



**UNIVERSITY
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ENGAGEMENT**

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2026 Student-Led, Faculty- Guided Technical Assistance Project Report

East Village Community
Engagement & Preliminary
Planning Concepts: East
Lansing

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EAST VILLAGE CONCEPT PLAN - The Red Cedar Squad UP 894 / 494: Planning Practicum

MEET THE TEAM - The Red Cedar Squad



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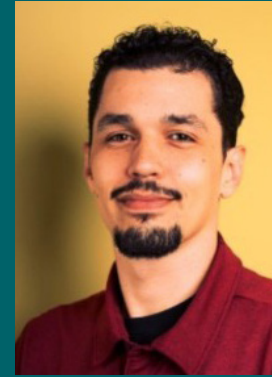
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Acknowledgments

The Red Cedar Squad would like to extend a special thanks to the City of East Lansing Planning Department, particularly Principal Planner Landon Bartley, for serving as our primary partner on this project. Landon's support and guidance have been invaluable.

We are also grateful for the insights and data shared by representatives of the Capital Area Transportation Authority, the East Lansing Downtown Development Authority, and the FarmHouse Fraternity. The feedback, information, and perspectives shared by these groups informed our work and allowed us to develop a deeper understanding of the East Village neighborhood.

We are deeply appreciative of all the residents, business owners, and community members who participated in interviews, surveys, and engagement activities.

Planning Practicum receives support from our community clients. It is also financially aided by the generous contributions from the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development Regional Economic Initiative (REI). The opinions expressed in the statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are the authors' sole responsibility and do not necessarily reflect the views of Michigan State University or any federal or state agency.

Finally, we thank Dr. Jesus J. Lara, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at Michigan State University and lead instructor of the practicum, along with Andrea Zeeb Polverento, co-instructor, for their mentorship and guidance throughout the practicum process. This project was completed as part of the Urban and Regional Planning Practicum in the School of Planning, Design, and Construction at Michigan State University.

Executive Summary

The East Village district faces three critical challenges: a student housing capacity gap, weak infrastructure, and an underutilized public realm. These findings were realized throughout a multi-phased research process involving site visits, informal interviews, demographic data, and thorough community engagement. To address these issues, this report prioritizes four recommendations: **(1) improve pedestrian accessibility and safety, (2) revitalize the Grand River corridor through mixed-use development and public realm activation, (3) add character to East Village through enhanced public spaces and placemaking, and (4) expand attainable housing options to meet growing demand.**

This project was conducted in partnership with the City of East Lansing to evaluate existing conditions and develop actionable strategies for transforming East Village into a more livable and vibrant district. The study used site analysis, spatial analysis, and community engagement—including surveys, intercept interviews, and stakeholder discussions—to identify key challenges and opportunities.

Findings show that limited pedestrian connectivity, inactive streetscapes, and insufficient housing supply reduce **accessibility, safety, and overall quality of life**. In response, this plan identifies three guiding principles: **Access & Mobility, Place Identity & Quality of Life, Mixed Use & Affordability**—which inform seven planning priorities that directly respond to the data and resident experience we learned during our research phases. Each planning priority has a dedicated timeline with actionable recommendations that use a variety of planning tools, including zoning amendments, public-private partnerships, and a new neighborhood committee.

The report recommends targeted investments in pedestrian infrastructure, streetscape improvements along Grand River, activation of public spaces to strengthen neighborhood identity, and policies that support higher-density mixed-use development with affordable housing. Together, these strategies provide a clear, implementation-oriented framework to guide future development and position East Village as a walkable, inclusive, and economically active district.

East Village can be the mixed-use, walkable, vibrant community residents desire. Based on our research and community engagement, this strategic framework can achieve these goals and make East Village a neighborhood where students, long time residents, and business owners can thrive.

This report is designed to be a strategic framework for planning purposes. While many community members are familiar with the ideas and concepts presented in this document, the intention of this document is to provide research on East Village and data about transportation patterns, current conditions of the built environment, and public opinions on different development styles and economic revitalization strategies. Our recommendations work as a guideline for professional committees and government departments to directly act on, as well as to begin further research and later actions.

Introduction

Project Overview

The Community Development East Village Concept Plan is a comprehensive report of a multi-phase project in which the Red Cedar Squad studied the East Village neighborhood and generated actionable recommendations based on the research and community engagement conducted. These actions focus on improving accessibility and mobility in the neighborhood while increasing density and student housing to support long-term growth.

Study Area Context

East Village, as defined in our project area, is bound by Bogue Street and Kedzie Street to the west, Albert Avenue to the north, Stoddard Avenue to the east, and the Red Cedar River to the south. East Village is a slightly varied neighborhood, with predominantly single family homes north of Grand River Avenue (North Area), a primary commercial corridor on Grand River Avenue (Grand River Corridor), and a mix of low density apartment buildings and single family homes south of Grand River Avenue (South Area). The majority of residents in the neighborhood are students; however, there is a small population of long-term residents. The Grand River Corridor consists of businesses that serve the larger East Lansing area and the Michigan State University (MSU) campus, including fast food restaurants, a gas station, and a few office spaces. The South Area is denser than the North Area, with a mix of houses and a few 2 to 3 story apartment complexes. The houses are a mix of rentals, long-term residents, and fraternities. The Red Cedar River borders the South Area, with multiple apartment complexes and a 2 story parking garage abutting the river. Many of the apartment complexes and homes were built between 1950 and 1970 and are reaching a point where they are consistently in need of maintenance.

East Village is located directly northeast of the MSU Campus, in East Lansing, Michigan. Both the neighborhood and the city are shaped by their proximity to MSU, as East Lansing and East Village have a uniquely large student population compared to other municipalities of similar size. Moreover, MSU and East Lansing are growing in terms of students and population, respectively. East Lansing also faces many challenges that are consistent with national trends, such as an increase in housing costs.

Purpose and Objectives

The goal of this project is to create a strategic framework of actionable recommendations to guide the City of East Lansing in improving the East Village neighborhood according to the opportunities we identified during our research and community engagement. More specifically, this report serves two primary purposes:

Introduction

This report contains a range of analyzed data on East Village. This data was collected during the first three phases of the project and consists of quantitative, qualitative, and spatial data of the neighborhood. This data was collected during site visits, interviews with residents, zoning code review, and Census data review. The City of East Lansing can use this information to guide future development in East Village and in East Lansing at large.

This report can serve as a guide to strategies to address the difficulties East Village faces. The report offers a strategic framework with planning priorities and actionable recommendations that was generated during the final three phases. This framework directly targets the challenges realized during our research phases, with strategies that have been successfully implemented in similar cities facing similar challenges.

Methodological Framework

There are 6 primary phases of this project and report: Qualitative Analysis, Quantitative Analysis, Community Engagement, Concept Plan Strategic Framework, Precedent Studies, and Implementation Strategies. Across these phases, the Red Cedar Squad analyzed the challenges East Village faces and translated the information into specific recommendations to address those challenges.

Our qualitative research consisted of initial site visits, informal intercept interviews, and follow-up site visits. This data was used to form key indicators, metrics that define the obstacles East Village faces. Our quantitative research phase consisted of Census data collection, zoning code analysis, and a review of secondary sources. Then, to better understand the community and resident experience, we also conducted a series of community meetings, as well as an online survey and a property owner focus group. This community engagement provided valuable insight on the resident experience related to the emerging themes we formed through our initial qualitative and quantitative analysis.

With our research complete, the Red Cedar Squad organized and prioritized the different challenges East Village faces based on their implications for the neighborhood. We created a strategic framework with actions and strategies linked to three guiding principles and seven planning priorities. To refine the actionable recommendations, we conducted further research into similar college towns across the country (as well as one international college town) that were addressing challenges similar to those our data presented. These precedent studies helped us create our complete strategic framework, with detailed actions that outline specific steps, key partners, timelines, and funding methods.

These actions are directly based on our data and the indicators we realized during our research phases. Each planning priority includes a clear guide of challenges, indicators, implications, and actionable recommendations. They consist of a variety of strategies including zoning amendments, public-private partnerships, further research and community engagement, tactical urbanism, and smart-growth methods. Planning priorities have actions that range in timeline from short- to long-term, and are specifically prioritized to help the city focus on actions that are the most feasible in terms of required coordination, funding, timeline, and impact.

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Phase 1

Qualitative Analysis

Source : Tim Kiser, 2014, Red Cedar River

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Project Background & Site Description

PHASE 1

01

Project Background & Site Description

Project Background

The purpose of this project is to collaborate with the **City of East Lansing** to inform the ongoing redevelopment of the **East Village neighborhood**, guided by the long-term vision established in the **2006 East Village Master Plan**. The Master Plan identifies the East Village as a strategic redevelopment area due to its proximity to **Michigan State University, Downtown East Lansing**, and the **Red Cedar River** and calls for a transition toward a higher-density, **mixed-use urban district** that supports student-oriented housing, pedestrian activity, and enhanced public access to the riverfront.

The 2006 Master Plan defines East Village as the area bounded by **Bogue Street** to the west, **Hagadorn Road** to the east, **Grand River Avenue** to the north, and the Red Cedar River to the south (Figure 1-a). Since the plan's adoption, however, development patterns, infrastructure conditions, and student housing pressures have evolved beyond these original boundaries. In response, the study area for this analysis has been redefined to better reflect current conditions and planning challenges. This adjustment has moved the eastern boundary to **Stoddard Avenue**, and the northernmost boundary to **Albert Avenue** to include the predominantly residential neighborhoods between **Grand River Avenue** and **Albert Avenue** and the commercial strip along Grand River Avenue (Figure 1-b). This revised boundary captures areas experiencing similar mobility, housing, and public-realm dynamics that influence East Village's redevelopment potential but fall outside the original master plan extent. It makes sense to extend the East Village boundary to include the neighborhood north of Grand River Avenue because the residents of this neighborhood supply much of the traffic for the businesses along the Grand River Corridor.

The study area encompasses multiple **zoning districts**, including **low-density residential**, medium-density residential, and **commercial zoning** along the Grand River Avenue corridor. These zoning distinctions strongly influence observed patterns of land use, building scale, housing typologies, and public-realm quality across the neighborhood. Understanding how these regulatory frameworks shape existing conditions is essential for interpreting variations in density, redevelopment capacity, and spatial performance within East Village and for identifying realistic opportunities for future intervention.



Figure 1-a: Current boundaries of the East Village Zoning District, establishing the original project scope defined in 2006. Source: East Village Master Plan 2006

Project Background & Site Description

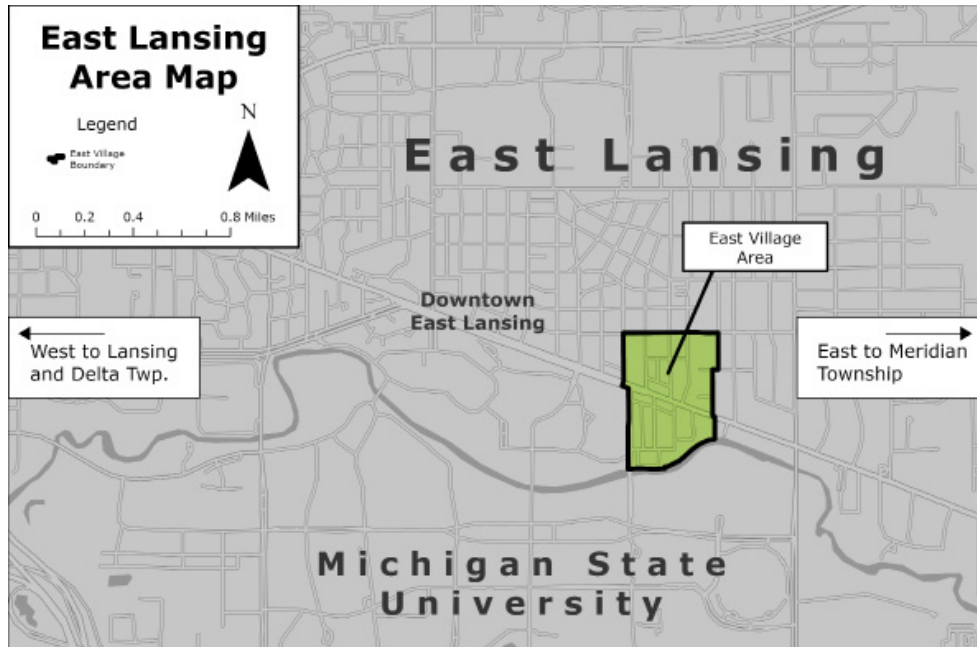


Figure 1-b: Red Cedar Squad's study area within East Village expanded to Albert Avenue and Stoddard Avenue to better capture the mobility and housing dynamics affecting the neighborhood

Site Description

For the purposes of data collection and analysis, the East Village was divided into three distinct areas of study. The map (Figure 1-c) delineates the East Village study area and its division into three analytical subareas—the **North Area**, **Grand River Corridor**, and **South Area**—used to structure qualitative data collection and analysis. The subareas reflect distinct land-use patterns, residential densities, and spatial relationships to **Michigan State University**, **Grand River Avenue**, and the **Red Cedar River**, providing a consistent framework for comparing infrastructure conditions, housing typologies, and public-realm characteristics across the neighborhood.

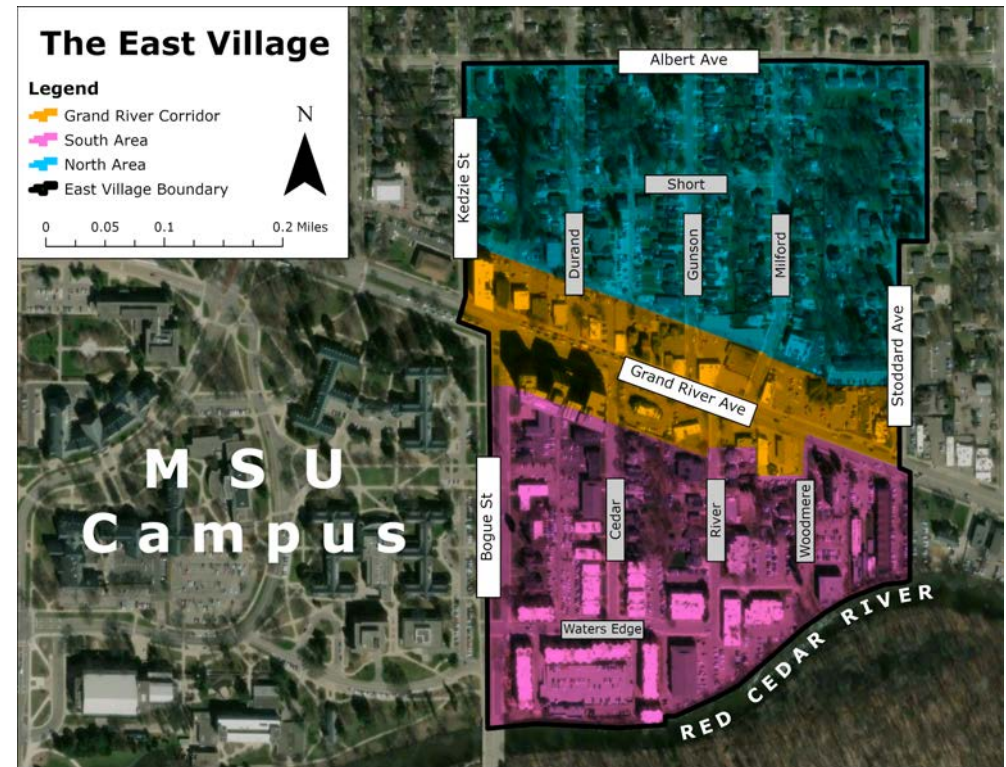


Figure 1-c: Dividing the district into the North Area, Grand River Corridor, and South Area provides a consistent framework for comparing land-use patterns and infrastructure needs.

North Area

- Primarily single-family homes
- Low density
- Mix of student rental housing and owner-occupied

South Area

- Primarily apartments and single-family homes
- Medium density
- Mix of apartments, student rental housing, and owner-occupied

Grand River Corridor

- Primarily commercial
- Mix of densities
- Mix of restaurants, shops, and The Hub (student mixed-use mid-rise)

Project Background & Site Description

The first of these, the **North Area**, consists primarily of **low-density, single-family housing** stock commonly found in other East Lansing neighborhoods (Figure 1-d). Many of the houses in this area are listed as for-rent **student housing**. Specifically, the northern section is largely zoned as R-2 and R-3, both general residential districts. There is, however, a strip of parcels directly behind Grand River Avenue within the northern section that is zoned as RM-32 - City Center Multiple-Family Residential - which allows for higher-density housing.

The second defined area, the **South Area**, borders both the Red Cedar River, Michigan State University's campus, and the Grand River Corridor. This area is primarily composed of medium- to high-density apartment housing with some single-family housing interspersed throughout. The south area, the area originally defined as East Village, is also zoned as a unique East Village zoning designation. Many of the single-family houses, especially on Bogue Street, are owned and operated by **student organizations**, such as fraternities, associated with the university. The **medium-density apartment** complexes in this area are serviced by surface parking lots, and almost all are aging structures.

The third area within the study area is the Grand River Avenue Commercial Corridor, which consists of mainly **low-density** commercial uses, such as gas stations and fast-food restaurants. These establishments are mostly designed around car traffic, with many having parking lots or drive-thrus. In **contrast** to this, this area is also the location of The Hub, a **mixed-use high-density apartment complex** at the corner of Grand River and Bogue. The Hub is an example of the recent trend **towards high-density housing** development found elsewhere in East Lansing in the past decade. The Grand River Commercial Corridor's official zoning is split, as the south side adheres to the East Village zoning designation and the northern side adheres to a more general zoning of B2-Retail sales business.

Phase 1 - Qualitative Analysis

Overall, a **mix of density patterns** and the location of the neighborhood make the East Village an area **prime** for re-development. The subareas reflect distinct land-use patterns, residential densities, and spatial relationships to **Michigan State University, Grand River Avenue, and the Red Cedar River**, providing a consistent framework for comparing infrastructure conditions, housing typologies, and public-realm characteristics across the neighborhood.



Figure 1-d: Single-family home on Gunson St., an example of the type of housing found north of Grand River Avenue in the East Village

Research Objectives & Guiding Questions

PHASE 1

02

Research Objectives & Guiding Questions

Qualitative data and methods are often overlooked in favor of the statistics and numerical outputs produced by quantitative analysis. However, the value of qualitative inquiry should not be understated. While quantitative measures can identify the presence and scale of urban phenomena, they do not always explain the underlying reasons, lived experiences, or contextual factors that shape those conditions.

Phase 1 of this report focuses on identifying opportunities and challenges in East Village through qualitative data collection. The primary objective of this phase was to document lived experiences, spatial conditions, and everyday use patterns within the East Village study area.

To achieve this, multiple site visits were conducted, photographs were taken, and informal interviews were held with residents, students, business managers, and property owners. Insights about the East Village neighborhood were generated through direct observation and stakeholder perspectives.

The guiding questions for Phase 1 were:

What are the lived experiences, perceptions, and values of residents, users, and stakeholders in the study area?

How do these experiences reveal opportunities and challenges relevant to the East Village neighborhood?

Addressing these questions qualitatively represents a critical first step in understanding the community's collective vision and everyday realities. Qualitative methods are particularly well suited to this phase because they enable a deeper understanding of place-based dynamics, user perceptions, and contextual conditions that are not easily captured through quantitative data alone.

The themes identified in Phase 1 provide essential context for the analyses, findings, and recommendations developed in subsequent phases of the project.

03

Data Collection Methods

Using **qualitative research methods**, the research team developed an in-depth understanding of the site context, spatial conditions, and lived experiences of community members. Methods including **direct site observation, physical and social documentation, and informal narrative data collection (Figure 3-a)** were used to support the key observations, emerging themes, and findings presented in this report.

Qualitative data were collected through **multiple site visits** conducted across **different days and time periods**, including both **weekday and holiday conditions**, to capture variations in activity patterns and environmental context. Site visits typically lasted **several hours**, allowing sufficient time for systematic observation, documentation, and stakeholder engagement. To ensure comprehensive spatial coverage, the study area was divided into **north, south, and Grand River corridor** zones, with research teams assigned to each zone.

During site visits, researchers documented **pedestrian and vehicular activity, infrastructure conditions, public realm quality, and environmental factors** such as snow and ice coverage. Field notes were recorded in real time using **structured observation prompts**, and **photographs** were taken to capture physical conditions and spatial relationships. In addition, approximately **19 informal intercept conversations** were conducted with **students, business managers, property owners, and residents**. These conversations were unstructured and conversational, allowing participants to freely express perceptions, concerns, and priorities related to mobility, housing, and public space.

Following data collection, field notes, interview summaries, and visual materials were **compiled and organized by zone**. The research team conducted an **iterative thematic review**, identifying recurring patterns and shared perspectives that informed the **emerging themes** used to guide subsequent phases of analysis.

Phase 1 - Qualitative Analysis

Three primary methods were used to gather qualitative data:

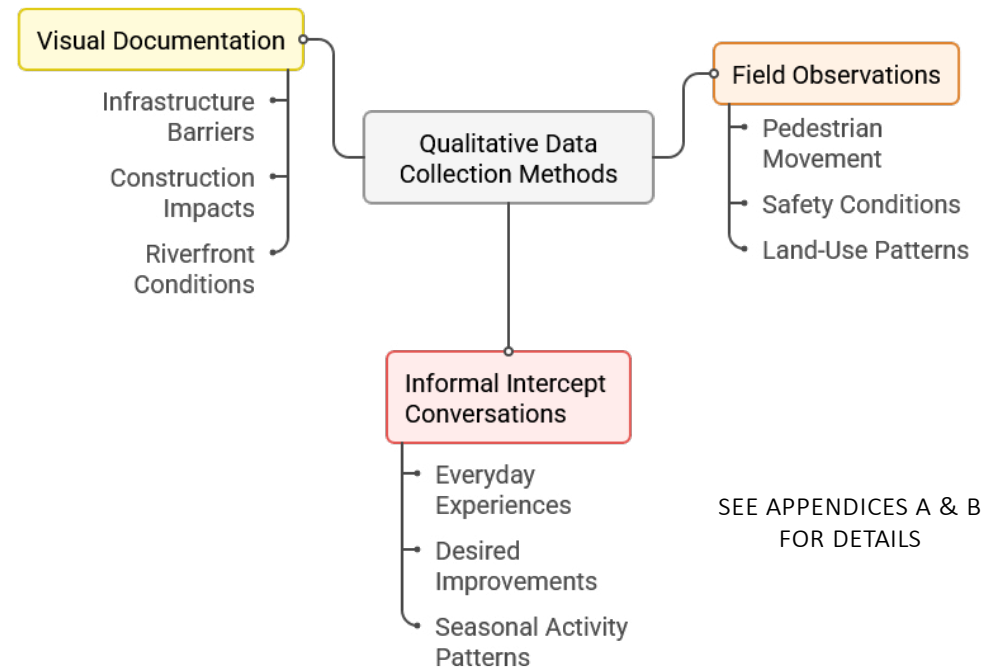


Figure 3-a: Qualitative Data Collection Framework, providing a visual representation of our methodology in gathering qualitative data

Role of the Researchers

Throughout this phase, the researchers acted as the **primary instrument for data collection**, engaging directly with the site through **observation, note-taking, and interpretation**. As planning students, the researchers remained aware of **potential biases** related to their professional training and academic background. To address this, observations were approached **reflexively**, with an emphasis on **documenting existing conditions and behaviors** rather than evaluating them against predetermined design outcomes.

Data Collection Methods

Field Observations

Field observations were a central component of **Phase 1 qualitative data collection** and were conducted using a **systematic, non-participant approach**. **Multiple site visits** were carried out across **different days and times** to capture variations in **activity levels, movement patterns (Figure 3-b), and environmental conditions**. Observations focused on documenting how people **interact** with the built environment, rather than evaluating behavior against **predefined design expectations**.

During these visits, researchers recorded **pedestrian and vehicular movement, street and crossing safety (Figure 3-c), sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure conditions, accessibility barriers, and the quality of the public realm**. Particular attention was given to the relationship between **land use and mobility**, including how **commercial frontages, residential buildings, and parking areas** influenced pedestrian activity. **Environmental conditions**—such as snow accumulation, ice coverage, and riverfront use—were also documented to understand seasonal impacts on **accessibility and safety**.

Observations were **semi-structured** and guided by key questions related to **walkability, multimodal connectivity, public space availability, and mixed-use activity**. Field notes were taken systematically and later organized by study zones (north area, south area, and Grand River Avenue corridor) to support **comparative analysis** across the East Village study area.

The Area Mobility map (Figure 3-d) illustrates patterns of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular movement within the East Village study area, with a particular focus on key intersections and corridors along Grand River Avenue and connecting north-south streets. The map reflects pedestrian counts conducted by the Red Cedar Squad at several locations within the East Village on

Phase 1 - Qualitative Analysis



Figure 3-b: Driveway without a marked crosswalk, representing lack of pedestrian safety measures installed along the Grand River Corridor



Figure 3-c: An example of foot traffic at the Cedar Village Apartments, demonstrating a demand for improved pedestrian infrastructure in East Village

Data Collection Methods

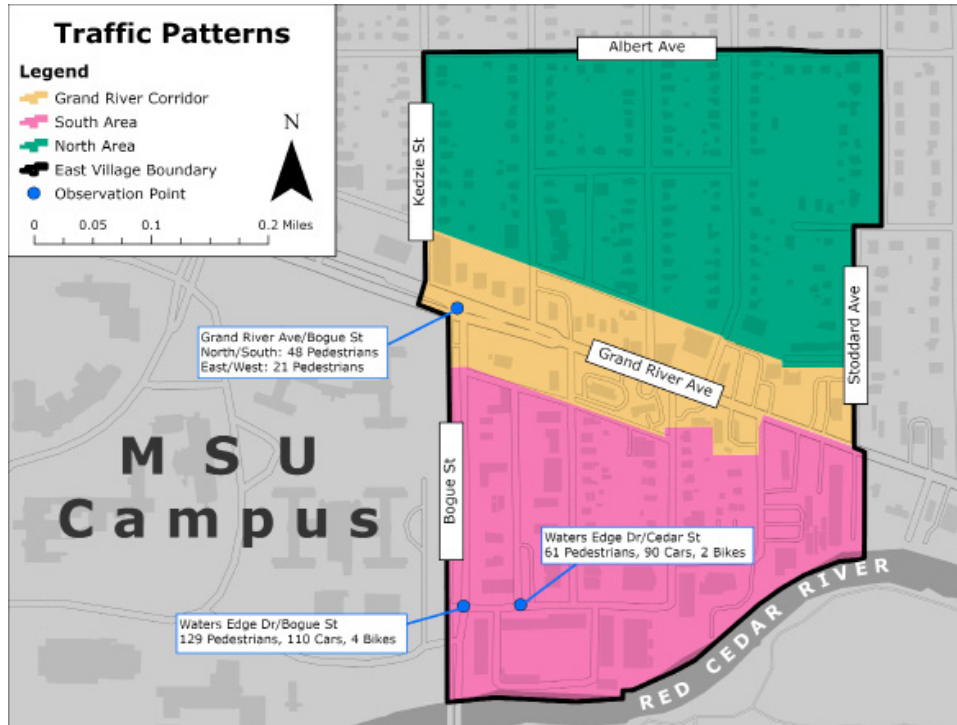


Figure 3-d: Figure 3-d: Area Mobility Map showing pedestrian counts collected by the Red Cedar Squad on Wednesday, Jan 21, 2026. Counts were collected to gather data on mobility patterns within the neighborhood.

January 21, 2026, from 12:00 - 12:30 p.m. Observed activity levels vary significantly by location, revealing an **uneven distribution of mobility** across the neighborhood. Pedestrian activity is most concentrated along **Grand River Avenue**, especially near major campus-adjacent nodes such as Bogue Street and Cedar Street, where **higher foot traffic** reflects **proximity to Michigan State University** and commercial destinations. In contrast, pedestrian movement decreases noticeably along River Street and Waters Edge Drive, indicating weaker internal connectivity and limited pedestrian attraction beyond the main corridor.

Vehicular traffic dominates many internal streets, particularly near parking facilities and service access points, while bicycle activity remains minimal across all observed locations. The **low presence of cyclists** aligns with observed gaps in **bicycle infrastructure**, including the absence of protected lanes and limited accessible bike parking. Intersections near the riverfront exhibit high vehicle volumes relative to pedestrian use, reinforcing the auto-oriented character of these areas. Overall, the map highlights **mobility imbalance** within East Village: pedestrian activity is concentrated along a single corridor, while internal streets and the riverfront remain underutilized by non-motorized users. These patterns suggest that infrastructure design, safety conditions, and land-use configuration collectively limit walkability and multimodal movement throughout the neighborhood.

The Transportation Use Pattern map (Figure 3-e), sourced from Social Explorer, depicts commuting patterns of workers aged 16 years and older by primary mode of transportation within the East Village and its surrounding context. The map shows a clear dominance of **automobile-based travel**, particularly along Grand River Avenue and adjacent residential streets, indicating a strong reliance on cars, trucks, or vans for daily commuting.

Pedestrian and bicycle commuting are present but comparatively dispersed and limited in concentration, suggesting that while walking and cycling occur, they do not form a dominant mobility pattern across the area. Public transportation use appears sporadic and clustered near major corridors, reflecting proximity to transit routes rather than comprehensive neighborhood coverage. Overall, the map highlights an **imbalance in multimodal mobility**, where auto-oriented travel outweighs active and transit-based modes, reinforcing observations of limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and the need for improved multimodal connectivity within the East Village.

Data Collection Methods



Figure 3-e: Transportation Use Pattern, Source: Social Explorer, 2026
(This map illustrates the spatial distribution of commuting modes among workers aged 16 years and older within and around the East Village study area. Each dot represents five workers and is categorized by primary mode of transportation, including driving, public transit, bicycling, walking, and other means.)

Informal Intercept Conversations

Informal intercept conversations were conducted with a range of stakeholders encountered during site visits, including students, residents, business owners, and property managers (Figure 3-f,g). These conversations were intentionally brief, unstructured, and open-ended, allowing participants to describe their everyday experiences and perceptions of East Village in their own terms.

Rather than following a fixed interview protocol, researchers used guided prompts related to walkability, safety, access to amenities,



Figure 3-f: Ben Hamrick, Red Cedar Squad member, interviewing a member of the FarmHouse Fraternity, Bogue St

Data Collection Methods

seasonal activity patterns, housing preferences, and desired neighborhood improvements, to facilitate responses. This flexible approach enabled participants to foreground they considered most salient, revealing concerns and priorities that may not surface through structured surveys or formal interviews.

Field notes from these conversations were summarized shortly after each site visit and reviewed alongside observational notes and visual documentation. This process supported cross-comparison among data sources and helped identify recurring perspectives and shared themes across stakeholder groups.

Although informal in structure, intercept conversations played a critical analytical role by contextualizing observed spatial conditions and clarifying how different user groups interpret and respond to those conditions. Interview insights were not treated as isolated anecdotes; instead, they were synthesized across participants to reveal common priorities and points of tension related to walkability, seasonal accessibility, housing density, and economic activity.

For example, business owners consistently linked student foot traffic to commercial viability, reinforcing field observations of activity concentration along Grand River Avenue. Students emphasized proximity, convenience, and perceived safety, helping explain why certain areas with available housing or open space remain underutilized. These insights directly informed the development of the emerging themes, ensuring that findings reflect not only physical conditions but also stakeholder-driven interpretations of opportunity and constraint.

“We need green space, late night food options nearby, coffee shops.”

- MSU Student



Figure 3-g: Ben Hamrick, Red Cedar Squad member, interviewing a member of the FarmHouse Fraternity on Bogue Street for their opinion on the current neighborhood character

Visual Documentation

Visual documentation was used to **complement and reinforce** findings from field observations and informal conversations. **Photographs** were taken throughout the study area to capture **physical conditions, infrastructure barriers, land-use patterns, construction impacts, and riverfront conditions** that shape **everyday experience** in East Village.

Images documented issues such as **snow-covered and unsalted sidewalks, unmarked or unsafe pedestrian crossings, bicycle parking with accessibility barriers, construction staging within street rights-of-way (Figure 3-i), and riverfront areas dominated by parking and service uses (Figure 3-h)**. These visuals served both as analytical tools and as **communicative aids**, helping convey **spatial constraints and environmental conditions** that are difficult to describe through text alone.

Data Collection Methods

Photographs were **cataloged by location and theme** and used during **data analysis** to corroborate **written field notes and stakeholder feedback**. Visual documentation strengthened the **credibility of qualitative findings** by providing **direct evidence of observed conditions** and supporting the identification of **recurring spatial patterns across the study area**.

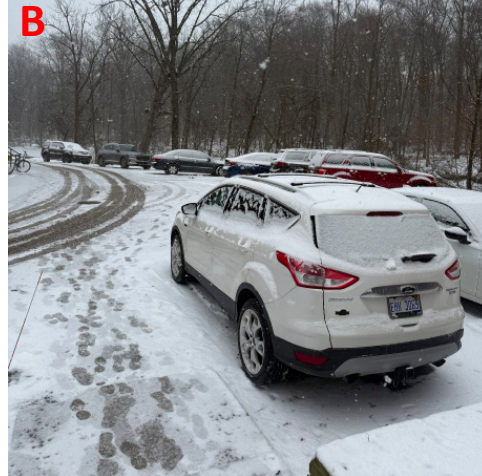


Figure 3-h: Riverfront area dominated by waste and parking, behind Cedar Village Apartments(A); Border of the Red Cedar River (B), showing an underutilization of riverfront space for public use.



Figure 3-i: Construction staging and utility infrastructure occupying River Street, limiting pedestrian and vehicular movement
Phase 1 - Qualitative Analysis

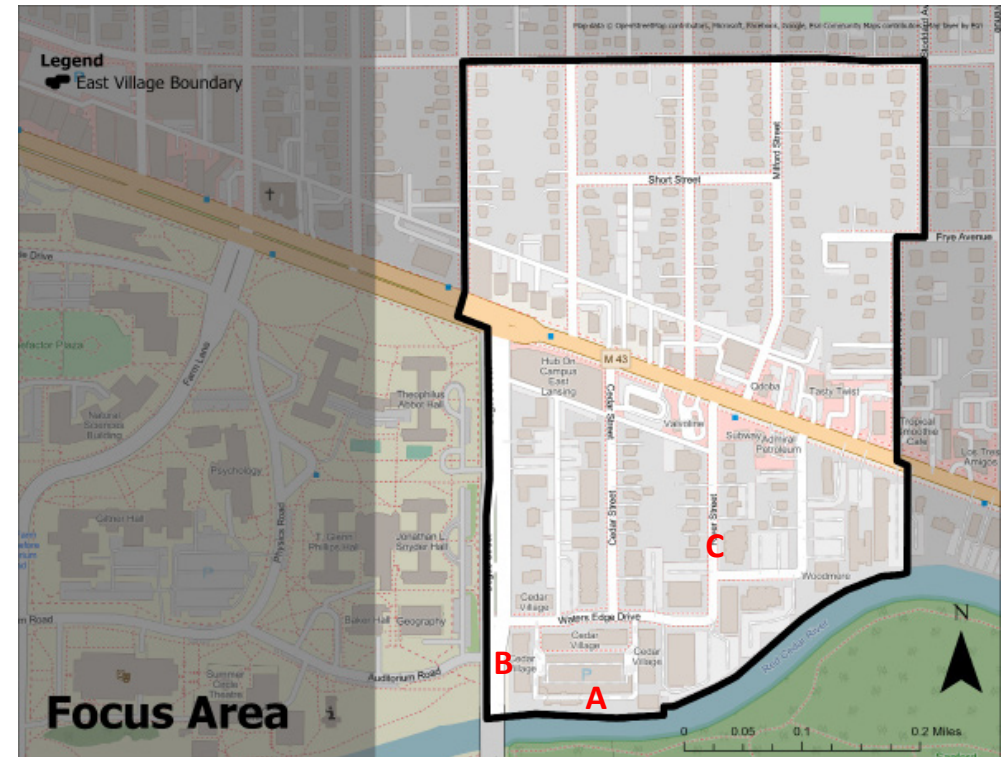


Figure 3-j: Location of riverfront parking and current construction staging within the East Village study area

Data Analysis

PHASE 1

04

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted concurrently with and following data collection, using an **iterative and inductive process (Figure 4-a)**. The primary data sources included field notes from on-site observations, summaries from informal interviews with approximately **19 participants (including students, business managers / employees, and property owners)**, photographs, and relevant project documents. All data were first **organized by type and study zone** (north, south, and Grand River Avenue corridor) to support **systematic review**.

The research team began analysis by **reviewing all field notes**, interview summaries, and visual materials to gain an overall sense of the data. During this stage, **preliminary impressions, recurring issues, and notable conditions** related to mobility, safety, public-realm quality, land use, and activity patterns were documented. This initial review helped identify **broad patterns and areas of convergence** across different data sources.

Following this review, **the data were coded manually** using an open coding approach. Short descriptive labels were assigned to segments of text and images that reflected observed conditions or participant perspectives, such as **pedestrian safety, lack of public space, parking constraints, and student-dependent businesses**. Codes were derived primarily from the data itself rather than from predetermined categories, allowing themes to **emerge organically** from observations and interviews.

Codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories through comparison across participants, locations, and data types. These themes were refined by examining their **frequency, consistency, and relevance** to the study objectives and the East Village Concept Plan. The final set of themes represents recurring spatial, social, and functional patterns observed across the study area rather than isolated or individual viewpoints.

To enhance credibility, findings were **triangulated across multiple data sources**, including observations, interviews, and photographs. The analysis focused on identifying **shared experiences and conditions** rather than evaluating or prioritizing individual opinions. The resulting themes form the basis for the qualitative findings and provide an interpretive framework for **understanding challenges and opportunities** in East Village, informing subsequent phases of **analysis and concept development**.

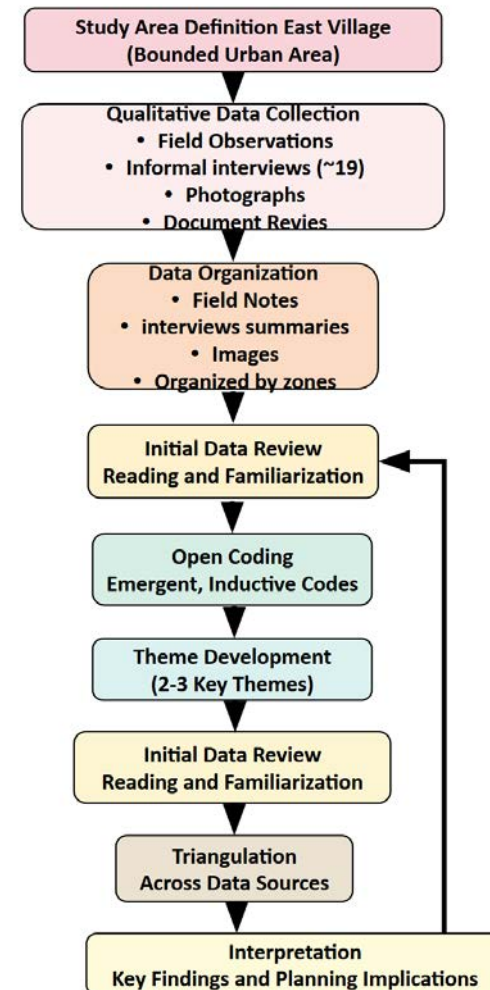
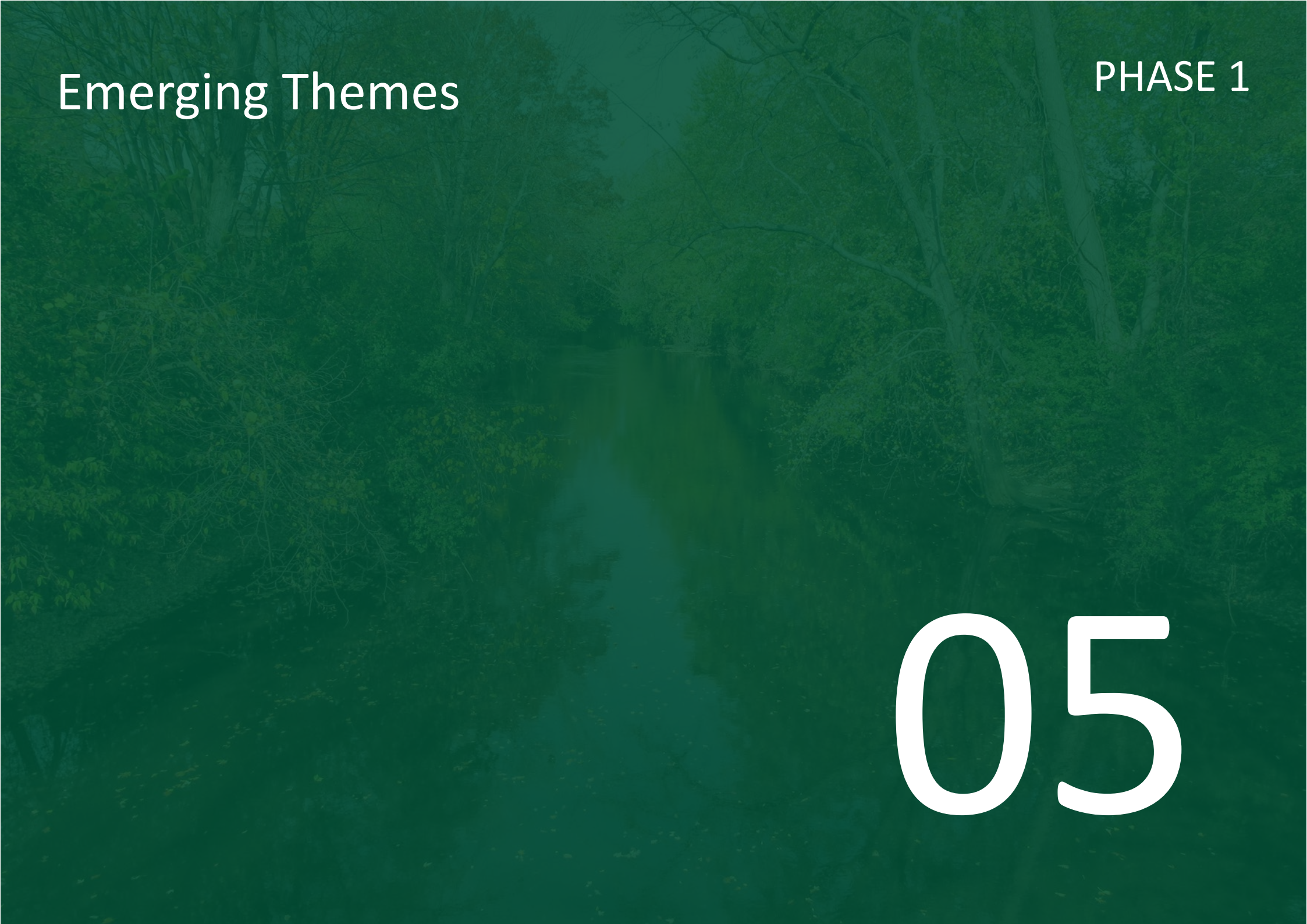


Figure 4-a: Qualitative data collection and analysis process



Emerging Themes

PHASE 1

05

Emerging Themes

Emerging Theme #1: Weak Infrastructure

The **East Village and Grand River corridor** is a **high-traffic area** of East Lansing, largely shaped by the daily movement of the **Michigan State University student population**. While the area hosts a significant number of students, the existing **infrastructure** does not adequately support **safe, comfortable pedestrian movement** and instead **prioritizes vehicular travel** over alternative modes of transportation.

Many **sidewalks** within East Village are **narrow, deteriorated, and poorly maintained**, limiting pedestrian comfort and accessibility.



Figure 5-a: Snow-covered sidewalks reduce accessibility and safety during winter months, Cedar Street.

Phase 1 - Qualitative Analysis

Observations conducted during the **winter months** further revealed **inconsistent winter maintenance**, with sidewalks often remaining icy and unsalted well after snowfall events (Figure 5-a). Pedestrian crossings present additional challenges, including **long signal wait times**, **cramped refuge islands** along Bogue Street and Grand River Avenue, and **drivers frequently failing to yield** at marked crosswalks. **Accessibility gaps**, such as **non-ADA-compliant bicycle parking** (Figure 5-b), further restrict **inclusive mobility** within the neighborhood.

The **dominance of automobiles** is particularly evident due to East Village's location along **Grand River Avenue**, a major



Figure 5-b: Bicycle parking requiring stair access, creating barriers to safe and inclusive use

Emerging Themes

state highway. Field observations identified traffic bottlenecks, especially near the **Starbucks drive-through**, which contribute to **congestion** and increase the risk of **conflicts** between vehicles and pedestrians. **Surface parking** occupies a substantial portion of the neighborhood, including areas adjacent to the **riverfront**, reinforcing a **car-centric urban** form despite mixed stakeholder opinions regarding the necessity of this level of parking.

Infrastructure supporting **alternative transportation modes** remains limited. **Dedicated bicycle lanes** are largely absent, forcing cyclists to share space with **high-speed vehicular traffic** or pedestrians. **CATA bus service** is concentrated along Grand River Avenue, leaving residential areas outside the corridor **underserved by transit**. Additionally, the **public realm** lacks basic amenities such as **benches, green spaces, and gathering areas**, diminishing the **overall quality of life** in East Village.

Stakeholders—including **business owners, employees, student tenants, property managers, and homeowners**—identified several opportunities for improvement. Suggested interventions included **streetscape improvements** through **green infrastructure and public amenities**. There was strong support for **mixed-use, ground-level development** that could enhance **walkability** and reduce **automobile dependence**.

Emerging Theme #2: Underperforming Public Realm

A substantial portion of the Phase 1 findings relates to the **public realm experience**, defined as **non-private spaces** accessible to all users. The quality of the public realm plays a critical role in shaping how residents and visitors **perceive, use, and move through** a neighborhood. Factors such as **safety, maintenance, amenities, and adjacent land uses** strongly influence public space vitality.

Three key findings emerged from the analysis of public realm
Phase 1 - Qualitative Analysis

conditions in East Village.

First, **field observations** revealed that the **pedestrian environment** is consistently **substandard**. During site visits, the majority of sidewalks were observed to be **icy, unsalted, and poorly defined**, even several days after snowfall (Figure 5-c). In some locations, it was difficult to distinguish the sidewalk edge (Figure 5-d), raising both **safety** and **accessibility concerns**.

Second, the team identified the presence of **underutilized commercial spaces (Figure 5-e)** within the study area. While occupied storefronts contribute to **active streets** and pedestrian interest, vacant or inactive spaces reduce **street-level vitality** and negatively affect the **visual quality** of the neighborhood.



Figure 5-c: Icy and uneven sidewalks on Gunson Street leading to unsafe pedestrian conditions

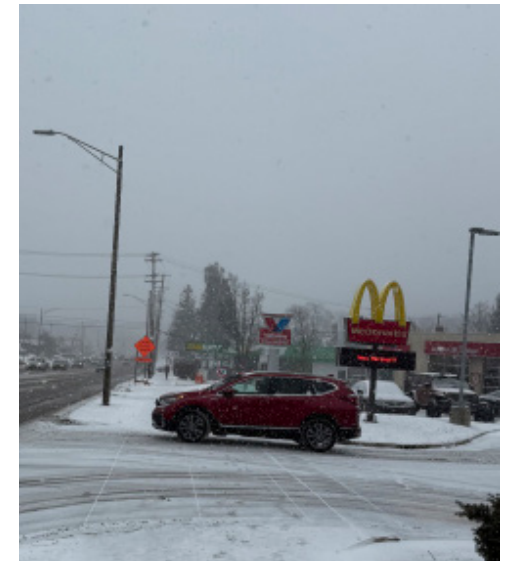


Figure 5-d: Driveway without a marked crosswalk, representing lack of pedestrian safety measures installed along the Grand River Corridor

Emerging Themes

Third, **visual documentation and informal interviews** revealed a pronounced **lack of public open space and ecological connection**. The neighborhood contains few areas where residents can **gather, socialize, or interact with nature**. The desire for **parks, plazas, and outdoor amenities**—such as playgrounds, farmers’ markets, and green spaces—was repeatedly expressed during stakeholder conversations. Despite proximity to the **Red Cedar River**, the riverfront is largely defined by **parking and private development (Figure 5-f)**, with limited **tree canopy** and **green infrastructure**, detracting from its potential as a public asset.

Emerging Theme #3: Student Housing Capacity Gap

Housing emerged as a key determinant of **neighborhood vitality**

and **economic sustainability** in East Village. Observations and informal interviews across all three study zones reveal a mismatch between **student housing demand** and the **existing residential supply**, particularly in areas with strong proximity to campus and commercial activity.

The **north zone** is dominated by low-density, single-family housing, much of which functions as student rentals but offers limited capacity to accommodate growing demand (Figures 5-g & 5-h). The **south zone** exhibits slightly higher residential density, with a concentration of **low-rise apartment buildings** (Figure 5-i) interspersed with single- and multi-family homes. However, this area also lacks **commercial and mixed-use development**, reinforcing a predominantly residential character with limited daily amenities.



Figure 5-e: Vacant commercial property at the corner of Milford St. and Grand River Ave.

Phase 1 - Qualitative Analysis



Figure 5-f: Red Cedar River access blocked by parking lot near Village Dr.



Figure 5-g: Townhomes on Stoddard Ave, diversifying the housing stock in the northern region of the study area

Emerging Themes

Along the **Grand River corridor**, land use is largely **commercial**, with limited residential presence aside from **The Hub, a high-density, high-rise student housing development** (Figure j) that accommodates up to **577 residents**. Informal interviews with local business owners highlighted the positive economic impact of this development. For example, on business owner noted a significant increase in **student-driven foot traffic** following The Hub's completion and expressed support for **additional high-density student housing** in East Village.

Stakeholder feedback—particularly from local business owners—underscored the economic benefits of increased residential density, while student interviews highlighted a desire for **walkable, amenity-rich living environments**. Together, these findings indicate a **housing capacity gap** driven not by lack of demand, but by **land use patterns and development intensity that have not kept pace with student-oriented growth**. This gap represents a critical planning opportunity to better align housing supply, economic activity, and neighborhood form.



Figure 5-h: Single-family homes on Gunson Street, the primary housing type in the northern region of the study area.



Figure 5-i: Low-rise apartment building on Kedzie Street, diversifying the housing stock in the northern region of the study area.



Figure 5-j: The Hub, a mixed-use apartment complex, in the backdrop of a Fraternity House (near Bogue Street)

Summary

PHASE 1

06

Summary

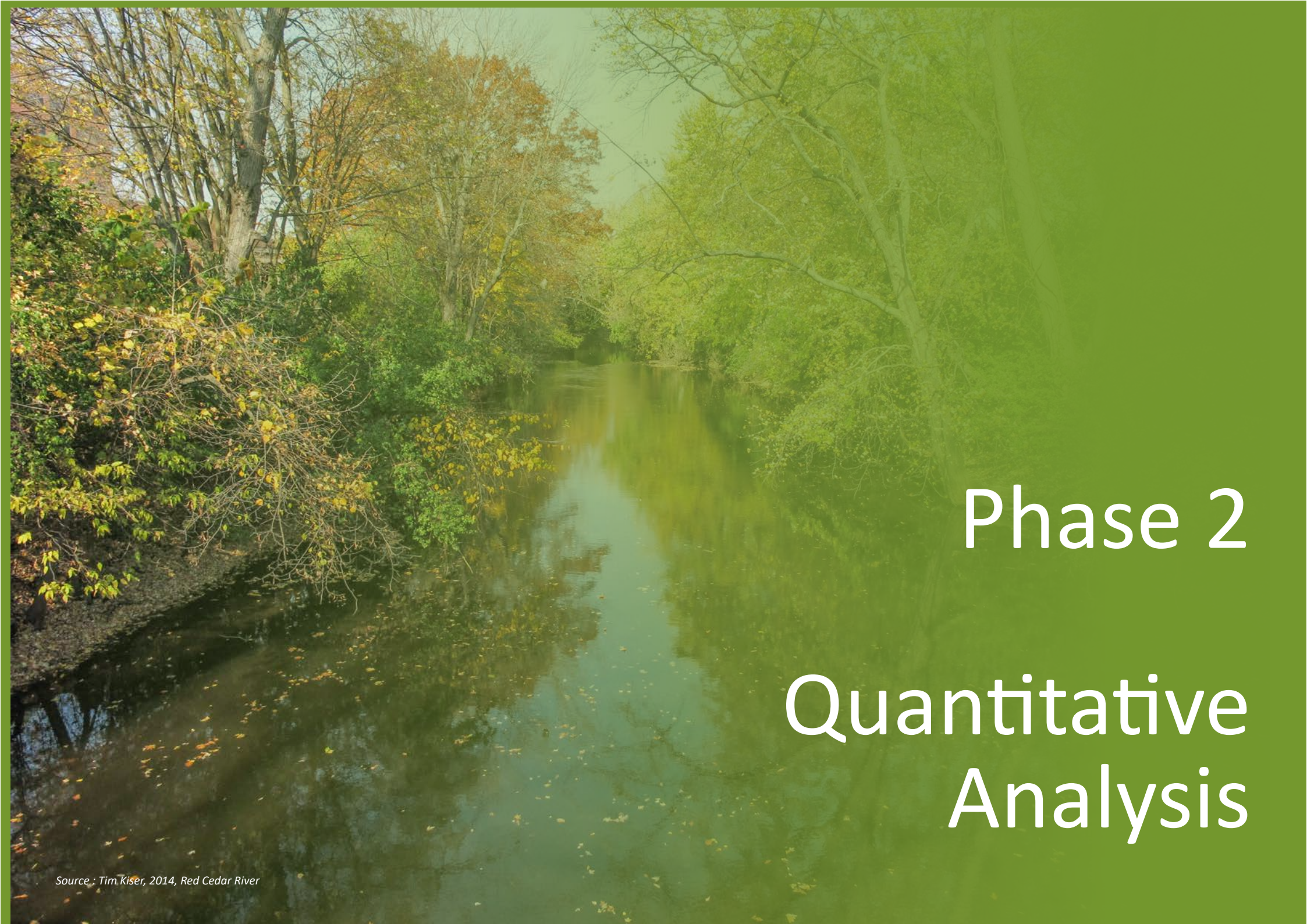
With the analysis narrowed to these **emerging themes**, the project advances to **Phase 2: Quantitative Analysis**. The findings from Phase 1 serve as a **conceptual framework** to guide the selection of data, the development of maps, and the construction of analytical visuals. The following considerations inform the focus of the quantitative phase:

Weak Infrastructure → Review **urban form and design ordinances** and expand **transportation datasets**, including pedestrian counts, to identify constraints on sidewalk width and bicycle infrastructure.

Underperforming Public Realm → Collect **targeted data on business and resident preferences** and evaluate the **zoning code** to identify **redevelopment opportunities**, **regulatory constraints**, and **feasible zoning adjustments** that could support expanded public space.

Student Housing Capacity Gap → Initiate **direct engagement with landowners and business owners** to examine **housing demand indicators**, including **land costs**, **development constraints**, and **capacity limitations**, in order to better assess and improve the **existing housing stock**.

Guided by these focus areas, Phase 2 will involve the production of **maps, tables, and spatial analyses** that highlight **infrastructure gaps**, **mobility patterns**, and **housing conditions** within East Village. Together, these quantitative outputs will support a **holistic understanding** of the area's **physical form**, **market dynamics**, and **stakeholder interests**, forming the basis for **evidence-based redevelopment recommendations**.



Phase 2

Quantitative Analysis

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Research Objective & Guiding Questions

PHASE 2

01

Research Objective & Guiding Questions

Quantitative data provides statistical and numerical evidence that is extremely beneficial for the analysis of a study region. However, quantitative data alone can lack significant community context that qualitative data provides to inform planners on perceptions of spaces and infrastructural systems within the study region. While both of these data collection methods are important separately, **when conducted in tandem, they form a strong relationship by guiding and informing one-another.** This allows the formation of a holistic **community identity** and **conditions** as well as its wants, needs, and aspirations through data collection.

The **primary objective** of Phase 2 is to collect and analyze **quantitative data** that informs and is guided by the established emerging themes and **qualitative analysis** of Phase 1.

To meet this goal, throughout the second phase of this project the **qualitative emerging themes** of Phase 1 will be leveraged to guide the **quantitative investigation**, data collection, and further analyses of the East Village districts.

Through the qualitative data collected and analyses performed in Phase 1, the team identified 3 emerging themes (Figure 1-a) that reflect the **current conditions** and **perceptions** of East Village. Furthermore, these quantitative findings will contextualize the emerging themes through the support of concrete numeric data. The identified emerging themes are a **housing capacity gap** for the student population, **weak infrastructure** in the built environment, and an **underperforming public realm**.

These themes specifically guided the research of quantitative data collection of Phase 2 through the formation of the following questions:

- ***Does the numerical or statistical data indicate a market deficit for student housing? If so, how dramatic is this gap?***
- ***What are the major infrastructural issues that are reflected in community services access?***
- ***Does the perceived underperformance in the public realm have any quantitative support?***

By addressing these questions with quantitative data, we can gain a **deeper and wider** understanding of the **challenges** that the East Village community faces.

The emerging themes identified in Phase 1 and numerically informed in Phase 2 will **significantly inform the public engagement process** of Phase 3.

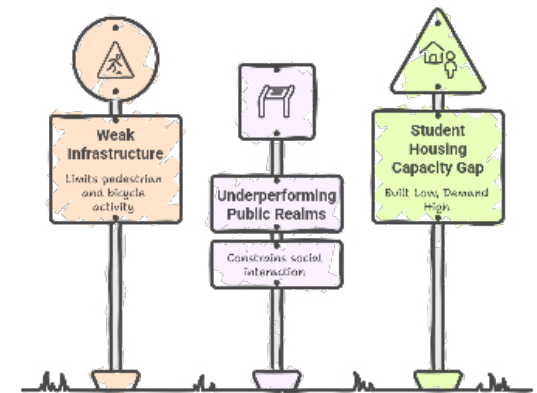


Figure 1-a: Emerging Themes: Weak Infrastructure, underperforming public realms, student housing capacity gap.



Methodology

02

Methodology

Data Collection Methods:

Phase 2 employs a quantitative secondary-data analysis approach to examine **housing capacity, land-use patterns, zoning regulations, and public realm performance** in the East Village study area of East Lansing, Michigan. Unlike Phase 1, which relied on field observation and qualitative interpretation, this phase uses **measurable demographic, spatial, and regulatory data** to support planning analysis and redevelopment recommendations. The approach focuses on **identifying gaps between existing conditions and future development needs** through systematic data collection, spatial analysis, and policy review.

Multiple credible secondary data sources were used to ensure reliability and accuracy (Figure 2-a). Key data sources included the **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)** for Michigan State University enrollment data, institutional estimates of on-campus housing capacity, **American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates (2024)** for housing and demographic characteristics, the updated **East Lansing Master Plan and zoning ordinance**, GIS parcel datasets, and visual verification using Google Street View. In addition to these sources, transportation survey analysis was conducted from the following sources: **The East Lansing Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, Lansing Non-Motorized Transportation Network**, and the **MDOT 2021 Traffic Volume Study**.

To assess the **student housing gap**, total student enrollment was compared with on-campus housing capacity and estimated off-campus rental capacity using Census data on occupied and vacant rental units. Average household size data were used to **approximate potential housing capacity and identify supply shortfalls**.

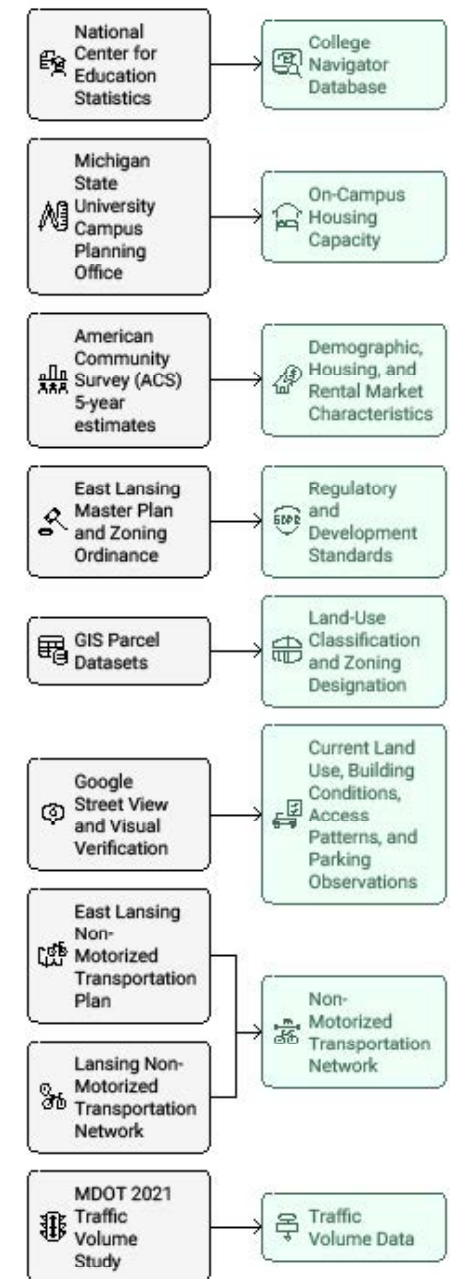


Figure 2-a: Data Sources for Phase 2 Quantitative Analysis

Methodology

Data Collection Methods:

For land-use and public realm analysis along the Grand River corridor, parcel data were extracted from GIS, cleaned, and analyzed alongside zoning regulations. Existing land uses, building heights, access patterns, and parking conditions were verified through mapping tools and street imagery. Parcel conditions were then compared with zoning allowances to evaluate conformity and redevelopment potential.

For transportation survey analysis, automobile use data from MDOT was compared to the teams individual traffic counts in the area, as well as using this data to find where East Village is within the context of Lansing and East Lansing's non-motorized transportation plan. Shuttle services, such as the Michigan Flyer, were noted as forms of transit that allow residents to access Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) without the need for a car.

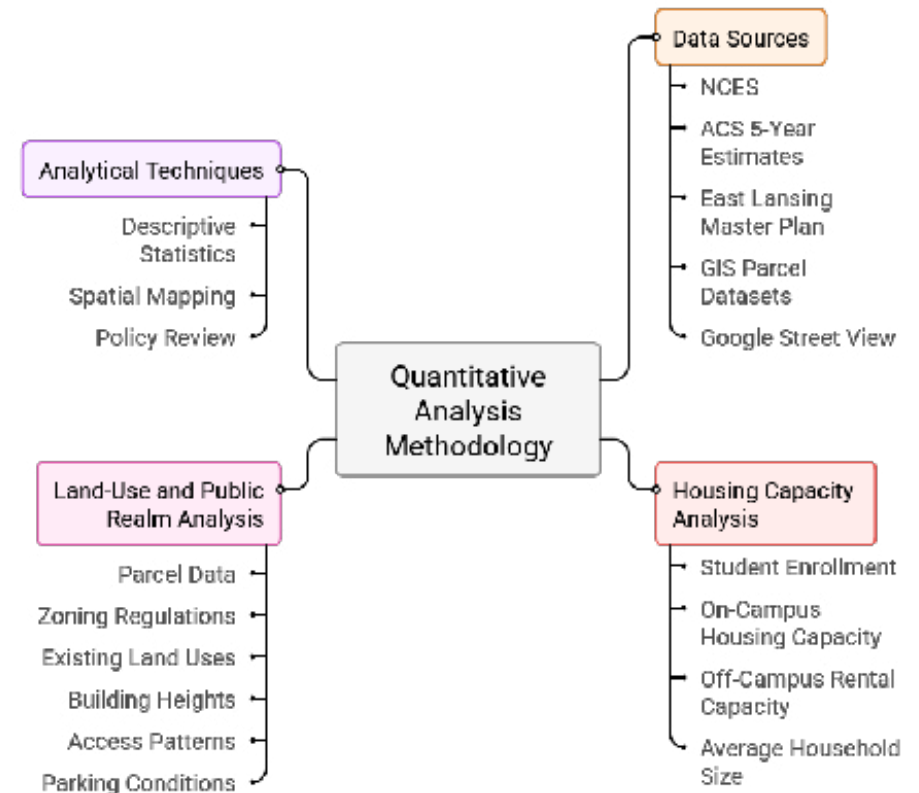


Figure 2-b Qualitative Analysis methodology for East village

Methodology

Data Analysis Techniques:

Quantitative analysis included:

- Descriptive statistical analysis of demographic and housing data.
- Comparative calculations to estimate housing supply versus demand.
- Spatial analysis using GIS to assess land-use patterns and zoning conformity.
- Parcel-level evaluation of density potential and development capacity.
- Policy analysis of zoning provisions affecting redevelopment opportunities.

These techniques collectively support evidence-based planning recommendations.

Limitations and Validity Considerations:

Because this phase relies on secondary datasets, several limitations are acknowledged:

- Census and ACS data represent estimates rather than exact counts.
- Enrollment data reflect a specific academic period and may fluctuate.
- Visual land-use verification using street imagery may not capture recent changes.
- Zoning compliance assessment assumes accurate municipal data and parcel boundaries.

To address these limitations, multiple data sources were cross-referenced wherever possible, and findings are interpreted cautiously within the planning context.

Integration with Planning Analysis:

The quantitative findings from Phase 2 **build upon and validate** the qualitative insights generated during Phase 1 site observations, creating a more **comprehensive understanding** of conditions in the East Village redevelopment area. While qualitative methods highlighted perceived issues such as **student housing demand, underperforming public spaces, mobility challenges, and land-use inconsistencies**, the quantitative analysis **provided measurable evidence** through demographic data, housing statistics, zoning regulations, and spatial datasets.

Together, these complementary approaches help **clarify development pressures, confirm the scale of housing demand, identify gaps in public realm quality, and assess zoning capacity**. This integrated analysis supports more informed planning recommendations related to student housing provision, public space enhancement, land-use optimization, transportation connectivity, and zoning policy adjustments aimed at guiding sustainable redevelopment in East Village.

Key Highlights-Phase 2 Quantitative Methodology:

Quantitative data used to assess **housing, land use, zoning, and public realm conditions**.

Combined **demographic data, GIS analysis, and policy review** for evidence-based insights.

Identified **housing demand gaps, density potential, and redevelopment constraints**.

Findings **interpreted cautiously** due to reliance on secondary datasets, estimates, and evolving urban conditions.

Findings complement Phase 1 qualitative observations **to guide planning recommendations**.

Community Demographic Context

03

Community Demographic Context

East Village as a **compact, student-oriented neighborhood** strongly shaped by its proximity to Michigan State University. The demographic profile is notably young, with **Generation Z residents comprising about 83% of the population (Figure 3-a)** and a **median age of 22.6 years (Figure 3-d)**, indicating a predominantly student-driven community with short-term residency patterns. Population trends show a **slight decline** over time (Figure 3-b), yet the **steady increase in housing units** (Figure 3-c) suggests ongoing development pressure, likely driven by student housing demand rather than long-term population growth.

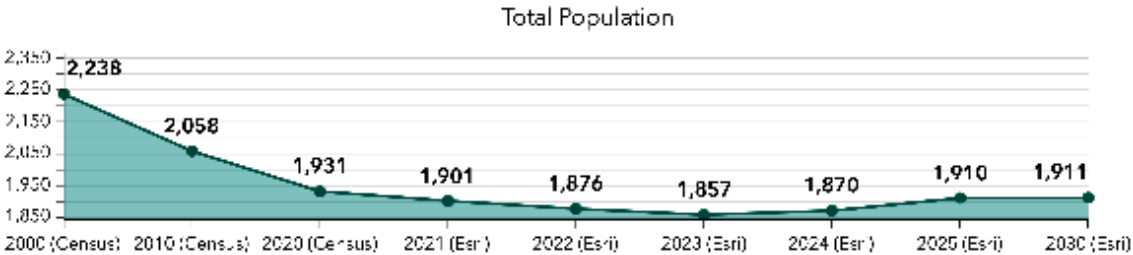


Figure 3-b: Population change of East Village. Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2025, 2030), ACS (2019-2023), U.S. Census (2000, 2010, 2020).

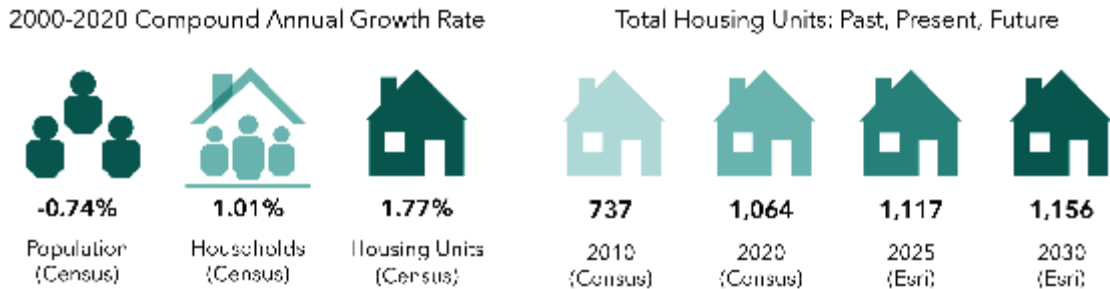


Figure 3-c: Population Trends and Housing Growth Snapshot (2000–2030) Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2025, 2030), ACS (2019-2023), U.S. Census (2000, 2010, 2020).

1,910	931	2.04	22.6	\$16,369	\$180,556	15	0	48
Population	Households	Avg Size Household	Median Age	Median Household Income	Median Home Value	Wealth Index	Housing Affordability	Diversity Index

Figure 3-d: Key demographic indicators of East Village. Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2025, 2030), Esri-U.S. BLS. (2025), ACS (2019-2023).

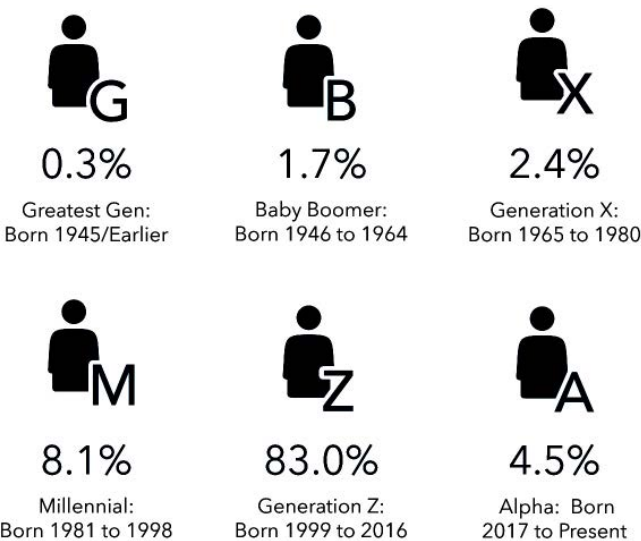


Figure 3-a: Population by generation. Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri (2025, 2030), Esri-U.S. BLS. (2025), ACS (2019-2023).

Socioeconomically, the area reflects **relatively low median household income (\$16,369) (Figure 3-d)** alongside a **high rental orientation**, reinforcing its identity as a transient academic district rather than a stable family neighborhood. Moderate diversity levels further characterize the community context. Overall, the data suggest that East Village **functions primarily as a university-influenced housing and activity zone**, where development patterns, land use, and economic dynamics are shaped more by student mobility cycles than by permanent residential settlement.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a narrow stream flowing through a dense forest. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding trees and foliage. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent green overlay. In the top left corner, the text "Development Pressures" is written in white. In the top right corner, the text "PHASE 2" is written in white. In the bottom right corner, the large number "04" is displayed in white.

Development Pressures

PHASE 2

04

Development Pressures

Population Data Indicator:

Population data trends are valuable in analyzing pressures for development and redevelopment, as well as current and future housing needs. Multiple data sources, such as census data, highlight problems such as **quantitative redevelopment pressures** and an **imbalance of density**. One clear census **indicator** of this problem is tract 43.01, situated in the northern portion of the study area, has a population density of 4,546 people per square mile. The moderate density of the tract is attributed to the **predominance of single-family homes** within it. Tract 43.02, located just south of Grand River Avenue, has a density of 11,825 people per square mile, nearly three times the density of the prior tract north of Grand River Avenue.

Connection to Phase 1:

This data matches findings and observations from the previous phase, specifically the student housing capacity gap, as this data shows that this land use does not fulfill the need for more, higher density, student housing highlighted in Phase 1.

Building Age:

In addition to population trends, building age is a **key indicator** in assessing redevelopment potential. Several apartment buildings south of Grand River Ave are aging, such as the Cedar Village apartments, which were built in 1968, and the Eden Roc Apartments, which were built in 1964. Figure () indicates that every apartment building within East Village was built during the 1960's, ranging from 57 to 66 years old, except for the Hub and Element 903. Due to the aging housing stock and documented maintenance issues, redevelopment has the possibility to financially benefit landowners.

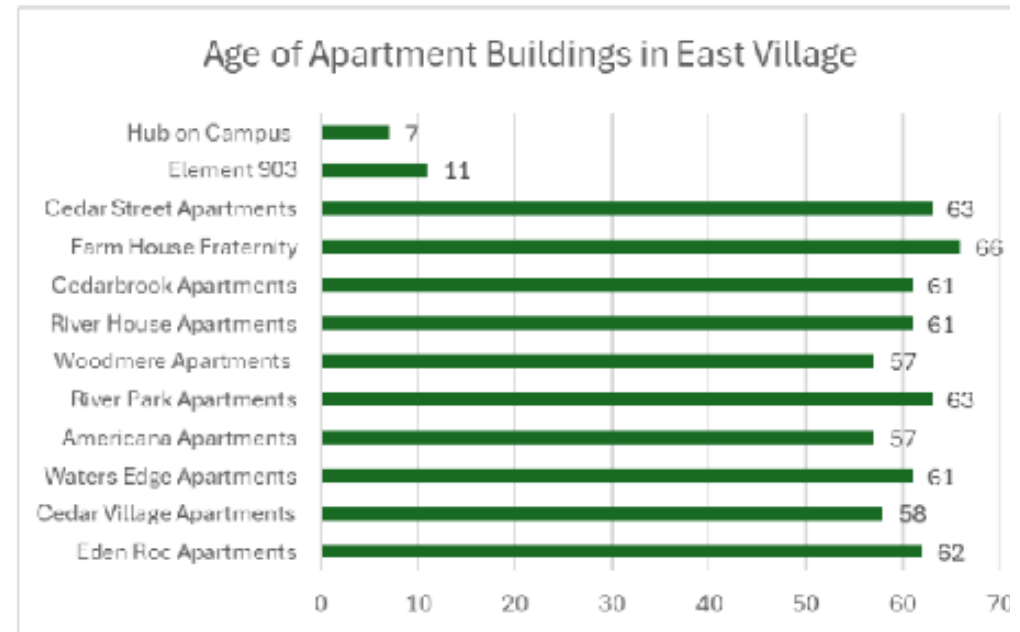


Figure 4-a: Building Age of Apartments in East Village (United States Census Bureau, 2024)

Stakeholder Considerations:

However, it is important to note that there is a **conflict in stakeholder interests**, such as the Farm House Fraternity's president, who stated in a phone call interview that the house is not interested in selling or changing their property for redevelopment purposes. This conflict will be explored further during upcoming community engagement meetings during Phase 3.

Works Cited

U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). Total population (Table B01003). 2020–2024 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Data accessed via Social Explorer.
City of East Lansing, BS&A Online Property Database, accessed February 9, 2026, <https://bsaonline.com>.

Development Pressures

Housing and Built Environment Conditions

Key Indicator: Google Reviews:

Google reviews are a **resident experience indicator** that highlight issues regarding the lived experience of buildings in the neighborhood, and further point to problems in the aging buildings that are approaching obsolescence. Many reviews confirm that aging utilities, infrastructure, and appliances are a cause for issues such as safety concerns, power outages, loss of heating, slow repairs, and WiFi issues. One tenant of the Cedar Village Apartments wrote,

—“They are horrific with managing maintenance requests. It was 15F outside and the heating in my apartment was out for an entire week. Every couple weeks something happens to our apartment. Either the dish washer breaks, the microwave or some other issue occurs. When we moved [into] the apartment [it] was genuinely filthy. There was grease in the oven, the cabinets have sticky residue on it, and there were literal nails in the mattress.”.

—Another tenant wrote, “The apartment itself is a disaster. The appliances are outdated and barely functional. The cabinets are falling apart, and the carpet is stained and worn. Despite the exorbitant rent, there’s no sign of any upkeep or improvements...Security is a huge concern here. There have been multiple break-ins, and the management has done nothing to address this issue. I constantly feel unsafe in my own home.”

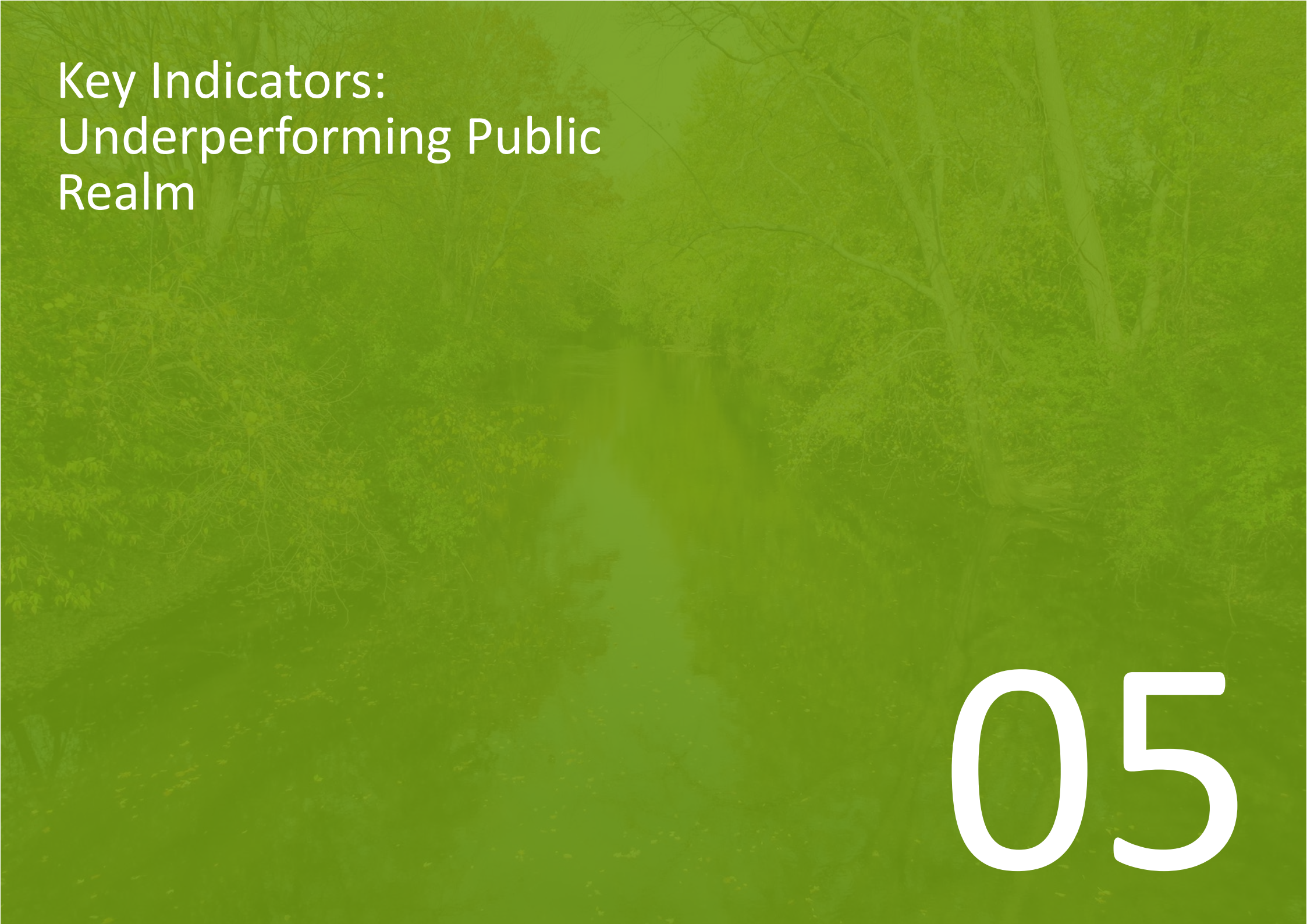
— These quotes highlight areas where the lived experience of East Village is falling short. **Safety concerns, aging infrastructure, and unreliable utilities** all show how buildings approaching obsolescence impact life in the neighborhood and also unveil an opportunity for the construction of newer, more modern housing stock.

Built Environment Implications:

While these issues largely exist within private apartment units, their impact extends farther than just individual buildings. Ongoing safety concerns, deferred maintenance, and an aging housing stock have an impact on neighborhood perception. As the current housing stock ages and approaches **functional obsolescence**, exterior neighborhood conditions also decline, resulting in stagnation of investment. These patterns are not only seen in individual properties, but throughout East Village, where non-conforming uses, inconsistent building form, and vacancy conflict with the pedestrian-oriented vision described in the East Lansing Zoning Ordinance, and impact public realm quality.

Works Cited

Google Reviews, “Cedar Village Apartments” Google Maps listing



Key Indicators: Underperforming Public Realm

05

Key Indicator: Underperforming Public Realms

Connection to Phase 1

The Grand River Corridor (Figure 5-a), the heart of the East Village region, is filled with **obsolete, aging structures**. Not only is this reflected in the exteriors and among the lived experiences of residents reflected on Google Reviews, informal intercept interviews during Phase 1, but also in the zoning ordinance.

Key Indicator

The parcels located on the north side of Grand River are all **zoned B2**, while the parcels on the south side of Grand River are **zoned EV**, or “**East Village**”. East Village is a **special district** created in 2007 with a **unique form-based code**, while B2 is a relatively broad commercial zone, allowing almost all retail uses, as well as food service and limited residential.

Despite the range of by right uses in the B2 zone, there are four **non-conforming single family houses** and **three vacant properties (Figure 5-b)**. There are many drive-thru restaurants, which **require special use permits**, and single story office spaces as well. Although 2 story development is by right in the zoning ordinance, less than half of the B2 parcels take advantage of that, and none of them **use special-use permits to reach the potential 6 story height**. In the EV district, only one building, **the Hub**, is **conforming**. The EV district has a strict code that requires buildings to be certain heights and mixed-use, and none of the other parcels meet these demands. These non-conforming buildings are all allowed in the district, however there are restrictions on making changes, which makes gradual redevelopment more challenging. The general non-conformity and use of special use permits result in an **unattractive environment on Grand River Avenue**.

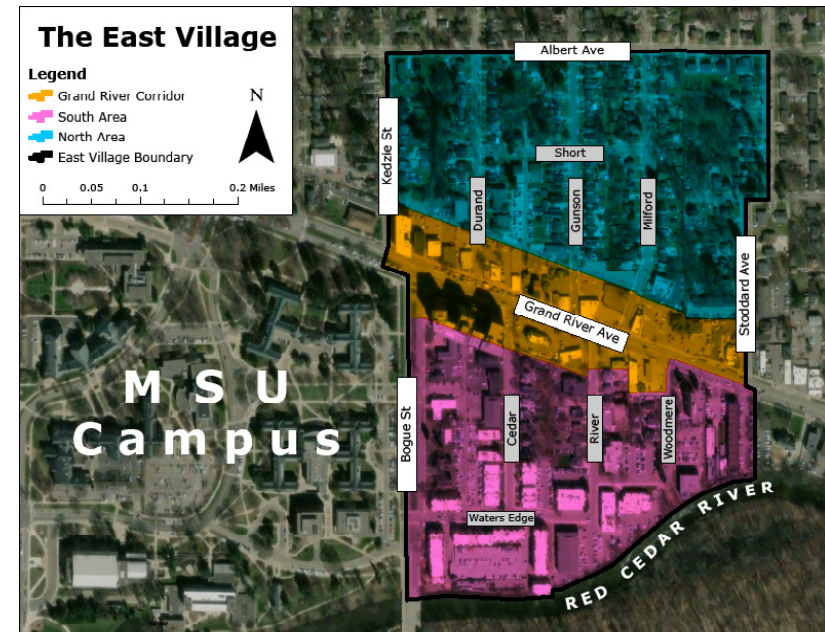


Figure 5-a: Map of East Village segmenting the three areas of study for further analysis



Figure 5-b: Vacant property zoned B2, 1047 E Grand River Ave, demonstrating the underperforming commercial activity in the study area

Key Indicator: Underperforming Public Realms

Pedestrian Safety Challenges:

Lastly, **pedestrian safety** is limited by the narrow sidewalks (Figure 5-c) and lack of buffers between the sidewalk and the street. There are frequent, busy drive-thrus directly on Grand River (Figure 5-d) that **disrupt the flow of traffic for both pedestrians and vehicles**. Moreover, the Grand River Ave intersection with Milford st was rated one of the **top ten traffic crashes locations in 2024 by the East Lansing PD (East Lansing Police Department, 2024)**. The East Lansing zoning ordinance requires a minimum of 5' of sidewalk space, and the approximate average sidewalk width in the Grand River Corridor is 6'6". Moreover, **buffers range from 2' to no buffer at all**. Moreover, the wide variety of setbacks and uses creates an inconsistent streetscape that makes the corridor **feel generic and uncharacteristic**. The setbacks range from 0' (The Hub) to over 92' (Tasty Twist) (Google Maps, 2026). Because the vast majority of buildings do not use their maximum height or lack of setback requirements, there is a lack of density that is already permitted in the zoning ordinance.

Implications:

In summary, the Grand River corridor **does not live up to the vision described in the East Lansing Zoning ordinance**. The goal of a **pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use area** is instead realized as a hodge podge of ranging densities, uses, and building types, making the area seem unorganized. This is only exacerbated by the zoning ordinance, which makes many of these parcels **non-conforming** and thus redevelopment and property changes are very challenging to get approved. The **non-conformity and vacancy** are key indicators of this underperforming public realm.



Figure 5-c: Narrow Sidewalk with No Buffer, 1001 E Grand River Ave
Photo taken on the NE corner of Grand River and Durand St, facing east



Figure 5-d: Drive-thru at 1054 E. Grand River Ave., showing busy traffic with an unmarked pedestrian crossing



Key Indicators: Student Housing Capacity Gap

06

Student Housing Capacity Gap

Connection to Phase 1:

One of the principal themes that emerged during Phase 1 of this study was the perception of a localized gap in student housing. Observations and informal interviews conducted during Phase 1 indicated that a mismatch between student housing demand and supply exists in the East Village study area. Student residents, in particular, expressed views that residential housing options near Michigan State University are limited and that rents are high. Interviews with business representatives further revealed that by increasing foot traffic, high-density student housing developments can have positive impacts on local businesses. One of the primary goals of Phase 2 was to quantitatively interrogate the perceived gap in student housing in East Lansing. Using housing data collected mainly from the United States Census Bureau, this section aims to determine whether the hard numbers reflect the housing gap identified by many Phase 1 interviewees.

MSU Student Enrollment:

The first step in ascertaining whether there is a current need for additional student housing in the City of East Lansing was to determine how many students are enrolled at MSU. The most current data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that in Fall of 2024, Michigan State had **52,089 enrolled students**, 41,234 of which were undergraduate students (Fig. 6-a).

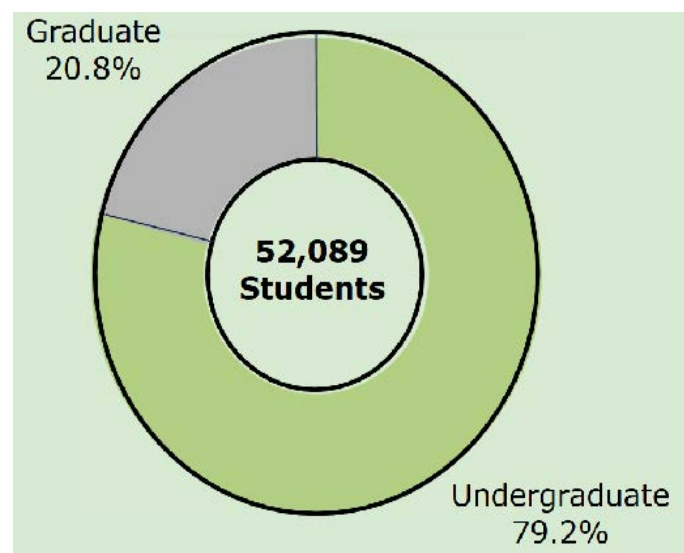


Figure 6-a: Michigan State University Student Enrollment, Fall 2024. Source: [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

MSU Housing Capacity:

The next step was to determine how many students the University has the capacity to house. Information provided by Brandon List, the MSU Campus Planner, signified that between five student dorm neighborhoods and three University-operated student apartment villages (Fig. 6-b), MSU is currently capable of housing 16,000 – 18,000 students. Subtracting the upper estimate of 18,000 from the approximately 52,000 students that are enrolled at Michigan State indicates that the **private housing market** is left to support approximately **36,000 students**.

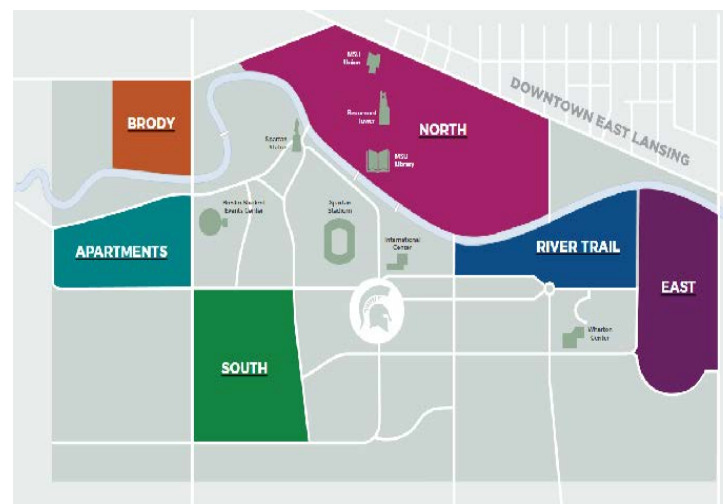


Figure 6-b: Michigan State Student Housing Neighborhoods. Source: [MSU Live On Residence Education and Housing Services](#).

Student Housing Capacity Gap

City of East Lansing Housing Data:

Data from the **United States Census Bureau*** was then used to evaluate the current state of the rental housing market in the City of East Lansing. All data was drawn from the **2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates**, as this represented the most current data available at the date of this report's compilation. The analysis centers around **rental housing units** (as distinguished from owner-occupied units) because the number of students who purchase real estate while in school is assumed to be comparatively low. Students tend to be young and transient, qualities that are better suited for renting rather than purchasing. Thus, this analysis operates under the assumption that university students gravitate towards renting, not buying.

The City of East Lansing has a **rental inventory of 9,501 housing units** (Tables [B25003](#) and [B25004](#)). 8,511 of these units are currently occupied, while the remaining **990 are vacant** (Table [B25004](#)). The total number of renters that the City could support was calculated by adding together the total number of renters that currently live in the City and the total number of renters that the City's vacant rental units could house. The total number of current renters in occupied units was derived from the household size statistics reported by the Census Bureau (Table [B25009](#)). An estimation for the total number of renters that could be housed in vacant rental units was calculated by multiplying the average household size by the number of vacant units (Tables [B25010](#) and [B25004](#)). The summation revealed that if **every rental unit** in the City of East Lansing was occupied, the City could house **17,973 renters**.

*The specific Census Bureau Tables relied on for each statistic are referenced and hyperlinked.

Key Indicator:

This housing analysis indicates that even if every available rental housing unit on the Michigan State campus and in the City of East Lansing were occupied to full capacity, there would still be approximately **16,116 students** left to find housing outside of East Lansing.

This discrepancy between the number of students enrolled at Michigan State and the housing capacity of the University and City strongly suggests that the Phase 1 interviewees' assertion that a student housing gap exists was not unfounded.



Figure 6-c: Student Housing, Cedar Village Apartments, an example that East Village is a student oriented neighborhood

Student Housing Capacity Gap

Limitations:

The data reported in this chapter is not intended to establish a specific housing goal for the City. The mere fact that housing for approximately 16,000 additional students would need to be constructed for the City of East Lansing to accommodate the full student body does not mean that this is what the City should do. For one, some students elect to live in neighboring municipalities or commute longer distances to campus. Additionally, not every student is a renter; some students do in fact own their own home. These factors suggest that the housing data analyzed above may represent an **over-exaggeration** of the student housing gap. On the other side of the equation, however, the above analysis relies on the assumption that every single rental housing unit in the City can be occupied by MSU students. This is simply not the case. The City of East Lansing has many non-student residents, some of whom rent. Additionally, some of the housing units in the City are not available for rent to the general public (senior housing,* for example). These factors suggest that the housing data analyzed in this section may **under-estimate** the number of new housing units that would be needed to accommodate the full MSU student population.

The true need for student housing may be slightly higher or slightly lower than what is reflected by the data above. As such, the gap identified is not intended to be precise. Rather, it is intended to illustrate that **a need for additional student housing in the City does indeed exist**, although the magnitude of this need may be variable.

Policy Implications:

Although the data indicates that the City is currently unable to house the full MSU student body, the City must decide whether this is a goal it wishes to pursue. On one hand, an attempt to provide housing for the full student population may create an imbalance between the student and non-student residents of East Lansing. The City may prefer to have students distributed across the neighboring municipalities in order to minimize traffic. On the other hand, a scarcity of student housing in East Lansing may contribute to unaffordable rents. Over the last few years, MSU has made the headlines (Cushing, 2025; Atwood, 2025) on numerous occasions for high and increasing rent prices. Many students who live farther from campus may wish to move to East Lansing but find themselves unable to do so on account of lack of housing or high rents. A student housing gap undoubtedly exists, but it is up to the City to determine what it means for the future of development in East Lansing.

Works Cited:

Cushing, B. (2025, July 3). *Housing Insecurity Affects Hundreds of MSU Students*. WILX10. <https://www.wilx.com/2025/07/03/housing-insecurity-affects-hundreds-msu-students/>

Atwood, S. (2025, April 11). *Michigan State Raises Rates for Dorms and Dining*. Lansing State Journal. <https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/local/campus/2025/04/11/msu-dorms-dining-costs-increase-rates/83027718007/?gnt-cfr=1&gca-cat=p&gca-uir=false&gca-epti=z115436p119250c119250u114136v115436&gca-ft=223&gca-ds=sophi>.

Key Indicators:
Weak Infrastructure

PHASE 2

07

Weak Infrastructure

Connection to Phase 1:

Field observations made during Phase 1 evidenced weak infrastructure in the East Village Study area. Poorly maintained sidewalks, absence of dedicated bicycle lanes, lack of parks, and concentration of public transit along just two corridors were just a few qualities of the built environment that suggested a deficiency in East Village's infrastructure. One of the primary goals of Phase 2 was to employ quantitative methods to explore the infrastructure quality and to identify any new trends not already captured by Phase 1 qualitative methods. Using transit data provided by the Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA), survey data previously collected as part of the City of East Lansing Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (2024), and Red Cedar Squad pedestrian / cyclist counts, this section seeks to further interrogate the emerging weak infrastructure themes identified in Phase 1 of this report.

Barriers to Active Transportation:

In 2023, as part of the data collection process for its Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, the City of East Lansing launched a web-site using Social Pinpoint. Using this online public outreach service, the City was able to engage with community members interested in contributing to the planning process. Participants in the survey consisted of residents of East Lansing, employees or patrons of businesses in the City, and visitors who come to East Lansing for recreation.

Survey results from the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan indicated that **the greatest perceived obstacle to walking and biking in the City is a lack of safe infrastructure (66.80% of respondents)**. Closely related to this statistic, **63.52% of respondents identified traffic safety concerns as a major limiting factor in their willingness to use non-motorized transportation**. These findings suggest that perceived and actual safety conditions have a significant influence on travel behavior.

Of note is that the East Village Non-Motorized Transportation Plan does not include any recommendations specifically for the East Village neighborhood nor is East Village included on the Lansing Non-Motorized Transportation Network. As such, this study may serve as a link between the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and the East Village neighborhood.

Community Preferences for Cycling Infrastructure:

The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan survey results also indicated strong public support for higher-quality bicycle infrastructure, **with 83.92% of survey respondents wanting to see buffered or protected bike lanes, and 73.33% of respondents wanting to see more separated bike lanes in East Lansing**. These results demonstrate a clear demand for infrastructure that physically separates bicycles from vehicle traffic rather than relying on shared or unprotected bike lanes.

Traffic Volumes and Crash Data:

In 2024, Quality Counts, LLC performed a neighborhood traffic volume study to evaluate 14 different road segments across East Lansing neighborhoods; most of these segments recorded **fewer than 750 vehicles per day** (measured over several days in April 2024), indicating relatively low traffic volumes in East Lansing's neighborhoods. Additionally, a five-year crash analysis (2019-2023) conducted by consulting firm Fleis & VandenBrink, LLC, found **zero speed-related crashes on specific neighborhood study segments**. Together these studies suggest that risk of vehicle collision is relatively low in East Lansing, yet the previously discussed survey responses show that safety is a significant concern for residents. This gap between perceived safety and data suggests that **the design of a space, and whether pedestrians feel comfortable while walking in a space, plays a critical role in encouraging more active forms of transportation**.

Weak Infrastructure

Red Cedar Squad Pedestrian / Bike Counts:

Although the East Lansing Non-Motorized Transportation Plan provided some data for the City as a whole, the Red Cedar Squad conducted several pedestrian counts within the study area to better understand the mobility patterns specifically in East Village. Counts were conducted on Wednesday, January 21 for a 30-minute interval from 12:10 p.m. to 12:40 p.m. (Fig. 7-a).

Grand River/Bogue: 48 Pedestrians (North/South Crosswalk)

Grand River/Bogue: 21 Pedestrians (East/West)

Bogue/Waters Edge: 129 Pedestrians, 4 bikes

Cedar/Waters Edge: 61 Pedestrians, 2 bikes

DISCLAIMER: Counts occurred in late January, during class commute hours. These numbers are indicative of pead pedestrian traffic for walking to class during the winter months. Land of bicycles observed during this observation period may also be explained by the poorly maintained sidewalks on this day, discouraging the use of bicycles.

Motorized Public Transit (Bus) Report on Findings in East Village:

In terms of CATA bus service within East Village, there are **two existing transit corridors** that traverse or border the study area. The larger corridor among the two is along Grand River Avenue, which is served by routes 1, 22, 23, and 48. The other is along Bogue Street, which is served by routes 20 and 23. **Neither the North Area nor the South Area have immediate access to bus services.** Several stops along both corridors are located within, or immediately adjacent to, East Village. These bus routes provide a vital link between East Village, Michigan State University campus, downtown East Lansing, and downtown Lansing.

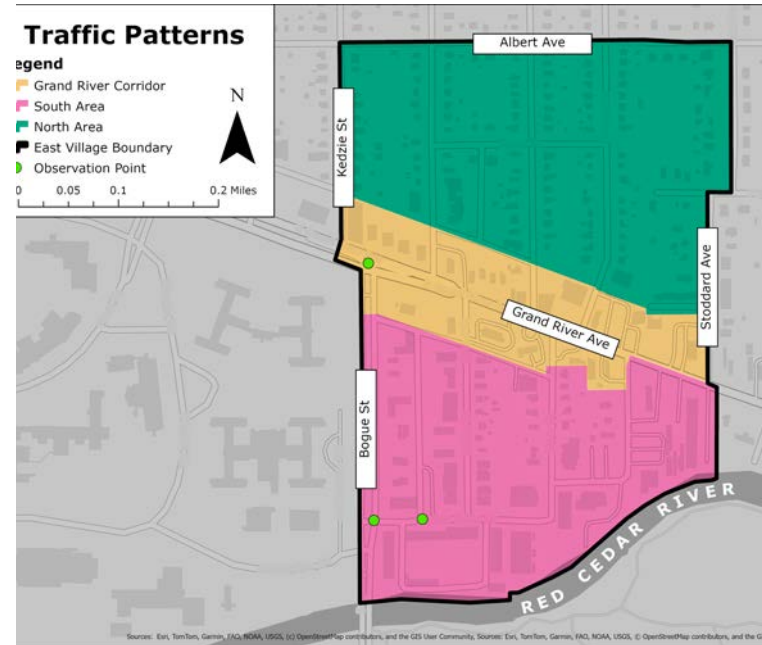


Figure 7-a: Data Collection Points in East Village for Pedestrian/Bike Counts to identify main multi-modal transportation corridors.

Ridership Figures:

Below are average weekly ridership statistics for individual bus stops in the area. Table 1 shows stops that are located within the East Village study area while MSU is in fall session, Table 2 shows the same stops over the summer, when students are away from school. Data listed below was provided by CATA and valid for the months of June and October 2025. The average ridership figure was calculated by combining the average weekly ons (boardings) and offs (disembarkings) for each stop.

Works Cited:

City of East Lansing. (2024). Non-motorized transportation plan. [Source.](#)

City of Lansing. (n.d.) Non-motorized transportation network map. [Source.](#)

Weak Infrastructure

Table 1 - October 2025

Bus Stop	Average Weekly Ridership (Number of Riders)
EBD Grand River past Bogue	438.73
EBD Grand River past River	129.12
WBD Grand River past Gunson	158.92
WBD Grand River past Stoddard	160.25
SBD Bogue past Grand River	92.07
SBD Bogue past Waters Edge	62.71

Table 2 - June 2025

Bus Stop	Average Weekly Ridership (Number of Riders)
EBD Grand River past Bogue	270.25
EBD Grand River past River	95.33
WBD Grand River past Gunson	143.98
WBD Grand River past Stoddard	95.88
SBD Bogue past Grand River	56.75
SBD Bogue past Waters Edge	31.39

While the East Village sees decent average weekly ridership, figures show that **transit in the area is underused**. Transit ridership in the area is primarily driven by MSU's student population, so routes serving campus and student housing have much higher ridership on average. Shown in Table 3, bus stops on MSU campus carry much higher ridership than buses off-campus. These areas are served by routes that are free for students, resulting in much higher ridership overall. This is also supported by the figures in Table 2, which show that **ridership across the study area is reduced in the summer months, when MSU is not in session**. Within the East Village, large residential areas mainly used by students do not see this free campus bus service, and some areas do not see transit service at all. Users are forced to walk to either the Grand River Avenue or Bogue Street transit corridors for bus access, and these buses either run infrequently or do not serve MSU directly. This **lack of student-driven transit access decreases incentive to use transit over other transportation modes**, and the East Village area lacks ridership as a result.

Table 3 - October 2025

Bus Stop	Average Weekly Ridership (Number of Riders)
NBD Physics before Dormitory	4,499.45
MSU Bus Station	35,947.55

Work Cited:

Capital Area Transportation Authority. (2025). Ridership Data - June and October 2025. <https://www.cata.org>

Weak Infrastructure

Key Indicators:

Although traffic volumes and crash data suggest **relatively low objective risk** in East Lansing, survey results reveal **significant perceived safety concerns** due to infrastructure gaps. Strong pedestrian activity in East Village demonstrates a **clear demand for more walkable environments in the area**, and survey results indicate a desire for stronger cycling infrastructure. Additionally, ridership and route data indicate that public transit is not utilized to its fullest capacity in East Village. Although the CATA routes in East Village provide connectivity with the surrounding area (Fig. 7-c), most stops in the study area are concentrated along two major corridors (Fig. 7-b).

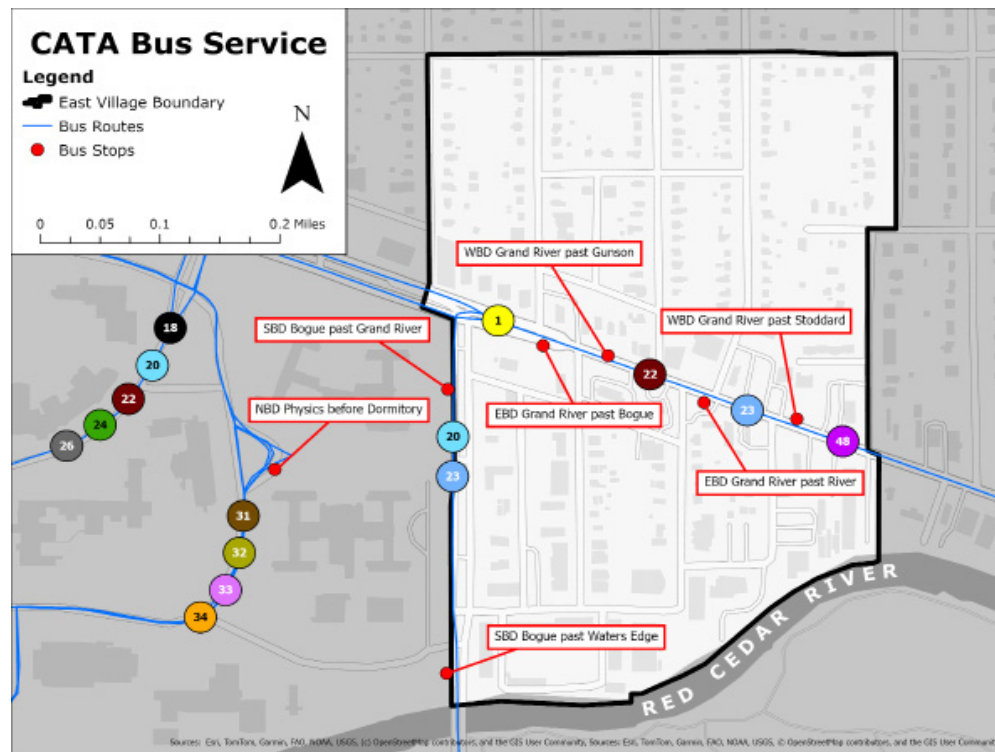


Figure 7-b: CATA Transit Access in East Village, showing limited areas for access within the neighborhood.

Policy Implications:

East Village is a neighborhood that is **prime for infrastructure improvement**. By improving sidewalk conditions, adding protected bike infrastructure, integrating East Village into the non-motorized transportation network, or strengthening transit connections, the City of East Lansing has an opportunity to foster a safer, more equitable, and more connected transportation system. In building its future transportation and traffic policies, the City will have to choose whether to focus its efforts on one particular mode of transportation (transit, walking, biking, etc.) or work to diversify the transportation options available in East Village.

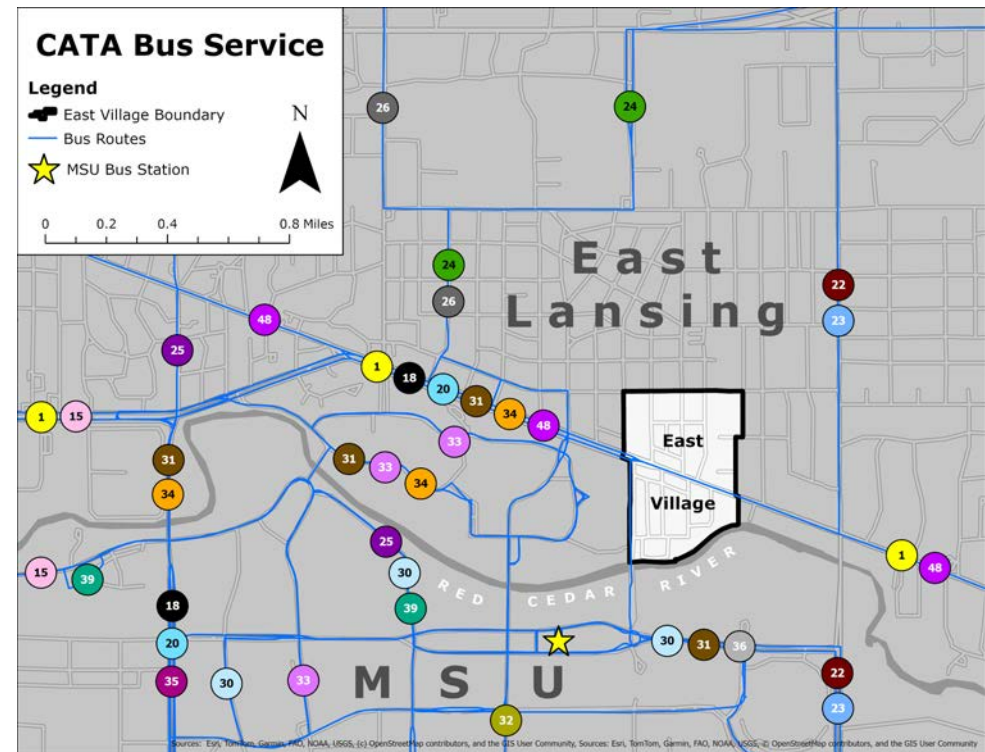


Figure 7-c: East Village in the context of surrounding CATA Bus Services, showing that other areas of East Lansing are better connected to CATA's transit network than East Village. SEE APPENDIX C FOR ROUTE DESCRIPTIONS.

Summary & Implications

08

Summary & Implications

The quantitative analysis conducted during Phase 2 provided an opportunity for deeper exploration of the emerging themes identified in Phase 1. The findings from Phases 1 and 2 will inform Phase 3 community engagement efforts in the following ways:

Underperforming Public Realm → Zoning code review and site surveys verified the existence of an underperforming public realm. Phase 2 analyses of zoning nonconformities and the built environment suggest that the underperforming public realm identified in Phase 1 originates (at least in part) from the failure of many buildings along Grand River Avenue to take full advantage of the allowances made for them in the City's zoning ordinance. Knowing that many of the buildings along Grand River do not utilize their lots to the fullest extent allowable by the zoning code, the next step is to understand *why*. This question will shape how the team approaches the property owner focus group that will be conducted during Phase 3. The team may ask questions such as:

- What factors prevent you from utilizing your property to its fullest extent?
- Have you sought out permits from the City to expand or renovate your building? If so, what was the process like?

Student Housing Gap → Housing data from the United States Census Bureau and Michigan State University verified the existence of the student housing gap identified by interviewees during Phase 1. Taken together, the housing findings from Phases 1 and 2 strongly indicate that the City of East Lansing is short on affordable student housing. What has been left unanswered, however, is *which type* of student housing is most desired by local residents and students. This question will be answered during Phase 3. At community meetings, for example, the team may show participants different styles of housing and seek feedback on which type is preferred. Such engagement will help merge the quantitative findings with the public desire to create a collaborative vision for housing in East Village.

Weak Infrastructure → The data on the bus routes and stops that CATA maintains in East Village confirmed Phase 1 findings that the neighborhoods north and south of Grand River Avenue lack in transit connection. However, the Phase 2 traffic volume and crash data hint at a mismatch between perceived pedestrian safety and actual pedestrian safety in the study area. The discrepancy suggests that Phase 3 will require a deeper exploration of *which specific factors* in the built environment cause feelings of insecurity for pedestrians.

Phases 1 and 2 have identified key areas for improvement in East Village. Formal community engagement is the logical next step because it will allow for a deeper exploration of the tensions between the quantitative data findings and resident perceptions. In addition, formal engagement serves as an opportunity to learn *whether and how* the community would like to respond to the challenges identified in Phases 1 and 2.



Phase 3

Community Engagement

Source : Tim Kiser, 2014, Red Cedar River

Phase 3 Dominant Insights from Community Engagement:

Phase 3 focused on direct community engagement to validate and deepen findings from Phases 1 and 2. Through three public meetings, a property owner focus group, surveys, visual preference voting, and intercept interviews, the team gathered stakeholder perspectives on housing, public realm, infrastructure, and redevelopment dynamics.

1. Strong Preference for Mixed-Use: Higher-Density Development Across engagement activities, medium- and high-rise mixed-use developments received the strongest support, particularly riverfront mixed-use (82% positive engagement) and high-rise/mid-rise mixed-use types. Row housing and single-use commercial corridors were the least preferred. The dominant takeaway: the community envisions a denser, more connected district integrating housing, retail, and amenities.

2. Affordability Over Availability: While housing capacity was a key theme in earlier phases, Phase 3 reframed the issue. A majority of respondents prioritized affordability over simple housing availability. Students repeatedly emphasized affordable rents, proximity to amenities, and quality living conditions. The community perceives rising costs as a central concern.

3. Underperforming Public Realm & Amenity Gaps: Community members consistently requested: An affordable grocery store, More parks and open spaces, Coffee shops and nightlife, fitness centers and community-oriented spaces, The lack of everyday amenities and “third spaces” was a dominant concern. Importantly, existing zoning largely allows these uses, meaning regulatory barriers are limited for most daytime amenities.

4. Demand for Improved Infrastructure: Participants expressed strong support for: Safer crosswalks, Expanded bike lanes and trails, Improved bus service (new routes and better frequency), Better winter maintenance. There is a persistent perception that

East Village is unsafe or inconvenient for pedestrians and cyclists. Infrastructure upgrades were widely viewed as essential to improving quality of life and supporting higher-density development.

5. Property Owner Concerns: Cost & Agency: While students favored redevelopment, property owners expressed two dominant concerns:

Cost: Rising construction expenses, limited subsidies, and skepticism about financial feasibility.

Agency: Wariness of city-led redevelopment due to historical tensions (e.g., eminent domain concerns and past conflicts), emphasizing that any master plan must remain visionary rather than prescriptive. This reveals a tension between growth aspirations and stakeholder trust. Phase 3 ultimately strengthened the empirical and experiential foundation for Phase 4 recommendations by grounding redevelopment strategy in stakeholder priorities while revealing key political and financial constraints

Phase 3 Key Insights (Executive Synthesis):

Support for Mixed-Use Density: Strong community preference for mid- to high-rise mixed-use development, emphasizing integrated housing, retail, and amenities.

Affordability as a Priority: Housing concerns shifted from availability to affordability, with strong demand for reasonably priced, student-oriented housing.

Amenity & Public Realm Gaps: Lack of essential services (e.g., grocery store, parks, social spaces) identified as a major barrier to livability and daily convenience.

Infrastructure as a Catalyst: Demand for safer, multimodal infrastructure (walkability, bike lanes, transit, winter maintenance) to support density and improve accessibility.

Stakeholder Tensions: Property owners raised concerns about development costs and decision-making control, highlighting the need for flexible, trust-building implementation strategies.

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Introduction & Primary Objective

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Introduction & Primary Objective

Quantitative and qualitative data analyses conducted during Phases 1 and 2 revealed essential information about infrastructure, housing, and the public experience in East Village. Although these analyses provided context on the study area, the data collection methods used left out crucial information on the lived experiences of East Village residents, property owners, and students. Although the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the first two phases developed a strong baseline understanding of the East Village neighborhood, formal community engagement can help fill gaps by providing a deeper understanding of stakeholder perceptions and visions.

The primary objective of Phase 3 is to conduct community engagement meetings, collect data (both qualitative and quantitative) at meetings and through online survey questions, and conduct an analysis, all of which is guided by the findings from Phases 1 and 2. Phase 3 analyses will then be used to inform our further investigations and recommendations for the East Village.

To meet this goal, throughout the third phase of this project the **qualitative** emerging themes of Phase 1 and the **quantitative** investigation of phase 2 will be leveraged to guide the community engagement of Phase 3.

Through the qualitative data collected and analyses performed in Phase 1, the team identified **3 emerging themes** that reflect the **current conditions** and **perceptions** of East Village. The quantitative findings of Phase 2 contextualized the emerging themes through the support of concrete numeric data. The identified emerging themes are a **housing capacity gap** for the student population, **weak infrastructure** in the built environment, and an **underperforming public realm**.

These themes specifically guided the team's community engagement efforts through these guiding questions:

- What are the perceptions of East Village from students, community members, and property/business owners?
- What do these groups want to see for the future of East Village?
- What draws these groups specifically to this area?

By addressing these questions with, we can gain a **deeper and wider** understanding of the **challenges** that the community faces, perceptions of the area, and community aspirations for the East Village.

The emerging themes identified in Phase 1, numerically confirmed in Phase 2 and the **public engagement process** of Phase 3 will inform our concept plan and strategic framework recommendations of Phase 4.

Methodology

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Methodology

Phase 3 was completed using a mixed methods approach (Figure 2-a) to collecting feedback **during three community engagement meetings (See Appendix D) and one focus group.** A charrette-based model was used for community meetings that were open to all members of the public, and a deliberative engagement framework with a facilitated conversation was used for the property owner/business owner focus group. **The mixed method approach** allowed for triangulation of survey responses, qualitative feedback, and visual preferencing results to find connections between community feedback and the emerging themes (weak infrastructure, underperforming public realm, and student housing capacity gap) identified in previous phases. Primary engagement methods for Phase 3 included an electronic survey that was revised after each phase, an outreach flyer to advertise community engagement meetings, nightlife intercept interviews, and one focus group for property and business owners in East Village.

Demographics

Planning for the community engagement meetings and property owner/business owner focus group started in the early stages of the project and centered around the goal of reaching a diverse range of residents. To achieve this goal, the first step was to strategically create a list of locations that would be suitable for hosting community events and which would attract a variety of demographics. Each population has different wants, needs, and opinions on the future of East Village, so it was important to hear from each of them and to gather their feedback and insights. For example, **MSU students** are an integral part of the East Village population and a major focus for this project, so attendance at community engagement meetings was needed to gauge what would attract them to this area. **Non-student East Lansing** residents support the community year-round, after students have left for the summer months or after graduation.

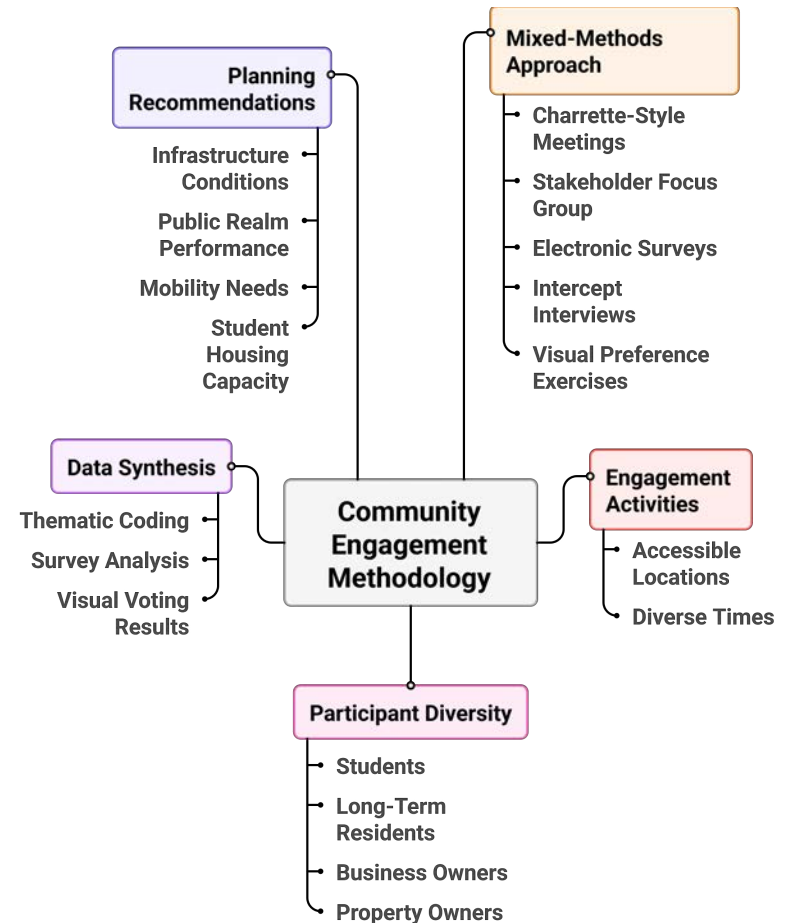


Figure 2-a: Community engagement methodology for East village redevelopment.

As staple contributors to the East Lansing economy, it was important to learn which types of amenities, business, and developments they want to see within their community and to include the voice of long-term East Lansing residents in the data collection. Business owners and property owners are key stakeholders in the conversations about zoning constraints and redevelopment pressures, so although they were invited to attend the general community meetings, a deliberate attempt was made to gather members of this demographic for a focus group.

Methodology

Data Collection Methods

Ultimately, the selected community meeting locations were the East Lansing Public Library, the Clubhouse at Cedar Village Apartments, and Martin Luther Chapel, which are local East Lansing establishments that are frequented by the target demographics. The business owner/property owner focus group was hosted at the East Lansing Public Library to provide the business owners and property owners with a familiar community venue that promotes connection to the City of East Lansing.

Location & Time

Community Engagement Meeting
East Lansing Public Library
Friday, February 13th, 2026
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Community Engagement Meeting
Clubhouse of Cedar Village Apartments
Tuesday, February 17th, 2026
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

Community Engagement Meeting
Martin Luther Chapel
Friday, February 20th, 2026
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

Property Owner / Business Owner Focus Group
East Lansing Public Library
Saturday, February 21st, 2026
2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

In addition to selecting different meeting locations, the community meetings were held at varying times during the week to give participants the greatest possible opportunity to attend. Times were selected to allow for participation across the varying demographics, taking into consideration the different times of day that participants would have work, school, and personal responsibilities.

Once locations and times for the meetings were selected, the next step was to circulate outreach materials to announce the initiative to the community. An outreach flyer that listed the times for the meetings and included a QR code to an online survey was distributed electronically on social media apps and websites, through email to a list of contacts that were provided by the client, Landon Bartley, and physically to East Lansing businesses and locations on MSU campus. In addition, collaboration with institutional bodies such as the MSU School of Planning, Design, and Construction and the City of East Lansing allowed the outreach flyer to reach more people.

Process & Activities

During the meetings, attendees were given handouts that introduced the project and provided instructions for the community engagement activities on arrival. A questionnaire was coupled with the handout, acting as means for attendees to provide detailed and thorough qualitative feedback, giving them more options than the sticky note activity.

Methodology

Our sign-in sheet had questions which helped us collect data on the various demographics of people that attended the community engagement events. These were the questions attached to the sign-in sheet:

- Are you a MSU student?
- Do you live in the East Village District?
- Do you live in East Lansing?
- Are you a renter or a property owner?

These questions helped to keep track of the different representation of people that attended our events, which can help inform how varying demographics influence our data collection. **A QR code of the East Village survey** was posted at the community events, to encourage attendees who did not want to participate in the activities a chance to interact with this project using a different method. Questions on the survey focused on **mobility preferences, land-use options, development types, and housing**, with all questions connecting back to the emerging themes. This allowed for attendees to interact with this project in multiple formats, filling out the East Village questionnaire, participating in the charrette based modeled activities, and interacting in informal conversations with group members. The activities for the community meetings included gathering **qualitative feedback** by providing **post-it notes** to participate in a **sticky note activity**, allowing attendees to write down answers to questions that connected to our emerging themes. **Dot stickers** were provided to allow attendees to participate in **visual preference voting**, which was conducted using four trifold poster boards that had various renderings and photographs (Fig 2b). These visualizations showed different types of development, **such as mixed use housing, non-mixed-use housing, commercial corridors with no corridors with no housing, riverfront**

development and townhomes. This activity captured community feedback about what type of **land-use, height, and density** they want to see in the East Village District. Informal conversations with attendees during the events helped to gather qualitative data about the **historical context** of the East Village district, lived experience of East Village residents and directed how we **reframed housing availability** issues to housing affordability. Food was provided to encourage attendance and promote a welcoming environment that would encourage conversations between attendees and the Red Cedar Squad group members.



Figure 2-b: Trifold poster boards used for visual preferencing voting activity using dot sticker during Community Engagement Event at the East Lansing Public Library on 13th February, 2026.

Methodology

Informal Intercept Interviews

Finally, in order to fill in gaps left during **Phase 1 data collection**, the team conducted several informal **intercept interviews** with the specific purpose of gathering student perceptions of the **nightlife in East Village**. Interviews were conducted on two separate evenings. **On Thursday, February 19, 2026 (9:30 pm - 10:45 pm)**, one researcher from the Red Cedar Squad interviewed students waiting in lines at the bars in downtown East Lansing. Although these interviews took place outside the study area, they were useful for **building an understanding** of how most students travelled to get to the **nightlife amenities** and from which neighborhoods they came. Another researcher conducted informal interviews along Grand River Avenue within the study area on **Friday, February 20, 2026 (9:00 pm - 9:40 pm)**. Between the two evenings, ten student groups were interviewed (**29 total students**). The interviews focused on nightlife and included questions such as:

- What **form of transportation** do you use to get to the bars in downtown **East Lansing**?
- Are you satisfied with the **transportation options available** for getting to downtown **East Lansing**?
- If there were bars in the **East Village neighborhood**, would you go to them?

Data Analysis Techniques

Data was collected and analyzed to synthesize findings from the East Village Conversations survey questions, qualitative feedback, and quantitative data. A mixed methods approach was used to collect data from an online survey, community engagement and focus group meetings, and visual preference voting using dot stickers. In addition to the qualitative feedback from the community engagement and online survey, informal intercept interviews were analyzed to understand mobility patterns and nightlife preferences. This analysis process was designed to identify patterns, uncover divergence, and reinforce emerging themes from Phase 1 & 2.

A thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative responses from the sticky note activity, detailed questionnaire, feedback from focus groups and informal conversations, and intercept interviews. Analysis strengthened our categorization of findings that were uncovered during the community engagement activities, which includes:

- **Transportation modality and pedestrian safety connecting to weak infrastructure.**
- **Shifting from housing availability to housing affordability connects to the dichotomy of student housing capacity gap.**
- **Increasing the access to varying types of business that strengthen economic vitality, connecting back to an underperforming public realm.**

Methodology

Team members collectively analyzed the qualitative data through discussion, finding patterns and connecting them back to our project direction and emerging themes. Individual interpretation was completed by group members, after our collective conversations led to the discovery of patterns and reframing of student housing capacity. A pie graph was created to show qualitative data that was produced by the online survey regarding amenities, business and gathering spaces that were requested for the East Village district. The qualitative summaries and graphs were created to show how data was spread across all three emerging themes.

Quantitative data gathered from the dot sticker voting during the visual preferencing activity was analyzed by tabulating the total number of votes per visualization. The percentages of responses were then figured by the total number of votes, the total number of possible votes when multiplied by the total number of choices and the total number of voting categories available based on the various development types. (Fig 2-c)

- **High Rise**
- **Mid Rise**
- **Low Rise**
- **Mixed-Use**
- **Non-Mixed Use**

These visual renderings and photographs were selected because they covered a variety of different developments that could serve to strengthen the East Village District. Lastly, triangulation occurred to strengthen the reliability of the findings by identifying where patterns within the feedback and quantitative data emerged. Analysis of the connections between the online survey, community engagement events/focus groups, in-person voting activities, and intercept interview findings help to uncover important community priorities that can inform the next steps towards Phase 4 concept plan and strategic framework.

Phase 3 - Community Engagement

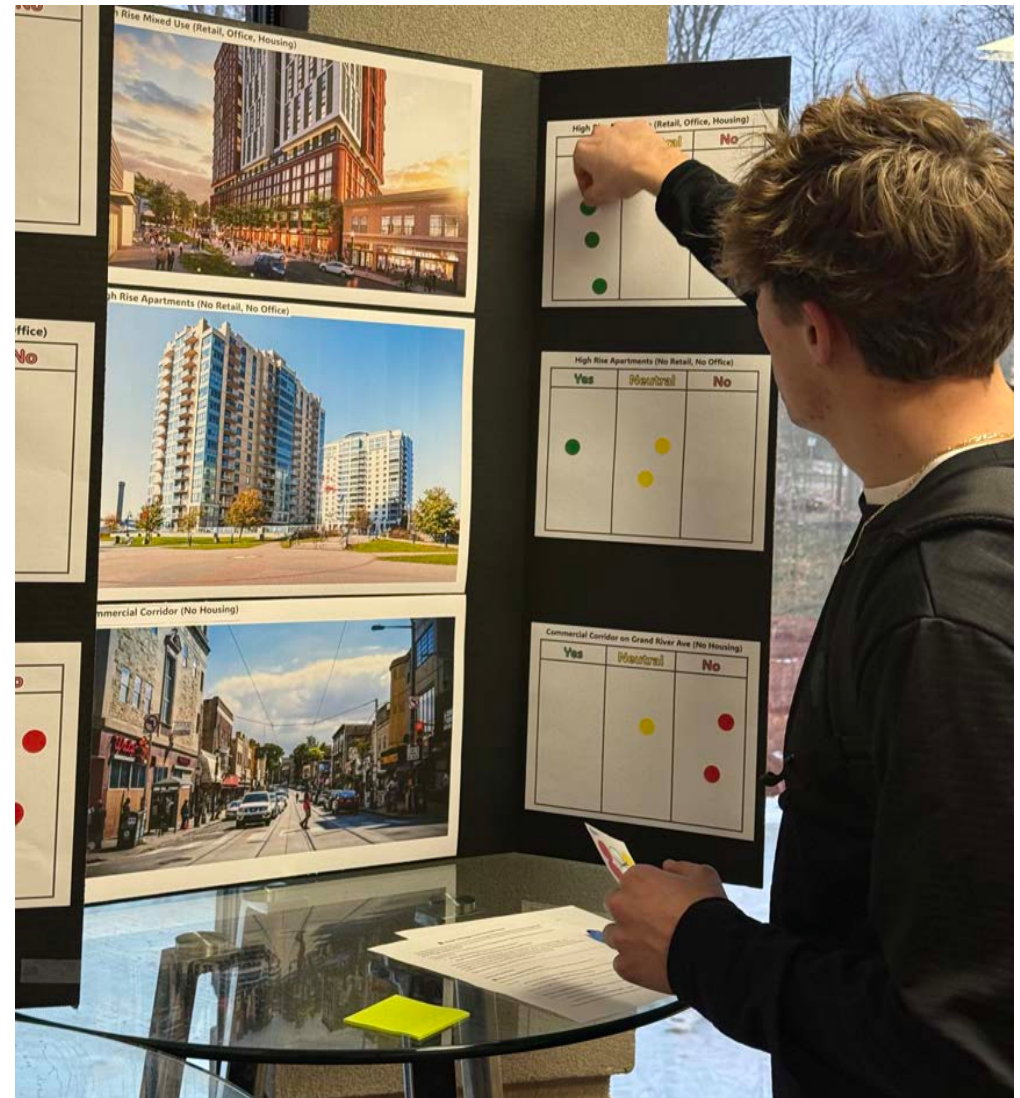


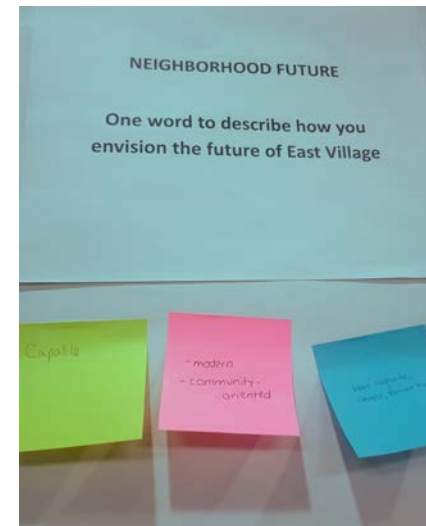
Figure 2-c: Attendee voting using dot stickers in the visual preferencing activity during the Community Engagement Event at Cedar Village Apartments on 17th February, 2026.

Methodology

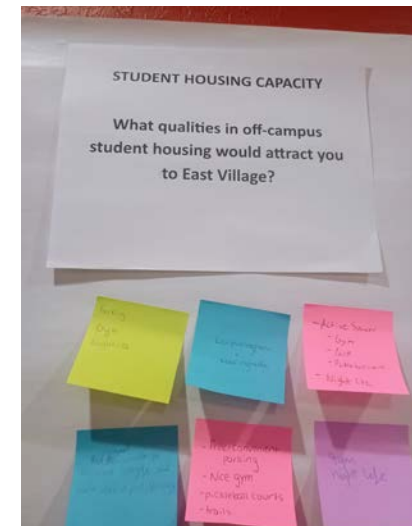
Limitations and Validity Considerations

Phase 3 limitations include self-reporting bias, overrepresentation of student voices, underrepresentation of non-student East Lansing residents and property/business owners voices, and the small sample size in both community engagement events and survey responses limits the generalizability of findings. With the overrepresentation of students, voting results that favored mixed-use land-use types and higher density could be influenced by the HUB and its association with creating more student housing in the East Village district (Figure d-g).

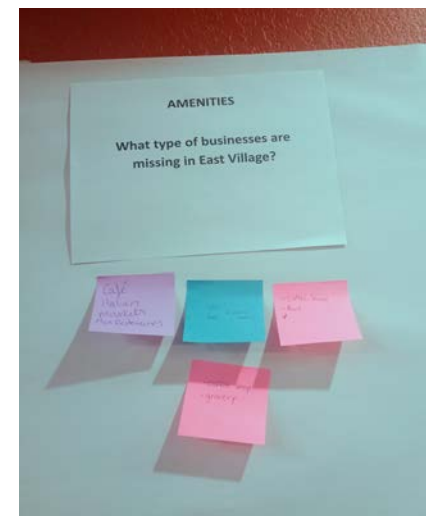
There are concerns about validity of the visual preferencing results due to the chance that participants could have voted on pictures that they believed were visually appealing and not on the factors that we were trying to capture, such as land-use type, height and density. Direct questions were placed next with the renderings and photographs such as, 'Would you like to see low rise mixed-use development in the East Village district?', to mitigate any voting that was strictly the result of preference of aesthetics. That could lower the chance that participants voted based on their preference to the picture aesthetically but there is still a chance that results were impacted by this factor. The questions that were used to gather qualitative feedback were designed to capture data that could be categorized in the three emerging themes from Phase 1, yet these questions may have been too deductive compared to inductive and lead the participants to provide answers that they believe the researchers were looking for. This limits the critical analysis that attendees could have given to our project and what they really want to see in the area, since they would be influenced by the previous responses that were present on the chart paper and the wording of the questions.



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f



g

Figure 2 d-g: Examples of Questions asked on our Boards for feedback

Underperforming Public Realms Findings

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03

Underperforming Public Realms Findings

Connection to Previous Phases

During Phases 1 and 2, a disconnect between the design and the public's lived experience was identified. During Phase Three, the team received additional feedback about underperforming spaces from residents and business owners throughout the East Village and surrounding area. As previously stated in Phase Two, Grand River corridor consists primarily of two zoning districts and functions as the primary commercial sector within the East Village neighborhood. Through multiple public outreach events, the Red Cedar Squad was able to engage directly with the community; meetings with students and business owners allowed the team to effectively assess existing amenities and better understand student identities within East Village. Evaluating existing and possible amenities provided insight into what residents and business owners believe could be incorporated into the area, while examining student identity and sense of belonging helped ensure the project remains student-oriented.

Feedback Highlights: Amenities and Nightlife

During our series of community events, several amenities consistently emerged in participant feedback. The most frequently requested amenity was an **inexpensive and reliable grocery store**. Another leading request was the development of a third space, such as a park, which many participants identified as highly desirable. There were a few other common suggestions, including a gym that would include a variety of studio spaces and be open to the public rather than affiliated with a single organization. The establishment of more coffee shops in the area was also discussed

As our community outreach continued, fewer new amenities were introduced, as many attendees reiterated priorities identified in earlier sessions. The most consistent request remained the introduction of additional open spaces, particularly for outdoor-based sports and recreation. Incorporating these recommendations of amenities into the redevelopment will help keep the area functional and cohesive with the community values. Overall, these events provided key student insight into the community's perspective on the potential redevelopment and new amenities in the area. In addition to our daytime and weekend community meetings, we also conducted multiple rounds of casual intercept interviews during the evening to gain a better understanding of current nightlife amenities and what the addition of bars and other late-night activities could do for East Village. When discussing the potential for nightlife in East Village, residents across the spectrum (on-campus students, off-campus students, non-student residents) said they would go out in East Village if there were more bars and nightlife present, some of the primary reasons being proximity to where they live or having friends nearby.

When discussing the potential for nightlife in East Village, residents across the spectrum (on-campus students, off-campus students, non-student residents) said they would go out in East Village if there were more bars and nightlife present, some of the primary reasons being proximity to where they live or having friends nearby. Community members also shared that increased bus service, including late-night service, would benefit both existing and future downtown areas. While the effects of bars in **East Village on noise, traffic, and business** would have to be further studied, our data clearly reflects that East Lansing residents want more nightlife options outside of those offered in the existing downtown district.

Underperforming Public Realms Findings

Zoning Callback

With these key student and resident insights about amenities in mind, we can use our zoning data from Phase 2 to better understand the gaps in the commercial corridor as well as others. The Grand River Corridor is entirely zoned B2, a broad commercial zone, and EV, a form-based zoning district developed in 2007 to support mixed-use development.

The data we received from our community engagement meetings tells us that the most desired amenities are grocery stores, gyms, creative spaces, and restaurants. These are all allowable uses under B2; however, other challenges can affect the realistic use, such as parcel size or minimum off-street parking requirements. Moreover, over 60% percent of people that attended our community events supported redevelopment options that include medium mixed-use development, which is possible in parcels zoned B2, and heavily encouraged in parcels zoned EV.

Implications

Our community engagement meetings helped guide us through what amenities and services East Village and East Lansing residents are missing in the East Village area. With a grocery store, a gym, and a park requested frequently, and a zoning ordinance that allows such uses, we can now move forward to find solutions to bring these crucial amenities to the East Village area. With a grocery store, a gym, and a park requested frequently, and a zoning ordinance that allows such uses, we can now move forward to find solutions to bring these crucial amenities to the East Village area.



Figure 3-a: Attendees providing qualitative feedback in the sticky note activity during the Community Engagement Event at Martin Luther Chapel on 20th February, 2026.

Housing Findings

PHASE 3

04

Housing Findings

Connection to Previous Phases

In Phases 1 and 2, we identified three emerging themes, with the third being a housing capacity gap. This theme guided us through our Phase 3 community engagement by driving questions asked of participants in order to gain a community perspective. Specifically, by asking students and community members the type of housing development desired, what their perceptions of the housing market are, and what attractive qualities could draw them to the area. By proposing these questions, we aimed to gain a comprehensive idea of community identity and challenges faced in the housing market. For various prompts we employed qualitative, open answer questions, while others aimed to gather quantitative data, with answers only including “Yes”, “No”, or “Maybe” (Figure 4-a). Utilizing both methods of data collection provided a large and well-balanced scope of understanding. Through the community meetings and survey conducted with the guidelines of previous phases, we identified many strengths and opportunities for the East Village area as indicated by community stakeholders.

Examples of qualitative questions include:

- What is more important, availability of housing OR affordability of housing?
- What qualities in off-campus student housing would attract you to East Village?
- Should East Village prioritize purpose-built student housing? (Yes/No)

Examples of quantitative questions voted upon include:

- Low Rise Apartments
- High Rise Apartments
- Low Rise Mixed Use
- High Rise Mixed Use
- Commercial Corridor



Figure 4-a: Voting Boards with Example Photos from Community Meeting.

Feedback Highlights: Voting

In examining the quantitative data feedback from all three meetings, we can identify the development types with the highest and lowest interest levels, giving an idea of what the community may want to see. For this, we used sticky dot voting, which prompted the respondent with a written development type and a corresponding picture. These prompts focused on potential future housing, mixed use or commercial developments, and aimed to gauge interest levels from community members. Of the development types, the “Riverfront Mixed Use Development” had the highest rate of positive engagement at 82% of respondents. This was closely followed by the other highest positive engagement, “High Rise Mixed-Use (Retail, Office, Housing)” and “Mid Rise Mixed-

Housing Findings

Use (Retail, Office, Housing)” and “Mid Rise Mixed-Use (Retail, Office, Housing)” both having 73% of respondents voting “Yes” . Conversely, “Row Housing/Narrow Townhouses” had the most negative engagement with 64% answering “No”, followed by “Commercial Corridor (No Housing)” with half of the responses against the development type. These results suggest that community members prefer mixed use development, are generally neutral to positive on mid and high rise apartments, and do not prefer row housing or utilizing the space as a commercial corridor.

Additionally, in the online survey the team conducted, similar sentiments were shared among respondents with minor differences in form preferences. Responses supported a mix of housing types, including, duplexes, triplexes, multiplexes, high and low rise apartments, with several responses interested in mixed-use development. When asked specifically about mixed use development in the area, 70% of respondents either fully supported or somewhat supported the development type. However, a difference between the data collection types was the survey respondents increased interest in townhomes/rowhomes. Overall, these survey responses indicate a strong preference for higher-density housing, particularly mid-rise and high-rise developments. Both the in person data collection at meetings and the online survey reflect a community looking for denser housing that is closely connected to surrounding spaces.

Feedback Highlights: Written and Spoken Response

Upon reviewing participants’ open-ended responses to the written prompts (Figure 4-b), a few central concerns and values within East Village were identified. These include the **affordability** and **availability** of housing, and **accessibility** to services and amenities surrounding said housing. This is evident when looking at the responses to the prompt-

“What is more important-availability of housing OR affordability of housing?”

“Affordability”

Of the 8 responses, 62% of the participants indicated that affordability is more important, while the other 38% placed more importance on availability.



Figure 4-b: MSU student responding to chart paper questions at community engagement meeting on February 13th, 2026

Housing Findings

Furthermore, when the question *“What qualities in off-campus student housing would attract you to East Village?”* was asked, numerous responses indicated that affordability would be the most attractive quality for housing in the East Village. This highlights a perception of a need for affordable housing, while also addressing availability within the area.

Additionally, other responses to *“What qualities in off-campus student housing would attract you to East Village?”* revealed the need for **accessibility to amenities** and **services** within or surrounding housing in the East Village. Common responses to this prompt highlighted a demand for access to **fitness centers, green spaces, nightlife**, and **a general connectivity** to the surrounding spaces and area.

At community meetings, engagement goes further than written responses and feedback collected; it extends to meaningful conversations with attendees. In these conversations, through all three general public meetings and the business owner focus group, we collected highly useful opinions, advice, and general themes that provided critical insight. Students and community members in attendance spoke to increasing rent prices, concerns over a housing market that must accommodate a rising MSU admittance rate, and a lack of community spaces near housing. These findings go hand in hand with those of the written and voting portions of the meetings, and data collected in Phases 1 and 2, creating a clear picture of the opportunities and strengths that community members in East Village identified.

From the business and property owner perspective, we came to understand that while these entities aim to better their communities, they must consider their own wellbeing and prosperity.

These entities stressed implications of new developments affecting their livelihoods and businesses. For example, a mid-rise apartment complex owner in the study area expressed concern over new housing developments in East Village, as it would raise housing costs even further, and take away from their affordable housing. Another business owner suggested that if there was any new development (housing or not), it should take place south of Grand River Avenue rather than affecting the single family homes of the Bailey neighborhood. Finally, a well known fraternity, FarmHouse, in East Village is hesitant to accept any new housing development, but is open to creative solutions to meet everyone's needs. Generally, property and business owners feel that any new housing or mixed use development must be done with the consideration of existing commercial and housing developments.

Collectively, these responses suggest that stakeholders perceive weaknesses in both the affordability and availability of housing in East Village, and express desire for comprehensive access to amenities and services.

Implications

Through the team's 4 total community engagement meetings, we gained insights from a diverse pool of stakeholders, providing ample feedback on housing and development conditions within the community. Community members and students indicated interest in more availability in affordable mixed use housing options and greater access to public transportation, green spaces, amenities (such as fitness centers), and nightlife establishments from their housing. However, some property and business owners feel concerned about new developments in East Village, while others are willing to work with the city to come to creative solutions so that the needs of all parties are met. As the team moves into recommendations for East Village, these findings will drive the proposed action.

Infrastructure Findings

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05

Infrastructure Findings

Connection to Previous Phases

The infrastructure themes identified in previous phases continue to come through in our recent engagement efforts. In Phase 1, we identified that the area prioritizes **car traffic over alternative transportation methods**, and that accessibility, maintenance, and bike infrastructure are lacking throughout. In Phase 2, we found that previous planning efforts identified **significant support for improved bike infrastructure and public transportation** and that, while crash statistics suggest that existing safety levels are relatively high, there is still a prominent perception that moving through the area is not safe. In Phase 3, we sought to investigate infrastructure perceptions further by asking engagement participants to answer questions about public transit, walking, and biking in East Village. The data collected during Phase 3 reiterated the perception that East Village is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate.

Through the three public engagement events, as well as a meeting open to property and business owners in the area, our findings back up those previously compiled.

Key Infrastructure Findings

During a focus group meeting open to **business and property owners** in the East Village area, two individuals attended and represented the views of **Farmhouse Fraternity**. This meeting did not focus much time on **infrastructure themes**, but the participants did express **support for bike lanes**. When asked whether they would support the extension or addition of bus lines throughout East Village, however, the Farmhouse representatives commented that such expansions would likely not be possible **due to the narrow roads and street-parking** that exists in the East Village neighborhoods.

During our first open-house meeting for anyone interested, twelve participants attended. Five of them were **students**, and two of them **owned property** in the focus area. There was support for **increased bike and pedestrian infrastructure, buses, and improved maintenance** of that already existing, especially snow and ice clearing in the winter (Figure 5-a). Some specific suggestions from this session included **improved bus shelters with seating, separated bike and pedestrian paths or lanes, and new crosswalks** with traffic stops or rapidly **flashing beams to stop traffic**.

During another open-house meeting, six **residents and non-property owners** of the East Village focus area attended. This session once again found **support for more buses, bike and pedestrian trails, and improved maintenance**. Some other specific concerns were a lack of understanding of existing transit systems and overcrowded sidewalks.



Figure 5-a: Sticky note activity for East Village Conversations at Cedar Village Apartments on February 17th, 2026

Infrastructure Findings

During our final open-house meeting four attendees were present, including one student, but no property owners or East Village residents. One memorable exchange came from an elderly attendee who emphasized the importance of reliable bus routes, noting that cars can be unpredictable and that transit often serves as a critical backup. There was clear support for adding a north–south bus route as well as improving sidewalks and trails to create safer, more continuous walking connections. Ideas also extended beyond basic mobility: one person suggested a pedestrian bridge linking directly to campus, while another highlighted the value of maintaining access to natural areas as part of the neighborhood experience. At the same time, two attendees expressed concern about insufficient parking, reflecting ongoing tension between expanding multimodal options and meeting current car-use expectations.



Figure 5-b: Ben H. conversing with a MSU student about infrastructure during Community Engagement Meeting at East Lansing Public Library on February 13, 2026

“Bike lanes are not as plentiful as necessary”-community participant

Implications

The most consistent theme from all of these events was **support for more biking and walking infrastructure**, whether that be on sidewalks, trails, or bike lanes. There was also **consistent support for improved public transportation** in both the form of more routes or buses and better accessibility to those existing. The infrastructure implications from this phase reflect those of previous phases. East Village’s infrastructure should be better maintained, and alternative transportation of all kinds should be improved, especially in the South and Grand River Corridor zones of the project area. Improving this infrastructure will help reduce perceptions of danger in local transportation and ideally improve alternative transportation utilization, contributing to East Lansing’s

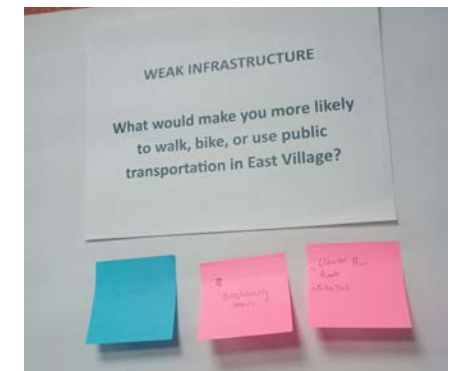
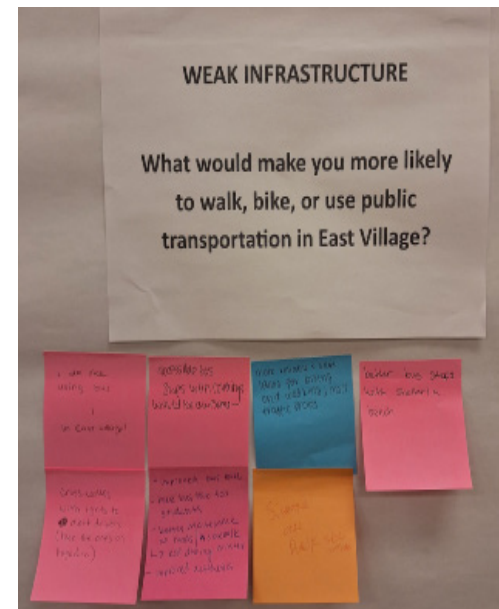


Figure 5-c, d: Example of question for Weak Infrastructure theme and qualitative feedback written on post-it notes during the Community Engagement Event at the East Lansing Public Library.

Property Owner Engagement Outcomes

PHASE 3

06

Property Owner Engagement Outcomes

Property Owners as Key Stakeholders

One of the stakeholder groups that holds the greatest influence over how a neighborhood changes and redevelops is property owners. Property owners are directly affected by changes in local zoning regulations, increasing or decreasing levels of investment in their communities, and demographic shifts. Property owners themselves are often also a catalyst of these changes. Because of how deeply property owners are connected with the communities in which they live, they were identified as key stakeholders deserving of a dedicated focus group (Figure 6-a) during which the team could gather detailed information about their lived experiences owning property in (or near) the East Village. Although only two property owners were able to attend the focus group held on February 21, 2026, the team made a point of speaking at length with the property owners who came to the general community engagement meetings. This section describes the results of these conversations, focusing on two recurring themes from property owner feedback: cost and agency.

Costs

The first and most evident recurring theme garnered from the property owner feedback (Figure 6-b) was concern regarding the cost of redevelopment. According to a local realtor, changes in federal administration have caused construction costs to skyrocket in the last couple of years (namely because of international tariffs and manufacturing labor cuts). Development costs are already higher for properties that are located in a floodplain, which impacts many of the properties near the southern border of the study area. One business owner explained that while her company has made use of East Lansing's Tax Increment Financing (TIF) offerings in the past, she did not believe it would be able to provide enough financial aid to make any future project in the area worthwhile.

*“The floodplain makes riverfront development really expensive”
- Property owner*



Figure 6-a: Conversations with East Village property owners during the Focus Group held at the East Lansing Public Library on February 21, 2026.

Additionally, two property owners were adamant that the City would be unable to supply them with any meaningful subsidies, stating that “East Lansing is broke” and that it had no subsidies to lend. Comments like these drive indicate that some property owners do not believe that the City will be able to help reduce the cost of new development in the East Village.

During our February 21st property owner focus group, we were fortunate enough to speak with two owners of FarmHouse fraternity. While they held some of the same skepticisms as other property owners, they also offered some interesting potential financial solutions for the local land owners.

Property Owner Engagement Outcomes

Their first suggestion was that they could ask MSU for financial assistance similar to what was done with The Hub. According to the FarmHouse representatives, during the infancy of The Hub project, the developers behind the project were able to receive some funding from MSU, seemingly due to the University's desperate need for more student housing. If redevelopment in the East Village area was advertised as creating mass amounts of student housing (which it could undoubtedly do), then the local developers and/or property owners may be able to work with Michigan State University to make a project in the area a reality. Another solution they were very passionate about was specifically geared towards redeveloping the frat houses on Bogue. The two land owners suggested building something similar to The Hub (but perhaps not as tall), with plenty of amenities and ground floor businesses, but with a portion of it sectioned off as the designated frat. For this idea, they repeatedly referenced a nearly identical project that was recently completed at Colorado State. They were quite adamant that, upon completion, a project like this could potentially "pay for itself." The reason that the FarmHouse representatives were so personally invested in this idea, apart from the financial benefits, was that they believed a denser, mixed-use apartment complex with amenities would attract more student members to join their fraternity.

Agency

A second theme that emerged during engagement with East Village property owners was a general concern about whether landowners would be able to retain their agency - their ability to make independent decisions - if redevelopment were to occur. Property owners shared the general sentiment that while it is good for the City of East Lansing to gauge the community's interest in redevelopment, it is ultimately the decision of the property owners how and whether this redevelopment should occur.

At the property owner focus group meeting, for instance, the two representatives from the FarmHouse Fraternity expressed support for the development of a new Master Plan for the East Village, so long as it is properly treated as a vision, not as a strict blueprint. The fact that the property owners felt the need to qualify their support for a new redevelopment plan is indicative of a wariness of the City's intentions and motives.



Figure 6-b: Conversations with East Lansing property owners at a Community Engagement Meeting held at the East Lansing Public Library on February 13, 2026

Several other property owners expressed skepticism that the City truly wants to collaborate with them on developing a plan for the area rather than imposing its own plans. Understanding why many East Village property owners are somewhat vigilant requires some historical context. Concern that by promoting redevelopment efforts, the City may either intentionally or inadvertently strip property owners of their rights seems to stem in part from the

Property Owner Engagement Outcomes

City of East Lansing's brush with eminent domain nearly two decades ago. In 2005, the Supreme Court of the United States decided the controversial eminent domain case *Kelo v. City of New London*. The decision upheld the City of New London's taking of private property for transfer to a private developer. The Court endorsed the City's position that the public purpose justifying the taking was economic development (*Kelo v. City of New London*, 2005). Although *Kelo* set the federal baseline, the decision left the states free to set greater restrictions on the government's right to take property. The State of Michigan took the opportunity to adopt a constitutional amendment in December 2006, in part to specify that "public use does not include the taking of private property for transfer to a private entity for the purpose of economic development or enhancement of tax revenues" (Mich. Const. art. X, § 2). What this means for Michigan municipalities is that takings may no longer be justified on economic development alone, such as for increasing municipal tax revenue or job creation. Instead, if a municipality wishes to invoke its eminent domain power, it must do so on other grounds.

The City of East Lansing considered the use of eminent domain to complete its City Center II project shortly after the constitutional amendment was passed. Presumably in preparation for the possible exercise of eminent domain, the City blighted* property in downtown East Lansing. Although the City Center II project was never completed (and the City never followed through with the taking) (Wittrock, 2012), the matter seems to have severely, albeit not irreparably, damaged the City's relationship with property owners. Nearly every property owner that the team met with mentioned this era of the City's history in a negative light. Although it has been nearly 20 years, the events evidently shaped the East Village property owners' relationship with the City.

Another significant event that influenced the relationship between the City of East Lansing and the East Village property owners was the 1999 basketball riot. On March 27, 1999, the Michigan State men's basketball team was eliminated from the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament in a close loss to Duke. Upset fans flooded the streets of East Lansing after the game, and violence quickly erupted. The epicenter, as described in the March 28 issue of the *Lansing State Journal*, was the Cedar Village apartment complex, located within the East Village. Much of the night's conflict, which resulted in tear gas deployment, arrests, and the destruction of a DeWitt Township police vehicle, happened outside of these apartments or on adjacent Bogue Street (Schultz, 1999). Many of the property owners mentioned these events during the community engagement meetings and remember it as a significant stain on the community that persists to this day. Any future development proposals will need to consider this history in order to minimize conflict between students, the city and property owners.

*Note that eminent domain that is exercised for the purpose of clearing blight places a higher burden of proof (clear and convincing) on the municipality to demonstrate that the taking is for a public purpose than is required (preponderance of the evidence) for other public use takings (Mich. Const. art. X, § 2).

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE INFORMATION ON EMINENT DOMAIN IN EAST LANSING AND THE CITY CENTER II PROJECT WAS INFERRED FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH PROPERTY OWNERS. THE ACCURACY SHOULD BE VERIFIED WITH THE CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT OR THE CITY ATTORNEY. .

Property Owner Engagement Outcomes

Implications

Conversations with property owners during community engagement meetings uncovered two key concerns: cost and agency. In any redevelopment efforts it makes, the City must be sure to factor in these concerns. The City has already begun the process of mitigating agency-related fears by working with the Red Cedar Squad to set up community engagement meetings for this very study. At each meeting, property owners and residents were given the opportunity to voice their opinions and participate in conversations, a demonstration of the City's goodwill and effort to include the public in the planning process.

As the City continues to contemplate development and investment in East Village, it is essential that it also continues involving property owners in any master plan updates, zoning changes, or investment strategies that it chooses to implement. Discussions with property owners also revealed steps that the City may take to alleviate concern over redevelopment cost. One option may be to partner with MSU for the construction of private student housing. Another may be to provide greater amounts of TIF funding for property owners who are redeveloping their properties. Regardless of how the City chooses to approach development in the East Village, it is clear that property owners must remain part of the conversation.

Works Cited:

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Figure 6-c: Participants doing different engagement activities at a community engagement meeting held at the East Lansing Public Library on February 13, 2026

Summary & Implications

PHASE 3

07

Summary

Conducting a thorough community outreach program provided the project with valuable context, and insight into how East Lansing views both the current state and future growth of the East Village neighborhood. Additionally, the community feedback strengthened conclusions reached based on analysis conducted in Phases 1 and 2.

Underperforming Public Realm

One of the most frequent topics of conversation among community members was the **lack of public amenities** within the East Village. First identified in Phase 1, the lack of access to inexpensive groceries, public parks, and desirable retail establishments were all reflected in community feedback, especially with MSU students and current East Village residents. Additionally, in Phase Two, we found that the current zoning code would allow for many of these amenities to be built and operated in the area. Throughout the community meetings, a consistent desire for higher quality retail uses was prevalent among residents and MSU students. Improving public access to quality amenities within the East Village would transform the neighborhood and make it a **more appealing place to live, work and spend time** for current and future residents.

Housing

One of the most appealing qualities of the current East Village area is the **access to affordable housing**. In the community engagement meetings, conversations regarding housing often touched on **two aspects: affordability and availability**. It was determined that despite both being valuable, more respondents were concerned whether housing in the area was affordable or not. Housing affordability needs to be prioritized in any future redevelopment of the East Village, as that will ensure more people will be able to live in and enjoy the neighborhood. Overall, **medium- and higher-density mixed-use development** proved to be popular among respondents of the sticky-dot survey at engagement meetings.

Contrasted to this, the primary viewpoint among business and property owners in the East Village was one of apprehension to **major new development in the area**. Many respondents in this category want to **protect their own interests in the community**, so they are hesitant to support a complete redevelopment. In order for the project to be successful going forward, both of these points of view must be considered.

Weak Infrastructure

Among those surveyed, most major infrastructure improvement requests centered on **transportation**. Many people using the sticky note activity at the outreach meetings said that **more crosswalks, bike lanes and trails, safer walking paths, and better access to bus transit** options would make the East Village more **appealing and enjoyable**. In terms of bus access, respondents supported both the creation of new routes serving the area and the realignment of existing routes to better serve the East Village, but also an increased service pattern on routes that already serve the neighborhood. A similar pattern was found regarding **bicycle infrastructure**, with most people supporting further development of **bike lanes and trails**. Across the outreach meetings, many residents and stakeholders shared their beliefs that the current infrastructure in the East Village is lacking in both **safety and convenience**. Residents also believed that improvements to the infrastructure quality in the area would significantly improve quality of life for community members, which is an important aspect to consider in future phases of the project.

Summary

Conversations with Business and Property Owners

The history surrounding the relationship between property owners in the East Village and the city of East Lansing is both **long and complicated**. The two major themes found within this history are **cost and agency**. Many property owners interviewed during this phase expressed concerns **that increased residential development would drive housing costs in the area up, and ultimately hurt their businesses**.

The other theme, agency, was even more prevalent. With owners concerned that **future development could infringe upon their rights**, any future plan will need to consider all sides of the argument. For any new development to be successful, proper outreach and dialogue need to be conducted every step of the way.

The context and information gained in Phase Three is crucial to the success of this project. Many data points, such as housing demand and infrastructure complaints, not only reinforced observations and data collected in Phases 1 and 2 but also proved valuable in their own right. This community outreach, and the implications it carries, will help shape how future phases are conducted, how data is collected, and ultimately, what recommendations are made for the future of the East Village.

Reflection for Phase 3

Hosting multiple community engagement events and a focus group in partnership with the City of East Lansing Planning and Zoning department presented many **challenges and successes**. We were able to reach various targeted demographics with our concentrated effort to spread the engagement events throughout the East Lansing Community. MSU students were represented as

most attendees, reaching a population of East Lansing residents that are the focus for this project, understanding the community response to the vision of a student-centered district within East Village. The voices of property owners and non-student East Lansing residents and community members were present during the community meetings and focus groups, providing feedback about how long-term residents and key stakeholders will be impacted by redevelopment and future zoning plans. Both voices provided the project with a rounded and comprehensive understanding of what the community in East Lansing and East Village district are visioning for the future. Prioritizing community engagement activities throughout this project has been beneficial for the success of our engagement events during Phase 3.

Taking the time to **understand the importance of organizing spaces, figuring out times and dates, creating a list of materials and the processes of the community engagement events** was a crucial step in attracting people to give their **feedback and participation**.

An important part of this phase was understanding the **need to adapt to** what was **being found in the feedback**, as well as **adapting to the process** in which the activities are happening. For our engagement event at Cedar Village Apartments, we were unable to attract people to our event through outreach efforts (flyers, social media apps, emails, collaboration with Cedar Village Apartments management), so we had to **adapt to a more direct outreach** and approached students who were using the different amenities at the Cedar Village Apartments Clubhouse, such as the gym.

Summary

Our recruitment of these attendees to participate in the community engagement activities shows that adaptation to unforeseen circumstances is an important part of conducting community engagement. The history of the East Village district shocked the group members of Red Cedar Squad, since we were not aware of the **political and social context** that is involved in community engagement within this area of East Lansing. The property owner/business focus group presented challenges due to the timing and date of the event. Property owners were not available on Saturday and most of them wanted to pick their own date and time to meet with the Red Cedar Squad to provide feedback and learn more about the East Village project. Future efforts to reach property owners of the East Village district will continue after Phase 3, with informal conversations creating a way to collect data that can better inform how our **concepts, frameworks, and recommendations** in the next phases will be received by the property owners. Overall challenges presented opportunities to learn and grow, helping to reframe the conversation about housing to fit with the voice of the community, and provided the chance for our group to learn how to adapt and interpret qualitative data with a neutral lens. Successful participation at our community engagement events **solidified** our outreach practices as **valid and actionable**.

Phase 3 Executive Synthesis: Key Insights Informing Phase 4

Community engagement in Phase 3 reinforced and deepened findings from earlier analyses, revealing clear priorities that directly inform Phase 4 design decisions.

Amenity Gaps & Underperforming Public Realm: A consistent lack of everyday amenities particularly affordable grocery options, parks, and quality retail emerged as a major concern. Importantly, existing zoning already permits many of these uses, indicating that activation not regulation is the primary barrier.

Phase 4 Focus: Public realm activation and targeted amenity development.

Affordability-Centered Housing Demand: While both housing availability and supply were discussed, affordability clearly emerged as the dominant concern. At the same time, there is strong support for medium- to high-density mixed-use development, especially among students and residents.

Phase 4 Focus: Affordable, mixed-use housing strategies.

Infrastructure as a Foundation for Livability: Strong demand for safer multimodal infrastructure, including improved crosswalks, bike lanes, transit access, and winter maintenance—highlights infrastructure as a prerequisite for both quality of life and successful densification.

Phase 4 Focus: Multimodal connectivity and pedestrian-oriented design.

Stakeholder Tensions: Growth vs. Control: While residents support redevelopment, property owners expressed concerns about rising costs and loss of agency. This reveals a critical tension between redevelopment goals and stakeholder trust.

Phase 4 Focus: Flexible, stakeholder-sensitive implementation strategies.

Alignment with Earlier Phases: Phase 3 validates key findings from Phases 1 and 2, strengthening confidence in identified priorities and ensuring that future recommendations are both data-driven and community-informed.



Phase 4

Concept Plan Strategic Framework

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PHASE 4

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Introduction & Primary Objective

PHASE 4

01

Introduction

Quantitative and qualitative data analyses conducted during Phases 1 and 2 revealed essential information about infrastructure, housing, and the public experience in East Village. Although these analyses alone contextualized the study area and highlighted preliminary challenges, the data collection through phase 3 community engagement, provided crucial information on the lived experiences of residents, property owners, and students in East Village.

The identification of challenges, strengths, and opportunities is vital in itself, however, what is done with that information is what takes our project from solely data collection to actionable principles, themes, and goals.

The primary objective of Phase 4 is to compile all data collected and use it to develop guiding principles (Figure 1-a) that inform a concept plan and the proposal of strategic actions for the betterment of East Village.

To create this comprehensive plan, the emerging themes and findings of prior phases will be directly employed and referenced. Previously, the team identified 3 emerging themes that reflect the current conditions and perceptions of East Village, pulling from both qualitative and quantitative data sources. These themes have guided the progression of the project thus far, continuing to provide an important framework.

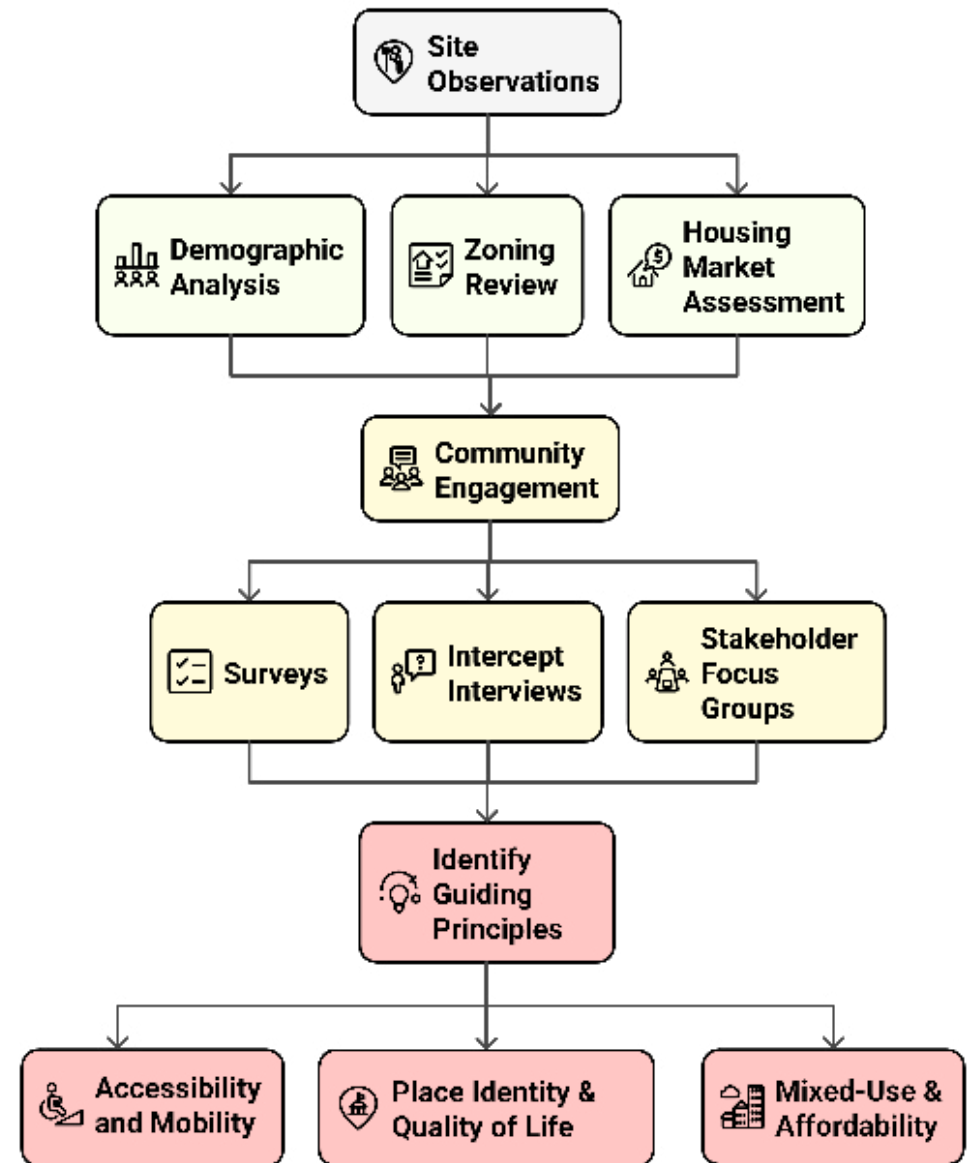


Figure 1-a: Process framework for identifying strategic priorities

The identified emerging themes are a **student housing capacity gap**, **weak infrastructure**, and an **under-performing public realm** (Figure 1-b). When looking to recommend further action for the East Village these are the focus areas.

Through phase 4's recommendation process, we aimed to address the following questions:

- What are the most prevalent, attainable challenges within each emerging theme?
- How does the team address challenges while meeting stakeholder needs?
- How does the team balance optimistic actions and reality?
- How can the city work with public functions, private businesses, and community stakeholders to create meaningful change?

By using these questions to guide the project, the team can more broadly address challenges and present opportunities and actions that aim to contribute to the growth of the East Village district.

The emerging themes identified in Phase 1, numerically confirmed in Phase 2, and the **public engagement process** of Phase 3 inform our concept plan and strategic framework recommendations of Phase 4.

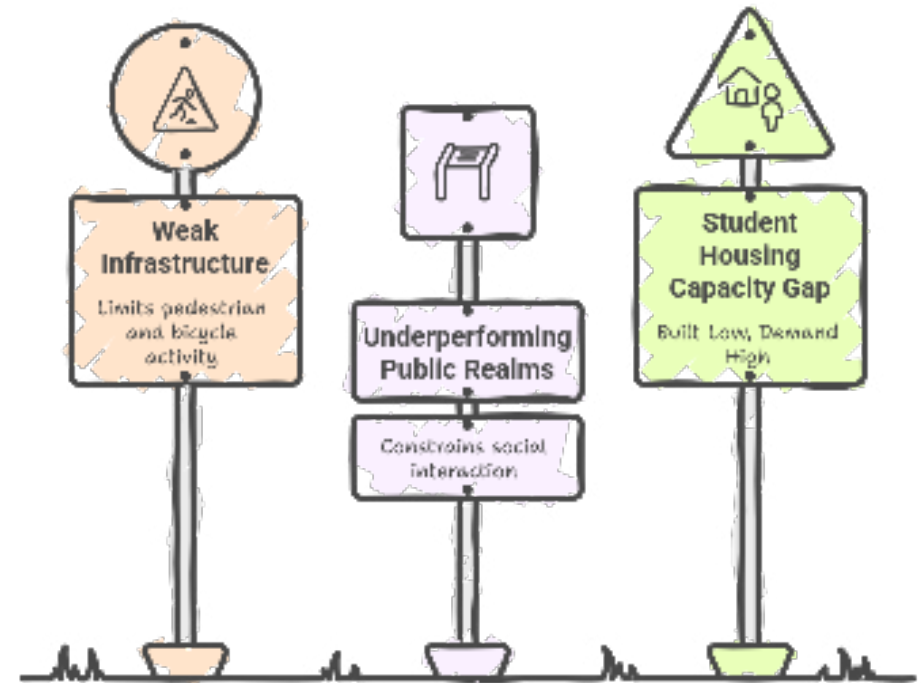


Figure 1-b: Emerging Themes: Weak Infrastructure, under-performing public realm, student housing capacity gap

Summary of Key Insights

PHASE 4

02

Key Insights From Prior Phases

Data collected during the last three phases will form the basis for recommendations made in this section. In Phase 1, the Red Cedar Squad (RCS) identified key qualitative characteristics about the area of study. In Phase 2, RCS collected quantitative data on the East Village and began to brainstorm community engagement strategies. In Phase 3, RCS hosted several community engagement events to develop an understanding of what the people of East Village deemed to be essential for the area to grow and develop. The concepts and strategies recommended in this phase of the report are derived from the data collected during the first three phases. Following is a summary of the relevant key findings and insights that emerged from each of the prior phases.

Phase 1 Insights

Phase 1 focused on understanding the goals of the client, the City of East Lansing, and collecting qualitative data for the desired area of study, the East Village. Two dominant findings from Phase 1 informed the recommendations in this section.

First, design of the East Village area is heavily car-centric. Second (and likely a consequence of car-centric design), certain public realm infrastructure, such as open space and pedestrian-friendly walkways, are lacking in the East Village. These Phase 1 findings suggest that the City should focus its efforts on finding ways to increase public space in the East Village and support walkability.

Phase 2 Insights

In Phase 2, RCS used quantitative data to explore the needs of the East Village. One key finding from Phase 2 was that multimodal activity is very limited in the area. Transit options that do exist are concentrated along the Grand River Corridor.

In Phase 2, RCS also noted that the East Village does not live up to its place-making potential, with many locals describing the neighborhood as bland or boring. At the end of Phase 2, RCS identified an imbalance of housing supply and demand in the area. RCS continued to gather data to prepare for Phase 3, aiming to confirm some of the findings that the area offered.

Phase 3 Insights

During Phase 3, RCS aimed to reach out to the community and build relationships with businesses, residential owners, and some of the more prominent developers in the area. After all the community outreach events that were hosted, several new findings arose that helped guide forward progress.

Many of the participants throughout the community agreed that the area would benefit from mixed-use development. However, participants also expressed that they value housing affordability, even more so than housing availability. Participants in the community engagement studies also indicated a strong desire for additional amenities in the East Village, such as gyms and grocery stores.

Key Insights From Prior Phases

Findings from the first three phases were distilled into three principles (Figure 2-a) which guided the Red Cedar Squad's concepts and recommendations for the East Village. Mobility, affordability, quality of life, and accessibility underpin these guiding principles. The first principle is to improve connectivity within the East Village, fostering a welcoming and accessible environment for all users. The goal is that a sense of welcomeness is instilled in those who live in the East Village as well as those who merely visit. The second principle is to strengthen community identity by revitalizing the commercial spaces and gathering places. The third and final guiding principle is to promote mixed-use development that enhances campus access while maintaining housing affordability. Development that adheres to these principles will create a thriving and vibrant neighborhood.

Guiding Principle 1	Guiding Principle 2	Guiding Principle 3
Accessibility & Mobility	Place Identity & Quality of Life	Mixed-Use & Affordability
<i>Improve connectivity within East Village to create a welcoming and accessible environment for all users.</i>	<i>Strengthen East Village's identity and livability through revitalized gathering and commercial spaces supported by public-private partnerships.</i>	<i>Promote mixed-use development that enhances campus access while maintaining housing affordability.</i>

Figure 2-a: Guiding principles informed by the dominant findings from Phases 1-3

Accessibility and Mobility

Problem: Lack of diverse transportation options.

Source of Problem:

1. Car-dependent infrastructure
2. Lacking pedestrian connections and bus routes (or any other transit) through the neighborhood

Possible Solutions:

1. Garner resident support for increased CATA funding millage to support increased transit
2. Rerouting of existing bus routes to go through the neighborhood.
3. Pedestrian bridge over the Red Cedar River connecting into East Campus.
4. River trail on the northern side of the Red Cedar River.

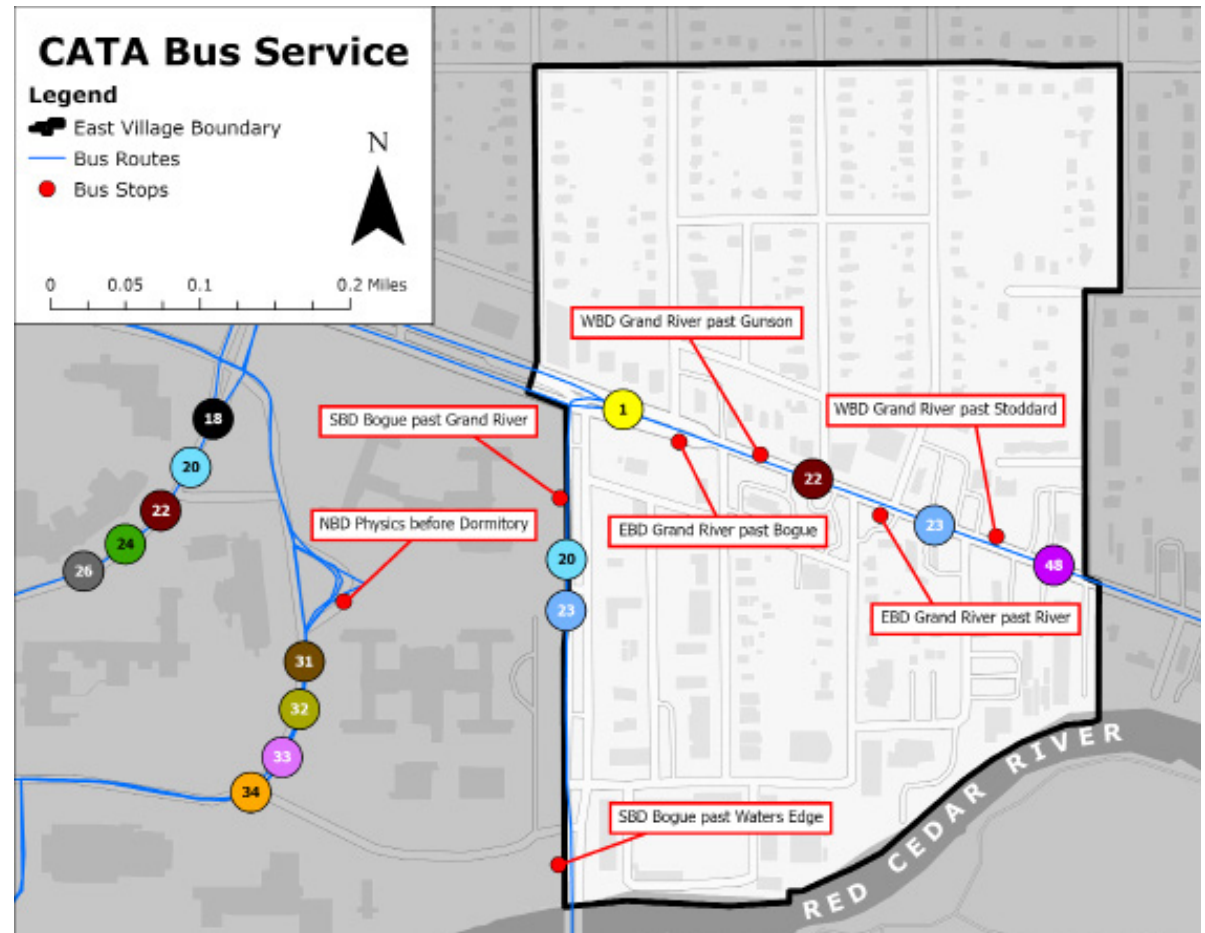


Figure 3-a: Map showing CATA Bus Service along Grand River Avenue, adjacent to East Village neighborhoods, displaying the disconnection of transit services East Village has compared to MSU's campus.

Challenges

One of the primary issues in the East Village is weak transportation infrastructure, largely driven by the current layout of the study area. The Grand River corridor is **heavily car-dependent**, creating an environment that **discourages walking and active transportation**. Fast-moving vehicles, often traveling up to 50 miles per hour, contribute to a streetscape that feels unsafe and uninviting for pedestrians. While pedestrian accidents in East Lansing are relatively limited, the perceived danger of walking near high-speed traffic is enough to deter residents from walking along Grand River Avenue. Additionally, transit access within the neighborhood is uneven (Figure 3-a).

Accessibility and Mobility

While CATA bus stops along Grand River provide regional connectivity, interior areas of East Village remain undeserved, reinforcing reliance on personal vehicles and limiting mobility options for residents.

Evidence

Survey data indicates that perceived safety is a major barrier to walking in car-oriented corridors. The design of Grand River Avenue, prioritizing vehicle throughput over pedestrian comfort, creates conditions that discourage foot traffic. A five-year **crash analysis (2019-2023) conducted by consulting firm Fleis & VandenBrink, LLC**, found **zero speed-related crashes** on specific neighborhood study segments. While the data shows that walking in East Lansing is pretty safe, survey responses show that perceived safety is a significant concern for residents. **48.05%** of respondents to the East Lansing Non-Motorized Transportation Survey make safety a primary priority when traveling around East Lansing, and **63.52%** of respondents reported that a lack of perceived safety limits them when engaging in **active transportation** in East Lansing. Furthermore, transit service patterns show a concentration of routes along major corridors, leaving interior neighborhood areas with **limited access to public transportation**.

The presence of the Red Cedar River and the adjacent Sanford Natural Area also introduces environmental constraints, as the south side of the river is designated as a no-development zone by Michigan State University for research purposes.

Implications

The lack of safe, accessible, and well-connected infrastructure limits walkability and reduces the overall livability of the East Village. When residents feel unsafe walking, they are less likely to engage with local businesses, diminishing economic activity along

to engage with local businesses, diminishing economic activity along the corridor.

Car dependency also creates broader challenges, including **reduced transit ridership** and **limited support** for expanded transit funding. Additionally, the physical separation between East Village and Michigan State University's campus weakens the neighborhood's integration with one of its most important adjacent activity centers. Without improvements, the area risks continued underperformance in both **economic development** and **community engagement**.

Priorities

To address these challenges, improving perceived and actual pedestrian safety should be a top priority. Strengthening connections between East Village and surrounding destinations, particularly Michigan State University, downtown Lansing, and nearby neighborhoods, is also essential.

Equally important is enhancing transit accessibility within the neighborhood to reduce reliance on cars and promote more sustainable mobility patterns. Finally, infrastructure improvements should be designed in a way that respects and preserves environmentally sensitive areas, such as the Sanford Natural Area.

Actions

Improving walkability in the East Village will require a combination of infrastructure investments and strategic partnerships. One potential solution is the construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting East Village to the East Campus neighborhood near Michigan State University. This connection would provide a safe and direct route for students and residents, increasing foot traffic and supporting local businesses.

Accessibility and Mobility

Given the proximity to the Sanford Natural Area, collaboration between the City of East Lansing and Michigan State University will be critical to ensure that any **development minimizes environmental impact**.

In addition to this, the creation of a **riverfront trail** along the north side of the Red Cedar River would offer an alternative pedestrian route removed from high-speed traffic (Figure 3-b,3-c). A natural trail environment can enhance the walking experience, improve perceived safety, and encourage more active transportation within the neighborhood.



Figure 3-b: Riverfront edge dominated by surface parking and service access which limits public access to the river and disconnects it from the surrounding neighborhood.



Figure 3-c: Continuous riverfront pedestrian trail and landscaped green buffer with native planting and seating can create an active recreational corridor, improve public access and visual connection to the river transforming the underutilized land into a vibrant community space.

Accessibility and Mobility

Transit improvements should also be pursued to better serve East Village residents. Extending CATA bus (Figure 3-f) routes deeper into the neighborhood would improve access for those not located along Grand River Avenue. Increased transit coverage could boost ridership and build public support for expanded transit funding, creating a positive feedback loop for future infrastructure investments. Improving bus frequency through the implementation of a dedicated bus lane would also promote more ridership, along with helping East Village establish an **identity of multimodal transportation**.

This multimodal identity can also be strengthened through the implementation of pedestrian-friendly crossings which will improve walkability and street safety (Figure 3-d). Additionally implementation of dedicated bike lanes (Figure 3-e), which could be done by replacing on-street parking to promote more biking in this neighborhood. MSU's campus is rather bike-friendly, but when it clashes with the current conditions of East Village, the infrastructure loses its full potential when it comes to making biking a viable option for residents.

Together, these actions would help shift the East Village toward a more **balanced, multimodal transportation system** that prioritizes safety, accessibility, and environmental stewardship.



Figure 3-d: Pedestrian-friendly crossings improve walkability and street safety



Figure 3-e: Dedicated bike lanes support safe and sustainable mobility



Figure 3-f: CATA provides public transportation service to East Village

Mixed-Use and Affordability

PHASE 4

04

Mixed-Use and Affordability

Challenges

Since the first phase of this project, observations and findings have consistently pointed to a student housing capacity gap in East Lansing. In particular, the East Village area north of Grand River Avenue is currently dominated by single-family homes and low-density apartment buildings that, in their present form, cannot accommodate residential growth.

Evidence

Observations and informal interviews conducted during Phase 1 revealed a perceived student housing capacity gap. This gap was quantitatively explored in Phase 2, using Michigan State University student population data and United States Census Bureau housing data to evaluate whether a need for more student housing truly exists. The quantitative analysis validated prior qualitative observations and confirmed that East Lansing has an **under-supply of student housing**. Additionally, Phase 2 findings indicated that a significant portion of the East Village housing stock was built in the 1960s and 1970s (Fig. 4-a), suggesting **aging infrastructure**. In fact, over half of the structures in the East Village are over 25 years old. Taken together, these findings suggest that East Village is well-positioned for redevelopment that may help the City overcome its housing deficit.

In Phase 3, community engagement questions were tailored to develop a deeper understanding of what the community envisions for the future of housing in the East Village. Results revealed mixed perspectives on whether affordability or availability should be prioritized, though a majority of participants identified **affordability** as the greater concern. Even so, many participants expressed support for **denser, mixed-use options** when presented with photos of what such development could look like.

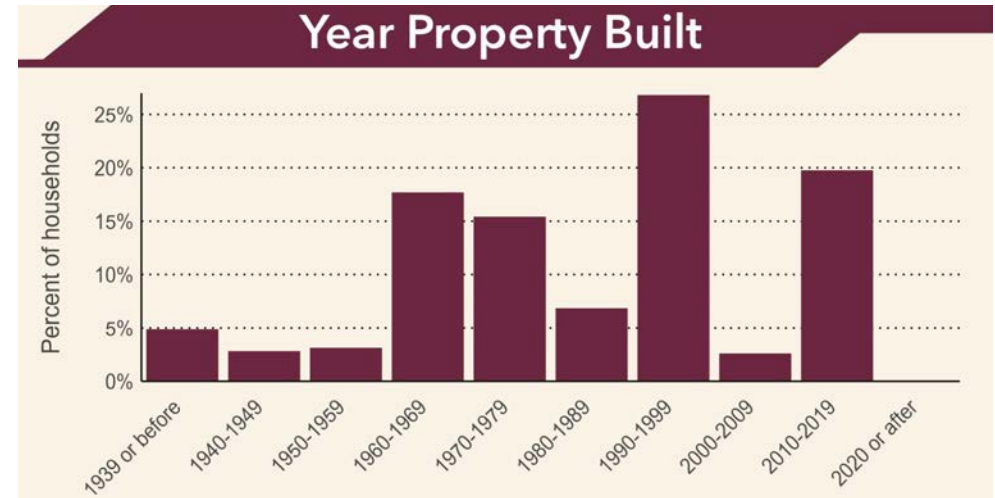


Fig. 4-a: Age of properties in the East Village study area; This graphic contains data provided by Esri (2025), ACS (2019-2023), U.S. Census (2020).

Implications

Combining evidence from the first three phases, it becomes evident that the study area holds the potential to help remedy the City's deficit through the development of **denser, student-focused housing**. However, conversations with the public also indicated that recommendations for the future of the East Village neighborhoods must balance both the **housing pressures** created by the nearby university and the desires of the public to keep housing **accessible and affordable**. The data collected during the first three phases may be distilled into the following principle intended to guide housing recommendations in the East Village:

Promote mixed-use development that enhances campus access while maintaining housing affordability.

Mixed-Use and Affordability

Planning Priorities

In order to address the housing needs of East Lansing and the East Village, the City should adhere to two main planning priorities:

- **Incentivize mixed-use development.**
- **Ensure affordable and attainable housing options.**

By taking planning actions that align with these priorities, East Lansing can take steps towards creating affordable, accessible housing in the East Village.

Actions: Incentivize Mixed-Use Development

The City can take several concrete actions, both in the short term and in the long term, to incentivize mixed-use development in the East Village. A complete list of recommendations is listed in the Appendix to this phase.

In the short term, East Lansing might consider relaxing parking requirements for the developments on Grand River Avenue. The City does already have some parking regulations that are conducive to mixed-use development. For example, the Zoning Code already allows properties in business districts (including the properties abutting Grand River Avenue to the north) to provide off-premise parking instead of having all parking on site (East Lansing Zoning Ordinance § 50-814(4)). However, off-premise parking may only be placed in business districts, the parking district, or municipal parking systems (unless otherwise approved by the City Council).

Because the East Village is largely surrounded by residential districts (Fig. 4-b), parking for Grand River properties wishing to take advantage of the off-premise parking allowance would likely end up being located on different properties along Grand River. As a result, it is unlikely that this ordinance, which is intended to promote use of public transit and increase walkability, would have its intended result. The City may consider amending its parking ordinance to be even more favorable to mixed-use development by either reducing minimum parking ratios for properties along Grand River or allowing off-premise parking to locate in zoning districts other than those currently listed in the ordinance.

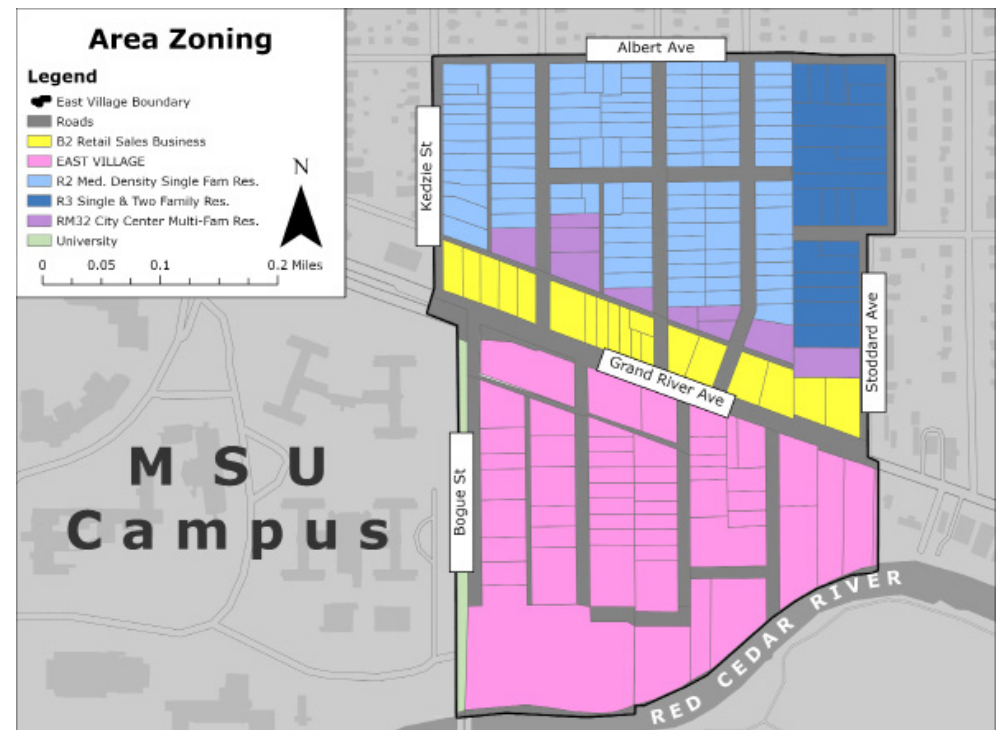


Figure 4-b: Zoning districts in the East Village study area, displaying what kinds of uses are allowed within the neighborhood

Mixed-Use and Affordability

Another action that the City might consider is providing density incentives for developments that have ground-floor commercial space (Fig. 4-c). In other words, the City could allow developers who provide commercial or retail space in their buildings to build taller and with more residential units than would otherwise be permitted in a given zoning district. Such incentives could encourage redevelopment by giving developers an opportunity to increase profits in exchange for constructing mixed-use buildings. Offering such an incentive may also assist in the development of aesthetically diverse neighborhoods with variation in building height, something that several members of the Downtown Development Authority mentioned as a priority.



Fig. 4-c: The Landmark on Grand River in Downtown East Lansing, an example of mixed-use development; Source: United Electric Inc, 2024.

Actions: Ensure Affordable and Attainable Housing

The City also may choose to pursue affordable and attainable housing in a variety of ways. In the short term, the City could conduct (in-house or via a consultant) a housing market analysis to more deeply evaluate rental prices and student demand for housing close to campus. While this report offers some preliminary commentary on the East Lansing rental housing deficit, the City could benefit from a more comprehensive analysis of the housing market both in East Lansing and in neighboring municipalities.

When looking at the medium-term housing actions that the City of East Lansing could take to ensure affordable and attainable housing in the East Village District, a closer look at Section 50-94(b)(4) of the East Lansing Zoning Code could provide the answer. Currently, new mixed-use developments in the East Lansing downtown area have a zoning requirement that 25% of the residential housing units are restricted to low-income to moderate income residents and other diverse housing options. Extending the zoning ordinance into the East Village District could incentivize mixed-use development, ensure affordability in housing options, and provide housing for a diverse range of residents. As this ordinance has precedent in downtown East Lansing, implementation may be more practical because the City has already demonstrated its willingness to prioritize diverse housing.

Long term, once the City has reached a housing balance through the prior proposed actions, it will want to take steps to maintain this diversity. For East Lansing, this might mean working with Michigan State University to keep up to date with projected student enrollment trends, so that the City can continue to tailor its policies to encourage the development of housing that will match demands.

Place, Identity and Quality of Life

PHASE 4

05

Place, Identity and Quality of Life

Challenges

Currently, the East Village lacks key amenities, like a grocery store or a gym. Moreover, much of the environment is not built around human scale, instead focusing on car infrastructure around Grand River Avenue and parking throughout the residential areas (Figure 5-a). There is also a lack of public spaces, with no parks or plazas in the entire neighborhood. Right now, residents in the East Village must leave the neighborhood to access crucial amenities like a grocery store and outdoor experiences in public parks. Grand River Avenue is unappealing to pedestrians and cyclists, so residents avoid walking down the road, which can hurt local businesses. Lastly, the East Village lacks a specific identity, leaving the neighborhood to blend in with the rest of East Lansing.

Evidence

Among those surveyed during Phase 3, the prevailing sentiment was that the East Village currently lacks access to many desired amenities, parks, and overall character. Many residents voiced their opinion that the area currently feels disconnected from the rest of East Lansing, as well as bland, boring and dingy (Figure 5-b). Many people also expressed their desires for a grocery store in the area, as well as a gym, cafe, nightlife, and open space. Improved parks are also popular among residents, along with restaurants and bars. This feedback represents a desire for neighborhood change among not only current residents, but also other students.

Implications

Considering the demand for a walkable neighborhood with amenities and services, public spaces, and local events, there is a great need for neighborhood improvement. This prevents crucial private investment in the neighborhood, including new development, new businesses, and new residents. In addition, current residents are less likely to extend their residency in the East Village post college.



Figure 5-a: View of Grand River Avenue, from Cedar Street, showing a lack of pedestrian infrastructure; Google Earth



Figure 5-b: Vacant Property on Grand River Ave., showcasing redevelopment potential for desired amenities

Place, Identity and Quality of Life

Priorities

In order to create a more appealing neighborhood, East Lansing should invest in forming a cohesive look, feel and identity for the East Village. To achieve this, the city should focus on:

- Amending the zoning code to encourage creative building design, art installations, and signage
- Increasing access to quality public spaces
- Attracting new amenities to the area, such as a grocery store

Making improvements to these factors would make the East Village a more desirable place to live, work and play for current and future residents.

Actions

One of the most important aspects of a community's appeal to visitors and residents is the overall character of the area. Currently, the East Village lacks a defined neighborhood character, and as a result, feels dull and uninspired. Several key improvements to the look and feel of the East Village can be made, which would increase the appeal of the area to both residents and businesses. An amendment to the current form-based zoning code defining several aesthetic and functional features, such as size of windows, setbacks, and roof angles, can be made. Additionally, a general architectural standard can be developed, with suggestions for a color palette and building materials to be used in new construction. Alongside this, several other initiatives can be made to improve neighborhood character. One such initiative is for public art installations throughout the East Village. Through a partnership with local artists, as well as MSU's College of Arts and Letters, public art would bring new liveliness to the East Village. Finally, the creation of a symbol, or flag, that represents the East Village neighborhood can help bring community members together and help the area stand out.

With Grand River Avenue being the commercial heart of the East Village, making the area a welcoming place for all is paramount to the corridor's success. Several physical improvements can be made to the streetscape to increase foot traffic, such as the installation of benches and other street furniture, widening of sidewalks, improvements to mobility accessibility, and planting of street trees and other foliage (Figure 5-d). These improvements would make the Grand River Avenue corridor a much more pleasant place to spend time for pedestrians and cyclists, increasing foot traffic and powering businesses in the area. Additionally, amendments to the zoning code to spur new development on currently vacant lots and cooperation between business owners and the East Lansing Downtown Development Authority can strengthen current and future commercial uses in the neighborhood. Finally, anchoring the neighborhood with a quality grocery store (Figure 5-c), and other amenities, will make the East Village more appealing to both residents and visitors.



Figure 5-c: Urban format Meijer in Lansing enhances walkable access to essential amenities (Nick King, 2020)

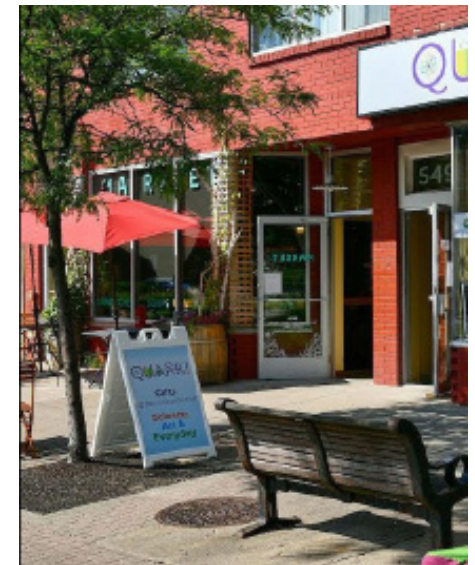


Figure 5-d: Activated Storefront in East Lansing with outdoor seating (Sarah Spohn, 2021)

Place, Identity and Quality of Life



Figure 5-e: River Front Concept - Highlighting the boardwalk and natural environment



Figure 5-f : River Front Concept - Showcasing the implementation of a stepped terraces gathering space

With a public park being among the most requested features of the East Village going forward, creating quality outdoor spaces is crucial to support the neighborhood's character and appeal. Currently, the land use along the Red Cedar River is mostly surface parking for the surrounding apartment complexes. Turning this area into a public park with river frontage would make the East Village more attractive to new development and new residents, and a walking path would help with area mobility (Figure 5-e). Supported by a feasibility study, thorough public engagement, and several potential funding sources, a quality public space along the riverfront would significantly improve the neighborhood's character and appeal. In addition to this, converting vacant parcels or unused land to public parks and plazas, as well as working with new and existing food service establishments to create an outdoor dining scheme can further improve the identity of the area.

Summary

Through a targeted planning approach to improve the neighborhood, the East Village can become a growing neighborhood with a vibrant commercial landscape, beautiful public parks, and local events that make the East Village stand out as a student-centered district in East Lansing (Figure 5-f). These planning priorities can improve the quality of the built environment through minor changes in the streetscape, while also improving the lives of residents through the integration of new services and businesses previously unavailable in the neighborhood. These actions lay out a realistic approach to strengthen the East Village's identity and livability.

Key Decisions

PHASE 4

06

Key Decisions

The East Village concept plan reflects a series of strategic decisions informed by analysis of **field observations, informal interviews, qualitative quantitative data collection, and community engagement activities**. These decisions are in response to core challenges that were identified through synthesis of the dominant findings of our project (Figure 6-a).

As the concept plan and strategic framework (Figure 6-b) progresses, questions about **improving public realm, accessibility and mobility, & mixed-use student housing affordability** arose:

- What type of **community organizations, partnerships, or engagement strategies** have been the most effective in East Lansing, in particular with sustaining long-term involvement and support for the implementation of new construction & redevelopment initiatives?
- How would the City of East Lansing facilitate the creation of **Public-Private Partnerships (P3) or Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)** initiatives with property owners, developers, and local businesses to support the development of public **gathering spaces, plazas, parks, and/or riverfront walking/cycling trails** within the East Village District?
- What role can the City of East Lansing play in advocating for bus route modifications, service expansion, and improved transit access within the East Village District?
- What role would the City of East Lansing play in ensuring that newly constructed or redeveloped student housing maintains affordability in the East Village District, while potential developers build mixed-use and modernized student housing stock?

These questions informed the future direction of the project and helped us to better conceptualize the feasibility of our recommendations.

East Village Development Challenges and Solutions

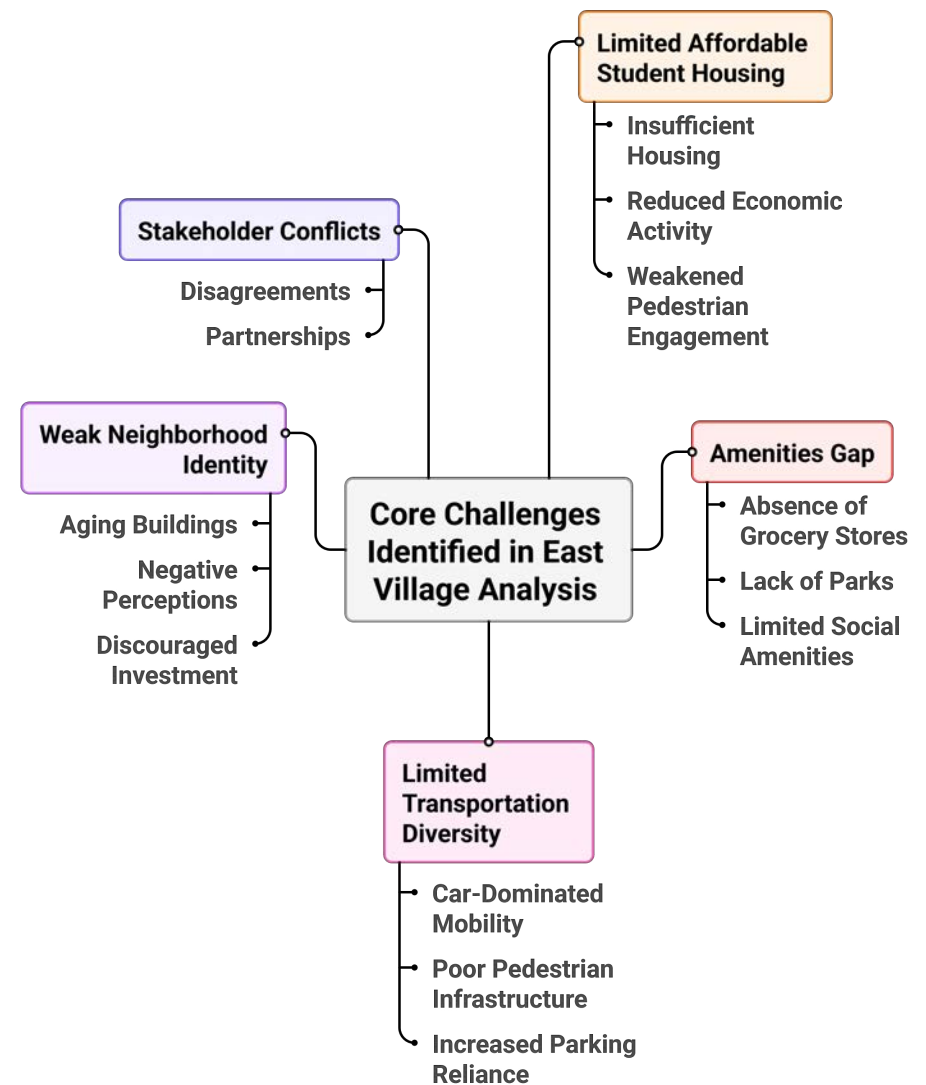


Figure 6 - a: Diagram showing core challenges identified in East Village

Key Decisions

Accessibility & Mobility

Due to accessibility & mobility being influenced by one of our emerging themes, **Weak Infrastructure**, a central focus of our concept plan is the **prioritization of multimodal transportation** recommendations to reduce the reliance on the existing auto-centric design of the East Village District. The implementation of an **East Village riverfront trail** that accommodates walking and cycling along the Red Cedar River, connectivity between MSU Campus and the East Village District, as well as established pedestrian crossings and bicycle infrastructure were high priority to our plan. Additionally, we believe that **collaboration with CATA and the City of East Lansing** is paramount to achieving **dedicated bus routes** within the East Village District, which will improve accessibility for students traveling between campus and the surrounding areas. Connectivity to MSU campus remains an important strategy that can be remedied by the **creation of a pedestrian bridge over the Red Cedar River** that connects the East Village District to the Sanford Natural Area. Implementation of a pedestrian bridge into the Sanford Natural Area could help to strengthen foot traffic into the East Village District by providing an alternative route that students can travel and does not require travel into the area strictly from Grand River Ave or Bogue St.

Place Identity & Quality of Life

Public realm activation and place identity are essential components of strengthening the neighborhood character of the East Village District. Based on findings and community feedback from previous phases, developing **neighborhood identity** involves attracting and placing desired amenities and businesses along the Grand River Corridor, such as urban markets, gyms, restaurants, nightlife venues, and retail. Amenities that are practical and useful can improve students and residents' access to daily needs and

gathering spaces, reducing the need to travel elsewhere, resulting in a robust and sustainable economic environment. Alternatively, using neighborhood banners on streetlights and traffic signals and **art murals to foster place-making** within the East Village District is another priority decision that emerged from the dominant findings. Participants at the community engagement events reported that East Village is “boring, dirty, bland, and dingy”, speaking to the need to create a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere within the built environment. Partnering with the **MSU College of Arts and Letters** could facilitate a process for this recommendation to come to fruition and improve the reputation of the East Village District. Another concept that we are recommending is developing a general architectural standard or **color palette and building materials** that are used in new development enhances the uniqueness that strengthens the identity and character of the East Village District. Another alternative is the rezoning and land use adjustments that would encourage the development of public- private partnerships with local community entities & businesses for the construction of **gathering spaces, plazas, and parks** within the East Village District; as well as the riverfront walking/cycling trail along the Red Cedar River within East Village. A final key decision involved with public realm activation is increasing collaboration between current/future business & property owners with the **City of East Lansing Downtown Development Authority** and incentivizing partnerships that bring forth initiatives that make East Village more appealing and welcoming.

Mixed-Use & Affordability

Development of mixed-use student housing emerged as a top recommendation for the concept plan, with a location emphasis on the Grand River Corridor. This recommendation addresses the student housing supply imbalance that was earlier identified in the project, specifically student housing near or on MSU campus. Community feedback included responses from stakeholders who wanted increased collaboration in the re-development decisions

Key Decisions

made in the East Village District and ensuring student housing affordability. To encourage and attract developers, while answering the community's voice that wants to keep East Village stocked with affordable housing, implementation of **density bonuses** and alignment with diverse housing ordinances are an integral part of the concept plan we are proposing.

Trade-Offs

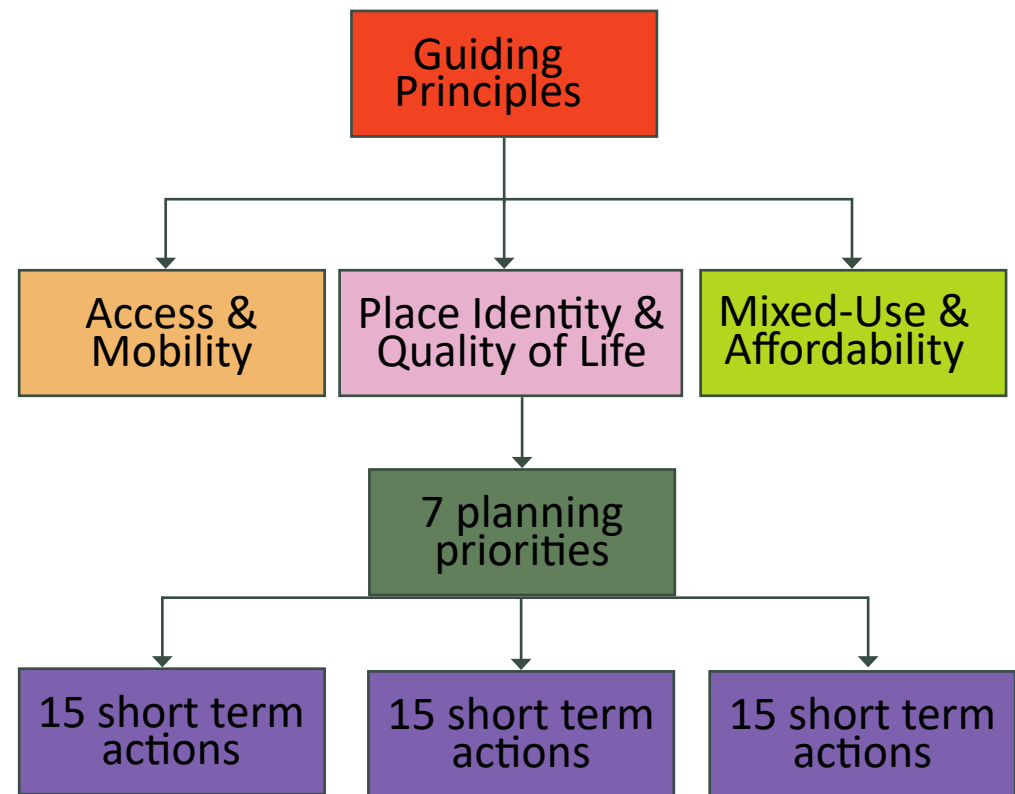
These decisions involved several important trade-offs that must be considered going forward. Improving multimodal transportation options would reduce parking availability, impacting the parking habits of current residents. The environmental impact of the proposed pedestrian bridge over the Red Cedar River into the Sanford Natural Area requires intentional development focused on minimizing environmental impact or leading to a reduction in the area that MSU conducts research. Place-making to **strengthen neighborhood identity and character**, as well as a riverfront walking/cycling trail along the Red Cedar River would require significant investment and collaboration among the City of East Lansing Planning Department, local developers and private property owners. Rezoning and land use adjustments that allow for these recommendations to become reality may face political barriers and community push-back, which could prolong or obstruct the implementation of these initiatives. Finally, increasing density through **mixed-use student housing** could alter the current neighborhood character of the area, causing a point of contention with students and longtime East Lansing Residents. With the strong focus on increasing student housing in the area, the East Village District could benefit businesses and property owners during the school year but run the risk of economic fluctuations during summer seasons.

East Village district provides many opportunities that could truly revitalize this area into a student-supportive and welcoming

Phase 4 - Concept Plan Strategic Framework

community, yet intentional changes to the current zoning, land use, and the creation of public-private partnerships are essential for the implementation. Key decisions presented in this chapter provides an overview of our concept plan, that will guide our strategic planning practices to make this project into a reality.

East Village Strategic Framework



SEE APPENDIX D FOR DETAILS

Figure 6 - b: Diagram of Strategic Framework for developing the East Village Concept Plan



PHASE 5

Phase 5

Precedent Studies

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Introduction & Selection Criteria

PHASE 5

01

Introduction & Selection Criteria

Introduction

Precedent analysis is a critical planning method used to identify successful strategies, design principles, and implementation tools from comparable contexts to inform local planning decisions. In this phase, selected case studies from university-adjacent districts and urban redevelopment projects are analyzed to understand how other cities have addressed challenges related to student housing, mixed-use development, mobility, and public realm activation. These precedents provide practical insights that bridge theory and application, helping to inform the strategic framework for the East Village redevelopment by highlighting adaptable solutions, best practices, and potential implementation pathways.

Selection Criteria

The case studies were selected based on their **relevance**, **comparability**, and **applicability** to the East Village project (Figure 1-a). Priority was given to **university-adjacent districts** (e.g., College Station, Champaign, Berkeley, Galway) that experience similar dynamics related to student populations, housing demand, and commercial activity. These cases reflect shared challenges such as accommodating student housing, enhancing amenities, and supporting vibrant mixed-use environments. Additionally, cases were chosen for their focus on **key planning themes**, including mixed-use development, corridor revitalization, mobility improvements, and public realm enhancement.

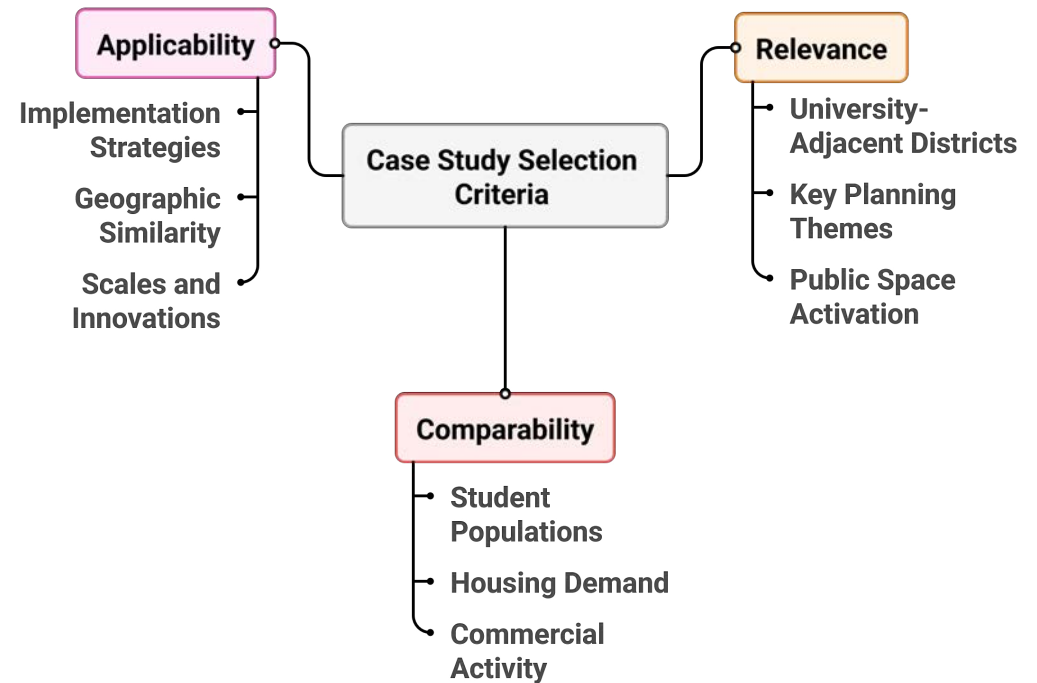


Figure 1-a: Case study selection criteria highlighting relevance, comparability, and applicability to guide precedent analysis.

Introduction & Selection Criteria

The Galway case, for example, provides insight into **university–city collaboration** and **riverfront activation**, highlighting strategies for improving connectivity, pedestrian accessibility, and public space along waterfronts—directly relevant to East Village’s riverfront opportunities. Selection also considered **implementation strategies** and **transferability**, including zoning reforms, public-private partnerships, and infrastructure investments. Geographic and institutional similarity—such as Ann Arbor’s comparable policy context within Michigan—further supports practical applicability. Finally, the cases represent a variety of **scales** and **innovations**, from district-wide redevelopment plans to targeted mobility and public space interventions, offering a comprehensive set of lessons to inform the East Village redevelopment framework.

Comparative precedent matrix highlighting strategies, design principles, implementation tools, outcomes, and transferability for selected case studies.

Case	Strategy	Design Principles	Implementation Tools	Outcomes	Transferability
College Station, TX (Texas A&M University)	Mixed-use district & student housing integration	Pedestrian safety & mixed-use development	Pedestrian infrastructure (wall, plaza, etc.) & high-rise housing	Active and dense entertainment district	High
Berkeley, CA (University of California-Berkeley)	Mixed-use redevelopment & affordability	Pedestrian movement & historic preservation	Revised zoning provisions & amended downtown design guidelines	New housing using density bonuses & transit-oriented development	Medium
Champaign, IL (University of Illinois)	Housing densification & corridor revitalization	Bike infrastructure & increased density	Creation of maintenance programs, action plans & zoning studies	New housing units & comprehensive biking infrastructure	Medium
Ann Arbor, MI (University of Michigan)	Multimodal transportation network expansion	Higher Density and multi-modal transportation	Creation of a district board & maintenance programs	Thousands of new residential units & improved placemaking	High
Galway, University of Galway	Riverfront activation & connectivity	Sustainability & connectivity	Riverfront trails & innovation district	Non-motorized transportation options & connectivity with broader region	Medium

Case Study 1 - Ann Arbor Downtown

PHASE 5

02

Case Study 1 - Ann Arbor Protected Bikeways

Case Study Overview

Among the selected studies, the University of Michigan (U of M) provides an example that is relevant to East Village, considering its geographic proximity and comparable student base. As Ann Arbor continues to grow and develop, one of the intended integrations includes a student-oriented downtown. Examining this case will bring insight into how targeted investments in infrastructure and housing can bring cohesion to an active urban environment.

This case study highlights several key challenges that align with the challenges discovered in the East Village, including underperforming public realms, weak infrastructure and a lack in student housing. That shape the urban development process. As part of the planning process, the City of Ann Arbor hosted a series of public workshops that allowed community members to contribute to the design of the district, as seen in figure 1. Across these workshops, recurring themes emerged, particularly the **importance of density** and **intentional urban design**. (Figure 2-a)



Figure 2-a: Small Table Workshop Exercise – Courtesy of Richard Murphy (Recommended Policy Framework for Downtown Ann Arbor - Downtown Development Strategies Project, 2005)

Ann Arbor also gave significant attention to building location. The city of Ann Arbor found sites for redevelopment and prepared proposals for mixed-use structures that incorporated both retail and office space. These developments emphasized architecturally engaging designs, such as stepped-building forms rather than flat facades, to create a more visually dynamic and inviting **streetscape**. (Figure 2-b)

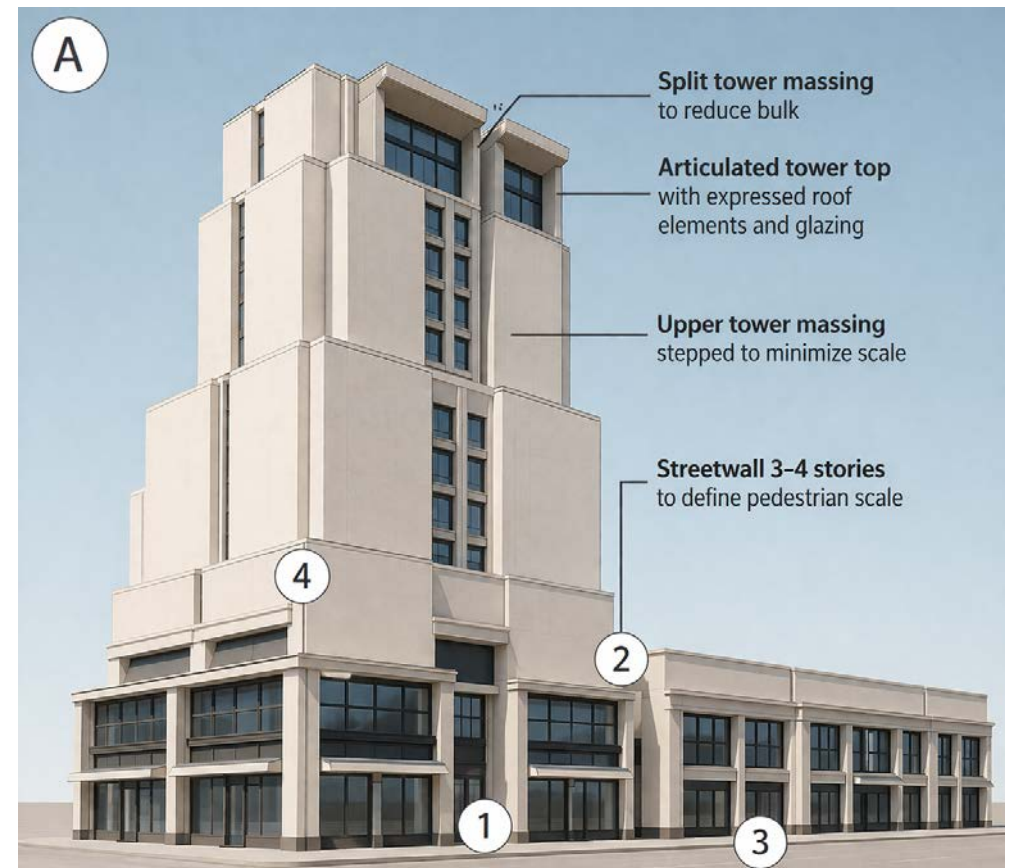


Figure 2-b: 12-Story Office Tower, Primary Frontage (Downtown Ann Arbor Design Guidelines Chapter 4, 2008)

Case Study 1 - Ann Arbor Protected Bikeways

As Ann Arbor's downtown district continues to expand, it faces increased pressures, particularly in the demand for housing. With the presence of a large student population, there is a need for high-density residential development. While the demand for more housing aligns with the district's growth, it also contributes to rising rental costs, creating affordability challenges for both **students** and **long-term residents**.

Similar to East Lansing, tensions between development and affordability are further reflected in public response to planning efforts. While the comprehensive plan emphasizes a pedestrian-oriented downtown, mixed-use development, and improved transit connectivity, community concerns have emerged regarding the lack of affordable housing. Initiatives such as the "A2 for All" campaign argue that ongoing development prioritizes growth over accessibility, highlighting a disconnect between planning goals and the public's priorities.

Key Strategies / Features

To address the weak infrastructure and underperforming public realm identified in East Village, the City of East Lansing can draw directly from Ann Arbor's recent multimodal transportation projects. These initiatives have shown clear progression from temporary pilot studies to permanent infrastructure, which is exactly what East Village needs to improve mobility and placemaking within East Village. In 2005, Ann Arbor noticed that much of its population uses diverse transportation options to get around the city. Downtown Ann Arbor identified that within the downtown district, non-motorized transportation plays a crucial role, as approximately **twenty percent of residents** walk to their destinations (Calthorpe, 2005).

1. Division Street Bikeway

Completed in the fall of 2021, the Division Street Bikeway introduced a **two-way protected bike lane** along the east side of Division Street from Packard to Catherine in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This project emerged from the city's "Healthy Streets Pilot Projects," a series of temporary COVID-19 response measures that were implemented in 2020 to encourage safe outdoor mobility. The final design of this project incorporated a curbed buffer to physically separate cyclists from motor traffic, enhanced safety at major intersections, and improved crosswalk infrastructure primarily serving a nearby high school. During the pilot phase of this project, Division Street became the most used and publicly supported bike lane among all the projects, demonstrating that using a "pop-up" to test community appeal is an effective strategy when finding areas to implement permanent infrastructure. This pilot-to-permanent model can be a valuable tool to build community approval of more bike infrastructure in East Village.

Residents of East Lansing frequently cited "perceived danger" from high-speed traffic as a barrier to walking or biking in the city, which could be addressed through a pilot project on corridors such as Grand River Avenue or Bogue Street. With 83.92% of East Lansing Non-Motorized Transportation Plan survey respondents expressing support for buffered or protected bike lanes, this approach can directly address weak infrastructure in East Village (Figure 2-c)

Case Study 1 - Ann Arbor Protected Bikeways



Figure 2-c: Image of riders on Division Street Bikeway, taking advantage of multimodal transportation infrastructure, Ann Arbor DDA, 2021

2. William Street Bikeway

Installed in 2019, the William Street Bikeway became Ann Arbor's first two-way protected bikeway, connecting the University of Michigan campus, downtown commercial districts, and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Located on the north side of William Street from First Street to State Street. In 2021, this bike path was upgraded to have removable curbs, which allows the street to be reconfigured, allowing events like the Ann Arbor Art Fair to be more easily hosted on the street, giving this project the flexibility to have multiple uses. By creating a visually and physically "guarded" lane, the bikeway provides a clear cue to drivers to be careful while also making users of the bike lane feel safe and comfortable riding along William Street.

This project is a great example of what can be implemented in East Village to improve its current character, working to solve multiple problems at once. When Red Cedar Squad reached out to East Lansing community members, people described the current neighborhood character of East Village as "bland" or "boring." Implementing removable infrastructure such as curbs that can be taken out seasonally or for specific events, would give a similar project the flexibility to temporarily reconfigure the street. For example, along the proposed riverfront recreational corridor, removable curbs would allow organizers to close the bike lane to traffic and expand pedestrian space for outdoor events. During these events, the pavement that is typically used for cyclists can offer space for different uses. When events are not going on, the curbs can be reinstalled to restore the original use of the space. This would allow East Village the flexibility and potential for exciting events to be hosted, improving the negative perception of the neighborhood's character (Figure 2-d).



Figure 2-d: Riders on the William Street Bikeway, protected from adjacent vehicular traffic, creating a sense of safety among riders, Ann Arbor DDA, 2019

Case Study 1 - Ann Arbor Protected Bikeways

3. First & Ashley Street Project

The First & Ashley Street Project, completed in 2021, reimagined the flow of a corridor, as First Street from Kingsley to Madison operated as a one-way street for nearly fifty years. This project brought back two-way traffic to this street by integrating a two-way protected bike lane, along with streetscape and sidewalk improvements (Figure 2-e). By bringing more human-scale design to this area, the neighborhood's connectivity is stronger, and non-motorized traffic can easily move through these spaces. For East Village, where car-centric design and surface parking dominates the built environment, this case study demonstrates how valuable prioritizing human-scale development, such as the creation of urban plazas and intentional gathering spaces, would directly address the amenity gaps identified by participants of the East Village community outreach, who cited the lack of “third spaces” such as cafes, parks, and plazas as a top priority for neighborhood improvement in East Village (Figure 2-f)



Figure 2-e: Image of improved streetscape and bike infrastructure on First Street, Ann Arbor DDA, 2021



Figure 2-f: Image of pedestrian plaza on First Street, an example of the public realm fostering community gathering spaces, Ann Arbor DDA, 2021

4. Miller/Catherine Bikeway

Completed in 2022, the Miller/Catherine Bikeway is a great example of coordinating transportation infrastructure with affordable housing development. Located on the south side of Miller and Catherine Streets between Division and First Street, the project involved the installation of a two-way separated bike lane that serves a 68-unit affordable housing development by the Ann Arbor Housing Commission. This coordination minimized construction disruption as the projects were developed simultaneously, advancing two community priorities for Ann Arbor, which were expanding safe multimodal infrastructure and increasing the stock of affordable housing. This case study can be a great example for what can be implemented in East Village, where housing affordability is a primary concern for 62% of participants in Red Cedar Squad's community engagement efforts.

Case Study 1 - Ann Arbor Protected Bikeways

The City of East Lansing can align infrastructure investment with its commitment to ensure that 25% of residential housing units in newly constructed mixed-use developments within the East Village District require diversity in housing options, through rezoning and ordinance amendments. This approach demonstrates that transportation and housing development do not have to be competing priorities, but can instead be mutual elements to promote revitalization (Figure 2-g). By focusing initial pilot projects on local roads to test community appeal, East Lansing can build toward the same kind of multimodal connectivity that Ann Arbor has achieved, while working outside of MDOT's jurisdiction on Grand River Avenue.



Figure 2-g: A cyclist riding on the Catherine Street bikeway in Ann Arbor, MLive, 2026

Outcomes / Lessons

Policy constraints also play a significant role in shaping developmental outcomes. Zoning regulations and parking requirements for areas originally designed for lower-density conditions have limited growth through implemented barriers.

In response, Ann Arbor has implemented zoning reforms through the A2D2: Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown initiative, which increased building heights and encouraged mixed-use development. Additionally, the increased high-density student housing and the contribution to a more active downtown environment.

The City of Ann Arbor adopted guidelines directed towards designing downtown that emphasize pedestrian based development. These designs include active street fronts and architecturally engaging building designs. Improved strategies sought out the quality of the public realm while strengthening activity at street level. Community engagement efforts played a role in developing goals, allowing residents to contribute to the vision of a prosperous downtown. As the population continues to increase, efforts aim to demonstrate flexible policy, and intentional planning supports higher-density and student-centered development. Ann Arbor's approach highlights the importance of aligning zoning and community input to create districts for the people. These successes through the City of Ann Arbor emphasize the shortcomings of the East Village district in East Lansing, where limited walkability, insufficient student housing, and an underdeveloped public realm continue to hinder the full potential.

Transferability to East Lansing

When comparing student-focused downtowns, both Ann Arbor and the East Village district face similar challenges related to weak bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, underperforming public realms, and perceived danger from traffic. Ann Arbor has made measurable progress by piloting temporary infrastructure through the Healthy Streets Pilot Projects, converting successful pilots into permanent installations like the Division Street Bikeway. East Lansing can adopt this same pilot-to-permanent model to test community support before committing to long-term investments.

Case Study 1 - Ann Arbor Protected Bikeways

However, a key constraint applies: Grand River Avenue in East Lansing is under MDOT jurisdiction because it is a state highway. Any infrastructure changes to Grand River, such as protected bike lanes or curb adjustments, would require MDOT approval, leading to longer implementation timelines and a broader set of design standards. Fortunately, the Ann Arbor case studies do not depend on MDOT-controlled roads, as they were implemented on local streets. In East Village, these bike lanes could be placed on Bogue Street and streets that run through the neighborhood currently, like Waters Edge Drive.

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Case Study 2 - Berkeley Downtown

PHASE 5

03

Case Study 2 - Berkeley Downtown

Case Study Overview

The City of Berkeley Downtown Area Plan, published in 2012, provides a strong precedent for redevelopment adjacent to a large university. The plan promotes walkability, cultural uses, housing, and employment within its downtown core adjacent to the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley). The plan aims to transform Berkeley's downtown core into a regional destination that also meets the needs of local residents and students, while maintaining its historic character. The plan also provides implementation strategies for successful coordination between the city and the university, as the city's partnership with UC Berkeley is an important driver for redevelopment and economic activity (Figure 3-a).

Key Strategies / Features

The key components of the 2012 City of Berkeley Downtown Area Plan, are outlined below.

1. Density and Mixed-Use Development

Denser, vertical mixed-use development is at the forefront of the Downtown Area Plan. This aligns with the city's goals of encouraging highly livable development and high density. Mixed-use development further reinforces the downtown's "main street" character, which supports pedestrian activity and economic development. This aligns with existing planning principles that correlate mixed-use development with enhanced walkability and community interaction (Grant, 2002). The city identified several downtown parcels for potential redevelopment, shown in Figure 3-b.

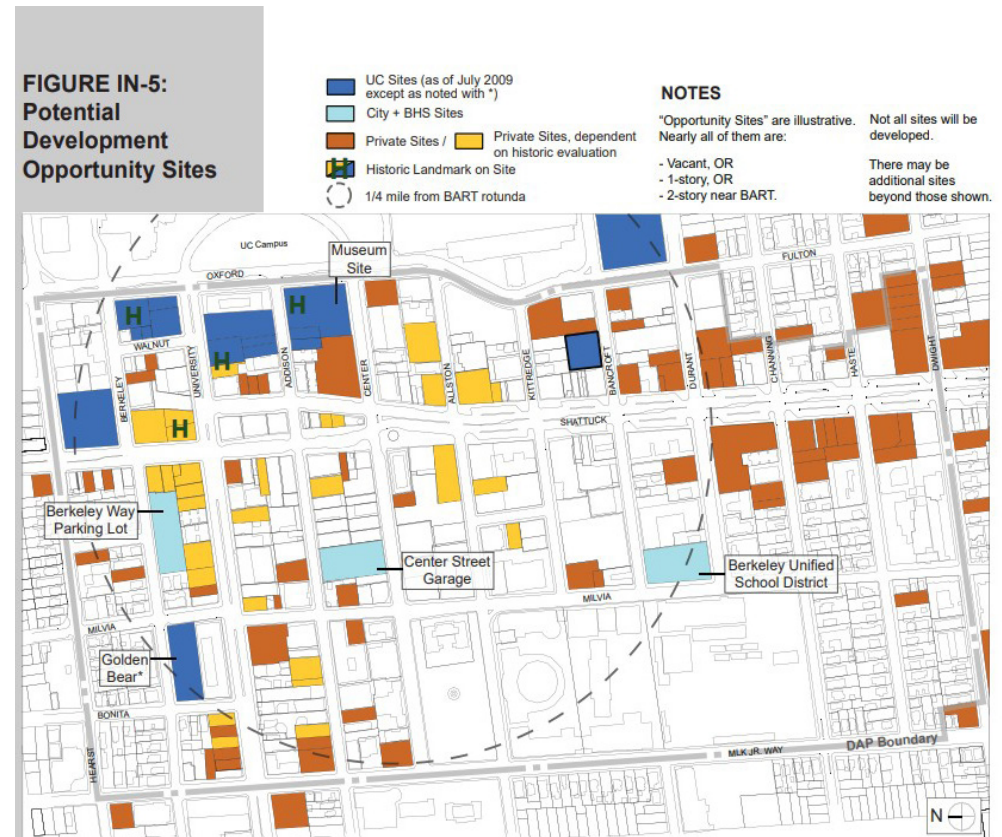


Figure 3-a: Potential sites for redevelopment within the Downtown Area Plan, including university sites, private sites, city sites, and historic landmarks identified by the City of Berkeley. Several of the highlighted sites are vacant parcels.

Case Study 2 - Berkeley Downtown



Figure 3-b - Planned mixed-use highrise housing development in Berkeley, in congruence with the Downtown Development Plan

2. Transit-oriented Development

Facilitating transit-oriented development is another key component of the plan by leveraging the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) for regional transportation and encouraging the use of local multi-modal transportation options such as walking, biking, and buses. Supporting “walk-to” destinations, like shops, services, and amenities that local residents can conveniently walk to rather than drive is a key implementation strategy in the plan. In turn, this strategy supports Berkeley’s environmental sustainability goals by reducing the use of vehicles that produce greenhouse gas emissions. The plan outlines that higher densities downtown and fast, frequent transit service to and from downtown will increase usage of multi-modal transportation. (Figure 3-c)



Figure 3-c. Bus transit in Berkeley after the 2012 Downtown Development Plan

3. Zoning Reform and Public Realm Improvements

Both zoning reform and public realm improvements also play important roles in enabling redevelopment and improving quality of life. The plan proposes multiple zoning amendments to support the city’s goals: increasing allowed building heights and densities, including building step-backs, and requiring community benefits for buildings with heights exceeding 75 feet. These community benefits, like open space, green features, or affordable housing units, aim to ensure that developers contribute to the city’s goal to enhance public open spaces. Berkeley heavily invests in public realm improvements such as the Arts District, streetscapes, and open spaces to improve placemaking, these investments make downtown an attractive destination, and increase social cohesion (Gehl, 2010). Additionally, the plan aims to ensure that UC Berkeley is a key partner in promoting a healthy and vital downtown. A city-university partnership similar to Berkeley could be beneficial for

Case Study 2 - Berkeley Downtown

East Village, as Michigan State University has been identified as a key partner in multiple recommended strategies detailed in Phase 4, such as commissioning murals, rerouting CATA route 31, and piloting temporary infrastructure changes in East Village.

Outcomes / Lessons

The 2012 Berkeley Downtown Area Plan promotes the development of mixed-use zones, denser housing, and an activated public realm through their targeted strategies. The plan also highlights the importance of communication and collaboration with local universities when developing an area plan. By doing so, Berkeley is able to create a community for students and residents to live, work, and thrive. A key lesson we can take away from the Berkeley plan is that balancing goals between community interests and the interest of the city is key. By targeting both dense development and community amenity space, the desires of many demographics can be met.

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Transferability to East Lansing

The principles outlined throughout the Berkeley plan provide insight into the redevelopment of the East Village neighborhood in a campus-adjacent context. Strategies such as increasing residential density and incentivizing mixed-use development can be applied to address the student housing capacity gap. Additionally, Berkeley's use of a transit-oriented development framework for increased access to amenities and campus aligns with needs identified during the Phase 3 community engagement process.

Using Berkeley as a case study, East Village can implement similar policy approaches to achieve community-identified goals. The Berkeley plan aims to increase allowable building heights to facilitate higher-density development, a strategy that could be applied in East Village to expand the housing stock. In East Village, zoning amendments that allow increased building heights in exchange for community benefits can guide redevelopment toward an expanded housing supply and improved public realm conditions.

Case Study 3 - Champaign Campustown

PHASE 5

04

Case Study 3 - Champaign Downtown

Case Study Overview

Located adjacent to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Campustown is a dense, student-oriented district centered around the Green Street corridor in the City of Champaign. The area functions as a mixed-use hub, combining student housing, retail, dining, and entertainment, while serving as a key interface between the university campus and the surrounding city. Over time, increasing student demand and changing urban dynamics created the need for coordinated redevelopment. In response, a series of planning efforts were developed to guide growth, improve infrastructure, and enhance the district's role as a vibrant, accessible, and student-focused urban environment.

Beginning in 1996, a group of community stakeholders collaborated to form Campustown 2000, a task force which led to the creation of the 1999 Campustown Action Plan. In 2002, Campustown 2000 transitioned from a not-for-profit into a city board, the University District Advisory Board. These efforts led to significant redevelopment, especially in the Green Street Corridor, including the Boneyard Detention Project, the 18-story Burnham 310 tower, and the 24-story College Corner development. Eventually, the 2008 University District Action Plan was created to build upon the success and the base of the 1999 Campustown Action Plan.

The 2008 plan defines the Campustown area into six distinct areas that include **on- and off-campus amenities**: the Burnham District, Campustown - Green Street Corridor, the Residential Core, the Athletic Campus, the Central Quad, and Downtown Champaign. These areas are shown in Figure 4-a. The most essential redevelopment districts to the plan are the **Green Street Corridor**, which is intended to serve as a **student downtown** with amenities and retail tailored to student demand, and the **Residential Core**, which hosts greek life residences, dormitories, and student-focused apartments.

Phase 5 - Precedent Studies

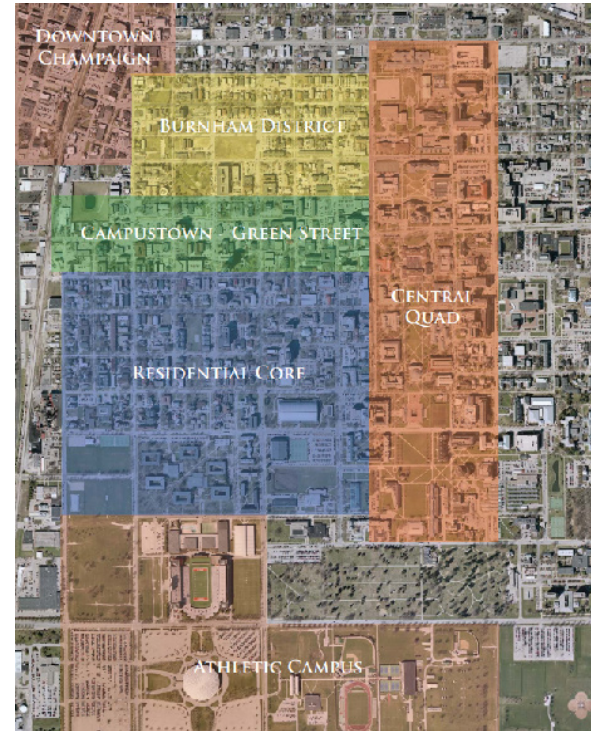


Figure 4-a. Areas referenced in the 2008 Action Plan. City of Champaign (2008)

Key Strategies / Features

One of the major improvements the plan lays out for the Green Street commercial corridor is the attraction of a **major national retailer** to the space. The plan discusses how, with the rise of car ownership in the past half-century, most major retail establishments moved to new commercial developments located on the periphery of the city. To support the recent spur in residential development surrounding the Green Street corridor, the city set the goal of attracting a **major urban grocery store** as well as other **shops** and **restaurants** to the area. The University District Action Plan establishes actions to address desired outcomes in several topics. The most relevant of these to the goals of the East Village are **land use and urban design, transportation and parking, and infrastructure and aesthetics**.

Case Study 3 - Champaign Downtown

1. Land Use and Urban Design:

In the land use and urban design section of the plan, the actions suggested and completed include facade renovations, streetscaping projects, and the creation of a redevelopment master plan (University District Action Plan). The redevelopment master plan would use community engagement to identify development opportunity sites, a list of desired businesses, and the creation of a business attraction plan based on the identified businesses and sites. The plan also recommends the determination of the **density** and **style of design** that is most desired for the area, followed up by zoning study to determine if the existing zoning permits or encourages those outcomes (University District Action Plan). An example of this increased density is shown in Figure 4-b.



Figure 4-b. Students crossing Green Street in Campustown. (Strong Towns, 2023)

2. Transportation and Parking

The University District Action Plan places focus on diversified transportation and strategic parking management. The improvement of bike infrastructure including lanes, trails, and bike-parking is a consistent theme. It also focuses on reducing congestion through methods such as designated loading zones. Further, it emphasizes pedestrian safety improvements such as high visibility crosswalks and traffic calming efforts (University District Action Plan). It also recommends that policy changes be made that encourage biking and bus use through the University District, including marketing campaigns with the University of Illinois, routing of bus routes in a way that encourages use through the area, and further improvements to biking infrastructure.

3. Infrastructure and Aesthetics

Finally, the section focused on infrastructure and aesthetics includes maintenance and beautification programs. Some specific actions include the creation of a Special Service Area, contracting for flowers to be planted annually, increased powerwashing of sidewalks, painting of street lines, the annual creation of a sidewalk maintenance priority list, new recycling and waste management programs, and regular assessment of street furniture conditions (University District Action Plan). Consistent enforcement of maintenance on private properties is also of high importance. These streetscape improvements make Campustown a much more welcoming place to spend time, as shown in Figure 4-c. Infrastructure improvements are crucial in any redevelopment project, as well as aesthetically pleasing elements of the urban environment.

Case Study 3 - Champaign Downtown



Figure 4-c. Students walk past a flowerbed along Green Street. (Experience Champaign-Urban)

Outcomes / Lessons

According to the City of Champaign, between 2004 and 2024, approximately 3,500 apartment units have been built or planned in Campustown, bringing a total investment in the area of over \$1 billion (Campustown: Politics of Place). This new housing density has also spurred an overall **revitalization** of Campustown, especially around the Green Street corridor. **New street infrastructure** helps to attract the **buzz and liveliness** that defines the Campustown of today. Accessible, dense development has transformed the area into a new, vibrant community where students **live, work, eat, and shop**. The primary lesson to be learned from the recent rejuvenation of Campustown is that building dense housing that is conducive to **alternative forms of transportation** makes an area more **attractive and desirable to live in**.

Transferability to East Lansing

Many parallels can be drawn between Campustown and the East Village. Michigan State University and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign are similar in both physical and enrollment size, and have similar influence over the communities in which they reside. Both schools have a large population of students that require off-campus housing, and both have spurred recent development opportunities in their respective cities. The benefits to the student experience at the University of Illinois can be replicated with similar development in the East Village and would improve the quality of life in East Lansing overall.

The city achieved benefits for the student population through actions similar to those laid out in the East Village Concept Plan, including improvements to pedestrian accessibility, placemaking actions, and higher-density mixed-use development. The University District Advisory Board organized community members to assemble actions, and then incentivised the most desirable developments for the area, such as an urban-format grocery store.

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Case Study 4 - Galway, Ireland

PHASE 5

05

Case Study 4 - Galway, Ireland

Case Study Overview

The University of Galway occupies a large plot of land along the River Corrib, west of the city center of Galway, Ireland (Figure 5-a). Using federal funds available to the city, Galway has initiated several infrastructure improvement projects near the university with the intent of promoting sustainable and compact development.



Figure 5-a: Aerial view of the University of Galway, located alongside the River Corrib in Galway, Ireland.

Source: [University of Galway](https://www.galwaycitycouncil.ie/)

Phase 5 - Precedent Studies

One of these redevelopment projects is the creation of an Innovation and Creativity District, which seeks to improve access and infrastructure within the city and the university campus. Another is the expansion of the Connemara Greenway, a pedestrian and cycling trail that is named for the nearby Connemara National Park. The path travels north from Galway city center, along the riverfront, and through the university campus. These projects, along with existing infrastructure, offer an interesting example of how activated public spaces can transform the neighborhoods around them.

Key Strategies / Features

In 2018, the Irish government completed a long-term strategic plan for the country, with special focus on resiliency and sustainability goals (Government of Ireland, 2018). As a means of funding the goals and projects included in the plan, a national Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) was established (Government of Ireland, 2025). Since the establishment of the Fund, the City of Galway has applied for and received several rounds of funding for projects with an emphasis on **sustainable urban development**. Although there is no direct equivalent to the URDF in the United States, the City of East Lansing can learn from several of the projects (outlined below) that Galway has pursued using its funds.

1. Connemara Greenway

Part of Galway's URDF funds are being used for the expansion of the city's cycling infrastructure. In 2016, Galway adopted a Transport Strategy report, establishing its vision "to create a connected city region driven by smarter mobility" (Galway City Council, 2016, p.3). The report included policies and plans to reduce car dependence. One of the City's goals mentioned in the report is to create an **integrated transit network** that allows for easy travel within the city and to destinations outside it (Galway City Council, 2016, p.47).

Case Study 4 - Galway, Ireland

The City hopes to use its URDF funds to advance this goal through the creation of the **Connemara Greenway**, the Galway portion of a national cycling project that aims to connect Galway to Clifden (Galway Tourism, n.d.). The Connemara Greenway will run along the River Corrib (Figure 5-b) and is part of the City's larger plan to encourage its residents to use **non-motorized transportation options**.

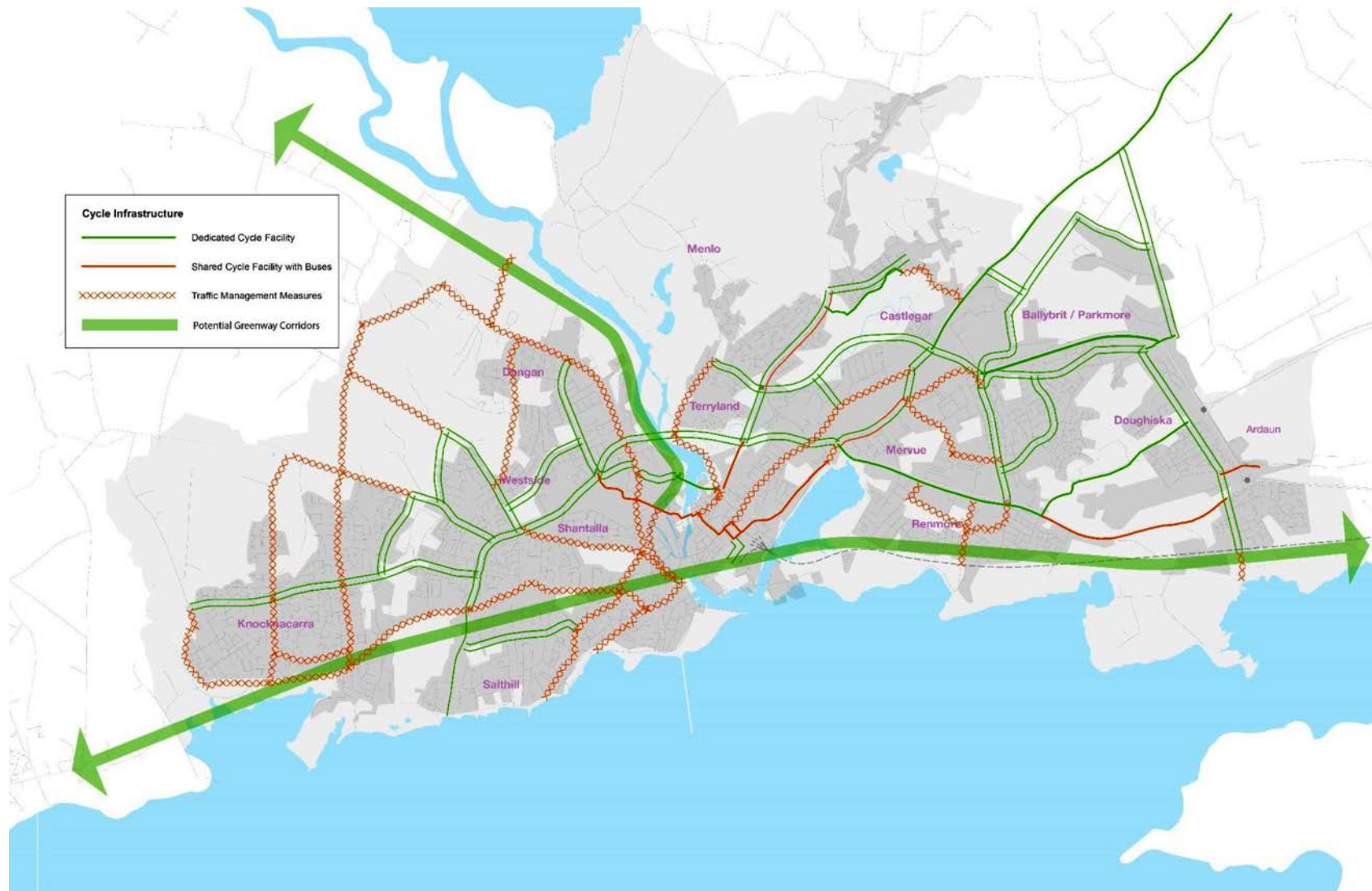


Figure 5-b: Map of Galway's proposed cycling infrastructure, showing the proposed Connemara Greenway extending from the city center, improving multimodal connectivity.

Case Study 4 - Galway, Ireland



Figure 5-c: An example of a path that runs alongside the River Corrib near Fisheries Field Park. Source: Google Maps, July 2025.

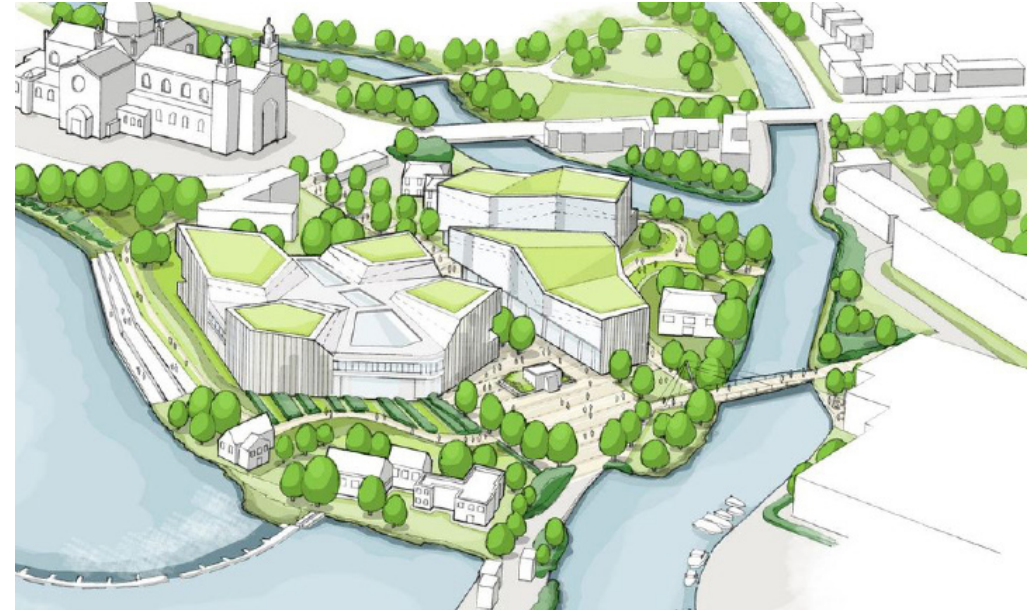


Figure 5-d: Artist impression of the Innovation and Creativity District. Source: [Irish Independent](#)

Although the Connemara Greenway is not yet complete, Galway does have some existing trail fragments that run parallel to the River (Figure 5-c). The Greenway serves as an example of how municipalities use **connectivity** as a means of encouraging **non-motorized transportation**.

2. Galway Innovation and Creativity District

In addition to new transportation infrastructure, areas along the River Corrib are being redeveloped in other ways. The creation of the Innovation and Creativity District along the riverfront was intended to strengthen the resources of the university, and **improve the overall public realm** (Galway City Council, 2025). As stated by the founder of the District, one of its primary goals was to “attract creators, innovators and entrepreneurs who wished to work in close proximity to others in a supportive and connected environment” (Breslin, 2023). Galway continues to work on improving its Innovation District, and a major component that the City is currently working towards is the creation of **new affordable student housing**, which aims to attract new and existing students to the area. Another goal of this development is to **improve the public space along the river** and throughout the neighborhood, as well as increase access to it (Galway City Council, 2025). This improved riverfront area, as interpreted by an artist, is shown in Figure 5-d. This project represents an example of the city strengthening its university through area redevelopment efforts and investment.

Case Study 4 - Galway, Ireland

Outcomes / Lessons

While construction of the Innovation and Creativity District is actively underway, notable improvements have already been made. **Bicycle infrastructure** through the university campus has improved access to the City of Galway, and helped connect the city to the university. These projects represent how investment in improving the **public realm** of an area can have tangible benefits for everyone who uses the spaces. Another important lesson to be learned is that collaboration between the city and the university can be a **powerful catalyst** for investment in public improvements, new housing, and an increased quality of life in the area.

Transferability to East Lansing

Galway's riverfront (Figure 5-e) can serve as a major source of inspiration for the East Village. One of the most important aspects of the redevelopment and transportation initiatives that happened in Galway City and the University of Galway, is how closely these projects relate to the results we gathered from various methods of data collection about the East Village District. Galway shows what can happen when a city and university work together to improve public and private spaces, through investments in transportation infrastructure, creating economic opportunities, and public realm activation. The City of East Lansing has a promising opportunity to connect the MSU campus to the East Village District by placing a walking/cycling trail that runs along the Red Cedar River.

This would improve pedestrian and student travel from MSU campus, through East Village along the Red Cedar River and ultimately connecting the proposed Riverfront Trail to the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail. Similar to the creation of the Connemara Greenway, which focused on encouraging residents to use non-motorized transportation options and URDP funds that the city is using to create an integrated transit network, the City of East



Figure 5-e: Aerial of the University of Galway Engineering Building, showing campus proximity to the River Corrib ([EUVIGA](#)).

Lansing has the chance to improve transportation on a citywide scale with the implementation of the Riverfront Trail. With increased access to the East Village District, the area can become a place of economic vitality, prompting the creation of an Innovation District like Galway's, which may benefit the City of East Lansing. These initiatives will encourage entrepreneurs to locate their businesses within the East Village District and contribute to a thriving economic and activated environment where students will want to stay post-graduation.

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Case Study 5 - Texas A&M

PHASE 5

06

Case Study 5 - Texas A&M

Case Study Overview

The City of College Station, Texas, is home to one of the country's largest universities: **Texas A&M**. With nearly **80,000** students enrolled at the university (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024), College Station faces many of the same challenges that the City of East Lansing does with balancing the needs of its students and permanent residents. In particular, the Northgate District, spanning several blocks and located just across the street from the university campus (Figure 6-a), has received special attention in recent years due to conflicting desires to **preserve the area as a residential neighborhood** and to promote it as an **entertainment, retail, and nightlife destination** (City of College Station, 2020). College Station touts the Northgate District as the City's "**premier entertainment district**" (City of College Station, n.d.) and advertises its **nightlife options** (Visit College Station, n.d.), yet a large portion of the District is composed of single-family and multi-family residences (City of College Station, 2025, p.30). Although College Station is still working to accommodate an increasing student presence, the City has been able to turn Northgate into a **vibrant and active neighborhood** that serves as an example of a **thriving student hub**.

Key Strategies / Features

The City of College Station has revisited its plans for the Northgate District several times in recent years. In 2020, the City put together a **Mobility Study & Operations Plan** for the Northgate District, identifying several priority areas, including late-night operations, parking planning, and public realm design (City of College Station, 2020, p.vii). In 2025, the City completed its Greater Northgate Small Area Plan, which involved extensive community outreach and engagement to develop a vision and action plan for the neighborhood. The contemplated strategies that are most germane to East Lansing's East Village are outlined below.

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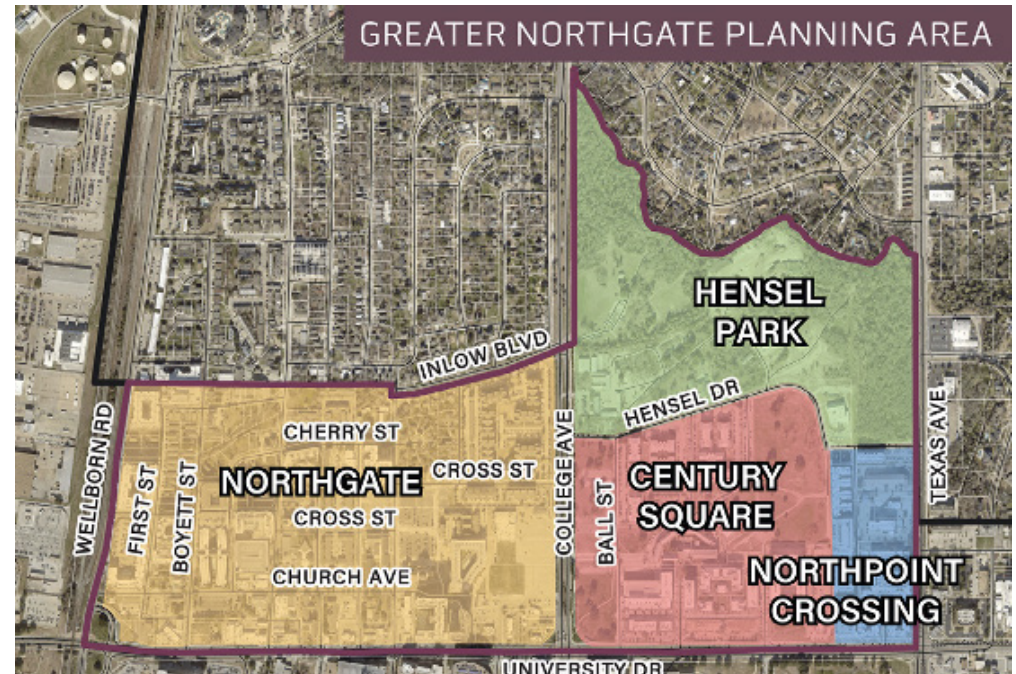


Figure 6-a: Location of the Northgate District, just across the street (University Drive) from Texas A&M University; Source: City of College Station, 2025 Greater Northgate Small Area Plan, p.2.

1. Pedestrian Safety

In its most recent effort to plan for the future of the Northgate District, the City of College Station conducted extensive community engagement with the goal of translating stakeholder feedback into concrete actions that might improve **pedestrian connectivity, enhance infrastructure, and provide lifestyle amenities** (City of College Station, 2025, p.5). One of the themes that emerged during engagement was public support for the extension of an existing pedestrian wall in the Northgate District (City of College Station, 2025, pp.8, 11).

Case Study 5 - Texas A&M

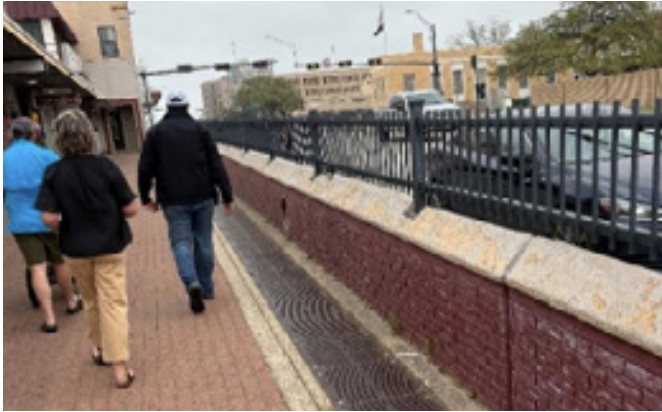


Figure 6-b: Existing wall protecting pedestrians walking along University Drive from vehicular traffic. Source: City of College Station, 2025 Greater Northgate Small Area Plan, p.12.

The neighborhood currently has a wall that provides a buffer for pedestrians walking along University -Drive the College Station equivalent of Grand River Avenue (Figure 6-b). University Drive is a heavy-traffic, six-lane roadway that participants in the city's community engagement meetings reported feeling unsafe walking alongside. The participants responded with overwhelmingly positive feedback to the proposed extension of the pedestrian wall, which currently ends partway through the Northgate District. As a consequence, the City's 2025 Greater Northgate Small Area Plan includes recommendations to extend the pedestrian wall.

2. Pedestrian Plazas

Scattered throughout the Northgate District are several pedestrian plazas and promenades (Figures 6-c, 6-d), a feature that is lacking in the East Village. These pedestrian features provide much needed public gathering spaces and relief from vehicular traffic. During the city's most recent community engagement efforts in 2025, the existing public spaces were praised by participants; however, many participants requested improved maintenance efforts in these areas. To improve these spaces, one of the strategic actions listed in the city's 2025 plan is to **"consider the addition of movable**

Phase 5 - Precedent Studies

seating, art installations, and decorative lighting" in the public plaza areas (City of College Station, 2025, p.21).

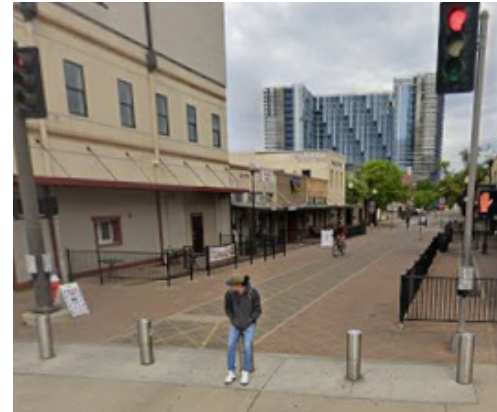


Figure 6-c: Pedestrian plaza closed to vehicular traffic on College Main. (GoogleMaps, March 2023.)

The 2020 Mobility Study had included similar recommendations, but such opportunities had not been realized in the five years between reports.

3. High-Rise Housing

Over the last several years, College Station has addressed housing pressures by approving several new high-rise housing developments in the Northgate District (Campbell, 2024). Many of these new developments are **mixed-use buildings with retail space on the ground floor** (Figure 6-e).



Figure 6-d: Pedestrian promenade on Patricia Street, featuring tree plantings with built-in seating options. (City of College Station, 2025 Greater Northgate Small Area Plan, p.20.)



Figure 6-e. The Rise at Northgate, an 18-story, mixed-use development completed in 2013 (Yelp).

Case Study 5 - Texas A&M

College Station is taking an aggressive approach to housing construction, with several more high-rise residential buildings in and around the Northgate District currently working through the approval process (Humble, 2026; Wilhelm, 2026).

Outcomes / Lessons

Although College Station's most recent study indicates that there is room for improvement, the Northgate District is widely acknowledged to be a **successful, student-oriented, mixed-use neighborhood**. Several lessons from Northgate may be translated to the East Village, specifically regarding public spaces.

First, any pedestrian spaces must be designed with **maintenance** and **aesthetics** in mind. Although the pedestrian spaces in the Northgate District are lauded by residents for their ability to provide public gathering spaces, College Station's community engagement efforts (Figure 6-f) revealed that the mere presence of designated pedestrian areas does not equate to good placemaking. These spaces must be designed with special attention to **lighting**, **seating**, and **decor** if they are to truly meet the public's desire for **safe, inviting public spaces**.

Second, the City of East Lansing can learn from how the College Station public responded positively to the creation of a pedestrian barrier along University Drive. The road shares many characteristics with Grand River Avenue (Figure 6-g), suggesting that a pedestrian wall or other barrier may be similarly well-received in the East Village.

Finally, the fact that College Station continues to approve high-rise, mixed-use buildings in and around the Northgate District evidences the demand for and success of that type of development (Figure 6-h). The City sets an example how well-planned dense housing, paired with concentrated restaurant and retail options, can create a lively and engaging community.

Phase 5 - Precedent Studies



Figure 6-f: Participants discuss future plans for the Northgate District at a public engagement meeting (City of College Station, 2025).



Figure 6-g: Aerial view of University Avenue, a wide, high-traffic roadway between campus and the Northgate mixed-use neighborhood (PrimoMedia).

Case Study 5 - Texas A&M



Figure 6-h: Rendering of the Verve Apartment Complex, a proposed 21-story building with ground-floor retail that is currently under review for construction in the Northgate District. (Campbell, A. (2024, July 1).

Transferability to East Lansing

The Northgate District adjacent to Texas A&M University has much in common with the East Village and Michigan State University. Several of College Station's strategies have contributed to the revitalization and development of the Northgate District as a **premier student-centered neighborhood**. Although East Lansing is slightly smaller in population than College Station, the East Village can benefit from the implementation of these same strategies. Designated parcels along the Grand River Corridor that are dedicated as public spaces could enhance how the East Village accommodates public gatherings of students and city residents alike. Much like the Northgate District, public spaces in East Village need to be **more than a space for people to come together**. Instead they must become places that lend **identity** to the area, with **art installations, diverse seating options, and decorative lighting**.

The entertainment district along University Drive attracts student residents to the area because of its close proximity to campus and nightlife activity.

Phase 5 - Precedent Studies

Focusing on the safety of the student residents and visitors walking along University Drive was an important part of the feedback received during the community engagement meetings hosted by the City of College Station. Their proposal to expand the existing pedestrian wall along University Drive can be directly applied to the safety concerns that community engagement participants expressed during the East Village Conversations that were had during Phase 3. MSU students and East Lansing residents expressed the desire for increased safety measures along the Grand River Corridor. This desire could be met by implementing a **pedestrian wall** or **by creating a row of natural buffers**, such as hedges or bushes, lining the Grand River Corridor. The Northgate District reflects much of what the City of East Lansing is trying to accomplish in the East Village. It serves as an **example of a student-centered district with housing, amenities, and nightlife options**.

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Key Lessons & Application

PHASE 5

07

Key Lessons & Application

The case studies explored in this phase of the project represent various strategies that could be explored to implement change and improvement in the East Village neighborhood. Berkeley, California created a regional destination by collaborating with the university to increase density, support diverse transportation via transit oriented developments, and the creation of a density bonus for public space to be provided. Ann Arbor represents an example of giving a greater student focus to new developments, and displays the importance of **diverse transportation**, especially **bike and pedestrian safety** as streetscapes and bikeways were found to improve both the perception of safety and the character of the neighborhood. Champaign, Illinois led a comprehensive redevelopment of the Campustown area of the city, and the larger University District near the University of Illinois' campus. This included diversified transportation improvements, targeted parking increases and surface level parking reductions, improved maintenance systems, and the creation of approximately 3,500 new apartment units.

This effort overall improved the **quality of life, closed a housing gap, and improved the aesthetics** of the district. In College Station, Texas, the city faced conflict between existing single family neighborhoods and the need for new student development around Texas A&M University, but achieved a targeted mixed use area with high rise buildings and pedestrian plazas and promenades to provide an enhanced sense of place. However, it also highlights the importance of making high places to ensure usability. Galway, Ireland planned a new mixed use trail near the University of Galway, connecting students into a larger trail system and providing a quality and functional place for students and local and regional residents. These case studies highlight the success of many of the concepts suggested throughout our phases. **Initiatives in transportation diversification, placemaking and aesthetic efforts**, the creation of new housing units, and the prioritization of pedestrian safety led to areas that are more usable and sustainable, and generate a higher tax base.

Comparative precedent matrix summarizing strategies, tools, outcomes, and key lessons from selected case studies

Case	Strategy	Tool	Outcome	Lesson
Ann Arbor, MI (University of Michigan)	Promote higher-density development to support population growth and address transportation needs	Modifying the zoning ordinance to allow more density while promoting multimodal transportation options	Expansion of protected bike lanes on major thoroughfares linked with increased building height allowances to enable greater density	The integration of land use policy and transportation planning is key to accommodating population growth
Berkeley, CA (University of California-Berkeley)	Support mixed use, dense development to promote walkability, cultural uses, housing, and employment to meet the needs of residents and students.	Amending zoning to allow for transit oriented development, mixed use, and public realm improvements while communicating with local university	Dense developments, with bus lines, bicycle lanes, and walking paths connected to local university campus life	Coordination with local campus is important to ensure smooth connectivity and successful integration of development
Champaign, IL (University of Illinois)	Redevelop the Campustown area of the City of Champaign into an aesthetically pleasing district with a student focus and diverse transportation options	Creation of action plans, zoning studies, creation of University District Commission, creation of new maintenance programs	Approximately 3,500 new housing units constructed, major new developments, creation of comprehensive bike infrastructure	Collaboration with the university and dedicated effort at the city and community level catalyzed new development and placemaking improvements
Galway, Ireland (University of Galway)	Encourage sustainable transportation options and provide connectivity between campus, Galway, and neighboring municipalities	Establishment of a Creativity and Innovation District in tandem with bicycle infrastructure expansions	Greater connectivity with broader region and expansion of non-motorized transportation options	Non-motorized transportation infrastructure is more successful when designed to connect to the broader region
College Station, TX (Texas A&M University)	Create an active entertainment district that integrates student housing with retail and nightlife options	Pedestrian infrastructure improvements and high-rise housing development	Dense, pedestrian-centered student district with active businesses and nightlife opportunities	To be successful, pedestrian infrastructure must be designed with place identity in mind



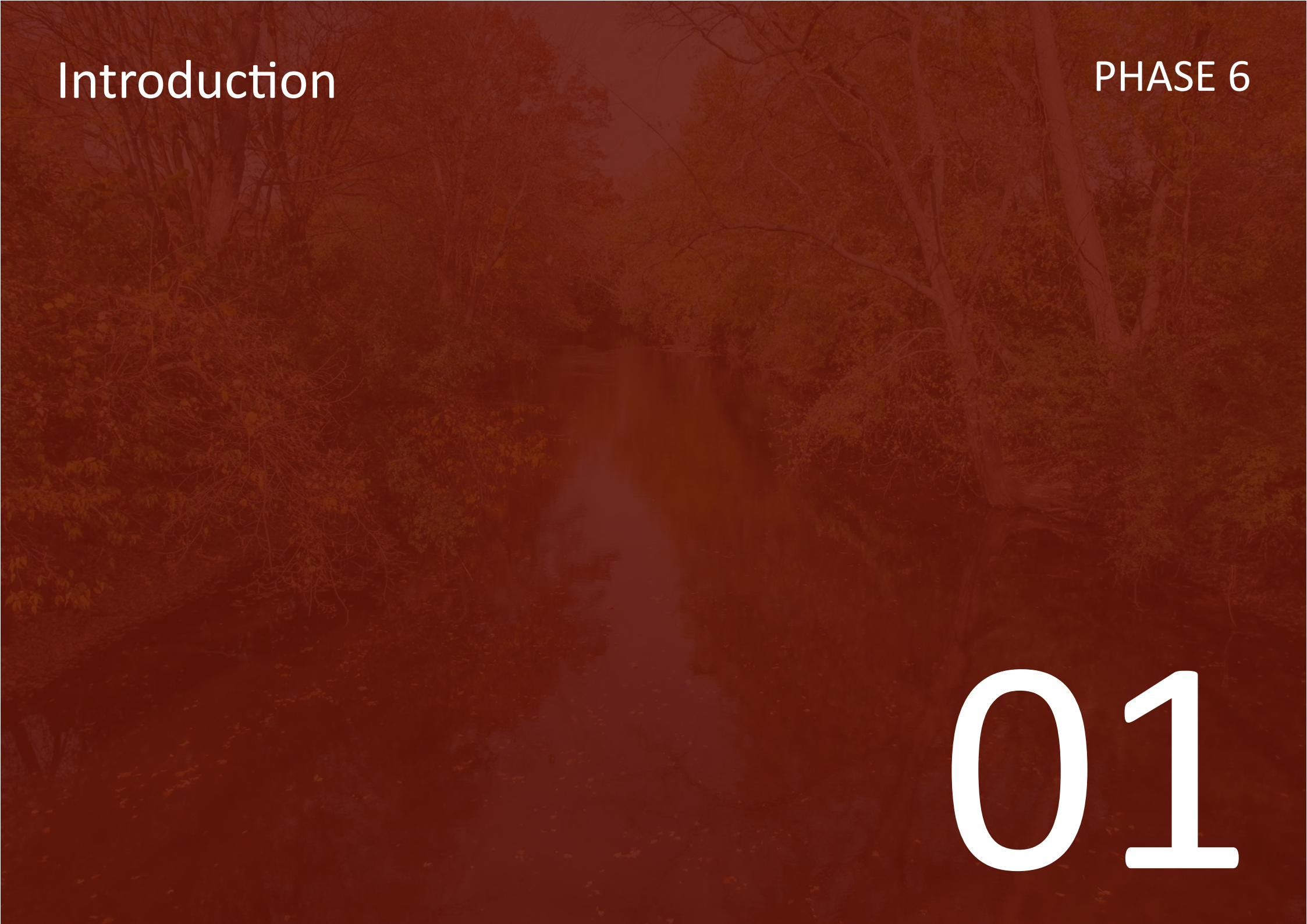
Phase 6

Implementation Strategies

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Introduction

PHASE 6

01

Introduction

Through this project, East Village has presented the Red Cedar Squad with a set of unique characteristics and opportunities. To initiate the process, the team conducted site evaluations and gathered qualitative data to better understand existing conditions (Figure 1-a). In addition, community engagement efforts were undergone to gain insight into local demographics, needs, and priorities.

Through Phases 1 through 3, Red Cedar Squad identified three primary emerging themes: weak infrastructure, underperforming public spaces, and a gap in student housing. Building on these findings, Phase 4 translated the themes into guiding principles such as access and mobility, place identity and quality of life, and mixed-use development and affordability, forming the foundation of the project's strategic framework.



Figure 1-a: Aerial Photo of a portion of East Village demonstrating current conditions, April 4th, 2026 (Terry Smith)

To further inform this framework, Red Cedar Squad examined comparable student-centered downtowns beyond the study area, including those at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign, IL), Texas A&M University (College Station, TX), University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI), University of California (Berkeley, CA), and the University of Galway (Galway, Ireland).

While moving forward into implementation, Phase 6 focuses on strategies developed throughout Phases 1 through 5. In preparation for this stage, Red Cedar Squad began the groundwork during Phase 4 by developing preliminary timelines and researching potential partners who may be interested in the area's development. In addition to identifying partners, assets will need to be secured to offset the costs associated with new development. Phase 6 builds upon Phase 4 by refining timelines, confirming partnerships, and identifying funding opportunities to support a successful implementation. These strategies are intended to leverage key opportunities within the district. In preparation for this stage, Red Cedar Squad began the groundwork during Phase 4 by developing preliminary timelines and researching potential partners who may be interested in the area's development. In addition to identifying partners, funding options were considered to offset the costs associated with new development. Phase 6 builds upon Phase 4 by refining timelines, confirming partnerships, and identifying funding opportunities to support successful implementation. These strategies are intended to leverage key opportunities within the district.

Overall, the combination of research, community engagement, and phased analysis has provided important insight into both effective approaches and potential limitations. This process enables Red Cedar Squad to evaluate and refine strategic actions, ultimately producing a framework for East Village that is practical, data-driven, and centered around community needs.

Findings Summary - Phases 1-5 Recap

PHASE 6

02

Findings Summary - Phases 1-5 Recap

To best understand the challenges East Village is currently facing, the Red Cedar Squad conducted multiple phases of research, beginning with qualitative research in Phase 1. During this initial phase, we primarily conducted site visits throughout the East Village (Figure 2-a). These site visits were able to give us first-hand experience of the built environment, the parking conditions, the current business stock, the bike infrastructure, and the existing housing stock and variety. During these site visits, we also conducted informal intercept interviews, during which we asked pedestrians or local business employees a few questions about their experiences living or working in the East Village. Finally, we gathered information on pedestrian counts at the busiest intersections and crosswalks. Through these site visits and informal intercept interviews, we were able to gather key information that guided our future research phases.

Many of our initial observations from Phase 1 regard the built environment of East Village. We observed a lack of bike infrastructure and poor sidewalk conditions, particularly on Grand River. We also noted that the area closest to the Red Cedar River was underutilized, mostly being used as informal parking or waste management for the apartment complexes nearby. In total, we conducted more than 15 informal intercept interviews, all of which helped us understand some of the challenges we observed during our site visits. Residents mentioned interest in river development and wanting more public space, while also complaining of the current condition of the river. Businesses mentioned that they struggle in the summer months when students are not in town. Both residents and businesses alike were interested in higher density student housing, as students want to be closer to campus and businesses want to have a denser customer base. Finally, our pedestrian counts confirmed that the few intersections into campus were congested at peak times. Organizing this research led us to our initial emerging themes: Weak Infrastructure, Underperforming Public Realms, and Student Housing Capacity Gap.

Phase 6 - Implementation Strategies

With these initial observations from our site visits and informal intercepts, the Red Cedar Squad had a clear path for our second phase of research: Quantitative Research. To expand on our emerging themes from Phase 1, we looked closely at the **zoning code and housing data** in East Village and throughout East Lansing as a whole to better understand how East Village's challenges came to be. When looking at the zoning, we focused on the Grand River corridor, which primarily comprised of commercial uses. For housing data, we looked at Census data and connected with the MSU Campus Planner to collect data on the campus housing stock. Finally, we reviewed secondary **news sources** about East Village.



Figure 2-a: Members of the Red Cedar Squad conducting initial site observations in the East Village on January 17, 2026

Findings Summary - Phases 1-5 Recap

Most of our quantitative data confirmed our initial emerging themes from Phase 1. We learned that all of East Village south of Grand River Avenue was zoned “East Village” (EV) in a 2007 plan to turn the area into a new, mixed-use neighborhood for young professionals and families. This new EV code is a **unique form-based code** with built-to lines and a higher height allowance than most other commercial zones in East Lansing. The other side of the Grand River Corridor is zoned B2, a broad commercial zone that does allow for mixed-use development. Our research confirmed that this was an **underutilized corridor**, with **9 non-conforming uses**, such as single family houses, and **4 vacant parcels or buildings** on Grand River Avenue alone. Housing data was more challenging to synthesize; however, we were still able to gain some key insights. We learned that there are many apartment complexes designed for students not in East Lansing at all, but instead in nearby communities like Okemos and Lansing. This led us to conclude that there is a **shortage of student housing** in East Lansing.

Our next, and most important, research phase was Phase 3: Community Engagement. While we conducted informal interviews in Phase 1, this was the Red Cedar Squad’s first chance to gain crucial community input on the challenges East Village faces. For our community engagement, we conducted **an online survey**, as well as hosted **3 community meetings and 1 business owner focus group**. At these meetings, there were a variety of activities for participants to vote on different types of development they preferred, as well as open ended questions about desired amenities and the infrastructure of East Village. We also conducted some **late night informal intercepts** to gain more information on nightlife patterns in East Village that we weren’t able to collect during Phase 1 due to inclement weather.

We collected some of our most valuable information from our community engagement. We learned that residents felt there were many **missing amenities**, such as a grocery store, a gym, local

restaurants, retail stores, and parks or public spaces. Participants also labeled the character of East Village as “Dingy”, “Bland”, and “Boring”. Some residents mentioned that **more reliable and safe bike lanes and walking paths** would lead them to walk, bike, or use public transportation more often. Through our nightlife informal interviews, participants displayed **interest in increased public transit** throughout East Village and the desire for more nightlife options in East Village. There was also a **clear contradiction between how students felt compared to property owners**. Students felt that housing was unaffordable and far from campus, while local property owners argued that they already provide affordable housing close to campus in East Village. Despite these differences, property owners and students were aligned in the desire for more amenities, parking, student-focused housing, and a pedestrian bridge across the Red Cedar River.

With the challenges of East Village clear, the Red Cedar Squad began work on Phase 4, our initial strategic framework to improve East Village and deliver the mixed-use, student-oriented neighborhood desired by students, residents, and business owners. We synthesized all of our findings and our initial emerging themes into **3 guiding principles** that can lead our strategic framework going forward:

- 1. Access & Mobility:** Improve connectivity within East Village to create a welcoming and accessible environment for all users.
- 2. Place Identity & Quality of Life:** Strengthen East Village’s identity and livability through revitalized gathering and commercial spaces.
- 3. Mixed-Use & Affordability:** Promote mixed-use development that enhances campus access while maintaining housing affordability.

Findings Summary - Phases 1-5 Recap

We developed 7 planning priorities to further sort our action items based on these guiding principles:

- 1.1: Support multi-modal transit
- 1.2: Improve pedestrian accessibility
- 2.1: Revitalize the Grand River Corridor
- 2.2: Develop more public spaces in East Village
- 2.3: Add character to East Village
- 3.1: Incentivize mixed-use development
- 3.2: Ensure affordable and attainable housing options

With this strategic framework in mind, we were able to conduct our final research phase, Phase 5: Case Studies. During this phase, we looked at college cities facing similar challenges to East Village and the strategies they used to address them. **We looked at cities that implemented mixed-use districts, expanded their multi-modal transportation network, revitalized primary corridors, and activated their riverfront.** Ultimately, we focused on five cities: Ann Arbor, MI; Berkeley, CA; Champaign, IL; Galway, Ireland and College Station, TX.

We looked at the different strategies these cities used to increase housing density, their public transit network, and their public spaces. Some key lessons we learned were that **collaboration among local partners, city and state government, property owners, developers, and the college itself (in our situation, MSU) is crucial.**

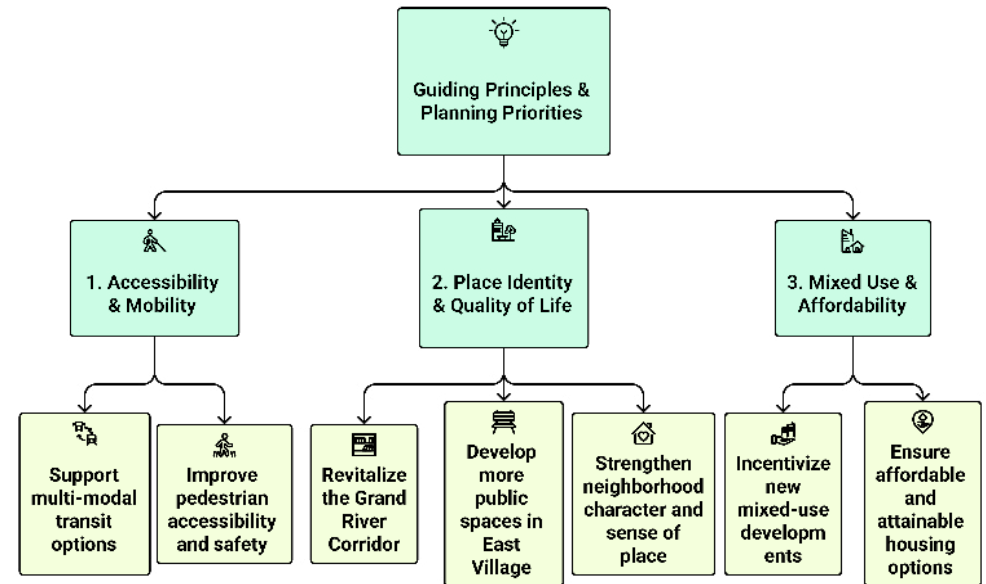


Figure 2-b: Guiding Principles and Planning Priorities

We realized that to best accommodate growth, pedestrian infrastructure, transportation planning, and land use policy must be well aligned to fully support redevelopment and higher density housing. From our first research phases, our initial strategic framework, and our case studies, we are confident that these recommendations will properly address the challenges realized in our research.



Implementation Strategies & Framework

- Access & Mobility

PHASE 6

03

Planning Priority 1.1 - Support Multi-Modal Transit

Improving multi-modal transit in East Village is essential for connecting residents of the neighborhood to MSU's campus, downtown Lansing, East Lansing, and the broader regional transportation network. The East Village currently lacks dedicated bike lanes, and the existing CATA service is concentrated along Grand River and Bogue Street, leaving many of the residential areas further from the Grand River Corridor underserved. The following actions focus on expanding transit access, building protected bike lanes, and securing community support in order to fund these improvements long-term.

Action 1.1.1 – Garner resident support for increased CATA funding millage

Building local support for a CATA millage increase is a short-term priority. Transit in East Village is currently underused and concentrated along Grand River and Bogue Street, leaving many residential areas without easy access. Since the City of East Lansing cannot actively campaign for a ballot proposal, local advocacy groups, residents, and MSU students must lead petition efforts. Per the Home Rule City Act, a petition requires signatures from at least 5% of qualified registered electors. The city clerk then certifies the petition and places it on the next regular election ballot. A successful millage increase would fund route expansions and improve service frequency. A key issue is that increased service would likely operate at a loss, making sustained community backing essential.

Action 1.1.2 – Reroute CATA Route 31 to stop within East Village

Rerouting CATA Route 31 deeper into East Village residential areas is a long-term action (Figure 3-a). Key stakeholders include CATA, which has the authority to reroute lines, and Michigan State University, which would likely face increased operating costs. Funding could come from MSU, a successful millage increase, the

Phase 6 - Implementation Strategies

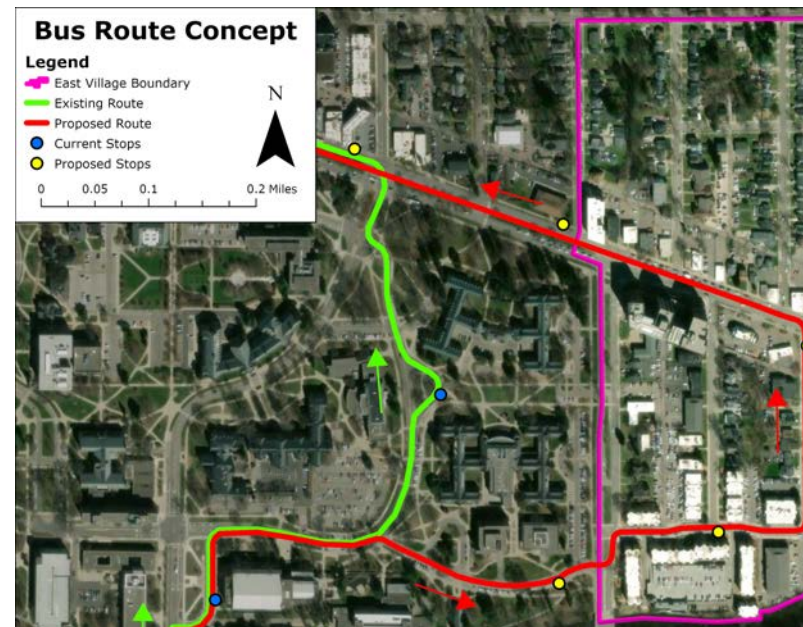


Figure 3-a: Proposed CATA Bus #31 reroute with new stops connecting East Village to Downtown and MSU, improving transit connectivity in the neighborhood.

city, or property owners. Before implementation, a feasibility study must examine ridership impacts. A major challenge is convincing MSU to sponsor a route not explicitly on campus, which would likely require a clear increase in student residents living in East Village. Infrastructure improvements, including potential road orientation changes, also requires significant time to plan and execute.

Action 1.1.3 – Replace street parking with protected bike lanes

Implementing protected bike lanes on Bogue Street and along the Red Cedar River is a medium-term action. The City of East Lansing, while MDOT must be involved in any changes near Grand River Avenue. Funding opportunities include MDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, although applications for this grant have been paused due to a lack of current funding. A pilot project on Bogue Street was attempted in the fall of 2019 but was removed after three months; restarting a pilot would gather community feedback

Planning Priority 1.1 - Support Multi-Modal Transit

before permanent installation. The east-west lane along East Village would remove riders from fast-moving Grand River traffic, improving perceived safety. Bike lanes should not be placed directly on Grand River Avenue due to high-speed traffic; instead, install protected bike lanes closer to the sidewalk to increase real and perceived safety. (Figure 3-b)

Action 1.1.4 – Work with MDOT to add a dedicated bus lane on Grand River Avenue

Adding a dedicated bus lane on Grand River Avenue is a long-term action requiring partnership between MDOT and the City of East Lansing (Figure 3-c). Funding could come from MDOT grants, state loans, or federal transportation funds. A full Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line was proposed in 2017, but was put on hold due to concerns about federal funding access. A dedicated bus lane is more realistic and would still improve service for Routes 1 and 31. Key issues include the complexity of coordinating with MDOT on a state highway and the need for traffic studies. This approach provides some BRT benefits, such as faster, more reliable service, but without the full cost of a BRT system.

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Figure 3-b: Image of past bike lane pilot project along Bogue Street showing a history of multimodal infrastructure implemented in the neighborhood (2019), MSU Department of Infrastructure Planning & Facilities.

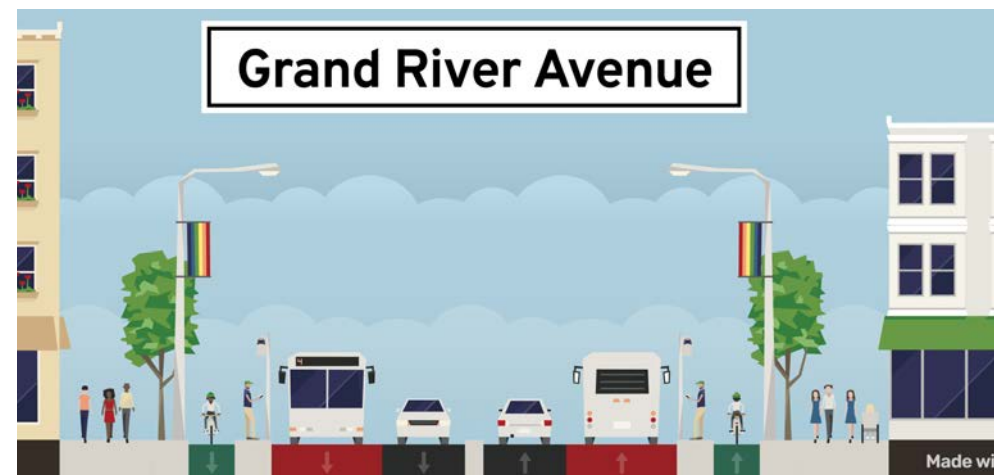


Figure 3-c: Mockup of potential street layout on Grand River Avenue, featuring protected bike lanes and a dedicated bus lane.

Planning Priority 1.2 - Improve Pedestrian Accessibility

In our research Phases 1 to 3, we identified the need to diversify transportation options. As part of this, the need to improve pedestrian accessibility and perceptions of safety emerged. To achieve this, the following planning priority was identified:

The planning priority was identified both from survey respondents who reported feeling unsafe as a pedestrian within the East Village area and our own site observations during our site visits. Improving pedestrian accessibility is essential to support a diverse transportation system and to support local businesses in East Village. The city can approach this through various methods, including new paths and road diets, as laid out in the following actions.

Action 1.2.1 - Conduct More Pedestrian Counts for Grand River Avenue

In previous phases, we conducted pedestrian counts throughout the East Village, but these were largely focused within the south zone of the neighborhood. To improve data and support pedestrian-focused redevelopment within the Grand River Ave Corridor, it will be essential to conduct more pedestrian counts in this zone. Future counts will also be done in better weather than our original counts done in the midst of winter, yielding more accurate counts for year-round pedestrian usage of Grand River ave. The data collected will support the need for improved pedestrian amenities along the roadway.

Action 1.2.2 - Pilot Temporary Infrastructure Changes

Cities often implement temporary infrastructure changes using easily installed and removable materials. This is sometimes referred to as tactical urbanism (Figure 3-d). Community members often take part in the installation of such programs. Previously, a temporary bike lane was tested on the Bogue Street bridge, but it ultimately did not become permanent infrastructure. Testing out more programs similar to this within the neighborhood could be one short term action that may lead to success in creating safe routes for pedestrians or bicyclists, as well as build public support for permanent infrastructure. Beyond bike lanes, this infrastructure could also include other traffic calming infrastructure, such as chicanes or traffic circles.



Figure 3-d: Example of community members partaking in the creation of a tactical urbanist traffic circle (Safe Routes Partnership).

Planning Priority 1.2 - Improve Pedestrian Accessibility

Action 1.2.3 - Create a Portal for Residents to Submit Photos of Sidewalks in Need of Repair

The creation of an online portal for residents to submit photos of sidewalks that need repairs will support community involvement in the improvement of the neighborhood by allowing residents to partake in the prioritization of maintenance initiatives. This can contribute to a sense of community and identity for the residents. The portal will allow the City of East Lansing to prioritize repairs based on repeated reports and documented safety hazards. Documenting the data collected through this portal will allow the City of East Lansing to prioritize locations with repeated reports, and thus focus repair efforts where they are most needed. Using a program like SeeClickFix allows residents to report worn-down infrastructure in East Lansing without having to completely create a new portal submission system from scratch.

Action 1.2.4 - Add Additional Crosswalks and Lights to Grand River Ave and Bogue Street

The City of East Lansing should formally request that MDOT approve two new high-visibility crosswalks with pedestrian-activated lights on Grand River Ave and Bogue Street. The largest roads through the East Village neighborhood are Grand River Ave and Bogue St. Grand River Ave especially highly prioritizes car traffic over pedestrian experience as it is a state highway. However, the creation of more crosswalks along these roadways would increase the access points to the neighborhood, improving overall accessibility from the north and west, especially to the southern zone of the project. The addition of street lights to the roadways would also improve the perception of safety for pedestrians by illuminating their path and improving visibility to drivers.

Action 1.2.5 - Create Permanent Traffic Calming Infrastructure

One medium term action is to make the temporary infrastructure explored in Action 1.2.3 permanent. The “Pilot to Permanent” model implemented in Ann Arbor should be replicated in East Village to convert successful pilot projects into permanent infrastructure. This would require successful funding efforts, which may be secured through federal grant programs such as Safe Street and Roads for All (SS4A), or support from street funding at various levels of government. Considering much of the concern for pedestrians in the area is related to a level of perceived safety, systems such as this help pedestrians feel prioritized and significantly increase overall usage of pedestrian infrastructure.

Action 1.2.6 - Widen the Bogue Street Bridge

Currently, the Bogue St bridge is limited in space. The sidewalks are narrow and, found through the previous pilot bike lane, there is opposition to reducing car lanes. Attempting to fund the widening of the bridge deck is one long term solution that would allow for larger sidewalks and the creation of bike lanes without reducing space for car traffic. Essential partnerships would be the City of East Lansing and Michigan State University to take initiative on the improvement of the roadway, and the Michigan Department of Transportation or the United States Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration to provide funding opportunities. (Figure 3-e)



Figure 3-e: An example of the near by Farm Lane Bridge that demolished and rebuilt with an updated design along with an accompanying pedestrian bridge.

Planning Priority 1.2 - Improve Pedestrian Accessibility

Action 1.2.7 - Build a river trail on the northern side of the Red Cedar River

One of the long-term actions would be to create a river trail following the northern route of the Red Cedar River. This would require coordination with property owners, land acquisition, and significant funding. Currently, the northern riverfront is largely fronted by parking lots located on privately owned property. Relocating the parking would be one action necessary to the creation of a river trail. Another consideration would be the presence of a flood plain on the riverfront. It would be essential to work closely with environmental professionals to create a river trail that is ecologically sensitive and able to be permitted on the land. The City of East Lansing can address this problem by hiring environmental consultants to perform a feasibility study in order to apply for permits to get the project started. This is in coordination with Action 2.2.1: Conduct a feasibility study on a riverfront park.

Action 1.2.8 - Construct a Pedestrian Bridge Connecting to East Campus

Just across the river from the East Village is MSU's East Campus. Between the river's southern bank and the campus area is the Sanford Natural Area. This goal would require creating a path through the natural area to connect into a bridge that would cross to the East Village. While the presence of the natural area creates a challenge for the feasibility of this goal, we found support among respondents for the creation of a bridge to improve connectivity, and it would be one of the single most effective actions in improving accessibility to the East Village. A major constraint is that the Sanford Natural Area is protected, meaning that development of the area would require overwhelming community support and approval from the MSU Board of Trustees. The City of East Lansing can address this by working with community advocacy groups to gain support as well as generate traffic models demonstrating

Phase 6 - Implementation Strategies

how this will reduce car congestion in the area. (Figure 3-f). This is a long-term goal that would first require proof of great support among the community and MSU to consider development in the Sanford Natural Area.



Figure 3-f: Construction of the New Farm Lane Bridge Project, highlighting the new pedestrian bridge to help alleviate foot traffic.

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Implementation Strategies & Frameworks

- Place Identity & Quality of Life

PHASE 6

04

Planning Priority 2.1 - Revitalize the Grand River Corridor

As the commercial backbone of the East Village, the Grand River Avenue corridor should be a pleasant, safe place to spend time for all. Currently, the corridor consists primarily of **low-density, auto-oriented commercial uses** as well as **vacant buildings and lots**. This lack of accessible density results in a less appealing neighborhood, and less foot traffic to the businesses along Grand River Avenue. It also creates a hostile environment to **pedestrians and cyclists**, who have to contend with sub-par street and sidewalk infrastructure. A revitalization of the Grand River corridor would provide the East Village with crucial amenities and businesses, and would increase the aesthetic appeal and overall use of Grand River Avenue.

Action 2.1.1 - Combine vacant parcels for increased density

A short-term priority that would increase availability of land for redevelopment efforts is the combination of several **vacant parcels** of land. Currently, these vacant parcels along Grand River Avenue are going unused within the East Village area. These **parcels** were divided to support small-scale commercial uses, which are still common in the area. The combination of these smaller adjacent tracts into **larger parcels** would allow for larger buildings to be constructed on the land, supporting future mixed-use development in the East Village, and helping to bring life back to the Grand River corridor. This could be accomplished by the City of East Lansing allowing the combination of **adjacent parcels**, as well as minor amendments to the zoning code to allow for increased density in the area. A potential caveat to this action is that many parcels are **privately owned**, and will need to be purchased by the city in order for a combination to be possible.

Action 2.1.2 - Connect current and future business and property owners with the East Lansing Downtown Development Authority

The East Lansing Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a quality resource for many current and future businesses along the

Phase 6 - Implementation Strategies

Grand River corridor. The DDA oversees several programs that can aid in **revitalization** of the commercial corridor, such as the **Facade Improvement Program**. This helps businesses fund the repair of their facades, improving their street presence, foot traffic, and the overall character of the East Village. In the short-term, a flier or other method of establishing contact between business owners and the DDA is recommended to enable the use of these programs.

Action 2.1.3 - Amend the zoning ordinance to limit drive-thrus on Grand River Avenue

Currently, many businesses along the corridor have drive-thrus that intake from, or empty onto, Grand River Avenue. This creates a potentially **dangerous** scenario not only for vehicle traffic travelling at high speed, but also **pedestrians and cyclists** using the corridor. Drive-thrus create conflict points with the sidewalk in many places, as well as on some side streets (Figure 4-a).

An amendment to the East Lansing zoning ordinance can be made by the city to restrict drive-thrus from direct access with Grand River. This **short-term solution** would not only improve the character of the neighborhood, as less cars are interfering with alternative transportation options, but it would also improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists along the corridor.



Figure 4-a: Drive-thrus from side street into Grand River Avenue creating conflict point.

Planning Priority 2.1 - Revitalize the Grand River Corridor

Action 2.1.4 - Add benches and other street furniture to Grand River Avenue.

A medium-term addition that will improve the **streetscape** along Grand River Avenue is the installation of additional benches, trash cans, bike racks, and other street furniture. Currently, the **sidewalks** flanking Grand River are **barren and hostile**. This lack of pedestrian infrastructure makes the corridor a less pleasant place to walk, shop, and spend time (Figure 4-b). It also harms users of other transportation, such as biking and bus transit. Lack of public bike racks means people are less likely to bike in the area, as they have no place to park them. Transit users are less likely to wait for the bus if there is no **shelter or bench**. Using grant funds to install additional street infrastructure will increase the usability, and appeal, of the area. The City of East Lansing and the Downtown Development Authority can use several funding sources, such as **Neighborhood Enhancement Mini-Grants**, to obtain small-scale funding for minor infrastructure improvements.

Action 2.1.5 - Plant additional trees and other greenery to improve the streetscape

The addition of **street trees and other foliage** to the Grand River corridor would make walking and cycling in the area much more pleasant. Grand River Avenue has some street trees today, but far fewer than other parts of East Lansing. Street trees offer shade, reduce noise, and create a buffer between pedestrians and traffic (see Figure 4-c). They also enhance neighborhood character and make the area more inviting to spend time in. This can be achieved in the **medium-term** through cooperation with the City of East Lansing, the Downtown Development Authority, and the Michigan Department of Transportation. City agencies can use Neighborhood Enhancement Mini-Grants to fund these minor infrastructure improvements along the Grand River Corridor.



Figure 4-b: Existing condition of the Grand River Corridor showing a lack of street trees, shade, and pedestrian-friendly design, resulting in an underutilized and uninviting public space (Google Maps, 2021).



Figure 4-c: Conceptual transformation illustrating how the Grand River Corridor could evolve into a more walkable, vibrant, and people-centered streetscape Source: (National Landing Streetscape Master Plan, n.d.) .

Planning Priority 2.1 - Revitalize the Grand River Corridor

Action 2.1.6 - Attract a major retail chain or grocery store to the area, establishing a modern urban market.

One of the most requested amenities among residents found in Phase 3 was a **quality grocery store**. In the **long-term**, establishing a smaller-scale urban grocery store would greatly improve quality of life in the East Village. Recently, mixed-use developments with smaller urban markets on the ground floor have proven to be successful in the Lansing area, with supermarket chain Meijer opening the mixed-use Capital City Market, located in Downtown Lansing, in 2020. Retailers, like Meijer and Target, have been opening these markets in mixed-use developments across the country.



Figure 4-d: Existing condition of the Grand River Corridor showing a lack of street trees, shade, and pedestrian-friendly design, resulting in an underutilized and uninviting public space (Google Maps, 2021).

Through programs like Meijer's Neighborhood Focus, which supports the creation of **small-scale urban markets**, as well as other financial and agency support, a true mixed-use grocery store can help the East Village better serve its residents. As illustrated in the conceptual transformation of the Grand River Corridor (Figure 4-d and 4-e), which shows how a mixed-use redevelopment with a ground-floor grocery store could convert the vacant site into a more walkable, vibrant, and people-centered public space.



Figure 4-e: Conceptual transformation illustrating how the Grand River Corridor could evolve into a more walkable, vibrant, and people-centered streetscape with a proposed mixed-use redevelopment with a ground-floor grocery store, transforming the vacant site into an active, pedestrian-oriented public space that meets community needs.

Planning Priority 2.2 - Develop more public spaces in East Village

Our second planning priority under the guiding principle Place Identity and Quality of Life is to develop **more public spaces** in East Village as our analysis shows that there were no public parks, plazas, or trails. This planning priority focuses on working with the community to add such spaces and ideally a **riverfront park**.

Action 2.2.1 - Conduct a feasibility study on a riverfront park

Our first short-term action is to conduct a feasibility study on a riverfront park. Due to existing development and the floodplain around the Red Cedar River, converting the area into a modern riverfront park would require complex redevelopment and coordination between many departments, including local property owners, the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, and state and federal environmental agencies. The Planning Department should generate a brief study on all relevant agencies, adjacent property owners, and local opinion to understand the current conditions.

Action 2.2.2 - Enforce stricter parking regulations throughout East Village

Our second short-term action is to enforce stricter parking regulations throughout East Village. Currently, the limited free land around the Red Cedar River is used for informal parking, preventing further research and realization of a potential park. PACE currently operates parking enforcement on public streets and parking lots, and Village Drive is under their jurisdiction. While this is a small step in transitioning the area into an established park, at the very least it can clear up the area and provide more open space by the river, considering it's currently undeveloped.

Action 2.2.3 - Hold community meetings about potential park locations and 2.2.4: Investigate potential state and federal funding for park development

Continuing with the ultimate goal of a riverfront park, our first medium-term goal is to hold community meetings about potential park locations. This gives the local community a chance to have more direct input on the types of recreational activities they desire and where they should be. At the same time, our next medium term goal is to find potential state and federal funding for park development. State and federal funding availability changes frequently with changes in the economy and administrations, so this is a crucial step once the initial feasibility study is completed.

Action 2.2.5 - Partner with existing food service to create outdoor dining schemes

Moving away from the river, our last medium-term goal is to partner with existing food service providers to create outdoor dining schemes. These businesses would provide the outdoor seating furniture, and the city would provide permits and sidewalk space to expand outdoor operations, which could activate the streetscape as well as increase business. This is a strategy that became more commonplace during the pandemic and has since remained popular in large cities and mid size cities alike since.

Action 2.2.6 - Purchase vacant parcels to develop into urban plazas

Our long-term goal is for the city to meet with owners of vacant parcels and agree on terms to buy the property below market value after a certain period of time if the parcel remains undeveloped. The city could then convert the vacant parcels into temporary plazas while they search for a developer to purchase the land. This is a unique option that would require a significant negotiating period with current land owners, however it could encourage property owners to develop their parcels, or add more public space.

Planning Priority 2.3 - Add Character to East Village

As the Red Cedar Squad, in conjunction with the City of East Lansing, is aiming to create an identity and revitalize the East village, a key component is creating character within the area. Character can be created in a multitude of ways, however for East Village and its identified challenges, there are a few key tools that would have the most impact on the area. The following tools and actions were selected due based on the prior analysis to their attainability, feasibility and overall impact within the community.

Action 2.3.1- Create an independent East Village neighborhood committee

Firstly, the Red Cedar Squad proposes that the city creates an independent East Village neighborhood committee to foster a connection between residents and developers. The key partner responsible for this would be the planning department itself, as it is the connecting entity between residents and the proposed developers. For the committee to be successful, the planning department must create guidelines for the make-up of this committee (i.e. a certain number of business owners, a certain number of residents, some sort of student representation) to maintain an equitable and fair representation of the community. If used, this committee could aid the city in the community engagement outlined in other actions by acting as a middle ground or partner within the East Village community. This action in East village is a highly attainable goal, identified as being a short term action (1-3 years) and has a high impact on public perception of the East Village project. As the committee would be a product of the East Lansing Planning Department, most funding would be internal, with staff supporting committee creation, management, and facilitation.

Action 2.3.2- Partner with the College of Arts and Letters to commission murals

The second proposed action to add character to East Village is a partnership between the city and the Michigan State University College of Arts and Letters. The purpose of this partnership would be to encourage university students to create murals within the East Village. Theoretically, students could design and create the murals for class work, with the supplies being provided by the College of Arts and Letters as it currently is. The designs depicted in the murals would be created both by the students and the residents of East Village through community engagement (done in conjunction with the neighborhood committee), and would ideally would be reflective of the ideal East Village character. To decide which buildings these murals would be painted, property owners and Business owners would apply to have a mural done on their property. Because this action relies on the agreement of property owners, the murals are constrained to their participation, a limiting factor. An example of an urban mural can be seen in Figure 4-g. This example is in Lansing, a city of many murals that has a strong community identity. The creation of murals within this space would promote placemaking and provide a sense of identity within the community.

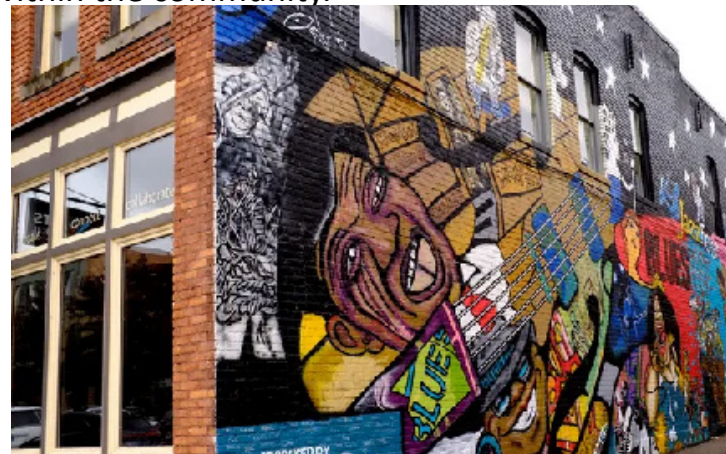


Figure 4-g: Mural in Lansing Michigan, Vickki Dozier 2018

Planning Priority 2.3 - Add Character to East Village

This is also a **short term action**, making it more attainable as a faster tactic in revitalization of East Village. Additionally, as this goal relies upon the collaboration with Michigan State University students and their labor, this is a low-cost action. If mural design and creation were a part of MSU class curriculum, this circumvents the monetary investment needed for the murals implementation. If not sponsored by MSU, the murals could be sponsored by building or business owners for their own spaces, still in collaboration with students.

Action 2.3.3 - Develop a uniformed color palette, design standards, and East Village branded flags

Alongside other artistic placemaking efforts listed above, the creation of East Village specific design standards, a village color palette and flags branded for the East Village would create a strong identity for the space, as a lack of this was a common sentiment in the conducted community engagement (Figure 4-h). This is another short-term goal that is attainable, but may require more public and governmental engagement. Because this is a policy and oriented goal based on governmental engagement, the funding required for this is low. This is also due to discussions being incorporated into planning commission meetings rather than requiring their own. For implementation, the East Lansing planning commission and department of planning would decide on design standards for East Village (i.e. exterior building materials, facade articulation, shade coverage) in conjunction with community members (possibly the recommended community boards), setting East Village apart from the surrounding East Lansing landscape. Additionally, by creating a set color scheme for the area, this specific placemaking effort would be further cemented and the area would be easily identifiable to all residents. An East Village flag would add even more character and designation to East Village and is one of the more realistic actions that can provide a subtle but lasting impact (Figure 4-i).

Phase 6 - Implementation Strategies

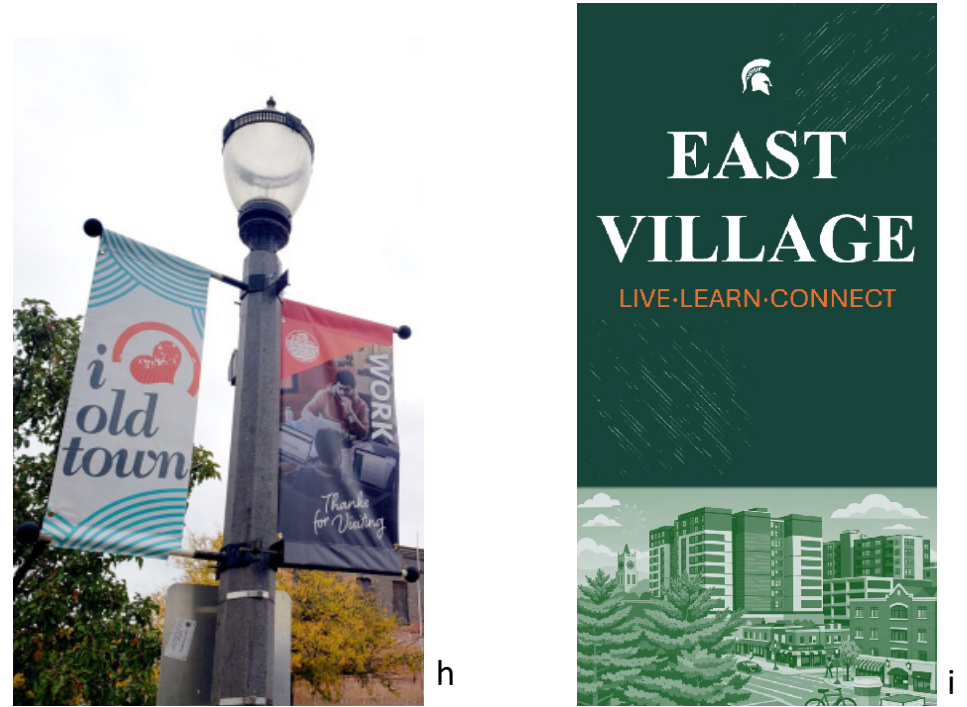


Figure 4-h & i: Example of City Flags on Lightposts, Lansing Michigan Michael Markoch, 2021 (h) & Mock up of a Lightpost banner for the East Village Community, Terry Smith (i)

The flag could be designed in conjunction with residents and students, who could come up with ideas while working with the city to ensure that the signs are appropriate and inviting. Public Works would then work to hang these signs on existing traffic signals, signs, and street lights in East Village. As this is a smaller and more attainable goal, funding opportunities for this action could be found within the East Lansing Neighborhood Enhancement Mini-Grant Program. This is a small grant program (\$250) perfectly suited to the monetary needs of a project such as the flag design.



Implementation Strategies & Frameworks

- Mixed-Use & Affordability

PHASE 6

05

Planning Priority 3.1 - Incentivize Mixed-Use Development

One of the Red Cedar Squad’s recommendations for the City of East Lansing that emerged during the strategic framework phase of this project was to promote connectivity between the East Village and the MSU campus by encouraging affordable, mixed-use development close to the university. The following planning priority was identified as one way to help the city achieve this goal:

Encouraging mixed-use in the East Village was selected as a planning priority because doing so will not only help East Lansing address the city’s **student housing shortage** identified during our quantitative data analysis, but it is also a way to respond to the **public’s desire for denser, mixed-use housing options** (Figure 5-a). **Two concrete actions** that the City of East Lansing may take to incentivize mixed-use development are outlined below.

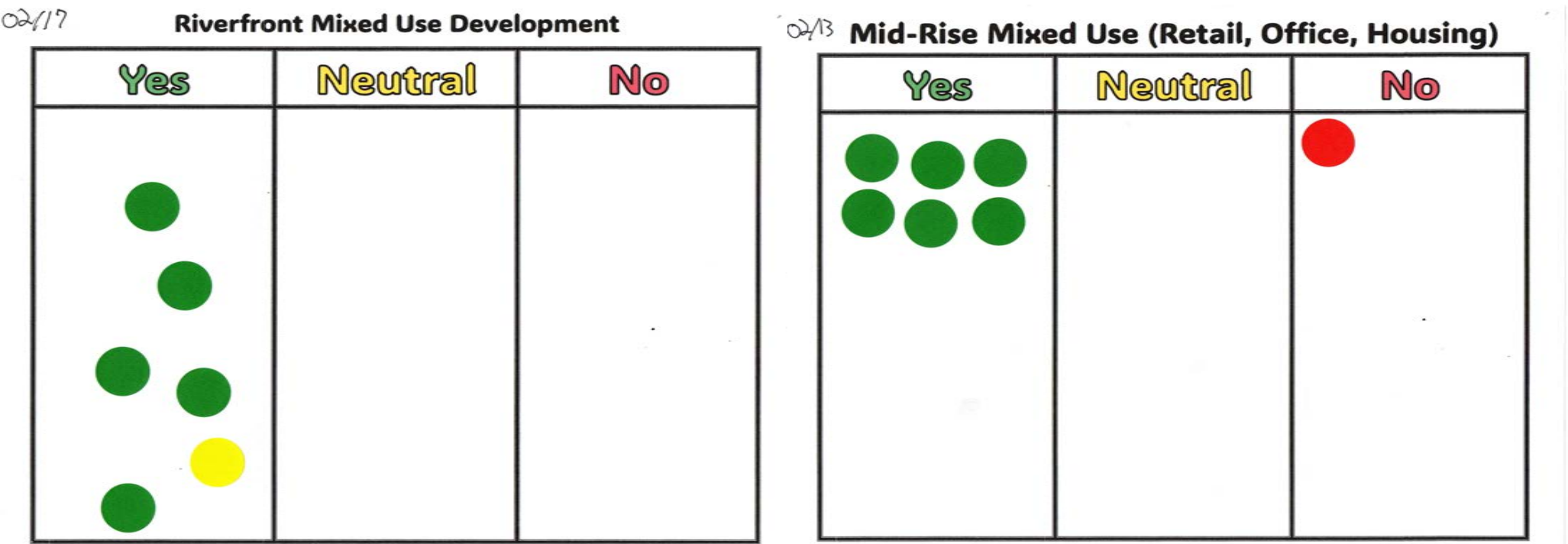


Figure 5-a: Examples of dot sticker voting results from Phase 3 community engagement efforts, demonstrating the public’s receptiveness to mixed-use development in the East Village.

Planning Priority 3.1 - Incentivize Mixed-Use Development

Action 3.1.1 - Reduce Parking Requirements Along Grand River Avenue

One way that the City of East Lansing can incentivize denser, mixed-use development is to **relax its parking requirements** along Grand River Avenue. The City of East Lansing currently allows properties located in business districts to provide off-premise parking instead of providing all required parking on site (East Lansing Zoning Ordinance § 50-814(4)). The properties bordering Grand River to the north are zoned B-2 and are, therefore, theoretically able to take advantage of this parking flexibility. However, off-premise parking may only be placed in business districts, the parking district, or municipal parking systems (unless otherwise approved by the City Council). The properties along Grand River Avenue are largely surrounded by residential zoning districts, which are not suitable for constructing off-premise parking. What this means is that **Grand River properties do not have many viable options for off-premise parking**, even though the zoning code gives them the option.

The City may consider amending its parking ordinance to be even **more favorable to mixed-use development** by either reducing minimum parking ratios for properties along Grand River or allowing off-premise parking to locate in zoning districts other than those currently listed in the ordinance. This is a **short-term goal** that could be accomplished in a matter of months. The City Planning Department could initiate a zoning code amendment **without needing to use any outside resources or funding**. The implications of reducing parking ratios along Grand River Avenue are twofold. First, minimizing the amount of parking available **encourages alternative modes of transportation**, such as public transit or biking. Second, reducing parking requirements **encourages an active streetscape** by allowing businesses to locate alongside one another without surface parking breaking up the continuity.

Action 3.1.2 - Encourage Redevelopment of Underutilized Parcels Along Grand River Avenue

Perhaps the best locations for new development in the East Village are lots that currently sit vacant or underutilized. Such parcels are suitable for redevelopment because they would not require the relocation of existing businesses or homes to accommodate new construction. There are currently a handful of **vacant commercial properties along Grand River Avenue** (Figure 5-b). It is in the city's best interest to **encourage the redevelopment of these underutilized parcels** in order to advance East Lansing's development goals.

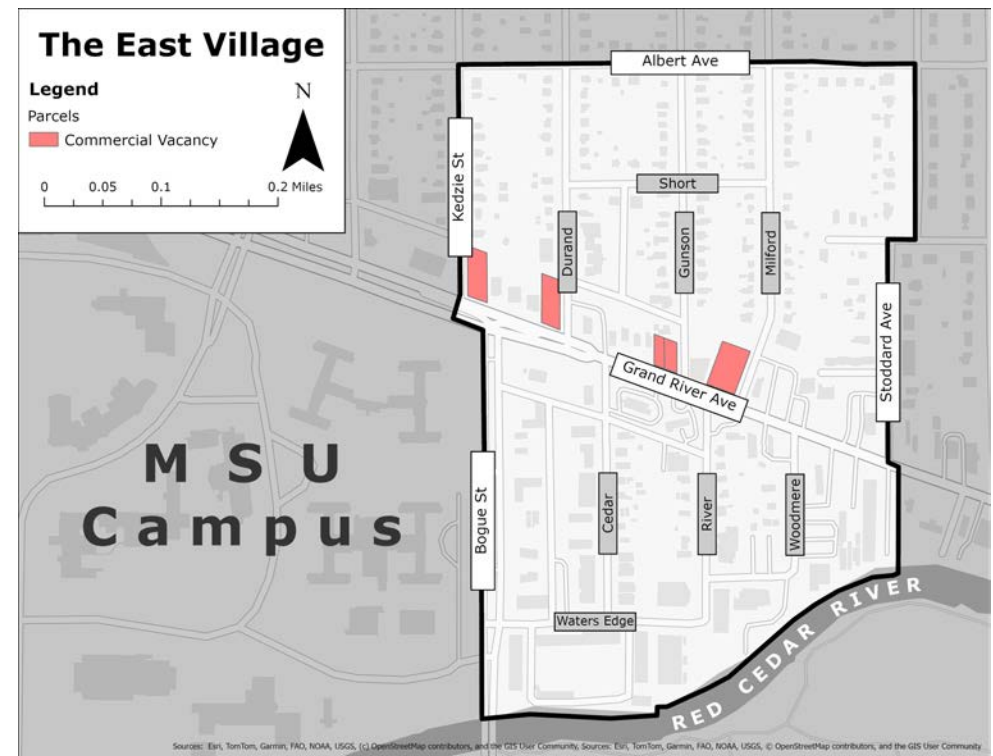


Figure 5-b: Map of commercial vacancies along Grand River Avenue in the East Village study area, showing areas for potential development

Planning Priority 3.1 - Incentivize Mixed-Use Development

The challenge inherent in this proposed action is that the vacant parcels in the East Village are privately owned, meaning that the city has little control over whether and how they are developed. Many municipalities will offer **financial incentives (especially tax abatements)** to developers who build particular types of development in particular locations. If the City of East Lansing is in the financial position to do so, this strategy is one that it may consider. However, there are other lower-cost alternatives to encouraging the development of underutilized parcels.

Some municipalities have a type of “one-stop shop” webpage for developers or business owners considering locating in the municipality. These types of pages encourage development by making it easy for developers to locate information about a municipality’s code requirements, permitting process and timeline, available parcels, and funding opportunities. Furthermore, such sites have the potential to encourage development in a cost-effective way by portraying a municipality as open to new development and willing to work with developers.

The City of East Lansing currently has a host of resources for businesses and developers available on its website (Figure 5-c); however, the resources are not displayed in the most intuitive way. For example, under the “Business” tab on the City website, there is a link to “Business Licenses & Permits,” yet the link leads to a long list of permits including a block party permit, a backyard chicken permit, an electric skateboard permit, and others that are not relevant to businesses or developers who are looking for information on how to establish themselves in East Lansing. This layout forces potential developers to sift through lists of permits in order to find the information they need.

The site also provides a link to the City Code but does not direct developers to the sections of the Code that will be relevant to them. Furthermore, the City provides information about Community Development Block Grants, but this information is found on the Community and Economic Development page, not the business resources page.

In short, while the City of East Lansing provides many resources on its website to help developers and encourage them to complete projects in the city, **revisions to the website could make the resources more accessible.** This is an achievable, short-term goal that does not require any outside funding. Website revisions could be made either by the City’s Community and Economic Development Department, by the City’s Graphic Designer, or by the City’s Communications Department and could be completed in just a few weeks or months.

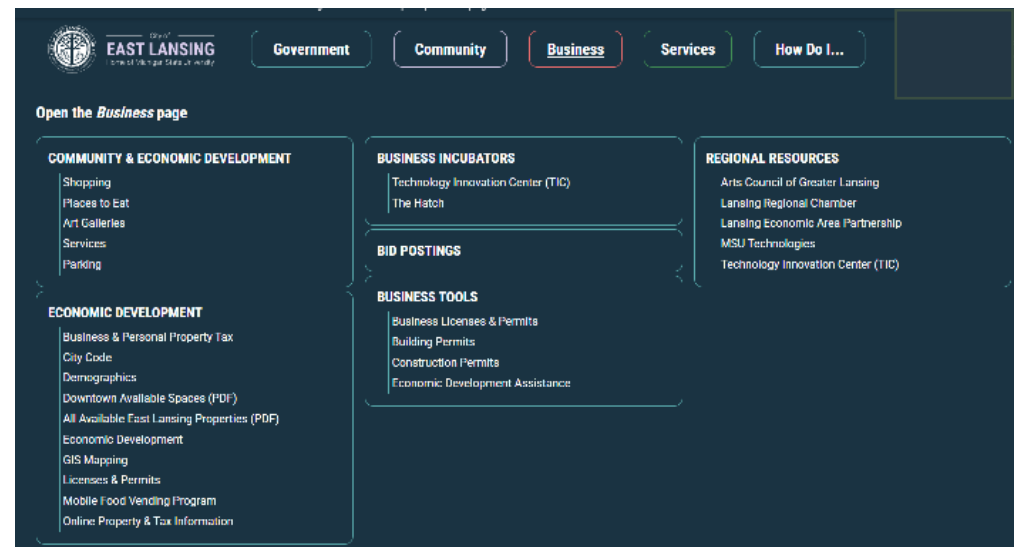


Figure 5-c: Resources available under the “Business” tab on the City of East Lansing website. Access Date: April 3, 2026

Planning Priority 3.2 - Ensure Affordable & Attainable Housing Options

During Phase 2, a student housing capacity gap was quantified, and in Phase 3, community input confirmed concerns about housing affordability and availability. During community engagement (Figure 5-d), participants described concerns about housing rental costs that increase annually, while upward trends in student enrollment at MSU create competition over the limited housing supply near campus, and students are pushed to live farther from campus. With these findings from previous phases in mind, specific planning actions can be implemented to alleviate housing affordability concerns and allow students to live closer to campus.

Action 3.2.1 - Leverage the Existing Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) to Encourage Development of Attainable Housing

The LIHTC is administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and **funded through federal tax incentives** that are allocated to states to increase and preserve affordable rental housing. Developers using the program receive credit against their tax liability annually for 10 years. Rent prices are based on the area's median income, with the specific requirement being that 20% of rental units be set at 50% of the area's median income (MSHDA). A housing development using LIHTC was recently proposed at **530 Albert Ave** (Figure 5-e), the current site of a surface parking lot in downtown East Lansing. The East Village could be a viable candidate for similar projects due to its proximity to MSU and the Grand River Corridor. Making information on LIHTC available to developers through online information, such as a landing page, is a **crucial short-term action, achievable within one year**, and may prompt partnerships between the MSHDA, the City of East Lansing, and private developers. Identification of potential underutilized sites for redevelopment, and ensuring the zoning ordinance allows such projects, is also important for implementation.



Figure 5-d: Student provides feedback on housing conditions in the East Village during a community engagement meeting at Cedar Village Apartments on February 17, 2026



Figure 5-e: Rendering of a proposed housing development in downtown East Lansing (530 Albert Ave.), including affordable and workforce housing (East Lansing Info, 2025)

Action 3.2.2 - Conduct a Housing Market Analysis Focused on Rental Prices and Student Demand

Although the data from prior phases supports the conclusion that a housing capacity gap exists near Michigan State University, a more comprehensive housing market analysis is recommended to identify the extent of the housing supply and demand imbalance in East Lansing. The goal of a housing market analysis is to assess **student demographic distribution**, identify gaps in housing **affordability or availability**, and ensure the feasibility of a **mixed-income or LIHTC** housing development.

Planning Priority 3.2 - Ensure Affordable & Attainable Housing Options

The analysis should collect data on housing demographics and market conditions, such as price per unit and by building type. Findings from a supply and demand analysis should also be used to inform LIHTC site selection. The intended outcome of this action is to gain a clear understanding of the current housing market. This action is **achievable within one year** and requires **coordination among key partners**, including MSU for housing demand and enrollment data, property managers for information on occupancy, and the MSHDA for affordability and funding guidance. A housing market analysis could be completed either in-house by the City of East Lansing Planning Department or Economic Development Department or by a private consultant.

Action 3.2.3 - Introduce Affordability Incentive Policy, such as Density Bonuses and Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Financial constraints are a common barrier to the expansion of affordable and attainable housing options. To address this challenge, the City of East Lansing should introduce and refine affordability incentive policies, including density bonuses and TIF, to encourage mixed-income housing and **offset development costs**. Density bonuses would allow developers to exceed the base zoning requirements in a variety of ways through floor area, unit count, or building height in exchange for providing a set percentage of affordable housing units. Density bonuses should be applied along corridors, such as **Grand River Avenue**, where higher-density development already exists. Additionally, TIFs provide funding to developers through the delay of the increase in property tax owed to the city to offset construction and development costs. Key partners for the implementation of TIFs include **City Council**, who hold some control over the application process, and private developers. Implementation of this affordability incentive policy is **achievable within one to two years** and is an effective funding mechanism that creates more opportunities to ensure affordable and attainable housing options.

Phase 6 - Implementation Strategies

Action 3.2.4 - Extend the current downtown East Lansing zoning ordinance under Section 50-04(b)(4)(e), which requires 25% of diverse housing options for residential housing units in newly constructed mixed-used developments

Section 50-94(b)(4)(e) establishes standards for specific uses in newly constructed mixed-use developments in downtown East Lansing; however, this policy is infrequently used by developers and has primarily been applied to senior housing projects rather than owner-occupied or low to moderate income housing units. To address this, the City of East Lansing should amend the ordinance to extend these specific uses East of Collingwood Dr, and apply defined affordability standards to newly constructed mixed-use development within the East Village District in addition to downtown East Lansing. Key partners for implementation include City Council for ordinance adjustments and private developers for construction of mixed-used buildings, and the City of East Lansing Planning department to amend the current downtown ordinance, extending the zoning requirements to the East Village District. Aside from an overlay, updating the ordinance with income restrictions and defined affordability standards, in addition to cost offsets such as TIFs and Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs would allow the City of East Lansing to ensure a diverse and financially attainable housing market for students and East Lansing residents alike.

Works Cited

Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). (n.d.). Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). <https://www.michigan.gov/mshda/developers/lihtc/lihtc/low-income-housing-tax-credit-lihtc>



Conclusion

PHASE 6

06

Conclusion

The East Village concept plan builds on prior community engagement and data collection to synthesize key challenges and opportunities and propose actionable recommendations for improving the area (See **Figure 6-a** for potential redevelopment opportunity areas in East Village). The actions proposed are based upon the three guiding principles identified through emerging themes ascertained from the quantitative and qualitative data collected in Phases 1-3. The recommendations stem from three guiding principles shaped by themes identified in Phases 1–3: **Access & Mobility, Place Identity & Quality of Life, and Mixed-Use & Affordability**—derived respectively from weak infrastructure, an underperforming public realm, and a student housing capacity gap.

The guiding principles aim to address challenges in a comprehensive manner while specifically targeting individual goals and opportunities. They influenced the decision making and strategic framework for the recommended planning priorities in the creation of the concept plan. This is seen in identified stakeholders, key partnerships, and the financial and social mechanisms upon which this plan is reliant. The principles also specifically lead the processes by which the planning priorities were identified and the prioritization or feasibility of actions within East Village. The use of prioritization not only aids the team in creation of steps and goals, but also in the further/later development and implementation of recommendations.

The resulting planning priorities reflect a synthesis of all collected data and represent the most achievable and meaningful actions for East Village. Through these priorities, the Red Cedar Squad aims to address the area’s financial, social, and commercial challenges. If utilized, these actions and principles will guide the city’s growth and development of East Village, while maintaining healthy relationships with citizens, students, and prospective developers, essential to a cohesive community environment.

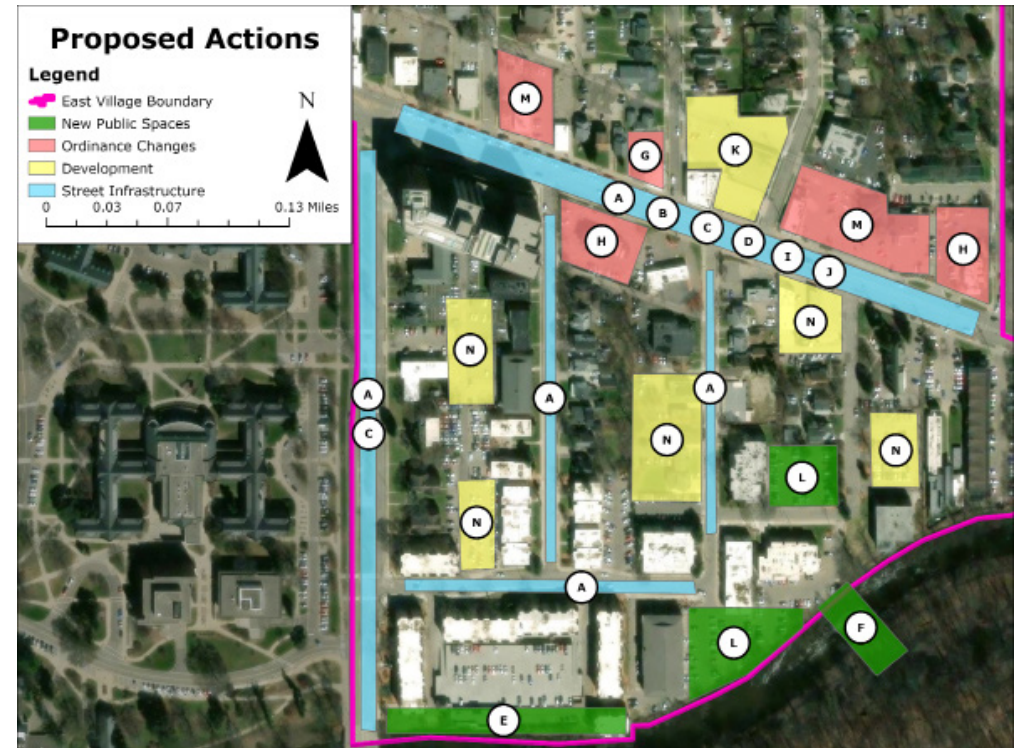


Figure 6-a: Map displaying redevelopment opportunities in East Village to improve the character of the neighborhood

- A) Replace street parking with bike lanes
- B) Bus lane on Grand River Ave
- C) Add crosswalks to Grand River Ave and Bogue St
- D) Paint crosswalks on Grand River Ave
- E) Build a river trail along the Red Cedar River
- F) Build a pedestrian bridge over the river
- G) Combine vacant parcels to increase density
- H) Limit drive thrus on Grand River Ave
- I) Add benches to Grand River Ave
- J) Plant trees along Grand River Ave
- K) Attract an urban grocery store
- L) Purchase vacant parcels to develop into urban plazas
- M) Reduce parking requirements along Grand River Ave
- N) Expand and modernize housing supply on underutilized parcels



Report Conclusion

Report Conclusion

East Village is a developing neighborhood in the heart of East Lansing. It is located directly adjacent to downtown East Lansing and the MSU campus, and serves the university as a neighborhood of primarily student housing. Despite this proximity, the neighborhood consists of low density housing and a commercial corridor missing key sectors. The housing was mostly built between 1950 and 1970 and is deteriorating, and the infrastructure in the neighborhood is outdated and doesn't reflect current, multi-modal trends. The lack of public spaces and neighborhood identity results in an area that sees less growth than East Lansing as a whole. East Village's proximity gives it potential to be a dense and walkable student-oriented community with a high quality of life and a vibrant identity.

The Red Cedar Squad was tasked by the City of East Lansing Planning Department to understand the current living, working, and housing conditions for all stakeholders within the East Village district. Furthermore, we were tasked to outline the challenges and opportunities within the neighborhood and translate them into actionable recommendations that aim for the betterment of the East Village community. To do so, the team conducted multiple rounds of data collection through qualitative and quantitative means. Furthermore, with the core of the project revolving around stakeholder perspectives and experiences, a large emphasis on community engagement was the backbone of data collection. Through numerous site visits, 4 community engagement meetings, an online survey, and data collected via census databases, the team identified three emerging themes that represented the challenges and opportunities realized within the community.

The three emerging themes identified through background research and community outreach are the gap in current capacity of student housing due to a lack of dense, mixed-use development; the underperforming public realm, caused by inadequate public spaces, services and character; and the area's weak infrastructure, exemplified by a lack of pedestrian accessibility and multi-modal transit options. Using these themes, seven planning priorities were identified and applied to the East Village project, ranging from improving pedestrian access in the neighborhood to encouraging new mixed-use development. The three themes identified using research the team conducted led to many recommended actions that will improve the East Village, and the quality of life for its residents.

Many of the challenges East Village faces are consistent with national trends, and are the focus of planning departments in similar college towns. East Lansing is gifted with a slew of key partnerships, zoning tools, funding mechanisms, and city departments that have the ability to address these challenges. The actionable recommendations outlined in this plan provide a guideline for the City of East Lansing to take advantage of these tools to unlock the full potential of East Village and continue to keep East Lansing a nationally ranked college town.

Additionally, several case studies were identified that offered parallels with the East Village. One such case study was Campustown, the student-oriented downtown area of Champaign, Illinois, near the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Since 2008, this area has seen rapid growth and transformation, and is now a thriving, bustling student activity center. Many of the infrastructure improvements, funding mechanisms, and development entities can also be applied in the East Village, in order to foster a similar lively atmosphere in the neighborhood.

Report Conclusion

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A solution to address East Lansing's and MSU's growth is the development of dense, mixed-use neighborhoods that serve a large population of students while also remaining accessible and affordable. Mixed-use neighborhoods require infrastructure and zoning that is unique to typical neighborhoods: commercial sectors need to be small-scale and accessible instead of centrally planned, road infrastructure must reflect the diverse multi-modal transit patterns of students, and new development is to be designed around these aspects instead of designating valuable space to new car infrastructure. This ambitious transition is possible through government intervention in a variety of forms. Zoning reform can ensure denser construction in the future, public-private partnerships can fill key commercial gaps, and the City of East Lansing can work with state partners to add central public spaces that raise the quality of life of residents.

As the city enacts these actions, there are broader planning implications to consider. Between our research and strategic framework generation, it is clear that constant and preemptive community engagement is essential to gain community support and representation for further projects. East Village has a repetitive history in terms of attempted development strategies from the city, however the lack of coordination and stakeholder engagement prevented further development and exacerbated neighborhood challenges. East Village is a neighborhood with immense potential, both for current residents and for the city at large, and the city should continue its current path of increasing density in and around downtown East Lansing.

East Village can be the mixed-use, walkable, vibrant community residents desire. Based on our research and community engagement, this strategic framework can achieve these goals and make East Village a neighborhood where students, long time residents, and business owners can thrive.



Appendix

To ensure comprehensive spatial coverage, the research team was divided into several groups, and the study area was organized into three zones: the north zone, the south zone, and the Grand River Avenue corridor. Each group consisted of two members, with one researcher responsible for taking systematic field notes and photographs while the other engaged in informal conversations with East Village stakeholders. Site visits were conducted on different days to capture variations in activity levels and site conditions.

Appendix A: Informal Interview Themes

Date	Time	Researchers Present	Interviewees	Interview Takeaways
Wednesday, January 14, 2026	12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Luke Dillon	4 student residents McDonald’s manager	Some student residents felt as though residential housing options near the Michigan State University campus are limited and that rents are continuously rising. — A business manager reported low customer volumes in summer months and academic breaks when the large MSU student population is away from the area. — Interviewees agreed that more park space would benefit the community. — Interviewees had mixed perceptions of parking availability. Some residents wanted parking closer to their residences, while others preferred to walk to campus or to work.

Friday, January 16, 2026	11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. South of Grand River Avenue	Ben Hamrick, Jack Shannon, Nahid Dristy, Evan Blake, Max Levinson, & Youssef El Hout	Residents of single-family housing units and pedestrians walking within the current East Village boundaries (13 MSU students, including residents at “Ski Club,” “FarmHouse,” and various properties along Grove St) — Employees and managers of businesses within the Grand River Corridor (Bell’s Pizza, McDonalds, Pita Way, Valvoline Oil Change, SRP Leasing Office, Big Ten)	Apartment residents tended to feel satisfied with the current traffic conditions, while house residents wanted the area to remain largely the same and complained about parking and traffic; there was a high demand expressed by all residents for an increased quantity of parking. — Many interviewees expressed interest in a riverfront park / public space, but mostly after being asked about it. — Many interviewees expressed low interest in increasing housing stock. — There was a high demand from single-family residents for new development to take the form of more single-family housing and a high demand from local business owners and apartment residents for new development to take the form of denser housing.
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Saturday, January 17, 2026	12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. North of Grand River Avenue	Clinton Mireles, Rachel Oelsner, Emma Lacross, & Evan Stowell	Employees and managers of businesses within the Grand River Corridor (Bowl Above, Tasty Twist, Qdoba, Wild Side Smoke-shop) Pedestrians walking within the proposed northern expansion of the East Village boundary (4 MSU students and 1 non-student)	Student interviewees expressed mixed interest in increasing nightlife in the East Village neighborhood; some students felt as though there is sufficient nightlife downtown East Lansing. — Business representatives expressed a high interest in promoting a shared, inclusive environment for students, families, and non-student residents. — Some businesses reported a customer base composed primarily of students; others reported a mix of students and families. — Student interviewees placed a high value on amenities, specifically requesting bars, gyms, rooftop pools, and access to Riverfront amenities such as outdoor patios.
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Please be advised that weather conditions during the periods of study may have influenced the data collected and should be considered when interpreting the results.

Appendix B: Field Observation Themes

Date	Time	Researchers Present	Field Observation Takeaways
Wednesday, January 14, 2026	12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Luke Dillon	Development in the area is predominately a mixture of low- to middle-density residential uses, with limited high-density residential and commercial use structures concentrated along Grand River Avenue. — The built environment caters to vehicles, not to people. Parking dominates the area, and there are few pedestrian-only areas. Pedestrians are often forced to share space with vehicles. — Dated architecture and stock housing contributes to a lack of cohesion throughout the area, especially when contrasted to newer development like the Hub. — There is a lack of physical and social cohesion with the MSU campus.
Friday, January 16, 2026	11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. South of Grand River Avenue	Ben Hamrick, Jack Shannon, Nahid Dristy, Evan Blake, Max Levinson, & Youssef El Hout	Sidewalks throughout the study area were unsalted and icy, presenting hazardous conditions for pedestrians. Several pedestrian paths conflicted with vehicle traffic and loading zones. — Neighborhood streets are generally narrow, with informal parking throughout the East Village neighborhood. — Several vacant commercial properties are located throughout the study area. — Underground construction on River Street blocked sidewalks and hindered vehicle traffic.

Saturday, January 17, 2026	12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. North of Grand River Avenue	Clinton Mireles, Rachel Oel- sner, Emma Lacross, & Evan Stowell	Sidewalks were unsalted and icy, presenting hazardous conditions for pedestrians. Limited space for bicycle lane infrastructure along the Grand River Corridor, leading to crowding on sidewalks between pedestrians and bicyclists. — Many buildings in the study area could benefit from improvement efforts. None of the homes were in poor condition, but updating siding, landscaping, etc. could improve the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood. — The Starbucks drive thru lane caused vehicle congestion on Stoddard Avenue. The line for the drive thru was so long that several cars had to wait in the street, blocking traffic. — Other than people walking in and out of the Starbucks coffee shop, there were almost no people walking, biking, or gathering outdoors in the observation area
Wednesday, January 21, 2026	12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Luke Dillon, Evan Stowell, Max Levinson, Ben Hamrick, Emma Lacross	The off-campus side of Bogue was not well plowed, leading to hazardous walking conditions. Waters Edge Drive becomes quite congested during peak periods of traffic. — Cars were not stopping for pedestrians at designated crosswalks. — Heavy car traffic exiting Cedar Village apartments to attend 12:40 class sessions.

**Please be advised that weather conditions during the periods of study may have influenced the data collected and should be considered when interpreting the results. During each of the observation periods, the temperature was below freezing. For several days, it was snowing. Due to sub-zero temperatures in the evenings, it was not possible to observe nightlife in the study area. The team plans to make site visits during warmer weather to supplement the observations in the above tables.*

Additionally, January 19, 2026, was a holiday (Martin Luther King Jr. Day). One of the team's site visits (January 17) occurred on the Saturday preceding the holiday. Activity levels in the study area may have been impacted by the long holiday weekend.

Appendix C: CATA Route Descriptions



Route 1
Downtown Lansing - Meridian Mall
Everyday



Route 15
Downtown Lansing - Lake Lansing Meijer
Monday-Friday Only



Route 18
MSU - South Lansing
Monday-Friday Only



Route 20
MSU - South Harrison
Everyday



Route 22
MSU - Okemos & Haslett Clockwise
Everyday



Route 23
MSU - Okemos & Haslett Counter-Clockwise
Everyday



Route 24
MSU - E. Lake Lansing Road
Everyday



Route 25
MSU - North Harrison
Everyday



Route 26
MSU - Chandler Apartments
Everyday



Route 30
South & East Neighborhoods
Monday-Friday Only



Route 31
Brody Complex - East Neighborhood
Monday-Friday Only



Route 32
Commuter Lot - Snyder Hall - Clinical Center
Monday-Friday Only



Route 33
North & South Neighborhoods
Monday-Friday Only



Route 34
Brody Complex - University Village
Saturday-Sunday Only



Route 35
South Neighborhood - Capital Area Multimodal Gateway
Saturday-Sunday Only



Route 36
East Neighborhood
Saturday-Sunday Only



Route 39
University Village
Monday-Friday Only



Route 48
Downtown Lansing - Williamston & Webberville
Monday-Friday Only, Limited Service

Appendix D

Key Details

Location: East Lansing Public Library

Date: February 13th, 2026

Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm

Group Participants: Ben, Clinton, Emma, Max, Evan B., and Youssef

Supplies

- Sign-in Sheet
- Printed instructions for meetings
- Questionnaire
- Extra printed flyers
- Four trifold poster boards with different pictures
- Eight pieces of chart paper with open-ended questions
- 2 printed maps
- Two tables for people to sit, eat, and discuss
- Catering from Sultan's Mediterranean Restaurant and Drinks

Participation

Number of total participants: 12

Number of students: 5

Number of East Village residents: 0

Number of East Village property owners: 2

Number of East Village business managers: 0

Low Rise Apartments (No Retail, No Office) [Non-Mixed-Use] [Low Rise]	3	2	0
Mid Rise Apartments (No Retail, No Office) [Non-Mixed-Use]	1	4	0
High Rise Apartments (No Retail, No office) [Non-Mixed-Use]	1	2	1
Commercial Corridor (No Housing) [Non-Mixed-Use]	2	1	4
Riverfront Apartments Facing the Red Cedar River [Non-Mixed-Use]	3	1	1
Riverfront Mixed Use Development [Mixed-Use]	5	0	2
Row Housing/Narrow Townhouses [Non-Mixed-Use] [Low Rise]	0	1	5
Low Rise Mixed Use (Retail, Office, Housing) [Mixed-Use] [Low Rise]	0	1	5
Mid Rise Mixed-Use (Retail, Office, Housing) [Mixed-Use]	5	2	0
High Rise Mixed-Use (Retail, Office, Housing) [Mixed-Use]	6	0	1

Appendix D

Quotes: Weak Infrastructure

Prompt: How do current conditions restrict use of alternative modes of transportation (walking/biking/public transit) in East Village?

"I feel like some sidewalks are sort of narrow, so that could keep people from walking maybe on Grand River in the dark"

"Bike lanes are not as plentiful as necessary"

"Sidewalks are not being Salted– making walking dangerous"

Prompt: What would make you more likely to walk, bike, or use public transportation in East Village?

"I do like using the bus in East Village"

"Accessible bus stops with coverings would be awesome"

"More reliable + safe lanes for biking and walking, more traffic stops"

"Better bus stops with shelter/ a bench"

"Cross-walks with lights to alert drivers (like the ones on Hagadorn)"

"Improved bus route, free bus use for students, better maintenance (especially during winter), improved aesthetics"

"Signage and public sidewalks"

Quotes: Amenities

Prompt: Top 3 amenities (Desired/Useful Neighborhood Features of Facilities) you want to see added to East Village

"Outdoor Court, Price reasonable grocery store, public restroom"

"Third spaces, grocery store, park"

"Park, Public bathroom, affordable housing"

"Improved parks + natural areas, AFFORDABLE Non-monopoly housing, small/locally owned businesses"

Prompt: What type of businesses are missing in East Village?

"Grocery store, pharmacy, thrift store"

"Grocery store/accessible affordable market– not dollar tree, small retail businesses, outdoor seating/restaurants -> Like Alert in the summer"

"Local"

"Grocery store, clothing store, arcade, after school place"

Appendix D

Quotes: Student Housing Capacity

Prompt: Should East Village prioritize purpose-built student housing? (Yes/No)

“No”

“Yes”

“Yes, if affordable”

Prompt: What qualities in off-campus student housing would attract you to East Village?

“Affordability, safe walking/alt modes of transport, better parking opportunities, better housing conditions”

“Affordability, proximity to health and fitness centers, bar proximity”

“Affordable, close proximity”

“Affordability, accessibility, proximity to greenery”

Quotes: Neighborhood Today

Prompt: One word to describe the current neighborhood character of East Village?

“Over-rated”

“Affordable”

“Dingy”

Quotes: Neighborhood Future

Prompt: One word to describe how you envision the future of East Village?

“Inclusive”

“Small Business”

“Prosperous”

Appendix D

Key Details

Location: Cedar Village Apartments Clubhouse
 Date: February 17th, 2026
 Time: 5:00pm-6:30pm
 Group Participants: Terry, Dristy, Clint, Luke, Ben

Supplies

- Sign-in sheet
- Printed instructions for meetings
- Questionnaire
- Extra printed flyers
- Four trifold posters boards with different pictures
- Eight pieces of chart paper with open-ended questions
- 2 printed maps
- Chairs provided by Cedar Village Apartments for people to sit, eat, and discuss
- Catering from Bell's Greek Pizza and Drinks

Participation

Number of total participants: 6
 Number of students: 6
 Number of East Village residents: 6
 Number of East Village property owners: 0
 Number of East Village business managers: 0

Low Rise Apartments (No Retail, No Office) [Non-Mixed-Use] [Low Rise]	3	0	2
Mid Rise Apartments (No Retail, No Office) [Non-Mixed-Use]	1	4	0
High Rise Apartments (No Retail, No office) [Non-Mixed-Use]	3	2	0
Commercial Corridor (No Housing) [Non-Mixed-Use]	1	2	2
Riverfront Apartments Facing the Red Cedar River [Non-Mixed-Use]	0	5	0
Riverfront Mixed Use Development [Mixed-Use]	0	5	0
Row Housing/Narrow Townhouses [Non-Mixed-Use] [Low Rise]	2	2	2
Low Rise Mixed Use (Retail, Office, Housing) [Mixed-Use] [Low Rise]	2	2	2
Mid Rise Mixed-Use (Retail, Office, Housing) [Mixed-Use]	2	1	2
High Rise Mixed-Use (Retail, Office, Housing) [Mixed-Use]	5	0	0

Appendix D

Quotes: Weak Infrastructure

Prompt: How do current conditions restrict use of alternative modes of transportation (walking/biking/public transit) in East Village?

“Not understanding public transit available”

“Overcrowded streets make it a little hard to walk”

Prompt: What would make you more likely to walk, bike, or use public transportation in East Village?

“Clearer bus routes, bike trails”

“Bike/walking trails”

“Fix potholes”

Quotes: Amenities

Prompt: Top 3 amenities (Desired/Useful Neighborhood Features of Facilities) you want to see added to East Village

“Art studio, dance studio, big gym, MSU or East Lansing Affiliated community center”

“Big gym, outdoor space”

“Better gym equipment, coffee shop”

“Nicer gym, more outdoor spaces/seating”

“A nicer gym for residents”

Prompt: What type of businesses are missing in East Village?

“Coffee shops, bars”

“Cafe, Italian, markets, more restaurants”

“Cafe, grocery stores, bars”

“Coffee shop, grocery”

Appendix D

Quotes: Student Housing Capacity

Prompt: What is more important, availability of housing OR affordability of housing?

"Affordability, less businesses"

"Affordability"

"Affordability"

"Affordability"

Prompt: What qualities in off-campus student housing would attract you to East Village?

"Active spaces, gym, park, pickleball court, night life"

"Gym, night life"

"Parking, gym, nightlife"

"Good roads because they are rough and hard when driving"

"Free & convenient parking, nice gym, pickleball court, trails"

"Low pricing of rent & more nightlife"

Quotes: Neighborhood Today

Prompt: One word to describe the current neighborhood character of East Village?

"Bland"

"Boring x3"

"Not-bussling"

Quotes: Neighborhood Future

Prompt: One word to describe how you envision the future of East Village?

"Capable"

"Modern, community oriented"

"More nightlife, people, better housing"

Appendix D

Key Details

Location: Martin Luther Chapel

Date: February 20th, 2026

Time: 12 PM - 1 PM

Group Participants: Rachel, Evan B., Jack, Ben & Clint

Supplies

- Sign-in Sheet
- Printed Instructions for meetings
- Questionnaire
- Extra printed flyers
- Four trifold poster boards with different pictures
- Eight pieces of chart paper with open-ended questions
- 2 printed maps
- 4 tables for people to sit, eat, and discuss
- Catering from Fosters Coffee Company & Quality Dairy Donuts
-

Participation

Number of total participants: 4

Number of students: 1

Number of East Village residents: 0

Number of East Village property owners: 0

Number of East Village business managers: 0

Low Rise Apartments (No Retail, No Office) [Non-Mixed-Use] [Low Rise]	0	1	1
Mid Rise Apartments (No Retail, No Office) [Non-Mixed-Use]	1	1	0
High Rise Apartments (No Retail, No office) [Non-Mixed-Use]	0	1	1
Commercial Corridor (No Housing) [Non-Mixed-Use]	1	0	1
Riverfront Apartments Facing the Red Cedar River [Non-Mixed-Use]	3	0	0
Riverfront Mixed Use Development [Mixed-Use]	3	1	0
Row Housing/Narrow Townhouses [Non-Mixed-Use] [Low Rise]	0	0	2
Low Rise Mixed Use (Retail, Office, Housing) [Mixed-Use] [Low Rise]	3	0	0
Mid Rise Mixed-Use (Retail, Office, Housing) [Mixed-Use]	1	1	1
High Rise Mixed-Use (Retail, Office, Housing) [Mixed-Use]	1	0	2

Appendix D

Quotes: Weak Infrastructure

Prompt: How do current conditions restrict use of alternative modes of transportation (walking/biking/public transit) in East Village?

“Bus routes in N. East (running N & S) villages, bike trails in S. East Village” (I believe they are saying that there needs to be bus route running North to South in East Village or subject area and bike infrastructure in South East Village)

“Limited parking, Narrow streets”

“Not enough parking”

Prompt: What would make you more likely to walk, bike, or use public transportation in East Village?

“Nothing North of Grand River. South of Grand River - Yes - Sidewalks and trails”

“If there were some access to nature”

“A walking/biking bridge across Grand River connecting North & South”

Quotes: Amenities

Prompt: Top 3 amenities (Desired/Useful Neighborhood Features of Facilities) you want to see added to East Village

“Open area for games (soccer, baseball, etc.), community center for study/indoor games/fitness”

“Nothing North of Grand River. South of Grand River - open spaces”

Prompt: What type of businesses are missing in East Village?

“Hang out restaurants/bars”

“Different types of businesses not specifically catered to college students”

“Grocery, coffee shops, gift shops, book shops”

Appendix D

Quotes: Student Housing Capacity

Prompt: What is more important, housing availability VS housing affordability?

“Affordable housing”

“Availability & a nicer or better control of the exterior condition. Tuned up clean & minor landscape.”

“Availability of housing, newer units”

“Availability”

Prompt: What qualities in off-campus student housing would attract you to East Village?

“Views of the river, more parking”

“New & Clean”

“Parks (small), Coffee shops, affordable grocery store”

“Walkability - Bikeability, open spaces, river views”

Quotes: Neighborhood Today

Prompt: One word to describe the current neighborhood character of East Village?

“Disconnected”

“North of Grand River - Neighbor for housing detached. South of Grand River - Too Dense - Too Old - No open space”

Quotes: Neighborhood Future

Prompt: One word to describe how you envision the future of East Village?

“Community”

“Better Grand River retail/restaurants - Less Dense - New apartments and townhomes”

Appendix E

Accessibility & Mobility
Support Multi-Modal Transit
Short Term (1-2 Years) Garner resident support for increased CATA funding millage.
Medium Term (2-5 Years) - Reroute CATA route 31 to stop within East Village. - Replace on street parking with bike lanes.
Long Term (5-10 Years) Work with MDOT to add a dedicated bus lane on Grand River Ave.
Improve Pedestrian Accessibility
Short Term (1-2 Years) - Conduct more pedestrian counts for Grand River Ave. - Create a portal for residents to submit photos of sidewalks in need of repair.
Medium Term (2-5 Years) Add additional crosswalk on Bouge St. and Grand River Ave.
Long Term (5-10 Years) - Build a river trail on the northern side of the Red Cedar River. - Work along MSU to build a pedestrian bridge over the Red Cedar River connecting to East Campus through the Sanford Natural Area.
Place Identity & Quality of Life
Revitalize the Grand River Corridor
Short Term (1-2 Years) - Combine vacant parcels to allow increased density. - Connect business owners with DDA resources and staff. - Amend the zoning ordinance to limit drivethrus on Grand River Ave.

Appendix E

Medium Term (2-5 Years)

- Add benches throughout Grand River Ave.
- Plant additional trees along Grand River Ave.
- Collaborate with the DDA a portal for prospective businesses trying to locate in East Village.

Long Term (5-10 Years)

- Partner with a major grocery chain to establish a modern urban market.

Develop more public spaces in East Village

Short Term (1-2 Years)

- Conduct a feasibility study on a riverfront park.
- Enforce stricter parking regulations throughout East Village.

Medium Term (2-5 Years)

- Hold community meetings about potential park locations.
- Investigate potential state and federal funding for park development.
- Partner with existing food service to create outdoor dining schemes.

Long Term (5-10 Years)

- Purchase vacant parcels to develop into urban plazas.

Add character to East Village

Short Term (1-2 Years)

- Create an independent East Village neighborhood committee.
- Partner with the College of Arts and Letters to commission murals.
- Develop a uniformed color palette and design standards for public signs in East Village.

Medium Term (2-5 Years)

- Develop an East Village “flag” to be placed on street lights and signals throughout the neighborhood.

Appendix E

Long Term (5-10 Years) Adjust the form-based code of EV and B-2 with more specific architectural requirements (E.g. roof angle, window size, etc)
Mixed-Use and Affordability
Incentivize mixed-use development
Short Term (1-2 Years) Reduce parking requirements along Grand River and provide density incentives for developments with ground-floor commercial space
Medium Term (2-5 Years) Encourage redevelopment of underutilized parcels along Grand River
Long Term (5-10 Years) Expand and modernize housing supply on underutilized parcels while maintaining affordability.
Ensure affordable and attainable housing options
Short Term (1-2 Years) - Identify incentives that could support affordable housing. - Conduct a housing market analysis focused on rental prices and student demand.
Medium Term (2-5 Years) - Introduce affordability incentives, such as density bonuses and LIHTC financing - Extend current downtown zoning ordinance into East Village District that requires diverse housing options for 25% of residential housing units in newly constructed mixed-use developments.
Long Term (5-10 Years) Maintain a diverse housing supply including student apartments and mixed-income developments.

Actions Matrix

Action Number #	Action	Timeframe	Priority	Key Partners	Dependent Actions
1.1.1	Garner resident support for increased CATA funding milage	Short	Medium	Community Advocacy Group	
1.1.2	Reroute CATA Route 31 to stop within East Village (See Figure XX)	Long	High	MSU, CATA	1.1.1
1.1.3	Replace Street parking with protected bike lanes	Medium	Medium	Planning Dept., Public Works	
1.1.4	Work with MDOT to add a dedicated bus lane on Grand River Ave	Long	Medium	MDOT	1.1.2
1.2.1	Conduct more pedestrian counts	Short	Low	Planning Dept.	
1.2.2	Pilot Temporary Infrastructure Changes	Short	Medium	Planning Dept., Public Works	
1.2.3	Create a portal for residents to submit photos of sidewalks in disrepair	Short	High	Public Works	
1.2.4	Add additional crosswalks and lights to Grand River Ave and Bogue St	Medium	Medium	Planning Dept., Public Works	1.2.1
1.2.5	Create Permanent Traffic Calming Infrastructure	Long	Medium	Planning Dept., Public Works	1.2.2
1.2.6	Widen the Bogue St Bridge	Long	Low	Public Works, MDOT	1.2.4, 1.2.1
1.2.7	Build a river trail on the northern side of the Red Cedar River	Long	High	Parks Department, Public Works, Planning Dept., EGLE	

Actions Matrix

Action Number #	Action	Timeframe	Priority	Key Partners	Dependent Actions
1.2.8	Construct a pedestrian bridge connecting to East Campus	Long	Low	Parks Dept., Public Works, Planning Dept., MSU	1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.6, 1.2.7
2.1.1	Combine vacant parcels to increase density	Short	Medium	Planning Dept.	
2.1.2	Connect business owners with DDA resources and staff	Short	Low	Community and Economic Development Dept, DDA	
2.1.3	Amend the zoning ordinance to limit drive-thrus on Grand River Ave	Medium	High	Planning Dept., Planning Commission	
2.1.4	Add benches and other street furniture to Grand River Ave	Short	High	Public Works, Parks Dept., DDA	
2.1.5	Plant additional trees and other greenery on Grand River Ave	Medium	Medium	Public Works, DDA	
2.1.6	Attract a major retail chain or grocery store to the area	Long	High	Community and Economic Development Dept.	
2.2.1	Conduct a feasibility study on a river-front park	Short	High	Public Works	
2.2.2	Enforce stricter parking regulations throughout East Village	Short	Low	PACE	
2.2.3	Hold community meetings about potential park locations	Medium	Medium	Planning Dept.	Planning Dept.

Actions Matrix

Action Number #	Action	Timeframe	Priority	Key Partners	Dependent Actions
2.2.4	Investigate potential state and federal funding for park development	Medium	High	Community and Economic Development Dept., Planning Dept.	2.2.1, 2.2.3
2.2.5	Partner with existing food service to create outdoor dining schemes	Medium	Medium	Public Works, Community and Economic Development Dept., Planning Dept.	
2.2.6	Purchase vacant parcels to develop into urban plazas	Long	Low	Planning Dept.	2.2.1
2.3.1	Create an independent East Village neighborhood committee	Short	High	Planning Dept.	
2.3.2	Partner with the College of Arts and Letters to commission murals	Medium	High	MSU	
2.3.3	Develop a uniformed color palette, design standards, and East Village branded flags	Long	Medium	East Village neighborhood Committee	
3.1.1	Reduce parking requirements along Grand River Ave	Medium	Medium	Planning Dept., Planning Commission	1.1.3, 2.1.1, 2.2.1
3.1.2	Encourage redevelopment of underutilized parcels along Grand River Ave.	Medium	High	Community and Economic Development Dept.	2.1.1, 2.2.1
3.2.1	Leverage the existing LIHTC to encourage development of attainable housing	Short	High	MI State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)	3.2.2

Actions Matrix

Action Number #	Action	Timeframe	Priority	Key Partners	Dependent Actions
3.2.2	Conduct a housing market analysis focused on rental prices and student demand	Short	High	Community and Economic Development Dept.	
3.2.3	Introduce affordability incentive policy such as density bonuses and TIFs	Medium	High	Community and Economic Development Dept.	3.2.2, 3.2.4

The MSU Center for Community and Economic Development Regional Economic Innovation (REI) seeks to identify and develop new economic development tools, models, policies, and practices to support innovative economic development, high-growth enterprises, and job creation in distressed regions across the state. REI is establishing a new economic development ecosystem to cope with the ever-changing global and regional dynamics. Through this ecosystem, REI engages innovative and creative minds which results in new economic development practices.

REI was established in 2011. In 2026, REI partnered with the following Michigan State University offices:

Office of the Provost
Office of the VPRI
MSU Jenison Fund
University Outreach & Engagement
College of Communication Arts and Sciences

