

# Downtown Dearborn Economic & Marketing Strategy

## Vision

In 2027, Downtown Dearborn will be a vibrant regional destination of business innovators offering multiple attractions, modes of access and housing where all are welcomed to celebrate in its rich tapestry of people, cultures, ideas, food, art and history.

## Goal and Transformational Strategies

**Goal:** Reposition Dearborn in the Metro Detroit market by transforming its image as a regional destination and a place that residents are proud to call home.

**Goal:** Build a Cohesive Main Street Michigan Avenue:

- Bridge the gap to unite the two downtowns and their historic attributes across the physical, social and psychological barriers that have divided them.
- Physically transform Michigan Avenue into a local arterial street to connect key centers of activity to the rest of the community.
- Improve the area between the downtowns to reinforce Michigan Avenue as the main artery of the City.

**Transformational Strategies:** The community identified five transformational strategies in order to reach this goal:

- Image
- Walkable Public Spaces
- Cohesive Community
- Millennial/Next Gen Appeal
- Innovative Retail

## Marketing Strategy

The marketing strategy will support this messaging of what the future holds and the action taking place to transform the community, while building greater awareness of the existing assets. The strategy is to change public perception and behaviors to grow the economy. It will grow consumer confidence and reach by sharing the economic and social value of Dearborn through a comprehensive communication plan.

### Target Audience

Our target audience is made up of local residents and businesses, the surrounding Metro Detroit communities within a 15-30 mile radius, regional and national media, and the next generation of

decision makers. We will create a unified, strong voice and brand identity that celebrates the tapestry of the people and places that make up Dearborn.

- Position information for:
  - tourism
  - business development & real estate
  - downtown living and playing;
  - Millennials

### SWOT Analysis

S	W	O	T
Historical Sites/Landmarks	Image	Change the Perception of the Middle East	Image – lack of identity
College Town	Walkability	More Greenspace and Greenspace Programming	Lack of retail diversity
Access (proximity/transit/roads)	Lack of Youth/Hipster Appeal	Image Campaign and Public Awareness	Divisive/ polarization – equality
Arts & Culture	Physical Environment	Capitalize on Museums/Institutions (The Henry Ford/Arab American)	Too many bars/restaurant (of same type)
Unique Locally-owned Businesses	Business Economy	Use Rouge River for more recreation activities	Need things geared to old and young alike

### Issues and Opportunities Identified

- No discernable nor consistent brand identity and brand guidelines
- A void of information internally and externally of all the great things Dearborn has to offer and future changes will take the community in a positive direction..
- Local consumer confidence needs to be boosted to build pride of their community
- Lack of unified messaging - Two downtowns and two commercial corridors that no one outside of Dearborn realizes that it all makes up Dearborn. As well as, a long-standing community divide between east and west.
- Dearborn needs to focus greater attention on retaining and attracting the Millennial generation Competition for this market segment is strong, ie: Detroit, Ferndale, Royal Oak, etc. Residents have noted that kids are leaving the community to recreate/find entertainment, as well as move on to live elsewhere.
- Property inventory is incomplete, not readily available nor marketed to businesses.
- Target market and tenant recommendations were recently identified through a market analysis completed in the Fall of 2016 for Downtown West Dearborn; a more thorough analysis is still needed of Downtown East Dearborn and other commercial corridors.

- Vacancy rate was as high as 40% in Downtown West Dearborn in 2015. Downtown East Dearborn tenancy reports are still being evaluated, but are upwards in the high teens and 20s.
- Lack of retail and enticing new retail/restaurant concepts.
- First impressions of both downtowns is tired, run-down/neglected buildings and amenities, auto-oriented, lack of dynamic public spaces, not pedestrian or bike friendly.
- Difficult to navigate - wayfinding sparse and doesn't reflect community.
- Ford Motor Company, UofM-Dearborn, Henry Ford College all need a more desirable community for employees and students to live and work in.
- The National Resource Network recently completed a housing and office market study for Downtown West Dearborn detailing demand for new multifamily, mixed use and student housing options to increase densities. Being near UofM\_Dearborn and Henry Ford College, as well as the demands from Ford Motor Company's new Wagner Place development will create additional demand for housing because of the 600+new employees to locate in 2018.
- The new Artspace Development in Downtown East Dearborn has over 50 new residents that are artists, and The Connector Space allows for an opportunity for entrepreneurs and workspace, as well as engaging the residents and local employees with needed retail and café space.
- Significant vacant space/sea of parking that can be developed.

## Unique Selling Proposition

Dearborn, the birthplace of Henry Ford, is steeped in history but far from old fashioned with its vibrant tapestry of people, cultures, flavors, businesses and neighborhoods that continue to shape the world. This American melting pot of over 100,000 residents has grown from waves of immigration and industrialization from the late 1800s to current day and now is the 8th largest city in the State of Michigan, and second largest in Wayne County. Only in Dearborn can you go from urban, compact downtowns and neighborhoods to natural wildlife, outdoor recreation and stately homes all within 26 square miles.

Ideally located between Detroit and the Metro Detroit Airport along historic Michigan Avenue, Dearborn's two downtown districts that developed out of the historic merger of Dearborn and Dearborn Township in 1929 are uniquely positioned for economic growth. With major tourist attractions like the The Henry Ford and the Arab American National Museum attracting 2 million visitors annually, and over 50,000 daily employees and college students in and around its downtowns, Downtown Dearborn is a regional destination for tourism, arts and employment.

Challenged by the 2008 economic crisis, Dearborn's stakeholders have now come together to strategically champion Downtown Dearborn's continuous economic momentum by working collaboratively to create a vibrant downtown experience for all - one Dearborn, two distinct districts. From arts and culture in the east to history and innovation in the west, both downtowns are transforming their environments with significant developments such as the City Hall Artspace Lofts for artist living and start-up space and the Wagner Place mixed-use redevelopment for 600 Ford employees and retail experiences.

Dearborn offers everything you need and more than you expect!

# Action Plan

## Image

**Objective: Identify and Create a Community Brand that Personifies Dearborn’s real character and future vision of its districts as “The Next Place” in Metro Detroit.**

Action: Create temporary Downtown Dearborn logo and advertising standards for transition period. (completed)

Action: Hire Brand Development firm to research, define and develop a community brand, personality, guidelines, marketing materials and voice that encompasses all assets of Downtown Dearborn with sub-brands for each of the downtown districts and corridors. (June 2017 – March 2018)

**Objective: Increase consistent, positive communications, messaging, events and stories that illustrate and celebrate the economic growth, history, assets and diversity of the community to change target market perception.**

Action: Currently working with MetroMode online news to generate weekly stories. Contracted through end of June 2017; and will renew contract for 2017/2018.

Action: Hired Communications & Marketing Firm to develop strategic communications plan to create and disseminate news and information for events, activities, promotions and issues. Contracted February 2017 – February 2018.

**Objective: Improve & Reinforce Good Building and Street Design, Upkeep & Renovation that draws visual appeal and interest**

Action: Inventory building photos and analyze needs (50% complete)

Action: Create Design Guidelines (in progress)

Action: Create façade improvement program (in progress)

Action: Form-based Code (in progress)

Action: Educate property and business owners (January 2018)

**Objective: Create an Impression that You Have Arrived in Dearborn that reflects community brand and improves consumer navigation.**

Action: Create and implement a wayfinding plan to districts and community assets (March 2018 – June 2019)

Action: Improve landscaping and maintenance (in progress)

Action: Install new holiday and seasonal décor (in progress)

## Walkable Public Spaces

**Objective: Create a vibrant, welcoming and active environment to connect all residents, employees, students and visitors through multi-modes of access to business, activities, events, recreation, public space, homes and neighborhoods.**

Action: Improve streetscapes for walking, biking, business activation, cafes and public space. (Michigan Avenue and Connector Streets in progress – January 2017 – July 2018; Multi-Modal Transportation Plan in progress March 2017 – June 2018)

Action: Implement a bike share program to connect visitors, employees, students and residents to business districts and cultural assets. (launch June 13, 2017)

Action: Create, define and program Green, Open & Active Places for events, activities and congregating in visible, downtown spaces.

Action: Connect Businesses to Public Space through Building Form and Public Space Urban Design Standards (Form-Based Code in progress)

Action: Connect Downtowns to Rouge River & Outdoor Activities (Rouge River Trail connection completed; Downtown Discovery trail in progress – Fall 2017)

## Cohesive Community

**Objective: Build community awareness and involvement in the Main Street Approach to revitalization by forming Downtown Dearborn Coalition.**

Action: Assemble and Activate Steering Committee (completed)

Action: Create community engagement and communication plan (in progress)

Action: Recruit and increase collaborative volunteerism and train for implementing Main Street Approach (in progress)

Action: Both downtowns apply for Michigan Main Street Select Level jointly or at same time. (Fall 2017)

Action: Create umbrella organization (DDI) (Fall 2017)

Action: Advocate and build support for focused downtown economic development tools, resources and investment (in progress)

**Objective: Create one communication source for all things Downtown Dearborn by consolidating social channels, websites, e-communications, advertising and marketing.**

Action: Consolidating social media channels to one handle per channel (May 2017)

Action: Migrating websites to one website (May – June 2017)

Action: Consolidated e-communication and delivering bi-weekly. (completed)

Action: Create and increase use of Discover Dearborn APP (completed)

Action: Joint Event & Brand Advertising in various mediums including The Henry Ford Giant Screen year round, local and regional newspapers and entertainment sources, and on-air marketing. (in progress)

Action: Distribute community and event information through CTM and other resources to reach tourism audience. (in progress)

**Objective: Engage, Connect and Increase Participation and Communication between Businesses, Partners and Institutions in Collective Planning, Events, Programs and Sharing**

Action: Establish collaborative partnership and funding opportunities with DDAs, CIAs, Ford Land, UofM Dearborn, Henry Ford College, Access/Arab American Museum, The Henry Ford and City to implement strategies, such as bike share, branding campaign, public relations outreach, event development, recruitment of businesses and property development. (in progress)

Action: Create shared communication portal (in progress)

Action: Establish online project management portal amongst volunteers and partners (in progress)

**Innovative Retail**

**Objective: Improve occupancy and underutilized properties with a balanced mix of entrepreneurial and national businesses that create a 24/7 business environment and defines each district's character.**

**Objective: Recruit innovative, dynamic retail and restaurants that build upon the character, natural resources and assets of the community and its districts.**

Action: Conduct Market Analysis and Define Trade Area (completed)

Action: Finalize inventory analysis/availability and identify key parcels/buildings (in progress)

Action: Develop and Implement Recruitment Strategy (in progress)

Action: Communicate available properties and desired tenancy through online, print sources and outreach (in progress)

Action: Partner with ICSC and DBusiness to build relationships with developers and brokers.

Action: Create a façade/building improvement program and retail location incentive (in progress)

Action: Collaborate on an incubator/pop-up/shared space locations (investigating & teaming up with UofM Dearborn, Henry Ford College and Access)

**Objective: Increase Density**

Action: Become a Redevelopment Ready Community (99% complete)

Action: Identify and analyze areas of opportunity (completed through NRN project and Sustainable Parking project)

Action: Market & solicit redevelopment of properties/sites both online, print materials, face-to-face and through RFP processes.

Action: Partner with ICSC and DBusiness to build relationships with developers and brokers.

**Objective: Improve Ease of Access to Start and Grow a Business**

Action: Provide Stellar Business Assistance (in progress)

Action: Provide Accessible Information (completed and expand upon)

Action: Streamline the business entry process (in progress)

## Next Gen Appeal

**Objective: Attract and retain next generation to live and work in Dearborn.**

Action: Create fresh events, recruit retail and build connectivity with college campus for the Next Generation/Millennials. (in progress)

Action: Develop Talent Economy by engaging Next Generation/Millennials and educational institutions in the planning, reinvestment, business start-up and activities of the downtown. (in progress)

Action: Increase Alternative Housing Options that provide a mix of dense housing types identified in NRN and Sustainable Parking study in the downtowns at varying market rates that fit the economic profile of the next generation (in progress: 42 units in Downtown West Dearborn; completed downtown west Dearborn housing analysis; completed Artspace Lofts in Downtown East Dearborn)

## Metrics to Watch

### Image

- Content of Conversation in Media
- Unity at Events
- Increase in Visitors
- Increase in Local Consumerism
- Perceived as Inclusive and Diverse (Overcome Racial and Cultural Divide)
- Perceived as the Next Place People Want to Be
- Comparable to Other Downtowns Visually and Perception
- 100% Adherence to Window Signs
- Visible Signage & Wayfinding

### Walkable Public Spaces

- Integrated Complete Streets/Multi-Modal Plan with MDOT Approval
  - Baseline Inventory
  - Walkable Study
  - Bike Shares & Lanes/Bike Facilities
  - Pedestrian Crossings Defined & Enforceable
  - Safe Walking and Biking That Connects East and West
  - RTA Impact on public space and business; walkability
  - Walkable Connections to Downtown
- Foot Count Survey
- 25% Increase of Front Doors Open
- Upgraded and “On” Public & Private Lighting
- Cleanliness of Sidewalks
- Visible Signage & Wayfinding

- More Walking Tour Events
- More Outdoor Dining
- Dog-Friendly Facilities, Businesses and Streetscapes
- BRT/RTA Supported
- Park & Places Defined
- Land Use Design with Form-Based Code Regulating Plan
- Triathlon
- More Landscaping

### Cohesive Community

- Collaborative/Unity and Enhancement of Planning, Events & Programs
- Inclusiveness
- # of Volunteers Working Together on the Whole
- Co-Operative Promotions and Business Supporting Each Other
- Increase in Shared Stories
- Defined Common Bonds & Storytelling (ie: arts, culture, architecture, life, food, traditions, music and student successes)
- Increased Communication Between Partners
- Attendance at Events
- Cohesive Brand
- Small Business Participation
- Approachable Government/A New Face/Minimize Fear of Govt
- Shared Documents

### Next Gen Appeal

- Increased APP & Social Media Usage/Check-Ins & GeoTags
- Demographic Surveys of Consumers
- More Next-Gen/Millennials Opening Businesses
- More Stores that Appeal to Next-Gen/Millennials and Their Needs
- Apartment & Loft Rental Occupancy Increase & New Development
- Student Pass Usage
- Distributed Student Welcome Package
- Walkable Connection to Downtown from Campuses

### Innovative Retail

- Entrepreneurial Business Increase
- College-Supported Business Start-up & Retention Assistance Program
- Increase in Pop-Ups
- Less than 7% Vacancy
- Rent Rate Trends
- Business Makeup/Niches & Clusters/National & Independent
- Inventory Baseline
- Balance of Hours of Operation – 24/7
- Businesses that Meet Defined District Emphasis (ie: Arts & Culture/Tourism & Entertainment)