

Alpena Township: US-23 South Corridor Revitalization Assessment

Executive Summary

The practicum team for the capstone course of the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program at Michigan State University has worked closely with Larry Clark and Taking Pride in Alpena the Spring 2016 semester to conduct a corridor revitalization study on Alpena Township. The study includes a detailed socio-economic profile, corridor assessment, and market analysis of the US-23 South corridor in Alpena Township. The research was used to create a set of recommendations that focus on branding and pedestrian design, market and economic growth, and filling vacancies and increasing building quality.

The focus area of the study is the US-23 South corridor in Alpena Township, specifically the section of road between Bare Point Drive and Grant Street, which borders Mich-E-Ke-Wis Park located in the City of Alpena. The US-23 Corridor Focus Area is a critical link in the economic growth and development of Alpena Township, the City of Alpena, and the surrounding regions. US-23 acts as the most important access point into the City of Alpena, and the development along the corridor is vitally important to the economic growth of Alpena. Knowing this, it was important to select the most commercially developed section of the corridor for the walking parcel assessment.

The methods used to gather the data for the report came from a corridor assessment and market analysis, created specifically on the focus area by the practicum group. The corridor assessment, using an original grading scale, scored all of the parcels directly bordering US-23 South, which were graded and analyzed independently. Since the corridor is critical for economic growth a market analysis was also conducted that included a complete business summary, retail market potential and expenditure, household budget expenditures, and leakage and surplus by industry group. The market analysis considered current and future projections of the business market.

All of the data gathered from the corridor assessment and the market analysis was synthesized into a set of recommendations that focused on the corridor and its revitalization. The recommendations focused on three sections: filling vacancies and increasing building quality, market growth, and branding and pedestrian design. For each recommendation topic there are four sections, which separate the recommendations into short-term, long-term, low cost, and high cost solutions. Ideally this will provide a road map for the client and community to help determine which recommendations can be implanted immediately and which solutions may need additional planning.

The recommendations created for the project are as follows:

Recommendation 1: Filling Vacancies and Increasing Building Quality

High Cost: Re-develop blighted buildings

Low Cost: Paint damaged buildings and siding to increase the corridor's aesthetics

Short-Term: Pop-up shops, offer short term leases to fill vacancies

Long-Term: Fill all vacancies with a permanent tenant to increase positive economic activity

Recommendation 2: Market Growth

High Cost: Development of specific industries

Low Cost: Pop-up shops and kiosks

Short-Term: 1. Inform community, 2. Make a business recommendation list

Long-Term: Approach developers and support local entrepreneurs

Recommendation 3: Branding and pedestrian design

High Cost: Pedestrian-oriented design to increase the human scale and walkability of the area

Low Cost: Implement Placemaking to build a sense of place

Short-Term: Create a logo and branding strategy to give the corridor an identity

Long-Term: Build a relationship between the surrounding natural area and the corridor

The work done here can be used to target specific industries that can be brought to the township and to seek out locations where renovations need to be made. The document can be made available to inform the public of the data gathering processes the practicum team went through and provide more in-depth graphs for a deeper understanding of the corridor. Each recommendation also includes specific ideas for funding that can be explored further by the community. Ideally these recommendations will be used by our client to create a path to revitalization along the US-23 Corridor, and ultimately Alpena Township as a whole.