Vision Statement

48217 is a vibrant, scenic, and beautiful jewel of Detroit that serves as a gateway to the City. The community is committed to diverse, friendly, unified, supportive, safe, convenient, clean, and livable neighborhoods which support economic development, viable opportunities, and resources for education, health, entertainment, churches, and youth.
Executive Summary

This document is a summary of our key findings regarding strategies for development for the 48217 Neighborhood.

Research for this project included community input from a workshop process and surveys of previous studies and current initiatives concerned with the 48217 Neighborhood. Work done previously by others has contributed in part to ideas contained within this report. In other words, this report builds upon those previous studies as well as current initiatives that are underway.

Our Final Strategy Statement was generated from the specific workshops held on June 28, September 14, and November 8, 2006. It was here that we asked: What does it mean to be a Model Community? It includes things like walkability, public libraries, cultural centers, community centers, neighborhood commercial, green public space, safe and secure, clean and welcoming, job opportunities, etc.... However for this group of residents it meant a little bit more. When the 48217 residents voted on the most important qualities to enhance their neighborhood, “Safe and Secure” and “Environmental” were the first two items. [Please see Section 2 of this booklet for the top 5 items.] They explained that to be “safe and secure” in a neighborhood surrounded by industry included being safe and secure in health. Thus, environmental measures are needed to help the neighborhood be a more healthy place to live.

We also explored the both regional and neighborhood tactics for development specific to the 48217 Neighborhood. You will see these in Sections 3 and 4 of this booklet. Section 5 shows the complete composite development strategy and introduces the recommendation for a umbrella managing body for the development of the entire area. This entity would include all 48217 stakeholder groups.
Vision Statement

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Final Strategy Statement

48217 should be a model community within an industrial area by celebrating environmental solutions and implementing regional and neighborhood tactics for development.

Introduction

Community Design Process
- Workshop Part 1
- Workshop Part 2
- Workshop Part 3

Regional Tactics

Neighborhood Tactics

Final Development Strategy

Summary
48217 is a vibrant, established community positioned at the southwestern-most tip of Detroit. It is bounded by the Rouge River to the north, Interstate 75 (I-75) to the west, Outer Drive to the south, and Basset Street to the east. 48217 is located in Cluster 5, a key location and hub of rail, road, and water transportation systems for the City of Detroit, including an international gateway to Canada. This infrastructure has established this cluster as an important jobs center combining housing and neighborhood-serving commercial areas with industry and commerce along the transportation connections.

This report outlines the participatory community design process and the development strategies that were generated. The design process negotiated the balance between the conceptual needs of the neighborhood, and the current assets and future vision of the community. It also addressed threats, weaknesses, and needs of the area. The result of the process is a design for a dynamic development strategy that builds on: (1.) the rich existing assets of the neighborhood and its people [parks, schools, commercial, etc...], (2.) the existing or proposed regional tactics [transportation, greenways, etc...] that potentially impact the 48217 area and (3.) the available land due to vacancy and abandonment.

Historically, the residential areas of the neighborhood have been referred to as “Boynton” to the south of I-75 and “Oakwood Heights” to the northwest. Currently, the neighborhood as a whole is referred to by its residents as: “48217”—its zip code number.
48217 should be a model community within an industrial area by celebrating environmental solutions and implementing regional and neighborhood tactics for development.

The housing stock of the 48217 is primarily single-family homes. The neighborhood’s primary commercial corridor is Fort Street, with Oakwood Boulevard and Viger Street serving as secondary commercial corridors.

Parks, churches, schools, and other neighborhood institutions are valuable assets to the 48217 community. The Kemeny Recreation Center serves a large number of youth and senior citizens in the community, while Kemeny Park, Plewok Park, Barolo Park, and Bridgeview Park provide valuable recreation space for the neighborhood. 48217 also has viable, historic businesses including Oakwood Bakery and Giovanni’s Restaurant. (potential assets—Rouge River, Electric Street?)

48217 is home to numerous industries that contribute to the economic development of Detroit. These industries include Marathon Petroleum Company, Detroit Salt Mine Company, and Shell Oil, among others. 48217 is also bordered to the northwest by the Ford River Rouge Plant whose revolutionary $5/day wage attracted residents of Appalachian, African-American, Hungarian, Polish, and other Eastern European descents to southwest Detroit neighborhoods. The proximity of these industries to the 48217 community is unique in comparison with other Detroit neighborhoods.

Like many urban neighborhoods in the United States’ postindustrial cities, 48217 has experienced dis-investment. Today there are many vacant lots, abandoned buildings, and inappropriate neighborhood activities such as illegal dumping and non-family-friendly commercial activities.
The Design Center works exclusively with non-profit organizations in a unique community design process. This process engages all participants in the project—community residents [regardless of economic background, race, religion, etc…], students, client representatives, end users, builders, designers and other concerned parties and stakeholders. All are seen as providing a particular expertise essential to the success of the project. The intent of this process is to ensure that through participatory workshops, the design criteria reflect the needs and concerns of all involved. It also fosters a commitment and understanding of the project as a whole and of the necessary requirements needed for its successful completion.

**Top 5 Qualities**

- Safety & Security
- Environmental
- Fiscal Sustainability
- Community & Neighborhood Design
- Community Values
48217 Neighborhood Planning Workshop Process

A variety of Stakeholders from 48217 participated in three workshops where they developed the vision, scope and specifics of their neighborhood development strategy.

**Workshop 1** [June 28, 2006]
**Goal:** Vision Statement
Project goals and objectives were developed and the results were composed into a vision statement. [Please see first page for final vision statement.]

**Goal:** Establish Quality Model
The concept of a quality model was introduced. Terms such as image, technology, operations, resources, mission appropriateness and culture were defined and prioritized. Stakeholders voted for qualities that were important to the revitalization plan.

Between workshops participants took photographs of both the positive and negative aspects of the area.

**Workshop 2** [September 14, 2006]
**Goal:** Establish Photo-voice
The photographs taken by each participant were arranged and themes were discussed. This led to a discussion and distinction between Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

**Goal:** Establish Program and Uses
Workshop participants developed potential uses and location of those uses in the neighborhood.

**Workshop 3/Feedback Session** [November 8, 2006]
**Goal:** Receive Quality Feedback on Preliminary Strategy
A preliminary strategy was developed and presented in detail to all present stakeholders. The participants used the information developed from the prior two workshops to assess and amend the work.
A “greenway” is usually the transformation of outdated infrastructure [for example: railroad lines] into public park space, and pedestrian and bike paths. Currently there are several Greenway initiatives underway in the Detroit Metro Area. Two of these engage the 48217 neighborhood. The Detroit Collaborative Design Center recommends using these greenways to branch off a secondary set that enter the neighborhood.

The Southwest Detroit-Dearborn Greenway vision involves linkages between Patton Park in Southwest Detroit, Lapeer Park in Dearborn, and the Rouge River Gateway corridor. The proposed connections between the two parks, two cities, and the Latino and Arabic neighborhoods are a first step toward linking the City of Detroit’s riverfront and other greenway developments.

The Detroit-Dearborn Greenway is a collaborative effort among the Southwest Detroit Business Association, the cities of Dearborn and Detroit, Wayne County, SDEV, Ford Motor Company, and the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services.

[source: Rouge River Gateway 2005 Master Plan Update]

The Fort Street Greenway would link the regional greenway system, thus connecting greater Detroit with Ecorse, Melvindale, and Allen Park. Hamilton Anderson Associates and students from Lawrence Technological University have done studies incorporating a greenway into Fort Street. This tactic builds upon those studies.
Access to the 48217 Neighborhood should be inviting and well-defined, while the edges and gateways should be highly visible to the Detroit community. Identification entry markers located at key entry points of the neighborhood have the potential of creating gateways by defining area boundaries and creating a sense of arrival or discovery. Gateway features can also strengthen and unify the neighborhood’s image and appearance and create a unique identity, or brand, for the community. These gateways could include signage, landscaping, or public art to indicate that you are approaching a special place. These gateways and branding techniques could also be part of a larger marketing campaign that the community establishes to attract new residents and businesses.

One possibility which would achieve the gateway, branding, and buffering goals is to take advantage of the Marathon Petroleum Company’s storage tanks along I-75, currently one of the first impressions upon entering the neighborhood. By utilizing these tanks as a canvas for murals, for example, the 48217 neighborhood and Marathon Petroleum could create an exciting gateway to the community.
The 48217 community members stressed the need for visual and noise buffering from the industries along Fort Street and I-75. This buffering could also be achieved through landscaping or public art, thus serving as both a buffer and a gateway.
Regional Tactics

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a type of public transit that combines the quality of rail transit and the flexibility of buses. It can operate on bus lanes, High Occupancy Vehicle lanes, expressways, or ordinary streets. A BRT system combines a simple route layout, frequent service, limited stops, and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology.

Bus Rapid Transit
Thoroughfare commercial refers to a range of retail establishments located conveniently along major traffic thoroughfares. In contrast to neighborhood commercial, thoroughfare commercial includes larger-scale development such as grocery stores and home improvement stores. This type of development is also considered "destination" commercial since an automobile is often used to make these larger shopping trips. Fort Street has the capacity to support a wide range of thoroughfare commercial development which would provide needed services to the 48217 community.
Neighborhood Tactics are proposed actions enhancing the 48217 neighborhood, which engage existing local neighborhood assets or opportunities. They provide small-scale development which celebrates the local community resident.
The intent behind the idea of neighborhood collectors developed from the notion that many centers for community interaction should exist throughout 48217. This is in addition to a new central neighborhood center. These collections include a library annex [an example is shown below], cafes [an example shown later in this booklet], the “corner store”, etc. They also provide neighborhood service, which are much-needed.

Currently the space is used for illegal dumping of trash and tires.

View of New Library Under Fort Street
Spatial Reuse Study

4 Neighborhood Tactics
Neighborhood Collectors: Existing
Neighborhood Tactics

Neighborhood Collectors: New & Existing

View of Existing Abandoned Building Transformed to a Local Cafe

Spatial Reuse Study
Opportunities to develop the Rouge Riverfront with public, recreational, and neighborhood commercial uses are already being pursued by a number of ongoing initiatives. Our recommendation is to build upon these initiatives and develop the waterfront as an asset for the 48217 community.

Current initiatives that impact the waterfront include the replacement of the Fort Street Bascule Bridge and alternative uses for Fordson Island. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is planning to replace the Fort Street Bascule Bridge in 2008 to eradicate the existing bridge’s structural deterioration. The new bridge will improve vehicular traffic flow and include pedestrian walkways on both sides while maintaining boat traffic in the river. A revised bridge layout creates open space on the south riverbank. The operator house could be preserved as an historical monument in its present location on the river’s north side. Adjacent property owned by CSX Railroad provides an opportunity for public riverfront development and accommodating a future Fort Street greenway connection.
The establishment of Electric Street as a linear park will connect the 48217 Neighborhood internally, increase economic development activities, and provide educational, and cultural opportunities. An Electric Street park and multi-use trail network would link 48217 to outside areas by connecting to Lincoln Park Greenway to the south and Fort Street Greenway to the north [both are proposed].
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Neighborhood Tactics

View of Proposed Electric Street Linear Park
As illustrated in Sections 3 & 4 of this booklet, the Detroit Collaborative Design Center recommends a combination of regional and neighborhood development strategies for 48217 as it strives to become a model community within an industrial area. To ensure the success of the goals and strategies described in this booklet, we recommend establishing an actively-managed collective voice for the entire 48217 neighborhood.

This “umbrella” organization is a type of nonprofit entity, which would include all the stakeholders of 48217 as part of its voice. These would include current and future CDC, current and future business associations, block clubs, neighborhood groups, industry, local government, etc.... It will be characterized by community-based leadership to improve quality of life in neighborhoods by advocating for affordable housing, job creation, social services, safety, and cleanliness, among other initiatives. It will also act as a liaison between the residents and local government.

The 48217 umbrella organization will manage and facilitate the neighborhood’s development process and oversee initiatives related to safety, cleanliness, affordable housing, social services, and economic development. Though, it will not develop its own project and thus, will not be in competition with other entities. This collective voice will become a vital resource and activist mechanism for the neighborhood by providing the foundation for community cohesion and serving as a resource for community members to take their concerns and ideas.

The phrase “Development Strategy” is used here as opposed to “Master Plan” to emphasize the point that this is a “living and breathing” document and is not cast in stone. It changes and alters based on changes in development opportunities, neighborhood demographics, and funding availability. This document sets up a series of intentions and strategies with a vision. It is a framework not a final directive.
One of the Potential Location for New Neighborhood Center
This final development strategy is the culmination of a participatory community design process. The participants were representatives of larger stakeholder groups. There was a dynamic interaction and understanding of the history of the neighborhood [where it has been] and its future [where it is going]. The sustainability of any neighborhood lies in the hands of its residents. Thus, the success of this final strategy occurs through one resident at a time and their connection with each other. After witnessing the dynamic participation in developing this plan, we at the Design Center are confident that it will continue, grow, and thrive.
View of New Media Center Under Fort Street at Night

This scene shows a movie being played.