

Commercial Corridors/Downtown Plan

Background

Public Act 197 of 1975 is an economic development tool that provides the authority for communities in the State of Michigan to create a Downtown Development Authority. This act was amended and replaced by PA 57 of 2018, which consolidates the state's redevelopment tools that utilize tax increment financing (TIF).

The Lathrup Village Downtown Development Authority was created by the City Council on January 12, 1998 because the city experienced notable property value deterioration and loss along Southfield Road. The DDA district is generally described as incorporating all public and private real estate along 11 Mile Road, 12 Mile Road, and Southfield Road including public rights-of-way and alleys. See Map 11.

The future success of Lathrup Village's current effort to revitalize its commercial area will depend, in large measure, on the readiness and ability to initiate public improvements that strengthen the commercial area and when feasible to participate in the development of new private uses that clearly demonstrate the creation of new jobs, the attraction of new business, and the generation of additional tax revenues.

The DDA leverages public investment, in the form of Tax Increment Financing revenues and a 1.9 mil tax on Southfield Road properties, to attract private investment in the city. The DDA works with state, regional, and county officials to strengthen the economic position of our existing businesses.

The benefit of using tax increment financing as a method to finance district improvements is that all local units of government levying taxes within the City of Lathrup Village contribute to the revitalization of the business district. These include:

- City of Lathrup Village (All Millages)
- Oakland County
- Oakland County Parks
- Huron Clinton Metroparks
- Oakland County Community College

Benefits to the DDA are broad and include:

- Business owners from increased traffic
- Property owners from increased property values
- Area residents from increased dining, shopping, and cultural opportunities and, often, increased property values
- Lathrup Village from increased property values and reputation as a destination

The DDA is a strong supporter of community events that reinforce the positive image of a thriving city. These year-round activities attract people to the heart of the city, and raise awareness within the region of the city's strengths.

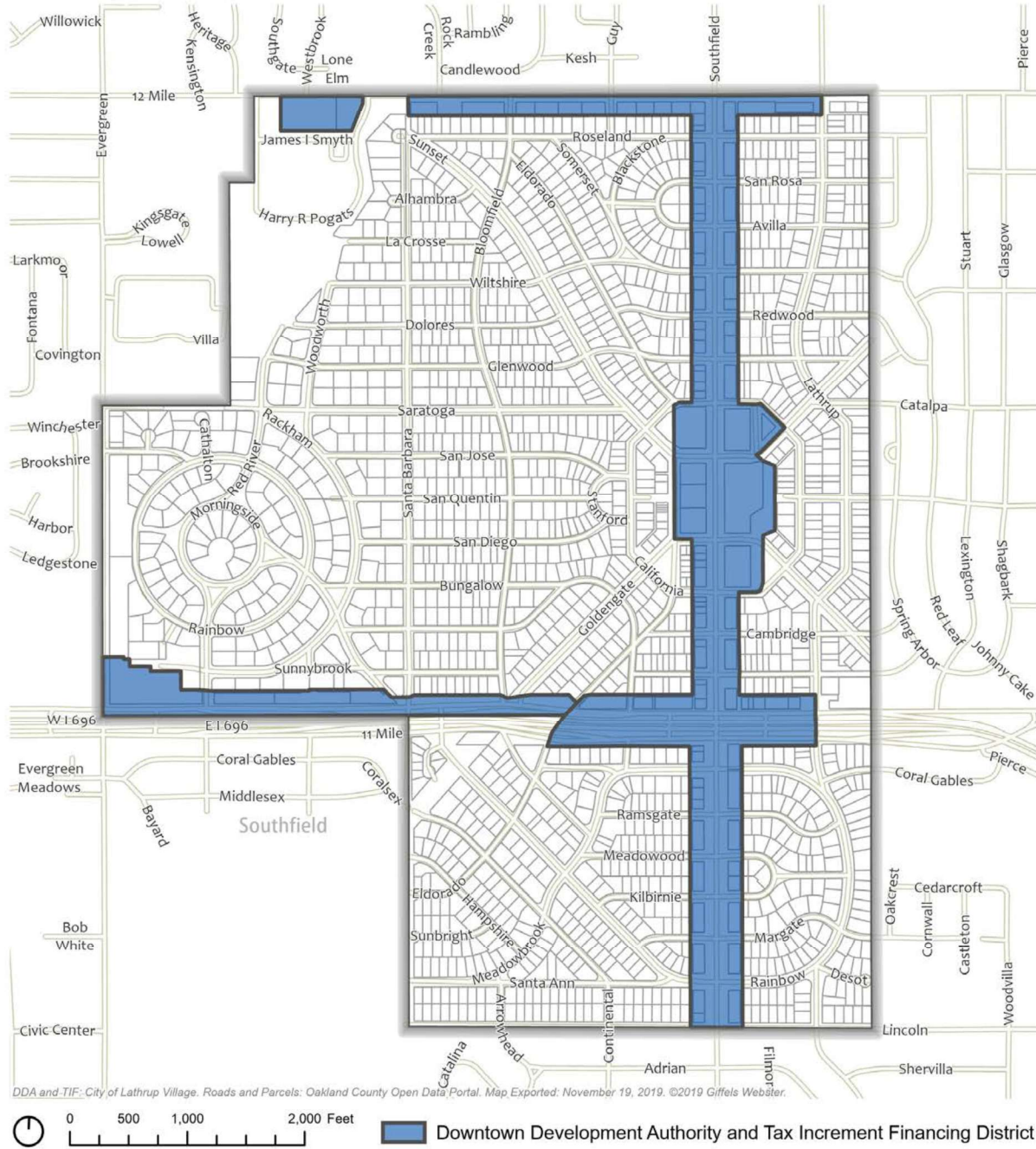
Market Study

In late 2019 and early 2020, a market study was prepared, in conjunction with this Comprehensive Plan. The market study is framed by changing demographics and trends in residential, retail, office and industrial uses. It should be noted that the market study was conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic. Pandemic-related changes to gatherings of all kinds began in March 2020 and continue into 2021. In the short-term, people have worked and attended school remotely when possible and have stopped traveling, dining out, going to sporting events and other activities that involve large gatherings of people. The long-term impacts of the pandemic are unknown, but communities are looking for ways to offer flexible land-use regulations to be prepared for future needs.

The 2020 market study included a survey of residents (about 90 residents responded). With respect to shopping, residents responded that:

- Typical households spend \$122 per week on average on groceries and related products.
- The three primary areas for grocery shopping, which is a surrogate for convenience shopping in general, are Southfield at Twelve Mile and Evergreen and Royal Oak.
- Most households purchase groceries at Kroger, Aldi, Market Fresh, Meijer, and Trader Joes.

MAP 10: LATHRUP VILLAGE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA) DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



DDA and TIF
CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE

- Less than one-third of the households have members that purchase grocery items at non-supermarket, non-box operations, like independent bakeries, farmers' markets, and health food stores, at least twice per month. Many of the products purchased are available throughout the entire year.
- Online purchases are significant and symbolize the exportation of dollars from the community. About one-half of the households purchase merchandise online at least once per week. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of the homes have someone that buys merchandise online at least twice per month, indicating further exportation of dollars. It should be noted that the Covid-19 pandemic likely increased the number and frequency of online purchases significantly.
- At least 64% have one or more members purchasing either or both lunch and dinner outside of the home at food preparation establishments at least once per week.
- A substantial number of households have at least one person who eats lunch outside the home at least once per week. (This implies there is a lunch trade market from residents of the area as well as potential employees and others who live outside the area).
- The preferred food service establishment for lunch and dinner is "local non-chain full-service restaurants."

In terms of housing, nearly all of the respondents own their homes and most reside there all year. Almost half have lived in their current home at least 10 years. Other housing-related findings include:

- About one-half of all households say they may be or are likely to move from their current home in the next five years. Those residents say that lifestyle changes and medical conditions are the two primary reasons for likely moves.
- For those that may or are likely to move, the majority will seek the same size or smaller units than that which they currently occupy.

Walkability continues to be important for Lathrup Village residents. Of those who may or are likely to move, "walkability" is a significant issue.

- About three-fourths (74%) of all households that will potentially move defined being near work, recreational opportunities, and walking areas as being either "extremely important" or "very important." No responding household defined walkability as "not being important at all," and only six percent identified it as being "not so important."

Market Study Findings

Housing

- The market could support 77 additional non-senior-oriented housing units and 130 market-rate senior-related housing in Lathrup Village by 2030. With redevelopment efforts, the city could see up to 150 new senior-related housing units by 2030.
- These could be in the form of single-family structures or non-single-family structures such as duplexes, townhomes, mid-rise three to four-story structures, and other attached structures.
- Many of the residents of the new housing would likely result from the relocation of existing residents, freeing existing housing for households headed by other active adults or younger.

Related Goods & Related Services

New rooftops (additional housing units) result in increased spending and demand for retail goods and related supportable space. Spending will occur in many places, including operations near home and work. Online purchases, vacation spending, and other activity will continue to diminish local sales. On the other hand, people working within the area, employed nearby, and those coming to Lathrup Village for a range of purposes will spend money in the city. Particularly during midday, people who work nearby come to the city for food services and other retail.



The Jagged Fork is a popular restaurant for breakfast and lunch in Lathrup Village.



Most of the Southfield Road corridor is occupied by one story commercial buildings, filled with office, retail and personal service uses.

While there does not seem to be a demand for additional retail goods and related service space, there is the potential to capture exported space in “Food,” “General Merchandise,” and “Miscellaneous” retail that includes operations such as Barber/Beauty salons, Book Stores, Florist/ Nurseries, Paper/Paper Products, and Gifts and Novelties. The catalytic activity and focus could be on specialty food activity.

Office Space

The office market continues to change with the increased emphasis on flexible work arrangements, co-working space, and in-home live/work activity. Added rooftops increase demand for professional services and related space derived from the new households. Rooftop growth and the identified desire of people to work near home also provides the opportunity for office space growth.

New demand generates about 137,000 square feet of office space by 2030. However, about forty-five percent of the space will be “in homes.” There is a potential unmet niche for co-working space in Lathrup Village. Personal and professional service space should be viewed as likely uses to fill vacant spaces. Again, post-pandemic changes could result in lower demand for office space - or increased use of in-home offices.



Office buildings in the corridor are dated; many house different uses than the office uses originally intended.

Market Study Recommendations

- Enhance walkability within neighborhoods.
- Create or enhance spaces for activity for meetings, small family events, etc.
- Expand specialty food opportunities beyond a traditional farmers' market.
- Continue supporting the enhancements of building façades through grants
- Work with property owners to address the former school buildings and property and contiguous properties. Recruit a developer or developer partner to buy, lease, or pursue partnership options with current owners. Explore mixed-use of activity on the site and buildings that include active adult and the gamut of senior living arrangements
- Utilize space on first floors for year-around and seasonal pop-up retail activities
- Explore reuse for the above in combination with co-working space.
- Expand community activity space for arts, culture, educational training.

The following is also suggested:

- If needed to increase development density options, explore the transitioning of alleys in the rear of the key parcels to private use or consideration in density requirements.
- Consider and explore funding for potential five-year tax abatement, an equity financing fund, public-private investment funding entity for a stake in redevelopment, or other mechanisms to diminish short-term redevelopment risk and increase the probability of property redevelopment.

The complete Market Study is found in the Appendix.



Enhancing walkability will support residents' desires and needs to walk and bicycle in and around Lathrup Village.



Village Center

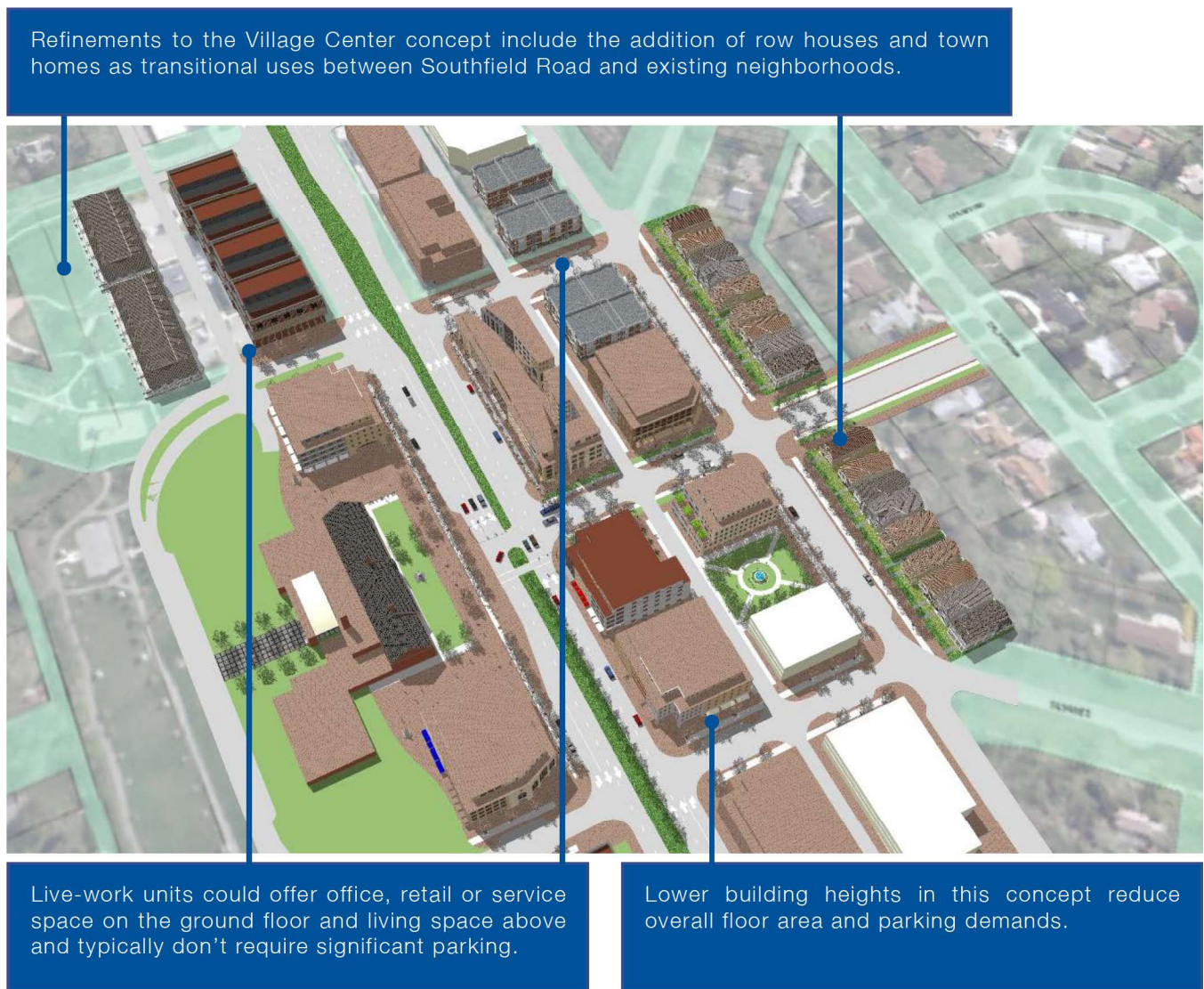
The concept for the Village Center was first established in the 2009 Master Plan. It was further fleshed out and illustrated to include a conceptual development layout and precedent images from developments across the US, intended to help the community, property owners and developers understand what the Village Center could become.

Prior to this Comprehensive Plan process, some city officials, property owners and residents expressed concern that, after 12 years of envisioning redevelopment, nothing has been realized. And yet, it remains clear that the corridor remains in need of redevelopment to improve the city's tax base.

Other goals of the city - providing destinations to which residents can walk, a variety of housing opportunities and improving walkability - all are reflected in the Village Center concept. While the conversations tend to revolve around the redevelopment of the school property (see Redevelopment Sites in the pages that follow), there may be other opportunities to spur redevelopment in the corridor.

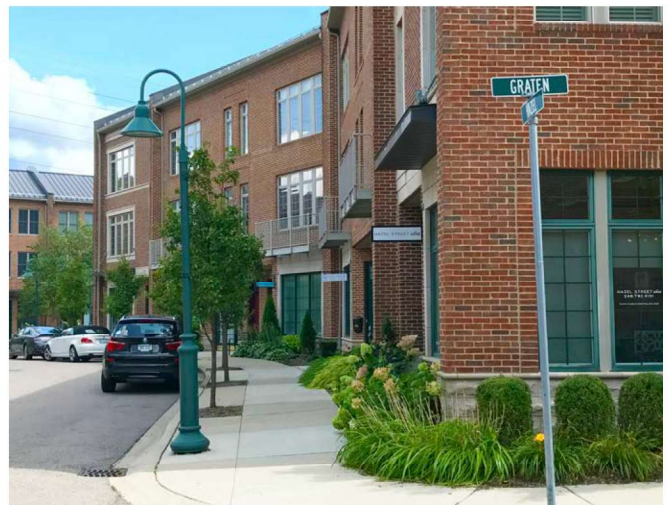
Housing is one of the strongest elements of the current real estate market. In the refined development concept, opportunities to add row houses, town homes and stacked flats in the transition areas could add the needed rooftops to draw additional retail and restaurant uses the city desires.

FIGURE 1: VILLAGE CENTER REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPT





Attached townhomes in Royal Oak (above) and Dearborn (below).



Examples of live-work buildings in Birmingham, MI



Roanoke Commons in Roanoke, TX is a 15,000 sf two-story development with commercial uses on the ground floor, active outdoor space and residential dwellings on the upper floor. Source: Newstream Commercial

Redevelopment Sites

To implement the goals of this Comprehensive Plan, three specific redevelopment sites have been identified by the City that are currently vacant or under-utilized, given their location, unique features, and size. Concepts for redevelopment of these suggest key components that are envisioned and approaches to facilitate redevelopment.

26026 Southfield Road

This site is currently undeveloped and zoned MX - Mixed Use. Permitted uses include general retail business, personal service establishments, office uses, second-floor residential, and restaurants. Surrounding parcels to the north and south on the east side of Southfield Road, as well as across Southfield Road to the west are zoned MX. Property to the east is zoned single-family residential. Generally, the parcels along Southfield Road are developed with a mix of office and strip commercial. The site also has high accessibility to the major thoroughfare of I-696 via Southfield Road.



Above: 26026 Southfield Road abuts single family homes and is separated by an existing masonry wall.

Below: The site is currently an undeveloped parking lot with expansive frontage on Southfield Road.



Components of the Redevelopment

Land Use

This parcel located on the east side of Southfield Road, south of I-696 in the southeast neighborhood. It has been vacant for at least ten years. Properties to the north, south and west along Southfield Road are developed with one-story buildings that are used for a mix of retail, office and personal service uses. Buildings in this portion of the corridor are setback considerably from Southfield Road, due to the large right-of-way in this area.

Building Form

Most of the buildings in the corridor occupy the width of their lots and have parking in the front. However, it is envisioned that moving buildings to the front lot line with minimal setbacks would narrow the built environment along the corridor, creating a greater sense of place. This type of enclosure would encourage walkability by creating more of a human scale for the corridor. Parking would be provided behind the building and “tuck under” parking could also be provided as the two-story concept model illustrates.

Transportation

Southfield Road is a heavily traveled roadway that serves many communities. However, not everyone can or wants to drive their own vehicle. The site has a bus stop that is essentially a small patch of built-up ground that spans a drainage culvert along Southfield Road. The connection to the sidewalk should be enhanced and the stop could also be improved with a bench and/or other shelter structure.

In addition, all parts of the site should be served by non-motorized transportation facilities that connect to adjacent sidewalks, roadways and sites as identified in the city’s Complete Streets plan. Connections and wayfinding signage should be provided to the existing sidewalk network. It is anticipated that vehicular access will tap into the existing street network.

Sustainability

Development on this site should be based on a framework of sustainable building and site design practices that offers a model for development and redevelopment elsewhere in the city. The use of low-impact design, pervious paving materials, and native landscape materials should be prioritized. Redevelopment of the site should include native, low-maintenance landscape with trees, shrubbery and other plantings with seasonal color.

Development of the District

Zoning for the parcel is currently MX Mixed Use, which supports the development concept illustrated below. Design guidelines, similar to those the city has for the Village Center district, should be developed to further illustrate the important elements of building design that support pedestrian activity.

FIGURE 2: SOUTHFIELD ROAD REDEVELOPMENT SITE



House in the Woods

The “House in the Woods” site is somewhat renowned in the city, as it was originally developed in 1927 with a home for Louise Lathrup Kelley, original developer of Lathrup Village. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998, along with that portion of the city built through 1953. In 2009, the house was struck by lightning and burned to the point it was no longer salvageable. The structure was removed and site was acquired by the city. Since the acquisition, the city allowed interested residents the opportunity to convert the property into a nature preserve. Unfortunately, the volunteer effort was not sustainable.

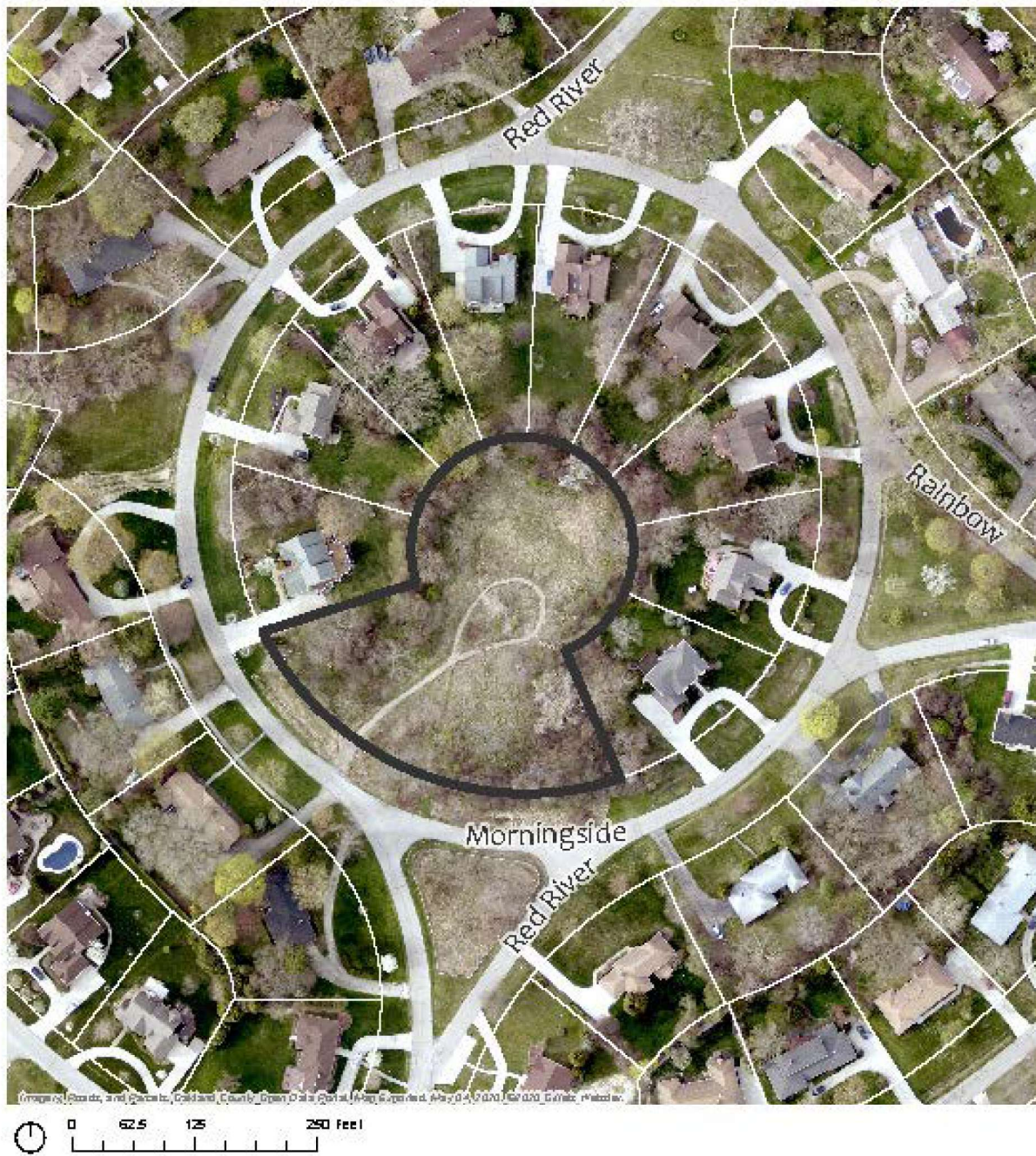


Above: Historic photo of the house (source: Detroit Public Library Digital Images)

Below: The site is currently undeveloped and heavily wooded.



MAP 12: LATHRUP VILLAGE HOUSE IN THE WOODS REDEVELOPMENT SITE



House in the Woods
CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE

Components of the Redevelopment

Land Use

Given its location in the middle of the neighborhood, residential uses are preferred by the city, who has considered developing the site as a park. However, the cost of development in addition to ongoing maintenance and operation of a park require resources that would be taken away from other city parks and the city prefers to see the site developed with homes, which also returns the site to the tax rolls.

Building Form

Replicating the building form of the adjacent homes would result in two, possibly three, new homes. However, arranged in a more compact fashion, eight to ten smaller homes could be developed on this site. These homes may be desirable by older residents looking for smaller homes (especially if built as ranches or laid out for first floor living), and more manageable yards as well as by younger professionals looking to move into the city. In creating a compact site layout, a small common space to be enjoyed by all of the neighborhood residents is another benefit.

Transportation

It is anticipated that pedestrian and vehicular access will tap into the existing street network. There are no sidewalks in this portion of the city, but the area is covered by a bike route.

Sustainability

Sustainable building and site design practices can offer a model for development and redevelopment elsewhere in the city. The compact site design allows new homes to be built while minimizing the amount of land needed. Other low-impact design techniques, including the use of native landscape materials should be prioritized.

Development of the District

Zoning for the parcel is currently zoned R3 Single Family Cluster Housing, which allows single-family dwelling units to be developed with varied yard setback requirements to (a) facilitate development of parcels that are difficult to develop under the usual standards, (b) allow for a single-family detached residential development without

increasing the permitted density, and/or (c) enhance useful open space and preserve significant trees and other natural features through the proper utilization of density transfer techniques.

Currently, this type of development would require council approval under the variance provisions of the zoning ordinance. Specific standards relating to building form, placement and architectural standards should be developed for this district to allow the type of compact development noted here.



Annie Lathrup School

The Annie Lathrup School is the last remaining historic structure on Southfield Road. This building is currently vacant. The structure is significant because it tells the story of Lathrup Village as well as provides an example of a different architectural character and building form than is seen elsewhere in the corridor. The school is designated as a local historic district, which means that the alteration of the boundaries of the district or modification of the structure require review and approval by the Historic District Commission.

The former Annie Lathrup School has been vacant for several years and is deteriorating. The school sits on a large parcel on Southfield Road, and is adjacent to City Hall and the community park. The parcel is at the heart of the Village Center district, which encompasses all of the segments of the California Drive octagon.



Above: The Annie Lathrup School site is vacant with large adjacent parking lots.

Below: The site is one of the only historical buildings in the city and features ornate brick work and stone details.



MAP 13: LATHRUP VILLAGE ANNIE LATHRUP SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT SITE



Annie Lathrup School
CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE

Components of the Redevelopment

Land Use

The vision for a “village center” was first expressed in the city’s 2009 Master Plan, which illustrated a plan for the revitalization of the Southfield Road corridor that centered on the “hub of the wheel” where several of the city’s streets converge. Since then, that vision has been refined, Zoning Ordinance standards created, and design guidelines adopted that set up a framework for redevelopment in the Village Center. The Annie Lathrup School is a highly visible redevelopment parcel that could begin to provide the type of mixed use the City envisions for the Village Center. It is envisioned that this site will retain the historic structure and allow for additional buildings that could incorporate a mix of public and private property, including residential, office, retail, restaurant, entertainment, gathering spaces, and recreation areas.

Building Form

While it is envisioned that the existing structure will be rehabilitated, new buildings are also expected and should be placed in a way that complements the school. Building walls and spaces between buildings will give pedestrians a protected feeling while providing space for pocket parks, plazas, courtyards or linkages and passageways to the rear of buildings. Off-street parking lots in front of buildings detract from the pedestrian-focused site layout that is desired. Roads should support the built environment and accommodate pedestrian and vehicular access. Buildings are envisioned to be at least two stories in height, and may be a maximum of five stories on Southfield Road, when the top floor is set back ten (10) feet from all building sides. Other buildings will be a maximum of three stories on other roads. Public spaces should include the following:

- Opportunities for people to gather formally, such as for art fairs, concerts, or other events, as well as informally, for a rest, a chance meeting, or to people-watch.
- Courtyards and Arcades—Spaces created by buildings that foster a feeling of intimacy and create a sense of connection from people to place

- The current civic facilities are intended to remain in the Village Center area, but may be leveraged or reconfigured to accommodate the redevelopment as envisioned for a vibrant, compact, pedestrian-oriented downtown area.

Transportation

The basic building blocks of the transportation network are the preservation of the existing historic building (Annie Lathrup School) and two main roadways that accommodate vehicular traffic with a pedestrian-friendly focus that includes on-street parking, wide sidewalks and abundant landscaping. Key elements in the concept include:

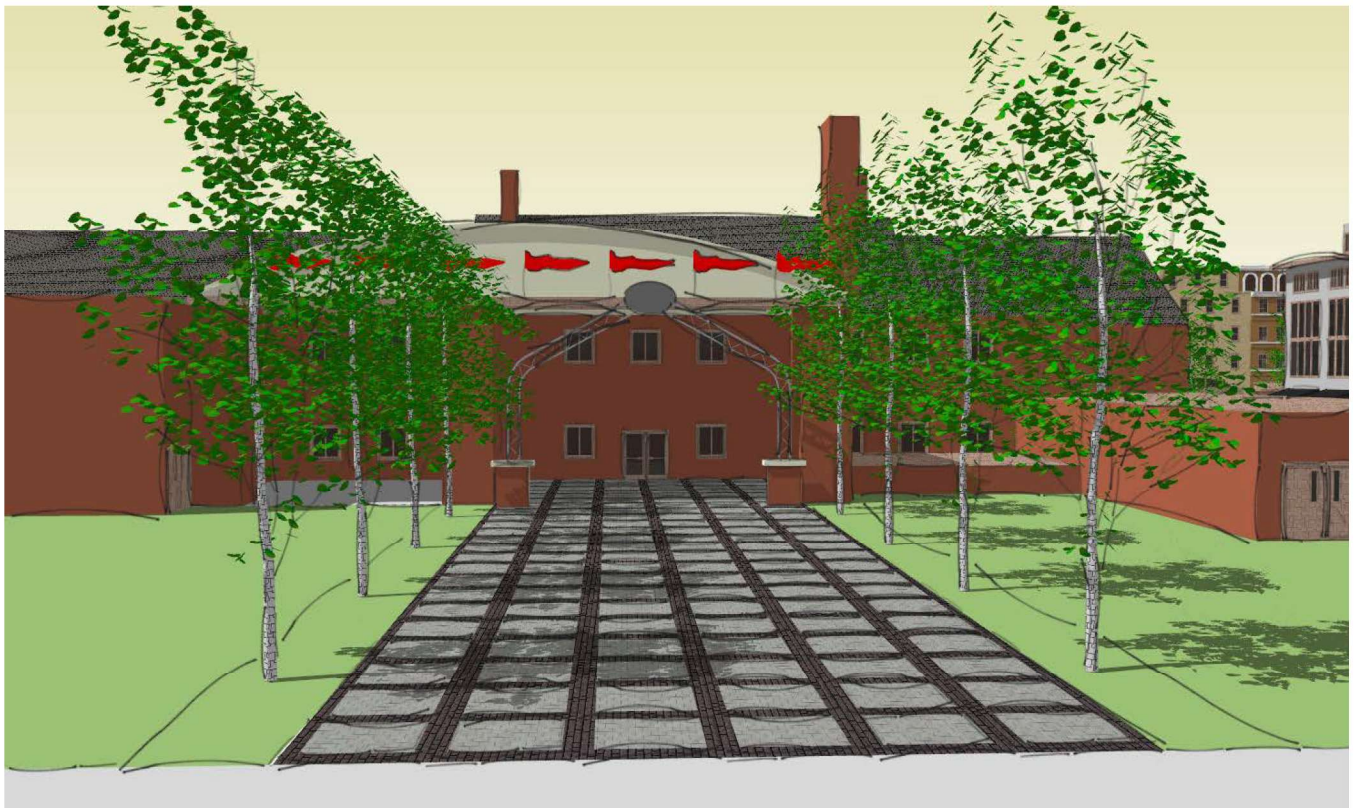
- Southfield Road: The existing 160 ft ROW includes double rows of street trees create a sense of place and makes corridor greener. It could be narrowed to 120 ft of ROW, depending upon the ultimate future road cross-section, which would provide more area for adjacent land development.
- A new Street, “Park Street Promenade”: Features a 100 ft ROW. Again, double rows of street trees create a sense of place and makes corridor greener—more “park-like.” This street will connect the Annie Lathrup School Plaza to the western end of the downtown area.

Sustainability

Development on this site should be based on a framework of sustainable building and site design practices that offers a model for development and redevelopment elsewhere in the city. The use of low-impact design, pervious paving materials, and native landscape materials should be prioritized. Redevelopment of the site should seek to rehabilitate the existing structure to the greatest extent possible.

Development of the District

Zoning for the parcel is currently VC Village Center. Future amendments to this district may be needed to refine building and site standards and also to provide additional graphics that help illustrate building regulations. In addition, the city should explore other properties in the Village Center district for catalyst development potential.



These images illustrate the preservation of the Annie Lathrup School structure and its enhancement by adjacent development, outdoor spaces and plazas.