

FINAL REPORT

M-28 CORRIDOR VISUAL ENHANCEMENT PLAN

HOUGHTON

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The US-2 Visual
Enhancement Planning
Project Partnership

Funded by:

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Introduction and Project Description

Introduction

Views from the road often form our first and most lasting impressions of a region and a community. What we see through the windshield can make us feel welcomed and at ease or uncomfortable and threatened. What can communities in the Upper Peninsula do to ensure that both residents and visitors feel welcomed and encouraged to stop?

Visual enhancement planning helps a community re-consider appearances from the perspective of a visitor. What attracts people to your town and local businesses? What encourages people to stay and enjoy your community's recreational resources? What keeps them coming back?

In 2003, the People and Land Program of W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided a grant to the Land Information Access Association and several project partners for the development of "visual enhancement plans" for many sections of the US-2 and M-134 corridors. The primary goal of the project was the preparation of a usable and well-supported visual enhancement plan for the US-2 and M-134 highway corridors, with a particular focus on critical community and tourist areas. The project also focused on motivating and supporting local and regional efforts to reverse on-going deterioration and preserve existing visual assets. In 2004, this effort continued with a focus on communities along the northern tier of the Upper Peninsula.

The project partners used a series of regional forums, press releases, newsletters and a web-site to introduce the concept of visual enhancement, describe why it is important for tourism and economic development, and discuss opportunities for communities to receive planning and implementation assistance. Building on the community participation and excitement generated from our initial outreach efforts, we invited several communities to participate in free, focused planning activities. This plan and the graphics and recommendations contained herein are the result of those activities.

What is Visual Enhancement?

Historically, highway design and construction has been oriented to concerns about safety, structure and cost. These areas remain foremost in the minds of new highway designers, as they should. However, their preeminence often eclipses another equally important design value - Visual Quality. The visual qualities of a roadway have important ramifications for drivers and communities along the corridor. A driver's view from the road often forms their entire impression of a region and informs their decisions about where to turn, where to stop and how to ultimately arrive at their destination. The visual qualities of a roadway can keep drivers informed, interested and alert or, conversely, confused, bored and tired.

When assessing existing roadways, visual qualities must be addressed from the standpoint of enhancements. What can be done to enhance the visual qualities of a particular roadway is a



community decision which should be addressed at the local level. However, some activities typically associated with visual enhancement are

- Adding bike or pedestrian facilities
- Limiting curb cuts and providing attractive, easy to follow directional signage
- Adding attractive landscaping or interesting street level features
- Preserving, rehabilitating or renovating historic structures
- Preserving scenic vistas or agricultural land
- Cleaning up of blighted areas
- Establishing design guidelines for signage, landscaping, materials, siting, etc.

Why Visual Enhancement?

Beyond the specific benefits of attractive streetscapes and safer and more efficient travel, the benefits of visual enhancement run much deeper. More attractive, interesting and informative transportation corridors can have dramatic impacts on community pride and economic development. Specifically, communities undertaking enhancement projects have seen:

- higher tax revenues
- increased tourism revenue
- increased private investment and new business creation
- increased employment
- increased interest in community history and civic engagement



Existing Conditions – Summary of Field Analysis

Houghton, Michigan was one of five communities selected to receive planning assistance as part of the 2004 Upper Peninsula Visual Enhancement Planning Project. Houghton is located in Houghton County near the base of the Keweenaw Peninsula in the Northwestern Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

The subject of this study and plan is an approximately ½ mile section of the M-26 corridor from the west city limit into the town of Houghton (see Figure 1). The analysis of existing conditions presented in this section is a summary of notes taken during field evaluations done by a professional landscape architect.

Overview and Approaches

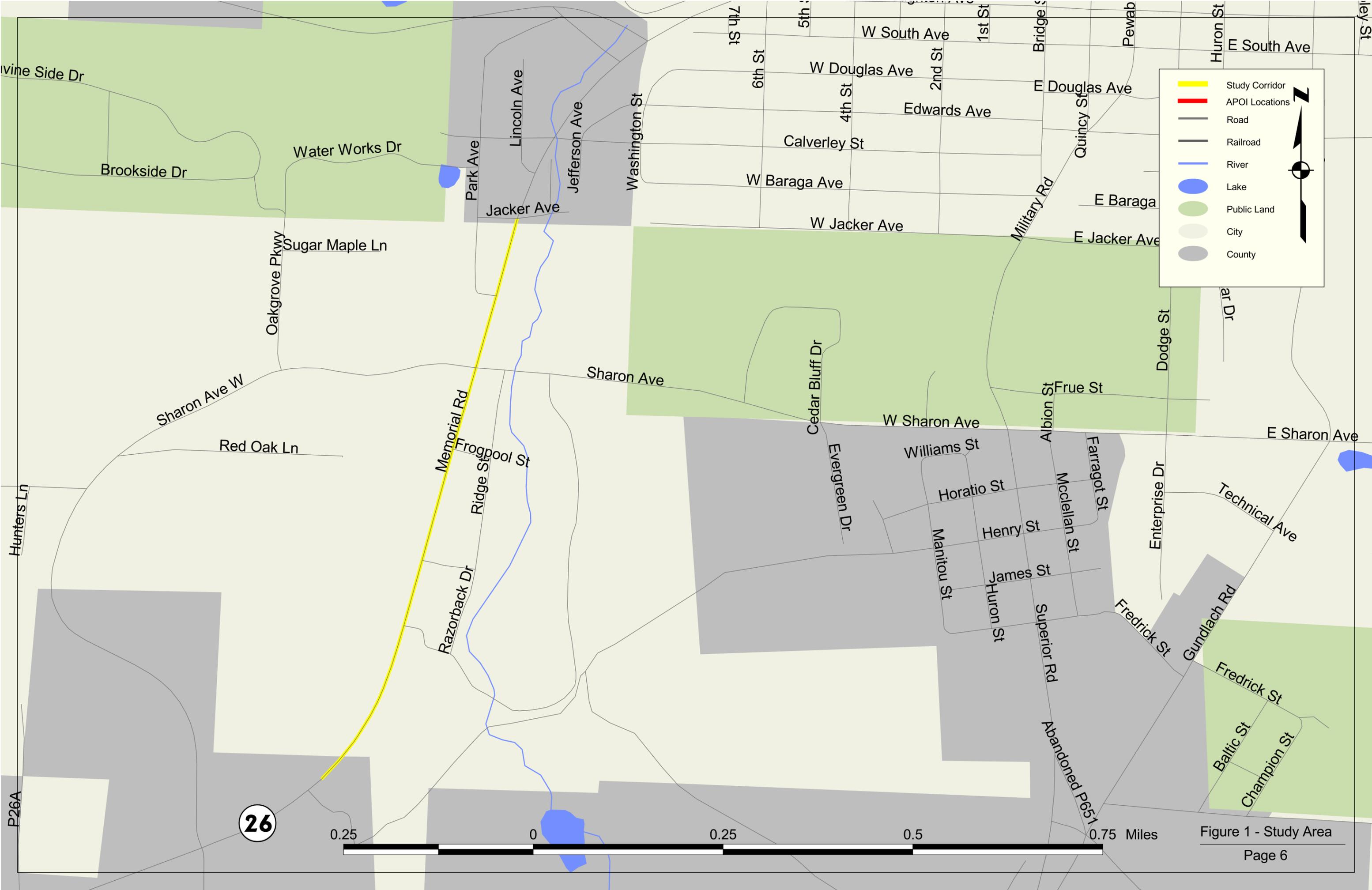
The study corridor is a newer commercial corridor, approximately ½ mile in length. The corridor appears somewhat typical; however, relative to many other U.P. commercial corridors, the study corridor is actually better executed and controlled. The main, and perhaps valid, criticism might be that it could be Anywhere, U.S.A. It is distinguished by excellent, long views north to Hancock and its mine structures. While the area is primarily developed, more businesses off the road frontage will be added and existing ones will undergo expansion and upgrades. Visual Enhancement efforts will not change the nature of land use along this corridor, but could refine the appearance and help bring back a sense of regional character.

Approaching the study corridor from the South, the roadway curves past a commercial/ retail area which includes an auto dealership and the Copper County Mall, a retail establishment set well back from road. Further along, the road descends through a cut section which frames the road way in green and serves as a nice break or portal to the city. Through the break, the city limits and a distant ridge view unfold.

Study Corridor

Roadway/Right-of-Way/Access

The study corridor is five lanes with curb and gutter. Traffic is approximately 14,100 A.D.T. The speed limit along the study corridor is 45 M.P.H.; however, a constant downhill to Sharon Ave. has traffic regularly exceeding the limit. The traffic, speed and lack of buffering trees/greenery make the corridor, adjacent parking and businesses seem noisy. The center lane is restricted in parts, but a boulevard is not feasible due to heavy winter snow.



	Study Corridor
	APOI Locations
	Road
	Railroad
	River
	Lake
	Public Land
	City
	County



26

Figure 1 - Study Area



The Right-of-Way is wide and varying with location due to grading. Approximate R.O.W. widths:

- 150' east of center line @ Wal-Mart
- 150' - 350' west of c.l. @ Rex
- 100' east and west @ Frog Pool Lane to Sharon Ave.

Many of the intersections along the study corridor lack definition.

Views

Traveling north on the M-26 study corridor, the views are dominated by distant Hancock Ridge, a dramatic and pleasant sight. The commercial aspects of the corridor are less obvious and not the defining feature. Downhill views to the east between Frog Pool Lane and Sharon Ave. are cluttered (parking lots, roofs, distant tall signs). There is no place to stop and enjoy the distant view of Hancock Ridge.

Traveling south, the drive is primarily uphill and the pavement ahead and adjacent ditches/banks dominate the view. This direction appears more commercial and less attractive: The hilltop above Walmart stands out.

Roadside Streetscape

The sidewalks along the study corridor are adjacent to the curb and the significant traffic of the roadway. Walking this close to traffic is not pleasant or comfortable. There is several feet of bare earth between the walk and grass and there are no walking connections to the many businesses along the route. There are no streetlights although the city has a prototype for custom poles and fixtures.

Overhead utility lines and poles are prominent between Frog Pool Lane and Sharon Ave. on the east side at the base of the slope (R.O.W. line). Deep ditches are present on the west side with erosion and mine rock. These seem difficult to maintain and are not attractive. Banks from several raised parking area (west) and other roadside slopes are also covered with mine rock. There is some unmaintained brushy growth in the ditches as well. Distant cut slopes behind the west businesses (with partial erosion control cover) appear stark.

Parking along the study corridor is set back from road and raised on west side and sunken on the east side. Most of the business parking is front yard and rarely screened. There are vehicle displays along the edge of and into the R.O.W. on the west side. The large commercial lots are generally unbroken expanse of paving with no islands or greenery. Access is generally well-controlled with minimal curb cuts and some use of backage road loops with indirect access.

The structures present along the study corridor are generally consistent with franchise architecture. There are several metal buildings with long, blank sidewalls seen prominently from the road. There is no visible use of regional materials or heritage styles. Blight is not present.

Commercial signs feature prominently in the view along the corridor with several large, tall signs at Taystee, Taco Bell and other businesses. There are also temporary, moveable signs present in the R.O.W. There are no billboards (not allowed).

A Community Welcome sign is present just beyond the green break. The sign is attractive but cluttered. The sign's backdrop is the Wal-Mart parking lot. There is also a community service club



sign past the welcome sign which is cluttered and unattractive. Directional signage is not present on M-26. The City has attractive signs planned for the intersections. Visitor information is not available along the corridor.

Landscaping is scattered, non-existent or un-maintained along the study corridor. Along the east R.O.W., the tree plantings on the slope are leaning. The existing trees in the R.O.W. are deciduous and have little or (for many months) no screening effect. There is no screening of parking areas or landscaping to soften views of blank building walls. The slopes on either side of the roadway are challenging to plan. There seems to be very little landscaping on private land (landscape ordinance?).



Community Input – Notes from Community Meeting

City of Houghton M-26 West

Visual Enhancement

Steering Committee Meeting

Monday May 17, 2004

Vision 2024- We Picture This

Landscaping

- Large tree islands to break up parking areas and direct traffic flow
- Landscaping along roadsides to soften the visual impact of stores
- Dirt slopes vegetated
- Trees (not too big – bushes)
- Trees lining the roadway
- Natural landscaping and wildflowers
- Flowers along sidewalks
- Landscaping around commercial signs
- Median down middle of M-26 landscaped with flowers
- Slopes covered with vegetation (No bare hill sides)
- Frontage roads with trees as a buffer from highway
- Retain as much existing vegetation as possible (Trees added where that was not done)
- Sidewalk and green buffer zone with trees
- Winter view (Evergreens)
- Evergreen trees between highway and parking lots
- No mine rock
- Landscaping that is easy to maintain
- Lighted trees for winter

Limit to Signs

- No Bill Boards
- No Billboards allowed – Limit sign height and size
- Better control of signage in terms of size and lighting (Zoning ordinance)
- Get rid of tall sign on corner of Sharon and M-26 by Pizza Hut
- No tall signs (>15 feet?)
- More attractive signs (None above rooftops) (Wood and stone instead of plastic)
- Shared signage
- Attractive signage



- Signage and lighting that look well in winter and summer

Views

- Light up the Quincy Mine Shaft at night (Flood light Quincy Mine)
- Better view from Quincy Hill overlook
- Excess lighting reduced (Down Directed)
- Recreate scenic view from Hancock Hill
- “Rest Area” – Viewing and picture taking location on M-26
- Remove or disguise used car presence along corridor
- Use enclosed pipe instead of drainage ditch on West side

Bike and Pedestrian Access

- Add benches, awnings
- Alternate transportation paths- i.e. Golf Carts
- Safe Biking, walking path from Houghton to Mall area and beyond
- Cooperation of commercial interests

Welcome and Information Signs

- Houghton welcome sign (Established 1858? –Home of Michigan Tech University, Quincy.....)
- Tourist information signage i.e. portage canal ¼ mile – Mount Ripley Ski Hill elevation: _____, Downtown Houghton ¼ mile, Quincy Mine established: _____
- Events billboard
- Nicer welcome to Houghton sign with plantings

Parking Lot Design

- Parking lots are not seas of pavement but have attractive landscaping on islands
- Parking lots allow safe pedestrian access
- Green area sized to accept snow removal (At expense of parking!!)
- Parking lots behind buildings
- Lesser amounts of driveways to highway
- Minimum driveways off highway

Lighting

- Consistent lighting
- Control of street lighting
- Nicer fixtures
- More attractive lighting
- Lighting with a mining/historic theme and protect the night sky



Current Conditions/Issues/Visual Invaders

- Billboards
- Mine Rock
- Broken Pavement
- Used Car lots – Parking on grass
- Trash (McDonalds cups, boxes etc. bottles and caps)
- Bare hillsides
- Large/tall signs
- Sign with unused spaces
- Open ditches
- Erosion of hillsides
- Grey concrete boxes
- Parking lots
- Unattractive building facades
- Store front designs
- “Off the Shelf” franchise architecture
- Pole buildings without attractive facades (wood, brick, stone would be nice)
- Five lanes of traffic
- Varied landscaping (not only lawn)
- Snow banks (especially in late winter/early spring)
- Access Roads—Traffic
- Temporary signage (e.g., sales events)
- Lack of directional signage (center lane purpose?)

Roadblocks

- Hospitality
- Progress versus blight

How do we get there?

- Publicity (Newspaper)
- Awards
- Plan → Vision → Developers
- Negative and positive image display (Pictures)
- TIF funding
- University and Ski Hill Promotion/Campaign
- Sign ordinance
- Interaction with businesses
- Present designs to businesses to build enthusiasm
- Don't shame businesses
- Invite businesses to planning meetings during early stages
- Stress the importance of a Chamber business locator
- Involve the Houghton Business Association
- Directional signage is a piece of the puzzle
- Promotion of six things people like about the Keewenaw



Theme

- Historical but Progressive



Suggested Improvements

The problems and issues mentioned during the community input session were grouped and then prioritized by the community members present. They are listed below in decreasing order of importance. This section will offer suggested improvements in each category and improvements are depicted generally on the map in Figure 2.

- Landscaping
- Sign Controls
- Views; protect, enhance
- Walks
- Community & Directional Signs
- Parking Mitigation
- Lighting

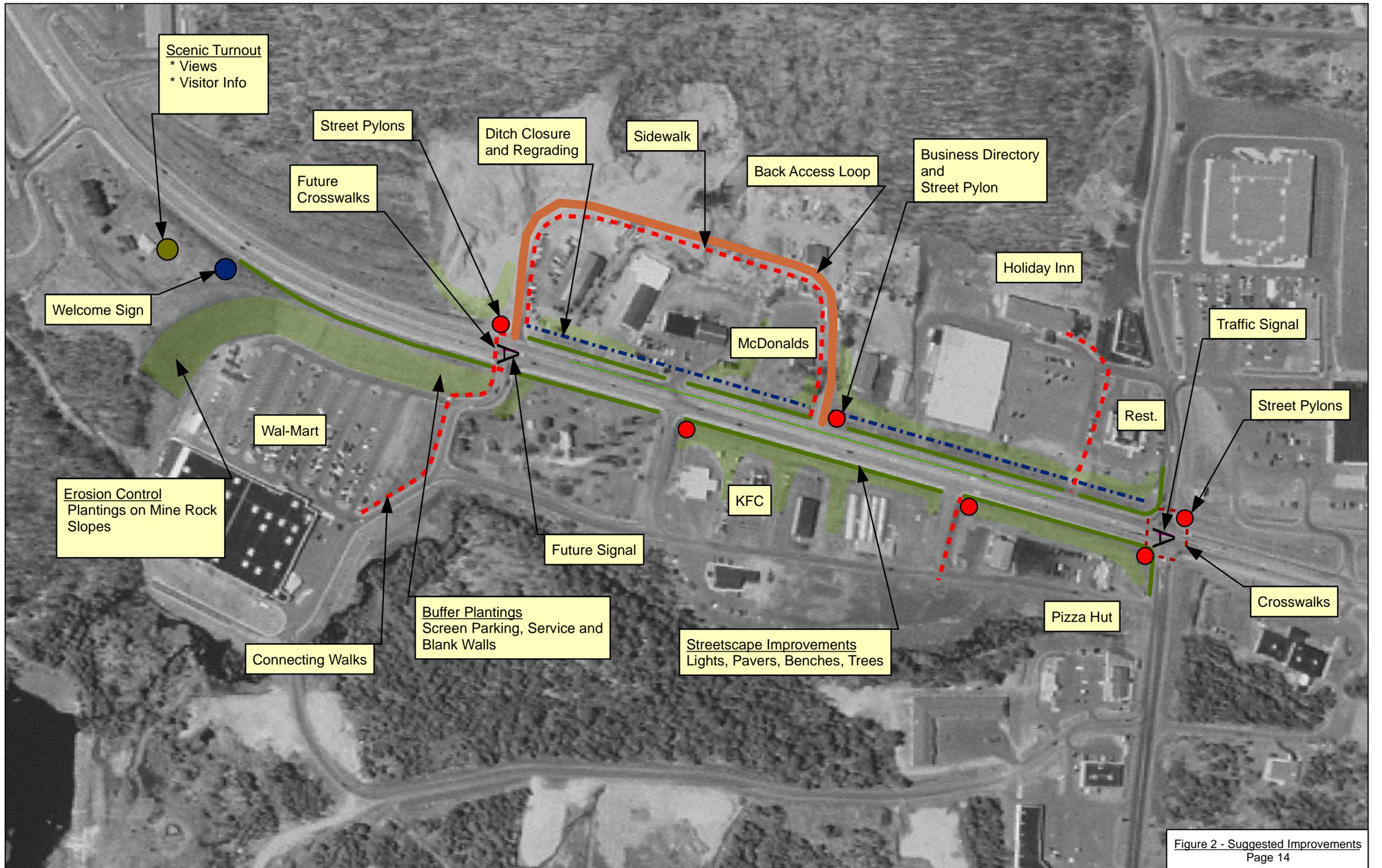
Landscaping

The ditches present along the west side of the corridor are very steep and hard to maintain. These should be filled to create gradual swales with reduced bank heights. Once filled, they should be planted with lawn and hardy native trees, shrubs and wildflowers and maintained. Where possible, the mine rock along banks should be replaced with groundcover. It may be necessary and desirable to use retaining walls in some cases.

Within the M-26 corridor R.O.W., much more landscaping is needed. More roadside trees, especially evergreens should be used to soften views of blank walls and utility lines. On the east side, the leaning trees should be leveled and rebraced. Large unbroken expanses of parking should be screened by plantings near the top of the slope. Focal plantings should be used at intersections, near directional signs and at new welcome signs. Outside of the R.O.W., mounded evergreen shrubs should be used to soften and screen views of parking areas and to highlight/soften the bases of commercial signs. Deciduous and evergreen tree and shrub plantings should also be used along side lots to screen blank building walls. City planners should review the ordinances for landscape requirements.

Commercial Signage

Signs feature prominently in the current windshield view of the study corridor. The city of Houghton should review/tighten current controls regarding size, height, number and lighting to ensure that this does not become a significant problem. Specific suggestions would be to control the use of moveable signs and auto displays at or in the R.O.W. The use of display terraces for automobile or other outdoor products would be one solution. Also, the city should consider the use of common style and regional materials in future signs. Older non-conforming or derelict signs should be removed and newer signs should be grouped.





Views

The city should consider the use of overlay zoning for viewshed protection. The existing green break or portal between the mall and Wal-Mart should be protected as it provides a nice dramatic entrance to the city. The views toward Hancock Ridge should be emphasized with a scenic turnout at the hilltop south of the city limit along the east side. Access could be provided via the mall entry and the turnout should include visitor information with a kiosk, map and interpretive display (mine or mining?).

Walks/Pathways

The crosswalk at Sharon Ave. should be improved and crosswalks should be added at all future signalized intersections. The existing walks could be enhanced with a decorative paver strip between walk and curb. This would require the partial removal of exist paving. Alternatively, a paver strip could be used outside the existing walks, to replace the bare areas. Benches should be added at intervals along the existing walks with shelters, reflecting new lighting standards, style and color, at key points. Connecting walks to stores would enhance visitor appeal.

Community Welcome/Directional Signage

The existing community welcome sign should be improved or replaced. The new sign should be a much more substantial structure and reflect local heritage with the use of stone or other defining features. Landscaping around the welcome sign is very important with focal landscaping to enhance the sign features and backdrop landscaping to enhance its appearance. A logo or some type of tagline (e.g., Home of Michigan Tech, Established 1858) is appropriate along with a possible events display. However, the sign should be uncluttered and wording limited. It is not possible to read much at 45 M.P.H. The service club signs should be moved (scenic turnout or closer to town?) and kept uncluttered.

The style of directional signage should be coordinated with the new streetscape elements. The city should explore the use of a special shape, city logo or the Keweenaw N.H.P. logo. Ideally a regional system could be used which included Hancock and the broader Keweenaw area. The directional signage should be grouped, located away from commercial signs and use pictorial symbols.

Parking

Drives along the west side of the study corridor should be consolidated, if possible, formalized and treated as intersections with the M-26. The connection should be packaged with the use of back access loops and a sidewalk. Large parking areas should include green islands (trees, shrubs, mounds) and future use of front-yard parking should be restricted.

Lighting/Other Streetscape Issues

Streetlighting should be added using the new attractive fixtures commissioned by city. These should be pedestrian scale and present at intersections. Spill-over light from businesses, parking and signs



should be reduced as much as possible. Other streetscape elements should emphasize intersections with decorative paving at corners, new pylon signs and focal plantings to screen commercial uses.

Architecture

Incorporate regional architectural heritage in new building and any renovations or upgrades of existing structures. Stone/brick/flat arches are all appropriate and would add to the visual appeal of this commercial corridor. The city should consider architectural guidelines and review boards.



Conceptual Designs

Several conceptual designs were prepared for the Houghton corridor. The enhancements depicted in the conceptual designs on the following pages are based on input from community meetings and field analysis of existing conditions. Where possible, we selected locations that were indicated as problems areas in the community meetings or could provide the greatest impact to overall corridor enhancement (see Figure 3). With limited resources, the project partnership was not able to prepare designs for the entire corridor. However, elements of each conceptual design are clearly transferable to other corridor sections.

-  Study Corridor
-  APOI Locations
-  Road
-  Railroad
-  River
-  Lake
-  Public Land
-  City
-  County

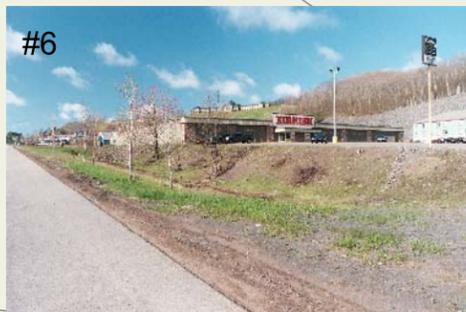
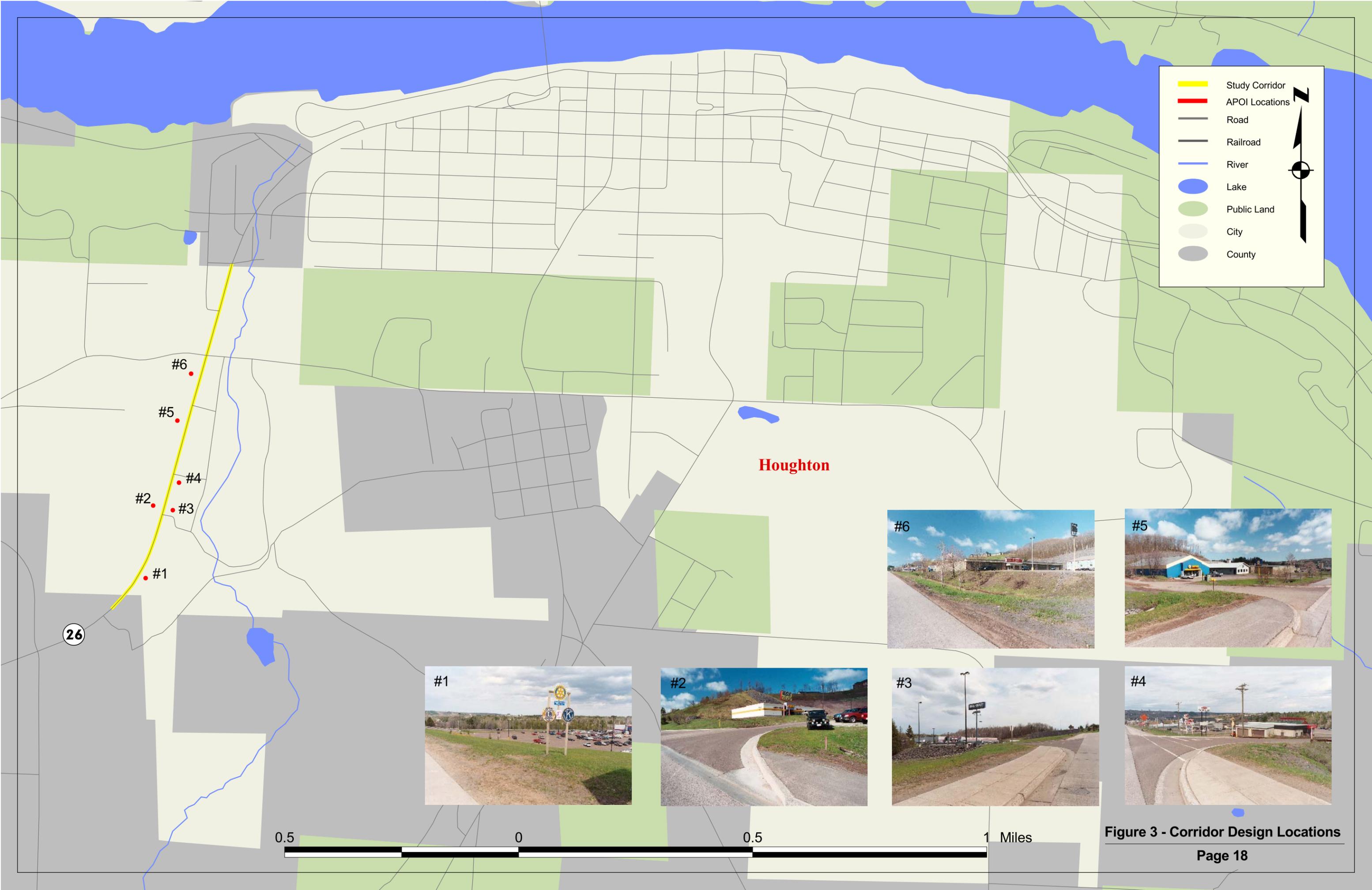
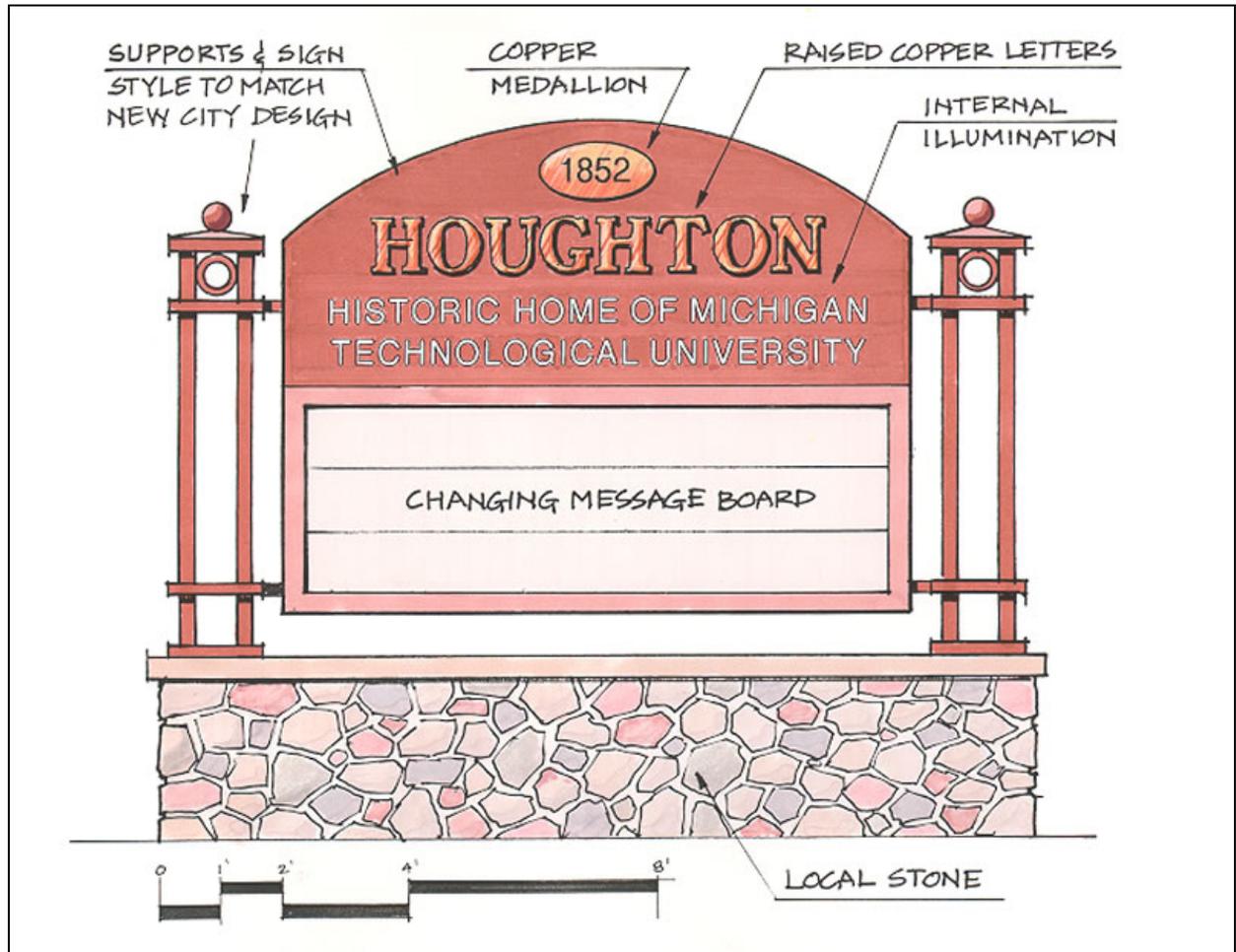



Figure 3 - Corridor Design Locations
Page 18



Conceptual Plan 1 – New Entrance Signs

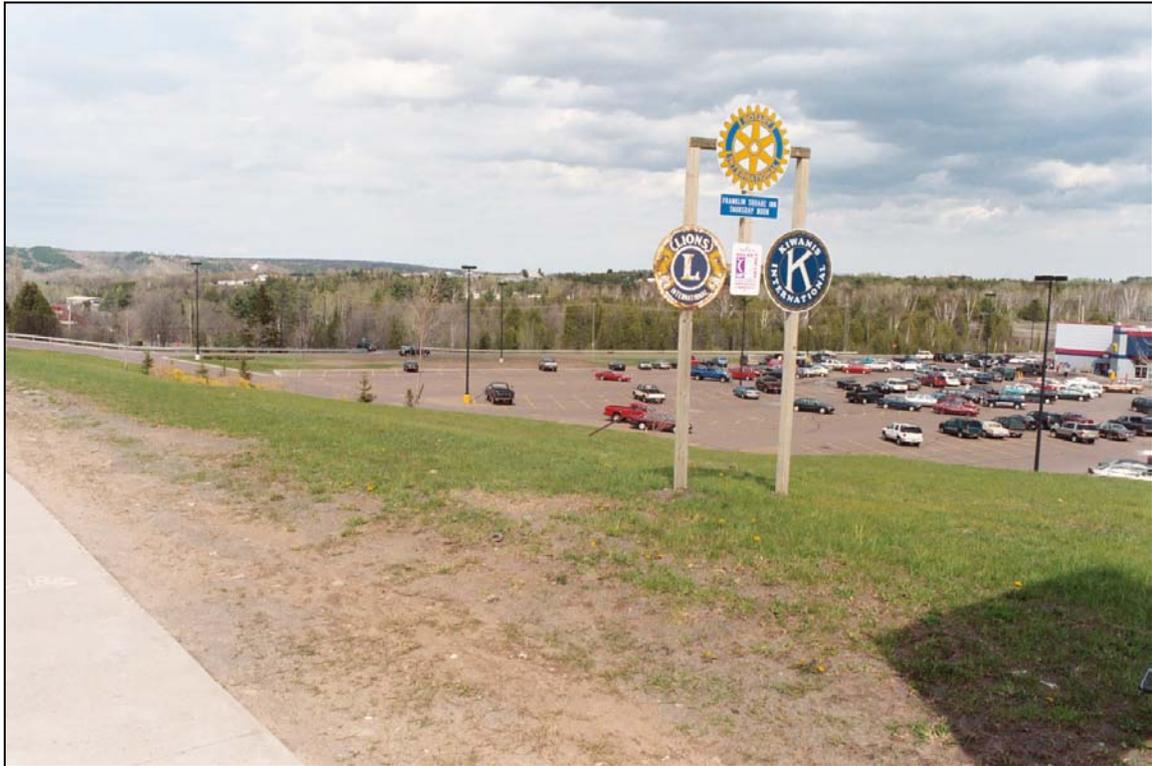
Proposed New Sign





Conceptual Plan 2 – Northbound M-26 at Walmart

Current View



Proposed Enhancements



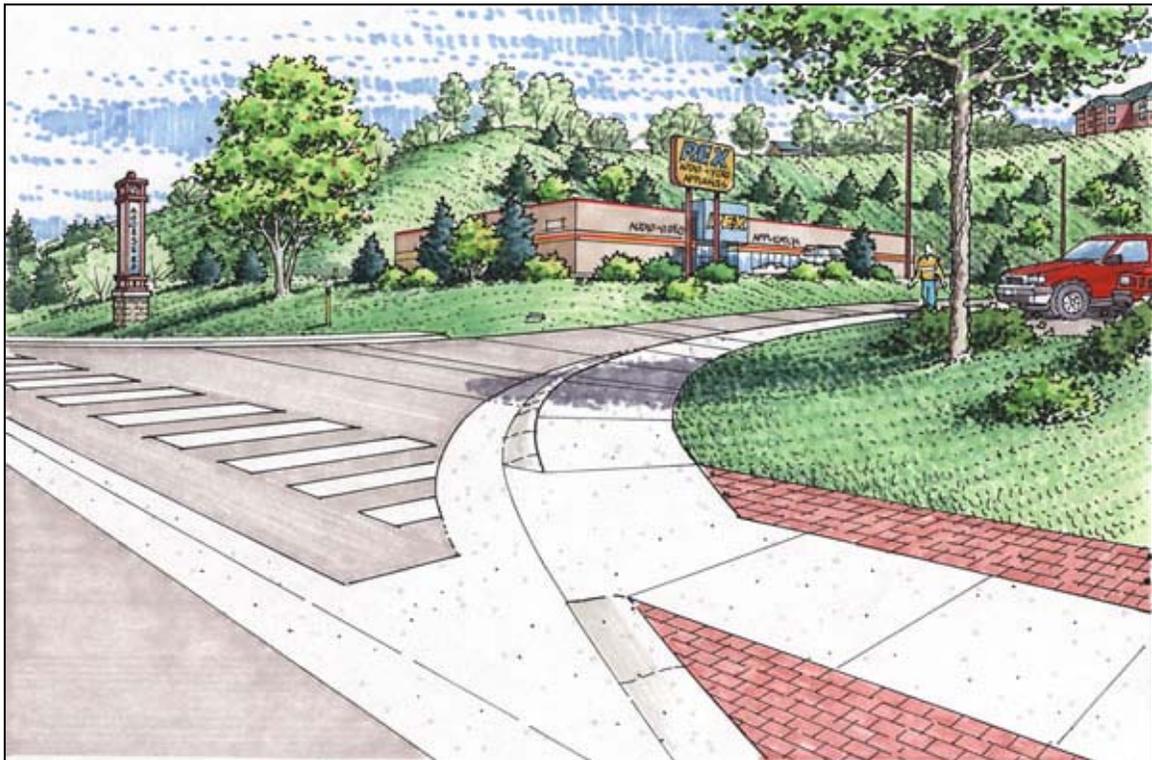


Conceptual Plan 3 – Southbound M-26

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





Conceptual Plan 4 – Southbound M-26 at Walmart

Current View



Proposed Enhancements



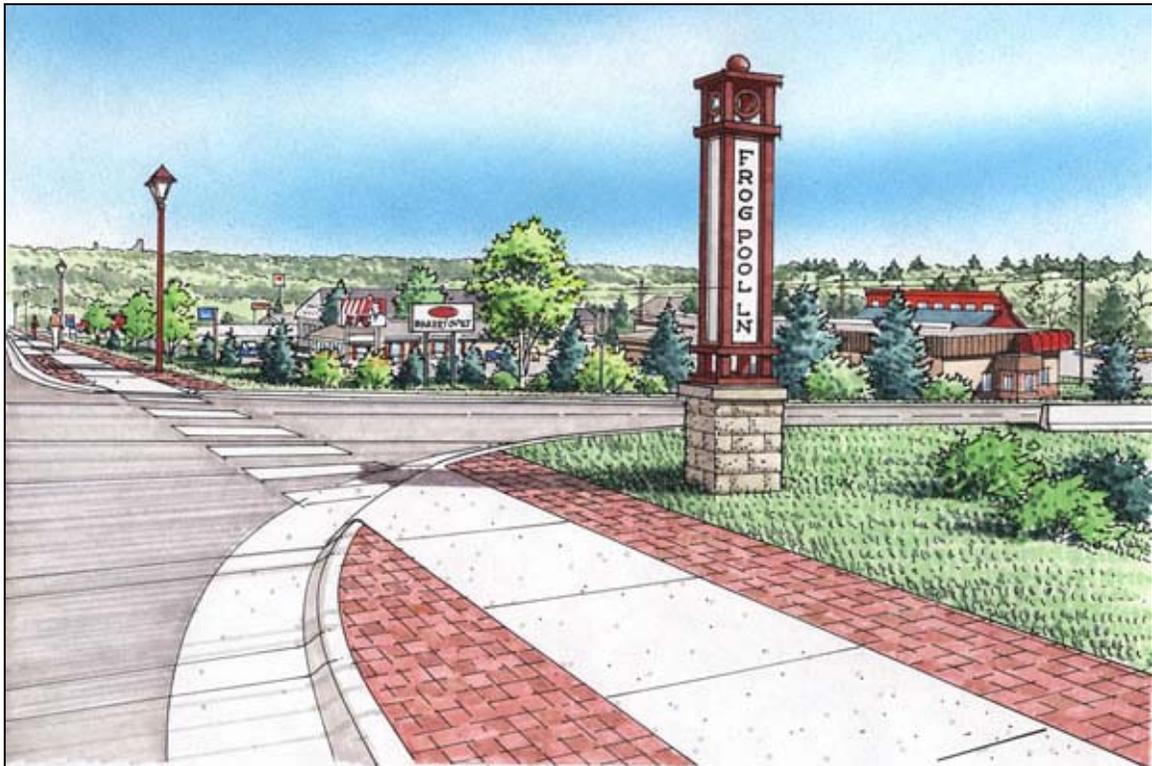


Conceptual Plan 5 – Northbound M-26 at Frog Pool Ln.

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





Conceptual Plan 6 – Northbound M-26

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





Conceptual Plan 7 – Southbound M-26

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





Achieving Results/Implementation

The previous sections of this plan focused on an analysis of existing conditions along the study corridor. We summarized findings and recommendations from community meetings and combined these comments with professional field analysis. We discussed some general suggestions for improving the study corridor and presented specific conceptual designs for areas along the corridor. This section of the report will present an overview of how to implement the changes detailed in the conceptual designs.

It should be clearly recognized that implementing some or the entire series of corridor enhancements proposed in this plan is no small endeavor. In many cases, it may be best to start with a smaller pilot project to show what can be accomplished. Either way, moving forward will require the continued commitment of the community steering team and other key stakeholders. New relationships between local officials, business owners and other community interests will have to be formed and nourished. It will require significant new sources of funding, substantial regulatory changes, and serious voluntary efforts. This is a long term process and one that is likely to change over time.

Working Locally and Regionally

The implementation of a visual protection/enhancement projects for highway corridors in Michigan's Upper Peninsula could potentially be accomplished in several ways. Local areas acting on their own initiative could independently plan and undertake projects. Collectively, these independent efforts could result in significant protection/enhancement. An example of such a corridor is US-31 through Grand Traverse, Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet Counties in the Lower Peninsula where the communities of Traverse City and environs, Elk Rapids, Charlevoix, Petoskey/Bay View, Alanson, Pellston, and Mackinaw City have all worked independently and without coordination to contribute to visual enhancement of that highway corridor. The draw back to this approach can be a lack of visual enhancement/preservation continuity along the highway corridor and potential disregard for the corridor in rural areas.

Another possible approach to the protection/enhancement of arterial corridors that pass through a number of communities interspersed with rural areas, is to establish a supervisory or oversight body. This organization can work to plan, promote, and coordinate appropriate protection/enhancement activities throughout a large regional area such as the Eastern or Western Upper Peninsula. The National Scenic Byways Program provides a model for such an organization with its advocates groups. These groups are typically organized as non-profits that take on the responsibility for the preparation of "corridor management plans" which identify key resources, threats to those resources, preservation strategies, and marketing plans.

If appropriately organized as a nonprofit such an advocacy group has the ability to receive grants from charitable foundations, certain governmental funding, and tax exempt gifts from a variety of private donors. These funds can be used to support a staff and its expenses and/or to fund a variety of projects along the roadway corridor.



The strength of such an organization, however, normally comes through its advocate members that volunteer and dedicate their time and energy to a variety of activities that support a planned and coordinated preservation/restoration program for the entire geographic area. Such an organization brings together groups from various local communities, creating a synergism among interested parties which can breathe life and longevity into the preservation/restoration effort.

A regional organization which brings the various stakeholders together can provide the inspiration, education, technical expertise and financial resources necessary to get the ball rolling and to keep it moving avoiding project melt down over time. It can assist the various component local groups in accessing and/or working with the many private and public resources which either exist or could be created to contribute to the effort.

There are many fine examples of regional organizations which have been established to assure the successful implementation of plans such as those proposed herein. One such organization is the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust in Washington State. Information about that trust as an example may be obtained from mtsgreenway@tpl.org. A Michigan example is the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy at Traverse City (www.landtrust.org) and the Little Traverse Bay Regional Land Conservancy at Petoskey/Harbor Springs (www.landtrust.org) that are working together to undertake protection/enhancement projects along the U.S. 31 corridor between Traverse City and Mackinaw City.

In reality, a combination of these types of approaches is probably most workable and practical. A regional organization is unlikely to get projects moving locally. There must and will always have to be a local “cheerleader”, who makes the necessary contacts, pulls together information and keeps otherwise busy people focused on a local objective. This local effort can look to a regional organization for ideas and resources; However, achieving results will come down to hard work at the local level.

Persistence to achieve the goals and objectives of a preservation/restoration effort is essential as implementation will not be achieved overnight. Rather, significant results will be realized over years as small accomplishments begin to accumulate and the effort snowballs to achieve a critical mass. That critical mass is essential to overcome false starts, political inertia, limited financial resources, resistance to change, resistance to regulate, burn out, etc.

A desire to imitate or “keep up with the Joneses” can be a driving force for community change. Often a forward-thinking community, by way of example, can inspire similar activity by other communities. This can be seen in the language found within the various zoning ordinances which are in place in communities along the U.S. 2 corridor studied in 2003. For example, essentially the same language requiring screening between residential and commercial and industrial uses, right down to specifying the plants to use, appears in several zoning ordinances adopted by communities along the corridor. Obviously one of these communities was the first to adopt such language. Others then followed the example of the first. The inspiration for visual enhancement/preservation projects can spread in a similar manner. For example, Community A adopts a billboard ordinance which is effective in stopping the visual blight of billboards. Community B learns of A’s success and adopts such an ordinance for its community.



Implementation Tools and Resources

There were a number of different issues raised during community meetings held over the course of this two-year project. Many have been addressed in the conceptual designs. In this section, we present a tabular listing of the issues raised and suggest some tools and resources to address the most common problems.

For a comprehensive matrix of problems/issues and suggested vehicles to address these problems, see Table 1. (presented in four sections 1-4). This matrix lists and groups all problems that were raised during community meetings through duration of the two-year Visual Enhancement Planning Project and identifies approximately eighty (80) resources which could have a potential roll in solving the problems or implementing the protection/enhancement effort being proposed. These resources range from providing advocacy support to volunteer labor. They have been identified in the matrix as follows:

A	Advocacy/community support
E	Education support
F	Funding support
L	Project labor
R	Regulatory requirements
T	Technical support
V	Volunteer labor

- A. Advocacy/community support can come from a variety of individuals or groups. These groups are important players that can send a positive message regarding the need and community support for the project and can challenge local politicians and governmental officials to act in a positive and responsible way to implement contributing activities such as enacting appropriate zoning ordinances, sign regulations, etc.



- E.** Education support regarding the benefits of implementing a restoration/enhancement project is available from a variety of sources such as the MSU Extension Service or the staff of the various Conservation Districts.

- F.** Funding support is available from a variety of fund raising activities, to grants from private and public sources, to the better utilization of the funds expended by governmental agencies in particular those responsible for the roadways and their corridors.

- L.** Project labor is either staff or contract labor which is assigned to preservation/restoration efforts by the agencies responsible for the roadways and their corridors. It may also come in the form of prison work crews which are available to assist communities.

- R.** Regulatory requirements are those which are set out in laws adopted to regulate the use of land. They include zoning and building codes and a variety of nuisance ordinances which can regulate blight, signage, landscaping, lighting, land use, historic sites etc.

- T.** Technical support is assistance which is available from professionals or perhaps qualified amateurs that have the technical expertise to envision, devise and implement preservation/restoration projects. They may typically be the staff or retired staff of various businesses or governmental agencies that due to their position or situation are able to offer their time and services to lead project implementation activities.

- V.** Volunteer labor may come from a variety of individual or community groups such as those that participate in adopt-a-road programs, beautification committees or Day of Giving efforts.



While the issues raised in each community were diverse and our suggested improvements are specific to each conceptual design, two things become clear about corridor-wide visual enhancement. The first step in corridor enhancement is removing things that clearly detract from corridor aesthetics and assuring they do not reappear. Two issues that were regularly mentioned in every community meeting that fall under this “removal” category are junk or blight and signage. We will address these issues specifically in the following pages. Other items that fall in the “removal” category and were mentioned include utility lines, unattractive street lighting and roadside debris often including waste from snowplowing.

The second step in corridor enhancement is adding things that add to corridor appeal. The issues most commonly mentioned during community meetings were landscaping, appropriate and attractive lighting, sidewalks or other non-motorized pathways, directional or recognition signage, tourist information and driveway/curb cut reduction. We discuss how to implement some of these enhancements. Finally, most enhancement projects in this second category require funding. Therefore, in the final chapter, we detail available funding sources at the federal, state and local level.

Removing Problems along the Corridor

The first issue to address in beautifying corridors is removal of things that obviously detract from corridor appearance. Clearly, derelict structures, junk, trash and inappropriate signage make towns unappealing to visitors. Additionally, any large expenditure to beautify a corridor is wasted if things like junk or excessive signage remain. It is also appropriate to deal with these issues first as they do not always require a source of new funds, only a collection and expression of community will.

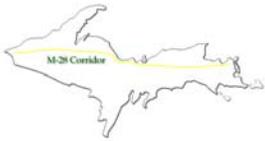
Zoning

When there is a sufficient community will to enact and enforce adequate and workable regulatory laws such as zoning, blight and sign ordinances, much can be done in this manner to remove things that mar the visual landscape. Such laws can regulate and/or require signage, night lighting, landscaping, maintenance of property, land use, etc. Zoning ordinance provisions often take time to result in meaningful improvements particularly in slow growing communities where grand fathering may allow existing situations to continue for many years. Change does eventually come, however, after the years pass. It is critically important for communities to think proactively and make the changes now that will define their communities in the future.

Blight

Blight can be described as conditions “which cause a reduction of, or lack of, proper utilization of the area to such an extent that it constitutes a serious physical, social, or economic burden on the community which cannot reasonably be expected to be reversed or alleviated by private enterprise acting alone.” (*from Blight Control Ordinance, Williams Charter Township, Bay County, MI*).

While not pervasive along the 2004 study corridors, blight remains a significant issue. Derelict sign structures, unused and unsafe buildings and junk cars and appliances were found in numerous locations. These issues and others falling into the blight category can be addressed through a properly structured and enforced blight or (in the case of derelict sign structures) sign ordinance.



Provisions within the ordinance to address junk cars, appliances and other junk typically contain language similar to the following:

No motor vehicle shall be kept, parked or stored in any district for residential use, unless it shall be in operating condition and properly licensed, or kept inside a building. The purpose of this provision is to prevent the accumulation of junk motor vehicles, and therefore it shall not apply to any motor vehicle ordinarily used, but temporarily out of running condition. If a motor vehicle is being kept for actual use, but is temporarily unlicensed, the Zoning Administrator may grant the owner a reasonable time, not to exceed six (6) months, to procure such license.

Likewise, no old, rusty and unsightly machinery, machines not suited for use upon the premises, or quantities of old and used building materials shall be kept or stored outside a building provided, however, that building materials fit to be used to improve the premises may be kept on site for one (1) year if they are piled off the ground so as not to become a rat and rodent harbor.

Source: *Acme Township, MI, Ordinance*

Model ordinances are available from the Michigan Townships Association, the Michigan Municipal League and Scenic Michigan (see Appendix A, Sources of Additional Information).

Another innovative way to deal with blight or junk in a community is to have a *Community Cleanup Day*. Typically, a *Community Cleanup Day* is scheduled once or twice per year in the Spring and/or Fall. People residing in the jurisdiction sponsoring the cleanup can bring junk of all types – appliances, lawn mowers, cars parts, etc. – to one place for disposal. The local unit of government contracts with a waste hauler to provide roll-offs and disposal. Alternatively, some communities may offer similar curbside service. This activity is typically paid for out of local government funds.

Two other issues mentioned during the community meeting that could be considered blight-related were property maintenance and vacant lots. These issues can also be addresses through zoning ordinance provisions. A “Duty to maintain property” provision within the ordinance can spell out what type of property maintenance is necessary. Typical “Duty to Maintain Property” language for a zoning ordinance reads as follows:

The owner or occupant of all land, structures and parts thereof, shall have the duty to maintain the same in a clean and sanitary condition free from any accumulation of dirt, filth, rubbish, garbage, junk, vermin and other duty not to act or omit to act so as to create or permit the existence of a nuisance as defined in this Chapter. This duty shall extend to any area of land between the lot line and adjoining streets and curbs.

Source: *City of Charlevoix, MI, Ordinance*



Some towns have enacted ordinances that specifically address maintenance of yards and landscaping, spelling out how long grass can be allowed to grow, etc. However, these can be seen as overly intrusive and this issue may be best addressed simply from neighbor and community pressure.

Lastly, in association with the blight and maintenance issue, the question of enforcement was raised. An ordinance is useless if it is not enforced and the variance requests properly reviewed. Properly written ordinances spell out enforcement responsibilities and it is up to the local governing body and their appointed officials to see that they are carried out. In some cases, the addition of a civil infraction ordinance helps communities enforce existing ordinances by allowing the local governing authority to secure liens against a property and lowering the burden of proof for violations.

Signage

The issue of signage was raised a number of times during the community meetings. The field observations indicate that this is clearly an issue especially along many of the commercial corridors and approaches to study communities where otherwise beautiful stretches of highway approach are marred with oversized and improperly spaced advertising signage. It should be remembered, that the approach is a visitor's first visual impression of a community, and first impressions last. In addition to the approaches, signage along the commercial corridors in many of the study areas is inconsistent in size, number, height, type, color, lighting and setback creating a chaotic, confusing and potentially dangerous visual for the traveler. The abundance of advertising sign clutter limits the effectiveness of any directional or recognition signage and contributes to traffic and safety problems.

The first steps in addressing the issue of signage are to inventory the existing signs along the study corridor, gather public input and craft a practical, understandable and enforceable sign ordinance. This ensures that new developments and signage are consistent with the community's goals. A sign ordinance should specify appropriate number, size, height, face area, type, color, materials, illumination, landscaping and setback of all newly erected signs within each type of district. The ordinance should clearly articulate the community's goals in establishing the ordinance and mesh with goals articulated in the community's comprehensive plan. Typical regulations in similar communities which have been successful in controlling signs are:

1. One free standing sign face size of thirty two (32) to (40) sq. ft. per business.
2. A free standing sign height of twenty feet.
3. A free standing sign setback from the highway right-of-way of ten feet.
4. Wall and window signage not to exceed twenty percent of the area of a building facade
5. Provisions for a "center sign" where multiple businesses and or buildings are identified.
6. Limitation of content to land use identification and not advertising.



7. Highway advertising regulations which restrict such signs from the corridor, or limit them to small appropriate districts, provide for significant spacing between signs, and limit their sign face size
8. Prohibition of banners, pennants, inflatable devices and other such signs which are designed to attract attention and not simply identify a business location.

These, it should be noted, are not the most restrictive provisions which a community may adopt. Model ordinances are available from the Michigan Townships Association, the Michigan Municipal League and Scenic Michigan (see Appendix A).

Adding to the Corridor

Landscaping

Most of the conceptual designs highlight some added landscape features. Trees, shrubs and other greenery as well as berms and mounds can serve many purposes along a corridor. They can be used to soften views, screen unwanted views and reduce the impacts from sound and light on the motorist. They can also be used as focal points and attractive backdrops for community entrance signs. The addition of landscaping can be accomplished in different ways.

Many communities establish beautification committees to coordinate community landscaping. These are usually voluntary efforts that attempt to get business owners and other corridor property owners to take an interest in landscaping their properties. Other times, community beautification or garden clubs will undertake specific projects such as landscaping at the town entrance or an important community attraction. In some cases, these voluntary efforts are supplemented with funding from the local government.

In addition to voluntary/community efforts, landscaping should be addressed in regulatory language as well. The community's master plan should establish policies and guidelines with respect to landscaping and layout the goals for having landscape requirements. Landscaping requirements should be included in the zoning ordinance and administered during a site plan review process for new developments. For corridors, the ordinance should:

- specify landscape requirements along the roadways and at major intersections
- provide landscape requirements for the sides and fronts of buildings visible along the corridor
- address the issue of snow storage and removal
- require landscaping that minimizes glare and light issues for the traveler and reduces noise for those alongside the roadway
- Require street trees along all highway frontages.
- Require parking lot landscaping that will provide summer shade for parked vehicles, screen cars from users of adjacent public right-of-ways and provide a green buffer between buildings and parking areas.



- Require screening of unsightly areas such as dumpsters, outside storage, etc.
- Require specific landscape treatment for the location and design of outdoor merchandise display areas such as those used for display of motor vehicles.
- Require watering sources for all landscape areas.
- Require appropriate design and landscaping of water retention/detention areas.

Sidewalks and Non-motorized Ways

Another often-mentioned issue during the community meetings was the lack of sidewalks and sidewalk connectivity. Sidewalks can be added during large roadway enhancement projects but should also be addressed in the zoning ordinance. Making sidewalks part of any improvement or new development will at least start the process. Hopefully, as new walks are added, completing an entire system becomes easier as the idea gains momentum. Typical language to address sidewalks found within an ordinance should include:

Sidewalks/Non-motorized ways: Pedestrian sidewalks or non-motorized ways shall be constructed to provide pedestrian access along highways _____ and other areas as may be designated by the unit of government, at such a time as any adjacent parcel is improved either by new construction or improvement to an existing land use. Sidewalks shall be provided in the _____ Districts and in planned developments in residential districts. In planned developments interior sidewalks or other non-motorized ways available to the public, may be substituted for the provision of this requirement if such substitution is approved by the _____ as a part of the site plan.

The upgrading or improvement of an existing land use shall not require the construction of a pedestrian sidewalk should the cost of the sidewalk exceed twenty percent (20%) of the construction or improvement cost. Sidewalk cost shall be based on a fixed amount of \$3.00 /sq. foot or a bid price submitted by the property owner from a qualified contractor verifiable by the Zoning Administrator. In the event consecutive improvements are made to the property within a three (3) year time period, the cumulative total cost of the separate improvements shall be considered when determining the need for such sidewalk construction.

Sidewalk construction shall meet the following requirements:

1. Sidewalk construction shall meet the current construction specifications of the Michigan Department of Transportation.
2. Sidewalk shall extend across the entire frontage of the property ownership.
3. Sidewalk shall be located whenever possible within the highway right-of-way, however, may be located on private property to avoid obstructions as part of a designated bike path, and shall be located so as to insure



connection and continuity with existing or future walks or bike paths on adjoining properties.

4. When required, permits must be obtained from the Michigan Department of Transportation.
5. Sidewalk maintenance including replacement in the case of inadequate construction as determined by the Zoning Administrator shall be the responsibility of the adjacent parcel owner.
6. Sidewalk construction shall be in essential compliance with the Non-motorized Facility Plan.

Source: *City of Charlevoix, Ordinance*

Lighting

Street lighting was mentioned often during community meetings and is incorporated in many of the conceptual designs. Street lighting, in both form and function, has significant impacts on corridor appeal. Poor lighting can make driving difficult and distracting. In addition, unappealing street lights can detract from a corridors aesthetic appeal.

Lighting is best addressed through a community’s zoning ordinance. Among other things, the ordinance should specify the type, architectural style, wattage, height, placement and spacing of lighting along the corridor for different zones. These issues should all be incorporated into the site plan review process.

Managing Access

Traffic and the number of roadway access points were issues mentioned several times during the community meetings and obvious from field analysis. There are a number of ways to improve traffic flow, safety and access. Access management is:

“a set of proven techniques that can help reduce traffic congestion, preserve the flow of traffic, improve traffic safety, prevent crashes, preserve existing road capacity and preserve investment in roads by managing the location, design and type of access to property.”

Access management techniques can include

- Driveway consolidation
- Driveway alterations
- Signage treatments/Restricting turns
- Avoid additional curb cuts



- Front and rear access
- Improved local street connections
- Medians

Source: Michigan Department of Transportation, *Reducing Traffic Congestion and Improving Traffic Safety in Michigan Communities: The Access Management Guidebook*, October 2001.

A detailed description of access management techniques, benefits and implementation is beyond the scope of this plan. For details, please consult the MDOT guidebook referenced above.



Funding Enhancements

A variety of potential sources of funding are available for the implementation of visual enhancement projects. Funding may come from a broad array of organizations at the local, state and federal level.

In some cases, federal dollars are administered by state agencies. In other cases, applications can be made directly to federal programs.

Federal Funding Sources (may be passed through and administered by state)

Federal Transportation Enhancement Funding

In 1991, the passage of ISTEA (*Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act*) mandated that every state must reserve 10 percent of surface transportation funds for enhancement activities. This act was reauthorized in 1998 through 2003 with the passage of TEA-21 (*Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century*). This act expires on September 30, 2003. The Bush Administration has proposed reauthorization with the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFETEA)*, however, this has not been passed by congress. These acts work to fund enhancement through taxes on motor fuel and vehicles which are placed in the Highway Trust Fund. These funds are distributed to the states through the Federal Highway Program. 10% of the state's surface transportation funds are reserved for enhancement activities

Federal Eligibility

To be eligible for *Transportation Enhancement Funding*, projects must meet several criteria. They must relate in some way to transportation. They must provide for public access and fit one or more of 12 enhancement activities:

1. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities
2. Pedestrian and bicycle safety and education activities
3. Acquisition of scenic or historic easements and sites
4. Scenic or historic highways programs including tourist and welcome centers
5. Landscaping and scenic beautification
6. Historic preservation
7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities
8. Conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails
9. Control and removal of outdoor advertising
10. Archaeological planning and research
11. Environmental mitigation of runoff pollution and provisions of wildlife connectivity
12. Establishment of transportation museums



Michigan Eligibility

To qualify for enhancement funding in Michigan, the project must have a sponsor. The applicant must be a governmental unit that receives fuel tax revenues such as cities, villages, road commissions, public transit agencies, or MDOT. Also, the project must meet at least one of the following qualifications:

- Must be on or next to a highway, street or road that is eligible for federal aid
- Must be a historic facility or a historic site that is significant to transportation but has current transportation use
- Must provide a service related to transportation
- Must fit within the same types of activities as the federal program(above) except does not include:
 - a. Pedestrian and bicycle safety activities and education
 - b. Transportation museums

Regional Contact:

Vince Bevins, Regional Planner
MDOT-Superior Region
1818 3rd Avenue North
Escanaba, MI 49829
(906) 786-1800

State Contacts:

Amber Thelen
thelena@michigan.gov
517.241.1456

Jessica Pierce
piercej3@michigan.gov
517.241.0185

Michigan Department of Transportation
Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement Office
425 West Ottawa - P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, MI 48909



National Scenic Byways Grant Program

A program of the Federal Highway Administration, National Scenic Byway funds are available through a grant application process to undertake eligible projects associated with designated National Scenic Byways, all-American Roads or state designated byways. In Michigan, scenic byways projects coordinator is the Michigan Heritage Route Program through MDOT:

Pete Hanses
Heritage Route Program Manager
Michigan Department of Transportation-Transportation Planning Division
425 W. Ottawa
Lansing, MI 48909
Voice: 517-335-2934
Fax: 517-373-9255
E-mail: hansesp@mdot.state.mi.us

The following is listing of grant categories for scenic byways grants. For more information, visit the Scenic Byways Website at www.byways.org.

- State Programs
- Corridor Management Plan
- Safety Improvements
- Byway Facilities
- Access to Recreation
- Resource Protection
- Interpretive Information
- Marketing



Public Lands Highways Program

This program provides federal funding to improve access to and within federal lands. Funds are available for "any kind of transportation project eligible for assistance under Title 23, United States Code, that is within, adjacent to, or provides access to the areas (Federal lands) served by the public lands highway." A public lands highway means a forest road or any highway through unappropriated or unreserved public lands, nontaxable Indian lands, or other Federal reservations under the jurisdiction of and maintained by a public authority and open to public travel. Interpretive signs, rest areas, visitor centers, bicycle and pedestrian projects are eligible for this grant program. The next call for projects is subject to the reauthorization of the federal Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA-21).

Source: National Transportation Enhancement Clearinghouse Website, www.enhancements.org, September 2003

State Funding Sources

Transportation Economic Development Fund

The [Michigan Department of Transportation](#) (MDOT) administers an Office of Economic Development that manages several types of Economic Development programs under the Transportation Economic Development Fund. Grant programs A, C, D, E, and F (B discontinued) are briefly described as follows:

Category A grants are targeted at specific industries, namely, Agriculture and Food Processing; Tourism; Forestry; High Technology Research; Manufacturing; Mining; and Office Centers of at least 50,000 square feet.

Category C grants are aimed at reducing congestion on county primary and city major streets within urban counties including advanced traffic management systems.

Category D grants seek to fund projects that complement the state trunkline system in rural areas, and

Category E grants seek to create and improve forest roads.

Category F grants are dedicated for road improvement for urbanized areas in rural counties.

Source: Citizens Research Council of Michigan, Website, Last Revised on 05/09/01

Contact Information for Transportation Economic Development Fund:



Administrator: Jacqueline G. Shinn
Contact: Merrie-Lynne Cherry
Phone: 517-335-1069
E-mail: cherrym@michigan.gov
Website: www.mich.gov/mdot

Program Administration Section

Michael Kapp, Manager 517-373-2666
Deanna Finch, Systems Coordinator 517-241-4778

Project Development Section

Michael Leon, Economic Dev. Spec. 517-241-2568

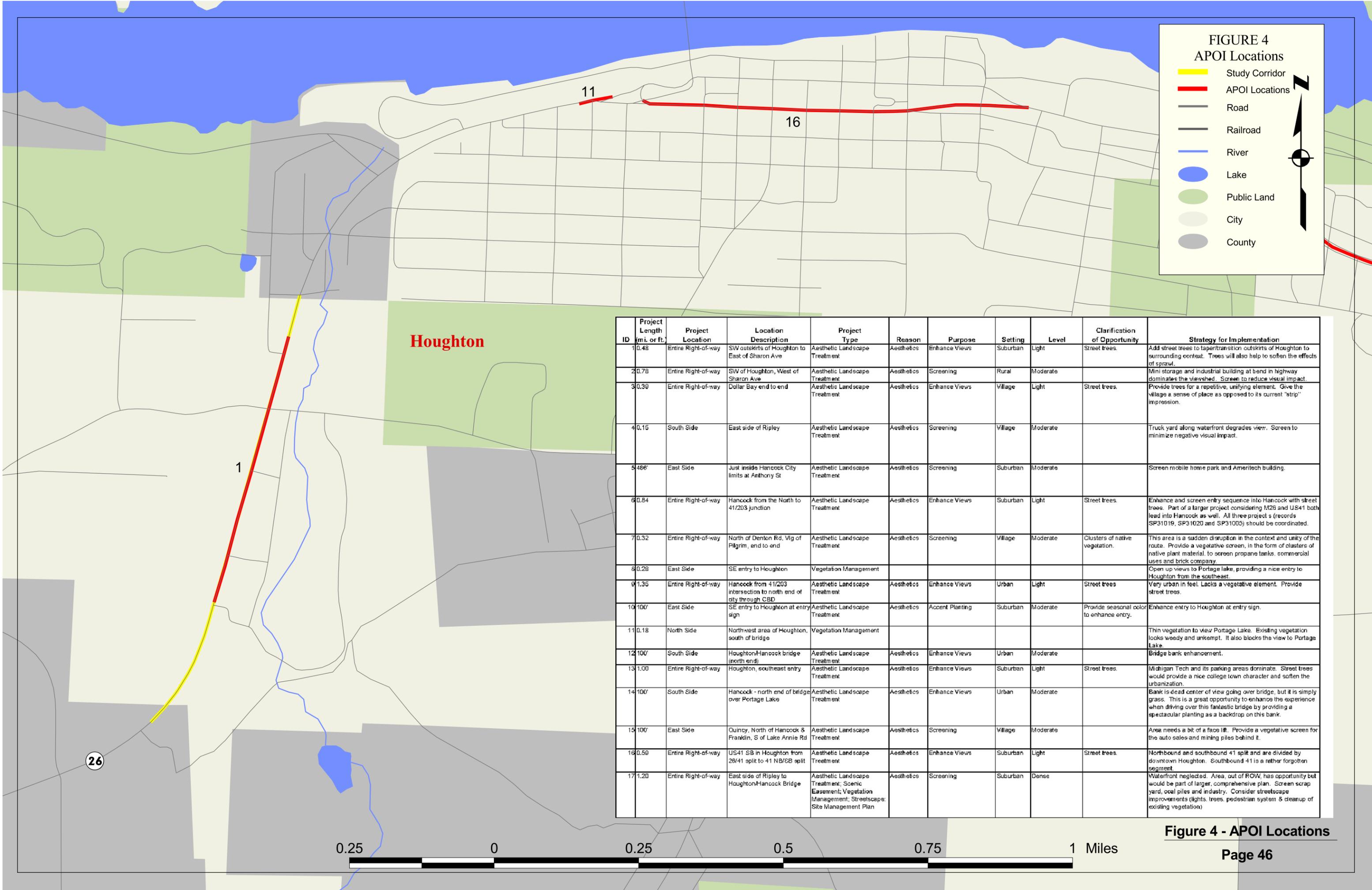
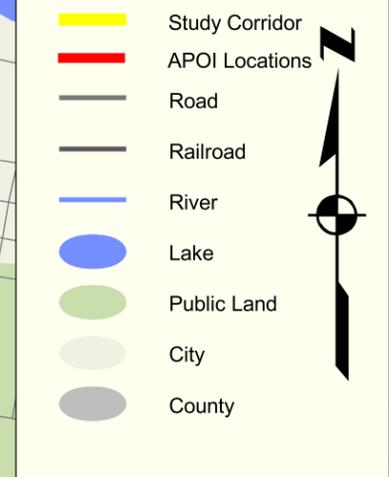
Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory

Several of the programs we have discussed in this section are administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). These include the Transportation Enhancements and Heritage Route Program and the Transportation Economic Development Fund. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the Enhancements Program and the Heritage Route Program, MDOT undertook an Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory (APOI) in 2000. The purpose of this program was to identify aesthetic project opportunities along state trunklines and ensure the best and most coordinated use of funds.

The APOI identified many project opportunities throughout the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Many of these project opportunities are located within the 5 communities and segments of study corridor that received planning assistance under this project. Also, many of the aesthetic opportunities identified during MDOT's inventory include many of the same treatments depicted in the conceptual designs presented within this plan. As MDOT may be a significant source of funds, this congruence is important to note.

A map of APOI locations is presented in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4
APOI Locations



Project ID	Project Length (mi. or ft.)	Project Location	Location Description	Project Type	Reason	Purpose	Setting	Level	Clarification of Opportunity	Strategy for Implementation
1	0.48	Entire Right-of-way	SW outskirts of Houghton to East of Sharon Ave	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Enhance Views	Suburban	Light	Street trees.	Add street trees to taper/transition outskirts of Houghton to surrounding context. Trees will also help to soften the effects of sprawl.
2	0.78	Entire Right-of-way	SW of Houghton, West of Sharon Ave	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Screening	Rural	Moderate		Mini storage and industrial building at bend in highway dominates the viewshed. Screen to reduce visual impact.
3	0.39	Entire Right-of-way	Dollar Bay end to end	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Enhance Views	Village	Light	Street trees.	Provide trees for a repetitive, unifying element. Give the village a sense of place as opposed to its current 'strip' impression.
4	0.15	South Side	East side of Ripley	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Screening	Village	Moderate		Truck yard along waterfront degrades view. Screen to minimize negative visual impact.
5	486'	East Side	Just inside Hancock City limits at Anthony St	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Screening	Suburban	Moderate		Screen mobile home park and Ameritech building.
6	0.84	Entire Right-of-way	Hancock from the North to 41/203 junction	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Enhance Views	Suburban	Light	Street trees.	Enhance and screen entry sequence into Hancock with street trees. Part of a larger project considering M26 and US41 both lead into Hancock as well. All three projects (records SP31019, SP31020 and SP31005) should be coordinated.
7	0.32	Entire Right-of-way	North of Denton Rd, W/ig of Pilgrim, end to end	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Screening	Village	Moderate	Clusters of native vegetation.	This area is a sudden disruption in the context and unity of the route. Provide a vegetative screen, in the form of clusters of native plant material, to screen propane tanks, commercial uses and brick company.
8	0.28	East Side	SE entry to Houghton	Vegetation Management						Open up views to Portage lake, providing a nice entry to Houghton from the southeast.
9	1.35	Entire Right-of-way	Hancock from 41/203 intersection to north end of city through CBD	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Enhance Views	Urban	Light	Street trees	Very urban in feel. Lacks a vegetative element. Provide street trees.
10	100'	East Side	SE entry to Houghton at entry sign	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Accent Planting	Suburban	Moderate	Provide seasonal color to enhance entry.	Enhance entry to Houghton at entry sign.
11	0.18	North Side	North-west area of Houghton, south of bridge	Vegetation Management						Thin vegetation to view Portage Lake. Existing vegetation looks weedy and unkempt. It also blocks the view to Portage Lake.
12	100'	South Side	Houghton/Hancock bridge (north end)	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Enhance Views	Urban	Moderate		Bridge bank enhancement.
13	1.00	Entire Right-of-way	Houghton, southeast entry	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Enhance Views	Suburban	Light	Street trees.	Michigan Tech and its parking areas dominate. Street trees would provide a nice college town character and soften the urbanization.
14	100'	South Side	Hancock - north end of bridge over Portage Lake	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Enhance Views	Urban	Moderate		Bank is dead center of view going over bridge, but it is simply grass. This is a great opportunity to enhance the experience when driving over this fantastic bridge by providing a spectacular planting as a backdrop on this bank.
15	100'	East Side	Quincy, North of Hancock & Franklin, S of Lake Annie Rd	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Screening	Village	Moderate		Area needs a bit of a face lift. Provide a vegetative screen for the auto sales and mining piles behind it.
16	0.59	Entire Right-of-way	US41 SB in Houghton from 26/41 split to 41 NB/EB split	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment	Aesthetics	Enhance Views	Suburban	Light	Street trees.	Northbound and southbound 41 split and are divided by downtown Houghton. Southbound 41 is a rather forgotten segment.
17	1.20	Entire Right-of-way	East side of Ripley to Houghton/Hancock Bridge	Aesthetic Landscape Treatment; Scenic Easement; Vegetation Management; Streetscape; Site Management Plan	Aesthetics	Screening	Suburban	Dense		Waterfront neglected. Area, out of ROW, has opportunity but would be part of larger, comprehensive plan. Screen scrap yard, coal piles and industry. Consider streetscape improvements (lights, trees, pedestrian system & cleanup of existing vegetation)



Figure 4 - APOI Locations



Community Development Block Grant (State Administered)

(the following text is taken directly from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Website, www.hud.gov)

Program Objectives

The primary statutory objective of the CDBG program is to develop viable communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low- and moderate-income. The State must ensure that at least 70 percent of its CDBG grant funds are used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons over a one-, two-, or three-year time period selected by the State. This general objective is achieved by granting "maximum feasible priority" to activities which benefit low- and moderate-income families or aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight. Under unique circumstances, States may also use their funds to meet urgent community development needs. A need is considered urgent if it poses a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community and has arisen in the past 18 months.

Eligible Activities

Communities receiving CDBG funds from the State may use the funds for many kinds of community development activities including, but not limited to:

- acquisition of property for public purposes;
- construction or reconstruction of streets, water and sewer facilities, neighborhood centers, recreation facilities, and other public works;
- demolition;
- rehabilitation of public and private buildings;
- public services;
- planning activities;
- assistance to nonprofit entities for community development activities; and
- assistance to private, for profit entities to carry out economic development activities (including assistance to micro-enterprises).



State Contact:

Mr. William Parker, Coordinator
Housing Development Authority
P.O. Box 30044
Lansing, MI 48909-7544
Phone: 517-373-1462
Fax: 517-335-4797
Email: parkerw@state.mi.us
[Michigan CDBG business incentives](#): 517-373-6213
Michigan CDBG housing resources: 517-373-1462

State Infrastructure Bank

The State Infrastructure Bank has low interest loans for transportation improvements. The program is administered through the Office of Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement.

State Contact:

Michigan Department of Transportation
Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement Office
425 West Ottawa - P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, MI 48909

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) has been in place since 1976. It provides financial assistance to local governments and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to purchase lands for outdoor recreation and/or the protection of natural resources and open space. It also assists in the appropriate development of land for public outdoor recreation.

Criteria

Applications are evaluated on established criteria such as resource protection, water access, and project need. At least 25 percent match on either acquisition or development projects is required from local government applicants. Recommendations are made by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board (members are appointed by the Governor) to the State Legislature for final



approval. Criteria are spelled out in the "Recreation Grants Selection Process" booklet given to all applicants. There are eleven evaluation criteria:

1. Protection and use of significant natural resources.
2. Use of inland waters.
3. Population served.
4. Economic benefits.
5. Hunting, fishing and other wildlife-related values.
6. Need for proposal.
7. Applicant history.
8. Site and project quality.
9. Special Initiatives of the MNRTF Board (See below).
10. Financial need of the applicant.
11. Local match contribution.

There are at times special circumstances that factor into grant evaluation. Currently, the 2003 Special Initiatives of the Board are:

1. Acquisition or development of railways that contribute to an overall State trail system.
2. Acquisition of lands open to hunting or development of hunting-related facilities, such as shooting ranges.
3. Acquisition of lands that provide for deer habitat with thermal cover.
4. Local shooting ranges or State/local shooting range partnerships.
5. Acquisition projects that create, establish and protect wildlife/ecological corridors by connecting to and/or buffering existing protected and managed State or local natural areas, forests or game areas.

Eligibility

Any local of government, including school districts, or any combination of units in which authority is legally constituted to provide recreation is eligible. Local units of government, school districts and local authorities must have a DNR-approved recreation plan to be eligible.



Contact

Jim Wood
Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems
Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
(517-241-2480)
woodjb@michigan.gov.

Source: *DNR Website, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Section, September 2003*

Local Funding Sources and Economic Development Tools

Obviously, funding for enhancement projects can come from local sources. Discretionary outlays from the city, township or county budget have been used for planning and implementation. In addition, public bonds or private foundation funding can be used. Lastly, in some cases, fees tied to development, such as traffic impact fees or assessments, have been pooled and used to fund corridor enhancements.

Economic Development Tools

There are a number of economic development tools available to communities to encourage and fund development and improvements in specific community areas. The following table compiled by the Michigan Municipal League describes some of these tools:



Table 2 *Summary of Economic Development Tools*

	DDAs	TIFAs	LDFAs	BRAs	EDCs	PSDs	BIDs
Authorized municipalities	Cities, villages and townships	Cities	Cities, villages and urban townships	Cities, villages and townships	Cities, villages and townships	Cities with designated principal shopping district(s)	One or more cities with an urban design plan
Limitations	One per municipality	No new areas established after 1989	One per municipality	Industrial or commercial property	Industrial area	Commercial area with at least 10 retail businesses	Commercial or industrial area with boundaries established by city resolution
Requirements	Deteriorating property values	Deteriorating property values	Industrial area	Environmental contamination	Industrial or 501(c)(3) nonprofit in master plan	Designated as a principal shopping area cities by resolution	Designated as a BID by one or more
Eligible projects	Located in DDA district with approved DDA/TIF plans	Within defined TIFA area	Public facility to benefit industrial park	Environmental cleanup	Issue bonds for private industrial development	Improve highways and walkways; promotion; parking, maintenance, security or operation	Improvement of highways and walkways; promotion; parking, maintenance, security or operation
Funding sources	TIF from District;	TIF from plan area	TIF on eligible property	TIF; Revenue Bonds	Tax exempt bonds	Bonds, special assessments	Bonds, special assessments, gifts, grants, city funds, other

Notes:

BIDs – Business Improvement Districts; DDAs – Downtown Development Authorities; PSDs – Principal Shopping Districts; BRAs – Brownfield Redevelopment Districts; LDFAs – Local Development Finance Authorities. For a summary comparison of these and Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) and Tax Increment Finance Districts (TIFAs), see the Michigan Municipal Leagues’s Economic Development Tools, June 2000.

Source: Michigan Municipal League. *Economic Development Tool*. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Municipal League,



Appendix A

There are numerous sources of information concerning visual enhancement and corridor aesthetics. Many organizations offer publications and websites with extensive resources to help communities plan for and fund enhancement projects. They offer tips on developing community support and involvement in enhancement activities and assistance with developing regulatory guidance and sample language. This appendix will list and briefly describe some of the more prominent organizations and resources.

Organizations with Additional Information

National

American Planning Association, www.planning.org

Scenic America, www.scenic.org

The Trust for Public Land

Federal Highway Administration (Context Sensitive Design), www.fhwa.dot.gov/csd/index.htm

The Surface Transportation Policy Project, www.transact.org

National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, www.enhancements.org

National Council of State Garden Clubs Inc., www.gardenclub.org

The Nature Conservancy, www.nature.org

National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse, www.byways.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation, www.nationaltrust.org

Michigan

Scenic Michigan, www.scenicmichigan.org

Michigan Association of Regions

Michigan Society of Planning, www.planningmi.org

Michigan Township Association, mta-townships.org

Michigan Municipal League www.mml.org

Michigan Department of Transportation, www.mich.gov/mdot

Important Publications

Communities Benefit! The Social and Economic Benefits of Transportation Enhancements, National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse

A Guide to Transportation Enhancements, National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse
Land Use Tools and Techniques, A Handbook for Local Communities, SEMCOG, March 2003

Community Guide to Corridor Management Planning for Scenic Byways, USDOT, FHWA.

Preparing Corridor Management Plans: A Scenic Byways Guidebook, USDOT, FHWA.