

Downtown Planning Charrette Summary

Resilient East Jordan
City of East Jordan, Michigan



DRAFT

Plan Prepared By



324 Munson Avenue, Traverse City, MI 49686
231-929-3696 www.liaa.org

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Downtown East Jordan	
Charrette Preparation	3
Charrette Process and Activities	3
Charrette – Day One	
Charrette – Day Two	
Charrette – Day Three	
Charrette Findings and Recommendations	6
Adaptive Reuse and Preservation of Historic Structures	
Building Form and Aesthetics	
Waterfront Development and Downtown Connectivity	
Pedestrian Connectivity	
Entry Experience and Roadway Design	
Natural Resources, Cultural Heritage, & Tourism	
Implementation – Tools & Practices	

Introduction

In 2014, the City of East Jordan began a new land use planning and community development project called **Resilient East Jordan**. This unique planning effort is designed to strengthen the community's ability to better manage the changes and challenges associated with future economic variability and climate change.

The Resilient East Jordan project is helping leaders and citizens of the East Jordan community refine their land use and development plans. Effort will be made to assist the City in updating its Master Plan. As a part of the Resilient East Jordan project, a planning *charrette* was conducted for Downtown East Jordan.

Downtown East Jordan

Downtown East Jordan is located near the shore of the south arm of Lake Charlevoix where the Jordan River flows into the Lake. While historic Downtown East Jordan comprises the three southern blocks of Main Street, the charrette focus area was expanded to include adjacent areas with direct connections to the historic downtown that make up the central core of the City (see map on the following page). The charrette focus area includes the historic downtown, Memorial Park, the City Marina, Sportsman's Park, the city boat launch, and the M-32 corridor from Water Street to Depot Street.

Downtown East Jordan has a unique setting near some of Michigan's most beautiful natural resources in the Jordan River and Lake Charlevoix. Main Street, home of the traditional downtown development patterns within the City, lies directly east of the south end of the south arm of Lake Charlevoix. Michigan State Highway 32 (M-32) is a primary east-west corridor in the region and intersects Main Street just to the east of the mouth of the Jordan River. East of Main Street, the development patterns along M-32 are typified by individual buildings with varying architectural character and larger parking lots.

Much of the property surrounding the confluence of the Jordan River and Lake Charlevoix is owned by the City and accessible to the public. The East Jordan Municipal Harbor and Memorial Park are located between Lake Charlevoix and Main Street, and Sportsman's Park and the city boat launch are located on the west side of the Jordan River and Lake Charlevoix respectively. The City of East Jordan offices, the East Jordan Civic Center, and the Jordan River Art Center can all be found Downtown.



What is a Charrette?

A charrette is a multi-day collaborative planning event that engages community members to create and support a feasible plan for sustainable and positive change for a specific issue or area of the community.



Downtown East Jordan

-Photo by MI RootsWear

Charrette Focus Area Map



Charrette Preparation

Prior to the charrette, the project team gathered information and data about the focus area to help inform the charrette activities and planning process. Information gathered included property data, road widths, existing sidewalk infrastructure, parking locations, existing development character, existing zoning regulations, and current land use. The project team also conducted walking audits of the focus area to identify potential areas of concern and existing visual character. The charrette studio, or working space, was set up in the lobby of the Community Auditorium at the East Jordan High School.

To ensure stakeholder and public participation in the charrette process, the project team placed notices throughout the community and submitted press releases to local media. Additionally, personal invitations were sent to key stakeholders and property owners.

Charrette Process and Activities

Charrette - Day One

On the first day of the charrette, the charrette team facilitated a series of meetings with multiple community stakeholder groups in order to get a better understanding of the key issues and constraints of the Downtown. Stakeholders also provided information about existing plans and visions for the focus area's future. Based on the input of the stakeholder groups, the charrette team began work on preliminary design concepts and alternatives. These preliminary concepts and alternatives addressed the issues identified by the stakeholders and provided specific ideas for consideration during future stakeholder and public meetings.

Many buildings along Main Street reflect the City's history.



Charrette - Day One.

The charrette team facilitated a series of stakeholder meetings and began work on preliminary design concepts.



On the evening of the first day of the charrette, the project team hosted a public planning workshop in the auditorium and charrette studio. The workshop provided an opportunity for citizens to learn about the charrette process, existing focus area conditions, and the basic principles of good streets, placemaking, urban form, walkability, and connectivity. Following the introductory presentation, participants completed a series of brainstorming activities. Working in small groups, participants were asked to identify, map, and illustrate:

- Five positive aspects of the focus area;
- Five negative aspects of the focus area;
- Three businesses they would like to see downtown; and
- A vision for the future of the focus area.

Several common themes were identified throughout the activities of the first day, and would become the primary focus of the charrette. These common themes were:

- Adaptive reuse and preservation of historic structures.
- Building form and aesthetics.
- Waterfront development and downtown connectivity.
- Pedestrian connectivity.
- Roadway function and design.

Charrette - Day One.

Charrette team members facilitated a public workshop where participants described their vision for Downtown.



Charrette - Day Two

On the second day of the charrette, the project team held additional meetings with stakeholder groups. These meetings provided opportunities for the stakeholders to review and provide input on the preliminary concepts and design alternatives created the previous day. Using the additional comments and suggestions, the project team continued to refine concepts, explore additional design alternatives, and formulate recommendations for the focus area.

Charrette - Day Two.

Charrette team members continue to discuss and analyze design alternatives with community stakeholders throughout the day.



On the evening of the second day, a public open house was hosted in the charrette studio. Information about the focus area, preliminary concepts, potential design alternatives, ideas, and draft recommendations were displayed around the studio. Stakeholders and interested community members discussed the displayed information with the project team and provided additional comments and suggestions.

Charrette - Day Two.

A comprehensive set of concepts and design alternatives were presented at a public open house, providing an opportunity for citizens to make more comments and suggestions.



Charrette - Day Three

Based on the suggestions and comments received at the open house, the project team refined and developed the final set of concepts, sketches, and recommendations for the focus area. Additional stakeholder feedback was received during the third day of the charrette and incorporated in to the final recommendations. The final concepts, sketches, and recommendations were presented to the community at a final public meeting in the Community Auditorium at the East Jordan High School.

Charrette - Day Three.

Based on feedback from the previous day, the charrette team refined the design concepts and recommendations. These were then presented to the community at a final presentation later in the evening.



Charrette Findings and Recommendations

The results and recommendations of the three day downtown planning charrette are provided in the following pages. It is important to remember that many of these concepts and ideas are just that — concepts and ideas. While these concepts have been vetted by the project team through preliminary analysis and stakeholder verification, additional study, analysis, and design will be required. Implementation of these recommendations will require cooperation with property owners and local, regional, and state agencies (e.g., Michigan Department of Transportation).

A majority of the stakeholder and community discussions involved, in one way or another, enhancing Downtown East Jordan and creating a unique identity, or sense of place, within the core of the City. Establishing a vibrant atmosphere with strong connections to the City’s unique natural resources was seen by many charrette participants as a way to improve the quality of life for local residents and encourage economic development and tourism. Many of the comments collected from stakeholders and citizens noted that vacant buildings, lack of connectivity, and inconsistent building character detract



from the overall identity of the East Jordan community. Concerns about the M-32 corridor's impact as the primary entry experience into the Downtown area were expressed throughout the charrette.

The East Jordan community has numerous unique assets that help establish identity and sense of place. Residents and visitors alike enjoy the community's waterways and parks. Historic sites and buildings contribute to the cultural heritage the community. The charrette team believes that enhancing a unique identity, or sense of place, in Downtown East Jordan can improve the quality of life for those who live, work, play, and shop there. Improving the aesthetic character of the M-32 corridor can also transform the primary entry experience to Downtown for the entire community. Creating a sense of place, or "placemaking," is the common thread for all of the charrette recommendations.

Placemaking can help improve quality of life for local residents, attract businesses and entrepreneurs, and increase tourism. According to the article "Why the Economics of "Place" Matters" by Dr. Soji Adelaja and Mark Wyckoff in *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People*, communities must work to attract talented, well-educated people to compete in the changing economy. The article states that these types of individuals are choosing places to live and then finding or developing jobs for themselves rather than moving to communities to follow jobs. This makes improving the community through placemaking efforts highly important. Strategic placemaking improvements for small towns and cities identified by Adelaja and Wyckoff include:

- Creating a wider range of entertainment and eating establishment options;
- Providing entrepreneurship and incubator services;
- Creating more bike paths and links to parks, green spaces, and waterways within town and connect to rural places within a few miles;
- Maintaining good schools;
- Providing a wide range of activities for youth and families;
- Maintaining good shopping areas;
- Constructing small mixed-use developments in key activity locations; and
- Developing regional nodes of activity.

Adaptive Reuse and Preservation of Historic Structures

The East Jordan community has a rich history dating back to the 1870's. Many sites and structures from the City's past still exist and serve as a source of pride for citizens. The preservation of the City's historic sites and structures was one of the most commonly cited desires by charrette participants. Ideas for new uses within older buildings in the focus area were a frequent discussion topic during the stakeholder and public meetings. Reusing an existing structure or site for a purpose other than that for which it was built is known as "adaptive reuse." Encouraging adaptive reuse within a community can help preserve historic structures and sites.

The preservation of historic character, particularly in traditional downtowns, helps enhance a sense of place by maintaining a human scale and preserving cultural heritage. The orientation, form, mass, design, and architectural character of historic buildings all contribute to the inviting environment that people associate with traditional main streets. Promoting cultural heritage through the preservation of history and architecture enhances a place's unique identity and can encourage historic tourism.

Recommendations

The charrette team recommends that valuable historic sites and buildings in Downtown East Jordan be identified and preserved to help create a unique identity that reflects the City's cultural heritage. The City should encourage the adaptive reuse of valuable existing historic buildings whenever possible. The first set of pictures below (A) shows what the potential adaptive reuse of the old East Jordan Fire Hall as a restaurant could look like. The next set of pictures (B) shows what the potential adaptive reuse of the East Jordan Co-operative Building as a brew-pub could look like.

Charrette participants placed a high importance on preserving historic sites and structures in Downtown East Jordan. The Main Street Center is an example of historic preservation efforts in the City.



Illustration A. Current View



Illustration A. Proposed View



Illustration B. Current View



Illustration B. Proposed View



Building Form and Aesthetics

The aesthetic character of the built environment greatly impacts how people perceive and experience locations, and is a major component of creating a sense of place. The development patterns and character of the built environment in the charrette focus area are inconsistent. On Main Street, buildings of widely varying height and mass can be found adjacent to one another. There are also incomplete blocks along Main Street where empty lots sit between buildings. The façade treatments and building materials used on Main Street buildings also vary significantly. Development along the M-32 corridor is more suburban in character, with some buildings set back from the road right-of-way with larger parking lots fronting on the road. Building character along M-32 is also varied. Charrette participants frequently noted a desire for development with character that complements the historic Downtown along M-32.

Recommendations

Building Orientation and Location

Buildings that sit adjacent to sidewalks and the road corridor have a greater presence for those walking or driving past and create a more human scale that can help slow traffic, improve business visibility, and

Building Orientation – Building locations in the focus area vary in their relationship to the sidewalk or roadway.



create a more defined sense of place. Siting buildings closer to sidewalks and rights-of-way also mimics historic building patterns and helps to unify old and new development. The charrette team recommends that as development and redevelopment occurs within the Downtown East Jordan focus area, buildings be placed at the fronts of lots. The first pictures below (C) shows how redevelopment along M-32 could look. A multiple-story, mixed-use building fronts on the roadway with a shared parking lot and residential development behind. The illustration (D) on the following page shows the M-32 corridor, in plan view, with building development along the roadway and shared parking areas located behind the buildings.

On Main Street, buildings should sit directly adjacent to the sidewalk. Along the M-32 corridor, buildings should be placed towards the fronts of lots with direct access to the existing sidewalk infrastructure and parking lots located behind or to the sides of structures. The City Planning Commission should amend the Zoning Ordinance to require that buildings in these areas be located near the sidewalk or road right-of-way.

Illustration C. Current View



Illustration C. Proposed View



Illustration D. Potential Redevelopment along M-32



Building Design and Character

The design and character of the existing buildings in the charrette focus area are fairly inconsistent. Maintaining consistent building orientation, mass, height, façade, and architectural features would help unify aesthetics and create a coordinated identity for the core of the City. We recommend that the City establish building design guidelines for the commercial properties in the study area. Items to consider when exploring these guidelines should include height, mass, architectural elements, roof lines, and building materials.

Building Height and Mass

Maintaining similar, but not identical, building height and massing within blocks provides a consistency of scale without limiting the character of individual buildings. Historically, Downtown East Jordan generally consisted of buildings of two or three stories with retail uses on the first floor. It is recommended that future development and redevelopment incorporate multiple-story buildings to maintain a consistent scale along the street and provide for a mix of uses, with retail on the first floor and residential or office uses on the upper floors. The pictures below (E) show how potential redevelopment along Main Street could reflect existing historic character, provide consistent building height and mass, and accommodate mixed-uses on multiple stories.

Illustration E. Current View



Illustration E. Proposed View



Historic downtown buildings in East Jordan were typically multiple-story and fronted on the sidewalk.

-Photo from City of East Jordan



Façades and Building Materials

The façade treatments, design elements, and exterior building materials of the buildings within the charrette study area vary greatly. Buildings with common façade treatments and design elements help create a unified street character. The charrette team recommends that design guidelines be created for buildings in the traditional Downtown area of East Jordan. These guidelines should encourage the use of consistent façade treatments, window size and placement, exterior building materials, and awnings. Newly constructed buildings should complement the existing character of the surrounding structures and incorporate similar levels of detail in their design, but also have individual appearances. Guidelines for buildings along M-32 should be developed and can allow for more flexibility in design, but should address items similar to those listed above.

When creating design guidelines for commercial areas, architectural elements that contribute to retail success should be considered. Robert Gibbs makes a series of form and design recommendations for retail success in *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development*. The following summarizes some of these best practices for retail success.

Best Practices for Awnings:

- Awning materials should be constructed from canvas, cloth, steel or glass, but should reflect the overall character of the business brand. Cloth awnings should appear to be natural fabric.
- Awnings constructed of plastic and internally illuminated awnings should not be permitted.
- Awnings should be limited to two colors.
- Logos and lettering should be limited to 8 inches in height, and only allowed on the front flap of the awning rather than on the top-sloped surface.
- Awnings should project no more than 6 feet and be at least 8 feet above the walk.

Best Practices for Facades (Windows, Doors, and Storefronts):

- At least sixty percent of first-level elevations facing the primary sidewalks should be transparent glass.
- A horizontal break between the first level and upper levels will help focus attention on the first level retailer.
- Signage, awnings, and materials should remain in character with the historic framework of the building.
- Doors facing the street should be recessed into the building façade whenever practical.

Façade treatments and exterior building materials vary greatly on Main Street buildings.



Signs

There is currently a wide variety of signage present within the charrette focus area. Providing a cohesive set of sign standards for the focus area will help create a unified character and aesthetic. It is recommended that the City work to create a set of sign standards that promote well-designed, properly scaled signs. According to *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development* by Robert Gibbs, uniform sign standards that still allow for individuality and creativity should be implemented. For downtown signs, size should be limited to 1 square foot of signage for each linear foot of storefront with a maximum letter height of 8 to 10 inches. For commercial signs along major road corridor, Gibbs recommends 2 square feet of sign area for each linear foot of storefront.

Waterfront Development and Downtown Connectivity

Downtown East Jordan is uniquely situated near some of the region's most spectacular natural resources. Capitalizing on its close proximity to Lake Charlevoix and the Jordan River should be one of the primary goals for the charrette study area. Memorial Park, along with its frontage on the Lake and the Municipal Harbor, presents great opportunity for the creation of a public activity center directly adjacent to the stores and restaurants on Main Street. Charrette participants frequently mentioned the potential for creating better connections between the waterfront and Downtown and increasing the scale and frequency of waterfront activities. Additionally, a great deal of East Jordan's history is connected to its waterfront location. This history should be emphasized and celebrated within the charrette focus area to educate residents about the City's cultural heritage and encourage heritage tourism.

Recommendations

Charrette participants noted that the Municipal Harbor and Memorial Park should both be used more than they currently are. Currently, both the park and harbor feel relatively detached from Downtown. Increasing the usability of Memorial Park was primary goal for some stakeholder and the charrette team recommends that a series of physical changes to the park be implemented to improve its usability and increase activity on the waterfront. The City should plan for, design, and implement changes that could include:

- The addition of an observation deck and seating area over the rip-rap covered slope on the lake side of the park to increase the park's usable space and allow people to get closer to the water.

“Nothing contributes to strong retail sales and an attractive downtown as much as well-designed and properly scale signage.”

-Robert J. Gibbs, *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development*



- Relocating the train to increase usable space within the center of the park. Charrette participants noted that Sportsman’s Park could be a more suitable potential location for the train.
- Thinning or eliminating the landscaping at the south end of the park to improve views of the park and harbor from M-32.
- Providing family-friendly recreational elements, such as a splash pad or “life size” chess board in the park.
- Providing a new structure that matches the character of the existing band shell to house new restrooms and a food vending space.
- Creating a plaza and seating area near the vending space to promote the use of the park as a place for picnics and gathering.

Conceptual representations of these recommendations (F and G) can be seen on the following pages.

It is also recommended that the City promote Memorial Park as the primary gathering place in the City by utilizing it as the main venue for as many festivals and events as possible. The City should also consider moving the farmers market to the location as well.

The charrette team also recommends maximizing the usability of the Memorial Park area as a gathering space by making the southern block of Spring Street a more pedestrian friendly space for use during festivals and events. Adding pavers or a similar surface to the street would help notify motorists that this is a place that pedestrians also use. Highly visible crosswalks and pedestrian connections to the existing sidewalks on city streets and walks that lead to Main Street through empty lots should also be incorporated. It should be noted that any improvements made to Spring Street need to consider the truck traffic that uses this route to access EJ, the infrastructure products manufacturing company, to the north of the park. The charrette team also recommends that the back sides of the Main Street businesses on the west side of the southern block be utilized in a way that capitalizes on their relationship with the waterfront. Rear business entrances should be incorporated and outdoor seating and dining areas should be promoted. The pictures on page 17 (H) show how redevelopment could allow for businesses to better utilize the space adjacent to Spring Street and the waterfront.



Illustration F. Potential Memorial Park Changes (Plan View)

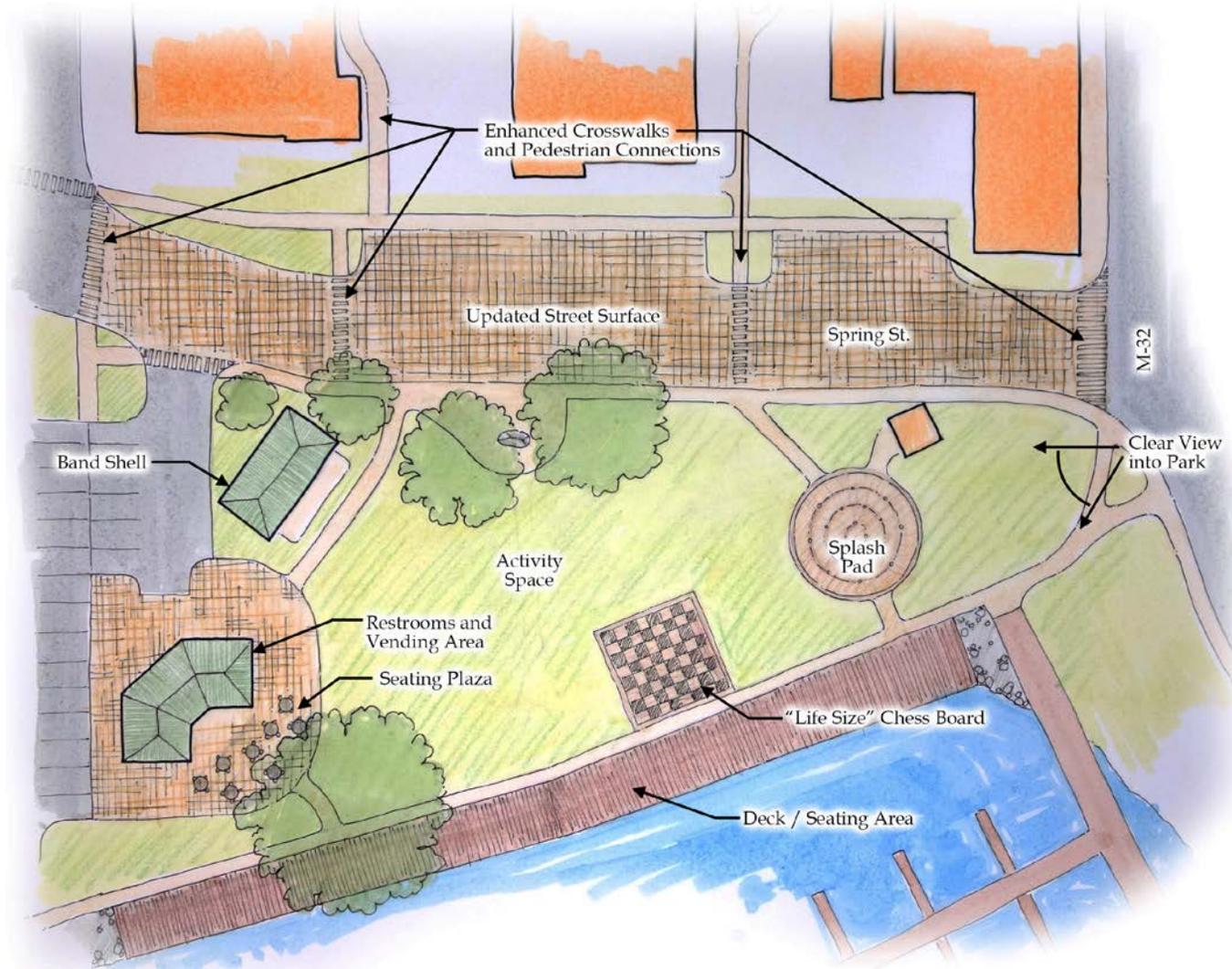


Illustration G. Potential Memorial Park Changes (Perspective Sketch)



Illustration H. Current View



Illustration H. Proposed View



In addition to providing a better relationship between Main Street and the waterfront, improvements to the back sides of these buildings would greatly enhance the visual appeal of downtown for motorists approaching on M-32 from the west.

Pedestrian Connectivity

Pedestrian infrastructure is present throughout the charrette focus area. Much of the pedestrian infrastructure in the focus area is functional, safe, and aesthetically pleasing, however there are improvements that can be made in certain locations to improve the pedestrian experience and connectivity. The existing streetscape along Main Street, constructed in 1998, includes sidewalks of concrete and brick, raised planters, street trees, and street lighting. Similar streetscape improvements were constructed along M-32 between Spring Street and 2nd Street in 2006/2007. Concrete sidewalks extend along both sides of M-32 east of 2nd Street. A sidewalk on the north side of M-32 runs west from Spring Street, across the bridge over the Jordan River, to the C-48 intersection. This section of sidewalk is directly adjacent to the northern curb on M-32.

One of the most commonly cited issues by charrette participants was the difficulty of crossing the Jordan River by foot or on a bicycle. The existing sidewalk on the north side of M-32 across the Jordan River lies directly adjacent to the busy vehicular travel lane. Due to the lack of separation between pedestrians and cars, people using this walk feel unsafe and uncomfortable to the point that they seek alternate routes across the river. The charrette team observed “social trails” along the roadway where pedestrians have found routes where sidewalks do not exist or that are better separated from the road and more comfortable to walk. “Social trails,” sometimes referred to as “goat paths,” are paths created by foot or bicycle traffic in locations where there is no pedestrian infrastructure. The social trails on the north side of M-32 lead to a small footbridge over the river.

Recommendations

The charrette team recommends that a variety of improvements be made to the pedestrian infrastructure and streetscape within the focus area. The city boat launch and Sportsman’s Park offer access to both Lake Charlevoix and the Jordan River within walking distance of Downtown. Creating efficient, attractive, and safe pedestrian connections between these places and downtown will encourage park users visit downtown and help solidify the perception of East Jordan as a waterfront City. It is recommended that new sidewalks that are separated from the roadway be built along the north side of M-32 in order to provide a safer and more comfortable experience for walkers and bicyclists. The feasibility of an updated, accessible foot bridge over the river to the north of the M-32 bridge should also be investigated.

We also recommend that a pedestrian connection from Sportsman’s Park along the south side of M-32 be made. This connection should incorporate a boardwalk system that crosses the wetlands on the south

“Social trails” show where pedestrians are seeking alternate routes where sidewalks don’t exist or feel too uncomfortable to use.



side of the road bridge and leads to the existing sidewalks on the south side of M-32 near the bank parking lot. The boardwalk system should incorporate wildlife viewing areas and connect with the larger river valley trail system that is currently being discussed. The most feasible route for this boardwalk connection might utilize the old temporary road bed through the wetlands from the time when the M-32 bridge was originally constructed. Charrette participants noted that this connection could also be used in the winter by snowmobiles. This would eliminate the need for snowmobilers to use the sometimes unsafe snowbanks of the M-32 bridge to cross the river and separate them from vehicular traffic. The illustration (I) on the following page shows what these potential pedestrian infrastructure improvements could look like.

The charrette team also recommends that the City continue to work with local and regional stakeholder groups to develop non-motorized and motorized trail connections between East Jordan and other communities around Lake Charlevoix and throughout the region. Creating these trail connections and providing trailhead facilities in the Downtown area would enhance recreation tourism and bring more people to downtown East Jordan.

Entry Experience and Roadway Design

The primary gateways into Downtown East Jordan are on M-32, entering from both the east and west. The entry experience at these gateways does little to announce an arrival into Downtown, and identify East Jordan as a unique place. Additionally, the existing wayfinding signage does not adequately direct visitors to Downtown and other important locations like schools or parks. Streetscaping and landscaping can be used as an effective placemaking strategy to improve the overall appeal of a roadway and help reduce traffic speeds. Creating a unified corridor aesthetic can help generate a unique identity, or sense of place, for the corridor. Thoughtfully placed and designed wayfinding signage can eliminate confusion for those unfamiliar with an area and direct them to key locations in a community.

Recommendations

The charrette team recommends that streetscape improvements be incorporated along the M-32 corridor in the charrette focus area. Street trees and uniform street lighting should be incorporated along the roadway to create a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing experience. Additionally, it is recommended that alternative designs for the intersection of M-32 and C-48 be explored. The addition of a roundabout at this intersection could improve the function of the intersection, provide an improved gateway to Downtown, reduce traffic speeds, and provide safer crossing points for pedestrians. The construction of a roundabout in this location would require utilizing portions of the City owned property on the northeast

The existing entry experience into Downtown along M-32 could be improved.



corner of the intersection to enlarge the road right-of-way. Collaboration with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), utility companies, and other regional and local entities would also be required. The illustration below (I) shows what the potential roundabout in this location could look like. The illustration also shows the potential pedestrian connections to Downtown along M-32 and the incorporation of improvements along the roadway and on public property.

Illustration I. Potential M-32 Roadway and Pedestrian Infrastructure Improvements



Natural Resources, Recreation, Cultural Heritage & Tourism

Tourism is a large part of the economy in northwest lower Michigan, with many visitors traveling to the region each year. Charrette participants expressed a strong desire to improve local tourism in order to increase diversity in the local economy. East Jordan has a number of assets, including its natural resources and cultural heritage, which can be capitalized on to bolster tourism. The City offers a unique setting with access to both Lake Charlevoix and the Jordan River, along with a number of public spaces and parks in the core of the community.

Creating a robust local trail system for both motorized and non-motorized users that connects to other communities in the region can help East Jordan take advantage of the growing recreation-based tourism movement. According to a recent Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) study, the total economic impact of bicycling in Michigan is \$668 million. Capitalizing on local and regional trail improvements helped Marquette, Michigan, increase annual hotel sales by 25,000 rooms from 2009-2012 with an economic impact of \$3.8 million. The City should work to enhance existing trails, creation new trails within the City, and provide trail connections to other communities in the region.

Additionally, East Jordan's unique industrial history can provide the basis for *cultural tourism* (see inset at right). In his article "Cultural Economic Development: An Economic Force Waiting to be Harnessed" in *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People*, Dr. William Anderson notes that cultural and historical attractions play a valuable role in Michigan's tourism industry. In his article, Anderson, referencing a study by the Tourism Association of America, notes that 80% of all adult travelers are interested in cultural/heritage experiences.

Recommendations

Many of the placemaking recommendations found earlier in this report apply to increasing natural resource, recreation, and cultural heritage tourism in East Jordan. In addition to those recommendations, the charrette team recommends that efforts be made to provide additional access to the City's natural resources, increase recreational opportunities, and celebrate East Jordan's history. Specifically, the City should implement elements of the Trail Towns concept to increase recreational tourism in the form of visiting bicyclists and paddlers and incorporate historic educational displays throughout the study area.

East Jordan should enhance and expand trail systems within the City and work to provide trail connections to other communities within the region. The following basic elements of a "Trail Town

"Cultural tourism means providing the visitor with an engaging and memorable experience based upon our history, the real character of a place, culture, traditions, and creativity."

-Dr. William Anderson, Cultural Economic Development: An Economic Force Waiting to be Harnessed



Strategy,” from *Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism, a Manual for Communities in Northern Michigan*, should be considered in future City plans:

- Entice trail users to get off the trail and into your town;
- Welcome trail users to your town by making information about the community readily available at the trail;
- Make a strong and safe connection between your town and the trail;
- Educate local businesses on the economic benefits of meeting trail tourists’ needs;
- Recruit new businesses or expand existing ones to fill gaps in the goods or services that trail users need;
- Promote the “trail-friendly” character of the town; and
- Work with neighboring communities to promote the entire trail corridor as a tourist destination.

We recommend that the city create a water trailhead at the City Boat Launch property to accommodate those paddling the Jordan River and Lake Charlevoix and encourage them to visit Downtown East Jordan during their trips. Trailhead amenities should include parking, kayak/canoe storage, restrooms, wayfinding signage, and safe pedestrian connections to Downtown. Additionally, the City should investigate the potential for creating a space that could be leased to a vendor to provide kayak and canoe rentals. The City should work to promote itself as a trail destination for all types of trail users including bicyclists, paddlers, and snowmobilers. In order to accommodate overnight visitors and increase tourism opportunity, the City should continue to promote the development of a hotel in the focus area. The City Planning Commission should review the standards of the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that they allow the type of hotel development that is desired.

We also recommend that local historical displays or educational signage be incorporated throughout the focus area. People are fascinated by the industrial past of the City and the current operations of EJ (formerly East Jordan Iron Works), which is located directly adjacent to the historic Downtown and has a visitor center on Main Street where visitors can learn about the history and workings of the company. In addition to historical displays and educational signage, past and present EJ products should be displayed in the lot adjacent to the visitor center, along the waterfront, and Downtown. The pictures below (J) show how the lot next to the EJ visitor center could look as a small pocket park with an added path between Main Street and Spring Street, displays of EJ products, and educational signage.



Illustration J. Current View



Illustration J. Proposed View



Implementation - Tools & Practices

Zoning Ordinance Standards

The City Planning Commissions should consider amending the Zoning Ordinance to require design and management standards that reflect the future vision for the focus area. Zoning amendments should address land uses, building location, building orientation, and signage. Potential amendments should be focused on creating more walkable and pedestrian oriented development. Building design guidelines (discussed below) could be encouraged or required in the Zoning Ordinance as well.

Design Guidelines

To create a unified and improved aesthetic character for the focus area, the Planning Commission should establish a set of design guidelines for buildings in the commercial areas along Main Street and M-32. Guidelines should address building location, orientation, bulk, entrances, facades, roof lines, window placement, and building materials. The City should collaborate with local property owners during the creation of the design guidelines to ensure support for the proposed recommendations. Design guidelines are not regulatory documents, but can serve to inform any future zoning standards related to building design and aesthetics.

Design Guidelines - Design guidelines work to convey a sense of the preferred vision for an area. It is important to note that design guidelines are not regulatory. Rather, design guidelines provide a connection between general planning principles and the zoning ordinance.

Redevelopment Ready Communities Program

The Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Program, administered by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), is a certification program that helps communities adopt redevelopment strategies and processes to encourage development. Communities that choose to participate in the program evaluate and modify their practices related to community plans and public outreach; zoning standards; development review processes; recruitment and education; specific redevelopment sites; and community prosperity. The City should consider participating in the RRC program to show that the community is business friendly and proactive about future development. The MEDC also helps program communities market their top priority redevelopment sites.

Community Development Block Grants

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding is provided to local communities through the Michigan Strategic Fund with assistance from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). A variety of grants related to economic development, downtown development, and housing projects are available. The City should investigate utilizing CDBG funding for blight elimination, façade improvement, and historic structure acquisition projects. Additionally, CDBG Farm to Food funding is available for the construction, improvement, or expansion of a three- to four-season farmer's market facility. This funding could be used to construct a farmer's market facility at Memorial Park or Sportsman's Park. A local match of at least 25% is required for the grant. Funding requests must be between \$30,000 and \$750,000.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The Transportation Alternatives Program was authorized under Section 1122 of the Federal *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act* (MAP-21). Under the Program, each state Department of Transportation is required to allocate 2 percent of its total Federal Highway funds for programs and projects defined as *transportation alternatives*. Examples of transportation alternatives include non-motorized trails, sidewalks, transit stops or stations, and education and safety programs such as Safe Routes to School. This is a potential funding source for improvements in the focus area.

Natural Resource Funding Sources

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) provides funding assistance for state and local outdoor recreation needs, including land acquisition and development of recreation facilities. This assistance is directed at creating and improving outdoor recreational opportunities and providing protection to valuable natural resources. Development project grant amounts range from \$15,000 to



\$300,000, with a required minimum local match of 25 percent. Trails and greenways are a priority project type for MNRTF grants. The City should pursue these funding sources in support of efforts to support trail and other recreation projects in the community.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Land and Water Conservation Fund provides funding to local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. A local match of at least 50% of the total project cost is required. Grant amounts range from \$30,000 to \$100,000. This funding source could be used to support trail development and the acquisition of properties to expand local recreation and trail systems.

The DNR also provides Waterways Program Grants to local governments for the design and construction of public recreational marina and boating access facilities through the Michigan State Waterways Fund. Grant priority may be given to projects where a local match of 50% or greater is made. Grants can be used for design and implementation of new marina or access projects or infrastructure improvement projects. This funding source could be used for the development of improvements for the City Marina or City Boat Launch properties.

Downtown Development Authority

The City should continue to use its Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to plan for, fund, and implement mutually beneficial public infrastructure projects and the redevelopment and revitalization of underperforming commercial properties. The DDA has utilized Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund public infrastructure and streetscape projects in the past and should consider utilizing this technique to fund future projects as well. The entire charrette focus area falls within the City of East Jordan DDA boundary.

