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**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY**

THE CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
COMPLETED APRIL 15, 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the city moves into the next century, with the competitive and challenging forces of today's urban landscape, global economy, and the desire to become a walkable and green community, Lathrup Village recognizes the need to evolve, grow, and expand its identity.

THE CITY MUST MAINTAIN AND ATTRACT BUSINESSES TO KEEP THE COMMUNITY THRIVING.

This Economic Development Strategy has been designed to create a framework for a prosperous, sustainable, walkable, and vibrant destination community for the residents and businesses of Lathrup Village. The need for economic restructuring is evident as the global economy increasingly embraces innovative economic models. These include a shift toward a service oriented economy that is driven by knowledge, innovation, and mass collaboration. Lathrup Village needs to plan for swift and innovative economic transition in order to maneuver itself into a position of sustainable prosperity.

The vision for economic redevelopment includes the creation of a *Village Center* as the central point within the city; creating the sense and feel of a small town. Secondary to this concept, and vital to the vision of the *Village Center*, is the rebuilding of Southfield Road to address the needs of the business community and the residents that are adjacent to the main transportation artery. Aggressive plans to address outdated architecture along Southfield Road are also key to the redesign of the city to attract and retain businesses that contribute to a diverse and sustainable economy.

Many issues act as challenges to the revitalization of the city. These issues are centered on the rebuilding of the main thoroughfare of Southfield Road, the actualization of the creation of the Village Center, general infrastructure needs, non-motorized connections for pedestrians, and the implications of the passage of time. Other challenges to the economic revitalization of the commercial corridor are the lack of business diversity, scarcity of retail options, and insufficient employment opportunities. This plan is

intended to leverage the city's assets as opportunities to overcoming these challenges to progress.

Finally, the implementation and evaluation sections of this document are essential to the actualization and success of the plan. By establishing a series of reference points and benchmarks, incremental progress can be measured on an annual basis.

This plan draws heavily from concepts and goals stated in the city's Master Plan, Non-Motorized Transportation Improvement Plan, the Capital Improvements Plan, and the Market Assessment and Strategy. This is done in order to establish a cohesive direction and aligned vision that results from a collaboration of ambitions set forth by prior documents.

Additional documents are used to coordinate local and regional goals, such as SEMCOG's *Increasing Jobs and Prosperity in Southeast Michigan*, a regional economic development document highlighting eleven points of economic development for Southeastern Michigan.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

DESCRIPTION

With a rich history dating back to 1923, The City of Lathrup Village is located in Oakland County, Michigan and spans one and a half square miles. It is bounded on the north and south by Twelve and Ten and a Half Mile Roads and runs east and west from about a quarter-mile east of Southfield Road to Evergreen Road on the west. With a controlled building plan, a beautiful residential development began to emerge in strict accordance with the ideas of the community's founder, Louise Lathrup Kelly. The unique street system design has been considered a popular model for planned residential communities.

POPULATION

4,075

The 2010 population for Lathrup Village was 4,075. This is a decrease from 4,236 in the year 2000. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) projects the City's population will continue to decline, potentially to 3,588 residents by 2040.

MEDIAN AGE

45.8

Demographic information suggests that the median age of the population is increasing. The increases in the senior population are largely a result of the aging Baby Boomer generation and an overall lower birth rate.

REGIONAL TRENDS

Trends in Lathrup Village are from 2000 to 2010 are consistent with trends in the region. However, SEMCOG forecasts a continued decline in Lathrup Village population through 2040, while neighboring communities may see a very small population increase.

HOUSING

In 2014, Oakland County Equalization identified 1,747 residential parcels in the City of Lathrup Village, an increase of 17 parcels since 2000. US Census data suggests that 90% of housing units were owner-occupied. The majority of housing in the city continues to be single family dwellings.

Although to the economic downturn caused housing values to decrease over the past six years, there is evidence that values are beginning to rebound. Oakland County Equalization finds a 33% decrease in assessed value and 41% decrease in the average sales price of a Lathrup Village home when the recession was at its peak.

Despite the decrease of the past ten years, housing values are reviving. A 2014 snapshot of Multiple Listing Service (MLS) data shows that the city's average home sale price in 2012 was \$106,494.00 and rose to \$152,477.00 in 2013. The trend continues so far into 2014 with the average sale price of a home between January and April of \$154,933.00.

The Lathrup Village Market Assessment and Strategy illustrates that the community has a favorable view of the housing options in the city. 37.2% of the community reports that the housing options are *Very Good*. However limited the housing options are (mostly single family homes) they continue to meet the high standards of the residential community.

HISTORIC DISTRICT

The historic district is a valuable asset to the city and its residents, but imposes no barriers to prospective real estate development that conforms to the design guidelines of the Community Master Plan.

Developed in the 1920's, the physical layout of the city mirrors many older village and city plans developed during the Garden City Movement. The plan is based on a radial pattern, which focuses on the village center at the confluence of Southfield Road and California Drive. California Drive is an octagon, so it has two intersections with Southfield Road at either end of the village center. Major streets emanate from the center,

THE CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE

which gives Lathrup Village its historical character and appeal. Historic District status was awarded to the City in the 1990's and the Lathrup Village Store District was formally recognized and approved by the US Secretary of the Interior in 1998. The Lathrup Village History District includes 1081 contributing properties and 132 non-contributing properties.

Dating back to 1929, a plan was advanced for the development of Sunset Boulevard as a major regional arterial road to connect the city of Pontiac with the city of Detroit. Part of that arterial road, Sunset Boulevard, went through the original Lathrup town site. The regional connector was never implemented. However, Sunset Boulevard remains an important connector through Lathrup Village, connecting the North Central and North West areas of the city. Two predominate buildings were constructed in the town court area. They are the Annie Lathrup School and the Town hall. With the demolition of the Town hall in the 1990's, the school remains the only historic structure on Southfield Road.

ECONOMY AND JOBS

According to the Market Assessment and Strategy, a large number of residents report a favorable quality of life in the city. The residents of Lathrup Village are also highly educated, with 95.5% of the population having attained at least a high school degree in 2011 and 49.7% having attained bachelor's degree or higher. These figures exceed the rates of Oakland County. Consequently, these higher levels of educational attainment have led to the city's elevated median income levels. According to the American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, the city's median income was \$80,664. This exceeds Oakland County's median income of \$66,466 by nearly \$15,000 and Michigan's by over \$30,000. The residents of Lathrup Village possess a significant amount of buying power to sustain a downtown commercial corridor. The city's poverty level is also mitigated by the higher educational attainment of residents. According to the five-year estimates, only 5.0% of people and 2.5% of families in Lathrup Village live below the poverty level, which is defined in 2012 as \$11,720 for one person and \$23,092 for a family of four. In comparison, 9.5% of people and 6.7% of families Oakland County were living below the poverty level; 15.7% of people and 11.1% of people across the state.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The City of Lathrup Village sits within and is completely surrounded by the City of Southfield. The vast majority of adjacent future land-use by the City of Southfield is designated "moderate density residential" and includes homes on lots that are 20,000 square feet or less. This type of development is compatible with the existing and planned land-use in Lathrup Village. One other residential land use, "low density multiple family residential" abuts Lathrup Village south of Twelve Mile Road east of Evergreen Road. The City of Southfield indicates this area for buildings two stories or less in height. One area that could impact Lathrup Village is the area north of the city along Southfield Road that the City of Southfield designates as the "North Southfield Road Suburbia Area." This area is described as a "unique area that contains a mixture of multicultural retail and services." Southfield's 2009 Comprehensive Plan notes that the objectives for this area are aggressive.

SEMCOG's Increasing Jobs and Prosperity in Southeast Michigan is the regional economic development document to which Lathrup Village's ambitions and vision conforms. As the region strives to compete in a global marketplace by shifting into a knowledge-based economy that values innovation, collaboration, and information, Lathrup Village must coordinate its local vision to compliment regional goals. Lathrup Village must endeavor to attract new and reinforce existing businesses that are suitable to the demands of the New Economy. Currently, the city participates in Oakland County's *Tech 248 Initiative* and is active with Oakland Community College and Lawrence Technical University to bring younger, educated residents into the city.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN LATHRUP VILLAGE

THE ECONOMIC VISION

The vision that this economic development plan sets out to achieve embraces an urban character, demographic diversity, and sustainable economic resiliency, while establishing the city as a regional economic hub.

Lathrup Village seeks to be a vibrant, *New Urban* destination that is characterized by walkability and business diversity, including both retail and knowledge-based services, to augment its sterling reputation as a historic bedroom community.

The city's competitive edge will be driven by its redeveloped downtown commercial corridor that will be known for its bold, progressive charge into the twenty-first century. Armed with the tools of innovation, a unique brand, and crowd-sourced collaboration, new businesses that are helping to reshape the global economy will prosper in Lathrup Village that reflect the needs and wants of the community.

A variety of amenities, increased housing options, and public improvements exist to attract businesses, developers, and new residents as well as contribute to the distinct charm of the city's existing housing stock.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

This economic development plan aims to diversify Lathrup Village's economic base by attracting firms that are innovative, collaborative, and possess features of a knowledge-based or retail economy. As Southeastern Michigan transitions further away from industrial manufacturing as its sole economic driver, Lathrup Village must be prepared to diversify and modernize its economic base in order to build and sustain economic significance in the region.

Innovation, economic diversity, and collaboration are important to the economic restructuring and physical transformation of the city, as well as essential to addressing the eleven points of economic development espoused by the SEMCOG regional plan.

The New Economy emphasizes a shift from a manufacturing economy to an economy focused on the provision of services and retail. Lathrup Village has no significant historical concentration of industrial manufacturing, precluding the city from many of the challenges of a post-industrial economy on a local level; however, many of those challenges are still presented to the city on a regional level. Lathrup Village had developed a commercial corridor in the latter half of the twentieth-century comprised primarily of professional services such as law, real estate, accounting, and medical offices. Although the office buildings that occupy the Southfield Corridor are aging into architectural obsolescence, Lathrup Village should continue to endeavor attracting professional service companies that are innovative, as well as retail locations that satisfy local consumer demand.

This economic development strategy recognizes the inherent economic value of useful and organized information. As the information age of the twenty-first century continues to develop in Southeast Michigan, technical skills, expertise, and innovation are seen as critical to the economy as natural resources themselves. The Lathrup Village Downtown Development Authority's Economic Restructuring Committee diligently works to refocus the city's economy around creating an environment suitable for the promulgation of innovative businesses. This is done by the committee's efforts to create a communicative infrastructure among the community of businesses in the commercial corridor. Additional programs include *coop advertizing* to mitigate the costs that businesses would ordinarily have to endure individually.

Collaboration and resource-sharing are emerging practices that champion wider availability of information, goods, and services among producers and consumers in order to enhance allocative efficiency, socio-economic equity, and to reduce waste. They are part of an emerging economic model built around the sharing of human and physical resources in order to maximize productivity and economic use, as well as to reduce costs and mitigate economic risks. Unlike preceding economic models, it advocates access instead of ownership of goods, services, and information. The collaborative economic model has given rise to practices that may help to transform Lathrup Village. These include services like crowdfunding and Timebanks, where resources are pooled, shared or

THE CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE

exchanged. Lathrup Village already has an active and thriving Timebank program operating within the city and crowdfunding is a new method of capital acquisition for both public and private endeavors that draw resources from a vast array of supporters.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation offers grant matching services to downtown areas for projects that utilize crowdfunding as a form of financing. Through the crowdfunding platform *Patronicity*, communities are able to leverage community wealth by collecting online donations to fund projects, events, or developments that improve and enrich their downtowns.

“Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people, typically via the internet.”

The economic restructuring of the city will depend upon the utilization of innovative concepts to transform the look and function of the downtown. By taking an innovative approach to comprehensive economic development, Lathrup Village can be a leader of successful development efforts while maintaining a competitive capacity for growth.

ACHIEVING THE VISION

To reify this vision, Lathrup Village must leverage its geographical location, transportation infrastructure, and proximity to anchor institutions in order to enhance economic capacity while promoting further growth.

Developers are necessary to physically transform the corridor into a more suitable location for businesses. New businesses must serve to diversify and revitalize the commercial corridor by offering vital and popular goods and services for residents and to attract customers from neighboring municipalities. The Lathrup Village Market Assessment and Strategy illustrates the need for pivotal commercial transformation. The resident feedback rates the city’s commercial corridor as poor in terms of shopping options and shopping experience, denoting a lack of available retail businesses and sites to host them. Likewise, the number, variety, and availability local employment opportunities are rated unfavorably. The need to

diversify the business mix and include a variety of retail establishments is apparent. In addition to this, the city must endeavor to better connect residents with their downtown, this includes increasing awareness, activity, and improving transportation connections. New businesses can drive economic development efforts by establishing agglomerative economic clusters, in which a critical mass results in a virtuous cycle of economic activity. This can improve real estate prices, making prospective development more attractive to investors and new businesses.

The economic strength of the city’s neighborhoods must engage the developing downtown in order to sustain growth. For this to continue, Lathrup Village must be attractive to new and younger residents who possess education and skills in order to stabilize the declining population, improve demographic diversity, and rejuvenate the housing market to promote neighborhood stability. Previous feedback from residents has revealed that the existing housing options are seen as satisfactory; however, the changing economy, aging population, and shifting demographics indicate that there may soon be a severe need for additional housing options to accommodate a downtown urban design with mixed-use buildings.

The city administration must achieve a series of goals that competitively improve the city’s economic capacity. These goals are catalytic in their transformative abilities in order to crystallize the ambitious drive for a downtown destination that serves as a thriving economic hub. Long-term economic viability will depend upon the city differentiating itself from surrounding areas to create a *sense of place* that is distinctive and further defined by an existing diverse economy with highly educated residents, local employment opportunities, and a vibrant commercial corridor.

AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT ATTRACTION

This section is dedicated to attracting real estate development to the commercial corridor in order to improve the economic capacity of the city. Lathrup Village seeks to have a cooperative relationship with property owners and attract developers in order to accelerate the physical transformation of the commercial corridor which will serve as a catalyst for economic development. Attracting developers is the first step in the physical transformation of the commercial corridor and is key to crafting an environment suitable for the promulgation of business activity.

A. MARKETING LATHRUP VILLAGE TO KEY AGENTS OF CHANGE

Lathrup Village must brand itself as an opportunity by highlighting the benefits of its geographical location, transportation infrastructure, and proximity to anchor institutions. In addition, it must be emphasized to prospective developers that new business locations can capture the buying power of local area residents, which is higher than in surrounding communities (a median income of \$80k), rather than continually seeing local wealth spent elsewhere in the region.

B. STREAMLINING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AT THE CITY LEVEL

Developers must be reassured that any real estate development venture will be an efficient, streamlined, and smooth process. This is an aspect of risk attenuation over which the city has direct control. Any risk of information asymmetry in the development process must be identified and mitigated. Access to information for developers, contractors, and inspectors must be easy, reliable, and consistent in order to avoid misunderstandings in the development and build-out processes.

C. ATTENUATING RISK

Lathrup Village must also be attractive to potential developers by attenuating the risk of entrepreneurial activity. The city's Downtown Development Authority already possesses incentives for businesses and property owners, such as a sign grant, which reimburses

applicants up to two-thousand dollars for the cost of new signs that meet strict design guidelines. A façade redevelopment grant is currently in the works to encourage additional building improvements.

D. DEVELOPING A UNIQUE SENSE OF PLACE

Public spaces and amenities need to be constructed and upgraded in order to create an environment that is visibly attractive to businesses that could serve to diversify the city's economy.

E. SOUTHFIELD ROAD

Rebuilding Southfield Road is essential to the strategy of creating a prosperous, sustainable, walkable, vibrant destination community. It is also essential to the economic sustainability of the city. The existing 160 feet right of way (ROW) includes double rows of street trees to create a sense of place and makes the corridor greener. The road could be narrowed to 120 feet of ROW, depending upon the ultimate future road cross-section, which would provide more area for adjacent land development. With no remaining undeveloped land in Lathrup Village, new commercial opportunities require the reuse of existing structures and properties. Therefore, compatible with the economic development strategy is the redevelopment of the vacant Annie Lathrup School Property. This site could be redefined from a historic, yet vacant structure in Lathrup Village to being a focal point of redevelopment.

Part of that endeavor includes the city continuing efforts to mitigate the impact of deteriorating properties through strict code enforcement, irrespective of occupancy status. The frontage along Southfield Road, for most of its length in the city, was built in a different era and is no longer compatible with modern commercial needs. The depth of the parcel zoned for commercial is often inadequate to support modern site and structure design. Addressing this issue means creating select parcels with greater depth, demolition of some existing structures while preserving the character of surrounding areas through limited infringement of residential area integrity. This would allow Southfield Road properties to be redeveloped, presenting opportunities for new uses and businesses in the entire corridor.

F. PUBLIC SPACES

The creation of public spaces would provide opportunities for people to gather formally, such as for art fairs, concerts, or other events, as well as informally, for a rest, a chance meeting, or to people-watch. This could be achieved through the creation of a Public Square, changing building setbacks, devising courtyards and arcade-spaces, redesigning the commercial corridor and mandating future land uses. Surrounding retail developments would benefit from the increasingly popular events in such spaces.

CHALLENGES + OPPORTUNITIES

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR REINVESTMENT

Several issues surrounding the commercial corridor need to be addressed. These include a built-out community, the identity of the Village, Southfield Road and the prevalence of buildings incompatible with the economic vision. There are currently many buildings constructed for office/medical activity located on lots lacking adequate parking. In addition, the lots have a narrow depth, reducing the potential for various types of redevelopment. The current commercial building stock requires an update in order to improve the perception of Lathrup Village as a place that is ideal for entrepreneurs, developers, and future residents.

SOUTHFIELD ROAD

Rebuilding Southfield Road in accordance with the community vision is perhaps the most pivotal task of the decade. However, its completion will herald a new chapter in the city's history. Southfield Road became an important north-south roadway in the mid-20th-century, with demand for suburban living and access afforded by new federal highways leading from Detroit. The expansion of Southfield Road to a five Lane "super-highway" was heralded by the local leaders of the time, who could not have envisioned that personal automobile traffic would dominate the landscape. Lathrup Village, while a suburban community itself, has been adversely impacted by sprawl. Major roads and highways delineate residential areas, increasing cut-through traffic and the need for additional buffering areas in traffic pulling techniques to screen protected residential areas. In addition, and as pointed out via

public input, Southfield Road and I-696 fragment the community into four zones. Issues raised in the Visioning Workshop of 2007 relating to transportation, included the need for more walkability in Lathrup Village. Impending Southfield Road reconstruction included expansion of the roadway and the addition of a large boulevard. The city recognized that the road project would do nothing to improve walkability, and would further reinforce the division of the City. Consequently in 2009, the city began researching an assessment of how it could better improve traffic flow and safety along its portions of Southfield Road, while responding to resident and business owner demands for a more walkable community.

VILLAGE CENTER AND CITY HALL

In conjunction with the Access Management Plan, the city developed a conceptual illustration for the Village Center area to assist with roadway planning, zoning ordinance development and discussions with the development community. It was anticipated that the City Hall Property could be leveraged to spur redevelopment under the right circumstances. The basic building blocks of the network are the preservation of the historic building, the Annie Lathrup School, and the addition of two main roadways to accommodate vehicular traffic with a pedestrian-friendly focus that include on-street parking, white sidewalks and abundant landscaping.

An additional opportunity is the fact that Lathrup Village was one of seven recipients of the 2015 Place Plans grants. Through a partnership with the Michigan Municipal League, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, and Michigan State University, this grant funds a project to collect stakeholder input and develop a plan to redevelop one of the city's most pivotal assets: City Hall. As a focal point of the Village Center, the redevelopment of city hall can set the tone for future redevelopment throughout the city by enhancing the sense of place and the economic potential of the space while conforming to the ideal concept of a mixed-use building in the commercial corridor.

The Farmers Market and the Summer Concerts have proven to be very successful in terms of attracting residents and visitors to the public spaces in the Village Center. These events have demonstrated how popular

THE CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE

future public spaces in the Village Center can be if the area is developed in accordance with the master plan. Increasing pedestrian and non-motorized traffic can serve to bring more people into the village center to shop, work, and visit.

ENCOURAGING GOOD DESIGN

Overcoming the obstacle of the suburban strip-style development is vital to transforming the community into a mixed use, multiple-story, and walkable community. Attractive commercial store fronts and curb appeal will not only improve the cities appearance, but attract new business and residents. Encouraging good design and proper building maintenance will require vigilant code enforcement and unceasing progress toward achieving the goals of the master plan. Fostering improvements in the commercial corridor is essential for business development efforts to be successful.

IMPLEMENTATION

DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPER ATTRACTION

Marketing Lathrup Village to key agents of change

- a. The creation of a real-estate development marketing packet by the DDA's Economic Restructuring Committee is key to acquiring the attention of real estate developers to prospective sites in Lathrup Village.

STREAMLINING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AT THE CITY LEVEL

- a. Acquire Redevelopment Ready Certification from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Continue to improve the city's Redevelopment Ready process. This will assist in streamlining the development process.
 - i. Assess the city's development review process annually for efficiency and effectiveness. Make improvements as needed.
 - ii. Through proactive marketing efforts, position Lathrup Village as the community of choice for developers that understand the city's vision.
- b. Establish a thorough auditing process of the building department database. This will assure

the finalization of permits by diligently following-up with inspections and oversight, thereby improving the city's ability to monitor ongoing development and ensuring building safety.

- c. Transitioning the development process to BS&A Software. Ensuring a centralized location for all information about buildings, code enforcement, permits, zoning issues, and development projects.

ATTENUATING RISK

- a. **Public Private Partnerships for Village Center and Commercial Corridor:** Create public/private partnerships to facilitate redevelopment of property bounded by California Drive
 - i. Identify specific key parcels that, when assembled and redeveloped, may leverage additional private investment.
 - ii. Define the city's role in terms of property acquisition, assembly, and redevelopment. Outline public/private partnership strategy.
 - iii. Identify funding sources and financial mechanisms for public and private investment.
- b. Establish the DDA Façade Grant in order to encourage improving the visible image of the city's commercial corridor. This process is projected to consume roughly one to two years of preparation time to codify it in the city ordinances and identify funding sources.
- c. Continue to popularize the DDA Sign Grant over the next two years in order to increase conformity with higher design standards in the Commercial Corridor.
- d. Pursue crowdfunding options with MEDC grant-matching support for projects that will craft an environment suitable for business attraction.

PLACEMAKING

- a. Incorporate placemaking strategies into all development and redevelopment, in conjunction with the principles and vision of the Master Plan, Village Center Concept, and Village Center Design Guidelines.
- b. Support placemaking efforts embodied in the goals, objectives, and action strategies for the

THE CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE

Village Center and Southfield Road Corridor. Identify and pursue other opportunities to create a sense of place in the City of Lathrup Village, building upon the city's identity as a diverse, caring, and welcoming community that has events and activities for all ages.

- i. **Recreation opportunities:** Strengthen and support the city's recreation opportunities by improving existing parks and continuing to develop engaging programming. Partner with neighborhood and civic groups, private property owners, and adjacent communities where appropriate to provide quality experiences.
- ii. **Farmers Market:** Seek opportunities to improve the city's Farmers Market by retaining popular vendors, drawing new and unique vendors, as well as attracting more shoppers each year. The market fills nutritional needs as well as offers opportunities for civic engagement and strengthens community ties.
- iii. **Schools:** Support efforts of Southfield Public Schools to engage Lathrup Village families by sharing the district's educational accomplishments and promoting opportunities for quality education.
- iv. **Relationships with Neighboring Communities:** Strengthen relationships with adjacent communities to facilitate quality development, regional connectivity, and efficient and effective municipal services.

THE VILLAGE CENTER

- a. **Infrastructure Needs in the Village Center:** Define infrastructure needs and develop a strategy for implementation. This may include new or improved roads and utilities.
 - i. Conduct an infrastructure audit to understand needs. Prioritize improvements according to the opportunity to leverage private investment through redevelopment.
 - ii. Identify appropriate funding opportunities for the variety of infrastructure improvements.

- b. **Streetscape standards in the Village Center:** Develop streetscape standards to improve public rights-of-way in the Village Center.

SOUTHFIELD ROAD

Improve the appearance of commercial areas outside of the Village Center. Encourage the improvement of buildings, streetscape, and signage along the Southfield and 12 Mile Roads. Improved curb appeal will improve the city's image and attract new development, new business, and new residents.

- a. **The DDA Corridor Cleanups:** Organize an annual event of volunteers who will help improve the image of the city's commercial corridors.
- b. **Property Acquisition along the Southfield Road Corridor:** Develop a strategy to facilitate acquisition of property along Southfield Road for redevelopment. Acquisition priorities should include vacant buildings, obsolete buildings, and properties considered strategic due to location and proximity to the proposed Village Center. A variety of funding options should be included in this strategy.
 - i. Create a survey of structures and incorporate these properties into a list of strategic property acquisitions.
 - ii. Define the city's role in assembling development sites through strategic land banking.
 - iii. Identify funding sources and financial mechanisms for public and private investment.
- c. **Zoning Ordinance Amendments:** Continue to assess the impact of Zoning Ordinance standards and refine as needed to facilitate quality redevelopment needs along the Southfield Road corridor.
- d. **Design Guidelines for Southfield Road Corridor:** Develop design guidelines and zoning standards to direct the improvement and maintenance of buildings and signage.
- e. **Streetscape standards for Southfield Road corridor:** Develop streetscape standards to improve the appearance of the public right-of-way.

THE CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE

- f. **Gateways at City Boundaries:** Create gateways to the city through the creation of district “Gateways” that combine landscape architecture and architectural techniques and structures. These gateway areas will reinforce the idea of Lathrup Village being a destination for shopping and doing business.
- g. **Parking Solutions for the Corridor:** Identify where parking constraints limit redevelopment opportunities and create strategies to address those constraints.
 - i. Assess impact of parking requirements on properties ripe for redevelopment; identify potential problem areas.
 - ii. Explore zoning changes that might improve redevelopment opportunities, while maintaining an appropriate buffer to adjacent residential properties.
 - iii. Consider the pros and cons of DDA district expansion in terms of meeting the objectives.
- h. **Infrastructure needs in the Southfield Road Corridor:** Define infrastructure needs along the Southfield Road Corridor and develop a strategy for implementation. This will include new or improved roads and utilities.
 - i. Conduct an infrastructure audit to understand needs. Prioritize improvements according to the opportunity to leverage private investment through redevelopment.
 - ii. Identify appropriate funding opportunities for the variety of infrastructure improvements.

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS ATTRACTION

Lathrup Village seeks to attract entrepreneurs by offering services and maintaining an environment, projecting an image, and marketing a brand that is conducive for business development. Presently, there are too many unviable businesses renting outdated facilities. There is also a current lack of diversity in the exiting business mix, with a narrow scope of goods and services being offered. Lathrup Village needs an ambitious business attraction program to revitalize and diversify its commercial corridor, as well as improve the retail shopping experience for area residents. Success in this task will enhance the economic capacity of the city. Only then can the commercial corridor leverage the buying power of area residents to spur further economic growth. The Lathrup Village Market Assessment identifies several business sectors that, if located within the city limits, will capture a significant amount of resident consumer spending. These sectors range from dining, to apparel sales, and entertainment such as movie theaters. Lathrup Village's location assures that these businesses would also become regional destinations.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

The existing viable businesses in Lathrup Village need to be strengthened in order to encourage the emergence of anchor institutions, which can serve to spur additional economic growth and pedestrian traffic. For instance, the Lathrup Village Market Assessment reveals that 52% of lunch trips and 86% of dinner trips are made to full-service restaurants by Lathrup Village residents. There are a few restaurants within the city limits that could capture this consumer spending in order to improve business retention and expansion.

BUSINESS DIVERSIFICATION

Retail and knowledge-based occupations are key to developing a sustainable and vibrant downtown economy, as well as serving to occupy the existing office buildings currently in the city's commercial corridor. Until property owners are adequately incentivized to redevelop their properties into mixed-use buildings, incremental steps to improve occupancy with a diverse

array of viable businesses that suit the intended purposes of the space should seriously be considered.

CHALLENGES + OPPORTUNITIES

Ultimately, the largest issue facing the economic redevelopment of the City is the time and the impetus to act swiftly as a means of mitigating continued economic decline for several reasons. The 2010 population for Lathrup Village has dropped since 2000, along with the (SEMCOG) projection that the City's population will continue to decline. The Southfield Road and outdated and unaddressed architecture will adversely affect business attraction and will affect future revenue generation through taxation for the city.

Rapid revitalization efforts are essential to mitigate the advent of increases in crime as more buildings along Southfield Road sit vacant. Lathrup Village has traditionally been an area of low crime. The city has prided itself in its ability to maintain a high level of public safety- an alluring feature for businesses and developers. Maintaining this level of public safety is essential for the maintenance of public spaces and economic development. Reducing the number of commercial and residential vacancies will be the number one challenge to accomplishing this task.

Fortunately, the city's Downtown Development Authority creates several opportunities for change. The many services offered by the Authority's Main Street Program helps in the promotion of the commercial corridor, the engagement of residents, the attraction and growth of businesses, and improving aesthetics. In addition to creating the foundation intended to give rise to a community of businesses within Lathrup Village, the DDA attempts to mitigate costs for businesses for advertizing and promotions, and to connect business owners and entrepreneurs with the resources and information they need to become successful. Resources like the Oakland County One Stop Shop is one example of a regional service available to local business owners.

IMPLEMENTATION

Support economic vitality throughout the city. An improved local economy benefits the community thorough job creation, improved property values, and the provision of needed goods and services for city residents.

BUSINESS ATTRACTION

- 1) **Make the city a destination:** Promote the city as a destination by attracting destination commercial uses.
 - a) Understand what destination commercial uses need to be successful and assess how Lathrup Village can meet those needs now and in the future.
 - b) Develop a recruitment strategy that matches key parcels suitable for destination commercial uses with available property in the city.
 - c) Consider which types of incentives are needed to supplement the assets the city already has to offer new businesses.
 - d) Develop strategies to retain existing businesses that fit the recommendations of the market analysis.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

- 1) Dialogue with Businesses: Establish a dialogue with existing business owners to understand their needs for growth and redevelopment.
 - a) Develop communications tools to gather input from business owners. Consider an approach that solicits the positives as well as the challenges.
 - b) Evaluate the findings and participation of communication tools and identify strategies to support redevelopment activities.
 - c) Identify which businesses have the capacity for expansion and possess the potential for increased full-time employment opportunities for residents.
 - d) Continue to develop *Business to Business* events in order to solidify a community of businesses who can mitigate risks and reduce costs by working together.
 - e) Continue to develop coop advertizing program to reduce costs for businesses and to increase general awareness of the commercial corridor.
 - f) Identify new sites for businesses within the commercial corridor in order to better suit their needs- expanding businesses may need more space, better storage, higher visibility, etc.

BUSINESS DIVERSIFICATION

Aggressively pursue a variety of retail and service providers to locate within the city in order to encourage the emergence of economic diversity. The city should develop a plan to lower costs and attenuate risks for new businesses in the city that meet a series of diversity criteria. This includes a two-year exploration of the viability and feasibility of a plan for a business incubator.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION AND RESIDENTIAL EXPANSION

By modernizing the commercial corridor, economy, and physical layout, the city will become an environment that is favorable to the development of innovative business clusters. The improvement of shopping, housing, and employment options will result in the emergence of a regional economic node on the map that is attractive to future residents. It is imperative that the city provide a sufficient number and variety of housing options. It is also vital that the city continue to preserve the value of the historic residential neighborhoods while modernizing the commercial corridor.

Retail locations are more attractive to businesses when they are located near strong residential neighborhoods. Code enforcement is key to the preservation of neighborhood stability, while a thriving commercial corridor will serve to enhance existing values.

CHALLENGES + OPPORTUNITIES

Effective and consistent code enforcement throughout Lathrup Village is essential to preserving residential housing quality and real estate values. As the housing stock ages, residents will need increasing access to programs that assist in mitigating the costs of house repairs and maintenance.

A powerful opportunity exists at the county level to assist with neighborhood stabilization. Oakland County Home Improvement Programs offer zero interest loans for maintenance, repairs and upgrades to the primary residence of qualified homeowners. This program can assist to reduce barriers to community development and neighborhood stabilization by connecting residents to resources they need.

Pursuing programs, improvements, and developments that continue to make Lathrup Village unique from surrounding communities is essential to maintaining a noticeable identity that is attractive to potential residents.

IMPLEMENTATION

Preserve and protect the quality and character of residential neighborhoods, while offering a variety of housing options. Encourage preservation and maintenance of existing homes in neighborhoods that contribute to the charm and identity of the city. Ensure that new housing is compatible with existing residential neighborhoods.

- 1) Tree preservation and protection: Evaluate the need to create a tree preservation, protection, and replacement ordinance in the city. The principal asset of the city is the historic residential neighborhoods with their wooded lots and tree-lined streets. A tree preservation, protection and replacement ordinance would manage this resource, require the timely replacement of trees, and determine the reasonableness and replacement of trees slated for removal.
- 2) Maintain quality city services, including but not limited to leaf and snow removal, and waste and recycling services.
- 3) Assist homeowners with the management of housing costs, including maintenance and utility costs, by encouraging energy and water conservation, alternative energy, and home maintenance services referral. Continue to support and promote the Lathrup Village Time Bank and its opportunities to match homeowner needs with those within the community with related skills.
- 4) Encourage the creation of a variety of housing options to meet the needs of young adults, families, and older adults.
- 5) Maintain a vigilant code enforcement program to maintain the existing quality of housing stock.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

Residents need to become more engaged in the commercial corridor. Living, shopping, working, volunteering, or recreating in the commercial corridor are all forms of engagement that the city should encourage and support. For this to be done, the city needs to pursue opportunities to create physical and social connections between the neighborhoods and the commercial corridor. The pathways created will be important in developing a strong community network that can allow the emergence of a strong economy.

Improving connectivity includes developing transportation systems and creating avenues for residents to better engage the formative downtown. First, the downtown needs to be more accessible to residents, workers and visitors by a variety of travel options. Safety, connectivity and mobility are key transportation issues currently being addressed.

CHALLENGES + OPPORTUNITIES

Incorporating the vision of a Village Center and revitalized commercial corridor, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has been studying alternatives for a plan to rebuild Southfield Road. The City of Lathrup Village continues to work closely with RCOC, advocating for a design alternative to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety and circulation, while at the same time encouraging a new vibrant type of redevelopment of property along this important commercial corridor.

Other transportation assets include Interstate 696, which bisects the City of Lathrup Village. With exits at Southfield Road and Evergreen, the interstate can certainly serve as a transportation asset that connects the city to the region for visitors, commuters, and commercial activity. Nearby freeways include I-75, Northwestern Highway, and the Lodge Freeway. These highways also serve to make Lathrup Village part of a transportation nexus, enhancing the significance of its geographic position as an economic node if properly utilized.

The city's Market Assessment and Strategy reports that a majority of residents rate Lathrup Village's transportation options as *poor*. In order for the city to undergo a comprehensive transformation and economic revitalization, the issue of non-motorized transportation must be addressed. The Capital Improvement Plan incorporates non-motorized transportation improvement plan (NMTIP) into its recommendations in order to comply with the Lathrup Village complete streets ordinance. Originally the NMTIP called for the installation of non-motorized connections for those that use Lathrup Village's roads as pedestrians. The installation of sidewalks, intersection connections, way-finding signage and road crossings should be incorporated. The current six-year plan focuses on pairing the completion of the pedestrian sidewalk network with the road re-paving projects or the installation of way findings signage. Way-finding signage is still a priority; future improvements within the park systems of Lathrup Village, the City of Southfield, and Oakland County may change pedestrian patterns and the need for signage.

An additional opportunity lay in the recent development of the SMART program. SMART has recently added numerous bus stops in the city, which is a big step in linking Lathrup Village to the region for many individuals who rely on public transportation.

The city is also very active in promoting local businesses and events to residents via the DDA's social media activities. There is a growing number of residents who are taking interest in the DDA, whether as volunteers, event attendees, or survey participants. It is an example of improving social connections with the downtown.

IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

- a) **Improve connectivity in the city:** Promote the independence and health of all of the residents by improving transportation options within the city. Unite all quadrants of the city by improving vehicular and non-motorized transportation access.
- b) **Connect all city quadrants:** Work with the RCOC and MDOT to provide safe crossings for Southfield Road and I696 that connect all parts of the city.

- c) **Southfield Road Improvement Plan:** Work with the road Commission for Oakland County to complete the environmental assessment and Design Plan for Southfield Road. The proposed road improvement should be designed in conjunction with the city's Complete Streets Plan, its Access Management Plan, and local input. The resulting plan should suggest corridor enhancements, on-street parking areas, pedestrian crossings, traffic signalization, corridor lighting, and geometric changes to the roadway.
- d) **Non-Motorized Transportation:** Continue to use the Capital Improvements Plan, the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, and other funding opportunities to make improvements to the city's existing non-motorized transportation network that connect residential areas, parks and recreational facilities, civic uses, and commercial designations, pursuant to the city's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. Integrate Complete Streets infrastructure and design features into street planning, design, construction, and reconstruction to improve the safety and accessibility of the city's transportation network.
- e) **Public Transportation:** Continue to improve transportation options for residents and business owners by exploring the city's participation in SMART as a first step to provide mass transit options to residents. Additional steps include discussions with other Southfield Road communities to evaluate other mass transit alternatives as well as promoting and encouraging city residents to take advantage of non-motorized travel options through education and awareness.
- f) **Promote Complete Streets in Adjacent Communities:** Advocate for Complete streets when other jurisdictions plan, design, and construct streets projects that impact the city's transportation network. Work with adjacent communities to establish connections to the trailways program that exist in nearby communities to create a more walkable community and provide additional recreational opportunities.
- g) **Improving Social Connections:** Connectivity also implies improving social networks. The city must create social connections with businesses, residents, visitors and workers in the commercial corridor. It is important to continue with a social media strategy that identifies the commercial corridor as a destination for residents, shoppers, and visitors.
- h) **Improve comfort and aesthetics of pedestrian environment:** Enhance the experience of non-motorized users by integrating street lighting, furniture, and other amenities as appropriate, given street function and land use context.