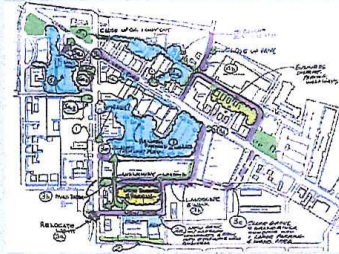
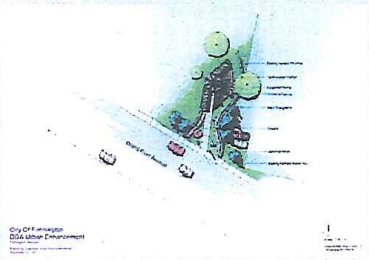
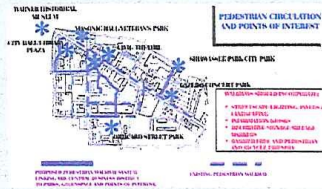


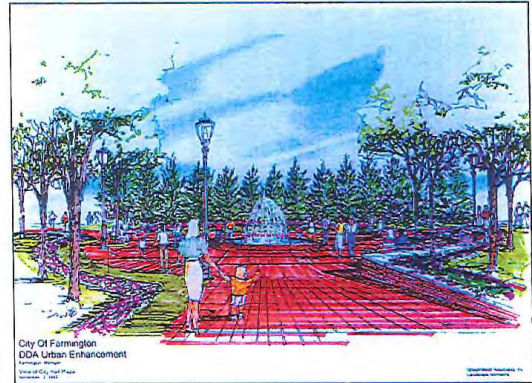
The City of Farmington  
23600 Liberty Street  
Farmington, Michigan 48335



# Farmington's Vision

## A Report of the Downtown Visioning Community Conference

The City of Farmington  
July 1998



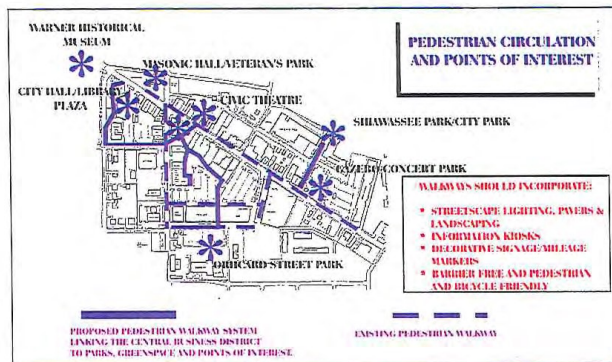
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## To The Farmington Community from City Council



Downtown Farmington is a very special place. It deserves our best collective efforts to ensure its continued economic vitality and to maintain its unique hometown character. Downtown Farmington's past is rich in history and tradition, its present is prosperous and enviable — and its future beckons.

What should downtown Farmington become over the next ten years? Is there a consensus in the community on the downtown's future? How can a preferred future for Farmington's downtown be determined?

What could the downtown look like? What kind of businesses should be located there? What do the residents want for the downtown? What does the business community think? What kind of cultural, social and entertainment events will the community support and attend? What about traffic, parking and pedestrians? Would more green space improve the downtown environment?

In October of 1997, the City hosted an Initiation Conference, facilitated by Wayne State University's Center for Urban Studies, and began a Community Visioning process to examine these and many other questions about the downtown's future. Over fifty members of the community participated, including City Councilmembers and administrators, representatives of City Boards and Commissions, downtown businesspeople and property owners, and residents.

Dr. Hal Stack and his WSU colleagues guided a dynamic discussion from which emerged four specific topics as most significant to the downtown's future. These topics became the focus of four task forces of community members who volunteered to conduct further study of the topics. The findings of the task forces are reported elsewhere in this document.

An Integration Conference was held in March of 1998 for reporting of task force findings, and to resume the group discussion and process of building toward community consensus of a shared vision of downtown Farmington's preferred future. The result is an intriguing, challenging, inspiring, imaginative, sky's-the-limit cornucopia of ideas, possibilities and suggestions for consideration.

What may not be adequately reflected in the "paperwork," however, is the dedication, spirit, professionalism, and creativity of Farmington's people. Please let any Councilmember or the City Manager's Office know what you think. We genuinely care about and want your input — it's never too late for you to share in shaping Farmington's future.

## What is Community Visioning?

Many communities today find themselves so busy trying to keep up with change that they can never get ahead of it. The Downtown Farmington Visioning Process was intended to break that cycle. It enables the community to step back from their day-to-day activities to look at the big picture: Where are we now? Where are we going? Where do we want to be?

Visioning is a process which brings people together to develop a shared image of what they want their community to become. It differs from more traditional planning in a number of ways:

- It is, by nature, community-based, – facilitating broad citizen participation.
- It necessarily reflects community values.
- It focuses on a wide range of concerns.
- It articulates a comprehensive vision to guide future planning and decision making.

Visioning does not replace other forms of community planning, but complements them. It provides an umbrella vision which will integrate other planning activities and guide decision making.





# The Downtown Farmington Visioning Process

The Downtown Farmington Visioning Process is the result of the Farmington City Council's decision to tap the skills and interests of community residents and downtown stakeholders in developing their vision for a better downtown. The City Manager's Office championed the process and took ultimate responsibility for its development.

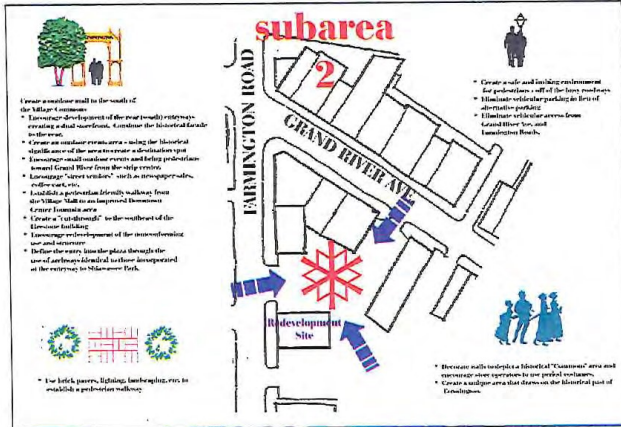
The process began on Saturday, October 4, 1997, when 43 people came together to participate in the Community Visioning Initiation Conference. Conference participants examined the changes occurring in downtown Farmington and identified trends most important to its future; analyzed the downtown's history and current situation; and identified the elements of a preferred future for the downtown area.

Four key elements of the preferred future were identified for further analysis. These were:

- Parking, Traffic and Pedestrian Friendliness
- Green Space and Park Use,
- Culture, Entertainment and Community Activities, and
- Business and Restaurant Mix.

Conference participants and other citizens were invited to join one of the four task forces that were established to analyze these areas. The task forces met regularly between December and March to complete their work. In all, 32 people worked long hours to gather and analyze information, debate alternative strategies, and ultimately to agree upon a shared vision for their task force area. Summaries of the task force recommendations follow this section.

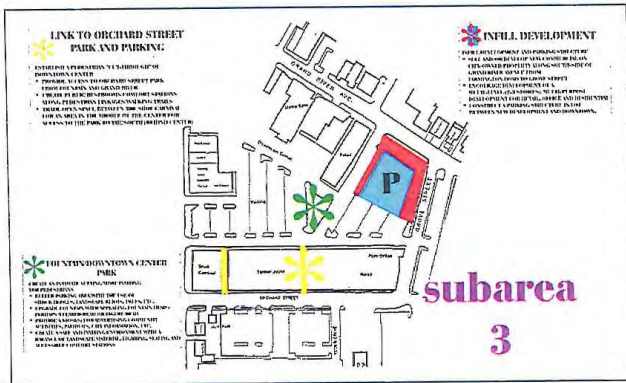
On March 28, 1998 task force members, initiation conference participants and additional community members came together to hear the task force reports and synthesize a community vision for the future of Downtown Farmington. That vision and its underlying community values are summarized on page 11.



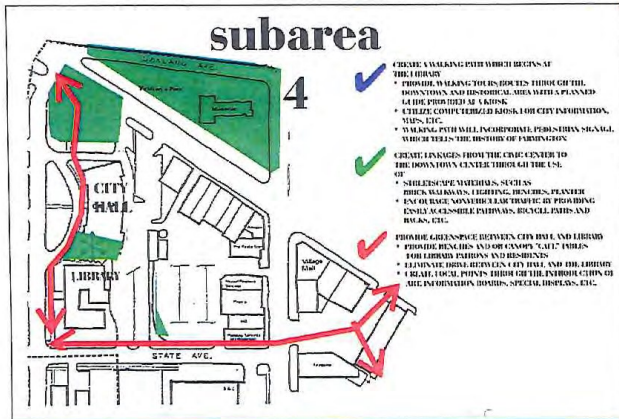
## Task Force Recommendations

Although each task force dealt with a different area, they all followed a similar approach in their analysis and development of recommendations. Each task force carefully assessed the current situation, identified those factors contributing to the situation, clarified their vision of success, and identified a variety of strategies for accomplishing that vision. The result is a series of recommendations that – taken together – provide the basis for a comprehensive and compelling vision for downtown Farmington.

The following pages present the results of the four task forces. More detailed final reports from individual task forces are available in the Office of the City Manager.



## Business and Restaurant Mix Task Force



The Business and Restaurant Mix Task Force had the difficult job of articulating a vision for the appropriate business uses of the downtown and how to get there. They propose a vision with both short- and long-term recommendations which focus on altering the physical shape of downtown (the multi-block, multi-story concept), its appearance (improved aesthetics), and the character of its stores and restaurants. Attracting more varied businesses and restaurants, they suggest, can only happen if we see the downtown as more than the strip of shops along Grand River Avenue. Their recommendations are as follow:

### What will success look like?

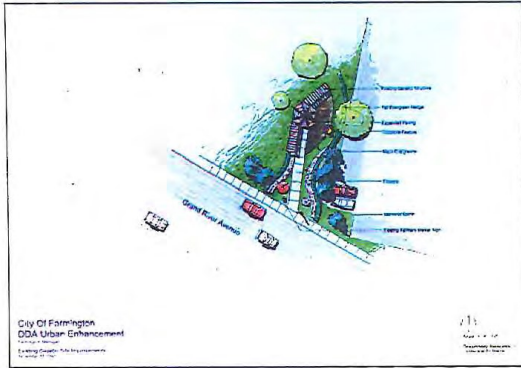
- Attraction of a major destination retailer
- More restaurant choices
- Quality merchandise and customer service
- Places to explore
- A pedestrian-friendly downtown with accessible parking
- Public spaces created for civic and cultural activities
- Shoppers in the district days and evenings

### Strategies for Accomplishing Our Vision:

1. Creation of multi-block, multi-story downtown enabling a variety of uses
2. Construction of at least one new building to attract a major "destination" retailer
  - High end restaurant or retailer
  - Historically relevant architecture
3. Expansion of parking, both vertically and throughout underutilized sections of downtown
4. Construction of a roofed pavilion to host public activities
5. Renovation/ungrading of private or historic properties to a heightened aesthetic standard
  - Courtyards, outdoor dining areas
  - Boutiques, galleries, antiques shops
6. Attraction of an increased variety of retailers and restaurants to compliment chain and discount options
  - Upscale restaurants, food specialty stores, home furnishings, apparel, book store, bakery/bread company, pet store, antiques, fine arts and crafts, boutiques, bed and breakfasts, outdoor seasonal market



## Cultural, Entertainment, and Community Activities Task Force



The Cultural, Entertainment, and Community Activities Task Force began by suggesting that the current downtown lacks an organized, consistent, and clear set of cultural activities — a vital part of what the downtown should be. Their recommendations include a focus on developing a permanent body to handle and develop downtown activities so that there are options for the entire community. Again, they see the encouragement of such activities as beneficial to the economic and cultural viability of downtown and pose the following recommendations for achieving this:

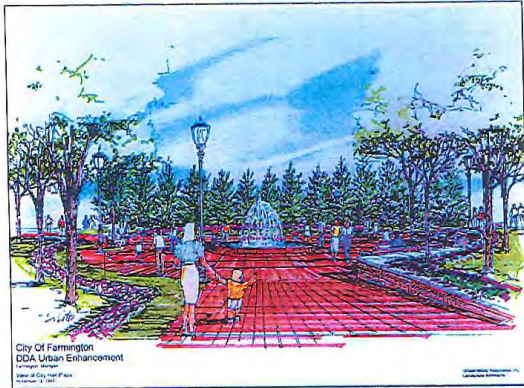
### What will success look like?

- Establishment of a permanent non-profit organization and director to organize activities
- Downtown as a destination for cultural and commercial activity
- Regular, varied, accessible, and well-publicized cultural activities

### Strategies for Accomplishing Our Vision:

1. Support of a non-profit organization to fund, lead and organize ongoing activities series
  - Quality entertainment
  - River Walk
2. Construction of a greenway system with walkways and signage to facilitate activities
  - Continuous walkways throughout shopping areas
  - Coordinated and/or decreased signage
3. Improvement in general aesthetic quality of downtown to encourage foot traffic
  - Enforcement of city ordinances and high maintenance standards
  - Art gallery and outside art
  - Protected crosswalks
4. "Opportunistic Developments" – redevelop properties as they become available
  - Hotels, Bed and Breakfasts
  - Historically significant structures, places
5. Foster collaboration between existing cultural organizations to maximize resources

## Green Space and Parks Task Force



The Green Space and Parks Task Force focused initially on existing parks near or within the downtown area to determine how they might better take advantage of the downtown and benefit it as well. They propose that a more accessible and aesthetically pleasing existing park system will both increase pedestrian traffic around the downtown and encourage more people to use the parks. By connecting existing parks via a downtown greenway system, the Task Force believes downtown can become a place of many uses for many people. Their recommendations are as follows:

### What will success look like?

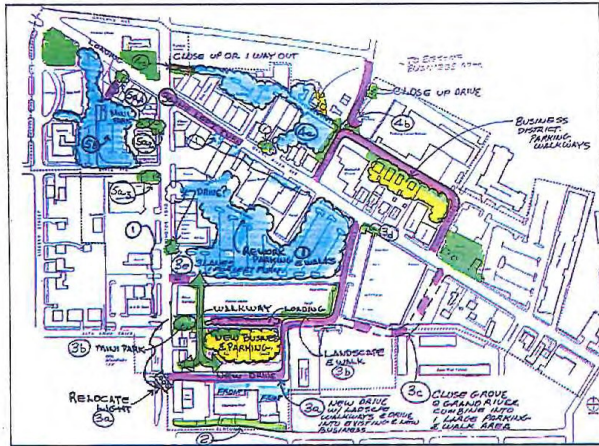
- More intimate, enclosed park areas
- Creation of a cohesive sense of place
- Integration of pedestrians, cars, green spaces, and businesses
- Abundance of recreational and social opportunities for all residents

### Strategies for Accomplishing Our Vision:

1. Improvement in general aesthetic quality of downtown
  - Gaslights, fountains, gardens, trees, hiding power lines
2. Aesthetic improvements to walkways within parks
  - Lighting, brick paving, bridges
3. Accessibility improvements to walkways within parks
  - Increased number of entrances
  - Addition of switchbacks
  - Barrier-free and bicycle routes
  - Directional and informational signage
4. Construction of a greenway system tying downtown together and including a pedestrian "cut-through"
  - Historical "trails" tour connecting points of interest
  - Addition of electronic kiosks for advertising events, self-guided tours
5. Introduction of increased public activities
  - Concerts, art fairs, dancing
  - Concessions, vendors



## Parking, Traffic and Pedestrian Friendliness Task Force



The Parking, Traffic and Pedestrian Friendliness Task Force began by determining that the downtown area in its current manifestation is too vehicle-oriented and makes the area unappealing and unsafe to pedestrians, and ultimately less viable economically. They propose that continued proliferation of individual business driveways and parking areas will only serve to undermine public and pedestrian participation in downtown activities, and that both adequate traffic accommodation and pedestrian safety and friendliness should be of equal concern.

### What will success look like?

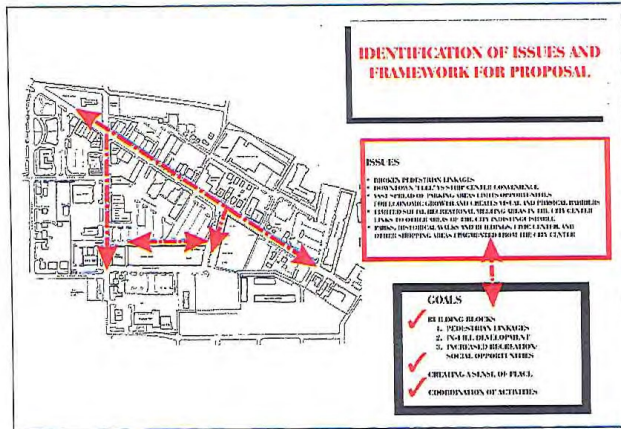
- Increased pedestrian traffic
- Increased sense of pride in being part of the Farmington community
- Improvement and change
- Citizens/residents drawn to the downtown area
- Feeling of a unified community
- Less noticeable vehicular traffic
- Ample, accessible and aesthetically pleasing parking

### Strategies for Accomplishing Our Vision:

1. Elimination of a number of individual business driveways
  - Parking areas to service groups of buildings
  - Continuity and clarity to augment pedestrian *and* driver safety
2. Enlargement of fewer existing driveways
3. Introduction of landscaping and walkways connecting shopping areas
  - Pedestrian scale crosswalks over Grand River Avenue and Farmington Road
  - Smooth walkways amenable to seniors, baby strollers
4. Introduction of lighting, window displays and other pedestrian "window shopper" amenities
5. Addition of walkways, entrances and landscaping along the rear of shops
  - Pedestrian traffic buffered from vehicular traffic
  - "Plaza"- style parking lots
6. Introduction of mass transit (trolley) within downtown area



## A Vision for Downtown Farmington



The vision developed through this community process is defined by a number of key elements, many of which appeared as repeating themes throughout different Task Force reports. The potential of each element is seen as maximized only if the others are achieved in parallel.

The participants conceived of a vision for the downtown area which is:

1. **Pedestrian Friendly**
  - Aesthetically pleasant
  - Physically and visually interconnected
  - Safe
  - Convenient (restrooms)
2. **Multi-Use Oriented**
  - Different activities (commerce, culture, play)
  - Different audiences (families, children, seniors)
3. **Focused around Parks and Green Space**
  - Aesthetically pleasant
  - Accessible
  - Interconnected
4. **The Economic and Cultural Core of the Area**
  - Downtown as a "destination"
  - Sense of place and history
  - Activities and plans coordinated and clear

This vision reflects a common set of **community values** which, though taking varying forms between Task Forces, provided the basis for the unified vision that emerged from their work. The community values include:

~A downtown which is friendly to all citizens—seniors, youth, families, walkers, shoppers, business owners, workers~  
It is safe, convenient, accessible, "green" and offers activities of interest to everyone.

~A downtown which is the recognizable core holding the community together — visually, actively, aesthetically, economically~  
It is spatially interconnected, visually representative of the community's past and present, and fosters civic pride as well as commerce.

## Acknowledgments

On behalf of the Farmington City Council and the community, I thank and commend all of those who participated and contributed to this important collaborative process. Conference attendees and task force members devoted many hours to this process. Such exemplary volunteer public service is a strong, continuing Farmington tradition of which we can all be proud. Please take a moment to read the list of acknowledgments, and the next time you see any one of them, just say "Thanks." After all, their contribution may influence the future of downtown Farmington.

Mary L Bush, Mayor

### **Business and Restaurant Mix**

Brian Casterline  
Larry Davis  
Judy Downey  
Walt Gajewski  
Chris Grattan  
William S. Hartssock  
Bill Law  
Pat Shelton  
Jody Soronen

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Joyce Hunt  
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James K Mitchell

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