

Appendix A

Downtown Fenton Subarea Plan

PLANNING AREA BOUNDARIES

For the purpose of this analysis, the Downtown Fenton planning area includes the properties fronting North Leroy Street, beginning at the Dibbleville block northward through Fenton Square to the intersection with Second Street. Residential neighborhoods adjacent to this area are considered in the plan and discussed with regard to possible changes in use and exterior treatment. The emphasis here, however, is on the commercial and office uses fronting North Leroy Street.

BACKGROUND

With the emergence of new development activity in Silver Lake Village and the North Leroy Street corridor, public concern has been expressed about the future viability of Downtown Fenton for commercial and office uses. The results of a recent Master Plan Public Open House indicate that redevelopment of the downtown area is a high priority for Fenton residents. The recent re-opening of N. Leroy Street through Fenton Square has brought opportunities for additional retail, office, and entertainment uses. Initial investment has been made by the State Bank (the former Rite Aid building) and by the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) through streetscape improvements.

Another project that is expected have a positive impact on the downtown is the new Main Street/Silver Lake Road connection. This road connection will improve east-west traffic flow through the City and increase exposure to the downtown area.

This subarea plan will look at the various planning and development issues facing the downtown area and present a series of recommendations for future improvements. A series of design guidelines are also provided for use in evaluating site plan review applications.

ANALYSIS

Residential

Most of the residential structures in and around the downtown area are historic single-family houses developed on small lots, with a density range of 2.6 to 4.5 units per acre. These blocks have retained much of their original character due to the houses being well-maintained and no drastic changes being made to the road network. The streets are laid out on a grid system and utilize sidewalks to create a pedestrian-friendly environment. The presence of street trees also adds to the aesthetic appearance of the area.

There is little vacant land available in the blocks surrounding Downtown Fenton so only minor infill housing development is anticipated in the future. Some of the

larger single-family residential structures have been converted to multiple-family dwellings, residential care facilities, or offices. Most of the multiple-family conversions have occurred in the area bordered by Rockwell Street to the south, Shiawassee Street to the north, East Street to the east, and Adelaide Street to the west. The office and nursing home conversions have occurred primarily to the west of the Dibbleville block along Shiawassee and Adelaide Streets.

While the exteriors of many converted structures are still intact, a number have been altered through the use of modern materials and some of the office buildings have inappropriate signage. It is important for the City of Fenton to maintain the historic flavor of these residential buildings around downtown. They are part of the character of Fenton and play a role in creating a sense of place in downtown.

Commercial

The commercial buildings along Leroy Street can be separated into four distinct areas: the Dibbleville block, the government core area, Fenton Square, and the Main Street area (from the Silver Lake Road intersection north to the Sixth Street intersection). Each of these areas has its own distinct character and will be reviewed individually under this section, even though the ultimate goal is to tie them together in a single, cohesive downtown area.

Dibbleville. The Dibbleville area includes the two retail-commercial blocks that front the intersection of South Leroy Street and Shiawassee Street. These are 19th Century Italianate storefront buildings made of brick. They have front yard setbacks at the sidewalk and zero lot line side yard setbacks, meaning the buildings are connected to one another. The upper floors are occupied by either residential or storage uses. The Dibbleville area has a great deal of historic flavor and charm, which is further accentuated by the ornamental lighting and brick pavers in the sidewalk.

Some of the buildings in Dibbleville are still in need of painting and/or repair. This is especially true of those buildings fronting Shiawassee Street. Another concern is the use of modern canopies, signs, and materials on some of the building facades fronting South Leroy Street. Canopies and signs can be installed that are sympathetic to the historic architecture and still provide the needed exposure to the business. This point is critical since the main selling point for Dibbleville is its quaint, historic charm.

The Government Core Area. The government core area encompasses the commercial buildings from the police station northward to the edge of the Fenton Square block. This area includes only a handful of commercial buildings, primarily at the corner of South Leroy and Mill Street (opposite the Post Office building) and the small strip center at the corner of South Leroy Street and Ellen Street. Neither of these locations provides a large enough concentration of businesses to create a specific identity for this area.

The primary concern is that any improvements to existing structures or the construction of new structures be in character with the surrounding government

buildings. This concept will be discussed in more detail later under the architecture section of the design guidelines.

Fenton Square. The Fenton Square area is located to the northeast of the Fenton Community Center and was redeveloped under the Urban Renewal program of the early 1970s. A block of the original turn-of-the-century buildings is still located on the west side of Leroy Street. This block was part of the original Downtown Fenton and includes both one- and two-story structures. The original architectural detailing can be seen on the second floor exteriors of the two-story buildings. Most of the first floor facades have been covered with more modern materials such as aluminum, plastic, and face brick.

As is the case with Dibbleville, the buildings have front setbacks at the sidewalk. The introduction of architecturally sympathetic awnings and signs, along with the restoration of original building facades, would improve the appearance of these buildings. This block of buildings can be the foundation for future improvements aimed at revitalizing downtown and the Fenton Square area.

Now that Leroy Street is open again to through traffic, the building “streetwall” must be re-constructed on the east side of the street. This will mean the construction of the new, multi-story buildings fronting Leroy Street and the possible development of townhouses along Walnut Street.

The buildings along Walnut Street to the southeast of Dancer=s present a design dilemma. The front entrances face a parking area that has little visibility from a through-road. The retail buildings are also a considerable distance from Leroy Street and lack the needed visibility from the roadway. In addition, the rear service areas and utility boxes for these buildings front on Walnut Street and create a less than attractive appearance from the public right-of-way.

The building on the western edge of Fenton Square that faces the former W. Caroline Street, currently has the necessary exposure to support small retail businesses. If the loop road is eventually closed as planned, this exposure to passing vehicles may be lost. Any plans for redevelopment of Fenton Square must consider this potential impact. Although this is a decent building with an attractive awning across the entire facade, the architecture is not outstanding and the long term viability of the structure must be examined.

There are two bank buildings located at the northeast and northwest corners of the Fenton Square area. They are both modern buildings with brick exteriors and it may be possible to incorporate them into a long term plan. Adequate parking is available next to the banks and could potentially be shared with other uses in Fenton Square. Once again, these buildings can be used as Anchors@ for future redevelopment efforts.

The Main Street Area. The Main Street area of North Leroy Street begins at the intersection with Silver Lake Road and runs northward to the Sixth Street intersection. The former Action Auto building, located on the northwest corner

of the Silver Lake Road and North Leroy Street intersection, acts as the entryway building into this area. While the building appears to be structurally sound with stable tenants, it is an industrial-style building with an overwhelming appearance; not the kind of building that makes a positive statement about the area. In addition, virtually the entire site is covered by the building and pavement.

To the north of the railroad tracks, the bean company building and Fenton Hotel building are located on the southeast corner and northeast corner, respectively, of the North Leroy Street and Main Street intersection. These two historic structures are attractive and provide a glimpse of Fenton in the 19th Century. The primary problem with each of these buildings is the lack of parking. It is difficult to adaptively reuse these buildings without the parking necessary to accommodate present day land uses. One option is to dedicate a portion of the former Glaser=s Lumber site to the east of the bean company building to public parking, once the Main Street connection is completed.

The industrial building to the immediate north of the Fenton Hotel building will not likely fit into a long term plan for downtown. This building is no longer being used for industrial purposes. In the long-term, this building might be replaced with a structure more sensitive to the character of the area.

The remaining sites on North Leroy Street northward to Sixth Street can be incorporated into the Main Street area through streetscape improvements and by following the development guidelines found later in this section.

At a public workshop meeting, during the 1996 Master Plan development, a A visioning@ session was held to obtain public input on how Downtown Fenton should develop. The audience was broken into two groups, with one discussing downtown and the other the North Leroy Street area. The former group was asked to look fifteen years into the future and describe what downtown looks like. Without any constraints being placed upon them, the attendees developed the following list of items that are still applicable today:

**A VISION FOR
DOWNTOWN
FENTON**

- No industrial uses around the Fenton Hotel.
- Underground utilities.
- Integrated design through streetscape elements, i.e. trees, brick pavers, etc.
- Design guidelines for development.
- Add a second story to City Hall.
- Improve traffic circulation to strengthen businesses and visibility.
- Create a downtown with specialty shops, cafes, and a nice restaurant.
- Convert the factory next to the Mill Pond into restaurants.
- Develop the Riverwalk.
- Improve uniform lighting theme.
- Eliminate the railroad track.

It is clear from the results of the Public Open House that there is a desire to see the downtown area of Fenton regain the activity it once had while maintaining and building upon the things that give it charm. To provide additional guidance in working toward this vision, a series of goals for development in Downtown

Fenton are identified here. These goals provide the basis upon which the guidelines found later in this section been developed. They are:

1. Ensure compatibility in uses throughout Downtown Fenton by relocating industrial and high intensity commercial uses to more appropriate locations and by recruiting specialty retail, office, and service businesses into downtown.
2. Create an active, vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment in Downtown Fenton.
3. Establish a common design theme for Downtown Fenton with architecture, landscaping, lighting, signage, etc.
4. Provide guidance to prospective developers, and to the Planning Commission who will review the site plans, by adopting a set of development guidelines that incorporate the above mentioned themes.

To help achieve these goals, the City will need a set of well-defined guidelines by which the Planning Commission can evaluate development proposals. While a number of other steps must be taken to create the desired downtown, the following guidelines will lay the foundation for future improvements and ensure compatibility in design.

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Each development contributes to the overall appearance of the corridor and how well it functions. The overall appearance affects public perceptions of the area and thereby affects the success or failure of each business in Downtown Fenton.

Having planning guidelines provides a clear message to developers and property owners about the City's expectations for thoughtful and attractive building improvements and site planning in downtown. It is for this reason that a series of development guidelines have been prepared and are listed below. They are to be used when reviewing development proposals in Downtown Fenton.

It is important to keep in mind that these are guidelines and not intended to be strict rules or to replace more detailed guidelines that will be needed as part of any Planned Unit Development (PUD) designation. They provide the Planning Commission a framework within which decisions can be made. Independent judgment must be exercised in each case without sacrificing the intent behind the guidelines. For example, changes to existing developments may be reviewed differently than new development proposals, where sites have fewer initial limitations. Consideration must be given to the specifics in each case and handled accordingly.

Objective. *To encourage maintenance of the original architectural character of the building while creating an inviting street environment for pedestrians and passing vehicles.*

ARCHIT
HIST
BUIL

With existing storefronts, such as those in Dibbleville, it should always be remembered that the storefront is part of a larger structure and should relate to the building's overall character. Furthermore, it should be realized that a commercial block may contain several storefronts and that each individual shop should harmonize with its neighbor. This is not intended to restrict individual expression and storefronts can vary tremendously to express the nature of the business and the identity of the owner. The original details and materials, however, should always be retained. A storefront's original design is the best guide for any renovation project.

- Aluminum and porcelain siding and detailing should be avoided because the materials do not match other historic building materials.
- Decorative features such as columns or brackets should be retained and replaced when deteriorated.
- Signage should be simple and the size limited to the proportions of the storefront. A sign should never be large enough to overpower the shop nor should it obscure a building's architectural features.
- The use of architecturally sympathetic awnings is encouraged to add visual interest and create a sense of enclosure along commercial streets. Awnings should compliment the distinct character of each storefront; continuous awnings which cross over several storefronts are discouraged.

Objective. *To maintain the overall architectural character of the neighborhood or block while creating an inviting street environment for pedestrians and passing vehicles.*

With modern existing buildings and new construction, storefronts should have a high-quality facade design that can attract customers and contribute to the desired image. The architectural elements should compliment those found on nearby buildings and adequate window space should be provided to display goods and services offered.

- Buildings should not be set back from the property line of the commercial street. At corner locations, new construction should be built to the property line of both the commercial street and adjacent side street.
- Store entrances should be located along the commercial street frontage. Secondary entrances adjacent to accessory parking are also encouraged.
 - Display windows oriented to the public right-of-way should be incorporated into the building's form and architectural style for retail uses. Retail storefronts are encouraged to utilize at least 40% of the front facade with windows.

**ARCHITECTURE:
MODERN
EXISTING
BUILDINGS & NEW
CONSTRUCTION**

- The scale, proportion, rhythm, cornice height, and fenestration of new construction should be consistent with the architectural character of surrounding buildings.

STREETSCAPE/ PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Objective. *Develop an integrated streetscape for the entire downtown area to create an aesthetically pleasing, pedestrian-friendly environment and improve the image of Downtown Fenton.*

An integrated streetscape program will help connect the currently disjointed areas of downtown and create a common identity for this area of the City. Merchants within the commercial districts area are encouraged to work with the City and organize their efforts to plan, install, and maintain a higher quality of streetscape improvements in order to enhance the image and visibility of the retail areas. Streetscape amenities that improve the character of the pedestrian street include low-level lighting, brick pavers, benches, banners, ornamental lighting, and street trees.

- A street tree program should be instituted along Leroy Street from Dibbleville northward to the intersection with Sixth Street. The same species should be used throughout this area to help create a unified image for Downtown Fenton.
 - Ornamental street lights (one style to replace existing lights) should be placed along Leroy Street from Dibbleville to the intersection with Sixth Street. Metal Halide fixtures should be used and high/low pressure sodium fixtures prohibited.
 - Sidewalks should be constructed of concrete or decorative pavers rather than asphalt, and should never be made of dirt.
 - Pedestrian crosswalks in parking lots, driveways and at intersections should be made of decorative masonry pavers.
 - The design of streetscape amenities should be coordinated and consistent along the street for a minimum of one block.
 - Amenities should be located in defined zones which do not impede pedestrian circulation.
- Where the sidewalk width is fifteen feet or greater, the use of sidewalk space for outdoor cafes and the display of merchandise (such as books and flowers) is encouraged.
 - Walks should be a minimum of five feet wide. Where more foot traffic is expected, increase the width by at least two feet. Where a car bumper might

overhang the sidewalk, the sidewalk should be made at least three feet wider than normal.

Objective. *Provide safe, efficient traffic flow through the downtown area along with adequate parking to serve nearby uses.*

**VEHICULAR
CIRCULATION/
PARKING**

To remain viable, an adequate supply of parking is needed to serve businesses on pedestrian-oriented streets. Design guidelines for parking attempt to improve the appearance of parking lots while avoiding conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.

- Parking lots should not be located along the sidewalks of the primary commercial street.
- Consolidation of parking lots to serve multiple properties is recommended to maximize the efficiency of downtown parking. Single business accessory lots are discouraged.
- Driveways should be located away from the corners of buildings to increase pedestrian visibility and to avoid blind corners.
- All driveways, parking lots and walks should be paved, either with asphalt or concrete, and maintained without large cracks or deterioration of the surface. Masonry pavers are an optional decorative opportunity. Dirt, gravel, and other unpaved surfaces are ineffective for commercial development because of dust, mud, and erosion.
- All driveways and parking lots should be defined by concrete curbs 6 to 8 inches high. Timbers, wheel stops, and asphalt curbing should be avoided due to their appearance, short life span, and vulnerability to trucks and cars.
- Parking lot spaces and driving lanes should be identified with painted striping. The use of double striping should be encouraged for parking spaces to improve separation between vehicles.
- Screen parking from the public right-of-way and adjoining uses. A landscape screen thirty-six inches high will screen wheels, bumpers, and paving, but allow views. Ornamental wrought iron (or facsimile) fencing can be used in combination with landscaping to screen parking areas.
 - Use vertical elements, such as planted, curbed islands and medians, to help define the circulation pattern and visually contain the parking area.
 - Separate and protect walks from parking areas and driveways with curbs and planted areas. Place walks in parking lot islands and medians when logical.
 - Parking lot islands should be a minimum of ten feet wide and as long as the adjacent parking space.

- Parking lot islands and medians should include shade or street trees, low shrubs and ground covers and grass. Security is important and tall shrubs can provide a hiding place for potential assailants.
- Landscaping for parking lots should be simple and easy to maintain. Hardy shade trees, low evergreen shrubs or ground covers, and grass are good choices.
- Planting medians should be at least five feet wide.

LANDSCAPING

Objective. *Incorporate landscaping into the design of both public areas and private properties to functionally improve the area while making it more attractive and compatible with the surrounding environment.*

Landscaping is an integral component in creating a sense of place in Downtown Fenton. A consistent tree and flower planting program can enhance the identity and image of downtown, especially in the commercial areas.

- Where possible, green space should be used to separate adjoining developments, enhance the roadway, strengthen the pedestrian setting, and soften the built environment.
- New developments should be encouraged to preserve healthy, mature trees twelve inches in caliper and larger. If such trees must be sacrificed, replacement trees should be required in addition to the basic landscaping requirements for the project.
- Maintain a view area between the roadway and developments between three feet and twelve feet above grade where no landscaping will obscure views of the businesses or compromise security and traffic safety.
- Street trees should be used to offer visual relief from long, uninterrupted views of utilities and light poles. To be effective, however, street trees must not be located where they will grow to interfere with utility lines at maturity. Trees which have been pruned and cut back around utility lines are eyesores; even though they are better than no trees at all.
- Trees which produce a messy fruit and attract birds should be avoided near paved areas.
- On narrow sidewalks, trees should be installed in tree grates.
- Landscaping should emphasize simple design and quality materials. Easy maintenance should be a prime consideration. Residential designs and materials such as timbers should be avoided, since they deteriorate rapidly.

- Lawn areas should have defined edges. Use concrete walks, steel edging, or curbing for permanent edging.
- Plant species native to southeast Michigan are the best choices. Avoid plants which are susceptible to the salt used on the roads, pollution produced by cars and trucks, and wind.
- As a submittal requirement for site plan review, building elevations should show proposed plant materials at maturity.
- Artificial plantings should be avoided and rocks, boulders, wood chips, etc. should not be used as a replacement for landscaping.

Objective. *Incorporate lighting into site design which will make the area more attractive and safe after dark.*

LIGHTING

Lighting can be used to enhance site features and the overall appearance of the site and neighborhood. Lighting can be used to accent landscaped areas, emphasize building textures and architectural features, highlight pedestrian walkways and building entrances, and establish a special character.

- Lighting of off-street parking areas should be designed to reflect light away from adjacent residential properties, with a maximum intensity of one foot candle at the property line.
- Lighting of parking lots should provide illumination adequate for security, typically at an overall intensity ratio of ten to one throughout the site.
- While ornamental light fixtures are desired, a shoe box or domed fixture is preferable to the cobra head design for appearance.
- In general, pole-mounted overhead lighting should be used for parking lots, as opposed to building-mounted lighting. Building-mounted lighting may be used to illuminate storage and loading/unloading areas but must be directed downward and have a maximum intensity of one foot candle at any property line. In no case shall building-mounted lighting be used on the front of a building unless it is decorative in nature.
 - Lighting location and levels should respond to site features such as steps, ramps, walkways, and building entrances.
 - Light posts should be placed so that they do not create hazards for pedestrians or vehicles.
 - The design of exterior building illumination should avoid exposed light fixtures. Flashing or moving lights should not be permitted.

SIGNS

Objective. *Establish a uniform signing system that effectively provides essential information to approaching motorists/pedestrians and maintains the architectural character of the building.*

Signs are one of the most prominent visual elements on the street. If well-designed, signs add interest and variety to a building's facade. On the other hand, signs, more than any other single feature, can detract from even the most attractive storefront and clutter its surroundings. An appropriately designed sign should:

1. Identify the business clearly and attractively;
2. Enhance the building on which it is located; and
3. Make a positive contribution to the general appearance of the street and neighborhood.

All Signs

- The sign shape should be kept simple and regular.
- Text should be written in a style that is simple and easy to read. Avoid script and complicated lettering styles.
- Signs should be compatible with the architecture and color of the building.
- Signs should be composed of durable, weather resistant, architectural-quality materials with a long life-span. Avoid signs which look home-made or have a residential character.
- Sign fabrication and installation should be by a qualified, experienced professional.
- Indirect lighting should be shielded or directed so that it does not adversely affect surrounding properties or the vision of motorists and pedestrians.
- Signs with moving parts or blinking, flashing or fluttering lights or parts should not be allowed, except for time or temperature signs.
- Electrical elements such as wires, conduits, junction boxes transformers, ballasts, switches, and panel boxes should be concealed from view.
- Structural supports should be enclosed and not visible.
- All visible sides and edges should be finished.
- Signs which advertise businesses and services no longer available should be removed.

- Separate internally illuminated letters/logos are preferred over internally illuminated box signs. Signs painted directly on the building or applied to a building surface should be discouraged and in all cases be subject to the same regulations as mounted signs.
- Awning signs and symbols which are designed, painted, or sewn onto awnings should be permitted. Internally illuminated canopies or awnings should be avoided since they have a bright, overpowering appearance.
- Signs should be no lower than the top of a display window head or eight feet high, whichever is lower. Signs should not be located on the roofs or on the side walls of buildings.
- All proposed signs should be reviewed in conjunction with the architecture to ensure compatibility with the building's overall architectural character.
- Portable signs, temporary signs, plastic flagging and other advertising paraphernalia should be discouraged. If allowed for temporary events such as a grand opening, a permit procedure with a time limit should be strictly enforced by the City.
- Neon window signs should be prohibited.
- Billboards should be prohibited.

Signs for Historic Buildings

- The use of internally illuminated and neon signs should be discouraged. Low intensity, indirect lighting is preferred.
- The lettering style and color selection should match the architectural character of the building and have an historic Aflavor.®

Planning

Downtown Fenton should be designated a Planned Unit Development (PUD) and detailed design criteria established. This will help ensure that the integrity and character of the area is maintained. The City should also move forward on redeveloping the east side of Leroy Street over to Walnut Street. This will recreate the “streetwall” effect in downtown and provide new space to attract desired uses.

