

ReInvent Inkster

Strategic Action Plan

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Inkster's past and current Mayor and City Council
ReInvent Inkster Steering Committee
Inkster City Manager and Community Development Staff
Inkster residents
Michigan State University Extension

History and Introduction

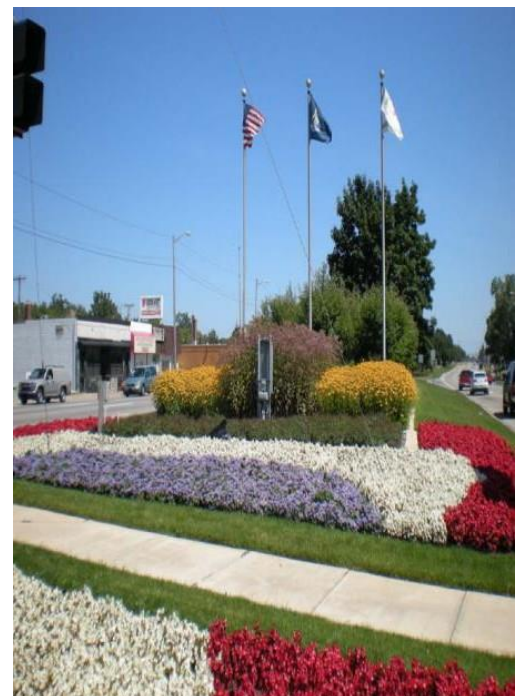
Inkster was incorporated as a city in 1964 and is an inner ring suburban community. It is bounded by Annapolis (South), Henry Ruff (West), Cherry Hill (North) and Beech Daly (East). Located in central Wayne County, it is approximately eight miles west of Detroit with land area of 6.28 square miles. Inkster is the hometown of many American notables. Talented musicians, singers, athletes and scientists were born and raised in the city which served as a nurturing community offering everyone the opportunity to excel and follow their dreams. Among those most renowned are:

- Earl Jones, Bronze medal winner in the 1984 Olympics
- Marcus Fizer, professional basketball player
- Wade Flemons, noted R&B singer, musician and songwriter who wrote “Stand by Me” recorded by the Platters. He was also an early member of the Earth, Wind and Fire group
- Keshawn Martin, professional football player
- The Marvelettes, an all-girl singing group from at Inkster High School that recorded the first Motown #1 hit single in 1961
- Jeralean Talley, super-centenarian; the world’s oldest living person until her death at age 116.
- Tyrone Wheatley, professional football player
- Congressman Vern Buchanan grew up in Inkster and graduated from Inkster High School
- J’Leon Love, professional boxer
- Dr. Woodrow Whitlow, Jr., Director of the National Aeronautics Space Administration at the John H. Glenn Research Center at Lewis field, Cleveland, Ohio

Inkster is primarily a “bedroom” community with some light industrial and commercial development. Inkster is mostly developed, with some significant open space remaining along the Lower Rouge River. Michigan Avenue, a major east/west highway, bisects the City into a northern half and a southern half. While it is experiencing some infrastructure development, including some sanitary and storm sewer construction and multi-residential units, Inkster still suffers from high levels of property vacancy and low levels of employment.

The city of Inkster is a financially distressed community. It operated under a consent agreement with the state of Michigan from 2012 to 2016 coming out of a five year plan in just four years.

The city of Inkster sits at a crossroads. It can continue to wait for economic recovery to begin and follow the same path as before. Or can position itself to succeed going forward by implementing strategies to reduce impacts from future economic downturns.



ReInvent Inkster Strategic Planning Process and Steering Committee

The ReInvent Inkster steering committee was formed to begin the work of addressing many issues in Inkster. Its objective was to enhance the possibilities of economic recovery and community revitalization. Launched in March, 2013 at former Mayor Hampton's State of the City Address, "Reinvent Inkster" is a results-oriented 12-18 month process to identify realistic Inkster-based solutions to improve the City's opportunities for economic recovery. By gaining better insight into the community's needs, we can obtain greater efficiencies in providing City services that add value to our citizens.

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) worked with the Steering Committee to identify key stakeholders to assist with organizing, and facilitating community and stakeholder educational meetings, nine (9) focus group listening sessions and a four-day charrette process.

As a result of this process, we developed a shared economic and community action plan that is the right fit for Inkster and will move Inkster forward. In addition, the plan identifies strategies to:

- Diversify and grow the tax base to increase prosperity for the city, residents and businesses
- Create a strong and vibrant community based on the city's many assets
- Develop a shared vision that builds on Inkster's rich history
- Facilitate development of a sustainable Inkster
- Ensure residents receive value and are valued.

A *Strategic Growth Plan* incorporates economic development with community development to create a short term (three years) plan to direct activities to implement the community master plan. There are several different methods for creating a plan.

The process of completing a New Economy strategic growth plan for ReInvent Inkster moved through the following steps:

1. Develop public engagement framework
2. Stakeholder Identification
3. Stakeholder education and coordination with key stakeholders in adjoining communities and other regional entities
4. Asset Identification through mapping workshops
5. Vision and objectives setting
6. Technical analysis of assets
7. Strategic focus areas development and analysis
8. Initiative development
9. Prioritization
10. Plan preparation, vetting and adoption

The process is not necessarily linear. Asset identification and analysis are mostly a continuous process. Public engagement is important throughout the process. The success of this plan will depend on creating a common vision and strategies with broad support and key stakeholder groups taking ownership for moving forward. Communities that tie strategies and vision to community assets will be successful in moving forward to grow and prosper.

This plan is designed to build on the work done by the community with previous planning projects (such as the Michigan Avenue corridor study commissioned by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Downtown Design guidelines adopted by the Downtown Development Authority) and to act as an implementation plan for the Inkster Master Plan.

Stakeholder Identification

The most critical requirement to the success of strategic growth plans is getting and keeping all the key stakeholders at the table. If everyone is not at the table, the plan will be incomplete. If everyone is not there, discussion about a common vision and key strategies will not be broad-based enough, and without that there will be an inadequate consensus and commitment to implementation by all the major stakeholders. In addition, key stakeholders serve as gatekeepers to the community and can endorse or block projects. They need to be at the table from the beginning. The Reinvent Inkster steering committee engaged in a stakeholder identification process to ensure participation of the varied viewpoints of the residents and business owners within the community. The Reinvent Inkster Steering committee developed a comprehensive list of potential citizens, business leaders, organizations and agencies, government officials (state and local) and other institutions involved or doing business in the city. Contact information for each of the names on the list was acquired and each was sent an invitation to participate at all phases of the project.

Community and Stakeholder Education

Two stakeholder education sessions were held. The purpose of these sessions was to brief the community on the project and share information from the research and analysis done by the team to this point. Economic changes in employment and industry, changes in demographics and market preferences were discussed. The concept of placemaking as an economic and community development tool was introduced.

People's attitudes about where they want to live, work, shop and play are changing. According to the National Association of Realtors (NAR) "2013 Community Preference Survey," 60 percent of respondents favor a neighborhood with a mix of houses, stores and other businesses that are within walking distance, rather than neighborhoods that require driving between home, work and recreation.

Respondents indicated that while the size of a home or yard does matter, most are willing to compromise on size for a preferred neighborhood and less commuting. For example, 55 percent of respondents were

willing to forgo a home with a larger yard if it meant they could live within walking distance of schools, stores and restaurants.

Focus Group Listening Sessions

Nine focus groups listening sessions were held throughout the community in the spring of 2014, looking at issues, assets and barriers. The intent of these sessions was to get resident and stakeholder responses to a set of questions. No names are attached to any comments. The information gathered in these group session helped inform the planning process but the source of the information remained anonymous. The responses helped the charrette team shape the areas of analysis and strategic focus areas within the plan. The same five questions were asked at each focus group:

1. What is the outside perception of Inkster?
2. What is the largest problem facing the city of Inkster?
3. What makes Inkster unique and special?
4. What is stopping Inkster from getting better?
5. What is the economic purpose of Inkster? (its role in the region)

The negative assets or barriers to making Inkster a vibrant prosperous place to live were many and varied. Five were consistently identified as the most important to overcome and these helped shape the strategic focus areas.

- Crime
- Council & Staff
- Apathy
- Poverty
- Lack of Leadership



ReInvent Inkster Charrette

In preparation for the charrette, several design and economic analyses were performed. Initial economic analysis looked at jobs density and employment sectors, wages, housing costs and vacancy rates, potential residents, and regional employment nodes. A commercial zoning analysis was performed looking at supply of commercial parcels within the city. A pedestrian based neighborhood analysis was completed resulting in 17 walkable neighborhoods being identified. Each of these neighborhoods has differing assets and needs which were addressed during the charrette.



The charrette process is based on public input, feedback loops and application of technical expertise. The charrette began with a public input session the first evening with 49 people in attendance. Participants worked through a series of exercises to develop a vision, identify assets and develop action items to move Inkster forward.



Inkster Today

(As identified by residents during Charrette process August 25 to 29, 2014)

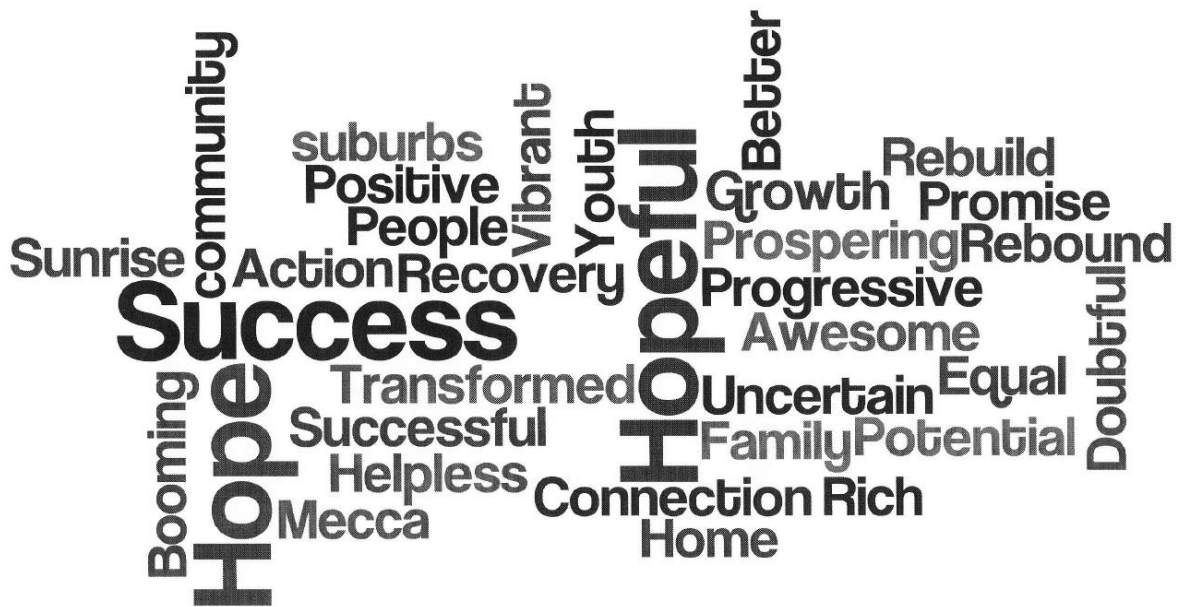


Vision

Inkster will be a thriving community with a strong commercial downtown. There will be a mix of uses such as retail, restaurants and housing. The downtown will be linked to its strong neighborhoods by walking, biking, and a bus network. The center will be linked to nearby job centers by transit serving the Michigan Avenue corridor. Neighborhoods will be anchored by quality housing and supported by neighborhood parks and commercial nodes. The neighborhoods will be walkable and bikeable to allow residents to meet daily needs without getting in a car. Quality schools and recreation activities will serve all residents.

Inkster Tomorrow

(As identified by residents during Charrette process August 25 to 29, 2014)



Goals

In the next 10 years (long term), Inkster is collectively going to work to accomplish the following feasible, measurable goals:

1. Double the tax base of Inkster (8% per year average increase).
2. Increase the total number of jobs in Inkster by 150% (from 2490 to 3735 or 10.5% per year average increase).
3. Increase the population of Inkster by 50% (4.5% per year average increase).
4. Hold budget increases for the city to less than 3% annually, an increase of just 30% over the next decade.

These goals were developed based on information gathered at citizen and business focus groups, the multi-day charrette and other community stakeholders as well as outside experts that the data was shared with. These goals were determined to be the most practical actions to prevent the City of Inkster from slipping back into another fiscal challenge in the future. This is the only path to solvency. Inkster needs to grow the tax base, population and total jobs using the resources they have while not adding to the long-term liabilities.



Strategic Focus Areas

Grow jobs locally & Attract jobs because of place

A robust, focused, and dependable business development effort is essential to assist existing businesses and maintain existing jobs; to grow new jobs by accelerating business growth; and to attract new businesses and jobs to the region. A set of targeted business services designed to **Assist** existing businesses, **Accelerate** the growth of emergent businesses, and **Attract** new businesses will be developed.

This is the work of those organizations focused specifically on business. (A³)

Fix City Practices and Procedures

We must improve the delivery and impact of government services by focusing on quality delivery of service and making them more anticipatory, more responsive, more efficient, more cost effective and more collaborative. Staff needs to be up to date on best practices and procedures. City services need to be delivered in an accessible manner to residents and visitors.

Reclaim Michigan Avenue as a place for pedestrians and transit

Today, Michigan Avenue (US-12) is a major arterial passing through the City of Inkster with an average annual daily traffic of approximately 33,000 vehicles. Several public hearings for the City of Inkster's master plan update and Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT) *US-12 (Michigan Avenue US-12) Conceptual Corridor Study* were held to determine the future of Michigan Avenue (US-12) within city limits. In summary, the consensus from the public was a desire for a pedestrian friendly environment with on-street parking, bicycle facilities, improved pedestrian crossings and updated streetscape elements. On the land use side, citizens are looking for mixed-use retail and office with restaurants, public spaces and entertainment venues supported by higher density residential.

Improvements include non-motorized connection of commercial spaces, improving local retail options within the city, mixed-use development around key nodes, and widening the range of food, entertainment and cultural opportunities throughout the Corridor. They also include ensuring that the infrastructure is in place for rapid social networking and free exchange of ideas and communication. Improving the quality of key activity nodes in the city along the corridor is also important.

Create value in existing neighborhoods

The first step for creating value is providing people with options. It is imperative to protect and strengthen the physical and social fabric of residential neighborhoods in an effort to maintain and enhance the overall quality of life. The city also must provide residents with options on how they get around in the community, how they use parks, the type of housing available and what activities can be enjoyed in the neighborhood.

Connect neighborhoods to the center

An essential part of making traditional neighborhoods (the places where we have the greatest public investment in infrastructure) more attractive to rehabilitation and infill development is to physically reconnect them to destinations like businesses, parks, gathering spots and other neighborhoods. These kinds of improvements include connecting key nodes of cultural, entertainment, and networking opportunities with an easy way to travel between them, such as a timely bus route, bike trails, or pedestrian walkways.

Create Place in Inkster

ReInvent Inkster is all about creating unique and vibrant places to enhance our quality of life and attracting people and businesses. Collectively, a city comprises dozens of unique places. However, if a city wants to strategically improve its economic conditions, it should start by targeting a smaller set of places in the city that could benefit from improvement aimed at making them more attractive for employees, tourists, business owners, and young knowledge workers. The resulting improvements to place will be attractive to citizens of all ages.

Action Items

Action items were developed to advance the outcomes within each of the strategic focus areas. These are intended to be achievable tasks and will be addressed in detail in the next section.

Reclaim Michigan Avenue as a place for pedestrians and transit

1. Get the Built Form Right
 - a. Wide sidewalk
 - b. Buildings placed at the sidewalk
 - c. Mixed use buildings
2. Create Nodes of activity
 - a. Focus on a few places
 - b. Start small and grow to fill
3. Create points of interest
 - a. Artwork
 - b. Median improvements
4. Welcome to Downtown Inkster Signage

Grow jobs locally & Attract jobs because of place

1. Pop Up Retail
 - a. Temporary retail to occupy empty buildings
 - b. After six months get permits
2. Assist, Accelerate and Attract businesses (**A³**)

Create more value in existing neighborhoods

1. Establish neighborhood commercial nodes
 - a. Walk to store
 - b. Meet Daily Needs
 - c. No Need to drive to Westland or Dearborn
2. Add parks to neighborhoods
 - a. Pocket Park In Each Neighborhood
 - i. Playground equipment
 - ii. Benches
 - iii. Bike rack
 - b. "Adopt" A Park
3. Fix the vacancies within the neighborhoods
 - a. Pocket Parks
 - b. Incentive process to sell and occupy within 9 months
 - c. Mow Next Door
 - d. Create Neighborhood Clean Crews (to mow, maintain vacant properties)

Connect neighborhoods to the center

1. Complete the sidewalk network
 - a. Have sidewalks on all streets, BOTH SIDES
 - b. Wide sidewalks for retail
 - c. Maintain and clear path
2. Enhance pedestrian network with crosswalks
 - a. Crosswalks at every intersection
 - b. If more than ¼ mile add mid-block crossing
 - c. Make them colorful
3. Bicycle infrastructure throughout city
 - a. Bike Lanes
 - b. Bike Parking (including racks)
 - c. Shared lanes
4. Enhance transit opportunities
 - a. Serve more than Middle Belt and Michigan
 - b. Fixed service connecting nodes and neighborhoods
 - c. Dedicated smaller bus for city route

Fix city practices and procedures

1. Lead by example
 - a. Maintenance and Beautification
 - b. Positive messages
 - c. Embrace Change
 - d. Share the Vision
2. Make it easy to do business with the city
 - a. Easy To Open A Business
 - b. Easy To Get A Permit
 - c. Respond Quickly
3. Provide training to enhance city services
 - a. Public Engagement
 - b. Planning Commission
 - c. Zoning Administration
 - d. Leadership and community development
 - e. staff training

Create Place in Inkster

1. Farmers Market located in a prominent space within the Town Center District
 - a. provide an opportunity for residents to access locally grown food
 - b. create an activity bringing people into downtown Inkster

2. Most Improved Block Competitions
 - a. create a sense of civic pride in neighborhoods
 - b. reward improvements in neighborhoods
3. Annual parade
4. Neighborhood festivals
 - a. create an opportunity to create social capital
 - b. cement identity of neighborhoods with residents
5. Inkster Summer Jazz Festival

Discussion of Action Items (as outlined above)

Reclaim Michigan Avenue as a place for pedestrians and transit

1. Get the Built Form Right

Inkster needs to create codes and ordinances that direct infill and redevelopment. Modifying the existing zoning for the Town Center District to operate on form based coding principles will allow for a pedestrian friendly environment to emerge. The urban pattern of people focused buildings is the pattern that results in a sustainable node or center. The combination of on-street parking and urban buildings carefully screen or fully hide off-street parking. Off-street parking is placed in the interior courts or in the well landscaped gardens to the side or rear of the building. Thriving downtowns or pleasant villages rarely require off-street parking minimums. In many cases today, municipalities prescribe a maximum number of spaces that are allowed, which makes better use of limited space. The DDA Design guidelines should be adopted and coded into the zoning ordinance.

2. Create Nodes of activity

Inkster is currently over capacity for retail zoning. A targeted approach for infill redevelopment is needed. The Michigan Avenue corridor is too long to target the entire length. Targeting key intersections at Inkster Rd and John Daly Rd will allow for pioneer developments to be sustainable and allow these nodes to gradually fill the corridor through the Town Center District.

3. Create points of interest

The median of Michigan Avenue can help to create visual interest in those areas targeted for intensification. Installation of additional landscaping, artwork and other pieces of interest will help to define the “place” of downtown Inkster

4. Welcome to Downtown Inkster Signage

Inkster currently has welcome signs in the median of Michigan Avenue at the entries to the city. Unfortunately these are located in areas that are not targeted as areas of intense mixed use development that would create a downtown. Signage would assist in creating a brand awareness of the mixed use district identified in the master plan and zoning ordinance

Grow jobs locally & Attract jobs because of place

1. Pop Up Retail

“Tactical Urbanism” companies looking to generate brand awareness first utilized the pop-up retail tactic. These first efforts made temporary use of vacant retail spaces by creating an event-like atmosphere for a limited time—sometimes even just one day. For retailers, the focus is generally on marketing or proof-of-concept, rather than producing sales.

Companies, large and small, property owners, artists and community organizations quickly adopted and calibrated the concept for a wide range of purposes. Main streets with vacant store fronts, oversized parking lots, and underutilized public spaces are increasingly being used as local incubators for a seemingly endless number of temporary to permanent commercial and community uses.

In this way, the pop-up trend reflects the new economy where aligning the interests of property owners and local entrepreneurs is happening in a more nimble and creative way.

Finally, the interest and public exposure pop-ups generate by way of their temporary nature provide a powerful tool for sparking long-term change. Successful pop-up stores often earn the right to stay, creating a win-win for the property owner, occupant and neighborhood

Inkster has a large quantity of vacant retail spaces. A process needs to be created to allow for this type of temporary use with the intent of incentivizing the transition from temporary to long term for those entrepreneurs.

2. Assist, Accelerate and Attract businesses

A robust, focused and dependable city business development effort is absolutely essential to assist existing businesses and maintain existing jobs, grow new jobs by accelerating business growth, and attract new businesses and jobs to the community.

In order to succeed in the New Economy, we need a set of targeted business services designed toward this end. This is the work of those organizations focused specifically on business, such as chambers of commerce, incubators, small business assistance centers. Entrepreneurs have led the United States out of every recession in the last hundred years. Consider that in 2007 — just seven years ago — companies less than five years old created nearly two-thirds of the new jobs.

It is critical to the future of this community that we nurture an entrepreneurial culture and support small-business entry and expansion efforts. There are numerous organizations that provide services and programs to support economic diversification and job growth. However, because service and program providers are dispersed by nature, it's difficult for entrepreneurs to locate what they need. An information center for assistance in connecting these services is necessary.

Create more value in existing neighborhoods

1. Create commercial nodes to serve neighborhoods

Inkster currently has commercial activity running along the north - south mile roads separating neighborhoods. Instead of isolating uses from one another, planning true neighborhoods places emphasis on creating quality environments that are not left behind for the newest area next door. Accommodating growth for a diverse array of lifestyles, incomes and needs provides marketable and viable choices that will retain a sense of belonging and identity. An appropriate mix of uses, housing types, and strong design are the backbone of developing livable and sustainable neighborhoods. Each neighborhood should have a balanced mix of uses. Ideally there is a mix of large dwellings, small

dwellings and attached dwellings as well as a mix of income types. Civic spaces and parks are distributed throughout. Retail is present as neighborhood commercial areas outside of the main commercial core or center.

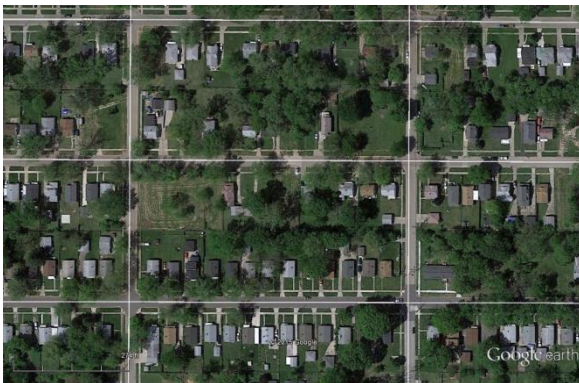
Inkster has an established neighborhood pattern of solid housing patterns and commercial activity along the dividing roads between neighborhoods. Commercial nodes need to be reinforced and infill development focused at these areas as a walkable anchor for the neighborhoods. Initial targets for intensification would be at the intersections of Middlebelt Road and Avondale St., Inkster Rd and Avondale St., Inkster Rd and Carlisle Street.

2. Add parks to neighborhoods.

Parks are one anchor of neighborhoods along with neighborhood retail. Adding parks to neighborhoods without them or providing more accessible parks in those areas with large parks that serve regional recreation needs would increase the value of neighborhoods. Research and best practices show there should be a pocket park within a quick walk of every residence within a neighborhood. These parks can be small and focused on play equipment for young children. These spaces should also contain places to sit such as benches and bicycle racks for parking of a bicycle.

These parks will need to be maintained at a level necessary for use by small children. Given current budget situations, other means of maintaining these parks is necessary. Creating an “Adopt a Park” system encouraging neighborhood groups to maintain and monitor the parks is important. Without a sense of ownership by the neighborhood, parks will not be used, monitored or maintained by the residents.

3. Neighborhood vacancies are a large issue facing Inkster



Currently there is an approximate 15% vacancy rate in housing throughout Inkster. This is comprised of vacant lots and vacant structures and varies from neighborhood to neighborhood with those in the northeast having the lowest vacancy rate. There are several strategies to fix these issues.

The first proposal to address vacant lots is conversion. Several neighborhoods were identified as needing additional parks. Vacant lots could be converted to pocket parks in those areas of need. This eliminates some of the vacant land. Maintenance of these vacant parcels can be addressed by two initiatives; Mow Next Door and Neighborhood Clean Crews to mow and maintain vacant parcels. Keeping vacant parcels mowed and clean adds value to the neighborhoods.



Finally the city needs to reinvent its means of disposing of tax reverted properties. An incentive process to move properties from city ownership to sold, up to code and occupied properties, rather than tax sales resulting in parcels remaining vacant and for sale is needed. Whether this is moving to a land bank process or the city changing its processes to eliminate the constant churn of vacant properties, changes to the system must be made.

Increasing occupancy rates in housing leads to more individuals in neighborhoods which leads to more residential observations of the street. This observation of the street leads to declining criminal activity within neighborhoods.

Connect neighborhoods to the center

To have both vibrant neighborhoods and city center, they each need to be connected by more than automobiles. Mobility options need to include pedestrian, bicycle and transit networks that connect neighborhoods to the center.

1. Complete the sidewalk network

To connect the neighborhoods to the center, to commercial nodes adjacent to the neighborhoods and to other destinations requires a complete sidewalk system. This requires sidewalks on both sides of all streets. Sidewalks must be in good condition and maintained with a clear overhead. In retail areas, sidewalks need to be of an appropriate size with a minimum width of eight feet. This will require a sidewalk inventory and inclusion of the sidewalk completion plan in the Capital Improvements Plan.

Currently the city has numerous gaps in the sidewalk network as illustrated by the image to the right.

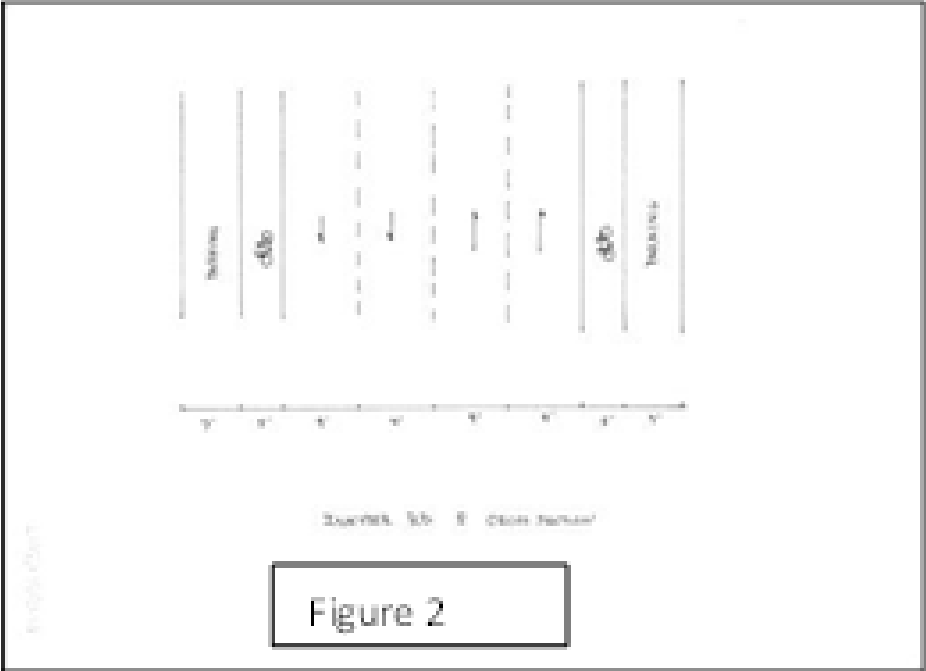
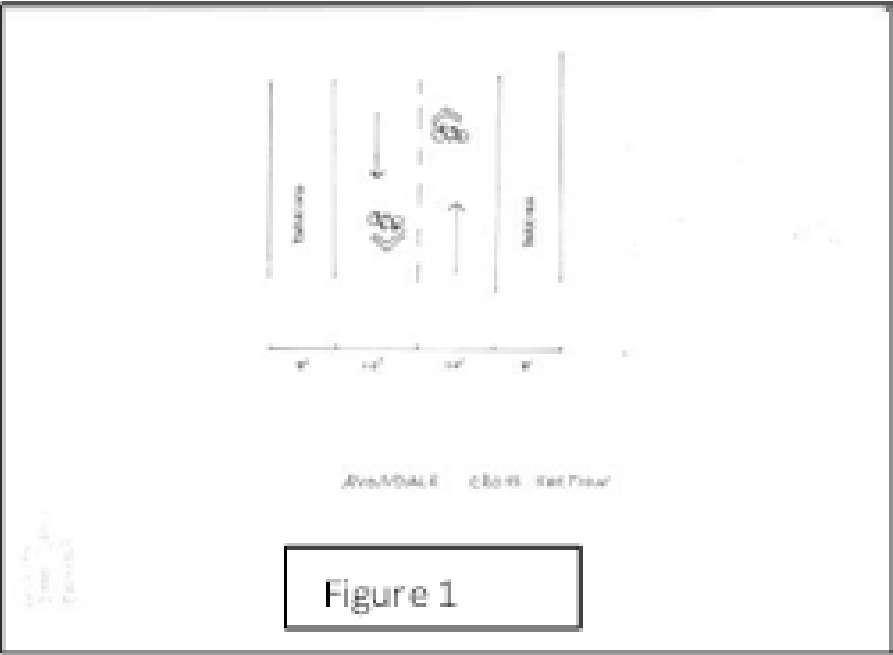
2. Enhance pedestrian network with crosswalks

These sidewalks have to be provided with clear connectivity at intersections. Crosswalks need to be installed and maintained at every intersection. On blocks that are longer than one quarter mile in length a mid-block crossing should be installed. These crosswalks can be traditional in design but more colorful or innovative in nature.

3. Bicycle infrastructure throughout city.

Bicycle infrastructure needs to be installed throughout the city. This would include bike lane installation on major roads. Shared lane markings would be installed on minor roads. Bicycle parking needs to be provided at city owned destinations including the Dozier Recreation complex, other parks and in commercial areas. This allows for people to access these destinations from farther distances than walking and allows them to secure their bicycle. Racks should be unique, colorful to add to design of area.

Streets needs to be reconfigured to incorporate bicycle lanes and shared spaces. By doing this it also slows down vehicle speeds on these streets. The City can take action on its streets and begin a dialogue with the Wayne County Road Commission regarding county roads. City streets that need to be addressed are Avondale, Carlisle, Harrison and John Daly. These streets should be restriped within the existing pavement areas to reflect figure 1 on the following page. The major north south routes, Inkster Road and Middlebelt Road should be reconfigured within the existing pavement as shown in figure 2. This will require cooperation of the Wayne County Road Commission.



4. Enhance transit opportunities.

Current transit service focuses on Michigan Avenue and Middlebelt Road. Inkster has a high population of residents who do not have access to a vehicle for daily needs. Transit opportunities for residents away from these corridors need to be increased. At a minimum, exploring bus service on Inkster Road to meet the needs of residents is a first step. Fixed, dedicated routes connecting the neighborhood nodes with service stops on Michigan Avenue would allow residents to use bus service along that

corridor to get to job centers in Dearborn, Detroit and Ann Arbor. A smaller bus on this dedicated route would serve until transit demand would require a larger full size bus.

Fix city practices and procedures

1. Lead by example.

Transformative change requires leadership and example. If the City wishes to improve it must demonstrate the change it wants to see. In other words, city officials need to lead by example. The city must commit to regular maintenance of city facilities and property. Parks and parking lots need to be mowed and weeded; lighting kept in good repair and damaged equipment repaired.

In addition to improving the physical image of the city, leadership needs to focus on positive messages. The public perception of Inkster is often fueled by negative messages. Regular positive messages about the actions and events in Inkster can shift these perceptions. The city currently maintains a website with this information but needs to establish a means of pushing messages through social media. Digital listserves for email, digital newsletters, pages on services such as Facebook allow for the city to push positive messages and information. A social media presence would allow the city to engage residents on a more personal level and create opportunities to promote events, gather input and manage perceptions.

Change is hard. People resist being forced to change. But if Inkster is going to halt its decline and shift to a path toward prosperity, Council and staff need to focus on embracing change and demonstrate a willingness to look at how things are done and how changes can be made to improve.

The vision developed based on the input from the charrette and focus groups represents the view from stakeholders of what needs to be accomplished for Inkster to thrive. City officials need to embrace and share this vision. The vision drives several of the elements in the plan.

2. Make it easy to do business with the city

Interactions with the city need to be easy, quick and convenient for the client. Customers need to be served quickly and efficiently. The New Economy demands consideration, involvement and coordination of the full range of city services, rather than the current compartmentalization that goes on. Services must be anticipatory, responsive, efficient, cost-effective and collaborative.

Interactions need to be streamlined into a “one stop” process. Customers should not be shuttled from one counter to another to transact with the city. Permit forms should be available at all transactions and staff cross trained to answer basic questions.

Currently city offices are open Monday – Thursday 8:30am - 11:30am and 1:00pm - 4:00pm. This precludes individuals employed during the day from utilizing city services at city hall. Extended evening or lunchtime hours should be considered as a means of serving the public.

Performance standards should be set in place regarding permit or application processing. These standards should be communicated to the applicant at time of submission and monitored for compliance.

3. Provide training to enhance city services.

A high functioning city needs staff that is current on best practices within their field. The expectation for a government official to know their job and perform their job accordingly is basic. But often when volunteers are appointed to their local planning commission or zoning board of appeals, that practice does not always happen. The lack of training and continuing education by those volunteers can be problematic. Having a training and continuing education program can be viewed as the most important and effective way for local governments to avoid lawsuits in planning and zoning issues. If one is a building inspector, tax assessor, or police officer, training is mandated. But many officials and volunteers making decisions about economic development and a community's future, which can easily run afoul of someone's private property rights and other constitutional issues, are not required to have any training in Michigan. With the city council reviewing special use permits and site plans, they should also attend continuing education programs on planning and zoning. It is important that a "critical mass" (quorum or majority) have the background and training to be able to effectively do their jobs and to mentor new members who have not yet had training

Similarly, leadership skills and public engagement training would address the concerns of the focus group participants regarding lack of leadership skills and concerns about council and staff.

There are many training opportunities in Michigan. Common sources of training include:

- Michigan Association of Planning
- MSU Extension Government and Public Policy Team including Citizen Planner
- Michigan Municipal League

Create Place in Inkster

Placemaking is all about creating unique and vibrant places to enhance our quality of life and to attract talent and businesses. Collectively, a metropolitan area comprises dozens of unique places.

However, if a region wants to strategically improve its economic conditions, it should start by targeting a smaller set of places in the region that could benefit from improvement aimed at making them more attractive for employees, tourists, business owners, and young knowledge workers. The resulting improvements to place will be attractive to citizens of all ages.

These kinds of improvements include connecting key nodes of cultural, entertainment, and networking opportunities with an easy way to travel between them, such as a timely bus route, bike trails, or pedestrian walkways. Improvements include non-motorized connection of green spaces, improving local food options within a region, mixed-use development around key nodes, and widening the range of food, entertainment, and cultural opportunities throughout the region. They also include ensuring that the infrastructure is in place for rapid social networking and free exchange of ideas and communication. Improving the quality of key activity nodes in the region and implementing placemaking and related strategies will require a large coordinated effort.

Quality of place is an important consideration in deciding where to locate a business or personal residence. The quality of K-12 and post-secondary educational systems, public infrastructure, and transportation connections are essential requirements for many businesses and residents. Amenity-rich

areas that provide a diversity of cultural, entertainment, natural, and outdoor recreation resources can assist business recruitment and retention efforts and be a key factor in encouraging business start-ups as well as attracting and retaining knowledge workers. These assets help create a positive image, contribute to a city's ability to attract tourists and conventions, and create small-business opportunities

Technology means that smart people and high-growth companies can make money anywhere in the world. They can and will locate in communities that offer them a great quality of life. These people and businesses value connected, safe, convenient and healthy places to live and work.

Connectedness is desired both in terms of infrastructure — from information technology to transportation — and with other people in the community.

Placemaking creates unique and vibrant places to enhance quality of life, as well as attract and retain talent and businesses. One of the weapons in a community's arsenal to improve its economic condition is to make it attractive for employees, tourists, business owners and young knowledge workers. The result will be a place attractive to residents of all ages. The following action items begin this process of creating place.

1. Farmers Market located in a prominent space within the Town Center District.



A market of this nature provides an opportunity for residents to access locally grown food during the growing season. Along with providing access to food it creates an activity bringing people into downtown Inkster. The market would need to be located in a highly visible area that is served by transit. The market needs to be scheduled on a weekend to maximize impact. There are several possible location for a market along the Michigan Avenue corridor.

2. Most Improved Block Competitions.

The goal of this program would be to create a sense of civic pride in neighborhoods and reward improvements in neighborhoods. It also serves as a mechanism to create value in neighborhoods.

3. Annual parade

Civic events such as a parade bring residents into the central business district and help to create civic pride

4. Neighborhood festivals

Events such as this create an opportunity to create social capital and cement identity of neighborhoods with residents. It also allows residents an opportunity to become familiar with and recognize neighbors. This creates a greater awareness of who lives and belongs in the neighborhood improving safety within the neighborhoods.

5. Inkster Summer Jazz Festival

Reintroducing this festival is an opportunity to bring residents and non-residents together and create a positive image of Inkster. When located in a business district, it also will benefit local businesses.

Marketing Inkster

A city can be the most wonderful place in the world, but if no one knows it, the city will not prosper. Successful communities tell their story through powerful experiences and effective marketing. Branding creates value for the community's products for international buyers, as well as creating the sense of identity needed to spur collaboration.

Developing a competitive identity does more for a city than simple marketing. Branding requires many of the same steps needed for region-building, strategic planning and regional investment alignment. Branding includes developing common goals and creating a common vision — who we are, and what we represent to the world — as well as discovering community strengths.

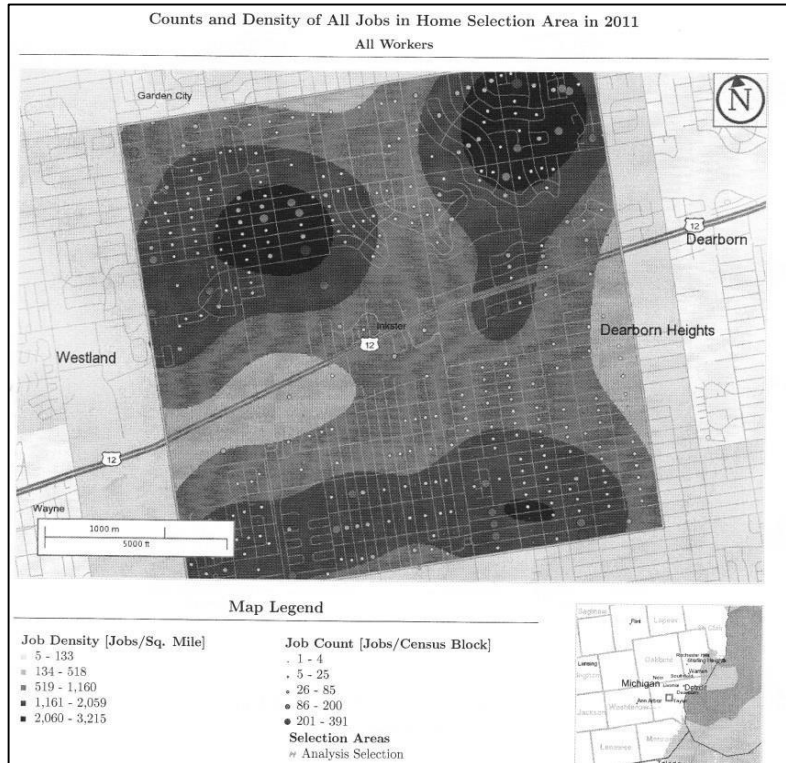
Success projects positive images to residents and outsiders alike, which create a buzz that retains and attracts talented workers. A community's brand represents the stories residents tell about themselves, stories that create a shared understanding of the area's identity and its economic potential.

Successful community leadership requires the skills of telling engaging stories and compelling narratives linking a city's past strengths to its future opportunities.

Current Employment Scenario in Inkster

Inkster is a community commonly referred to as a bedroom community. According to 2011 census data there are 2490 employed within the city and 9,838 residents who are employed within the region. More workers leave the city each day for employment than enter. An analysis of the city shows where those who are employed live in Inkster. It clearly indicates three nodes of employee density within the city. These delineate neighborhoods that can be targeted first to demonstrate change. They have the highest occupancy rates.

Census data shows several employment nodes within the city, anchored in industrial and retail areas.



OnTheMap

<http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

OnTheMap
Start Base Map Selection Results

Work Area Profile Analysis
enter your own subtitle

Display Settings
Characteristic Filter Total Year 2011

Map Controls
Color Key Thermal Overlay Point Overlay Selection Outline Identify Zoom to Selection Clear Overlays Animate Overlays Report/Map Outputs Detailed Report Export Geography Print Chart/Map

Legends
5 - 69 Jobs/Sq Mile 70 - 264 Jobs/Sq Mile **Change Settings**

LEHD Home Help and Documentation Reload Text-Only

Click a Characteristic link in the Summary Report to see more detail.

Age Earnings Industry Sector Race

Total Primary Jobs
2011
Count Share
Total Primary Jobs 2,490 100.0%

Worker Age
Views Bar Chart
2011
Count Share
Age 20 or younger 526 21.1%
Age 20 to 24 1,501 60.3%
Age 25 or older 463 18.6%

Earnings
2011
Count Share
\$1,250 per month or less 651 26.1%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month 936 37.7%
More than \$3,333 per month 903 36.1%

NAICS Industry Sector
2011
Count Share
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting 0 0.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction 0 0.0%
Utilities 0 0.0%
Construction 15 0.6%
Manufacturing 141 5.7%
Wholesale Trade 123 4.9%
Retail Trade 254 10.2%
Transportation and Warehousing 17 0.7%
Information 2 0.1%

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies | e-mail: CES.OnTheMap.Feedback@census.gov

Attachments

1. Prioritized Action List
2. Focus Group Findings (excerpts)

Attachment #1

ReInvent Inkster Prioritized¹ Action List

Council/Staff Actions	Community Actions
1. Positive Messaging	1. Positive Messaging
2. Maintenance & Beautification	2. Mow Next Door
3. Share the Vision	3. Adopt-a- Park
4. Embrace Change	4. Neighborhood Clean Crews
5. Leadership Training	5. Identifying Bike Parking & Bike Lanes
6. Attract and Retain Business (i.e., Pop-Up Retail)	6. Annual Parade
7. Boards, Commissions & Staff Training	7. Most Improved Block Competitions
8. Quick Responses: Safety, Customer Service, Communications, Permits	8. Farmers Market
9. Artwork on Michigan Avenue	9. Neighborhood Festivals & Events
10. Downtown Development with Placemaking principles	10. Inkster Jazz Fest
11. Increased Local & Regional Transit	11. Leadership & Community Training
12. Commercial Code Enforcement	12. Create Sense of Place
	13. Citywide Art Initiative

1. Prioritized by the ReInvent Inkster Steering Committeemembers based on public input. Each member ranked the items and they were prioritized based on the each item’s number of first, second, etc. rankings. Each item also was identified as being either a city (official or staff) action or community (residents) action item.

Attachment #2

The City of Inkster's Focus Group Meetings Findings

As part of the fiscal training and strategic planning process, Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) prepared questions related to Inkster's neighborhoods, community issues and perceptions of Inkster. Listed below are the questions and the responses from residents and businesses collected during the nine focus groups in Inkster, Michigan. Multiple, similar responses are listed once. **Responses are in alphabetical order, not ranked by order of importance.**

What makes Inkster unique and special? (partial list)

Churches
Home of famous people such as Don Barden, the Marvelettes & Tyrone Wheatly
Michigan Avenue
Proximity (ex: close to airport)
Railway accessibility
Recreation Center
Sense of family

What is the Largest Problem Facing Inkster?

Blight
Business environment
Children dispersed into four school districts
City inundated with sex offenders and felons
City works against community groups
Confused community – no identity
Corruption within the city government
Crime
Different treatments from city of permits/zoning
Dumping ground for "others" and no support provided
Emergency shelters
Entitlement mentality
High taxes and high water bills
Housing
Infrastructure/roads
Lack of Leadership
Lack of money
Lack of vision
Malaise, apathy, hopelessness
Not cutting grass on vacant properties and public housing
Not going after resources

Political system seemed hell bent on destruction of Inkster
Poor city leadership
Residents – apathy – complacent
Safety
Smart meters
Years of mismanagement

What is stopping Inkster from getting better?

“Always been that way” attitude
Citizen attitude
City not progressive
City pride
Decision makers don’t listen to youth
Don’t vote on issues
Gang violence
Inkster does not have effective voluntary leadership
Involvement beyond same old/same old
Lack of leadership
Lack of ownership
Lack of youth leadership – no school district focus
Media
Need more community leadership
 -Outside assistance cutoff
 -Lansing
 -Lack of representation
People of Inkster
Residents “enabled” in past
Residents complain but don’t act
Revenue sharing-lack of
Rumors-negative perceptions
Schools
Self-perception low
Stereotypes
Uneducated voters

What is the Outside Perception of Inkster?

A bunch of poor GM/Ford/Chrysler/Dow workers
Bad schools
Blight
DHS/SSA Office – poor and welfare
Drug infested
Gang violence
Inkster: Where you get beaten or killed
Kids are thugs
Lack of retail

Little Saigon
Lumped in with Detroit, Flint
No city government, no police no rules
No community services
No economic base
No good black people.
Poverty
Put it in Inkster if we won't want it.
Rent City
Residents don't care
Slum lord heaven
Stereotyped, racial bias
Too much public housing
Trashy community
Uneducated
Violence, robbery

Parks and Recreation Survey Data

In addition to the focus groups held as part of the MSUE financial training and strategic planning process, a separate parks and recreation survey was developed and completed in Inkster. This process included several 1:1 meetings with community stakeholders focusing on key concerns about youth services and programming within the city. Their input and ideas were taken into consideration as Dr. Nelson and MSUE worked to develop a new Parks and Recreation Plan.

What is stopping Inkster from getting better?

Lack of a plan
Lack of community buy-in
Silos
Residents
Inflight (air traffic)
Lack of visionary leadership
Missing catalyst or spark
Money
Denial and lack of responsibility

What is the one most important action Inkster can take to improve recreational opportunities for your household?

Quality parks and recreation facilities in Inkster
Lacking bike/walking trails
Youth activities needed
Empty, poorly maintained parks and facilities (e.g. bathrooms, drinking fountains)
Wheatley Park
Programs for all age groups from youth to seniors

Need updated and modernized recreation center and pool
South side recreation facility is needed
Need transportation to Dozier Recreation Center
Youth not encouraged to take leadership roles or offer their opinions
Job training

What is the one most important action the City of Inkster can take to improve recreational opportunities?

Want pool back
Recreation Center reopening 7/17
Need more opportunities, period.
Jazz Festival
Parade
Parks: - Clean-up and reopen
 Update restrooms and play equipment
 There is no maintenance at any of the parks
 Need safety in parks
More commitment from parents/guardians to continue Park and Recreation programming
Commitment from community to participate in programs
Trust that will happen and continue
Need P & R dollars – grants?
Introduce new recreation activities
Offer activities for all skills, ages, abilities
Year round activities
Develop calendar, and pop up activities on regular basis
Social activities needed
 - Girl and boy scouts/clubs

Are there good parks in your neighborhood?

Lemoyne Park
Wheatley Park
Parks need upkeep
Nothing to do at neighborhood parks.
Some good parks
Historical cemeteries
No quality parks in walking distance
Tyrone Wheatley Park
No functioning recreation facility
Recreation Center closed
Lemoyne Park is best
Wheatley Park used by kids but no trash cans
Parks not maintained
No programming
Youth Park jobs lacking/ending