



Greater Corktown

Neighborhood Framework Plan

Supplemental Information

City of Detroit



An aerial photograph of a city, likely downtown, is shown in a dark, semi-transparent style. A grid of light-colored dots is overlaid on the entire image, creating a patterned background. The city buildings and streets are visible through the grid.

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Historic Preservation Report

*Image Credits: left: Perry Street, by Elaine Robinson; right, Corktown Historic District Houses
by Katie Remensnyder, Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc.*



CORKTOWN FRAMEWORK: A HISTORIC PRESERVATION PERSPECTIVE

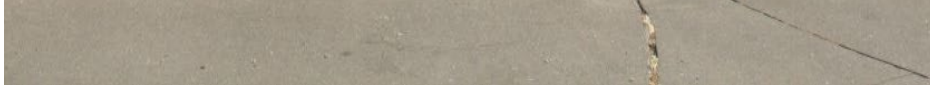


WAYNE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

J-1043/R1414

PERKINS & WILL

DECEMBER 6, 2019





COMMONWEALTH
H E R I T A G E G R O U P

**CORKTOWN FRAMEWORK:
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PERSPECTIVE**

**Prepared for
PERKINS & WILL**

**Prepared by
COMMONWEALTH HERITAGE GROUP, INC.
3215 CENTRAL STREET
DEXTER, MICHIGAN 48130**

**Elaine H. Robinson, M.S., Senior Architectural Historian
Katie Remensnyder, M.S., Architectural Historian
Brandon Gabler, Ph.D., RPA, Project Manager**

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Disclaimers

The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this report are those of Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc. and the authors.

ABSTRACT

The following report was prepared as part of the Corktown Framework Project. This document provides information on previously documented historic resources, includes a brief history of the area, and offers suggestions for areas that would benefit from additional efforts.

The Corktown Framework Area consists of two areas identified by the City of Detroit as Corktown and North Corktown. Although historically connected, the construction of several expressways has isolated the Corktown neighborhood from the North Corktown area. The Corktown area has benefited from several areas being designated historic districts, with the original district created in 1978 and a second western district designated as a local district in 1978. It is likely that these designations have enabled the area to retain some of its original density.

Both neighborhoods in the Framework Area have undergone extensive demolitions. Among the earliest losses came in the 1910s, when a gateway park was created in front of the new Michigan Central Train Station. Another wave of losses came with the construction of the urban expressways and creation of the West Side Industrial Project in the southern section of Corktown beginning in 1959. By the final decades of the twentieth century, rather than large-scale clearing projects, individual buildings were targeted for removal.

In spite of these losses, there continues to be a positive attitude among the area residents. Signs of construction and rehabilitation are evident in both Corktown and North Corktown. These efforts can be encouraged and strengthened by the implantation of active preservation efforts. However, to have the greatest economic impact, these efforts need to extend beyond the existing districts to consider properties that would be viable restoration projects using incentives such as federal historic preservation tax credits.



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INTRODUCTION

Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc. (Commonwealth) is part of the team assembled by Perkins & Will (in turn contracted to Detroit Economic Growth Association) to prepare a framework for the Corktown area in the City of Detroit (Figure 1). This area, as defined by the city, includes both the previously documented historic sections of Corktown largely south of Michigan Avenue as well as North Corktown, which extends north from Michigan Avenue to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The final portion of the project area is a triangle of land north of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and bounded on the two outer edges by Rosa Parks Boulevard on the west and West Grand River Avenue on the east (Figure 2).

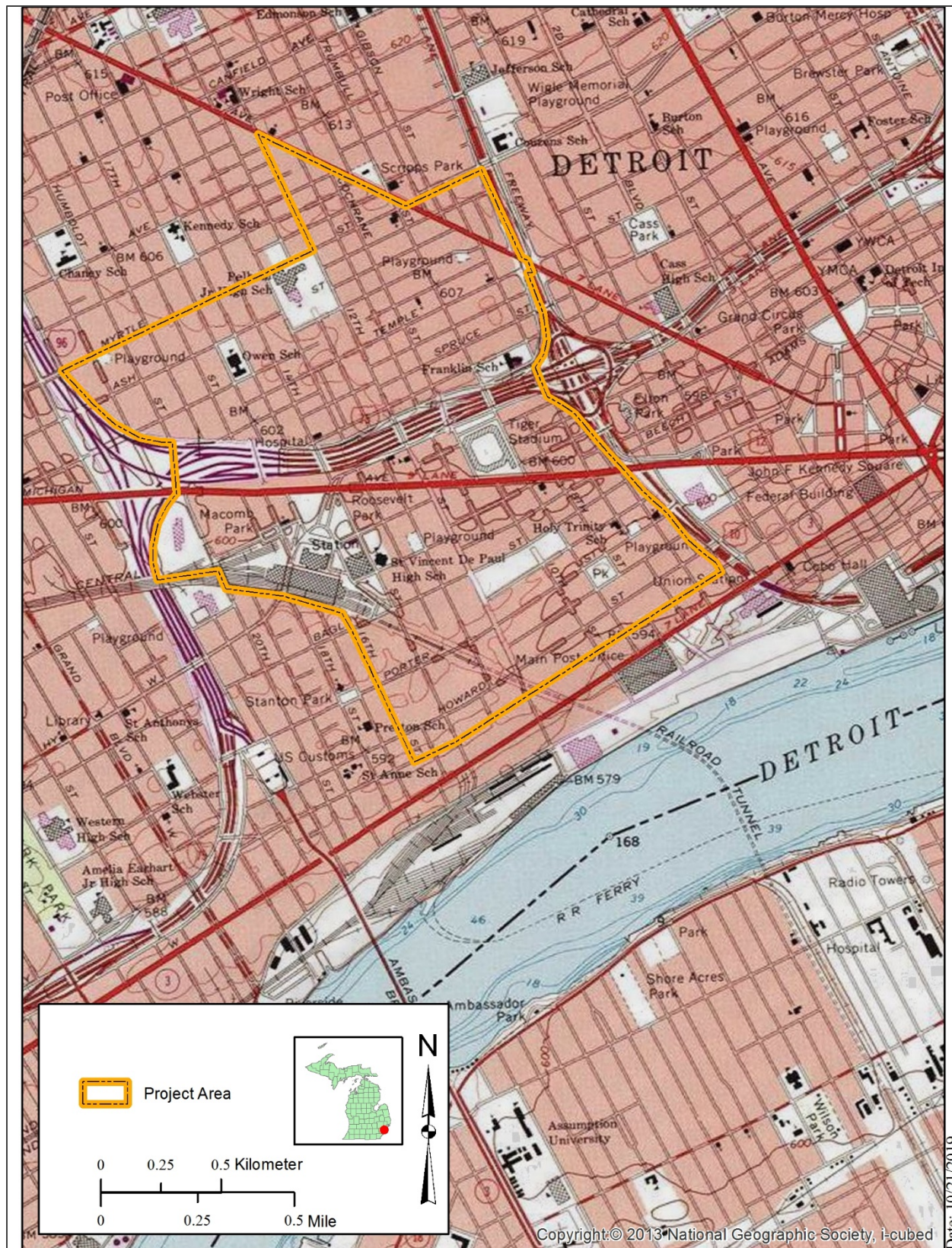


Figure 1. Project location



Figure 2. Corktown Framework Project Area

Within the project area there are a variety of large building types, including industrial, commercial, residential (single family and multiple dwelling), educational, and religious, and a variety of recreational uses. Today, by far, the area is characterized by large areas of open space. Historically much of the open land, particularly in North Corktown, was occupied by residential buildings. In the last twenty years there have been extensive changes to the area, including the loss of the long-standing Tiger Stadium (Navin Field) and tremendous popularity in local businesses such as Slows Bar BQ and Gold Cash Gold, both located on Michigan Avenue.

The names of the neighborhoods, Corktown and North Corktown, are based on early residents. Silas Farmer wrote in 1890 about the nationalities and characteristics of the residents of Detroit:

the larger portion of the territory on Fifth and Sixth Streets, for several blocks each side of Michigan Avenue, is called Corktown, because chiefly occupied by people from the Emerald Isle...Peddler's Point is a name frequently applied to the part of Grand River Avenue near Twelfth Street. The intersection of several streets at the place forms a pointed block, which locality is a favorite place for itinerant hucksters to intercept and purchase supplies from the farmers coming in on the Grand River Road.¹

¹ Silas Farmer, *History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan*, 3rd ed. (Detroit: Silas Farmer & Co., 1890), 928.

METHODOLOGY

Previously Recorded Historic Properties

The evaluation required for the Project has included completing a file search with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and other sources to identify previously surveyed or evaluated properties. As a result of these efforts, Commonwealth identified a total of seven resources previously identified as historically significant. These include one district and two buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), three buildings listed in the State Register of Historic Sites (SRHS), and one local historic district (Table 1; Figure 3).

Table 1. Previously Identified Historic Resources within the Project Area

Resource Name	Location	Designation	Date Designated
Corktown Historic District	Roughly bounded by Lodge Freeway, Porter, Trumbull, Bagley, Rosa Parks Blvd., and Michigan Ave.	NRHP	July 1978 ²
West Corktown Addition to the Corktown Historic District	Roughly bounded by Michigan Ave., Rosa Parks Blvd., Dalzalle, Vermont, Bagley, Marantette, Wabash, and Fourteenth Street.	Local - City of Detroit	1998 ³
Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church	1050 Porter Street	NRHP -contributes to Corktown Historic District; SRHP	1978; October 1984 ⁴
Trinity Episcopal Church	1519 Myrtle Street (Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard)	NRHP; Local Historic District	May 1980; December 1979 ⁵
Joseph H. Esterling House	2245 Wabash Street	SRHS; also, in Local Historic District	March 1982 ⁶
Penn Central Station/ Michigan Central Railroad Station	2405 West Vernor	NRHP	April 16, 1975 ⁷
Mary Bell's Millinery-John Allen's Café	1378-1384 Michigan Avenue	SRHS	May 31, 1989 ⁸

² Robert E. Miller, "Corktown Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, on file at the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing, Michigan.

³ City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB), "West Corktown Addition to the Corktown Historic District, Final Report." On file, HDAB, City of Detroit, approved 1998.

⁴ Michigan History Division Inventory Form, State Register of Historic Sites, Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church and Rectory, on file at the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing, Michigan.

⁵ Leslie J. Vollmert, "Trinity Episcopal Church," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, on file at the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing, Michigan.; City of Detroit Local Historic District Map, <https://detroitmi.gov/webapp/local-historic-district-mapof> (accessed October 17, 2019).

⁶ Michigan History Division Inventory Form, State Register of Historic Sites, Joseph H. Esterling House, on file at the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office Lansing, Michigan; City of Detroit Local Historic District Map, <https://detroitmi.gov/webapp/local-historic-district-map> (accessed October 17, 2019).

⁷ Leonard Kniffel, "Penn Central Station/Michigan Central Railroad Station," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, on file at the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing, Michigan.

⁸ Richard T. Chapman, "Mary Bell's Millinery – John Allen's Café" State Register of Historic Sites, Inventory form on file with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing, Michigan.

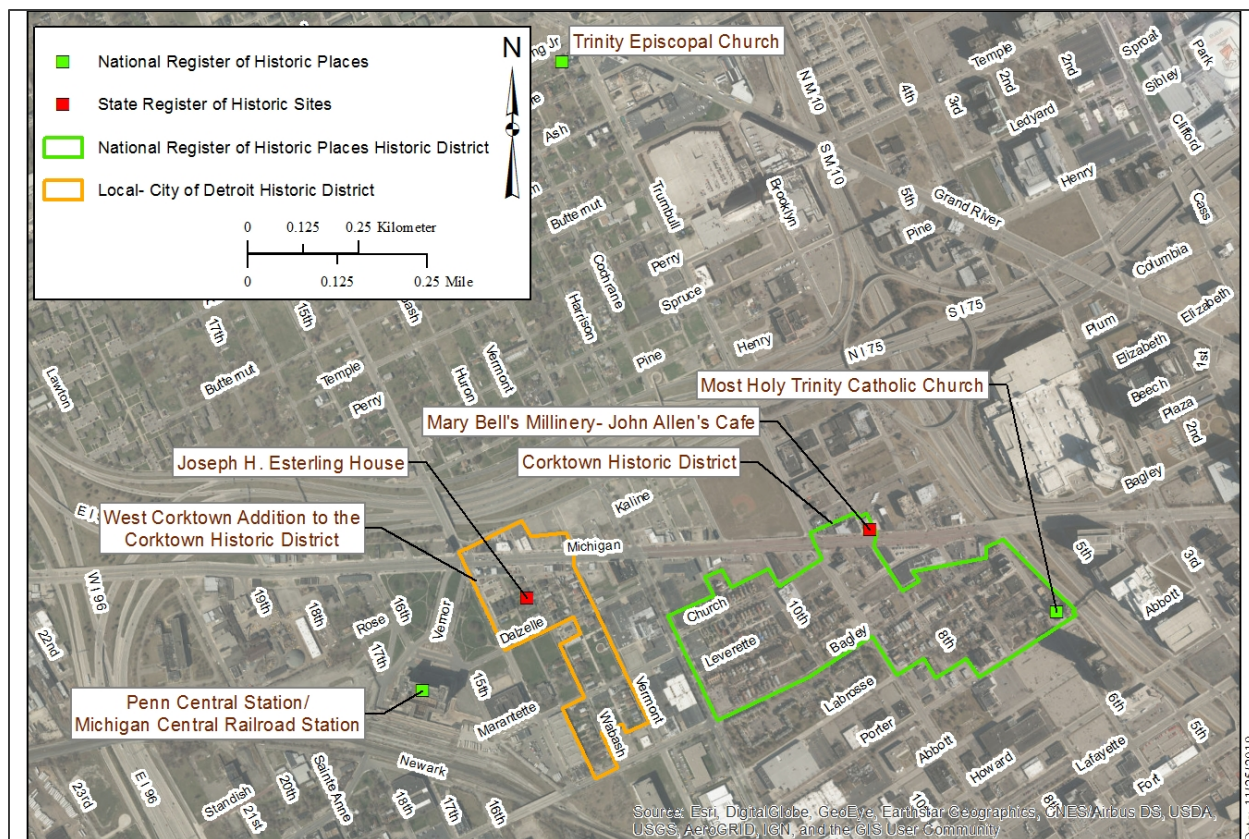


Figure 3. Previously recorded historic districts and buildings

In addition to the investigations of previously identified historic resources, Commonwealth carried out background research on local history and historic contexts relevant to the area. This research was completed using published histories, maps, and newspaper articles as well as background materials from previous historic investigations.

Field Investigations

Field investigations were completed by Ms. Elaine Robinson and Ms. Katie Remensnyder on October 9, 2019. As part of this effort, every street in the Project Area was driven to identify previously documented historic resources. During these investigations, photographs were taken of selected resources, sufficient to capture the character of the area, and included both previously identified historic resources (see Table 1), typical resources, and those properties that should be considered for future designation.



CORKTOWN HISTORY

Originally the area known as Corktown was bounded by the Detroit River, Eighth Street, Vernor Highway, and Third Street and was under development by the Irish community by 1820 (Figure 4).⁹ Early residents came from Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, and other parts of Ireland, including County Cork, which provided the neighborhood name. As the number of Irish immigrants grew, the Catholic Church recognized the need for an English-speaking church, and a new parish was established in 1833 with the first church, Most Holy Trinity, dedicated in 1835 at Cadillac Square and Bates Street just east of Woodward Avenue in downtown Detroit.¹⁰ Continued Irish movement to the west side of Detroit eventually required the movement of Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church and resulted in an expansion of the Corktown neighborhood. In August 1849 the brick building was moved to the Porter and Sixth Streets.¹¹ The present church was designed by New York based architect Patrick C. Keely begun in 1855 and dedicated in 1866 (Figure 5).¹² Keeley, who was considered to be the “Pioneer Catholic Architect of America,” designed over 600 churches in his long career, although it is believed that Most Holy Trinity is his only Michigan work.¹³ Twenty years later, in 1886, the associated rectory, designed by Detroit architects Mason & Rice, was constructed in the Romanesque Revival style.¹⁴

⁹ Gene Scott, *Detroit Beginnings: Early Villages and Old Neighborhoods* (Detroit: Detroit 300 Partners Program of Detroit Retired City Employees Association, 2001), 68.

¹⁰ Michigan History Division Inventory Form, State Register of Historic Sites, Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church and Rectory, on file at the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing, Michigan

¹¹ Farmer, *History of Detroit*, 536.

¹² Michigan History Division Inventory Form, State Register of Historic Sites, Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church and Rectory, on file at the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing, Michigan

¹³ “Built 600 Churches,” *Buffalo Courier* (Buffalo, NY), August 14, 1896, 2.

¹⁴ Eric J. Hill, FAIA, and John Gallagher, *AIA Detroit: The American Institute of Architects Guide to Detroit Architecture* (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2003), 245.



Figure 5. Most Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, Corktown

Early residents in Corktown constructed detached single-family houses and rowhouses in the Federal Style, which was fashionable at the time (Figure 6). Later buildings in the neighborhood reflected the current architectural trends, resulting in new buildings often being modest one- and two-story townhouses with Italianate and Queen Anne stylistic details (Figure 7).¹⁵

¹⁵ Detroit Historical Society, “Corktown Historic District,” in *Encyclopedia of Detroit*, <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/corktown-historic-district> (accessed November 21, 2019).



Figure 6. Worker's Row House, 1430 Sixth Street, constructed in 1849. The building is believed to be the oldest extant residence in Corktown.



Figure 7. Houses along the north side of Bagley Street



Figure 8. Typical houses of West Corktown

The traditional Irish ethnicity of Corktown in 1880 had already started to diffuse, with just 40% of the households at the time headed by an Irish immigrant.¹⁶ By the 1890s the Irish community, which was increasingly affluent, was scattering throughout the city. More and more of the residents of Corktown claimed other ethnicities, including many that identified as American and Protestant; however, the area was able to maintain a strong Irish tone.¹⁷

Although losing its original Irish residents, Corktown and North Corktown continued to flourish. In 1890 Harrah’s Real Estate Exchange indicated that houses for sale in the area were priced between \$1,000 and \$10,000, although there were several sales for over \$10,000.¹⁸ One house located between Perry and Bagg (now Temple) Streets was advertised for \$5,500 was described as:

Two story frame dwelling, containing twelve apartments exclusive of bath rooms [sic], all nicely furnished and papers; high ceilings, hot and cold water; good cellar. Lot 74 x 195. Barn with stabling for six horses. Fruit and shade trees.¹⁹

The majority of houses in what one author called the “new west side” and in areas south of Michigan Avenue were selling for between \$2,000 and \$5,000. Most of these houses were frame construction and were considered comfortable rather than luxurious.²⁰ One house included in the

¹⁶ Olivier Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 133.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁹ Harrah’s Real Estate Exchange, *Real Estate Advertiser* (Detroit), April 1890, 1.

²⁰ Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality*, 149.

Real Estate Advertiser was located on Perry Street between Trumbull and National (now Cochrane) Streets in what is now known as North Corktown. The listing noted the “spacious new cottage” that contained seven rooms located on a lot 30 x 115 and selling for \$2,400.²¹

Along with the modest frame buildings, there were some larger brick and stone buildings erected in the area. One such example of these buildings is the Late Gothic Revival style Trinity Episcopal/Spirit of Hope Church (Figure 9). The building, also designed by Mason & Rice, was constructed between 1890 and 1892.²² James E. and Harriet Scripps were the benefactors in the construction of complex. Mr. Scripps was a prominent resident of Detroit who launched a newspaper that is today known as *The Detroit News* and was instrumental in establishing the predecessor of the Detroit Institute of Arts.²³ The Scripps home was located on Trumbull Avenue, north of Brainard Street and just outside of the area today known as North Corktown.²⁴



Figure 9. Trinity Episcopal/Spirit of Hope Church and Rectory, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard

The number of Irish families in Corktown continued to diminish through the last decade of the nineteenth century. The number of Irish in Detroit remained strong, but their stronghold on one neighborhood dissipated as they moved into other areas in the city. A sign of the local ethnic shift was the sale of the Hibernian Hall building on Michigan Avenue in 1908.²⁵ The hall, which was located at the corner of Porter and Third Streets, had been the home of the Hibernian Benevolent Society, a social, cultural, and economic organization for Irish Catholic immigrants

²¹ Harrah’s Real Estate Exchange, *Real Estate Advertiser* (Detroit), April 1890, 7.

²² Eckert, *Buildings of Michigan*, 78.

²³ “Scripps is at Rest,” *Detroit Free Press (DFP)*, June 1, 1906, 11.

²⁴ Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan* (Detroit: Sanborn Map Company, vol 2, 1921), 65.

²⁵ Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality*, 195.

and residents of Corktown. The society was formed in Detroit in 1871, and in 1875 boasted about 175 members.²⁶

One of the largest construction projects in Corktown, before the expressways, was the development of the Michigan Central Station. Construction of the railroad station, located at the corner of West Vernor and Michigan Avenues, was completed on December 25, 1913, just eight days after the older station was destroyed by fire.²⁷ The new station was constructed on land already owned by Michigan Central Railroad, and was situated near the new railroad tunnel to Canada (Figure 10).

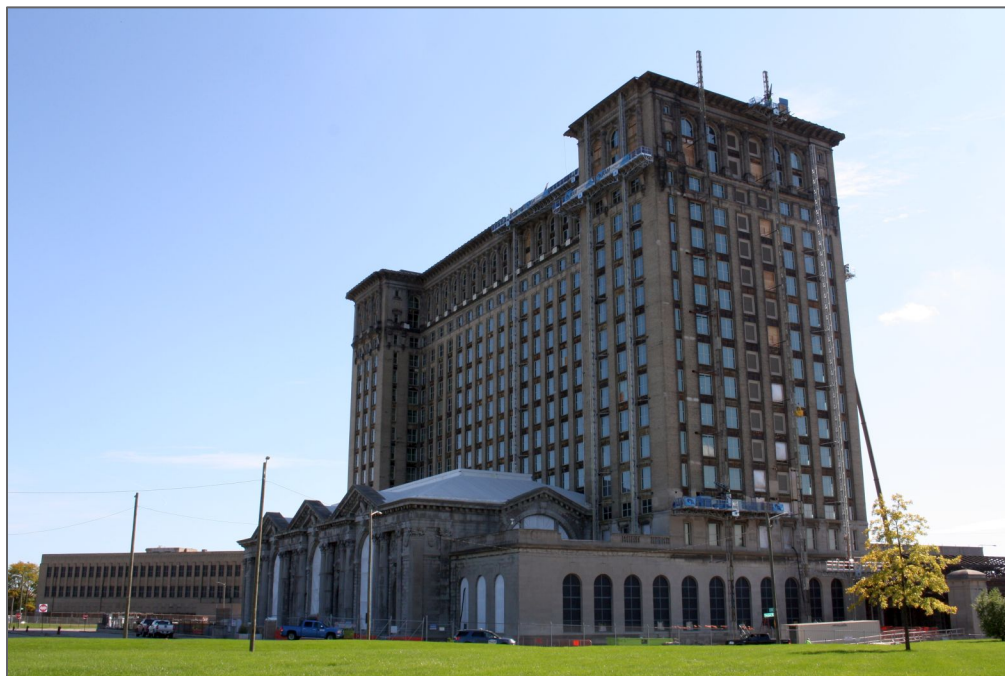


Figure 10. Michigan Central Station

Initially the station was surrounded by houses and businesses; however, even before the station was constructed there was a suggestion made by the assistant general manager of the railway, W. S. Kinnear, for the city to create a park in front of the station so “persons entering the city may at once have a favorable impression of Detroit.”²⁸ It took several more years, but by 1913 the City had identified the area that would eventually become Roosevelt Park in front of the train station. Initially known as the Esplanade, the City costs to acquire and demolish about 200 houses in the area was estimated at \$500,000 by Assessor John Nagel.²⁹ The design for the approach was prepared by Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennet, Chicago-based architects who were highly regarded in the City Beautiful Movement.³⁰ Unfortunately, Daniel Burnham died in mid-

²⁶ J. W. Weeks & Co, *Annual Directory of Detroit for 1875-76*, (Detroit: J. W. Weeks & Co., 1875), 35.

²⁷ Leonard Kniffel, “Penn Central Station/Michigan Central Railroad Station,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, on file at the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing, Michigan.

²⁸ “Ask City’s Co-Operation,” *DFP*, August 25, 1910, 9.

²⁹ “Esplanade Costs Fixed at \$500,000,” *DFP*, January 19, 1913, 10.

³⁰ “Experts to Aid City Plan Work,” *DFP*, October 12, 1911, 3.

1912, leaving Bennett to complete the design.³¹ It would take another six years before the area was cleared, with much of the delay due to lawsuits brought by former property owners protesting the large area of condemnations. On January 7, 1919, the day after President Theodore Roosevelt passed away, the Detroit City Council adopted a resolution naming the new park Roosevelt Park (Figure 11).³²

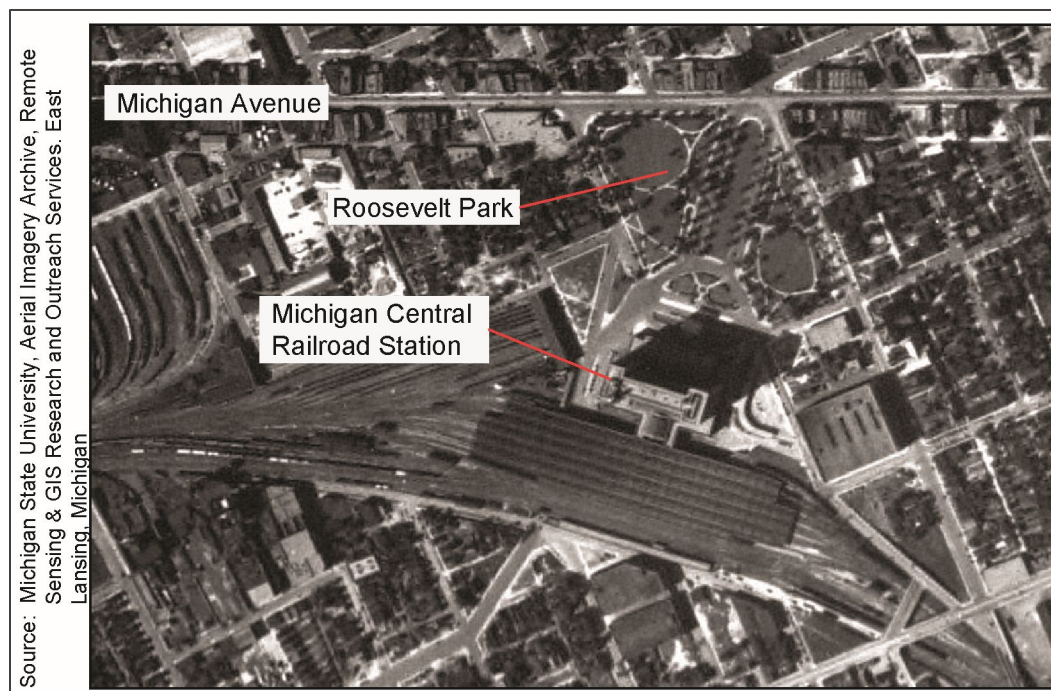


Figure 11. Aerial view of Michigan Central Station and Roosevelt Park in 1937

The northern edge of Roosevelt Park extends to Michigan Avenue, which is the major commercial street in Corktown. The roadway was first planned in the 1820s as a means to connect Fort Wayne in Detroit to Fort Dearborn in Chicago, and was considered a military highway.³³ The early city plan intended for Michigan Avenue to be 200 feet wide, matching the widths of other Detroit thoroughfares such as Washington Boulevard or Madison Avenue; however, its location on the northern border of the “Military Reserve” meant that the road was narrower than intended. By 1884 this irregularity in the width of Michigan Avenue in Detroit was illustrated by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, with Michigan narrowing from 100 feet on the east end near Fifth Street to a mere 66 feet at Seventh Street (now Brooklyn Street).³⁴

³¹ Paul Sewick, “Roosevelt Park,” *Corktown History*, <http://corktownhistory.blogspot.com/2012/04/roosevelt-park.html> (accessed November 25, 2019).

³² “Old’ Council Through work,” *DFP*, January 8, 1919, 2.

³³ Paul Sewick, “Radial Avenues Part III: Michigan Avenue,” *Detroit Urbanism*, <http://detroiturbanism.blogspot.com/2016/09/radial-avenues-part-iii-michigan-ave.html> (accessed November 19, 2019); Aaron Mondry, “Michigan’s highway; The history of Michigan Avenue, or state’s most important road,” Model D, March 6, 2017, <https://www.modeldmedia.com/features/michigan-avenue-pt1-030617.aspx>, (accessed November 25, 2019).

³⁴ Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan*, vol. 1. (Detroit: Sanborn Map Company, 1884), 11.

Congestion of the roadway resulted in a vote held in 1925, which resulted in the approval of widening Michigan Avenue from Fifth to Livernois Avenues.³⁵ It was not until 1939 that the buildings on the south side of the road were removed, and the adjacent Michigan Avenue was widened.³⁶

Following World War I the ethnic population of Corktown began to shift to include immigrants from Malta, a small island in the Mediterranean between Sicily and Libya. An estimated 6,000 to 7,000 immigrants made their way from Malta to Detroit prior to December 12, 1920.³⁷ Many of these new arrivals settled in Corktown, drawn to the area by others who immigrated before them and the presence of Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church, which provided the immigrants their important connection to the church. It is believed that the Detroit settlement of Maltese was the largest outside their home country.³⁸ To assist the new immigrants in assimilating, the Americanization Committee of Detroit was established and included a Maltese Information Bureau. The Bureau produced a newsletter in Maltese that included vital information for the newly arrived residents.³⁹

Using aerial photographs, the changes that occurred in the Corktown area between 1937 and 1993 are evident. In 1937 the two largest landmarks—Tiger Stadium and Michigan Central Station—are present, as is the landscaped Roosevelt Park. Additionally, almost every block is developed with houses or other small businesses (Figure 12). This image is also prior to the widening of Michigan Avenue, illustrating the original narrow roadway.

In 1957 the aerial reveals the widened Michigan Avenue, which is missing many of the commercial buildings along the south side of the street (Figure 13). There are also several scattered areas of vacant lands, including several blocks north of Michigan Avenue near Nineteenth Street, a large parcel along the south side of Locust Street (near the Michigan Avenue label), and a third location northeast of Cherry and Pine Streets.

³⁵ “Detroit Votes to Spend Many Millions in Widening; Annexation Poll Expands City’s Ares 21 Sq. Miles,” *DFP*, October 11, 1925, 5-1.

³⁶ Paul Sewick, “Radial Avenues Part III: Michigan Avenue,” *Detroit Urbanism*, <http://detroiturbanism.blogspot.com/2016/09/radial-avenues-part-iii-michigan-ave.html> (accessed November 19, 2019).

³⁷ Diane Gale Andreassi, *Maltese in Detroit* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), xi.

³⁸ Andreassi, *Maltese in Detroit*, 2.

³⁹ Joseph M. Lubig, *Maltese in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011).



Figure 13. Corktown Framework Area, 1957

Major highway construction occurred in Detroit in the 1960s, with the last leg of Interstate 75 (I-75, or the Fisher Freeway) opened in September 1970.⁴⁰ The new expressways are clearly visible in the 1972 aerial, passing just north of Michigan Avenue and dividing the Corktown Framework Area into two distinct areas (Figure 14). To facilitate the construction of the expressway, hundreds of houses and businesses were demolished. In addition to the buildings lost to the expressway construction, beginning in 1959 and nearing completion in 1965, was the establishment of the West Side Industrial Project in the southern portion of Corktown. This project required clearing of all the buildings between the Lodge Freeway on the east, Twelfth Street (Rosa Parks Boulevard) on the west, Howard Street on the south, and Porter Street to Trumbull Avenue then along Labrosse Street on the north. The first stage of the project included 77 acres of land, with a planned second stage to be located immediately west of the West Side Industrial Project that included 101 acres.⁴¹

Also evident in the 1972 aerial photograph is the construction of the Benjamin F. Pelham Junior High school completed in 1963.⁴² The school is located at the southwest corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (formerly Myrtle Street) and Rosa Parks Boulevard (see Figure 14). The sprawling Modern-era school occupies approximately half of the large lot, with the remainder dedicated to Nagel Park, which consists of open areas and a large baseball field. The school was later known as Owen School and since 2010 it has housed the Burton International Academy.⁴³

The change in land use in the West Side Industrial Area is clearly evident in the 1972 aerial (see Figure 14), with larger buildings spaced across the area where hundreds of smaller homes were located just a few years earlier. In part, the planned revitalization of the industrial areas was based on the projected city taxes. Prior to the demolitions, the West Side Industrial Area brought in \$106,000 a year. This figure was estimated to be closer to \$150,000 in 1965, and an estimated return of \$450,000 annually in city taxes once all the planned construction was completed.⁴⁴

A large cleared area near the new I-96 expressway and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is also evident on the 1972 aerial. This land would be developed into the Fountain Court Cooperative, an apartment and townhouse complex on a portion of the old Western Market site.⁴⁵ Developers had worked for over three years to reach the 1969 grand opening of the first forty-eight housing units, with as many as 400 residences to be constructed by the time the project was completed. In part, the new housing, the first in the area in over twenty years, was developed to provide affordable options to those neighborhood residents before losing their residences to eminent domain.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Jody Ross, "Historic Note Opens Last I-75 Leg in City," *DFP*, September 18, 1970, A3.

⁴¹ John A. Woerpel, "City Tags 550 Acres for Industrial Parks," *DFP*, December 4, 1965, 5-B.

⁴² John Grover and Yvette van der Velde, *A School District in Crisis: Detroit's Public Schools 1842-2015*, Loveland Technologies, <https://landgrid.com/reports/schools#top> (accessed October 22, 2019).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ "Co-Op Complex Opened at Old Western Market Site," *DFP*, June 7, 1969, 4C.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*



Figure 14. Corktown Framework, 1972

By the time of the 1993 aerial photograph, there are early signs of building demolitions in the neighborhoods of both Corktown and North Corktown (Figure 15). Particularly in the northwest corner of North Corktown, almost every block has vacant lots, reducing the historic building density. There are also expanded surface parking lot areas in proximity to Tiger Stadium, both north and south of Michigan Avenue.

This loss of building fabric is even more pronounced in 2019 (Figure 16). In North Corktown, a number of blocks have had all their earlier buildings removed. Trees partially hide the lack of buildings on most blocks in the aerial, although there are areas where even trees are scarce (Figure 17). The construction of the Motor City Casino, which opened late in 1999, required the removal of a number of earlier buildings in the area north of Temple Steet to Elm Street and between Grand River and Trumbull Avenues. There have also a number of buildings removed in the Corktown area, particularly southwest of the West Corktown Historic District (see Figure 3).

Perhaps the greater remaining building density in the south half of the Framework area is due to the establishment of the historic districts. As was noted in Table 1, historic districts include the Corktown Historic District, which was established in July 1978, and the locally listed West Corktown Additon to the Corktown Historic District designated in 1998 (see Figure 3). Although the Corktown Historic District is listed in the NRHP, it is also a local historic district, with oversight provided by the Detroit Historic District Commission (HDC). The HDC is charged with “Ensuring the preservation of historically and culturally significant areas of the of the City, designated by City Council as Historic Districts, through the administration of project reviews.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ City of Detroit, “Historic District Commission Information,” <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/zoning-innovation-and-historic-preservation/historic-district-commission-information> (accessed November 27, 2019).



Figure 15. Corktown Framework Area, 1993

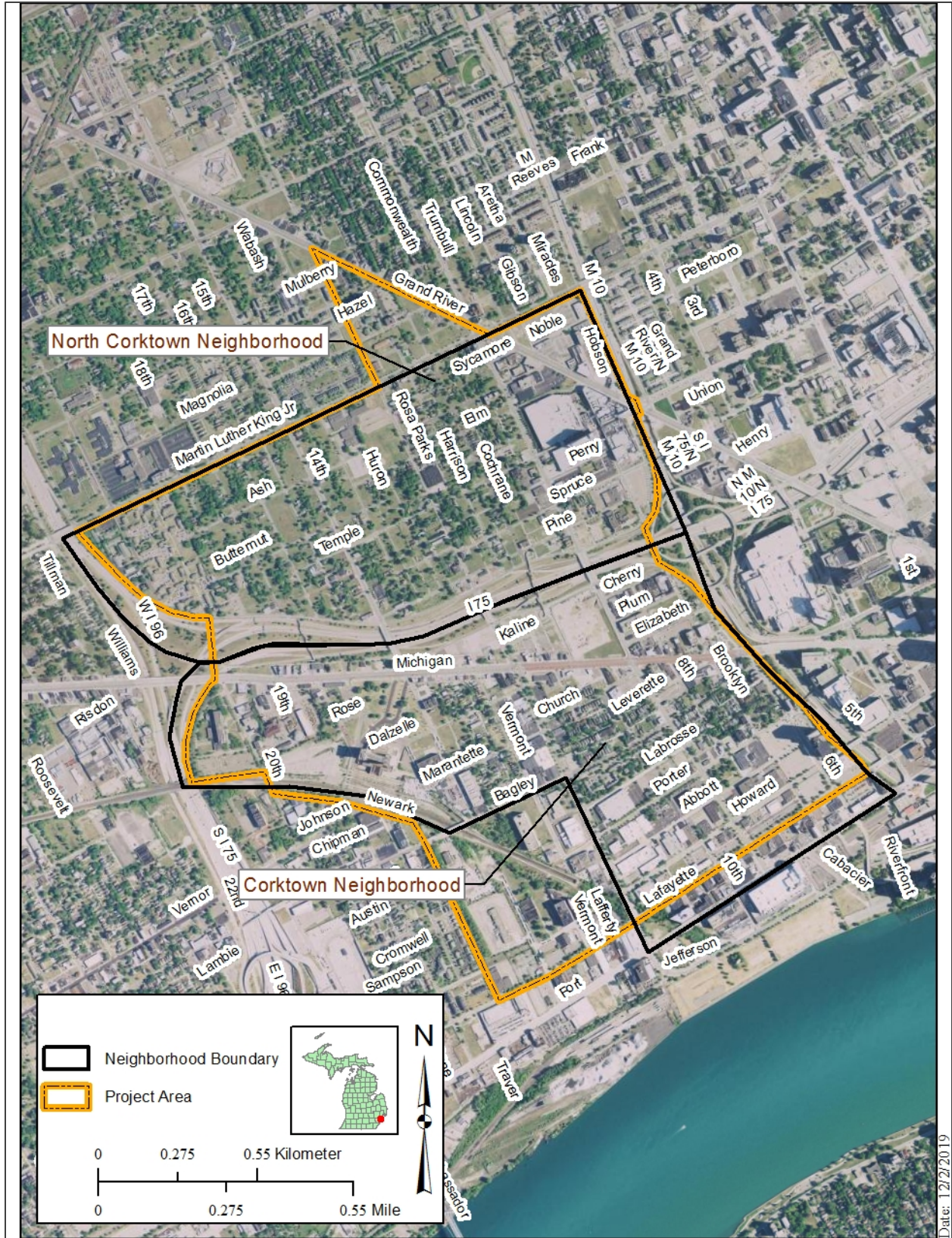


Figure 16. Corktown Framework Area, 2019



Figure 17. Perry Street in North Corktown

PRESERVATION ISSUES

Vacant and Abandoned

The Corktown and North Corktown areas were once densely occupied with single- and multiple-family residences and commercial enterprises. As early as 1910 the area was targeted for redevelopment and beautification projects. Included in these early efforts was the removal of houses and commercial buildings to develop Roosevelt Park as a gateway to the City of Detroit from the newly constructed Michigan Central Station. In the following decades buildings were demolished to make way for other public improvements, such as the widening of Michigan Avenue in the 1930s and the development of the urban expressway system in the 1960s. During the 1960s urban redevelopment also came to the area in the form of the West Industrial Area Redevelopment Project, which resulted in the removal of earlier buildings south of Porter Street to Trumbull Avenue and Labrosse Street between Trumbull Avenue and Rosa Parks Boulevard as the first phase, and then further west as Phase 2 (Figure 18).

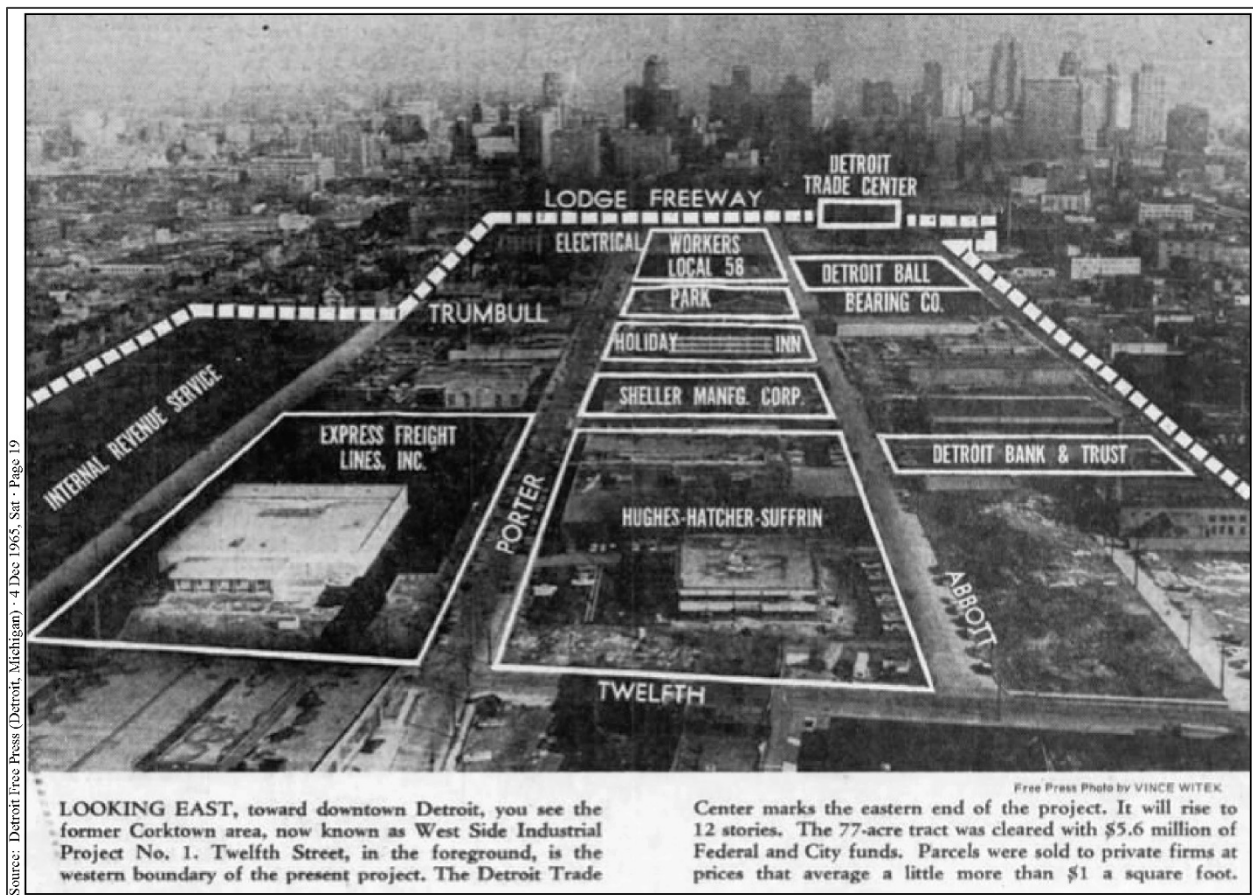


Figure 18. Map of the West Industrial Redevelopment Project Area with planned new construction

In recent decades a large number of buildings have been removed from across the Corktown Framework Area. Even more buildings are either vacant or in disrepair (Figure 19).



Figure 19. West Side of Cochrane Street, between Spruce and Perry Streets

There is also strong evidence of revitalization of the existing building stock. A number of buildings were actively undergoing restoration when surveyed in October 2019, particularly in North Corktown. Among those is the house on the right side of Figure 19. Other buildings with active restoration or preservation efforts include Spaulding Courts, a pair of distinctive stone buildings on Rosa Parks Boulevard north of Spruce Street (Figure 20), and three houses on the west side of Trumbull Avenue between Elm and Ash Streets (Figure 21).



Figure 20. Spaulding Court, 2737–2741 Rosa Parks Boulevard



Figure 21. Three brick residences either ready for restoration or currently undergoing work, west side of Trumbull Avenue between Elm and Ash Streets



Adaptive Reuse and Historic Tax Credit Potential

Current federal law allows for a 20% credit on income tax liability for property owners when a substantial restoration is completed following the Secretary of the Interior’s (SOI) Standards for Rehabilitation. There are some requirements, but currently the largest one is that the credit is limited to “income producing properties.” In other words, credits are only possible for places that earn income from the building. This means that the building could be an industrial or commercial property, but it also means that the building can be adaptively reused to convert, for example, a commercial building into a residential property. There were several properties noted during survey where rehabilitation would provide new opportunities for buildings that currently seem to have outlived their productive life.

There are a number of buildings in the Corktown Framework Area that should be considered for adaptive reuse and/or historic tax credits. Due to the limitation that credits are only available currently for income producing properties, several churches and residences that are ripe for redevelopment must be excluded. However, three buildings identified during field work appear to be excellent candidates for adaptive reuse.

One of these buildings is the former Grand-Trumbull Market House, which is located on the point of land defined by Grand River Avenue on the east, Trumbull Avenue on the west, and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the north. Constructed ca. 1921, the building is currently partially occupied by a Family Dollar store (Figure 22).⁴⁸ Today the building retains much of its distinctive architecture, such as arcaded openings along both its south and east elevations, and an ornate cartouche positioned over the arched opening at the southeast corner of the building. The cartouche retains its emblem “GTM” for the original occupant, Grand-Trumbull Market.

Another candidate for adaptive reuse is located at 3114 Grand River Avenue (Figure 23).⁴⁹ The building was constructed in 1920 as an automotive sales and service center.

⁴⁸ Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan*, vol. 2, (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1921), 27.

⁴⁹ Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan*, vol. 2, (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1921), 28.



Figure 22. Former Grand-Trumbull Market House



Figure 23. 3114 Grand River Avenue

The former Benjamin Franklin School at 1333 Pine Street (Figure 24) is a third potential adaptive reuse project. The building was designed ca. 1900 by the well-known Detroit architecture firm Malcolmsen & Higgenbotham to replace an earlier school with the same name.⁵⁰ Vacant for decades, the school shows signs of break-ins and damage, but its location close to both I-75 and the Lodge Expressway makes it an excellent location for a loft development, which could incorporate community rooms and other features to connect the building to the surrounding neighborhood.



Figure 24. Former Benjamin Franklin School, 1333 Pine Street

⁵⁰ Paul Sewick, “Corktown History: The Benjamin Franklin School,” <http://corktownhistory.blogspot.com/2011/08/benjamin-franklin-school.html> (accessed November 27, 2019).

INFORMATION GAPS

The properties in Corktown are for the most part well documented, even if the NRHP nomination is outdated. The district nomination was written in March 1978 and appears to be based on research from 1976. This makes the neighborhood survey at least forty years old. It is very likely that the City of Detroit has more recent documentation on the buildings in the district, but formally updating the NRHP listing would provide an opportunity to include information for every contributing building in the district. Additionally, the areas at the edges and surrounding the historic district should be evaluated to determine if the district should be expanded or reduced.

The West Corktown District was designated much more recently, in 1998. This is still over 20 years ago, and there have been a number of changes in that part of the city; a new survey that includes every resource and possible expansion or contraction of the district boundaries may also be beneficial.

Similarly, the NRHP nomination for the Michigan Central Railroad Station was prepared in June 1974. This nomination should be updated, and likely will be used as part of the restoration of the station. The Roosevelt Park area does not appear to have been historically documented or evaluated. Considered the formal entrance to the city from the station, the park should be evaluated and combined with the train station to form a historic district.

Unlike the Corktown portion of the Framework Area, North Corktown has very little in the way of documentation of its historic resources. Based on field investigations there is not a large historic district similar to the original Corktown Historic District, but there are certainly areas and individual buildings that should be documented for potential future designation and restoration.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Commonwealth recommends that at minimum a reconnaissance-level survey be completed for the North Corktown District. The Michigan SHPO defines a reconnaissance-level survey as a survey that

identifies properties of architectural significance and updates existing information in SHPO files. The reconnaissance survey documents properties using photographs, brief descriptions, condition, and location information. Limited research on the history of the buildings, sites, and features is undertaken. Reconnaissance-level surveys look primarily at the architectural integrity of the properties.⁵¹

This survey will provide guidance on further areas for intensive-level study and potential NRHP designation.

Intensive-level survey seeks to identify and thoroughly document significant properties and districts through research and evaluation of the National Register of Historic Places criteria within the broader historic context...Intensive-level survey begins with a reconnaissance survey or an update of an older survey. The survey then continues with research on potentially significant properties using primary sources, researching the community history, evaluating the properties for National Register significance, identifying historic districts, and completing MiSHPO submission information. Finally, many intensive-level surveys provide recommendations for future preservation activities.⁵²

One anticipated result of any intensive-level survey is the identification of those properties that would meet the requirements for listing in the NRHP. The study should go a step further to identify candidates that could be marketed by the City of Detroit or other organizations as potential tax credit restoration projects. This process could bring outside funding sources into neighborhoods that would result in the restoration of a strong economic base for both neighborhoods.

⁵¹ Katie Kolokithas and Diane Tuinstra, *Michigan Above-Ground Survey Manual*, (Lansing: Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, 2018), 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*

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2

Detailed Parking Strategy

From the Existing Conditions Report:

Parking throughout the neighborhood is plentiful, but restrictions on use of private lots and lack of regulations on the use of curbside spaces has led to constraints at some times of day in specific locations.

There are over 5,750 off-street parking spaces across Greater Corktown. However, over 60% of these parking lots are fenced and accessible to residents and their visitors alone. Half of these are poorly paved and maintained. Several parking lots are adjacent to vacant properties or are not in use, indicating an untapped supply of parking within the area. Field observations and stakeholder input suggest that, even the lots linked to active properties and land uses offer significant excess capacity during evenings and weekends – times that are increasingly critical to Greater Corktown’s economic vitality and growth.

A **comprehensive parking strategy** can help unlock a significant share of this surplus parking capacity, potentially lowering development costs and increasing project feasibility for individual sites, by allowing new land uses to be accessed via existing parking. Such a strategy can also improve the effectiveness of curbside parking in the area, by better aligning strategic regulations with desired forms and levels of curbside parking across the area.

Parking Strategies

Short Term (1-2 years)

- Fundamental elements to address first
- Strategies that can be employed throughout Greater Corktown.

Make strategic use of the City’s new residential parking permit (RPP) regulations.

- Implement innovative elements of the new regulations on streets identified by residents as neighborhood parking resources negatively affected by commercial parking demand (employees and customers).

Focus on managing spillover from key commercial blocks along Michigan Avenue. Prime candidates include:

Bagley Street, between Trumbull and 6th Street;

Wabash Street, between Michigan and Dalzelle; and

Church and Leverette Streets, between Rosa Parks and 10th Street.

- Each of these examples is south of Michigan Avenue, where residents expressed challenges with commercial parking from Michigan Avenue businesses spilling over into historic residential blocks with limited access to off-street parking.

Key Implementation Steps:

1. Neighborhood block groups should coordinate with the City’s Municipal Parking Department to examine the options for residential parking permit area designation, per 2019 code updates, understanding that existing conditions in the areas noted above may not meet the minimum threshold outlined in the ordinance.
2. Corktown residents and City officials should also monitor implementation of RPP areas in other City neighborhoods, including Midtown and Brush Park.

Utilize the City’s new shared parking program to increase utilization of existing, privately-owned off-street lots and ease the burden on curb spaces.

- Hundreds of privately-owned parking spaces are currently contained in gated and otherwise restricted-use lots.
- As development continues, the City and community leaders can utilize Park Detroit’s new shared parking portal to help owners monetize off-hour capacity and make this space available to serve a variety of users during key times of visitor parking demand.
- An effective shared parking approach can help increase availability of short-term on-street parking and reduce demand for off-street supply as surface lots are re-positioned for development.

Key Implementation Steps:

1. Recruit owners of lots offering immediate proximity to Michigan Avenue, where several underutilized surface lots sit empty during the highest demand times of day. Examples include lots on either side of Trumbull and between Trumbull and Rosa Parks, south of Michigan.
3. Identify opportunities north of Michigan in Historic Corktown, with development occurring more rapidly in the area between Rosa Parks and Brooklyn.

Explore expansion of metered parking zones into areas where on-street parking is in high demand and greater turnover is needed.

- Metered parking is currently limited to Michigan Avenue, but new demand and need for turnover now extends into adjacent corridors, including Trumbull Avenue (north and south of Michigan) and Roosevelt Park (in line with Ford’s redevelopment plans).
- Extending metered parking into these areas can help facilitate turnover in these areas and can be coordinated according to the City’s parking rate categories.¹

Key Implementation Steps:

1. Monitor existing and new meter zones to determine appropriate hours and rates.
2. Where necessary, on-street metering and RPP strategies should be coordinated to mitigate conflicts and constraints for various users – see above.

Survey existing shuttle operations in an around Greater Corktown to identify opportunities for consolidation and community benefit.

- A variety of parking shuttle services currently operate in the Greater Corktown area, providing access to remote parking facilities and transferring workers and visitors between destinations.
- While these shuttles may support a small number of businesses in Corktown, they primarily provide cheap park-and-ride access to Downtown businesses and reinforce Corktown as a place to store cars to the detriment of neighborhood residents.

Key Implementation Steps:

1. Analyze use patterns among current shuttle services, as well as rider needs.
2. Identify opportunities for consolidation of services, and/or transition to support and use of existing fixed-route or other public transit services.

1 Sec. 46-4-42. - Parking meter zones; limitation on use of parking meters; parking rate categories; parking zones; parking zone sectors; maximum time limits.

4. If privately operated services continue, seek opportunities to provide benefits to neighborhood residents during off-peak periods when the shuttles are currently not in use.

Medium Term (3-5 years)

- Interventions that are high priority and high impact that can be implemented in the medium term

Ensure zoning regulations incorporate context-sensitive parking requirements to support new development and mitigate negative impacts on existing residents/businesses.

- Zoning regulations in Greater Corktown should facilitate creation of new parking supply that is supportive of the community's aspirations to be a walkable, vibrant, green neighborhood.
- Regulations can guide placement of parking on individual sites or within the neighborhood as a whole, limit the number of curb cuts to reduce conflicts with other travelers, and replace parking minimums with parking maximums to reduce added parking supply.
- Limitations on parking supply can be tied to requirements to establish shared parking agreements with adjacent properties to reduce overall need for parking supply. New developments of scale can be encouraged/required to develop a transportation demand management (TDM) plan, per City ordinances,² to reduce parking needs and requirements.
- Design criteria can require screening of parking lots and structures to foster more active, green frontages and promote walkability, building from existing City ordinances³.

Key Implementation Steps:

1. Build upon recent/ongoing zoning-reform efforts across the city to incorporate innovative strategies appropriate to Greater Corktown.
2. Incorporate or expand upon these strategies to emphasize the provision of shared, public, and resilient parking infrastructure in new projects, and to minimize accessory, private parking facilities that will exacerbate the excess and redundancy of current parking supplies.
3. This might include:
 - Parking maximums linked to options for building more parking to the extent that parking is shared/public at key times.
 - Eliminated or greatly reduced parking requirements.
 - Alternative means of meeting any remaining parking requirements, such as a Fee in Lieu, TDM commitments, or investments in community mobility improvements.

Continue to refine curbside management policies, programs, and practices.

- The value of, and demand for, curbside space will continue to intensify as forms of urban mobility continue to expand, including a growing emphasis on “shared” and “service” models for which curbside access is an essential component.
- In areas with high demand for competing curbside uses, metering and permitting opportunities should be explored, as outlined in the Short Term strategies section, while also looking for opportunities to improve access for transit, bicycle, pick-up, drop-off, and delivery activities, reducing conflicts between users.

2 Sec. 50-14-164. - Transportation Demand Management Plan.

3 Sec. 50-14-449. - Parking design standards—Parking areas.

Key Implementation Steps:

1. The City and its community partners should work together to establish curbside use priorities in high-demand and high-conflict locations.
2. Monitor use, adjust regulations, and improve enforcement as use patterns change and management tools evolve.
5. Invest in more significant changes to curb use that align with evolving street function and adjacent land use needs, as well as monitoring and enforcement tools, including mapping and reporting programs and license plate reader (LPR) technologies.

Improve multimodal access from primary visitor parking locations.

- As larger structured and shared facilities are developed in coming years, visitors may be required to walk further to reach their final destinations.
- Improved multimodal access to these facilities will support a “park once” visitor environment, reducing area parking needs and activating Greater Corktown’s public spaces.
- These improvements will also serve local access and mobility needs for Corktown residents and businesses by enhancing the convenience, comfort, and safety of non-driving travel modes.

Key Implementation Steps:

- Focus on sidewalks, safe street crossings, lighting, and ADA accessibility, in line with the Traveling strategies highlighted throughout the framework plan.
- Enhance connections to micromobility and microtransit “last mile” services.

Pursue joint development opportunities on existing surface lots.

- In line with the Building strategies and catalytic sites identified in this framework, joint development opportunities should be pursued in locations where parking demand necessitates creation of new supply. Alongside these investments, multimodal network amenities can be created or enhanced to facilitate “park-once” connections and improved neighborhood access and mobility (see above).

Key Implementation Steps:

- As development plans take shape on Greater Corktown’s underutilized parcels, the City and private developers should work together to pursue joint development opportunities that create needed off-street parking supply and minimize the cost and risk to all parties.
- Prioritize shared parking opportunities that can serve a broad variety of user needs.

Long Term (6+ years)

- Interventions that require time and investment and can be implemented in the medium to long term

Explore Opportunities to create a Parking and Mobility District

- District-wide approaches to creation and management of new parking assets may benefit from establishing an “assessment district” to strategically formalize, finance, construct, and manage shared supply.

- This could be a form of Parking Assessment District, as defined in the development code⁴, but may expand beyond parking to include additional mobility needs.

Key Implementation Steps:

- Examine the potential for the “assessment district” approach in Greater Corktown or a sub-geography of the neighborhood, including learning from the performance of existing assessment districts in Detroit.
- Seek opportunities to create synergies with Ford site development and operations to make Greater Corktown the center of urban mobility innovation.
- Explore early opportunities to create Mobility Hubs that can promote and demonstrate mobility services and technologies being developed in Corktown.
- Use this platform to quantify and promote the benefits of mobility innovation, particularly in reducing local parking demand and supply needs.

4 Sec. 50-14-161. - Parking assessment districts.



3

Economic Incentives Detailed Assessment

Economic Incentives Detailed Assessment

As neighborhood improvements attract public amenities and support greater densities, they may create upward pressures on property values in Corktown. In response, the City could seek to capture a share of these value increases through a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) mechanism, which would channel future growth toward funding demolition, remediation, infrastructure, site preparation, and more. By diverting certain incremental City, County, and/or State millage rates (or mills), a TIF district could support ongoing maintenance and/or upfront capital commitments. There are two types of TIF funding mechanisms available for the study area:

1. Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA)
2. Targeted Redevelopment Authority (TRA)

This memo supplements the Implementation and Action Plan for the Greater Corktown Framework Plan. Top-line funding potential and considerations are included below with program background on the following pages. The selected parcel geographies and amounts are based on hypothetical options and could vary based on specific boundary decisions.¹

CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY (CIA)

Modeled Funding Potential¹: Funding potential depends on the type of CIA mechanism used and the deployment geography. The numbers shown reflect the parcels shown in the hypothetical CIA map below.

	Area 1 (682 Parcels)	Area 1 + 2 (1,283 Parcels)	Area 1 + 2A (993 Parcels)	Area 1 + 2B (972 Parcels)
Basic CIA (City + County)	\$10.1M – 13.1M	\$10.8M – \$14.3M	\$10.4M – \$13.4M	\$10.6M – \$14.1M
QDA (City, County, + State)	\$15.7M – \$20.4M	\$16.7M – \$22.1M	\$16.0M – 20.8M	\$16.4M – \$21.9M

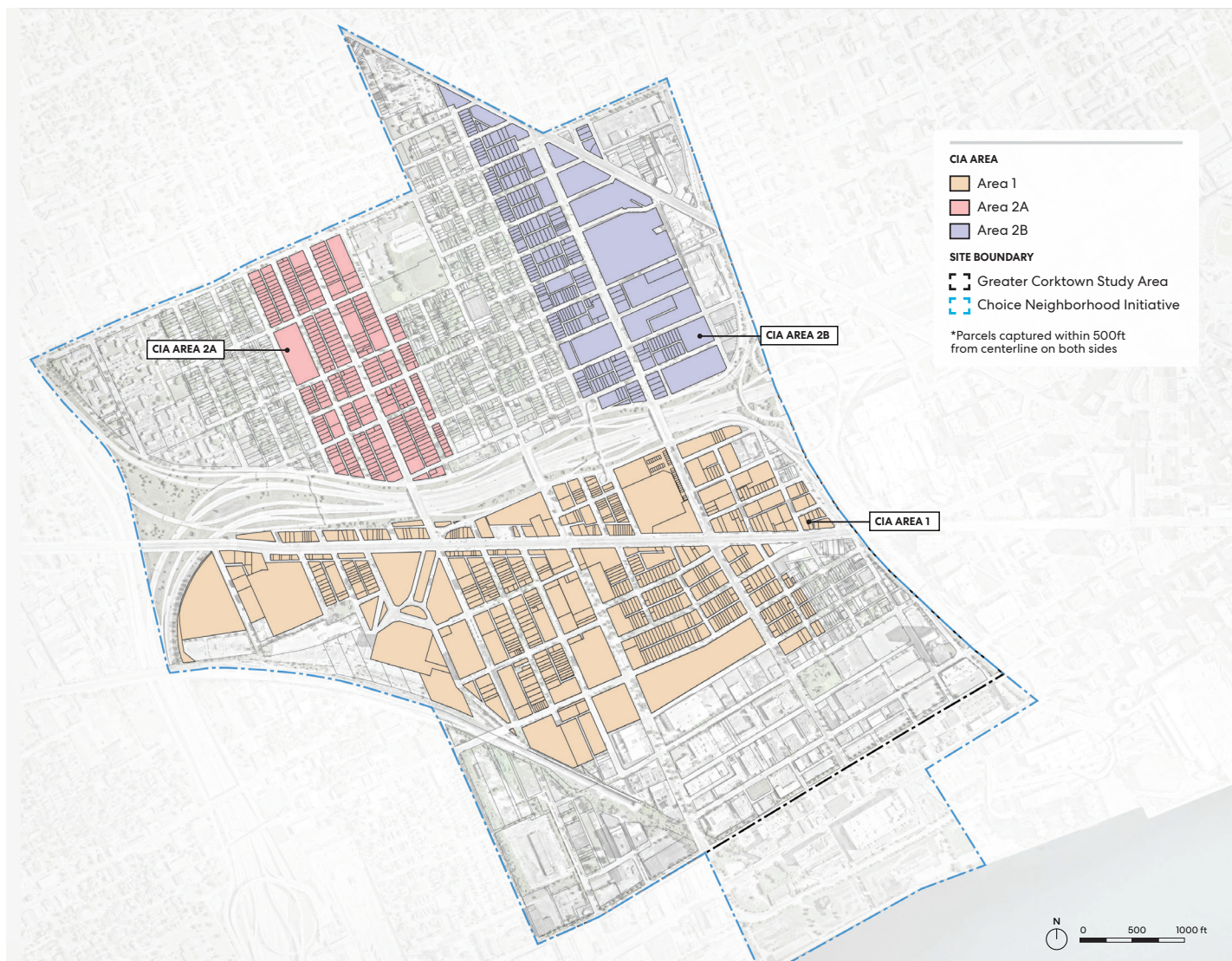
High-level Considerations:

- **Approval Process:** Capturing full incremental value involves layers of approval processes with only City mills captured as-of-right; County and State mills each require separate approvals and additional requirements to meet local policy objectives. In order to capture State mills, the CIA must contain a transit-oriented development or transit-oriented facility which enables it to be designated as a qualified development area (QDA) and thus exempted from typical CIA approvals and size restrictions. In order for Corktown to qualify, the plan would require an infrastructural improvement within a 1/2-mile radius of a transit station that “promotes transit ridership or passenger rail use,” such as enhanced pedestrian infrastructure adjacent to the SMART bus stops along Michigan Avenue. QDA designation would also eliminate the need for separate County approval.
- **Available Increment:** While a transit-oriented development strategy is not currently proposed for Greater Corktown, this analysis illustratively models both a baseline CIA where county millage is assumed to be obtained through approval, as well as a scenario where transit capacity is expanded and Greater Corktown may qualify for QDA designation; under this scenario county millage is approved as-of-right and application for State mileage is assumed to be successful.
- **Geography:** Specific location requirements – parcel location within 500 feet of an arterial road – would require the deployment of multiple corridors to capture the increment shown. Likely to generate higher revenues from parcels within Historic Corktown, though substantial funding needs exist throughout both North and Historic Corktown.
- **Size Constraints:** Requires clarification of whether the 500-foot buffer must either fully encompass or only intersect with parcels to qualify, as well as confirmation that sufficient commercial ground floor square footage exists along CIA corridors to meet CIA requirements and that multiple corridors can be included within one CIA. The latter two potential constraints would be waived following QDA designation.

Modeled District Boundaries: HR&A analyzed three proposed CIA subdistricts for potential funding capacity, including a

core area (Area 1) in Historic Corktown along Michigan Ave, Rosa Parks Blvd, Bagley St., Trumbull and 14th St. and two potential branches along the 14th St. (Area 2A) and Trumbull (Area 2B) corridors in North Corktown.

Hypothetical CIA Boundaries within Corktown Study Area



Methodological Considerations: The revenue range utilized for both TRA and CIA includes a more conservative scenario, with 3% baseline value growth, and a second scenario assuming 6% property value growth. Both scenarios are expressed as the net present value of 25 years of incremental property taxes. Since nearly all new private development relies on TIF or other abatements, increment only includes the value unlocked by the turnover of existing properties, excluding undeveloped land parcels and incremental revenues from new development and rehabilitation, which would likely be abated per the NEZ, OPRA, CRA, or other programs. The model conservatively assumes that all residential properties are considered primary residences and are thus exempted from the school education tax. Neither Brownfield TIF nor CIA districts can procure Debt millage, and the analysis excludes it from consideration in all scenarios.

TARGETED REDEVELOPMENT AREA (BROWNFIELD TIF)

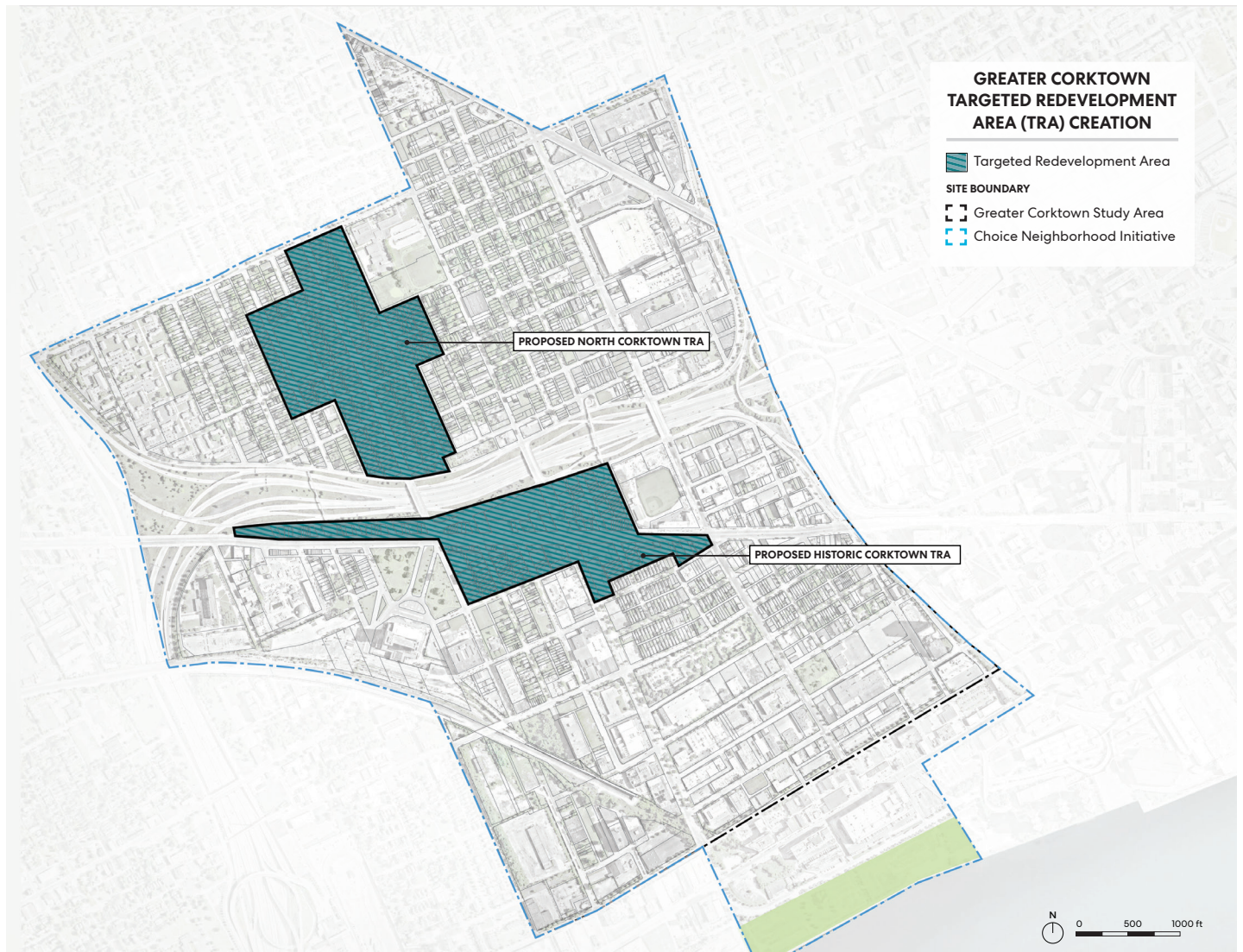
Modeled Funding Potential²: A hypothetical TRA could generate \$4.9M - \$6.7M, based on a modeled district of 481 parcels concentrated on either side of the Fisher Freeway, as shown in the TRA map below.

High-Level Considerations:

- **Approval Process:** The process requires approval by both the City Council and Michigan Strategic Fund.
- **Available Increment:** Once approved, TRA Is eligible to capture City, County, and State mills for up to 30 years.
- **Geography:** Likely to generate higher revenues from parcels within Historic Corktown, though substantial funding needs exist throughout both North and Historic Corktown.
- **Size Constraints:** Limitation on the number of parcels within a TRA district (500 contiguous).

Modeled District Boundaries: We recommend exploring a TRA district that would potentially include parcels in both North and Historic Corktown to generate incremental taxes and allow for the funding of neighborhood improvements and redevelopment projects.

Hypothetical TRA Boundaries within Corktown Study Area





DETROIT TIF PROGRAMS

This analysis focuses on two pieces of enabling state legislation: the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act and the CIA section of the Recodified Tax Increment Financing Act. For all properties, the City calculates a property’s taxable value as 50% of the true cash value, which is determined at sale. Subsequent to purchase, assessed value increases are capped at 1% annual growth, limiting the capture from existing properties. A millage rate of over 85 mills is then applied to the taxable value, reflecting City, County, and State taxes as shown in the chart below:

Taxing Jurisdiction	Millage Rate
State Millage	
School Operating	6.0000
State Education Tax	18.0000
Total State Millage	24.0000
City Millage	
City Operating	19.9520
City Library	4.6307
Total City Millage	24.5827
County Millage	
Wayne County Charter	5.6483
Huron Clinton Metropolitan Authority	0.2146
Wayne County	0.9897
Wayne County Public Safety	0.9381
Wayne County Parks	0.2459
Wayne County HCMA	0.2117
Wayne County RESA	0.0965
Wayne County Special Education	3.3678
Wayne County Community College	3.2408
Total County Millage	16.7400
Total Debt Millage	20.3000
Total Millage Rate	85.6227

The level of available funding depends on future market and growth conditions, the TIF program pursued, the district boundaries, and County and State approvals. In considering TIF districts, the City must weigh the public benefits of the improvements against the risks of diverting TIF funding from future private development, which to date has relied on TIF financing to support feasibility. Political feasibility is also a consideration, since TIF districts must receive sign-off from public and private stakeholders.

Although TIF districts in Detroit have primarily supported private development, the enabling legislation considers public infrastructure improvements to be eligible expenditures. In particular, a Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) and a Targeted Redevelopment Area (TRA) as defined under the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act would allow for the diversion of property tax revenues to support district- or corridor-based public investments. A basic CIA can only capture City and County mills – and jurisdictions can opt out – while a TRA could also capture State mills. In either case, funding neighborhood improvements with TIF financing would blaze a new trail in Detroit without substantial precedent; as a result, the analysis presents high-level recommendations that warrant further review of applicability by lawyers and municipal financial advisors.

CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY (CIA)

A CIA is formed by City Council approval with between 5 and 9 Board members, all appointed by the Mayor. Once established, the CIA Board enjoys broad powers to invest in both public infrastructure and private development within the defined development area. The CIA is eligible to capture all City and County mills with approval from the relevant taxing jurisdictions, excluding the library levy (though the Library Board can authorize capture as well). Backed by this funding stream, the CIA is authorized to issue revenue bonds to fund capital projects upon approving a development plan.

In general, a CIA development area must meet the following criteria:

- Adjacent to or located within 500 feet of an arterial road,
- More than 10 contiguous parcels or greater than 5 acres,
- More than 50% of ground-floor square footage is commercial,
- Zoned for residential, commercial, or industrial uses for prior 30 years (not agricultural land),
- Served by municipal water and sewer,
- Zoned to allow for mixed-use, including high-density residential use, and
- The City must agree to expedite permitting in the development area and modify the master plan to provide for “nonmotorized interconnections”, such as sidewalks and greenways.

A CIA that contains a transit-oriented development or transit-oriented facility can be designated a qualified development area (QDA) and be exempted from all of the above requirements. These terms encompass any infrastructural improvements within a ½-mile radius of a transit station that “promotes transit ridership or passenger rail use,” a status determined by the CIA Board and approved by the City.

A CIA within a QDA does not have to receive approval from County jurisdictions for County mills; it automatically captures them. Furthermore, a QDA-backed CIA can apply to capture State mills with approval from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. If approved as a QDA, a CIA could potentially expand beyond a 500-foot distance from the selected Corktown corridors, avoid jurisdictional approval of County mills, and apply to capture State mills.

To date, the only existing CIA in Detroit is the Eight Mile Woodward Corridor Improvement Authority (EMWCIA), which oversaw the Gateway Marketplace development at the intersection of Eight Mile Rd. and Woodward Avenue. The scale of the 35-acre project, which produced 350K sf of retail space, affirms the

potential of a CIA district to fund significant improvements. At the same time, the single-assemblage site did not require the political coordination that a multi-parcel corridor would demand.

TARGETED REDEVELOPMENT AREA (BROWNFIELD TIF)

A Brownfield TIF must be approved by the City Council and Michigan Strategic Fund, and the City’s Brownfield plans are governed by the Detroit Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (DBRA). Once approved, the TIF district can seek reimbursement for eligible costs from DBRA’s Local Brownfield Revolving Fund, which captures City, County, and State mills for up to 30 years.



Essentially, the Fund reimburses the project with its own future property tax revenue over time to cover the initial investments. To be eligible for a Brownfield TIF, the property must meet one of the following criteria:

- Owned by the Detroit Land Bank Authority,
- Blighted status,
- Contains transit-oriented development, or
- Located within a Targeted Redevelopment Area (TRA).

The TRA designation enables properties to apply for Brownfield TIF that would not otherwise qualify alone. TRAs must contain at least 40 parcels but no more than 500 parcels, and they can leverage TIF for either district infrastructure or select site infrastructure. Notably, the City can only nominate up to two TRAs per year. To date, however, no TRAs have been established in Detroit. Because individual jurisdictional approvals are not required, the Brownfield TIF mechanism ensures the highest possible tax increment capture from City, County and State sources.

4

Business and Retail Detailed Strategy

Strategy B: Job Creation, Economic Development and Community-Serving Retail

First Stop on the Innovation Railroad

Connecting to the mobility and place making efforts on the corridor, Corktown small businesses have the opportunity to capitalize on the corresponding business activity and development. Working together as a collective, the small business community is a key stakeholder and voice.

The neighborhood is a seasoned expert in resilient innovation having already gone through shared parking, bus shuttles, corridor public events like the Corktown Parade and St. Patrick's Day that have become significant regional attractions and community staples. Corktown is unapologetically unique and craves the space to celebrate that uniqueness.

In this next chapter, the small business community will continue to innovate, from collective vendor opportunities to positioning themselves as a destination along the connected mobility route coming to life to bring more residents, workers and visitors.

The future of Corktown retail, with its strong foundational heritage, will be innovative, connected and flexible. It's not about recovering from last year or preparing for the next year that was, it's about understanding how to be continuously adaptable and thrive post-COVID. This strategy will prepare existing businesses to adapt and thrive with new neighbors and new competition, seen and unforeseen.

I. SCALABLE SMALL BUSINESS RETENTION STRATEGY

Small businesses are the heartbeat of our city and it's no secret the pandemic has caused lasting damage. A robust and collaborative intervention is necessary to preserve the fabric and essence of one of the city's most vibrant retail corridors. If piloted successfully this holistic strategy could be scaled to other neighborhood corridors across Detroit.

STRENGTH & RESILIENCY

- **Local Capacity Building:** Strengthen the capacity and connectivity of Corktown's Business Support Organizations to provide collaborative Technical Assistance (workshops, direct one-on-one support), cohesive support for hiring, marketing, purchasing and advocacy
 - Funding for the association would compensate small business owners who agree to serve as officers. Other members would also have the opportunity for compensation in exchange for mentoring a new business owner or sharing other time and expertise.
 - **Establishing a Business Improvement Zone (BIZ)** to facilitate property owners sharing the cost of marketing, safe and clean programs, and compensation for association staff time
 - Partners:
 - Corktown Business Association
 - Other neighboring economic development agencies (Southwest Detroit Business Association, Mexicantown CDC) could be contracted or entered into a formal partnership to share staff support and peer learning
 - Build Institute – contracted as central intake point for business owners to navigate resource programs, and provide direct TA
- **Sales & Marketing Growth:**
 - Cohesive corridor promotion strategy through unified logo and branding
 - Strategy includes billboard ads on DDOT buses, loyalty programs offering discounts for staff at local employers ([see Charlotte NC example](#))
 - Partners: DDOT, DEGC, Ford, Quicken
 - Funding Sources: CDBG

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Using forward thinking strategies, the association will leverage innovative tools to bring the corridor into the future of serving customers.

- **An Open Business web application** helps customers understand which businesses are currently open for delivery or takeout, current operating hours, and potential to market discounts and offers through the app. Enables businesses without a digital footprint to market themselves and share the cost of maintaining an online presence
 - Partners: Quicken/Bedrock (developed this technology for downtown businesses)
- **Virtual presence:** Provide one-on-one support setting up google maps listing, third party delivery systems like door dash, uber eats, grubhub.
- **Joint Ordering Platform:** Provide direct technical support for implementing and managing joint delivery operations and shared corridor pick-up zone. A combined platform increases the opportunity for customers to customize their experience ordering from multiple vendors at a time in one convenient place. The combined order experience extends beyond B2C, enabling small businesses to compete for larger corporate procurement opportunities as Ford and others begin to reopen in the neighborhood.

FLEXIBILITY & ADAPTABILITY

- **Outdoor food hall:** through more flexible permitting, corridor collaboration and increased capacity from the local business association, **Roosevelt Park Market** allows businesses to scale operations up or down by operating a second physical outpost (or temporarily only operating an outpost). Combining a one-stop open air destination will increase foot traffic in a safe way. The market connects Ford's footprint with the local business market in a collaborative way that benefits all stakeholders.
- **Flex Zones and Parklets** are gaining national traction, allowing additional restaurant capacity to make-up for lost revenue and indoor capacity restrictions, providing modular space activation and increasing walkability.
 - Parklets convert existing curbside parking stalls into outdoor seating, community gathering spots, and even areas for fitness activities.
 - Temporary relaxing of permitting and licensing requirements will help facilitate the changes, and bring signs of much-needed vitality to shopping and dining districts, and most importantly, create conditions that serve to re-build restaurant patronage.
 - Flex Zones are opportunities to provide temporary infrastructure similar to a Parklet, in a lighter, quicker, and cost-effective manner. Flex Zones serve to calm traffic while facilitating socially distanced dining and curbside pick-ups with cheerful surface graphics using materials such as spray chalk and stencils or even decals, along with modular structures and protective barriers like potted plants and water-filled k-rail.
- **Resiliency Accelerator:** Housed in a new mixed-use development, this 6-8 week program helps existing business owners adapt and pivot their business models to meet evolving customer needs and market conditions. A combination of workshops, one-on-one support with experts, mentorship and peer learning, the accelerator converts the technology and innovation strategy to action. (Reference: "[B2C Small Business Accelerator](#)" in Charlotte NC virtual small business accelerator catering to post-COVID 19 needs. Cost = \$500,000.)
 - Curriculum includes intensive resiliency and continuity planning and personalized coaching and mentoring with direction on how to operationalize it successfully. Innovation is embedded within the curriculum to pilot new business concepts outlined above.
 - **Sustainability** – one-on-one TA to help businesses with energy efficiency and sustainability custom action plans. As businesses are already rethinking operations to navigate a COVID-safe environment, now is an opportune time to embed more sustainable practices that will improve the long-term viability of the business and neighborhood.
- **Post-COVID Playbook** - Produce a post-COVID handbook to support organizations and businesses with the technical support needed to pivot and thrive in a new reality.
 - Physical or virtual, the playbook is a Corktown centric aggregation of resources and information pipeline including continuous education catered to the unique challenges of the neighborhood. The resource builds upon existing state and citywide initiatives (Detroit Means Business). There's an overwhelming amount of information available, providing

a toolkit tailored to Corktown specific needs will distill the most pertinent and relevant information into a digestible format.

- The playbook will include a post-COVID assessment, workshops and convenings to put handbook into practice.
 - **Pivot Parties**, or reimagining sessions pair cohort-based learning with corporate volunteers to provide coaching for implementation. Partners: Accenture, Google.
 - A **Virtual Resource Fair** will bring resource partners together in one place for easy navigation (see [BizGrid Live](#))
 - Corktown business owners will walk away with a customized new playbook for their specific operations and resiliency plan.
 - The association can provide added value by sharing information from cities nationally that are experiencing equivalent growth and mobility growth

CONNECTION & COLLABORATION

- **Realizing economies of scale** through cost sharing.
 - Implement **inventory sharing** program that enables members to capture economies of scale, reducing individual overhead costs
 - **PPE collection and distribution:** Implement a centralized intake to receive PPE donations from corporate partners like DTE and the State of Michigan (administered by central business association partner)

II. Homegrown Retail Attraction

While Corktown has a vibrant small business corridor, like many places in Detroit vacancies persist and a lack of access to certain goods and services detracts from residents' quality of life. A four-step strategy outlines the roadmap for responsibly integrating new retail that is non-competing and complimentary to the neighborhood.

STRENGTH & RESILIENCY

1. **Aggregating data and market analysis** on spending power and specific retail needs of Corktown with concerted effort to attract businesses and fill amenities needs
 - Corktown Match – using a very intentional approach, connect entrepreneurs seeking to open the specific types of retail the study demonstrates pent-up demand for. Entrepreneurs will be paired with technical assistance and mentorship through Corktown Business Association.
 - Youth Entrepreneurship Competition – using the retail analysis, student entrepreneur teams will pitch their concept for the specific retail need prescribed by the analysis. The general public, with a stronger weight on ballots cast by local residents, vote for their choice. The winning entrepreneurs are paired with (1) full time operator and (1) expert mentor. The student will continue as an intern on the founding team to start and grow the business.*(see *chart below*)
2. **White-box Real Estate Matching Grant Fund** – available by invitation only for key commercial spaces and targeted infill
 - Requires property owners to pass on cost savings in lease agreement (i.e. 6 months free)
 - Option for landlord to sub-lease to economic development CDC. CDC maintains responsibility for white boxing and tenant infill. Landlord collects monthly rent stipend under master lease.
 - Partners: local business association, DEGC
 - Funding Sources: CDBG

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

3. **Pilot innovative use of space** to fill gaps along the corridor while boosting availability of demand driven amenities. A **pop-up incubator** provides a flexible, affordable white-box space for entrepreneurs to pilot new businesses with low barrier to entry will encourage risk-taking and innovation to cultivate retail concepts that best meet community and current public safety need. (Partners: Build Institute)
 - Lowering barriers to test new business ideas in Corktown will incentivize risk-taking, innovation and market growth
 - Examples include: dry cleaning valets, grocery vending machines, pop-up retail, digital pharmacy
 - The flexibility embedded in an incubator model will allow exploration of optimal strategies for filling vacant space, such as enabling different businesses at different times of day, multiple businesses operating in one 2,000sf space as the growing national retail trend is shrinking footprints, and piloting space use to test the market
 - Local business association will maintain a library of flexible space uses with estimated build-out costs and vetted list of recommended contractors to facilitate entrepreneurs seeking to start or grow a business on the corridor. The library will be populated with local, national and global cutting edge retail practices.
 - Entrepreneurs will be connected to the Corktown Accelerator, small business cohort and mentorship resources

CONNECTION & COLLABORATION

4. **Market Attraction Tools**
 - **A welcome packet** for new residents, businesses and employees creates a sense of community and incentivizes local patronage.
 - Partnering together and with local corporations to offer a cohesive **corridor employee loyalty program** that encourages local staff to patronize local small businesses and receive employer incentives (such as points or loyalty bucks) that can be spent in the local community.
 - Leverage the strong community culture to communicate and market opportunities and needs in the neighborhood at scale.

III. Sustainable Job creation

The service industry is struggling to fill vacancies while unemployment in the city was more than three times the national average according to a recent [University of Michigan study](#). Public health and safety and small business financial resiliency persist as barriers to local job creation. A localized workforce and talent development strategy is recommended through increasing connectivity, providing the tools and resources for hiring, saving costs through shared training and workshare programs, and leveraging existing city workforce programs.

- **Corktown Connect:** a jobs portal for Corktown small businesses
 - Library of templates for job postings, HR policies, hiring best practices, tools and templates.
 - Business Association supports organizing a virtual career fair with specific outreach to surrounding residents seeking employment.
 - Streamline customer service training for all small businesses to pay reduced fee for centralized training (i.e. Zingerman's curriculum) Coordination support from local business association.
 - Collaboration with city's workforce development efforts on training curriculum and workforce pipeline. (Partners: Detroit Employment Solutions Corp)
- **Workforce Development Training** – partner with the city's workforce development department to

place trainees in food and beverage jobs

- Career cohorts provide extensive job training and guaranteed job placement in food services through immersive experience
- Participants receive a training stipend (i.e. \$15/hour) and paid, work-based learning experience with small business in the food services industry
- Participants will have access to Corktown Connect career center and additional services including mentoring, coaching and case management
- **Grow Detroit's Young Talent partnership:** fully sponsored Detroit student intern for small business
 - A successful pilot with Motor City Match demonstrated a successful, cost effective model pairing students with small business internships. Students have an interest in working with entrepreneurs, often those who grew up in the city or similar neighborhoods. Finding and retaining talent is a top challenge for Detroit small business owners; fully subsidizing the cost of a GDYT intern is a mutually beneficial solution.
 - In particular, today's students have advanced technological skills to support with digital strategy and online presence, social media marketing, web maintenance, and other virtual tools that have become the lifeblood for small business operations post-COVID-19.
 - An additional subsidized intern to support the business association with corridor web app development and social media campaign is recommended.
 - This model leverages existing corporate sponsorships of the program, whereby small businesses pay 50% of the intern cost. Their 50% share is then fully subsidized through philanthropic funding. Partners: Skillman Foundation
- **Workshare program:** facilitate sharing employees across small businesses on the corridor to prevent underemployment and more flexible overhead for small business owners. Cross-training provides added skills and job stability for employees as well.

