

NORTHWEST HAMTRAMCK NEIGHBORHOOD VISION

March 2025



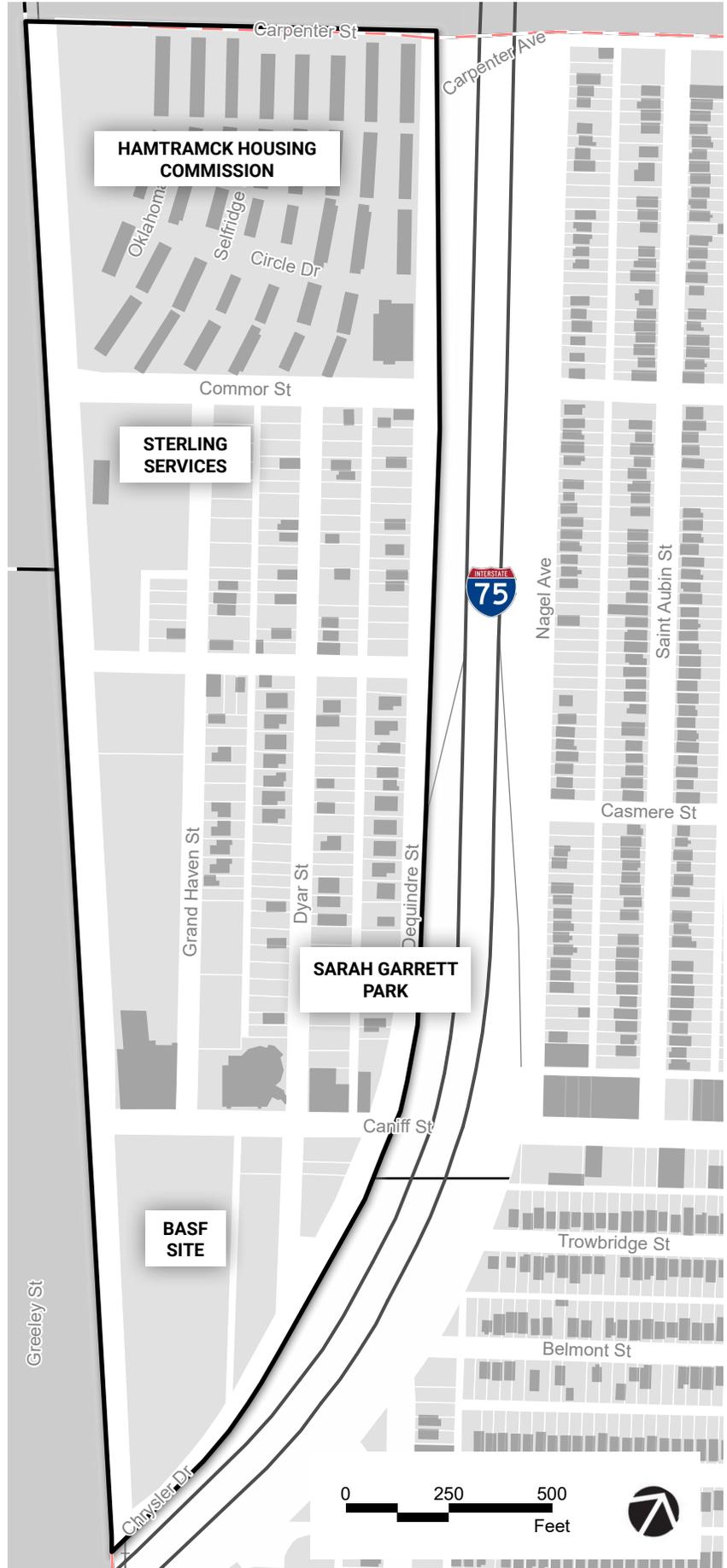
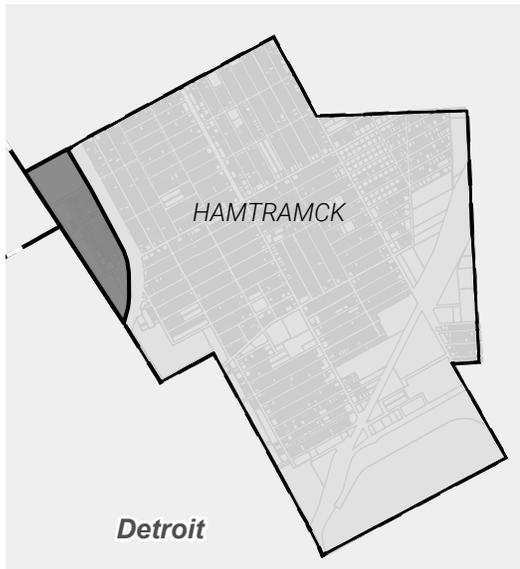
Introduction

The City of Hamtramck is uniquely positioned to improve housing, transportation, and recreation offerings in its northwest neighborhood. Surrounded on all sides by the City of Detroit, Hamtramck is one of the fastest growing communities in the state of Michigan. The City has a storied history of growth and culture. The growing immigrant population over the last several decades has made Hamtramck one of the most diverse and international cities in Michigan. Between 2010 and 2020, the City grew from 22,423 to 28,433 people, a 26.8% increase. With an area of just 2.1 square miles, this has also made Hamtramck one of the most densely populated areas in the state.

As one of the fastest-growing communities in Michigan, pressure on public services, amenities, and housing has also grown. Across the country, communities have been grappling with a growing housing crisis due to lack of affordable options. Most areas of the Hamtramck are completely built out with little vacant land available for newly constructed housing. However, there is a disproportionate number of vacant lots available in the area of the City west of the I-75 freeway. This area has a variety of unique challenges and has been cut off from the rest of the community by the physical and visual barrier of the freeway. This Vision Plan was created to address issues that caused by this barrier, and to help the City take advantage of the opportunities to develop and improve this neighborhood.



The map on the left shows the study area evaluated in this Vision Plan. The area of focus for this Vision Plan is the northwest corner of Hamtramck, with the I-75 freeway serving as a physical, visual, and social boundary. The freeway was originally constructed as part of urban renewal, a practice from the 1950's which demolished existing neighborhoods to make way for new projects, most commonly interstates. As a result, homes were left directly adjacent to the noise, pollution, and visual nuisance of a highly trafficked interstate highway. Additionally, the freeway created a physical barrier between the northwest neighborhood and the rest of the City.



Right: Study Area
Above: NW Neighborhood Location

Context

EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land use is a diverse mix of residential, industrial, and institutional uses, including a disproportionate amount of vacant land. Community assets in the neighborhood include:

1. **Sarah Garrett Park**, which was developed over the last several years in accordance with a lawsuit regarding urban renewal activities and discriminatory housing practices.
2. **Hamtramck Housing Commission**, which has about 325 housing units, with an estimated 625 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census).
3. **Corinthian Baptist Church**, located on Caniff just east of the City's western border. The church has been a long-time institution of the neighborhood, and also owns a variety of property throughout the neighborhood.
4. **Sterling Services**, which offers liquid distribution service for petroleum and chemical products. Sterling Services has operated at this site for decades, and also owns a variety of vacant land in the neighborhood.

OPPORTUNITIES

This neighborhood, though physically separated from the rest of the City, has much potential to be a contributing factor to Hamtramck's success. Existing assets can be built upon, strengthened, and enhanced to create a unique, sustainable neighborhood.

LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Residential
- Civic / Institutional
- Park / Recreation
- Commercial
- Parking
- Industrial
- Vacant Building
- Vacant Lot
- Study Area

Community Assets

Label	Name
1	Sarah Garrett Park
2	Hamtramck Housing Commission
3	Corinthian Baptist Church
4	Sterling Services





VACANT LAND OWNERSHIP

This map demonstrates where there is vacant, developable land in the neighborhood, categorized by owner. In addition to City-owned land, Sterling Services and Corinthian Baptist Church own a variety of contiguous vacant residential property that could be developed into infill housing or additional public amenities such as a workforce training center or second park interior to the neighborhood. The BASF Corporation is the largest chemical producer in the world, and owns several of the large, vacant industrial sites in the south of the neighborhood. These sites are known brownfields, and are not actively used by BASF. Any remaining contamination on these sites should be mitigated and brought to active use as either clean industry, a public recreational facility, or other public amenity.

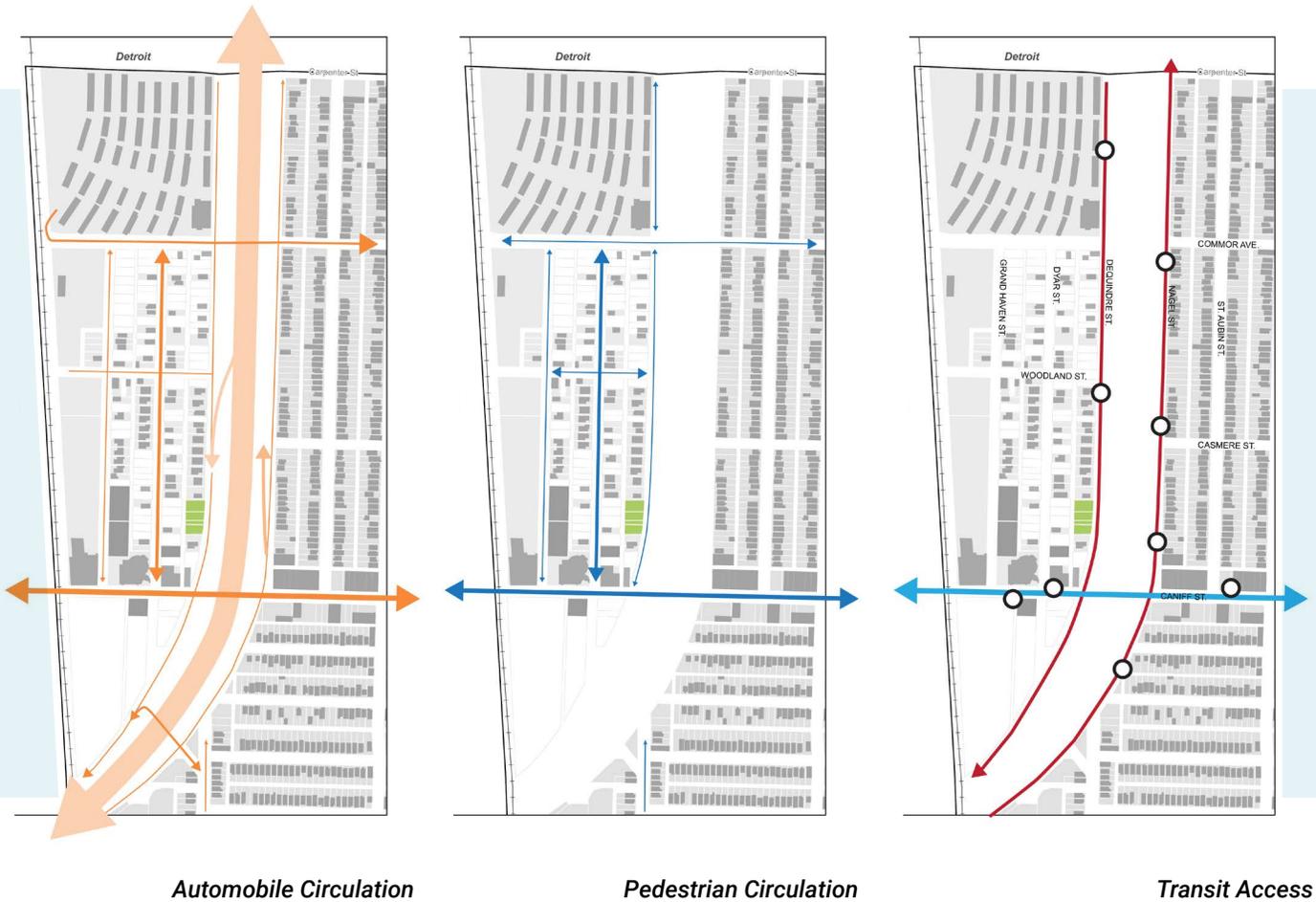
OPPORTUNITIES

This overabundance of vacant land presents a unique opportunity for the City to provide additional housing which is desperately needed.

LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Study Area
- Building Footprints
- Public**
- City
- Wayne County Land Bank
- Private**
- BASF Corporation
- Corinthian Baptist Church
- Sterling Services
- Other
- Occupied

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION



The I-75 freeway provides great vehicular access for businesses, travelers, and industries, though it does create a barrier for pedestrians. There are several bridges over the freeway that have modest pedestrian infrastructure. There are several bus stops in the neighborhood that are serviced by the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) and connect to the Russel (40) and Plymouth (38) lines. Riders can take line 40 north to shopping and other retail amenities on Outer Drive or south to downtown Detroit. Line 38 will take riders east near the Coleman A. Young International Airport or west through Detroit to a variety of parks, shopping, and other amenities. The existing transit stops are neither comfortable nor accessible, especially the stop on the north side of Caniff, where the existing bus shelter orientation and narrow sidewalk make waiting for and boarding the bus challenging.

OPPORTUNITIES

Additional pedestrian amenities such as lighting, improved crosswalks at intersections, and safety buffers between the sidewalk and roadway could dramatically improve walkability, transit access, and connectivity in the area.





ZONING

The neighborhood is primarily zoned for residential, with industrial and commercial zones on the active industrial sites to the west and vacant site in the south. Hamtramck's zoning districts are generally broad and offer a wide range of potential uses and structural layouts. While some zoning changes may be necessary to realize this Vision Plan, the flexibility built in to the City's zoning ordinance allows for creativity and innovation.

OPPORTUNITIES

Some strategic rezoning of currently-zoned properties, especially from R (Residential) to C-2 (Multi-Use) on the south Commor St. frontage and parts of the north Caniff frontage, would expand allowable uses and encourage development of walkable neighborhood commercial amenities that the area currently lacks.

Similarly, the BASF site is more likely a more positive contributor to the neighborhood as something other than industrial and thus may benefit from a zoning change to facilitate redevelopment.

Lastly, as with other places in the city where residential and industrial uses are adjacent, some areas adjacent to Grand Haven may be appropriate for zoning into a new zone that allows lighter industrial and 'non-Main Street' businesses such as warehousing, maker spaces, film production, etc. to provide more appropriate separation and buffering between intense industrial uses that are currently permitted in the I district and lower-intensity residential uses.

LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Study Area
- Zoning**
- Residential District
- Multiple Family Residential District
- Multi-Use District
- Industrial District

Current Opportunity: Rezoning of City-Owned Property



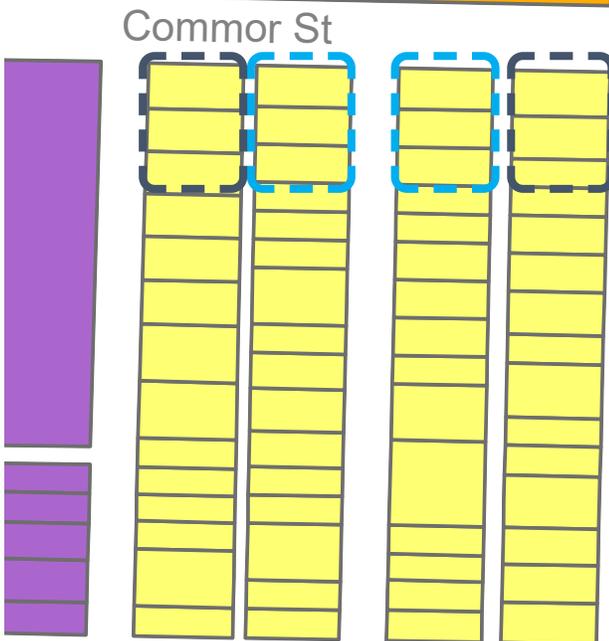
As of Fall 2024, the City of Hamtramck owns six parcels, each approximately 4,000 square feet, south of Commor St. on both sides of Dyer St.

Together, these parcels offer two development sites that are each approximately 0.28 acres. They are currently zoned R (Residential), which permits housing and a limited amount of commercial activity.

Similarly-situated parcels on Dequindre and Grand Haven are privately owned, represent another 0.28 acres each, and are currently also zoned R (Residential).

Given the recent revitalization of Carter's Market at 11817 Dequindre Street and the population of the neighborhood that is underserved for walkable retail amenities, proactively rezoning these properties could help facilitate the beginning of a walkable neighborhood main street on Commor.

The C2 (Multi-Use) district would create the opportunity to permit development on these sites for a host of commercial uses and/or multi-family housing that would benefit the neighborhood and the city as a whole.



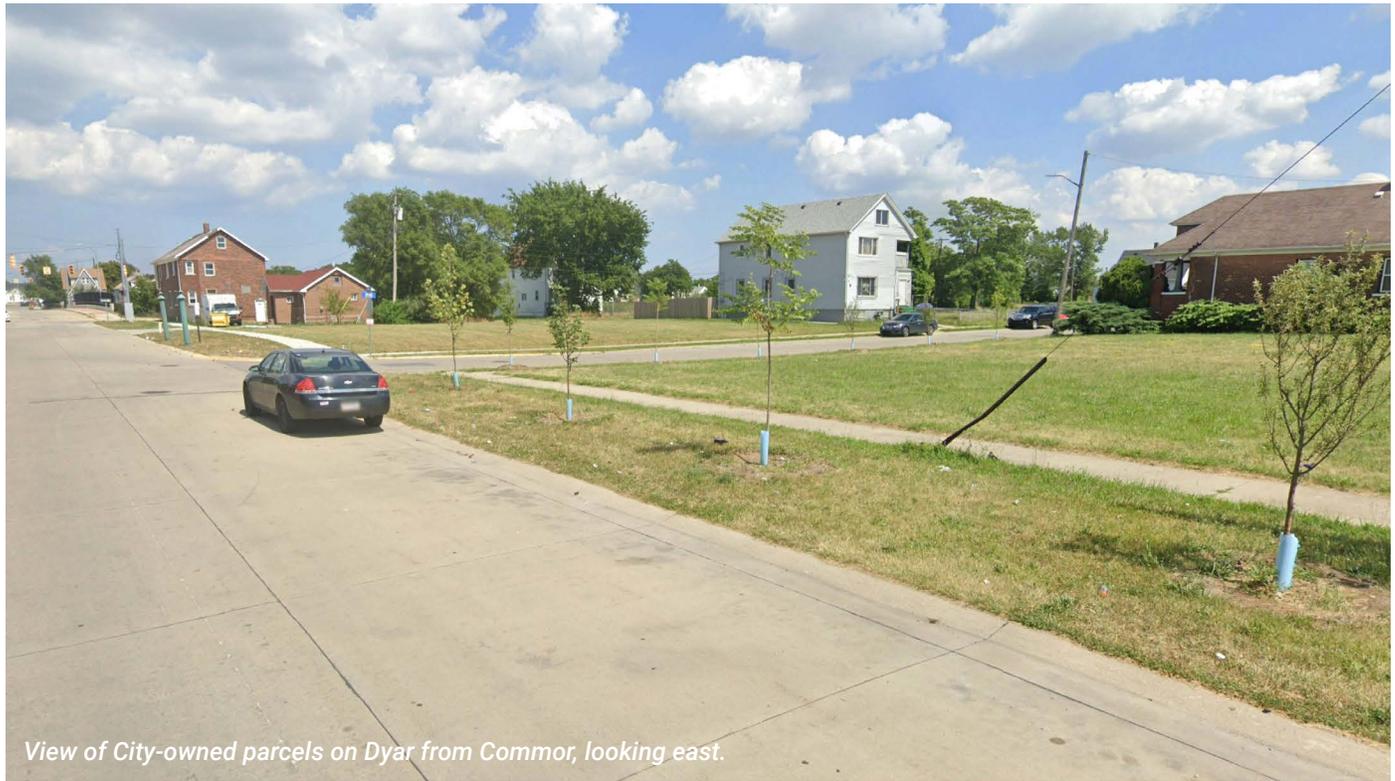
LEGEND

-  City Boundary
-  Study Area
- Zoning**
-  Residential District
-  Multiple Family Residential District
-  Multi-Use District
-  Industrial District
-  Potential Rezoning: City-Owned
-  Potential Rezoning: Privately-Owned

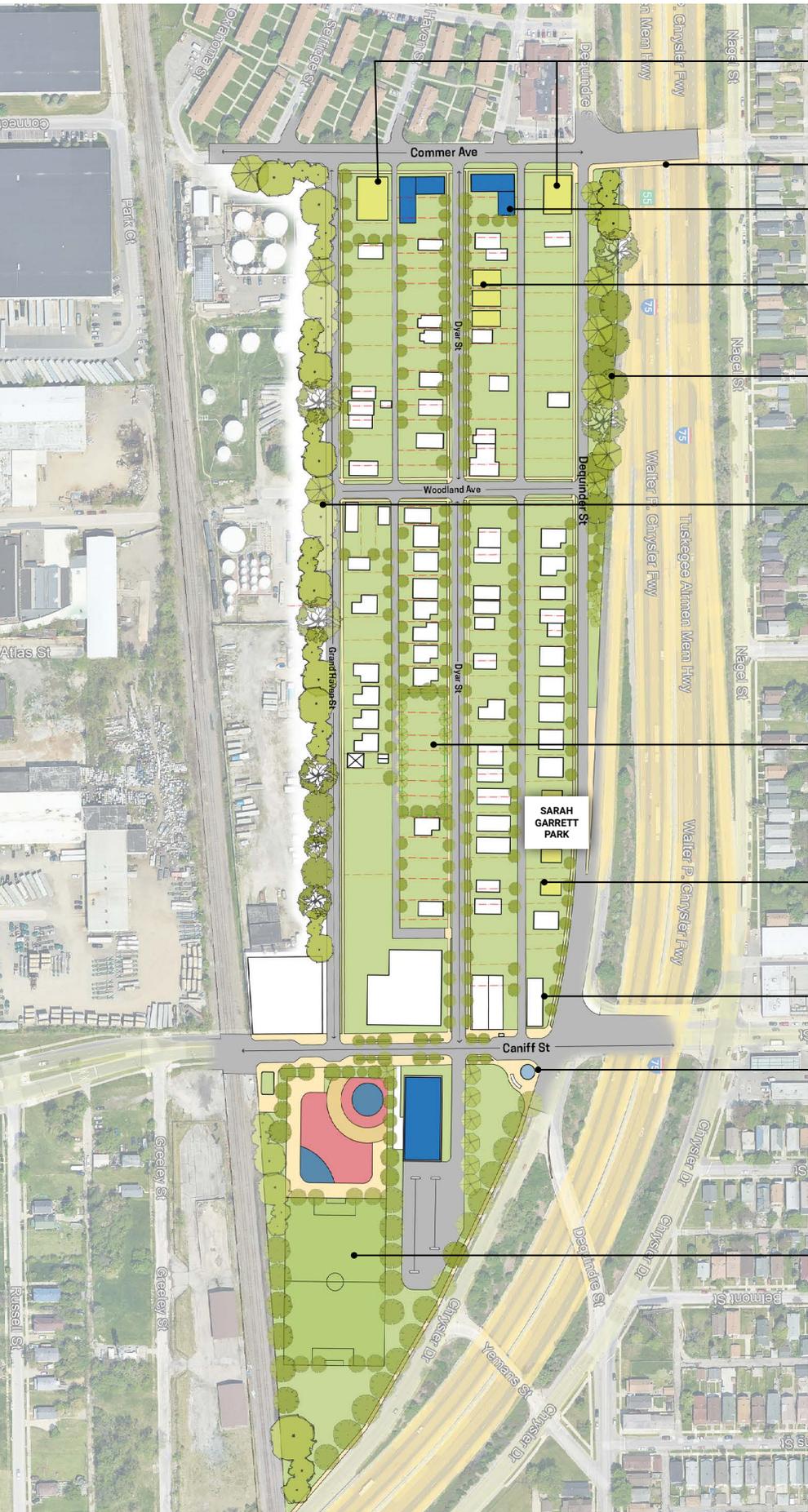


View of Carters Market and city-owned parcels beyond, looking west on Commor from Dequindre.

Google Earth



View of City-owned parcels on Dyar from Commor, looking east.



Commercial Development Opportunities

Improved Pedestrian Crossing

Multi-Family or Neighborhood Commercial Corridor Development Opportunities

Infill Development on City-Owned Lots

Narrowed Road on Dequindre, Landscape Buffer from I-75 Noise and Air Impacts

Increased Landscape Buffer Along Grand Haven

Future New Interior Neighborhood Park

SARAH GARRETT PARK

Sarah Garrett Park Improvements

Adaptive Reuse / Commercial Development Opportunity

**Improved Caniff Streetscape:
Expanded Sidewalk
Improved Bus Stops
'Gateway' Plaza**

**Redevelopment Opportunity:
Recreation Campus**

FUTURE OPPORTUNITY: A New Gateway to Hamtramck

STREETScape

Caniff runs along the southern edge of the neighborhood, and the Hamtramck/Detroit border on Caniff is just west of the Canadian National railroad. The Caniff frontage has an opportunity to be a 'gateway' to the city from the west, announcing through an enhanced public realm that one has entered the Hamtramck. As importantly, a redesigned streetscape with wider sidewalks, street trees, enhanced lighting, a 'gateway' plaza, and accessible bus stops could:

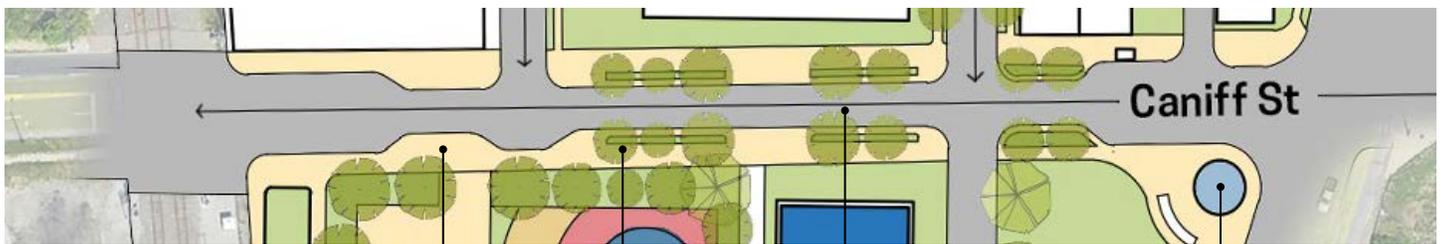
- » make walking along and across Caniff safer,
- » make it safer and more comfortable to wait for the bus, and
- » enhance the pedestrian environment for neighborhood residents and future visitors.



Caniff Streetscape and Bus Stop (before)



Caniff Streetscape and Bus Stop (potential future)



Expanded Sidewalks and Bump-outs for Pedestrian Comfort and Safety

Street Trees

Accessible Bus Stop Improvements

Gateway Plaza, Potential Entry Sign Location

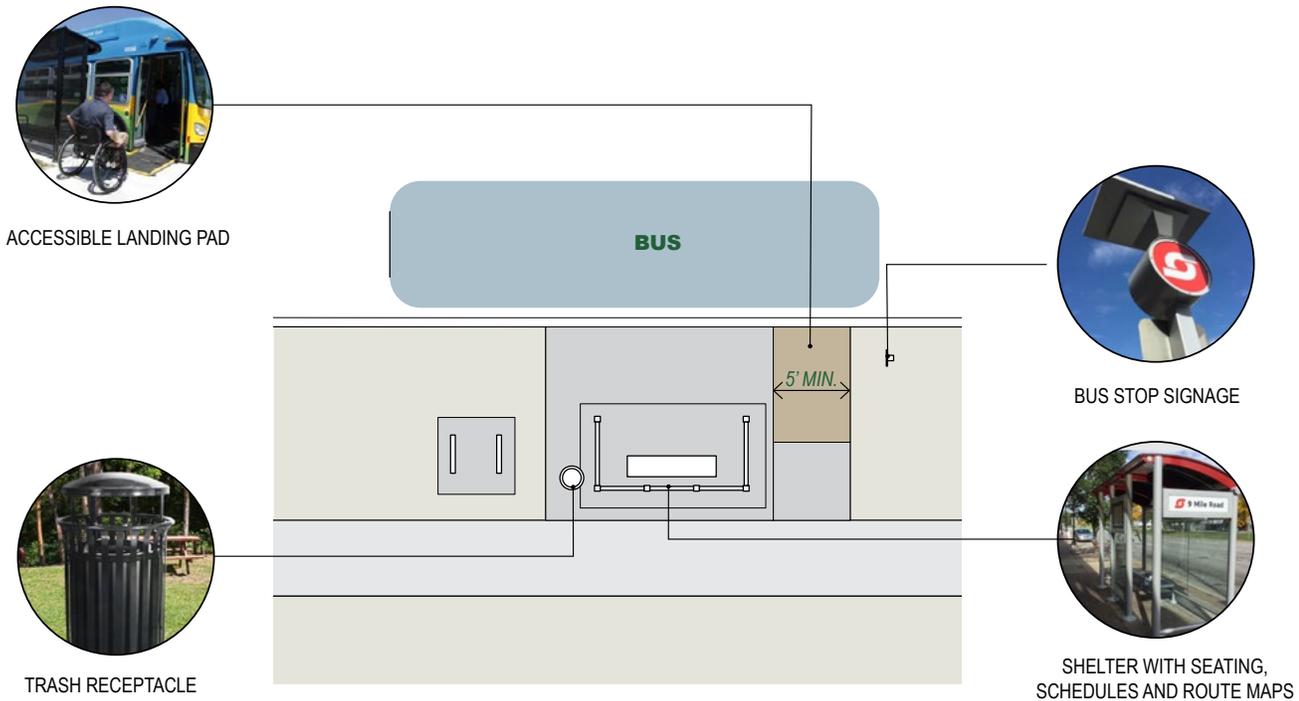


ENTRY SIGN

Currently there are several entry signs welcoming visitors and residents to the City. The nearest one to the northwest neighborhood is located across I-75, at the corner of Caniff and Chrysler Drive.

The location of this sign is misleading and signals to passerby that the City limits do not begin until after the freeway. In addition to the physical barrier the freeway creates between the City and the northwest neighborhood, signage like this can also create a visual and cultural barrier, excluding the neighborhood.

Focusing on upgrading amenities and infrastructure in this area creates an opportunity to also end this exclusion by moving the welcome signage to the true City boundary west of the freeway.



Prototypical Bus Stop Improvements

FUTURE OPPORTUNITY: Transform Underutilized Property into Neighborhood Contributors

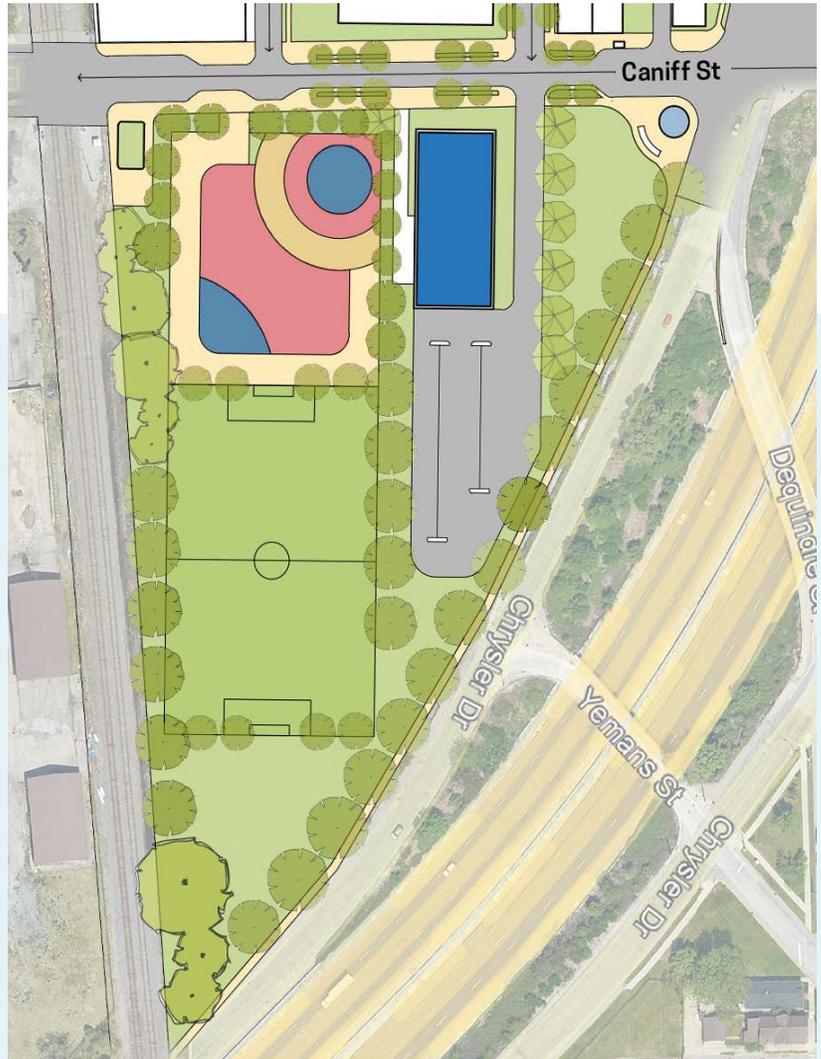
ADDRESS HAMTRAMCK'S NEED FOR MORE HOUSING.

The City has operated a lot sale for the last several years to off-load its residential properties, many of which are located in the northwest neighborhood. Many of these properties that sold in other parts of the City have been bought and developed by owner-occupiers. Given that many of the vacant lots in the northwest neighborhood are consecutive, it offers the opportunity for a developer to build on a larger scale, and offer alternative housing options than are available elsewhere in Hamtramck. While some are multi-unit, most of the housing in Hamtramck is single family. The existence of privately-owned land provides even more potential for large-scale development in the neighborhood.

ADD MORE WALKABLE COMMERCIAL USES.

There are several vacant structures in the northwest neighborhood that could be reoccupied with some investment. There is a vacant structure on the corner of Dequindre Street and Commor Avenue that was retrofitted from a single-family home to allow for residential on the top floor and commercial on the first floor. Originally intended as a corner market, this site should be targeted for reactivation and is an ideal transitional use between the single family residences to the west and south from the freeway. Another vacant commercial building exists on the corner of Dequindre Street and Caniff Street. The site is owned by Corinthian Baptist Church, and is in fair shape. Activating this site for as a commercial use would provide another retail offering to the neighborhood and emulate the successful walkable retail available in other parts of the city.





ADDRESS THE CITY'S NEED FOR MORE RECREATION FACILITIES.

The 'BASF site', south of Caniff and west of I-75, is a brownfield that currently blights the southern edge of this neighborhood. While there may be many desirable long-term futures for this piece of property, given its history of contamination and brownfield status, it may be more feasible and achievable to utilize it in a way that controls the costs of mitigation while serving a neighborhood need. One option for this is to make a community solar panel facility. Another is to develop it as a recreation 'campus'. It's xx acres provide plenty of room for active recreation, playgrounds a sport field, room for group classes and activities, and associated parking.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITY: Parks and Greenspaces

SARAH GARRETT PARK

In recent years, the City has worked with public and private partners to improve Sarah Garrett Park, located directly adjacent to the I-75 off-ramp. The park is one of just six in Hamtramck, and is a highly valuable asset to the northwest neighborhood. There are several minor adjustments that could enhance the accessibility and practical use of the park. Vehicles exiting I-75 tend to go faster than typical traffic driving down Dequindre Street, and noise from the freeway creates a loud, undesirable environment. The addition of a decorative fence along the Dequindre Street frontage of the park would create a barrier to traffic on Dequindre to increase safety and overall comfort for park visitors. Additionally, access to the park could be improved. There is currently no signage to direct visitors to parking, which is only accessible through the alleyway off of Caniff Street. Additional signage would make the entrance to the park easier to find for those who are not walking to it. Lastly, placing a sidewalk connection from Dequindre to the pavilion would increase accessibility and create a more formal, welcoming entrance from the east side of the park.

NEW INTERIOR PARK

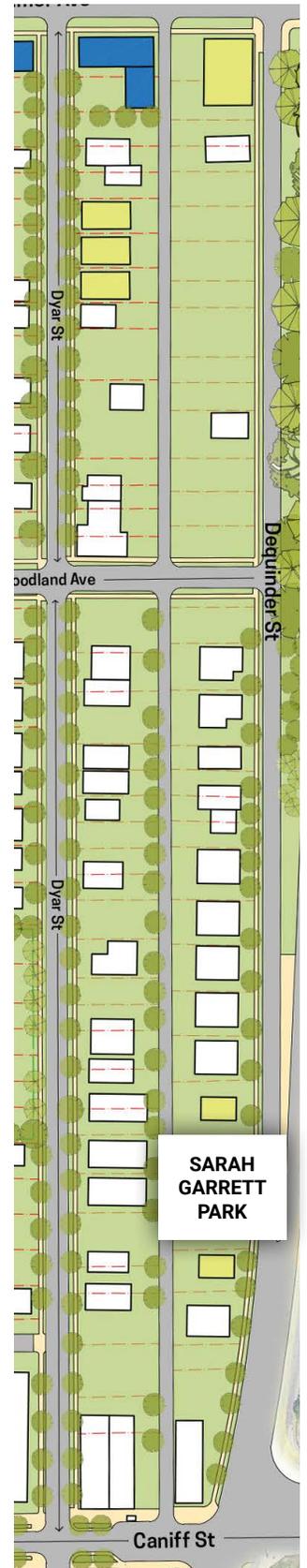
As the neighborhood develops, an opportunity exists to convert some of the existing vacant land into an additional central neighborhood park along Dyar that, along with Sarah Garrett Park, could provide current and future residents with a variety of greenspace and recreation spaces.



Sarah Garrett Park Frontage (before)



Sarah Garrett Park Frontage (after)



FUTURE OPPORTUNITY: Livability and Sustainability

AIR QUALITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

The neighborhood's proximity to I-75, the railroad, and industrial land uses presents challenges and environmental justice issues. Noise impacts from unbuffered highways are significant, and the increased traffic impacts air quality. Installing a sound mitigation wall or a landscape buffer along the freeway could drastically improve the experience for park visitors and nearby residents. There is growing research from organizations like the World Health Organization and Rutgers University showing that sustained exposure to loud noise can cause serious health issues. In addition to the noise the freeway creates, there is also pollution from vehicle emissions which is cause for concern.

Along other stretches of I-75, sound mitigation walls have been constructed out of concrete. However, because the freeway is the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation, the City does not have control over when or if these walls are installed along the sections passing through Hamtramck. The City can seek that a traffic noise analysis is done, but traditionally these analyses are only done when the freeway is actively under construction. The City should speak with State representatives expressing concerns about the noise, but in the meantime can also seek other buffer options. A vegetative buffer along Dequindre Street would not only aid in lessening some of the traffic noise, it could also significantly reduce air pollution caused by motor vehicles.

STREET TREES

Street trees can aid in air quality, which is a growing concern for areas near freeways. They also reduce the effects of urban heat islands and help mitigate the impacts of extreme stormwater events, making street trees a critical element of any neighborhood, but especially one as environmentally challenged as northwest Hamtramck.

Modest progress has been made to enhance the tree canopy along Dyar and Dequindre streets. These should be continued, expanded, and enhanced, especially the stewardship of newly-planted trees to ensure they survive until they are viable without regular watering and maintenance.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The ideal future of the BASF site is comprehensive redevelopment development, such as a recreation center (as illustrated in this document), or another active, contributing use like housing or commercial activity.

Given the site's history, redevelopment is likely to be a long and resource-intensive process. There are potentially shorter-term 'holdover' strategies for this land, including a community solar installation that could help make the neighborhood more resilient and reduce the City's carbon footprint. More information about solar development on brownfield sites can be found here: <https://graham.umich.edu/media/files/dow/Dow-Masters-2019-Brownfields.pdf>



Potential Next Steps

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

This document provides a summary of the opportunity that is latent in northwest Hamtramck as observed and understood by City staff, consultants, and potential investors. It is intended to help articulate what is possible here.

- » An essential next step is to engage the community about what their priorities are for this neighborhood.
- » Engagement should be comprehensive, engaging especially current residents of the neighborhood, and also other Hamtramck residents, business owners, and key stakeholders.

ZONING CHANGES

The majority of the NW Hamtramck neighborhood is zoned R, Residential. Though the R designation is well-suited to encourage a walkable, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood. This zoning designation allows single-family houses, duplexes, townhouses, and apartment buildings less than six units by right, and, with special land use approval, allows denser apartments and certain commercial uses. Still, to fully realize the area's potential it would be helpful to consider proactively rezoning some parcels:

- » Rezone the south Commor St. frontage and parts of the north Caniff frontage from R (Residential) to C-2 (Multi-Use).
- » Study redevelopment scenarios for the BASF site, and pursue a zoning change that best facilitates redevelopment.



IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Realizing the vision identified in this document will not be achieved by the City of Hamtramck alone. Fortunately, there are many opportunities for the City to partner for implementation resources. An overview of potential partners includes:



PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERS

- » **Hamtramck Parks Conservancy.** Any improvements to Sarah Garrett Park and future potential development of a new interior park should be a collaborative effort with the Parks Conservancy. The Conservancy
- » **Michigan Department of Natural Resources.** The DNR is one of the largest funders for park improvements in Michigan, which the City has already taken advantage of in other parks.
- » **Greening of Detroit.** The City already works with Greening, and should continue this partnership to continue planting street trees and vegetative buffers where needed.
- » **Private funders.** Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, Erb Foundation, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, and the Kresge Foundation are just a few of the private funders the City could seek funding and partnerships with.

TRANSPORTATION PARTNERS

- » **Michigan Department of Transportation.** The I-75 freeway is MDOT jurisdiction, and the City should seek to collaborate with them on sound mitigation walls and vegetative buffers.
- » **Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.** SEMCOG offers an abundance of funding and support opportunities for transit, planning, and development projects. In addition, there are a number of data and mapping resources the City can take advantage of on the SEMCOG website.
- » **Detroit Department of Transportation.** The City will need to work with DDOT on improvements to the bus stops in the neighborhood to ensure a smooth process for riders.

HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

- » **Michigan Economic Development Corporation.** MEDC offers a variety support and funding opportunities for business owners and developers. The City can help make connections to these opportunities for private parties interested in commercial sites in the neighborhood.
- » **Michigan State Housing Development Authority.** MSHDA provides funding and support to public and private partners to help create new housing and support existing housing. The City could work with MSHDA directly or be a connector between them and private partners in the neighborhood.
- » **Private property owners and developers.** There have already been developers interested in this area, and by working with other property owners to leverage vacant land in the neighborhood, the City could increase the potential for private investment.



HAMTRAMCK.US

Prepared with the assistance of:



MCKENNA

235 E. Main Street, Suite 105

Northville, MI 48167

T: 248.596.0920

F: 248.596.0930

www.mcka.com