

Alpena Downtown
Development Authority

2017 Downtown Strategic Plan and Market Analysis



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Through the MEDC's RRC® Program



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- City of Alpena
- MEDC
- Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce, including the Economic Development arm
- Alpena Convention & Visitors Bureau

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A. Introduction

This plan serves as an update to the 2003 Market Analysis and Downtown Strategic Plan and provides the basis for amendments to the DDA Development Plan project list, last amended in 2004. The focus of this downtown plan update was to provide a new market analysis, evaluate parking and one-way streets, and provide overall recommendations on urban design. This plan was funded by the Alpena Downtown Development Authority and the MEDC as part of the Redevelopment Ready Communities® program.

Process

The consultant team conducted stakeholder interviews and a resident survey in the spring of 2016 and hosted an Expert Summit in the summer of 2016 providing results of their market and transportation analyses and the latest best practices. Then the City and DDA met with representatives from MDOT to discuss the feasibility of converting one-way streets to two-way.

Purpose Of The Downtown Development Authority Act

Act 179 of Public Acts of 1975, as amended, of the State of Michigan, commonly referred to as the Downtown Development Authority Act, was created in part to correct and prevent deterioration within business districts; to promote economic growth and revitalization; to encourage commercial revitalization and historic preservation; to authorize the acquisition and disposal of interests in real and personal property; to authorize the creation of a downtown development authority board; to authorize the levy and collection of taxes, the issuance of bonds and the use of tax increment financing in the accomplishment of specific development activities contained in locally-adopted development plans.

The Act seeks to attack problems of urban decline, strengthen existing areas and encourage new private developments in Michigan downtowns. It seeks to accomplish this goal by providing communities with the necessary legal, monetary and organizational tools to revitalize economically distressed areas either through public-initiated projects or in concert with privately motivated development projects. The manner in which downtown development authorities choose to make use of these tools does, of course, depend on the problems and opportunities facing each particular redevelopment area and the development priorities sought by the community and board in the revitalization of its area.

Creation of the Downtown Development Authority

On April 21, 1980 the City Council of the City of Alpena adopted Ordinance No. 110, creating a Downtown Development Authority under Public Act 179 of 1975, and designating the boundaries of the Authority district within which the Authority will exercise its powers. The 1980 district included the core downtown area within an area generally bounded by Fifth Avenue, Thunder Bay River, Fletcher Street, and Sable Street. In 1988, the downtown development authority district was expanded to include selective parcels along Washington and Fifth Streets. In 1989, the district was again expanded to include properties on the block of N. Second Street from Oldfield Street to Miller Street. And most recently, in 2003, the district was expanded to include the former Fletcher Paper Company property along the Thunder Bay River and Fletcher Street.

Previous Plans and Studies

- DDA Development Plan, 1981, as amended 1986, 2004
- Downtown-Waterfront Linkage Plan, 1991
- Comprehensive Plan
- Zoning Ordinance
- Downtown Traffic Circulation Alternatives, 1999
- Market Analysis and Downtown Strategic Plan, 2003 (Beckett & Raeder)
- Plaza Parking Impact Study, 2013 (Gibbs Planning Group)
- Plaza PlacePlan Report, 2013, (MSU Extension/MML)
- Alpena County Target Market Analysis, 2015 (LandUse | USA)



Downtown Framework Plan

B. Market Analysis Executive Summary

Introduction

- Downtown's assets include underutilized and underdeveloped land, a number of recognized food establishments, ample waterfront frontage, and a variety of new and planned commercial and housing investments in addition to a growing arts community and low first-floor vacancies.
- Issues include low achievable commercial rent levels and dispersed development and activity along the waterfront, along with signs of non-residential disinvestment contributing to investment uncertainty.

Methodology and Household Survey

A Market Assessment was developed through a combined approach of gathering information through independent research, stakeholder interviews, demand forecasting, and cluster analysis. A survey was also conducted across 550 Alpena households to evaluate consumer attitudes and behavior patterns. Key findings from the survey include the following:

- About 90% of households frequent large chains (Meijer, Neiman's or WalMart) for grocery purchases.
- Non-chain food service establishments are preferred by Alpena residents eating lunch or dinner outside the home.
- More than half of residents make online purchases twice per month, while one quarter make online purchases at least once per week.
- While a majority of patrons express favorable views towards their ability to safely walk around downtown, the majority view convenience of parking and shopping options less favorably.

Analysis

- Overall Economy- natural resource & extraction, wholesaling, transportation & logistics, medical, retail, and recreation & entertainment were all identified as weak sector groups compared to similar communities.
- R&D Potential- Alpena has rich opportunities for wildlife and natural resources research in the area surrounding Thunder Bay River, particularly in relation to the NOAA International Research laboratory and Northern Michigan Unmanned Aerial Systems Consortium. The area's prevalent agricultural sector has potential for an increased R&D sector, particularly in pharmaceuticals and food systems research.
- Housing- While the recession contributed to a significant decline in new housing builds, the majority of those few annual new building permits issued continue to be for single-family dwellings as opposed to attached residential. Without the attraction of one or more large employment generators, major shifts in the current residential permitting pattern remain unlikely. An increasing share of the Alpena area and larger market residents desire a different housing pattern in the future which Downtown can provide. Creating the desired active walkable environment and housing downtown may facilitate the purchase of existing homes by young child-bearing age families elsewhere in Alpena.

The complete Market Analysis is provided as a separate appendix to this plan.

Alpena Household Survey, By The Numbers:

\$110 Average spending on groceries each week

40% purchase fresh products from local vendors

\$50-75K Average income of most frequent downtown patrons

\$84K Mean Household Income

Housing Analysis, By the Numbers:

31% of those surveyed said they were likely to move in the next five years

\$850 /month on average for rent or mortgage

>55 yrs with incomes \$50-75K, \$75-100K & \$100K+ as greatest demand segments for market rate housing

54-94 estimated new market rate units by end of 2026

- **Non-retail Goods & Services Space-** In addition to traditional non-retail goods and service related office space, there is untapped potential for new industrial/emerging tech uses that can be safely integrated into a modern living environment. It is anticipated Downtown can capture between 56,000-69,000 square feet of traditional non-retail space by 2020 alone, with as much as double that amount of occupied space through capitalizing on uses associated with emerging technologies.
- **Commercial Demand and Retail Spending-** market activity is comprised of both locals who live and spend money in the area, and those who live outside the area but choose to spend money here. Downtown Alpena is expected to be able to capture roughly 250,000 square feet of retail goods and related services.
- **Entertainment Spending-** Area residents spend an estimated \$48 million on entertainment activities annually, roughly 15% of which includes spending associated with food service such as live music performances, smaller clubs, and similar venues.

Cluster Analysis

A cluster analysis was conducted to identify under-represented businesses in the Alpena market. The analysis compared Alpena County and Downtown zip code areas to other counties and zip code areas with comparable demographics, transportation networks and locations. The cluster analysis describes the types of uses the market evaluation suggests could be more successful than others. This is a static analysis, meaning it was done at a particular time. The market is dynamic and will change based on many factors including how new and existing businesses respond to the market potential. Some of the current business operators may have insight on which uses on the list seem to have the best potential, based on their more intimate knowledge of customer preferences and competition in other towns (or online). The City and DDA can use the market analysis to help existing business operators see potential to expand their services to those on these lists, and in promotional efforts to attract new businesses.

- **Natural Resource & Extraction.** (Including Timber Tract Operations; Forest Nurseries and Gathering of Forest Products; Logging; Soil Preparation, Planting, and Cultivating; Support Activities for Forestry; Crude Petroleum and Natural Gas Extraction; Crushed and Broken Limestone Mining and Quarrying; Other Crushed and Broken Stone Mining and Quarrying; Support Activities for Oil and Gas Operations; Sawmills; Reconstituted Wood Product Manufacturing; Wood Window and Door Manufacturing; Wood Container and Pallet Manufacturing; and All Other Miscellaneous Wood Product Manufacturing.)
- **Wholesaling.** (Including Motor Vehicle Supplies and New Parts Merchant Wholesalers; Brick, Stone, and Related Construction Material Merchant Wholesalers; Office Equipment Merchant Wholesalers; Other Commercial Equipment Merchant Wholesalers; Other Professional Equipment and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers; Metal Service Centers and Other Metal Merchant Wholesalers; Industrial Machinery and Equipment Merchant Wholesalers; Industrial Supplies Merchant Wholesalers; Service Establishment

- Downtown Alpena is expected to be able to capture roughly 250,000 square feet of retail goods and related services space.
- Downtown can capture between 56,000 and 69,000 square feet of traditional non-retail goods and related service office space
- Downtown can recruit and incentivize emerging technology driven activity such as 3D printing or additional R & D which will also occupy "office" space, the amount of potential space essentially doubles to 15,000 to 141,000 square feet.

Equipment and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers; Other Miscellaneous Durable Goods Merchant Wholesalers; Confectionery Merchant Wholesalers; Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Merchant Wholesalers; Other Grocery and Related Products Merchant Wholesalers; Other Chemical and Allied Products Merchant Wholesalers; Petroleum Bulk Stations and Terminals; Tobacco and Tobacco Product Merchant Wholesalers; Other Miscellaneous Nondurable Goods Merchant Wholesalers; and Machine Manufacturing.)

- **Transportation and Logistics.** (Including General Freight Trucking, Local; General Freight Trucking, Long-Distance, Less Than Truckload; Charter Bus Industry; Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Water; Other Airport Operations; Other Support Activities for Air Transportation; and Couriers and Express Delivery Services.)
- **Medical.** (Including Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists); Offices of Dentists; Offices of Optometrists; Kidney Dialysis Centers; Offices of All Other Miscellaneous Health Practitioners; Home Health Care Services; and Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly.)
- **Retail.** (Including Used Car Dealers; Automotive Parts and Accessories Stores; Outdoor Power Equipment Stores; Supermarkets and Other Grocery (except Convenience) Stores; Convenience Stores ; Fruit and Vegetable Markets; All Other Specialty Food Stores; Optical Goods Stores; All Other Health and Personal Care Stores; Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores; Children's and Infants' Clothing Stores; Family Clothing Stores; Clothing Accessories Stores; Other Clothing Stores; Shoe Stores; Jewelry Stores; Sporting Goods Stores; Hobby, Toy, and Game Stores; Musical Instrument and Supplies Stores; Office Supplies and Stationery Stores; Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages); Cafeterias, Grill Buffets, and Buffets; and Snack and Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars.)
- **Recreation and Entertainment.** (Such as Amusement Arcades, Marinas and Motion Picture Theaters except Drive-Ins.)

Opportunities Linked to Sites

In concert with the previously discussed analyses, a small number of downtown sites were highlighted as examples of opportunities for attracting synergistic development. Sites were chosen based on a variety of factors, including:

- Link activity on both sides of the river
- Strategic location near riverfront
- Opportunity to create enhanced linkages across the river
- Underutilized structures
- Critical mass for expanded activity

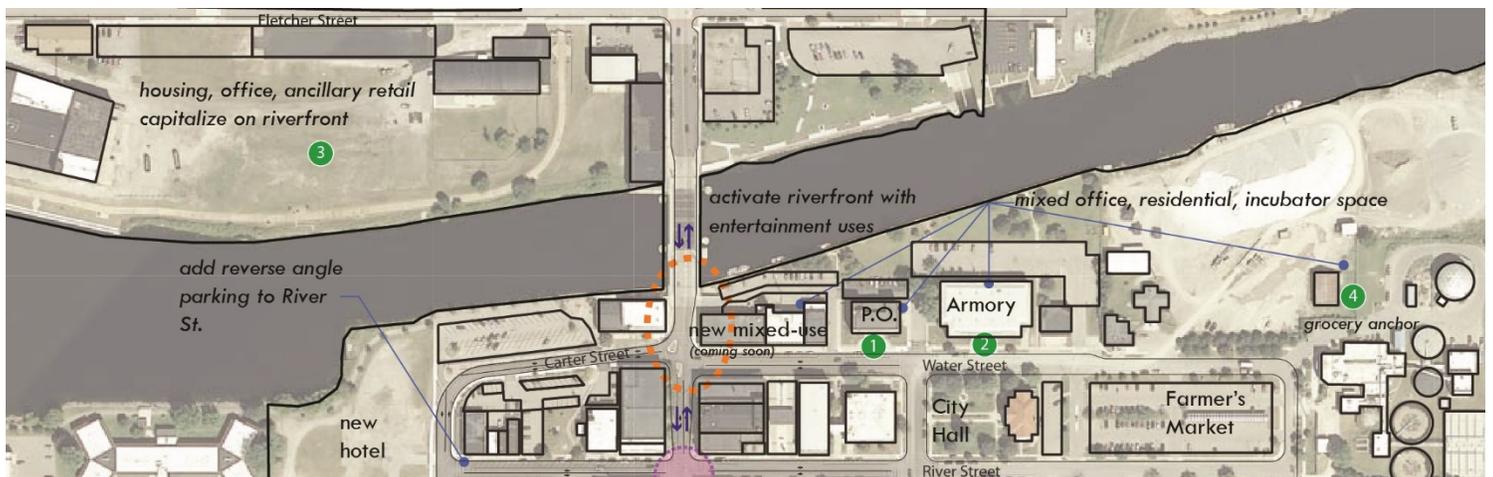
Site 1. This former post office is currently a single residence. The proposition of rehabilitating the existing structure merits further investigation considering its historic character. Conversion to either several

offices or housing units should be considered, as such reuse would not promote further retail sprawl. The former power company offices adjacent to the site is being demolished.

Site 2. Larger than Site 1, Site 2 (the former armory) is strategically located between Sites 1 and 4 and will provide a link between the "main street" area and a sizeable mass of activity on Site 4. Primary uses could be business-oriented incubator space or interior flex-type offices, housing, or a combination of the two.

Site 3. Located along the north riverfront, Site 3 provides the opportunity to link the current R & D/NOAA, diving and visitor attractions in the area with the core commercial downtown activity and new hotel. Redevelopment versus rehabilitation is likely to be most appropriate scenario to provide density of activity and related return on investment along with a quality pedestrian environment. The site is appropriate for mixed-use activity consisting of primarily housing and offices but not to the exclusion of retail on the first floor. Food service activity is ideal for the first floor and would strengthen the ties to nearby visitor and theater activity. The site may be capable of holding 10 or more housing and/or office units while providing ancillary retail. Redevelopment involving "terraced" structures or townhouse/duplex activity could take advantage of both the waterfront and street. Such terraced style development would allow first floor space to rent at a level below that associated with multi-storied street level structures with office on first floor.

Site 4. It is the largest of the four sites but also the site furthest from current "main street" activity. Because of its scale, there is potential for substantial mixed-use development. While adding substantial retail space on the site could detract from the viability of the "main street", limiting retail on the site to food service and specialty grocery space could serve to support the core downtown retail activity through synergistic marketing and opportunities for shared parking.



Economic Policy issues and recommended strategies

Six policy goals were identified as ideas for economic growth in downtown. These should serve as guiding principles for future development:

1. Promote strategies to retain current residents as they age, both Baby Boomers and young adults who grew up in the community.
2. Expand wellness and health care opportunities.
3. Provide for employment activity that meets the needs of current and future residents.
4. Capture growth opportunities (identified above) that will enhance short- and long-term viability of the community.
5. Expand the linkage between the water and adjacent land uses.
6. Provide a unique environment in which to live, operate businesses, produce products and recreate.

Accordingly, recommended strategies for achieving the goals are outlined as follows:

- Mitigate Dispersal of Retail- retail demand is best accommodated along “main street” in the traditional downtown core, and revisions to the zoning ordinance would prevent further dispersal from occurring. Retail would be limited on sites not located in the downtown core.
- Regulations to Support Tech Driven Business and Unique Housing Options. A key consideration is to ensure zoning regulations permit emerging tech uses and a variety of housing types.
- Recruitment and Public/Private Partnerships- Developer recruitment will be more cost-effective and less time-consuming than individual tenant recruitment for Downtown. Redevelopment of some parcels and development of other parcels may require partnerships between the current owners and others: someone to buy the property, and/or other investors to bring it to fruition. This may be necessary for many reasons including insufficient interests by current property owners, insufficient fiscal capacity, and inexperience. Recruiting other local and outside interests can result in purchase agreements, shared development of property with dual equity positions and other arrangements.

Alpena is fortunate enough to have significant industry interests with the fiscal capacity resulting in most if not all development being internalized. Well-respected local development experts can partner with the DDA to help address issues such as parking, walkability, and multi-story development to ensure a long-term focus is maintained towards developing the downtown area. If such partnerships cannot be formed locally then outside interests must be recruited.

- Elevator Assistance- It is not uncommon for public-private partnership efforts to close gaps between achievable revenue and costs of development. In downtown Alpena there is a previously noted gap between current residential rent levels and those necessary to provide a return on investment. Unique housing design and configurations and a mixing of uses on sites may require assistance to accommodate development beyond one or two stories. Elevator cost and maintenance can be a key “make or break” funding issue to accommodate desired site densities. Communities around the country have been creative in treating vertical movement much like horizontal movement: In some cases,

elevators have been considered part of the public infrastructure and can be funded as other infrastructure or amenities

- Enhanced Walkability for a “24/7, 365” downtown- Invest in making downtown and riverfront area sidewalks usable year-round as upfront costs will more than pay for themselves. This includes considering integrating technologies such as hydronic snow melt systems or geothermal energy and solar.
- Communication Systems Technology- High speed wireless internet connectivity should be considered essential infrastructure throughout downtown similar to roads, parking, water and other systems. There is emerging tested technology that is dramatically diminishing the cost of such infrastructure that is based on high-speed intensive, strategically placed outdoor modems.

C. Downtown Physical Assessment and Best Practices

1. Parking

Long-term viability of the downtown partially depends on the availability of conveniently located parking to serve employees, customers, residents, and visitors. Its availability can help ensure that customers can easily access businesses and help ease concerns for those who are not familiar with downtown.

Parking demands and needs also vary by season. For example, demand is higher in the peak summer months, whereas off-season demand for parking is lower. Parking should also be easy to find and understand for visitors. Similarly, parking management can vary seasonally. During the winter months, some seldom-used spaces can be used for snow storage. In places where parking dimensions are tight, some of those spaces might be summer season only parking.

Planning for parking in a downtown is different than for any other area. Aside from the fact that many downtown buildings predate the automobile, downtowns are intended to be compact, walkable, interactive, and visually attractive. Therefore, the provision of surface lots needs to be accomplished in a way that serves modern parking needs while protecting and furthering the overall vision for downtown.

Recommendations:

- There is opportunity to add both on- and off-street parking through restriping. The parking plan illustrates some of the places where parking could be added. The resulting spaces would be smaller than current sizes but still meet the nationally recommended dimensions.
- Reconfigure the parallel parking on the north side of River Street to “back-in” angled parking. This will almost double the on-street parking on that side, and is much safer than old-style parallel parking. In fact, due to safety considerations, the MI DOT has noted that any angled parking on a state route must be this type of back-in style. Parallel parking could be retained on the other side but should not be allowed in the winter since the dimensions are a bit tight. Back-in spaces should be 10 feet wide to ease maneuvering. The street is 45 feet wide which will accommodate the angled parking (15 feet deep) + 7 foot wide parallel parking + 11.5 foot wide travel lanes or 8 foot wide parallel spaces with 11 foot wide travel lanes).

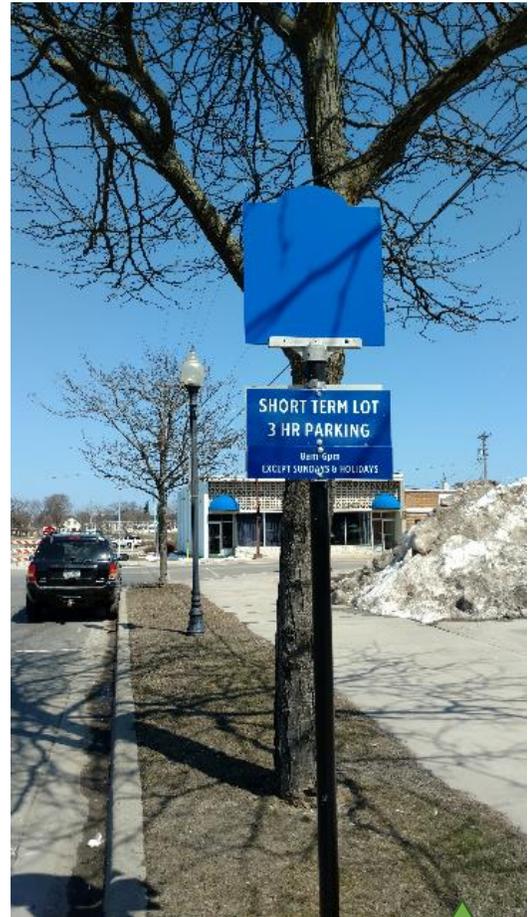
Parking Goals

- Balance supply and demand
- Easy to find
- Balance parking needs of offices and residences with shoppers
- Optimize on-street for high turnover
- Friendly enforcement
- Maximize current on- and off-street parking configurations

Getting used to back-in parking

In some towns, cards have been placed at downtown businesses explaining the new reverse angle parking. Others have had police officers hand out survey cards that explain the benefits and allow people to comment. If the city desires a trial period, tape could be used rather than paint stripes.

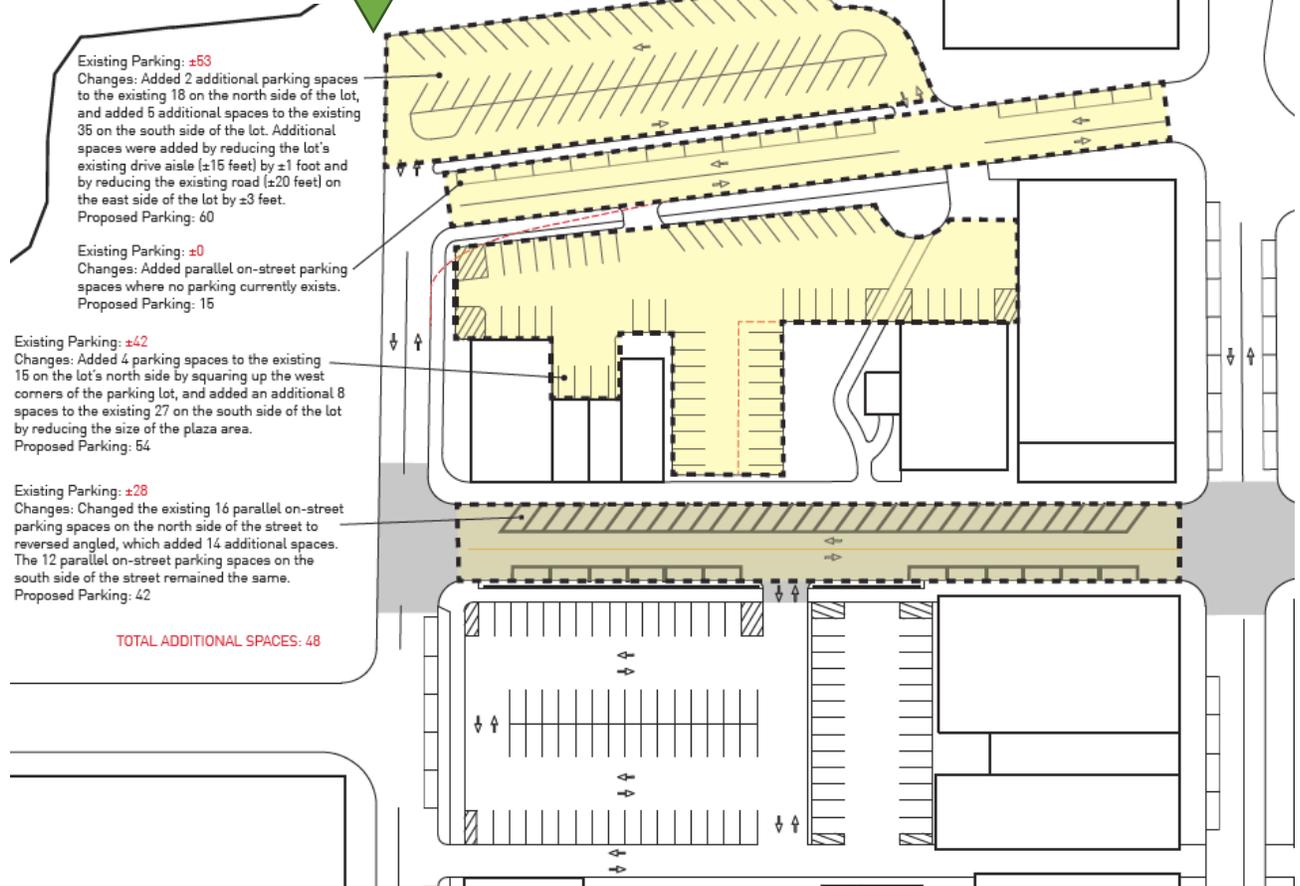
- The conversion of 2nd and 3rd Streets to two-way traffic will result in loss of some on-street parking. For example, some spaces close to the signalized intersections will reduce conflicts with traffic at the intersections. The drawing shows retention of most of the on-street spaces on both sides, though the width of the spaces and traffic lanes is close to the accepted minimum. The City may determine that parking on one side needs to be removed, at least until actual traffic patterns with the two-way can be observed. This plan provides a replacement for that lost parking and adds quite a bit more parking as well. The dimensions would be 7 foot-wide parallel parking + two 11 foot-wide travel lanes. These dimensions meet the typical minimums, though MDOT prefers 12 foot-wide lanes and 8 foot-wide parking spaces for their segments of the streets.
- On-street parallel parking should be delineated with “X” pavement markings between every third and fourth space to make pulling in and out easier, especially for those not comfortable with backing into a parallel parking space. This does not change the overall dimensions - the x's are marked at the ends of the typical 20+ foot parallel space.
- Though the parking lot signs are relatively new, the lettering is relatively small and can be difficult for passing motorists to read. Replace current parking lot signage to be larger, include hours of operations/fees if applicable, and include a diagram on a sign in the parking lot to distinguish open vs. permitted parking, or a sign in front of each “permitted only” space.
- Encourage employee or other long-term parking in surface lots to preserve on-street spaces for patrons. This can be done through 2 hour limits for on-street and allowance of all day parking for some of the space in the lots. The DDA should regularly remind business operators of the economic value of having high turnover of on-street parking spaces. Friendly enforcement should be used so that visitors do not have a bad experience. Examples of this include friendly reminders of the location of longer term parking on a window flyer instead of a ticket, a lower fine for immediate payment, and signs by on-street spaces directing motorists to longer term parking lots.
- Gradually replace parking lots on riverfront with mixed-use development that promotes the river as an asset.



Current public lots' signs aren't large enough for drivers to see

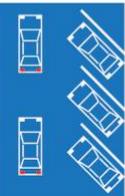
See the parking optimization plan on the following page

Parking Optimization Plan



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF REVERSE ANGLE PARKING?

SAFE UNLOADING



Vehicle doors open and direct passengers (especially children!) toward the sidewalk. Trunks are adjacent to the sidewalk to load/unload goods easily and safely. Handicap spaces can be placed adjacent to curb ramps.



SAFE EXIT



With improved visibility, drivers can see if any vehicles or bicycles are approaching before leaving the space. Vehicles exiting reverse angle spaces will also migrate more fluidly into traffic than standard "back-out" spaces.



2. Circulation

Streets are among the most important public infrastructure and placemaking elements of the city because they can define how a visitor, resident, or worker perceives the downtown or the city as a whole. While it is important that streets foster safe travel for vehicles, pedestrians and bikes, they must also be easy to navigate, look good, be inviting, and create the right impression. The elements that most influence how people react to the character and design of streets include right-of-way and street widths, pavement conditions, driveway placement, sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, traffic speeds, on-street parking, setbacks (the way buildings frame the street) and the presence (or lack thereof) of street trees.

In addition, though intersections need to be designed to accommodate truck turns, the downtown area should prioritize turning radii that put the pedestrian first. This means having tighter radii than you may find on streets with higher truck volumes. Radii around 25 feet can allow trucks to turn, but reduce speeds and the amount of pavement pedestrians cover to cross the street.

In combination, these factors contribute to the character of a given corridor and influence the perception of an entire district, such as the downtown.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen the connection to Old Town by making the bridge more pedestrian friendly with banners and continuous streetscape elements
- Convert one-way streets to two-way where possible to ease navigation
- During the plan process several business operators suggested heated sidewalks to ease snow removal. This type of system is expensive but if funding could be found, it would provide a significant benefit.
- Add a short median on Chisholm as an entry and traffic calming feature where the center turn lane is not needed for left turns or driveway access; it could be designed so that it is only installed during summer months.
- Pass a joint resolution with City Council in support of Complete Streets to strengthen the City's commitment to non-motorized travel when coordinating with MDOT on street improvements

Circulation Goals

- A transportation system that complements a walkable and vibrant downtown district
- Balance pedestrians/ bicyclists with cars/trucks to promote a Complete Streets system
- Park once and walk
- Ensure the walk is pleasant, safe, and inviting
- Connect prime destinations: riverfront, City Hall, farmer's market, Bay View Park, downtown businesses



Providing safe, convenient, connected transportation alternatives to the automobile is a hallmark of a Complete Streets system

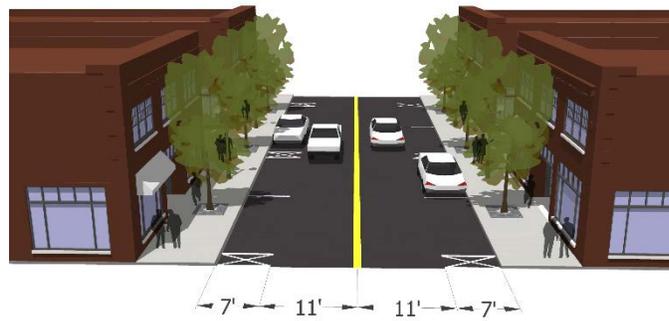
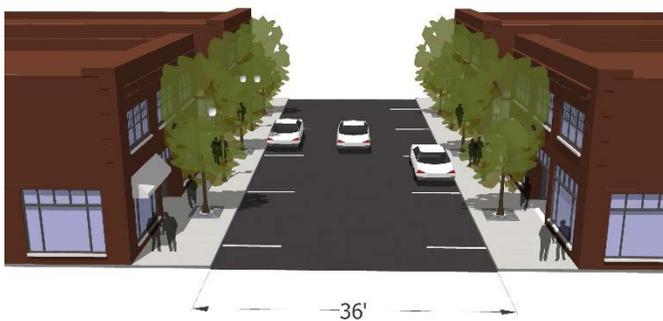
There are pros and cons with one-way vs. two-way downtown streets. Some of the key ones are noted below.

Existing: One-way

- Higher traffic capacity (though aside from a few peak weekend days, current volumes are well under capacity)
- Gives more room for on-street parking or bikes
- Pedestrians only look one way, yet still considered less walkable than two-way
- Provides more maneuvering room for trucks at intersections

Two-way Conversion

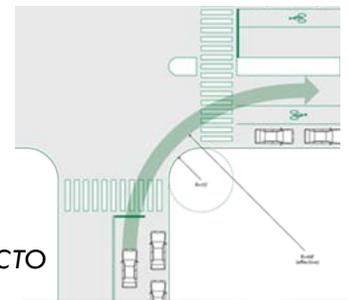
- Slower traffic, more walkable
- Easier to navigate to parking
- Easier to find businesses, especially for visitors
- Less on-street parking (removed at corners and potentially along one side of the street)
- More delays at intersections
- Cost of converting three-sided signals to four-sided



MDOT has jurisdiction of some of the streets and the City has jurisdiction over others. The City has been working toward a conversion of the one-way city streets to two-way. There was interest in making a similar conversion for the MDOT streets at the same time. This would make wayfinding throughout the downtown easier. MDOT staff expressed a willingness to consider changes but had concerns with accommodation for larger vehicles turning at the intersections. Reconstruction of a wide radii (up to a 65 foot radius was suggested compared to the standard downtown radius of 25 feet). Such a wide radius would accommodate trucks but would greatly increase the crossing distance for pedestrians and would likely require expensive right-of-way acquisition. In response to those concerns, the City undertook actual truck counts to see how many large trucks travel through the downtown. Counts on a typical summer weekday (8 AM-5PM) indicated only about one truck per hour turns onto or off 2nd and 3rd Streets (the through volume was relatively high at over 20 trucks per hour).

Suggested lane dimensions are national standards from AASHTO and ITE (lane width standard is 11-12 feet, 12 feet preferred for major truck or transit routes, no crash difference between the two). Standard parking width is 7-8 feet throughout Michigan and the U.S.

Options discussed including moving the state trunkline to a street that does not run through downtown, moving the stop bars to provide more space for trucks to turn, or changes to the intersection geometrics. One option that could provide more room for trucks without causing a less walkable downtown would be to install a flush curb, as shown in the photo at right. This type of curb provides additional room for larger trucks to turn without running up over a typical curb. But as shown on the photo, it still provides a clear locations for pedestrians to stand except for when a larger truck is turning. This type of curb is used in many Michigan downtowns.



Source: NACTO



Flush curbs could accommodate wide-turning trucks

3. Streetscape design

Successful downtowns have streets, sidewalks and public spaces that are geared toward creating quality environments for the pedestrian. These settings create memorable places – places where people want to linger, shop, recreate, and see other people enjoying themselves. A more walkable downtown Alpena will make an imprint on people and provide significant health benefits for its residents and an even more attractive visitor destination.

A traditional, pedestrian-friendly downtown is largely defined by the public realm created by well conceived buildings that line its sidewalks, parks, and public spaces. Downtown Alpena has a variety of buildings and well defined spaces that contribute to a positive pedestrian environment.

Some features, however, detract from that experience. Open surface parking lots, frequently spaced driveways, buildings with long stretches of blank walls. Providing a safe and comfortable interface between vehicles and the pedestrian is critical to maintaining a high level of comfort for the workers, residents, shoppers, and visitors within the downtown.

An extensive system of sidewalks is in place throughout downtown and can serve as the basis for expanding the connectivity to key features. Natural corridors such as the Thunder Bay River are logical links in a regional pathway system with the downtown as its hub.

Accessibility, clearing sidewalks of snow, seniors/those with disabilities need convenience of on-street parking and easy access to businesses...

Recommendations:

- Outdoor seating: Allow decks in parking spaces (while balancing outdoor seating with parking needs). Require fencing enclosure (rather than paint striping delineating the "alcohol zone")
- Provide parking lot screening with low knee walls, landscaping and fencing
- Replace crumbling brick pavers with stamped concrete for better longevity
- Refresh Culligan Plaza by removing concrete walls and adding outdoor furniture
- Encourage public art



Culligan Plaza could be modernized by removing concrete walls, adding movable summer furniture and planters to make it more flexible and accessible.



Public Art

Many cities throughout the country have adopted public arts programs recognizing the need for public support and contribution to the arts. Public art programs promote life-long participation and learning in the arts and integrate art into the urban environment. They provide opportunities for local and national, established and emerging artists in the area to celebrate the city's diversity.

Other cities nationwide have held design competitions for unique streetscape features, public works projects, and other "functional art," including custom bike racks, tree grates, storm drains, benches, garbage bins, light posts, and newspaper stands.



Functional art competitions can lead to creative parking meters and bike racks



4. Gateways

A gateway can be an entrance or a corridor leading to a particular destination. Typically, it is located where major streets or pedestrian pathways enter and exit a district. The initial visual impact of a gateway defines the overall perception about a particular area, neighborhood, or the entire community. It also announces arrival, defining the entry or limits of an area.

Gateways can be very simple and consist of just trees, a plane of grass, and an existing landmark building or they can be much more “structured” and include signs, landscaping, entrance walls, sculpture or other structural elements. Potential gateway treatments include:

- Consistent Welcome to Downtown Alpena signage.
- A tightly spaced copse of street trees to create a “closed-in” traffic calming atmosphere.
- Public art as a memorable community icon.
- Combination of trees, perennial and annual flowers, ground cover, and shrubs.
- A boulevard to incorporate gateway elements.
- Landmarks or public art to create distinction, focal points and enhance the entry experience.

The key is to develop a design theme that repeats itself at the various gateways so those entering feel a connection regardless of how they got there. Though not every element must be used at every entry point, a selection of several correlating elements should be used to maintain consistency.



The 3rd and Washington intersection could benefit from improved welcoming features such as signage, parking lot screening, landscaping, and enhanced crossings.

The State/Chisholm gateway provides an excellent opportunity for presenting a sense of arrival Downtown. Even while the dated shopping center remains, the streetscape could be livened up with signage and landscaping.



5. Facades

The DDA provides a façade grant program to encourage maintenance and restoration of historic facades. The design of new or renovated buildings should complement older historic building forms/styles. While these guidelines give guidance in terms of building style, form, size, color and materials, diversity is encouraged. The following building design considerations should be considered:

- Exterior design and details (color, architectural form, type and number of materials) should be applied to all building facades to achieve harmony and design continuity.
- Building facades that are visible from the street and portions of buildings that are visible to the public should be finished in a manner that is consistent with the front facade.
- Where the rear of the building is located near parking areas, well defined access to, and into, the building should be provided.
- Awnings and blade signs are encouraged to enhance the pedestrian streetscape.
- The first floor should be composed mostly of glass, balanced with less glass on upper stories.
- Transom windows that are blocked in or covered up should be opened and restored to their original appearance. New or renovated buildings should consider incorporating transom windows.
- Materials that give a false historic appearance should be avoided. Buildings should consist of durable, high quality materials. The primary building material should consist of brick or similar high quality material, with stucco, glass, or stone as accent materials. Fiberglass reinforced concrete, polymer plastic (fypon) or Exterior Insulation and Finishing Systems (EIFS) materials may be used only for accent purposes. Highly reflective materials are discouraged. Vinyl siding is strongly discouraged and wood siding should be used in combination with masonry. Material and/or color changes should generally occur where there is a change of plane along the building facade.
- Contemporary design is acceptable, but it should use traditional proportions and ratios of windows to wall area.
- Variation should be provided along facades visible by the public. Relief along the building plane can be provided through offsets or projections, architectural banding and/or vertical projections.



Recent façade improvements respect the historic character through quality building materials.

Blade signs, awnings, and inviting storefront windows significantly contribute to the Downtown pedestrian experience.



Historic facades that match their neighbors are likely hidden underneath these metal, vinyl, and wood paneled facades.



D. Action Plan

While the DDA is in a position to coordinate many of the plan's implementation tasks, responsibility should not solely rest on the DDA. Instead, the vast array of stakeholders having key roles in either the downtown or city as a whole should all participate. A collaborative partnership between the DDA and City will result in the most effective implementation of this plan. Partnerships extending to the public and private sector, including the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, MDOT, employers, and businesses will also lead to success implementing the plan's initiatives. Partnerships may range from sharing information to funding and shared promotions or services. The spirit of cooperation through alliances and partnerships will be sustained to benefit everyone in the city. Only through public/private collaboration can the plan's vision be realized.

The following actions outline the most appropriate strategies necessary to achieve the project goals and recommendations. These strategies range from policy changes to infrastructure investment. They are organized by subject so the three committees of the DDA and City have a short-list of tasks to work on in the coming years. The intent is that this project list will replace the project list in the existing DDA Development Plan.

Priority

- 1 Within One Year (or ongoing)
- 2 Commence within 1 - 2 Years
- 3 Within 3 Year to 5 Years

Project / Program Description		Priority	Responsible Party		Forecasted Cost
			Primary Party	Secondary Party	
Organizational Strategies					
By-Law Review	Annual Review of DDA By-Laws	2	DDA		
DDA Communications	Preparation of DDA communication materials including newsletters, sign boards, press releases, and weekly newspaper column.	1	DDA		\$5,000
Memberships	Maintain Memberships in downtown related organizations	1	DDA		\$550
Annual Strategic Planning Session	Conduct an annual strategic planning session with DDA Board to review progress on master plan and new projects	2	DDA		\$700
DDA Budget	Utilize DDA Budget and TIF revenues as local match for state and federal grants	2	DDA		
Partnerships	Continue working relationship with Chamber and Convention and Visitors Bureau	3	DDA	Chamber & CVB	
Training	Seek board development opportunities and training sessions quarterly	1	DDA		\$3,000
Council Liaison	Establish a formal DDA Liaison to City Council	1	CITY	DDA	
Complete Streets	Pass a joint resolution between the DDA and City Council supporting complete streets	1	DDA	CITY	
Design and Physical Improvement Strategies					
Façade Grant Program	Target grants to facades with greatest need - 5 projects a year	1	DDA	CITY	\$25,000

	Project / Program Description	Priority	Responsible Party		Forecasted Cost
			Primary Party	Secondary Party	
	Review Façade Grant Program scope of project eligibility	2	DDA		
Sign Grant Program	Develop grant program to encourage quality signs improvements - 2 projects per year	1	DDA	CITY	\$5,000
Streetscape and Parking Lot Improvements	Second Street Streetscape Improvements	1	CITY	DDA	\$2-4 mil
	Urban Parks and Plazas	2	CITY	DDA	\$50-100k
	Public Parking Lot Enhancements	2	CITY	DDA	\$3-5 mil
	Parking Structure	3	CITY	DDA	\$5-7mil
	Heated Sidewalks, begin at 2nd/Chisholm and gradually expand outward as streetscape improvements are undertaken	1	DDA	CITY	\$168,000
Enhanced crosswalks	Work with MDOT to install creative pavement treatments at key pedestrian nodes and gateways, and mid-block crossings	1	CITY	DDA & MDOT	
Economic Development Strategies					
Business Retention	Establish and implement a business retention program	1	DDA		\$25,000
Business Recruitment	Establish a business recruitment process	2	DDA	Econ. Dev't @ Chamber	\$25,000
Economic Development Fund	Continue to fund the Economic Development Fund to support or procure projects within the DDA	1	DDA		\$20,000
Land Acquisition	Acquire land for public purposes or to package redevelopment opportunities	1	DDA		\$1 mil
Update Downtown Parking Plan	Revise downtown parking plan to incorporate strategies for businesses' employees, residents, and patrons	2	DDA	CITY	\$31,000
Snow Removal	Partner with the City to educate owners on removal procedures and self-enforce snow removal, especially prior to heated sidewalk installation	1	DDA	CITY	
Property Information Packages	Assist in preparation of Property Information Packages to market available downtown properties for redevelopment or reoccupancy	1	Econ. Dev't @ Chamber	CITY & DDA	
Marketing and Promotion Strategies					
Marketing and Promotion Committee	Develop a consistent marketing message across all media	1	DDA		\$10,000
Web Site Maintenance	Continued maintenance of the Alpena DDA website	1	DDA		\$1,500

	Project / Program Description	Priority	Responsible Party		Forecasted Cost
			Primary Party	Secondary Party	
Banners	DDA contribution towards banners	1	DDA		\$5,000
Public Art	Create a public art commission and solicit competitions for custom streetscape amenities and art installations	2	DDA	CITY & MACNE	\$10,000
Cultural Events	Partner with civic groups to continue to promote festivals and events downtown	1	DDA		
					\$12-18 mil

City Actions		
Downtown Overlay Design Standards	Define major vs. minor rehabilitation and consider requiring sketch plan review of minor rehabilitation to encourage greater adherence to design standards	1
Residential	Allow attached residential by right outside of the downtown core to encourage more housing options in the Downtown	1
Provide Access Management Standards	Establish access management standards for on-site connections, shared drives, and driveway placement	2
Redevelopment Projects	Position DDA as a stakeholder in redevelopment projects	2
Two-Way Streets	Convert one-way streets to two-way streets with on-street parking (pavement stripping; signage; traffic signal revisions)	1
Outdoor Seating	Require decorative fencing of outdoor seating where liquor control is an issue	1
Office uses	Limit first-floor offices uses to outside the Downtown Core	2
Tech Uses	Consider permitting emerging technology/R&D industrial uses in the Downtown	2