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MIplace Initiative

The MIplace Partnership is a statewide initiative with the purpose of keeping Michigan at the forefront of a national movement known as placemaking. It is based on the concept that people choose to live in places that offer the amenities, resources, social and professional networks, and opportunities to support thriving lifestyles. The partnership helps communities create and bolster those places. It is led at the state agency level by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and coordinated through a public-private leadership collaborative known as the Sense of Place Council. Michigan State University and the Michigan Municipal League, the partners on this project, are collaborators with the Sense of Place Council. Learn more at: http://www.miplace.org/

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Local Partners

The PlacePlan Technical Assistance Team would like to acknowledge the Cadillac City staff, elected, and appointed officials for their constant support and assistance. The local partners ensured that the team had data, documents, and the community input necessary for completing the analysis and resulting asset, planning, and design recommendations for the Cadillac Heritage Plaza site. Special thanks to Jerry Adams, Community Development Director, and Mike Coy, Community Development Analyst, for their contributions.

The PlacePlan Technical Assistance Team would like to express their sincere gratitude to the dozens of residents, business owners, land owners, and other stakeholders that attended the Community Visioning Meeting and Multiple-Day Design Charrette and provided feedback during this process. Additionally, the team would like to thank the Elk’s Lodge for their hospitality and support for the design charrette portion of this process, and the downtown Goodrich theater for hosting the final presentation. These gathering spaces were a key component in creating an inviting and comfortable public access point to share thoughts and ideas for this project. Placemaking begins with a community-supported vision for what makes a place a true destination in the community; without you, this process would not be possible.
The following proposed design, land use regulatory tools, and asset optimization recommendations for the Cadillac Place-Plan project fall under the planning approach called **placemaking**. The placemaking approach helps communities identify and build upon their unique strengths and personalities to grow and thrive: it leverages the public spaces within the community, and the activities of people in those spaces, to build virtuous cycles of use. Whether applied to a single lot, a street, or an entire downtown or neighborhood, placemaking helps communities raise up their distinct character both to best serve their residents and to attract new residents and businesses.

Much of the community planning practice of the 20th century focused on separating potentially “incompatible” land uses, providing for the rapid growth in detached single-family housing stock, treating commercial real estate as a commodity to serve the global investment market’s demand for standardization, and facilitating increased mobility through the personal car (to travel between these newly separated destinations). The broad application of these trends ignored the human-scale interactions of traditional downtowns and neighborhoods, weakening many of our communities.

Communities must differentiate themselves to attract residents and businesses as the economy continues to globalize. Placemaking’s approach of engaging around existing assets supports this goal while honoring local culture and community.
Introduction

Project Overview

In response to the MIplace Partnership request for applications, the City of Cadillac submitted a request for assistance with a focus on the Heritage Plaza area, a lakeside block of Downtown Cadillac that offers historical charm and sophistication that represents the City as a whole. A physical design plan is needed to help future development of this area; provide a framework within which public and private initiatives may be accomplished in a coordinated fashion; capitalize on, while protecting, the area’s environmental and aesthetic qualities; foster downtown placemaking; elevate the area’s business synergy; and, serve as a blueprint for guiding the planning and development of locations immediately adjacent to the project area. Addressing this space will coincide with current projects that include the new Baker College student housing, new businesses, and connections to the White Pine Non-Motorized Bike Trail. This placemaking based project area includes 20 businesses, upper story apartments, the Cadillac City Park, Rotary Performing Arts Pavilion, Lakefront Park, Keith Mc Kellog Pedestrian Pathway, and the eastern shoreline of Lake Cadillac.

Overview of Existing Site

The proposed project site is centrally located in downtown Cadillac, bound by store fronts on Mitchell Street (US-131BR), Cass Street, the Lake Cadillac shoreline, and Harris Street. Mitchell Street is a state trunkline and designated US-131 business route. Mitchell is the primary route into and through downtown Cadillac. Cass and Harris are local streets.

The project area is presently experiencing a series of exciting placemaking projects in different stages of planning and execution. These include a new apartment complex by Baker College of Cadillac providing market rate housing for thirty-two students enrolled in the college’s advanced technical and medical programs, major redevelopment of a former coffee café/house into a combination restaurant and brew pub, extension of the White Pine Non-Motorized Bike Trail into the core downtown, the upgrading of the Rotary Performing Arts Pavilion and pavilion site located along the Lake Cadillac Shoreline, and the redevelopment of a central public parking lot linking Mitchell Street businesses with the City Park and shoreline.

Community agencies and organizations and the private sector recognize that the strategic planning and harmonization of downtown redevelopment activities are critical to the goal of successful placemaking for downtown Cadillac.

The existing pavilion is used for community events.
Photo Source: http://www.downtowncadillac.com/
In order to provide carefully considered asset, planning, and design recommendations for implementation of a plaza development project in Cadillac, the following process was carried out for gathering the necessary information and input:

- Reviewed local/regional land use plans and relevant data
- Inventoried assets that fulfill MML’s 21st Century Community criteria
- Conducted interviews with stakeholders
- Held three community meetings:
  - Phase One: Community Visioning
  - Phase Two: Design Charrette
  - Phase Three: Final Report Presentation

National Charrette Institute’s Charrette System

These phases were carried out in line with the National Charrette Institute’s (NCI) Charrette System. With objectives that include creating a safe environment in which all members can participate in planning their community, planning for scenarios at the neighborhood scale, bringing an on-the-ground reality to community planning by creating demonstration projects that often turn into real catalytic development, and anchoring public involvement with realistic constraints, the Cadillac community was engaged in NCI’s three planning phases, including a stakeholder interview process.

MML Stakeholder Interview Process

A critical element of the charrette process is engagement, including the preparatory work of interviewing stakeholders in advance of the design charrette meetings. The purpose is to identify key stakeholders and allow ample opportunity for input in a non-public setting for groups with a considerable vested interest in the project. Initial stakeholder analysis was prepared by MML staff, who identified priority individuals and groups and provided that information to the City for review and input. Representatives from MML and MSU then held interviews aimed at promoting a shared understanding of the project, identifying priorities, concerns, and potential barriers to success.
Community Input

Phase One: Community Kick-Off Workshop

At the onset of the Cadillac Heritage Plaza Project, the City of Cadillac hosted a kick-off community visioning meeting. The visioning session was held on December 5th, 2013. During the meeting, attendees were challenged to think about, discuss with others, and document their thoughts. This included what about Cadillac makes them proud, what they are sorry about, and what they would like to see in Cadillac (especially within the development site) in the future. To encourage creative visions over the long-term, questions were posed such as “you’re in a hot air balloon over the site 15 years from now – what would you like to look down on?” and provided white sheets of drawing paper and markers to encourage not only written comments, but an opportunity to share visuals. Figure 1 summarizes the findings from the Community Visioning Meeting.

Phase Two: Design Charrette

On March 4th and 5th, 2014, a multiple-day design charrette was held to gauge stakeholder feelings towards the plaza. Prior to the meetings, an array of design images were produced to visualize the many directions in which the plaza could go. After all of the images and concepts were introduced, participants broke off into small groups and sat down at tables where facilitators led discussions about the project. After a series of questions were asked and a multitude of ideas were exchanged at each table, participants were then asked to write on notecards what they liked and didn’t like about the design images. Participants also shared additional comments on post-it notes and placed them on pictures of the design concepts for the Plaza. This two-day process revealed the similar and varying sentiments towards the Plaza and thereby enabled the planning team to establish priorities for the final report.

| Proud          | Physical Environment: Small town charm, parking availability, accessibility, green space, attractions, outdoor activities |
|               | Public Services: Regional headquarters of DNR, DEQ, state police, good school system, festivals, and volunteerism |
| Sorry         | Traffic & Parking: Parking issues, no snow mobile access, street infrastructure in poor condition, railroad tracks a barrier |
|               | Physical Environment: Lack of housing, poor business diversity, historic architecture covered, street utilities an eyesore |
| Vision        | New Development: Diverse multi-level housing, more restaurants, outdoor markets |
|               | Site Amenities and Activity: Greenery, more people, public art, more docks, ice skating, year-round activities |

Figure 1: Visioning Session Summary
Design Concept Aerial Image
Cadillac, Michigan
Heritage Plaza
Design Considerations

Design Parameters

In an effort to plan and redesign City Park of Downtown Cadillac, collaboration with the community, key stakeholders, and city officials lead to a few design parameters that define what the space will look like in the future. Important characteristics of Cadillac such as history, tradition, and culture helped drive much of the “Heritage” concept. Additionally, tangible elements like Lake Cadillac, the downtown business frontage, building types, parking space, vehicular and pedestrian movement, and accessibility, along with beautification and sustainability concerns helped shape the site. Finally, programming elements and usability requirements such as event types, crowd size, flexible spacing, seasonal usage, and other reasons that people would visit the Plaza began to drive the overall sense of place that Downtown Cadillac was striving to achieve.

Key Design Principles and Elements

Many of the key design principles that drove much of the specific design elements came from the feedback received throughout the first two phases of the community engagement process. Attendees frequently commented on the need for better connection between Lake Cadillac and Mitchell Street, two of the prominent physical figures of the downtown. In an effort to accomplish this, the parking between the park and the backs of Mitchell street businesses was moved to sides of the site, adjacent to Cass and Harris Streets. Additionally, a remake of the alley creates a pedestrian-oriented area with added business frontage allowing for a four seasons outdoor café and garden space. It also accommodates business deliveries and allows for emergency access for fire, police and EMS. An arcade connection through the buildings fronting Mitchell Street connects to the Plaza with a grand staircase to the plaza level.

This connection allowed for another key principle for Heritage Plaza: the central core, which is based on a multi-use, multi-seasonal, flexible space for community events, festivals, and public gathering. This includes art fairs, summerfest/winterfest type events, a splash pad in the summer, ice skating in the winter (including a fireplace), musical events, and much more. Surrounding the central core is a plethora of seating and gathering areas for small groups and individuals accompanied by a small children’s playscape, public art, and shaded green space.

Sustainability and environmentally sensible design was an important key principle expressed by everyone involved in the design process. Much of the existing mature trees and the Memorial Fountain remain preserved, while additional plantings that are introduced to the site are beautiful native, low maintenance species. The close proximity of Lake Cadillac is important to the undeniable sense of place of Downtown Cadillac. An additional dock allows for a better connection for boaters to downtown. A wooden boardwalk behind the pavilion connects both docks to the fishing pier behind the pavilion, which will allow for anglers and boats to have their own space to enjoy their favorite summer time hobbies.

As a solution to an often debated topic, vehicular access to Lake Street remains, but also incorporates a Complete Streets approach for pedestrians and bicyclists, with the addition of controlled barrier features (called bollards) at each end allowing for the street to be shut off for pedestrian use only. Prominently marked crosswalks across Lake St. ensure a strong physical connection from the plaza to Lake Cadillac and the pavilion. To ensure the safety of all visitors, indirect lighting along pathways and major gathering spaces encourages visitors to confidently use the plaza during evening hours without suppressing the mood of the night sky. The overall design concept on the facing page illustrates the major planning and design considerations for Heritage Plaza.
Place Assets
Recommendations for Action

The Placemaking approach helps communities identify and build upon their unique strengths and personalities to grow and thrive: it leverages the public spaces within the community, and the activities of people in those spaces, to build virtuous cycles of activity. Whether applied to a single lot or alley, a street, or an entire downtown or neighborhood, placemaking helps communities raise up their distinct character both to best serve their residents and to attract new residents and businesses.

Communities must differentiate themselves to attract residents and businesses as the economy continues to globalize. The placemaking approach of engaging around existing assets supports this goal while honoring local culture and community. While each community will have a different mixture of assets and opportunities, several common elements support placemaking in a broad variety of places. These common elements provide a sound foundation that communities can build on with their individual assets through the placemaking process. The following pages illustrate the recommendations and implementation strategies for each asset category.

- Physical Design and Walkability
- Environmental Sustainability
- Cultural Economic Development
- Entrepreneurship
- Multiculturalism
- Transportation Options
- Messaging and Technology
- Education
Physical Design and Walkability

The physical design and walkability of a community helps create interest, connectivity and overall sense of place. Walkability and connectivity can afford people safe and convenient access to the places they live, work, shop, and play. The challenge is that oftentimes our streets are designed to prioritize cars, aiming to move them through a community as quickly as possible without appropriate consideration for pedestrians, bicyclists and other users. Market analysis continues to show that preferences are changing, and more people want to live in neighborhoods with walkable downtowns with a variety of transportation options that provide access to cultural, social, and entertainment opportunities. Walkability not only helps to create a strong sense of place, it promotes a strong local economy and healthy lifestyle.

Asset Analysis

The downtown Cadillac area is highly walkable, due to its traditional street grid and mix of destinations—WalkScore proclaims it a “Walker’s Paradise” with a score of 95 out of 100. There are some limitations, though; WalkScore focuses on routes to destinations without addressing the quality of those routes, so improvements to the pedestrian experience could make the project area still more attractive for walking. For example, many of the side streets branching off of Mitchell, including those leading to the waterfront park area, do not offer much of interest to pedestrians: they are flanked by blank walls or smaller “side” windows, rather than building entrances or display windows that would naturally draw pedestrian interest.

Similarly, off-street parking lots can discourage pedestrians, both by offering little of interest as well as exposing pedestrians to wind, cars entering and exiting, and other negative conditions. The City’s website boasts of over 1,500 parking spaces in downtown (including both on- and off-street)¹. Parking is clearly important to seasonal tourist traffic arriving in town, so reducing the number of spaces may not be an option, but the City should take care to manage parking to minimize the amount of excess space, as well as make sure the sidewalk frontage of off-street lots is attractively designed.

Finally, Mitchell Street is currently 5 lanes wide in downtown, plus parking lanes: multi-lane streets can inhibit pedestrian crossing even at signals by offering higher speeds and wider expanses of exposure to traffic. MDOT’s 2012 traffic counts show fewer than 15,000 vehicles travel this stretch daily², which may provide opportunities to redesign the street to emphasize downtown access by vehicles and pedestrians over through travel.


A pedestrian-oriented alley behind the Mitchell St. businesses directly connects users from Mitchell St. to the Plaza, Lake Cadillac waterfront, and adjacent downtown blocks.
### Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Incentivize or require “active” facades on side streets, especially streets</td>
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<td>like Cass and Martin that lead to public amenities</td>
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<td>• Evaluate Mitchell Street traffic patterns redesign the street to provide</td>
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<tr>
<td>more space for pedestrians and business district patrons</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Identify any under-utilized off-street parking areas and consider repurposing them for active uses</td>
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<td>• Ensure that access to Heritage Plaza is adequate for all, including those with disabilities</td>
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### Implementation Opportunities

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<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage Cadillac’s City Council to adopt form-based code to allow for uniformity among structures and facades</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Work with MDOT and the Street Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works to ensure adequate signage as well as street markings for increased pedestrian safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reconfigure the orientation of parking behind the Mitchell Street businesses while still maintaining 85% of the existing parking spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Create better connections to adjacent public parking</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Retain the vast majority of parking within Heritage Plaza while creating additional open space</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reconfigure the layout of sidewalks within Heritage Plaza to allow for greater walkability and ensure barrier-free pedestrian access from businesses to Heritage Plaza</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluate wheelchair-accessible boarding ramps for docks</td>
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Environmental sustainability initiatives are critical for any community intending to be viable in today’s economy. Placemaking has a strong connection with environmental concerns because healthy, livable communities are committed to doing the right thing for the planet and inherently more concerned about place. The Cadillac community has a rich legacy that is rooted in its natural assets. Lake Cadillac influenced the community’s economy and today it helps sustain Cadillac’s thriving tourism industry. Furthermore, Cadillac’s parks and network of trails influence the community’s sense of place.

Community’s Asset Analysis

Recognizing Lake Cadillac’s influence on Cadillac’s economy and community culture, the City has taken proactive measures to ensure invasive species like Milfoil do not harm the community’s valuable natural asset.

Cadillac’s network of trails provides a natural connector to the City’s downtown business district, parks and other natural assets. The North Blvd. Bike trail and the Keith McKellop Walkway connect William Mitchell State Park, Cadillac Heritage Nature Study Area, and Kentwood Heritage Park to City Park—a popular events venue and urban park—and the downtown business district. Bike routes, paved trails and scenic views continue from City Park connecting to the Cadillac Trailhead for the White Pine Trail and back to William Mitchell State Park.

Proper landscaping by using only native plant life can improve the environmental quality of a space. Discouraging use of non-native or invasive species can also promote sustainability.
### Environmental Sustainability continued...

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<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Relate Cadillac’s natural assets to the activities of the central business district</td>
<td>• Utilize the community farmer’s market as an opportunity to encourage environmentally-friendly growing practices and to teach the community to eat locally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continue to build up and establish trail connections to Cadillac’s parks and Downtown</td>
<td>• Work with the Parks Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works to maximize connections to local trailheads to encourage recreation and wellness as well as sustainable modes of getting around such as walking and biking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adopt green infrastructure approaches to stormwater management</td>
<td>• Develop rain gardens where possible along the alley behind the Mitchell Street businesses to help prevent flooding of Heritage Plaza</td>
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<td>• Implement landscaping changes to prevent flooding</td>
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<td>• Landscape with vegetation that is natural to the area and will not harm other surrounding plant life</td>
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<td>• Consider using more pervious materials such as pavers for sidewalks to improve drainage</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adopt new policy to improve access to solar energy technologies</td>
<td>• Create a renewable energy ordinance to allow for the installation of solar panels on light fixtures within the public right-of-way</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improve recycling options</td>
<td>• Work with the Cadillac Recycling Center as well as the Cadillac Department of Utilities to implement a recycling program for Heritage Plaza</td>
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Cultural Economic Development

Arts and culture are essential components of a thriving, knowledge-based economy. A healthy creative sector attracts and retains residents and businesses, and produces economic benefits including jobs, a stronger tax base, downtown and neighborhood revitalization, and tourism. Additionally, providing diverse cultural, artistic, economic, and recreational opportunities will also improve quality of life.

Community’s Asset Analysis

Cadillac’s beautiful natural assets and diverse recreation activities draw many visitors to the area year round. Cadillac’s rich cultural heritage is celebrated today through the appreciation of art and nature. The community’s park system connects Cadillac’s natural and economic assets. Its parks serve as venues for celebrating events that draw Cadillac residents and visitors. Cadillac has a strong presence of arts and culture through its annual events like the Art Festival, Classic Car Show and other reoccurring live music events throughout the summer. Likewise, Cadillac continues to celebrate during the winter months at the annual North American Snow Festival. Embracing a “four seasons” attitude will lead to cultural richness as well as a greater diversity of economic opportunities for Cadillac.

Heritage Plaza will host many activities and events, serving as a destination for current residents and Northern Michigan visitors. The summer splash pad and winter ice rink will be keystones of Downtown Cadillac culture.
## Cultural Economic Development continued...

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<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Establish a unified branding for Cadillac’s community assets</td>
<td>• Working with the Parks Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works as well as the Department of Community Development, create a community branding strategy for local assets to improve connections within the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage use of Heritage Plaza year-round</td>
<td>• Construct facilities that allow for a variety of uses</td>
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<td>• Utilize Heritage Plaza for major community events</td>
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<td>• Implement better snow management practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Encourage community art and cultural displays</td>
<td>• Encourage the use of Heritage Plaza by touting it as a centerpiece of recreation, social interaction, and culture in downtown Cadillac</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Utilize Heritage Plaza as a space for a variety of events (craft shows, art shows, outdoor movies, plays, etc.)</td>
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<td>• Work with local businesses to encourage sponsorship and participation in community events</td>
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Entrepreneurship

Growing jobs by ones and twos is key to creating strong local economies in the 21st century. Local communities are fueled by small start-ups and growth on main street and economic gardening strategies aimed at developing the talent and potential that already exists right at home. Also central to success are social entrepreneurs, who act as change agents within a community, seizing opportunities others miss to create social value rather than profits. This type of entrepreneurial activity resonates especially with students and Millennials looking to apply their optimism, energy, passion and skills for a positive, tangible impact.

Asset Analysis

Cadillac has a burgeoning entrepreneurial culture, evidenced by the recent location of several startups downtown. An active and engaged Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Association are in place. Baker College’s Business Administration program contains an Entrepreneurship major, with a sequence of courses dedicated to developing entrepreneurial principles. Furthermore, the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments hosts several business development resources in the region at large, including the Northwest Michigan Small Business Development Center located in Traverse City.
Entrepreneurship continued...

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<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Incentivize small business development in the downtown</td>
<td>• Develop a targeted program for attracting and retaining small and startup businesses</td>
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<td>• Develop a business incubator to allow for local businesses to gain traction at an affordable rent</td>
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<td>• Consider taking advantage of Michigan’s investment crowdfunding law, which allows residents to invest in local businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review city regulations and processes to create a supportive environment</td>
<td>• Apply for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation’s Redevelopment Ready Communities program to spur economic growth downtown</td>
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Giving the local businesses extra frontage to the alley allows for each storefront to enhance entry space, create public space or a garden, or show off their product.

Spaces in front of each building allow for interaction with the customer to begin and continue outside of their doors.
Multiculturalism

Successful 21st century communities are inclusive and welcoming to all, embracing diversity and multiculturalism as a competitive advantage. These types of communities are most attractive to new businesses, and today’s fluid, mobile, and global workforce seeks out places that embrace people of all ages, religions, ethnicities, national origins, and races. Providing a welcoming environment for all will encourage growth of Cadillac.

Asset Analysis

The community engagement in Cadillac was unparalleled and revealed time and again that the Cadillac community is close-knit, supportive, and friendly, with very well developed social capital. The City hosts an historical museum with cultural exhibits, and several diversity-themed events take place in the summer months. Cadillac has two sister cities: Mölnlycke, Sweden, and Rovaniemi, Finland.

Encouraging use of Heritage Plaza for a variety of events will lead to diversity within the community. Cultural events such as art fairs and farmer’s markets are examples of such events.

The space in front of the Rotary Pavilion is turned into an open amphitheater style lawn. Across Lake Street, an additional space is available for extended viewing. This allows for larger events and programeing that will draw crowds from the surrounding regions.
### Recommendations

- Employ a cultural exchange program
- Focus community heritage events on diversity
- Incorporate additional signage indicating historic sites and information
- Utilize community practices that celebrate a diversity of cultures

### Implementation Opportunities

- Work with Sister Cities International to strengthen relationships with Cadillac’s sister cities
- Communicate with local institutions and community groups to work together to celebrate Cadillac’s diverse past
- Celebrate Native American tribes that used to inhabit what is now Cadillac and Wexford County through community events
- Work with the Parks Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works to install additional signage indicating historical sites and information about Cadillac’s past

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Scenes such as this provide an idea for how Cadillac can incorporate the City’s heritage into the built environment. For example, Cadillac was once a bustling hub for the logging industry. Civic art can give prominence to the past in a diverse way.

Providing comfortable and adequate seating areas will encourage residents to spend more time in Heritage Plaza.
Transportation Options

Thriving regions offer a range of transportation options, from walking and biking to buses and other modes of transit. Developing effective transportation options is a necessary tool for all communities interested in attracting and retaining residents, workers, and businesses. Research shows that people across the nation are choosing communities that offer various modes of transportation, with easy access to the places they live, work, and play. Multimodal transportation can be as complex as rail systems and as simple as trails and bike paths.

Asset Analysis

Cadillac features good access to non-motorized transportation amenities—in addition to overall walkability, the city anchors the northern end of the White Pine Trail, which runs 92 miles to Grand Rapids. In addition, the City is relatively compact, and about 40% of downtown area employees commute less than 10 miles. Likely because of these factors, 5% of Cadillac residents walk to work—over twice the state average—and the average resident’s commute is almost 10 minutes shorter than the statewide average.

Beyond non-motorized amenities, though, Cadillac residents have limited travel options. Wexford Area Transit Authority provides door-to-door demand response service, but no fixed route transit exists; Greyhound provides Thruway motorcoach service to Cadillac once daily, connecting to Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, and Traverse City. The Great Lakes Central-owned rail line running through downtown has been discussed as someday seeing passenger rail service restored, but any such service is years away.

3 LEDH 2011
4 American Community Survey 2008-2012

Introducing a better connection to the natural assets of the Cadillac area will increase the usability of the plaza. Increasing the amount of boat parking and fishing opportunities also adds to the overall experience of Heritage Plaza.
### Transportation Options continued...

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<tr>
<td>• Consider opportunities for creating commuter &amp; tourism connections between Cadillac and other regional destinations</td>
<td>• Consider CMAQ or Transportation Alternatives grants to pilot a public-private partnership, such as with Indian Trails or other motorcoach operators, to provide a commuter connection with Traverse City and other surrounding cities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Research policies for expanding seasonal boat and snowmobile access to downtown destinations</td>
<td>• Research how other northern lakefront communities have handled additional seasonal boat and snowmobile access to their downtowns to formulate a plan for Cadillac</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Promote biking as an alternative to automobile use</td>
<td>• Add bike lanes where lacking but necessary to encourage equal use of the road</td>
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<td>• Employ Complete Streets development strategies as allowed by legislation adopted in August 2010</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Install adequate bike racks at trail heads and major inlets to downtown to allow cyclists to park their bikes while</td>
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Messaging and Technology

People communicate, connect, and engage differently today than they did ten years ago, or five years ago, or last year, or even last month. Next generation Internet and communication technologies are allowing people to share information in the virtual world in unprecedented ways. Communities that use cutting-edge strategies in their approach to branding, engagement, and communication with new demographics, businesses, cultural institutions, and philanthropic communities are ahead of the game.

Asset Analysis

Local institutions have a social media presence: the City of Cadillac has over 1,000 “likes” on Facebook and a small Twitter following; The Cadillac Wexford Public Library has 900 Facebook “likes” (also with a small Twitter following); the Chamber of Commerce and Cadillac Community Foundation have smaller followings on Facebook. The City website is easy to navigate, and 75 users have personalized the website using built-in functionality. Several downtown businesses offer free Wi-Fi access. Connect Michigan gives Cadillac a score of 100 for Broadband Internet access, with coverage available throughout the city, though outlying areas of Wexford County to the west and north are underserved. The Cadillac News has a reasonably easy-to-navigate website that is integrated with social media, though non-subscribers can only read 10 articles per month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Employ a greater emphasis on social media</td>
<td>• Either in-house or with the help of a consultant, develop a coordinated social media presence, where all community institutions are consistently delivering coordinated messages. Cadillac is home to a startup social media consultant group that has achieved similar results with local businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Move a wider variety of city services online</td>
<td>• Work with the various departments of the Cadillac city government to move more of their services online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide options to receive billing statements through email</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

City of Cadillac Michigan Website
Source: http://www.cadillac-mi.net/
**Education**

Education is key in competing in a global, 21st century economy, and centers of education are vital anchor institutions within communities. From K-12 schools to community colleges, and technical schools to state universities, educational institutions bring innumerable benefits to a community. They are the hub not only for learning, but sports, entertainment, arts and culture, healthcare, and recreation, and serve as engines of economic development. Vibrant communities successfully collaborate with a full range of educational institutions to develop intellectual, human, and physical capital. Collaboration can be as simple as sharing physical facilities such as ballparks and swimming pools, or as complex as formal town-gown strategic plans.

**Asset Analysis**

In 2010, Cadillac’s youth population of 24.7% under age 18 was slightly higher than the state average of 23.7%. The City fares well with regard to high school diploma attainment (89.8%, slightly higher than the state average), but lagged the state average when it comes to bachelor’s degrees (13.6% compared to the state average of 25.5%).

Cadillac hosts a campus of Baker College, which offers several professional programs. Cadillac’s public school district includes an alternative high school as part of its portfolio, and the Wexford-Missaukee ISD hosts the Wexford-Missaukee Career Technical Center which provides career training to high school students. The ISD additionally provides special education programs, as well as professional support programs for educators.

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5 American Community Survey 2008-2012

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Develop a place-based plan for “town-gown” development that builds on the Baker College residences downtown as a first step</td>
<td>• Leverage existing educational resources to expand learning opportunities for all, while further developing cultural and recreational opportunities in a coordinated framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider adding additional post-secondary educational space downtown</td>
<td>• Supplement the additional student housing available in downtown Cadillac by constructing additional classroom space that can be used by the area’s various educational institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Place: Cadillac, Michigan
Appendix
Additional Images

The following are additional images that were not included in the body of the report and further illustrate the design concepts.
Enhanced connection to memorial fountain

Memorial fountain directly connects with plaza

Open plaza space allows for events and activities

Simple children playscapes have historical background

Enhanced pedestrian crossing ensures pedestrian safety

Trees, parking, and pavement patterns extend to Mitchell St.

Cadillac, Michigan
Enhanced connection to memorial fountain
Memorial fountain directly connects with plaza
Open plaza space allows for events and activities

Simple children playscapes have historical background
Enhanced pedestrian crossing ensures pedestrian safety
Trees, parking, and pavement patterns extend to Mitchell St.

Cadillac, Michigan
Oblique Looking Northeast

Proposed Atrium looking over Heritage Plaza
## Design Charrette Concept Feedback

**Participant comments on specific design images at the multi-day design charrette on March 4th and 5th, 2014 at the Elks Lodge in Cadillac, Michigan.**

### Concept A Feedback

- Parking is an issue already for our business. 65+-year-old clients. Parking needs to be close to building.
- Where is a bike trailhead?
- Ability to block off Lake Street for events.
- Need to promote downtown apartment for young professionals.
- 2’ 6’ rule for trees and scrubs for better visibility and fewer hiding places. Shrubs lower than 2’. Tree branches higher than 6’.
- Too many trees for people to hide and bad activity.
- Kids playground? With equipment?
- Like concept of being able to open/close Lake Street.
- Space to attract people to Cadillac for special events. Example: hockey tournaments.
- Like extension of green space toward Mitchell.
- Like keeping Lake Street open on weekdays.
- With the Wex possibly closing, a venue downtown would be great! Ice rink/venue in the summer!
- I love the skating rink behind the fountain!
- Love train spur idea!
- Don’t close Lake Street! Too much traffic.
- Close Lake Street or make it emergency vehicles only and combine two parks.
- Like ice rink. Include concession stand.
- Mom as a child told stories of ice-skating downtown Cadillac. Round rink made each year.

### Concept B Feedback

- Maybe extend dock from behind rotary pavilion.
- Like two docks.
- Better conditioned walkways leading to park.
- Pavilion having a viewing area for movies.
- Where is a bike trailhead?
- Better than [Concept] A!
- Space in Park for current events (art fair, beer fest, etc.).
- Bigger splash pad. Only one for maintenance reason.
- Like the walkway behind the pavilion. (Ditto).
- Like this green – no parking!
- Open space in front of pavilion! – No trees or bushes to block view.
- Snow plowing ease for loaders to move through lots and pile snow.
- Make South walk to pavilion a controlled drive for performer’s equipment.
- Trees/shrubs need to preserve sight lines to lakefront.
- Put an ice rink on this one.
- Parking is only an issue one weekend of the year – loss of spots is worth park improvement.
- Need more parking. Parking garage?
- Closure of Lake Street.
- Who can use outdoor fireplace? Safety?
- Like the designated fishing pier!
- Like this green – no parking.
- Use more of lakefront for festivals and music events.
- Like the multiple splash pads and linear ice-skating.
- Would be nice to have pathways from other parking lots.
- There is not enough parking currently!
- I like the fishing pier concept.
Elaboration on Implementation

The following provides additional detail to the implementation strategies outlined in the report.

Physical Design and Walkability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Incentivize or require “active” facades on side streets, especially streets like Cass and Martin that lead to public amenities. | • A Form-Based Code can be used to regulate locations of entrances, sizes of windows, and other design features.  
• Even without transitioning to a Form-Based Code, the zoning ordinance can be amended to require or promote active uses at street level in certain districts.  
• Any business incentives should be used strategically to create active side facades—for example, to support restaurants on corner lots, where side streets might support sidewalk seating, rather than banks or other uses that typically do not make use of side facades. |
| Evaluate Mitchell Street traffic patterns for any opportunities to redesign the street to provide more space for pedestrians and business district patrons. | • Recent legislation allows for angled parking on state trunklines; if Mitchell only needs one travel lane in each direction, this option could repurpose some pavement for increased on-street parking. In locations where left turns are infrequent, a median may slow traffic and provide pedestrians a greater sense of safety when crossing. |
| Identify any under-utilized off-street parking areas and consider repurposing them, in whole or in part, for active uses. | • Larger underused parking areas (whether public or private) might be able to support permanent development. Smaller parking areas could be made available for more “temporary” uses that can attract pedestrian traffic, such as event space or food trucks.  
• Even if eliminating an entire lot is not practical, shallow liner buildings can be filled in on the edges to create an active pedestrian environment. |

Figure 21
### Environmental Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relate Cadillac’s natural assets to the activities of the central business district.</td>
<td>The community Farmers Market and the annual Made in Michigan Event are both example opportunities to demonstrate the relationship between Cadillac’s natural resources and economic vitality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to build up and establish trail connections to Cadillac’s parks and Downtown.</td>
<td>Cadillac’s trail network and connectivity to its downtown is one of the community’s strongest assets. The community has an opportunity to reiterate and maximize this strength by making the trails and connections multi-with the strongest emphasis on pedestrians and bicyclists.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 22**

### Cultural Economic Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish a unified branding for Cadillac’s community assets</td>
<td>Bringing the parks, lakes and surrounding community assets together through branding has the opportunity to create a stronger impact as a whole greater than the individual parts. Creative and unique signage and promotion for these assets reinforce connection and invite the community to experience an entire place versus a sole destination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspond with current events and programming in the proximal community assets.</td>
<td>Cadillac’s City Park serves the community as a hub for community events and connectivity to the City’s natural and commercial assets. Regular events like Thursday night World Class Jazz, the local farmers market, and performances by the Cadillac Footlitters converge in the City Park area and bring downtown Cadillac a rich cultural identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think regionally to better leverage resources</td>
<td>There are opportunities to connect with other communities in the region to help leverage other private businesses and non-governmental organizations to join together and strengthen the area’s cultural economy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 23**

Cadillac, Michigan
## Entrepreneurship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop a targeted program for attracting and retaining small and startup businesses.</td>
<td>Leverage existing local resources, including the knowledge base at Baker College, NWMCOG and DDA and target potential startups for location downtown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider applying for MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready Communities program.</td>
<td>RRC provides a framework for communities to attract and retain talent. Participation in RRC involves detailed evaluation of six Best Practice areas intended to create a positive experience for investors, businesses and residents working within a community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a Business Incubator.</td>
<td>The University of Michigan’s Center for Business Acceleration and Incubation Studies provided a detailed feasibility analysis and operating plan for a business incubator in the region. Consider alternative options for location to those recommended in the study to include the downtown area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 24

## Multiculturalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employ a cultural exchange program.</td>
<td>Cadillac has had sister city relationships with two Scandinavian cities for nearly 30 years. Leveraging these relationships through Sister Cities International can provide an opportunity to expose residents of all ages to new cultural experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus community heritage events on diversity.</td>
<td>Several Native American tribes originally populated what is now Wexford County. Cadillac’s history as a logging hub attracted immigrants from Europe. Local institutions should focus education and exhibitions on this history.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 25
### Messaging and Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ a greater emphasis on social media.</strong></td>
<td>Either in-house or with the help of a consultant, develop a coordinated social media presence, where all community institutions are consistently delivering coordinated messages. Cadillac is home to a startup social media consultant group that has achieved similar results with local businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Move a wider variety of city services online.</strong></td>
<td>Facilitate filing such things as building and occupancy permits directly online (currently all paper forms are available online). The service employed by Cadillac to search property tax records has the functionality to accept tax payments online, but Cadillac currently does not participate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Figure 26**

**Figure 27**
**Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop a place-based plan for “town-gown” development that builds on the Baker College residences downtown as a first step.</td>
<td>As a relatively compact city with a regional college campus, Cadillac can leverage its existing educational resources to expand learning opportunities to all, while further developing cultural and recreational opportunities in a coordinated framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider adding additional post-secondary educational space downtown.</td>
<td>Baker College’s addition of student housing downtown could be supplemented with the addition of classroom space nearby which could be used by the area’s several institutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 28
Interview Summary

The interview summary provides an outline of feedback from community stakeholders in regard to the PlacePlan for Cadillac’s Heritage Square. The key opportunities, universal concerns, and what stakeholders would like to see are all presented on this page.

Key opportunities:
- Pretty universal support for closing Lake Street; if permanent closure not feasible, strong interest in temporary applications (retractable bollards)
- Interest in moving farm market to this site, possibly with permanent structure that allows for parking on off days
- Universal positive reports about “Made in Michigan” pop-up retail in parking lot in the summer
- Open up back door/deck opportunities to Mitchell St businesses (may need to bury utilities)
- Encourage pedestrian flow between Mitchell St and lake, whether by developing a cut through parking lot or by using Elks alley, Harris and Cass as “mini” main streets connecting to waterfront
- Arts Council/art community could be better engaged, better highlighted
- Complete Streets policy almost done, ordinance will follow (bike route to campus?)
- Tie in to current linear parks/trails
- Fountain is a warm-weather family attraction, build on that with other offerings

What would you like to see:
- Highlight current assets, park, trees, fountain, train, depot (some suggested responsibly thinning trees in park to improve views, provide more space in park for events)
- Shuffleboard in park is NEVER used, take it out!
- Trail head at depot area (bike & snowmobile)
- More benches throughout the area to be more friendly to mature residents
- Better lighting in the park
- Water activities, boats, kayaks
- Winter activities, snowmobiles; outdoor winter gathering space like Holland fireplace; ice skating around the fountain in winter
- Downtown market (not necessarily full grocery) to serve residential population
- Evening activities, including those which cater to under 21
- Yoga in the park
- Wi-Fi in the park/downtown (current Wi-Fi through library, NOT good!)
- Bike route from downtown to Baker campus
- Remove buildings mid block on Mitchell to create site line & connections
- Creative snow removal/management, for example sled hill in the park

Universal concerns:
- Waterfront doesn’t feel close or connected to downtown
- Backs of buildings don’t strongly signal what the downtown has to offer
- Parking lot is difficult to navigate, especially in winter
- Need creative place to put trash, receive deliveries, and other practical rear of building issues
- Parking management: balance need for downtown business employees, retail, and residents; seasonal/peak demand; improve signage & enforcement
- Power lines limit use of rear buildings facing water
- Need more electricity in park and downtown to support expanded uses, events, vendors, etc.
- City’s policies around snowmobile access and boat dock usage are hot-button issues
Connections to Placemaking

The following tables illustrate the relative time frame and type of placemaking activity for each implementation strategy outlined in the report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset Category</th>
<th>Implementation Strategies</th>
<th>Short-term</th>
<th>Long-term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Design &amp; Walkability</td>
<td>A1: Modify Lake Street between Harris and Cass Streets to become a pedestrian street. Add retractable bollards to allow Lake Street to be open to vehicle traffic and emergency vehicles when appropriate.</td>
<td>[ ] Tactical</td>
<td>[ ] Creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A2: Encourage Cadillac’s City Council to adopt form-based code to allow for uniformity among structures and facades</td>
<td>[ ] Tactical</td>
<td>[ ] Creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A3: Reconfigure the layout of sidewalks within Heritage Plaza to allow for greater walkability and ensure barrier-free pedestrian access from businesses to Heritage Plaza</td>
<td>[ ] Tactical</td>
<td>[ ] Creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A4: Reconfigure the orientation of parking behind the Mitchell Street businesses while still maintaining 85% of the existing parking spaces</td>
<td>[ ] Tactical</td>
<td>✓ Creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A5: Work with MDOT and the Street Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works to ensure adequate signage as well as street markings for increased pedestrian safety</td>
<td>✓ Tactical</td>
<td>[ ] Creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A6: Ensure that access to Heritage Plaza is adequate for all, including those with disabilities</td>
<td>✓ Tactical</td>
<td>[ ] Creative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Environment Sustainability | B1: Develop rain gardens where possible along the alley behind the Mitchell Street businesses to help prevent flooding of Heritage Plaza | ✓ Tactical | [ ] Creative | [ ] Strategic |
| | B2: Work with the Cadillac Recycling Center as well as the Cadillac Department of Utilities to implement a recycling program for Heritage Plaza | ✓ Tactical | ✓ Creative | [ ] Strategic |
| | B3: Utilize the community farmer’s market as an opportunity to encourage environmentally-friendly growing practices and to teach the community to eat locally | ✓ Tactical | ✓ Creative | [ ] Strategic |
| | B4: Create a renewable energy ordinance to allow for the installation of solar panels on light fixtures within the public right-of-way | ✓ Tactical | ✓ Creative | [ ] Strategic |
| | B5: Work with the Parks Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works to maximize connections to local trailheads to encourage recreation and wellness as well as sustainable modes of getting around such as walking and biking | ✓ Tactical | ✓ Creative | [ ] Strategic |

Figure 32

Figure 33

PlacePlan: Cadillac, Michigan | 41
### Asset Category

**Cultural Economic Development**
- C1: Working with the Parks Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works as well as the Department of Community Development, create a community branding strategy for local assets to improve connections within the community.
- C2: Encourage the use of Heritage Plaza by touting it as a centerpiece of recreation, social interaction, and culture in downtown Cadillac.
- C3: Utilize Heritage Plaza as a space for a variety of events (craft shows, art shows, outdoor movies, plays, etc.).
- C4: Work with local businesses to encourage sponsorship and participation in community events.

**Entrepreneurship**
- D1: Apply for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation’s Redevelopment Ready Communities program to spur economic growth downtown.
- D2: Encourage private-public partnership for events in Heritage Plaza.
- D3: Develop a business incubator to allow for local businesses to gain traction at an affordable rent.
- D4: Consider taking advantage of Michigan’s investment crowdfunding law, which allows residents to invest in local businesses.

**Multiculturalism**
- E1: Work with Sister Cities International to strengthen relationships with Cadillac’s sister cities.
- E2: Communicate with local institutions and community groups to work together to celebrate Cadillac’s diverse past.
- E3: Work with the Parks Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works to install additional signage indicating historical sites and information about Cadillac’s past.
- E4: Celebrate Native American tribes that used to inhabit what is now Cadillac and Wexford County through community events.

### Implementation Strategies

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Economic Development</strong></td>
<td>C1: Working with the Parks Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works as well as the Department of Community Development, create a community branding strategy for local assets to improve connections within the community.</td>
<td>✔️✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2: Encourage the use of Heritage Plaza by touting it as a centerpiece of recreation, social interaction, and culture in downtown Cadillac.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3: Utilize Heritage Plaza as a space for a variety of events (craft shows, art shows, outdoor movies, plays, etc.).</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C4: Work with local businesses to encourage sponsorship and participation in community events.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entrepreneurship</strong></td>
<td>D1: Apply for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation’s Redevelopment Ready Communities program to spur economic growth downtown.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D2: Encourage private-public partnership for events in Heritage Plaza.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D3: Develop a business incubator to allow for local businesses to gain traction at an affordable rent.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D4: Consider taking advantage of Michigan’s investment crowdfunding law, which allows residents to invest in local businesses.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td><strong>Multiculturalism</strong></td>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E2: Communicate with local institutions and community groups to work together to celebrate Cadillac’s diverse past.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E3: Work with the Parks Division of the Cadillac Department of Public Works to install additional signage indicating historical sites and information about Cadillac’s past.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E4: Celebrate Native American tribes that used to inhabit what is now Cadillac and Wexford County through community events.</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
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</table>
G1: Work with the various departments of the Cadillac city government to move more of their services online
G2: Either in-house or with the help of a consultant, develop a coordinated social media presence, where all community institutions are consistently delivering coordinated messages. Cadillac is home to a startup social media consultant group that has achieved similar results with local businesses.

F1: Consider CMAQ or Transportation Alternatives grants to pilot a public-private partnership, such as with Indian Trails or other motorcoach operators, to provide a commuter connection with Traverse City and other surrounding cities
F2: Research how other northern lakefront communities have handled additional seasonal boat and snowmobile access to their downtowns to formulate a plan for Cadillac to follow
F3: Adding bike lanes where lacking but necessary to encourage equal use of the road
F4: Employ Complete Streets development strategies as allowed by legislation adopted in August 2010
F5: Install adequate bike racks at trail heads and major inlets to downtown to allow cyclists to park their bikes while keeping downtown a pedestrian friendly area

H1: Supplement the additional student housing available in downtown Cadillac by constructing additional classroom space that can be used by the area’s various educational institutions
H2: Leverage existing educational resources to expand learning opportunities for all, while further developing cultural and recreational opportunities in a coordinated framework
Case Studies

The following are case studies relating to each asset category in the body of the report. These case studies provide an example of how placemaking can be tied in with each asset category.

Physical Design & Walkability: Farmington’s “Heart of Downtown”

Michigan communities across the state are improving walkability and design, especially in their downtown areas. Farmington has spent the past decade creating a stronger sense of place in its downtown and the result of this work has been positive for the community’s economy. Municipal officials worked with residents to transform a downtown strip mall parking lot into a public park and pavilion. The new area now houses about 60 events throughout the year, including the farmers market, swing dancing performances, and a winter festival. With more people visiting downtown Farmington on a regular basis, retail stores and restaurants have seen more foot traffic and increased sales.¹

The park and pavilion initiative also built momentum for the city’s downtown streetscape projects. Farmington’s downtown was divided by Grand River Avenue, a busy, multi-lane roadway. The city narrowed the road and improved landscaping in an effort to reduce road congestion as well as improve pedestrian safety, street aesthetics, and the business environment. The improvements have resulted in additional street parking, increased foot traffic, and encouraged many downtown restaurant owners to add outdoor seating options.²

Environmental Sustainability: The Dequindre Cut Greenway

Connecting natural assets and business activities is an important way cities can support residents’ interests. In Detroit, the Dequindre Cut Greenway is a former railway redeveloped into a biking and walking path. The Cut links pedestrians and bicyclists to the Detroit Riverfront, Eastern Market, and many residential communities. Building on existing assets, the trail provides an unique opportunity to strengthen social bonds, connect nearby communities, and promote healthy lifestyles in downtown Detroit.³

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²“Heart of Downtown: Sundquist Pavilion in Riley Park”
Cultural Economic Development: 
Leveraging Public Art for Community Branding

Developing effective community branding and organizing cultural events can be an effective way to increase resident quality-of-life and increase tourism. A group of city leaders and concerned residents came up with the St. Joseph, MI Public Art project to re-energize the community. A theme is selected each year and local artists paint and decorate unique sculptures, which are placed around the downtown. Past themes include Horses on the Beach, Beach Bears, Hot Cars, Cool Beaches, and more. The Public Art initiative has helped increase downtown storefront occupancy, tourism, downtown foot traffic, and an overall change in attitude among local residents.1


Entrepreneurship: Providing Spaces for New Business

In an effort to attract and support small businesses in Ferndale, MI, community leaders started a shared indoor market called the Rust Belt Market. The market is a redeveloped vacant commercial building in downtown Ferndale that is now home to more than fifty small business owners. Local entrepreneurs rent an area in the large, renovated building and operate their retail stores alongside other small businesses. Rust Belt Market also uses the building’s communal space to host concerts and community events, improving the city’s social offerings and activities.2


Similarly, Detroit’s “pop-up” Revolve program supports entrepreneurs and activates vacant storefronts. Using a small budget, the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation works with the community and local entrepreneurs to renovate vacant storefronts in walkable Detroit communities. Entrepreneurs are able to temporarily use the space to test their business and products, and build dedicated clientele and storefronts are renovated for future permanent businesses.3 Getting creative with new business development, like Rust Belt Market and Revolve initiatives, can help Michigan communities become successful entrepreneurship destinations.

Multiculturalism: Gathering over SOUP

Hosting events that bring diverse groups of people together is one way to encourage a welcoming community. Detroit SOUP is a local crowdfunding potluck where attendees make a donation of $5 and listen to pitches from people doing great things in the community. Throughout the evening, attendees talk, ask questions, share ideas, and support each other. At the end of the night, people vote for their favorite pitch and the winner goes home with all of the money raised at the door as seed funding for their concept. Giving people an opportunity to gather and support each other can help bridge cultural divides and promote a more welcoming community.

Transportation Options:
Expanding Transit to Increase Travel Options

Although other states are far ahead of Michigan’s public transportation options, some Michigan communities are making quick progress in the initiative. In May, 2014, 71 percent of voters in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Ypsilanti Township passed a tax increase to expand transit services between the communities. The additional funding will put more buses on the road, expand hours, add routes, and broaden a digital ride service. The Grand Rapids area is also planning to put a more complete bus system on the streets by August 2014. The Silver Line bus rapid transit project will connect Grand Rapids, Kentwood, and Wyoming, and aims to compete with cars to get suburban workers downtown. The buses will communicate with traffic lights and use their own traffic lane to quickly bring people where they need to go. Both projects are estimated to have a positive impact on the communities’ economic development and increase revenue for local businesses.

Messaging & Technology: Sharing the Love in Muskegon

Some Michigan communities are getting creative with messaging, and even letting residents do some of the work. In an effort to promote Muskegon, a group of young professionals designed a logo and slogan for the community, “Love Muskegon,” and started boosting the city’s online presence. The open-sourced logo was widely dispersed throughout the community, which sparked events, photo opportunities, and gave residents an excuse to “have a love affair” with their city.2

Education: Student Projects Leverage Public Data in Jackson

For decades, the University of Michigan has been partnering with communities across the state for research projects and student internships. Recently UM students have been working with city officials in Jackson to initiate special projects to improve communication between the city and residents. For example, one group is developing a program where the public can text anonymous information to police—something the city didn’t have the time or staff to create on its own. Cities that are able to build strong relationships with universities can leverage important student and professional assets they may not be able to access otherwise.
