



Memorandum

TO: City Council Members, Planning Commission Members and Nicol Pulluam, City Manager
City of Hartford

FROM: Donovan Smith, AICP Principal Planner
Hillary Taylor, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Summary of Bus Tour Notes**

DATE: July 18, 2025

A summary of the bus tour that took place on July 16, 2025 Thank you to everyone for their participation during the bus tour on July 16th. The tour took place between 10:00am and noon and was narrated by the Mayor and Pete Sinclair of the DDA. Below you will find a summary of the bus tour notes.

BUS TOUR NOTES

Library/Community Center

- Built for 2.7 million 5-8 years ago
- Used to be Red Arrow elementary
- Also houses the Genealogical Center
- The Library Board is separate from the City
- The Library Board owns the block to the south and maintains native plants
- There was some discussion about a park for children in this area
- Van Buren County may have some funding for parks
- Neighborhood parks were also discussed
- Staff should reach out to the Library Board to engage them in discussions about the Master Plan update.

Redwood Elementary School

- The School Board is also a separate entity from the City. Staff should reach out to the School Board to engage them in discussions about the Master Plan update.
- The school has a gym and a stage.
- The property was vacant land, part of Thomas Farm, before it became the school.
- They serve a Senior lunch every other month.



Recreational Fields

- There are four (4) fields by the Redwood Elementary School
- Concession stands built with Tribe support.
- There is a tournament held in the summer.
- The elementary school provides a lot of the parking for the ball fields.

Olds Avenue

- 25 years ago this property was annexed to the city
- The land runs to the highway

Woodside Apartments

- Recently re-done by Superior Builders
- Income based
- Elevator
- ~65 units

Cemetery/Agricultural lands

- The cemetery is in the Township.
- The agricultural land to the east of Center is owned by Mr. Faulkner who spends time in Florida.
- The property was re-zoned to mixed-use sometime around Covid.
- The re-zoning does not show up on the current zoning map.
- The current zoning shows the property as split zoned between commercial and agricultural.
- Staff should have a conversation with Mr. Faulker about his future plans for the property.

McDonald's and Future Casey's

- Subway is in the Township
- Behind McDonald's is a Sand and Gravel operation Puhman Excavation
- Staff should have a conversation with Puhman Excavation about the future plans for the property.
- Casey's gas station is planned to provide diesel fuel as well.
- Across from Faulkner property is the EMS Base – is this owned by the City?
- The City ends at the I-94 ramps

Center Street Apartments/ MHP behind/ DPW

- Rent subsidized housing



- ~100 units
- There is a MHP park that is currently zoned Single-Family Residential behind the Center Street Apartments
- The units were built during a time when the units were ~12-14 ft wide and 30-40 ft long – consider creating a zoning district that would facilitate the replacement of older units to conform with new State laws.
- Is there funding from the CDBG to upgrade trailers?
- DPW is also on this road.

Small lots as platted throughout the community

- Many lots are 40' x 60' making them difficult to re-build, or build new housing. Staff should evaluate the existing lots and identify appropriate setbacks and minimum lot sizes to work with the existing platted lots.
- A discussion with the Fire Marshal is necessary to determine the sizes allowed for small lots and the minimum building separation requirements.

Planned utility improvements/Road Improvements

- A 14 million dollar grant has been secured to replace the existing lead lines in the city.
- Part of this this work on the lead line replacement will include road repairs.
- There is an additional 1.5 million dollar bond to repair the roads.
- Sidewalks and walkability are important to the community, grant funding has been secured for improvements on Center Street and 60th Street.

Ely Park and Downtown

- There is an existing \$700,000 grant to improve Ely Park.
- The park is home to the Strawberry Festival in June.
- There is interest in working with the DPW to created downtown design guidelines for the Downtown to regulate street furniture, sidewalk cafes etc. Staff should set up a meeting with the DDA and the DPW leadership.

Doranne Greene/Vanderlyn

- Rent Controlled housing
- Has a PILOT on the property
- Ohio maintenance company

Industrial property/Speedway

- Factory in town that does powder coating, visible from Marion Street
- Vacant land north of Hamhock owned by the Michigan Department of Treasury



- The Speedway does two (2) nights a month, night of destruction is most popular.
- Staff should have a conversation with the owner of the Speedway about the future plans for the property.
- There is rail service in the community that is operated by West MI Rail Service. The rail hauls dairy feed, fertilizer, and cooking oil on the line typically. This generates a lot of truck traffic on the main roads and a need for support services for truck traffic.
- The owner of the rail line is Mike Hnatiuk staff should reach out and ask what future plans he has for the area.
- Ameri-Gas is located off of Prospect.
- There is a buffing and polishing facility for furniture on Prospect. The company has one (1) shift. Staff should have a conversation with the property owner about future plans for the property.

Van Buren State Park Trail head

- Located on Prospect street the Trail head is a great asset.
- The signage is old and the trail head could use some improvements.
- Staff should work with Van Buren County to get information about any planned improvements for the trail head.
- The trail head connects all the way to South Haven.

High School/Middle School

- The high school and middle school sit on the same property.
- There are ball fields for soccer and football. Soccer has been gaining popularity and is very successful.
- The school has a “school of choice” option and many children attend using this option. The population for K-12 is about 1,400.

County Fair and Township Businesses outside of the City

- The Van Buren Youth Fair is located just outside of the City and is active during the week of July 14-18th.
- There is a Lineage regional warehousing truck facility for the movement of goods in the Township.
- Paw Paw Produce is in the Township.
- A metal rolling plant for pole buildings is in the Township out by the County Fair.
- Bachman Welding and Red Arrow Automotive are also in the Township.

Summary of tasks for City Staff and McKenna Staff

1. Staff should reach out to the Library Board to engage them in discussions about the Master Plan update.



2. Staff should reach out to the School Board to engage them in discussions about the Master Plan update.
3. Staff should have a conversation with Mr. Faulker about his future plans for the agriculture property south on Center Street.
4. Staff should have a conversation with Puhрман Excavation about the future plans for the property.
5. Staff should consider creating a zoning district that would facilitate the replacement of older units in the existing MHP to conform with new State laws.
6. Staff should investigate if there is funding from the CDBG to upgrade mobile trailers.
7. Staff should evaluate the existing residential lots in the city and identify appropriate setbacks and minimum lot sizes to work with the existing platted lots.
8. A discussion with the Fire Marshal is necessary to determine the sizes allowed for small lots and the minimum building separation requirements.
9. There is interest in working with the DPW to create downtown design guidelines for the Downtown to regulate street furniture, sidewalk cafes etc. Staff should set up a meeting with the DDA and the DPW leadership.
10. The owner of the rail line is Mike Hnatiuk staff should reach out and ask what future plans he has for the area.
11. Staff should have a conversation with the owner of the Speedway about the future plans for the property.
12. There is a buffing and polishing facility for furniture on Prospect. The company has one (1) shift. Staff should have a conversation with the property owner about future plans for the property.
13. Staff should work with Van Buren County to get information about any planned improvements for the trail head.