

CENTERING A

city

URBAN
SMART
GROWTH

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT



Welcome to

Hudsonville

good people
good living



Ottawa County
Where You Belong



GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY



The Hudsonville Woonerf. Hudsonville photos, illustrations by Rich C. Lakeberg, Ottawa County; historic photos courtesy of the Gary Byker Memorial Library of Hudsonville; all other images credited.

ABOUT SMART GROWTH

DEVELOPMENT – it's inevitable, right? In Michigan, woodlands give way to lumbering, lumbering gives way to farming, farming gives way to industry, commercial and/or residential areas – it's the nature of progress. Growth presents a fantastic opportunity; however, unplanned growth can lead to fractured communities, unnecessary expenses and wasted infrastructure.

SMART GROWTH – is a community-oriented approach to development that protects local character. With this strategy, growth is used to complement and strengthen existing neighborhoods while preserving green space and agricultural lands. Mixed-use buildings and a variety of housing and transportation options echo the traditional approach to town planning.

THE URBAN SMART GROWTH DEMONSTRATION PROJECT – developed by the Ottawa County Planning Commission, serves as a model for creating community planning documents that improve the ability of local leaders to plan for future growth and development.

CENTERING A CITY is an Ottawa County publication that tells the story of Smart Growth and how the Urban Smart Growth Demonstration Project is transforming Hudsonville.

RESEARCH, WRITING AND DESIGN

Grand Valley State Geography and Sustainable Planning Assistant Professor Chad Frederick
chad.frederick@gvsu.edu

Ottawa County Project Support Specialist
Rich C. Lakeberg
rlakeberg@miOttawa.org

INTRODUCTION

Every place changes over time — that much is certain. Sometimes these changes are good, and sometimes they are harmful. Most of the time, change is undirected, and uncontrolled by any person or group. Changes like these are merely the outcomes of general trends.

Just like a strange noise from under the hood of a car can be a mystery to one person, but a tell-tale sign of a particular problem to a trained ear, data about the world can seem like harmless noise to one, and a sign of trouble to another.

In Ottawa County, the professionals who are responsible for detecting these long-range problems saw something troubling for the health and well-being of the community. Something was threatening the rich and prosperous farmlands of West Michigan — lands that the community depends on for economic stability. At the same time, something was threatening the vitality of Ottawa County's city centers — centers which people depend on for goods and services. These changes can be extremely hard to detect to the untrained eye.



“Effective planning isn’t reactionary. Effective planning is proactive.”

Ottawa County Planning and Performance
Improvement Department Director Paul Sachs



Threatening noise in the data

How can something be threatening to both the countryside and the towns?

Rural areas and downtowns oftentimes are described by some people as being in opposition. The truth is that both depend highly upon one another.

The threat is sprawl. Sprawl threatens to gobble up productive farmlands, spinning places which transform soil, skill, and sunlight into wealth for the

community into places of asphalt without character; places which become just another place to pass on the way to somewhere more useful and interesting.

Sprawl also threatens the city centers with empty parking lots and boarded-up businesses. Sprawl turns places that define a community into places that the community avoids.

In the later 1990s, the people in Ottawa County who are trained

to detect these threatening noises noticed that West Michigan was growing in population.

In many ways growth is good. Our economy depends on certain kinds of growth.

But a closer look showed that the charming cities and towns of West Michigan were losing population shortly after the 2000 Census, while at the same time Ottawa County’s quaint townships were growing — rapidly.

Why is this pattern of growth a threat?

When cities lose population, their economy and quality of life deteriorates. With fewer customers, businesses cut back or even close — jobs are lost.

The buildings these shuttered businesses occupied — many of them beautiful examples of our heritage and craftsmanship — fall into disarray and crumble.

The vibrant public spaces full of life and light become quiet, dark, and threatening. When this pattern continues, more people flee to outlying townships, and the city spirals into poverty and lost opportunity.

When townships grow rapidly, they often lose the qualities of life that the people who live there cherish.

The open spaces become filled with hastily built structures that people avoid. The quiet becomes noise. Wildlife loses habitat. The farms become condominiums, shopping centers, and parking lots.

All this productive land that created wealth transforms into places to rent. And, because many of these properties aren't locally owned, income generated from rentals often leaves the region.



An abandoned building in Gary, Indiana. Flight from urban centers can quickly lead to blight. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



With unplanned growth, valuable farmland can quickly turn into subdivisions. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

How did we get here?

At the end of the 19th century, many cities were inhospitable places. The news and problems of major industrial metropolises such as New York City and London came to dominate the public's ideas about all things urban.

Soon after, visionaries like architect Frank Lloyd Wright, writer Ebenezer Howard, and others had a new vision for America: create places which blended the best aspects of the city and the countryside. In practice, these types of communities created places that were distant from the rich employment centers and services of the town center, requiring many of us to spend time commuting; time that would be better spent with family.

In reality, most towns are unlike New York City or London. The vast majority in fact are something completely different – instead of dreary industrial landscapes full of factories and warehouses, West Michigan's downtowns are lively community centers with theaters, colleges, eateries, libraries, and shops.

Nevertheless, this model of development away from the town center



New York City's Lower East Side circa 1915. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS Below left: William H. Winslow Prairie-style house in Oak Park, Illinois, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1894. OAK PARK CYCLE CLUB/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



and dispersing across the countryside has persisted into the present.

Many of us have come to love these bedroom communities. They are in our memories and in the familiar patterns of everyday life.

But we have also come to cherish both the truly rural and the truly urban. Just like the rural and the urban depend on one another, our suburban areas depend on them as well. Both rural and urban areas need our protection.



COURTESY OF THE STATE MUSEUM OF PENNSYLVANIA

Where are we today?

All economies are a reflection of the values of the people who engage in them.

Today's economy is dominated by the largest generation of people since the Baby Boomers were born: Millennials.

Surveys have shown the approximately 73 million American Millennials (and as far as we can tell, the one to follow, "Generation Z") have different tastes in places to live than the generations who came before.

What kinds of places do Millennials desire? A vast amount of research has focused on this question for nearly a decade.

The data seems conclusive: significantly more young people want walkable cities and towns than the generations who left city centers in the 1950s-1980s did. They drive less, and bike more. They buy fewer cars, and taxi more. They rent smaller homes and apartments, love the charm of older buildings, and prefer to "live locally."

Based on previous needs, local housing ordinances often did not allow for smaller square-footage housing units. And even if they did, these types of units were not necessarily allowed in many locations Millennials desire, let alone convenient for a workforce that would benefit from living close to employment centers.

This shift in needs can be reflected in current efforts to incorporate the number of affordable housing options in the County.

LOCAL | A3
MISS MANNERS
Hamilton Middle School students practice manners at Eloquence Day

SPORTS | B4
HOME COMING
Kirk Cousins faces Lions in return to Michigan

Tuesday, December 25, 2018
@HollandSentinel
facebook.com/HollandSentinelNews
\$1.25
TODAY
37/31

The Holland Sentinel

'LACK OF OPTIONS'

Affordable housing cited as chief cause of Holland...

Shut down

Partial government shutdown over border wall could stretch into 2019

What is Holland doing to tackle affordable housing?

HOLLAND — The state of affordable housing was front and center Wednesday at the Holland City Council meeting. Just the day before...

OPINION

It's time to stop resisting affordable housing

I've covered this community at the Sentinel for two years. I've never lived in Holland. I've never lived in Ottawa County. Nearly every weekday for two years, until my last day on Nov. 23, I drove from my apartment in Grand Rapids to the newspaper. That's because it's cheaper for me to do than to live in Holland. In my time covering local government here, I've been a silent observer to conversations about housing. As a millennial and college-educated professional with a full-time job, many times I was frustrated at the assumptions made about those who need affordable housing and resistance of public officials and some residents to allow more of it. The housing issues in Ottawa County...

Affordable housing developer mulls options after denial of tax break

HOLLAND — The Wisconsin developer denied a tax break that would allow it to build a 100-unit, mixed-use development in Holland. The developer, said Sig Strautmanis, partner at General Capital Group. Holland City Council voted 5-3 during its Sept. 19 meeting to deny a request from the company for a tax break that would allow it to build a 100-unit, mixed-use development in Holland. The developer, said Sig Strautmanis, partner at General Capital Group. Holland City Council voted 5-3 during its Sept. 19 meeting to deny a request from the company for a tax break that would allow it to build a 100-unit, mixed-use development in Holland.

Grand Haven approves plan for affordable housing

Mayor Geri McCaleb stressed the need for single-family homes in the area and said many affordable homes have been turned into short-term rentals for the summer months. "Those are single-family homes that are taken off the market," she said. "I don't want to extend them anywhere outside districts where they are already allowed, so they don't cut into that housing stock." City Manager Pat McGinnis will add to the plan quarterly with annual progress reports for the council to review.

Housing experts discuss affordable housing issues, solutions

HOLLAND — The complexity of the affordable housing issue in Ottawa County was the focus of a panel event March 5 at the Herrick District Library. About 50 people attended the Living Sustainably Along the Lakeshore event where four housing experts spoke, and were able to answer questions. Discussions centered around defining "affordable housing," misconceptions with stigma sometimes attached to "affordable housing." "Using different terminology doesn't unpack the stigma that comes with the idea of who deserves affordable housing and who doesn't," Kilpatrick said. "So what we really need to do is recognize that we all deserve some level of affordability and the real question is: How do we get it and for whom are we working?" When people hear affordable housing, usually they picture a government-subsidized housing project, when in reality their prices down, he said. Kilpatrick and Frederick talked a lot about flaws in how municipalities have historically zoned land, because it tends to discourage density. Higher density in housing projects is more productive in economic value, Kilpatrick said. This is because multiple households can share public infrastructure, which is one of the most expensive costs of living. Urban land-use policies make housing less affordable, Frederick explained. "The real problem is the explained. The solution? Upzoning. "Upzoning is when you take your regulation book and zoning guide for the city and start taking places that were previously only available for single-family detached homes, and you make them available to multifamily housing," Frederick said. Upzoning diversifies land use, decreasing scarcity, Frederick said. Getting upzoning to become policy can be difficult, he said, even though it supports basic fairness and increased livelihood Maxwell explained. This could mean living in more dangerous or unhealthy environments, or away from community resources. "We see quite a varied population of different genders, ages and employment statuses," said Maxwell, who works at Community Action House. The Community Action House food pantry serves between 1,200-1,600 clients a year, and community kitchen serves 200-400 people yearly. "Addressing this issue is going to take a coordina-

A local life

A 2019 study entitled ‘Urban revival by Millennials? Intraurban net migration patterns of young adults, 1980-2010,’ published by the Journal of Regional Science, shows Millennials favor living in urban neighborhoods more than previous generations. Analyzing U.S. Census migration data from the past three decades, researchers clearly saw a pattern of increased urbanization.

Why a tilt toward city centers? Millennials seem to want to know their neighbors and be part of an authentic community. They like sidewalks, and places to walk to. They value sustainability, which means a clean environment, a fair society, and a stable economy.

Interviewed by The Washington Post for a December 2019 real estate article, a Denver, Colorado, Re/Max realtor Kerron Stokes summed up Millennials’ desires: “As a whole, Millennials are very interested in a sense of community and place a priority on the neighborhood.”

Most importantly of all, data reveals Millennials have smaller families and start them later.



Smaller homes near urban centers, non-motorized transport and a sense of community are what Millennials seem to seek out. STOCK PHOTOS

“Younger generations seem to make their decisions about where they want to live first, and then decide what job they want later. Older generations seem to believe that you go get a good job and you live wherever that is. This represents a major shift.”

Michelle Fare, Hudsonville Downtown Development Authority and Hudsonville Area Chamber of Commerce

Pew Research Center statistics show just under half (46%) of Millennials 25-37 were married in 2018. Millennials are also waiting longer to become parents. In 2016, 48% of

Millennial women ages 20-35 were mothers, compared to the 57% of Generation X women surveyed at the same age in 2000.

Delaying starting

families, choosing to live closer to urban centers, and sustainability concerns reveal a desire for built environments which support a particular kind of life — a local life.

What do these environments look like?

Frankly, these environments look like downtown Holland and Grand Haven. The benefits of these environments is that they are denser, which takes up less land — land that is better used for farms, places to recreate, and homes for wildlife. Plus, they are cheaper; when things are closer together, it takes less ‘stuff’ to connect them: shorter water lines and sewers, fewer electric and gas lines, etc.

Likewise, when things are closer together, more people can use the same amenities, like parks and libraries, which makes them cost less per person, stretching tax dollars.

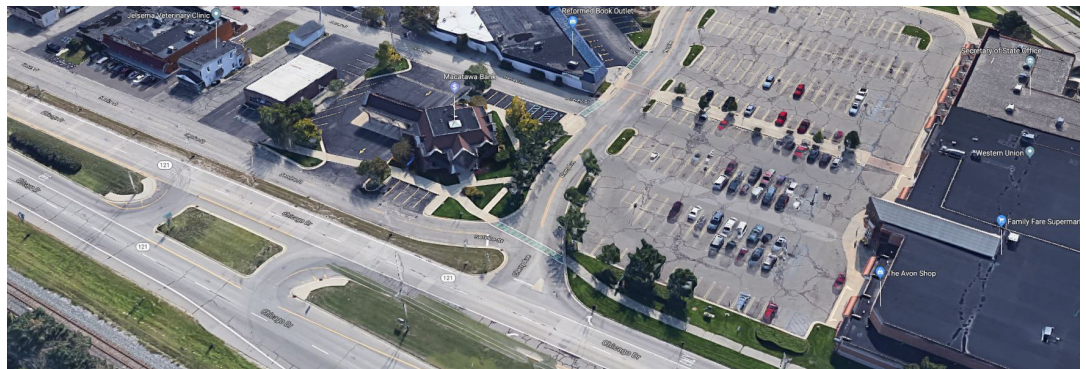
What is standing in the way of providing these environments?

What stands in the way of providing these more urban environments is, ironically, ourselves. Mentally, what we need is an accurate understanding of what a return to good urban form in a small and mid-size town means.

Many people still think of density as New York City and Chicago. The difference between New York City (with its 10-20,000 people per square mile) and Holland (at only 3-4,000 per square mile) is vast.



Above: Downtown Holland offers old architecture, modern amenities and is pedestrian-friendly. Hudsonville (below) did not develop with walkability in mind.



No one is arguing to increase density to those levels. But the difference between downtown Holland and downtown Hudsonville (at about 1,700 per square mile) is also vast.

Creating this type of downtown area is to go from Hudsonville to Holland, not from Hudsonville to New York City, or even to Grand Rapids.

Additionally, providing these environments does not mean changing the entire city, any more than developing Grand Haven means building a sea of shops and condominiums all the way to Allendale.

These places are inherently walkable. And, since the average person doesn't want to walk too far, these places tend to be less than a mile in diameter.

Physically, what is needed is a nucleus, an identifiable city center.

Towns like Holland and Grand Haven have many opportunities for building on what they already have: ‘infill development,’ which means turning unused parcels of land into places that complement the neighborhood; and in the best of circumstances, fill a vital need such as

SEE PAGE 8

What do these environments look like?

FROM PAGE 7

housing or job sites.

But some towns like Hudsonville grew so fast in prior decades that they now lack a center. This raises the important question of where to begin.

A new rule book

Politically, what we need is a set of rules that allow developers to respond to the new market signals, yet still maintain the character and design aesthetic of the community. Some towns and villages have taken a second look at their zoning regulations to see if they are inhibiting the necessary kind of investment to create a thriving community.

Local planners have already made huge progress at the state level removing barriers to funding which support developers to create these places.

For example, one source of state funding for supporting downtown development was, ironically, limited to communities which already have a downtown.

However some Michigan cities and towns lack even a central nucleus upon which to build.

One such town is Hudsonville.

A HUDSONVILLE GROWTH TIMELINE

1848: Homer E. Hudson buys land in Georgetown Township, develops it into a nursery.

1873: Hudson deeds 20 acres to the community and names it Hudsonville. Tamarack Swamp, which borders the village, hampers development.

1870s: Chicago and West Michigan Railroad is built through Hudsonville.

1890s: Dutch immigrants arrive and drain swamp. Farms develop and produce onions, celery, other crops.

1890s-1920s: Population growth brings churches, schools and stores. Population in 1910 hits 800.



Homer E. Hudson



A stretch of Division Street looking from the south in 1916.

1923: A two-lane road, Pike 51, is built through Hudsonville. It later becomes M-21, also known as Chicago Drive.

1940s-1950s: Hudsonville's growth increases after World War II. By the 1950s the population surpasses 1,000. Pike 51 is converted into a four-lane double highway and renamed M-21.

1957: Hudsonville officially becomes a city.

1963: The population grows to 2,650.

1966: Municipal water becomes available.

1971: Municipal sewage system is constructed. I-196 extends through countryside south of city, bringing more residents and commerce.



De Weerd's Foodlanes in 1970.

1973: The population surpasses 3,500; Hudsonville celebrated its 100th birthday.

1980s-1990s: A new city hall and fire station are built along with more homes. Buttermilk Creek Industrial Park and the Hudsonville Business Park are built.

2004: M-6 is completed.

Ottawa County Planning Commission selects Hudsonville for its Urban Smart Growth Demonstration Project.

2005: MSU Small Town Design Initiative conducts series of community forums to determine residents' preferences for community image and architectural styles, paving the way for the Architectural Design Elements Portfolio (ADEP).

2006: ADEP completed, adopted into city zoning ordinance. Downtown Master Plan work begins.

2007: Downtown Master Plan adopted by city.

2008: ADEP, Downtown Master Plan win American Institute of Architects Regional and Urban Design Honor Award, Michigan Association of Planning Outstanding Project Award.

2009: Work begins on Downtown Zoning Ordinance.

2012: Downtown Zoning Ordinance adopted, provides framework to implement Downtown Master Plan.

2013: Work begins on Citywide Master Plan, four 'Guiding Principles' developed.

2014: Mobile kiosks placed around city to inform and gather public opinion.

2015: Imagine Hudsonville 2030 visioning plan approved, used as springboard for developing a Citywide Zoning Ordinance.

2017: Terra Square project completed; wins Michigan Municipal League Award.

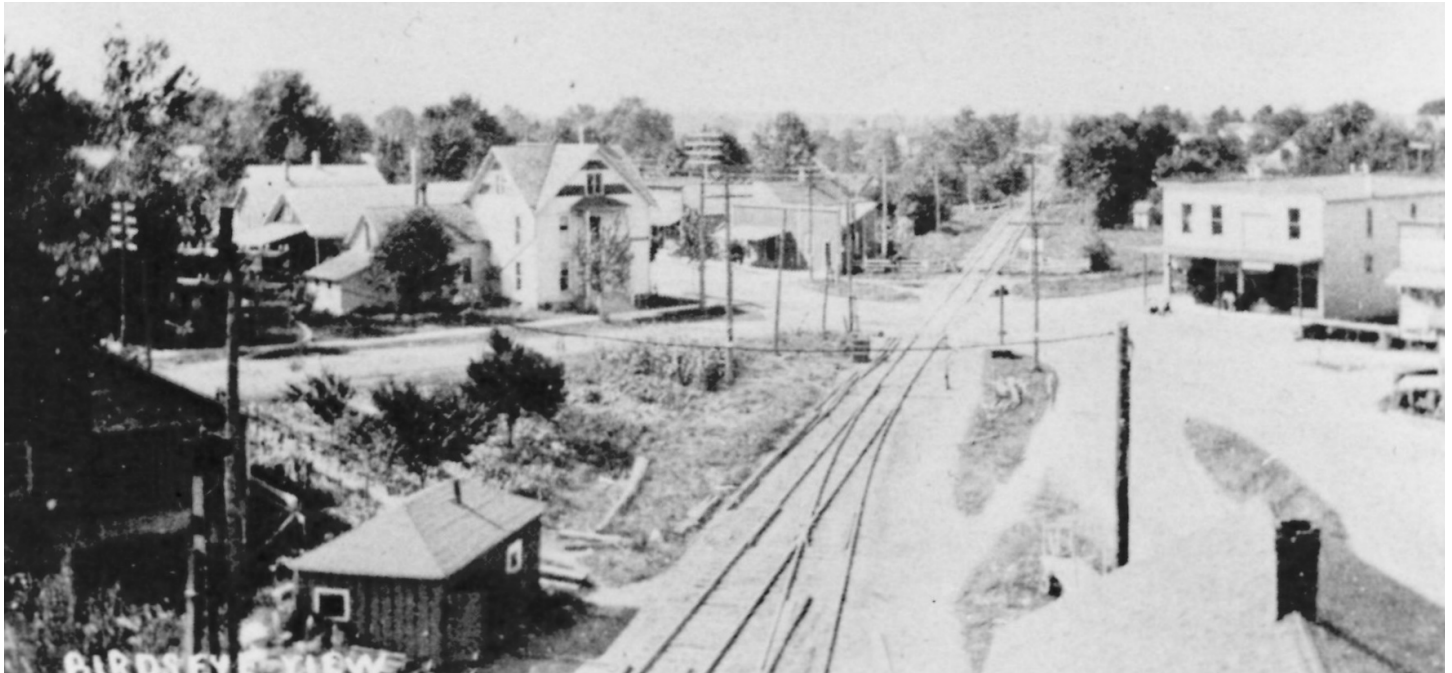
2018: Harvey Street Woonerf and Hudson Center three-story, mixed-use building completed.



The new City Hall opened in 1994.

— History excerpts from Hudsonville.org

Creating a town center



Hudsonville in the early 1900s.

Shouldering the burden to provide places for people cannot be left to towns like Holland and Grand Haven, nor should the economic and social benefits of these places be excluded from towns like Hudsonville.

The creation of a downtown like Holland's was not an accident; it was the result of concerted and intentional efforts by its first settlers. Holland's Centennial Park, for example, was cleared for a market square not long after settlement in 1847.

Just like Holland, Hudsonville's downtown needs to be created with the same kind of concerted and intentional efforts.

Things are a bit different



Service Street/Chicago Drive looking west.

now, however. First, we are not creating a town center out of an empty lakeshore or forest, but from within an existing town.

And also, to be honest, we are out of practice; most planners will admit that. As urbanist James

Kunstler said recently, "We threw all our knowledge of city building in the garbage after World War II."

A thousand years of history and expertise seems out of reach.

Thankfully, people are trying to excavate this

knowledge. The Congress of New Urbanism is trying to piece together the principles of good urban form and function.

These efforts have resulted in many approaches to city building, but one stands out: Smart Growth.

Hudsonville and Smart Growth

“Smart Growth is a way to build cities, towns, and neighborhoods that are economically prosperous, socially equitable, and environmentally sustainable.”

Smart Growth America

At its core, Smart Growth, according to the nonprofit advocacy organization Smart Growth America, is an approach to development that encourages mixed use, development in existing neighborhoods, transportation options and community engagement.

In response to the concerning patterns of dispersed development in the latter 1990s and early 2000s throughout Ottawa County, the Ottawa County Planning Commission developed the Urban Smart Growth Demonstration Project (USGDP).

Guided by Smart Growth principles, the USGDP was created to demonstrate that, through careful planning, our urban communities have the ability to attract and retain new and existing residents.

The USGDP would be done by developing a highly visual, graphics-based master plan and zoning ordinance that would improve the ability of Ottawa County’s urban communities to effectively plan for future growth and development.

Using an application and scoring process, the planners determined Hudsonville was the perfect fit.

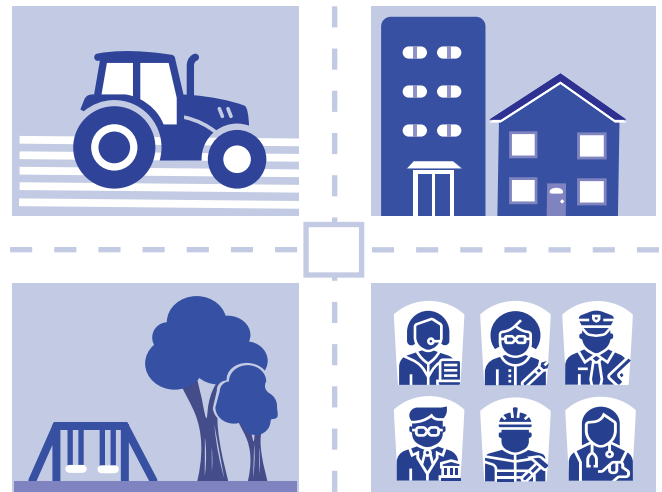
“It was the right timing for them,” Ottawa County Planning and Performance Improvement Department Director Paul Sachs said. “They needed an update to the master plan and zoning code.”

Gathering the data

In 2004, Hudsonville hired The Chesapeake Group, an investment banking and strategic advisory organization, to perform a market assessment. This assessment revealed a need for much: a permanent economic development partnership group, family-oriented outdoor niche retail, a permanent farmers’ market, redevelopment incentives, support for quality housing, and regional cooperation. The report’s author even told city officials the market demand potential for the 32nd Street/I-196 interchange was unlimited.

In 2005, the City of Hudsonville and the Ottawa County Planning Commission forged a unique partnership to implement the USGDP. At the same time, Hudsonville began working with Michigan State University’s Small Town Design Initiative to develop architectural design ideas, create a future vision, build consensus, generate ideas, and more.

THE 10 PRINCIPLES OF SMART GROWTH



- 1 Mixed land uses
- 2 Take advantage of compact design
- 3 Create a range of housing and employment opportunities and choices
- 4 Create walkable neighborhoods
- 5 Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- 6 Preserve open space, farmland, environmental areas
- 7 Direct development toward existing communities
- 8 Provide a variety of transportation choices
- 9 Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
- 10 Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Hudsonville and Smart Growth

Let the forums begin

A series of community forms hosted by the Small Town Design Initiative hashed out citizen preferences for community image and architectural styles, paving the way for the creation of an Architectural Design Elements Portfolio, an architectural guidebook for the community.

Armed with information from the forums, work began on the new City of Hudsonville Master Plan with Nederveld Inc. A series of public workshops, visioning sessions, focus group dialogues and Chicago Drive design meetings with MDOT in 2006 guided the planners and the City Commission to a cohesive vision. The initial Downtown Master Plan was officially adopted by the City Commission and supported by the Ottawa County Planning Commission in 2007.

From a zoning ordinance to a visioning plan

Over the next few years, the County, city, and Nederveld Inc., worked to develop a new Downtown Zoning Ordinance. Once completed, the Zoning Ordinance provided the framework for developing a Citywide Master Plan. In 2013, the city and County planners developed four 'Guiding Principles' for the city's future: A 'Distinctive City', a 'Vibrant City', a 'Livable City' and a 'Connected City.' These four principles became the basis for the new visioning plan: Imagine Hudsonville 2030

To keep the public involved and garner support for the plan, city and County officials looked at the idea of a 'charrette.' Most charrettes take place in a civic center, such as a library or city hall.

What is a charrette?

As useful as Smart Growth Principles are, implementing them requires care. Many of the problems we face regarding the built environment are the result of a few people implementing their grand vision of society without regard for one of America's most cherished values: democracy.

Interestingly, Hudsonville's built environment provided an example of how the lack of a center impacts the community: it creates difficulties in reaching out to the public. In most cities which have a center, many of the people can be found there: working, shopping, and socializing. A method for engaging the public, the 'charrette,' is often used.

A charrette is an intense planning session where residents, developers, and planners work together to create a vision for a parcel, space, or even an entire town.

It is a forum for ideas, offering the critical advantage of a sense of ownership over the process, and allows the public to meet face-to-face with planners and designers so they can express their desires.

The many different activities which can be used at a charrette all have one thing in common: they allow anyone who participates to effectively co-author the plan.

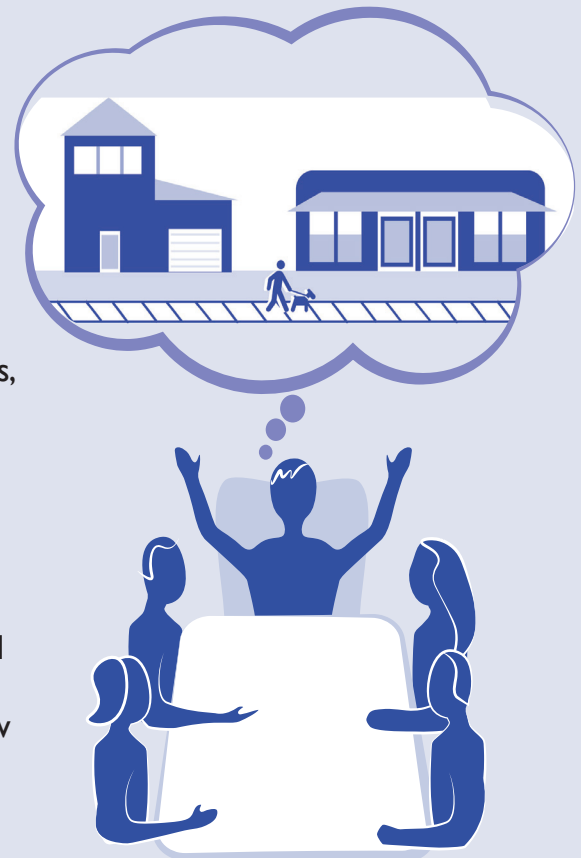
charrette | noun

cha•rrette

A meeting in which all stakeholders in a project attempt to resolve conflicts and map solutions.

Etymology

The term charrette means 'little cart' in French. In the 19th century, French professors would showcase and foster discussion of art students' work by hauling a little cart around town.



Hudsonville and Smart Growth

In dispersed cities like Hudsonville, civic buildings are not well-frequented by the public.

“It’s really hard for most people to get to meetings, unless you hold them at different places and at different times of the day,” said Ottawa County’s Paul Sachs.

Without a city center, how could stakeholders host a fruitful charrette? The planners had to get creative.

Using the Small Town Design Initiative forum data from years prior as a springboard, the planners hosted a series of workshops, open houses and focus groups to develop a game plan. Their solution: a mobile charrette. Informational kiosks were created to engage residents at places they used every day, such as grocery stores.

Deployed throughout the city, these kiosks helped to both inform the public and gauge public opinion.

“(The kiosks) were six foot tall and four-sided,” said Sachs. “Each side described a pillar of the master plan. There also were survey cards that people could peel off and fill out. This vital feedback was submitted right back into these kiosks.”

The kiosks also provided links to an online survey via a QR code. Between the paper and digital surveys, the planners received more than 300 responses.

“The kiosks were a clever way for us to gather community input while sharing the vision consistently, not at just one meeting,” said Sachs. “That was big.”

The results of the input process conveyed insights into the future vision of the city, aesthetic



A citizen reaches for a comment card at a kiosk at Gemmen’s Home and Hardware in Hudsonville.

preferences of the community, goals of the citizens, how people use their city, and how they perceive the city today.

Using this community data, the planners completed the Imagine Hudsonville 2030 visioning plan. It was approved by the city in 2015.

With the nucleus of the downtown identified, the planners had their bull’s-eye: The Downtown Development Authority Zone. Since then, with assistance from Ottawa County planners, Hudsonville officials and the DDA have been busy remaking this community.

Stakeholders Speak: Implementation Tactics & Lessons Learned

Creating a new paradigm

Q & A with Ottawa County Planning & Performance Improvement Director Paul Sachs

Why Hudsonville?

We did an application process for this project. Who wants in? Who is willing to completely rewrite their master plan? Who is willing to completely rewrite their zoning code and do something that no other community has ever done before? All seven of our urban communities said “we want in; we want to try this!”

We had an interview process and a scoring system – Hudsonville elevated to the top for many reasons. It was the right timing for them. They needed an update to their master plan and zoning code.

And the community itself, city leaders ... were willing to be innovative. They were willing to step outside the boundaries and create a new paradigm. That takes a lot of faith and willingness to explore.

We also did a small survey of the community to gauge citizen interest in the project.

Residents said, “Yeah we want this. Hudsonville doesn’t have an identity. We don’t have a downtown. The master plan is bold. Let’s participate in this.”



**Residents said,
‘Yeah we want this.
Hudsonville doesn’t
have an identity.
We don’t have
a downtown.’**

What are the key elements to creating a plan/vision that generates community energy, understanding, and action?

I think it goes back to the community. Typically, they don’t know what they want until you show them some options. Who would have thought that Hudsonville would want three- and four-story buildings?

It also helps to use an engaging, graphics-based process. And, you need to be receptive to feedback.

It takes time and energy. Don’t go through the motions of your statutory requirements and your public meetings just because you have to. Be genuine about it. Purposefully share the vision everywhere and genuinely get that feedback to happen.

How important are people in the process (e.g. elected leaders, appointed leaders, staff, volunteers, businesses, public ... etc.)?

They’re incredibly important; all of the above. To really activate it, it’s got to be unified and shared by all parties. It’s important to bring everyone along in the process. Get them all engaged. Because it’s Hudsonville 2030; it’s the future. It doesn’t help if people are saying, “Eh, that’s so many years out. Can we really make this happen?” They really have to believe it. They have to understand that there’s pragmatic, tangible steps that are laid out in this plan that are all prioritized.

Stakeholders Speak: Implementation Tactics & Lessons Learned

‘A strong core for our city’

Q & A with Hudsonville City Manager Patrick Waterman and City Planner Dan Strikwerda

Why create a planning vision for your community?

To communicate with our community the future plans. So they can see the ‘end goal’ of what we are trying to accomplish – based on previous public input. We had a downtown that was not super stable – more needed to be done to create a strong core for our city. Without taking action, we could have lost the little we had for a downtown.

Why is it important to be flexible with time and plans to ensure the community vision is achieved?

It isn’t known exactly which doors will open and which doors will close. If a door opens, you don’t want to say, “We want to accomplish these other goals first.” That opportunity may not come back, or be as good later.

What are the key elements to creating a plan/vision that generates community energy, understanding, and action?

Engage the community as much as possible so they can see the goals and are part of creating



Hudsonville City Manager Patrick Waterman (left) and Hudsonville City Planner Dan Strikwerda.

the goals. Put effort into making plans known – meetings; online availability such as QR codes; and publicly display plans at businesses. Take actions to show that the plan is happening. This helps the community believe the goals are achievable. Most of all, listen; be able to alter plans based on public input.

How important are the various stakeholders in the process?

All are important. If one of these steps does not support it, the process can collapse.

Elected leaders need to buy in since they are the people who make financial decisions based on plans. Appointed leaders such as the city manager and

The public are the voters and the users of the city. If they don’t support it, the plans will be thwarted. If they don’t like it, spaces being created may not be used.

the Downtown Development Authority need to approve and support plans. Staff need to do the majority of leadership and work.

Volunteers can help as boots on the ground; some things can’t be done well without them, such as larger events. Businesses pay taxes; they are impacted by these decisions, so their support is often needed to enable plans to happen.

Finally, the public are the voters and the users of the city. If they don’t support it, the plans will be thwarted.

If they don’t like it, spaces being created may not be used.

We need them to support and activate plans. This is why their input is needed so it is known what our community actually wants.

Imagine Hudsonville 2030 progress

Just five years on, downtown Hudsonville already looks dramatically different — new buildings have risen, community gathering spaces have been created, and aesthetic improvements have been made. The downtown vision is becoming reality. Let's take a look at the progress.

The Harvey Street

Woonerf: Harvey Street, now extended from Cherry Avenue east to Terra Square off School Avenue, has been redeveloped as a 'woonerf,' (meaning 'shared' or 'living' street in Dutch) to encourage walkability and community. This means Harvey Street has been redesigned to encourage foot traffic. A pedestrian-only section from Plaza Avenue to Terra Square is decorated with string lights and features a splash pad, pocket park, and gathering areas.

To take advantage of this new space, the city hosts Happenings on Harvey every Thursday during the summer. These events feature a variety of family-friendly activities such as live canvas painting, car shows and dog nights.

Hudson Center: A three-story, 25,000 square-foot building completed in November 2018 by Geerlings Development addresses several of the implementation strategies of the Imagine Hudsonville 2030 plan, including Distinctive City (Promote Urban Design & Use Distinctive Design), Livable City (Build Density), and Vibrant City (Build Mixed Use).



The new Woonerf, looking east from Cherry Street. The three-story Hudson Center is in the distance.



Hudson Center opened in November 2018.

MEDC and Imagine Hudsonville 2030

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is a major player in the redevelopment of Hudsonville.

Hudsonville is Redevelopment Ready Certified through the state, which gives Hudsonville access to MEDC funding.

"The third floor of the Hudson Center exists because MEDC gave a nearly \$700,000 grant for the floor," said DDA Director Michelle Fare. "This was key to making the numbers work from a construction standpoint."

For more on the MEDC, visit michiganbusiness.org.

Imagine Hudsonville 2030 progress



Terra Square, which opened in 2017, features a farmers market, event space and membership-driven business work space.

The mixed-use building includes residential, office, retail, and restaurant uses.

A slew of businesses have already moved in. The first floor is home to Wing Doozy, Dorados Mexican Grill & Bar and 317 Coffee. As of summer 2019, Affinity Financial Group and Code Green Creative were occupying a section of the second floor, and residential apartments were available for lease on the third. In 2019, city officials told the Grand Rapids Business Journal current Hudson Center businesses would bring in about 50 new jobs to the city.

Terra Square: Buoyed by community support for a permanent farmers market location and civic center from the Imagine Hudsonville charrettes, city officials and the DDA transformed the once-vacant former Hartman Chevrolet dealership building into a multipurpose community center.

Opening in 2017, the center features a farmers market, event



Attendees enjoy small plates from Farmhouse Deli and Pantry during the 2019 Farms Are The Tapas farmland preservation fundraiser dinner and auction, held inside the Terra Square event space.

space and a membership-driven business work space. Completion of Terra Square earned Hudsonville the Michigan Municipal League's Community Excellence Award in 2017.

Besides the farmers market, Terra Square has been the site for many community events, including movie nights and Ottawa County's annual Farms Are The Tapas farmland preservation fundraiser.

Imagine Hudsonville 2030 progress



Landscaping on the median along Chicago Drive was improved in 2018.



Highlighting Hudsonville's farming heritage, celery art now lines the crosswalk at intersection of Central Avenue and School Street. For many years Hudsonville was called the "Celery Center."

Becoming pedestrian-friendly:

Multiple sections of non-motorized pathways have been completed. Most recently, the Barry Street pathway was extended to 22nd Avenue in Georgetown Township, connecting Hudsonville to the regional pathway system.

Aesthetic improvements: In late 2018, the city completed a beautification project along Chicago Drive. The trees along the north side of Chicago Drive provide screening from the railroad tracks. The landscaping in the median and on the south side of the road is more detailed and features trees and flower pots.

Many downtown crosswalks now feature celery stalks and onions to highlight the city's agricultural heritage.

[SEE PAGE 18](#)

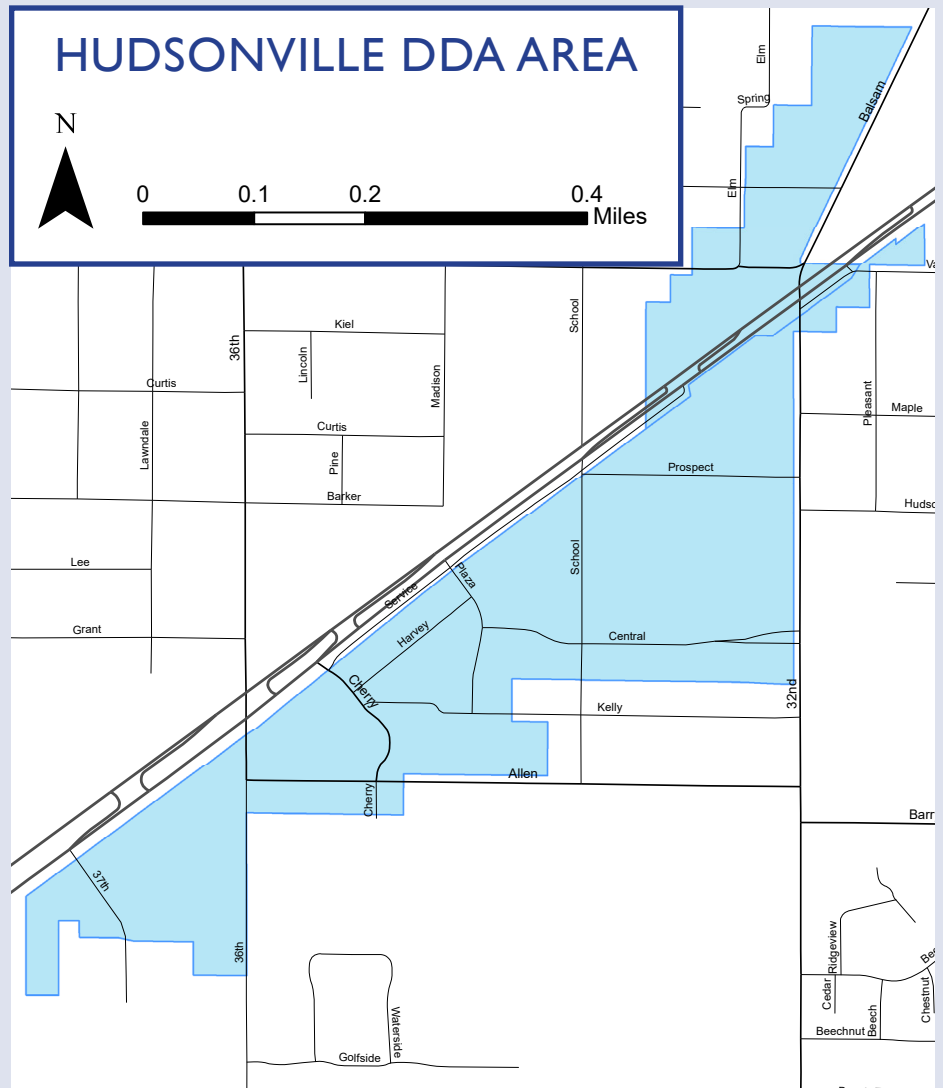
Encouraging development and rehabilitation

One way the Downtown Development Authority is facilitating development is with its Downtown Development & Rehabilitation Loan Program, created as part of the USGDP.

The goal of this low-interest loan program is to encourage commercial real estate development and rehabilitation efforts in the DDA zone.

Administered by the City of Hudsonville, the program provides financial incentives to new, existing or relocating businesses that comply with the Hudsonville Downtown Zoning Ordinance and Architectural Elements Portfolio.

For more information on the Downtown Development Authority or to download an application, visit www.hudsonville.org/downtown-development-authority.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

DJ's Pizza underwent a major renovation and expansion project which added outdoor seating and amenities in 2015. Restaurant operators also secured a license to serve beer and wine.

The Hudsonville Pizza Ranch underwent a significant remodel in 2017 as well. Upgrades included additional seating, an event space, and aesthetic improvements.



DJ's Pizza underwent a major renovation and expansion project.

Hudsonville: The proving ground for Urban Smart Growth

Through Ottawa County's USGDP, planners are demonstrating their hypothesis: with careful planning, urban communities like Hudsonville have the ability to attract and retain new and existing residents. Collaboration between planners and key stakeholders coupled with carefully considered public input yielded the highly visual and clearly written planning documents needed to demonstrate Ottawa County and the city's Smart Growth vision.

"The continued success and influence of this demonstration project is no accident," said Paul Sachs. "Without a robust partnership between municipal leaders and boards and public engagement, we would have faced significant hurdles."

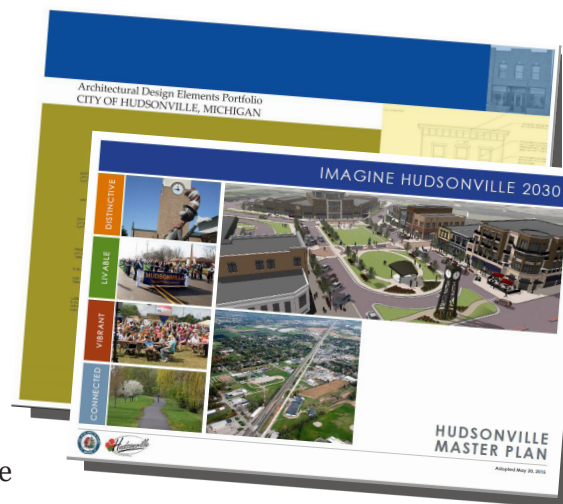
These award-winning planning documents — the Imagine Hudsonville 2030 Visioning Plan and the Architectural Design Elements Portfolio — ensure the public and development communities understand the goals.

With the development of the Woonerf, Terra Square and Hudson Center, this vision is already emerging. "These developments fueled by Imagine Hudsonville 2030 demonstrate major progress in Hudsonville's quest to build a more vibrant, livable and thriving downtown," said Sachs. "Through participating in this project, the City of Hudsonville has secured itself as one of Michigan's premier communities."

Reverberations of USGDP are being felt beyond Hudsonville. County planners anticipated project



Then-Ottawa County Land Use Planner Paul Sachs meets with Hudsonville officials and Mark Miller, of Nederveld Inc., in 2013.



techniques and planning principles would serve as a model for other communities and organizations, and they were right.

The City of Holland incorporated the framework of the Architectural Design Elements Portfolio and Hudsonville zoning code into their Unified Downtown Development Ordinance for the city, which was adopted in 2017.

This demonstration effort's documents are also being tapped by the nonprofit Ottawa Housing Next as a guide and a discussion tool to tackle affordable housing issues.

Guided by the visioning plan and architectural portfolio, Hudsonville continues to develop its downtown.

Much work remains for the city to fully realize Imagine Hudsonville 2030 — construction of a village green, incorporation of public art, transit improvements, the list goes on.

But with the collaboration of municipal leaders, local and regional boards and continued community engagement, the seeds are there for success in Hudsonville and any community that seeks to improve its vibrancy, livability, and aesthetic character.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CENTERING A CITY wouldn't have been possible without the writing and research support of Grand Valley State University's Geography and Sustainable Planning Department. A special thanks to:



Bailey Glazier

Class of 2020

Major: Environmental and Sustainability Studies



Brenna Newhouse

Class of 2022

Major: Geography
Minor: Sustainable Urban and Regional Planning
GIS & Technology Certificate



Matthew Olsen

Class of 2020

Major: Geography
Minor: Applied Statistics
GIS & Technology Certificate
Remote Sensing Certificate



Dominic Piscipo

Class of 2019

Major: Geography, emphasis in Environment and Global Development



Timothy Saagman

Class of 2020

Major: Geography, emphasis in Environment and Global Development
Minor: Sustainable Urban and Regional Planning
GIS & Technology Certificate
Remote Sensing Certificate



Ali Townsend

Class of 2020

Major: Geography, emphasis in Urban and Regional Planning
Minor: Environmental Studies
GIS & Technology Certificate

CENTERING A
city



IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Ottawa County
Planning & Performance
Improvement

12220 Fillmore Street
Room 260
West Olive, MI 49460

616-738-4852 | miottawa.org/departments/planning