

Bringing Vision into Focus:

**A Simple and Pragmatic
Commercial Redevelopment Strategy for Brightmoor**

**UP656: Central City Planning and Community Development
Professor June Thomas
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Group A

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Executive Summary

Objective

The purpose of this report is to provide a preliminary commercial revitalization strategy for the Brightmoor neighborhood that is practical and achievable. Using the five commercial focus areas identified in the 2008 “A Land Use Plan for Brightmoor” (referred to as the Doherty plan) as a starting point, the report provides several specific recommendations for the Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDND) and public entities to pursue.

The main objective of the report is to analyze the potential of Doherty’s five commercial focus areas based upon two criteria, *Feasibility* and *Viability*, and outline a narrower commercial redevelopment strategy targeting redevelopment in the two most promising nodes. Our discussion utilizes three primary sources: the Doherty plan, the City of Detroit 1992 and 2004 Master Plans, and 2007 property data from the City of Detroit.

Methodology

The two main determinants of redevelopment potential used by this report are *Viability*, based on the Doherty plan, and *Feasibility*, based on 2007 City of Detroit property data. These factors can be used to predict whether newly constructed businesses would succeed in a given location within the current market.

Feasibility compares the prospects for commercial redevelopment of a particular node based upon the economic possibility of acquiring parcels and the ownership condition of parcels. The dataset used provided details on the following characteristics of the parcels included in each node: median and total assessed values, median and total taxable values, property ownership, vacancy, number of buildings, type of use, and number of active businesses. *Viability* takes into consideration the types of building uses surrounding particular parcels and the state of their condition as well as accessibility for residents of Brightmoor and its neighboring communities. A similar assessment was made to determine the *Viability* of each area according to the Doherty plan’s criteria. The Doherty plan offers four criteria that signify the best choice for a commercial node; 1) daily car traffic, 2) public transportation access, 3) existing businesses, and 4) the amount of vacant properties (Doherty et al., 2008). The above analysis was repeated for all five potential commercial nodes.

Findings

To this end, the report recommends that commercial redevelopment be specifically targeted to two primary commercial nodes, the intersection of Schoolcraft Rd. and Evergreen Rd and Fenkell Ave. between Trinity St. and Braile St. In terms of *Viability*, these nodes exhibit the greatest promise of economic success because each boasts a strong presence of the four key criteria. In terms of *Feasibility*, these nodes provide the greatest opportunity for an aggregation of parcels because of the high number of low-valued parcels and the presence of vacant parcels and/or unoccupied buildings. They are also in accordance with locations recommended in the 2004 Draft Master Plan. The report asserts that the next step for NDND will be to begin assessing the two best nodes parcel by parcel to determine the *Feasibility* and *Viability* of

aggregating individual parcels and redeveloping them for commercial use. The final section of the report provides visionary recommendations for NDND to pursue an inclusive participatory planning process and to focus design efforts on creating an intimate and attractive retail landscape with a small-town feel.

Introduction

Commercial land use in Brightmoor has been the unfortunate victim of decades of neglect, disinvestment, and population decline. Historic centers of commercial activity lay vacant, reflecting current neighborhood economic conditions and the continued decline in neighborhood market base. The purpose of this report is to provide a preliminary commercial revitalization strategy for the Brightmoor neighborhood that is practical and achievable. Using the five commercial focus areas identified in the 2008 “A Land Use Plan for Brightmoor” (hereafter referred to as the Doherty plan) as a starting point, the report provides several specific recommendations for the Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDND) and public entities to pursue.

The main objective of the report is to analyze the potential of Doherty’s five commercial focus areas based upon two criteria, *Feasibility* and *Viability*, and outline a narrower commercial redevelopment strategy targeting redevelopment in the two most promising nodes . The discussion will utilize three primary sources: the Doherty plan, the City of Detroit 1992 and 2004 Master Plans, and 2007 property data from the City of Detroit. Other sources include correspondence with John O’Brien, the Executive Director of NDND, and information gathered during a recent site visit.

The report begins by providing a brief analysis of existing planning context based upon the most recent City of Detroit Master Plans. This is followed by an assessment of the existing commercial areas in Brightmoor, and recommendations for rethinking the commercial focus in Brightmoor. The report concludes that NDND’s current redevelopment approach and the Doherty plan “Business District Realignment” strategy are too far-reaching and overly

optimistic. No clear solution for commercial redevelopment in Brightmoor is immediately apparent. However, this study asserts that measured revitalization can best be achieved by selecting a few specific locations in which to allocate limited resources. To this end, the report recommends that commercial redevelopment be specifically targeted to two primary commercial nodes, the intersection of Schoolcraft Rd. and Evergreen Rd. and Fenkell Ave. between Trinity St. and Braile St.

Past and Existing Approaches to Commercial Development

Commercial development in Brightmoor has been guided by a series of very different visions over the past 60 years. It seems that some of the more “destructive,” strictly auto-oriented planning ideologies of Detroit’s earliest master plans have been mostly abandoned in favor of a focus upon reestablishing healthy neighborhoods (Curry, 2008). Accomplishing the goals for commercial development outlined in the most recent plans though, including the Doherty plan, will be an extremely difficult task given the current condition of Brightmoor.

The Current (1992) Master Plan

Despite the creation of a 2004 Draft Master Plan, the 1992 plan still serves as the planning standard for Detroit, as the newer version has not yet been adopted by City Council (Curry, 2008). Unlike its predecessors, the 1992 plan encourages a highly cooperative and community focused development process. In addition, the plan surpasses its predecessors in terms of providing detail regarding commercial locality and neighborhood focus, and also in its encouragement of private entrepreneurial spirit (Curry, 2008). Accordingly, the 1992 plan encourages the development of local cooperatives, local retail ownership, attractive facades and

streetscapes, and attentiveness to local community needs (Teague, 2008). In order to accomplish these goals the plan calls for specific policies to be implemented including matching grants to store owners to maintain healthy storefronts (City of Detroit, 1992), and the removal of blighted buildings in commercial areas (Miller, 2008). This includes the conversion of obsolete buildings into neighborhood retail, and the removal of vacant and abandoned structures in the neighborhoods and along major thoroughfares like Telegraph Rd. and Grand River Ave (City of Detroit, 1992).

The 2004 Draft Master Plan

The 2004 Draft Master Plan features many similar commercial policy recommendations (Teague, 2008). For example, increasing the vitality and improving the appearance of commercial thoroughfares and neighborhood commercial areas are policies consistent with earlier plans (Teague, 2008). Brightmoor is located in Cluster 8 of this plan, which also includes the neighborhoods of Redford, Evergreen, and Rosedale (City of Detroit, 2004). The 2004 plan builds upon the neighborhood focus of the 1992 plan by designating more areas deemed desirable for commercial development within individual neighborhoods as opposed to strictly along major arterial thoroughfares (Teague, 2008). The plan suggests additional commercial nodes along Fenkell Ave. and Schoolcraft Rd., specifically at the intersection of Schoolcraft Rd. and Evergreen Rd. (City of Detroit, 2004). The 2004 plan also emphasizes the need for blight removal in Cluster 8 and minimizing land use conflicts, and reiterates the need to remove abrasive commercial uses such as adult stores and tow yards (Teague, 2008). The plan suggests increased code enforcement and crime prevention measures as appropriate tools to accomplish these goals (Miller, 2008).

In general the planning approach recommended by the 1992 and 2004 plans focuses upon targeting general areas for commercial redevelopment and improving the physical appearance of commercial areas. The plans emphasize the need for more neighborhood-level planning and appear to be encouraging the various neighborhoods to take an active role in the redevelopment of their commercial areas as opposed to relying on City aid. The 2004 plan expands upon the neighborhood focus of the 1992 plan by recommending commercial development to be focused in specific areas within neighborhoods and not just along major arterial thoroughfares. Fenkell Ave. and Schoolcraft Rd. specifically are mentioned as corridors in Brightmoor where commercial development should be focused. The 2008 Doherty plan is consistent with the 2004 Plan in focusing upon Fenkell Ave. and Schoolcraft Rd., but limits the discussion to five specific nodes along these streets. Despite constraining their recommendations to these five nodes, the plan still seems to be overly optimistic given the current physical and economic condition of Brightmoor. Supporting successful commercial development in each of these five areas is likely beyond the current potential of Brightmoor. The following section provides an assessment of potential commercial focus areas in Brightmoor, beginning with a more detailed discussion of the Doherty plan.

Analysis of Existing Commercial Areas

The “Business District Realignment” chapter in the Doherty plan lacks attention to the economic *Feasibility* and overall scale of the commercial redevelopment plan it recommends for Brightmoor. The chapter appears to be an attempt by the students to expand upon the 2004 plan and limit their recommendations to five commercial nodes. Unfortunately, this doesn’t seem to go far enough in terms of focusing commercial development. Given that Brightmoor is a

severely distressed neighborhood, the students' optimism seems to be too unbridled and these recommendations appear to be too far-reaching (Miller 2008). Targeting one designated node for investment along each corridor is a more appropriate immediate approach and would allow NDND to focus its redevelopment efforts and utilize limited resources effectively towards establishing two small successful commercial clusters.

The two main determinants of redevelopment potential used by this report are *Viability*, based on the Doherty plan, and *Feasibility*, based on 2007 City of Detroit property data. *Feasibility* compares the prospects for commercial redevelopment of a particular node based upon the economic possibility of acquiring parcels and the ownership condition of parcels. Property values and ownership have a profound effect on site selection. Property values and ownership should be taken into account to assess redevelopment opportunities at each node. Property values and ownership affect the *Feasibility* of purchase price, assemblage, and tax revenue generation.

Viability takes into consideration the types of building uses surrounding particular parcels and the state of their condition as well as accessibility for residents of Brightmoor and its neighboring communities. These factors can be used to predict whether newly constructed businesses would succeed in a given location within the current market. Our realistic, pragmatic plan for commercial redevelopment in Brightmoor will identify two nodes, one along Fenkell Ave. and one along Schoolcraft Rd., whose location offers parcels that would be cost-efficient to redevelop and promise a high likelihood of business success. First, we will discuss the *Feasibility* of commercial redevelopment in Brightmoor and then more specifically at each of the five potential nodes. Second, we will apply the Doherty criteria to illustrate the *Viability* of the two most feasible nodes.

Evaluation of Feasibility Based Upon 2007 Property Data

The primary contribution that this report makes to existing commercial land use strategies in Brightmoor is the following property data analysis evaluating the *Feasibility* of commercial redevelopment. Essentially, *Feasibility* is a measure how easily property could be acquired and aggregated in the focus area. The specific properties studied were those located near the five recommended nodes of the Doherty plan.

Property values, the number and location of vacant parcels, and ownership condition have a profound influence on the current state commercial land use in Brightmoor and indicate the most sensible clusters of parcels to redevelop as commercial nodes. The dataset used provided details on the following characteristics of the parcels included in each node: median and total assessed values, median and total taxable values, property ownership, vacancy, number of buildings, type of use, and number of active businesses. Each figure has a practical purpose for NDND. Together the data sets will help determine possible next steps for NDND. Knowing the economic *Feasibility* of redeveloping within the focus areas, NDND can begin to explore which parcels to acquire and what to do on the chosen parcels.

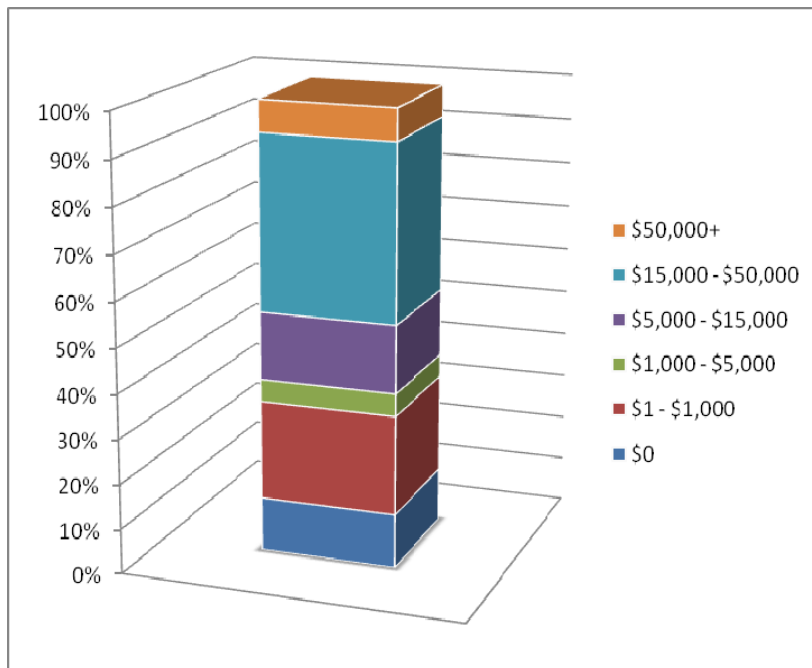
The *Feasibility* of the potential commercial nodes was determined first by considering property values, then available parcels, and finally ownership condition. Property values data were weighted most heavily in the analysis. These numbers provide a cost estimate for aggregating parcels. It is important to note that a parcel's assessed value provided here will likely be different from and oftentimes lesser than the actual appraised value. The number and location of vacant parcels was the next most important consideration. In general, it is less costly to build on vacant parcels. While purchasing costs and taxes still apply, both tend to be less prohibitive

than in the case of occupied parcels. Finally, property ownership data identifies the entity that would need to be contacted to inquire about purchasing a given parcel. It is assumed that those properties already owned by public agencies or NDND are likely easier to aggregate under a single ownership for commercial redevelopment.

Property Values in Brightmoor

Figure 1 outlines the distribution of property values within Brightmoor, while Figure 2 illustrates their location. The vast majority of parcels in Brightmoor are inexpensive. Since 93% of the properties in Brightmoor have assessed values below \$50,000, the data has been sorted in such a way as to focus upon variation in the lower portion of the data range. Parcel boundaries have been removed to more clearly and simply show spatial clustering in the data.

Figure 1 – Distribution of Property Values in Brightmoor



- Approximately 93% of the properties in Brightmoor have current assessed values below \$50,000.
- Approximately 54% of the properties in Brightmoor have current assessed values below \$15,000.
- Approximately 39% of the properties in Brightmoor have current assessed values below \$5,000.
- Approximately 34% of the properties in Brightmoor have current assess values below \$1,000.
- Approximately 12% of the properties in Brightmoor have current assessed values of \$0. Most of these properties are currently owned by the City of Detroit or churches and other non-profit organizations.

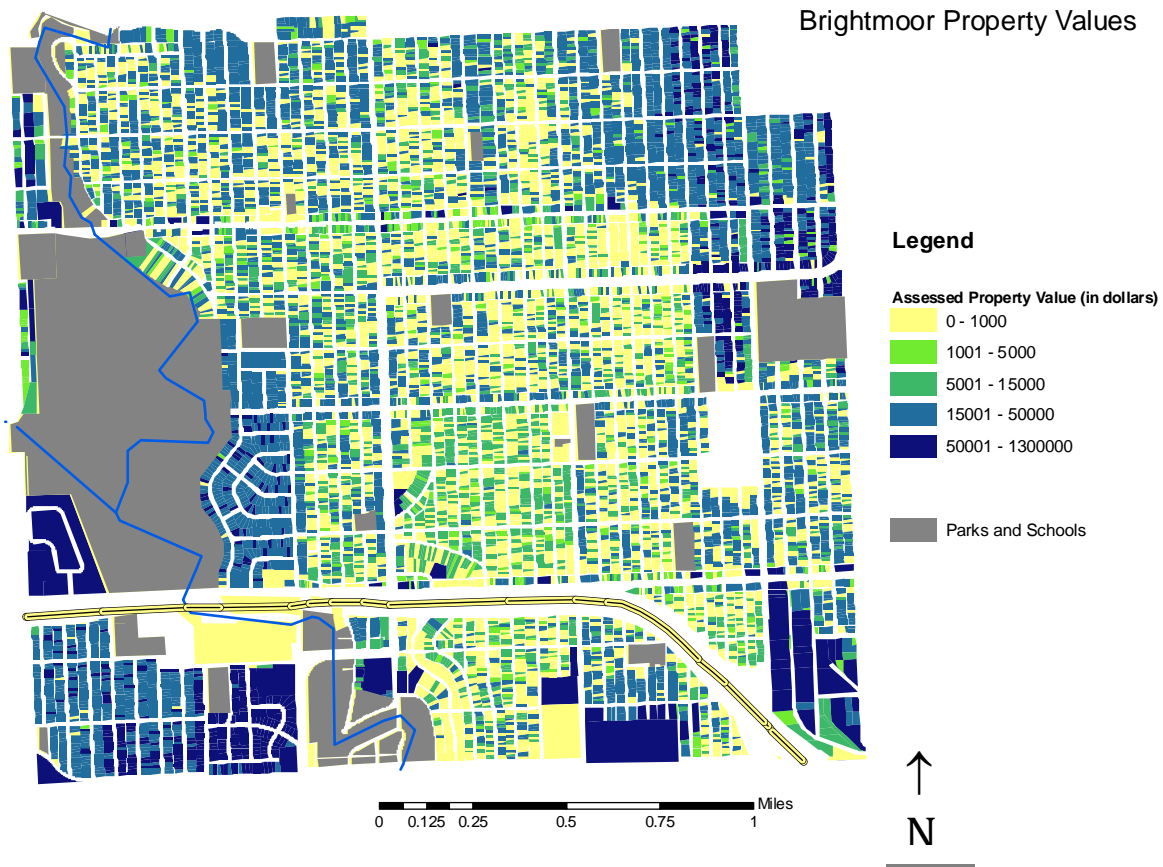


Figure 2 – Map of Property Values in Brightmoor

Property Ownership in Brightmoor

There are 980 publicly-owned properties in the Brightmoor area (about 8%). Each of these is owned either by a department within the City of Detroit, the State of Michigan, or the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. There are 911 properties owned by the various Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development programs (about 7%). The public entities and NDND together own 1,891 properties, or about 15% of the parcels in Brightmoor. Figures 3

and 4 illustrate the distribution and locations of the various parcels owned by the most significant property owners in Brightmoor.

Figure 3 – Significant Property Owners in Brightmoor

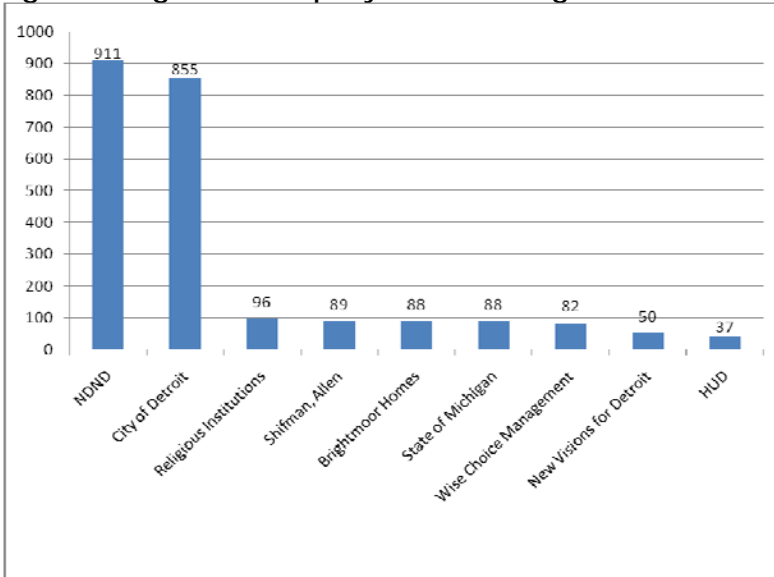
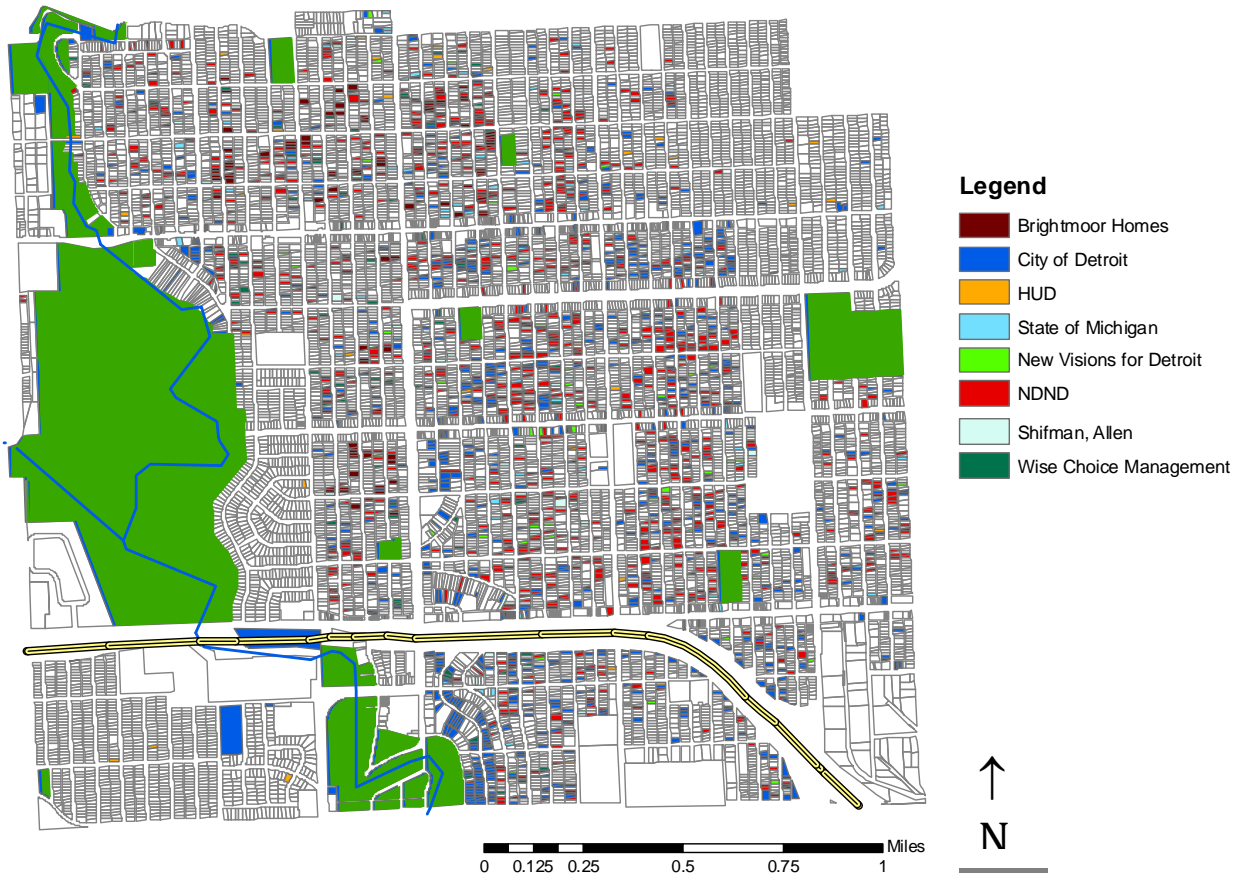


Figure 4 – Map of Significant Property Owners in Brightmoor

Brightmoor Significant Property Owners



There does not appear to be a strong trend in spatial distribution for the ownership of these parcels across the Brightmoor area. This would seem to indicate a lack of focus amongst the property owners listed in terms of aggregating parcels and/or working toward the meaningful redevelopment of specific areas above the individual parcel level. More specifically, those owners who should likely be the most active in working toward revitalizing Brightmoor (public entities and NDND) appear to lack any kind of cohesion or collaboration. This is an important note, because as Galster states, “the neighborhood as a whole affects the wellbeing of each consumer/producer, what happens to that neighborhood is a function of changes [by those

producers/consumers]” (Galster, 2001). In our case, the producers/consumers are property owners, and their decisions will greatly affect the neighborhood’s outcome.

The spatial distribution of these 1,891 parcels reflects a pattern of acquisition that is widely scattered, likely based on which parcels were the easiest to acquire in terms of cost and clean-up. Thus far these scattered sites have failed to catalyze widespread redevelopment. They have become isolated instances of redevelopment in a situation that seems to need a more targeted approach. The successful commercial redevelopment of Brightmoor in any capacity does not seem feasible under the existing scattered approach.

Property owners should be encouraged to more specifically target larger areas for redevelopment. Concentrating redevelopment in certain target locations will consolidate ownership and may even prompt adjacent property owners to redevelop parcels on the surrounding blocks. These conclusions seem to confirm the previous assessment that focusing redevelopment in two primary nodes, one each along Fenkell Ave. and Schoolcraft Rd., is an appropriate immediate strategy for commercial revitalization.

Determining The Study Area Using the Doherty Plan as a Starting Point

The above analysis was repeated for all five potential commercial focus areas to determine where redevelopment would be most *Feasible*. (*Note: See appendix for individual maps and tables each of the 5 potential commercial focus areas.*) The Doherty plan analysis did not specify exact boundaries by parcel, therefore study boundaries were defined according to the proximity of parcels to the locations specified by the Doherty plan and their existing land use. In several instances, adjacent vacant land that appeared to be well positioned for aggregation into the focus areas was also included. (*Note: For the purposes of this report “vacant” refers to parcels that are entirely devoid*

of structures. Parcels with buildings that are empty or abandoned are not included in this figure.) In almost all cases these criteria provided clear and obvious boundaries by which to identify the parcels for examination in each focus area. Figure 5 taken from the Doherty plan illustrates the general locations of the five proposed nodes. Figure 6 illustrates the individual parcels included in this report’s analysis of the five nodes as potential focus areas for commercial redevelopment in Brightmoor.

Figure 5 – Proposed Commercial Node Locations (Doherty et al., 2008)

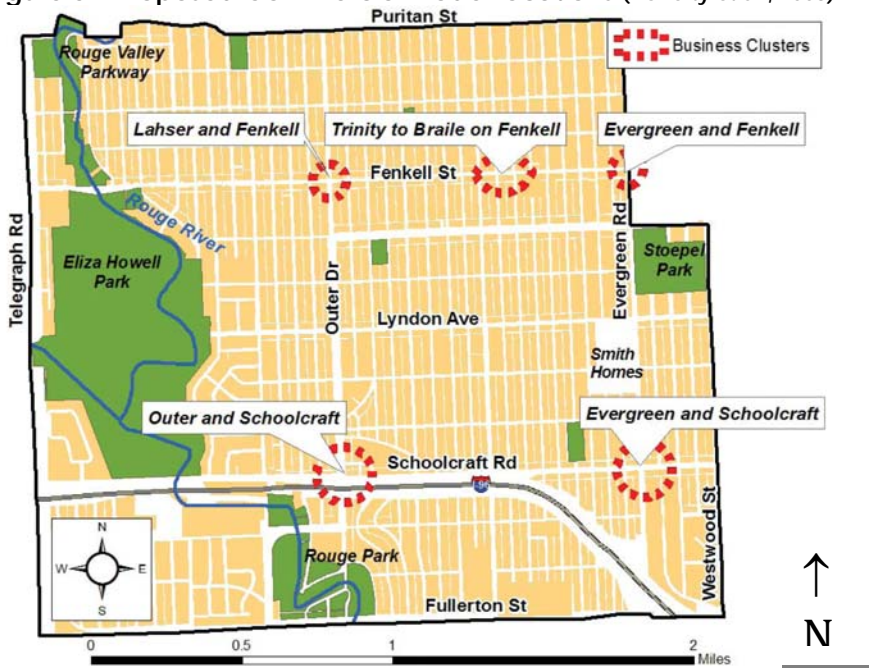
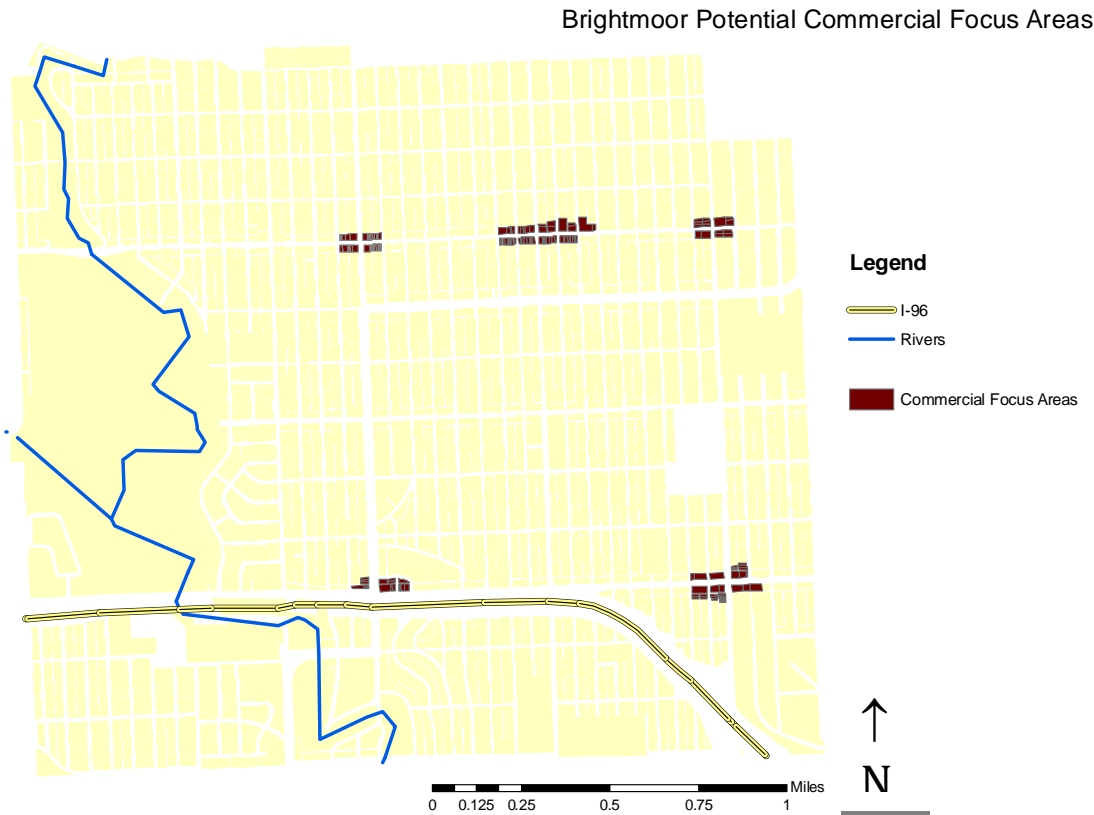


Figure 6 – Parcels Selected for Analysis in the 5 Potential Commercial Focus Areas



Property Values and Ownership in the 5 Potential Commercial Focus Areas

Lahser Rd. and Fenkell Ave.

The intersection of Lahser Rd. and Fenkell Ave. boasts relatively moderate property values and little vacant space. We included 30 parcels in our analysis of this intersection. The parcels located immediately at the intersection are between \$10,000 - \$250,000. The total assessed value of property of the intersection and surrounding area is \$640,464. The median assessed value is \$5,628. Despite a high total assessed value the median value is low due to low-priced adjacent properties. The total taxable value is \$491,249 with a median taxable value of \$3,948. The

parcels have a high taxable value yet a low taxable median for the same reasons that explain the trend in assessed value above. The data set revealed zero vacant parcels along Fenkell Ave. in the relevant focus area. It is possible that vacancies have occurred since 2007, however the total number of vacant parcels is still likely very small in comparison to the other four areas examined. There are several vacant parcels near the intersection along Lahser, though none of them fall within the focus area of analysis. Most of the property in the area is owned by Wise Choice Management or individual private owners. There are twenty total buildings in the focus area. All buildings are assumed to be for commercial use. There are five active businesses.

Evergreen Rd. and Fenkell Ave.

The property around the intersection of Evergreen Rd. and Fenkell Ave. is relatively stable in terms of property value and vacancy. We included 15 properties at this intersection. The property at the intersection is valued between \$10,000 to \$260,000. The total assessed value is \$762,688 and the median assessed value is \$38,886. The total taxable value is \$700,000 and the median taxable value is \$23,897. Given this data it is not surprising that there are relatively few inexpensive parcels and no vacant parcels near this intersection. Nearly all of the properties (87%) are privately-owned residential buildings. There are two commercial buildings at this node and they are both listed as active businesses.

Schoolcraft Rd. and Evergreen Rd.

The intersection of Schoolcraft Road and Evergreen Road has a relatively large amount of variation in terms of property value and vacancy. Thirty-two parcels were included in the analysis of the focus area. The total assessed value of property at this location is \$629,599. The

median value is a remarkably low \$602. The total taxable value is \$846,792 and the median taxable value is \$610. There are 14 vacant parcels in this area. Most of the vacant parcels are not located along Evergreen Rd. or Schoolcraft Rd., but were included in the analysis because they were immediately adjacent to parcels along these roads and thought to be easily aggregated with these parcels. One of the parcels in the area is owned by the City of Detroit, though most are privately-owned by individuals (including some of the vacant parcels). There are 23 buildings in this focus area. Twenty-two of the buildings are commercial and one is residential. Four businesses are listed as active.

Schoolcraft Rd. and Outer Dr.

Eighteen parcels were included in the analysis of the intersection of Schoolcraft Road and Outer Drive. The total assessed value of these parcels is \$569,853 and the median assessed value is \$4,919. Additionally, the total taxable value is \$368,405 and the median taxable value is \$3,739. There are only two vacant parcels in our analysis, yet there are several vacant properties one and two blocks behind Schoolcraft Rd. and along Outer Dr. Nearly all of the parcels are privately owned, including the two vacant properties. One of the parcels is owned by the city. The site hosts 13 buildings of which ten are commercial and three are residential.

Fenkell Ave. between Trinity St. and Braile St.

At this site, our analysis covers parcels along and around Fenkell Ave. between Trinity and Braile. This particular node includes the largest number of parcels, totaling 54 altogether. Subsequently, there is significant variation across parcels' property values. The total assessed value of the properties is \$717,100 and the median assessed value is \$7,777. There are no vacant

properties in the study area, though there are a substantial number of vacant properties in the blocks south of Fenkell Ave. Although, none of the parcels are listed as vacant, most of the parcels directly along Fenkell Ave. contain buildings that are unoccupied. Depending upon the condition of these buildings they may provide opportunity for rehabilitation and reuse. The total taxable value of the properties is \$537,052 while the median taxable value is \$5,649. Several of the properties are owned by the City of Detroit and NDND though most are held by individual property owners. Forty-three buildings are located in this section. One property is residential and the rest are commercial. According to the Doherty plan, new residential units were constructed within this node since this data set was compiled. A current data set would reveal more properties listed as residential use. Finally, there are seven active businesses.

Narrowing the Commercial Focus

Selecting Two Nodes for Redevelopment

Just as the *Feasibility* of each potential commercial focus area was analyzed, a similar assessment was made to determine the *Viability* of each area according to the Doherty plan's criteria. Here the criteria will be established and a description of the viability of each of the two best nodes will follow. The Doherty plan offers four criteria that signify the best choice for a commercial node; 1) daily car traffic, 2) public transportation access, 3) existing businesses, and 4) the amount of vacant properties (Doherty, 2008). Together, these criteria evaluate the potential *Viability* of the commercial nodes based upon visibility to consumers, volume of traffic, ease of access, and the influence of surrounding uses. Our selection of the best two nodes was determined by analyzing these criteria and our own assessment of *Feasibility* according to property values and ownership data.

Based upon both our *Viability* and *Feasibility* assessments, two focus areas are recommended for the pursuit of commercial redevelopment:

- 1) Fenkell Ave. between Trinity St. and Braile St., and
- 2) the intersection of Schoolcraft Rd. and Evergreen Rd.

In terms of *Viability*, these nodes exhibit the greatest promise of economic success because each boasts a strong presence of the four key criteria. In terms of *Feasibility*, these nodes provide the greatest opportunity for an aggregation of parcels because of the high number of low-valued parcels and the presence of vacant parcels and/or unoccupied buildings. In addition, these locations are consistent with previous recommendations made by both the 2004 Draft Master Plan and the 2008 Doherty plan, therefore these site selections do not represent a significant departure from existing thinking and recommendations. Instead, they simply further narrow the focus of commercial redevelopment strategy. It is clear that the current distressed physical and economic condition of Brightmoor calls for a more limited approach to commercial redevelopment strategy. Below is a viability assessment for the two selected nodes and a summary revisiting their relative feasibility.

Fenkell Ave. between Trinity St. and Braile St. – Viability

The Doherty plan states that Fenkell Ave. has historically been the most important commercial area in Brightmoor (Doherty, 2008). DDOT Bus Route 18 services this strip every half hour offering excellent public transportation access. Although Doherty does not include the daily car traffic for the area, one can assume this figure lies somewhere between the high numbers recorded at Fenkell's intersections with Lahser and Evergreen, 13,000 and 19,000 cars per day respectively (Doherty, 2008). Daily car and bus traffic can be expected to produce higher

foot traffic and consequently more eyes on the street providing retail visibility and safety. There are seven active businesses within this area. These include a new post office, the Thea Bowman Community Health Center, new housing units (Trinity Estates by Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church), and will be the relocation site of the NDND office headquarters. The site also hosts "two of the most architecturally significant structures in Brightmoor," Paulie's Hardware and the Old Guardian Bank buildings. The existence of stable and relatively successful buildings provides a good launching point for new businesses. The existence of stable businesses increases new businesses' opportunity for visibility and patronage.

Fenkell Ave. between Trinity St. and Braile St. – Feasibility

Many of the parcels in this focus area are owned by NDND and the City of Detroit, which means they are already likely candidates for redevelopment, and could be easily aggregated. This location also has a high variety of assessed property values ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000. Many of the parcels could be purchased and redeveloped at relatively low cost. While there are no vacant parcels in the area, this site has the highest number of commercial buildings (42), many of which were determined to be unoccupied during a site visit and could provide an opportunity for rehabilitation for new businesses.

The Intersection of Schoolcraft Rd. and Evergreen Rd. – Viability

The second selection of our sites is the intersection of Schoolcraft Rd. and Evergreen Rd. The amount of traffic at this site is quite high with 120,000 cars passing through on the highway everyday (Doherty et al., 2008). This site is also serviced by DDOT Bus Route number 43 on Schoolcraft Rd. The intersection's proximity to I-96 has the potential to bring significant outside

patronage to Brightmoor. Again, the high frequency of auto and pedestrian traffic increase this location's retail visibility and safety. This node is already an established hub of commercial activity. There are four active businesses at this location: two gas stations, a liquor store, and Sonny's Hamburgers restaurant. The Doherty plan indicates that these businesses are heavily frequented. New businesses would benefit from existing businesses' established patterns of foot traffic.

The Intersection of Schoolcraft Rd. and Evergreen Rd. – Feasibility

This intersection boasts the highest assessed property value of the nodes analyzed (\$846,792) indicating some stability in the area. However, a high number of the parcels are assessed at very low values and provide the opportunity for a relatively easy aggregation of parcels. In addition, all of the vacant parcels are located one block behind Schoolcraft Rd. and therefore will not adversely affect the appearance of commercial storefronts in the short term. Instead, vacant parcels are an asset providing long-term potential for expanded development. This site also has the second highest number of commercial buildings. Many of these buildings are large and were used for industrial purposes. Subsequently, these buildings have the potential to host larger commercial enterprises or community centers. One of these buildings in particular has already been converted into the New Beginnings Genesis Bible Christian Center (Doherty et al., 2008).

Next Steps

The analysis completed for this report is only a beginning that can serve as a foundation for future assessments and strategizing. NDND and public entities can use the detailed maps and

tables found in the Appendix to continue analysis of the two selected best nodes at the individual parcel level. Before implementing a commercial strategy, these agencies must further explore the *Feasibility* and *Viability* of redeveloping individual parcels for new commercial use. Further explorations must include inquiring about actual appraised values of parcels, determining which clusters of parcels can be easily aggregated, investigating costs of rehabilitating existing buildings in decent condition and costs of demolition for structures in worse condition that need to be torn down. In addition, parcels slated for redevelopment should show signs of commercial viability in terms of the type and condition of surrounding uses. The following set of visionary recommendations represents some of the big-picture decisions NDND can start to ponder after doing a thorough parcel-by-parcel analysis.

Visionary Recommendations

The intersection of Evergreen Rd. and Schoolcraft Rd., and Fenkell Ave. between Trinity St. and Braile St. have been identified because of their *Feasibility* and *Viability*. Each is representative of the last centers of activity in Brightmoor. NDND can capitalize on this fact using design and aesthetics to establish the two nodes as gateways into and out of the community. This gateway into Brightmoor needs approachability and a small-town feel. For example, the Fenkell Ave. focus area is an ideal location to create a cohesive and contiguous landscape pattern. Consistent landscaping could provide local businesses with a more intimate face from the street, as well providing an identity for this focus area as a small neighborhood village with lots of places to walk and sit. Improving storefronts and pedestrian access contributes not only to security but also encourages care of open space and offers an invitation to visitors (Deitrick and Ellis, 2004). The vision for this node is to create a consistent visual

connection through landscaping. Different buildings with varying conditions exist along this focus area. Those in the worst condition either need to be demolished or rehabilitated to the point that all visible sides are be warm and inviting. These efforts have the potential to create more comprehensive landscaping that is inviting to the eye from the sidewalk or the street. Restoring a natural continuous feel to these areas will help to overcome the stigma associated with years of commercial decline. Once perceptions begin to change, new businesses are more likely to be tempted to come and be a part of the community.

Commercial redevelopment in the selected focus areas should be driven by an inclusive public participation process. The key to any redevelopment process is to capitalize on community power to create a community neighborhood plan (Deitrick and Ellis, 2004). Established neighborhood organizations, like the Brightmoor Alliance, can be at the forefront of this process utilizing community power and cohesiveness to encourage residents of Brightmoor to express their wants and needs. It is crucial that resident voices and concerns be incorporated into any neighborhood commercial revitalization strategy. NDND could take cues from other community development corporations (CDCs) that have successfully conducted participatory planning efforts. For example, Murphy and Cunningham praise the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) for its dedication to participatory planning during the redevelopment of Boston's severely distressed Roxbury neighborhood. DSNI was able to overcome barriers to participation CDCs commonly encounter in central city neighborhoods to form a "resident-directed planning committee" and keep all residents informed of committee decisions and actions regarding redevelopment in the community (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003).

The basic vision for both nodes is simply to clean, organize, and provide natural consistency among the standing structures. Appropriate development of these identified focus

areas through a transparent, neighborhood-driven, community development process and improvements to the existing patterns of landscaping and physical organization could provide the Brightmoor community with two vibrant commercial nodes that residents would be proud to call their neighborhood centers. These two areas, like much of Brightmoor, are in need of reclamation and an effort to spruce up storefronts. The current harsh landscape of dilapidated buildings and vacant parcels is not conducive towards attracting consumers and community. It is evident that great community design and development can improve a neighborhood (Deitrick and Ellis, 2004). Change is possible as long as development is planned with poise and compassion for the community.

Conclusion

After careful consideration of two primary criteria, *Viability* (based on information in the 2008 Doherty plan) and *Feasibility* (based on available 2007 City of Detroit property data), this report finds that the most appropriate strategy for commercial redevelopment would be to focus efforts upon the commercial areas at the intersection of Evergreen Rd. and Schoolcraft Rd. and along Fenkell Ave. between Trinity St. and Braile St. Given the existing economic and physical condition of Brightmoor, limiting redevelopment efforts to these two areas is a more practical and achievable approach than past recommendations made by the City of Detroit 2004 Draft Master Plan and the 2008 Doherty plan.

Embracing this strategy means that NDND and public entities need to rethink their current model of acquiring scattered parcels based solely upon ease of acquisition and instead focus efforts in the two identified areas. These property owners need to pursue a strategy of highly targeted investment in order to catalyze new development as opposed to isolated instances

of redevelopment. This new approach does not necessarily rule out redevelopment efforts in other parcels, nor does it rule out the eventual development of the other 3 commercial nodes recommended in the Doherty plan. Instead it places the immediate focus of redevelopment efforts upon the two areas identified. Specifically targeting these two areas for redevelopment provides the best opportunity for success in the short term. The next step for NDND is to begin *Feasibility* and *Viability* assessments at the individual parcel level for all parcels included in the two best focus areas to determine what can and should be done to revitalize commercial land use in these locations.

In redeveloping the two commercial focus areas, NDND should be actively involved in leading a transparent, neighborhood-driven, community participation process. Landscape improvements, building rehabilitation, and streetscape improvements should be pursued if at all possible to help overcome the dilapidated physical condition of these areas and encourage commercial development. Though no clear solution for comprehensive commercial redevelopment in Brightmoor is immediately apparent, these preliminary recommendations are offered because they are believed to provide the greatest chance for success in realizing a tangible commercial revitalization.

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Appendix

The Appendix includes the tables and graphs developed for each of the five potential commercial focus areas analyzed, as well as, some tables and graphs of information compiled for the Brightmoor study area as a whole. All of the data presented here and discussed with regard to “*Feasibility*” in the report were directly developed from a GIS dataset provided in confidentiality from Professor Margaret Dewar at the University of Michigan. The dataset was composed of 2007 property data from The City of Detroit Planning and Development Department and The City of Detroit Assessor’s Office (Finance Department, Assessment Division).