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MIplace Initiative

The MIplacePartnership 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, 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.

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Local Partners

The PlacePlan Technical Assistance Team would like to acknowledge the Jackson City staff and 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 Downtown Jackson Alleyway site. Special thanks to Executive Director, Jonathan Greene, and Assistant to the Director, Rebecca Rae, at Jackson Downtown Development Authority 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 Grand River Marketplace for hosting the location for the design charrette portion of this process. 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 Jackson PlacePlan project fall under the planning approach termed *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.

For decades, communities have ignored the importance of “Place” and put greater emphasis on accommodating for the automobile. Placemaking aims to create or restore a higher quality living environment in key parts of a community through urban redevelopment that builds on existing structures and infrastructure with good form –like many historic structures. By empowering citizens to engage in the Placemaking process, high quality urban places can come into being.

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

The four-block alley that bisects Downtown Jackson shows the potential for pedestrian walkability and interaction with the surrounding businesses, restaurants, and more. This project aims to employ tactical, creative, and strategic planning and design techniques to create a continuous and visually cohesive corridor that will not only serve as a means for getting from Point A to Point B, but as a destination in and of itself. The City has requested support from the Michigan Municipal League and Michigan State University to prepare a PlacePlan for the Alleyway that facilitates pedestrian connections to nearby assets and provides design recommendations that will act as a catalyst for job creation and revitalization. Engagement with the community was a necessary step in determining the proper planning techniques and design for innovative infrastructure improvements. The desired outcome of this PlacePlan is to fully develop a shovel-ready project or list of projects that can be implemented by the City of Jackson.

Overview of Existing Site

The Alleyway is a critical building block in the movement of people in Downtown Jackson. The existing alley runs north to south in the heart of Downtown Jackson, bounded by Washington Avenue and Louis Glick (US-127). The corridor created by the alley will provide efficient access to local businesses, restaurants, entertainment, and other existing and forthcoming activities in the area. The appeal of this study area comes from its high density and mixed-use capacity, both of which present opportunities for social interaction and economic development. By integrating better design with physical and visual connectivity, the City can further downtown economic development efforts via increased foot traffic, enhanced mobility, and quality infrastructure improvements. Development of the Downtown Alleyway Project will spark a new era of placemaking action in Jackson.
Methodology
Overview

In order to provide carefully considered asset, planning, and design recommendations for implementation of an Alleyway project, 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 the League’s 21st Century Community criteria
- Conducted interviews with stakeholders
- Held three community meetings:
  - Phase One: Community Kick-off Workshop
  - 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 Jackson 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 considerable vested interest in the project. Initial stakeholder analysis was prepared by MML, identifying individuals and groups that may be appropriate to speak with directly, 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.
Phase One: Community Kick-Off Workshop

The City of Jackson hosted a visioning meeting on December 19, 2013 to set the PlacePlans planning process in motion. At this meeting, the team introduced and described to an audience of Jackson stakeholders the Jackson Alleyway Project and its scope of work. The meeting established a timeline and a list of milestones through which development of the project could be completed. By the end of the meeting, this timeline was assigned to a tentative schedule. Stakeholders at the meeting were then asked what they were proud of, sorry about, and what they would like to see regarding the Alleyway. Comments during this segment of the meeting are summarized in Figure 1.

Phase Two: Design Charrette

On March 6th and 7th, 2014, a multiple-day design charrette was held at Grand River Marketplace to gauge stakeholders’ feelings towards the Alleyway. Prior to the meetings, an array of design images were produced to visualize the many directions in which the project could go. After all of the images and concepts were introduced, participants broke off into small groups of 5 to 10 and sat down at tables where facilitators led discussions about the project. Participants wrote on notecards what they liked and did not like about the design images. After this step was completed, participants then wrote additional comments on post-it notes and placed them on pictures of the design concepts for the trail. This two-day process revealed similar and varying sentiments towards the Alleyway and thereby enabled the planning team to establish priorities for the report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proud</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Farmers Market</td>
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<tr>
<td>• New residential apartments</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Businesses that are oriented towards the alley</td>
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<td>• Downtown is becoming more and more attractive</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sorry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• No place to hang out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unsavory reputation and usage</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Poor lighting</td>
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<td>• Poorly maintained streetscape</td>
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<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Well maintained path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “See it not smell it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Used as pedestrian conduit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encouraging business growth in the surrounding areas</td>
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Figure 1: Visioning Session Summary
Downtown Jackson Alleyway
Design Considerations

Design Parameters
In an effort to plan for and enhance the four-block, pedestrian-oriented, Downtown Jackson Alleyway, collaboration with the community, key stakeholders, and city officials lead to design parameters that defined what the future vision for the space would look like. Capturing the important “Jackson-esque” feeling of the downtown district, like history, architecture, culture, art, uniqueness, and suitable downtown atmosphere helped develop “The Jax” theme. In addition, physical attributes of Jackson, like the Grand River, recreation space, entertainment, restaurants, shopping, and diverse types of housing helped define specific spaces that will occur along the Alleyway. Finally, important details like beautification, accessibility, public gathering space, and uses for all ages to strengthen connections to adjacent neighborhoods began to outline what a sense of place for the Alleyway would really look and feel like.

Key Design Principles and Elements
Many of the key design principles that set the stage for specific design elements came from the feedback received through the community input process. Much of this focused on the need for authentic public space that would promote the urban atmosphere and encourage residents and visitors to utilize Downtown Jackson during the day and night, resulting in support that would inspire a stronger community identity. Key elements like multi-purpose, multi-seasonal, and flexible public space are emphasized to support local businesses, housing, and key anchors like the farmers market and the Grand River. These spaces will encourage active and passive uses like special events, recreation, nightlife, and enjoyable entertainment for users of all ages.

Another key design principle was to ensure cohesive connection between main attractions along the alley and important features found in Jackson’s historical neighborhoods. By adopting an artistic culture, which caters to sculpture display, wall murals, and creative public utility, users will spend time in and out of the Alleyway exploring the unheralded talents that make Jackson unique. Additionally, adding focal points inside the alley, and also at terminating ends, creates a destination that people will be excited to reach as they pass interesting and inviting businesses, restaurants, and shopping boutiques that open out into the Alleyway.

Safety in an urban environment is always a concern, which made the topic an important one to Jackson residents and officials. As a key design principle, multiple corresponding

Looking South Through the Alley
Design Concept Aerial Image
Jackson, Michigan
elements of design were included to improve the perceived safety of the Alleyway. The provision of public utilities like benches, trash receptacles, emergency stations, bicycle parking and entrance arbors will help keep people in a space that is clean and functional. Additionally, lighting on the streets, on buildings and above the Alleyway reduce dark areas, keeping pedestrians comfortable during all hours of the day. Marked pedestrian crossings can build on this concept by controlling traffic at all of the intersections and increasing safety and connectivity throughout the Alleyway.

Finally, a focus on environmental and sensible design techniques were crucial to sustaining the quality and beauty of Jackson’s greatest native feature, the Grand River. Special techniques like green roofs, green walls, native planting, and stormwater management are key elements of design that will help decrease the negative effects of an urban environment to the surrounding flora and fauna. These features, among others mentioned will enhance the beauty of Downtown Jackson and create a sense of place that will encapsulate the City as a whole.

Mixed-use Development and Placemaking

Compact, mixed-use properties are the building blocks that private developers contribute to a vibrant urban district. Whether these are two-story neighborhood centers with apartments and professional offices above convenience retail, or ten stories of condos, hotel rooms, and offices above downtown shopping and restaurants, this development form has many benefits, which include:

- **Supporting a 24/7 district:** mixing daytime employment uses with evening shopping and entertainment uses and nighttime residents ensures something is happening at all times—creating a place where people want to be.

- **Allowing businesses and residents to attract each other:** a walkable mixed-use district provides amenities that attract new residents, and a built-in customer base that can support new businesses, creating a virtuous cycle of activity and investment.

- **Making efficient use of public resources:** compact, mixed-use development costs less per unit to serve with public utilities, while producing substantially higher tax yields per acre, providing a much higher return on public investment. This effect is even stronger when building in infill locations in existing downtowns and neighborhood centers.

- **Reducing household transportation and energy costs:** residents of mixed-use districts typically have lower total housing and transportation costs, due to the efficiencies of living near jobs, shopping, and other destinations. These savings translate into increased spending power, which supports the local economy.1

Household demand for the economic and quality-of-life benefits of living in mixed-use developments has risen in recent years, and, in most communities, supply has not yet caught up. To build on the public space investments described in this plan, the city should identify appropriate locations for mixed-use development in the surrounding area; examine adopted plans, zoning and development regulations, and use of incentives to ensure these tools support the desired development; and engage directly with developers to solicit proposals.

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1 For more information on these benefits, review The Option of Urbanism (2009) by developer and Brookings Institution Visiting Fellow Chris Leinberger, and Smart Growth Savings (2014) by Todd Litman, Victoria Public Policy Institute
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. Placemaking’s 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.

- 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. Examples include a traditional downtown with easy access from historic and/or architecturally pleasing residential areas, and mixed-use development that encourages appropriate density, traffic and other infrastructure design features that value the human scale by considering the pedestrian, bicyclist and other non-motorized uses of the space.

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, access to cultural, social, and entertainment opportunities, with a variety of transportation options. Walkability not only helps to create a strong sense of place, it promotes a strong local economy and healthy lifestyle.

The downtown Jackson project location boasts a WalkScore of 100, a “Walker’s Paradise,” thanks to the fine-grained traditional street grid and mix of uses. WalkScore primarily measures proximity to destinations, rather than quality of pedestrian experience, suggesting that Jackson has great raw material to work with. The alley project’s focus on improving the pedestrian’s qualitative experience, to ease access among downtown destinations, is therefore appropriate.

However, there remain other significant barriers to downtown walkability. One is the higher-speed one-way US-127 business loop around downtown, which creates an obstacle to cyclists and walkers coming into the Michigan Avenue area from surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, multilane one-way streets often force downtown users to reach their destinations indirectly, serving longer-distance traffic over local business district travel. The City of Jackson is pursuing two-way conversion of this loop, and has already made changes to streets that intersect it in anticipation of the change.

The other potential liability is the amount of downtown land dedicated to parking—approximately half of the downtown off-street land area is dedicated to parking. Surface parking lots both pose a barrier to pedestrians, by providing gaps between attractive downtown uses, as well as having an opportunity cost: land area dedicated to parking is land that does not have residents or employees on it.
### Recommendations

- Identify opportunities to promote development of surface parking lots.
- Incorporate plants and vegetation along the Alleyway.
- Allow for year-round use.
- Install signage to guide users of the Alleyway to certain destinations.
- Create vibrant, inviting entrances at Washington Avenue and Louis Glick Highway.

### Implementation Opportunities

- Review off-street parking utilization; consider reducing off-street parking requirements for development.
- Use Target Market Analysis portion of current master planning process to identify development opportunities and upcoming Redevelopment Ready Communities process to identify appropriate incentives.
- Review complete streets resolution; consider possibility of street trees, bushes, and other plants and vegetation along the alley.
- Ensure the physical upkeep of the alley involves scheduled snow, leaf, and trash removal year-round.
- Use form-based code to regulate the size and character of buildings and related plants, street furniture, and other design elements within the Alleyway.

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Measure can be put in place to increase the walkability of Downtown Jackson. Adding bump-outs to crosswalks at large arterial street crossings will slow traffic and offer a safer crossing point. Additionally, using existing parking spaces to extend the public domain will create a more comfortable atmosphere for visitors.
Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability initiatives are critical for any community intending to be viable in today’s economy. Placemaking is strongly connected to environmental concerns because of the critical role that Michigan’s waterways, parks, and green spaces play in defining our communities. Whether through access to healthy local food, recreational trails, streets that prioritize walking and biking, or clean air and water, the environment is a vital part of healthy vibrant communities.

As Jackson County’s county seat, the City of Jackson has the opportunity to leverage sustainability initiatives as a way to connect different constituencies through a common goal of improving the environment and preserving the region’s natural resources. The City and County can lead the sustainability initiative through partnerships with local active organizations such as the Dahlem Conservancy and the state-wide Michigan Green Communities program.

The Grand River passes through downtown Jackson, forming the northern edge of the Farmers’ Market, but is virtually invisible. While the surrounding area features high-quality trails following much of the river’s course, the downtown area lacks access or connection to the water, except for the section passing the Consumers Power offices.

Jackson’s 2010 master plan acknowledges environmental issues through conservation of its natural assets. The plan emphasizes strengthening its parks and trail networks that have since been established. Additionally, the plan directs the City to improve views to the Grand River through the establishment of a 150-foot riparian buffer. Jackson’s natural assets are not exclusive to the City; the park system and river extends throughout the county. This supports the opportunity the City has to join the County with a unified sustainability vision.

The scale of the Alley has the potential for green trellis (seen above) that can help improve air quality, absorb rainwater, and provide shade for users of the corridor.
### Environmental Sustainability continued...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Implementation Opportunities</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Participate in the Michigan Green Communities network.</td>
<td>• Register for the Green Communities challenge at <a href="http://www.mml.org/green/mgc.php">http://www.mml.org/green/mgc.php</a> to earn recognition for sustainability measures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Continue to build up and establish trail connections to Jackson’s parks.</td>
<td>• Consider a long-range goal of a continuous pathway along the river.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore green infrastructure design elements.</td>
<td>• Identify opportunities for redevelopment along the river that would take advantage of river views and a future trail; pursue partnerships and easements for trail construction and maintenance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consider the use of permeable building material to allow efficient management of stormwater.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Place recycling bins at convenient locations along the alley.</td>
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The Grand River offers a great opportunity for the Jackson community to embrace sustainable infrastructure along the Alley that will enhance the river environmentally and aesthetically.
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.

The arts culture is woven within the Jackson community. Jackson’s public art heightens the community’s senses to creativity. Furthermore, the city has made a long-term investment in its arts community with the Armory Arts project.

The Arts and Cultural Alliance of Jackson County (ACAJC) places public art throughout the city. The Armory Arts Village serves as the artist community anchor as a mixed use, creatively focused, mixed-use neighborhood. The affordable live-work space is designed to meet both the living and workspace needs of emerging artists and creative people. Furthermore, it demonstrates to the community that the Jackson area welcomes creativity and celebrates and supports their local talent.

The Ella Sharp Museum plays a significant role in Jackson’s community culture. Jackson regards Ella Sharp’s estate as a historic landmark for the community to enjoy. The Museum, her estate, Hillside Farm, and her home, the Merriman-Sharp Farmhouse, serve the community as a park and cultural resource. The Ella Sharp Museum hosts a variety of events that offer a broad range of programming such as Educational and entertainment events including lectures, school outreach, field trips, tours, gallery walks, free community events, and the annual Art & Wine Festival.

Events and programming in Jackson are diverse, ranging from music, food and cars. In addition to the many outdoor venues Jackson offers for programming, the City’s master plan recognizes the amount of activity and encourages events to locate along Michigan Avenue in Downtown Jackson. This forward thinking approach connects programming like the Grand River Farmers Market to more permanent attractions in the city.
### Cultural Economic Development continued...

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<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Use alley and wayfinding signs as opportunities for public art.</td>
<td>• Integrate visual branding components with neighborhood, trail, and event-related social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrate Jackson arts and culture into the alley.</td>
<td>• Use trail and wayfinding signs themselves as opportunities for public art, through partnerships with neighborhood artists or community design competitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Designate space for live performances and artistic display within the Alleyway.</td>
<td>• Coordinate local art societies to organize events centered around Jackson’s arts and culture in the Alley.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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.

Jackson has experienced business leaders operating at all scales—from Consumers Energy and Allegiance Health to many dedicated small business owners downtown. This local culture is expressed through several business development organizations, including the Enterprise Group of Jackson, the Downtown Development Authority, and the Midtown Merchants Association. Jackson was further selected to participate in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation’s (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities program.

As the alley connects key assets in the heart of Jackson’s downtown, development of new businesses and expansion of existing businesses along its path will be key to defining it as a ‘place’ in and of itself, rather than merely a new way to get from point A to point B. While existing and new traditional small businesses operating out of storefronts will activate the alley and the area surrounding it as a vibrant public space, allowing ease of entry for nontraditional small businesses—such as food carts and street performers—is equally important as these models are community-focused and require little start-up capital.

Traditional alleyways can be cramped and uncomfortable to the user. Expanding certain areas can change an alley into an urban public space. This simple technique will attract users to local businesses and increase public activity.
### Entrepreneurship continued...

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<tr>
<td>• Focus development/redevelopment efforts along the Alley on creating space for new and expanding businesses.</td>
<td>• Allow further expansion of outdoor seating in Alley for new/existing restaurants (as has been done in the case of 140 Michigan Ave.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leverage nontraditional businesses—such as food carts and street performers—to activate the alley and farmers’ market area.</td>
<td>• Consider requiring storefronts opening directly onto Alley for any new retail development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take advantage of the new Crowdfunding law (the Michigan Invests Locally Exemption, P.A. 264 of 2013) to attract and support entrepreneurs and local businesses to the Alley as well as to the larger downtown area.</td>
<td>• Review existing ordinance language for any changes necessary to enable temporary businesses or use of the public right-of-way, and to ensure compatibility with surrounding permanent businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish business incubator(s)</td>
<td>• Consult <a href="http://www.crowdfundingmi.com">http://www.crowdfundingmi.com</a>, for information on utilizing “investment crowdfunding” as a unique and transformative tool for small business.”</td>
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Foot traffic is essential to commercial success. Allowing businesses to have entrances in the Alleyway will encourage people to shop at small businesses in Downtown Jackson rather than rely on malls and shopping centers for goods and services.
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.

The City of Jackson has a long-standing dedication to being a diverse and welcoming community: the City established a Human Relations Commission (HRC) in 1963 to promote mutual respect and discourage discrimination across lines of race, religion or nationality. The HRC meets monthly, publishes a periodic newsletter, and hosts events such as an annual community picnic.

Jackson’s cultural events showcase a strong oral history tradition in the community. The annual StoryFest and HRC’s Teressa Delph Oratorial Contest have each run for over 20 years, teaching children and youth the joy and the power of the spoken word, while the Blues Festival and FolkGalore feature traditional storytelling musical styles. Jackson has two sister cities, Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland, and Varel, Germany. The latter city has hosted Jackson high school students through the German American Partnership Exchange.

The updated Alleyway will include new lighting techniques that increase the comfort of the user by increasing the perceived safety of the environment. This will help introduce a better nightlife presence in Downtown Jackson.

In many scenarios, outdoor seating within a cultural atmosphere is an effective way to achieve entrepreneurial success in a downtown setting.
### Recommendations

- Expand on the community’s cultural traditions in public art installations.
- Strengthen cultural exchange programs.
- Add farmers’ market and alley programming around community diversity.
- Use signage to point out and give prominence to certain historical or cultural elements in Jackson.
- Involve art and cultural groups in developing exhibits and displays along the Alleyway.

### Implementation Opportunities

- Consider planters and other features in the alley, and throughout downtown, as canvases for art.
- Host a youth contest for short poetry to incorporate into public art.
- Explore building on previous exchange programs to include an art component which can be facilitated by Jackson’s active arts community.
- Develop a food cart program to provide a diverse range of ethnic foods.
- Integrate a local history component that focuses on the Jackson area’s role in the Underground Railroad.
- Create flyer to encourage local art institutions to provide input as to what multiculturalism means to Jackson.
Transportation Options

Thriving regions offer a range of transit options, from walking and biking, to buses and other modes of transit. Developing effective transportation options is a necessity 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 transit can be as complex as rail systems and as simple as trails and bike paths.

As noted previously, the downtown Jackson area is relatively walkable; it also offers good local transit access to much of the city via the downtown JATA transit center. In addition, a network of on-road bike lanes connects downtown to nearby neighborhoods, and to the Inter-City and Falling Waters regional trails.

Despite these options, and the fact that nearly 4,000 people employed in the downtown area commute from less than 10 miles away, Jackson sees only 9% of its population commute by walking, biking, mass transit, or “other” non-automobile methods. A few dozen downtown area residents commute to jobs at Allegiance Health or the Commonwealth Commerce Center; while Consumers Energy sees employees come from neighborhoods around the city, relatively few live in the immediate downtown area.

By contrast, nearly 40% of the 1,000 residents who live within ¼ mile of the downtown commute more than 50 miles to work, primarily east to the Ann Arbor and metro Detroit areas. These residents have few options available for travel; while the Amtrak station adjacent to downtown connects Jackson to those areas, the current train schedule does not support typical commuting hours.

All commute data 2011, from Census Bureau’s 2011 Longitudinal Employer/Household Dynamics (LEHD) dataset

The Jackson Alley Project is going to embody the meaning of Placemaking; a place to live, work, and play. With a growing urban environment, non-motorized transportation in the downtown district will increase. Amenities like benches, bike racks, and shaded space will become increasingly important to create a comfortable and usable environment.
### Recommendations

- Offer downtown area employees support for non-driving commutes, such as parking cash-out options or reduced fare JATA passes.

- Consider employee incentives to live in the downtown Jackson area, to support a vibrant mix of uses and continued reinvestment with built in-customers.

- Monitor opportunities for creating additional choices for residents who commute to the Ann Arbor and Detroit areas.

### Implementation Opportunities

- Create transit incentives for downtown employees to free up parking, similar to, with ongoing funding from DDA TIF or parking system revenues. the go!pass program in downtown Ann Arbor. CMAQ grant funding may cover a pilot phase, as a transportation demand management project.

- Discuss Live Midtown case study (in appendix) and Live Ypsi program (http://www.emich.edu/livepsi/) with downtown’s major employers.

- Coordinate with MDOT Rail Division and neighboring cities on options to extend A2-Detroit commuter rail or add commuter choices to Amtrak schedule.

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*With an increasing amount of people using mass transit in Jackson, foot traffic downtown will also increase, this will allow businesses to capitalize on plenty of opportunities.*
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! Rapidly evolving 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.

Local institutions have a strong social media presence. Nearly all major community institutions and groups have a presence on social media: the official city account, Ella Sharp museum and Jackson District Library each have several hundred Twitter followers. A similar presence and enthusiasm for social media exists on Facebook: the Downtown Development Authority’s page has nearly 3,000 “likes,” the Jackson Police Department has over 2,700, the Ella Sharp museum has over 2,500, and the official City page has over 1,500. The City website has a contemporary design and is easy to navigate. Many area businesses offer free Wi-Fi access. Connect Michigan gives Jackson a score of 100 for Broadband Internet access, with multiple sources of coverage available throughout the city. The Jackson Citizen Patriot’s website is part of the MLiveMedia Group family, providing one of the most advanced online news platforms in the United States.
## Messaging and Technology continued...

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<td>• Downtown business associations advertise the Alley through existing social media platforms.</td>
<td>• Coordinate promotions and programming related to the Alley with existing social media efforts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Facilitate publicly accessible Internet access in the Alley area to drive traffic.</td>
<td>• Provide infrastructure for free WiFi access in the alley area to encourage usage as a public space</td>
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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 also sports, entertainment, arts and culture, healthcare, and recreation, which 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.

Jackson Public Schools serves over 6,000 primary and secondary education students between 11 schools. In addition to 6 traditional elementary schools, Sharp Park Academy focuses curriculum on fine arts and technology, and the McCulloch Academy of Technology & Science—located on the periphery of downtown—is a magnet school which integrates technology into the curriculum. Jackson High School is located on the periphery of the downtown area as well, as is the alternative high school T.A. Wilson Academy. Several private schools also provide primary and secondary education, including Saint Mary Star of the Sea, a Catholic elementary school located downtown.

The Jackson County Intermediate School District provides career, technical and special education services, as well as professional development programs for educators. Jackson College, located south of the city, offers Associate’s degrees and professional/continuing education programs in addition to a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in Energy Systems Management. Baker College, located northwest of the city, offers Associate’s and Bachelor’s degrees in fields related to business, applied science, technology and education, in addition to continuing and professional education programs. Spring Arbor University, whose main campus is situated 15 minutes west of Jackson in its namesake township, is a private faith-based liberal arts college serving over 4,000 students.
### Recommendations

- Enhance connections between the Alley and nearby school facilities.
- Partner with local educational institutions to establish programming along the Alley.
- Coordinate university housing initiatives with the Alley route; Explore the potential of area higher education institutions to offer courses downtown.

### Implementation Opportunities

- Focus mobility-related improvements to those neighborhoods with nearby schools to encourage use of the Alley as a safe and feasible route to school.
- Leverage the Transportation Alternatives and Safe Routes to School programs to fund infrastructure improvements for biking and walking.
- Showcase student projects, provide informational displays about area schools, and consider allowing school benefit fundraisers/sales to take place.
- New housing for university students, either provided by the institution itself or in partnership through the private market should explore locating along or near the Alley route to leverage demand for downtown living among younger households.
- Explore the potential for creating classroom space in available downtown buildings in conjunction with a housing initiative.
Place Plan: Jackson, 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.

The Farmer’s Market is the perfect terminus for the Alley

The connection to the waterfront is a key attraction for this portion of the Alley

A smooth transition from the Market to the Alley will persuade visitors to explore more of Downtown Jackson

Parking for the Farmers Market is just as critical for the success of the Alley
A main component of the alley was a modern take of “Jackson-esque” iron works as public art.

A view of the alley from the north terminus as it continues through Downtown Jackson.

The alley will use some innovative ways to add greenery to the urban environment.

The trellis will work as a natural ceiling, increasing the comfort of the space in the narrow alley among the tall buildings.
Bump-outs at intersections incorporate vegetated barriers to increase pedestrian safety.

Pedestrian crossings are adjusted to the proper grade for greater accessibility for all users.

The addition of public amenities will help users identify the alley as a pedestrian space.

These iron gates help distinguish public space from parking space.
The city has the opportunity to place temporary uses outside the normal pedestrian right of way to extend the public space.

The renovation of the alley space will encourage future development with more business, entertainment, eating, and shopping opportunities.

New development allows for new, innovative entrepreneurial opportunities.

New views can open up over Downtown Jackson.
Vegetation is added along the alley to increase beautification and provide a more comfortable public space.

When there is an opportunity, the alley is widened to open up more space for civic use.

At certain points, businesses have the opportunity to extend beyond their walls, using a larger space for outdoor eating in the warmer months.

A view of the Jackson alley corridor.
A view of the South terminus of the Jackson Alleyway

The pedestrian space is separated from parking by a vegetated buffer

A view looking north from the southern end of the Alley
Businesses will prosper from the new pedestrian culture in Jackson, Michigan.

Pedestrians using the alley space are separated by the barriers to ensure public safety.

Pedestrian space has a vegetated ceiling that will help shade the public environment, creating a more comfortable climate.
Public amenities are also accompanied by native vegetation.

Different artistic expression can be found along the entire alley, including murals, sculpture, and other creative pieces.

The wrought iron is a historic type of artistic expression that is found along the alley.

The businesses will have a greater opportunity to engage with foot traffic as they take the opportunity to open up to the Alleyway.
Evolution of the Jackson Alley

A view of the Jackson Alley
Charrette design ideas evolve I
Charrette design ideas evolve II
Charrette design ideas evolve III

Jackson, Michigan
Charrette design ideas evolve V

"Jackson-esque" Design Character

Charrette design ideas evolve IV
## Design Charrette Concept Feedback

Participant comments about specific design images and concepts presented at the multi-day design charrette on March 6th and 7th, 2014 at the Grand River Marketplace.

### Liked
- Like the overhead lighting in the alley in A (8)
- Continuity of Concept/Connections (7)
- Identity (4)
- Interactivity (4)
- All lighting ideas are good (4)
- Dynamic energy (4)
- Transformational spaces - things have the ability to change both function and look – eg. Art spaces and patios spaces (3)
- Flexible, dynamic, interactive art (3)
- Businesses opening onto the alley/outdoor eating spaces/covered storefronts (3)
- Rooftop seating (3)
- Energy theme (3)
- Liked “Plugged In” concept A better (2)
- Mixed use building (2)
- Overhead closure of space (2)
- Like the ideas for the names and the consumers energy references (2)
- Greenery (2)
- The airiness of B (2)
- Like Concept B better,
- The murals on the building
- Like that B connects to the Grand river
- The fact that there is more plant material in B
- Like the wire idea
- Like the round seating pods in south end of B area
- love the sign at the South Entrance in concept A
- Like the signage at the south end of the alley
- The idea of lighting as art
- Themes for blocks
- Parking/Recreation flexibility
- Both have strong features, I like them both a lot
- Like the pride in heritage
- The arbors at each exit
- Conduit concept visually gives tribute to prison history of Jackson
- Sitting areas
- Outdoor performance area
- City residents interest in proposal
- Artistically designed trashcans and recycling cans

### Concerns
- North end of Concept A, the features remind me too much of walking under the Corkscrew at Cedar Point/feels like theme park (3)
- Needs more greenery (3)
- Maintenance and upkeep of whatever structures go in – who’s in charge of it all? (3)
- Needs bike racks (2)
- Excessive/imposing elements in A (2)
- Don’t reduce parking (2)
- Needs historical markers/signage (2)
- Need more signage and wayfinding, i.e. intersection signs at each street, arrows pointing to different features (2)
- More shelter instead of roller coaster design
- Name for concept A is too wordy
- Would like a chandelier effect better for the overhead lighting, would be more organized
- Don’t like the pipe things either
- Excessive use of color in A
- Scale is out of proportion in A, but will probably be rectified through the budget reality
- Concept A will go out of style fast and become outdated
- Not sure about losing any parking spaces in Lot B
- Do not like the spiral wires going from place to place
- Needs an arcade
- Arches and overhead structures
- Didn’t use Summer Night Tree
- Poor access to parking/bus/bike
- Should the alley even be the centerpiece of downtown?
- Needs to be a balance between being too progressive and abstract and something that the community embraces
- What if transit center moves?
- Seating of vagrants an issue
- Want changeable lighting
- Lighting should use renewable energy
- Don’t focus on history–should be modern, fun, and inviting
- Concepts nearly identical
- Your “renderings” are detracting from your project.
- Concepts do not deal with and in fact accentuate the lack of a built environment
- No sense of “alley” except between Pearl & Michigan
- More light
- Separate the alley from adjoining parking lots so it isn’t seen as a driveway
- Missing water features
- Why would you build a new building as a part of this? There is enough empty space waiting to be filled
Stakeholder Interview Summary

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

**What do you like and want to preserve?:**
- Fake brick/stamped concrete—Yes! It’s inviting.
- Fake brick/stamped concrete—No!
- Preserve/restore building facades
- Outdoor seating—How to sequence? The existing on Michigan Ave. is not working

**How could the alley become a better connection?**
- Street furniture—tables and chairs, cafe-style, hanging baskets, plantings.
- Sculptures, murals, ART. Richmond, IN mural case study; competition, all painted in one month, got everyone interested.
- LIGHTING—Green energy, solar power, classically styled, futuristic, gas lights, overhead ‘net’ of lights for enclosure.
- Signage
- Retail fronting the alley, not just 9-to-5 uses
- Needs a sense of enclosure
- Trash collection, needs movement/consolidation of Dumpsters/trash cans
- Connectivity to walking paths, transit (the existing transit station is a no-go)
- Maintenance plan with regular trash collection, plowing
- Buskers, street performers
- Removable/retractable bollards at street crossings

**Future Identity of the alley? Case Studies?**
- No identity currently, no one really knows it’s there, ANYTHING is better than nothing.
- Brewer’s Alley
- Art gallery
- Big piano/xylophone you can jump/play on
- Local history

Case Studies:
- Richmond, IN
- Walnut Creek, CA
- Santa Barbara, CA
- Fort Collins, CO Alleyway Plan
- Seattle, Integrated Alley Handbook
- Denver, CO downtown alleyways
- Green Bay river walk
- Petoskey Trail
- Grand Haven

**5. Other information/concerns?**
- QR Codes, show past/present pictures
- Be able to easily replicate what we design to other city alleys
- Dead pigeons from county building
- Dr. Don’s—It is an issue. How to engage/not engage?
## 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>Time Frame</th>
<th>Long-term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Design &amp; Walkability</td>
<td>A.1 Review off-street parking utilization; consider reducing off-street parking requirements for development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.2 Use Target Market Analysis portion of current master planning process to identify development opportunities and upcoming Redevelopment Ready Communities process to identify appropriate incentives.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.3 Review complete streets resolution; consider possibility of street trees, bushes, and other plants and vegetation along the alley.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A.4 Ensure the physical upkeep of the alley involves scheduled snow, leaf, and trash removal year-round.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A.5 Use form-based code to regulate the size and character of buildings and related plants, street furniture, and other design elements within the Alleyway.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment Sustainability</td>
<td>B.1 Register for the Green Communities challenge at <a href="http://www.mml.org/green/mgc.php">http://www.mml.org/green/mgc.php</a> to earn recognition for sustainability measures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>B.2 Consider a long-range goal of a continuous pathway along the river.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.3 Identify opportunities for redevelopment along the river that would take advantage of river views and a future trail; pursue partnerships and easements for trail construction and maintenance.</td>
<td>✓</td>
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### Cultural Economic Development

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<td>D.4 Consult <a href="http://www.crowdfundingmi.com">www.crowdfundingmi.com</a>, for information on utilizing “investment crowdfunding” as a unique and transformative tool for small business.</td>
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### Transportation Options

**G.1** Create transit incentives for downtown employees to free up parking, similar to go!pass program in downtown Ann Arbor. CMAQ grant funding may cover a pilot phase, as a transportation demand management project, with ongoing funding from DD TIF or parking system revenues.

**G.2** Discuss Live Midtown case study (in appendix) and Live Ypsi program (http://www.emich.edu/liveypsi/) with downtown’s major employers.

**G.3** Coordinate with MDOT Rail Division and neighboring cities on options or add commuter choices to Amtrak schedule.

### Messaging & Technology

**G.1** Facilitate filing such things as building and occupancy permits directly online (currently all paper forms are available online). Functionality to pay city income and property taxes online is another valuable service.

**G.2** Coordinate promotions and programming related to the Alley with existing social media efforts.

**G.3** Provide infrastructure for free WiFi access in the alley and encourage usage on a public space.

### Education

**H.1** Focus mobility-related improvements to those neighborhoods with nearby schools to encourage use of the Alley as a safe and feasible route to school.

**H.2** Leverage the Transportation Alternatives and Safe Routes to School programs to fund infrastructure improvements for biking and walking.

**H.3** Showcase student projects, provide informational displays about area schools, and consider allowing school benefit fundraisers/sales to take place.

**H.4** New housing for university students, either provided by the institution itself or in partnership through the private market should explore locating along or near the Alley route to leverage demand for downtown living among younger households.

**H.5** Explore the potential for creating classroom space in available downtown buildings in conjunction with a housing initiative.

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**Table: Implementation Strategies**

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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

²“Heart of Downtown: Sundquist Pavilion in Riley Park”
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.\(^1\) Giving people an opportunity to gather and support each other can help bridge cultural divides and promote a more welcoming community.

Education: 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.\(^2\)


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.\(^1\) 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.\(^2\) Getting creative with new business development, like Rust Belt Market and Revolve initiatives, can help Michigan communities become successful entrepreneurship destinations.

Cultural Economic Development: 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.\(^3\)

Detroit’s Midtown neighborhood is home to the Detroit Medical Center, Henry Ford Health System, and Wayne State University. The three institutions have been investing in the community for years but wanted to focus on improving the neighborhood’s density and walkability to improve safety and encourage economic growth. In partnership with the area’s community development corporation, the coalition developed a live-where-you-work incentive program, Live Midtown, the anchor institutions’ employees. Although not everything can be directly credited to Live Midtown, after three years of implementation, the area’s occupancy rate and median home sale price have increased, developers started more than 20 residential/mixed-use renovation or new construction projects, and entrepreneurs have opened more than 40 new businesses. This level of activity and density continues to spark design and walkability projects such as building parks and green alleys, increasing bicycle lanes, narrowing roads, and encouraging restaurants to build outdoor seating on wide sidewalks. Communities that foster walkability and street design will likely see greater economic prosperity, higher density, and an increase in investment projects and small businesses.
