

# RETHINKING 8 MILE

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNIFYING ELEMENTS



Prepared For:  
**The Eight Mile Boulevard Association**



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## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

The 8 Mile Road corridor is defined by, and challenged by, a lack of a unified vision. This condition posed unique problems for the design team to resolve. Corridor development is currently at the forefront of regional planning. The corridor is the connective tissue that links neighborhoods, districts, towns and cities. The 8 Mile Road corridor affects all of these conditions. Its perceived negative is that it also acts as a barrier between cultures, races, and municipalities. This presented the design team with many unique issues.

Among these issues were the following:

- Bringing together 13 communities along political, geographical and racial lines.
- Coordinating the efforts of various community organizations working to enhance their own identities
- Developing a vision that could be comprehended along the 27.5 mile length of the corridor.

The recommendations in this Framework will strive to be universal for the corridor as a whole, but depend on the individual municipalities and community development corporations for follow-through. The Framework is neither a Masterplan nor an Overlay zoning ordinance. It should be used to guide those processes in the future.

The design team puts forth this document with the conviction that it has been the result of an inclusive design process, involving many interested parties. This conviction is supplemented by the knowledge that the design team brings from 15 yrs studying numerous communities nationwide and the elements that foster the unity that the Eight Mile Boulevard Association is seeking.

It is believed that through this process that the corridor can be developed in a manner that will sustain it well into this century and beyond. 8 Mile Framework for Unifying Elements is composed of three distinct components:

### I. The Physical Elements

### II. The Design Guidelines

### III. The Facade Enhancement Program

*The Physical Elements* include streetscape recommendations, aesthetic enhancements, and Public Art for Gateways

*The Design Guidelines* include-urban design criteria, development models, signage organization and the incorporation of nonmotorized pathways.

*The Facade Enhancement Program* outlines the requirements for qualifying for the fund or grant assistance program as well quality standards for signage, lighting, canopies, architectural details, and color.

## Historical Significance

8 Mile Road is the old surveying line that forms boundaries between southern Michigan counties and Illinois and Wisconsin. It is a wide road, split a fat median that for much of it carries huge electric power lines, the address of numerous factories, tool and die shops, bars, used car lots, factory close-out stores, salvage companies, resale shops and strip clubs. But 8 Mile's modern significance developed when Detroit's majority white population began moving north from the city in the 1950s to suburbs in Macomb and Oakland counties.

## Analysis and Concept Formation

The Design Team developed a land use analysis of the 8 Mile Road corridor in order to better understand the locations for areas of opportunity for the unifying elements. From this process the team created the "Focus Areas" or special nodes at key junctions along the 27.5 mile corridor. These nodes (illustrated in the concept plans) can be areas of increased pedestrian activity and concentration for connecting both sides of 8 Mile Road. Between the nodes we have grouped the zones into categories based on similar physical conditions on both sides of the corridor. This process will help to direct specific recommendations to specific areas within the corridor (see land use plans).

## Goals

The following goals were articulated by the Focus Groups as desired outcomes of the design process:

- Provide an overlay framework for physical predictability
- Create a sense of place along the corridor. "Place-making" - Uniformity from property to property and community to community
- Generate development interest and make 8 Mile Road a priority
- Unifying elements should create the I.D. of the corridor
- Develop an approach to coexist with the non-desirable uses along the corridor
- Open communities to new possibilities by changing the "mind" about the potential of the corridor
- Rethink the size of the retail demographic draw area
- Create a "Linear DDA" to coordinate efforts along the corridor

## Social Equity Through Design

*The Framework for Unifying Elements* envisions 8 Mile Road as a series of hubs of community social activity. These mixed use destinations will include amenities for residents such as grocery stores, post offices, child care facilities, and banks. Some may include much needed restaurants and movie theatres to meet the entertainment needs of the communities. Market forces and overall adjacent community development and planning will shape the programming of each of the “Focus Areas”.

In addition to providing local amenities the “Focus Areas” will have facilities and characteristics that are unique to their communities and will attract residents and encourage cross-community interaction north and south of 8 Mile Road. These areas will be programmed to support a mix of uses as opposed to the strips of connective tissue between the nodes which typically have uses that are consistent throughout.

Mixed use development is the cornerstone of creating great urban places. The perception of a cohesive mixed use area is achieved through its walkability. The 1/4 mile walking radius from center to edge has been used traditionally as a determining factor in establishing the size of neighborhoods and districts. The 1/4 mile distance is generally accepted as the distance most North Americans will walk before they would make the decision to drive instead. We have incorporated this concept into the development of the “Focus Areas”.

It must be stated that design alone will not ensure social equity. If 8 Mile Road is developed in the manner described in the design guidelines, it can become a well regarded place to live, work, and play. It is important to keep provisions in each community that allow for a true mix of incomes and housing types. This will aid in achieving a noticeably diverse urban environment.

By creating “places that people care about” the *8 Mile Framework for Unifying Elements* will encourage development of key employment sectors, supporting the economic growth of the corridor by providing jobs and opportunity.

## Community Involvement

The following communities and counties were involved in the design process:

### MUNICIPALITIES

Detroit  
 Eastpointe  
 Farmington Hills  
 Farmington  
 Ferndale  
 Harper Woods  
 Hazel Park  
 Livonia  
 Oak Park  
 Redford Township  
 Royal Oak Township  
 Southfield  
 Warren

### COUNTIES

Macomb  
 Oakland  
 Wayne

Primary Responsibilities of Participating Organizations:  
**Eight Mile Boulevard Association (8MBA)**

The 8MBA will coordinate activities within the corridor which will aid in the unification process. The 8MBA will monitor progress of projects and will present them to the Planning Advisory Committee for review.

## The Municipalities the Counties, and the CDCs

The municipalities and the counties of Macomb, Wayne, and Oakland counties will, through their representatives on the Planning Advisory Committee review, comment on, and approve projects along the corridor in accordance with *8 Mile Framework for Unifying Elements*.

## MDOT

The Michigan Department of Transportation is responsible for the care, maintenance, and improvements to the roadway. This responsibility will entail considering improvements that will help to make the thoroughfare a connector as opposed to a divider.

## DDOT and SMART

The Detroit Department of Transportation and the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transit will work cooperatively with 8MBA to realize the recommendations of *8 Mile Framework for Unifying Elements* including the use of vehicles and transit stops along 8 Mile that share a common graphic identity.

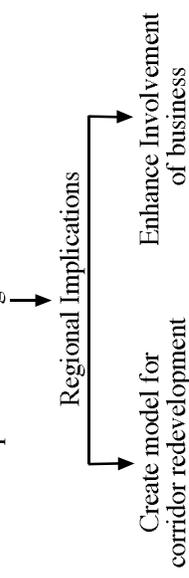
## Corridor Businesses

Businesses and property owners along the corridor will be responsible for providing the improvements to their property in accordance with the overall vision of 8 Mile Road. This will aid in creating the environment necessary to attract new investment and create new job opportunities throughout the corridor.

## Overall Social Equity Strategy for the *8 Mile Framework for Unifying Elements*

The primary desired outcome of the process is:

To affect positive change on the 8 Mile corridor



At the race relations workshop the following questions were asked:

- What will keep us together?
- What could break us apart?
- What could our group focus on?

The answers to the question were developed through the design process.

## Process

The design team conducted five focus group meetings during the three month design process. The focus groups consisted of city planners in each of the communities and representatives of area Community Development Corporations. The design team also met with the Eight Mile Boulevard Association Board twice to present the progress of the design project.

Each focus group was asked the same set of questions. From these questions the “commonalities” were culled to create a unified set of issues for the municipalities to support. The questions that were asked were:

1. What are the proposed projects in the community that will affect the corridor?
2. What are the problematic sites along the corridor in the community (eg. ownership issues, property condition)?
3. What is your community’s expectations of the framework (“vision” for the corridor)?
4. Are there any logistical or legal issues that can hinder development of the corridor (existing ordinances, unclear ownership, etc.,)?
5. What are the positive characteristics of your community and the corridor?
6. What are the negative characteristics of your community and the corridor?
7. What could be added or taken away from the corridor to make it a great place?
8. Are there other communities either close by or far away that would be good examples of your vision for the corridor or your community?

The answers were documented on flip charts so that all participants could view them. After the focus group meetings the design team archived the comments and developed this listing of common comments:

- Create Places along 8 Mile Road.  
Prime spots for transit hubs:  
-8 Mile Road/ Gratiot Avenue  
-8 Mile Road/ Telegraph Road  
-8 Mile Road/ Greenfield Road  
  
Prime Gateways:  
8Mile Road/ Woodward Avenue  
  
8Mile Road/ Van Dyke Road

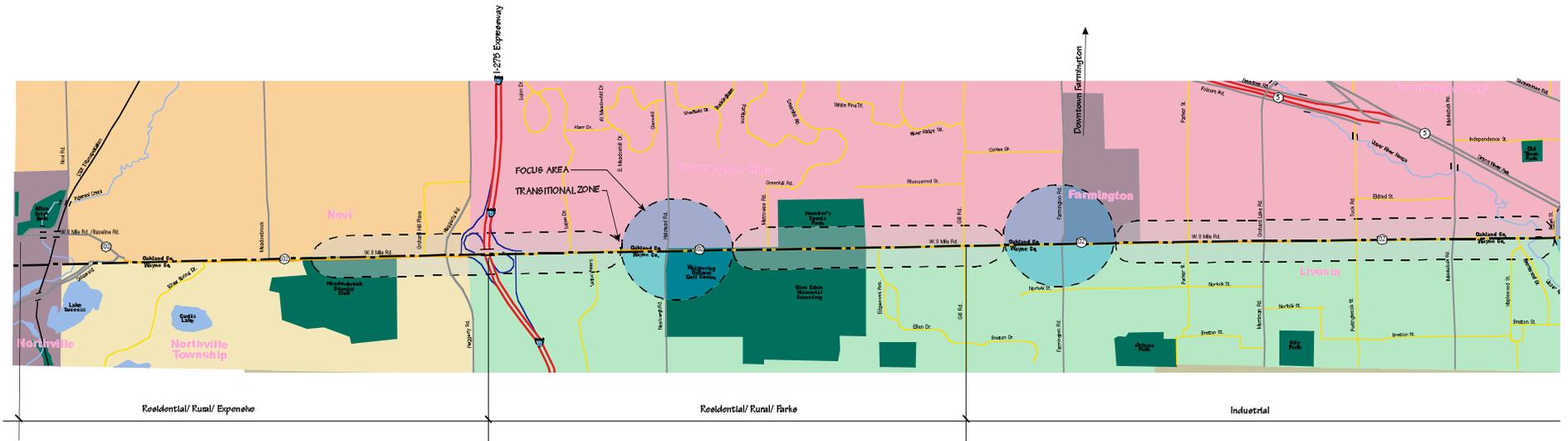
Incorporating:  
-Bus stops - Bus rapid transit and coordination of transit shelters  
-Park and ride  
-Articulation of the major intersections  
-Brighter metal halide lamps (at least at intersections)  
-Coordinate with local lighting and sign ordinances

- MDOT median maintenance. -Consider ground cover instead of grass
- Find a creative way to deal with “the Bridges” if they continue to exist
- Develop streetscape design standards and standards for street tree planting
- Develop controls for additional Billboards (consider coordinating heights and orientation of all freestanding signage along the corridor.
- Creative treatment of “towers”
- Enhancement of aging retail frontages
- Develop an approach to guide large scale development
- Develop an approach to reuse existing buildings
- Incorporate “Coasting the Baseline” – Identify locations for future obelisks or landmarks
- Incorporate greenway and trailway links and pocket parks along 8 Mile.
- Develop an approach to industrial buildings/sites adjacent to residential.
- Repair failing curbs and gutters

## Next Steps

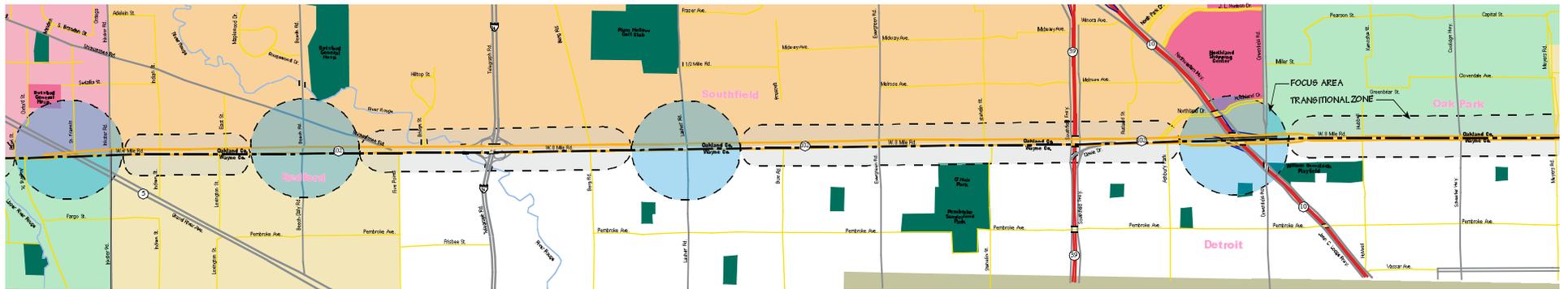
1. **Review of the First Phase results.**  
The results of the Framework for Unifying Elements will be reviewed by the 8MBA Board. Elements that do not contribute to the overall vision of the corridor will be critiqued for revision by the design team if necessary.
2. **Planning Advisory Committee Review.**  
The Framework will be forwarded to the 8MBA Planning Advisory Committee. This process will entail work sessions where the planning representatives convey specific issues related to the plan that affect their respective communities.
3. **Detailed Planning Efforts.**  
The design team will gather the review comments from the various sources and begin to implement the Framework through further development of the “Focus Areas”. This will include conceptual site planning for 1-2 of the zones in the first year along with design assistance for designated façade improvements.

As this work progresses it can be used as a catalyst for economic development. We must remember that in order to unify a corridor with the challenges associated with 8 Mile Road, we must not only encourage quality development, we must nurture it.



- 
**Focus Areas:**  
 Special nodes at key junctions along the 27.5 mile corridor; areas of increased pedestrian activity and concentration for connecting both sides of 8 Mile Road.
- 
**Transitional Zones:**  
 Zones between the nodes identified by the physical conditions on both sides of the corridor.

Zone 1: I275 - Grand River Avenue



Commercial

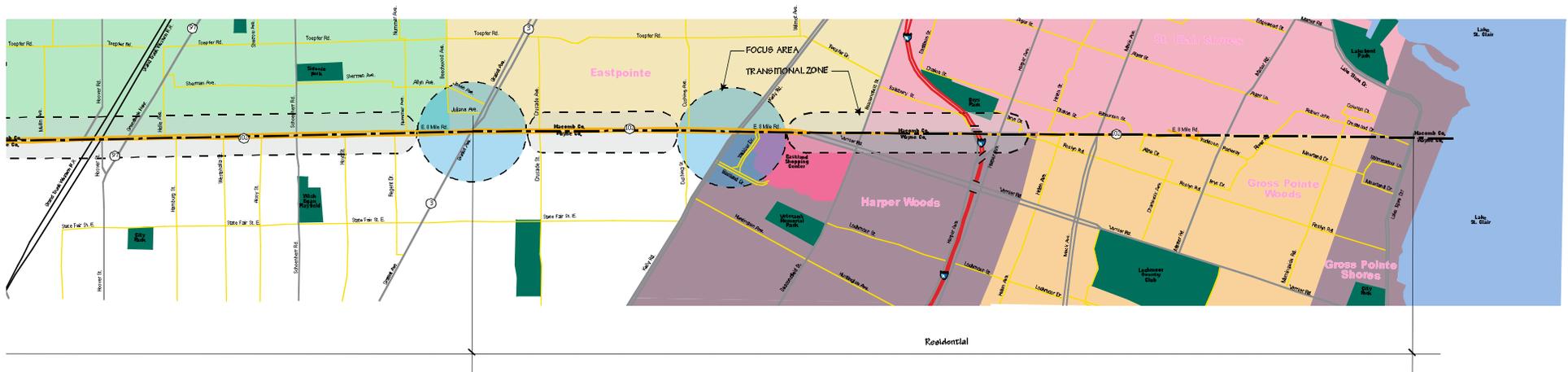
- 
**Focus Areas:**  
 Special nodes at key junctions along the 27.5 mile corridor: areas of increased pedestrian activity and concentration for connecting both sides of 8 Mile Road.
- 
**Transitional Zones:**  
 Zones between the nodes identified by the physical conditions on both sides of the corridor.

Zone 2: Grand River Avenue - Meyers



- 
**Focus Areas:**  
 Special nodes at key junctions along the 27.5 mile corridor; areas of increased pedestrian activity and concentration for connecting both sides of 8 Mile Road.
- 
**Transitional Zones:**  
 Zones between the nodes identified by the physical conditions on both sides of the corridor.

Zone 3: Meyers - Van Dyke



- 
**Focus Areas:**  
 Special nodes at key junctions along the 27.5 mile corridor; areas of increased pedestrian activity and concentration for connecting both sides of 8 Mile Road.
- 
**Transitional Zones:**  
 Zones between the nodes identified by the physical conditions on both sides of the corridor.

Zone 4: Van Dyke - I94



Land Use Study - Concept Plan Sketches	
Commercial - Linear Development	C-1
Commercial - Centers / Cluster	C-2
Single Family Residential	R-1
Multi Family Residential	R-2
Industrial - Light Facilities	I-1
Industrial - Large Dense Plant	I-2
Recreation - Park/Openpace	P-R
Institutional/Community Spaces	S
Major Connection Arterial	--- --- ---
Secondary Roads	--- --- ---
Pedestrian/Neighborhood Trunk	--- --- ---
Framework Study Areas / Nodes	○
Gateways	⊕

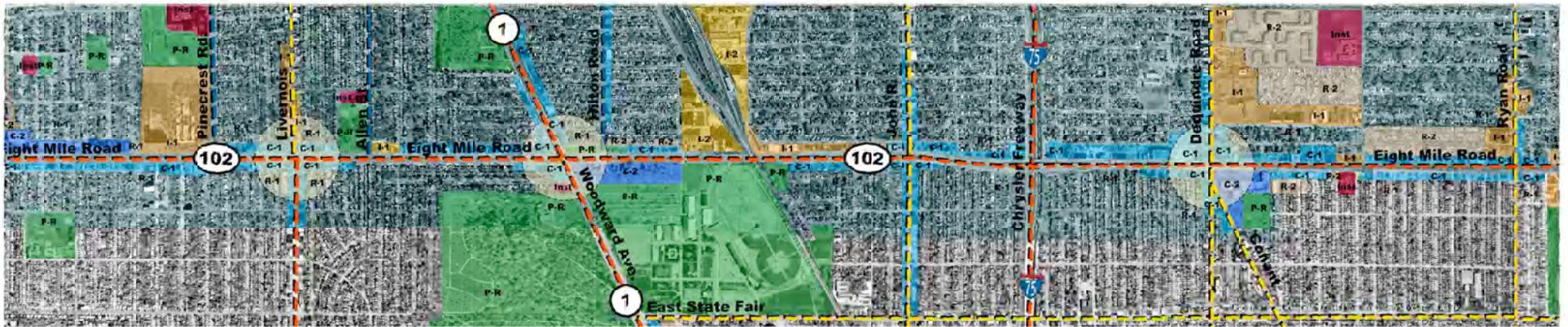
Land Use Map 1



Land Use Study - Concept Plan Sketches	
Commercial - Linear Development	C-1
Commercial - Center / Clusters	C-2
Single Family Residential	R-1
Multi Family Residential	R-2
Industrial - Light Facilities	I-1
Industrial - Large Dense Plants	I-2
Recreation - Park/Open Space	P-R
Institutional/Community Space	Inst
Major Connection Arteries	--- 100' --- 100' ---
Secondary Roads	--- 50' --- 50' ---
Pedestrian/Neighborhood Trunks	--- 20' --- 20' ---
Framework Study Areas/Nodes	
Gateways	



Land Use Study - Concept Plan Sketches	
Commercial - Linear Development	C-1
Commercial - Centers / Clusters	C-2
Single Family Residential	R-1
Multi Family Residential	R-2
Industrial - Light facilities	I-1
Industrial - Large Scale Plants	I-2
Recreation - Park/OpenSpace	P-R
Institutional/Community Spaces	IN-1
Major Connection Arteries	— — — — —
Secondary Roads	— — — — —
Feeder/Neighborhood Trunks	— — — — —
Framework Study Areas / Nodes	○
Gateways	⊠ ⊡



Land Use Study - Concept Plan Sketches	
Commercial - Linear Development	C-1
Commercial - Centers/Clusters	C-2
Single Family Residential	R-1
Multi Family Residential	R-2
Industrial - Light facilities	I-1
Industrial - Large Dense Plants	I-2
Recreation - Park/Open Space	P-R
Institutional/Community Spaces	In-1
Major Connection Arteries	102
Secondary Roads	75
Pedestrian/Neighborhood Trunks	1
Framework Study Area/Nodes	Yellow Circle
Gateways	Star

Land Use Map 4



Land Use Study - Concept Plan Sketches	
Commercial - Linear Development	C-1
Commercial - Clusters / Clusters	C-2
Single Family Residential	R-1
Multi Family Residential	R-2
Industrial - Light facilities	I-1
Industrial - Large Dense Plants	I-2
Recreation - Park/OpenSpace	P-R
Institutional/Community Spaces	I-C
Major Connection Arteries	— — — — —
Secondary Roads	— — — — —
Pedestrian/Neighborhood Trunks	— — — — —
Framework Study Areas / Nodes	○
Gateways	⊞



Land Use Study - Concept Plan Sketches	
Commercial - Linear Development	C-1
Commercial - Centers / Clusters	C-2
Single Family Residential	R-1
Multi Family Residential	R-2
Industrial - Light Facilities	I-1
Industrial - Large Dense Plants	I-2
Recreation - Park/Openpace	P-R
Institutional/Community Spaces	Inst
Major Connection Arteries	— — — — —
Secondary Roads	— — — — —
Pedestrian/Neighborhood Trunks	— — — — —
Framework Study Areas / Nodes	○
Gateways	⊕ ⊗

## I. The Physical Elements

The goal of the Physical Elements is to provide a sense of place and identity throughout the corridor. The Physical Elements include: district markers, signage, pavement treatments, and lighting. The design team has identified eight items that constitute the “physical elements” that will begin to unify the corridor. They are as follows:

### The District Sign Marker

The District Sign Marker is a significant part of the unifying elements theme. This multi-use structure announces the pedestrian or vehicular traveler’s entry into one of the designated “focus areas” along the corridor (see foldout aerial plan). This festive element serves as sign, symbol, decorative light, and space defining element. These elements should be located in the Right of Way on both sides of 8 Mile Road as well as in the median (see sketch page 12) to properly accentuate the district.

### The Screen Wall

The screen wall is a built structure that creates an urbanized edge at the side walk in conditions where the existing fabric is broken down (vacant parcels, parking lots). The screen wall can be temporary or permanent depending on the specific situation. (see pages 10 and 11)

### Color

Because of the general neutral nature of most of the building materials in communities traditionally, and the generally overcast lighting condition of our area, the built environment often takes on a very drab appearance. Color usage is a simple but high impact leading way to create unity along the corridor. The application of color should be in those situations that are most undesirable; transforming a perceived negative into a perceived positive (ie; the electric towers, the bridges...). The coloration of elements can be achieving through new technologies such as LED lighting or painting.

### Special Pavers

The Special Pavers are used judiciously throughout the corridor. It is the firm belief of the design team that, while these decorative elements enhance the streetscape, they are not an end-all cure for neglected public space. Special care must be taken during the construction stages to insure proper installation and minimize the possibility of upheaval due to the freeze/thaw cycle in Michigan. An alternative that has been use effectively is colored and textured concrete.

### Wayfinding Signage

Wayfinding signage is important in unifying the corridor. This signage should be used to denote special public attractions along the corridor (ie., directions to adjacent downtown’s, historical buildings/sites, and community parks).

### Street Trees

Street trees will be used to enhance the “edges” of 8 Mile Road. A variety of deciduous types is preferred. These types as they change with the seasons, will have a variety of decorating opportunities.

### Street Lights

Street lights along the corridor are at present inconsistent. The design team proposes a traditional street lamp for those locations between the festive district markers. These lights, along with the addition of street trees, begin to reduce the perceived scale of the street as well as creating a comfortable walking environment for the pedestrian.

### Coasting the Baseline Obelisks

*Coasting the Baseline* is a nonprofit educational project created by sculptor David Barr and coordinated by the Michigan Legacy Art Park (MLAP).

The first obelisk was erected on December 14, 2003, in Northville, Michigan. Each obelisk will offer a community-especially young people-opportunities to research and commemorate local history; to gain hands-on experience in exploring how survey technology shaped our geographic, social, and economic landscape; and to connect with communities across the baseline.

The baseline obelisks are ten feet tall, constructed of alternating, six-inch layers of black and white granite slabs to suggest the surveyor’s pole; the obelisk form, usually truncated, has historically marked geographic boundaries.

Farwell Field has been identified as a logical choice for the next location for an obelisk. The design team learned that the location is exactly eight miles due north from the zero point of Campus Martius in the heart of downtown Detroit.

The other locations identified by the design team are: 8 Mile Road/ Greenfield Road; 8 Mile Road/ Van Dyke Road; 8 Mile Road/ Mound Road.

### Observations

In addition to the elements described above, numerous existing conditions need to be addressed along the corridor. The following are the design team’s observations of existing conditions to be addressed in conjunction with the introduction of streetscape elements.

1. Some street lights are in disrepair. Inspect the existing lights and clean of rust, remove dents, and paint with recommended color designated by 8MBA.
2. The existing median is in need of maintenance as well as an upgrade of plantings. Use groundcover as a way to mitigate maintenance costs for median.
3. New development is taking on a conventional suburban character, which is inconsistent with the minimal front setbacks historically seen on the corridor. In the short term the Physical Elements should be used to mediate between this condition and the desired character of the corridor.

## Identity

Identity development allows a two-dimensional logo type or mark to be introduced and/or executed in a three dimensional fashion. Typically these elements are related to actual brick and mortar applications in high profile areas. A family of signs or environmental graphic elements is established to address varying and diverse field conditions.

A key element for corridor identity is the ability to establish a strong and continuous design theme, usually through landscape and streetscape elements, gateways, environmental signs, street and pedestrian lights, banners, color and logo type.

Examples of identity elements in districts



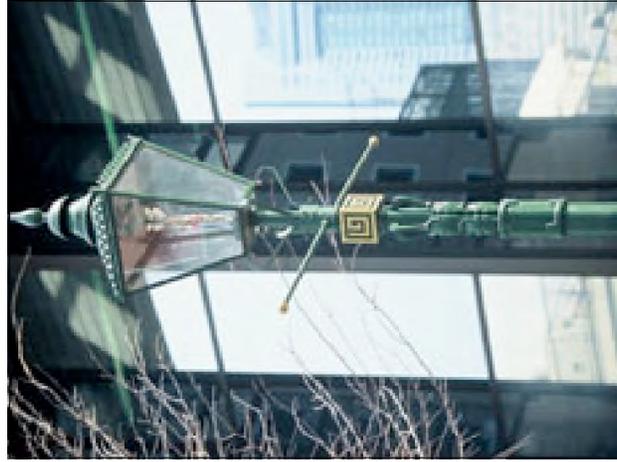
## Streetscape Lights

Streetscape lighting will help to promote an identity, presence, and community pride. Lighting should be limited to one style within the Focus Areas along the corridor.

For areas such as street crossings and intersections, more elaborate light fixtures should be used for high visibility. Consideration should also be made for pedestrian scaled fixtures to direct lighting to the pavement area and avoid shadows from the lighting fixture.



Examples of identity elements in districts



### Streetscape Pavers

Streetscape pavers should define crosswalks allow pedestrians to feel a sense of safety and predictability when placed adjacent to heavy traffic movement. Streetscape pavers will aid in creating a sense of place along the corridor by signifying important zones.

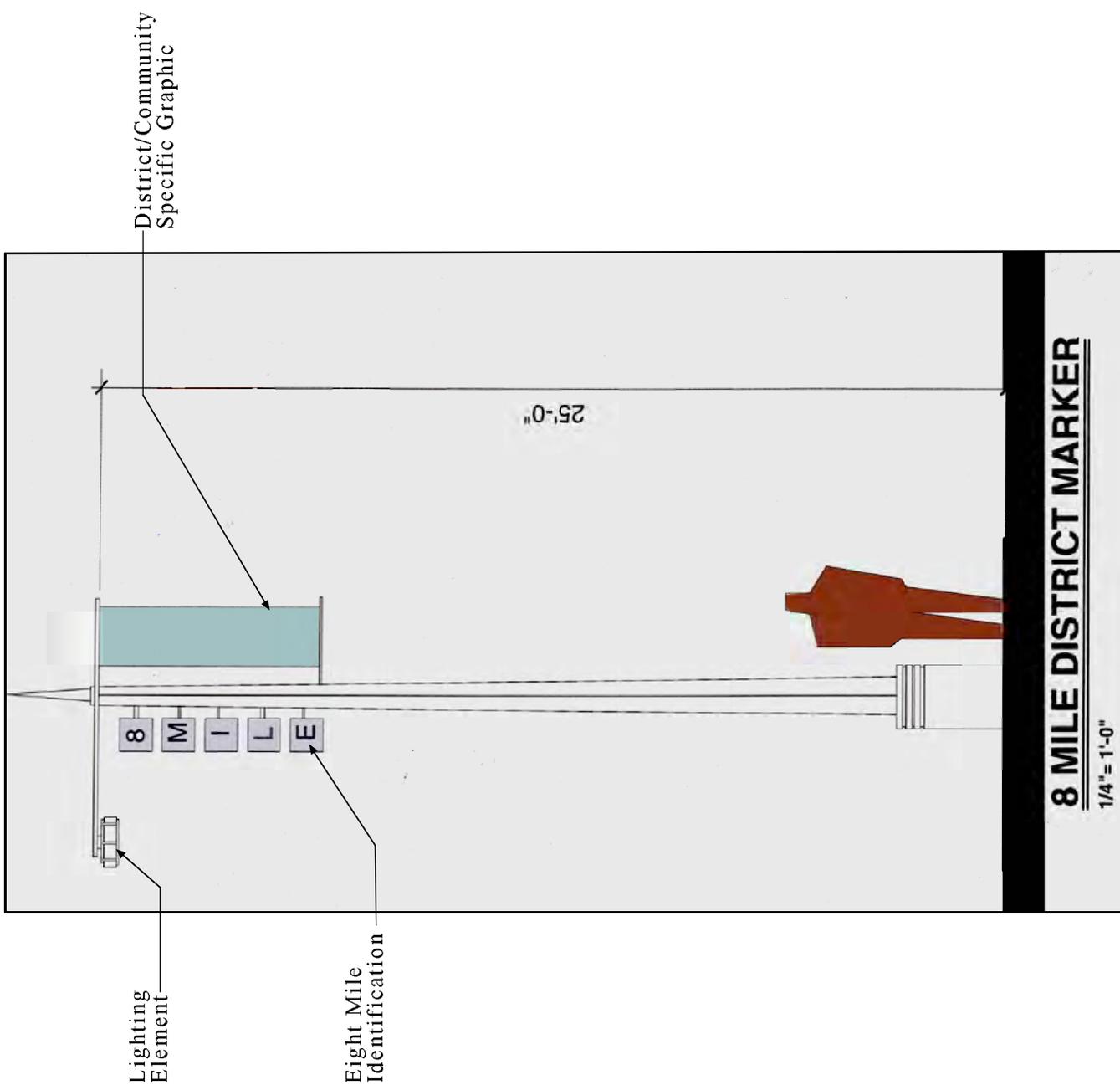
Clearly designated crosswalks will be utilized by streetscape pavers to encourage pedestrian use.

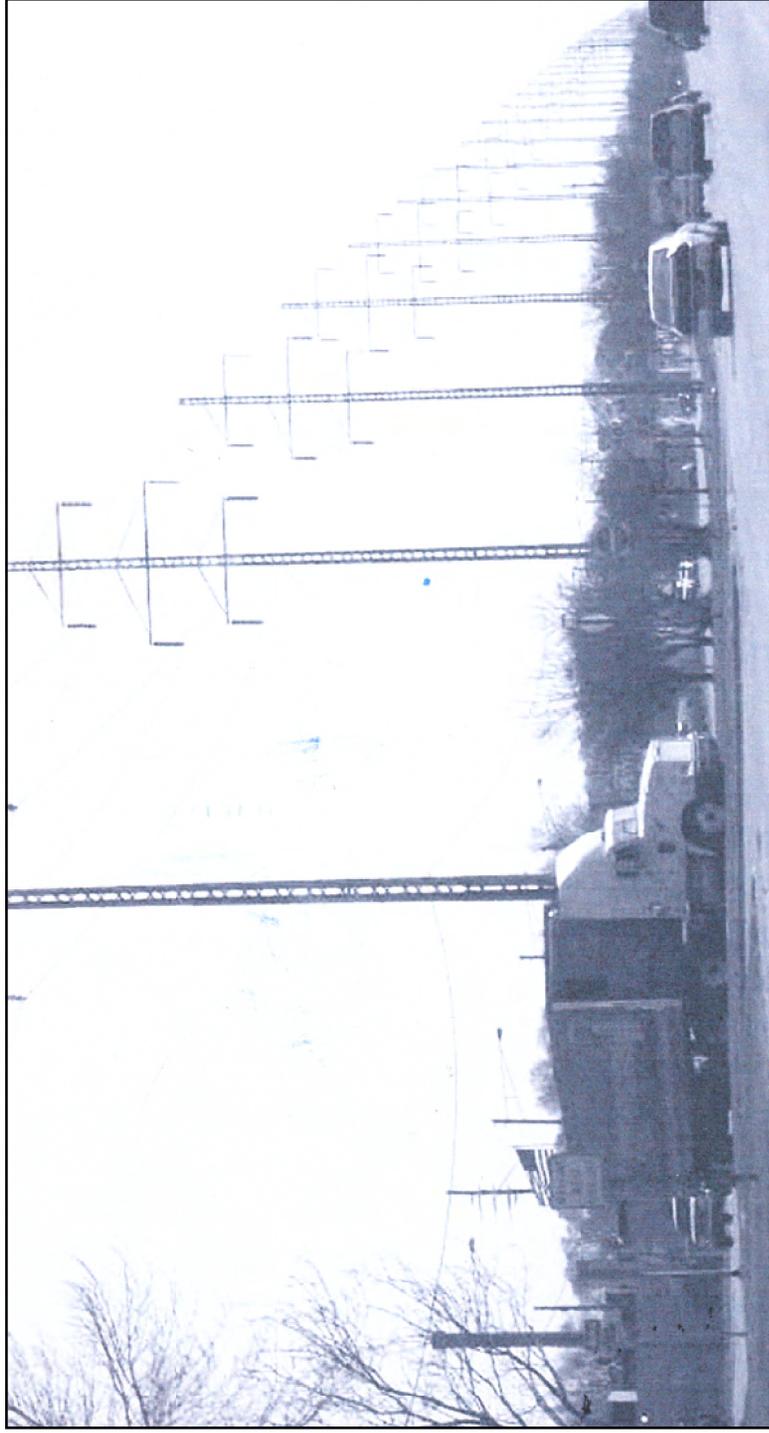
Building entrances should be fully accessible from both parking areas and public walkways that can be accentuated with paving. Building entries could be articulated with decorative brick or concrete pavers to announce clearly the entrances.

Examples of identity elements in districts

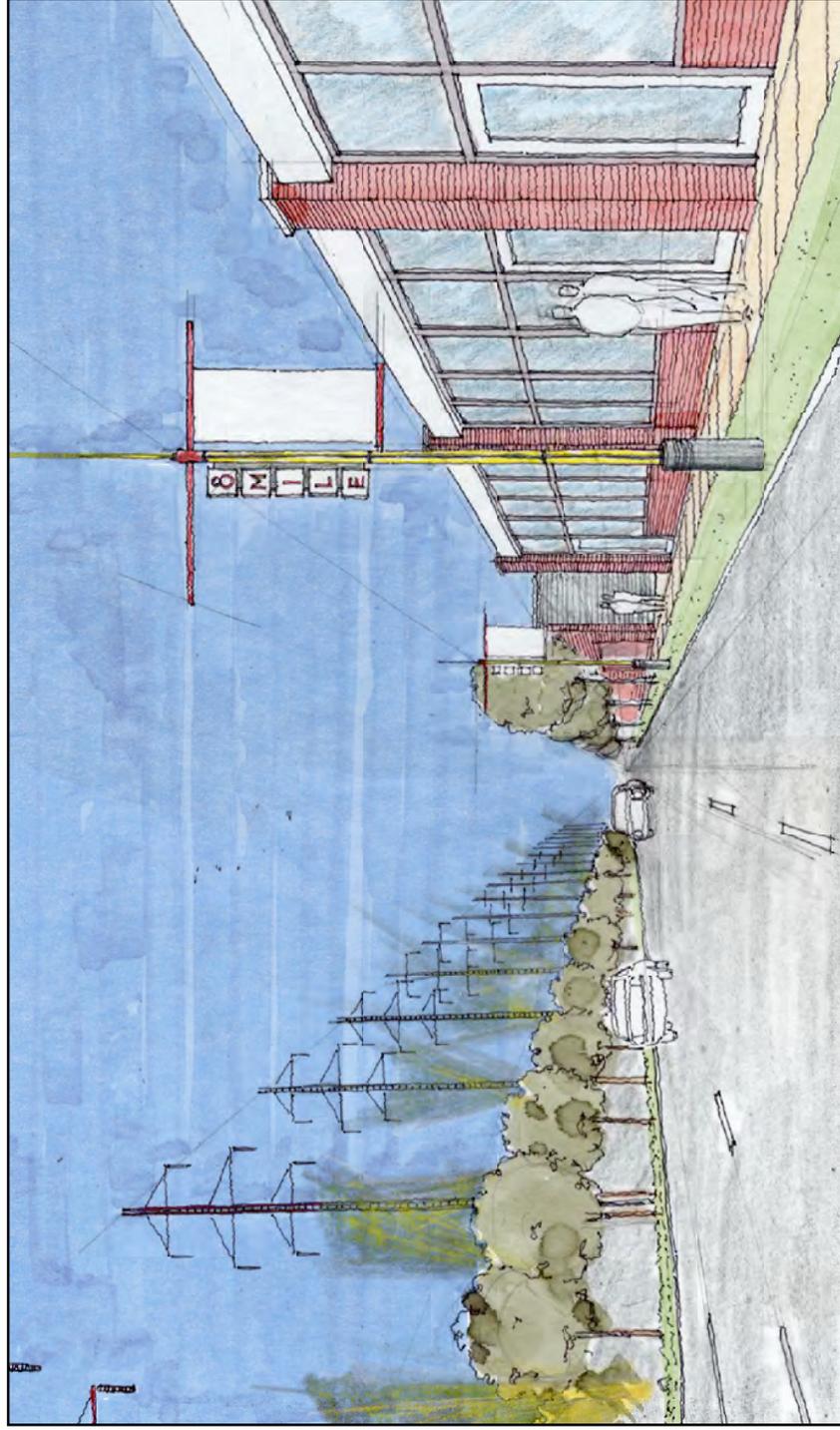




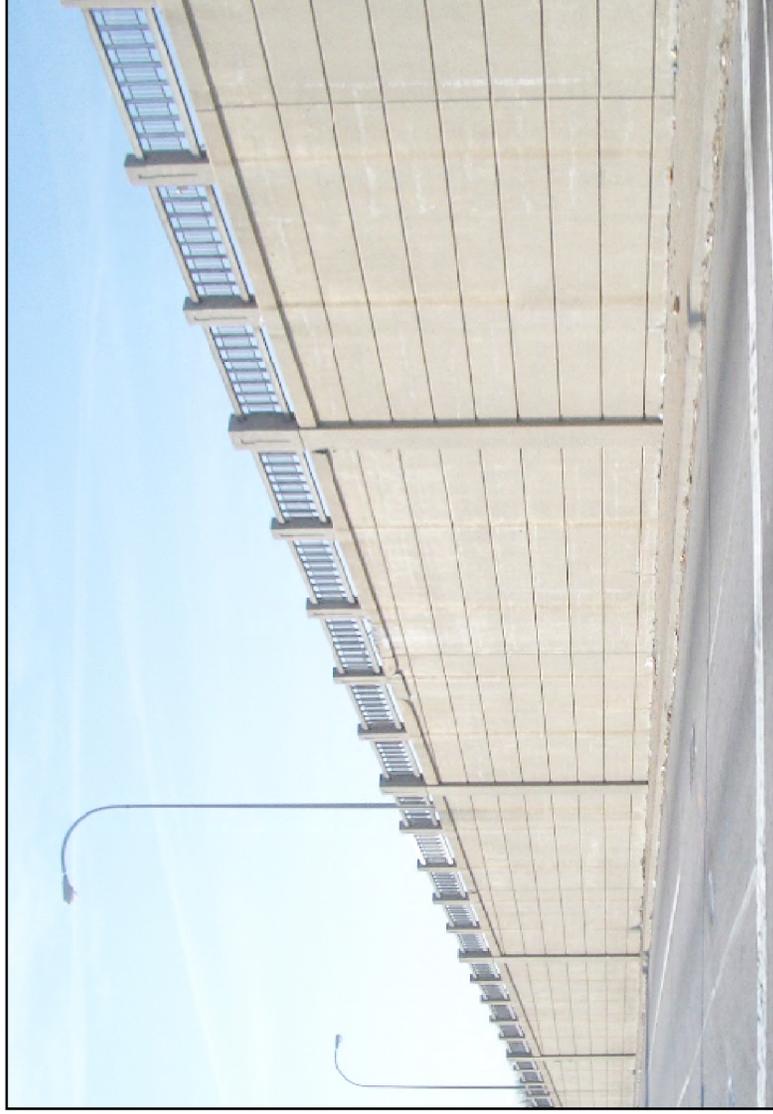




A typical condition along 8 Mile Road suffers from scalelessness and a lack of a sense of place.



The streetscape enhancements along with painting and lighting the “towers” will help to build character along the corridor.

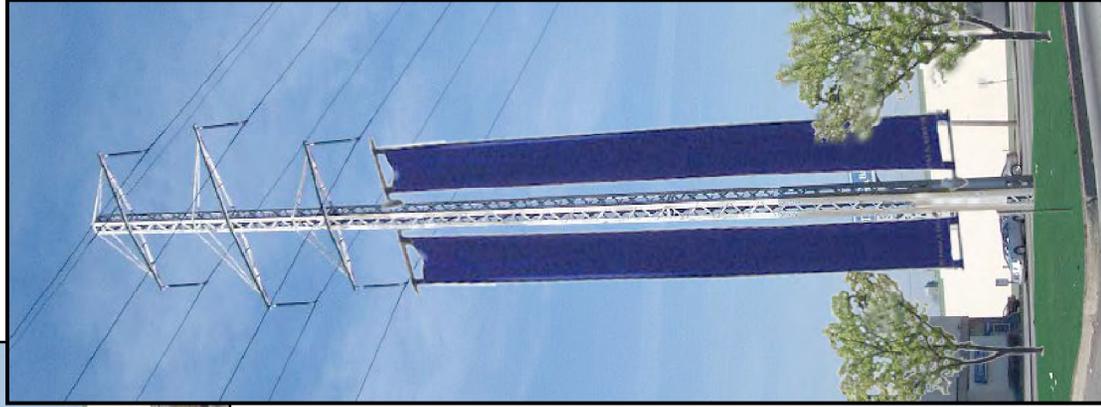
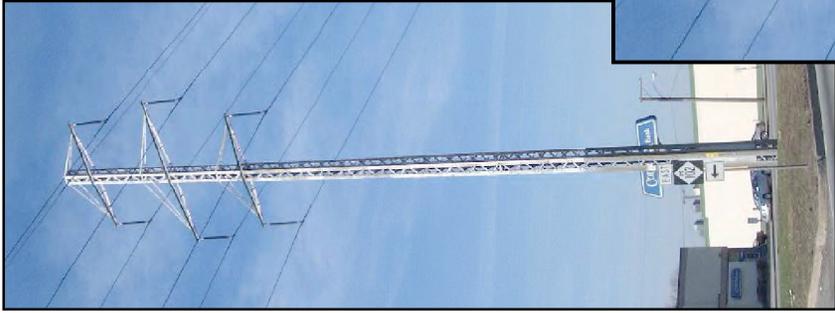


Woodward Avenue and 8 Mile Road is currently defined by the bleak walls of the concrete overpass.



The overpass can be turned into a feature through the application of streetlighting, color, and vegetation.

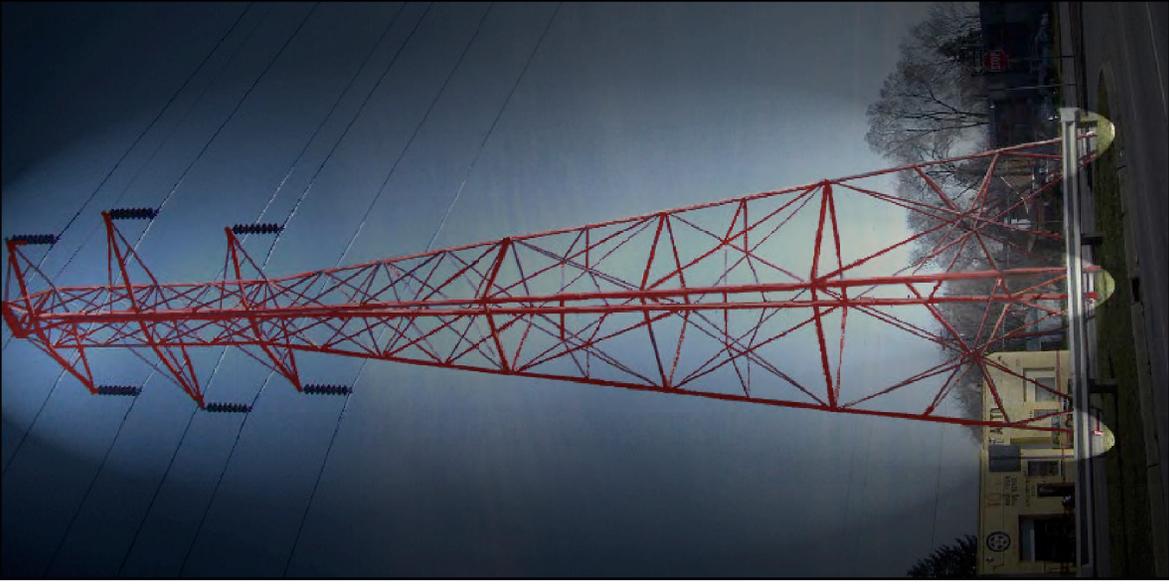
The existing “towers” are scaleless elements that don’t contribute positively to the corridor.



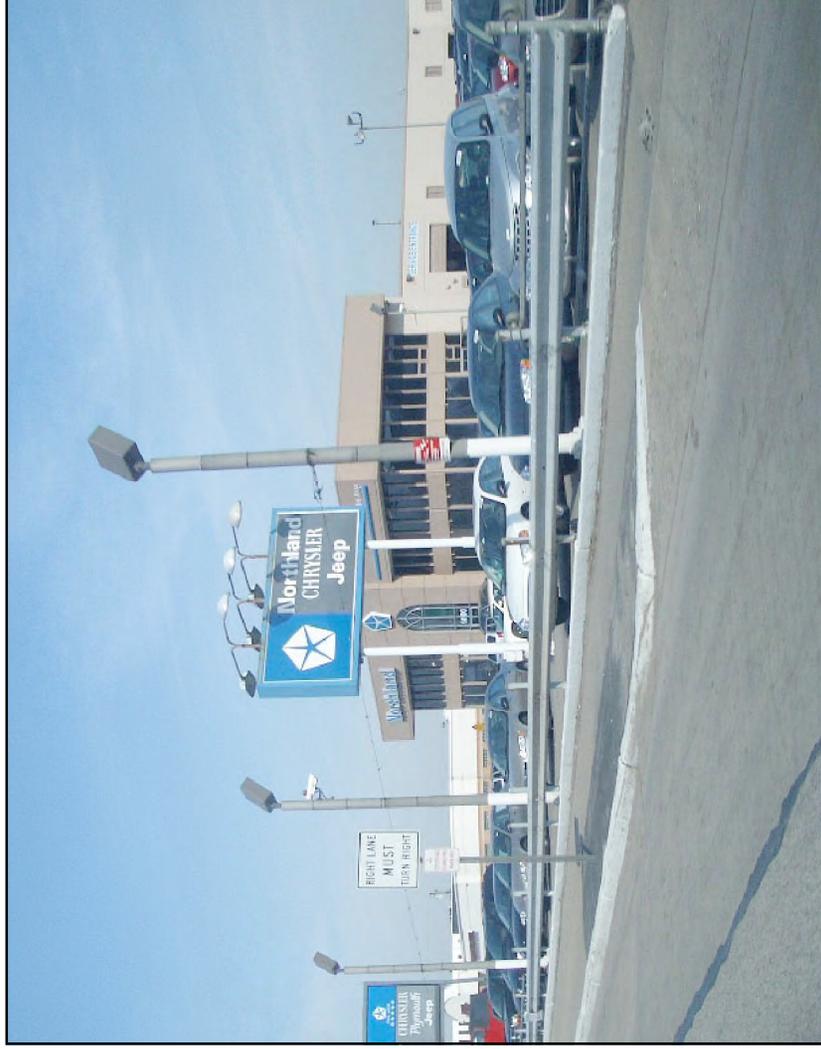
Through the application of banner systems the “towers” can become a part of the positive identity of the corridor.



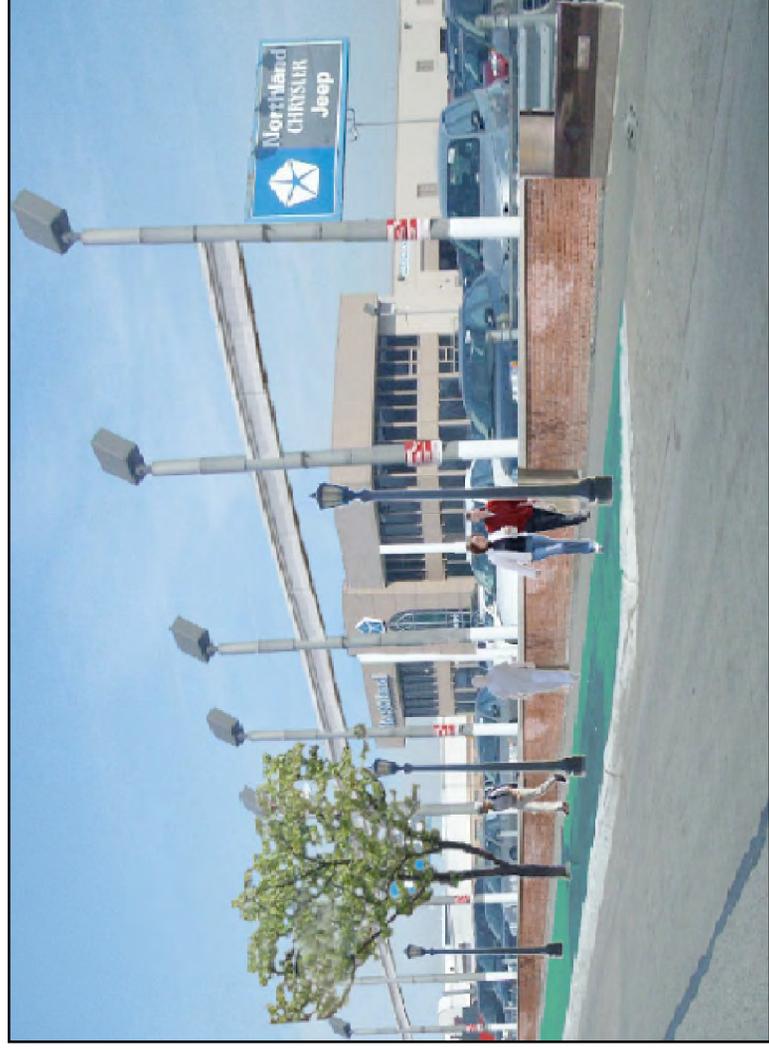
The existing “towers” at Coolidge Highway and 8 Mile Road.



Through the usage of color and lighting implementation the “towers” can be an appealing feature along the corridor.



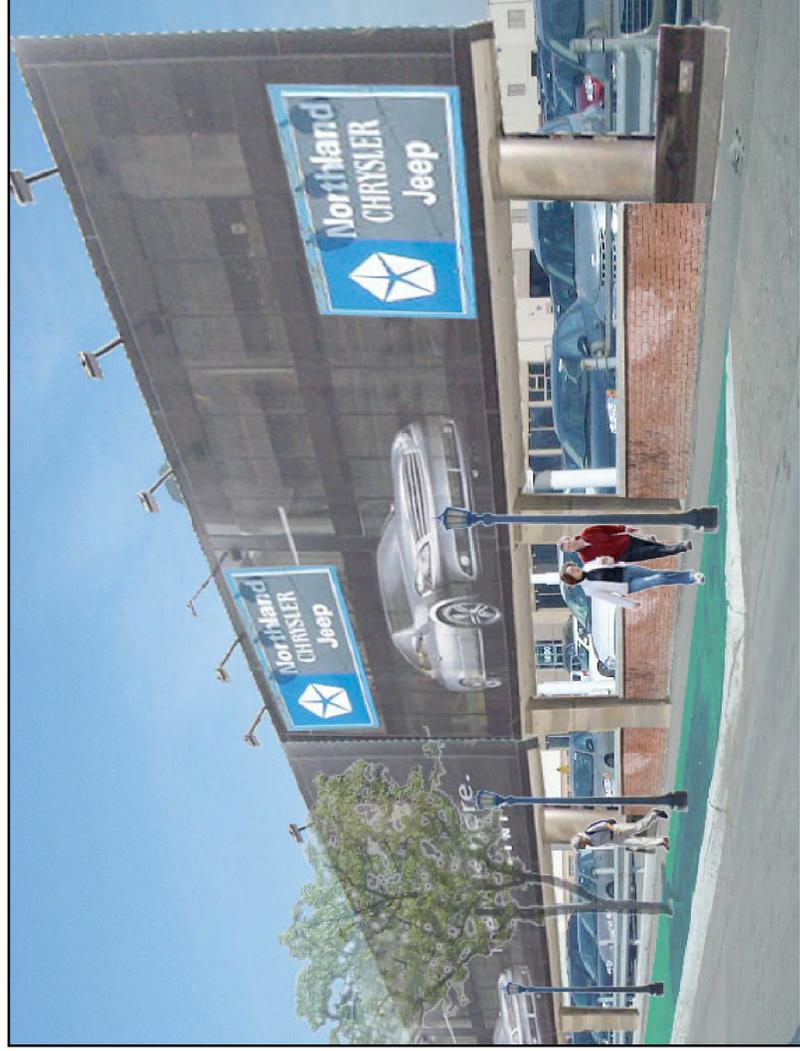
An auto dealership along 8 Mile Road & Greenfield Road lacks a pedestrian friendly streetfront.



The screenwall signage element creates a visually interesting, walkable urban edge that allows for visibility into the site.



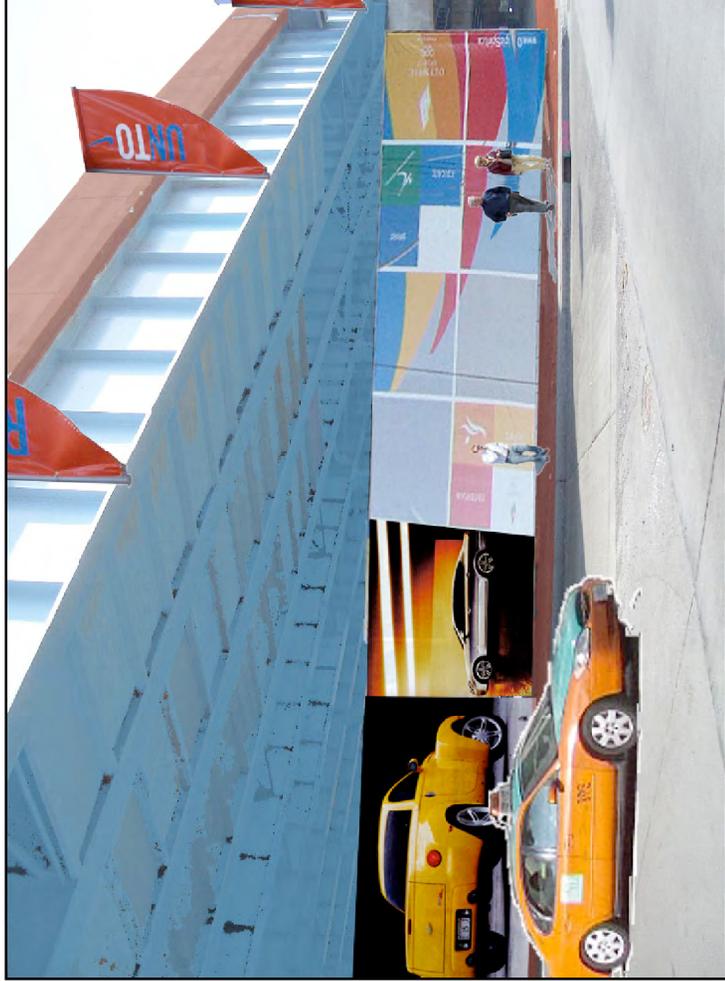
This auto dealership near 8 Mile Road & Greenfield Road lacks a pedestrian friendly streetfront.



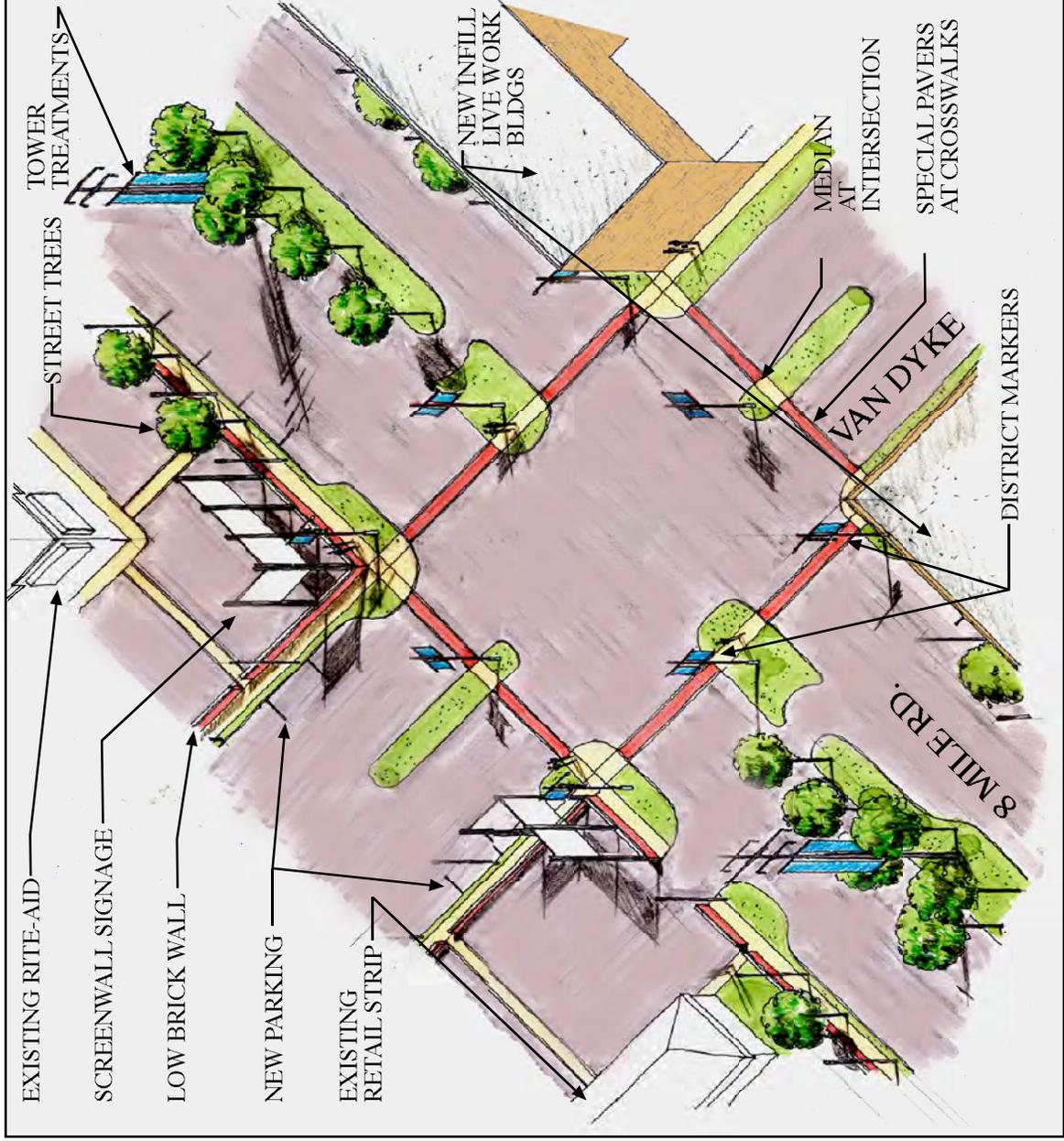
Alternate screenwall example, incorporating advertising and promotions of products sold at the location. This additional physical element assists in creating a pedestrian-seated property edge.



The bridge at 8 Mile Road and Greenfield Road presents an ominous presence to pedestrians and drivers, contributing to the barrier that is perceived along the corridor.



The proposed alterations on additional elements create a more walkable and lighted pathway across 8 Mile Road.



This conceptual sketch illustrates the application of the Physical Elements at a "Focus Area" (ie. 8 Mile Road/ Van Dyke Road). The elements assist in creating a sense of place in an area visually dominated by parking lots.

## II. The Design Guidelines

As improvements to the corridor begin to attract more development, clear and concise design guidelines must be conveyed to create the physical environment desired by the Eight Mile Boulevard Association. A study was made of the 8 Mile Road corridor. Through this study, typical building heights, massing, orientations, and materials were identified and a strategy to achieve complementary structures was developed. Proposed commercial and mixed-use developments should promote a walkable pedestrian streetfront while simultaneously accommodating automobile access.

The following guidelines will provide direction regarding the physical form for future infill development and additions and enhancement to existing structures within the corridor.

### Building Typology

The corridor includes a variety of uses. Mixed-use structures can include residential, office, retail and live/work uses. These types of uses can be incorporated into numerous building types. Existing structures can accommodate many of the future land uses proposed. With the addition of multiple floors, existing commercial structures can become mixed-use buildings. New buildings may be multiple stories with elevators and accommodate upper floor office or residential uses. All buildings should maintain an active use on the street or storefront side of the building. This encourages a pedestrian-orientation by animating the street with visibly interesting activities.

### Building Placement

1. Structures should have their main entry oriented to the corridor to develop the streetscape into a pedestrian- oriented public space.
2. Proposed buildings should be built to the recommended building streetwall line defined in the following design guideline drawings. Setback guidelines are based on the understanding that the right-of-way is typically 10' from the curb. This condition allows for a continuous pedestrian path adjacent to commercial storefronts.

### Non-Motorized Transportation

1. Develop pedestrian, and bicycle networks throughout the corridor. Create policy statement on integrating bicycle and walking into transportation infrastructure
2. In the Van Dyke Road "Focus Area" coordinate bicycle/path network with efforts in Macomb County at McArthur St. and in Detroit at the Conner Creek Greenway entrance at Conner Street and 8 Mile Road.

### Access and Parking

Parking considerations are of primary importance when enhancing or developing property. Due to the functional significance of automobile accessibility to the businesses along 8 Mile Road, parking needs to be appropriately accommodated. There are many different ways of achieving the parking quantities that are required for commercial, office and residential uses typically located within mixed-use districts. The existing parking condition is typically parallel on-street or provided with open areas of asphalt, usually in front of the buildings that they serve. Depending on the size of the commercial structure, these parking lots can be minimal in size or can be large expanses. With the intention of increasing pedestrian activity along the street as well as providing continuity from one site to another, the manner in which parking is incorporated on a site can contribute or inhibit these goals.

### Parking Placement

1. Parking should be located at the rear of the site where possible with access from the front or side of the property. Primary space allocation for parking should be oriented to the rear of the site with minor amounts along the side and front of the building. Where possible, reposition parking spaces around the building as opposed to one large open parking lot.
2. Repositioning of the parking within a site is another way to achieve the goal of breaking down the scale of the expanses of asphalt parking lots that are typical along the corridor. Parking repositioning refers to the rearranging of parking within the site to be located around structures and within internal "streets". For example, some parking might be located in front of the structure, some on one or both sides and some in the rear.
3. Include pedestrian pathways on the site to access parking. The parking accommodation must be connected to provisions for pedestrian pathways within the site. This is the inclusion of sidewalks around the structure, from most points of the site to the building entrance, and to the public right-of-way with a sidewalk that connects to the adjacent properties.
4. Receiving areas should also be located at the rear of buildings.
5. Landscape elements and trees should also be incorporated into the pathways and parking lots as part of the redevelopment process to limit the expansiveness of the parking lots. They can be located at the ends of parking rows or along the sidewalks that are created within the site.
6. Other opportunities for parking include placing parking inside of existing or new structures as part of an amenity for the user. The most likely use of this option is in office or residential developments. Large existing structures can be internally reconfigured to have perimeters of retail or office use and parking enclosed by the existing structure walls. This is especially opportune with residential uses where internal, on-site parking is a primary concern.

### Screen-walls

To provide continuity from property to property and to minimize the visibility of an open parking lot from the street, a screen-wall that aligns with the building facade is suggested along the edge of the parking lots facing the front of the site. This screen-wall can be brick or a high quality material it can be either a few feet tall as an edge at the sidewalk it or can be an extension of the structure's facade and might include a sign for the business activity on the site. The parking screen provides an important edge to the site at its front lot line and allows for a "streetwall" to be created. This "streetwall", with the landscape elements along the right-of-way, will provide the continuity required to enhance the corridor.

### Massing and Built Form

Commercial buildings, mixed-use buildings and office buildings can be of a similar form. Buildings should be scaled to accommodate the pedestrian through articulation or fenestration, to minimize expanses of blank walls along pedestrian pathways. A larger building could be articulated to appear as a series of smaller elements.

### Height/Scale

Developments should respect the scale of the adjacent residential streets. In order to establish a continuous and pedestrian-oriented street space, proposed structures should be of a height that can create a appropriate height to street width ratio. With the significant width from building front to building front across 8 Mile Road, additional multi-story structures would assist in creating a more walkable areas along the corridor.

Commercial buildings along the corridor are most often single-story structures and should be encouraged to be of a significant height if possible. This could be achieved by having a high ceiling on the interior and a potentially substantial facade and parapet on the building. The goal is to create a building that is scaled for a large boulevard.

### Material Use and Placement

1. Developments should be of durable materials, preferably masonry.
2. Walls that face 8 Mile Road, pedestrian sidestreets and "internal streets" should have at least 50% window surface on upper floors. First floor commercial spaces in the same location should have at least 70% window surface. The window surface should be read as punched openings.
3. Curtain walls, tinted glass and reflective glass should be avoided. Storefronts should use clear glass only. Building facades should be articulated by changes in material and fenestration type from ground floor to upper floors.
4. Build on the existing character in appropriate locations (where corridor runs through or adjacent to downtowns, historic and/or "urban-type" intersections, etc.)

### Signage

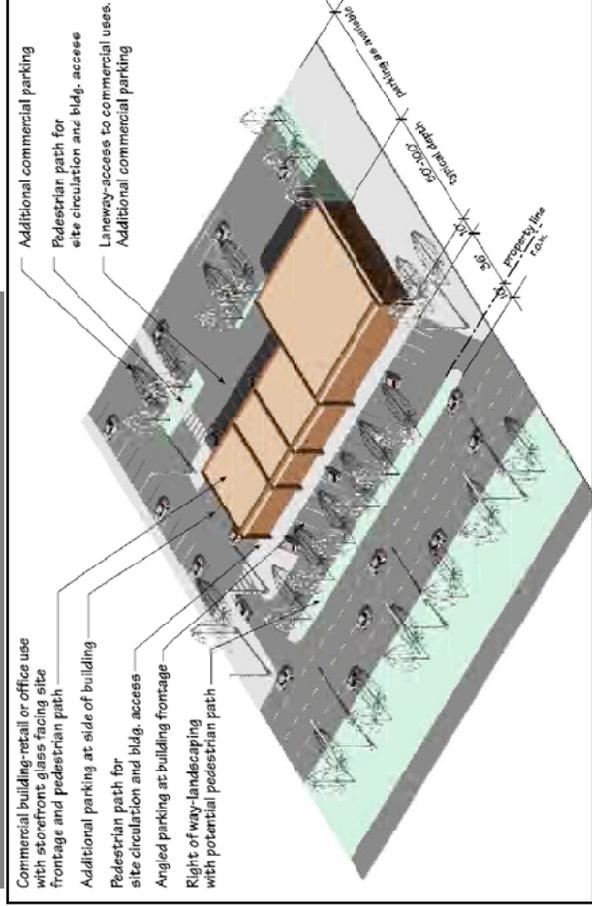
1. Structures should be large enough to be read by the vehicular activity while being sensitive to the pedestrian.
2. Signs are encouraged to be separately illuminated by floodlights or adjacent lighting and not to be backlit box-type.

### Lighting

Buildings should be lighted to provide nighttime visibility. Creative illumination of buildings, signage, landscaping and other elements of a property can make for an interesting and exciting street. Large amounts of glazing on a building with internal lighting will provide a beacon of interest while walking or driving along 8 Mile Road at night. Illuminating a commercial storefront at night also allows for product visibility and promotes the business when the establishment is closed.

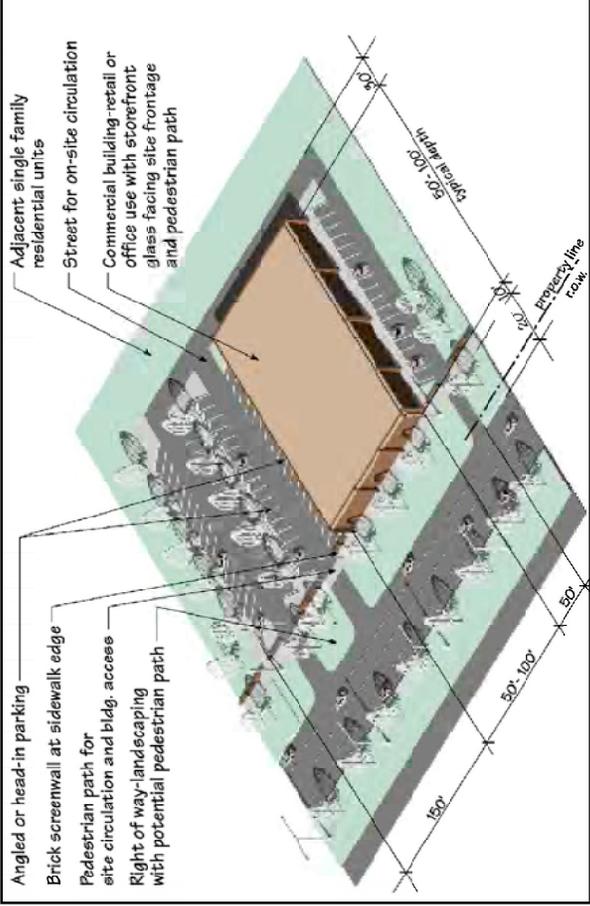
### Orientation and Connections

The building orientation and entrance should be established relative to adjacent structures. Buildings and parcels that are adjacent should acknowledge one another through door and window locations, material and color choices and building signage and lighting. The intention is not to mimic or match the aesthetic or architectural elements from one building to the next but to be sensitive to the adjacent context. This acknowledgment of the context will assist in providing continuity throughout the area.



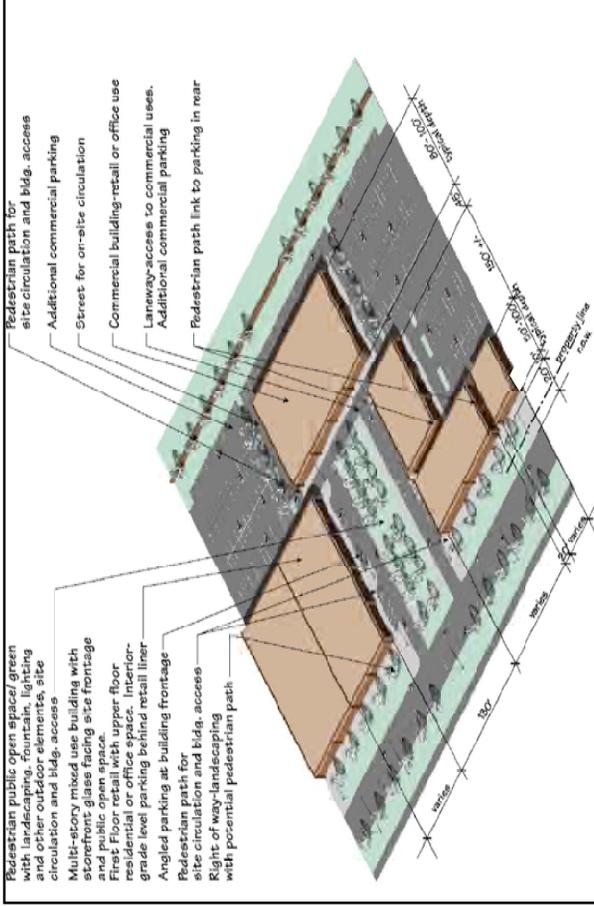
### Development Model A

Presents a pedestrian-oriented option for conventional strip development. The model accommodates the standard occupancies found in typical 1-story commercial developments. The model provides a landscaped “buffer” zone in the Right-of-Way between the development access drive and the higher speed traffic along 8 Mile Road.



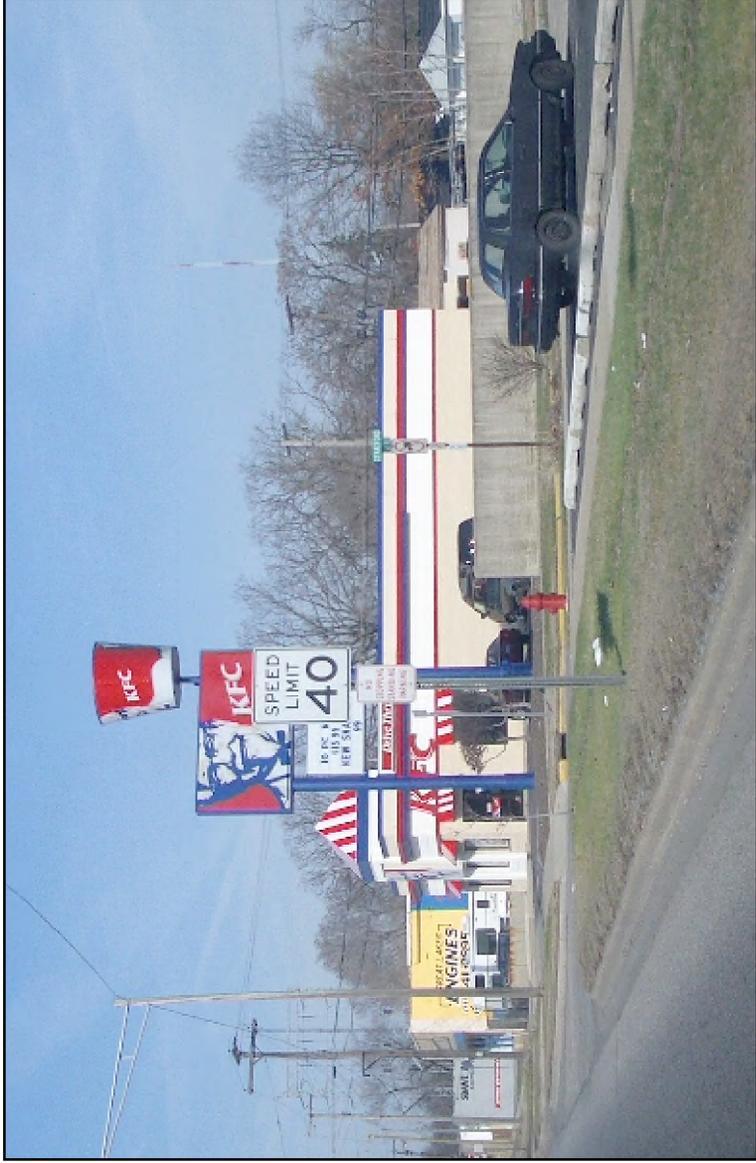
### Development Model B

Illustrates the distribution of the model on a medium sized site. The advantages of the previous option are accommodated while also providing the opportunity to incorporate a brick “screen wall” to shield the additional parking from view. This screen wall is used to continue the pedestrian edge until the market conditions are appropriate for another building to be built on the site.



### Development Model C

Offers a response to the demand for public open space as a component of new development. The model provides expanded opportunities for parking as well as more available store frontage and glass facing 8 Mile Road and the adjacent parking. This model creates a pedestrian environment of walkable retail frontages with added amenity of a central “green” that acts as both the identity for the development and the catalyst that aids in enhancing the site’s value.



Typical vacant site/parking lot condition along the corridor.



This sketch illustrates the application of the design guidelines on an infill site. A low screenwall is used in conjunction with organized signage on vertical metal columns. The new infill development accommodates an access drive, adjacent parking, and a new 3-story mixed-use structure within the right-of-way, additional landscaping and sidewalk accommodate the pedestrian integration into the development.



Existing vacant building sites offer many opportunities for redevelopment.



Live/work units with office or residential uses above are part of a building type that can be a positive addition to the corridor in place of obsolete structures.

### III. The Façade Improvement Program

8 Mile Road is comprised of buildings of various ages, styles, and conditions. The purpose of the façade enhancement program is to provide a framework and standard of quality for the buildings that make up the 27.5 mile corridor.

Corridors that create a unified sense of place and level of quality have a competitive advantage compared to haphazard conventional commercial strip centers. Creating a visually coherent and consistent corridor through the quality of the exterior maintenance will attract businesses as well as customers.

Another unique characteristic of the corridor is that there exists a mix of historic, traditional, and modern storefront types. This causes the focus of façade design issues to be on elements that are common to new and old façades.

There are three basic components of the typical corridor storefront:

1. Windows
2. Entryways
3. Signage

#### Windows

It is desired that through the Façade Improvement Program that an approach consistent with the requirements for new construction be utilized. Therefore, businesses are encouraged to modify their existing exteriors when taking advantage of the grant/loan program. Fortress-like storefronts detract from the ability of the corridor to draw in more customers, visitors, and businesses by sending the wrong image.

1. Security measures for storefronts should be as unobtrusive as possible. Placing bars and solid rolling “garage-type” doors on storefronts is strongly discouraged. The use of an open mesh-type rolling grate mounted on the inside of the storefront window is a more preferred option. By using the rolling grate, the inside can be seen and monitored at all times.
2. As an alternative to security grates, businesses are encouraged to use laminated glass in storefronts. Laminated glass is designed to break in place and is virtually impervious.
3. Storefront windows should be illuminated at night. This will provide visibility of the interior and promotion of the merchandise.
4. Storefront display windows shall not be filled with or concealed by opaque materials.

#### Signage

Signage can incorporate letters, graphics, numbers, and symbols for the purpose of identifying a business and or product. Understanding the location of signage on a façade is a key consideration. Signage provides businesses with identity and advertising.

Each building should be limited to one primary and one secondary sign. The purpose of this guideline is to minimize the possibility of visual clutter. The primary sign should be placed above the height of the doorway (see example images). Secondary signage can be placed at the pedestrian level in windows. Signs in windows, though, should not obscure more than 35% of the display area.

Wall mounted signs illuminated with directional lighting is encouraged. Box-type, backlit signs are discouraged. These sign-types have been shown to give a negative perception to areas.

#### Exterior Maintenance

Maintaining the façades and grounds of properties along the corridor will redefine the perception of 8 Mile Road. Using quality materials and craftsmanship can aid in displaying a sense of pride and in deterring vandalism.

1. Maintenance should include:
2. Clean the sidewalk of snow and debris
3. Planting and maintaining vegetation
4. Addressing vandalism immediately
5. Keeping the storefront glass clear of obstructions

### Lighting

1. On recognized historic structures, original fixtures, if present should be maintained and preserved where possible or replaced with similar or historically accurate fixtures.
2. Domestic fixtures are inappropriate for commercial buildings and should be discouraged.
3. New fixtures on recognized historic buildings should not dominate the façade or be a major design feature. These fixtures should also be used judiciously to avoid the perception of 'applique'.

### Awnings

Awnings are a simple, but highly effective device for focusing attention on a storefront. They introduce color and interest to the storefront and can be used to unify a grouping of buildings. The design features and style of the awning, though, are crucial to the image of the corridor environment. Therefore the following apply:

1. Awnings should be shed-type that slope away from the building. The awnings should also have open sides to minimize the effect on the façade.
2. Awning colors should complement the colors of the building façade.
3. Internally lit awnings are inappropriate and are discouraged.
4. Awnings should be segmented when used on a wide storefront. The segmentation should correspond to the articulation of the building's windows and doors.
5. Barrel vault or "bubble" type awnings are not allowed under the program. These awnings are typically of low material and aesthetic quality.
6. Awnings should be attached directly to the building façade rather than requiring poles for support.

**Program Overview**

The Façade Improvement Program is a grant designed to promote aesthetic enhancement of and unification principles to the 8 Mile Road corridor. The Eight Mile Boulevard Association will be the administering body for the program and will work directly with successful applicants to achieve a more unified and pleasing environment.

**Eligibility Requirements**

1. Available to property owners within the 8MBA boundary.
2. Commercial/ Industrial tenants are eligible to apply with written approval from the property owners.
3. Must be a member of the association at “Bronze” level higher.

**Eligible Activities**

Items include, but are not limited to:

1. Repair or replacement of entrances, doors, windows, architectural detail, or awnings.
2. Masonry repair.
3. Cleaning of façade.
4. Accentuating existing architectural features through lighting, painting, restoration, or replacement.
5. Installation of landscaping.
6. Sign removal, repair, or replacement.
7. Repair to building facades.
8. Exterior painting.
9. Handicapped accessibility.

**Ineligible activities:**

Items include, but are not limited to:

1. Interior improvements.
2. Unapproved cleaning methods of exterior materials.
3. Unapproved repair/replacement methods.
4. Roofing
5. Sidewalks.

**Incentives for Qualified Projects**

One or more of these incentives may be available for eligible projects.

**Architectural Assistance:** A 100% grant (up to \$5,000) of actual costs associated with façade improvements, contingent upon the applicant complying the architectural drawings provided. A licensed architect shall be retained by 8MBA for concept drawings, specifications and consultation.

**Façade Improvement Grant:** A 100% grant (up to \$10,000) for actual costs of façade and or related exterior rehabilitation costs. Concept drawings created by a licensed architect must be completed prior to approval for Façade Improvement Grant Funds. No more than 50% of the total grant will be distributed prior to project completion.

**Sign Program:** A 50% (up to \$1000) of actual costs associated with the fabrication and construction of replacement signage. The new sign must meet the criteria of the façade improvement guidelines. The new sign must be designed by a certified design professional (i.e., graphic designer, architect).

**Selection Criteria**

The following selection criteria could be used to review and rate applications for the Façade Improvement Grant Program. Criteria are derived from the goals of *8 Mile Framework for Unifying Elements*. Criteria are weighted with a maximum score of 100 points.

1. Year Constructed, Historic Preservation, and Materials (Up to 25 points): Degree to which the proposed project promotes historic preservation, adaptive re-use of historic structures, site design, architecture, materials, landscaping, and other visual and physical amenities.
2. Streetscape Aesthetics and Functionality (Up to 35 points): Degree to which the proposed project enhances the streetscape, including the addition or enhancement of display windows, awnings, landscaping, handicapped accessibility and architectural amenities such as arcades, and balconies, and degree to which the proposed project would improve the aesthetic appearance of the streetscape through the use of architectural materials, color, signage, landscaping and other amenities.
3. Defensible Space and CPTED (Up to 15 points): Degree to which the proposed project will promote safety, create defensible space, and employ the principles of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).
4. Removal of slum and blight positive impact to neighborhood (Up to 25 points): Degree to which the proposed project upgrades or eliminates substandard structures or eliminates non-conforming uses.

## Process

### Application Process

1. Façade Improvement Program application submitted to 8MBA.
2. 8MBA selects qualified applicants for architectural assistance.
3. Architectural Assistance Agreement signed. 8MBA assigns architect to the project.
4. Architectural concept drawings submitted to 8MBA design review committee.
5. 8MBA Design review Committee approves or provides written comments for revisions of conceptual drawings.
6. Architectural drawings completed and architect paid.
7. Completed architectural drawings submitted to the 8MBA Design Review Committee.
8. 8MBA Design Review Committee approves or provides written comments for revisions.
9. Façade Improvement Grant Agreement signed. Total grant determined. No more than 50% of the total grant will be distributed prior to project completion. No funds disbursed without proof of payment.
10. Project proceeds. Design Review Committee must approve changes in approved work. Deviations from approved scope and/or specifications may be cause for disqualification.
11. Projects not completed within 1 year will be reviewed for extension or termination.
12. Project completion. Proof of payment to contractors submitted and remainder of grant released.

### General Requirements

1. All work shall comply with the Façade Improvement Program guidelines.
2. All code violations with respect to the exterior must be corrected at the time of façade renovation.
3. All construction management is the responsibility of the applicant.
4. All historic structures shall comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

# 8MBA FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION



Examples

1. Address of property to be improved: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Date property was constructed: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Owner's name: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Phone: \_\_\_\_\_
5. E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Owner's address: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Applicant's name (if different from the Owner): \_\_\_\_\_
8. Applicant's address: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Applicant's phone: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Applicant's E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Applicant's Federal Tax Identification #: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you own or lease the property? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Is the first floor of the building currently occupied? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Name of business: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Type of business: Retail \_\_\_\_\_ Service \_\_\_\_\_ Professional \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - No. of employees: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

## 14. What improvements would you consider undertaking through the facade Improvement Program?

Restoration  
Masonry, stone or tile work  
Cornices  
Iron work  
Storefront systems  
Entrances  
Painting and color design  
Removal of non-historical or inappropriate alterations

Marketing, Maintenance and Rehabilitation  
Clean or repair masonry and stone  
Storefronts and doorways  
Windows  
Parking lot screening  
Window display  
Painting & color design  
Canopies  
Architectural and storefront lighting

15. Estimated project cost: \_\_\_\_\_
16. What is your plan for financing the facade improvements? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Attach a single page description of the work proposed. Also include photographs of the property.

If the applicant does not own the property, the owner must complete the following and include a notarized letter of approval:

I (we) certify that I (we) own the property at \_\_\_\_\_, and that I/we give the applicant the authorization to participate in the Facade Improvement Program.

Owner's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed/prepared this application and understand that submission of an application does not guarantee funding. I/we certify that the information provided is true and accurate to the best of my/our knowledge, and if approved, work will be completed. I also acknowledge that any photographs provided can be used by the Eight Mile Boulevard Association for the promotion of the Facade Improvement Program.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



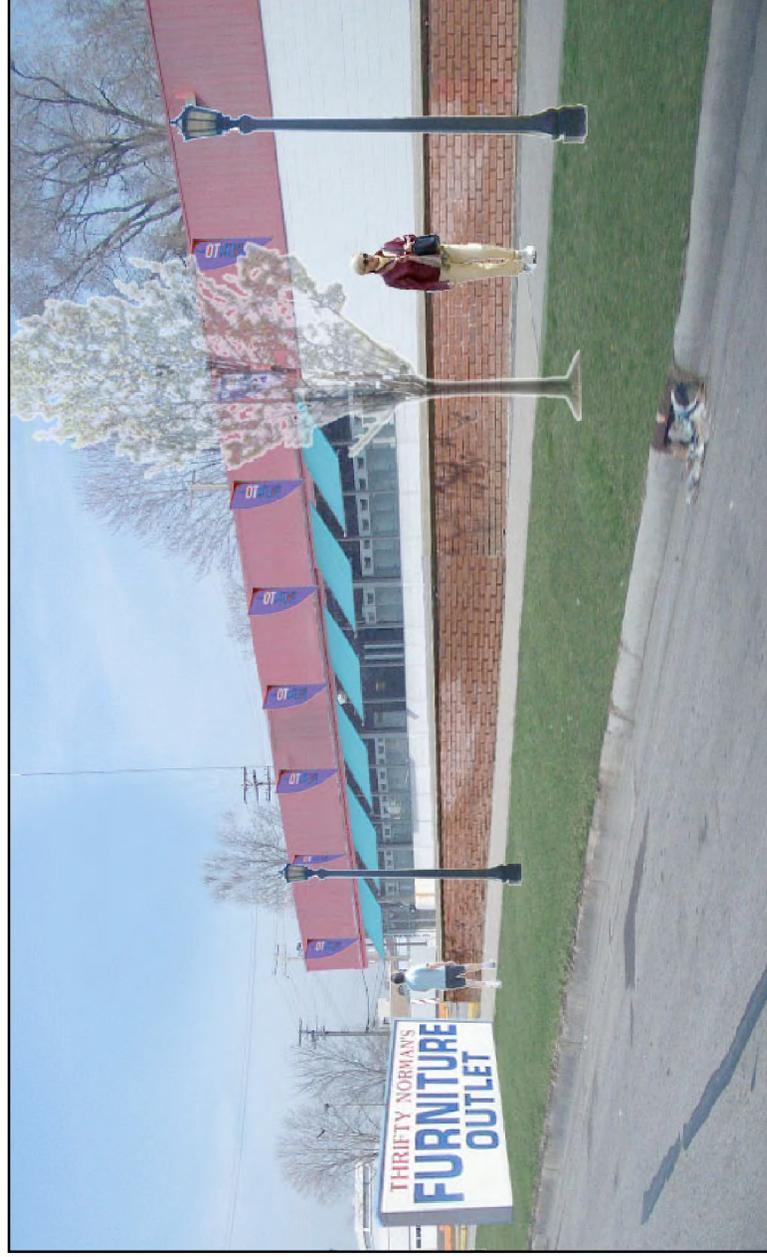
This existing building presents an anti-pedestrian presence at the street.



The concept sketch adds lighting, organized signage, and new storefront glazing to create a more pedestrian-friendly exterior.



The existing site lacks character and presents a bleak parking lot along the streetfront.



A walkable streetfront and aesthetically positive environment is created by revising the facade with awnings, banners, and a modification of the applied roof form.



The existing building, while being urbanistically correct, is an example of unorganized signage.



Through the implementation of slight revisions to the exterior and more control of signage a pleasing appearance is achieved.



The blank wall and oversized graphics presents a scaleless face to 8 Mile.



By opening the facade to the street, a more customer-friendly environment is created.

## Conclusion

The intention of this proposal has been to recommend and illustrate strategies that would offer the corridor, and by extension the municipalities involved, the prospect of a return to regional importance. It should be stressed, once again, that the *8 Mile Framework for Unifying Elements* is a beginning, not an end. It is not a masterplan or zoning ordinance document, but is meant to inform both in the future.

The 8 Mile Road corridor is at a critical juncture. Corridor development is the new frontier of metropolitan planning nationwide. A cautious, deliberate approach must be married to a comprehensive and proactive approach to development. The 8MBA should capitalize on the demand for “places” within the region by building an image of a safe, welcoming, mixed use corridor.

The proposed framework is a strategy in which the corridor regains its vibrancy. The corridor will become welcoming, attractive, pedestrian friendly, and alive with activity. It will be an area of diverse interconnected communities, accessed by the automobile and coordinated transit, yet coming completely alive when experienced on foot.