In Business - In Brightmoor

A Commercial Redevelopment Strategy for Brightmoor

UP 656: Problem Set 2
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Brightmoor neighborhood in northwest Detroit has faced some serious challenges in the past few decades, and has struggled to maintain residents, housing stock and commercial businesses. While it has seen some difficult times, Brightmoor is poised to make a come back thanks to the dedication of community organizations such as the Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDND) and the financial attention of entities such as the City of Detroit and the Skillman Foundation. NDND has made great progress in the neighborhood by creating new housing, but a commercial development strategy is needed to revitalize the neighborhood holistically.

While there are many areas in Brightmoor that may be able to support a commercial district, there is one area that is particularly well suited for a commercial center, on Fenkell between Trinity and Braile. This area is ideal for commercial redevelopment because it centrally located, it has many anchoring and supporting businesses, and is located adjacent to a stable residential area. This paper creates a commercial development strategy for this corridor that includes specific recommendations for each lot on this strip, assessed value of each lot, a description of the currently stable institutions and recommendations for the abandoned buildings and vacant lots.
We proposed a five step strategy as follows: 1) Acquire and remove dilapidated structures, 2) Organize current businesses and property owners, 3) Market and promote current businesses and seek tenants for unoccupied businesses and vacant land, 4) Foster investment and entrepreneurship through partnerships with business development institutions, 5) Strengthen the safety and appearance of the neighborhood. These redevelopment strategies are complimented by potential implementation resources such as grant and city funding sources. While the challenges that Brightmoor faces are great, this strategy provides one path that may be utilized to create a new future for the residents of this neighborhood.
Detroit’s Brightmoor neighborhood has struggled with obtaining and maintaining a strong commercial corridor. The neighborhood, as well as Detroit, has changed drastically in the past 60 years, creating a unique challenge to City planners and the community. Brightmoor has evolved from a stable, bustling neighborhood to one that is struggling to retain residents, businesses and built structures. While there has been an effort to maintain and build new housing in the community, there has been little attention paid to the commercial and retail areas of the neighborhood. Housing is an important part of neighborhood revitalization, but it has become apparent that a sound community renewal strategy must include a commercial business component. Residents need jobs, services and shops in their neighborhood to provide amenities and continued investment in the community.

This paper reviews the current conditions in Detroit and Brighmoor, Master Plans in Detroit and presents a strategy for revitalizing one small commercial node in Brightmoor. The node is located along Fenkell Avenue from Trinity to Braile, which was chosen based on information presented in A Land Use Plan for Brightmoor. The presented strategies includes very specific recommendations for each parcel in the chosen node as well as implementation approaches including potential funding sources.
**Detroit Master Plans**

The population of Detroit has changed drastically, altering the way land is utilized and creating unique challenges for the City of Detroit and its planners. The history of Detroit’s Master Plans shows the massive changes that have occurred in the past 50 years in Detroit. For the purposes of this paper, the Detroit’s commercial land use plans are briefly reviewed in the context of neighborhood commercial centers to gain a greater understanding of where Brightmoor is today.

Detroit’s Planners had a unique and lively vision for the City of Detroit in the 1940’s. They created a master plan for the city that would ensure each neighborhood had access to schools, parks, retail and other services. This vision formed the basis for future planning in Detroit in which planners sought to save the city money by distributing resources throughout the city and coordinating public projects. However, Detroit planners did not always have the tools or the necessary information to manage the declining populations and economic issues that began facing Detroit in the 1950’s. These early plans did not focus on commercial or retail areas, but rather on residents, amenities and services. The 1951 Detroit Master Plan contains only one page of commercial land use information.
and one map. The narrative of the plan is geared toward the city as a whole, and not specific neighborhoods. During this time it is possible that neighborhood commercial areas were not deemed as important or pressing as residential areas and infrastructure issues.

In the 1973 Master Plan, no specific commercial strategies were given for Cluster 8 (the cluster that contains the Brightmoor neighborhood), Brightmoor, or residential commercial development in general. This reflects the primary focus of central business district development and the negative attitude towards comprehensive planning during that time. Although the 1973 plan did not give specific neighborhood development strategies, or include information in the general land use map, general guidelines for residential commercial development were provided. These guidelines included support for auto-centric shopping centers, which demanded large land areas to accommodate parking. Additionally, it was important that shopping centers be located in high-traffic areas that could easily be accessed by vehicles in four directions. Although a development strategy of the time, the assumption that most Detroiters would own vehicles was short sighted, and has resulted in isolating low-income residents from accessible commercial districts. These development standards are
best shown by the development to parking ratio presented in the 1973 plan. It advises that for every two acres of residential commercial development, six acres of off-street parking be provided. The 1973 master plan centered all commercial residential development on the automobile, alienating members of the community without cars.

The current master plan was adopted by the Detroit City Council in 1992, though other updated plans have been drafted as recently as 2004. The current plan does not list specific redevelopment strategies for Brightmoor’s commercial district, but it does make suggestions for strengthening the community as a whole. Among these is the development of apartments and housing into the commercial thoroughfares of Fenkell and Schoolcraft. Integrating housing into the commercial district will result in a more viable retail center in which people who live nearby can also shop and visit services such as the post office and medical clinic. The current 1992 plan also seeks to stabilize and upgrade Brightmoor’s shopping district and replace the over supply of unused commercial storefronts with more appropriate uses for the shrinking community. By incorporating housing, this goal can partially be attained, but other specific details and recommendations are not listed. Finally, the plan calls for
desirable neighborhood-oriented commercial development. Similar to the other goals listed, there is no plan of action, or specific recommendations to achieve these goals. So, even though the current plan mentions the neighborhood of Brightmoor, it does not provide detailed instructions for implementing these ideas.

A Land Use Plan for Brightmoor

The report A Land Use Plan for Brightmoor by Doherty et al was written by students fulfilling their Master’s of Urban Planning degrees at the University of Michigan. It is a thorough examination of the Brightmoor neighborhood and provides a comprehensive vision for improving the community. This report is the basis for our strategy for redeveloping a commercial node in Brightmoor as we expand on the Doherty plan.

The Doherty Report takes a distinct approach to commercial development in Brightmoor. It focuses on building small-scale commercial nodes, rather than entire commercial corridors or major shopping centers. The Report’s vision for the Fenkell area between Trinity and Braile is locally focused. Doherty et al sees local retail establishments locating here to
serve the neighborhood, and perhaps build on the traffic already attracted to the area to use the post office or the well-established hardware store. The Report also anticipates nonprofit uses of properties in the area, building on the post office’s institutional presence on Fenkell.

Accordingly, the prevailing vision that emerges from both the Doherty Report and the evolution of the Detroit master plans is that modest commercial development is suited to the Brightmoor area, with major intersections as the likeliest locations for businesses that serve the high volume of traffic that flows on the collector streets in the area. Fenkell between Trinity and Braile may serve as the commercial center for businesses targeting local residents, and is the focus of this paper’s redevelopment strategy.

**Detroit and Brightmoor Current Conditions**

The City of Detroit has been rapidly losing population in the past fifty years, creating vacant and abandoned residential and commercial properties all over the city. The residents of Detroit are also at further risk as they experience high unemployment and poverty. While these numbers are high, those living in Brightmoor face an even situation even more dire,
creating a great need for employment and services in the neighborhood.

The City of Detroit’s population peaked in 1950 with a total of 1,849,568 people. In 2007, the estimated population is 916,952, less than half its highest population. The Brightmoor neighborhood has also been hard hit by the population losses. In 1980, the peak population of the neighborhood was approximately 31,000, while in 2000, it dropped 20% to approximately 25,000. In 2000, Brightmoor is about 80% African-American and 20% White, with much of this population facing high unemployment and poverty rates, well above that of Detroit as a whole. About 20% of households had no earned income in 1999 and 13% received public assistance. In 2000, 15% of Brightmoor residents were unemployed, while 14% of Detroiters reported unemployment. Approximately 32% of Brightmoor residents were under the poverty line in 2000, while 26% of Detroit residents fell into this category. These startling numbers paint a dire picture for Brightmoor, emphasizing the need for jobs and services within this once prosperous neighborhood.
Surrounding Communities

The communities directly surrounding Brightmoor, both within the city limits and beyond them, are stable in population, housing stock and commercial businesses. The neighborhoods surrounding Brightmoor do indeed present a potentially strong market for goods and services to be sold by commercial businesses in Brightmoor. All three areas are characterized by strong property values, high home ownership rates, and comparatively high household incomes. In Redford and Evergreen, for example, over fifty-five percent of the housing values exceed $70,000. Rosedale is even better off, with over 90% of housing units having a value in excess of $70,000. Brightmoor, by contrast, has only about one-third of its housing units with values in excess of $70,000.

Not surprisingly, income trends in these areas roughly track these home value figures. Rosedale shows the highest income levels, with over 60% of residents having incomes of $50,000 or more. In Redford, about one-third of residents have incomes of $50,000 or more. In Evergreen, about 37% of residents have incomes of $50,000 or more. By contrast, just 24% of residents in Brightmoor have incomes at that level.
Accordingly, Brightmoor is surrounded by comparatively better-off neighborhoods that could serve as the target market for businesses that locate in Brightmoor. However, these neighborhoods also pose a challenge for such a marketing plan. It may be difficult to attract residents of the neighborhoods surrounding Brightmoor to the commercial establishments that locate in Brightmoor, because each of the adjacent neighborhoods has an established commercial district. Thus, for example, in its 2004 Draft Master Plan, the City of Detroit notes that “Redford has rather stable commercial thoroughfares along Grand River and Telegraph.” Similarly, in Rosedale, “Grand River is a rather stable commercial thoroughfare.” Evergreen shows some weakness in its commercial area, with the City noting the need to strengthen commercial areas along McNichols and Seven Mile. However, Evergreen is the neighborhood located furthest from Brightmoor, and Evergreen residents who do not choose to shop in their own neighborhood could visit the well-established commercial areas on Grand River in Rosedale more easily than any destination in Brightmoor. Accordingly, converting the “potential” customers in Rosedale, Redford and Evergreen into actual customers of Brightmoor establishments remains a challenge. A specific strategy for redeveloping a commercial strip in Brightmoor follows below.
This report takes a closer look at one of the commercial nodes identified in the Doherty report – the business district on Fenkell between Trinity and Braile. We focus on this node for three reasons:

1. Neighborhood “downtown” potential. If there is a “downtown” to the Brightmoor neighborhood, this is it. It is centrally located and accessible to many on foot. Buildings are compact, one- to two-stories tall, built at the edge of the sidewalk, immediately adjacent to the next building, with little or no on-site parking. They are exactly what planners have in mind when they talk about “walkable urbanism.”

2. Making this area a vital commercial node able to meet the daily needs of neighborhood residents is particularly important considering that about one-third of Brightmoor residents do not own a car.

2. Strong, anchoring institutions and supporting enterprises. The seeds of success have already been sewn in this business district in the form of several anchoring institutions that bring visitors and stability to the area, including the U.S. Post Office, a community health clinic, a hardware store, a restaurant, and a church. Eight other enterprises build on and support this budding commercial vitality. The area will also
soon be home to the offices of Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development, Inc.

3. Great potential. The node sits adjacent to a comparatively well-off residential area, and is surrounded by other residential areas in which Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development, Inc. is actively investing. Moreover, the node includes fifteen unoccupied buildings and six vacant lots. Accordingly, there is strong development and redevelopment potential in the area.
The Brightmoor Business District

Thirty five properties comprise the business district on Fenkell between Trinity and Braile. Of these, 13 are occupied, 16 are empty buildings, and six are vacant lots. Together, the properties in the district have a total value of almost $600,000. Most of this value (66%) is found in the occupied buildings, which have an average assessed value of $35,527. The average value for the empty buildings is $11,308, which is just $2,000 more than the average value of vacant lots in the district. Table 1 provides further details of the property values in the district.

Table 1 - Overview of Properties in the District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties in District</th>
<th>Number of Properties</th>
<th>Number as Percent of Total in District</th>
<th>Average Assessed Value</th>
<th>Median Assessed Value</th>
<th>Total Assessed Value</th>
<th>Total Value as Percent of District Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupied Buildings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>$45,656</td>
<td>$24,229</td>
<td>$456,561</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty Buildings</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>$11,324</td>
<td>$9,340</td>
<td>$135,886</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Lots</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>$9,907</td>
<td>$11,489</td>
<td>$39,626</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall for District</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>$24,311</td>
<td>$13,442</td>
<td>$632,073</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For purposes of analysis, we divided the occupied buildings into “anchor” properties and “supporting” properties. Five of the occupied buildings seem to serve as anchors for the business district. These include the U.S. Post Office, the Thea Bowman Community Health Center, the Brightmoor Coney Island Restaurant, Paulie’s Hardware Store, and Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church. Each of these institutions attracts a comparatively high volume of people to the neighborhood, presents an attractive, well-maintained façade, and enhances the commercial district’s vibrancy. Despite their prominence, these anchor properties account for just 9% of the overall assessed value of properties in the district. This may be explained in part by the fact that two of the anchor properties – the U.S. Post Office and Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church – are exempt from taxation. Accordingly, no assessed value is determined for them.

Table 2 lists the anchor properties we identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Assessed Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church</td>
<td>15125 Burt Rd.</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thea Bowman Community Health Center*</td>
<td>20548 Fenkell</td>
<td>$103,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Post Office</td>
<td>20615 Fenkell</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brightmoor Coney Island</td>
<td>20740 Fenkell</td>
<td>$14,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulie’s Hardware</td>
<td>20900 Fenkell</td>
<td>$29,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>147,448</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The assessed value for the Thea Bowman Community Health Center was determined based on the property’s value on its most recent date of sale (Sept. 13, 2002), as the assessed value reported in the data provided by the City of Detroit ($8,910) did not appear accurate.
Community Anchors

Brightmoor: Detroit, MI
Seven other institutions play or could play supporting roles in the commercial dynamics of the district. Most are small-scale operations. Some have attractive, well-maintained façades. Others could benefit from investments in their storefronts. Properties in this group include an appliance store, a used furniture store, an auto wash and detailing business, an auto parts retailer, two liquor stores, a “cash for gold” business, and the clubhouse for the “Scorpions” Motorcycle Club. NDND’s future headquarters on Fenkell would also fall into this category when it is established. Properties in this group account for 57% of the property value in the district. The two liquor stores at 20650 Fenkell and 20830 Fenkell are responsible for two-thirds of this value, with a combined assessed value of $221,246. Table 3 provides further details concerning these supporting properties.
Table 4: Unoccupied Buildings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Assessed Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20717 Fenkell</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>$10,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20723 Fenkell</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>$3,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20727 Fenkell</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>$6,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20731 Fenkell</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>$16,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20739 Fenkell</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>$4,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnell Drew's Towing &amp; Tires</td>
<td>20800 Fenkell</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>$27,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20827 Fenkell</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>$12,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20831 Fenkell</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDND Future Home</td>
<td>20845 Fenkell</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20909 Fenkell</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>$1,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20915 Fenkell</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>$6,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20918 Fenkell</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>$28,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20919 Fenkell</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>$18,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20932 Fenkell</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>$10,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant storefront</td>
<td>20947 Fenkell</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>$8,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$158,317</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifteen properties in the district are unoccupied buildings. Based on a walking survey of the neighborhood, two of the buildings appear to be in good to excellent condition, presenting a visually appealing façade and apparently ready to be put to use with little or no improvements. Eight of the buildings appear to be in fair condition – apparently sound structurally and ready to be put to use with moderate rehabilitation. The remaining five buildings are in poor condition, with substantially deteriorated structures that do not appear to merit rehabilitation. These deteriorated structures are clustered in the 20900 block of Fenkell, with four of them located on the south side of the street and one on the north. Table 4 provides details regarding these unoccupied buildings.
Development Opportunities

Brightmoor: Detroit, MI
The remaining six properties consist of vacant land. Half of these are clustered on the south side of the 20900 block of Fenkell, adjacent to the cluster of deteriorated buildings described above. The remaining three properties are at the corner of Fenkell and Braile, across from the new post office.

Table 5- Vacant Land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Assessed Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vacant land</td>
<td>20701 Fenkell</td>
<td>$9,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant land</td>
<td>20707 Fenkell</td>
<td>$2,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant land</td>
<td>20711 Fenkell</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant land</td>
<td>20927 Fenkell</td>
<td>$13,991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant land</td>
<td>20935 Fenkell</td>
<td>$13,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant land</td>
<td>20943 Fenkell</td>
<td>$7,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$46,815</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Redevelopment Strategy

We propose a five-point redevelopment strategy for the Brightmoor business district on Fenkell between Trinity and Braile:

1. Acquire and remove dilapidated structures.
2. Organize current businesses and property owners.
3. Market and promote current businesses and seek tenants for unoccupied buildings and vacant land.
4. Foster investment and entrepreneurship through partnerships with business development institutions.
5. Strengthen safety and appearance of neighborhood.
We expand on each of these points in turn.

1. **Acquire and remove dilapidated structures.**
   NDND or another community group could substantially improve the target area by acquiring and removing the five dilapidated structures in the 20900 block of Fenkell. Doing so would improve the appearance of the neighborhood, and eliminate visible reminders of the area’s decline. Moreover, it would enhance the perceived safety of the neighborhood for those who pass the area on foot or in vehicles.

   Implementation of this strategy should not be unduly expensive. Collectively, the assessed value of the five properties does not exceed $50,000 (see Table 5). Although these figures date to 2007, we do not anticipate that they have increased substantially since then. Indeed, insofar as the buildings have likely deteriorated even further since 2007, the assessed value has probably declined.

   Acquiring and demolishing the buildings on the South side of Fenkell opens up a significant redevelopment opportunity. Trinity Community Development Corporation (hereafter “Trinity CDC”) already owns one of the vacant buildings and one of the vacant lots on this block. It also owns several adjacent lots on Trinity Street that back up to Mount Vernon Missionary Baptist Church. If Trinity CDC were to acquire the remaining vacant lots and dilapidated buildings, in would own an “L” shaped site that could host a substantial redevelopment
A mixed use project with ground-floor commercial on Fenkell and multifamily residential above the Fenkell shops and around the corner on Trinity would substantially enhance the vitality of this area. Accordingly, Trinity CDC, rather than NDND, may be the most appropriate entity to accomplish the acquisition and demolition of the existing dilapidated buildings on the 20900 block of Fenkell.

2. Organize current businesses and property owners.
NDND could enhance the functioning of the Brightmoor business district by organizing the current business and property owners into a formal business association. Doing so would yield at least four significant benefits. First, it would foster cooperation and a shared sense of identity among the members. Second, and related, it would provide a mechanism to addresses common problems and seize future opportunities. Thus, if traffic speed or criminal conducts in the area are identified as problems, the group can speak with one voice when it petitions City Hall for assistance. Third, an organized business association can serve as a funding vehicle for possible grant money. Accordingly, as the group develops independent initiatives, it will be in a position to seek funds to implement them.

Fourth, organizing a group now to discuss and work together on issues impacting the business climate in the neighborhood could help lay the groundwork for a possible future Business Improvement Zone (“BIZ”). A BIZ is like a homeowners’ association for businesses – it is a mechanism by which businesses in a particular
area agree to tax themselves and use the collected taxes (i.e. “dues payments”) to support the commercial vitality of the area. BIZ activities can include streetscape improvements, street cleaning and security services, collective marketing, etc. We judge the commercial climate in the Fenkell area too fragile to support a BIZ at this point. However, it could be a very useful tool when the area gains commercial strength. The cooperation and communication established by organizing a business association now will make it easier to adopt a BIZ in the future when the members deem it appropriate.

3. Market and Promote Area Businesses and Properties
The most effective economic development strategy for a neighborhood is one that both keeps neighborhood dollars in the neighborhood and attracts out-of-neighborhood dollars to the neighborhood. Such dollars have a multiplier effect when they get re-spent in the neighborhood. Accordingly, one dollar in spending can amount to more than a dollar in economic impact for the neighborhood.

This argues for a “Buy Brightmoor” campaign. This campaign would encourage local residents to purchase their goods and services locally to the extent practicable. It would also advertise neighborhood businesses outside of the neighborhood, in the hope of bringing more dollars to the neighborhood. NDND or the proposed Brightmoor business association could conduct this campaign through advertising circulars, posters displayed in stores and restaurants, etc.

This strategy would be more effective if there were more opportunities to spend money in the area.
Brightmoor business district on Fenkell. To that end, NDND could work with owners of unoccupied buildings and vacant lots to market the sites to prospective businesses. The 20700 block of Fenkell in particular seems to have substantial potential. It houses a collection of six small shopfronts that are perfectly scaled to serve as incubators for small businesses. Enterprises that serve the essential needs and promote the social bonds of neighborhood residents would be most desirable for these shop fronts. These include businesses such as a bakery, a barber shop or hair salon, a ice cream parlor, a pharmacy, etc. Businesses of this nature appear to be permitted as of right under the current zoning for the property.

4. **Foster investment and entrepreneurship through partnerships with business development institutions.**

A variety of government and nonprofit entities offer assistance to support small businesses get established and continue operations. In the Detroit area, these include the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, the Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Centers, the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Small Business Detroit Microloan Program, and the Detroit Entrepreneurship Institute (“DEI”). These last two merit further exploration.

The Small Business Detroit MicroLoan Program is an initiative of the City of Detroit’s Offices of Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization. As described on the program’s website:

The Small Business Detroit Microloan Program provides financial support for new and existing small businesses that are currently located in or wanting to locate in the city of Detroit. Some of these [sic] businesses may have trouble
meeting collateral or credit rating requirements of lenders. Others may need assistance with payment terms due to short-term cash flow concerns. Some businesses may not qualify for conventional financing for these reasons. This fund will make loans available to these business owners.

Thus, the program can provide bridge or gap financing in circumstances where conventional financing is unavailable. This can be an important resource for small-scale enterprises just getting underway.

DEI is focused on providing “entrepreneurship and economic assistance to individuals in Southeast Michigan with barriers to accessing resources in order to enhance their economic conditions and that of their community.”28 To that end, it provides one-on-one assistance and group training programs that walk entrepreneurs through the business start-up and operation process. Many of DEI’s clients have been low-income people.

NDND could tap these resources to foster investment and entrepreneurship in the Brightmoor business district on Fenkell. Joint workshops sponsored by NDND and run by any of the above entities could help identify budding entrepreneurs and connect them with specific opportunities in the Brightmoor neighborhood. Such workshops may also help existing businesses run their operations more profitably and competitively.

5. **Strengthen safety and appearance of neighborhood.**
An attractive appearance can go a long way toward giving consumers and business people confidence in the safety and viability of an area. Sidewalk reconstruction, tree planting, other curbside landscaping, and more attractive
and effective lighting fixtures are some improvements that can have a direct and noticeable impact on an area.

Public art adds to neighborhood vitality in a different way. It both adds a creative touch to a neighborhood and signals the involvement of a community committed to making its neighborhood better. The mural painted on the side of the building NDND is to occupy is an excellent example of public art. The clubhouse for the Scorpions Motorcycle Club, located just three door down from the NDND building (at 20801 Fenkell), may be a prime location for another mural. The Club has surrounded its outdoor space with a cinderblock wall standing at least 8 feet tall. While the wall no doubt provides the Club with much-desired privacy, and likely shields the neighborhood enduring noisy gatherings, it also creates a sizeable “dead zone” for pedestrians on the sidewalk, giving them nothing to look at while towering menacingly above them. A mural on this wall, perhaps with a motorcycle theme to reflect the premises’ occupants, could go a long way toward lightening the pedestrian experience of this space.

Relatedly, NDND may wish to implement a façade improvement program. While many of the properties in the Brightmoor business district already present an appealing façade, others could benefit from renewed investment. Prime candidates for façade improvements include the appliance store at 20942 Fenkell, the furniture store at 20728 Fenkell, and the collection of small storefronts on the 20700 block of Fenkell. Like the streetscape and public art improvements, investments in façade improvements could immediately impact the appearance of the area and inspire new and renewed interest in it.
Implementation

NDND has a variety of resources available to help implement this renewal strategy. City of Detroit Community Development Block Grants are available for a variety of uses, including streetscape and infrastructure improvements, acquisition and demolition of blighted properties, and community planning initiatives. Another City resource is the Office of Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization ("ONCR"), which has in the past targeted its assistance to strategies such as these. ONCR’s Re$to program has offered technical assistance and funding for staff to implement commercial renewal strategies, while the ReFresh program has funded façade improvement programs. However, ONCR is no longer accepting applications for these programs. It remains to be seen whether the new City administration in Detroit will re-commit to these programs. If it does, they could provide critical assistance to NDND in implementing the revitalization strategy we have proposed.

The Local Initiatives Support Corporation ("LISC") and the Skillman Foundation are also potential funding sources. Both have committed to funding revitalization efforts in Brightmoor. LISC is in the process of investing $40 million in Detroit’s neighborhoods, and has specifically targeted the Brightmoor neighborhood as one of four “strategic investment areas” in the City. The Skillman Foundation has similarly targeted the Brightmoor neighborhood, with a $100 million commitment to help make “good neighborhoods for children.” Brightmoor is one of six Detroit neighborhoods targeted for Skillman foundation funding. Both of these funders could play important roles in supporting the revitalization strategy we have devised.
Finally, the economic development entities identified above – including Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, the Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Centers, the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Small Business Detroit Microloan Program, and the Detroit Entrepreneurship Institute – should be considered partners in the above revitalization strategy. Their expertise could substantially enhance NDND’s efforts to bring a stronger commercial presence to the Brightmoor business district on Fenkell between Trinity and Braile.
Though Brightmoor faces difficult challenges as it revitalizes its neighborhood, it has a strong support from local organizations, the City of Detroit and funding institutions. The Fenkell commercial strip is particularly well poised for redevelopment, and may prove to become a commercial center that attracts people from all over the region. A central location for employment, services and retail shops would reenergize the community and create a sense of hope. The strategy outlined in this paper utilizes the strengths of the neighborhood and can be used as a starting point for redeveloping Brightmoor and ultimately creating a stronger community for its residents.


3. Ibid.


7. Detroit Master Plan 1992

8. Ibid


10. Ibid, pg 88


15. Ibid


17. Ibid, Table 8-4

18. Ibid, Table 8-4
19. Ibid, Table 8-3
20. Ibid, Table 8-2
21. Ibid, Table 8-1
22. Ibid, at 8-7
23. Ibid, at 8-9
24. Ibid at 8-5 to 8-6
27. Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church is a large church located just off of Fenkell on Burt Rd.