

# Strategic Plan

2025-2030



**Lake Orion Downtown Development Authority**

**An Accredited Main Street America Program**



Approved by DDA: \_\_\_\_\_



We present, with hope and excitement, the Lake Orion Downtown Development Authority's (DDA) Strategic Plan for 2025-2030. This Plan establishes the mission, vision, values and strategic direction of the Lake Orion Downtown Development Authority and is the foundation for its commitment to the principals and goals of Main Street America, a guiding program for our Historic Downtown.

The undersigned are unified in our pledge to secure the future of Lake Orion with the same passion, history and vision that built it.

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Debbie Burgess, Chair

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Sam Caruso, Vice-Chair

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Matthew Shell, Treasurer

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Hank Lorant, Secretary

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Teresa Rutt, Council President

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Darwin McClary, Village Manager

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Chris Barnett, Orion Supervisor

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Alaina Campbell, Board Member

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Sally Medina, Board Member

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Llyod Coe, Board Member

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Matthew Gibb, Executive Director

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Janet Bloom, Assistant Director

## Purpose

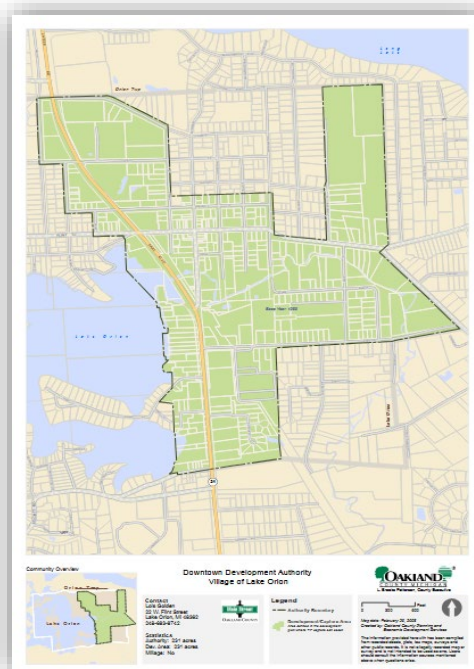
Nestled in the heart of Oakland County, Lake Orion is a bustling village with a rich history and vibrant lifestyle. Known for its motto, “Where Living is a Vacation,” Lake Orion offers both residents and visitors the perfect blend of small-town charm and modern amenities. Lake Orion is more than just a place to visit, it’s a thriving year-round community that continues to draw people in with its unique mix of natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Lake Orion’s downtown, guided and supported by the DDA since 1985, has won acclaim from multiple organizations, including accreditation from Main Street America for eighteen consecutive years. The expectations of preserving our historic character, and the need to grow and sustain a balanced and economically sustainable community create a substantial responsibility and challenge for those charged with developing and governing the Lake Orion community. A significant part of that load is shouldered by the Lake Orion Downtown Development Authority.

This is the DDA’s Strategic Plan for 2025-2030. It is a declaration of our intended work, established through our mission, vision, and shared values and articulated through a series of inter-connected goals and action plans. Our progress toward achieving these goals, and the mission they support, will be prepared, tracked and assessed so that a report of our effort and results is continuously made public. The progress made, and the lessons learned shall act as a guide to update this plan, as needed, for the benefit of this community.

The DDA, through its Board and staff, welcome ideas and input from everyone. The meetings of the DDA Board are open for comment and ideas, whether in person, by mail, email or by direct contact with staff. Contact information for the DDA, and more information about the organization, is available at [www.downtownlakeorion.org](http://www.downtownlakeorion.org), or by calling the DDA office (248) 693-9742

This map delineates the downtown district that is the primary focus of the DDA and this Strategic Plan.



## Mission

We are a community of innovative economic stewards focused on preserving and enhancing the Lake Orion DDA District to drive prosperity and a strong sense of connection for all.

## Vision

A lively lakeside downtown, where all ages come together for endless fun, connection, and unforgettable experiences in unique businesses, community spaces, and historic and natural treasures.

To achieve this vision, the DDA will work to meet the following benchmarks.

- Improve the quality of life
- Create a sense of place
- Attract and retain residents, businesses and talent
- Spur private reinvestment
- Increase property value in and around the area

The benchmarks of this plan will be met through new and ongoing DDA efforts, including,

- Infrastructure improvements to streets, sidewalks, lighting, sewer and water
- Design of public gathering places and parks
- Revitalization of vacant and underutilized properties
- Rehabilitation of historic buildings, assets and facades
- Mixed-use and middle-housing infill developments
- Business recruitment and retention programs
- Safety, security and maintenance programs
- Marketing, special events and promotions

## Values

The **Values** of DDA Board guide Board decisions, processes and operations. The Values, along with the Mission and Vision serve as “filters” for decision making.

The Board Values are:



COMMUNITY



COMMITMENT  
TO PRESERVING  
& NURTURING  
KEY ASSETS



WELCOMING



INTEGRITY

## SWOT Analysis

This plan incorporates and the strengths and weaknesses of the DDA and community, including its assets and ideological challenges.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats	Key Assets
Staff	Connection to Lake	Lumberyard Project	People without Knowledge of Happenings	Lakes/Trails/Greenspace
Beautiful Downtown	Lack of Volunteers/Committee Depth	Retail Product Gap Fill	Members of Council Wanting to Shrink or Dismantle DDA	Lumberyard
Lakes/Trails/Natural Features	Quantity & Variety of Retail & Small Food Places	Greenspace	Lack of Village Mgt. Support	Businesses & Restaurants - Unique Shops
	Village Relationship	Increase Pedestrian Traffic	Higher Sq. Ft. Rent/Price	

## Needs Assessment

Needs assessments are used to understand what's lacking in an organization or community and what resources or changes are needed to meet those unmet needs.

Physical	Economic	Social	Organizational
Façade Improvements	Small Business Support Tools/Growth	Family Activities	Decision on Outsource Vs. Village Contracts
Lumberyard Improvements	Coordinated Marketing	Activities for All Businesses	Volunteers & Revised Structure
Cross Highway Access	Money to Improve M-24	Unique/Bigger Events (don't just do it to do it)	Community Involvement/Vision
Dumpster Enclosures ( and litter control)	More Retail	Business Incentive Promotion	Less Battles
Greenspace Expansion	Grants	Placemaking for All Ages	Increase Communication/Transparency
More Gathering Spaces	Promote Tourism		

## Measuring Success

Measuring success is an essential component of a strategic plan. It helps organizations track their progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that they are on track to achieve their long-term goals. The following metrics are not an exhaustive list, but represent trackable results that can be reported, analyzed and applied to ongoing updates and extensions of the purpose and mission of the plan.

There will be progress when the Board is presented with tangible evidence of:

- Broad-based Community Support/Buy-in
- Large Volunteer Force
- Financial Strength/Support to Meet Goals, Projects and Needs
- Target Market Grows
- A Community for All Ages
- Diversity & Retention of Businesses
- Strong DDA/Village Relationship
- GAMSA Winner/National Recognition

## Stakeholders

The success of the DDA and, more importantly, of Lake Orion's downtown, will depend on partnership, collaboration and the unification of stakeholders around priorities and plans for the community.

Stakeholders include but are not limited to:

### Property Owners

Downtown Businesses

Village and Orion Residents

Developers and Investors

Nonprofit Organizations

Village and Township Government

Oakland County Government

MainStreet Oakland County

Orion Area Chamber of Comm.

### Regional Partnership(s)

University/Community College(s)

Southeast Michigan Council of Gov.

Mich. Department of Transportation

Lake Orion Lake Association

Orion Township Library

Lake Orion Community Schools

Neighborhood Organizations

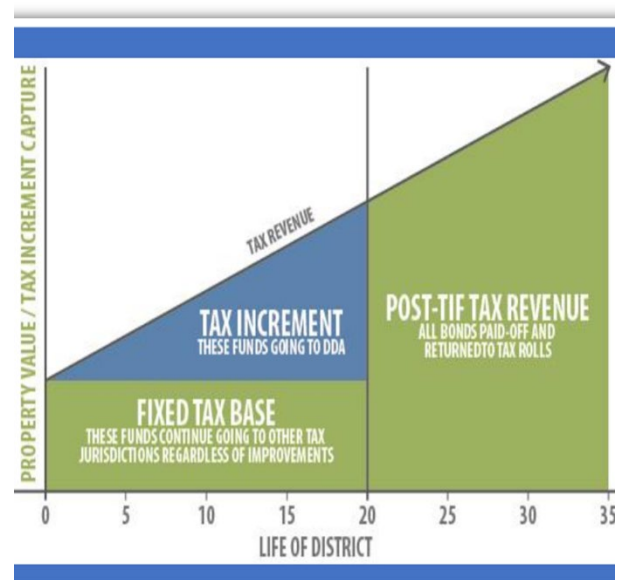
## How is the DDA Funded?

It's important to understand how the DDA is funded to carry out its mission. Part 2 of the Recodified Tax Increment Financing Act, Public Act 57 of 2018, governs the creation and operations of Downtown Development Authorities. The Act provides several different ways that DDA's can partner with municipalities, property owners and developers to finance public improvements in a defined downtown area. These include, levying mills on DDA property owners, special assessments on property within the DDA, and tax Increment Financing, also known as TIF. The Lake Orion DDA primarily uses TIF to fund its plan.

Under TIF, a specific area within the DDA is defined, a development plan is adopted, and the property tax revenues, above those paid to the village and other authorities from the base year, are transferred to the DDA to be used to finance public improvements needed to carry out the development plan. Revenues through TIF may be the sole source of financing for these public projects or they may be used in combination with other financing or funding sources.

The statutory purpose of TIF, created by the DDA Act, is to help municipalities correct and prevent deterioration of downtown business districts, encourage historic preservation and promote economic growth in the designated downtown area. Since many downtowns are the oldest areas in a community, providing and upgrading infrastructure is essential for downtown prosperity. The DDA statute provides for the use of TIF, setting up a mechanism for partnerships with other benefitting taxing units who also have a stake in the health of downtown, ensuring funds are used for needed public improvements. Public investment is a catalyst for private investment creating the tax revenue to pay for the public improvements.

When a TIF district is created, its current taxable value is established and that is the value base for the duration of the TIF's existence. As long as the TIF District exists, the Village, and other taxing authorities, continues to receive revenues normally generated by the taxable value base. TIF revenues are generated from the difference between the new annual taxable value and the value base. That difference between new value and base value is placed into the TIF Fund and used for public improvements identified in the TIF development plan.



As an example, some of the public projects already completed from Lake Orion TIF include:

- Streetscapes
- Parking Lots
- Paint Creek Pedestrian Bridge
- Event and Festival Utilities
- Utility Relocation
- Public Art
- Wayfinding Signage
- Downtown Repair and Maintenance
- Public Space Improvements
- Park Improvements
- On-going Maintenance

## Transformational Strategies

The Main Street Approach is centered around Transformation Strategies. A Transformational Strategy articulates a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a downtown or commercial district's economy. Each Transformation Strategy is implemented through activities in the four broad areas of work represented by the Four Points: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization.

The DDA Board has engaged and analyzed the district's market position and reflected and included the community's attitudes, metrics, demographics and opportunities to focus the identity and priority goals of the DDA. Acknowledging that an effective Transformational Strategy serves a particular customer segment, responds to an underserved market demand, or creates a differentiated destination, this plan is built with actions and goals intended to build and support two Transformational Strategies.



**LAKESHORE  
ECONOMY**



**COMMUNITY  
BUILDING**



## Areas of Focus

Over the course of this plan the DDA will focus on five areas to accomplish defined goals and actions to implement these transformational strategies.



## LAKESHORE ECONOMY

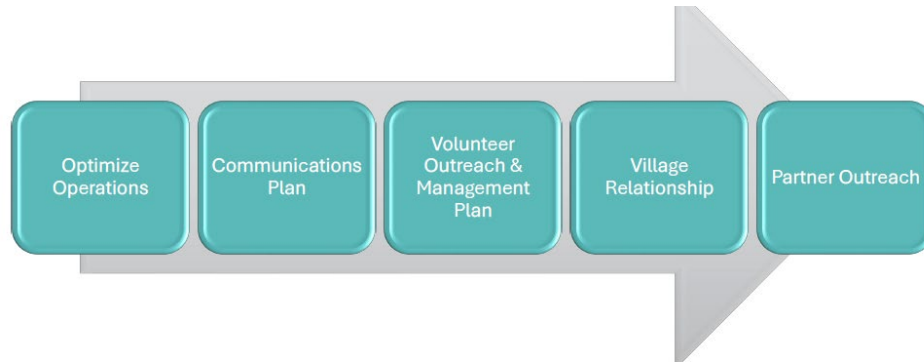
FOCUS AREA	GOALS
1. Enhance Downtown Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gateway Project – Lumberyard</li> <li>• Trail Access &amp; Amenities</li> <li>• Walkable Lake Access</li> <li>• Community Gathering &amp; Green Spaces for All Ages (Public &amp; Private)</li> </ul>
2. Grow Local Tourism Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Mix Analysis and Recruitment Strategy</li> <li>• Small Business Support Tools/Growth</li> <li>• Lakeshore-centric and Trail-based Events &amp; Promotions - Signature Events, Recreational Activities for Families &amp; All Ages</li> <li>• Tourism Marketing –Co-op &amp; Coordinated Business Opportunities</li> </ul>
3. Create Great First Impressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Façade Improvements</li> <li>• Dumpster Enclosures</li> </ul>





## COMMUNITY BUILDING

FOCUS AREA	GOALS
1. Strengthen Local Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Optimize Operations – Contracts &amp; Accounts</li><li>• Improve Village Partnership</li><li>• Expand Other Organizational Partnerships for Volunteer Resources &amp; Project Alignment</li><li>• Grants/Foundations/Resources</li></ul>
2. Increase Community Involvement & Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Refreshed Communications &amp; Brand Messaging Plan</li><li>• Volunteer Outreach &amp; Management Plan</li></ul>



The Action Plans attached hereto are incorporated into this Strategic Plan