



City of Howell Consolidated Economic Development Strategy

There has been a great deal of study and planning resulting in several documents that guide economic development in the City. Our current Master Plan was adopted in 2015 and the current Strategic Plan for the Howell Main Street DDA was adopted in October 2014. There are a variety of tools available to a developer, depending on the project, to incentivize projects that meet the goals of those two documents. The City's economic development partner, Ann Arbor SPARK, will assist a developer and the City to bring projects to fruition.

Downtown Howell

The Downtown Development Authority is focused on small businesses, events to draw people to downtown, and transformative projects. Our Main Street was selected as a 2018 recipient of the Great American Main Street award, given to communities whose success exemplifies the comprehensive, preservation-based commercial revitalization promoted by the Main Street America program. The current Strategic Goals guiding the organization are:

- Manage and expand the downtown business mix by retaining existing retail, restaurant, and entertainment and service businesses and help them expand and actively recruit complimentary new businesses, to expand our nightlife and restaurant niches.
- Make the downtown business district thrive by offering year-round events and activities that the public truly wants.
- Expand the organizational budget by \$100,000 through a comprehensive private sector fundraising effort; communicate regularly about the excitement in downtown and involve hundreds of volunteers in our work.
- Promote our built heritage and continue to foster restoration, revitalization, beautification and celebration of our downtown streetscape, green spaces, and historic buildings.

Successes under these Strategic Goals include the creation of biannual a food truck rally and food truck Tuesdays in the summer, attraction of new commercial tenants downtown including Birch and Elm, and Aberrant Ales, and restoration of the First National Bank and Uptown Coffeehouse buildings through partnerships with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

The Main Street program utilizes a committee system to direct the work of the board and volunteers. These committees, Business Development, Outreach, Promotion, and Design each focus on one of the Strategic Goals listed above. The Main Street DDA plan has a series of specific projects for each of the committees. A copy of the plan can be found at <https://www.downtownhowell.org/s/2014-Adopted-Strategic-Plan.pdf>.

Commercial/Industrial Areas Outside Downtown

The Master Plan for the City of Howell that was adopted in 2015 lays out Guiding Values for growth and change in the Community. The document includes five small area plans for the potential future development in the commercial and industrial areas outside of the Downtown, which includes:

- West Grand River
- East Grand River
- South Michigan
- Northeast/M-59
- Loop Road

Each area has unique assets, opportunities, and challenges, so rather than overall goals and objectives covering the whole City, Howell opted to be more specific as to what should be preserved, created, or changed in each area. These individual Small Area Plans outline what the City wants to see for each area in the future. A copy of the Comprehensive Plan can be found at http://www.cityofhowell.org/Howell_Master_Plan_2015.pdf. The City also completed a Community profile as a separate document

Development Tools and Incentives

The City has utilized a variety of State authorized economic development incentives in the past. We continue to support their use for projects that meet the goals the Main Street DDA Strategic Plan and/or the City's Comprehensive Plan. The following are programs that have been previously used successfully in the City previously or are set up to be utilized immediately.

Brownfield Redevelopment Authority – Howell has a BRA district to support redevelopment of former industrial sites that have potential environmental contamination. Projects are able to recover tax revenues to pay for qualified costs in a redevelopment project, after approval of the brownfield plan.

Commercial Rehabilitation Act – The City established a CRA district that covers properties in the South Michigan Avenue corridor, in the area between Mason Road and Interstate 96. The law allows for tax abatements on commercial properties for qualifying projects and the corridor is one that the City is focused on redeveloping in the near-to-mid term.

PA 198 – Public Act 198 allows for tax abatements on new industrial investments. The act is designed for manufacturing or research and development facilities. The City has developed a matrix for approval, making the process for requesting this type of abatement very straightforward.

Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act – Downtown Howell has many historic buildings that the City and our residents would like to see preserved. The use of OPRA has enabled the City to support the rehabilitation of four different buildings through two projects that brought the underutilized buildings to their historic glory.

Economic Development Partnership

The Economic Development Council of Livingston County partners with Ann Arbor SPARK to implement comprehensive economic development services within the City.

While Howell handles community development, Ann Arbor SPARK helps the City with business development. SPARK is able to bring resources to the table that Howell cannot on our own. Our partnership includes:

- SPARK meets with businesses on behalf of the City of Howell and connects them with State and Local resources to assist them with expansion or attraction projects that are located within the City.
- Multiple municipalities in Livingston County utilize the services of SPARK, allowing for collaboration on economic development efforts and continued promotion of Business Friendly practices in the County.
- Livingston County has an extremely low unemployment rate and companies are often looking for employees. Ann Arbor SPARK helps by connecting employers to talent resources, utilizing Michigan Works!, local talent agencies, Community Ventures, or any other organization necessary to bring the needed talent to Howell businesses.
- Ann Arbor SPARK will aggregate data from a number of different sources to aid in business development. SPARK will provide companies with market data to assist in site selection, wage-data to assist with talent retention and attraction, and will help them find any other relevant metrics.
- In order to foster entrepreneurship and accelerate start-up companies, the EDCLC developed the CEED micro-loan, a flexible, low-interest loan that assists companies who are turned down by traditional lenders. In addition to the CEED microloan, SPARK will help connect entrepreneurs with other low-cost resources, incentives, and opportunities to obtain capital.

