

[NOTE: THE FINAL UPDATE DOCUMENT WILL INCLUDE A COVER PAGE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS.]

2021 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

INTRODUCTION

The City of Northville is a historic community with deep roots in this part of Wayne and Oakland counties. Much of the City has a well-established character illustrated through a physical record of its almost two centuries of growth. This is seen through historic homes, schools, industrial buildings, and houses of worship. Another significant component of Northville’s historic character is the City’s charming, late-nineteenth-century downtown, which is a popular regional destination for dining, entertainment, and shopping, as well as a central gathering space for City residents.

It is preservation of the City’s character that was a major impetus for this Master Plan Update, among other issues. A redevelopment proposal, located just south of downtown, was submitted for review in late 2018, and generated considerable public interest and concerns about how redevelopment could influence or change this character.

For a number of reasons, the redevelopment proposal was withdrawn. However, this gave the Planning Commission an opportunity to review and update the Master Plan. **The purpose of this Master Plan Update is to describe and illustrate a refined vision for the redevelopment of the Cady Town-Cady Street, Racetrack, and S. Center St. areas of the City.**

Sharing & Listening

[INSERT GRAPHIC SHOWING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND TIMEFRAMES]

Discussions with residents about the proposed redevelopment project inspired the Planning Commission to start the Master Plan Update with a robust public engagement process. The Commissioners wanted to hear what residents had to say, identify priorities, and develop themes that could be used as a basis for Planning Commission decisions on policy and guidance in the Master Plan.

It did this by creating a sub-committee of four Commissioners, charging them with developing a multi-layered approach to public engagement. Working with City Staff and planning consultants, the sub-committee developed a four-part process, as described below. (See later in this Update for public engagement results.)

Part 1. **Information Sharing.** Before soliciting opinions, the Sub-Committee thought it important that everyone involved in the Master Plan Update – from public officials to residents to business owners – have the same level of understanding about how land development works. Four thematic seminars were given. Each seminar provided up-to-date information by experts on a core topic of redevelopment. The sessions helped provide a common base of facts that underlie redevelopment. Informational topics included:

- Planning & Zoning Basics and Financial Topics
- Demographics & Schools
- Traffic, Walkability/Mobility & Parking
- Future Land Use

Part 2. **Survey #1. Identifying Themes and Priorities**

The first survey was conducted on-line, with paper copies available to those who wanted them. The survey questions were designed to be fairly broad and non-specific, encouraging people to “think big” and offer their ideas and opinions without judgement. The overarching goals of this survey were to:

- Discern what is most valued about the character and vibrancy of Northville;
- Confirm key priorities for the Cady Street/Racetrack/South Center Street sub-areas; and
- Identify potential opportunities, needs and concerns concerning the future of the Cady Street/Racetrack/South Center Street sub-areas.

Part 3. **Virtual Open House Sessions. Using a Design Activity to Illustrate Priorities**

The next effort involved three Open House Sessions conducted virtually. Participants were broken into small groups, and asked to use a “gameboard” to design their vision for redevelopment of the sub-areas. This activity gave participants an opportunity to express their ideas visually. Small groups organized game pieces around an aerial photograph (gameboard) of the redevelopment area, “drawing” the location of new streets, preferred land uses and public open spaces on the gameboard. The gameboards also provided room to add notes and explanations of the design intent.

Part 4. **Survey #2. Exploring Top Priorities and Ideas**

The second survey was also conducted on-line, with paper copies available. The priorities and themes identified in the results of Survey #1 were used as a basis for Survey #2. Questions in the second survey “drilled down” into the priorities and themes gleaned from Survey #1, testing various versions of these priorities and themes. Respondents were also asked to make challenging choices between necessary features of a development and public benefits a developer may be able/willing to incorporate into a design.

Sidebar: What’s a Master Plan? *A Master Plan is an official statement of policy, written and adopted by the planning commission, describing the desired physical development of the community. It does not lay out rules that must be followed – it paints a picture of desired land uses and development. A Master Plan also:*

- *Aids in daily decision-making by the Planning Commission, City Council and City Staff through the Master Plan goals and strategies.*
- *Coordinates public improvements with private development.*
- *Educates citizens, property owners, developers, and adjacent communities with a clear indication of the City’s future direction.*
- *Provides the statutory foundation for zoning regulations. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires that a Zoning Ordinance be based on a Master Plan.*

What Residents Said or Illustrated

The overarching themes identified by the public engagement process include the following:

- **Maintain/enhance walkability** by connecting existing sidewalks with pedestrian facilities in the new development; improve streetscapes with grass buffer strip, street trees, streetlights, and landscaping.
- **Facilitate vehicular connections** by extending existing street network into development area. Specific roadway connections are illustrated in the Open House gameboards. Improve traffic flow, addressing existing issues as well as accommodating additional traffic.

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City of Northville

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- **Blend new development with the surrounding area** by using building scale and design that illustrates the “small-town” character of Northville.
- **Include welcoming public spaces.** Most important is to daylight the Rouge River; incorporate the river into a public park and add pathways along the river.
- **Extend the downtown** with more commercial uses that Northvillians enjoy, such as restaurants, shops, bars/brew pubs, and entertainment venues (indoor and outdoor).
- Preferred land uses:
 - Cady Town-Cady Street: Mix of commercial and residential uses.
 - Racetrack: Residential, public spaces, entertainment/events space.
 - S. Center Street: Mix of residential uses.

Full results of all public engagement activities are provided in the Appendix of this Update. Also, detailed public input results relating to each sub-area are provided in the specific sub-area descriptions.