

Executive Summary

The Southend is a small community in Dearborn, MI, tucked between the Ford Rouge Factory, which has a prominent industrial presence along the Rouge River, and the City of Detroit. This area is unique for its significant Arab-American community which is reflected in the many Yemeni restaurants, markets, and retail stores along the Dix-Vernor Corridor. For the purpose of this study, the City of Dearborn has defined the focus area of the project as the nearly one-mile-long Dix-Vernor corridor.

The Vision Plan and Economic Development Strategy for the Dix-Vernor Corridor was created as a resource for the City of Dearborn and the Dix-Vernor Business District Improvement Authority to thoughtfully plan and develop the area. The purpose of this document is to develop a strategic plan that can help economically strengthen the Southend of Dearborn as well as the surrounding residential Salina Neighborhood.

The process began with a planning and strategy session with staff from the City of Dearborn's Economic and Community Development Department as well as the City Planner. The practicum team made several trips throughout the planning process to meet with key community members and anchor institutions to gain a better understanding of the focus area. This report analyzes the past and current socioeconomic profile of the focus area included in the Dix-Vernor Business District Improvement Authority boundary, identical to the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) boundary (City of Dearborn, 2015).

Dearborn's TIF Plan, implemented by the Dix-Vernor Business District Improvement Authority, aims to capture the incremental tax revenues generated within the District, and utilize ancillary funding sources such as grant programs, private cooperation, municipal participation, and other funding sources to help economically enhance the area. To accomplish the goals set forth in the scope of work, the team developed a detailed physical inventory of commercial buildings on the corridor to assess the current conditions of the commercial corridor and identify possible areas for improvement. This inventory includes assessment of parcel condition, streetscape, parking, and mobility analysis including pedestrian crosswalk conditions.

In March 2016, the Dix-Vernor Business District Improvement Authority, with the support of the MSU Practicum Team, received a matching grant of \$15,000 from the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority (MSHDA) totaling \$30,000. This grant will assist in supporting the implementation of the recommendations found for The Southend including garbage cans, flower planters, and benches directly benefit the community. It will also help initiate the process of establishing the view of Dix-Vernor Corridor and The Southend as an important economic area to be invested in. The submitted Statewide Partnership Grant application can be found in Appendix A.

Based on research conducted and a detailed socioeconomic profile of the community, the practicum team has created a series of recommendations to economically strengthen the development of The Southend community and business district to improve the quality of life. Marketing and branding initiatives are recommended as an opportunity to aid in the sense of community building as well as a method in promoting businesses along the corridor. Walkability and bikeability considerations are vital in a vibrant business corridor and connection to Southwest Detroit and the rest of Dearborn through a marked bike path is one of the recommendations created in order to promote pedestrian activity. Infrastructure recommendations could help to promote a pedestrian and biker friendly community with safer sidewalks, crosswalks, and complete streets. Recreational space improvements could be a popular addition for the large youth population in The Southend and provide another opportunity for positive community interactions. Commercial conditions and housing additions that were assessed were provided various cost and timespan options for project completions. Recommendations for the corridor include parking management and improvements in order to accommodate the area's unique parking fluxes. The team observed the corridor at various times and days of the week and documented the parking capacity and recommendations for alleviating current congestion. Low cost and short term projects have the opportunity to be immediately address through grant funding. The team in collaboration with the City of Dearborn recommended possible placement for seating, planters, and garbage can additions. With such a resilient and driven business community, small, incremental changes in the Dix-Vernor Corridor could have lasting positive improvements to the economic stability and sense of place within The Southend.

	Low Cost <\$1,000	Medium Cost \$1,000-\$5,000	High Cost >\$5,000
Short Term 3-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logo creation • Parking surveys for businesses and patrons • Crowdgranting for park (not including implementation time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banners • Bilingual parking signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Signs • Sidewalk connection and safety improvements • Improve sidewalk/street buffers • Create and paint bike lanes
Medium Term 1-4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media presence and management • Become Redevelopment Ready Certified (Focus on BP 5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement of parking • Bike route connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park and ride system • Creating parking in vacant, city owned lots • Façade improvements
Long Term 4+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community input sheets (ongoing if necessary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SafeRoutes to School program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional low-income housing varieties