Downtown Howell FUTURES
Howell, Michigan
Market Insights and Evolutions
A Michigan Main Street Program Service

PREPARED FOR
Howell Main Street
2018

PREPARED BY
Downtown Professionals Network
Franklin, Tennessee USA
www.downtownpros.com
Howell, a Great American Main Street Award-winning community, has already achieved a level of success that communities aspire for. A long track record of results and positive changes occurring in the downtown area have positioned the community well. Still, recognizing that change is inevitable and with growth occurring in the community and surrounding region, Howell Main Street, Inc., along with community partners and stakeholders, is taking a pro-active planning approach and applying sound market principles, community engagement practices and creative thinking to guide future development, redevelopment and downtown enhancement initiatives.

The Downtown Futures service is a new Michigan Main Street Program service designed for communities and organizations that have demonstrated success and are contemplating the scope and nature of future change in their downtown and traditional neighborhood commercial districts. The process and its resulting products provide a solid foundation upon which to think, plan and act for the future in a way that will preserve, celebrate and leverage the assets and special features that make Downtown Howell a special place.

Market Study Limitations and Disclaimers
Retail market studies and analyses, their components (such as retail sales gap analyses and surveys interpretation) and derivative business development plans provide important guidance on how a commercial area should, theoretically, be able to perform and on the sales levels businesses should be able to achieve. However, a number of factors affect the actual performance of businesses and commercial areas, including the skills of the business operator, level of business capitalization, the quality of the physical environment, changes in overall economic conditions, the effectiveness of business and district marketing programs, and many other factors. The information in this document is intended to provide a foundation of information for making district enhancement and business development decisions, but it does not and cannot ensure business success.

As is true of all demographic, economic and market studies, our analysis’ reliability is limited to the reliability and quality of the data available. Our research assumes that all data made available by and procured from federal, state, county, city, primary and third party sources is accurate and reliable.

Because market conditions change rapidly and sometimes without warning, the information and opinions expressed here represent a snapshot in time and cannot predict or gauge future changes or results.

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Market Study Insights and Outcomes

A Stable and Growing Market
Market data and projections summarized in the Downtown Howell Market Snapshot demonstrate a stable and growing market. Key indicators for the five, ten and twenty-minute drive times anticipate growth in population, households and median household income at or exceeding rates projected for the state through 2023. Overall retail sales surplus and leakage estimates show Howell is effectively “pulling” sales from the surrounding area, though opportunities to capture sales leakage in certain categories still exists.

Tools and References
► Downtown Howell Market Snapshot
► Esri Reports for the Howell Drive Time Market

The Daily Surge
Inflow/Outflow Analysis Data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s On The Map application shows a 2015 inflow of 6,251 workers employed in the Howell city limits, resulting in an estimated daytime population net gain of 2,974 persons. The workplace market is likely responsible, in part, for sales surplus estimates in certain categories. Moreover, the combination of rooftops and “vehicle tops” in the Howell market offers opportunities for existing business to grow, and for new retail, service, and eating and drinking establishments to join the mix.

Downtown Trends | Community Perspectives
An overwhelming seventy-three percent of 766 respondents to the 2018 Downtown Howell Top Prospects and Strategies online survey described recent trends in Downtown Howell as “improving or making progress,” while 26% said the area is steady or holding its own.

Describe recent trends in Downtown Howell.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving or making progress</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady or holding its own</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining or losing ground</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DOWNTOWN HOWELL DRIVE TIME MARKET

DEMOGRAPHIC FAST FACTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Min</td>
<td>10 Min</td>
<td>20 Min</td>
<td>2018 Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>Est. State Pop Growth (2018-23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Min</td>
<td>10 Min</td>
<td>20 Min</td>
<td>2018 Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>-10.2%</td>
<td>Est. State Pop Growth (2018-23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Households</th>
<th>2018 Estimate</th>
<th>Growth (2018-23)</th>
<th>10 MINUTE DRIVE TIME</th>
<th>2018-23 GROWTH: 6.2%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Min</td>
<td>10 Min</td>
<td>20 Min</td>
<td>2018 Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>Est. State HH Growth (2018-23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Median HH Income</th>
<th>2018 Estimate</th>
<th>Growth (2018-23)</th>
<th>10 MINUTE DRIVE TIME</th>
<th>2018-23 GROWTH: 19.1%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Min</td>
<td>10 Min</td>
<td>20 Min</td>
<td>2018 Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>Est. State HH Income (2018-23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Esri Market Profile | 08.18
Market Study Insights and Outcomes

Opportunities
Findings from the 2018 Top Prospects and Strategies Survey, based on responses from 774 participants, provide insights for eating & drinking places and retail establishments that could be candidates – and targeted – for expansion and recruitment in Downtown Howell, as well as specific features, products and services most likely to appeal to targeted consumer groups in the Howell market.

Eating and Drinking Establishments | Top Selections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deli/Sandwich Shop</th>
<th>Restaurant</th>
<th>Drinking Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Features:</td>
<td>Top Features:</td>
<td>Top Features:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwiches/salads</td>
<td>Casual, family-friendly</td>
<td>Outdoor seating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemade soups</td>
<td>Full-service</td>
<td>Dinner menu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grilled sandwiches</td>
<td>Dinner menu</td>
<td>Beer garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grab-and-go items</td>
<td>Outdoor dining</td>
<td>Craft beers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Demo: HH Income
- $50K to $100K: 39%
- $100K+: 48%

Survey Demo: HH Income
- $50K to $100K: 30%
- $100K+: 56%

Survey Demo: HH Income
- $50K to $100K: 21%
- $100K+: 67%

Retail Establishments | Top Selections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty Foods</th>
<th>Kitchen, Home, Gifts</th>
<th>Books, Toys &amp; Games</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Features:</td>
<td>Top Features:</td>
<td>Top Features:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally-sourced foods</td>
<td>Home furnishings/decor</td>
<td>New books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan foods</td>
<td>Demo kitchen &amp; classes</td>
<td>Used books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic foods</td>
<td>Made in Howell/MI</td>
<td>Educational toys/games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic foods</td>
<td>Tasting/sampling events</td>
<td>Book signing events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Demo: HH Income
- $50K to $100K: 28%
- $100K+: 62%

Survey Demo: HH Income
- $50K to $100K: 32%
- $100K+: 50%

Survey Demo: HH Income
- $50K to $100K: 36%
- $100K+: 44%

Potential Market Traction

Q: How likely would you be to patronize the following types of business in Downtown Howell?
Average Score Ranking | 5.00 = Definitely Would

4. Ice Cream & Sweets 3.45 4. Arts, Crafts & Hobbies 3.44

Tools and References
- Top Prospects Survey Summary Results
- At-a-Glance Survey Results
Market Study Insights and Outcomes

Are You a Prospect?
Fifty-eight respondents to the Top Prospects and Strategies Survey (9% of the survey sample) expressed interest in moving or opening a new business in Downtown Howell. The level of interest expressed bodes well for the future and possibilities for the success of local business attraction efforts.

Are you a prospect?
Are you interested in moving your business to, or opening a new business in, Downtown Howell?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interested in moving</th>
<th>19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested in opening new</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9% of Survey Sample

Live it Up
Fifty-five percent of all survey respondents indicated some level of interest in potential downtown housing opportunities and a mix of housing styles catering to a broad spectrum of age groups and income levels. The benefits of housing as part of the downtown mix are multi-fold and an important ingredient for a vibrant district — and a possible motivator for prospective developers and investors.

Of those surveyed would or might consider living in Downtown Howell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top housing styles</th>
<th>Mortgage or rent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 BR Townhome 50%</td>
<td>Less than $1,000 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 BR Condo 44%</td>
<td>$1,000 to $1,200 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loft 26%</td>
<td>$1,200 to $1,400 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 BR Apartment 18%</td>
<td>$1,400 or more 18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tools and References
► At-a-Glance Top Prospects Survey Results
► Housing Visual Preferences Survey Results
Market Study Insights and Outcomes

Taking it to the Street

Market study information and findings provide a strong foundation for efforts to help businesses grow, to attract new businesses to be part of the downtown mix, and to promote opportunities to prospective businesses, investors, developers and entrepreneurs. The success of these efforts is also likely to hinge on the ability to:

- Demonstrate a solid understanding of the market and market trends.
- Demonstrate strong partnerships among Howell Main Street, the City of Howell, Howell Chamber of Commerce and other economic development partners are in place.
- Provide an outrageous level of personal service and attention to prospects, help prospects navigate the development process or the steps for opening a business, and demonstrate a “can-do” attitude.
- Demonstrate success and positive trends through tracking data, visuals and testimonials.
- Promote a business-friendly and development-ready environment and approach using lessons learned and tools developed through MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program and certification, and including the ability to direct prospects to developers, property owners and agents for available sites.
- Target prospects who:
  - Have prior industry experience or who are already operating within the region.
  - Have a connection to Howell.
  - Have concepts or business models that are consistent with “top prospects” identified in the recent survey or that are complementary to existing businesses and uses.
  - Are most likely to be attracted to the community and the Howell way-of-life.

Moving Ahead

Examples of next steps and implementation activities

- Follow-up with new and expanding business prospects identified via the Top Prospects Survey.
- Share information from the Top Prospects survey with existing businesses, especially those who might have opportunities to expand or reposition themselves to capitalize on products, services and features sought by area consumers.
- Develop a “Starting a Business in Downtown Howell” brochure that outlines the process in a simple and condensed step-by-step format and provides information and contacts for available guidance, technical assistance and resources.
- Develop a form or system for tracking prospects to collect basic information and to record notes on follow-up communications and activity.
- Update and maintain the Howell Main Street website’s “Opening a Business in Downtown Howell” to serve as a one-stop shop portal for information, links and downloads to assist existing and prospective investors, developers, businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Use on-the-street marketing techniques (posters, sandwich board signs, etc.) to promote opportunities, highlight progress and celebrate successes.
- Employ appropriate prospecting techniques, such as social media posts, field trips, database mining, business plan competitions and property tours, to identify and mine leads for new and expanding businesses.
- Apply a Pre-development Team approach that includes all relevant personnel in project preview and walk-through activities designed to trouble-shoot development and building rehabilitation projects, identify possible alternatives to meet the intent of life-safety measures and related codes and ordinances, and provides clear direction to investors, developers, businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Consider using a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to market and catalyze development at City- or other publicly-owned sites in the downtown area.
Introduction

Howell is a mid-Michigan community of about 9,500 people with a downtown that would be considered the center of the community. Significant investment in buildings and downtown infrastructure has resulted in a core of retail and business places that is attractive, functional, and, from most viewpoints, vibrant. It would be easy for the community to rest upon its accomplishments, but the people of Howell know well the need to continually manage its downtown to ensure its integrity, vitality, and future are aligned with the community as a whole.

To help understand Downtown Howell’s potential, Michigan Main Street commissioned the DPN team to explore possibilities for new introductions in downtown. The team focused its efforts on a three-day period, enough time to get to know the higher-level needs of downtown but not enough time to define a specific and watertight solution. As a result, the consultant team offers this document as a springboard for a deeper conversation about Downtown Howell, one where the suggestions and directions posed on these pages might be challenged, confirmed, expanded, and honed.

Charge

While creating a specific plan for the evolution of a downtown cannot be achieved during a three-day exercise, that period allows for significant interaction with a community of downtown stakeholders that results in initial framing guidance, articulation of concepts, and depictions of possibilities—all of which are necessary as starting points for a greater conversation. That was the charge for this exercise. During a three-day period, meetings were conducted with interest groups, city leadership, and the community. Tours and on-site investigations were conducted to understand, as best as could happen during a study of limited duration, the function of downtown, the issues the area might face as it evolves, and the potential for new introductions.

The results create a great starting point—not for physical change, but for the necessary dialog that should occur as the community plans downtown’s evolution. Change overnight isn’t possible or even desirable; Downtown Howell has been growing and changing for more than 150 years. It’s more organism than artifact, such that understanding its biology becomes important in knowing where downtown’s next metamorphosis might happen. This report suggests where that might happen, and what might result. But moving through a process that gains resonance with the downtown’s full range of stakeholders is still important and is suggested as the necessary next step.
Planning context

For this effort, the focus is Downtown Howell. Where several lines might be drawn to define that geography, there was a conscious effort to frame a study area that worked for the experience of downtown. With that, the center of Downtown Howell is clearly the intersection of Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue, and the expanse of downtown is limited to two blocks in each direction. This results in a downtown area that is compact and reasonably walkable (reasonably because two major thoroughfares are difficult for pedestrian crossings), with residential neighborhoods held close to that boundary.

Concepts

The focus of this effort is the delivery of concept for potential development that resonate with market opportunities, local interest, and contextual feasibility. It’s important to understand the nature of concepts and the depth of investigation that can occur during a limited-duration study. From that perspective, the deliverables are based on interactions with the Howell community during the three-day site visit and input received from a survey organized as a part of this effort, and they rely heavily on assumptions related to financial feasibility, continued positive economic conditions, political support and the will of local leadership to foster change in Downtown Howell, and a host of other factors.

Drawings and other suggestions of possible development directions are included in this report. Drawings, however, are not solutions. They demonstrate possibilities that need further vetting, but their best use is to encourage a dialog. As concepts, they will evolve—almost continuously—as dialog occurs. As a tool for dialog, the drawings and this report offer a way to talk about new introductions, massing and intensity of potential development, sequencing of implementation, accommodating parking and providing other public benefits, and eventually, issues of style and aesthetics.

In this report, a lens of finance has not been applied except from the perspective of redevelopment experience in other similar situations. The concepts, as initially presented and in any evolution, need to abide by principles. Several are outlined as a part of this report but, like the drawings, the principles need dialog to gain concurrence. The drawings show one way to apply the principles; many configurations beyond those shown are possible.
Conditions

Assessing the potential for change in Downtown Howell is a process that is necessarily rooted in the opportunities and challenges present in downtown’s geography as well as a solid understanding of the economic foundations of the downtown area. It also demands vision to understand the ways in which change supports the qualities of today’s downtown and the values people hold for it. Where this section strives to summarize factors influencing change in downtown, those more visionary ideas are explored in the report’s next section.

There are likely other factors that should be considered to understand how change might happen and, in particular, where quantitative investigations might reveal other patterns. Comparing land value to building value, for instance, might reveal patterns where a parcel or parcels, in their current state, could be ripe for change; where a ratio of land-to-building value approaches (or exceeds) 1.0, it is a signal that physical change is possible. There are certainly other similar investigations that might—and should—occur to best understand the potential for change in Downtown Howell.

Opportunities

The fabric of Downtown Howell includes a significant stock of historic buildings, most of which are occupied and located without gaps along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue. Equally important, downtown is generally compact and identifiable, such that everyone knows when they arrive. Neighborhoods are close and largely in good condition, a relationship that doesn’t always exist at the boundaries of a healthy downtown. Upper floors of buildings are reasonably occupied. In fact, most of the things that most small towns desire are already present in Downtown Howell.

Tenants and businesses in Downtown Howell are local. Very few “chains” exist in downtown—maybe only one or two, and those are located in storefronts that fit the character of downtown. People seem excited by the potential for new uses to be added, and survey results suggest an opportunity related to downtown living that expands upon the current downtown population. Beyond retail and services, downtown offers a range of entertainment venues and eating and drinking establishments, some of which appear busy even on weeknights and suggesting that Downtown Howell offers reasonable nightlife. As new uses or reuses are considered, the issues seem to relate mostly to parking, and even then, it’s more a matter of proximate parking than a lack of available parking.
Opportunities for new introductions may not exist along Grand River Avenue or Michigan Avenue except for evolutions in the use of current storefronts and a very few spots where new buildings could occur. Just off those streets, however, several locations for new introductions—even at relatively large scale—are possible. In those situations, recognizing the scale of downtown is important as a part of the design process so that a new building doesn’t overwhelm its locality.

While more difficult to imagine, Downtown Howell’s real opportunity for evolution comes not from its stock of historic buildings, but from its supply of surface parking lots. These spaces might be seen, in a way, as land banks—allowing for evolution at the right time but serving a necessary purpose for downtown until such time as they become something more than a place to store cars. And when they evolve, the potential for introducing structured parking seems worth pursuing—not as a standalone project but a project that adds incrementally to downtown’s parking supply while introducing new uses and activities.

Perhaps most important, in meetings related to this process, people seem ready for the next thing to happen in Downtown Howell. They’re looking for new places to shop or gather based on results of a survey that preceded the design efforts by just a few weeks. People are concerned about what new introductions look like but do not seem opposed to change. And that’s important because great downtowns are organic, always changing, and not artifacts locked in time.
Conditions

Challenges

Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue are significant roadways providing excellent access to downtown, and excellent passage through downtown. Crossing these streets is best—and safest—at signalized intersections, but the patterns of traffic signals does not favor crossing of Grand River Avenue. In addition, turning movements coupled with traffic volumes at the intersection of Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue often impede pedestrian crossings.

Not only do those streets carry significant traffic, they create a divide that results in four relatively equal quadrants. Where few opportunities exist for new or infill development along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue, some quadrants offer significant opportunities for incremental change.

*Divided by two major streets each carrying a significant volume of traffic, Downtown Howell becomes divided into four quadrants.*
Challenges (continued)

While Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue seem to have a great retail presence, several spaces along their frontages are occupied by non-retail businesses, professional offices and other uses that are not necessarily focused on pedestrians. It was suggested that events and activities that are part of a lively and robust downtown compromise the ability of those businesses to do regular business at those times. While certainly better than empty storefronts, or downtown space used simply for storage, those spaces that are not retail-focused tend to break the continuity for pedestrians as storefront displays and the opportunity to see into shops are lost. While having legal, insurance, real estate, and similar businesses is important and should be accommodated in downtown, there might be more spaces in Downtown Howell that are more conducive to their business practices.

Like many downtowns, input from the community suggests there is a parking problem in Downtown Howell. While there would appear to be extensive parking opportunities, immediately proximate parking is not always available—a situation that may be more of the crux of the problem. Still, with new uses being introduced to downtown, there may be an actual shortage of parking in the future. Proximate parking that meets many of the expectations expressed will not likely ever be satisfied, however several comments were made about improving corridors to address comfort, interest, and safety, with the linked notion that those improvements make more parking “available.”

The volume of traffic and the divide created by Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue also present challenges to those arriving downtown, or attempting to navigate around or through the downtown area, via alternative modes of transportation, such as bicycles, scooters and, someday, autonomous vehicles. Future dialog and planning should consider how these and other alternative forms of transportation might best be accommodated—and parked—in the Downtown Howell of the future.

Downtown Howell is not without its public spaces. Two spaces dominate: the lawn surrounding the library and the amphitheater at the courthouse. While these spaces accommodate gathering on some occasions, they offer no real opportunity for refuge, escape or play. In an evolved downtown, other types of public spaces will likely be needed.
Challenges (continued)

Zoning ordinances currently limit building heights in downtown to three stories, even though a taller building was determined worthy of approval through a clever design of areas under the roof. In that case, dating to the early 2000s, a fourth floor was configured in what would otherwise have been unoccupied “attic” space in a multifamily residential building. As redevelopment is considered, the relationship between the magnitude of development, the costs of construction, and the return on investment will be considered, most likely resulting in the need for a building that exceed three stories.

Rents for downtown spaces remain comparatively low, making new investment difficult—or perhaps more important, making it difficult for reinvestment in existing structures. New development may be possible without a higher level of rent, so other features—proximate and reliable parking, contemporary spatial configurations and supportive building infrastructure, fully accessible and compliant spaces—might incentivize tenancies.

Community Input

A survey of nearly 800 people conducted prior to the on-site explorations of potential change in downtown yielded critical information to guide the current and future efforts aimed at new introductions for Downtown Howell. From a quantitative view, the survey results suggest:

► A belief that Downtown Howell is well-positioned to accommodate new introductions;
► Community support for complementary eating & drinking and retail establishments to join the existing business mix;
► A desire for amenities, services and hands-on interaction to enliven the downtown experience; and
► People would seek opportunities to live in Downtown Howell.

A companion to the quantitative results was a visual preference survey targeting respondents’ impressions of various building types, massings, and styles. This more qualitative section of the survey suggests:

► Scale of structures is important in Downtown Howell, regardless of structure type; respondents were generally more favorable to smaller structures as opposed to larger structures; and
► Style of structures is important, again regardless of structure type; respondents were generally more favorable to structures exhibiting more traditional motifs as opposed to modernistic buildings.
Community Input (continued)

An opportunity to gain greater insights occurred during the on-site explorations when more than 30 people participated in a community forum where survey results were reviewed, questions were posed regarding the visual preferences expressed, and an exercise assessing susceptibility to change was accomplished. Some meeting participants expressed strongly an orientation to Victorian architecture, nearly suggesting that no other style is appropriate to Downtown Howell. It was important that the group did not oppose structured parking, as long as it was as invisible as practicable.

Meeting participants worked in groups to assess the susceptibility to change for parcels throughout Downtown Howell. On maps of downtown, the groups were asked to highlight those parcels or areas of downtown where change was not likely and to mark those parcels or areas where there might be a greater susceptibility to change. The marked maps are not starting points for redevelopment or teardowns, and it certainly was not a scientific endeavor. Still, comparing directions across the marked maps of five groups demonstrated significantly similarities. Areas along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue were largely viewed as resistant to significant change, but parking areas throughout the downtown area as well as a few residential parcels were generally assessed as susceptible to change. This exercise translated to the effort to identify likely areas for new introductions that is a focus of this report.
Guiding Change

This study cannot, in its limited exposure to Downtown Howell, be predictive about change. But based on key signals and experience in downtown planning from across the country, the consultant team can begin framing where change might happen and how, in some areas, it might be configured. Even before the physical change is imagined, the process of creating change in a downtown is one of sharing values and thoughts among those most interested in its future. In this report, those notions are summarized as a set of principles and an organizing idea, both of which need confirmation by the community. More important, if change in Downtown Howell was imagined as a series of tasks—a recipe or checklist—principles wouldn’t be as necessary. The process of imagining change will be one where ideas resonate, a project is initiated, and a new opportunity emerges that requires immediate attention—a disruption occurs in the plan.

It’s in those disruptions that the value of principles becomes important. When the path is known, focus is clear and movement seems easy. With a disruption, things get messy—and it’s the principles that offer clarity. Simply stepping back to the beginning can help put initiatives into perspective and determine whether the disruption is a real opportunity, a temporary distraction, or a direction unworthy for Downtown Howell.

Principles

Change in Downtown Howell might happen without this kind of study. Under the right economic conditions and political environment, an entity might step forward with a proposal for a new introduction. And the community may have the technical tools to respond to that kind of opportunity. But the values of the community are not always fairly reflected in a community’s set of tools, so this effort begins with an identification of principles that might better frame a path for change in Downtown Howell.

Principles aren’t rules; rules can be broken, and in some cases the broken rules create better results. Principles are more like truths or values—things that might resonate so clearly with the community that they’re the first filter when considering a change. Several such principles, shown on the following pages, are framed to guide the planning of this study and, when embraced fully by the community, the evolution of Downtown Howell.

“When the path is known, focus is clear and movement seems easy. With a disruption, things get messy—and it’s the principles that offer clarity. Simply stepping back to the beginning can help put initiatives into perspective and determine whether the disruption is a real opportunity, a temporary distraction, or a direction unworthy for Downtown Howell.”

Principles for Downtown Howell

- Forget style… it’s about authenticity
- Keep the neighborhood close
- Walk if you want to experience downtown
- Create a downtown to accommodate play
- Build structures for many lifetimes of use
- Seek evolution, not revolution
Principles (continued)

*Forget style... it’s about authenticity*
During the on-site work, several stakeholders noted the need to follow strictly the Victorian style of Downtown Howell. Those structures that are Victorian might well be perpetuated, but there are many other buildings in downtown that are not Victorian. In fact, many Downtown Howell storefronts might be better categorized as Early 20th Century Commercial, an architectural style that relied upon simplicity of form, large expanses of transparent glass in organized groupings, patterned masonry walls, and a clearly articulated and projecting cornice. And there are many buildings to come, each of which should be designed according to a style of its day; to replicate Victorian in a building constructed in 2020 only would seem to denigrate what is Victorian (or Early 20th Century Commercial) and authentic in Downtown Howell.

*Keep the neighborhood close*
A great feature of Downtown Howell is the proximity of neighborhoods to the commercial area. There is no buffer, no separation, and in most cases, no transition. Single family homes lie opposite commercial activities and seem not to suffer from that more intensive activity. Where many communities have attempted transitions, those zones have become places of neglect—the classic “no man’s land.” Evolutions of Downtown Howell would do well to limit expansions of downtown to ensure a great stock of single-family homes is retained at its edges.

*Walk if you want to experience downtown*
There’s almost no way to experience Downtown Howell in a car, but it might still be the way most people get there—and that’s important because it means that most people begin and end their visit to downtown in a car. It makes where they park really important to their experience, whether it’s a prime spot or one a few blocks away on a street or, someday, in a parking structure. It means that design begins and ends with consideration of the experience at human scale, not because of the great stock of buildings in Downtown Howell, but because it’s the best and only way to really appreciate it.
Downtown Evolutions

Principles (continued)

Create a downtown to accommodate play

Where most of the focus of a downtown is directed to business (retail, service, and all things between) and the civic life of a community (think “town square”), most do not accommodate the basic idea of play that is central to the lives of families and individuals. In Downtown Howell, some emphasis should be directed to creating a place—or several places—where play is the clear focus, for families and for individuals, and perhaps especially where play is intergenerational. While there is a clear social idea supporting play, there is a potential economic motivation if downtown visitors extend their stay beyond the time required for their business as the play demonstrates vitality through the simple presence of people.

Build structures for many lifetimes of use

Looking at the stock of buildings in Downtown Howell it’s clear that many have served purposes far beyond their original intended use. That’s the beauty of a downtown building and an idea that should be perpetuated as new introductions are considered—that a building not only gets better with time but it accommodates a wide range of uses and activities during its lifetime. As new buildings are proposed, it’s entirely fair to ask the proponent how it might be used 50 or 60 years from the date it is first occupied.

Seek evolution, not revolution

Downtowns are not artifacts or collections. They are organic, constantly changing and finding ways to adapt to changing conditions. Considered in those terms, Downtown Howell has always been changing, not in big ways but in increments. As its future is considered, that same well-considered, incrementally-paced evolution seems wholly appropriate. It took years for Downtown Howell to become what it is today; logic (and economics) suggests is will take years to move through its next evolution. Benefits are many, including maintaining familiarity and allowing stability in finance, but perhaps one clear benefit of a more gradual approach will resonate: an incremental evolution will result in small successes, but it will also limit the size of mistakes.
An Organizing Idea

Along with principles for Downtown Howell’s evolution, an organizing idea becomes part of the foundation for change. It’s likely the original organizing idea was simple—Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue would form a tight, coherent center for the Howell community. Areas behind buildings would function to support the community and its commerce, but perhaps not with the same degree of aesthetics as downtown’s “main streets”—they would serve the messy but still necessary functions of Downtown Howell. Today, there are still necessary functions that might not find their home on Grand River Avenue or Michigan Avenue, but they can no longer be messy. Instead, those spaces are becoming a core part of the Downtown Howell experience.

An Organizing Idea

- Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue are dividers, but it’s only four quadrants that make it whole.
- Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue are the core of the retail experience.
- Wandering should be encouraged as a public experience.
- Each quadrant should have: 1) a parking reservoir; 2) a place to play or gather; 3) intensive housing; and 4) space for non-retail businesses.
- Parking should be convenient and visible, but not obvious.
- Public spaces should be prominent and obvious, and oriented to all ages.

The central organizing ideas for Downtown Howell recognize the presence of a retail core along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue, but also look to better connect and use spaces in each quadrant, perhaps facilitated by the introduction of parking reservoirs and places for play and gathering in each quadrant.
An Organizing Idea (continued)

Several points make those spaces for “necessary functions” more integral to downtown, and the key will be allowing them to evolve. The change in these parts of downtown allow it to function for contemporary purposes and local market needs without compromising the character of development along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue. They also respect adjacencies, particularly when those nearby properties are residential in nature.

► Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue are dividers, but it’s only four quadrants that make it whole.

Downtown’s major streets will not likely see much of a reduction in traffic—ever, and they fall outside of the jurisdiction of Howell, and they are important and necessary parts of the community’s and the region’s transportation infrastructure. In short, these streets are not likely changing in terms of the traffic that they’ll carry, even as physical changes strive to encourage motorist behavior more compatible with a downtown setting. That leaves the quadrants to help make downtown whole, making those portions of downtown that were once “messy” important to its evolution.

► Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue are the core of the retail experience.

As the historic retail streets, Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue will—and should—continue to be the focus of the Downtown Howell’s retail experience. New introductions to downtown might be positioned away from these streets and still have a retail use, but to the greatest degree possible the character of downtown will be perpetuated by having retail configured along these streets.

► Wandering should be encouraged as a public experience.

Where the principles encourage Downtown Howell as a pedestrian experience, offering pedestrians a way to explore on their own creates a more interesting downtown. Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue allow for a retail “stroll,” but a few streets should be organized to encourage pedestrians from parking in the quadrants to “amble” to the “main streets,” and others—like the alleys—might be expanded to allow a “ramble” to provide an even greater diversity in the pedestrian experience.
An Organizing Idea (continued)

► Each quadrant should have:
  • A parking reservoir
    A parking reservoir is, simply, a place that accommodates needed parking for new introductions plus a bit of extra capacity that might be needed in downtown so that important buildings are not removed in favor of parking.
  • A place to play or gather
    Most people don’t think of play as a downtown experience, but like gathering it’s a function of community—at the child and family scale, for certain, but there’s no reason those experiences can’t be expanded to other generations and groups. Gathering might, in some cases, be for more activity in groups, but in others, depending on the quadrant, it might be more reflective and solitary.
  • Intensive housing
    Downtown Howell is already a sought-after location for living. The quadrants each offer the potential for new choices in housing, at scales that help to create activity on streets and public spaces that lend comfort and security to all of downtown.
  • Spaces for non-retail businesses
    The quadrants might have to evolve to accommodate non-retail businesses, especially if Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue are to be the retail focus of Downtown Howell. Incrementally, new spaces for business might be created—offering improved configurations and flexibility for non-retail uses, contemporary infrastructure more suitable to longer daily occupancies, and more convenient parking for business clients. And as that transition happens, opportunities are created along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue for new retail business.
Downtown Evolutions

An Organizing Idea (continued)

► Parking should be convenient and visible, but not obvious.

If parking is in short supply in Downtown Howell, strategies for augmenting parking need to consider how it might be, first, found, and then used. Future aggregations of parking may likely be in structures of some sort, but their locations should be organized so that entrances for cars and people are clear, visible, and logical. Hiding parking behind liners of actual use is a great strategy for making a structure fit downtown but camouflaging it so that it is hard to find only means some people will be driving in circles to find the new parking opportunities. Once in a parking structure, a person’s experience in downtown begins (and it’s similar for the end of the experience). Parking structures have to lend the same send of convenience and security as parking along any of downtown’s street.

► Public spaces should be prominent and obvious, and oriented to all ages.

A few opportunities exist already in Downtown as public spaces, not the least of which are downtown’s “main streets.” Others, like the Library Lawn and the Courthouse Amphitheater begin to serve the need for public spaces and events in downtown. But more spaces are needed to accommodate a growing population of downtown users, particularly where those spaces can serve ordinary gathering, serendipity, play, and refuge. And most important, these spaces should be prominent in the experience of downtown and be created so they are attractive to a user group that ranges from age 4 or 5 to 80 or older.

The Library Lawn and the Courthouse Amphitheater begin to serve the need for public spaces and events in downtown. But more spaces are needed to accommodate a growing population of downtown users, particularly where those spaces can serve ordinary gathering, serendipity, play, and refuge.
Possibilities

While concepts presented in this report suggest certain types of uses and configurations, they have not been verified through a process typically used by a developer as a building project is undertaken. However, trends and input have suggested that uses demonstrated in the concepts would be supported by the community, with high interest for some of the proposed uses. In this section, a series of projects is proposed—some of which are investments in the public realm and others that might be some combination of public and private investment. In addition, there are broad considerations related to incrementalism, market support, pedestrian movements, and local guidance that may need attention in order to gain the most from any new investment.

Cross Quadrant Corridors

Two street corridors—Walnut Street and Court Street—are suggested as expanded links between quadrants on either side of Michigan Avenue, not so much as vehicle corridors but as signals to new development that might occur in the blocks behind Grand River Avenue facades. Crossings of Grand River Avenue at Court Street might be highlighted by overhead warning signals and more definitive pavement markings, slowing traffic and giving greater prominence to pedestrians who have little opportunity to cross Grand River Avenue east of Michigan Avenue.

Both streets can be relatively easily expanded to create a more dramatic landscape and pedestrian experience. Walnut Street between Sibley Street and Wetmore Street could be expanded by eliminating parking on its west side. Parking would be replaced in a parking structure as noted below. The additional eight feet of sidewalk and tree planting zone leads directly to the Depot and offers cues to an eventually expanded downtown experience.

Court Street can be expanded in an even more dramatic way south of Grand River Avenue. Elimination of one private business creates a zone of more than 40 feet wide. The existing sidewalk area might be reconfigured with diagonal parking. Like its pair at Walnut Street, the Court Street promenade links the retail experience of Grand River Avenue with other future downtown activities and experiences. In the case of this quadrant, this feature becomes its place to play and gather.
Alleys

While not every alley experience will be like that of the northeast quadrant, other alleys might acquire some of the same charm and attraction. The simple additions found in two narrow corridors—unique overhead lighting, individualized plantings and seating—create a layer of interest that masks an alley’s utilitarian function, but it also opens the back portions of buildings to a use that might not otherwise be recognized. Where the original businesses might have needed the “back room” spaces of a deep building facing onto Grand River Avenue or Michigan Avenue, many—maybe most—contemporary businesses do not maintain extensive backroom stock. This allows the opportunity for “back rooms” to become storefronts, now on alleys.

The wandering nature of the first improved alley might not be fully replicable in other parts of downtown. Thoughtful placement of buildings might allow some of that character to develop, but other alleys need not duplicate the original. Rather, they might focus on its more bohemian character so that each set of alleys becomes as interesting and unique as the original.

Within each block along Grand River Avenue, a secondary passage might be created as a link through the block and downtown, each with a distinct character and creating an invitation from public parking.
Quadrant Development

Under the organization of downtown, major evolutions are most likely to occur by quadrant with each eventually containing a parking reservoir, a place to play or gather, intensive housing, and spaces for non-retail businesses. Importantly, quadrant development as explored in this study does not replace a focus on Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue. Instead, it augments what happens along those streets with new activities and functions, all of which are intended to expand the experience of downtown.

While change is possible in each quadrant, this study explores the potential of the northwest and southeast quadrants. Other quadrants would likely be shaped following many of the same ideas and strategies. Development activities in each quadrant are linked to the cross-quadrant corridors created on Walnut Street and Court Street (at least in the southeast quadrant). The quadrants chosen under this study have significant opportunity based primarily on expanses of underutilized and undeveloped (and largely unproductive) land.

Northwest Quadrant Demonstration

The northwest quadrant holds all or portions of three blocks that might, under the right conditions, be appropriate for redevelopment (see diagram at right).

The demonstration is directed to the first two portions of the zone where it seems more likely for redevelopment to occur. Circumstances may suggest that the public parking areas are the most likely targets for redevelopment, as they contain no structures and are under single ownership, but the demonstration seeks to address several concerns related to Downtown Howell through redevelopment, not just new buildings. As a consequence, the path is more complex, the numbers of properties likely greater, and the creation of replacement parking at the NW-2 block might be a logical starting point.

All or portions of three blocks comprise the core redevelopment opportunities in the Northwest Quadrant, with each containing new parking and public spaces. These blocks include:

► **Block NW-1**: the northerly half of the 200 block between Grand River Avenue and Clinton Street, which is currently occupied by “the pit” parking lot;

► **Block NW-2**: the entire block bounded by Clinton Street, Walnut Street, Wetmore Street, and Center Street which is currently occupied by a small building at 214 North Walnut Street and an associated parking area, with large areas of the block being vacant;

► **Block NW-3**: the entire block bounded by Walnut Street, Clinton Street, Grand River Avenue, and the railroad, which is currently occupied by a public parking area, two small buildings (118 West Clinton Street and 122 West Clinton Street), and a convenience store/gas station, all of which may or may not be a part of the redevelopment.

A market hall, in two parts, parallels Walnut Street and the cross-quadrant corridor, with spaces at street level matching the activity of a farmers’ market and other uses occupying upper story spaces.
Potential development at NW-1 and NW-2 blocks shows an integrated pattern of public and private uses, including a significant parking structure, a market hall, and an expansive linear park as public features.
Parking below grade is important in the development of NW-1 and NW-2 blocks, particularly when the need for private parking serving new uses is recognized.
Cross-quadrant Development

Finding a path to new development is key, but whatever happens must also fit Downtown Howell. One of the key directions supporting downtown-activating redevelopment for the Northwest Quadrant is the creation of the cross-quadrant corridor along Walnut Street, in this case reaching from Grand River Avenue to the Depot but eventually stretching south of Grand River Avenue to Sibley Street. Imagined in this study as a broad and tree-lined sidewalk on the west side of Walnut Street, achieved by the removal of parallel parking, this corridor is an important cue to the new introductions in this part of downtown. Eventually, that corridor might reach further northward, crossing the railroad to land at a pavilion overlooking the pond and wetland just across the tracks. While not an essential part of an active downtown, as new residents and uses are introduced in this quadrant, it provides an expanded set of experiences, creates something of a quiet refuge at the edge of downtown, and supports the idea of a place to play or gather in each quadrant—although other such places are also proposed in the demonstration.

Parking Reservoir

Key support for redevelopment and downtown is the provision of parking. In the demonstration, this occurs by creating a below-grade/below structure parking opportunity at the existing public parking area on the south side of Clinton Street (Block NW-1). New development would occur over this parking garage, including some public space, with a parking quantity at least matching the amount that exists. This is important because the goal is not elimination of parking, but the creation of new introductions that ensure vibrancy in Downtown Howell. Parking demand created by new development would be accommodated in other parts of the redevelopment zone, making clear the need to create multi-block patterns of redevelopment.

A second and more substantial parking structure would be created across the street (Block NW-2). Here, a multi-level parking structure is envisioned to support new development on the block plus other new parking required of other quadrant introductions. In the demonstration, parking occupies the below-grade space of nearly the entire block and a parking structure rises two levels above grade. The parking structure would eventually have a liner of residential uses along two sides, a retail/office use on one side, and a play feature and landscape along the remaining side—making the parking structure itself as utilitarian in design as practicable. Adding development over its face is the least expensive way to create a structure, allowing other improvements—high quality lighting, enhanced stair and elevator cores—to address the people part of the parking structure.

For both parking structures, some or all portions of the top level are developed as green roofs—spaces of real landscape. This becomes important as the structures are surrounded by new development, some of which may look down upon these yard-like spaces. The green roofs also moderate stormwater runoff, offsetting somewhat the cost of utilitarian infrastructure required to support new development. Even where that new development is taking the place of existing hardcover and it would seem stormwater management wouldn’t be required, changing regulations in many parts of the country suggest that each development is a “start over” condition made necessary by an enhanced understanding of stormwater management and changing climate conditions.

Beyond green roofs, another significant design direction for parking structures should be the creation of flat parking decks. While sloping decks are more efficient for cars, they are sometimes more difficult for pedestrians; cars can negotiate slopes more effectively that people. But perhaps more important, the investment made in a parking structure suggests that it will be a part of the downtown experience for many years—even many decades. In that time, the need for parking might change dramatically, as cars get smaller, as more people share cars, and as autonomous vehicles gain favor. Creating a parking structure with flat decks allows for its conversion to another use, in whole or in part, at a point where the need for storing cars in downtown is not so great as it is today.
**A Place to Play or Gather**

The organizing ideas for Downtown Howell suggest a place to play or gather in each quadrant. In the Northwest Quadrant, an idea is suggested that the middle of the NW-1 and NW-2 blocks contain a linear park space. In the NW-2 block, one side is the largely open side of a parking structure, left open in large part to reduce the need for expensive ventilation infrastructure for above-grade portions of the structure. The place to play or gather is simple: an elongated lawn with scattered trees, bordered on one side by hard surfaces accommodating events or festivals and on the other by an artful play space, one that reaches upward to cover portions of the parking structure and invites children—and adults—to climb and slide—or engage in other activities supporting the idea of play. At its north end, the linear park overlooks the Depot area with views toward the pond and wetland and the pavilion imagined as another place to gather in Downtown Howell.

One side of a parking reservoir in the Northwest Quadrant is faced with a play structure, attracting people to downtown and encouraging them to stay longer.
**Intensive Housing**

New housing opportunities are made a part of the NW-2 block on Center Street and a portion of Wetmore Street. While the demonstration is not based on any market-specific studies, an idea is posed that creates two-level row homes, each with its own entry accessed by steps and front porches from the street and a floor-to-floor dimension of about 20 feet (between the street level and the next unit above the rowhome). A flat occupies level three—a one-level unit that has direct access to the green roof over the parking structure. The top unit is a two-story loft with its upper level built into the roof. In total, the building is five stories, but its architectural expression is four stories plus a roof, with units above the rowhomes stepped back from to create terraces or balconies. All units would have parking in the below-grade parking garage, with visitor spaces accommodated through the joint use nature of parking—where residential visitors are most likely present when businesses are not operating.

Experience in other downtowns suggest a residential building of this height is economically possible, but no specific exploration of financial feasibility was conducted as part of this study. From a downtown design perspective, the mix of units, the form of the building, and its placement opposite residential uses makes for a reasonable fit for this part of Downtown Howell.
Non-retail Business Spaces

The organizing ideas suggest the creation of non-retail business space as a part of redevelopment is critical. These spaces would provide contemporary office and work spaces that allow for the relocation of non-retail businesses along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue. As a part of their relocation, the provision of reasonable and accessible parking becomes primary, which is accommodated in the new parking structures. In the NW-2 block, non-retail business spaces are provided along Clinton Street and becomes one face of the parking structure. The amount of space provided is not large but seems reasonable based on the market opportunity and a possible incremental movement of non-retail businesses from Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue. From an expense perspective, the elevator core for the non-retail business building becomes the public elevator core for the parking structure. The street level space should be tall—about 20 feet—to allow for two levels of parking behind it and plenty of light penetration. The second and third levels are shorter, maybe 10 or 12 feet, and overlook the green roof of the parking structure. The depth of the building is relatively short compared to older downtown buildings but recognizes that the historic need for deep spaces is not part of contemporary business needs. The upper floors, then, with narrow depths and openings to the street and green roof, offer light and views that cannot be achieved in Downtown Howell’s older buildings.

Special Features

While the description of new introductions for the Northwest Quadrant as parking, residential, and non-retail business might seem banal, they form the foundation for other opportunities. In the Northwest Quadrant, the demonstration poses a market hall, banquet hall and a small hotel. The need for each has not been demonstrated beyond statements of interest from the community, but the demonstration illustrates how each might be incorporated neatly into the quadrant’s evolution.

The market hall stretches along the east side of the NW-1 and NW-2 blocks, paralleling and opening onto the cross-quadrant corridor on Walnut Street. The lower level houses the market hall, with many openings to both Walnut Street and the linear park on its west side, and accommodates vendors for food and specialty items, especially where those vendors are startups or expansions of businesses from non-Howell locations. The space of a market hall requires air—not in a literal sense but from a spatial perspective. Where the floor level is busy, occupied by stalls, products, and lots of people, above about eight feet, the space is open and occupied primarily by signs for individual stalls and lighting. It suggests the second floor is set about 20 feet above the first, similar to the floor-to-floor dimensions of other new development on the block.

Wide walks achieved through the elimination of parking on one side of Walnut Street create the promenade along the market hall, which stretches across portions of two blocks, and reaching to the Depot.
In the demonstration, the market hall is three floors. The upper floors accommodate non-retail businesses, with the second floor roughly matching the footprint of the market hall and the third floor becoming more loft-like and part of the building’s roof architecture.

With similar architectural expression and relationship to Walnut Street, the banquet hall fills a gap identified during discussions with the community. Again, no market study has demonstrated the feasibility of a banquet hall but the patterns of the demonstrate how it might fit this quadrant. The banquet hall, in this demonstration, is the second floor of the NW-1 block’s market hall. This building is scaled similar to its partner on the NW-2 block except that the second level becomes the banquet hall, with the space reaching to the roof.

Downtown stakeholders suggested that a boutique hotel would be desirable but not likely. Their determination of its potential was based on their perceptions of vacancies during the week, but successful smaller hotels in other communities have found success by focusing on accommodating the national and sometimes international guests of a few local businesses that feel their customers deserve better accommodations than are typically available. With that, the smaller hotels have a base of business that is only expanded by weekend or event guests.

On a portion of the NW-1 block, the demonstration shows a three-story hotel with a small drop-off and parking court on its south side. Guest parking is easily and conveniently located in the parking structure on the NW-2 block, again emphasizing the need to look across more than one block for redevelopment potential. As the hotel is considered, management of the banquet hall on the same block becomes more directly accommodated.

In the demonstration of the Northwest Quadrant, no activity is proposed that replaces or displaces the activity of Grand River Avenue or Michigan Avenue. In fact, the market hall is the only retail activity proposed and its activity could not be easily accommodated in any building on Grand River Avenue or Michigan Avenue. In short, new development in the Northwest Quadrant is envisioned as a complement to existing activity in downtown, adding residents, visitors and others the experience of Downtown Howell.
Northwest Quadrant Development Potential

The following charts summarize the development demonstrated for the Northwest Quadrants on two blocks:

**Block NW-1 Demonstration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development component</th>
<th>Component Area</th>
<th>Parking basis</th>
<th>Parking required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-retail businesses</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>50 rooms</td>
<td>1 space/room +10</td>
<td>60 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Use – Market Hall</td>
<td>6,050 square feet</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>24 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Use – Banquet Hall</td>
<td>200 seats</td>
<td>1 space/3 seats</td>
<td>67 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1.5 spaces/unit</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>90 spaces¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total parking required: 241 spaces
Total parking provided: 121 spaces

**Block NW-2 Demonstration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development component</th>
<th>Component Area</th>
<th>Parking basis</th>
<th>Parking required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-retail businesses</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>112 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1 space/room +10</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Use – Market Hall</td>
<td>12,000 square feet</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>48 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Use – Banquet Hall</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1 space/3 seats</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>48 units</td>
<td>1.5 spaces/unit</td>
<td>72 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11 spaces²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total parking required: 241 spaces
Total parking provided: 341 spaces

¹ Includes 80 parking spaces in “the pit” and 10 spaces along the west side of Walnut Street between Grand River Avenue and Clinton Street removed to create the cross-quadrant corridor.

² Includes 11 spaces along the west side of Walnut Street between Clinton Street and Wetmore Street removed to create the cross-quadrant corridor.
Southeast Quadrant Demonstration

The Southeast Quadrant holds all or portions of four blocks that might, under the right conditions, be appropriate for redevelopment (see diagram at right).

The Southeast Quadrant holds all or portions of four blocks that might, under the right conditions, be appropriate for redevelopment. Those blocks include:

- **Block SE-1**: the easterly portion of the block bounded by Sibley Street, Court Street, Grand River Avenue, and Michigan Avenue, and containing a single-story commercial building (100 South Court Street) and a portion of a public parking area;

- **Block SE-2**: the northerly portion of the block bounded by Washington Street, Barnard Street, Sibley Street, and McCarthy Street, and containing a parking area at its westerly end, a vacant lot (215 East Sibley Street), and commercial and residential buildings at its easterly end (233 East Sibley Street, 239 East Sibley Street, and 206 South Barnard Street);

- **Block SE-3**: portions of the block bounded by Sibley Street, Barnard Street, Grand River Avenue, and Court Street, and including two structures facing Grand River Avenue and one along Court Street (303 East Grand River Avenue, 323 East Grand River Avenue and 121 South Court Street); and;

- **Block SE-4**: the northeasterly portion of the block bounded by Michigan Avenue, Sibley Street, McCarthy Street, and Washington Street and containing two residential structures (204 McCarthy Street and 210 McCarthy Street).
Quadrant Development | Southeast Quadrant Demonstration (continued)

As suggested for the demonstration at the Northwest Quadrant, activities supporting redevelopment are linked, with the path to redevelopment complex. In this quadrant, redevelopment activities might first focus on the SE-2 block, where existing development is limited and the parking reservoir supporting other development would be created.

A mix of uses is possible in an evolution of the Southeast Quadrant, made possible largely through the creation of parking on a portion of one block. The parking would be lined by residential uses and capped with a public park.

Most parking for the quadrant is located below a green roof extending along the length of a residential liner, made into a parklike space for this part of Downtown Howell.
**Cross-quadrant Development**

Making certain new development is linked to Grand River Avenue is a key to redevelopment in the quadrants. In the Southeast Quadrant, Court Street becomes the cross-quadrant corridor through the removal of a small building (100 South Court Street) to create a broad landscaped pedestrian link between Grand River Avenue and Sibley Street. Creation of this corridor may also satisfy the goal of creating a place to play or gather in the Southeast Quadrant as this space, at 40 feet wide, offers ample opportunity for the introduction of gardens, a fountain, public art, seating, and other special features oriented to pedestrian activity and gathering.

Importantly, the added landscape feature of the cross-quadrant corridor is a signal of the reach of downtown toward Sibley Street. In contrast to Walnut Street on the other side of Michigan Avenue, Court Street terminates at the public space at the courthouse. To make a truly effective cross-quadrant connection, enhancement to crossing Grand River Avenue is needed—not just because of the corridor but because there is no other convenient street crossing on this side of Michigan Avenue. Pedestrian crossing signals (rapid flashing beacons) and highlighted pavement markings will help to establish a loop for pedestrians on the east side of downtown.

**Parking reservoir**

One of the core guidance elements shared in this study is the creation of a parking reservoir in each quadrant as a means of distributing parking in downtown and allowing for more movement through downtown on foot. The parking reservoir for the Southeast Quadrant is shown on the SE-2 block in the demonstration. As in the demonstration for the Northwest Quadrant, a parking structure is shown in combination with new development and public space and includes replacement parking for any public or private parking that cannot be replaced elsewhere as new development occurs. As shown for the Northwest Quadrant, this parking reservoir is partially lined by new development, it is topped by a green roof, and parking decks are flat. Access is separated so that the lowest level serves residential units and is accessed from Barnard Street and the upper levels are accessed from Sibley Street with an internal ramp.

Its relationship to existing residential uses to the south need to be considered in the design, both from the perspective of the structure’s south wall and the potential for activities on the green roof to overlook rear yards on neighboring properties. Both issues are important and can be resolved through thoughtful design of the parking structure and, especially, by setting the parking structure somewhat back from the south parcel boundary to allow for a significant landscape to be created.

Parking is still required to support other new introductions in the quadrant. On the SE-3 block, parking is shown below new development on the south portion of the block (along Sibley Street), but surface parking is also retained in a reconfigured layout.
The Court Street Promenade is the cross-quadrant corridor for the Southeast Quadrant and, as suggested above, it holds the potential for serving as the quadrant’s place to play or gather. It’s design in the demonstration is more passive, creating a landscaped passage between Grand River Avenue and Sibley Street and a definitive public space opposite the courthouse lawn and amphitheater.

Other opportunities exist as the SE-2 block evolves, where the existing parking area on that block might evolve to become the play or gathering space. In the demonstration, the evolution shows a space focused on an interactive fountain, one where the water feature is both display and play created through changing water sprays in combination with lighting, with the basin being a carefully crafted sidewalk that allows for people, children especially but not exclusively, to walk into the water.

The play and gathering space on the SE-2 block extends through the redevelopment of that block by using the green roof space above the parking structure. A combination of landscape and low-intensity play activates the roof and extends the notion of quadrant play across an even greater piece of the quadrant’s landscape.

Parking Reservoir (continued)

In the Southeast Quadrant, approximately 350 parking spaces are created to offset current actual or perceived shortages and to accommodate new uses. Other parking is created to match the demand created in the demonstration at the rates aligned with typical contemporary parking requirements:

- Retail, office: 4.0 spaces per 1,000 square feet
- Indoor assembly: 1.0 space per 3 seats
- Hotel: 1.0 space per unit plus ten spaces for employees
- Residential: 1.5 spaces per unit
- Outdoor uses: No spaces provided

As in the Northwest Quadrant, opportunities for sharing of parking spaces result from off-setting peaks in use, making the true number of spaces available to support existing and some new uses even greater.

An existing parking area on the SE-2 block might evolve to become a play or gathering space for the Southeast Quadrant.
Intensive Housing

Intensive housing is focused on the creation of a multi-story residential liner for the parking structure on the SE-3 block. Similar to the residential building demonstrated for the NW-2 block, the first level are two-level rowhome units with entries from the street, front porches, and an overall height of approximately 20 feet, which accommodates the two-levels of parking over the garage level and where the top is a green roof. The intermediate level are flat units that access directly to the green roof, and the upper level are loft units. Façades step back from the rowhomes and the upper level of the lofts are built into the roof, giving five levels of living in a building appearing to be four stories with dormers in the roof. As the structure steps back, the insertion of porches, terraces, and balconies are important in lending a sense of life to the building and providing eyes onto the street. The structure effectively screens the parking structure behind, with residential parking at the lowest level and the upper two levels providing quadrant parking.

A parking reservoir is lined by residential uses and capped with a public space.
Non-Retail Business Spaces

As in the demonstration of the Northwest Quadrant and as suggested in the organizing ideas, spaces for non-retail business should be created as the Southeast Quadrant evolves. In this demonstration, SE-1 block and SE-2 block show such introductions. On the SE-1 block, new non-retail business space might be created at the southerly end of the existing public parking area. In this case, and particularly because of its location along a cross-quadrant corridor, some retail, restaurant, or eating/drinking establishment might occur at the street level of this multi-story building.

The SE-3 block includes new introductions along Sibley Street where it can take advantage of the parking reservoir created across the street, although the building might also include some garage parking. Critically, the evolution of the Southeast Quadrant includes several buildings on the SE-3 block, creating more activity along Grand River Avenue that is retail in orientation, but the size of the former newspaper building, if it is perpetuated, might suggest some other uses that are not necessarily retail-focused.

While these non-retail business spaces are being suggested as non-retail spaces, the creation of taller first floor spaces—20 feet, as suggested for the Northwest Quadrant—offers the potential for unique new uses, perhaps as live-work spaces for certain businesses, maker spaces, or even a transition to two-level residential spaces depending on market conditions. As in other parts of Downtown Howell, the key is the creation of buildings that can support a variety of uses during their lifetime.

A new building replaces a part of the public parking area along Court Street, creating a more active link between Grand River Avenue and Sibley Street.
**Special Features**

New introductions in the Southeast Quadrant are focused on the basic components of a downtown. As redevelopment occurs, there will be opportunities for special features to be introduced as part of its experience. As opposed to new introductions in the Northwest Quadrant, the demonstrations are oriented to special features being a part of the public realm—the expansion of the Court Street to create a promenade and a playful and interactive fountain near the corner of Sibley Street and McCarthy Street.

Still, no introductions in the Southeast Quadrant replace activity intended to occur along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue. It’s about augmenting activity through new uses and new users, expanding the experience of Downtown Howell.

*The Court Street Promenade provides a public space connection to new development in the Southeast Quadrant other than retail and other activities along Grand River Avenue.*
Southeast Quadrant Development Potential

The following charts summarize the development demonstrated for the Southeast Quadrants on three blocks:

### Block SE-1 Demonstration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development component</th>
<th>Component Area</th>
<th>Parking basis</th>
<th>Parking required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>3,500 square feet</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>14 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-retail businesses</td>
<td>3,500 square feet</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>14 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Use</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1.5 spaces/unit</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31 spaces&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total parking required</td>
<td>59 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total parking provided</td>
<td>0 spaces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Block SE-2 Demonstration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development component</th>
<th>Component Area</th>
<th>Parking basis</th>
<th>Parking required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-retail businesses</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Use</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>42 units</td>
<td>1.5 spaces/unit</td>
<td>63 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total parking required</td>
<td>63 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total parking provided</td>
<td>195 spaces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Block SE-3 Demonstration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development component</th>
<th>Component Area</th>
<th>Parking basis</th>
<th>Parking required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>10,000 square feet</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>40 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-retail businesses</td>
<td>30,000 square feet</td>
<td>1 space/250 sq. ft.</td>
<td>120 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Use</td>
<td>Not present</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>9 units</td>
<td>1.5 spaces/unit</td>
<td>14 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>41 spaces&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total parking required</td>
<td>215 spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total parking provided</td>
<td>157 spaces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>3</sup> Includes spaces assumed to be private parking associated with 309 East Grand River Avenue and 315 East Grand River Avenue.

<sup>4</sup> Includes spaces from the removal of the parking area at Sibley Street and McCarthy Street.
Features

While this study encourages solutions intended for Downtown Howell instead of a simple replication of solutions from other downtowns, there are plenty of ideas that might spur greater thinking for Downtown Howell. Several ideas are included here, more as a springboard for exploration than as a mandate for inclusion. They range from special street furniture and lighting ideas to play ideas and forms of public spaces. They key is to consider how these precedents from other downtowns might be made better as the stakeholders attempt to incorporate them to Downtown Howell.

Streetscape Furniture and Lighting

Most furniture and lighting in Downtown Howell will be selected and placed in ways that resonate with the area’s historic character, but all seating and lighting need not be so strictly tied to a historic aesthetic. Especially in the deeper parts of the downtown’s quadrants, the chance exists to create something unique and a special attraction for a block or a portion of the streetscape or a blank wall. Often, these features become important as landmarks—not from the perspective of history but for navigation and the social life of a downtown—they’re meeting places, recognized for their capacity to create engagement and interest. Sometimes they’re temporary, but in a place where people look for something new to show up on a regular basis. A key, though, is that these features are introduced sparingly so that they have the chance to be special—maybe one per block or block face is sufficient to allow for discovery and encourage exploration but keeping them from becoming a signature for the entire downtown area.
Downtown Evolutions

Streetscape Furniture and Lighting
Streetscape Furniture and Lighting

Play in Downtown

A real opportunity exists for expanding beyond the civic spaces in Downtown Howell at the library and the courthouse, especially where those spaces afford some unique play activity. There’s no particular play that would be encouraged, except that play that affords an opportunity for children and adults to be more engaged seem like a natural for a downtown. In this case, it’s not sports fields or traditional playgrounds, but maybe more adventuresome play as found in a climbing or bouldering experience or an artful and playful water feature. Examples shared in this report are simply beginning points for further exploration for Downtown Howell; where it seems a place for some examples would not exist, think about new introductions and how they might be incorporated as part of those new structures.
Play in Downtown

Like the character of each of Downtown Howell’s quadrants, the nature of public spaces should vary. It’s part of the dynamic nature of downtown, where exploration reveals new opportunities and experiences. The scale of parks in downtown should be based on intimacy, where people are brought into spaces intended for interaction or refuge. There are plenty of places where interactions based on commerce are the focus, as well as places where gathering happens in larger groups. But there are few places where someone might just hang out for a while. Adding places to accommodate these kinds of activities is important in extending a person’s experience in Downtown Howell, and in thinking how they fit, it’s not so important to create a new place as imagining how these activities might be made to fit a space that is not so well used in the current experience of downtown, with small pockets or narrow stretches being transformed from places of neglect to places of value.

Gardens and Parks

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Market Hall

An idea suggested by the community as a meaningful introduction to Downtown Howell—and one aligning with results of this planning initiative’s market study—was a market hall, a facility that has gained traction in many cities in the United States. Simply, it’s something of a hybrid between an indoor farmers market and incubator space for new entities often focusing on food. Typically, these spaces are shells with vendors creating their spaces within a defined geography in the building, with coordinated hours and marketing. Successful enterprises might eventually move to other brick and mortar locations in downtown, which is the incubator side of the market hall. Management is important, with key tasks ranging from start-up assistance, coordination of business activities, hours, and marketing, and even ensuring the best organization and distribution of entities within the hall. Many examples exist; these photographs included in this report begin to show the character, intensity of activity, and variety of offerings from a few market halls.
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Incremental Change

No one can snap their fingers to make change in Downtown Howell—or anywhere. Change that happens will be incremental, taking years to accomplish. But Downtown Howell has time to evolve, and incremental changes allows for the new introductions to be absorbed by the community and the market, and if mistakes are made, they are incrementally small. In Downtown Howell, the pattern of quadrants and their inherent potential for evolution allows for a change that is already quite incremental. It seems, at least initially, that a focus on the northwest or southeast quadrant is logical.

Even though an incremental approach is advocated in this study, it’s important to stick with it. Redevelopment is difficult and there are good chances that the first proposal and even the second will not proceed—for any number of reasons. Experience suggests that a developer will “go to school” on those first explorations and come back with something that really works. Whatever the pace, it won’t likely come quickly, and it might stall. But instead of accepting anything because it seems like nothing is happening, it’s important to stay the course, studying when a new tack is needed and only making adjustments when its logical and absolutely necessary.

Alignment with the Market

This report relies heavily on community interest for direction related to new introductions to Downtown Howell. Some suggestions, such as the creation of parking reservoirs, cross-quadrant corridors, and play and gathering spaces are based on community need or the desire for a continued vital downtown. Experience from other downtowns suggests that increased housing opportunities and some smaller increment of non-retail business spaces is logical and could be supported by the market. Some suggestions are more hypothetical and will rely on the right combination of circumstances for realization, like a hotel, a banquet center, or a market hall.

The greater point is that there seems to be a market for expansion of downtown in several areas. A developer will certainly advocate for their own perspectives on the market rather than relying on this report—and that’s fair. At that point, it’s up to the community to push at the edges—a little more housing, a bit more non-retail business space, or a partnership to make some of the more interesting and chancier suggestions become real. It’s part of the necessary dialog that has been proposed as a core part of Downtown Howell’s evolution.
Downtown Evolutions

Barnes Dance

Henry Barnes, a traffic engineer with a career that spanned decades when cars were clearly favored for moving about (including a stint in Flint, Michigan early on), advocated for a pedestrian crossing solution that might be considered for the intersection of Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue. He noted in reference to the ways in which a downtown visitor moved across a busy street (not Grand River Avenue or Michigan Avenue) that:

“As things stood now, a downtown shopper needed a four-leaf clover, a voodoo charm, and a St. Christopher’s medal to make it in one piece from one curbstone to the other.”

At the same time, he was ready with a solution:

“In this business there are very few problems that can’t be solved with some yellow paint and a little bit of common sense.”

He was known for advocating a solution at busy intersections that gave pedestrians their own signal phase, where the only thing in the entire intersection would be pedestrians. All signals for cars would be red—a concurrent stop condition, allowing pedestrians to move in any direction through the intersection, including diagonally. This solution is sometimes termed a “Barnes Dance,” named so because journalist Henry Buchanan noted that “Barnes has made people so happy, they’re dancing in the street.”
Alignment with Ordinances

It was noted during the exercise that current ordinances prevent the construction of any building in downtown taller than three stories. This presents a significant hurdle for redevelopment in Downtown Howell from a financial perspective; if a developer is required to clear land for a new introduction, the feasibility of the project is already at a disadvantage when compared to an opportunity to create something on unburdened land. When parking is factored into the equation, it becomes even more unlikely that the finance equation would favor the developer. And it’s important to recognize that an entity willing to make an investment in a downtown is best served by a development that can be viable—no one wants a developer to fail, leaving a partially finished project to mar the experience of downtown.

The likely solution, and one employed by downtowns across the country, is to recognize the need to go higher with new development. While heights may be limited along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue in order to remain more compatible with existing buildings, deeper into the quadrants greater height is needed and logical. It makes the investment return more attractive, but it might also encourage development that will screen a downtown parking structure or introduce a range of uses into a single structure that is more aligned with desired downtown activity.

Unlimited height is not the goal. Even with greater height, the experience of the pedestrian is key. The higher portions of a new introduction might best be stepped back from the front façade, creating terraces at upper levels that can be occupied with exterior activities of the new development. While study is needed to understand how much height is desired, it might be that five stories becomes a logical limit, with the first story being 20 feet tall to allow it to “hide” a two-level parking structure. With four ten-foot “floors,” the total height becomes 60 feet.
Even in a rather condensed timeframe study such as this, many opportunities can be highlighted. Some of what is shown might resonate with the community, some parts may not. But the question isn’t about what fits or doesn’t... most often, its “Where do we start?” The answer is two-fold:

**Start...**

too often, nothing is done to initiate the work of understanding a downtown’s evolution and the control a community might exercise is lost to those willing to initiate the change. And the community is left to catch up. It’s simple enough to start the process of imaging an evolution of Downtown Howell... in fact, this report is a part of that.

**Dialog...**

the real first step is a conversation, often an extended one, that makes certain that local interests and ideas are reflected in a plan for change. This doesn’t mean that only those ideas become a part of downtown as there will have to be space made for the significant investment that others will make—and in doing so, they become a part of the Downtown Howell community. In that process, expect that a developer proposing change in downtown will make a profit—they should and the community should want a project that is viable enough that someone profits.

There are other, perhaps mundane, things that might be initiated. They may not be immediately important, but the effort directed to these activities will advance project ideas more quickly once they surface.

**Ordinance update**

Downtown Howell is limited in its capacity for evolution by the city’s zoning ordinance. A review of those portions of the ordinance influencing new development might be initiated, both highlighting those features of the ordinance that might seem incongruous to new development potential and framing options for changing the ordinance. A particular focus might be directed to building height, especially for areas that are not immediately along Grand River Avenue and Michigan Avenue, and parking requirements, especially if the city is oriented to the creation of public parking in structures.

**Finance capacity**

It’s a certainty that a developer will look to the city for assistance. But it might also be necessary for the city to fully understand its capacity for creating infrastructure to support downtown, as it is only a handful of acres when compared to the whole of Howell. There is reason to invest city resources in downtown, and those should be highlighted in the exploration of financing: the city has invested in streets, infrastructure, enhancements, and other features of Downtown Howell. There is likely significant tax base here, especially when considered on a square foot comparison with other parts of the Howell community. And, importantly, downtown is a source of pride and identity for all of Howell.

**Partnerships**

There will, inevitably, be some request by a development entity for assistance related to a development project. The city should create a policy that is well-understood by the community so that the ground is solid in even early discussions with developers. Gaining an understanding of the potential for a subsidy or a public-private partnership will be useful early on, especially where the community can articulate what it intends to achieve from the partnership.

**Parcel assembly**

Where developers might have the capacity to aggregate parcels under a single ownership, the ability of a community to orchestrate development that resonates with local visions is often shaped by who owns the land. By actively working to assemble a development parcel, the city places itself in the position of being a partner in a downtown development project from its beginning, even if there is a conveyance of the aggregated parcel, in whole or in part, as part of the development project.