



UPTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD BUCHANAN, MI

Neighborhood Revitalization Plan

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Executive Summary

Text to come later.

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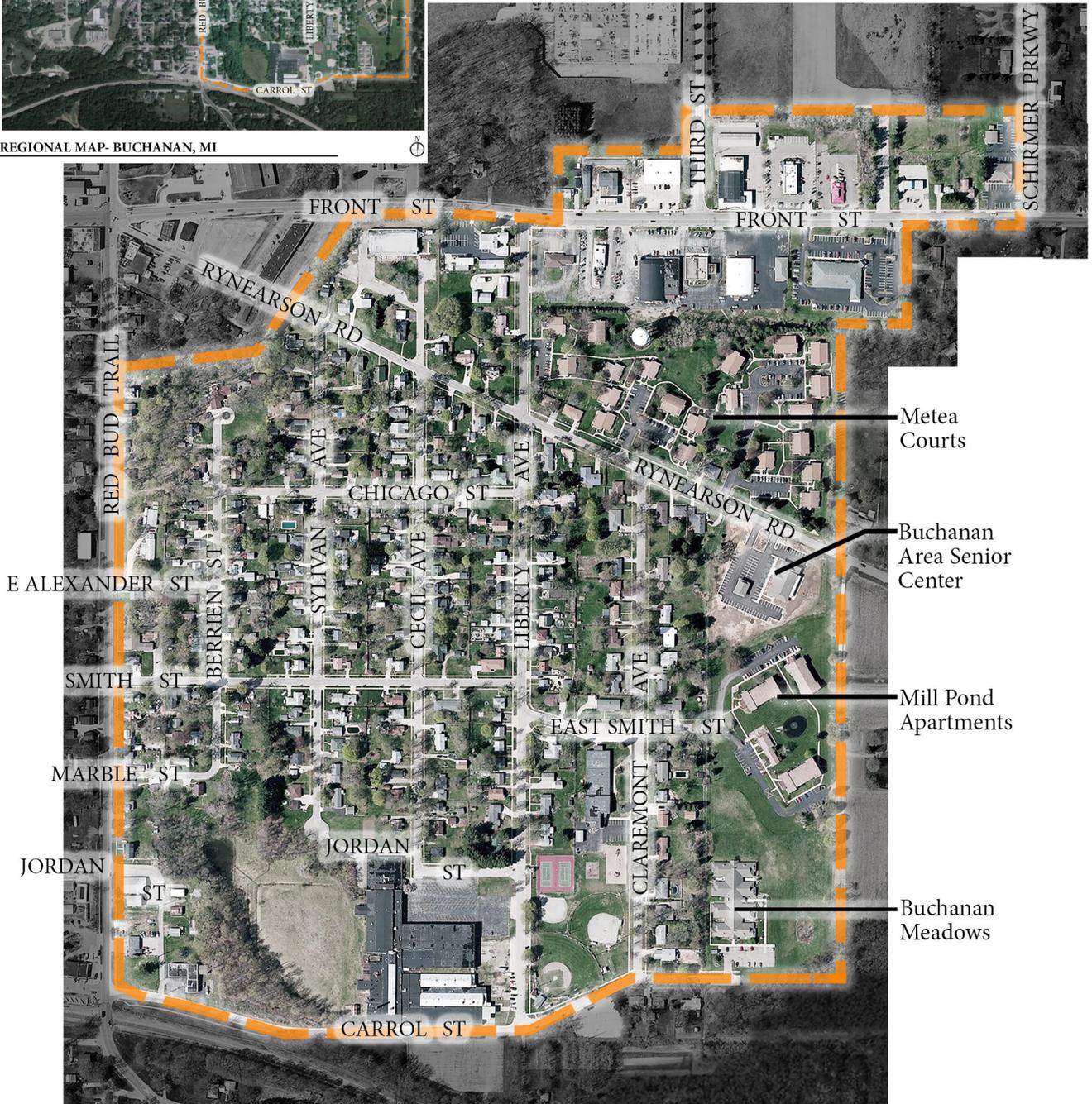


EXISTING CONDITIONS & ASSESSMENT

Existing Conditions & Assessment



REGIONAL MAP- BUCHANAN, MI



UPTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD FOCUS AREA

— Focus Area Boundary



Existing Conditions & Assessment

Overview

The Uptown Neighborhood focus area covers approximately 143 acres which is comprised of commercial at the north, a large area of single family and affordable senior housing, and a small area of light industrial at the south.

Uptown has a separate identity from downtown Buchanan, largely due to its geographical position in the city. This was also historically emphasized due to the growth of the Clark Equipment Company—located directly north of the neighborhood—expanding this area beyond the context of the central business district.

The residential neighborhood of Uptown is stable and well maintained with a large percentage of owner occupied housing (over 60% for the City of Buchanan). The majority of the residential neighborhood is laid out on a grid pattern with streets and walks aligning at four-way intersections. This pattern is consistent within the single family housing part of the neighborhood, which is also the older, more established section of the neighborhood. Two more recent, multi-family additions to the residential neighborhood are laid out in an inward-focused curvilinear pattern. This inconsistency with the block patterns creates a physical and perceptible disconnect as walks, streets, and paths do not align.

The commercial district consists of the main arterial road, Front Street, which is a direct link to downtown Buchanan. This area is a considered typical “strip” development and is not integrated into the neighborhood fabric either

through complementary character or connectivity.

The residential neighborhood has consistent street tree coverage. Street trees are shade trees planted between the sidewalk and the street in a tree lawn. The tree lawns range from 5 feet to 12 feet wide. There is a good variety of sizes and ages of trees, which is beneficial to maintaining a healthy urban canopy and avoiding significant die off from diseases common in areas of low diversity. The oldest trees are mostly maples, and the newer trees are a variety of species. There are no street trees in the commercial corridor from Liberty Street to just west of Shirmer Parkway.

The following sections identify key areas of assessment within the Uptown Neighborhood.

Single-Family Housing

The single-family neighborhood is stable with little to no vacant homes or empty lots. The density of the neighborhood is appropriate and sustainable, and the majority of properties are well-maintained. The architectural styles found within the area include bungalow, cottage, craftsman, and traditional American Foursquare.

Residential streets are appropriately sized. These more narrow streets act to maintain reduced vehicular speeds. Lanes are generally about 12 feet wide with no accommodation for on-street parking or bicycle lanes.

The now-closed Stark Elementary School at the corner of Claremont Street and East Smith Street creates an unfortunate spot of

atrophy in this solid single family neighborhood. This property is for sale, but may have limited opportunities for suitable redevelopment due to its internal constraints. The school is bordered to the south by very popular baseball and softball fields, which have been improved and expanded



Abandoned Stark Elementary School in the last couple of years.

Multi-Family and Affordable Housing

All of the multi-family housing in the neighborhood is focused on seniors or the disabled and provides affordable housing.

Metea Court

Metea Court is a 100-unit complex built in the mid-1970s, of which 76 units are allocated for Section 8 low-income housing. The development’s buildings are surrounded by landscape, lawn space, and asphalt parking lots. The buildings are split – level and single – level with triangular facades of brick on the ends of the single story – buildings. They do not adhere to any specific architectural style. This, combined with the appearance of exterior light fixtures, lends to the dated appearance of the buildings. The interiors are in need of updating. The buildings sit back on the property and do not directly address the street.

Metea Court is located directly

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across the street from the Buchanan Area Senior Center, however there are no direct connections between them. Improving the connection between Metea Court and the neighborhood and updating the interiors, exteriors, and site will ensure its long-term viability in the community.



Existing path between Metea Court and the parking lots of the commercial district

Mill Pond Apartments

Mill Pond Apartments is located on the east side of the focus area where East Smith Street dead ends into the development. It consists of 50 one-bedroom low-income apartment units for seniors and disabled people. It is comprised of three multi-story buildings and a single story building which houses the office and community center. The buildings are adorned and painted in a Tudor style. The development has sufficient sidewalks, and accessible curb cuts and ramps are incorporated into the parking lot. A ramp connecting to the Buchanan Area Senior Center exists, but the railings do not meet current ADA requirements. The city sidewalks continue into the development for continuous pedestrian access, although they are somewhat steep. This complex is visually and functionally removed from the rest of the neighborhood. The city street and curbs end at the

property line of the complex. This abrupt change further signifies a difference to the residents.

Improved connectivity with the adjacent neighborhood, architectural updates that complement the surrounding neighborhood, and accessible links to vital amenities would greatly enhance this quiet but important part of the neighborhood.

Buchanan Meadows

Buchanan Meadows is a small assisted living / memory care community in the south east of the residential neighborhood where Carroll Street dead ends. It is south of the Mill Pond Apartments, and there is an expanse of park-like lawn between the two properties. The building is attractive, with porches, pitched roofs, and a combination of stone and vinyl siding. It fits well into the scale of the neighborhood. There are no pedestrian connections from Buchanan Meadows to the north toward Mill Pond Apartments, nor out to Carroll Street's sidewalk. Providing a connection between Buchanan Meadows and Mill Pond Apartments would open up opportunities for utilizing the open space for recreational purposes and links to the neighborhood.

Commercial District Framework

The commercial district within the focus area is located along a section of Front Street running west from Liberty Street to Shirmer Parkway. This commercial corridor is not part of downtown Buchanan. The buildings are not historical and are

built to fit their purpose rather than fit the context of the community. This corridor is a typical strip development. The corridor has a variety of businesses and shops, including McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Rite Aid Pharmacy, Dollar General, banks, locally – owned restaurants, and a car wash. The businesses are well – patronized, and there are few vacant storefronts. They are well – established and in – demand.



View of Front Street looking west.

The businesses are approached mainly via car. Only one building utilizes a zero – offset that is typical of downtown business districts. That building is partially vacant. The commercial buildings are separated from the street with lawn areas, parking lots, and signage. There is parking in the front and behind almost all the buildings, with multiple entrances allowing cars to enter and exit Front Street at frequent intervals. The dumpsters for the businesses are not enclosed. There are no street trees along Front Street, and there is minimal foundation landscape.

Public Right of Way Improvements

The city responded to an expressed desire to improve the Front Street corridor with traffic-calming measures and improved walkability. In recent years the City of Buchanan has invested in the corridor by reducing the roadway

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to two travel lanes and one turning lane, reducing the number of curb cuts into the businesses, adding new curbing, creating a fully – accessible intersection at Third Street, and upgrading sidewalks. This has not only improved the appearance of this corridor but also improved the safety for both pedestrians and drivers. These improvements have provided positive momentum to continue upgrading the area.



Existing parking lot between Front Street and business fronts.

Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access from the residential area is along Liberty Street and through the private pedestrian paths between Metea Court and the rear parking lots of the commercial buildings. Once on the corridor, pedestrians must cross Front Street in order to utilize the continuous walks already in place since the sidewalks on the south side of the corridor are not continuous. Refer to the Pedestrian Connectivity section for further information regarding this area.

Isolated Commercial Property

There is one site within the commercial area that is not accessed from Front Street. Although it has frontage on Front Street, the natural topography and dense woods isolates this property from Front Street and the

abutting commercial properties. It is accessed from within the residential neighborhood at the end of Cecil Avenue. This property contains a cell tower and an empty storage facility. This property has a unique prospect in that it is at the highest point of the hill and is at the transition point between the Uptown neighborhood and the slope leading to downtown. It may be beneficial to study this site as a strategic location for future city improvements or amenities to complement community activities.

Light Industrial Zone

The light industrial zone is located along the southern edge of the Uptown focus area. It is bordered by Jordan Street to the north and Carroll Street to the south, and Liberty Avenue to the east. A vacant factory and parking lot occupy the site and are listed for sale.



Abandoned industrial factory

This is an area of low activity and the existing factory is dilapidated and unappealing. It is a Superfund site with no schedule for mitigation or clean up, creating an unstable element within the neighborhood. The situation lends itself to vandalism and crime, so active surveillance and maintenance are key until the property can be properly developed.

Pedestrian Connectivity Sidewalks

Sidewalks exist throughout the residential neighborhood, with the majority being approximately 4 feet wide. There are missing sidewalks along sections of Berrien Street and East Smith Street. The primary pedestrian route is along Liberty Street, which is the only pedestrian connection between the single – family residential area and the commercial corridor along Front Street. In some instances, the roots from mature street trees have uplifted the concrete walks and made using the sidewalks difficult.



Sidewalk damaged by mature tree roots

Sidewalks in the commercial district are present but do not completely separate pedestrians from vehicular zones. The recent traffic calming and accessibility improvements on Front Street make the intersections much more accessible. However, the walks on the north side of Front St. are narrow, but complete between Liberty Street and Shirmer Parkway. Some walks on the south side of Front Street were installed as part of the city improvements, but some sections remain incomplete. This requires pedestrians to share parking lots and commercial drives with vehicular traffic in order to proceed along their route. There are no separate bicycle lanes or multi-use paths within the commercial corridor.

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Intersections

Crosswalk curb cuts are present at most intersections, making the neighborhood partially accessible. Some curb cuts are steep and do not adhere to accessibility requirements as dictated in the ADA Standards for Accessible Design. Truncated dome tiles required by the ADA but are not present at the intersections. The intersections along Front Street have been made ADA – compliant through the recent improvements. However, further improvements, such as providing wider sidewalk aprons at intersections and easing the angles of sidewalk connections, would make them easier to traverse, particularly for those with accessibility challenges.

Ensuring that all walks are smooth and wide enough to accommodate all pedestrians, intersections are ADA – compliant, and sidewalks are continuous is important in creating a more pedestrian – friendly neighborhood. In addition, as trees with damaging roots are removed, they should be replaced with street tree species that have been proven to not damage adjacent walks.

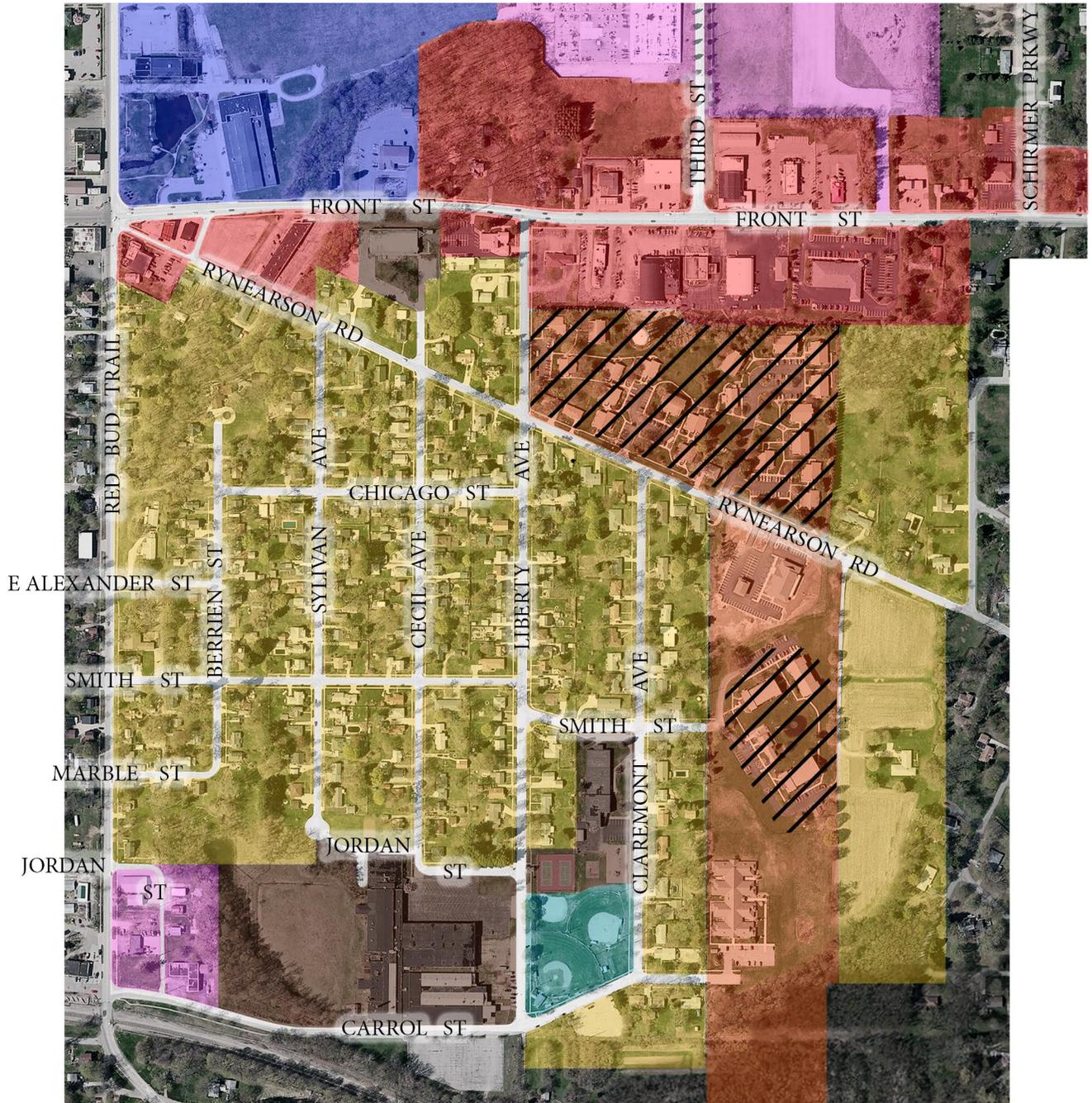
Connections / Linkages

The majority of senior residents utilize the Dial-A-Ride program to get to the Senior Center, neighborhood businesses, and downtown. Dial-A-Ride is a highly-used on-demand service that assists the senior community. Safe and accessible pedestrian connections between the residential neighborhood and the commercial corridor are currently minimal, which

forces the use of this vehicular transportation. Improvements to pedestrian accessibility within the neighborhood would open up additional choices for residents to conduct business in their own neighborhood and more opportunities for enjoyment and exercise.

Three paths between the commercial corridor and Metea Court currently exist, but are limited due to stairs and inadequate paving. The paths are overgrown by surrounding vegetation creating an unwelcoming and unsafe perception. If improved, these would provide opportunities for direct, convenient links for residents to access the businesses along Front Street. Continuing that connection through the service and parking areas would complete the link and minimize the potential for pedestrian-vehicular conflicts. Residents and bicyclists not living in Metea Court must access the commercial district by Liberty Avenue. The sidewalk route along Liberty Avenue is pleasant and accompanied by a street tree buffer. Dedicated bike lanes would be beneficial to encourage further transportation options due to the heavier amounts of vehicular traffic along Front Street.

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EXISTING LAND USE

- Commercial District
- Single Family - Residential
- Multi-Family - Residential
- Park
- Light Industrial
- Vacant Site/Building
- PUD Zoning
- ▨▨▨▨ Affordable Housing



Existing Conditions & Assessment



CITY IMPROVEMENTS & INDEPENDENT INITIATIVES



-  Buchanan Area Senior Center (2010)
-  Accessibility & Traffic Calming (2014)

-  BYSBA Field Improvements (____)

VISION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Vision & Recommendations

Vision

The vision for the Uptown neighborhood is to enhance and maintain a stable neighborhood that provides its residents access to quality opportunities for recreation, shopping, dining, and business needs. The following are goals that have been established to meet this vision:

1. Preserve long-term stability of the neighborhood.
 - Monitor condition of the mixed – use area in the southern portion of the focus area.
 - Retain affordable housing and keep well-maintained.
 - Improve and maintain public spaces and infrastructure.
2. Improve pedestrian accessibility, both within the neighborhood and connecting to other parts of Buchanan.
 - Provide continuous pedestrian corridors between residential areas and amenities.
 - Construct pathways and walks that are fully accessible, visible, and safe.
 - Improve crosswalk ramps at intersections.
3. New development will support the neighborhood and improve the quality of life in the community.
 - Encourage new businesses along the Front Street corridor that provide for basic needs.
 - Support adaptive reuse of existing vacant properties.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed to help the Uptown Neighborhood continue to progress as a stable, thriving community that is welcoming, safe, and convenient for all residents. These recommendations are intended to complement the improvements made by the city and community outlined previously.

Preserve and Develop Neighborhood Stability and Character

Commercial District Character

- Include the residential areas of Uptown Neighborhood as part of the updated Buchanan Master Plan to enable guidelines that seek to establish a precedent for future growth and renovations to reinforce the city’s architectural history and character.
- Establish design guidelines for the commercial district that will unify and improve the aesthetic and functional character.
- Enhance the eastern gateway to the City of Buchanan by developing a gateway character at the commercial district.
- Improve the scale and character of the district with cohesive streetscape improvements, such as upgraded street light poles, benches, banners, litter receptacles, and fencing.
- Introduce street trees in the existing tree lawns.
- Continue efforts to combine driveways to eliminate repetitive and sometimes unsafe access onto Front Street.

- Provide fencing and landscape buffers to minimize views of parking lots and dumpsters.
- Add and widen sidewalks to provide safe, separate, and uninterrupted pedestrian pathways in commercial district only.
- Increase pedestrian and bicycle access from the surrounding neighborhood.

Address Transitioning Properties

- Secure avenues for private funding for Superfund cleanup of the light industrial property in southern area of neighborhood.
- Continue working with and encouraging the owners for clean up and mitigation.
- Investigate PUD zoning to allow for more complementary growth for the neighborhood.
- Create shared public space in vacant or to – be – demolished properties, such as a public park, community garden, or expansion of the baseball and softball fields.
- Encourage responsible repurposing of vacant properties.
- Due to location of the railroad, it may be inappropriate to retain some light industrial land.

Sustain Affordable Senior Housing

The areas of the neighborhood most in need of significant revitalization include the two affordable housing developments in the multi – family residential zone.

Vision & Recommendations

Metea Court

- Provide pedestrian accessibility to the commercial corridor by removing stairway barriers and providing a hard-surface accessible path. Visually open and clean up the connection area to improve the sense of welcome and safety.
- Install new accessible walkways — a minimum of 6 feet wide — that directly connect to the Buchanan Area Senior Center.
- Update parking and internal walkways to meet ADA compliance
- Widen walkways, ease walkway intersections, and add secure benches, tables, and litter receptacles at key locations for better utilization of outdoor amenities.
- Improve shared open areas by creating a central outdoor space for gathering and activities.
- Renovate the exterior facades and lighting to compliment the character of the surrounding single – family area.
- Update the interior of the residential units and common areas to bring them up – to – date and into current code compliance.

Mill Pond Apartments

- Renovate the exterior facade to compliment the character of the surrounding single – family area.
- Enhance the shared water feature with pathways and seating to become a significant community amenity.

- Improve the connection to the Buchanan Area Senior Center by bringing the existing ramp up to ADA compliance.
- Increase the connection to the surrounding neighbors by providing ADA – compliant walks, ramps, and curb cuts from the apartment complex.

Establish Direct, Accessible Pedestrian Routes Within the Neighborhood

- Develop a dedicated pedestrian zone between the Metea Court connections and Front Street to minimize pedestrian and vehicular mixing through the service area and front parking area.
- Continue to improve pedestrian access along Front Street. Install missing sections of sidewalk along the south side of Front Street, and upgrade the north side sidewalks to 6 feet wide where possible.
- Emphasize crosswalks at intersections where there is substantial vehicular traffic. Delineation may be achieved through paint, stamped asphalt, colored and scored concrete, or pavers.
- Establish a methodology to replace neighborhood curb ramps that are not ADA – compliant, prioritizing intersections along Liberty Avenue and routes connecting to the affordable senior housing.
- Establish a methodology to prioritize the repair of neighborhood walks damaged by tree roots and settling.
- Add sidewalks to neighborhood

streets where they are lacking.

Vision & Recommendations



NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION STRATEGY



- Neighborhood Improvements
- Adaptive Reuse and Renovation
- Accessible Connections
- Sidewalk & Crosswalk Replacements and Improvements
- Reclamation- land to be used for Public Use: i.e. parks, pool, gardens



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Implementation Strategies

SustainAffordable
Senior Housing

Recommended Action Items:

	Involved Parties/Agencies					Potential Funding Sources					Goals Accomplished			Potential Timeline
	City of Buchanan	Downtown Development Authority	Public Works	MDOT	Private / BPS Community Foundation	Federal/State Grants	City Financing	Downtown Development Association	Donation / Local Funding	Property Owners	Preserve long-term stability of the neighborhood	Improve pedestrian accessibility	New development that supports the neighborhood and quality of life	Timeline Range in Years
Metea Court: Sidewalk, parking, and curb cuts brought up to ADA - compliance					X	X				X	X	X	0-1	
Metea Court: Create accessible sidewalk connections to Front Street commercial district					X	X				X	X	X	2-4	
Metea Court: Create central outdoor gathering space; gardens and patio in open green space					X	X				X	X	X	0-1	
Metea Court: Install new accessible walk connection to Senior Center					X	X				X	X	X	2-4	
Metea Court: Exterior and interior building renovations and updating					X	X				X		X	0-1	
Mill Pond Apartments: Update accessible ramp to senior center					X	X				X	X	X	2-4	
Mill Pond Apartments: Building exterior upgrades					X	X				X		X	5+	
Mill Pond Apartments: Enhance access and amenities at pond feature					X	X				X	X	X	5+	
Mill Pond Apartments / Buchanan Meadows: Install walkway between properties					X	X				X	X	X	5+	

Implementation Strategies

Preserve and Develop
Neighborhood Stability

Recommended Action Items:

	Involved Parties/Agencies					Potential Funding Sources					Goals Accomplished			Potential Timeline
	City of Buchanan	Downtown Development Authority	Public Works	MDOT	Private / BPS Community Foundation	Federal/State Grants	City Financing	Downtown Development Association	Donations / Local Funding	Property Owners	Preserve long-term stability of the neighborhood	Improve pedestrian accessibility	New development that supports the neighborhood and quality of life	Timeline Range in Years
Establish guidelines for commercial district improvements that will begin to unify and improve aesthetic character	X	X				X	X	X				X	X	5 +
Buchanan gateway improvements at Front Street corridor	X	X				X	X	X				X	X	2-4
Include neighborhood as part of Buchanan Area Master Plan Review to facilitate design guidelines	X						X	X			X			2-4
Add streetscape elements and visual buffers in commercial district	X	X		X		X	X	X			X		X	5 +
Investigate PUD zoning for light industrial area to promote growth in the neighborhood	X				X					X	X		X	2-4
City to continue working with owners to secure funding for cleaning up southern light industrial Superfund site	X				X					X	X		X	5 +

Implementation Strategies

Improve & Establish Direct, Accessible Pedestrian Routes

Recommended Action Items:

	Involved Parties/Agencies					Potential Funding Sources					Goals Accomplished			Potential Timeline
	City of Buchanan	Downtown Development Authority	Public Works	MDOT	Private / BPS Community Foundation	Federal/State Grants	City Financing	Downtown Development Association	Donations / Local Funding	Property Owners	Preserve long-term stability of the neighborhood	Improve pedestrian accessibility	New development that supports the neighborhood and quality of life	Timeline Range in Years
Develop dedicated pedestrian zone between Metea Court and Front Street	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2-4
Continue expanding walkability improvements along Front Street	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2-4
Install sections of missing sidewalk throughout neighborhood Right - of - Ways	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2-4
Establish methodology to update neighborhood curb cuts at crosswalks to meet current ADA requirements	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2-4
Establish methodology to repair sidewalks in neighborhoods	X		X	X		X				X	X	X	X	2-4

