



Village of Romeo

Master Plan 2022

Draft Document (3-26-2022)

Acknowledgments

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Thanks to Lisa Hall, Kathryn Trapp, and Cindy Wilson for providing several photographs used in this publication.

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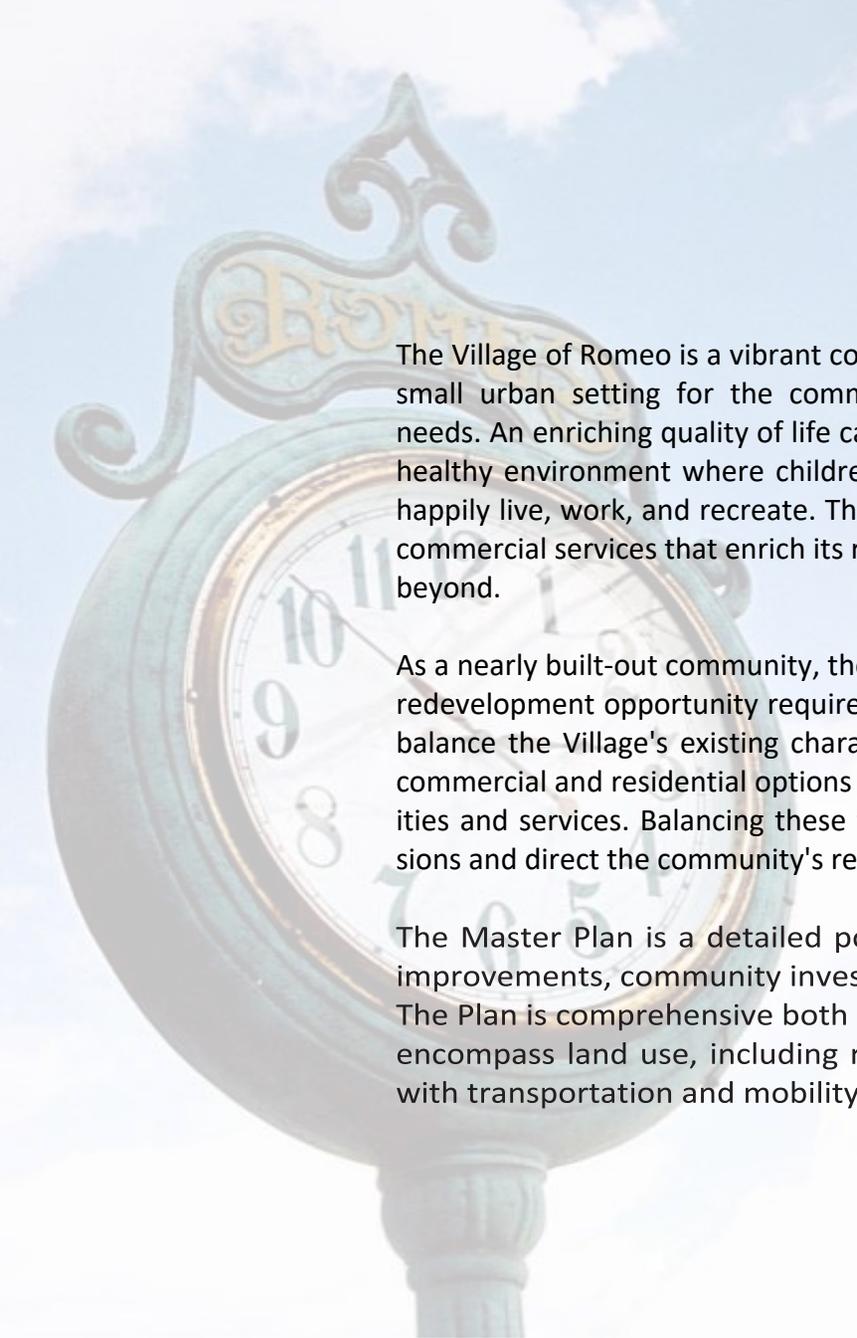
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“By far the greatest and most admirable form of wisdom is that needed to plan and beautify cities and human communities.”

— Socrates



Chapter 1

Introduction

The Village of Romeo is a vibrant community featuring a full array of amenities that provide a quality small urban setting for the community's residential, commercial, educational, and recreational needs. An enriching quality of life can be found for Romeo's residents in its activity-rich, age-friendly, healthy environment where children, young people, adults of all ages, and families can safely and happily live, work, and recreate. The Village provides cultural amenities, recreational amenities, and commercial services that enrich its residents' lives and attract visitors from the immediate region and beyond.

As a nearly built-out community, the Village has limited opportunity for new development. Each infill redevelopment opportunity requires a heightened level of sensitivity and creativity to appropriately balance the Village's existing character with the need and desire for economic growth, enhanced commercial and residential options for residents, and maintaining the community's high-quality facilities and services. Balancing these factors requires a plan that can serve to inform and guide decisions and direct the community's resources and efforts moving forward.

The Master Plan is a detailed policy document that guides land use, development, capital improvements, community investment, growth, and overall quality of life for 15 to 20 years. The Plan is comprehensive both in breadth and scope, with recommendations for areas that encompass land use, including residential, commercial, and industrial development, along with transportation and mobility.

THE MASTER PLAN

It is the responsibility of the Romeo Planning Commission to prepare and adopt a Master Plan on behalf of the Village. Romeo derives its authority to prepare a Master Plan from the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008. The Master Plan process has undertaken a thorough investigation of past trends, current conditions, and alternative futures for the Village. The overall process has been structured to allow for broad participation, expression of new ideas, and creation of new concepts that will help the Village make the most of its opportunities.

While the Master Plan embodies Romeo’s vision of what the community should be like for future generations, it is not expected that change will be achieved all at once. Over the life of the plan, the change will be gradual – and probably in different ways than anticipated. Every circumstance influencing the Village cannot be accurately predicted. However, a well-crafted and executed Master Plan will assist the community in making the right decisions to move the Village forward, and towards a more sustainable future!

Michigan Planning Enabling Act

The State of Michigan passed enabling legislation in 2008 which gives local municipalities, through its designated planning commissions, the authority and responsibility to create a long-range plan for development. This ensures that incremental improvements are in line with the long-range vision of the community.



ROLE OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

There are four main governmental bodies that influence the development and implementation of the Village's Master Plan:

Village Council	Adopts ordinances and sets policy for the village. The Village Council approves all ordinances.
Planning Commission	Recommends policy relating to land use and is the approving body for most development and redevelopment. The Planning Commission is responsible for developing a Master Plan.
Downtown Development Authority (DDA)	Implements plans and policies in the DDA District. The DDA is responsible for implementing the Development Plan and Tax Increment Financing Plan for the Downtown District.
Historic District Commission	Promotes the educational and cultural heritage of the Village through the preservation and protection of the historic structures and areas.

HOW IS IT USED?

The Master Plan serves many functions, and is to be used in a variety of ways, including;

- A Basis for Regulatory Actions: It provides the statutory basis upon which zoning and land use decisions are made. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 2006 of 2008, as amended) requires that the zoning ordinance be in accordance with a plan designed to meet the resident's need for natural resources, places of residence, recreation, industry, trade, service, and other uses, and to ensure these uses are situated in appropriate locations.
- A Basis for Community Programs and Decision Making: The goals and policies outlined in the Master Plan will guide the Planning Commission and Village Council in their deliberations on zoning, subdivisions, capital improvements, and other matters relating to land use and development. This provides a stable, long-term basis for decision-making.
- A Source for Planning Studies: Few Master Plans can, and do, address every issue in sufficient detail. However, a Master Plan can identify specific needs and recommend further study to address these needs through specific actions.
- A Source of Information: The Master Plan is a valuable source of information for citizens, developers, businesses, prospective residents, the Planning Commission, the Village Council, and other local boards, commissions, and agencies. It gives a clear indication of the Village's direction for the future.
- A Long-term Guide: The plan will assist in evaluating public and private proposals that affect the community's physical, social, economic, and environmental characteristics. It is a long-range statement of goals and policies aimed at unified and coordinated development.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Community input is the core of any planning effort. In order for the goals of the plan to be achievable, general consensus regarding the vital issues of the community must be reached.

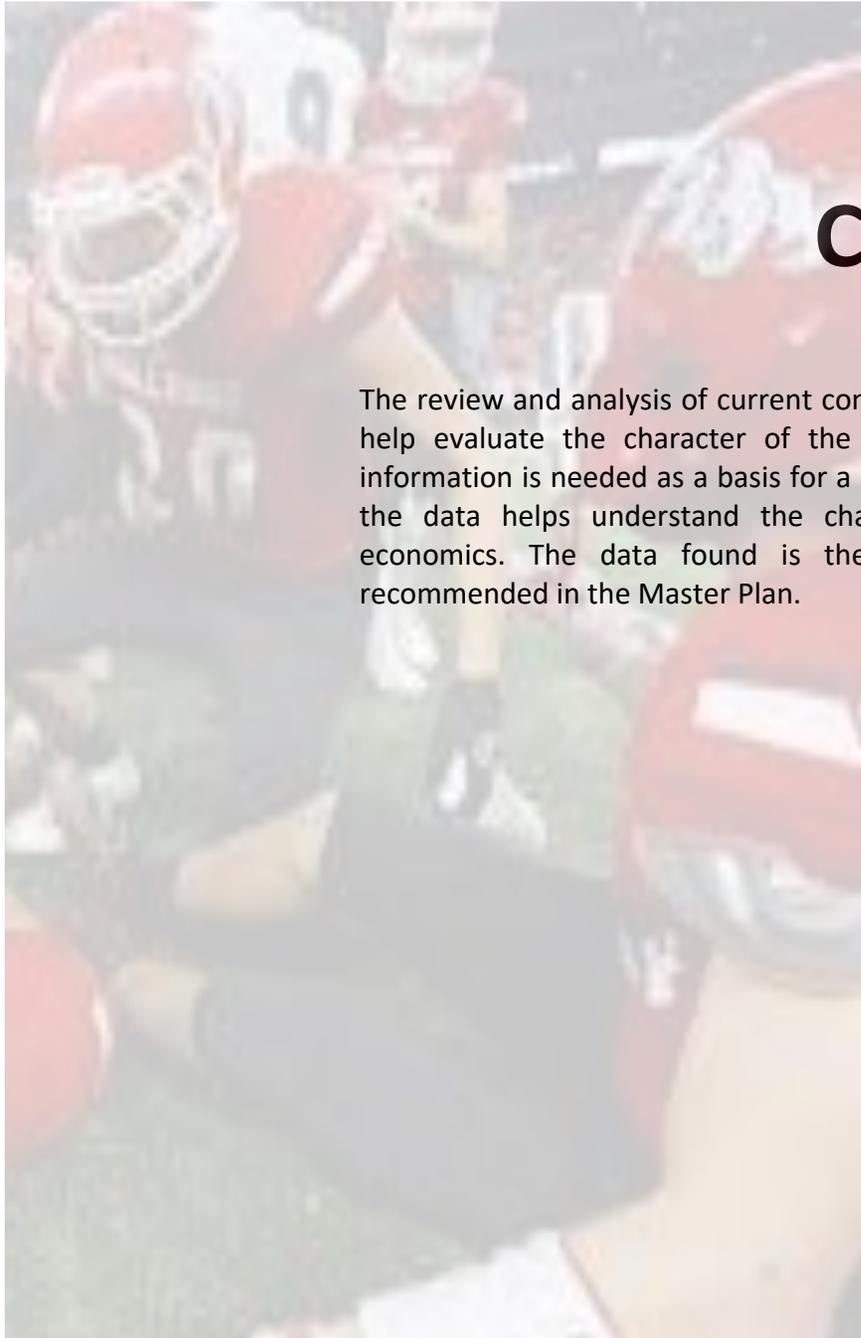
The Village held two Master Plan Public Forums at the Romeo Community Center. The goal was to gather citizen input on a variety of topics and to encourage conceptualization of a desired future for the community. Over 50 individuals participated in each forum. Also, an online community survey was conducted through Survey Planet. A total of 150 persons participated, answering questions related to housing, neighborhoods, economic development, and transportation.

The results of these public input opportunities were utilized in creating many of the strategies included in this plan.



“Do not try to make circumstances fit your plans. Make plans that fit the circumstances.”

— George S. Patton, U.S. Army General



Chapter 2

Community Snapshot

The review and analysis of current conditions, including population and housing trends, is done to help evaluate the character of the Village and understand the directions of the past. This information is needed as a basis for a community to plan for its long-term goals. The evaluation of the data helps understand the changing trends in population, housing, employment, and economics. The data found is then evaluated to help support the long-term decisions recommended in the Master Plan.

LOCATION

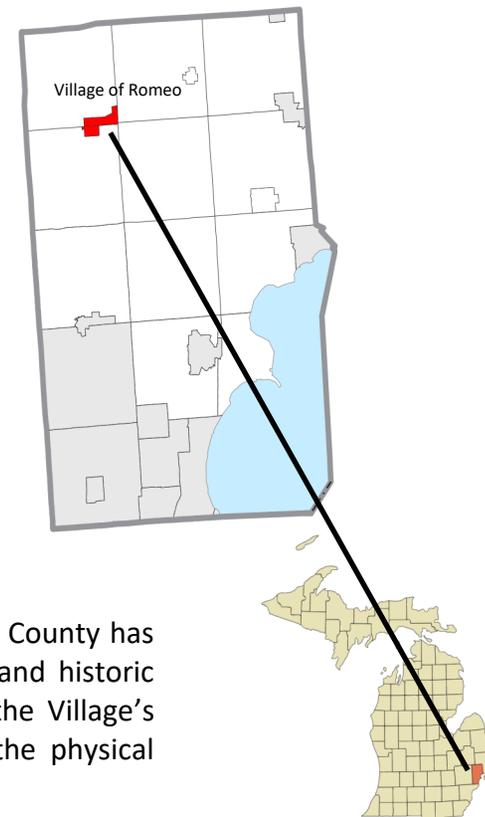
The Village of Romeo is located in the northwest corner of Macomb County, approximately 30 miles north of downtown Detroit and only 6 miles from the southern boundary of Lapeer County. The incorporated Village is surrounded by the neighboring Townships of Bruce, Armada, Ray, and Washington. The Village is connected to the region by the M-53 Freeway, which crosses the eastern half of the Village approximately one-half mile east of Romeo's Central Business District. Van Dyke Avenue bisects the core of the downtown, and provides immediate, full access to communities to the south. Romeo lies centrally within the major expressway corridors of I-69 on the north, M-59 on the south, I-75 to the west, and I-94 to the east. While none of these corridors directly impact the Village, these arterials provide access to and from the region, and are rather easily accessible to residents of the Village

HISTORY

The Village of Romeo was originally established by settlers from upstate New York and New England in the 1820's. It was formally incorporated on March 9, 1938. Many of the original settlers were drawn to the area by the fertile farmland available in the surrounding Townships.

Like many midwestern villages common to the mid-1800's, Romeo served as a focal point for the surrounding farmland. The Village was the center of commerce and public facilities. It was also an important economic center, on a scale comparable with the County Seat, Mount Clemens.

While the role of the Village and its relationship to other economic centers in Macomb County has changed over the last 200 years, Romeo has successfully preserved an architectural and historic legacy that provides a unique character that remains today. The rich character of the Village's homes, the residential streets, the downtown district and public buildings provide the physical setting within which the future will be based.





Aerial Depicting the Village of Romeo in Relation to Adjoining Communities

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

The population of Romeo has remained very stable over the past 40 years, during which time the total population increased by 258 residents. This is primarily due to the fact that the Village has had very little land available for development.

The surrounding townships, however, have seen significant growth over the same time period, with Bruce Township increasing by 3,818 persons, Ray Township by 629 persons, Armada Township by 1,139 persons, and Washington Township by nearly 18,000 persons.

Population Trends for Romeo & Surrounding Communities

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Romeo	3,509	3,520	3,721	3,596	3,767
Bruce Twp.	3,823	4,193	6,395	6,947	7,641
Armada Twp.	2,495	2,943	3,673	3,649	3,634
Armada	1,392	1,548	1,573	1,730	1,684
Ray Twp.	3,121	3,230	3,740	3,739	3,780
Washington Twp.	8,637	22,386	17,122	23,296	26,361
Macomb County	694,600	717,400	788,149	840,978	881,261

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Average household sizes have dropped across the country, from 2.62 to 2.53 from 2000 to 2015. Michigan has experienced a larger drop, from 2.75 to 2.52 during the same time period, with local communities following suit. In Romeo, the average household size is even smaller than that of the country and state. Romeo's average household size in 2020 is 2.27, and in 2045 is forecasted to be 2.37.

Romeo Population & Household Data 2000-2045

	2000 Census	2010 Census	2020 Census	2045 Forecast
Population	3,721	3,596	3,596	3,647
Households	1,528	1,501	1,578	1,542
Persons per Household	2.43	2.39	2.27	2.37

AGE CHARACTERISTICS

Information on age within a community can assist in matching public services to community characteristics and in determining special needs of certain age groups. For example, younger populations tend to require more rental housing units and smaller homes, while the elderly populations may have a need for assisted living facilities.

The fastest growing segment of the population is seniors. The number of people over 65 years of age in 2020 is estimated at 691, a 50% increase over that in 2000. Furthermore, this number is expected to increase an additional 53% by 2045.

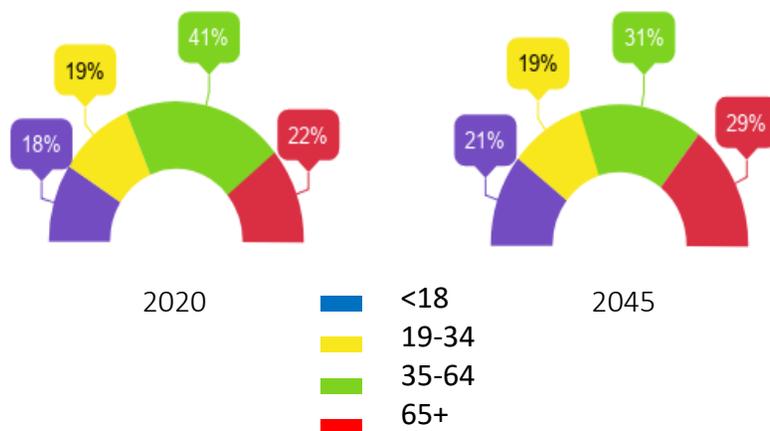
In 2017, the median age of Village residents was estimated to be 39.9 years. This represents a 1.1 year increase since 2010.

Population Counts by Age Brackets

	2000 Census	2010 Census	2020 Project- ed	2045 Forecast
Under 5	246	170	160	169
5—17	725	523	478	449
18—24	304	274	292	204
25—54	1,617	1,471	1,356	1,276
55—64	301	574	593	489
65—84	384	512	601	801
85+	62	78	90	259
Total	3,509	3,602	3,570	3,647

Source: SEMCOG, 2015 American Community Survey

Age Distribution



RACIAL COMPOSITION

One important social characteristic of a community is its racial make-up. Understanding the racial composition of a community helps to identify the diverse needs of its population. The U.S. Census Bureau categorizes the population into a number of racial categories.

The adjacent table illustrates a comparison of the Racial Composition of the Village of Romeo in 2010 and 2018. The largest segment of the population in Romeo is White. However, the fastest growing segments of the population are Black/African Americans, and Hispanic.

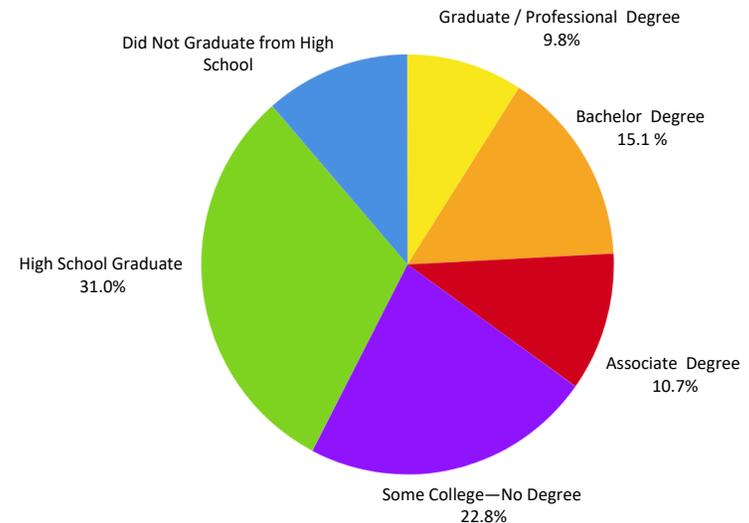
Population by Race

	2010 Census	2018 Estimated	Change
White	3,149	3,100	-49
Black	134	324	+190
Hispanic	206	477	+271
Multi Racial	80	15	-65
Other	27	0	-27

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The adjacent chart indicates educational attainment of Romeo residents based on the most recent American Community Survey data. As of 2015, the percentage of residents with a Bachelor’s or Graduate College Degree was 24.2%, which is higher than that of Macomb County (23.3%), but lower than that of Michigan (30.6%).

The percentage of residents with high school degrees or higher is 88.6%.



HOUSING TYPE

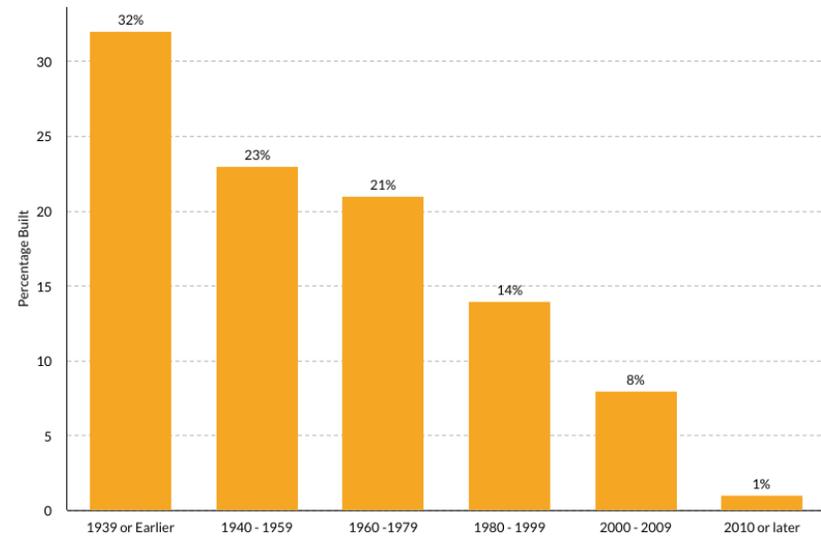
There are roughly 1,700 housing units in the Village of Romeo, 61% of which are single family homes. There are just a little under 500 units within multi-unit/apartment buildings and even fewer duplexes and townhomes. Single family homes in Romeo are generally well maintained and although relatively homogeneous by neighborhood, throughout the Village there are a variety of ages, styles, and sizes. Single family homes have traditionally been the backbone of the community and historically the preferred housing type for small towns.

HOUSING AGE

Housing is a vital characteristic of any community. Houses are highly visible and relatively permanent, and for these reasons serve as great indicators of the wellbeing of a community. The historic character of Romeo’s housing is reflected in the data regarding the year housing units were constructed. A total of approximately 32% of the Village’s housing stock was constructed prior to 1939.

Occupancy

	2010	2019
Owner Occupied Units	1,083	1,056
Renter Occupied Units	418	499
Vacant Units	158	148
Total	1,659	1,703



Percentage of Residential Homes Built During Time Period

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Analyzing income and poverty levels is a good way to measure the relative economic health of the community. The median household income in Romeo is less than that of both Macomb County and the State. However, it is important to indicate that between 2010 and 2019, Romeo’s median income actually increased (+\$1,944), while both the county and state median income declined.

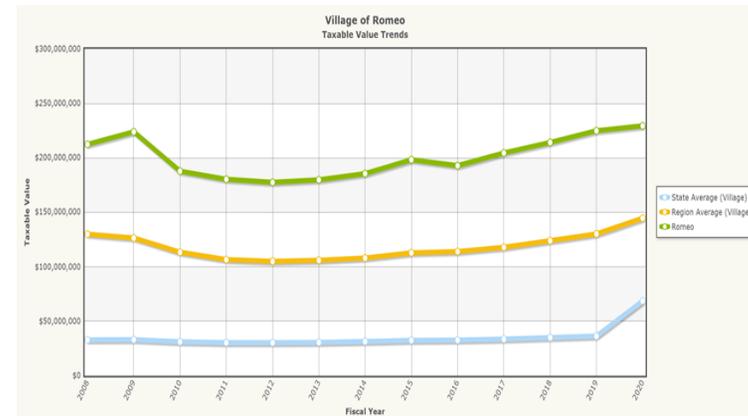
Median Household Income 2010—2019

	2010 Median Household Income	2019 Median Household Income	2010 – 2015 Change
Romeo	\$48,212	\$50,156	+\$1,944
Macomb County	\$58,691	\$54,582	-\$4,109
State of Michigan	\$57,722	\$53,594	-\$4,128

TAXABLE VALUE

Taxable Value is an indication of the value of property in a community. It is the value on which property taxes are calculated. An increasing Taxable Value is very beneficial to a community since it is directly related to a community’s tax base.

According to information provided by SEMCOG, Taxable Value in Romeo is significantly higher than the region average and state average for villages. In addition, taxable value over the previous 8 years has been trending upwards.



Source: SEMCOG

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

SEMCOG estimates that there were 4,112 jobs in Romeo in 2020, which, is 282 more jobs than in 2015. Furthermore, the Village provides more jobs than surrounding Bruce, Armada, and Ray Townships, and the Village of Armada.

The chart below depicts the number of jobs by industry section in which Romeo residents are employed. In 2015, the largest number of jobs was in Manufacturing, followed by Information & Financial Services, and Healthcare.

Romeo Resident's Employment by Job

Industry Sector	2015	2025	2035
Natural Resources, Mining & Construction	235	359	351
Manufacturing	1,586	1,584	1,609
Wholesale Trade	49	55	52
Retail Trade	117	131	135
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	58	50	53
Information & Financial Services	444	443	416
Professional & Technical Services	157	179	145
Administrative	271	267	281
Education Services	186	191	193
Healthcare	277	419	433
Leisure and Hospitality	130	139	134
Public Administration	33	34	33
Other	225	243	258
Total Employment Numbers	3,828	4,094	4,093

Source: SEMCOG, 2015 American Community Survey

Employment in Community

	2015	2020	2025
Romeo	3,828	4,112	4,094
Bruce Township	2,541	2,503	2,486
Village of Armada	591	582	569
Armada Township	1,488	1,499	1,466
Ray Township	1,337	1,388	1,406
Washington Township	7,480	7,705	7,622
Macomb County	421,450	440,946	438,715



TRAFFIC VOLUMES

Traffic volumes and safety are some of the primary measures of the performance of individual roads in a road system and how a road network interacts as a whole. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) publishes the most recent traffic count data for Romeo. Not surprisingly, 32 Mile Road has the highest traffic volumes.

Highest Traffic Volumes

Year	Travel Direction	Road	Segment	Avg. Daily Trips
2017	East and West	32 Mile	Between Harriet & Denby	14,823
2017	East	32 Mile	West of Powell	8,060
2016	West	32 Mile	M-53 to Powell	7,790
2017	West	32 Mile	East of Main Street	7,650
2016	East	32 Mile	M-53 to Powell	7,470
2017	North	Main Street	South of 32 Mile	7,180

Source: SEMCOG

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Roadway design, driver behavior, and weather conditions are contributing factors to the cause of an accident. However, the most frequent cause of traffic accidents is attributed to improper driving. Excessive speed, failure to yield the right-of-way, and following too closely are the principal types of improper driving behavior that lead to accidents. Alcohol and other drugs were reported to be a factor in over one-half of the fatal traffic accidents in the United States.

SEMCOG keeps track of accident reports by intersections. The following intersections have been identified as having the most accidents in the Village based upon data from 2014 to 2018.



Romeo Average Traffic Accidents per Year (2014-2018)

Intersection	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Average
Southbound M-53 and 32 Mile Road	17	17	15	23	14	17.2
Northbound M-53 and 32 Mile Road	10	9	13	9	14	11.0
Main St. and 32 Mile Road	14	7	12	6	8	9.4
32 Mile Road and Powell Road	9	1	2	7	9	5.6
Main St. and Lafayette St.	7	5	4	5	0	4.2

Source: SEMCOG

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Village Administrative Offices - Romeo's administrative offices are located downtown on West St. Clair Street. The two-story building includes office space on the first floor, along with storage and meeting space on the second floor.

Police - The Village of Romeo provides its own police services. The Department shares a portion of the existing Village office space on West St. Clair Street. This location is centrally located, which provides convenient and rapid response to all portions of the Village.

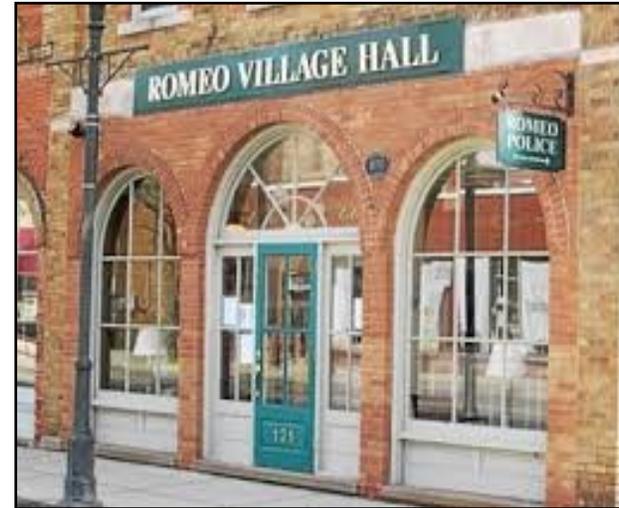
Fire - The Village contracts with Bruce Township for fire and emergency medical services.

Library - The Romeo District Library serves the Village and several surrounding townships. One of its two branches, the Kezak Branch, is located on 107 Church Street within the Village limits.

Cemetery - The Village operates a municipal cemetery on West St. Clair Street, along its western boundary.

Water Distribution - The Village operates its own municipal water distribution system which services the majority of the Village. Romeo operates 3 main wells, two of which are located in the southwest corner of the Village, south of Benjamin Street. A third well is located in Washington Township, south of 32 Mile Road. The Village has a water tower located west of Morton St. near the Village Cemetery.

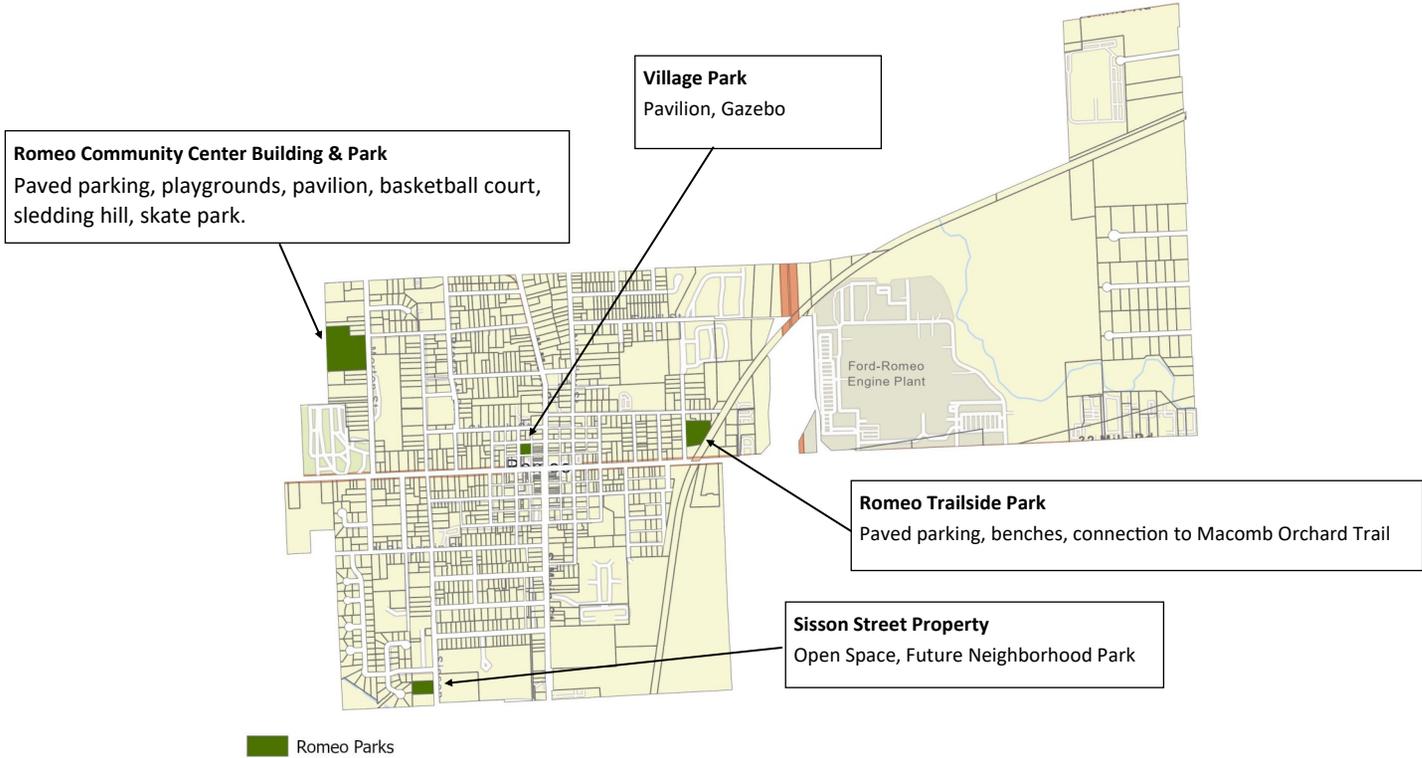
Sanitary Sewer System - The Village operates its own municipal waste water collection and treatment system. The treatment plant is located in the industrial area, just north of 32 Mile Road, and west of Powell.



PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

The Romeo-Washington-Bruce Recreation Commission is a public agency, that is responsible for providing recreation services to area residents. The purpose of the Commission is to promote, plan, coordinate and operate a system of indoor and outdoor public recreation programs and facilities for all residents of those areas encompassed by the boundaries of Bruce and Washington Townships along with the Village of Romeo.

In 2017 the Recreation Commission prepared a five year Parks and Recreation Plan for submittal to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The finding and recommendations of the plan are hereby incorporated into this Master Plan. The plan recognized four parks/open space areas within the Village.



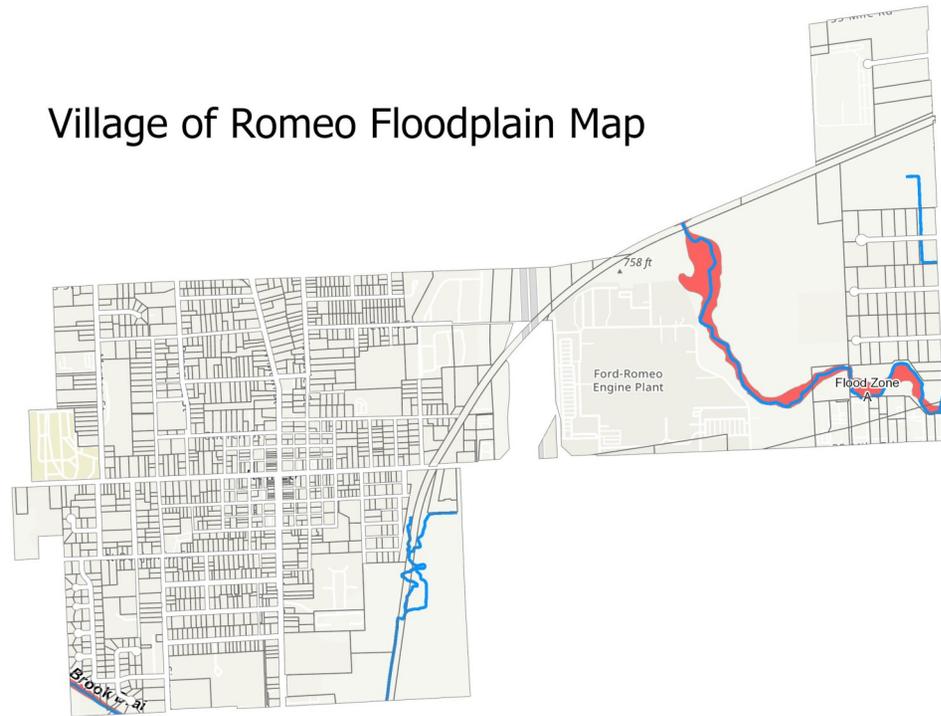
NATURAL FEATURES

Natural features exert important influences in shaping the development and character of a specific area. They are nature's contribution to the Village's environment. Collectively, these features can determine the overall physical character of the community.

When integrated thoughtfully into development proposals, physical features serve to enhance the character and appearance of the constructed environment. Conversely, ignoring physical features, or misusing them, can have significant, long-term negative consequences.

Flood Plains - The East Pond Creek is the only major drainage course that crosses the Village. This creek is a tributary of the north branch of the Clinton River. It crosses the eastern portion of the Village, entering Romeo north of the Ford Engine Plant, and exiting the community at Powell Road, just north of 32 Mile Road.

Village of Romeo Floodplain Map



Legend

Flood Zones

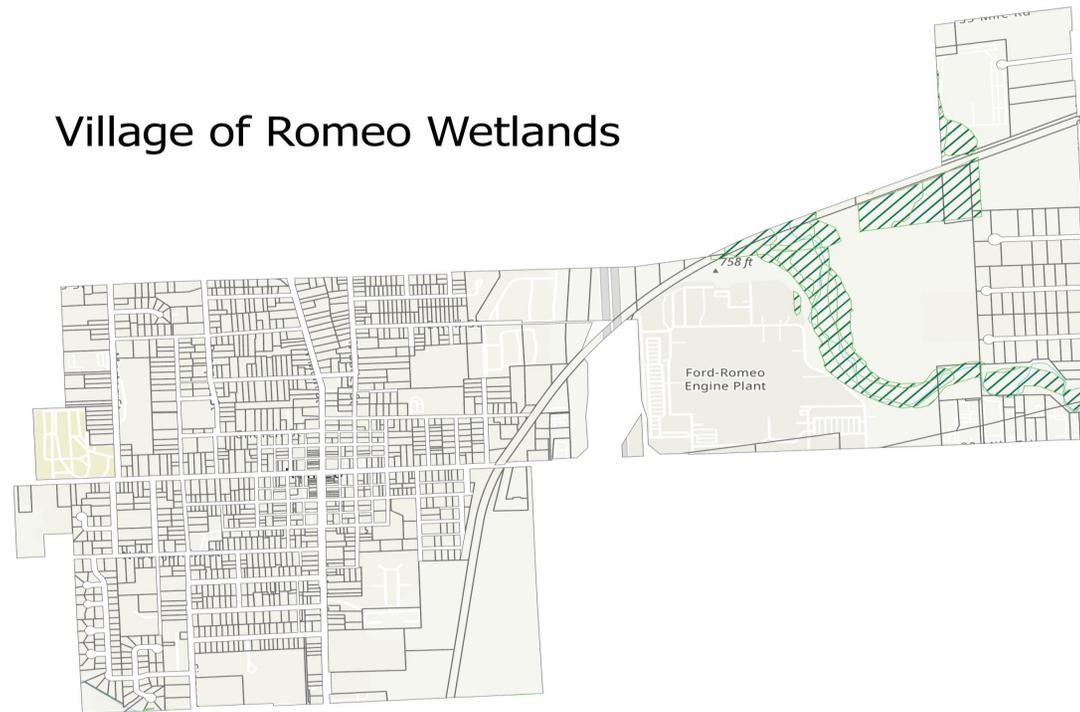


Wetlands - Wetlands are areas characterized by the presence of water that either saturates the soil or cover the land most of the year, and serve a number of necessary environmental functions. These include:

- ◆ Protecting downstream water supplies by providing clean ground water as a result of the nutrient retention and sediment removal.
- ◆ Functioning as effective natural storage basins for flood water
- ◆ Providing a habitat for many types of plants and animals.

Within the Village, only a few areas of wetlands have been identified. These areas are predominantly located along the East Pond Creek and essentially mimic that of the defined floodplain.

Village of Romeo Wetlands



Legend

 Potential Wetlands

“I don’t believe there is a challenge anywhere in the world that’s more important to people everywhere than finding a solution to the problems of our cities.”

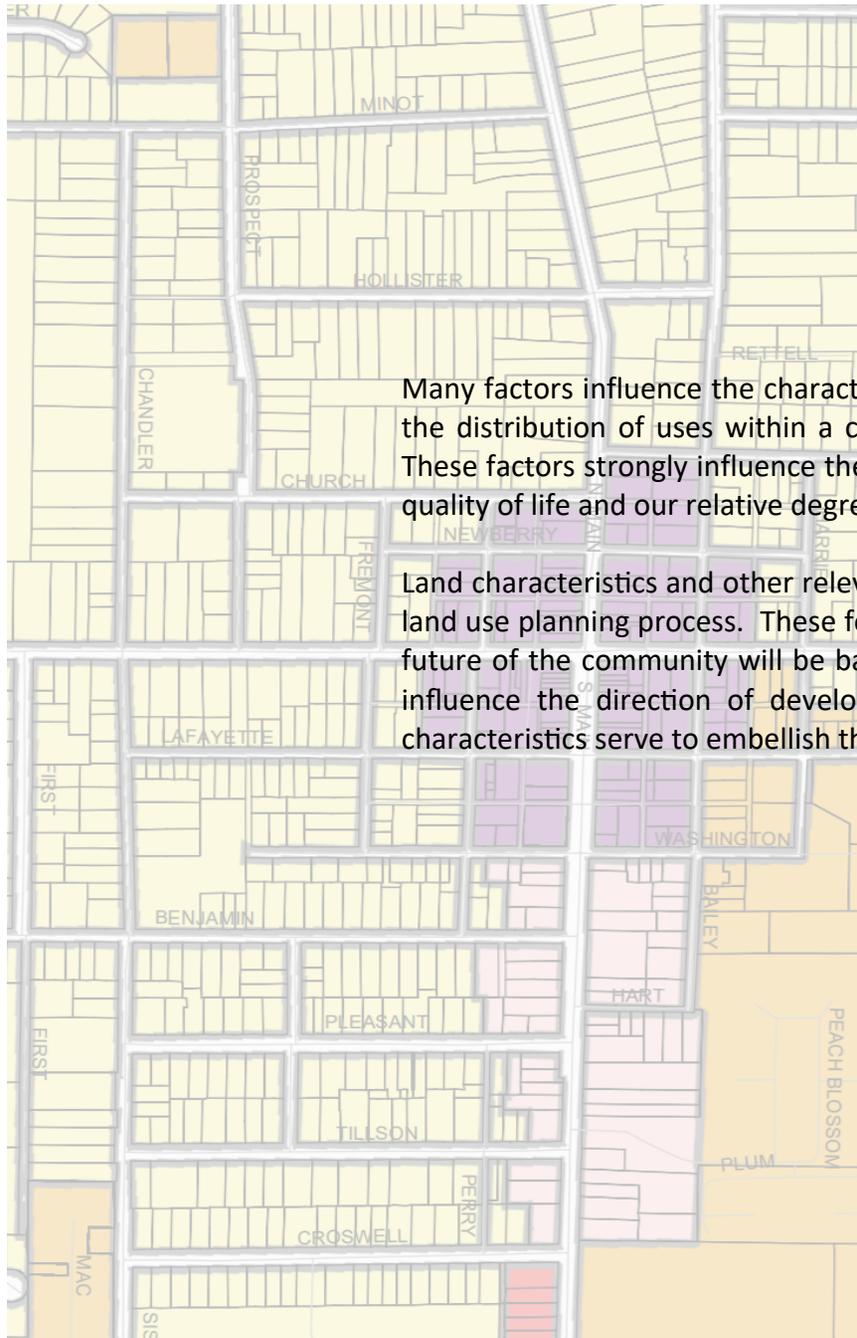
— Walt Disney, Entrepreneur

Chapter 3

Existing Land Use

Many factors influence the character of our physical environment. Chief among these is land use, the distribution of uses within a community, and the relationship of these uses to one another. These factors strongly influence the overall character and image of the Village. They also affect the quality of life and our relative degree of satisfaction with our surroundings.

Land characteristics and other relevant physical features are among the most critical aspects of the land use planning process. These features establish the observable physical setting upon which the future of the community will be based. In a largely undeveloped community, these features may influence the direction of development. In a more mature community like Romeo, physical characteristics serve to embellish the community's overall visual character.

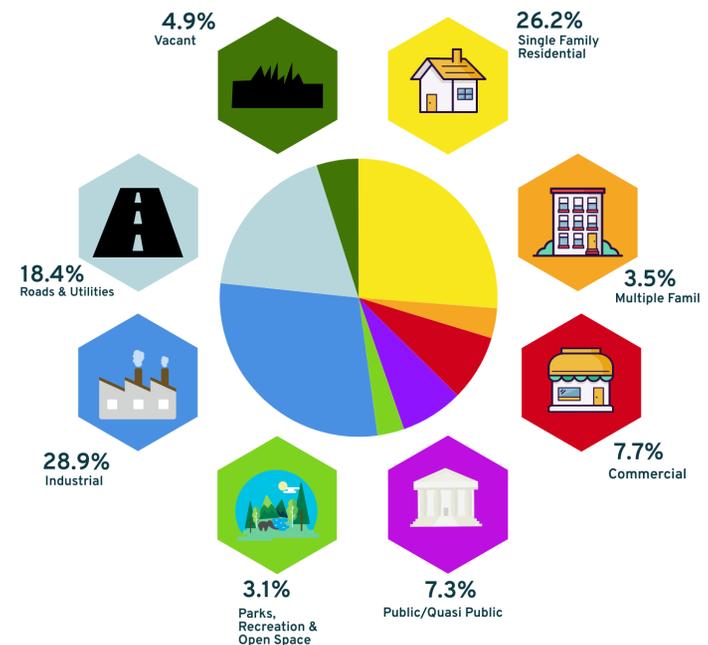


EXISTING LAND USE PLAN

The Village of Romeo is a compact community with a clearly developed land use pattern. The community is comprised of a traditional downtown, strong residential neighborhoods, a large industrial area, and commercial/office areas with a variety of retail opportunities and services used by the residents of Romeo and surrounding communities.

Existing land use data was gathered during a field survey of the community conducted in the Spring, 2020. Aerial photographs were used as a secondary source of information to verify the extent of land use patterns observed in the field. Information from both sources was subsequently transferred to a base map according to individual categories.

2020 Existing Land Use Categories	Acreage
Single Family Residential	338
Multiple Family Residential	46
Commercial	100
Industrial	373
Public / Quasi-Public	95
Roads & Utilities	235
Parks, Recreation, & Open Space	38
Vacant	64
Total	1,299 Acres



Existing Land Use

Single Family Residential

A total of 338 acres of land in the Village is utilized for single family dwellings. This accounts for approximately 26.2% of the total land. All of the single family residential development is located in the original one square mile boundary of the Village, west of the M-53 Bypass. The northeast, northwest, and southwest quadrants of the Village contain the most single family residences.

Lot sizes within the Village range from forty (40) feet to more than one hundred (100) feet in width. The most common lot size is between sixty to seventy (60-70) feet in width. Lot depth also varies greatly. Typical lots may have depths averaging one hundred fifty (150) feet. However, a number of lots within the Village far exceed this, approaching nearly three hundred (300) feet in depth.

Multiple Family Residential

A total of 46 acres or 3.5% of the land is devoted to multiple family land use with Romeo. The Village has two main areas developed as multiple family—the areas at the end of Ewell Street, immediately to the north of the manufactured housing development, and an area east of Van Dyke, north of St. Clement Church, and south of the Lions Club Field.



Commercial & Office

Commercial land uses within the Village have been divided into two distinct types, those located within the Downtown Central Business District, and those which are located outside of the core downtown, in a more suburban commercial setting.

The downtown generally encompasses a six block area along Main Street, extending from Newberry Street on the north, to Washington Street on the south. This area, containing approximately 22 acres, includes a mixture of retail and service land uses.

There are also a number of office uses within the Village. This type of use can include medical, dental, legal, financial, and other professional services. The vast majority of these uses are located along South Main Street, where residential dwellings have been converted to office space.

Commercial & Office land use within the Village occupies approximately 100 acres, or 7.7% of the total land area.



Industrial

Nearly all of the industrial uses in the Village are located east of the Van Dyke Bypass and north of 32 Mile Road. Industrial development occupies 373 acres (28.9%) of the total land area, making it the largest land use category. The predominate user is the Ford Motor Company Engine Plant, which accounts for over 30 acres of developed industrial property. The Village also has several industrial subdivisions located north of 32 Mile Road, and east of west of Powell Road.

The Village also has several industrial subdivisions which provide for an efficient use of industrial property, while minimizing impacts to the adjacent roadways of Powell and 32 Mile Road.

There is also a small industrial area located along Clinton Street. This must be given special consideration due to its location within a primarily residential area. The west side of Clinton Street and the north sided of Street are residentially development and may be heavily impacted by industrial activities.



Public & Quasi Public

Public & Quasi Public land uses include municipal facilities, community service facilities, and religious institutions. Romeo contains a number of churches which have been cornerstones of the community for decades. Approximately 20 properties have been identified on the existing land use map for public and quasi public uses. This represents 95 acres or 7.3% of the land area of the Village.



Roads & Utilities

This land use category, accounting for 235 acres., or 18.4% of land area, includes state and local road rights of way, and public utilities.

Parks, Recreation, & Open Space

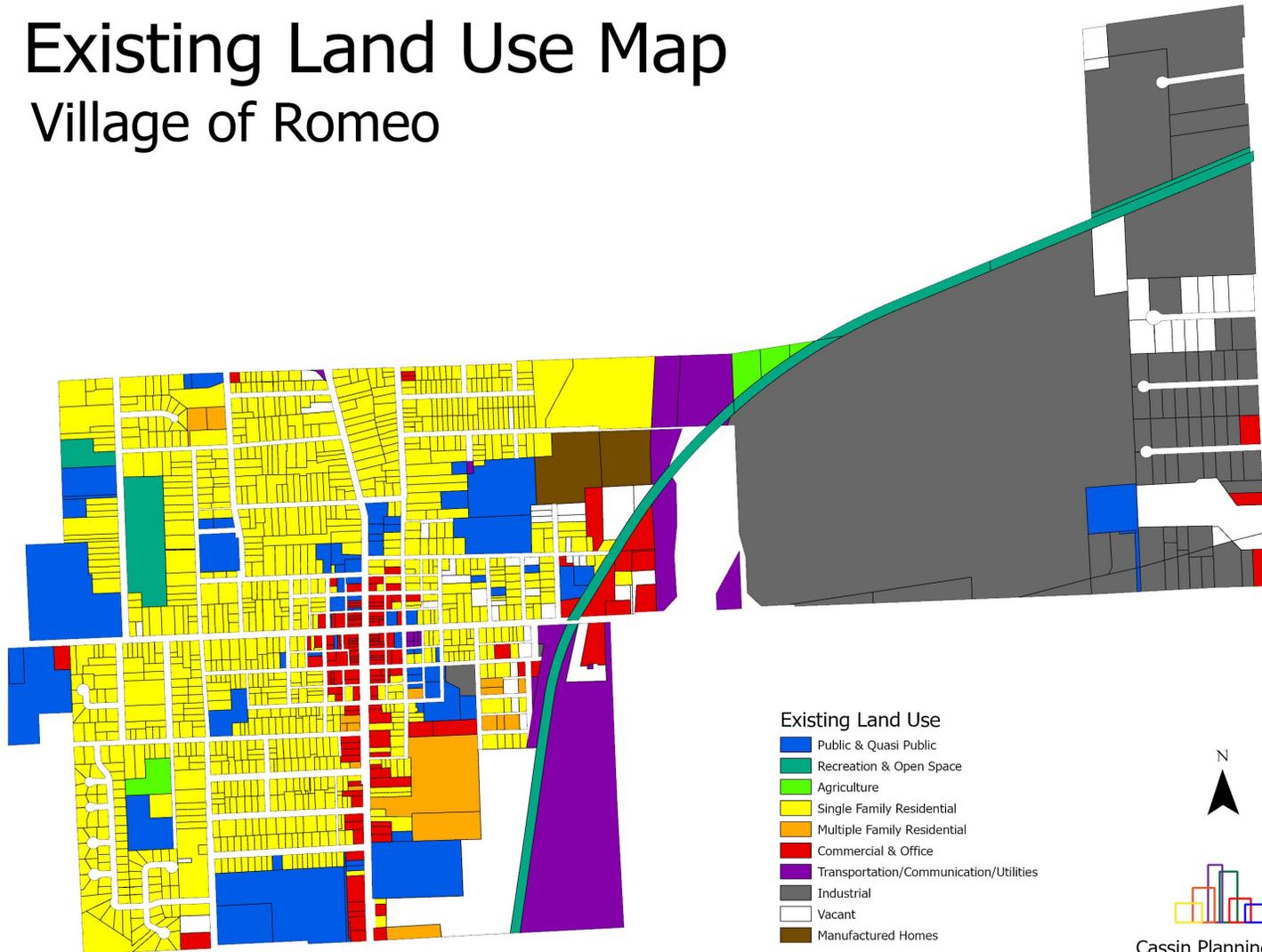
This designation consists of public parks, playgrounds, and open space that provide active and passive recreational opportunities. The type of land use occupies 38 acres (3.1%) of the total land within the Village.

Vacant

There are approximately 64 acres of vacant land (mostly developable) scattered throughout the Village.

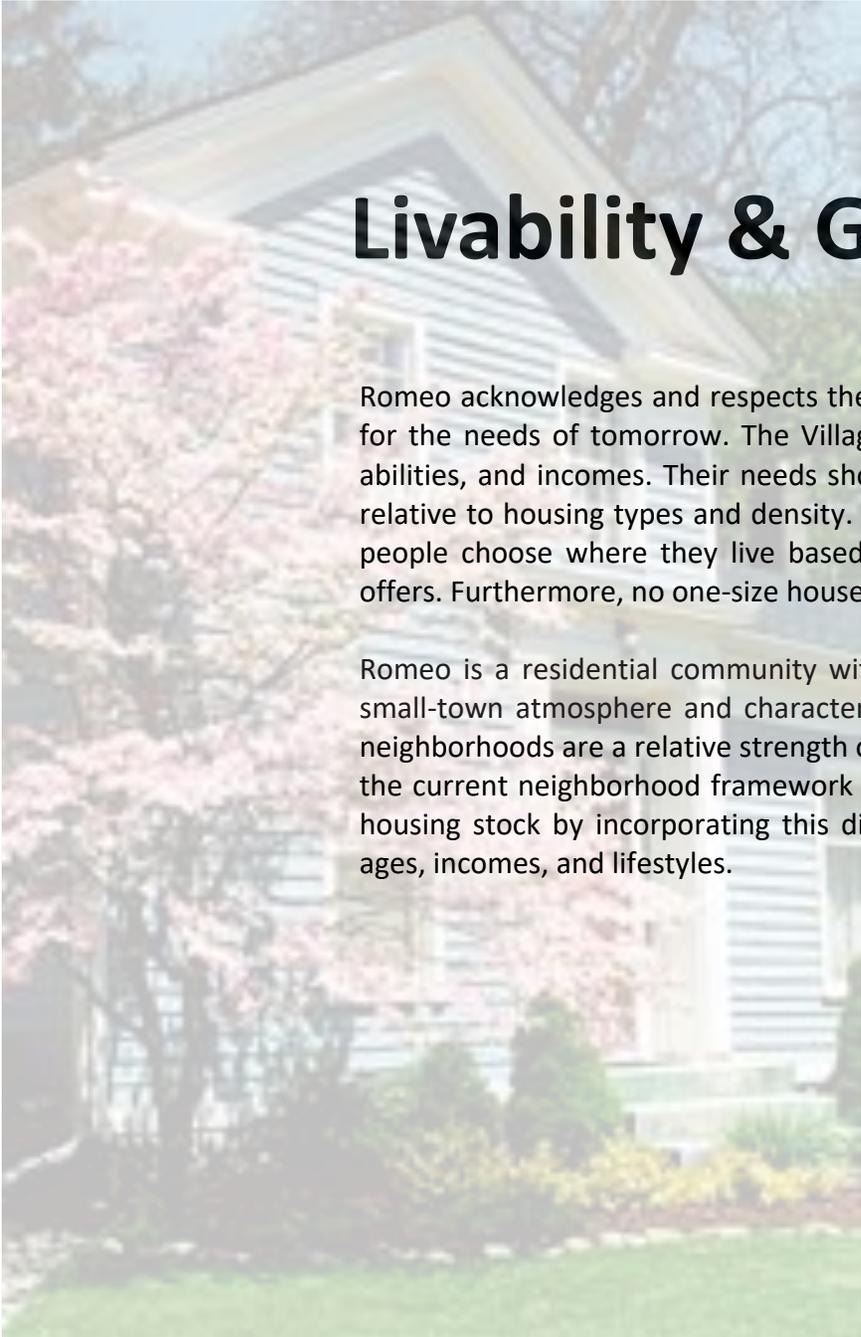
Existing Land Use Map

Village of Romeo



“We must do more to protect our neighborhoods and give integrity to our community plans.”

— Alan Autry, Former Mayor of Fresno, CA



Chapter 4

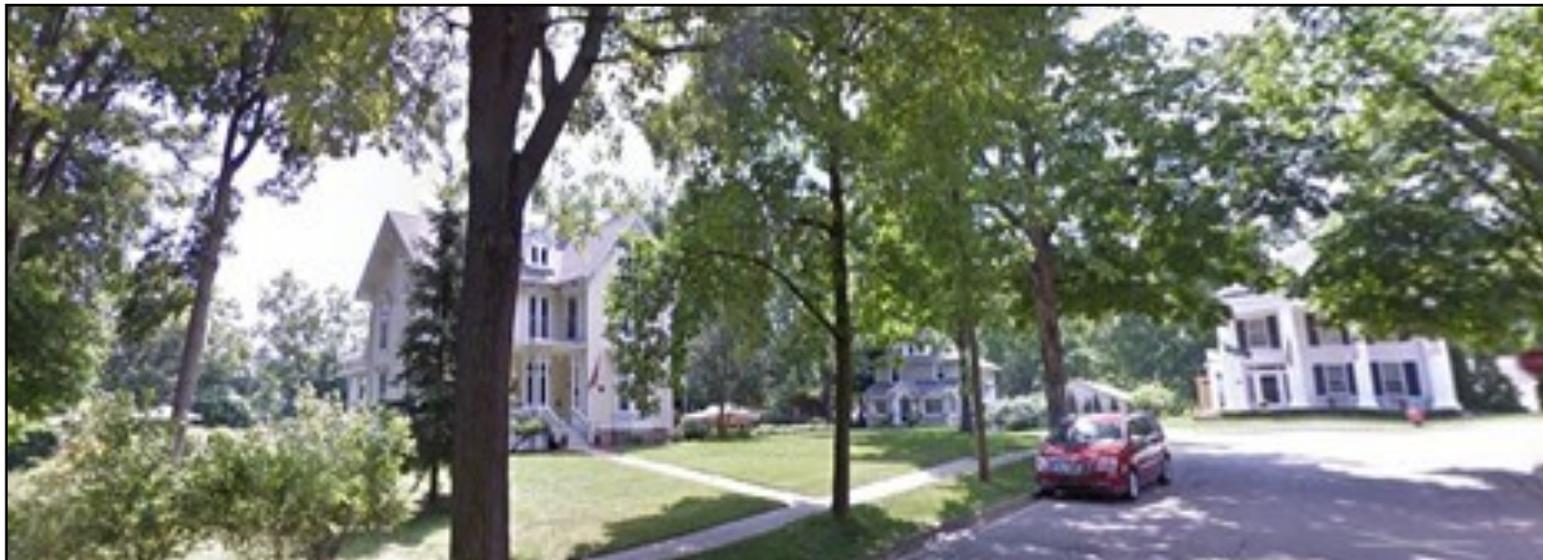
Livability & Great Neighborhoods

Romeo acknowledges and respects the heritage of its community while at the same time planning for the needs of tomorrow. The Village is home to people of different ages, interests, lifestyles, abilities, and incomes. Their needs should be equally considered when making land-use decisions relative to housing types and density. Input from the public meetings tells us that more and more people choose where they live based on the character of a neighborhood and the amenities it offers. Furthermore, no one-size house or neighborhood fits all.

Romeo is a residential community with unique residential neighborhoods that contribute to the small-town atmosphere and character. Consequently, the existing housing stock and residential neighborhoods are a relative strength of our community. The Master Plan builds upon and supports the current neighborhood framework while also seeking opportunities to improve the diversity of housing stock by incorporating this diversity into existing neighborhoods, including people of all ages, incomes, and lifestyles.

CORE OBJECTIVES

- 🎯 Romeo will be a safe and welcoming community of strong and complete neighborhoods that will meet the needs of all residents.
- 🎯 Romeo will have a full range of quality and affordable housing opportunities throughout the community.



TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Romeo's neighborhoods were developed based on a traditional grid which provides a uniform layout of streets and lots. This compact or walkable urban design and land use, also known as traditional neighborhood design (TND), comes from an era that predates automobiles. The development pattern counters urban sprawl, focusing on human-scaled design where residents can easily access public spaces, amenities, and community destinations by foot. TND supports a fine-grained mix of uses where businesses and homes are not strictly separated, and residential units are integrated near commercial uses. It is complemented by a highly connected street system with sidewalks and an eclectic variety of architectural styles.



ACTION STRATEGY

Preserve and enhance the unique character of Romeo's single family neighborhoods.

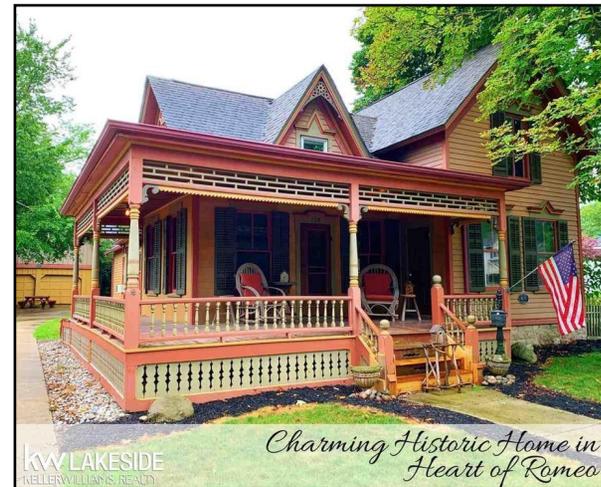
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Romeo’s homes and neighborhoods are the pride of the community and are the most significant contributor to the community’s overall image, identity, character, and charm. The neighborhoods are characterized by tree-lined streets, a connected sidewalk system, and an architecturally diverse and historically significant housing stock.

The Village recognizes the value and importance of historic preservation; it is essential to attract and accommodate new residential investment and infill development. It is the combination of well-maintained and valued older homes, together with high-quality new homes, that keeps the neighborhoods desirable, vibrant, and attractive.

In the future, the Village must continue to prioritize the character and quality of the neighborhoods. By supporting historic preservation and the maintenance and rehabilitation of older homes, ensuring desirable new infill single-family development, accommodating appropriate new multi-family development in select locations, and balancing the need for economic development along the primary corridors, the Village can maintain and enhance the desirability of the neighborhoods.

The Romeo Historic District Commission is responsible for reviewing all plans for new construction, substantial renovation, and demolition relative to the general compatibility of exterior design, arrangement, texture, materials, and any other factors, including aesthetics deemed appropriate.



RESIDENTIAL INFILL

Residential infill refers to the development of new housing on vacant or underutilized land in previously developed areas. The term encompasses everything from a single new dwelling in an established neighborhood, to multi-family residences in strategic locations, to an entirely new residential neighborhood on a remnant or previously developed parcel. For built-out communities such as Romeo, residential infill is the only option to satisfy additional housing demand.

Typically, residential infill's primary goal is to ensure that new housing is compatible with the existing neighborhood. This incompatibility can be incredibly challenging when current market dynamics favor development that is out-of-character with the community's vision.

People seek the traditional neighborhood characteristics exemplified by the neighborhoods of Romeo. Older homes, however, often need to be updated to include amenities and living spaces that young families are looking for and to allow older adults to age in place. Rehabilitation and new infill development should emphasize the existing traditional neighborhood characteristics concerning density, scale, architecture, site design, etc.



ACTION STRATEGY

New homes and residential structures should be constructed in a manner that complements the existing historical character of the neighborhood, while providing housing opportunities that meet the needs and desires of existing and future populations.

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

With walkable, mixed-use development in high demand as an economic driver for many communities, civic leaders are reexamining how to build productive, resilient urban places to attract young talent, aging demographics, and new employment sectors. A crucial factor in their development is diversity—not just diversity of residents, but also housing choice.

Missing Middle Housing (MMH) an initiative designed to confront and help remedy a serious market gap in many walkable urban places. Missing Middle is a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible with single-family homes that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living. These types provide diverse housing options, offer a spectrum of affordability, including duplexes, fourplexes, and housing courts, and fit seamlessly into existing residential neighborhoods.

Conventional zoning ordinances are primarily regulated by land use or allowed activities, dividing communities and neighborhoods into single-family residential, multiple-family residential, commercial, office, etc. This separation of uses is contrary to the concept of mixed-use walkable neighborhoods.

Missing Middle Housing is intended to be part of low-rise residential neighborhoods, typically zoned as “single-family residential” in conventional zoning. However, because MMH contains multiple units, it is, by definition, not allowed in single-family zones.

Today’s young couples, single adults, and baby boomers are looking for ways to live in a walkable neighborhood without the cost and maintenance burden of a detached single, family home; Missing Middle Housing can be a viable option.



ACTION STRATEGY

Evaluate and amend the zoning ordinance to allow for Missing Middle Housing in areas where appropriate.



Missing Middle Housing Concept Rendering



Rendering showing how Missing Middle Housing can be used as a transition between a traditional neighborhood and downtown.

AGING IN PLACE

Aging in place is the ability to safely, independently, and comfortably stay in one's home or community as we grow older. Most individuals express a desire to remain in their home and community as they age. Today's seniors live longer, are more highly educated, stay in the workforce longer, and are physically active. To facilitate a complete lifestyle, senior housing options must be located in places with a clear identity and community amenities that promote quality of life, such as a walkable downtown with connected neighborhoods and community spaces.

In addition to safety and independence, today's active seniors are also looking for rich social environments; vibrant, walkable neighborhoods; and access to pedestrian amenities and open space. Aging in place is about promoting access and mobility, engagement, and well-being on the individual and group level in a community setting. To support the senior population's growing and changing needs, it will be essential to promote diverse housing options. These should be in the form of smaller units integrated into existing walkable and accessible neighborhoods or existing or planned mixed-use areas.

The U.S. Census reports that about 1/3 of all homeowners have no mortgage on their home. This means that money not spent on mortgages may increase the potential for spending on other commodities, including local goods and services. Also, older adults often have the time and inclination to volunteer their time; the Township may find it beneficial to tap into their skills and backgrounds.

Therefore, Romeo's ability to keep residents in their homes for as long as possible likely yields a return more significant than any additional costs associated with providing services.

Zoning laws in most communities create obstacles for those trying to remain in their neighborhoods as they age. Besides isolating residential areas from everyday commercial services, most housing built in the last 50 years excludes by law any housing form except single-family. When a home becomes challenging to maintain, older adults cannot "downsize" and remain in their community. Zoning regulations prevent older adults from converting a garage or basement into apartment space for a caregiver. Children of older adults face the same barriers trying to convert their homes or locate their parents nearby.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) provide a realistic option for seniors to age in place. ADU's are a separate housekeeping unit on the same lot as a single-family dwelling. Such units can be attached or detached but are designed to be compatible in scale and character with the existing single-family neighborhood. ADUs are a growing trend in communities as they often are created to provide supportive yet independent living options for family members just entering adulthood and those in their zenith.

Recognizing that a family member may not always occupy the unit, regulations should be put in place to ensure compatibility with the existing neighborhood. Design criteria could require that the building materials and architectural style are the same as the principal structure. Regulation often requires that the principal home be owner-occupied to ensure that the land is cared for with the same attention as other single-family homes in the district. The ADU must be secondary to the principal use as a single-family residence.



Examples of Accessory Dwelling Units



ACTION STRATEGY

Evaluate and revise the Zoning Ordinance, as necessary, to eliminate barriers to allowing seniors to age in place.

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

Zoning laws in most communities create obstacles for those trying to remain in their neighborhoods as they age. In addition to isolating residential neighborhoods from everyday commercial services, most housing built in the last 50 years excluded by law any housing form except single family. When a home becomes difficult to maintain, older adults cannot “downsize” and remain in their community. Zoning regulations prevent older adults from converting a garage or basement into apartment space for a caregiver. Children of older adults face the same barriers trying to convert their homes, or locate their parents nearby.

RESTRICTING COMMERCIAL INTRUSIONS INTO RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

The established development pattern in Romeo has several areas where residential properties abut commercial development. While providing appropriate buffering and screening between such uses can be a challenge in any situation, it is often an even more significant challenge in Romeo due to the shallow lot depths that plague many commercial properties.

The Village should identify where residential and commercial area adjacency is problematic and examine ways to facilitate buffering and screening techniques. Such initiatives might include establishing a program to promote screening improvements.

Alternatively, the Village’s landscape ordinance could be revised to require enhanced screening and an amortization schedule to ensure compliance within a set time frame. Given limited commercial lot size and depth, effective screening and buffering will likely involve a combination of landscaping and fencing, possibly including a requirement for new commercial development to provide additional landscaping on adjacent residential properties.



ACTION STRATEGY

Review where residential and commercial adjacency is problematic, and examine ways to facilitate the use of buffering and screening techniques to minimize harmful impacts.

STREET TREES

Many of the streets within the Village’s neighborhoods are lined with a canopy of mature trees. These trees contribute significantly to the overall desirability and character of the neighborhoods and the Village.

Communities with a dense urban canopy support community character and define a unique sense of place. Romeo should take proactive efforts in maintaining, replacing and enhancing its street canopy.



Benefits of Street Trees

Natural Beauty

Traffic Calming

Increased Property Values

Saves Energy

Protection from Elements

Temperature Reduction

Air Quality Improvement

Stormwater Reduction



ACTION STRATEGY

Develop and implement a tree planting program to replace diseased trees, and plant new trees where needed. The installation of new trees will ensure a healthy and complete urban tree canopy and help to increase the attractiveness, desirability, and value of the neighborhoods.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Neighborhoods are the environment in which we live. Improper property maintenance and nuisances can devalue, detract, and degrade the quality of any neighborhood. While property owners often think that the way they take care of their property is their own business, the significant impact that neighboring properties have on one another's value and enjoyment means that building maintenance and safety becomes everyone's business.

The Village of Romeo should adopt codes that govern the use and maintenance of all properties. Aggressive but sensible approaches to bringing property owners into compliance with the law can be vital in maintaining the neighborhood's appearance and property values.



RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTION PROGRAM

A properly developed and implemented rental inspection program should be instituted to ensure that all rental properties within the Village are properly maintained and safe for occupancy. Rental homes are often not maintained to the same standards of owner-occupied homes, and exterior deferred maintenance can lead to blight, while interior deferred maintenance can lead to significant safety issues. Periodic inspections will ensure that the properties are maintained in a safe and aesthetically pleasing manner while ensuring they are safe for tenants and first responders.



ACTION STRATEGY

Strengthen code enforcement and inspection programs that promote the health, safety, and welfare of our residential living units and neighborhoods.

HOUSING DEMOLITION

Demolitions are sometimes necessary for the evolution of the neighborhood environment. Structures that are functionally obsolete, unsafe, or economically obsolete can negatively affect the surrounding area. A demolition should only be pursued out of necessity, and not simply out of convenience. The Historic District Commission should play a major role in determining whether the demolition is appropriate.

NEIGHBORHOOD STREET LIGHTING PROGRAM

Street lighting provides several important benefits. It can not only promote security in neighborhoods, but can also improve safety for drivers, riders, and pedestrians. As such, the Village should assess the current lighting provided in the neighborhoods, and make adjustments as needed to ensure a safe and attractive environment for residents.



ACTION STRATEGY

Install street lighting, where needed, to provide for vehicular and pedestrian safety.

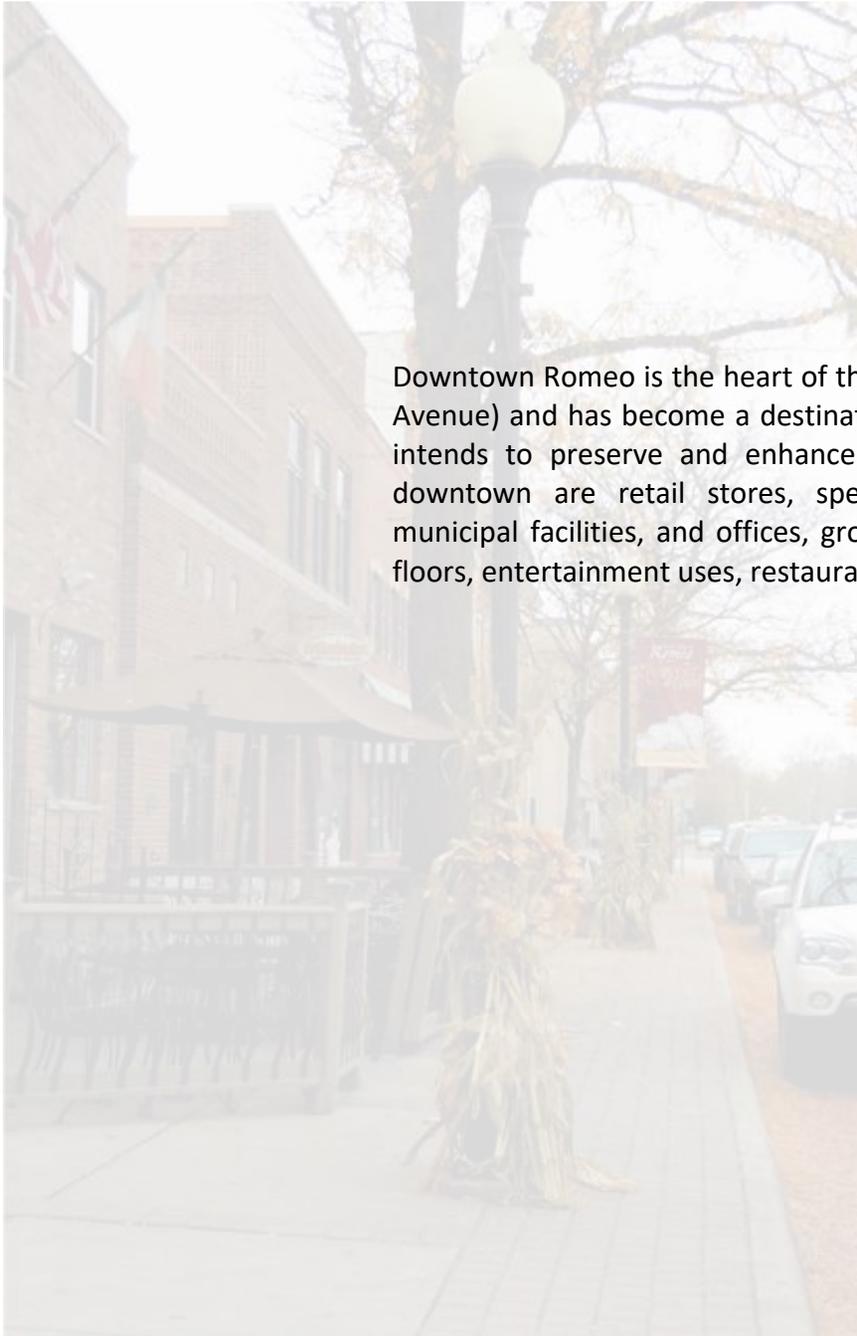
“You can design and create, and build the most wonderful place in the world, but it takes people to make the dream a reality.”

— Walt Disney, Entrepreneur

Chapter 5

Downtown Vitality

Downtown Romeo is the heart of the Village. It is attractively located along Main Street (Van Dyke Avenue) and has become a destination for residents and many regional visitors. This Master Plan intends to preserve and enhance this great asset. Desirable land uses and elements in the downtown are retail stores, specialty shops, personal service establishments, restaurants, municipal facilities, and offices, ground floor retail with office and residential uses on the upper floors, entertainment uses, restaurants with live entertainment, and public gathering places.



CORE OBJECTIVES

- 🎯 Romeo's Downtown will be a vibrant, mixed use, pedestrian oriented environment, that values and builds upon its cultural and historical assets.
- 🎯 Romeo's Downtown will serve as a hub of community activity, providing a unique and hospitable location for area events, social interaction, and commerce.



HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

Romeo is fortunate to have a vibrant historic downtown, pedestrian in scale and architecturally interesting. Within the downtown area, the walkways, decorative streetscape elements, and the one and two-story historic brick buildings provide Romeo with a truly unique image that many communities strive for today.

It is inevitable that changes to structures in the downtown area will occur over time. However, it is absolutely essential that these changes do not damage the historic building fabric and character of the downtown. Restoration of neglected storefronts and preservation of intact storefronts will improve the overall character of the downtown, strengthen its position as a regional destination, and strengthen its value to the community.



The historic buildings in the downtown area were constructed according to a common architectural tradition. While the style of each building may be unique, there are commonalities that all of the historic downtown buildings share. These common design elements are rooted in a centuries-old tradition of village/town building. Such centuries-old traditions develop over time in response to the needs of human activity.



ACTION STRATEGY

Future building renovation or alteration, no matter the planned use, must retain the overall design integrity of the historic building by protecting or restoring the original features, and design elements.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Adaptive reuse is developing a new use for an older building or a building originally designed for a particular or specific purpose. Many of the existing historic buildings were designed for use different than the market would support today. The goal is to repurpose the building to benefit the community, such as commercial space, office space, or residential units.

The struggle with adaptive reuse of buildings can meet current building codes for the new use. While historic buildings tend to be structurally sound and exhibit the kind of architectural features, exterior design, and building form for which communities might strive, the cost of upgrading electrical, plumbing, and fires suppression systems can become burdensome for future developers.



ACTION STRATEGY

Update the Zoning Ordinance to lessen restrictions on adaptive reuse projects.

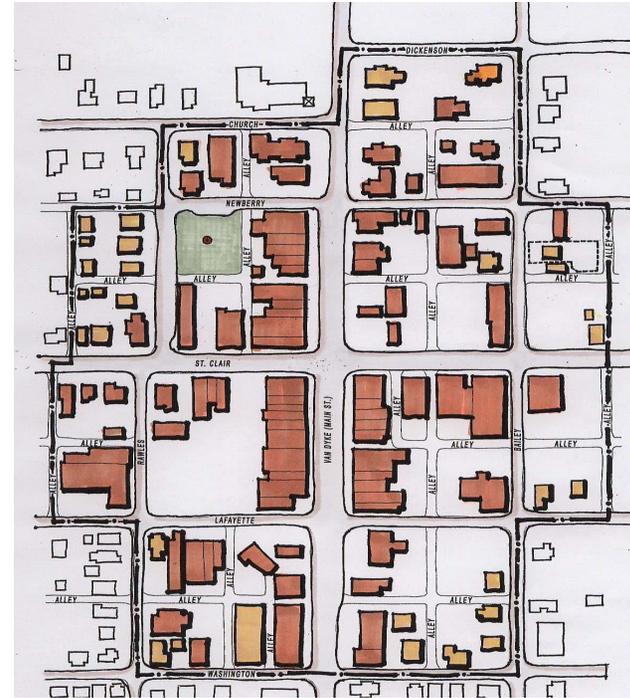
Characteristics of Successful Downtowns

- ◆ *Pedestrian-friendly environment*
- ◆ *Clean, well-maintained streets and sidewalks*
- ◆ *Greenery: trees, shrubs, flowers, planters, etc.*
- ◆ *Traffic slowing features.*
- ◆ *Availability of public restroom facilities*
- ◆ *Street furniture, such as benches and seating*
- ◆ *Substantial street lights and well lit areas*
- ◆ *Directional signage (parking, destinations, etc.)*
- ◆ *Easy access to adequate parking facilities*
- ◆ *Bike lanes, paths, and racks*
- ◆ *Open public space such as a park*
- ◆ *Preservation of historic character, including historic sites and reuse of existing historic buildings*
- ◆ *Outdoor cafes or restaurants that draw patrons outside, increase pedestrian traffic, and create a highly visible gathering place*
- ◆ *Attractive storefronts that encourage window-shopping*
- ◆ *Playgrounds and play areas for children*

Romeo Downtown Development Authority

On April 21, 1986, the Village of Romeo Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was established by the Village Council pursuant to Michigan Public Act 197 of 1975, and Romeo Ordinance No. 415.

The DDA was established in order to prevent actual and potential deterioration of property values in the downtown district, to eliminate the causes of economic and physical deterioration, and to promote economic growth and development.



BLUEPRINTS FOR MICHIGAN DOWNTOWNS

In 2006, the Village of Romeo participated in the Blueprints for Michigan's Downtowns Program, a partnership effort between the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and the Michigan Municipal League (MML). The program contracted with a planning and design firm, Hyett Palma, to prepare a downtown strategy for the Village of Romeo. The purpose of the strategy was to create a downtown vision and then develop action steps to implement the vision. Suggested actions focused on revitalizing the Downtown, attracting people, and creating new private jobs and investments. Many of the plan's recommendations are still relevant and achievable today.



ACTION STRATEGY

Review the Downtown Blueprint Plan to determine which of the recommended strategies are still relevant today, and develop a plan for implementation.

MIXED-USE BUILDINGS

Mixed-use downtowns were the hearts of our communities for decades. However, in the early 20th century, with the advent of Euclidean zoning (which separates different land uses into districts) and the rise in popularity of the automobile, the urge to separate retail from residential grew. Most community zoning ordinances prohibited the mixing of retail and residential uses, and it was one of the prime factors prompting the decline of our downtowns.

By the 1990s and 2000s, urban planners realized that mixed-use development was something to be embraced. They saw that vibrant downtowns had mixed uses and that the most active downtowns were the ones that had "high energy" businesses, such as restaurants, bars, coffee houses, nightclubs, salons, theaters, live music venues, and similar-type uses.

There has been a lot of discussion regarding the current zoning ordinance regulations that restrict first-floor units on Main Street in the Downtown to retail. While first floor retail, if properly designed, can increase activity Downtown, Romeo needs to be mindful that there is a finite amount of retail space that can be supported. It is, often, worse to have vacant buildings than to occupy ground floor units with non-retail businesses.

Office uses are essential to Downtown because they are "demand anchors" for retailing along the street, especially in the morning and afternoon. Professional tenants such as doctors and lawyers are very desirable because they steadily attract visitors, employ office staff, and serve neighborhood residents—all of whom are potential shoppers.



ACTION STRATEGY

Revise the Romeo Zoning Ordinance to allow mixed use development within the Central Business District and the Van Dyke Office District. Focus on building form rather than on building use.

DOWNTOWN RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS

A retail gap analysis compares the availability of goods and services (supply) with consumer expenditures (demand). When consumers spend more than existing businesses can accommodate, this means that need is greater than supply. When this occurs, local households and daytime workers are spending money outside of the market area. This is referred to as a retail market leakage and can represent a potential opportunity for growth. Conversely, when the supply is greater than consumer expenditure (supply is greater than demand), there is saturation or a surplus.

The Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), an international supplier of geographic information systems, software, and geodatabase management applications, provides Market Retail Gap data for locations throughout the world. The chart on the following page pertains to the Village of Romeo. On the chart, the bars to the right of the center indicate leakage or demand for services. The bars to the left of the center show a surplus or oversaturation of services. According to the information presented, there appears to be a market demand in Romeo for businesses such as specialty food stores, non-automotive motor vehicle sales, general merchandise stores, and lawn & garden equipment dealers.

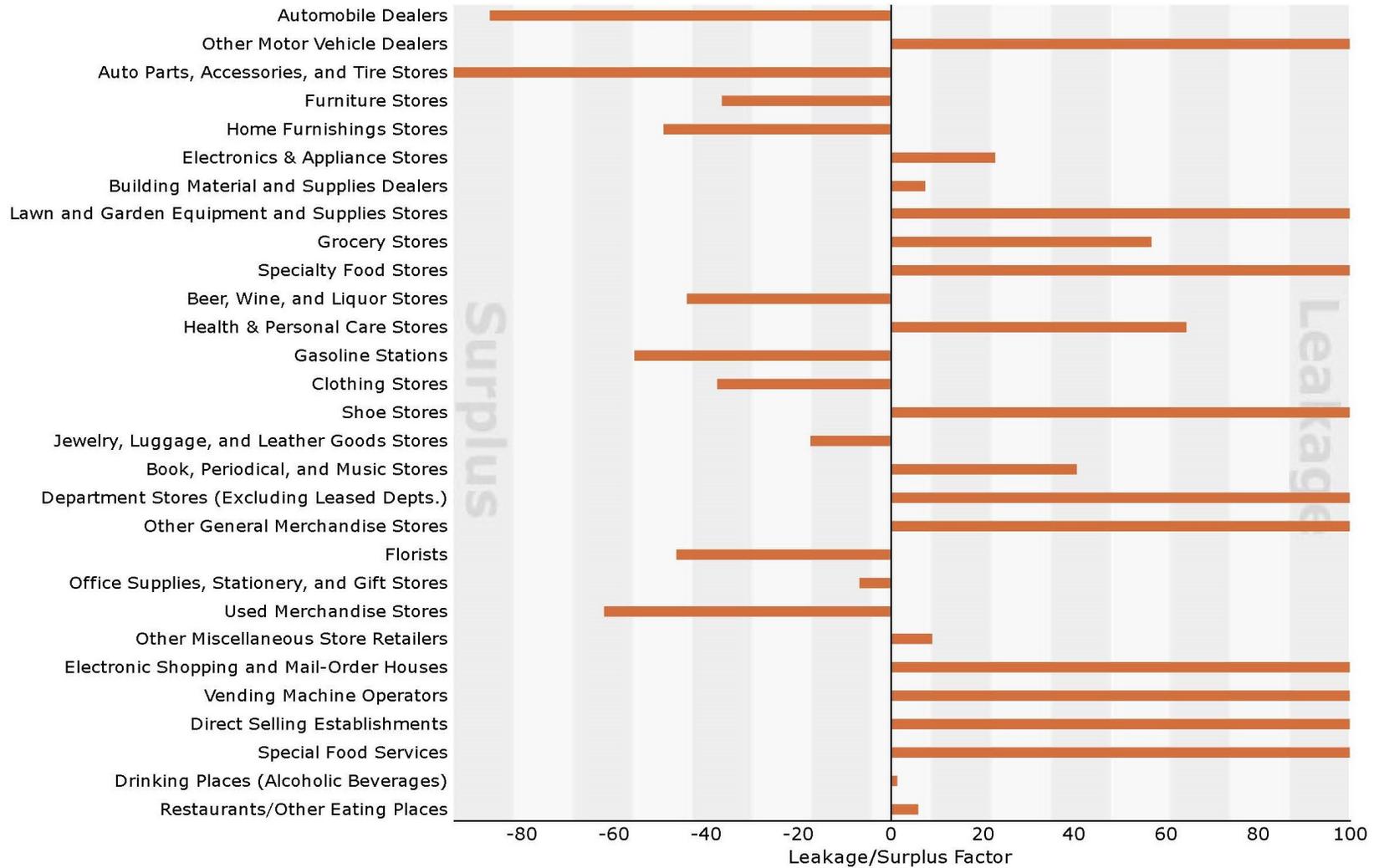
The Village administration and Downtown Development Authority should utilize this information when marketing the downtown to potential businesses. However, it is essential to note that other factors such as competition, demographics, business climate, site availability, access, and infrastructure will dictate whether this potential can be captured in Romeo or if retail will develop elsewhere to capitalize on existing unmet market demand. Competition with other communities in the area will be the most significant factor in determining future retail growth.



ACTION STRATEGY

The Downtown Development Authority and the Planning Commission should take an active role in marketing available commercial spaces in the downtown to potential and existing businesses in the region that might seek to expand or open a new facility. Assembling data on the available commercial properties, including information on their internal layout and square footage, potential uses, and provision of utilities, is one key step that could be undertaken.

Market Demand



Source: Esri and Infogroup. Esri 2019 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace. Copyright 2019 Esri. Copyright 2017 Infogroup, Inc. All rights reserved.

ATTRACTING ENTREPRENEURS

To support a thriving, growing local economy that successfully attracts and retains businesses in the Downtown, Romeo must focus on attracting new entrepreneurs. For this to occur, the Village must be prepared with the necessary infrastructure, urban setting, and facilities to support business development. Romeo should undertake the following recommendations to establish it as a business-ready community:

- ◆ Promote Romeo as a live, learn, and earn community.
- ◆ Improve broadband by ensuring that high-speed internet access is available in all parts of the community. Fast, reliable internet is essential for most businesses as it directly impacts the speed and efficiency of communication and work.
- ◆ Provide business incubator space in proximity to downtown to support new and developing businesses with coworking spaces, affordable office spaces, and business mentorship and training programs.



ACTION STRATEGY

Work with downtown building owners to identify space that could provide reasonable priced lease options, shared services, and technical assistance to start-up businesses.

Business Incubators

A major challenge for small businesses is having sufficient operating capital to make it through the first year or so. One way to mitigate this challenge is by starting business incubators. A business incubator is a facility that provides flexible space near or below market cost; shared services; access to computers, fax machines and general office equipment; and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and early-stage businesses. The primary goal of a business incubator is to develop successful business operations that will outgrow their start-up space in the incubator and leave to establish viable, freestanding business operations within the Village.



The Launch Factory Incubator, Charlotte, North Carolina

DOWNTOWN PARKING

Parking and land use regulations are closely related. To achieve the goals of a land use plan, adequate parking must be available to meet the needs of a dense downtown setting, while facilities should be located so as to minimize the impact on the vibrancy of the downtown and the pedestrian environment.

In order to maximize the use of the core and promote a pedestrian-friendly environment, parking demand for businesses in the downtown is considered collectively rather than on a business-by-business basis. Downtown property owners may be required to provide on-site parking or are responsible for meeting parking demands by participating in a public-private funding structure that provides for the construction of shared customer and employee parking.

Parking is a costly asset; accordingly it is important to ensure that the use of parking spaces and facilities are maximized. It is important to note that it is not practical to provide enough parking spaces to meet the absolute peak demand. Therefore parking management strategies focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing parking supply and should be utilized to address short-term parking needs in the downtown.

Parking in downtown Romeo is served by several private and public parking lots and on-street parking. It is critical that a balance of parking types be maintained throughout the downtown to meet the needs of various users. While public parking lots offer the most flexibility for visitors and employees, private parking lots offer unique opportunities for businesses to promote parking options directly to their customers.



The perceived shortage of parking in downtown Romeo has been identified as a major concern by some community members. Other residents have indicated that there is not a parking shortage, but only a parking management issue. Regardless, of which side is right, there remains a parking concern that needs to be examined and addressed. In this regard, a parking study should be performed that answers the following questions:

- ◆ Is there enough available parking in the downtown to serve both the existing businesses and anticipated future businesses?
- ◆ Are the existing lots being used most efficiently?
- ◆ What parking management options should the Village pursue to maintain a quality downtown, while protecting the nearby neighborhoods?
- ◆ How best to fund the construction of additional parking areas, if needed, and how best to fund the maintenance and management of existing parking areas?



ACTION STRATEGIES

Contract with a qualified company to undertake an analysis of downtown parking supply and demand, and based upon the findings, recommend specific and achievable implementation measures.

Adopt and implement a Payment in Lieu of Providing Downtown Parking Ordinance

BICYCLE PARKING

As society shifts towards sustainable living, a cleaner alternative to automobile commuting is gaining traction. Cycling offers benefits that surpass driving on many levels—an economically and environmentally sound option that helps people fulfill health and fitness goals.

Bicycle parking is needed at key destinations throughout the downtown to encourage bicycling as a mode of transportation. The safety, location, and type of bicycle parking facility is important to encouraging cyclists to use it. Parking should be located where it is close to entrances, have metal framing that is secured to the ground, and allow for bicycle frames to be locked to the rack in addition to front wheels.

Bicycle parking could be permitted as an incentive to reduce vehicle parking for new development and in redevelopment projects or could be required as a part of the site development provisions in the zoning ordinance.



Without a convenient place to park, bicyclists will either pass through or avoid downtown entirely. Therefore, a complete network of conveniently located bicycle parking facilities needs to be provided.



ACTION STRATEGY

Identify appropriate locations, and construct attractive and durable, bicycle parking areas within the downtown.

FORM BASED CODES

Form-based codes are a zoning tool that can be used to achieve mixed-use development in a contextually appropriate manner that can be catered to the character or desired character of a particular area of the Village.

Form-based Codes focus on physical form as the organizing element of regulation. Building types and dimensions, building and parking location, and the relationship of building façades to the public realm are all elements of physical form that are considered when crafting a Form-based Code.

Under conventional zoning, land use is regulated by districts often segregating uses that may otherwise be compatible. Use regulations in the form-based code recognize that building forms can accommodate a variety of uses. Therefore, uses are organized by broader use groups, which are groupings or categorization of compatible uses which exhibit similar characteristics. Because the district is more permissive and buildings are designed and located in such a way to accommodate more uses, these developments tend to be more sustainable as they are more easily adapted to new uses in the future.

The entire Main Street and St. Clair Street corridors are obvious candidates for a Form Based Code overlay zone. These areas have a mix of historic homes and commercial/office buildings interspersed with new commercial establishments. These new commercial buildings are often single-story with parking in front; they do not fit with the historic development patterns. Creating a Form Based Code would address building size, placement, and height, as well as other components of the public realm.

Form Based Codes

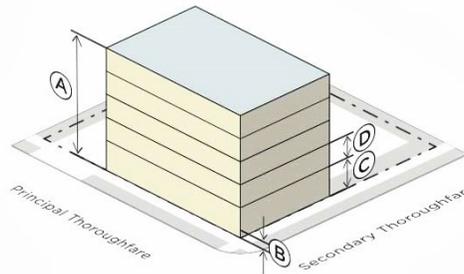
While not in the scope of this master plan update, the Village of Romeo has expressed interest in exploring the possibility of adopting a Form Based Code for its Downtown.

Form Based Codes are a method of regulating development to achieve a desirable urban form. They create a predictable public realm, primarily by controlling physical form with a lesser focus on land use through ordinance regulations.

Form Based Codes focus on the quality of spaces and can target a specific development or entire portion of the community. They are vision-based, unique to individual places, and can be applied to undeveloped or redevelopment areas.

Typical Form Based Code Regulations

2.2.5. Height



Building Height

A	Stories (min/max)	2 stories / 8 stories
	Height (min/max) ¹	28' / 110'

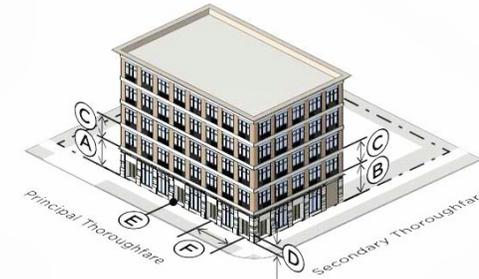
Story Height

B	Ground floor elevation (min/max)	0' / 2'
C	Ground story height, floor to floor (min)	16'
D	Upper story height, floor to floor (min)	12'

¹ Where any 40 foot or taller building is proposed on a site which abuts an R1, R2, or R3 zoning district, the upper stories of the building must be stepped back from the respective interior side or rear lot line by at least one foot for each additional foot above the first 40 feet of building height.

Source: City of Olean, NY

2.2.6. Transparency



Transparency

A	Ground story transparency, front facade (min) ²	70%
B	Ground story transparency, corner side facade (min) ²	40%
C	Upper story transparency, front and corner facades (min) ²	25%
D	Ground story window sill height, front and corner facades (min/max) ²	0.5' / 2.5'

Pedestrian Access

E	Main entrance location (required)	Front facade
F	Entrance spacing along front facade ²	At least 1 entrance for each 30' of facade width

² Non-commercial buildings are exempt from transparency, window sill height, and entrance spacing requirements.



ACTION STRATEGY

Create form based regulations in the zoning ordinance for use in the Central Business District and the Van Dyke Office District .

TRASH DUMPSTER CORALS

Dumpster corrals are generally incorporated in a designated, central area. They can be attached to the side or back of a building, or at the end of a parking lot. Their location provides benefits by making it easier and more convenient to access by residents or employees. Its location also averts illegal trash dumping, which is a frequent problem for commercial buildings in urban areas.

Another great advantage to the location of a dumpster corral is odor and waste management. Many commercial properties do not want their guests, customers, or clients smelling the rotting odors of garbage as they enter the premises. Furthermore, it can be unsanitary to have garbage within range of guests. A dumpster corral can mitigate odor and safeguard against unhygienic environments.



ACTION STRATEGY

Identify locations, and construct dumpster corrals in each of the four quadrants of the downtown. Establish ordinance requirements for their shared use.

Naperville, Illinois Case Study

In January 2010, the Naperville City Council authorized the construction of a shared refuse enclosure at the end of a surface parking lot. The enclosure was sufficiently sized for two garbage compactors and grease receptacles to serve the businesses bordering the parking lot.

Constructing the enclosure allowed dumpsters that had been located in the parking lot to be removed, producing immediate aesthetic benefits (e.g., reducing unpleasant odors currently experienced during warmer months) and functional benefits (e.g., increasing the number of available parking spaces and reducing the number of different trucks servicing the lot).



DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

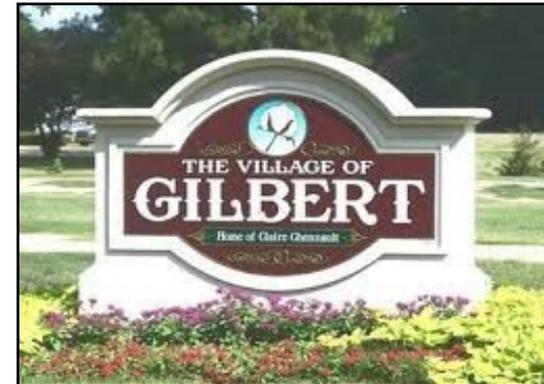
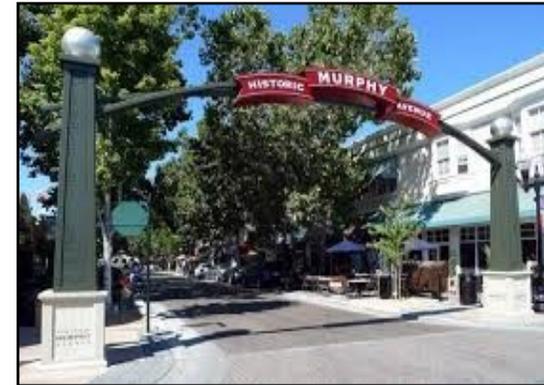
Gateways into the Village currently do not effectively announce arrival or communicate the sense of pride and the character that embodies the area. Gateways are physical symbols of community or district limits that express a sense of territory to those entering.

Understanding the importance of identifying boundaries in the Village, the reintroduction of the entry signs is seen as a necessity. These signs should reflect the historical nature of the Village, and help provide an aesthetic entry, utilizing quality landscaping and signage materials.



ACTION STRATEGY

Construct architectural features that clearly identify the entrances to Downtown from all directions on Main Street and St. Clair Street.



DOWNTOWN WAYFINDING

Wayfinding refers to the process of finding one's way from point to point. Good wayfinding systems direct traffic flows across all transportation modes to key areas or destinations. Great wayfinding systems not only accomplish these goals, but they also promote a community's brand or identity. This brand or identity helps establish a sense of place by communicating a certain message to residents and visitors alike. Great wayfinding systems use consistent designs to further promote a positive image of a community.

Well-designed and well-placed signs create aesthetic harmony in a community and work to:

- ◆ Help visitors find their way
- ◆ Promote a pedestrian-friendly environment
- ◆ Link uses, destinations, and districts
- ◆ Enhance a community's identity



ACTION STRATEGY

Develop a system of wayfinding within the Village that appropriately directs motorists, bicyclist, and pedestrians to various locations. Signage should reflect the historical heritage of the community.

STREETSCAPES

Streetscapes include natural and built features that influence the quality of the street and its visual effect. This includes roads, sidewalks, signs, lighting, and other elements that often influence public places where people can engage in various activities and interact with each other. In the public meetings conducted for this Master Plan, respondents indicated a desire for the revitalization of the downtown, business development, and attractive community gathering places. Many of these features are influenced by the streetscape, as it provides transportation and the setting in which people can live, work, and play.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

The historic appearance of a majority of downtown buildings establishes the distinct visual character of the area, and is recognized as the hallmark asset and attraction to many downtown visitors. It is vital to implement a program to encourage building owners to maintain, preserve, restore, renovate and/or improve their buildings and businesses in a way that does not limit architectural variety, but rather encourages designs that will respect existing historic buildings.



BEAUTIFICATION AND LANDSCAPING

To maintain the attractiveness of the downtown, and to preserve its historic charm, a comprehensive beautification program should be implemented. This can include such things as: the maintenance of streetscape features; landscaping improvements (planting of trees, shrubs, and the hanging of flower baskets); installation of banners; installing and maintaining street furniture; and, the installation and maintenance of lighting.



ACTION STRATEGY

Enhance the streetscapes and building facades in the Downtown. Programs that encourage private investment should be developed.

PUBLIC SPACES AND GATHERING AREAS

One of the most important aspects of the perception of a downtown, are the public spaces in which residents, employees, visitors, or shoppers can gather. These places can take the form of sidewalks, plazas, alleys, parks, etc. These spaces not only provide areas for pedestrian movement and congregation, but they also enhance the architectural variety that promotes the identity of the downtown.

The Village has several good examples of public spaces and gathering areas within the downtown. These include the pedestrian alleys which have been created in each quadrant of the downtown, and the Village Park. The alleys not only continue the pedestrian sidewalk and brickscape found on the main sidewalks of downtown, but also provide extensive landscaping and visual intrigue. The Village Park provides an extensive gathering area, including the pavilion, park benches, and table. Large-scale landscaping protects users against excessive sun or other harmful elements.



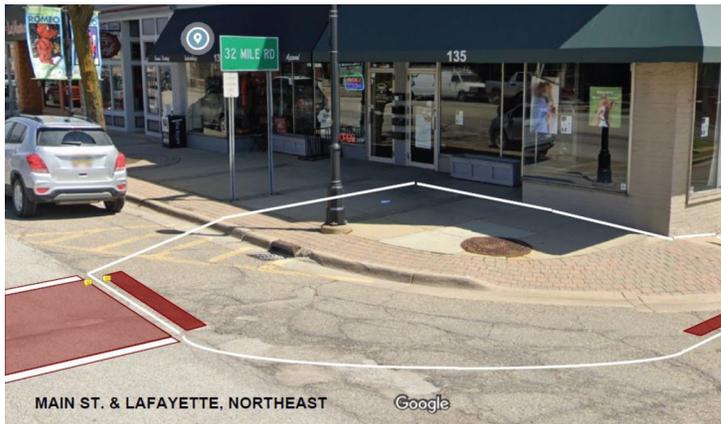
ACTION STRATEGY

Additional public gathering spaces should be identified and constructed, and existing public gathering spaces should be enhanced and promoted for use.

DOWNTOWN PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

The walking experience downtown should be simple, enjoyable, and safe. Streets must balance both the needs of the pedestrian and the automobile. Traffic must be calmed, and pedestrian amenities must be enhanced, to achieve a vibrant downtown.

An essential component of pedestrian safety is having delineated crosswalks. Romeo has contracted with Rowe Engineering to develop a crosswalk plan for the downtown area. Their plan identifies 7 crosswalks (as shown on the adjoining map), including “bump-outs” at Main St. and Lafayette St, and Main St. and Newberry St.



Source: Rowe Engineering



ACTION STRATEGY

Seek appropriate funding (including grants) to develop the needed crosswalks identified by Rowe Engineering.

PROXIMITY TO THE MACOMB ORCHARD TRAIL

In 2017, the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development, along with LSL Planning, developed a report entitled, “Mobilize Macomb”, which evaluated the existing trail network within the county.

The report found that a gap existed in the trail network between the Macomb Orchard Trail (which crosses the northeast portion of the Village), and Downtown Romeo. It further recommends that “The Macomb Orchard Trail crossing should be brought up to new design standards to include wayfinding and a bike lane leading to downtown along 32 Mile Road”.

The Macomb Orchard Trail is a great asset that should be promoted to generate additional pedestrian and bike traffic into the Downtown. A safely designed pathway should be developed along 32 Mile from Romeo Trailside Park to Main Street. In addition, advertising materials should be made available at the park, promoting Romeo’s current events and businesses.

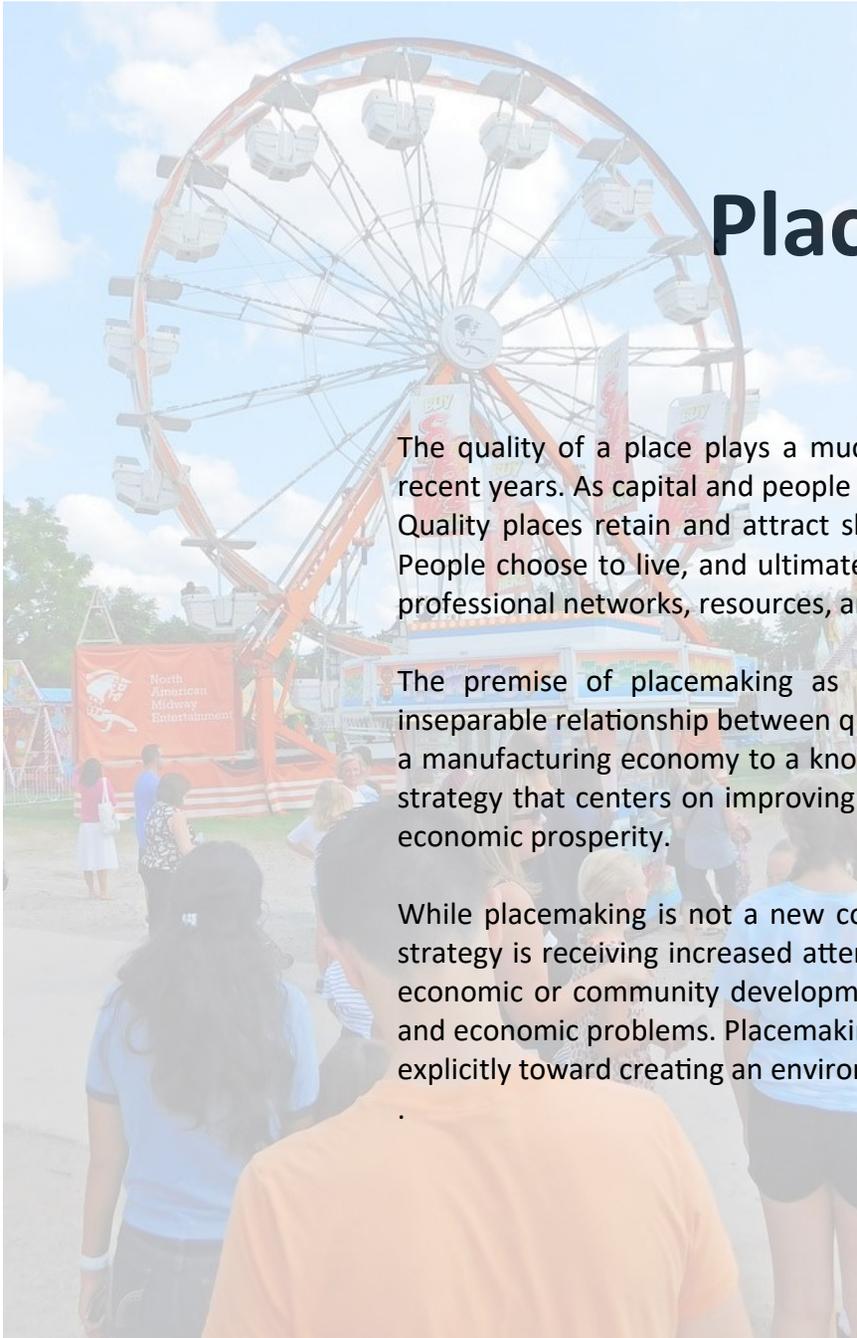


ACTION STRATEGY

Develop a safely designed pedestrian and bicycle trail from the Macomb Orchard Trail to Downtown Romeo to further bolster downtown activity.

“Cultures and climates differ all over the world, but people are the same. They’ll gather in public if you give them a good place to do it.”

— Jan Gehl, Architect



Chapter 6

Placemaking & Economic Development

The quality of a place plays a much more significant role in today's economic decisions than in recent years. As capital and people are more mobile than ever, the quality of a place matters more. Quality places retain and attract skilled and talented people who in turn retain and create jobs. People choose to live, and ultimately invest, in places that offer community amenities, social and professional networks, resources, and opportunities.

The premise of placemaking as a planning and economic development tool recognizes the inseparable relationship between quality places and investment. In light of the transformation from a manufacturing economy to a knowledge-based economy, the concept of placemaking is a logical strategy that centers on improving a community's appeal, desirability, and overall quality to drive economic prosperity.

While placemaking is not a new concept, placemaking as a planning and economic development strategy is receiving increased attention and funding from both the public and private sectors. No economic or community development strategy should be viewed as a quick-fix to complex social and economic problems. Placemaking can be an effective economic development strategy, targeted explicitly toward creating an environment for investment.

CORE OBJECTIVES

- 🎯 Romeo will have a growing, diversified economy that offers opportunity for all businesses and residents to prosper.
- 🎯 Romeo will have a unique character and strong sense of place in its neighborhoods, downtown, and Village as a whole.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A successful economic development strategy drives investment and growth strategies, and it helps to define the way a community will interact with local businesses. It can guide business attraction and retention, determine which types of projects warrant public incentive support, identify an economic development vision, and create an implementation strategy to complete tasks that will enhance the economy within the community.

Business Attraction—Business attraction focuses on identifying companies from outside the area and enticing them to expand or relocate into a community. The goal is simple and straightforward: to secure new jobs and investment. Business attraction activities help ensure that new businesses replace the ones that close. Communities are often successful in business attraction when they target companies that will either fill a gap in meeting the needs of local residents, provide goods or services your existing businesses or industries need to purchase, or complement a growing or pronounced specialty that you have developed.

Business Retention and Expansion—Business retention and expansion (BRE) is the foundation of effective economic development. It makes little sense to invest time and resources to recruit new businesses, while losing others due to lack of attention to changing needs or emerging obstacles. Existing businesses provide jobs for local residents and tax revenue for the community. Successful BRE strategies focus on satisfying the needs of the businesses already in the community, encouraging them to stay (retains them) or grow (expand). A proactive community and economic development approach taken by local governments and local economic development agencies involves learning more about the needs of its existing businesses.



ACTION STRATEGY

Market available commercial spaces in the downtown to potential and existing businesses in the region that might seek to expand or open a new facility. Assembling data on the available commercial properties and lease spaces, including information on their internal layout and square footage, potential uses, and provision of utilities and appliances, would help support and facilitate the process.

QUALITY OF PLACE

The quality of place plays a much larger role in today's economic decisions than in recent years. As capital and people are more mobile than ever, the quality of a place matters more. Quality places retain and attract skilled and talented people who in turn retain and create jobs. People choose to live, and ultimately invest, in places that offer community amenities, social and professional networks, resources and opportunities.

Placemaking in the sense of place-based community investment considers the concept in a broader sense as a transformative tool that focuses on talent retention and attraction by creating quality communities, providing quality amenities and services, and offering an overall high quality of life. While placemaking is not a new concept, placemaking as a strategy for economic development is receiving increased attention and funding from both the public and private sector.

Maintenance and preservation of existing parks green space, and growth of additional recreation and green space is a key component. The key to the future success in Romeo is retaining and creating high paying jobs. Retaining and growing current small businesses and attracting talent and entrepreneurs is the key to sustainable, long-term job growth. This can be done by recognizing and promoting the Village's existing and developing community assets, efficiently providing the necessary service and infrastructure, and promoting the best logical choices for business growth and development. The success of this method is dependent on a positive and close relationship between government and business owners. Open and consistent communication between the local business community and local government is necessary in order to fully understand the needs of the business community and what assets are being provided by the local government.



Characteristics of Placemaking

- ◆ *Compact development that doesn't sprawl, enabling urban and rural areas to be clearly differentiated from one another.*
- ◆ *Urban places with a strong center, where multiple uses and activities are clustered in fairly close proximity.*
- ◆ *Vital, distinctive, and varied neighborhoods, in close proximity to the urban center.*
- ◆ *Pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment.*
- ◆ *Environmental resources, natural amenities, scenic qualities, parks, recreation, and open space that are preserved and integrated into the fabric of the community.*
- ◆ *Historic and cultural resources.*
- ◆ *Strong local character, community identity, and a sense of place.*
- ◆ *Well-designed buildings and public spaces that strengthen community sense of place, often reinforced and enlivened by works of art and sculpture.*
- ◆ *Landmarks and building facades, providing evidence that it is a real place, not just superficial.*



SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events and festivals draw people into the downtown and blaze the path for future trips to shops, restaurants, and other local merchants. Seasonal events such as the Peach Festival already draw large numbers of people to the area. This and other events should emphasize the distinctive, small town character of Romeo and provide opportunities for interactions among diverse groups of area residents. The sense of community was a desirable attribute of Romeo that was significant to the participants in the Master Plan visioning sessions. Village festivals and events definitely provide the opportunity to foster a greater sense of community.

Coordination among downtown business owners to host sidewalk sales, holiday celebrations, and other themed special events, have the potential to greatly increase patronage from local and regional residents. Their experiences can broaden Romeo's commercial base by drawing dollars from outside the immediate area. With deliberate and coordinated planning, events like these can have a positive and lasting impact on the Downtown and on the Village as a whole.



ACTION STRATEGY

Expand the hosting of festivals and special events that bring people and dollars into the Village.

ARTS AND CULTURE

The Village of Romeo recognizes the importance of arts and culture in defining the character of a community; promoting economic vitality; creating rich educational opportunities; sparking innovation; fostering dialogues across income, age, and cultural demographics; and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents.



Public art and cultural amenities help define the public realm, promote community-based dialogue and interactions, and distinguish Village destinations. Romeo wishes to create a stronger cultural presence through the creation of specific physical spaces and new initiatives that showcase our arts and culture, while simultaneously, leveraging regional opportunities that will provide our residents with a plethora of vibrant art and cultural venues.



Starkweather Art Center

Ms. Helen Starkweather taught art and drafting in the Romeo school system for more than forty years. Many current residents fondly remember having her as a teacher. .

When Helen died in 1987 at the age of eighty-four, she left her estate to the Romeo Historical Society and to the Village of Romeo. Her will stipulated that her home and studio at 219 North Main Street be used as an art and cultural center “...dedicated to promoting and fostering the appreciation of art and artisans and to support the preservation of the character and quality of the Village”.

On November 13, 1999, Ms. Starkweather’s former home and studio was officially opened to the public as the Starkweather Arts Center. The Center includes two beautiful exhibit galleries and a sales gallery.

POP-UP & TEMPORARY BUSINESSES

Large events are great, but planning and implementing these can take significant planning and resources—requisites often beyond many small governments. The answer—think smaller scale. The Downtown Development Authority, local Chamber of Commerce, Village staff, and community volunteers can work with property owners to accommodate “pop-up” businesses, which might be startups or just secondary locations of existing businesses.

These pop-up businesses can occupy empty commercial spaces or vacant lots during “happy hour” times, weekends, or holidays. Concurrent, small scale events can include concerts, food truck gatherings, or wine/beer tastings, and craft/farmers’ markets. Any leftover empty spaces can feature passive attractions by local artists or student projects from nearby schools. While some existing businesses may feel uneasy at first about the new competition, the increased traffic downtown will benefit all—potentially leading to new private investment and new, longer term tenants.



ACTION STRATEGY

Revise the Village ordinances to allow new or potential businesses to hold temporary pop-up events, use vacant spaces, or utilize movable infrastructure to test and market their product or service, prior to making a significant investment.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is often defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is based on a simple principle: everything that we need for survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on the natural environment.

Romeo's commitment to conserving and protecting the environment is directly connected to enhancing the quality of life for our residents, businesses, and visitors. This requires a comprehensive inclusion of a "green" perspective in all our endeavors, whether these are in the area of commercial development, the creation of recreational activities, determining viable land use patterns, or preserving and enhancing our neighborhoods.



IMAGE & BRANDING

Every community is unique in one way or another. For some communities, it is their proximity to a lake or river. For others, it is their active downtown, vibrant festivals, or walkable neighborhoods. Each attribute is part of a collage of place-based community assets that shape the identity, quality of life, and livability of a community.

Branding is the act of defining how you would like other to perceive you as a community. For Romeo, it is important that the community project a brand to others, rather than allowing others to dictate the community's identity. Branding consists of several key components. First, the Village should work with residents, businesses, and others to identify unique assets that distinguish the Village from other communities. The Village should then use this as a foundation for establishing a succinct and impactful message that resonates with both local residents and the broader regional audience.

Romeo should consider the following elements when branding.

Audience. In the public visioning sessions conducted for this Master Plan, respondents indicated a strong desire for community gathering places and attracting visitors downtown. Signage and branding can be used to highlight local businesses and events. Signage and branding can develop a sense of place for residents and welcome visitors. .

Purpose. Wayfinding signage and branding can serve for identification, direction, information, and regulation. As signage and branding is considered Downtown the purposes of signs and branding should complement each other, enhancing the user's experience and promoting the character of the Village.



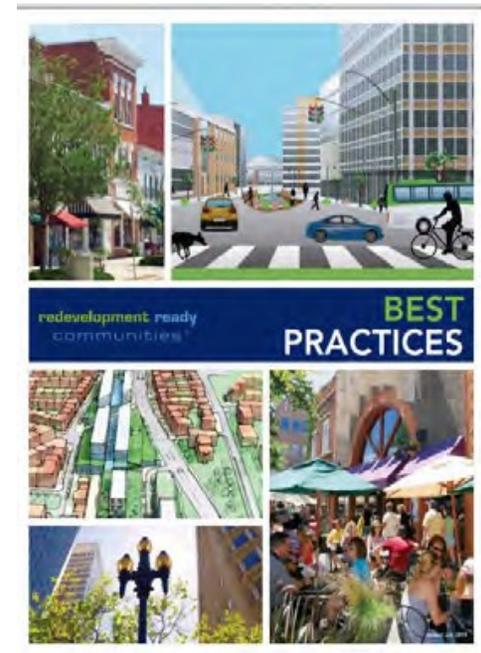
ACTION STRATEGY

Partner with the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development to promote the Village as a place to live, visit, and start a business.

REDEVELOPMENT READY

From a land-use planning perspective as well as an economic development perspective, it is important to take stock of the areas in the community that are ripe for redevelopment. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) encourages communities to take a proactive approach in identifying and preparing properties to be redeveloped. A key element of the MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities Program is to identify redevelopment ready sites and strategies associated with each site.

The MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities Program is a statewide certification program that helps communities become development-ready and competitive in today's economy. There is a formal certification program to ensure well-defined development procedures, a community supported vision, an open and predictable review process, and compelling sites for developers to locate their latest projects.



ACTION STRATEGY

Develop and maintain a listing of redevelopment ready sites for distribution to realtors, builders, and developers.

Identify and implement best practices to become a certified Redevelopment Ready Community.

MEDC Redevelopment Ready Community Program

In order to be certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community, the Village would need to meet all of the RRC best practice criteria:

- ◆ **Community Plans and Public Outreach** *This practice assesses community planning and establishes a vision for redevelopment, which can be included in the master plan, capital improvements plan, downtown plan, and other plans.*
- ◆ **Zoning Regulations** *This best practice evaluates a community's zoning ordinance and considers how effectively it regulates development and furthers the goals included in the master plan. This results in a more streamlined ordinance.*
- ◆ **Development Review Process** *The goal of this practice is to ensure that specific development plans comply with local ordinances and are consistent with the master plan. This involves evaluation of the community's development review policies and procedures, project tracking, and internal/external communication.*
- ◆ **Recruitment and Education** *This practice evaluates how the community recruits and provides orientation for newly elected officials and board members. This addresses diversity of perspectives and skills, along with encouraging education and training.*
- ◆ **Redevelopment Ready Sites** *A redevelopment ready site is one that has been targeted by the community and is ready for investment. This best practice assesses how the community markets, identifies, and provides a vision for priority redevelopment sites. This stimulates the real estate market for vacant or underutilized properties.*
- ◆ **Community Prosperity** *This best practice assesses the goals and actions that a community has identified in order to help strengthen its overall economic health. This includes marketing, initiatives, and methods that encourage diversity of the area's economic base, provide opportunities for economic expansion, and help create a sustainable community.*

LEAN ZONING

Lean Zoning is a concept of removing barriers from development and reducing red tape. Romeo can promote Lean Zoning practices by reviewing the development process and identify roadblocks that can delay or increase the cost of doing business in the Village. For instance, the Village could develop a set of criteria for development in the Downtown that when met, could reduce the number of meetings required for approval. Another option is that the required information and site improvements for the reuse of an existing building may be reduced.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

One way of encouraging investment and development in a community is streamline the development review process. Application forms and checklists should be reviewed to ensure that they are accurate and easy-to understand. A Guide to Development should be developed to explain policies and perhaps offer a visual representation of how the development review and approval processes work in the Village

Detroit, Michigan Case Study

Developers had complained that, like many cities, Detroit's onerous and outdated rules made it too difficult to rebuild or repurpose long-neglected retail areas.

To try to reduce those obstacles without a time-consuming and expensive rezoning process, the city proposed a handful of "pink zones," where red tape is cut to help small developers and entrepreneurs open new businesses and revive aging commercial strips.

The goal was not to eliminate zoning but to ease some of the constraints faced by new projects, like minimum-parking requirements or environmental-impact reports.

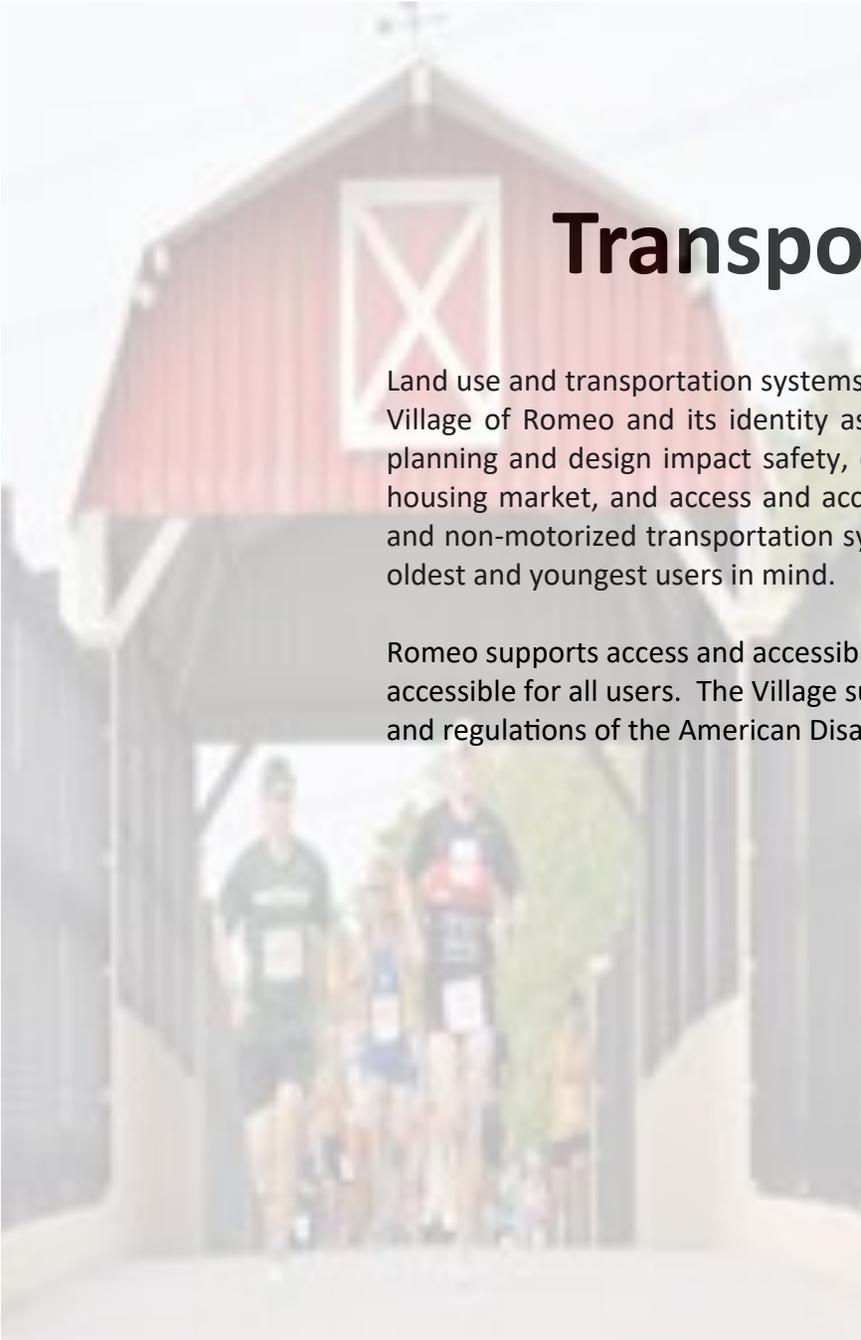


ACTION STRATEGY

Amend the Village of Romeo Zoning Ordinance to streamline the development review process for potential developers.

“Planning of the automobile city focuses on saving time. Planning for the accessible city, on the other hand, focus on time well spent.”

— Robert Cervero, Author



Chapter 7

Transportation & Walkability

Land use and transportation systems have and will continue to have a tremendous influence on the Village of Romeo and its identity as a charming, inviting, and livable small town. Transportation planning and design impact safety, quality of life factors, recreation, economic development, the housing market, and access and accessibility. Romeo is committed to ensuring that its motorized and non-motorized transportation system is safe and efficient for all users and is designed with its oldest and youngest users in mind.

Romeo supports access and accessibility and strives to ensure public facilities are inviting and accessible for all users. The Village supports and strongly encourages compliance with the rules and regulations of the American Disabilities Act (ADA).

CORE OBJECTIVES

- 🎯 Romeo will maintain a safe and efficient transportation network that is consistent with the character of the area, coordinated with future land use patterns, and serves residents and visitors of all means, abilities, and ages.
- 🎯 Romeo will provide an expanded multimodal network that supports our Downtown and other commercial areas, protects the integrity of our neighborhoods, and embraces new and sustainable technologies.

ROADWAY SYSTEM

A safe and effective transportation network is essential to active communities for everything from getting children to school, getting to and from work, and having places to exercise and recreate. Economic development and job creation depend on transporting raw materials and finished products and giving workers access to employment opportunities.

Like many residents throughout Macomb County, residents within the Village are primarily dependent on automobile travel and the region's arterial road network to access employment, schools, shopping, and services. Romeo's residential character, the limited shopping supply, and its somewhat limited employment opportunities require travel to other communities to meet these needs. In turn, many patrons visiting the businesses in the Village come from outside of Romeo.

Fortunately, Romeo is well served by the regional road network, with access to Van Dyke and M-53 and 32 Mile Road providing vehicle access throughout the area. Once within the Village's boundaries, the local street grid system offers complete access throughout the Village, both in the immediate downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.

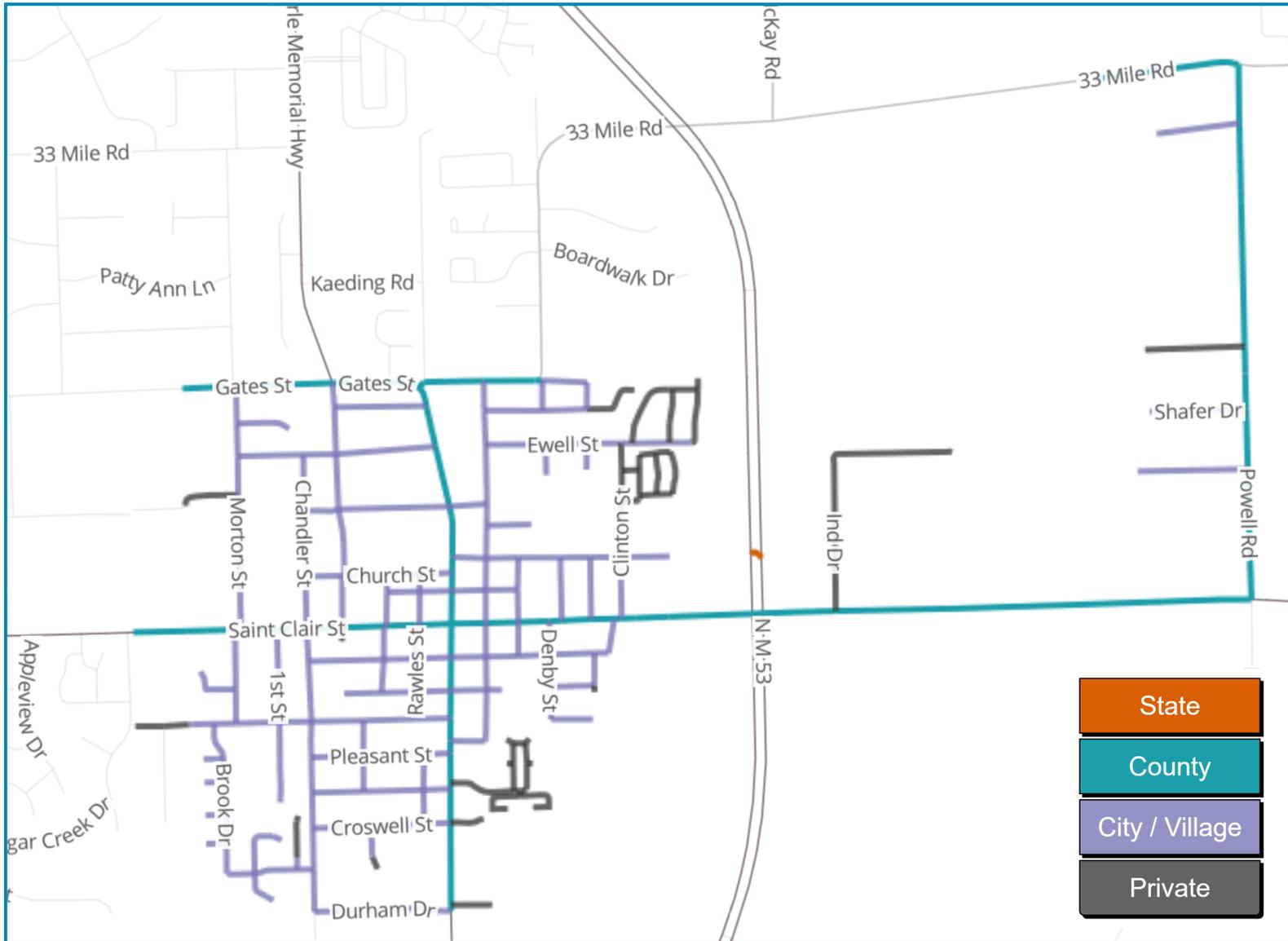
The road network with the Village is primarily laid out as part of the downtown's original platting. The network follows that of a traditional downtown, providing a relatively strict grid pattern for downtown roads and alleys.

Village roads—13 Miles
County— 6 miles
Private—3 miles
Total—22 Miles



ACTION STRATEGY

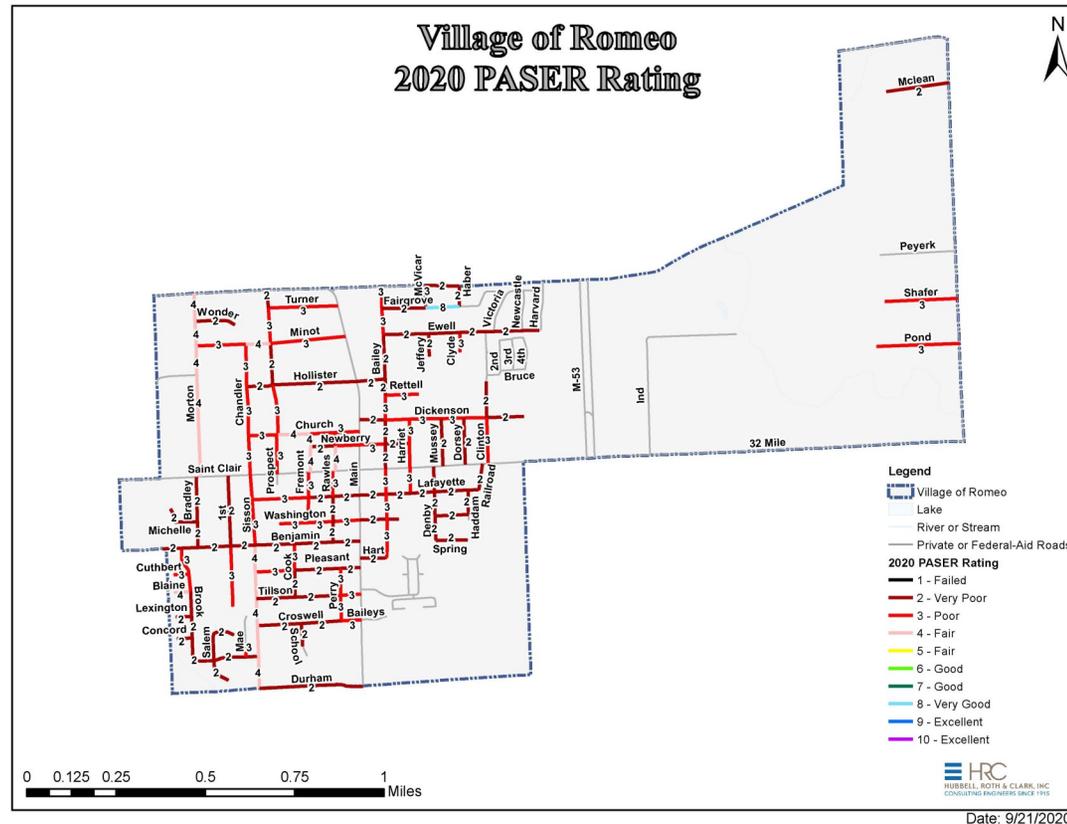
Based on the road network hierarchy, develop standards for each functional classification. Work with neighboring local, county and state jurisdictions to establish safe, attractive and equitable standards for public rights-of-way.



Source: SEMCOG

PASER SURVEY

Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating, or PASER, is a visual test of the surface condition of the road focused on pavement conditions. The Village’s engineering consultant Hubbel, Roth & Clark conducted a PASER Survey of the streets within the Village in September 2020. The results, as indicated on the map below, found that the vast majority of Romeo’s local streets to be in poor conditions.



ACTION STRATEGY

Encourage the maintenance and improvement to local streets to ensure safe access to and within the Village’s residential neighborhoods, while discouraging extraneous non-residential traffic.

TRAFFIC CALMING

Traffic calming techniques enhance both safety and the quality of life on city streets. Shade trees and on-street parking can buffer homes from the streets and slow traffic. Sidewalks can be widened and bicycle lanes added where safe and appropriate. Street entrances can be narrowed and brick crosswalks added. The intent is to affect driver behavior and expectations—causing vehicles to slow down and adopt a more pedestrian-friendly behavior. Physical barriers or a change in pavement texture may slow traffic entering a calmed area.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Another method for improving pedestrian and traffic circulation along the main roads is called access management. This design approach reduces the number of points of access to the street from adjacent properties. This benefits pedestrians by reducing the number of points along a sidewalk where they may encounter an automobile, and it benefits traffic by reducing the potential number of points where another vehicle entering the street may be encountered.



Curb extensions (also called bulb-outs) extend the sidewalk into the parking lane to narrow the roadway and provide additional pedestrian space at key locations; they can be used at corners and at mid-block. Curb extensions enhance pedestrian safety by increasing pedestrian visibility, shortening crossing distances, slowing turning vehicles, and visually narrowing the roadway.



ACTION STRATEGY

Adopt policies to accommodate increases in traffic volumes through road maintenance, intersection improvements, access management principles, signalization improvements, upgrading the road network, and implementing appropriate street calming measures.

COMPLETE STREETS

The Michigan Complete Streets legislation was signed into law in 2010 through two public acts, Public Act 134 and Public Act 135. The Michigan Planning Act was also amended to require the consideration of complete streets in the Master Plan. The legislation defines Complete Streets as "roadways planned, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users, whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot or bicycle." It gives local government, county, and state transportation agencies new responsibilities to address all legal users' transportation needs (including pedestrians and bicyclists) in their community Master Plans.

Communities with Complete Streets policies help ensure that roadway design accommodates all users, not just motorists. Facilities that make a street "complete" depend on existing conditions and the intended users. It's never a "one-size-fits-all" scenario. Examples include curb ramps, audible or tactile signals for blind pedestrians, longer crossing times, smooth sidewalks, and bike lanes free of obstacles.



ACTION STRATEGY

Develop and adopt a local Complete Streets Policy and Ordinance, establishing a clear emphasis and dedication to designing streets for all users.

Complete Streets Benefits

Complete Streets provide a number of benefits such as:

- ◆ *Improved safety for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers*
- ◆ *Improved human health by encouraging walking and bicycling*
- ◆ *Decreased car traffic, reducing the dependence on gasoline and petroleum products, and improved air quality*
- ◆ *More transportation options*
- ◆ *Fosters livable communities and an improved quality of life*

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Romeo residents have expressed an interest in an increased ability to engage in active transportation. Active transportation refers to any form of human-powered transportation, including walking, cycling, using a wheelchair, in-line skating, or skateboarding. There are many ways to engage in active transportation, whether walking or cycling to a bus stop, school, work, or essential services.

Active transportation can cost-effectively address multiple societal challenges. Communities that prioritize active transit tend to be healthier by enabling residents to be more physically active in their daily routes and cleaner air to breathe. Active transportation systems also foster economic health by creating dynamic, connected communities with a high quality of life, leading to small business development, increased property values, tourism, and corporate investment that attract a talented, highly educated workforce. Additionally, motorists can benefit from having fewer vehicles on the road. When there are transportation options, residents of all ages are more likely to be independent and better manage the costs related to transportation.

Many people are choosing active transportation options when possible. When deciding where to live, people will factor into their decision-making process whether they have access to non-motorized trails and whether they can walk, bike, or use public transportation as their primary mode of transportation.



ACTION STRATEGY

Expand upon existing connections to create a community-wide non-motorized network to provide opportunities for pedestrian activity such as walking, jogging and bicycling.

PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED DESIGN

Pedestrian-oriented design is a design approach that links urban design to such qualities as sense of comfort, sense of safety, and level of interest to create quality walking environments that consider pedestrian users' perceptions and sensitivities. This design approach focuses on the pedestrian experience of space and place. The pedestrian-oriented design's conceptual framework is that physical features influence the walking environment's quality both directly and indirectly.

Design features include appropriate sidewalk widths, a buffer or transition to the street that could consist of grass, street trees or other plantings, pedestrian-scale lighting, and the proximity of buildings that create a "street wall."

This pedestrian design element should be incorporated into new developments and redevelopments to provide a quality experience for the pedestrian and enhance safety and provide a consistent aesthetic throughout the Village. Buildings near the street should be designed to provide accessible entrances oriented towards the road and visual interest in architecture and transparent windows that allow visibility into commercial establishments.

SIDEWALKS

Romeo embraces walkability as a primary goal for the transportation system. This plan recommends a complete build-out of the sidewalk network in all areas of the Village. Residential sidewalks should be a minimum of 5 feet wide and have 5 feet of landscape separation from the roadway. Where right-of-way permits, a 10-foot landscape separation in residential areas should be provided.

ACCESSIBILITY

A significant consideration of mobility in the downtown is accessibility. Improving the sidewalks and pedestrian routes in the downtown to meet and exceed (when feasible) the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements is critical to making the downtown accessible to all users. Some barriers may impede mobility in the downtown, including sidewalk gaps, reduced sidewalk widths, traffic signals, and crossing locations. As the pedestrian network is expanded or enhanced through development or capital improvement projects, accessibility must be evaluated. Any obstacles that may impact pedestrian mobility must be mitigated to help identify these barriers.

Recommendations for Creating an Enriching Pedestrian Experience

- ◆ *Create a pedestrian oriented environment at the street level that is safe, accessible, visually pleasing, and comfortable.*
- ◆ *Ensure that new projects within the downtown are designed to provide a connection with the designated sidewalks (pedestrian ways).*
- ◆ *Provide interesting displays or showcases within the interior of the building windows, visible to those passing by.*
- ◆ *Allow acceptable uses such as, food and drink sales, outdoor recreation, public art displays, and pedestrian resting places.*
- ◆ *Locate all street furniture, canopies, railings, and other accessories outside of the pedestrian way.*
- ◆ *Expand retail sales floor area by allowing retailers to temporarily utilize the public space in front of their buildings, without impeding pedestrians.*
- ◆ *Provide distinctions between the sidewalk (pedestrian way) and pedestrian activity areas, by using various architectural treatments such as brick, concrete, color variation, etc.*
- ◆ *New building or renovations to existing building should be designed to relate to the pedestrian scale.*

TRAILS

The Macomb County Trails Master Plan has been developed to provide a framework for creating a connected system of greenways and trails throughout the county. This non-motorized system is envisioned to serve a diverse range of users, providing safe and well-maintained linkages to important natural, cultural and civic destinations and other points of interest within and outside of the county.

The Village of Romeo has proposed designating local connections along Morton, Gates, Bailey and 32 Mile Road.



ACTION STRATEGY

Actively seek and develop a safe trail connection between the Macomb Orchard Trail and Romeo's Downtown.

BICYCLE NETWORK

Improvements to the bicycle network in Romeo are intended to support resident's health and access to important local destinations. With bicycle network improvements, a greater number of Romeo residents will have the opportunity to make safe, short trips to parks, schools, and downtown entertainment and shopping, all without getting in the car. Bicycle network improvements are recommended based on the need for separation from vehicle traffic, existing signal locations to cross major roadways, and alignment with desirable community destinations, i.e., schools, parks, public facilities, and commercial areas.

Many of Romeo's neighborhood local streets are currently comfortable bicycling on and could be improved with simple signs. Some corridors can serve as more prominent system links with on-street pavement markings like conventional bike lanes and marked shared lanes. Many recreational cyclists don't feel comfortable biking with heavy traffic; complete separation is desirable on these corridors. This plan recommends designing a bike network that connects residents to the Downtown from all neighborhoods. A system of shared-use paths, on-street bike lanes, marked shared lanes, and routes will link residents to public spaces and make Romeo a safer and more habitable community.



ACTION STRATEGY

Complete gaps in the sidewalk and trail network. Develop safe and efficient bike lanes where practical.

Investigate public “bikeshare” or bike rental system.

CONNECTED AND AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

Connected and autonomous vehicle technology will transform transportation systems over the coming decades, with major implications for the planning and design of communities. Autonomous vehicles, also known as driverless or self-driving cars, have been sharing streets and roads for years.

According to the American Planning Association,

“The widespread deployment of autonomous vehicles for cities and metropolitan regions will change the way we design our public rights-of-way. Sensors will allow autonomous vehicles to travel closer together than human-controlled vehicles, reducing the necessary pavement width and freeing up space for wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and other amenities. Local zoning codes will need to address requirements for passenger loading and unloading, and parking needs will change drastically if a shared use model is employed. As cities transition away from ordinances that now require large amounts of land to be used for parking and circulation, they will need to determine how best to make use of that “extra” land through new approaches to land use and zoning. “

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

As automobile manufacturers increase their offerings of electric vehicles (EVs), and public acceptance of electronic vehicles becomes more the norm, drivers may elect to shop where they can also refuel their EVs - so they can attend to two chores in one location. Longer dwell time at a retail location may even translate to an increase in sales. Businesses looking into the benefits of EV charging stations for their customers may build a competitive advantage over others.



ACTION STRATEGY

Develop a plan to place EV Charging Stations in all public parking lots, and solicit grants which will lessen acquisition and installation costs.

“We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.”

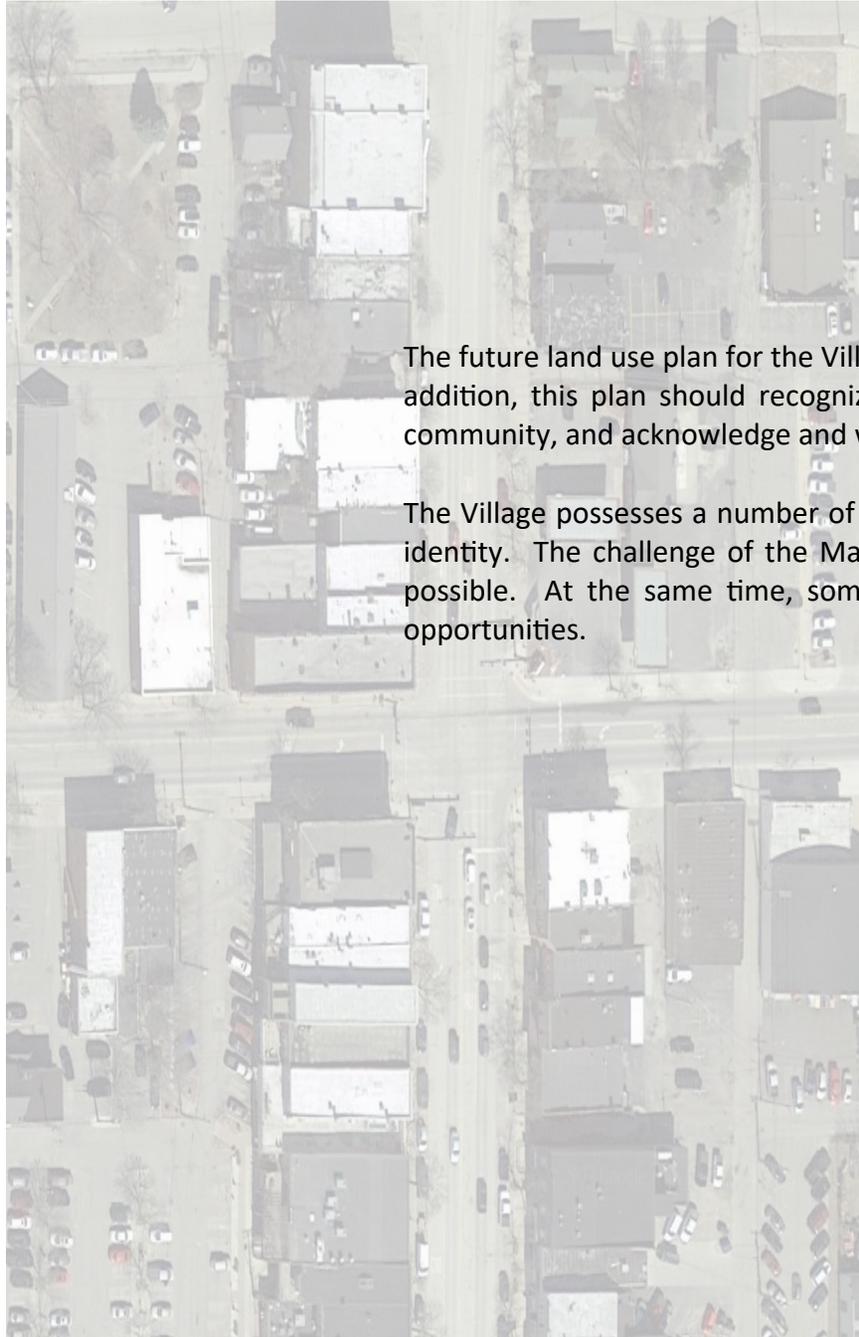
— Winston Churchill, Statesman

Chapter 8

Future Land Use

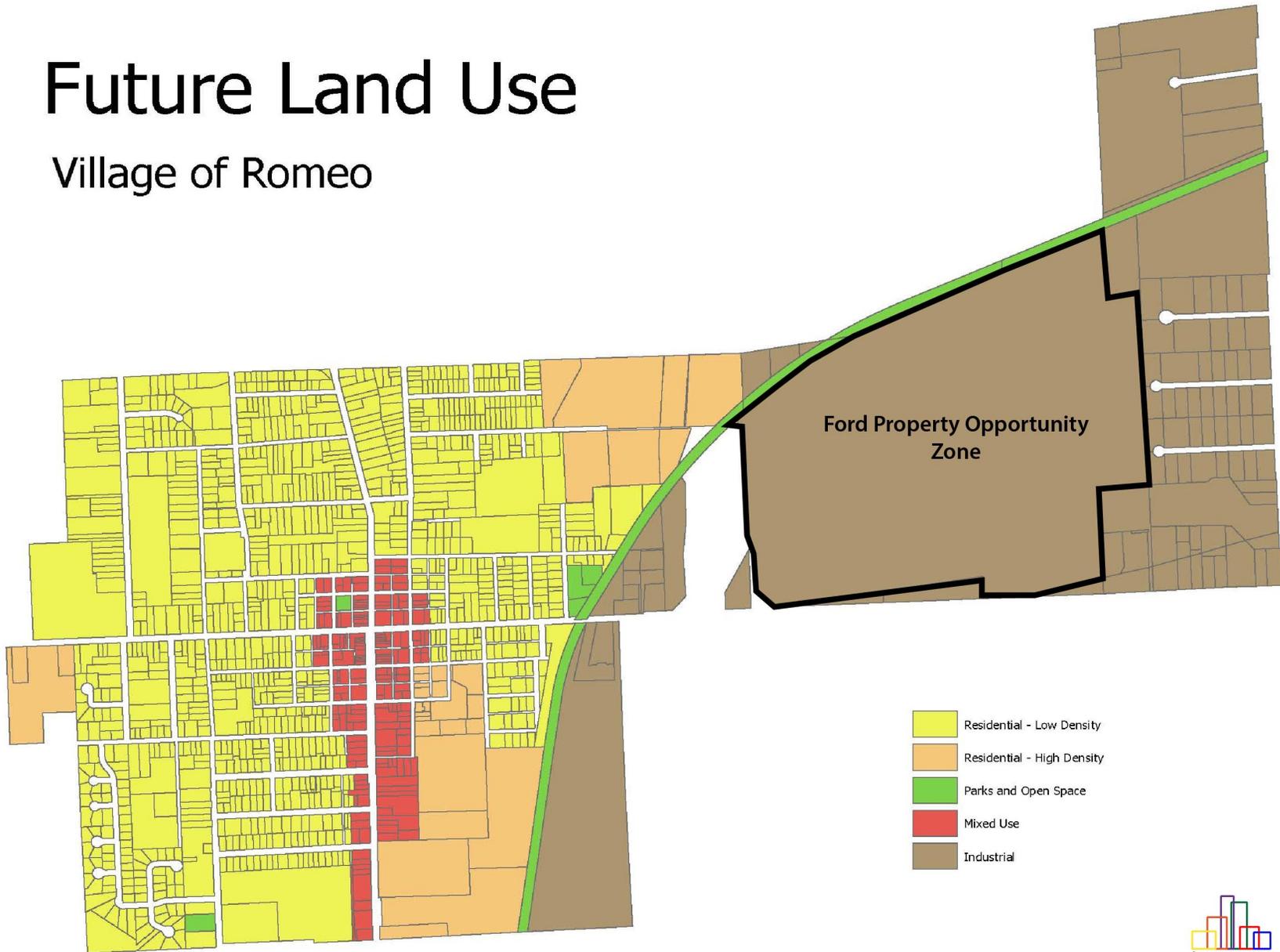
The future land use plan for the Village of Romeo should reflect the pattern of existing land uses. In addition, this plan should recognize and protect the natural and human-made resources of the community, and acknowledge and work with the constraints that the existing conditions present.

The Village possesses a number of resources that are valuable because they help create a positive identity. The challenge of the Master Plan is to build on these resources to the greatest extent possible. At the same time, some resources also pose limits or constraints to redevelopment opportunities.



Future Land Use

Village of Romeo



Cassin Planning Group

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use Plan is an illustrative vision for the Village, modeled on sound planning principles. The Future Land Use Plan is the culmination of these efforts and reflects what the entire Village desires for its future. The plan's vision is sensitive of the community's character, its well established community fabric, and its unique environmental features.

The Future Land Use Map identifies 5 different land use categories. In addition, the map identifies the Ford Property Opportunity Zone.

Residential Low Density

This category is primarily designed to accommodate detached single-family dwellings on lot sizes typically 12,000 square feet or under. Community uses such as parks, churches, schools, and cemeteries are allowed in these areas. Home occupations are also compatible in these areas provided the residential character of the neighborhood is preserved.

Residential Medium Density

This designation is intended to provide locations for apartments, townhouses, condominiums and manufactured homes. This category is intended for residential development with a density greater than six units per acre. Higher density residential uses can generate a significant amount of traffic and, therefore, should be located adjacent or near a major thoroughfare. Higher density residential uses can serve as a transition between non-residential districts and lower density residential areas.



Mixed Use

The Mixed-Use category designates areas that are intended to be developed in a way that promotes a mix of retail, housing, employment, office and institutional uses through unique development and/or design standards. The mix can either be horizontal (adjacent different but compatible uses) or vertical (different uses within a single building). The objective is to create more walkable, accessible developments with shared parking arrangements (either on-site or in collective lots).

The Future Land Use Map indicates mixed use in the downtown, and all commercial and office areas adjacent to St. Clair and Main Streets.

Parks and Open Space

This classification includes public parks and open spaces.

Industrial

The Future Land Use Map indicates that industrial development should be restricted to two specific areas: abutting 32 Mile Road, east of M-53, and north of 32 Mile, west of Powell Road. This category serves the general industrial needs of the Village, and is intended to be isolated from other uses. A wide variety of industrial/manufacturing uses are allowed in addition to some commercial uses.



Ford Property Opportunity Zone

Ford Motor Company announced in 2019 that its Romeo Engine Plant would be closing . The plant, originally opened in 1967, contains over 2 million square feet of floor space, and sits on 270 acres of land. Village government and business leaders have been working closely with the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development to find a new users for the building and/or property.

As part of the public survey process in completing this Master Plan, respondents were asked “How would you like to see the Ford Motor property develop in the future?” A large majority responded that they would prefer a mixed use development.

The Future Land Use Plan designates the area as an “opportunity zone”, meaning that the Village should be flexible in allowing various types of development to occur.



“A city is not an accident but the result of coherent visions and aims.”

— Leon Krier, Architect

Chapter 9

Zoning Plan & Implementation

The Master Plan is essentially a statement of goals and objectives designed to accommodate future growth and redevelopment. As stated in the introduction of this document, the Master Plan is the officially adopted document that sets forth an agenda for the achievement of goals and policies. It helps develop a balance of orderly change in a deliberate and controlled manner that permits controlled growth. As such, it provides the basis upon which zoning and land use decisions are made. The Plan forms the philosophical basis for the more technical and specific implementation measures. It must be recognized that development and change will occur either with or without planning, and that the Plan will have little effect upon future development unless adequate implementation programs are established.

Zoning is the development control that has been most closely associated with planning. Originally, zoning was intended to inhibit nuisances and protect property values. However, zoning also serves additional purposes relating to planning, including:

- ◆ Promoting orderly growth in a manner consistent with land use policies and the Master Plan
- ◆ Promoting attractiveness in the Village's physical (built) environment by providing variation in lot sizes, architectural features, and appropriate land uses.
- ◆ Accommodating special, complex or unique uses through mechanisms such as planned unit developments, overlay districts, or special land use permits.
- ◆ Guiding development away from conflicting land uses.

MASTER PLAN REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

The Village of Romeo Master Plan is a policy statement constructed of goals and actions intended to guide reasonable and realistic development decisions. The recommended actions are comprehensive and outlined in a manageable framework spread over five years.

The Village must commit to upholding the integrity of the goals and objectives of the document. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008) requires that the plan be reviewed and revised or reaffirmed every five years. The plan should be used consistently and discussed annually to determine if any amendments are necessary.

The master plan is an adaptable document. However, amendments should only be made after a thorough analysis of immediate needs and the long-range impacts of the plan's amendments. The Village Council and Planning Commission should consider each proposed amendment carefully to determine whether it is consistent with the plan's goals and policies and whether it will offer long-term benefits to the citizens of Romeo.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MASTER PLAN MASTER PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE

Zoning is a regulatory mechanism for controlling the classification and regulation of land use. It has the force of law. The Zoning Ordinance controls land uses based upon today’s conditions.

The Master Plan and its maps and policy statements are intended to guide land use decision-making over the long term. The Master Plan is a community’s vision, while the Zoning Ordinance contains the rules that govern the path to that vision.

State law requires that the Zoning Ordinance be based on a plan. Therefore, the Master Plan forms the basis upon which zoning decisions are made; With a Master Plan in place, zoning decisions consistent with the plan are presumed by the courts to be valid. Without a Master Plan, the courts may find the community’s argument to be weaker, leaving the community more vulnerable to a ruling inconsistent with its vision.

Master Plan	Zoning Ordinance
Provides general policies, a guide.	Provides specific regulations, the law.
Describes what should happen over the next 10 - 20 years, not necessarily the recommended use for today, with updates required every 5 years.	Describes what is, and what is not, allowed today.
Adopted under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended).	Adopted under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended).
Flexibility to respond to changing conditions.	Fairly rigid, requires formal amendment to change.

ZONING PLAN

A Zoning Plan is a required element in a Master Plan. Zoning Plan describes the relationship between the future land use categories in the Master Plan and the comparable zoning ordinance districts. Not to be confused with the zoning ordinance, the zoning plan provides generalized recommendations for aligning the zoning ordinance with the future land use vision. The zoning plan compares the zoning districts and future land use designations. Specific standards in the zoning ordinance regulate these development features.

Future Land Use Designation	Corresponding Zoning Districts
Residential Low Density	R-1 Single Family Residential
Residential Medium Density	RM Multiple Family Residential MHP Mobile Home Park
Mixed Use	Central Business District Commercial Office
Parks and Open Space	R-1 Single Family Residential RM Multiple Family Residential Central Business District Commercial Office
Industrial	Industrial
Ford Property Opportunity Zone	Flexible

IMPLEMENTATION

The following matrixes provide a listing of all recommended Action Strategies, along with their ranked priority, and the group / individuals responsible for implementing the strategy.



Livability & Great Neighborhoods

ACTION STRATEGY	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
Preserve and enhance the unique character of Romeo’s single family neighborhoods.	HIGH	HC, PC, VC
Require that new homes and residential structures be constructed in a manner that complements the existing historical character of the neighborhood, while providing housing opportunities that meet the needs and desires of existing and future populations	HIGH	HC, PC, VC
Evaluate and amend the zoning ordinance to allow for Missing Middle Housing in areas where appropriate.	MEDIUM	PC, VC
Review where residential and commercial adjacency is problematic, and examine ways to facilitate the use of buffering and screening techniques to minimize harmful impacts	MEDIUM	PC, VC
Strengthen code enforcement and inspection programs that promote the health, safety, and welfare our residential living units and neighborhoods.	HIGH	PC, VC
Install street lighting, where needed, to provide for vehicular and pedestrian safety.	MEDIUM	VC
Develop a dedicated tree replacement program that addresses trees in all areas of the Village, including all public and private property.	LOW	VC

PC – Planning Commission, DDA—Downtown Development Authority, HDC—Historic District Commission, VC—Village Council

Downtown Vitality (cont.)

ACTION STRATEGY	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
Work with downtown building owners to identify space that could provide reasonable priced lease options, shared services, and technical assistance to start-up businesses.	MEDIUM	DDA
Contract with a qualified company to undertake an analysis of downtown parking supply and demand, and based upon the findings, recommend specific and achievable implementation measures.	HIGH	DDA, PC, VC
Identify appropriate locations, and construct attractive and durable, bicycle parking areas within the downtown.	MEDIUM	DDA, PC, VC
Create form based regulation in the zoning ordinance to be used in a new zoning district which would be applied to the areas identified in the future land use plan.	MEDIUM	PC, VC
Identify locations, and construct dumpster corrals in each of the four quadrants of the downtown. Establish ordinance requirements for their shared use.	MEDIUM	DDA, PC, VC
Construct architectural features that clearly identify the entrances to Downtown from all directions on Main Street and St. Clair Street.	MEDIUM	DDA, PC, VC

PC – Planning Commission, DDA—Downtown Development Authority, HDC—Historic District Commission, VC—Village Council

Downtown Vitality

ACTION STRATEGY	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>Future building renovation or alteration, no matter the planned use, must retain the overall design integrity of the historic building by protecting or restoring the original features, and design elements.</p>	MEDIUM	HDC, PC
<p>Update the Zoning Ordinance to lessen restrictions on adaptive reuse projects.</p>	MEDIUM	HDC, PC
<p>Review the Downtown Blueprint Plan to determine which of the recommended strategies are still relevant today, and develop a plan for implementation.</p>	HIGH	DDA
<p>Revise the Romeo Zoning Ordinance to allow mixed use development within the Central Business District. Focus on building form rather than on building use.</p>	HIGH	PC, VC
<p>The Downtown Development Authority and the Planning Commission should take an active role in marketing available commercial spaces in the downtown to potential and existing businesses in the region that might seek to expand or open a new facility. Assembling data on the available commercial properties, including information on their internal layout and square footage, potential uses, and provision of utilities, is one key step that could be undertaken.</p>	MEDIUM	DDA, PC

PC – Planning Commission, DDA—Downtown Development Authority, HDC—Historic District Commission, VC—Village Council

Downtown Vitality (cont.)

ACTION STRATEGY	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
Develop a system of wayfinding within the Village that appropriately directs motorists, bicyclist, and pedestrians to various locations. Signage should reflect the historical heritage of the community.	HIGH	DDA, VC
Enhance the streetscapes and building facades in the Downtown. Programs that encourage private investment should be developed.	MEDIUM	PC, DDA
Identify and construct additional public gathering spaces, and existing public gathering spaces should be enhanced and promoted for use.	MEDIUM	PC, DDA, VC
Seek appropriate funding (including grants) to develop the needed crosswalks identified by Rowe Engineering.	MEDIUM	VC, DDA
Actively seek and develop a safe trail connection between the Macomb Orchard Trail and Romeo's Downtown. In addition, provide advertising materials at the park, to promote Romeo's current events and businesses.	MEDIUM	PC, DDA, VC

PC – Planning Commission, DDA—Downtown Development Authority, HDC—Historic District Commission, VC—Village Council

Placemaking & Economic Development

ACTION STRATEGY	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
Market available commercial spaces in the downtown to potential and existing businesses in the region that might seek to expand or open a new facility. Assembling data on the available commercial properties and lease spaces, including information on their internal layout and square footage, potential uses, and provision of utilities and appliances, would help support and facilitate the process	HIGH	DDA, VC
Expand the hosting of festivals and special events that bring people and dollars into the Village.	MEDIUM	DDA, VC
Revise the Village ordinances to allow new or potential businesses to hold temporary pop-up events, use vacant spaces, or utilize movable infrastructure to test and market their product or service, prior to making a significant investment.	MEDIUM	DDA, PC, VC
Partner with the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development to promote the Village as a place to live, visit, and start a business	MEDIUM	DDA, PC, VC
Develop and maintain a listing of redevelopment ready sites for distribution to realtors, builders, and developers	MEDIUM	PC, VC, DDA
Identify and implement best practices to become a certified Redevelopment Ready Community.	LOW	PC, VC
Amend the Village Zoning Ordinance to streamline the development process for potential developers.	MEDIUM	PC, VC

PC – Planning Commission, DDA—Downtown Development Authority, HDC—Historic District Commission, VC—Village Council

Transportation & Mobility

ACTION STRATEGY	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
Based on the road network hierarchy, develop standards for each functional classification. Work with neighboring local, county and state jurisdictions to establish safe, attractive, and equitable standards for public rights-of-way.	MEDIUM	PC, VC
Encourage the maintenance and improvement to local streets to ensure safe access to and within the Village’s residential neighborhoods, while discouraging extraneous non-residential traffic.	MEDIUM	VC
Adopt policies to accommodate increases in traffic volumes through road maintenance, intersection improvements, access management principles, signalization improvements, upgrading the road network, and implementing appropriate street calming measures.	MEDIUM	VC
Develop and adopt a local Complete Streets Policy and Ordinance, establishing a clear emphasis and dedication to designing streets for all users.	LOW	PC, VC
Expand upon existing connections to create a community-wide non-motorized network to provide opportunities for pedestrian activity such as walking, jogging, and bicycling.	MEDIUM	PC, VC

PC – Planning Commission, DDA—Downtown Development Authority, HDC—Historic District Commission, VC—Village Council

Transportation & Mobility (cont.)

ACTION STRATEGY	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
Complete gaps in the sidewalk and trail network.	MEDIUM	VC
Develop safe and efficient bike lanes where practical.	MEDIUM	PC, VC
Investigate public “bikeshare” or bike rental system.	MEDIUM	DDA, VC
Develop a plan to place EV Charging Stations in all municipal parking lots, and solicit grants which will lessen acquisition and installation costs.	MEDIUM	DDA, VC

PC – Planning Commission, DDA—Downtown Development Authority, HDC—Historic District Commission, VC—Village Council

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

This section identifies tools and programs that will be useful in implementing the Master Plan.

Form Based Zoning Codes

Form-based regulations that relate to the context in which they are applied, are based on three main factors: street type, site type, and building form. Site context is derived from existing and desired characteristics of the area where these regulations are applied. Areas are distinguished from one another by their size and configuration, street patterns, location, and intensity of use. Site context requires a customized approach to each project. Building form addresses how buildings and structures relate to their lots, to other buildings, and the street. Building form standards control height, placement, building configuration, parking location, and other design factors. In conventional districts, building form and arrangement are dictated by setback and height requirements.

Form-based codes require more significant analysis of the size, shape, and dimensions of each property at the time a code is adopted. In conventional districts, the application of design standards is reactive rather than proactive, and a great deal is left to chance during the review process. Most of the design standards are intended to offset a nuisance rather than achieve a visual improvement. With conventional codes, there is a lack of consistency between sites, since each site is reviewed individually over different periods of time.

Overlay Zoning

Overlay zoning allows the Village to enforce an additional set of regulations on special areas within an existing zoning district. In an area where an overlay zone is established, the property is placed simultaneously in the two zones, and the property may be developed only under the applicable conditions and requirements of both zones.

Planned Unit Development

The Planned Unit Development (PUD) involves the use of special zoning requirements and review procedures that provide design and regulatory flexibility, so as to encourage innovation in land use planning and design. Planned developments typically achieve a higher quality of development than might otherwise be possible.

Conditional Rezoning

Conditional zoning allows the Village to approve a rezoning contingent upon the developer fulfilling conditions attached to the rezoning approval. Conditional rezoning allows flexibility in site design, and may also ensure that undesirable uses will not occur on a particular site if rezoned. This tool should not be used as the sole implementation method for flexible use areas, but it may be appropriate for difficult sites where a rezoning would be acceptable if properly designed. The use of conditional rezoning would assure the Village that certain design and use standards would be met in the new development if rezoned.

Code Enforcement

The implementation of an effective code enforcement program is critical to preserving a high quality community. Code enforcement officials maintain the quality of life and the physical appearance of the Village by enforcing the Village's general codes and ordinances regarding such items as commercial and residential buildings, signage, nuisances, animals, and zoning.

Rental Inspection Program

A properly developed and implemented rental inspection program be instituted to ensure that all rental properties within the Village are properly maintained and safe for occupancy. Rental homes are often not maintained to the same standards of owner-occupied homes, and exterior deferred maintenance can lead to blight while interior deferred maintenance can lead to significant safety issues. Periodic inspections will ensure that the properties are maintained in a safe and aesthetically pleasing manner while ensuring they are safe for tenants and first responders.

Complete Streets

Transportation impacts an entire community in a multitude of ways including how handicapped individuals are able to move around the community without barriers, how people are able to safely use non-motorized paths to move without the need for a vehicle, and how goods and services are delivered. To ensure all transportation users are considered, the Village should adopt a Complete Streets policy.

Neighborhood Area Improvements Act

Michigan Public Act 208 of 1949 authorizes municipalities to designate neighborhood areas for the purpose of planning and carrying out local public improvements for the prevention of blight in such areas. The Act calls for preparation of neighborhood betterment plans by the Planning Commission. The Act also provides methods of financing improvements within the neighborhoods, including special assessment districts and the issuance of neighborhood improvement bonds. This Act might prove useful in continuing the improvement of some of the older neighborhoods within the Village.

Brownfield Districts

The Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act, Public Act 381 of 1996, (Act 381, as amended) establishes finance methods to fund environmental response activities at contaminated properties. This program provides municipalities with the tools to develop and implement Brownfield redevelopment financing plans. Properties eligible for Brownfield Act financing include blighted or functionally obsolete structures. Eligible activities include infrastructure improvements, demolition, lead or asbestos abatement, and site preparation. The Village may establish one or more of its own Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities or utilize the Macomb County Brownfield Authority.

Special Assessments

Special assessments are compulsory contributions collected from the owners of property benefited by specific public improvements, such as paving and drainage improvements, to defray the costs of such improvements. Special assessments are apportioned according to the benefits afforded to the property affected.

Bonding

Bonds are one of the principal sources of financing used by communities to pay for capital improvements. General obligation bonds are issued for specific community projects and are paid off by the general public with property tax revenues. Revenue bonds are issued for the construction of projects that generate revenue, like parking structures. These bonds are then retired using income generated by the project.

Downtown Development Authorities

Downtown Development Authorities (DDA) are quasi-public development corporations that provide downtown management services. Allowed activities include funding infrastructure projects, conducting marketing activities, purchasing and developing property, underwriting enhanced maintenance and public safety services within the district, and conducting district management activities. These services develop desirable environments for businesses and residents while implementing economic development projects. A variety of financing techniques are available to DDAs, including bond issues, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), operating millages, and public and private contributions. When a Tax Increment Finance district is established, the state equalized value of all properties in the district is recorded. Every year thereafter, the property tax revenue generated by any increase in the taxable value is captured by the DDA to finance improvements set forth in the development plan. Often bonds are issued to finance capital improvements, and a portion of the tax increment revenues are used to repay the bonds. The DDA tool has been used by numerous communities of all shapes and sizes in the State of Michigan.

Local Development Financing Authorities

A Local Development Financing Authority (LDFA) is intended to assist industrial development, to promote economic growth, and prevent unemployment. Eligible activities include the support of business investment in districts where the primary activity is the manufacture of goods or materials, agricultural processing, or high-tech activities such as product development, engineering, product testing, or research and development. A LDFA may use Tax Increment Financing, and only one LDFA may be created in the community.

Corridor Improvement Authorities

This legislation established a method of improving commercial corridors that may not resemble traditional downtown districts. The Corridor Improvement Authority Act allows local governments to create one or more Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIA) to address established, deteriorating commercial corridors located outside their downtown areas. The primary benefit of this tool is to: provide local governments with the authorization to levy and collect taxes; issue bonds and other forms of indebtedness; use Tax Increment Financing for making improvements within the district; and engage in a wide range of activities to promote economic development and redevelopment in commercial corridors.

In order to be eligible to create a CIA, the development area must have a minimum size of 5 acres, consist of at

least 50% commercial property, and be zoned to allow mixed-uses, including high-density residential. A municipality must also expedite the local permitted and inspection process in the development area and promote walkable non-motorized interconnections throughout the development area. The Corridor Improvement Authority would allow the Village of Romeo to undertake a wide range of activities to promote economic development and redevelopment in commercial areas outside of the Downtown district.

Principal Shopping District/Business Improvement Districts

This Act provides for the establishment of principal shopping districts and for the establishment of Business Improvement Districts or Zones. Communities are permitted to complete street and pedestrian improvements, acquire property for and construct parking facilities (including parking garages), along with other facilities that “serve the public interest.”

Commercial Rehabilitation Act

The Commercial Rehabilitation Act enables local units of government to create one or more rehabilitation districts in which rehabilitated commercial property may receive property tax reductions for one to 10 years from the municipality (excluding personal property and the land upon which the rehabilitated facility is located). These tax reductions or abatements may be used to encourage redevelopment in the community; however, they do reduce the amount of tax revenues collected by the Village. Therefore, this tool should be used judiciously.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

CDBG is an annual allocation of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to local governments for a wide range of community development activities, including housing rehabilitation, public and neighborhood improvements, and economic development activities that primarily benefit low and moderate-income persons or eliminate slums or blight within the community. The Village of Romeo receives limited funding from Macomb County,

MNRTF Grants

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) has grants available for park development and land acquisition, with a minimum 25% match by the community. Projects eligible for funding include: acquisition of land or

rights in land for recreational uses or for protection of the land for environmental importance or scenic beauty; and development proposals for public outdoor recreation or resource protection purposes (i.e., picnic areas, beaches, boating access, fishing and hunting facilities, winter sports areas, playgrounds, ball fields, tennis courts, and trails, etc.). Indoor facilities are considered only if their primary purpose is to support outdoor recreation. Examples include nature interpretive buildings and park visitor centers. Outdoor recreation support buildings such as restrooms and storage buildings, are also eligible. Eligible local government recipients must have a current recreation plan that has been approved by the Department of Natural Resources.

MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

This is a competitive transportation enhancement grant program that funds projects such as non-motorized paths, streetscapes, and historic preservation of transportation facilities that enhance a community's intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options. These investments support place-based economic development by offering transportation choices, promoting walkability, and improving the quality of life.

Capital Improvement Plan

The Village's role in providing and financing community facilities will undoubtedly increase in the future. An orderly procedure for planning and financing such facilities can be achieved through the adoption of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), attached to the annual budgeting process. The CIP is a schedule of projects developed for a six (6) year period and contains estimated costs and sources of funding. While the Planning Commission is involved in larger-scale capital improvement planning for infrastructure improvements as it relates to land use, the Village Council has responsibility for yearly capital improvement planning. This includes detailed budgeting, staff assignments, and strategic planning.

A Capital Improvement Plan is coordinated with the Master Plan so that funds are devoted to projects that will benefit the greatest number of Village residents and visitors. Capital improvements plans consider the funding and timing of all municipally related capital goods needs, including such items as roadways, utilities, parks and recreation, municipal building expansion/development etc.

“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood.”

— Daniel Burnham, Architect & Urban Designer



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