



**Request for Qualifications and Proposals (RFQP)
Community-Based Neighborhood Planning**

**Lansing Equitable Economic Development (LEED)
Initiative
Targeted Redevelopment Program**

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PURPOSE

The Lansing Economic Development Corporation (Lansing EDC) is seeking proposals from qualified firms or multidisciplinary teams to lead community-based planning and neighborhood activation efforts for two Mayor-Designated Neighborhoods of Focus under its Lansing Equitable Economic Development (LEED) Initiative – Targeted Redevelopment Program.

The purpose of this RFQP is to identify a team capable of working in historically disinvested and underrepresented areas of the city of Lansing, Michigan to support community-driven planning, identify redevelopment opportunities, and position targeted neighborhoods for future public and private investment.

This effort is intended to do more than produce plans. The selected firm will be expected to build trust with residents and stakeholders, support neighborhood activation, and develop practical, investment-ready strategies that align community priorities with market realities.

The resulting work will inform Lansing EDC's redevelopment strategy, guide future funding decisions, and support implementation efforts by the City of Lansing, Lansing EDC, and partner organizations.

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SCOPE OF WORK

The firm will work closely with Lansing EDC, City of Lansing departments, and community stakeholders to complete the following tasks for separate processes and plans for each Project Area. Respondents may propose refinements to the scope that strengthens outcomes, provided core objectives are met.

Task 1: Project Initiation and Coordination

- Participate in a project kickoff meeting with Lansing EDC and key partners
- Develop a detailed workplan, schedule, and communication protocol
- Coordinate with City departments, neighborhood organizations, and other stakeholders as needed

Deliverables

- Final project workplan and timeline
- Stakeholder coordination and communication plan

Task 2: Community Engagement and Neighborhood Activation

The firm will design and lead an engagement process that is inclusive, accessible, and appropriate for the project area. Engagement should prioritize relationship-building and meaningful participation over one-time meetings.

Activities may include:

- Community meetings, workshops, and small-group discussions
- Targeted outreach to residents, businesses, property owners, and community organizations
- Engagement strategies for renters, youth, and historically underrepresented populations
- Creative or on-the-ground engagement methods (e.g., pop-ups, walking tours, temporary activations), as appropriate

Deliverables

- Summary of engagement activities and participation
- Documentation of community priorities, concerns, and aspirations
- Summary of neighborhood activation concepts or pilot efforts (if applicable)

Task 3: Existing Conditions and Opportunity Analysis

The firm will conduct a focused analysis to inform the redevelopment strategy, which may include:

- Land use, zoning, and ownership patterns
- Market conditions and redevelopment feasibility
- Demographic and economic trends
- Infrastructure, transportation, and public realm conditions
- Review of relevant plans, policies, and prior studies

Deliverables

- Documentation of baseline conditions that establish each Project Area as a Neighborhood of Focus, along with benchmarks and measurable indicators for tracking change since original designation and over time
- Identification of key challenges and redevelopment opportunities
- Maps and graphics suitable for public and stakeholder use

Task 4: Visioning and Redevelopment Framework

Building on community input and analysis, the firm will develop a clear and actionable redevelopment framework that reflects neighborhood priorities and supports equitable growth.

This framework may include:

- Guiding principles for redevelopment
- Priority sites, corridors, or focus areas
- Land use and development concepts
- Public realm, placemaking, and connectivity strategies
- Considerations for small businesses, housing, and workforce needs

Deliverables

- Community-supported vision and guiding principles
- Redevelopment framework and concept illustrations
- List of priority redevelopment opportunities

Task 5: Implementation and Investment Strategy

The firm will translate planning concepts into actionable next steps by identifying:

- Catalytic redevelopment projects
- Phasing and sequencing strategies
- Potential funding and financing tools
- Roles and responsibilities for Lansing EDC, the City, and partner organizations
- Short-term actions and longer-term implementation strategies

Deliverables

- Implementation action plan and matrix
- Investment readiness and funding strategy
- Recommended metrics for tracking progress and outcomes

Task 6: Final Deliverables and Presentations

- Draft and final Targeted Redevelopment Plan
- Public-facing summary document
- Presentations to Lansing EDC leadership and community stakeholders

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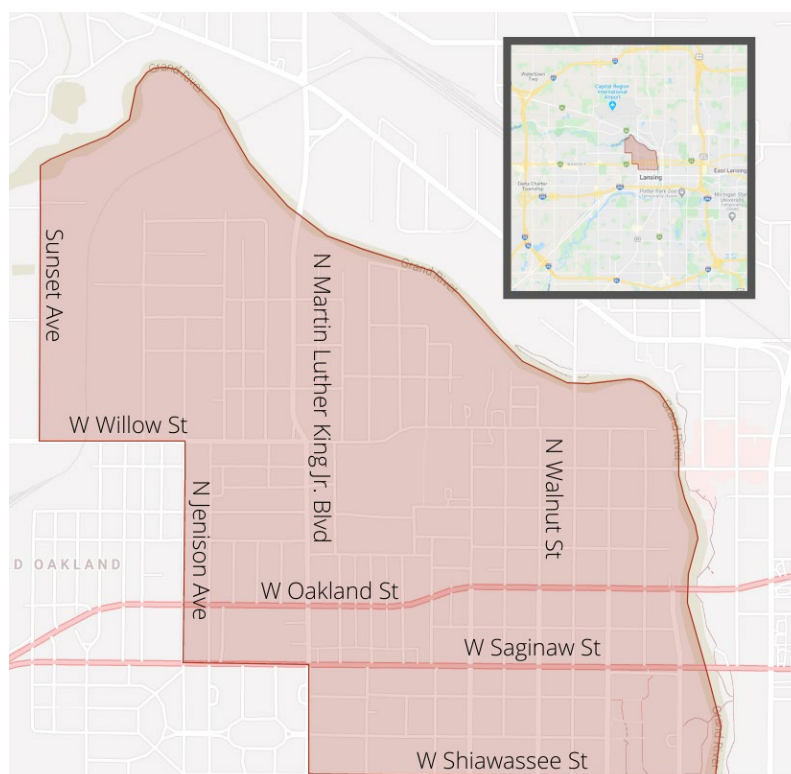
PROJECT AREAS

The Lansing EDC has identified two priority geographies for this Targeted Redevelopment Program: Willow–Walnut and Baker–Donora Neighborhoods. These project areas are Mayor-Designated Neighborhoods of Focus and were selected due to their strategic location within the City of Lansing, their history of disinvestment, and their strong potential for equitable, community-driven redevelopment.

Reference maps for each project area are below. The maps are intended to provide general geographic context and are not intended to prescribe final study boundaries, priority sites, or redevelopment outcomes.

Willow–Walnut Project Area

The Willow–Walnut project area is located north of downtown Lansing and west of the Capitol Complex and includes portions of surrounding residential and commercial areas. The area contains a mix of residential uses, neighborhood-scale commercial corridors, institutional uses, and vacant or underutilized properties. Its proximity to downtown and existing infrastructure makes it a strategic area for focused planning and reinvestment.



Baker-Donora Project Area

The Baker–Donora project area is located in south Lansing and consists primarily of residential areas with scattered commercial, institutional, and industrial uses. The neighborhood has experienced long-term disinvestment and contains aging housing stock and underutilized properties, alongside established community assets and infrastructure.

Baker Donora Neighborhood In Lansing

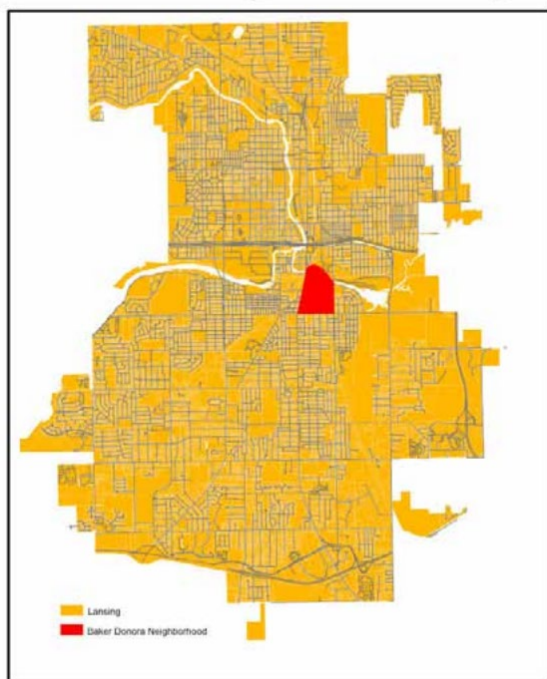
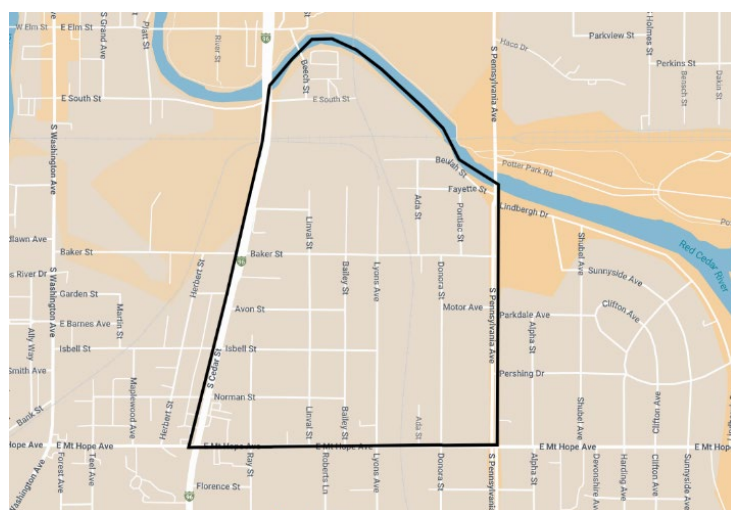


Figure 1.2 Baker Donora Neighborhood in Lansing



QUALIFICATIONS

Respondents must demonstrate the capacity to successfully deliver this work in disinvested or transitioning neighborhoods. Proposals should clearly describe relevant experience and qualifications, including:

- Demonstrated experience leading community-based planning or redevelopment efforts
- Experience working in historically disinvested or underserved neighborhoods
- Expertise in economic development, real estate, land use planning, or related fields
- Strong community engagement and facilitation capabilities
- Experience working with public-sector clients, economic development organizations, or municipalities
- Ability to translate community priorities into feasible, implementable strategies
- Multidisciplinary teams are encouraged. Familiarity with Lansing or similar mid-sized cities is preferred but not required.

PROJECT TIMELINE

This RFQP will be governed by the following schedule:

- Open: February 9, 2026
- Close: March 27, 2026
- Close for RFQP inquiries: March 15, 2026
- Review and selection: March 30, 2026 – April 13, 2026
- Period of project performance: May 1, 2026 – October 31, 2026

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EVALUATION CRITERIA & PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Understanding of project goals and context
- Strength of proposed approach and methodology
- Experience with similar projects
- Quality and inclusivity of engagement strategies
- Team qualifications
- Cost effectiveness and value

Proposals should include:

1. Cover Letter
2. Firm/Team Overview
3. Relevant Experience & Case Studies
4. Proposed Approach & Workplan
5. Community Engagement Philosophy
6. Project Team & Roles
7. Timeline
8. Budget & Fee Proposal
9. Three (3) References

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SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Your responses to the Evaluation Criteria listed above are the basis of your response to this RFQP. Responses should follow the sequence indicated. If you cannot respond to any item, please indicate the reason.
- Only complete responses to this RFQP will be considered.
- One hardcopy copy of the response must be submitted (the copy shall be unbound, and paper clipped, suitable for copying with an automatic feed) along with a digital copy emailed to aurelius@lansingedc.com or provided via USB flash drive.
- Each proposal submitted shall include a cover letter and must be signed by an authorized representative of the company or organization.
- All Proposals must be delivered in a sealed envelope to:
 - Lansing Economic Development Corporation
Attn: RFQP for LEED Initiative: Targeted Redevelopment Program
401 S. Washington Sq. Ste. 101
Lansing, MI 48933
- Proposals may be mailed or delivered to the address above. If delivering in-person, please schedule a time for drop-off with Aurelius Christian at aurelius@lansingedc.com or (517) 331-2773.
- Each envelope must be clearly marked and numbered if more than one envelope: RFQP for LEED Initiative Targeted Redevelopment Program.
- Questions pertaining to this RFQP should be directed to Aurelius Christian at aurelius@lansingedc.com or (517) 331-2773.
- All Proposals must be received by March 27, 2026, at 5:00 PM (ET). Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

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PROPOSAL EVALUATION

- A selection committee composed of City of Lansing and Lansing EDC representatives and staff will be assembled to review and evaluate proposals submitted by respondents.
- The purpose of this RFQP is to identify and select one or more firms that the Lansing EDC will negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement to provide the services specified in this RFQP. The Lansing EDC reserves the right to amend or modify the RFQP at any time during the procurement process, prior to the date and time which responses are due. All amendments and modifications will be posted on the Lansing EDC website (www.lansingedc.com) in the form of an Addendum. It is the responsibility of the bidder to check the website.
- The Lansing EDC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to reject any or all proposals or parts of any and all proposals; re-advertise this RFQP; postpone or cancel, at any time, this RFQP process; or waive any irregularities in this RFQP or in the proposals received as a result of this RFQP. The Lansing EDC reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to determine the appropriate next steps. The Lansing EDC may also issue a new RFI with project modifications based on information learned from the initial round or other changing circumstances or may terminate or suspend the solicitation process at any time. The Lansing EDC reserves the right to reject all submissions, or to cancel this procurement at any time.

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Baker Donora Neighborhood Revitalization

A Neighborhood Under Construction



Group Members:

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Executive Summary

In 2004, the City of Lansing developed the Baker Donora Neighborhood Preservation Program to address concerning issues in the neighborhood, including housing condition, crime rates, home ownership, and neighborhood aesthetics. The program was separated into two phases: Phase I and Phase II. Phase I was completed in 2008 and Phase II plans are currently in progress. The purpose of this study was to analyze the success of Phase I and provide recommendations for Phase II implementation of the Neighborhood Preservation Program.

The methodology of this project involved analyzing the current conditions of the Baker Donora Neighborhood to see how it had changed since the implementation of the NPP. Then a windshield survey was conducted of the goals of Phase I that had been reached. Utilizing the current conditions and the accomplishments of Phase I, recommendations for the implementation of Phase II were developed.

During Phase I, many improvements have been made in the Baker Donora Neighborhood. 47 homes have been improved and rehabilitated during the 4 years of Phase I, as well as an improvement to overall neighborhood aesthetics through the help of various programs. Also, many educational services are being provided by the Focus Center. However, some goals of Phase I were not completed, including the installation of an entrance sign and a buffer near the railroad tracks.

With this in mind; we decided that many of the goals and tasks should be similar in Phase II as the goals in Phase I to ensure that all goals are completed. We also developed short and long term goals. Some of these short-term goals that require little assistance from outside agencies include landscaping and bench installation. Long term goals were also included that rely on the City of Lansing for implementation, including developing a Police and Teacher Next Door Program to promote home ownership in the neighborhood.

Overall, it is intended that this document be useable for the residents to take action in the future of *their* Baker Donora neighborhood and become empowered to raise their voice to actualize neighborhood improvements. By taking small steps and making small changes, the residents can feel that they are able to reach these goals and continue to make further improvements to the area. This document is also intended to give the residents hope that they can improve their neighborhood and preserve its sense of community. By maintaining hope, vision, and hard work, the community will continue to see improvements everyday and as each year goes by.

"Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending." - Maria Robins

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the progress made in the City of Lansing's Neighborhood Preservation Program in the Baker Donora neighborhood. Phase I began in January 2005 and ended in December 2007. This study analyzes Phase I progress in order to provide adequate, helpful recommendations for Phase II implementation.

Planning Practicum

Michigan State University's Urban and Regional Planning Program is a nationally accredited planning program. Courses provide insight to planning theory and principles with hands-on projects interlaced throughout the program. The Planning Practicum course is designed to apply the students' knowledge of planning principles to real life situations with projects that impact various cities. The Course is taken in the final semester of the program and allows students to provide resources to various jurisdictions in the format of project management, implementation, and presentation.

Before the semester begins, various jurisdictions approach the MSU's Planning Department in search of student insight to various project developments. Students then are placed in groups of six to eight graduate and undergraduate students who utilize technical, theoretical, and analytical resources to provide a complete professional product for the client. Research is conducted, maps and graphics are generated, and a final draft product is presented to the client and various MSU professors and faculty in a presentation format at the end of the final semester. The client and the professors provide feedback throughout the semester to ensure a quality product that becomes useful to the client.

The major benefit to the Practicum class is that students obtain invaluable experience working with a client, a jurisdiction, and other students and professionals in a very real setting. Both the client and the students benefit from the Planning Practicum course.

About the Client

Our Planning Practicum Client is the City of Lansing Planning and Development Department. The contact person is Dorothy Boone, Director of Housing for the City of Lansing. The City of Lansing is the capital of Michigan. Lansing is situated in the south central portion of the state. The City resides in the northern section of Ingham County and is home to roughly 119,000 residents. Historically, Lansing was the site of many manufacturing entities, especially the automotive industry. During this time, many of the services were catered to manufacturing employees. In fact, certain neighborhoods were specifically designed for middle to low income factory employees adjacent to manufacturing plants. For this reason, the neighborhoods surrounding Lansing provide a unique element when considering the housing and the overall community conditions.

Toward the last quarter of the twentieth century, the automotive industry began to rapidly decline, causing other businesses and manufacturers to decline as well. As more and more employers left the city, unemployment began to rise and neighborhoods began to decline. Disinvestment occurred throughout the entire city as middle-income residents left for the suburbs and low-income residents with minimal job opportunities remained in the city. Decline escalated, leaving the surrounding neighborhoods in despair. While in recent years downtown development has increased and created a more thriving climate, some neighborhoods are still struggling to survive in the age of trendy lofts and suburban ranches. The Baker Donora Neighborhood is one of these neighborhoods.

Eager to combat the issues of neighborhood decline, the City of Lansing developed various neighborhood revitalization programs to help renew and restore declining neighborhoods. The Baker Donora Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was created in 2004 in hopes to provide a jump-start towards renewal. After 3 years of program implementation, our client was interested in analyzing the programs success and gathering recommendations for the continued implementation of the program. Our team was chosen to complete the task.

Baker Donora Neighborhood In Michigan

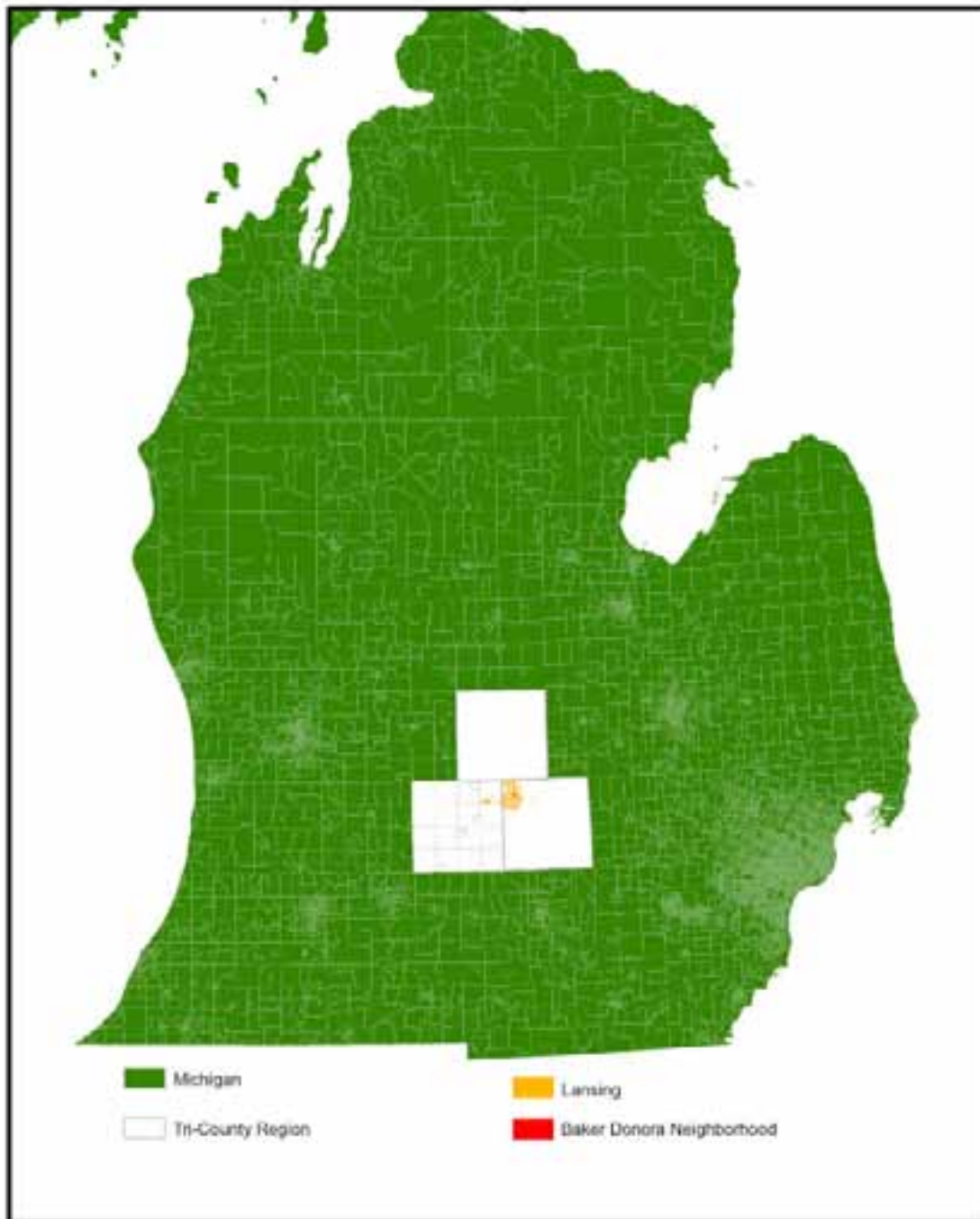


Figure 1.1 Baker Donora Neighborhood in Michigan

Baker Donora Overview

The Baker Donora Neighborhood is located in Lansing, Michigan east of Cedar Street, west of Pennsylvania Avenue, north of Mt. Hope Avenue, and south of the Red Cedar River. Most of the neighborhood was designed and constructed in the early 1900's for low to middle income employees who worked at the manufacturing plant directly to the northeast of the neighborhood. The houses are all relatively affordable with two or three rooms located on small lot sizes. The neighborhood was the home to a school, a park, and numerous housing units all in convenient location to the manufacturing plant, which is now referred to as the John Bean building. The school has since been relocated to a more city central location and the Caesar Donora Park is still in use. The neighborhood is bisected with a functioning railroad that is not buffered from the residential units.

As more and more manufacturers left the City of Lansing, particularly the manufacturer located in the John Bean Building, the neighborhood slowly began to decline. Due to the small size of the housing units and the parcels, the area soon became a low-income neighborhood where people could afford to rent or own homes. However, many people could not afford basic maintenance to their homes and the overall quality of the community declined in terms of housing condition, crime, health, and investments. The reputation of the neighborhood took a tumble as crime rates increased and is currently known as one of Lansing's most notorious neighborhoods, according to our Client. The demographics of the neighborhood compared with the City of Lansing show the differences in factors such as owner occupancy, families below the poverty line, educational attainment, and crime rates.

Baker Donora Neighborhood In Lansing

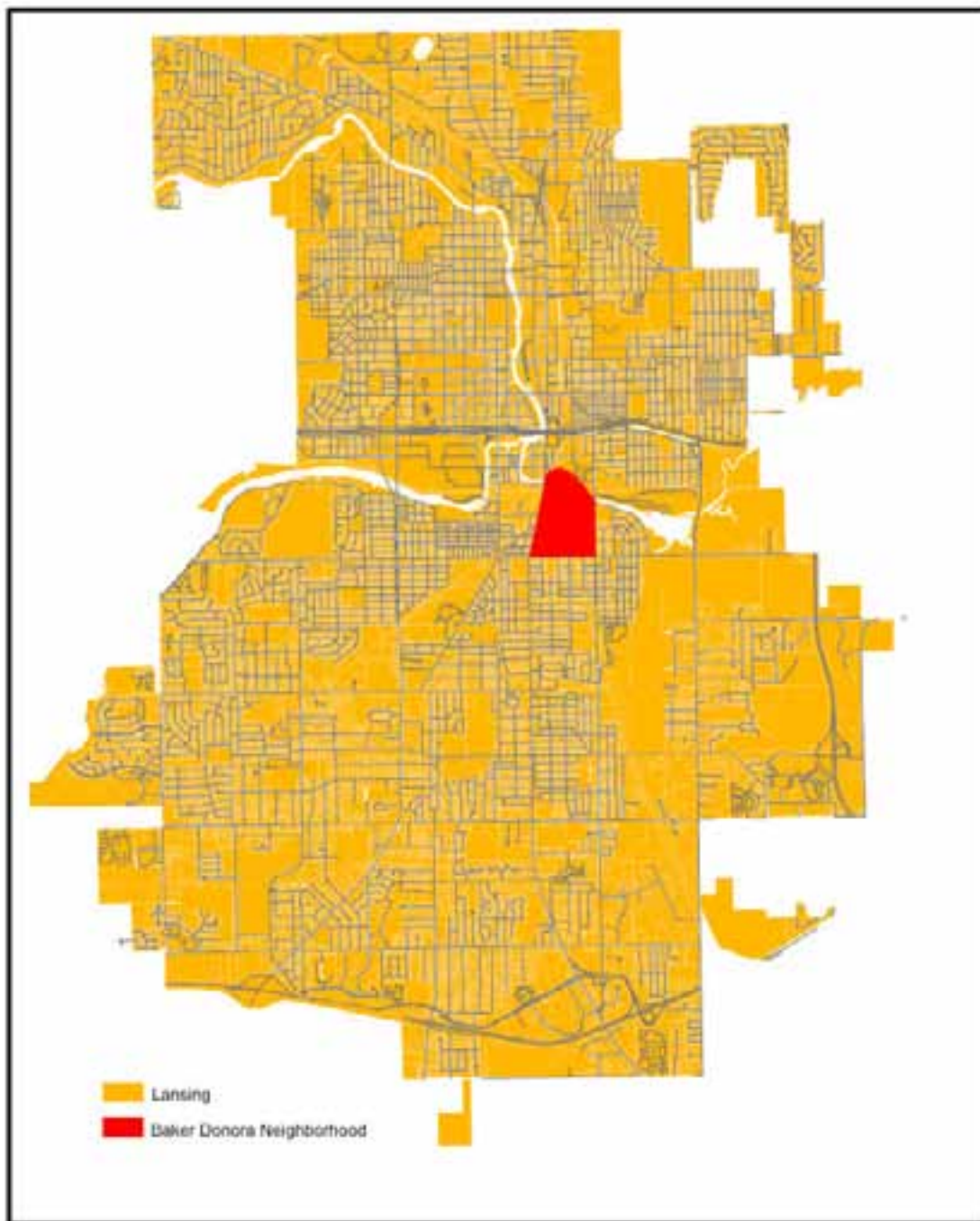


Figure 1.2 Baker Donora Neighborhood in Lansing

Baker Donora Neighborhood Preservation Program Background

Since his administration began, the mayor of Lansing, Virg Bernero, the City of Lansing, and other stakeholders have tried to improve Lansing by targeting certain neighborhoods for revitalization. Hence, the Neighborhood Preservation Plan (NPP) was created to accomplish this task. Phase I of the plan officially began in January of 2005 and ran through December of 2007. The targeted neighborhood is the Baker Donora area located on the southeast side of Lansing. The program is funded by many different sources. Community Block Development Grants from the City of Lansing were planned to provide \$600,000 towards Phase I of the NPP, The Public Service Department planned to contribute \$175,000, and MSU Extension allotted a total of \$168,000. The total amount provided in Phase I was \$943,000. Other partners involved in the implementation of Phase I included:

- The Greater Lansing Housing Coalition (GLHC), who renovated homes to be used for affordable housing
- The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), who provided grants funds for qualifying program activities
- The Baker Donora Focus Center, who provided services to the residents
- The Lansing Community Government Response Team (CGRT)
- Parks and Recreation Department,
- The Lansing Police Department
- The Lansing Code Compliance Department.

Each of these partners provided valuable resources, knowledge, and energy towards the implementation of Phase I of the NPP.

Along with the plan, a Memorandum of Understanding was written especially for Baker Donora. This memorandum clearly spelled out the objectives, goals, and the resources needed along with the time that it would take to accomplish those goals. Phase II is set to begin sometime this year, but in order for it to begin we need to determine whether the goals and objectives for Phase I had been either: Completed, Some Progress has been made or No Progress has been made. There must to be a clear course of action set in motion before Phase II can officially begin.

In the Baker Donora NPP Memorandum of Understanding, eight goals were cited. Taken directly from the text of the Memorandum of Understanding, the goals are as follows:

1. Improve the appearance and safety of housing and public spaces.
 2. Increase effective homeownership and owner occupied homes.
 3. Improve economic vitality and financial strength of households and businesses in the Target Area.
 4. Improve the attractiveness of the neighborhood for the benefit of the residents, potential residents, businesses and visitors.
 5. Increase the capacity of the Baker Donora Focus Center and improve the community center facilities.
 6. Model and effective process for citizens to work together to accomplish their goals for neighborhood improvement.
 7. Establish a framework for active citizen participation and civic responsibility in the Target Area that will continue functioning.
 8. Build a hopeful, supportive, pleasant, and healthy physical and social environment for a diverse population.
- (Baker Donora NPP-Memorandum of Understanding)

Several objectives were also cited in the Memorandum of Understanding and were separated into several different categories. Taken directly from the text of the Memorandum of Understanding, the following is a list of the objectives listed to help reach the previously mentioned goals:

Safety

1. Enhance the relationship between the community and code compliance and law enforcement agencies.
2. Encourage traffic safety.
3. Reduce crime.
4. Reduce code violations.

Community

1. Improve neighborhood appearance and image.
2. Improve neighborhood behaviors.

Housing

1. Improve the condition of neighborhood housing.
2. Increase owner occupancy ratio of housing and encourage home improvements.
3. Enhance the sense of community.
4. Remediate lead paint hazards.
5. Improve the safety and appearance of front porch and steps.

Community Center Space

1. Establish a Neighborhood Tool shed, including tools.
2. Install signage and additional landscaping for Community Center.
3. Acquire sports equipment for new “gym” area of the community center.
4. Acquire tables, chairs, and equipment for meeting rooms in the Community Center.

Beautification

1. Install “Neighborhood Under Construction” signs.
2. Install fence or visual screening between the Caesar Donora Park and the adjacent railroad tracks.
3. Acquire funds and volunteers for front yard improvement for volunteer service, home improvements, and prizes for a holiday decorating contest.
1. Schedule, organize, and conduct community clean-up activities, such as one or more Extreme Street Makeover projects.

Marketing and Education

1. Develop marketing tools and a web site.
2. Provide a computer, printer, digital camera, computer consultant, and web site service for use exclusively by the neighborhood.
3. Offer educational courses in homeownership, credit repair, landscaping, home repair, lead paint awareness, resume writing, health, nutrition, food preparation, healthy life styles, substance abuse prevention, and family building.
4. Provide new community and recreational space.
5. Host at least four media events such as open houses, tours, and ground breakings, to promote new image for the neighborhood.
6. Recruit and train volunteers for community service projects.
7. Schedule neighborhood “round-table” events to create neighborhood leadership, promote additional resident involvement.
8. Provide at least four neighborhood leadership training sessions.

In order to see whether these goals have been met, we examined the current condition of the neighborhood in comparison to the condition of the neighborhood at the culmination of the Neighborhood Preservation Program. The following section highlights the current situation of Baker Donora in terms of housing, crime and safety, aesthetics and community image, floodplain, and community services.

Current Situation

In order to provide recommendations for Phase II of the Baker Donora NPP, it is important to denote any changes and progress that have been made in the neighborhood since Phase I implementation. To do that, we have examined several different elements and factors of the neighborhood for the years 2004 and 2008 where available. These elements include the housing age and year built, housing value, building activity during the 4 years of the NPP, tagged homes, and overall condition of the homes. Some of these figures are examined against the condition of Lansing as whole to determine Baker Donora's position within the city. Also, we examined the crime rates and social demographics of the area, including education and poverty. These too were compared to figures of the City of Lansing.

Next, we examined the image and aesthetics of the area. This area is difficult to determine in the form of specific numbers without knowing any rating criteria that was utilized in 2004. To get an overall judgment of image and aesthetics, we looked at the current programs and the assistance and improvements they added to the NPP. For example, The Extreme Street Makeover Projects helped to improve the aesthetics of three blocks in the neighborhood. Data such as this is what was utilized to analyze the overall aesthetics of the area. We also examined the land use of the area to determine if the overall use of the land was providing a hampering effect to the improvement of the area and to see where compatibility issues were arising to aid in our recommendations for Phase II. Finally, we examined the floodplain issue that is prevalent through a portion of the neighborhood. Because housing and development in floodplains are severely limited due to the high risk and to the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA), it is important to see what programs are currently available and being utilized to ensure the proper developments of Phase II of the NPP.

The following section begins with an overview of Baker Donora demographics, followed by the land use analysis, housing, social conditions, and image and aesthetics. Charts, maps, and images will accompany the explanations and analysis to further aid in the explanation.

Demographics of Baker Donora

According to 2000 Census data, the population of Lansing is 118,920 while the population for Baker Donora's Census tract is 3,819. The demographic makeups of Baker Donora and Lansing are very similar. For example, the racial makeup of Lansing is 65.3 percent White, 21.6 percent Black, and 13.1 percent other, while Baker Donora's makeup is 67.5 percent White, 16.8 percent Black, and 15.7 percent other. Additionally, the percentage of female-headed households is very similar- Lansing's rate is 8.8 percent while Baker Donora's is 8.9 percent. However, when it comes to issues of poverty, Baker Donora has a higher rate than the City of Lansing. 24.6 percent of households in Baker Donora fall below the poverty line while only 16.8 percent of Lansing households do. Furthermore, the median household income of Baker Donora residents is \$26,171 while Lansing's is \$34,833. Another factor that puts Baker Donora at a disadvantage to the rest of Lansing is the age of its buildings. In Lansing, the average year structures were built is 1958 while in Baker Donora that year is much earlier- 1940. While the City of Lansing and the Baker Donora neighborhood have many similarities, it is easy to see how Baker Donora needs to have a plan of its own in order to work toward solving the problems that only exist in the neighborhood.

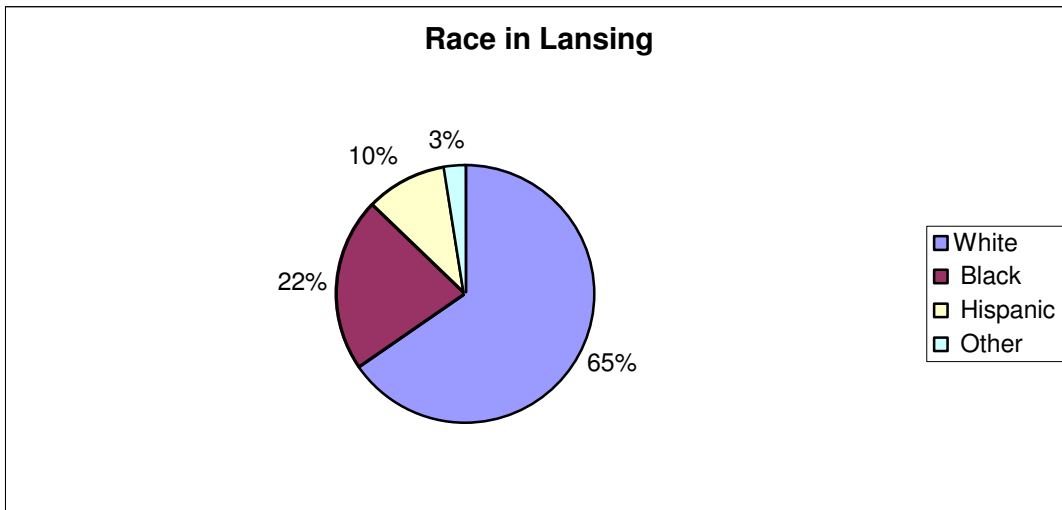
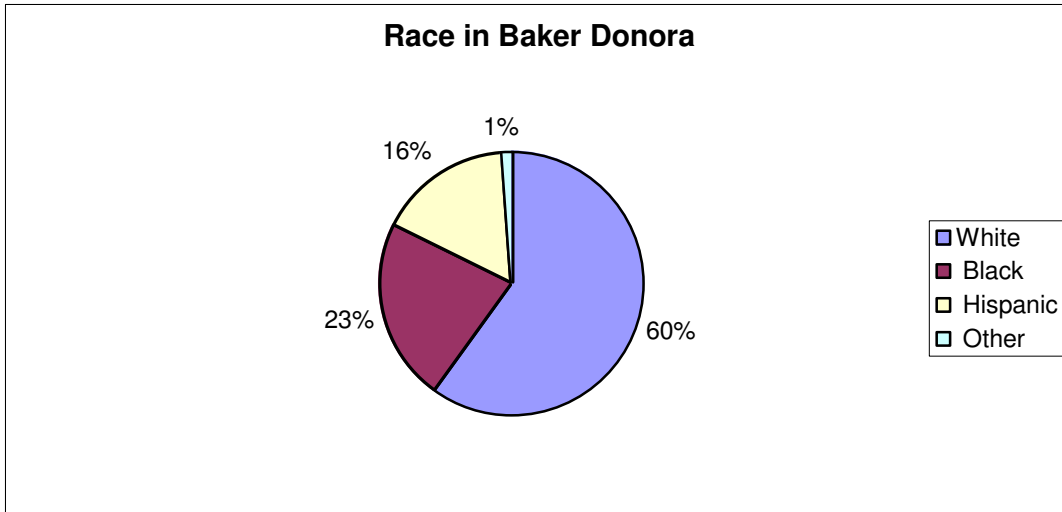


Figure 2.1 Racial Makeup of Baker Donora and Lansing

Percentage of Households Below Poverty Line

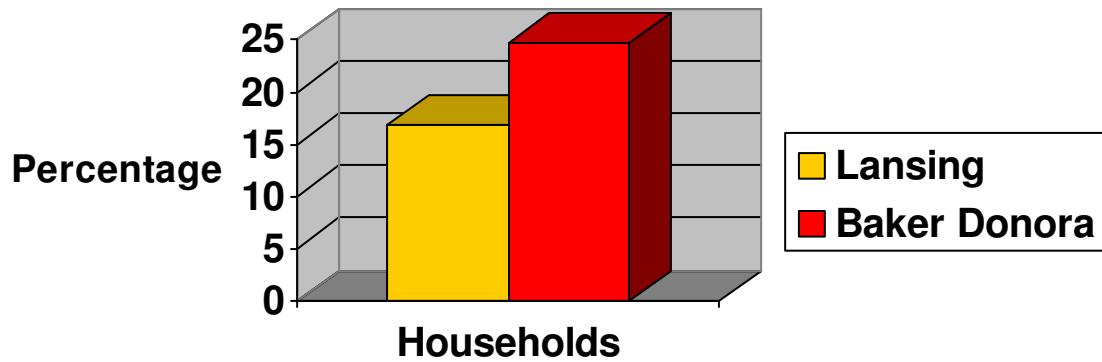


Figure 2.2 Percentage of Households Below Poverty Line

Baker Donora Household Income in 2000

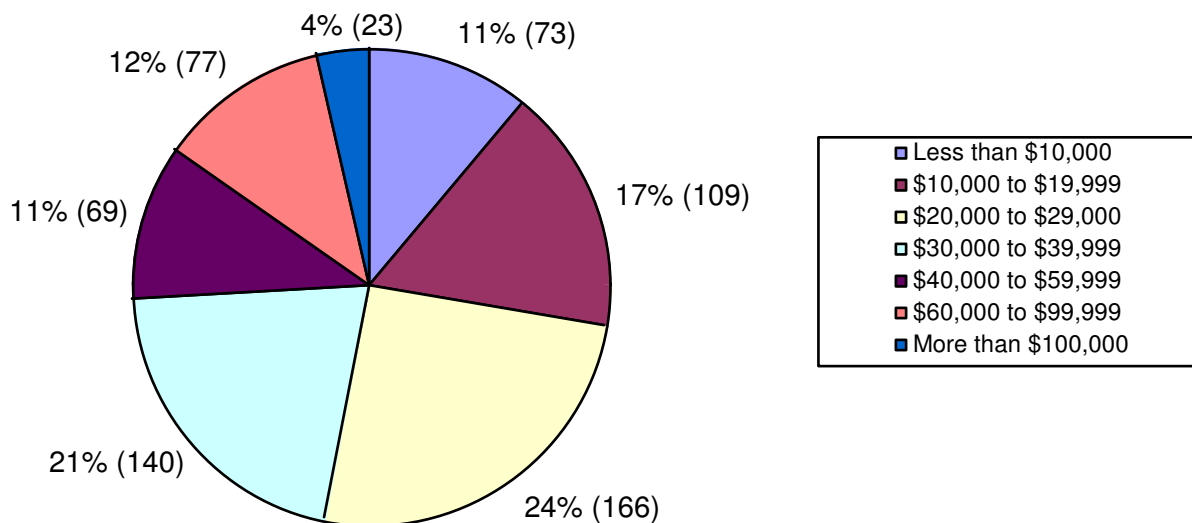


Figure 2.3 Baker Donora Household Income in 2000

Land Use

Cities employ various principles to regulate land use patterns and physical growth. The revitalizing of certain neighborhoods in the city can be accomplished through land use regulating and zoning techniques. Currently, Lansing is divided into approximately 21 zoned districts, and land is zoned according to how it will be used in that particular area. For many years, the City of Lansing has used these tools to revitalize certain pockets of the community. This has been one of the tools that Lansing is using to turn the Baker Donora neighborhood around.

In general, land should offer a broad mixture of residential, commercial, industrial, and open space uses. And it should be zoned to reflect those uses. “Also, the proposed Land Use principle will create a specific set of research based land use recommendations including an Existing Land Use Map of current uses and a Future Land Use Map that will be used as a guide to both rezoning petitions and potential City-sponsored rezoning.”

Zoning in the Baker Donora Neighborhood

The zoning of the neighborhood helps to regulate land use, the amount of square footage allotted for each house, height, density, right of ways, parking, and signage. Excluding some open space, the Baker Donora neighborhood has 5 zoning districts that are mostly residential, industrial (light and heavy), and commercial. The majority of the parcels in Baker Donora are zoned as Single-Family Residential, which are sprinkled with a handful of Multiple-Family Residential parcels. Most of the commercial zoned land lies on the periphery of the neighborhood along Mt. Hope, Cedar, and Pennsylvania Streets, as does the Industrial zone which is located in the North West corner of the Baker Donora neighborhood.

Existing Land Use in Baker Donora

When we look at an Existing Land Use Map, it is like a snapshot in time; it is a representation of how the land is being used today. Therefore, when we look at the Zoning Map and the Existing Land Use Map together, they should coincide. According to the Existing Land Use Map’s Legend, Baker Donora is made-up of mostly single and multiple family residential housing, warehousing, service, parks, and vacant parcels. Each description needs to be defined, in order, to get a clear understanding of its use.

Residential: Housing with no more than 2-3 units. Units are intended for the occupancy of a single household.

Multifamily Residential: Housing built for rent or sale with 4 units and over. Includes garden apartments, condos, and high-rise apartments.

Warehousing: A commercial building use to store goods. Also, can be used by various businesses (manufacturers, wholesalers, importers, and exporters).

Service: This is defined as public water and sewer (or other public facilities).

Parks: Open space with parks for public use.

Vacant land: Land with no buildings or usable structures. Includes vacant land zoned for apartments and other residential buildings, commercial and industrial land, vacant streets and alleys, industrial railway land and vacant landscapes.

The neighborhood is varied in the types of uses represented in the neighborhood. Usually warehousing and residential uses are not directly adjacent to one another. Residential land lies adjacent to warehousing land with no buffer, which is much needed as depicted in the following pictures.



Figure 2.4 Residential homes directly adjacent to the John Bean Building with no buffer



Figure 2.5 Residential homes directly adjacent to the John Bean Building with no buffer

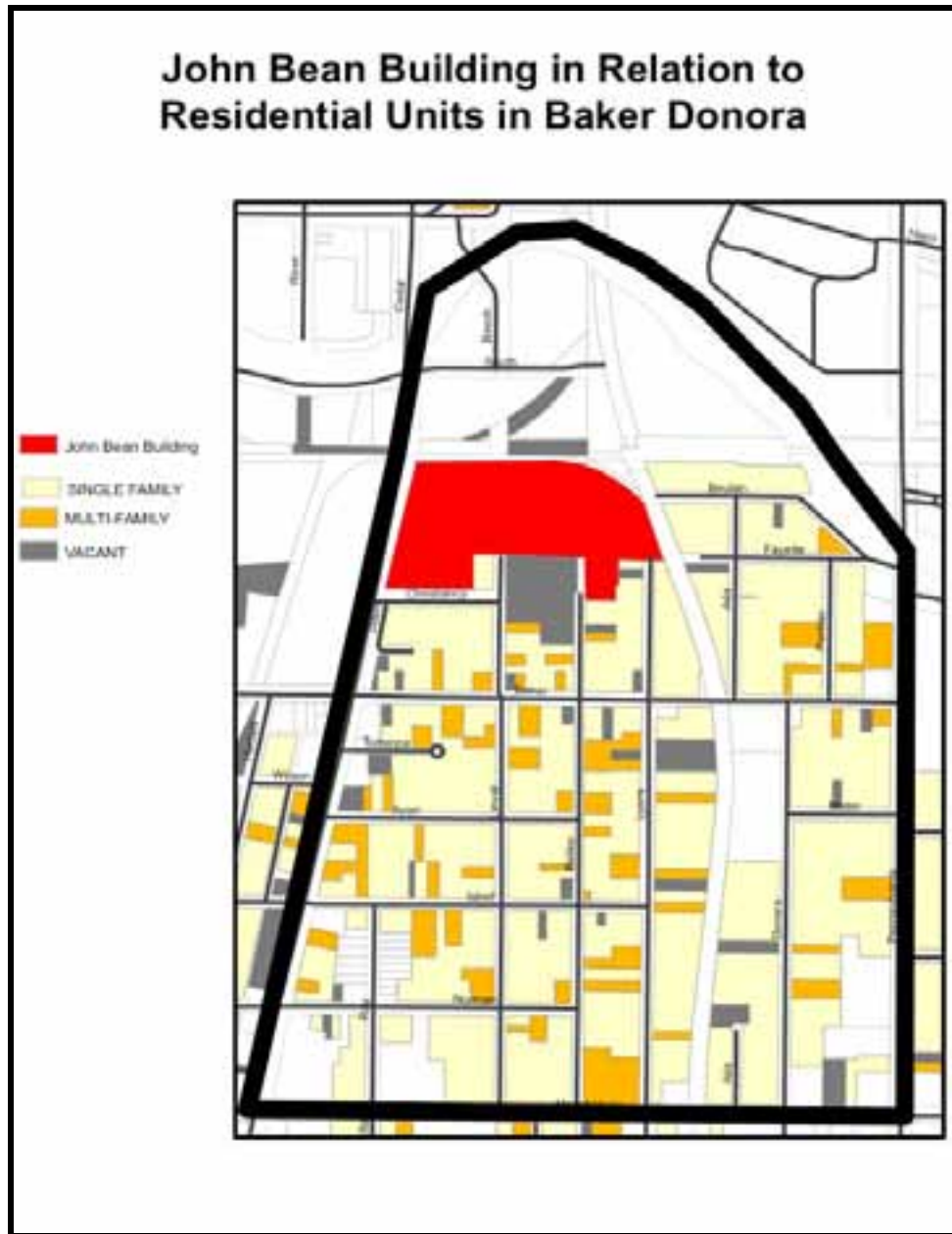


Figure 2.6 John Bean Location

Figure 2.6 depicts the location of the John Bean Building within the Baker Donora neighborhood. The parcels directly to the east of the building are also used as industrial properties and warehousing and are not buffered from the rest of the community. The following map shows the Existing Land Use within the entire Baker Donora Neighborhood.

Baker Donora Existing Land Use 2008

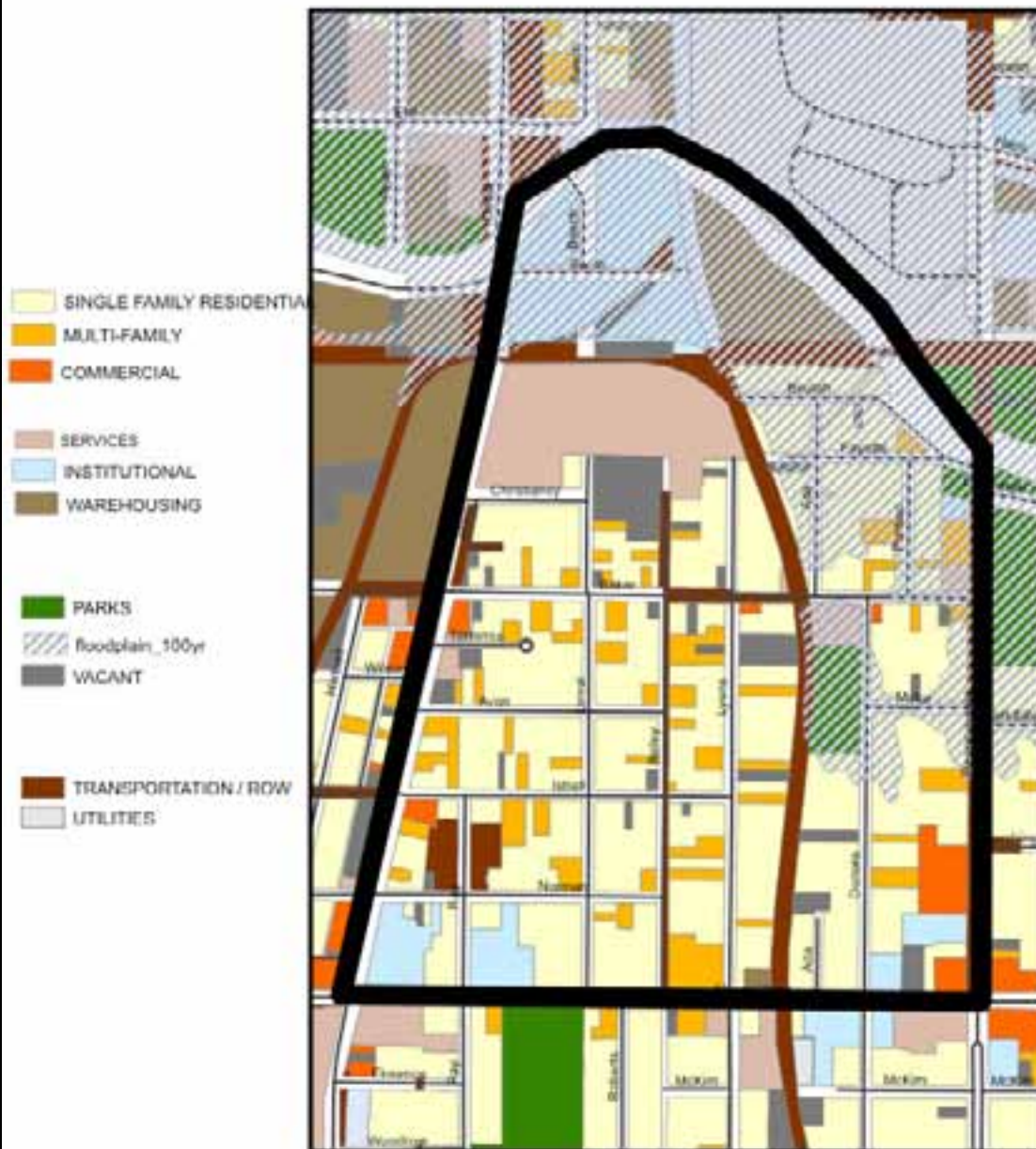


Figure 2.7 Baker Donora Existing Land Use

Future Land Use in Baker Donora

Unlike the Existing Land Use Map, which is a snapshot of the present, the Future Land Use Map is a representation of the land about five to ten years into the future. When we look at the Baker Donora neighborhood, we see that the area is still predominately residential (low to moderate density), industrial, commercial, and open space. Again, there is quite a varied scale of uses expected in the future in Baker Donora.

Low-density Housing: Includes single-family housing on individual lots. It may include duplexes, granny flats or garage apartments.

Moderate-density Housing: This includes small apartment buildings, town homes, and converted single-family homes. Also, low-density housing is included in this category.

Industrial: Improved parcels used predominately for manufacturing or on which materials or articles are processed or semi-processed, but not retailed, including related storage areas, and warehousing.

Commercial: Parcels that are used for retail, manufacturing, wholesale, and office space that are housed in multifunctional structures.

Open space: This includes large, undeveloped areas that are usually owned by institutions or the public.

Baker Donora Future Land Use Map 2008



Figure 2.8 Baker Donora Future Land Use

As Figures 2.7 and 2.8 indicate, the neighborhood is predominately residential and varying uses along the perimeter of the neighborhood on major arterials. Of importance, is the predominate number of homes in the floodplain which promotes development hazards and maintenance issues. Also, as noted above, there are incompatible land use issues, particularly on the northwest side of the neighborhood near the John Bean building. Both the flood plain and the John Bean building should be buffered from the homes as to reduce risk of flooding damage and personal injury, not to mention aesthetics, that could occur on the industrial/warehousing areas near the John Bean building. This type of information and data will be useful when approaching the Phase II of the NPP and should be considered when making recommendations.

The following section will focus on the current condition of housing in Baker Donora to see where improvements have been made in the area and to note where more improvements and changes could be made.

Housing In Baker Donora

One of the main goals of the Baker Donora Neighborhood Preservation Program was to improve the housing condition in the neighborhood. Many efforts have been made by various agencies including the City of Lansing and the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition to improve and rehabilitate housing on a block-by-block approach. In order to assess the progress of the NPP on the housing stock of Baker Donora it is important to analyze certain factors and data gathered before the implementation of Phase I along with data from the current year to assess any changes. Data analyzed in this study seeks to provide any overall picture of the current state of housing in the neighborhood. To do that, the study examines housing age, size, value, and tenure. Also, the study analyzes the building activity of the area to see the extent of home improvements that have been made to reach the goals addressed in the Memorandum of Understanding of Phase I of the NPP.

The Baker Donora NPP Memorandum of Understanding listed several housing goals that the program wished to accomplish over the life of the program. Included in the listed goals were improvement of the neighborhood housing condition, increasing the owner occupancy ratios, encourage home improvements, enhance the sense of community, remediate lead paint hazards, and improve the safety and appearance of the front porch and steps of homes. Although these goals seek to revitalize the neighborhood, no tasks or implementation procedures were listed within the Memorandum of Understanding. However, there have been many efforts to reach these goals through various efforts, including the Extreme Street Makeover and other tools provided by various government and non-profit agencies.

Overall, many improvements have been made in the housing stock of Baker Donora. First, it is important to note that Baker Donora housing is characterized by old housing, most built between 1911 and 1920 and remains relatively small in size (1001-1200 Square feet) due to the fact that the housing was first developed for the lower class factory workers employed at the industrial plant now known as the John Bean Building on the north west side of the neighborhood. Since the decline of the operations in the industrial plant, housing has struggled to maintain value and investment. Between 2004 and 2008, median housing values have stayed level with very little growth or decline. In fact, the median housing value in 2004 was \$37,772 while in 2008 the number changed slightly to \$37,827 This steady housing value rate may be due to the high amounts of building activity located in the area, with nearly fifty homes rehabilitated in only four years in the entire neighborhood. However, there is still a disproportionately high level of tagged homes in the neighborhood, creating a continual fight to make progress in the realm of housing rehabilitation. Although much improvement has been made in the area, it is very important to continue investment in the housing to ensure that housing values continue to increase. Not only does the Baker Donora neighborhood face these individual problems, they also have been effected by

the current poor conditions of the U.S. housing market and it's dangerously high foreclosure rates, and with Michigan's economic problems. The following pages will detail the NPP housing goals along with the current conditions to aid in overall assessment.

In our analysis of the current housing situation, we gathered housing data from the years 2004 and 2008 to assess the overall improvements that have been made to the community. By taking a close look at various figures, including housing values, building activity, owner occupancy, housing size, and red tagged houses, we can obtain an overall idea of what programs were utilized, the goals that have yet to be reached, and the strategies that could be used with the current situation in reaching the housing goals listed in the Memorandum of Understanding for the Baker Donora Neighborhood Preservation Program. The following is an outline of our analysis.

Housing Value

In considering the progress of the Baker Donora Neighborhood Revitalization Program, it is important to examine property values to ensure an appreciating market is present. The data examined was the State Equalized Value (SEV) of each parcel, which was provided by the City of Lansing Assessing Department. The SEV of a parcel is used in determining the amount of property taxes a property owner will pay in a given year. The SEV is the adjusted Assessed Value, which is half of the Market Value of the parcel. The SEV is incredibly useful in determining overall value of the property and also seeing the contribution of taxes that will be provided to the city via property taxes.

The Practicum Group analyzed data from the years 2004 and 2008 in order to chart the differences and changes over the time period of Phase I of the Baker Donora Neighborhood Revitalization Program. As seen in Figure 2.9, the trends are positive. Property values increased slightly over the four years. In 2004, in all of the 643 houses, the house value ranges a lot. There are 16 houses (2.5%) are worth less than \$20,000, 125 houses (19.4%) are from \$20,001 to \$30,000, 267 houses (41.5%) are from \$30,001 to \$40,000, 166 houses (25.8%) are from \$40,001 to \$50,000, 47 houses (7.3%) are from \$50,001 to \$60,000, 22 houses (3.4%) are more than \$60,000. We can find that most of the houses are worth between \$30,001 and 40,000. The median housing value of 2004 was \$37,772.

In 2008, the situation changes slightly. In all of the 612 houses, there are 15 houses (2.6%) worth less than \$20,000, 115 houses (18.8%) are from \$20,001 to \$30,000, 260 houses (42.5%) are from \$30,001 to \$40,000, 160 houses (26.1%) are from \$40,001 to \$50,000, 40 houses (6.5%) are from \$50,001 to \$60,000, 22 houses (3.6%) are more than \$60,000. We can find that the houses with values of \$30,001 to \$40,000 are still the predominance. The median housing value in 2008 was \$37,827. However, it is important to note that overall the median housing value increased by \$55 over the four years that the NPP program has been in place. This value is minimal and shows that the neighborhood is

struggling to maintain its investment and property value, but it is a hopeful increase. It should be noted that during 2007, housing values nation wide have struggled in retaining value. In fact, according an article in the LA Times on 2/15/08, Lansing, Michigan actually saw some of the highest decreases in property values nation wide. On that note, although the Baker Donora housing values raised minimally over the four years of the NPP program, they fare far better than the cited housing value decrease of 19% in the City of Lansing. The following charts depict the difference between housing values in the City of Lansing and Baker Donora for the year 2007, which shows an obvious disproportionate difference between the two areas.

Housing Values for the City of Lansing and Baker Donora in 2007.

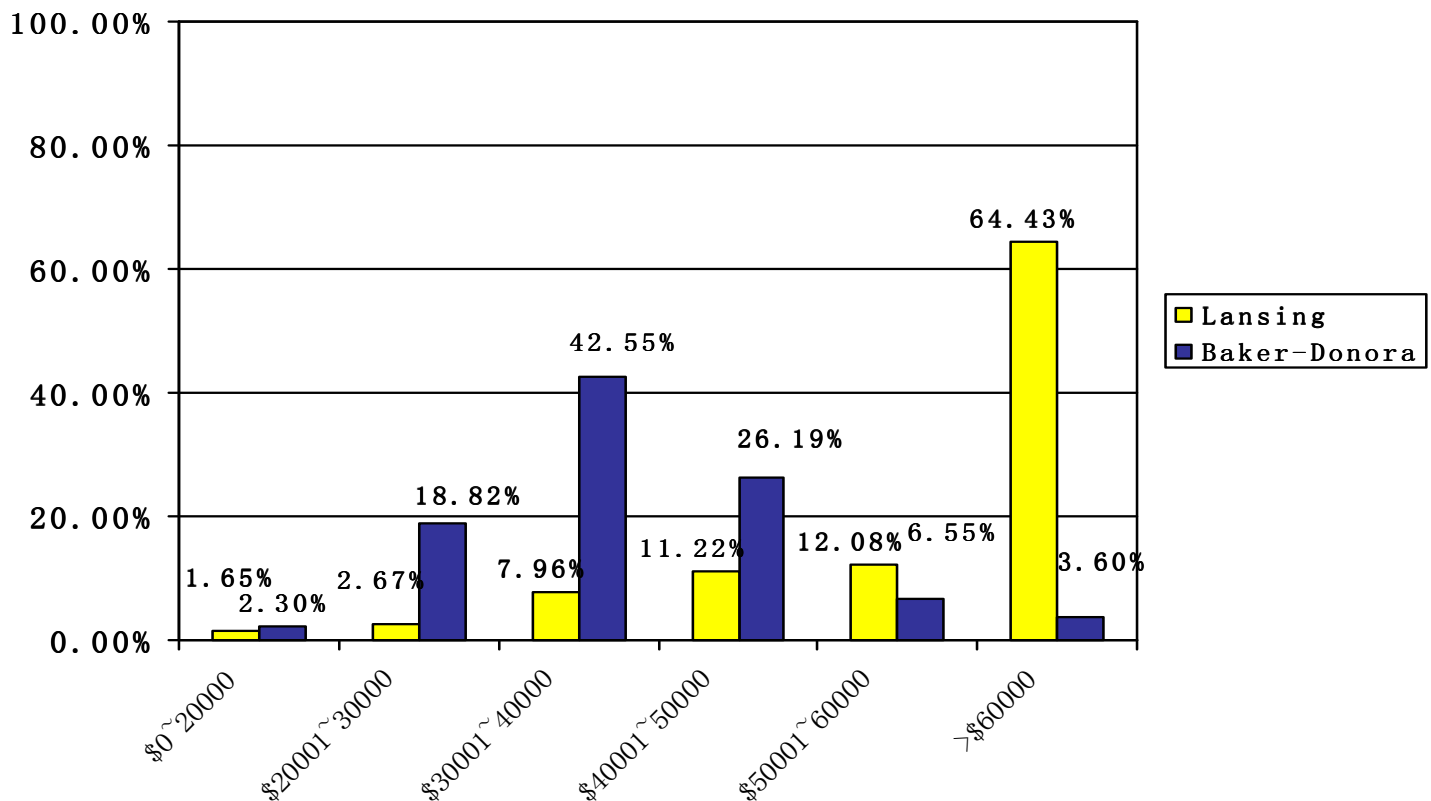


Figure 2.9 Housing Values in Lansing and Baker Donora

Baker Donora Owner Occupancy

Owner occupancy is an important indicator to community investment and commitment. Home owners have made their home an investment and make efforts to maintain their property and ensure secured investments. Overall,

homeowners create stability in neighborhoods. A major objective of many neighborhood revitalization programs is to increase homeownership. Homeownership is a symbol of neighborhood stability according to a study by William M. Rohe and Leslie S. Stewart in 1996. (City of Lansing Community Indicator Report). The survey shows that, homeownership indicates a relatively higher income level of the neighborhood. Additionally, the study finds that there is a significant positive correlation between homeownership and property value. Evidentially, high levels of homeownership means good living conditions, improved property maintenance, and longer lengths of tenure. Therefore, more homeowners indicate a good economic situation and a more stable environment in a neighborhood.

In 2004, more than half of the houses (50.5%) were not owner occupied. This is a relatively high number of renters in an area, and can often be attributed to the low-income levels of the residents in the neighborhood. Although efforts to increase homeownership were a focus of the NPP, little change occurred in the four years of the NPP. The percentage of non-owner-occupied homes is still a little more than 50 percent. There is no obvious improvement of this area.

The following chart depicts the difference between the City of Lansing homeowner occupancy with the homeownership of the Baker Donora Neighborhood in 2007. We can see an obvious difference in the percentage of homeownership in these two areas. More than 77.23 percent of the houses are homeowner occupied in Lansing while in Baker Donora neighborhood the percentage is only 49.43%.

Owner Occupancy in the City of Lansing and Baker Donora in 2007

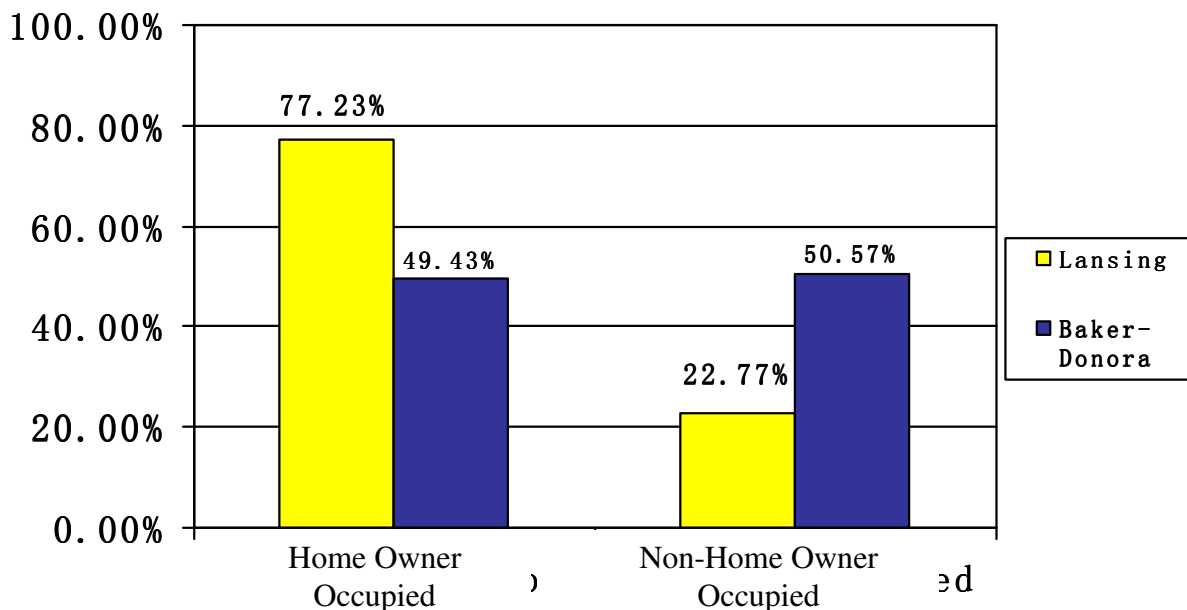


Figure 2.10 Owner Occupancy in Lansing and Baker Donora

The remaining housing factors, e.g. housing condition, age, size, were considered to have some influence on property value and consequently on neighborhood stability, although their influence may be more complex and of a secondary nature. They also provide a means of classifying the type of housing that is characteristic of a given area. This in turn can offer valuable insights in explaining trends influencing neighborhood needs and in identifying appropriate strategies to address these needs.

Housing Condition

The physical condition of housing in a neighborhood is a basic measure of the area's health and fundamental needs. A windshield survey of housing conditions throughout the Lansing community was conducted 1999, as part of the *Lansing Housing Market Survey*. According to this survey, approximately 8.3 percent of the housing stocks were found to be in a poor condition in the whole Lansing area.

The GIS graph of this survey indicates that 15 to 30 percent of the housing in Baker Donora Neighborhood were in poor condition. Compared to the City of Lansing housing condition, the condition of Baker Donora housing stocks are in very low level and deteriorated condition.

According to both Lansing and Baker Donora data, the resulting housing condition is similar to the pattern for homeownership and value. A strong association between housing condition and homeownership is evident from the survey and database of housing condition provided by the City of Lansing Planning Department. These consistently show that homeowners are more likely than landlords to undertake repairs and they spend more on them. Due to the more than 50 percent non-owner occupancy ratio and the fast growth number of tagged homes, there are a number of factors relating to Baker Donora's housing condition.

However, much improvement has been made to improve the housing condition within the neighborhood. With programs such as the Extreme Street Makeover and funding provided by the City of Lansing and for the NPP Program, much improvement has been made. These improvements will be focused in more detail in the Building Activity Section.

City of Lansing Housing Condition 1999

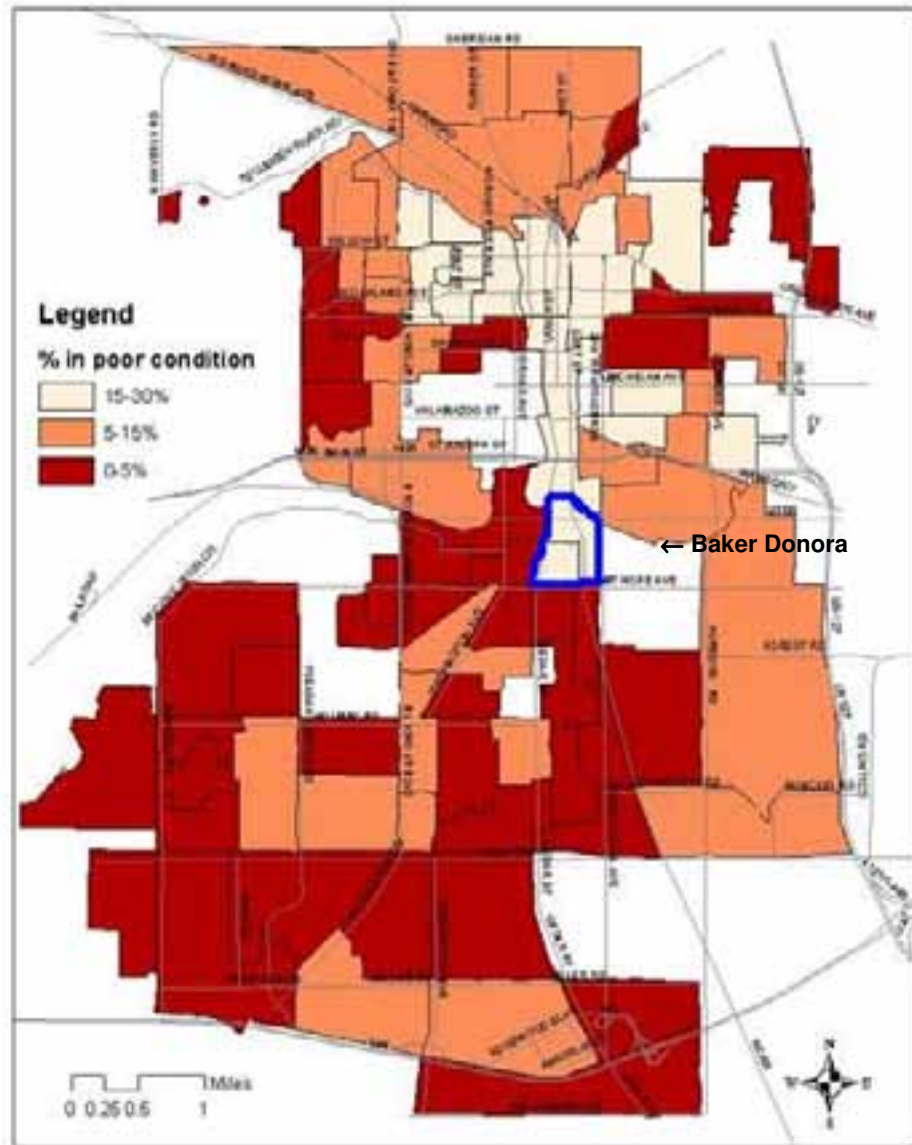


Figure 2.11 Housing Market Study, City of Lansing

Housing Age

The data from the 2004 U.S. Census indicate that the Baker Donora neighborhood's housing stock is comprised of many small, older houses. More than half of the houses were built between 1911 and 1920, and more than 90 percent of the houses were built before 1930. The average year that housing was built in the neighborhood was 1907, while the average year housing was built in Lansing was 1913. The prevalence of older housing could tend to overly restrict the neighborhood's housing market and community's aesthetics. Age can affect property value and, in turn, neighborhood. As noted in the *Housing Market Study* reported by the City of Lansing, some older areas can offer a desirable environment that is difficult to achieve in a new neighborhood but the age of a house is often associated with higher maintenance costs.

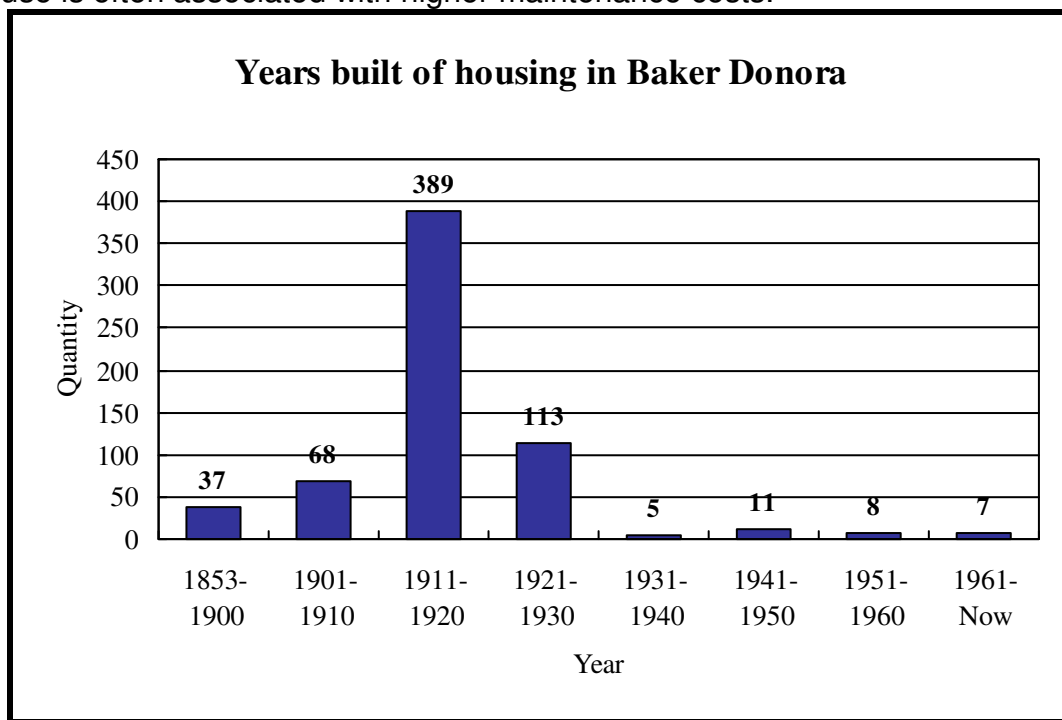


Figure 2.12 Year Housing Built in Baker Donora

Due to neighborhood build-out, there were very few new homes built after 1930. After 1961, there were only seven houses were built.

House Size

The 2004 U.S. Census data and the data from the City of Lansing GIS database, shows the household size in Baker Donora tends to be smaller than other neighborhoods in Lansing. Smaller houses with fewer and smaller bedrooms, bathrooms, and closets can decrease their attractiveness in today's housing market. From the chart, 88.54 percent of the homes are less than 1400 square feet, and 40.26 percent of the homes are between 801 and 1100 square feet in size which takes the biggest ratio of housing size in Baker Donora neighborhood.

A trend was examined in the 2004 *Lansing Housing Market Study* relating to house size which was considered influential to the stability of some neighborhoods in the City. From the study and the City of Lansing GIS database the average house size in the city of Lansing is 1151 square feet. In comparison, the average house size in Baker Donora is 1052 square feet.

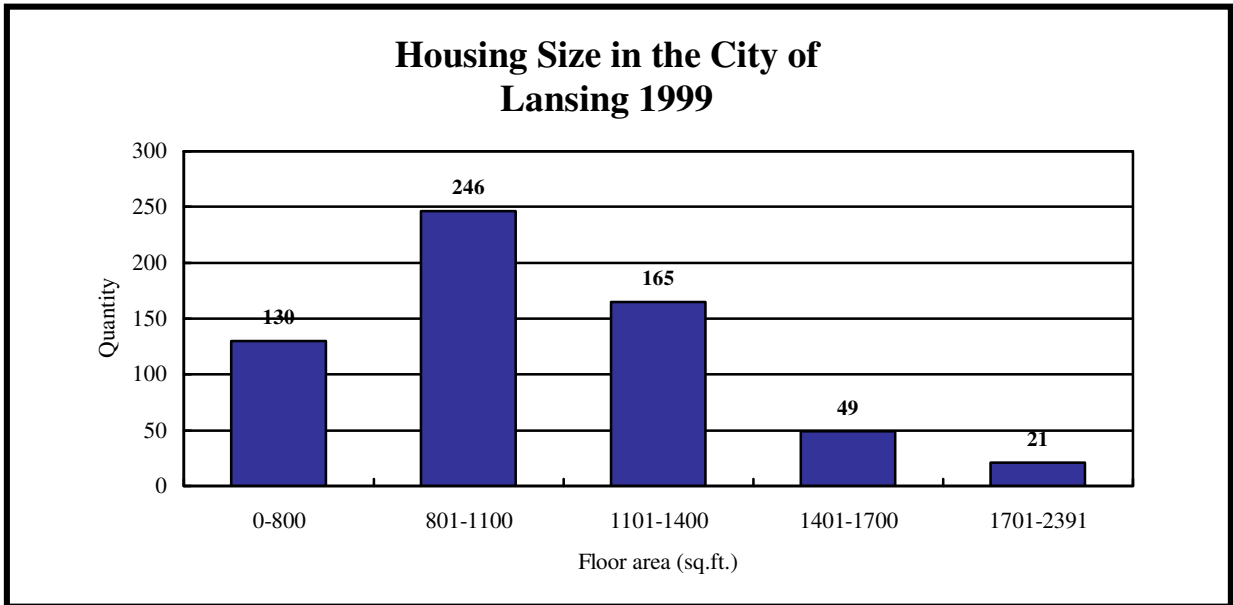


Figure 2.13 City of Lansing Housing Size

House Size

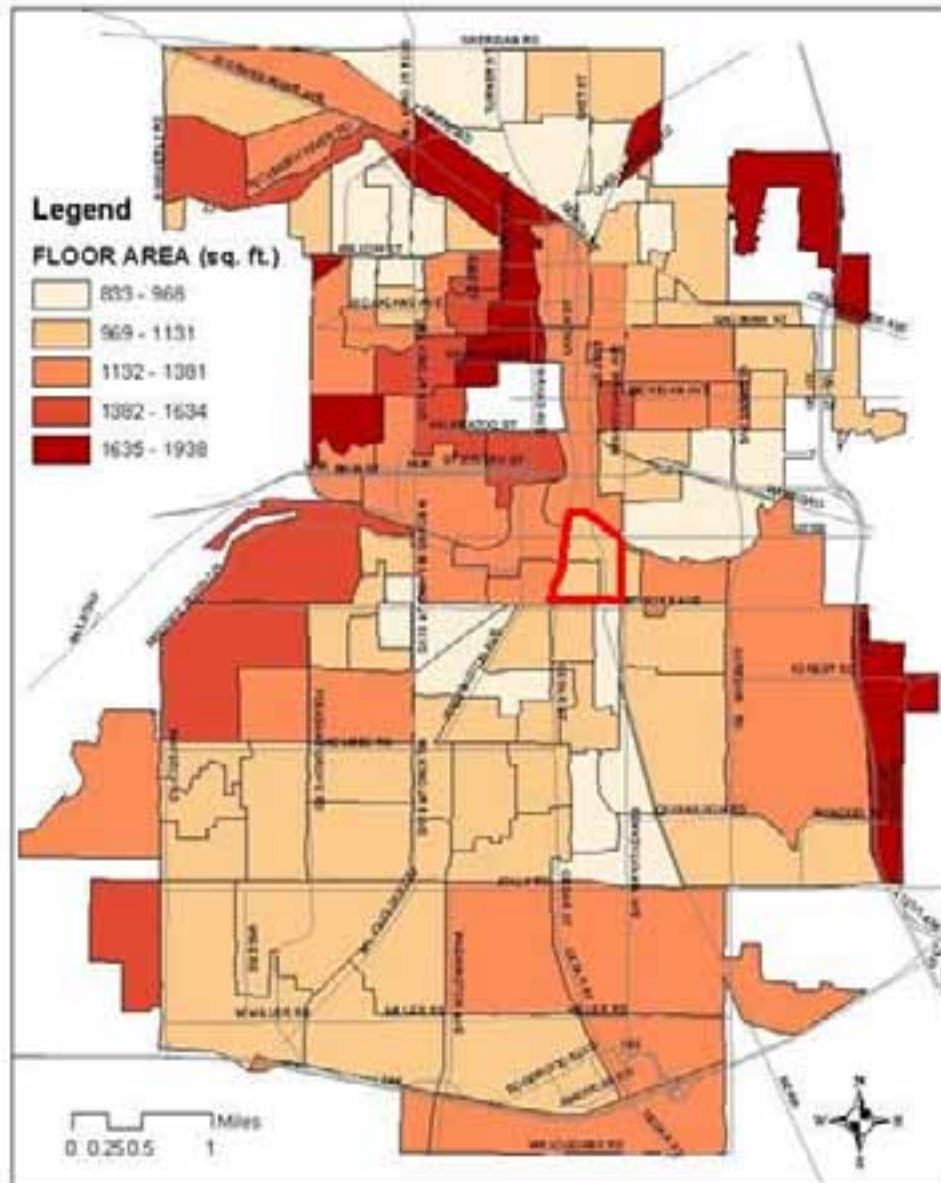


Figure 2.14 Lansing House Size

Building Activity

One of the major objectives of the NPP was to create a chain reaction of building activity in the neighborhood. Often times when a neighborhood undergoes renovation, neighbors are inspired to improve their own homes. Also, the NPP was providing more assistance in home repair and rehabilitation. The City of

Lansing and the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition combined, rehabilitated nearly 50 homes in the neighborhood in only four years. The neighborhood hoped that residents would take advantage of their funding opportunities and begin building and rehabilitating their homes. To determine whether residents began improving their homes, collection of building permits issued by the City of Lansing Building Department for the years 2004 and 2007 is necessary.

In order to measure building activity, we analyzed the number of building permits issued in 2007 to see if a significant building activity had occurred. In 2007, there were 16 building permits issued to the Baker Donora Neighborhood. Of these 16 permits, 11 (68%) were issued to remove or install roofing, three (19%) were issued for driveway repairs, and one (6%) was issued to repair a floor hoist. Although it is wonderful to see any building activity in the area, the type of repairs that we see here are not associated with rehabilitation of properties. Roof work and repair is a necessary maintenance issue with homes and will create uninhabitable damage if not repaired right away. Thus, roof repair is a poor indicator of building and renovation activity in the neighborhood.

Next, various agencies have been investing in the neighborhood and renovating homes to put on the market for sale. The Greater Lansing Housing Coalition (GLHC) has renovated 17 homes in the Baker Donora Neighborhood since 2004, and has plans for three more in the summer of 2008. The GLHC purchases the homes at a very low cost and renovates them to sell at market value. In fact, the GLHC has been the one of the largest influences on the redevelopment of Baker Donora and should have more practices modeled after their strategies and investments. The GLHC is a very important resource for the implementation of Phase II.

The City of Lansing works very closely with the GLHC and has redeveloped and improved 17 homes in the neighborhood as well. Combined, the two entities have improved 34 homes, which is five percent of the total housing units and invested nearly \$1,077,266 in housing improvements and assistance. Some of this funding was utilized in the implementation of the *Extreme Street Makeover Program*, which seeks to improve the overall façade of specific blocks in the neighborhood by installing landscaping, improving porches and fences, and painting homes. This tremendous amount of work and investment in the neighborhood shows that people and agencies are committed to the improvement of the neighborhood, considering that nearly nine homes per year have been improved since the implementation of the NPP Program. If the number of homes improved and rehabilitated in the neighborhood increases to 12 per year during Phase II for five years, nearly 15 percent of the total housing stock will have been improved. This is a promising number that will further encourage neighborhood investment far into the future. The following is a map of redeveloped homes in the Baker Donora neighborhood.

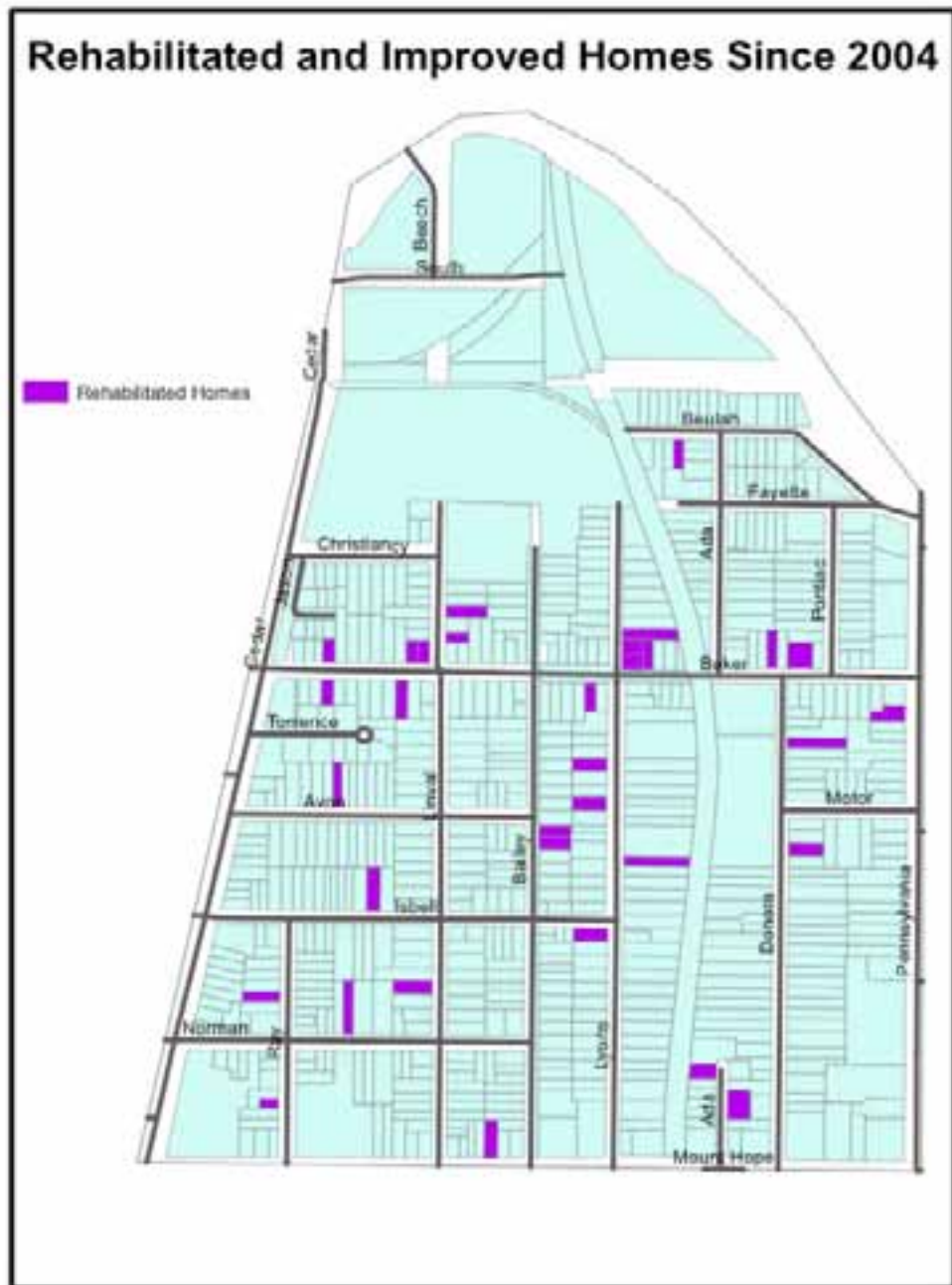


Figure 2.15 Rehabilitated and Improved Homes Since 2004

Code Violations

Code violations are very clear indicators as to the investment and commitment that a property owner gives to his home. Code violations are a sure sign that an owner is disinvesting in the property due to financial hardship or for a lack of commitment to the area. Tagged homes are homes that are deemed unsafe for safety and public health reasons. Much of the time it is due to an extended period of vacancy.

We obtained data from the City of Lansing Planning Department charting the number of tagged homes in the Baker Donora neighborhood for the years 2002, 2005 and 2008. The figures represent the number of homes listed on a specific date. We obtained figures from the dates of 12/01/02, 12/12/05, and 02/12/08. Although any structure type (residential, commercial, industrial) can be deemed a red-tag, our study only chose to examine the residential tagged properties for ease of consistency when comparing to the City of Lansing.

On December 1st, 2002, the neighborhood had 23 tagged homes listed with the Code Compliance Department, while one year later on December 12th, 2005 the neighborhood saw 33 tagged homes. On February 12th, 2008, the number of tagged homes reached 53. It is obvious that this number is increasing dramatically instead of decreasing as a main intention of the NPP.

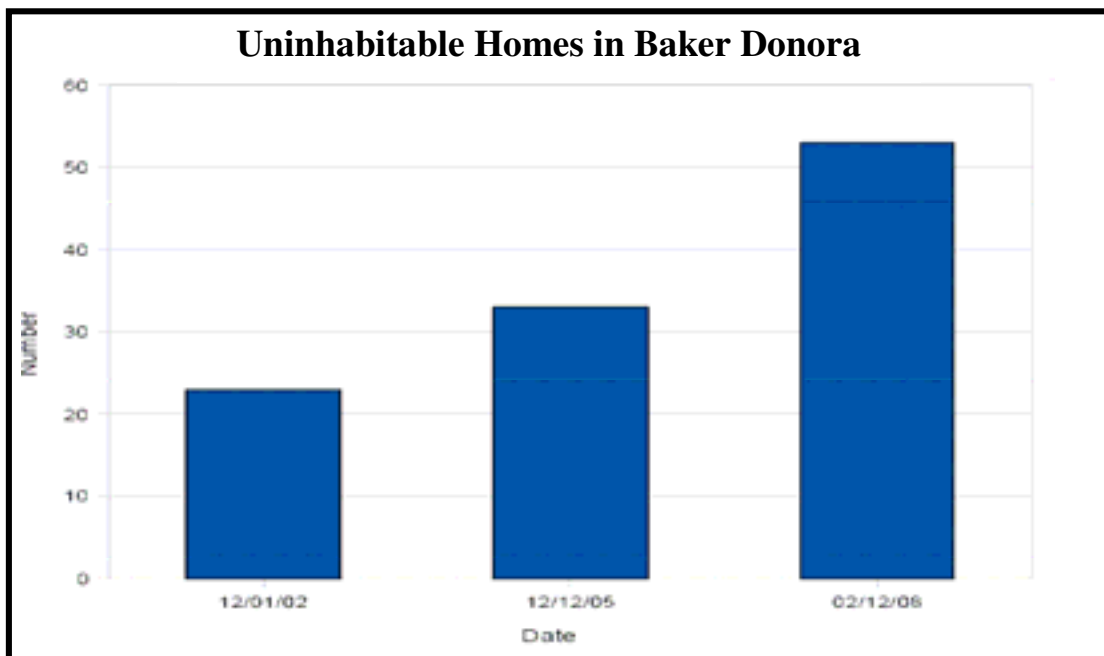


Figure 2.16 Uninhabitable Homes in Baker Donora

Upon contacting the City of Lansing Building Code Department, it became apparent the extent of the code violation issues in the Baker Donora neighborhood. The Code Enforcement Officer, David Vincent stated that there are two very large problems that lead to the high number of tagged homes in the

Baker Donora neighborhood. These were undoubtedly the high renter occupation homes, who for some reason or another leave the rental home in shambles, creating a larger than expected required investment from the property owner to return the home to a reasonable rental condition. Thus, the property owner does not make these investments and the property suffers to the point of being a threat to public safety. The second major contributor to tagged homes and community decline was the high number of mortgage-foreclosed properties that are owned by banks. Many of these banks are located in other cities and states. No investment or improvements are made to these homes; rather the bank just sits on the property until a buyer will invest in the home. While this process proceeds, often taking many years, the house declines and creates a major community decline circumstance.

For measure of comparison, City of Lansing data was looked at in terms of the percentage of tagged homes in the Baker Donora area. The Baker Donora Neighborhood has a significantly high level of tagged homes compared to Lansing. The charts show the number of tagged homes in Lansing and Baker Donora for the years 2004 and 2008 respectively.

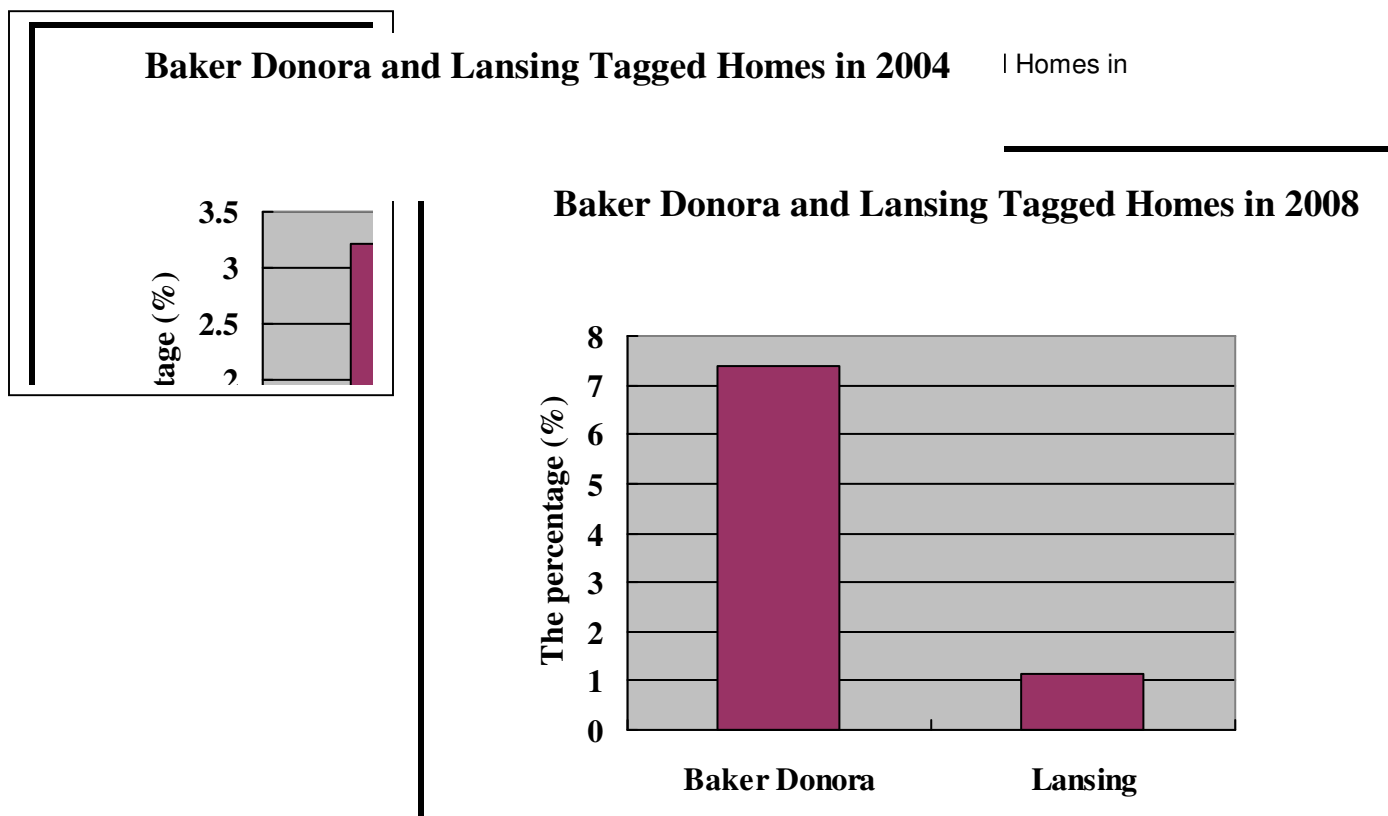


Figure 2.18 Baker Donora and Lansing Tagged Homes in 2008

Figures 2.17 and 2.18 clearly show that over time, the number of tagged homes in Baker Donora increases, while the number of tagged homes in Lansing

actually decreases. The reasons for this type of trend are unclear and could be caused by a number of factors. Again, according to the Code Compliance Officer of the City of Lansing, there are a high number of mortgaged foreclosed properties in the neighborhood that sit vacant for many years and are not improved. When the bank owns foreclosed houses, the City of Lansing is legally not allowed to improve the homes without bank approval. Most times, the bank does not approve the houses into programs such as Extreme Street Makeover due to the fact that the decision maker at the bank does not know what needs to be improved on the home. Another reason is that bank owned properties and homes become ineligible for certain types of housing assistance and repair programs, such as the Lead Abatement Program. Finally, there has been a more aggressive approach taken on by the Code Compliance Department in the Baker Donora Neighborhood to enforce City of Lansing housing codes. Overall, it is a combination of factors that are causing the decline of some housing units to the point of being deemed unsafe.

It is obvious that although there have been improvements in the neighborhood, a stronger focus needs to be made on the improvement of tagged homes as to prevent further increase in the number of unsafe and declining homes in the Baker Donora neighborhood. It is important to focus on foreclosure prevention programs and homeowner programs, as well as home improvement and rehabilitation programs because without the homeowners and strong tenure, the houses are going to continue to decline.

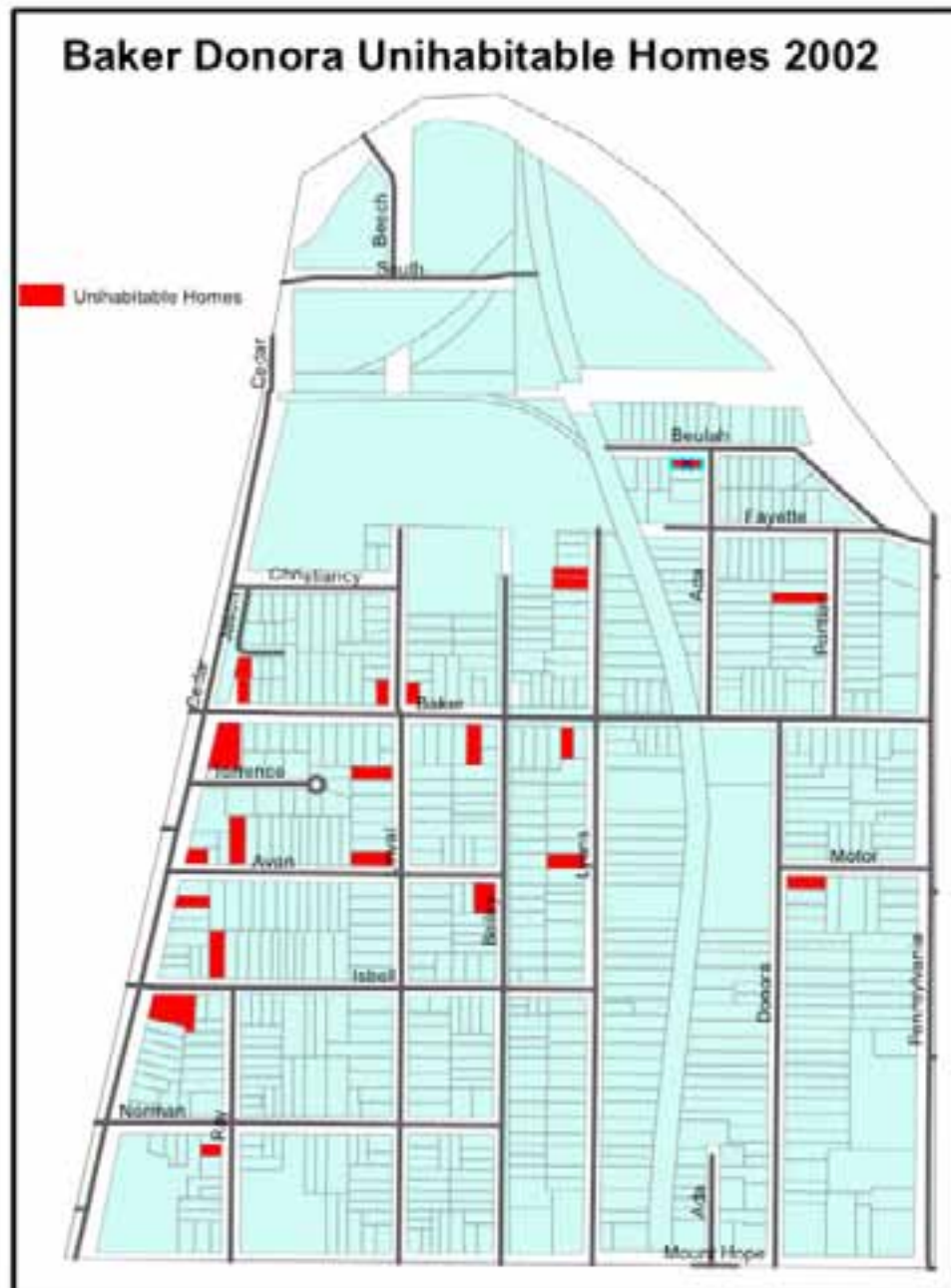


Figure 2.19 Baker Donora Uninhabitable Homes in 2002

Uninhabitable Homes in Baker Donora 2008

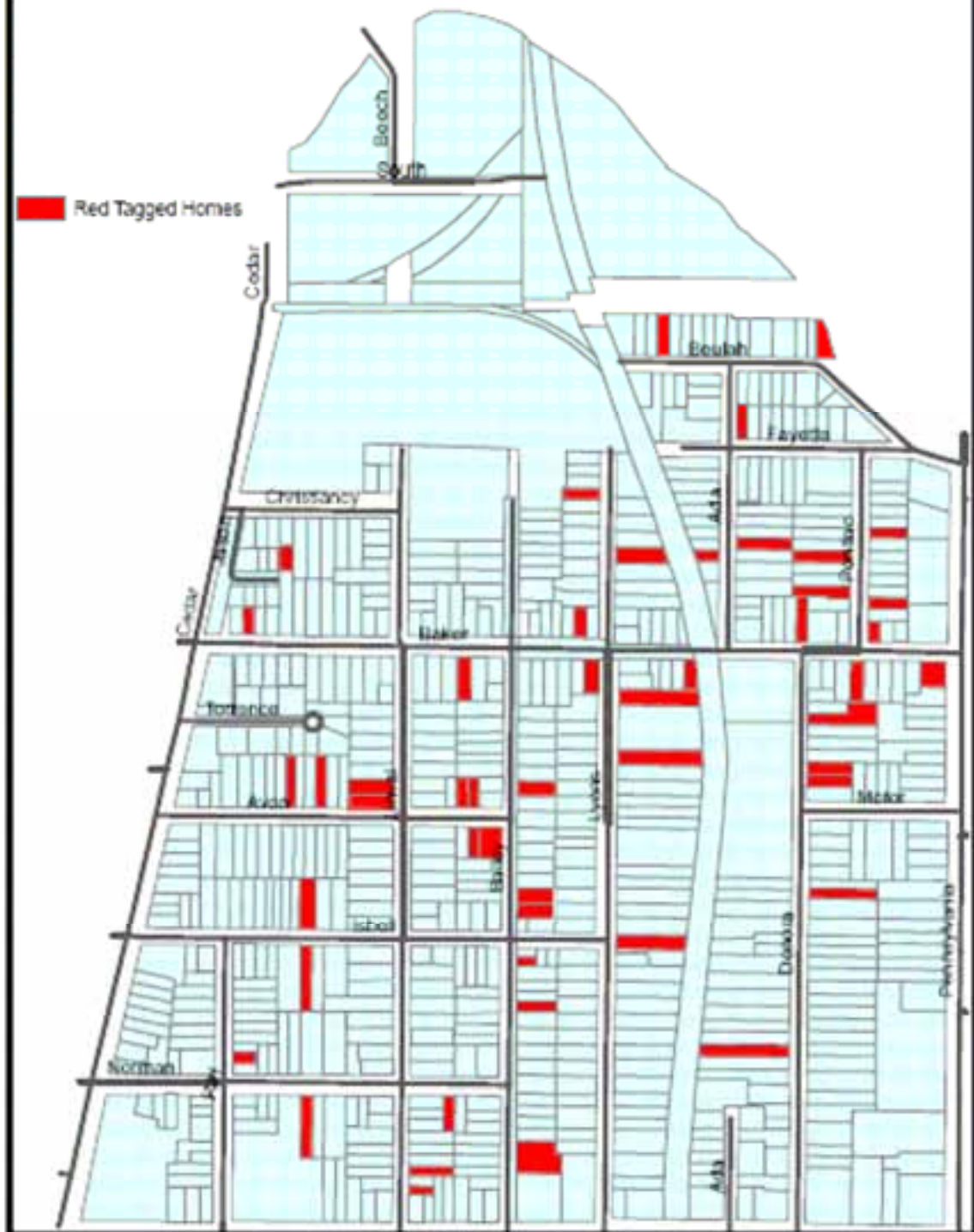


Figure 2.20 Uninhabitable Homes in Baker Donora in 2008

Mortgage Foreclosed Homes

According to the City of Lansing Code Compliance Officer, mortgage foreclosed homes provide a serious detriment to the rehabilitation of housing in neighborhoods. The reason lies in the fact that once a home becomes foreclosed, it is uninhabited and is held in the property of the corresponding bank that provided the mortgage. Often times, the banks are located in different states and do not improve the house while it remains vacant, which can be for many years. During this time, bank owned homes are vandalized and legally cannot be a part of the home improvement programs provided by the City of Lansing and the GLHC, causing them to become eyesores on the block.

According to the Realty Track website accessed on 1/31/08 there were 40 foreclosed homes in the Baker Donora neighborhood out of the total 632 residential parcels in the community. This number varies on a daily basis, however it currently represents nearly six percent of the Baker Donora housing stock. Lansing has an estimated 1420 mortgage foreclosed properties out of the total 36,448 residential parcels, representing 3.8 percent of the housing stock in the City of Lansing. Again, this number is a very static figure that changes on a daily basis, but the percentage can give us a general idea of what the current state of housing looks like.

The following is a map of foreclosed homes in the Baker Donora neighborhood.

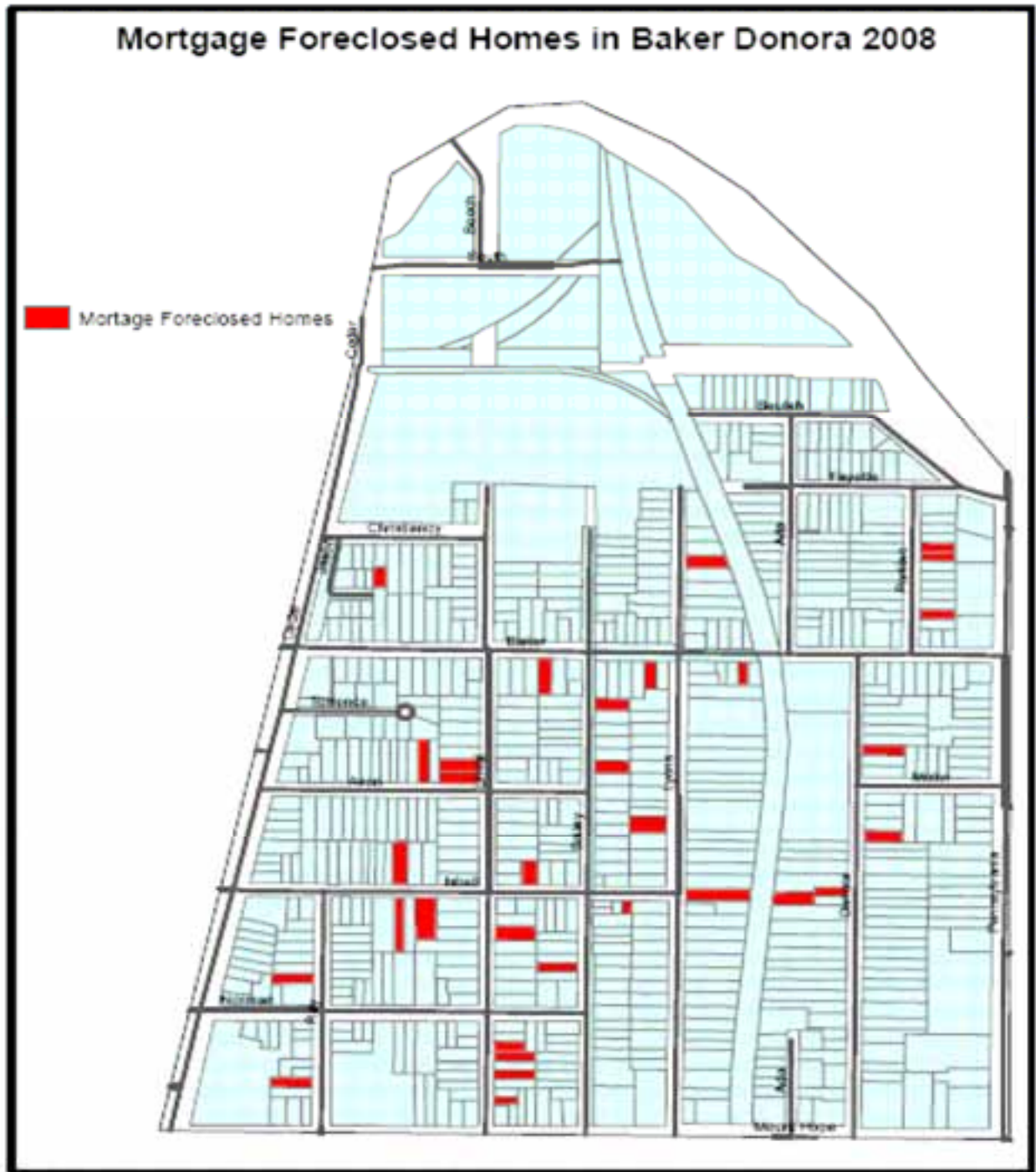


Figure 2.21 Mortgage Foreclosed Homes in Baker Donora in 2008*

*Data courtesy of <http://www.realtytrac.com/foreclosures/realestateterms/realty-track.html> accessed on 1/31/08.

Overall, the Neighborhood Preservation Program has made major efforts in the improvement of the housing in the Baker Donora Neighborhood. Nearly 5 percent of the homes have been improved or rehabilitated in only 4 years and the housing values have remained constant in a regional market that is continuing to plummet. There has been over a million dollars invested into the community in four years which will continue to encourage investment further into the NPP Program. It is evident; however, that a large number of homes are still deemed as unsafe, which not only jeopardizes public health, but also creates a road block in the neighborhood improvement process. Although many of these factors are unique to Baker Donora, it must be emphasized that many outlying threats continue to loom over the neighborhood, including the national foreclosure crisis and the national housing market and value decline. When realizing Phase II recommendations, it is important to take these facts into consideration.

Neighborhood Image Improvements

One of the eight original goals of the Baker Donora Neighborhood Preservation Project was to improve the aesthetics of the neighborhood for the benefit of both residents and visitors. The four major methods of accomplishing this were through installation of “Neighborhood Under Construction” signs, installing visual screening of the railroad tracks, encouraging homeowners to improve the visual attractiveness of their homes, and scheduling community clean-up activities. While these goals were feasible and appropriate for the Baker Donora neighborhood, only one of the four has been accomplished since the adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2005.

First in order to market Baker Donora, both residents of the neighborhood and Lansing residents need to identify the area as the Baker Donora Neighborhood. The neighborhood can use redevelopment and revitalization techniques to positively impact the visual impressions that citizens and the businesses want to see. Since Citizens, visitors and the businesses will evaluate the quality of Baker Donora through visual impressions of the neighborhood it is important to maintain a positive image of the neighborhood. Currently, the only marketing of the neighborhood took place during the Extreme Street Makeover Project. The local news station covered the event and showcased several homes. This is an example of using the media to shed a positive light on the neighborhood.

In improving the overall image of the neighborhood, Baker Donora should take a similar approach to those of Reo Town and Old Town in Lansing. They use appropriate gateway signage to convey that the neighborhood is a residential area in which residents take pride. Neighborhood identity is strongly portrayed through signage and entrance beautification. This is a simple and moderate expense that can greatly change the perception of the neighbor, while giving the residents a sense of home and entitlement. However, while this was suggested in Phase I, it was never implemented.



Figure 2.22 Example of a Neighborhood Welcome Sign

In order to accomplish the task of involving the community in clean-up activities, the Baker Donora Focus Center planned its first “Extreme Street Makeover” in July of 2005. Volunteers, both from the neighborhood and visitors, painted and power-washed homes, repaired front porches, and landscaped yards on Ada Street in the Baker Donora neighborhood. In the summer of 2006, the program was again run, this time focusing its revitalization efforts on Baker Street. Finally, in 2007, the Extreme Street Makeover Team took to Baker Street again and continued its improvements. As a result of the Extreme Street Makeover project, parts of the Baker Donora neighborhood’s aesthetic appearance has improved greatly. In fact, the Extreme Street Makeover project has proved to be one of the more successful image improvements and aesthetics projects performed by the Neighborhood. One of the important functions of the project is that it combines City of Lansing residents and volunteers whom may have never set foot in the Baker Donora Neighborhood, with the residents of the neighborhood all working to achieve the same goal: improving the aesthetics of specific blocks to promote stronger community pride and image. The exact numbers of homes that have been improved has not yet become available to the Practicum Group, but the overall appearance of the blocks on Ada and Baker Streets has improved. By maintaining this “block-by-block” approach, the neighborhood will undoubtedly see continue aesthetic improvements. However, as mentioned above, the Extreme Street Makeover should expand its focus from housing façade and encompass the realm of street furniture, lighting, and signage to improve the overall image and aesthetics of the neighborhood.



Figure 2.23 Volunteer help is essential in Baker Donora

Social Improvements

Tying directly in with the image of the Baker Donora Neighborhood is the Social Improvements profile of the neighborhood. One of the goals of the NPP Program listed in the Memorandum of Understanding was to decrease crime and increase the social qualities of the neighborhood such as education, community involvement and leadership, youth programs, etc. By improving the social aspect of the neighborhood, it is hoped that residents will hold other members of the community accountable for their actions and overall crime, safety, and education rates will improve.

Crime

Overall, the Baker Donora Focus Center has made great strides in providing programs for the residents to become involved with, including after school programs and education and life skills programs for adults. It is difficult to determine whether these programs have had an impact on the overall social health of the neighborhood, but there are a couple different indicators that can be gathered that will help to give an overall picture of the social conditions of the neighborhood. Crime rates in the Baker Donora neighborhood compared to the overall City of Lansing are useful in determining the social and safety conditions of the neighborhood by providing an overall glimpse of the types and rates of crime prevalent in the neighborhood. In the past couple decades, Baker Donora's crime rate has surpassed that of the City of Lansing as a whole. Many factors are related to the elevated crime rates, including community disinvestment. As disinvestment continues in a downward spiral motion, crime rates tend to continue to elevate. It is important to address the crime rates and monitor their changes over a period of time in relation to the city of Lansing. By examining the Baker Donora change in crime rates in comparison to the City of Lansing's change in crime rates, any neighborhood safety issues can be addressed. The following is a list of Baker Donora Crimes from the years 2004 and 2007, courtesy of the Lansing Police Department.

Baker Donora	2004	2007
Criminal Sexual Conduct	4	5
Assault	63	73
Burglary	36	38
Larceny	48	43
Motor Vehicle Theft	12	5
Damage to Property	25	33
DUI	14	10
Disorderly Conduct	6	13
Suspended Ops	32	12
Kidnapping/Abduction	1	2
Robbery	7	6
Arson	2	0

Fraud	7	5
Stolen Property	1	2
Violation of Controlled Substances	5	9
Sexual Offenses	1	1
Liquor Violations	8	7
Obstructing Police	3	4
Obstructing Justice	5	3
Weapons Offenses	3	6
Trespass	5	4
Juvenile Runaway	6	6
Furnishing False Information	5	6
Non-Criminal Incident	31	41
Total	331	344

Figure 2.24 shows the Baker Donora crime rate for the neighborhood increased by 4%.

As shown in Figure 2.24, the overall crime rate in the Baker Donora Neighborhood has actually increased during the implementation of the Baker Donora NPP. There could be several reasons for this finding. First, crime in City of Lansing has actually risen at a higher rate than that of Baker Donora. In fact, the City of Lansing crime rate was more than double that of Baker Donora, with a nine percent increase in the same crime over the years 2004 and 2007.

Lansing	2004	2007
Criminal Sexual Conduct	222	200
Assault	2387	2779
Burglary	1073	1337
Larceny	2355	2126
Motor Vehicle Theft	504	403
Damage to Property	1188	1323
DUI	595	479
Disorderly Conduct	449	451
Suspended Ops	985	1227
Kidnapping/Abduction	23	34
Robbery	234	277
Arson	32	50
Fraud	451	505
Stolen Property	29	27
Violation of Controlled Substances	838	1116
Sexual Offenses	21	42
Liquor Violations	398	341
Obstructing Police	145	184
Obstructing Justice	336	358
Weapons Offenses	101	139
Trespass	238	269
Juvenile Runaway	308	331

Furnishing False Information	158	180
Non-Criminal Incident	1248	1652
Total	15653	17190

Figure 2.25 Shows that the City of Lansing crime rate increased by 9.8%.

A second reason for the increase in crime rates in the Baker Donora Neighborhood may be that the Lansing Police Department may have been making their presence more available in the neighborhood in order to “crack down” on crimes in order to prove their commitment to the area. The distinction between the two instances is important because the later relationship may actually prove to benefit the community and eventually cause a decline in crime rates due to the increased police department commitment to the neighborhood. Efforts are being made to eliminate crime in the neighborhood. The Community Focus Center provides “Hot Spots” sheets to the community members to track where crime was witnessed. These “Hot Spots” sheets are submitted to the Lansing Police Department and to the Code Compliance Officer so as to ensure that proper surveillance is occurring. Also, when determining where to invest in housing improvements in the neighborhood, the Great Lansing Housing Coalition refers to the hot spots and tries to invest where the crime is the highest in the area.

Education

Another social condition that can be examined is that of education rates and levels of the community members. It is important to understand where residents peak in their school enrollment as to help assist them in continuing their education, whether it be with high school or college education continuation. The US Census data for the year 2000 was the only data available in terms of educational levels, but this data was gathered at the neighborhood and City of Lansing levels as to provide a general comparison.

When comparing Baker Donora and Lansing in educational attainment, according to the 2000 US Census, there are some important differences. Baker Donora has a slightly larger percent of high school graduates than the City of Lansing. However this is because Lansing has a higher share of people who have attended some college, but have yet to get a degree. This means that there are less people in Baker Donora who are going on to college. Lansing and Baker Donora have the same percentage of people with Associates degrees; however Lansing has a higher percentage of people who are working with a professional degree than in Baker Donora. Baker Donora also has a nine percent higher number of people who have made it to high school, but did not graduate than in Lansing. This data concludes that Baker Donora is behind Lansing in post high school education, with the exception of associate’s degrees.

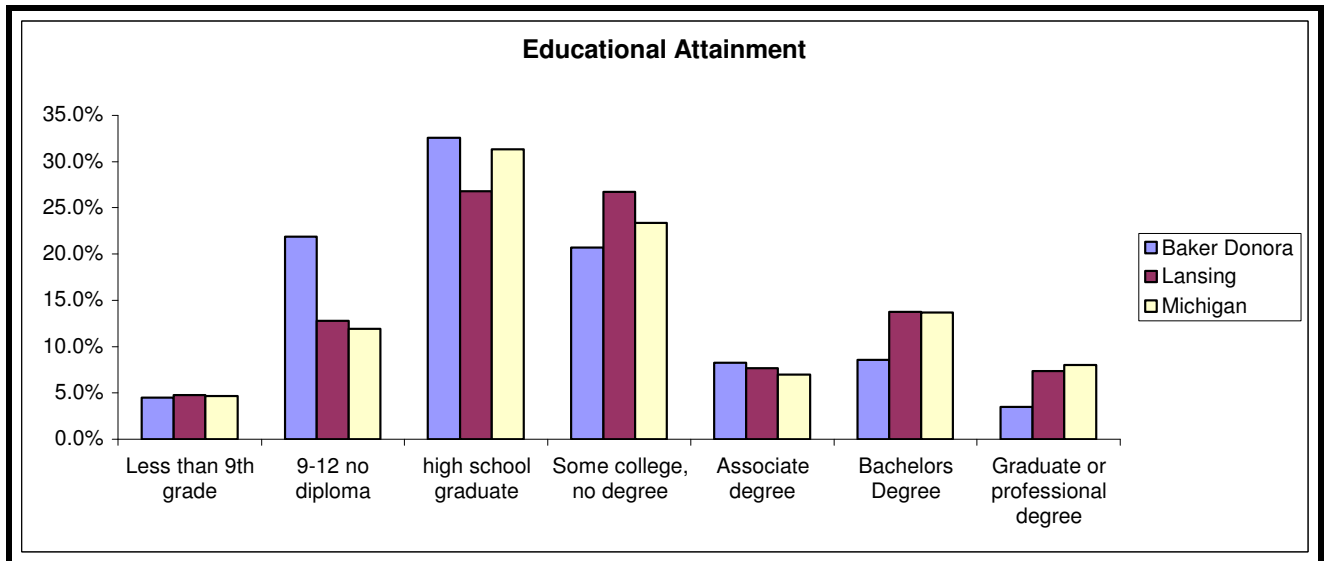


Figure 2.26 Educational Attainment

Finally, the Baker Donora Neighborhood and its focus center have collaborated with partners from the city in order to improve social aspects of the neighborhood. According to the Baker Donora NPP, major project goals included improving economic vitality and financial strength of households and businesses in the target area, establish a framework for active citizen participation and civic responsibility in the Target area that will continue functioning beyond the conclusion of the term of the Memorandum of Understanding, and build a hopeful, supportive, pleasant, and healthy physical and social environment for a diverse population. In order to accomplish these goals, the Baker Donora Focus Center provides programs that encourage the following:

- Community
- Service
- Youth and Families
- Food Preservation
- Parenting
- Health
- Emergency Needs
- Education
- After School and Summer Youth Enrichment Programs

Overall, crime has increased in the City of Lansing as well as the Baker Donora Neighborhood. Educational attainment in the neighborhood is less than that of the City of Lansing, perhaps due to income barriers. However, efforts have been taken by the Baker Donora Focus Center to provide social services to the residents in the form of educational courses, after school programs, health and parenting classes, and even programs that allow for families to use clothes provided by the community center. In short, the Baker Donora Focus Center has dedicated itself to provide human and social services to the community and has been triumphant in its efforts.

Analysis of Phase I Progress

Several objectives were cited in the Memorandum of Understanding, ranging from safety issues all the way through homeownership programs. Specific partners or responsible parties were listed in the MOU to provide commitment to the success of the Neighborhood Preservation Program. In fact, nearly every party has maintained a strong commitment to the area. The City of Lansing and the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition have invested \$1,077,266 into the neighborhood to aid in the improvement of homes and aesthetics. Michigan State University has provided funding and outreach support to the community programs such as the Extreme Street Makeover. Additionally, the Baker Donora Focus Center has provided extensive social programs and services to the neighborhood in hopes of improving community values and living conditions.

To assess the work that been completed, we created a matrix summarizing the progress during Phase I of the NPP. Each issue (or concern) was placed in one of three categories: Completed, Partially Completed, and Not Completed. The area of significant improvement lies in the area of home improvements. Since the beginning of the NPP, 47 homes have been improved. Most of these homes have been sold as affordable housing to homeowners in the area. The program Paint a Place has assisted in improving 13 homes in the area by providing resources and manpower to paint their homes. These high numbers show that nearly 12 homes per year have been improved since the beginning of the program in 2005. That is a very promising number for the future of the Baker Donora Neighborhood and for Phase II of the NPP. Also, a great deal of effort has been made in beautifying the neighborhood and façade improvements through the Extreme Street Makeover Projects. Three blocks were improved during these programs by provided landscaping assistance, painting, and porch and fence repair.

Although there are many challenges that confront the Baker Donora Neighborhood, especially when comparing it to the City of Lansing as a whole, there have been significant improvements within the neighborhood. As our data shows, there are a large amount of tagged homes in the area, which continue to increase. Much of this is due to the high home mortgage foreclosure rates. However, continued commitment to continue to reinvest in the neighborhood through programs such as the Extreme Street Makeover and other aspects of the Neighborhood Preservation Program will continue to improve the condition of the neighborhood housing. Also, housing values have remained consistent in a market that is continually declining. This shows that the improvements made to the neighborhood have made a difference in the housing values.

Although crime rates did increase in the neighborhood, the crime rates did not increase at such a rate as the City of Lansing, which increased more than double the amount of Baker Donora neighborhood since 2004. By maintaining the Neighborhood in Action Community Group, crime rates may begin to decrease

as residents notice that people are committed to improving the community values and safety.

The following matrix details the specific progress made within the Baker Donora Neighborhood from the years 2004 to the beginning of 2008.



Phase I Progress Summary

At the Neighborhood Focus Group Meeting held on Tues, Feb. 24, 2008 at the Baker Donora Community Center, a number of surveys were handed out to those in attendance. The practicum group wanted to take a small sampling of the neighborhood population to get an overall feel of their attitudes about the goals that were set-up in Phase I of the Neighborhood Preservation Plan (NPP). We wanted to know whether they felt that the goals were met, partially met, or unmet and their reasons for those feelings. A total of 20 individuals participated in the survey, and the population was made up of homeowners, tenants, landlords, and business owners. The survey was broken up into several categories and sub-categories. The main categories were Safety, Community, Housing, the Community Center, Beautification, Marketing/Education, and Homebuyer Training & Homeownership.

Safety

The first goal dealt with safety issues in the neighborhood. That issue was further broken down into subcategories including the relationship of the code compliance officer and the Lansing Police Department between the Baker Donora residents in the neighborhood. We wanted to know if the residents felt that there was enough of a visible presence of these agencies in the neighborhood.

Unfortunately, since NPP began back in January of 2004, crime has risen by 4%. This could be partially caused by an increase of crime reporting as a result of the Hot Spot sheets. For instance, Anita Moneypenny-Salinaz is the Baker Donora Focus Center Director, and she in conjunction with David Vincent (the Code Compliance Officer) and George Vincent (an officer on the Lansing Police Department), hand out Hot-Spot sheets to the residents to report any crimes that they witness in their neighborhood. Once the sheets are turned into the community center, Anita, will give them to either David or George, and sometimes both depending upon the resident's concern and the severity of the complaint witnessed. This procedure is followed on a daily basis. According to the survey, the people feel that there is a strong enough presence of both the code compliance officer and the Lansing Police Department in the neighborhood and they feel that crime has gone down compared to before these agencies became involved.

Another concern were the speed of vehicular traffic through the neighborhood. As a result of this concern, two stop signs have been installed in heavy incident areas, and the residents would like to see speed bumps installed too. Lastly, because of Michigan's current economic crisis there has been a significant increase (numbers have doubled according to David Vincent, the Code Compliance Officer) in the number of uninhabitable and foreclosed houses throughout Baker Donora. This is of grave concern to the residents there

because these homes now attract crime and promote other safety issues for the children.

Community

The next goal dealt with how the residents saw their neighborhood after renovations and Extreme Street Makeovers took place throughout the community. The practicum group wanted to see if the makeovers have given enough of a visible change to the appearance of streets and whether or not it has helped to change the general public's opinion of Baker Donora. Because of the information given on the Hot Spot sheets, areas in need were targeted for makeovers, in an effort to reduce crime in those areas. Again, we wanted to get the residents feedback to know if they felt that this was a viable strategy that is working. Our survey found that residents felt this goal was only partially met. They felt that this is an ongoing process that continuously will need to be addressed. Unfortunately, Baker Donora has gotten negative publicity that has stayed with it down through the years, but other neighborhoods in other cities have experienced the same things and were able to turn things around. Baker Donora can do the same, but it may take awhile.

Housing

Housing is an important issue, especially with the nationwide increase in the number of foreclosed homes. In this category, the practicum group wanted to look specifically at "sense of community" as it pertains to the rehabilitation of some of the houses. We wanted to know if they or their neighbors planted flowers or made other efforts to improve the appearance of their property or the community. We wanted to know if the residents have seen an increase in the number of owner occupied houses as opposed to renters in their neighborhoods and if those tenants cared about the outside appearance of where they live.

Because many of the homes are so old, lead poisoning is a major concern and we wanted to know if the residents have ever taken advantage of the workshops to become more informed as to what to do to rid their homes of this danger to them and their family. Another problem plaguing the neighborhood is the safety the safety of front porches. The group wanted to know how many porches have been fixed through the monies provided through NPP.

The residents felt that the Extreme Street Makeovers helped to improve the neighborhood housing on their streets and that they and their neighbors wanted to do more to make their property and the community look more attractive. The homeowners have not seen more of an increase in rentals, which they feel is due to the present economy and the mortgage crisis. Only houses that are sold for over \$5000 are eligible for lead poisoning inspections; therefore the group couldn't tell if the residents were talking about the inspection or if they had gone through a lead poisoning workshop. The residents seemed to feel that the GLHC is doing a pretty good job with fixing the porches.

Community Center

When passing into Baker Donora, you immediately realize that the Focus Center is an important part of the neighborhood. Director Anita Money Penny-Salinez, along with the volunteer staff, offers classes to improve the community. One of the goals of the NPP grant was to provide tools for a community tool shed. The tool shed will be opening this spring, thus the residents feel that the goal was met. The biggest and main goal set was the completion of a new Community Center. Again, certain equipment like chairs, tables, and other equipment were to be provided; along with sports equipment for the children through the grant. And lastly, the practicum group wanted to see if the goal of establishing a neighborhood "Welcome" sign at key Baker Donora entrances had been met. It is obvious to the residents that because the tool shed will be opening this spring that that goal has been met. However, the meeting at the Focus Center made it clear that no progress had been made on the "Welcome" signs. According to Anita Money Penny-Salinez, paperwork has been filled out since 2004, but still no signs have been installed, thus the residents overwhelmingly feel that this goal has not been met. The sports equipment has been purchased through NPP, but the residents would much rather see it used in the new facility that has been promised but not delivered.

Beautification

In the Memorandum of Understanding, the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition (GLHC) set aside \$10,000 from the NPP grant to have a fence installed at the railroad tracks to not only buffer the Community Center and the neighborhood, but as a safety precaution too. Beautification is paramount to any neighborhood attracting potential homeowners, so certain goals under this category were established. Things like funding for front yards improvements (installing grass, bushes, etc) and an annual neighborhood cleanup were to be done. Similarly to the signage problem, the fence has not been installed. The residents have been pleased with both the front yard improvements and the annual neighborhood clean up; therefore, they feel that these goals have been met. Each year the neighborhood gets between 100 and 110 volunteers to go around the neighborhood and pick up and dispose of any trash in the streets or that the residents want to discard. The residents feel that this has been an overwhelming success that always gets a good response.

Marketing and Education

The next goal in the Matrix dealt with Marketing and Education. For this goal, brochures and a website are being created to familiarize all of Lansing and the surrounding areas with the neighborhood. Also, there are a number of classes and services offered at the community center all year long for every age group. There is a space at the Focus Center for anyone who wants to use the internet, and a bus comes through at least once a week to take the children over to the Boys and Girls Club or the YMCA. Additionally, the Focus Center houses a daycare that has been set up for anyone working outside the home that needs someone to take care of their young children. While there are computers

available to the residents, they had hoped for a new printer, digital camera, and a computer consultant who could come in on a regular basis to help them develop their computer skills. For the most part the residents have been very pleased with the services that the community center currently offers, they would just like to see the new one built or at least under construction. They feel that it's a safe place where kids can go to get off the streets and stay out of trouble. One goal that the residents feel is only being partially met is the neighborhood "roundtable" events. An increase in these activities would help to create more leaders within the community and get other residents more involved too. The residents have expressed an interest and would like to be more involved in this type of setting. Fortunately, Ms. Moneypenny-Salinez will be going out of town on three different occasions for training that she believes will help her to train potential leaders in the neighborhood and will help the residents become more self-sufficient while helping to reduce crime at the same time.

Homebuyer Training and Homeownership

The last goal in the Matrix has been somewhat of a challenge because of the slow house sells and foreclosures that are seen nationwide. The practicum group wanted to know if the residents felt that the GLHC had provided enough information (workshops and classes) and put in place enough financial incentives that would encourage someone to purchase one of the renovated homes in Baker Donora. So far, only one person has taken advantage of the down-payment assistance, but hopefully the neighborhood can do something to attract more homeowners to the neighborhood. Another issue is that foreclosures have been occurring more rapidly in the neighborhood among the residents. The major complaint is that the homeowners do not know whom to contact for homeownership assistance. The residents feel that there needs to be someone that can walk them through the entire process.

Summary of Goals

It is clear from the matrix that two main issues in Baker Donora need to be addressed and a big portion of community's attention needs to be on aesthetics and housing. Although the neighborhood is being improved, focus needs to be maintained to continue to improve the aesthetics, housing, and image of the neighborhood. A generally negative perception of the neighborhood continues to overshadow all the progress that is being made. Additionally, the Focus Center and its director have worked hard to put in place all the wonderful programs that help to promote a "sense of place" within the neighborhood. These programs have clearly been the glue that has kept the neighborhood afloat. It is our hope that the Baker Donora neighborhood will succeed by becoming self-sufficient and by not depending upon federal or state funding once Phase II is completed. We believe that this neighborhood can become a safe and prosperous place, where people can live and raise a family.

Furthermore, it is important to note that often times it is difficult to see change in an area when constantly submerged within it, similar to watching a plant grow.

Change doesn't happen over night. But with continued care and effort, the plant eventually becomes fruitful. With this in mind, it is important for the community to maintain hope that their neighborhood will be improved and continue to take small steps to reach these goals. Many steps have been taken as shown by the improvements done to porches, house paintings, and other efforts. Continued effort will provide success in the reaching the goals established in the Neighborhood Preservation Program.

Phase II Recommendations

The main goal of this Practicum Project was to determine recommendations for the implementation of Phase II of the Neighborhood Preservation Program. Now that we have analyzed the current conditions with the success of the Phase I portion of the program, we are ready to provide an analysis that will lead to our recommendations. We will do this by providing a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis for the neighborhood. This analysis can help us to determine goals and recommendations to the neighborhood. Following the SWOT analysis will be the goals that we are seeking to reach through Phase II of the NPP. Also included is a detailed matrix highlighting the partners who should be involved with each task, the time it should take to initiate and complete each task, and the cost associated with each task.

Overall, we want to be able to provide short-term, inexpensive goals to the community to use without incredible assistance from the City of Lansing so as to empower the residents in the neighborhood and those involved in the Neighborhood United in Action. Additionally we hope to provide long-term, more expensive goals in which the City of Lansing can have a larger influence.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis

Based on the analysis of the current conditions in the neighborhood and the improvements that have been made to the area; the Baker Donora Practicum Group provided a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis (SWOT) in order to provide recommendations that will be helpful for Phase II of the Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP).

Strengths:

- A strong “sense of place” exists throughout the neighborhood.
- Many activities are offered year round
- Close proximity to the Potter Park Zoo, CATA bus line, River trail, and the Red Cedar River.
- Has a historical characteristic because it was originally built for the workers at the nearby John Bean building (manufacturing plant).
- Abundance of Affordable housing
- Permanent director at the Focus Center and many volunteers, to help with the day-to-day projects.

Weaknesses:

- A high number of vacant, foreclosed, and tagged homes.
- Low number of owner occupied homes and high amount of rentals
- Many houses are run down and in need of rehabilitation
- Neighborhood has a bad reputation in Lansing
- There is a high rate of unemployed and low-income families that reside in the Baker Donora neighborhood.
- High population of disadvantaged children
- Poor relationship between the residents and the business owners

Opportunities:

- The John Bean Building has over 180 businesses
- Focus Center and the local churches contribute to the cohesion of the neighborhood.
- Abundance of affordable housing available to first-time buyers
- The availability of outside help to make suggestions to strengthen the neighborhood (MSU, LCC, and Cooley Law students, etc.)

Threats:

- Some houses are below the flood plain.
- High crime issues (drug activity, shootings, etc.)
- Poor lightning throughout the neighborhood
- There is a negative perception of Baker Donora
- Because of Michigan’s high unemployment rate, many homes are being Foreclosed upon

Recommendations

The original Baker Donora Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP) Memorandum of Understanding listed a number of goals to be completed within the first four years of the project. Currently, some Phase I goals have been completed while others still leave work to be done. As a result of this, the practicum group has come up with eight short-term goals and three long-term goals. We have also included their accompanying objectives, tasks, timelines, benchmarks, possible partners, and projected costs. Some are continuations of the Phase I goals and some are new ideas from the practicum group. Still, all of them follow very closely to the overarching topics undertaken in Phase I of increasing safety, community, housing, community center space, beautification, marketing and education, and homebuyer training and homeownership.

Short-Term Goals

There are several goals that the Practicum Group views as being short-term goals. Short-term goals can be completed in a relatively short amount of time and most can be accomplished by utilizing assets the Baker Donora neighborhood already possesses, such as the cohesive neighborhood spirit and the Baker Donora Focus Center. The Practicum group sees these goals as a good way to make small, but impactful changes in the Baker Donora neighborhood almost immediately.

Goal 1: Improve Landscape

In the first phase of the NPP of the Baker Donora Neighborhood, it was stated that a goal for the neighborhood was to improve the attractiveness of the neighborhood. We recommend creating a more specific goal for the neighborhood that improves the landscape. The objective of improving landscape in the neighborhood is to improve the aesthetics and the image of the Baker Donora Neighborhood. It is important that these two things are done to the neighborhood in order to help motivate residents.

Spring Cleaning

In order to begin improving the landscape of the neighborhood, there must first be time taken out to do so. A great way to get residents and volunteers involved is to have an annual "Spring Cleaning" for the neighborhood. The Baker Donora Focus Center, Neighbors United in Action, and other community residents would take a week every spring to essentially clean up the neighborhood. It should be held in the spring whenever the weather permits, and should be promoted about a month in advance to local residents and to the media. Effort will be needed to get stores like Wal-Mart or Home Depot to give discounts or donate landscaping tools to the neighborhood in order to support the Spring Cleaning. This program could go into effect this coming year, and it should only require a few weeks of planning and promoting to get it started. Success of the program should be determined after holding the program twice, and by how much in the

neighborhood was fixed up, and lastly by how many people actually participated in it. Costs could range from \$500 (which includes rakes, trash bags, leaf bags, gloves, brooms, etc.) to about \$1,000 which would be only if there was a need to purchase things like a lawn mower or a weed whacker.



Neighborhood Tools

Another recommendation is to acquire some landscaping tools for the community tool shed that will be for resident use. Partners for this program could include the Focus Center and community residents who are willing to donate tools, as well as stores who sell these items for low-cost. The effort could go into effect immediately since there is already a tool shed available for storage. Fliers could be made to ask residents to donate tools they do not use anymore or that they may be willing to lend to the center. Success of the program should be measured after there are enough tools to satisfy members of the community for borrowing purposes. Depending on how many tools are needed for the community, and also what kinds, the cost for this program could begin at about \$100 and end up around \$1,000 over the years with replacing and renewing tools.

Youth Involvement

Youth involvement in landscaping activities is also a recommendation for the neighborhood. Create a landscaping club that gives the youth responsibility for projects in the neighborhood, and in the future might help prevent any vandalism that may occur because of youth. This will also help with the beautification efforts for the neighborhood. The Focus Center, community residents and youth are needed for this project. As soon as the weather permits, the program can begin, giving the youth small projects within the neighborhood to work on together. Signs could be made to explain their work. Success for this program relies on how many youth participate in the program. There should be at least a

25 percent turnout rate from neighborhood youth. However, this program will not cost anything to start.

Curb Cleanup Program

A Curb Cleanup program should be initialized in the neighborhood to help with landscaping efforts. This includes proper disposal of wastes and things like furniture that are put out to the curb. The Focus Center, community residents, and the city of Lansing waste management services should partner to make the program successful. The program should take about one year in order for it to make any progress. There should be flyering done by the focus center to announce leaf pickup, waste pickup, and recycling pickup. At least 30 percent of the residents should participate in one of these areas in order to make the effort successful.

Tree Planting Program

Another recommendation for the neighborhood is tree-planting. The community should at least plant 10 trees a year in the neighborhood. Community residents along with the Focus Center can get together to accomplish this goal. Every year the neighborhood should have a tree-planting day, which will help with the environment and aesthetics of the neighborhood. The goal of planting 10 trees should be met each year. Costs vary depending on what types of trees are used. There are also grants available through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for trees.



Goal 2: Beautify Entrance to Neighborhood

In the first phase of the NPP, some of the goals for the Baker Donora Neighborhood focused on improving the attractiveness of the neighborhood for the benefit of its residents, potential residents, businesses and investors. A great

way to accomplish this goal is to create both a main and secondary entrance into the neighborhood that will enhance the neighborhood in a positive way. This goal was not specifically mentioned in the NPP, however plans were made for neighborhood signs, and the plans have not yet been carried out. A goal for the entrances should be specifically stated in the phase II of the NPP, and it should be put as a top priority, because not only will it identify the neighborhood with a positive image from outsiders, but it will also create pride from the residents.

Neighborhood Signage

The first thing that should be done at these entrances is to create an identifiable sign for the neighborhood. The sign should represent all that the neighborhood means to its residents. A larger sign should be at the main entrance, and a smaller sign should be at the secondary entrance. The Focus Center will need a lot of cooperation from the City of Lansing in order to get this completed. These signs should be completed and ready to put up by 2009. According to the NPP, the grant money from the City of Lansing will pay for these costs.

There is a second part to the sign effort. Community residents should create a committee that will put together a design and slogan that represent the neighborhood. These two things will create a positive image for the neighborhood by representing residents as well as introducing future residents to the neighborhood. This should be done immediately, and it should only take the committee about a month to deliberate and vote for the display and slogan.



Signage Lighting

There should also be an emphasis on lighting for the area of the entrances. It is important to catch attention, will help to eliminate vandalism at night. Baker Donora will have to buy some type of outdoor lighting like spotlights to help

enhance the entrance. The City of Lansing and Baker Donora Focus Center will have to partner together to find ways to pay the costs. Partnering up with stores like Home Depot could also help lower costs. Lighting should be the last aspect added to the project. Within a year of putting the signs up in the designated entrances, lighting should be in place. There should be a maintenance check once a year to change bulbs and check for vandalism. Depending on how many lights used and the size, costs may vary. Additionally, maintenance will be required to ensure the signs continue to show the neighborhood in a positive light.

Signage Landscaping

Lastly, there should be some moderate amount of landscaping involved with the entrances, like planting flowers or plants, and adding woodchips or stones. The Focus Center can get volunteers and residents to help with this project. This should get completed as soon as the sign is put up. The costs will vary for this project from about \$50 to \$200, depending on what the residents would like to do with the area.

Goal 3: Create a Buffer Between the Neighborhood, Train Tracks, and John Bean Building

Our goal is to develop buffers along the railroad and surrounding John Bean building for improving aesthetics and increasing housing value in the Baker Donora neighborhood. Fences constructed of shrubs, barriers, steel or wood bars, landscaping elements, etc. should be placed along the railroad and John Bean building. We should cooperate and negotiate with the State Council of Michigan, Planning Commission of Lansing, county road commissions, and landowners. This project should take between 6 months and 1 year. The length of buffer along the railroad should be 25 to 30 meters and the buffer surrounding the John Bean building should be 10 to 15 meters. It is estimated that the average cost of developing the buffer will be \$80 to \$100 per foot. Possible funding for this project could come from the Lansing Public Service Department.



Goal 4: Improve Streetscape

Baker Donora's strongest asset is its "sense of community." One of the best ways to emphasize the uniqueness of any neighborhood is to improve the streetscapes. Phase I of the Neighborhood Preservation Plan (NPP) provided for the makeovers of some of the houses throughout the neighborhood, but there still needs to be an increase in the overall aesthetics and image of Baker Donora. There should be something that is unique only to this neighborhood and which would make it stand out from the rest of the community.

Bench Art Contest

One task to help improve the neighborhood streetscapes and to keep the streets clean, is to put on a two month long contest, that would be underwritten by the Lansing Art Gallery. The timeline for this contest is one month or less to contact the Lansing Art Gallery for a list of local artists and another month to collect the supplies. The benchmark for the starting date of this competition is either the end of April or the beginning of May. Local artists and the news media would be invited to BAKER DONORA to cover the event and interview the artists as they decorate park benches and trash receptacles. Lastly, at the end of the news broadcast the winner would be announced live. Those same benches and receptacles would be placed at nearby bus stops and the Caesar Donora Park. Home improvement businesses like Menards, Home Depot, and Lowe's would be contacted to determine if they would donate the materials. The estimated costs for this event would range from \$795.00 (for five benches) to \$1590.00 (for 10 benches). The receptacles would range from \$40 to \$400. If these businesses are unwilling to donate the materials, the Lansing Art Gallery could be asked to donate panels on which neighborhood businesses, patrons of the arts, family, friends, etc., could sponsor each artist.



Mural Painting

Another way to invite the public into Baker Donora and change the overall image of the neighborhood is to have the children design, paint murals, and place them

strategically at the main entrances leading into Baker Donora making them the focal point in the park. The timeline for this project would only be during the summer months and local artists along with MSU and LCC students could volunteer once or twice a week to help the children complete the task by summer's end. To enact this project, the residents and children could have a letter writing campaign to contact local dignitaries and the Lansing State Journal to see if they would do a write-up in the newspaper. In addition, there could be a ribbon cutting ceremony featuring Lansing City Officials and some of the children as one of the murals are placed at either the Pennsylvania Street or Cedar Street entrances into Baker Donora. Realistically, a mural could be completed each month, and by the end of the summer, the children will have completed 3 or 4 murals. Again, creative financing and persistence would have to be implemented by the volunteers who would either write letters or make phone calls to get businesses like O'Leary's Paint, Home Depot, and Lowe's involved through donations or sponsorship.

Birdhouse Decoration

To promote a sense of community among the residents, birdhouses could be decorated and painted by the residents who would give them away to their neighbors. The Lansing Art Gallery, MSU, and LCC students could be involved to help the residents get the birdhouses completed during the summer months. This project could last for years and be enacted immediately. The entire neighborhood could get involved in this project, especially the senior citizens. The birdhouses can be pre-made from either Michael's or any craft store for no more than \$20. It should take no more than two months to gather all of the supplies needed and to make the phone calls to determine sponsorship. Depending on the number of people involved, the residents should be able to finish around 50 birdhouses between the months June and August.

Porch Light Giveaway

Lastly, to make the neighborhood safe for people to walk at night, there could be an ongoing light bulb giveaway (energy saver) campaign where the lighting is improved throughout the community as a result of residents are keeping their porch lights on all night. Consumer's Energy and the Lansing Board of Water & Light (LBWL) could donate energy saver light bulbs to the residents three or four times a year. The campaign could have a slogan like "Light your neighborhood – one porch at a time" or "save a life and keep your porch light on through the night." Volunteers could go door-to-door handing out the bulbs and encouraging the residents to take part in the campaign. If Consumer's Energy or the LBWL does not want to donate the bulbs, then grants might be available for neighborhoods that want to reduce crime in their community. The cost of the energy saver bulbs at Home Depot is about eight dollars for a pack of two (therefore 700 bulbs (one per household) would cost \$6,000).

Goal 5: Improve Housing Condition and Occupancy

Due to the decline and bad reputation in Baker Donora Neighborhood, the goal of increasing home ownership and occupancy is very important. In order to implement this goal, there are six tasks.

Mortgage Program

The first task is implementing a loan program to provide easy access to home mortgage loan program. The City of Lansing and the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority (MSHDA) will provide low interest loans on housing improvements for low-income homeowners. Due to the bad economic environment of Michigan, it will help homeowners throughout the mortgage and financing problem. This program will last five years, provide up to \$100,000 per household and aid 10 households a year. The funding will be from the Development Office Housing Rehabilitation Program, Community Development Block Grants, and MSHDA funds.

Mortgage Education

The second task is concerned with the education programs on mortgage loan, housing financing, insurance and maintenance. These objectives will help people to better use resources to solve their housing issues, in this case to increase home ownership. These objectives include providing assistance to home insurance, acquiring a housing counselor and providing education on housing mortgage and maintenance. The City of Lansing, the Baker Donora Focus Center and MSHDA will be the major partners to help to execute this task. This program will last five years and comprise with several workshops, monthly community meetings, particular help meetings and the appointment with professional housing counselors. This task will approximately need \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year, and the costs will be covered by CDBG funds and Ingham County MSU Extension Services.

Housing Revitalization Program

The third task is to improve housing condition, which is implemented by the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition (GLHC). This Housing Revitalization program will improve the reputation of Baker Donora Housing and then increase home ownership. It will last another five years for Phase II and have a goal of renovating five houses per year. GLHC will be asked to provide funds of up to \$100,000 per house.



Extreme Street Makeover

The fourth task is to improve appearance of the front porch and steps of homes as well as street improvement. The Extreme Street Makeover Program, already implemented in Phase I, will continue to be executed by the Baker Donora Focus Center and the City of Lansing to beautify the appearance of the community. This task will use the CDBG and MSHDA money to renovate two blocks per year in Baker Donora Neighborhood in the next five years for Phase II.

Help Room and Give Center

The fifth task is to establish a Help Room and Take and Give Center to improve tenure and enhance the sense of the community. The establishment of Help Room is to offer daily and emergency help to neighborhood residents, and the Take and Give Center will accept residents' donations and classify them for other residents' needs. This task will need one to two years to establish two 200 square foot rooms in new Baker Donora Community Center, and need approximately \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year for the facilities and support staff. Ingham County MSU Extension Services and the Baker Donora Focus Center will take charge of this project and provide the funds.

Gymnasium and Computer Lab

The sixth task is to establish a gym and computer lab in the new Baker Donora Community Center. According to enhance the community's infrastructure, it will improve tenure and the sense of community. While this was a goal listed in Phase I, this program should be implemented in the next five years, and the Baker Donora Focus Center and the City of Lansing will take charge on this project as well as Ingham County MSU Extension Services will provide some of funds for the facilities and staffs. Because of the large amount of funds needed, the particular scenario still needs to be determined.

Goal 6: Create a Connection Between the Baker Donora Neighborhood and Potter Park Zoo

The sixth goal is to create a connection between the Baker Donora neighborhood and the Potter Park Zoo. In Phase I, the overarching goals of beautification and marketing are discussed. Providing this trail would promote the visibility and image of the Baker Donora neighborhood. Additionally, it would add signage and landscaping that would increase the beauty of the area. In order to accomplish this, the tasks of putting signs in neighborhood directing traffic toward Potter Park and put signs on the River Trail that direct traffic toward Baker Donora should be accomplished within one year of Phase II implementation. Additionally, funding was already allocated for projects similar to these in the Phase I goals, so this project should also be nearly free of expense to the neighborhood. Finally, the Baker Donora neighborhood should continue its partnership with the City of Lansing in order to accomplish this goal.



Goal 7: Increase Homeownership

One of the goals in the NPP Memorandum was to improve the conditions of the neighborhood housing and the housing value. We have comprised six objectives that will be included in Phase II portion of this plan, these consist of increasing the housing exterior appearance, educate members of the neighborhood on home improvement tips, flood proofing, and preventing lead exposure. Also the neighborhood should take steps to improve the streetscape and porch aesthetics.

Paint Homes

The first objective is to increase housing exterior appearance and value; we plan on doing this by painting homes within the neighborhood between the months of May and September. By painting one house per month for four months, volunteers will be needed. The estimated cost per home is \$200 to \$500, this is a very feasible goal, and homes through out the neighborhood have already been painted and have been a success.

Home Improvement Education

The second objective is to educate members of the community about home improvement tips, programs and grants. If a class is implemented on fundamental methods to enhance the homes appearance, this will enable community members to take initiative and make small to intermediate improvements to there homes their selves. Also the class will teach and inform the homeowners how to apply and receive grants from the city. By holding one public meeting monthly and send out flyers for six months, this will be an efficient way inform the whole community on available money and programs. The Baker Donora Focus Center was very good in enlightening the community on ways they could improve there during phase I, in Phase II we plan on expanding on what the Focus Center started and educating the neighborhood on way to receive grants and funding for home improving.



Extreme Street Makeovers

The third objective is to enhance aesthetics of the streets through out the Baker Donora neighborhood. The Extreme Street Makeovers have been a huge success during Phase I, and we plan on continuing and build on the progress already made. For the next two years, if one street per year is made over majority of the neighborhood will have been improved. During Phase I, Pontiac and Ada streets were made over, costing approximately \$4,000 to \$9,000. This was funded by MSHDA and other local funds.

Floodplain Education

The fourth objective is to educate residents who live in the flood plain about flood proofing techniques and NFIA insurance. In Phase II we plan to have a class implemented to notify and inform community members whole live in the flood plain area on flood prevention. The Focus Center can also accommodate these meetings. There are future plans to tear convert the flood plain area into green space, however a flood in a 100-year flood plain can occur at any time. We feel within six months, holding one meeting a month will adequate enough to inform residents who live in the flood plain on flood proofing techniques and preventions.

Pre-mediate Lead-Paint Hazards

The fifth objective is to Pre-mediate lead-paint hazards. This program started up again on January 1st, 2008. Some residents already have become certified in lead-paint prevention at the end of the class. During Phase II we plan on expanding the knowledge of lead prevention through the focus center, holding public monthly meetings for six months will allow the whole community to become educated in the dangers of lead in homes and methods of prevention.

Front Porch Improvement

Objective six is to improve the safety and appearance of front porches and steps of homes through out Baker Donora. Phase I has already made progress towards this goal, through the NPP grant; roughly 10 porches have been renovated. Repairing two to five porches per year for three to five years will be a practical length of time to complete this goal. \$200 to \$500 is the estimated cost of refurbishing each porch.



Goal 8: Increase Employment and Entrepreneur Opportunities

The eighth goal is to create a business association that will include any home-based businesses in the neighborhood. The Phase I goals do not touch on this aspect of the neighborhood directly. However, one of the goals is to “develop marketing tools and a website” and a neighborhood business association would help positively promote the businesses in the area. This goal is comprised of one objective- to promote business leadership within the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Business Association

In order to accomplish this, there are two sets of tasks. The first involves compiling a comprehensive list of businesses in the neighborhood and then drafting a charter for the association to follow within one year. The second set of tasks is to put the association into action. Within two years of the implementation of Phase II, the association should be distributing newsletters on a regular basis and also helping to educate members on business funding opportunities. The total cost of this goal should be relatively low. The only cost should be in printing the newsletters. However, the Focus Center has a copy machine, and if possible, it could be printed there for virtually no cost. Additionally, the business association could partner with the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Lansing Chamber of Commerce.

Long-Term Goals

There are a number of recommendations that the Practicum group is providing that require action from parties outside of the Baker Donora Neighborhood including the City of Lansing Planning and Development Departments, the Ingham County Land Bank Authority, the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition, and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Federal Emergency Management Authority, Michigan State University, etc. Due to this fact, some of the following recommendations lend themselves to becoming rather long-term goals for the community and the City of Lansing to upkeep. However, it is believed that by implementing some of these recommendations, the state of the neighborhood will improve when combined with the other more local and short-term recommendations that the community residents can utilize.

Goal 1: Eliminate Flood Risks to Homes Within the Flood Plain

Considering that large portion of Baker Donora lies within the floodplain, there remains a large risk of flood damage to the area homes, which becomes incredibly costly to repair and maintain. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has strict regulations in place regarding structures built within the floodplain. In fact, development is severely limited. On top of that, Baker Donora has a high number of tagged homes within the neighborhood, some of which lie in the floodplain. In order to conquer all of these problems, the Practicum Group offers a recommendation that requires multi-agency cooperation to create an overall community benefit.

Demolish or Redevelop Tax-Foreclosed Homes

The Ingham County Land Bank works to either redevelop or demolish tax-foreclosed homes and can utilize Brownfield funding to do such projects. FEMA works to reduce the amount of flooding threats that affect properties and provides assistance in doing so. The Greater Lansing Housing Coalition works to acquire and redevelop homes that can be marketable with considerable work for affordable housing opportunities. The City of Lansing has several different departments that are interested in not only reducing flooding threats, but also reducing the number of tagged homes and increasing the amount of greenspace and park land available to communities. Considering the interconnectedness of these agencies to the Baker Donora floodplain situation, it makes complete sense to create a partnership with the mentioned agencies to acquire property (GLHC and Land Bank), demolish the homes, especially tagged and tax-foreclosed properties (FEMA, Land Bank) and redevelop as parkland or greenspace (City of Lansing). This type of partnership would work to solve a multiple of problems by maximizing agency resources. Tagged and tax-reverted homes would be demolished, which would reduce the flooding threats to homes and the overall cost associated with floodplain repair. Also, greenspace would be created along the Red Cedar River, which is one asset to the Baker Donora Neighborhood that is currently not being utilized. One simple demolition could create a public access point to the river where residents could partake in various recreation opportunities. By combining several parcels together, an entire riverfront park could be created to create a wonderful draw to the community directly adjacent to the river walk trail.



As mentioned above, the partners involved would be the City of Lansing, the Ingham County Land Bank Authority, the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition, and FEMA. Also, residents would be involved in the park development stages. This type of program would take 1 year to begin to implement, but nearly 5-7 years before actual parkland and riverfront access is developed to its full potential. Considering that it costs nearly \$10,000 for demolition of one home, and with a benchmark of 3 homes per year for 5 years, the overall cost of the program

would be \$150,000 with 15 total homes removed from the floodplain and converted to parkland. Considering the funding available to each agency involved, this type of cost could be easily covered.

Goal 2: Increase Homeownership

As mentioned before, only 50 percent of the parcels in Baker Donora are home owner- occupied. Homeowners provide stability to a neighborhood and generally perform maintenance and upkeep on the homes on a consistence basis. One of the original goals of the Neighborhood Preservation Program was to increase home ownership, which was not accomplished in the four years of the Phase I implementation. As a goal to increase home ownership in the neighborhood to promote a more stable community with longer tenure, there are several options that can be utilized by multiple agencies.

MSU Home Buyer Program

The first recommendation involves developing a MSU Home Buyer Program. An MSU Home Buyer Program would encourage university staff to purchase homes within the Baker Donora Neighborhood in order to receive assistance and incentives for purchasing the homes. The University and the City of Lansing could provide incentives in the form of down-payment assistance or a yearly contribution to the annual mortgage payments. The assistance would be provided with the stipulation that the homes are improved and maintained and with a certain time commitment to the area. This type of program would greatly improve the neighborhood by not only increasing home ownership, but also allowing a professional population into the neighborhood to perhaps contribute to the overall image of the neighborhood. Currently, the program could be marketed for the service oriented university staff that may be in the market for a starter home, including janitorial staff, parking maintenance staff, and other full-time, lower income staff on the MSU campus. As the quality of the neighborhood improves through other efforts, the program could be marketed to more professional staff.



In order for this type of program to be successful, a plan of action determining the extent of funding assistance to the potential homeowner is mandatory. It is suggested that MSU and the City of Lansing both contribute \$10,000 per home to the University staff purchasing the home in Baker Donora. Also, a strong marketing campaign is required to make sure that employees are aware of the program and the benefits provided to them for purchasing the home. But before the program can be completely successful, continued improvement of the overall neighborhood aesthetics and image is necessary not only from the current residents, but also from the agencies already committed to the Neighborhood Preservation Program.

The partners and stake holders involved in this type of program include Michigan State University and the City of Lansing who could both match funds to contribute to the overall assistance provided to the potential home owner. Other stakeholders may include Lansing Community College decision makers to develop a similar program, and also the current residents. The overall cost of implementing a MSU Home Buyer Program is determinate on the level of funding provided to the potential homebuyers. It is recommended to invest \$20,000 per home in assistance. Other program costs could include the time and personnel necessary to market the program, which could amount to nearly \$5,000, which would be a one-time expenditure. Setting a benchmark of five homes per year for five years being sold to university staff utilizing an MSU Home Buyer Program would result in an overall cost of \$550,000 and 25 homes sold to staff and improved within the neighborhood. This sounds like a lot of money, but this cost will be split among several different agencies.

Police and Teacher Next Door Programs

The second recommendation to aid in the increase of home ownership is a Police and Teacher Next Door Program. This type of program was utilized in specific target neighborhoods in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and proved to be quite successful in increasing home ownership and reducing crime rates. The logistics of the program include offering newly improved homes to local police officers and teachers before putting the homes on the market for the general public. Incentives for the police and teachers include down payment assistance and tax incentives for a specified number of years with the stipulation that the house is improved and maintained consistently. This is a reasonable program for the Baker Donora neighborhood due to the fact that police and teachers are public servants with relatively limited levels of income. However, they are respected professionals that will not only provide as a neighborhood watch to improve the image of the community, but also make general housing improvements to their homes.

Potential stakeholders involved in this type of program include the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition, who can reserve homes that they improve on the market for a set period of time for police officers and teachers before opening the sale of the property to the general public. Also, the Lansing Police Department

and the Lansing Public Schools Teachers Union would be involved in the program to ensure that employees are aware of the program. The City of Lansing could provide incentives to the potential homebuyers in the form of down payment assistance (\$10,000) or tax incentives, which could be utilized through CDBG funds or MSHDA assistance. Other stakeholders include the local residents and the teachers and police officers themselves. Without considering the cost to the GLHC of redeveloping a home (typically \$50-75,000 per home) the program will be relatively inexpensive to administer. With setting a benchmark of three homes sold through the program for five years and providing a \$10,000 incentive per home, the program cost of implementation is \$150,000 and 15 homes sold to police officers and teachers in a five-year time span.

Goal 3: Increase Employment Opportunities

Considering the current state of Michigan's economy and the high unemployment rate, it is important that residents have opportunities to make a living to be able to support themselves in today's society. Baker Donora residents are at another disadvantage with having lower education levels, it is incredibly important that there are opportunities available for them. This report does not seek to recommend commercial uses within the neighborhood due to the lack of a market analysis and the potential demand; however, this report fully supports the employment of entrepreneur efforts among the residents that may potentially serve the community. Some of these types of efforts could include day cares, barbershops, technical/computer services, and other in-home businesses. With the current zoning being mostly Single Family Residential, it is often difficult and costly to obtain permits to convert portions of homes to business operations. This setback leads to the following recommendation.

Entrepreneur Overlay District

An Entrepreneur Overlay District for the Baker Donora Neighborhood would allow for residents to have greater ease in converting portions of their home to a business endeavor that requires a small amount of real estate but could be accommodated within the home. The overlay district would create specific specifications in the conversion of homes to businesses and remove the requirement of having to obtain a Special Use Permit for certain business practices in the area, or waiving the fee associated with the Special Use Permit. Instead of creating more increased development standards like many overlay districts do, this type of overlay would require standards that are inexpensive and relatively easy to comply with so that residents can successfully transition portions of their home into a business. The district could provide funding for any entrepreneurial efforts or assistance in the conversion process. Marketing of this type of program is necessary so that residents become bold enough to start a home operated business.

In order to create an Entrepreneur District, the City of Lansing must assess the current development standards for the Single Family Residential Zone and consider what types of standards are appropriate for a system that promotes

home businesses. Implementation may take as many as 5 years to work its way through the administrative process and become an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. Other stakeholders include the residents and the Baker Donora Focus Center who can provide entrepreneur classes and assistance to those interested in becoming business owners and operators. The overall cost of implementation remains with the City of Lansing administrative staff time and wage costs for developing such a district.

Conclusion

The Practicum group has prepared an extensive list of goals and their associated objectives, tasks, timelines, benchmarks, possible partners, and projected costs that we hope the Baker Donora neighborhood to find useful. By separating the goals into two sections- short and long-term goals, and by incorporating the overlying themes from Phase I, we hope the goals are easy to pursue and execute as a successful Phase II plan.

The following is a detailed matrix summarizing the tasks needed to complete the goals at hand, the partners involved, the time needed to complete each project, and the cost of each task. The matrix is intended to provide a quick glance of the recommendations and can be used for quick reference.

Final Summary

Overall, the Neighborhood Preservation Program needs to continue making improvements to the Baker Donora Neighborhood in the City of Lansing. The neighborhood has many strengths and opportunities that can help move the program forward, such as its strong community unity, the Community Focus Center, and the level of commitment that stakeholders are exhibiting through the Neighborhood Preservation Program. Many of the weaknesses and threats to the neighborhood have begun to be resolved with the improvements that have been made to the housing stock via rehabilitation programs available to the neighborhood. In total, combined with the City of Lansing CBDG program, the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition, and the Paint-a-Place Program, 47 homes have been improved or completely rehabilitated. This shows incredible improvements in the neighborhood in only 4 years. Also, the Community Focus Center has provided numerous enrichment programs to the community in the form of after school programs and homeowner assistance programs. This level of improvement should bring hope to the neighborhood residents as they continue to work towards their goals during Phase II of the Neighborhood Preservation Program.

Areas where improvements and focus should be allocated still remain in the condition of the housing stock as well as neighborhood aesthetics. As the data shows, there have been an increased amount of tagged homes in the neighborhood which will encourage blight, declined property values, and crime. A focus should be made on the tagged homes in Phase II when implementing housing rehabilitation projects to not only begin to eliminate the number of tagged homes, but also promote home ownership. Also, the data also shows a high number of foreclosed homes, which according to David Vincent, the Code Compliance Officer in the neighborhood, contributes to the high number of tagged homes. By providing foreclosure assistance programs to the neighborhood to help prevent foreclosures, perhaps the neighborhood can maintain their homes and not be subject to foreclosures. When deciding on rehabilitation projects, perhaps the City of Lansing and the greater Lansing Housing Coalition can chose to rehabilitate the foreclosed homes before they become neighborhood eye-sores. Aesthetic Improvements include several simple measures including incorporation of a sign and slogan in increase the image of the neighborhood, as well as the addition of benches, lighting, murals, etc. Overall, aesthetics and home improvements are the two most pressing issues that can be accomplished within the neighborhood. Another major focus should be on the reduction of crimes in the area to increase the safety of the residents.

Finally, in Phase II, the Practicum Group recommends maintaining the original goals of Phase I and continue working towards those goals with a more clear focus as to who is responsible for specific tasks and what tasks are required to achieve a goal. Other recommendations were provided in the form of short term

and long-term goals. The short-term goals are intended for the neighborhood residents to be able to easily achieve with minimal resources in order to see results in a short amount of time. Some recommendations are specific, while others can be catered to the specific party involved with the tasks. The long-term goals are intended for action to be made from various City agencies, including the City of Lansing Planning Department, the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition, Michigan State Housing Development Authority, and the Public Service Departments. Their involvement in the long-term projects is crucial in making major and significant changes to the neighborhood.

To reiterate an important fact, it is incredibly vital that all partners remain committed to the improvement of the neighborhood, especially the residents. As mentioned above, often times it is difficult to see change as it happens when immersed within the neighborhood, but like a plant, change takes time and energy and commitment. With time, hard work, hope and commitment the Baker Donora Neighborhood will continue to improve and blossom into a wonderful place for residents to live and play.

Appendix

Tools for Implementation

There are many different tools the Baker Donora neighborhood can utilize in implementing the goals outlined by the Practicum group. The following is a list of possible programs Baker Donora can make use of.

Housing Programs

City of Lansing:

Development Office Housing Rehabilitation Program:

This program provides 0% loans on housing improvements for low-income neighborhoods. Improvements that are included are roof replacement, window replacement, lead abatement, and exterior painting.

Lead Free Lansing:

The City of Lansing provides up to \$8000 for the removal of lead in homes with children under 6 years old. The program is limited to low-income homeowners and must be met with a 25% match of funding.

State of Michigan:

Michigan State Housing Development Authority:

Home Owner Programs: Homeowners are given opportunities to take out loans for any type of improvement to the house with very low interest rates.

Non-Owner Occupied PIP Program:

Landlords are allowed to take out MSHDA loans up to \$100,000 depending on the number of units in the building. These improvements must be used for overall building improvements.

Michigan State Health Department:

Healthy Homes University: This program provides funds for specific home repair in homes with children with asthma. The funds can only be used for very specific repairs that improve the overall air quality of the home. This program has funding through the end of 2008.

Greater Lansing Housing Coalition:

The Greater Lansing Housing Coalition has had a major impact on the improvement of homes in the Baker Donora neighborhood. Using MSHDA and other local funds, the GLHC has acquired and redeveloped several different houses within the neighborhood. The Coalition also provides resources for redevelopment projects such as the Extreme Street Makeover Project that aimed to improve housing exteriors on a block-by-block basis.

Allen Street Neighborhood Center:

The Allen Street Neighborhood is a CDC for the Allen Street neighborhood, which lies adjacent to Baker Donora. Although it was not intended to provide resources for the Baker Donora Neighborhood, the CDC still provides community assistance. Programs include homeowner counseling, parenting programs, and community tool sharing.

The Baker Donora Community Center:

The Baker Donora Community Center is the driving force behind community redevelopment efforts. General assistance is available to the community in terms of housing assistance programs, and social and educational programs. The Baker Donora Community Center currently offers the following housing services to its residents:

- Housing Task forces
- Neighborhood Preservation Program
- Home Ownership Classes
- Budgeting
- Home Repair Workshops
- Land Foreclosure
- Bank Foreclosure
- Senior and Special Needs Fix Up Programs
- Ramp Program
- Extreme Street Make Over Program
- Landscaping Workshops
- Senior and Special Needs lawn Care program
- Snow Angels program
- Paint a Place

Social Programs of Baker Donora

These are Programs geared towards community development and leadership. A strong community base is important in the Baker Donora Neighborhood, and building a sense community requires citizenship participation.

Service: Service in Baker Donora is required from its residents, it is important that the whole community takes part in helping with re-building the neighborhood.

Youth & Families: These programs are created to help with growth in relationships between the youth and families in the neighborhood.

Food Preservation: These programs help families and residents with proper preservation techniques for their food.

Parenting: These programs are offered to help parents with skills in handling their children properly.

Health: Health is important in Baker Donora; these programs give access to important health tips for families and residents in the neighborhood.

Emergency Needs: It is important that families in Baker Donora get the help that they need in case of an emergency. These programs provide things such as extra food, clothes, and linen when needed.

Education: Education is important for every single resident of Baker Donora, and these programs help residents with getting their GED, college prep, and other various learning tools.

After School & Summer Youth Enrichment Programs: The Baker Donora Neighborhood cares for its youth by providing activities that will help enrich young minds. These programs help keep youth busy and positive.

Baker Donora Zoning Definitions:

“B” Residential District

Permitted Uses: Single-family detached dwellings with minimum lot size of 4,000 square feet.

Use by Special Condition and Special Land Use Permit: The same as above.

“C” Residential District

The intent of the “C” Residential District is to provide lots for moderate density two-family dwellings. The district is designed to do all of the following:

Permitted Uses: Single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings with lot area per unit as follows:

Efficiency – 2,400 sq. ft.

1 bedroom – 2,800 sq. ft.

“H” Light Industrial

The intent of the “H” Light Industrial District is to permit the construction or conversion of structures and the use of land for the purpose of manufacturing, processing, compounding, packaging, assembling or treatment of items permitted by this section within an enclosed structure.

Permitted Uses: Manufacture of already processed components such as bakeries, cosmetics, candies, tool, die and machine shops, manufacture of toys, furniture, appliances, truck terminals, metal forging, dry cleaning plants, laundries, laboratories, lumber yards, and contractor storage yards.

Use by Special Condition: Trade school, child day care, museum, library, animal hospital, kennel, car trailer and RV sales, heliport, heavy auto repair.

Use by Special Land Use Permit: Church, drive-in theater, other storage yards, research laboratory, and residential uses.

“I” Heavy Industrial

The intent of the “I” Heavy Industrial District is to permit the construction or conversion of structures and the use of land for the purpose of manufacturing, processing, and compounding of semi-finished or finished products from raw materials, as well as from previously prepared materials.

Permitted Uses: Power plants, manufacture of automobile parts and car assembly, industrial scrap metal processing, cleaning, processing, servicing, or repair of any product.

Use by Special Condition: Same as “H” Light Industrial District, adding all outdoor storage yards and salvage yards.

Use by Special Land Use Permit: Church, drive-in theater, sanitary landfill, mining, junk yard, research laboratory, and residential uses.

“F” Commercial

The intent of the “F” Commercial District is to allow general retail commercial use.

Permitted Uses: General retail uses (i.e., comparison retail, theater, hotel) as well as convenience retail and office uses.

Use by Special Condition: Accessory residential uses at “DM-3” density, hospital, clinic, animal hospital, kennel, and vehicle sales.

Use by Special Land Use Permit: Similar to “D-1” District.

* Data gathered from City of Lansing Zoning Code

Cost Estimate Information for Phase II Recommendations

Goal 1: Improve Landscape

Free Wood Chips Offered from the Parks and Forestry Division, City of Lansing

<http://www.cityoflansingmi.com/parks/forestry/programs.jsp>

Costs of Landscaping Tools

<http://www.homegardenandpatio.com/curb/landscaping.htm>

Curbside Collection, Frequently Asked Questions, City of Lansing

<http://www.cityoflansingmi.com/pubserv/wastereduction/index.jsp>

Tree Planting Grants, State of Michigan

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10371_10402-187906--,00.html

Costs of Trees

<http://www.naturehills.com/catalog/Trees.aspx>

Goal 2: Beautify entrance to the neighborhood

Outdoor Lighting Costs

http://www.lampsplus.com/Products/s_clearance-Landscape/

Goal 3: Create Buffer between neighborhood, train tracks, and John Bean Building

Cost info source:

(<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE4D8163BF937A35755C0A967958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>)

The projection will experience 6 months-1 year.

The width of buffer along the railroad should be 25 - 30 meters

(<http://www.tzjs.com.cn/news/2006-6-7/1149665472740.html>) and surrounding John Beam building should be 10 - 15 meters. (<http://www.dpchina.com/zbd/dhlkzxgh/05.htm>).

It is estimated that the average cost of developing buffer will be \$80-100 for a foot (<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE4D8163BF937A35755C0A967958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>).

Goal 4: Improve Streetscape

www.homedepot.com

Model: 9052- 16

(Teak Bench)

Price: \$149.00 + .06 = \$ 157.94

www.homedepot.com

Model: 5M8232

(23 Watt Soft White)

Price: \$6.88 + .06 = \$7.29

(CLF, 2 Pack)

www.belson.com/trash.html

Model: R55TR or R55BT

(Thermoplastic Coated Trash receptacles)

Price: \$ 326 + .06 = \$ 345.56

www.charlottekaye.com/birdhouses.html

Models and Prices vary depending

on preference

http://special.sk-mfg.com/?gclid=CL7_nYu8s5lCFQJQxgod2W85Rw

This is a

website for Bo Gourd Birdhouses

Price: \$2.99 + tax + S&H

Goal 5: Increase Homeownership and Occupancy

Cost Helper. May 2007. Painting a House Cost

www.costhelper.com/cost/home-garden/painting-exterior.html

East Coast Power Washing & Detailing, inc. March 2008. East Coast

Wash.

www.eastcoastwash.com

Goal 7: Improve Housing Conditions

The goal "Provide easy assess to home loan program" is based on the Property Improvement Program (PIP) which is administered by MSHDA. The link is:

http://www.michigan.gov/mshda/0,1607,7-141-5505_46195---,00.html

Commitments:

Property Improvement Program (PIP): The purpose of the Property Improvement Program (PIP) is to improve housing stock by providing a low interest loan to home owners with low to moderate incomes, and to assist landlords who provide rental units to people with low to moderate income. Below are detailed descriptions on how the program works for owner, and non-owner occupied loans. The Consumer Hand Book page is guidelines for borrowers to pick a reliable contractor.

The cost of Acquire a housing counselor, home education and assistance based on the part-time wage of counselor, the cost of his periodic workshop and meeting.

http://swz.salary.com/salarywizard/layouthtmls/MI/swzl_compresult_state_MI_HR09200362.html

Goal 8: Increase Employment and Entrepreneur Opportunities

(http://www.payscale.com/research/US/City=Lansing/Hourly_Rate)

Computer training costs about \$1195 per person,
(<http://www.computernetworkingcenter.com/>)

The equipment costs about \$1500. (<http://www.dell.com/>, <http://www.hp.com/>,
<http://www.canon.com/>)

\$16 per person per hour

(http://www.payscale.com/research/US/City=Lansing/Hourly_Rate)

Long Term Goals

Goal 1: Eliminate Flood Risks to Homes within the Flood Plain

<http://www.inghamlandbank.org/>

<http://www.umich.edu/~nppcpub/research/lcahome/homelca0.html>

Goal 2: Increase Homeownership

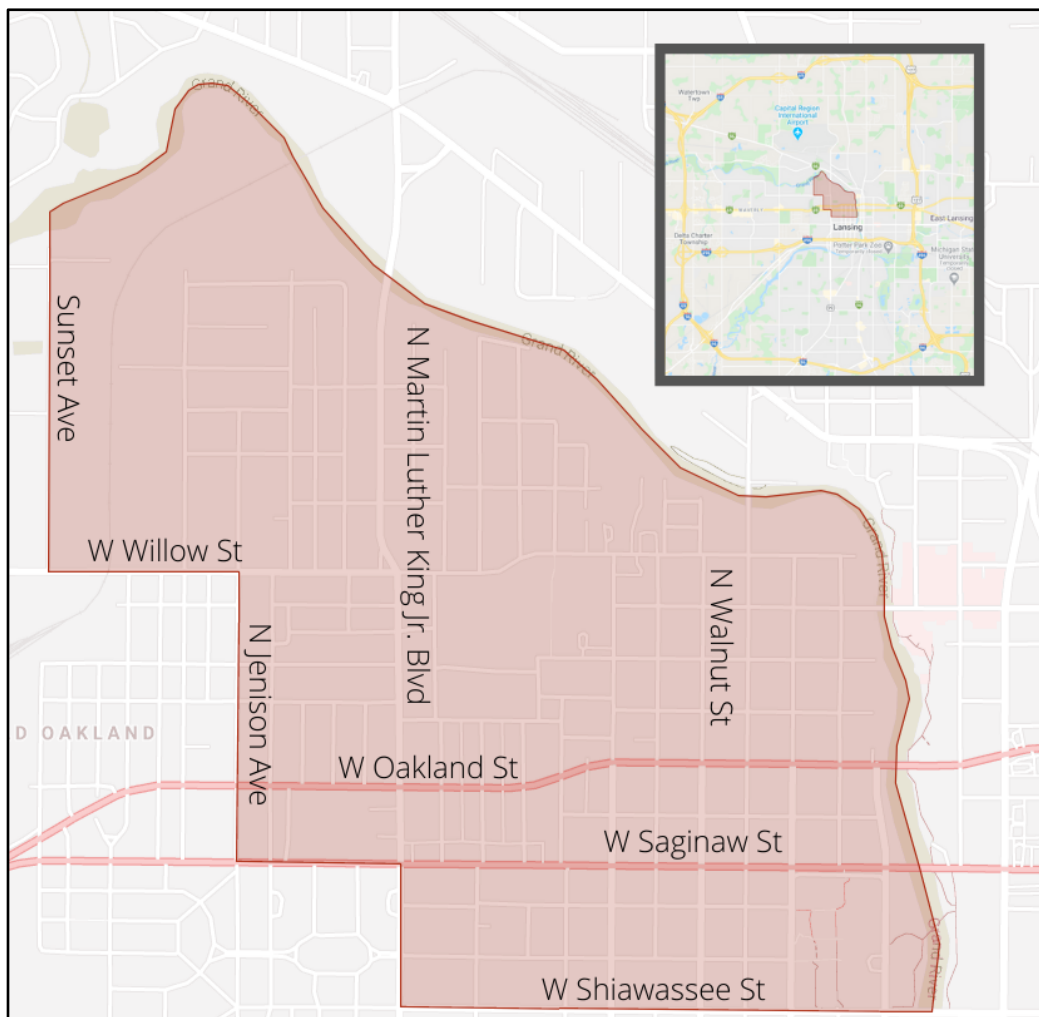
<http://www.yale.edu/hronline/hbuyer/hbuyprog.htm>

<http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/winter99/lessons5.html>

The Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood

The Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood in Lansing is northwest of downtown. The Grand River makes up the northern and eastern borders of the neighborhood while the southwest border starts on Sunset Ave, moves east across W. Willow St. South along N Jenison Ave, east on Saginaw St, south again on N Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, before finally moving east on W Shiawassee St. back to the Grand River.

The Neighborhood of Focus included only Census Tract 68 originally but has been expanded to also include Census Tract 7 and a small part of Tract 6. Because many of the statistics used in this report draw from the American Community Survey and similar sources that primarily look at tract-level data, much of the information will be presented as either a range or an average of the data of only tracts 68 and 7. The section of this neighborhood that falls in Tract 6 is underrepresented in much of the data as a result.



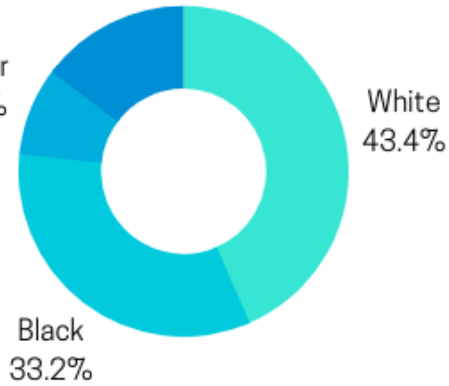
Demographics

Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood

Lansing as a whole

Two or More Races
14.7%

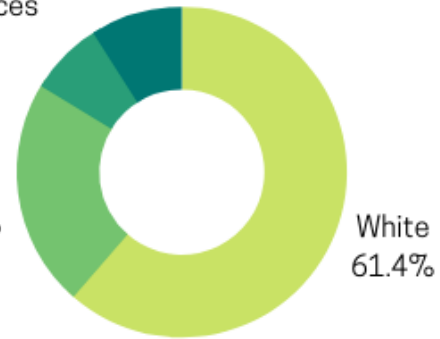
Other
8.7%



Two or More Races
9%

Other Races
7.3%

Black
22.3%



Hispanic or Latino
14.6%



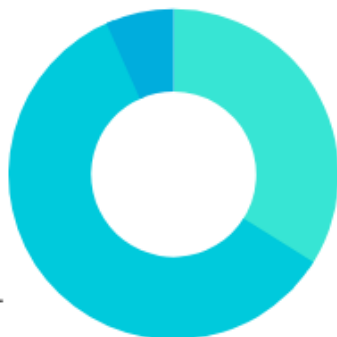
Hispanic or Latino
12.5%



Not Hispanic or Latino
85.4%

Not Hispanic or Latino
87.5%

65 and Older
6.7%



Under 18
33.9%

65 and Older
11.6%

Under 18
23.3%



Ages 18-64
59.4%

Ages 18-64
65.1%

Because of the large minority population in this neighborhood, any conversations surrounding this topic should be careful to use a lens of racial justice and equality. In addition, these statistics do suggest that the legacy of redlining in the city that will need to be discussed.

The neighborhood is much younger on average than the rest of the city. While issues relating to children are important in all areas of the city, over one-third of the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood is under 18. This means there is a great opportunity to implement programs to help these youth now so that they can become more economically mobile in the future.

While having a younger population is certainly a contributor to this, the rate of married people is lower in this neighborhood than in Lansing as a whole. 35% of the city is married, but only 29% of tract 68 and 18% of tract 7 are married. In addition, any policy options must consider how to help the high number of single mothers in the area. In tract 68, 60% of households have children, but 35% of households are single mothers with children. In tract 7, 55% of households have children while an incredible 44% of households are single mothers with children. In Lansing as a whole, only 47% of households have children and a mere 20% are single mothers with children. Financial strain, work-life balance, and parenting with limited time are some of the biggest challenges that single mothers face.

Finally, we must consider that 6% of the neighborhood does not speak English. While this is a small percentage of the total population, we must work to find ways to include this group without simply forcing them to learn English.

Assets

The following list is not meant to be exhaustive but rather an overview of some of the most significant assets the neighborhood has and can be used to help build financial capacity in the neighborhood.

Schools

- Willow Elementary, a Pre-K through 3rd grade school centrally located in the neighborhood
- Mid-Michigan Leadership Academy, a Kindergarten through 8th grade school that exists on the historic campus of the former Michigan Female College and Michigan School for the Blind
- Lansing Community College, one of the largest community colleges in Michigan that offers over 200 different programs
- Pine Street Head Start, an organization that provides early childhood education

Large Employers

- Sparrow Health Systems
- Consumers Energy
- Lansing Community College

- Alro Steel
- Cameron Tool Corporation
- Atmosphere Annealing
- Precision Vehicle Logistics
- In addition, there are a large number of private law and marketing firms, automotive repair shops, manufacturers, retailers, and restaurants

Parks

- Edmore Park, a riverfront park
- Comstock Park, a large park with a playground near the two schools
- Adado Riverfront Park, part of this expansive park falls in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood
- Basset Park, another park with a playground deep in the northwestern part of the neighborhood
- Ferris Park, a park on the southern edge of the neighborhood with a soccer field
- Durant Park, a tranquil park with benches and gardens

Health Care Services

- Sparrow Hospital St. Lawrence Campus
- Sparrow Pharmacy Plus
- Holt Pharmacy MLK
- Care Free Medical, a nonprofit that provides high-quality care to community members
- Hospice House of Mid Michigan
- Glass House, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center
- Rite-Aid
- Ingham Community Health Center
- A Lee Townsend PC
- Flint David M DDS
- Gary W Johnson DDS
- Willow Tree Family Center

Organizations

- Saginaw Oakland Commercial Association
- Capital Area Housing Partnership
- Lansing Neighborhood Empowerment Center
- Advent House Ministries
- Ele's Place
- Loaves and Fishes Ministries
- Fellowship for Today Spiritual Center
- Mid-Michigan Guardianship Services, Inc.
- Refugee Development Center
- Willow Tree Family Center

Access to public transportation is another important asset for this neighborhood. The Capital Area Transportation Authority is responsible for two bus routes that pass through this neighborhood: routes 3 and 12. Route 3 runs down Willow St. and offers residents transportation between the Lansing Mall and downtown. Route 12 traverses W Oakland Ave and W Saginaw St and also offers access to Downtown Lansing. For residents in the northwestern part of the neighborhood, they can cross the bridge on N Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd for easy access to route 14 which runs between the Capital Region International Airport and Downtown Lansing. From downtown, residents are able to take other routes to access nearly every part of the city.

The Ingham County Land Bank possesses a large number of properties in this neighborhood. Many of these are vacant and would be an opportunity for new buildings or could be utilized in other ways to improve the neighborhood. These ideas will be discussed further in the policy section of this report, but it should be noted that the number of properties owned by the land bank is likely to increase in the next few years. According to County Treasurer and Ingham County Land Bank Chairperson, Eric Schertzing, the current economic recession will likely lead to more people than usual being unable to pay property taxes. One of the goals of the County Treasurer is to minimize the number of people who lose their homes as a result of this process, and every effort should be made to keep people in their homes. However, some of these properties will unfortunately end up in the land bank's possession within the next few years.

The Lansing River Trail is a thirteen-mile-long trail that traverses much of the city. While it does not pass through the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood, it is accessible by crossing over the Grand River at any one of the many available bridges. While this is relatively close for residents on the northern or eastern edges of the neighborhood, it is not as easily accessible for residents on the southwestern part of the neighborhood. Next year, the bridge over N Grand River Ave is going to be renovated, and the bridge approach on the north side of the river will connect directly with the River Trail.

The Ingham County Health Department offers a wide range of services that residents are able to take advantage of through the nearby Community Health Center. The health department has done an excellent job creating their various programs, so there is no obvious gap in the services they offer when compared to what residents in other similar cities are able to receive. As such, health issues will not be discussed in this report other than how they relate to housing and code enforcement.

Poverty

The primary reason that Willow Walnut Comstock Park is a neighborhood of focus is the severe poverty that permeates the area. Approximately 47% of people in the neighborhood currently live in poverty. This is nearly double the poverty rate of Lansing, a much lower 26%. Between 60 and 84% of single mothers in the neighborhood currently live in poverty, and around 1 in 5 households are in deep poverty. The poverty rates are even worse for African Americans in the neighborhood. 51% of Black residents currently live in poverty in Tract 68, and that number jumps to 75% for Tract 7.

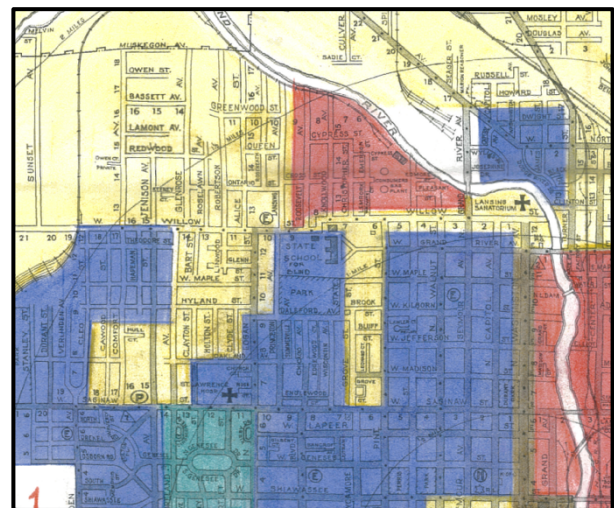
Most problematic is that Willow Walnut Comstock Park is a persistent poverty area. All three census tracts that make up the area have had poverty rates above 20% for the last 30 years. This persistent, intergenerational poverty has far reaching effects. According to the Urban Institute, minority communities make up a disproportionate number of urban persistent poverty tracts, and that is the case here. This neighborhood has among the largest minority populations in Lansing, so the poverty here raises issues of racial inequality in addition to the economic inequality.

“All three census tracts that make up the area have had poverty rates above 20% for the last 30 years.”

Long-term outcomes for people born in the neighborhood are also concerning. Economic mobility is exceptionally low. While 8% of people born in very low-income families in Lansing will eventually reach the top 20th percentile of income, only 3% of those born in Tract 68 and 6% in Tract 7 will achieve that same level of wealth. Less than 1% of very low-income African Americans from Tract 68 and 5% from Tract 7 will achieve that goal.

It is not only the very poor who struggle to reach the highest income level. Only 8% of residents born in the neighborhood to families below the 50th percentile will make it to the top 20%. For Lansing as a whole, 15% of residents born to families who earn below the median income will achieve this level of economic success.

This is not a new phenomenon for the neighborhood. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation's infamous 1934 maps that established a process later known as “redlining” marked off parts of this neighborhood as “hazardous” and recommended that banks do not lend to people in these neighborhoods. Worse still, the reason these neighborhoods were called hazardous was, in part, because of an “undesirable population.” This raises issues of structural racism in how these maps were constructed. Because these maps deterred investment in the neighborhoods, the cycle of poverty was reinforced. While some sections of the neighborhood were considered “still desirable,” much of the area was described as “definitely declining.” Recent research has shown that as many as 74% of the neighborhoods described as hazardous in these maps are still low-to-moderate income today. While investment in the area has been historically low, in part because of these maps, there is now an opportunity to reverse these patterns and improve economic mobility.



Red areas were “hazardous,” yellow areas were “definitely declining,” and blue areas were “still desirable.”

Policy Recommendations

The rest of the report is dedicated to policy options that may increase economic mobility in the neighborhood. It covers issues including crime, education, land usage, housing, and placemaking. Some of these ideas could be implemented at little to no cost, while others would require significant resources. As such, the benefits offered by these programs vary greatly, and the city will have to undertake several of these programs in order to make sustainable change in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood. There is currently limited funding available for investment in the neighborhood, so many of the high-cost options are not feasible but are still included as long-term possibilities.

Crime

Economic mobility in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood cannot be improved without addressing the high crime rate. The area is designated a crime “hot spot” by the Lansing Police Department, and multiple studies have confirmed the fact that any attempts to alleviate persistent poverty that are not accompanied by crime reduction efforts will have little, if any, success. The City of Lansing has already been engaging in several important efforts to reduce crime, but there are more policy options at the city’s disposal they can use to further fight crime.

One theme that will run through many of these options is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). This is the idea that cities can reduce crime through an intentional decision-making design process. The four principles of this concept are natural surveillance, natural access control, territorial reinforcement, and maintenance and management. Natural surveillance is the idea that people are less likely to commit crimes when there are clear sightlines and high visibility in the neighborhood. Natural access control looks at how individuals, organizations, and city governments design access to areas and how that access shifts pedestrian traffic in a way that decreases criminal opportunities. Territorial reinforcement’s goal is to create clear boundaries between public and private spaces to make it easy to identify intruders. Finally, maintenance and management are important because, according to the National Crime Prevention Council, “The more dilapidated an area, the more likely it is to attract unwanted activities.” Therefore, proper upkeep of a neighborhood is important to reduce crime.

Option 1: Lighting

One of the most effective methods of reducing crime in a neighborhood is through increasing visibility. While part of this is designing the neighborhood with clear lines of sight, it can also be improved through adequate lighting at night. One 2019 study showed that installing streetlights in a previously underlit neighborhood could reduce crime by up to 36%. Therefore, one easy-to-implement, albeit expensive, program would be installing more streetlights in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood.

Additional research is necessary are what optimal lighting would look like in this area, but there is one area that is clearly problematic. Lighting is extremely poor surrounding the Neighborhood

Empowerment Center. Because the Refugee Center operates classes at night in this building, this is an important safety issue that will need to be addressed.

While this would be the preferred option, a low-cost alternative has grown in popularity in recent years. Beginning in 2012, Light Up the City Saginaw is a program designed to improve visibility in neighborhoods by handing out lightbulbs for residents to install in their porchlights. Despite porchlights not being as effective as streetlights, the City of Saginaw has seen a 16% reduction in crime since the program's implementation (although this is not all attributable to the program). The program is primarily sponsored by Consumer's Energy and they have expressed interest in bringing it to other cities, which they did in 2018 by implementing the program in Jackson. Due to the high density of houses in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood, Light Up the City would be an excellent tool for crime reduction.

Option 2: Improving Neighborhood Appearance

It is also important for the city to trim overgrown plants that inhibit sightlines and clean up other blights in the neighborhood to reduce crime. As previously discussed, increasing visibility is one of the most effective ways to reduce crime. Beyond increasing visibility, cleaning up trash can increase perceived safety, which in turn increases real safety. One important area of focus would be the broken glass that permeates sidewalks in some parts of the neighborhoods, including the bridges on the north side.

The city only cleans up public areas, while private property is left to be cleaned up by the owners. This can be done as a community event in order to beautify all parts of the neighborhood. By inviting residents to take part in this process, relationships can be built between residents, the city, law enforcement, and local organizations. It can also help residents take ownership of and responsibility for their neighborhood. The city or partner organizations would have to provide the tools necessary for the process, and the clean-up day should be accompanied by incentives, such as food and entertainment, to encourage them to be involved in the process. Such an event requires very little investment and would function as a building block for future crime prevention efforts.

Option 3: Activity Generation

Another effective method of reducing crime in a neighborhood is by creating new, safe activities in the area in order to replace unsafe activities. Ideas on how to do this are discussed in greater detail in the section on placemaking.

Option 4: Safety Audits

Inspired by Project Deadbolt from Greensboro, NC, safety audits are an opportunity for residents to set up an appointment with a community police officer to look for safety issues in one's home, such as inadequate door locks, peepholes, and window locks. The city would then provide the resources needed to make the home more secure.

While this could provide increased safety to individual residents, the cost of these installations does add up, and it only protects against certain kinds of crime. In addition, given recent events, there may be greater-than-normal distrust of police officers, so residents may be disinclined to invite an officer into their home.

This program has been expanded from an individual-level to a neighborhood-level audit in at least one city. In a neighborhood safety audit, residents would be invited on a walk around the neighborhood to identify areas where they do not feel safe. It allows residents and city employees to build relationships and discuss ways to work on the neighborhood together. City planners would then recommend options on how to fix problematic areas to increase safety.

Option 5: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for High-Risk Individuals and Previous Offenders

The usage of cognitive behavioral therapy to change behaviors in groups of all ages to prevent crime is an effective tool. Therapy, especially family-based therapy, can help prevent youth from engaging in high-risk and illegal behaviors, and it is equally useful at helping recently released prisoners at reintegrating with society and preventing recidivism. Currently, the City of Lansing is using CBT in its Offender Success program. Despite its high cost, the use of CBT should be expanded to high-risk youth because of the high return on investment.

Option 6: Improve Youth Programs

One of the most effective tools at preventing crime is to deter youth away from it at a young age. After school programs that encourage positive behaviors and prevent children and adolescents from engaging in illegal behavior can be incredibly effective. Lina Hashem, in her 2019 report on the city's engagement with youth, wrote a detailed analysis of the programs that Lansing already offers and how to improve these programs. These steps should be implemented to help reach more high-risk youth and improve outcomes.

Option 7: Community Policing

Community policing is a concept that has grown in popularity in recent years. The goal is to have a specific officer spend time in the community, getting to know the people there and building trust. This has been shown to improve crime-related outcomes. High poverty and high crime communities like Willow Walnut Comstock Park are the ones most likely to experience high police distrust, so community policing can be of great value here. Currently, only a portion of the area is served by a community police officer. This program and coverage should be reviewed as the city seeks citizen input on policing practices and budget allocations. The new Lansing Police Department substation in Walnut Park Apartments is a great resource to begin building improved community relations.

Education

Lack of education is one of the greatest obstacles in the neighborhood. Approximately 28% of the population has less than a high school diploma or equivalent. Only 12% of Lansing as a whole lacks a diploma. Research shows having a high school diploma can significantly improve economic outcomes for individuals. While not as good as a diploma, earning a GED has also been shown to improve outcomes. Therefore, the City of Lansing should be pursuing options to both encourage students to stay in school until they graduate and encourage adults without a diploma to begin working on a GED.

In addition, there are a number of resources, both educational and financial, already available. The city should examine ways to increase uptake of these already present services.

Option One: GED Assistance

GED programs are a particularly attractive method of improving economic mobility because they give people the tools needed in order to succeed. Rather than having to rely on continued programs for assistance, GED recipients are able to achieve greater economic outcomes than without one. In addition, a GED can have a multigenerational effect. Children of parents who receive a GED are more likely to graduate high school, increasing their overall economic mobility as well.

There are already several organizations that offer GED classes and coaching, but there are other obstacles that residents of the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood would face that may prevent them from earning a GED. These obstacles include, but are not limited to, transportation, family issues, childcare, lack of confidence, and cost. While it is difficult to create policy that affects individual confidence or family dynamics, the other three areas are ones that the city can address.

While there are two CATA bus routes that travel through the neighborhood, neither one of them provide direct access to GED classes offered by the Lansing school district. Residents would have to take one of the two neighborhood routes into Downtown Lansing before taking the bus on Route 9 to near Pattengill Ave. In total, this route takes approximately 40 minutes each direction and would cost each individual \$35 per month for an Unlimited Ride 31-Day Adult Pass.

While one possible solution to this issue would be for the city to provide transportation directly to a class from the neighborhood each day, that would require a significant investment when there is already a public transportation system in place. Therefore, the most efficient option the city could pursue regarding transportation to GED classes would likely be working with CATA to find ways to reduce the cost of transportation. The lowest level of investment would be to partner with CATA and ensure that GED program students, regardless of where they are going for classes, are able to get the student 31-day pass instead of the traditional adult 31-day pass. If the city had the funding and was interested in greater investment into this program, they could partner with residents and cover the cost of the unlimited bus pass as long as they attend a certain percentage of classes.

Another possible option here would be to offer GED classes within the neighborhood. Willow Elementary could offer the classes after hours, or the Neighborhood Empowerment Center could host classes. These options would also eliminate nearly all transportation issues and reduce travel time to make it easier for residents to achieve their goals.

The second area that policy can address would be childcare. Many GED programs happen during school hours, so school-age children would not prevent parents from attending. However, parents of young children may struggle to find people to watch their children while they attend these classes. For this reason, a childcare program would make it easier for parents to succeed in a GED program. The cost of such a policy would be prohibitively high currently, but in a different economy, the city should consider offering childcare for low-income residents during GED classes.

The final obstacle Lansing can help residents overcome is the cost of GED tests. The cost of transportation has already been addressed, but there is also a \$150 fee associated with taking all necessary tests. While this is a small amount considering the potential increase in income, it may be too much for some families. The City of Lansing could offer a program where they cover the cost of the tests as long as residents attend a certain percentage of classes. This could also be used to incentivize people to enroll in GED classes. The cost of such a program could be high, but the return on investment would make it a worthwhile program.

These programs could also be targeted to reduce cost. While low-income residents of the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood would be the general population, the city could choose to focus the program on single mothers. Over a third of households in the neighborhood are headed by single mothers, and this program is an opportunity to help those who did not earn a high school diploma achieve greater economic mobility.

Option Two: Lansing SAVE Partnerships

The Lansing SAVE program has seen great success in saving money for post-secondary education for Lansing residents. However, it is more difficult for low-income families to set aside money for their children's future education. There is already a clear precedent on how the city can help put more money into these accounts: the partnership with Bethlehem Lutheran Church to raise money for students in the Baker Neighborhood of Lansing. There are several religious organizations in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood that the city should reach out to in order to find partners willing to do the same.

Option Three: Promotion of Library Resources

The Capital Area District Libraries offers educational programs and online learning tools to help people of all ages. It's likely that many residents of the neighborhood are not aware of all of the free resources available to them. For that reason, a promotion campaign through mailers or another medium could increase usage of these tools.

Option Four: Head Start Promotion

Currently, there are two Head Start programs in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood. These programs have been shown to improve long-term outcomes for participants, including high school completion and even future health. An advertising campaign that teaches residents about these benefits and the fact that the program is free could have a positive effect on enrollment. By increasing the number of children enrolled in this federally funded program, long-term outcomes for young residents will likely improve.

Option Five: Financial Literacy Education

Financial literacy education has been widely adopted by organizations across the country to try and help Americans of all ages develop better financial habits. Research has shown that financial literacy programs targeted specifically towards youth are the most effective. This is currently being implemented through BOLD Lansing and the program should be strengthened as much as possible.

In addition to programs for youth, both the city and many partner organizations offer financial literacy education for adults. However, research has shown that most of these programs targeting adults are ineffective and have no lasting impact. Therefore, regular program evaluation is necessary to ensure that these programs remain a sound investment and are helping the people of Lansing.

Underutilized Properties and Vacant Land

As discussed in the section on neighborhood assets, the Ingham County Land Bank is in possession of a large number of properties in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park area. However, not all of these properties are usable. Many of them are in the Grand River floodplain, and the City of Lansing will not allow new structures to be built on them. In addition, many properties with structures have fallen into disrepair and would need to be demolished before anything can be done with them. Not all vacant and underutilized land is owned by the land bank, though. Some key properties are still owned privately, and the city should start having discussions with some of these owners about how to better utilize that land.

Option 1: Redeveloping Vacant Land

Currently, the Ingham County Land Bank is trying to sell off many of their vacant lots to people who would be interested in building new properties on them. However, according to Executive Director Roxanne Case, there has been very little interest in these lots because of the location and marketability. After considering the cost of the lot and construction, the house would not be worth enough money for individuals to justify.

However, if there were multiple lots next to each other, investors may be interested in purchasing these lots. When Willow Park Apartments were built, the investors purchased multiple lots from

the land bank. By reaching out to other investors, it may be possible to have even more affordable, quality housing built in the future.

Option 2: Construction of New Homes

Perhaps the most obvious proposal for the vacant properties that the land bank possesses is to build new properties on them. In some cases, the original lot may be too small, so if there are two vacant properties next to each other, they could be combined to form one larger property for these new constructions. Not only would this increase the average value of homes in the neighborhood, but it could draw in potential medium income home buyers who would not otherwise look at this neighborhood.

This process requires considerable investment from the city or other investors, though, considering new structures would not sell for enough to cover the cost of their construction. For this reason, further analysis would need to be done considering whether or not this option would be the best use of the city's limited resources before undertaking another construction. However, Community Housing & Development Organizations, such as Capital Area Housing Partnership, can and will still invest in the construction of these new homes.

Option 3: Encourage the Leasing of Vacant Lots for Neighborhood Use

Currently, Ingham County Land Bank makes most of their vacant lots available for leasing to residents at very low cost. Throughout the city, people take advantage of this program and use the lots for community gardens, extra yard space for children to play, and for whatever else they may want. Currently, over 200 parcels in Lansing are currently being used for gardening.

However, this program has not been widely embraced in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood. The reasons why this is the case are not immediately clear, and, when possible given social distancing guidelines, it would be beneficial to engage community members in a conversation about why they aren't interested in the program.

Increasing the use of these vacant lots, particularly for community gardens, could have an impact on the atmosphere and outcomes in the neighborhood. Research has shown that community gardens not only increase feelings of well-being and safety but also reduce the crime rate. As previously discussed, crime reduction is a critical step in improving economic mobility. Because this could be a low-cost, community-led effort, the City of Lansing should prioritize ways to promote this program as they move forward with policy discussions.

In addition, community gardens provide an opportunity for properties in the floodplain to be revitalized. New city ordinances are allowing this otherwise unusable land to be used for gardening.

The following are a list of possible proposals to encourage residents to take advantage of the program:

- Currently, the land bank periodically puts up signs to advertise lots that are available to lease
- The city could send out fliers promoting some of the usages of these vacant lots
- If having to engage in maintenance is holding people back, the city or other organizations could agree to partner with the garden for a year to take care of snow removal and lawn mowing
- Reach out to religious organizations, apartment complexes, and Lansing Community College to promote the benefits of community gardens to the people there
- The city could find a group of engaged residents from another neighborhood who would be willing to come into the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood for a trial period to run a community garden in hopes of piquing the interest of other residents

Option 4: Expansion of Edmore Park

The land bank is currently in possession of land near Edmore Park on the northern border of the neighborhood that could be used to expand the park for additional activities.

Option 5: Neighborhood Revitalization through New Community Assets

One important part of neighborhood revitalization is the creation of community assets, such as banks, grocery stores, and youth centers. In particular, the need for a quality grocery store that can offer fresh, healthy food to residents is apparent in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood. Underutilized and vacant lots in key locations could be used as the future location for some of these assets, and the city has many options for partner organizations to do this work with. Habitat for Humanity offers a neighborhood revitalization program where they do this kind of work, and Capital Area Housing Partnership has already worked on similar projects in Lansing in the past. Such programs could also be funded through grants from the MI State Housing Development Authority's neighborhood enhancement program.

Option 6: Increase the Amount of Mixed-Income Housing Available

While the goal of this focus on the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood is to help the residents that currently live there, one way to do this is to attract more middle-income families into the neighborhood. While simply being around individuals with higher incomes does not help low-income residents, the increased assets that these individuals bring to the neighborhood can. Having a higher median income in the neighborhood can attract more businesses and community services to an area. Many of the benefits associated with this shift are specifically place-based benefits, such as increased feelings of safety.

In order to draw more middle-income families into the neighborhood, the community will need to be able to draw in potential residents and provide quality housing for them. The section on placemaking will discuss neighborhood beautification and revitalization efforts that would make it an appealing choice for residents. There is still a need for quality housing, though, just as there

is for low-income residents. For this reason, intentionally mixed-income housing developments can be an effective method of bringing more income diversity into the neighborhood.

Many mixed-income developments have also been designed in ways that their surroundings become community hubs. Some complexes have devoted their first floors to businesses, including retail that can draw people to the area, and have set up community spaces outside for people to sit and relax. This creates additional income opportunities for investors and naturally increases safety by drawing more people to the area.

The goal of such developments is not gentrification. That is why these developments are mixed-income instead of being only for middle-income individuals. It is possible to draw in higher income families while still keeping the area affordable for the current residents.

Housing

One of the most apparent issues in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood is housing. Many of the houses have been abandoned, fallen into disrepair, and are a blight on the area. Even among still occupied homes, many of them have not been properly maintained and have issues.

Despite these problems, housing affordability is still a serious concern. Over half of the residents are renters, and for large swaths of the neighborhood, rent can consume 35-45% of household income. While income does vary depending on what small part of the neighborhood being looked at, between 30% and 55% of residents have household incomes of less than \$25,000. Based on definitions of affordability from HUD, only a small percentage of available rental properties are considered affordable for these households. In other words, residents have to pay a large portion of their income in order to live in homes that have not been maintained well. There is, therefore, a high demand for quality, affordable housing in the neighborhood.

Some of these topics have already been discussed in the section on the Ingham County Land Bank, so they will not be covered in the same depth here.

Finally, one important method of improving housing for families in poverty is through the Community Development Block Grant Program. This funds much of the work that the city does, but not all households are eligible for it. While most homes in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood are CDBG-eligible, not all of them are. An important part of program delivery is knowing what households are eligible, so this must be considered in the policy-making process.

Option 1: Persuade Investors to Build Additional Low-Income Housing

This option is already being actively pursued. It led to investors purchasing the land and building Walnut Park Apartments, and other investors may be willing to do the same in the future.

While the neighborhood is already a centralized location of poverty, building several low-income apartments would strengthen that centralization. Unless the city takes active efforts to bring middle- and high-income families into the neighborhood as well, the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood would likely permanently become a high-poverty area instead of becoming mixed-income, which is most likely the best outcome for current residents because of the additional resources mixed income can pull into the neighborhood.

Option 2: Housing Vouchers with Additional Assistance

Housing vouchers have been a popular tool to help residents of low-opportunity neighborhoods move to high-opportunity neighborhoods. However, most recipients underutilized the vouchers or did not use them at all. Recent research has shown that if the city is willing to fund a position devoted to helping recipients learn about the positive effects of moving to a higher opportunity neighborhood, they are several times more likely to make use of the vouchers. Considering that there is other research showing that children whose families move from low-opportunity neighborhoods to high-opportunity neighborhoods have significantly improved economic outcomes, adding support to the voucher programs can make them far more effective.

They are so effective, in fact, that this option is likely the most cost-effective recommendation in this report when it comes to improving individual economic mobility. However, it fails to address the systemic neighborhood issues. This means that, although it is an excellent stopgap measure, the city must work to improve outcomes for those who remain in the neighborhood. In addition, vouchers are only effective when there is sufficient quality housing available that will accept them.

Option 3: Educate Residents on How to Repair and Improve Their Own Homes

The Capital Area Housing Partnership already offers classes and the tools residents need in order to repair their own homes. The city should partner with CAHP to find ways to increase uptake of these resources to help improve the quality of homes in Willow Walnut Comstock Park at little to no cost. Not only will this benefit individuals in the neighborhood, but if a sufficient number of houses' appearance improves, there may be a reduction in crime rate as a result of the perceived increase in safety.

Option 4: Promotion of Lead Safe Lansing

The city and Capital Area Housing Partnership together offer the Lead Safe Lansing program to provide grants to families with young children who live in home with lead-based paint. This paint can cause health issues for pregnant women and young children, so it is imperative to remove it from homes whenever possible. During the last grant period, the program was funded to remove the lead-based paint from 150 homes. Programs like this are a critical part of including health outcomes for the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood, and an expansion of this program specifically targeting this neighborhood could have long-term benefits for residents.

Option 5: Reduce Utility Cost Through Energy Efficient Modules

Utility bills can be a large expense for many households in the neighborhood, so any reduction in this bill can put more money in residents' pockets and help them achieve better outcomes. The Lansing Board of Water and Light provides energy saver kits that include energy efficient lightbulbs to help reduce utility bills for low-income residents. This program has seen great usage in this neighborhood already, and additional efforts to promote it and the benefits may be helpful.

Weatherization is an important process that modifies a house in order to reduce energy consumption and thus shrink utility bills. While this process can be expensive, there are many programs that can help low-income residents take advantage of it. For example, Capital Area Community Services offers a program that provides weatherization assistance that is funded through the Department of Energy and utility companies. By raising awareness of programs like this, there may be an increased uptake in program usage.

Option 6: Code Enforcement

Code enforcement is the process through which the city ensures that all buildings are following building and housing codes. Historically, in many US cities, this process has caused undue burden on low-income residents. It is important to make sure that this process is actually helping residents instead of harming them. This can be done by prioritizing internal housing codes because these are the codes that are most often relevant to resident health outcomes.

In addition, the city should be looking into ways to help fund the corrective process. This is growing increasingly difficult due to the declining funds of the CDBG program, so it will be necessary to find innovative funding methods to actually improve the homes instead of just punishing residents for their inability to fix the issue.

Placemaking

Placemaking is a process designed to activate public spaces to improve the quality of life for residents. Placemaking should not be considered a luxury process that is only designed to beautify neighborhoods; it can have an impact on public safety as well. For this reason, placemaking efforts, and in particular community-led tactical placemaking, should be considered by the city as part of the effort to improve economic mobility in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood. For residential areas like this, placemaking can offer a greater sense of community and give residents an increased ability to advocate for themselves along with additional public safety. It will not fix the issue of persistent poverty on its own, but it's an excellent step.

While the term "placemaking" has become more common in recent years, tactical placemaking is currently not as popular. It is what the Project for Public Spaces calls Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper. Generally speaking, these programs are ones that can be done at little to no cost and are traditionally only temporary to show the potential of what a space could be or to excite residents to engage in additional neighborhood improvement activities. While many of these projects are relatively low cost, they can help justify far greater investment in the future.

One of the most critical placemaking principles is the acknowledgement that community members are the experts. Their needs and desires are important, and their willingness to invest in projects should guide which ones the city undertakes. As a result of this importance, one weakness of placemaking is that if community engagement is low, the project will be less likely to succeed. These projects, and in particular the tactical placemaking projects, are dependent upon the buy-in of neighborhood stakeholders. For that reason, some organizations recommend these projects for “stronger neighborhoods” instead of ones with low engagement. This is a potential concern with the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood, but without significant funding for other projects, these tools may be the best available option.

However, one of the other benefits of placemaking is that it can encourage previously disinvested community members to see potential in their neighborhoods once again. While these ideas may struggle to gain traction at first, the hope is that they will inspire community members to become more engaged in future projects.

Option 1: Revitalization of Parks

The City of Lansing’s remarkable parks and recreation program is one of the most attractive parts of the city. There are almost always parks nearby, regardless of where in Lansing a person lives. However, the parks in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood are not currently being utilized to their full potential. Apart from the playgrounds, there are very few activities in these parks to draw people to them. To quote the Project for Public Spaces, “the danger in all of this is that when there are few reasons for people to go to a park, fewer people use them and they will cease to be valued.”

Currently, Comstock Park, the largest of the parks in the neighborhood, is mostly open, green space. Very little of the park has a specific use. This means that there are a number of opportunities the city can take advantage of to make greater use of this space. While the other parks have similar resources, the amount of space offered by Comstock Park, as well as its central location, makes it the best candidate for a true revitalization effort.

One of the most common ways tactical placemaking is used in parks is to transform it into a fully utilized community space for a single day or weekend. By bringing in entertainment, food trucks, farmers’ markets, and other temporary businesses, such as a craft fair, the city can change the perception of this park in peoples’ minds into that of a community gathering place that can be much more than it is currently. If these efforts are successful at drawing community members into the park, it will prove the potential of this location as a possible focal point of the community.

Discussions should be held with community leaders to discover what kind of programming would be most effective in these parks to draw in people of all age ranges, and programming will change as the city discovers what is most effective at transforming the park into a public space. This is an ongoing process that must be responsive to voices in the community.

One critique of spending limited resources revitalizing a park is that it does not seem to directly improve economic mobility. However, when a park is able to draw community members into public spaces, overall visibility in the neighborhood increases. Research shows that when a neighborhood has higher visibility, the crime rate drops. This visibility is the mechanism through which high quality spaces can impact public safety. Research has shown that neighborhood poverty cannot truly be addressed without first lowering the crime rate.

In addition, having a high-quality, frequently visited park can transform the spirit of the neighborhood and draw in potential middle-income home buyers.

As stated previously, these revitalization efforts should be guided by the needs of the community, but the following programming options are events that have been undertaken by other cities in their efforts to transform parks into community centers:

- Community picnics
- Kite-flying days
- Dog walk days
- Informal little leagues
- Informal soccer matches
- Temporary frisbee courses
- Farmers' markets
- Concerts
- Craft fairs
- Storytime for young children
- Snowmen building competitions
- Open-air cinema

The Project for Public Spaces provides a number of other programming ideas for parks, as well as additional guidelines for how to transform an urban park into a community gathering place. While many of these guidelines are designed for larger parks in larger cities, Lansing can still adopt some of the principles behind them to revitalize its parks.

Option 2: Build a Better Block

Several years ago, a group of citizens in Dallas, TX started a community-led revitalization project to temporarily transform a nearby block into a community gathering place. While the installations would not be permanent, the goal was to inspire other community members by showing them what the space could become. Since then, their organization has grown and now works to empower neighborhoods across the country to do the same through The Better Block Foundation.

There are four key principles that are addressed in this process: safety, shared access, stay power, and amenities.

The first goal of Better Block is to change the perceived safety in the neighborhood, which oftentimes rapidly improves its actual safety. For a Better Block to succeed, the community members working on it must make sure that the place is sufficiently transformed so that it feels

safe to linger in the area. This means being aware of obstacles in the area that reduce sightlines while also cleaning up debris, graffiti, and overgrown landscaping.

The next goal is to find ways to bring people into the neighborhoods, such as by creating signs to guide people into the neighborhood and making sure it is easily accessible from neighborhoods.

The third goal is to create encouragement for people to visit the neighborhood, linger, and invite their friends. This means that the ideal location features sufficient outdoor space that can be used to set up seating, games, food options, and other attractions. For this reason, a Better Block in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood would want to be set up in an area with plenty of sidewalk space near businesses.

The final primary goal is to create amenities that can lure all groups of people. Some examples of this would include pop-up art galleries showcasing local artists, oversized checkers, plenty of seating for families to sit and enjoy a meal, art studios for children, and pop-up shops. One of the great benefits of Better Block is the number of toolkits and information they provide so that everything needed for this project can be built by the community. In addition, many of these tools could be used as part of the park revitalization project previously discussed.

In Willow Walnut Comstock Park, the Better Block model could create a temporary community gathering spot outside of a park that may inspire residents and help them see what the neighborhood could become. This is not a permanent change, but previous Better Blocks have shown investors what a community is capable of as well and have drawn in new businesses into a community. When businesses occupy these vacant storefronts and more people are gathering in these places, the actual safety of the neighborhood does increase, an important step before the issue of poverty can be addressed in the area. The greatest boon that Better Block has to offer the Willow Walnut Comstock Park residents is that it can jumpstart economic revitalization in the area.

Option 3: Little Free Library

Over the last two decades, “Little Free Libraries” have taken cities both large and small by storm. They function as a peer-to-peer micro-library system where residents leave books for others to “check out” as well as take ones that other people have left to read. This program is based on the honor system with no way to prevent malicious actors from taking advantage of the system, but it has seen great success all over the world and can be a purely community-led program. The website littlefreelibrary.org provides resources on how anyone can start their own library.

Currently, there are already a few of these micro-libraries in the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood. It can only benefit the residents by continuing to install more and make books more easily available throughout the neighborhood.

The City of Lansing could also consider applying for the Impact Library Program offered by littlefreelibrary.org. This program targets areas that lack access to books and will provide a high-

quality book box for that neighborhood. If the neighborhood was approved for this program, it would also be an excellent media outreach opportunity to draw attention to the need and hopefully attract additional support for programs in Willow Walnut Comstock Park.

Option 4: Intersection Art

One low cost placemaking option that has risen in popularity in recent years is the creation of a mural in an intersection. These murals are typically created by local artists and insert color and new energy into the neighborhoods they are installed in. Although there appears to be a lack of empirical research into these projects, surveys of residents in the blocks surrounding these projects have suggested a reduction in crime rate and reduced driving speeds in the neighborhood. While the connection with crime rate may seem dubious, it does seem to fit the overall narrative of placemaking in that these art installations create an emotional response in people towards their neighborhood which has been associated with an increase in public safety.

The current popularity of intersection art can be traced to the City Repair Project out of Portland, OR, who offer advice on how to implement this program at cityrepair.org.

Option 5: Transformation of Bus Stops into Public Amenities

Currently, most bus stops in Lansing and the surrounding area focus as little more than stops. However, one recent placemaking trend in cities around the nation is to expand what is available at the spots. Some cities have been “co-locating postal collection boxes, newsstands, and similar conveniences” according to the Project for Public Spaces.

In addition, some cities, have decided to use bus stops as the locations for community gardens. Despite being in high crime areas, many of these gardens have transformed the area around the stop into a safe place for people to wait. These are typically smaller than the full-size community gardens seen in other projects, but they change the atmosphere around the bus stop enough to have an impact on crime.

However, these transformations do not need to be so thorough. Oftentimes, adding an extra bench and a few potted plants is enough to sufficiently change the atmosphere of the bus stop. If possible, adding an enclosure that can protect from the elements, display bus schedules, advertise events, and even showcase local art can make the stop feel even more welcoming.

Option 6: Art Spaces for Youth

In Detroit, The Alley Project was undertaken to transform a handful of vacant lots and a detached garage into an art-filled public space. They have built free-standing walls that are used as canvases for their art, and it has become a gathering space for neighborhood youth to gather and play after school.

In the Willow Walnut Comstock Park Neighborhood, some of the vacant lots owned by the land bank could be leased for this same purpose. It provides a creative outlet for neighborhood youth and can help breathe new life into underutilized areas. In addition, research has shown that engaging in art can help children and teens develop a number of useful skills that can help them in their future careers.

While the vacant property from the land bank may be the most obvious choice, it could also be a partner program with the Department of Parks and Recreation. This could be another way to revitalize the parks in the neighborhood and help them become places where youth spend their time after school.

The above options are by no means the only ways to engage in placemaking in the neighborhood, but they are a starting place to begin discussions on how to create a deeper emotional connection between residents and the area they call home. While these projects would not have anywhere near the direct impact on economic mobility that a strategically designed, full-fledged program would, they are capable of jumpstarting some of the changes that would improve the neighborhood.