

BEST Benton Harbor



2023 Community Plan

Benton Harbor, Michigan

November 2023

BEST Benton Harbor

2023 Community Plan

Benton Harbor, Michigan

November 2023

Prepared with the assistance of:



151 S. Rose Street, Suite 920

Kalamazoo, MI 49007

T: 248.596.0920

F: 248.596.0930

www.mcka.com

Acknowledgments

CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Marcus Muhammad
Sharon Henderson
1st Ward Commissioner
Jerry Edwards
2nd Ward Commissioner
Juanita Henry
3rd Ward Commissioner
Ethel Clark-Griffin
4th Ward Commissioner
Edward Isom
Commissioner-at-Large
Ronald Singleton
Commissioner-at-Large
Mary Alice Adams
Commissioner-at-Large
Duane Seats
Commissioner-at-Large/Mayor Pro-Tem

CITY ADMINISTRATION

Ellis Mitchell
City Manager
Tiffany Moore
City Clerk
Maurice Bruce
Chief Code Compliance Officer
Alex Little
Director of Community and Economic Development
Angela Story
Assessor
Daniel E. McGinnis Jr.
Director of Public Safety
Lesia Osler
Water Payment Administrator
Darel Rice
Water Plant Supervisor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Lee Reed
Chairman
Ellis Mitchell
City Manager
Mayor Marcus Muhammed
Juanita Henry
3rd Ward Commissioner
Rich Hensel
Vice Chair
Commissioner Eddie Marshall
Commissioner Glenn Yarbrough

BEST BENTON HARBOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mayor Marcus Muhammad
Ellis Mitchell
City Manager
Lee Reed
Planning Commission Chair
Rich Hensel
Downtown Development Authority Chair
Alex Little
Director of Community and Economic Development
Dimetrius Meeks
Public Works
Terry Stokes
Business Owner
Zach Vaughn
Cornerstone Alliance
Kim Gallagher
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
Mamie Yarbrough
Berrien County Commissioner
Christine Wilke
Prairie Real Estate and Development
Ambie Bell
Resident Representative and Business Owner
Barbara Sistrunk
Summit Financial
Angel Crayton
Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority
Dashuna Robinson
Benton Harbor Area School Board Representative
Alloyd Blackmon
Center for Better Health
Ashley Hines
Benton Harbor Community Development Corporation
Deborrah O'Connor
Whirlpool
Stefanie R Harvey-Vandenberg
Whirlpool
Andrew Haan
Cornerstone Alliance
Princella Tobias
Benton Harbor Spirit News

Nick Gunn
Resident Representative, Mr. Benton Harbor 2022
Sharon Brown
Resident Representative, Owner of African American History and Literature Gallery
Deidre Fields
Resident Representative and Business Owner

TALENT SHOW COMPETITION WINNERS

Oalliyah Hornes
Demonte Bradley
Tyrece Lamar
Andrian Valentine

CONSULTANT TEAM

McKenna Team
John Jackson, *President*
Paul Lippens, *Vice President, Project Manager*
Maya Baker, *Assistant Planner, Project Planner*
Chris Khorey, *Senior Principal Planner*
Carrie Leitner, *Art Director*
Adam Cook, *Principal Planner*
Erin Raine, *Graphic Designer*
Jeff Keesler, *Associate Planner*
James Kilborn, *Associate Planner*
Ashley Amey, *Assistant Planner*
Alexis Farrell, *Assistant Planner*
Emily Huhman, *Assistant Planner*
Lauren Sayre, *Assistant Planner*
McKenna's Partners
Bob Gibbs, *President, Gibbs Planning Group*
Devondre Jones, *President, DanceSpire*

Contents

01	Community Action Plan	1
	Vision Statement	1
	How to Use the Action Plan	2
	Goals and Objectives	4
02	Securing Community	13
	Introduction	15
	Increasing City Capacity	15
	Equity Opportunity Areas	24
03	Growing Community	33
	New Resident Outreach	35
	Middle Housing and Neighborhood Investment	38
04	Progressing Community	69
	City /Publicly Owned Property	71
	Tools for Development	77
	Neighborhood Middle Housing Concept Plans	80
05	Connecting Community	101
	Parks and Boulevard System	103
	Transit - TCATA	113
	Complete Streets	114
06	Building Community	119
	Future Land Use Plan	121
	Zoning Plan	138
07	Engaging Community	143
	General Summary of Public Engagement Events	144
	Planning Week	145
	Neighborhood Workshops	149
	Best Benton Harbor Talent Competition	152
	July 11th Open House	153
	Online Engagement	153
	Meeting Log	155

08	Understanding Community	157
	Benton Harbor History.....	157
	Demographic Analysis.....	168
	Demographic Analysis Summary	188
09	Community Atlas	189
	Spatial Analysis.....	189

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1.	Equity Opportunity Areas and Community Facilities	22
Map 2.	Middle Housing Opportunities.....	50
Map 3.	Neighborhood Middle Housing Concept Plans.....	84
Map 4.	Parks and Boulevards System with Roadway Classification.....	108
Map 5.	Future Land Use	130
Map 6.	Benton Harbor–St Joseph Urban Area Map	168
Map 7.	Benton Harbor–St. Joseph Urban Area.....	191
Map 8.	Existing Land Use	192
Map 9.	2019 Estimated Traffic Volumes	193
Map 10.	2020 Estimated Traffic Volumes	194
Map 11.	Existing Fixed Transit Routes.....	195
Map 12.	Non-Motorized Pathways	196
Map 13.	Floodplains.....	197
Map 14.	Wetlands	198
Map 15.	Homestead Exemptions.....	199
Map 16.	Parcels Assessed Values	200
Map 17.	Parcels Assessed Values 3D Scene	201
Map 18.	Parcels Assessed Values per Acre.....	202
Map 19.	Parcels Assessed Values per Acre 3D Scene	203

Community Action Plan

Vision Statement

Benton Harbor will experience a tremendous resurgence of community pride, identity, and overall image and appearance. Benton Harbor will experience new job growth, new residential and commercial development, improvements in parks and open space, a decrease in crime, the creation of stronger neighborhoods, a healthier population with more healthy food options, improved communication between the City and its residents, more educational opportunities, and an overall improved appearance and cleanliness of the City.

This Vision Statement reinforces the City's Strategic Goals, as follows:

- Increase the City of Benton Harbor's total residential population
- Increase the City of Benton Harbor's tax base
- Increase housing for working families in the City of Benton Harbor
 - » Replace blighted and/or obsolete low-income housing with high-quality affordable housing options for people in need of financial assistance
 - » Provide attainable workforce housing, middle housing, and multi-family options for all
- Increase businesses and create jobs, and attract new water users to the City of Benton Harbor
- Rebuild the public school population

Creating a Living Plan with Continual Community Engagement

The Best Benton Harbor Strategic Action Plan is intended to be a living document, that is implemented and updated with residents. The State of Michigan requires City plans to be updated every five years, however, the City intends to continue to have an open conversation and revisit this plan with residents as projects are implemented.



How to Use the Action Plan

This section presents tools and techniques that residents, community leaders, and City administration can use to implement the Best Benton Harbor Community Plan. Specific recommendations for implementing certain goals and objectives established by residents during the public engagement efforts are also provided.

The Best Benton Harbor Community Plan recommends a future vision for the community. This Plan builds upon Benton Harbor's existing assets and opportunities to attract new development and new residents. Moving forward, Benton Harbor will be a gentrification-proof city that serves the needs of its residents through economic and sustainable planning and policy decisions. The goals and objectives of the Best Benton Harbor Community Plan should be reviewed often and be considered in decision-making by the City. Successful implementation of this plan will be the result of actions taken by the City Commission, City Departments, the Planning Commission, regional- and state-level governmental agencies, private residents and organizations, and other elected and appointed officials. This section identifies and describes actions and tools available to implement the vision created in this Plan. Broadly stated, the Best Benton Harbor Community Plan will be implemented incrementally by working on the value statements identified for the plan goals.

The tables on the following pages present a detailed summary of all of the recommended implementation activities, including partners for completing the activity, and available funding resources for each activity.

Legend

Priority	
A	Most Important
B	Very Important
C	Important

Timeframe	
1	1–3 years
2	3–5 years
3	5+ years

Responsibility	
	Project Lead
	Key Participant
	Contributor

Entity Abbreviations	
BCPRC	Berrien County Parks & Recreation Commission
BCRD	Berrien County Road Department
BHAS	Benton Harbor Area Schools
BHPL	Benton Harbor Public Library
BO	Business Owners
BRA	Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
CC	City Commission
CED	Community & Economic Development
CM	Community Members
CO	Code Compliance
DDA	Downtown Development Authority
EGLE	Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, & Energy
LC	Legislative Commission
MDOT	Michigan Department of Transportation
MEDC	Michigan Economic Development Corporation
MHM	Morton House Museum
PC	Planning Commission
PD	Private Developers
PFD	Personnel & Finance Department
PR	Parks & Recreation Department
PS	Public Safety
SD	Sanitation Department
SMRC	Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber
SWMPC	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
TCATA	Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority
U	Utility Companies
UD	Utility Department
WD	Water Department

Funding	
Public	Includes public funds from the City operating budget, County, and State funding. May also include local government bonds and grants.
Private	Includes funds from private sources such as grant monies, corporate funding, or property owners.
TIF	Tax Increment Financing Incentive Districts, established by legislation in the local jurisdiction.

Goals and Objectives

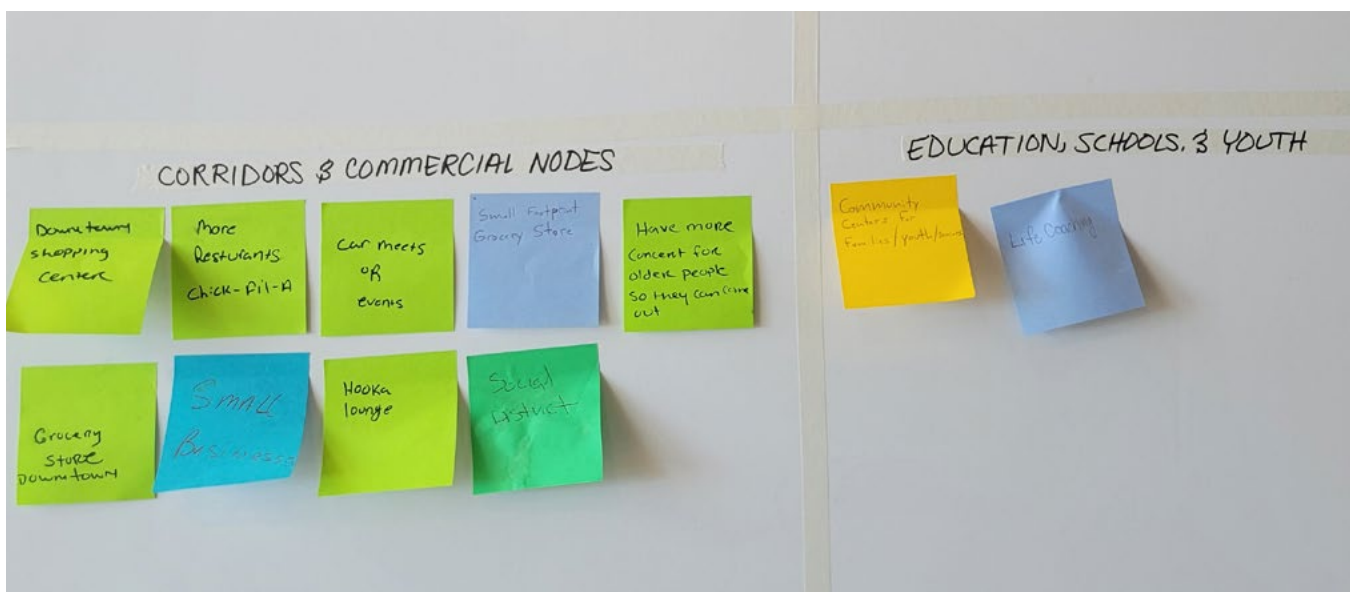


Goal 1

Benton Harbor residents will live in complete neighborhoods with thoughtful and equitable access to diverse housing opportunities, healthy food, local services, civic spaces, recreation, and shopping. Benton Harbor long-time residents, homeowners, workforce, and youth will all benefit from future economic growth and prosperity. Urgent consideration will be given in decision-making processes to protect vulnerable residents from the impacts of unplanned and unmitigated economic development.

Objectives	Action Items	Priority	Time-frame	Partnership			Funding		
				City	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private	TIF/DDA
Objective 1.1: Enhance public amenities.	1.1.1: Continue to support the Farmer's Market and consider expanding to create a farmer's market that operates year-round, with indoor spaces.	B	1	CC PC PR DDA	BCPRC	BO PD	X	X	
	1.1.2: Add privately-owned recreational uses like water parks, go karts, trampoline parks, or arcades.								
	1.1.3: Continue to support existing community facilities and service providers in their efforts to provide high quality, affordable opportunities for residents								
	1.1.4: Actively pursue the development of both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and services to engage residents and visitors year-round.								
Objective 1.2: Improve environmental, health, and wellness conditions for Benton Harbor residents.	1.2.1: Create a quality healthcare facility in Benton Harbor.	A	2	CC PC CED DDA BRA SD UD WD	TCATA BCRD EGLE MDOT	BO CM	X	X	X
	1.2.2: Identify and protect environmental and ecologically sensitive areas for the health and well-being of Benton Harbor residents								
	1.2.3: Increase City capacity for maintenance and operation services to keep neighborhoods clean, safe, and secure. Continue work to upgrade public infrastructure, roads, water, sewer, and transit systems.								
	1.2.4: Continue to invest in neighborhood pride with clean-up days, block parties, and events at neighborhood parks.								
	1.2.5: Work with State and regional organizations to clean-up illegal dump sites and condemned structures, and take action to prevent future occurrences.								
	1.2.6: Encourage public agencies to urgently respond to issues relating to fair housing discrimination, absentee landlords, and unsafe rental housing conditions.								

Objectives	Action Items	Priority	Time-frame	Partnership			Funding		
				City	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private	TIF/DDA
Objective 1.3: Increase city population through new housing development and new resident outreach.	1.3.1: Create and implement a program to utilize the roughly 500 City-owned lots for middle housing and attainable workforce housing.	A	2	CC LC CED DDA	MEDC		X		
	1.3.2: Protect existing housing stock, especially structures of historic significance, with renovation and rehabilitation programs.								
	1.3.3: Develop programs to attract new Black and minority residents to the City.								
	1.3.4: Develop programs to attract new artists, musicians, and creative professionals to the City.								
	1.3.5: Consider creating a new position, or designating a City employee, to work with residents to address issues relating to fair housing discrimination, gentrification, and/or the displacement of people or cultural assets.								
Objective 1.4: Increase access to goods, services, entertainment, and cultural programming.	1.4.1: Support private businesses and non-profits dedicated to healthy food provision and access within the City. Encourage new markets, specialty food shops, groceries, restaurants, and expanding the farmer's market.	B	1	CC PC CED DDA PR BHPL	MEDC	CM BO CO	X	X	X
	1.4.2: Continue to support cultural organizations and neighborhood events that foster community spirit and vitality.								
	1.4.3: Continue to work with foundations and private institutions to reinvest and revitalize City assets, like Union Park, the waterfront, and Ox Creek corridor.								
	1.4.4: Continue to support the Benton Harbor Downtown Development Authority and complete planning and administration efforts to establish and maintain a DDA TIF District.								



Benton Harbor City Government and partner organizations will continue to lead by example and grow local capacity through building and maintaining infrastructure, providing transparent leadership, and creating opportunities for residents to acquire adequate training and rewarding careers.

Objectives	Action Items	Priority	Time-frame	Partnership			Funding		
				City	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private	TIF/DDA
Objective 2.1: Develop employment training.	2.1.1: Build on existing training resources and expand on resources.	A	1	CC CED BHAS BHPL	SMRC	BO CM	X		
	2.1.2: Create a co-op program with Benton Harbor Area Schools for high school students to gain employment experience, or collaborate with BHAS on the existing Career and Technical Education program.								
	2.1.3: Develop a financial literacy program for youth and older adults.								
	2.1.4: Encourage programs to support the development and training of minority contractors. Create linkages so that trained and licensed minority contractors and business owners can be easily pre-approved to do business in the city.								
	2.1.5: Work with businesses to establish training opportunities and recruitment programs for residents.								
	2.1.6: Work with existing educational organizations and businesses to connect with and provide training and job placement services to returning citizens to reduce stigma and discrimination, as well as reduce potential impacts like homelessness, substance misuse, and recidivism.								
Objective 2.2: Encourage job growth and build expertise.	2.2.1: Create a small business incubator to encourage and support small business start-ups.	A	2	CC PC CED DDA BRA BHAS	SWMPC MEDC EGLE	BO CM	X		
	2.2.2: Work with existing property owners to relocate existing heavy industrial uses into designated industrial business parks and away from waterways, key redevelopment sites, and neighborhoods.								
	2.2.3: Partner with local schools to attract teachers to purchase homes in targeted areas.								
	2.2.4: Encourage and support small businesses in neighborhoods to improve access to services and employment.								

Benton Harbor will maintain, enhance, and expand on a complex system of both formal and informal public spaces at the block, neighborhood, district, citywide, and regional scales. Benton Harbor parks will provide opportunities for both passive and active recreation, programming activities, civic events, and community gatherings.

Objectives	Action Items	Priority	Time-frame	Partnership			Funding		
				City	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private TIF/DDA	
Objective 3.1: Improve Ox Creek to be a recreational and natural amenity.	3.1.1: Perform environmental studies on Ox Creek to ensure the environmental safety of the area.	A	2	PR CC PC BRA	BCPRC SWMPC EGLE		X	X	
	3.1.2: Look for and secure funding from state, federal, and private sources to remove waste and improve poor conditions found in environmental studies.								
	3.1.3: Provide frequent seating along paths to allow visitors to enjoy passive recreation.								
Objective 3.2: Improve existing parks to be accessible to individuals of all ages and abilities.	3.2.1: Ensure major pathways in and around parks are clear, even, and wide enough to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs.	B	1	PR CC PC SD	BCPRC SWMPC		X		
	3.2.2: Install updated play equipment and seating compliant with the most recent Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.								
	3.2.3: Provide frequent seating along paths to allow visitors to enjoy passive recreation.								
Objective 3.3: Provide year-round events and programs that create opportunities to bring the community together.	3.3.1: Rotate events and programs between different neighborhoods to ensure access for all and encourage people to visit different parts of the city.	A	1	PR CC PC DDA	BCPRC	CM	X	X	
	3.3.2: Continue to work with local organizations and institutions to provide a variety of enriching programming for every age group.								
	3.3.3: Provide adequate parking for visitors at parks and only host events at parks large enough to accommodate crowds.								
	3.3.4: Continue to reinvest and rehabilitate the Benton Harbor Bobo Brazil (the Armory) Center and Charles Gray Center to support indoor recreation and community activities.								
	3.3.5: Create community gardens to increase freshly grown food and to educate youth about growing food.								

Objectives	Action Items	Priority	Time-frame	Partnership			Funding	
				City	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private TIF/DDA
Objective 3.4: Ensure that every resident has access to a quality neighborhood park.	3.4.1: Improve basic maintenance of parks in every neighborhood.	A	1	SD PR PC BRA	BCPRC TCATA SWMPC MDOT		X	
	3.4.2: Ensure that local transportation systems provide stops at the most popular city parks.							
	3.4.3: Strive to ensure that each resident lives within at least one mile of quality green space.							
	3.4.4: Secure sustainable revenue sources for ongoing facility maintenance and operations of park system resources.							
	3.4.5: Expand connections between parks through a greenway system that links neighborhoods, schools, and other community assets; running throughout the City's ravines, wooded areas, and along waterways							
Objective 3.5: Protect park visitors and make sure that public parks are safe community spaces.	3.5.1: Improve lighting in public gathering spaces and along pathways.	B	1	PR PS SD	BCPRC MDOT		X	
	3.5.2: Increase public safety in parks and recreation areas.							

Residents of Benton Harbor will have access to housing, employment, recreation, and services via a complete and smart transportation system serving people with safe facilities for walking, biking, transit riding, and driving.

Objectives	Action Items	Priority	Time-frame	Partnership			Funding		
				City	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private TIF/DDA	
Objective 4.1: Improve existing transportation options.	4.1.1: Ensure sidewalks and major pathways are clear, even, and wide enough to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs.	A	1	CC PC SD	TCATA BCRD MDOT		X		
	4.1.2: Reinvest in existing bike system elements with new connected, safe and protected bike paths, and bike lane infrastructure.								
	4.1.3: Provide frequent seating along paths, sidewalks, and transit stops to allow visitors to enjoy passive recreation and improve accessibility.								
Objective 4.2: Encourage transportation system improvements that support all modes of transportation and prioritize the safety of vulnerable users.	4.2.1: Encourage ride-hail companies like Uber, Lyft, and shared mobility companies, like Bicycle (bike share) and Lime (e-scooters), to operate in the city.	A	3	CC PC CED PR SD UD DDA U	TCATA BCRD BCPRC MDOT	CM BO	X	X	
	4.2.2: Create bike parking and bike infrastructure in key places in the city.								
	4.2.3: Consider creating connected entertainment options, like a drive-in movie theater, with space for bicycles and pedestrians to view in Benton Harbor.								
	4.2.4: Add electric vehicle charging stations at designated locations.								
	4.2.5: Encourage shared off-street parking and public access / shared parking agreements in areas where public parking is needed.								
	4.2.6: Work with regional stakeholders to connect Berrien County bike trails to South Bend, South Haven, Kalamazoo, and Chicago.								
	4.2.7: Improve streets, sidewalks, and trails to create an efficient transportation network for cars, public transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians.								
Objective 4.3: Continue to ensure that TCATA serves the needs of Benton Harbor residents.	4.3.1: Continue to provide affordable public transit with frequent service stops in the City of Benton Harbor.	A	2	CC PC PR UD	TCATA BCRD MDOT		X		
	4.3.2: Add circulator transit to run between key activity areas, neighborhood centers, downtown, Jean Klock Park, and other commercial centers in the City. Additionally consider adding downtown St. Joseph to a Benton Harbor circulator system.								
	4.3.3: Continue to advocate for the City of Benton Harbor to remain the hub of TCATA services, and that the headquarters, servicing facilities, and all current and future transit facilities remain located in the City.								

Benton Harbor’s waterways will be restored, enhanced, and preserved in a manner that provides community access, economic vitality, and sustainable habitat.

Objectives	Action Items	Priority	Time-frame	Partnership			Funding		
				City	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private	TIF/DDA
Objective 5.1: Prioritize environmental justice.	5.1.1: Continue to promote sustainability as a part of assisting City policy and decision-making.	A	1	CC PC PR BRA	SWMPC BCPRC EGLE		X		
	5.1.2: Identify and protect environmental and ecologically sensitive areas, including wooded areas, ravines, and waterways from the impacts of development.								
Objective 5.2: Create a strong public waterfront, harbor area, and downtown commercial area.	5.2.1: Develop the waterfront into an activity center with a variety of commercial uses.	A	2	CC PC PR CED SD UD WD BRA DDA	SWMPC BCRD EGLE	CM BO	X	X	
	5.2.2: Create non-motorized trails in the waterfront district.								
	5.2.3: Add boat parking facilities.								
	5.2.4: Continue to protect and invest in the City’s water and sewer facilities.								
	5.2.5: Continue to support and implement the activities outlined in the Twin Cities Harbor Study and the Twin Cities Sustainable Harbor Plan, which outline strategies for developing the harbor and coordinating development opportunities. Work with partners to update and evaluate these documents regularly and adopt updates with the City Commission, Planning Commission, and other relevant municipal authorities when completed.								
5.2.6: Restore and open up the canal as a public amenity to connect the riverfront to the City Center.									

New developments in Benton Harbor will put people first and exemplify the highest standards of site design, material selection, and durable construction, to complement and enhance the best architectural precedents of the City and its historic downtown.

Objectives	Action Items	Priority	Time-frame	Partnership			Funding		
				City	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private TIF/DDA	
Objective 6.1: Enhance neighborhood design and service provision.	6.1.1: Encourage small businesses along commercial corridors and reuse of vacant or underperforming structures in commercial areas.	A	2	CC PC CED DDA	MEDC		X	X	
	6.1.2: Permit neighborhood service uses in mixed-use buildings in accessible locations to City neighborhoods.								
	6.1.3: Support historic preservation and adaptive reuse of historic structures throughout the City by creating a design review process.								
	6.1.4: Establish safe, attractive, and easily accessible neighborhood commercial areas to provide local shopping opportunities for residents.								
	6.1.5: Provide clear, cohesive design standards for developers to streamline the development process and encourage new construction in the city.								
Objective 6.2: Ensure that new construction of buildings and amenities in the downtown are complementary to and enhance the existing resources..	6.2.1: Develop construction material standards to ensure all new buildings in downtown are of the same quality and durability as the existing buildings.	B	1	CC PC CO CED DDA			X		
	6.2.2: Implement the design review requirements of the City Zoning Ordinance and incorporate DDA Ordinance guidelines into the Zoning Ordinance.								
	6.2.3: Implement the recommendations of the City parking study to secure attractive and appropriate parking facilities in downtown Benton Harbor.								
	6.2.4: Review sign standards to reduce sign pollution and ensure aesthetic harmony with Downtown architectural features.								
	6.2.5: Develop design standards for the incorporation of modern materials and construction methods in a manner that complements historic features, including guidelines for the use of shipping containers as a construction material.								
Objective 6.3: Develop middle housing standards for encouraging neighborhood revitalization and new residents.	6.3.1: Develop standards for pre-approved middle housing type developments that encourage architecturally and aesthetically appropriate housing infill within City neighborhoods.	A	2	CC PC CED DDA CO		CM BO	X		
	6.3.2: Consider developing alternate middle housing type standards that utilize shipping containers as building materials.								
	6.3.3: Work with residents to support or establish neighborhood organizations with distinct identities, names, events, and brand elements to be used for wayfinding and citywide promotions.								

The City of Benton Harbor will continue to foster creative enterprise through education, exhibition, and celebration by developing and investing in local-grown talent and welcoming artists from the Midwest and beyond to share in the beauty of the City and the region.

Objectives	Action Items	Priority	Time-frame	Partnership			Funding		
				City	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private	TIF/DDA
Objective 7.1: Increase opportunities for public art, performance, and entertainment installations.	7.1.1: Commission local artists to paint murals and sculptures in key locations in the city.	B	1	CC PC CED DDA MHM BHAS	MEDC	CM	X	X	
	7.1.2: Open a Benton Harbor art and history museum.								
	7.1.3: Continue to support, promote, and expand access to arts training programs for youth and young adults.								
	7.1.4: Continue to expand on the success of the Arts District through marketing, economic development, and by establishing places to create and celebrate public art.								
	7.1.5: Support musicians by encouraging local recording and performance spaces. Consider becoming a music city by developing a Benton Harbor Music Strategy and rediscovering Benton Harbor's musical history.								
Objective 7.2: Support and expand existing museum and cultural resources within the City.	7.2.1: Support and provide resources to existing Benton Harbor Museums.	B	1	CC PC CED DDA	MEDC	CM	X		
	7.2.2: Support existing educational, training, and entertainment facilities.								
	7.2.3: Provide a role for Benton Harbor Talent Ambassadors to interact with City leadership through boards and commissions and develop an ongoing program for recruiting new Talent Ambassadors to continue to play a role and influence City functions. Consider expanding the role to become community ambassadors who promote/ and recruit on all levels, including talent, businesses, new residents, etc. Consider providing stipends for participants.								
	7.2.4: Continue to support efforts by the DDA to rehabilitate and restore the Benton Harbor State Theater as a local cultural center.								
	7.2.5: Continue to support local cultural programming in the Arts District and city parks, like Art Hop, outdoor concerts, and celebrations like the Juneteenth Festival, Pride Celebration, the Blossom Festival, and the Coming Home Coming Together Celebration.								

02

Securing Community



BEST Benton Harbor

CHAPTER 02

Contents

Introduction	15
Increasing City Capacity.....	15
Services	16
Municipal Facilities.....	16
City Departments.....	16
Safety	18
Transparency	20
Economic Development.....	20
Equity Opportunity Areas.....	25
Home Investment Opportunity Area.....	26
Black Wall Street Opportunity Area	27
Education Opportunity Area	29
Entertainment Arts Opportunity Area.....	30
Midwest Commerce Opportunity Area	31
Resiliency Opportunity Area	31



Introduction

Cities have so many different purposes, one of which is to provide the benefits of modern society: running water, waste management, roads, safety, and so much more. These are the things that we rely on to function in our daily lives—to feel safe and secure, to feel comfortable, and to be willing to call a place “home.” In addition to the basic infrastructure of a city, the people that govern it need to have a vision of how the city should build and change moving forward. This section provides guidance to how Benton Harbor can provide its residents with what they need to be able to not just function, but thrive.

The first part of this section, Increasing City Capacity, outlines the City’s existing municipal services and functions. It also provides best-practice strategies to improve the City’s communications, cooperation, and effectiveness moving forward. The second part describes the City’s new Equity Opportunity Areas. In each area, a set of policy directives will help to guide future government decision-making to improve the lives of Benton Harbor’s current residents, as well as facilitate manageable growth.

Increasing City Capacity

Every community has facilities such as municipal buildings, libraries, schools, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, and infrastructure such as streets and utilities. During engagement, we received feedback on City resources and heard a strong call for reliable, high-quality services. An analysis of community facilities and services is necessary to determine future capital expenditures needed to improve the provision of government services and the expansion or maintenance of public facilities.



The John Billups Fire Department, renamed after the City's first Black Fire Chief. John Billups served Benton Harbor from 1957 until he retired as chief in 1983.

Services

Providing high-quality services to its residents and business owners is a top priority for Benton Harbor. A major barrier to this goal is a mismatch of need and funding due to the City's legacy costs of maintaining infrastructure that was built to accommodate many more people than it currently serves. Chapter 3: Growing Community will address how the City can make efforts to draw more residents, leading to increased tax revenue. Increased tax revenue will support the City's ability to provide more, better quality services.

Municipal Facilities

- City Hall - 200 E Wall Street
- Fire Station - located in City Hall
- Public Works - 768 Paw Paw Avenue
- Police Station - 251 Market Street
- Library - 213 E Wall Street

**City Parks are covered in Chapter 5: Connecting Community.*

***The Benton Harbor Public Library is owned and operated by the Benton Harbor Public Library Board of Trustees. While it serves as a public asset for City residents, it is not managed by the City of Benton Harbor.*

City Departments

- City Clerk
- City Manager
- Code Compliance
- Community and Economic Development
- Human Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Property Tax/Assessment
- Public Safety
- Sanitation
- Utility Department
- Water Department

To reach the standard of provision that is expected of a community, the City needs to focus on improving several areas of service:

DEPARTMENT STAFFING

The City currently employs 55 staff members across eleven departments. Fully staffed departments in city government are critical to provide high-quality services and lead to better organization, time management and produce better overall experiences for residents. Succession planning is also critical for long-time staff who have invaluable local and institutional knowledge, and the City must ensure this information is transitioned to the next generation of staff. Having strong administrative staff can lead to an overall more effective government and will be crucial to improving City services.



Illegal dumping is a major concern to citizens. It is particularly common in vacant and inactive areas.

SANITATION SERVICES

During the public engagement process, several comments involved the desire to improve trash pick-up services and install new waste receptacles. Additionally, illegal dumping was a concern brought up several times and something that the City struggles with on both publicly and privately owned properties. So far, the city has invested significant funds toward further surveillance of key dumping sites, monitored by the Police Department and Public Works. The City must find additional cost-effective ways to address this, such as fencing on vacant land that is targeted for dumping, and renegotiation of their waste contract. Providing a basic service such as waste management is not only expected by taxpayers but also a major public health concern that needs to be resolved.

MAINTENANCE

Public spaces and general maintenance of City infrastructure were brought up by several participants during public engagement. Maintenance, such as waste management and trash clean-ups, snow removal, landscaping, and weed removal, all have an impact on the City's image. Maintaining clean, safe public spaces can improve the City's image and create a more welcoming, safe environment.

BLIGHT ENFORCEMENT

The City currently employs a Chief Code Compliance Officer and one additional officer out of their Department of Public Safety. The objective for these officers is to ensure that structures and properties are built safely and remain well-maintained. Blight was a concern voiced by many residents during engagement. Things such as dangerous buildings, abandoned structures, litter, and overgrown weeds have a dramatic impact on a community. While the City may not be able to clean up private property, it can strengthen its enforcement efforts through code compliance ticketing. Hiring additional code officers can ensure that all properties in Benton Harbor are following zoning, building, plumbing, fire, and other local ordinances, leading to a cleaner, more visually appealing environment for residents.



Benton Harbor's high school and public library. Both serve as iconic centers of learning, growth, and knowledge.

Safety

The City of Benton Harbor Department of Public Safety (BHDPS) houses both the police and fire services, as well as two Code Compliance officers. The City maintains its own police force out of the station located at 251 E. Market Street. It is operated by twenty-two staff members, including a director and deputy director, four sergeants, four officers, as well as additional support and reserve officers. The City's Fire Services operate out of the same building, with access off of 200 E. Wall Street. Fire Services has five staff, including a fire marshal and four firefighters, providing protection to the entirety of the City.

Public Safety was cited throughout the community engagement process as a priority in future planning. Regardless of crime rates, this is expected in any community; a sense of security concerning one's person, family, and property is a fundamental human need. The following are several approaches that the City should utilize as they work to enhance public safety services:

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design is the use of the built environment to reduce fear and incidents of crime to improve quality of life for residents. The approach includes several strategies:

- **Territoriality:** a design concept encouraging a 'sense of ownership' in legitimate users of a space to discourage illegitimate users and criminal offenses. This can include proper signage, placemaking like public art, and public activities.
- **Surveillance:** the existence or mere perception of being observed can make someone less likely to offend, given the increased potential for intervention.
- **Access Control:** controlling and reducing accessibility points to a property with things such as gates and fences, but also speed bumps and curbs.
- **Activity Support:** intentional design and signage to produce specific patterns of usage of public space. This can involve placing an ATM in a place where there is high foot traffic, which has been shown to reduce robberies.
- **Image/Management:** promoting a sense of community and positive image can encourage people to care more about their community and potentially encourage them enough to report suspicious behavior. Having well-maintained properties can also improve the perception and feeling of safety.
- **Target Hardening:** involves strengthening the security of buildings to protect them. The most traditional form of crime prevention.

Community Policing is the approach that focuses on relationship-building between law enforcement and community members to collaboratively solve community problems. By building relationships with the community, law enforcement can build trust between officers and civilians, allowing for better communication, problem-solving, and ultimately better outcomes. It is easier for residents and business owners to feel at ease putting the safety of their families, properties, and livelihoods into the hands of people they know and trust when there are relationships between them and their neighborhood officer.

Benton Harbor Area Schools (BHAS) are operated by the Benton Harbor Area Schools Board of Education. As population has declined in the City over the last several decades, BHAS has experienced declining enrollment and several schools have been closed. The Board of Education maintains its headquarters in the City. Though there has been discussion about moving to the Township, the City should continue to work with BHAS to align policies and efforts to keep schools and administration in the City. Schools play a major role in fostering safe communities and coordinating Board of Education decisions and efforts with the City Commission is critical to creating a united approach.

Additionally, the Benton Harbor Planning Commission should work with the Board of Education to support land use decisions. While schools are not legally required to adhere to zoning ordinances, the Planning Commission should support them to follow best practices in their land use decisions that help enact community goals laid out in this plan.

SCHOOLS

- Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School—750 E. Britain Avenue
- Fair Plain East Elementary School—1998 Union Avenue
- Fair Plain Middle School—120 E. Napier Avenue
- Benton Harbor High School—870 Colfax Avenue
- Discovery Enrichment Center—465 S. McCord Street
- CAPE Center—636 Pipestone Street
- Administration Building - 870 Colfax Avenue

PEACE WALK

For the last eleven years, the community has marked the end of school and the start of summer with a Peace Walk between the Peace Garden at Benton Harbor High School and the June Woods Memorial Park, formerly known as Broadway Park. The entire community is invited to participate in the event, which commences with a libation ceremony and reading, organized by teachers and students from the school. This year, organizers encouraged participants to take a 90-day oath of peace to allow for focus on healing, mental health, and healthy habits. Events such as this foster trust and encourage a sense of ownership amongst residents in the effort of creating a safer community.



The June 14, 2023, Benton Harbor Peace Walk (Credit: Peace4LifeBH, Facebook).

Transparency

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

Under the City Charter, Benton Harbor is governed by a council-manager system that includes nine elected commissioners on the City Commission, and the expertise of an appointed city manager who runs daily administrative duties. The City Manager is responsible for implementing the City Commission's policies and programs through leading departments and coordinating delivery of services.

CITY COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

Commissions and committees in local government provide a great opportunity for residents and administrators to collaborate on specific issues and topics to inform policy change and daily decision-making. While some roles require experience or expertise, there are many that residents can fill to provide a community perspective.

- Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
- Cemetery Board
- Communications/Public Relations Committee
- Downtown Development Authority
- Legislative Committee
- Personnel and Finance Committee
- Planning & Economic Development Committee
- Planning Commission
- Public Safety Committee

PLANNING'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Planners and planning commissions serve to guide land use development, policy, and preservation that best meets the City's goals. Their work will be steered by this Community Plan, initiatives put forth by the City Planning Commission, community efforts, and changes in state and local legislature. When developers approach the City for site plan approvals and permits, the Planning Commission must review the proposed development against local zoning regulations as well as for alignment with this Community Plan. Through these reviews, the Planning Commission can influence development through the physical shape and aesthetics as well as the location of certain land uses.

Economic Development

There are a variety of tools that the City can take advantage of to help support and stimulate economic development. Having a thriving local economy is a vital piece of the puzzle in creating a vibrant, successful community. To better understand the current conditions and what tools the City should take advantage of, a market analysis was done in 2022, which is summarized below. Additional economic development tools can also be found in Chapter 4.

GIBBS PLANNING GROUP MARKET ANALYSIS

In June 2022, Gibbs Planning Group (GPG) conducted a market analysis of what is considered to be Benton Harbor's primary trade area, which GPG estimates extends approximately 1 to 5 miles from downtown, while the overall trade area extends approximately 10 to 20 miles. The study is based on geographic conditions, traffic data for the area, concentrations of daytime employment, and the retail gravitation in the market. With these considerations analyzing U.S. Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics data on population, consumer



The Downtown Benton Harbor Welcome Center was opened in 2022 by the Downtown Development Authority. Mamie Yarbrough, County Commissioner, is pictured here after the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Welcome Center.

expenditure, and demographic characteristics, GPG found that the City can support up to 27,000 square feet of new retail space, equating to about 15 to 21 new stores, and 14,000 square feet of new or expanded restaurant space, which is about 6 to 9 restaurants. The combined 42,000 square feet of commercial space could include apparel stores, book/music stores, gift stores, furniture stores, jewelry stores, shoe stores, toy/sporting goods stores, specialty grocery stores, full-service restaurants, limited-service restaurants, bakeries, or coffee shops. This represents the potential to generate up to \$16 million in new annual sales if the retail space is located in a walkable mixed-use downtown implementing best practices. The full study can be found in the appendices.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)

The Benton Harbor Downtown Development Authority is a public body charged with the task of bringing together resources and developing relationships with stakeholders in the Central Business District of the City in order to create and maintain a viable downtown that serves as a place where all people are welcome.

The DDA has been active in the last several years, hosting events, supporting local businesses, and providing numerous amenities in the Central Business District. DDAs can be incredibly impactful to communities when they have ample funding. Currently, the DDA does not take advantage of a tax increment financing (TIF) district, which is the common way that DDAs are funded. If the city established a TIF district to provide the DDA a sustainable funding stream, they could invest in capital improvement projects such as road and sidewalk repairs, installation of seating, lighting, and waste receptacles, and even provide direct funding to local businesses for things such as façade updates or building repairs.

While the City may not be able to directly control the local economy in Benton Harbor, it can create an environment that is attractive to businesses and consumers and provide support to local business owners and start-up companies through the DDA.

BROADBAND, CHARGING STATIONS, AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGY










The City is actively pursuing improvement to broadband technology, including working with the State to secure funding for fiber optic connections from Chicago to Benton Harbor. The City's continued efforts to establish Benton Harbor as a tech leader with supportive infrastructure and policy to embrace alternative energy, like wind, solar, and electric vehicle charging stations is an ongoing the community facilities strategy.

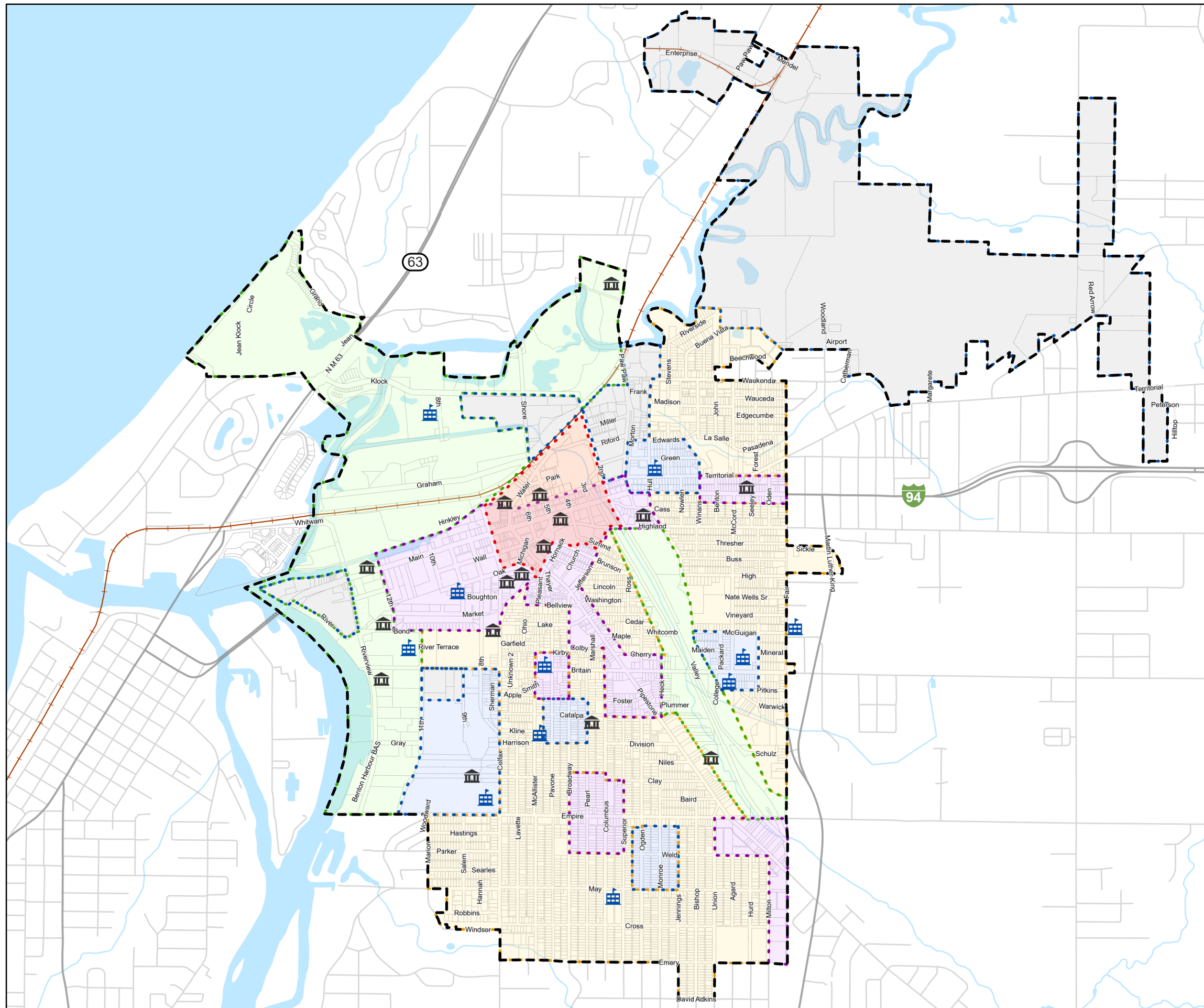
Equity Opportunity Areas and Community Facilities

City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County, Michigan

November 7, 2023

LEGEND

-  Community Facilities
-  Schools
-  Black Wall Street
-  Education
-  Entertainment and Art
-  Home Investment
-  Midwest Commercial
-  Resiliency
-  Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.
Data Source: Berrien County 2022. McKenna 2023.



Equity Opportunity Areas

The purpose of the Equity Opportunity Areas is to encourage reinvestment throughout the City through intentional decision-making processes that require all development to consider equitable benefits for City residents. Equity Opportunity Areas are placed in areas around the City where clear decision-making procedures and funding policies can inform development decisions, limit unforeseen impacts on vulnerable populations, and achieve results more in line with the City's vision, goals, and objectives.

Equity Opportunity Areas differ from the future land use designations. Future land use designations articulate the planned land uses and development character, which are largely achieved through iterative, small-scale private development projects. Conversely, Equity Opportunity Areas are intended to guide small-scale projects and influence large-scale developments. Projects initiated by public agencies, or only made possible by significant investment of public resources, must show community benefit. Equity Opportunity Areas are intended to limit negative impacts of large-scale development decisions and guide City initiated processes. The Equity Opportunity Areas can help to guide high-impact catalytic projects to the right places throughout the City and articulate the big issues that the City would like to prioritize in its large-scale reinvestment efforts. Ultimately, the purpose of government is to benefit the community through well-articulated and intentional decision-making processes; through this initiative, the City of Benton Harbor can create a secure and prosperous future for its current residents and generations to come.

The Equity Opportunity Areas have been created based on concerns expressed by City residents that participated in the planning process. The Equity Opportunity Area map shows where each Opportunity Area should be considered in land use decisions throughout the City. The intent and purpose of each area is detailed below.



Home Investment Opportunity Area

Public input suggests a strong sentiment for more investment and energy to go into neighborhoods without displacing residents or raising the cost of living. The Home Investment Area is designed to direct investment into the neighborhoods, as well as ensure that long-term residents of Benton Harbor are able to enjoy the benefits of redevelopment and revitalization. The objective of creating this Opportunity Area is to highly prioritize investment in Home Investment Opportunity Area communities, operating under a "Neighborhoods First" mindset. Overall, the intent of this area is to incite more thoughtful decision-making and dialogue when considering a new project, proposal, or where to apply funding. The first question to be asked on any project in the City should be, "How can this help to support Benton Harbor's neighborhoods?"

1. Projects that require demolition of actively occupied homes or businesses are discouraged in order to prevent gentrification and displacement of the existing population unless an opportunity for nearby relocation is provided by the developer.
2. Existing housing should be rehabilitated, rather than demolished, whenever economically viable. Renovations that do not displace residents, or that provide alternative lodging during construction, are highly encouraged.
3. Demolition of existing housing units shall be replaced by a minimum of 1.5 units of new middle housing for every demolished unit.
4. Conversion of existing properties into new supported uses, also known as adaptive reuse, is encouraged wherever possible.
5. Encourage Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) in these areas to provide 20% of housing units are affordable (costing 30% of a person's income) to a household making 80% of the Area Median Income for Berrien County as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
6. Higher consideration should be given to housing developments and PUDs that include more than three (3) of the following attributes:
 - a. Provide a range of unit prices in order to facilitate multiple income groups.
 - b. Buildings constructed with durable and/or ecologically sustainable materials.
 - c. Quality open space is provided to residents—if open space is to be private, it should be properly enclosed to create a clear designation between public and private space.
 - d. Projects that are all-electric, use energy-efficient electric systems, utilize renewable energy, or otherwise integrate environmentally friendly construction and design.
 - e. Developed or owned by individuals who can demonstrate occupancy within the City of Benton Harbor.
 - f. Developed or owned by small landowners—those who own five (5) or fewer properties.



Black Wall Street Opportunity Area

Black Wall Street districts are being created across the country to enable focused areas to support Black entrepreneurship. While 87% of the City's population is African American, it is still crucial to be intentional about efforts to ensure that prosperity and opportunity are accessible to the Black Community. Creating a Black Wall Street does not mean restricting Black-owned business to a specific location, and it does not mean non-Black ownership will be blocked. Rather, this Opportunity Area is an area to celebrate and cultivate success and prosperity for Benton Harbor's African American residents. Benton Harbor's own Wall Street can capitalize on its Downtown presence, connecting with existing Arts District development and crossing Main Street to boost resource access and expand off of existing development in the area. Other Black Wall Street areas are placed along major neighborhood commercial corridors throughout the City.

1. A community development corporation or chamber of commerce should actively work to foster collaboration and cohesion between the businesses in this district.
2. City-Owned property in this area should be retained and leased to businesses and organizations that will have a broad positive effect on the surrounding area, such as but not limited to:
 - a. Business incubators and shared office space.
 - b. Businesses that provide "third spaces", where people can spend time together and build community, such as restaurants, cafes, bookstores, barber shops, beauty salons, or any business that encourages social gathering.
 - c. Marketplaces where vendors can sell their products in a "pop-up" style.
 - d. Combined workshop storefronts that offer apprenticeship opportunities to Benton Harbor residents.
 - e. Offices for nonprofit service providers.
3. Conversion of existing properties into new supported uses, also known as adaptive reuse, is encouraged wherever possible.
4. Existing structures should be rehabilitated, rather than demolished, whenever economically viable. Renovations that do not displace residents, or that provide alternative lodging during construction, are highly encouraged.
5. Projects which integrate art by local artists and/or art that celebrates African American history and culture are highly encouraged.
6. The presence of a financial institution that is able to provide access to financial counseling and servicing is highly desirable in this district.



Education Opportunity Area

Not only can schools provide a safe place for children to learn and socialize during the day, but they are also great spaces for community gathering and learning opportunities outside of the regular school day. Many residents expressed support for utilizing existing school buildings as community anchors. Benton Harbor Area Schools are of course a separate entity from the City of Benton Harbor, but the City must continue to collaborate closely with the district to ensure that the schools are utilized as community assets. Benton Harbor should affirm the importance of schools, especially Benton Harbor High School, remaining within the City's neighborhoods. Offer opportunities for safe activities in the areas close to schools to provide business opportunities, activate neighborhoods, and safe places for students to spend time after school.

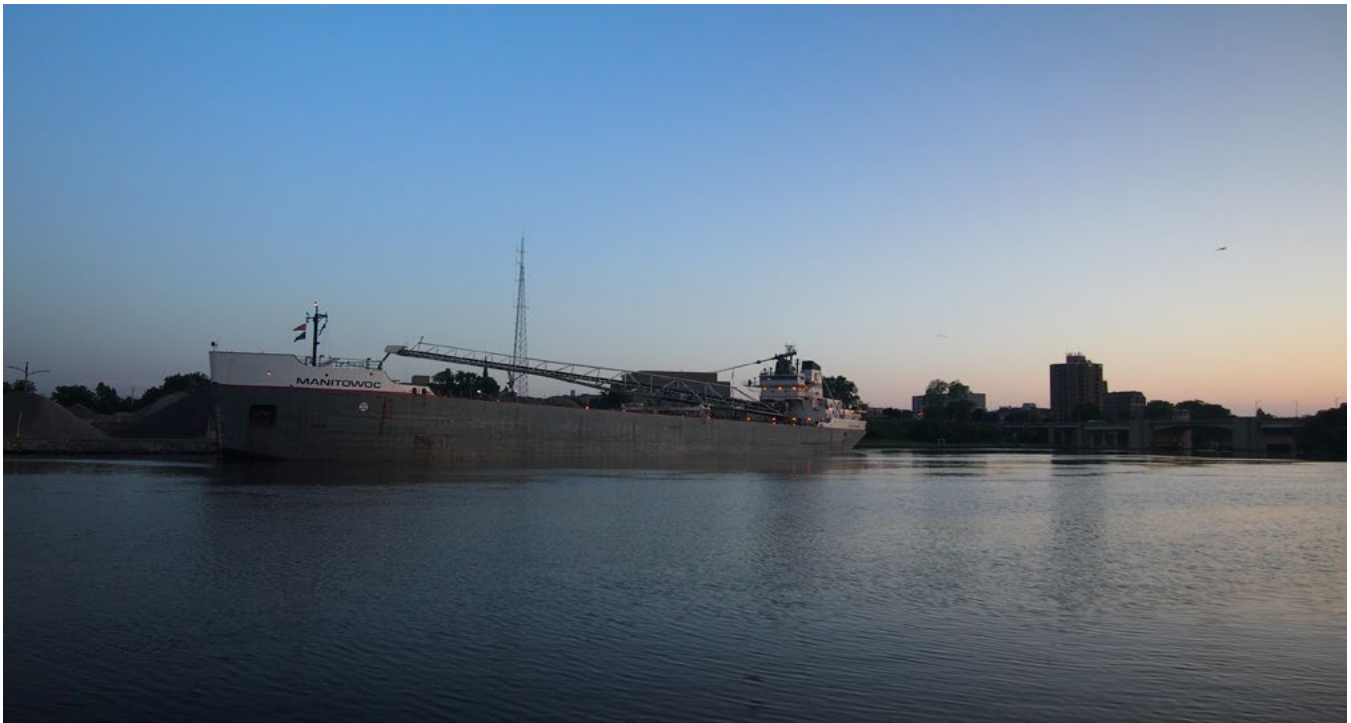
1. The City will actively advocate for retaining its current schools. The City will highly discourage school closures as well as relocation of schools outside of City limits.
2. Housing that is suitable for families, such as larger units with more bedrooms, will be encouraged in this area.
3. Infrastructure updates and maintenance, as well as new non-motorized corridors, should be prioritized so as to connect schools to where students are living.
4. Higher consideration should be given to businesses and organizations which provide safe gathering spaces for students after school.
5. Liquor stores and adult businesses will be highly discouraged within the Education Opportunity Areas.
6. Neighborhood schools should serve as meeting places for community events when possible. The city encourages the use of schools for public events such as town halls, open houses, business and career fairs, and festivals or public celebrations.



Entertainment Arts Opportunity Area

This area builds off the current downtown Arts District, stretching beyond Main Street, and intentionally overlapping with the Black Wall Street Opportunity Area. The Arts District has been a successful hub for artists and creatives in the City, and lessons for success can be utilized to grow this attraction as a major focal point. Continuing current Arts District projects, but expanding them to this greater Entertainment Arts Opportunity Area, will expand opportunities and cross boundaries. Supporting not only the visual arts but also the entertainment arts showcases the diverse talent of Benton Harbor residents.

1. The City will pursue grant opportunities to support artists and arts education.
2. The City will offer a local artist fellowship to attract artists to settle in the City.
3. Higher consideration will be given to arts and entertainment businesses, such as:
 - a. Performing arts venues such as theaters and concert halls.
 - b. Marketplaces where artists and craftspeople can sell their products in a “pop-up” style.
 - c. Combined workshop-storefronts that offer arts apprenticeship opportunities to Benton Harbor residents.
 - d. Art studios and workshops that offer space and materials for artisans.
 - e. Create artists in residency housing opportunities as well as permanent housing incentives for artists.
4. Pursue the development of a dedicated space for providing arts education to Benton Harbor High School students, partnering with local artists and performers to offer mentorship.



Midwest Commerce Opportunity Area

For a large part of Benton Harbor's history, large amounts of land were dedicated to industrial and large-scale commercial activities. Manufacturing and Commerce are critical job creators for the City, and the City should ensure that there are attractive, accessible areas dedicated to these uses. Both motorized and non-motorized transportation networks can connect jobs to residences in the neighborhoods while providing a comfortable distance between intensive uses and neighborhoods. Job training programs could be created in conjunction with partners in this Opportunity Area. Many of the best-practice construction principles in this Opportunity Area are similar to those from the Housing Investment Area, but should be considered in the context of industrial development rather than residential development.

1. Projects that require demolition of actively occupied homes or businesses are discouraged in order to prevent gentrification and displacement of the existing population unless an opportunity for nearby relocation is provided by the developer.
2. Existing housing should be rehabilitated, rather than demolished, whenever economically viable. Renovations that do not displace residents, or that provide alternative lodging during construction, are highly encouraged.
3. Prioritize projects that implement Adaptive Reuse, the conversion of existing properties into new supported uses.
4. Higher consideration should be given to PUDs that include more than three (2) of the following attributes:
 - a. Projects that are all-electric, use energy-efficient electric systems, utilize renewable energy, or otherwise integrate environmentally friendly construction and design.
 - b. Buildings constructed with durable and/or ecologically sustainable materials.
 - c. Developments that are that protect environmentally sensitive areas and waterways.
 - d. Developed or owned by individuals who can demonstrate occupancy within the City of Benton Harbor.



- e. Businesses that are able to provide shuttle services for employees who do not have access to personal transportation.
- f. Industrial facilities in the Midwest Commerce area should demonstrate an ability to maintain a high-quality facility that does not become harmful or hazardous to residents of Benton Harbor, accounting for water retention, waste disposal, large vehicle access, dust containment, water usage, and material storage.
5. Benton Harbor should highly support TCATA service to major industrial corridors with a schedule that corresponds to regular shift hours in order to provide convenient access for employees.
6. Promote hiring and workforce development policies that increase job access for Benton Harbor residents and increase opportunities to gain new job skills.
 - a. Implement a Ban the Box policy that prevents employers from asking about felony convictions on a job application.
 - b. Businesses in the Midwest Commerce Opportunity Area should offer a living wage that reflects the cost of living in Benton Harbor.
7. Incentivize mentorship/apprenticeships to teach trade skills to residents.
8. Evaluate opportunities to co-locate industry within the Midwest Commerce Area. Leverage the presence of existing industry to attract supporting industries, such as logistics, information technology (IT), and administrative services.



Resiliency Opportunity Area

Resiliency Opportunity Areas have been designated to identify environmentally sensitive areas that should be protected from intense development. Clean-up and restoration projects are also planned to preserve Benton Harbor's waterways. While it is important to protect the flora and fauna native to these areas to promote a healthy ecosystem, protecting natural space is a benefit, not a burden, to the entire city. Historically Black communities in the United States have faced the most environmental devastation and are more likely to be lacking greenspace. It is important that the City make a point of protecting its natural resources and preventing further air, ground, and water pollution.

1. Prohibit destruction of Wetlands larger than 1 acre.
2. Prohibit residential development within 100- and 500-year floodplains. Prohibit Commercial development within 100-year floodplains.
3. Discourage industrial development in environmentally sensitive areas and near waterways (unless the nature of the industry requires access to a waterway).
4. Create river and creek clean-up days to remove trash near waterways.
5. Create an adopt-a-shore program where community groups can undertake some responsibility for regular upkeep along waterways.
6. Ensure that development along waterways incorporates best practices for run-off control/water retention, waste containment and disposal, and water usage.
7. Create more opportunities for public enjoyment of waterways—walkways along the river, viewing decks. Discourage development that impedes public access to waterways when possible.

This page intentionally left blank.

03

Growing Community



BEST Benton Harbor

CHAPTER 03

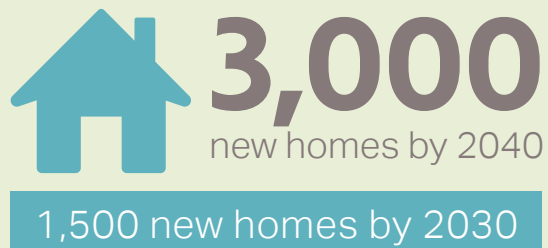
Contents

New Resident Outreach.....	35
Make Benton Harbor a Gentrification-Proof City.....	36
New Resident and Outreach and Welcome Program.....	36
Music City and Artist Outreach	37
Middle Housing and Neighborhood Investment	38
Single Family Traditional and Container Homes.....	39
Duplex Side-By-Side.....	42
Duplex Stacked.....	45
Villa	48
Fourplex	52
Carriage House / Accessory Dwelling Unit.....	55
Bungalow Court / Traditional and Container Building.....	58
Rowhouse	61
Small Apartment.....	64



New Resident Outreach

The City of Benton Harbor supports the following metrics for creating new homes, generating wealth for existing residents, and improving quality of life in the City for generations to come.





Make Benton Harbor a Gentrification-Proof City

Gentrification is the displacement of working-class residents in a community and their replacement by upper-class newcomers as the cost of living grows. Gentrification is a major concern whenever a city pursues revitalization. Benton Harbor had a peak population of nearly 20,000 residents in 1960 – but today, its population is less than 9,000. This means the City has the capacity to accommodate thousands of new residents, with much more flexibility than most urban communities. However, this alone will not prevent gentrification. That’s why the strategies set out in the Best Benton Harbor Community Plan aim to make the City Gentrification-Proof – by protecting legacy residents, increasing density, and setting high standards for new development.

New and Former Resident and Outreach and Welcome Program

New and former resident outreach is a crucial process aimed at welcoming and integrating newcomers into a community, as well as reaching out to former residents to encourage and support their efforts to return home. It involves reaching out to individuals or families who have recently moved to the area and providing them with information, support, and opportunities to connect with their new surroundings. This outreach is important because it fosters a sense of belonging, helps newcomers navigate their new environment, and promotes community engagement.

Effective new resident outreach involves various methods and activities. It includes organizing welcome events or orientations where new residents can meet community leaders and fellow residents, distributing welcome packets containing essential information about local services and resources, and utilizing online platforms or social media groups to provide an avenue for communication and support. By prioritizing new resident outreach, Benton Harbor can create an inclusive and supportive environment, encourage cultural exchange, and ensure that newcomers feel valued and connected to Benton Harbor from the very beginning.



Music City and Artist Outreach

Artists play a significant role in any city's growth and development, particularly in Benton Harbor within the Benton Harbor Arts District. Their creative contributions and presence add value to the cultural fabric of the city, encouraging a sense of community among both locals and tourists. Through their work, they stimulate discussions, inspire collaboration, and promote social engagement, leading to a deeper appreciation of Benton Harbor's history and current challenges.

By passing strategic initiatives and policies aimed at supporting local artists, Benton Harbor can create a nurturing environment that empowers existing artists and attracts new talents. Some of the strategic initiatives and policies that can be implemented are forming an advisory panel, offering funding and grant opportunities, and promoting safe and affordable spaces for creativity and living. Creating and supporting programs that provide housing for residents, through fellowships or stipends, would help to attract new artists to Benton Harbor. The Paducah Renaissance Alliance, in Paducah Kentucky, could provide a model structure for program development in Benton Harbor.



Top: The State Theater opened in 1942 and was a source of culture and entertainment until its permanent closure in 2007. The DDA has since acquired the building and plans for it to accommodate live performances and films.

Bottom: Benton Harbor supports public art and many murals can be found in the City.

Strategies from Denver Plan and APA

Denver Music Strategy Plan

https://www.artsandvenuesdenver.com/assets/doc/2018_DenverMusicStrategy_FullReport_3-6-19-8bdefbe36e.pdf

Planning for Music

<https://www.planning.org/planning/2019/feb/planningformusic/>

Middle Housing and Neighborhood Investment

“Missing middle housing” is a range of medium-density housing types that fill a void in many Midwestern communities. This Plan also refers to such housing simply as “middle housing” to affirmatively promote denser housing as the norm, so it will no longer be “missing”. This section demonstrates an array of Missing-Middle housing types popular before World War II. Located on a spectrum between the single-family house at one extreme, and the large apartment block at the other, Missing-Middle housing fell out of favor during a post-war period of rapid suburban expansion. Today, however, with a renewed appreciation for urban living, Missing-Middle housing types are enjoying a renaissance. Missing-Middle housing increases both affordability and population density and contributes to neighborhood walkability by locating more residential units close to mixed-use centers and transit.

The City of Benton Harbor and the neighborhoods surrounding downtown are appropriate for middle housing infill development. The need for more attainable housing in the City as well as filling in gaps created by vacant properties within the City’s neighborhoods was broadly supported by members of the public. This section describes housing types that should be considered in future housing development projects.

Middle housing should be permitted in all of the City’s Future Land Use Classifications, except the parks and public category. The following table includes specific guidance on where individual building types are encouraged, permitted, and discouraged.

Table 1. Benton Harbor Middle Housing and Future Land Use Classification Matrix

	Neighborhood	Neighborhood Bluff	Neighborhood Center	Parks / Public	River / Harbor	Regional Center	Industrial
Single Family	E	P	P	D	D	D	D
Single Family: Container Home	D	E	D	D	P	D	D
Duplex: Side By Side and Stacked	P	P	P	D	D	D	D
Villa	P	E	E	D	D	D	D
Fourplex	E	E	E	D	D	D	D
Carriage House / ADU	E	E	P	D	D	D	D
Bungalow Court	E	D	E	D	D	D	D
Bungalow Court: Container Homes	D	E	D	D	E	D	D
Rowhouse	P	D	E	D	E	P	D
Small Apartment Building	P	E	E	D	E	E	D

E = Encouraged P = Permitted D = Discouraged

Single Family Traditional and Container Homes



The Single-Family Building Type is a singular, dedicated residential structure occupying one residential lot. The building is roughly 16 to 45 feet in width and 30 to 60 feet in depth, with doors located at the front and back. The Building Type is one to 2 1/2 stories and approximately 15 to 26 feet in height with a pitched roof.

The Single-Family Building Type contains one residential unit, with an open porch and main entrance located at the front. The ground floor is elevated 24 to 30 inches above finish grade. Because it contains fewer than four residential units, construction of this Building Type is governed by The International Residential Code (IRC). Because of that, units are not required by code to be accessible.

The Single-Family Building Type is an urban building type, modest in size, and not to be confused with large-lot suburban homes located on limited-access streets. It occupies frontage on a street inextricably linked to a larger network of streets and intersections. Setbacks are small and lots are narrow and deep. Therefore, the building is, with exceptions, typically narrower than it is deep and the garage must always be located behind.

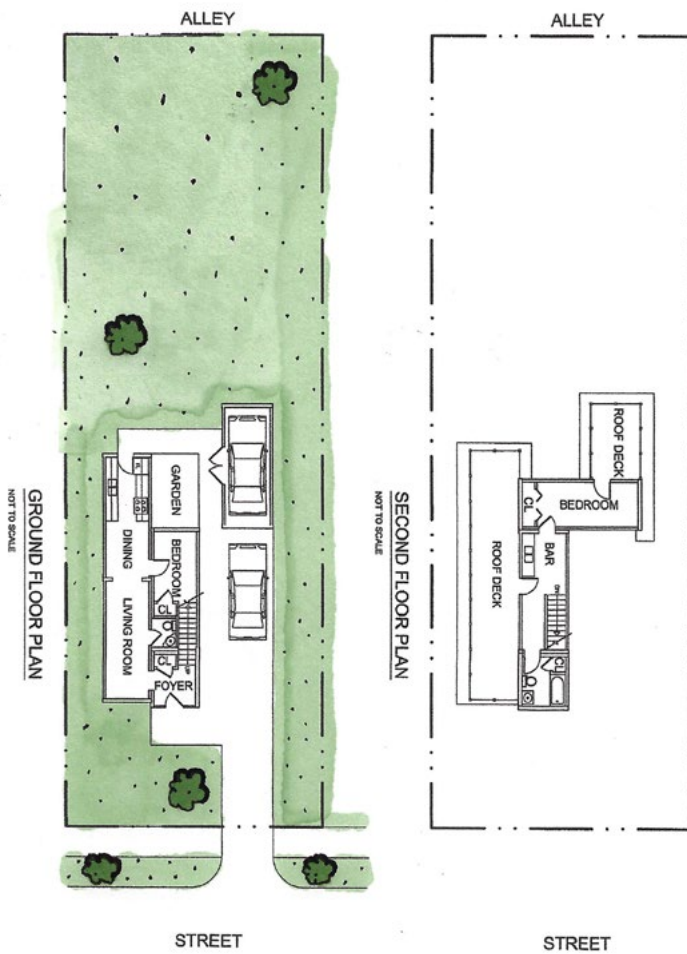
The Single-Family Building Type is a stand-alone structure without a façade. Therefore, building materials must match on all facets of the building.

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS: SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE BUILDING TYPE



Examples of the Single-Family house building type.

1. Traditionally-styled single-family house form containing one residential unit with one main entrance at the front and additional entrances along the sides and/or back.
2. Opaque façade through which window openings appear to have been “punched” as through paper in a ring binder.
3. Pattern of solids and voids generated by the vertical and horizontal alignment of windows and doors in various repeating sizes.
4. Window groupings and bay windows encouraged, with groups of up to 3 allowable.
5. Ground floor 24” to 36” above grade.
6. Min. 6’-6” deep front porch, maximum 30” above grade, with rail 28” to 36” above porch floor.
7. Main entrance articulation.
8. Window screens to be made of wood or, if non-masonry structure, windows to have 3’ ½” height painted wood aprons added beneath sills to width of cased openings.
9. Garage detached at rear.
10. Floor-to-floor heights limited to 10’-0”.
11. Front elevation to extend along Min. 60% of principal lot frontage.



A pre-approved site plan for the Single Family Building Type built using storage containers.

NUMERICAL PARAMETERS

	Width	Height	Height-to-Width Ratio	Depth	Lateral Spacing	Depth of Recess	Extent of Projection
Building Size	16' to 45'	15' to 26'; 1 to 2.5 stories with a pitched roof	n/a	30' to 60'	n/a	n/a	n/a
Brick Coursing	8"	2.66" (Three courses = 8")	n/a	4"	n/a	1" to 8"	Best practices
Forecourt	Prohibited	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE BUILDING TYPE-ALLOWABLE MATERIALS

	Brick	Terra Cotta	Limestone	Formed Concrete	Beveled Cedar Siding	Other
Building Wall	X				X	Portland Cement Stucco / Cement Board *
Accents	X	X	X	X		Cedar
Window and Door Trim*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Cedar
Window Sills*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Cedar
Columns	X	X	X	X		Painted Wood

*Cement Siding and Wood Trim Installed Smooth-Side Out. Visible Wood-Grain Embossing or Rough-Sawn Surfaces Prohibited

Duplex Side-By-Side



The Duplex Side-by-Side Building Type is a singular, dedicated residential structure occupying one or two residential lots. The building is roughly 40 to 50 feet in width and 50 to 60 feet in depth, with doors located at the front and back. The Building Type is one to 2 ½ -stories and 15 to 26 feet in height with a pitched roof.

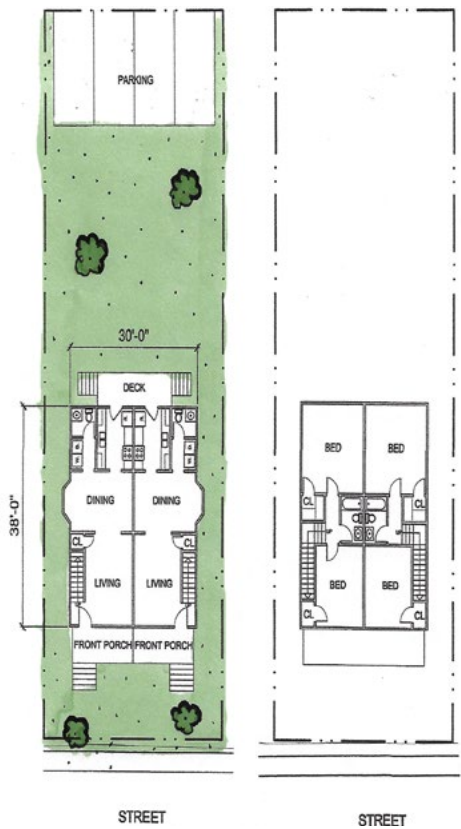
The Duplex Side-by-Side Building Type contains two residential units, adjacent to one another, each extending front to back and ground to roof, with open porches and main entrances located at the front. The ground floor is elevated 24 to 30 inches above finish grade. Because it contains fewer than four residential units, construction of this Building Type is governed by The International Residential Code (IRC). Because of that, units are not required by code to be accessible.

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS: DUPLEX: SIDE-BY-SIDE BUILDING TYPE

1. Traditionally-styled single-family house form containing two residential units with two main entrances at the front and alternate or service entrances along the sides and/or back.
2. Residential units exist side-by-side within building enclosure.
3. Opaque exterior walls through which window and door openings appear to have been "punched" as through paper in a ring binder.
4. Pattern of solids and voids generated by the vertical and horizontal alignment of windows and doors in various repeating sizes.
5. Window groupings encouraged, with groups of up to 3 allowable.
6. Building overhangs commensurate with style of architecture.
7. Ground floor (finish floor) 2'-0" to 3'-6" above grade.
8. Min. 6'-6" deep front porch maximum 30" above grade with decorative rail 28" – 36" above porch floor.
9. Individual main entrance articulation.
10. Window screens to be made of wood or, if non-masonry structure, windows to have 3' 1/2" height painted wood aprons added beneath sills to width of cased openings.
11. Floor-to-floor heights limited to 10'-0".
12. Garage detached at rear.
13. Front elevation to extend along Min. 60% of principal lot frontage.



Examples of the Duplex Side-by-Side building type.



A pre-approved site plan for the Duplex Side-by-Side Building Type.

NUMERICAL PARAMETERS

	Width	Height	Height-to-Width Ratio	Depth	Lateral Spacing	Depth of Recess	Extent of Projection
Building Size	40' to 50'	15' to 26'; 1 to 2.5 stories with pitched roof	n/a	50' to 60'	n/a	n/a	n/a
Brick Coursing	8"	2.66" (Three courses = 8")	n/a	4"	n/a	1" to 8"	Best practices
Forecourt	Prohibited	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

DUPLEX: SIDE-BY-SIDE BUILDING TYPE-ALLOWABLE MATERIALS

	Brick	Terra Cotta	Limestone	Formed Concrete	Beveled Cedar, Pine, and Composite Board Siding	Other
Building Wall	X				X	Portland Cement Stucco / Cement Board*
Accents	X	X	X	X		Portland Cement Stucco
Window and Door Trim*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Cedar
Window Sills*	X	X	X	X		Cedar
Columns	X	X	X	X		Painted Wood

*Cement Siding and Wood Trim Installed Smooth-Side Out. Visible Wood-Grain Embossing or Rough-Sawn Surfaces Prohibited

Duplex Stacked



The Duplex Stacked Building Type is a singular, dedicated residential structure occupying one residential lot. The building is roughly 18 to 25 feet in width and 30 to 60 feet in depth, with doors located at the front and back. The Building Type is 2 stories and approximately 26 feet in height with a pitched roof.

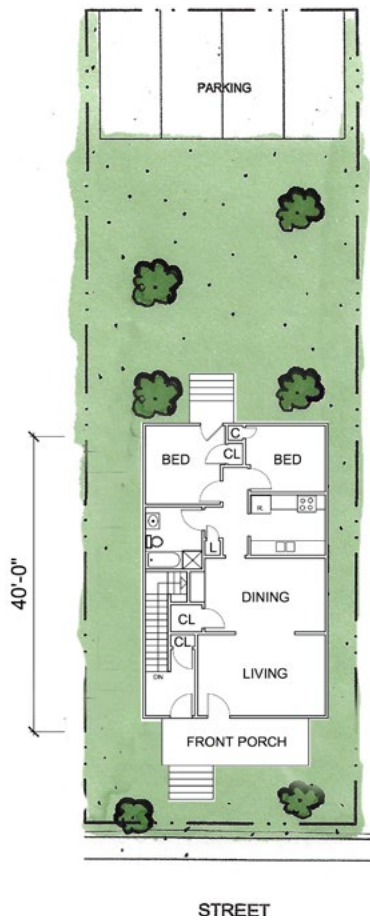
The Duplex Stacked Building Type contains two residential units, stacked one upon the other, with open porches and main entrances located at the front. The ground floor is elevated 24 to 30 inches above finish grade. Because it contains fewer than four residential units, construction of this Building Type is governed by The International Residential Code (IRC). Because of that, units are not required by code to be accessible.

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS: DUPLEX STACKED



Examples of the Duplex Stacked building type.

1. Traditionally-styled single-family house form containing two residential units with one to two main entrances at the front and alternate or service entrances along the sides and/or back.
2. Residential units exist above one another within building enclosure.
3. Opaque exterior walls through which window openings appear to have been “punched” as through paper in a ring binder.
4. Pattern of solids and voids generated by the vertical and horizontal alignment of windows and doors in various repeating sizes.
5. Window groupings encouraged, with groups of up to 3 allowable.
6. Building overhangs commensurate with style of architecture.
7. Ground floor (finish floor) 24” to 36” above grade.
8. Min. 6’-6” deep front porch maximum 30” above grade with decorative rail 28” – 36” above porch floor.
9. Main entrance articulation (entrance and porch may be shared).
10. Window screens to be made of wood or, if non-masonry structure, windows to have 3’ 1/2” height painted wood aprons added beneath sills to width of cased openings.
11. Floor-to-floor heights limited to 10’-0”.
12. Garage detached at rear.
13. Front elevation to extend along Min. 60% of principal lot frontage.



A pre-approved site plan for the Duplex: Stacked Building Type.

NUMERICAL PARAMETERS

	Width	Height	Height-to-Width Ratio	Depth	Lateral Spacing	Depth of Recess	Extent of Projection
Building Size	18' to 25'	Max. 26'; 2 stories with a pitched roof	n/a	30' to 60'	n/a	n/a	n/a
Brick Coursing	8"	2.66" (Three courses = 8")	n/a	4"	n/a	1" to 8"	Best practices
Forecourt	Prohibited	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

DUPLEX STACKED BUILDING TYPE-ALLOWABLE MATERIALS

	Brick	Terra Cotta	Limestone	Formed Concrete	Beveled Cedar, Pine, and Composite Board Siding	Other
Building Wall	X				X	Portland Cement Stucco / Cement Board*
Accents	X	X	X	X		
Window and Door Trim*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Cedar
Window Sills*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Cedar
Columns	X	X	X	X		Wood

*Cement Siding and Wood Trim Installed Smooth-Side Out. Visible Wood-Grain Embossing or Rough-Sawn Surfaces Prohibited

Villa



Examples of the villa building type.

The Villa Building Type is a large floor plate, singular, dedicated residential structure occupying one residential lot and containing one to 6 residential units. The minimum studio unit should be not less than 500 Square Feet. The building is roughly 40 to 50 feet in width and 30 to 60 feet in depth, with doors located at the front, back, and sides. The Building Type is one to 3 ½ stories and approximately 15 to 30 feet in height with a pitched roof.

The residential units within the Villa Building Type are flexibly situated by being stacked one upon the other, located side-by-side, or some combination thereof. Unless all three units are essentially identical to one another in plan and vertically stacked upon one another, this building type tends to appear more as a large single-family home than as a multi-unit structure.

The ground floor is elevated 24 to 30 inches above finish grade. Buildings that contain fewer than 4 units are governed by the International Residential Code (IRC), so villas with fewer than 4 units are not required by code to be accessible

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS: VILLA BUILDING TYPE

1. Traditional single-family house form with a pitched roof containing one to six residential units and a main entrance at the front with additional entrances along the sides and/or back.
2. Pattern of solids and voids generated by the vertical and horizontal alignment of windows and doors in various repeating sizes.
3. Window groupings encouraged, with groups of up to 3 allowable.
4. Ground floor 24" to 36" above grade.
5. Min. 6'-6" deep front porch, maximum 30" above grade, with decorative rail 28" to 36" above porch floor.
6. Main entrance articulation.
7. Floor-to-floor heights limited to 10'-0".
8. Window screens to be made of wood or, if non-masonry structure, windows to have 3' ½" height painted wood aprons added beneath sills to width of cased openings.
9. Garage detached at rear.
10. Front elevation to extend along a minimum of 60% of principal lot frontage.

NUMERICAL PARAMETERS

	Width	Height	Height-to-Width Ratio	Depth	Lateral Spacing	Depth of Recess	Extent of Projection
Building Size	40' to 50'	15' to 45'; 1 to 3.5 stores with a pitched roof	n/a	30' to 60'	n/a	n/a	n/a
Brick Coursing	8"	2.66" (Three courses = 8")	n/a	4"	n/a	1" to 8"	Best practices
Forecourt	Prohibited	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

VILLA BUILDING TYPE-ALLOWABLE MATERIALS

	Brick	Terra Cotta	Limestone	Formed Concrete	Beveled Cedar, Pine, and Composite Board Siding	Other
Building Wall	X				X	Portland Cement Stucco / Cement Board *
Accents	X	X	X	X		
Window and Door Trim*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Painted Wood
Window Sills*	X	X	X	X		Painted Wood
Columns	X	X	X	X		Painted Wood

*Cement Siding and Wood Trim Installed Smooth-Side Out. Visible Wood-Grain Embossing or Rough-Sawn Surfaces Prohibited





Middle Housing Opportunities

City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County, Michigan




November 7, 2023

LEGEND

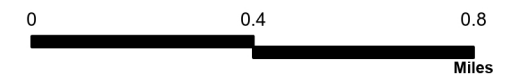
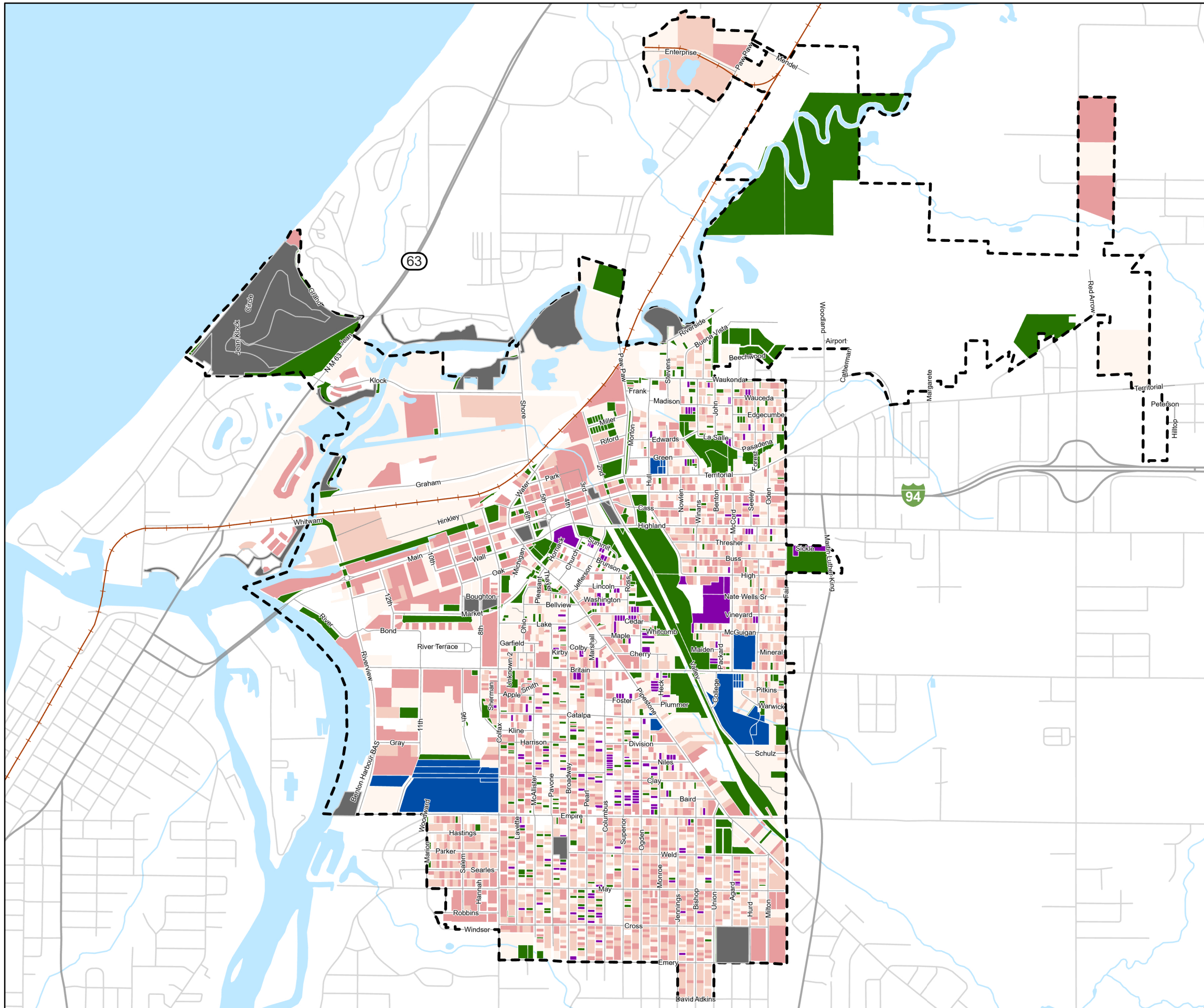
Publicly-Owned Properties

-  Benton Harbor Area Schools Properties
-  City of Benton Harbor Properties
-  Benton Harbor Housing Commission Properties
-  Deed Restricted Parcels (Park/Open Space)

Taxable Value per Acre

-  Lowest 33%
-  Middle 33%
-  Highest 33%

 Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.
Data Source: Berrien County 2022, McKenna 2023.

Fourplex



The Fourplex Building Type is a residential building, typically brick, occupying one residential lot. The building is roughly 30 to 40 feet in width and 50 to 60 feet in depth, with front and back doors located on its shorter dimensions. It is two stories and approximately 27 to 32 feet in height with a flat roof. Access to individual units is through an interior shared space such as a lobby or foyer.

The Fourplex Building Type contains four residential units, with two pairs of units (each extending front to back) stacked one upon the other. Because it contains four (or more) residential units, construction of this Building Type is governed by the International Building Code (IBC) and not by the International Residential Code (IRC). Therefore, all ground floor units must be accessible.

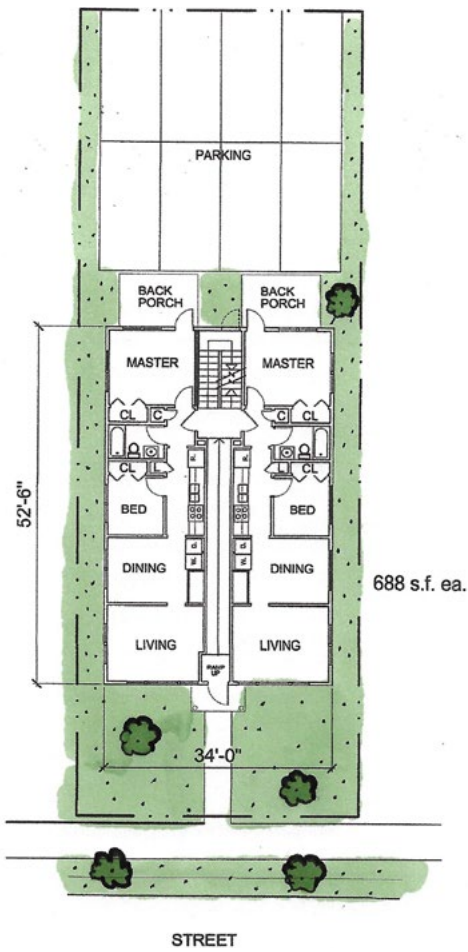
Wherever the front setback of a Fourplex Building Type matches other residential buildings along the same block face, it (like the other Missing-Middle housing types) fits seamlessly into any urban neighborhood, even those of mostly single-family houses, serving to strengthen the housing stock thereby adding mass and contributing quality design and materials.

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS: FOURPLEX

1. Traditional building façade treatments (including masonry reliefs and/or motifs) and main entrances located along Principal Frontage.
2. Opaque façade through which window and door openings appear to have been “punched” as through paper in a ring binder.
3. Building cornice (at top of building), along Principal Frontage, casting tallest horizontal shadow upon building elevations. Must be the most prominent shadow line.
4. Minimum one additional horizontal molding or accent material projection dividing the building into layers and/or water table expression.
5. Pattern of solids and voids generated by the vertical and horizontal alignment of windows and doors in repeating sizes.
6. Window groupings encouraged, with groups of up to 4 allowable.
7. Main entrance at grade for accessibility, working in conjunction with interior lobby or vestibule and lift or ramp servicing first-floor units.
8. Ground-floor units finish floor elevation 24” to 42” above grade.
9. Main entrance articulation.
10. Prominent sills and/or heads required for windows located along facades.
11. Sides and back of buildings not regulated by this code, except at corners (as shown here).
12. Building façade treatments optional along intersecting streets (not illustrated).
13. Floor-to-floor heights limited to 10’-0”.
14. Front elevation to extend along Min. 60% of principal lot frontage.



Examples of the Fourplex building type.



A pre-approved site plan for the Fourplex Building Type.

NUMERICAL PARAMETERS

	Width	Height	Height-to-Width Ratio	Depth	Lateral Spacing	Depth of Recess	Extent of Projection
Building Size	30' to 40'	27' to 32' with a flat roof	n/a	50' to 60'	n/a	n/a	n/a
Brick Coursing	8"	2.66" (Three courses = 8")	n/a	4"30'	n/a	1" to 8"	Best practices
Forecourt	Prohibited	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

FOURPLEX BUILDING TYPE-ALLOWABLE MATERIALS

	Brick	Terra Cotta	Limestone	Formed Concrete	Beveled Cedar, Pine, and Composite Board Siding	Other
Building Wall	X					Portland Cement Stucco
Accents	X	X	X	X		
Window and Door Trim*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Painted Wood*
Window Sills*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Painted Wood*
Columns	X	X	X	X		Painted Wood*

*Cement Siding and Wood Trim Installed Smooth-Side Out. Visible Wood-Grain Embossing or Rough-Sawn Surfaces Prohibited

Carriage House / Accessory Dwelling Unit



The Carriage House Building Type is accessory to a primary Building Type on the same lot and subject to zoning regulations regarding accessory uses. However, dimensional parameters here override accessory use standards elsewhere. The purpose of this Building Type is usually to provide rental income and/or accessory unit availability or office space in conjunction with the primary building and use on the site.

The Carriage House Building Type building footprint is typically rectangular in shape, roughly 24' in one direction and 24' to 36' in the other. The Building Type is one to 2 ½ stories and approximately 13 to 26 feet in height with a pitched roof. The ground floor may be dedicated to enclosed vehicular parking and, indeed, the building usually consists of a garage with an apartment or office above.

The Carriage House Building Type contains a maximum of one residential unit with stairway access to upper levels of the building. Because it contains fewer than four residential units, construction of this Building Type is governed by The International Residential Code (IRC) and, therefore, units are not required by code to be accessible.

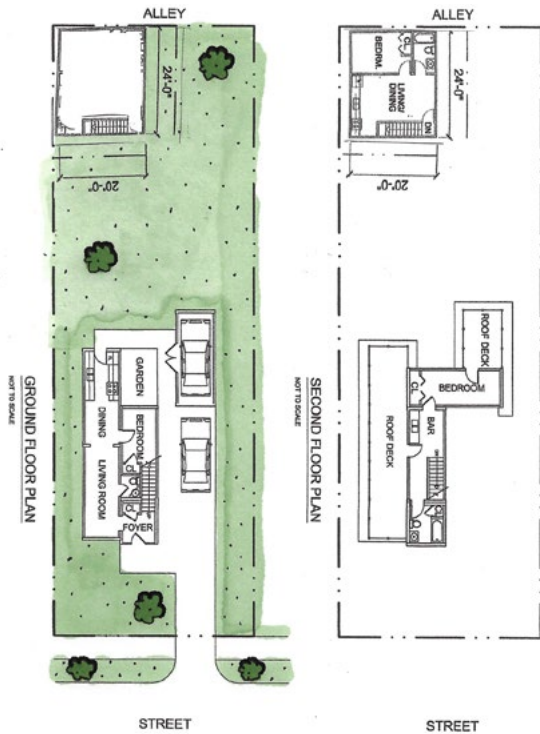
Side and rear setbacks are typically a minimum of 3', with 30' of clearance perpendicular to any garage door. Garage door clearance may be satisfied by a combination of additional building setback, the extent of alley Right-of-Way or easement width, and the existing setbacks of buildings cross-alley.



Examples of the Carriage House building type.

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS: CARRIAGE HOUSE

1. Small, traditionally-styled residential garage form containing one (1) residential unit, indoor parking, or one (1) residential unit above indoor parking. Ground floor finish floor 24"-36" above grade (if not above parking).
2. Opaque façade through which window and door openings appear to have been "punched" as through paper in a ring binder (garage doors excepted).
3. Window groupings encouraged, with groups of up to 3 allowable.
4. Residential entrance articulation and indoor stairway (stairway if more than one story).
5. Floor-to-floor heights limited to 10'-6".
6. Window screens to be made of wood or, if non-masonry structure, windows to have 3' 1/2" height painted wood aprons added beneath sills to width of cased openings.
7. Must be concealed behind a primary building type. Not to be located in view of frontage corresponding to street of primary building address.
8. Garage door openings, garage doors, garage door Window panes, and garage door panels must all be square or rectangular. Door panels and Window panes must be oriented vertically.



A pre-approved site plan for the Carriage House Building Type.

NUMERICAL PARAMETERS

	Width	Height	Height-to-Width Ratio	Depth	Lateral Spacing	Depth of Recess	Extent of Projection
Building Size	18' to 24'	≤ 21' (a)	.6 to 1.2	20' to 25'	n/a	n/a	n/a

CARRIAGE HOUSE BUILDING TYPE-ALLOWABLE MATERIALS

	Brick	Terra Cotta	Limestone	Formed Concrete	Beveled Cedar, Pine, and Composite Board Siding	Other
Building Wall	X				X	
Accents		X	X	X		
Window and Door Trim*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		
Window Sills*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		
Columns	X	X	X	X		

*Cement Siding and Wood Trim Installed Smooth-Side Out. Visible Wood-Grain Embossing or Rough-Sawn Surfaces Prohibited

*To be placed according to accessory structure standards in each district

Bungalow Court / Traditional and Container Building



The Bungalow Court Building Type constitutes seven to ten dedicated, single-family or duplex residential structures occupying one or more residential lots. The individual buildings are 24 to 30 feet in width and 20 to 24 in-depth, each with front porches, and are configured around a common open space. The building site (lots combined) should be roughly 100 feet in width and 150 feet in depth. The individual buildings are one to 2 ½ stories and approximately 15 to 30 feet in height with a pitched roof.

The residential units within the Bungalow Court Building Type are one-to-two-bedroom units. The ground floors are elevated 24 to 30 inches above finish grade. Because each building contains fewer than four residential units, construction of this Building Type is governed by The International Residential Code (IRC). Because of that, units are not required by code to be accessible.

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS: BUNGALOW COURT

1. Five to nine small, traditionally-styled wood-framed single-family houses arranged around a landscaped forecourt and covering a total area of maximum of 115 feet wide by 175 feet deep from Principal Frontage (including landscaped court and parking).
2. Court must be open on one side to Principal Frontage. Arrangement of units = two rows of two to four units each, perpendicular to street of address, facing one another with one additional unit centered at the back of the lot and facing the street. (See illustration at right).
3. Additionally, the site must include seven to twelve off-street parking spaces.
4. Unit sizes must be 480 to 672 square feet gross each, per story (first and second levels, where applicable).
5. Each house maximum 2 ½ stories, with one-story preferred.
6. Floor-to-floor heights limited to 10'-0".
7. Minimum 6'-0" deep front porch for each unit.
8. Minimum 2'-0" roof overhangs per house.
9. Sidewalk access to front of each unit must be included from both the public sidewalk and parking.
10. Each house must include an opaque façade through which window and door openings appear to have been "punched" as through paper in a ring binder.
11. Each house must include a pattern of solids and voids generated by the vertical and horizontal alignment of windows and doors in various repeating sizes.
12. Window groupings encouraged, with groups of up to 3 allowable.
13. Ground floor (finish floor level) 24" to 36" above grade.
14. Window screens to be made of wood or windows to have 3 ½" ht. exterior painted wood aprons added beneath sills to width of cased openings.
15. Required minimum 30" height manicured hedge or wall at front right-of-way line separating landscaped court from sidewalk (See perspective illustration provided).

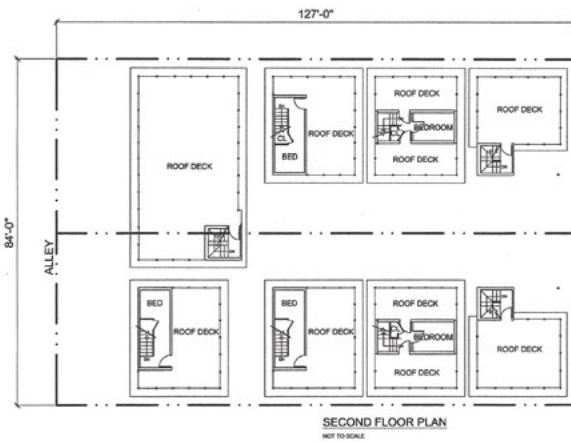
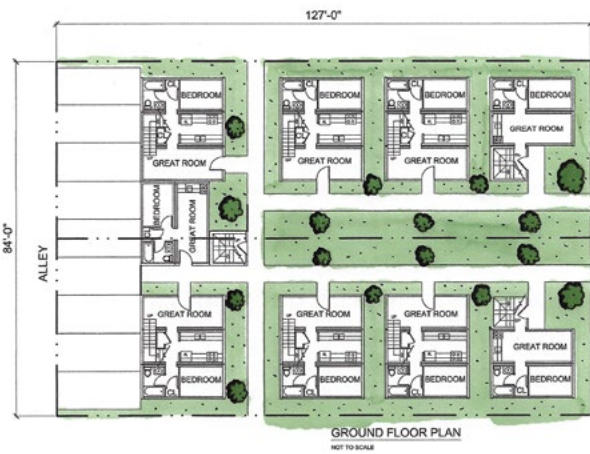


Examples of the Bungalow Court building type.



Top: A pre-approved site plan for the Bungalow Court Building Type.

Bottom: Another pre-approved site plan for the Bungalow Court Building Type using shipping containers as the building material.



NUMERICAL PARAMETERS

	Width	Height	Height-to-Width Ratio	Depth	Lateral Spacing	Depth of Recess	Extent of Projection
Building Size	24' to 30'	15' to 30'; 1 to 2.5 stories with a pitched roof	n/a	20' to 24'	5' to 7' Between adjacent units	n/a	n/a
Lot Size	Max. 100'	n/a	n/a	Max. 150'	n/a	n/a	n/a
Brick Coursing	8"	2.66" (Three courses = 8")	n/a	4"	n/a	1" to 8"	Best practices
Forecourt	25' TO 40'	n/a	n/a	To last unit	n/a	To last unit	n/a

BUNGALOW COURT BUILDING TYPE-ALLOWABLE MATERIALS

	Brick	Terra Cotta	Limestone	Formed Concrete	Beveled Cedar, Pine, and Composite Board Siding	Other
Building Wall	X				X	Portland Cement Stucco / Cement Board *
Accents	X	X	X	X		Painted Wood
Window and Door Trim*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Painted Wood
Window Sills*	X	X	X	X		Painted Wood
Columns	X	X	X	X		Painted Wood

*Cement Siding and Wood Trim Installed Smooth-Side Out. Visible Wood-Grain Embossing or Rough-Sawn Surfaces Prohibited

Rowhouse



The Rowhouse-Neighborhood Building Type is a multi-unit residential building with a shared front porch and residential units occupying one residential lot each. The individual units are approximately 15 to 20 feet in width and 2 ½ to 3 stories in height, extending front to back, ground to roof, and with each sharing one or more interior walls with adjacent units.

The Rowhouse-Neighborhood Building Type is a form of attached single-family housing, the construction of which is governed by the International Residential Code (IRC). Therefore, units are not required to be accessible.

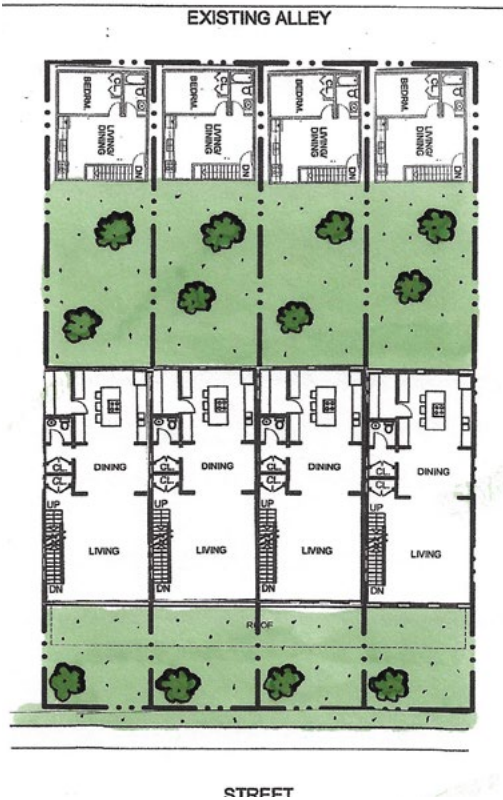
Wherever the front setback of a Rowhouse-Neighborhood Building Type matches other residential buildings along the same block face, it (like the other Missing-Middle housing types) fits seamlessly into any urban neighborhood, even those of mostly single-family houses, serving to strengthen the housing stock thereby adding mass and contributing quality design and materials.

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS: ROWHOUSE - NEIGHBORHOOD

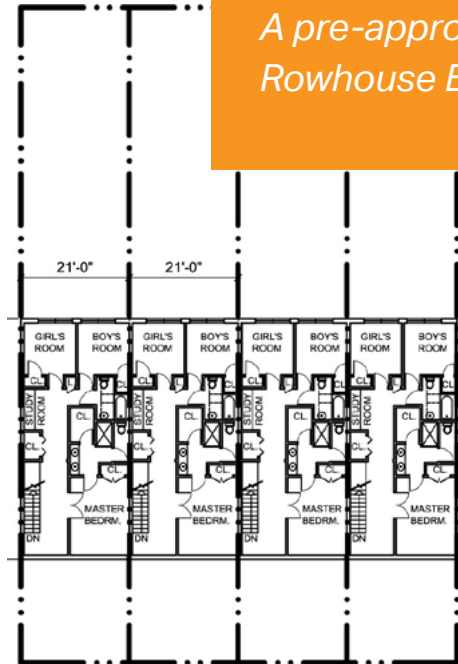
1. Residential units existing side-by-side within building enclosure with each unit extending front to back and foundation to roof.
2. Parking at rear or within building at ground floor with parking entrance at rear of building.
3. Side parking lots prohibited.
4. Opaque exterior walls through which window openings appear to have been "punched" as through paper in a ring binder.
5. Pattern of solids and voids generated by the vertical and horizontal alignment of windows and doors in various repeating sizes.
6. Window groupings encouraged, with groups of up to 3 allowable.
7. Ground floor (finished floor) 24" to 30" above grade.
8. Min. 6'-6" deep required front porch maximum 30" above grade with decorative rail 28" – 36" above porch floor (porches may be individual or shared and continuous across front of building).
9. Individual main entrances / potential for Private Porches.
10. Floor-to-floor heights limited to 10'-0".
11. Front elevation to extend along Min. 80% of principal lot frontage.



Examples of the Rowhouse building type.



A pre-approved site plan for the Rowhouse Building Type.



NUMERICAL PARAMETERS

	Width	Height	Height-to-Width Ratio	Depth	Lateral Spacing	Depth of Recess	Extent of Projection
Building Size	15' to 20'	2.5 to 3 stories	n/a	Max. 60'	15' to 22'	n/a	n/a
Brick Coursing	8"	2.66" (Three courses = 8")	n/a	4"	n/a	1" to 8"	Best practices
Forecourt	Prohibited	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

ROWHOUSE - NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING TYPE-ALLOWABLE MATERIALS

	Brick	Terra Cotta	Limestone	Formed Concrete	Beveled Cedar, Pine, and Composite Board Siding	Other
Building Wall	X				X	Portland Cement Stucco / Cement Board *
Accents	X	X	X	X		
Window and Door Trim*	Soldier Course	X	X	X		Cedar
Window Sills*	X	X	X	X		Cedar
Columns	X	X	X	X		Painted Wood

*Cement Siding and Wood Trim Installed Smooth-Side Out. Visible Wood-Grain Embossing or Rough-Sawn Surfaces Prohibited

Small Apartment



The Apartment Building Type is typically a brick building occupying one residential lot. The building is roughly 36 to 45 feet in width and 72 to 110 feet in depth, with doors located at the front and back. The Building Type is 3 ½ stories and approximately 35 to 40 feet in height with a flat roof. Access to individual units is through an interior shared space such as a lobby, foyer, and/or corridor. An elevator serves all levels and connects upper and lower-level units to a lobby frontage.

The Apartment Building Type contains 16 to 32 residential units, with a double-loaded corridor down the middle of each floor accessing those units. Because it contains four or more residential units, construction of this Building Type is governed by The International Building Code (IBC) and not by the International Residential Code (IRC). Because of that, and the fact that the building is serviced by an elevator, all units must be accessible.

Whenever the front setback of an Apartment Building Type matches other residential buildings along the same block face, it (like the other Middle housing types) fits seamlessly into any urban neighborhood of mostly single-family houses, serving to strengthen the housing stock thereby adding mass and contributing quality design and materials.

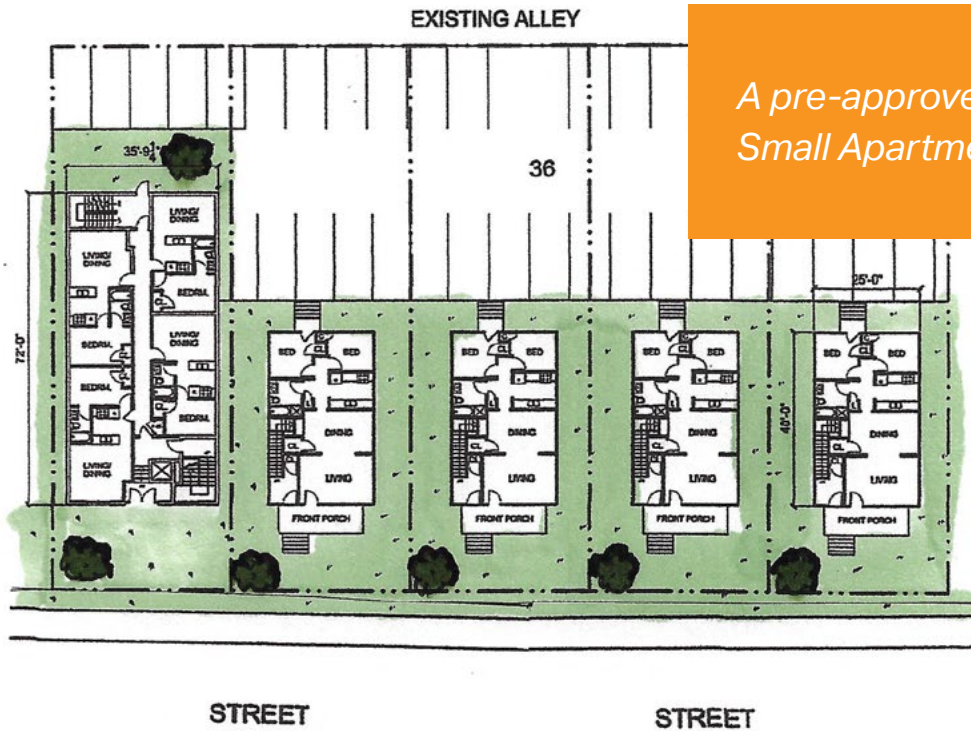
The Apartment Building Type is an urban building type, modest in size, and not to be confused with or represented by apartment complexes, campus-style housing, housing projects, or any one of many “towers-in-green”. Accordingly, the front door directly addresses a public, urban sidewalk at the front with minimal setback, and the building is oriented perpendicular, parallel, or tangent with the street right-of-way and addresses that right-of-way with a building façade that defines, scales, and respects the public realm. Recessed forecourts, 25’ or less in width, are allowable if centered on the building façade and with a minimum 16’ of building width present on either side.

ILLUSTRATED DESIGN STANDARDS: SMALL APARTMENT

1. Traditional building façade treatments (including masonry reliefs and/or motifs) and main entrance located along street of building address.
2. Opaque façade through which window and door openings appear to have been “punched” as through paper in a ring binder.
3. Building cornice (at top of building) of substantial height and decoration. (Feature excepted on Art Deco style buildings).
4. Minimum one horizontal molding or accent material projection dividing the façade into layers.
5. Pattern of solids and voids generated by the vertical and horizontal alignment of windows and doors in repeating sizes.
6. Window groupings encouraged, with groups of up to 3 allowable.
7. Main entrances at grade for accessibility, working in conjunction with interior lobby or vestibule and elevator.
8. Ground Floor Units (finished floor) 36” to 42” above grade.
9. Main entrance articulation.
10. Prominent sills and/or heads required for windows located along façades (discouraged along other exterior walls).
11. Building façade treatments (other than inclusion of windows) optional along intersecting streets.
12. No building entrances from side parking lots allowable. Otherwise, sides and backs of buildings not regulated by this code, except at corners (as shown here).
13. Towers, sculptures, and other characteristic forms and/or focal points encouraged (not illustrated).
14. Floor-to-floor heights limited to 10’-0”.
15. Facades to extend along Min. 80% of principal lot frontage.
16. Front façade should be setback to match other residential buildings along the same frontage w/ lawn in the setback area. No setback for facades along secondary frontages.



Examples of the Small Apartment building type.



A pre-approved site plan for the Small Apartment Building Type.

NUMERICAL PARAMETERS

	Width	Height	Height-to-Width Ratio	Depth	Lateral Spacing	Depth of Recess	Extent of Projection
Building Size	36' to 45'	35' to 40' ; 3.5 stories with a flat roof	n/a	72' to 110'	n/a	n/a	n/a
Brick Coursing	8"	2.66" (Three courses = 8")	n/a	4"	n/a	1" to 4"	Best practices
Forecourt	Max. 25'	n/a	n/a	unregulated	Building Wings max 60'	n/a	n/a

SMALL APARTMENT BUILDING TYPE-ALLOWABLE MATERIALS

	Brick	Terra Cotta	Limestone	Formed Concrete	Beveled Cedar, Pine, and Composite Board Siding	Other
Building Wall	X					X
Accents	X	X	X	X	X	X
Window and Door Trim*	Soldier Course	X	X	X	X	
Window Sills*	X	X	X	X	X	
Columns	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Cement Siding and Wood Trim Installed Smooth-Side Out. Visible Wood-Grain Embossing or Rough-Sawn Surfaces Prohibited

This page intentionally left blank.



www.BestBentonHarbor.com

04

Progressing Community



BEST Benton Harbor

CHAPTER 04

Contents

City /Publicly Owned Property	71
500 Lots Rehabilitated or Developed as Housing by 2040.	71
Metrics for Tax Base Development Through Middle Housing Investment on City Lots.	72
Building Home Equity through Local Partnerships	73
Tools for Development.	77
Land Trusts	77
Brownfield Redevelopment	77
Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Investment	78
Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts.	78
The Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act (OPRA).	79
Private Investment.	79
Community Partners.	79
Neighborhood Middle Housing Concept Plans	80
Klock / Paw Paw	82
Waukonda / Riverside.	86
Colfax / Britain.	88
Pipestone / Britain	90
Valley / Shultz.	92
Empire / Broadway.	94
Riverview	96



City / Publicly Owned Property

500 Lots Rehabilitated or Developed as Housing by 2040

The City and Housing Commission own over 600 properties that can be used to create more opportunities for equitable wealth building for City residents while stabilizing and improving the City's neighborhoods. Given that many of these properties are already in use, this plan sets forth a goal of developing 500 of these properties for new uses over the next 20 years. As the demographic research shows, in 1960 the City had more than 18,000 residents. In 2020, that number had dropped to just over 9,000 residents. As discussed in the Growing Community metrics, an aspirational goal for the City would be to add 10,000 new residents, 3,000 new homes, and 1,000 renovated homes by 2040. With the City as a partner, this goal can help stabilize neighborhoods, build wealth for City residents, and make Benton Harbor gentrification-proof.

Publicly-controlled properties can be utilized to achieve 50% of this goal, but it cannot be reached by developing single-family housing. If the City and the Housing Commission were to successfully utilize 500 lots for new homes, each site would need to house 10 people. The average household size in Benton Harbor is 2.7 persons per unit—therefore, single-family housing must be supplemented with additional housing types. Implementing policies to attract more residents to Benton Harbor, while focusing on strategies that intentionally confront issues of gentrification, build wealth for existing residents, and simultaneously encourage new residents from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds is a challenging yet hopeful endeavor.

Table 2. Potential People Living in New Homes with City Lot Middle Housing Program:

Middle Housing Type	Persons Per Building	Total Units	Total Persons
Accessory Dwelling Unit (1 Unit + 1 SF)	5.4	143	386
Bungalow Court (7 Units/3 Lots)	6.3	167	450
Duplex Side-by-Side (2 Units)	5.4	143	386
Duplex Stacked (2 Units)	5.4	143	386
Fourplex (4 Units)	10.8	286	771
Rowhouse (2 Units/Lot)	5.4	143	386
Apartment (12 Units)	32.4	857	2314
Total	-	1881	5079

Metrics for Tax Base Development Through Middle Housing Investment on City Lots



Generated with 50/50 Split Homestead / Non-Homestead



The existing housing stock in Benton Harbor serve as presidents for middle housing building types. New home building strategies must be combined with renovation incentives for current residents to improve and preserve the high-quality homes that exist in the City.



Building Home Equity through Local Partnerships

Advancing community wealth requires both social and economic equity. In order to support local wealth building through development, strong participation from a variety of partners—including government representatives, non-profit organizations, private businesses, and most importantly, individual citizens. The exhibit on the next page describes a “Home Equity Ladder” that illustrates a strategy for local involvement in housing development. Those at the lower levels of the ladder are **Foundational Partners** who share community wealth, and are responsible for supporting those at the higher levels, who build and earn community wealth.

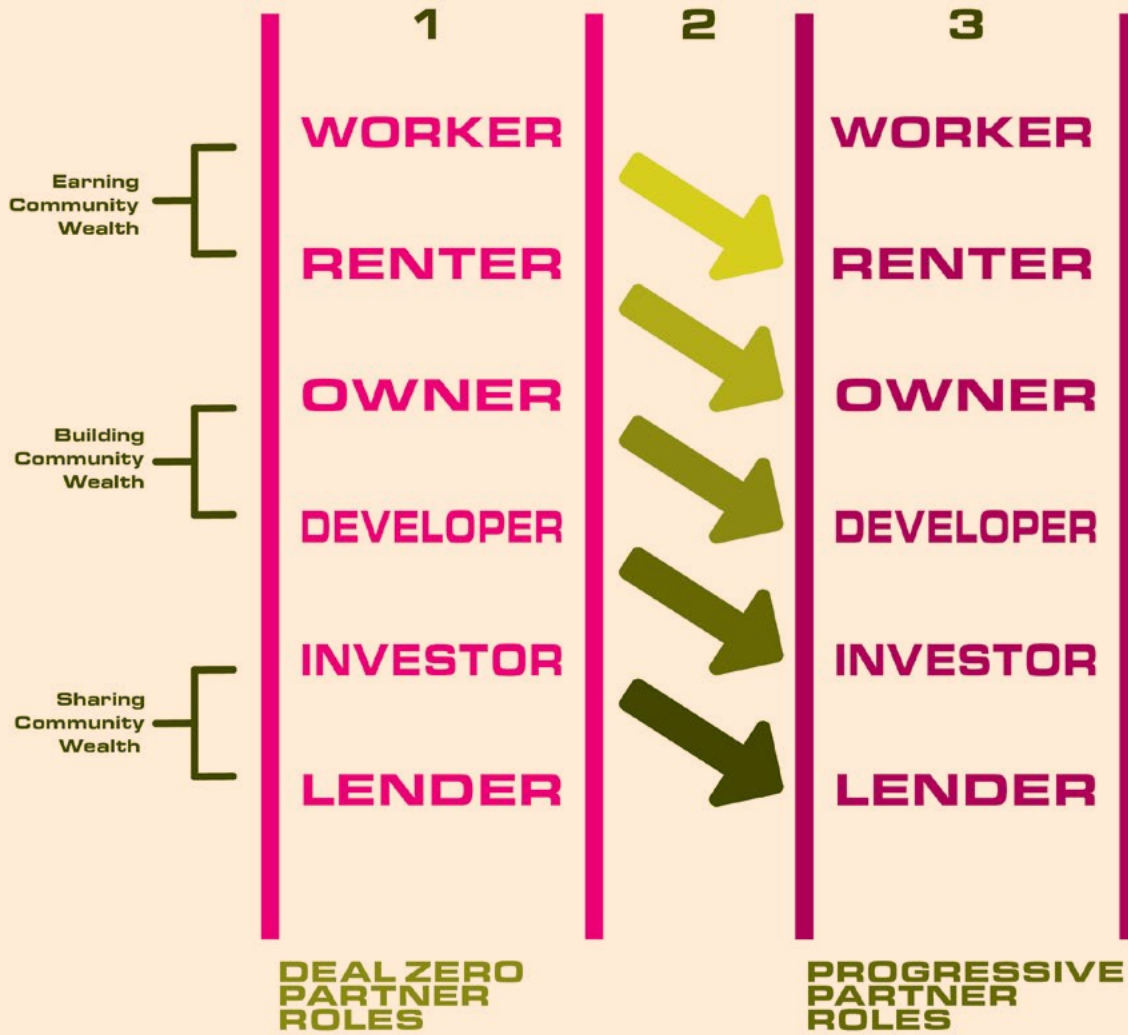
Partners from every level of the Home Equity Ladder should be represented and considered when undergoing development. **Identifying the right partners before acting is key to developing a beneficial cycle that builds community wealth. Before the first deal happens, local partners should be in place to ensure success. The home equity ladder calls this “Deal Zero.”**

DEAL ZERO REQUIRES:

- Local **Workers** building new units.
- Local **Renters** upgrading their living situation.
- Local **Owners** living in one unit of a multi-unit home, using rental income to qualify for mortgages.
- Local **Developers** (non-profit and for-profit) who know market realities, developing new units.
- Local **Investors** (public and private) financing development.
- Local **Lenders** (public and private) contributing land equity.

With high local involvement in the Deal Zero phase, wealth and equity will be generated by everyone on the Home Equity Ladder. As they accrue wealth, partners involved at higher steps of the ladder can move down to the foundational steps.

- **Workers & Renters** can become **Owners**.
- **Owners** can become **Developers**.
- **Developers** can become **Investors**.



- 1** Deal Zero reflects the partners in place before home development is started and more local partners will increase community wealth in progressive deals
- 2** Benefits of the home equity ladder model accrue with each middle housing deal and community members can progress from earning to building to sharing wealth
- 3** Progressive rounds of middle housing development can provide access for new partners to earn as previous partners progress to building and sharing roles

HOME EQUITY LADDER



Owner occupied middle housing provides residents the opportunity to build wealth and qualify for mortgages with rental income



Top: Abandoned, significantly deteriorated buildings pose a public safety risk. The National Fire Protection Association estimates that about half of vacant building fires are intentionally set compared to 10% of all structure fires. While these structures should be demolished, it is important to prioritize those sites for new construction early on, to avoid creating large areas of empty land.



Bottom: "Infill" is construction that occupies vacant lots between currently active uses. This prevents sprawl and improves neighborhoods that have experienced deterioration and have had little to no new development over the years.

Over 600 properties are owned throughout Benton Harbor between the City (399), Benton Harbor Area Schools (27), and the Benton Harbor Housing Commission (182), presenting an opportunity to have significant influence over how this land is developed and redeveloped. Having Transfer Guidelines that reinforce the objectives of the Equity Opportunity Areas will be critical to ensuring the future of these properties maximize value for the community.

The City's Community and Economic Development Department formerly had a Vacant Lot Revitalization Program which was put on hold to conduct an inventory of properties. This inventory should expand to include both vacant lots and properties with structures. The inventory could be further expanded to include properties owned by boards of the Benton Harbor Area Schools and the Benton Harbor Housing Commission. Further examination could be done to identify underutilized property to be targeted for housing development.

Evaluation of all properties should observe the "neighborhoods-first" intent behind the Home Investment Opportunity Area. Properties should be categorized into the following groups, which each have distinct Transfer Guidelines when considering development proposals:

Actively in Use: These properties should be removed from the redevelopment pipeline. Additional municipal needs for property should be assessed to determine if any unused properties should be set aside for future use by the City. In the case of occupied residential properties that need rehabilitation, residents should be given the opportunity to move into newly constructed units, permanently or temporarily while renovations are completed.

Vacant Structures: These properties need to be assessed for either rehabilitation or demolition. Determining how many must be demolished will provide the City with an estimate of initial investment. Guidelines for redeveloping these properties are:

- **Demolition candidates:** Structures that are deemed unsafe and beyond repair. Adaptive reuse should be considered wherever possible and demolition should be used as a last resort. If deemed unsuitable for rehabilitation, demolition of existing housing units shall be replaced by a minimum of 1.5 units of new middle housing per demolished unit.
- **Rehabilitation candidates:** Industrial or commercial structures deemed economically viable should be considered for adaptive reuse, providing the City an opportunity to generate higher-density multi-family properties. Request for Proposals (RFPs) should be utilized to identify experienced developers. Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) should be required for publicly-owned properties in the Home Investment Opportunity Area and adhere to the affordability and design criteria.

Developer Requirements: RFPs for rehabilitation projects should require:

- **Affordability Commitment:**
 - » 20% of housing units are affordable (costing 30% of a person’s income) to a household making 80% of the Area Median Income for Berrien County as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, or
 - » Contribution to an Affordable Housing Fund at a specific rate.
- **Community Wealth Generation Commitment:**
 - » Developers should have owners identified at the time of transfer, and higher consideration should be given to projects that commit to identifying an existing Benton Harbor resident.
- **Resident Employment Commitment:**
 - » Higher consideration should be given to proposals that commit to a minimum workforce comprised of 25% Benton Harbor residents.

Vacant Land: These properties present the most potential for innovation and generating community value. When considering the transfer of these properties, the City should highly scrutinize proposals based on these guidelines:

- **Large Lots and Contiguous Parcels:** There are several properties that are good candidates for high-density development and catalytic impact. Contiguous small vacant parcels should be reserved for consolidation into larger developments. RFPs should seek experienced nonprofit or for-profit developers. Proposals should be between 20 to 35 dwelling units per acre (du/ac), based on the size of the property and adjacent uses. Middle Housing Typologies outlined in Chapter 3 such as Bungalow Courts, Quadplexes, Rowhouses, and Small Apartments would be appropriate here.
- **Medium Lots:** These properties should be between 12 to 20 du/ac and depending on size could accommodate Fourplex, Bungalow Court, or Neighborhood Rowhouse typologies.
- **Small, Isolated Lots:** These should be evaluated depending on context:
 - » **Side Lot Program:** Adjacent neighbors should have right of first refusal for side lots if they are willing to commit to utilizing them for adding capacity for more housing units or otherwise add significant value to the property. The side lot program is intended to activate side lots for more productive uses, not only to grant property owners additional yard space.” Single-family homeowners living next to a side lot could use it to construct an ADU or duplex addition, while a small multi-family building or apartment might add a unit or provide more resident amenities.
 - » **Vacant Lot Revitalization Program:** Properties turned down by neighbors, or ones that are on blocks with high vacancy, should be considered for a new iteration of the Vacant Lot Revitalization Program. The program should target small-scale developers or residents seeking land to build their own homes. Development agreements should be utilized, requiring construction within 2 years of purchase with the ability to apply for an extension if necessary. Pre-approved site plans mentioned can be utilized to create an accessible process. Benton Harbor residents who seek to occupy the home should get highest preference, followed by those who seek to maintain ownership as a rental property, then all other interested buyers.

Tools for Development

The following are overviews of different funding and financing tools the City can take advantage of. These tools don't just support development, they help to create mechanisms to welcome new residents while protecting current residents from displacement and improving access to housing and other critical supports.

Land Trusts

A land trust describes a conservation organization or non-profit organization that obtains and permanently conserves land. Land trusts can gain land through different means, but typically, the managing organization acquires land by purchasing it directly or working with private landowners to obtain a conservation easement. Once purchased or donated, these lands are typically made open to the public, providing additional community benefit. Residents of these properties hold ownership over the buildings on the property but hold a long-term lease on the land so that it is retained by the land trust, which can ensure it is resold at a reasonable profit margin, rents are kept affordable, or so the land can be used for other kinds of community benefits.

This land preservation tool has become more commonplace in recent decades as municipalities become more concerned about the protection of valuable land and water resources. In Benton Harbor, a land trust may be a beneficial tool for maintaining affordable housing, protecting ecologically important land, hosting local businesses, or creating pocket parks and community gardens. A land trust's greatest benefit is that the land is preserved in perpetuity, allowing important land in Benton Harbor to be protected for generations to come. Community land trusts are typically governed by a combination of city leadership, residents of the land trust properties, and locals who do not live on land trust properties.

Brownfield Redevelopment

Brownfield properties are those which may be complicated by the presence or perception of contamination. To aid in the redevelopment of these properties, state grants, loans, site assessments, and other support is available for remediation processes. Remediation is a necessary process and state funding can help with the financial feasibility of a project. The City of Benton Harbor currently has a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, which works closely with Environmental Consulting Technology, which specializes in solving complex environmental issues. The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority should utilize the goals set forth in this Plan when considering development projects on Brownfield properties.





Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Investment

While there has already been considerable investment in downtown Benton Harbor, there are currently several properties slated for housing. The DDA's role in supporting housing development is investment in public amenities that will increase the value and desirability of the area. Examples include:

- Streetscaping, such as seasonal plantings, holiday lighting, and outdoor furnishings like benches;
- Improved parking options for vehicles and bicycles, including electric vehicle charging stations;
- Infrastructure repairs, such as pavement and sidewalk crossings;
- Maintenance, such as snow removal, clean-up services, and provision of waste receptacles.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts

A TIF District is a tool that municipalities use to finance public investments and infrastructure improvements in specific geographic areas. TIFs work by freezing the assessed value of properties in the district for a specific number of years. Property taxes continue to be collected at the frozen assessment value and allocated as normal. As property values go up incrementally each year, the additional tax revenue beyond the frozen assessment value is allocated to infrastructure needs and development expenditures only within the TIF district. This happens over a designated period of time, usually 10 to 20 years, after which all the tax revenue from the area will go into the general fund moving forward.

TIF revenues can be used in a “pay-as-you-go” model, where private investment pays for development up front and a municipality reimburses the developer once property values and tax revenues increase, or a “pay-as-you-use” model in which the sponsoring jurisdiction (typically a municipality’s redevelopment authority or commission) issues debt to pay for development up front and uses the incremental tax revenue to pay it off.

The Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act (OPRA)

OPRA provides a property tax exemption for commercial and commercial housing properties that are rehabilitated and meet the requirements of the Act. The property must be located in an established Obsolete Property Rehabilitation District, which the City can establish. While the City may be forgoing some tax revenue at the start of a project with this tool, they are investing in the long-term benefits of bringing in additional development.

Private Investment

Another critical component of Benton Harbor's housing development is private investment from foundations, non-governmental organizations, mission-driven organizations, corporations, and other private parties. There is growing interest in supporting Benton Harbor's revitalization and the City must be prepared to play a role in guiding this investment. This can be done by:

- Establishing an Affordable Housing Fund that can be used to provide subsidies to developments that meet affordability criteria.
- Establishing a section of the Capital Improvement Plan dedicated to community amenities that interested parties can commission.
- Evaluating proposals that fall outside the City's list of needs against the corresponding Equity Opportunity Area guidelines for projects that align with one of the Opportunity Area topics.

Community Partners

In addition to private parties that want to directly contribute financially, the City should continue working with local community development organizations as well as the Housing Commission to collaborate wherever possible. To accomplish the revitalization goals this plan sets out, the City must focus on strengthening strategic partnerships that will foster community buy-in and provide opportunities to accomplish more than it could in isolation. Local community organizations are highly encouraged to pursue projects that further the goals of the Community Plan that align with their own missions.





3D illustration of concept plans for Valley Drive.



Rendering of a street-level view of Project T, a mixed-income and mixed-density project by Harbor Habitat for Humanity, which exemplifies the goals of the Benton Harbor Community Plan.

Neighborhood Middle Housing Concept Plans

The Neighborhood Middle Housing Concept Plans illustrate that the City's efforts to build capacity, improve services, and improve the tax base go hand-in-hand with the effort to provide more and better housing opportunities for Benton Harbor's current and future residents. The prior section demonstrated that by focusing only on 500 City and/or Housing Commission properties, 52% of the home creation metric and 34% of the new people metric could be achieved by 2030, while 65% of the home creation metric and 42% of the new people metric could be achieved by 2040.

This analysis focuses on the people-housing-tax benefits centered on neighborhood investment around the City. All of the focus areas were discussed with members of the public as well as City leaders. Each area was visited onsite during the planning week event in June of 2022. All of the areas had clusters of vacant publicly-owned properties, vacant privately-owned properties, and existing residences where current homeowners and renters could benefit from renovation incentives. 52% of the home creation metric and 65% of the new people metric could be achieved by 2040 if the seven study areas evaluated were developed similarly to the Concept Plan.

Citywide, the summary table on the following page shows that within these focus areas, 71 public lots and 298 vacant private lots would be developed into new homes for existing and future Benton Harbor residents. This would result in more than \$5 million in new annual tax revenue for the City. 27 New Civic Institutions, which may also include retail uses and housing on upper floors, will anchor the plans.

Table 3. Units Shown on Neighborhood Middle Housing Concept Plans

Middle Housing Type	Klock / Paw Paw	Waukonda / Riverside	Colfax / Britain	Pipestone / Britain	Valley / Shultz	Empire / Broadway	Riverview	Total
Accessory Dwelling Unit (1 Unit)	98	103	70	36	32	113	-	452
Bungalow Court (7 Units/3 Lots)	-	-	5	2	4	2	-	13
Duplex (2 Units)	6	33	27	5	4	1	-	76
Villa (3 Units)	-	-	5	10	5	-	-	20
Fourplex (4 Units)	-	3	6	5	15	1	-	30
Rowhouse (2 Units/Lot)	46	14	14	16	2	10	-	102
Apartment (12 Units)	30	5	15	9	-	17	58	134
Total	174	158	142	83	62	144	58	821
Civic Buildings and Quasi-Public Uses Illustrated	3	1	2	6	2	6	7	27
Estimated Renovation Units Illustrated	-	28	39	52	-	101	5	225
Total People with New Homes	1,214	581	887	540	378	771	1,503	5,864
Total New Tax Revenue	\$1,404,149	\$852,625	\$884,470	\$632,545	\$317,267	\$617,355	\$344,716	\$5,053,127

1. Klock / Paw Paw

The Klock / Paw Paw plan creates 174 new homes on the north side of the City and a neighborhood bridge between the City's neighborhoods and the Lake Michigan waterfront. These homes will need to be designed in a manner consistent with best practices for flood mitigation. A highlight of this plan is a 3-4 story 120 to 160 thousand square foot civic building, which could house a new sports complex, hotel facilities, restaurants, and retail. Rowhouses include full-size units in front with Accessory Dwelling Units facing interior alleys. 1,400 people can benefit from newly constructed homes and new tax revenue of \$1.4 million annually will be generated if the area is developed in accordance with this concept plan.



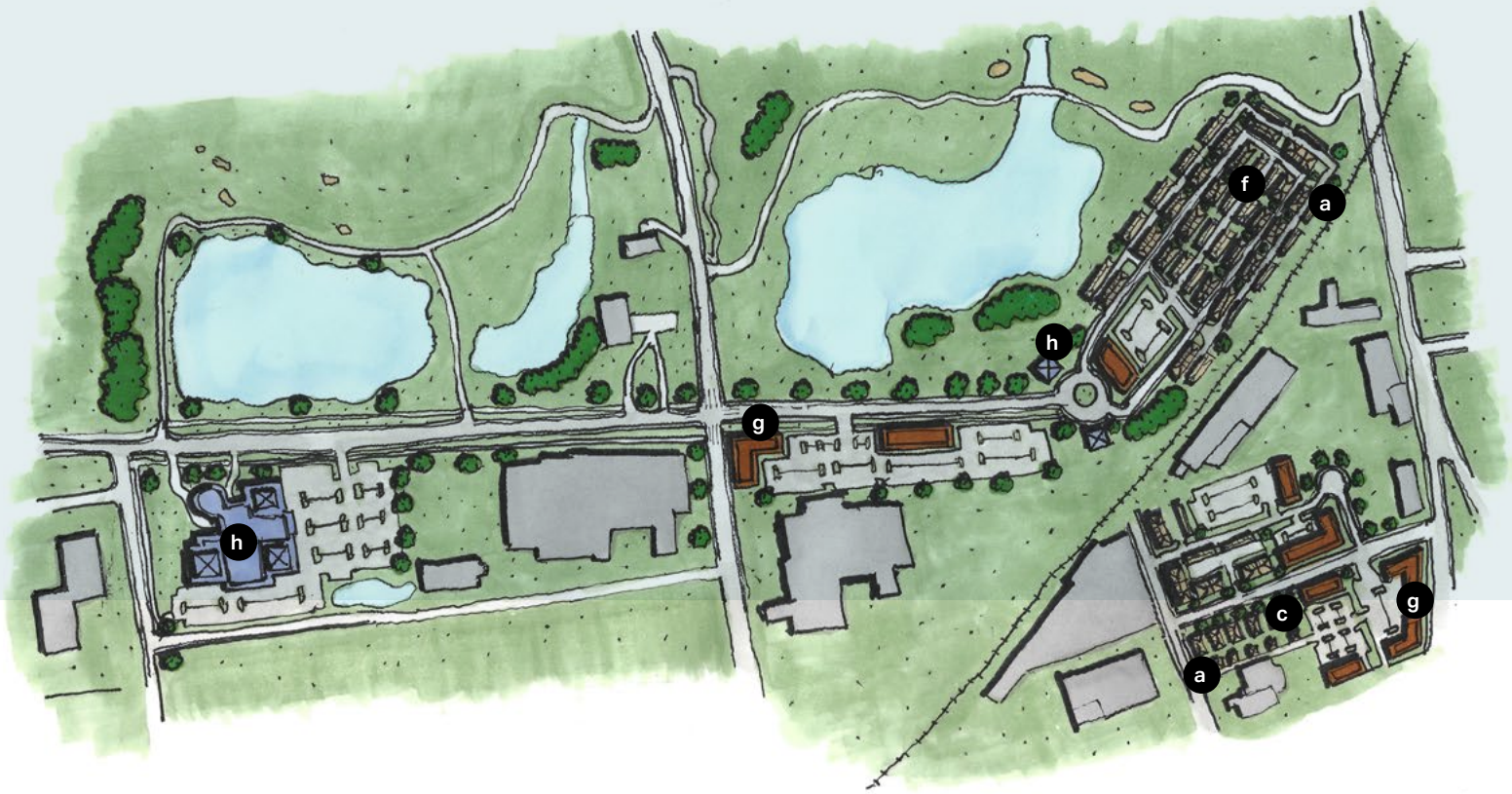


Table 4. Potential People Living in New Homes in the Klock / Paw Paw Plan


Concept Plan Key	Middle Housing Type	Total New		Total People in New Homes
a	Accessory Dwelling Unit (1 Unit)	98		212
b	Bungalow Court (7 Units/3 Lots)	0		0
c	Duplex (2 Units)	6		26
d	Villa (3 Units)	0		0
e	Fourplex (4 Units)	0		0
f	Rowhouse (2 Units/Lot)	46		199
g	Apartment (12 Units)	30		778
	Total	180		1214
h	Civic Buildings and Quasi-Public Uses Illustrated	3	New Construction Public Properties	3
	Total New Taxable Value	\$1,404,149	New Construction Private Properties	20
i	Estimated Renovation Units Illustrated	0	Total New Construction	23

Neighborhood Middle Housing Concept Plans


City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County, Michigan


November 7, 2023


LEGEND


 Focus Areas

Traffic Volumes 2020

 0 - 1000 AADT


 1001 - 3000 AADT

 3001 - 8000 AADT

 8001+ AADT

Flood Hazard

 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard

 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard

 Regulatory Floodway

 Benton Harbor Boundary

1 Klock / Paw Paw

2 Waukonda / Riverside

3 Colfax / Britain

4 Pipestone / Britain

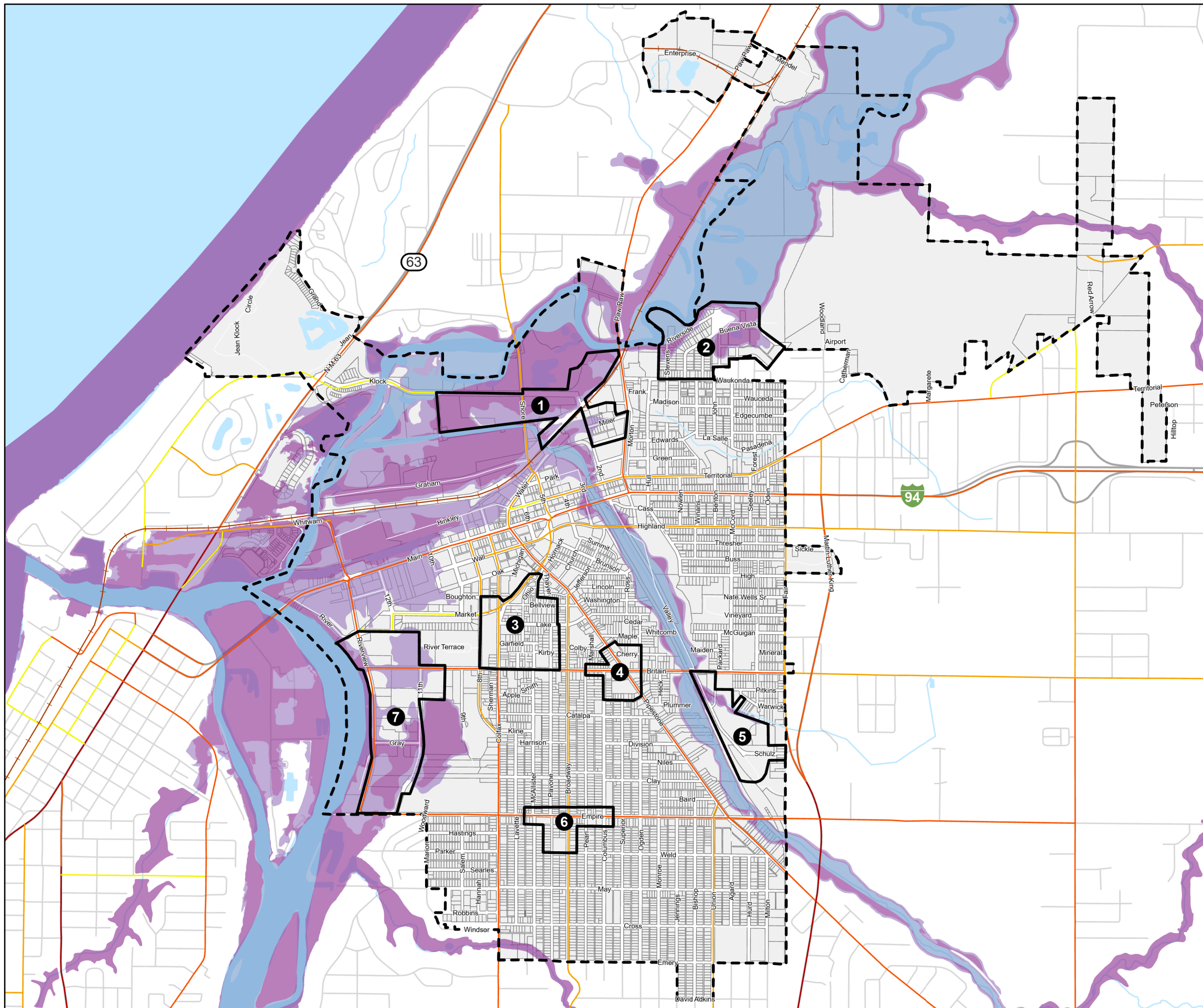
5 Valley / Shultz

6 Empire / Broadway

7 Riverview



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.
Data Source: Berrien County 2022, McKenna 2023.



2. Waukonda / Riverside

The Waukonda plan creates 158 new homes on the north side of the City. This plan helps to improve access to the Paw Paw River and provides more residences near this asset. These homes can take advantage of the changes in elevation to create vistas on the river. A highlight of this plan is a civic building, which could house an indoor roller rink for winter activities, as well as canoe and kayak rentals, or other river-related recreation opportunities for summer activities. 804 people can benefit from newly constructed homes and new tax revenue of \$850 thousand annually will be generated if the area is developed in accordance with this concept plan.





Table 5. Potential People Living in New Homes in the Waukonda / Riverside Plan

Concept Plan Key	Middle Housing Type	Total New		Total People in New Homes
a	Accessory Dwelling Unit (1 Unit)	103		222
b	Bungalow Court (7 Units/3 Lots)	0		0
c	Duplex (2 Units)	33		143
d	Villa (3 Units)	0		0
e	Fourplex (4 Units)	3		26
f	Rowhouse (2 Units/Lot)	14		60
g	Apartment (12 Units)	5		130
	Total	158		581
h	Civic Buildings and Quasi-Public Uses Illustrated	1	New Construction Public Properties	14
	Total New Taxable Value	\$852,625	New Construction Private Properties	58
i	Estimated Renovation Units Illustrated	28	Total New Construction	72

3. Colfax / Britain

The Colfax plan creates 142 new homes in the center of the City and utilizes the bluff along Colfax to create pristine views of downtown and the waterfront. Developing small apartments, quadplexes, and villas along the bluff is highly desirable because larger floor plate structures will complement the grand design of the historic homes along the street. A highlight of this plan would be the adaptive reuse of Calvin Britain School for housing and / or community educational activities. 978 people can benefit from newly constructed homes and new tax revenue of \$884 thousand annually will be generated if the area is developed in accordance with this concept plan.





Table 6. Potential People Living in New Homes in the Colfax / Britain Plan

Concept Plan Key	Middle Housing Type	Total New		Total People in New Homes
a	Accessory Dwelling Unit (1 Unit)	70		151
b	Bungalow Court (7 Units/3 Lots)	5		76
c	Duplex (2 Units)	27		117
d	Villa (3 Units)	5		32
e	Fourplex (4 Units)	6		52
f	Rowhouse (2 Units/Lot)	14		60
g	Apartment (12 Units)	15		389
	Total	142		877
h	Civic Buildings and Quasi-Public Uses Illustrated	2	New Construction Public Properties	15
	Total New Taxable Value	\$884,470	New Construction Private Properties	119
i	Estimated Renovation Units Illustrated	39	Total New Construction	134

4. Pipestone / Britain

The Pipestone plan creates 83 new homes in the center of the City and creates a node of activity along Pipestone, which can be utilized to support new business development and entrepreneurship as well as religious and institutional uses. A highlight of this plan would be the development of new rowhouses on a privately held greenfield site south of Britain. While the owner of this particular site may not be interested in developing it in this manner, the concept illustrates how pocket developments can help to restore neighborhood continuity. 598 people can benefit from newly constructed homes and new tax revenue of \$633 thousand annually will be generated if the area is developed in accordance with this concept plan.

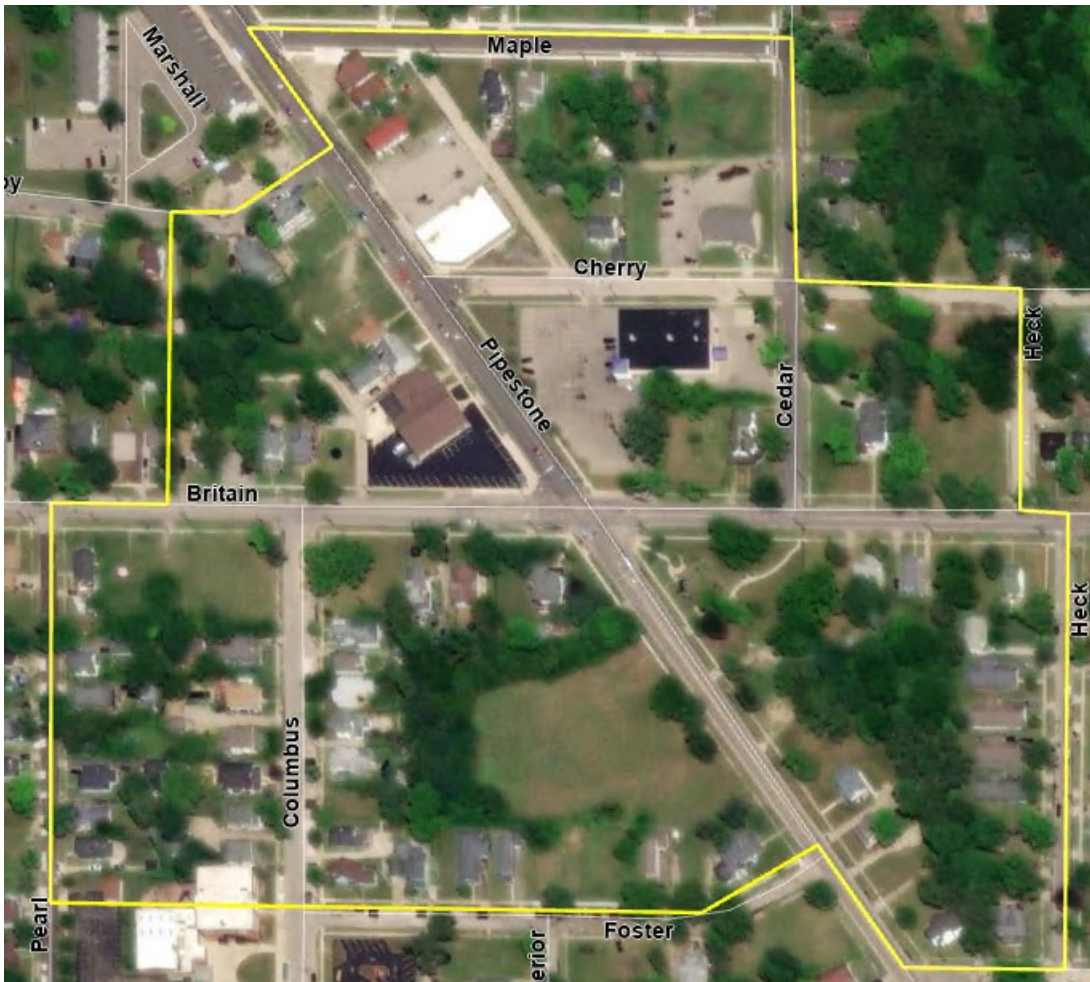




Table 7. Potential People Living in New Homes in the Pipestone / Britain Plan

Concept Plan Key	Middle Housing Type	Total New		Total People in New Homes
a	Accessory Dwelling Unit (1 Unit)	36		78
b	Bungalow Court (7 Units/3 Lots)	2		30
c	Duplex (2 Units)	5		22
d	Villa (3 Units)	10		65
e	Fourplex (4 Units)	5		43
f	Rowhouse (2 Units/Lot)	16		69
g	Apartment (12 Units)	9		233
	Total	83		540
h	Civic Buildings and Quasi-Public Uses Illustrated	6	New Construction Public Properties	20
	Total New Taxable Value	\$632,545	New Construction Private Properties	26
i	Estimated Renovation Units Illustrated	52	Total New Construction	46

5. Valley / Shultz

The Valley plan creates 62 new homes on the east side of the City and helps to improve access to Ox Creek. These homes would front a newly-created Ox Creek boardwalk trail and take advantage of the changes in elevation to create vistas overlooking a public park. A highlight of this plan is the ability to use new development to encourage environmental justice and remediation activities. As it currently exists, Valley Drive is a site that experiences excessive illegal dumping and has other significant contamination concerns. The Concept Plan presented here envisions the site being cleaned to residential standards. Illegal dumping is most common in unoccupied areas, so developing the site for active use should discourage further dumping activities. 346 people can benefit from newly constructed homes and new tax revenue of \$317 thousand annually will be generated if the area is developed in accordance with this concept plan.





Table 8. Potential People Living in New Homes in the Valley / Shultz Plan

Concept Plan Key	Middle Housing Type	Total New		Total People in New Homes
a	Accessory Dwelling Unit (1 Unit)	32		69
b	Bungalow Court (7 Units/3 Lots)	8		121
c	Duplex (2 Units)	4		17
d	Villa (3 Units)	5		32
e	Fourplex (4 Units)	15		130
f	Rowhouse (2 Units/Lot)	2		9
g	Apartment (12 Units)	0		0
	Total	66		378
h	Civic Buildings and Quasi-Public Uses Illustrated	2	New Construction Public Properties	1
	Total New Taxable Value	\$317,267	New Construction Private Properties	5
i	Estimated Renovation Units Illustrated	0	Total New Construction	6

6. Empire / Broadway

The Empire plan creates 144 new homes in the center of the City and creates a node of activity along Empire at Broadway that can be utilized to support new business development and entrepreneurship, while also creating opportunities for new loft apartments on upper stories. A highlight of this plan would be the creation of small apartment buildings facing Broadway Park. 995 people can benefit from newly constructed homes and new tax revenue of \$617 thousand annually will be generated if the area is developed in accordance with this concept plan.





Table 9. Potential People Living in New Homes in the Empire / Broadway Plan

Concept Plan Key	Middle Housing Type	Total New		Total People in New Homes
a	Accessory Dwelling Unit (1 Unit)	113		244
b	Bungalow Court (7 Units/3 Lots)	2		30
c	Duplex (2 Units)	1		4
d	Villa (3 Units)	0		0
e	Fourplex (4 Units)	1		9
f	Rowhouse (2 Units/Lot)	10		43
g	Apartment (12 Units)	17		441
	Total	144		771
h	Civic Buildings and Quasi-Public Uses Illustrated	6	New Construction Public Properties	14
	Total New Taxable Value	\$617,355	New Construction Private Properties	40
i	Estimated Renovation Units Illustrated	101	Total New Construction	54

7. Riverview

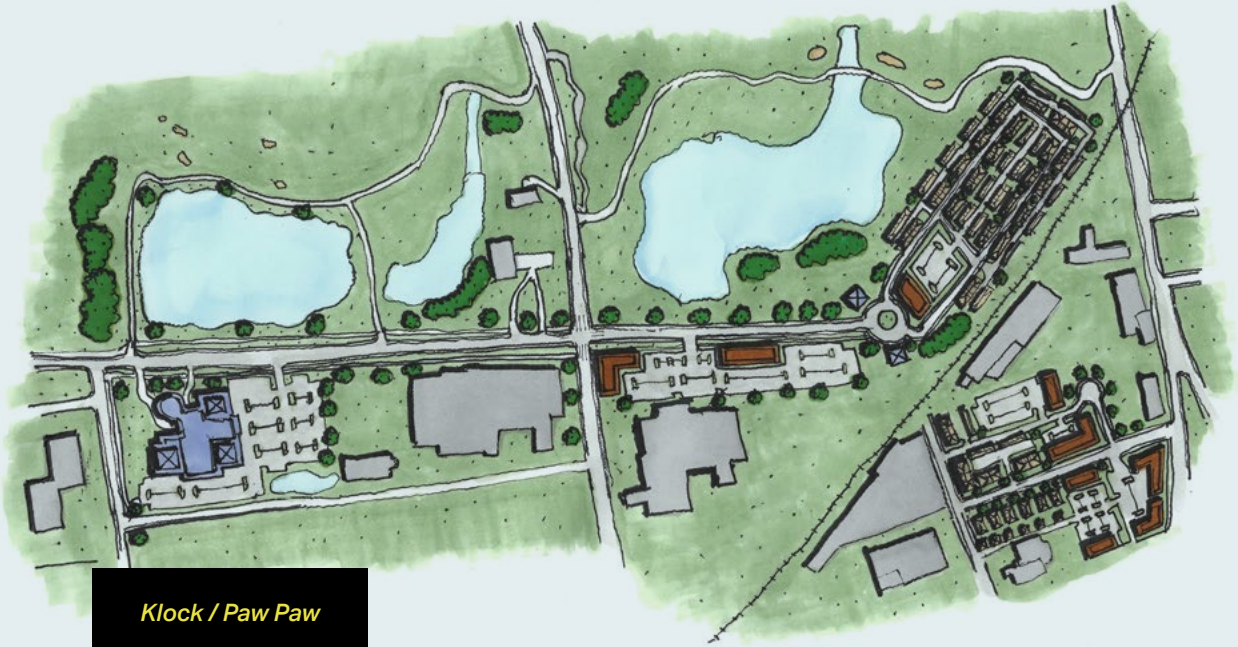
As mentioned prior, the plan for the Riverview is consistent with the vision presented in the 2011 Master Plan. The Riverview plan creates 116 new homes on the west side of the City and helps to create connectivity between the City’s neighborhoods and the St. Joseph River, Downtown, and the Lake Michigan waterfront. These homes will need to be designed in a manner consistent with best practices for flood mitigation. A highlight of this plan is a node of civic activity on the north end in close proximity to the Whirlpool Campus. All buildings on this plan should be 3-4 stories. The civic buildings should have upper-story residential and include both civic and commercial / office uses. Parking in this area should be in structures, or on the first floor with residential above. Residential must be elevated above the base flood height. 1,503 people can benefit from newly constructed homes and new tax revenue of \$345 thousand annually will be generated if the area is developed in accordance with this concept plan.

We note that the plan for the Riverview area from the 2011 Master Plan and the recommendations from the Twin Cities Harbor Study were validated during the public engagement process. The Riverview area plan has been redrawn, excepting the Whirlpool Campus and the Chase Building site, to be consistent with the Neighborhood Middle Housing Concept Plans. The plan for Riverview includes higher-density loft apartments adjacent to an expanded riverfront park and river trail system. This style of housing will create more homes than the middle housing types illustrated in the six other plans, appropriate for the higher-density context.

Table 10. Potential People Living in New Homes in the Riverview Plan

Concept Plan Key	Middle Housing Type	Total New		Total People in New Homes
a	Accessory Dwelling Unit (1 Unit)	0		0
b	Bungalow Court (7 Units/3 Lots)	0		0
c	Duplex (2 Units)	0		0
d	Villa (3 Units)	0		0
e	Fourplex (4 Units)	0		0
f	Rowhouse (2 Units/Lot)	0		0
g	Apartment (12 Units)	58		1503
	Total	58		1503
h	Civic Buildings and Quasi-Public Uses Illustrated	7	New Construction Public Properties	4
	Total New Taxable Value	\$344,716	New Construction Private Properties	30
i	Estimated Renovation Units Illustrated	5	Total New Construction	34





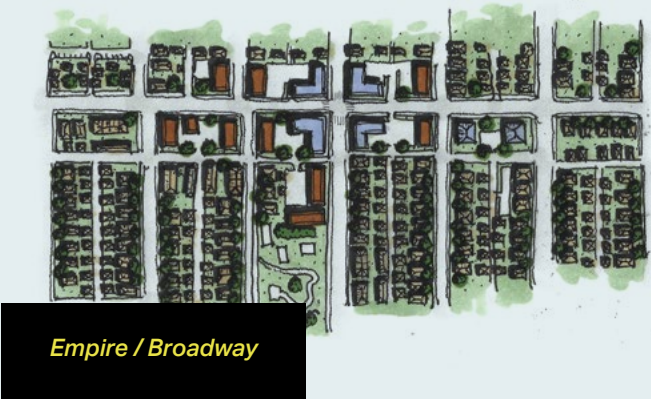
Klock / Paw Paw



Waukonda / Riverside



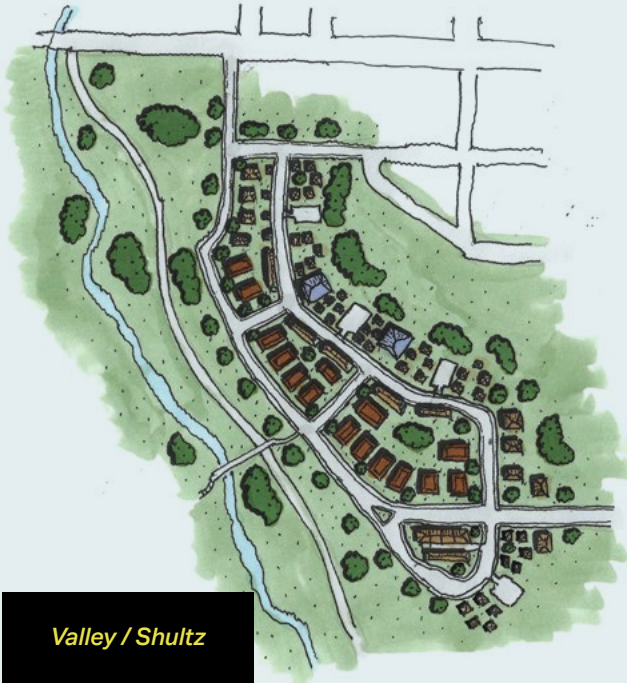
Pipestone / Britain



Empire / Broadway



Colfax / Britain



Valley / Shultz



Riverview



www.BestBentonHarbor.com

05

Connecting Community



BEST Benton Harbor

CHAPTER 05

Contents

Parks and Boulevard System.....	103
City Parks.....	104
Greenways.....	106
Ox Creek Corridor Visioning Project	106
Bikeway Connections in the Parks and Boulevard System.....	111
Transit - TCATA	113
The University of Michigan Urban Collaboratory Study	113
Complete Streets.....	114
Sidewalk Network.....	115
Vehicle Connections.....	115
Functional Classification.....	115
Act 51	116



Parks and Boulevard System

The purpose of a parks and boulevard system is to create a comprehensive greenspace network that preserves the natural beauty of Benton Harbor, while also providing recreation access to residents. By considering greenspaces as a connected network, rather than individual parks, it allows for increased access for residents and visitors alike. The parks and boulevard system component of the Best Benton Harbor Community Plan combines the recommendations for the transportation system and the parks system into one feature that links neighborhoods to park resources and economic centers.

Connected parks and recreation systems have a rich history in America. Some of the most popular park and boulevard systems were designed by landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmstead, in the late 1800s. Olmstead designed Boston's Emerald Necklace, which connects six parks to the Boston Commons with a system of boulevards. Olmstead also contributed to Chicago's parks and boulevard system, which was created for the 1893 World's Fair. This expansive system includes eight parks, nineteen boulevards, and six squares. Fort Wayne, Indiana also established a parks and boulevard system in the early 1900s. George Kessler was the landscape architect that finalized the development of the system that includes eleven public parks, four parkways, and ten boulevards. The parks and boulevard system model is a meaningful way to connect Benton Harbor residents to the City's natural features and waterways and further develop its bicycle and pedestrian networks. While Benton Harbor need not replicate the parks and boulevard systems of these larger cities, they provide important considerations, such as increased connectivity and enhancing natural beauty, that can be applied to Benton Harbor.

When approaching the creation of a parks and boulevard system in Benton Harbor, it is important to understand the current system. Benton Harbor has 16 parks and a 10-mile trail system (Harbor Shores Trails). The parks and boulevard system connects parks throughout the city. The network utilizes the existing trail system and creates



Above: A dedication at what is now Broadway Park, one of the City's oldest parks. It recently received new playground equipment that was installed by neighborhood volunteers.

Below: Union Park, in the Southeast area of the City, recently received new accessible playground equipment.

new connections throughout the city. Further, a boardwalk along Ox Creek is in development, which would increase access to the creek and improve connectivity between Hall and Seitz Parks. Connections to these public facilities can be made by using existing parks, trails, and bikeways, with new planned greenways, trails, landscaping enhancements, sidewalk improvements, and on-street bikeways. By increasing connections to these parks, it increases residents' access to these spaces. This system not only provides residents with greater access to their local parks, it also encourages travel and connection between neighborhoods, using current parks as community anchoring points.

City Parks

Currently, the City of Benton Harbor maintains 14 parks that offer varying levels of recreational activities for all ages, from passive recreation like picnicking and walking, to more active sports-related recreation and playgrounds. Many parks are admission-free. Below is a list of Benton Harbor's parks and the amenities they offer:

ARMORY COMMUNITY CENTER

Formerly the historic Naval Reserve Armory, the Armory Community Center, also called the Bobo Brazil Community Center, will host events for residents of all ages.

ART'S PARK

Art's Park is at the intersection of Water Street and Territorial Road. It includes public artwork, benches, and native landscaping. With utility hookups to that can support vendors and performances, it's a great small event space as well.

BROADWAY PARK

Broadway Park has multiple play structures, a basketball court, and a covered shelter with picnic tables, providing sports-related and passive recreation for all ages.

CHARLES YARBROUGH PARK

Charles Yarbrough Park is another park that is great for boaters and offers a boat launch on the St. Joseph River. Additionally, its multiple play structures and seating areas make it a great place for families and children.

THE CHILDREN'S PARK

The Children's Park, sometimes known as Pipestone Park, is a small park located along the Pipestone Street thoroughfare. This park is ideal for children with its play structure and swings.

DWIGHT P. MITCHELL CITY CENTER PARK

Dwight P. Mitchell City Center Park is located in the center of downtown Benton Harbor and frequently hosts City-sponsored events, including the Farmers Market. Its benches and landscaping provide a place to rest as residents and visitors enjoy what downtown Benton Harbor has to offer.

EDWARDS PARK

Edwards Park is located on the corner of Edgecumbe and McCord Street and is equipped with play structures and park benches, making it a good park for families and children,

FRANKS PARK

Franks Park provides picnic tables, benches, and play equipment for residents and visitors to enjoy.

HALL PARK

Hall Park includes a play structure, picnic tables and grills, baseball fields, and basketball courts, as well as open fields and wooded areas. One of the City's oldest parks, its trails have fallen into disrepair but could be improved to provide beneficial connections.

JEAN KLOCK PARK

Families and friends can spend an entire day enjoying Jean Klock Park's Lake Michigan access and other amenities. Jean Klock Park is complete with swimming in Lake Michigan, volleyball courts, an observation trail and tower, and picnic tables. It is also connected to the Harbor Shores Nature & Fitness Trail system, offering multiple opportunities for active or passive recreation.

MORTON PARK

Located across from the Armory Community Center, Morton Park is a great place to enjoy passive recreation with its fountain and numerous benches.

RIVERVIEW PARK

Located along the St. Joseph River, Riverview Park features a popular boat launch.

ROOSEVELT PARK

Roosevelt Park is a small park located across from the historic First Congregational Church featuring a bronze statue of Theodore Roosevelt.

SEITZ PARK

Seitz Park is a mini park across the street from the Project T development. It includes benches and a green space where people can wait for the bus.

THAYER PARK

Thayer Park is a small triangular park, bound by Water, Park, and 5th Streets. This park, with benches and nice shady trees, is often used during public fairs or public art installations.

UNION PARK

With ample open green space, benches, picnic tables, and a restroom facility, Union Park is a great place to gather with friends, family, and the community. Union Park also offers baseball diamonds, basketball courts, and play structures.



*Above: Basketball court at Hall Park.
Below: A turtle found near Ox Creek.
Healthy waterways provides a healthier ecosystem, and access points provide opportunities to get in touch with nature.*



Elevated Boardwalk
Riparian Buffer
Integrated Lighting
Native Vegetation Recovery

Greenways

Greenways are outdoor recreational paths connecting people to open spaces, parks, public facilities, and neighborhood centers together, and are a critical component of the overall Parks and Boulevards System. Greenways often include traffic-calming and safety measures to provide a comfortable experience for users, as well as a mix of bicycle facilities and other pedestrian-oriented amenities. Greenways often allow for a variety of uses, including walking, running, bicycling, and skating.

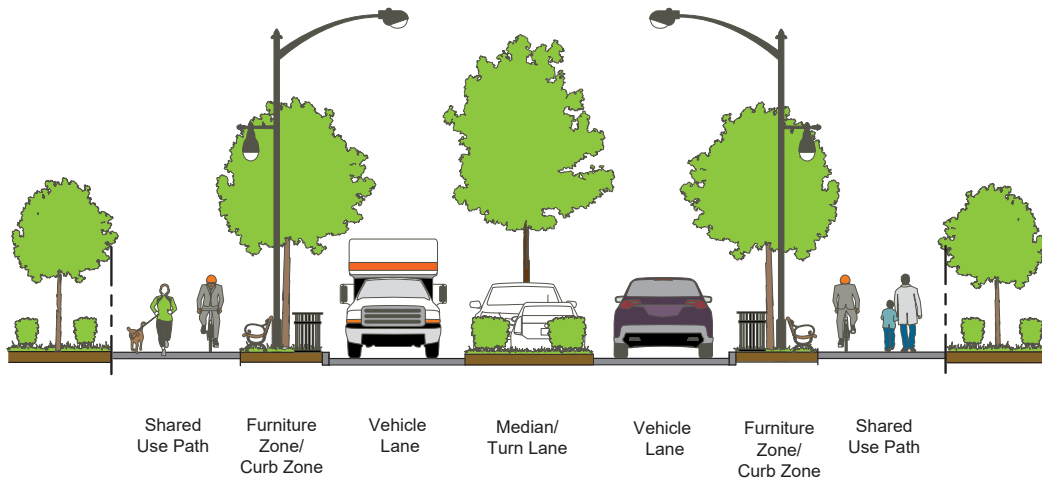
Greenways can offer a space that improves the mental and physical health of people who use them through access to safe, high-quality outdoor recreational spaces. Greenways can also become regional destinations that draw non-resident visitors who often contribute to local economies.

Ox Creek Corridor Visioning Project

In 2022, the City of Benton Harbor conducted a study on the assets and needs of Ox Creek in collaboration with Benton Charter Township, Berrien County, the State of Michigan, University of Michigan, and Southwest Michigan Planning Commission. The work resulted in a development concept for a greenway consisting of a new elevated boardwalk and stream crossings to connect the full length of the creek from downtown to the commercial center along Napier Ave. and several neighborhoods along each side of the creek. The study and concept are supported by research that shows neighborhood parks can provide up to a 20% increase in housing values for those homes facing the park, and benefits can extend as far as 600 feet from the park.

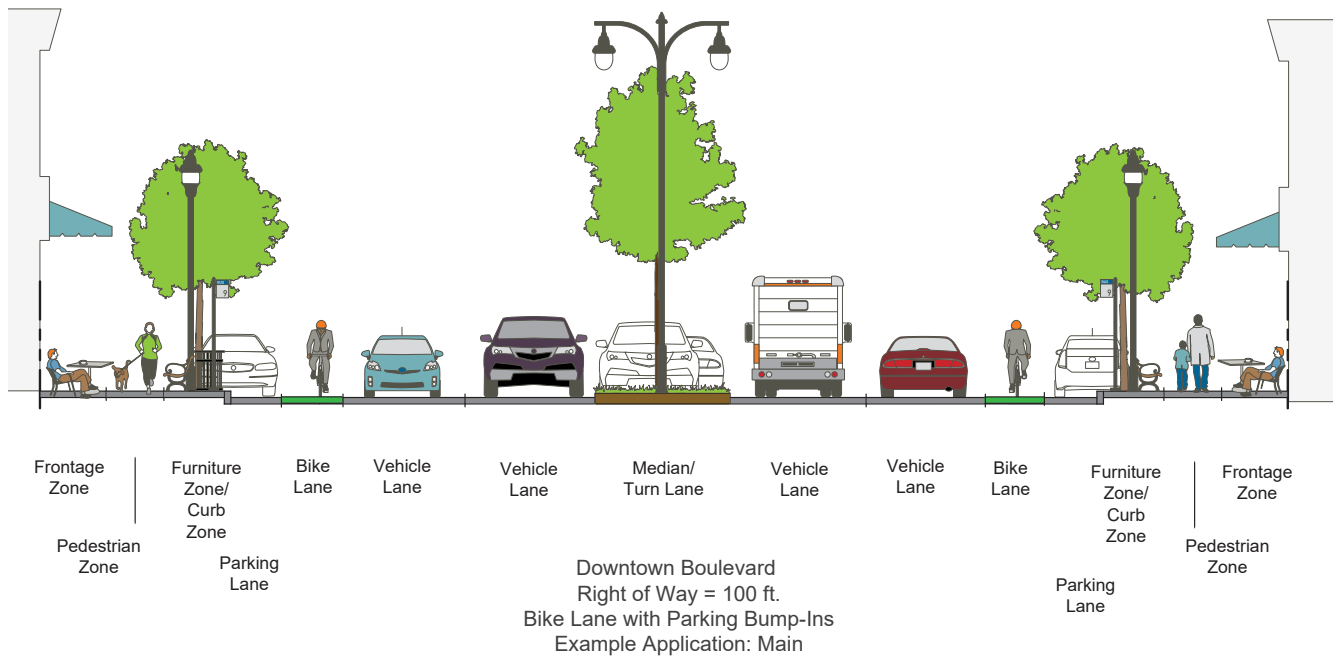
The greenway concept is part of the larger recommendations of the study which include valley clean-up and riparian buffer installation, stream restoration, pollutant and sediment reduction, and restoration of Hall Park.

Figure 1. Citywide Parks Connector Cross Section



Citywide Park Connector
 Right of Way = 66 ft.
 Shared Use Path with Wayfinding Signs
 Example Application: Pipestone, Colfax

Figure 2. Downtown Boulevard Cross Section














Downtown Boulevard
 Right of Way = 100 ft.
 Bike Lane with Parking Bump-Ins
 Example Application: Main

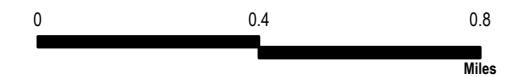
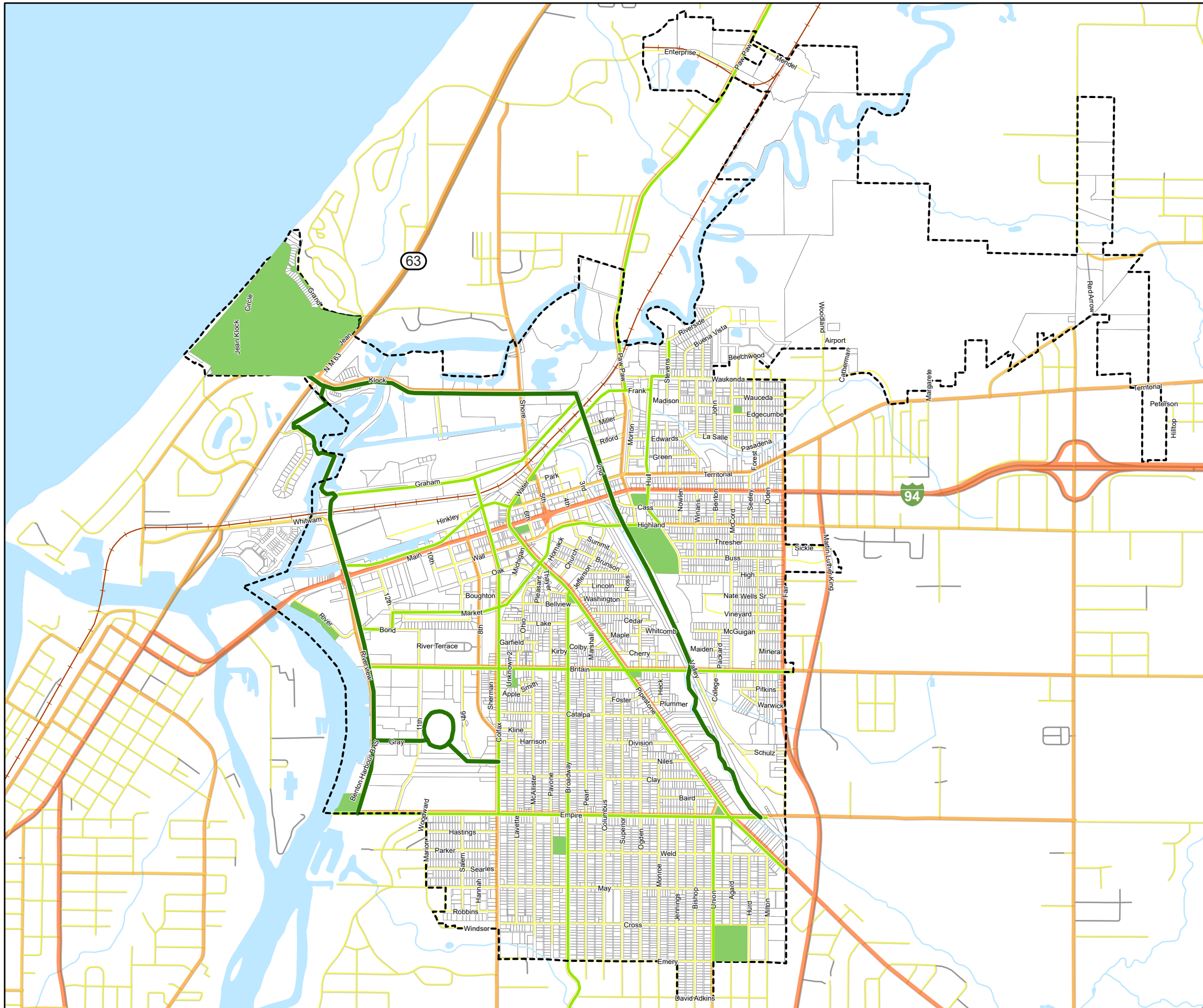
Parks and Boulevards System with Roadway Classification

City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County, Michigan

November 7, 2023

LEGEND

-  Greenways
-  Bikeways
- National Functional Classifications**
-  Interstate
-  Other Principal Arterial
-  Minor Arterial
-  Major Collector
-  Minor Collector
-  Local
-  Non-Certified
-  Benton Harbor Boundary
-  City Parks



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.
Data Source: Berrien County 2022. McKenna 2023.

Figure 3. Neighborhood Park Connector Cross Section

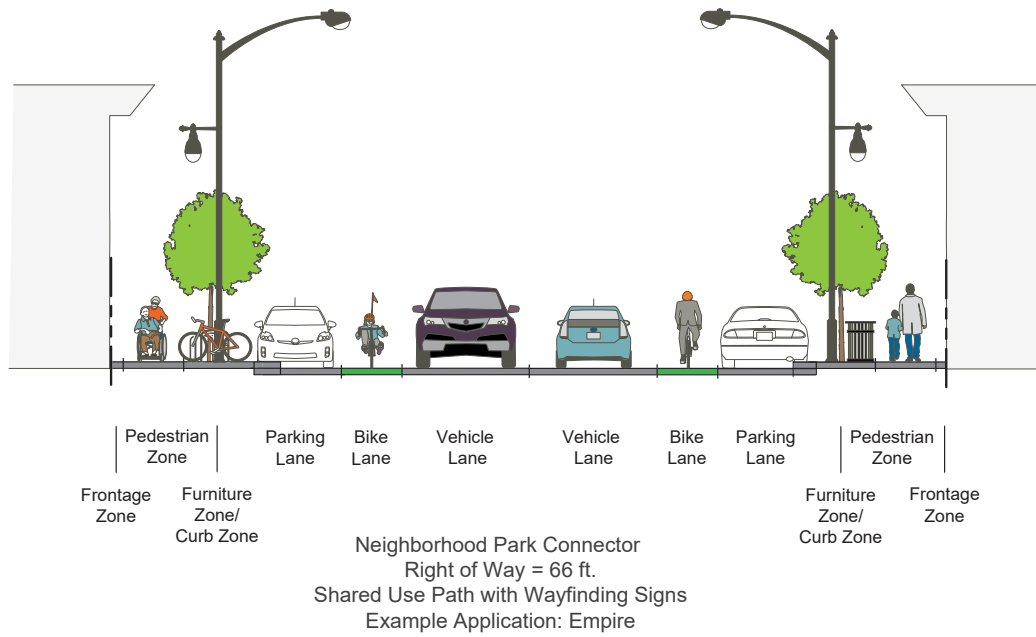


Figure 4. Residential Park Connector Cross Section

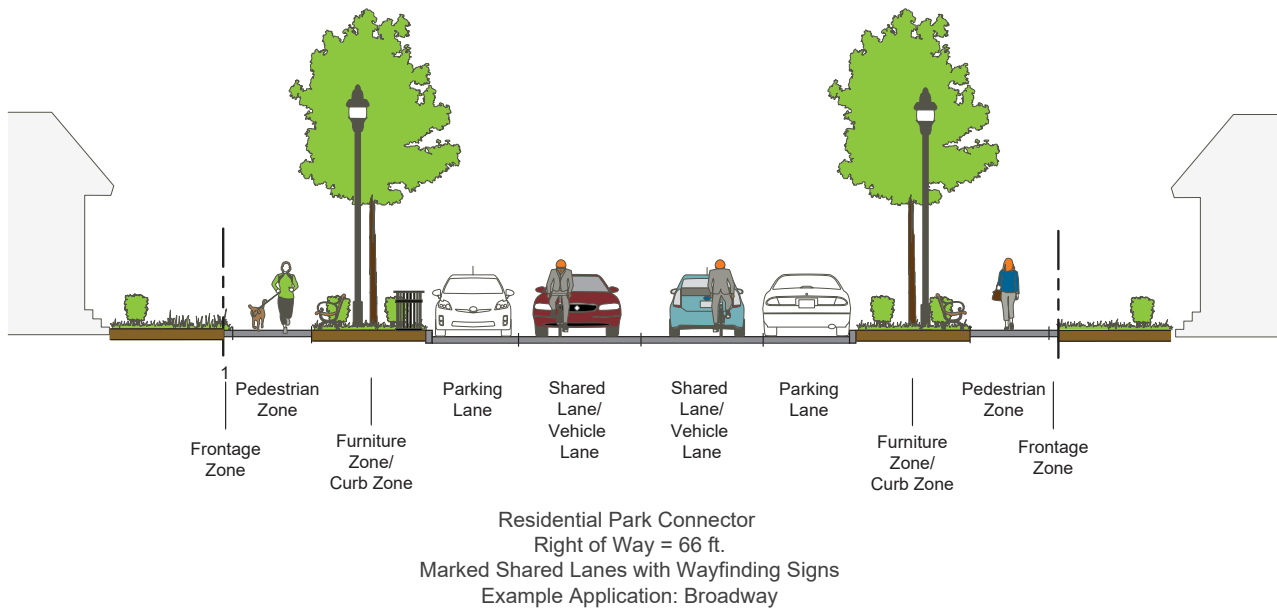
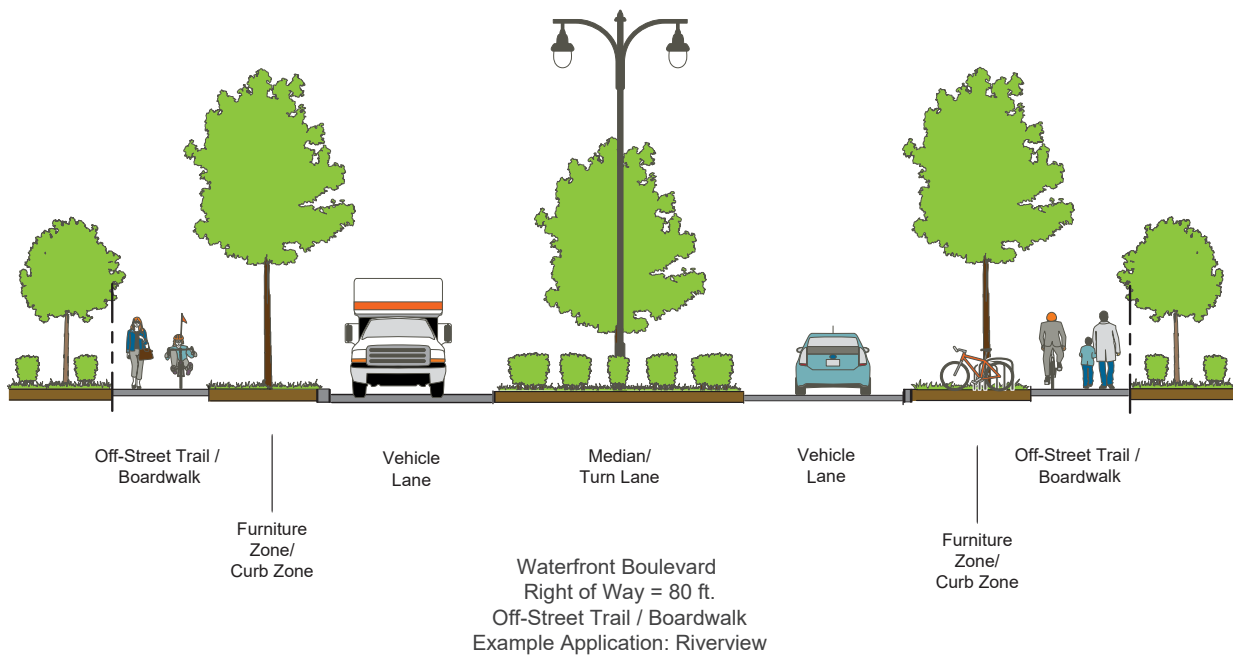


Figure 5. Waterfront Boulevard Cross Section



Bikeway Connections in the Parks and Boulevard System

Every street and trailway included in the Parks and Boulevard System is prioritized for bike accommodations. Bikeways are routes intended for bicycle traffic. Bikeways may take many forms including signed routes, marked shared lanes, advisory bike lanes, bike lanes, protected bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, shared-use paths, and trails. The appropriate type of bikeway depends on several factors including road width, traffic volume, and budget.

Signed Routes help raise awareness and acceptance for cycling by indicating the most bike-friendly routes in the community. Additional bike facilities such as a designated lane are not required for a signed route. Bike route signs are appropriate for any roadway that provides an essential link in a bicycle system and are typically designated along more lightly traveled roads.

Marked Shared Lanes utilize a double chevron and bicycle marking in a lane intended for joint use of motorized and bicycle traffic. Marked shared lanes help raise awareness for motorists that bicyclists may also be using the road. It also encourages bicyclists to use the road with motorists.

Advisory Bike Lanes allow for bike lanes on roads where they may normally not fit. Advisory bike lanes are located on either side of the road, while vehicles use the center lane. When vehicles traveling in the opposite direction meet, the vehicles move into the bike lanes to pass safely.



Signed Route



Marked Shared Lane



Advisory Bike Lane



Bike Lane



Protected Bike Lane



Buffered Bike Lane



Shared Use Path



Trail

Bike Lanes create dedicated spaces for cyclists on the roadway. Bike lanes are indicated by on-street markings and, sometimes, signage. They are appropriate on streets with moderate to heavy vehicle traffic. Configurations for bike lanes vary based on protective measures.

Protected Bike Lanes are physically separated from traffic by a curb, rail, or bollards, providing a dedicated space for bicyclists. Protected bike lanes are appropriate for roads with high-speed and high-volume traffic. Protected bike lanes are typically wide enough for two-way bicycle traffic.

Buffered Bike Lanes are dedicated spaces for cyclists that are separated by a painted buffer area to separate vehicle traffic from the bike lane. The buffer area allows for improved cyclists' comfort and safety. Additionally, buffered bike lanes may include a parking buffer, which is a parking zone between the bike lane and the road, further separating cyclists from traffic.

Shared Use Paths are paved concrete or asphalt paths that are wide enough to accommodate both pedestrian and bicyclist traffic. These paths are typically located within the right-of-way and should have minimal intersection with driveways. Shared-use paths save space if the width of the road and right-of-way cannot support separate bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Additionally, it separates non-motorized traffic from motorized traffic, which increases the comfort and safety of the non-motorized users of the shared use path.

Trails are another type of shared-use path. Not all trails are shared use, but many are. Trails are paths that are used for recreation as well as transportation. These are usually located away from roadways.

Transit - TCATA

The Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) is the transit system serving the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph-Fairplain areas. The TCATA service area encompasses most of the shopping opportunities in the Northern part of Berrien County and the jobs associated with those places. The key medical facilities and related services as well as a significant number of light manufacturing operations and several major employers are located within this area.

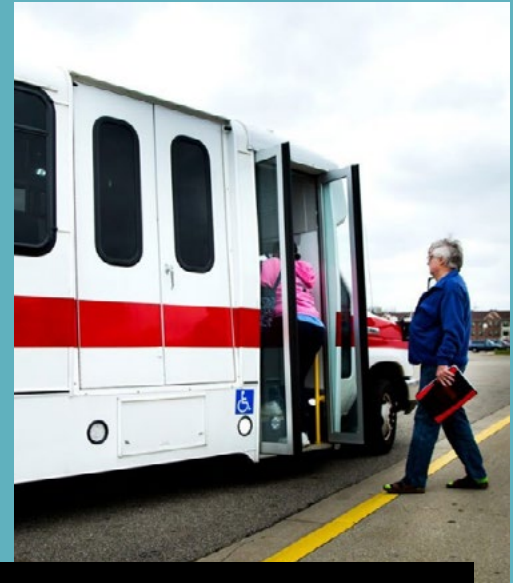
TCATA provides two types of services, namely a fixed-route-and-schedule transit service and a dial-a-ride service. TCATA has two fixed transit lines in Benton Harbor, but largely operates as an on-demand-responsive system that provides door-to-door services.

Dispatch decisions for the dial-a-ride system are made based on the personal judgement of the dispatch operators. Many Benton Harbor residents do not have access to personal vehicles and use TCATA as their main mobility provider, relying on TCATA for their commuting, shopping, educational, and healthcare trips.

The University of Michigan Urban Collaboratory Study

To increase the efficiency of operations and enhance the quality of service of public transportation in Benton Harbor, researchers at the University of Michigan are developing data-driven optimization techniques that allow for efficient allocation of vans between the fixed transit lines and the dial-a-ride service, as well as optimizing the operation of each service. Through data received by monitoring ridership activity in Benton Harbor, The University of Michigan team is able to predict where and when the areas of transportation need will be in the city. Based on current travel patterns, and a forecast of travel demands, new short, high-frequency transit lines will be designed to provide reliable and high-quality mobility for the residents. This not only helps Benton Harbor provide better services to its residents, but it also allows the city to better use its transportation resources and funding. The University of Michigan team is also working on developing a real-time operation for the dial-a-ride system.

Transportation and mobility options continue to be a determinant of social and financial well-being for both individuals and communities. By providing efficient and reliable transportation options for its residents, Benton Harbor will provide its residents with better access to job opportunities, education, and healthcare for low-mobility families in the community. These factors, combined with others, will result in a higher quality of life and increased social engagement for these families.



Public transit plays a vital role in providing dignity and independence to individuals who are unable to drive by granting them access to public services, employment opportunities, and social interactions, enabling to navigate the world on their terms.

~3.9 million Americans 18 or older are unable to drive for reasons like physical disabilities or medical conditions (2021).

The average American spends about \$9,576 per year on owning and operating a vehicle.



Complete Streets

As part of the overall parks and boulevards system, Benton Harbor's streets will be safe and accessible for all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicle drivers. Complete Streets accommodate people of all ages and physical abilities. They are designed to include everyone, whether they walk, roll, drive, or ride transit. Each street and neighborhood have unique needs, so there is no single formula or prescription for a Complete Street in Benton Harbor. Streets are "complete" when they fit in the context of the surrounding area. Not all Benton Harbor streets will include each of the elements below, but this list represents what the City will strive to achieve when evaluating future transportation projects.

Pedestrians: Benton Harbor's streets will include sidewalks with unobstructed walking space, adequate lighting, benches, trees, shading, roadway separation, and on-street parking, easy access to walkable destinations, and safe and frequent crossings.

Bicyclists: Benton Harbor's streets will include spaces to bike comfortably shared with vehicular traffic, or clearly marked bike lanes with appropriate separation based on speed and volume of vehicle traffic, adequate bicycle parking, intersection treatments, and destinations accessible by bike.

Vehicles: Benton Harbor's streets will be safe and convenient for driving. Signals will be timed to reduce congestion, on-street and off-street parking will be easily accessible and appropriately priced, and streets will be designed to promote safe driving speeds.

Streets are places: Benton Harbor's streets will be places. They will not simply link destinations; they will be destinations in themselves and include places for social gathering, exercising, and relaxing.

Streets add value: Benton Harbor's streets will enhance property value and be coordinated with land use development standards to support commerce through connectivity, design aesthetics, street life, and access.

Transit: Benton Harbor’s streets will support access to existing and future transit systems in the region. Supporting Complete Streets in Benton Harbor will complement existing development patterns, enhance the attractiveness and use of the Central Business District, extend traditional neighborhood development patterns as sites are redeveloped, and improve the walkability of the City.

Sidewalk Network

Benton Harbor embraces walkability as a primary goal for the transportation system. The City’s sidewalk system is not comprehensive. There are portions of the City that lack links in the residential sidewalk network and additional sidewalks are needed to complete the pedestrian pathway system, especially in the City’s older neighborhoods.

This plan recommends a full build-out of the sidewalk network in all areas of the City. Residential sidewalks should be a minimum of 5 feet wide and have a minimum of 5 feet of landscape separation from the roadway. Where right-of-way permits, a 10-foot landscape separation in residential areas is desired.

The City has a responsibility to design streets that work for everyone—not only drivers. This will require investment in areas that have been left behind as well as dangerous corridors where design changes can improve safety and save lives.

Vehicle Connections

One way to evaluate the street system is to determine how well each street serves its purpose. Streets are classified in two ways: [1] a national ranking system called “Functional Classification” and [2] Act 51 of 1951 by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

Functional Classification

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) developed the National Functional Classification (NFC) to classify all highways, streets, and roads according to their function. This system has been in place since the 1960s and is recognized as the official road classification system by the FHWA. The following paragraphs list each category in the NFC.

Principal Arterials: Principal arterials are the prominent road type in the NFC hierarchy and are generally known as highways and freeways. They provide high-speed uninterrupted travel with limited access or restricted access to regionally important urban areas and amenities such as airports. They are the major source for interstate travel and fall under state jurisdiction.



Well-maintained sidewalks improve safety and encourage people to travel between local businesses and community assets.



Main Street in Benton Harbor already includes bike lanes on both sides of the street, as well as parking bump-outs to make room for cyclists.

The principal arterials within Benton Harbor include Main Street, Pipestone Street, Niles Road (M-63), and Fair Street (M-139). Niles Road and Fair Street are under the jurisdiction of MDOT as they are classified as a State Trunk Lines and serve as the City's major arterials, carrying high volumes of local and regional traffic and connects the City to the regional area.

Minor Arterials: Minor arterials are similar in function to principal arterials, but they generally carry less traffic and connect to smaller urban centers. Accessibility is greater but stops are more frequent due to signalized intersections. Riverview Drive, Britain Avenue, Colfax Avenue, Empire Avenue, 8th Street, Territorial Road, Paw Paw Avenue, 5th Street, Klock Road, Riverview Drive, and Shore Drive are the minor arterials in the City.

Major Collectors: Major collector roads are important travel corridors and provide service to arterial roads and often connect major population and employment centers. The major collectors in Benton Harbor are Broadway, Union Street, Market Street, Water Street, Highland Avenue, and part of Territorial Road.

Minor Collectors: Minor collectors often collect traffic from local roads and private property and provide connections to more developed areas. Currently, the only minor collectors within the City are parts of Whitwam Drive and Riverview Drive.

Local Roads: Local roads primarily provide access to property and include residential streets. All of the remaining roads within Benton Harbor are local roads.

Act 51

Act 51 is the mechanism under which the State of Michigan shares road maintenance funds with communities. Municipalities are awarded funds based on the mileage of roadway within their boundaries. Under Act 51, roads are divided into two categories – Major Streets and Local Streets. Major Streets receive more funding per mile. As shown on the Parks and Boulevard System Map, Benton Harbor's street system typically provides the most direct route, and better movement of vehicles, from point A to B in comparison to the curvilinear street patterns present in many newer developed communities. Curvilinear streets limit travel routes because there are only a few major streets to carry traffic along and often result in a bottleneck situation, causing congestion. Many streets around the Central Business District are designated as major streets and the City receives Act 51 funding from the State to pay for maintenance. This is one area of the City where the system is not always straight and direct, and tends to be northwest/southeast oriented. All major streets in the City of Benton Harbor are under local jurisdiction.



www.BestBentonHarbor.com

06

Building Community

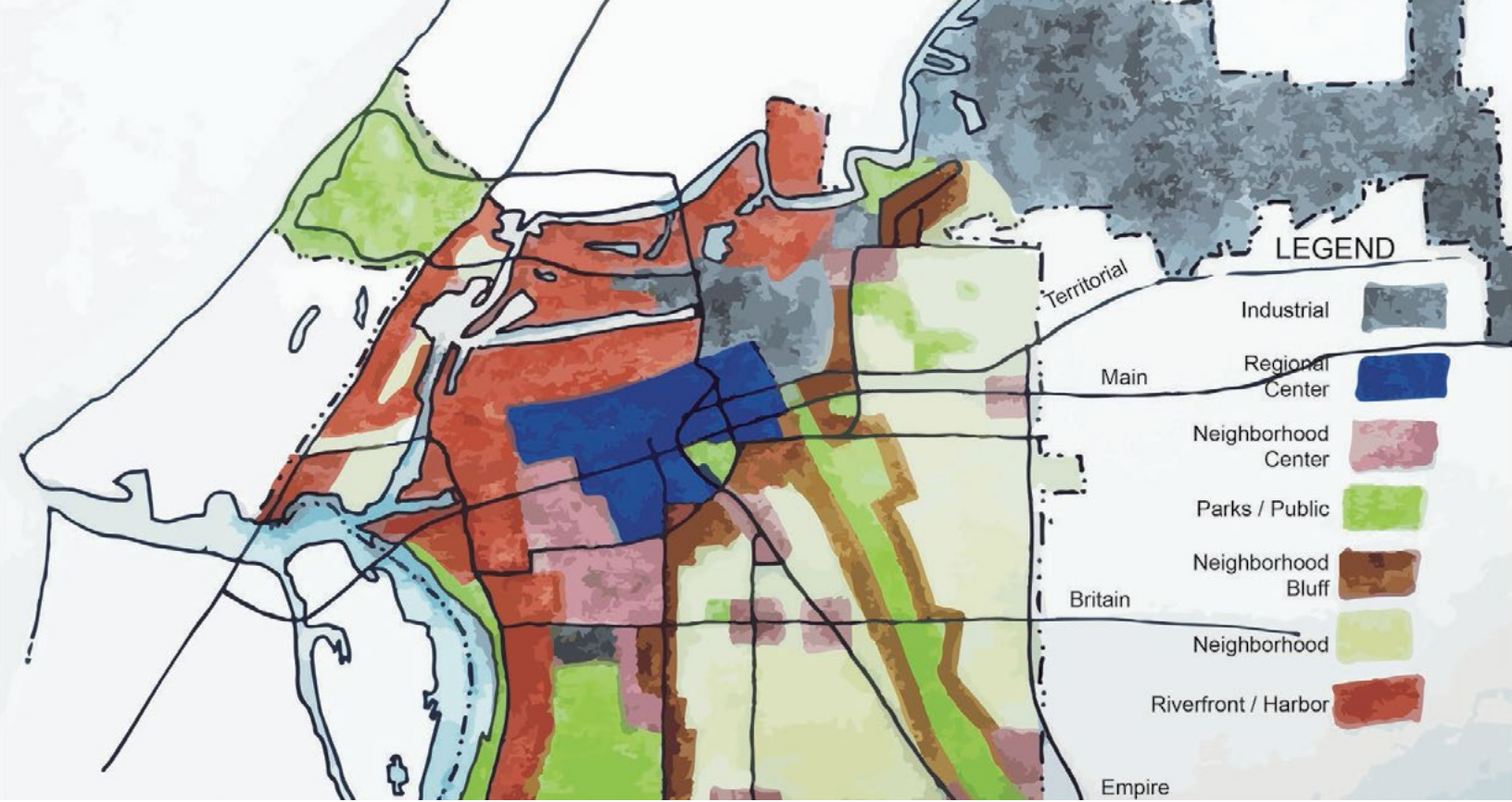


BEST Benton Harbor

CHAPTER 06

Contents

Future Land Use Plan	121
Neighborhood	122
Neighborhood Bluff	124
Neighborhood Center	126
Parks / Public	128
Riverfront / Harbor	132
Regional Center	134
Industrial	136
Zoning Plan	138
Priorities for Zoning Amendments:	139



Future Land Use Plan

The intent of a future land use map is to establish the types of buildings and uses that are desired in different areas throughout the city. The classifications were established based on discussion and feedback from members of the community that participated in Planning Week. The following section provides the proposed Future Land Use classifications with recommendations of how the City can encourage beneficial growth and encourage development that will have a positive impact on the community.



Neighborhood

The goal for the Neighborhood Future Land Use category is to provide safe, up-to-date, attainable housing by encouraging new development of housing and infill projects. Current housing in these areas tends toward detached, single-family homes that are often vacant, aging, or in poor condition. In these areas, the city should encourage the development of “Middle” housing, including duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes, which will tend to be more attainable for lower-income households. New development should still maintain cohesiveness with the existing design character of the neighborhoods.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Fitting uses within the Neighborhood Future Land Use Category include one- to four-unit residential, including bungalow courts on larger combined parcels. Along major arterial roads, higher densities are appropriate in the form of rowhouses and small apartments. Additional compatible uses are civil and municipal uses meant to serve smaller neighborhood populations, such as libraries, schools, and post offices, as well as parks and community gardens.

Lot Type	Single Family	Duplex, Tri/Quad-Plex	Rowhouses ¹	Small Apartments ²	Bungalow Court	ADU, Carriage House	Tenant Amenities	Off-street Parking (for multi-family)	Urban Garden	Private Patio	Community Garden	Neighborhood Park	Municipal/Civic Uses ³
Side-Lot							●	●	●	●			
Micro-Lot (2,000 sf to <1/8 acre)	●												
Standard Lot (1/8 acre to <1/4 acre)	●	●				●					●	●	●
Double Lot (1/4 acre to <1/2 acre)	●	●			●	●					●	●	●
Large Lot (1/2 to <1 acre)		●	●	●	●							●	●
Development Lot (1+ acre)			●	●	●								●

1 Up to 4 units attached per building. 20 ft-wide units. Along major arterials, up to 16 contiguous units may be constructed.

2 Up to 32 units, depending on lot size. Along major arterials.

3 Along major arterials only.

CONNECTIVITY

Well-maintained sidewalks are necessary on both sides of every right-of-way to facilitate safe travel for walking, running, pushing a stroller, or using a wheelchair. Sidewalks should have curb cuts at corners to allow safe crossing for stroller and wheelchair users.

A grid-like street pattern allows for easy navigation and efficient use of land. Local side streets should be narrow to encourage slower, safer, driving—making travel safer for bicycles and other slow traffic. Major arterials should include designated bike lanes, with protected bike lanes wherever possible on the busiest corridors.

Transportation planning should provide frequent stops that connect neighborhood residents to jobs, shopping, and services in the Neighborhood Center, Regional Center, and (where appropriate) the Industrial Future Land Use categories. Linear parks and systems of bike pathways should connect neighborhoods with each other, to jobs and services, and to City Parks.

BUILDING LOCATION

In most residential neighborhoods, buildings are positioned towards the middle and front of the lots, allowing for yards on all four sides of the structure. This arrangement creates a balanced and aesthetically pleasing neighborhood layout. Large front porches that enter into the front yard area, are highly encouraged. Balancing the property so that there is more yard space in the rear of the lot allows a designated private area—a clear designation of public and private space.

Along major arterials, buildings may be set farther back from the street to protect residents' privacy and limit street noise.

BUILDING DESIGN

Buildings within residential neighborhoods should maintain a residential scale and character. Building materials should be wood, stone, brick, or stucco. Durable materials that are consistent with surrounding properties are encouraged, however, maintenance-free vinyl and metal siding are discouraged. Container homes and pre-manufactured homes, including tiny homes, are discouraged on single lots in the Neighborhood land use category. Middle housing types, including tiny homes within bungalow courts or accessory carriage houses, are encouraged. Architectural designs consistent with Midwestern vernacular, as illustrated in the building types section, are encouraged.

PARKING

Typically, low-density neighborhoods do not require large parking lots for appropriate uses. However, in cases where off-street parking is necessary, parking lots should be designed to minimize their visibility from roadways using appropriate landscaping and screening to ensure an unobtrusive streetscape. Limited front-yard parking may be allowable for multi-family structures along major arterial corridors.



Lot Dimensions		
Minimum lot area		4,000 sq. ft.
Minimum lot width		25 ft.
Frontage in build-to area		n/a
Encouraged maximum lot area		0.5 acre
Building Setbacks		
Arterial street	Min.	10 ft.
	Max.	none
Local street	Min.	10 ft.
	Max.	20 ft.
Side (one)		5 ft.
Side (total of both)		10 ft.
Rear		20 ft.
From adjacent		n/a
Building Height		
Minimum		1 story
Maximum		2.5 stories, 3 on major arterials



Neighborhood Bluffs

The Neighborhood Bluff areas enhance Benton Harbor's unique geographical features and potential environmental concerns. Because of the presence of the St. Joseph River, the Paw Paw River, and Ox Creek, the city's topography includes some steep elevations and irregularities that pose unique challenges and opportunities. Buildings in the bluffs are much more visible, and the City should encourage homes with larger footprints and taller heights to provide a more distinguished image along the bluffs. Moderate-high density construction, such as small apartment buildings of less than ten units, as well as multiplexes with larger units, would be appropriate in this Future Land Use district. Areas with steep slopes can have environmental concerns during flood events, are susceptible to erosion, and can contribute to pollution through stormwater runoff. With more extreme weather patterns becoming more common, it would be beneficial to consider ways to plan for and prevent potentially hazardous conditions in these areas.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

The appropriate land uses within Neighborhood Bluff areas include detached and attached residential dwellings of up to ten units. Small neighborhood parks and boulevards to allow access into adjacent Parks/Public areas are also appropriate.

CONNECTIVITY

Neighborhood Bluff areas are planned in close proximity to mixed-use Neighborhood and Regional Centers. Bicycle and pedestrian connections should be provided between adjacent neighborhoods to facilitate walking and biking to nearby destinations.

Well-maintained sidewalks are necessary on both sides of every right-of-way to facilitate safe travel for walking, running, pushing a stroller, or using a wheelchair. Sidewalks should have curb cuts at corners to allow safe crossing for stroller and wheelchair users. Well-maintained and wide sidewalks are especially necessary on streets with steep slopes.

A grid-like street pattern allows for easy navigation and efficient use of land, but the topography of the neighborhood bluffs does not always facilitate this strategy. Diagonal streets exist to accommodate the topography, running parallel to the bluff's ridge rather than perpendicular. Sharp curves and low-visibility areas should have sufficient landscaping and hardscaping to protect against vehicle accidents. Homes should be set farther back from the road in these precarious areas. Streets should be narrow to encourage slower, safer driving—

making travel safer for bicycles and other slow traffic. Major arterials should include designated bike lanes, with protected bike lanes where possible on the busiest corridors.

BUILDING LOCATION

In Neighborhood Bluff areas, buildings should be situated closer to interior streets, optimizing the layout and flow of the neighborhood. Buildings should be designed in a manner that works with steep slopes, rather than against them. Cutting and filling slopes should be minimized wherever possible.

Along high-traffic streets or streets with low visibility from the road such as sharp turns or hills, buildings may be set farther back to protect against vehicle accidents. Along major arterials, buildings may be set farther back from the street to protect residents' privacy and limit street noise.

BUILDING DESIGN

Buildings within Neighborhood Bluff areas should offer larger footprints than in Neighborhood areas while maintaining a residential scale and character. Garages should be located in rear yards, although they may be situated in a side yard if the garage door is positioned at least 10 feet behind the front door of the unit.

More frequent natural landscaping is encouraged in this district to prevent erosion. Carefully distributed drainage is especially critical on steep slopes. Slopes that lead into natural areas are at risk of bringing contaminants from human activity into waterways and should include vegetation to filter and slow the flow of water. Slopes that lead into roadways can cause flash flooding if drainage is not properly managed. The use of permeable surfaces should be highly encouraged, as well as frequent small landscape buffers and catch basins where appropriate. Additional drainage should be directed toward storm sewers.

Buildings on the bluffs should maintain a residential scale and character. Building materials can be wood, stone, brick, or stucco, but may also utilize modern maintenance-free materials and metal. Container homes and container home bungalow courts are encouraged in the Neighborhood Bluff land use category. Middle housing types, such as villas, small apartments, and quadplexes, are encouraged. Architectural designs consistent with Midwestern vernacular, as illustrated in the building types section, are encouraged. Modern architectural design and container homes are also appropriate.

PARKING

Typically, low-density neighborhoods such as the Neighborhood Bluff area do not require large parking lots for appropriate uses. On-street parking spaces are expected to accommodate most visitor parking, with the possibility of some rear-yard visitor spaces for attached units. In cases where off-street parking is necessary, parking lots should be designed to minimize their visibility from roadways using appropriate landscaping and screening to ensure an unobtrusive streetscape.



Lot Dimensions		
Minimum lot area		15,000 sq. ft.
Minimum lot width		60 ft.
Frontage in build-to area		70%
Encouraged maximum lot area		n/a
Building Setbacks		
Arterial street	Min.	20 ft.
	Max.	none
Local street	Min.	5 ft.
	Max.	25 ft.
Side (one)		5 ft.
Side (total of both)		10 ft.
Rear		25 ft.
From adjacent		n/a
Bluff Setback (from slope >30% slope)		10 ft.
Building Height		
Minimum		1 story
Maximum		3.5 stories



Neighborhood Center

The Neighborhood Center category is placed around key intersections within primarily residential areas, intended to build small commercial nodes to serve local needs. Development in this area should be mixed-use, with both commercial and residential development, at higher levels of density than in the Neighborhood classification. Higher-density attainable housing, such as small apartment buildings and multiplexes no greater than three stories would be appropriate in these areas.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

To service adjacent residential neighborhoods, Neighborhood Center areas should contain a mixture of retail, office, and multi-family residential uses of up to 32 units. The upper stories of buildings are ideal for office space or apartments. Automotive-oriented uses such as gas stations, auto repair, or drive-through facilities may be appropriate in this Future Land Use category along Main Street west of Hull and Pipestone south of Empire, and Milton south of Pipestone. Medium- to large-scale commercial uses such as grocery stores and similarly-sized retail are also appropriate where lot sizes permit. An effort should be made to partner with State agencies to remove encumbrances from land that would be more suitably used for business and housing. The results of the City's high-water study should be considered in determining appropriate public uses and programming uses for properties near waterfront areas.

CONNECTIVITY

The intention of the Neighborhood Center is to offer goods and services to residents within close proximity. Located along major corridors, these areas are also easily accessible from larger commercial areas and other neighborhoods. Ideally, streetscaping along these corridors should narrow and encourage slower speeds to facilitate additional pedestrian traffic. Frequent cross-access is encouraged to reduce curb cuts and turning conflicts. Street connections and/or pedestrian connections, as appropriate, should be provided between mixed-use areas and adjacent neighborhoods. To facilitate connectivity within and between mixed-used areas and residential uses, an internal street system in any newly developed blocks should match the existing block pattern of Benton Harbor, roughly 300 feet by 300 feet downtown and 300 feet to 700 feet in the neighborhoods.

These areas are ideal for public transit stops, as they are in centralized locations within walking distance of neighborhoods and would provide easy access to businesses in this district.

BUILDING LOCATION

Buildings should face major arterial roads rather than local side streets when possible. Commercial uses should have zero (0) setbacks from the right-of-way to create co-visibility between the street and building interiors. Up to 30 feet of setback is permissible only to facilitate outdoor seating.

BUILDING DESIGN

Building design should match the character and materials of existing buildings on the street. Façades of ground floor retail uses will be proportional, respond to the street, and be welcoming to pedestrians, with accessible main entrances and street-facing glazed windows. At least 60% of ground floor storefront façades on the should include non-reflective, tinted glass windows.

PARKING

On-street parking should be widely available on both arterial and interior streets in this future land use area. Off-street parking should be located at the rear of buildings and shared between adjacent uses whenever possible. Preferred access to parking should be along the side of the block to create safer pedestrian access, prevent curb cuts, and reduce frequent turning on and off of major streets.



Lot Dimensions

Minimum lot area	n/a
Minimum lot width	n/a
Frontage in build-to area	60%, when at right-of-way line

Building Setbacks

Arterial street	Min.	0 ft.
	Max.	30 ft.
Local street	Min.	0 ft.
	Max.	20 ft.
Side (one)		None
Side (total of both)		None
Rear		None
From adjacent residential districts		None

Building Height

Minimum	1.5 stories
Maximum	3 stories



Parks / Public

Parks and public areas are designed to accommodate public parks, municipal facilities, schools, and recreation facilities. It is important for these areas to include harmonious design in relation to the surrounding areas. These are areas where visitors and residents are able to meet, play, and enjoy the natural beauty of Benton Harbor. Further, these areas should encourage low-impact uses and be in close proximity to major thoroughfares to provide greater access to natural space and recreation.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Parks/Public areas include play equipment, formal and informal playfields, paved and unpaved pathways (for walking, hiking, running, or biking), preservation areas, and other similar uses. Civic and municipal uses, such as schools, are also appropriate for the Parks/Public Future Land Use category. In addition, City parks should provide space and venues to accommodate public events and social gatherings and offer regular programming for all age groups. Activities that allow for enjoyment in the colder months should be pursued where possible to create opportunities to use these areas even with inclement weather. This area also includes places that may be ecologically sensitive. Established natural areas, particularly forests and wetlands within 500 feet of a waterway, should be protected from high-impact development through appropriate screening and should not be destroyed for new structures if at all avoidable.

SCALE

Areas planned for future Parks/Public uses are intended to be community-wide facilities. Neighborhood parks are an important component of a community's parks and recreation profile. Neighborhood parks should be opportunistically provided in neighborhoods according to the neighborhood park recommendations contained in the other future development areas.

CONNECTIVITY

Parks/Public areas must be accessible not only by vehicle but by foot and bike. Connections to parks from adjacent neighborhoods and within park areas should be provided. Accessibility to preservation areas should be provided contextually so as to respect and protect natural features. If the block size of a park is not consistent with an adjacent use, pedestrian connections can be made at the location where adjacent roadways and pathways intersect a park area. Parks should be connected to one another for non-motorized travel through a parks and boulevards system.

Along waterways, strategies of allowing for public access to waterways are highly encouraged. Pathways or boardwalks along the riverfront are highly encouraged, with intermittent jetties, docks, and shore access for the enjoyment of the waterfront. Outdoor recreation facilities may be permissible adjacent to the Riverfront/Harbor Future Land Use district if they require direct access to the waterfront, such as boat rentals and marinas, so long as public access to the waterfront is not impeded.

Sufficient off-street parking should be provided when high volumes of visitors are expected so as to limit impact on neighborhoods.



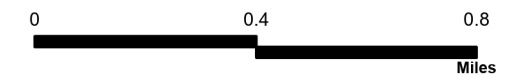
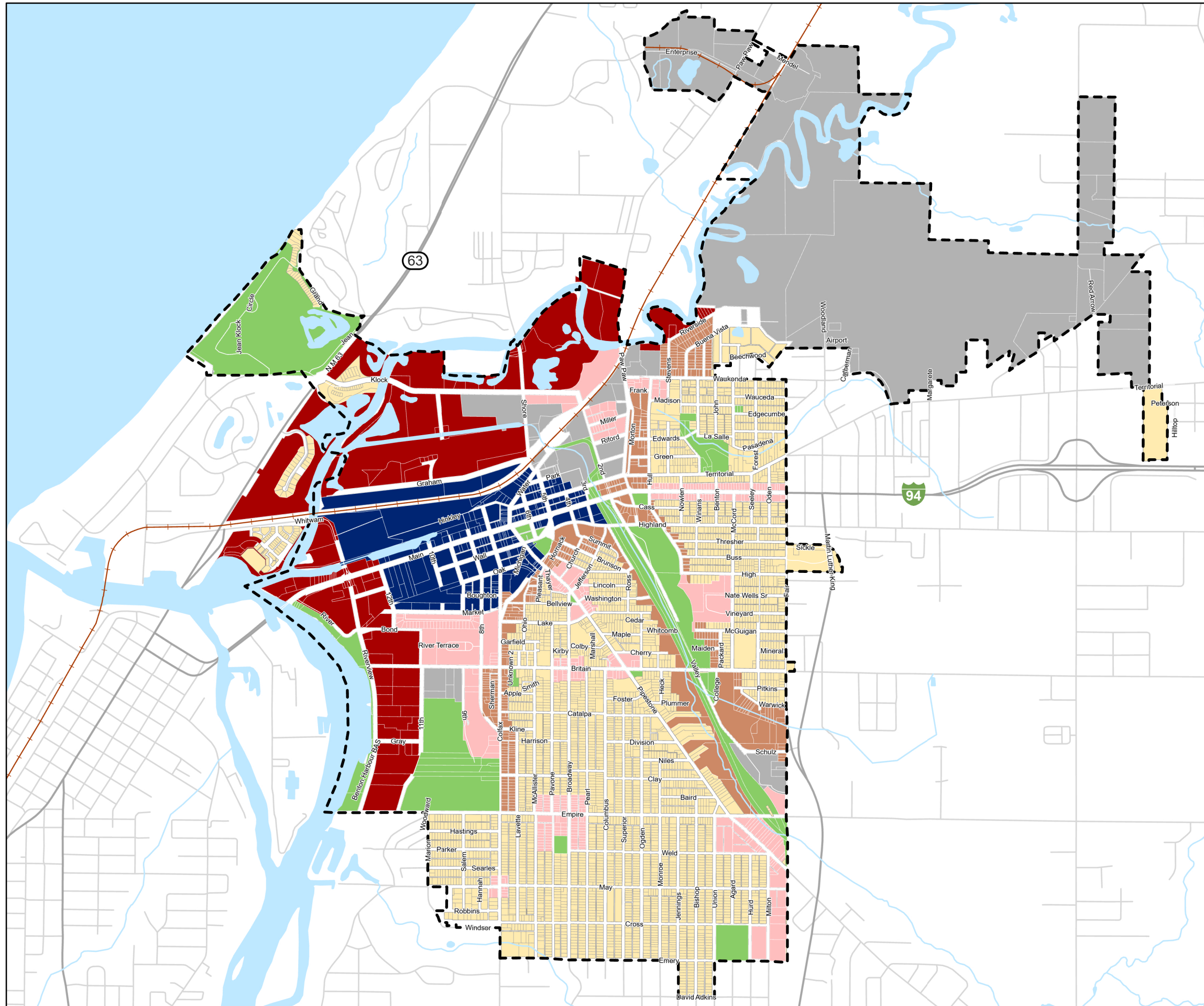
Future Land Use

City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County, Michigan

November 7, 2023

LEGEND

- Industrial
- Neighborhood
- Neighborhood Bluff
- Neighborhood Center
- Parks / Public
- Riverfront / Harbor
- Regional Center
- Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.
Data Source: Berrien County 2022. McKenna 2023.



Riverfront / Harbor

Benton Harbor is characterized by an abundance of water resources, but there is very little space dedicated to accessing and appreciating the lake, rivers, and creeks. It is vital to improve connectivity between the City's water and its neighborhoods. Any currently open waterfront should be sparingly developed to preserve the City's natural assets. However, it is important to strike a balance between uses that support the City's economy and the protection of natural features. Expansion of heavy industrial uses along the river should be discouraged, as they compromise the long-term integrity of the riverfront and often have significant environmental consequences. Industrial uses should only be permitted in their existing locations and should not be expanded beyond their current footprint. Some of the city's highest-value parcels are adjacent to the Lake and Rivers, and while this can offer an opportunity for tax revenue for the City, any development along major waterways should be approached with caution. So long as it is developed with consideration for the waterfront, moderate-density mixed-use commercial and residential uses are highly appropriate in this district as to utilize valuable land.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Appropriate uses in the Riverfront/Harbor areas are mixed-use, including commercial and residential, with some light industrial uses in targeted locations. Uses that interact with the waterfront in a responsible way are welcome in this area, such as recreational businesses, like a bike or kayak rental business. An effort should be made to partner with State agencies to remove encumbrances from land that would be more suitably used for business and housing. The results of the City's high-water study should be considered in determining appropriate land uses for properties in the Riverfront / Harbor classification. Best practices for flood mitigation and resiliency are critical to redevelopment within waterfront areas.

CONNECTIVITY

Benton Harbor's proximity to Lake Michigan and multiple rivers is one of its greatest assets. Businesses should be accessible not only by vehicle but by foot and bike. Connections to Riverfront/Harbor uses from adjacent parks should be provided. Accessibility to preservation areas should be provided contextually so as to respect and protect natural features. If the block size of a park is not consistent with an adjacent use, pedestrian connections can be made at the location where adjacent roadways and pathways intersect a park area.

BUILDING LOCATION

Buildings along waterways should be placed outside of the floodway or raised above the base flood elevation with parking underneath, when feasible. Public access along waterways should be maintained in new construction. Placement of buildings should be flexibly designed to maintain public views of the waterfront. Public access to and through sites to waterways is encouraged.

BUILDING DESIGN

Areas planned for Riverfront/Harbor uses are intended to be vibrant and mixed-use. Building design should match the character and materials of existing buildings. Buildings with industrial design characteristics and modern architectural materials are appropriate.

Buildings with large windows or balconies facing the waterfront are highly encouraged to utilize high-value views. These buildings may be taller than those in Neighborhood districts, though no taller than nearby Downtown Regional Center buildings such that views are obstructed.

PARKING

Parking should be placed far from waterways when possible and graded such that runoff is not directed into waterways. Sufficient landscaping buffers are beneficial along waterways to further filter contaminants.



Lot Dimensions		
Minimum lot area		n/a
Minimum lot width		n/a
Frontage in build-to area		n/a
Building Setbacks		
Arterial street	Min.	15 ft
	Max.	30 ft.
Local street	Min.	5 ft.
	Max.	15 ft.
Side (one)		none
Side (total of both)		none
Rear		25 ft.
From adjacent residential districts		25 ft.
Building Height		
Minimum		1 story
Maximum		4 story



Regional Center

Benton Harbor can serve as not only a city center but a regional destination. The Regional Center Future Land Use district encompasses Downtown Benton Harbor. This district should promote development to stimulate the economy of Benton Harbor. This Future Land Use district can support taller buildings with block-sized footprints, continuing its current levels of intensity. Downtown Benton Harbor should provide amenities for Benton Harbor residents, as well as attract visitors from surrounding communities.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Appropriate land uses in the Regional Center are mixed-use or commercial, including office, general retail commercial, food service, and upper-story residential uses as well as apartment buildings. Automotive-oriented uses such as gas stations, auto repair, or drive-through facilities are not appropriate in this future land use category. An effort should be made to partner with State agencies to remove encumbrances from land that would be more suitably used for business and housing.

CONNECTIVITY

Downtown Benton Harbor should connect to every part of the City, so residents can easily enjoy its amenities and opportunities. This area is the entrance point to the City from the North and East. While it should be easy to get through this area and into other parts of the City, traffic should be slowed to provide safe conditions for pedestrians and encourage patronage of businesses Downtown.

To support growing economic activity in Downtown Benton Harbor, the Regional Center should focus on walkability. Frequent cross-access is encouraged to reduce curb cuts and turning conflicts. Street connections and/or pedestrian connections, as may be appropriate, should be provided between corridor commercial areas and adjacent neighborhoods. Designated or protected bike lanes are critical in these areas as bicycles should be strictly prohibited on sidewalks in heavy pedestrian zones. Wide sidewalks allow for high pedestrian traffic and also create space for outdoor seating and displays that improve business.

BUILDING LOCATION

Buildings in the Regional Center should fill most of their lot area with minimal setbacks. Most buildings should be built at the lot line with no more than 20% of frontage reserved for courtyard uses, which include outdoor seating, patios, and art installations along the street.

BUILDING DESIGN

Buildings are required to match the design characteristics of the precedent structures in the Downtown area. New construction must incorporate high-quality stone, brick, concrete, and similar building materials. All new construction must be timeless with a development horizon of 100 years or more.

PARKING

On-street parking in the Downtown area should be preserved and expanded in areas where feasible. Parking areas should be located in side or rear yards for buildings facing an arterial street. Shared parking between adjacent uses is preferable to avoid excessive parking areas and preserve valuable land uses. Parking should also be located in side or rear yards for buildings facing an interior street. Interior streets should also feature on-street parking.



Lot Dimensions

Minimum lot area	n/a
Minimum lot width	n/a
Frontage in build-to area	80%

Building Setbacks

Arterial street	Min.	0 ft
	Max.	0 ft.
Local street	Min.	0 ft.
	Max.	15 ft.
Side (one)		none
Side (total of both)		none
Rear		25 ft.
From adjacent residential districts		25 ft.

Building Height

Minimum	2 stories
Maximum	6 stories



Benton Harbor has historically been an industrial community, and its economy still relies heavily on manufacturing and industry. Heavy industrial uses should be limited to select areas and separated from residential uses due to the potential for noxious odors, noise, heavy vehicle traffic, and the risk of negative air, soil, and water quality impacts. Currently, the city is over-zoned for industry, so the Future Land Use Plan limits industrial uses primarily to areas that are still in active use while providing more flexibility in areas that have experienced extended vacancies.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Appropriate land uses in this category include manufacturing, office, research, warehousing, and similar uses. Outdoor storage may be appropriate in certain limited instances where the outdoor component is shielded and where the use will not generate any negative impacts on nearby residential neighborhoods or major streets.

CONNECTIVITY

As a major area of employment for Benton Harbor residents, connectivity to Industrial uses from other commercial and residential uses via motorized and non-motorized transportation is essential. Bicycle connections within and through the Industrial area are encouraged while working to manage the negative effects of pollution and noise on these pedestrian connections. It is also important that public transportation provides access to and from these areas to provide access to Neighborhood residents.

BUILDING LOCATION

Buildings should be located towards the middle of the lot, with landscaping between the building and the street to provide a natural barrier between industrial uses and residential and commercial uses.

BUILDING DESIGN

Buildings may be industrial in nature but should include quality materials and detailing on the front façade.

PARKING

Parking and loading activities are encouraged to be located in side or rear yards.



Lot Dimensions	
Minimum lot area	20,000 sq. ft.
Minimum lot width	100 ft.
Frontage in build-to area	n/a

Building Setbacks		
Arterial street	Min.	50 ft.
	Max.	none
Local street	Min.	50 ft.
	Max.	none
Side (one)		20 ft.
Side (total of both)		40 ft.
Rear		20 ft.
From adjacent residential districts		100 ft.

Building Height	
Minimum	1 story
Maximum	3 stories



Zoning Plan

The Zoning Ordinance is the major tool available to local governments to implement the land use mapping element of the Community Plan, as the two documents are intricately linked. The Zoning Ordinance ensures that desired development patterns and goals outlined in the Master Plan are effectively translated in tandem to guide and regulate the physical development of an area. The Benton Harbor Future Land Use Map indicates residential growth areas of different densities and provides locations for commercial and industrial uses.

The land use classifications on the map and the corresponding descriptions of those classifications form the basis for evaluation of future land use and the corresponding development associated with that use. The Master Plan provides general land use allocations while the Zoning Map has precise boundaries and permitted uses adopted as law.

A Zoning Plan is required by the Michigan Planning and Zoning Enabling Acts. Section 33(d) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, as amended, requires that the Master Plan prepared under that act shall serve as the basis for the community's Zoning Plan. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, PA 110 of 2006, as amended, requires a zoning plan to be prepared as the basis for the zoning ordinance. The Zoning Plan must be based on an inventory of conditions pertinent to zoning in the municipality and the purposes for which zoning may be adopted (as described in Section 201 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act).

The following table presents the Benton Harbor Zoning districts that apply to each of this Plan's Future Land Use designations. Where new regulations are recommended to implement the master plan, the "new district" or "district revisions" descriptions have also been added to the table.

Future Land Use and Zoning Map Correlation

Benton Harbor Future Land Use Designation	Benton Harbor Zoning Districts
Neighborhood	R-S, R-M *District Revisions
Neighborhood Bluff	R-S, R-M *District Revisions
Neighborhood Center	MU, R-M, C-L *District Revisions
Parks / Public	R-S, R-M, C-L, C-G, MU, CB, P-R
Riverfront / Harbor	MU, R-M, IL, P-R *District Revisions
Regional Center	CB, MU, C-G, R-M *District Revisions
Industrial	IL, IH

Not all of the Community Plan's future land use categories will match up with the current location or regulations of the Zoning District to which they most closely correspond. Zoning Ordinance text amendments, map amendments or new Zoning Districts will be necessary to implement the Future Land Use Plan. The key recommended revisions of the Zoning Ordinance are discussed below.

Priorities for Zoning Amendments:

In order to meet the goals of this plan, the following revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and Map are recommended:

- Expanding the P-R Public Riverfront District to address resiliency objectives:** We recommend updating the P-R district to accommodate resiliency objectives that govern the design of the waterfront itself and could have other aspects (such as land uses, building heights, stormwater, etc.). The district could be expanded to include Ox Creek, the Paw Paw River, and the canal. This solution acknowledges that there are residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational aspects to the waterfront, without creating zoning districts for all of them.
- Include more housing types.** Including middle housing and attainable housing in districts throughout the City. Consider adopting building type standards, pre-approved site development criteria, checklists for preapproval of middle housing developments, pattern book of homes, and form-based code districts where applicable. Additionally, using a housing type model is one approach to removing maximum and minimum building sizes. Each permitted housing type can have a range of dimensional standards and lot placement standards. Standards for housing types can be placed in the Zoning Ordinance or included in the Best Benton Harbor Community Plan and adopted by reference.

Housing types to include:

- » Single Family
- » Duplex
- » Triplex



- » Quadplex
 - » Bungalow Court—ensuring that there are opportunities for small-footprint residential units while also ensuring that the City’s valuable residential properties are fully utilized.
 - » Small Apartment Building
 - » Large Apartment Building
 - » Accessory Dwelling Units—ensure they meet building code and are accessory to a principal structure
 - » Live / Work
 - » Row Houses
 - » Mixed Use
- **Reestablish Neighborhood Commercial Nodes.** Include more mixed-use development options to incentivize entrepreneurship and neighborhood business. The ordinance should encourage adaptive reuse of existing structures for business and residential uses, as well as creative uses in residential areas. Neighborhood services should be permitted near where people live.
 - **Right Size Industrial Districts.** Rezone underutilized Industrial Districts for Mixed Use and Downtown Development, consistent with the 2012 Master Plan and preliminary recommendations from the Best Benton Harbor Community Plan.
 - **Consolidate and/or Update C-G and C-B districts for Mixed Use and Housing.** Consider eliminating the C-G district and updating the C-B district for form-based standards, building types, and more opportunities for downtown living.
 - **Off-Street Parking and Loading.** Review off-street parking and loading requirements for consistency with current best practices, like the Institute of Transportation Engineers and the Smart Code. Consider eliminating all minimum parking requirements, creating maximum parking requirements, revising shared parking standards, including bike parking requirements, and clarifying alternative material incentives.
 - **Development Review Processes:** update development processes, where appropriate, to match current processes, or conversely, look to establish processes that comply with the zoning requirements.

Sections to evaluate include:

- » Preapplication Conference
- » Minimum submission requirements
- » Notice of public hearings—amend to be consistent with Michigan Zoning Enabling Act
- » M-U Mixed Use District Reviews—verify that the rules for review of development in mixed-use districts provide incentives to development, appropriate City oversight, and are not overly burdensome.
- » Planned Development Reviews—update review process and ensure rules are consistent with most recent planning policy.



www.BestBentonHarbor.com

Engaging Community



Residents, business owners, and planners gathered at the charrette space in downtown Benton Harbor on Day 3 of Planning Week. Attendees participated in the Design Alternatives exercise to offer input on how they want to see Ox Creek developed.

In order to do the work of community planning, the public must be involved. Throughout the Benton Harbor Community Planning process, the public was heavily engaged and the invaluable input from Benton Harbor residents was instrumental in the development of the Plan. This chapter summarizes the public engagement efforts that were made throughout the process and echoes the great visions and concepts of Benton Harbor residents. This process was not only rewarding, but an integral part of creating a relevant, community-informed plan. Ways in which the public was engaged during the process include:

- Planning Week: A Design Charrette from June 6-10, 2022
- Best Benton Harbor Talent Competition: 3 public artists awarded in Summer 2022
- 4 Neighborhood Workshops: Fall 2022
- 3 Online Surveys:
 - » Big Idea
 - » Community Plan Survey
 - » Vision and Goals Survey

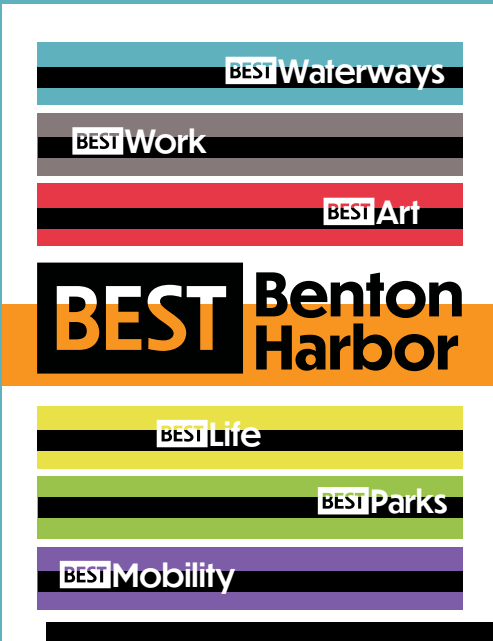
General Summary of Public Engagement Events

Overall, residents of Benton Harbor have a lot of pride in their community and have great ideas for how they see the City continuing on the path to ensuring vibrant, attractive, equitable neighborhoods and businesses. New development decisions must be equitable and support the City's residents, striving to make Benton Harbor a gentrification-proof city.

Throughout Planning Week and the series of neighborhood workshops there were many comments about workforce training and opportunities for educating youth in the community - especially in skilled trades. Training in skilled trades will offer youth and young adults ability to take on specialized employment. Another topic that was mentioned by many is Ox Creek. Many participants felt that Ox Creek was an opportunity for Benton Harbor to add a significant and beautiful natural area. This was a persistent suggestion throughout the public engagement process.

Several others felt that adding more public art and murals around the city would help bring out the identity of the residents who live in the community. Many individuals suggested ideas for art like supporting the African American Literature Gallery, building an art museum, and building a History of Benton Harbor Museum. Many others suggested building community gardens to increase freshly grown food in the city and also to educate youth about how to grow food.

Other ideas for the future of Benton Harbor were related to transportation, housing, and public works. Several individuals mentioned trash and proper disposal and pick-up as something they aspired to see happen better in the city. Others felt that adding biking and walking paths to the existing infrastructure would be great for residents- especially those who don't drive. Many individuals mentioned the desire to have more housing types (affordable, attainable, single-family, multi-family) and options available in the city. Many focused on Benton Harbor's waterfront as an opportune place for recreation, entertainment, commerce, and residential uses. Some suggested that it would be helpful for the waterfront to add boat parking, trails, and other commercial uses that inspire activities in the area.



Pictured above is a postcard flyer which was sent out to the public ahead of engagement. It represents the vision for Benton Harbor to offer the best quality of life for residents.



Planning Week

Best Benton Harbor Planning Week was a week-long kickoff to Benton Harbor's Year of Planning that took place from June 6th through June 10th of 2022 in downtown Benton Harbor. The week was operated as a charrette, an intensive planning process designed to understand public consensus on values, goals, and ideas for the City of Benton Harbor. As the week progressed, concepts for the Community Plan were compiled and repeatedly reevaluated and refined based on real-time feedback from the public, elected officials, City staff, and community leaders. The charrette space was open to the public Monday through Thursday, and residents could come in to provide feedback at any time. There were specific workshop events that the public was encouraged to attend, while certain breakout groups were focused on specific community stakeholders, but no conversation was behind closed doors. Every presentation provided over the course of the week was livestreamed and recorded and can be found on the Best Benton Harbor YouTube Channel.

Monday, June 6th: Kickoff

Day One of Planning Week was dedicated to introducing the planning team, local leadership, and community members and setting goals for the week. This day began with an orientation on the purpose of a Community Plan and the benefits of comprehensive community planning. Multiple presentations were given over the course of the day to provide context for the week's activities. These presentations discussed the City's recent demographic and economic statistics, physical design, and the City's current Future Land Use Plan. The Ox Creek Revitalization Team discussed their partnership with Benton Harbor to support neighborhoods through clean-up and development along the Ox Creek Corridor. Between presentations, a group of both long-time residents and visiting contributors toured major study sites throughout Benton Harbor from a Dial-A-Ride bus. Residents were able to tell stories about different areas of the city that mattered to them, what concerned them, and what they would like to see improved. The night concluded with a social event and talent showcase at a local restaurant where collaborators could unwind and discuss the city in a less formal setting, and to demonstrate the importance of supporting local arts and performance.

Tuesday, June 7th: Workshops

Day Two kicked off with an intensive workshop involving collaboration from a wide range of community members and local business owners. Several activities were used to engage discussion and spark ideas. Participants were asked to make a mental map of the city to include their favorite places and areas they'd most like to see improved. This set the tone for collaboration over the course of the week, in terms of "Fix, Keep, Aspire". With this mindset, everyone is asked to consider: What needs to be *fixed*? What are the city's assets that we need to *keep*? What is something you'd like to see in Benton Harbor that we can *aspire* to? The Ox Creek Revitalization Team provided materials demonstrating alternative ways that different communities have improved their water resources, with the goal of understanding what would be most appreciated in and appropriate for Benton Harbor. Throughout the day, brainstorming boards were posted throughout the charrette space for people to comment on specific aspects of the community, such as parks, transportation, housing, and work. This was a day for vigorous discussion and intent listening.

The evening session included more presentations and opportunities to share thoughts on goals for the City. Two presentations went into detail on the City's planning history and past City Plans and how they affected the state of the city today. A visiting expert presented promising information on the potential for future business growth in Benton Harbor, challenging many participants' assumptions about the city's capacity for economic development. The brainstorming boards were up and attendees were encouraged to add their ideas before and after the presentations.

Wednesday, June 8th: Listening

Day Three was focused on taking the previous days' ideas and turning them into vision statements to guide planning in the different topic areas. The group discussed these vision statements and refined them over the course of the day. The group also took another tour focusing on key business development areas and met with Mayor Muhammad to discuss the future of the area around the Project T site. Afterward, a small group including elected officials, advisory board members, and community members had a critical conversation with the planning team to discuss how to get more residents involved in the Community Plan process during the charrette and over the rest of the year. This conversation contributed to how the Neighborhood Workshops would be conducted in October later that year, ensuring the Community Plan team could support a diverse range of needs when looking for input so that residents would feel comfortable sharing their views.

For the event that night, the team was able to present most of the ideas put forth over the previous days so that attendees could comment on their favorite and least favorite points. The Ox Creek Team also presented alternative designs and goals for the creek, prioritizing clean-up and



The photo above shows attendees listening in to a presentation in the charrette space. The bottom photo captures participants on a tour which they took via Dial-A-Bus.



restoration. The night concluded with a vision circle led by the Chair of the Planning Commission, Mr. Lee Reed, where each person took turns sharing their vision for Benton Harbor. Older residents shared what they missed from the Benton Harbor of their childhoods, and younger residents expressed why they wanted to stay in Benton Harbor and the improvements they wanted to see in the community. Folks who had not been able to attend earlier in the week provided more insight into the goals presented by the planning team, helping to build an understanding of what would need to be addressed in the Community Plan.

Thursday, June 9th: Refinement

Day Four was an intense day for continuing the feedback loop and refining ideas. Using presentations from the past night that consolidated the week's ideas, attendees continued to provide comments on alternatives presented by the planning team. They also discussed ways to improve community participation in local policy and accountability in neighborhood upkeep, such as establishing neighborhood improvement groups or hiring local residents to help with maintenance. Similar ideas were combined, while conflicting ideas were set aside to be discussed and debated further. These were consolidated into a presentation to summarize the goals of the Community Plan to frame future, more detailed discussion and policy by the planning team, with the intent to revisit the topics with the planning commission, the Community Plan advisory board, and in the Neighborhood Workshops. The team developed the first draft of the Future Land Use Plan and the Parks and Boulevard System Map, based on the ideas and themes explored throughout the week.

A wrap-up event concluded the night in the Arts District. While the original intent was to conclude the night with a summary of the ideas put forth over the course of the week, a discussion launched between the participants of the event, many of whom had not been able to attend earlier charrette sessions. The conversation was livestreamed and can be found on the Best Benton Harbor YouTube channel, and focused on what it would mean for the Community Plan to be successful. Different voices conflicted in how they thought the Community Plan could impact the city, but ultimately the conversation was thought-provoking, respectful, and productive.



Deavondre Jones and his son participate in the 2022 Peace Day Walk along with students and community members. Deavondre was inspired to host the Best Benton Harbor Talent Competition by his favorite memories of participating in student talent shows as a student at Benton Harbor High School.

Friday, June 10th: Peace Day

Day Five was Benton Harbor Peace Day. Benton Harbor High School led a Peace Walk to kick off a 90-day Peace Pledge. The planning team joined in on the walk, using the opportunity before the event to ask students what they would like to see in Benton Harbor. One of the brainstorming boards was brought along, and the youth were eager to offer ideas and input about their city. The board had twice as many entries by the end of the day than had been collected from other participants over the past week! The planning team was also given the opportunity to announce the Best Benton Harbor Talent Competition to the entire high school student body. The announcement was given by the owner of DanceSpire, Deavondre Jones, graduate of Benton Harbor High School and advisory partner to the planning team.

The final livestream summarizing visions and goals for the Community Plan was presented later that afternoon. These concepts would later be revisited at the Neighborhood Workshops and then turned into policy and language described in this Community Plan. They were the guiding ideas for the planning team to focus on throughout the entire planning process.

Idea Boards

Over the course of the Planning Week, participants were always encouraged to take a look at the idea boards and share their thoughts relating to each topic area. Some folks wrote about the city's assets in these areas, places in the city to zoom in on, challenges to be addressed, but more than anything else, solutions and suggestions for improvement.



Neighborhood Workshops

In the fall of 2022, the City of Benton Harbor engaged the community in a series of four neighborhood workshops, listed at right.

Workshops were held in each ward of the city and open to all residents, not just residents of the ward it was held in. The workshops were hosted by ward presidents, city council members, members of the planning commission, concerned residents, and others. At the workshop events, there were large poster boards placed around the rooms with the following topics: Best Life, Best Mobility, Best Parks, Best Work, Best Art, Best Design, and Best Waterways. Individuals were asked to write their ideas for each of the topic areas on a sticky note and stick it on the corresponding board. Individuals were then asked to put their “Big Ideas” on a Big Idea board. The comments and ideas gathered from each of the neighborhood workshops are summarized below.

After the series of neighborhood workshops, the planning team synthesized the most prevalent themes discussed to create the Equity Opportunity Area Map and refined ideas for the Neighborhood Investment and Housing strategy. Along with the Future Land Use and Parks and Boulevard System recommendations, these policy focus areas make up the recommended chapters for Benton Harbor’s Land Development Guidelines.

Workshop #1

Second Baptist Church

October 19, 2022

Workshop #2

Virginia Edwards Community Center

Big Idea, Comments

October 20, 2022

Workshop #3

Joel E. Smilow Teen Center

Big Idea, Comments

October 25, 2022

Workshop #4

Benton Harbor Public Library

Big Idea, Comments

October 26, 2022

BEST Life Summary of Public Comments

Participants expressed that they would like to “bring back our students by bettering the schools and the experience.” Several individuals commented about the children and youth of Benton Harbor and providing them with more opportunities. One commenter suggested that education should be a community priority and that new schools should be built in the city. Another participant said that children 0-18 are the largest population group in the city and that “we need to invest in children.”

Commenters said affordable housing for multiple-income families was an aspiration. Participants said they would like to see improved homes, some lower-cost and better-quality rental housing, and fewer absentee landlords. Others suggested that the farmer’s market is great in the summer, but the City needs a year-round, indoor, fresh organic produce facility. Another respondent mentioned having a co-op program for students and developing a financial literacy program for students and seniors. Others expressed the desire to give stability to kids in Benton Harbor and add a healing space for youth. One person suggested sensitivity training for police.

Commissioner Clark-Griffin shared her aspirations for a community center, affordable housing and internet access, grocery stores and health stores, and a laundromat.

Commissioner Reed mentioned that he would like to see the City do a better job of cleaning up after storms that knock down tree limbs.

BEST Mobility Summary of Public Comments

For best mobility participants suggested making public transportation more accessible throughout the day, mentioning that people have different needs at all times of the day— “We need to accommodate them.” Others mentioned the desire to have bike trails and boardwalks throughout the city.

Comments from many individuals centered around transportation on main corridors. Participants advocated for Dial-A-Ride renewal routes, getting rid of parking minimums for developments, and adding protected bike lanes.

One individual suggested the city has, “sidewalk hazards— even on Main Street.” Their suggestion was to repair the sidewalks to increase pedestrian use and safety.

BEST Parks Summary of Public Comments

Participants commented that kids in Benton Harbor need activities and suggested that there are limited opportunities for youth in the city. One participant voiced the need for funding parks and recreation in the city. Another person said their desire was to create a community center with a swimming pool. Multiple people commented that the new Boys and Girls Club youth centers are benefiting the city and that similar investments would also be beneficial. Participants also expressed their interest in having African American art displayed throughout the city, increasing the public works workforce, and expanding Jean Klock Park.

One suggested having drive-in movies in the city and having giveaways for people in need. People also mentioned more public speaking and field trips as opportunities. Others supported adding water parks for the public, places for “random fun and togetherness”, and adding businesses that offer indoor activities like go-karts, trampolines, or arcades.

BEST Work Summary of Public Comments

When asked what aspirations individuals have for work in Benton Harbor, suggestions focused on how to provide occupational training, bring in new jobs, and support and expand local businesses. One respondent said the City should “create a racial equity board” and add a training hub for minority contractors who want to do business with the city. A training hub would develop a list of pre-approved contractors who are ready to do work within the city. One participant suggested that the city open its doors to minority owned-businesses and create an employment training center. Many suggested doing job and employment training for the youth of the city. “Youth will be trained here and stay here.” One person suggested using the property at 200 Paw Paw as a training center. Overall themes focused on providing more training opportunities and collaboration between the City and job-makers, in particular working with minority-owned businesses. One individual said that younger people should be able to work at 13 years and 6 months. Another suggested ward-specific resource centers and adding community gardens that youth are encouraged to engage with.

BEST Art Summary of Public Comments

Benton Harbor residents see the need for public art to define their city and culture. Participants suggested having fewer city celebrations and instead, “help the inner-city immediately please”. Another commenter suggested having a talent show and competition and supporting the African American Literature Gallery. Many suggestions across the different boards looked for ways to integrate the arts into everyday life, and use the arts as a tool to enrich the lives of residents.

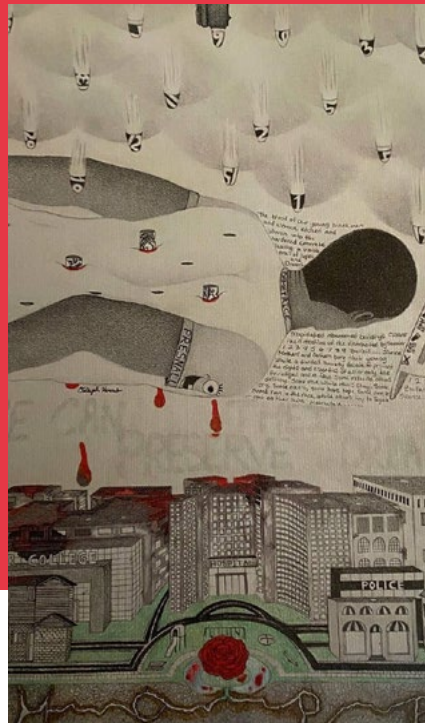
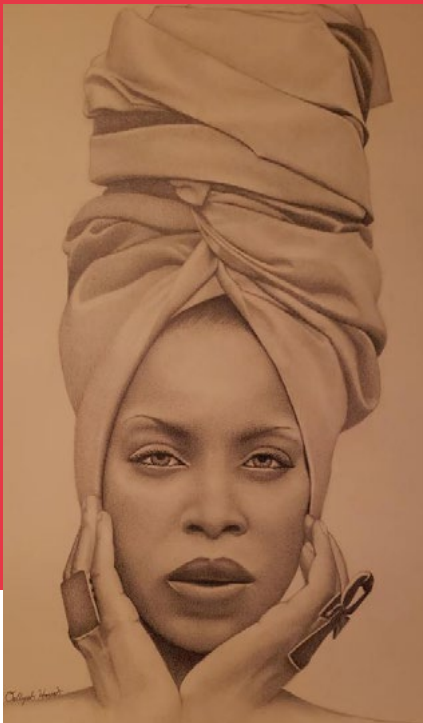
BEST Design Summary of Public Comments

One commenter mentioned adding parking meters downtown to generate income. They suggested that any new development in the city should benefit the citizens. Participants shared their desires for community design and suggested that Benton Harbor needs more policing to stop gun violence, more art around town, more quality healthcare, and more healthy food options. One participant suggested that corporations take over public land. Another suggested public safety and maintenance improvements like fixing trash can needs. This individual suggested that the City needs more trash cans and they need to be emptied regularly. Another comment for Best Design was for supporting the Empire Corridor.

BEST Waterways Summary of Public Comments

When asked about ideas for waterways, participants suggested mostly public safety and maintenance ideas. One participant suggested developing a “Riverview Drive” like in Detroit. Another suggestion was to add a water taxi and boat parking on the waterfront. Others suggested making sure the city and residents are following Hazmat and accident regulations and best practices. Additionally, one person said that the site at 2000 Paw Paw belongs to the City of Benton Harbor and expressed concerns about this site.

One commenter said to make Bobo Brazil Community Center (formally the Armory) into a community center. Another participant suggested the City create a 5th Ward and establish a waterfront district. Other participants suggested cleaning up and opening up Ox Creek and making it walkable. They also suggested “cleaning up” the City’s public workforce to maintain public areas better. Others advocated for more affordable housing for families, and more skilled trades taught in the schools.



Original artwork by Olliyah Hornes, winner of Best Benton Harbor Talent Competition for Best Art.

"Art is life. To create is to bring something into existence. A creative community is an existing community and Benton Harbor deserves to exist."

-Olliyah Hornes

Best Benton Harbor Talent Competition

The Best Benton Harbor Talent Competition is an innovative method to engage Benton Harbor communities designed and executed by project partner Deavondre Jones of DanceSpire.

Three winners of the competition were provided a \$500 stipend and selected as Best Benton Harbor Talent Ambassadors, in the categories of Fine Art, Music Production, and Dance. Winning artists were provided an opportunity to contribute to the Best Benton Harbor Community Plan and invited to attend Advisory Committee Meetings. The artists retain all rights to work submitted for award consideration.

The Best Benton Harbor Talent Competition was launched on June 19, 2022, at the City's Juneteenth event at Dwight P. Mitchell City Center Park. The Competition concluded with a social event and open mic performance and livestreamed at the Citadel's Oak Room on December 3, 2022.

The DanceSpire team worked to coordinate with artists to finalize posting artwork samples and statements, and transmitted stipends to winners.

BEST BENTON HARBOR TALENT COMPETITION WINNERS

Oalliyah Hornes

Fine Art

Demonte Bradley

Dance

Tyrece Lamar

Music

July 11th Open House

Prior to the release of the first public draft of the Community Plan, an Open House event was held at Benton Harbor Public Library. At the Open House, attendees could learn about the ongoing process of adopting the Community Plan—both what had already been completed and what the next steps would be. The Open House was a chance for Benton Harbor residents to get a first glance at the new Community Plan that will guide development in the city as Benton Harbor grows into the future version of itself.

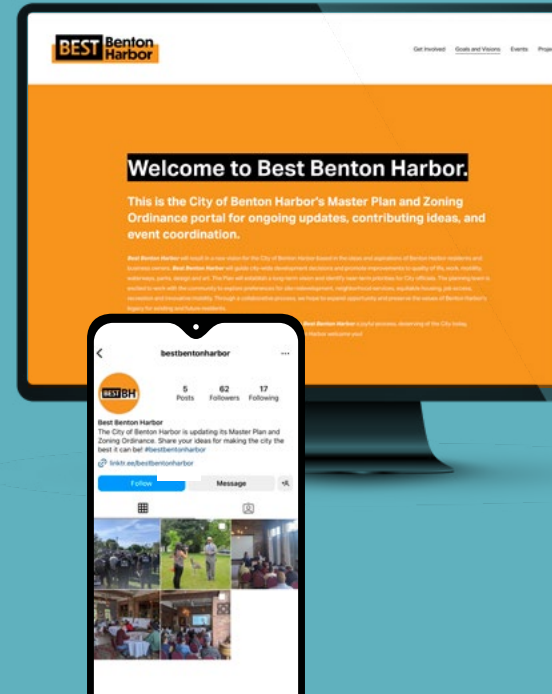
Online Engagement

Social Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube

The initial project strategy was to utilize Instagram for posting project photos and YouTube for streaming presentations. Following Planning Week, a Facebook page was also created to reach people who primarily use that platform. The Best Benton Harbor Instagram page has 60 followers. The YouTube Page has 17 subscribers. The videos on this page can be an archive of many of the project milestones, including the 5-day Planning Week event that was used to develop the 30% draft. Most of these videos have between 20 and 50 views, with the Planning Week Orientation presentation had 232 views. As mentioned above, the Best Benton Harbor Facebook page was added following Planning Week to increase awareness of the project throughout the community and help spread the word about the Neighborhood Workshops in October of 2022. The Neighborhood Workshop promotion reached more than 3000 people and received 199 link clicks. All of the YouTube presentations and the Talent Competition livestream are posted on the Facebook Page as well.

Website: BestBentonHarbor.com

The Best Benton Harbor Website has served as a repository for project information and a place to provide input. The website has had 1,100 unique visitors, more than 1,500 visits, and more than 2,600 page views.



Examples of the Best Benton Harbor brand on the website and Instagram page for the Community Plan.

Online Surveys

Three online surveys were placed on the Best Benton Harbor website to encourage people who were not able to participate in person at one of the planned engagement events to offer feedback. The surveys were kept open from May 2022 through January 2023. The surveys were also promoted through handouts provided at the charrette, Benton Harbor High School Peace Walk, and the Neighborhood Workshops.

The following online surveys were conducted:

- Big Idea: Opportunity for people to share their ideas for the future of Benton Harbor. A total of eight responses.
- Community Plan Survey: This survey focused on broad topics such as household composition, neighborhood activity, daily life, and the overall impressions concerning the community. Responses will give City leaders and the project team ideas of strategic issues for further analysis and exploration. A total of twenty-one responses.
- Vision and Goals Survey: This survey helped to validate the vision and goals statements for the Best Benton Harbor Plan. The survey offered the opportunity to share informal open-ended feedback on the statements and provided participants an opportunity to rewrite the statements in their own words. Vision statements and goals help to organize projects and strategies into intentional actions. A total of two responses.



WNDU News Now correspondent interviews Mayor Muhammad about the kickoff of Benton Harbor's Community Plan process.

Media and Public Information

Information about the planning process was consistently distributed using traditional media channels. A detailed press release was developed for Planning Week and the Neighborhood Workshop series in addition to purchased advertising and promotion through Benton-Michiana Spirit News, including three appearances on the Spirit Radio program. The project has been covered in the Harold-Palladium, WSJM.com, and with an evening news feature on Channel 16 WNDU.

Meeting Log

The planning team has approached the project with flexibility in order to achieve an extensive and broad-based connection with community members. This effort has been targeted at forming meaningful connections with people interested in the future of the City, which requires listening sessions and in-person attendance at both formal and informal events. The following meeting log does not represent every interaction or discussion that has taken place around the project, rather, shows the breadth and depth of communication embraced by the planning team.

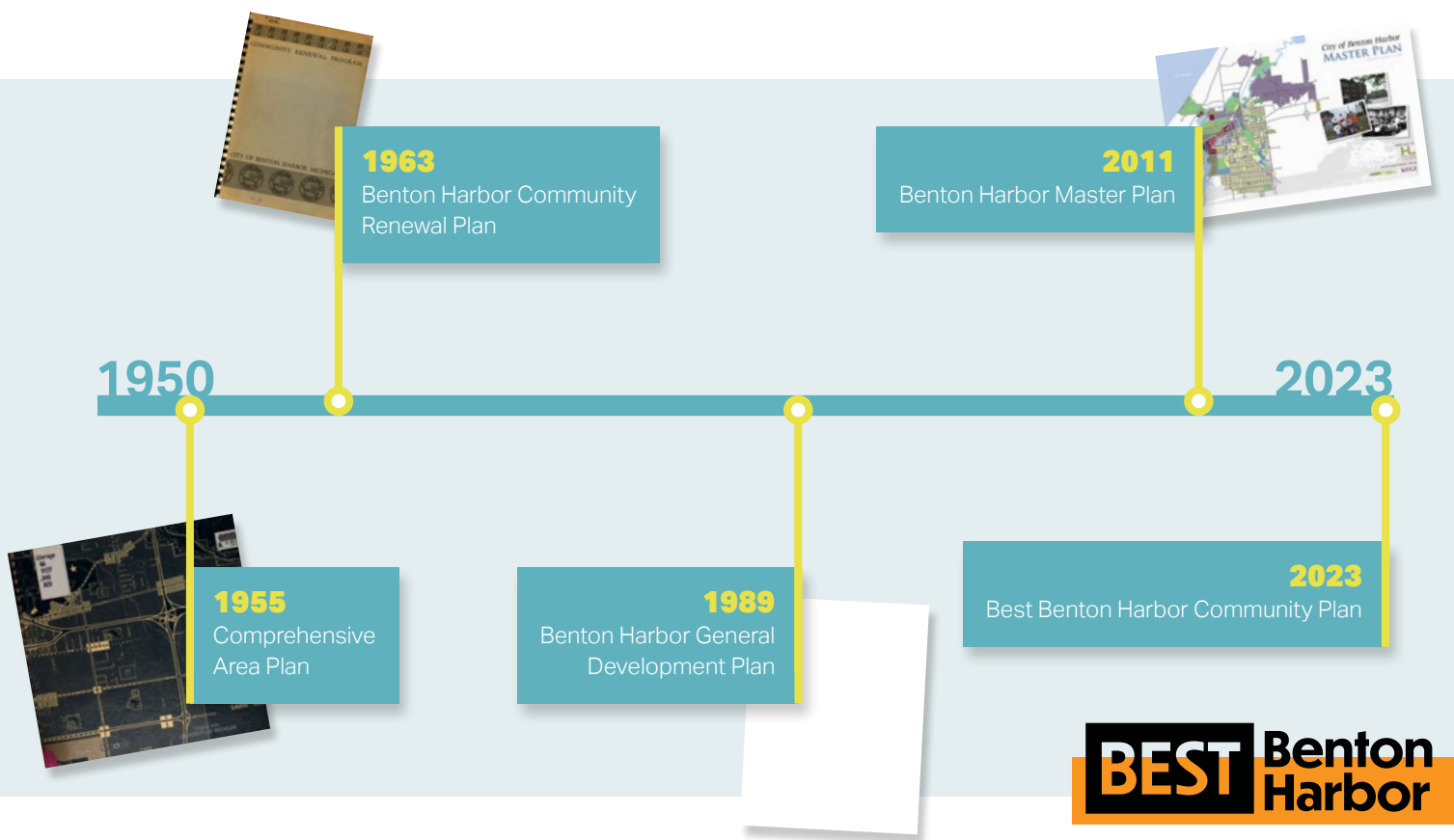
Community Plan and Zoning Ordinance Meeting Log

#	Best Benton Harbor Meetings	Date	Attendee Description
1	Kick-off Tour	8/15/2021	City Leadership
2	Kick-off Meeting	11/12/2021	City Leadership
3	County Plan Coordination	12/1/2021	City and Regional leaders
4	PC Kick-off presentation	12/7/2021	Planning Commission
5	Four Ward Tours	12/14/2021	All 4 wards with Commissioners
6	Black Wall Street Meeting	12/12/2022	Community Organizers
7	Ward 4 Tour	2/21/2022	New ward 4 commissioner
8	Project T Meeting	2/24/2022	Harbor Habitat
9	Downtown Business Meeting	3/7/2022	Downtown Stakeholders
10	City Commission Meeting	3/7/2022	City Leadership
11	Benton Harbor CDC	3/29/2022	Community Organizers
12	City Administration Outreach Coordination Meeting	3/30/2022	City Leadership
13	Downtown Business Meeting	3/30/2022	Downtown Stakeholders
14	Ox Creek Coordination Meeting	4/5/2022	City Administration and Consultants
15	Ox Creek Coordination Meeting	4/6/2022	City Administration and Consultants
16	Ox Creek Coordination Meeting	4/11/2022	City Administration and Consultants
17	City Administration Outreach Coordination Meeting	4/13/2022	City Leadership
18	City Commission Meeting	4/18/2022	City Leadership
19	Ox Creek Coordination Meeting	4/22/2022	City Administration and Consultants
20	Berrien County Trails Plan	4/28/2022	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
21	Planning Commission Meeting	5/3/2022	City Leadership
22	TCATA Planning Meeting	5/13/2022	Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority / University of Michigan
23	Advisory Committee Meeting	5/19/2022	Advisory Committee
24	DDA Welcome Center Launch	5/25/2022	Downtown Development Authority
25	Meet with Mayor	5/31/2022	City Administration and Consultants
26	Benton Harbor CDC - Live Stream	6/2/2022	Planning Commission Chair and Advisory Committee
27	Planning Week - Multiple Workshops and Public Events Every Day	6/6 to 6/10	Public
34	Spirit News / Radio Promo Interview	6/7/2022	Deavondre Jones, Nick Gunn
28	Juneteenth Celebration	6/18/2022	DanceSpire Event #1
29	Administration Meeting / Farmer Market / Whirlpool	7/13/2022	Planning Commission Chair and Manager

#	Best Benton Harbor Meetings	Date	Attendee Description
30	City Commission Meeting	8/15/2022	City Leadership
31	Administration Meeting	9/13/2022	Planning Commission Chair and Manager
32	Calls to Commissioners	9/15 & 9/16	City Leadership
33	Advisory Committee Meeting	10/10/2022	Advisory Committee
34	Spirit News / Radio Promo Interview	10/17/2022	Commissioner Singleton, Nick Gunn
35	Neighborhood Workshop #1: Second Baptist Church	10/19/2022	Public
36	Neighborhood Workshop #2: The Virginia Edwards Community Center	10/20/2022	Public
37	Neighborhood Workshop #3: Joel E. Smilow Teen Center	10/25/2022	Public
38	Neighborhood Workshop #4: Benton Harbor Public Library	10/26/2022	Public
39	Planning Commission Meeting - Zoning Issue Identification	11/1/2022	Planning Commission
40	Coordination meeting with EGLE and Ox Creek Team	11/30/2022	City Manager and Ox Creek Team
41	Best Benton Harbor Talent Competition at the Citadel and Live Stream	12/1/2022	DanceSpire Event #2
42	Planning Commission Meeting - Community Plan Update	12/6/2022	Planning Commission
43	Benton Harboropoly, with Mayor Mohammad	12/13/2022	Public
44	City Administration 50% Memo Coordination Meeting	2/2/2023	City Leadership
45	Planning Commission Update	2/7/2023	Planning Commission
46	City Administration 50% Memo Coordination Meeting	2/24/2023	City Leadership
47	Planning Commission Update	3/7/2023	Planning Commission
48	Advisory Committee Meeting	3/27/2023	Advisory Committee
49	Middle Housing Developer Meeting	4/24/2023	Sean McMickle and City Manager's Office
50	Coordination meeting with City Manager's Office and Mayor	6/6/2023	City Leadership
51	Planning Commission Update	6/6/2023	Planning Commission
52	Planning Commission Update	7/11/2022	Planning Commission
53	Mayor's Town Hall at Library	7/11/2023	Public
54	Planning Commission Town Hall at City Hall	7/25/2023	Public
55	Planning Commission 63-day review period meeting	8/1/2023	Planning Commission
56	City Commission Approve 63-day review period meeting	8/7/2023	City Commission
57	Draft Review Meeting with Planning Commission Chair and Vice Chair	8/17/2023	City Leadership
58	Advisory Committee Meeting	10/24/2023	Advisory Committee
59	Planning Commission - Public Hearing on Plan Adoption	11/14/2023	Planning Commission
60	City Commission - Plan Adoption	12/18/2023	City Commission

Understanding Community

Benton Harbor History





Strong Foundations

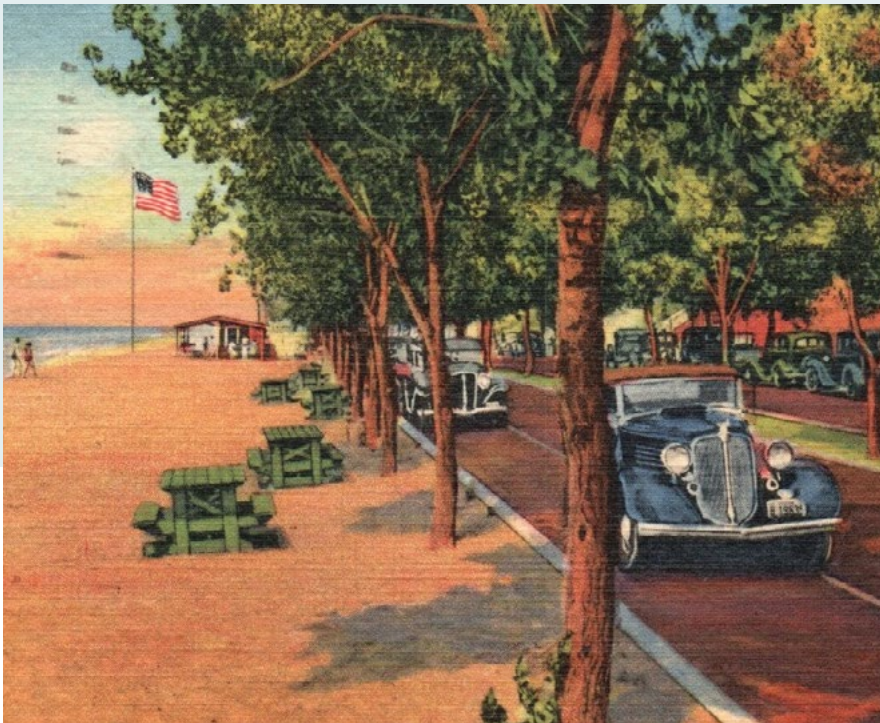
Benton Harbor was founded in 1860 as Bunson Harbor, after founder Sterne Bunson; the name was changed to Benton Harbor in 1865 after the neighboring township. Bunson and other founders hired a surveyor to lay out a rectilinear grid of streets, allowing plats of land to be sold in fractions of an acre. Most towns settled during this time period followed a similar pattern, but Benton Harbor's was unique due to the area's varied topography. Several diagonal streets were inserted into the grid to accommodate the steep bluff surrounding the town.

The 1889 image shows a "bird's-eye view" of Benton Harbor, demonstrating the town's swift development after only 30 years. Major regional roads descended the bluffs to converge on the town center. Benton Harbor would be incorporated as a city two years later, in 1891.

Benton Harbor would swiftly become a major regional focal point. The economy of the growing community was anchored by the harbor, which acted as a critical loading point for regional trade. Naturally, the harbor was used to transport industrial materials as well, generating diverse business activity. By the time it was incorporated into a city, it had surpassed St. Joseph and Niles to become the largest settlement in Berrien County.

As it developed, Benton Harbor's focal point became the "Five Corners" intersection of Michigan, Pipestone, and Wall Streets. Major local businesses lined the three streets, and new residents built homes in the surrounding neighborhoods. In a pre-automobile era, neighborhoods and commercial districts were spaced so that people could walk short five- and ten-minute walks to access daily needs.

As community wealth grew into the early twentieth Century, grand and stately homes in the Queen Anne, Greek Revival, and Italianate styles were built in the city; in particular along the Pipestone Street, Colfax Avenue, and Territorial Road corridors which served as the main gateways to Benton Harbor from the south and east. Close at hand in the fabric of the city's neighborhoods were smaller and simpler houses intended for working people. These buildings were built to be flexible, changing in size and configuration through multiple generations of ownership.



Left: The 1934 State Highway Map, showing US-31 and US-12 passing through Benton Harbor, attracting travelers.

Center: An aerial map of Benton Harbor from 1889, showing how Benton Harbor has changed.

Right: A postcard for Jean Klock Bathing Beach circa 1938.

Early 20th Century

Benton Harbor's position as a regional hub for shipping, manufacturing, and food processing made it a magnet for workers seeking better opportunities. Benton Harbor was a significant destination during the Great Migration, a mass exodus of African Americans fleeing persecution in the South to find a better life in northern states. In the pre-war era, Benton Harbor grew into a diverse community, with African Americans as well as Native Americans, Germans, Poles, Italians, Greeks, Scandinavians, and Jewish Americans.

As the population boomed, neighborhoods based on street grids continued to develop further from the city center. These neighborhoods were served by smaller commercial districts that developed at their edges; examples of these mixed-use nodes included the intersection of Britain Avenue and Pipestone Street, and North Fair Avenue and Territorial Road.

Once the automobile became a popular choice for regional and cross-country travel, Benton Harbor benefited from its location along two major highways: US-12 connected Detroit to Chicago, while US-31 connected south to Indianapolis, Louisville, Nashville, and Birmingham. Prior to World War II, these early highways were routed through the center of Benton Harbor, giving local businesses access to travelers passing through.

The Transformation of Benton Harbor

Just like most industrial centers during WWII, Benton Harbor was a major employment center. Benton Harbor's shipping and manufacturing industry contributed to consistent growth as new businesses entered the City, and the workers followed. However, beginning in the fifties, things would begin to change rapidly.

As urban populations were growing like never before, modernist planning and development ideals began to take hold in communities small and large. Many changes were implemented through planning practices, incentivized through a range of federal programs. These policies upended the human settlement patterns that had been present up until that point. The two planning documents that were created during this time, which reflect the

changes that occurred in Benton Harbor: The 1955 Comprehensive Plan, and The 1963 Community Renewal Plan.

The 1955 Comprehensive Plan was written as an overall planning document for the Twin Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, as well as their respective townships. The Comprehensive Plan discusses the area's recent growth, and anticipates further growth over the upcoming decades, so it focuses on the nature and location of that anticipated growth. This was to involve pushing future residential development almost entirely to the outer municipalities and out of the City of Benton Harbor. Further infrastructure and amenity improvements and expansions would be prioritized outside the city.

Development patterns across the country at this time focused on separating residential uses from all other types, specifically commercial and industrial development. It was also popular to keep single-family homes separate from all multi-family homes. There was also a desire to reduce population density so that people would be more spread out. This would mean expanding roadways so that the places where people worked and shopped would be separated from where people lived. Residential areas would also be spread out to make room for a higher number of single-family homes.

The federal Urban Renewal Program of the 1950s and 1960s subsidized plans and redevelopment efforts that had a radical impact on Benton Harbor's urban fabric. The 1963 Benton Harbor Community Renewal Plan outlined a series of projects to transform the city along modernist lines. Urban renewal was a practice whereby a city would acquire large amounts of property, demolish existing structures, and plan and sell the property for new construction. While many large-scale projects—including a full downtown freeway loop—never came to fruition, 121 acres of land containing 281 buildings were ultimately cleared, according to the 1989 General Development Plan.

The introduction of the Community Renewal Plan demonstrates a sentiment at the time that the city was experiencing the beginning of a "gradual deterioration" of its infrastructure, and that the city was almost completely built up, with little room for future growth. Large blocks of residential neighborhoods were considered to have "sub-standard" or "blighted" housing making up more than 50% of their housing stock. A neighborhood was also considered blighted if it included a large mix of housing stock or was in an area that would be more profitable if it were used for industry or commerce. The substandard housing was attributed to poor upkeep by absentee landlords, and a failure by the city to enforce minimum building codes. Based on the 1960 Census, 80% of Benton Harbor's nonwhite population lived in neighborhoods deemed "substandard" in the 1963 Plan.



A map produced in 1930 showing the topographical features of the Twin Cities region at the time.



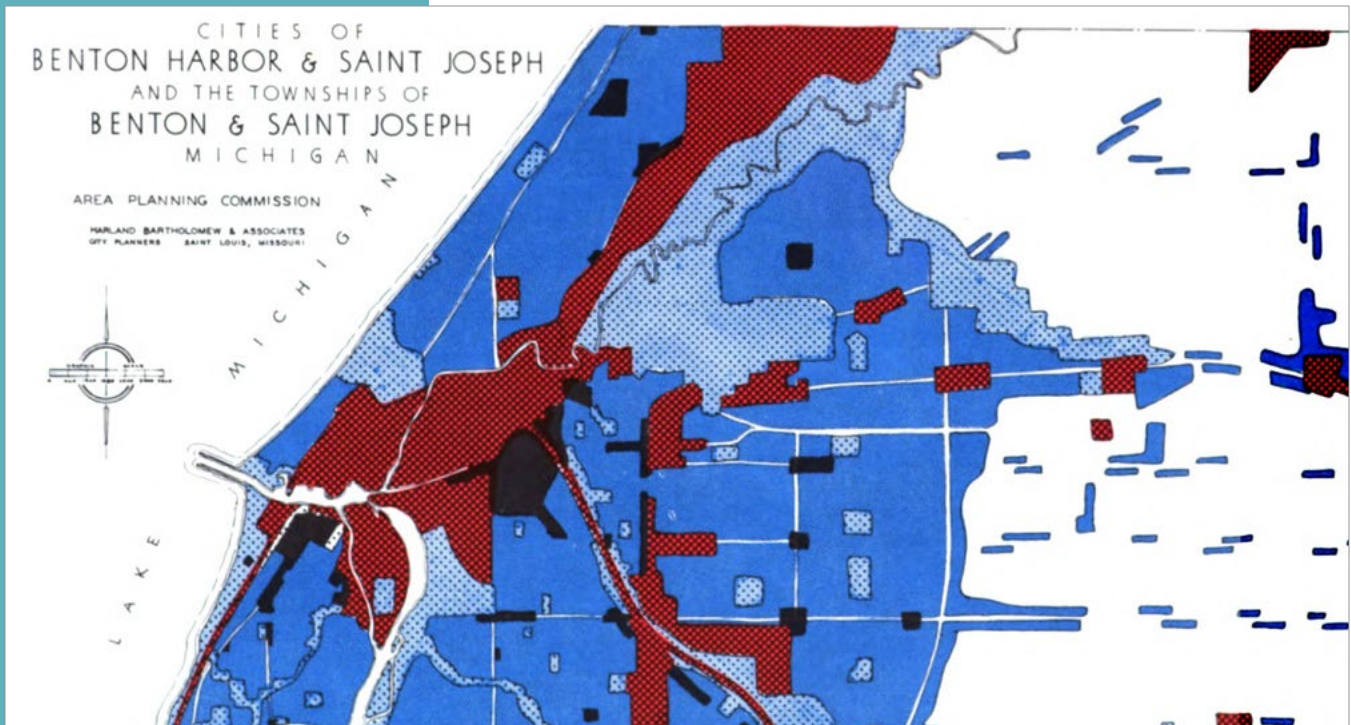
TYPICAL VIEWS IN "FLATS" AREA - PROPOSED FOR CLEARANCE UNDER PROGRAM

Certain areas of the city were slated for complete demolition for a variety of new projects. Highway expansions and new commercial and industrial zoning were planned to go over existing neighborhoods. The neighborhoods prioritized for redevelopment, the Flats and Little Brooklyn, were largely African American areas. While twelve areas were officially slated for redevelopment down the line, these were the first priority and had the greatest likelihood of being completed.

The Community Renewal Program intended large amounts of land to be used for industry and commercial development, as the city was interested in diversifying its commerce as manufacturing jobs were beginning to decline. The vision for Benton Harbor's future saw the city as a retail and tourist destination for residents living outside the region and underplayed a need to support the city's existing residents.

While previously, people had lived close to where they worked and shopped, each type of land use was now separated into different districts. People were expected to drive their car a few miles or more to get to work, and the streets were redesigned to allow people to cut through town quickly—meaning they were less likely to pull over to visit a local shop on the way. It also meant that those who couldn't afford transportation would be isolated from job centers. While it used to be common to have multi-generational homes, or split a house between two families, these more communal, sustainable, and affordable ways of living were seen as undesirable forms of blight.

Many projects planned for Benton Harbor were initiated, and then never finished—significant existing infrastructure was demolished and never fully replaced. Resident displacement from demolition pushed people into adjacent neighborhoods that were already overcrowding, or out of the city entirely. Benton Harbor's population grew over the course of the 1950s and peaked in 1960 with just over 19,100 residents.



The 1955 Comprehensive Plan

FAST FACTS

Areas Planned: Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, Benton Harbor Township, St. Joseph Township

Who contributed: City leadership of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, joint Planning Commission, Harland Bartholomew and Associates (St. Louis), Citizens Advisory Committee (appointed by local governments)

Planned Population by 1980: 19,400

Actual Population in 1980: 14,707

Goals of the Plan	Implemented
Coordinate planning in conjunction with St. Joseph and adjoining communities.	No
Implement zoning that prevents a "hodge-podge intermingling" of residential, commercial, industrial uses.	Yes
"Protect" single-family homes from other types of uses.	Yes
Reduce zoning for commercial and multiple family dwellings.	Yes
Build low-density suburbs in the Townships and lower density of neighborhoods in the Cities.	Yes
Increase the amount of commerce in the city by reducing residential area in Benton Harbor.	No
Construct US-31 Connection into downtown Benton Harbor.	No
Highway loop access around the City.	Yes



The 1963 Community Renewal Plan

Goals of the Plan	Implemented
Demolish multiple neighborhoods and re-zone for most profitable uses.	Partial
Subsidize developers purchasing land to incentivize development.	No
Eliminate "slums" and "blight".	No
Extend I-94 into Downtown Benton Harbor.	No
Relocate half of displaced residents.	No

FAST FACTS

Areas Planned: Benton Harbor

Who contributed: Benton Harbor Planning Director, Planning Commission, City Council, Chamber of Commerce, Harland Bartholomew and Associates (St. Louis)

Plan Focus: Capital Improvement Plan, Urban Renewal and Relocation Strategy

Planned Acres Demolished: 191

Actual Acres Demolished: 121

Planned Buildings Demolished: 985

Actual Buildings Demolished: 281



Late 20th Century

Industry began to exit Benton Harbor from the late 1960s onward, reflecting a trend taking place across the Midwest. As jobs left, residents followed—the city’s population shrank by roughly 5,000 people between 1960 and 1985. By 1980, nearly half of city residents were under 20 years of age, and it was estimated that only one in three city residents were employed. Likewise, from 1970 to 1985, unemployment grew by 25% and poverty by 20%. The State of Michigan identified Benton Harbor as its “most distressed community” in 1982.

While the decline in population and income impacted the viability of longtime local businesses, the regional pattern of suburbanization also took a heavy toll. The Orchards Mall opened in Benton Township in 1979, drawing longtime businesses away from downtown Benton Harbor. The loss of businesses and residents through the 1980s meant that Benton Harbor faced the headwinds of declining infrastructure, the need to keep property taxes at a high level, and an aging building stock.

Additionally, a great deal of the housing stock was renter-occupied and poorly maintained by absentee landlords, and there was a great deal of overcrowding. According to The 1989 General Development Plan, overcrowding was in part due to the demolition of much residential housing by Urban Renewal projects and a failure to adequately provide for relocation.

In response to these conditions, The 1989 Benton Harbor General Development Plan focused on strategies to attract businesses and jobs. The General Development Plan was written in conjunction with a new General Development Ordinance.

The plan focused on attracting new businesses to the city through tax incentives and improving infrastructure with Community Development Block Grants. It planned to improve housing stock by offering low-cost land and loans for rehabilitation and improvement of existing structures. The plan also suggested expanding building inspections and creating a grant fund for home improvement to deal with deteriorating housing. Additionally, the Plan encouraged increasing services for citizens, especially young people in the area, though funding sources for such programs were scarce compared to those for business development at the time. The plan anticipated continued decline in Benton Harbor’s population but expressed a desire to moderate this loss.

Despite ongoing challenges, the General Development Plan expressed optimism for potential new commercial development within the city, citing the creation of the Downtown Development Authority and the designation of Michigan’s first Enterprise Zone. It also highlighted the upcoming reopening of the Ship Canal as a promising opportunity for new jobs and investment.

C. Population Projections.....40

D. Departmental and Agency Plans, Programs, and Strategies

 1. Economic Development.....41

 2. Community Development.....43

 3. Parks and Recreation.....44

 4. Public Safety.....46

 a. Police

 b. Fire and Inspections

US Department of Commerce
 NOAA Coastal Services Center Library
 2234 South Hobson Avenue
 Charleston, SC 29405-2413

The 1989 Benton Harbor General Development Plan tried to address some of the consequences that occurred as a result of the policies introduced in the 1955 and 1963 plans.

The 1989 General Development Plan

Goals of the Plan	Implemented
Reduce the number of zoning districts to make the zoning ordinance less complicated	Yes
Implement a Home Repair Grant Program	Yes
Harbor Commission should apply for more control over harbor area from the Army Corps of Engineers.	No
Encourage development of a tourist destination along the lakeshore.	Yes
Increase Code Enforcement.	No
Offer low-cost loans to incentivize rehabilitation and development.	No

FAST FACTS

Areas Planned: Benton Harbor

Who contributed: Benton Harbor Planning Division, Planning Commission

21st Century—Present Day

The economic development strategies proposed in the 1989 plan did not help with Benton Harbor's shrinking population. Benton Harbor continued to struggle to attract significant job creation and the population continued to decline. Shortly after the year 2000, the City dipped below 10,000 residents. While the period of population decline is detrimental to neighborhood cohesion and City capacity, the rate of population decline in the city has become more gradual over the years.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, several improvements were made to the downtown district, and a small arts-based community began to anchor a portion of the district. The creation of a Downtown Development Authority supported new business development and infrastructure improvements to attract new businesses.

Benton Harbor was under emergency management from 2010 to 2014. In 2010, Harbor Shores Golf Course was opened, and The Inn at Harbor Shores was completed in 2014. Adjacent to Jean Klock Park, Harbor Shores is now a major golfing destination, and frequently hosts the Senior PGA Championship as well as other golf tournaments.

Mercy Memorial Hospital, the only hospital in Benton Harbor, was demolished in 2016, having been vacant for a number of years prior. While many were sad to see the hospital go, it is now being planned to provide a mixed-income housing development in a critical part of the city. After struggling with extremely high levels of lead in the water supply, a Benton Harbor Community Water Council was formed. The council found the high lead levels, educated the public on how to protect themselves, and advocated for support from the State. After years and months of petitioning state and federal officials for funding, by the end of 2022, 99% of lead service lines were replaced in Benton Harbor—an enormous success.

The 2011 Master Plan was most distinct from previous planning documents in how it detailed citizen input. Previous plans used little to no input from the general public to shape the future of Benton Harbor. Not only was public input utilized in creating the 2011 Master Plan, but direct quotes from the different community engagement events were included in the Plan. This public direction is provided to shape the goals and visions of the Plan. While there was a wide variety of input, and not everyone agreed on every topic, there was a consensus that the City should work for the residents of Benton Harbor first. Employment and business development were major concerns, as well as deteriorating housing stock and crime rates. The people expressed a deep care for their city, and showed that the people of Benton Harbor are willing to be engaged and put in the work to improve the city if they could only have the resources necessary to do so. The 2011 Plan focused on large-scale development opportunities to bring further tax revenue into the City, particularly waterfront redevelopment along the St. Joseph River. New mixed-use districts were added near downtown and along the River. The Plan also suggested smaller-scale programs to provide community benefit.



The 2011 City of Benton Harbor Master Plan

Goals of the Plan	Implemented
Establish an industrial recruitment program to invite job creators to Benton Harbor.	No
Create a network of “neighborhood greens” on vacant parcels to improve open spaces.	No
Improve the Arts District and zone it as a mixed-use area.	Yes / Partial
Establish a Benton Harbor Museum	No
Support Dial-A-Ride to provide public transit.	Yes

FAST FACTS

Areas Planned: Benton Harbor

Who contributed: Benton Harbor Planning Commission, Master Plan Advisory Committee, Houseal Lavigne Associates (Chicago)

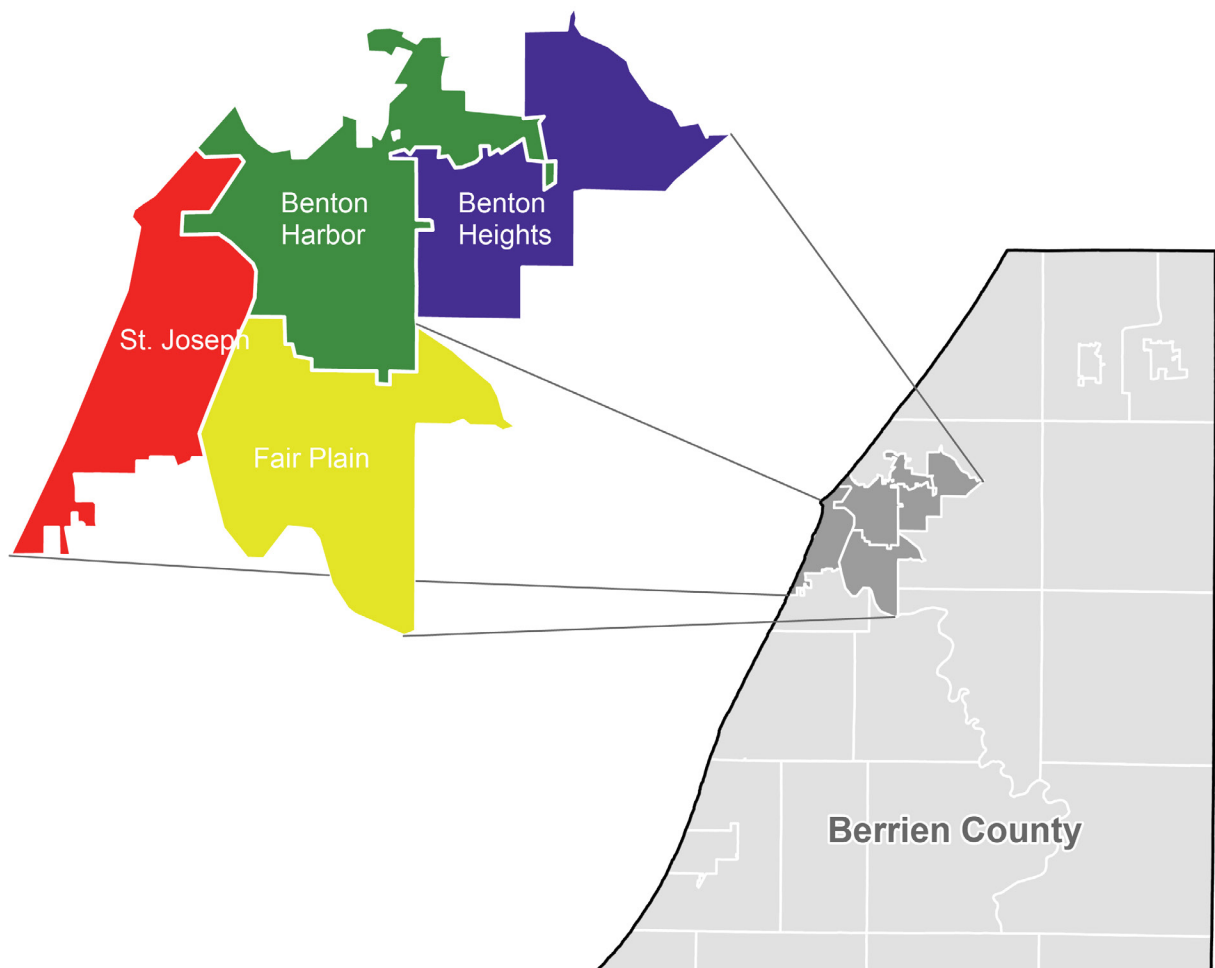
Community Engagement: 5 public engagement workshops, online questionnaires, DIY community workshops

Demographic Analysis

The following sections compare key metrics in Benton Harbor and some of its neighboring communities. The City of St. Joseph and the Census designated urbanized areas of Fair Plan and Benton Heights were used for the purpose of geographical scale comparison to the City of Benton Harbor. Benton Heights is located in Benton Charter Township and Fair Plain is located in both Benton Charter Township and St. Joseph Charter Township. These metrics can illustrate important facts about the City and its residents, and can be compared with neighboring communities to understand the unique qualities and challenges of the City. This data can assist in setting goals and tracking progress toward those goals over time. Data alone does not show a complete picture of Benton Harbor. The stories and experiences of the City's residents shape this plan. But this information can serve as a tool for implementing the City's values and finding ways to improve.

The data in the following sections is primarily sourced from the US Decennial Census and the American Community Survey, both collected by the US Census Bureau. The Decennial Census is collected every 10 years and was last collected in 2020, and provides some basic information about the population. Not all of the data from the 2020 Census was released at the writing of this Community Plan. The American Community Survey is a yearly calculation which creates estimates of more detailed statistics, and was also used for much of the data provided in this chapter.

Map 6. Benton Harbor–St Joseph Urban Area Map



Population and Demographics

Population is one of the most important metrics a city needs to consider. The number of people and households within the city impacts the level of services that will need to be provided to those residents. When a city's population goes up, it will need to build more infrastructure to support that population. When a city's population goes down, the infrastructure might be too expensive for the limited taxes the city will be able to collect. In the 2020 Census, the population of Benton Harbor was 9,103 residents. While this is a reduction from previous years, the rate of population loss in the City has begun to stabilize after decades of outmigration.

Table 11 demonstrates the population change of Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, Fair Plain, and Benton Heights. Fair Plain and Benton Heights are urbanized areas of Benton Township—they are included in the analysis because they are more similar to the City than the more remote areas of Benton Township. The community with the most population loss was Benton Heights, which saw a 10% loss. Fair Plain lost the fewest residents, but still suffered a 3% population loss. These communities, in combination with the Twin Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, suffered an overall 7% loss in population from 2010 to 2020.

Table 11. Population Change

	Benton Harbor	St. Joseph	Fair Plain	Benton Heights	Combined Metropolitan Area
Population (2010)	10,038	8,365	7,631	4,084	30,118
Population (2020)	9,103	7,856	7,402	3,652	28,013
Percent Change (2010-2020)	-9.3%	-6.1%	-3.0%	-10.6%	-7.0%

Source: 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census

The number of households in Benton Harbor decreased at roughly the same rate as the number of residents of the City. This means the average household size remained about the same, at 2.73 people per household. St. Joseph had the smallest average household size in the metropolitan area.

HISTORIC POPULATION TRENDS

Benton Harbor's population peaked in 1960 with just over 19,000 residents. The current population is almost 50% of that figure. Comparably, St. Joseph decreased by about 30% and Benton Heights decreased by about 50% since 1970. Benton Harbor's population decreased most sharply from 1960 to 1970. While shrinkage has continued, it has become more gradual over time. The rate of population loss has decreased each decade, which is a promising sign of stabilization.

Table 12. Population History, 1950-2020

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Benton Harbor	18,612	19,136	16,481	14,707	12,818	11,182	10,038	9,103
St. Joseph	10,123	11,755	11,042	9,622	9,214	8,789	8,365	7,856
Fair Plain*	X	X	X	5,057	8,051	7,828	7,631	7,402
Benton Heights*	X	X	8,067	6,787	5,465	5,458	4,084	3,652
Berrien County	114,683	149,865	163,940	171,276	161,378	162,453	156,813	154,316

* X denotes lack of data due to Census-Designated Place (CDP) establishment after Decennial Census count.

Figure 6. Population Change, Benton Harbor-St. Joseph Urbanized Area, 1950-2020

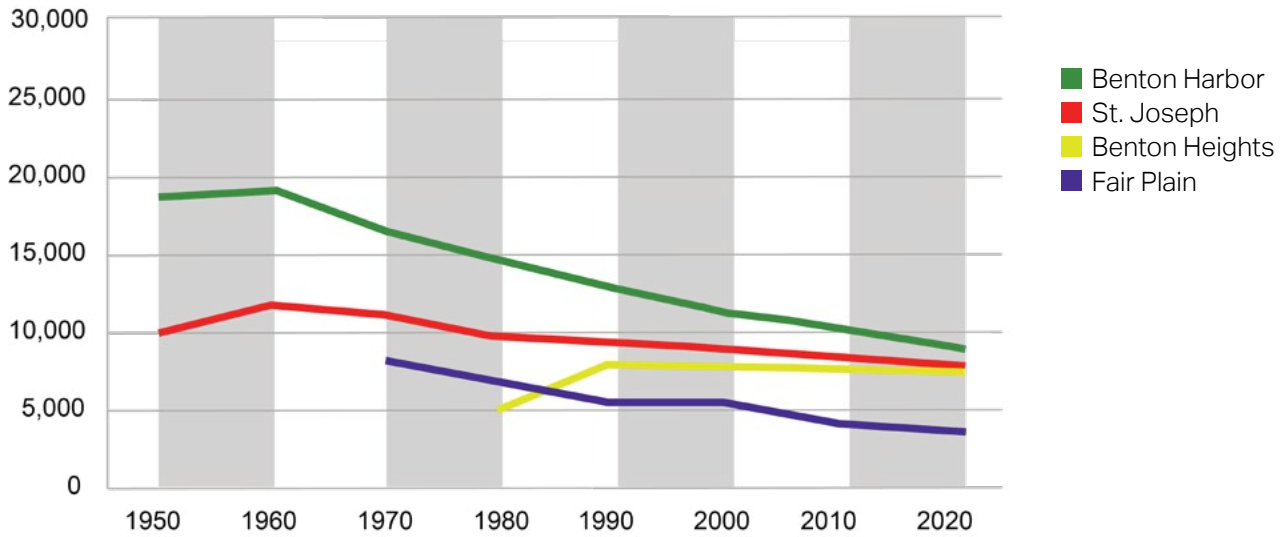
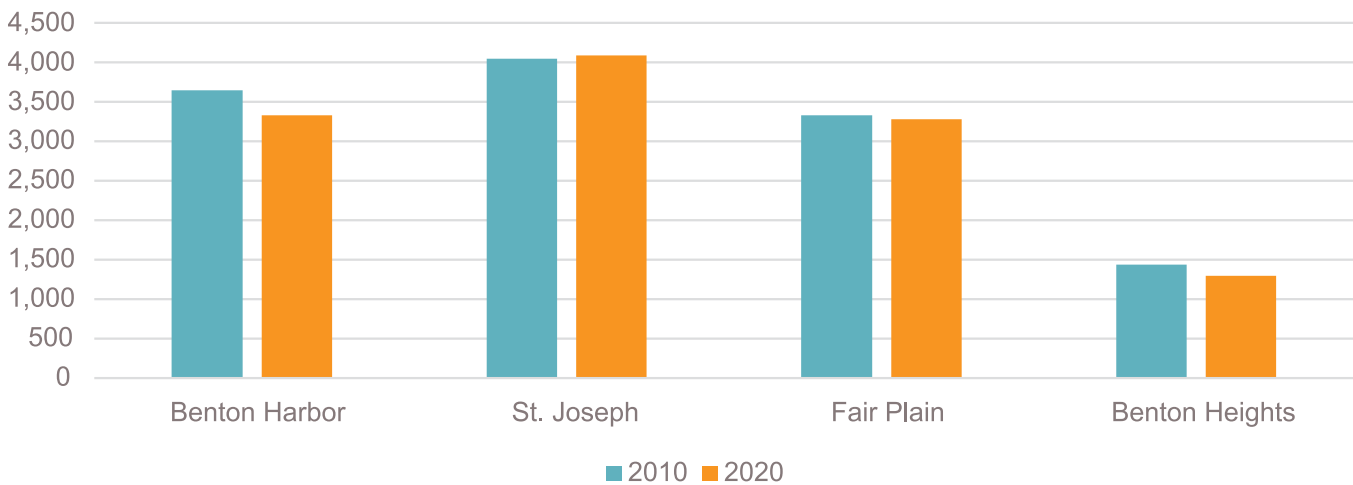


Table 13. Households

	Benton Harbor	St. Joseph	Fair Plain	Benton Heights	Combined Metropolitan Area
Number of Households (2010)	3,650	4,053	3,336	1,440	12,479
Number of Households (2020)	3,329	4,088	3,281	1,298	11,996
Percent Change (2010-2020)	-8.8%	0.9%	-1.6%	-9.9%	-3.9%
Average Household Size (2020)	2.73	1.92	2.26	2.81	2.34

Source: 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census

Figure 7. Number of Households in Benton Harbor and Comparison Communities, 2010 to 2020



AGE GROUPS

Different age groups have different needs and wants that can affect how the City should distribute resources. Communities with more children, for instance, will need to invest more in schools, family services, and playgrounds than communities that have a higher proportion of senior citizens. It is also useful in understanding how the city might grow. If a population has a higher number of young adults, you would expect to see more children born in the next few years than if the population was skewed toward older generations. Table 14 shows the makeup of the different age groups in Benton Harbor, using categories defined by the US census.

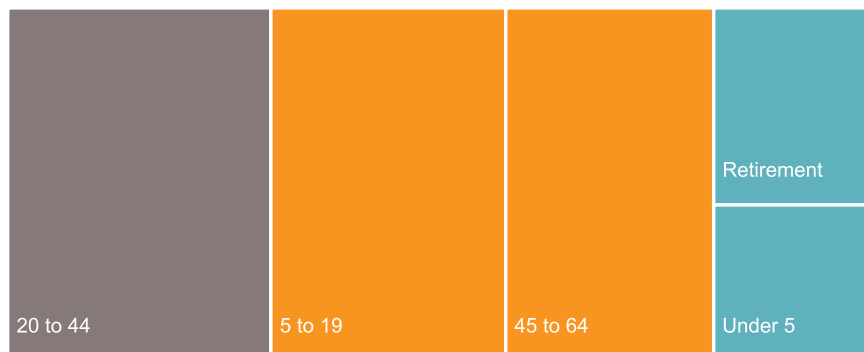
Table 14. Age Groups

Age	Benton Harbor	
Pre-School Aged - Under 5	764	8.4%
School-Aged - 5 to 19	2,451	26.9%
Family Forming - 20 to 44	2,750	30.2%
Mature Families - 45 to 64	2,171	23.8%
Senior Citizens—65+	967	10.6%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census

As demonstrated in Table 14, children made up the largest percentage of Benton Harbor’s population. Children under 5 and residents under 20 made up a combined 35.3% of the population. Adults ages 20 to 44, the age group most likely to have younger children and to be starting families, were 30.2% of the City’s population. This group should also make up the majority of the City’s workforce and is a very important indicator of future growth potential. The other half of the workforce was Mature Adults, those age 45 to 60—these individuals represented 23.8% of the population. Senior Citizens made up 10.6% of the population. Given that in past decades, Benton Harbor has struggled with its balance between dependent and working-age residents, it is positive that the primary working age group of 20 to 64 years old now makes up more than 50% of the population. The tree map below includes a box proportional to the size of each age group. This demonstrates how large the population groups are relative to each other.

Figure 8. 2020 Benton Harbor Age Groups



POPULATION PROJECTION

In order to project the population in the future, a Cohort-Component Population Projection was used. Cohort-Component Population Projections are developed using the following methodology:

Cohort-Component: The population is divided into ten-year age cohorts, using US Census data. At each ten-year interval, individual age cohorts are moved up the ladder. For instance, the group that was 30-40 years old in 2010 became the 40-50-year-olds in 2020, minus those who pass away during that time frame based on the mortality rate for their age group. To calculate the number of people aged 0-10, the population of women of childbearing age was calculated and a 10-year birthrate per thousand from the Michigan Department of Community Health was applied to predict the number of births. By using the average death and birth rates, we predict how many people would be living in the city in 2020, if no one had moved in or out.

Net Migration Calculation: To account for migration, the population projection also includes a net migration factor. The net migration factor was calculated by comparing the 2020 population we predicted from 2010 if there hadn't been any migration, to the actual population in 2020, which we now know. The Cohort-Component Analysis predicted a city population of 11,500, but the actual population was 9,103. Therefore, the analysis estimates a net loss of 2,397 people from the City who would otherwise be living there if people had not moved away. 2,397 represents a -21% net migration rate. The following chart demonstrates what the population of Benton Harbor may be over the next 20 years if this migration rate were to remain the same, worsen, or improve over time.

Table 15. Net Migration

Projected Population at Different Migration Rates		
	2030 Population	2040 Population
Increased Outmigration (-30%)	7,625	6,394
Current Migration Rate (-21%)	8,429	7,803
Reduced Outmigration (-10%)	9,412	9,713
Stabilized Population (0%)	10,305	11,628
Marginal Growth (5%)	10,751	12,650
High Growth (10%)	11,198	13,714
Induced Growth through Middle Home Investment Strategies		
	2030 (+50% from 2020 Census, 9,103)	2040 (+100% from 2020 Census, 9,103)
Induced Growth Target Double Population by 2040	13,655	18,206

Social and Economic Characteristics

RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Since the mid-20th century, Benton Harbor has been a majority-African American community. In 2020, African Americans made up 83% of the City’s population. White residents made up the second-largest group, at 7.5% of the population. The remaining 10% were multi-racial, Asian, or identified as “other”. About 5% of the population was made up of Hispanics of any race.

Table 16. Racial/Ethnic Composition of Benton Harbor

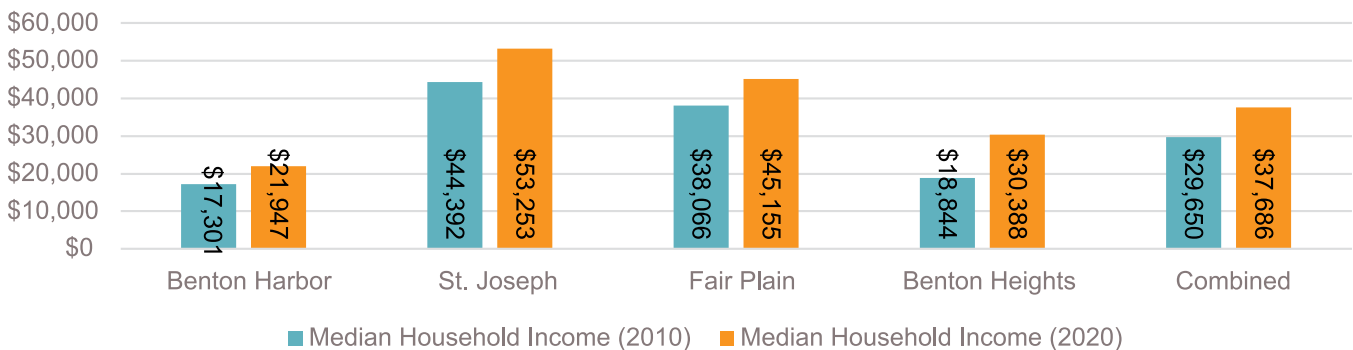
Race	Total	Percentage
African American	7,569	83.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	24	0.3%
Asian	13	0.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	5	0.1%
White	679	7.5%
Other Race	44	0.5%
Multiple Races	302	3.3%
Hispanic or Latino	467	5.1%
Total Population	9,103	--

Source: 2020 Decennial Census

HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND POVERTY LEVELS

The median household income is the midpoint of all incomes in Benton Harbor. The median household income for Benton Harbor in 2020 was just under \$22,000 per year. In other words, this means that there were just as many households making less than \$22,000 as there were making more than that amount. The median household income in Benton Harbor was the lowest of its neighbors. St. Joseph had the highest median household income in the metropolitan area, at about \$53,000 per year. The State of Michigan’s median household income in 2020 was \$59,000 per year. The St. Joseph—Benton Harbor area is dealing with below-standard income levels, an indication of significant challenge for the entire metro area. However, household incomes have risen more quickly than the rate of inflation, showing a positive trend moving forward.

Figure 9. Median Household Income in Benton Harbor and Comparison Communities, 2010-2020



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, US Census Bureau



Table 17. Median Household Income in Benton Harbor and Comparison Communities, 2010 to 2020

	Benton Harbor	St. Joseph	Fair Plain	Benton Heights	Combined Metropolitan Area
2010	\$17,301	\$44,392	\$38,066	\$18,844	\$29,650
2020	\$21,947	\$53,253	\$45,155	\$30,388	\$37,686
Percent Change (2010-2020)	26.9%	20.0%	18.6%	61.3%	27.1%

Source: American Community Survey 2020 5-year estimates

Beyond median income, the following table shows the percentage of the population living in poverty by age group. The poverty threshold (the maximum income per year that designates a household as being in poverty) is dependent on the number of adults, children, and seniors in a household. Generally speaking, in 2021 the Census uses a poverty threshold of \$13,788 for an individual adult and \$17,529 for two adults, with an additional \$1,375 for each child in the household. In Benton Harbor in 2021, more than 55.6% of children were living below the poverty level and about 40% of all adults.

Table 18. 2021 Poverty Statistics

% Living in Poverty	
% Children Below the Poverty Level	55.6%
% Adults Below the Poverty Level	38.7%
% Senior Citizens Below the Poverty Level	42.8%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

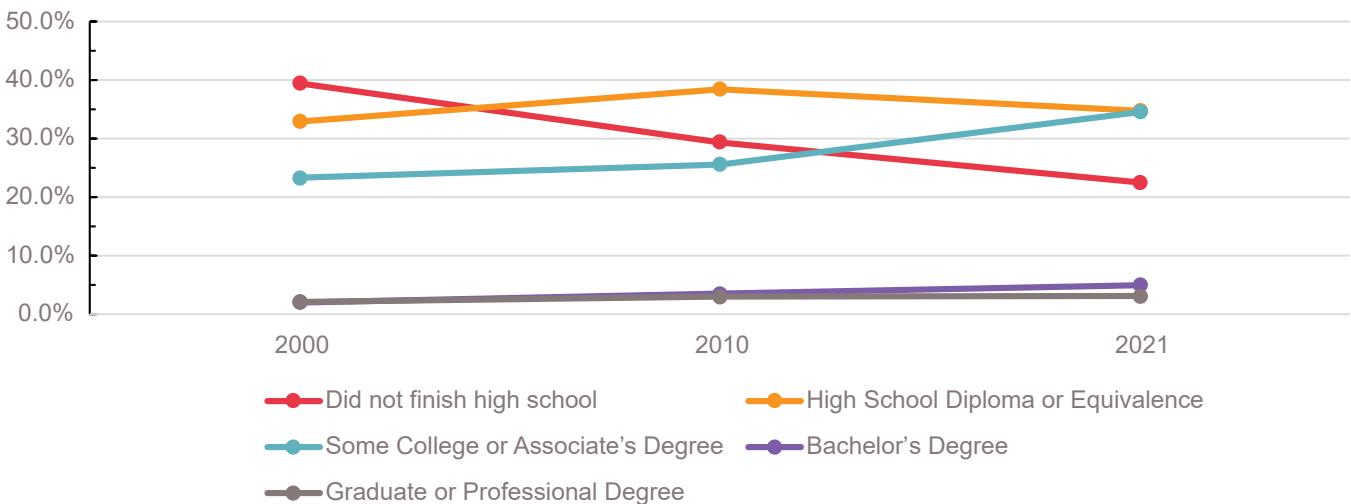
Benton Harbor has seen positive trends in educational attainment over the past 20 years. The following table shows the highest level of education of Benton Harbor residents over 25 years old in 2000, 2010, and 2021. According to the most recent data from 2021, about 78% of Benton Harbor residents over age 25 had completed their high school diploma, up from 60% in 2000. More residents attended at least some college, training, or received an associate's degree, though bachelor's degree attainment increased more slowly. Continuing and expanding programs to provide educational opportunities and access can help to continue these trends.

Table 19. 2000 to 2020 Educational Attainment

Highest completed level of education	2000		2010		2021	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Did not finish high school	2,233	39.5%	1,701	29.4%	1,309	22.5%
High School Diploma or Equivalence	1,864	33.0%	2,228	38.5%	2,024	34.8%
Some College or Associate's Degree	1,318	23.3%	1,481	25.6%	2,012	34.6%
Bachelor's Degree	116	2.1%	203	3.5%	291	5.0%
Graduate or Professional Degree	122	2.2%	174	3.0%	180	3.1%
High School diploma or higher	3,420	60.5%	4,085	70.6%	4,507	77.5%
Total population 25 years or older	5,653		5,786		5,816	

Source: 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

Figure 10. 2000 to 2021 Educational Attainment





DISABILITY STATUS

Individuals with disabilities may need some unique accommodation or support to be able to go about their normal days. All cities should plan with people of all abilities in mind, and new construction must always comply with the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The following table shows the number of people in Benton Harbor living with a disability or impairment of some kind in 2021. There is often an assumption that there are very few disabled people, so making accommodations for them is catering to a very small group. The table below shows that the number of people with disabilities may be much higher than the majority of the population is aware. Almost 15% of Benton Harbor residents were living with a disability in 2021. This is on par with the overall state population: 14% Michiganders were disabled in 2021. The largest group of individuals was living with an ambulatory, or walking, difficulty.

Table 20. 2021 Population with Disabilities

Type of Disability	Benton Harbor Residents	
Hearing Difficulty	149	1.6%
Vision Difficulty	197	2.2%
Cognitive Difficulty	519	5.7%
Ambulatory (Walking) Difficulty	938	10.3%
Self-Care Difficulty	401	4.4%
Independent Living Difficulty*	549	8.3%
Total with a disability**	1,328	14.6%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

*Percentage is of population over 18 years of age.

**Some individuals may have more than one difficulty which qualifies them as disabled, which is why the total is not a summation of all above numbers.

VEHICLE ACCESS

Vehicle access is important to show how many people will need alternative forms of transportation to get around. In Benton Harbor, 27% of households owned no vehicles. Comparatively, in the same year, 6.7% of St. Joseph, 6.3% of Berrien County, and 6.1% of Michigan households own no vehicle. Many residents rely on their friends and family for ride sharing when they can't take a bus or another mode of transportation to their daily activities. A high number of households without their own vehicles indicates a need for more alternative transportation options.

Table 21. 2021 Vehicle Access

Vehicles available	Number of Households	Percentage
No vehicles available	1090	27.0%
1 vehicle available	1974	48.8%
2 vehicles available	739	18.3%
3 or more vehicles available	238	5.9%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

INTERNET AND COMPUTER ACCESS

Table 22. Computers and Internet by Household

	Households	Percentage
At least one computer in the home	3,323	82.2%
Access to in-home internet connection	2,857	70.7%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

In today's world, it is nearly impossible to fully participate in daily life without some kind of access to a computer and internet connection at home. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual communications are at an all-time high. In 2021, an estimated 29% of households in Benton Harbor did not have an in-home internet connection.

WORKFORCE AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

In 2021, there were just under 7,000 people of working age living in Benton Harbor. Of that group, 63% were in the labor force—meaning that they were either employed or unemployed and actively seeking work. The remaining 37%, or 4,374 people, were not in the labor force. Individuals might be out of the workforce because they do not want to work, or because they want to work but are no longer actively seeking work. Some who do not want a job might be students, those who stay home out of choice or necessity, and those who for any other reason have no interest in working. Those who have stopped looking may struggle to find a job due to their qualifications, ability to travel, or personal conditions that make it difficult to find work such as disability or criminal history, as well as because of a lack of available job opportunities. There have been fluctuations in the labor force over the past twenty years, some of which could be attributed to the impacts of the Great Recession. Notably however, the labor force was higher in 2021 than it was in 2000.

Within the 2021 labor force, there was still a considerably high unemployment rate of 18.9%. For reference, the statewide unemployment rate for the same year was 6.9%, and the countywide unemployment rate was 5.8%. The 2021 unemployment rate was 2% larger than the rate in 2000.

Table 23. Employment Status, 2000 to 2021

	2000		2010		2021	
Working Age Population (16 and Over)	7,308		7,350		6,984	
In Labor Force	4,248	58.1%	3,988	54.3%	4,374	62.6%
Not in Labor Force	3,060	41.9%	3,362	45.7%	2,610	37.4%
Employed	3,557	(83.7%)	2,665	(66.8%)	3,546	(81.1%)
Unemployed	691	(16.3%)	1,323	(33.2%)	828	(18.9%)

Source: 2000 Decennial Census, US Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey

INDUSTRY BY SECTOR

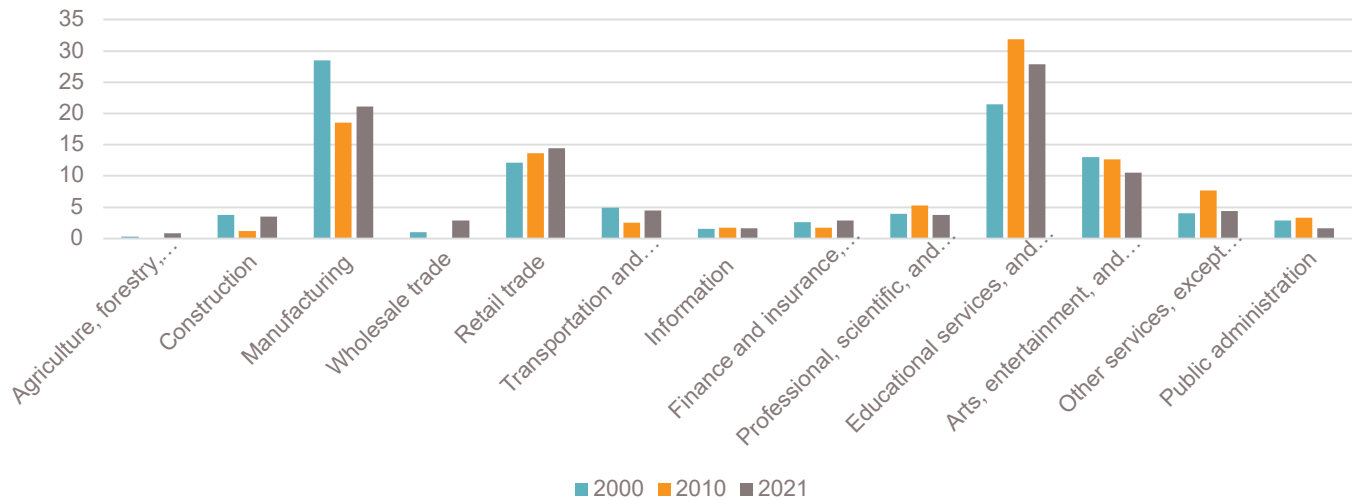
Table 24. Employment Industry Sector 2000 to 2021

	2000	2010	2021
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.3%	0%	0.8%
Construction	3.8%	1.2%	3.5%
Manufacturing	28.5%	18.5%	21.1%
Wholesale trade	1%	0%	2.9%
Retail trade	12.1%	13.6%	14.4%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	4.9%	2.5%	4.5%
Information	1.5%	1.7%	1.6%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	2.6%	1.7%	2.9%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	3.9%	5.3%	3.8%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	21.5%	31.9%	27.9%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	13%	12.7%	10.5%
Other services, except public administration	4%	7.7%	4.4%
Public administration	2.9%	3.3%	1.6%
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	3,557	2,665	3,546

Source: 2000 Decennial Census, 2010 American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

Manufacturing and educational services have been the top two industries employing residents of Benton Harbor since the 2000 census. At the 2010 census, educational services overtook manufacturing as the number one industry in the City, and it made up 27.9% of employment in 2021. Retail trade and arts and entertainment also make up significant percentages, with retail employing 14.4% of employees in 2021.

Figure 11. Employment Industry Sector 2000 to 2021



Source: 2000 Decennial Census, 2010 American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

OCCUPATION

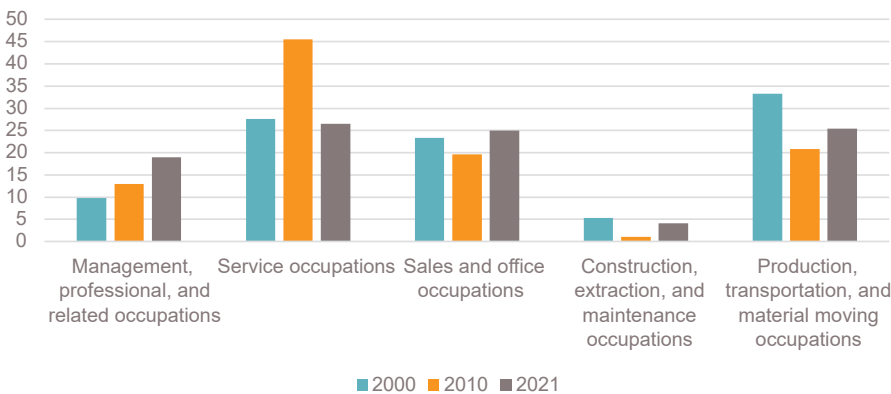
Table 25. Occupation, 2000 to 2021

	2000	2010	2021
Management, professional, and related occupations	9.8%	13%	19%
Service occupations	27.6%	45.5%	26.5%
Sales and office occupations	23.4%	19.6%	25%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	5.3%	1.1%	4.1%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	33.3%	20.8%	25.4%
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	3557	2665	3546

Source: 2000 Decennial Census, 2010 American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

In 2021, approximately 25% of the workforce was represented in each of the top three categories of service, sales, and production. An additional 19% worked in management and other professional occupations. Notably, only 4% of Benton Harbor’s residents worked in construction, which represents a potential growth sector as the City looks to increase it’s tax base through new housing development. The representation of occupational data remained fairly consistent since the 2000 census, with one notable trend: the percentage of people working in production and transportation declined by nearly 10%, while the percentage of people working in management increased by nearly 10%. This trend aligns with the similar one noted in the Industry by Sector analysis, which reports a shift from manufacturing to educational services.

Figure 12. Occupation, 2000 to 2021



Source: 2000 Decennial Census, 2010 American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau



COMMUTE PATTERNS

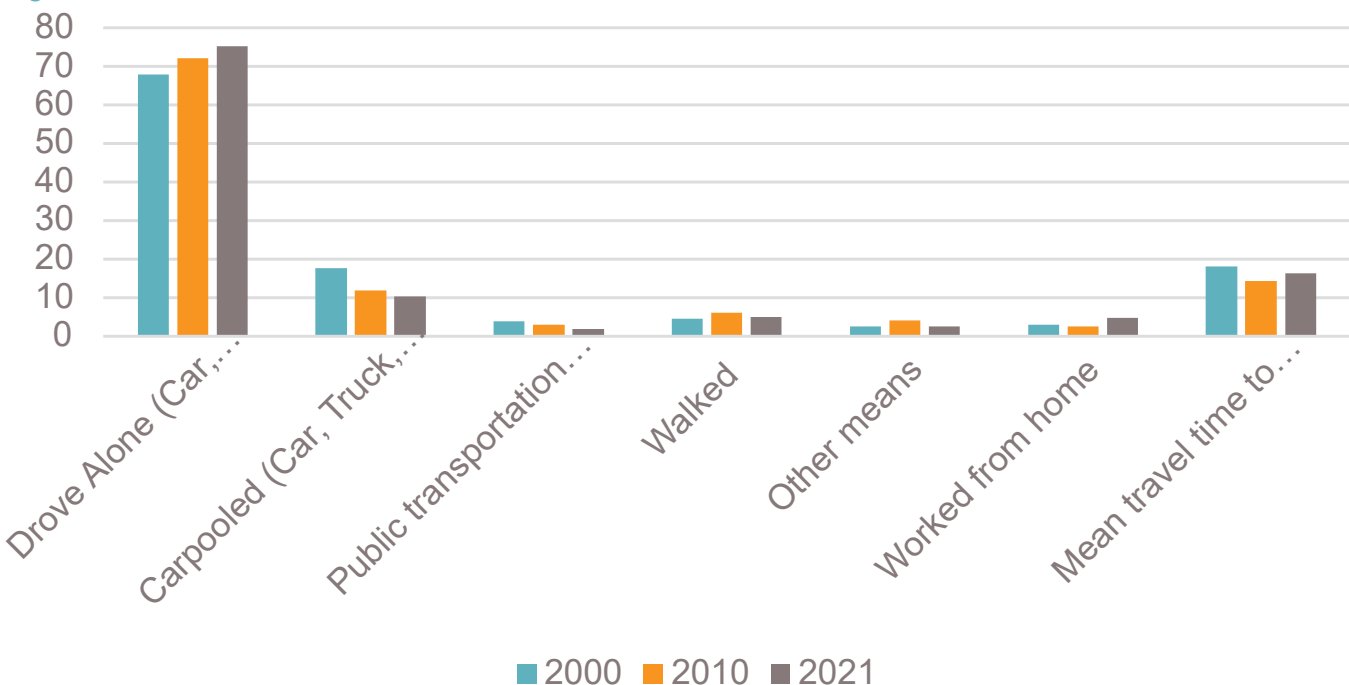
Table 26. Commute Method and Time

	2000	2010	2021
Drove Alone (Car, Truck, or Van)	67.9%	72.2%	75.4%
Carpooled (Car, Truck, or Van)	17.8%	11.9%	10.4%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	4%	3%	1.9%
Walked	4.7%	6.2%	5.1%
Other means	2.6%	4.2%	2.5%
Worked from home	3.1%	2.6%	4.8%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	18.1	14.4	16.4
Workers 16 years and over	3,420	2,665	3,433

Source: 2000 Decennial Census, 2010 American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

The overwhelming majority of Benton Harbor residents drove alone to work, at more that 75%. The drive alone percentage increased by 8% since 2000, while the number of people carpooling decreased by the same factor to 10% - showing that those who were carpooling switched to driving alone. While the percent of people using transit was only 4% in 2000, that number fell to under 2% in 2021. This could be a temporary ridership decline due to the impacts of COVID-19. It's also notable that 5% of Benton Harbor residents walk to work, a fairly consistent number and that the number of people working from home nearly doubled between 2010 and 2021, to 4.8%. While the number who drive alone can indicate some levels of individual success, improving access to public transportation and other modes of transportation would lower the cost of commuting as well as improve local air quality.

Figure 13. Commute Method and Time



Source: 2000 Decennial Census, 2010 American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

Housing Data

VACANCY

According to the 2020 census, there were a total of 3,795 housing units in the City of Benton Harbor. Out of these units, 12.3% were vacant. This figure is lower than neighboring communities and the overall county.

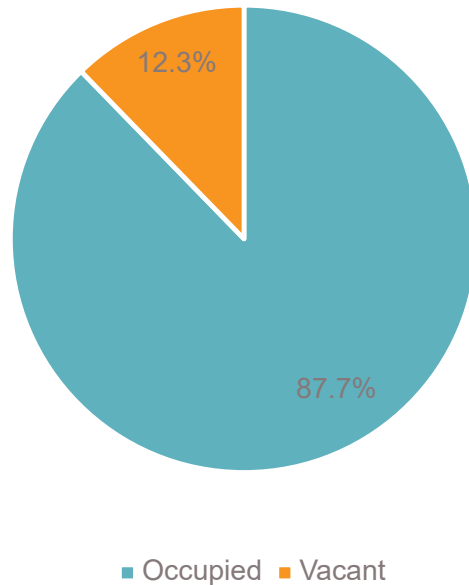
Housing vacancy is an indicator of economic health as well as the nature of the market. All communities should have some housing vacancy to allow for new residents to move in, and for current residents to have options if they would like to move within the city. Too high of a vacancy rate indicates lower demand for the current housing stock. Vacant homes are also at risk of disrepair and can be a strain on the city's infrastructure. St. Joseph is more popular for temporary vacation homes than Benton Harbor, which partially explains their higher vacancy rate. The total vacancy rate for the State of Michigan the same year was 11.7%, so Benton Harbor was consistent with statewide trends.

Table 27. 2020 Housing Occupancy

	Benton Harbor		St. Joseph	Berrien County	Michigan
	Number	%	%	%	%
Occupied Units	3,329	87.7%	83.7%	83.3%	88.3%
Vacant Units	466	12.3%	16.3%	16.7%	11.7%
Total Units	3,795	--	--	--	--

Source: 2000 Decennial Census, 2010 American Community Survey, 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

Figure 14. Housing Vacancy





HOUSING TENURE (HOME OWNERSHIP)

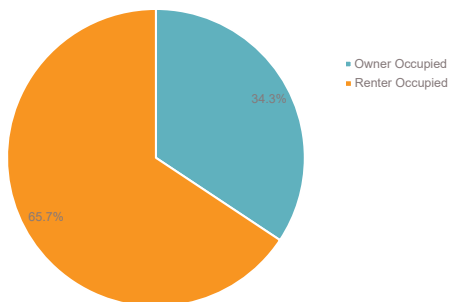
Housing tenure refers to ownership structure of a unit: whether the resident of the unit is a renter, or owns the property themselves. In Benton Harbor, 34% of housing units were owner-occupied. This is a relatively low rate of owner occupation compared to neighboring communities. Homeownership is a wealth-building tool and an indicator of the economic health of a municipality’s residents. Policies to help increase rates of homeownership can be considered for long-term planning. Renters are more likely to be low-income, so the number of renters is consistent with the median area income. The number of renters also indicates the kinds of services the City may need to provide to support them. In the shorter-term, policies should be developed to support quality of life for renters, given that they make up the majority of the City’s population.

Table 28. Housing Tenure

Housing Tenure Compared	Benton Harbor		Benton Heights		Fair Plain		St. Joseph	
Owner Occupied	1,387	34.3%	821	54.2%	2145	68.5%	2446	62.0%
Renter Occupied	2,654	65.7%	693	45.8%	988	31.5%	1500	38.0%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census, US Census Bureau

Figure 15. Housing Tenure



HOME VALUES

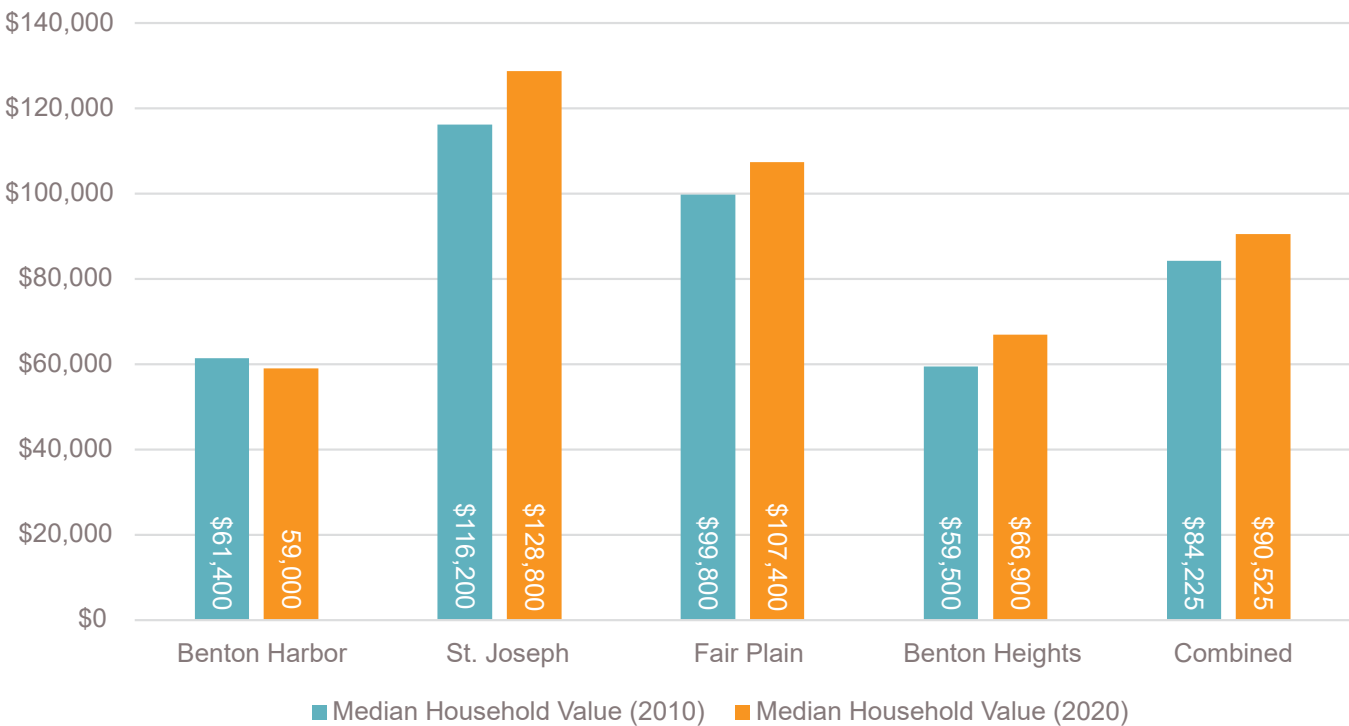
The following table demonstrates home values in Benton Harbor and the comparison communities. The numbers reflect the median home value of owner-occupied housing units only, and do not include properties for rent. From 2010 to 2020, home values in Benton Harbor decreased slightly, while they increased in all neighboring communities.

Table 29. Median Home Value Compared

	Benton Harbor	St. Joseph	Fair Plain	Benton Heights	Combined Metropolitan Area
2010	\$61,400	\$116,200	\$99,800	\$59,500	\$84,225
2020	\$59,000	\$128,800	\$107,400	\$66,900	\$90,525
Percent Change (2010-2020)	-3.9%	10.8%	7.6%	12.4%	7.5%

Source: American Community Survey 2020 5-year estimates, Value of Owner-Occupied Housing

Figure 16. Median Home Value, 2010-2020





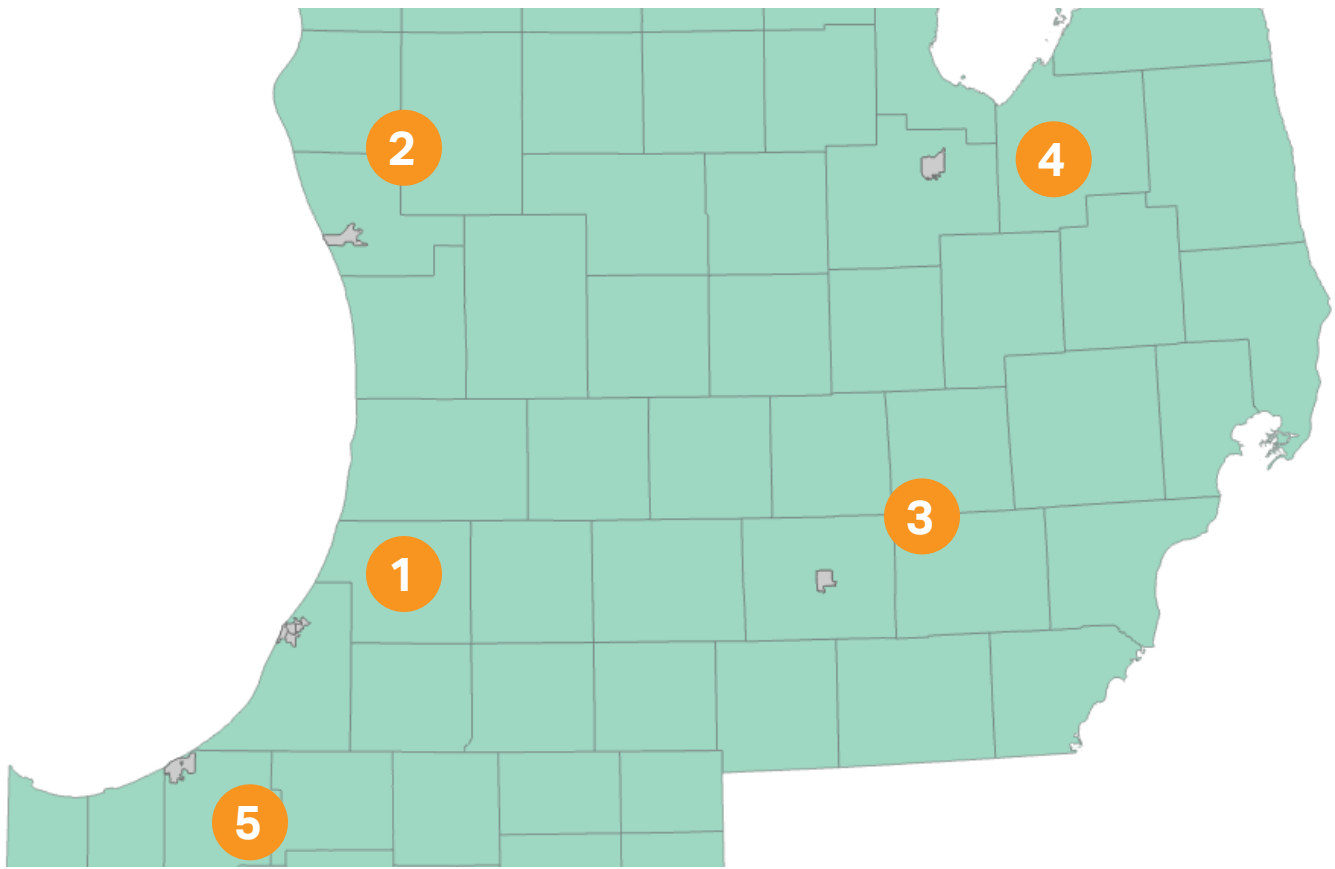
DETAILED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

The following tables provide a snapshot of Benton Harbor's housing stock age, value, and density. Three quarters of the City's homes were valued at less than \$100,000, and the median home value was \$59,000 in 2020. The City's housing stock was aging, 67% of homes were more than 50 years old. Most of the housing in the city was made up of single-family homes (70%), while 11% of units were in apartment buildings.

Table 30. Housing Characteristics

Home Value	# of Properties	%
Less than \$50,000	534	38.5%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	510	36.8%
\$100,000 to \$199,999	126	9.1%
\$200,000 to \$499,999	168	12.1%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	111	8.0%
\$1,000,000 or greater	0	0%
Age of Home		
Built 2020 or later	0	0.0%
Built 2010 to 2019	155	3.4%
Built 2000 to 2009	439	9.6%
Built 1970 to 1999	940	20.6%
Built 1940 to 1969	1,701	37.2%
Built 1939 or earlier	1,332	29.2%
Units in Structure		
1-unit detached	3,220	70.5%
1-unit attached	49	1.1%
2-4 units	383	8.4%
5-9 units	214	4.7%
10-19 units	155	3.4%
20 or more units	527	11.5%
Mobile home	19	0.4%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census, 2020 American Community Survey.



Land Area and Population of Benton Harbor Region Compared to Other Regions

The table on the following page compares the population and land area in the Benton Harbor Urbanized Region to several peer communities, including: Muskegon, Jackson, Saginaw, and Michigan City, Indiana. This analysis shows that the Benton Harbor Urbanized Region has significantly lower population per square mile, at 1,784, than the three other Michigan communities, which have all have more than 2,500 people per square mile. However, at 15.7 square miles, the Benton Harbor Urbanized Region is similar in size to these areas, which range from 10 to 18 square miles. Conversely, the Benton Harbor Urbanized Region has a similar population density but lower land area than the urbanized region of Michigan City, Indiana, which is approximately 35 miles to the southeast.

As discussed earlier, between 1950 and 2020, the City of Benton Harbor lost approximately 9,000 residents. If the Benton Harbor Urbanized Region were to attract new residents into the City and reach a population close to its 1950 level, the population per square mile would be approximately 2,350 people per square mile, slightly lower than the current population density of Muskegon, Jackson, and Saginaw.

Table 31. Land Area and Population Regional Comparison



	Benton Harbor— St. Joseph Urbanized Region	City of Muskegon	City of Jackson	City of Saginaw	City of Michigan City, IN
Geographic Land Area (Square Miles)	15.7	14.1	10.9	17.1	20.4
Population Density (People per Square Mile)	1,784	2,718	2,872	2,585	1,572
Population (2010)	30,118	38,401	33,534	51,508	31,479
Population (2020)	28,013	38,318	31,309	44,202	32,075
Percent Population Change, 2010-2020	-7.0%	-0.2%	-6.6%	-14.2%	1.9%

Land Area and Population of Benton Harbor Region Compared to Other Regions

The area coinciding with the structural extent of downtown Benton Harbor, outlined in red on the inset map on the following page is roughly 140 acres. For scale comparison, the series of illustrations show how the land area of Benton Harbor compares to other downtown areas in West Michigan. These illustrations show that downtown Benton Harbor has more land area than Saugatuck and Holland and is comparable to Kalamazoo. While significantly smaller than Grand Rapids, it is interesting to see how the most intensely developed portion of downtown Grand Rapids is nonetheless, similar in land area to Benton Harbor as well.

This analysis further illustrates the universal truths of human-scale design and elements that contribute to ensuring a walkable city. Benton Harbor’s typical block length is 300 feet by 300 feet. Downtown Benton Harbor is less than 1 mile east to west and roughly ¼ mile north to south. Expressed in walking times, its a 20-minute walk east to west and a 5-minute walk north to south. The City of Benton Harbor is less then 2.5 miles north to south and less than 1.5 miles east to west. Both distances take less than 5 minutes to bike.



Downtown Benton Harbor has a block structure that is ideal for walkable development, although many blocks are partially or completely without structures, resulting from periods of planned demolition, as discussed prior. Benton Harbor also has a similar block structure to the premier walkable districts illustrated below.

WEST MICHIGAN DOWNTOWN TYPICAL BLOCK SIZE:

- Benton Harbor: 300 ft. by 300 ft.
- Holland: 300 ft. by 450 ft.
- Saugatuck: 300 ft. by 315 ft.
- Kalamazoo: 300 ft. by 320 ft.
- Grand Rapids: 300 ft. by 300 ft.



DOWNTOWN BENTON HARBOR



DOWNTOWN HOLLAND



DOWNTOWN SAUGATUCK



DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO



DOWNTOWN GRAND RAPIDS



Demographic Analysis Summary

The following summarize high-level takeaways from the historic research and demographic analysis.

1. **Benton Harbor is a City designed for twice its current population**
 - » The highest population was in 1960 with 19,136 residents
 - » The 2020 population was 9,103 residents—roughly the same as the City’s population in 1910
 - » Declining population and aging infrastructure, with increased community services demand, presents financial challenges that can be mitigated with increases to population and tax revenue.
2. **Benton Harbor shares characteristics with other mid-size cities in the region**
 - » The Benton Harbor Urbanized Area shares similar geographic size and population to other cities (Muskegon, Jackson, Saginaw, Michigan City, IN)
 - » Benton Harbor’s downtown geographic area is comparable to much larger cities (Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo)
 - » Benton Harbor’s post-industrial population decline is shared with many other communities, but its strengths, including water, sewer, and road infrastructure, parks system, airport, harbor and proximity to Lake Michigan are unique advantages.
3. **Benton Harbor is well-positioned for growth**
 - » The City’s location on Lake Michigan, the St. Joseph River, and the Paw Paw River makes it an attractive destination for commerce, living, recreation activities
 - » The airport, transit system, and close access to interstate highways and other thoroughfares provides easy transportation throughout the region
 - » The City’s existing infrastructure and geographic size make it attractive to both new and renovated middle housing, as ingredients for healthy neighborhoods already exist
 - » The city’s assets, including schools, water, sewer, parks, roads, and transit are a strength for new and future residents

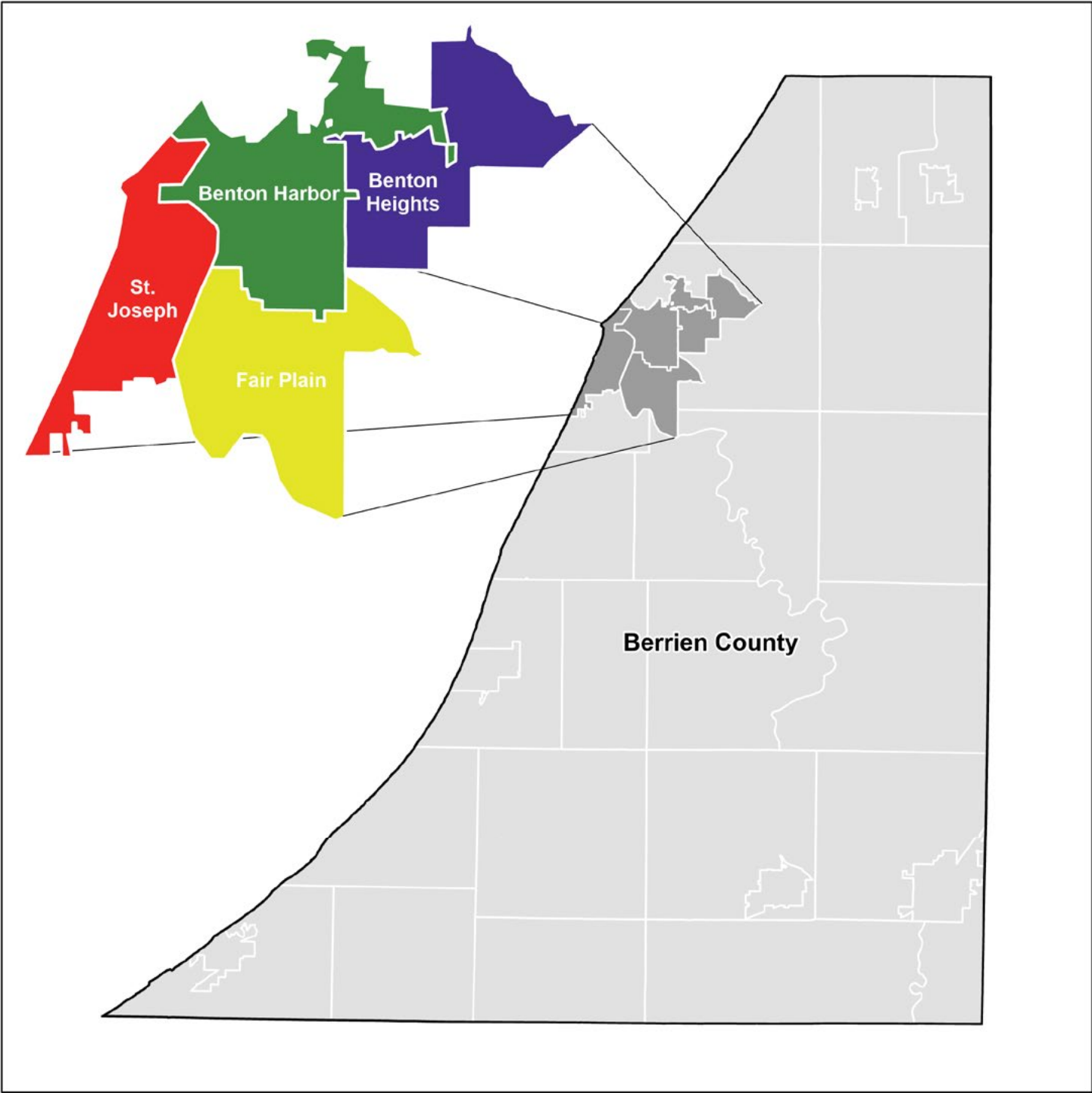
Spatial Analysis

Mapping existing conditions is helpful to determine the assets and areas of improvement a community already possesses. Spatially displaying this data allows for geographic trends to be easily identified. Several map exhibits displaying various conditions within Benton Harbor have been created and are detailed below.

- **Benton Harbor—St. Joseph Urban Area:** shows the regional location of the Benton Harbor—St. Joseph urban area within Berrien County. This allows for a better understanding of the spatial relation the City has at a regional scale. *(page 191)*
- **Existing Land Use:** shows how the land is currently being used within the City. There are many areas of vacant residential and industrial land. Commercial is mainly located along major corridors. *(page 192)*
- **Estimated Traffic Volumes:** shows 2019 and 2020 Michigan Department of Transportation annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes. Generally, there is a lower traffic volume in 2020, which may be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, but high trafficked roads include major routes such as Pipestone Street, Main Street, and M-63. *(page 193, page 194)*
- **Existing Fixed Transit Routes:** shows the current Twin Cities Area Transit (TCATA) bus routes that provide connections within the City and connect Benton Harbor to surrounding communities. There are limited stops and the routes follow major corridors. *(page 195)*
- **Non-Motorized Pathways:** shows the current and proposed non-motorized transportation network. This includes paved shoulders, non-motorized shared-use pathways, and proposed non-motorized pathways. The existing shared-use pathways are concentrated around the northwest section of the City, particularly Jean Klock Park. There are proposed shared-use paths that would follow Ox Creek, Empire Avenue, and Riverview Drive, connecting existing shared-use paths and paved shoulders. *(page 196)*
- **Floodplains:** shows the location of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identified floodplains, including 100-year and 500-year floodplains. There are many hydrological features that intersect the City, including the St. Joseph River, Paw Paw River, and Ox Creek, therefore, a large portion of the City, particularly in the northwest, are located within floodplains. *(page 197)*
- **Wetlands:** shows the location of wetlands within and around the City. Similar to floodplains, the wetlands are located primarily along the hydrological features, however, wetlands are more concentrated along the Paw Paw River and Ox Creek. These areas are primarily being used as public parks/open space. *(page 198)*



- **Homestead Exemptions:** shows the parcels that have a recorded homestead exemption, which means that it is someone's primary residence. The most concentrated area that are primary residences is the southwest corner of the City. The residential areas throughout the City are a patchwork of homes with and without homestead exemptions, however there are more than double the number of parcels without the exemption. *(page 199)*
- **Parcels Assessed Values and Parcels Assessed Values 3D Scene:** both show the values assigned to the parcels through Benton Harbor. The 3D Scene map visualizes the data as a three-dimensional output, so that the differences in value are further highlighted. The highest value parcels are located along the commercial and industrial sections of the City, as well as some waterfront residential parcels. *(page 200, page 201)*
- **Parcels Assessed Values per Acre and Parcels Assessed Values per Acre 3D Scene:** both show the value assigned to the parcels adjusted to show the value per acre. This helps rectify the large variation between commercial and residential parcels. The highest value parcels are the same as the Parcel Assessed Values Map, however the highest value per acre are smaller commercial parcels downtown and waterfront residential parcels in the northwest. *(page 202, page 203)*



Benton Harbor- St. Joseph Urban Area

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023

LEGEND

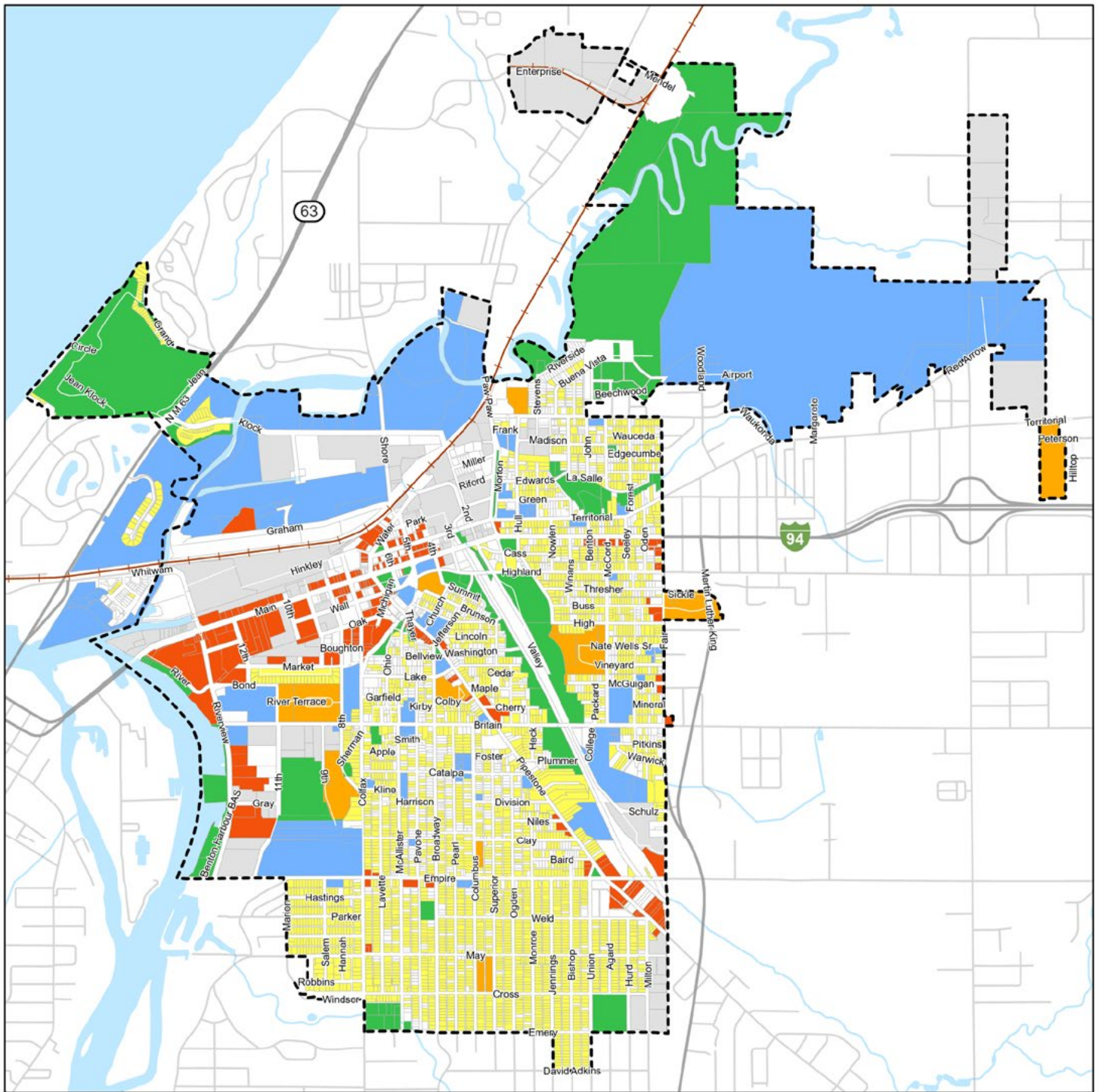
Benton Harbor - St Joseph Urban Area
Includes:

- City of Benton Harbor
- City of St. Joseph
- Fair Plain Census-Designated Place
- Benton Heights Census-Designated Place



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.





Existing Land Use

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023

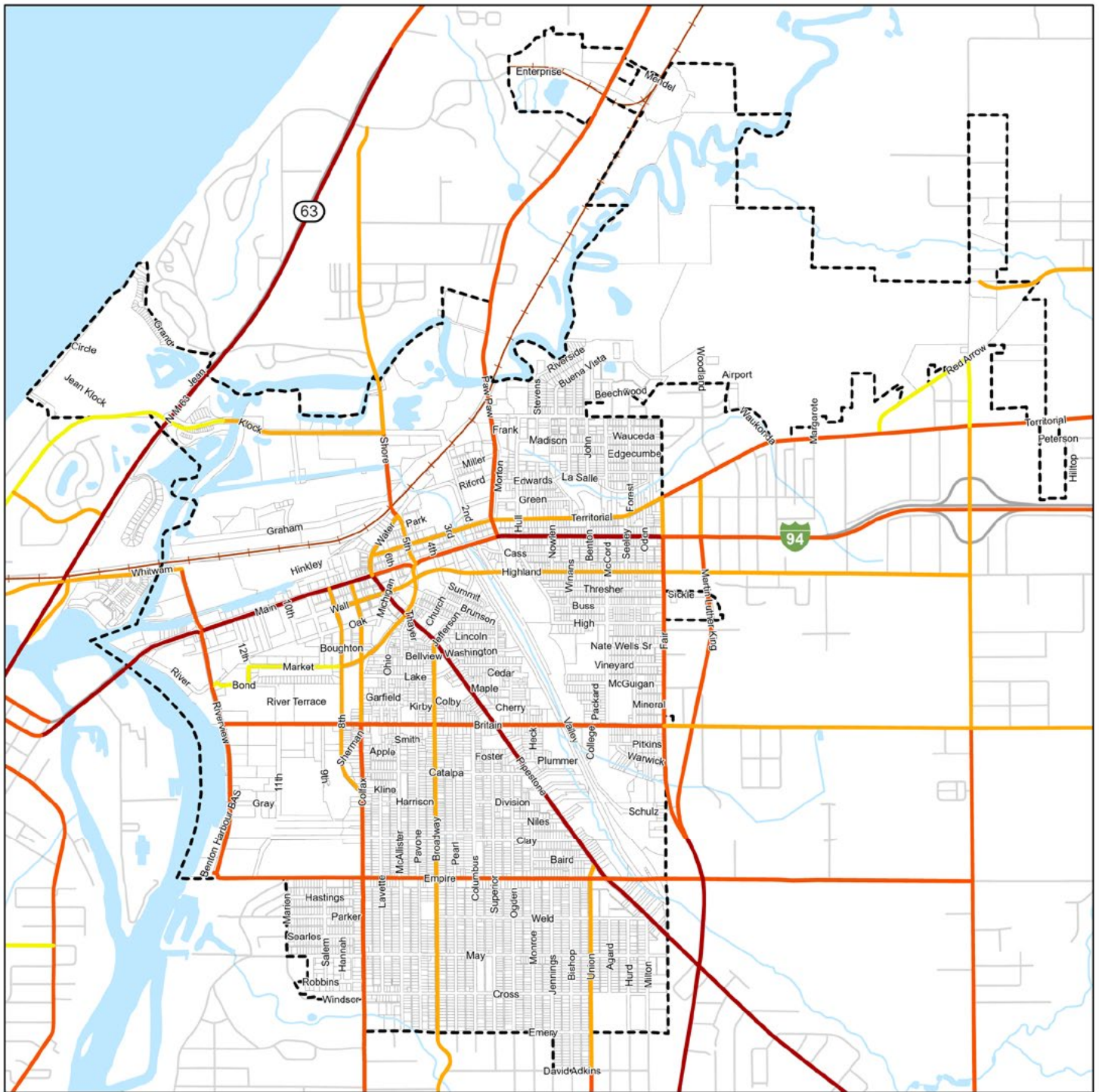
LEGEND

- Single-Family Residential
- Multiple-Family Residential
- Commercial/Office
- Industrial
- Public Parks/Open Space
- Public/Institutional
- Vacant
- Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.





2019 Estimated Traffic Volumes

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

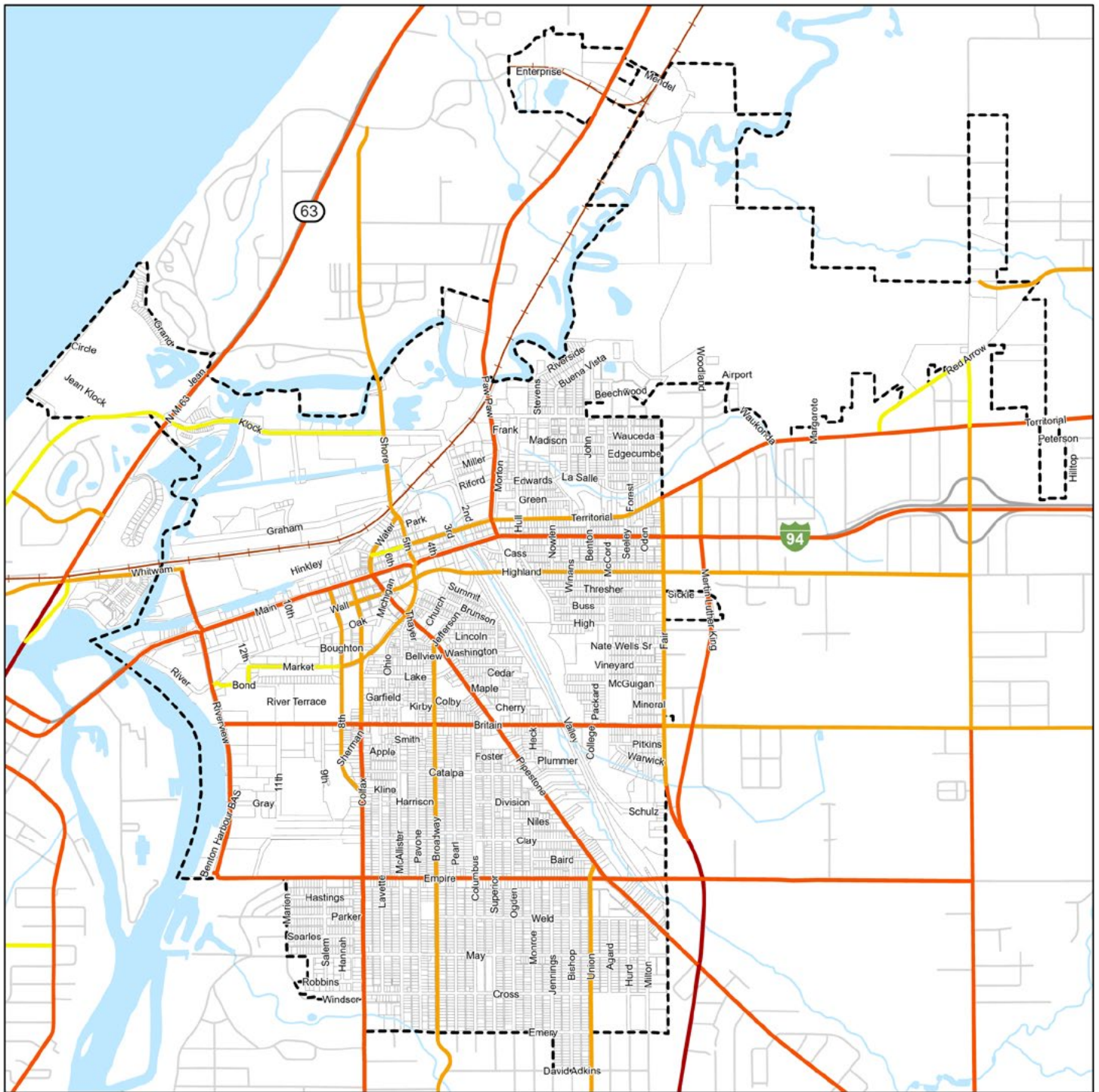
Community Atlas
June 22, 2023

LEGEND

- 0 - 1000 AADT
- 1001 - 3000 AADT
- 3001 - 8000 AADT
- 8001+ AADT
- Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.








2020 Estimated Traffic Volumes

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023

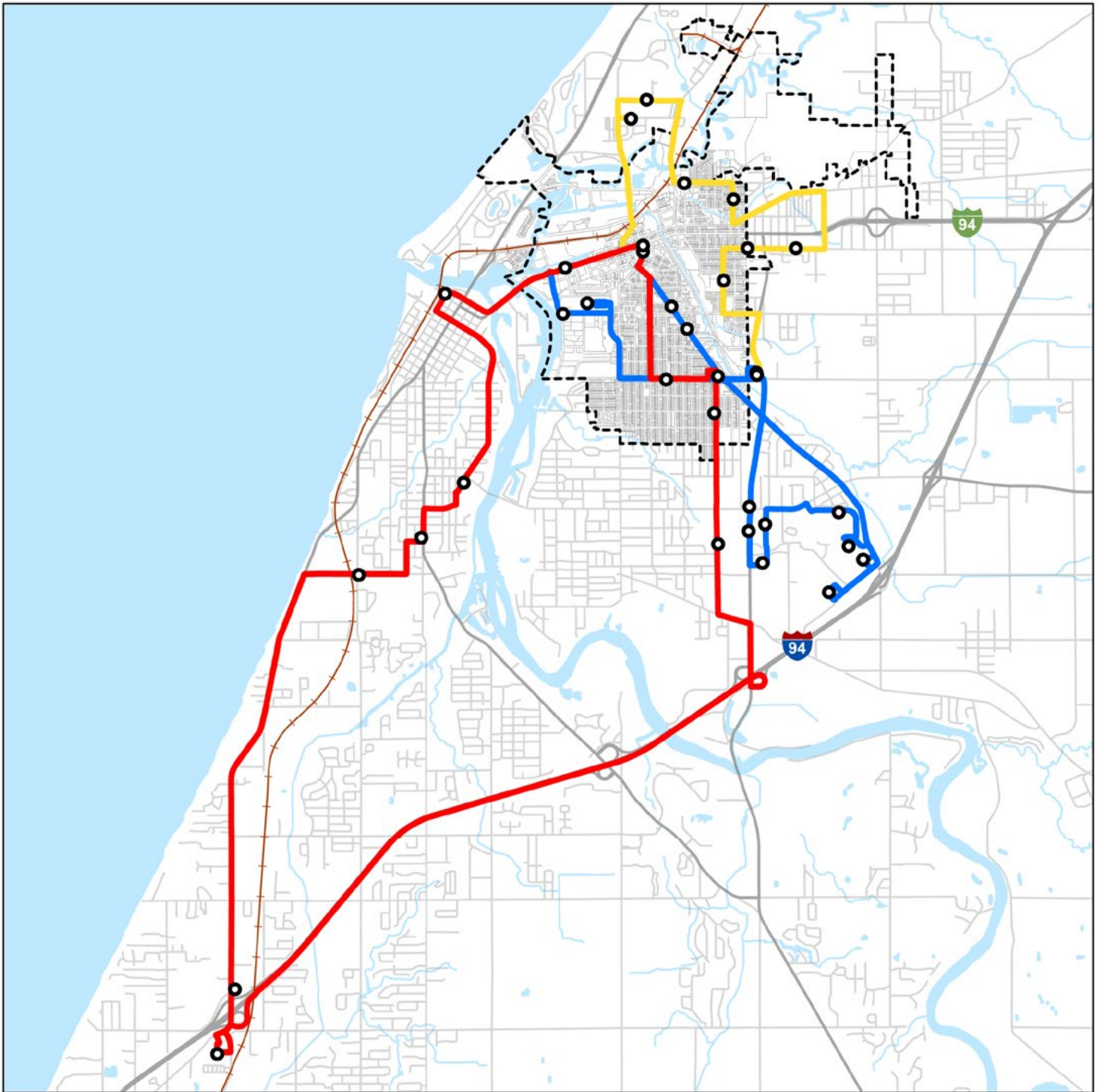
LEGEND

-  Benton Harbor Boundary
-  0 - 1000 AADT
-  1001 - 3000 AADT
-  3001 - 8000 AADT
-  8001+ AADT



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.





Existing Fixed Transit Routes

LEGEND

- Blue Route
- Red Route
- Yellow Route
- Benton Harbor Boundary

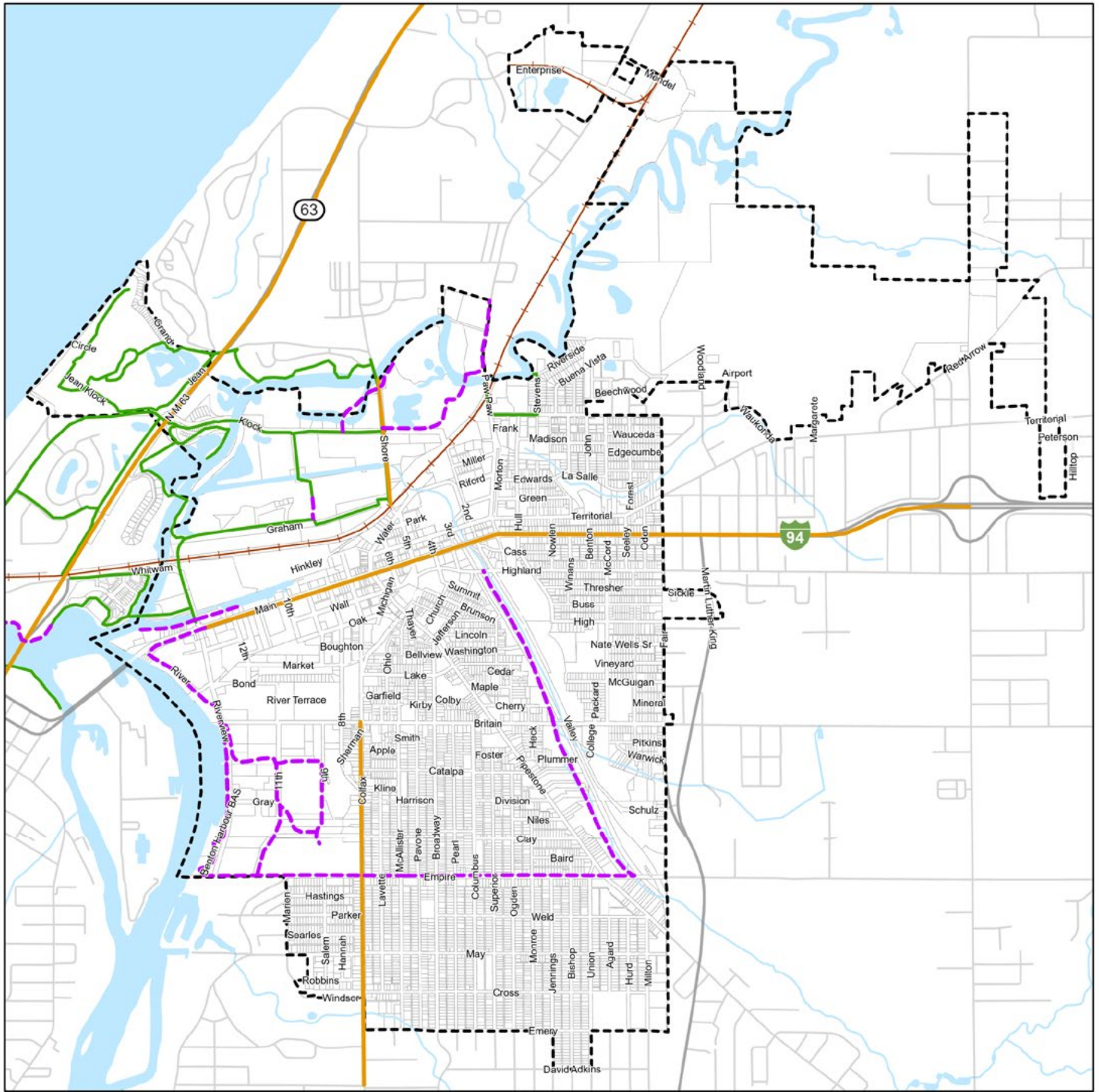


Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023





Non-Motorized Pathways

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023

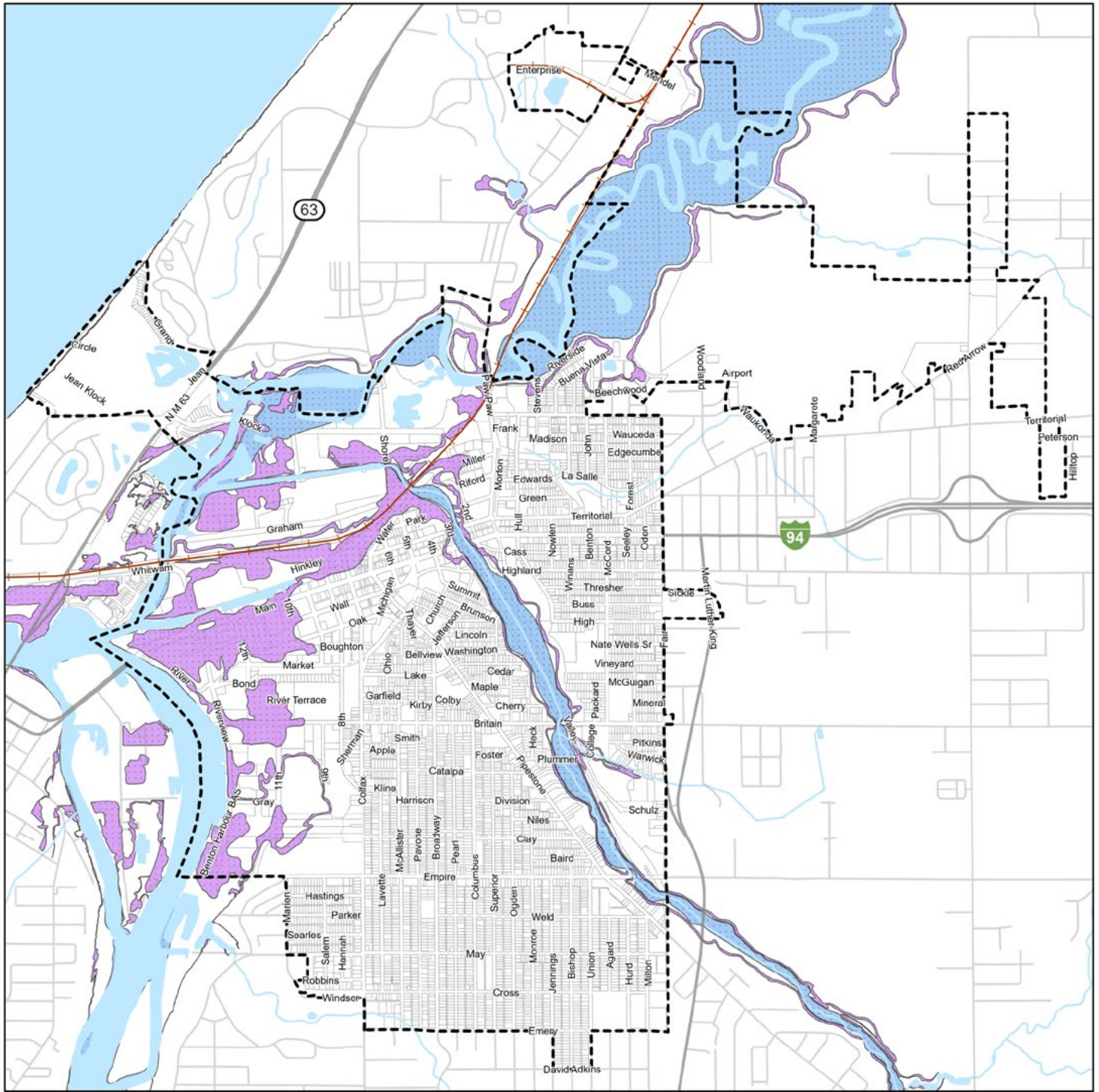
LEGEND

- Non-Motorized Shared Use Pathways
- Paved Shoulders
- - - 2011 Proposed Non-Motorized Pathways
- Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.





Floodplains

LEGEND

- Zone AE - 100-Year Floodplain
- Zone X - 500-Year Floodplain
- Benton Harbor Boundary

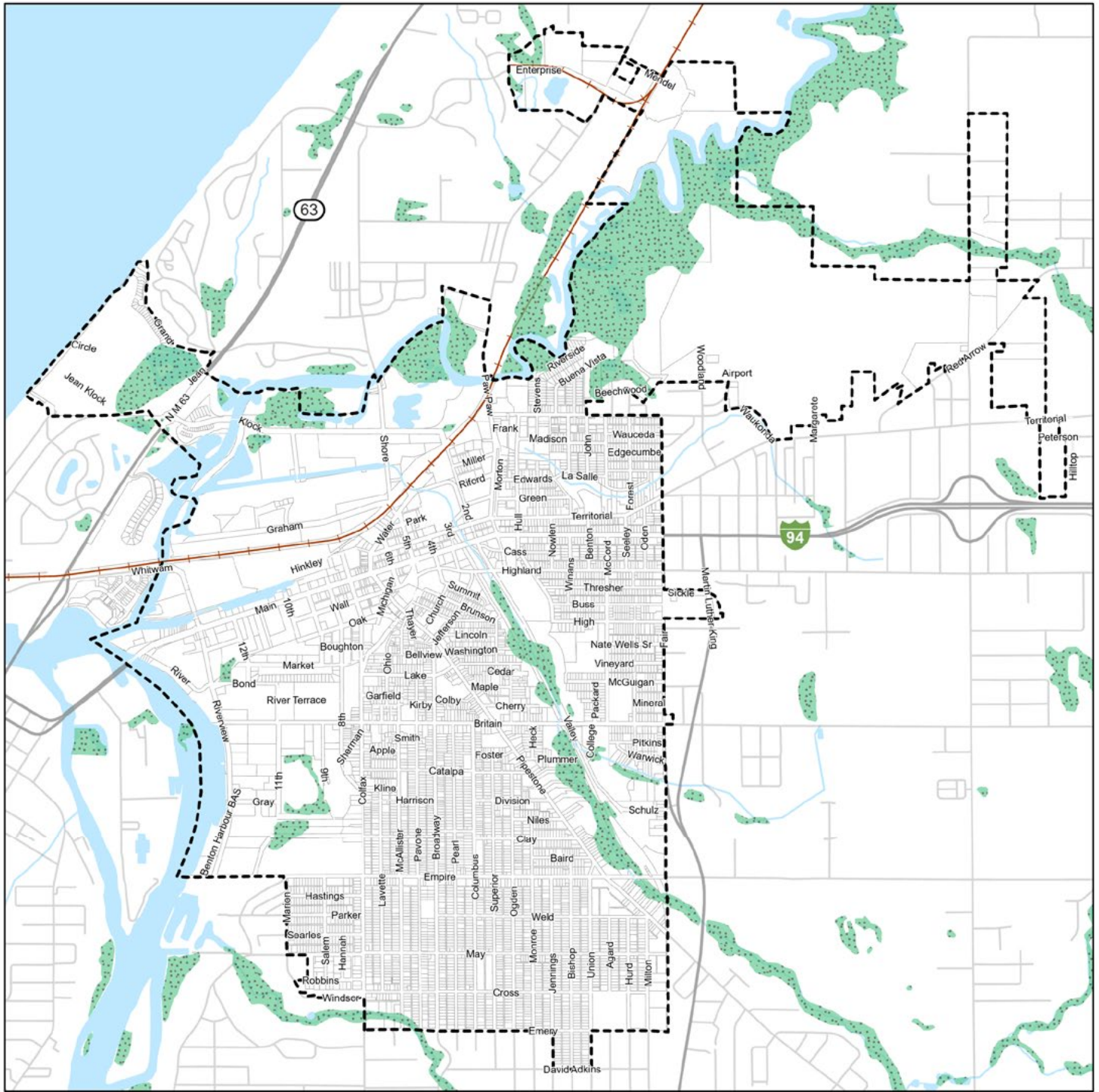


Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

Community Atlas
June 22, 2023

November 2023
MCKENNA



Wetlands

LEGEND

- Wetland Features
- Benton Harbor Boundary

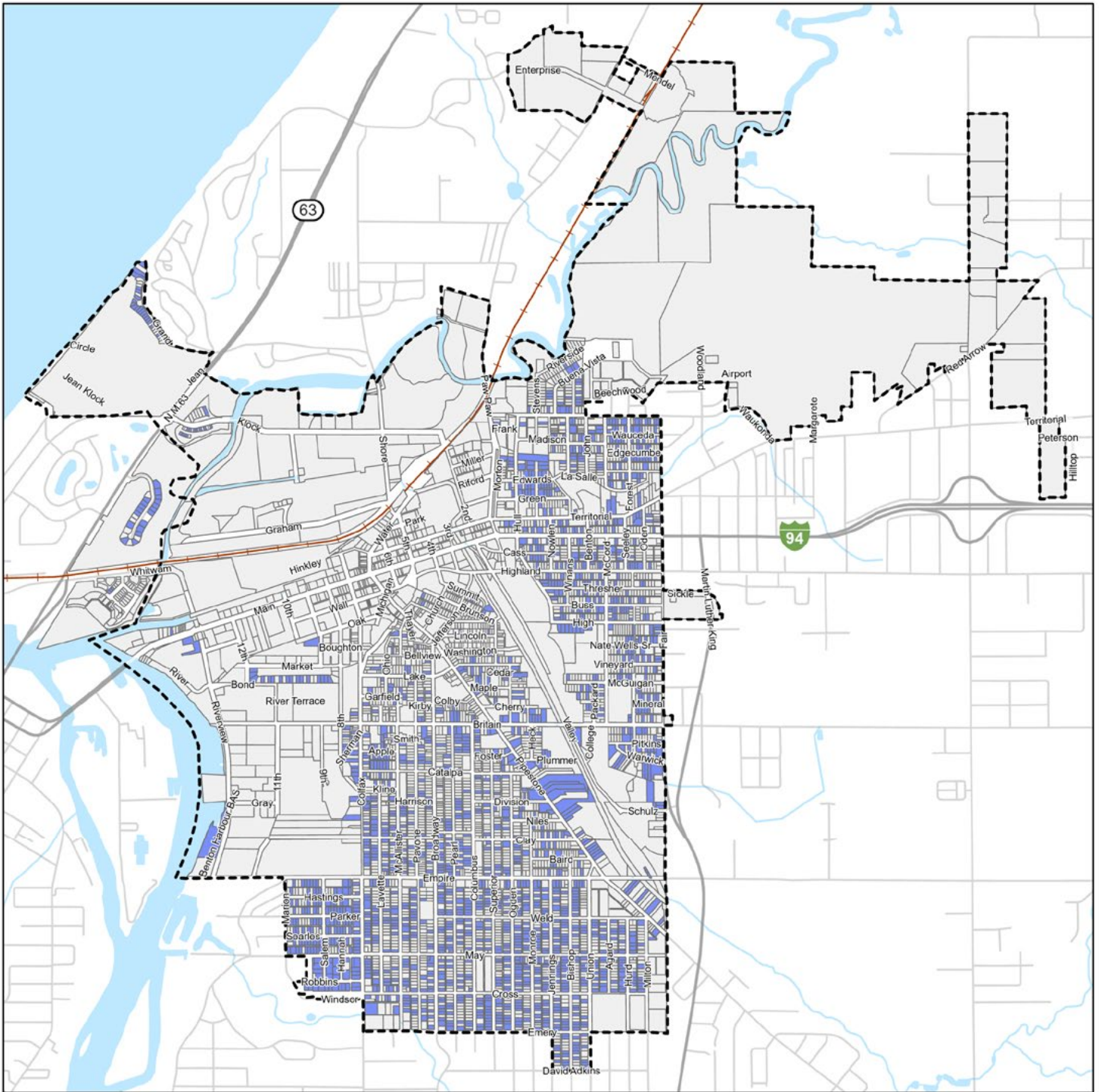


Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023





Homestead Exemptions

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023

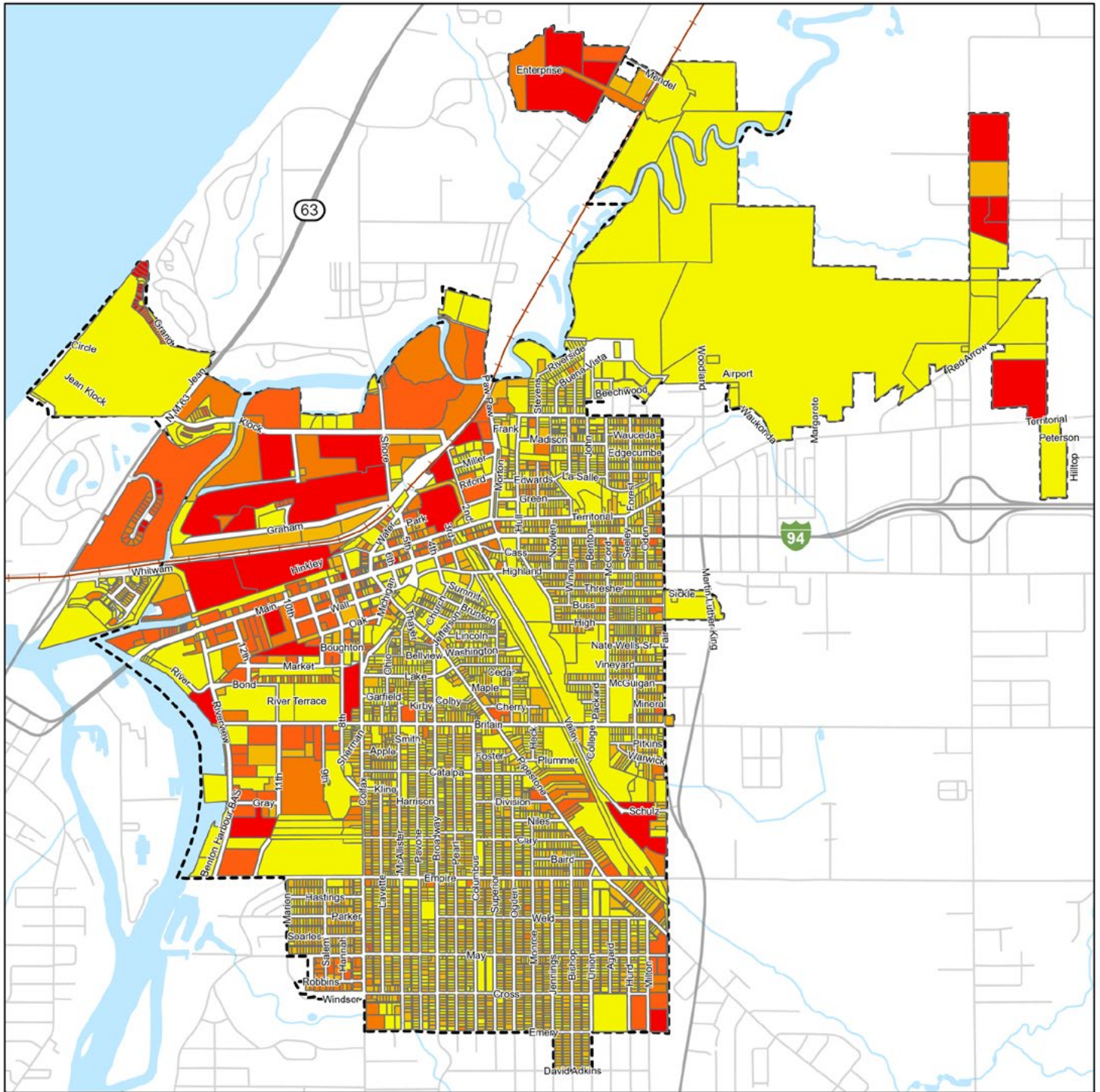
LEGEND

- Recorded Homestead Exemption
- No Recorded Homestead Exemption
- Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.





Parcels Assessed Values

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023

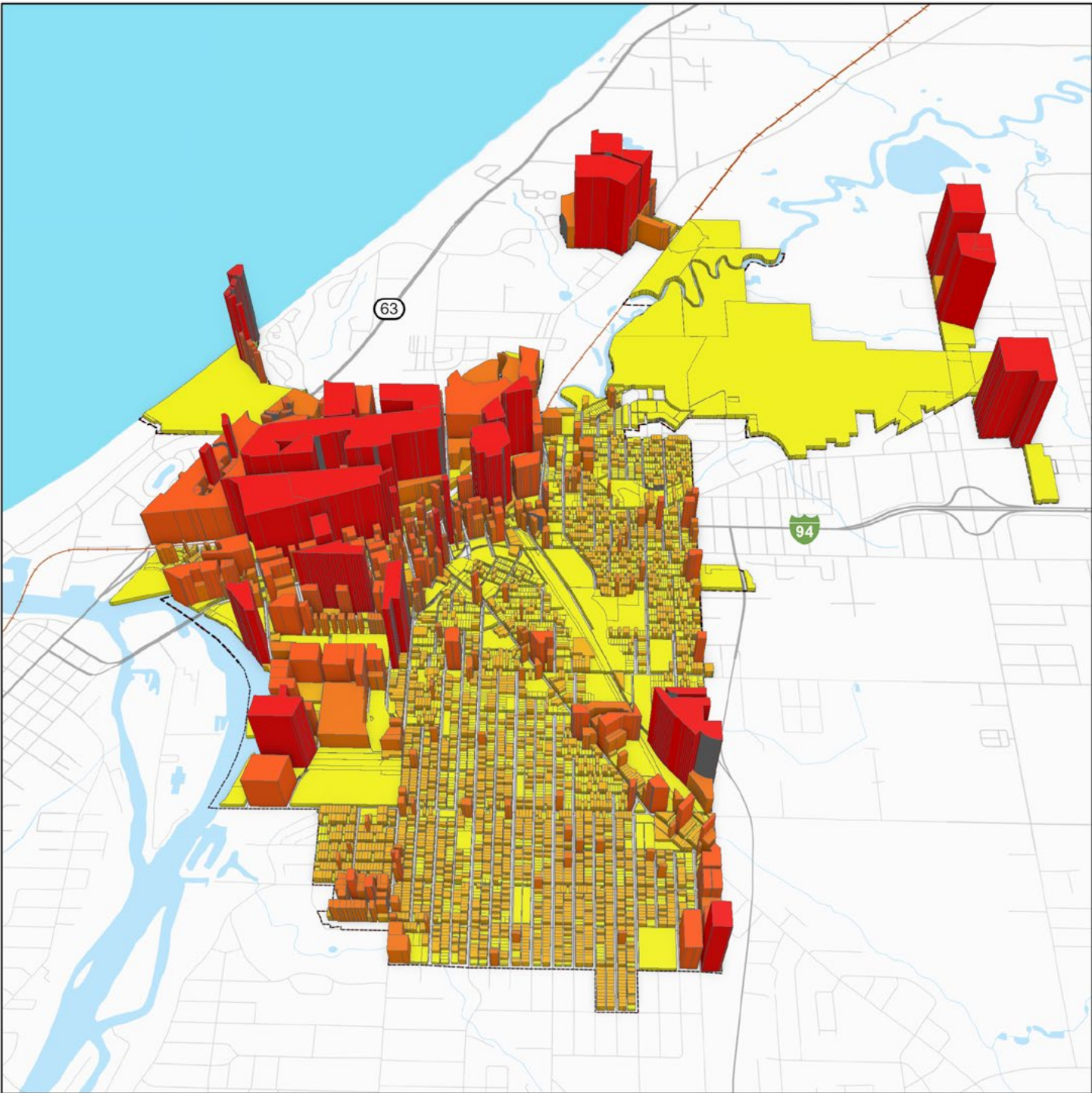
LEGEND

- \$0 - \$10,000
- \$10,001 - \$40,000
- \$40,001 - \$100,000
- \$100,000 - \$500,000
- \$500,000 - \$3,000,000
- Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.





Parcels Assessed Values 3D Scene

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

Community Atlas
June 22, 2023

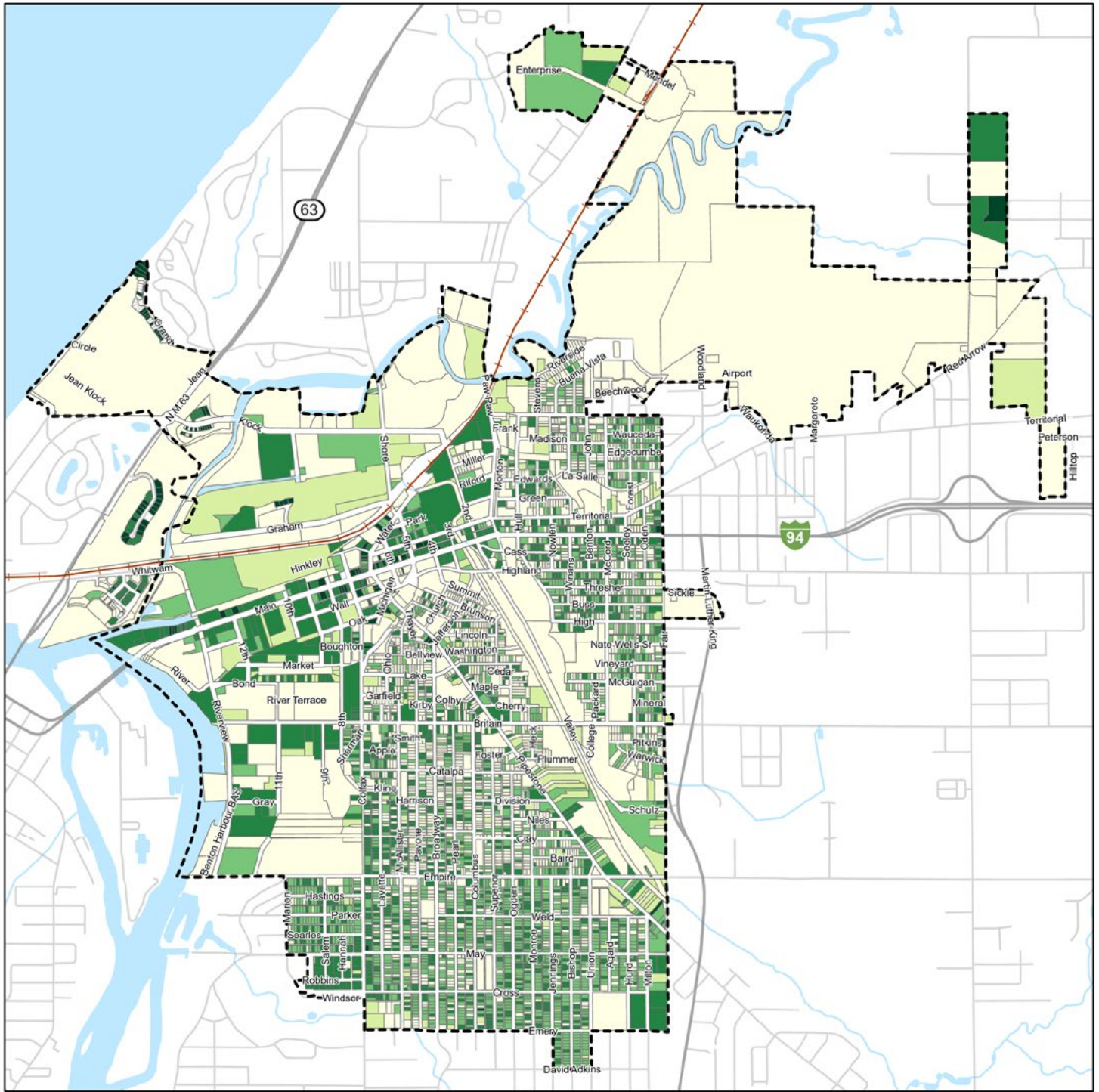
LEGEND

- \$0 - \$10,000
- \$10,001 - \$40,000
- \$40,001 - \$100,000
- \$100,000 - \$500,000
- \$500,000 - \$3,000,000
- Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.

June 2023
MCKENNA



Parcels Assessed Values per Acre

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023

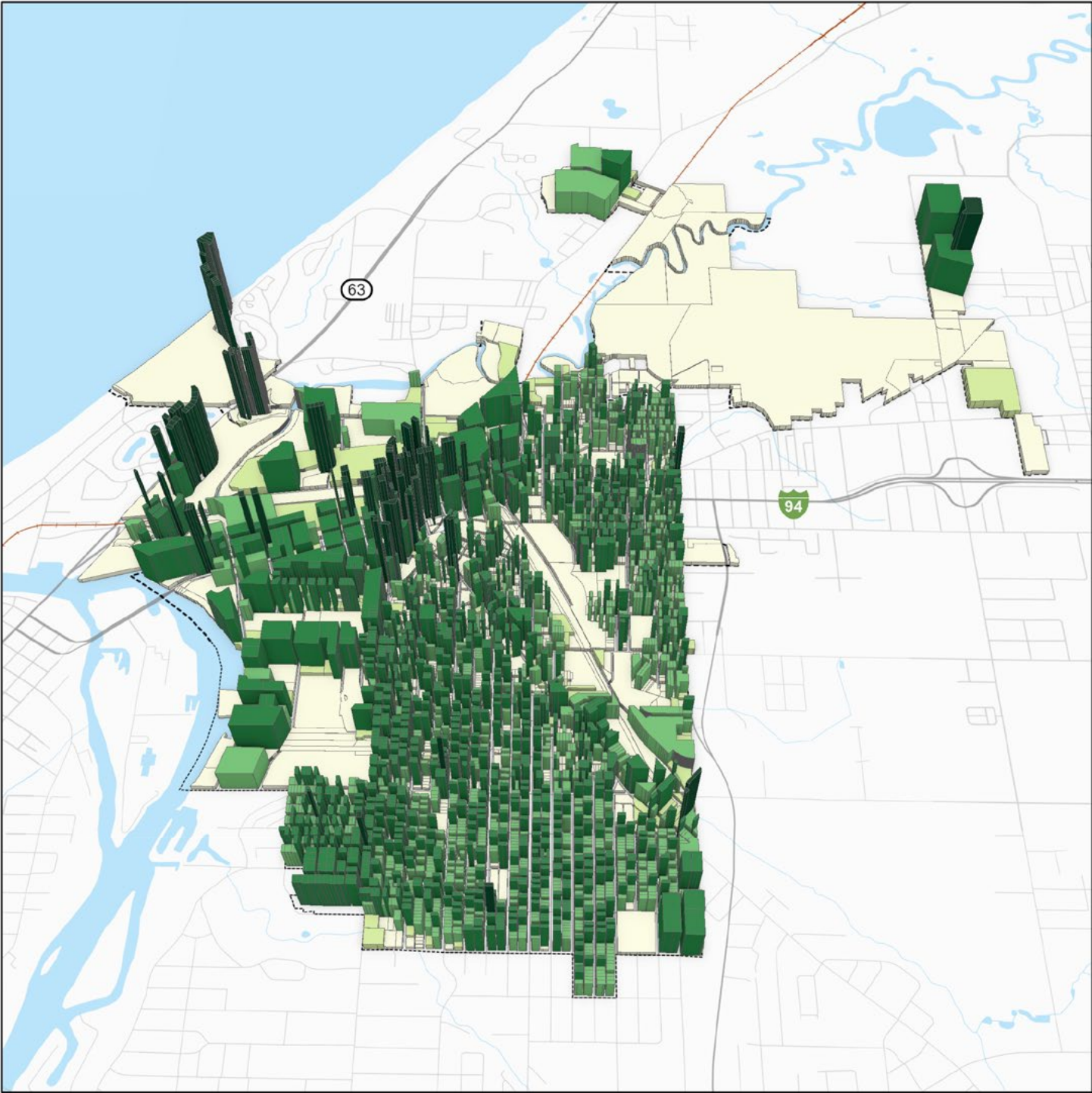
LEGEND

- \$0 - \$10,000
- \$10,001 - \$40,000
- \$40,001 - \$100,000
- \$100,001 - \$500,000
- \$500,001 - \$3,000,000
- Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.





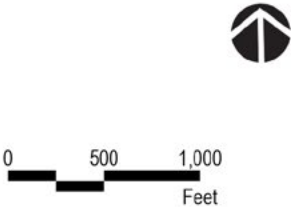
Parcels Assessed Values per Acre 3D Scene

City of Benton Harbor
Berrien County, Michigan

June 22, 2023

LEGEND

	\$0 - \$10,000
	\$10,001 - \$40,000
	\$40,001 - \$100,000
	\$100,001 - \$500,000
	\$500,001 - \$3,000,000
	Benton Harbor Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: City of Benton Harbor, 2022. McKenna, 2023.



