

AREA SPECIFIC PLAN:

# BUTTERWORTH



DRAFT

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
NEIGHBORHOOD TODAY.....	5
PLANNING PROCESS AND ENGAGEMENT.....	10
KEY TAKEAWAYS.....	13
COMMUNITY GOALS.....	15
NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE FUTURE.....	16
Goal 01: Sustainable, Equitable Development.....	18
Goal 02: A Vibrant and Thriving Business Community.....	26
Goal 03: Safer, Walkable and Bikeable Streets.....	32
Goal 04: Beautiful Neighborhoods And Healthy, Active Community Spaces.....	38
FUTURE SCENARIOS, ZONING, AND IMPLEMENTATION.....	42

## INTRODUCTION

### OVERVIEW

The Butterworth Area Specific Plan (ASP) is the culmination of a series of community input and feedback sessions with the neighborhood. The ASP outlines the community's vision for the future of the neighborhood and defines the steps necessary to achieve that vision. This includes both short- and long-term strategies related to land use, housing, economic development, transportation, and public space.

The Butterworth ASP is bounded by the following streets: Watson, Lexington, Butterworth, Front, Wealthy, Marion, Park, and Deloney (see **ASP Study Area Boundary** map). Butterworth contains a mix of industrial uses along the river and existing rail corridors, a commercial corridor on Butterworth Street, and traditional residential neighborhoods. Defining features within or adjacent to the study area include the Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Pew Campus, the Grand River, Westtown Commons Park, the Padnos scrap yard, the former Butterworth Landfill, regional trail connections, and the future Acrisure Amphitheater across the river.

### ASP STUDY AREA BOUNDARY



### RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN AND OTHER PLANS

The Community Master Plan (CMP) acts as a blueprint, outlining a vision and broad objectives along with detailed recommendations to achieve them. Building on this foundation, the Area Specific Plans (ASPs) adhere to the same principles and provide more detailed strategies. These plans illustrate how the overarching vision and goals of the CMP are tailored and implemented to meet the unique needs of individual neighborhoods. Additionally, citywide planning initiatives such as the Vital Streets Plan, Bicycle Action Plan, the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, Grand Rapids/Kent County Housing Needs Assessment, Grand River Equity Framework, and others offer further recommendations.

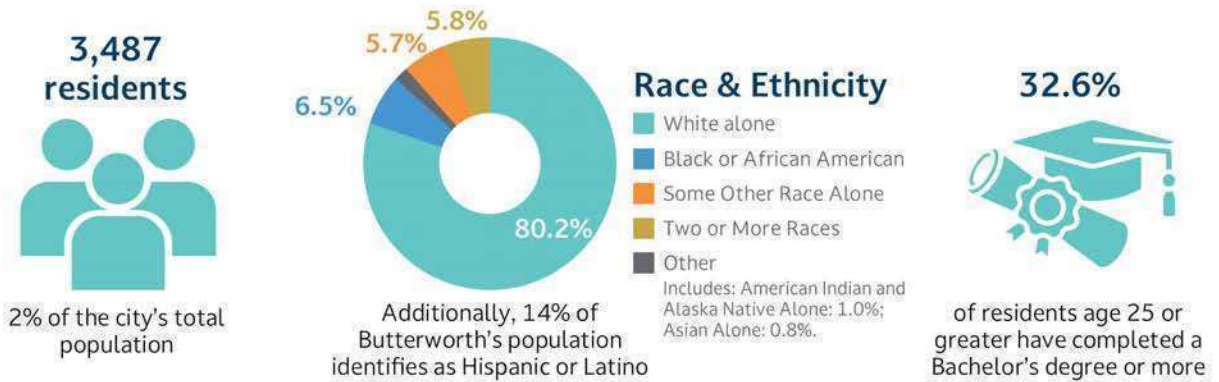


## NEIGHBORHOOD TODAY

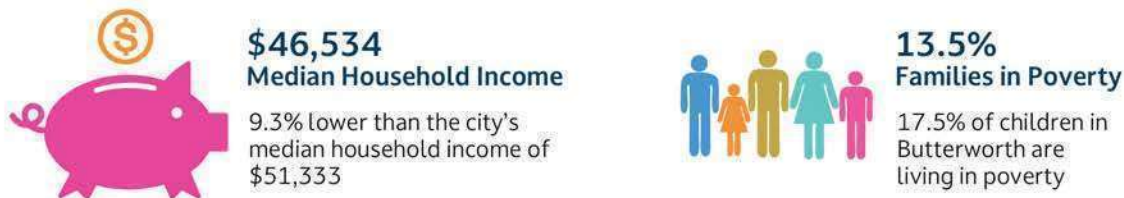
## COMMUNITY PROFILE

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2020 &amp; 2022 (5-Year Estimates) - Census Tract 27, Kent County, Michigan

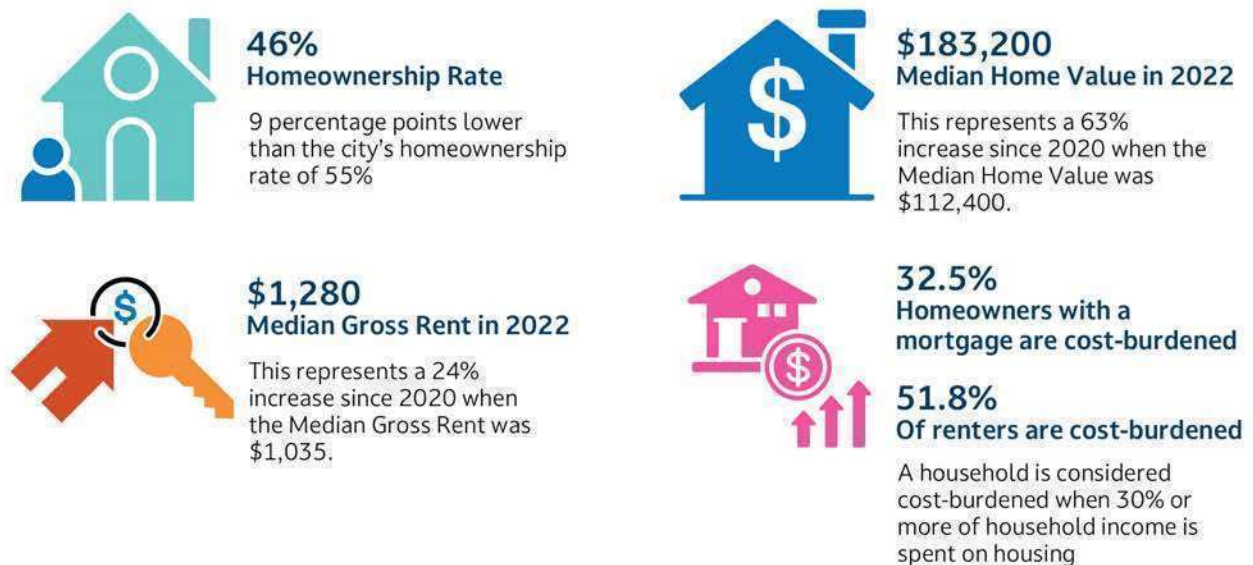
## POPULATION



## INCOMES

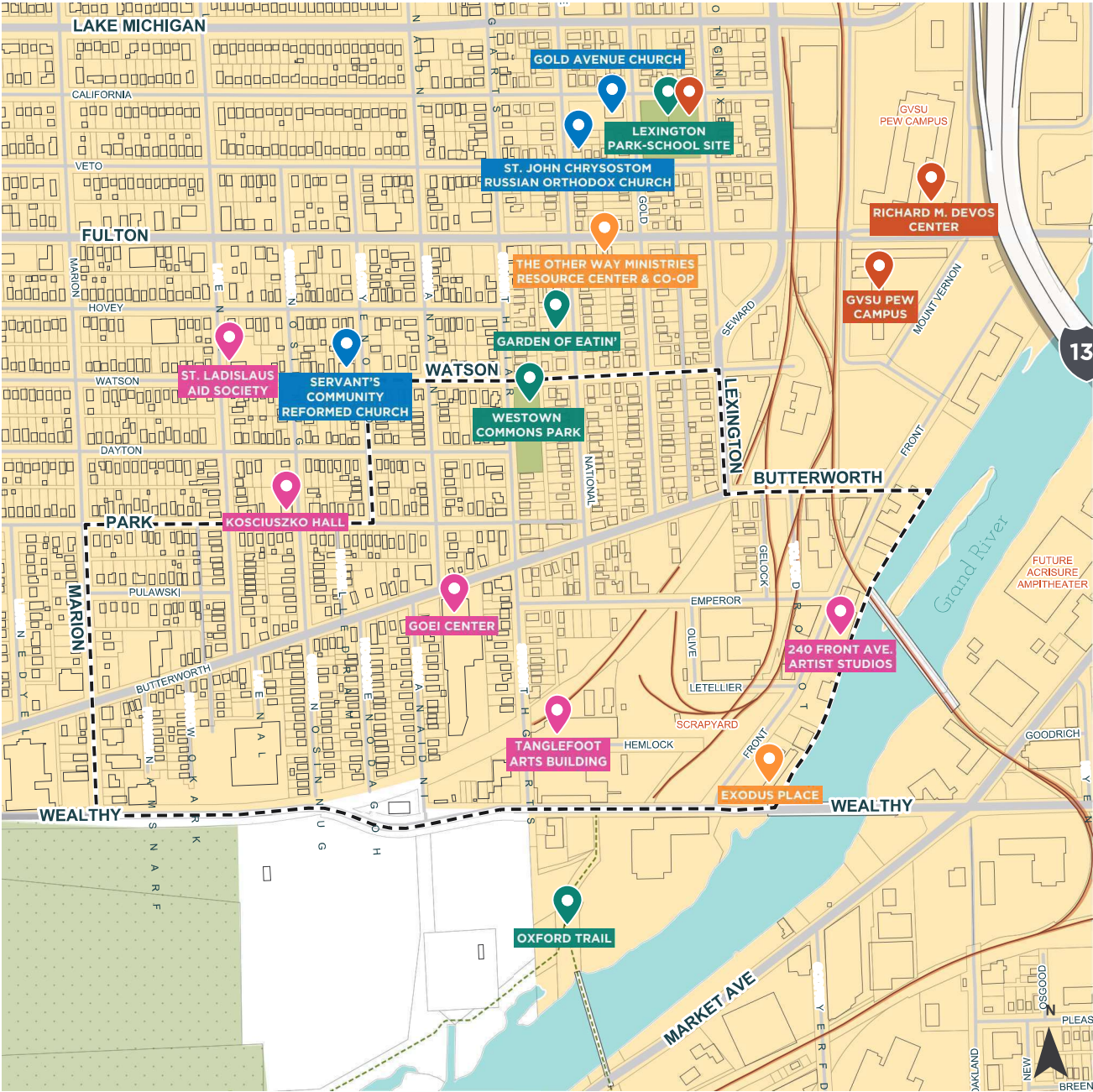


## HOUSING



Census tracts are designed to capture statistical data and are often delineated based on population size and other criteria that do not necessarily correspond with neighborhood boundaries, which can be more fluid and defined by a combination of historical, social, and economic factors. Despite these limitations, the insights derived from analyzing census tract data provide a valuable foundation for understanding the broader trends and dynamics of the neighborhood.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS AND CLASSIFICATION



Legend

- |                         |                    |                                   |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Neighborhood Study Area | Parks              | Arts, Culture & Recreation        |
| Parks                   | Community Services | Historic & Landmarks              |
| Open Spaces             | Education          | Traditional Neighborhood Boundary |
| Railway                 | Places of Worship  |                                   |
| Existing Trail          |                    |                                   |



## NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS

Some of the assets highlighted by residents (see **Neighborhood Assets** map) include:

- Westown Commons Park.
- Access to the Oxford Trail.
- An engaged community of residents, artists, and business owners.
- Beloved businesses and social organizations.

The small size of the Butterworth community provides a neighborhood feel that residents value and want to support and enhance. As the neighborhood continues to evolve, there is interest in reactivating areas such as the commercial corridor along Butterworth Street and former or underutilized industrial sites, while ensuring that residents are the ones who benefit from these improvements.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATION

The Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance assigns different neighborhood classifications to residential and mixed-use commercial districts based on existing development characteristics. Butterworth contains one of the three residential classifications as seen on the map to the left and described below.

**Traditional Neighborhood (TN):** Designed prior to the advent of the automobile, these neighborhoods were created to offer residents commercial and institutional uses within a short walk of their homes. Housing options include single-family homes and apartments located above storefronts, with commercial and institutional spaces seamlessly incorporated into the neighborhood. The variety in building sizes and uses adds to the vibrancy of these areas.



*Westown Commons Park.*

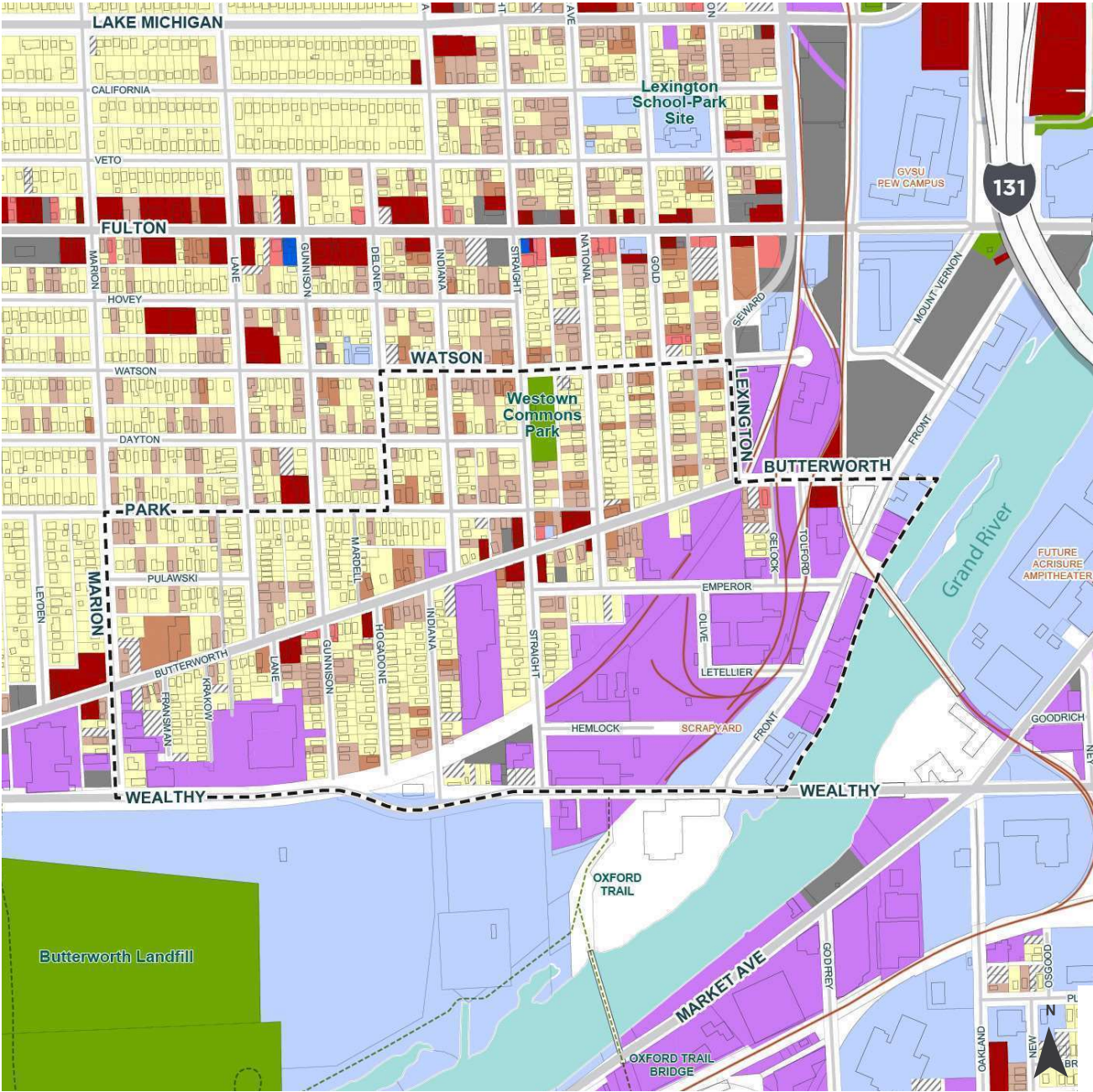


*Office and research buildings along the riverfront.*



*Tanglefoot building.*

EXISTING LAND USE



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Railway
- Existing Trail

- Parks & Other Open Spaces
- Single Family
- Multifamily - 2 Units
- Multifamily - 3 Or More Units
- High Density Residential
- Mixed Commercial/Residential
- Commercial

- Public/Quasi Public
- Medical Facilities
- Office
- Industrial
- Parking Lot
- Vacant Lot



## EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

### Existing Land Use

Land use patterns in Butterworth (see **Existing Land Use** map) include the following:

- Single family and multi-family residential properties.
- A commercial corridor along Butterworth Street that contains a mix of commercial, residential, and small scale industrial properties.
- Industrial properties along the river and active rail lines.
- A large open space on the former Butterworth landfill.

### Existing Zoning

Zoning in Butterworth generally aligns with the community's existing land use patterns. Industrial properties along the riverfront have been rezoned to mixed-use commercial districts, including City Center and Transitional City Center (TCC). The TCC serves as a buffer between the higher-intensity uses permitted in City Center and the adjacent residential areas. In the TCC, large-scale industrial activities require a special land use permit, changing the character of this historically industrial district.

The following zoning districts are found in Butterworth and fall under the Traditional Neighborhood (TN) designation:

- CC - City Center
- TCC - Transitional City Center
- TBA - Traditional Business Area
- LDR - Low Density Residential
- SD-OS - Open Space
- SD-IT - Industrial Transportation



*Properties in the Low Density Residential district.*



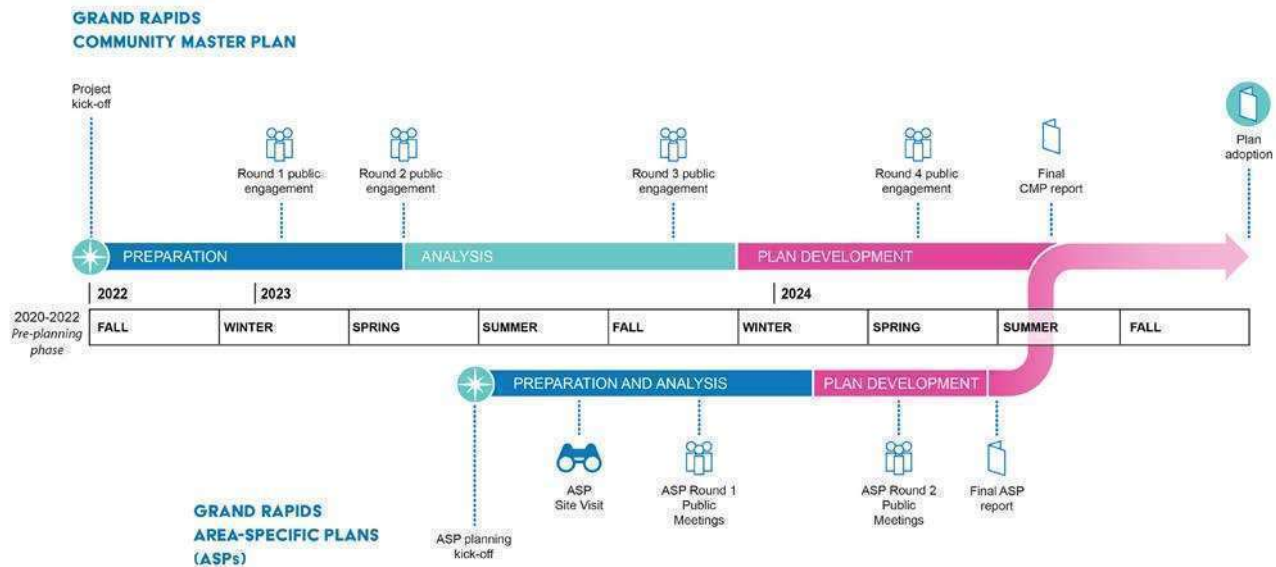
*Properties in the Traditional Business Area district.*



*Properties in the Transitional City Center district.*

## PLANNING PROCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

### CITYWIDE ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE AND CMP VALUES AND GOALS



### A Comprehensive View

The City of Grand Rapids began developing a new Community Master Plan in 2022, after two years of preliminary planning from 2020 to 2022, and more than 20 years since the release of the previous plan. The citywide engagement process required a comprehensive, phased approach over two years, including:

- Four rounds of **engagement**.
- Various **focus groups and interviews** with key stakeholders to discuss specific issues.
- Regular meetings with the **Steering Committee** to help guide the process.
- Small group meetings and targeted conversations with neighborhood residents through **Community Connectors**. The Connectors were trusted voices in the community, made up of community leaders and activists representing nonprofits and other stakeholders from across the city. They hosted small group meetings, in addition to other tasks, helping to expand the reach of the engagement process.
- The City of Grand Rapids has over 30 **Neighborhood Organizations**, many of which participated in the Community Master Plan process. Some were on the Steering Committee, others served as Community Connectors, and CDBG funding enabled many to host engagement meetings. These organizations helped inform residents about the process and facilitated community conversations.

## Community Master Plan Values

One clear goal of the citywide engagement process was to determine the values that are most important to the community. These values are crosscutting and are threaded throughout the CMP.

### CULTURE



### EQUITY



### SAFETY



### SUSTAINABILITY



### VIBRANCY



## Community Master Plan Goals

The citywide engagement process also revealed residents' overall concerns and priorities, such as a desire for better and more diverse housing options, pleasant public spaces that support economic activity, access to local jobs and amenities, and improved pedestrian safety and mobility. This community input, combined with an existing conditions analysis, informed the creation of the community goals upon which the CMP is based and **ultimately guided the strategies for the ASPs:**

**1. Great Neighborhoods:** Connected and diverse neighborhoods where residents can thrive. Grand Rapids neighborhoods will have access to housing, retail, open space, and more that meet the needs of residents in all phases of life.

**2. Vital Business Districts:** A network of unique and diverse businesses in all neighborhoods. Vital business districts will provide a variety of products, services, amenities, and safe, walkable places that attract people.

**3. A Strong Economy:** An economy that offers a prosperous quality of life. The Grand Rapids economy will offer a range of employers and job choices so that everyone can access and earn a living wage.

**4. Balanced Mobility:** A transportation network that is safe, reliable, and affordable. Grand Rapids will have mobility options that include a variety of ways to move about the city and beyond.

**5. Desirable Development Character:** A strong sense of place through high quality design. New development will improve or support the existing fabric of each neighborhood.



## BUTTERWORTH SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT

The Butterworth ASP engagement process began in the summer of 2023, alongside the citywide engagement process. The community priorities identified through the citywide effort helped shape the ASP engagement by highlighting issues and priorities that needed further exploration with community members. The ASP engagement process included:

- A guided neighborhood visit with community stakeholders, City staff, and the consultant team.
- Two rounds of public meetings, organized in partnership with the John Ball Area Neighbors. The meetings were hosted locally thanks to the Goei Center and Butterworth residents.
- ASP related questions and activities in the broader CMP engagement process.
- Regular meetings with City staff and consultants to ensure alignment between the community input from Butterworth residents and the recommendations being developed in the Community Master Plan.

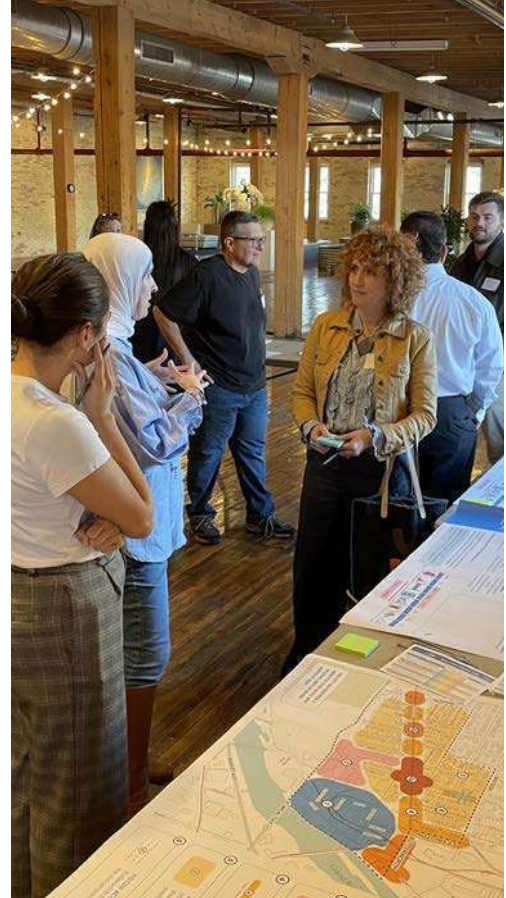
### ASP Engagement Summary

Some of the ideas that emerged from public engagement discussions include:

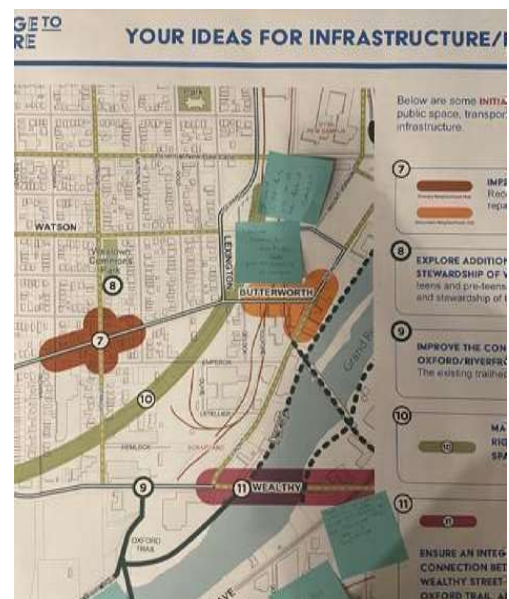
- Increasing housing affordability and housing options.
- Increasing pedestrian and bicycle safety by re-routing semi-truck traffic.
- Providing public access to the waterfront and preserving the neighborhood's charm and scale.
- Supporting increased density along key corridors and intersections, as well as some support for adaptive reuse of industrial buildings for arts/makers.

Residents echoed the need to encourage:

- Sustainable, equitable development.
- A vibrant and thriving business community.
- Safer, walkable/bikeable streets.
- Beautiful neighborhoods with healthy, active community spaces.



Community event in Butterworth.



Ideas shared by the community at an outreach event.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Engagement with neighbors, along with data and analysis of existing conditions, led to several key takeaways.

### THE RIVERFRONT IS POISED TO CHANGE IN THE COMING YEARS

With direct access to rail, river, and the citywide landfill (in operation from 1950 to 1973), Butterworth flourished as an industrial district for decades. The closure of the landfill and the changing nature of transportation (trucking replacing rail and river) contributed to a decline in industrial activity in Butterworth, with only a few legacy businesses remaining. With plans to grow the GVSU Pew Campus onto former industrial land and investments in the higher tech industrial sector highlighted by Grand River Aseptic, the district is likely to evolve considerably in the future.

### THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS FEELING THE PRESSURE OF THE LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

Historically an affordable landing spot for a working class immigrant population, Butterworth is now suffering the same housing affordability issues that much of the City of Grand Rapids is experiencing. As a downtown adjacent neighborhood and within walking distance of GVSU's Pew Campus (with thousands of students enrolled), Butterworth has felt the issue acutely.

### BUTTERWORTH STREET IS IN A STATE OF TRANSITION

Butterworth Street serves many purposes for the neighborhood and the Westside:

- It is a neighborhood commercial corridor serving local needs.
- It is a light industrial center with auto repair shops and other similar uses.
- It is a residential street at times.
- It is a heavily used truck route for major industrial uses outside of the neighborhood, including the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant and the City of Grand Rapids Yard Waste Drop-off Site.

Determining how all of these uses coexist is important for the future of the neighborhood.



*Surface parking lots in formerly industrial areas.*



*Example of new housing.*



*Butterworth commercial corridor.*

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS A HUB FOR THE REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK

Butterworth sits at the crossroads of many regional trail connections including the Grand River Greenway, Kent County Trails (with connections to Millennium Park), and the Oxford Trail (with future connections to the Plaster Creek Greenway). Investments to the existing network to help fill in gaps as well as enhance trail accessibility will improve the neighborhood for future generations of Butterworth residents.

## MAJOR PROJECTS WILL HAVE A BIG IMPACT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Some of the biggest investments in the Grand Rapids region are happening adjacent to Butterworth. The Acrisure Amphitheater under construction will reimagine the former City street maintenance yard into an outdoor music venue, trail, and public space. A proposed new soccer stadium will replace some of the DASH surface parking lots north of Lake Michigan Drive into a multipurpose sports facility. The expansion of the GVSU Pew Campus, with new residential and academic buildings, will bring additional buildings and people to what are now parking lots. All of these investments will have impacts on the future of Butterworth and may jump-start smaller scale investments in the neighborhood.

Source: River for All



Oxford Trail bridge crossing the Grand River.



The riverfront across from Butterworth and site of the future Acrisure Amphitheater.

The below intersection of Front and Wealthy will soon be reconstructed with bicycle lanes, transit stops, and amenities.



## COMMUNITY GOALS

The following goals were determined with the community throughout the engagement process.

### 01

#### SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

This goal relates to the **Great Neighborhoods** and **Desirable Development Character** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

### 02

#### A VIBRANT AND THRIVING BUSINESS COMMUNITY

This goal relates to the **Vital Business Districts** and **A Strong Economy** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

### 03

#### SAFER, WALKABLE AND BIKEABLE STREETS

This goal relates to the **Vital Business Districts** and **Balanced Mobility** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

### 04

#### BEAUTIFUL NEIGHBORHOODS AND HEALTHY, ACTIVE COMMUNITY SPACES

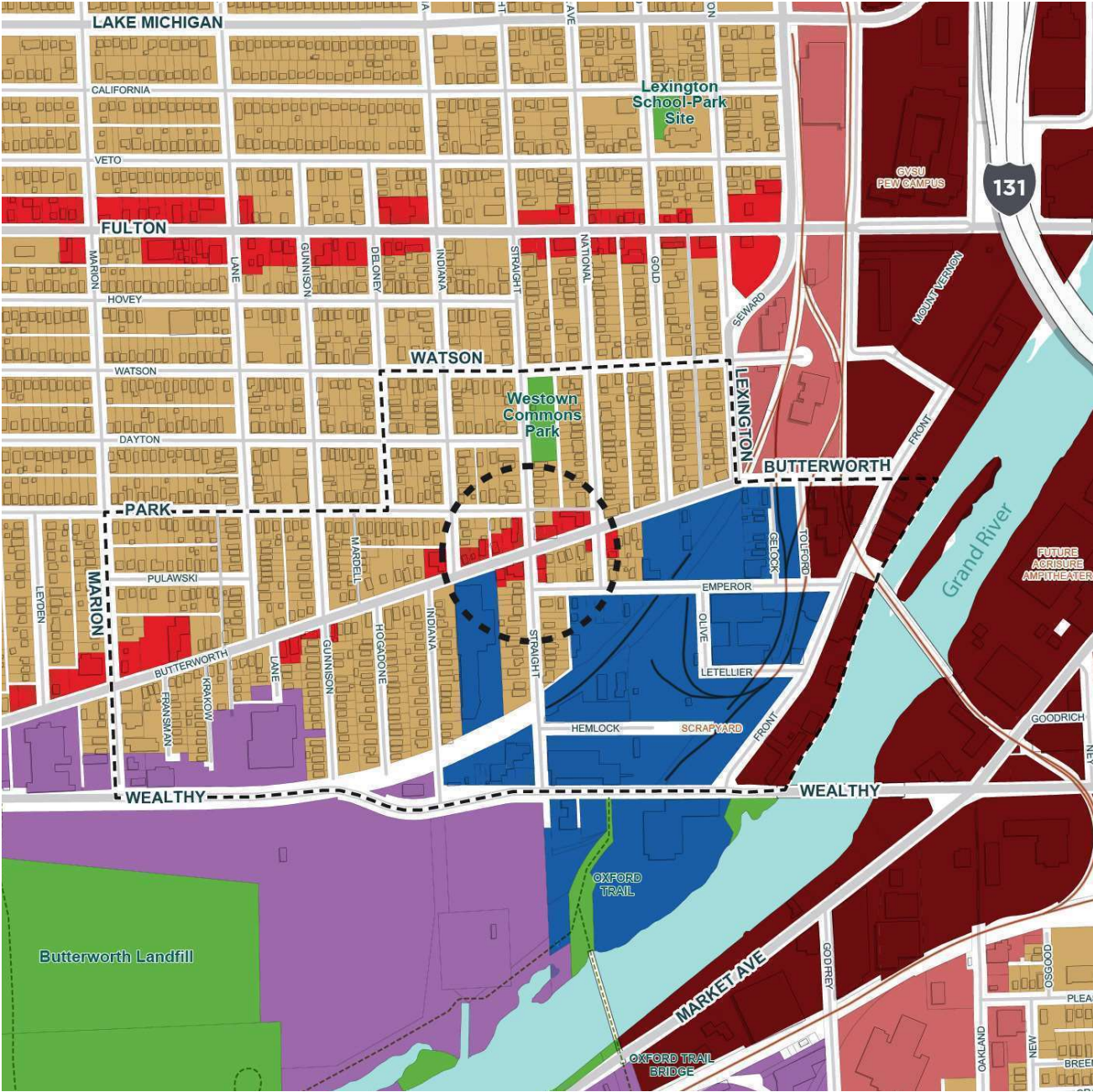
This goal relates to the **Great Neighborhoods** goal found in the Community Master Plan.

Through the CMP and ASP engagement process, the community helped co-create the Future Character Map (see **Future Development Character and Node Map** on next page), which outlines Grand Rapids' future land use. It emphasizes development character and qualities as well as urban form and function. This map guides future development citywide, reinforcing existing patterns in some areas and supporting changes in others.



NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE FUTURE

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER MAP AND NODES



Legend

Neighborhood Study Area

Neighborhood Nodes

- Downtown
- Transitional Activity Center
- Community Activity Center
- Neighborhood Center
- Compact Neighborhood

- Suburban Neighborhood
- Manufacturing & Logistics
- Campus
- Innovation Center
- Parks and Open Space



## Neighborhood Node



**Intent:** Neighborhood Nodes are central to residential areas or business zones, primarily serving the neighborhood but sometimes drawing regional visitors. They offer local access to businesses, services, and amenities within walking distance. These Nodes mix commercial, civic, institutional, and residential uses, and increased residential density within a quarter-mile radius is crucial for supporting them.

**What it means for Butterworth:** Butterworth has one Neighborhood Node as defined by the CMP:

- Butterworth Street and Straight Avenue

## Downtown

**Intent:** Promote a dense development pattern focused on the close proximity of services, a diversity of uses, and dynamic building styles.

**What it means for Butterworth:** In the future, the underutilized properties adjacent to GVSU and the riverfront will be activated with a denser development pattern

## Neighborhood Center

**Intent:** Reinforce a pedestrian and transit-friendly environment in a compact area and promote a mix of small-scale retail, service, entertainment, civic, office, and residential uses to enhance the vitality of surrounding neighborhoods.

**What it means for Butterworth:** Existing commercial corridors in Butterworth will continue to serve as Neighborhood Centers

## Compact Neighborhood

**Intent:** Create, maintain, and promote a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse population while maintaining the desired physical characteristics of the city's existing neighborhoods.

**What it means for Butterworth:** Neighborhoods that are predominantly single family housing may grow to provide more diverse housing options.

## Innovation Center

**Intent:** Accommodate a broad range of flexible employment opportunities, with a focus on active ground floor uses abutting public streets to promote compact, walkable areas.

**What it means for Butterworth:** In the future, the former industrial areas along the riverfront will include diverse employment options as well as multi-family residential and active ground floor uses. Access to the riverfront and trails will also be improved.

## Manufacturing and Logistics

**Intent:** Allow for a wide range of types, services, and wage levels in sectors such as production, manufacturing, research, distribution, and logistics while preserving the character and integrity of adjacent land uses.

**What it means for Butterworth:** Legacy industrial properties within Butterworth will continue to support existing jobs. If businesses decide to close or move in the future, redevelopment should fit the adjacent character areas (Downtown and Innovation Centers).

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GOAL 01:

# SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Grand Rapids has been experiencing significant population growth that aligns with growth at the county level. Consequently, the demand for various types of housing at different price points has also increased.

According to the City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan (2024):

Grand Rapids is the largest city in Kent County and accounts for 30% of its population. After a short period of decline (5% between 2000 and 2010), the population of Grand Rapids has recovered and is increasing, with new residents partly fueling the city's growth. Additionally, the population of Kent County is expected to grow by about 27% (+169,000 people) by 2045. If Grand Rapids maintains its 30% share of county population, the city will grow to approximately 251,000 residents in that time. In the shorter term, it is expected that Grand Rapids will need at least 14,000 housing units by 2027 to satisfy demand (CMP, 2024).

The housing shortage in Grand Rapids can be alleviated through various means, and the CMP identifies several key recommendations. The ASP process provides an opportunity to observe the impacts of broader citywide policies within ASP areas. In Butterworth, housing can be added along the Butterworth commercial corridor, in parking lots, on vacant lots, and in areas near the river that have been rezoned for mixed-use development. Additionally, there are opportunities to add housing in residential neighborhoods while maintaining community character.

The following recommendations offer ideas to add new housing and provide support for existing residents and homeowners.



*Surface parking lots such as the one near the intersection of Butterworth Street and Lexington Avenue would be ideal places for new housing and redevelopment.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1

#### ENCOURAGE DENSER HOUSING ON KEY CORRIDORS.

The Community Master Plan (CMP) strongly advocates for incorporating denser housing in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure. The CMP includes specific goals to better coordinate development with transportation decisions, with a particular focus on lots fronting Link Residential and Network Residential streets. The Vital Streets Plan defines these street types as follows:

**Link Residential:** Link Residential streets connect neighborhoods and local destinations. They are common in areas with a traditional grid layout but can be found in any neighborhood type. These streets typically feature low-to-moderate density housing and should support high-quality residential life. They often host community facilities like parks, schools, and places of worship.

**Network Residential:** Network Residential streets are quality residential corridors that efficiently and safely move vehicles and non-motorized users. They are similar to arterial roads but are designed with more attention to non-auto users. These streets typically have higher residential density than other types and often feature community facilities like parks, schools, and places of worship, along with some industrial or small commercial spaces.

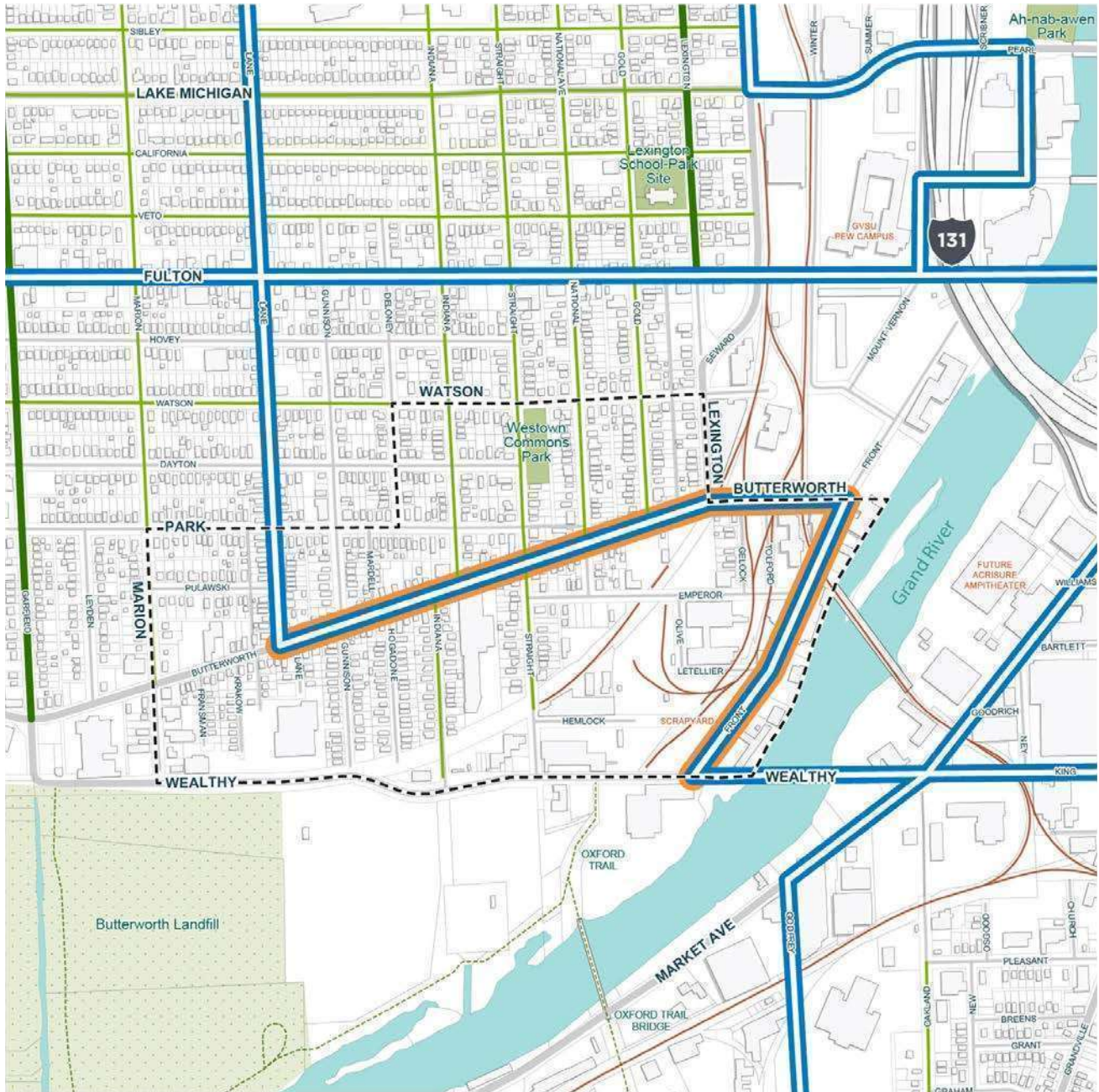
Link Residential and Network Residential streets are shown on the map to the right. Existing bus routes are layered onto the map to reinforce the connection between land use density and transportation infrastructure.

The following streets should be prioritized for consideration of denser residential use for these reasons:

- **Butterworth:** There are existing bus and bicycle connections, the street contains sections identified as downtown and neighborhood/innovation centers in the future character map, and the street is generally suitable for denser uses.
- **Front:** There are existing bus and bicycle connections, the street contains sections identified as downtown in the future character map, and the street is generally suitable for denser uses.



## VITAL STREETS PLAN STREET TYPES AND EXISTING BUS ROUTES



### Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Existing Bus Route
- Network Residential (Vital Streets Plan)
- Link Residential (Vital Streets Plan)
- Priority Streets for Increased Density (as proposed in the ASP)

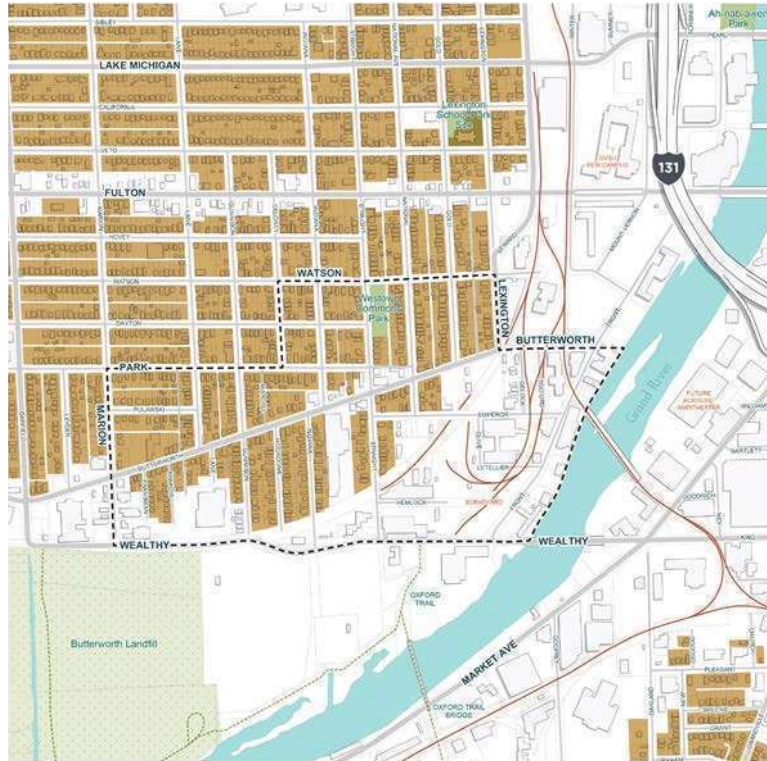
## 2

**ALLOW FOR A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES IN SINGLE FAMILY DISTRICTS.**

The CMP recommends allowing denser types of housing in low-density residential zones, up to and including quadplexes. This aims to keep naturally occurring affordable housing viable and compliant with regulations. It also seeks to expand and preserve middle-density housing and encourage the development of new housing types for a range of family types.

The CMP identifies the residential neighborhoods of Butterworth as Compact Neighborhoods within the Future Character Map (see **CMP Compact Neighborhood Designations** map). They are defined as areas that create, maintain, and promote a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse population while maintaining the desired physical characteristics of the city's existing neighborhoods.

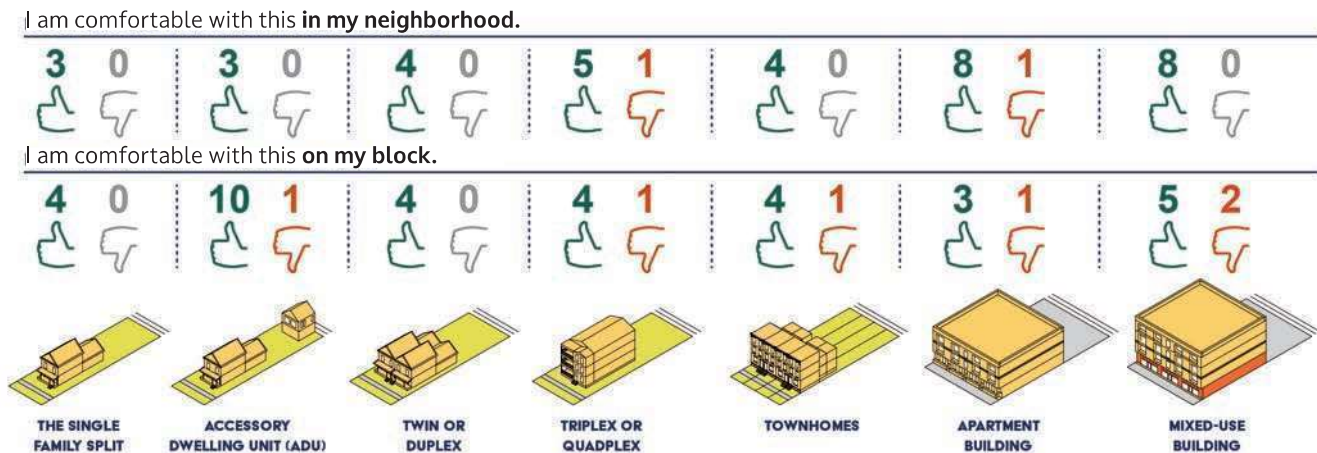
Most residential properties in Butterworth are zoned for Low Density Residential and are predominantly detached single-family houses. Opportunities already exist within the zoning ordinance to add denser housing types, but achieving the future character identified in the CMP may require broader zoning changes. Based on the engagement, residents would support changes that allow for more diversified housing types.

**CMP COMPACT NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGNATIONS AS WELL AS EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATIONS****Legend**

Compact Neighborhood - Future Character as define by CMP



*Below: During the engagement process, residents were asked to vote with a thumbs up or thumbs down to indicate the types of development they would or would not support in their neighborhood.*



As part of the engagement process, residents were asked about the types of housing they would be comfortable with in their neighborhood and on their block. They were most strongly in favor of Accessory Dwelling Units, particularly on their block, as well as higher density types in the neighborhood, like apartment buildings and mixed-use buildings, but generally supported a variety of housing types, with no strong opposition. According to the Grand Rapids zoning ordinance, an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a secondary housing unit on a single-family residential lot that is either attached to the main house or a separate structure. ADUs are a great way to add density to neighborhoods without altering their character. Both homeowners and potential renters can benefit in various ways: homeowners can supplement their income through renting the ADU and gain opportunities to age in place, while renters often find ADUs more affordable due to their smaller size.

While the benefits of ADUs are numerous, there are some downsides as well. Upfront costs, such as those associated with water and sewer regulations, can be substantial and difficult to finance. To overcome this challenge, the City has continued to refine its legislation to lower barriers to entry and make the process as easy as possible, such as eliminating the owner-occupancy requirement, allowing ADUs in association with duplexes, and making it a by-right use. The City should continue refining as needed.

There are also issues regarding accessibility, parking, and residents feeling like secondary members of the community. Focusing ADUs on properties with an existing alley network may help sidestep some of these challenges by creating additional off-street parking spaces, which can be difficult to find on narrow lots in traditional neighborhoods like Butterworth. Additionally, residents would have direct access to their units rather than having to walk through the primary home's property. Alleyways are also the most likely locations for detached parking garages, which offer easier and more affordable opportunities for residential conversions.

Another challenge is that residents may be unaware of the benefits of ADUs and current City legislation. As an initial step, neighborhood or housing-focused organizations could conduct targeted outreach to property owners within eligible areas to educate homeowners on ADUs, discuss their benefits, and provide resources.

The alley on the backside of properties on National Avenue between Watson and Park is an excellent location to focus investment in ADUs as all of the properties have access off the alley and have the added benefit of fronting Westown Commons Park, providing tangential benefits to the park by activating the underutilized space.

*The alley between National and Watson streets fronting Westown Commons Park.*



**CASE STUDY:** Los Angeles leads the United States in the number of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The City's favorable regulations, which include no owner-occupancy restrictions and no minimum lot size requirements, have made it a model for ADU development. Los Angeles allows detached ADUs up to 1,200 square feet and two stories tall, with many homeowners converting garages into livable spaces. Los Angeles has also launched the Accessory Dwelling Unit Standard Plan Program, which offers pre-approved ADU designs to simplify the building process.

*Below: Examples of ADUs in Los Angeles. The below photo includes off-street parking and direct access from an alley.*

Source: [bunchadu.com](http://bunchadu.com)



Source: [archdaily.com](http://archdaily.com)



## 3

**SUPPORT EXISTING HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS.**

Neighborhoods thrive on the diversity of their neighbors, and it is important that existing homeowners and renters can stay in their community if they choose to do so. Along with the City's CMP and housing-related initiatives and policies, it is important to undertake targeted outreach to Butterworth residents to ensure they are aware of and have access to resources available to help them improve their housing. This work needs to be done with the following goals in mind:

**Keep Housing Affordable:**

- Continue to provide and promote the Housing Rehabilitation Program, a federally funded program administered by the Community Development Department that offers affordable loans for home repairs to applicants who meet eligibility requirements.
- Incentivize and preserve affordable housing per the Grand Rapids Housing Needs Assessment.

**Encourage Resident Involvement:**

- Create pathways for residents to be informed and provide input on new development.
- Support community members who aspire to take on small-scale real estate development projects in their community through trainings, mentorship, and networking opportunities.



*Butterworth continues to evolve with new construction housing.*

---

GOAL 02:

# A VIBRANT AND THRIVING BUSINESS COMMUNITY

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4

#### REDEVELOP THE RIVERFRONT AS AN INNOVATION CENTER.

Industrial properties near the river in Butterworth have evolved over time, and can accommodate a broader range of uses moving forward, including office, research and development, artist studios, small-scale manufacturing, hotels, multi-family residential, retail, restaurants, and services. This evolution may accelerate as GVSU expands their campus south and as the riverfront continues to grow and develop. The rezoning of this industrial district to City Center and Transitional City Center after the 2002 Master Plan were a first step in starting this transition.

Through the engagement process for the Community Master Plan and the Area Specific Plan, residents confirmed that transitioning the industrial uses to an Innovation Center aligns with their future vision for this area. Additionally, the Community Master Plan identified multiple Innovation Centers in the citywide Future Character Map, including properties near the Butterworth riverfront.

The City should look to develop a strategic partnership with GVSU and local partners to support new investments in creating a vibrant Innovation Center along the river. These investments could include property acquisition, development incentives, marketing assistance, job training, expansion of the West Side Corridor Improvement Authority Area, and upgraded infrastructure such as streets and parks.

### 5

#### ADAPTIVE REUSE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS WITH AN ART/MAKER FOCUS.

The area around the intersection of Straight and Wealthy is home to a burgeoning arts district anchored by the Tanglefoot building, the Goei Center, The Moon Photography Studio, Dinderbeck Print Studios, Red Hydrant Press, and several other art, maker, and light industrial businesses. Additional buildings in the area, including the large Padnos building at the corner of Straight and Wealthy and the Spectrum Industries building on Wealthy and Front, could support more art, maker, and light industrial spaces if redeveloped. Older industrial structures in the community provide excellent opportunities for reuse to support new and growing local businesses. Creative businesses, makers and many more are in dire need nationally for relatively inexpensive small to medium sized spaces. Butterworth could play a key role in the city's efforts to expand local businesses and entrepreneurship by retaining and repurposing the area's industrial buildings for modern use.

Modest infrastructure improvements could better connect this area to the neighborhood. The former rail right-of-way on the north side of the Tanglefoot building presents an excellent opportunity to create a temporary, flexible outdoor space. This space could be shared by these buildings and potentially be accessible to the public, supporting the work of makers and artists in the area, before the extension of Seward Avenue comes to fruition. See **Recommendation 11** for more details.



*Surface parking lots within the riverfront district.*



*Tanglefoot building.*



## 6

**SUPPORT BUTTERWORTH STREET AS A NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR.**

Butterworth Street currently hosts a mix of uses, including small-scale industrial, residential, and neighborhood-serving commercial spaces. In the broader neighborhood context, Fulton Street serves a larger market as a commercial corridor, while Butterworth caters to local needs. The following recommendations aim to support Butterworth as a neighborhood-serving commercial street and a community gathering place in the future.



*Butterworth Commercial Corridor.*



*A redeveloped industrial building on Butterworth.*



*The Goei Center.*

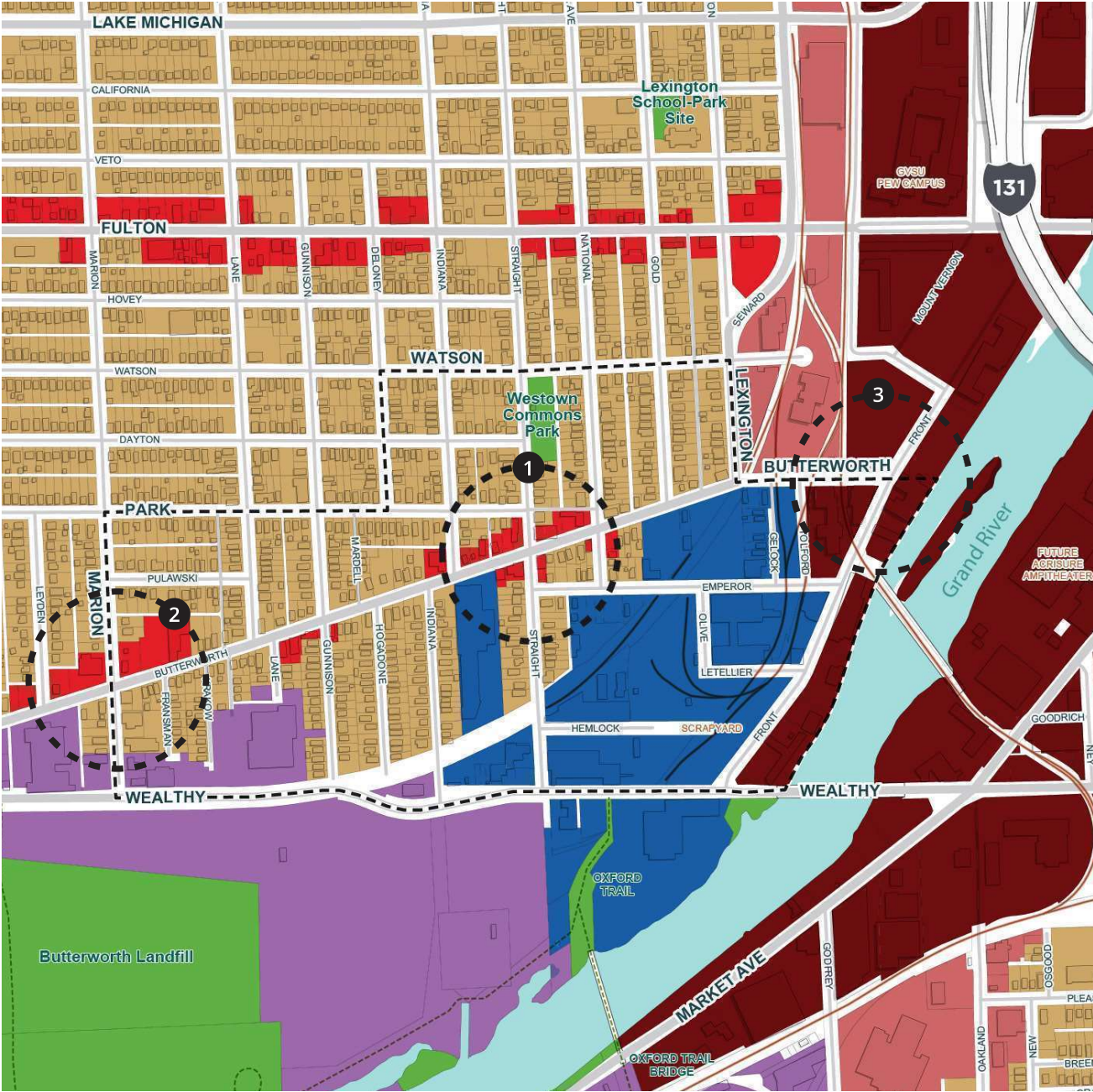


*Butterworth Commercial Corridor.*

1. **Promote additional housing units** to help the broader city meet expected housing demand as well as provide customers for corridor businesses. Focus new development in three areas:
  - Butterworth and Straight (from National to Indiana) - Identified as a neighborhood node in the CMP.
  - Butterworth and Marion - Identified as a sub-node in the ASP.
  - Butterworth and Front - Identified as a sub-node in the ASP.
2. **Ensure active ground floor uses with any new development** within the neighborhood node and sub-nodes and east of Lexington Avenue. Non-commercial ground floor uses can still add to the vitality of the street, but within the targeted neighborhood node and sub-nodes, active ground floors with engaging storefronts and commercial spaces would be preferred.
3. **Maintain small scale/industrial buildings as affordable work/commercial space.** While some of the older small scale industrial buildings on Butterworth Street SW may seem obsolete, they are often great opportunities to provide inexpensive commercial space for a variety of uses that can add vitality and new life to the district. A perfect example is 839 Butterworth which was home to Advance Caster and Wheel Company for many years which eventually relocated to an industrial district in SE Grand Rapids around 2016. After years of vacancy the building was eventually bought and renovated as an interior design company with a retail component. Numerous similar buildings exist on Butterworth Street and are ripe for similar conversions.
4. **Encourage parking in the rear of properties accessed via side streets and alleys in the neighborhood nodes and sub-nodes.** Surface parking lots interrupt the activity along the street and create unsafe crossing for those walking and bicycling. Due to the alleys in the north side of the street and the numerous side streets on the south side of the street, surface parking lots should be accessed through those less visible means.
5. **Target storefront and facade repairs in the neighborhood node and sub-nodes.** Grand Rapids has six Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIAs) that can administer facade improvement grants. Butterworth Street, within the West Side CIA boundaries, should focus on engagement within the neighborhood node and sub-nodes to educate and support interested property owners.



NODES AND SUB-NODES AS PROPOSED IN RECOMMENDATION 6



Legend

Neighborhood Study Area

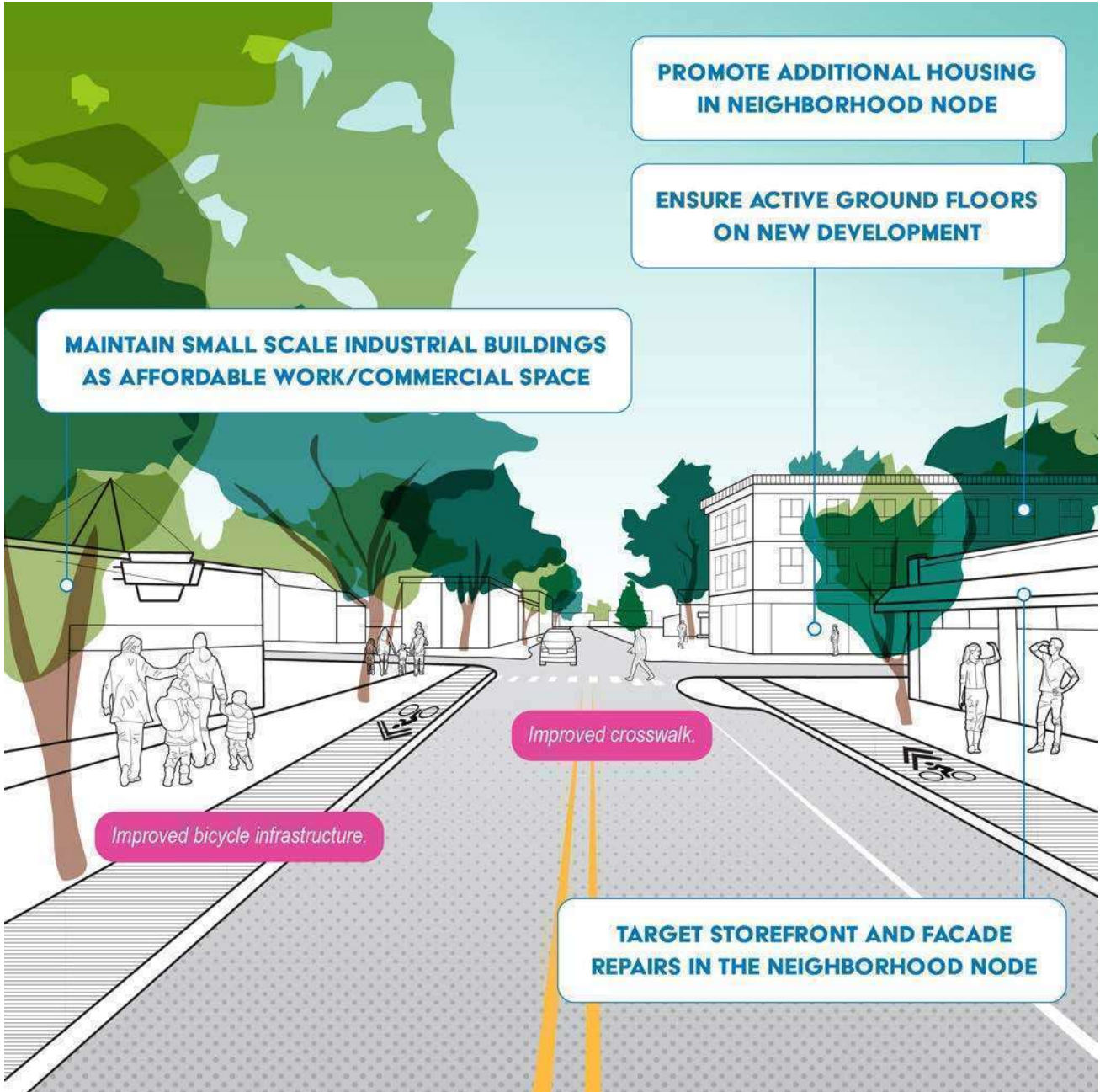
Neighborhood Nodes & Sub-Nodes

- 1 Butterworth & Straight Neighborhood Node (from National to Indiana)
- 2 Butterworth & Marion Sub-Node
- 3 Butterworth & Front Sub-Node

- Downtown
- Community Activity Center
- Neighborhood Center
- Compact Neighborhood
- Transitional Activity Center
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Campus
- Innovation Center
- Parks & Open Spaces
- Manufacturing & Logistics



## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO BUTTERWORTH STREET NEAR NATIONAL AVENUE AS PROPOSED IN RECOMMENDATION 6



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GOAL 03:

# SAFER, WALKABLE AND BIKEABLE STREETS

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7

#### **IMPROVE BUTTERWORTH FOR PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS.**

Butterworth Street accommodates various modes of travel, including cars, bicycles, and trucks, making it challenging to maintain a safe environment for all users. The following recommendations aim to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists on Butterworth Street:

##### **Pedestrian Safety:**

- Install pedestrian crossing signs at key crosswalks along Butterworth to increase driver awareness.
- Implement curb bump-outs at intersections with mandatory stop crosswalks to enhance pedestrian visibility and safety.
- Study for the potential of signalized intersections with curb bump-outs at Butterworth Streets intersections with Marion Avenue, Gunnison Avenue, and Lexington Avenue to improve pedestrian crossing safety.

##### **Truck Traffic Management:**

- Short-term: Implement pedestrian safety improvements as described above to slow down truck traffic.
- Long-term: Develop alternative routes for truck traffic to alleviate the impacts on the corridor. Options for alternative routes could include:
  - Realize existing City plans to extend Seward Avenue south to Wealthy Street.
  - Monitoring and capitalizing on any property ownership changes along the planned extension route to facilitate the Seward Street project, ensuring alignment with City development goals.
  - Realize existing City plans to connect Wealthy Street to 196.



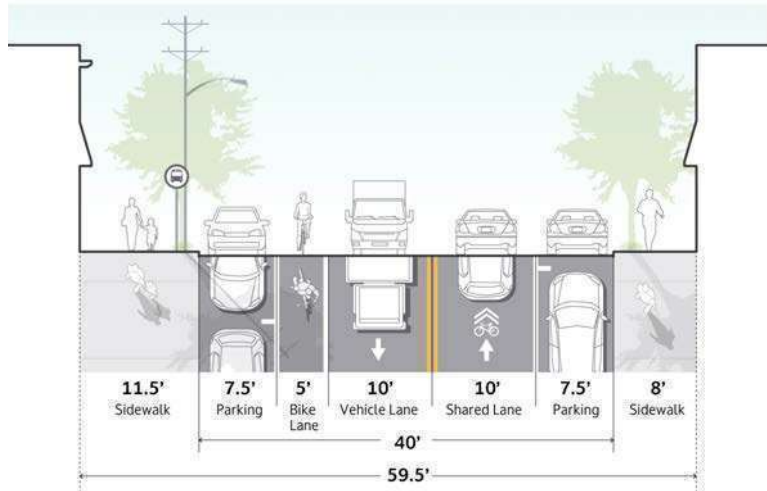
**Bicycle Facilities:**

- Assess and enhance the safety of bicycle lanes from Marion Street to Gold Street by considering raised bike lanes in both directions.
- Evaluate impacts of removing street parking in front of commercial businesses before finalizing new bicycle facility plans.
- Maintain protected bicycle lanes West of Marion Street and standard lanes east of Gold Street to Front Street.

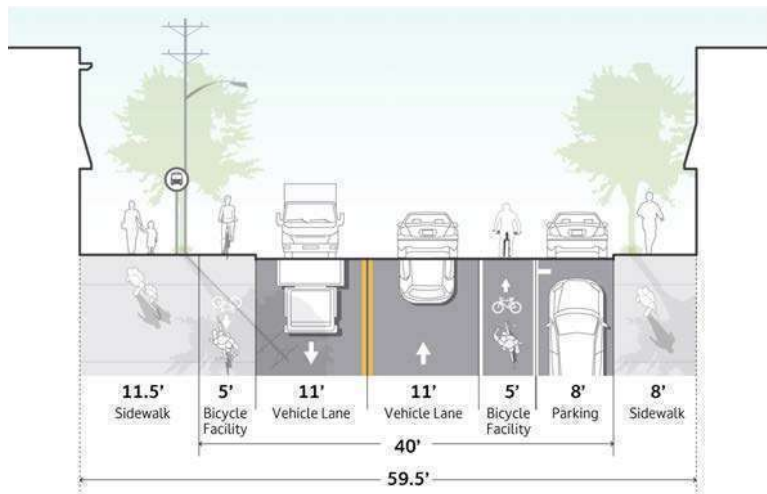


*Existing bicycle facilities on Butterworth Street.*

**EXISTING SECTION -  
BUTTERWORTH STREET AT STRAIGHT AVENUE**



**PROPOSED SECTION -  
BUTTERWORTH STREET AT STRAIGHT AVENUE**



## ASDFASDF

## 8

**DEVELOP ALLEYS AS AN ALTERNATIVE PEDESTRIAN NETWORK AND COMMUNITY SPACE.**

Alleys serve as ancillary infrastructure for Butterworth, and provide access to garages, trash and recycling pickup, and utility right-of-ways. They are often overlooked and thought of as a back of house location to hide things that are unsightly. Neighborhoods across the country have flipped the script and have begun to look at alleys in a new light, recognizing that alleys can serve as ancillary pedestrian routes and public spaces as well. The alleys in Butterworth could serve as additional spaces for the community to gather, traverse through the neighborhood, and add greening. The alley behind National Avenue between Watson and Park could serve as a pilot for this recommendation, as it was already identified as a targeted location for ADUs in **Recommendation 2**. Adding additional greening, art, and pedestrian improvements to this alley could serve as a model for the rest of the community.



*Existing alley between Straight Avenue and National Avenue.*

**CASE STUDY:** Multiple cities have initiated projects to green and upgrade alleys for pedestrian use. In South Los Angeles, the organization Parks for People (a program by the Trust for Public Land) has led the Avalon Green Alleys Demonstration Project, transforming six alley segments into walkable, bikeable, green community spaces. This project included features such as light-colored pavement to reduce urban heat, additional lighting and pavement markings to promote pedestrian use, and native plantings to enhance the greenery.

In Chicago, the city has developed a Green Alleys program and handbook that aims to improve alleys using green infrastructure strategies. These strategies include the use of permeable pavement, recycled construction materials, energy-efficient lighting fixtures, and proper grading of alley surfaces for effective water drainage.

*Right: Examples of completed green alleys in Los Angeles (above) and Chicago (below).*

*Source: SALT Architects.*



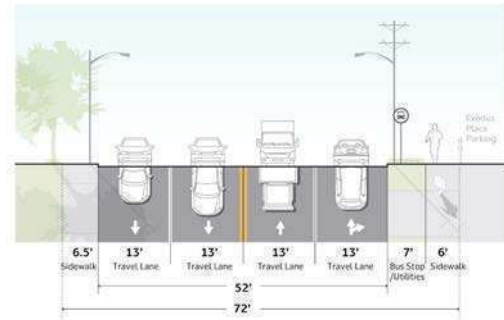
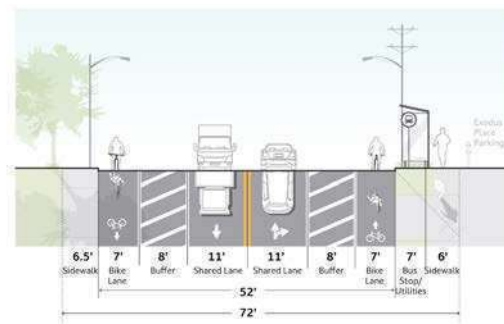
*Source: City of Chicago Green Alley Handbook.*

## 9

**IMPROVE EXISTING TRAIL AND BICYCLE CONNECTIONS WITHIN NEIGHBORHOOD.**

Butterworth is the converging point for a variety of trails extending beyond the city, including the Grand River Greenway. Planned extensions to the trails will make for even more of an interconnected network and Butterworth stands to benefit. Investments have been made to the bicycle network, adding new facilities in the past decade, but gaps exist to connect bicycle lanes to the broader trail network and the city at large. The following improvements (see **Bicycle Action Plan Recommendations** map) will help solidify Butterworth as a critical piece within the bicycle and trail network:

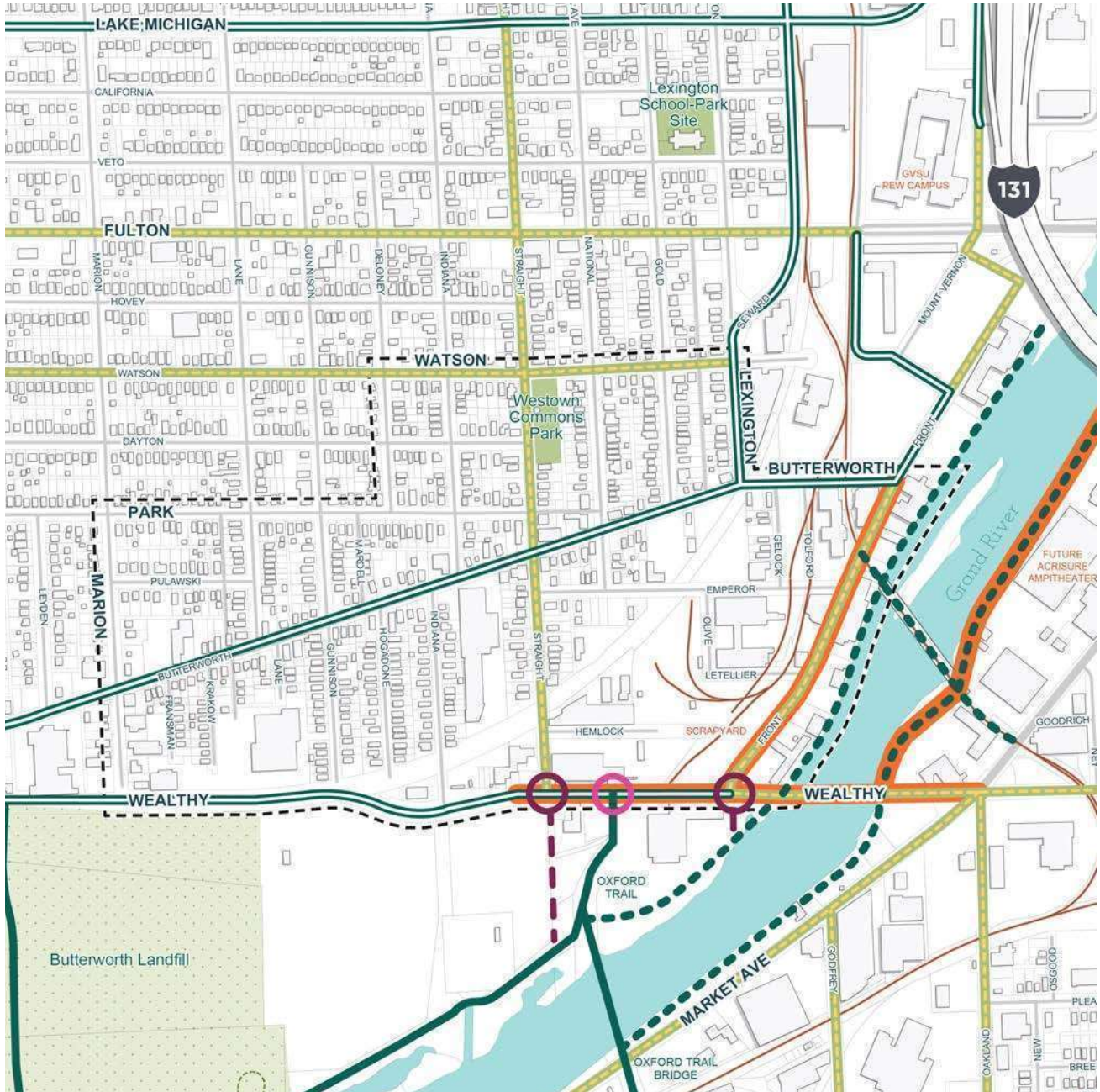
- Implement the Bicycle Action Plan throughout the neighborhood.
- Enhance the connection to the Oxford/Riverfront trailhead. Currently, the trailhead is uninviting and hard to locate. In the long term, options should be explored to move the trailhead to a more visible and accessible location. Potential new sites include the intersection of Wealthy and Straight or the intersection of Front and Wealthy, running along the rear of the Spectrum Industries property.
- Ensure an integrated connection between the Wealthy Street bicycle lane, the Oxford Trail, and the Wealthy Street bridge. Improve pedestrian infrastructure on Wealthy Street across the length of the bridge (see **Wealthy Street Bridge Street Sections**). City staff is actively investigating sturdy options for physical separation that can be placed on a bridge structure.
- Work to complete connections to the Grand River Greenway throughout neighborhood.

**EXISTING SECTION - WEALTHY STREET BRIDGE****PROPOSED SECTION - WEALTHY STREET BRIDGE****RENDERING OF PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS ALONG THE OXFORD TRAIL JUST SOUTH OF THE BUTTERWORTH STUDY AREA**

Source: Department of Parks and Recreation



## BICYCLE ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS



### Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Existing Trail
- Existing Bike Facility
- Proposed Trail
- Proposed New/Improved Bike Facility
- Priority Improvement
- Existing Trailhead Improvement
- Potential New Trailhead & Connection

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GOAL 04:

# BEAUTIFUL NEIGHBORHOODS AND HEALTHY, ACTIVE COMMUNITY SPACES

## RECOMMENDATIONS

## 10

**EXPLORE ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING AND ONGOING STEWARDSHIP OF WESTOWN COMMONS PARK.**

Westown Commons Park is a valued community asset and the only public park in the Butterworth area. Recent improvements to the park include a new shade pavilion and the replacement of an abandoned wading pool with a skate park serving neighborhood youth. Neighbors are actively involved in stewardship of the park and the park is part of the Adopt-A-Park program, an initiative of the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks that engages volunteers to host at least one beautification event or activation per quarter.

The existing support for maintenance through the City and the Adopt-A-Park program should continue, but larger maintenance issues beyond the ability of volunteers should be noted and addressed appropriately.

Butterworth residents expressed a desire to have more support for programming and partnership-building, noting that there is a notable gap in activities for teens and pre-teens. Activities like outdoor movie nights could help attract a broader audience, but would also require the support of small grants. Many neighborhood parks host a series of yearly programs for between \$1,000 - \$5,000 annually, amounts that could be raised through local fundraising or small grants. Additionally, partnering with outside organizations to host programming at the park or other facilities is another way to activate, and increase access to, public spaces. These organizations could include local non-profits, artists, and schools.



Westown Commons Park.

**CASE STUDY:** Green for the Greater Good at Rodney Reservoir (Wilmington, DE) is a volunteer-run organization focused on advocating for Rodney Reservoir, a 4-acre abandoned water reservoir in the heart of Wilmington's Hilltop neighborhood. The organization, in partnership with community members, has led efforts to redevelop the park as a neighborhood amenity through a community-driven design process. In addition, Green for the Greater Good has established partnerships with residents, volunteers, and organizations such as West Side Grows Together, Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids, and local schools to develop environmental programming and a learning curriculum around the park's currently active community garden.

*Below: Children from the Lewis Dual Language Elementary School in the West Side participate in the Education Cultivation Program at the Rodney Reservoir community garden.*

*Source: Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids*





## 11

**FOSTER PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.**

New neighborhood public spaces would enhance the variety and quality of gathering areas for the community, and could be either publicly or privately owned and operated via agreements with the City. Opportunities include:

**The abandoned rail right-of-way** that cuts diagonally through Butterworth from Fulton Street to Wealthy Street is currently occupied by parking, vacant lots, and industrial storage. In the long term, this land is intended for an extension of Seward Avenue to Wealthy Street. However, with no funding in place, these blocks are unlikely to change in the near term. Some blocks could be repurposed temporarily to add unique green spaces, neighborhood amenities, and space to showcase art and other products produced by local artists and makers. Additional blocks could also be used for other temporary installations or greening initiatives.

Here are just a few ideas for how the space could be used:

- Community gardens
- Wildflower meadow
- Programmed space
- Mulch path and plantings
- Play space for children
- Picnic tables and grills

**The lawn in front of the Goei Center** offers the possibility of a unique public space that fronts on Butterworth Street at a key commercial center, and could serve as additional outdoor space for events held at the Center. The existing loading dock area could be opened during events to create a strong connection between indoor event spaces and a new outdoor space.

**Public spaces that are part of future development/redevelopment projects** could also greatly add to the neighborhood's public space network. GVSU's campus expansion plans include a central campus green to replace the parking lot between Watson Street, Front Avenue, and Fulton Street. Additional public space opportunities to be explored in future redevelopment projects include the entrance to the Grand Rapids Swing Bridge located near the intersection of Front Avenue and Emperor Street, which is planned to become a pedestrian and bicycle connection in the Bicycle Action Plan that connects to the river walk. The development of the Oxford Trail/Factory Yards presents an opportunity to add a trail linkage through that property via trail/utility easements.



*An empty lot outside the Goei Center.*



*Rail right-of-way outside the Tanglefoot building.*



*Potential pedestrian and bicycle connection over the Grand River on the Swing Bridge.*

## 12

**INCREASE THE TREE CANOPY AS THE INNOVATION CENTER DEVELOPS.**

Urban trees play an important role in creating a healthy environment for the city and its residents. They clean the air, help with stormwater issues, and create shade to cool the urban heat island effect. Residential streets within Butterworth have good tree coverage on both private yards and along curbs, but the riverfront is lacking due to its industrial history. As the district changes, a concerted effort should be made to add additional tree coverage by taking the following steps:

- Work with GVSU to ensure trees are added to existing properties and future development plans.
- Include street trees along any new streets created to serve Innovation Center uses.
- Plant trees within City owned properties and parking lots.
- Engage with existing property owners to partner with local tree planting organizations.
- Mandate tree planting requirements within Innovation Center designations.



*Extensive tree coverage within residential streets.*



*Extensive tree coverage within residential streets.*



*Minimal tree coverage on surface parking lots and industrial properties near the river.*

# DRAFT

# FUTURE SCENARIOS, ZONING AND IMPLEMENTATION



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## FUTURE SCENARIOS, ZONING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations set the stage for future changes. The final section of this Area Specific Plan outlines the potential impact of these recommendations across Butterworth and how to implement them. This section is divided into the following parts:

### **Future Development Scenarios:**

This section graphically depicts how many of the recommendations around the built environment and housing could look on typical blocks within Butterworth. It includes a variety of developments that add housing in a contextual way, mixed-use developments that support commercial corridors, and larger-scale developments on formerly industrial areas.

### **Site-Specific Improvements:**

While the future development scenarios illustrate potential futures on typical blocks, this section focuses on specific areas within Butterworth, showcasing what the recommendations could look like across different goal areas. The primary areas of focus are the industrial zones near the river and Butterworth Street and adjacent blocks, which are most likely to undergo changes.

### **Future Character Areas and Zoning:**

The CMP identifies future character areas across the city, often requiring zoning changes to achieve the desired character. This section includes a map and associated chart to help navigate potential zoning changes.

### **Implementation:**

This matrix identifies potential partnerships needed to accomplish the specific recommendations outlined in the plan.

DRAFT

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

### REDEVELOP THE RIVERFRONT AS AN INNOVATION CENTER.

Please see  
RECOMMENDATION 4  
for more details

Repurposing of small scale industrial buildings for new businesses

Adaptive reuse of existing buildings

Ground floor commercial

Upper floor residential

Ground floor maker space

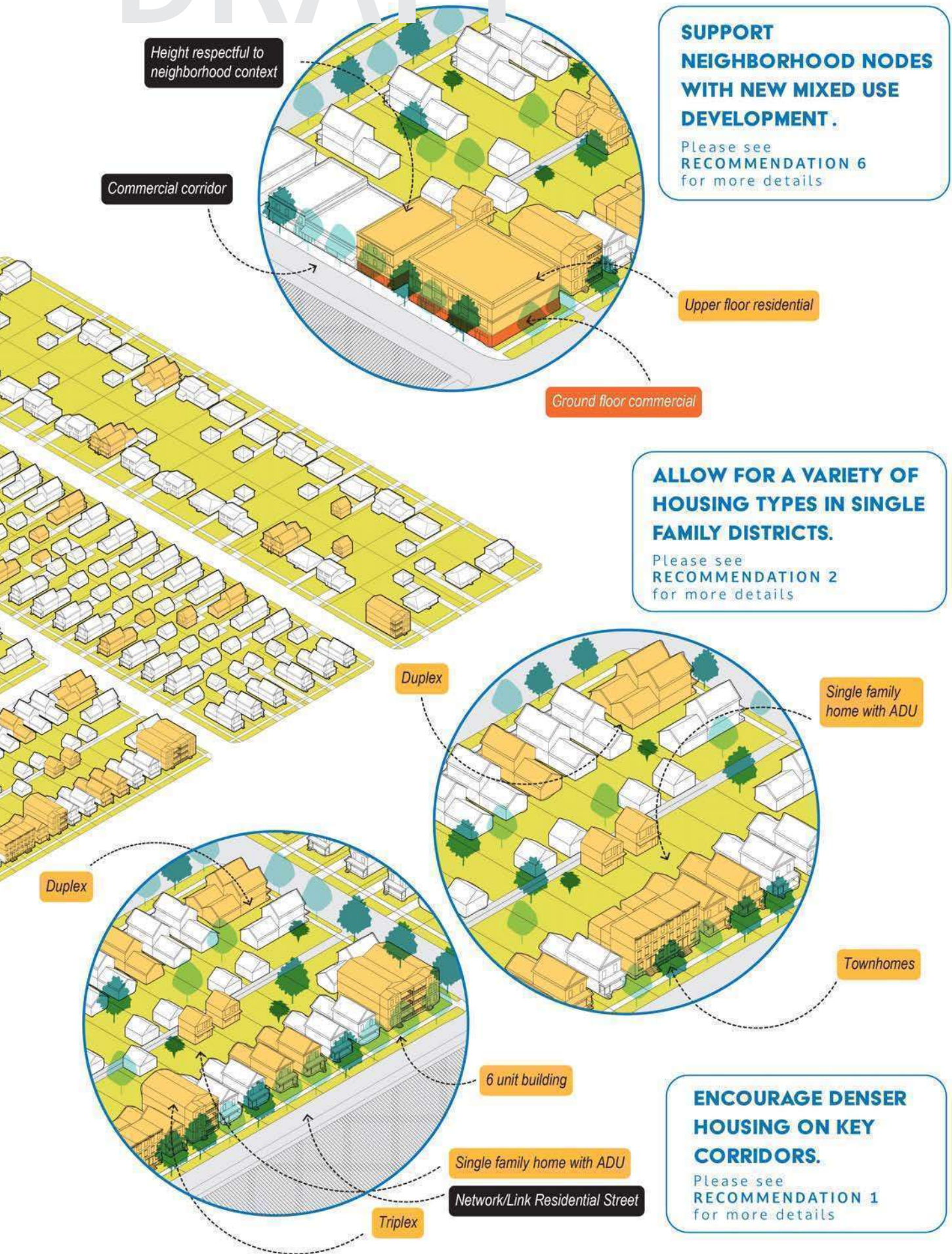
### ENCOURAGE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU) WITHIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Please see  
RECOMMENDATION 2  
for more details

Existing alley

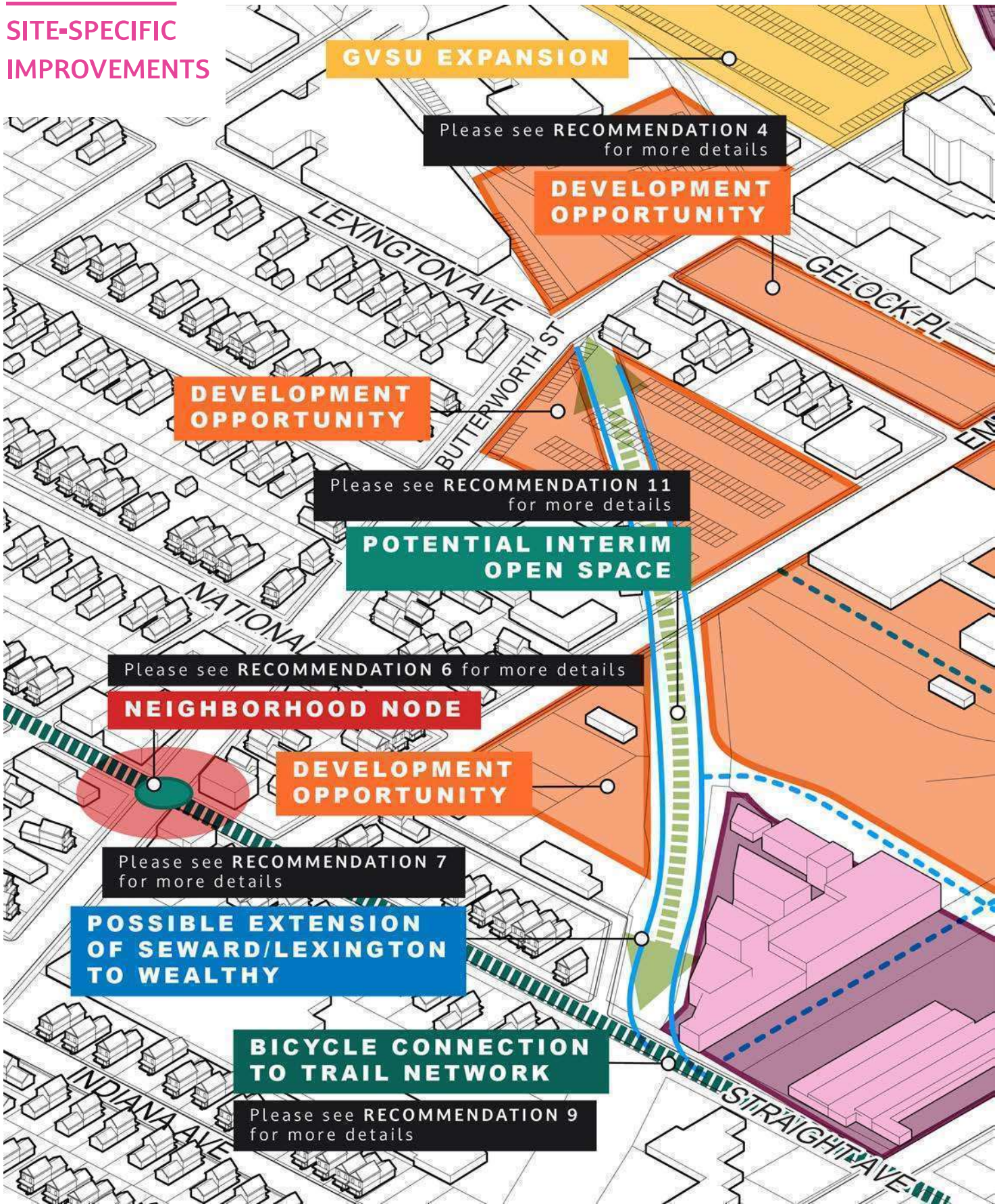
ADUs clustered on existing alley



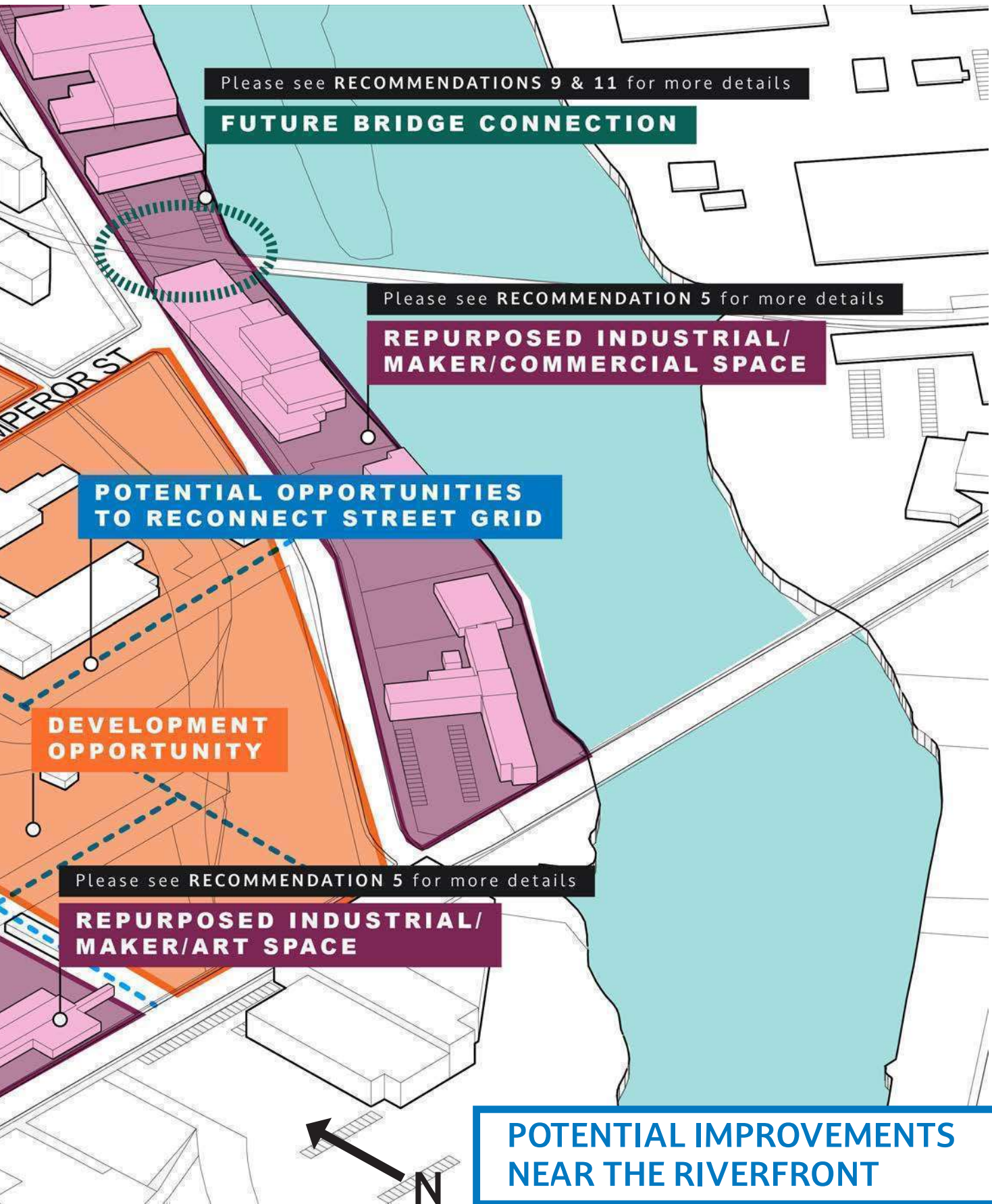




## SITE-SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS

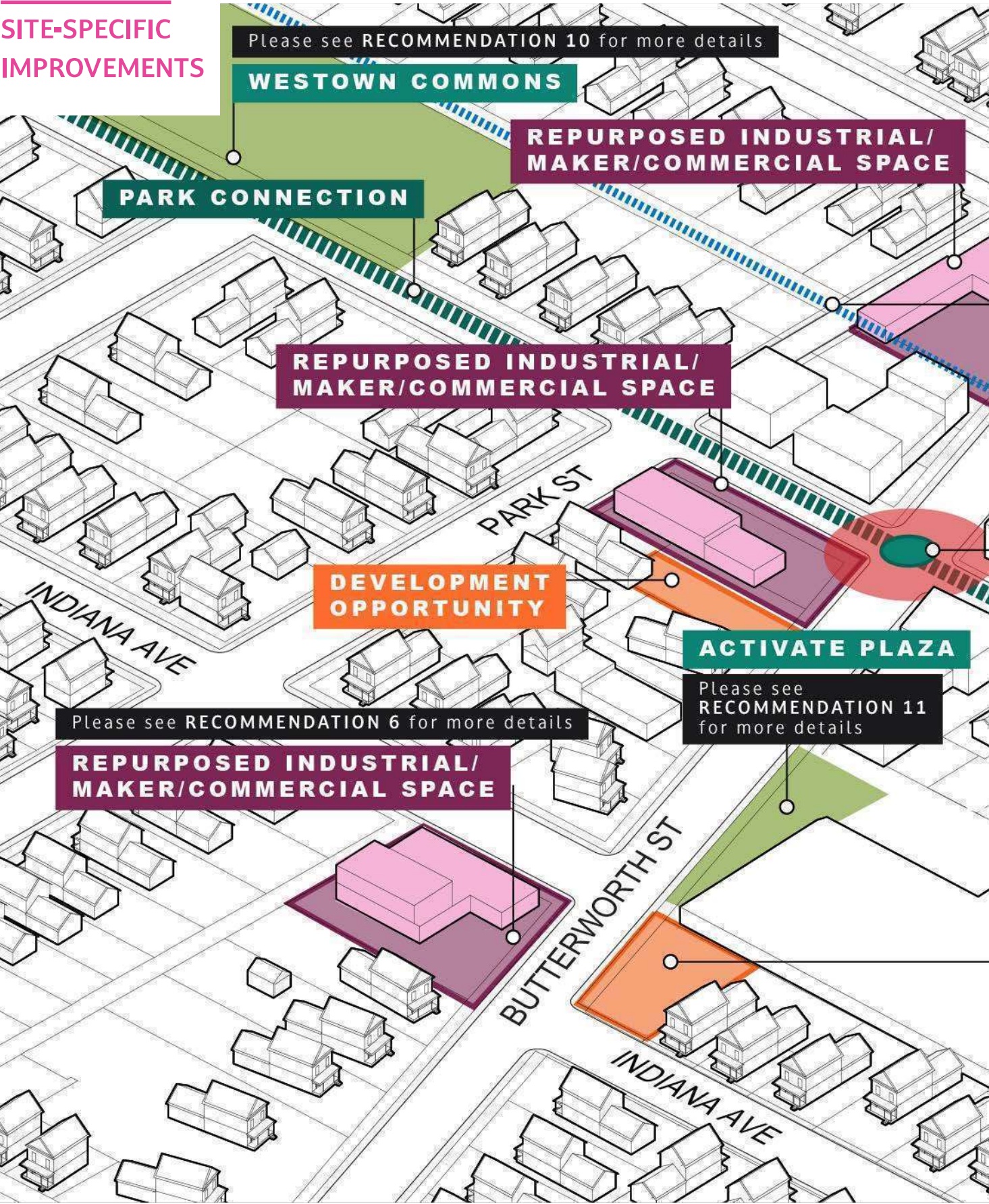




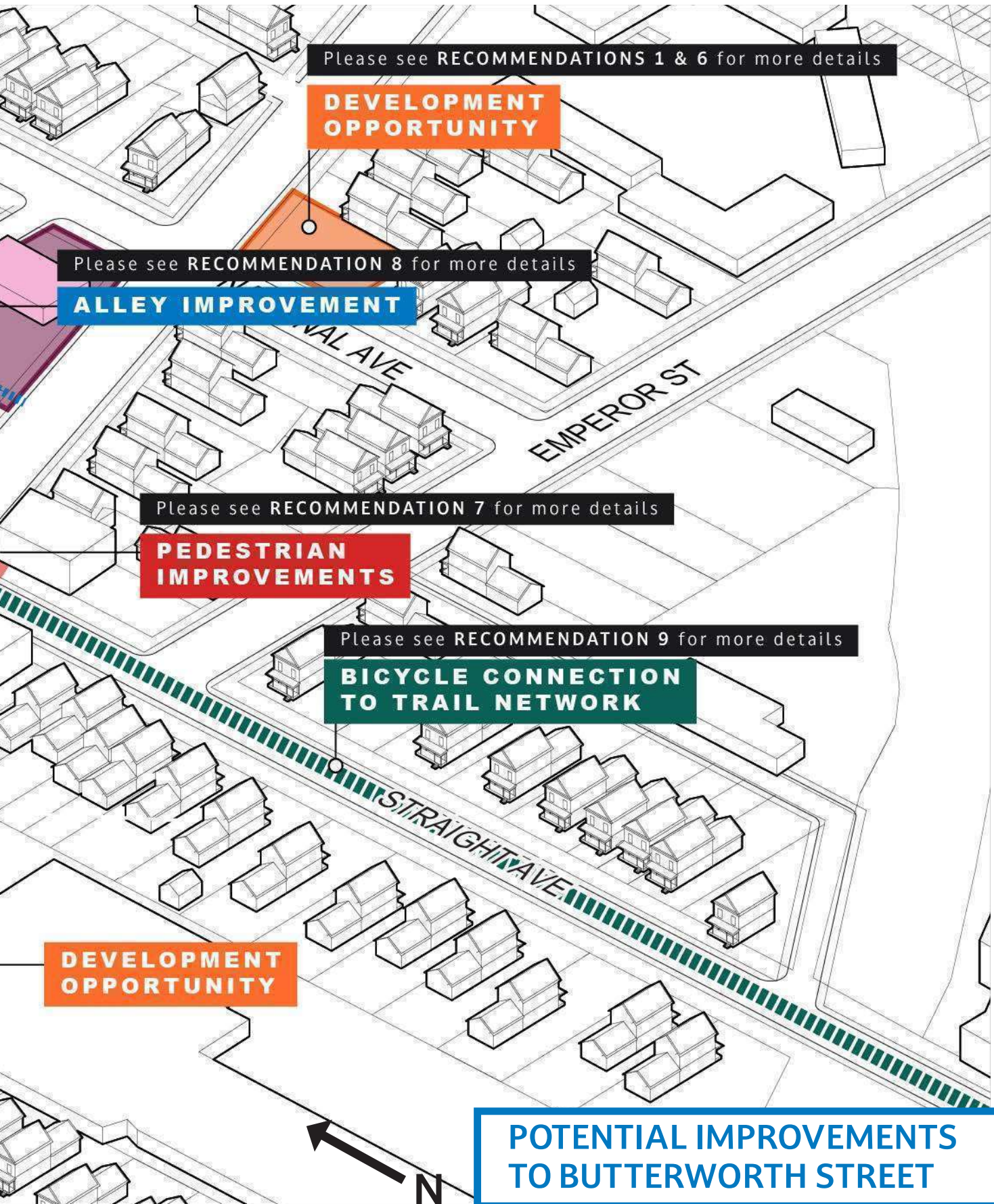




SITE-SPECIFIC  
IMPROVEMENTS



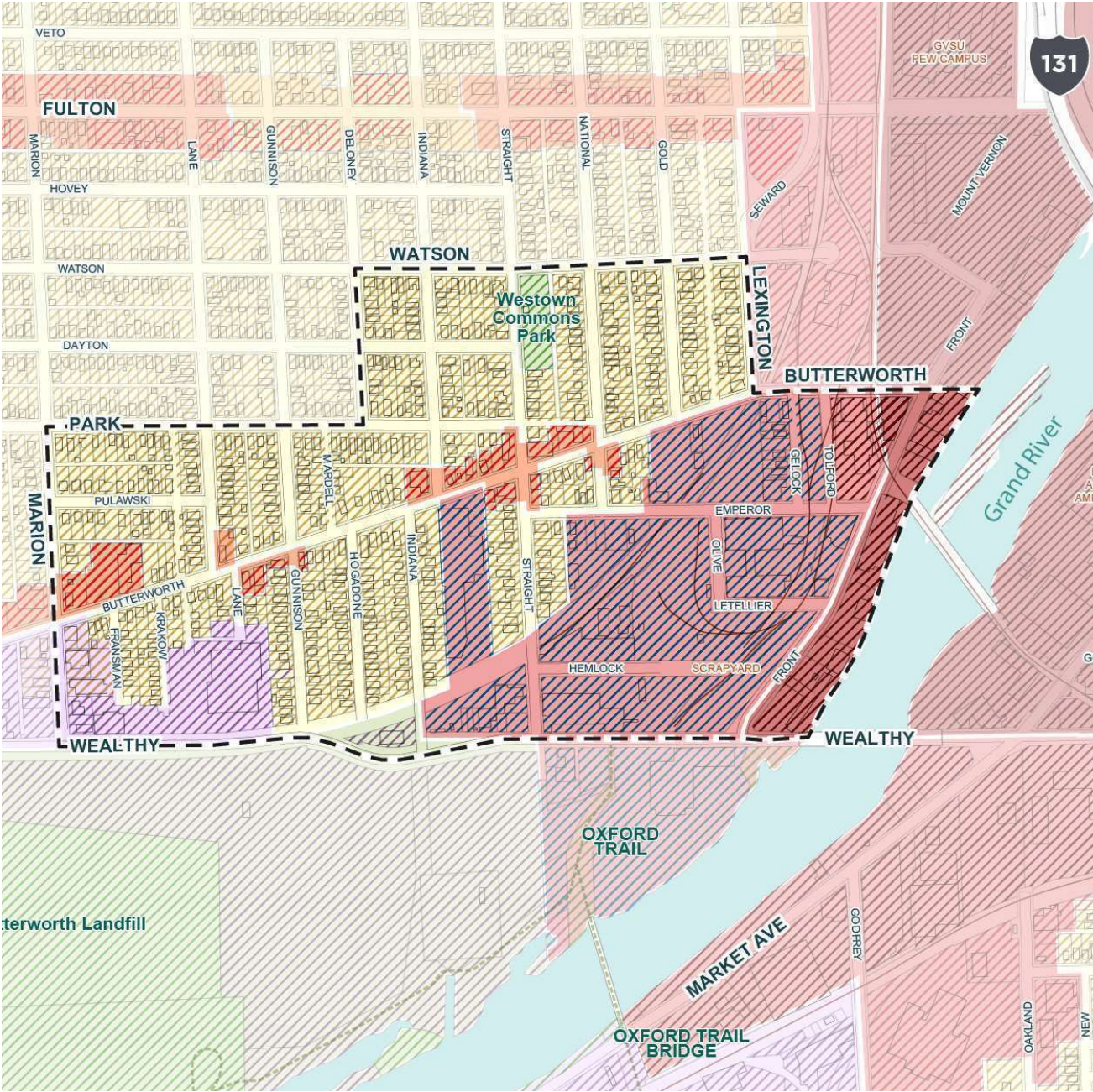






FUTURE DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER AND ZONING

RELATIONSHIP TO ZONING



Legend

Future Character Areas

- Downtown
- Neighborhood Center
- Compact Neighborhood
- Transitional Activity Center
- Campus
- Innovation Center
- Parks & Open Spaces
- Manufacturing & Logistics

Existing Zoning

- LDR - Low Density Residential
- MDR - Mixed Density Residential
- TBA - Traditional Business Area
- TCC - Transitional City Center
- CC - City Center
- IT - Industrial-Transportation
- OS - Open Space
- PRD - Planned Redevelopment District

**Downtown****Appropriate Zoning Districts:**

- City Center

**Neighborhood Center****Appropriate Zoning Districts:**

- Traditional Business Area
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Transit Oriented Development

**Compact Neighborhood****Appropriate Zoning Districts:**

- Mixed-Density Residential
- Low-Density Residential
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Planned Redevelopment

**Innovation Center****Appropriate Zoning Districts:**

- Transitional City Center
- Commercial
- Transit Oriented Development
- Mixed-Density Residential
- Planned Redevelopment

**Manufacturing and Logistics****Appropriate Zoning Districts:**

- Industrial - Transportation
- Commercial
- Planned Redevelopment

**Parks****Appropriate Zoning Districts:**

- Open Space

The **Future Character Map** and **Zoning Map** serve different purposes for the City.

**Future Character Map:** This map is a visionary tool that outlines the intended use of land in the future, reflecting the community's long-term goals and aspirations. It is part of a Community Master Plan and guides future development, informing decisions about growth and land use changes.

**Zoning Map:** This map is a regulatory tool that defines the current legal use of land, specifying what can be built and how land can be used right now. It divides the city into zones, each with its own set of rules and regulations regarding building types, densities, and uses.

In essence, the **Future Character Map** provides a guide for future development, while the **Zoning Map** enforces current land use regulations. The City will need to update its zoning to achieve this vision, and this zoning plan may help coordinate between existing zoning classifications and desired outcomes.



## IMPLEMENTATION

Action	Category	Timeframe	Responsibility - City Departments	Responsibility - External Partners
<b>GOAL 01: SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT</b>				
1. ALLOW FOR DENSER HOUSING ON KEY CORRIDORS.	R	S	Planning	
2. ALLOW FOR A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES IN SINGLE FAMILY DISTRICTS.	R	S	Planning	
3. SUPPORT EXISTING HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS.	P	S	Planning, Community Development Department	
<b>GOAL 02: A VIBRANT &amp; THRIVING BUSINESS COMMUNITY</b>				
4. REDEVELOP THE RIVERFRONT AS AN INNOVATION CENTER.	R	S	Planning, Economic Development	
5. ADAPTIVE REUSE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS WITH AN ART/MAKER FOCUS.	R, C	M	Planning, Engineering, MobileGR	
6. SUPPORT BUTTERWORTH STREET AS A NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR.	R, P	S	Planning, Economic Development	
<b>GOAL 03: SAFER, WALKABLE &amp; BIKEABLE STREETS</b>				
7. IMPROVE BUTTERWORTH FOR PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS.	C	M, L	Engineering, MobileGR	
8. DEVELOP ALLEYS AS AN ALTERNATIVE PEDESTRIAN NETWORK AND COMMUNITY SPACE.	C, O	M, L	Planning, MobileGR, Engineering, Public Works	
9. IMPROVE EXISTING TRAIL AND BICYCLE CONNECTIONS WITHIN NEIGHBORHOOD.	C	Ongoing	Engineering, MobileGR, Parks and Rec, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.	Kent County

Action	Category	Timeframe	Responsibility - City Departments	Responsibility - External Partners
<b>GOAL 04: BEAUTIFUL NEIGHBORHOODS &amp; HEALTHY, ACTIVE COMMUNITY SPACES</b>				
10. EXPLORE ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING AND ONGOING STEWARDSHIP OF WESTOWN COMMONS PARK.	P	S	Special Events, Parks and Rec	<b>John Ball Area Neighbors, Friends of GR Parks</b>
11. IDENTIFY NEW PUBLIC SPACE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.	C, O	M	<b>Engineering, MobileGR, Parks and Rec</b>	Property Owners
12. INCREASE THE TREE CANOPY AS THE INNOVATION CENTER DEVELOPS.	R, P	M, L	<b>Planning</b> , Economic Development	GVSU, Friends of GR Parks, JBAN

#### CATEGORIES

**R:** Regulations: Actions that could be implemented through the Framework zoning ordinance rewrite or other update to city ordinances.

**C:** Capital Project: Physical improvements to city facilities and infrastructure.

**P:** Program: Programs or initiatives that may require some ongoing City support or participation.

**O:** Policy: Direction used on an ongoing basis to guide City decisions.

#### TIMEFRAME

**S:** Short-term (1-5 years)

**M:** Medium-term (5-10 years)

**L:** Long-term (10-20 years)

**Bold text** indicates who is leading the effort

