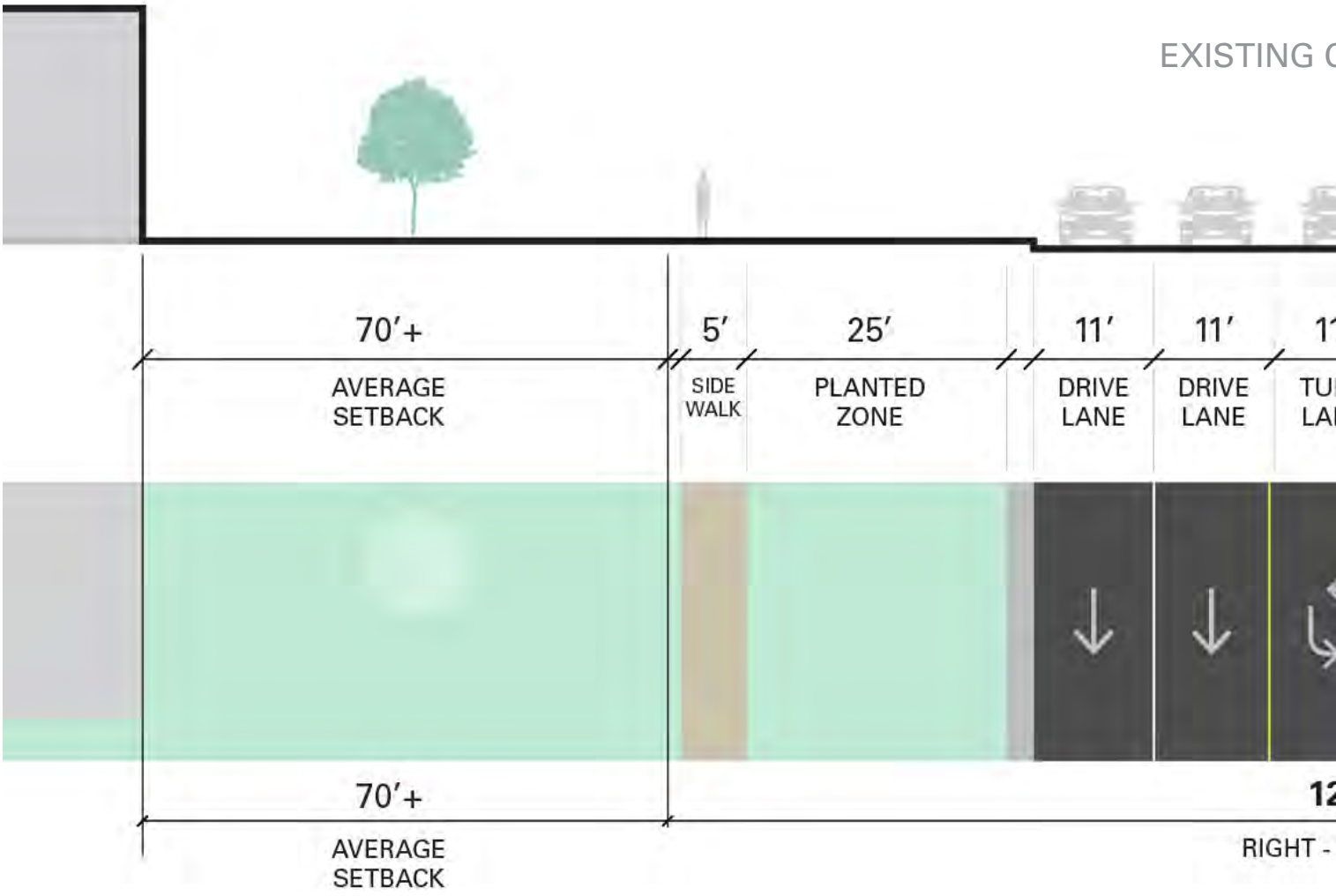
Presently, bus stops are marked with route signage and, in some cases, benches, bike racks, and trash bins are present, though these are featured sporadically throughout the corridor. Overall, bus stops are isolated from the pedestrian network and offer little comfort to riders waiting for buses.



## THE VAN DYKE AVENUE RIGHT-OF-WAY

Van Dyke Avenue is presently composed of a 120-foot right-of-way throughout the entirety of the corridor. Within that right-of-way are five vehicular lanes (four travel lanes and a center turn lane), an incomplete network of 5-foot wide sidewalks on both sides of the street, and 25-foot empty setback zones between the road edge and sidewalks. The present speed limit is 45 MPH, and when walking along the corridor, the traffic feels very fast. Presently, crosswalks across Van Dyke exist within the study area at only four intersections—the M-53 roundabout, 19 Mile Road, Utica Road, and Riverland Drive. As driving is the primary means of accessing the corridor and development, there are numerous curb cuts along both sides of the street, offering access to individual businesses. These frequent drives require a dedicated center turn lane for left-hand turns.

Beyond the sidewalks at the edges of the right-of-way, more expansive and empty setback zones exist in front of street-facing development.

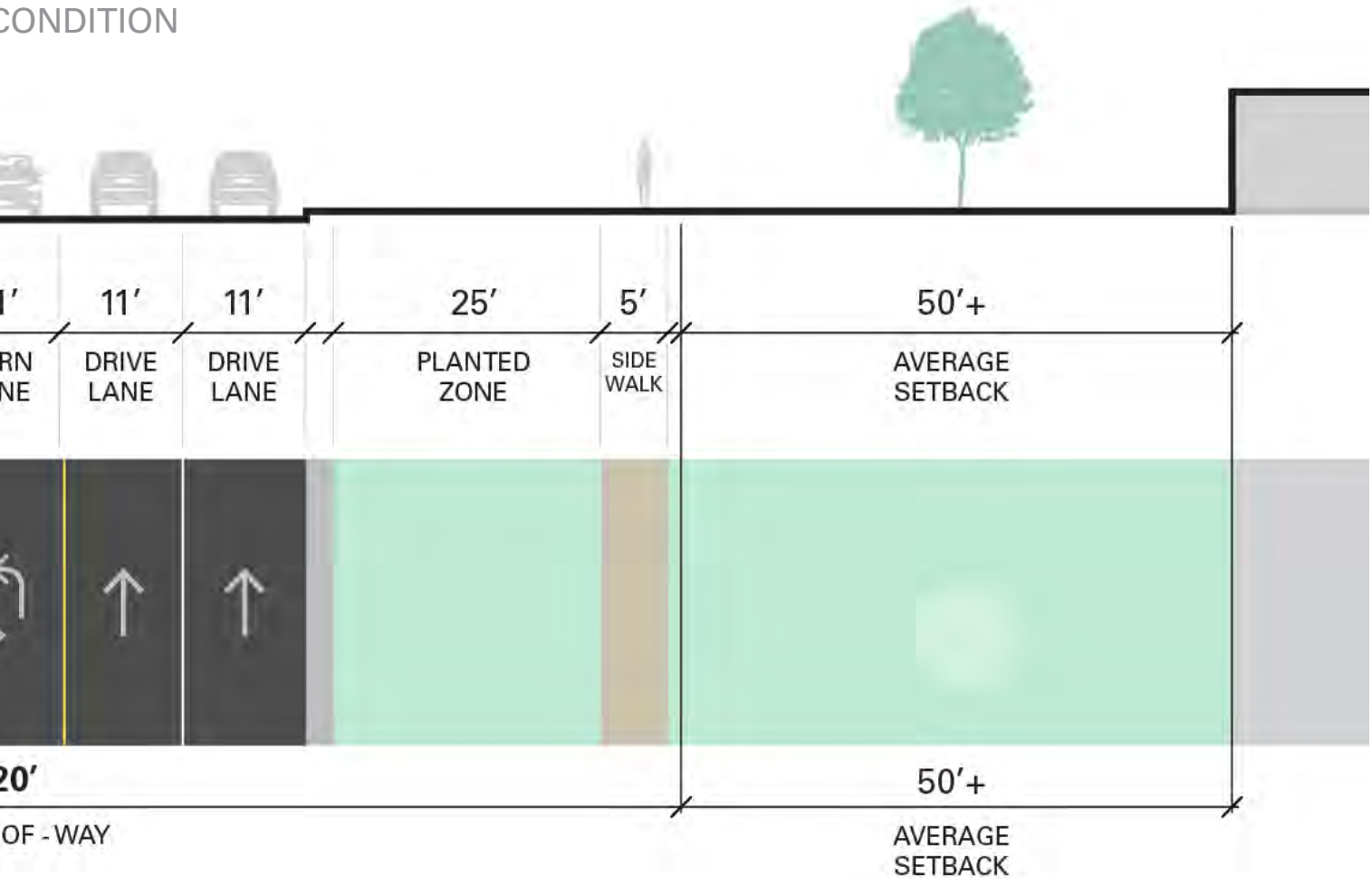


**Curb Cuts**
With low-density, auto-oriented development dominating the right-of-way, Van Dyke Avenue has many active curb-cuts providing access to development and parking lots.

**Wide Crossing Distances**
In conjunction with a lack of pedestrian infrastructure and crossings, the wide (five vehicular lane) Van Dyke Avenue presents a daunting environment for pedestrians aiming to cross to the other side.

**Large Empty Setbacks**
A characteristic element of the Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way within the study area is large, empty, lawned setbacks between the road and development.

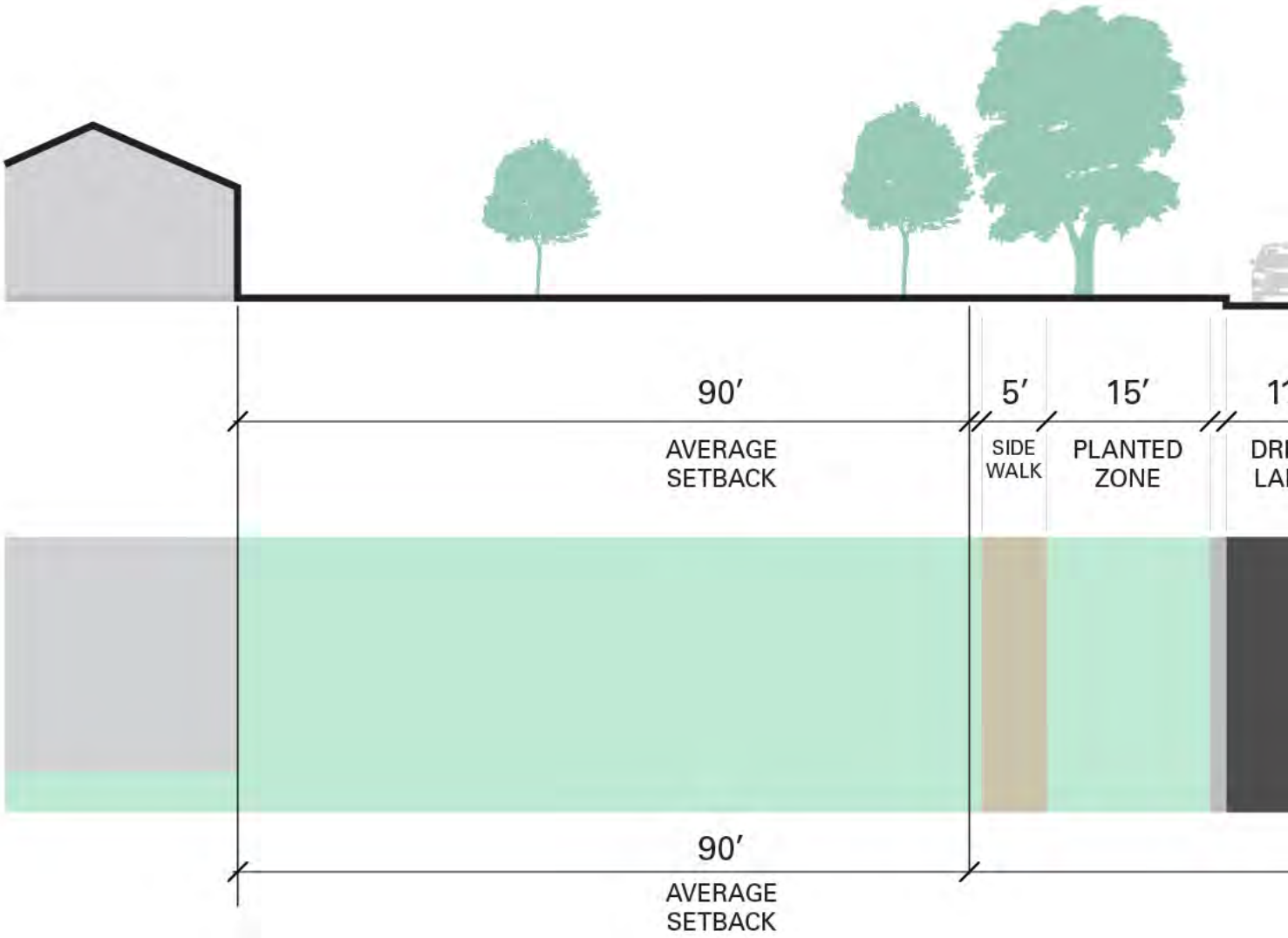
## CONDITION



## UTICA ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY

The Utica Road right-of-way varies greatly in width over the course of the half-mile stretch within the corridor. At its most narrow, the right-of-way width is 66 feet, while at its widest, it is 120 feet wide. The right-of-way maintains a four travel lane configuration through the corridor, expanding to five lanes at the Van Dyke Avenue intersection and shrinking down to two lanes to the southeast of the corridor. The speed limit along the segment within the study area is 35 MPH.

Similar to Van Dyke Avenue, Utica Road offers limited and inconsistent pedestrian infrastructure. Significant segments of the 5-foot sidewalk are missing on either side of the street. Also similar to Van Dyke, sidewalks are separated from the road with empty, turf setbacks. While the setbacks within the right-of-way are smaller than Van Dyke's, the setbacks outside the right-of-way, between the sidewalk and development can be even larger.

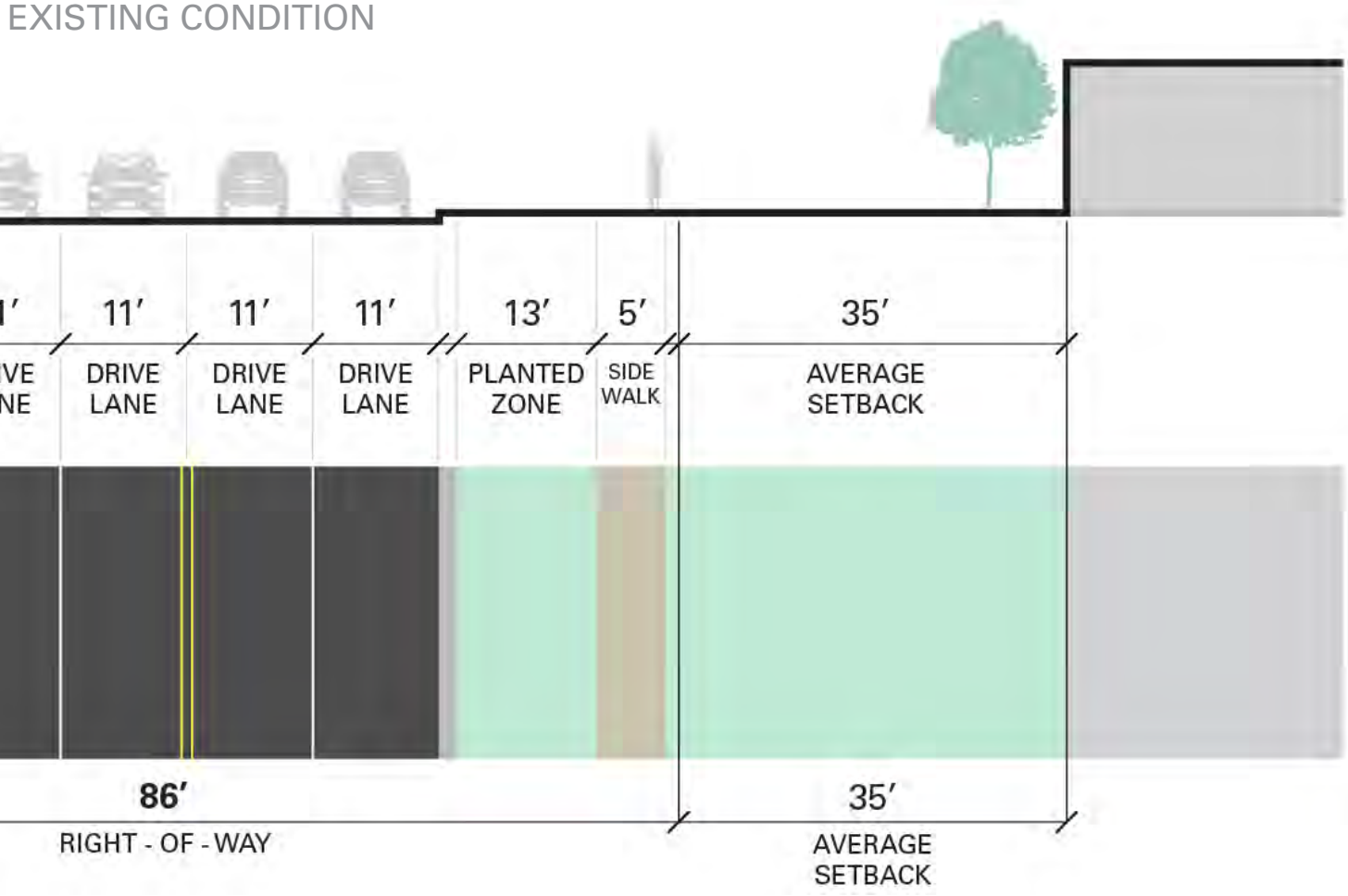


**Intersection with Van Dyke**
The intersection of Utica Road and Van Dyke Avenue presents a situation where five travel lanes meet five travel lanes. While pedestrian crossing infrastructure exists, the intersection can be uncomfortable to cross.

**The Center of it All**
Recognizing the importance of the highly-trafficked intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road, the City recently invested in creating the study area's only formal park space north of the intersection.

**A Connection to Other Community Assets**
Utica Road presents the best connection to other community assets and recent City investments, such as the Sterling Heights Nature Center, Dodge Park, and the City's cluster of civic uses at the municipal center—all located southeast of the study area along Utica Road.

## EXISTING CONDITION



## RIGHT-OF-WAY + TRAFFIC ANALYSIS

Understanding the future potential mobility of the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor begins with understanding the way it is used today. As part of this master plan effort, the planning team reviewed recent traffic, vehicular accident, and signal timing data to understand the present circumstances of Van Dyke Avenue and the other streets that intersect with it within the corridor and immediately outside of it.

The full Right-of-Way + Traffic Analysis conducted as part of this effort can be found in Appendix A.

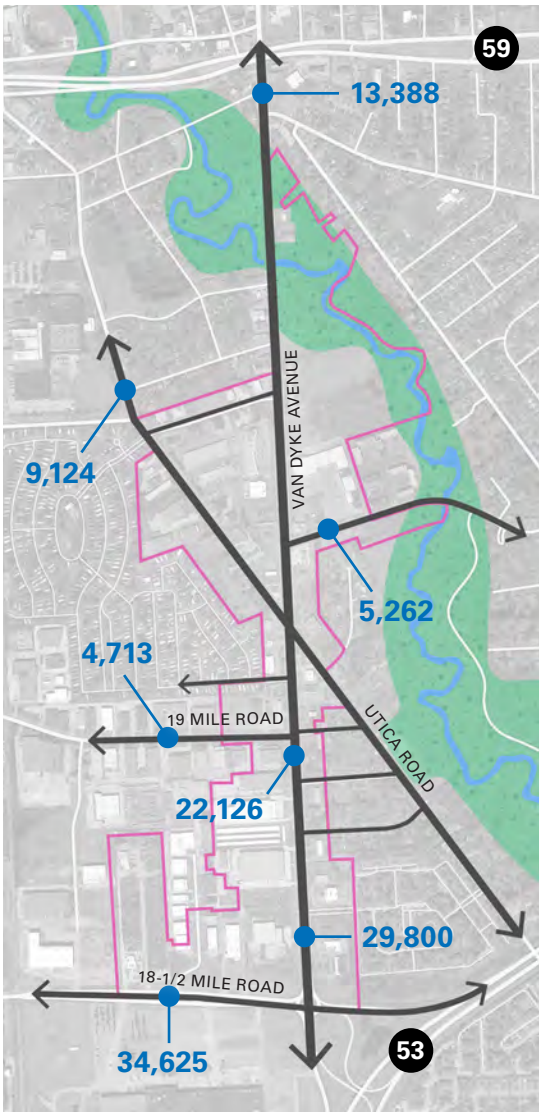
Development along the Van Dyke Avenue corridor appears to account for a minority of the daily traffic facilitated by the road. A great deal of the traffic appears to result from cars and trucks entering and exiting the regional highways at either end of the corridor—M53 to the south and M-59 to the north. The surrounding area involves a high density of industrial uses including both GM and Ford plants and millions of square feet of other industrial and manufacturing development. Both of these plants were in operation at the time of the traffic counts.

The graphic on page 39 shows the average annual daily traffic counts (AADT) for the Van Dyke Avenue corridor and its intersecting streets as collected by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in 2019. The planning team also collected first-hand traffic data in the fall of 2020 to understand present traffic volumes. While the planning team's more updated count largely reflected that of MDOT's 2019 count, MDOT's data is displayed to mitigate any data variations that may have been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted traffic counts elsewhere. The data from this count, along with the full Right-of-Way and Traffic Analysis completed as part of this effort can be found in the appendix.

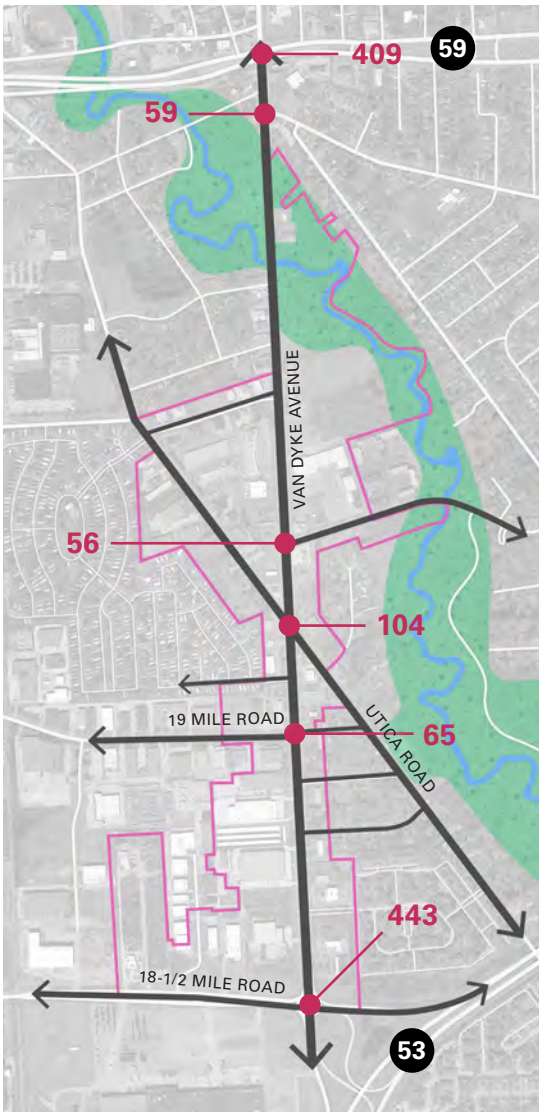
Overall, traffic counts from the last few years show moderate traffic levels on this 1.5-mile long segment of Van Dyke Avenue and at its intersections with other roads within the study area. Traffic volumes are higher, particularly at peak hours, at the intersections of Van Dyke Avenue and the M-53 roundabout to the south and M-59 to the north.

## MEASURING THE ROADS

Beyond simply measuring traffic counts, it is important to understand existing traffic levels relative to roadway capacity. One common metric for understanding traffic levels is level of service (LOS). Level of service is communicated with letter grades, ranging from A (acceptable, under capacity) to F (unacceptable, over capacity). Letter grades A through D are all considered acceptable from a traffic engineering standpoint. Analyzing the existing level of service on Van Dyke Avenue reveals




**2019 MDOT Recorded AADT**




**2015-2019 MDOT Crash Data**

letter grades of A through C at all intersections between 19 Mile Road and Canal Road. The intersection at M-59 provides service between letter grades C and D, while the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue with the M-53 roundabout to the south stands at a letter grade E (marginally acceptable).

## VEHICULAR CRASHES

Another important metric to take into account when measuring a road and planning for its future is the number of vehicular accidents that occur on a regular basis. Van Dyke Avenue sees far more accidents at critical intersections than is typical for the region at large. This is particularly true of the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and the M-53 roundabout at the southernmost edge of the study area. The graphic above shows MDOT's records for crashes at intersections between 2015-2019.

# MARKET + ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

## PURPOSE + BACKGROUND

The planning team began the master planning effort by gaining a holistic understanding of existing conditions to build the foundation for a conceptual redevelopment plan. Initial explorations and analysis included an economic and market analysis to identify opportunities for growth and strategic investment along the corridor. This analysis and its findings formed the basis for conceptual redevelopment alternatives that enhance the activation, placemaking, identity and branding of the corridor while informing recommendations for investment and implementation. The information found is this section is intended to provide insight on the following:

- identify external and internal factors that will influence development of the site as well as strategies to best leverage its assets;
- identify the market area, target market segments and demand drivers that will influence development;
- identify the high-level land use and product mix that best meets the demands of the market and furthers the City's vision for the corridor;
- suggest how the City can better position itself to take advantage of the existing area's Opportunity Zone designation;
- identify potential opportunities and/or issues that the likely redevelopment of the Lakeside Mall has on the redevelopment of the North Van Dyke River District;
- analyze the corridor's and City's strengths, weaknesses, assets and opportunities; and
- provide recommendations for land use and physical site development.

The full Market + Economic Analysis conducted as part of this effort can be found in Appendix B.

The City of Sterling Heights and the North Van Dyke Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority are investigating the feasibility of potential land uses for the redevelopment of the North Van Dyke Avenue Corridor into a vibrant, mixed-use environment. Design Workshop investigated market conditions, real estate and demographic trends, and land uses by type to define the market and analyze demand. The full market and economic analysis can be found in the appendix of this master plan report.

## KEY FINDINGS + OPPORTUNITIES

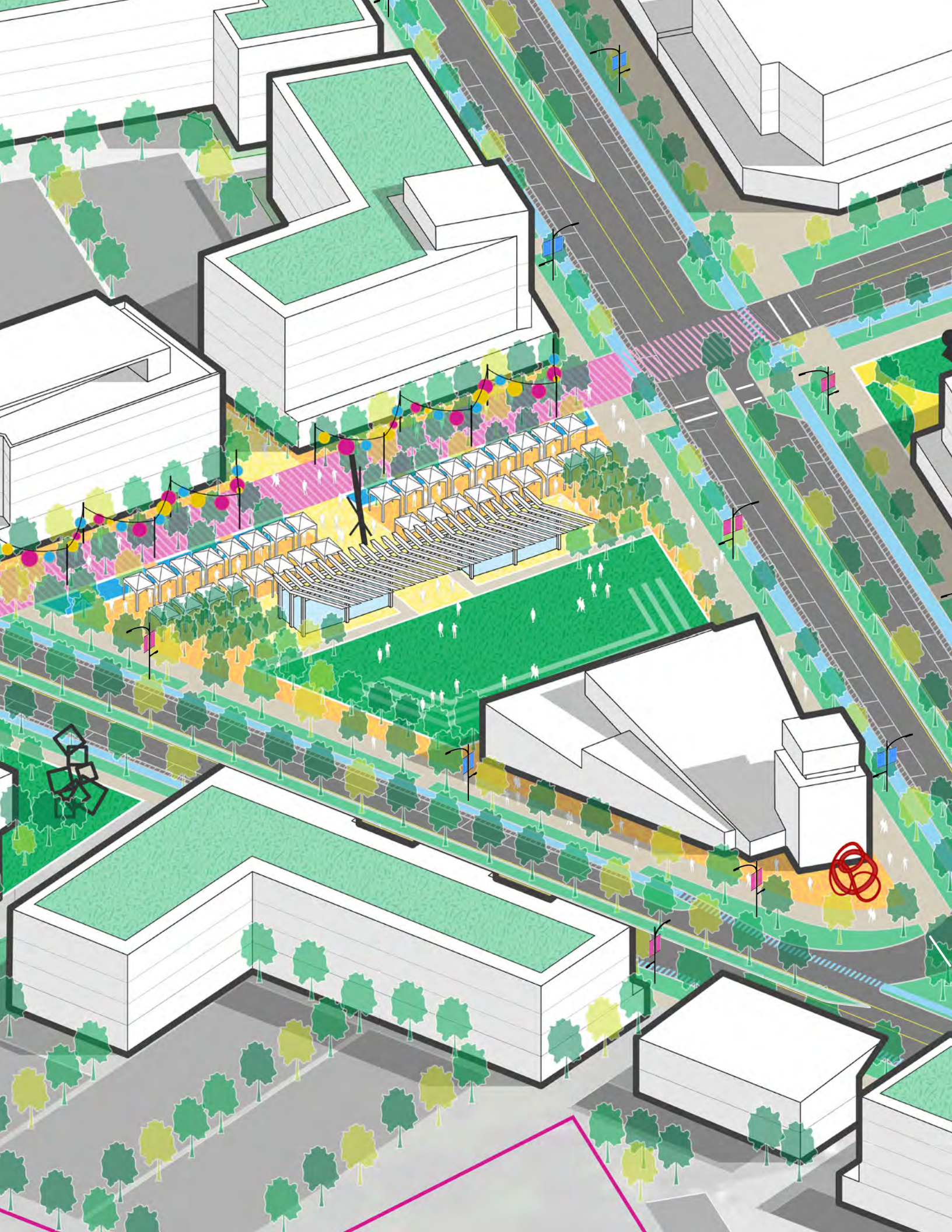
- There is both an immediate and long-term opportunity for local commercial/retail uses to meet the daily retail and service needs of residents and daily workers.
- There is immediate opportunity for additional regional commercial uses to serve a larger, regional population.
- A basic housing needs assessment indicates that the City will need an additional 5,000 housing units by 2040, or

roughly 264 new units per year to accommodate the city's growing population.

- There is an immediate opportunity to leverage the corridor's proximity to the industrial corridor and defense sector.
- There is near-term opportunity to provide office space that would attract the growing technology and knowledge-based industries.
- There is an immediate opportunity for light industrial and other supportive uses along the corridor that will thrive on the proximity to the existing industrial corridor. A well-planned mix of "innovation support" uses would support the success and viability of the City's industrial corridor while maintaining and enhancing the study area's employment base.

## NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY

| Development Types | Opportunities |
|---|---|
| **Residential** | • Development of over 5,000 additional housing units in Sterling Heights by 2040 based on population growth estimates.<br>• Multifamily market is strong and there is immediate opportunity for mid-rise/garden style apartments with supportive commercial uses.<br>• Mid and long-term opportunity to establish a new urban living concept with middle density housing and single-family attached housing within a mixed-use context. |
| **Commercial/ Retail** | • Immediate opportunity for regional commercial development (national chains and large footprint retailers).<br>• Immediate opportunity to intensify existing local commercial sites which will increase the number of local residents and support increased demand for new commercial services.<br>• As a mixed-use program is developed, the project's retail experience will have to be differentiated in order to create the traffic necessary to achieve the type of place that people choose to shop at instead of cheaper alternatives often situated closer to where they live. |
| **Office** | • Opportunity to provide office space that would attract the growing technology and knowledge-based industries.<br>• Opportunity to incorporate trade and vocational schools to provide labor and support to area industrial and manufacturing businesses.<br>• As residential and mixed-use development gains momentum and the area has more residents and daily workers, non-manufacturing businesses may be more attracted to the area. These could include professional offices, insurance offices, smaller medical services like dermatologists and dentists as the daily workers and residents increase. These business may exist as secondary uses within mixed-use development. |
| **Industrial** | • Immediate opportunity for light industrial and innovation support that leverages the proximity to the industrial corridor.<br>• The City may need to consolidate smaller lots to accommodate requests for larger sites and the creation buffers to separate non-compatible uses. |



# MASTER PLAN VISION



This chapter outlines the planning approach, goals, alternatives explorations, and final conceptual vision establishing the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan.

# PRIOR PLANNING + COMMUNITY GUIDANCE

Before embarking on an effort to re-envision North Van Dyke Avenue, the planning team benefitted from recent citywide planning work that established goals, priorities, and a foundation for the future of this area.

## MASTER LAND USE PLAN (2017 - 2040)

Published in February 2017, the Master Land Use Plan establishes long-range planning guidance for Sterling Heights through the year 2040.

### PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Overall, the plan anticipates growth within Sterling Heights. According to the plan, the residential population is expected to grow by more than five percent by 2040, resulting in a need for approximately 4,250 new housing units in that time (as population grows, average household sizes shrink).

The plan also anticipates growth in office uses, but foresees a decline in the demand for commercial and industrial uses. The caveat to these later analyses is to understand more specifically the role Sterling Heights plays in the larger region. Given its composition and legacy as a commercial and industrial center, standard projections on commercial, industrial, and office may understate the potential longevity and growth of these uses in the long-term.

### TRANSFORMATION

The Master Land Use Plan acknowledges the fundamental transformations taking place in residential, retail, commercial, office, and industrial development and patronage. As the population makeup of Sterling Heights evolves, new residential products will reach higher levels of demand to accommodate new lifestyle preferences. As a largely suburban, single family community, Sterling Heights will benefit from encouraging development of the "missing middle" residential products, such as townhouses and apartments. On the retail front, the plan points out national trends indicating a preference for retail in a "smaller, more specialized location that focuses on experience...". A similar trend is identified in the office market, as workers express preferences for office locations in a more "downtown" environment that is rich with amenities.

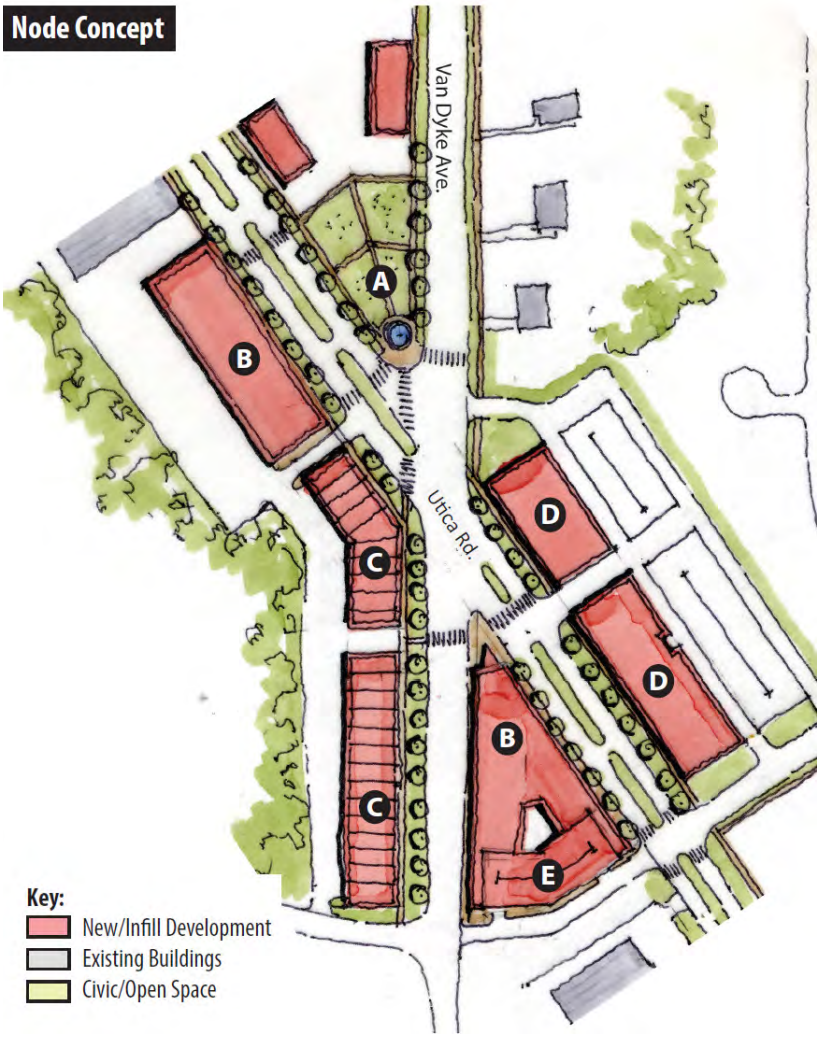
Furthermore, the historic approach to development within the community is recognized as in need of transformation. The plan states: "Sterling Heights is defined by, and challenged by, a lack of a cohesive pattern of pedestrian and non-motorized accommodations and an orientation towards ease of vehicle-oriented mobility. This condition poses unique issues that need to be addressed as part of the master planning process."

**Understanding the Planning Context**
In addition to the 2017-2040 Master Land Use Plan, the planning team reviewed the City's Visioning 2030 Plan, 2017-2021 Parks, Recreation and Non-Motorized Plan, Michael Lombardini's history of the corridor, specific site plans for properties within and outside the corridor, and relevant Macomb County and State of Michigan plans and regulations.

### IDENTIFYING "NODES" FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Master Land Use Plan identifies twelve nodes where existing issues were evaluated and where planning, urban design, and placemaking interventions could have a positive impact on the quality of the place. The intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road is one of these twelve nodes. Here, the vehicular orientation of the roads, the underutilization of commercial properties, and existing traffic levels were identified as challenges.

The plan builds on this analysis with a sketch of a possible future Van Dyke Avenue - Utica Road intersection if developed as a traditional mixed-use node, with denser, street-abutting development and an enhanced public realm.




## VISIONING 2030 PLAN

In 2014, the City of Sterling Heights worked in concert with community members, business leaders, and other stakeholders to undertake a strategic planning effort, resulting in the adoption of the Visioning 2030 Plan. As part of this plan, guiding principles were established to steer future planning and redevelopment efforts at critical sites throughout the city.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Safe, well maintained and desirable neighborhoods enhanced by great schools
- Plentiful leisure and recreation opportunities featuring fully-utilized parks
- Abundant pathways for biking and walking
- Focal points that are both public and private to serve as destinations for residents and visitors
- Well maintained and aesthetically pleasing roads and green spaces
- Successful, vibrant and attractive commercial centers with unique offerings
- Destinations for high-tech and emerging industries and entrepreneurs

**Traditional Mixed-use Development Node Concept**
As part of the 2017-2040 Master Land Use Plan process, the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road was reimagined as a prominent urban node within the city.

M-1: Light Industrial

M-2: Heavy Industrial

RM1/RM2: Multifamily Low-rise

R60/R70/R80/R100: One Family Res.

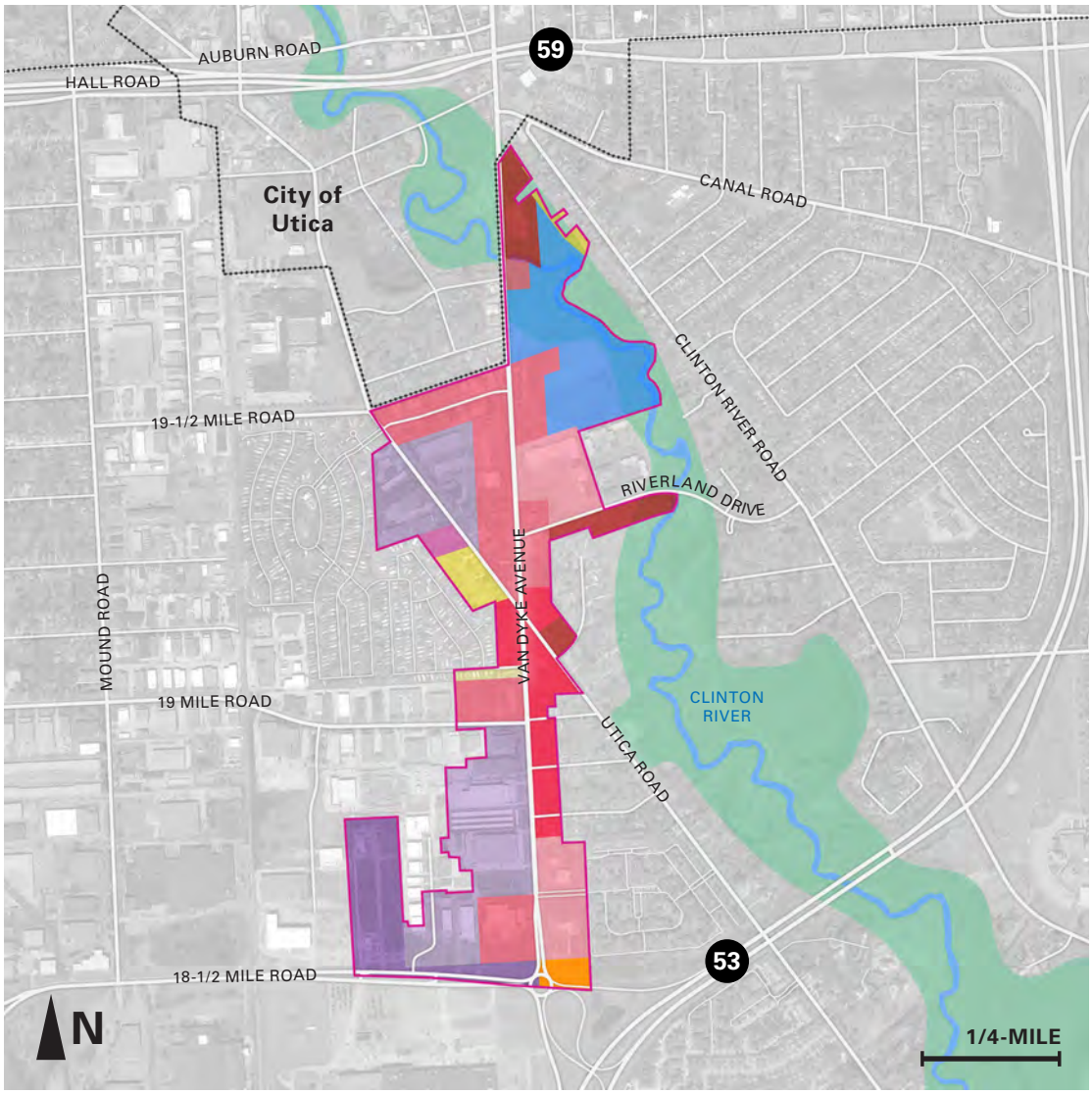
C1: Local Conv. Business

C2: Planned Comp. Business

C3: General Business

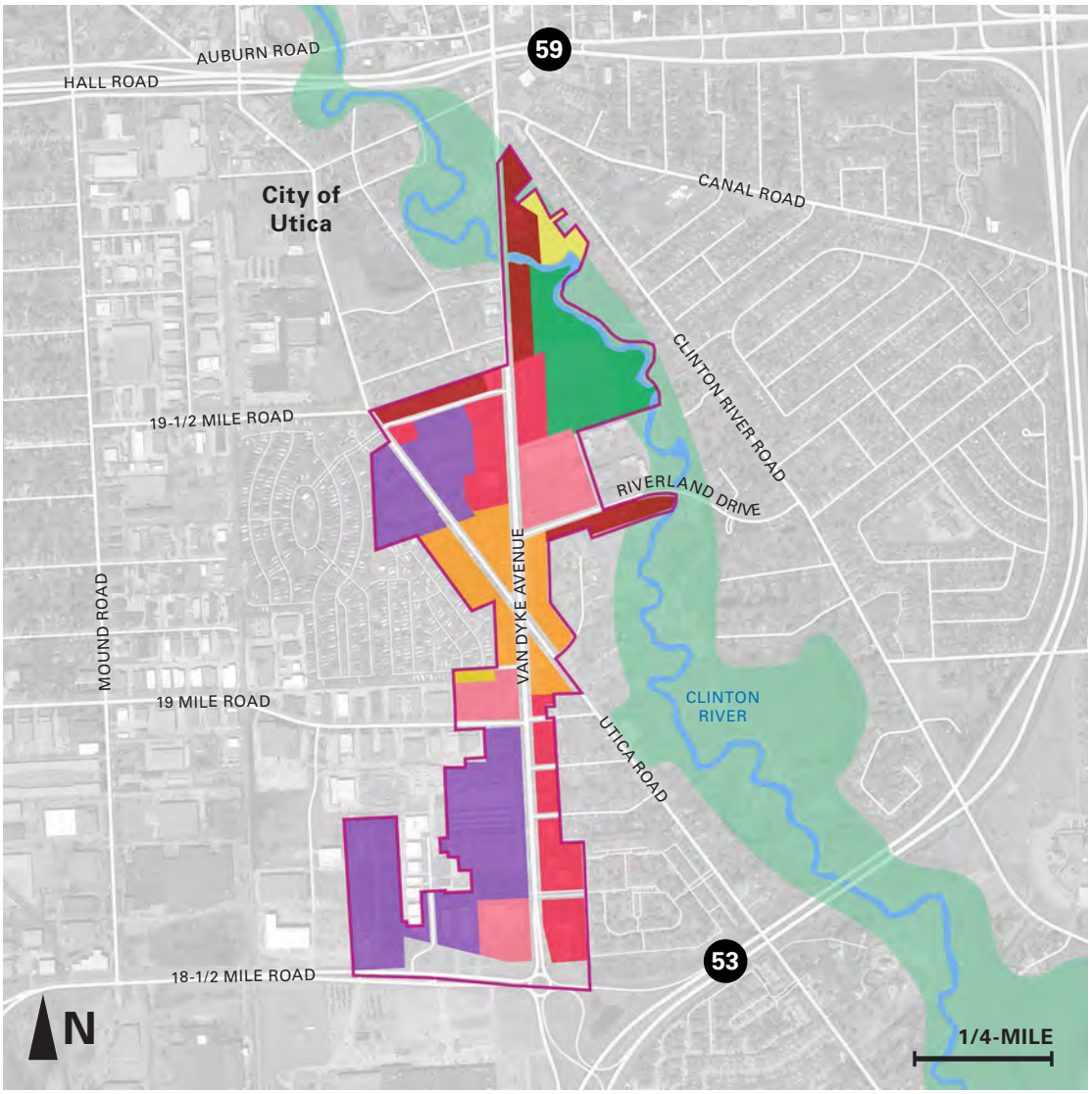
O1: Office + Prof. Business

FP: Floodplain Area




## EXISTING ZONING

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor encompasses eight zoning districts. Van Dyke Avenue is straddled with commercial and industrial uses, while small residential zones cover the few existing residential properties. Present zoning allowances and requirements within the district largely reflect the kind of development that has taken shape. Development is largely limited to one-story, and in some cases, two. Maximum lot coverage for commercial development is low, around 35% for most uses. Required setbacks are large, which is typical of suburban, auto-oriented development along commercial corridors. This zoning, while accommodating of present uses and development configurations, makes more dense and walkable development difficult to accomplish.




Suburban Residential

Office

Local Commercial

Regional Commercial

Industrial

Traditional Mixed-Use Development

Parks/Open Space

## FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

In total, 18 future land use categories were established in the Master Land Use Plan with seven of these existing in the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor. In several instances, future land use categories do not specifically relate to an existing zoning district. Based on the vision outlined in the Master Land Use Plan, a variety of revisions to the City's zoning ordinance and map were recommended.

| | Present Acres | FLU Acres | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Residential** | 7.0 | 1.9 | - 5.2% |
| **Commercial** | 65.3 | 55.2 | - 10.2% |
| **Office** | 14.2 | 20.0 | **+ 5.8%** |
| **Industrial** | 37.0 | 62.6 | **+ 25.6%** |
| **Parks/Open Space** | 0.50 | 22.8 | **+ 22.2%** |
| **Traditional Mixed Use** | 0.00 | 25.3 | **+ 25.3%** |

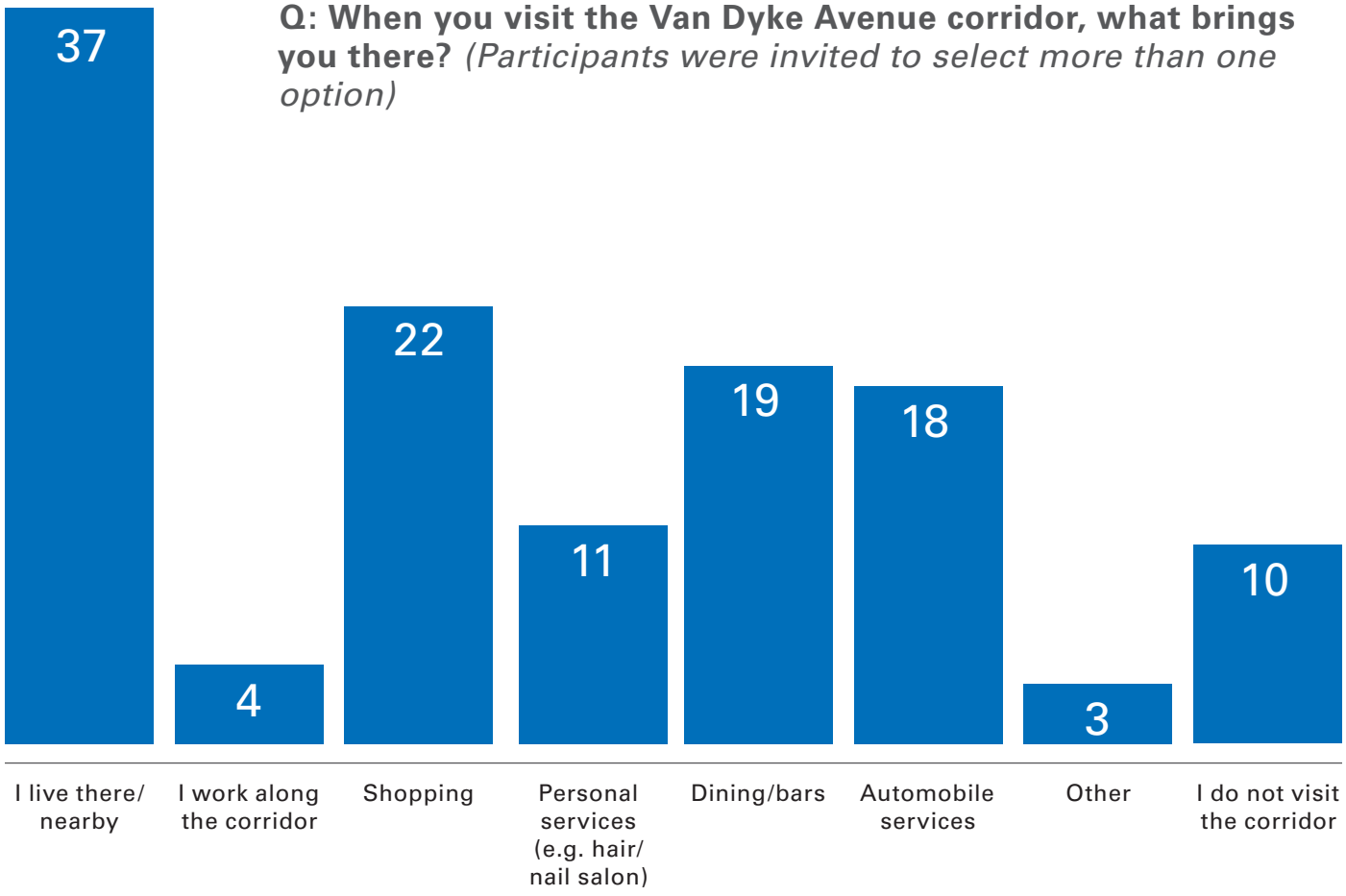
## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 TAKEAWAYS

In October 2020, the City of Sterling Heights and the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan planning team co-hosted a virtual community workshop to introduce the Sterling Heights community and corridor stakeholders to the effort and collect valuable insight on the community's experience of the corridor today and their aspirations for the future.

Participants represented a good cross-section of the city and users of the corridor. In addition to more specific insights on their preferences and priorities for the future, the participants' general perceptions of the corridor provided guidance on what to address and what to emphasize as part of this master planning process. Words like "old", "dated", and "empty" echoed the City's impetus for initiating the plan, while words like "potential", blank-slate", and "underused" pointed to the community's own desire and optimism for growth and change.

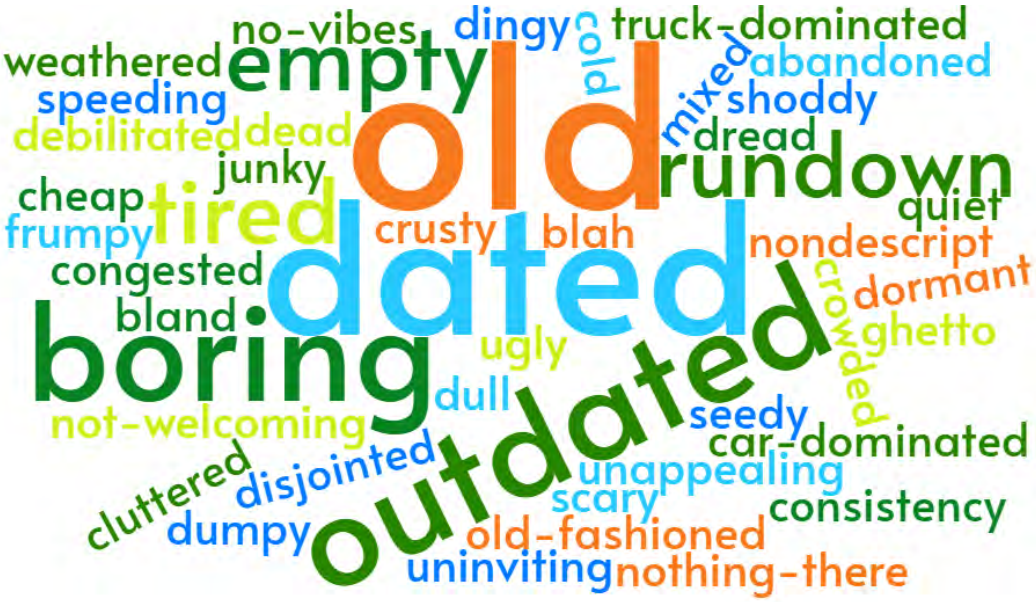
In addition to informing the overall planning approach, this kind of community input was crucial to providing a foundation for the district brand planning undertaken as part of the master plan process.

**Q: When you visit the Van Dyke Avenue corridor, what brings you there?** *(Participants were invited to select more than one option)*



**Q: What POSITIVE word would you use to describe the existing character of Van Dyke Avenue?**


**Q: What NEGATIVE word would you use to describe the existing character of Van Dyke Avenue?**



## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 TAKEAWAYS

As part of the first "Visioning" virtual community workshop, and the online follow-up survey, community members were presented with the issues facing North Van Dyke Avenue and asked to imagine alternative uses for the substantially underutilized portions of the right-of-way. When given the opportunity to choose more than one alternative use, participants largely agreed that restaurant spill-out space, public plaza and gathering areas, and green infrastructure and planting are all appropriate and desired future uses for the North Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way. Bicycle infrastructure, such as bike lanes, racks, and other amenities were also very popular. To a lesser extent, real estate development was seen as appropriate within the right-of-way, and a few participants had other ideas for how to better utilize the right-of-way.


The existing Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way includes large, unused setbacks between the street and the sidewalk. Private development sites further extend this setback with their own large setbacks from the sidewalk.

**Q: Which of these options do you consider to be appropriate for repurposing sections of the Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way?** *(Participants were invited to select more than one option)*

**RESTAURANTS / SPILL-OUT SPACE**

42

**PLAZA / GATHERING SPACE**

42

**GREEN STREETS / INFRASTRUCTURE**

40

**BIKE LANES + AMENITIES**

32

**REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT (NARROWED ROW)**

22

X None of these — 1

? Other — 3

As an area largely devoid of public space, the planning team aimed to engage workshop participants and survey-takers in a conversation about enhancing the public realm throughout the district.

Participants were presented with various types, scales, and programming ideas for parks and given the opportunity to identify ones that are most needed in the vicinity of Van Dyke Avenue. Overall, the community expressed the strongest desire for parks featuring the natural environment and lush vegetation and more active, small-scale, and neighborhood-centric parks with amenities like playgrounds.

More intentionally-programmed landscapes, such as community parks associated with development and specialized recreation parks were also popular with many participants.

One half-acre park exists on site presently at the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road.

**Q: What kind of parks are most needed along and around Van Dyke Avenue?**
*(Participants were invited to select more than one option)*

**NATURAL PARK / GARDEN**

33

**POCKET PARK / PLAYGROUND**

32

**COMMUNITY PARK**

24

**RECREATION / ATHLETIC PARK**

15

X None of these — 5

? Other — 3

## MASTER PLAN GOALS

At the outset of the planning process, the planning team worked in concert with the City of Sterling Heights to develop project goals. These goals are the foundation upon which the master plan is organized and imagined. These goals align with the project objective to create a dynamic vision for the corridor and the community's stated goals in recent city-wide planning efforts to create distinctive, high-performance, and high-quality places in Sterling Heights. As these goals have guided the development of this plan, they will also help steer the district's future development.

1. **Establish an aspirational and achievable vision for the transformation of Van Dyke Avenue into a distinctive place.**

2. **Van Dyke Avenue will be a cultural destination representing the spirit and changing demographics of Sterling Heights.**

3. **Van Dyke Avenue will become a preferred destination for strategic investment in Sterling Heights.**

4. **Redevelopment will include public spaces for gathering, will activate the corridor as a place for people, and will provide connections to existing City assets.**

5. **Van Dyke Avenue will safely accommodate all means of mobility and will calm traffic to prioritize the pedestrian experience.**

6 Van Dyke Avenue will accommodate a **variety of new and existing uses** and the future vision will be sensitive to existing businesses and investments.

7 Redevelopment will take shape through **strong partnerships** between private investors, governments, and public agencies.

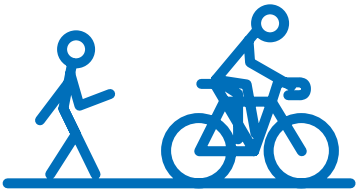
8 Near- and long-term redevelopment plans will be **informed by realistic market and economic conditions**.

9 Van Dyke Avenue will have a unified and **cohesive brand and visual identity** to strengthen its sense of place and reflect the role of the corridor within Sterling Heights.

10 The vision will be **guided by the best practices** in planning, urban design, sustainability, equity, placemaking, and economic development.

## ELEMENTS OF PLACEMAKING

For North Van Dyke Avenue to turn into a destination within Sterling Heights and across the region, the district must embrace a collection of vital elements that contribute to the character and dynamism of any successful place. These elements are both rooted in the history of the place and fundamental to future development. These elements must be considered as an ensemble for the whole district and also considered on the level of each individual public and private investment. This plan aims to describe strategies for embracing and engaging these elements in greater detail in the following pages.

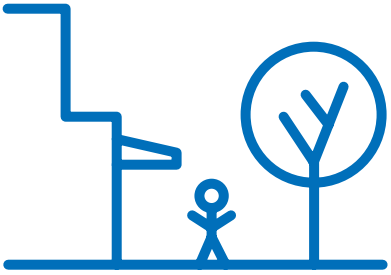


**Walkability + Bikeability**

Great places provide access for and encourage the use of non-automotive mobility. It is healthier, slower, safer, and greener.

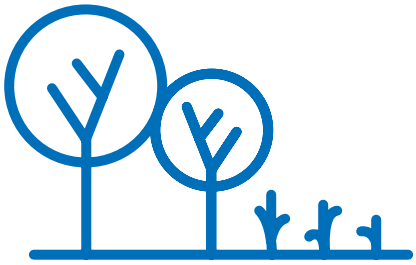

**Authenticity + Identity**

Embracing the history, nature, and unique features of the place, as well as the diverse people who call it home, is what creates distinctive destinations.



**Pedestrian Scale**

Great urban streets are scaled to the pedestrian, not the car. Through street design, a spacious public realm, and appropriate development and urban design, people can feel welcome.



**Vegetation**

Plant life and the shade of a tree are essential to creating quality places. In addition to the functional and performative features of local trees and plant life, people love them.

**Commercial Activation**

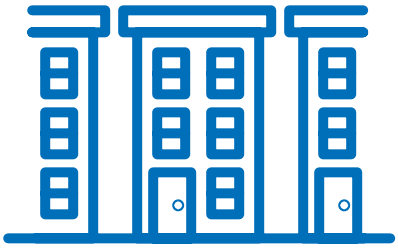
Places buzz because they are alive with activity. Whether it be shopping, dining, entertainment, or nightlife, destinations with diverse activity draw people in.

**Mix Of Uses**

The best urban districts offer people opportunities to live, work, play, learn, and explore all within walking distance. (Mixed-use development also cuts down on traffic.)

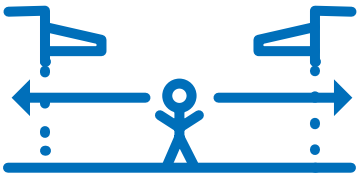
**Civic Space**

Civic spaces, in the form of parks, plazas, and institutions like libraries and museums provide cultural richness and places for the community to gather together.



**Density**

Over the course of millennia, we have learned that density is good for us. Building densely makes everything more accessible and consumes land responsibly.



**Porosity**

An active and enjoyable public realm requires a relationship between street life and development. Transparency, or "porosity" on the ground floor stokes curiosity and interest.

**Flexible Activity**

Whether on streets, in plazas, or within development—flexibility is key to keeping places fresh and exciting. The world is changing. Our places should aim to keep up!

Planning frameworks provide a structure upon which specific proposals and decisions can be made. North Van Dyke Avenue's frameworks will focus on creating streets and a public realm that supports everyone while readjusting priorities to focus on people, rather than cars.

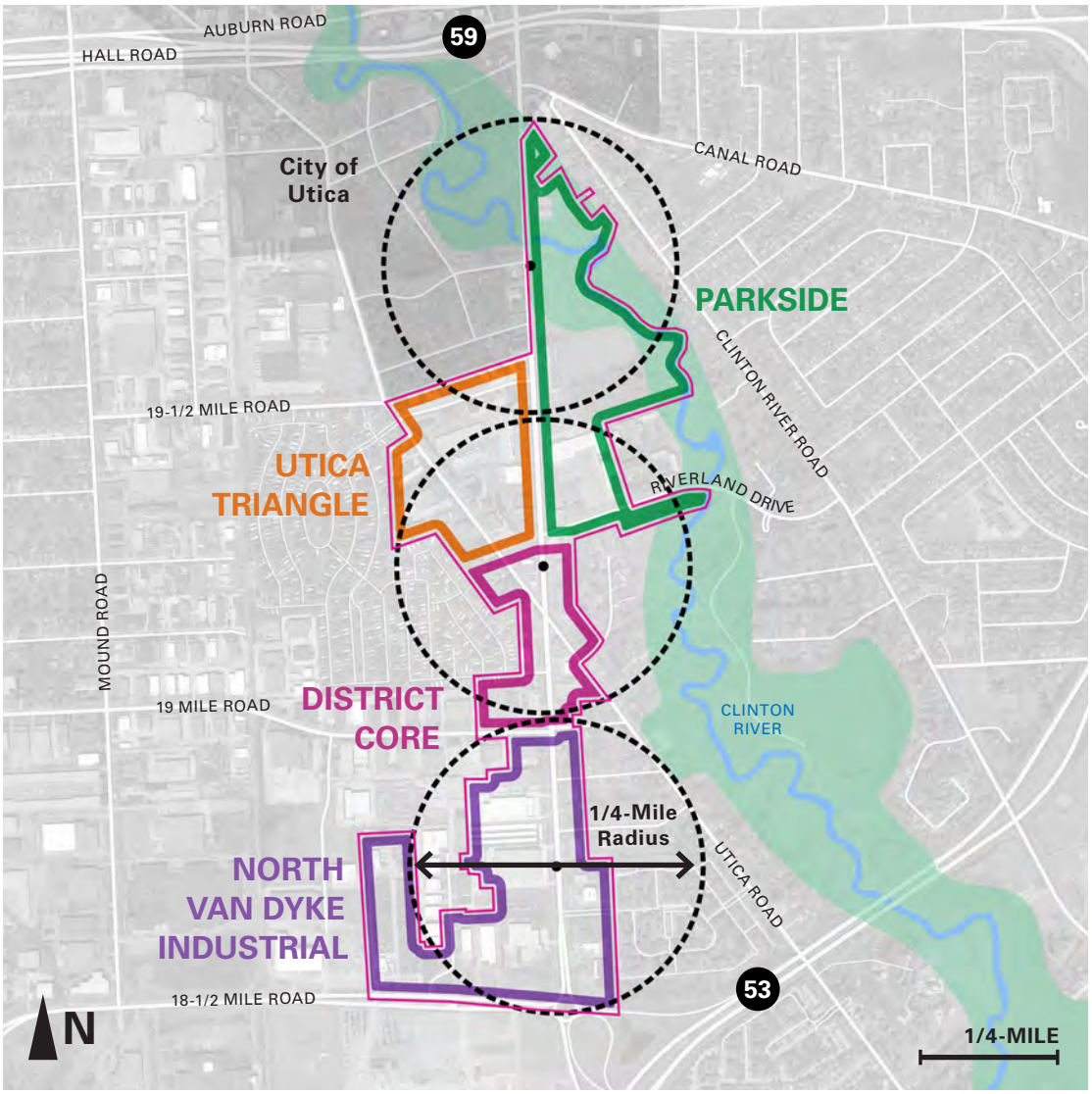
*Graphic Source: Global Street Design Guide, Global Designing Cities Initiative*

## PLANNING FRAMEWORKS

In advance of generating planning recommendations and conceptual development alternatives, a series of planning frameworks were generated to understand the critical issues to be addressed and the "physical principles" that will underlie the master plan.

These frameworks provide insight on the character of the many places comprising North Van Dyke Avenue, the important connections to be protected or established within and outside the district, and opportunities for creating unique development opportunities and experiences here.

Riverland Drive provides one of two existing connections across the Clinton River for vehicles within the North Van Dyke Avenue master plan area and one of three connections for bikes and pedestrians spanning the length of the corridor.




## SUB-AREA FRAMEWORK

Van Dyke Avenue between 18-1/2 Mile Road and Hall Road is a 1.5-mile long corridor and the larger future district comprises nearly 240 acres. Given the large scale of the area, it became evident that any master plan for the corridor should understand it not as one solitary place, but as a collection of connected places, each featuring its own history, uses, and character. Following a site tour, the planning team established the basic sub-area framework of the future North Van Dyke Avenue district.

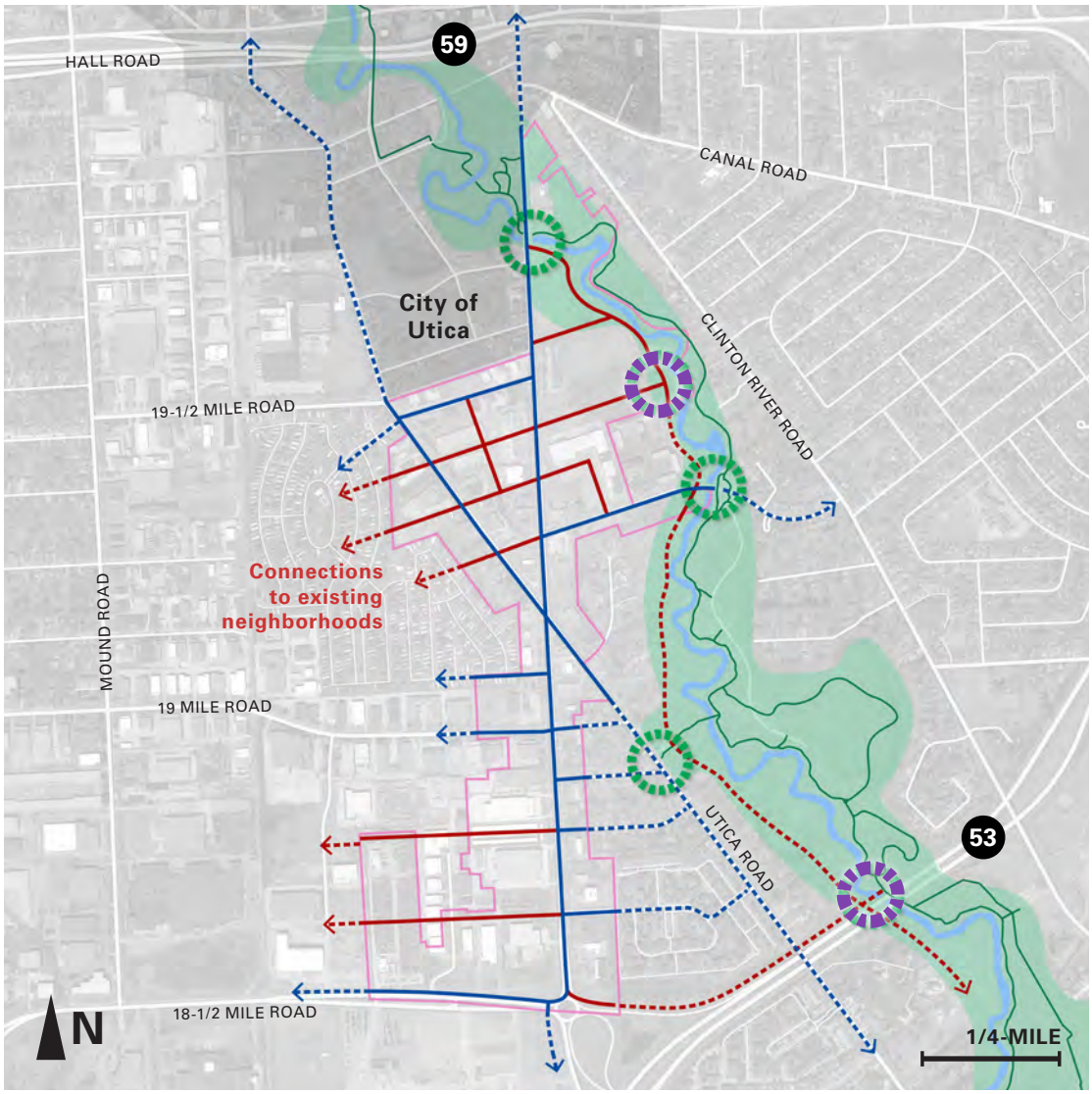
- In the center, the "District Core" sits at the intersection of Van Dyke and Utica Road.
- The northeastern "Parkside" sub-area has a strong relationship with the Clinton River park system.
- The northwestern "Utica Triangle" has a relationship with existing adjacent uses and provides an opportunity to transition to the core.
- The southernmost sub-area, "North Van Dyke Industrial" builds on the industrial legacy of the area while drawing in new audiences.

Enhanced pedestrian path

New pedestrian path

Existing trail connection

New trail connection

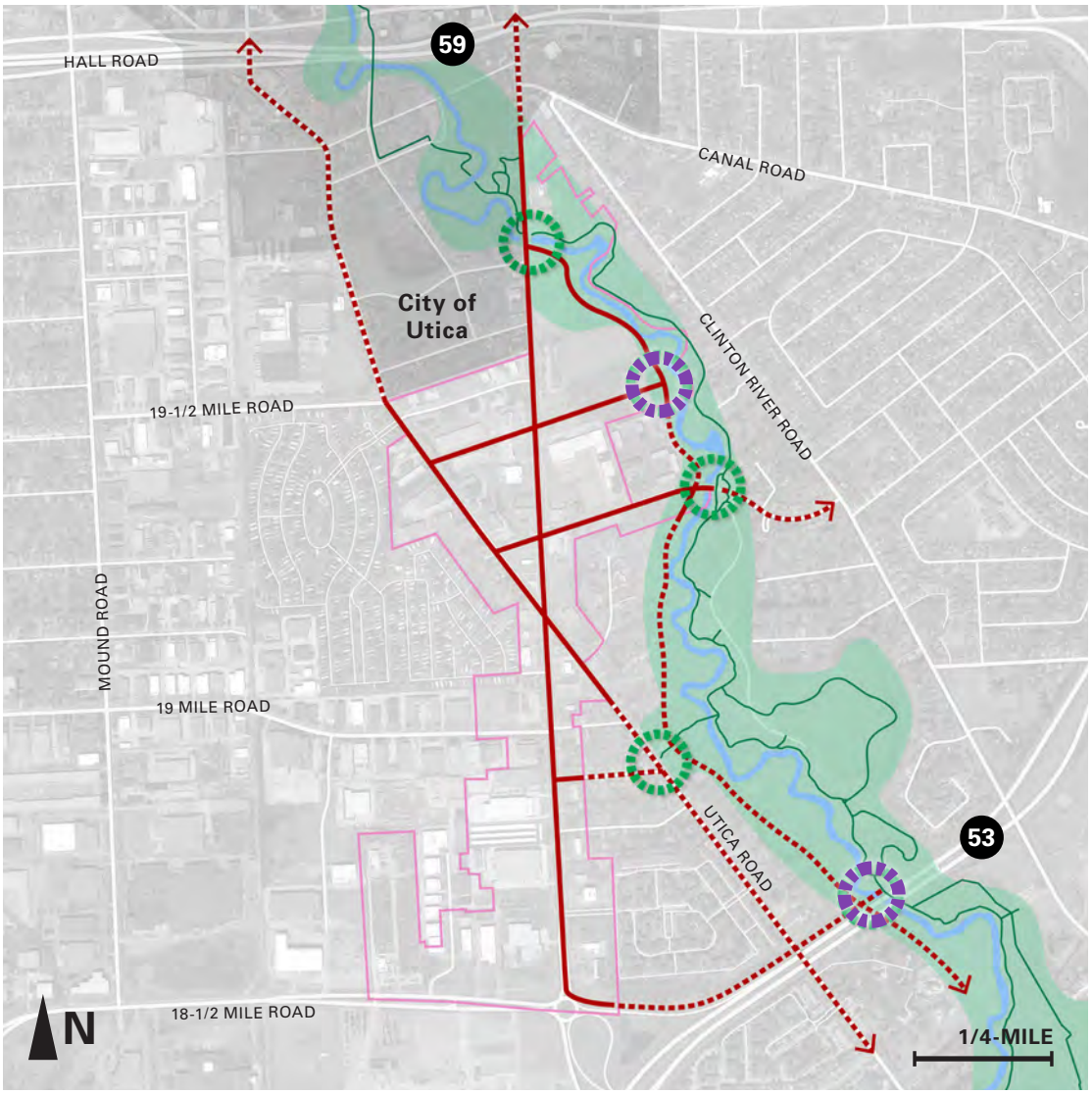



## PEDESTRIAN FRAMEWORK

The first objective for enhancing pedestrian access throughout the corridor is to develop a complete pedestrian network on all roads. This means constructing new sidewalk on both sides of every street.

To improve pedestrian connectivity outside the corridor, new pedestrian connections are proposed through to the west, to create walkability and access to and from existing neighborhoods, and to the east to establish new and enhanced links to the Clinton River and trail system. A new trail on the west side of the river would create a strong relationship between the corridor and greenway.

To enhance pedestrian connectivity within the corridor, new pedestrian paths will be proposed through existing megablocks, such as the Utica Triangle and the industrial area south of 19 Mile Road.




New bicycle path

Connection to trail network

New trail connection

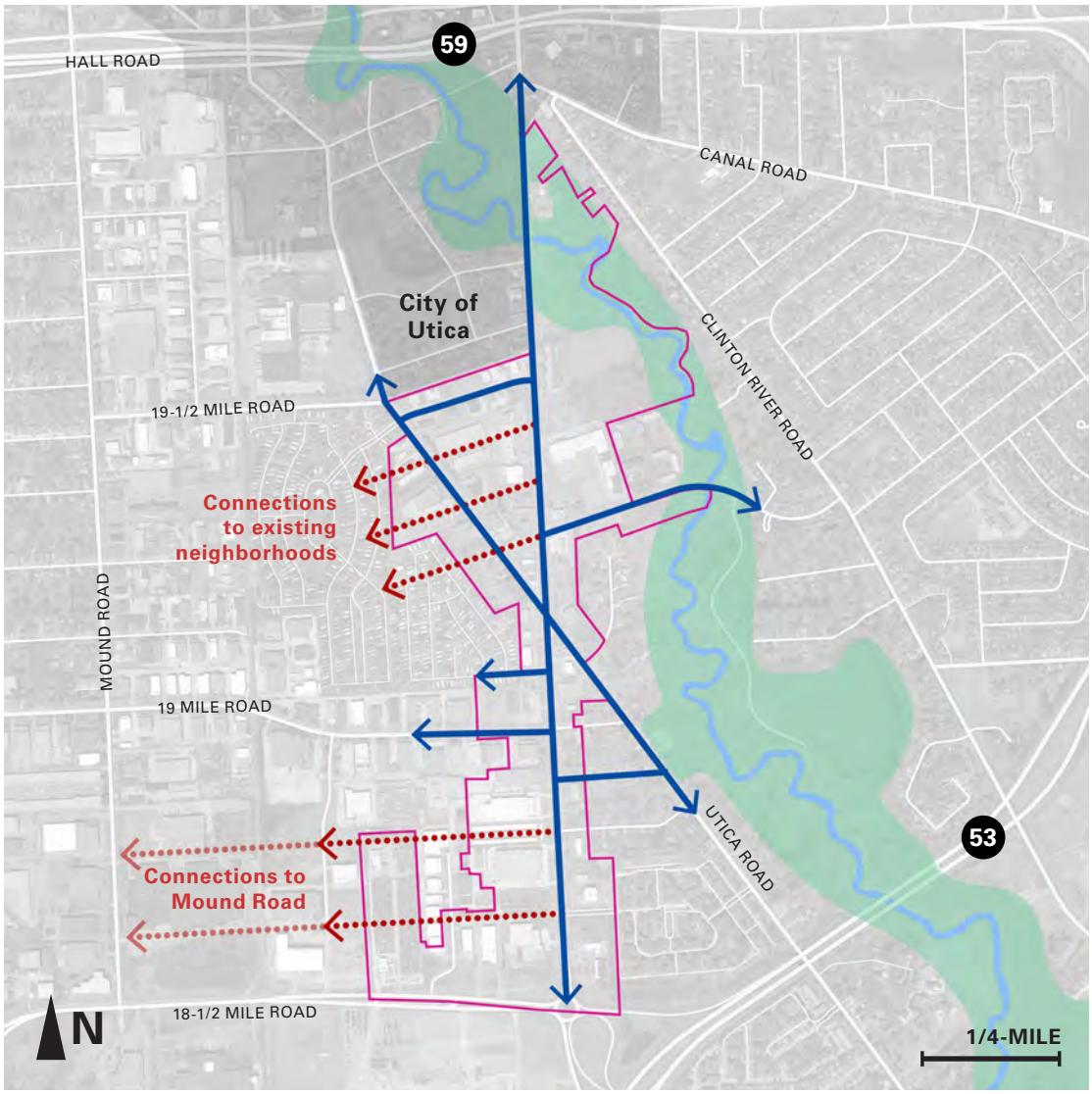
## BICYCLE FRAMEWORK

The corridor today suffers from a complete lack of bicycle infrastructure outside the Clinton River trail system, making cycling difficult and unsafe along Van Dyke Avenue.

The master plan will include a more robust and safe network of bicycle lanes, trails, and resources to encourage cycling and provide quick, easy, and legible access to the Clinton River trails. As a primary city connector, Utica Road should also support bikes. This will enable bicycle access between the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor and Jimmy Johns Field and downtown Utica to the north, and Dodge Park and the Sterling Heights Municipal Center to the south.

Enhanced street

New street



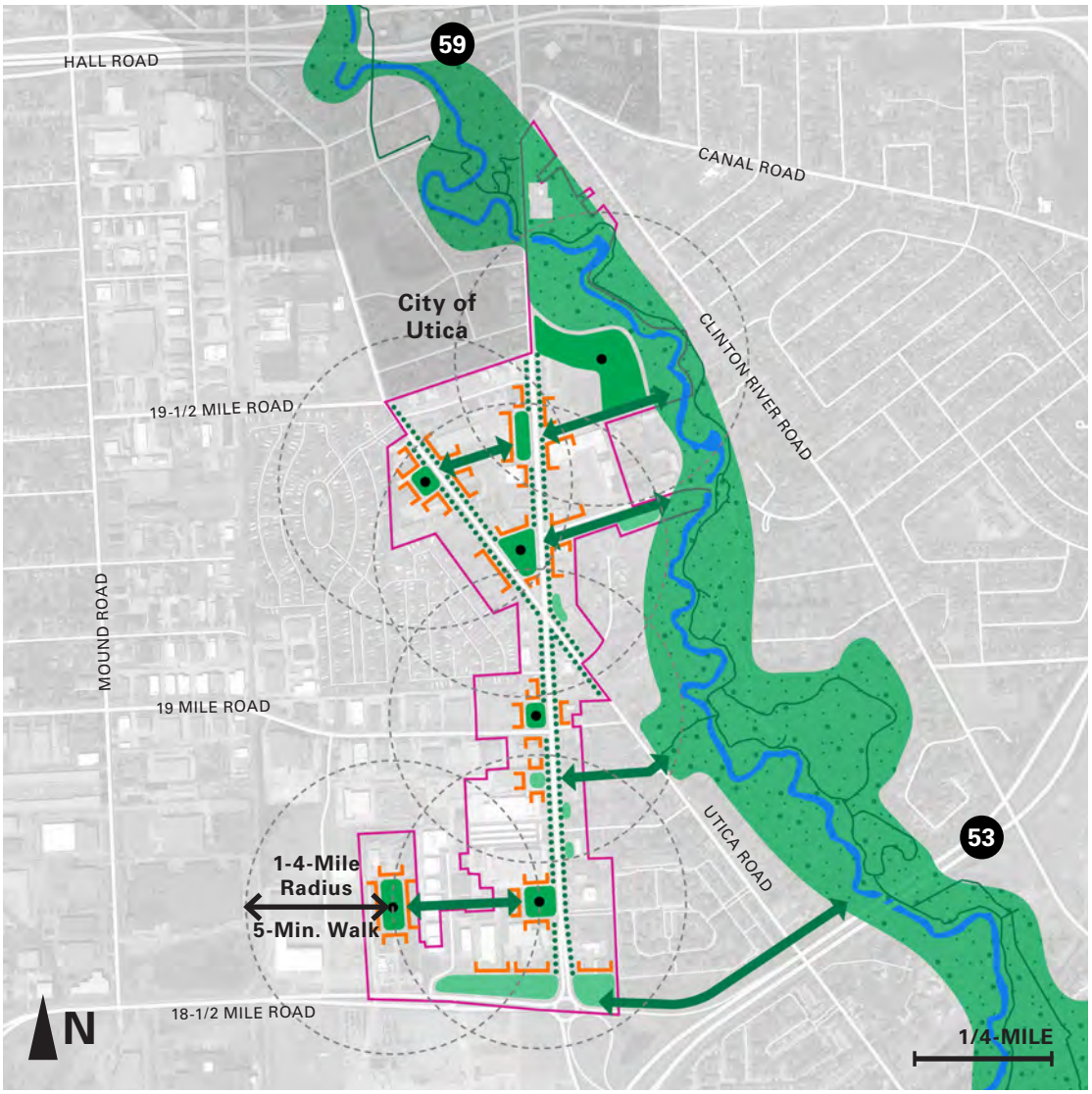

Re-envisioning public right-of-ways requires consultation and partnership between multiple levels of government and neighboring jurisdictions to ensure alignment and cooperation from concept through construction.

## VEHICULAR FRAMEWORK

A well-designed and well-connected vehicular network is essential to the success of an urban place at the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor. Overall, vehicular traffic can be made safer by decreasing speeds and offering more opportunities to move around the corridor.

Within existing right-of-ways, the master plan will recommend enhancements such as road diets, improved signalization, street parking, and traffic calming measures to ensure the corridor's streets are safe and efficient while providing needed access to existing and new development.

Overall, vehicular traffic can be made more efficient and supportive of a vibrant local economy by decreasing speeds and offering a more dispersed, well-connected, and robust network to facilitate moving around the area with ease.




Green connection

New primary park space

New secondary park space

5-Min.

All 239 acres of the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor are within five minutes of an existing or proposed park in the master plan vision, and the vast majority of the developable area is accessible to more than one park within a five minute walk.

## PUBLIC REALM FRAMEWORK

A transformed North Van Dyke Avenue will aim to strike a balance between private development and the public realm. In addition to the practical community benefits of parks, plazas, greenways, and other open spaces, these spaces play a role in the ecological, environmental, and social health of the district while supporting resiliency. Significant civic spaces such as parks, plazas, and natural areas can also play a role in increasing the value of private real estate.

In addition to creating substantial connections to the magnificent resource that is the Clinton River and greenway park system, the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor will have an internal network of parks, plazas, and open spaces. These spaces will be located at short intervals to provide pedestrian access to one or several from any future development on site and will be connected via green streets, featuring street trees and landscape zones.

## URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES

With planning frameworks established that set priorities in alignment with the master plan goals, a series of urban design strategies emerge to guide decision-making on future public realm and private development projects. These strategies help root decision-making in the context of the place while embracing best practices in urban design within the real-world constraints of the district.

The following strategies were used as a starting place for exploring conceptual redevelopment alternatives.

1. **Transition from the context**
   Van Dyke Avenue exists in a mature community context. Its transformation should respond to and serve those communities and context.

2. **Reinforce the core**
   As the future "heart" of the district, the intersection of Van Dyke and Utica Road should be reinforced with signature buildings and spaces.

3. **Build upon local assets**
   While the plan envisions long-term redevelopment, opportunities should be explored to reuse and connect to what is working.

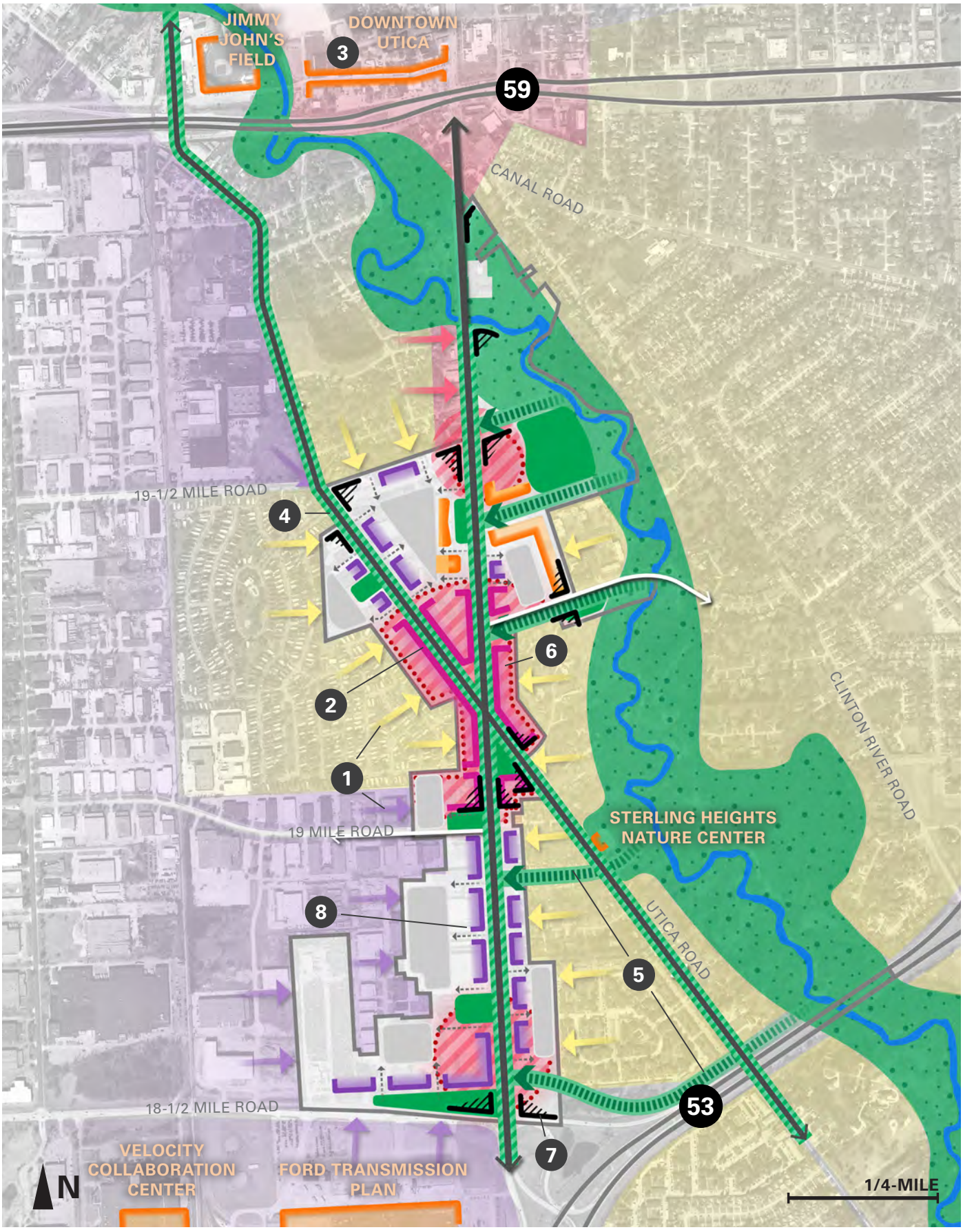
4. **Share the streets**
   The corridor's major streets must accommodate all forms of mobility comfortably and safely while prioritizing the pedestrian experience and offering spill-out space for adjacent development.

5. **Establish a green network**
   A green network connecting development within the district and to the Clinton River greenway will create healthy, enjoyable places.

6. **Concentrate activity**
   Dynamic ground-floor retail and engaging civic frontages cannot happen everywhere. Prioritize and concentrate activity at important nodes.

7. **Mark the gateways**
   Establish a cohesive and legible place with a strong identity by marking gateways with signature signage and branded elements.

8. **Flip the parking paradigm**
   Create a more urban and pedestrian-focused environment by pushing development to the street edge and screening parking behind buildings.


JIMMY JOHN'S FIELD
DOWNTOWN UTICA
3
59
CANAL ROAD
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
4
6
2
1
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
19 MILE ROAD
STERLING HEIGHTS NATURE CENTER
8
UTICA ROAD
5
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
7
VELOCITY COLLABORATION CENTER
FORD TRANSMISSION PLAN
N
1/4-MILE

## CONCEPTUAL REDEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

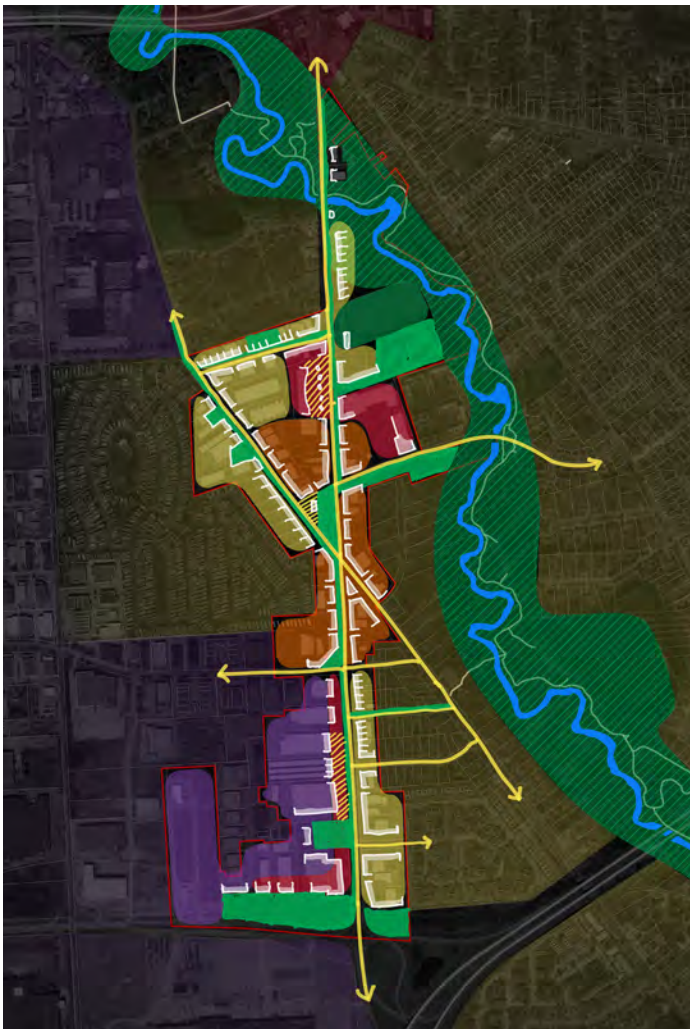
Following the first virtual community workshop, the planning team reviewed public feedback from surveys and the online opportunity mapping tool along with the findings of the market analysis to develop two conceptual redevelopment alternatives for further exploration.

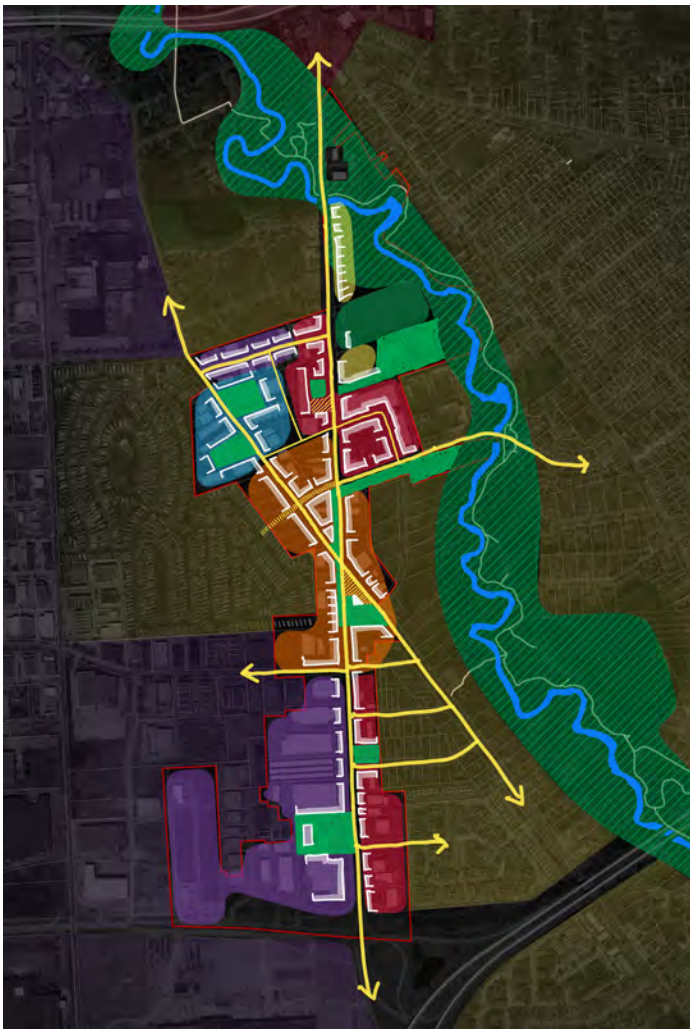
These alternatives explored various approaches to district configuration, land uses, and programming for long-term redevelopment. The alternatives were discussed with the community at the second virtual workshop in December 2020, where participants were asked to contribute feedback.

Overall, these two approaches consider community priorities, market conditions, and the immediate context of each sub-area and development site along the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor. They represent different approaches for reshaping existing development and different priorities for the future use of the corridor's distinct areas.

These two redevelopment alternatives were intended to start a conversation with the Sterling Heights community about their preferences for the future of the corridor and the mix of development types, parks and open spaces, and programming that is most desired by the community as the corridor redevelops.

Following the presentation of these two alternatives at the December 2020 workshop, the planning team created a preferred redevelopment concept plan that included the community's preferred overall redevelopment approach and preferred elements from both alternatives. That preferred plan serves as the foundation of this master plan and its recommendations.



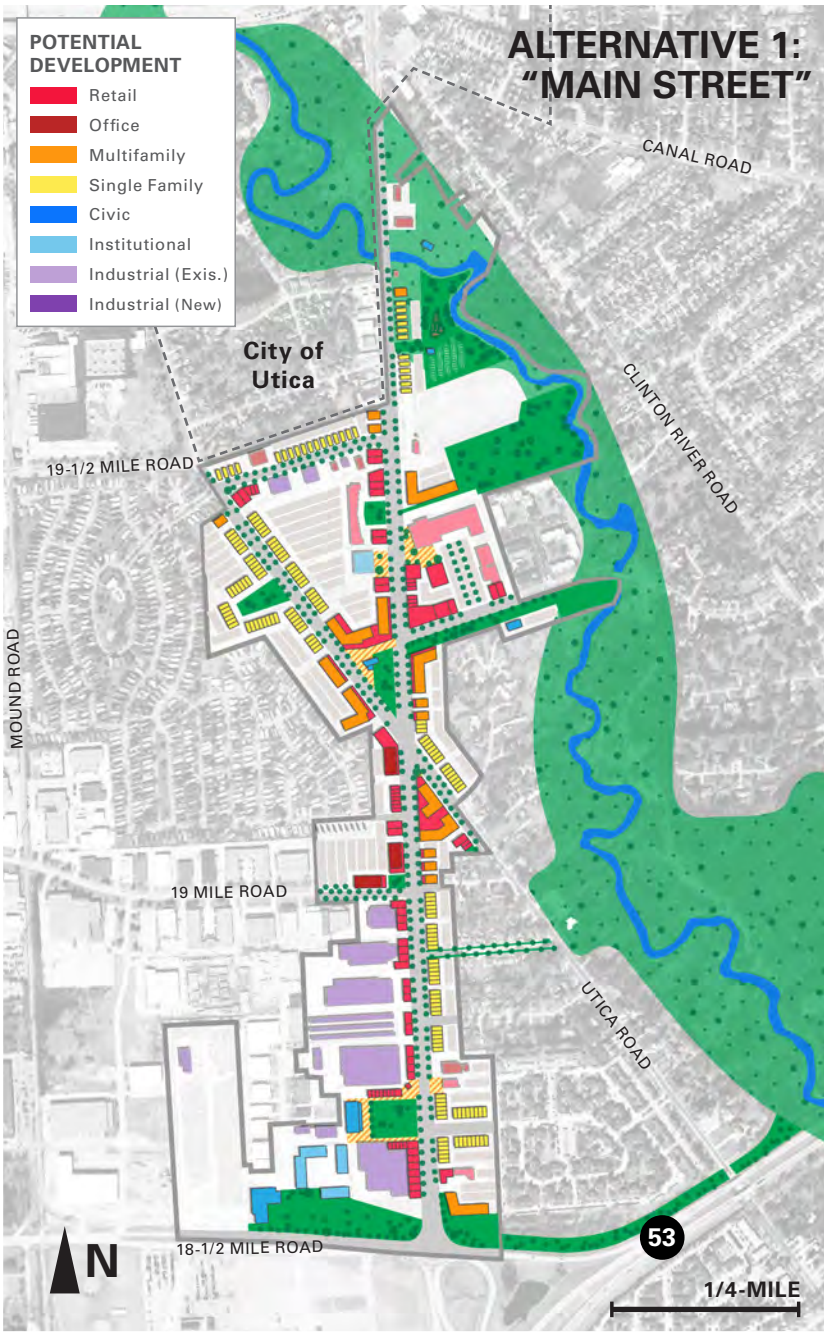


**Alternative 1: "Main Street" Framework**

- North Van Dyke Avenue is built out in the form of a traditional "Main Street" with a "downtown" center and residential development at either end
- Retail fronts onto the west side of Van Dyke Avenue, shielding industrial uses
- Transect housing model (dense urbanized center steps down, through mid-density housing development, towards edges and adjacent single family neighborhoods)

**Alternative 2: "Clusters" Framework**

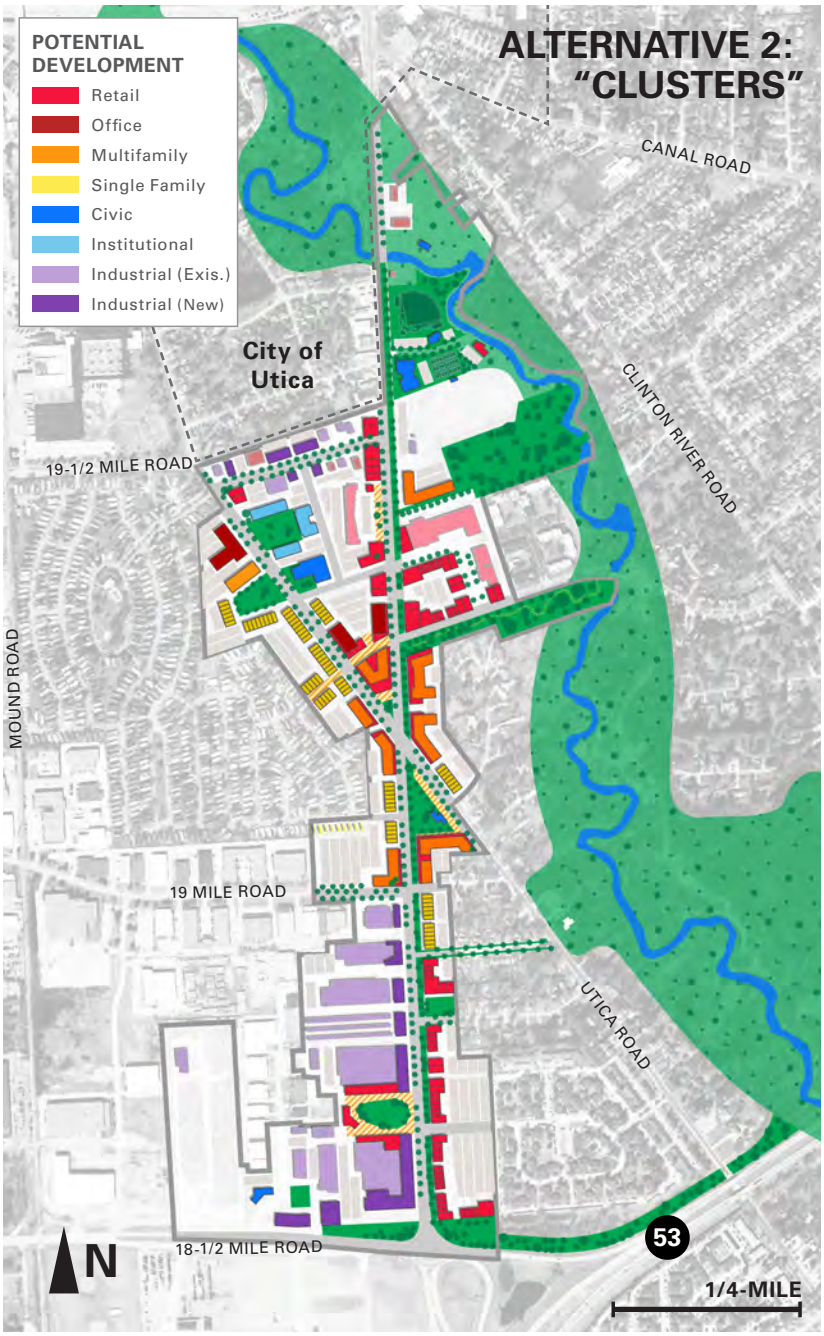
- Mixed-use core with ground floor retail
- Single use "clusters" outside the core, extending and enhancing existing conditions adjacent to the corridor
- Institutional-industrial partnership zone in the northwest for creative collaboration
- Retail along southeastern end of North Van Dyke Avenue
- Expanded and enhanced industrial/manufacturing presence along southwestern end of Van Dyke Avenue

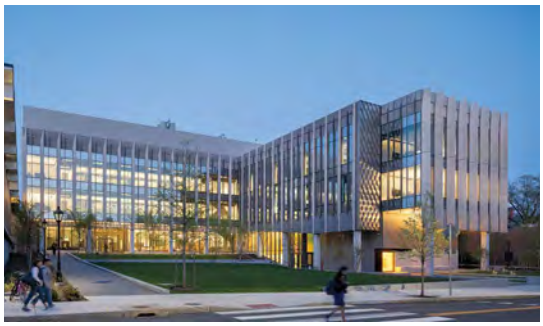




## PROGRAMMING APPROACH

### ALTERNATIVE 1: "MAIN STREET"

Conceptual redevelopment alternative 1 showcases a future North Van Dyke Avenue district with a city center at its core that transitions to smaller, neighborhood-scale development at its edges. This scheme imagines an activated central park that is directly connected to the Clinton River greenway at the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road. The "Main Street" approach prioritizes stitching the district and Avenue into the larger city context.



## ALTERNATIVE 2: "CLUSTERS"

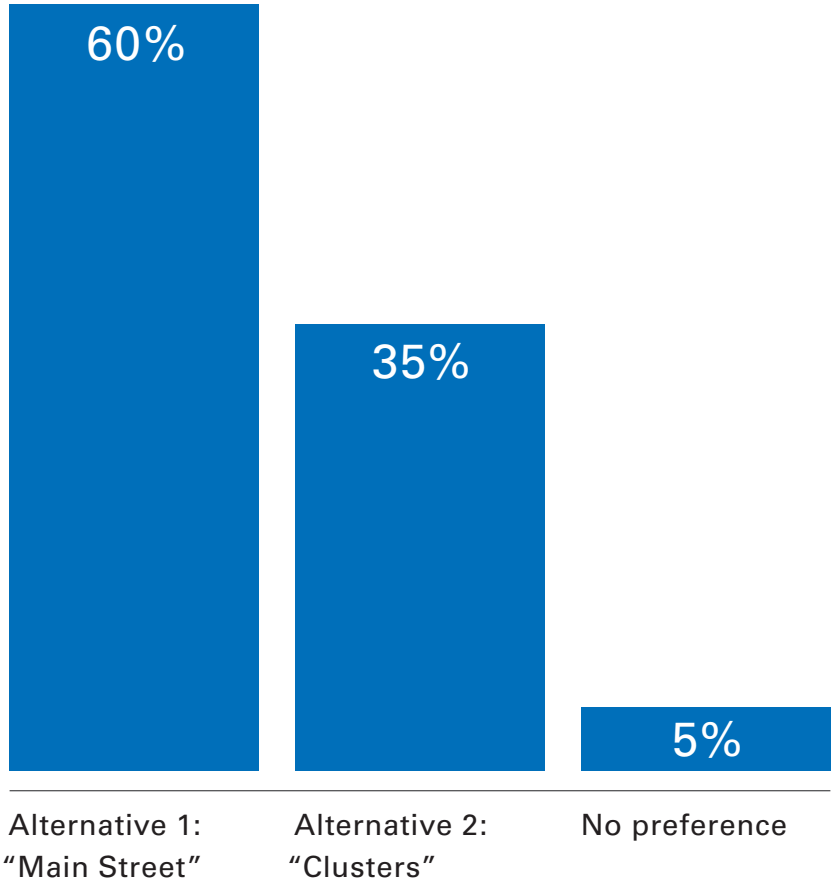
Whereas alternative 1 imagines North Van Dyke Avenue as one continuum connecting together the district and city, alternative 2 envisions the district as a collection of distinct clusters. In the south, industrial uses are encouraged to expand and front onto Van Dyke Avenue, and a southern retail district captures northbound traffic. The mixed-used core includes a neighborhood park and multifamily development, and the northernmost areas, support retail infill, office development, and a "maker" cluster where industry, education, and office uses come together to collaborate.

## COMMUNITY INPUT

Following a presentation of the alternative redevelopment concepts, the planning team engaged community members in a conversation around the elements of each concept that resonated most strongly for the future of the corridor. Overall, community members (both in the workshop and in the survey following the workshop) preferred the development approach outlined in alternative 1.

The ideas highlighted by the community, and seen on the facing page, were carefully considered and included, where possible, in the preferred plan direction following the workshop.

**Q: Of the two alternative redevelopment approaches, did you have a preferred scheme?**



**Q: Which of these ideas, if any, resonated most strongly with you as appropriate for the future of Van Dyke Avenue?**

MAKERSPACE VIBE
OUTDOOR SEATING
WALKABILITY
BEER GARDEN ON THE CLINTON RIVER
MULTI-ETHNIC/ CULTURAL FOODIE HAVEN
WORK SPACE FOR START-UPS
PARK SPACE
PUBLIC ART
OUTDOOR MARKETS
BREWERY
TOWNHOUSES
FOOD TRUCK ZONES
TRAIL ACCESS
DESTINATION
MULTI-USE SPACES
MAIN STREET
CENTRAL PARK
EVENT SPACES (STERLINGFEST)
RIVERSIDE DINING
VOCATIONAL TRAINING
NEW BUSINESSES
PERFORMANCE SPACES
MULTIPLE HOUSING TYPES
SHIPPING CONTAINER/ POP-UP SHOPS
FOOD INCUBATORS/ COMMERCIAL KITCHEN

**Q: How can we effectively program and activate Van Dyke Avenue to best serve the Sterling Heights community?**

FOOD TRUCKS NEAR JOBS
ARTS
CULTURAL FOOD OUTLETS
LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM
PERFORMANCE VENUE
DISTILLERY
BIKE HUB + RENTALS
CLOSED STREETS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS
WIFI
FOCUS ON RIVER INITIATIVES
COMMUNITY GATHERING OPTIONS
EVENTS LIKE STERLINGFEST
LOCAL LIBRARY
STREETCARS
COMMUNITY CENTER
SHARED STREETS
SCIENCE CENTER
KAYAKING ON THE CLINTON RIVER
AQUARIUM
TRANSIT


N

## CONSENSUS VISION PLAN

Following the second virtual community workshop, where alternative concepts for the possible future of North Van Dyke Avenue were discussed with the community, a preferred redevelopment vision was developed by the planning team.

This "consensus vision plan" was developed to capture the most salient ideas and strategies from the previous stages of work and organize them around a preferred planning framework.

The final redevelopment vision plan provides recommendations and guidance on:

- the redevelopment of public and private property within the district
- new and enhanced open space and landscape connections within and outside the district
- the reconfiguration and reconstruction of major streets and the introduction of new streets and pedestrian connections
- proposed development densities, intensities, and typologies
- programming and activation of key sites
- short- and long-term phasing of the master plan vision

While this plan provides a conceptual vision for the future of the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor, it represents one possible build-out of the over-arching vision of the district as a vibrant, mixed-use, civic heart of Sterling Heights.

### VISION PLAN THEMES

A master plan of this scale brings many design goals, approaches, and strategies to the bear on the corridor in order to articulate the potential of the place and the community's desired vision for its future. Among these specific and sometimes technical design ideas, four major themes emerge.

1. **Strong integration of urban development and natural splendor:** North Van Dyke Avenue is home to an interconnected network of parks and open spaces that are themselves robustly and frequently connected to the Clinton River and greenway.
2. **From "corridor" to "district"** The future North Van Dyke Avenue is more than just a corridor; it is a cohesive and unique place within Sterling Heights. It is a destination. It is a unified district, stitched into the larger community fabric.
3. **Informed by context and inspired by legacy:** North Van Dyke Avenue represents the continuation and evolution of what already makes Sterling Heights great—great civic character, multiculturalism, strong neighborhoods, and industrial heritage.
4. **A city center for all:** The North Van Dyke Avenue District Core becomes a central destination for the entire city and region, and a place to experience the great diversity of Sterling Heights.

## REDEVELOPMENT VISION PLAN

The successful evolution of North Van Dyke Avenue into a vibrant, mixed-use, and accessible destination requires a bold vision that the City and community of Sterling Heights can support. The placemaking concepts in this plan aim to suggest the kind of place that can take shape at this critical site if the principles of this plan are embraced by the community and facilitated by public officials and the private development community.

### RIGHT-OF-WAYS

In addition to local zoning regulations and traditional suburban development paradigms that have taken shape in Sterling Heights over the course of decades, much of the existing form of development has resulted from the nature of the roads that service the corridor. With fast, wide, and vehicle-prioritized roads, development has favored cars over people. The first essential component of transforming the corridor from its present makeup into something more in line with the community's vision is addressing the design and functionality of the right-of-ways. This plan establishes a new vision for the major streets serving the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor, to enhance the quality of the district experience for all users and create a unique place within Sterling Heights.

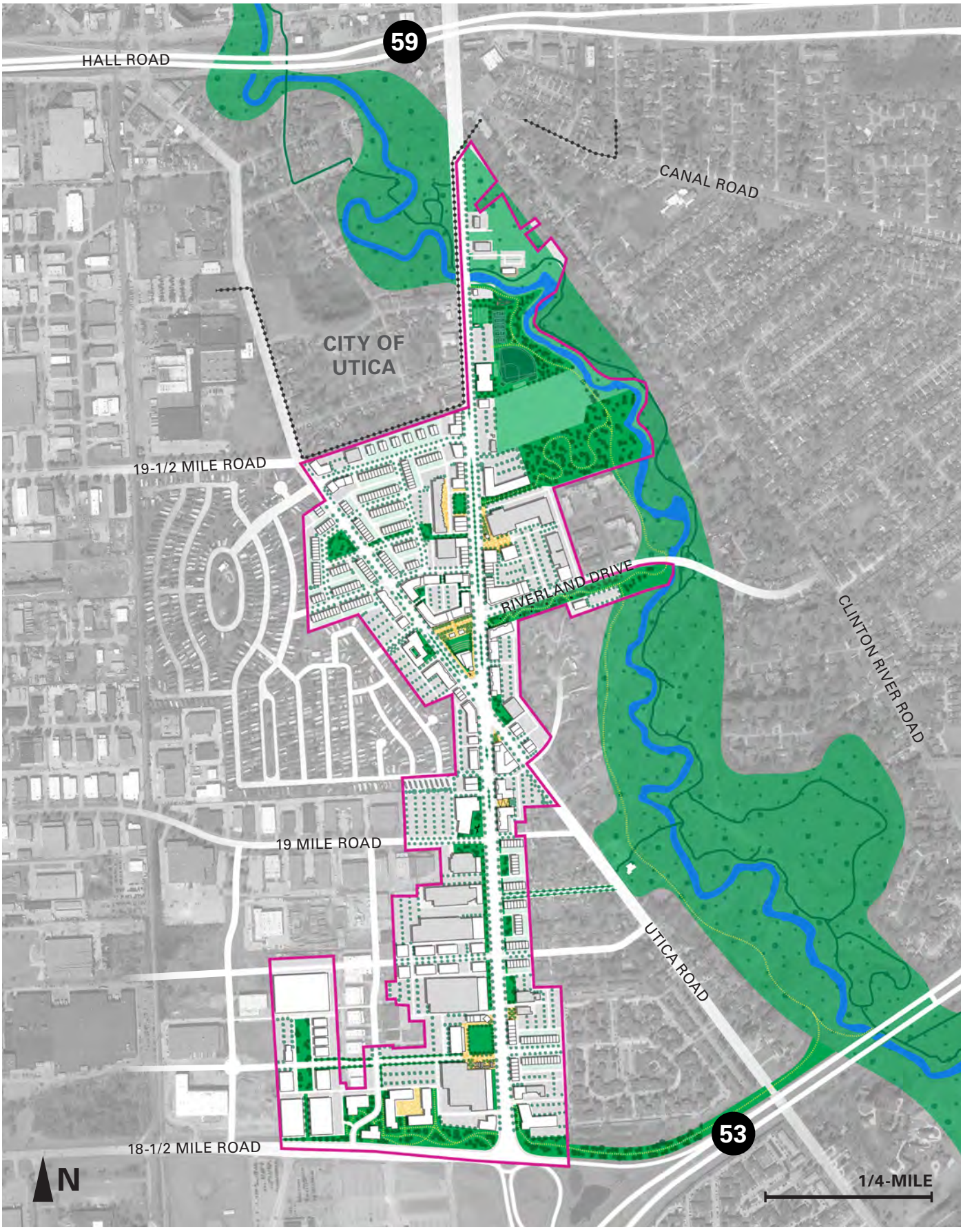
### DEVELOPMENT

While the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor is largely built out today, it is broadly underutilized from a development and land use perspective. With substantial setbacks from the street, low densities, and an orientation towards vehicular traffic, the corridor is not experienced as a cohesive place and does not inspire creative investments to improve the experience of development.

This master plan proposes a new mix of high-quality, dense, and interrelated uses that will draw in people and dollars while creating a regional destination for locals and visitors alike. New proposed development has been sited strategically, in response to community feedback, market realities, and best practices in planning and urban design.

### PUBLIC REALM

North Van Dyke Avenue today lacks a legible and usable public realm. With only one half-acre park and few meaningful connections to the Clinton River, its network of parks, and its trail system, there is little opportunity for gathering, play, recreation, or spilling outdoors. This plan establishes an over-arching framework for a robust and connected public realm and proposes new public spaces to facilitate community health and district activation.


HALL ROAD
59
CANAL ROAD
CITY OF UTICA
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
19 MILE ROAD
UTICA ROAD
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

## SHIFTING DEMAND FOR THE RIGHT-OF-WAY

While North Van Dyke Avenue today is dominated by vehicular traffic, those conditions result from a development paradigm and road condition that drives automobile trips. As part of this master plan, the planning team explored opportunities to resolve some of the traffic and safety issues occurring along Van Dyke Avenue to support potential future transformation in line with the master plan goals.

### A ROAD FOR CARS

North Van Dyke Avenue today is a vehicular road. While there are sidewalks in some areas, they form a disconnected network and are sometimes found in a state of disrepair. These issues, matched with high vehicular travel speeds (45 MPH), a lack of street furniture and trees, and development that is disconnected from sidewalks, create inhospitable conditions for pedestrians. Presently, there is no bike infrastructure on Van Dyke Avenue or within the master plan area.

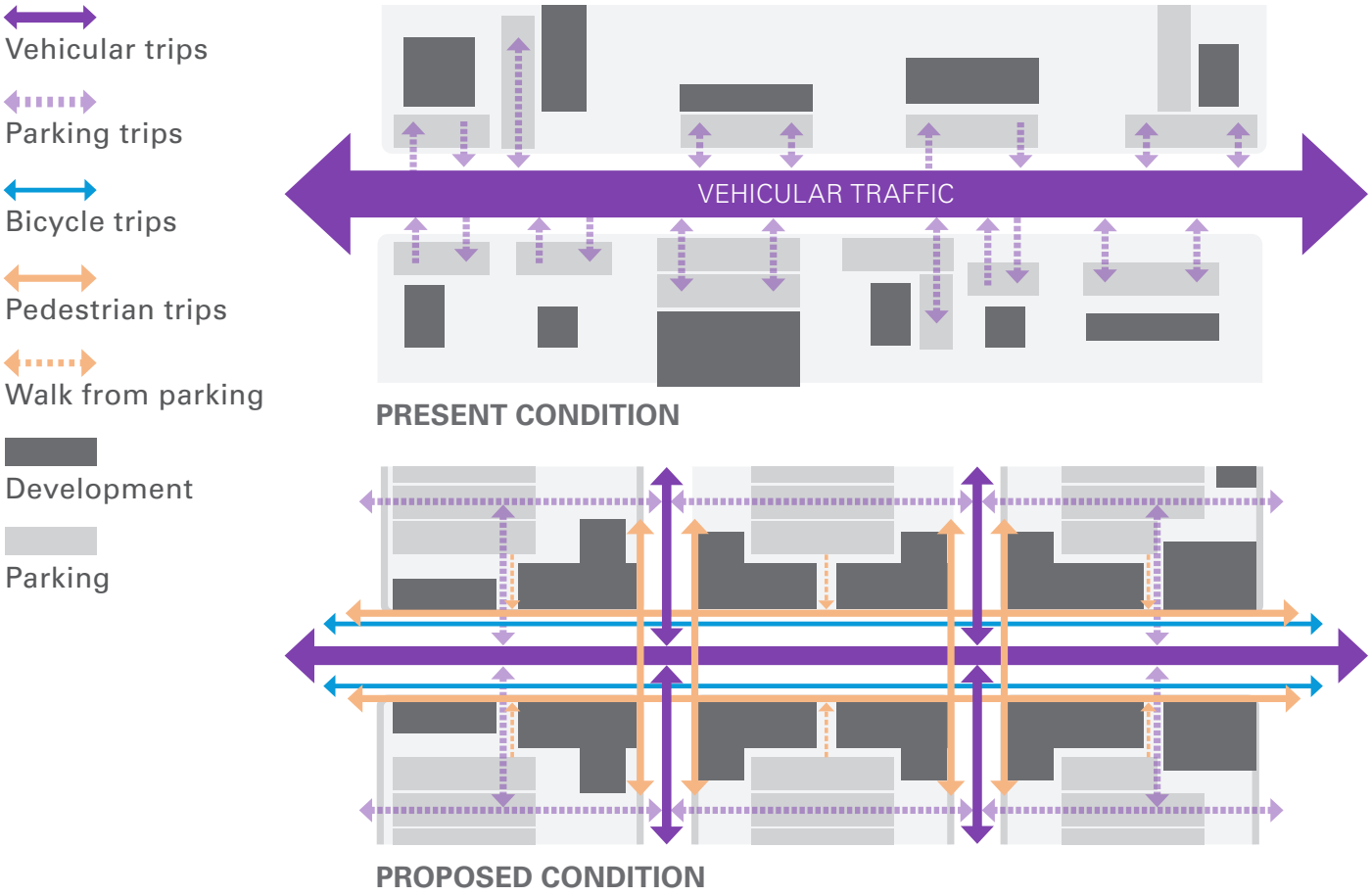
Given these realities and previous investment choices, Van Dyke Avenue is a high traffic road. With investment in comfortable pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, the Avenue can become a multimodal street and support the kind of development that is drawn to such an environment. As new means of access and circulation are introduced and new uses take shape, it is conceivable that a share of existing vehicular traffic would be supplanted by other means of mobility, reducing traffic overall and the need for some parking.

### PARKING AS A DRIVER OF DRIVING

When development in a place like North Van Dyke Avenue is scattered and separated, it becomes difficult for those visiting to avoid getting in the car to do more than one thing. Today, if a visitor wanted to buy a slice of pizza at a Van Dyke pizzeria and also go to a bank or convenience store, they would almost certainly drive between the two uses, even if they are only a short walk away. Parking lots in front of development primarily welcome cars. Because parking lots are associated with each respective business, have no connections between them, and are not oriented in such a way that encourages a “park once” mentality, it becomes difficult to leave the car behind. This problem is compounded by the corridor’s lack of connective pedestrian infrastructure.

### DEVELOPMENT + LAND USES AS A DRIVER OF DRIVING

Even residents who live only blocks away often have no choice but to drive to Van Dyke Avenue to run errands, dine out, or experience the Clinton River trail. Redeveloping the corridor in a mixed-use fashion enables a cohesive, district-wide




parking strategy. Residents and workers will have the ability to park once upon arrival and leave their vehicles where they are as they explore the multitude of uses within the district. A mixed-use district can also benefit from the different peak hours that drive parking needs at different times of the day. A typical residential parking space is often empty during the day while people are at work. On the flip side, office and other employment uses require daytime parking. In a mixed-use district, some spaces can meet both needs at different times of the day.

## A MULTIMODAL PARADIGM

The diagram above shows the present condition of Van Dyke Avenue as compared to the recommended condition. In the present condition, cars are the only means of access to each development and each has its own surface parking lot with access from Van Dyke Avenue. Without many intersecting streets to provide access to these lots, this configuration creates high levels of traffic on Van Dyke and the need for more travel lanes.

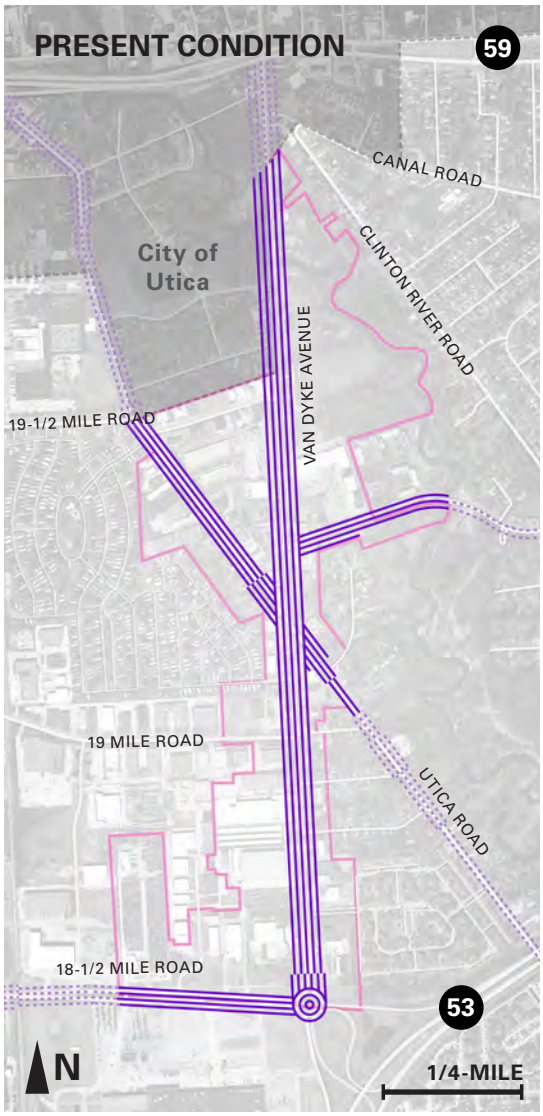
In the proposed condition, new pedestrian and bike infrastructure creates opportunities for more means of accessing and traversing the district. The proposed condition also introduces new vehicular streets, creating more walkable blocks and more opportunities for vehicles to take alternate routes, leading to a dispersion of traffic and lower traffic volumes on Van Dyke Avenue. Secondary streets that intersect with the primary street also allow for fewer curb cuts on the primary street as drives accessing parking can be relocated to the secondary streets.

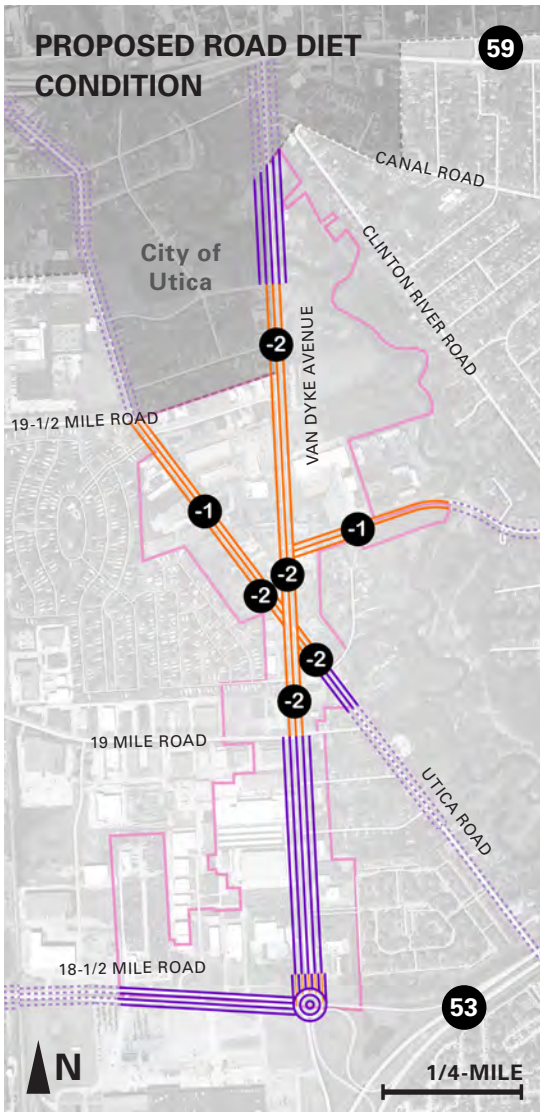
Vehicular lanes

Vehicular lanes remaining after proposed reductions

-#

Proposed lane reductions

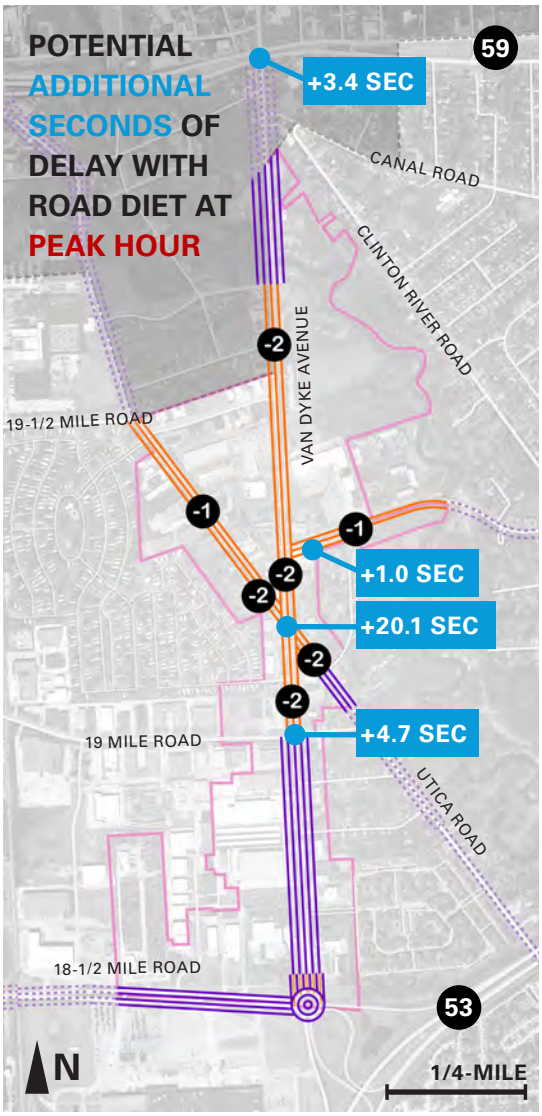


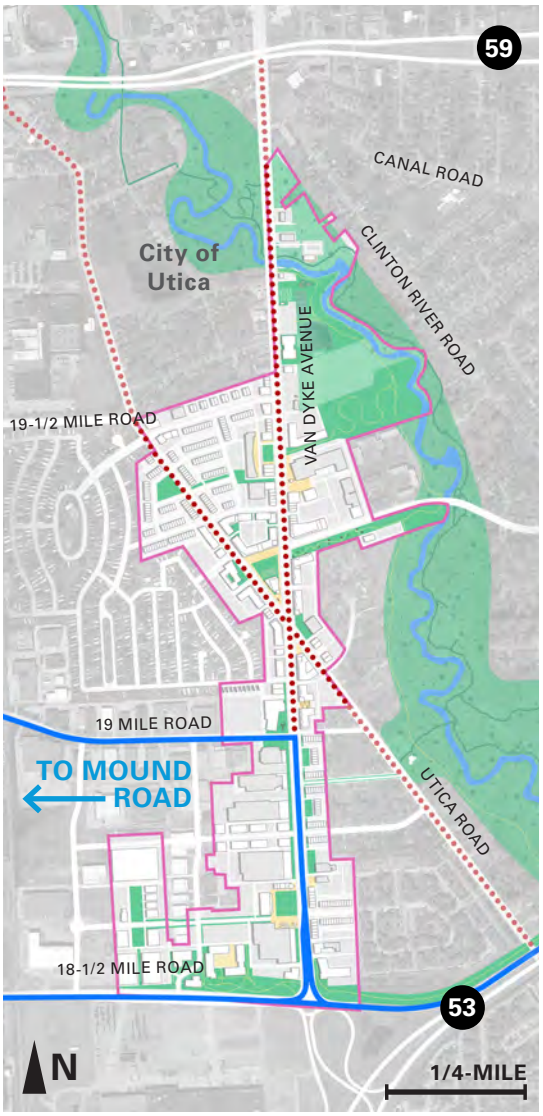




## ROAD DIET

North Van Dyke Avenue today is well-suited for its purpose—to get cars from one point to another. To transform Van Dyke into a high quality place, in line with the community's stated objectives, the right-of-way will need to adapt to accommodate more pedestrians, bikes, and other emerging means of mobility. After assessing the present traffic volumes and considering the character of the redevelopment being planned, the planning team recommends a road diet on the segment of Van Dyke Avenue from 19 Mile Road to the Clinton River bridge (from four travel lanes to two), as well as on the segments of Utica Road (from four to two) and Riverland Drive (from three to two) located within the master plan area.

A road diet on these segments will create a multitude of benefits for the future district, including slower travel speeds (recommended to decrease from 45 MPH to 25 MPH), widened sidewalks




Truck route

Limited truck access

This master plan envisions a future North Van Dyke Avenue that is fundamentally different in character from the one that exists today. To achieve this vision, all partners and stakeholder must adopt an approach to prioritizes the multimodal experience of the street, instead of one that prioritizes only the efficient movement of vehicular traffic.

with street trees and space for outdoor dining associated with restaurants, bike lanes, and newly activated storefronts and other developments that thrive in this kind of environment. While the diet may result in minimally increased wait times at busy intersections during peak hours (as much as 20 seconds, or one light cycle), it is conceivable that the confluence of factors at play in the district's redevelopment can mitigate any increased traffic times.

## RE-ROUTING TRUCK TRAFFIC

While Van Dyke Avenue today serves as a primary vehicular route through the district, future redevelopment aims to make it a destination. Given the area's proximity to Sterling Heights' industrial development to the south and west, truck traffic levels are noticeable. In order to reduce truck traffic within the road diet limits, it is recommended that the City explore rerouting through truck service off Van Dyke at the intersection with 19 Mile Road and to Mound Road—the City's main industrial traffic roadway.

Today, unused development setbacks along North Van Dyke Avenue constitute nearly 17 acres of the corridor's land area. A more urban development configuration that brings buildings to the edge of the right-of-way creates a better pedestrian environment, enables greater density, and reclaims this unused acreage for economically productive uses.

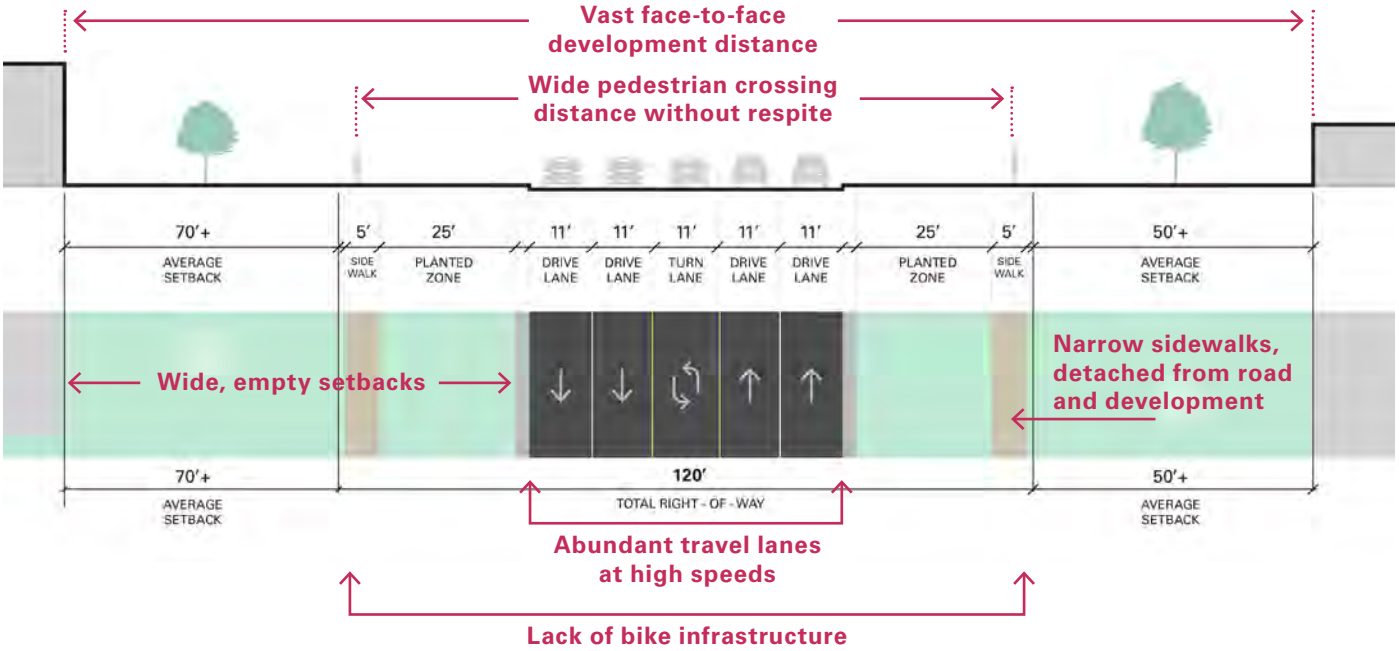
## UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY OF VAN DYKE

As mentioned in the previous section, the Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way presents many challenges to the quality of place, redevelopment potential, and safety of the district. With its five vehicular lanes, lack of bicycle infrastructure, narrow and incomplete sidewalks, and large development setbacks, the existing right-of-way configuration is inconducive to the kind of urban, walkable, and experiential district the City and community hope to see take shape here.

### EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

As part of the conceptual redevelopment explorations, the planning team created two possible alternative approaches to the reconfiguration of the segment of Van Dyke Avenue north of 19 Mile Road and south of the Clinton River bridge. Both alternatives include a road diet, which aims to transform Van Dyke Avenue from a high-speed vehicular throughway into a multimodal, safe, urban street and provide street parking to support future retail development. Alternative 1 envisions wide sidewalks, dedicated bike lanes on both sides of the street, and ten foot amenity zones for street trees, plantings and street furniture. Alternative 2 proposes narrower (but still comfortable) sidewalks and a more concentrated landscape approach with a 40-foot wide linear park along the eastern edge of Van Dyke Avenue, including a multi-use path for cyclists and pedestrians.

### VAN DYKE AVENUE - EXISTING CONFIGURATION

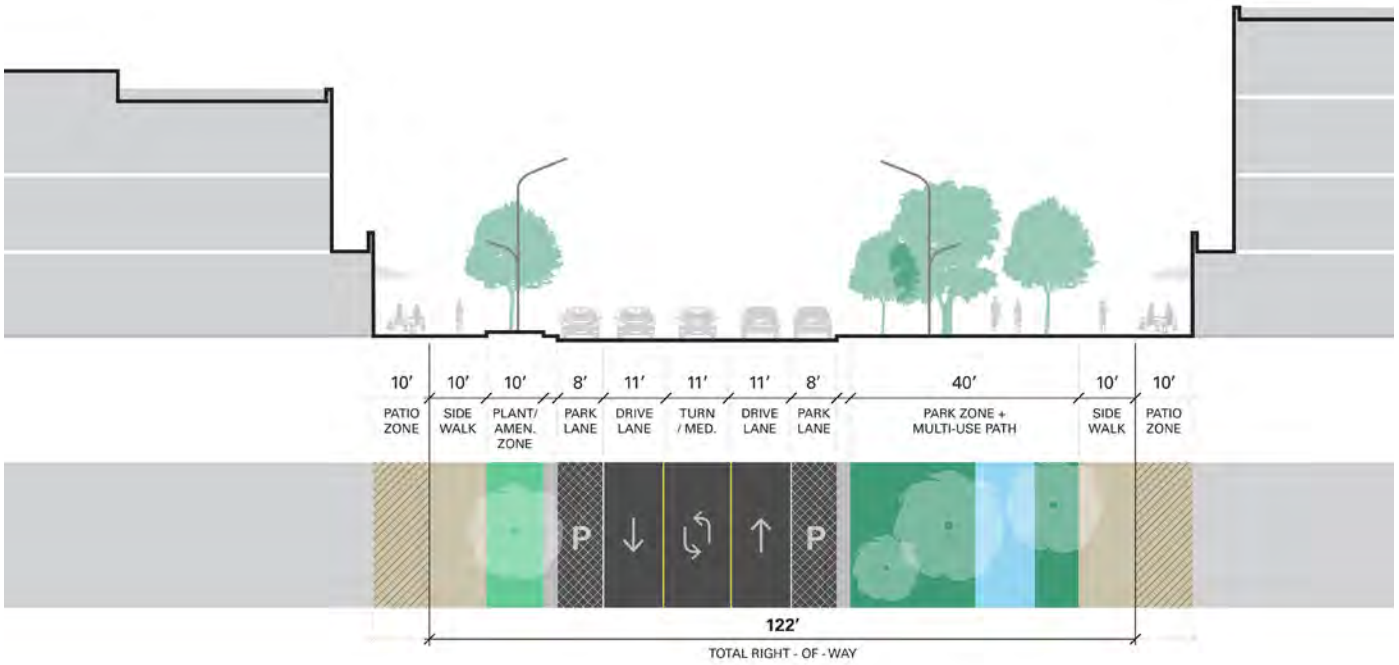


## VAN DYKE AVENUE - ALTERNATIVE 1


EXISTING ROW SECTION FOR REFERENCE




## VAN DYKE AVENUE - ALTERNATIVE 2

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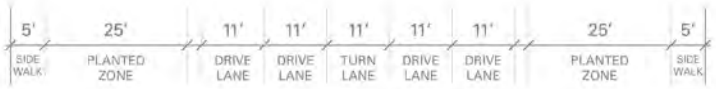
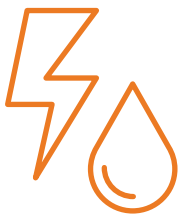
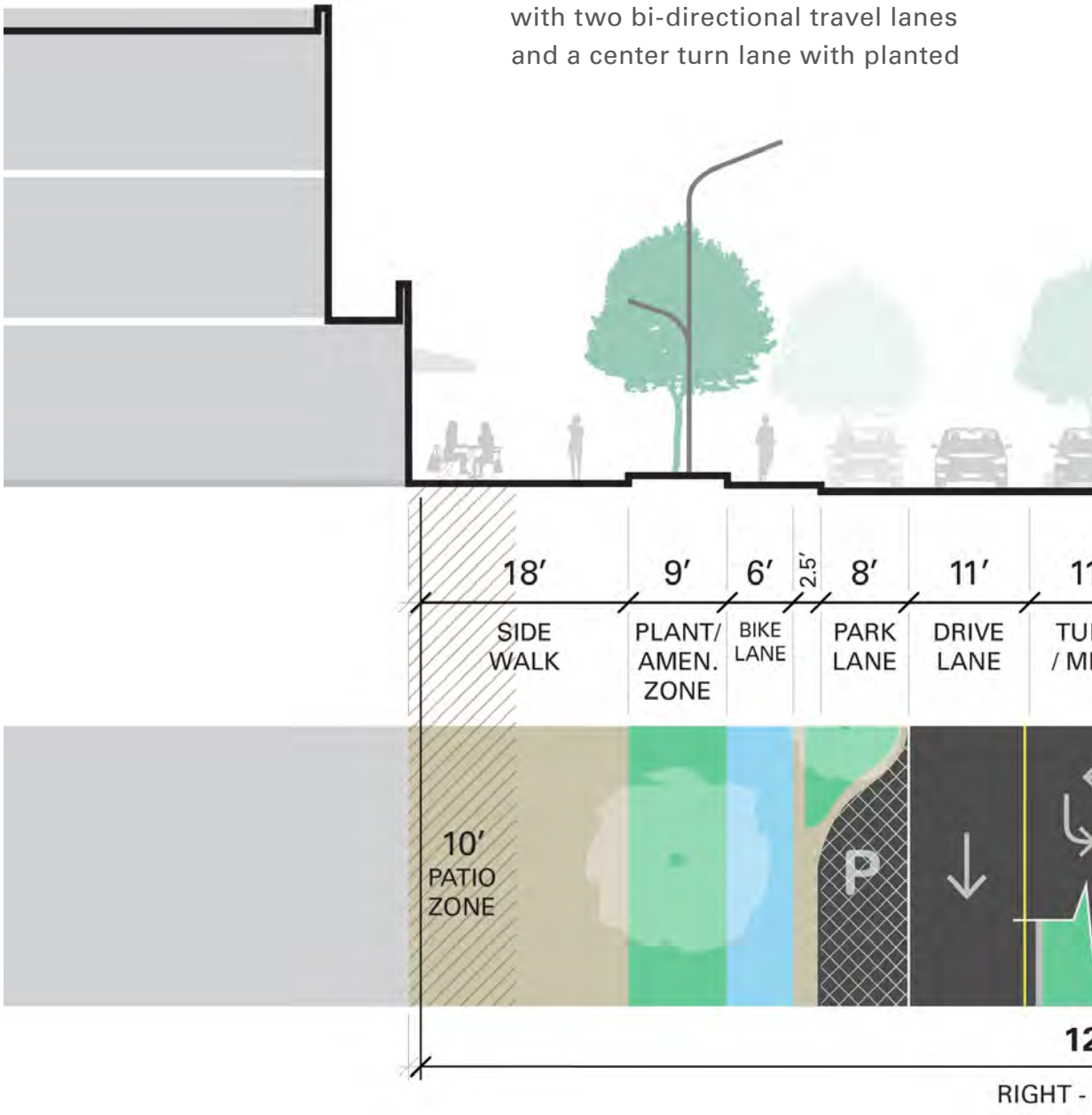


## RECOMMENDED VAN DYKE AVENUE SECTION (NORTH OF 19 MILE ROAD)

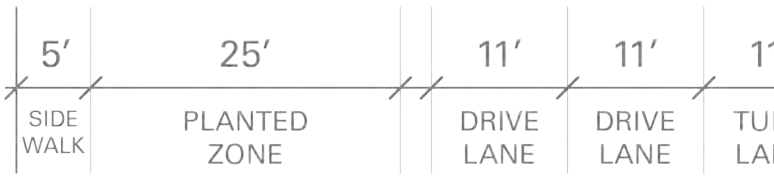
The proposed reconfiguration of Van Dyke (north of 19 Mile Road and south of the Clinton River bridge) consists of a dieted road section with two bi-directional travel lanes and a center turn lane with planted



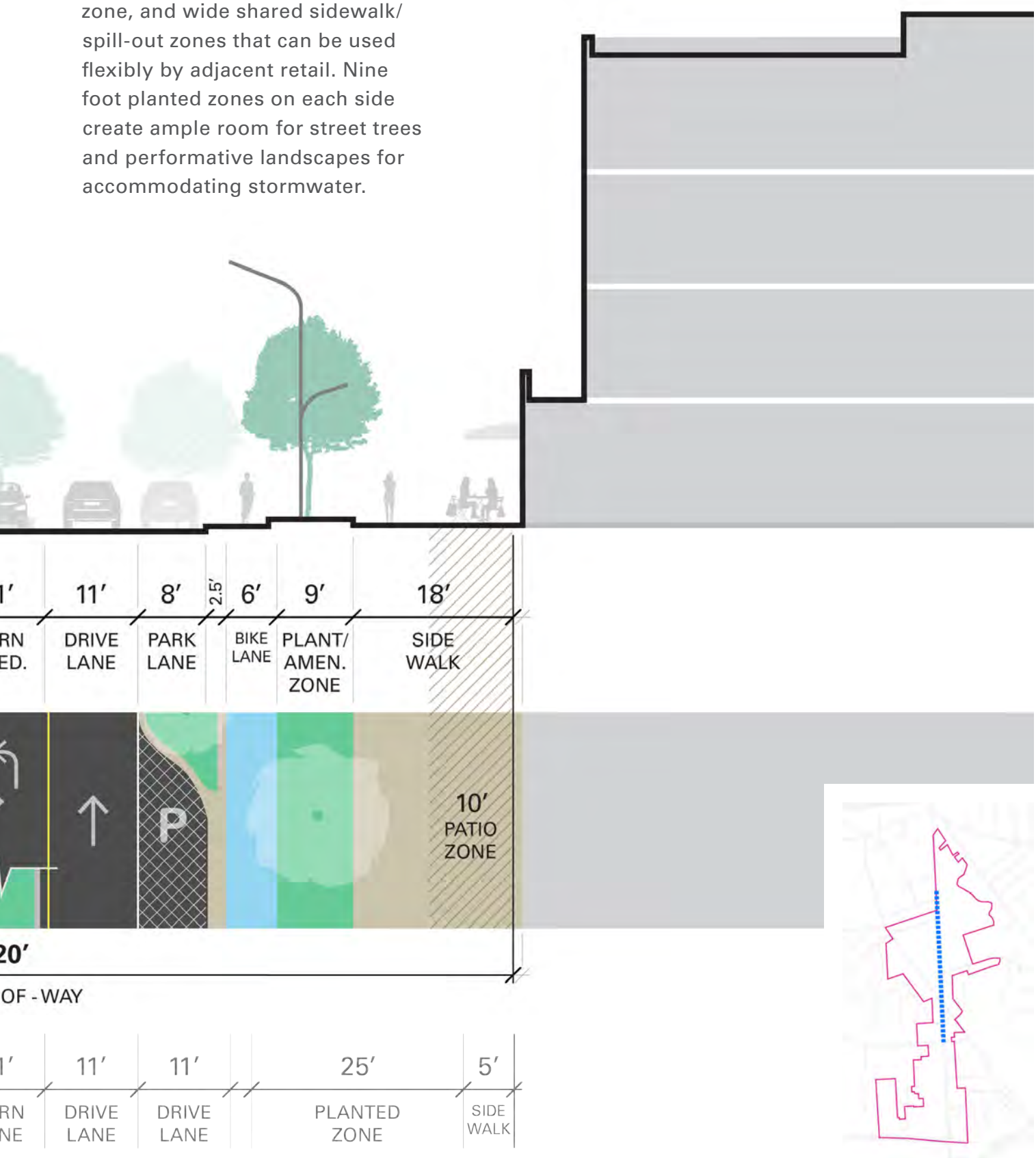
A right-of-way reconstruction of this magnitude offers the City an opportunity to plan for public utility infrastructure in a smart and resilient way. While the exact locations and utility strategy employed will be developed during a detailed right-of-way design phase, all future water, power, gas, and telecommunications utility lines along North Van Dyke Avenue corridor streets should be buried within or directly adjacent to the public right-of-way.




## EXISTING ROW SECTION FOR REFERENCE



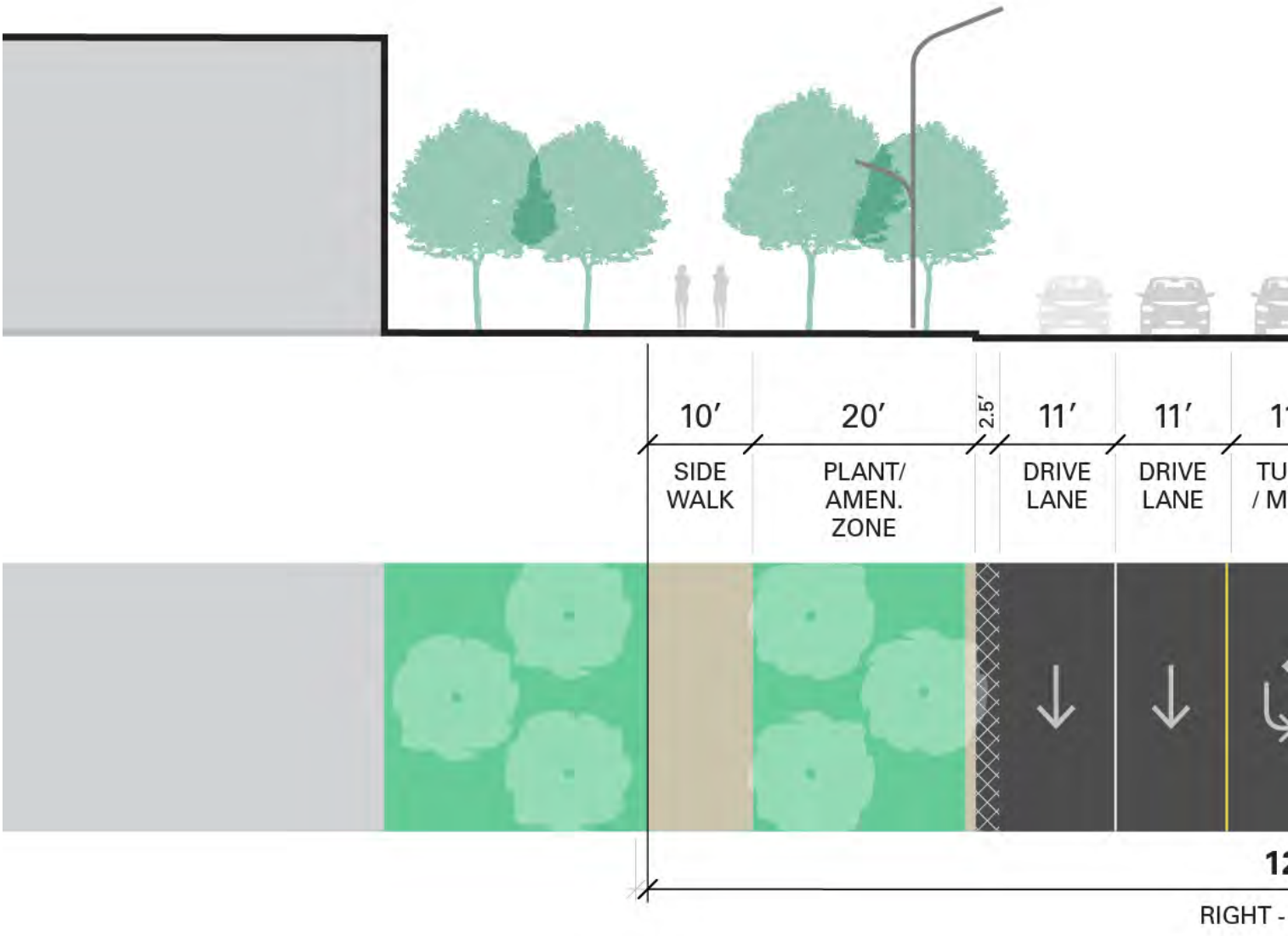
medians, dedicated bike lanes with a 2.5′ wide step-out/protection zone, and wide shared sidewalk/ spill-out zones that can be used flexibly by adjacent retail. Nine foot planted zones on each side create ample room for street trees and performative landscapes for accommodating stormwater.



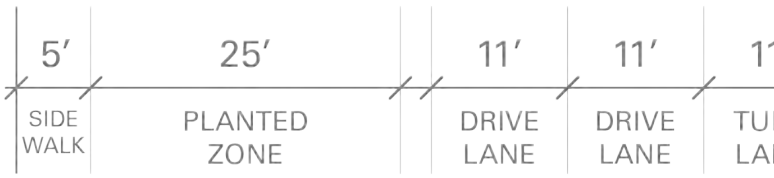
## RECOMMENDED VAN DYKE AVENUE SECTION (SOUTH OF 19 MILE ROAD)

While the most transformative reconfiguration of Van Dyke Avenue is proposed for those segments north of 19 Mile Road, there are ample enhancements that can be made to the southernmost segments of the corridor as well, to enhance the experience of the street and provide connectivity for all means of mobility.

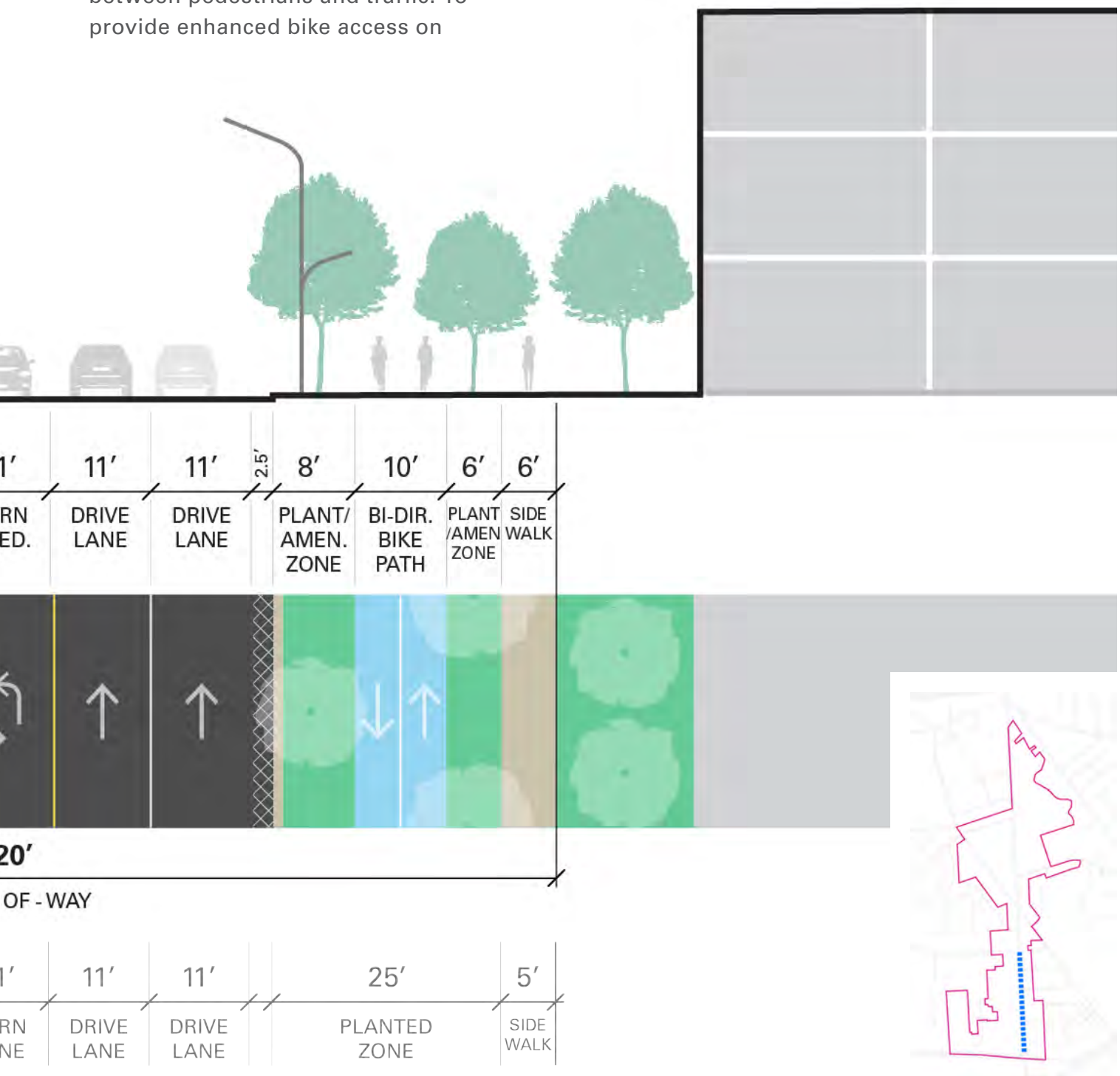
This section envisions maintaining existing travel lanes along Van Dyke Avenue from the roundabout




**EXISTING ROW SECTION FOR REFERENCE**



at 18-1/2 Mile Road to 19 Mile Road. Outside the travel lanes, it is proposed that sidewalks be expanded to provide more comfortable pedestrian zones and trees be added to planting zones to provide shade and screening between pedestrians and traffic. To provide enhanced bike access on Van Dyke Avenue and connections to the Clinton River trail system, a bi-directional bike path is proposed along the eastern side of the right-of-way. Reconfiguration of the right-of-way in line with these proposals will require substantial partnership with Macomb County.

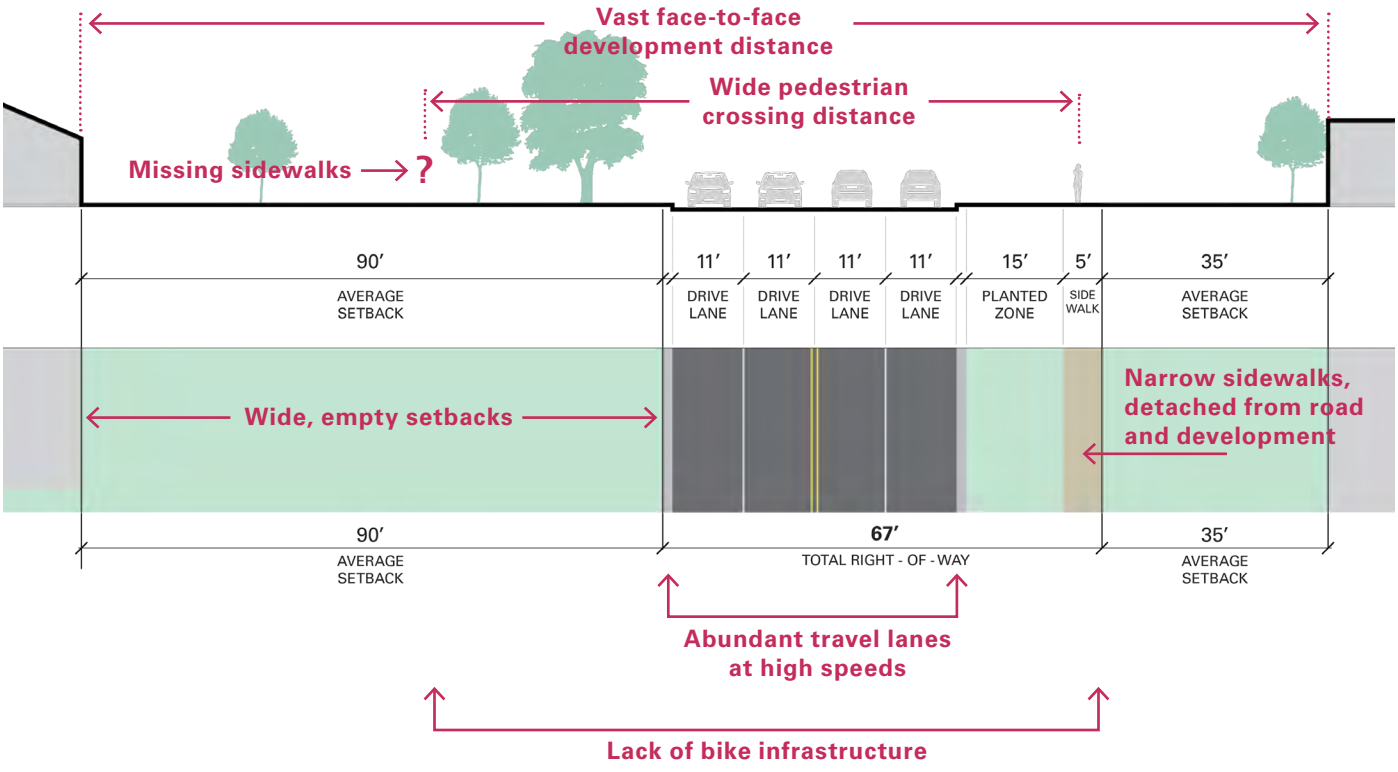


Today, unused development setbacks along Utica Road constitute about six acres of the corridor's land area. A more urban development configuration that brings buildings to the edge of the right-of-way creates a better pedestrian environment, enables greater density, and reclaims this unused acreage for economically productive uses.

## UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY OF UTICA ROAD

In its present configuration, Utica Road (within the master plan area) struggles with many of the same challenges as Van Dyke Avenue. While the vehicular lane area is slightly narrower (four lanes vs. five), the varying right-of way width creates inconsistency, there are sections of incomplete pedestrian sidewalks, there is no bike infrastructure, and massive setbacks create underutilized space between the street and development. Given Utica Road's prominence within the corridor, its major intersection with Van Dyke, and the connectivity it provides to downtown Utica and the Sterling Heights Municipal Center, there is much potential to transform Utica Road into a primary multimodal street within the district.

### UTICA ROAD - EXISTING CONFIGURATION



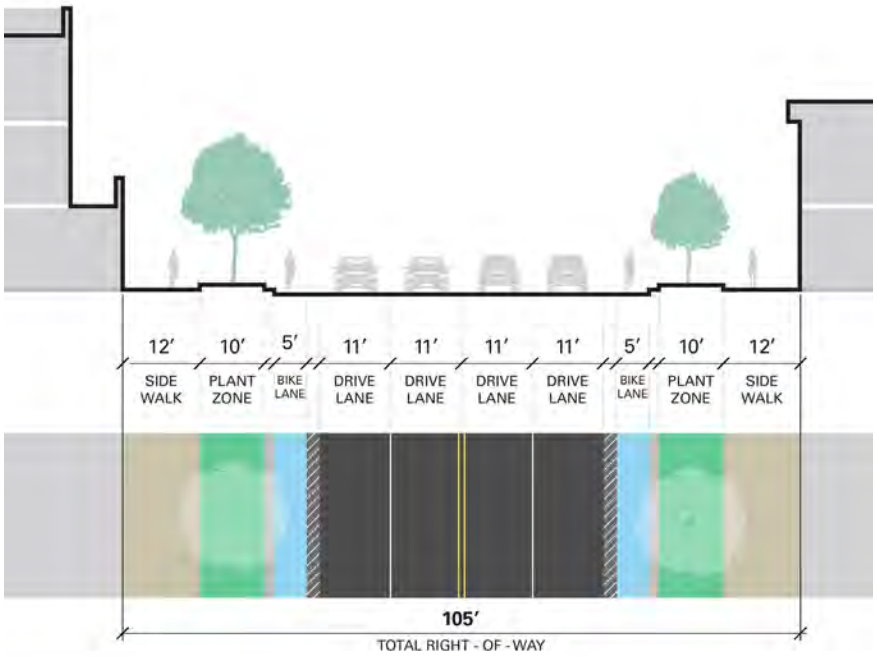
## EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

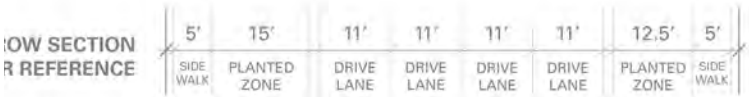
As part of the conceptual redevelopment explorations, the planning team created two possible alternative reconfiguration approaches for the Utica Road right-of-way.

Alternative 1 envisions maintaining the existing travel lane configuration while better utilizing the space flanking the travel lanes to better support pedestrians, bicycles, spill-out space, and vegetation. This alternative embraces a wider right-of-way, as can be found along some segments of Utica Road.

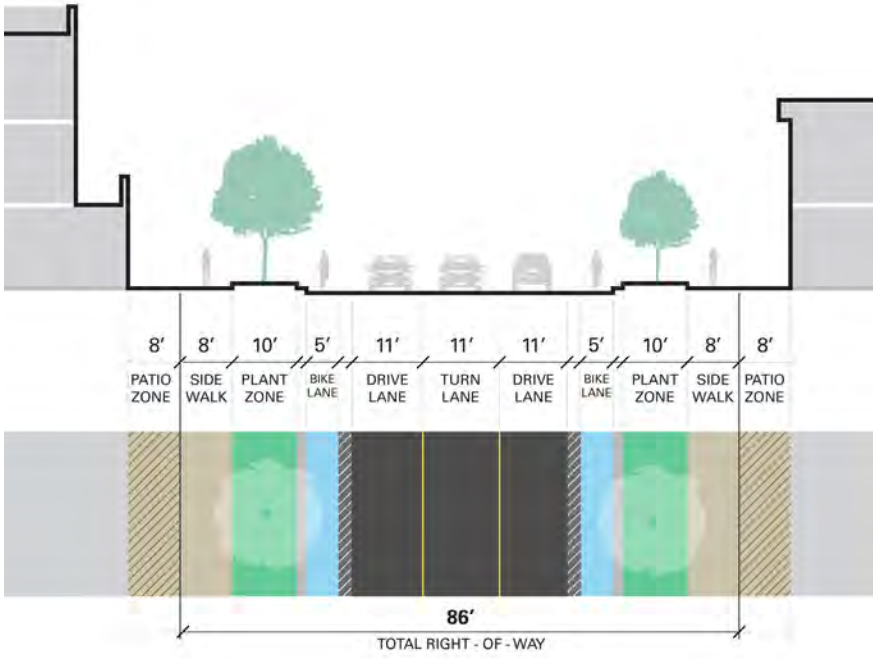
Alternative 2 reduces the number of lanes to two bi-directional travel lanes and a center turn lane. This option aims to fit all desired street components within the narrowest section of Utica Road to enable strong continuity and connectivity across different segments.

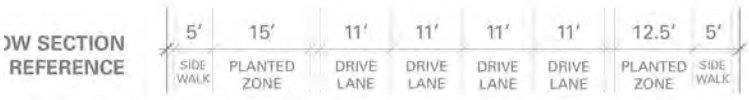
### UTICA ROAD - ALTERNATIVE 1

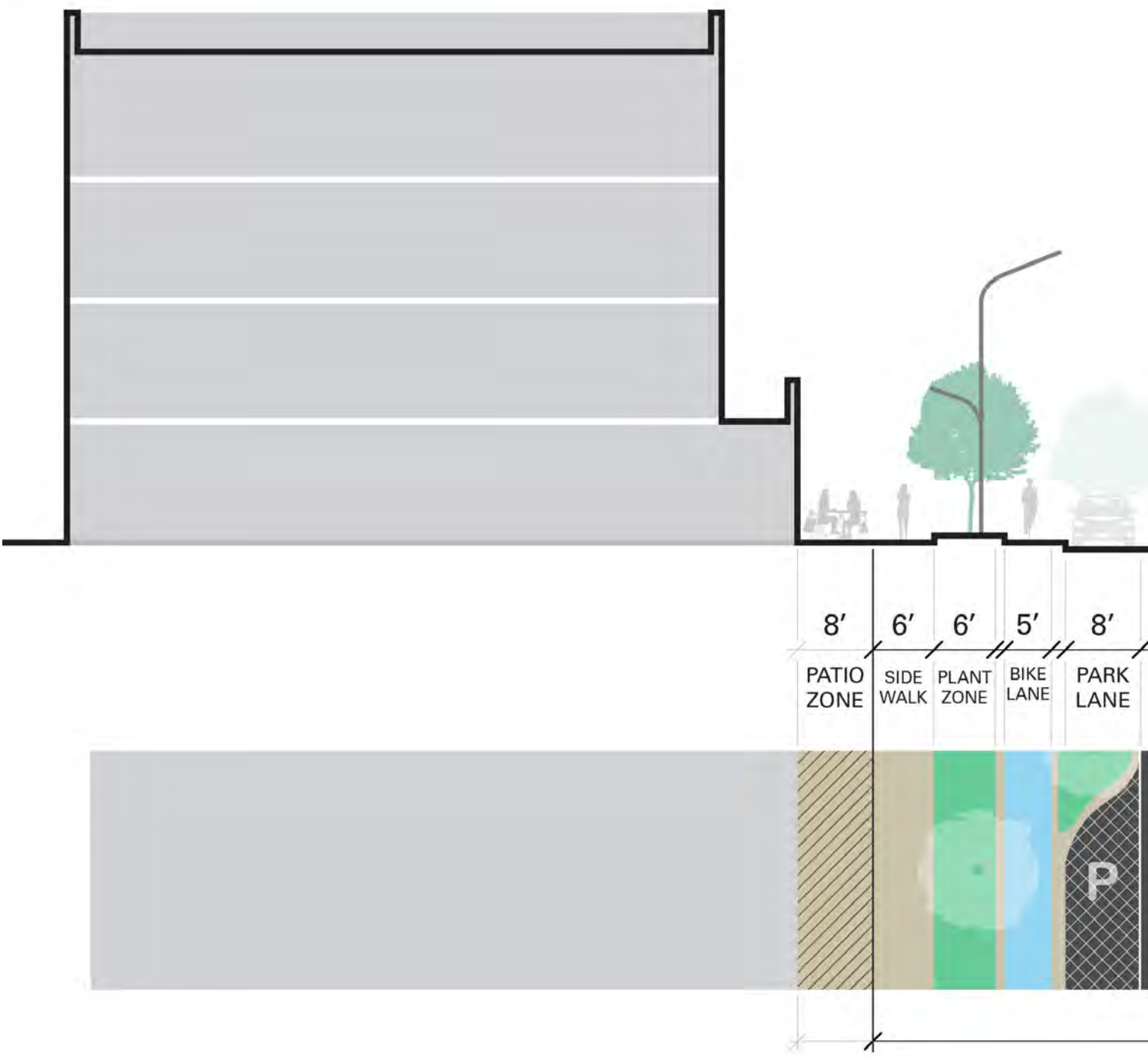



### UTICA ROAD - ALTERNATIVE 2



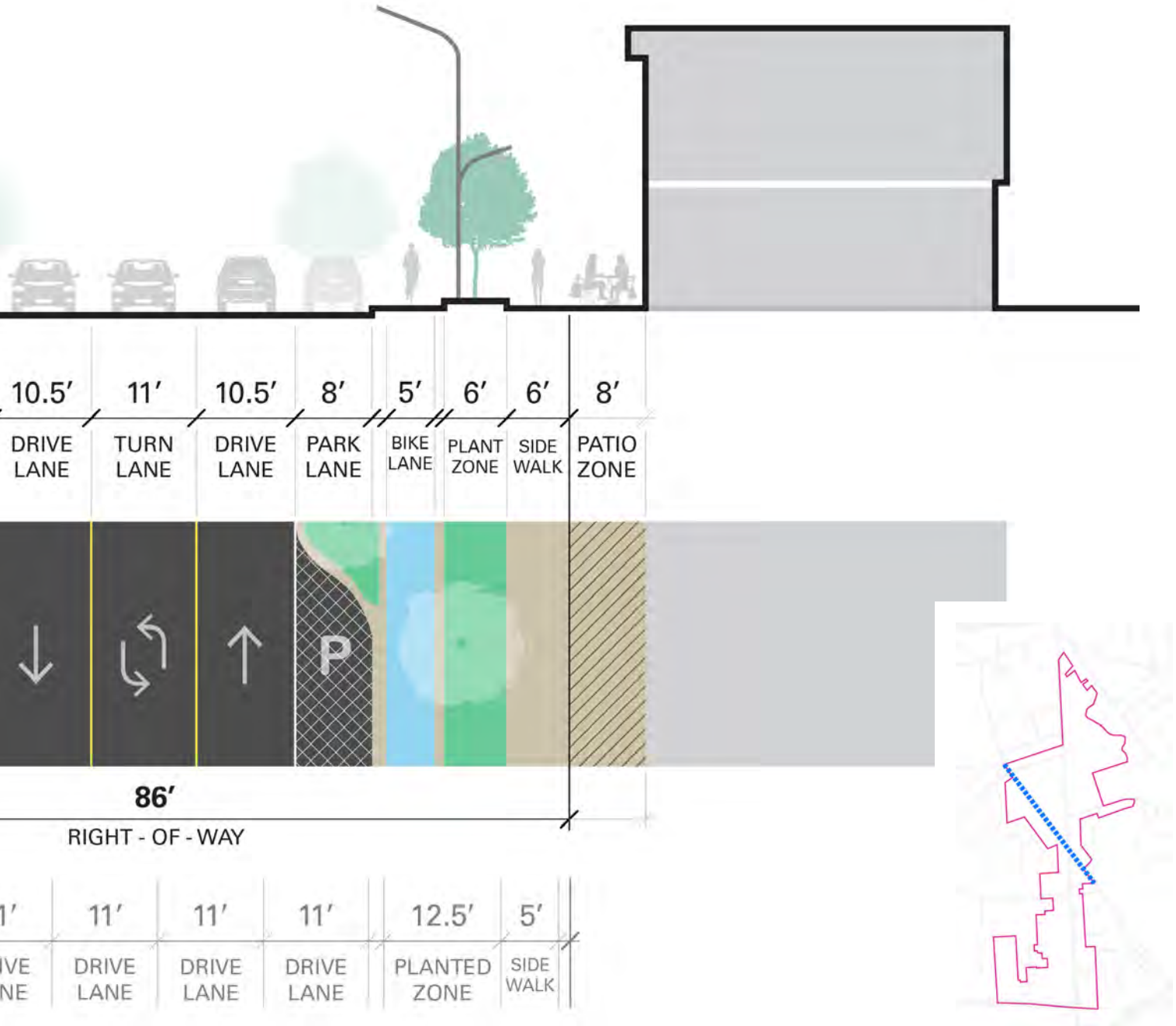






## EXISTING ROW SECTION FOR REFERENCE

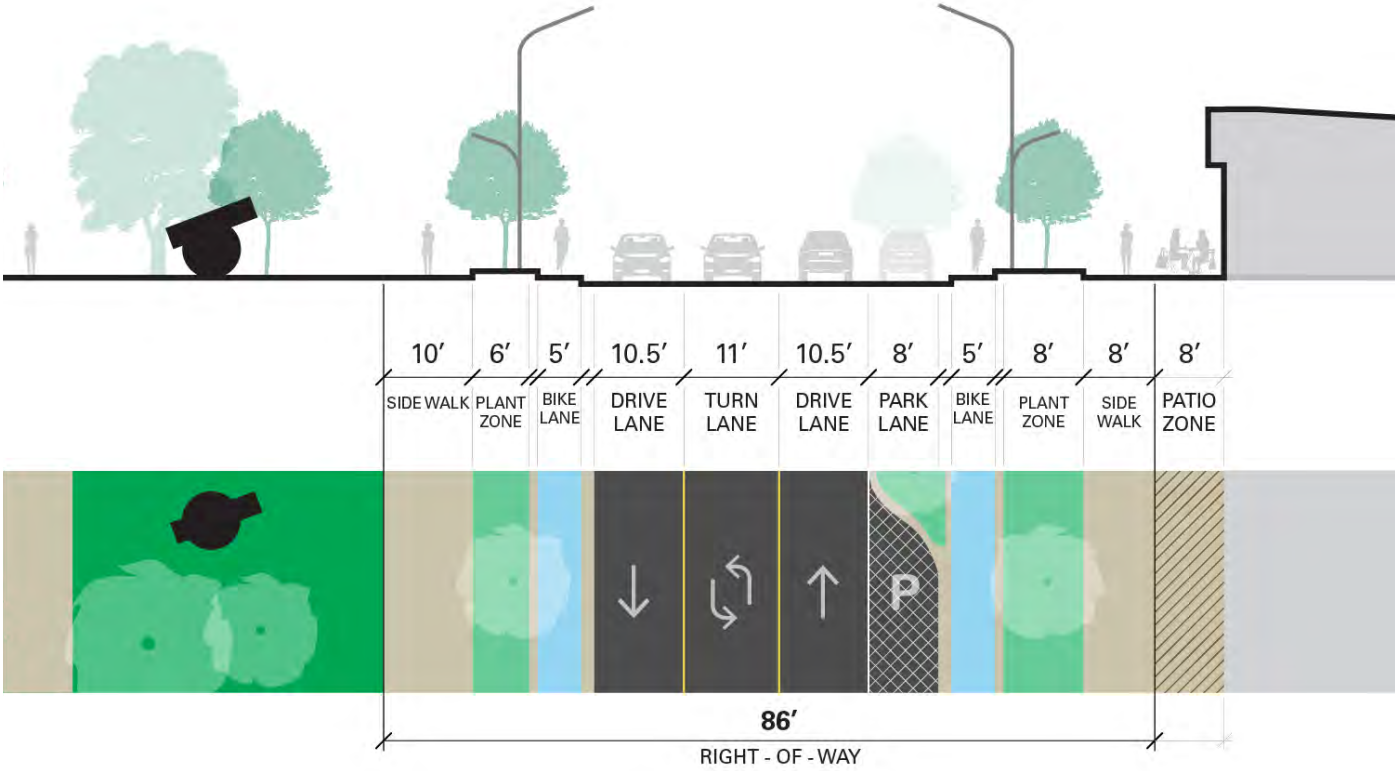
## RECOMMENDED UTICA ROAD SECTION

In the future North Van Dyke Avenue urban district, Utica Road is a critical connector and place in its own right. While the right-of-way width varies throughout the district, this section shows the proposed configuration for the narrowest (86-foot) area. The street supports two travel lanes and a centered turn lane, street parking on both sides, protected bike lanes, six-foot planted zones on both sides, and hybrid sidewalk/patio zones adjacent to retail development on both sides of the street.



## RECOMMENDED RIVERLAND DRIVE SECTION

Riverland Drive is a unique connector within the future North Van Dyke Avenue district—bringing people from the District Core to the Clinton River, greenway, and trails and vice versa. The Drive serves simultaneously as street, park, retail frontage, civic space, and gateway to the district. A proposed re-configuration of this street provides spacious sidewalks, street trees, street parking adjacent to enhanced retail development north of the drive, dedicated bike lanes to connect seamlessly into the Clinton River trail system, and a large linear park to the south, establishing a major landscape connection between the Clinton River and the District Core. As the primary pedestrian and bike connection between these places, there is substantial opportunity to create a unique amenity along this landscape. Creative activation featuring a linear sculptural garden or "art walk" and spill-out space for adjacent civic and retail uses can bridge the greenway and core.

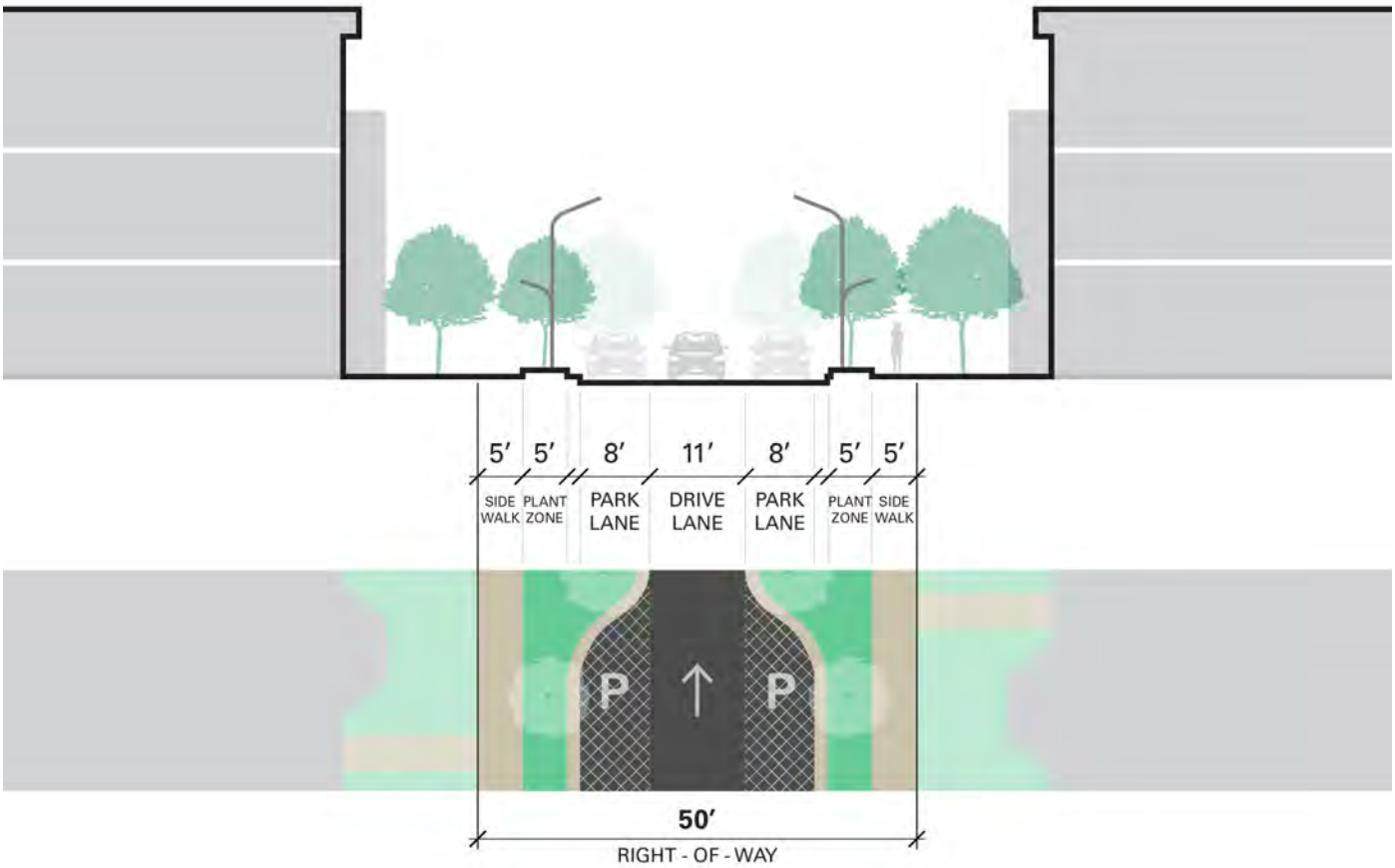



**EXISTING ROW SECTION FOR REFERENCE**

## RECOMMENDED TYPICAL NEIGHBORHOOD STREET SECTION

Neighborhood streets are designed to serve primarily local traffic within the district. With a narrow right-of-way, they create intimate, pedestrian-scaled corridors to serve neighborhoods and common-use developments. They are not designed to accommodate through-traffic. In residential neighborhoods, these streets can be configured to support one-way vehicular traffic with sidewalks, landscape zones, and street parking on both sides. In non-residential areas, street parking can be sacrificed for two-way traffic and wider sidewalks.

Planning and design for these tertiary local roads will need to be coordinated with the City's Engineering and Fire Departments to ensure adequate sizing for emergency access.



## VISION PLAN CIRCULATION NETWORK

Successfully stitching a district like North Van Dyke Avenue into the larger community requires careful consideration of connection points. While the present corridor is well-connected for vehicular traffic entering or exiting the site from the north and south, the present configuration facilitates through traffic and only serves drivers. A well-connected district that equally prioritizes multiple modes of transportation, including driving, cycling, and walking can reduce the overall vehicular traffic volumes throughout the site while expanding access to a broader array of community members.

This master plan vision imagines a more robustly connected district with primary, secondary, and tertiary streets—all designed to comfortably accommodate multiple means of mobility (including emerging modes of micro-mobility), create inclusive streets with consistent and safe Americans with Disability Act (ADA) routes, and to establish new connections to neighbors.

### PRIMARY STREETS

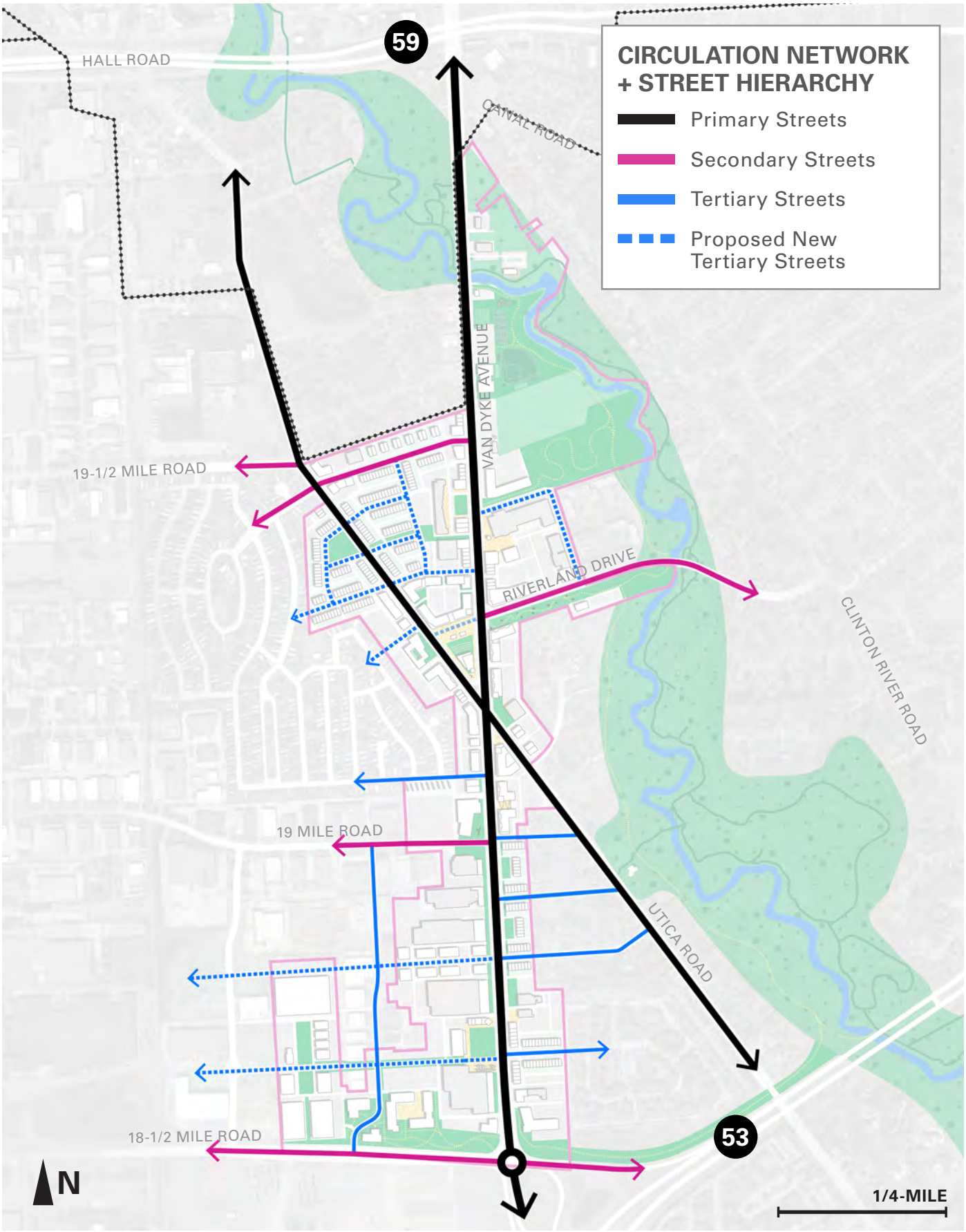
The two primary streets of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road establish the overall structure of the district. These two major streets provide primary access for most vehicles and on-street bikes entering the site. These streets have the widest right-of-ways within the district and have been designed with the most dedicated infrastructure to support walking, cycling, driving, and street parking. These streets also serve as the district's primary vehicular connections to the larger region via M-53 and M-59 at either end of the district.

### SECONDARY STREETS

The secondary streets serving the district also serve as major connectors to, from, and through the district, but are smaller in scale and more locally-focused. Like primary streets, secondary streets include space for cars, bikes, and people. Though Riverland Drive is the only secondary street with dedicated bike lanes (offering connections to the Clinton River trails), each of these streets is designed to be shared to provide enhanced access throughout the district and to existing adjacent neighborhoods.

### TERTIARY STREETS

These smaller, local streets create enhanced access from adjacent neighborhoods and industrial areas while creating more walkable block dimensions throughout the district. These smaller streets are envisioned with a tighter right-of-way to accommodate slow traffic. In the residential neighborhoods, these streets can be designed to accommodate one-way travel and street parking to discourage through-traffic while creating a safe pedestrian experience.

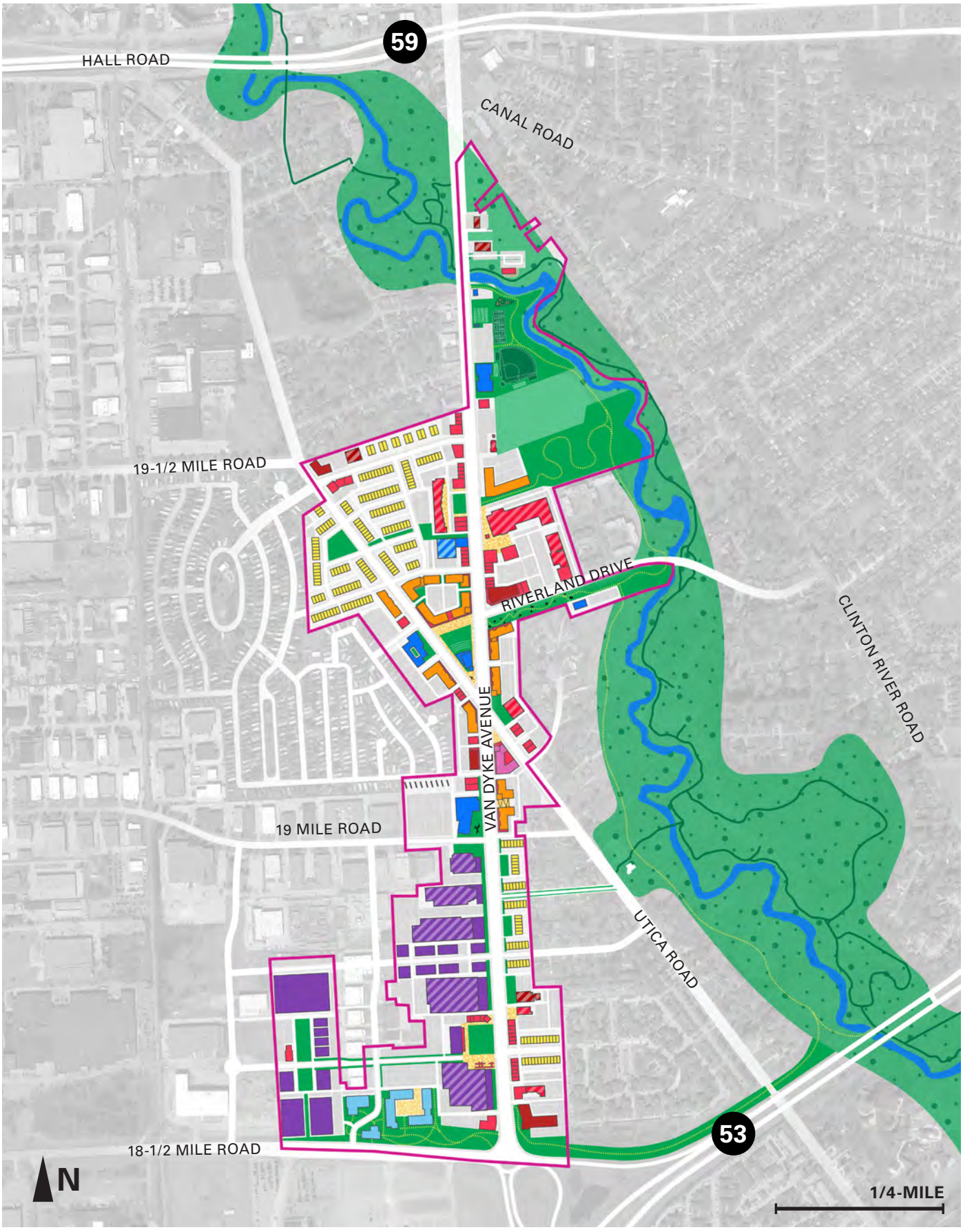

CIRCULATION NETWORK
+ STREET HIERARCHY
Primary Streets
Secondary Streets
Tertiary Streets
Proposed New
Tertiary Streets
HALL ROAD
59
CANAL ROAD
VAN DYKE AVENUE
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
19 MILE ROAD
UTICA ROAD
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
53
N
1/4-MILE

## VISION PLAN LAND USES

Building on the City's Master Land Use Plan, market conditions, and the community's preferences for the future of the district, this plan imagines North Van Dyke Avenue as a robust mixed-use place. Housing in the form of mid-density products is envisioned for the District Core and adjacent to existing residential development, while retail, office, and industrial uses are proposed along the 1.5-mile Van Dyke Avenue. Civic and institutional uses, along with new parks and plazas, are proposed for the future of the corridor as destinations, public resources, and places for community gathering within the district.

**Includes remaining development + proposed redevelopment*

| Proposed Use | *Approx. Proposed GSF (Full Build-out) | Assumed Densities | Proposed Height | Proposed Setback |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Multifamily (or Hotel)** *Apartment buildings, condominiums, artists' housing, affordable housing, mixed-use development (with ground floor retail), hotel* | 770,000 SF (515 units) *(All development calculated as MF; hotel can sub in at any site)* | **Medium-High Density** Most multifamily (MF) development is proposed with ground floor retail. MF development is proposed at a densities of 24-30 DUs/acre. | 4 - 5 stories | 0 - 10 FT |
| **Townhouse/TND** *Attached townhouses, detached townhouses, duplexes, traditional neighborhood development* | 735,000 SF (245 units) | **Medium-Low Density** Development of this type is high-density single family product such as townhomes or duplexes. Densities range from 8-10 DUs/acre. | 3 stories | 15 FT |
| **Retail/Commercial** *Single-story retail, ground floor retail, standalone destination retail, food + beverage establishments* | 635,000 SF* | Unless part of a mixed-use development, all retail is projected to take the form of single-story, medium density commercial development at 0.3-0.5 FAR. This density accommodates surface parking. | 1 story (incl. 1 story of ground floor retail in mixed-use) | 0 - 10 FT |
| **Office** *Small-scale office, medium density mixed-use office, lab space (biotechnology, research and development)* | 210,000 SF | Density varies depending on configuration. Mixed-use office development is assumed at three stories of office above one story of ground floor retail | 1 - 4 stories | 0 - 10 FT |
| **Civic** *Standalone development* | 185,000 SF | Primarily single and two-story development. | VARIES | VARIES |
| **Institutional** *Standalone/campus development* | 220,000 SF | Academic and institutional buildings at two to three stories each. | VARIES | VARIES |
| **Industrial/Manufacturing** *Standalone/campus development* | 715,000 SF* | Large-footprint single-story development. | VARIES | 15 - 25 FT |
| **Total Proposed Dev. SF** | **3,470,000 SF** | | | |


HALL ROAD
59
CANAL ROAD
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
VAN DYKE AVENUE
19 MILE ROAD
UTICA ROAD
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

## VAN DYKE AVENUE SUB-AREAS

At the outset of this planning initiative, the planning team explored several regional commercial clusters, "Main Streets", and mixed-use districts to understand the typical scale and dimensions of these destinations. This study revealed that North Van Dyke Avenue's (NVDA) 1.5-mile long stretch should be planned and envisioned as a collection of places composing a holistic district. The master plan aims to clarify a vision for these distinct places and define unique recommended program mixes for each.

Building off an understanding of the district's context, community contributions on the online Opportunity Mapping tool, and feedback from conceptual redevelopment alternatives, a high-level program mix was established for each master plan sub-area. In some cases, these program mixes represent growth and enhancement of existing land uses, while in others, such as the District Core, a wholesale transformation is envisioned.

### WALKABLE COMMERCIAL CENTER SCALE COMPARISONS

*(in scale with the North Van Dyke Avenue sub-areas map to the right)*

**S. Rochester Road**

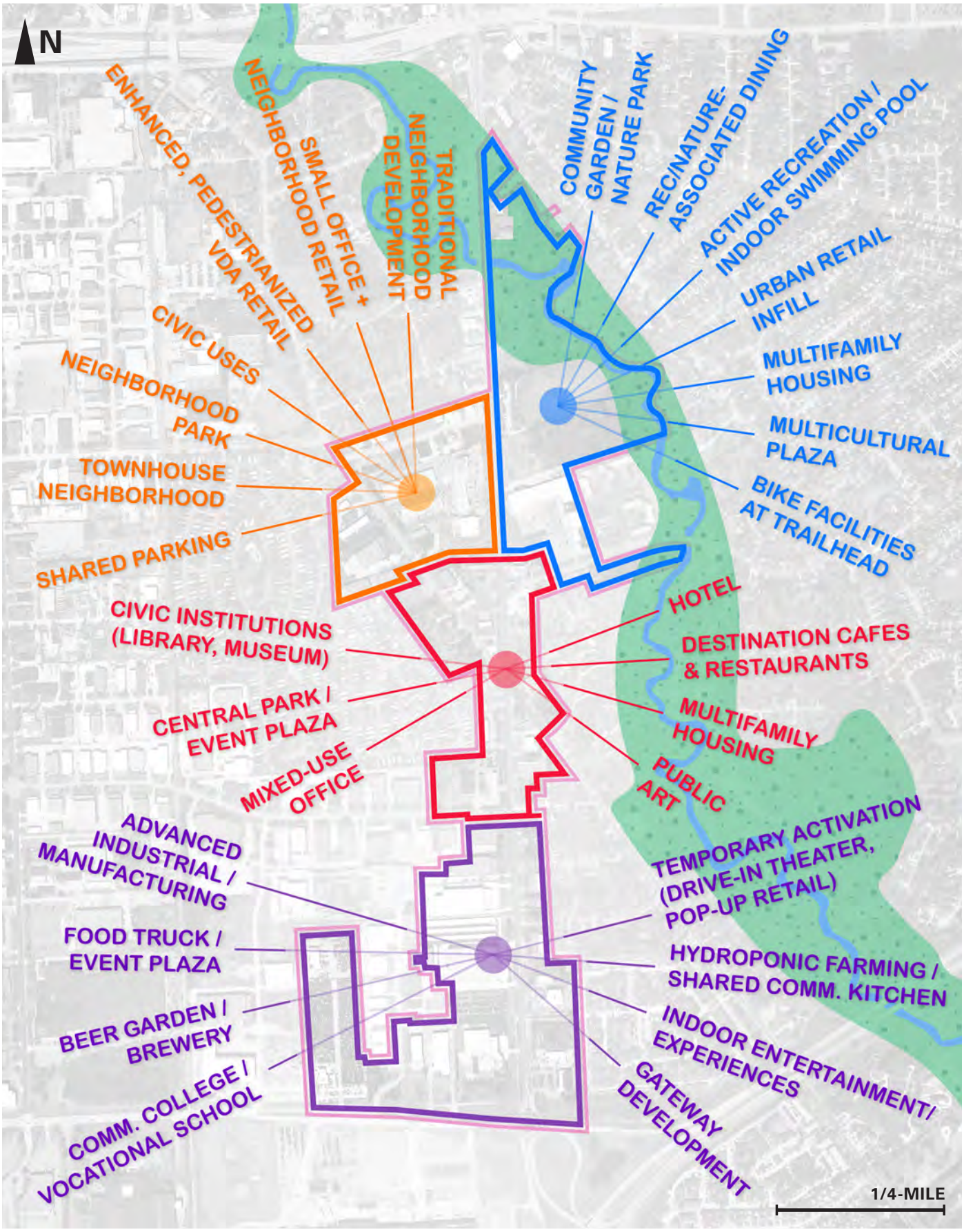
Located seven miles northwest of North Van Dyke, this serves as a half-mile long commercial "Main Street" for Rochester Hills.

**Downtown Utica**

Located just north of the North Van Dyke corridor, this quarter-mile long historic downtown creates a small walkable commercial center for Utica.

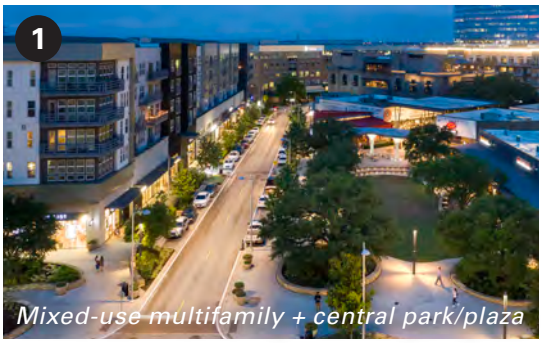
**Warren Town Center (Proposed)**

Proposed as a mixed-use transformation of the existing municipal complex, this project proposes similar uses and densities as those envisioned for NVDA.


N
ENHANCED, PEDESTRIANIZED VDA RETAIL
NEIGHBORHOOD SMALL OFFICE + RETAIL
TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY GARDEN / NATURE PARK
REC/NATURE-ASSOCIATED DINING
ACTIVE RECREATION / INDOOR SWIMMING POOL
URBAN RETAIL INFILL
MULTIFAMILY HOUSING
MULTICULTURAL PLAZA
BIKE FACILITIES AT TRAILHEAD
CIVIC USES
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
TOWNHOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD
SHARED PARKING
CIVIC INSTITUTIONS (LIBRARY, MUSEUM)
CENTRAL PARK / EVENT PLAZA
MIXED-USE OFFICE
HOTEL
DESTINATION CAFES & RESTAURANTS
MULTIFAMILY HOUSING
PUBLIC ART
ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL / MANUFACTURING
FOOD TRUCK / EVENT PLAZA
BEER GARDEN / BREWERY
COMM. COLLEGE / VOCATIONAL SCHOOL
TEMPORARY ACTIVATION (DRIVE-IN THEATER, POP-UP RETAIL)
HYDROPONIC FARMING / SHARED COMM. KITCHEN
INDOOR ENTERTAINMENT/ EXPERIENCES
GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT
1/4-MILE

## DISTRICT CORE

The North Van Dyke Avenue (NVDA) District Core is the heart of this place. It contains the highest density development and the greatest concentration of activated ground floors in the district. The Core hosts a central park/plaza where year-round activation and programming is encouraged to take place. The Core contains mixed-use multifamily residential, office, hotel, and civic uses and a strong landscaped connection to the Clinton River greenway.

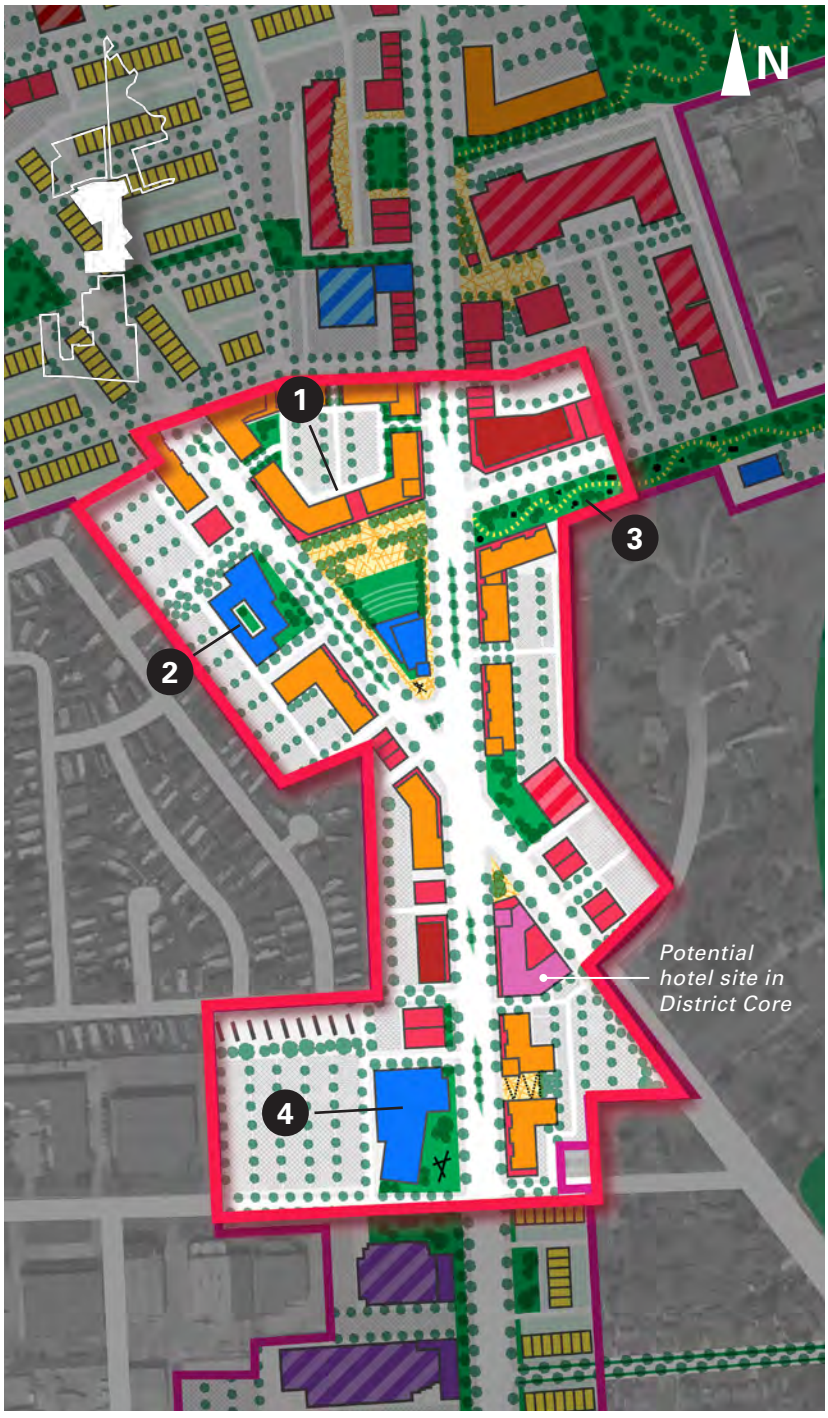


*Mixed-use multifamily + central park/plaza*

*Library/community center*

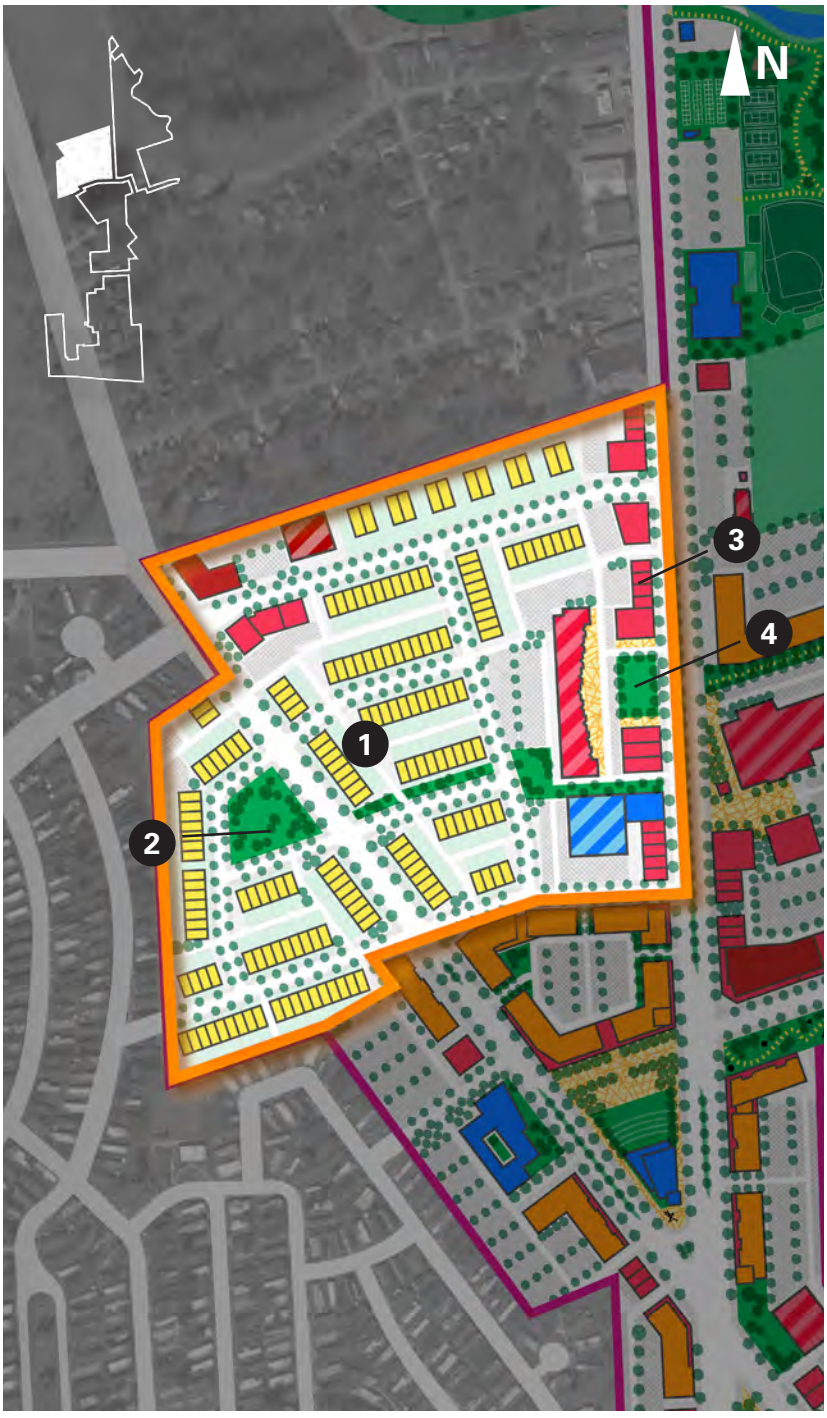
*Sculpture walk/greenway to Clinton River*

*Industrial history museum/science center*



## UTICA TRIANGLE

In the future NVDA district, the Utica Triangle sub-area serves as a transition zone between the Core and the existing residential neighborhoods to the north and west of the district. Medium density residential development like townhouses along Utica Road and along new neighborhood roads between Van Dyke and Utica can create a neighborhood within the district. A residential park and linear green connection to Van Dyke Avenue link the neighborhood to new, street-fronted "Main Street" style infill retail. This sub-area plan represents a long-term vision that will require deliberate private coordination and a parcel assembly strategy to achieve.







## PARKSIDE

The Parkside sub-area brings the community to the Clinton River greenway and vice versa. With most of the sub-area in the floodplain, there is significant opportunity to embrace existing undeveloped lands to create a series of programmed parks and landscape connections to the district. The plan proposes developing the Van Dyke frontage and enhancing existing development while creating a "cultural corridor" that celebrates the diversity of Sterling Heights.

*Active recreation park + recreation center*

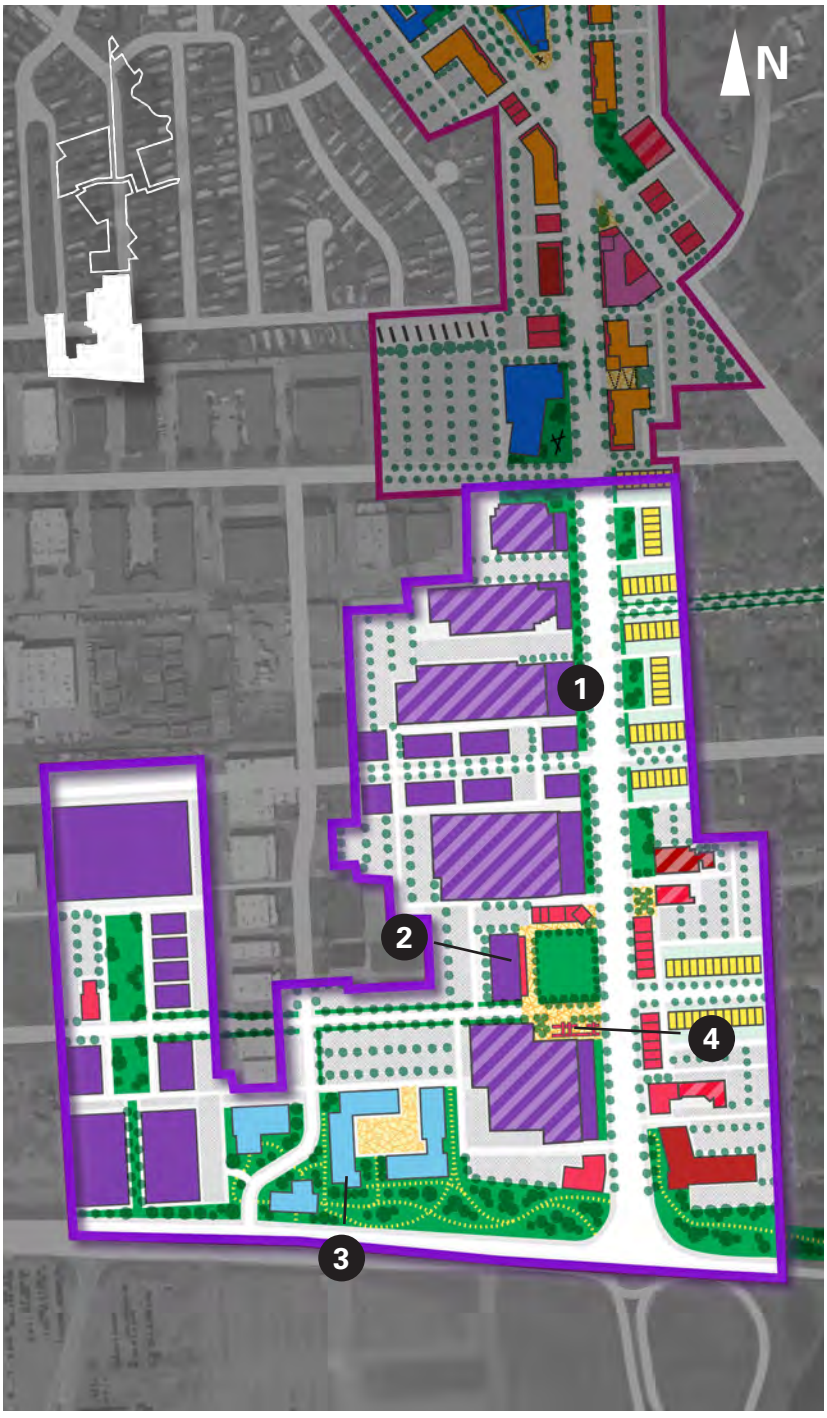
*Nature park + interpretation*

*Cultural Corridor + ethnic food plaza*

*Bike rental, repair + service station*

## NORTH VDA INDUSTRIAL

The identity of the North VDA Industrial sub-area revolves around showcasing the industries and manufacturing that have long operated in Sterling Heights while ushering in a new era of clean, advanced, and high-tech operations. Facilities are encouraged to grow and transparently display their operations as a contribution to the ensemble of the public realm. As a bridge to the next generation, a vocational school/ university extension could grow amidst the makers and builders. New public uses such as a brewery and beer garden are envisioned.

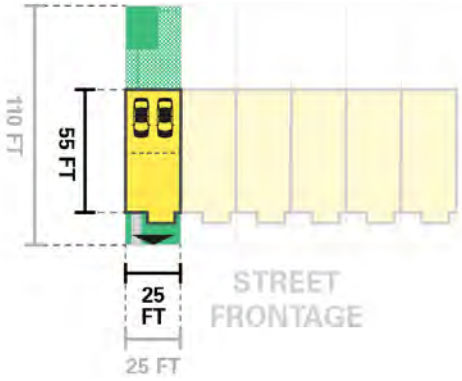






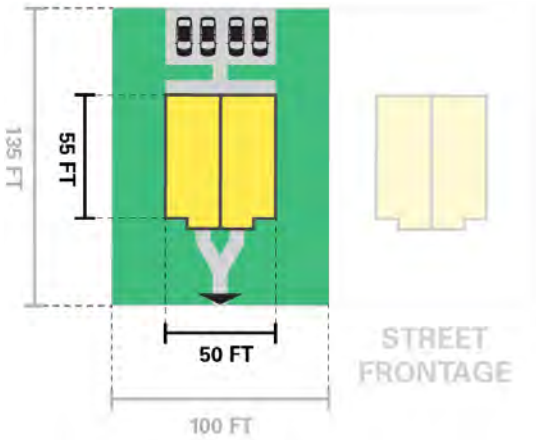
## VISION PLAN PROTOTYPICAL DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

The conceptual development typologies in this master plan are intended to be indicative of the form of development that is recommended for the future of North Van Dyke Avenue. Describing the functionality and programming of these typologies helps planners understand requirements related to standard development dimensions, the provision of open space, development scale and setbacks and parking. These typologies were designed in consideration of both general market appeal and adherence to master plan and community goals. These typologies can help inform zoning and private planning efforts.



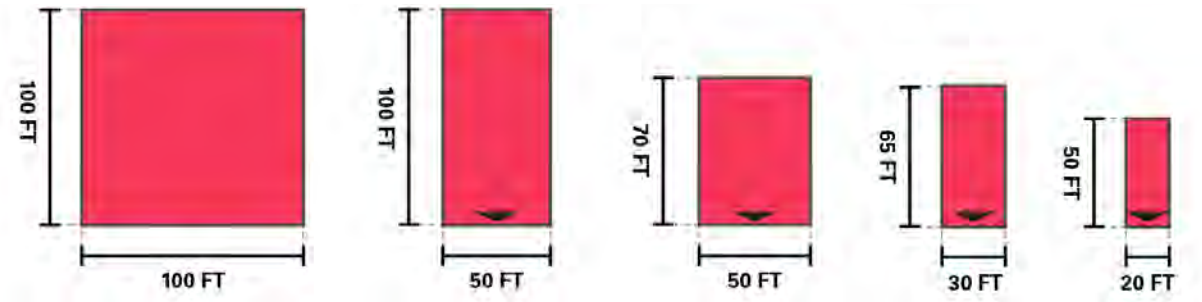

### ATTACHED TOWNHOUSES

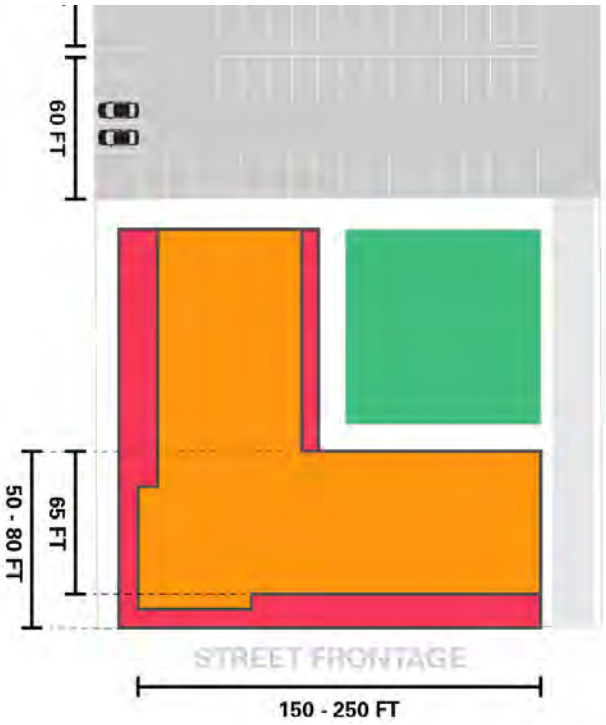
This townhouse typology allows for single family development within the North Van Dyke Avenue district in a denser, urban form. The three-story, approximately 2,500 SF units include on-site covered parking for two cars and small, private green areas on 2,750 SF lot. Townhouses are aggregated into a neighborhood that shares a larger neighborhood park and on-street guest parking.

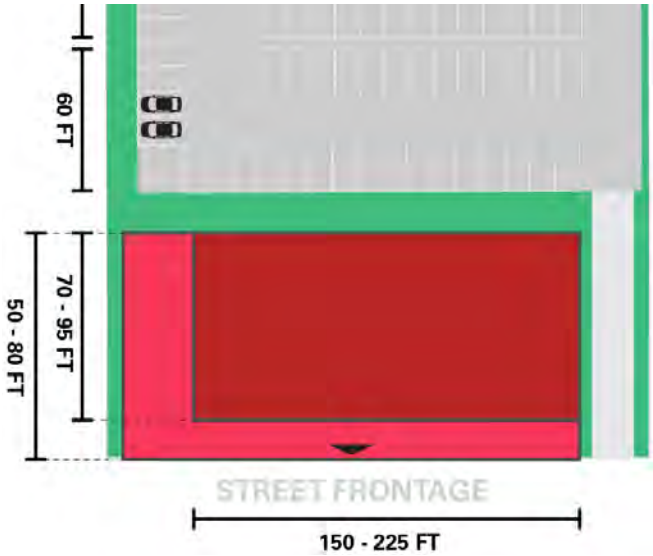



### DUPLEX/TND

The duplex/traditional neighborhood development (TND) typology allows for standalone single family development within the North Van Dyke Avenue district while maintaining density. The two-story, approximately 2,750 SF units include on-site surface parking for two cars and yard space shared between two units on 13.500 SF lots.






### MIXED-USE MULTIFAMILY

The mixed-use multifamily typology consists of three or four stories of apartments/ condominiums over a single story of retail. While a standard 65-FT width will accommodate a double-loaded corridor of units, the building length is flexible to site conditions. In order to create dynamic and properly-scaled building massing and create walkable blocks, it is recommended that overall building length not exceed 250 feet. Parking is assumed at one space per residential unit and is provided via on-site surface lots, shared parking arrangements with compatible nearby uses, and street parking.

### MIXED-USE OFFICE

Mixed-use office development is imagined as three stories of office over one story of ground floor retail. Office development is typically wider and shorter in length than residential development. Similar to the multifamily typology, it is recommended that overall building dimensions are properly scaled and articulated to create diverse facades. All mixed-use development should include setbacks after the first or second floor to create better lighting conditions on the street and a better pedestrian experience. Parking for office use is assumed at one space per 300 SF and is provided on-site, shared with neighboring development, or on-street.

### RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

Standard retail development dimensions vary depending on the type of retail. Small, boutique shops can be as small as 1,000 SF with 20-FT street frontage and aggregated into a collection of shops along a street, whereas larger stores and restaurants can fill out over 10,000 SF of space. Even larger retail spaces may be required for uses like destination retailers or grocers, which can often fill out 20,000+ SF spaces.

## DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY + ABSORPTION METHODOLOGY

A master plan vision is a community's aspiration for the future of a place. Any given proposal or plan is inherently subject to the multitude of forces that impact growth, development and change in cities. Over time, forces like changing market and economic conditions and trends, acquisitions and transfers of private property, and the decisions made by governments with overlapping jurisdictions will ultimately impact the specific projects that take shape and where they happen. But any master plan vision should be rooted in a plausible path for growth and change. For the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan, preliminary long-term redevelopment schemes were informed by recent planning work undertaken by the City of Sterling Heights and an analysis of present market conditions and opportunities.

The redevelopment concept proposed in this master plan reflects the potential long-term build-out of the district. To understand the rate of growth and investment in North Van Dyke Avenue (NVDA) required to realize this vision, calculations were performed based on industry standards for development absorption and capacity and compared to the community's projections for growth over the next few decades.

### RESIDENTIAL

In order to realize the vision depicted in this master plan, NVDA would have to capture 15% of the City's projected residential growth over the next twenty years. Most of the residential development in the master plan takes the form of multifamily and townhouse development, helping fill the "missing middle" range of housing products that are in high demand and low supply in the City presently.

### RETAIL/COMMERCIAL

The master plan aims to facilitate the transformation of NVDA from an underutilized corridor into a vibrant and dense mixed-use destination within the region. The percentage of retail that could be absorbed in the future district was calculated based on future projections for growth within and in the immediate context of NVDA.

### OFFICE

Sterling Heights' office market is not expected to grow substantially. As such, the master plan calls for a small amount of mixed-use office development.

### INDUSTRIAL

While industrial uses are in high demand today, the total acreage and gross floor area (GSF) of new development is not expected to grow substantially. This master plan proposes conversions of existing facilities and densifying industrial sites within the future NVDA district.

| Land Use Growth Projections (2020 - 2040) | Conceptual Redevelopment | Proportion of City/ Regional Growth | Population Growth in NVDA |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5,042**<br>SEMCOG forecasted additional housing units needed by 2040 to accommodate population growth and shrinking household sizes. | Single Family (TH/TND)<br>**735,000 SF (245 Units)**<br>Multifamily Residential<br>**770,000 SF (515 Units)** | **15%**<br>of Sterling Heights' residential growth over the next 20 years occurs in the NVDA district (assuming full build-out). | **~2,000**<br>Potential future population of the NVDA district, (assuming a 2.5 person average household size[1]) |
| **250**<br>Acres of new office development anticipated in Sterling Heights through 2040 (SEMCOG) | Office<br>**210,000 SF** | **2%**<br>of Sterling Heights' office growth over the next 20 years occurs in the NVDA district (assuming full build-out). | **1,088**<br>Potential future office employees within NVDA (assuming 193 SF/employee[2]). |
| **---**<br>The City's Master Land Use Plan and SEMCOG forecast no substantive industrial development growth in the near term. | Industrial/ Manufacturing<br>**715,000 SF** | **5%**<br>of Sterling Heights' future industrial development (28.2 M SF) would be located in the NVDA district if industrial GSF doubles over 20 years. | **747**<br>Potential future industrial employees within NVDA (assuming 957 SF/employee[3]). |

## Potential Retail Capture Based on Establishment of Regional Destination

**68,650**
Households within a 10-minute driving radius of the NVDA corridor[1].

**11,500**
Jobs within a 10-minute drive of the NVDA district[1].

**180,000**
Total residential and employee population within a 10-minute drive of the NVDA district (adjusted to account for overlapping populations)[1].

Retail/ Commercial
**635,000 SF**

**11.8%**
Total retail/ commercial square footage to be captured in the NVDA district (assuming 30 SF of retail space per capita[4]) within a 10-minute drive.

1: ESRI Business Analyst, 2020
2: Source: Gensler, *Workplace Standards Benchmarking,* 2012
3: Source: NAIOP, *Stabilization of the U.S. Manufacturing Sector and Its Impact on Industrial Space*, June 2013
4: Cushman & Wakefield, *Valuation & Advisory Retail*, 2019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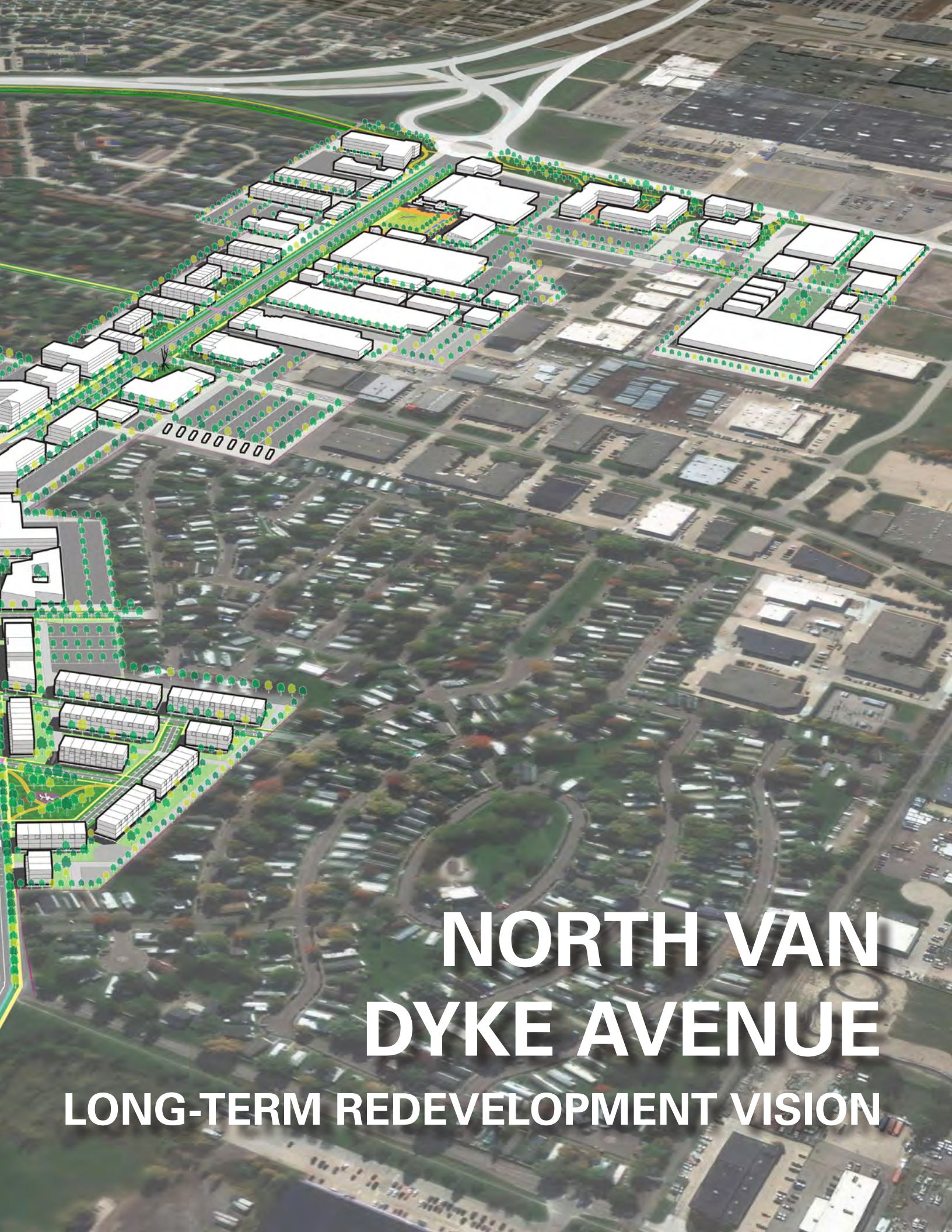


# NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE

## LONG-TERM REDEVELOPMENT VISION

## CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT VISION PARKING PLAN

Parking is an essential consideration for any redevelopment plan. Given the underdeveloped state of the corridor today and its suburban commercial configuration, it is no surprise that there is an abundance of parking. As the district transforms over time into an urban place with higher densities and a more diverse range of uses, a new parking paradigm will be required to support those uses.

### PARKING TYPES

Given market demand and conditions within the region, it is expected that surface parking is the most feasible option for the foreseeable future.

Overall, off-street parking should be located in the interior of blocks, behind street-facing development. This enables a more pleasant and safe pedestrian environment and streetscape. In addition to parking lots associated with development, the plan also recommends adding street parking to the segments of Van Dyke Avenue, Utica Road, Riverland Drive, and proposed new neighborhood streets to add transient parking options and support existing and forthcoming retail.

### PARKING STRATEGIES

To support the densities and intensity of development proposed for the future North Van Dyke Avenue district, a variety of parking strategies must be employed to consider parking rationally and in context.

#### Zoning

To permit and encourage the type of development envisioned in this plan, the City and community will need to embrace new zoning techniques and standards that accommodate urban development. An essential component of this is a shift in thinking regarding parking ratios. Urban districts throughout the country have revealed that dense, mixed-use environments require less parking capacity than is typically found in traditional zoning. Additionally, all indications of trends and preferences related to car usage and commuting patterns continue to suggest that car ownership is less desirable than it used to be among a variety of demographic groups. Young and older individuals alike continue to express interest in a car-free lifestyle and are looking for places to live and work that support that lifestyle.

Zoning can and should promote responsible parking ratios that reflect real-life demand and embrace the natural efficiencies that come with multi-modal and mixed-use districts. As a default, the City should consider instituting parking maximums in lieu of minimum requirements for districts governing development in the future North Van Dyke Avenue district.

### Shared Parking

Mixed-use districts benefit greatly from the differing parking demand levels at different times of the day. As discussed in the previous chapter, shared parking strategies that enable the efficient use of spaces throughout the day can result in a lower overall number of needed spaces associated with developments and within the district as a whole. The same parking space that parks a resident's car at night can host a worker's during the day. It is recommended that private and public owners of parking lots connect those lots and enter into agreements for shared parking across them.

### Parking Management

In order to efficiently facilitate a shared parking program throughout a district like North Van Dyke Avenue, it is recommended that a parking administrator operate lots across private development sites. Such entities can set variable parking pricing and time maximums to manage demand—particularly as district activation and events take shape—and can understand demand from the perspective of surges and gaps in real time and manage accordingly.

From the public side, street parking can offer a source of revenue for the city or other public entities with jurisdiction over the right-of-way. Setting limits on street parking can ensure it remains transient parking and keeps spots in circulation to support local businesses.

### Park Once

One of the fundamental benefits of mixed-use districts with respect to parking results from the urban form that reduces the need for vehicular trips all together. In the first place, a well-connected and multi-modal district like the future North Van Dyke Avenue envisioned in this plan will require fewer people to drive to access it. Enhancements to the public realm that afford a comfortable environment to those who would prefer to walk, bike, scooter, or rideshare will reduce demand for parking. For those residents, workers, shoppers, visitors, hikers, and event-goers who do arrive by car, the district will provide the opportunity to "park once".

With a great multitude of uses within walking distance of centralized parking lots, drivers will be encouraged by the very nature of the district to drop their car off and leave it where it is. For some who choose to reside in the future district, this will certainly be the case for trips to the store, library, local bar or restaurant, or hikes along the Clinton River trail. A parking strategy and zoning code that takes this into account can result in significantly lower requirements for parking for nearly every development type.

While this plan proposes design strategies, policy changes, and parking quantities that will support urban redevelopment, this transformation will occur in the long term. It is recommended that policies governing parking ratios and quantities are phased in over time as the District redevelops.

## PARKING TEST FIT

In order to test the parking capacity of the proposed redevelopment vision, the planning team established average parking ratios by land use. Ratios are commonly employed by zoning codes to ensure adequate parking. The ratios established for this effort yield lower required parking counts than is typical in most municipalities, but are considered appropriate for an urban district of this kind. Parking is then aggregated into "zones" in accordance with the shared parking strategy referred to above. The parking depicted in the concept plan supports 91.4% of the development depicted in the concept plan when measured by these ratios. It is assumed that the remaining balance can be accommodated through the alternative strategies previously described.

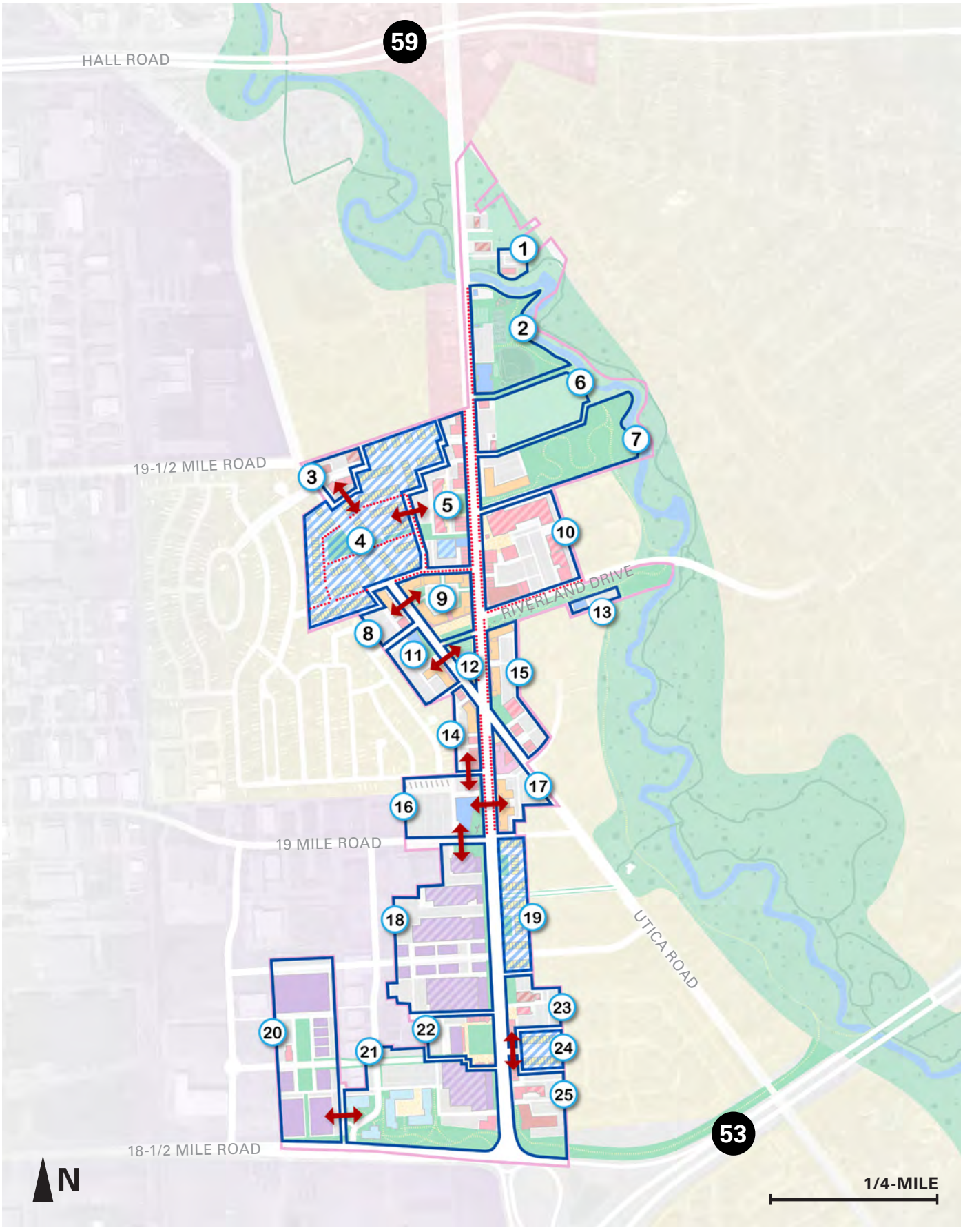
**Blue shaded parking zones depict self-parked development.*

| Parking Ratios by Use | 1 SP / X SF |
|---|---|
| Res. - MF | 1500 |
| Res. - SF | 1500 |
| Retail | 300 |
| Special Retail | 100 |
| Office | 300 |
| Civic | 500 |
| Industrial | 1000 |
| Institutional | 1000 |
| Hotel | 750 |
| **Recreation** | |
| Trail access | 15 |
| Park space/AC | 10 |

The 8.6% of parking spaces not provided by strict measurement of these ratios can be mitigated by a combination of:

- Walkable mixed-use development
- Other park sharing strategies
- Multi-modal transportation
- Rideshare
- Demographic preference variation
- Smaller household sizes
- Incentives

| Parking Zone | Total Spaces Depicted | Total Spaces Req. by Ratio | Excess/Deficit per Group | Park Share Balance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 65 | 65 | 0 | |
| 2 | 133 | 153 | -20 | |
| 3 | 90 | 131 | -41 | 40 |
| 4 | 448 | 348 | 100 | |
| 5 | 313 | 333 | -20 | |
| 6 | 104 | 101 | 3 | |
| 7 | 190 | 210 | -20 | |
| 8 | 102 | 54 | 48 | -104 |
| 9 | 156 | 308 | -152 | |
| 10 | 592 | 991 | -399 | |
| 11 | 158 | 145 | 13 | -5 |
| 12 | 16 | 34 | -18 | |
| 13 | 40 | 45 | -5 | |
| 14 | 156 | 236 | -80 | 52 |
| 15 | 280 | 281 | -1 | |
| 16 | 320 | 168 | 152 | |
| 17 | 195 | 308 | -113 | |
| 18 | 435 | 343 | 92 | |
| 19 | 94 | 94 | 0 | |
| 20 | 342 | 303 | 39 | -5 |
| 21 | 426 | 470 | -44 | |
| 22 | 131 | 129 | 3 | |
| 23 | 236 | 107 | 129 | -36 |
| 24 | 48 | 48 | 0 | |
| 25 | 264 | 429 | -165 | |
| | **5,334** | **5,833** | **(499)** | |
| | | | **-8.6%** | |


59
HALL ROAD
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
19 MILE ROAD
UTICA ROAD
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
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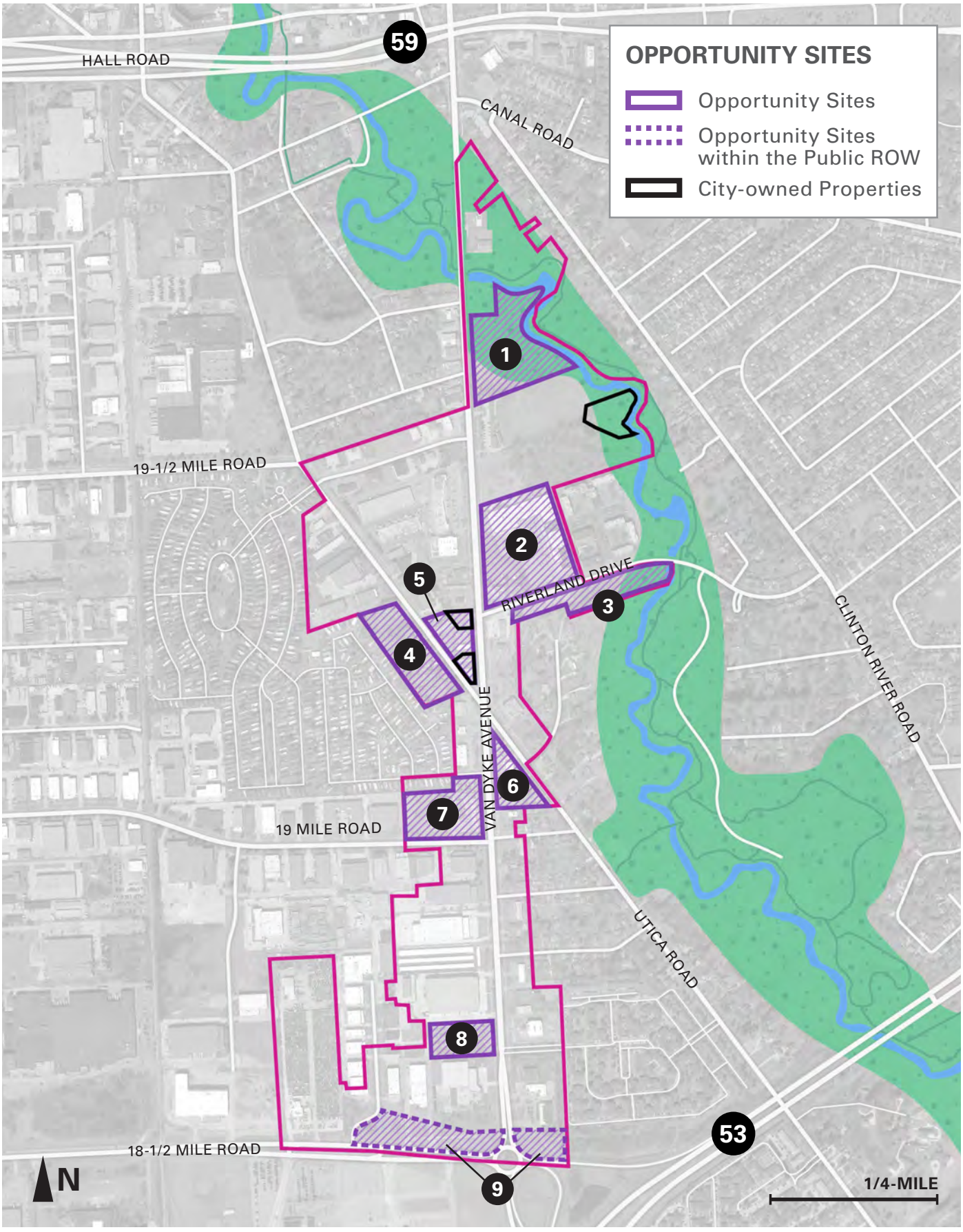
1/4-MILE

## OPPORTUNITY SITES

While all of North Van Dyke Avenue presents opportunities for redevelopment and creative placemaking, there are several parcels that, by nature of their location, development status, or ownership present early opportunities for implementing the vision outlined in this master plan. These properties should be explored further for their potential to build momentum for the district-wide redevelopment, site-level master planning, and immediate-term temporary activation to draw people in and build excitement for the future of the district. Where opportunity exists to immediately densify private property or aggregate parcels in line with the master plan vision, it should be pursued.

| Opportunity SIte | Approx. Acreage | Constituent Parcel IDs | Constituent Parcel Acre. | Opportunity | Potential Future Use |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9.1 AC | 10-03-151-009 | 9.1 AC | Wooded site, vacant, in the floodplain, riverfront | Public park |
| 2 | 11.5 AC | 10-03-301-013 | 10.4 AC | Existing successful retail, underutilized | Densified retail development, public space |
| | | 10-03-301-014 | 1.1 AC | Vacant, prime location | |
| 3 | 4.2 AC | 10-03-302-002 | 0.5 AC | Wooded, vacant, prime location | Green connection between Clinton River + space |
| | | 10-03-302-003 | 2.5 AC | | |
| | | 10-03-302-004 | 1.2 AC | | |
| 4 | 6.5 AC | 10-04-476-002 | 1.0 AC | Vacant, prime location | Densified development |
| | | 10-04-476-003 | 1.0 AC | | |
| | | 10-04-476-004 | 0.9 AC | Underutilized, prime location | |
| | | 10-04-476-005 | 0.9 AC | | |
| | | 10-04-476-006 | 0.9 AC | | |
| | | 10-04-476-007 | 0.9 AC | | |
| | | 10-04-476-008 | 0.9 AC | Vacant, prime location | |
| 5 | 3.1 AC | 10-04-427-019 | 0.8 AC | Underutilized, prime location | Densified development, civic use, public space |
| | | 10-04-427-021 | 1.3 AC | | |
| | | 10-04-427-020 | 0.5 AC | City owned, vacant, prime location | |
| | | 10-04-427-012 | 0.5 AC | | |
| 6 | 3.4 AC | 10-03-052-005 | 0.3 AC | Underutilized, prime location | Densified development |
| | | 10-03-052-006 | 0.7 AC | | |
| | | 10-03-052-004 | 2.4 AC | | |
| 7 | 5.6 AC | 10-29-226-011 | 5.6 AC | Underutilized, gateway location | Densified development, civic use, gateway development |
| 8 | 3.0 AC | 10-09-200-043 | 3.0 AC | Parking, car storage | Densified development, public space |
| 9 | 7.5 AC | --- | 7.5 AC | Publicly-owned, vacant | Gateway landscape |


OPPORTUNITY SITES
Opportunity Sites
Opportunity Sites within the Public ROW
City-owned Properties
HALL ROAD
CANAL ROAD
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
VAN DYKE AVENUE
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
19 MILE ROAD
UTICA ROAD
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
59
53
1
2
3
4
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1/4-MILE

## FLOODPLAIN AWARENESS + MITIGATION

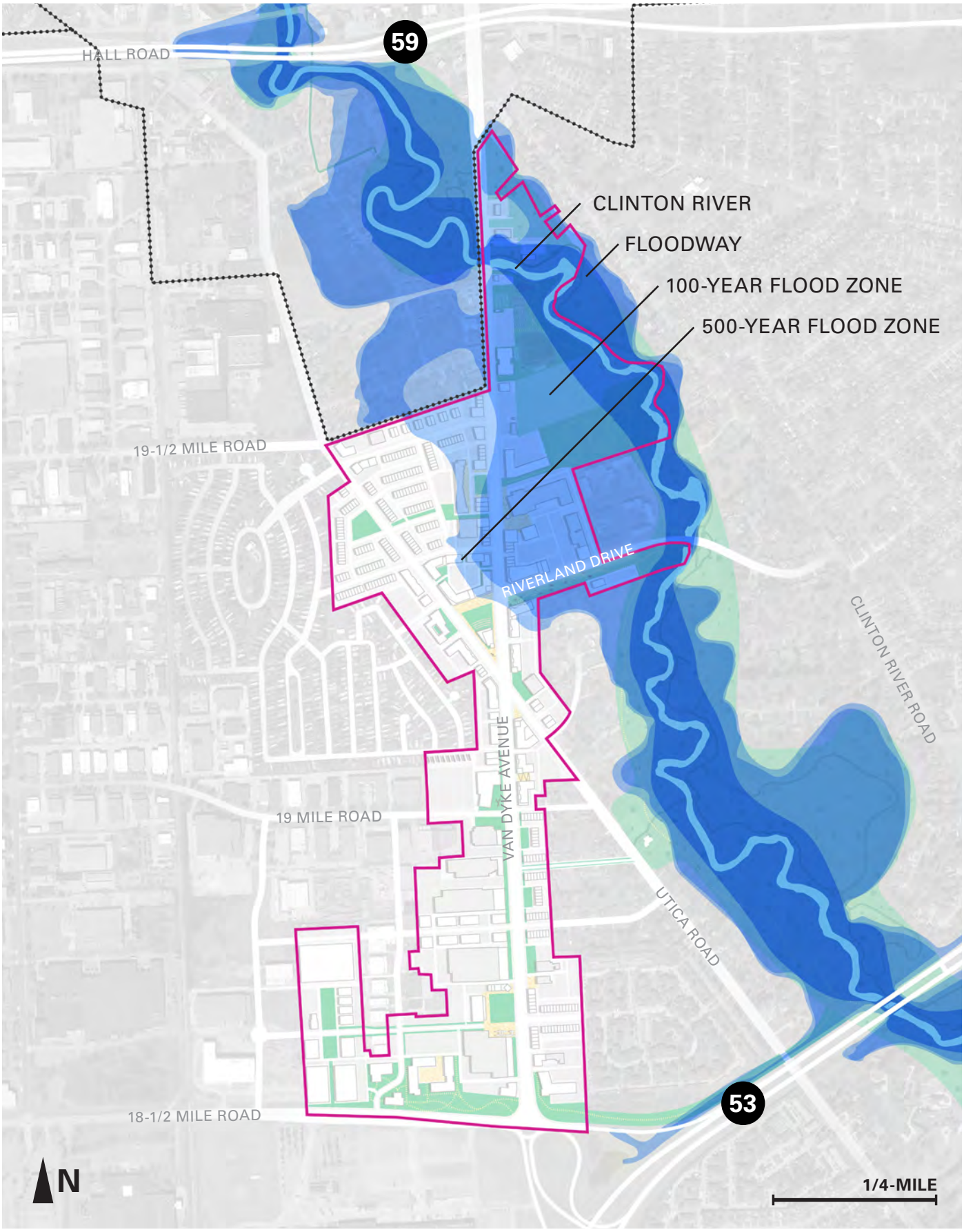
Awareness of potential flood conditions is an essential first step to redevelopment in any area. Areas in the northeast of the North Van Dyke Avenue district exist within the floodway, 100-year flood zone, and 500-year flood zone, as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), due to their low elevation and proximity to the Clinton River.

In most cases, it is advised that development steer clear of building within the floodplain to avoid future flooding of homes and businesses, and to avoid shifting flood waters further outside the floodplain. This master plan proposes using most of the North Van Dyke Avenue lands within the flood zone as floodable parks and open spaces that manage, direct, and absorb potential future floodwaters. These uses, combined with progressive and district-wide adoption of adequately-sized and sustainable stormwater infrastructure can enable the district to accommodate occasional flooding while avoiding major flood damage to development.

In some cases, such as civic uses associated with parklands and infill development on previously developed sites already within the floodplain, the plan proposes new development within the 100-year and 500-year flood zones. For construction in these zones to be feasible, developers must embrace flood-resistant site design, architectural, and construction techniques.

For the most part, the single best strategy for protecting development from floodwaters when building within a floodplain is to elevate finished areas and utilities above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE). The BFE is the height of the water resulting from a 100-year flood event. One good local example of a project that used architecture and site design to mitigate the flood risk can be found just outside the district, along Riverland Drive between the Riverland Shopping Center and the Clinton River. The Riverland Woods Apartments were constructed over fifty years ago. Recognizing the risks associated with siting the apartments so closely to a river that occasionally floods, developers designed the living space of the complex to be elevated out of the floodplain entirely. With floodable room underneath apartments, the building provides residents with dedicated sheltered parking spaces, mitigating the need for vast parking lots detached from the development—themselves often displacers of flood and stormwaters.

Alternative design strategies that enable construction in the flood zone include berming development out of the floodplain with earth fill and constructing basement spaces to be floodable. The former


HALL ROAD
59
CLINTON RIVER
FLOODWAY
100-YEAR FLOOD ZONE
500-YEAR FLOOD ZONE
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
CLINTON RIVER ROAD
VAN DYKE AVENUE
19 MILE ROAD
UTICA ROAD
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
53
N
1/4-MILE

must work in tandem with a flood/stormwater retention strategy to avoid creating water displacement problems for neighboring sites. Floodable basements rely on the same principle and functionally as the Riverland Woods Apartments example.

In many cases, the 100-year flood zone designations do not fully reflect the risk of flooding events and resulting damage, as climate change, more volatile weather and flooding, flood mitigation projects nearby, and a variety of other factors continue to change the risk landscape. Any projects proposed within the floodplain will require a detailed investigation of the risks present and will be required by various regulations across different levels of government to plan for flooding and mitigate disparate impacts on surrounding development. It is recommended that private developers work with their insurance providers, as insurance companies may have additional, more restrictive requirements.

Given increasing volatility in weather patterns and the higher frequency of major storm events associated with climate change, it is advised that any development within the 100-year and 500-year flood zones build flood avoidance and mitigation measures reasonably in excess of those required by law. Increasing the elevation of new development by an extra foot or two can mean the difference between safety in an unpredictably intense storm event and catastrophic damage.

Together with stormwater retention strategies and the implementation of district-wide green infrastructure, flood risks can be mitigated for the benefit of individual sites within the flood zone and the district at-large.

## REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

### City of Sterling Heights

All development projects within the 100-year flood plain (not just construction of buildings, but filling, excavation, fences, etc.) are required to elevate the base finished floor at least two feet above the floodplain and obtain a permit from the city and Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

### State of Michigan

The current building codes in Michigan require that new construction or substantially improved buildings within the 100-year floodplain have the lowest floor, elevated at least one-foot above the 100-year flood elevation. Basements that are below grade on all sides must be at or above the 100-year flood elevation.

- New residential construction is specifically prohibited in the floodway.
- Commercial construction may be permitted within the floodway, however, a hydraulic

analysis may be required which demonstrates that the proposal will not harmfully increase flood stages or shift flood flows onto adjacent property owners.

### Federal Permits

Depending on the effect on the 100-year flood plain, a permit from the Federal Emergency Management Agency may be also be required. Applications must be made and necessary permits must be obtained prior to doing any work in a 100-year flood plain area.

## DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Building in the floodplain requires additional regulatory, design, and economic considerations. Extensive site work and engineering studies analyzing grades, fill amounts, and structural conditions will be required for any proposed development project. It is important to understand that development in these areas will take longer, more commitment, and higher costs than development outside the floodplain. Higher density development may help offset additional costs incurred by mitigating risk associated with floodplain development.

The Riverland Woods Apartments complex elevates residential units out of the floodplain and provides sheltered parking for residents' cars underneath. These floodable parking areas prevent living spaces from flooding while mitigating potential displacement of floodwaters to neighboring sites resulting from the development.

## VISION PLAN LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

One of the most important frameworks underlying the master plan vision for North Van Dyke Avenue is the interconnected network of landscapes, natural features, and green public spaces traversing the district.

By creating and enhancing multifunctional, equitable, economical, ecologically functional, culturally relevant, and inspirational landscapes, the community can help establish the redeveloped North Van Dyke Avenue corridor as a rich urban place. Such spaces, when spatially and programmatically diverse, can enrich the quality of life of Sterling Heights' residents.

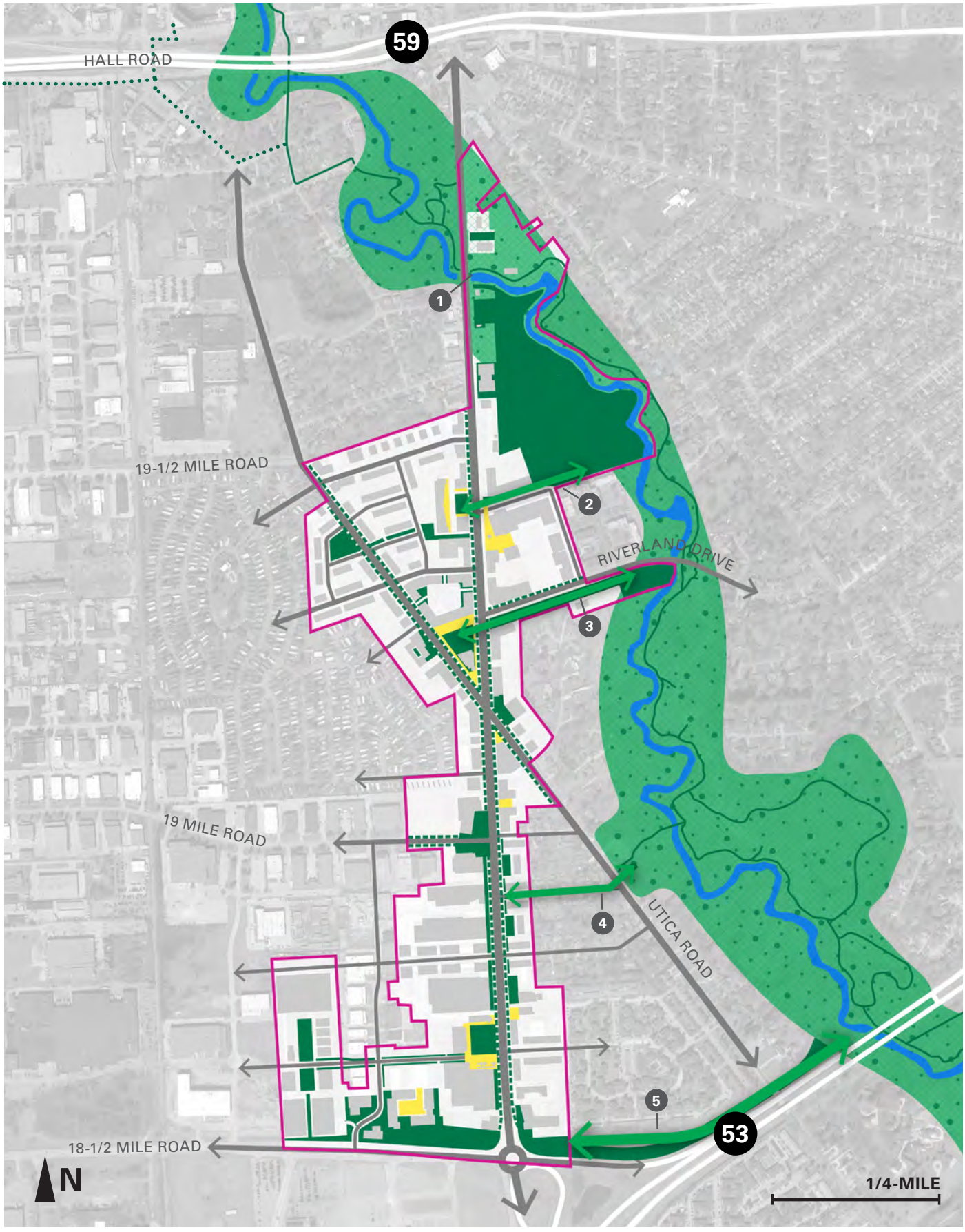
### CONNECTING TO THE CLINTON RIVER

The approach to creating a robust, sustainable, and impactful system of parks, natural landscapes, and green destinations within the district begins with establishing meaningful connections to the tremendous community and ecological asset that is the Clinton River and greenway. Spanning the length of the corridor, City of Sterling Heights, and a significant portion of the greater region, this river, its tributaries, and its natural buffer provide a cherished ecosystem for local flora and fauna within the City's largest and most densely forested areas.

The river and its greenway also serve as substantial recreational amenities. With several parks and playgrounds encompassed within and adjacent to the greenway, opportunities for kayaking and other water-based recreation, and a regional trail system traversing its length on the eastern edge, the Clinton River greenway serves as the Sterling Heights community's most significant local opportunity to access and experience nature on a daily basis.

One of the best opportunities available to the North Van Dyke Avenue district to create a high-quality, desirable, and successful destination and place to live, work, and play, is to leverage this magnificent asset and create a dialogue between new urban development and the natural world. The plan proposes establishing or enhancing five connections between Van Dyke Avenue and the Clinton River greenway:

1. North: at the existing trail head, where the Clinton River crosses under Van Dyke Avenue
2. Center-north: south of the forthcoming Chaldean Foundation development
3. Core: along the southern edge of Riverland Drive
4. Center-south: along Ogden Drive, connecting to the Sterling Heights Nature Center
5. South: within the public right-of-way along the M-53 off-ramp


HALL ROAD
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RIVERLAND DRIVE
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19 MILE ROAD
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UTICA ROAD
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18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

33%

of the non-right-of-way acreage in the master plan conceptual redevelopment plan consists of parks and open space.

## ESTABLISHING A DISTRICT-WIDE OPEN SPACE/GREEN NETWORK

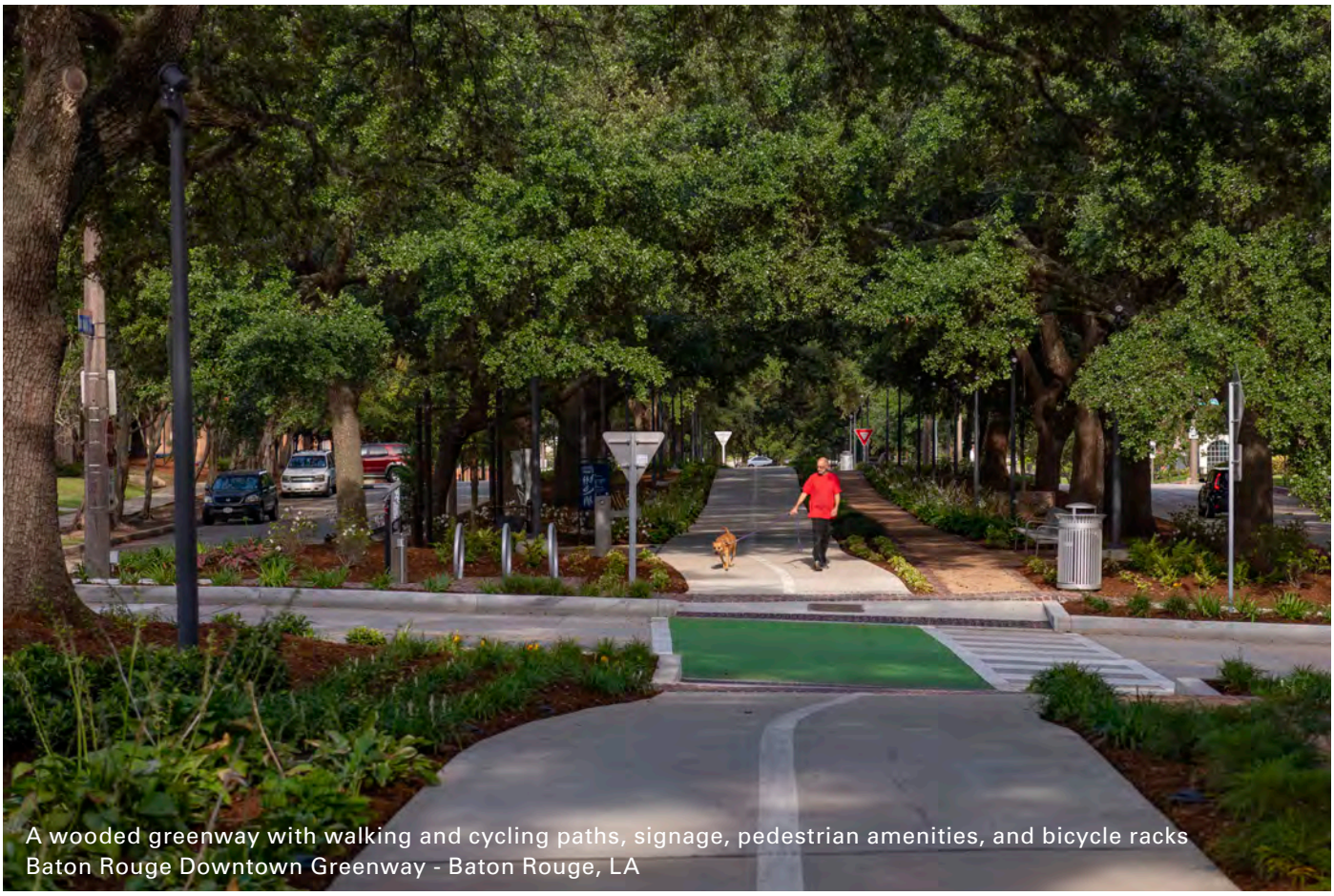
Community open spaces are critical to supporting physical and mental health. They offer places for recreation, decompression, inspiration, reflection, artistic expression, and social gathering. These landscapes have the capacity to address the challenges of daily life in an urban environment and offer the potential to celebrate cultural and ecological narratives within the community. As centers of community life, they can help shape strong social relationships and civic cooperation. All of these benefits can come to fruition throughout the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor with parks, plazas, recreation and open spaces that exhibit sound resource management and positive economic impact.

With new green connections reaching into the district from the Clinton River greenway, the basic structure for an internal green network is established. The goal for parks, plazas, landscapes, green streets, and green corridors within the district is to create a lush and pedestrian-oriented urban public realm that will contribute directly to district sustainability, the well-being of the entire community, and the health of the natural environment. These spaces will provide opportunities for recreation, outdoor events such as markets and festivals, community gathering, outdoor dining, and a multitude of other adaptable community uses.

The master plan envisions a collection of new parks and plazas throughout the district. Overall, new or enhanced parks, natural landscapes, and green corridors comprise approximately 46 acres, or 33%, of the net corridor land area (not including the public right-of-way). This already significant number includes only small portions of the Clinton River greenway—itself, as mentioned, an enormous collection of parks and landscapes. This collection of high-quality green space within and accessible to the future district, will establish North Van Dyke Avenue as one of the region's greenest mixed-use districts.

The plan prioritizes equitable access to park space for all future residents, workers, and visitors by distributing parks across the district and ensuring nowhere within the district is more than a short walk from formal park space or more than a five-minute walk from a path connecting to the Clinton River greenway. As the U.S. Centers for Disease Control report in their 2019 *Increasing Physical Activity* report, proximity to green space results in a 48% increase in the number of people exercising three or more days per week.

Creating high-quality urban landscapes, robust green connections, and streets rich with



A wooded greenway with walking and cycling paths, signage, pedestrian amenities, and bicycle racks
Baton Rouge Downtown Greenway - Baton Rouge, LA

vegetation also provides financial benefits to emerging mixed-use districts. It is well understood in real estate that frontage on major parks and plazas increases property values and the desirability of office and residences with views and easy access to these amenities. Furthermore, retail streets with healthy trees and dedicated planting areas create a pedestrian environment that is esthetically pleasing and more comfortable.

## NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE'S FUTURE PUBLIC REALM

Each park and plaza space within the district will take shape emphasizing different character and programmatic elements in response to its context and the development uses that surround it. The plan is designed to create opportunities for a diversity of recreational, event, civic, and cultural experiences that are all linked together with green connections and green streets.

These spaces should be designed creatively and with an eye towards the evolving trends and preferences in the use and functionality of public space. Increasingly, landscape designers and parks systems are proving that flexible park spaces that accommodate a broad range of gatherings, events, and everyday functions can spur year-round, diverse activation.

A wooden boardwalk winds through a nature park
Houston Arboretum + Nature Center - Houston, TX

Parks and all other elements of the public realm within the North Van Dyke Avenue district will hardly serve only the future residents and workers within the district. Instead, these will be parks for the entire Sterling Heights community and destinations for the larger region. Maximizing their utility and accessibility across the seasons will be important to making these spaces beloved year-round places. Parks, plazas, and landscapes should be designed to accommodate unique cold-weather programming and activation.

Working in concert with the City's Parks and Recreation Department, city planners, the Corridor Improvement Authority, and future developers within the district should look to program public spaces to serve the needs and priorities of the larger Sterling Heights community, and especially those residential communities existing just outside the district. Partnering with this and other city agencies can ensure alignment of vision and goals and opportunities to co-develop spaces that will fulfill City objectives and simultaneously spur development and investment within the North Van Dyke Avenue district.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER + TYPOLOGIES

While all public parks and landscapes should incorporate features and degrees of flexibility, many will host formal programmatic elements such as recreation fields, dining plazas, performance spaces, playgrounds, dog parks, and rentable space for major events. These uses and programming will need to be carefully planned to establish appropriate and strategic relationships with adjacent development and contextual features, such as the Clinton River and greenway and high-traffic roads.

Cities often catalog their parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces with classifications that group them based on use patterns, function, size, and amenities. Sterling Heights, in the 2017-2021 Parks, Recreation and Non-Motorized Plan utilizes the State of Michigan's Department of Natural Resources classification system to organize and understand the City's 30 parks and 1,000 acres of parkland. The table on the next page describes each of the classifications proposed for the North Van Dyke Avenue district. Descriptions and dimensions are informed by State standards, but adapted to add more detail about the proposed parks in this master plan.

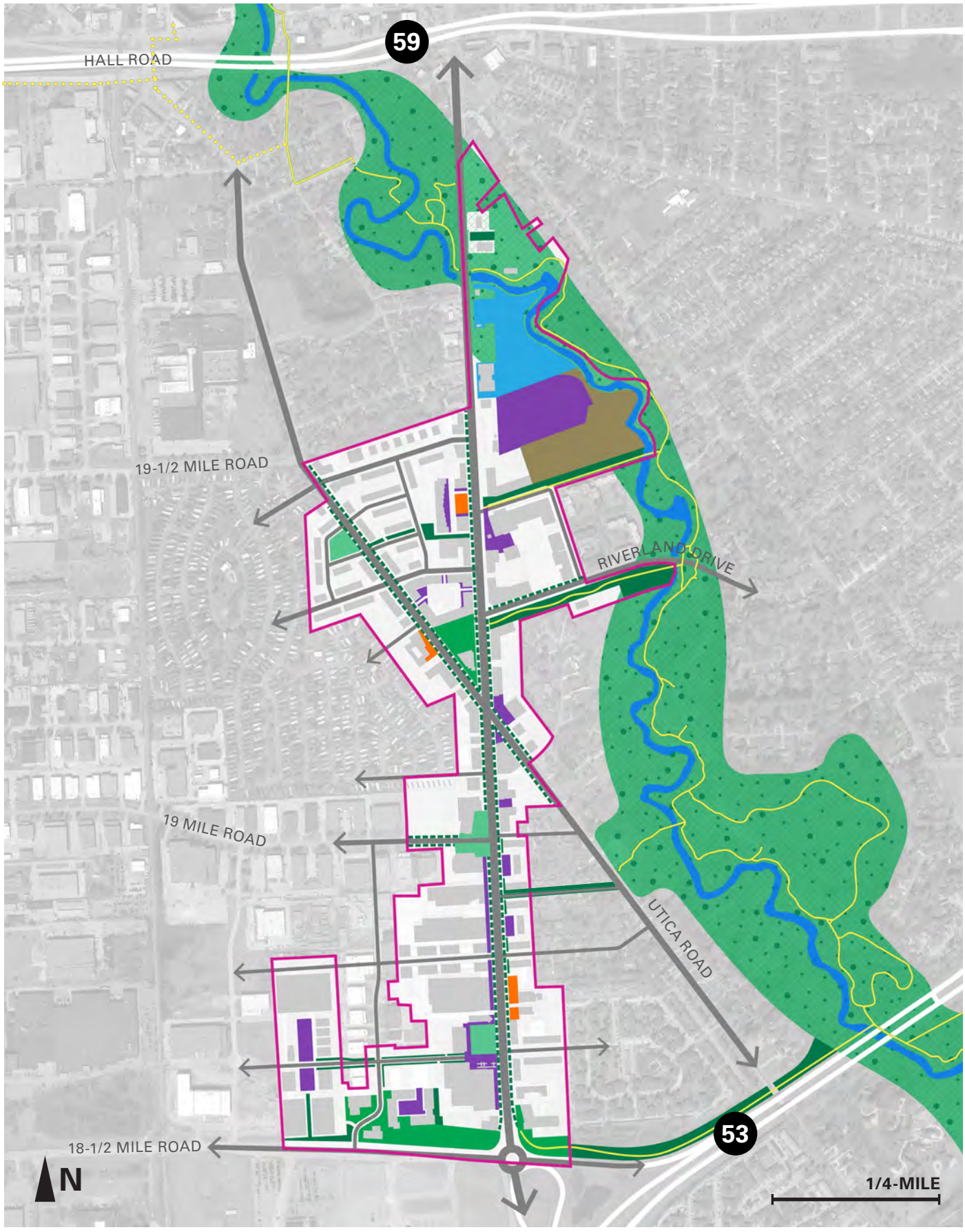
While some of the parks, plazas, and open spaces in this master plan will undoubtedly develop as private or public-private spaces, the same classification system used by the City has been used to organize and understand the proposed landscapes of the future North Van Dyke Avenue district.


A flexible performance/event space within a community park offers opportunities for diverse outdoor activation
Old Town Plaza - Lewisville, TX

# MASTER PLAN PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

*Adapted from the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources Park Classifications*

| Park Typology | Function + Programming | General Location | General Size |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mini-Park** | Provides small green areas, stormwater infrastructure, dog parks, outdoor dining, cafes, public art. | Great use for small, otherwise vacant areas within or adjacent to the public realm; can activate alleys, "leftover" land | < 1 AC |
| **Neighborhood Park** | The basic unit of the park system, neighborhood parks serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Primarily features flexible programming, informal active and passive recreation. | Mostly situated within residential neighborhoods. It is recommended that all residences be within 1/4-mile to 1/2-mile of a neighborhood park. | 5 - 10 AC |
| **Community Park** | Community parks serve a broader range of uses than neighborhood parks. These parks focus on meeting community recreation and activation needs. These parks can often host formal recreation fields and courts. | Determined by the quality and suitability of the site, as the park becomes a destination for users. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods. It is recommended that all residences be within 1/2-mile to 3 miles of a community park. | As needed to accommodate desired uses |
| **Natural Resource Areas** | Lands set aside for the enjoyment of the natural landscape, proximity to the Clinton River, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual esthetics/buffering. | Resource availability and acquisition opportunity. | Variable |
| **Greenways** | Greenways are effective public spaces for tying park system components together to form a continuous landscape environment. | Resource availability and acquisition opportunity. | Variable |
| **Sports Complex** | Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites that are strategically located throughout the community. | Strategically located community-wide facilities. | Determined by projected demand |
| **Private Park/ Recreation Facility** | Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and larger recreation system. | Variable—dependent on specific use. | Variable |
| **Park Trail + Connector Trails** | Multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural resources areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with the natural environment. | Connecting parks. | Sited to tie into larger trail networks |


HALL ROAD
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19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
19 MILE ROAD
UTICA ROAD
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
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## ECOLOGICAL HEALTH + RECOMMENDED VEGETATION ZONES

Protecting ecological health in concert with urban development means both preserving existing on-site natural features, habitats, and trees and creating a developed place that is in balance with ample, healthy vegetation.

### PROTECTING THE CLINTON RIVER

For natural waterways and water bodies in close proximity to urban development, it is important to establish and respect a riparian buffer, within which wildlife is allowed to flourish and development is prohibited without special permitting. While the City of Sterling Heights does not provide specific guidance for the minimum development distance from the river's edge, the state's Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, & Energy (EGLE) issues guidance that provides recommendations based on a variety of site-specific and conditional factors.

Generally, a 100-foot riparian buffer is considered appropriate for small rivers and streams in order to provide sufficient run-off for water filtration and habitat protection. The proposed development shown in the master plan conceptual redevelopment plan respects a 100-foot or greater buffer, with the exception of a potential commercial use (e.g. restaurant, bar, beer garden) depicted north of the river in the north of the district. Such a special use would likely require special permitting and a development plan that is sensitive to the river and existing habitats.

### STREET TREES + VEGETATION

Today, Van Dyke Avenue is not home to many trees, relative to the amount of development present. The largest clusters of trees exist along the Clinton River and on undeveloped areas adjacent to it and within the flood zone. This plan aims to preserve these existing clusters of forested area through conservation of open space and conversion to park lands. The plan also proposes planting trees along every street, within all public and private park lands, and within each development site and parking lot.

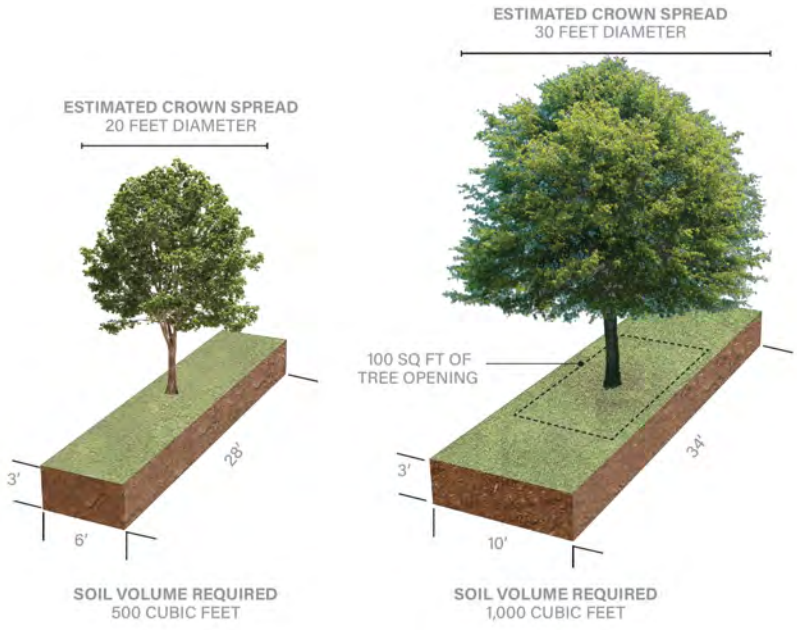
Streets that are good for people are also good for the environment. Everyone knows that trees help clean the air by removing carbon dioxide and expelling life-giving oxygen. In large quantities and in dense configurations, this can result in measurable improvements in air quality in places with high levels of vehicular travel.

But trees in dense, urban places also create substantial passive benefits when lining streets, developments, and parking lots. Beyond the general enjoyment people experience on well-vegetated streets, the shade provided by trees provides respite

on hot summer days, which creates a more pleasant environment for walking, biking, and shopping. Without these trees, businesses would almost certainly experience declines in foot traffic on such days, as people might choose to stay indoors or drive to their destinations. The shade trees provide also helps reduce the amount of heat that enters glazed facades in retail, office, and residential development on hot days, reducing the amount of energy required to keep spaces comfortable. The same is true of the paved areas beneath their canopies. Without street trees, heat from the sun can get trapped in asphalt and concrete, increasing the overall heat of urban areas. Trees, shrubs, and other plant life within the district should consist of species that are local to the area and resilient to its unique mix of weather conditions and seasonal changes. Different species are appropriate for different contexts within an urban district depending on their respective needs. For urban districts with high vehicular traffic volumes, plants known to improve air quality are recommended. Macomb County provides a helpful guide to selecting appropriate trees and other vegetation in the *Green Macomb Urban Forest Partnership: Commercial Streetscape Planting Guidance* document. The document provides information on specific species recommended for high-traffic commercial streets including tree selections for improving air quality, and a "do not plant" list of invasive species to avoid.

Typically, urban districts host a variety of native trees, rather than a single species, to add diversity and character to the public realm and promote the long-term health of the trees. Planting a variety of trees in clusters with sizable gaps between similar species clusters can help prevent the spread of tree diseases and keep trees alive and healthy.

Planting zones hosting street trees should be large enough to accommodate healthy tree growth and support an abundant planting understory (plantings beneath tree canopies). These areas, when properly sized, can also support green stormwater infrastructures, as discussed in the next section. See the figures on the previous page for recommendations on proper sizing for tree growth and long-term health.



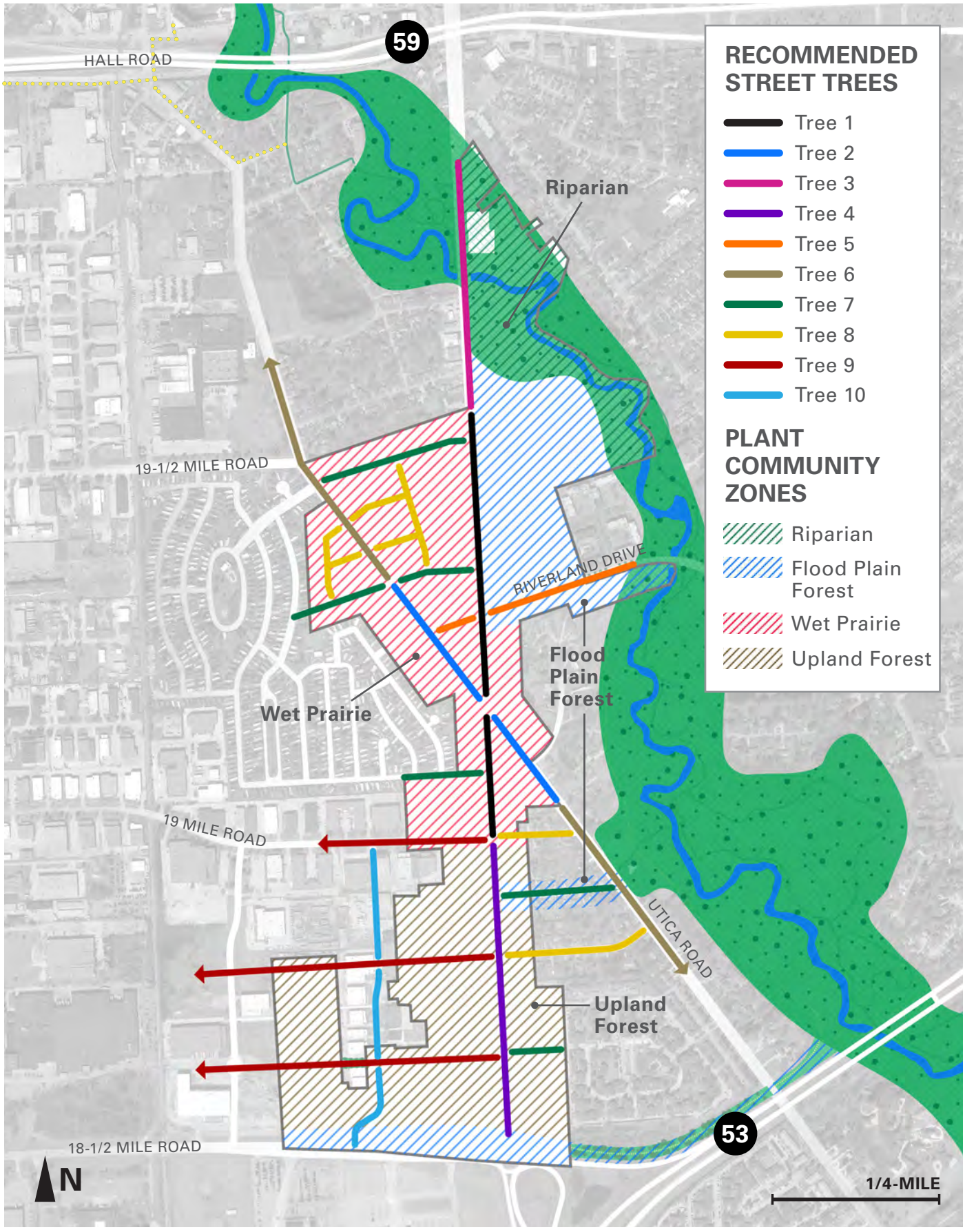

Designing streets with appropriate spacing and planting zone dimensions is important to keeping trees healthy.

## STREET TREE PLANTING

The primary goal of a street tree planting plan is to balance public realm functionality with esthetics. Successful tree planting along streetscapes requires consideration of practical factors such as mature growth size (height and canopy spread), root behavior, and its relationship to utilities and planting allotments. Resilience to forces like flooding, drought, air pollution, and traffic volumes are elements that are critical to consider. Balanced with the practical considerations are the experiential qualities, such as tree esthetics, shade provided, foliage colors and seasonal shedding, and shape. A successful district-wide tree planting plan will distribute the right trees in the right places while ensuring quality, longevity, ecological health and performance, and diversity within the public realm. The recommended tree list has been adapted from recommended trees by Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, & Energy (EGLE) and trees allowable by the City of Sterling Heights in the right-of-ways.

*Source for height and spread: https://www.mortonarb.org/*

| Street Tree Zone | General Requirements | Recommended Appropriate Tree Species | Mature Height + Spread |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Tree 1:** Core, primary street | Large canopy tree; flood, pollution, and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Northern Red Oak** *(Quercus rubra)* | H: 60′ - 75′<br>S: 60′ - 75′ |
| **Tree 2:** Core, primary street | Large canopy tree; flood, pollution, and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Triumph Elm** *(Ulmus 'Morton Glossy')* | H: 50′ - 60′<br>S: 35′ - 40′ |
| **Tree 3:** Outside core, primary street | Large canopy tree; flood, pollution, and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Swamp White Oak** *(Quercus bicolor)* | H: 50′ - 60′<br>S: 50′ - 60′ |
| **Tree 4:** Industrial/ commercial area, primary street | Large canopy tree; pollution and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Swamp White Oak** *(Quercus bicolor)* | H: 50′ - 60′<br>S: 50′ - 60′ |
| **Tree 5:** Core and greenway, secondary street | Medium canopy tree; flood, pollution, and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Sunset Red Maple** *(Acer rubrum 'Franksred')* | H: 40′ - 60′<br>S: 35′ - 45′ |
| **Tree 6:** Outside core, primary street | Medium canopy tree; pollution and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Triumph Elm** *(Ulmus 'Morton Glossy')* | H: 50′ - 60′<br>S: 35′ - 40′ |
| **Tree 7:** Outside core, secondary and tertiary streets | Medium canopy tree; pollution and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Sunset Red Maple** *(Acer rubrum 'Franksred')* | H: 40′ - 60′<br>S: 35′ - 45′ |
| **Tree 8:** Outside core, secondary and tertiary streets | Medium canopy tree; pollution and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Hackberry** *(Celtis occidentalis)* | H: 40′ - 60′<br>S: 40′ - 50′ |
| **Tree 9:** Industrial area, secondary and tertiary streets | Small canopy tree; pollution and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Gingko** *(Ginkgo balboa)*<br>**Princeton Elm** *(Ulmus americana 'Princeton')* | H: 50′ - 80′<br>S: 30′ - 50′ |
| **Tree 10:** Industrial area, secondary and tertiary streets | Small canopy tree; pollution and salt tolerance; heat and drought resistance | **Tulip Tree** *(Liriodendron tulipifera)* | H: 70′ - 90′<br>S: 35′ - 50′ |


RECOMMENDED STREET TREES
Tree 1
Tree 2
Tree 3
Tree 4
Tree 5
Tree 6
Tree 7
Tree 8
Tree 9
Tree 10
PLANT COMMUNITY ZONES
Riparian
Flood Plain Forest
Wet Prairie
Upland Forest
HALL ROAD
59
Riparian
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
Flood Plain Forest
Wet Prairie
19 MILE ROAD
UTICA ROAD
Upland Forest
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

## RECOMMENDED ECOLOGICAL TRANSECT

Choosing the planting palette for greening an urban district like the future North Van Dyke Avenue corridor requires strategic decision making and a planting strategy to guide placement and streetscape design. The plants can do more than just beautify; they are builders of soil, air quality, biodiversity, and sense of place. Choosing the right planting palette begins with evaluating the pre-development conditions local to this area.

### PLANT COMMUNITY ZONES

The project area lies within the West Main Branch of the Clinton River east subwatershed draining into Lake St Clair. It is also at the northern limits of the Eastern Deciduous Forest Region. It is considered part of the "Carolinian Life Zone" because of its link with forests located farther south. Many of the species found here are at the northern boundaries of their range. As part of an ancient glacial lake plain, the poorly drained silts and clays of the subwatershed supported hardwood forests and swamps, with ancient beaches and sandy deposits supporting prairie and savanna. (source: CREW-Subwatershed-Plan)

For the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor, the planning team proposes the incorporation of four primary plant community zones within the sub-areas.

**Riparian Zone**

Riparian zones includes the areas along the banks of water bodies that provide a transition between the Clinton River and the adjacent land. This unique habitat will include diverse plant communities that are adapted to fluctuating water levels and provide an important migratory corridor for wildlife in an increasingly fragmented urban landscape.

**Flood Plain Forest Zone**

This zone will include large canopy trees of numerous tree species supported by wildflowers, and grasses. Periodically flooded alluvial soils in this zone can support ferns, mosses, and vines.

**Wet Prairie Zone**

This zone will contain an abundance of species dominated by prairie flowers and grasses and sedges with few trees. The tree clusters in this zone will be reflective of native vegetation as seen in oak barrens' where trees grow in scattered clumps among prairie flowers and grasses.

**Upland Forest Zone**

This zone will include transition communities from woodland to prairie and will be defined by widely spaced trees (typically oak and hickory), containing shrubs, grasses, sedges, ferns and wildflowers in the understory and moderately well-

drained soils. (adapted from CREW-Subwatershed-Plan)

These plant communities are the basis for ecological districts. The 'feel' of these districts aligns with the sub-areas of the corridor. The choice of the tree palette along the right-of-ways will be responsible for maintaining a consistent identity with distinctive sub-districts along the corridor.

## PERFORMATIVE LANDSCAPES + STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor is located within the Clinton River East watershed/ Lake St. Clair regional sub-basin. Development within the watershed and changes in hydrological processes, vegetation, and habitat directly impact the quality of ecosystems within the watershed including the quality of the water resources. Sustainably designed and properly maintained landscapes can promote biodiversity, protect water resources, create and enhance habitats, mitigate urban heat island effects, reduce energy consumption in buildings, save money, and promote health and well-being—all while being beautiful and welcoming. Sustainable stormwater management captures water closer to the source, reducing combined sewer overflows and roadway flooding.

### MANAGING STORMWATER AS A DISTRICT

The City of Sterling Heights may want to explore the option of developing a district-wide stormwater strategy through City/ district-funded and maintained infrastructure. This centralized system could provide capacity for runoff from the public right-of-ways as well as that which runs-off from private development sites. While a large upfront expense, the feature would ensure proper stormwater management and the ability to deploy green technologies sitewide while enticing private development with a major site development consideration accounted for.

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor can manage stormwater through a toolkit of green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) strategies (see page 134). This plan suggests a toolkit of improvements which will assist the City in achieving their stormwater goals. The recommended strategies prioritize natural solutions over highly engineered ones as well as solutions which add ecological value to public realm landscapes and surrounding neighborhoods. The overall goal for GSI includes three major concepts:

- creating storage for water and reusing it within the district;
- slowing the flow of water, and;
- cleaning the water before it is released back into the existing stormwater infrastructure system.

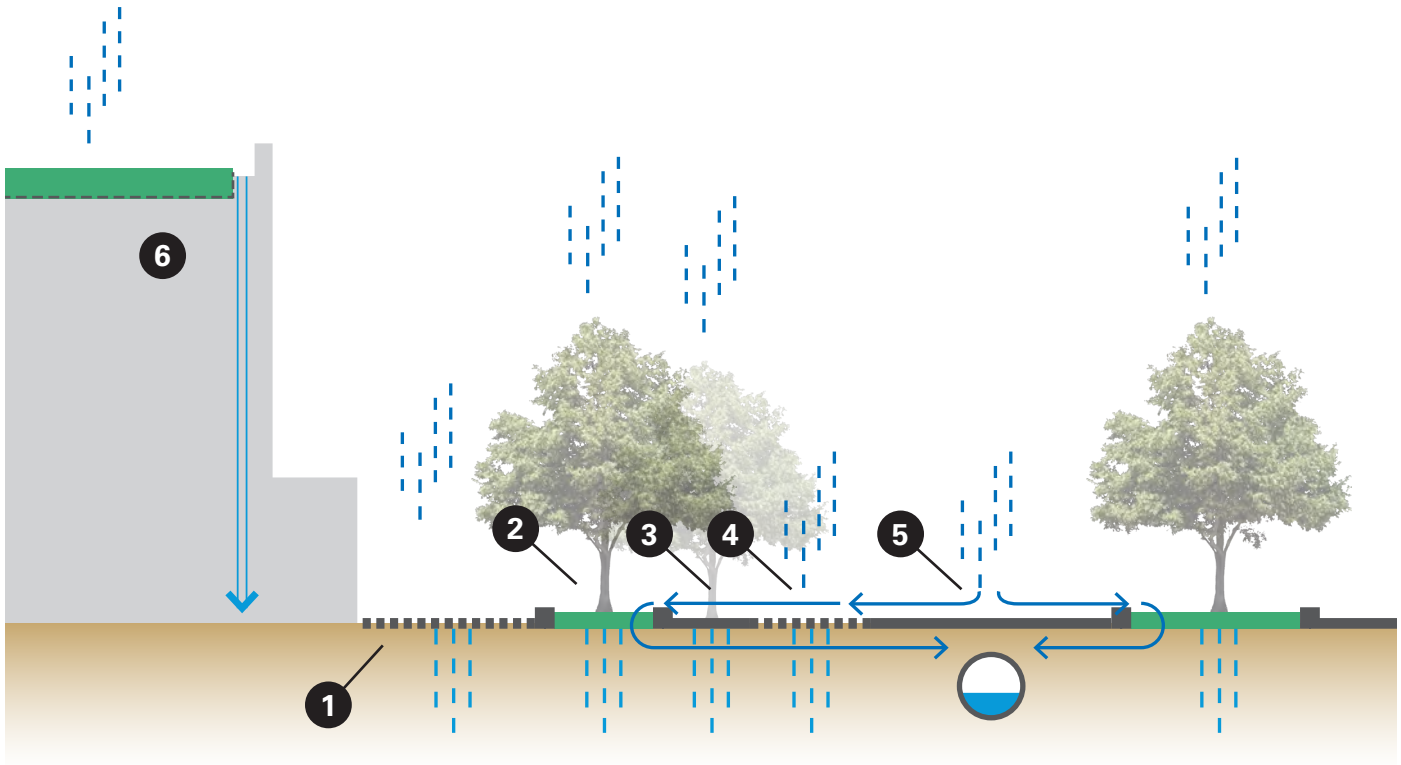
The project area can be divided into four distinct GSI districts, based on the master plan sub-areas, where some of the strategies identified below can be more easily accommodated based on proposed future land uses. However, it is recommended that the City develop a GSI plan to link the tool-kit of strategies together with the stormwater ordinance.

- **Zone 1 (Parkside):** native planting, pervious paving, swales, retention/ detention strategies.
- **Zone 2 (Utica Triangle):** pervious pavements, curb extensions, storage/ retention/detention strategies.
- **Zone 3 (District Core):** green roofs, pervious pavements, planted medians, curb extensions, storage/retention/ detention strategies.
- **Zone 4 (Industrial):** green roofs, pervious pavements, planted medians, curb extensions, storage/ retention/detention strategies.

## GREEN STREETS

Well-designed streetscapes and public realm can become important components in a district's overall infrastructure and strategy for managing stormwater and enhancing the health and sustainability of a place.

As discussed above, trees lining streets, in public parks, associated with private development, and integrated with parking lots provide myriad health, sustainability, and experiential benefits to the urban



environment. Equally important is the understory planted area beneath tree canopies. These plant zones are vital to the health of the trees and other plants as they provide space for roots to grow, but they also provide opportunities for stormwater infiltration and capture through systems like rain gardens, swales, and detention infrastructure.

### PERMEABLE SURFACES

Where possible and practical, permeable pavement should be used on walkways, step-out areas, patio seating areas, parking spaces, and other paved surfaces that experience low-impact traffic. Permeable paving allows rainwater to infiltrate the ground surface and seep into the underlying earth. Increasing the overall surface area where water can permeate the ground is the most sustainable solution to stormwater management as it requires passive infrastructure and results in the greatest distribution of water across a stormwater management system.

The street section diagram to the left shows how the combination of permeable strategies in paved and green areas can allow for maximum stormwater and rainfall seepage through the street and into the ground. Each of the strategies listed below and depicted in this diagram are described in further detail in Chapter 5: The Path to Transformation.

1. Permeable paving in patio seating areas, sidewalks (where possible), and sidewalk amenity areas dramatically increase the area within the right-of-way that allows water infiltration.
2. Planted zones between the sidewalk and the vehicular travel lanes can be designed to be functional stormwater infrastructure with techniques like rain gardens and swales. Native understory planting and soils help filter stormwater from the streets and sidewalks, which drain into these areas through curb cuts.
3. Curb extensions at intersections and crosswalks can accommodate planted areas with green stormwater infrastructure.
4. Street parking areas experience low speeds and lighter traffic than roads and can often accommodate permeable pavers in lieu of asphalt.
5. Rainwater from the streets can runoff to green/retention stormwater infrastructure on either side of the street.
6. Rainfall can be captured at private development sites via green roofs and on-site infiltration and retention strategies.

# GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE TOOLKIT STRATEGIES

## Single-lot Strategies

**Residential Rain Garden**
40' x 100' Rain Garden 6" average depth underdrain

**14,960 gal***

**Rain Barrel**
Individual 55 gallon rain barrel connected to downspout

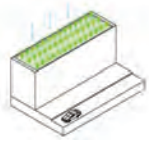
**55 gal***

**Vacant Lot - Central Ponding**
50'x110' lot, 5' setback, 5:1 side slopes, 12" bioretention soils

**67,320 gal***

**Green Roof - Intensive**
1,000 SF; variable green roof media depth, 1/3 - 18", 1/6 - 4", 1/6 - 36", and 1/3 pavers

**2,369 gal***



**Green Roof - Extensive**
1.000 SF, 4"- deep green roof media. 2005 EPA study found summer retention of 95+%, winter retention < 20%. average annual retention 20-50%.

**748 gal***

## Right-of-way Strategies

**Median : Narrow**
5'-wide x 40' x 6" ponding. 12" rain garden soils, no outlet to sewer.

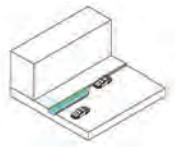
**1,196 gal***

**Median: Medium**
15'x 40'x 9" ponding. 12" bioretention soils. Tie underdrain to storm sewer. Overflow structure

**4,712 gal***

**Median: Wide**
25' x 40' x 9" ponding. 12" bioretention soils. Tie underdrain to storm sewer. Overflow structure

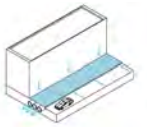
**7,854 gal***



**Bulb Out**
234 square feet. 18" bioretention soil. 8" filter material. 6" ponding

**2,013 gal***

## Aggregated-lot Strategies



**Porous Paving With Stormtech System**
1,000 SF, 16" Tall SC-310 stormtech system with 10" stone above and below

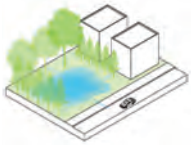
**7,405 gal***

**Productive Land: Hoop House Growing**
1 AC; volume of runoff in gallons reduced by going from current lot (C=0.5) to agricultural land with greenhouses (C=0.45)

**6,992 gal***

**Productive Land: Forestation**
1 AC; volume of runoff in gallons reduced by going from current lot (C=0.5) to wooded lot (C=0.1)

**55,934 gal***

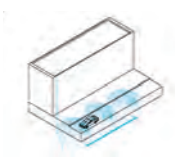


**Central Ponding/Stormwater Park**
Ponding size and park amenities can vary significantly depending on available land.

**0.2 - 50 gal***

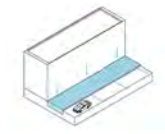
**Productive Land: Crops**
1 AC; volume of runoff in gallons reduced by going from current lot (C=0.5) to crops lot (C=0.2)

**41,950 gal***



**Cistern**
Individual 10,000 gallon underground rain cistern receiving rainfall from business roof drains

**10,000 gal***



**Porous Paving With Underground**
1,000 SF of porous pavement, with 3' of stone storage below, 30% porosity

**6,732 gal***

** Indicates average stormwater volume that can be removed from the City stormwater system. Note the actual volumes can vary based on specific GSI design and site conditions.*

## STORMWATER SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

Future green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) projects should strive to achieve multiple social, environmental, economic and esthetic benefits for the region. As the City moves forward with GSI initiatives and works with community members and property owners, the following criteria should be used to help select appropriate strategies for individual lots, large storage areas, and streetscapes.

### GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE TOOLKIT

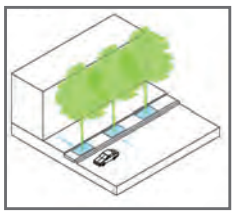
Different stormwater management strategies are appropriate for different sites and yield varying retention and infiltration results. The GSI toolkit identifies these strategies along with guidance on appropriate applications and approximate retention capacities based on generic implementation dimensions. These strategies can be pursued throughout the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor by both public and private entities.

## PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA FOR GSI SITE SELECTION

### SINGLE LOT STRATEGIES

- ☑ Lot is on a block with >50% occupancy
- ☑ Lot is located within historic floodplain
- ☑ Lot is adjacent to/along greenway routes
- ☑ Responsible party for maintenance is identified

### RIGHT-OF-WAY STRATEGIES: ARTERIALS AND MAJOR ROADWAYS



- ☑ ROW capacity exceeds latest traffic counts
- ☑ Canopy coverage along ROW is <20%
- ☑ Active businesses occupy >50% of ROW frontage
- ☑ Responsible party for maintenance is identified

### AGGREGATED LOT STRATEGIES

- ☑ Capacity for a minimum of 10,000 gallons of retention
- ☑ Lots are on a block with <50% occupancy
- ☑ Lots are located within historic floodplain
- ☑ Lots are adjacent to/along greenway routes
- ☑ Responsible party for maintenance is identified

### RIGHT-OF-WAY STRATEGIES: RESIDENTIAL STREETS

- ☑ Blocks along street are >50% occupied
- ☑ Street connects to park, greenway or other GSI
- ☑ ROW has significant volume capacity
- ☑ ROW has green spaces like tree lawns or medians
- ☑ Responsible party for maintenance is identified

*GSI selection for sites will be contingent on local codes and approvals processes.*

## ON-SITE GREENING + STORMWATER MANAGEMENT EXAMPLES

In the absence of a district-wide system sufficiently sized to capture 100% of the stormwater runoff from the right-of-ways and private development sites, each private site will be required to manage their own runoff on site while also mitigating any offsets created by development. Several recommended examples of effective and sustainable stormwater management techniques are provided in Chapter 5. Private development sites are encouraged to be designed with landscapes that are usable, well-distributed throughout a site, and performative in terms of water and tree cover. Commercial and industrial districts

### COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES - EXISTING CONDITION

Today, few trees and little designed or performative landscaping exists either within or adjacent to the right-of-way. Trees are sparse throughout the corridor.

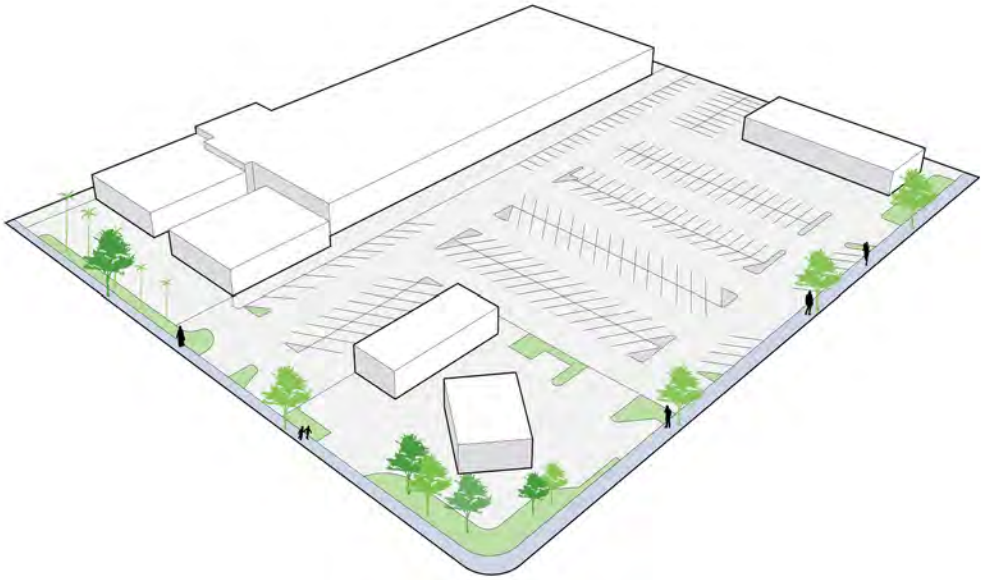
### COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES - PROPOSED CONDITION

Future development and redevelopment within commercial and mixed-use sites should add trees to the public realm and parking lots, utilize a variety of sustainable landscaped stormwater features, and utilize rooftops for solar panels or green space.

should provide adequately-sized trees along streets where development is set back from the sidewalks. Trees should be planted at regular intervals of approximately 60’ to 100’ in surface parking lots, both around the perimeter and between parking lanes. Wherever possible, hard surfaces with non-vehicular traffic or low traffic speeds should incorporate permeable pavement to allow for infiltration of stormwater runoff into the ground. Where feasible, rooftops of commercial, residential, and industrial buildings should incorporate solar panels for energy generation or green roofs for heat distribution efficiency and additional stormwater retention.

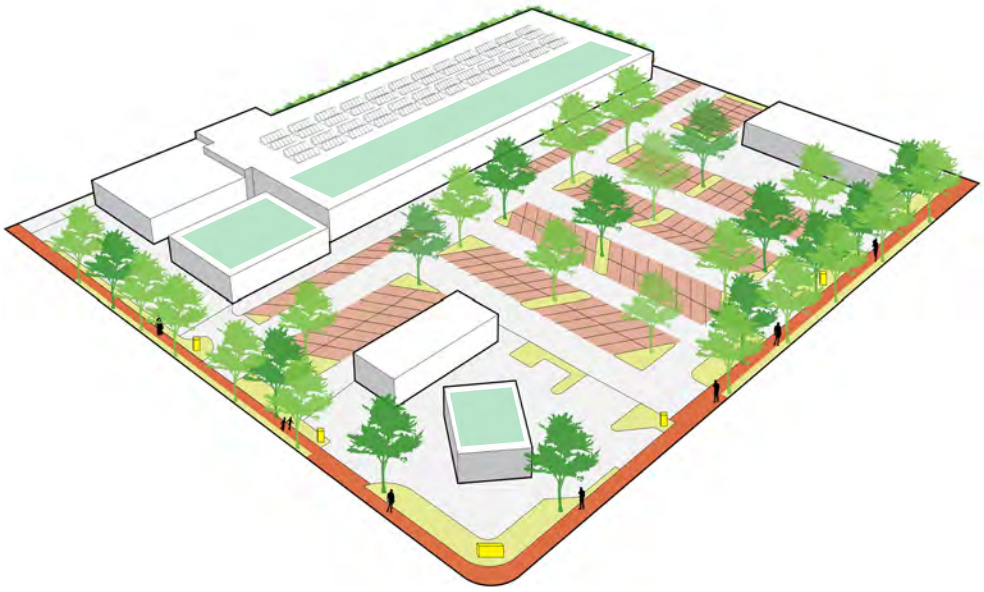
### INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES - EXISTING CONDITION

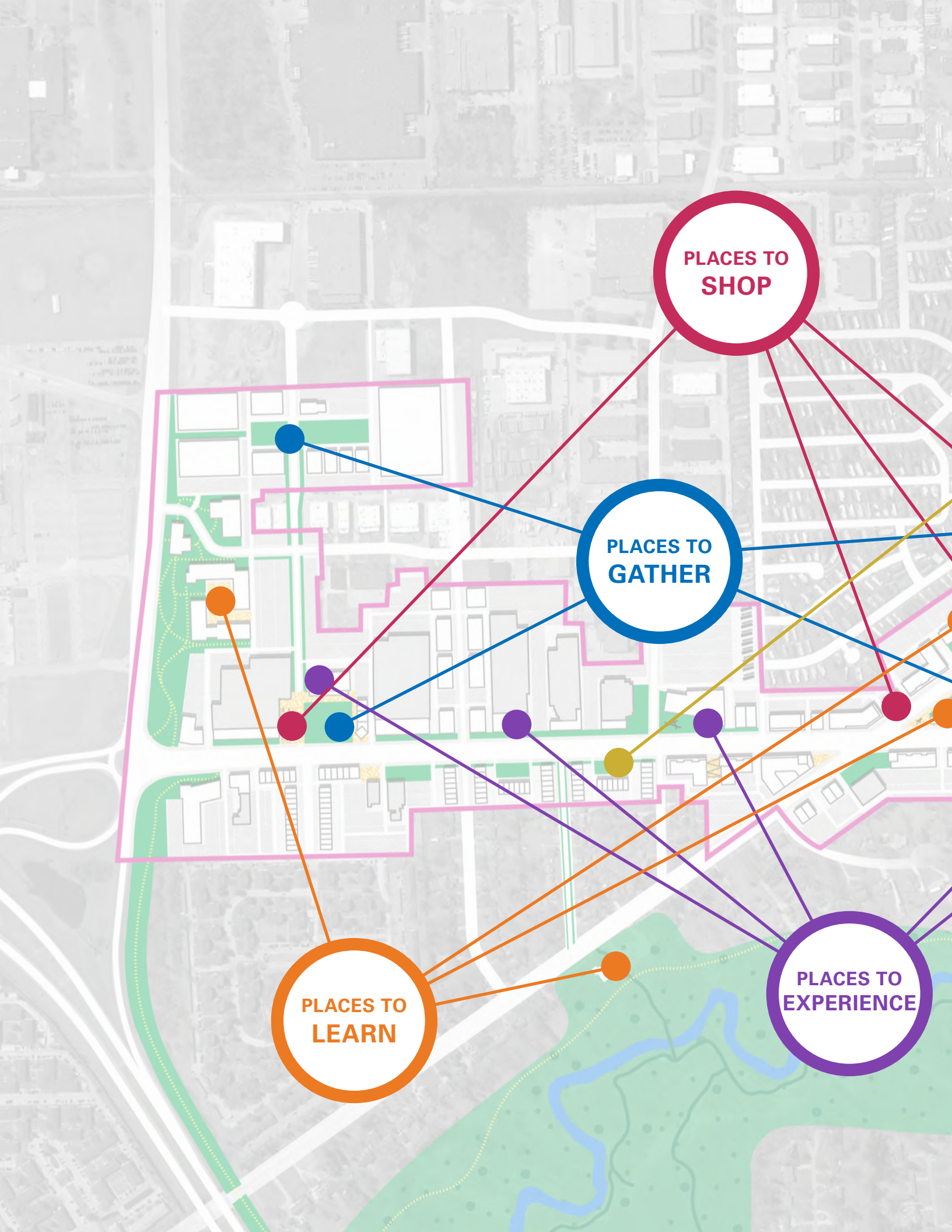
Today, industrial sites have little relationship with the street and provide few trees along their perimeter. Parking lots are uninterrupted seas of asphalt.

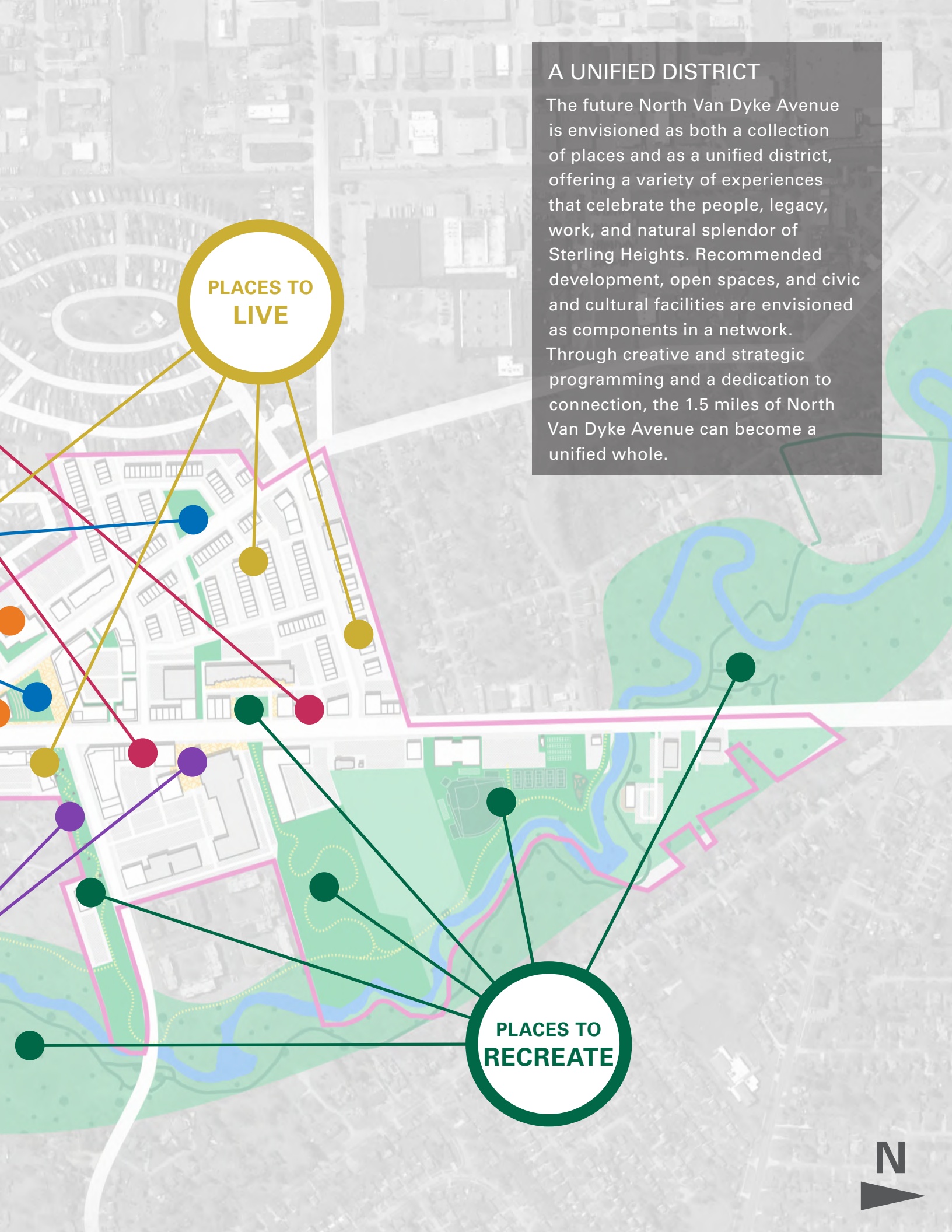


### INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES - PROPOSED CONDITION

Future industrial development sites should utilize permeable pavement in parking areas (where possible) and walking zones and incorporate continuous trees along the perimeter and within surface parking lots. Green rooftops should be explored.




PLACES TO
SHOP
PLACES TO
GATHER
PLACES TO
LEARN
PLACES TO
EXPERIENCE




## A UNIFIED DISTRICT

The future North Van Dyke Avenue is envisioned as both a collection of places and as a unified district, offering a variety of experiences that celebrate the people, legacy, work, and natural splendor of Sterling Heights. Recommended development, open spaces, and civic and cultural facilities are envisioned as components in a network. Through creative and strategic programming and a dedication to connection, the 1.5 miles of North Van Dyke Avenue can become a unified whole.

# DISTRICT PROGRAMMING + ACTIVATION

## THE STREET AS A DESTINATION

Like great buildings, parks, and neighborhoods, great streets are places in their own right. When designed with character and the pedestrian in mind, streets draw people in and propel strolling and exploring. Active streets provide variation, interactivity with the ground floor, a comfortable pedestrian environment, vegetation, unique features, and public art.

## PLACES TO GATHER

Carving out civic space on streetscapes is a great way to add life and dynamism to the urban environment. Providing places to rest, gather small groups, enjoy a coffee or meal, or have a conversation attracts people and encourages them to stay. In addition to common street furniture like benches and bike racks, signature public features like fireplaces, public art, and interactive elements can help bring character to a place.

## GROUND FLOOR POROSITY

Urban streets that thrive as enjoyable places to walk and visit are porous with ground floor development. Ground floors are transparent, offering views and access to shops, restaurants, art galleries, offices, civic and community functions, and the like. Streets with restaurants, bars, and cafes can expand to outdoor seating along the sidewalk.

While creating porous frontages is important for sustaining retail and busy urban centers, they are also important for creating comfortable pedestrian environments and high quality districts. Multifamily and office developments should also take care to create porous and transparent street facades on the ground floor, where possible. Building lobbies, corner stores, cafes, gymnasia, community rooms, and other uses where large windows are appropriate are recommended for all ground floors facing primary streets.

Transparent facades along Van Dyke Avenue in the North VDA Industrial sub-area are also encouraged where possible and appropriate. While not typical of industrial and manufacturing buildings, this master plan envisions North Van Dyke Avenue as a place that celebrates these uses. In some cases, industrial uses and manufacturing operations are interesting for spectators to observe and large, transparent glass facades are appropriate (e.g. breweries, large machinery, 3D printing, fire stations, etc.). Alternatively, these facilities could face lobbies or cafes with windows towards the street.

Where it is not possible or desired to showcase internal operations, industrial development facing Van Dyke Avenue could incorporate dynamic lighting or similar features in lieu of large, blank facades.

**Q: What kind of retail experiences is Van Dyke Avenue right for?** *(Participants were invited to select more than one option)*

LOCAL / MAKER SHOPS

44

MAIN STREET

42

DINING + NIGHTLIFE

33

DESTINATION RETAIL

17

X None of these 1

? Other 1

**Q: What kind of outdoor activities would you like to participate in along a transformed Van Dyke Avenue?**

DINING
LIVE MUSIC
OUTDOOR FAMILY MOVIES
CONCERTS
VISUAL ENTERTAINMENT
BEER GARDEN
NATURE PARKS
LOCAL ART, SHARED STUDIOS
SPORTS
FOOD TRUCKS
RECREATION
ART FAIR
ICE SCULPTURES
HOLIDAY EVENTS
WALKING
SHOPPING
NIGHT LIFE
GOLF
BICYCLING
FRUIT MARKET
BUSINESS GATHERING
GIANT PUBLIC FIREPLACE

**Q: What kind of civic facilities does Van Dyke Avenue need?**

VOCATIONAL SCHOOL
ART MUSEUM
CULTURAL DESTINATIONS
RECREATION/FITNESS PARKS
PARK SPACE
LIBRARY ANNEX
SKILLS CENTER
LIVE-WORK SPACE
BOCCE COURTS
ICE RINK
TENNIS COURTS
LIBRARY
SENIOR CENTER
FISHING
CULTURAL CENTER
ARTWORK (MURALS, SCULPTURES, ETC.)
RECREATION FIELDS COMPLEMENTING RIVER AND JIMMY JOHNS FIELD
MULTIFUNCTIONAL ART SPACE
CAFES
FOOD MARKET
INDOOR POOL
MAKER-SPACE
BICYCLE REPAIR
TRAILS
MULTI-PURPOSE RECREATION FACILITY (BASKETBALL, VOLLEYBALL, SOCCER, ETC.)
ZIPLINE

## STREET + DEVELOPMENT FRONTAGE ACTIVATION

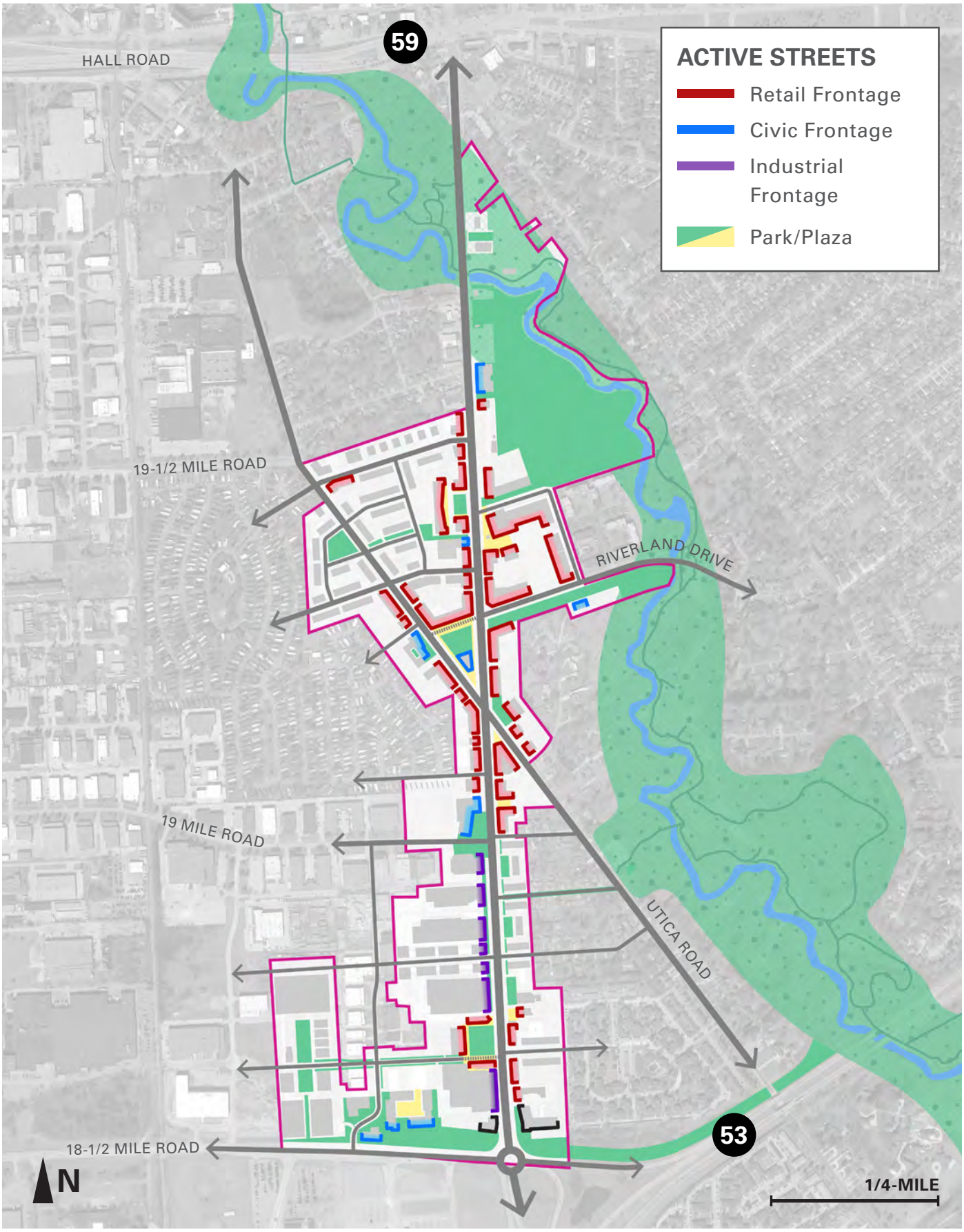
Urban districts and commercial streets are vibrant places to be, desirable places to live and work, and economically successful when they are well-activated. Street activation is a fairly straight-forward idea: it means streets where there is a lot going on. Activation is about encouraging visitation and lingering within the district as one walks down the sidewalk and is pulled ever further out of curiosity of what is on the next block.

Streets are primarily activated with street-facing development with ground floors dedicated to retail, civic, and other publicly-accessible uses. The best urban districts and streets have continuous retail frontages, as retailers, restaurants, bars, and salons benefit from clustering together and collectively offering visitors a destination to explore. For retail streets to be successful, retail spaces must be well-designed, welcoming, and transparent to encourage patronage and give pedestrians a glimpse of what is going on inside.

While retail is the primary driver of activated ground floors, other developments and uses can contribute their own activated public realms to the ensemble of the street. Civic buildings such as libraries, museums, recreation centers, and performance centers all offer public amenities and have interesting things going on inside them. These spaces are encouraged to open up to the street with glazed facades and front landscapes that welcome street life into them and become extensions of the streetscape. Industrial and manufacturing facilities can also offer glazed facades to the public realm, contributing views of interesting industrial or public-facing uses to the street.

Activated facades make for great streets of all kind, however retail uses and major civic facilities should be concentrated along major retail corridors like Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road, in order to create a more cohesive and legible urban district and reap the benefits of commercial clustering. Neighborhood and other tertiary streets would welcome a quieter public realm and less transient activity.

Beyond the development, active streets are also streets with considered and accommodating public realms. Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road are both proposed to have wide sidewalks for outdoor seating, comfortable pedestrian movement, and activity zones where planting, lighting, seating, public art, and unique features can be installed and enjoyed.


ACTIVE STREETS
Retail Frontage
Civic Frontage
Industrial Frontage
Park/Plaza
HALL ROAD
59
19-1/2 MILE ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
19 MILE ROAD
UTICA ROAD
53
18-1/2 MILE ROAD
N
1/4-MILE

The Lawn on D
Boston, MA

## EXPERIMENTING WITH SPACE

Many cities have had very positive experiences with tactical—or experimental—urbanism in redeveloping urban areas. This often involves low-cost, temporary installations and activations that reflect potential future redevelopment and permanent activation, to build a brand and excitement for future investments.


The District
Henderson, NV

## FLEXIBLE PUBLIC SPACE

Public spaces such as parks, plazas, and some streets should be designed to accommodate a wide variety of uses including art installations, performances, and gatherings. The best urban districts are those that can serve as palettes for creativity and platforms for new experiences.

Titletown Plaza
Green Bay, WI

## YEAR-ROUND ACTIVATION

For cities in a northern climate, extra effort is required to activate public space and bring people outdoors in the winter months. Many cities have recently been experimenting with winter festivals, beer gardens, skating rinks, and other winter festivities in major public parks and plazas. This kind of winter programming is popular when designed to be fun and hospitable in cold weather, with features like tents and fireplaces.

## A COMFORTABLE PUBLIC REALM

Creating great streets starts with a wide, comfortable public realm, but it does not end there. Furnishing a streetscape with elements that accommodate the way people use it (e.g. benches for sitting, lights for night activation, a variety of vegetation, bike racks, wayfinding, outdoor seating, public art, etc.) helps complete the public realm and offers opportunities to establish a unique identity for an urban district.

Domain Plaza
Austin, TX

## SIGNATURE FEATURES

Signature features like a community stage and amphitheater in a park, water features where kids can play, fountains, and streetside fireplaces contribute to the identity of a place. Siting these throughout the public realm signals that these places are for people and lead to everyday engagement that is fun and creative. Any installations within the right-of-way will need to be coordinated with respective jurisdictions.


Broadway
Wheaton, IL

## SPACE FOR EVENTS

When a dense district becomes home to community, events such as farmers' markets, art festivals, cultural celebrations, and street festivals begin happening. This kind of regular temporary activation should be planned for and encouraged. Designing a pedestrian promenade or segment of the right-of-way where these events can play out should be a priority as development takes shape.

Cherry Creek
Denver, CO

## GATEWAYS + PUBLIC ART STRATEGY

Marking the gateways into a district communicates to pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers that they are entering a distinctive place and sets the overall tone for the experience of the place.

### GATEWAY SIGNAGE

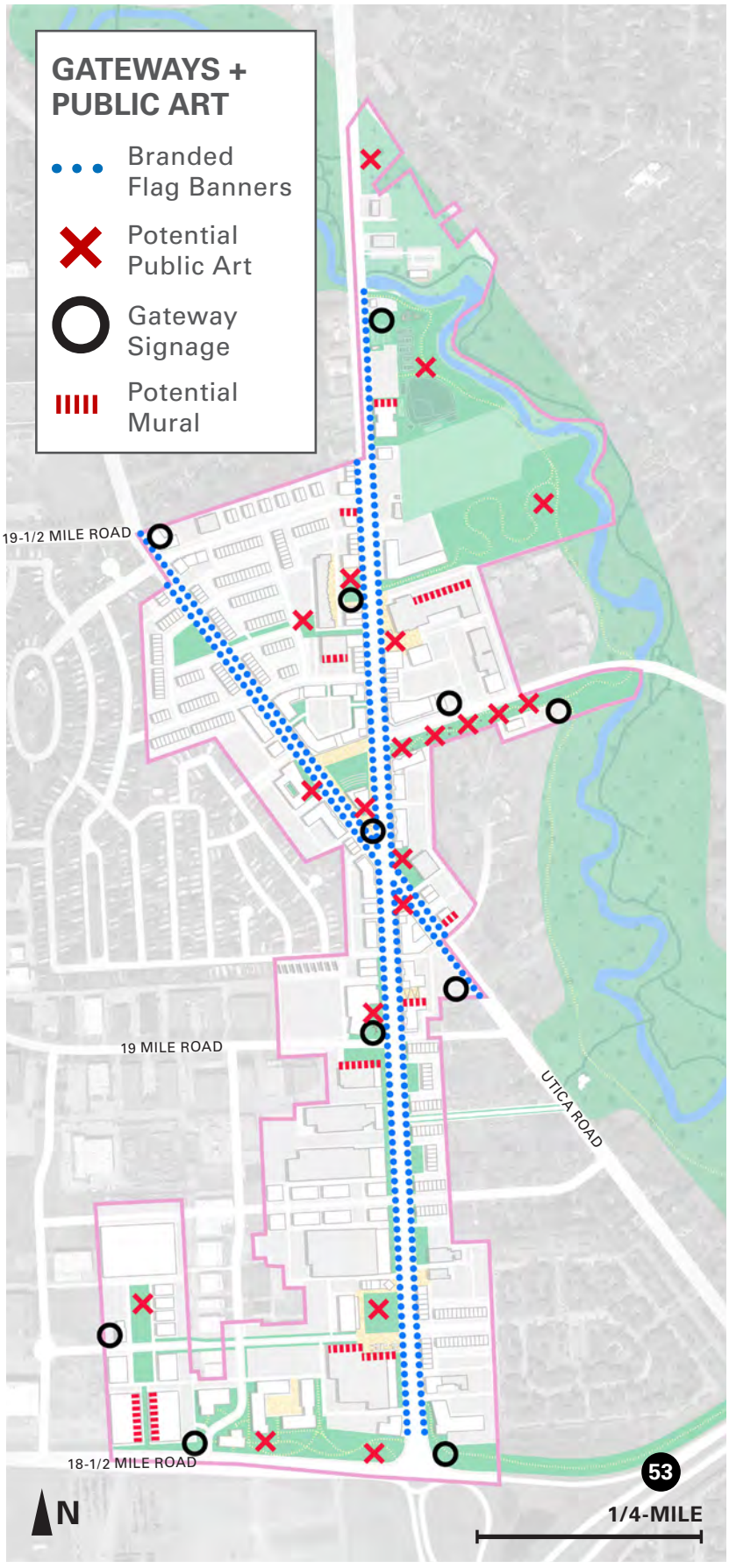
Gateway signage is among the most obvious ways to demarcate a special place. Large, branded, sculptural signs at major intersection and public spaces, literal gateways, street light banners, wayfinding, and other district-identifying features both signify one's arrival to or presence within a district, but also establish cohesiveness between developments and elements of the public realm. Often these special features can create advertising benefits for the City, district, and private development as they become "Instagrammable" moments that can be shared widely online and in promotional material. Gateways and signage should be developed in consideration of a unified district branding approach.

### PUBLIC ART

Some of the most dynamic elements of urban districts are the public art carefully situated within them. Public art in the form of sculptures, light features, murals, and interactive and performance art sets create activity and buzz, encourage engagement, and inspire creativity and critical thinking within a place. These elements provide a thoughtful contrast to the typical components of development, streetscapes, and public places. To a certain extent, places like the one envisioned for North Van Dyke Avenue in this master plan can be seen as district-wide museums, with a coordinated public art strategy and an embrace of a public art program from public officials and private developers.

The best public art is that which is sited intentionally for its context. Murals, sculptures, and interactive/temporary pieces and sets should engage with their context and respond to the overall composition of the district. A good approach for incorporating contextually appropriate art is to commission local artists to develop the art.

To facilitate the inclusion of public art in private projects, the City can institute requirements and incentives in zoning and other local regulations. Nationally and in local communities across the county, "one percent for the arts" programs have resulted in more public art, though these programs are typically successful when tied to public funding or lands. To encourage more public art associated with private development, the City could partner with developers to incorporate it and help connect them to local artists. The City could also partner with a regional museum to maintain an outdoor collection throughout the district.

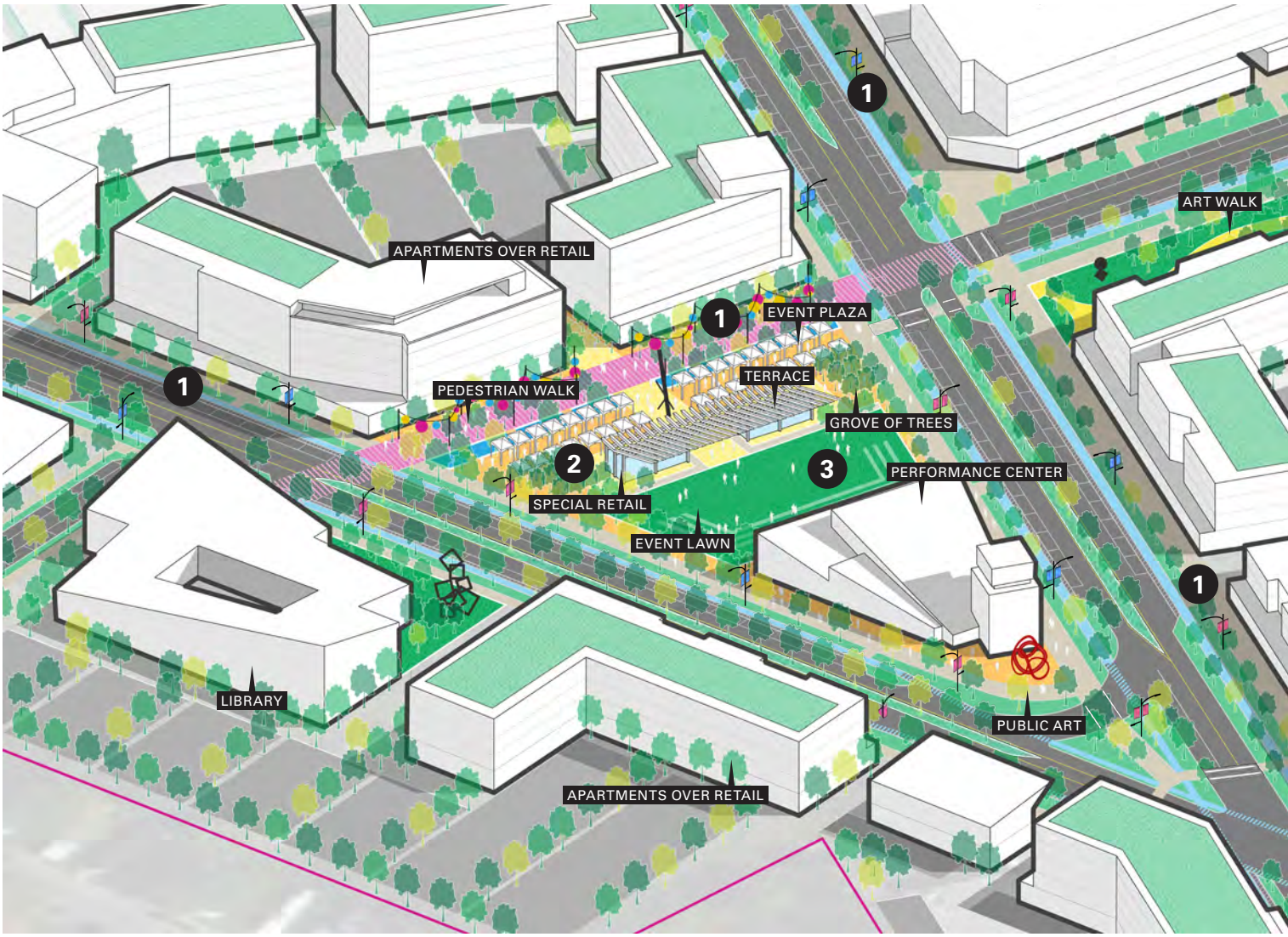



*Sculptural, branded signage*

*Branded gateway structures*

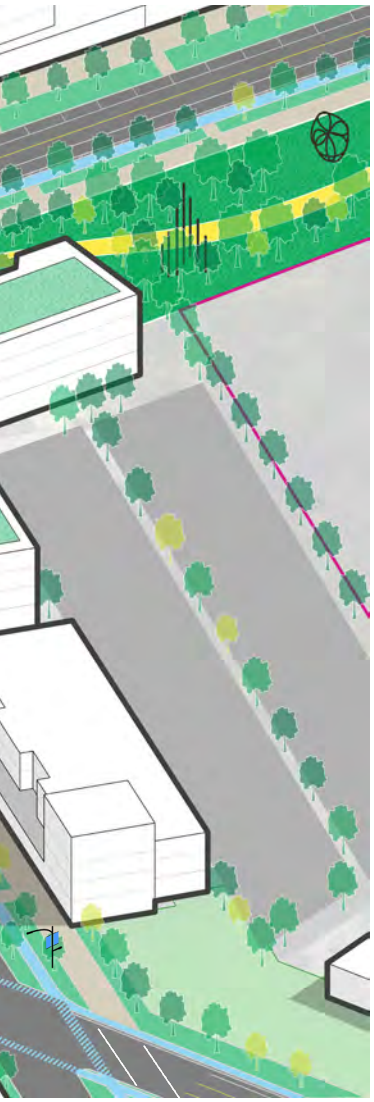

*Murals on blank facades in public realm*


*Sculptures in the public realm*




## A CITY CENTER

North Van Dyke Avenue's District Core is the heart of this 240-acre mixed-use, urban place. Featuring a central park and plaza that can serve as the City's front yard, the Core is designed to become a regional destination for events, year-round public programming, and community gathering. Fronted by a major civic use, such as a performing arts center, at the northern intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road, the central park and plaza can be activated regularly with outdoor events, performances, and flexible daily use. A combination of soft and hard landscaped zones creates opportunities for a range of activation types, including festival tents, outdoor film nights, and pick-up games. Public art, rentable retail spaces, a landscaped connection to the Clinton River greenway, and signature architectural features create a distinctive place at the center of North Van Dyke Avenue.



**Active Streets**
Development with ground floor retail pushed right up against wide sidewalks in the District Core enables active and engaging streets. Planted zones, street trees, outdoor seating, signage, and street furniture help create a pleasant pedestrian environment.

**The DIstrict's Central Park**
A central plaza adjacent to development and hosting rentable facilities creates opportunities for special events such as festivals, farmers' markets, outdoor dining for restaurants, and casual recreation amidst the active mixed-use environment.

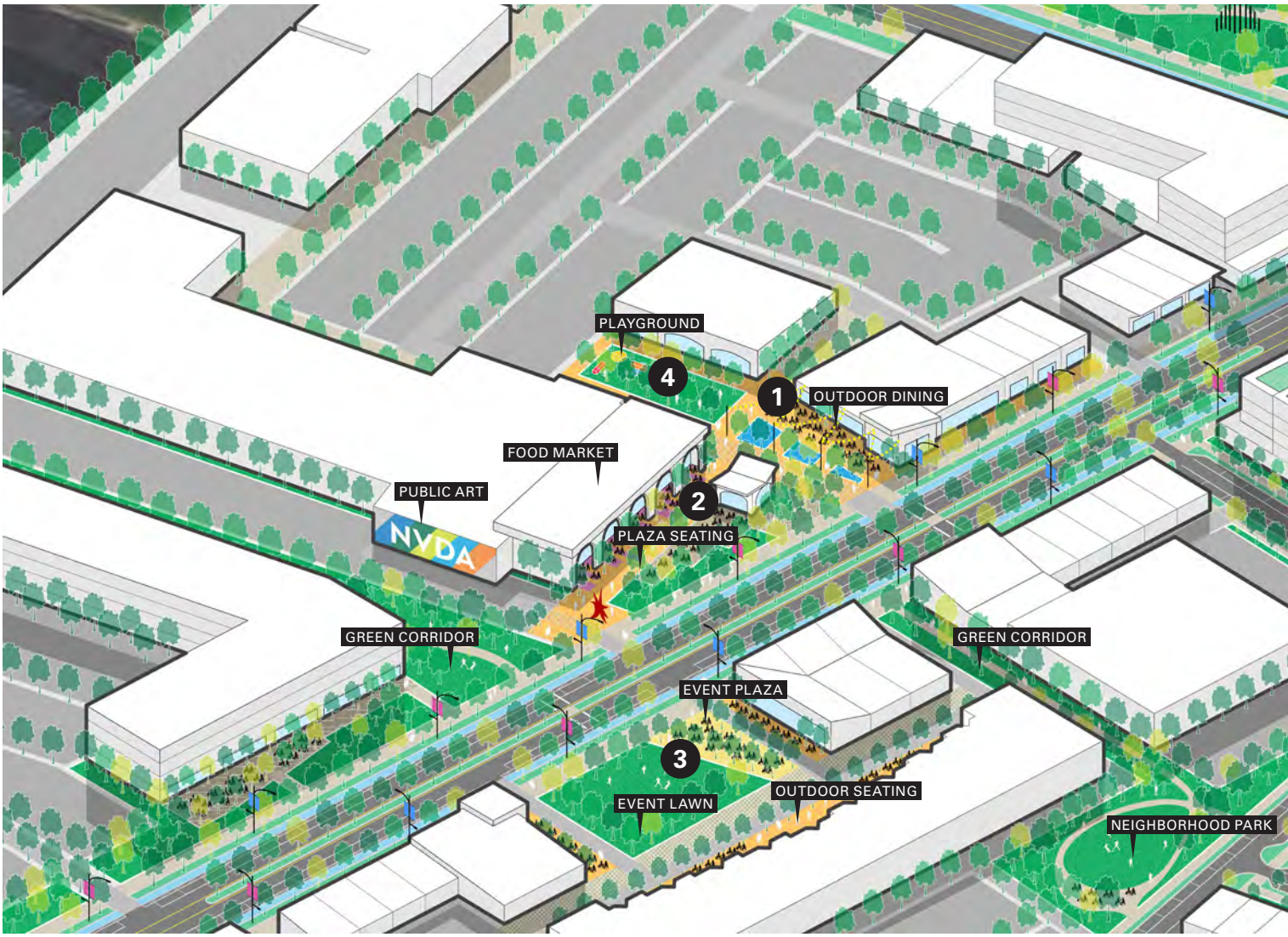
**A Community Park**
A central park provides flexible community space for residents of new multifamily development within the District Core. Adjacency to community uses such as a library, community center, or performing arts space allows for spill-out activity and community gathering for events like concerts, plays, movie nights, and sports.




CAFÉ BEAN

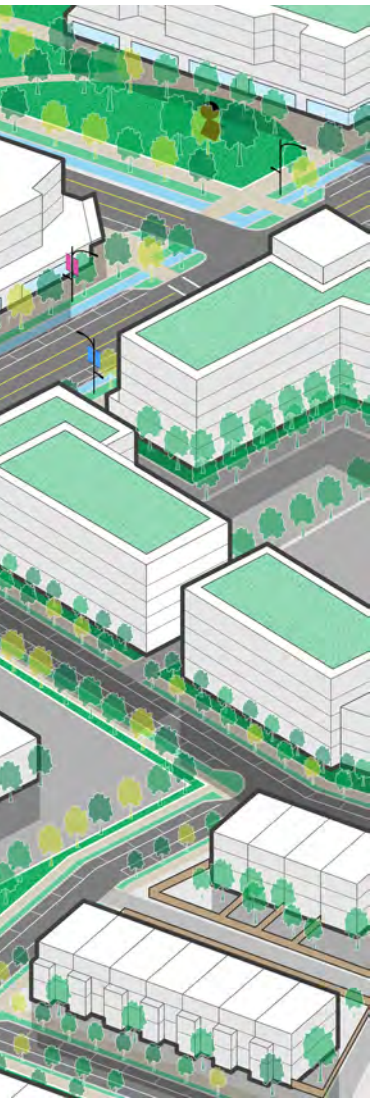
## AN URBAN EXPERIENCE

North Van Dyke Avenue's District Core provides a uniquely urban experience within Sterling Heights. At the crossroads of Van Dyke Avenue, Utica Road, Riverland Drive, and a green linear connection to the Clinton River, the District Core serves as the heart of this renewed place. Featuring the district's densest development, ground-floor retail that spills out into new parks and plazas, new civic uses, and public art—the District Core can become a place for locals and visitors to gather and experience a robust array of year-round programs and activities.




## THE CULTURAL CORRIDOR

The future North Van Dyke Avenue will be a destination offering a multicultural experience to locals and visitors. The "Cultural Corridor", along the northern segment of North Van Dyke Avenue is envisioned as a continued and potential future home for a variety of community and commercial uses that celebrate Sterling Heights' diversity. Present uses such as the BAPS community center, ethnic restaurants, and the forthcoming Chaldean Community Foundation mixed-use housing project can serve as anchors for further culturally-focused investments in the area. Creating plaza and park spaces outside and between residential and retail developments can offer spaces for community events, outdoor dining, and creative cultural activation. As a place that encourages cultural activation and a range of experiences, the NVDA district could become a truly special destination that is reflective of Sterling Heights.



**Cultural Events**
While cultural and civic events are welcomed in all neighborhoods, the "Cultural Corridor" segment of North Van Dyke serves as a desirable stage for these celebrations. The parks and plazas along the corridor should be designed flexibly to host tents, stages, and other elements necessary for a broad range of events.


**Special Places**
While the street and plaza spaces are lined with a diverse array of shops and restaurants in a vibrant cultural district, some special venues within and adjacent to parks and plazas create dynamism within these spaces and opportunities for unique or signature uses.

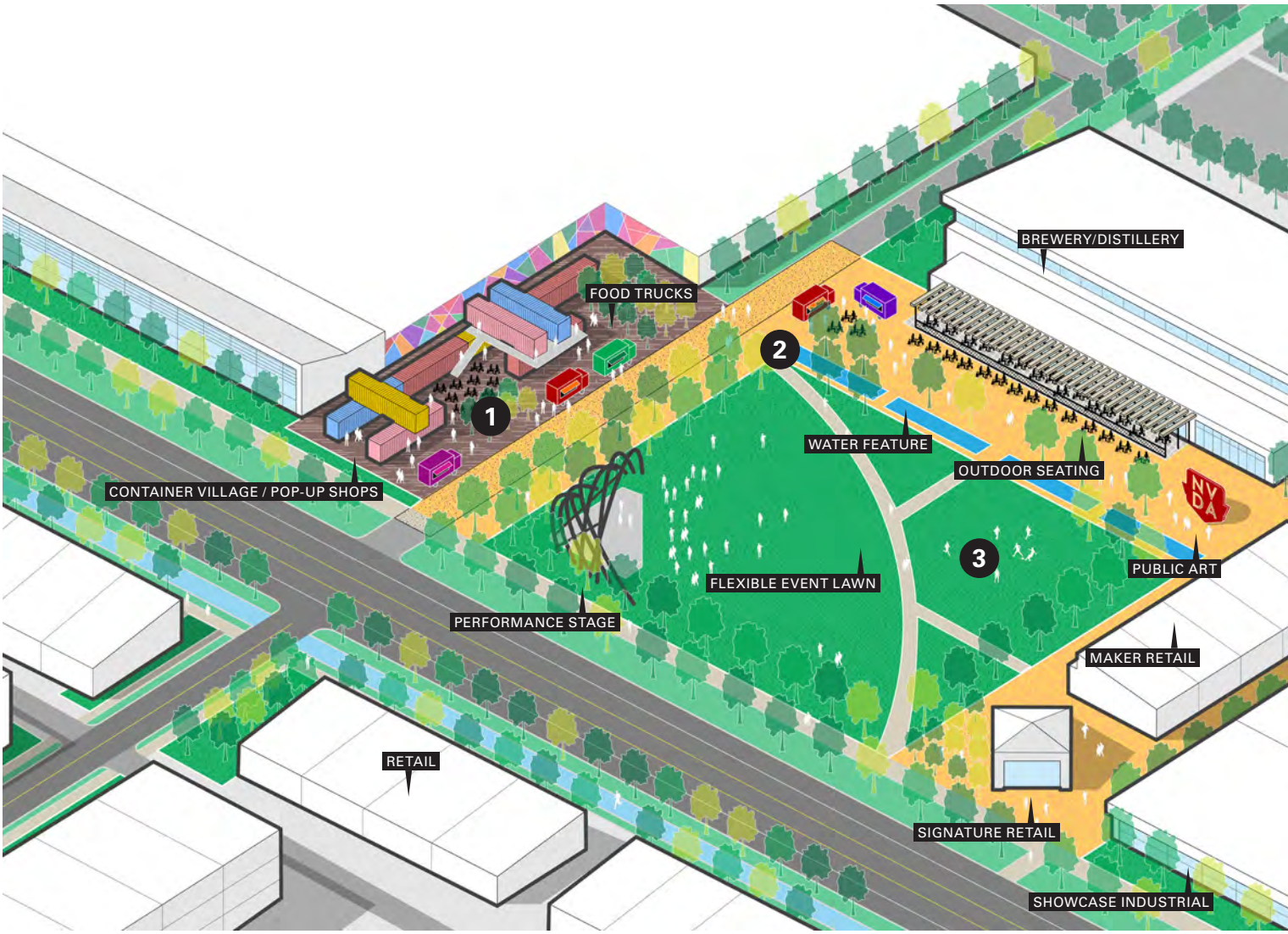

**Creative Activation**
Successful cultural districts often host celebrations, performances, and creative new uses of public space. As retail uses change, the space between them should also evolve.



VAN DYKE

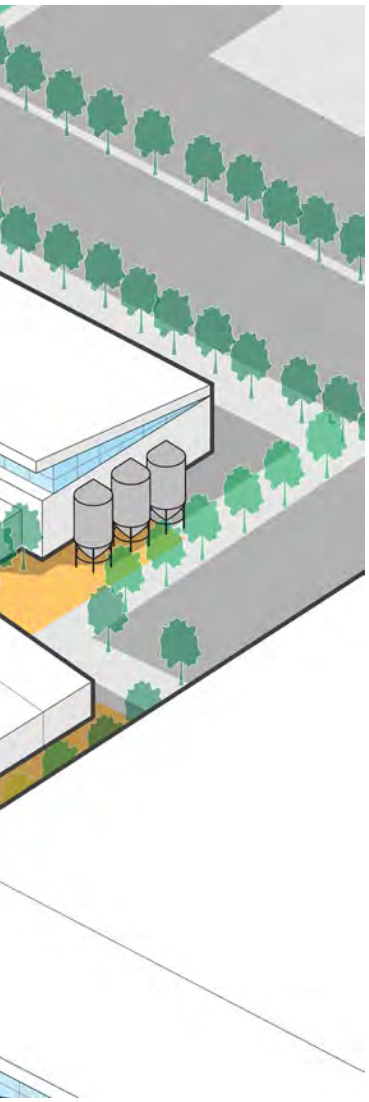
## CULTURAL CONNECTIVITY

The future North Van Dyke Avenue is envisioned as a connective place, where a multitude of uses, communities, and ambitions come together to create an exciting whole. North of the District Core, along Van Dyke Avenue, several existing and proposed new developments can coalesce into a distinctive place within the district—a place of multicultural celebration. With an emphasis on community gathering, food, festivities, creative activation, and cultural resources, the Cultural Corridor will become a destination for new experiences within Sterling Heights.




## A PLACE AMONG INDUSTRY

The North Van Dyke Avenue envisioned in this plan is one that celebrates the broad range and diversity of uses that call it home. Building on the impressive industrial and manufacturing legacy of Sterling Heights, a new destination can emerge among the makers and builders of the North VDA Industrial sub-area. By repurposing presently underutilized sites, an exciting and flexible space can draw people to the district, encourage greater patronage of local businesses, and provide a place for gathering for local workers. The master plan envisions a park and plaza with adaptable features at an existing parking lot between industrial facilities, though such a space could develop in a variety of locations within the sub-area. Programming with maker/pop-up shops, food trucks, and a district signature brewery/distillery could further emphasize and celebrate the area's industrial character.



**Temporary Spaces**
A popular trend for programming and activation in emerging and industrial districts is the use of modular, temporary spaces for hosting a rotating series of shops and eateries. Shipping container assemblages create exciting and low-cost places for exploration and new experiences within an industrial district.


**Food Truck Placemaking**
The food truck revolution has been good for civic spaces. Creating a food truck destination within an area where dining options are limited creates opportunities for existing populations and a draw for new foot traffic. Such spaces should be designed with dedicated areas for dining and lingering.


**Flexible Spaces**
Low-cost public spaces consisting of flexible paved and grassy areas are good spaces for creative community uses. Developing these spaces adjacent to large, active destination like a brewery enables events, festivals, lawn games, movie nights, and more.


VAN DYKE


## CELEBRATING MAKERS

Sterling Heights has a long and impressive history as an industrial and manufacturing base within the larger region. This critical piece of the city's economy and identity can contribute to the future composition of North Van Dyke Avenue while also providing opportunities for people to see and experience the exciting work being done here. By encouraging new, clean, industrial facilities, inviting in new visitor-friendly and compatible uses, and creating flexible and programmable open spaces where people can dine, shop, lounge, and gather, the industrial character of North Van Dyke Avenue can become a point of celebration.

## THE FUTURE

# NORTH VAN DYKE AVENUE


19-1/2 MILE ROAD
HALL ROAD
UTICA ROAD
RIVERLAND DRIVE
1/4-MILE

## PHASING STRATEGY

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither will the reimagined North Van Dyke Avenue district. The fully-built out vision depicted in this master plan represents the long-term transformation of the corridor, assuming phased development over the course of decades.

This phasing plan is intended to help guide strategic investments from the public and private sectors over time, while also identifying catalytic projects and establishing priorities for key sites.

Phasing recommendations are put forth to help sequence steps that should be taken to prepare sites for development, but also to recognize practical and market-related factors that will impact investment in the district. Phasing is different from prioritization, as the highest priority sites, proposed developments, and civic spaces in this plan are unlikely to be developed early on and instead will likely require catalytic public investment, creative activation, and "proof of concept" development before they take shape.

While this phasing plan outlines one path for implementing this master plan vision, it by no means depicts the only path. The City, community stakeholders, and private developers are encouraged to implement any component of this plan, in line with the over-arching vision, when the time is right.

### ENACT POLICY CHANGES RIGHT AWAY

The first and most powerful tool the City can exercise to pave the way for this transformation is zoning. Presently, the North Van Dyke Avenue district prohibits, or makes cumbersome, the development of projects such as those proposed in this plan. Establishing new zoning districts in the area and embracing an overall zoning philosophy that enables higher densities, lower parking requirements, a closer relationship between development and the street, and more form-based controls will go a long way towards spurring the kind of investment and site-specific planning and development that will realize this master plan vision.

The City is encouraged to immediately explore new zoning districts and provisions in line with this redevelopment concept and the specific recommendations outlined in Chapter 5: The Path to Transformation.

### PICKING THE LOW-HANGING FRUIT

Some of the improvements and redevelopment concepts in this plan have fewer steps that need to be taken or constraints to overcome before coming to fruition than others. The phasing plan identifies some of these sites and projects, however, the on-the-ground circumstances will

continue to change and evolve as new investments are made and properties change hands.

One category of these sites includes lands already controlled by the City of Sterling Heights.

With respect to private property, the most straight-forward unobstructed development opportunities are likely to be those proposed for sites that are presently vacant or significantly underutilized. Those sites in key areas (see Opportunity Sites image on page 113) can immediately utilize new zoning allowances to densify and draw people to North Van Dyke Avenue.

The City is encouraged to continually assess the "low-hanging fruit" and take action where possible to acquire lands designated for public projects, carve out right-of-ways, and steer private development interests to priority sites.

## EMBRACE TACTICAL URBANISM

For many members of the community, it may be difficult to imagine the kind of transformation of North Van Dyke Avenue proposed in this plan. One effective strategy for rallying the community behind this kind of redevelopment is using tactical, or experimental, techniques to temporarily transform underutilized areas like parking lots into active, programmed destinations. With low-cost investments like moveable outdoor furniture, temporary structures like converted shipping containers, tents, paint, boxed planters, outdoor games, etc., a vibrant new urban space can take shape. Community events like outdoor movies, food festivals, concerts, street fairs, art shows, and more can be hosted at these spaces over the course of many months and create buzz within the community and region.

Tactical urbanism at open lots with paint and temporary furniture
The Lawn on D - Boston, MA

While the simplest time of year to execute experimental urbanism is undoubtedly the warmer months, many cities have had success recently in setting up winter markets in this fashion, as residents seek engagement and activities during the long winter months. Space heaters, heated tents, ice rinks, ice sculptures and other thematic installations can create a unique winter destination within the city.

Tactical urbanism can also be a useful tool for pilot projects that temporarily transform segments of public right-of-ways. While reconstruction of the roads and

Experimenting with new ideas in the public right-of-way through tactical urbanism strategies will require partnership and close coordination with Macomb County Department of Roads, the City of Utica, and other City of Sterling Heights departments with oversight over the roadway and its immediate context.

streetscapes as proposed in this plan may take many years to see through, temporary interventions that convert drive lanes into parking lanes and create new public and pedestrian zones within the right-of-way can give community members a chance to experience the improvements firsthand while public entities collect data on traffic volumes and flow. Additionally, bike lanes can be temporarily striped in with temporary paint or tape. The phasing diagram on page 164 highlight recommended segments of the Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way where experimentation is recommended in the immediate term.

To best communicate the intent and proposed vision of this plan to the community, it is recommended that experimental activation of key sites and temporary right-of-way reconfigurations occur concurrently. For example, if an underutilized parking lot along Van Dyke Avenue is temporarily transformed into a programmed public plaza in the summer, the City should seek to implement a temporary road diet on adjacent segments of Van Dyke Avenue, including street parking, bike infrastructure, moveable planters, and pedestrian zones. Implementing these temporary interventions concurrently allows the community to understand the relationship between these changes and improvements and the degree to which they support each other. Implementing right-of-way changes alongside activation also enables community members to access the activation site more comfortably by foot or bike.


Winter activation of parks and plazas with temporary installations like ice rinks and winter shopping villages can help enliven the district throughout cold weather months.

These strategies are temporarily deployed on-site to test how the community will use them and understand their preferences related to the future of these spaces. All tactical urbanist and pop-up interventions should be accompanied by an engagement campaign where community members are invited to submit their experience, ideas, and feedback on proposed changes.

## EXPLORE PARTNERSHIPS

Realizing this master plan vision for North Van Dyke Avenue will require strong partnerships between

the various public agencies with oversight of the district, existing land owners, interested private developers, local businesses and industrial operators, and regional/state civic institutions.

### PARTNERING INTER-GOVERNMENTALLY

Forming early partnerships with invested stakeholders through genuine request for cooperation and input enables a mutual sense of ownership over the master plan vision and the success of the district. The City of Sterling Heights will need to form strong partnerships with Macomb County and City of Utica decision-makers to implement the proposed changes within the Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way. The City should engage county officials immediately to explore opportunities for temporary reconfiguration of the right-of-way and work cooperatively to measure the usage patterns and impact on traffic and site access.

An alternative approach to working within the existing ownership and right-of-way control paradigm is to explore acquiring the Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way from the County. Such an acquisition would give the City more direct control and responsibility over the reconfiguration possibilities while potentially enabling more flexible expenditure of TIF funds on implementing right-of-way improvements as well.

### PARTNERING WITH NORTH VAN DYKE'S LAND OWNERS

Partnership with existing land owners within the North Van Dyke Avenue district can occur in a multitude of ways. In some cases, existing land owners may be fully invested in the redevelopment vision established in this plan and will seek/be open to opportunities for reinvesting in their property in line with the vision. The City is encouraged to work collaboratively with these landowners to bring them into the fold and connect them with resources to begin redeveloping or enhancing their property in line with the master plan vision.

For other landowners, their interest may lie in taking the adoption of the master plan vision as an opportunity to liquidate property and/or move operations elsewhere—even on-site, as may be the case with existing industrial operations in the Utica Triangle sub-area that might find new opportunity by relocating operations to the North VDA Industrial sub-area, for example. In these cases, the City is encouraged to provide support to these landowners by making connections with other Sterling Heights landowners, interested development entities, and adjacent property owners. In some cases, the City may want to purchase available properties itself. A decision-making infrastructure should be developed within City government to act quickly on these opportunities as they arise.


GM's Sterling Heights Heritage Center showcases the company's products over time. A new museum at NVDA could showcase the full breadth of the city's manufacturing legacy.

### PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The City is also encouraged to partner early on with community organizations, such as the Chaldean Community Foundation, who have expressed interest in growth within the community and who are already making investments in the district. Engaging with local developers interested in developing townhouse or multifamily neighborhoods could yield near- or long-term investments in the district when presented alongside the City's investment commitments. To the extent possible, local business owners, and particularly minority business owners, can be encouraged to expand within North Van Dyke Avenue and supported with resources and guidance from various City departments.

Partnership with existing community groups, like the Youth Advisory Board, Senior Center, the Arts Commission, local recreation groups, and the Beautification Commission can help to launch new initiatives within the district and gain support for public investments and the introduction of new uses on-site.

### PARTNERING WITH CITY DEPARTMENTS

Many elements of the master plan require commitment, prioritization, and investment from various City departments to be realized. The City Planning Department should engage early with City leaders and departments like Engineering, Library, and Parks and Recreation—groups who can help establish shared goals and objectives and steer future investment to the area in line with the master plan vision.

### PARTNERING BEYOND THE STERLING HEIGHTS

For uses beyond the purview of City leaders and the private development community, the City is encouraged to begin marketing the master plan vision to regional, state, and national entities and institutions who can contribute to the development and success of the district. The plan recommends introducing civic uses to the district such as a vocational school or community college. Early conversations with entities such as the state university system and regional community colleges can

put the opportunity of growth within Sterling Heights and the North Van Dyke Avenue district on their radar as they plan for the future. Given the community's existing collection of major employers and industrial/manufacturing operations, such an opportunity to expand within the city and train the next generation of great makers might inspire investments and further partnerships with the City.

For proposed uses such as the recreation center in the Parkside sub-area, national organizations such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America or the YMCA may be interested in establishing new facilities in the area.

Another potential future civic use that community members embraced, is the idea of establishing a museum dedicated to the City's industrial and manufacturing legacy within the district. Such an institution would become a local and regional destination, as there is no shortage of stories to tell and exhibits to showcase. A museum of this sort would serve as a strong bridge between the North Van Dyke Avenue District Core and the industrial uses to the south and west. Potential partners for such an institution could be found throughout the city. With major automobile, aerospace, and defense contractor operations located only steps away, partnerships could be explored for sponsorship where industry players help finance the institution's development. Galleries could showcase gifted machinery, defense equipment, cars, and other items that have been manufactured in Sterling Heights over time. It is conceivable that each of Sterling Heights' industrial sectors could have their own sponsored galleries.

## PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

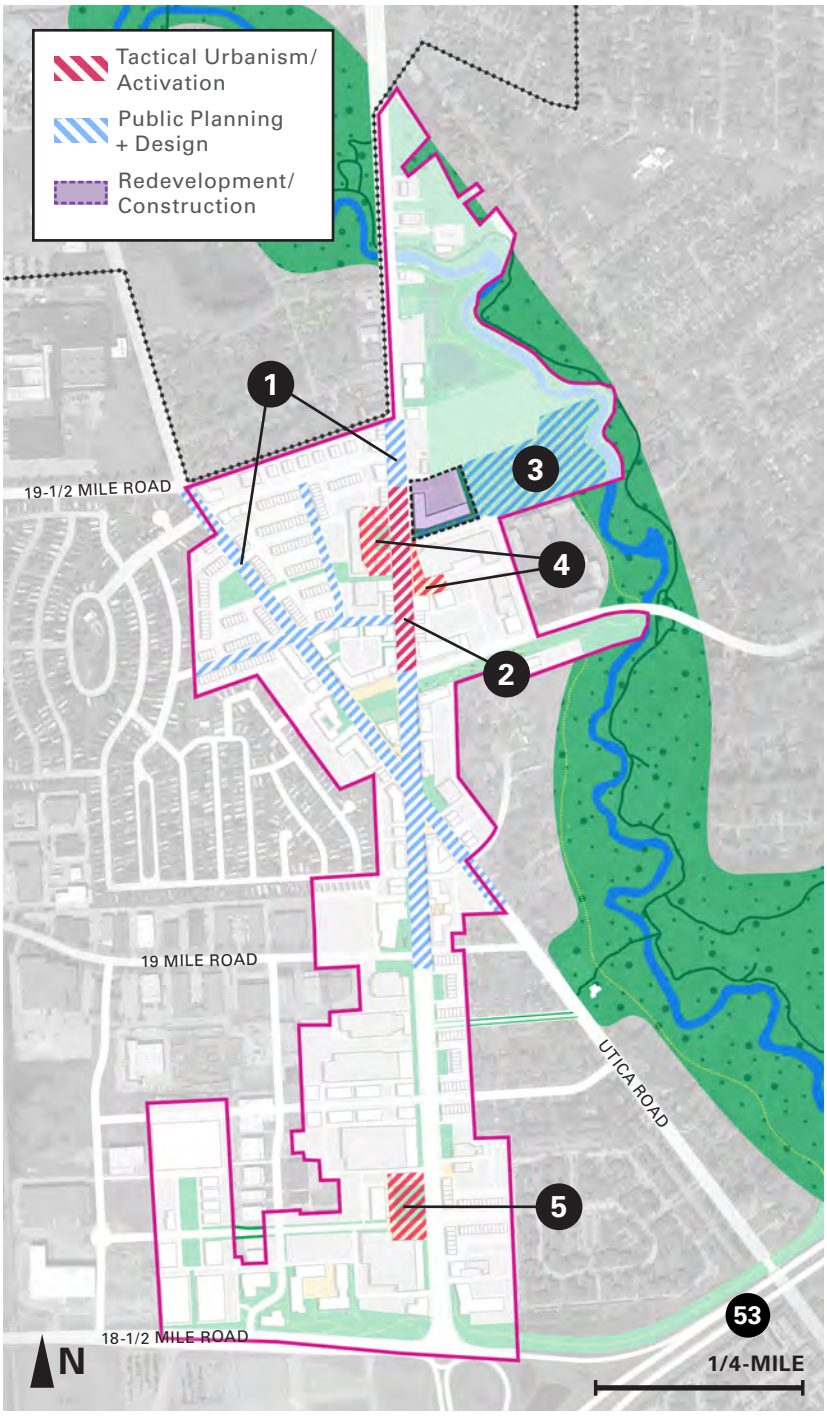
As described above, it is important for the City to act quickly to implement policy and regulatory changes with tools like zoning to enable and encourage development within the North Van Dyke Avenue district that aligns with the master plan vision. In some cases, early development interest may emerge in a form that does not align with the master plan vision. This is why new zoning requirements must be carefully designed and implemented to ensure compliance with the community's objectives for the future of this district.

The intent of phasing is to build momentum and reach a level of critical mass where the higher densities proposed for the district are feasible and in-demand. Directing investment of a smaller scale to areas within the district, but outside the highest density areas, is a strategic way of ensuring all appropriate development has a place in the reimagined district while preserving the most high-value sites for the most suitable development.

## IMMEDIATE TERM (0-2 YEARS)

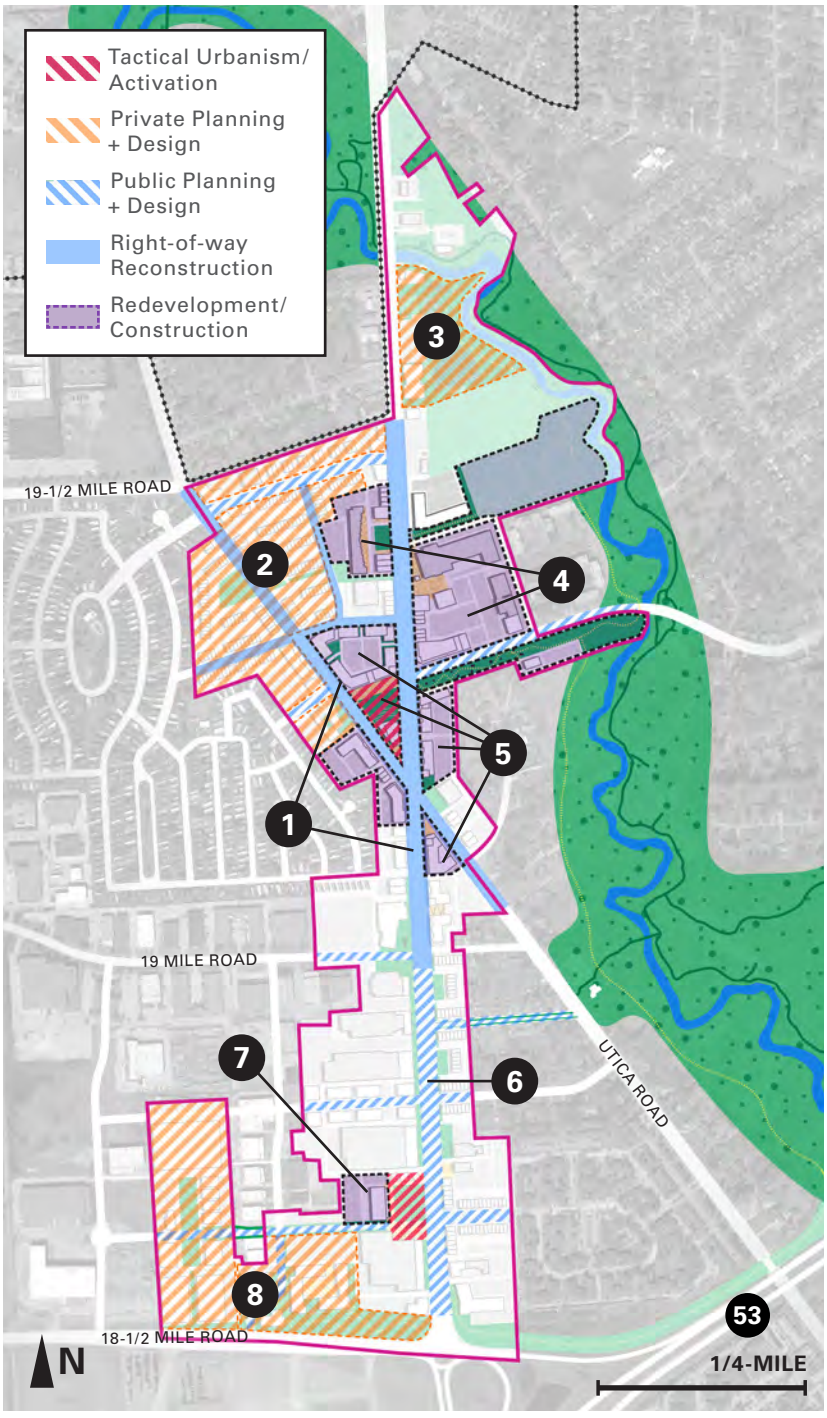
In the immediate-term, it is recommended that the City pursue detailed planning and design for public features, such as existing and proposed right-of-ways and public landscapes. The City should also work to activate key sites with tactical urbanism and programming. The City should partner with Macomb County to implement temporary right-of-way reconfigurations on priority segments of North Van Dyke Avenue (VDA).

- Draft and implement zoning changes for the whole of the district in accordance with the master plan vision.
- **1** Perform planning and design for the future reconfiguration of NVDA (partnering with Macomb County), north of 19 Mile Road and Utica Road. Conduct a study to determine optimal alignments for new roads between NVDA and Utica Road, north of their intersection.
- **2** Working with a traffic engineer and planner, implement temporary right-of-way reconfiguration along a key segment of NVDA, introducing street parking, an enhanced pedestrian realm, bike lanes, and other amenities to showcase potential future changes. Align temporary reconfiguration with adjacent tactical urbanism interventions and programming.
- **3** Commission a master plan for the park property located between the Clinton River and the forthcoming Chaldean Foundation development along NVDA.
- **4** Partner with community organizations and existing property owners to activate existing surface lots adjacent to operational retail establishments with tactical urbanism strategies and programming.
- **5** Partner with community and civic organizations and a local/nearby vendor, such as a brewery, to activate the existing surface lot in the NVDA Industrial sub-area.



## SHORT TERM (2-10 YEARS)

In the short-term, defined roughly as the next decade, it is anticipated that much of the retail and multifamily housing development in and around the District Core can take shape while other sub-areas undertake planning and design work to prepare for future densification and redevelopment. Public investment in new right-of-way reconfigurations along NVDA and Utica Road along with new zoning policies will help facilitate the transition of land uses where proposed.

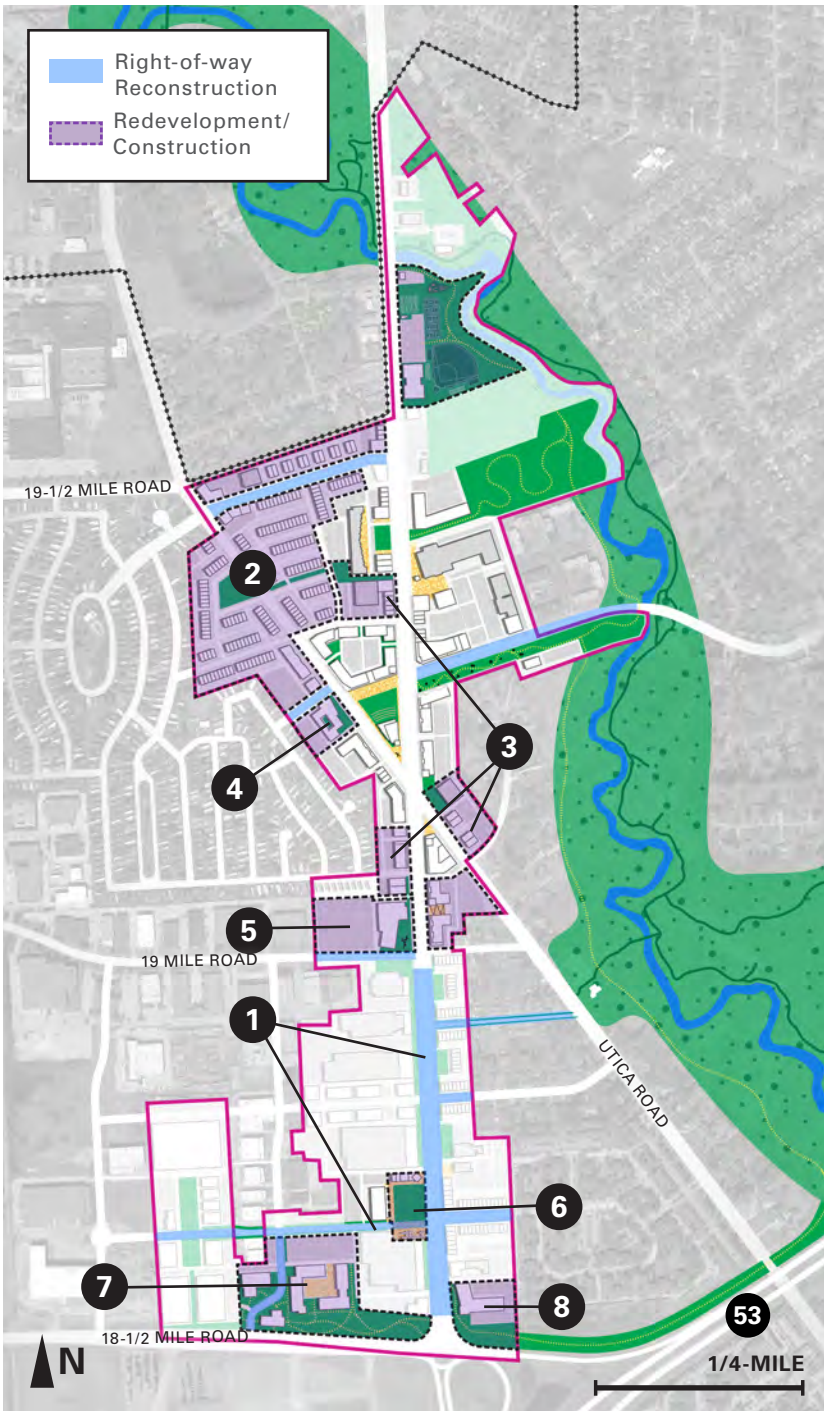



1. Reconstruct NVDA and Utica Road right-of-ways north of 19 Mile Road.
2. Encourage the aggregation of parcels in the Utica Triangle sub-area as properties go up for sale. Zoning changes may entice private developers to capitalize on opportunities for housing development.
3. Work with private and/or public stakeholders to develop a recreational park and related facilities at the site between NVDA and the Clinton River, north of Triangle Drive.
4. Encourage, through zoning and incentives, the densification of existing established retail sites in line with the urban design guidelines outlined in this plan. Partner with private landowners to design and build privately-owned public space.
5. Market District Core development sites through proactive engagement with local and regional development entities. Activate District Core "central park" with tactical urbanism strategies to build momentum for forthcoming development.
6. Perform planning and design for the future reconfiguration of NVDA (partnering with Macomb County), south of 19 Mile Road. Conduct necessary studies to determine optimal alignments for new roads perpendicular to NVDA.
7. Partner with local/regional brewer/ distiller to construct a retail brewery in North VDA Industrial sub-area.
8. Conduct planning for advanced manufacturing campus and learning institution in southwest NVDA.

## MEDIUM TERM (10-20 YEARS)

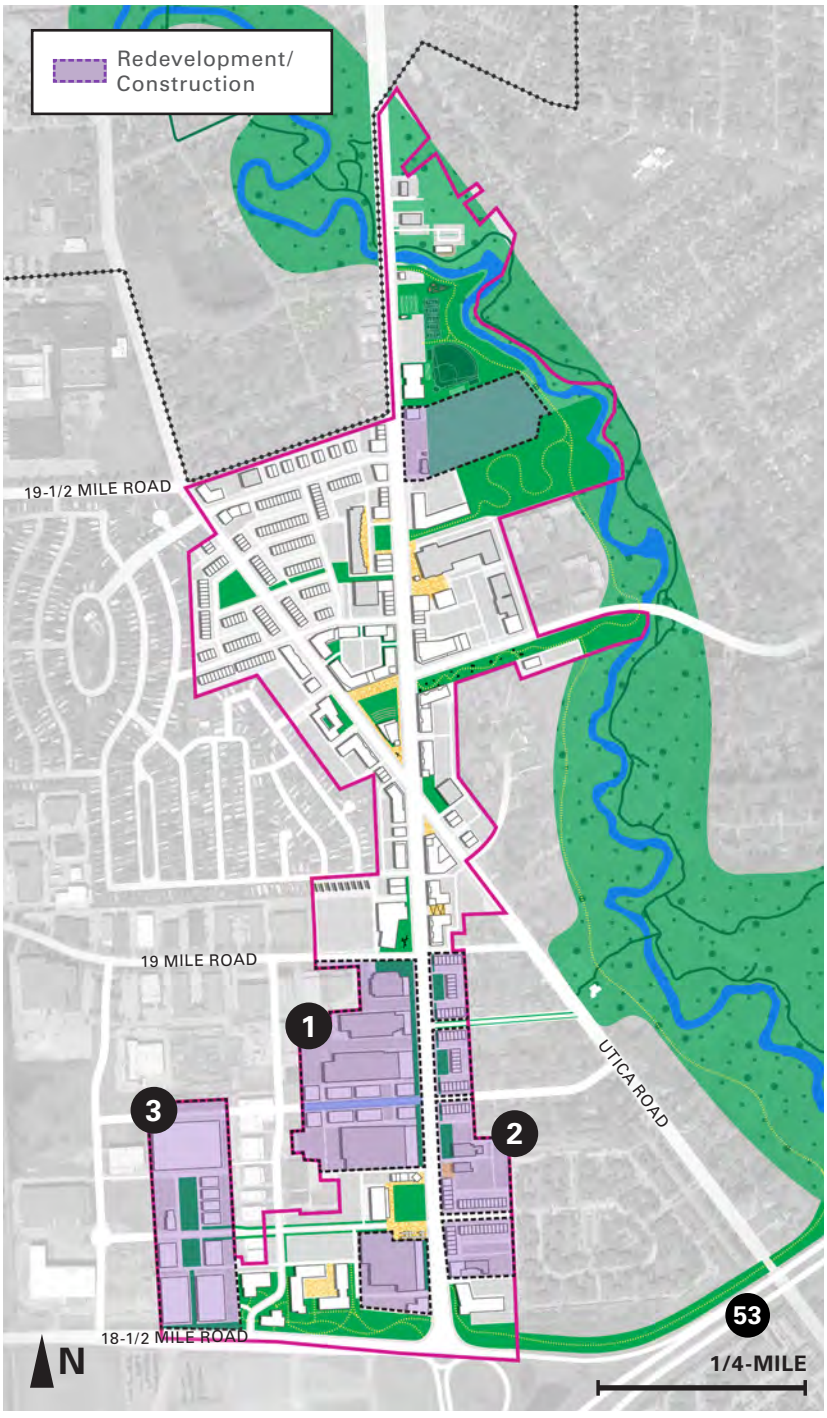
With housing in high demand in the near term, proposed multifamily and neighborhood developments could take shape at any point in the coming years. However, in some areas of the district, it may take more time for existing properties to transition to new proposed uses. If the Core is the first area to take shape, outgrowth to the south and northwest can begin to unfold, building off the catalytic energy of initial private and public investments in the area.

1. Reconstruct the segment of NVDA south of 19 Mile Road and the right-of-ways within the district that intersect with NVDA.
2. With public investments in place and site acquisitions/partnerships underway, development at mixed-use and neighborhood sites would ideally commence in the medium term, if not sooner.
3. Retail infill development built out in pace with higher-density uses in and around the Core.
4. Planning, budgeting, and site selection for uses like a library or community center should commence in earlier phases to allow for development in the medium term.
5. Partnering with private entities and the establishment of an administering authority to support the development of a museum should occur in earlier phases to prepare for development in the medium term.
6. Build park/plaza and event space adjacent to activated industrial development and brewery/distillery facility. Activate with permanent retail stalls for temporary/rotating vendors and food trucks.
7. Working in collaboration with a major local, regional, state, or national institution, site and develop a facility for learning and training the next generation of makers, builders, and manufacturers in Sterling Heights.
8. Gateway development at southern entrance to NVDA is developed, along with formal park design and development for landscapes north of M-53.



## LONG TERM (20+ YEARS)

In the long term, the plan recommends densifying the industrial lands in the North VDA Industrial area with clean, advanced industrial and manufacturing facilities that have a presence on NVDA. As the conditions along this segment of road become more hospitable, new medium density residential development can come in and provide a transition zone between the industrial corridor and neighborhoods to the east of NVDA.



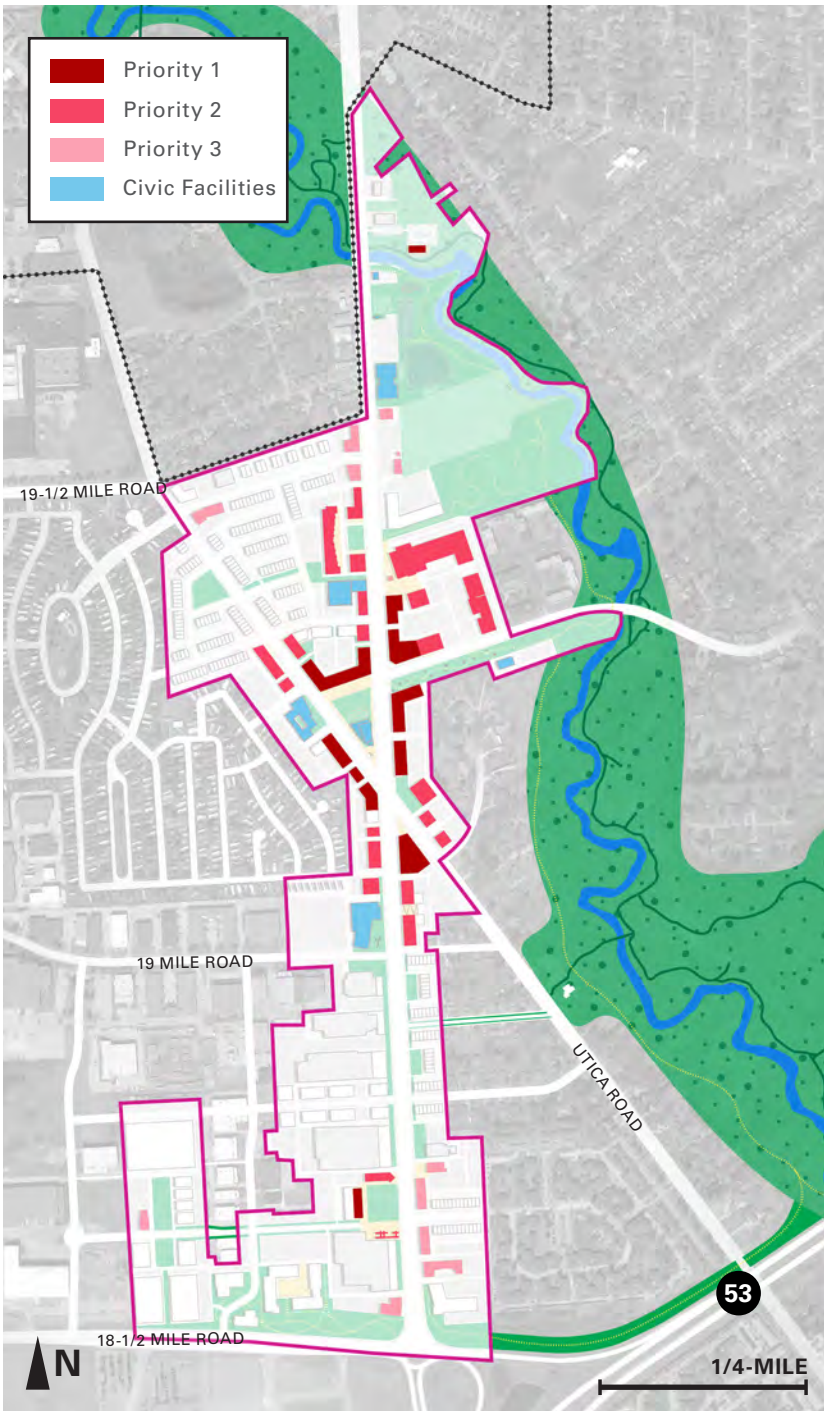

1. If not in earlier phases, industrial development infill within the NVDA Industrial sub-area develops in the long-term as the district becomes a destination. Smaller facilities hosting small companies, shared task-specific (e.g. commercial kitchen, CNC, makerspace) resource centers, and start-ups can fill in underutilized portions of existing industrial lands while companies occupying larger existing or redeveloped facilities can expand towards VDA, creating transparency to showcase operations where possible.

2. With a reconstructed streetscape along NVDA between 19 Mile Road and the M-53 roundabout creating a safer and more pleasant pedestrian environment and with newly activated civic spaces created within the North VDA Industrial area, residential development can take shape along the eastern side of VDA and west of Utica Road. This medium density development can serve as a transition between the industrial lands and existing neighborhoods east of the district.

3. Should the salvage yard at the far southwest edge of the district transition away from its current use, this large parcel could be used for an advanced manufacturing campus, possibly associated with the educational institution envisioned for the adjacent site and/or the Velocity Collaboration Center located a half-mile southwest of the existing salvage yard.

## RETAIL PRIORITIZATION

Ground floors activated by retail are a crucial component of great urban districts. Most of the retail development depicted in the conceptual redevelopment vision is concentrated along North Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road in the District Core. Continuous retail streets create a critical mass that encourages gathering, lingering, and spending.




The vision outlined in this master plan will undoubtedly develop in phases and over the course of decades. In order to provide guidance to the City of Sterling Heights and private development interests exploring potential investments, a retail prioritization plan is provided. The intent of this plan is to ensure that as proposed developments take shape, zoning and other City guidance prioritizes the development of ground-floor retail and activated frontages on parcels designated as priority areas for such uses.

In the area designed priority 1, it is recommended that a minimum frontage of activated ground floors be required for all new development and adhere to a set of form-based regulations and design guidelines to achieve the desired vision for clustered retail activity. For priority 2 parcels, activated and transparent retail frontages should be required for at least a portion of the frontage while allowing more flexibility to accommodate a range of possible future uses. Priority 3 parcels should be encouraged to include active and retail frontages, but may not be required to, given their location outside the Core. Civic facilities can be activated with prominent entrances, glazed facades, and public space at entries.

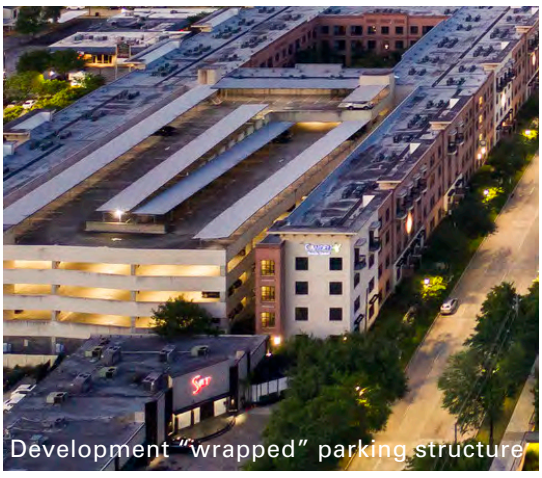
## DENSIFICATION PLAN

Considering existing development patterns and foreseeable market conditions in Sterling Heights and the immediate context, it is the assumption of the planning team that redevelopment in the near and medium terms will not support structured parking. However, should the market support that level of investment and density, it is encouraged.

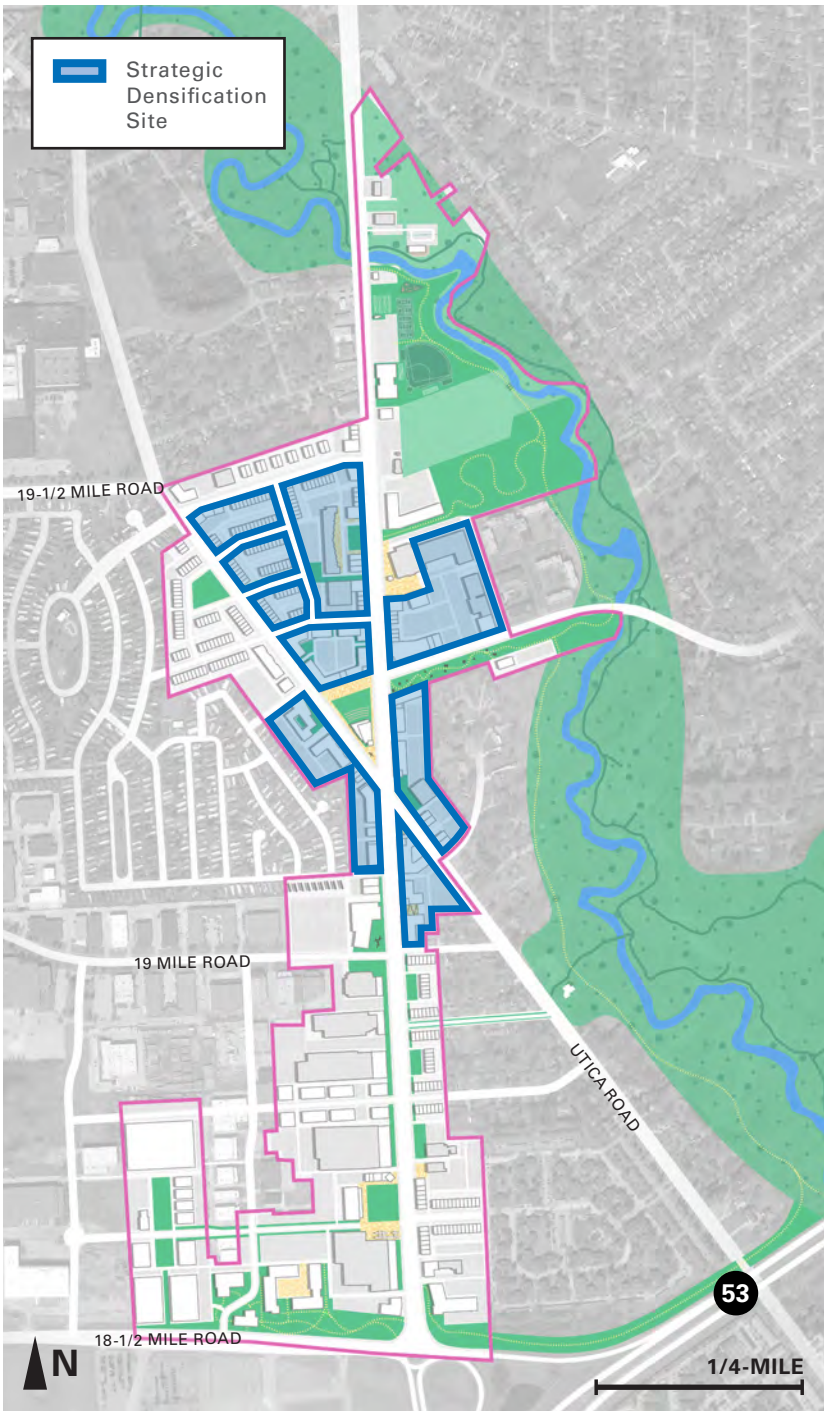
The diagram on this page identifies strategic areas of the plan where structured parking is conceivable in the future and recommended, given the scale of the development sites and immediate context.

Should any developer seek to build structured parking as part of a development plan within the North Van Dyke Avenue district, the parking structure should follow the same guidelines as those of surface parking. Namely, parking structures should be internal to city blocks whenever possible. Parking garages exposed to the street should include screening mechanisms—either architectural or with vegetation.

When associated with multifamily development, developers are encouraged to explore the options that "wrap" housing around the parking garage, as depicted in the example on this page.



Development "wrapped" parking structure



NORTH
VAN DYKE
AVENUE

MAKING THE FUTURE

# DISTRICT BRANDING + IDENTITY



Great urban districts have an identity that is legible, unified, and encompassing of the elements inherent to the place. The brand of a place is simultaneously referential and aspirational. As part of this master plan, a conceptual brand identity was established for the emerging North Van Dyke Avenue district.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE VAN DYKE AVENUE MASTER PLAN BRANDING

The North Van Dyke Avenue corridor and the City of Sterling Heights share a diverse character that can be used to inspire a visual brand for the future district. The City and corridor's vibrant cultural communities, rich history, and impressive legacy of production and building things can all come into play in the story the brand tells about the place.

As part of this place branding effort, the master planning team worked closely with graphic and environmental graphic designers to uncover the details, narratives, and cues that would inform an authentic brand for a redeveloping North Van Dyke Avenue. After initial site explorations and collecting histories, context material, and photography from around the city, the planning team engaged with the Sterling Heights community during Community Workshop #1 to learn more about their perceptions of the district and desires for its visual identity moving forward.

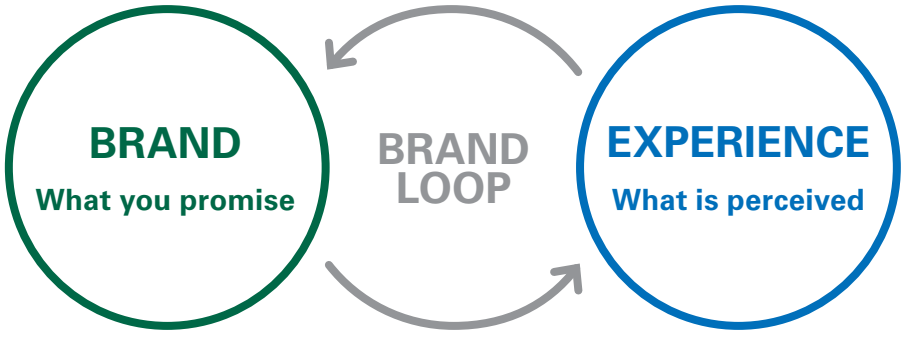
With the community's insights and preferences in hand, the planning team generated two alternative graphic directions for the North Van Dyke Avenue brand and presented them, along with the inspiration and positioning that lay behind them to community participants in Community Workshop #2. The community was asked to select a preferred direction, which ultimately led to the development of the preferred brand strategy outlined in this chapter.

The proposed North Van Dyke Avenue brand materials are designed to be fresh and exciting, as behooves a fresh and exciting place, while still celebrating the history, people, and past of the district and City.

"A branding plan can be a way to align a community around a common vision."

- **Tripp Muldrow, AICP** (*An Introduction to Community Planning*)

The brand is the experience. The experience is the brand.



## VISUAL ID

LOGO, COLOR,
TYPOGRAPHY, ICONS

## PLACEMAKING

ART, GATEWAYS, STREET
FURNITURE, BRANDED
SPACES

## ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHICS

SIGNAGE, WAYFINDING

**Q: How should Van Dyke Avenue and/or Sterling Heights be celebrated in the district's branding and identity?**

INDUSTRY (TIE IN CAR MANUFACTURING + MOTORCITY)

DIVERSITY

NATURE

FAMILY, SMALL TOWN

ART, HISTORY, NATURE, ADVENTURE, MODERN, REVIVED

DIVERSITY, ART, COMMUNITY

DIVERSITY, MODERN

HISTORY

PUBLIC ART

SOCIAL TIME

HOUSING + INDUSTRY

GREENWAY

WHERE EXCITING ACTIVITIES OCCUR IN THE CITY

MULTICULTURAL

RIVER, CULTURAL DIVERSITY, MANUFACTURING

PUBLIC ART, HISTORY, NATURE, INDUSTRIAL

PUBLIC ART, HISTORY

MODERN DOWNTOWN WITH A TRADITIONAL LOOK; "UP NORTH" FEELING TO TIE INTO THE IRON BELLE TRAIL

QUAINT + DESIRABLE

STERLING HEIGHTS BRAND

CLEAN, NATURAL, WELCOMING

HISTORY + INDUSTRY

RETAIL, ENTERTAINMENT, FOOD

MAKING THE CITY MORE LIKE A BIG CITY

THIS COOL LOCAL SPOT THAT HAS A COUPLE BREW PUBS, INDUSTRIOUS TOWNHOMES, AND COOL LITTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANIES. YOU CAN HAVE A BEER AND JUMP ON THE TRAIL TO BIKE HOME

HONOR OUR INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

DIVERSITY, SAFETY, FAMILY

INTERNATIONAL DIVERSITY

THE NEW PLACE TO MOVE TO

REPRESENT ALL CULTURES OF THE CITY

WHERE YOU CAN ENJOY NATURE AND THE CITY ALL AT ONCE

UNIQUENESS, CONNECTIVITY TO SURROUNDING AMENITIES, PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. AWESOME RIVER, WALKWAYS

A CULTURAL DESTINATION HIGHLIGHTING THE MANY DIVERSE ETHNIC GROUPS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF THE SURROUNDING AREAS

MURALS, SIGNAGE, SCULPTURE, NATURE MIXED WITH GOOD BUSINESS PLANNING

ARTISTIC

WALKABILITY

STERLING HEIGHTS MAKES THINGS

COMFORTABLE FAMILY ATMOSPHERES

NATURAL BEAUTY ENVISIONED

NEWEST PLACES TO EAT

AN AREA FOR ALL TO COME

CULTURAL DIVERSITY, UPDATED, CELEBRATED HISTORY, INNOVATIVE, LIVE, WORK, SHOP, MURALS, RESTAURANTS

**Q: It's 2040 and the master plan vision established by this effort is almost fully implemented. How do you describe this Van Dyke Avenue district?**

- Sustainable neighborhood
- See local art
- Bright, fun, entertaining, green
- Great place to visit and hang out with friends and family
- Active, energized, just a place to go to be
- Chill
- Eat tasty food
- Family destination
- See how stuff is made
- Different
- Destination
- A destination for dining, recreating, night life, a vibrant hub of activity
- A place of inclusion with great places to live, parks, shopping and restaurants
- No run down business, lots more housing places, fun parks, and feeling safe
- Many areas to walk to for a drink and a meal
- Great shopping
- Main Street
- Very interactive, tactile
- Filled with mixed-use housing and outdoor attractions to accommodate the growing population
- Vibrant, urban/suburban vs. suburban sprawl, innovative, jobs, social scene, families, walkable, connectivity, regional destination, entertainment, culture, historic, in-migration
- Vibrant, must-visit, full of activity and diversity
- Inviting
- Carbon neutral
- Walkable, clean, beautiful

A walkable Main Street with ample recreational opportunities that's connected to both the city and up north woodlands of Michigan

Pedestrian-friendly Main Street with specialty shops, dining, nightlife and groceries

Making living in the area appealing to those who don't wish to travel several miles for amenities. Hopefully this would also bring in many visitors as well.

Colorful, walkable, welcoming, inspiring

Walkable, Main Street, restaurants, bars, live music venues, green space

Vibrant, multicultural, safe

Lively missing street area surrounded by unique shopping and great parks and trails

Lively, exciting, functional

Walkable neighborhood with essential amenities (clean public restrooms, local product sales, bodegas)

Lively, walkable, gathering

Main Street, exciting

Lively

Hub of Sterling Heights

Able to get many things I need in one stop

Walkable, lively, one-of-a-kind

Walkable, Main Street, lively

Great dining, date night destination

## BRAND POSITIONING

With so much great insight from the community about their perceptions of the Van Dyke Avenue corridor and its potential for transformation, the planning team generated brand positioning material that would serve to inform graphic explorations and recommendations for a visual identity that fits the place. The team heard from the community that the corridor today is old, inactive, car-dominated, and boring. But it was also described as a place with potential, with a desirable "grit",

POSITIVE

**Potential** x8
**Open/Accessible** x5
**Universal/Multicultural** x2
**Vintage/Gritty** x2

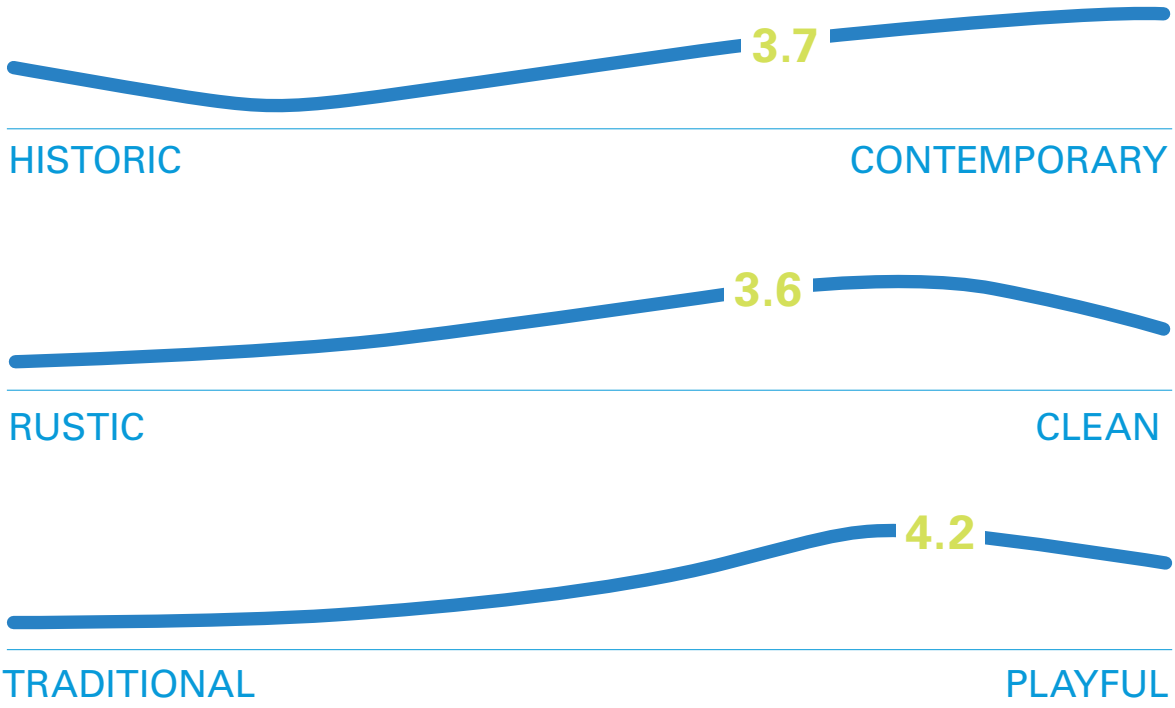
vintage | gritty | opportunity | accessible | light traffic | future of Sterling Heights | unlimited | universal | open | potential | multi-cultural | local | character | array | availability | family friendly | everyone | underused | underutilized | lots of potential | old | consistency | old fashioned

NEGATIVE

**Inactive/Boring** x8
**Old/Outdated** x7
**Car/Truck Dominated** x2

tired | outdated | frumpy | debilitated | nothing there | shoddy | dormant | dead | no vibes | scary | speeding | old | dated | car/truck dominated | boring | consistency

and  where multiculturalism could be celebrated. Asked to choose an overall preferred direction for the brand, the community sided with an identity that was more contemporary, clean and playful than one that was historic, rustic, and traditional. This input gave the planning team direction for establishing the branding values that would undergird design concepts and ultimately, a set of recommendations. The planning team determined the community's preference was for a brand that is inclusive, artful, and uplifting.




## BRANDING VALUES

MULTICULTURAL **Inclusive** FAMILY FRIENDLY

INDUSTRIOUS **Artful** CREATIVE

NATURAL BEAUTY **Uplifting** VIBRANT

## INSPIRATION

Given the stark contrast that exists between the corridor today and the aspirational vision, not much exists presently in the way of graphic inspiration for a new brand. However, the site's historic use, adjacent natural and built features, and history of development provide some valuable guidance for rooting a modern brand in the authentic nature of the place.

### WHERE CITY MEETS NATURE

The North Van Dyke Avenue district sits in a unique position at the junction of city and nature. The Clinton River and greenway play such an important role in the identity, configuration, and make-up of the district and its future that the connections to and from this magnificent natural resource must be celebrated. The planning team looked for opportunities to play on the idea of the union between the industrialized and developed city and the natural beauty of the river corridor.

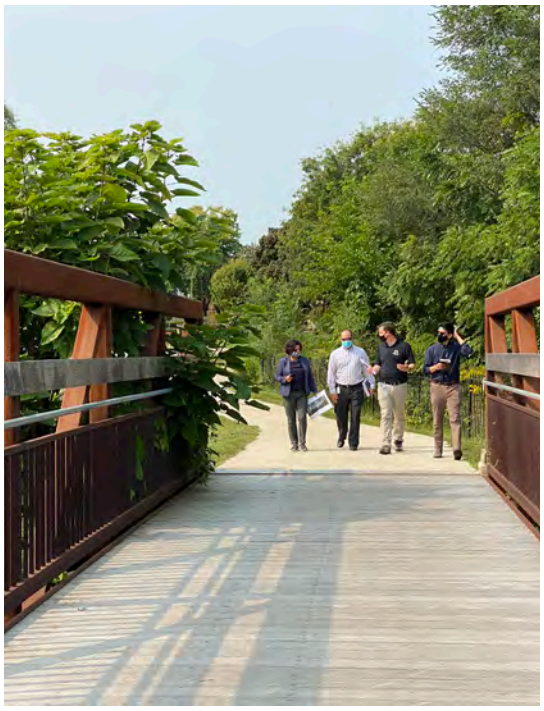
### EMBRACING THE IDENTITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS

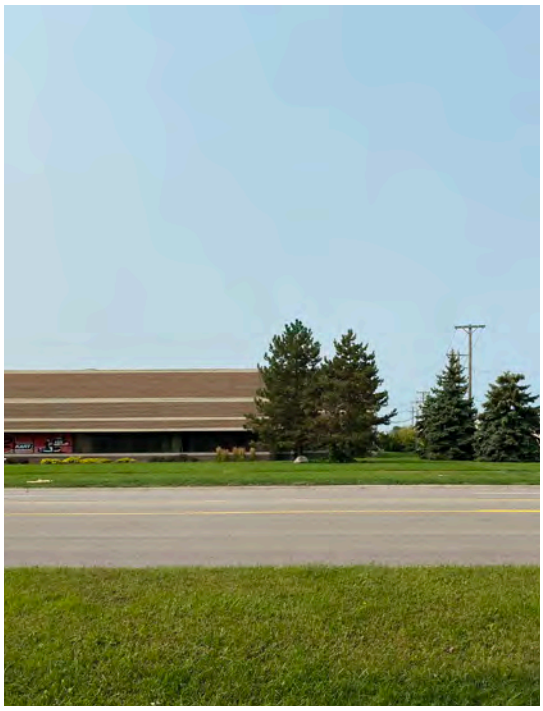
The City of Sterling Heights recently embarked on a branding initiative for the full community that contributes valuable messages about the kind of place it is and wants to be. Elements of and references to that brand provide inspiration for North Van Dyke Avenue. The City's new logo references the Clinton River in its shape and color palette. In honor of this over-arching brand and the shared importance of its elements, the planning team looked for ways to incorporate key features of the City's brand in the explorations and ultimate recommendations for the North Van Dyke Avenue district brand.

### INSPIRED BY HISTORY AND LEGACY

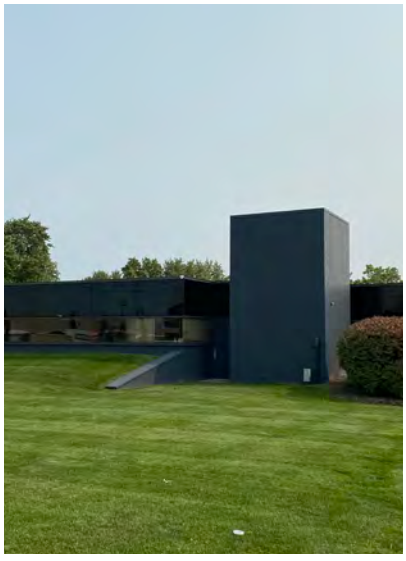
Sterling Heights came of age in an era of American prosperity. Families were establishing themselves in the suburbs and industry was humming in Metro Detroit and Sterling Heights, specifically. This is inherently a mid-century City and its legacy is inherently rooted in the esthetic and economic forces of that time.

These features are assets as the City looks to steer growth and change development paradigms in the context of what came before. Elements of Sterling Heights' unique story and path to prosperity also served as inspiration for the district brand and identity presented in this chapter.





CITY OF Sterling Heights



## BRAND CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES

Building on research conducted for the master plan, community imagery, and feedback from participants at the first community workshop and associated online survey, the planning team generated two conceptual brand options. The two alternatives represent different approaches to place branding, both rooted in the branding values established early on.

### ALTERNATIVE 1: "MODERN MOSAIC"

Alternative one was designed as a fresh, modern take on North Van Dyke Avenue. The brand palette is built with vibrant colors and a triangle pattern motif with a broad array of potential applications and manipulations that represent dynamism and inspire creative adaptation. The assemblage of the triangles and different colors into the logo is intended to represent the multi-culturalism of the district and the opportunity North Van Dyke Avenue presents for people to come together. The marching, growing pyramids created in the negative space beneath the logo letters signifies the potential for growth and progress. This brand identity and its logo are designed to be highly graphic and instantly recognizable.

### ALTERNATIVE 2: "INDUSTRY + NATURE"

Alternative two takes a more classic approach with recognizable iconography and graphic elements. This approach emphasizes the position of North Van Dyke Avenue between the robust industrial development to the west and the lush natural landscapes and flowing waters of the Clinton River and greenway to the east. The overall graphic style references the mid-century history of the community and the signature elements of mid-century American brands, such as the major automobile manufacturers. This approach is designed to promote and continue the legacy of Sterling Heights and Van Dyke Avenue as a place where things are made.

In order to give the community a sense of the versatility and applicability of each alternative, a series of graphics were generated showing each concept deployed in the real world.

## ALTERNATIVE 1: MODERN MOSAIC

Vibrant

Multi-cultural

Family friendly

Creative

## ALTERNATIVE 2: INDUSTRY MEETS NATURE

Industrious

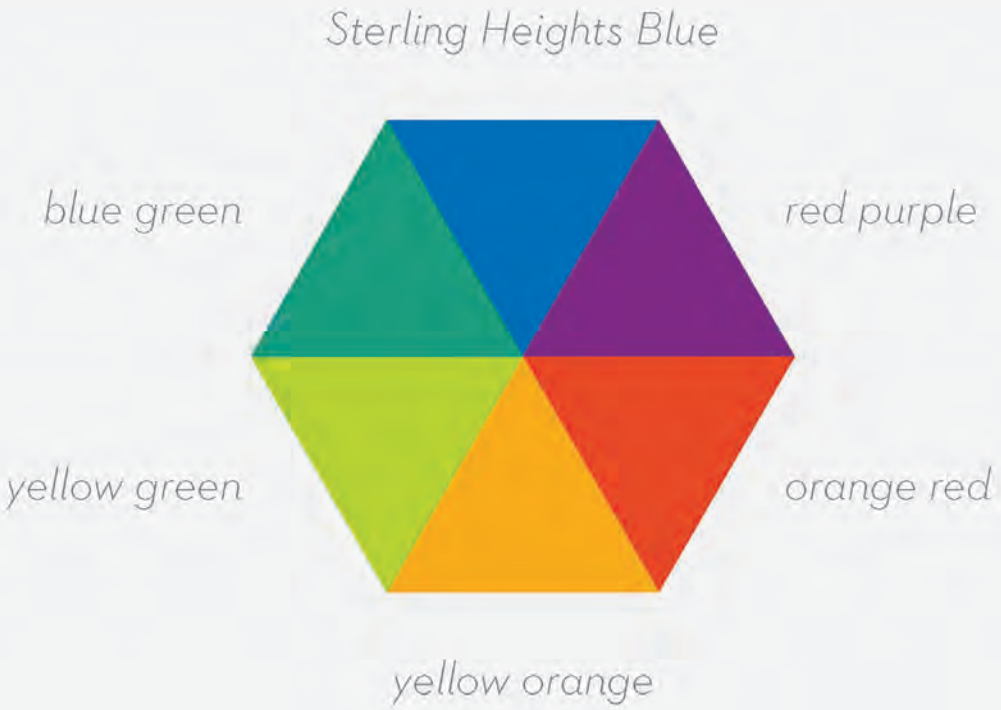
Natural environment

Creative

Vibrant

## ALTERNATIVE 1: MODERN MOSAIC

Explorations for the Modern Mosaic scheme built on the triangle pattern motif and the signature logo. Applications on T-shirts, murals, and branded sculptures show the variety of potential applications throughout the district and on marketing materials. The bright color palette designed for this scheme creates an exciting and vibrant urban environment when applied to development and the public realm.

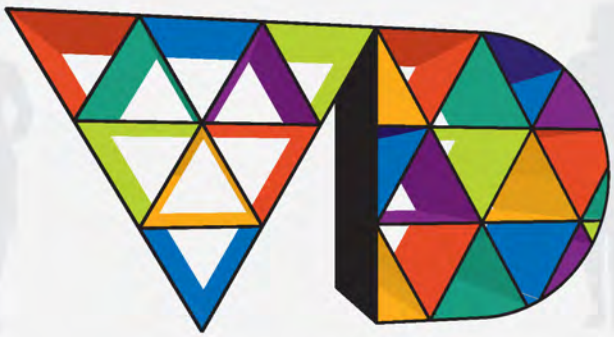




## BRAND COLORS

Primary and secondary colors represent the overlap and intersection of people, cultures, and ideas.

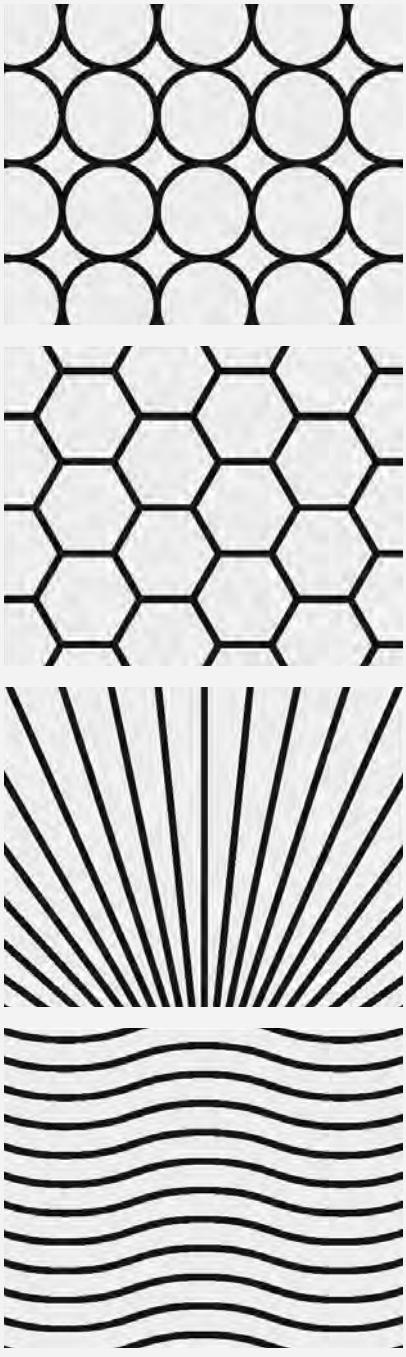
## POTENTIAL BRAND APPLICATIONS





## ALTERNATIVE 2: INDUSTRY + NATURE

Explorations within the realm of the Industry + Nature scheme focused on the symbolism of the badge icon and the mid-century patterns that compose the detail of the icon. The badge icon is inspired by usage in recreation (e.g. Scouts) and industry (e.g. uniforms, car logos). Patterns rely on basic linework, evoking metal-work and making them broadly adaptable to use in print material and on-site installations like signage, art, and gateways.

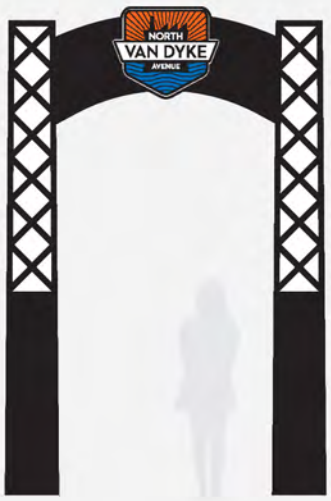



## BRAND COLORS

Primary and secondary colors are more earthy in tone and more deeply saturated than Alternative 1.

## POTENTIAL BRAND APPLICATIONS

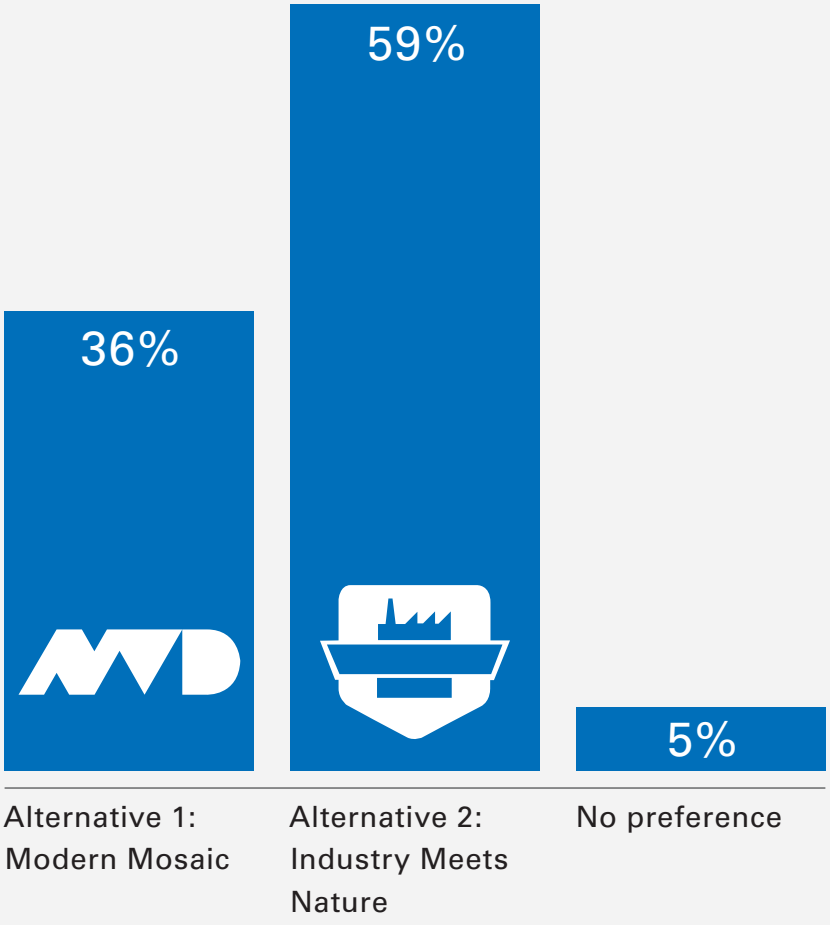




## FEEDBACK FROM THE STERLING HEIGHTS COMMUNITY

In the second community workshop, community participants were presented with the alternative concepts and invited to contribute feedback and select a favorite approach among the two. Overall, respondents in both the community workshop and the follow-up survey selected Alternative 2: "Industry + Nature" as the preferred graphic approach and branding direction. Community members also provided valuable insights on the elements of each scheme that resonated with them and which they found appropriate for the future district.

**Q: Which of these two branding concepts did you like best?**



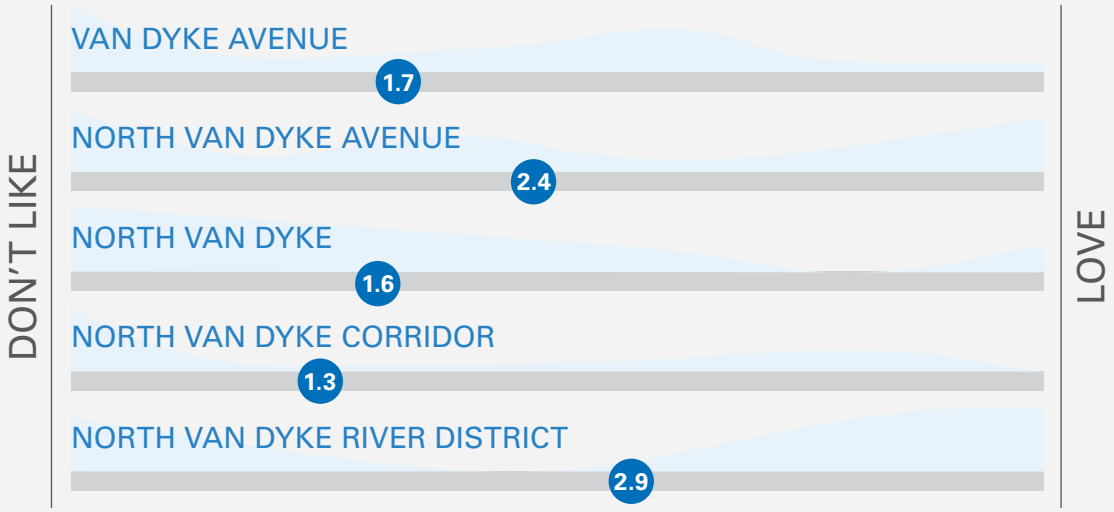
**Q: Which elements (graphics, language, colors, designs, etc.) of these concepts resonated most strongly with you as appropriate for the future of Van Dyke Avenue?**

- Clean look
- Versatility
- Artistic quality
- River theme
- Flowing lines to represent the river
- Simplicity of concept
- Patterning and abstract nature
- Clear, simple
- Representation of manufacturing
- Future-orientation
- Sharp and cool
- Symbol of the Clinton River
- Geometric design
- Timelessness
- Abstraction is good, but not too busy
- Badge motif is appropriate
- Incorporate patterns
- Clear badges represent leadership

**Q: What essential components are missing from these branding concepts/approaches, if any?**

- Commercial or Main Street design elements
- A tie-in to the City's branding
- Sustainability
- Walking
- People
- Innovation
- The river and green space
- Access to the river
- Multiculturalism
- The river

**Q: Which best describes this future Van Dyke Avenue district?**



## RECOMMENDED BRANDING APPROACH

With the community's feedback and preference for a graphic direction in hand, the planning team generated a preferred branding scheme along with recommendations for applications across the site and within individual sub-areas. The overall approach, logo, and graphic elements are adapted from the community's preferred concept, as seen here. Building on the community's specific guidance, the team generated an updated version that has a cleaner, more modern look while embracing the more vibrant color palette of alternative one. The tagline "Making the Future" is intended to straddle the line between historical reference and aspiration for the future of this mixed-use district where industry and urbanity meet nature and multiculturalism. The combination of features and style create a signature identity and recognizable set of graphics for the district that can be broadly adopted under the City's larger branding approach.

## BRAND COLOR PALETTE

The proposed color palette for North Van Dyke Avenue exists between natural and vibrant. The colors are intended to build on the theme of urbanity meeting nature in a modern and intentional way. In deference to the larger City branding, of which this district is only one piece, the two primary City of Sterling Heights brand colors (royal blue and blue-green) are incorporated in the overall palette and other efforts by the Local Development Finance Authority to brand nearby industrial clusters are referenced in the full palette.. The primary logo for North Van Dyke Avenue utilizes brighter versions of these colors to distinguish it from the City's brand.

## BRAND TYPOGRAPHY

The recommended typography for the district identity was chosen to fit in with the esthetic of the graphics with their mid-century style and clean linework. The typefaces featured here convey the overall look and feel of typography that is compatible with the brand and graphic identity. A clean, thin, sans-serif typeface serves as the primary while a narrow, more stout, and subtley serifed typeface serves as the secondary.

### TYPEFACE 1: NEUTRAFACE 2


Neutraface 2 Text Demi

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Neutraface 2 Display Light

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Neutraface Text Book

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890


Evanston Alehouse

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

### TYPEFACE: EVANSTON ALEHOUSE

## SECONDARY MARKS

A variety of secondary marks, or logos, were drafted to showcase the versatility of the graphic, color, typography, and iconography palettes. Using elements like the trapezoid shape, the linework patterns, the badge with rounded corners, and the clean typography, a great many versions of the district logo can be generated for different applications. These secondary marks are designed to be subordinate to the primary mark.




## BRAND COMPONENTS

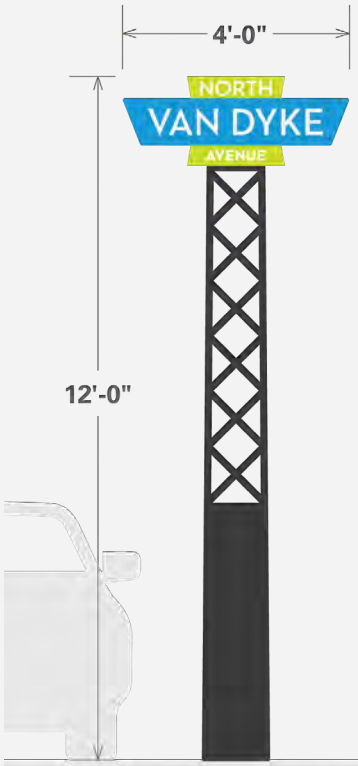
In addition the graphic elements providing opportunities for versatile applications, the brand colors and patterns can be used to establish unique neighborhood identities for each of the sub-areas identified in this master plan. Applications of the patterns in signage, paving, murals, and print material can add depth to the identity while creating distinctiveness within the unified whole.

PARKSIDE
VAN DYKE

TRIANGLE
VAN DYKE

CORE
VAN DYKE

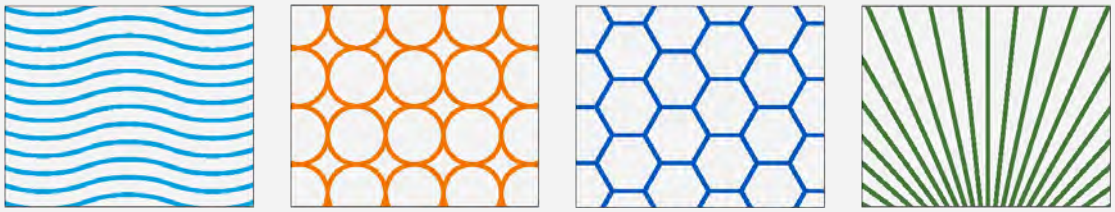
INDUSTRIAL
VAN DYKE

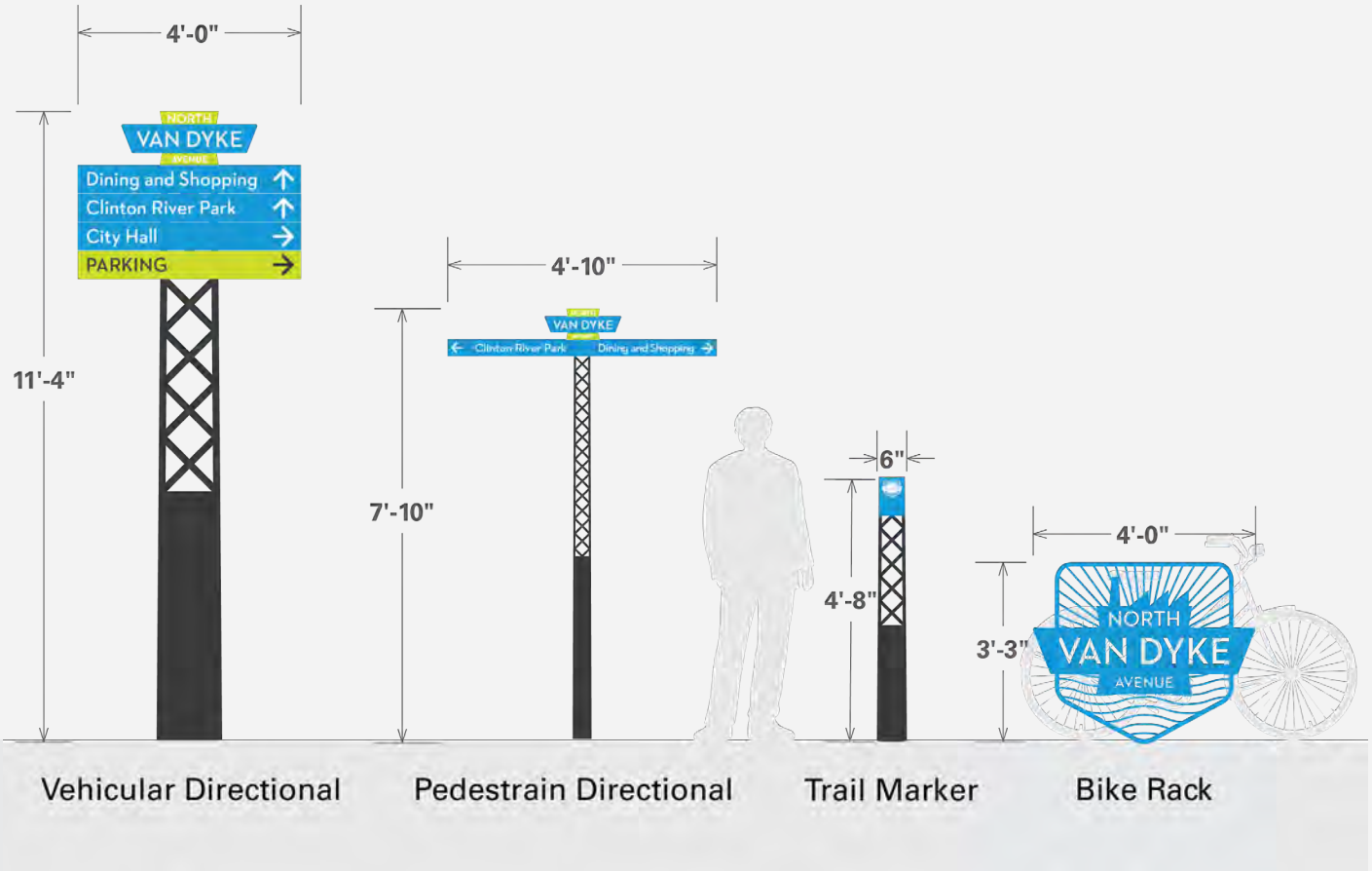



Gateway/District Marker

## SIGNAGE CONCEPTS

A primary application of a district's branding is in the signage and wayfinding that marks the gateways and provides legibility to visitors. Utilizing the brand colors, linework patterns, and signature logos and typefaces, a clear and consistent set of district signs, gateways, and street furniture such as benches and bike racks can clarify the public realm and reinforce the district identity.





# THE PATH TO TRANSFORMATION



This chapter outlines some of the policy, funding, financing, and development steps that exist between adopting the master plan vision and realizing that vision. This guidance is intended to start community leaders, stakeholders, and potential investors on a path to achieving the kind of investment that will transform North Van Dyke Avenue into the place this plan envisions.

# IMPLEMENTING THE MASTER PLAN VISION

Implementing the master plan vision established through this planning process and laid out in the pages of this report will require a variety of concentrated actions, strategies, and investments from the public sector, the private sector, and creative partnerships between the two.

It is important to remember that while the plan in this report represents the long-term vision for the North Van Dyke Avenue corridor, the specific future developments, redevelopment projects, public spaces, and placemaking features will undoubtedly vary from the concept images in this plan. Fully building out this master plan vision will require bold experimentation with new road design approaches, adjustments to local zoning underlying the district's development sites, concentrated public investment within the corridor, and strategic private parcel assemblage at key sites. Ultimately, the important features of this plan are not the specific development and public realm concept designs or assigned uses, but the ideas inspired by the community, the principles underlying the vision, and the specific guidance put forward to steer investment, development, and connectivity throughout the district.

## PRIVATE LANDS

Where the plans in this report show proposed changes to private property, it is intended to serve as a conceptual vision for the role these properties can play in the future of the North Van Dyke Avenue district. It represents an opportunity for existing landowners, businesses, and residents to partner with each other and with the City to increase the quality of the whole place that is North Van Dyke Avenue and create a special and unique place within the region.

### INCREASING VALUE

Where possible, private land owners are encouraged to use this plan as a starting place for their own planning for the future of their property. Exploring new investments in line with the community's vision for the district as a whole through site master planning could reveal new opportunities and potential property value in alignment with zoning changes allowing greater densities and new uses.

### PARCEL ASSEMBLAGE

Additionally, this plan could serve as a roadmap for establishing new partnerships with neighboring landowners. Guided by the principles and guidelines in this plan and future changes to City zoning to enable development in line with this vision and the goals of the 2040 Master Land Use Plan, existing and future land owners can

assemble land through acquisition, sale, or partnership. Newly assembled parcels could unlock new development densities and intensities, offer enhanced frontages and proximities to proposed developments, and create better development conditions relative to visibility, parking, access, and real estate value.

## PUBLIC LANDS

Where enhancements or development are proposed for publicly-owned lands and public right-of-ways, careful consideration was given to the responsible use of public property. In many cases, public lands sit in crucial locations and have the opportunity to serve the district and wider community as enhanced public spaces, such as parks, plazas, and civic facilities. In other cases, it may make sense to sell off public lands to private development interests, and invest the profits elsewhere within the district.

### REPURPOSING THE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR PUBLIC USE

In other cases, extra-wide public right-of-ways are shown in the conceptual vision plan to be encroached upon by new development. In these cases, the intent was either to take advantage of a strategic site or align the vision plan with goals (e.g. consistent urban form). Should the City government determine there is opportunity to deaccess underutilized and non-strategic portions of public right-of-way to serve other public goals with civically-oriented uses (e.g. school, museum), they are encouraged to explore those opportunities. Goals and guidelines for such deaccessions should be developed with the community and each potential transfer or boundary adjustment should be measured against those goals and guidelines. Deed restrictions can be used to restrict redevelopment and usage of former public right-of-way for non-public serving uses.

### REPURPOSING THE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR PRIVATE USE

Where it is not in the best strategic and public interest of Sterling Heights to deaccess a public property or right-of-way segment (i.e. frontage zone) or where redevelopment will solely serve private interests, the City is encouraged to explore opportunities for long-term land leases of underutilized public property to public or private interests aiming to redevelop in line with this master plan vision.

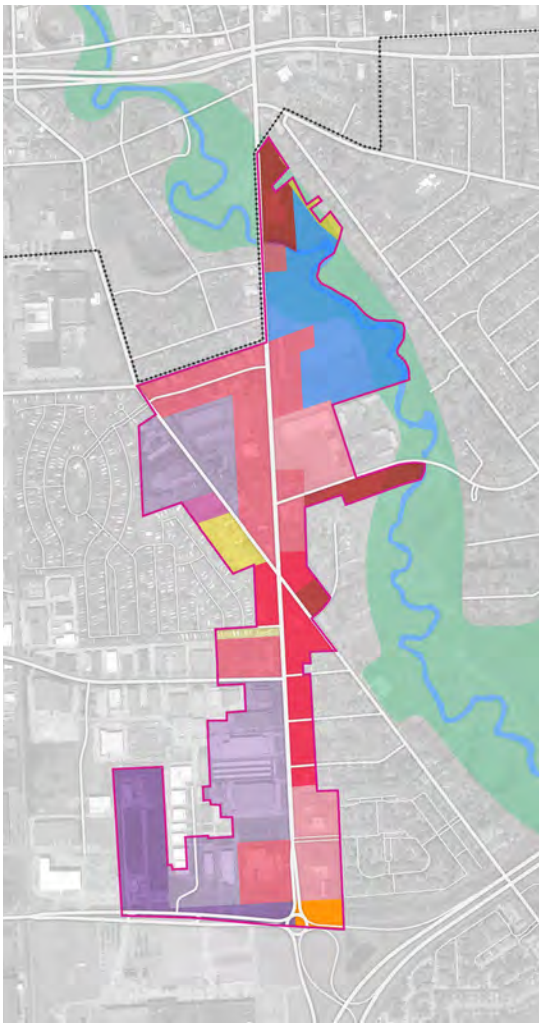
Overall, proposed redevelopment ideas are intended to increase property and community value, along with experiential quality, both individually and for the district as a whole.

## LAYING THE ZONING GROUNDWORK

The most powerful tool the City of Sterling Heights has to encourage redevelopment of the North Van Dyke Avenue district in accordance with this master plan vision is zoning. Present zoning covering the district is insufficiently instructive and permitting to enable transformation in the near-term.

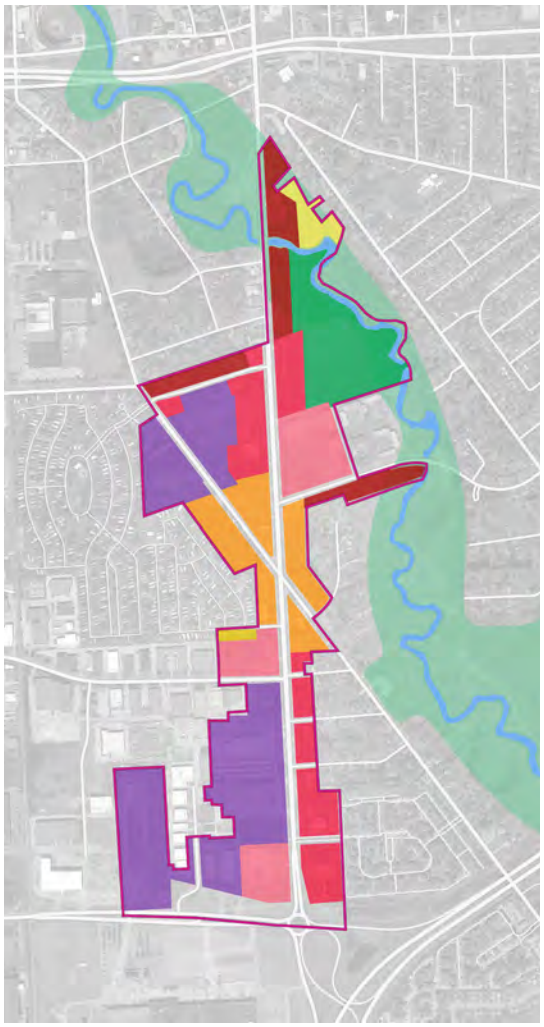
Today's zoning encourages single-use, low-rise development with large setbacks and high parking counts. New or enhanced zoning districts that enable by-right development of mixed-use and pedestrian friendly projects can spur investment in the area and encourage immediate transformation from the present condition to the one envisioned in this plan.

| Existing Zoning Districts | Allowed Uses | Conditional Uses | Max. Hgt. | Min. Set. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **M-1: Light Industrial** | Warehousing and wholesale, light manufacturing, printing/publishing facilities, central dry cleaning facilities, trade and industrial schools, post offices, building construction material wholesalers | Non-automotive painting and varnishing shops, lumber mills, car dealerships, auto service centers, automobile repair shops, recreational vehicle storage, automobile impound lots, indoor recreation facilities, truck/ commercial vehicle/ boat rental facilities, outdoor commercial sports centers | 35′ | 35–75′ |
| **M-2: Heavy Industrial** | All M-1 allowed uses, manufacturing/ industrial facilities | Junk yards, refuse and garbage facilities, truck storage yards, warehouse/showroom retail, concrete and asphalt crushing plants | 50′ | 35–75′ |
| **RM1/RM2: Multi-family Low-rise** | Multifamily housing, including multiplexes, townhouses, apartments, duplexes | Multifamily housing (3 stories), religious buildings, assisted living facilities, boarding houses, child care facility | 30′ | 35–110′ (private - major) |
| **R60/R70/R80/R100: One-family Residential** | Single family residential, agriculture, City-owned facilities, site condominiums, small group homes | Religious buildings, higher education facilities, recreational facilities, private clubs, single family cluster, assisted living, child care facility | 30′ | 30–100′ (private - major) |
| **C1: Local Convenience Business** | Hardware stores, grocery stores, meat and fish markets, bakeries, drugstores, beauty/barber shop, repair shop, dry cleaning, liquor store, general retail, florist, pet supply store, home furnishing store, eating and drinking establishments, movie theater, museum, art gallery, dry cleaning, children's recreation | Veterinary office, automobile service centers, fast food restaurants, regional shopping center, adult entertainment, body art facilities, events facilities | 30′ | 35–95′ (private - major) |
| **C2: Planned Comparison Business** | Nursery/garden store, department store, general merchandise, supermarket, fitness facility, pet shops, bulk food stores, clothing store, home furnishing store, eating and drinking establishments, movie theater, museum, art gallery, dry cleaning, children's' recreation | Veterinary office, automobile service centers, fast food restaurants, regional shopping center, adult entertainment, body art facilities, events facilities | 30′ | 75–135′ (private - major) |
| **G3: General Business** | Veterinary office, building material and hardware store, car dealerships, eating and drinking establishments, hotels and motels, mortuaries, rental supply store, large appliance repair, automotive supply, automotive rental | Businesses of a drive-in nature, bowling alleys, other recreational facilities, gasoline service stations, self-storage facilities, miniature gold, automobile wash establishments, gas stations, dance halls, event facilities | 30′ | 35–95′ (private - major) |
| **O1: Office and Professional Business** | Executive and administrative offices, medical offices, professional offices, financial institutions | Pharmacies, laboratories, drive-through facilities, assisted housing, child care facility | 25′ | 35–95′ (private - major) |



## EXISTING ZONING

Existing zoning within the district permits the development of commercial, business/office, and industrial uses. This single-use zoning approach leads to development in kind with what has taken shape throughout the district to date and prohibits the kind of development imagined in this plan. While the district falls within an overlay district enabling mixed-use and urban development, the process for developing projects of this kind requires extra review and permitting and can be cumbersome for developers.



## 2040 FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The City's Future Land Use plan identifies the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road as a priority location for "traditional mixed-use development". This community objective provides a solid foundation for rezoning the area to accommodate the kind of development envisioned in this plan. Rezoning enables mixed-use and higher-density development by right, foregoing special processes and permits.

### FUTURE LAND USE PLAN LAND USES

- Trad. Mixed Use Development Node
- Industrial
- Office
- Local Commercial
- Regional Commercial
- Suburban Residential
- Parks + Open Space

## RECOMMENDED ZONING UPDATES

As an outcome of this plan, the City of Sterling Heights and stakeholders are prepared to see the transformation of North Van Dyke Avenue into a dense, walkable, mixed-use urban center. In order to facilitate changes in uses, forms, and functions of the district and in order to spur investment in this vision, the City must enact changes to the zoning that governs North Van Dyke Avenue. As discussed in Chapter 2, existing zoning is designed to facilitate the kind of development that has taken shape over the last five decades. New, specific guidance on the type, scale, density, and intended relationship to the street of future development is required in order to permit and encourage the evolution envisioned in this plan.

Typical zoning codes are highly focused on developing single land uses on single lots. Dimensional standards accompany strict requirements on what is allowed where and clustering uses together and apart from others in order to promote compatibility. In mixed-use districts, like that envisioned for North Van Dyke, the specific uses that develop on specific sites is not very important. The idea is that a broad range of people-centered uses are inherently compatible, and result in successful places where people want to be.

For districts such as this one, a zoning code that focuses more on the overall form of development and the relationship of one project to the next is more likely to create an environment that is attractive for investors, flexible to changing market and demand conditions, and sustainable overall.

### TRADITIONAL MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT NODE OVERLAY DISTRICT (TMUDN)

The City of Sterling Heights zoning code contains an overlay district in Article 14B that creates a collaborative zoning and review process designed to facilitate mixed-use development within the node (at the intersection of Van Dyke Avenue and Utica Road) identified in the City's Master Land Use Plan. The overlay district allows residential uses above all existing allowed uses within the overlay district by approval in the City's standard review process for site plan, special approval land use, and/or planned unit development.

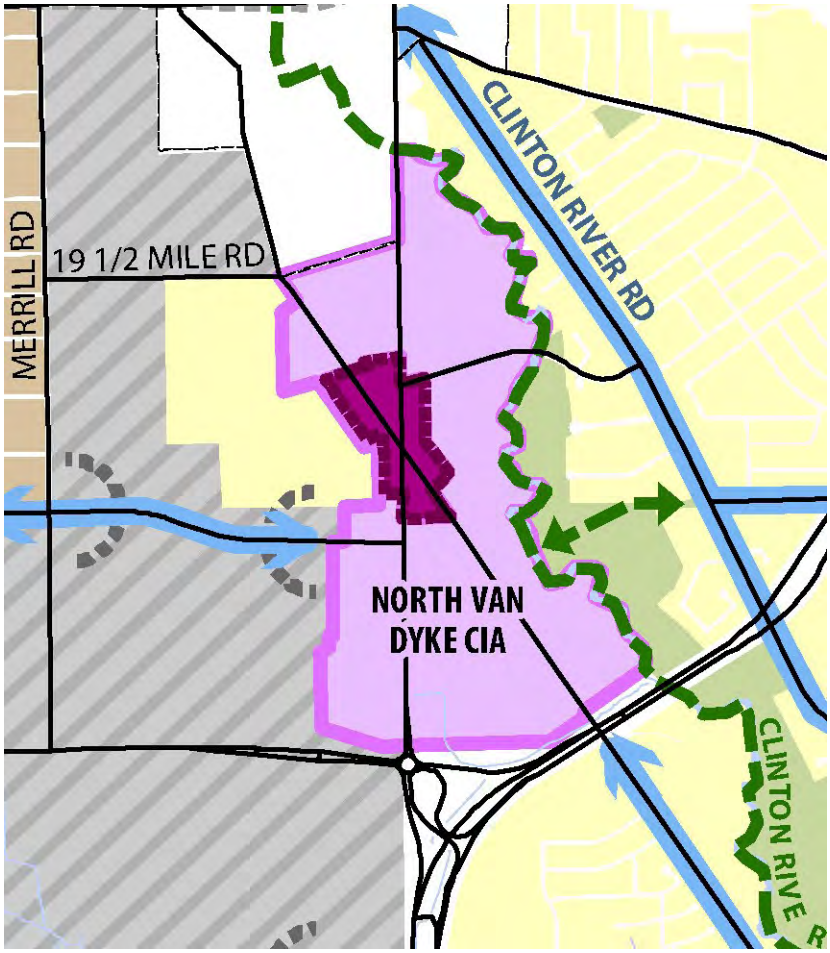
The Article provides flexibility for parking counts, in line with those proposed in this plan—allowing for the consideration of "verifiable justification" for proposed reductions. The Article establishes the defacto parking minimum for mixed-use residential development at one space per dwelling unit.

The overlay zone allows for flexibility and densified development, overall. The allowed mix of uses, height

increases, increases in allowable lot coverage and other provisions provide a substantial tool for permitting projects in line with this vision. However, the Article still requires landowners to pursue a special approval and negotiation process to secure approval and most of the guidance in the provision's language is suggestive and qualitative, as opposed to specific and numerical.

### NEW ZONING DISTRICTS

To provide the necessary flexibility for mixed-use development while ensuring adherence to the frameworks and character vision for each sub-area within the plan, the planning team recommends establishing multiple mixed-use, form-based zoning districts that cover each of the major place types envisioned in the plan.

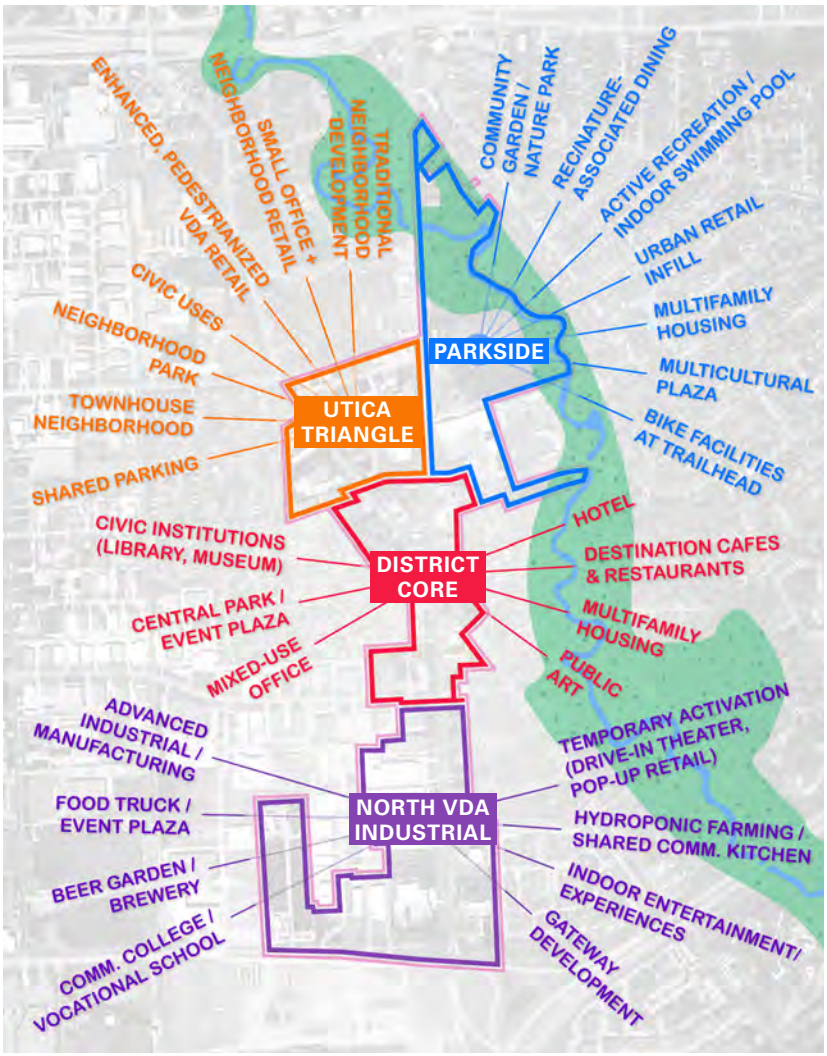



Mixed Use Development Node Overlay from the Sterling Heights 2017-2040 Master Land Use Plan Framework Plan

### DISTRICT CORE

As the urban center of the district and Sterling Heights more largely, development in the District Core is recommended to be high density, reasonably tall, and interfacing closely with the street. Whether individual sites host mixed-use residential, office, hotel, cultural, or civic uses should not be heavily controlled, and all should be encouraged within the Core. Height minimums should be set for parcels spacious enough to accommodate requisite parking in addition to development. For parcels that accommodate lower intensity uses, such as single-use retail, the code should encourage two-story development and/or require tall single-story development to stay in keeping with the sub-area's overall height and massing.

Given the dense nature of the proposed development within this sub-area, parking requirements should be the most flexible possible within the District Core. The City should explore implementing parking maximums in lieu of parking minimums within the




zoning district(s) governing Core development.

### UTICA TRIANGLE

Development within the Utica Triangle sub-area is envisioned to support neighborhood development and a lower density mixed-use character than that of the District Core. Zoning covering this area should embrace the same flexibility in development use while providing significantly more guidance on density, form, connectivity, relationship to adjacent development, parking locations and visibility, and the provision of open space.

Development within the Utica Triangle sub-area should allow/require reasonable front setbacks to accommodate residential development and neighborhood-style commercial development.

### PARKSIDE

With the Parkside sub-area benefitting from significant Clinton River frontage, the plan calls for natural resource protection and a diverse range of outdoor and recreational programming on parcels within this area. The immediate frontage of Van Dyke Avenue and Riverland Drive are encouraged to develop in line with the vision for mixed-use urban district, while the back lands should be woven into the Clinton River greenway, to the extent possible. Provisions should be included requiring meaningfully spacious green connections through from the Clinton River to Van Dyke Avenue.

In order to ensure the Clinton River remains protected, the Riverland zoning district(s) should emphasize a significant river buffer, within which, development is mostly forbidden.

### NORTH VDA INDUSTRIAL

The North VDA Industrial sub-area should be treated somewhat differently from the other sub-areas. Given the industrial nature of

this area, the same kind of vibrant, mixed-use, and retail-activated streetscape is not envisioned for the foreseeable future along this segment of Van Dyke Avenue. As such, reasonable setbacks should be permitted for new development (approximately 15-25 FT). These setbacks will allow for close interfacing between new and additive development and the sidewalk while not overwhelming the pedestrian realm with out-of-scale industrial development. Considered landscaped frontages, transparent development, and pedestrian paths should be required for these setbacks.

As concentrated commercial and retail development is imagined for portions of this area, zoning should allow it with requisite requirements for pedestrian amenities and open space. Commercial, retail, food and beverage, and entertainment development associated with ongoing industrial/manufacturing uses (e.g. brewery, distillery) should be especially encouraged and should be developed with street frontage and facing public spaces.

Future commercial/retail development should be encouraged to interface in a considered and respectful manner with existing and future industrial and manufacturing development, and vice versa.

For development parcels within the North VDA Industrial sub-area and to the east of Van Dyke Avenue, uses such as medium and high density residential, retail, and commercial/office should be allowed. Setbacks in this area should also be more flexible than sub-areas to the north to provide relief from higher traffic levels along Van Dyke Avenue, for residential uses in particular. Another approach to accommodate the kind of development envisioned for this area, the City could consider using the same zoning allowances or district as that employed for the Utica Triangle district(s). Given the proximity of this area to major jobs centers, affordable and workers' housing development should be encouraged here, to the extent possible.

### CONSERVATION ZONE

The district's frontage onto the Clinton River affords it a special responsibility to protect lands essential to accessing the river and natural lands that surround it and protect its environment. In addition to establishing a mandatory no-build buffer from the river's edge, it is recommended that these buffer lands and further adjacent lands designated for permanent natural park use be zoned as conservation lands. Such a designation should prohibit most development but permit infrastructure conducive to access and enjoyment by the community.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

As part of a form-based zoning approach, guidance on the massing, architectural features, streetscape interface, and public realm connectivity of development helps created a unified and successful district. In addition to the dimensional specifics required/permitted by the zoning districts, the City of Sterling Heights is encouraged to adopt design guidelines for the North Van Dyke Avenue district to provide guidance to private developers. Examples of the kind of design guidelines that would be appropriate for the North Van Dyke Avenue district are provided in the next section.

Important site considerations include guidance on lot coverage, the location and access of primary entrances, pedestrian paths, landscape treatments, intra- and inter-site open space dimensions and connectivity, signage requirements, and stormwater retention.

Development guidelines should provide instructions on the detailing of development massing and architectural features and articulation. Overall, guidance should encourage active frontages, transparent ground floors, vertical stepbacks on taller development, varied facade articulation, the accessible location of primary openings, the inclusion of architectural features such as canopies, green roofs, materiality, screening, and more.

## ALTERNATIVE PERMITTING PROCESSES

Today, Sterling Heights offers various alternative processes for planning and permitting developments that embrace the principles of this plan, but which might vary in substantial ways from the underlying zoning. These alternatives include Planned Unit Development (PUD) and the overlay district described above. As no zoning policy can fully articulate all potential desired development configurations, these alternative mechanisms should continue to be embraced by the City and encouraged for projects that can benefit from their flexibility and collaborative planning and design intent. PUD, in particular, can be useful for developers embarking on large-scale redevelopment projects or those taking shape over multiple parcels.

## PARKING REQUIREMENTS

As mentioned above, revised parking requirements are an essential component of successful transformation from the present development conditions of North Van Dyke Avenue to the one envisioned in this master plan. Chapter 3 provides guidance on appropriate parking ratios and strategies for each proposed development type.

Through the process of rezoning, the City of Sterling Heights is encouraged to pursue parking standards in line with these recommended ratios, offsets, and shared parking scenarios. The City should explore the idea of establishing maximum parking requirements in the District Core while embracing more urban, multi-modal, and future-oriented parking paradigms for other sub-areas.

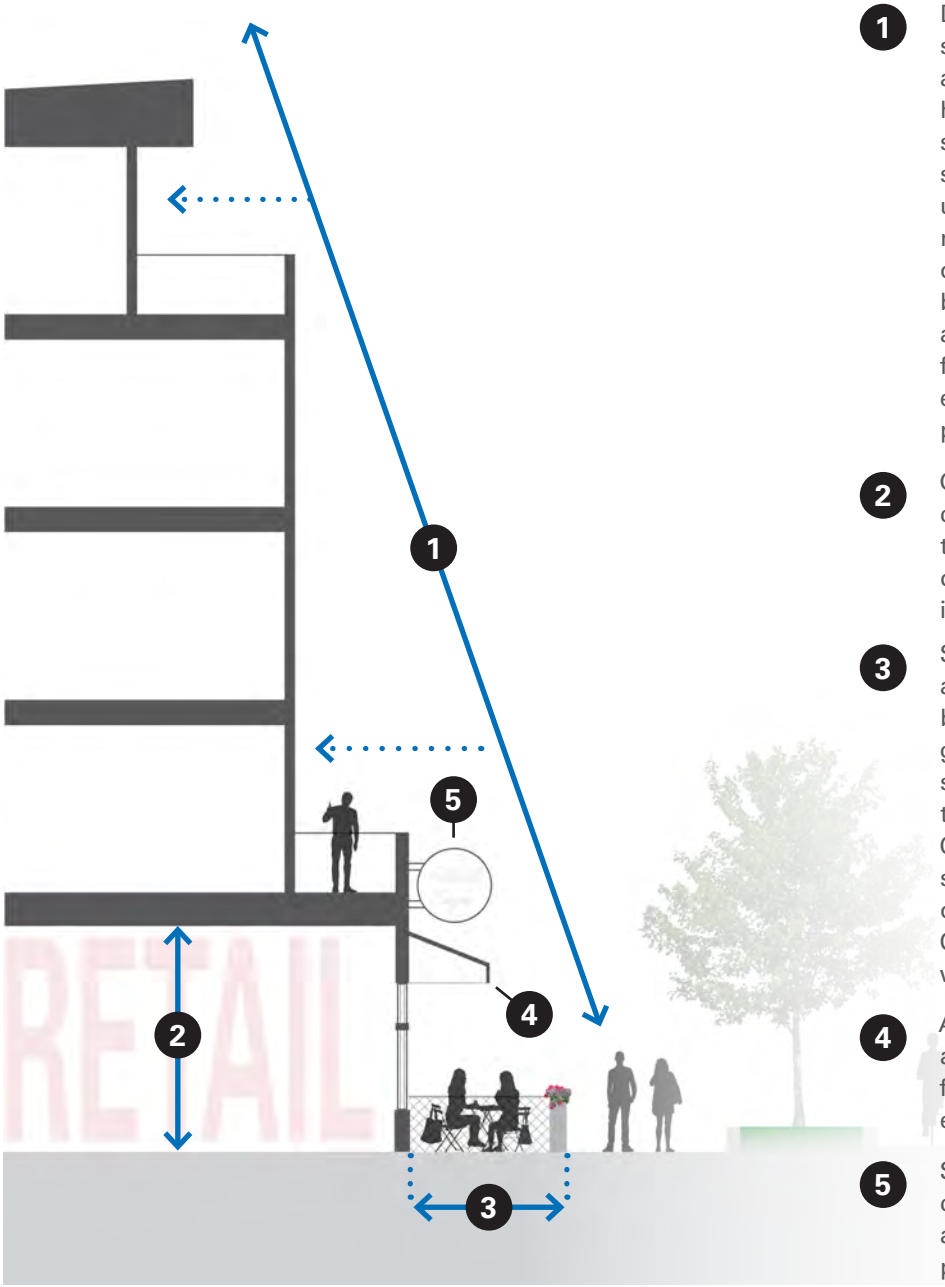
## PROPOSED ZONING DISTRICT ATTRIBUTES

The following table outlines the proposed attributes that are important to creating the unique district and sub-areas envisioned for North Van Dyke Avenue. These proposed uses and dimensional requirements reflect the vision established in the conceptual redevelopment plan outlined in this master plan and are intended to serve as a starting place for the City as it considers adaptations to existing zoning. As a first step towards implementing the vision in this plan, the City of Sterling Heights is encouraged to embark on a rezoning effort to permit dense, mixed-use development along the corridor.

| District Sub-area | Encouraged Uses | Front Setback Requirement | Height Req. | Open Space Req. (% of site area) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **District Core** | Attached single family residential, multifamily residential, office, research/ laboratory, retail, restaurants + bars, personal services, entertainment, event venues, daycare, cultural facilities, civic/ community facilities, library, museum, recreation facilities | **Min:** 0 FT<br>**Max.:** 8 FT; must be landscaped/ activated with cafe seating | **Min.:** 24 FT<br>**Max:** 105 FT | 5%, including the creation of pedestrian paths connecting to adjacent developments and open space; must follow streetscape guidance; provided open space should connect to larger district network |
| **Utica Triangle** | Attached single family residential, detached single family residential (TND) multifamily residential, office, research/ laboratory, retail, restaurants + bars, entertainment, event venues, daycare, civic/community facilities, library, museum, personal services, cultural facilities, recreation facilities | **Min:** 0 FT (primary street); 10 FT (secondary + tertiary street)<br>**Max:** 15 FT (primary Street); 20 FT (secondary + tertiary street) | **Min.:** 16 FT<br>**Max.:** 65 FT | 10% or 300 SF of combined open space per residential unit for townhouse, duplex, and TND development |
| **Parkside** | Attached single family residential, multifamily residential, office, research/ laboratory, retail, restaurants + bars, entertainment, personal services, event venues, daycare, cultural facilities, civic/ community facilities, library, museum, recreation facilities | **Min:** 0 FT<br>**Max:** 10 FT | **Min.:** 16 FT<br>**Max.:** 65 FT | 10% (combined) or 300 SF of combined open space per residential unit for townhouse, duplex, and TND development |
| **North VDA Industrial** | Attached single family residential, multifamily residential, office, research/ laboratory, retail, restaurants + bars, entertainment, personal services, event venues, daycare, cultural facilities, civic/community facilities, library, museum,recreation facilities, industrial facilities, manufacturing/fabrication facilities | **Min.:** 10 FT<br>Max.: 25 FT | Min.: 24 FT<br>Max.: 65 FT | 10% or 300 SF of combined open space per residential unit for townhouse, duplex, and TND development |

## DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Along with base zoning district provisions, overlays, and other regulations governing the type and scale of development that can take place within the district, a clear, simple, and flexible set of development guidelines should be drafted and adopted to require (where possible) and encourage planning, siting, and architectural design that comports with the master plan vision. A consistent set of guidelines will ensure development meets key district objectives for a pleasant, safe, and active pedestrian realm while ensuring compatibility between




1. Development taller than three stories should include stepbacks for floors above the ground floor. Stepbacks help create more pedestrian-scaled streetscapes and allow more sunlight into the street. For mixed-use projects with ground floor retail, residential or office uses beginning on the second floor should step back from the first floor. All floors above the fourth should step back further. These stepback spaces are encouraged to be used for balconies/patios.
2. Ground floor retail should have tall, comfortable floor-to-ceiling heights to accommodate lighting, ventilation, other mechanical equipment, and interior decor.
3. Street-side outdoor/cafe seating and dining patios are encouraged between the public right-of-way and ground floor retail along primary streets. In special cases and where there is sufficient sidewalk width, the City can permit temporary spill-out/seating area within the public right-of-way, adjacent to development. Outdoor seating should be contained with attractive partitions.
4. Architectural and fabric canopies are encouraged above ground floor retail/storefronts and above entrances to development.
5. Signage above retail should be consistent in dimensions and across a development frontage and be positioned above obstructions, such as canopies.

adjacent developments. While these guidelines can articulate clear preferences for overall approach and permitted design features, they should not be overly prescriptive, nor should they dictate or forbid specific architectural styles, features, colors, or temporal and subjective preferences. The most successful development guidelines provide an overall framework while encouraging creativity and diversity in the character of the development that takes shape. Below, several suggestions are provided to give a sense of the recommended scope of development guidelines for the North Van Dyke Avenue district.

**6** Development should clearly articulate a horizontal hierarchy (base, middle, top), properly scaled to the height of the structure.

**7** All buildings should meet the ground with a clearly defined building footing.

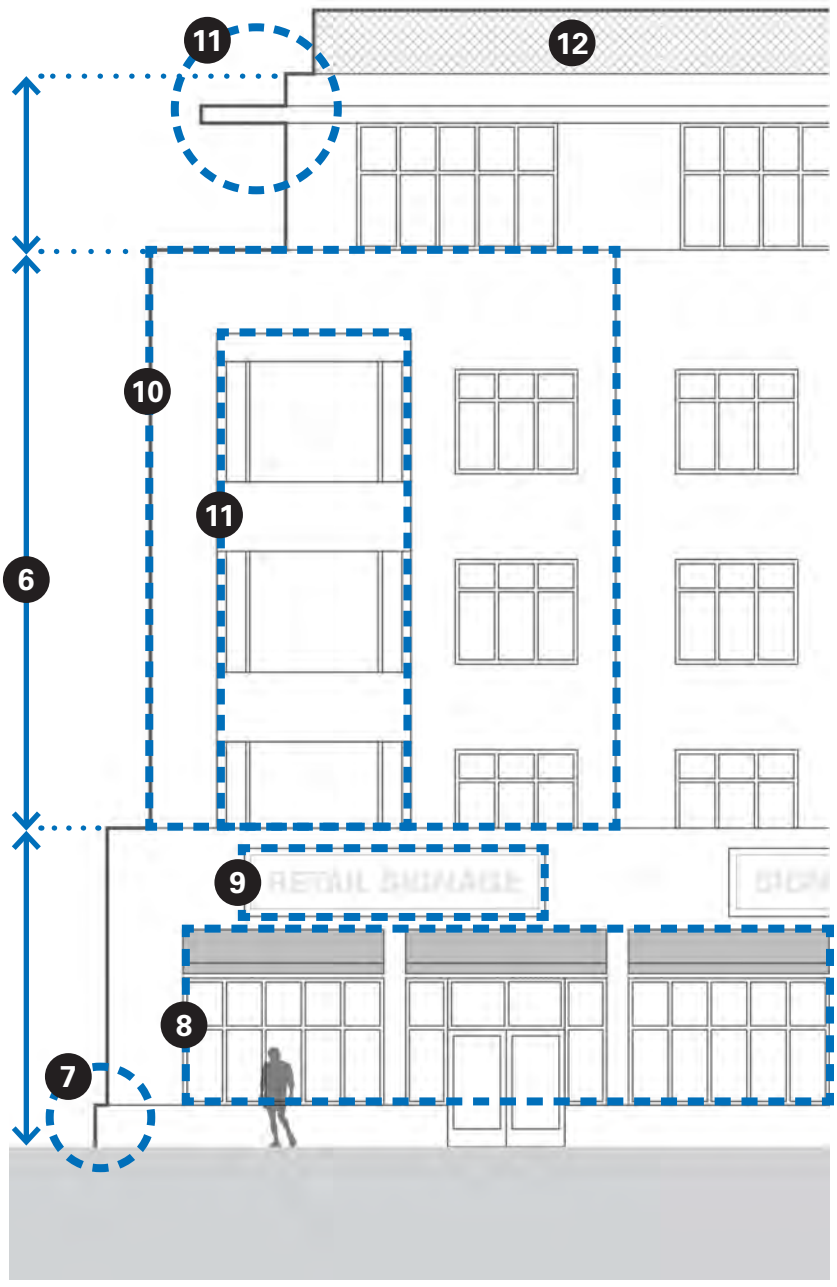
**8** Ground floor development should be highly transparent, with the majority of the ground floor facade consisting of glazed entry areas, doors, and windows.

**9** Signage above retail shops should be consistent in size and position along the facade. Signage along the same plane as the primary facade and small flag signs (perpendicular to the facade) should be permitted.

**10** Buildings with heights above two stories should be articulated with varied massing to create dynamic facades and prevent flat, static streetscapes. Major facade articulations (pushes and pulls in depth) should occur at intervals no greater than approximately 25 FT.

**11** Architectural detailing such as bays, horizontal and vertical datum lines, balconies, decks, and roof trellises are encouraged to create design diversity and more complex geometries.

**12** Roof-mounted mechanical equipment and parking garages visible from primary and secondary streets should be screened with appropriate metal/wood screening material. Green roofs are encouraged where possible.



## GREEN STREETS + STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Green Infrastructure is a philosophy as much as it is an approach to urban development—one that prioritizes the use of natural systems. Green infrastructure provides interconnected networks of parks, greenways, wildlife corridors and waterways. Roadways can become green streets if they implement green stormwater management solutions. These multipurpose systems are used to clean and manage stormwater, reduce flooding, provide habitat, reduce carbon emissions, address climate change, clean the air and reduce the urban heat island effect. Green stormwater management captures the stormwater runoff where it lands, especially when this surface is impervious. Green infrastructure relies on plants, soils, microbes and porous and permeable pavements to reduce, clean and slow stormwater. Green infrastructure provides social, economic and ecological benefits to communities who take advantage of this approach.

Benefits of green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) include:

- Cost effective and often less expensive than traditional stormwater management systems
- Infiltration of runoff and recharge of ground water aquifers
- Reduced flooding
- Locally-managed stormwater
- Reduced runoff volume
- Reduced total suspended solids (TSS)
- Collection of trash/debris
- Improved water quality by reducing or removing organics, bacteria, nutrients, heavy metals, oils and grease from runoff that might enter lakes, rivers and streams.

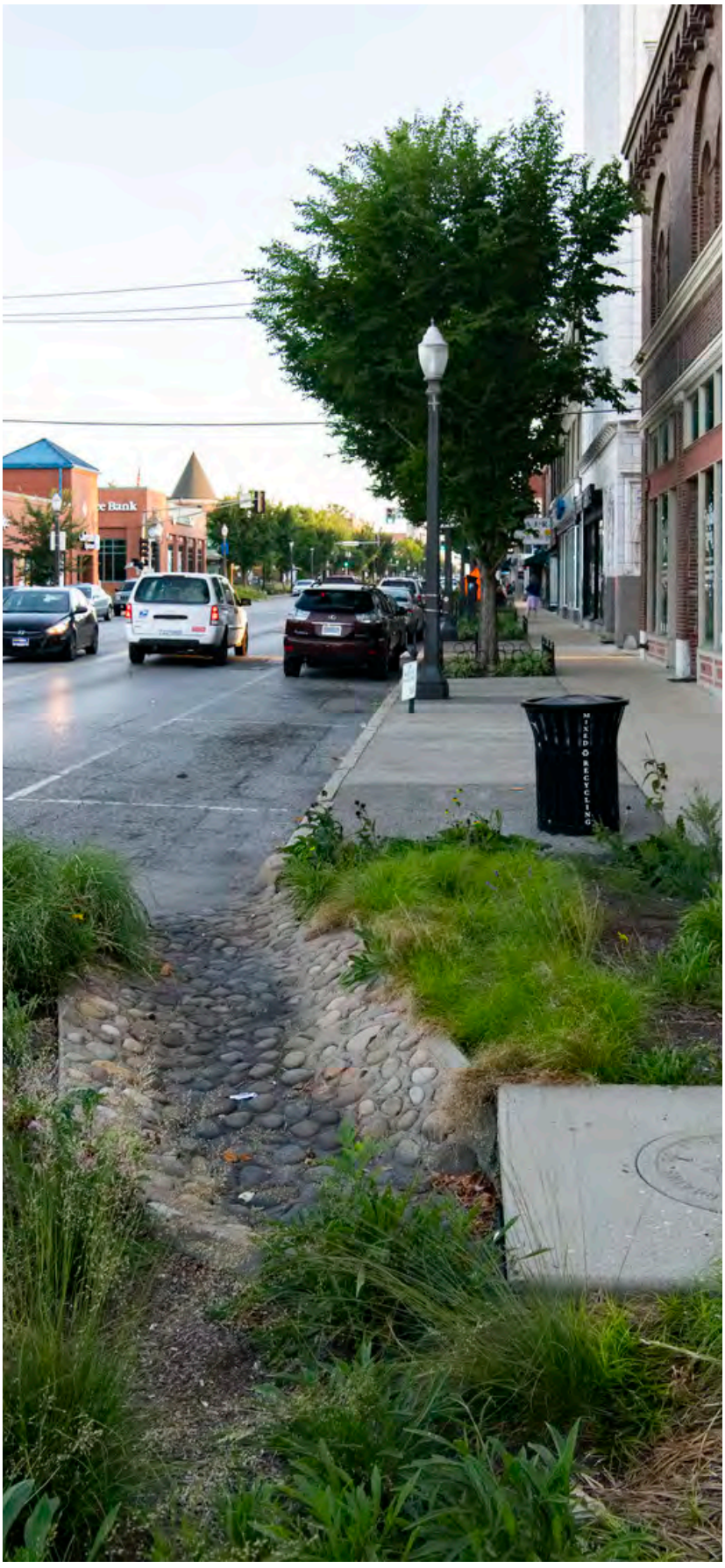
Plants and soil microbes are a critical part of the GSI system. They bind and breakdown pollutants associated with urban stormwater runoff. Plants also use the nutrients in the runoff, preventing excesses from reaching rivers and streams. Plants, especially trees, uptake large volumes of water over their lifetime, again reducing runoff.

Historically, communities relied on grey infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff. Water was carried through a network of underground storm piping and outlet to rivers and streams. The runoff was filled with trash, sediment, heavy metals and other pollutants. In older communities, besides not treating the stormwater runoff, it was not detained either. Long and heavy storm events lead to overtaxing the storm sewer system, causing flooding and erosion of waterways.

Today we know better and rely on green stormwater infrastructure combined with grey infrastructure. GSI should be implemented

beginning at the individual site level and continuing to the community and regional levels. The following pages outline proven green stormwater infrastructure techniques that can be employed in within the North Van Dyke Avenue district. Some are more relevant to the public realm and right of way, while others are more appropriate to private development.

Many of the techniques in this section rely on the principles of the bioretention cell, but have more specific names, depending on where they are implemented. Common principles include the use of engineered soils, especially when native soils are clay and do not allow infiltration. Storage volumes for ponding of runoff, mulch, native plants, an overflow and an underdrain are necessary in most GSI techniques. In all cases, the landscape architect and civil engineer work closely to design and engineer the green solution so that it meets local stormwater requirements.



## BIORETENTION CELLS

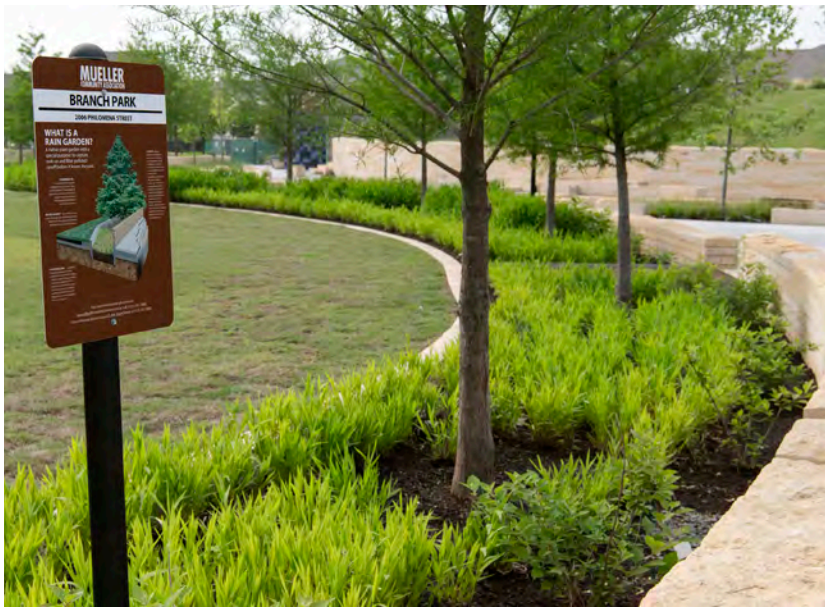
Bioretention Cells are depressed areas in the landscape designed to slow and filter stormwater runoff. They rely on engineered soils, a stone layer and infiltration or an underdrain to treat stormwater runoff. Plantings and a mulch layer are also critical to the success and function of the bioretention cell. Bioretention cells should also have an overflow. The soils and mulch layer within the bioretention cells bind pollutants such as heavy metals, sediment, nitrogen and phosphorous, preventing them from leaving the site and entering waterways. Pervious soils allow infiltration from the bioretention cell, provided the depth to ground water is adequate, typically five feet.

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Size and ponding depth are based on stormwater calculations by a registered engineer. Ponding depth is generally six to twelve inches. Shape is typically long and fairly narrow, making bioretention cells very appropriate along roads and parking lots. The bottom of the bioretention cell should be flat to promote distribution of the stormwater across the cell. Geotechnical fabrics should be avoided, due to the long term risk of clogging the fabric with sediment.
- Plantings should be native and resilient to flooding, drought and pollutants. If road salts will be heavily used, a method of preventing the stormwater first flush in winter months should be included. Sedges can be used for a grass like appearance, but mowing should be minimized. Trees, shrubs and perennials can all be used in a bioretention cell if the above criteria are met.
- Heavy equipment should never be allowed to enter a bioretention cell, including during the construction period. Soil compaction reduces air space and endangers infiltration. Equipment should be limited to 8,000 lbs.
- Bioretention cells can be implemented in both the public realm and private development sites.

## RAIN GARDENS

Rain Gardens are similar to bioretention cells, often the terms are used interchangeably, but there are a few key differences. Rain gardens are most often found in smaller and residential applications. They are depressions (low spots) in the landscape that capture, treat and infiltrate runoff from roofs, walks, driveways and other paved surfaces. Lawn areas can also be directed to rain gardens, as a lawn infiltrates far less rain than a rain garden. The rain garden does not have an underdrain or overflow and typically does not have engineered soils. In locations with heavy clays, compost can be mixed with the native soils.




### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Locate the rain garden at least ten feet from buildings.
- Direct downspouts toward the rain garden.
- Plant the garden with native Michigan plants. Choose those that can withstand drought and standing water.
- Rain gardens can be implemented in both the public realm and private development sites.

## VEGETATED SWALE

Vegetated swales, or bioswales, are long, narrow depressions in the landscape which rely on a longitudinal slope to carry stormwater. Vegetated swales provide pretreatment of stormwater runoff, by slowing it and trapping sediments and other pollutants, and typically end a detention basin. Vegetated swales flood during rain events. The thicker and healthier the vegetation, the greater the nutrient and sediment removal.

Parking lot runoff can be captured via sheet flow, while roadway runoff relies on curb drops to allow the stormwater to enter the bioswale. In the case of sheet flow, a stone border is beneficial for dissipating energy. If the swale is collecting road runoff where de-icing salts are used, it is helpful to include an underdrain which will allow the salts to dilute and pass through the soil.

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- If the longitudinal slope exceeds four percent, check dams or weirs should be used. A two percent longitudinal slope is ideal. Four to one is the ideal side slope of a vegetated swale, creating a trapezoidal cross section.
- Plantings should be native and those that can survive flooding, drought and pollutants. If road salts will be heavily used, a method of preventing the stormwater first flush in winter months should be included. Sedges can be used for a grass like appearance, but mowing should be minimized. Trees, shrubs and perennials can all be used in a vegetated swale if the above criteria are met. When planted along roadways, care must be taken in the selection and placement of vegetation to avoid blocking the drivers' view at intersections and crosswalks. Road salts are an additional consideration.
- Swales can be implemented in both the public realm and private development sites.

## PLANTER BOXES

Planter Boxes are a stormwater management technique used in dense, urban areas. The planter box has vertical sides and is often constructed of concrete. The planter box may have an open bottom for infiltration, or a closed bottom, requiring a connection to the city stormwater sewer system. Planter boxes function in the same fashion as bioretention cells by slowing and filtering stormwater runoff. They rely on engineered soils, a stone layer and infiltration or an underdrain to treat stormwater runoff. Plantings and a mulch layer are also critical to the success of the planter.

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- If the longitudinal slope exceeds four percent, weirs or stepped planters should be used.
- When treating roadside runoff, a curb cut is required. If collecting roof runoff from an open downspout, the sidewalk should have a grate rated for vehicles and maintenance equipment and allow stormwater to enter, while not impeding pedestrian traffic.
- A ponding depth of six inches is typical. The planter should have an overflow and underdrain.
- Planter boxes should be located behind the curb, with sufficient distance to allow car doors to open. They are often fenced for pedestrian safety. The low fencing becomes part of the brand of the community, and can include the community's logo, colors and other design details.

- Plantings should be native and those that can survive flooding, drought and pollutants. If road salts will be heavily used, a method of preventing the stormwater first flush in winter months should be included. Sedges can be used for a grass like appearance, but mowing should be minimized. Trees, shrubs and perennials can all be used in a planter box if the above criteria are met. When planted along roadways, care must be taken in the selection and placement of vegetation to avoid blocking the drivers' view at intersections and crosswalks with a maximum height of twenty four inches. Other hardy perennials and shrubs have a place in the urban planter box, as esthetics and height are important. Road salts are an additional consideration.
- Planter boxes can be implemented in both the public realm and private development sites.

## CENTER MEDIAN

The center median is a giant planter or bioretention cell, used in the center of a roadway to capture and treat stormwater runoff. It is best used in new construction, as roads do not typically drain to the center.

In addition to capturing, slowing and treating stormwater, center medians offer branding opportunities for the community and road corridor, provide habitat and traffic calming. Trees, shrubs and perennials can all be used in the central median.

Central medians can have a stone swale down in the center and weirs to slow the stormwater on a road with a slope. The stone swale will help dissipate energy from flowing stormwater during storm events. Curb drops are required to allow the stormwater to enter. An overflow and underdrain are required.


### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Road slopes greater than four percent should include weirs or stepping pools to slow runoff.
- Plantings should be native and those that can survive flooding, drought and pollutants. If road salts will be heavily used, a method of preventing the stormwater first flush in winter months should be provided. Sedges can be used for a grass like appearance, but mowing should be minimized. Trees, shrubs and perennials can all be used in the median if the above criteria are met. Care must be taken in the selection and placement of vegetation to avoid blocking the drivers' view at intersections and crosswalks with a maximum height of twenty four inches. Other hardy perennials and shrubs have a place in the median, as aesthetics and height are important. Road salts are an additional consideration.
- Center medians are primarily recommended for public right-of-ways, though are encouraged for private roads wide enough to support them.

## CURB EXTENSIONS + BUMP-OUTS

Curb extensions, also known as bump-outs and bulb-outs can play a role in greening the street, whether it is the introduction of trees and planters, or providing space for green stormwater infrastructure. Curb extensions can easily incorporate bioretention cells or planter boxes, while helping to slow traffic and increase pedestrian safety.

Bump outs work in the same fashion as bioretention cells by slowing and filtering stormwater runoff. They rely on engineered soils, a stone layer and infiltration or an underdrain to treat stormwater runoff. Plantings and a mulch layer are also critical to the success of the bioretention cell.


### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Bump-outs can be located at intersections or mid-block. A curb drop or inlet is required to capture the stormwater runoff. The slope of road must drain toward the bump out to allow for effective capture of stormwater.
- Plantings should be native and those that can survive flooding, drought and pollutants. If road salts will be heavily used, a method of preventing the stormwater first flush in winter months should be included. Sedges can be used for a grass like appearance, but mowing should be minimized. Trees, shrubs and perennials can all be used in a bump out if the above criteria are met. When planted along roadways, care must be taken in the selection and placement of vegetation to avoid blocking the drivers' view at intersections and crosswalks, with a maximum height of twenty four inches. Other hardy perennials and shrubs have a place in the bump out, as aesthetics and height are important. Road salts are an additional consideration.
- Curb extensions/bump-outs are primarily recommended for public right-of-ways, though are encouraged for private roads wide enough to support them.

## PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Small pedestrian bridges allow the stormwater system and the pedestrian system to coexist in the landscape, while compromising neither. A grating supported by the concrete structure provides the pedestrian bridge. The bridge allows the stormwater to flow to its destination, uninterrupted.

The same concept can be used when downspouts require routing from the building, across a sidewalk area, to a planter box or bioretention cell.

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- The bridge and grating should support maintenance vehicles.
- Stone should be placed under the bridge to minimize erosion.
- Pedestrian bridges can be implemented in both the public realm and private development sites.

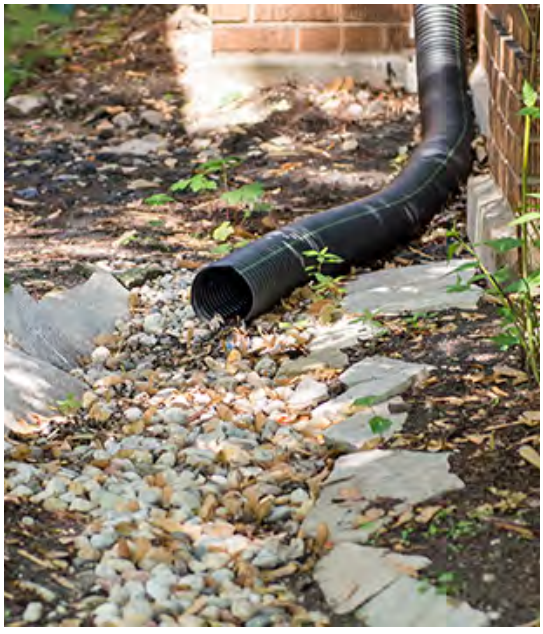
## DISCONNECTED DOWNSPOUTS

Downspouts carry roof runoff and have historically been connected to the storm sewer system or drain to paved surfaces.

Disconnected downspouts allow the runoff to be directed to planted areas, cisterns and rain barrels.

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Disconnected downspouts should be directed away from foundations and to planters, rain gardens, turf areas, or swales.
- Disconnected downspouts are primarily recommended for private development



## GREEN PAVERS

Green pavers can be used for roads, parking lots, plazas and walkways. They can be used in streetscapes, parking lots or neighborhoods. A common solution is to build the parking spaces of green pavement, while the drive lanes are typical pavement. Drives lanes can also be green pavement. Green pavement is typically used in lower traffic areas, and can be pervious asphalt, pervious concrete or porous or permeable pavers.

In the case of asphalt and concrete, the smallest fines are left out of the mix, allowing for stormwater to drain through the pavement system.

If the native soil is sandy, the stormwater can then infiltrate. If native soils are clay, an underdrain system is required. The underdrain can outlet to the storm sewer system or a vegetated swale. The storage bed beneath the pavement must be carefully engineered.

Porous pavers can be clay, concrete or plastic. The paver has an open grid which is filled with turf, ground cover or aggregate, which all allow the stormwater to drain through the paver. Permeable pavers are solid but allow stormwater to drain through the joints between the pavers.

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Porous and pervious pavements can be used on brownfield sites if there is a liner to prevent infiltration, and a connection provided to the stormwater system.
- Landscape areas should not be allowed to drain onto green pavements. Leaves, branches and other natural materials will clog the pores of the pavement, reducing its effectiveness. Green pavements typically require vacuuming twice a year. Spring is recommended to remove sediments and build up of debris from the winter. Fall cleanup is recommended to remove leaves and other debris.
- Green pavers with turf should be used in low use areas only, such as overflow parking lots and fire lanes. Heavy use, salt and the heat and shade from vehicles does not allow the turf to recover.
- Signage of green pavement is recommended. Signs should indicate the presence of green pavement, prohibiting stockpile of materials and warning against seal coating.

## GREEN ROOF

Green roofs can be intensive or extensive. Intensive green roofs have deeper soils, typically 12-36 inches, and are planted with ground covers, perennials, shrubs and trees. Intensive green roofs can be thought of as roof top gardens, a usable green space for residents, employees or visitors. Planters, pavers, trellises, shade structures and even swimming pools are all common with an intensive green roof. Intensive green roofs are common in hotels, apartments, offices, schools and hospitals.

Extensive green roofs have shallow, light weight soils. Soils are typically expanded shale or slate and very porous. Sedums, a variety of alpine plants, is a very typical green roof plant. Sedums can withstand extended periods of drought and temperature extremes, both hot and cold, making them ideal. Native perennials can also be used in extensive green roofs. Depending on the system chosen, the green roof system can detain stormwater, which allows it to be counted toward the site detention requirements. Stormwater is cleaned as it lands on the green roof and drains through the soil. A common misconception is that green roofs are planted in grass. This is rarely the case. Grass is maintenance intensive, especially on a roof, and requires regular mowing.

In addition to the stormwater benefits, green roofs provide habitat for birds and migratory pollinators, reduce the temperature extremes of the roof, allowing it to be warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, and also reduce the wear and tear on the roof, prolonging roof life by years.

Extensive green roofs should be located where they can be seen, but not regularly walked on. The tender structure of sedum does not support regular or heavy foot traffic.

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- The green roof designer, the structural engineer, the architect and the supplier must all work closely together on the roofing system. Root barriers are required between the green roof soils and the roof itself.
- Green roofs typically require irrigation and drainage. Check the supplier's warranty, which often requires an automatic irrigation system.
- Fertilization is also required, as stormwater quickly drains through the soils, taking nutrients with it.

## RAINWATER HARVESTING

Cisterns, whether below or above ground, are a type of rainwater harvesting. The cistern is a large tank used to collect roof runoff and detain it for reuse. Typical reuse strategies include irrigation and toilet flushing. To reuse stormwater for potable needs is more involved. Above ground cisterns can be a strong design element, allowing one to tell the story of sustainability and rainwater harvesting and reuse. Above ground, outdoor cisterns are typically heated or taken off-line in the winter.

Rain barrels are a residential scale solution to rainwater harvesting.

The rain barrel can receive stormwater from roofs and hold it temporarily. Homeowners can then use the harvested water for their garden.

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Cisterns can be located in a prominent place, and should be part of the design brand. Above ground cisterns require a foundation designed by a structural engineer and should be sized to collect the roof runoff. More than one cistern may be required based on building size and roof design. An overflow is critical.
- Rain barrels, whether steel, wood or plastic, can be placed adjacent to the home or garage. Location should be chosen such that overflow does not impact the building foundations to negatively affect plantings.

## NATIVE PLANTS + TREES

Native plants are those found in a specific ecosystem without human intervention, before the introduction of European settlers. Native plants have evolved in the particular region over thousands of years.

Native plants are important and have the following benefits:

- Adapted to the local climate, soils, rainfall and temperature
- Less susceptible to pests and disease
- Typically low or lower maintenance after establishment
- Do not require fertilizer
- Provide valuable food and habitat for wildlife of all forms.

Perhaps the most important reason to use native plants is to provide food to the birds and insects that evolved with them and whose diet is so specialized as to not be able to survive without the native plant they evolved with. The monarch butterfly and milkweek plant is a perfect example of this concept. Without milkweed, we are in danger of causing the extinction of monarch butterflies.

Trees also provide a wide range of benefits for the urban environment. Benefits include:

- Removing pollution and improving air quality
- Providing shade for people, buildings and landscapes thus mitigating the urban heat island effect and reducing energy cost and demand
- Providing oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide
- Provide food and shelter to wildlife
- Improved property value
- Reducing stress for employees and students when they have a view of trees from the office or schoolroom.

Trees also play an important role in the management of stormwater. Benefits include:

- Trees intercept rainwater, reducing soil compaction and the rate of runoff
- Trees use rainwater, reducing the volume of runoff
- Trees encourage infiltration through the seams left by their roots
- Trees use nutrients, thus removing them from runoff.

The Center for Watershed Protection has developed a tool that can be adopted and used when calculating the benefit of trees in the management of stormwater. https://owl.cwp.org/mdocs-posts/stormwater-performance-based-credit/

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Native plants include trees, shrubs, wildflowers, ground cover and wetland species. They all play a role in the ecosystem through the food and beauty they provide.
- Massing of native wildflowers provides a more formal

appearance, which is often preferred by residents. Minimizing the number of species used in an urban application can also be more acceptable to residents.

- Height is a critical consideration in the urban landscape. Many natives are very tall.

There are many databases for native plants of southeast Michigan. A few to reference include:

- http://nativeplant.com/plants/search/input
- https://www.michiganaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MI-Native-Plants-for-Bird-Friendly-Landscapes_Website.pdf
- https://www.canr.msu.edu/nativeplants/plant_facts/local_info/south_lower_peninsula
- https://green.macombgov.org/Green-Home

Northern Red Oak

Triumph Elm

# POTENTIAL FUNDING MECHANISMS

Implementing a plan as ambitious and forward-looking as the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan requires strategic thinking, strong partnerships between stakeholders, and as many supportive resources as can be employed to buttress investments.

As part of this chapter's implementation guidance, the planning team has summarized several potential partners, funders, and programs that can be explored by City leaders, private investors, and civic organizations who aim to invest in North Van Dyke Avenue.

## REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

SEMCOG, as the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) can help local governments apply for grant funding in many ways. SEMCOG membership includes access to GrantFinder, the largest searchable database of private, state, and federal grants available to municipalities and local non-profits.

SEMCOG member governments may request a Grant Writing USA scholarship for a two-day workshop on grant writing or grant management. The grant writing course covers how to write grant proposals from start to finish and how to locate and track relevant grant opportunities. Federal, state, local and non-governmental, and private sector grants are covered.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

### MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES AND ENERGY (EGLE)

EGLE's Grants and Loans page provides information on grants and loans administered by EGLE:

https://www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3307_3515---,00.html

- Brownfield Redevelopment Grants: funding to investigate and remediate known sites of environmental contamination, which will be used for identified economic redevelopment projects.
- MI Clean Water Plan: upgrade wastewater infrastructure.

### MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

The DNR's Grants webpage has several resources, including a list of available natural resource grants by type:

https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79134_81684---,00.html

- Outdoor Recreation and Legacy Partnership Program: provides matching grants to states and local governments for the development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities in urban areas.

## MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

MEDC's Community Development and Assistance page provides information on the grants and loans offered by MEDC to redevelop Michigan's downtowns and foster historic preservation: https://www.miplace.org/programs/

- The Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) program is available to communities across the state. It's a voluntary, no-cost certification program designed to promote effective redevelopment strategies through a set of best practices. The program measures and then certifies communities that integrate transparency, predictability and efficiency into their daily development practices. The RRC certification is a formal recognition that the community has a vision for the future - and the fundamental practices in place to get there.
- Public Spaces Community Places: Designed by MEDC in collaboration with the Michigan Municipal League, PSCP is a crowdgranting initiative that can provide matching grant funds for crowdfunded public space projects through Patronicity, an online, crowdfunding platform.
- Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI): https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9623_85502---,00.html
    - MEDC has assigned Business Development Managers to each prosperity region. These Business Development Managers provide personalized business assistance and can help businesses across the state access the resources they need to be successful. The RPI provides assistance in the form of grants, workforce development, economic development and asset mapping. The RPI has a mission to encourage local private, public, and nonprofit partners to collaborate to create vibrant regional economies.
    - Sterling Heights falls into region 10: Detroit Metro Region/Macomb County, which has its own Business Development Manager.

## MICHIGAN STRATEGIC FUND

https://www.michiganbusiness.org/about-medc/michigan-strategic-fund/

The Michigan Business Development Program is an incentive program available from the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) in cooperation with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The program is designed to provide grants, loans and other economic assistance to businesses for highly competitive projects in Michigan that create jobs and/or provide investment and results in a net-positive return to Michigan.

### MICHIGAN COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS (MCACA)

MCACA coordinates grants to arts and culture organizations, cities and municipalities, and other nonprofit organizations ensuring that every citizen and community in Michigan enjoys the civic, economic and educational benefits of arts and culture.

### U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

- Urban Waters Small Grants Program (https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-10/documents/uwsg_flyer_october2016.pdf) provides grants up to $60,000 for small projects that meet the following four program objectives:
    - Address local water quality issues related to urban runoff pollution;
    - Provide additional community benefits;
    - Actively engage underserved communities; and
    - Foster partnership
- Greening America's Communities (https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/greening-americas-communities) partnered with EPA's Heat Island Reduction Program selects a few communities each year to produce schematic designs intended to catalyze or complement a larger planning process for a pilot neighborhood. Additionally, these pilots are often the testing ground for citywide actions, such as changes to local codes and ordinances to better support environmentally sustainable growth and green infrastructure.

### U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BUILD Transportation Grants within Opportunity Zones (https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/about)

- BUILD is focused on Planning projects which includes planning, preparation, or design (including environmental analysis, feasibility studies, and other pre-construction activities) of eligible surface transportation capital projects. This includes both construction projects and planning that does not result in construction of a capital project.
- BUILD Grants directly relate to the Opportunity Zone along VDA.
- BUILD can provide capital funding directly to any public entity, including municipalities, counties, port authorities, tribal governments, MPOs, or others in contrast to traditional Federal programs which provide funding to very specific groups of applicants (mostly State DOTs and transit agencies). This flexibility allows BUILD and our traditional partners at the State and local levels to work directly with a host of entities that own, operate, and maintain much of the transportation infrastructure.
- For reference, a BUILD Grant of $2M was awarded in 2020 for the Adams Road Corridor Project in Oakland County – just west of Sterling Heights – for an

environmental assessment for a widening and reconstruction of two miles of Adams Road.

### MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

(https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9621_17216---,00.html)

- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): TAP is a competitive grant program that funds projects such as bike paths, streetscapes, and historic preservation of transportation facilities that enhance Michigan's intermodal transportation system, promote walkability, and improve quality of life for Michigan citizens. Applications process should be pursued in coordination with SEMCOG.

  Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities projects are considered competitive if they:

  - Connect and develop documented regional or statewide trail systems.
  - Appropriate for the need and use types targeted.
  - Benefit state tourism or economic development initiatives.
  - If locally significant, have strong transportation connection and involve planning efforts to serve as connectors to regional trails.
  - Are a priority on MDOT, county or regional trail plans.
  - Address documented safety deficiencies.
  - Part of a broader non-TAP-funded pedestrian and bicycle system.
  - Include amenities that increase usability of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
  - Address pedestrian safety deficiencies in traditional/historic downtowns.

- Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF): TEDF provides funding for transportation improvements that enhance the state's ability to compete in a global economy, promote economic growth and improve the quality of life in the State of Michigan. Applicable to VDA implementation would focus on **Category A - Economic Development Road Projects**.

  The goal of Category A is to promote increased economic potential and improve the quality of life through the support of job creation and retention in Michigan. The purpose of the funding is to provide funding for transportation projects to:

  - Improve the network of highway services essential to economic competitiveness;
  - Improve accessibility to target industries as a catalyst for economic growth;
  - Support private initiatives that create or retain jobs; and

- Encourage economic development and redevelopment efforts that improve the health, safety, and welfare of Michigan residents.

### FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) AND FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (FHWA)

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was signed into law on December 4, 2015 and continued the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) with only minor changes. The FAST Act confirmed the overall purpose of this program is to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads through the implementation of infrastructure-related highway safety improvements.

(https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/hsip/about.cfm)

## LOAN OPPORTUNITIES

### STATE INFRASTRUCTURE BANK (SIB)

The Michigan State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) loan program is available to any Act 51 public entity (county road commissions, cities, villages, or MDOT) for eligible transportation projects. The SIB complements traditional funding techniques and serves as a tool to meet urgent project financing demands.

### MICHIGAN COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROGRAM (MCRP)

Michigan communities have access to development gap financing with the Michigan Community Revitalization Program (MCRP). The program promotes community revitalization through the provision of grants, loans or other economic assistance for eligible projects located on properties that are either contaminated (facility), blighted, functionally obsolete or historic resources.

### MICHIGAN STRATEGIC FUND

Private Activity Revenue Bonds; Private activity bonds are an attractive source of financial assistance to economic development projects in Michigan. They provide profitable firms with capital cost savings stemming from the difference between taxable and tax-exempt interest rates. Public facilities, which generate a revenue stream, (parking structures, for instance) have traditionally been financed by municipalities through tax-exempt "revenue bonds." Private activity bonds apply this same tax-exempt finance mechanism to the "public purpose" of economic development. The governmental unit borrows money from private capital markets, secured only by the project's revenues rather than the government's full faith and credit. Interest income earned on bonds issued by a governmental entity to finance a project for a private

company which has demonstrated a good public purpose is exempt from federal, state, and local income taxes, thereby reducing the cost of capital (including the cost of letters of credit, remarketing fees, etc.)

### NEW MARKET TAX CREDITS

The New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) is an important source of financing for businesses and community facilities in America's most distressed rural and urban communities. Congress authorized the NMTC in 2000 to bring down the cost of capital in communities outside of the economic mainstream. Taxpayers receive a 39 percent tax credit (taken over seven years) for qualified investments into Community Development Entities (CDEs), organizations with a track record of loans and investments in underserved areas. CDEs use the proceeds of those investments to finance business expansions, community facilities, and other projects prioritized by communities.

(https://nmtccoalition.org/progress-report-2019/about-the-nmtc/)

## ADDITIONAL GRANT INFORMATION RESOURCES:

- Grants.gov provides a database of federal grants.
- National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) maintains a list of federal grant opportunities for local governments.

# LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Created as part of the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, an Opportunity Zone is a place where long term investment provides progressive tax benefits for individuals via certified Opportunity Funds. Opportunity Zones are low income census tracts identified by states and then certified by the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. The purpose is to encourage economic development in these areas.

Opportunity Funds allow investors to:

- Defer 100% of payment of capital gains taxes until 2026
- Exempt up to 15% of the payment of capital gains tax
- Secure a permanent exclusion from capital gains tax on the profits/growth in an Opportunity Fund if the investment is held for 10 years

Opportunity Funds can be used to create new businesses and/or to acquire residential, commercial or industrial property. They can also be combined with other incentives such as New Market Credits, Low-Income Tax Credits, and Commercial and Industrial Tax Exemption Certificates for additional value.

## THE VAN DYKE OPPORTUNITY ZONE

In Sterling Heights, there are two designated Opportunity Zones that cover 2,555 acres. The two zones are ideally located along Hall Road (M-59) and adjacent to Van Dyke Avenue (M-53), which are prominent roadways in Macomb County. The Opportunity Zone designated upon census tract 2303 includes the entirety of the study area and is a mix of commercial, industrial and residential properties with a nearby railway. The area is marketed as an area with booming economic development within Sterling Heights. Existing business investments have been in the industrial corridor although there are nine available properties within the study area marketed by the City and County which are summarized here.

## FINDING THE OPPORTUNITY IN OPPORTUNITY ZONES

In October 2020, Smart Growth America released a report entitled “Unrealized Gains: Opportunity Zones and Small Businesses” which sought to document activity of Opportunity Zones and Funds, identify the motivations behind various kinds of investors in Opportunity Zones, and understand their impact on communities. According to the report, Opportunity Zone investments have had mixed results. While they have found success with real estate development projects, and multifamily developments in particular, in many areas of the country, the report found that Opportunity Zone tax benefits

have largely served as a bonus for development projects that were already underway.

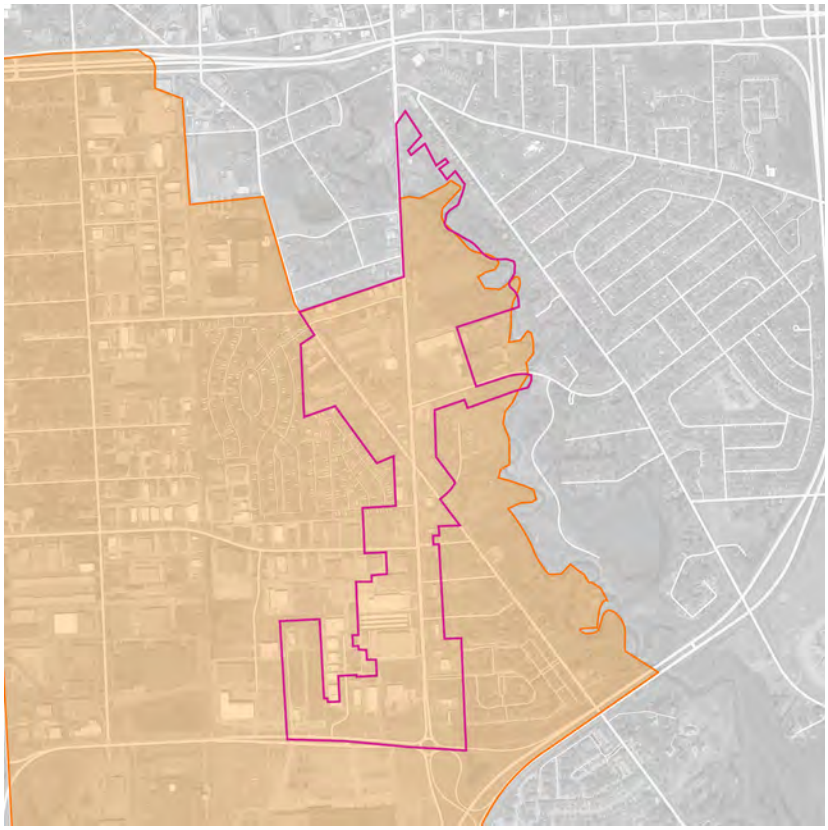
The report finds that it has been difficult for businesses already located within Opportunity Zones to qualify for program benefits and tax incentives. For zones in transition, such as North Van Dyke Avenue, the program can incentivize new and transformational investment as land uses and developments change over in accordance with the master plan vision.

Some cities have found success in utilizing portals for connecting investors to Opportunity Zone program requirements, qualifications, and parallel incentive programs that similarly encourage investment in these areas.

The Smart Growth America report encourages state and local governments to become active brokers in the Opportunity Zone program to better direct investment and link potential investors to resources and program benefits. One recommendation that is particularly salient to this effort suggests that local municipalities offer specific support, guidance, and resources to those investors developing projects that align with the adopted plan for this area.

## POTENTIAL EARLY INVESTMENT PROPERTIES WITHIN THE VAN DYKE AVENUE OPPORTUNITY ZONE

| Parcel ID | Acres | Existing Use |
|---|---|---|
| 101003151009 | 10.20 | Vacant |
| 101004280032 | 0.38 | Vacant |
| 101004280033 | 0.38 | Vacant |
| 101004280034 | 0.38 | Vacant |
| 101004427008 | 0.79 | Commercial |
| 101004476003 | 0.96 | Vacant |
| 101003351012 | 0.65 | Vacant |
| 101004476008 | 0.92 | SF Residential |
| 101003351005 | 0.46 | Office |



# ACTION PLAN

An essential step to implementing a master plan vision that is as ambitious, multi-faceted, and involving of as many stakeholders as this one is creating a plan of action. The following action plan lists out the first steps and milestones recommended to the City of Sterling Heights and the Corridor Improvement Authority to build momentum, attract investment, and make good on the City's commitment to this transformation.

These specific steps have been extracted from the overall master plan recommendations outlined in the prior chapters of this report. These first steps are intended to kick-start redevelopment from both the public and private sectors by providing a time-driven framework for implementation and identifying leadership and potential partners for each recommended project.

### Policy, Planning + Funding Development

| Action | Implementation Timeline | Lead + Potential Partnerships |
|---|---|---|
| **Adopt the Master Plan**<br>Adopt the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan as the official City of Sterling Heights and Corridor Improvement Authority vision for the future of this district. | Immediate (<1 year) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights City Council |
| **Align Priorities + Opportunities**<br>Consult with other City agencies to discuss existing departmental priorities and opportunities to align with the North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority |
| **Develop an Implementation Priority Matrix**<br>Develop an implementation priority matrix for City investments and expenditures for inclusion in upcoming capital investment program development. | Immediate (0-2 years), ongoing | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority |
| **Rezone the District**<br>Develop new zoning districts for the North Van Dyke Avenue district that encourage and permit by-right the dense, mixed-use development (and associated parking requirements) outlined in this master plan. In addition to outlining requirements for form, massing, use, and density, new zoning regulations should incorporate requirements and guidance on the private provisioning of affordable housing, public/green space. public art, and sustainable stormwater management solutions. New zoning should enable flexible temporary site activation throughout the district. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Develop Grant Pursuit Strategy**<br>Develop a strategy and calendar for pursuing local, regional, state, and federal grants in alignment with Master Plan implementation priorities and timelines. Dedicate resources and personnel to pursuing grant funding in collaboration with the Corridor Improvement Authority. | Immediate (0-2 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights |
| **Conduct a Detailed Traffic Study**<br>Partner with the City of Utica, Macomb County, and private drive owners to commission/conduct a detailed traffic study on existing roads within the district to understand traffic levels and patterns and establish a common baseline. Establish common goals related to multimodal infrastructure, connectivity, maintenance, and the installation of pedestrian-oriented features such as lighting, widened sidewalks, street furniture, and signage. A traffic study should simulate traffic effects of future development and road diet schemes proposed in this master plan. | Immediate (0-2 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights, Macomb County, City of Utica |
| **Develop a District Mobility Plan**<br>In collaboration with the City of Utica, Macomb County, and private right-of-way owners, develop a detailed mobility plan for the district, establishing clear guidance for specific right-of-way alterations, multimodal accommodations, future transit improvements, public realm enhancements for pedestrians and transit riders, and a district-wide parking strategy. | Immediate (0-2 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights, Macomb County, City of Utica |
| **Plan for the Reconfiguration of Van Dyke Avenue**<br>Collaborate with Macomb County on immediate (temporary) and long-term (permanent) reconfiguration of the Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way in line with the master plan vision. Explore the potential of the City of Sterling Heights acquiring the segment of the Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way between 18-1/2 Mile Road and the Canal Road from Macomb County. | Immediate (<1 year) | City of Sterling Heights, Macomb County |
| **Develop a District Activation Plan**<br>Develop a temporary activation plan for the district in the immediate and near-term. Develop a calendar of activation strategies (potentially in collaboration with a dedicated activation consultant) and partner with existing property owners to make arrangements. | Immediate (0-2 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights, local business owners, Macomb County |

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| **Establish Master/Site Plans for Landscapes**<br>Commission/develop master plans for major public landscapes proposed in this master plan in alignment with citywide parks system planning work. Planning should include trail enhancements and extensions such as a new trail/path within the Clinton River greenway west of the river and enhancements to trail access points within and adjacent to the North Van Dyke Avenue district. | Short (2-5 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights |
| **Develop a District Wayfinding, Gateway, and Public Art Plan**<br>Develop a plan to guide the phased introduction of a unified and branded wayfinding system throughout the district. The plan should identify key gateways and locations for public art and provide specific guidance on the design, construction, and cost of gateway and wayfinding features. | Short (2-5 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights |

## Site Preparation + Studies

| Action | Implementation Timeline | Lead Party + Potential Partnerships |
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| **Conduct a District-Wide Site Survey**<br>Conduct a district-wide site survey and study of soil conditions to understand detailed topography, existing utility alignments, existing tree cover and conditions, and the potential for future stormwater infiltration, vegetation, and development feasibility throughout the district. | Immediate (<1 year) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights |
| **Prioritize Future Public Investment**<br>Develop priorities for public investment in key privately-held sites. Create a prioritization matrix establishing criteria for targeting and prioritizing sites for acquisition through purchase or partnership with existing/future landowners. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority |

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| **Establish District Design Guidelines**<br>Develop design guidelines for development, landscapes, streets, signage, and other elements visible from the public realm to control the quality of public and private-sector implementation projects and maintain consistency with the overall master plan vision. Design guidelines should include guidance on building form, massing, materiality, architectural elements (overhangs, terracing, patios, stoops, bays, etc.) specific plant species, and preferences for the look and articulation of street furniture, signage, and placemaking elements throughout the district. Specific design guidelines for each of the master plan sub-areas should allow the individual character expression of the different areas of the district while fitting into a unified district-wide esthetic. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority |
| **Establish Future Public Right-of-Ways**<br>Work with property owners to acquire right-of-ways for new streets, pedestrian connections, and other priority public passages recommended in the Master Plan. Where donations or purchases are deemed viable in the near-term, pursue acquisition immediately. Where acquisitions are not immediately viable, prepare necessary specific planning documentation for acquisition at the time of resale and develop acquisition priorities. | Short (2-5 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority, district business/property owners |

## Management, Marketing + Promotion

| Action | Implementation Timeline | Lead Party + Potential Partnerships |
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| **Convene a District Stakeholder Roundtable**<br>Establish a business and property owner roundtable within the district to facilitate regular dialogue and cooperation between businesses, the City of Sterling Heights, and the Corridor Improvement Authority. This roundtable can collaborate on programming and events within the district, help guide expenditures from the district's TIF fund, and lobby for public and private investments in the area. | Immediate (0-2 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights, district business/property owners, Sterling Heights Chamber of Commerce |

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| **Establish a District Redevelopment Partnership Office**<br>Develop an office/program co-located within the City of Sterling Heights Department of Economic Development and the Corridor Improvement Authority geared towards partnering with the private investment community, community organizations, and civic/institutional vendors to encourage and facilitate investment projects within the district (including renovation of existing properties). Staff within the City or CIA should be trained in the features and mechanisms offered to investors in federally-designated Opportunity Zones. | Immediate, (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority |
| **Develop a Promotional Campaign**<br>Develop marketing and promotional materials (dedicated website, brochures, 3D visualizations, etc.) to promote opportunities for investment locally and regionally. | Immediate (0-2 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights |
| **Establish a District Management Entity**<br>In partnership with the Corridor Improvement Authority, district land owners, and district business owners, establish an entity like a Business Improvement District (BID) tasked with managing, maintaining, and promoting the district. This entity will take on an increasingly important role as new public and private investments are made in the district and new developments take shape. A BID-like entity could take shape within the existing structure and budget of the Corridor Improvement Authority. | Short (2-5 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights, district business/ property owners |
| **Formalize and Deploy the District Brand**<br>Using the brand strategy and directional materials established in this master plan, the City and Corridor Improvement Authority should formalize and adopt a branding scheme for the district. These branding materials can be used on promotional materials and district signage/wayfinding alongside early investments. Major brand deployments and installations should correspond with other implementation projects. | Short (2-5 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights |
| **Engage a Marketing Partner**<br>Explore opportunities to partner with a private public relations or marketing firm to actively promote the district to potential investors. | Short (2-5 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority |

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| **Explore Partnerships for Civic Facilities** Promote public, civic, and institutional investments in the area in accordance with the Master Plan vision. Identify and meet with potential partners in the development of facilities and programming for recreation centers, performing arts centers, vocational education, higher education, makerspaces, job training centers, libraries, museums, community centers, senior centers, and other civically-oriented uses that can provide resources to the community and catalyze private investment in the area. | Short (2-5 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority |
| **Engage an Industrial Catalyst** Promote the City's interest in the establishment of a local manufacturer of local food/drink products, such as a brewery or distillery, and the location of a consumer-oriented production facility in the North VDA Industrial area. Create incentives for such an establishment to invest in the district and support its development with public investments in the public realm adjacent to it. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority, district business/property owners |
| **Explore Partnerships for Park Lands** Explore opportunities to partner with public, private, and non-profit developers/ conservators of park lands to understand the potential of investment in acquisitions, development, and programming of major proposed landscapes within the district. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority |

## Temporary/Tactical Site Activation

| Action | Implementation Timeline | Lead Party + Potential Partnerships |
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| **Launch Events within the District** Partner with community groups and organizations to host major civic and community events within the district, in close proximity to existing commercial operations. Align events with Master Plan vision for public space activation and temporary design interventions. | Immediate (0-2 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights, district business/ property owners |

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| **Temporarily Reconfigure Van Dyke Avenue**<br>Partner with Macomb County to install a temporary reconfiguration of the Van Dyke Avenue right-of-way at a strategic location (north of the intersection with Utica Road) to diet the road, add street parking, add bump-outs, add bike lanes, and expand the pedestrian zone with widened sidewalks, plantings, and street furniture. These temporary interventions should coincide with adjacent on-site programming and activation to give users a holistic sense of the kind of change envisioned for the corridor. Adequate signage and advertising prior to and throughout the experiment is essential to success to keep drivers informed of the project and offer alternative routes. Traffic volumes and impacts of the experiment should be carefully measured and surveys should be provided to the community to provide feedback and experiential notes. Temporary reconfiguration should be designed and implemented in consultation with traffic engineers. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Macomb County, Corridor Improvement Authority |
| **Create Buzz in Industrial Areas with Temporary Activation Strategies**<br>In order to build momentum for investments in the North VDA Industrial sub-area and catalyze investment in a publicly-oriented industrial use, such as a brewery, the City should partner with existing land owners and business operators to create a small, temporary park space with events, programming, and vendors (e.g. food trucks, brewery, winery, pop-up shops). Temporary interventions can include painted/chalked plaza/seating areas, umbrellas, planters, lawn games, food trucks, repurposed shipping containers, festival tents, and other strategies. Programming and place management can be facilitated by a private operator. | Short (2-5 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority, district business/property owners |

## Site, Infrastructure + Utilities Enhancements

| Action | Implementation Timeline | Lead Party + Potential Partnerships |
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| **Plan for Burying Utility Infrastructure with Road Reconstruction**<br>In concert with road reconfiguration planning and design, the City should coordinate with local and regional authorities managing water, sewer, and power utilities to bury lines underground within or directly adjacent to the public right-of-way. Overhead power utilities create challenges for implementing other improvements within the pedestrian zones proposed in this master plan. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Macomb County |

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| **Create Incentives for Renewable Energy + Green Infrastructure**<br>As part of the overall vision for this district as a high quality, urban, and future-oriented place, energy and infrastructure implemented alongside redevelopment should be green and sustainable. Projects should be encouraged through zoning, tax, or other incentives to implement green technologies, such as solar power, rainwater harvesting, and green roofs. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights |
| **Create Landscape Enhancement Incentive Program**<br>Establish grants for enhancing street-facing landscapes at existing development sites. Landscapes improvements should incorporate green infrastructure, native plantings, trees, seating, lighting, and other pedestrian amenities. | Immediate (0-2 years) | Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Sterling Heights |
| **Explore District-wide Stormwater Management Solutions**<br>While the public realm and private development sites are already required to manage and treat their own stormwater runoff, another possibility for the future is district-wide strategy for managing stormwater. Such a strategy would require district-wide planning for conveyance and storage, ample permeability throughout the district, and agreements with private land-owners to embrace the district system. Such a system could serve as an incentive for redevelopment as private developers would be asked to pay a fee to the district in lieu of the significant financial obligation of designing and installing a site-specific management system. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Corridor Improvement Authority |
| **Establish a Plan for Enhanced Transit Service**<br>Partner with SMART and other local and regional entities (public and private) to enhance transit service aligned with district growth. Prioritize enhancing existing transit stops first, with better lighting, shelters, street furniture, signage, and step-off zones to increase awareness of existing service and rider comfort while waiting for buses. | Immediate (0-2 years) | City of Sterling Heights, Macomb County, Corridor Improvement Authority, SMART |


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