



AGENDA
CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY
May 23, 2018 6:00 pm
Central Fire Station

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. MISSION: The Corridor Improvement Authority of the Charter Township of Meridian is dedicated to establishing the Grand River Avenue corridor in Meridian Township as a prime business and recreation destination in the Tri-County region. The Authority is focused on creating programs and projects that invigorate the streetscape and build partnerships among corridor property owners, business owners, and residents.
3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
4. CONSENT AGENDA
 - a. Communications
 - b. Minutes – April 25, 2018
 - c. Development Projects Update
5. PUBLIC COMMENT
6. PRESENTATION – Consumers Energy: Sanju Guinn, Megan Cogswell & Tammi Opalek
7. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Corridor Action Plan – projects, costs, resources, timelines, ordinances
 - b. View the Complete Capitol Corridor Plan at:
<http://www.meridian.mi.us/Home/ShowDocument?id=11775>
8. OLD BUSINESS
 - a. MUPUD Zoning Amendment Update
 - b. Form Based Code/Shaping the Ave Update
9. MERIDIAN MALL REPORT
10. TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT
11. CHAIR REPORT
12. STAFF REPORT
13. OPEN DISCUSSION/BOARD COMMENTS
14. PUBLIC COMMENT
15. NEXT MEETING DATE:
 - a. Next Meeting Date: June 27, 2018 - 6:00 p.m. Central Fire Station
16. ADJOURNMENT



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY-CENTRAL FIRE STATION
5000 OKEMOS ROAD, OKEMOS, MI 48864
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018 6:00 pm – Minutes (Draft)

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Chris Nugent, Eric Foster, Bruce Peffers, Supervisor Ron Styka, Barry Goetz, Brian Jones and Todd Huhn

MEMBERS

ABSENT: Chris Rigterink, Kellie Johnson, and Jeff Ross

STAFF

PRESENT: Economic Development Director Chris Buck

OTHERS

PRESENT: Doris Schwartz

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Kellie Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm and read the mission statement.

2. MISSION: The Corridor Improvement Authority of the Charter Township of Meridian is dedicated to establishing the Grand River Avenue corridor in Meridian Township as a prime business and recreation destination in the Tri-County region. The Authority is focused on creating programs and projects that invigorate the streetscape and build partnerships among corridor property owners, business owners, and residents.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION BY MEMBER PEFFERS TO APPROVE AGENDA. SUPPORTED BY MEMBER HUHN. MOTION APPROVED 7-0.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR STYKA TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA. SUPPORTED BY MEMBER PEFFERS. MOTION APPROVED 7-0.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Doris Schwartz introduced herself, wants to stay in tune with what the CIA is working on. She thought about joining, but decided not to. However, she wants to stay involved as a citizen.

6. PRESENTATION

Corridor Improvement Authority Minutes (Draft)
April 25, 2018
Page 2

Brad Funkhouser explained the new leadership, philosophy of inclusion and engagement. CATA views itself as a mobility solutions organization, not a bus company. They are working with ETRAN and Clinton Transit to collaborate wherever possible. Safety of buses are of the highest concern, full inspection of all vehicles has happened and he feels proud of the fleet now.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. MUPUD Zoning Amendment Update

Director Buck reminded the CIA Board what was being suggested in the zoning amendment and that the Township Board will be voting Tuesday, May 1st. CIA members are welcome to attend and support if they feel so inclined.

B. Form Based Code/Shaping the Avenue Update

Director Buck reminded the CIA that there is a work session from 6-9pm on Monday, April 30th with the Shaping the Ave consultants and the Planning Commission. They are welcome to attend.

C. Consumers Lighting Study

Director Buck handed out the initial response from Consumers as to what it would cost to relight the entire Township. Consumers is putting together more information and will present at the May CIA meeting.

8. MERIDIAN MALL REPORT

Younkers closing discussion. Work is going on behind the scenes by the Mall management and ownership to create an overall plan to assist the mall.

9. TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT

Supervisor Styka reported the following items:

- MUPUD
- Police Chief
- Redi-Ride
- Solar Project

10. CHAIR REPORT

Chris Nugent reported the following items:

- His conversations with developers has been very positive regarding doing business in Meridian
- Restaurants are not performing well based on his conversations. Meetings with multiple location owners say their locations outside of Meridian perform better than their Meridian locations. He did not have a solution, but just wanted to relay for the CIA to

think about how we can help. Director Buck offered for Nugent to share which restaurants are saying that so he can visit with them to get more info.

11. STAFF REPORT

Director Buck reported on the following items:

- Pathway Update-In regards to the MSU to Lake Lansing Pathway we are awaiting approval of the last grant we need. It's a MDOT TAP grant and they required us to complete a feasibility study to be eligible. The study has been completed and we have resubmitted our TAP application. We have secured our local and county grant funding and we now await confirmation of the TAP grant. We will spend the rest of 2018 on final design and securing easements and plan to construct phase one in 2019. (Director Perry email)
- Development Projects – Director Buck highlighted specific projects on the list
- A site plan review application for the construction of the New Hope Church on Saginaw Highway has been received
- A site plan review application for a revised site layout for the Marriott Courtyard hotel on Jolly Oak Road has been received
- A rezoning application for the drive-in movie theater site on Saginaw Highway from multiple family to C-2 (Commercial) has been received
- A commercial planned unit development (C-PUD) application for the Panera project on Grand River Avenue (former Mongolian BBQ site) has been received

12. OPEN DISCUSSION/BOARD COMMENTS

None.

13. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Request that the CIA do a better goal setting and vision plan
- Request that the Form Based Code work session be recorded for public viewing & training purposes

14. NEXT MEETING DATE

Wednesday, May 23, 2018 at 6:00pm at the Central Fire Station

15. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned without objection at 7:48 pm. Chris Nugent, Chairperson



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN Development Projects Update

May 2018

Businesses Opened:

- **Fox Lansing Nissan**, Grand River Ave (5/17/18)
- **Lotus Beauty Lounge**, Meridian Mall (5/11/18)
- **Kellie's Wooden Skate**, Cornell Road & Grand River (5/4/18)
- **Commercial Bank**, 2121 Jolly Road. (5/21/18)

Ribbon Cuttings/Opening Dates Announced (some estimated):

- **Elevation** – Jolly & Jolly Oak Roads, 350+ residential units, 6/19/18 is opening party
- **Baskin-Robbins**, 1917 Grand River Ave – Open House 6/2/18
- **Launch Trampoline Park**, 30k sq. ft. of Gordmanns (Meridian Mall). Plan to open June/July.
- **Great Lakes Interiors** - office furniture retailer at 2076 Towner Road. "open soon" on website

Under construction

- **Peak Performance Physical Therapy**, new Meridian location next to Playmakers
- **Red Cedar Flats** - 112 unit, mixed use project with 11,800 square feet of commercial space on Northwind Drive.
- **Ingham County Medical Care Facility** – 64,000 square foot (48 room) addition at 3860 Dobie.
- **Marriot Courtyard** –105 rooms at SW corner of Jolly Oak Road/Meridian Crossing Drive.
- **Whitehills Lakes South #2** –21 single family lots @ Saginaw Highway/Lake Lansing Road.
- **Georgetown #4** – initial site work underway for 22 single family lots at Tihart/Cornell Roads.
- **Sierra Ridge #3** – initial site work underway for 20 single family lots Lake Lansing/Newton.

Approved/not yet commenced

- **Portnoy and Tu dentist office** –4,332 square foot dental office at 2476 Jolly Road.
- **Tilted Kilt**, new restaurant at 5000 Northwind Drive (Red Cedar Flats)
- **New Hope Church**, Saginaw Highway & Newton Roads, construction expected in summer

Under consideration

- **Red Cedar Manor**, 2875 Northwind Drive. 70,000+ sq ft mixed use w/88 apartments
- **LaFontaine**, Chrysler/Jeep/Dodge Dealer proposed on W. Grand River Ave
- **Panera Bread**, Proposing to demo and rebuild BD Mongolian Grill. Drive-through proposed.
- **Silverstone Estates**, 25 single family residential homes at Powell Road north of Grand River
- **Hannah Farms East**, mixed use/student housing proposed at Eyde Pkwy (dormant for now)

Renovations

- **Aldi**, interior renovation valued at \$400,000
- **Best Buy**, Shopping Center – exterior facelift, resizing spaces valued at \$770,000
- **Olive Garden**, Exterior remodel, complete interior makeover. No value yet

Closings/Relocations

- **Toys R Us**, Property up for auction
- **Younkers**, closing both anchor stores at Meridian Mall by August

Meridian Charter Township (1000 0028 7605)
Conceptual Costs for replacing Cobra Head fixtures with LED

Consumers Energy may require an engineering study for total project costs

Mercury Vapor Cobrahead (MV)	Estimated Cost		Estimated Cost*	Estimated Monthly Savings	Estimated Payback Period (In Years)
	Per Fixture	Number of Fixtures			
100W MV to 54W LED	\$ 75.00	50	\$ 3,750.00	\$ 212.50	
175W MV to 54W LED	\$ 75.00	361	\$ 27,075.00	\$ 2,952.98	
250W MV to 54W LED	\$ 75.00	39	\$ 2,925.00	\$ 455.52	
** W MV to 72W LED	\$ 193.00		\$ -		
400W MV to 85W LED	\$ 181.00	30	\$ 5,430.00	\$ 574.50	
** W MV to 171W LED	\$ 606.00		\$ -		
Totals			\$ 39,180.00		
High Pressure Sodium Cobrahead (HPS)					
100W HPS to 54W LED	\$ 651.00	1595	\$ 1,038,345.00	\$ 5,933.40	
150W HPS to 72W LED	\$ 775.00	43	\$ 33,325.00	\$ 244.67	
250W HPS to 85W LED	\$ 823.00	9	\$ 7,407.00	\$ 111.24	
400W HPS to 171W LED	\$ 1,254.00		\$ -		
Totals		1647	\$ 1,079,077.00		
Combined MV & HPS monthly savings:			\$ 1,118,257.00	\$ 10,484.81	8.887913404

*These are only estimates and costs may vary based on each fixture. Fixture and labor costs are included in the above estimate, however this does not include any other removal costs or additional equipment costs due to center suspension lights, tree trimming, old poles in need of replacement, etc.



THE CAPITOL CORRIDOR

a regional vision for
Michigan Avenue / Grand River Avenue



THE CAPITOL CORRIDOR

a regional vision for
Michigan Avenue / Grand River Avenue



advancing sustainable communities

The *Capitol Corridor* planning effort is a project of the Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability, a sustainable communities initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and other local partners. This visioning effort exemplifies the collaborative community planning and sustainable *Livability Principles* promoted by the Partnership for Sustainable Communities.

The Michigan Avenue / Grand River Avenue corridor has a rich history. Originating as an Indian trail, it became an Old Plank Road, and was included as part of the first cross-state trunkline highway. A congressionally-designated auto heritage zone, the first autos were built and tested on this road. Today, the corridor acts as the economic engine of the region, home to many important businesses and institutions, and is often described to as "Michigan's Main Street".

Working collaboratively with local governments, stakeholders and residents of the Lansing region, the task at hand is to plan a new, sustainable future for this historic urban-to-countryside corridor. Exciting upgrades such as street design retrofit and beautification to create improved environments for pedestrians and bicyclists, the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit, street-oriented housing and mixed-use buildings on vacant and underutilized properties, the revitalization of towns and preservation of the countryside are all part of the solution. The Michigan Avenue / Grand River Avenue envisioned is one that will better serve the present and future needs of this region's communities. *The Capitol Corridor* effort endeavors to establish this vision to guide public investments and future growth choices, directing a new chapter in the history of this storied corridor.





Livability Principles

Provide more transportation choices. Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.

Promote equitable, affordable housing. Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

Enhance economic competitiveness. Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.

Support existing communities. Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.

Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment. Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy

Value communities and neighborhoods. Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Reduce greenhouse gases and address climate change. This seventh principle was introduced for this planning effort, and is of crucial importance to citizens of the region. Improvements in the Michigan Avenue/ Grand River Avenue corridor should incorporate green design solutions and alternative energy sources, so that growth and change can help the region to be ready to face the challenges of climate change.

Partnership for Sustainable Communities

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities – the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – helps communities nationwide improve access to affordable housing, increase transportation options, and lower transportation costs while protecting the environment. The partnership agencies incorporate the above six principles of livability in their work to coordinate federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution.

For more information, refer to sustainablecommunities.gov.

Meridian Area Hands-on Design & Open House

On October 24, a Hands-on Design Session was conducted at Chippewa Middle School to work on design details for the Meridian Center focus area (generally, Meridian Township along the Grand River Avenue corridor, focused between the intersections of Grand River Avenue with Marsh Road and Okemos Road).

The event began with an opening presentation that recapped work from the Vision Charrette; keypad polling was used to begin to gather input regarding desired building form and neighborhood design features. Participants then worked in groups to discuss urban design concepts for the Meridian Center area.

The focus of the first exercise was to identify and design a transit village. Meridian Center is planned to be the end of the line for the bus-rapid transit system (or as referred to by residents in Meridian Township, the start of the line). However, the exact location of the station and park-and-ride has not been chosen. Each group was assigned one of the three general locations (Meridian Mall site, Best Buy site, Meijer site) to focus on first and design as their ideal urban environment. After exploring design options at their assigned location, each table worked on a second location of their choosing for the creation of a transit village.

As done previously for the Lansing focus areas, for the second exercise, participants were given “playing pieces,” or stickers showing potential new building footprints. Participants arranged the playing pieces on the transit village map started in exercise one to show one way their table’s vision could be applied in the near-term (utilizing current market demand), and grow to be more complete in the long-term (when additional new development is viable). At the end of the design exercises, each table presented their work to the entire assembly.

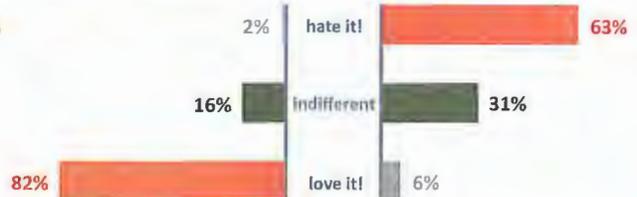
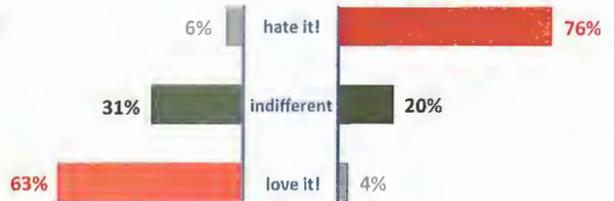
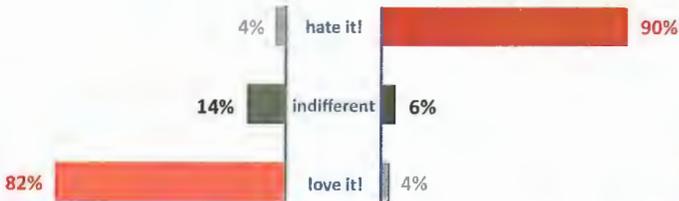
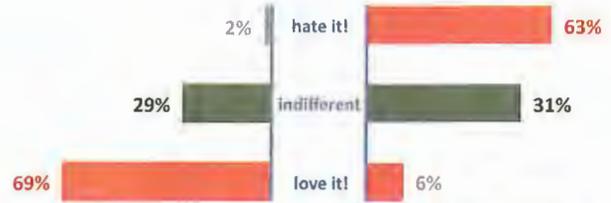
On October 28, an Open House was held at the Meridian Township Hall to review the work-in-progress and gather additional feedback. Draft illustrations were pinned up around the room, and a summary of input from the Hands-on Session was displayed. This information is also summarized on the following pages.



top and middle: Participants at the Hands-on Design Session

bottom: Presenting the work completed at table design sessions

Rating Urban Form: Love It or Hate It



ONE WORD that comes to mind about the **Meridian Center**
(responses from participants at hands-on design workshop on October 24, 2013)

NOW:



IN THE FUTURE:



IDEAS: What should be explored this week? What is most useful to achieve YOUR VISION?

(responses from participants at the hands-on design workshop on October 24, 2013, and ranked by participants at the Meridian area open house on October 28, 2013)

Improve Transportation Options:

Walking, Biking (not just cars)

- **Smaller blocks = more walkable and less traffic**
- Safe crossings all along Grand River. Too many pedestrians racing across for their lives – including by railroad bridge to apartments by Park Lake.
- Accommodate pedestrians and bikes, including crossing Grand River north to south
- Pedestrian crossing midblock like the one just west of Hagadorn on Grand River
- Connecting big boxes with covered walks / walkways

Create Quality Public Resources:

New Parks and Plazas, New Connections to the River Trail

- **Strong connections to Red Cedar river trail**
- The River needs to be considered
- People gravitate to “outdoor rooms”
- Connect the bus rapid transit to the River and Park – this is a huge asset for the community that’s currently under-utilized
- Open Space
- Create public square between Marsh and Grand River
- Tree lining the parking lots

Utilize BRT: Stimulate New Development Forms, New Connections

- **BRT station – moving to mixed-use development**
- **Connecting Mall to BRT**
- Park & ride to connect BRT with the commercial core and future high density residential along the corridor
- Needs arts and culture and medical around BRT
- Bus Rapid Transit
- Transportation hub as focal point for where people live, learn, work and play
- Mixed-use bus terminal with shops and restaurants
- TOD, mixed-use along all roads, residential square behind
- BRT in and out of the area

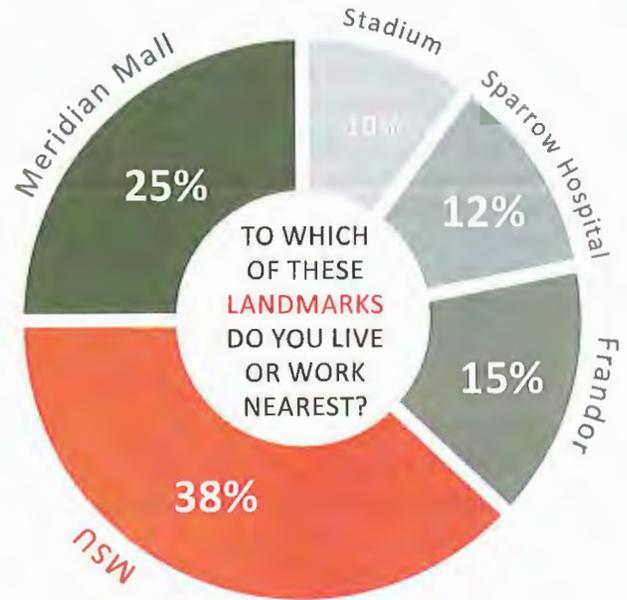
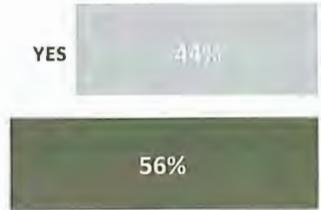
Other Ideas (add to the list!)

- **Community energy planning**
- **BRT, Farmers Market, Art & Culture multi-use facility**
- Utilize parking lots as areas of development
- Green Infrastructure for stormwater management
- This area needs a hotel
- Keeping Meridian Mall central
- Form-based code
- 2-levels at Marsh & Grand River with Roundabout; BRT upper level, Marsh Road lower level; hotel/ conf center in middle of intersection
- Parking ramp is more expensive but it reduces the parking footprint
- LEED and energy efficient / climate sensitive designs
- Be open minded
- All of the team 11 ideas
- Affordable
- The 3 options provides more hope to achieving a vision and solution that works

Design Charrette Keypad Polling Results

(responses from participants at work-in-progress presentation on October 30, 2013)

Did you attend the *last* WORK-IN-PROGRESS PRESENTATION IN MAY?

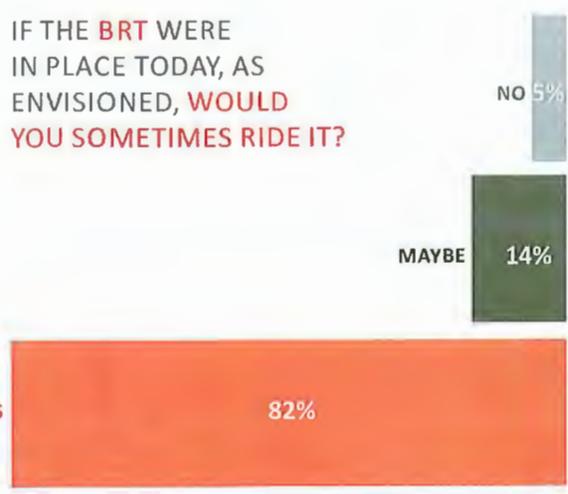
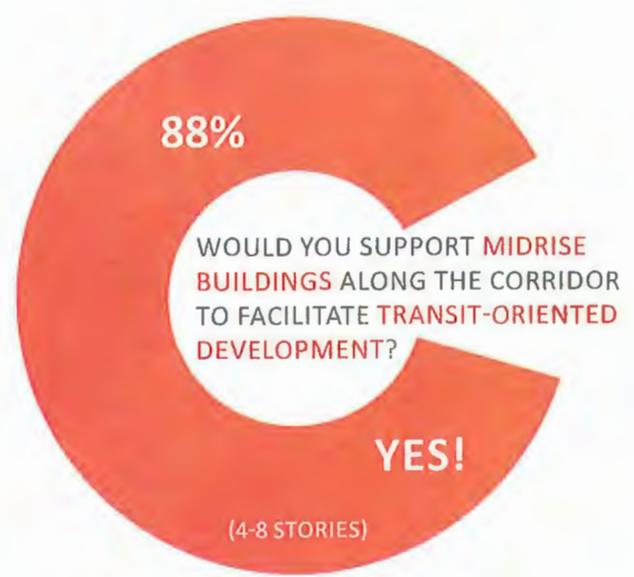
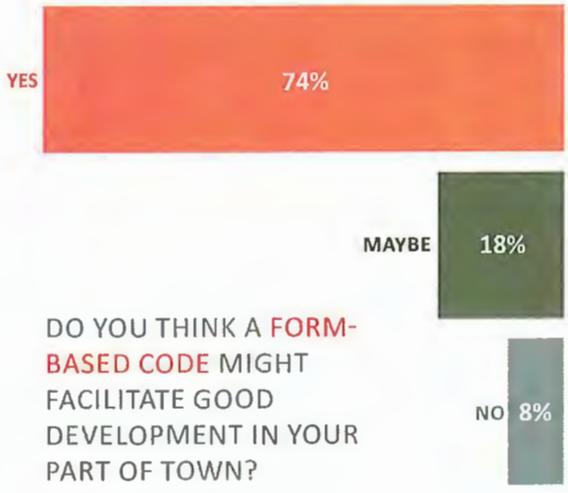


DO YOU LIVE, WORK, GO TO SCHOOL, OR INVEST IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS ALONG THE CORRIDOR?

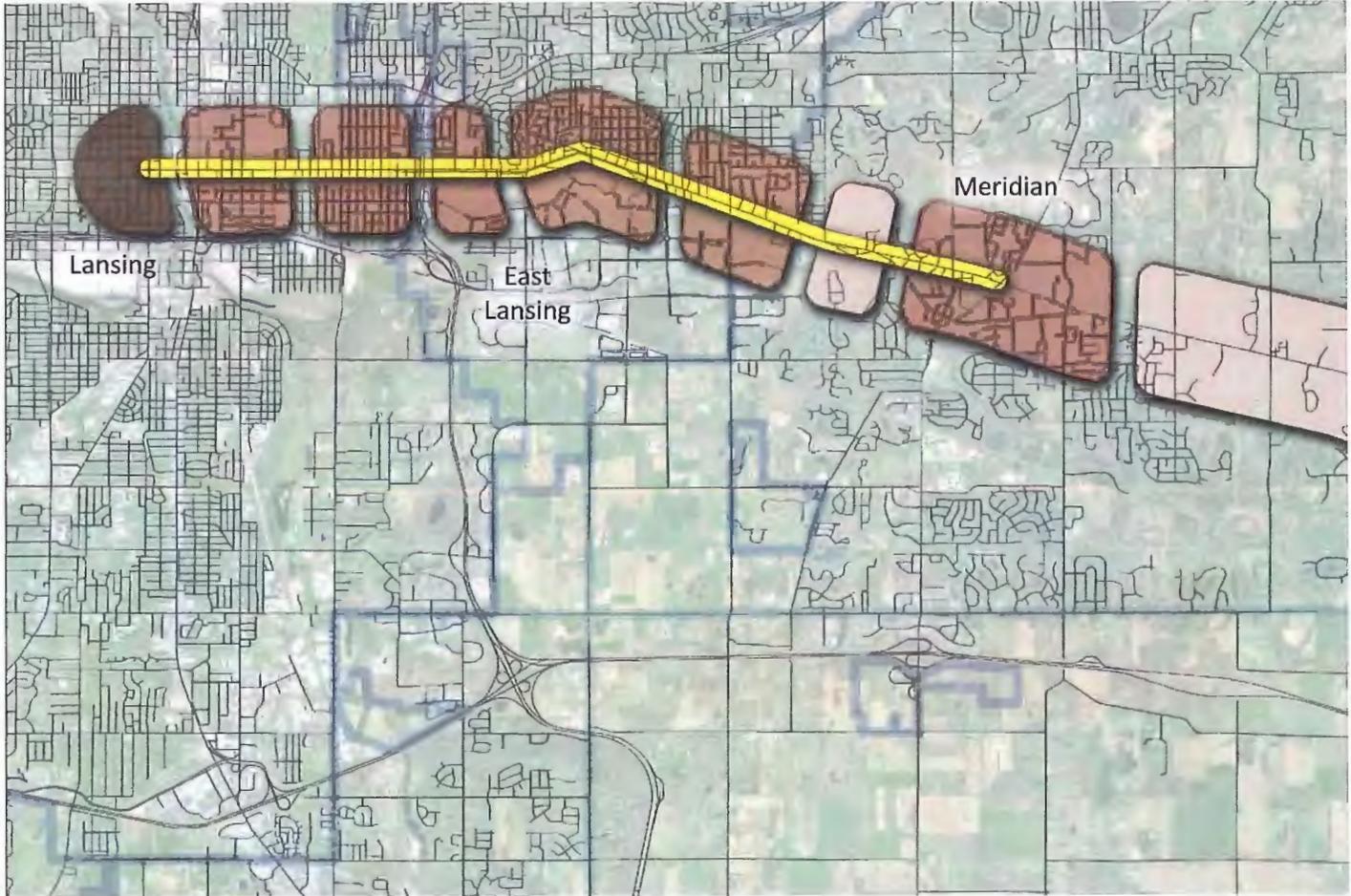


DO YOU AGREE THAT "WALKABILITY" SHOULD BE A MAJOR THEME OF FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS & DEVELOPMENTS?





the corridor tomorrow: a string of pearls



Vision Cornerstones

During the Vision Charrette, hundreds of participants described how they would like to see the Michigan Avenue / Grand River Avenue corridor evolve through drawings, surveys, and conversations with the planning team. These many ideas were then consolidated into plan "cornerstones", or big ideas to guide future change and growth. Summarized on this page, the application of these "vision cornerstones" along the corridor is described in this chapter.

Restore the balance of transportation & placemaking

Michigan Avenue / Grand River Avenue is an important corridor for moving people and cars but it also has the dual purpose of providing unique settings for businesses, institutions and homes. The physical design of the corridor should balance transportation functionality with establishing a strong "sense of place" on both public and private property, to create a corridor that is not only functional but also memorable and uniquely Lansing.

Create distinct, character-rich places, linked by transit

In the future, traversing the 19-mile corridor should reveal a sequence of distinct settlements, each with their own character and feel. This "string of pearls", each a gem in its own right, will be linked by an enhanced transit system to make it easy to move from one to the next.

Protect rural views & reinforce historic towns

Along the eastern corridor, the memorable sequence of town-and-country with long views across open fields interrupted by the historic towns of Williamston and Webberville should be protected for future generations; this includes strengthening land preservation policies, focusing new development in strategic locations, and ensuring the character of development is complementary with each town's fabric.

Meridian Township

At the Vision Charrette Hands-on Design Session, the Meridian Township area (specifically the portion of the corridor near the intersections of Grand River Avenue with Marsh Road and Okemos Road) was identified for a mixed use, dense, walkable, urban village. Many participants specifically said “Why not use the big empty parking lots for new building sites?”

The big idea that emerged for the Meridian area was that by directing the form of new growth over time, instead of a conventional mall and strip shopping area you could have a walkable center and destination – much like the historic form found in Old Town Okemos. The next generation of growth and change, however modest, can be linked with the ideas of the new transit enhancements, and be street-oriented and mixed-use, set forward rather than set back, and have doors and windows facing the street.

The first new buildings can reflect and be part of that vision for the place, set forward to define the edges of streets and public plazas and squares, rather than set behind large parking lots as is the pattern today.

In the long term future, if the big box retail format becomes obsolete, there is a possibility of further extending a new walkable and bikeable street network deeper into each parcel. This should be planned in coordination with surrounding parcels so that over time new street connections will align. Mixing the land uses allows shared parking solutions to be very efficient; eventually it may reach a stage when surface parking is no longer adequate, and structured parking could be introduced at block interiors. This is another example of shaping the next generation of growth and change to build your way out of problems and achieve a more desirable, sustainable settlement form.



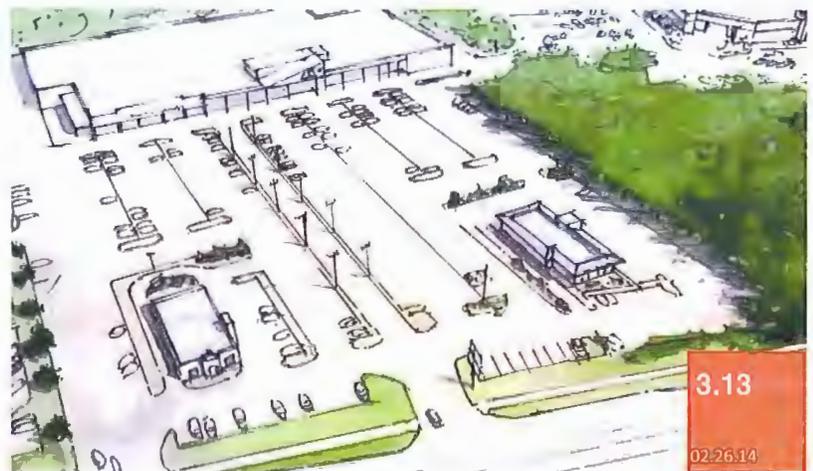


above: Long term redevelopment prospects include subdividing large parcels with a new walkable street network faced by street-oriented building forms. The block and street network can accommodate a variety of uses, including retail destinations, housing, offices, and new public spaces.

right: Initial infill on the site could begin with a few outparcels near Grand River Avenue designed with street-oriented buildings. The existing big box retailer and its parking could remain.

below right: Existing Conditions, big box retail parcel in the Meridian area, 2013.

left: Aerial view showing the potential future transformation of the Meridian Center area into walkable, transit-oriented development. This concept was further explored during the design charrette, to include potential locations for the Bus Rapid Transit turnaround (see Chapter 4).



applying the vision: Meridian Center

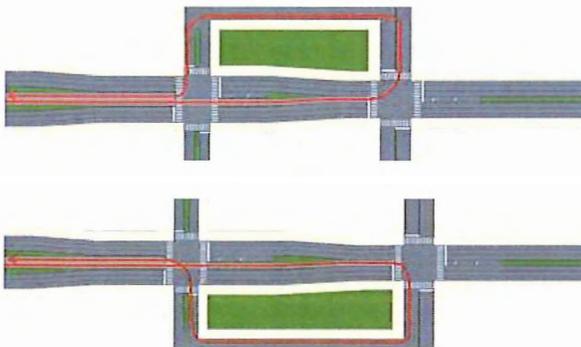
The Meridian Center area (near the intersection of Grand River Avenue with Marsh Road) is proposed to be the beginning / end of line for the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor. With this planned transit enhancement, there will be an opportunity to transform the existing suburban strip-commercial and big-box retail format parcels into a transit- and pedestrian-oriented form. There will also be a need to accommodate a BRT turn-around station as well as park-and-ride facility, which can be a stimulant for new development.

During the charrette, three sites were studied in detail as potential locations for the station area / turn-around: the Meridian Mall, the Best Buy site and the Meijers site. Preliminary analysis demonstrated that any of these sites could function equally well; the determining factor will be a combination of market conditions as well as the decisions of individual property owners.

The parcels not utilized for the BRT station can still transform over time to include a new network of streets, open spaces, and mixture of uses (including the introduction of additional housing within walking distance of commercial amenities), using the street-oriented design principles illustrated. With the vision established, new development rules can be established to guide the desired relationship of buildings to street, desired block sizes (which will result in subdivision of large parcels into walkable streets and blocks), and desired street design details (which include street trees, sidewalks, crosswalks, and provisions for bicyclists).

BRT Operation and Access

Operation and access for the new BRT station/ turn-around was evaluated for each of the three potential Meridian sites. An additional traffic signal would be required to stop motor vehicle traffic to allow the BRT vehicle to turn into and out of the site. The existing traffic signal at the Meridian Mall entrance may be moved or replaced by this signal, resulting in no additional new stops for motor vehicle traffic. The Mall and Best Buy sites are on the north side of Grand River Avenue, requiring the BRT to turn left into the station, while the Meijer site would require a right turn. In both cases, it is recommended that the BRT vehicles travel in a one-way loop through the new development. The BRT busway in this area should be designed so that the entrance and exit paths do not cross. The feasibility of two-way motor vehicle traffic on these development roads was evaluated qualitatively and may require a multi-phase signal at Grand River Avenue.



key recommendations

- a Design Grand River Avenue to incorporate dedicated BRT lanes and on-street parking
- b Activate public space in front of Meridian Mall with mixed-use development on corners to create a defined public space
- c New public green south of Meridian Mall
- d New development including small apartment and commercial buildings
- e Parking garages on large parcels along corridor to allow consolidation of parking needs
- f New buildings constructed close to the street with parking to the rear of the lot, accessed from the alley
- g Additional civic spaces provide gathering places for neighborhood residents
- h Additional pedestrian/ bicyclist path connectivity

Legend

- Existing Buildings
- Proposed Buildings
- Existing Aerial
- Civic Buildings
- Green/Open Spaces



Meridian Center: Urban Design

Grand River Avenue through Meridian Township is a suburban road with commercial buildings set back behind parking lots. With the arrival of the BRT to this area, a new transit- and pedestrian-oriented future is envisioned. The right-of-way is redesigned to incorporate on-street parking, bicycle infrastructure (bike lane or cycle track), street trees and wider sidewalks.

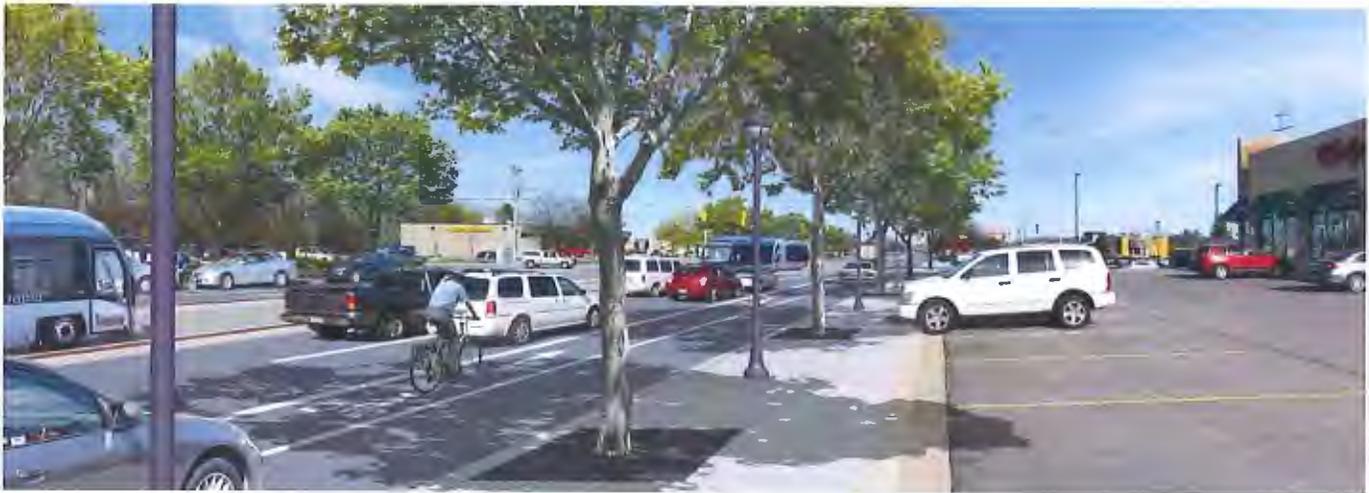
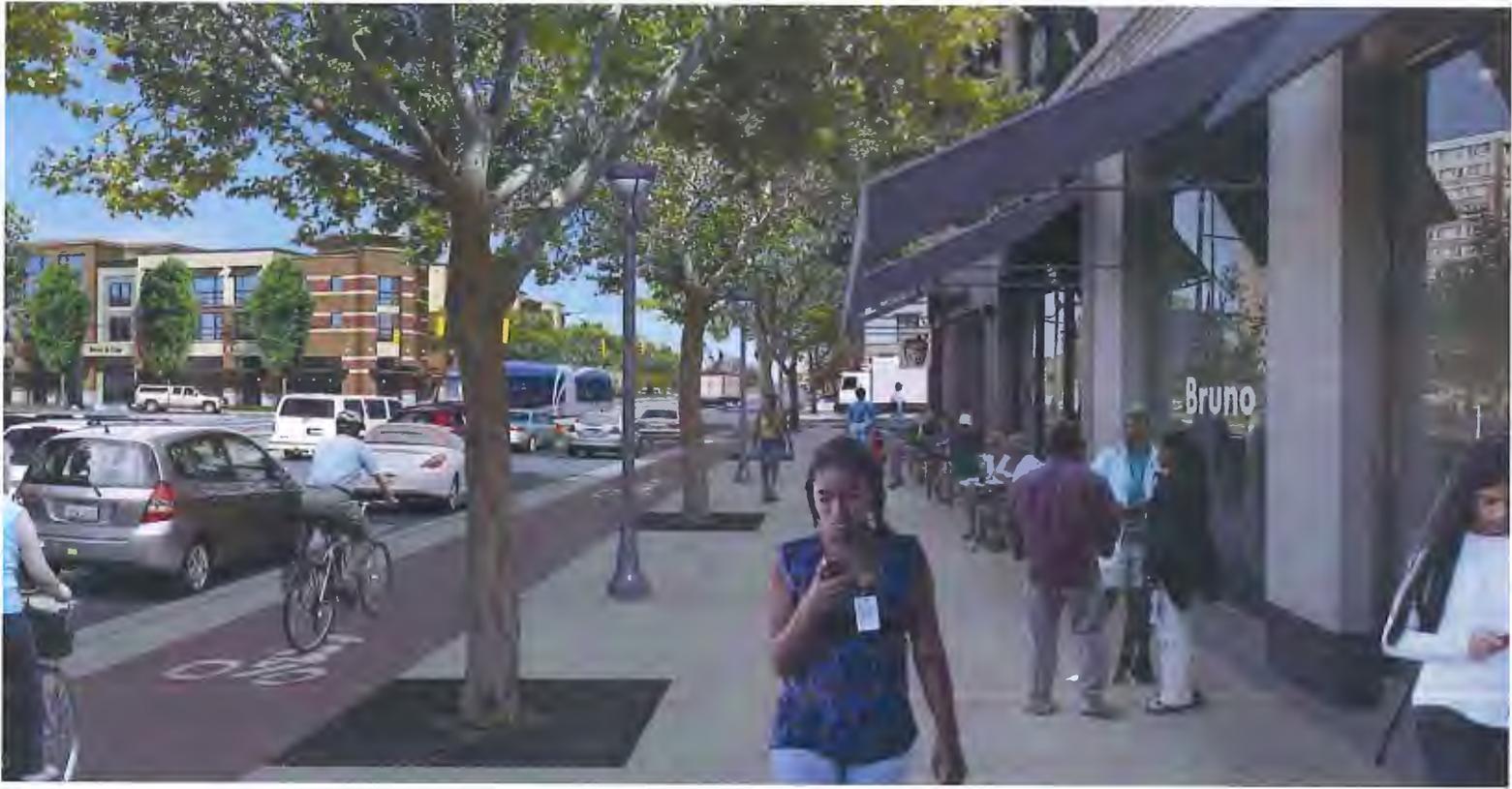
Public improvements will give property owners the confidence needed to make additional investments on their own properties. Smart rules to guide development on private properties can leverage those public investments to create an urban environment that follows the community's vision.



above: Future view of Grand River Avenue in the Meridian Center area. Infill development lines the sidewalks, creating a pedestrian-oriented environment. (Note: a cycle track at sidewalk level is shown here in place of the bike lane. Both options were evaluated during the charrette.)

right: Initial improvements in Meridian can happen with redesign of the street within the right-of-way: BRT lanes, street trees, wide sidewalks, a dedicated bicycle facility (bike lane), and on-street parking. These improvements will make feasible the envisioned changes on private properties to a street-oriented development form.

bottom right: Existing conditions, Grand River Avenue at Okemos Road.

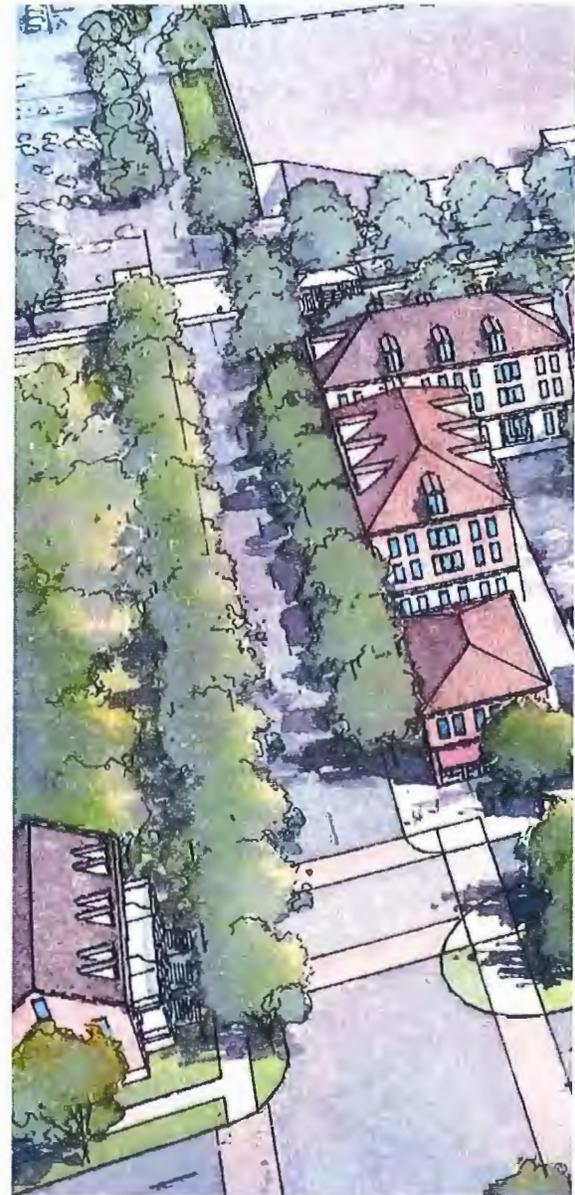


Transit Village at the Mall

The first area studied for the potential BRT station was the Meridian Mall site north of Grand River Avenue. Today, large parking lots surround the mall and front Grand River Avenue.

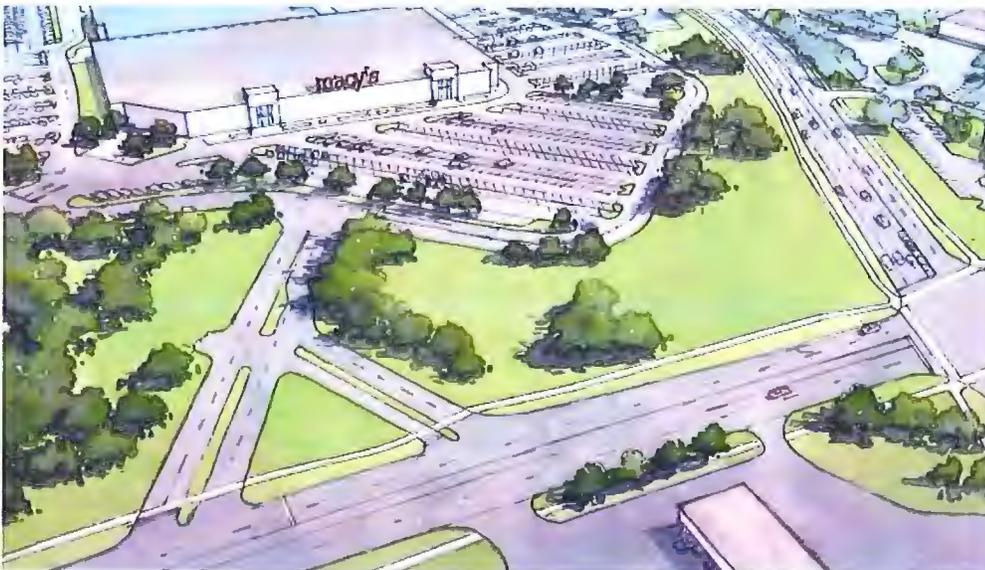
The first phases of new development could occur in the existing landscape buffer. A new public square parallel to Grand River Avenue can accommodate the turn-around and station area for the BRT. New buildings front the square, defining the public space and establishing the pattern and form for new development in the area. Signage can be incorporated on new building facades to remind vehicular travelers of the mall beyond.

Additional phases can include a complete new block-and-street network to connect pedestrians and BRT users with the existing Mall. A mix of uses, including retail, commercial, and residential units, is envisioned. A new green provides a formal entry to the Macy's building. Parking is provided in mid-block locations, in surface lots initially, which may transition to structures when demand is high enough. New streets are designed to be walkable with street trees and on-street parking. Design speeds should be slow enough that bicyclists will feel safe sharing the roads with vehicles.



above: Potential infill / redevelopment at the Meridian Mall site, centered around the new BRT station / turn-around square located in the foreground.

right: Existing conditions, Meridian Mall site at Grand River Avenue in the Meridian Center.



Transit Village at Best Buy

The second area studied for the potential BRT station was the Best Buy site north of Grand River Avenue. Today, a large parking lot with outparcels faces Grand River Avenue, with the big box retailer located beyond.

The first phases of new development can focus on the outparcels. A new triangular green along Grand River Avenue can be designed for the turn-around and station area for the BRT.

As shown for the Mall site, additional phases can include a complete new block-and-street network to connect pedestrians and BRT users with the Best Buy. If, in the future, there is a desire to rethink the big-box format, this network could continue further into the site. Connectivity to surrounding parcels should be a priority to optimize use of the site for pedestrians, bicyclists, and well as vehicles.



above: Potential infill / redevelopment at the Best Buy site, centered around the new BRT station / turn-around square located in the foreground.

right: Existing conditions, Best Buy site at Grand River Avenue in the Meridian Center.



Transit Village at Meijer

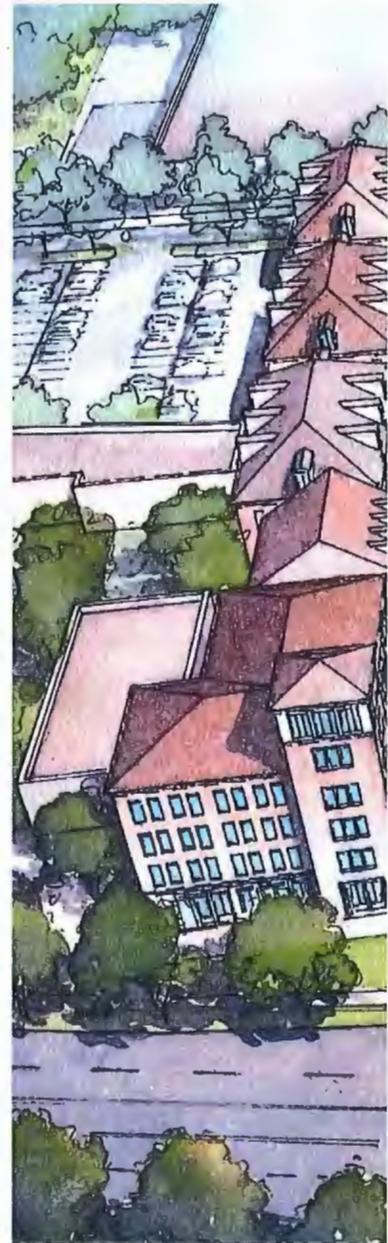
The third area studied for the potential BRT station was the Meijer site south of Grand River Avenue. Today, a large green swale faces Grand River Avenue, with the big box retailer and parking lot located beyond. A series of phases show how the site can be improved with small amounts of strategic development. Similar phases could be used for each of the three Meridian sites.

If the BRT station was to be located here, the large green swale could be reconfigured as a formal green space. Although this space is open today, it is not utilized as a public space; lining it with trees, sidewalks, and streets rather than parking lots, and placing a civic building within will make it usable. The BRT turn-around can circulate this space. New buildings can front the civic green, giving it further definition and creating a sense of place.

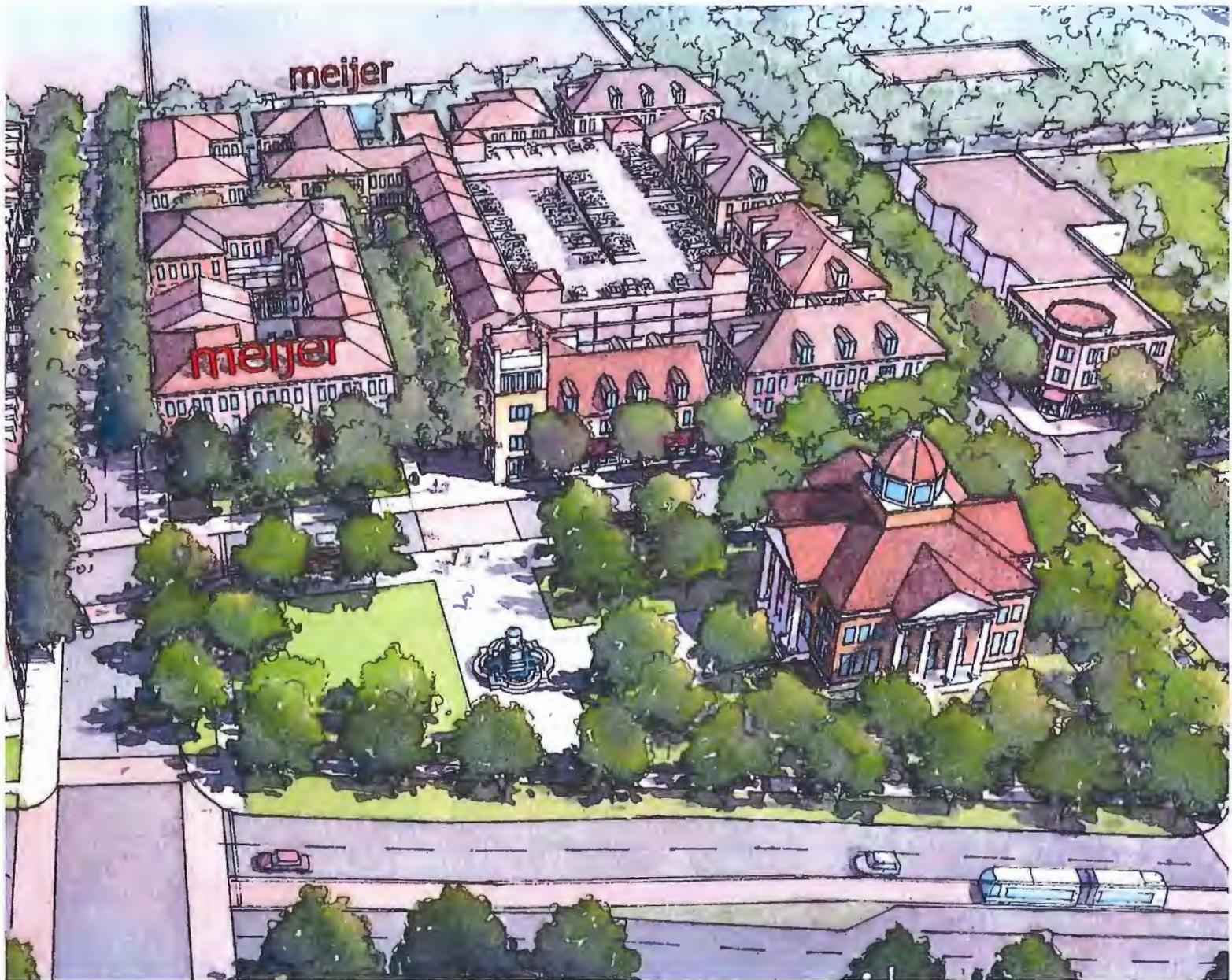


above: Existing Condition

below: Phase 1



As shown for the other two sites, future phases would include a complete walkable and bikeable block-and-street network, which can also be extended onto surrounding parcels as the area transforms.



below: Phase 2



above: Phase 3
Potential Infill / redevelopment at the Meijer site, centered around the new BRT station / turn-around civic green located in the foreground.

Grand River Avenue: Street Details

Today, Grand River Avenue in the Meridian Center area is a typical suburban roadway. The right-of-way is 120 feet, with 10 feet of space dedicated to utility poles for overhead power lines. The existing curb-to-curb width of the roadway is 64 feet. This includes two travel lanes in each direction and a two-way left-turn lane in the center. Eight foot sidewalks are set back from the roadway – this setback varies and is occasionally used for an additional turn lane.

Cross-sections were developed based on the assumption that the 120 feet of right-of-way would be available – which would require utility work to bury the overhead power lines.

A 10-foot median is provided on either side of the BRT busway, replaced with left-turn storage at signalized intersections. Reserving this space in mid-block sections allows for left-turning vehicles to be accommodated at intersections, without requiring shifting vehicle travel lanes or the BRT busway. The intermittent medians also provide an opportunity for green space. An 8-foot on-street buffered bicycle lane is proposed in each direction.

The proposed cross-section in this area can be achieved in two phases. Phase 1 provides an intermediate solution, accommodating the BRT lanes, median, travel lanes, bike lane, and sidewalks in the existing 120 feet.

Phase 2 adds on-street parking and is based on the assumption that, as land uses change, additional width for sidewalks will be provided on private land to serve pedestrian-oriented shopfront buildings. In Phase 2, the 7-foot on-street buffered bicycle lane is replaced with on-street parking. While on-street parking is not necessary today, it would be an asset to new developments as the proposed land use and building form changes. The curb-to-curb width will not change, making this a potentially low cost upgrade. The bicycle lane is then moved behind the curb as its own protected space. This future condition would require the sidewalk and cycle track to be located on private land, on what is today part of the setback from the street. New buildings would be placed on the back side of this sidewalk; the proposed cross-section assumes 15-foot sidewalks, and thus a 140-foot ultimate right-of-way.

Grand River Avenue Design: Meridian Center



Expected Traffic Operations

Because no vehicle travel lanes are proposed to be removed in this section, motor vehicle operations are expected to remain at currently acceptable levels for the most part. However, the restriction of mid-block left turns due to the addition of the BRT busway and intermittent median would increase demand for left-turns at signalized intersections. In addition, the proposed cross-sections do not allow space for exclusive right turn lanes, the removal of which may introduce delay for through vehicles. Traffic simulation models were not available for this area, so anticipated motor vehicle level of service was not analyzed.

Red Cedar/ Frandor District

The Red Cedar/ Frandor District features excellent regional access via U.S. 127, large amounts of developable land at former automobile dealerships and the former Red Cedar golf course, and proven development interest. This is evident in the development of the Gillespie “Midtown” project and the public-private partnership forming to develop the old Red Cedar golf course. Proximity to Michigan State University further heightens housing demand in this area.

Immediate strategies for this area are to:

1. Continue public sector support for development proposals at key sites.
2. Confirm (and make contingent public sector support of) early projects meet the physical design standards that will ensure creation of an urban, transit-oriented neighborhood, and establish an appropriate precedent for future development.
3. Ensure new development makes accommodations for street and open space connectivity in future phases, including street and/or alley stub-outs in accordance with the illustrative plan.
4. Implement identified pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and amenity improvements.
5. When possible, design necessary stormwater management facilities to also serve as civic art; this includes the design of swales, rain gardens, and other retention facilities incorporated as amenities in street and open space design.
6. Form inter-organizational capacity for information sharing and shared action to open dialog and potentially provide a funding source for district-wide maintenance and improvements.

Meridian Center

Development opportunities in the Meridian Center area are uniquely challenging. This segment of the corridor is surrounded by affluent communities, but development patterns along the corridor are large-scale auto-oriented uses that can be difficult to adapt to a pedestrian- and transit-oriented environment. The large-scale retail stores and shopping centers have potentially under-utilized land that is currently being used for large setbacks and parking lots, yet these stores’ and centers’ financial models in the current physical environment depend on this parking and visibility from customers in automobiles to be successful. This area is the planned beginning/ end of the line for the bus rapid transit, which presents an opportunity for new transit-oriented development and a park and ride facility; but the exact location for the station and turn-around has not yet been determined.

The most immediate near-term transformational development opportunities – and therefore strategies – may be targeted to Downtown Okemos. This small area retains a historic, if under-utilized, urban fabric within walking distance of Grand River Avenue. A Downtown Okemos development authority is already in place, as well as a “Downtown Site Plan” finalized in March 2009. Modest new development projects have been constructed in the area. Small scale successful development in this area, although not directly on the bus corridor, can help transform the overall image of the larger area and start to build greater market certainty about the potential for transformative development directly along the corridor.

The overarching strategy for the Meridian Mall area is to begin long-range planning for development of larger scale sites along the corridor. Early planning efforts should focus on building the infrastructure necessary to support greater pedestrian and bike connectivity so that as new development happens on these sites, the entire area can evolve into a multi-modal district. This includes review and revision of the regulatory structure to permit, and encourage/ require new development to include street-oriented building forms, a walkable network of streets and blocks, new community open spaces, and connectivity with surrounding parcels. Setbacks or build-to locations for new buildings along Grand River Avenue should be coordinated with the long-range vision for streetscape design outlined in Chapter 4, to ensure new buildings are properly oriented to the street.