

Downtown Baldwin Vision Plan

Winter 2024

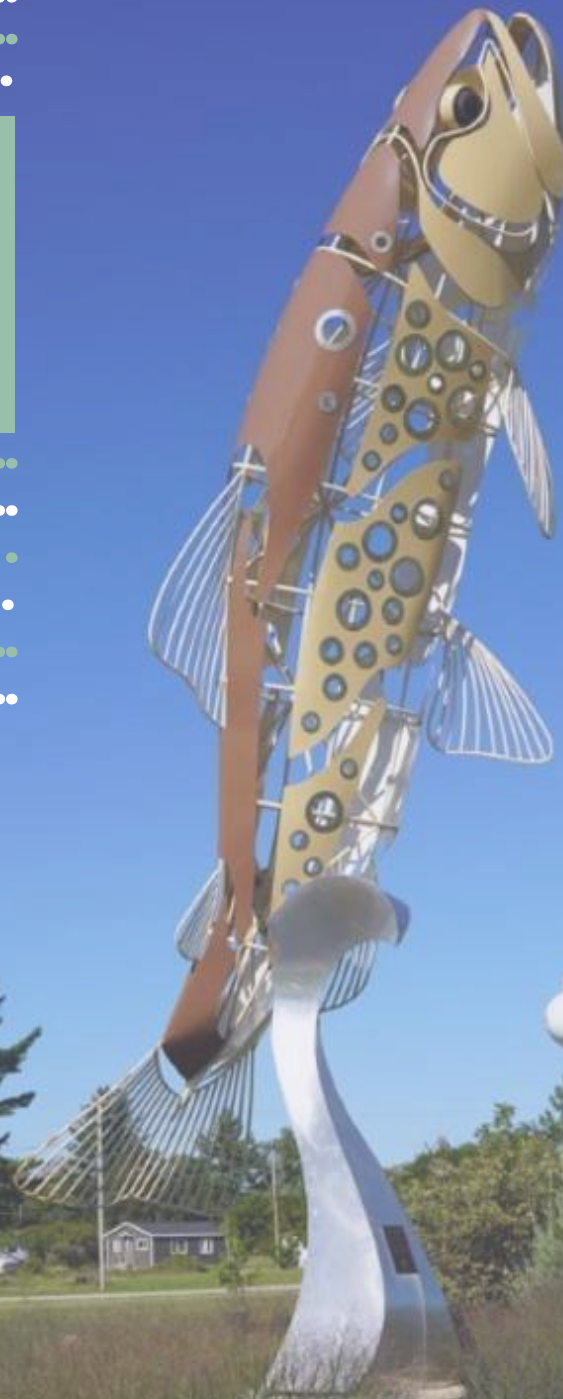




Table of Contents

1	Introduction and Purpose for the Plan	1
2	Community Engagement: What We've Heard	2
3	Target Market Analysis and Marketing Baldwin	8
4	Downtown Baldwin Vision	29
5	Realizing the Vision: Implementation Strategies	44



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1 Introduction and Purpose for the Plan

The primary goal of the Baldwin Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is to encourage economic growth within the downtown and broader Baldwin community. Established in 1987, the DDA provides a mechanism for the Village to continuously improve Baldwin's downtown district. Because of this, the DDA is the primary entity tasked with making downtown Baldwin an attractive destination; a place to visit, shop, grab a bite to eat, or enjoy concerts and events.

Seeking to improve the downtown district as well as drive greater engagement and participation throughout the Baldwin community, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) worked with the Planning Team (Progressive AE) to develop a comprehensive vision for downtown Baldwin. This Plan involved extensive community engagement, a market analysis of Baldwin and the surrounding region, concepts envisioning the community's long-term priorities, and a menu of action items empowering the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to work towards realizing the community's future vision.

Special Thanks

Jane Allison - *Chairperson, Baldwin Lumber*

Tony Gagliardo - *Member*

Andrew Gremel - *Member*

Meredith Gremel - *Member*

Lamont Hill - *Member*

Josh Johnson - *Pompeii's Pizza*

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Deborah Smith-Olson - *Secretary/Treasurer, Lake - Osceola State Bank*

Robert Toland - *DDA Administrator*

Jim Truxton - *Village of Baldwin President*

Seth Wenger - *Member, Wenger Insurance*

Jodi Nichols - *Executive Director, Lake County Economic Development Alliance*

Special thanks to funding partner Lake County Economic Development Alliance and the many members of the Baldwin community who participated throughout this process.



2 Community Engagement: What We've Heard

Throughout development of this Plan, the Planning Team reached out to residents, stakeholders, and others invested in Baldwin's future to determine their priorities and thoughts for the future. This included an online survey, a number of "pop-up" booths to engage residents at key events, two open house-style community events, and a full-day charrette planning activity. A summary of each of these engagement efforts and what we've heard are included below.

Community Pop-Ups

During Summer 2023, the Planning Team held impromptu pop-up booths at busy community events. These events included Troutarama on Saturday, July 22 and an evening concert at Wenger Pavilion on Wednesday, August 9. Attendees to these events were asked about their vision for downtown Baldwin – what businesses they want to see downtown, how they would improve downtown, and their "big idea" for the area's future.



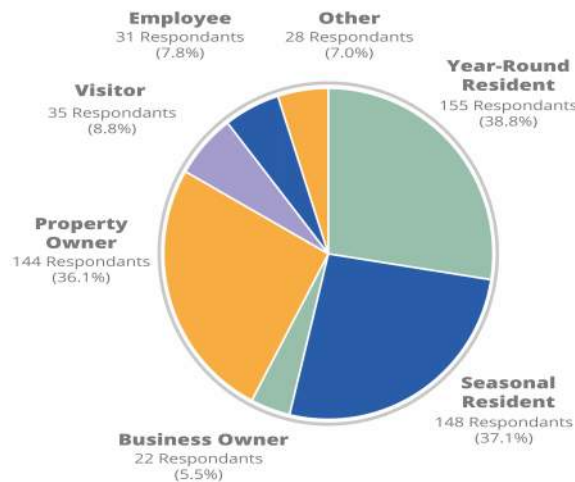
Because these pop-ups were held at parades or concert events, many of the respondents were from areas outside of Baldwin. With that said, their attendance and participation indicated the large market area for Baldwin and its draw within the region. Many people desired downtown Baldwin to have more "third places" or locations to meet with friends and family over coffee, drinks, or a simple meal. People also mentioned a desire for more community gathering spaces for activities and events to be held in.

These pop-up events engaged residents and stakeholders that otherwise might not be aware of the DDA's planning efforts, ensuring feedback was gathered from a broad cross-section of the Baldwin community.

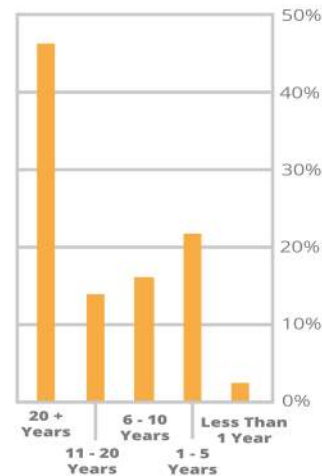
Community Survey

The Planning Team also released an online survey for residents and downtown stakeholders to offer their input on. Nearly 400 people participated in the survey and provided their thoughts on Baldwin's strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities, as well as land uses they want to see downtown. A summary of these comments is included below.

What is your relationship to Baldwin?



How long have you lived, worked, or visited downtown Baldwin?



What would you like to see in downtown Baldwin?

Food and Dining Options

Community Gathering and Entertainment

Recreational Facilities

Economic Development and Employment

Infrastructure and Beautification

Retail Diversity

Arts and Culture

Family and Youth-Focused Services

Technology and Connectivity

Public Amenities

What are Downtown Baldwin's Challenges?

Limited Business Diversity

Lack of Year-Round Activities

Community Engagement

Blight and Appearance

Lack of Job Opportunities

Staffing Shortages

Seasonality

Access to Amenities

Community Gathering Spaces

Housing

Describe in one word your vision for Downtown Baldwin in the future?

Growth

Prosperous

Inclusive

Safe

Beautiful

Quaint

Cozy

Entertainment

Variety

Community Open House Events

Along with the survey and pop-up events during the summer, the Planning Team held two Community Open House events. The first was held on Wednesday, August 30 and the second was held on Wednesday, December 15. Both events were held at Pompeii's Pizza in downtown Baldwin and featured activity boards for attendees to provide feedback. A summary of these events is included below.



Community Open House #1 (Wednesday, August 30) – Over 30 attendees came and offered their thoughts on overall goals for downtown Baldwin, what types of community gathering spaces they would like the most, desired street design amenities, and potential events and activities the City can hold in the future.

Many of the attendees desired downtown Baldwin to have a greater mix of restaurants, businesses, and other amenities while also featuring more community gathering spaces. Many also desired improved beautification of storefronts including murals, plantings, and outdoor dining opportunities. Attendees also want to emphasize Baldwin's recreational amenities and market the community as a year-round destination. Attendees also desired street design features to slow traffic along Michigan Avenue (M-37) through downtown.





Community Open House #2 (Wednesday, December 15) – This event asked attendees to join the DDA’s working groups for short-term planning projects such as improvements to Hollister Park and the future green space that will occupy the 902 Michigan Avenue site following its demolition. The event also gathered attendees’ ideas for “branding Baldwin,” or how the community can market itself better. Attendees mostly emphasized the City’s access to nature and status as an “ORV capital of Michigan” as well as being a “sportsman’s paradise.” These comments emphasize the importance of nature and recreation in Baldwin.



Charrette Planning Day (Tuesday, October 17) – This full-day event started with a walking tour of downtown Baldwin and was followed by a discussion of the area. Attendees identified priorities for downtown and identified locations that should be the focus of planning efforts. These areas included pedestrian improvements to Michigan Avenue, beautification including façade improvements and murals to downtown buildings, potential locations for a maker’s market, and improvements to the Baldwin Business Center.

Takeaways from Community Engagement

The following are common themes for a future vision of Downtown Baldwin identified by residents, business owners, visitors, and other stakeholders that participated in one or more engagement activity.

Grow Small Businesses

Downtown Baldwin will feature a mix of restaurants, unique businesses, and other amenities that draw people from both the Village of Baldwin and surrounding communities.



Create Gathering Places

Downtown Baldwin will be the community's "front porch," offering quality public gathering spaces to meet and mingle with friends and neighbors.

Beautification

Revitalize and invest in downtown Baldwin through addressing vacancy and offering tools to maintain and improve the appearance of storefronts.



Year-Round Destination

Baldwin will build upon its central location, natural beauty, and recreational opportunities to be a year-round destination for families, adventurers, and everyone in between.



Improve Pedestrian Experience

Promote walkability and accessibility by making downtown Baldwin an inviting and safe place for pedestrians.



3 Target Market Analysis and Marketing Baldwin

Understanding that a downtown's success is predicated on the success of its businesses, The Chesapeake Group performed a target market analysis to identify market needs and business opportunities likely to be supported by the community and surrounding service area – both now and into the future. This analysis considers factors such as demographics, financial characteristics, housing, existing businesses, regional attractions, and other factors that drive market demand.



Target Market Analysis (Completed by Chesapeake Group in 2023)

Local Generated Opportunities

Past, current, and future local market conditions are critical in defining community. There are currently 725 households in Baldwin. There are 463 families in Baldwin.

Residential Opportunities

Because of this small Baldwin population base, all businesses in the DDA area must serve a large local market defined as households in Lake County at a minimum. Lake County housing growth contributes to growth in demand for goods and services since it reflects new or added households to the market. It has the most potential to create new business development and an expanded population base in and around the DDA area.

Lake County saw modest rooftop growth between 2004 and 2010. These years included the pre-Great Recession housing boom nationally associated with rapidly rising property values and the Great Recession often attributed to the “burst” of the housing “bubble.” Following those national patterns, Lake County saw higher housing units permitted during the early period and a decline from 2008 through 2010.

Table 1: Housing Units Permitted for Lake County, 2004 - 2010

	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Total Units	42	44	57	82	105	132	131
Units in Single-Family Structures	42	44	57	82	105	132	131
Units in All Multi-Family Structures	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

From the technical end of the Great Recession in 2011 through 2017, the number of units permitted grew almost every year. Even with rising mortgage interest rates, permit levels began expanding again in 2021 and 2022.

Table 2: Housing Units Permitted for Lake County, 2011 - 2022

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total Units	30	22	19	17	0	62	57	57	54	47	45	40
Units in Single-Family Structures	30	22	19	17	0	62	57	57	54	47	45	40
Units in All Multi-Family Structures	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Developed by The Chesapeake Group, Inc. based on U.S. HUD data.

Since 2004, the following is pertinent for the permitted units.

- Over 1,040 permits were issued for new housing units in Lake County.
- The average annual number of units permitted was fifty-five.
- All permits were for “single-family” homes. Single-family homes are better defined as detached housing units.
- No “multi-family” housing units were permitted. Multi-family housing units are better defined as attached units. Attached units are more likely to be part of mixed-use development or greater density units typically better suited for downtowns.
- The lack of “multi-family” units potentially represents latent or non-exercised demand for Downtown market-rate housing based on the aging of the population.

Household income is another indicator of potential price points for new housing units for either current residents that may move or generate new households or those relocating from other than Lake County. The Census Bureau indicates that the Lake County median household income is low when compared to other counties in Michigan. While that may be correct, it paints a totally inaccurate picture of the market and market conditions in Lake County for the following reasons. Furthermore, being untrue, it should not be employed in defining either housing or non-residential opportunities.

- Mean income, often twenty to thirty percent higher than median income, is a better measure of market demand.
- The Census figure only includes households that define Lake County as their primary residence. Much of the housing in Lake County is occupied by persons having “second” homes. They often frequent the area, purchase homes and buy goods and services.
- By virtue of their ownership of second homes, their incomes or assets are well above the average full-time resident's.



“The Census figure only includes households that define Lake County as their primary residence. Much of the housing in Lake County is occupied by persons having ‘second’ homes. They often frequent the area, purchase homes and buy goods and services.”



Numerous factors impact the type of housing unit and whether units are rented or owner-occupied. It is also noted that different ownership models include but are not limited to condominiums, coops, and those with strong homeowner associations that have responsibilities generally for the exterior of buildings and property issues. Some factors impacting the composition of housing units include those that follow. Many of these change with some regularity, and others are more stable.

- Interest rates for borrowing, including construction.
- Mortgage rates.
- Cost of production of housing units.
- Method of construction employed.
- Land costs.
- Relationship between unit demand and supply.
- Income levels
- Age of those seeking housing.
- The number of local and neighboring options.
- Public processes and policies.
- Perceptions of the households seeking housing.
- Inflation or deflation.
- Area infrastructure.

To better define housing opportunities in Baldwin, sales of properties within Zip Code Area 49304 were examined. This zip code includes the Village and surrounding area and is employed because of data availability. The following summarizes the conclusions of the information.

- The average size of the houses sold was 1,119 square feet.
- The average sale price was \$164,000.
- The average per square foot for sold units was just under \$147.
- Units sold were generally built between the years 1950 and 1982.
- There were too few commercial and apartments to evaluate.

Three apartment complexes within the Village were identified, and one nursing home. These properties include the Hollister Manor Senior Apartments with 72 units, Kahlil Apartments with 97 units, Oakwood Manor Senior Housing with 32 units, and Grand Oaks Nursing Home with 80 units. It appears that all are intended for low and moderate-income residents, and the scale of the nursing home reflects the aging of the population within Baldwin and Lake County.

Housing units in Baldwin are relatively new with fifty-six percent being built since 1980. Less than ten percent of the homes were built before 1940. A significant number were built between 2000 and 2004.

Based on historical patterns, the aging population, the ability of current full-time residents to sell units and reinvest assets in housing, and current market conditions, the following housing opportunities are identified for Lake County.

- Over the next five years, 275 new housing units are likely to be permitted.
- Of these units, fifty-five are likely to be occupied by full-time or living in the units for the majority of year households.
- Over the next ten years, seven hundred units are likely to be marketable, with one hundred ten being full-time residents.

Of these Lake County units, the following housing units are associated with Baldwin and Downtown. All of these units are attached.

- In five years, twenty-five units will be marketable Downtown.
- Over ten years, a total of sixty units will be marketable Downtown.
- In addition, within ten years, there is likely to be sufficient market to support a 150-unit independent living community on the edge of Downtown, assuming such scale cannot be accommodated in Downtown. The community could be linked to health and housing compendium off-site.

The above addresses market-rate housing. As appropriate from design, fiscal, and environmental perspectives, building rehabilitation could accommodate below-market-rate units.

It's projected that in the next 5 years:

- 275 housing units will be permitted in Lake County. Of these housing units, 55 will likely be occupied by year-round residents
- Housing demand in Downtown Baldwin will be enough to support 25 new market-rate housing units

It's projected that in the next 10 years:

- Housing demand in Lake County will be enough to support 700 new market-rate housing units. Of these housing units, 110 will likely be occupied by year-round residents
- Housing demand in Downtown Baldwin will be enough to support 60 new market-rate housing units

Non-Residential Opportunities

More than one hundred operations exist in zip code 49304. Many are “one of a kind.” Operations with more than one include those that follow.

- Auto body shop
- Bar
- Campground
- Commercial laundry equipment, vended laundry business
- Convenience store
- Dollar store
- Fishing products store
- Gas station
- Grocery store
- Hair salon
- HVAC contractor
- Ice cream and other
- Insurance, financial services
- Medical
- Non-profit corporation
- Real estate
- Resort hotel
- Restaurant

Non-Residential Commercial Opportunities

The expansion of supportable space for retail goods, related offices, and other services results from market expansion and the capture of dollars. With few unique sets of circumstances, those dollars are derived from residential growth previously defined. The resulting supportable space is not extracted from any existing business.

Supportable space, measured by square footage, reflects the number of dollars necessary to support business activity, and it includes the ability to pay all costs of operation and a reasonable return on investment. Each type of business or service has different sales or revenues per square foot required to pay expenses and provide a return.

As defined, the number of households and rooftops will expand over the next five and ten years. The resulting growth in supportable square feet should not drain any existing business, assuming competitiveness. Therefore, growth-based supportable square feet is new space for which demand will exist but does not presently.

Most households spend most of their income on three commodities irrespective of income. These are housing, transportation, and food. Food spending is generally made at an operation selling groceries or food service establishments, such as restaurants and fast food operations.

The supportable square feet of space capturable Downtown is expected to grow by about 34,000 by 2028.

**Table 4: Capturable Commercial Space for Baldwin
(From Full and Part-Time Residents Only)**

Category	2023 SQ FT	2028 SQ FT	2033 SQ FT	2023-28 SQ FT
Total Square Feet	640,000	674,546	691,722	34,215

The following table contains a breakdown of the supportable space by major retail goods and service category. Highlighted are primary categories of space typically found in downtowns upon which there is growth for Baldwin to focus.

Table 5: Capturable Sales and Space for Baldwin (From Full and Part-Time Residents Only)

Category	2023	2028	2023-2033	2023 SQ FT	2028 SQ FT	2023-33 SQ FT
Food	\$34,411,000	\$35,303,000	\$1,791,000	54,738	56,158	2,849
Supermarkets	28,733,185	29,478,005	1,495,485	43,535	44,664	2,266
Independents	2,752,880	2,824,240	143,280	6,882	7,061	358
Bakeries	757,042	776,666	39,402	2,523	2,589	131
Dairies	447,343	458,939	23,283	1,243	1,275	65
Others	1,720,550	1,765,150	89,550	555	569	29
Eat/Drink	20,202,000	20,725,000	1,051,000	48,100	49,345	2,502
General Merchandise	27,253,000	27,960,000	1,418,000	161,753	165,950	8,417
Furniture	6,564,000	6,735,000	342,000	15,108	15,502	788
Transportation	25,432,000	26,091,000	1,324,000	83,350	85,510	4,340
Drugstore	15,458,000	15,859,000	805,000	15,155	15,548	789
Apparel	14,357,000	14,729,000	747,000	39,834	40,867	2,072
Hardware	16,665,000	17,097,000	867,000	67,909	69,670	3,533
Vehicle Service	21,663,000	22,224,000	1,127,000	52,739	54,104	2,743
Miscellaneous	29,752,000	30,523,000	1,548,000	118,816	121,892	6,182
TOTAL	\$211,757,000	\$217,246,000	\$11,020,000	640,000	674,546	34,215

Segway between Local and Non-Local Opportunities

For over fifty years, the area has been the location of the event known as the Blessing of the Bikes. This year, the two-to-three-day event was held in May. According to the Blessing of the Bikes website, the event attracts around 40,000 people, including motorcyclists and others. This event annually attracts between 5,000 and 10,000 bikers to Baldwin to celebrate the joy of two-wheel travel. Though limited in time, it offers significant exposure.

A second event offering exposure is Baldwin's Troutarama. This event runs for four days and is held in July. It includes a carnival, food, beer tent, music, a 5k run, a car show, and other activities.

Downtown Baldwin and the immediate vicinity have opportunities defined, such as an active adult community. An additional option to an active adult community, bridging local and non-local demand, might be a year-round recreational vehicle park near the Trout Sculpture site. The large site and surrounding undeveloped properties essentially abut the downtown and lie near the Pere Marquette Rails to Trails trail. The site area is walkable to Downtown, only a few blocks, and lies on top of the trail system.

In addition, there is a small airport that more or less abuts the village on the south. The airport only accommodates small aircraft. The airport could catalyze the housing market or the development of unique food service operations that develop a significant statewide or regional reputation. In addition, it might also bridge the gap between locals and non-locals by offering seasonal scenic helicopter flights of the Forest, rivers, and surrounding areas. The airport might also represent an opportunity for locals and non-locals to enjoy hot-air balloon rides over the Forest during the Troutarama and Blessings of the Bikes.



Non-Local Generated Opportunities

Huron-Manistee National Forest - Located between the shores of Lakes Michigan and Huron in the northern half of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan is the roughly one-million-acre Huron-Manistee National Forests. (For this document, the Huron-Manistee National Forests is defined as Forest.) The Forest offers year-around motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, with the most popular being the trails, campgrounds, and four nationally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. Those rivers are the Pine, Manistee, Au Sable and Pere Marquette. The Pere Marquette lies just south of the Village while the Pine and Manistee Rivers are within approximately thirty minutes drive time. The Manistee National Forest is 538,756 acres that spreads 40 miles east to west and 70 miles north to south. Baldwin is in the center of the Manistee National Forest section.

The Forest boasts many lakes and thousands of miles of rivers and streams. The nationally-known Pere Marquette and Au Sable Rivers are known for their quality canoeing and fishing. The faster moving Pine River represents an exciting challenge for those more experienced with canoes and kayaks. Over 330 miles of trails are available for hiking, with some trails shared with horses or cross-country skiers in the winter months. The cross-country and nature trails are usually varied length loops with hiking and horse trails often being linear.

According to the Public Affairs Officer, the latest survey available indicates that there are 1.8 million visitors annually to the Huron-Manistee National Forest. These numbers increased during the Covid Pandemic. The top activities for those visiting are snowmobiling, timbering, and viewing natural features. About 20% of the visits to the Forest are for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Those that primarily benefit from the visitors are recreationists, outfitters, guides, and local businesses. Total annual spending by the Forest visitors is about \$97 million.

The U.S. Forest Service develops estimates through the National Visitor Use Monitoring program. According to those records , the following are general characteristics for recreation visitors to national forests.

- About 38 percent of visits to national forests are made by women.
- Children under the age of 16 account for about one out of every six visits to national forests.
- Nearly half of visits to national forests come from people who live within 50 miles of the forest they visited, while over one-fifth traveled more than 200 miles.
- About 58 percent are by people who visit that forest fewer than 10 times per year.
- Over 15 percent of visits are from people who come back more than 50 times each year.

The spending that occurs on a recreation trip is greatly influenced by the type of trip taken. Visitors on overnight trips away from home pay for some form of lodging, such as hotel rooms or campground fees, while day-trip visitors do not. Visitors on overnight trips also generally purchase more food during their trip in restaurants or grocery stores than visitors on day trips. Visitors who are close to home usually spend less than visitors traveling longer distances, especially on items such as fuel and food.

- Overnight visitors generally spend about 50 hours per visit or trip.
- Day use visitors spend about three hours.
- Activities in which visitors participate are hiking and walking (49.1%) viewing natural features (42.5%), relaxing (30.8%), viewing wildlife (28.8%), and snowboarding and skiing (22.0%).
- About 38 percent of visits to national forests are made by people who are spending at least one night away from home.
- Those spending the night within 50 miles of the forest stay an average of about 5 nights.
- For those spending one or more nights on or near the forest, about 40 percent stay in hotels or lodges off the forest.

Assuming these figures reflect the Huron-Manistee National Forest, The Cheseapeake Group estimates that **there are about 100,000 “unique” annual visitors to the Forest.**

Potential Contribution to Downtown Baldwin

This is estimated to potentially generate about 200,000 annual room nights for hotels and related transient accommodations. This is sufficient to support 816 rooms at a 65% capacity with the potential for full year occupancy. At the current time, **Baldwin is not capturing any of these room nights due to the lack of accommodations and few dollars are captured as a result.**

With Baldwin's location in the center of the Manistee National Forest section of the Forest and close proximity to several of its most significant resources, a capture of five percent of the demand **would be sufficient to support roughly forty to forty-five hotel rooms.**



Sustainable Activity Based on Strength of Activities

The fundamental activities associated with the Forest are not only sustainable, but growing in vibrancy and related demand as follow. Therefore, the potential demand supported from this visitor component of the market will continue to grow in the future.

Fishing - The area's rivers and streams are internationally recognized for a variety of trout and other species. Publicly released figures indicate overall participation in fishing continues to increase, with about 55 million Americans fishing at least once last year. More than one-half of people who have tried fishing intend to continue the activity. African American or Black participation is experiencing the largest growth rate, increasing by almost fifteen percent annually.

Hunting - According to the most recent data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, there are approximately 13.7 million hunters in the country, with this number remaining relatively stable. The most popular states for hunters are Texas, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. The majority of hunters live in rural areas, but many are from suburban and urban areas such as nearby Grand Rapids and Muskegon. While the number of Americans living in rural areas has decreased over time, the percentage of hunters who live in rural areas has remained relatively steady.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that hunters spend around \$2,000 each year on hunting-related activities such as equipment, licenses, and travel expenses. Not included is the cost of food or lodging. White-tailed deer, common to the Baldwin area, is the most popular game animal in North America . Other popular local game includes wild turkey, black bear, ruffed grouse, woodcock, and several varieties of ducks and geese.

Motorsport Recreation - Lake County is one of the few in the state that allow off-road recreational vehicles (ORVs) on county roadways. This coupled with the abundance of natural forest areas and existing snowmobile trails brings thousands of motorsport recreation enthusiasts to the region every year. As a major economic draw, Downtown Baldwin can capture these customers as they travel to and from the area's many trailheads.





Birdwatching - Per the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "eBird" list for Michigan, 213 bird species have been observed in Lake County. Birding is perhaps the second most rapid growth segment of natural resource recreation. Females represent about eight out of every ten participants. Birdwatching primarily attracts seniors. The majority of birdwatchers are 55 or older. Almost eight in ten are between the ages of 55 to 74, and an additional twelve percent are 75 or older. Birdwatching is particularly appealing to retirees or those nearing retirement, due to the leisure time, relaxation, health benefits, and connection with nature that this activity provides.

Wildlife Viewing - In addition to birdwatching, wildlife viewing is the first or second fastest growing outdoor recreation activity in the United States. Wildlife viewers are those who intentionally observe, feed (where permitted) or photograph wildlife. They generally travel to parks, protected areas, or other natural spaces with the purpose of feeding, observing, or photographing wildlife. There is in excess of 86 million participants.

While nature-based tourism, which includes wildlife tourism, has been expanding rapidly in the last decade or so due to increased demand and opportunities, wildlife and biodiversity are increasingly threatened by habitat loss, poaching, and a lack of funding for protection. By definition, the Forest is preserving diminishing natural areas through quality management. Further opportunities for expanding this activity include tours, possibly in cooperation with the local Forest Service office, that could begin and conclude in Baldwin and utilize potential transient accommodations in the future.

Trails - There are many trails both within and outside the Forest. Some of those are geared toward off road vehicles while others are oriented toward hiking and walking. Major trails within the Manistee portion of the Forest include Nordhouse Dune Wilderness Area, Big M Trail, Hungerford Recreation Area, Loda Lake National Wildlife Sanctuary, Manistee River Trail, MacKenzie Trail, Marzinski Trail, and the North County National Scenic Trail. Trail use is anticipated to continue to increase. Many communities in Northwest Michigan, some larger than Baldwin, near the Forest expect to capitalize on this market segment.

Marketing - Success with pursuing any and all of the opportunities will require DDA cooperation within Baldwin and interests from Lake County, and other Lake County jurisdictions.

Cultural & Heritage Opportunities

Cultural and heritage tourism involves attracting visitors motivated, wholly or partly, by the historical, artistic, scientific, lifestyle, and heritage offerings in a community, region, group, or institution.

The emergence of cultural tourism as a social phenomenon can be traced back to the surge in post-World War 2 leisure travel. In Europe, travel helped increase cultural understanding and rebuild shattered economies. As incomes and consumption continued to rise in the 1960s and 1970s, so did international travel, and the consumption of culture. Interest in cultural tourism continued to grow throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with the growth of international and domestic travel and the identification of cultural tourism as a 'good' form of tourism that would stimulate the economy and help conserve culture. The beginning of the 1990s indicates a period of transformation of cultural tourism, which, unlike the original orientation towards elite clientele, found a new opportunity for development in the direction of the mass market.

Cultural tourism has become a well-established phenomenon in many tourism destinations. Growth in cultural tourism was also marked by fragmentation into several emerging niches, such as heritage tourism, arts tourism, gastronomic tourism, film tourism, and creative tourism.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past, and heritage tourism can include cultural, historical, and natural resources.

Cultural heritage tourism has a number of objectives within the context of sustainability. These are the conservation of cultural resources, accurate interpretation of resources, and authentic visitors' experiences. Cultural heritage tourism is not only concerned with the identification, management, and protection of heritage values, but it must also be involved in understanding the impact of tourism on communities and regions, achieving economic and social benefits, providing financial resources for protection, and marketing and promotion. Focuses for this type of tourism often include the following.

- Industrial Heritage
- Natural Resources
- Tribalism
- Immigration
- Indigenous Peoples



Downtown Baldwin can focus on some cultural and heritage activities that stimulate patronage and business development. One area could be shared with neighboring communities, while others could be self-contained. Heritage tourism could focus on the following.

- Reenactment of changes in fishing over the past one hundred years.
- Visuals and lectures of changes on the area's natural river habitats over the past 100 years.
- How changes in fishing impact local and industry culture.
- How humans shaped the use of the areas' resources.
- Preservation of water quality and fauna reenactments.
- Cross country and trails growth as an industry.
- Indigenous peoples' roles in the area.
- Segregation and integration changes and its impact on Baldwin and Idlewild development.

Such activities have the potential to bring clusters of twenty-five to fifty patrons into Downtown during days and evenings throughout the year. Arrangements could be made with food service operations and caterers to enhance the experience. Conservatively, this activity could bring 500 to 4,500 additional visitors into Downtown.

It could also be combined with tours to the active rivers, natural resource areas, and historic indigenous people's heritage sites.

Marketing - Success with pursuing any of the opportunities will require DDA cooperation within Baldwin and interests from Lake County, and federal forest and river management entities.

Agriculture Tourism Opportunities

Within Lake County, the number of farms and farmers is small compared to larger agricultural-dominated counties. Large and small farmers are increasingly adopting agritourism to gain a competitive advantage and capitalize on the uniqueness of their farm and farming lifestyle. This adoption, coupled with the rising focus on rural development, represents a key factor in growing the market. In addition, agritourism offers different farm activities, such as fishing, harvest festivals, horseback riding, wildlife photography, outdoor farm stays, wagon or sleigh rides, sheep shearing, cooking classes using crops from the farm, guided animal tours, and historical re-enactments. Besides this, there is a considerable increase in the use of farms for events such as weddings, gatherings, and private parties. Tourists fascinated by rural lifestyles also purchase authentic farm products and services while visiting farms. This, along with the rising traction of pick-your-own activity, creates a positive outlook for the market well into the future.

The U.S. Census of Agriculture shows an increasing trend in agritourism, related recreational services, and direct sales of agricultural products. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 28,575 farms offered agritourism and recreational services, resulting in \$949 million in sales. In addition, direct-to-consumer sales brought in \$2.8 billion in sales for 130,056 farms.

An agritourism business is any person, farm, or corporation actively engaged in operating, managing, or promoting of an agriculturally-related tourism business open to the public. Examples of agritourism activities include but are not limited to those that follow.

- U-picks
- On-farm markets
- Pumpkin Patches
- Corn mazes
- Vineyards and wineries
- Floriculture farms
- Christmas tree farms
- Farm stays
- Farm tours
- Farm camps
- Farm-to-table dining
- Equine Agritourism
- Fee and Lease Pond Fishing

Management practices for agritourism operations include those that follow.

1. Providing an authentic farm or ranch experience
2. Providing an educational experience
3. Providing excellent customer service
4. Providing adequate public facilities
5. Maintaining a safe and accessible environment
6. Creating good community relations
7. Planning for your financial future



Focuses for an ag tourism operation include those that follow:

- Authentic Farm or Ranch Experience
- Educational Experience
- Customer Service
- Adequate Public Facilities
- Safe and Accessible Environment
- Community Relations

Cattle production is one of the most important industries in the United States. Milk cows and calves are the primary “crops” in Lake County. However, some small farms have diversified products. Some are willing to grow agritourism in one form or another.

Whether located outside of Downtown, adjacent to it, or created in Downtown, there are opportunities to expand economic activity through expanded patronage from agritourism. The following are two examples, one of which might be accommodated at a reasonable scale within Downtown.

Davis Farmland – just minutes from Route 495 and an hour from Boston, Davis Farmland is the “Ultimate Children’s Discovery Farm,” in Sterling, Massachusetts. The farm spans seven generations, starting in 1846. In 1990, the Davis family built a simple petting zoo, which has since grown to be the largest sanctuary of endangered or heritage livestock in North America and houses over one hundred breeds of farm animals, including Highland Cattle, Poitou Donkey, Nigerian Dwarf Goats, plus alpacas, camels, and others. It includes over 20 acres of children’s play, hayrides, pony rides, an eighty-foot Cow-A-Bunga Super Slide, Dig for Dino bones, sand and water play, Jumbo Jump Pad, state-of-the-art play structures, and Toddler Play, and New England’s largest zero-depth water spray park.

Stew Leonard's - Located on the east coast of the United States, Stew Leonard's is a full-year indoor visually interactive market with fresh products, food services, and other activities. The Downtown Baldwin location near larger population centers provides another opportunity for a particularly unique operation with broad regional appeal and a proven success record.

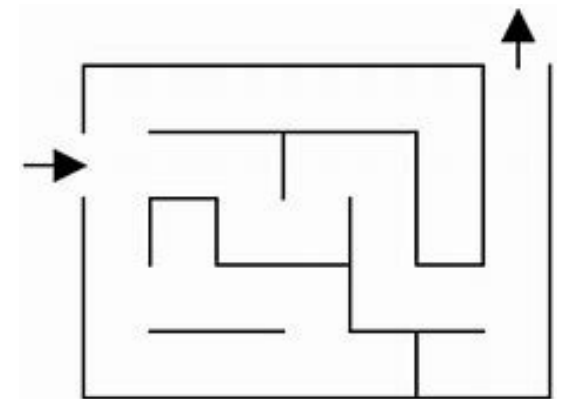
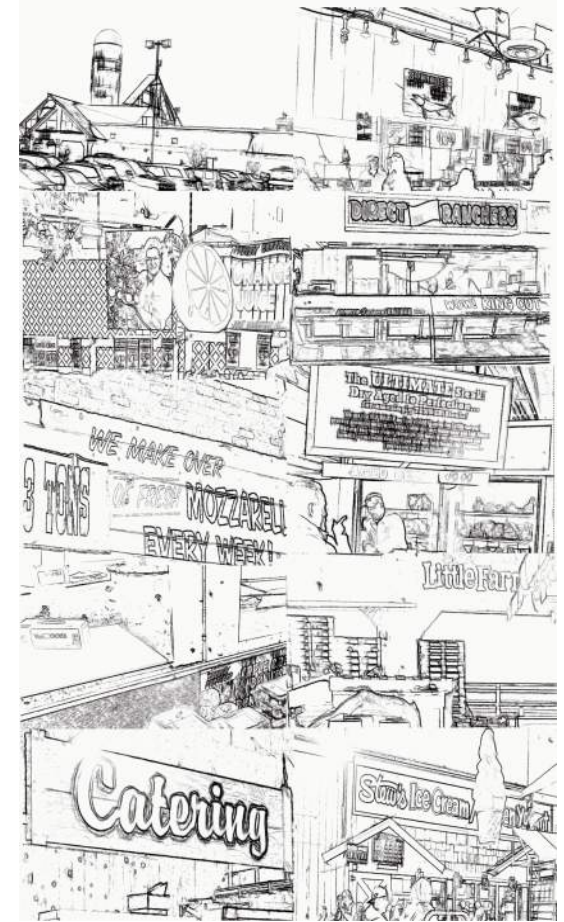
Farm-to-table has spread throughout the country and often manifests through non-permanent and permanent farmers' markets. Some are seasonal. They provide one level of experience for the consumer.

However, long before the explosion of farm-to-table activity, there was and continues to be an operation whose characteristics can be duplicated that draws various market segments to enjoy a greater experience than these markets offer. That operation is known as Stew Leonards (stewleonards.com). They have seven locations in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, franchised or company-owned.

Not only are the properties situated well for the concept (company-owned, franchised, or duplicated) but there is sufficient evidence that a composite of space users could be assembled and that the facility would draw from larger regional population areas and visitors who come for other purposes.

The market becomes a destination and an experience needed in the evolution of retail blending with entertainment. Patrons see the fruits juiced, meat cutting, baking, and making other products on-site, contributing to the entertainment experience. (A maze system like that utilized by IKEA results in much higher sales per shopper than other operations in their category.)

Marketing - Success with pursuing any of the opportunities will require DDA cooperation within Baldwin and interests from Lake County, federal forest and river management entities, and other Lake County jurisdictions.



Above: Pedestrian maze floorplan used by Ikea and Stew Leonard's

Synopsis of Opportunities

The following are supportable market opportunities based on Baldwin and Lake County's population that can be captured by Baldwin's DDA or immediately surrounding areas.

- Over ten years, a total of sixty market-rate units.
- A 150-unit independent living community on the edge of Downtown, assuming such scale cannot be accommodated in Downtown.
- Rehabilitation of existing structures could accommodate below-market-rate housing units.
- Thirty-four thousand square feet of additional non-residential space generally focused on Eating and Drinking, General Merchandise, and Miscellaneous retail goods and related service categories. (The General Merchandise category includes discount stores, "dollar" stores, and others. The Miscellaneous category includes many operations like dental and physician labs, florists and nurseries, laundry and dry cleaning, optical goods and opticians, photo supplies and studios, printing, paper products, gifts and cards, novelties, and others.

The following are supportable market opportunities based on visitations to Lake County that can be captured by Baldwin's DDA or immediately surrounding areas.

- About forty to forty-five hotel rooms.
- Enhanced Cultural and Heritage tourism marketing and operational physical facility potentially combined with other segments of the tourism market.
- An agritourism business.
- A full-year indoor visually interactive market with fresh products, food services, and other activities.

Success in attracting a more significant share of the visitations to the area will require DDA cooperation within Baldwin and interests from Lake County and federal forest and river management entities with an expansion of marketing. Seizing all market opportunities is based on enhancements to the physical environment for the DDA area as is appropriate from a design, engineering, and fiscal perspective.

Branding Baldwin

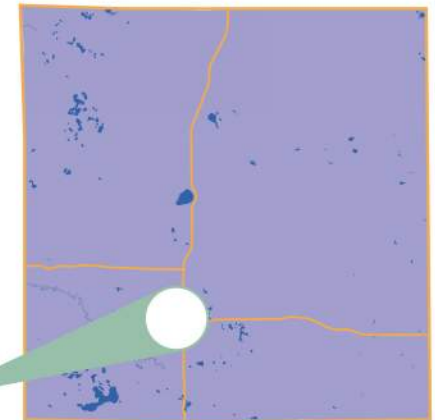
Throughout the planning process, people's perceptions of Baldwin were noted as a key influence for the community's future. How people talk about Baldwin – the image it conjures in people's minds and what people associate with the area – these shape the outside narrative of the community. When asked about Baldwin's negatives, people noted a lack of employment opportunities, a lack of property maintenance, the seasonal nature of the area, a lack of amenities for children and young adults, and perceptions of being a rural low-income community.

Since it's the most visible part of the community and functions as its "front porch," improvements to downtown Baldwin can help shift these perceptions over time. Along with these ongoing improvements to downtown, the Village can embrace a new identity – one that accurately captures the strengths of the community and conveys them in a fresh and attractive format. Like the marketing adage goes – "if you don't like what's being said, change the conversation."

Part of changing this conversation is taking the economic data gathered in the Target Market Analysis and pairing it with the observations and comments gathered from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. While there are many factors influencing the community outside of Baldwin's control, the Village has influence over how it markets itself – namely what "brand" it chooses to embrace. As both community feedback and the Target Market Analysis mentioned, Baldwin has numerous strengths it can leverage.

#1 Baldwin is Lake County's Economic Center

As the county seat, Baldwin is the largest community in Lake County and provides an economic center for a large geographic area. This means that residents from surrounding areas already travel into Baldwin for services, shopping, and other amenities. The Market Analysis found that over 1,000 housing units were permitted in Lake County since 2004, implying more people spending time within the region. Understanding its role as Lake County's economic hub, downtown Baldwin can market itself as a main street destination that offers services to the entire region.

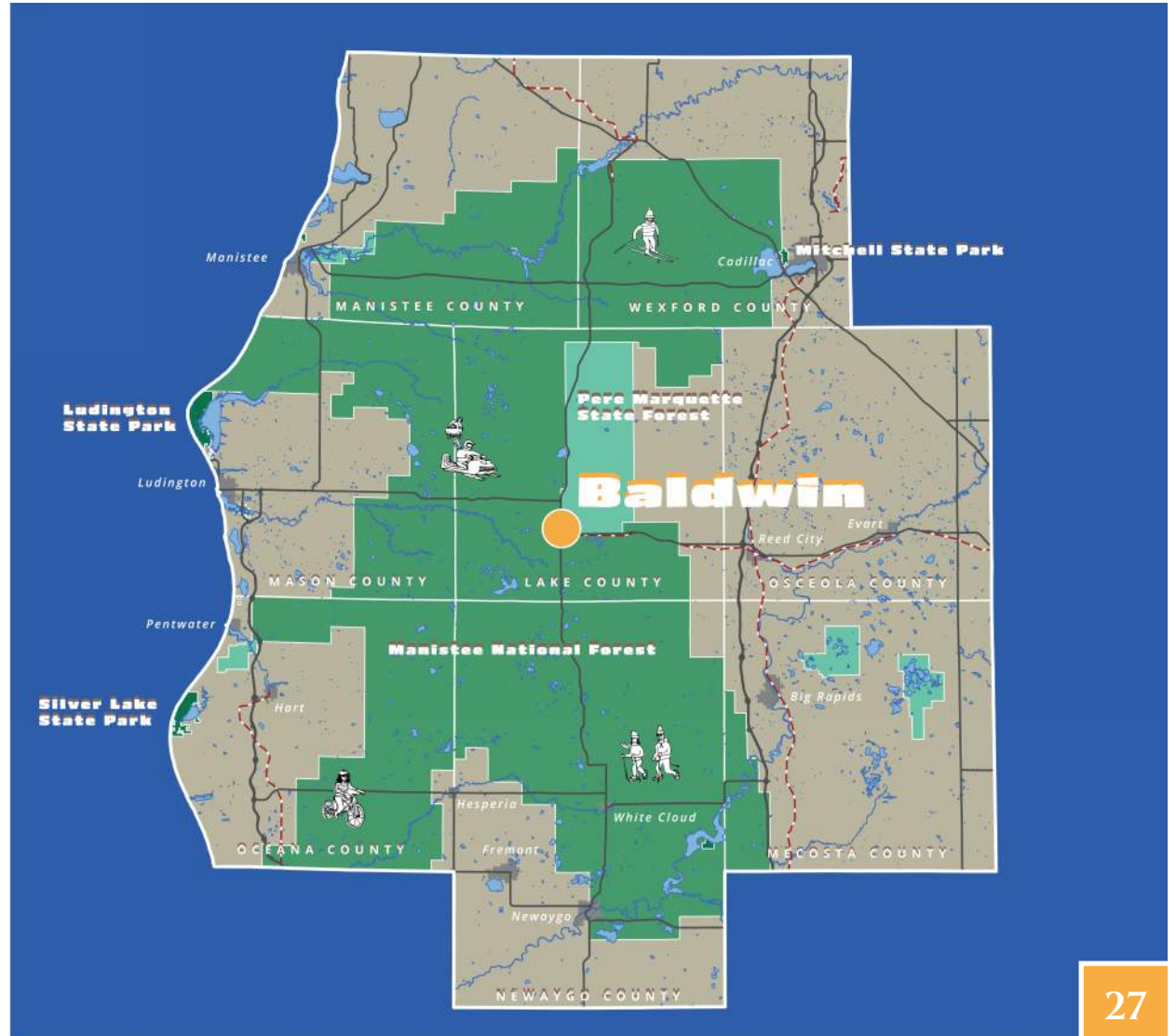


Baldwin: Lake County's Downtown

#2 Access to Natural Features is a Marketable Asset

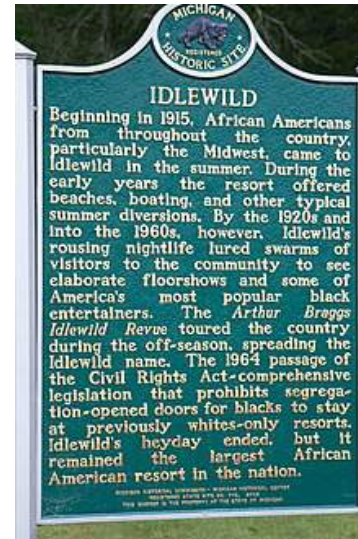
Baldwin is surrounded by thousands of acres of public forest lands containing lakes, rivers, streams, and other natural features. Located in the middle of the Manistee National Forest, Baldwin is in a great “jumping-off” location for all forms of Michigan’s rich outdoor recreational opportunities. Caberfae Ski Resort is 30 miles to the north; Lake Michigan and Ludington is 34 miles to the west; both the Baldwin River and Pere Marquette River offer some of the greatest fishing locations in the state, and a variety of campgrounds and trailheads offer access to the hundreds of thousands of acres of public land through the forest system.

The Target Market Analysis recommends catering to people visiting these places, as many visitors desire “small-town” amenities such as hotels or restaurant options over rustic camping. These also present opportunities for additional recreation-based stores downtown. In this sense, Baldwin can further embrace its status as a quintessential “up north” community surrounded by some of the greatest natural amenities Michigan has to offer.



#3 Region's Unique Historical Significance

Baldwin and Lake County's history is another asset to emphasize, as its status as a former lumber and fishing community alludes to the region's rich natural features. The history of Idlewild is another asset to cherish, as the black resort community was a jazz mecca during its heyday in the twentieth century. In this way, Baldwin's unique and rich past can inform its future.



#4 Downtown Events and Activities are Economic Drivers

Baldwin currently hosts numerous events throughout the year – namely the Blessing of the Bikes event and Troutarama in the summer and the Christmas Parade in winter. These events draw hundreds of people from outlying areas, generating a buzz around Baldwin as people visit shops, restaurants, and stores within downtown. These events are an opportunity for Baldwin to “show off” downtown improvements and to encourage people to keep coming back to local businesses.



Baldwin can market itself in a new light, building on these strengths and creating a new brand for the community. Throughout the community engagement process, people have been excited to share their ideas on how to rebrand Baldwin; it's recommended the Village builds on this excitement in developing this brand for the future.

4 Downtown Baldwin Vision

Guided by community feedback and the results of the Target Market Analysis (included in the previous chapter), the DDA and the Planning Team identified short-term and long-term priorities for downtown Baldwin.

Short-Term Priorities – Projects that are either currently underway or are planned over the next year or two. These include:

- 902 Michigan Green Space
- Maker's Market Space
- Hollister Park Improvements
- Downtown Street Improvements
- Community Branding and Marketing

With this distinction in mind, the following projects represent the priorities the DDA will work towards over the coming years. These projects seek to build downtown Baldwin as a destination – a gathering place where people want to visit and spend time in. Both these short-term and long-term improvements help realize this vision of a better, more vibrant Baldwin.

Long-Term Priorities – Projects that are planned over a longer period of time – likely over three to five years into the future. These projects are more capital-intensive or require additional planning, community feedback, or design work before implementation. These include:

- Amphitheater and Community Gathering Space
- Public Riverfront Access
- Small-Scale Hotel
- Downtown Housing
- Pere Marquette Trail Paving*

**While much of the trail exists outside of Downtown Baldwin, the DDA recognizes the value in paving the Pere Marquette Trail and will pursue funding sources and partnerships to improve this regional recreational amenity. The DDA also supports the trail's designation as a Heritage Trail to reflect its importance within Lake County and the region.*

Short-Term Priorities

- 1 902 Michigan Green Space
- 2 Maker's Market Space
- 3 Hollister Park Improvements
- 4 Downtown Street Improvements
- 5 Community Branding and Marketing (Not Location Specific)



Opportunity: Community pocket park, including features such as outdoor seating, art installations, fire pits, television screen, long-term potential for new development

Background: Located at the intersection of 8th Street and Michigan Avenue, this site was the former location of the Baldwin Opera House. The long-vacant building was demolished in January 2024, leaving a vacant parcel in its place. Due to its proximity to Baldwin's downtown district, the Pere Marquette Trailhead, and the Wenger Pavilion, this parcel is highly visible and may serve as a desirable development site in the future. In the meantime however, this vacant parcel can be used as a temporary "pocket park" or small community gathering space.

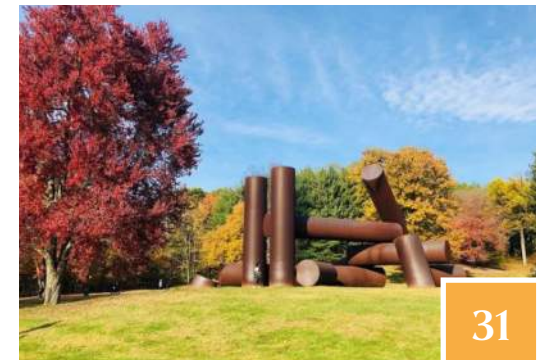
Potential Funding Sources: Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Spark Grant Program, MDNR Recreation Passport Grant Program, Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Revitalization and Placemaking Grant Program, MEDC Public Gathering Spaces Initiative, Lake County Community Foundation

Case Studies

Reed City, MI – Developed in partnership with Crossroads Recreation Connection (a local recreation non-profit), Reed City received a \$1 million grant from the MEDC Public Gathering Spaces Initiative Grant for the construction of a pocket park near its downtown district. Located on a former vacant parcel at Slosson Street and Chestnut Street, this park will have a splash pad, restrooms, an ice rink, and an outdoor bandshell.



Farmington, MI – In 2022, the Farmington DDA secured \$75,000 in matching funds and was awarded an MEDC Public Gathering Spaces Initiative Grant for the completion of Dinan Park. This small downtown park features outdoor seating, a fire pit, and shade features and is located within the community's social district, supporting the nearby restaurants and breweries by providing a shared outdoor dining space.



2

Maker's Market Space

Opportunity: Pavilion for public market events, restroom facilities

Background: With the popularity of farmer's markets and craft shows of homemade goods, construction of a pavilion or "maker's market space" is a short-term priority for the DDA. This provides a venue to hold these events and draws people to downtown Baldwin regularly. The location is to be determined but should be placed adjacent to the downtown district and feature easy pedestrian connectivity between these areas.

Potential Funding Sources: Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Revitalization and Placemaking Grant Program, MEDC Public Gathering Spaces Initiative, Lake County Community Foundation

Case Studies

Ludington, MI – Completed in 2021, Legacy Plaza is located in downtown Ludington and features a large covered pavilion, restroom facilities, and an outdoor fire pit area. The \$2.1 million park improvement created a space that is now used for farmer's markets as well as a "backdoor entry" into downtown Ludington.



3

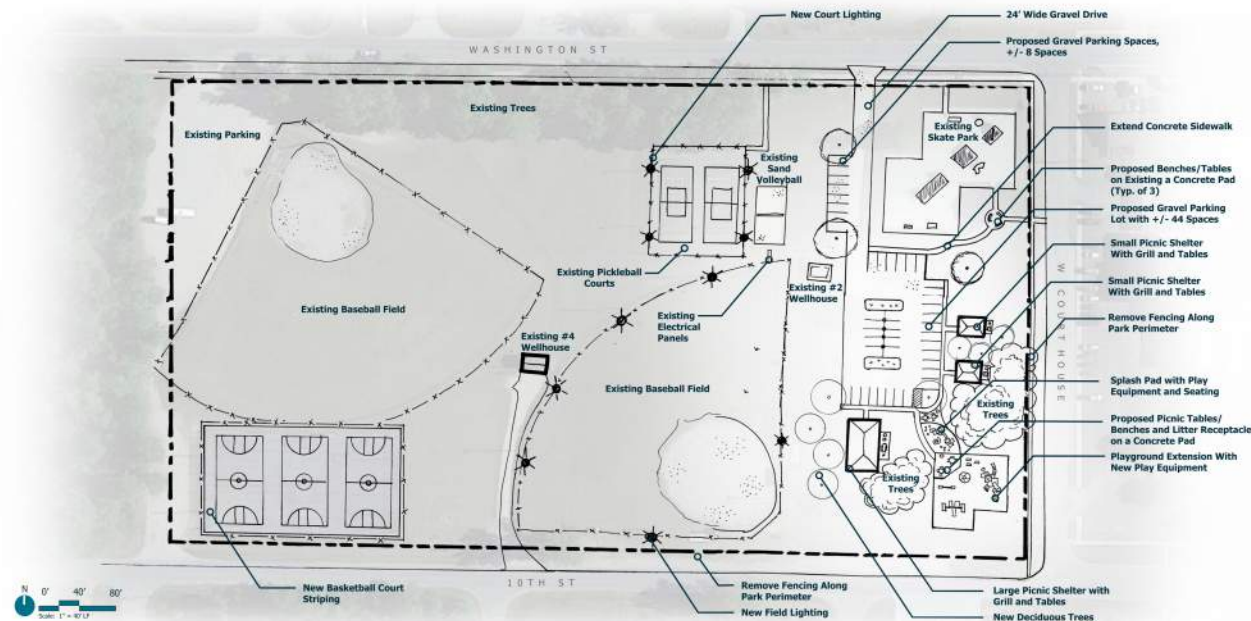
Hollister Park Improvements

Opportunity: Splash pad, lighting improvements, continued recreation facility improvements

Background: The Village is in the process of improving Hollister Park, as the Village submitted a MDNR Spark Grant Application in 2024. These improvements will improve parking, add lighting, and install a proposed splash pad at the park. These improvements represent work already occurring within Baldwin, enhancing the community's recreational amenities.

Potential Funding Sources: MDNR Spark Grant Program

Hollister Park - Site Layout Concept



4

Downtown Street Improvements

Opportunity: Traffic-calming street improvements, painted crosswalks, improved landscaping

Background: With Downtown Baldwin located along Michigan Avenue (M-37), there are both challenges and opportunities to improve the downtown's streetscape. The five-lane state highway creates a large barrier between the east and west sides of downtown, making crossing the street difficult. Increasing pedestrian connectivity throughout downtown is a priority and can be accomplished through temporary "traffic-calming" measures such as new painting including restriping lanes, painted crosswalks, or pedestrian medians.

Due to its status as a state highway, these improvements will require study and coordination with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). It should be noted that many communities have successfully worked with MDOT on redesigning streets in their downtown districts. While street reconstruction is a long-term and costly investment, the Village can partner with MDOT on implementing "pilot projects" that offer temporary, lower-cost improvements that can be removed if they are not successful. With this in mind, the Village can build a working relationship with MDOT and identify places to implement traffic-calming methods through downtown Baldwin.

Potential Funding Sources: Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Transportation Alternatives Program, MDOT Transportation Economic Development Fund – Category B Villages and Small Cities

Case Studies

Newaygo, MI – Following a "pilot project" implemented in 2020, MDOT and the City of Newaygo reconstructed M-37 through downtown Newaygo, reducing lane widths, creating wider sidewalks, and installing pedestrian crosswalks through the district. After its completion in 2021, the road follows a more compact, lower-speed form that is more conducive to a vibrant pedestrian-oriented business district.



5

Community Branding and Marketing

Opportunity: Village of Baldwin rebranding strategy

Background: As mentioned in the previous section, Baldwin can create a stronger “brand” or identity that leverages the community’s many strengths. This helps paint Baldwin in a positive and more attractive light and points to the ongoing improvements currently underway in the community. This can be communicated through a new Village logo, website, communications materials, adopted color palette, light-pole banners, and signage welcoming visitors to Baldwin. This presents a fresh look for the community, showcasing Baldwin in a new light.

Potential Funding Sources: Lake County Community Foundation, Lake County Economic Development Alliance

Case Study

Hancock, MI

Old Brand



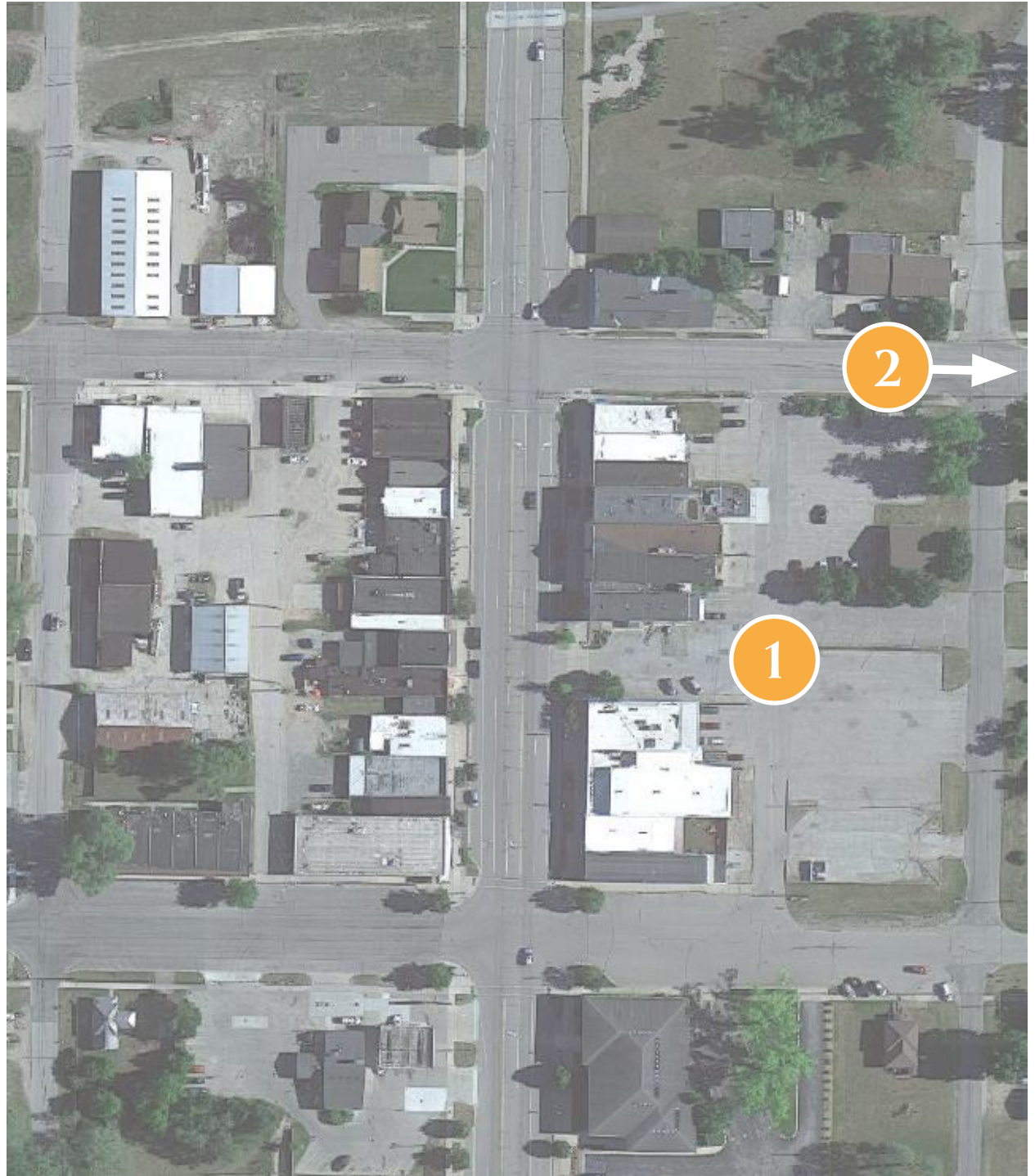
New Brand



Above: Vintage License Plate of Baldwin. Courtesy of Lake County Historical Society.

Long-Term Priorities

- 1 Amphitheater and Community Gathering Space
- 2 Public Riverfront Access
- 3 Small-Scale Hotel (Not Location Specific)
- 4 Downtown Housing (Not Location Specific)



1

Amphitheater and Community Gathering Space

Opportunity: Community green space, concert amphitheater, activated alley space

Background: A dedicated gathering space and pavilion were identified as long-term priorities and were discussed in further detail at the Community Charrette Day in October 2023. Although the Wenger Pavilion currently hosts outdoor concert events, the Village should plan for the next life stage of this part of town, potentially enhancing the public uses in this space. Because the area behind the storefronts on the east side of downtown Baldwin is used for parking and Troutarama festivities every summer, planning for this space requires thoughtful configuration. Taking feedback received through community feedback, concepts reflecting a new amphitheater and gathering space were created for this area.

Both images are conceptual in nature but represent what is possible in this area. Concept A represents the Wenger Pavilion being refurbished with bathrooms added to its north face. This concept also features a family-friendly green space for picnics or lawn chairs during concert events. An activated alley also connects the space, increasing connectivity between this space and downtown Baldwin. Concept B also includes an activated alley while orienting the pavilion space and bathrooms around a larger community green space. Both of these concepts illustrate a creative use of the current backside of downtown Baldwin, envisioning this as an extension and enhancement of the downtown district. These areas are shielded from the traffic and noise of Michigan Avenue, making it an ideal location for an amphitheater.

These concepts seek to enhance downtown Baldwin year-round. Summer nights along Michigan Street can be turned into a unique experience – dinner at a local restaurant followed by ice cream dessert, then walking through a well-lit alleyway to set up lawn chairs to catch a concert under the stars. During the winter, visitors can sip something warm while they stand near fire pits or window-shop along Michigan Avenue. Although aspirational in nature, these concepts seek to further Baldwin's vision as a destination.

Potential Funding Sources: Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Revitalization and Placemaking Grant Program, MEDC Public Gathering Spaces Initiative, Lake County Community Foundation

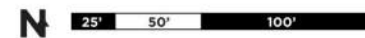


1

Amphitheater and Community Gathering Space (Continued)



- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 New Infill Opportunity, 45' X 100' | 6 Restroom & Storage Addition, 35' X 15', 525+/- SF |
| 2 Community Center Renovation | 7 Lawn |
| 3 Streetscape: Outdoor Activation | 8 Market Area |
| 4 Alley Activation | 9 Monument "Moment" |
| 5 Wenger Pavilion, Existing | 10 Food Truck Area |



- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Pavilion, 20' X 60'+/- & Restrooms | 6 Monument "Moment" |
| 2 Event Stage, 35' X 50' | 7 Food Truck Area |
| 3 Market Expansion Area | 8 New Infill Opportunity, 45' X 100' |
| 4 Outdoor Firepit | 9 Community Center Renovation |
| 5 Lawn | 10 Streetscape: Outdoor Activation |
| | 11 Alley Activation |

2

Public Riverfront Access

Opportunity: Sidewalks, non-motorized path along Eighth Street

Background: Identified as one of Baldwin's greatest assets, the Village's proximity to rivers, lakes, and streams is something to be cherished and leveraged for future development. Located half a mile to the east of downtown is the Baldwin River, a tributary of the famous Pere Marquette River. Due to its ideal recreational location, there have been discussions of creating an RV campground here. Connecting downtown to the Baldwin River not only makes travel between this proposed campground and downtown easier, it connects the community to its defining natural feature. By installing a sidewalk or shared use non-motorized pathway along Eighth Street, downtown Baldwin would be a convenient 10-minute walk from the rivers and streams that give the community its unique "up-north" character.

Potential Funding Sources: Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Spark Grant Program, MDNR Recreation Passport Grant Program, MDNR Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Program, Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)



3

Small-Scale Hotel

Opportunity: Small-scale hotel located in downtown Baldwin

Background: As mentioned in the Target Market Analysis, Baldwin is located in a tourism-oriented part of the state. Baldwin's lack of a hotel however forces visitors to stay outside of town – representing a missed opportunity to capture this business. A downtown hotel represents a key anchor for a downtown district and leads to an economic “spillover” effect, as it attracts outsiders who then visit local shops, restaurants, bars, and other establishments during their stay. Because of this, the DDA can identify sites and encourage the development of a small-scale “boutique” hotel or lodge that is located in downtown Baldwin – offering a unique experience that pairs the proximity to the Manistee National Forest with the convenience of being located downtown.

Potential Funding Sources: MEDC Community Revitalization Program, MEDC Main Street Program, MEDC Build Michigan Community Grant Program, MEDC Brownfield Redevelopment Program

Case Study

Saugatuck, MI – Located in a 19th century Victorian home only a block from downtown Saugatuck, the Twin Oaks Inn is a popular small-scale hotel in the community. The six-room hotel offers guests a bed-and-breakfast style environment and provides close access to all the downtown Saugatuck has to offer.



Opportunity: In-fill downtown residential development

Background: As important as capturing tourism dollars is for Baldwin, increasing its population base is crucial for the downtown's vibrancy and long-term success. More people in Baldwin means a larger customer base for local goods and services. As the Target Market Analysis stated, there is pent-up residential demand for housing units in downtown Baldwin to support part-time and full-time residents. Although housing development is a long-term priority for the DDA since it brings customers closer to the downtown district, there remain hurdles for housing construction. Some of these are identified below:

- **Perceived Lack of Demand:** Private developers may assume that downtown Baldwin is not a target market for housing due to a perceived lack of housing demand. When home prices remain lower than cost to build, it is a signal that real estate development is not feasible without substantial incentives.
- **Financing Difficulties:** Lenders may be hesitant to provide financing for housing projects in soft markets due to a low appraisal or increased risk of default. This can make it challenging for developers to secure the necessary funds to initiate or complete projects. The current construction market, combined with higher interest rates, makes financing new housing projects difficult.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** Regulatory hurdles such as zoning restrictions, permitting delays, and compliance requirements can add significant time and costs to housing development projects.
- **Limited Access to Amenities:** Baldwin may lack the necessary infrastructure and amenities to attract potential residents. Without access to essential services, transportation options, schools, housing developments may struggle to appeal to potential private developers.
- **Local Technical Capacity and Incentives:** Baldwin and Lake County has limited experience with brownfield redevelopments and tax incentives, many of which may be necessary for successful housing developments in order to make financing work.

Potential Funding Sources: MEDC Community Revitalization Program, MEDC Main Street Program, MEDC Build Michigan Community Grant Program, MEDC Brownfield Redevelopment Program

“More people in Baldwin means a larger customer base for local goods and services.”

Case Study

Hudsonville, MI – A new three-story mixed-use development is being constructed in downtown Hudsonville. The development received a \$950,000 Community Revitalization Grant from the MEDC as well as 15 years of property tax abatements valued at roughly \$950,000. The mixed-use development will include 22 residential units and at least four commercial spaces on its first floor.

Cadillac, MI – This four-story, new construction building is located at 207 South Mitchell Street, on the corner of South Mitchell Street and East Cass Street in downtown Cadillac. The \$9 million construction costs, along with challenges in appraising and financing the project in a community without comparable developments, required substantial support, contributions, and leadership from the developer, the City of Cadillac, and state agencies. The developer provided equity in the project, while public partners provided or applied for a broad range of incentives, grants, and loans. A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to the City of Cadillac funded demolition and site preparation. Brownfield grants and loans to the Cadillac Brownfield Authority from EGLE addressed site contamination and other brownfield-eligible activities. Tax incentives were requested from the City through both the Commercial Redevelopment Act, which provides a 12-year, 50% reduction on the millage rate on the commercial portion of the project; and use of a Neighborhood Enterprise Zone (NEZ), which reduces the millage for the residential portion of the property for 15 years. Finally, a Community Revitalization Program (CRP) grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) of \$1.5 million offset construction expenses.



4

Downtown Housing (Continued)

Opportunity: Explore public entities as developer/owners

Many municipal public entities across the country—such as housing commissions and land banks—are leveraging municipal bond financing to build and sell or rent mixed-income housing, rather than relying solely on private developers.

Case Study

Montgomery County, MD – Montgomery County's Housing Opportunities Commission is a public developer and a housing finance agency. They create mixed-income housing across the county and continue to own the properties. The County created a Housing Production Fund, which replaces the expensive private equity required by private developers, charging a lower rate of return and saving the developer money on the project's overall cost.



Opportunity: Land banking

Baldwin can work with the Lake County Land Bank to buy, hold, and redevelop or sell land to be used for housing. Land banks can help offset development costs and risks by eliminating holding costs during pre-development and construction.

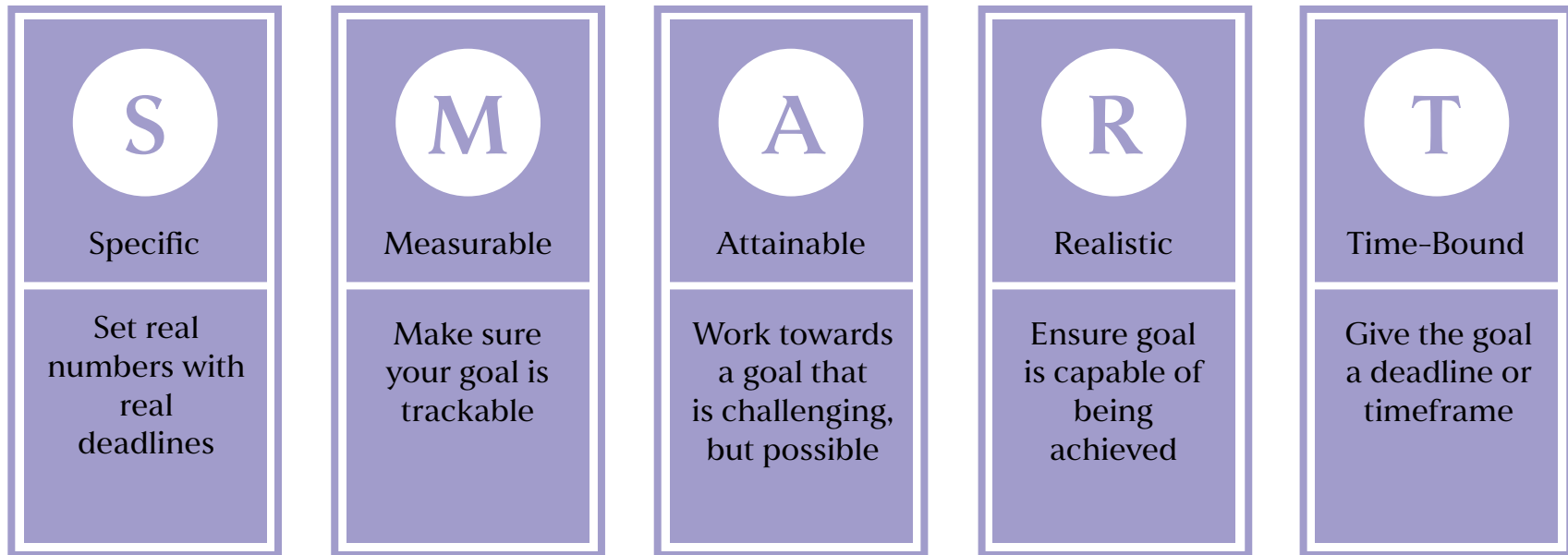
Case Study

Flint, MI – Michigan Community Capital and Uptown Reinvestment Corporation, developed six new housing units on land bank-owned land. By owning the land during development and construction, the project had no property taxes, making the project more feasible. The \$2 million project constructed two walk-up duplexes and two single family homes and also used grant financing from the Mott Foundation and brownfield tax increment financing.



5 Realizing the Vision: Implementation Strategies

We know where we want to go – now how do we get there? Moving from a vision to goals and strategies is critical to making a plan actionable. Together with the DDA, the Project Team has formulated a list of priorities to move downtown Baldwin forward. These strategies follow the framework for “SMART” goals, as illustrated in the graphic below.



The following pages include the Implementation Strategies for putting this plan into action. These are organized based on the DDA's short-term and long-term priorities, proposed timelines, and entities tasked with completing these actions. Short timeframes are those that can be initiated immediately, medium-term timeframes are those that can be initiated 1-3 years in the future, and long-term timeframes are those that are likely to take over 3-5 years to initiate.

Implementation Strategies Table

Task	Timeframe	Entity
902 Michigan Green Space		
Seek funding for quick park improvements	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Discuss connectivity to trout sculpture site and Pere Marquette Trail with CSX	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin, DDA, CSX
Discuss potential acquisition of 384 Michigan Avenue parcel for parcel lot combination with trout sculpture site and Pere Marquette Trail	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Gather community feedback on desired use of green space through public survey and convening committee tasked with identifying potential uses	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Study long-term feasibility and potential for utilizing site for future development	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Maker's Market		
Implement pilot program featuring a maker's market at the current Wenger pavilion	Short (Less than 1 Year)	DDA, Lake County Chamber of Commerce
Determine long-term management structure of maker's market events and identify funding sources	Short (Less than 1 Year)	DDA, Lake County Chamber of Commerce

Task	Timeframe	Entity
Hollister Park		
Hire contractor to complete planned improvements per Parks and Recreation Master Plan and SPARK grant application	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin
Downtown Street Improvements		
Pilot traffic calming program - work with MDOT on painting crosswalks along Michigan Avenue at 7th and 8th Streets	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin, DDA, MDOT
Pilot traffic calming program - work with MDOT on painting middle turn lane along Michigan Avenue	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin, DDA, MDOT
Work with MDOT on the study and installation of pedestrian crossing beacons at 7th and 8th Streets	Long (Over 3-5 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA, MDOT
Work with MDOT on the study and installation of a traffic light at M-37 and US-10	Long (Over 3-5 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA, MDOT
Work with MDOT on the study and potential redesign of M-37 to facilitate more sidewalks and pedestrian spaces	Long (Over 3-5 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA, MDOT

Task	Timeframe	Entity
Community Branding and Marketing		
Create committee with representation from DDA, Village of Baldwin, Lake County, The Right Place, and neighboring townships and villages to develop cohesive marketing strategy and determine capacity for leading marketing efforts for the greater Baldwin region	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin, DDA, Lake County, The Right Place, Webber Township, Yates Township, Pleasant Plains Township, Idlewild
Update Village of Baldwin website and social media for updated and consistent brand and online presence	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Create paid staff position to increase marketing capacity and perform duties currently done by volunteers; this may require a regional partnership or having this position be shared across multiple entities	Medium (1-3 Years)	TBD
Hold competition to gather brand and marketing ideas from members of the Baldwin community	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA

Task	Timeframe	Entity
Amphitheater and Community Gathering Space		
Incorporate amenities such as art, lighting, landscaping, banners, and other placemaking elements	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Discuss activated alley space connecting Michigan Avenue to Wenger pavilion space with Jones Ice Cream and other nearby businesses	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Incorporate provisions for green space and lawn seating design into future repaving of parking lot	Long (Over 3-5 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Develop RFP for design of new bandshell and indoor/outdoor event facility with restrooms	Long (Over 3-5 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Convene committee of summer concert series organizers, Historical Society, DDA, Village, and neighboring townships to identify capacity and technical needs for desired future events	Long (Over 3-5 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA, Historical Society, Summer Concert Series, Webber Twp, Yates Twp, Pleasant Plains Twp, Idlewild

Task	Timeframe	Entity
Public Riverfront Access		
Improve 8th Street from Michigan Avenue to Baldwin River by adding streetlights, curb and gutter, trees, and sidewalk or sidepath	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Install signage at Baldwin River indicating distance to downtown Baldwin	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Apply for DNR grant funding for boat and kayak launch along the Baldwin River	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Construct campground on Village-owned property to encourage tourism and further support downtown Baldwin	Long (Over 3-5 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Small-Scale Hotel		
Review Zoning Ordinance to ensure hotel is an allowable, by right use in priority sites for hotel development	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin
Pursue Redevelopment-Ready Communities Support to develop and issue a Request for Developer Qualifications for a hotel	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin

Task	Timeframe	Entity
Downtown Housing		
Revise Zoning Ordinance to allow for upper-floor residential in the C-1 Village Center Commercial District by right	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin
Eliminate or reduce required parking spaces in the C-1 Village Center Commercial District and others to lower the cost of entry for businesses and developers	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Pursue Essentials Level of Redevelopment Ready Community Certification to gain access to technical assistance and funding to address zoning, housing, and economic development matters	Short (Less than 1 Year)	Village of Baldwin
Apply for MSHDA Housing Readiness Incentive Grant and/or MSHDA community development grants to fund activities related to the development of housing in downtown Baldwin	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin
Monitor updates from the Michigan High Speed Internet Office for future funding sources to upgrade broadband internet	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, DDA
Coordinate with the Lake County Land Bank Authority to buy, hold, redevelop, or sell land to facilitate housing development	Medium (1-3 Years)	Village of Baldwin, Lake County Land Bank Authority



