

St. Martha's Commons Community Vision Webinar Script
Presented by: Patrick Crawford, Michael French, Chris Hughes, Melinda McIntosh,
Richard Wooten

<https://connect.msu.edu/p80jh0smbu4>

Jennifer Bruen: The MSU EDA University Center for Regional Economic Innovation was established in the fall of 2011 with support from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. The purpose of the University Center is to support innovative economic development strategies that may yield high growth entrepreneurship, job creation, and economic innovation for distressed regions in Michigan. The webinar you are about to view is a part of a collaborative effort with a dynamic broad based network of partners working to strengthen Michigan's economy.

Melinda McIntosh: Welcome. Thank you for joining the Michigan State University Center for Regional Economic Innovation webinar. The following presentation will introduce the St. Martha's Commons Community Vision. We would like to thank the Economic Development Administration of the US Department of Commerce, Canterbury-on-the-Lake, and Presbyterian Villages for providing funding support for this project and webinar broadcast.

This report was developed by 2012 MSU practicum team members under the direction of Rex LaMore and John Melcher. The client for the project is the St. Martha's Commons Planning Team, led by Presbyterian Villages and Canterbury-on-the Lake. The Team is comprised of fifteen community groups, businesses, and congregations in northwest Detroit that are working together to support health and wellness and intergenerational and interfaith understanding and cooperation.

I am Melinda McIntosh. This morning I will introduce the goals and methodologies of our project, explain our client's vision, and describe the location and history of the site.

The first request that our clients made was for data. We compiled information on neighborhoods adjacent to the site within one and three mile radiuses and compared this information to trends and conditions in Wayne County and the State of Michigan.

Unique characteristics of this site include the historic significance of the location and the buildings, the beauty and quality of the architecture, and the serene, pastoral nature of the surrounding acreage. The Community Commons will use these qualities to enhance the community's connection to its history, and its sense of pride and locational identity.

The St Martha's Planning Team has envisioned a community commons that will bring together people from diverse generations, spiritual and personal backgrounds, races, and physical and mental capabilities, to promote the well being of all.

During the spring semester of 2012 MSU practicum students gathered demographic and economic data; toured, inspected, photographed and inventoried the site; identified needs and opportunities in the community; and developed a site plan and course of action for St. Martha's Commons.

The site is in the city of Detroit in Wayne County in Southeast Michigan. It is in the west side of the city, just north of the Dearborn border. Is bounded by Joy Road, Greenfield Road, the CSX rail line, and Tireman and Mettetal Streets. It is an 80 acre site comprised of 32 separate parcels.

Currently the bulk of the site is zoned for "industrial use", with a "business and services" area in the southeast corner and "Residential" and "Planned Development" areas along the northern and western edges.

Areas zoned as "Industrial" and "Residential" are classified almost entirely as "Institutional Use" on the future land use map, with some "retail/ commercial" use at the corner of Joy Greenfield Roads. The southeastern area is classified as "Light Industrial", and the northwest corner is classified "Low Density Residential."

The project site is the 80 acre group of 32 parcels. The project Focus Area is the group of three parcels situated along the northern border of the project site. St. Martha's Community Commons will occupy portions of the 20 acre focus area.

In 1832 George and Samuel Ford, great uncles of automotive giant Henry Ford, moved to Michigan from Ireland and purchased 80 acres of farm land on Joy Road. They were soon joined by Henry Ford's father and grandfather, who also purchased farms in the area. When Samuel Ford died he was buried on the original farm, and in 1893 a deed of trust was created allowing the land to be operated as a place of burial for the Ford family. When Henry Ford died he was also buried in the family plot, and his widow Clara, herself in failing health, became concerned about the future safety and security of the cemetery.

Clara Ford made arrangements with the Episcopalian Diocese of Michigan in which she financed the construction of a beautiful stone church in the English Revival style, complete with a slate gabled roof, stone buttresses, tiffany stained glass windows, a pipe organ, and a fifty foot bell tower. The church was built on land donated from the original Ford farm, and shares its site with the Ford cemetery and two small stone homes. In accordance with Clara's wishes the church was named in honor of her mother, Martha Bryant.

The church property is the easternmost of the three properties in the focus area. Immediately west of the church is the Village of St. Martha's and west of the Village is the St. Peter's Boys Home.

St. Peter's was founded in 1962 and operated for 28 years as a residential program for adolescent boys. Unfortunately in 2010 expenses exceeded available funding and the facility closed. Although still structurally sound the vacant and unguarded building has been extensively vandalized.

Between the church and St. Peter's sits St. Martha's Village, an attractive well constructed three story building. It contains 45 apartments which house senior citizens at a various income levels. Expanded campuses at other Presbyterian Villages locations provide many services to their residents and to the surrounding communities. Opportunities for similar services are being explored for this site.

Now Patrick will discuss Demographic findings for the neighborhoods surrounding St. Martha's Community Commons.

For our report we conducted an analysis of the community in which we took a look at the demographic data we collected along with the survey responses we received from the St. Martha's Planning team. We then identified some strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the community.

Patrick Crawford: Hey everybody, I'm Patrick and today I am going to go over a lot of the demographic information that we on our 1 of 3 ((((((7.22))) which are on our site and the things I am going to over today are populations trends and age distribution, race, housing occupancy, employment vs. unemployment, income, poverty status, and also health care access in the area. So to begin, you guys can see that between 1990 and 2000 our site really didn't change that much. The one mile radius decreased in population by 2.5 percent while the state of Michigan increased by 6.91 percent, but from 2000 to 2010 there was a very big change in the Wayne Country area and our site specifically lost 22.8 percent of this entire population of about a fifth of it. Moving out to the 3 mile radius, lost 18 percent of their population so you guys can see that in our site specifically we've lost a lot of our population and then also you need to know that as our population is decreasing, it's also an aging population. To the right you can see an age distribution for the one mile radius and that's a population pyramid. It's a little bit small, but you guys can see that in 2000 the population for 85 and over was 188 people and that only increased about 1 percent but that increase of 1 percent equals 68 new residents in the area that are over the age of 85. Moving down a little bit further to another significant area, the group that is about to retire, 60 to 64 percent, that group actually increased by 256 residents in the area to not only as our population is shrinking, they are also aging, and that is one of the things we would really like to focus on for our site specifically. Race is another very important thing in our area. The State of Michigan is 82%

Caucasian and 15 percent is African American. However, if you look at our site specifically for Wayne County 54 percent of the population is Caucasian and 41 percent is African American. What's significant about this is that 52 percent of all the African Americans in the State actually live within 5 miles of our site. Housing occupancy was another thing we looked at and you guys can see on the top here for the one mile radius housing occupancy as far as occupied units went decreased by 1,300 units and vacant units decreased by about the same amount. In 2000, our one mile radius had a 6 percent vacancy rate and in 2010 that vacancy rate had increased to 23 percent. Employment was another very important thing to look at for our site. In 1990, employment was at about 12%. In 2006, things got a little bit better increased to about 6 percent unemployment but by 2010 almost a quarter of the population was unemployed in our area. Moving onto poverty status here. What's important to see here is that poverty trends in our entire area we studied have increased between 2000 to 2010 but the highest poverty trend is for our one mile radius again. In 2000, it was about 25 percent poverty status but by 2010 it had increased to 32 percent. Moving onto the 3 mile radius, they had a little bit better poverty trend. In 2000 they had about a 20 percent poverty rate. By 2010 they had over 25 percent. So you guys can see that in our area poverty has increased so has job vacancy. We noticed that with our aging population health care access may be one of the most important things we could look at for our community and what we could do for them. So if you guys see on the left here, average health care consumer spending our one mile area spent the least amount of money on health care each year. If you look on the right side, our one mile radius was also the most likely to spend more than one visit at a doctor each year. This means that they're spending the least amount of money, but they are also making the most visit so they have to make their money stretch as far as it can in our area so we noticed because of this that making affordable health care in the area might be a recommendation for the future. So a summary of our population demographics here is that is that our population is really shrunk in the last ten years and it is an aging population. We're looking at a very diverse area that is struggling with unemployment and housing occupancy right now and they are also lacking health care access.

Chris Hughes: Hi everybody, I'm Chris Hughes and I am going to be talking about the community swat analysis. We conducted an analysis of community in which we took a demographic data we collected along with a survey responses we received from St. Martha's planning team. We then identified some strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the community. One strength is the historical background of the site. Henry Ford and the Ford Family are obviously very important to the city of Detroit. The land was originally the Ford family farm, and Henry Ford and other members of the Ford Family are buried right on site in front of the church.

The church itself is strength to the community. It is a beautiful building with impressive stone work, amazing Tiffany stain glass windows, and an overall high quality of construction. With such an aesthetically pleasing building and the history behind the site, the St. Martha's Commons really has an opportunity to serve as an attraction to the community.

Another strength is the St. Martha's planning session. This group has been meeting before our practicum group came into the picture and will continue to meet after we have finished here. The project will continue to move forward with the guidance and leadership from this group.

Moving onto weaknesses. One weakness is disinvestment in the area is a weakness. Businesses and organizations are leaving the area, and as their old facilities sit vacant vandalism sets in and lowers the overall quality of the neighborhood.

Another weakness is the accessibility to quality recreation in the area. River Rouge Park is a 1200 acre park that would be a main attraction of the area, but due to a lack of funding the city has struggled to maintain the park. With limited funding and help from community volunteers, some areas of the park remain open, but again, the overall quality is very low.

Another weakness is poor accessibility to healthy food sources. This map here shows the major healthy food sources in the City of Detroit. The red star represents the St. Martha's Site. As you can see there are a few healthy food sources within the area.

However if we look at a leakage/surplus map, one of the first things we notice is there is a leakage in most industry groups within the 1 mile radius, including grocery stores and specialty food stores. A leakage meaning consumers are going outside the 1 mile radius for these industry groups. This would suggest that the issue is not with accessibility, but maybe quality or costs of healthy foods.

Moving onto opportunities we see that there are available real estate in the area. The Wayne County Community College, and the former Detroit Lutheran School are both vacant, and while the Islamic center is not vacant, the owners have relocated to a new facility and the old facility is under-utilized.

There are great opportunities to collaborate with community organizations. There are many different community organizations some of which are part of the St. Martha's Planning Team. These organizations can bring a variety of different services and resources to the St. Martha's Commons.

There is also an opportunity for community involvement. One of the goals of the commons is to bring the community together and create a sense of unity among a diverse population.

Gardenview Estates is also an opportunity within the area. Gardenview Estates is HOPE XI mixed income housing development located a block west of the St. Martha's Site. Planning began in 1996 after demolition of Herman Gardens. The plan includes 4 phases equaling 228 million dollars. Upon completion there will be over 1000 mixed income units, 231 market rate

single family homes, and 833 rental units of varying type. Hopefully these two communities can work together to revitalize the surrounding area.

Moving on to threats. Security and vandalism is an issue in the area. Like I mentioned before as buildings sit vacant vandalism takes place and lowers the overall quality of the area.

Another threat is the high cost of maintaining the church. The reason why the church has not been vandalized is because of the maintenance and upkeep of the building. Although it is vacant, it has the appearance of being occupied, but this comes at a very high cost. If some sort of funding isn't generated to offset these cost, the future of building could be in jeopardy. Now moving onto recommendations and Mike will walk you through our conditions for the place.

Mike French: Good afternoon, I'm Mike French.

Now that we had collected and compiled our demographic and local economic data as well as an inventory of the site and the surrounding area we were ready to begin the process of organizing our conclusions and developing our recommendations. In order to make this easy, we organized the site into ten planning districts. District one is our primary focus area and is the St. Martha Common. We're gonna skip ahead and do two through ten and then come back and focus on District One.

District Two is the Joy West Apartments, an existing apartment complex. We recommend the continuation of the current use. We'd like to integrate this district with our community commons concept and these residents should be targeted to participate in the future activities on the St. Martha's site.

Planning District Three is a group of abandoned and vandalized single and multi-family dwellings. Ownership of these parcels has reverted to the city of Detroit. These parcels, we recommend, in the near term be demolished. This action would serve the dual purpose of removing the blight of these half destroyed buildings from the neighborhood, as well as create a buffer, a green buffer, between the St. Martha's development and lands to the west.

Planning District Four is Christ Child Society Home which is an operating facility for at-risk boys in the community. Given the relationship that has been developed between the Presbyterian Villages of Michigan and the operators of the Christ Child Society House, both entities have a vested interest in the success and community involvement of the St. Martha's property. A path connecting the boys' home property with the development planned at the St. Martha's site will strengthen and enhance this partnership.

Planning District Five is the former Islamic Center. Continued use of this site by an Islamic worship or community service organization will contribute to enhance inter-faith cooperation

and understanding wherein members can actively participate in the programs of the new St. Martha's Common.

Planning District Six is an area of existing commercial uses: one retail store, one fast food restaurant, and one office building. We recommend the beautification and expansion, the beautification of the expansive asphalt area and demarcation of crosswalks to improve appearance, traffic flow, and pedestrian safety. Also, continued monitoring of future development plans is recommended as the potential for both positive and negative outcomes on this corner.

Planning District Seven is an existing wood lot. These woods provide a natural buffer between the southern boundary of the St. Martha's site and the railroad tracks and other land uses to the south. In addition, its home to several animal species and mature shade trees which provide natural beauty at no additional cost. Accordingly, our recommendation is that these woods be maintained and managed in their current condition.

Planning District Eight: Location of the former Wayne County Community College campus. They have since moved south to the location of a new campus. This being their former northwest campus. This property is now vacant. We recommend two possible uses of this parcel to support the goals and activities of St. Martha's commons. One use would be to repurpose the structure as an urban agricultural training or technical facility. Detroit is being developed as a food hub and a center for urban agriculture. The connectivity of the site, and size and layout of the existing building increase the feasibility of this type of land use. A second possibility for the site is demolishing the buildings and creating senior cottages, more senior housing for the area. The population of seniors is projected to increase creating demand for livable senior housing. This type of development would generate greater demand for the new St. Martha's amenities.

Planning District Nine is the former Detroit Urban Lutheran School. A K through 12 school that's now abandoned and deteriorating. It's also been vandalized like many of the properties on this block have been. We'd advocate that a new K through 12 user come in and occupy the building and be available to actively participate in the programs on the new St. Martha's site.

Planning district 10 is the location of two currently operating facilities: the City of Detroit Bus Terminal and the City of Detroit's School District's Bus Terminal and the CF Berger Creamery. The City of Detroit Bus Terminal is one of only two locations for bus maintenance and mobilizing. Use of this facility is likely to continue in the near term and no recommendation for a use change is suitable for this parcel at this time. The CF Berger Creamery is an operating creamery and processing plant which provides approximately 150 jobs to the local economy. One recommendation might be possible distribution and marketing partnerships.

Now coming back to District 1, our primary focus area. We have organized this into several steps or recommendations and conclusions for this parcel. Step 1 would be to submit the St. Martha's Episcopal Church for registration on both the state and federal registers for historic places. Registration will enhance attractiveness as a tourist destination and will open funding sources through historic preservation grants, particularly MSHDA Historic Preservation and Historic Building Repurpose Grant, as well as low cost loans. Step 2 would be to establish a non-profit entity to manage the St. Martha's Commons project. Offices for this entity may be housed in the rooms in the church building, or in the renovated St. Peters building, or possibly, also, in the Rectory Anselmy Building. In setting up a non-profit, State and Federal law requires a few specific steps. Incorporation can be done by identifying a single individual as the registered agent. Other steps that need to be taken include identifying the size of the board and how it functions, etc. Step 3 would be repair buildings and grounds. We recommend the complete renovations and repairs to the main church building and Sexton and Rectory. Continuing use of the main building will help to conduct routine maintenance on a consistent basis. Roof, tiles, gutters, and eaves need to be repaired and in spots replaced. Exterior walls, windows, and trim will be weatherized, cleaned, and painted. Interior spaces will be cleaned, prepped, and painted. Mechanical and kitchen equipment will be modernized. Several Congregations can share that facility by staggering meeting times. Classrooms and the large kitchen can be shared by the congregations for their own needs and used for community instruction, enrichment activities, and outreach. Step 4 would be to create a "Women of Ford" museum. With its historic connections with Clara Ford and the Ford Family at large, St. Martha's is an excellent location for a museum dedicated to the women of the Ford family and the company, also, those female employees that helped to shape the modern Ford company: the first female executives, workers during World War II, etc. The museum can be operated within the church itself without using any fixed emplacement exhibits. Quick Response codes and handheld readers can make information available to museum visitors with minimal intrusion into the environment. Step 5 would be to create a multi-tenant, non-profit center. The former St. Peter's Boys Home building has been identified as having adequate space and accessibility to house a number of community service entities. The building has suffered some vandalism, however, this analysis assumes the building is salvageable in its shell state and interior structure could be possible. Step 6 would be to establish a non-profit health and wellness clinic. Our analysis of the community profile and inventory of community assets have identified a gap in low cost health, wellness, fitness, and nutrition services in the community. Other office space in this building could be utilized for the operation of the St. Martha's Commons project and volunteer space as required, or may be necessary. Step 7 would be to establish a multi-purpose garden. Existing open space located to the south of St. Peter's boys improvements, south of the village of St. Martha's senior home, and south of St. Martha's Episcopal Church have been identified for the best location for multipurpose gardens and a

walking path. The need for multipurpose gardens was identified through meetings with the St. Martha's planning team. Some components of which are direct result of their input and advice. The gardens would be designed to support functions including, but not limited to, a teaching and training class for the Vets to Ag Program, a healing care garden designed to support rehabilitation of the ill and injured, a community garden for use of nearby residents, an ecumenical or spiritual garden for medication, handicap accessible planting plants for use by wheel chair bound person, etcetera. Step 8 would be to establish a community farmer's market. We recommend that the site serve as location of a new community farmer's market. A community market will draw attention to the site on a weekly or bi weekly basis which will quickly establish the St. Martha's Commons concept and solidify the Commons as a destination for community partners. The farmer's market space could include a pavilion for display area for vendors, an open plaza, and structures for storage. Step 9 would be the mutually beneficial community organization participation. The success of the Common's plan will likely be determined by the strength of coordination and agreements with existing nonprofit entities serving the local community. The subject study area is currently being targeted by several communities or faith based organizations and foundations. Now we'd like to run a brief animation and we'll point out some of the highlights here that will show what we envision.

(Video animation starts): Okay, moving to the east of the Presbyterian Villages of Michigan's building, this is the church property, there's Ford cemetery, and here we've envisioned some new fencing. You can see a new handicap accessible ramp and viewing platform. Now this landscaping is what meant when we said connecting pathways; ways to connect these three parcels together. We're flying through that now. Now we're in front, between the road and the Village of St. Martha's Senior Housing building. Now moving to the west, we're back behind St. Peter's Boy's Home. Here we can see structures for the new farmer's market. Notice the sidewalks again connecting pathways. Bike racks, parking areas, and behind that a visualization of what the gardens might look like. There on north end you saw some handicap accessible planting beds. More landscaping improvements, benches for sitting, and again sidewalks: ways to connect these elements together along the property. Here we can see a recreational golf area as well as a new water feature and an exercise path, a walking trail for the seniors in the community. Okay, now we would like to introduce Richard Wooten from the MSU Extension Office.

Richard Wooten: My name is Richard Wooten and I work at the Wayne County MSU Extension Office and I actually am the co-facilitator or co-chair of the local planning team. And actually, in terms of the the next step for this project, we're in the process of trying to address air quality issues with the church. So we've gotten several proposals we're trying to get those issues addressed because we actually have about two different churches that are actually using facility on a part time basis. And because we have had problems with the air quality in the facility they

have moved over to the PVM recreation room or meeting room to have their meetings. So in terms of next steps: One, we've got to address the air quality issue. Two, we're still looking to potentially track community based tenants who focus on issues of health and wellness to actually reuse the facility as was indicated in the early part of the presentation. If we can't find tenants for the facility to address the ongoing cost of maintaining the church we will be challenged in terms of maintaining that facility on a long-term basis. We still got to do that, but we can't do that until we address the air quality. Two, we are working on a specific plan for St. Martha's Commons. Now that the students have completed a plan for the overall site, we're taking some of that information that they've developed and we're incorporating it into a site specific plan for St. Martha's because our intent is really to start looking at some mini-grants to actually start using some of the ground areas on the site as we look for more substantial funding for the reuse of the church and the expansion of the overall commons site. And also, actually, we're also talking to Templar Foundation. They're an environmental conscious foundation. They work with limited income families who have children that are terminally ill. What they would like to do is to create a hydroponic garden facility on the old Boys Home site. The project would actually create 1.9 lbs of fresh food a year and it would be organically grown and it would generate a three million dollar investment for the site. Also, we're trying to potentially talk to potential re-users of the some of the adjacent properties and we're hoping we can get them to actually participate as a part of the planning team so we can come up with a cohesive plan for the overall re-development of the entire 80 acres. So that's kind of where we are and where we are trying to get to.

Jennifer Bruen: Thank you Richard

Richard Wooten: You're very welcome.

Jennifer Bruen: Thank you practicum team. This is very informative and looked like it was a lot of work and we're looking forward to the future of this project.

Richard Wooten: Great.