

Making Small Michigan Cities Thrive

2024 Annual MAP Conference



**Carmine Avantini, AICP,
President, CIB Planning**



**Lynn Markland, City
Manager, City of Fenton**



Michigan continues to lose population: How do we change that?

- Young people move to vibrant communities after college
- Opportunity to lure them back, especially when settling down
- Requires right community amenities
- Employment opportunities must exist, yet remote employment offers options

City of Fenton Growth

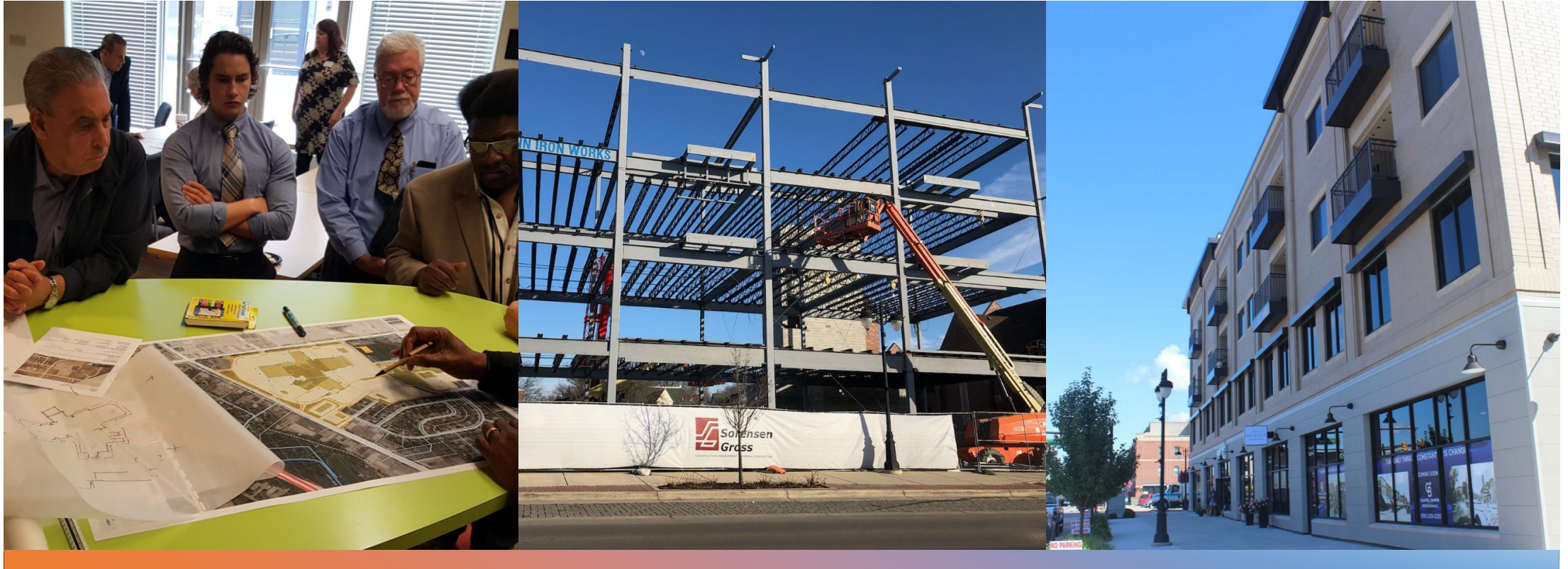
1990 Census

- Population: 8,444
- Housing Units: 3,395
- 20-29 Age Group: 728

2020 census

- Population: 11,368
- Housing Units: 5,067
- 20-29 Age Group: 1,578

FENTON, Mich
JULY 7, 1918.

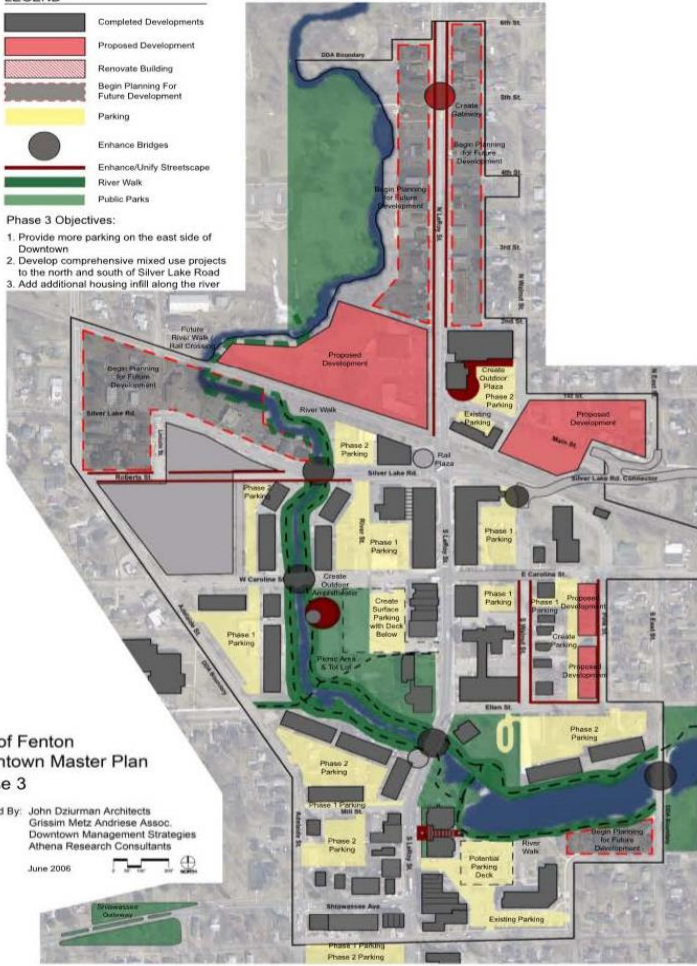


Establish A Long-term Vision For The Community
YOU WILL REACH THE VISION YOU ESTABLISH,
WHETHER GOOD OR BAD

LEGEND

- Completed Developments
- Proposed Development
- Renovate Building
- Begin Planning For Future Development
- Parking
- Enhance Bridges
- Enhance/Unify Streetscape
- River Walk
- Public Parks

- Phase 3 Objectives:
1. Provide more parking on the east side of Downtown
 2. Develop comprehensive mixed use projects to the north and south of Silver Lake Road
 3. Add additional housing inflit along the river



City of Fenton
Downtown Master Plan
Phase 3

Prepared By: John Dzurman Architects
Grissim Metz Andriese Assoc.
Downtown Management Strategies
Athena Research Consultants
June 2006



Create A Vibrant,
Traditional
Downtown That
Will Attract People,
Businesses, and
Development

FENTON COMMUNITY VISION



Downtown Fenton: What it used to look like



BIG SHOW
TONIGHT
SPECIAL PRIZE DRAWING
FEATURE

HOME RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT

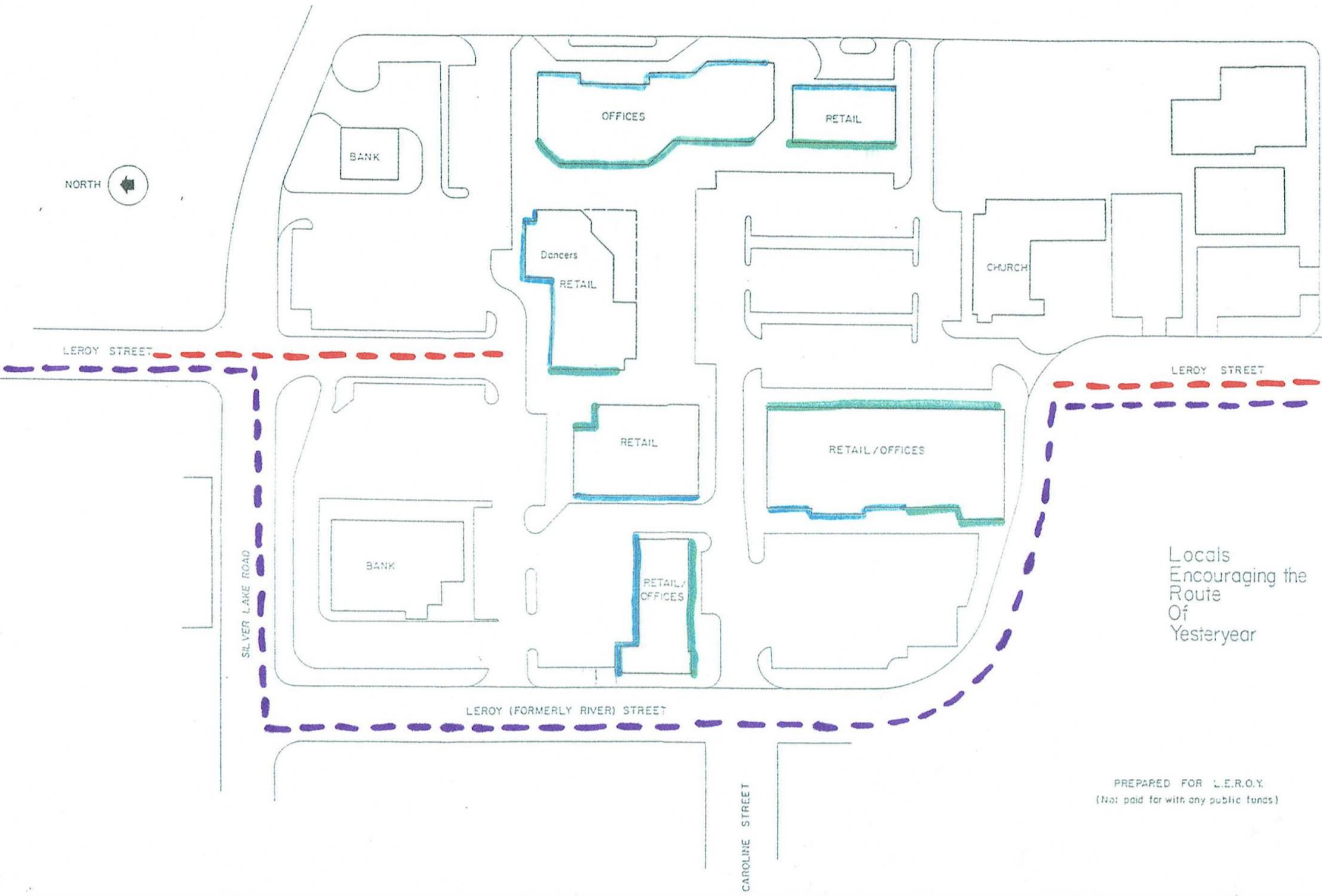
FENTON, Mich
JULY 7, 1918.



Early downtown
obstacles:
Urban Renewal

N. LEROY STREET
CLOSED AND
TURNED INTO
PARKING LOT

Early downtown obstacles to redevelopment: Urban Renewal





Early Downtown obstacles:
Urban Renewal

FAILED PEDESTRIAN
MALL WITH HIGH
VACANCY RATES

Planner backs reopening Fenton's main street

By **Tammy Webber**

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

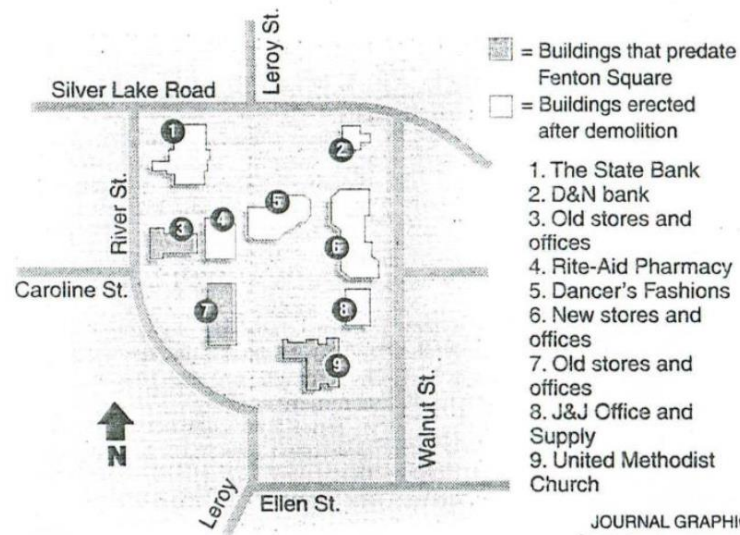
Fenton – Reopening the city's main thoroughfare could help revive the ailing downtown shopping area, a planning consultant said Tuesday.

Although he stopped short of recommending that S. Leroy Street be reopened through Fenton Square, Carmine P. Avantini from McKenna Associates Inc. said the square's current layout inhibits a thriving downtown.

In 1979, Fenton Square was built in the middle of S. Leroy and Caroline streets, closing Leroy, the city's main north-south artery, and cutting the business areas in half. Dancer's Fashions was built over part of the former street.

"Dancer's does not fit into a long-term plan; it doesn't make sense," said Avanti. "Fenton Square doesn't work."

"From a traffic (flow) standpoint, there is no good argument for or against opening the street, but it would be simpler to go through."



More than 60 residents and business owners attended Tuesday's meeting, the last in a series of public forums seeking input on the master plan. Avanti said a draft plan will be available for review by April 1.

Several businesses have come and gone from the square, but the closing of two original anchors has provided renewed incentive – and opportunity – for revitalization, residents said.

Rite Aid Pharmacy, formerly Ideal Pharmacy, closed last month and Dancer's officials announced that the store will move this summer to the new Silver Lake Village at U.S. 23 and Owen Road.

Doug Dancer, president of the Mason-based corporation, said he favors reopening the road, although it would require tearing down part of his building. He said the square location had no bearing on his decision to move the store, the second-most profitable in the 30-store chain.

"We were totally happy downtown, but we could

Please see **PLANNER, C2**

Early Downtown obstacles: Urban Renewal



Fenton Downtown Plan

Community came together to create a vision and plan that would lead to a revitalized downtown.

Am I confused or have Fenton officials lost their minds?

Fenton officials have purchased the former Dancer's building for \$475,000 as the first step in supposedly rejuvenating downtown Fenton. This brings back the nightmare of our last stupid project which was "Urban Renewal." This fiasco, which is very similar to the last one, should be put to a vote of the people.

In case no one remembers, let me refresh your memory. Opening up downtown Fenton will not cost \$475,000; it will cost a couple of million dollars before it's done and what you'll have is NOTHING.

Now what really bothers me is that we are going to spend millions

STRAIGHT
from the
SHOULDER



by
**Rick
Rockman**

to open Leroy Street while at the same time, a project is being pushed by a bunch of outside developers to build a 277,000 square foot shopping center on the outskirts of Fenton.

Someone had better open their eyes before the whole town is bankrupt. Our streets are in desperate

need of resurfacing, our traffic situation is the most screwed up mess I have ever seen. We have traffic lights where we don't need them and no traffic lights where we do need them. It looks to me like the inmates are running the asylum.

Hopefully, Carmine Avantini, the city's planning consultant, will stick to his guns when he said that the devel-

oper has failed to address important issues such as lighting, buffers, landscaping, fencing, environmental concerns and, most of all, the traffic jams that a development such as this would create. Fenton has a master plan that was designed to permit controlled growth instead of a hodgepodge of mass confusion. If the planning commission doesn't stand up and be counted (they have so far), then we will be in a hell of a mess.

According to a recent survey my newspaper just finished, we have vacancies for offices and retail space all over town. Why would we even consider allowing outsiders to come in here and create more empty spaces that could remain empty? There are only so many businesses that a community this size can support. Most small businesses have trouble

paying their bills and their taxes now, so why would we even consider making it tougher for them?

After studying the dilemma we are in, I have come to the conclusion that there is only one solution: ask Wal-Mart and all its surrounding stores to build downtown, where they should be in the first place. This would rejuvenate the downtown and at the same time not create a shoppers' nightmare on Owen Road.

Unless you want to be faced with an increase in taxes to pay for all these proposed changes, you had better show up Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at the city offices. I urge you to express your opinions and thoughts to the planning commission, as well as the mayor and council members. Remember, they are supposed to follow the wishes of the people.

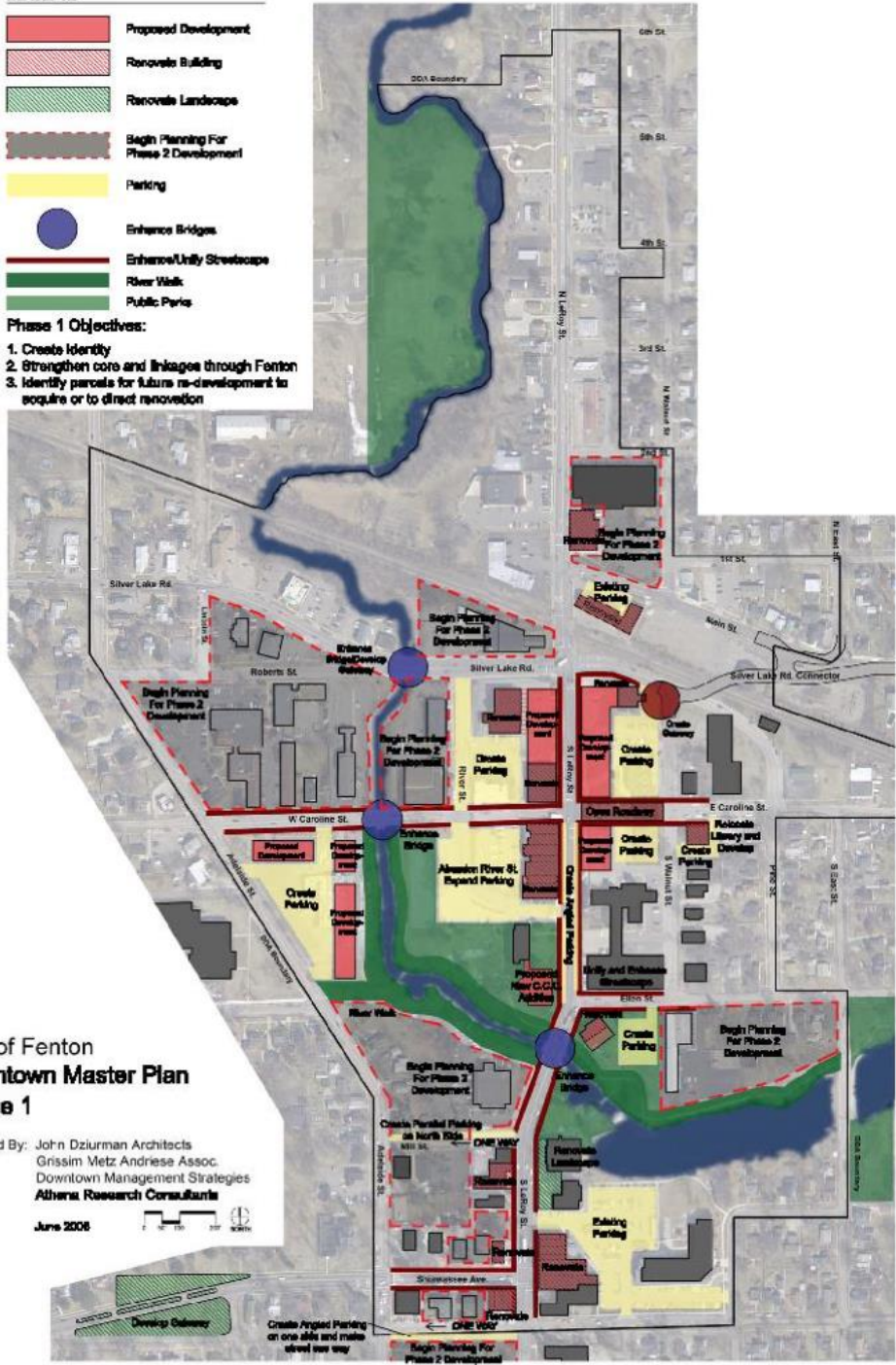
Early Downtown obstacles: Urban Renewal

LEGEND

- Proposed Development
- Renovate Building
- Renovate Landscape
- Begin Planning For Phase 2 Development
- Parking
- Enhance Bridges
- Enhance/Unify Streetscape
- River Walk
- Public Parks

Phase 1 Objectives:

1. Create Identity
2. Strengthen core and linkages through Fenton
3. Identify parcels for future re-development to acquire or to direct renovation



**City of Fenton
Downtown Master Plan
Phase 1**

Prepared By: John Dziurman Architects
Grissim Metz Andriese Assoc.
Downtown Management Strategies
Athena Research Consultants

June 2008

Innovative Zoning

Fenton adopted a Planned Unit Development (PUD) in 1997 that pre-zoned the Downtown with a Preliminary PUD Plan and Downtown Design Guidelines.

Allows compliant developments to be approved in 30 days or less.



Focus on plan implementation

Over the years, the Fenton City Council, Planning Commission & DDA have consciously focused on implementing projects identified in the Master Plan.



Plan implementation

Be adaptable
with plans



COMMUNITY SELF-IMAGE

If you *think* you have a high-quality community, then you will end up with a high-quality community: self image





Consistent Decision-Making

“THE CHARACTER OF A COMMUNITY IS MORE OFTEN DETERMINED BY WHEN YOU SAY NO THAN WHEN YOU SAY YES” *CARMINE AVANTINI*



FOCUS ON COMMUNITY IMAGE

- High-quality design standards in ordinance.
- Utilization of Planned Unit Developments (PUD) throughout the city.
- Require quality uses and designs at the highway entryways, corridors, and along US 23.
- Enforcement of codes and site plan approvals.

Lynn Markland



Fenton City Manager



Maintain the community vision

- Learn to offer options
- Encourage the developer to follow your “design”
- Architectural variety, we’re not building a strip mall downtown
- Maintain walkability. Don’t “squeeze” out the pedestrian.
- Allow places for green space, art and events.

Downtown Cornerstone Project

Proposed drug store



Community plan & vision





Caroline St

What Was Built

What Was Built



OTHER
DOWNTOWN
PROJECTS:
Fire hall building





OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS:
Fire hall building



OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS: Horizon Building



OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS

What was built



WEST (LEROY ST.) ELEVATION - BUILDING "C"

OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS: 111 Leroy Place



WEST (LEROY ST.) ELEVATION - BUILDING "B"





OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS: 111 Leroy Place



OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS: The Railyard



OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS: The Railyard



OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS: The Railyard



OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS: 113 Mill Street

A wide, paved street with a sidewalk, trees, and streetlights. The text "OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS: Streetscape enhancements" is overlaid in white. The scene shows a clear blue sky, lush green trees, and a well-maintained urban environment. A red car is visible in the distance on the road. The sidewalk is made of concrete and has a brick border. There are several streetlights and signs, including a yellow pedestrian crossing sign and a white sign with a black arrow and a pedestrian symbol. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

OTHER DOWNTOWN PROJECTS: Streetscape enhancements



Silver Lake Village mixed-use development



Relationship between Downtown and Silver Lake Village

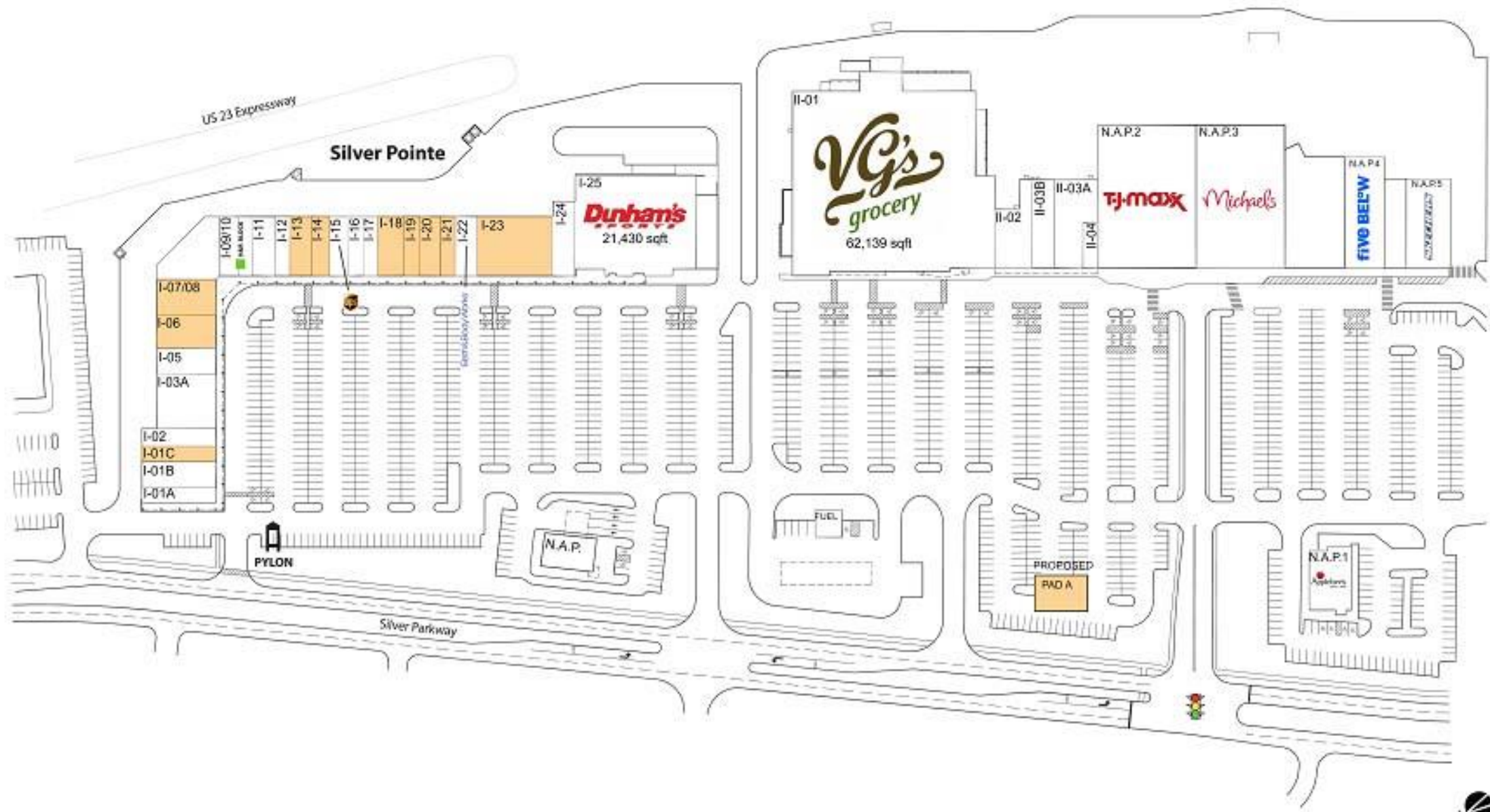
Kmart site redeveloped into retail center with TJ Maxx as the anchor
Michaels, Skechers, Five Below, Carter's and outlet became Texas Roadhouse.



Redeveloped Kmart property



Silver Lake











Redeveloped Silver Pointe property

Improved façade brought in more retail



Redeveloped silver pointe property



- Public transportation MTA
- Trolley style transportation adds character and makes using mass transit an experience.
- Our downtown success became an opportunity for our mass transit authority.
- Perhaps future public transit on-demand ride share



FREE
Thursday - Friday - Saturday
11AM - 11PM

Sit back, relax, and let the MTA do the driving.

Enjoy a ride on one of the Fenton trolleys for sustainable, convenient trips to local shops and restaurants. Support the local businesses, enjoy affordable travel and experience the charm of Fenton in style.

The trolleys travel on two routes around the City of Fenton stopping at many points of interest. Whether you're traveling on the North or South side of the city, we have a ride for you.



For route information, trolley stops and schedules visit:
mtaflint.org/fenton-trolley-service





Consistent Leadership

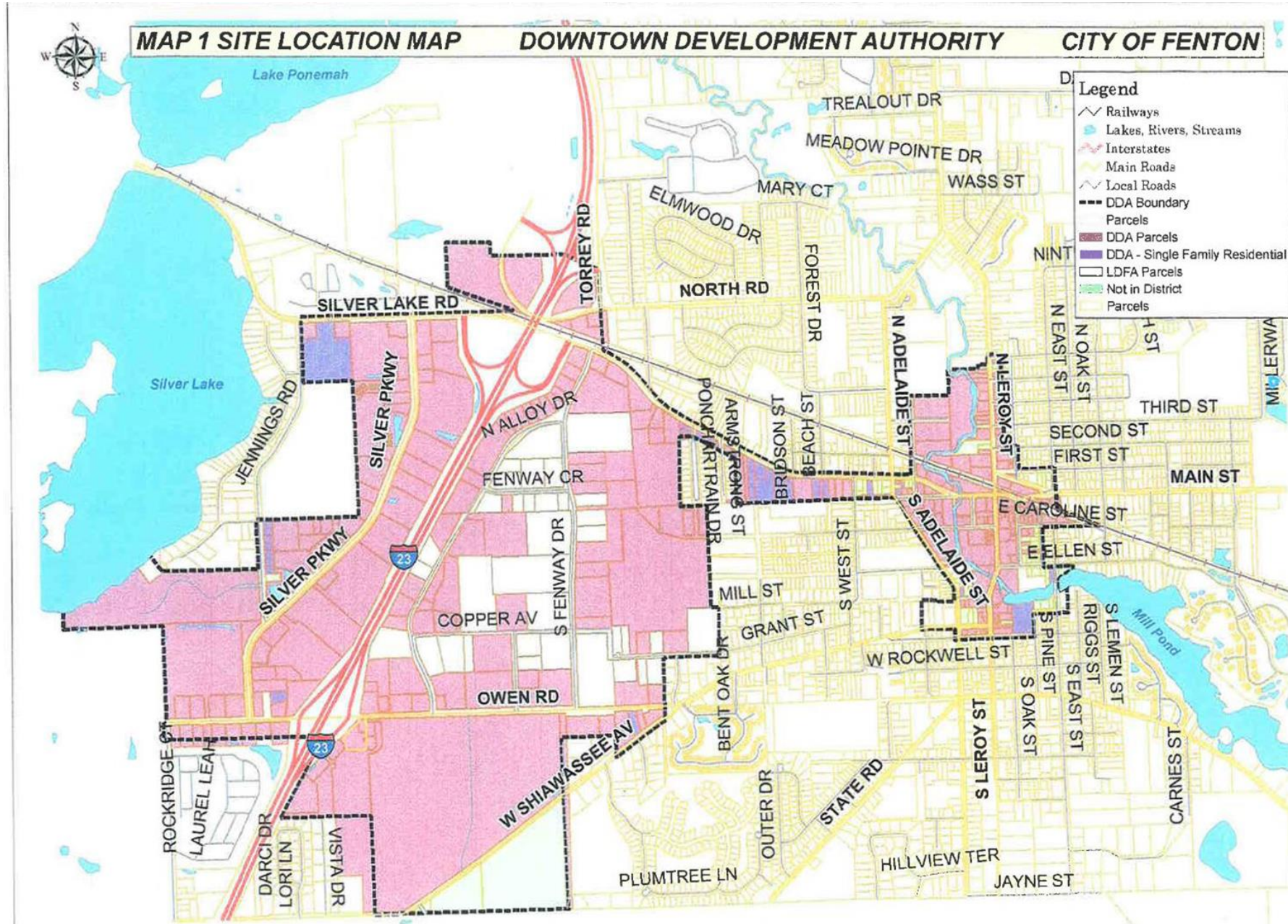


Reinvest back into community

DDA dollars to support
improvements in Downtown
and Silver Lake Village

Relationship between Downtown and Silver Lake Village

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) from Silver Lake Village development helped fund the DDA and downtown improvements.





IF YOU BUILD A QUALITY
community THEY WILL COME!!!

Downtown overview

Lessons Learned: CREATING COMMUNITIES THAT THRIVE

Whether traditional downtown or suburban development, create places and spaces that inspire community connection.

Questions?

