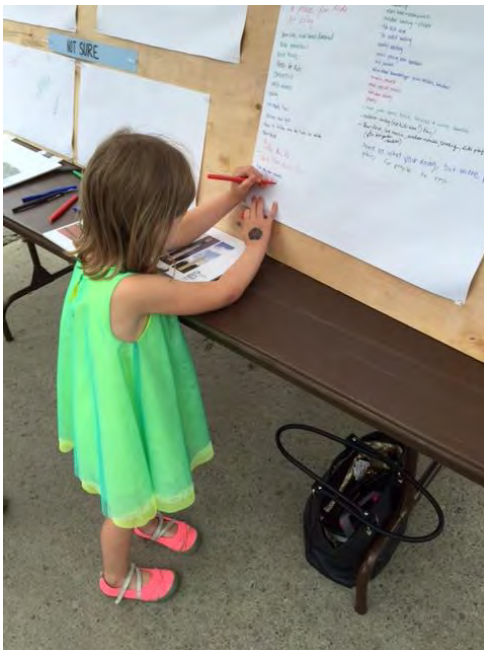


The City of Berkley ROBINA PROJECT

June 2015



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Better Communities. Better Michigan.





PROJECT HISTORY

In the spring of 2014, the Michigan Municipal League (the League) partnered with Detroit consulting firm New Solutions Group and the city of Berkley to lead a civic engagement project. The goal was to ask residents to brainstorm how to better use the public space at the Robina and 12 Mile intersection of downtown. The project involved building a local steering committee to lead the project, a physical demonstration of how the space could be used, and engagement with Berkley residents and visitors during an annual June event, the Berkley Art Bash. The engagement exercise collected more than 100 ideas of how people want to use the space and encouraged local leaders to move the project forward. The entire report, [*The Berkley Robina Project: A Report on a Civic Engagement Exercise and the Recommended Next Steps*](#), is available on the League website and in Attachment 1 of this document.

Through the winter of 2014 and spring of 2015, Berkley local leaders worked with consulting firms LSL Planning (LSL) and Grissim, Metz, Andriese Associates (GMA) to come up with preliminary designs for the intersection, based on feedback from the 2014 Art Bash event. In preparation for a Berkley Planning Commission meeting on June 23, 2015, municipal leaders decided to bring these ideas back to the streets for wider and deeper engagement. On June 13, 2015, the League joined the city and LSL at this year's Art Bash and led a secondary engagement activity, which will be used to guide the next steps of this project.



PROJECT GOALS

City leaders decided to use the 2015 Art Bash to lead a secondary engagement exercise to further guide the project. The planning team created two potential renditions of the Robina and 12 Mile intersection:

1. Close one block of Robina permanently on both the north and south side of 12 Mile to create a pedestrian-only plaza;
2. Narrow the road and improve Robina to make the north and south blocks more pedestrian friendly, while keeping the street open to vehicle traffic most of the year.

See the full renderings in Attachment 2 of this report.

This engagement exercise had three main goals:

1. Identify public preference for the two design options listed above;
2. Generate ideas and preferences for how the public would like to use the space (programming, design features, etc.);
3. Build awareness of the project and encourage the public to attend the Planning Commission meeting on June 23.



ENGAGEMENT AT ART BASH 2015

With these goals in mind, partners obtained a booth in the nonprofit section of Art Bash vendors on the north side of Robina – exactly where some of the potential changes would take place.

LSL printed posters of the pedestrian plaza renderings and inspirational images from places across Michigan so passerbys could better imagine how the space could look. The League created a 5.5' by 4' plywood board asking the public to vote and comment on the following items. The

board read:

The city is improving Robina at 12 Mile, should we:

- *CLOSE ROBINA: Close Robina permanently as a pedestrian plaza*
- *KEEP ROBINA OPEN: Only close the street during special events*
- *Don't know*

Each option had a separate poster to collect a vote and additional comments or questions related to each topic. There was also a poster dedicated to the last question, which read: *Either way, how would YOU like to use the space?*

The League also prepared small flyers promoting the June 23 Planning Commission meeting and encouraged participants to attend.

Throughout the day (10 am – 6 pm), volunteers encouraged Art Bash attendees to take a few minutes to participate in the exercise. In total, the activity received 178 votes and more than 200 comments, questions, and ideas. In summary:

- 89.3% (159) of participants prefer to close Robina permanently as a pedestrian plaza
- 4.5% (8) of participants prefer to keep Robina open and close only during special events
- 6.2% (11) of participants didn't know which option they preferred

Participants gave many ideas for how the space could be used, but the features most frequently mentioned were:

- Outdoor seating (18), including patio furniture, benches, and picnic tables
- Green space (17), including plants, flowers, and gardens
- Outdoor beer garden and related events (12)
- Farmers market or small farm stand (7)
- Kids play area (7)
- Food trucks (6)

The most frequent concerns and questions raised during the event were:

- How would a permanent closure impact traffic flow?
- How would a permanent closure and the draw of a pedestrian plaza impact parking?
- What changes to 12 Mile might be necessary to make the road safer to pedestrians?



INFORMATION COLLECTED

The charts below list every comment and vote recorded during the event. Almost all of the comments are typed how they were originally written (i.e. in all capital letters or with explanation points).

Option 1: Close Robina permanently as a pedestrian plaza

Total responses: 158

Yes: 156 votes (99%)	No: 2 votes (1%)
Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do it!- We need a central area- Walking downtown is quality of life!- More space for community use!- There are enough cross streets already- Will bring more people downtown to hang out- Making downtown walkable and family friendly is a big plus!- Yes! It needs a family friendly gathering space to host music and kids activities- Agree!- Great idea for a community location!- Just do it! It would be amazing!- Awesome idea! GREAT use of space! Love it!!!- More community space would be awesome!- Super cool and fun!- Yes, love the idea!- Yes!! Great idea- Great idea- CLOSE IT!- Yes, perfect idea- New place to go, love it!- It would make Berkley a shopping destination- Yes! Time to make it happen!- Sounds great, we love the concerts & idea for a permanent park- Great idea!- Let's be progressive!- Berkley needs more public space!- Close Bacon, it's a freaking freeway!!- I'm from Berkley and I'm all for it!!- Looks great!- Absolutely!- Do it <3	Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Don't make any changes – fix the big problems but don't make any new improvements- Please don't take Robina homes for parking structure like 2007 plan called for. I love my home! – Robina resident- Way too expensive for the small space- The city wouldn't be able to maintain

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great idea! - As a resident on Robina, I love the idea of turning this intersection into a public plaza - It would be nice to have a place to meet downtown Berkley! - I'm all for it! The city needs things like this! - I like the plaza idea - Any reason to bring walking traffic downtown is a good one - Too much unnecessary traffic on Robina - There's too much concrete – more green and activities! - We need more green – it would create a friendlier place - Believe in public space - I love on Robina and would LOVE a community space!! - Love events in Berkley – what makes it great! - Would be wonderful! - Better to meet new neighbors! - Less traffic - Would look great - Make downtown more family friendly! - Design a place where families can come together - Nice to gather without worrying about cars - Live on Robina – great for community – shopper & pedestrian friendly - We need a public gathering center in Berkley - Yes! Super idea! - GREAT IDEA! - Would love a family-friendly area 	
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Questions/Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If closed, how would the bar traffic be routed? Would not want them routing into residential - Would we need a parking structure? (Don't want a situation like Vinsetta Garage) - How would we make sure 12 Mile is more pedestrian friendly near the plaza?



Option 2: Keep Robina open; only close the street during special events

Total responses: 9

Yes: 6 votes (67%)	No: 3 votes (33%)
Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Parking is important- If closed all the time, there would be too much traffic on Robina. We don't want work trucks and shoppers on the residential street- Do not close part of 12 mile permanently- Leave open – Traffic signal on Wakefield and Griffith is plenty- Why do we need this? The space would be summer space only?- Keep open but close for events- Keep it open. Close for events. Remove all the bricks – they shift and people trip and strollers catch. Not handicap accessible. Put in some benches, low maintenance- Keep open but close for events- KEEP LIKE IT IS! – Scott of Robina- We need more parking spaces!	Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Let's be more innovative! Close it all the time to see impact on DT

Option 3: Not sure

Total responses: 11

Questions/Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Is there enough of a draw for people to come hang out?- Traffic concern- Concerned about residents – one-way- How will it be used in the winter?- How long before you have to build a parking structure & where would that be – Robina – taking homes?- Would love it! Concerned about parking, traffic, and residents that live on Robina- Parking concerns- How would it impact traffic flow?- Like idea to close but ONLY if impact on immediate neighbors is acceptable to them- Either way ... Robina residents need to have a voice- Traffic concerns for Griffith residents- What about near neighbors? Robina first block- Where will city make up for parking loss?



Either way, how would you like to use the space?

Total responses: 137

Activities & Programming

- Concerts - 4
- Beer festival, beer garden, beer tent, seasonal & local brews- 12
- Food trucks, food truck rally - 6
- Kids activities, kids programs – 2
- Farmers market, market, farm stand - 7
- Arts events, art fair - 2
- Festivals and special events – 3
- Outdoor movies
- Fitness events
- Food tastings
- Winter activities: hot chocolate, tea and coffee stands, ice festival, place to roast s'mores

Features

- Fountain, water feature – 5 (examples from Rochester Hills or Plymouth_
- Splash pad - 2
- Free Wi-Fi
- Have a public accessible bathroom
- Space for bikes and scooters, bike parking - 5
- Seating, place to relax - 6
- Park benches – 6
- Picnic tables - 2
- Moveable and comfortable furniture, patio furniture - 4
- Kids play area – 7 (animal statues like at the zoo, something to climb on)
- No maple trees
- Outdoor games
- NO kids area- 2
- After school homework spot
- Good spot for wedding pictures, etc.
- Heated road for year-round use
- Connection by bike – paths through the city
- Walkability
- A place for teens/tweens to hang out – it would be nice to have a space for us ☺
- Picnic blankets
- Dog park, dog friendly - 2
- Gathering areas
- Coffee stand

Greenspace, Look & Feel

- Greenery, green space, plants – 7
- Grassy, park-like area - 2
- Make it beautiful
- A place to chill



- Decorative street lights, interesting lighting - 3
- Flowers - 2
- Garden, urban garden - 6
- Good for walking

Art

- Color
- Art Hops (like in Kalamazoo)
- Art, local art, sculpture, murals – 5 (contact Cranbrook maybe temporary displays of student work)
- Highlight our school musical groups
- Performance space
- Music playing from speakers

Maintenance

- Community service volunteers could help gardening

Surrounding Area

- Bike lanes on 12 Mile
- More bars and restaurants
- More parking
- Town clock in the middle of 12 Mile Road
- More shops
- Put an island in the middle of 12 Mile with cross walks – Like Downtown Northville
- I want a grocery store!
- A grocery store would be great! No more nail or hair places! Or dry cleaners!!
- I don't care what you do with this space but reopen the Berkley Theatre!



CONCLUSION

With feedback from this engagement exercise, Berkley leaders have a lot to move forward with. Based on the findings within this report, the public seems to be encouraging the city to get creative and build a public space that can improve resident quality of life and spark local economic development.

The League recommends using these findings to inform City Council and other project decision makers to move forward and explore a permanent closure of Robina at 12 Mile. This report should also be used to encourage business owners, nonprofit leaders, and active residents to keep the momentum going.

To this effort, many of the recommendations detailed in the 2014 League report can still be applied to potential next steps. See pages 19 – 27 of the report for more information on:

- Continuing stakeholder engagement;
- Using community events to test ideas;
- Programming the space;
- Making low-cost, incremental improvements before breaking ground on any permanent changes;
- Potential fundraising opportunities.

The city and local leaders are encouraged to contact the League for additional guidance or assistance on this project.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Michigan Municipal League, *The Berkley Robina Project: A Report on a Civic Engagement Exercise and the Recommended Next Steps*
- Attachment 2: LSL and GMA, *Conceptual Design Package*

THE BERKLEY ROBINA PROJECT

A Report on a Civic Engagement Exercise and
the Recommended Next Steps



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INTRODUCTION

PlacePlans is a joint effort between Michigan State University and the Michigan Municipal League (the League). The project, funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority through the MIPlace initiative, helps communities design and plan for transformative placemaking projects.

The PlacePlans process is customized to each project and community, but each involves an intensive community engagement strategy. These strategies include a public visioning session, several public meetings to provide specific input and feedback on plans and designs, and direct work with key community stakeholders along the way.

To expand on the PlacePlans major projects, the League determined to undertake additional civic engagement pilot projects in two communities in the Spring of 2014. Through this civic engagement pilot, the League provided a facilitator to the City of Berkley to guide a short-term planning process and the implementation of a demonstration project in a key public place.

A stakeholder team of volunteers assembled by, and including, the city planner, city manager and other city officials undertook a significant part of the planning.

Through this civic engagement pilot projects, the League hoped to explore some of the theories and strategies of tactical placemaking. In essence, these demonstration projects put civic engagement front and center without the burden of a highly technical planning process.

A major success of this project was the use of an already planned public event to serve as a springboard for this kind of tactical placemaking. Building a civic engagement component during a public event allows several benefits: (1) it lowers the burden to attract visitors to the engagement event, keeping down the outreach/media/communications budget; (2) public events draw a cross-sector of visitors, including residents, residents of neighboring communities, and even tourists, who offer a range of valuable perspectives; and, perhaps most importantly, (3) public events that enliven a public place that, on an average day, may not have lots of users, allow people to view the space for its potential, as opposed to being limited by what currently is there.



ASSIGNMENT AND APPROACH

In Berkley, the city's PlacePlans application described a site at the intersection of Twelve Mile Road, the town's main thoroughfare, and Robina, a side street that for the first block north and south has some small business frontage and parking before quickly transitioning to residential use. Robina has two-way traffic and unusually wide sidewalks, which are furnished with outdated concrete planters and some benches. A lack of water outlets makes it challenging to maintain attractive vegetation in the planters. According to the city's PlacePlans application:

"The intersection of Robina and Twelve Mile is one of the few locations where commercial corridors intersect within the City. Twelve Mile Road is a lively and bustling county road. Robina offers a quiet respite from the activity of Twelve Mile Road."

The intersection of Twelve Mile Road and Robina is already used to a limited extent as a public gathering place—not just a street and sidewalk. For instance, the block north of Twelve Mile is closed multiple times per summer for a musical performance called "Robina Rhapsody." The Berkley PlacePlans application goes on to note that, at 30 feet wider than other downtown side streets, Robina makes an ideal "public square" setting.

As part of Berkley's Master Plan Update of 2007, the city identified what it called catalytic projects—four significant changes to Berkley's streetscape to make over the course of several years. One was the creation of a downtown plaza.

While Berkley did not participate in the full PlacePlans project, the League approached the city about doing a civic engagement pilot project to test out the public's receptivity to different ideas for improving the quality of the public space at Robina and Twelve Mile. The hope is that this would be a low-cost way to gather public input and create some enthusiasm for undertaking a more significant design process.

In initial conversations with Berkley's city planner, Berkley's annual June Art Bash, during which several blocks of Twelve Mile are closed for an art fair, arose as a prime opportunity for inviting public opinion. Thus creating a one-day engagement event to complement Art Bash quickly became the goal. Due to the space needs of Art Bash, it was also decided that this event would only focus on the north side of Twelve Mile, where the block of Robina closest to Twelve Mile would be closed to traffic. The city planner and city manager widely distributed invitations to an initial meeting to stakeholders, including business owners, residents, city council members, planning committee members, representatives of the DDA, and others.



NARRATIVE OF PLANNING PROCESS

The League worked with Berkley to create a planning committee of community stakeholders and facilitated four meetings to prepare for Art Bash. Approximately thirty people attended the first meeting and provided their input. Approximately ten people signed up for and then participated in the planning committees that met three additional times. The goals of each meeting were as follows:

1. Initial meeting – Introduce the concept of placemaking, share potential concepts that the committee might want to test during Art Bash, collect initial input about promising directions for the project site, and recruit attendees to serve on planning committees.
2. Committee planning meeting #1 – Share some examples of how other communities have implemented the most popular ideas generated at the first meeting, narrow the project focus, and solicit volunteers to research or further develop selected project elements.
3. Committee planning meeting #2 – Report out on work done between the two meetings and make decisions regarding the project elements.
4. Committee planning meeting #3 – Finalize any unfinished plans, determine final arrangement of project elements, and discuss questions the committee wants to pose for public input.



Initial Meeting

The League provided the stakeholders with a presentation to offer guidance and ideas for the project, and then facilitated a conversation around ideas to activate the public space at Robina and Twelve Mile.

Presentation

We began with an introduction to placemaking as a transformative approach to the planning, design, and programming of public spaces, and how it is helpful in creating public spaces that become the heart of the community. A slideshow of great public spaces and public space elements was shown. The projects featured varied from sidewalk paint to parklets to major infrastructure, from amateur to professionally designed, and from highly programmed to loose and organic. The facilitator invited the meeting participants to call out what struck them about each photo. She encouraged them not to start thinking about feasibility yet or answering, “Could this work in Berkley?” but to simply stay focused on sharing what they liked.

These public spaces shown included:

- *Campus Martius, Detroit*: A traditional downtown public plaza with fountains, café tables and chairs, and shade umbrellas. Stakeholders liked the well-maintained planter boxes, the flexibility of the moveable furniture, the accessibility, and the idea of a gathering space full of people.
- *Sunnyside Piazza, Portland*: Neighbors collaborated to brighten an intersection, using public art and sculptures to enhance the area while slowing traffic; additionally, the design resulted in an informal meeting place for the neighborhood. Stakeholders appreciated the pergola structure, noting the need for shade, as well as the bright colors and the innovative way of making the streets safer and more pedestrian friendly.
- *Kensington Market, Toronto*: A bustling year-round neighborhood market surrounded by murals and retail. Stakeholders appreciated the organic, gritty, and very crowded feel of the space, imagining it to be full of life and very welcoming.
- *Logan Parklet, Philadelphia*: A parklet provided protected seating space and a community news sharing mesh wall, showing how much you can provide in a relatively small area. Stakeholders liked the idea of providing something fun and engaging, especially for children to climb and play.
- *Green Acre Park, New York City*: A “pocket park” sanctuary with seating, full of greenery and a waterfall. Stakeholders liked the privacy element, the feelings of safety brought on by the enclosure, and especially the water feature.



The presentation then transitioned to showcase some examples of tactical placemaking and how it can support or include civic engagement. Again, these examples may have served as a more effective, and faster, explanation of directions for the civic engagement pilot project.

- *Park(ing) Day* is an annual worldwide event transforming parking spaces for a day. It showed stakeholders how they can test out ideas, in particular the reclaiming of a parking space for pedestrian use.
- *Build a Better Block* is the temporary transformation of a block into a more pedestrian-focused design. It leans on grassroots collaborative efforts of community members with the goal of showing the transformative effects of a walkable, vibrant neighborhood on a community.
- Candy Chang's *I wish this was* is a project in which the public is given stickers to place on vacant buildings and storefronts expressing their wants and needs for their neighborhoods.
- Open Streets Project and Cyclovias are the temporary closure of streets to automobile traffic. The closed streets are then activated by pedestrians and cyclists, and residents are given the opportunity to experience the streets in other ways, from yoga classes to festivals.

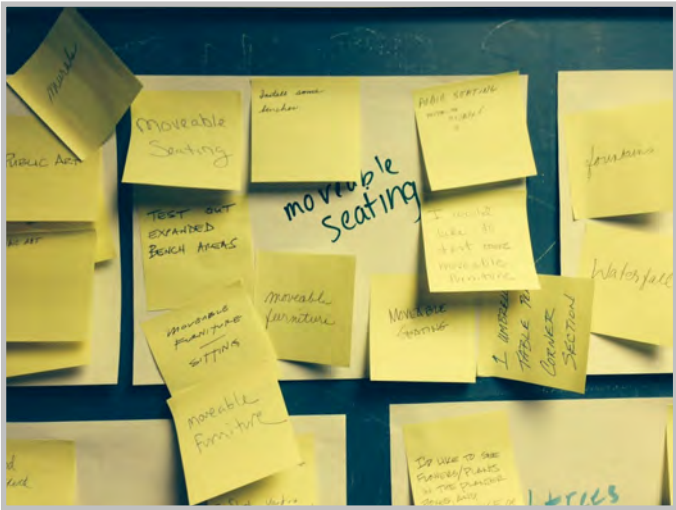


Through both the example placemaking projects and example engagement exercises, some of the other ways to measure the quality of place were introduced. For instance, asking people about feelings of safety, observing whether children and seniors feel comfortable in a place, and looking to see whether people are adapting the space in unexpected ways (moving a chair to the shade, for instance).

The goal of subsequent planning was described as choosing a variety of uses or designs to test out during Art Bash. This idea of “testability” became important as some ideas were dismissed for lack of feasibility. Art Bash attendees, the facilitator explained, should be encouraged to try out potential uses of the space and give feedback on whether they like it or not. Committee members were encouraged to imagine engaging programming and a variety of ways to interact with the space.

The minutes from the meeting show a few interesting conversations worth noting. First, debate quickly arose over whether the street should undergo significant changes—being narrowed, temporarily closed, or permanently closed in the block nearest Twelve Mile. Multiple small business owners in the area reported that easy parking is something valued by their customers. Other participants encouraged them to think about whether they might gain if Berkley did more to encourage pedestrian rather than vehicle traffic.

The “parklet” concept, which was an element shown during the presentation, was positively received but contributed to this debate. Rather than focusing on the intended suggestion (small, cozy space designed with some kind of barrier so that seating feel protected from traffic), stakeholders wanted to discuss whether it should be located on a parking space, as it was in an example photo, or on the sidewalk. The facilitator tried to move away from the discussion by focusing on the fact that by no means would this process make the decision about the final arrangements, but should be viewed as an opportunity to put these questions to a greater public audience. The second half of the meeting was devoted to facilitating a brainstorm of ideas about what to test for the Berkley project site.



Facilitation Exercise

Every attendee was handed several sticky notes and told to write on separate notes ideas they wanted to test. For instance, one attendee wrote: “outdoor yoga class” on one note and “parklet” on another. The facilitator then began to solicit the ideas people had generated. Whenever a new idea was offered, facilitator wrote that idea on a large sheet of paper and passed it around the room. Anyone who had written a similar idea would add her sticky note to the corresponding sheet of paper. In this way, the most popular ideas were quickly grouped together with their popularity immediately visualized. The labeled pages with categorized sticky notes were then hung on the wall, with facilitators placing the most popular ideas together (near the top of the wall) and the less popular ideas closer to the floor.

One goal of this exercise was that different types of project elements could be grouped together for different committees to work on. Based on the ideas presented, the meeting facilitator assigned the following categories:

- *Design*, as in physical design of the place;
- *Programming*, or planning activities to bring people to use the space;
- *Multi-modal accessibility*, increasing the ability of walkers and bikers to use the space;
- *Maintenance*, improving the way that any new elements would be maintained; and
- *Engagement*, to reach out to additional stakeholders to help plan the Art Bash event.

The following table shows the different ideas that were generated, sorted from most to least popular, and how they were categorized (this was done informally by the facilitator during the meeting, and confirmed once the notes were tabulated into the following table).

However, when sign-up sheets circulated for the five committees, people only volunteered for two: programming and design. This was taken as a vote that these areas were what people were most interested in exploring and the other committees were quickly scrapped. Furthermore, since only two people signed up for the programming committee—two people who also signed up for the design committee—the two committees were treated as one for the remainder of the planning process.

Category	Feature	Votes	Notes
Design	Public art	14	Art, murals, statues, sculptures; use building walls; chalk and chalkboard for kids; develop themes used throughout city
Design	Moveable seating	10	Benches, shaded seating (with umbrellas)
Design	Water feature	8	Drinking fountain
Design	Close off Robina	6	Plaza; green space; farmers market
Design	Trees and flowers	6	
Programming	Music-related structure & programming	5	School outdoor concerts; public assembly; amphitheater
Programming	Big outdoor game	5	Similar: yoga in the street
Multi-modal accessibility	Bike racks	5	Rentals, connect to bike paths
Design	Shade & shelter	5	Trees or canopies
Programming	Free Wifi	5	
Programming	Food trucks	5	
Multi-modal accessibility	Sidewalks repaired	4	
Engagement	Public Comment (<i>I wish this was...</i>)	4	Idea board on existing pillars
Design	Parklets	4	Test on a parking spot; test on sidewalk
Design	Use / decorate theater wall	4	Water feature, mural, greenery, mosaic
Design	Climbing furniture for children	3	
Maintenance	Trash baskets and recycling	3	Solar powered trash compactor
Multi-modal accessibility	Stop Lights and Cross-walk	3	
Design	Preserve parking	3	
Maintenance	Adopt-an-area	3	Families, schools, societies, churches
Programming	Weekend programming all summer	3	Girls night out every 3rd Thursday
Engagement	Engage schools in design	1	

Planning Meeting #1

In preparation for the first planning committee meeting, the League prepared a short slideshow that showed successful examples of some of the more popular and possible ideas generated during the initial meeting. The slideshow included more examples of unusual moveable seating, “vertical gardens,” or walls decorated with landscaping, and oversize games like chess and Jenga.



At the meeting, the facilitator showed participants a table (like table 1) that categorized the brainstorm from the initial meeting and tallied each idea’s popularity. She then showed the prepared slideshow to prompt thinking about what could be possible for some of the ideas that had arisen. Finally, she led a conversation that focused on whether and how to test some of the ideas, starting with the most popular. Some ideas were

combined when possible.

Certain conditions were set up: the city was open to testing almost anything, provided that a member of the planning committee was enthusiastic enough to champion it and figure out how to test it. In this way, the planning process was most responsive to “who showed up,” and who was willing to do extra work outside of attending the meetings. The League was able to take on only a limited number of tasks outside of facilitating the meetings, so the interest of the committee drove the final choices. (For example, while a water feature was considered probably overly ambitious, the enthusiasm of some of the members of the planning committee kept “water feature” on the narrowed list of ideas to test. Two members in particular volunteered to explore options for borrowing a water feature from a landscaping or gardening business. Ultimately, they weren’t able to find a way to convincingly test this feature.)

By the end of the first meeting, the committee had decided to investigate: renting moveable furniture, installing temporary landscaping, especially with the hope of simulating a vertical garden, designing an oversized game board, temporarily installing public art with local artists, and using student art from Berkley public schools.

Planning Committee Meetings #2 & #3

At the remaining two planning meetings, committee members reported out on their attempts to procure the supplies or equipment needed to implement each idea. Often, members attempted to get materials donated (with limited success). The moveable furniture/parklet concept emerged as the primary component of the project, which required rented furniture. Following the success of the first two meetings, the city was able to commit \$2,000 to put towards the event, most of which was used to rent furniture. (A budget is available as *Appendix A*.) The two features that were pursued but not achieved were some borrowed landscaping, vertical garden display, or water feature. A number of landscaping and garden supply stores were contacted about either donated or paid rentals, but were not able to contribute them on a temporary basis during a busy time of year.

The committee also met at the project site to discuss the layout of different elements. It was decided that all of the project components should be consolidated as near to Twelve Mile Road as possible to create a feeling of density and relatedness among them.

Ultimately, the physical components included:

- Four café tables and chairs, shade umbrellas, and boxwood hedges to define a small “outdoor café” on the street;
- Metal sculptures in some of the empty planters from a local metal artist;
- Student art from Berkley Public Schools on the empty theater wall;
- Decorative flags to help define the space;
- A large checkerboard painted with chalk on the street, using Frisbees as checkers; and
- Boxes of sidewalk chalk scattered around the area for kids’ use.

The only additional programming element was an outdoor yoga class on the site at noon.

NOTES FROM THE EVENT



On the morning of Art Bash, a number of volunteers assisted with set-up. Art Bash officially opened at 10:00 a.m. The first two hours saw tentative engagement with the demonstration project. Children led the way: A father-son duo made use of the checkerboard early in the morning, while several small groups of kids found and used the sidewalk chalk. Staff and volunteers encouraged tentative onlookers to partake in the different project elements.

Over the course of the eight-hour Art Bash, League staff took frequent observation notes about how the different project elements were being used. Early in the day, volunteers included the city manager and city planner, both of whom knew a number of visitors and encouraged them to either take a seat in the “café” or to write their feedback on the engagement wall. This helped demonstrate the use for later users, who required less prodding to leave their thoughts. Throughout the day, the League staff also engaged the users—especially the café users—in conversation explaining the reason for the project and asking users to share their thoughts on the engagement wall.

Children led the way: A father-son duo made use of the checkerboard early in the morning, while several small groups of kids found and used the sidewalk chalk.

PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY – ART BASH

On the wall of the former theater, now Rite Aid, below the student art work, was a large sheet of paper with several questions posed for public input. Markers were provided and users of any part of the project were encouraged to leave their feedback on the wall. This section documents the feedback that was collected, including summaries that call out key themes, and with tables that detail every comment left.

Question #1: *Vote! I would like to see updated planters on this sidewalk... OR I would like to see the planters removed, creating more room for other features (like street furniture).*

Overall, the responses showed an enthusiasm for re-thinking the space's layout for more diverse uses. Given the responses to the remaining questions, we don't believe that the votes for updated planters reflect a desire to not have seating so much as a desire for improved aesthetics.

Updated Planters	Planters Removed for Other Features	Both
18	10	5
Additional Comments	Additional Comments	Additional Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, more colorful flowers • More green! • Maybe some veggies • Smaller, but yes! • Yes, more places to stop and rest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables and seating like was on display for Art Bash • Seating with live music • Farmer's market • Games, yoga, a stage • Play place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love the idea of more gardens and comfortable seating!

Extra Credit: *Would you feel safe sitting in street furniture on the sidewalk on this block?*

25 respondents said yes. No one replied that they would not feel safe on this block. Additionally, no one added a comment that conditioned his or her response based on changes in infrastructure. The conclusion is that even as currently configured (without narrowing or closing the street), people feel safe on this stretch of sidewalk.

Question #2: *On this wall, would you like to see...*

This question refers to the large empty brick wall of the former theater (currently a Rite Aid).

The vote was split on this question, with similar numbers of people showing interest in both a mural or art and a vertical garden. It is clear that most people answered the "something else" with what they want in the space, rather than what they want on the wall itself. To identify themes, we categorized those comments and for those that

had more than two, tallied them as follows:

- A plaza or park: 7 comments
- Events and programming: 3 comments
- Art and opportunities for community creativity: 3 comments in addition to those who simply voted for art on the wall.
- Food vendors: 4 comments
- Other specific business ideas people feel Berkley is missing: 2 comments

Mural / Art	Vertical Garden	Other
Twelve	9	23
Additional Comments	Additional Comments	Additional Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student art (5) • Rotating mural art – canvasdetroit.com 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackboard with fill-in-the-blanks • Have more events to bring people • More city events, help the community feeling of Berkley • Icee truck • Taco stand • Lemonade stand • Pedestrian area • Pocket parks are the best, please do it! • Art easels for art • More soccer • Creativity courts – art by the people • Music in the plaza • Splash pads (2) • Plaza closed to traffic off Twelve Mile Rd. for music/seating • Outdoor cafes • Small boutique shops • Multi-story residences near downtown to increase pedestrian traffic • More public family space! • Park with grass, seating, chess, checkers, bocce ball • Would love green space but as Robina resident NO street closure • We need a grocery store again • Café & ice cream

Question #3: Should this block be closed more frequently for events? Why or why not?

Nearly all of the people (96%) who responded expressed a desire to see the block closed more frequently. Many people included additional suggestions for what to do during these closures, such as: food options like food trucks or tastings from local eateries; local events such as bands, art shows and school concerts; an urban park and greenspace; and places for families and children to gather. The one person who responded that they would not like to close Robina to automobile traffic more often expressed concern that it would be bad for businesses in the area.

Yes	No
24	1
Additional Comments	Additional Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring in food trucks, bands, artists • Yes, to position us to permanently close it – we’d be here regularly! • Yes, food trucks, drinks, and music! (like Mark’s Carts and Bill’s Beer Garden in Ann Arbor) • Yes! School concerts • Yes, our family would love it • Yes, we could have fundraisers • Love the events! Especially music with different genres) • Yes, it will be fun for the kids • Yes, Urban Park • Yes, food truck rally • I love food trucks! • Yes! Encourage more community meeting places and greener spaces while discouraging through traffic in the neighborhoods • More tasting from local eateries • Yes, because it will let kids know each other and be friends • All of the above! Art, activities, interaction, creativity! We need it! • Smaller pedestrian flow spaces within the larger drivable grid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, need business

Question #4: Do you agree? This stretch of Robina could be permanently closed to cars to create a public plaza. Why or why not?

Nearly three out of four respondents agreed that Robina could be permanently closed to create a public plaza. Those in favor added that it would be a great location for a restful space or community gathering place, something Berkley could benefit from, especially if it was cozy with ample seating and provided a place for everyone to gather, play and enjoy.

Those who opposed the idea expressed concern for lost parking convenience and for the impact on businesses and residents of Robina. These are all valid concerns that require additional research. Because of the free-form nature of the engagement wall, some “dialogue” was possible. Some respondents responded to each other’s notes, and disagreed with these concerns. They indicated there is plenty of parking on the streets and behind the stores, while another respondent suggested movable bollards so that it can be closed and opened depending on needs.

Three respondents made reference to changing trends towards more pedestrian friendly areas, adding that they would also like to expand sidewalks (potentially for outdoor restaurant seating) and add bike lanes; these people suggested that public space for the community gives Berkley more value, and that reducing traffic is also beneficial to the area and its residents.

(One additional note: two people who did not vote for permanent closure mentioned the proximity of the post office. The post office is actually a block away, at Wakefield and Twelve Mile Road.)

Yes	No	Not Sure
22 (71%)	6 (19%)	3 (10%)
Additional Comments	Additional Comments	Additional Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, create a public place • Yes (in response to Kam’s parking—street and behind are enough!) • Yes, perfect place to rest • Yes! All of the most popular and quickly growing communities in the country have areas designated to public events. Please promote the idea of valuing our city and our neighbors! • Yes, would make it more of a “downtown” feel • Yes, we need a pedestrian area! • Yes, Berkley could use a consistent meeting space • Yes, it makes it more organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, would make it more difficult to park for Kam’s • No, too hard to get out on Edwards • No, too many streets are closed off now • No, not with the post office right here • No, post office traffic and HOPEFULLY another supermarket will move in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on what Robina residents think • Could be very nice, concerned for parking availability for businesses though • Removable bollards so vehicles can get through if needed

Additional “Yes” Comments to Question #4

- Sure, close it and make a public space and while you’re at it get ride of the parking on Twelve Mile (plenty in back of the stores), expand the sidewalks and allow for more outdoor seating for restaurants/cafes. Throw in a bike lane too!
- Yes, it makes the city more cozy.
- More outdoor seating with tables for people to gather on weekends in nice weather to eat, hang out, etc. Outdoor water fountain
- Yes, too much traffic will not promote a place for people to come and hang out
- Urban park/town square is JUST what we need! Play, gather, enjoy!
- Ditto! *[to above comment]*

Question #5: I wish this space was...

When prompted with "I wish this space was____," Art Bash visitors suggested many amenities that would help make downtown Berkley a more inviting and comfortable place to spend time. These ideas ran from creating a public space with seating or a sidewalk café, enhancing comfort and providing a place to rest and socialize, to specific events that would activate the space, to focusing on outdoor activities for children. Two responses suggested using the space to help people, perhaps by donating proceeds from a volunteer run sidewalk café back to the city. Some written suggestions were seconded by later respondents, which is indicated by the “number” column in the next table.

Overall, it seems Berkley residents and visitors alike both see the need for a public space in downtown Berkley for people to relax, gather, and socialize.

In order to summarize themes, we assigned up to two categories per idea. The most popular categories are as follows:

- Plaza / seating: 7
- Events / programming: 6 (with yoga the most popular event idea)
- Children: 6
- Green space: 6
- Art & creativity: 3
- Food vendors: 2
- Other specific businesses: 2

(See next page for complete chart.)

Idea	Number	Category 1	Category 2
We want to be able to make our mark here!!	1	Art & creativity	
Art & creativity needed!	1	Art & creativity	
Updated bulletin boards	1	Community benefit	Communication
Help people	1	Community benefit	
Maybe cut into the wall a projector and screen to show movies and close off the street. Could still use theatre in some way	1	Events / programming	Film
Permanent speakers with season-specific music	1	Events / programming	Music
Outdoor summer yoga	3	Events / programming	Yoga
Little kids singing, dancing, art show	1	Events / programming	Children
Creative commerce sidewalk café with volunteer baristas, proceeds donated back to the city	1	Food vendor	Community benefit
Ice cream	1	Food vendor	
Small community garden	1	Green space	Community garden
A plant garden to grow vegetables and fruit	1	Green space	Community garden
vertical garden up rite aid wall	4	Green space	Vertical garden
Water for the dogs.	1	Other	
The Berkley theatre again	1	Other business	Movie theater
I wish that an anchor supermarket was next to this space	1	Other business	Supermarket
Artwork surrounding café structure	1	Plaza / seating	Art & creativity
A better community meeting space	2	Plaza / seating	Community benefit
Moveable comfortable furniture	1	Plaza / seating	
More comfortable with swings	1	Plaza / seating	
Blocked off with space to sit, Tables and chairs to sit in and enjoy.	1	Plaza / seating	
Outdoor dining from local restaurants, live music once a month (like 3rd Thursdays Ferndale)	1	Plaza / seating	
A place for kids to have fun	1	Children	
Splash pad in summer	4	Children	Splash pad

REPLICATION & LESSONS LEARNED

Overall, we believe this project showcased the power of a few key themes for tactical placemaking. The rest of this report is a strategy for Berkley to continue trying related projects but we offer these lessons learned to inform any projects or events Berkley or other communities to consider if they undertake similar activities.

Lessons include:

1. People are most willing to reconsider physical design and use of their public infrastructure when they are shown possibilities. Allowing new ideas to live temporarily at the site being considered for change gives people the opportunity to reach beyond what they would normally consider possible.
2. Related to #1, we observe that those committed to the status quo are often operating out of fear of the unknown. Temporarily testing proposed changes allows stakeholders to test their negative assumptions safely. Acknowledging this dynamic can be a tool for facilitators—urge stakeholders to utilize this low-risk way to test out the ideas that make them most nervous.
3. In the event that the idea for a space doesn't lend itself to a demonstration, photos of examples of what is being considered may be effective. The stakeholders in Berkley actually urged the League to use example photos rather than having, for instance, professional-style renderings of a concept to display. They feared that the renderings would make the project feel too “finished,” and would invite criticism of the details rather than feedback on the overall concept.
4. The use of photos at planning meetings was similarly useful. Rather than getting bogged down in technical descriptions of placemaking and why it is valuable, showing photos of great public places allowed people to imagine what is possible for Berkley. With each photo, the facilitator asked people to share simply what they liked. Their response was guided by how they imagined it would feel to be in each space. This turned out to be a very expansive way of discussing placemaking—responses ranged from the colors of umbrellas to the arrangement of seating. It also provided the facilitator the opportunity to highlight out a few placemaking best practices (e.g., moveable seating) and indicators of success (e.g., the presence of children) without turning the meeting into a lecture. Finally, it doesn't alienate anyone by using overly technical language or making people feel like they need to be designers to have an opinion.
5. This is true in many collaborative projects, but is worth stating here: throughout the planning process, it's useful to occasionally assess the stakeholder group and determine whether additional constituencies would be beneficial. This can be done in a way that avoids the risk of new members changing the direction of the project midway by seeking out those who can be invited to respond to very specific needs.
6. These events attract both residents and visitors, creating the opportunity for input from both types of users. Having visitor input can help overcome a hyper-local view and help people think about how their community can actually attract others, rather than just better serving current residents. Finally, it allows users to see the site in question being fully utilized, opening up their imagination to the potential of a busy public space.

Existing events are a great opportunity for testing out ideas. Building off of these events diminishes or eliminates the need for additional promotional work.

7. The Art Bash event was successful in providing opportunities for multiple constituencies (for example, kids playing with sidewalk chalk, seniors using the café, yogis doing yoga). Thinking through the ways that programming decisions will draw different constituencies; Adding programming or creating joint programming contributes to the richness of the event and to the diversity of input gathered.
8. Kids have great ideas and are outside-the-box thinkers. Children and families freely participated in the engagement wall at Art Bash. Having specific ways to make sure they are engaged can help generate some of the most creative ideas.
9. “Starting small” is a foundational belief behind tactical placemaking and Art Bash was another example of the value in this principle. It’s possible to explore what is possible and to get people excited in just a few hours and with a limited budget.



A few “missed opportunities” could be called out here for the purposes of replication:

1. Café “menus” or small placards around the site explaining the purpose could make the event less reliant on staff or volunteers (though the conversations with staff and volunteers are useful tools in and of themselves). I.e., consider every place where users will be experiencing the demonstration project and make sure that an explanation of what’s happening is available to them.
2. While staff took notes on comments made by users, a formal engagement tool at the café could have been useful, since it drew the greatest response. While staff and volunteers encouraged café users to share feedback using the engagement wall, it seems likely that only a percentage of them did so.
3. It was noted that where the Art Bash food trucks were set up, one block over, many people were sitting on the curb to eat their lunches. While the café tables were well-used—especially during peak lunch hours—signs near the food vendors alerting customers to the proximity of comfortable seating could have increased both the café’s use and the written engagement. To generalize: think in advance about how to use other parts of the event to best engage users.
4. The hour during which the yoga class was being offered saw some of the greatest loitering and space use. In retrospect, the ease of setting up the yoga class should have encouraged the facilitator to explore other programming options even though they were not the priority interest of the stakeholder committee. (Very simply, a volunteer contacted a local yoga studio and the yoga studio publicized their

BERKLEY RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

From the overwhelmingly positive responses (not one person wrote, “Leave things on Robina the way they are.”) to proposed changes, it is clear that Berkley has a mandate for doing everything possible to make the intersection of Robina and Twelve Mile a shining public space for the community to enjoy.

What is less clear is the ultimate shape that the space should take. If anything, the civic engagement project and input wall at Art Bash began a community brainstorm—it expanded the possibilities rather than narrowing them. This is an exciting position in which to be.

Therefore, the League's recommendations can be summed up briefly as: **Keep the momentum going.** The details in the next section of this report constitute a strategy for doing so.

When implementing this strategy, it is important to keep in mind that Berkley needs to answer two key questions:

1. **What uses do people want for this space?** Desired or needed uses should drive site design, not the other way around. Participants in Art Bash expressed openness to a wide variety of public uses. For some time, Berkley can keep expanding the brainstorm—and then at some point, start narrowing again. Keep in mind that the design can be one for great flexibility if the ability to host a variety of events emerges as a priority.
2. **What infrastructure changes (street narrowing or closure, bike lanes, etc.) will work for the City of Berkley?** Art Bash participants expressed openness to a range of options. At one end, many favored the idea of closing a block of Robina permanently. On the other, people expressed feeling safe on the sidewalk even as the street is currently configured. Additional data regarding both preferences and parking needs will help answer this question.

1. Find a Way to “Yes”

Placemaking should be a fun and creative process. Too often communities say “no” to ideas that on the surface seem complicated, expensive, or are outside of the norm.

It's important residents, businesses, and civic leaders are open minded, make an effort to experiment, and find a way to “yes.”

In many situations, great placemaking projects and activities are led by non-government entities and the city takes more of a facilitator's role. Farmington, MI, for example, hosts more than 60 events a year in their downtown park and pavilion. The city or DDA programs some of the annual events but relies on residents, local businesses, the library, and others to activate the space. The city makes it easy for people or groups to use the space for public purposes to ensure there is plenty of activity. Learn more about Farmington's downtown project at [the League's placemaking website](#).¹ Being flexible and empowering everyone to take ownership of public spaces is a great way to strengthen community partnerships, test placemaking ideas, and improve the city.

2. Explore What's Possible

Overall, this recommendation is about continuing to answer the question: What uses do people want to see in this space? Every suggestion below is an opportunity to test additional uses and collect public responses and ideas. But in addition, these ideas are also about contributing to a positive feedback loop wherein greater use of the space, even in its current layout, leads to greater care for and interest in the space. This in turn leads to increased community investment in the space and advocacy for finding its greatest potential. This is the feedback loop that can lead to both the most successful public space—one designed for its most likely users—and grow a community of advocates who help make a new design a reality.

Ensure Continuous Stakeholder Engagement

Building a strong team of stakeholders to lead ongoing placemaking activities can help both ensure activities continue, and make sure they reflect community wants and needs. Creating a standing committee is one way to ensure ongoing involvement. It should include a diverse group of Berkley leaders who are affected by any changes to the intersection, bring an interesting or creative perspective, and anyone who may object to change.

Stakeholders may include: residents, business owners, nonprofits, artists, school leaders, students, seniors, disabled residents, city officials, DDA representatives, and others. These partners should develop guiding principles, gain consensus on the committee's responsibilities, establish a shared vision for the intersection, and determine a facilitator to lead the group throughout the process. The stakeholder group should challenge mindsets, ask hard questions, and seek additional research on placemaking.

Although building and maintaining a strong stakeholder group is sometimes challenging and time consuming, the benefits of the collaboration certainly pay off. Projects that have a large and involved stakeholder group typically have more ideas, better engagement, and smoother implementation. The success of the Art Bash placemaking experiment had much to do with stakeholders' involvement generating ideas, doing research, gathering materials, and volunteering at the event. The next steps should be led by a similar group.

The most important next step will be to determine where this project—attending to placemaking at Robina and Twelve Mile—can “live.” Whether it is an existing organization or a new committee, an organized group of stakeholders should determine how the project can move forward; identifying a chair/lead facilitator should be the first action item for this group. The chair could be anyone in the community who has the time and capabilities to do the work but is also open-minded, confident running meetings, and a good leader. Potential facilitators are a councilperson, a member of the planning commission, an active resident, or business owner.

Use Community Events to Test New Ideas

One reason the Art Bash placemaking experiment was so successful is because residents could test ideas on how to use the space. Instead of merely asking visitors if they wanted furniture or art, Art Bash gave them the opportunity to experience these elements, give feedback, and offer new ideas.

The stakeholder group can use other Berkley events to test additional ideas and gain more feedback before making any expensive, long-term changes. According to Berkley's community calendar, there are many events taking place throughout the rest of the year—these events should be full of placemaking experiments! When thinking of ideas to test, consider what can benefit children, adults, and businesses, and build on the feedback gathered at Art Bash. Some examples include:

- At Robina Rhapsody, borrow musical instruments from the elementary school for children to make their own music during the event. Drums, tambourines, maracas, and other fun instruments will certainly draw a crowd. Adults might want a more comfortable place to sit so put colorful cushions on cement planters. Businesses will want to capitalize on foot traffic so invite them to sell items at a “merchant's row” throughout the day on the other side of Twelve Mile. Resident volunteers can take shifts acting as a crossing guard to help pedestrians safely cross the street.
- The Fire Open House is already kid-centered, so consider how other elements can be tested on this day. Invite local restaurants to do a chili cook-off, ask a bar to sponsor a beer garden, or have an artist facilitate a fall-themed, community art project or pumpkin-carving contest.
- Try something new at the Holiday Lights Parade: Invite the middle school choir to sing winter carols at Robina and Twelve Mile, ask a local business to sell hot chocolate and warm treats at an outdoor stand, have a wreath-making activity for kids and adults to do together, and if there's snow, have a section completely dedicated to building snow men!
- Whatever the experiment, be sure to track usage, record feedback, and ask for new ideas from attendees. This input is what should guide longer-term decisions for changes to the intersection and improvements to the downtown area.

Keep the Space Activated Through Additional Programming

There are already many Berkley-sponsored events happening at or near the Robina and Twelve Mile intersection but encouraging additional programming and activities are great ways to keep people coming to the area! Finding a way to “yes” is particularly important here – the city doesn’t need to lead all of the activities, but rather should facilitate the process and empower stakeholders to lead the activities.

Build on what’s in the area and encourage local leaders to host an activity:

- Will a restaurant sponsor an outdoor movie night? The restaurant can offer deals and specials to go along with the movie’s theme and sell snacks on-site during the event.
- Will a yoga studio offer weekly outdoor classes?
- Will a nearby dance studio do swing-dance lessons or a performance at the intersection?
- Will a private day care center host a Saturday kids’ craft activity or playgroup?
- Can the knitting store do a Sunday afternoon knitters’ circle?
- Will the antiques store offer an outdoor furniture restoration class?
- Can a bar host a beer garden in the space?

*Placemaking is less
about a physical space
and more about people
inside the space.*

There are endless opportunities for nearby places to host events at the intersection. Allow for creativity and be sure to find a way to “yes.” Remember to take advantage of each event by continuing resident engagement, feedback, and testing new ideas. This input is important data to make long-term decisions for the space.

Make Low-Cost, Day-to-Day Improvements in Aesthetics and Comfort

Many improvements to Robina and Twelve Mile are low-cost and can start now. Making the space more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing will encourage loitering (see loitering as lingering – it’s a good thing) and boost activity. Some examples of these types of improvements are below:

Moveable furniture

The patio furniture at Art Bash was extremely popular. Because the sidewalks at Robina and Twelve Mile are full of cement planters, adding too much furniture to the sidewalks at this point might be a challenge. However, there are a few ways to improve the comfort and aesthetics of the space without the planters getting in the way:

- Put out colorful, weatherproof cushions on the planters.
- Transform an empty planter into a table (or a table with a checkerboard) and place chairs around it.
- Encourage nearby businesses to put out fun patio furniture outside their doors.
- The city can accept donations for and purchase patio furniture to put in the street during events when the street is already closed (more on funding below).
- Residents, business groups, or nonprofits can sponsor and build and maintain a “parklet,” a small park taking up a parking space or two. Learn from Grand Rapid’s parklet program [here](#).²



Landscaping

Plants and flowers can dramatically improve the comfort and aesthetics of a space. The lack of a convenient water source makes landscaping a challenge at the Robina and Twelve Mile intersection, so get creative about ways to make low-cost and easy-to-maintain landscaping improvements. Some examples include:

- Repopulate the existing planters with Michigan native plants. These plants, flowers, and grasses have adapted to Michigan's climate and rain patterns so they require much less maintenance. Additional resources on native plants can be found through [Michigan State University's Extension program](#).³
- Offer incentives to nearby business owners to purchase and maintain plants. The best way to find out what is the right incentive is to ask. Maybe it's a gift card to a landscaping store to purchase pots and plants, or maybe it's free advertising on the city's website.
- Get the community involved by having local nonprofits, homeowner associations, religious institutions, or youth groups purchase and maintain pieces of the landscape. Have the sponsor put out a small sign promoting their organization.
- Find out if a local landscaper or florist would maintain the space in exchange for advertising.

Lighting and décor

Making the "look and feel" of the space unique is a great way to draw people in. Berkley is a unique space and improvements should be authentically "Berkley." Easy ways to draw attention and improve the intersection's aesthetics include:

- String outdoor lights across the intersection.
- Put flags or other decorations across the intersection or along buildings.
- Give the space a name and have a local artist make a welcoming sign.
- Feature local artists by rotating art on the theatre wall or inside of unused planters.
- Recruit knitters to engage in "guerilla knitting" or "yarn bombing" where knitters decorate an area with yarn.
- Paint a blank wall with blackboard paint and encouraging residents to use chalk to draw, promote events, share ideas, answer a question, and give feedback on placemaking experiments.

Keep kids in mind

Berkley is very family-focused and many ideas from Art Bash included ways to entertain children. Some new designs and activities should be kid-centered. For example:

- Make sure seating accommodates children by also putting out child-sized tables and chairs or furniture kids will find interesting. Kids love to play on stumps and benches or other unusually shaped furniture.
- Find a handy resident to build a small house or fort for kids to play in while parents can chat nearby.
- If a planter is empty and kid-height, fill it with sand and put out digging toys for kids to play with.

Constantly Engage Business Owners

Ensuring local businesses are benefitting from and involved in each activity is an important way to boost the city's local economy and ensure that any long-term placemaking plans are beneficial to Berkley's businesses. Art Bash participants were clearly concerned with what's good for business and owners' input and involvement is important. The city of Berkley is already prioritizing businesses and making many important processes easy and transparent, so city leaders should expand on this concept.

Nearby businesses have a large stake in the quality and success of the space. Business owners should be open-minded to ideas, be actively engaged in placemaking experiments, and do their part to improve the aesthetics and comfort of the intersection. For example:

- Stores and restaurants in the area can make their storefront more welcoming by putting out chairs, tables, and benches open to the public.
- Potted plants, flowers, and fun décor like lights and flags can improve the aesthetics of the building and nearby space. These features will also draw attention to the storefront and invite new people into the space.
- Attractive sidewalk signs and creative way finders (for instance, giving “clues” to direct pedestrians to the business: follow the chalk foot prints to the shoe repair store!) will not only draw attention to the store but offer fun things for pedestrians and loiters to look at.
- Host a contest for the best outdoor space: Business owners can improve their outdoor environment and residents can “adopt” part of the nearby area. Participants can have a week to prepare their site, and over a few weeks or a month, people can vote for their favorite spaces by dropping a marble in a jar outside the venue, making a hash mark, or putting a sticker on a nearby wall. Prizes like a gift card to a hardware/landscaping store can encourage winners to keep the space maintained. And don’t worry about “cheating.” Talk about the competition as a fun, community-building event. Residents should be encouraged to trust their neighbors and low-stakes competitions like this can be an easy way to build community.

The city should support these types of activities and find a way to make it easy for business leaders to take ownership of the public space and encourage activity.

3. Collect More Data

To make better, more informed decisions about how to use the Robina and Twelve Mile intersection in the long term, collecting more data is an important next step.

Because people are the center of communities, long-term changes need to be focused on people and how they use, and want to use, the public space.

Continue Resident Engagement

As mentioned, testing new ideas at Berkley events is a great way to show residents what the space can become. Take advantage of every event and be sure to test out an idea, gather feedback, and collect new ideas.

At any of the events or activities mentioned above, be sure to have ways to ask people what they liked or didn’t like about the ideas being tested. Input walls like the one used during Art Bash are inexpensive and visually exciting way to ask people what they think.

Art Bash participants were concerned about how any changes would affect residents on Robina Avenue. Although these residents should be a special target group in recruitment efforts, remember the intersection is a public space and is an asset to the entire community. The stakeholder committee should make an effort to flyer Robina householders to encourage participation at planned events and collect feedback on experiments from

as many people as possible. *Showing* is more effective than *telling* so door-to-door surveys asking for input are less effective in asking people to imagine potential changes with an open-mind.

Business-Based Survey

Larger infrastructure changes like narrowing the road, making the block a public plaza, or putting a parklet in a few parking spaces will require additional research. Nearby businesses should determine what they want to

know, come up with a short list of questions, a timeframe for the study, and reporting methods. Business owners can start collecting research by quickly surveying patrons as they come in the store. For example, over the month of September, store clerks could ask patrons at check out a few questions. Some may include:

- Where did you come from?
- How did you get here? (Drive, walk, bike, bus)
- How far do you usually walk from your parking space to a local business?
- Did you know there is a parking lot behind the businesses?
- Do you feel like you know what other businesses Berkley has to offer?
- What other comments do you have?

After the set time period, businesses can combine their data and start to figure out next steps. If visitors don't know there's a parking lot on the north side of Twelve Mile, maybe businesses should make an "Additional parking this way" sign directing traffic to the lot. If people usually visit one shop only and aren't aware of neighboring businesses, this is a sign that increasing pedestrian opportunities in Berkley could do a lot to increase exposure to businesses. Whatever the questions, be sure to keep them short and easy to answer, but also to give people a chance to share their own ideas if they're interested.

Formal Parking and Traffic Study

If the city moves forward to narrow or close a block of Robina at Twelve Mile, a more formal parking study may be necessary to ensure there is enough parking to fill the needs of the area. Ypsilanti did an in-house parking study in 2012 to ensure there was sufficient parking for the city's downtown and explore options for a more integrated parking and transportation system. City staff, DDA members and other representatives created an ad-hoc parking committee to develop guiding principles and set the study's methodology and timeline. Summarized, the committee determined:

- The goals of the parking system
- Existing parking conditions and usage
- Gaps between usage and goals
- Recommendations to close the gap

Ypsilanti's complete report can be viewed [here](#).⁴

If Berkley doesn't have the capacity for an in-house study, hiring a contractor can be a viable low-cost option, particularly for such a targeted study. the League works with a number of consultants who are not just focused on transportation, but understand placemaking and downtown retail. If interested, we would be happy to connect you to potential contractors.

Resident input and feedback from businesses may signal that closing the short section of Robina will be the best way to improve the community's downtown. In this case, the city will have to facilitate additional research to ensure the street and alley can accommodate the new traffic patterns. When the time comes, the League can also help connect necessary contractors.

4. Prepare for Further Planning

As described throughout this report, improvements to the Robina and Twelve Mile intersection can be started immediately and with very little cost to the city. Incremental changes will help keep costs down and increase the likelihood of successful implementation; however, larger changes will need funding. Because placemaking is a priority in Michigan, there are many funding opportunities to help communities improve their public spaces.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a way to raise money for a specific project or venture (usually) through an online platform. Many people contribute varying dollar amounts until a final goal is met or timeframe runs out. Patronicity is a Detroit-based crowdfunding site that supports community projects across the state. Improvements to Robina and Twelve Mile could be funded, or partially funded, through crowdfunding. Crowdfunding is also a way to build excitement, community awareness, and additional support for projects. Berkley should use this method of fundraising to its advantage and encourage residents and visitors to invest in their community.



For example, Berkley could launch a crowdfunding opportunity to purchase fun, moveable furniture to use during events. The stakeholder group would create a campaign on [Patronicity.com](https://patronicity.com)⁵, post pictures of the furniture they want to buy, offer incentives to donors (like an 'I Love Berkley' bumper sticker!), and set a funding goal. Everyone involved in the project would promote it on social media, at community meetings, and even publish a press release promoting the initiative. Stakeholders should take advantage of community events by promoting the funding opportunity and soliciting donations. At the next Robina Rhapsody, for example, the stakeholder group could come

with pictures of the furniture and a means of accepting donations (an iPad or other handheld internet device) and talk to people about the project. Even small donations of \$10 or \$25 add up quickly for a low-cost, tangible project like patio furniture.

[Public Spaces Community Places](https://patronicity.com/puremichigan)⁶ is an opportunity that launched this summer through the Patronicity platform. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation is offering a matching grant, up to \$100,000, for public projects that meet their funding goal. The goal is to help fund public plazas, green spaces, access to public amenities, farmers markets, alley rehabilitation, and other place-based, public projects. So if Berkley would like to raise \$10,000 on Patronicity, the city could apply for an additional \$10,000 match from MEDC. The organization has dedicated \$720,000 to the grant this year but a similar opportunity may be available through next year. A full application guide with eligibility information, scoring, and other details is available at <https://patronicity.com/puremichigan>. Once Berkley has a more complete plan for the intersection, the Public Spaces Community Places grant could be a great funding option.

Michigan has also started state-specific funding platforms meant to promote entrepreneurship. the League has helped lead this initiative and legislation passed in December of 2013 to allow intrastate investment crowdfunding. This law allows Michigan residents to invest in businesses and receive a return on their investment through an ownership stake or debt position. More information on the legislation can be found at www.crowdfundingmi.com. Although this opportunity may not be directly related to the Robina and Twelve Mile placemaking project, it can be used as an economic development tool that can promote new or existing businesses for the community.

State Grants

When planning infrastructure changes, the city may want to consider hiring design professionals to lead the process. A design charrette is a way to connect community stakeholders with architects and designers to help imagine a fun, human-focused space. The city contracts with an architecture firm to work for three or four days near the space, conduct stakeholder interviews, have conversations with business owners and residents, and build plans based on what they hear. The result of a design charrette (this should be negotiated with the firm being hired) often includes formal plans and renderings for the site and may even include plans sufficient for contractors' bids.

The process of a charrette can be a great way to engage residents and design a space people will love. There is often a significant cost associated with hiring the design team but because the state is prioritizing placemaking, there are opportunities to fund these sorts of projects. This year, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority offered a matching grant up to \$15,000 to communities hosting charrettes. Starting this fall, it is expected that MSHDA will offer similar grants. If interested, the League will help Berkley gain access to the information and build relationships with state officials who are involved in the granting process.

Additional Funding Opportunities

Especially in a fun, community-based project like the Robina and Twelve Mile intersection, Berkley stakeholders should not be afraid to dream big. Although sometimes competitive, there are a number of funding opportunities local governments, nonprofits, and business leaders can explore to help balance the costs of the placemaking project. Attached as *Appendix B* are additional funding opportunities the city and stakeholders should explore.

CONCLUSION

The City of Berkley identified the potential at Robina and Twelve Mile Road for good reason. The physical attributes, the need for an update, and the use of the intersection as Berkley's primary public space (albeit for events only) were all excellent reasons to test out the public's interest in additional investments there. The civic engagement exercise at Art Bash showed that the public's answer to, "Should we do something special here?" is a resounding "Yes!" Whether it becomes an occasional outdoor movie theater, a parklet, a place to showcase the public's creativity, a permanent town square, or all of the above, there is work to be done and enthusiasm about doing it.

By exploring what's possible (and showing the possible to people whenever possible!); by collecting additional data; and by preparing for more formal planning, Berkley can ensure that the ultimate direction chosen reflects the wants and needs of the community. This leads to the greatest likelihood that placemaking on Robina will be successful. Keeping the question of *use* (not design) first and foremost over the next year, we encourage Berkley to experiment as broadly as possible and to empower stakeholders in the community to try their own experiments.

And if the brainstorming dries up: Here are some bonus ideas for activating the space. These are just a few ideas (ok, 72 ideas) to get people thinking. Remember: Be open-minded and find a way to "yes!"

1. Sponsor "After 5" activities, happy hours, etc. to get people out after work
2. Hands-on science/environment classes at the intersection
3. Ice skating
4. Interactive fountain or splash pad kids can play in
5. Outdoor fire pit
6. Marshmallow roasting
7. Hot chocolate stand, best hot chocolate competition

8. Chili cook-off
9. Barbeque battles
10. Food truck rally
11. Top Chef Berkley contest
12. Harvest fest
13. Outdoor cooking classes
14. Cake decorating demonstrations
15. Buy-and-decorate cupcakes, cookies
16. Library book club meetings
17. Kids story time
18. Author book signing event
19. Poetry slams
20. Book cart with magazines, books, puzzles for loan and/or for sale
21. Outdoor eating - formal cafes or informal picnic tables
22. Small musical performances
23. Small theatrical performances
24. Improv/comedy
25. Artists working
26. Art classes/demonstrations
27. Hands on art for kids - Sidewalk chalk
28. Yoga classes
29. Family fitness classes
30. Walking club
31. Mom-to-mom sales
32. Karate classes
33. Dance classes
34. Fruit/veggie stand
35. Doggie refreshment stop
36. Music classes, guitar lessons
37. Barbershop quartet
38. Battle of the bands
39. Recycling roundup spot
40. Outdoor games (chess, checkers, volleyball, etc.)
41. Beer garden
42. Outdoor movies
43. Wi-Fi access
44. "Adopt a Plot" program - groups maintain a planter on a seasonal or weekly basis
45. A Berkley "photo-op" (See the League's case study: [Love Muskegon⁷](#))
46. Knitting/quilting club
47. Student photography exhibit with all Berkley-inspired work
48. Santa visits
49. Pep rallies
50. Tree/Menorah lighting location
51. New Year's Eve ball drop
52. Egg hunt
53. Memorial and Veteran's Day service
54. St. Patrick's Day event
55. Valentine's Day sweets stroll
56. Community potluck
57. Martin Luther King Day service
58. Halloween costume contest
59. Puppy parade, pet adoption drive
60. Community garden space
61. Annual clean sweep program - volunteers meet to do seasonal beautification projects
62. Model train, car, or airplane demonstrations
63. Ladies night downtown - Babysitting/kids' activities while shops are open late, outdoor performances/entertainment
64. Water balloon fight on the last day of school
65. Multi-denominational services, rotate a daily message
66. Central place for community drives/drop-offs (canned goods, collection for the holidays, etc.)
67. Community garage sale
68. Face painting
69. Lego building activities
70. Snow fort contest
71. Outdoor toy chest with seasonal toys
72. SOUP community fundraising events (See the League's case study: [Detroit SOUP⁸](#))

Endnotes

¹“Heart of Downtown: Sundquist Pavilion in Riley Park,” Michigan Municipal League: Placemaking, accessed 8/13/14, <http://placemaking.mml.org/heart-of-downtown-sundquest-pavilion-in-riley-park/>.

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⁴“Parking Utilization Study: Downtown, Depot Town, West Cross,” Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority, 20Twelve, accessed 8/13/2014, <http://www.ypsilantidda.org/content/download/1093/4167/file/YDDA%20Parking%20Utilization%20Study,%20Final%20Draft%2010-16-13.pdf>.

⁵Patronicity: Let’s Build a Better Michigan, accessed 8/13/14, <https://patronicity.com/>.

⁶“New Public Spaces Community Places Grant Incentivizes Vibrant Communities,” Patronicity, accessed 8/13/14, <https://patronicity.com/puremichigan>.

⁷“Love Muskegon,” Michigan Municipal League: Placemaking, accessed 8/13/14, <http://placemaking.mml.org/love-muskegon/>.

⁸“Detroit SOUP,” Michigan Municipal League: Placemaking, accessed 8/13/14, <http://placemaking.mml.org/detroit-soup/>.

Appendix A – Project Budget

Item	Details	Cost
Furniture rental	Café furniture, umbrellas, boxwood hedges, and delivery	1,693.92
Frisbees	For checkers	37.02
Spray chalk	For checkerboard	19.93
Craft paper	Flags	19.85
Printing	Photos of example projects	57.56
Miscellaneous supplies	Tape and other tools for hanging and setting up	41.48
TOTAL		\$1,869.76

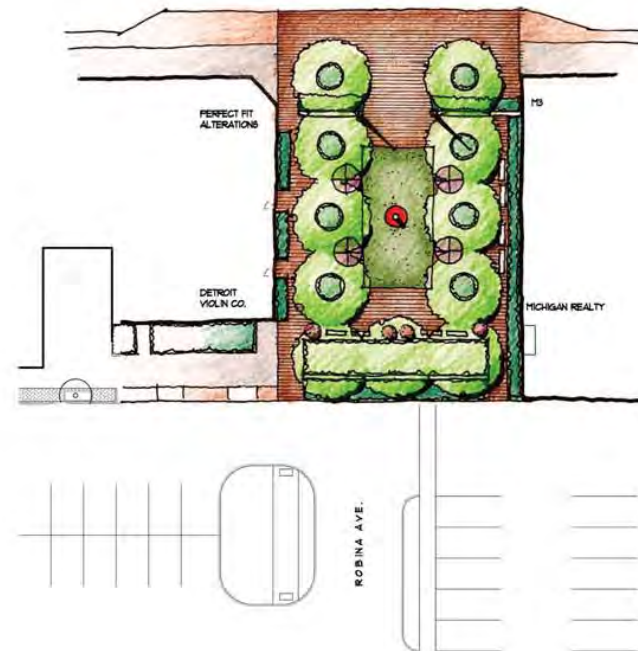
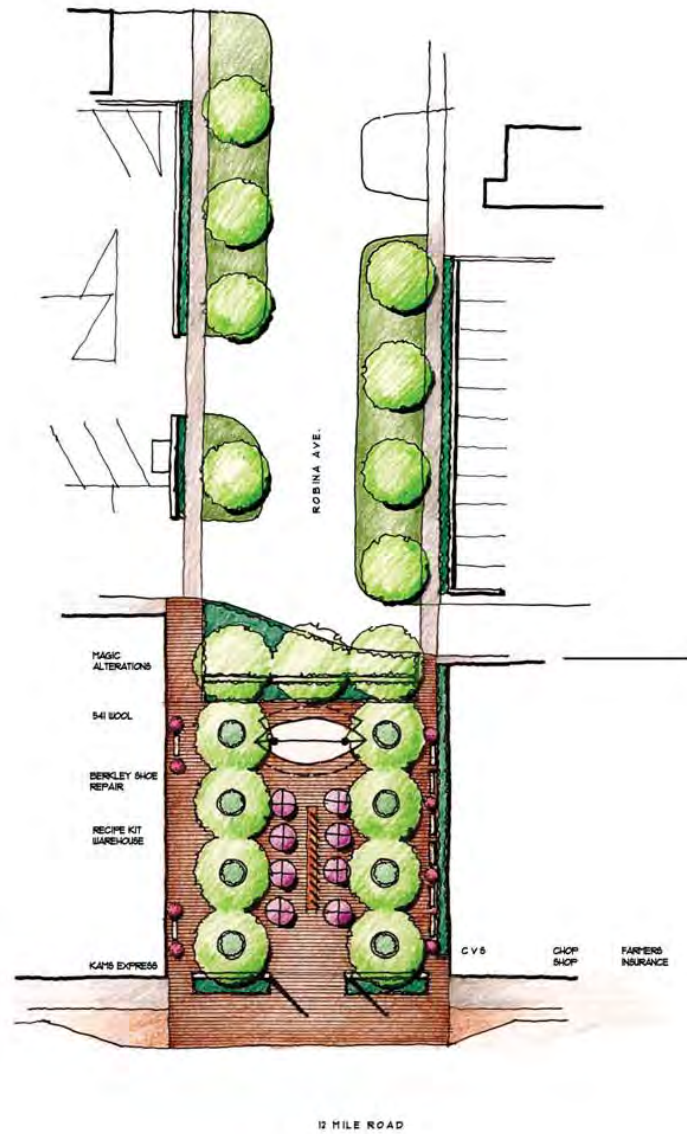
Appendix B – Possible Funding Sources

Agency/Program	Summary	Additional information
Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs Grant Program	MCACA seeks to fund projects that encourage, develop, and facilitate an enriched environment of artistic, creative, and cultural activity in Michigan. There is also a minigrant program focused on increasing public access to arts and culture.	Grant deadline Oct 1. More info at: http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/
National Association of Realtors Placemaking Micro-Grant	This is a minigrant program encouraging Realtor Associations and their members to engage in community placemaking. Many projects do not require a lot of money to get off the ground, so this micro-grant can serve as a placemaking catalyst for communities.	Grants accepted on a rolling basis, \$500 - \$2,500 opportunities. More info at: http://www.realtoractioncenter.com/for-associations/smartgrowth/placemaking/placemaking-micro-grant.html
Kresge Arts & Culture Grants	The grant program seeks to build strong, healthy cities by promoting the integration of arts and culture in community revitalization.	Grant information available at: http://kresge.org/programs/arts-culture
National Endowment for the Arts OUR TOWN Grant Program	The National Endowment for the Arts will provide a limited number of grants for creative placemaking projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and to help transform them into lively, beautiful and sustainable places with arts at their core.	Grants range from \$25,000 - \$200,000, funding opportunities will likely be announced this fall for the 2014 funding cycle. Additional information at: http://arts.gov/grants/apply-grant/grants-organizations/our-town/our-town-grant-program-description
ArtPlace America	Innovation grants are designed to invest in creative placemaking projects that reach for new possibilities and involve a variety of partners on place-based strategies that can transform communities.	Grants range from \$20,000 - \$300,00 across the country. Learn more at: http://www.artplaceamerica.org/
Michigan Complete Streets Coalition	This coalition works to assist communities with technical assistance related to complete streets.	http://www.micompletestreets.org/
MEDC Downtown Façade Improvement	For communities that seek to target traditional downtowns for façade improvements, which may have a significant impact on the downtown	Full and matching grant opportunities. More information at: http://www.michiganbusiness.org/cm/files/fact-sheets/cdbg.pdf

Agency/Program	Summary	Additional information
USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program	This program offers grants to improve and expand farmers markets. Local governments, nonprofits, agriculture cooperatives, and others are eligible to apply.	\$15,000 - \$100,000 grants. Info at: http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/fmpp
SEMCOG's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	If Berkley wants to expand the project and explore opportunities to improve Twelve Mile, the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) may be a good funding option. This program offers funding opportunities to help expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience through implementing a number of transportation improvements, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and safety programs, historic preservation and rehabilitation of transportation facilities, environmental mitigation activities, and safe routes to school programs.	More information at: http://www.semcog.org/TAPCall.aspx



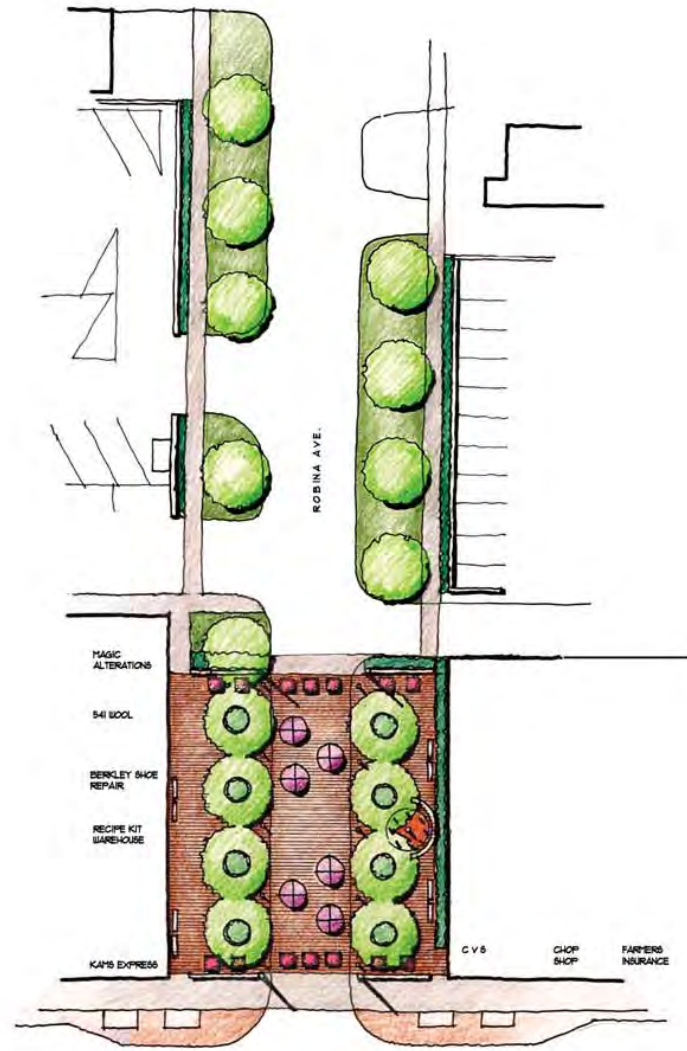
The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. Through advocacy at the state and federal level, we proactively represent municipalities to help them sustain highly livable, desirable, and unique places within the state. We create and offer our members services and events that range from traditional to cutting edge, in order to help educate and inspire them to remain focused on their passion for the area they represent. We are a non-profit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs; our people are dynamic, energetic and highly approachable, passionately and aggressively pushing change for better communities.



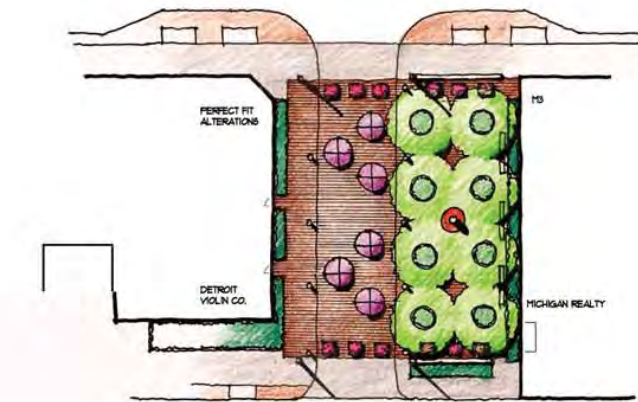
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Location:	Berkley, MI
Client:	
Option:	Option 1
Permanent Closure:	
Job Number:	105151
Drawn By:	JH
Checked By:	
Date:	
Date:	05/18/2015
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12 MILE ROAD



ROBINA AVE.



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Berkley, MI

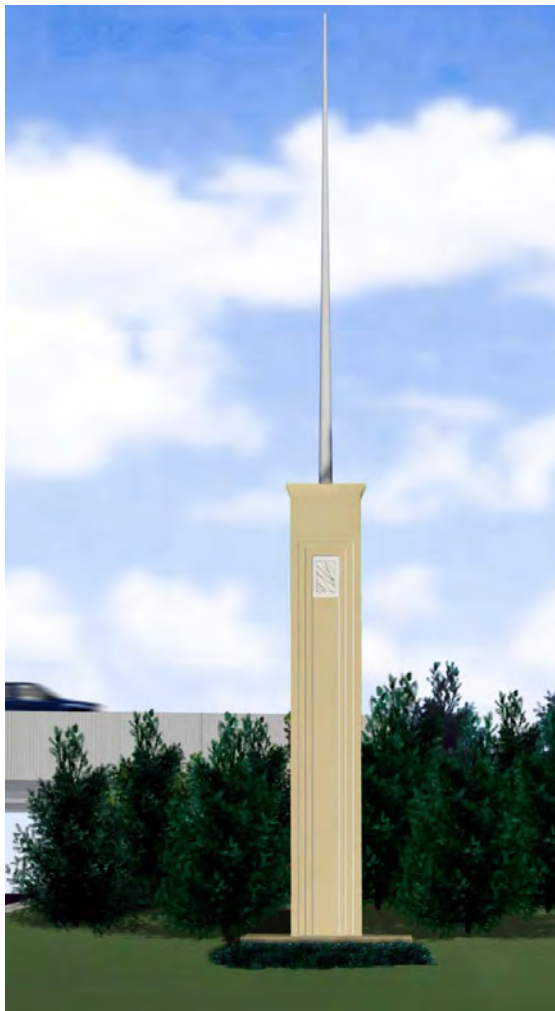
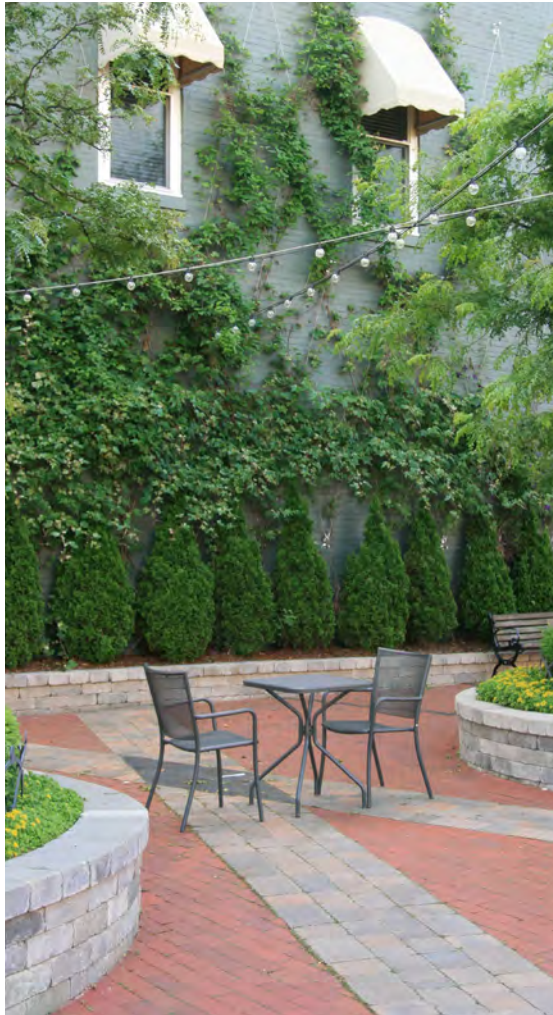
Sheet: Option 2
Seasonal Closure

Job Number: 105151
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Date: 05/18/2015

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Client: Site Amenities Examples

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