

DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN AND DESIGN FRAMEWORK

WHITMORE LAKE, NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP
WASHTENAW COUNTY, MI

prepared by McKenna Associates
September 25, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Township Board of Trustees

Marlene Chockley — Supervisor
Kathy Manley — Clerk
Lenore Zelenock — Treasurer
Tawn Beliger
Janet Chick
Wayne Dockett
Jacki Otto

Downtown Planning Group

Barb Griffith — Chair, DDA Chair
Suzanne Bellore
Tom Dekeyser
Denise Kabisch
Linda Lupi
Tamren Menzel
Jeni Olney
Tim Saville
Cyndi Secrist
Jack Secrist
Doug Wilbur

Downtown Development Authority:

Barbara Griffith — Chair
Marlene Chockley — Northfield Township Supervisor
David Ely
Dave Horton
Anne Iaquinto
Soamer Jamil
Denise Kabicch
Jack Secrist
Doug Wilbur

Consultants – McKenna Associates

Paul Lippens, AICP — Project Manager
Patrick Sloan, AICP — Township Planner
John Jackson, AICP — President
Steve Hannon, AICP — Project Planner
Michael Campbell, AIA — Urban Design
Carrie Leitner — Graphic Design

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	i
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN	1
Introduction	1
Purpose Statement	2
Goals and Objectives	3
Strategic Action Plan	17
DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK	23
Priority Sites	23
OPTION A: The Infill Approach	24
OPTION B: The Infill with Infrastructure Approach	25
OPTION C: The Redevelopment Approach	26
Synthesis Plan	27
Façade / Building Guidelines	31
Future Land Use	34
CONNECTIVITY FRAMEWORK	39
Transition Elements	40
Grid Retrofits	41
Mode Accommodation	42
DESIGN PALETTES	45
Furnishing Palette	45
Streetscape Furniture	45
Hardscape Materials	46
Identity Palette	46
Public Art	48
LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 1: Aerial of Downtown at Barker Road and Main Street	1
Figure 2: Retail Market Trade Area - Downtown Whitmore Lake	13
Figure 3: Birdseye view of downtown facing northeast from 75 Barker	28
Figure 4: Birdseye view of downtown facing west from the Lake	28
Figure 5: Village Center – Mixed Use Design Standards	32
Figure 6: Village Center – Cottage Retail Storefront Design Standards	33
LIST OF TABLES	
Table 1: What Events Do You Want to See Downtown?	7
Table 2: What Stores Do You Want to See Downtown?	7
Table 3: Summary of Comment Cards for Design Alternatives	11
Table 4: Percentage of Unmet Retail Demand	14
Table 5: Demand for New Stores in Downtown Whitmore Lake Trade Area	15

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



Figure 1: Aerial of Downtown at Barker Road and Main Street

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2015, the Northfield Township Board of Trustees identified the need to create a comprehensive strategy for the revitalization of Downtown Whitmore Lake. To lead the effort, the Board authorized the creation of the Downtown Planning Group (DPG) on October 13, 2015 by a unanimous vote. Barb Griffith was named as DPG chairperson. Community volunteers representing many different interests and skills were recruited to serve on the DPG. They spent several months exploring what makes for thriving downtowns and researching the unique opportunities presented by Whitmore Lake's proximity to the water. They hope to bring together the community's ideas and take advantage of the many exciting opportunities to revitalize Whitmore Lake's downtown.

The first plan developed for the downtown area was for the North Village site, also known as the "Van Curler" property after the Township purchased this 23-acre property in September 2016. Planning for the North Village began in October 2016 and the resulting plan was presented to the Township Board and Planning Commission at the joint meeting on March 28, 2017.

The North Village Plan proposes a central lawn enhanced by a new community garden, band shell, and non-motorized paths. Residential owner-occupied Townhomes and loft buildings are proposed along the edges of the site and next to US 23. On the west side of Main Street, a community green would be surrounded by a modest number of residential units atop small retail shops or eateries. Across Main Street, a lakefront public access area with a small marina, fishing pier, and sand beach play area is envisioned.

This plan, the Northfield Downtown Plan, which started in April 2017 after completion of the North Village Plan, focuses on the entire Downtown Whitmore Lake area, especially the blocks surrounding the intersection of Main Street and Barker Road. The Plan outlines a community vision, strategies, and a design framework for Downtown Whitmore Lake.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The project purpose statement for the Downtown Plan outlines the major themes throughout the plan and how they all relate to a common vision for the community. For example, the North Village Plan included a project purpose statement, which was as follows:

“The North Village development shall complement the surrounding neighborhoods, historic architecture, and traditional character of Downtown Whitmore Lake. Development shall be phased to address public amenities, lake views and natural features, desirable connections to Downtown, parking, site access, and community vitality.

Uses shall be complementary to Downtown Whitmore Lake and mixed use buildings with restaurants, retail, and second floor residential along Main Street are desirable. The site shall be developed to minimize the fiscal impact on taxpayers and new private development, include housing and mixed use buildings, shall be considered if the development will subsidize public amenities.”

Using input from Township staff, the Downtown Planning Group, and residents, the major themes for the Downtown Plan were identified and the following purpose statement was developed:

“Downtown Whitmore Lake is recognized as a major community hub that will be enhanced by targeted investments and improvements in order to better serve residents and visitors. The Downtown Plan shall guide the development of the downtown area and encourage attractive architecture and design elements. The downtown area shall highlight promote the high quality of life and a positive image of the community, and new projects shall be pursued with the broad support of the community. New projects and developments shall be attainable and focused on existing assets in Downtown Whitmore Lake. The Downtown Plan shall be implemented in phases, starting with short-term “quick wins” before moving on to larger and more complicated projects.

The downtown area shall be included in the assets that reflect general positive image of the community and shall support other community assets such as Whitmore Lake schools. New projects shall provide opportunities for community discussion, recognizing that different people in the community will bring a wide variety of perspectives and that not every development or project will appeal to everyone.”



Ice Cream Social
July 8, 2017

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A key element of a successful downtown revitalization plan is the identification of themes or niches. For downtown Whitmore Lake to thrive, the district needs to become a destination that capitalizes on its proximity to the lake and attracts a critical mass of visitors. The creation of niche markets is a key component of the national main street model for revitalizing downtowns. The Urban Land Institute and many other organizations that promote downtown redevelopment strategies have a similar focus.

The improvement and success of Downtown Whitmore Lake is dependent on the quality and aesthetics of the streetscape, buildings, and landscaping. The Downtown experience should relate to and enhance the waterfront. Local identity and design enhancements should be established to attract visitors from around the region. With the lake as a backdrop, Whitmore Lake is a great location for entertainment, recreation, eateries and businesses focused on an entertainment market.

This Plan has organized strategies for Downtown Whitmore Lake around six goal areas:

Beautification

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall encourage high-quality aesthetics, local identity, and architectural elements that evoke an attractive image of the community.

- Enhance the visual appeal of downtown with a strong focus on a well-kept and inviting appearance..
- Create architectural guidelines or a pattern book for new development and redevelopment.
- Install streetscape elements that complement the architecture and character of downtown.
- Include well-designed landscaping and street trees along Main Street and Barker Road.
- Encourage off-street parking lots to be located behind buildings with access through alleys.

Recreation

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall promote active lifestyles and be developed to support access to the North Village area and the Lake.

- Support businesses and entertainment options that enhance the waterfront and draw visitors to the waterfront.
- Implement the North Village Master Plan to develop the park component as a community focal point.
- Capitalize on the lake as a key asset and potential catalyst for downtown activities.
- Strive to enhance community health by promoting recreation assets during all seasons.
- Attract retail and service businesses that cater to recreation on the lake and in the rural areas.

Businesses and Entertainment

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall be an entertainment destination for activities and businesses that serve the residents of the community and visitors from around the region.

- Encourage new community-focused retail uses, including shops and restaurants.
- Promote cultural activities and venues that draw individuals from outside the community.
- Focus on promoting existing businesses and take an active role in supporting their successes.
- Engage local entrepreneurs and support opportunities for entrepreneurship downtown.
- Review and remove or alter existing regulations that are burdensome and create regulations that are conducive to small business development.
- Seek development ideas that are implementable and align with realistic conditions.

Celebration

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall promote the positive self-image and quality of life for the residents of the entire community.

- Support existing downtown celebrations and events.
- Enhance community involvement and encourage as many citizens to get involved as possible.
- Create opportunities for networking and conversation throughout the community.
- Boost the uniqueness and positive perception of “Whitmore Lake.”
- Highlight the quality of education in Whitmore Lake Public Schools.
- Promote sustainability in the development and maintenance of the downtown area.

Connectivity

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall encourage the safe and effective use of its transportation network by all modes including motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

- Design Main Street and Barker Road to calm traffic and effectively reduce speeding traffic.
- Connect surrounding neighborhoods to downtown by expanding the sidewalk network.
- Install bicycle infrastructure, including bicycle parking, to encourage biking to downtown.
- Improve wayfinding signage and the streetscape to make a more user friendly space.
- Encourage off-street parking lots to be located behind buildings with access through alleys.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

Public Open House
June 20, 2017

Northfield Downtown Plan Focus Groups Summary

As part of the public engagement process for the plan, three focus groups were conducted early in the planning process to gather ideas from specific groups of people with unique perspectives. These three groups were seniors, residents of surrounding neighborhoods, and business owners. The senior focus group had 21 attendees, the resident group had 12 attendees, and the business group had nine attendees. Attendees at all focus groups were asked what small city or town they would like for Whitmore Lake to emulate, and what their “big idea” was for the downtown area. This kicked off a discussion regarding several topics. Key themes throughout the discussion included the following:

- People wanted to see Whitmore Lake emulate several different small towns including Dexter, South Lyon, Pinckney, Plymouth, Saline, Dundee, Chelsea, Charlevoix, and Milford.
- People generated a wide variety of big ideas including affordable senior housing, programming for youth, renovation ideas for 75 Barker Road, and having a nautical “theme” for downtown.
- People most often go to Polly’s, the Library, the Post Office, the Community Center, and to the various restaurants along Main Street and Barker Road.
- Downtown needs more consistently available parking to be more accessible, although several people thought there was enough parking available already.
- More people would bike downtown if it were safer and more convenient to do so.
- For lake access, people mostly wanted to see a contained public beach or a pier/dock.
- People had a variety of ideas for specific changes they wanted to see in downtown including a consistent landscaping design with flowers, a museum, establishing a historic preservation commission, cleaning up blight and unkept buildings, and getting students involved in the community.
- The whole downtown was deemed a priority for reinvestment, but especially Driftwood Marina and 75 Barker Road, along with the yard across the railroad tracks from the library.
- People wanted to see a variety of different events take place including concerts in the park and other music events, pond hockey, craft fair, and events for kids.



Public Open House
June 20, 2017

Northfield Downtown Plan Public Engagement Open Houses

Northfield Township held two open houses to gather input and ideas from the public on the Downtown Plan. The first open house was held at the Township offices in the evening on Tuesday June 20, 2017. The second was held on Saturday July 8, 2017 in the old Township Fire Station, as part of a combined open house and ice cream social. About 10 people attended the first open house and about 40 people attended the open house and ice cream social.

At each event, McKenna Associates gave an overview and provided background information about the project, and described the four types of feedback that participants could give:

- **Events and Stores.** This activity provided background information regarding the retail market gap analysis for Downtown Whitmore Lake showing what retail use types may be successful in the downtown area. People were shown a list of retail types and a list of potential downtown events and were asked to place one dot each next to the retail use and downtown event they most wanted to see.
- **Visual Preference Survey.** This activity presented a series of images in different categories and asked people to place a dot on their top choice in each category for images that depicted their preferred design elements and styles for Downtown Whitmore Lake. Categories included bike and pedestrian amenities, architectural styles, streetscape elements, and public art.
- **Design Alternatives.** This activity showed three design alternatives for the downtown area and asked people to choose a preferred alternative, indicating their choice on a comment card with any comments they had. People were encouraged to describe the reasons behind their choice and to comment on which elements they would combine from different designs, if any.
- **Big Idea.** This activity simply asked people to write down any “big idea” they had for improving Downtown Whitmore Lake, which created a space for any ideas to be contributed.

Events and Stores

This exercise included a display board presenting the retail market gap analysis research for Downtown Whitmore Lake, as described in the next section. Using some of these retail categories along with additional retail uses and potential downtown events, people were asked to place a dot next to one event and one store they wanted to see in the downtown area. People were also invited to add their own ideas.

Table 1: What Events Do You Want to See Downtown?

Event	Open House (June 20)	Ice Cream Social (July 8)	Total
Concerts / Music in the Park	5	24	29
Weekly Events (Farmers Markets, Movies in the Park)	0.5	11	11.5
More Seasonal Events (Fireworks, Pond Hockey, Trunk or Treat)	0.5	10	10.5
Craft / Art Fair	5	5	10
Kid / Youth Events	0	10	10
Boat Parade	0	2	2

Table 2: What Stores Do You Want to See Downtown?

Store	Open House (June 20)	Ice Cream Social (July 8)	Total
Grocer / Specialty Food Services	1	16	17
Hardware / Building Materials / Supplies Stores	1	14	15
Bars / Breweries / Entertainment	1	12	13
Boutique Retail / Specialty Shops	3	9	12
Café / Bakery	3	8	11
Other - Bank or Credit Union	0	11	11
Full Service Restaurants	0	6	6
Clothing / Shoe / Apparel Stores	0	5	5
Other - White Castle	0	0	0
Other - Music Shop	0	0	0

The most popular event that people wanted to see was concerts or music in the park. This finding was consistent with the public engagement for the North Village Community Park. There was also a strong level of support for weekly events, seasonal events, craft or art fairs, and events for kids. The new park will create additional formalized space to hold events, allowing the possibility for many of these events to take place. In any case, there seems to be strong support for more downtown events overall.

There was strong support for several new types of stores such as grocery stores, hardware stores, bars, boutique shops, and cafés or bakeries. One of the resident-submitted choices was bank or credit union, which also got a high level of support indicating a strong preference among participants to have a bank in Whitmore Lake. Clothing or shoe stores and full-service restaurants also received some support.

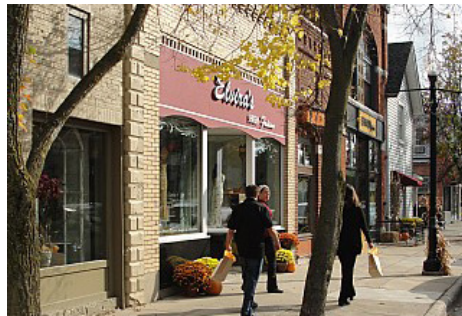
Visual Preference Survey

The visual preference survey asked people to identify a preferred image in several categories depicting the design elements and styles they wanted to see in Downtown Whitmore Lake.



TRANSPORTATION

RESULTS: The preferred images show a bike lane and a marked crosswalk with median. Bike lanes were preferred to shared lane markings, or sharrows, which indicate shared bicycle and vehicle lanes. Most people wanted to see the downtown area become more bicycle friendly. The marked crosswalk highlighted pedestrian safety concerns, and the median with warning/safety signs were preferred to a light-activated crosswalk.



MAIN STREET BUILDINGS

RESULTS: The two main street building types with the most votes keep building facades at the sidewalk edge. This establishes the building line of a typical downtown. Both buildings also have a classic / traditional architecture type and avoid modern architecture styles.



INFILL HOUSING

RESULTS: There were three housing types with a high level of support, and they all have several common characteristics. All these buildings have classic or traditional architecture styles, with pitched roofs and porches. Each of the buildings also has enough room on its site to accommodate landscaping and street trees. The only building type that did not get any votes had a modern architecture style and most likely would not fit in to the character desired for downtown Whitmore Lake.



SEATING

RESULTS: The most well-liked bench type was the solid black bench. Many people expressed a desire for streetscape elements that were easy to maintain. Many people liked the anchor benches, but as an artistic element instead of an everyday bench.



WASTE RECEPTACLE

RESULTS: The most well-liked trash can type was the solid black trash can. Many people wanted streetscape elements that were easy to maintain.



BICYCLE RACK

RESULTS: The most well-liked bike rack type was the solid black bike rack. Many people wanted streetscape elements that were easy to maintain.



HARDSCAPE

RESULTS: The most popular hardscape element was the public square image from Northville. This is consistent with the development of North Village Community Park, where some of the space may be designed as a small community green with outdoor seating.





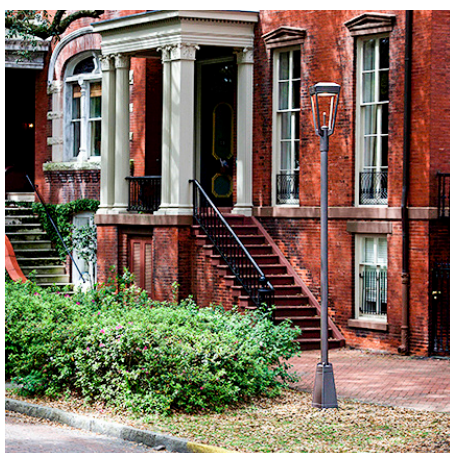
IDENTITY ELEMENTS

RESULTS: The two most well-liked identity elements were the entry archway and the clock. Both elements evoked a classic look but also had practical uses, making for a strong gateway feature for the downtown area. While an entry archway is not practical, given downtown's proximity to US-23, this choice does indicate a strong desire to have a prominent gateway or urban design feature.



VEGETATION

RESULTS: Both images for potential vegetation in the downtown received strong support. This supports adding landscaping along with the streetscape elements as part of downtown revitalization.



LIGHTING

RESULTS: The light fixture among landscaping was the only one to receive votes, indicating that the residents of the Township want a modern lighting fixture with classic appeal.

Design Alternatives

Three design alternatives were generated for this exercise, and people were asked for their feedback on which alternative was their favorite, and what elements of each alternative they liked.

- **Alternative A.** In this scenario, new buildings were added to downtown without removing any existing buildings. These buildings would be built up to the street. Common parking lots were proposed behind the buildings. A restaurant with a deck on the lakeside was included.
- **Alternative B.** In this scenario, several new buildings would be built but were proposed to keep the existing building line intact. The Barker Road right-of-way would be widened to take up the space between buildings and a new center median would be installed with landscaping. Barker Road would have on-street parking on both sides and parking lots would be located behind the buildings. A new building would be built at the site of the existing marina with a parking lot on the lakefront side.
- **Alternative C.** This scenario is similar to Alternative A in that buildings are built up to the road, which would keep its existing configuration. However, this scenario includes the demolition of existing buildings on some sites and promotes total redevelopment. Parking is still proposed to be located behind the buildings and accessed by alleys off of Barker and Main.

People were asked to indicate which alternative they liked the best on a comment card, and also leave comments as to why they liked that alternative or which elements of each alternative they liked.

Table 3: Summary of Comment Cards for Design Alternatives

Design Alternative	Votes	Most Common Comments
A	10	• Restaurant on the lake (several concurring comments) • Best long-term approach • Room for more dining options • Being able to bike and walk from end to end
B	13	• Pedestrian access • Boulevard on Barker Street (several concurring comments) • Parking improvements, although lakefront parking was negative • Many people wanted to add lakefront restaurant to this design • Bringing a more modern touch without losing hometown feel • Leaves the most flexibility to change as we grow • Pedestrian friendly and welcoming
C	0	• No comments from open house attendees

Big Idea

Several ideas were generated from the “Big Idea” board, as listed in the following table

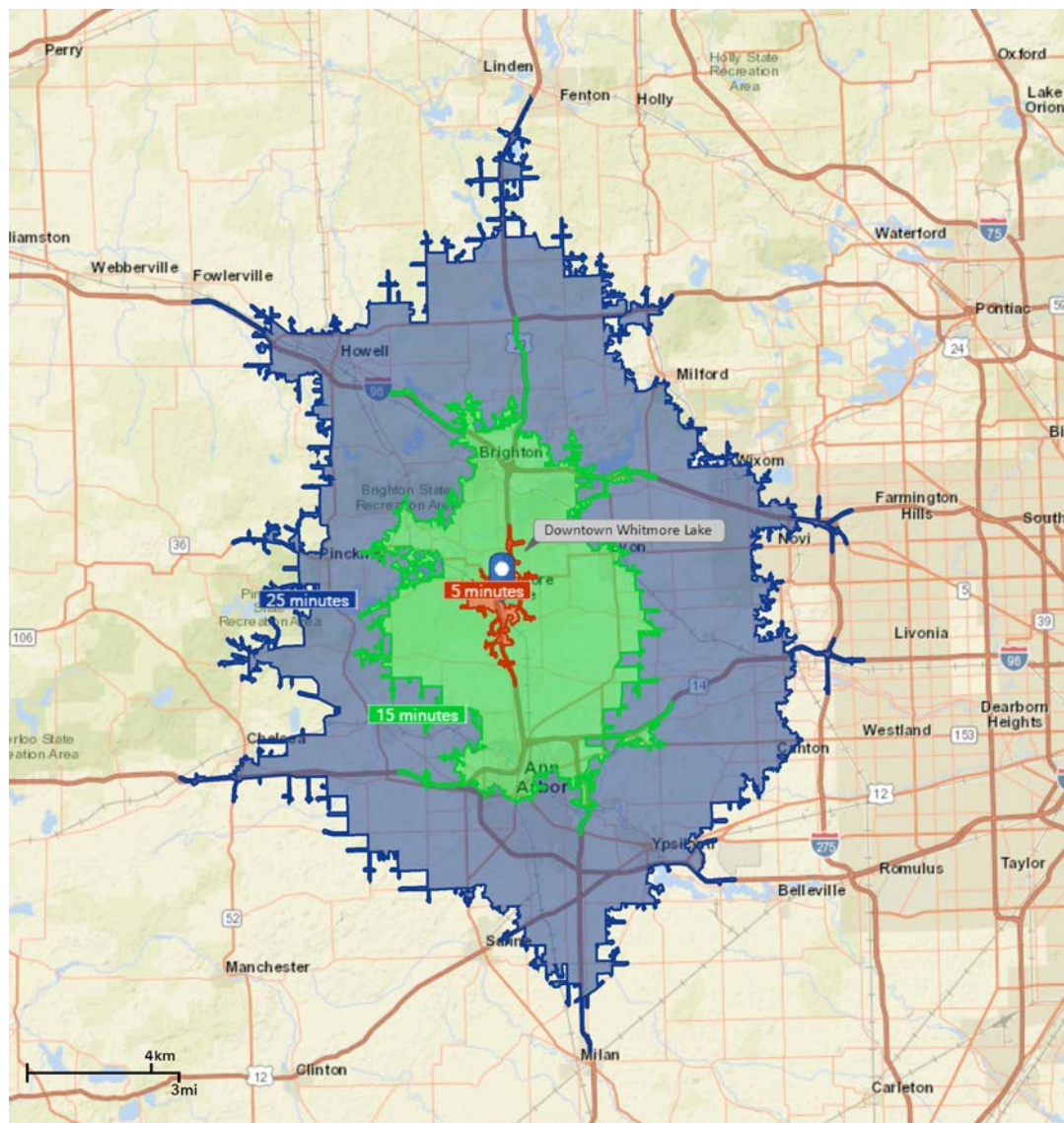
Big Ideas from Both Open Houses
Pocket park!
New grocer
Allow housing developments - new residents to support our schools & the downtown
Brewery
Waterway into old Van Curler property
Housing developments - need more quality homes to draw in people to our great town!
Live music venue
Bar
Café
Record store
Restaurant on the lake for boats too
Bakery
Used book and record store
Antique store
Candle shop
Organic groceries
Public beach
New grocery store
More restaurants
Beach
Athletic fields
Bike and walk from end to end
More restaurants (other than typical American food :)
Small stores
Public beach!
UM Credit Union
Stakeholders
Restaurant or bar with outdoor seating with view of lake and access for boats
Office building / small tech company / other offices who will employ people. Incentive for people to move here.
A boat dock at Van Curler property so people can walk downtown from the lake
Form based codes much like the look of Downtown Chelsea and Northville
Shops
Restaurants
Community activities
Being able to walk or bike from end to end
Storefronts filled with boutique shops
Bank
Unique shops - walking distance from each other like Dixboro General Store
A theme for downtown (i.e. nautical)
Facade improvements and permanent landscaping; mixed use (first floor commercial, second floor residential)
Move the post office to the old bank
Pave and combine Polly's and Barker Road parking lots

RETAIL MARKET GAP ANALYSIS

This chapter analyzes market potential of different retail uses for their viability in Downtown Whitmore Lake by conducting a gap analysis. A gap analysis is performed by defining a specific “trade area” for a community and identifying supply and demand for different types of retail uses. The supply consists of the total amount of a good or service of a particular type sold by businesses within that trade area. The demand consists of the total amount of a particular type good or service purchased by residents of the trade area. If supply exceeds demand, then people are entering the trade area to purchase a particular good or service, but it could also indicate an oversupply. If the demand exceeds supply, then people are leaving the trade area or shopping online for that good or service, but it could also indicate the potential for a new retail location within the trade area.

Demand is subtracted from supply to calculate a market gap for each retail type. Using an estimate of average sales per square foot, and an estimate of average square feet per store, the market gap is then converted to an estimated number of new stores demanded in the trade area. The following section is the retail market gap analysis for the trade area as defined by the map below:

Figure 2: Retail Market Trade Area - Downtown Whitmore Lake



Source: 2015 ESRI

The trade area is defined by the drive time from Downtown Whitmore Lake at regular intervals of 5, 15, and 25 minutes. The 5-minute drive time represents people living generally within the immediate area around downtown and the lake, or anybody who lives close enough that Downtown Whitmore Lake is a regular shopping destination. The 15-minute drive time represents people who live in the surrounding communities that may conduct shopping in Whitmore Lake but who also may primarily choose to go to other places to shop. This area includes commuters to Ann Arbor from Brighton. The 25-minute drive time represents a large area of people within reach of Whitmore Lake, but who may choose to shop in other regional retail centers such as Ann Arbor, Howell, and Novi. This trade area includes commuters to Ann Arbor from Howell and from US 23 north of I-96. The following charts show the retail gap, as a percentage, and the number of new stores demanded in the Downtown Whitmore Lake 5 minute, 15-minute, and 25-minute trade areas based on the buying power and square footage requirements for each store-type.

Table 4: Percentage of Unmet Retail Demand

Category	5-Minute Drive	15-Minute Drive	25-Minute Drive
Furniture Stores	100.0%	-17.1%	-27.8%
Home Furnishings Stores	100.0%	14.5%	-12.2%
Electronics and Appliance Stores	95.1%	-40.2%	-51.6%
Building Materials and Supplies Dealers	49.0%	42.8%	21.0%
Lawn and Garden Equipment Stores	-10.9%	-14.2%	23.6%
Grocery Stores	91.5%	15.3%	12.1%
Specialty Food Stores	100.0%	49.5%	49.0%
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	-409.8%	0.5%	29.1%
Health and Personal Care Stores	37.6%	5.6%	-8.5%
Clothing Stores	100.0%	6.4%	-39.4%
Shoe Stores	100.0%	36.8%	17.4%
Jewelry or Luggage Stores	100.0%	-17.9%	18.0%
Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Music Stores	35.1%	-65.7%	-46.7%
Book Stores	100.0%	-21.3%	5.8%
Department Stores	100.0%	75.5%	4.9%
General Merchandise Stores	100.0%	-88.6%	-65.6%
Florists	100.0%	14.2%	39.0%
Office Supplies Stores	-108.3%	13.4%	-19.0%
Used Merchandise Stores	-3.5%	-3.2%	-4.1%
Special Food Services	100.0%	-11.3%	14.6%
Bars	100.0%	-21.3%	39.6%
Restaurants / Other Eating Places	27.7%	-38.3%	-9.3%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst 2017

NOTE: A 100% gap in the 5-minute area does not mean there is enough buying power to support a new store. A 100% gap means there is demand but there is no existing store to meet the demand.

Table 5: Demand for New Stores in Downtown Whitmore Lake Trade Area

Category	5-Minute Drive	15-Minute Drive	25-Minute Drive
Furniture Stores	0	0	0
Home Furnishings Stores	0	0-1	0
Electronics and Appliance Stores	0-1	0	0
Building Materials and Supplies Dealers	0	2-3	7-8
Lawn and Garden Equipment Stores	0	0	0-1
Grocery Stores	0-1	2-3	10-11
Specialty Food Stores	0-1	5-6	27-28
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	0	0	6-7
Health and Personal Care Stores	0	0-1	0
Clothing Stores	0-1	0-1	0
Shoe Stores	0	0-1	2-3
Jewelry or Luggage Stores	0	0	1-2
Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Music Stores	0	0	0
Book Stores	0	0	0-1
Department Stores	0-1	17-18	4-5
General Merchandise Stores	0-1	0	0
Florists	0	0	4-5
Office Supplies Stores	0	0-1	0
Used Merchandise Stores	0	0	0
Special Food Services	0	0	0-1
Bars	0	0	4-5
Restaurants / Other Eating Places	0-1	0	0

Source: ESRI Business Analyst 2017

NOTE: A gap within one trade area may be met in another trade area. For instance, looking at department stores, within a 15-minute radius there is buying power to support 17-18 additional department stores. However, the 25-minute radius picks up Briarwood Mall in Ann Arbor and Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi. While the buying power of the larger trade area is significantly higher, much of the supply is met and only 4-5 additional department stores would be supported. The success of downtown Whitmore Lake to meet regional and local needs depends on pulling successfully from multiple trade areas and creating a local retail niche.



Main Street

The data for the 5-minute drive time shows several categories with unmet demand, and a few of these categories have enough unmet demand that a new store could be viable. This implies that the market power of the people living close to the downtown area will support new retail uses. New local businesses should consider the unique location of downtown and access to Whitmore Lake as a strength to develop a local niche and a destination based entertainment experience for customers.

The data for the 15-minute drive time area shows several retail categories that are saturated, but there are several others with a significant amount of unmet demand. In particular, shoe stores and clothing stores, building materials (hardware), grocers, and specialty food stores have enough demand to support nine to 14 new stores. The scale and size of these types of businesses are appropriate for the downtown area and could be accommodated in existing or new buildings. Since the 15-minute area includes the north side of Ann Arbor and all of Brighton, which generate a large amount of demand, a niche market or destination based strategy will help to attract these customers into downtown. The Township would likely benefit from businesses that have a unique character and may be successful marketing to commuters traveling between Ann Arbor and Brighton. Department stores show a gap of 17 to 18 stores. Department stores are probably not appropriate for downtown but the high unmet demand for department stores further supports creating a destination-based market strategy within this trade area.

The data for the 25-minute drive time area reveals a potential unmet need for several retail categories across the region. This area includes a larger population by adding Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Howell, South Lyon, and other heavily populated areas, and these areas generate additional demand. However, this area includes major regional retail centers including Briarwood Mall, the outlet mall in Howell, and the downtowns of other cities. Businesses with a unique character or identity would likely succeed and be competitive in the area. In particular, grocery stores, specialty food stores, and building materials and supplies dealers show a strong demand in the 15-minute and 25-minute areas, meaning that there is a need not currently being met across the entire region.

It is important to understand that the above data describe existing conditions. Additional demand can be created using aggressive marketing, community events, attracting new residents or other strategies. Any strategies should build on the strengths of the community and may come from the existing events and resources in the Township. The development of the North Village Community Park allows for new possibilities for events and has generated excitement around the Township. If the Township wanted to attract new residents, it benefits substantially from an ideal location. Another potential strategy is the concept of “economic gardening,” which focuses on fostering the long-term and sustainable growth of small businesses and entrepreneurs in the Township.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan outlines the goals, objectives, and actions for the Township and others to pursue in order to implement this Plan. Each goal and subsequent set of objectives and actions corresponds with a chapter of this Plan. The abbreviations in the following goals charts for the Action Plan are identified below:

ABBREV	PARTNERS
TWP	Northfield Township
DDA	Downtown Development Authority
BO	Business Owners
WCRC	Washtenaw County Road Commission
WATS	Washtenaw Area Transportation Study
CM	Community Members
PC	Planning Commission
PR	Parks and Recreation Board
UC	Utility Companies
NTCC	Northfield Township Community Center
WLPS	Whitmore Lake Public Schools

ABBREV	PRIORITY
A	Top Priority
B	Near-Term Priority
C	Long-Term Priority

Driftwood Marina



Goal #1: Beautification

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall encourage high-quality aesthetics, local identity, and architectural elements that evoke an attractive image of the community.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Enhance the visual appeal of downtown with a strong focus a well-kept and inviting appearance				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Continue the high frequency of code enforcement activities to address any blight issues such as yards, vehicles, buildings, and junk	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP	TWP
Encourage blight complaint forms to be submitted by residents and quickly addressed by code enforcement officers	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP	TWP
OBJECTIVE 1.2: Create architectural guidelines or a pattern book for new development and redevelopment.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Enforce the downtown architecture / building design guidelines by amending the Township Zoning Ordinance	A	1-2 years	TWP, PC, DDA	N/A
OBJECTIVE 1.3: Install streetscape elements that complement the architecture and character of downtown.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Install benches, lighting, and waste receptacles elements according to the furnishing palette	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO	TWP, DDA, BO
Create opportunities for public art to enhance other streetscape elements	C	5+ years	TWP, DDA, BO, DPG, CM	TWP, DDA, BO, state / fed grants
OBJECTIVE 1.4: Include well-designed landscaping and street trees along Main Street and Barker Road.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Install landscaping, shrubbery, and new street trees in the streetscape and tree lawn areas according to the furnishing palette	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO,	TWP, DDA, BO
OBJECTIVE 1.5: Encourage off-street parking lots to be located behind buildings with access through alleys.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Amend Zoning Ordinance to update parking and design standards Downtown Whitmore Lake area	A	1-2 years	TWP, PC, DDA	N/A
Develop alleys to Main Street and Barker Road to serve as access between the downtown and North Village to access rear parking lots	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO,	TWP, DDA, BO

Goal #2: Recreation

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall promote active lifestyles and be developed to support access to the North Village area and the Lake.

OBJECTIVE 2.1:

Support businesses and entertainment options that enhance the waterfront and draw visitors to the waterfront.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Develop Driftwood Marina site at intersection of Main Street and Barker Road and seek developers who will invest in the site	A	1-2 years	TWP, PC, DDA, DPG, BO	TWP, DDA, BO

OBJECTIVE 2.2:

Implement the North Village Master Plan to develop the park component as a community focal point.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Use the Value and Phasing section of the North Village Master Plan to guide improvements on the North Village site	A	1-2 years	TWP, PC, DDA, BO	TWP, DDA, BO

OBJECTIVE 2.3:

Capitalize on the lake as a key asset and potential catalyst for downtown activities.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Install a fishing pier and/or public beach access point to draw additional people downtown	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO	TWP, DDA, BO, grants

OBJECTIVE 2.4:

Strive to enhance community health by promoting recreation assets during all seasons.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Partner with the Northfield Township Community Center on any recreational programming or promotional opportunities as needed	Ongoing	Ongoing	DDA, NTCC	NTCC
Partner with Whitmore Lake Public Schools on any recreational programming or promotional opportunities as needed	Ongoing	Ongoing	DDA, WLPS	WLPS

OBJECTIVE 2.5:

Attract retail and service businesses that cater to recreation on the lake and in the rural areas.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Market the downtown as an outdoor recreation hub and recruit potential new businesses such as bike shops or outdoor retailers or equipment rentals	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, BO	BO

Goal #3: Business and Entertainment

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall be an entertainment destination for activities and businesses that serve the residents of the community and visitors from around the region.

OBJECTIVE 3.1: Encourage new community-focused retail uses, shops, restaurants, and event spaces.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Target marketing efforts based on needs among community focused retail uses	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, BO	DDA, BO
Encourage the conversions of available spaces to recreational venues, such as whirlyball, art studios, a concert hall or civic theater, etc	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, BO	DDA, BO
Enlist local groups and businesses to champion events at the North Village Park and downtown	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, BO	DDA, BO
OBJECTIVE 3.2: Promote cultural activities and venues that draw individuals from outside the community.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Target marketing efforts based on potential niche as discovered through target market analysis and research	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, BO, DPG	DDA, BO
OBJECTIVE 3.3: Focus on promoting existing businesses and take an active role in supporting their successes.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Create a downtown branding and marketing initiative and use to publicize and promote downtown businesses	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, BO	DDA, BO
OBJECTIVE 3.4: Engage local entrepreneurs and support opportunities for entrepreneurship downtown.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Seek space for a business incubator / maker space in downtown, potentially at the old firehouse (75 Barker)	A	1-2 years	TWP, PC, DDA, BO	BO
Develop incentives for business attraction and retention in the downtown	A	1-2 years	TWP, PC, DDA, BO	BO
OBJECTIVE 3.5: Review and remove or alter existing regulations that are burdensome and create regulations that are conducive to small business development.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Review current Zoning Ordinance standards on a regular basis and revise as needed	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, PC	N/A
Adopt lean zoning practices that remove barriers to investment as the Ordinance is continually reviewed and updated	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, PC	N/A
Consider expedited site plan review processes for new business development downtown, especially in vacant buildings	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, PC	N/A
OBJECTIVE 3.6 Seek development ideas that are implementable and align with realistic conditions.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Target marketing efforts to support a lake front and boutique retail niche for the Downtown Whitmore Lake area	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, BO, DPG	DDA, BO

Goal #4: Celebration

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall promote the positive self-image and quality of life for the residents of the entire community.

OBJECTIVE 4.1:

Support existing downtown celebrations and events and encourage new events.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Include calendar of existing celebrations and events in any new marketing materials for Downtown Whitmore Lake	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, DDA, BO	DDA, BO
Support ideas for new community events such as concerts, music, and movies in the park, farmers markets, pond hockey, fireworks, trunk or treat, craft/air fairs, events for kids/youth, or other creative ideas	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, DDA, BO, CM	DDA, BO, CM

OBJECTIVE 4.2:

Enhance community involvement and encourage as many citizens to get involved as possible.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Gather public feedback at the existing celebrations and events to take advantage of a captive audience	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, PC, DDA, DPG	DDA
Ensure that information and news about downtown is updated and distributed widely, include through online and print resources	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, PC, DDA, DPG	DDA
Encourage and facilitate community donations and commissions to help implement design improvements in downtown	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, PC, DDA, CM	DDA

OBJECTIVE 4.3:

Create opportunities for networking and conversation throughout the community.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Invite key community groups to spread the word about news and information about downtown, especially public meetings	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, DDA, BO, CM	CM
Utilize existing popular social media platforms to allow for the community to network, form new relationships, and have dialogue	Ongoing	Ongoing	TWP, DDA, BO, CM	CM

OBJECTIVE 4.4:

Boost the uniqueness and positive perception of “Whitmore Lake.”

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Develop positive marketing campaign highlighting the positive aspects of Downtown Whitmore Lake and the overall community	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, BO, CM	DDA, BO

OBJECTIVE 4.5:

Strengthen the reputation and quality of education in Whitmore Lake Public Schools.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Provide promotional and partnership opportunities with the Whitmore Lake Public Schools as needed	Ongoing	Ongoing	DDA, WLPS	WLPS

OBJECTIVE 4.6:

Highlight the quality of education in Whitmore Lake Public Schools.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Promote bicycling and walking in the downtown area by adding bicycle racks and completing sidewalks, among other improvements	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO	TWP, DDA, BO
Use low impact design practices in landscaping materials and other features of the downtown streetscape	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO	TWP, DDA, BO

Goal #5: Connectivity

Downtown Whitmore Lake shall encourage the safe and effective use of its transportation network by all modes including motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

OBJECTIVE 5.1: Design Main Street and Barker Road to calm traffic and effectively reduce speeding traffic.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Work with the Washtenaw County Road Commission on design solutions for each street improvement included in the synthesis plan for downtown	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, WCRC	TWP, WCRC
Apply for TAP grant to assist in development of pedestrian and bicycle improvements in the Downtown and North Village areas	A	1-2 years	TWP, DDA, WCRC, DPG	TWP, WCRC
OBJECTIVE 5.2: Connect surrounding neighborhoods to downtown by expanding the sidewalk network and pedestrian crossings.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Incorporate sidewalks into the Capital Improvements Program of the Township to ensure completion	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA	TWP, DDA
OBJECTIVE 5.3: Install bicycle infrastructure, including bicycle parking, to encourage biking to downtown.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Work with business owners to determine potential locations for bike racks along Main Street and Barker Road	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO, CM	TWP, DDA, BO
Work with the Washtenaw County Road Commission on new biking and walking infrastructure on Main Street	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, WCRC	TWP, WCRC
Pursue a connection to the Lakeland Trail and create a bike route trailhead downtown.	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, WCRC	TWP, WCRC
OBJECTIVE 5.4: Improve wayfinding signage and the streetscape to make a more user friendly space.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Install business oriented identity and wayfinding ground signs at major activity nodes and near key intersections	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO	TWP, DDA, BO
Install gateway entrance signs at the entrances to downtown	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO, V	TWP, DDA, BO
Use other identity elements including banners according to the identity palette	C	5+ years	TWP, DDA, BO, CM	TWP, DDA, BO
OBJECTIVE 5.5: Encourage off-street parking lots to be located behind buildings with access through alleys.				
ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERSHIPS	FUNDING
Amend Zoning Ordinance to require parking behind buildings in the Downtown Whitmore Lake area	A	1-2 years	TWP, PC, DDA	N/A
Develop alley parallel to Main Street to serve as access between the downtown and North Village, with access to rear parking lots	B	3-5 years	TWP, DDA, BO	TWP, DDA, BO

DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

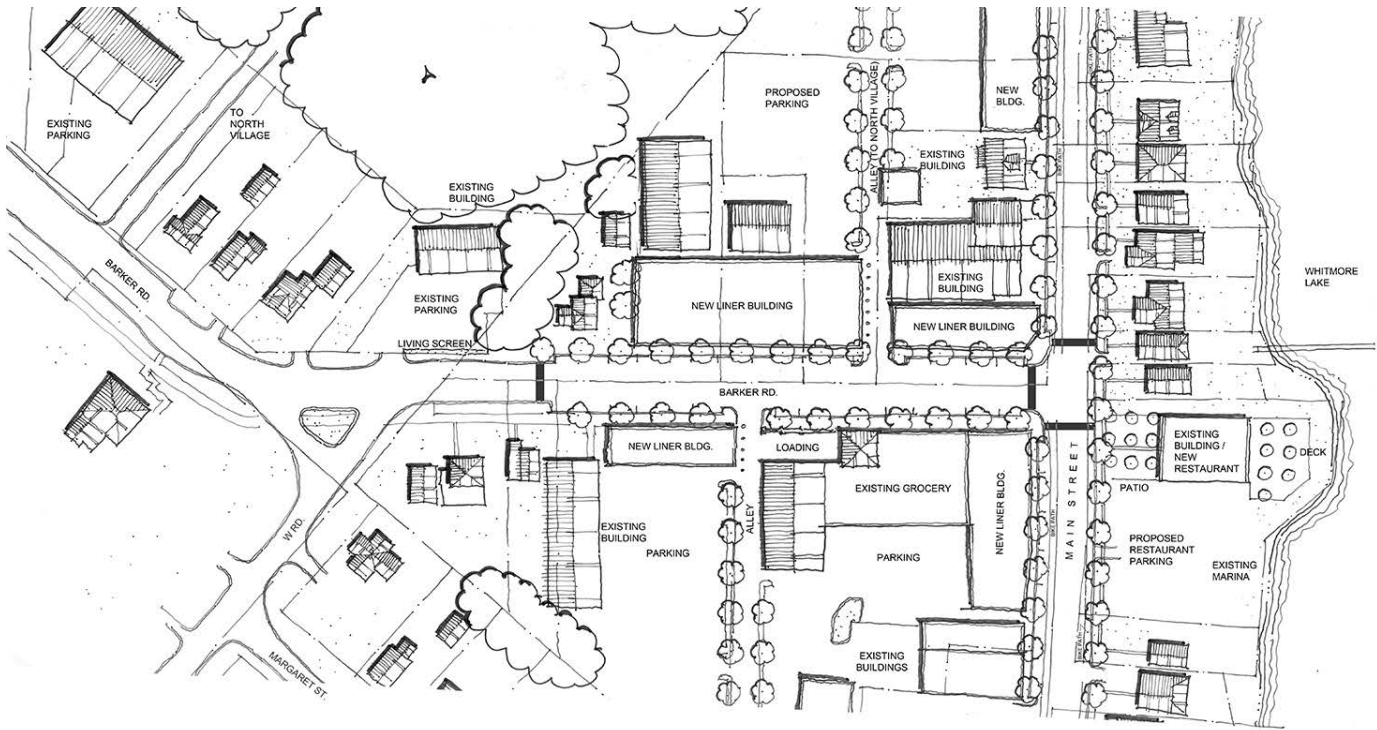
PRIORITY SITES

The public engagement process was used to identify the key development outcomes desired through the implementation of this Plan. This includes the identification of priority development sites. These are sites that are currently vacant or underutilized but may be a catalyst for reinvestment downtown. There are four total priority sites, which are described as follows:

- **75 Barker / Old Firehouse** – This building once housed the main fire station for the Northfield Township Fire Department. The building has large garage doors that open up to an undivided main floor, which has been suggested for a farmers market or similar community event space. The second floor has been suggested to be rented out as private event space.
- **Driftwood Marina / Barker and Main** – This site is located at the intersection of Barker Road and Main Street in one of the most highly visible places downtown. The other side of the site offers excellent views of the lake. The site has been suggested for a restaurant with lakeside patio seating or another similar use taking advantage of the lakefront space.
- **North Village** – The Township recently purchased the North Village site and adopted a North Village Master Plan specifically for guiding the development of this land. Key ideas for the site include a large open space in the center, an amphitheater, housing units along the west edge near US 23, and a smaller green space surrounded by buildings as a public square.
- **Township Library: Adjacent Yard** – This property is immediately west of the Township Library building on Barker Road. Of all the priority sites, this parcel is located closest to the US 23 exit and would act as a gateway to the downtown area. The site is also next to the railroad tracks. Several different redevelopment options are potentially feasible at this location.

Old Firehouse





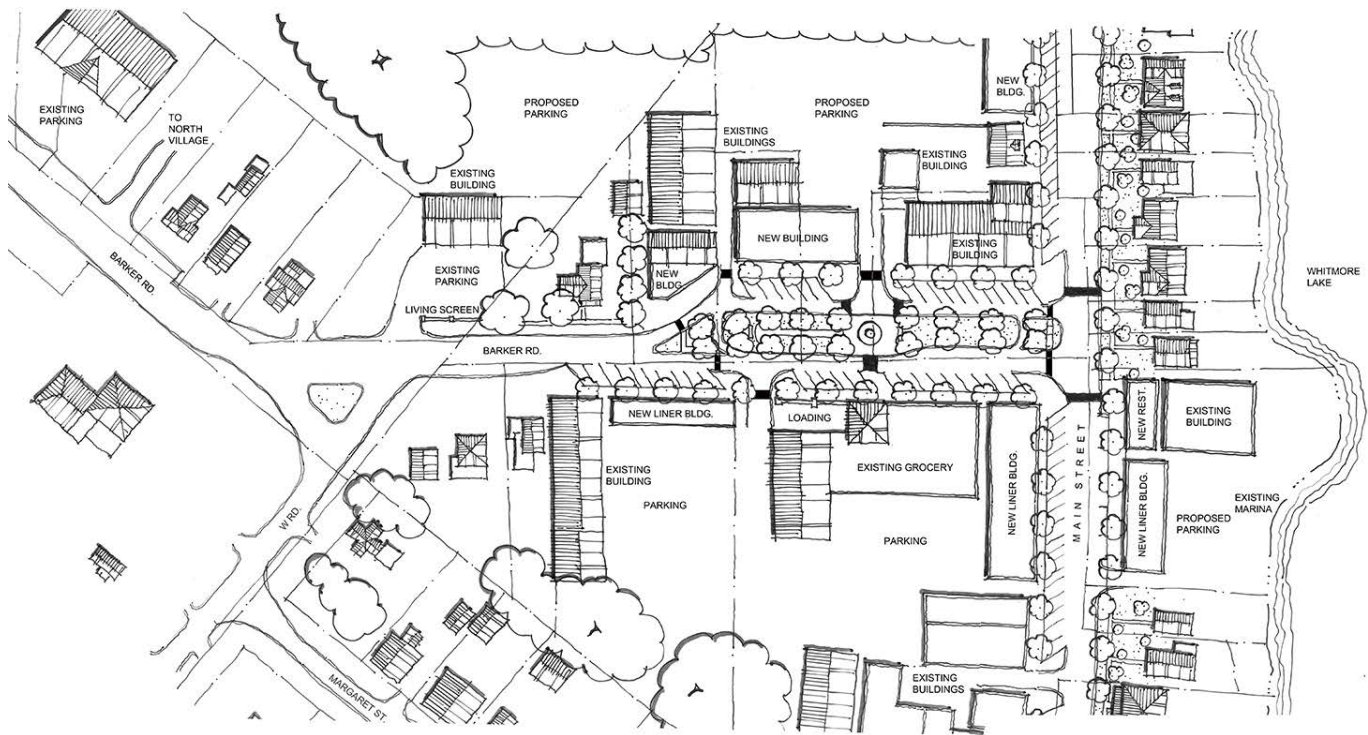
OPTION A: THE INFILL APPROACH:

Downtown has great “bones.” A few strategic buildings with managed public and private parking areas are all that’s needed.

Option A builds upon the existing fabric of Downtown Whitmore Lake. Existing buildings have been maintained for future use but the plan includes a substantial amount of new buildings to fill in gaps along existing frontages. The plan proposes no changes to existing road rights-of-way or streetscape. The construction of new buildings at the existing right-of-way lines has been further emphasized.

In the interest of creating a vibrant pedestrian environment, most of the required parking has been concealed behind buildings and within blocks. Some on-street parking has also been provided, however, to ensure the viability of the retail, which is so important to the success of any pedestrian-oriented downtown district.

Rear alleys have been delineated behind the buildings along Main Street in order to improve circulation within blocks and provide for general deliveries (and for the storage and removal of trash). Additionally, a direct pedestrian and vehicular connection to North Village has been accommodated by one of the new alleys.



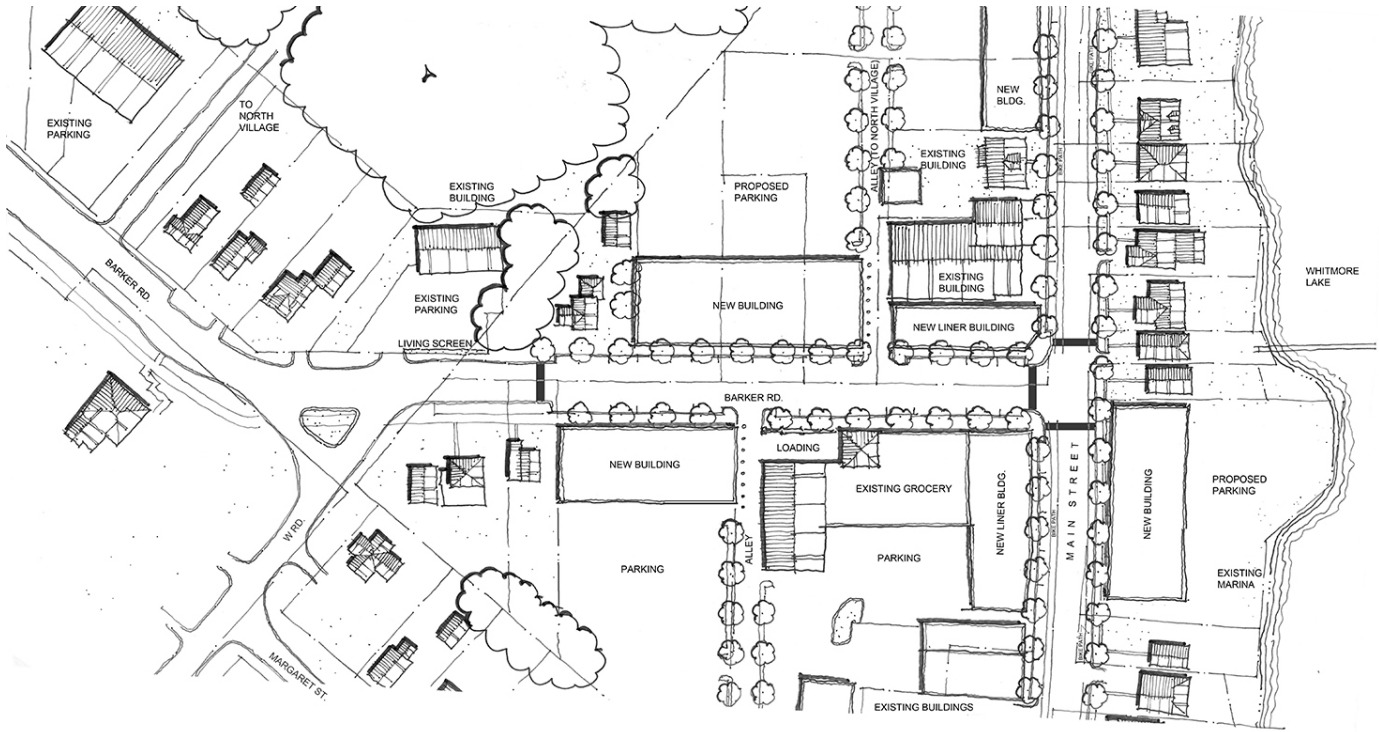
OPTION B: THE INFILL WITH INFRASTRUCTURE APPROACH:

A few strategic buildings with managed public & private parking areas are necessary. Downtown also needs to improved circulation, pedestrian access, and identity features to truly realize its potential.

Of the three alternative plans considered, Option B presents the most significant public investment in transportation, public spaces, and streetscape. This approach encourages private investment through a directed effort to improve public amenities in the Downtown area. It is an attempt to build existing structures, while making better use of the spaces in-between.

Additionally, a build-to line has been established along the northwestern side of Barker Road, corresponding to the existing facade of Family Video (which is the closest to the street along this edge). Maintenance of a disciplined build-to line along this trajectory will support pedestrian activity at building frontages.

Some new buildings have been indicated where needed to further define and shape the public spaces, as they have been envisioned, and on-street angle parking has been provided throughout the downtown to support retail activity. Most of the anticipated public and shared retail parking areas have been concealed behind existing buildings.



OPTION C: THE REDEVELOPMENT APPROACH:

Downtown has a few opportunity sites that would benefit from complete redevelopment. Supporting mixed uses on these sites could bring new people to downtown and help support other businesses.

Option C explores full urbanization of Whitmore Lake's downtown area. All of the retail buildings that are not currently positioned up to their respective right-of-way lines are shown to have been replaced by relatively large-scale retail buildings that are so located and, with the demolition of the corresponding existing buildings on their respective sites, the maximum quantity of parking behind buildings is also achieved.

This plan could otherwise be considered full build-out, or what the town could look like 20 to 40 years from now with planned densification and favorable market conditions. While a somewhat quaint, small town character could be maintained with this level of development intensity (if developed in conjunction with strict development and architectural codes), Whitmore Lake's existing character as a village or hamlet would most surely be compromised.

However, as in Plan B, rear alleys have been delineated behind the Main Street buildings and a connection to North Village has been similarly accommodated.

As in both of the other alternatives, on-street parking has been included throughout to support retail activity.



SYNTHESIS PLAN

Ice Cream Social
July 8, 2017

The Downtown Synthesis plan was created based on the feedback received from participants on three design scenarios presented at the public workshop on June 20, 2017 and the ice cream social on July 8, 2017. The feedback and results were further considered by the DDA and DPG at the regular meeting on July 24, 2017.

The consensus expressed by the DDA and DPG in considering the public feedback received was to encourage redevelopment at a higher intensity, most similar to Option C - the Redevelopment Approach, with a focus on infrastructure investment through streetscape, median, and identity enhancements, and public parking most similar to Option B - The Infill with Infrastructure Approach. These two options accounted for 70% of online respondents feedback and 57% of ice cream social feedback, which combined account for 68% of all responses.

Consistent with these preferences, the synthesis plan emphasizes increasing prominence of the lake front in downtown with visual and physical access, as well as protecting the character and form of lake fronting structures. Enhancements to pedestrian crossings, lighting, furnishings, and landscaping are also incorporated into the design concept.

The overarching goal of the synthesis plan for Downtown Whitmore Lake promotes pedestrian safety, accessibility and a unified design treatment. The design treatments include modified widths of vehicular travel lanes to provide room for on-street parking, which may require right-of-way acquisition and reconfiguring the available right-of-way. The design also features a median on Barker that will include public art, people spaces, and identity features to enhance downtown. Finally, marked-shared lanes to reinforce the Township's commitment to introducing traffic calming in downtown and safe biking to the lake.

The streetscape enhancements will be focused around the core intersection of Main and Barker. The development of the streetscape in this area will be an opportunity to implement the design palette for furnishings and identity elements.



Figure 3: Birdseye view of downtown facing northeast from 75 Barker..



Figure 4: Birdseye view of downtown facing west from the Lake.



**DOWNTOWN WHITMORE LAKE
SYNTHESIS PLAN KEY**

- 1 Barker Road
- 2 Main Street
- 3 Margaret Street
- 4 Infill Building, typical
- 5 Existing Building, typical
- 6 Existing Trees
- 7 Connection to North Village
- 8 Whitmore Lake
- 9 Parking Lot
- 10 Existing Ped. / Bike Trail
- 11 Trail Connection
- 12 Proposed On-Street Parking (w/ new sidewalk)
- 13 New Boulevard Median with Public Art
- 14 New Restaurant
- 15 Existing Marina
- 16 Proposed Alley Easement



FAÇADE / BUILDING GUIDELINES

The singular outstanding feature of traditional downtown buildings and facades, including the best of those in Downtown Whitmore Lake, is their tendency to position immediately against the sidewalk along primary and secondary frontages and to present a shaded and transparent glass storefront along the right-of-way in such locations. This allows these types of buildings to define the public realm by creating an effective street wall and lets them serve to accommodate a welcoming, convenient, and pedestrian-oriented shopping experience by displaying merchandise within view of passersby. These guidelines, in part, are intended to regulate the construction and renovation of commercial buildings within Downtown Whitmore Lake to achieve this particular character.

A less common but equally attractive condition, sometimes referred to as “cottage retail”, comes about as retail uses migrate into areas already occupied by houses and other residential building types. Here, robust and vibrant retail frontages can develop while leaving a record of their residential past. This record lives on in the form of residential roofs still visible behind full commercial facades, houses physically modified for retail use, houses remaining largely intact but behind and attached to newer storefronts located at the sidewalk, and houses accommodating a retail or office use with little or no change in building form or character. In downtown Whitmore Lake, several houses exist currently in the downtown along the lake side of Main Street and retail uses are already in existence immediately across Main Street from those residential properties. Therefore, this plan supports permitting a transition of residential parcels to retail and similar uses without degrading the residential and “cottage” character of Whitmore Lake. In part, these guidelines are intended to regulate the corresponding physical transformation of the existing buildings on those parcels.

The collection of mixed-use guidelines provided have been designed to accommodate future development of a variety of uses within all areas of Downtown Whitmore Lake while protecting and enhancing the existing downtown character.

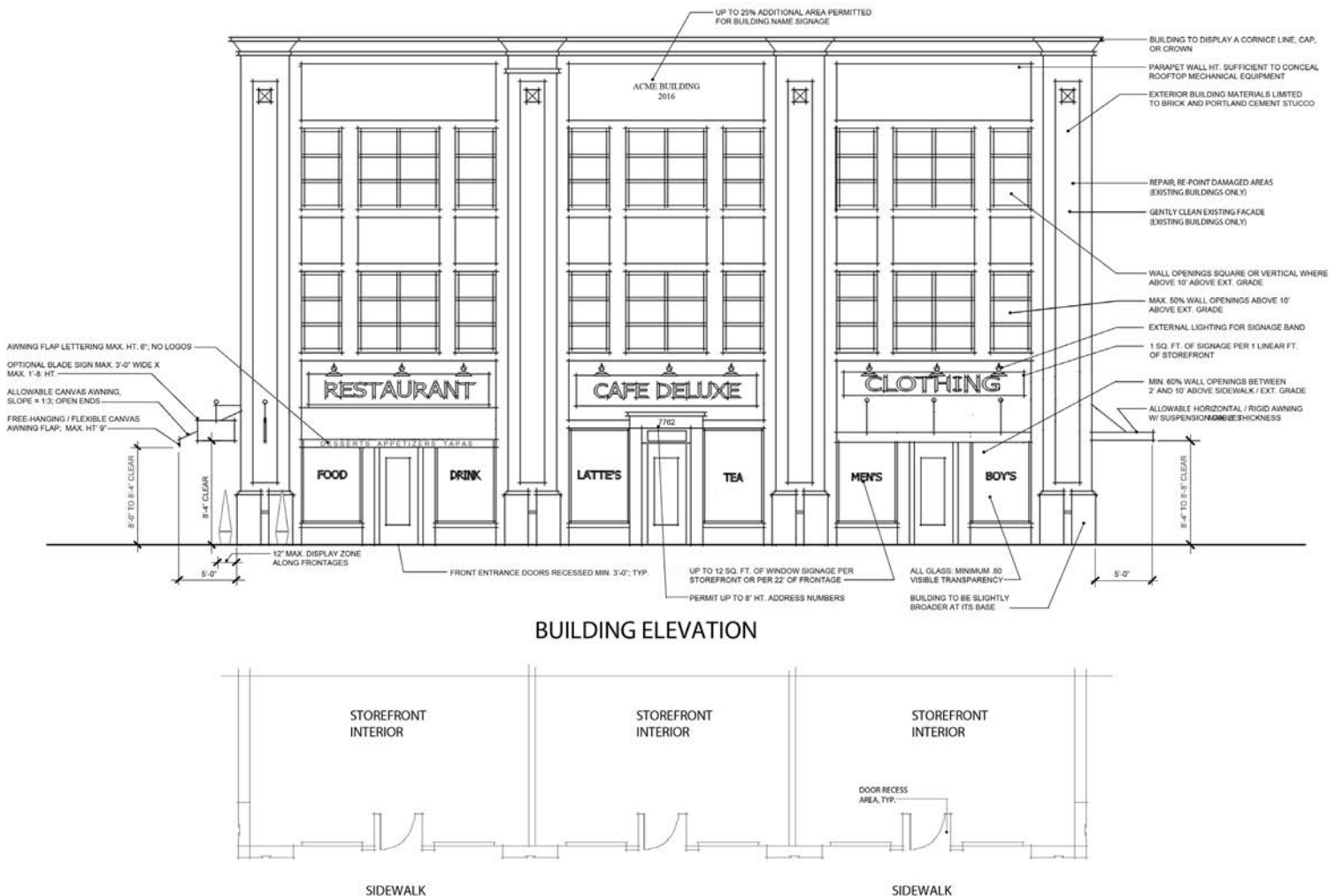
Village Center – Mixed-Use Design Guidelines

The commercial portion of Downtown Whitmore Lake is charming and consistent with that of well-defined hamlets in the center or rural areas. Many areas with buildings constructed in similar historic time periods, like Ann Arbor and Adrian, were developed into larger cities. Others like Dixboro and Dexter, for example, did not grow dramatically but have examples of historic architecture and quality of place.

Whitmore Lake's beginnings were not humble. Its early retail buildings were constructed of solid brick and according to the highest of design standards and they were placed at the right-of-way line, just as they were in downtown Ann Arbor and Adrian. This quality of design provides an opportunity for future growth within Downtown Whitmore Lake that sustains a similar brand of ambition. Further, by emphasizing the importance of design in downtown, the Township's rural character is also preserved. The best examples of Michigan rural hamlets are seldom muddled with suburban development patterns.

Accordingly, the design guidelines for new construction and renovation along both sides of Barker Road and for the side opposite the lake along Main Street in Downtown Whitmore Lake are intended to be developed at the right-of-way line. They will occupy their rightful place along the public sidewalk the way they always have in this and similar downtowns across the state. Quality downtown development will help preserve rural character (see figure below).

Figure 5: Village Center – Mixed Use Design Standards



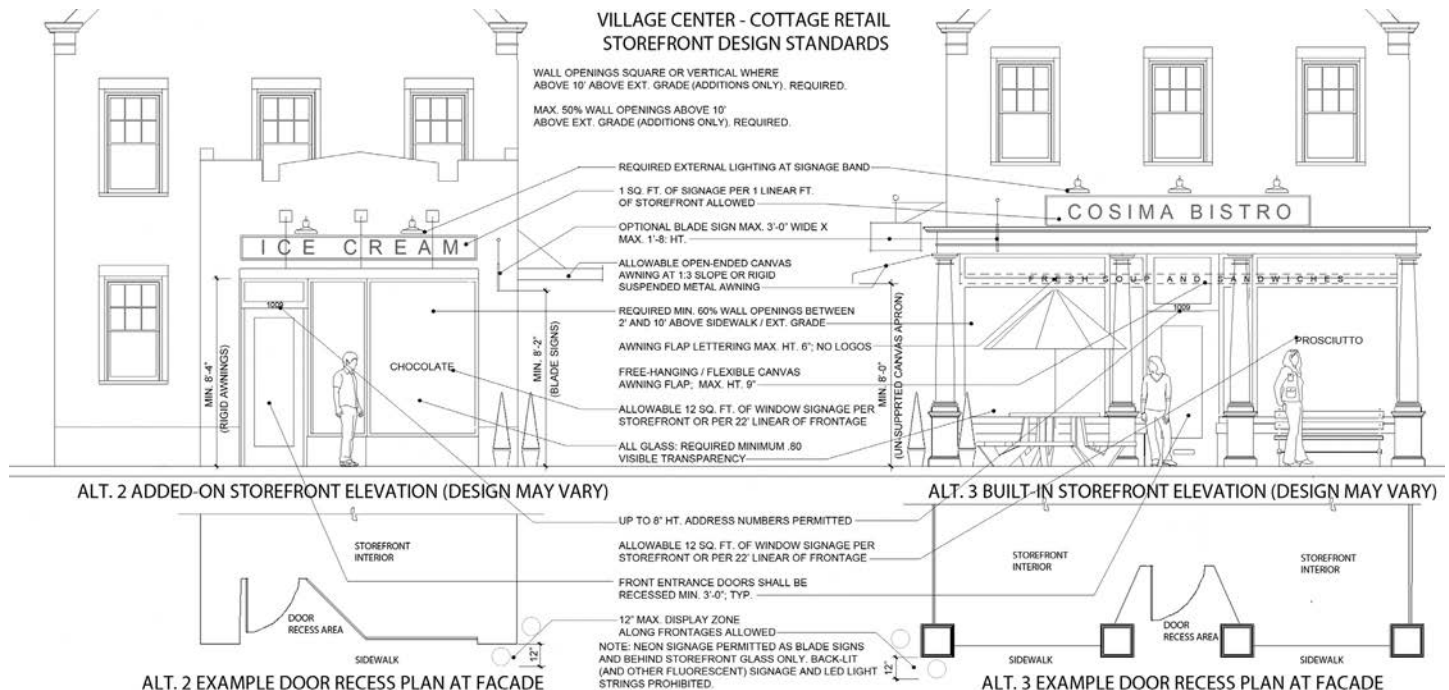
Village Center - Cottage Retail Design Guidelines

Regarding the currently residential parcels along the lake side of Main Street, an alternative but complementary vision is appropriate. Therefore, the corresponding guidelines for the development of these properties seek to achieve a “cottage retail” interface, whereby the existing residential scale and configuration of building form is preserved while retail uses may be accommodated in a variety of ways (see figure below). These alternative approaches to fitting retail uses into a residential character streetscape are anticipated to be employed in combination with one another and are so intended to achieve a more relaxed, informal result:

1. **Alternative 1.** The existing house is simply re-purposed for retail use in its existing form. This may be accomplished by placing a small, attractive, painted, wooden sign on the lawn that identifies the business within and by displaying merchandise or announcing services (with additional signage) through existing windows.
2. **Alternative 2.** An addition is constructed to the house. A new storefront is added-on to the street side of the existing building, extending the building out to the sidewalk.
3. **Alternative 3.** The house is modified. A new storefront is inserted into the existing building and the sidewalk is extended back to the building line.

The specific design guidelines for Cottage Retail are outlined in the figure below.

Figure 6: Village Center – Cottage Retail Storefront Design Standards



FUTURE LAND USE



Village Center – Mixed Use

Intent: The intent of the Village Center – Mixed Use designation is to encourage and permit mixed uses in and around the Downtown Whitmore Lake area. This designation is intended to allow for buildings to be slightly taller than those in the surrounding districts, up to three or four stories. The design pattern of the Village Center – Mixed Use area should promote walking and foster community interaction. The future land uses within the Village Center – Mixed Use area are intended to be flexible, but shall meet specific form and mixed-use design guidelines.

Description: The Village Center – Mixed Use designation is focused on the core of the downtown area near Main and Barker, the North Village area, and potential development areas bordering US 23.

Relationship to Physical and Natural Features: This area is the most urbanized within the Township; however, it is also environmentally sensitive due to the location of the Township's water bodies and the desire of people to reside near bodies of water.

Most Compatible Uses:

- Mixed-use development / 3-4 story buildings
- Upper-floor dwelling units
- Townhomes
- Senior housing
- Neighborhood commercial uses
- Restaurants / Bakeries / Cafés
- Food production / Breweries
- Marinas / Lake-oriented businesses
- Personal service establishments
- Hardware stores
- Banks / Credit unions
- Offices
- Farm and artisan markets / Specialty grocers
- Community Center
- Recreational services / Gyms / Sporting goods
- Entertainment and event spaces
- Public square
- Community support facilities such as churches, schools, and public buildings



Village Center – Cottage Retail

Intent: The intent of the Village Center – Cottage Retail designation is to connect the downtown to the rest of the Township by acting as a kind of transition between different intensities of uses. Buildings in this district will not be as tall as those in the Village Center – Mixed Use area, but may be at a relatively high density to signify a transition from surrounding neighborhoods to downtown. The design pattern of the downtown area should promote walking and foster community interaction. Future land uses in the Village Center – Cottage Retail area are intended to be flexible and shall promote adaptive reuse of existing buildings. Projects shall follow Cottage Retail design guidelines.

Description: The Village Center – Cottage Retail designation is focused on the edges of the downtown area along Barker and Main from all three directions leading into the core.

Relationship to Physical and Natural Features: This area is not as densely developed as the designated Village Center – Mixed Use areas, so there are generally greater opportunities for yard space or other pervious surfaces. However, the area is more urbanized than the other parts of the Township. It is also environmentally sensitive due to the location of the Township's water bodies and the desire of people to reside near bodies of water.

Most Compatible Uses:

- Adaptive mixed-use development
- Boutique and specialty retail uses
- Single-family residences
- Two-family residences
- Multiple-family residences
- Innovative housing projects
- Personal service establishments
- Offices
- Parks, open spaces, and conservation areas
- Community support facilities such as churches, schools, and public buildings



DRAFT

Future Land Use Map

Downtown Whitmore Lake,
Northfield Township,
Washtenaw County, Michigan

August 23, 2017

-  Village Center Boundary
-  Village Buildings
-  Cottage Retail
-  Mixed Use

0 250 500
FEET

McKenna
ASSOCIATES

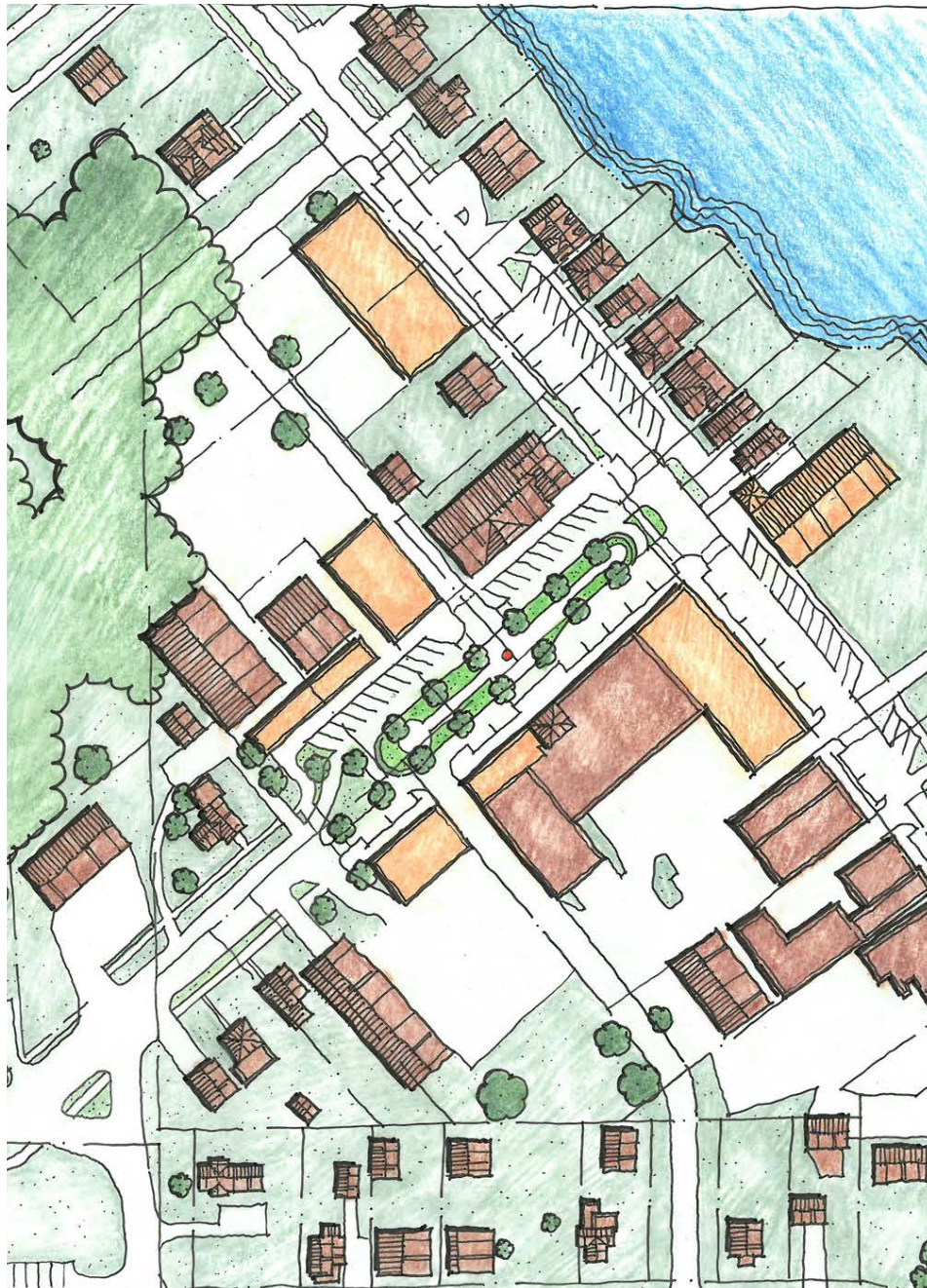


Map Feature Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library, Washtenaw County GIS

CONNECTIVITY FRAMEWORK

The Connectivity Framework provides recommendations for the development of the public right-of-way in Downtown Whitmore Lake a manner consistent with and supportive of recommendations for Future Land Use. The Future Transportation Map shows the detailed physical recommendations contained in the following narrative.

The Future Transportation recommendations focus on pathways, crossing improvements, gateway creation, and creating complete streets with pedestrian crossings, streetscape enhancements, and bicycle facilities. The network is designed to establish easy to navigate connections for people to walk, bike, and drive from their neighborhoods around the Township to Downtown Whitmore Lake.





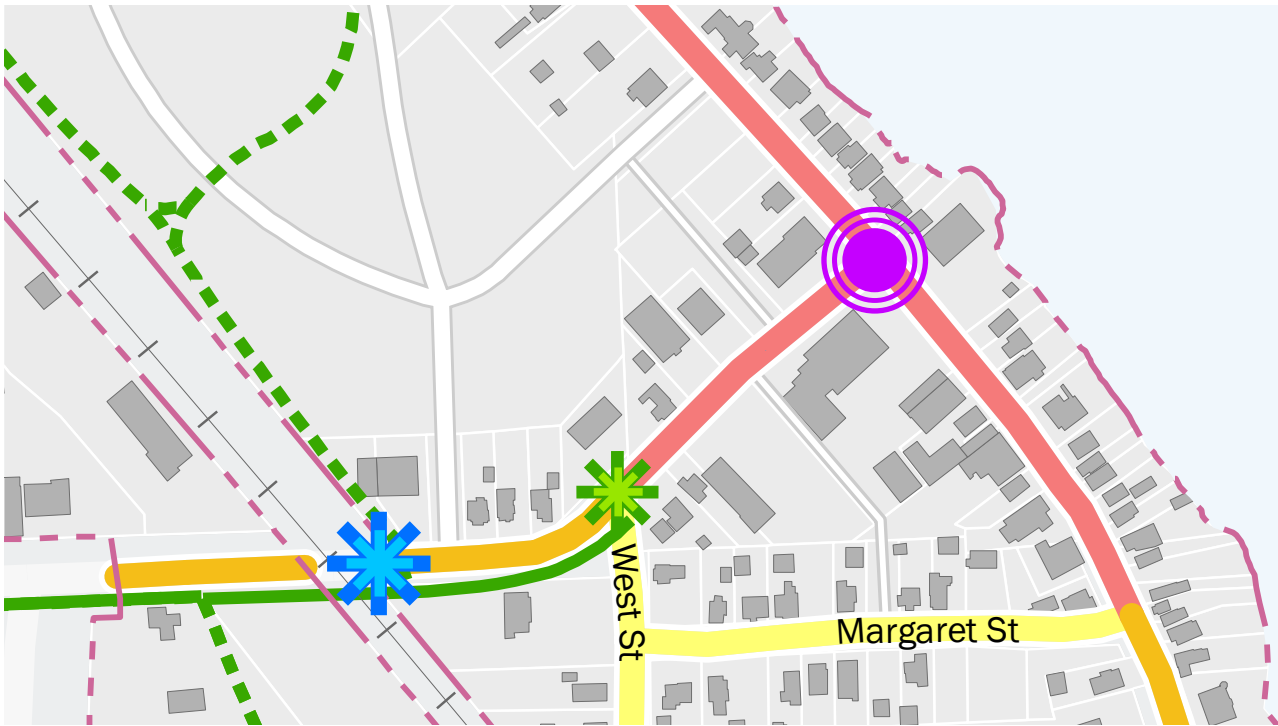
Example of a
pedestrian crossing

TRANSITION ELEMENTS

Transition elements are recommended to be installed at changes in the street typologies. These locations are important places to provide visual cues to denote the change in roadway context. These locations are noted on the Street Typology Map as Nodes, Gateways and Transitions.

- **Core Intersection:** Barker and Main Street is the heart of Downtown. Improvements of the identity and public system are recommended to be centered on this focal point. Pedestrian priority at this intersection should be established through traffic calming and crossing improvements. A prominent boulevard with a sculpture, public art, or clock is recommended to be included in the median.
- **Gateways:** Located at the entrances to downtown Whitmore Lake from the south, north and west. Prominent gateway features include gateway signs, public art, lane narrowing and wayfinding signs.
- **Transitions:** Located at the where bike facilities are recommended to transition to an on-street marked shared lane. Landscaping, signs, identity features and public art are appropriate design treatments.

The design palettes contain guidelines for installing traffic calming, landscaping, street furnishing, wayfinding, and identity features in these locations to enhance the user experience and operations in downtown.



GRID RETROFITS

Future Transportation Plan calls for new streets, alleys, and trails.

Currently, there are some limitations in the intersection density of the street grid in Downtown Whitmore Lake that can be improved by new alleys, pathways, and streets in the North Village Area. A desirable standard block length for walkability and vehicle circulation in a downtown area is 300 feet to 600 feet.

With new development, it may be possible to retrofit the street grid to create more pedestrian scale block lengths and improve network connections. The Future Transportation Map shows a few key retrofits to the network to eliminate the mega-blocks and create walkable urban centers.

- **North Village Area:**
 - » New public street system to link the Central Lawn and Green planned for the North Village into the downtown Whitmore Lake Street system.
- **Downtown Area:**
 - » New public alleys to link Barker Road north into the North Village site and new proposed public parking and south to Margaret Street.
- **Trails:**
 - » New trail connection from the bicycle path into the North Village area that currently passes by the Library to Main Street with a preferred connection along the railroad corridor under US-23.

New street connections in the North Village should be two-way shared streets with bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles sharing the roadway. The new streets should have target vehicle speeds of 15 mph to 20 mph and 16 to 22 feet total travel way. On-street parking, shared biking and pedestrian access should be required. Curbs are not required as the systems should maintain a rural character consistent with Township neighborhoods. Alleys should be 16 to 20 feet with shared bike and pedestrian access as well.

Currently, every site in downtown manages their own parking, with limited on-street parking, shared parking, or cross site access. Adding new streets will provide circulation and access to new on-street parking, shared private parking, and new public parking areas so customers can park once and walk to multiple destinations in downtown

MODE ACCOMMODATION

Improvements to the bicycle network in Downtown Whitmore Lake are desirable to increase access to downtown and support the Township's desire to improve recreation opportunities and lake access. Connections to the Downtown shopping destinations and Lake access will support residents' health and wellness. With bicycle network improvements more Township residents will be able to make safe, short trips to parks, schools, and even downtown entertainment and shopping, all without getting in the car. Bicycle network improvements are recommended based on the need for separation from vehicle traffic, existing signal locations to cross major roadways, and alignment with desirable community destinations like schools, parks, public facilities, and commercial areas.

Shared Use Paths and Trails

Shared use paths and trails are paved concrete or asphalt paths wide enough to accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists. They are typically a minimum of 10 feet wide with 2 feet of clearance on either side of the path. Shared use paths offer cyclists a safe place to bike off-street when there is no space for a bike lane, or it is unsafe to bike on the street.



Conventional Bike Lanes and Paved Shoulders

Bike lanes create a dedicated space for cyclists on a roadway. They are appropriate on streets with moderate to heavy traffic. Bike lanes are indicated by on-street markings, which can be supplemented with signage. Bike lanes reinforce proper roadway etiquette, raise the visibility of bicyclists, and help both bicyclists and drivers behave predictably when sharing road space. For safe cycling, bike lanes should be 4 feet to 6 feet wide.



Marked Shared Lanes or Sharrows

Marked shared lanes use a double chevron and bicycle marking, or "sharrow," in a lane intended for the joint use of motorized and bicycle traffic. Chevron symbols direct bicyclists to ride in the safest location within the lane, outside of the door zone of parked cars and areas where debris is likely to collect. Generally, marked shared lanes are a low-cost treatment suitable for lightly traveled collector and arterial roads.



Improved Pedestrian Crossings

Improved and frequent pedestrian crossings are recommended to support safety, comfort, speed, and convenience of walking trips. Pedestrian crossings also serve bicyclists.



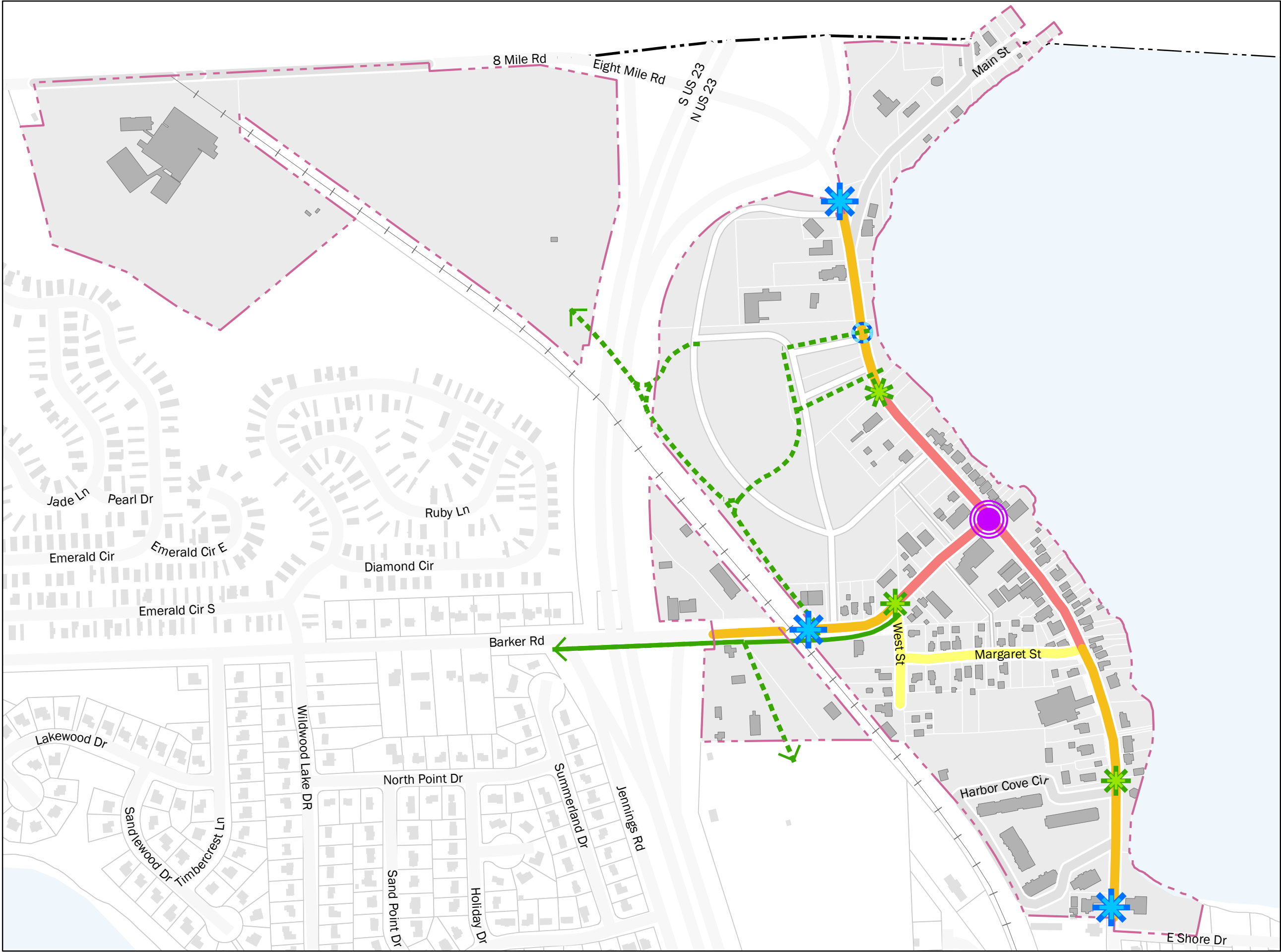
DRAFT

Future Transportation Map

Downtown Whitmore Lake,
Northfield Township,
Washtenaw County, Michigan

September 20, 2017

- Village Center Boundary
- Village Buildings
- Proposed Road
- Proposed Alley
- Paved Shoulder / Bike Lane
- Marked Shared Lane
- Bike Route
- Existing Pathway
- Proposed Pathway
- Core Intersection
- Gateway
- Transition
- Pedestrian Crossing



DESIGN PALETTES

An improved identity for Downtown Whitmore Lake will be created by enhancing the qualities of the streetscape through a high-quality built environment boasting safe accessible pedestrian circulation, traffic calming measures, marked shared bike lanes, on street parking, streetscape furniture, and plantings. The rhythmic placement of the streetscape elements establishes a cohesive streetscape setting.

The overarching goal of the proposed *Design Palette* for downtown promotes pedestrian safety, accessibility and a unified design treatment.

The streetscape enhancements will be focused in the downtown area, predominantly between the noted transitions into the urbanized downtown. The enhancement of the streetscape environment in downtown using the following finishing and identity palettes, as well as public art, will support the Township's objectives to give downtown a new life and identity to residents and people in the region.

FURNISHING PALETTE

Streetscape Furniture

Site furnishings provide important amenities for pedestrians by adding functionality and vitality to the pedestrian realm. Site furnishings include the images to the right.

These streetscape palette elements will complement the existing elements and can be implemented in the near-term, potentially with the help of donations or commissioning. These furnishings are available for purchase from Michigan based *Landscape Forms, Inc.*

Landscape Forms Inc.

Contact Information:
431 Lawndale Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI 49048
Tel: 800.430.6209
www.landscapeforms.com



HARDSCAPE MATERIALS

Exposed Aggregate and Concrete Paving

The mixture of exposed aggregate and concrete paving reinforces the area as the downtown and central hub of activity, distinguishing it from other areas.

Detectable Warning Strips

Detectable warning surfaces are applied to ramps to indicate interference with the street.



- f Exposed Aggregate
- g Concrete Paving
- h Detectable Warning Strip

IDENTITY PALETTE

Identity elements are recommended for Downtown Whitmore Lake to enhance identity and promote interaction and engagement between people and the streetscape environment. Interpretive signs can identify a district's name and entrances, announce important events, or display environmental information. Some identity features include gateways, signs, historical markers, installations, and banners.

Gateways

The Whitmore Lake gateway sign will identify entrances to the downtown district and mark the beginning of the area recommended for downtown identity features. The gateway design is a simple stone masonry base, the logo is designed to highlight the “more lake” slogan that reinforces residents' desires to enhance Lake access and market the Lake as the significant defining element of downtown. The sign is intended to be cut from 3/8 inch steel panel with the “more lake” section powder coated in a branded Whitmore Lake red. The lettering should be placed to be prominently viewed from the direction entering downtown. Landscape screens or buildings can be used as a back drop. The lettering can also be back-lit for night visibility.

- Kiosks and informational signs can be used proximate to gateway signs, can be attractive, useful street features. Kiosks can be used to display maps, bulletin boards, community announcements, and other important information.
- Installations of public art can be considered to enhance the gateway elements or placed at transition elements or near the core intersection of Barker and Main.

The Townships existing “Northfield Township” gateway signs should remain in place. The Whitmore Lake signs will signify the entrance to downtown and complement rather than replace them.

Signs

Signs are an effective way to welcome, alert, inform and direct users, especially at transition points. The Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) contains guidelines for sign use in the transportation network, including pedestrian and bicycle signs.

Sign branding for downtown Whitmore Lake should be used to enhance the character of the downtown and its regional recognition. Distinctive directional signs, monument signs and banners will provide user information and convey a sense of local identity.

- Sign stands can be used for temporary purposes or in permanent installations, such as district maps and informative displays.
- Whitmore Lake Banners can be displayed on new poles or hang from existing lighting and utilities. Banners can be permanent district markers or rotated to note seasons or significant events.

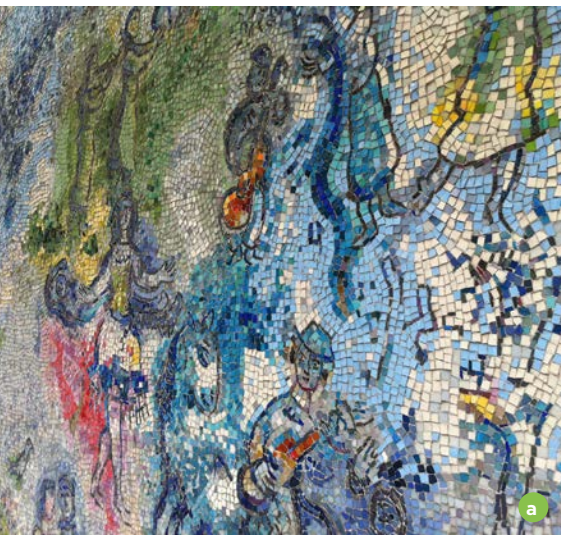
Downtown Whitmore Lake Logo/Brand

The Whitmore Lake logo is recommended to be an established brand for the downtown. The use of this logo by local organizations, businesses, and residents is encouraged.



PUBLIC ART

Art installations in downtown Whitmore Lake are encouraged. Sculptures and murals, can greatly accentuate the transportation network and improve the value of a place. Art can be effective traffic calming and can be substituted for gateway signs and wayfinding signs to reduce sign clutter. These features should be carefully placed so that they improve the walkability and bikability of the roadway without creating hazardous obstacles or distracting drivers.



a Wall Mosaic
Chicago, IL

b Wall Art
Chicago, IL

c Sculpture
Evanston, IL

d Median Sculpture
Detroit, MI

