



# URBAN DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**Downtown Urban Design Plan  
Ferndale, Michigan**

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# **URBAN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

## **Downtown Urban Design Plan Ferndale, Michigan**

**Prepared For**

**City of Ferndale  
Downtown Development Authority**

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**Prepared By**

**McKenna Associates, Incorporated  
38955 Hills Tech Drive, Suite 200  
Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331  
(313) 553-0290**

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# URBAN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

## I. INTRODUCTION

The primary reason for undertaking the planning process is to formulate a strategy for improving the physical and economic environment of Ferndale's downtown. Without such a strategy around which to organize action, major improvements are unlikely to occur.

The two background studies, Physical Assets and Retail Market Analysis, describe the problems and needs of the CBD in detail and present numerous actions which could be taken to enhance the urban environment. In order to prioritize activities and provide a framework for attaining a sound, economically viable and amenable shopping district, goals have been developed. These goals generally describe the desired end state and conditions to be attained in the CBD.

The remaining sections of this plan propose the means to meet these goals, expressed through: (1) an urban design plan for Ferndale's downtown, and (2) a strategy for implementing the urban design plan and achieving the market recommendations.

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## II. GOALS

The following goals were developed as a result of the information gathering, data collection and assessment effort establishing the physical and economic condition of the downtown. Further, the direct involvement and perspectives of the Downtown Development Authority have been incorporated. The City Planning Commission, City Council and others have also participated in the process.

The Ferndale Urban Design Plan is based upon the following goals:

- Enhance the vehicular and pedestrian circulation in and around the CBD.
- Create an attractive image of Ferndale on Woodward Avenue and a clear entrance to downtown.
- Develop functional public spaces for downtown, merchant and civic activities.
- Provide for additional retail and office space as the market will support it and optimize the mixture of businesses for marketing purposes.
- Supply adequate shopper amenities (i.e., convenient parking, lighting, signs, landscaping, street furniture, etc.).
- Visually coordinate individual businesses into a distinctive, cohesive and attractive district.

To achieve these goals, a variety of projects involving active participation by various public and private agencies and individuals must be undertaken. The Urban Design Plan serves as the overall framework around which projects are addressed and ultimately involved citizenry are organized and guided. The following text outlines the Plan components and the major public and private projects necessary to achieve it.

### III. URBAN DESIGN PLAN

The single most important aspect of the Urban Design Plan, illustrated on the following page, is that it gives the downtown many of the positive qualities of a shopping center. Although the character of the CBD should be distinguished apart from commercial strips, there are many characteristics of shopping malls and centers which make them popular places to go. Successful shopping centers have abundant parking conveniently located close to the stores; have a unified design theme with a consistent facade and signage; have clearly defined entrances and exits; and contain common spaces and amenities for shoppers. These considerations and features have been integrated into the overall Urban Design Plan.

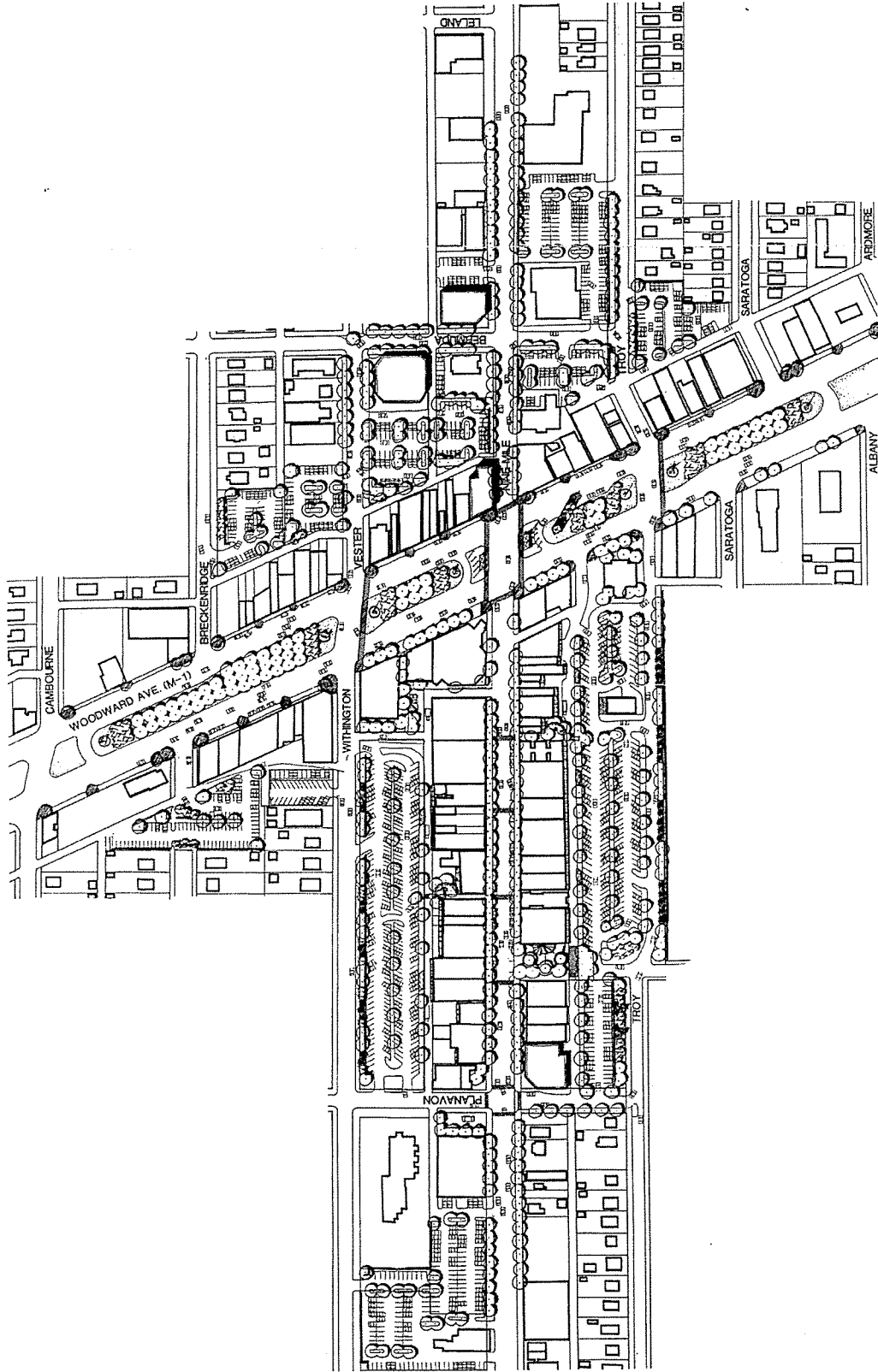
The design concept responds to the needs and benefits of more than the consumer. A critical component of any improvement effort is stabilization of district retailers. If a retail center, such as the CBD, offers the merchant and prospective merchant only floor space on a major thoroughfare with public parking in the vicinity, then location in the CBD may be difficult to justify from the merchant's perspective. If, however, a wide variety of public improvements are present, creating a vital, attractive, exciting environment filled with changing sights, sounds and events, then the downtown becomes a very desirable location. Therefore, provision of public spaces, aesthetic improvements and modifications of existing spaces to create a better shopping environment can be an initiative to merchants to stay in downtown and further serves as an incentive for retailers to reinvest in their facilities.

#### A. Physical Improvement Projects

Illustrated on the Urban Design Plan, Map 1, are a number of general improvement projects within Ferndale's CBD. These projects, described below, are the major physical investments which should be undertaken to effectuate a desirable environment downtown. For purposes of description, related projects have been grouped. Project codes following the project group title refer to Table 1 in the Implementation Strategy section of this plan.

##### 1. Troy Parking Lot (Projects A & B)

One of the most significant projects identified on the Urban Design Plan is the redesign and reconstruction of the Troy parking lot on a model similar to the successful, well-used Withington parking lot. Like the Withington lot, the new design shifts the parking areas closer to the rear entrances of the commercial buildings. To accommodate the shift, the Troy roadway is relocated along the south edge of the lot to intersect Woodward south of the post office. An alley remains immediately behind the businesses to facilitate loading and unloading and emergency access. Common areas for dumpsters are screened in landscaped areas adjacent to the alley. Improvements proposed with the overall Troy parking lot design include consolidation of several separate parking lots with repaving, new lighting, landscaping, sidewalks and clearly marked crosswalks. Although much of the land required for the



**URBAN DESIGN PLAN**  
**CITY OF FERNDALE** ■ **OAKLAND COUNTY** ■ **MICHIGAN**

**MAP 1**

scale

100	200	400	660 feet
			1/8 mile



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alley is privately owned, owners should be willing to grant easements or dedicate the property in exchange for the DDA-constructed improvements. Acquisition of an isolated building and property in the parking lot will allow better utilization of the land. These improvements should greatly enhance the convenience, appearance and functioning of this visible portion of the CBD, thereby making the nearby commercial properties more valuable.

**2. Commercial Rear Entrances (Projects C & D)**

With the primary parking areas located to the rear of the West Nine Mile Road shops, considerable focus is on the rear entrances to these stores. The Urban Design Plan suggests public improvements in conjunction with private facade improvements to unify the appearance of these areas and provide amenities for pedestrian comfort. Downtown gateway structures would be constructed to clearly direct shoppers to the several existing mid-block pedestrian alleys, announcing an entrance to downtown. Adjacent to the gateways, pedestrian convenience areas (small plazas with benches, trees and ornamental landscaping) are planned.

**3. Woodward Avenue (Projects F, G & M)**

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) plans resurfacing and streetscape improvements along Woodward Avenue through Ferndale during the 1991 construction season. An integral part of the MDOT project is the removal of the median parking lots to reduce accident hazards on this busy stretch of highway. Substantial new parking lot construction has already been initiated by the City in anticipation of the loss of the median. Included in MDOT's contract are street trees, new sidewalk, decorative brick-like pavers, and some median landscaping.

Additional investment is needed beyond that to be done by the State. While MDOT's prime objective is to move traffic with speed and efficiency, it is better for the downtown if cars move somewhat slower increasing the likelihood that their occupants will stop and shop in Ferndale. The Urban Design Plan includes significant additional landscaping in the median, highlighted with the placement of sculpture or other public art. The intersection of Woodward and Nine Mile will be a focal point for the CBD with decorative crosswalks, a sign identifying the downtown anchors, attractive covered pedestrian shelters and evergreen planters at the four corners. Although a lower priority, new pedestrian lights should be installed along Woodward to modernize the frontage appearance.

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#### **4. Circulation (Projects E, J & R)**

The Urban Design Plan proposes several circulation changes to improve the clarity and overall functioning of downtown. The opening of I-696 has greatly impacted traffic volumes downtown. Traffic today is significantly less than in recent years. In order to maintain West Nine Mile as the downtown spine with pedestrian activity and a healthy amount of congestion, the prohibition on right turns from Nine Mile to Woodward should be lifted, thereby eliminating the mandatory Allen/Troy and Bermuda/Vester bypasses. These routes are retained under the Plan, with an extension of Planavon south to Troy then following the relocated alignment. Establishing Planavon as a cross road makes is a distinct western entrance to the CBD and a more regular pattern of streets and blocks is created. A further advantage of the Troy relocation is that it allows the road to align directly with Troy on the east side of Woodward, and permits the installation of a new traffic light on Woodward. The new traffic light will also help slow traffic on Woodward as it passes through town.

With reduced traffic volumes on West Nine Mile, sufficient capacity should exist on the street to provide for some on-street parallel parking particularly during non-rush hours. On-street parking is desirable because it promotes activity in front of the stores and is a convenience for short term parkers. Detailed traffic counts should be conducted prior to permitting the parking to determine appropriate times. Pedestrian crosswalks should be added or relocated to match other pathway locations and signals provided for easy mid-block crossings.

The remaining quadrant of the downtown traffic loop will be completed by extending Bermuda south of Nine Mile to Troy.

#### **5. Allen Plaza (Project K)**

The closing of Allen between Nine Mile and Troy creates an opportunity for a much-needed public activity space. Allen Plaza will provide the location for special events, downtown promotions and other activities. Amenities included are a small stage area, sculpture, benches and tables, pedestrian lighting, paving and landscaping, and a kiosk listing programmed events and merchant promotions.

#### **6. Public Parking Lots (Projects L & T)**

The Urban Design Plan identifies expanded or improved public parking in several locations. Resurfacing, landscaping, combined dumpsters and other aesthetic improvements are desirable improvements in the Withington parking lot. Other public parking lots, particularly those which front on Nine Mile, warrant resurfacing, lighting, landscaping and screening walls to enhance the appearance of downtown.

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Although the existing off-street parking supply is adequate, new development will require expanded parking capacity. Construction of new parking lots is planned in conjunction with infill construction on key sites downtown.

**7. Private Construction/Infill (Projects H, O, S, & U)**

Several sites have been identified with potential for new construction or redevelopment. Any new development downtown should be encouraged to remain in scale, height and architectural character with the CBD and to preserve or reinforce the streetwall. Inappropriate uses should be discouraged.

The retail market analysis pointed out the need for a new retail anchor in the downtown. This anchor is proposed to be located in the existing or an expanded Farmer Jack building with parking constructed to support the use. Alternately, the anchor could locate on the nearby commercial infill site south of West Nine Mile which is planned utilizing the Nine Mile/Planavon parking lot with new parking located to the rear.

Two new office buildings are indicated as redevelopment opportunities in the vicinity of Bermuda and Vester. Office uses in this area would strengthen the Civic Center complex and contribute day time population to patronize the restaurants and stores. Architecturally, the most critical new construction is the northeast corner of Nine Mile and Woodward. To maintain the CBD density and intensity focus at this intersection, the new building must be at least two stories tall.

**8. Nine Mile Streetscape (Projects I, Q & P)**

Although much of the West Nine Mile shopping district has adequate streetscape improvements, some of the individual elements are becoming dated. The Plan provides for upgraded furniture, accent lighting of significant buildings and new pedestrian lights to modernize the street. Extension of the existing streetscape is shown west to the Western Market and east to City Hall to facilitate foot traffic. These extensions should be timed to coincide with private investment nearby.

**9. Facade Improvements (Project N)**

Building facades, both front and rear, contribute greatly to the appearance of downtown. Although facade improvements are primarily the responsibility of the building owner, the City can assist in creating design continuity by preparing and adopting detailed design guidelines.

In general, storefronts should contain common colors, complementary detailing and materials. Window displays should

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be simple, comprehensive and accentuate the most popular items or services of a business. Customer entrances should be inviting and can be identified by awnings above the door, business identification signs painted on the door, decorative details such as door pulls, kick plates, and grill work, and by painting all main doors the same color. Sign confusion should be minimized by coordinating lighting, materials, proportion and placement.

Rear facades in Ferndale must respond to the same needs as the store front, only at a reduced scale (i.e., identification, signage, display and entry), while still meeting the service needs of the business. Common treatments needed for the rear facades include: repair or cosmetic improvement of gutters and downspouts; repair or repainting of masonry; utility boxes painted to match color of building; modestly scaled signs; awnings to create a pleasant protected space; windows used for display; doors similar to the front door. Landscaping and planter boxes should be used selectively to improve the visual image and coordinate with neighboring properties.

To be successful, this Plan must be developed in a systematic manner which acknowledges and complements the resulting impacts to the merchants. The following implementation strategy outlines such a systematic schedule for improvements, potential funding sources and feasible delegation of responsibilities.

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## **IV. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

In order to accomplish the goals and recommendations of the background studies and the Urban Design Plan, projects have been suggested in a three (3) part implementation strategy. These activities have been classified as Physical Improvement Projects, Market Development Projects, and Administrative Projects. Tables 1, 2 and 3 list these projects.

The overall strategy reflected in the Physical Improvement Projects emphasizes the relocation of Troy to the south of existing parking in order to physically integrate the parking lots with existing businesses and to create a ring road around the downtown shopping district; the improvement of rear facades of existing businesses in order to improve their attractiveness to the consumer and to better communicate the purpose of these entrances; and to place parallel parking on West Nine Mile Road to encourage greater pedestrian usage of the Nine Mile Road to access the retail establishments. This set of projects would be primarily financed through a bond issue to be repaid from the tax increment finance revenues collected by the DDA.

The primary recommendation contained in the Market Development Projects is to create a Shopping District Management Board with a majority membership of downtown retailers and property owners. This Board would hire and finance the cost of a Downtown Development Authority/Shopping District Management Board Manager. The Downtown Manager would be responsible for the management of the development activities and the promotion of the downtown shopping district. Such a person will permit the CBD to operate more competitively as an integrated shopping center. Most of the other recommended programs are based on having a full time staff person prior to implementation.

The basic recommendation embodied in the Administrative Projects is to update the City's ordinances to regulate the design and operations of the shopping district to be in conformance with the recommendations of the Plan. Such ordinances regulate signs, sign appearance, the uses and layout of property, building design and construction, maintenance and other aspects of the downtown.

### **A. Costs, Phasing and Responsibilities**

The timing, cost estimates, implementation responsibility, and potential funding sources of the three categories of projects are outlined in the following tables.

Table 1

**FERNDALÉ DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN  
Physical Improvement Projects  
Phase 1: 1991 - 1995**

Project I.D.	Project Summary	Preliminary Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Responsibility	Timing <sup>a</sup>		Process
					Planning/Design	Construction	
A	<u>Troy Parking Lot Improvements</u> Property acquisition, business relocation, building demolition. Parking lot reorganization, and redesign to include curb removal, repaving, new lighting, landscaping, sidewalks.	\$930,000	TIF Bonds	DDA City	1992	1993	Assume TIF bonds to be sold in 1992
B	<u>Troy Relocation</u> Right-of-way acquisition, road construction (Woodward to Allen)	\$260,000	TIF Bonds	DDA City	1992	1993	Right-of-way may be acquired through land swap with property owners
C	<u>W. Nine Mile Commercial Rear Entrances (Withington)</u> Consolidated service areas, sidewalks, paving, pedestrian convenience areas with landscaping, benches, uniform awning, downtown gateway structure.	\$220,000	TIF Bonds	DDA	1992	1993	Coordinate proposals with merchants and land owners; permission needed to attach awning; negotiate easements to use private land for pedestrian convenience areas.
D	<u>W. Nine Mile Commercial Rear Entrance (Troy)</u> Consolidated service areas, sidewalks, paving, pedestrian convenience areas with landscaping, benches, uniform awning, downtown gateway structure.	\$300,000	TIF Bonds	DDA	1992	1993	Coordinate proposals with merchants and land owners; permission needed to attach awning; negotiate easements to use private land for pedestrian convenience areas.
E	<u>West Nine Mile Road: Circulation</u> Allow turns onto Woodward, stripe roadway to allow on-street parking during non-rush hours. Add crosswalks and signals, coordinate public directional signs.	\$20,000	General Fund Act 51	DDA City	1992	1992	Traffic consultant services included to review proposed circulation system and perform detailed traffic counts.

Table 1 (Continued)

**FERDALE DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN**  
**Physical Improvement Projects**  
**Phase 1 -- 1991 - 1995**

Project I.D.	Project Summary	Preliminary Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Responsibility	Timing <sup>a</sup>		Process
					Planning/Design	Construction	
F	<u>Woodward Avenue: Median</u> Public art, covered pedestrian crossings, focal landscaping, downtown sign.	\$250,000	Donations Grants TIF Bonds	DDA Private City	1992	1993	Assumes art work is donated.
G	<u>Woodward Avenue: Streetscape</u> Street repaving, sidewalk, pavers and street trees.	\$3.1 million total \$67,000 city share	MDOT City	MDOT	Done	1992	Need to amend contract to shift median for Troy crossover.
H	<u>Retail Anchor/W. Nine Mile</u> Secure new tenant for building, building expansion as needed, parking expansion and improvements, residential parcel acquisition (3 parcels).	\$480,000	Private TIF Revenue	Private DDA	1992	1993	Target Tax Increment which expanded building will generate toward needed site improvements. Timing depends on tenant.
I	<u>W. Nine Mile Streetscape Extension</u> Sidewalks, curbs, trees, parking lot screening walls, pedestrian lighting (600 feet)	\$140,000	Special Assessment TIF Revenues	DDA	1992	1993	To be timed to support the new retail tenant in Farmer Jack building.
J	<u>Downtown Traffic Loop: Planavon</u> Right-of-way acquisition (2 residential parcels), relocation and demolition, road construction and buffer landscaping.	\$200,000	TIF Bonds	DDA City	1992	1994	Prior to construction of Allen Plaza.
K	<u>Allen Plaza</u> Construct paved plaza with seating, lighting, landscaping.	\$90,000	TIF Bonds Donations	DDA Private	1992	1995	Requires land from Sam's Jams.

Table 1 (Continued)

**FERNDALÉ DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN**  
**Physical Improvement Projects**  
**Phase 2: 1996 - 2000**

Project I.D.	Project Summary	Preliminary Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Responsibility	Timing <sup>a</sup>			Process
					Planning/Design	Construction		
L	<u>Withington Parking Lot Improvements</u> Resurfacing and landscaping	\$560,000	TIF Revenue Parking Fund	DDA	NA	NA	As funds are available.	
M	<u>Woodward Avenue: Streetscape</u>  Add planters with evergreen shrubs, perennials and other features at downtown core.	\$20,000	TIF Revenue Donations	DDA	1996	1997	Work with Downtown Manager to obtain owner support.	
N	New pedestrian lights for 600 feet north and south of Nine Mile (2,400 ft. total)	\$80,000	Special Assessment	City	1996	1997		
	<u>Building Improvements</u> Front and rear facade modifications to coordinate sign placement, window and door placement, scale and proportion of buildings.	\$16 - 25 (front) \$5 - 10 (rear) per sq. ft. of facade surface area	Private	Private DDA City	Ongoing	Ongoing	Incentive programs can be developed and promoted by Downtown Manager.  Improvements to be obtained through compliance with facade guidelines at time of individual remodeling.	
O	<u>Woodward/Nine Mile Parcel</u> Promote construction of taller commercial/office building.	NA	Private	Private DDA	NA	NA	Coordinate through Downtown Manager.	



Table 1 (Continued)

**FERNDALE DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN  
Physical Improvement Projects  
Phase 3: 2001 - Completion**

Project I.D.	Project Summary	Preliminary Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Responsibility	Timing <sup>a</sup>		Process
					Planning/Design	Construction	
P	<u>E. Nine Mile Road Streetscape Extension</u> Sidewalks, curbs, trees, parking lot screening walls, pedestrian lighting.	\$270,000	TIF Revenue Special Assessment	DDA	b	b	Coordinate with redevelopment of private property.
Q	<u>W. Nine Mile Road Streetscape: Renovation</u> Upgraded furniture, accent lighting, new pedestrian lights.	\$100,000	TIF Revenue Special Assessment	DDA	b	b	Work with Downtown Manager to obtain owner support.
R	<u>Downtown Traffic Loop Completion: Bermuda</u> Reorganization of Civic Center parking lots, roads construction.	\$20,000	TIF Revenue	DDA City	b	b	May require additional land acquisition for parking.
S	<u>Commercial Infill/W. Nine Mile</u> New building construction to match existing streetwall, remove 9 Mile/ Planavon parking lot and relocate to rear of buildings.	\$300,000	Private TIF Revenue	Private DDA	NA	NA	Ensure that streetwall is maintained.
T	<u>Other Public Parking Lot Improvements</u> Resurfacing, landscaping, screening walls, lighting.	\$100,000	TIF Revenue Parking Fund	DDA	b	b	Ongoing needs.
U	<u>Office Development</u> Promote redevelopment of properties east of Woodward for office uses.	NA	Private	Private DDA	NA	NA	Coordinate through Downtown Manager.

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Timetable refers to budget year in which project would be initiated.

<sup>b</sup>As funds become available.

Table 2

**FERNDALE DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN  
Market Development Projects  
Phase 1 -- 1991 - 1995**

Project I.D.	Activity	Responsibility	Timing	Process
A	<p>Establish Shopping District Management Board</p> <p>Establish a Shopping District Management Board with a coterminous (same members on each) membership with the DDA in order to expand business participation, expand special assessment authority, &amp; expand authority to operate the shopping district.</p>	<p>DDA Mayor City Council</p>	1991	<p>DDA and Mayor submit proposal to City Council for approval.</p>
B	<p>Agree on Assessment to Operate Shopping district</p> <p>Obtain a agreement to assess Ferndale Shopping District properties approximately \$.25/square foot of retail and related space, for administration, marketing, and promotion of the shopping district. Typical private shopping malls allocates approximately \$1.00 to 2.00 per square foot for this purpose. The request must come from the merchants. The entire plan should be submitted to the Ferndale merchants and a vote taken of the merchants present.</p>	DDA/Shopping District Management Board	1991	<p>Shopping District Management Board determine budget and notice assessment.</p>
C	<p>Hire Downtown Manager</p> <p>Hire a professional to manage the shopping district to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ help establish an image,</li> <li>✓ recruit tenants,</li> <li>✓ assist current stores to expand,</li> <li>✓ promote the district,</li> <li>✓ help retailers improve store design,</li> <li>✓ manage the DDA development program,</li> <li>✓ provide staff support to the DDA/Shopping District Management Board and a newly formed Merchant's Association,</li> <li>✓ run promotional events from sidewalk sales to art fairs, to festivals, have promotional brochures prepared,</li> <li>✓ publish a newsletter to keep merchants current.</li> </ul> <p>It is important that the manager be selected by the retailers and property owners and approved by the DDA/Shopping District Management Board. The program should be decided by a consensus of the merchants.</p>	DDA/Shopping District Management Board	1991	<p>It is recommended that the following decision making process be established:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Establish a merchant (3-5 people) subcommittee of the DDA (add non-members to assure appropriate participation). They should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ prepare a job description,</li> <li>▪ recommend salary, obtain DDA/Shopping District Management Board approval, and then</li> <li>▪ recruit, interview, &amp; obtain DDA/Shopping District Management Board approval to hire</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 2 (Continued)

**FERDALE DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN**  
**Market Development Projects**  
**Phase 1: 1991 - 1995**

Project I.D.	Activity	Responsibility	Timing	Process
D	<b>Assist Retailers to Expand</b> Several firms indicated a desire to expand. Work with all merchants to expand their presence in the shopping district.	DDA/Shopping District Management Board	1992	Downtown Manager should work with firms desiring to expand.
E	<b>Recruit New Tenants</b> Negotiate an arrangement with a professional real estate firm to recruit retailers to meet the needs of the center in particular another anchor, a men's store, a hardware store, and to concentrate on recruiting off-price (i.e., Bull Run) type stores, negotiate a standard contract for all property owners to sign and participate.	DDA/Shopping District Management Board	1992	Downtown Manager should recruit, negotiate, and obtain DDA approval.
F	<b>Organize Merchants' Association</b> Organize and provide support staff to a strong, effective Merchants' Association to advise the DDA/Shopping District Management Board on implementation of all downtown programs.	DDA/Shopping District Management Board	1992	Downtown Manager should organize merchants to be an effective participatory role player in downtown activities.
G	<b>Eliminate Warehousing</b> Work with merchants to remove warehousing and storage operations from frontage.	DDA/Shopping District Management Board	1992	DDA director should work with retailers to implement the program.
H	<b>Establish Minimum Hours</b> Establish minimum operating hours for the district, have included in all new leasing contracts.	DDA/Shopping District Management Board	1992	DDA director should work with retailers to implement the program.
I	<b>Establish Promotional Programs &amp; Activities</b> Establish and manage an annual series of events and activities that will draw customers to the Ferndale Shopping District.	DDA/Shopping District - Management Board	1992 & Ongoing	DDA director should work with retailers to implement the program.
J	<b>Advertise</b> Prepare a promotional leaflet describing all of the stores located in the Ferndale Shopping District, prepare mailings to market area customers and organize joint and cross promotion programs.	DDA/Shopping District Management Board	1992 & Ongoing	DDA director should work with retailers to implement the program.
K	<b>Improve Interior Design &amp; Display</b> Initiate a program to help small business retailers in improving display design, signage, and promotion.	DDA/Shopping District - Management Board	1992-3	Downtown Manager with McKenna Associates assistance would design the program.

Table 3

**FERNDALÉ DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN  
Administrative Projects**

Project I.D.	Activity	Responsibility	Timing	Process
A	<p><b>Appearance Code</b> - Prepare a City Appearance Code or Zoning Ordinance revision which include an Appearance Review Board. The Review Board would be used to control design and appearance of the downtown shopping district.</p>	<p>Planning Commission City DDA</p>	<p>1991 - 92</p>	<p>Consider hiring Consultant to prepare the ordinance.</p>
B	<p><b>Zoning Ordinance</b> - The Zoning Ordinance controls the design criteria and property uses for the downtown shopping district.</p> <p>The zoning ordinance should be modified to reflect the recommendations of the Plan including the following provisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Prohibit parking lots fronting on 9 Mile Road.</li> <li>■ Establish maximum setbacks for buildings.</li> <li>■ Prohibit outdoor storage of vehicles.</li> <li>■ Ensure continuity of building heights in the CBD.</li> <li>■ Prohibit warehousing or storage on 9 Mile frontage.</li> <li>■ Include provisions for an Appearance Review Board.</li> </ul>	<p>Planning Commission City DDA</p>	<p>1991 - 92</p>	<p>Consider hiring Consultant to prepare the zoning ordinance amendments and work with Planning Commission.</p>
C	<p><b>Sign Ordinance</b> - The sign ordinance should be amended to establish common criteria for size, style and location of signs specific for the downtown.</p>	<p>Planning Commission City DDA</p>	<p>1991 - 92</p>	<p>Consider hiring Consultant to prepare suggested sign ordinance amendments.</p>
D	<p><b>Building Code</b> - Review to ensure that the Code is up-to-date and reflects appropriate considerations for unique needs of older downtown buildings.</p>	<p>City</p>	<p>1992</p>	<p>On-going process with City staff.</p>

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## B. Implementation Mechanisms

### 1. Financing Tools

Adequate financing is perhaps the most important tool for implementation. Several sources of public financing are outlined below:

#### a. Shopping Center Redevelopment Act, P.A. 120 of 1961

The Shopping Center Redevelopment Act permits a community to redevelop and to provide for maintenance, provide for maintenance, promotion, security, and continued operation of the shopping district. In particular, the community is permitted to establish a special assessment district to pay for developing parking lots, improving streets and alleys, construct buildings to serve the public, and to provide for the operation, maintenance, and security of the district. The act requires the establishment of a managing board with a majority of the members being property owners and business operators.

The act requires that the redevelopment plan for the downtown be included in the city's Master Plan.

It is proposed that the board of the Downtown Development Authority be coterminous with the Shopping District Management Board. The membership criteria for each is as follows:

	<u>DDA</u>	<u>Shopping District Management Board</u>
<b>Size</b>	Chief Executive Officer community plus 8 to 12	No size limitation
<b>Government Member</b>	Chief Executive Officer	1 City representative
<b>Representation</b>	Majority of owners or property owners	Majority have "interest" in property
<b>Residents</b>	One from District if there are 100 or more residents	One from adjacent neighborhood

The Management Board can be established once the redevelopment plan, in this case the Urban Design Plan, is approved by the Planning Commission. The law requires that the City's chief executive appoint the members who are then approved by the City Council.

In order to initiate a special assessment, the Shopping District Management Board is required to make a proposal to the City Council. The proposal should include a budget and work plan. The City Council after a public hearing may authorize the special assessment which may be based on benefits to the property owner or frontage. It is recommended that the assessment be made based on gross square feet of retail space, multiplied by the amount to be assessed per square foot. An initial estimated allocation is \$ 0.25 per square foot.

Upon approval of the project, the assessor is required to prepare a special assessment roll and allocate the costs to the taxpayers within the assessment district. Prior to approving the special assessment roll, the City Council members and the Board of Special Assessors shall hold a public hearing. Any person objecting to the assessment may object in writing. When the assessment roll is confirmed by the City Council, it is final. This summary of special assessment procedures is based upon Chapter 12 of the City Charter.

**b. Downtown Development Authority (DDA), P.A. 197 of 1975**

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a non-profit corporation for the downtown business district of Ferndale. Its purpose is to promote a desirable environment for businesses and residents and for implementing economic revitalization projects. Projects can be implemented by the DDA through a variety of financing techniques, but the principal technique used is tax increment financing.

The City can designate a portion of the increased taxes generated through increased taxes generated through increased in property values to pay for public improvements. Since the DDA now has a source of income, the DDA may issue bonds to be repaid from the captured tax revenue. This is proposed as the primary source of funds for financing the capital improvement projects planned for downtown Ferndale.

In order to use tax increment financing to finance the improvements designated in the plan, the DDA will be required to amend the current Tax Increment Financing Plan and have it approved by the City Council. The Tax Increment Plan includes an explicit development plan as outlined in Section 17 of the Act, which must also be amended to provide for the projects in the Urban Design Plan. Once the Development Plan is complete, the City Council is required to hold a public hearing and determine that the plans serve a public purpose. Further, the Council must find that they consider the project to be a public purpose. Then, they must make a series of findings that the plan is reasonable, feasible, meets the criteria of the law, that public services, infrastructure, and zoning are adequate and/or reasonable, and that it is in keeping with the City Master Plan.

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The DDA prior to the public hearing must inform the School Board and the County Commissioners of the full fiscal and economic implications of the Development and Tax Increment Plan.

If needed, the DDA may also assess the properties within its district up to 2 mills for operating and other costs.

**c. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

The Community Development Block Grant program is a federal entitlement program that annually provides money to the community for community development projects. The funds can be utilized to construct parking lots, establish revolving loan funds for streetscape improvements to acquire and clear land for redevelopment, and other eligible projects. In some cases, CDBG funds can be used as matching funds for other federal or state grant programs. Presently most of Ferndale's CDBG funds are committed to existing programs.

**d. Highway Improvement Act (P.A. 51 of 1951)**

P.A. 51 establishes a process for the distribution of gasoline taxes and vehicle weight taxes to communities for the purpose of road maintenance and improvement. The formula is based on miles of road by class, population, category of community size, and the amount of funds available in the Michigan Transportation Fund. The dollar amount changes from year to year. These funds may be used for several of the proposed road improvement projects.

**2. Administrative Tools**

A number of regulatory mechanisms are available to further the goals of the Plan. Some of the most important of these follow:

**a. Sign Ordinance**

A sign ordinance can be a very effective mechanism for affecting the appearance of commercial buildings and property. The ordinance can regulate the size, height, style, and construction of signs. Ferndale's sign regulations should be reviewed and updated to include specific design standards for all signage along Nine Mile Road and Woodward Avenue in the CBD. Further, the ordinance should incorporate provisions to prohibit new billboards in the CBD and encourage the removal of those existing.

**b. Zoning Ordinance**

The zoning ordinance for a city controls the type of uses, building setbacks, building heights, parking, and other site development considerations. It can give the City a mechanism to help assure a healthy downtown by reducing blighting influences and encouraging good design practices.

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**c. Appearance Review Board**

It is proposed that Ferndale develop and enact an Appearance Code in order to establish regulatory control over the appearance of shops and buildings. The Appearance Code would include design guidelines and standards to achieve attractive buildings downtown. The format of the Code should help business people to understand the appearance criteria, processes, time lines and submission requirements. The language must be written very carefully in order to permit the Appearance Review Board to protect community aesthetics without restricting creativity. Further, the effort should be well publicized to encourage awareness and responsiveness. Alternatively, these design objectives can be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance.

**d. Building Code**

The City Building Code is a tool that can be used to upgrade and improve existing and new housing and commercial properties. It provides specific standards for such things as light and ventilation, minimum sanitary facilities, health standards, structural conditions, minimum electrical and plumbing standards. The Code can force improvement or can be used to demolish buildings unfit for habitation.

**3. Private/Public Partnerships**

Overall, the Ferndale downtown improvement program should be viewed as a private/public partnership. The success of the proposed projects, programs and activities is dependent on the private sector sharing in the implementation of various projects, along with the considerable public investment proposed. Some of the improvement projects described may be implemented through formal private/public partnerships, or joint ventures. Joint ventures involving both public and private interests are increasingly used to implement improvement projects. These limited "partnerships" are typically an arrangement whereby public funds are used to leverage private investment and to finance related public improvements.

Private financing and participation will occur through merchants reinvesting in businesses, participating in joint promotion campaigns, and being assessed to pay for the management of the development and operational program. In the case of rear facades and rear entrance improvements, the businesses may be asked to donate easements or land in order for the DDA to install the proposed uniform awning and construct the downtown gateway and other improvements. Another one of the recommended programs creates a matching fund to encourage business to improve their interior design and displays.

An active Merchants Association, other than the Shopping District Management Board, should be encouraged in order to assure that the City is responsive to the retailers' needs.



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## **C. Roles of Implementation Participants**

The implementation strategy for the Ferndale Downtown Urban Design Plan involves the need for a coordinated and aggressive effort from a number of different actors. Each group is needed to provide an essential ingredient of the implementation process, whether that role involves project administration, financing, or community support. The role of each group is defined below.

### **1. Planning Commission**

The Downtown Urban Design and Implementation Plan should be adopted by the Planning Commission as part the City Master Plan. The Planning Commission is also responsible for preparing and recommending zoning ordinance amendments and other land regulation.

### **2. Community Development Department**

The Community Development Department, until a DDA manager is hired, must provide the staff services to implement the Downtown Urban Design and Implementation Plan. The department needs to support the establishment of the Shopping District Management Board and the bonding process for tax increment bonds to finance the project. The department should maintain a systematic code enforcement program to assure all commercial properties are properly maintained.

### **3. City Council**

The City Council approval is required to expand the DDA boundary, adopt a new tax increment financing plan, create the Shopping District Management Board and enact the special assessment for the continued operation of the downtown shopping district, including the hiring of a downtown manager. In each case, the City Council is required to have public hearings to obtain the comments of the merchants and area residents.

### **4. Municipal Departments**

All municipal departments need to promote an environment welcoming shoppers to Ferndale. Overtime parking should not be strictly enforced; streets should be maintained in a clean and uncluttered condition; and other City services should be provided in an effective, efficient manner.

### **5. Businessmen**

Businessmen are the key to the success of the Plan. It is important that they organize to assure that the Plan is responsive to their needs and work with the City and the DDA to create a vital and economically healthy shopping district. Merchants need to invest in their businesses to keep them a strong retail attraction. They need to join together to attract strong tenants into the vacant spaces. Also, the businessmen

will need to agree to the special assessment for downtown shopping district operations and promotions.

## **6. Financial Institutions**

The community's financial institutions should be encouraged to offer financing to strong healthy businesses to help modernize merchandizing and to modernize and improve the stores. Financial institutions should specifically be recruited as integral members of the Downtown Merchants Association.

## **7. Downtown Development Authority**

The Downtown Development Authority has the primary responsibility for implementation of the Plan. Once this Plan has been approved by the DDA, the members must make a commitment to sell the Plan recommendations to the retailers in the district, the City Council and the public as a whole. Once approved by all parties, it is the responsibility of the DDA to initiate the actions required to implement the plan, including the establishment of a Shopping District Management Board, hiring of a director, proposing the special assessment to finance the program, and approval and issuance of the bond to raise the necessary funds. The DDA will need to provide continuing policy guidance and supervision for the entire development process and for continued promotion and a management of the district.

## **8. Consultants**

Consultants can provide specialized services which the DDA and the City can not afford to have on staff. Consultants have been recommended to fulfill several of the key actions in the plan, such as:

- Traffic consultant to study traffic patterns and recommend parking hours along Nine Mile Road.
- Preparation of a new Tax Increment Financing Plan including the associated Development Plan in conformance with the requirements of P.A. 197.
- Assistance in preparing ordinance changes and additions, including:
  - Zoning Ordinance Amendments
  - Appearance Code
  - Sign Ordinance revisions
- Legal and financing assistance needed to package and sell TIF bonds to finance the major physical improvement projects.
- Engineering services to complete detailed design and specifications for parking lots, roads and other projects.

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With the participation of each of above-identified groups, the enhancement of Ferndale's downtown to create a vital market and a quality place is an achievable goal.

