Master Plan

City of Hartford, Michigan

Draft February 18, 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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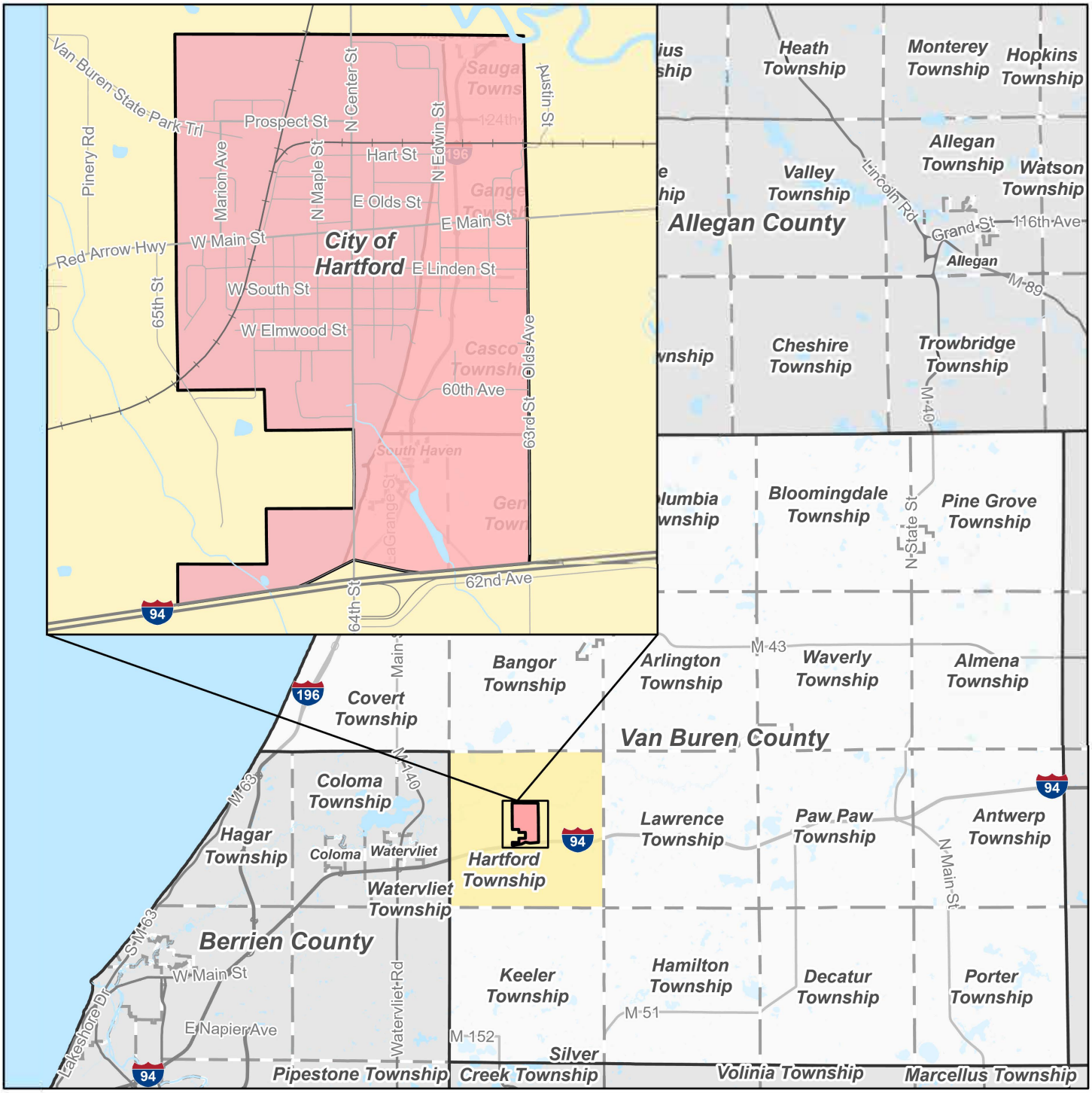
Planning Context

Planning for the future change and continual development and redevelopment of a community and its resulting land uses is largely dependent on where the community is located. Understanding the regional location of a community and other existing conditions such as transportation systems, environmental features, demographics, and more helps to drive logical, pragmatic, and action-oriented implementation measures that can be used to steer the community into a sustainable future.

Not only is it imperative to understand regional location and existing conditions within a community, but other elements—such as regional development and planning trends, as well as broad development and planning trends—are significant foundations to the master planning process and subsequent implementation actions taken by a community. By analyzing both regional and broad planning trends, a community can proactively prepare for changing environments and seamlessly adapt to growth and development for years to come.

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT AND HISTORY

The City of Hartford is located in Van Buren County, in the southwest portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The City is approximately 13 miles from Lake Michigan. Hartford consists of 1.34 square miles (857.6 acres). The community's walkable small-town character gives way to the surrounding rural communities of the Paw Paw and Lawrence Village and Hartford Township. Hartford is positioned northeast of the City of Benton Harbor, southeast of the City of South Haven, and southwest of the City of Kalamazoo. These urban population centers are situated approximately 18, 17, and 35 miles away, respectively. Hartford is connected to these more urbanized areas via I-94 and I-196, as well as with several secondary routes. The proximity of these centers provides the residents of Hartford with an unusually wide assortment of urban amenities within a short driving distance. Conversely, the residents of these metropolitan centers are drawn to the Hartford area where they enjoy the quiet aura of the community and its natural resources.



Regional Location

City of Hartford, Michigan

June 13, 2025

LEGEND

- City of Hartford
- Hartford Township
- Van Buren Townships
- Counties

0 2 4 Miles

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
Data Source: McKenna 2025.

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MASTER PLAN DATA SOURCES

This Master Plan uses the U.S. Census 2020 and the ACS 2023 together to balance accuracy with relevance. Census 2020 provides the official population and housing baseline, while ACS 2023 offers timely insight into current social and economic conditions. Census data are used for total counts, growth comparisons, and baseline metrics, while ACS data are used for rates, proportions, and trend analysis. When used together, the data sources allow the community to distinguish between long-term structural changes and short-term trends. This approach ensures technical accuracy while providing a comprehensive understanding of the community's needs.

U.S. Census 2020 (Decennial Census)

The U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 Decennial Census serves as the foundational demographic data source for this community's first Master Plan. Conducted every ten years, the Decennial Census provides a complete count of the population and housing units at a single point in time. Its strength lies in its precision, as it is based on a full enumeration rather than a sample, making it the most authoritative source for total population, housing unit counts, and basic demographic characteristics. The Census 2020 establishes a clear baseline from which long-term planning decisions can be made. It is particularly important for understanding the community's size, growth or decline patterns, household counts, and housing stock at the start of the planning process. This baseline allows the community to evaluate structural conditions—such as population loss or stability, changes in household formation, and housing occupancy—without the margin of error associated with survey-based estimates.

American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 (5-Year Estimates)

The American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 five-year estimates are used in this Master Plan to provide current, detailed, and context-rich socioeconomic information that complements the 2020 Decennial Census. Unlike the Census, the ACS is a continuous survey that collects data annually and reports rolling five-year averages, allowing communities to assess recent trends and emerging conditions.

ACS data are critical for understanding how residents live today. The ACS provides detailed information on household composition, income, housing costs, tenure, employment, commuting patterns, education levels, and age distribution data elements that are not fully captured in the Decennial Census. This information supports informed policy decisions related to housing affordability, economic development, transportation, and community services.

Michigan Housing Data Portal (MiHDP)

The Michigan Housing Data Portal (MiHDP) is used in this to provide state-specific, policy-relevant housing information that complements federal data sources such as the U.S. Census and American Community Survey. Developed through a partnership between the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), Data Driven Detroit, and other statewide stakeholders, MiHDP aggregates and standardizes housing, demographic, and economic data for communities across Michigan.

The Michigan Housing Data Portal offers a valuable bridge between local conditions and state-level housing policy priorities. The portal translates raw census and survey data into housing-focused indicators, including housing affordability, cost burden, tenure, housing production, and demographic trends which are presented in a format that is directly applicable to housing planning, making the data accessible and actionable.

Michigan Crash Analysis Tool (MiCAT)

The Michigan Crash Analysis Tool (MiCAT) is used to analyze traffic safety conditions and transportation system performance within the community. Managed by the Michigan State Police in partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), MiCAT provides detailed, location-based crash data for all reported traffic incidents in Michigan. This data source allows communities to identify safety trends, high-crash locations, and transportation-related risks affecting motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

MiCAT offers an objective, data-driven foundation for transportation and mobility planning. Unlike regional traffic models or infrastructure inventories, MiCAT focuses specifically on safety outcomes, capturing the real-world impacts of roadway design, traffic volumes, and user behavior. The Master Plan uses MiCAT data to assess crash frequency, severity, and contributing factors, which informs recommendations related to roadway design, access management, and multimodal safety.

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Community Engagement

This Section describes the planned future conditions of the City of Hartford, through the duration of this Master Plan. The goals, objectives, and recommendations listed in this Plan derive from the high-level existing conditions analysis, feedback from City staff and officials, stakeholder and public input, analysis of current planning trends, and more.

The primary purpose of this Section is to determine the goals and objectives of this Plan and itemize and prioritize the implementation steps for achieving them. The Future Land Use Plan is also a significant component of this Section, which describes the future fabric and planned land use of each parcel of land within the City.

PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC INPUT

Public engagement was a central component of the City of Hartford Master Plan, ensuring that the Plan reflects the priorities, concerns, and aspirations of residents, business owners, and community stakeholders. Because this is a comprehensive planning effort with long-term implications, the City employed multiple engagement methods to reach a broad audience and provide opportunities for meaningful input throughout the process.

Engagement activities included a community-wide public input survey, an in-person and virtual community workshop with interactive activities, and a guided bus tour of key sites within the City. Together, these efforts allowed participants to share both broad community values and location-specific observations, helping to ground planning recommendations in lived experience and local knowledge.

The input gathered through the public survey, community workshop activities, and guided bus tour was synthesized in collaboration with City staff, elected officials, and key community stakeholders to identify shared priorities and areas of opportunity. This collective input directly informed the analysis, implications, and recommended actions presented later in this Plan. By grounding the Action Plan in community-identified needs and locally informed discussions, the City of Hartford Master Plan ensures that recommended strategies are both responsive to public input and achievable within the community's capacity and resources.

Public Input Survey

For the purpose of gathering public comments for the Master Plan update, the City of Hartford conducted a community wide survey in late summer and fall of 2025. A postcard promoting the survey was mailed to all addresses in Hartford in the summer of 2025. There was a total of 42 responses to the survey. Most of the survey respondents (71%) were residents of Hartford. Survey respondents tended to be older adults, with those aged 55-74 representing 29% of respondents.

The survey highlighted respondents' similar positive feelings about Hartford. Most respondents said that what they appreciate most about Hartford is the access to main thoroughfares. Others pointed to its close proximity to other urbanized areas such as Benton Harbor, Kalamazoo, and Niles.

Many respondents said they wished for increased business and entertainment opportunities like restaurants, theaters, and eateries. Others expressed the need for additional housing options in the City, with the current housing stock being old as well as expensive. Most respondents expressed single-family homes as their most desired type of housing in Hartford followed by new urbanist single family. Some like accessory dwelling units, townhomes, and duplexes as well. Many also discussed the need for ordinance enforcement, specifically blight and safety.

44% of respondents are satisfied with the City's current park system. Others expressed the need for more parks, playgrounds and sport courts. Only 25% of participants are satisfied with the current trail system, 50% are neutral or have no opinion regarding trails. Some would like more trails developed in the area, others would like the current trailhead to be updated. Most would like sidewalks to be installed wherever none currently exist but most still feel safe walking and biking through the City.

People tend to visit the downtown area every day in the afternoon and find that parking is easily available. Specifically in the downtown, respondents would like to see restaurants, bakeries, casual dining establishments, mixed uses, bars, entertainment venues, and boutiques. Other important improvements specific to the downtown area include the redevelopment of vacant properties, increased job opportunities, façade improvements, safety, and sense of place. For business owners, items that would increase their performance include streetscape improvements, increasing the critical mass, events and activities, as well as grant programs for façade improvements.

Overall, Hartford residents expressed an appreciation for the quaint and unique character of Hartford, including its events, downtown spaces, and walkability. However, additional items residents would like to see are lodging and entertainment options, small-scale retail businesses, professional offices, retail chains, and industrial establishments.

Community Workshop

To better inform the Master Plan process, the City of Hartford conducted a public engagement open house in July 2025. For those who could not attend, a virtual meeting was hosted as well. These events were open to the public and were promoted around the community. The workshop was hosted at City Hall and included various activities on large boards to get community members involved and collect their ideas.

SWOT Analysis

In the first activity, participants were given the opportunity to comment on what they perceive are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within Hartford. The responses are synthesized below.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
• Long-time homeowners and residents • Railroad and I-94 • Schools • Small Niche Community • Red Arrow Highway and I-94 • Fire Department • Close to bigger cities and lakes • Affordable • Close tight knit community	• Demolishing developable property • Noisy refrigerated rail cars • Public involvement – lack community input communication • Blight • High taxes • Too many roads in disrepair	• Grant/loan opportunities for Downtown – MEDC • Police enforce the ordinance • Open building for new business opportunities • Train control ordinance • Downtown • Park south of Red Arrow • Historical area homes • Street improvements • Speedway race track • Support Home based businesses • Development • Updating Law and Ordinance – New Master Plan • Parks and Recreation Plan • Redevelop County Land Bank properties	• City fund demolitions • Speed controls on South Center • Decreasing home values • Homeless • Budget and funding • Need more money

Big Idea Board

The next station included a big idea board where participants had the opportunity to write down more general or broad ideas that they have for the master plan. Their ideas are listed below:

- Fire Demolition insurance.
- Lower taxes or tax incentives
- Jobs industry
- Redevelop underutilized lots and buildings.
- Council term limits
- Tax free zone
- Art
- For 250-year anniversary of America have a big 4th of July celebration
- Improve welcome signs
- Mixed-use downtown Housing on 2/3rd level commercial retail on street level
- Set up something to celebrate America's 250th anniversary
- Develop empty lots within the city for housing
- Redevelopment sites
- Single family duplex housing infill

Housing Preference Board

The housing type preference board listed various housing types with options to vote for if the City needed more, less, or the right amount of each type. The results are listed below:

Housing Type	More	Less	Right Amount
Large-sized single-family housing (more than 2,500 sq. ft.)	2	3	0
Medium-sized single-family housing (1,500–2,500 sq. ft.)	1	2	0
Small-sized single-family housing (less than 1,500 sq. ft.)	4	1	0
Duplexes	3	1	0
Triplexes	2	2	0
Quadplexes	1	3	0
Attached townhouses or row houses	2	1	0
Apartments	1	3	0
Senior living facilities	3	0	0
Downtown apartments/flats	4	2	0
Accessory dwelling units (e.g., grandparent flats)	5	2	0
Short-term rentals / seasonal housing	4	1	0

Goals & Objectives Board

The goals and objectives board outlined several categories that may be assets or have opportunities to improve. Participants could write on a sticky note as well as place a sticker on a map to outline what ideas they had and where. The categories and their corresponding strengths or improvements are listed below:

Housing and Neighborhoods – opportunities for improvement

- Rehabilitation of some buildings and properties
- Consistent ordinance enforcement – blight elimination
- Remove blight in residential and downtown
- Grants housing rehabilitation affordability MEDC MSHDA

Transportation and mobility - opportunities for improvement

- Water tower signage needs to be updated
- Signage for Entry to Hartford and Downtown
- Consistent signage
- Signage
- Walking
- Sidewalk to South Center
- More safe sidewalks and good roads
- Sidewalk repairs
- Road Improvements

Parks, Natural Systems, and Resiliency – opportunities for improvement

- Improve down by the river like Watervliet did with a canoe rental
- Add more parks
- Add more trees
- Need playground in the same area as the library
- Art in the park

Economic Development and Business Support - opportunities for improvement

- Job creation
- If there was a nursing home/senior center to create jobs
- City and Township plan together for bigger and better
- MEDC downtown revitalization
- Be nice
- Economic incentives and Brownfields
- Capacity for economic development and business attraction

Community Character - opportunities for improvement

- A large mural with the Paw Paw River and fruit on it on the corner building
- Add more festivals
- Façade grants

Environmental Sustainability and Resilience - opportunities for improvement

- Grant to remove old pipes water
- Trees on Main and Center

Community Engagement and Equity - opportunities for improvement

- A number of churches in our area – youth grants
- Talk to locals at the school
- Community calendar with all the activities
- Art
-

Downtown Development

Current Downtown Development action items from 2003 were listed on the last board. Participants were given the opportunity to list their own ideas for action items or improvements to the current ones.

(See Hartford Tomorrow Downtown Growth and Enhancement)

Bus Tour

Before the Community Workshop, a bus tour was hosted by the Mayor and Pete Sinclair of the DDA. Below are the discussion topics:

Library/Community Center

- Built for 2.7 million 5-8 years ago
- Used to be Red Arrow elementary
- Also houses the Genealogical Center
- The Library Board is separate from the City
- The Library Board owns the block to the south and maintains native plants
- There was some discussion about a park for children in this area
- Van Buren County may have some funding for parks
- Neighborhood parks were also discussed
- Staff should reach out to the Library Board to engage them in discussions about the Master Plan update.

Redwood Elementary School

- The School Board is also a separate entity from the City. Staff should reach out to the School Board to engage them in discussions about the Master Plan update.
- The school has a gym and a stage.
- The property was vacant land, part of Thomas Farm, before it became the school.
- They serve a Senior lunch every other month.

Recreational Fields

- There are four (4) fields by the Redwood Elementary School
- Concession stands built with Tribe support.
- There is a tournament held in the summer.
- The elementary school provides a lot of the parking for the ball fields.

Olds Avenue

- 25 years ago, this property was annexed to the city
- The land runs to the highway

Woodside Apartments

- Recently re-done by Superior Builders
- Income based
- Elevator
- ~65 units

Cemetery/Agricultural lands

- The cemetery is in the Township.
- The agricultural land to the east of Center is owned by Mr. Faulkner who spends time in Florida.
- The property was re-zoned to mixed-use sometime around Covid.
- The re-zoning does not show up on the current zoning map.
- The current zoning shows the property as split zoned between commercial and agricultural.
- Staff should have a conversation with Mr. Faulker about his future plans for the property.

McDonald's and Future Casey's

- Subway is in the Township
- Behind McDonald's is a Sand and Gravel operation Puhrman Excavation
- Staff should have a conversation with Puhrman Excavation about the future plans for the property.
- Casey's gas station is planned to provide diesel fuel as well.
- Across from Faulkner property is the EMS Base – is this owned by the City?
- The City ends at the I-94 ramps

Center Street Apartments/ MHP behind/ DPW

- Rent subsidized housing ~100 units
- There is a MHP park that is currently zoned Single-Family Residential behind the Center Street Apartments
- The units were built during a time when the units were ~12-14 ft wide and 30-40 ft long – consider creating a zoning district that would facilitate the replacement of older units to conform with new State laws.
- Is there funding from the CDBG to upgrade trailers?
- DPW is also on this road.

Small lots as platted throughout the community

- Many lots are 40' x 60' making them difficult to re-build or build new housing. Staff should evaluate the existing lots and identify appropriate setbacks and minimum lot sizes to work with the existing platted lots.
- A discussion with the Fire Marshal is necessary to determine the sizes allowed for small lots and the minimum building separation requirements.

Planned utility improvements/Road Improvements

- A 14-million-dollar grant has been secured to replace the existing lead lines in the city.
- Part of this this work on the lead line replacement will include road repairs.
- There is an additional 1.5-million-dollar bond to repair the roads.
- Sidewalks and walkability are important to the community, grant funding has been secured for improvements on Center Street and 60th Street.

Ely Park and Downtown

- There is an existing $700,000 grant to improve Ely Park.
- The park is home to the Strawberry Festival in June.
- There is interest in working with the DPW to created downtown design guidelines for the Downtown to regulate street furniture, sidewalk cafes etc. Staff should set up a meeting with the DDA and the DPW leadership.

Doranne Greene/Vanderlyn

- Rent Controlled housing
- Has a PILOT on the property
- Ohio maintenance company

Industrial property/Speedway

- Factory in town that does powder coating, visible from Marion Street
- Vacant land north of Hamhock owned by the Michigan Department of Treasury
- The Speedway does two (2) nights a month, night of destruction is most popular.
- Staff should have a conversation with the owner of the Speedway about the future plans for the property.
- There is rail service in the community that is operated by West MI Rail Service. The rail hauls diary feed, fertilizer, and cooking oil on the line typically. This generates a lot of truck traffic on the main roads and a need for support services for truck traffic.
- The owner of the rail line is Mike Hnatiuk staff should reach out and ask what future plans he has for the area.
- Ameri-Gas is located off of Prospect.
- There is a buffing and polishing facility for furniture on Prospect. The company has one (1) shift. Staff should have a conversation with the property owner about future plans for the property.

Van Buren State Park Trail head

- Located on Prospect Street the Trail head is a great asset.
- The signage is old and the trail head could use some improvements.
- Staff should work with Van Buren County to get information about any planned improvements for the trail head.
- The trail head connects all the way to South Haven.

High School/Middle School

- The high school and middle school sit on the same property.
- There are ball fields for soccer and football. Soccer has been gaining popularity and is very successful.
- The school has a “school of choice” option and many children attend using this option. The population for K-12 is about 1,400.

County Fair and Township Businesses outside of the City

- The Van Buren Youth Fair is located just outside of the City and is active during the week of July 14-18th.
- There is a Lineage regional warehousing truck facility for the movement of goods in the Township.
- Paw Paw Produce is in the Township.
- A metal rolling plant for pole buildings is in the Township out by the County Fair.
- Bachman Welding and Red Arrow Automotive are also in the Township.

Hartford Today

The City of Hartford Master Plan provides a roadmap for the future development of the City. The changes in the City's demographics, acknowledgement of advances in technology, community-building, and other important sectors, and comments received during public input have led to a revised vision for the future changes within Hartford.

Demographic analysis, or the study of the characteristics of the population, is a fundamental element of master planning. Future growth and development require consideration of how many people will need City services, how much housing is affordable, how many new houses will be built, and other vital signs. By understanding these existing conditions and past trends, the City can then appropriately anticipate and plan for the future needs of the community.

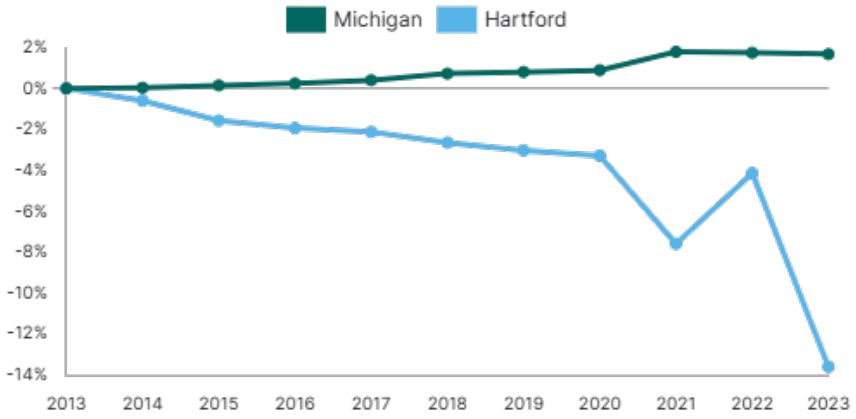
The comprehensive data sources for this Master Plan are the 2010, 2020, and 2023 U.S. Census, and the 2023 American Community Survey Estimates. This analysis compares the City of Hartford to several surrounding communities and Van Buren County where appropriate. Differences in demographics may indicate issues or areas in which land use planning and public policies are warranted; may identify strengths or assets that can be further developed; or may identify weaknesses or issues that need to be addressed.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

This section of the Plan examines the demographic trends in City of Hartford by analyzing data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The analysis offers regional context and comparisons with neighboring communities. Understanding the existing demographic patterns gives insight into what the City needs to plan for in the future. This section includes a review of the population, race, age structure, educational attainment, as well as employment and housing summaries. The data and trends identified provide a foundation for developing strategies to address the needs of City of Hartford residents.

Population Trends

According to the American Community Survey, Hartford had a population of 2,312 residents in 2023. Over the past 13 years, the City of Hartford has experienced a significant population decrease from its peak population of 2,676 residents in 2010. During this same period, ACS data highlight a decline in family poverty rates, decreasing to 10.8% in 2023 from 12% in 2013, as well as a decrease in average household size from 3.12 in 2013 to 2.66 in 2023.



Similar trends are observed across the County, Township, and other nearby municipalities, which have also experienced reductions in household size and family poverty rates, as shown in Table 1. However, several regional communities exhibit differing population trends, indicating the presence of stronger community amenities or economic drivers that attract residents. Hartford would benefit from identifying gaps in community characteristics and amenities that support population growth and broader economic development.

Table 1: Regional Population Trends

Municipality	2010	2023	% Change (2010-2023)
City of Hartford	2,662	2,312	-13.1%
Van Buren County	76,585	75,681	-1.2%
Hartford Township	3,278	3,025	-7.7%
Village of Lawrence	1,182	1,186	0.3%
City of Bangor	2,078	2,113	1.7%
City of Watervliet	1,679	1,879	11.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2023

Race, Gender, Age, and Disability Status

While the recent decade of population decline has reduced Hartford's population by roughly 300 residents, the ethnic composition of residents has only changed modestly. About 63% of the ethic population continues to be White, followed by American Indian and Alaska Native residents making up about 4% of the population (Table 3). It is important to note a noticeable decrease in the number of White residents in the City over the last decade. Additionally, there has been a slight increase in the number of Black or African American individuals as well as American Indian and Alaska Native individuals in the City, although altogether this population group makes up less than 10% of the overall population.

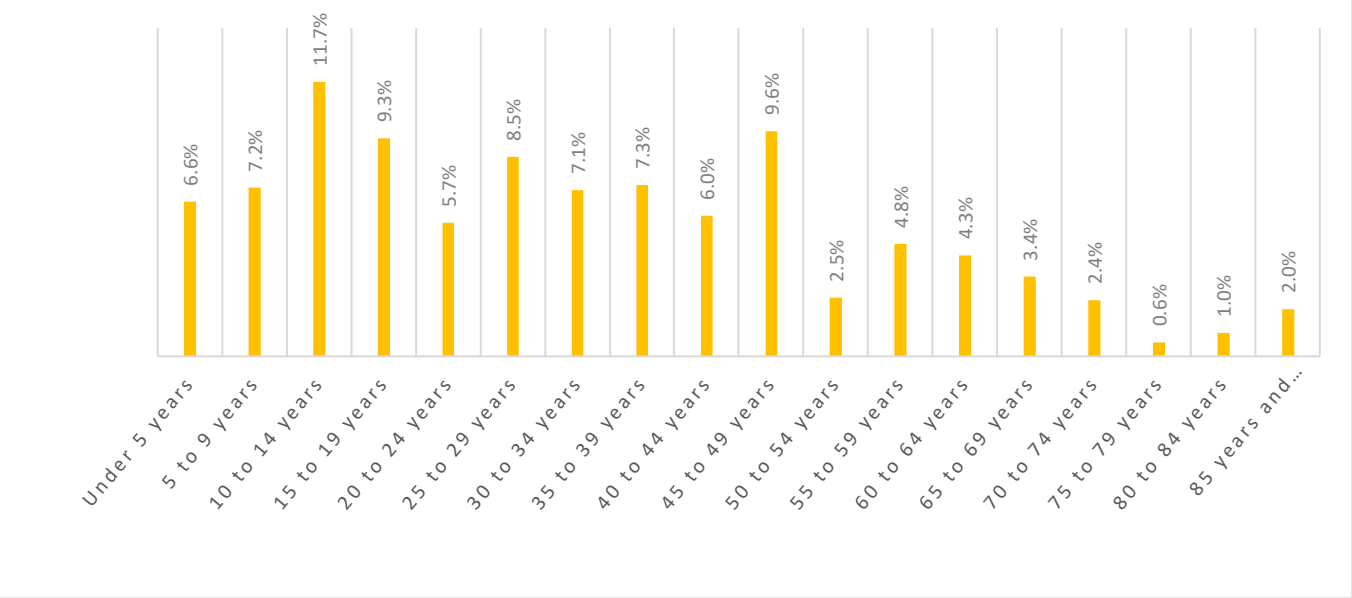
Table 2: Race and Ethnicity

Race	2010	%	2020	%	% Change (2010-2020)
Total Population	**2,688**		**2,515**		**-6.4%**
One race	2,567	95.5%	2,198	87.4%	-14.4%
White	1,933	71.9%	1,583	62.9%	-18.1%
Black or African American	44	1.6%	45	1.8%	2.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native	75	2.8%	97	3.9%	29.3%
Asian	13	0.5%	6	0.2%	-53.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	-
Some Other Race	502	18.7%	465	18.5%	-7.4%
Two or More Races	121	4.5%	317	12.6%	162.0%
Hispanic or Latino	793	29.5%	852	33.9%	7.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2020

The figures below provide an overview of how the City of Hartford's population varies by age, including current composition and changes in age distribution over time. The median age of residents in the City of Hartford is 30.4 years, and residents under the age of 30 account for approximately 49% of Hartford's population. This age group is commonly associated with working-age residents and younger starter families. Middle-stage residents aged 30 to 64 account for 41.6% of the population and are often associated with mature families and established career households that contribute significantly to local economic activity and spending. Residents aged 65 and older comprise 9.4% of the population and represent the City's senior population.

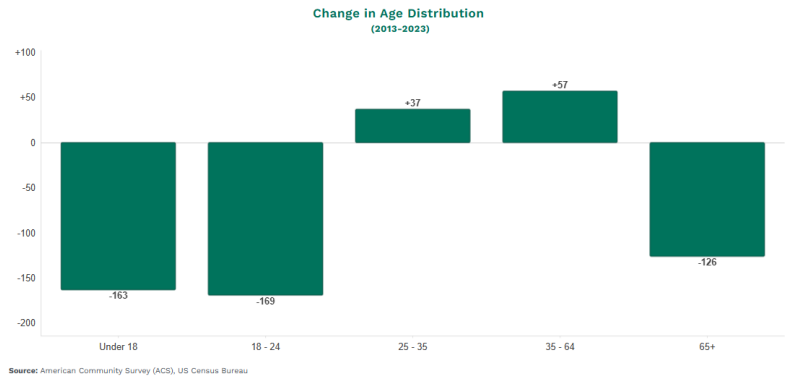
Figure 1. Population Breakdown by Age, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023

The Change in Age Distribution figure (Figure 3) highlights decreasing population levels among residents under the age of 24, as well as those under the age of 65. Notably, growth among residents aged 25 to 65 supports long-term economic stability and community development by strengthening the workforce and supporting both established and emerging households. Over the past decade, shifts in Hartford's age distribution point to future demographic implications that will influence population composition and inform strategies to mitigate potential economic and community development challenges associated with an aging and evolving population.

Figure 2. Change in Age Distribution, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023, MSHDA Housing Data Portal (2025)

Housing and Households

According to the 2023 Census Estimates Hartford had 866 households and 884 total housing units. This includes 573 family households (66%) and 293 non-family (34%) households.

Based on the U.S. Census Estimates for 2023:

- The average household size is 2.66 persons.
- The average family size is 3.25 persons.
- About 40% of all households had children under the age of 18.
- The majority of the households, 41.5%, are occupied by married couples, 33.8% are non-family households – 26.9% of which are people living alone and about 47% of the people living alone are seniors. 20% are single-female parent-led households, and the remaining 4.7% being single-male parent-led households.
- Most occupied households are single-family (68.2%), 91.6% of which are occupied by married couples. There are also a significant number of multiple family structures (38.9%), that are occupied mostly by non-family households.
- Of the 884 built homes in City of Hartford, 98% are occupied. Of the occupied houses, 65.7% are owner-occupied and about 34.3% are renter-occupied. The 18 existing vacant housing structures have the potential to accommodate any additional residents; however, the population has decreased since 2010 thus indicating there is not a need for more housing.
- According to the 2023 American Community Survey Estimates, 19.1% of Hartford residents (439 persons) are currently living below the poverty line. This is a large percentage of residents who are below the poverty line when compared to Van Buren County (13.8%) and the state of Michigan (13.5%).

Table 2: Housing by Family Type and Unit Type

	Total Occupied-Houses	Married-couple family household	Single-male family household	Single-female family household	Non-family household
Housing by Family Type (#)	866	359	41	173	293
Housing by Family Type (%)		41.5%	4.7%	20%	33.8%
Housing by Units/Housing Type:					
1-unit structures	68.2%	91.6%	58.5%	54.3%	49.1%
2-or-more-unit structures	20.7%	0.0%	0%	37.6%	38.9%
Mobile homes and all other types	11.1%	8.4%	41.5%	8.1%	11.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023

Hartford's housing stock is fairly typical of walkable small-town communities. According to the 2023 Census Estimates, Hartford had 866 occupied housing units and 18 vacant units. The majority of housing units in Hartford are 4–5-bedroom homes (47%). In addition, 27% of the City's housing stock was built prior to 1940 (231 units). Many of these are the historic homes which are found throughout the city. One-fourth of the remaining housing units were built between 1960 and 1979. Since 2020, there have been no new homes built.

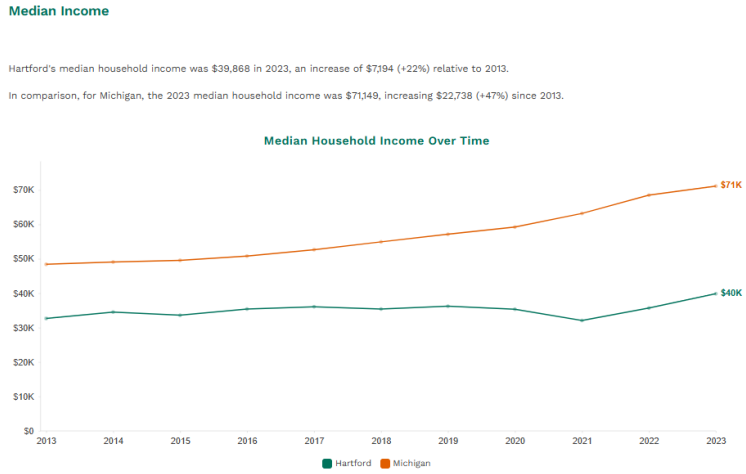
The quality, affordability, and availability of a community's housing stock has a significant impact on the vitality and quality of the community as a whole. The following analysis of trends relating to the number of housing units, the amount of owner-occupied, rental, and vacant units, and households by type helps evaluate the health of City of Hartford's housing stock.

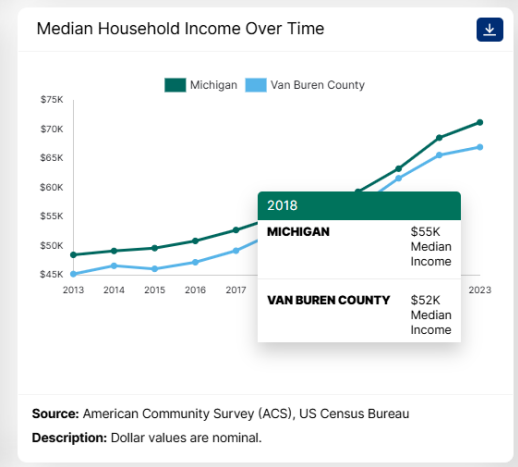
Economic Profile

This section outlines the employment levels for the City based on 2023 ACS (American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates) data, which is the most current information available from the United States Census. Because this data is an estimate, the following numbers may have a margin of error. However, the following data provides a breakdown of where those within the City, who are 16 years and older, hold employment.

The City of Hartford's economic profile is supported by its employment base and steady consistent household incomes. Over the recent decade, Hartford median household income has kept pace with the county and surrounding Hartford township, all municipalities sharing gradual increases in median income, whereas in 2023, Hartford's median income was $40,000, below the similar Michigan and Van Buren County median incomes of around $55,000, seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Regional Median Household Income





Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023, MSHDA Housing Data Portal (2025)

Hartford had a total of 926 people 16 and older in the workforce in 2023. The main employment sectors for full-time workers were service occupations (278), manufacturing (210), and sales and office occupations (176). The employment industry supports Hartford's median household income, and the table below identifies employment sectors by the number of those 16 years of age and older in the workforce.

Table 3: Employment by Industry, 2023

Civilian employed population 16 years and over	926
Management, business, science, and arts occupations:	**210**
Management, business, and financial occupations:	48
Management occupations	38
Business and financial operations occupations	10
Computer, engineering, and science occupations:	**29**
Computer and mathematical occupations	0
Architecture and engineering occupations	0
Life, physical, and social science occupations	29
Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations:	**40**
Community and social service occupations	4
Legal occupations	0
Educational instruction, and library occupations	33
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	3
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations:	**93**
Health diagnosing and treating practitioners and other technical occupations	41
Health technologists and technicians	52
Service occupations:	**278**
Protective service occupations:	33
Firefighting and prevention, and other protective service workers including supervisors	23
Law enforcement workers including supervisors	10
Food preparation and serving related occupations	51
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	22
Personal care and service occupations	31
Sales and office occupations:	**176**
Sales and related occupations	63
Office and administrative support occupations	113
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations:	**116**
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	9
Construction and extraction occupations	89
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	18
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations:	146
Production occupations	95
Transportation occupations	10
Material moving occupations	41

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023

Summary of Community Profile

- Hartford's population has decreased by 13.1% since 2010.
- Overall, the City's population is younger, and households are getting larger, which is the opposite of state and national trends.
- The City has a strong family presence and a large young population.
- The City has a high level of home ownership.
- The housing stock has a majority of older, single-family homes built before 2020.
- Hartford's population overall has lower income levels than both the County and the State averages.
- Top employment sectors continue to be service occupations, manufacturing, and sales and office occupations.
- The percentage of City residents that work within Van Buren County versus outside the County are split about half and half, with a slightly higher percentage working within the County.

EXISTING LAND USES AND CHARACTER

Overview

Knowledge of current land uses allows the City to consider the compatibility of new land uses and is a valuable tool when considering the day-to-day problems associated with land management and the delivery of key public services. The existing land use survey provides an inventory of land use within the community and is a key source of background information used in developing the Master Plan.

A major component of a community master plan is to identify existing land use patterns. To make informed decisions regarding the future of land uses in the City of Hartford, it is critical to have a clear understanding of existing land uses and the relationships between those land uses. Documenting the existing land use framework not only identifies the locations of particular land use activities but also highlights the areas with future growth potential and areas where land use conflicts may exist.

A key element to consider when determining the future fabric of a community is the identification of where current activities (such as residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational) take place. This existing conditions and land use analysis will help to determine what areas and corridors should be preserved, redeveloped, or intensified.

This master planning process has also identified other existing conditions that help determine not only the Future Land Use Plan, but also the overarching goals, objectives, and recommendations, as described in the next section.

Residential

The City of Hartford has several residential land uses associated with varied densities. In the center of the City there are single family residential land uses and residential neighborhoods. Single-family neighborhoods make up the majority of the City's current housing stock and residential land uses; however, apartments and mobile home communities also exist in the City. Most notably, the City has Maple Hill Village, Woodside Apartments, and Center Street Apartments.

Commercial

Commercial sites are those that are intended for use by for-profit businesses, such as grocery stores, restaurants, and malls. Commercial uses in the City of Hartford are largely concentrated along the Main Street Corridor. Other commercial uses are spread throughout the edges of the City along major streets. Both Center St. and Main Street are prominent routes for downtown traffic and also function as ways to gain access to major corridors like I-94.

Main Street contains businesses like a mixture of food and commercial establishments, City Hall, and the Community Center. Center Street has a mixture of commercial uses and provides access to the Post Office as well. Center street supports a mixture of commercial, light industrial, and residential uses and connects the City with I-94.

The City of Hartford has several commercial land use types that vary in intensity. The local commercial uses are located in and around the downtown area and near residential neighborhoods, while higher intensity commercial, such as warehouse commercial storage, are located on the City fringes, usually within close proximity to the highway.

Industrial

The City of Hartford includes an array of industrial uses centered primarily along the railroad corridor. Mann Metal Finishing operates a 70,000-square-foot facility at 200 Prospect Street, specializing in metal polishing, buffing, and blasting services primarily for aluminum die casting companies throughout the Great Lakes region. West Michigan Railroad Company operates 4.21 miles of active rail line through the city, providing freight service for clients including refrigerated transport for regional food distribution. The railroad has been experiencing aggressive growth and plans significant infrastructure improvements, including track upgrades to accommodate heavier modern rail standards and a potential siding installation that would reduce in-town rail operations. The railroad corridor provides a critical economic development asset for the city, with direct access to CSX mainline service and proximity to M-40, positioning Hartford's industrial areas for potential expansion and investment.

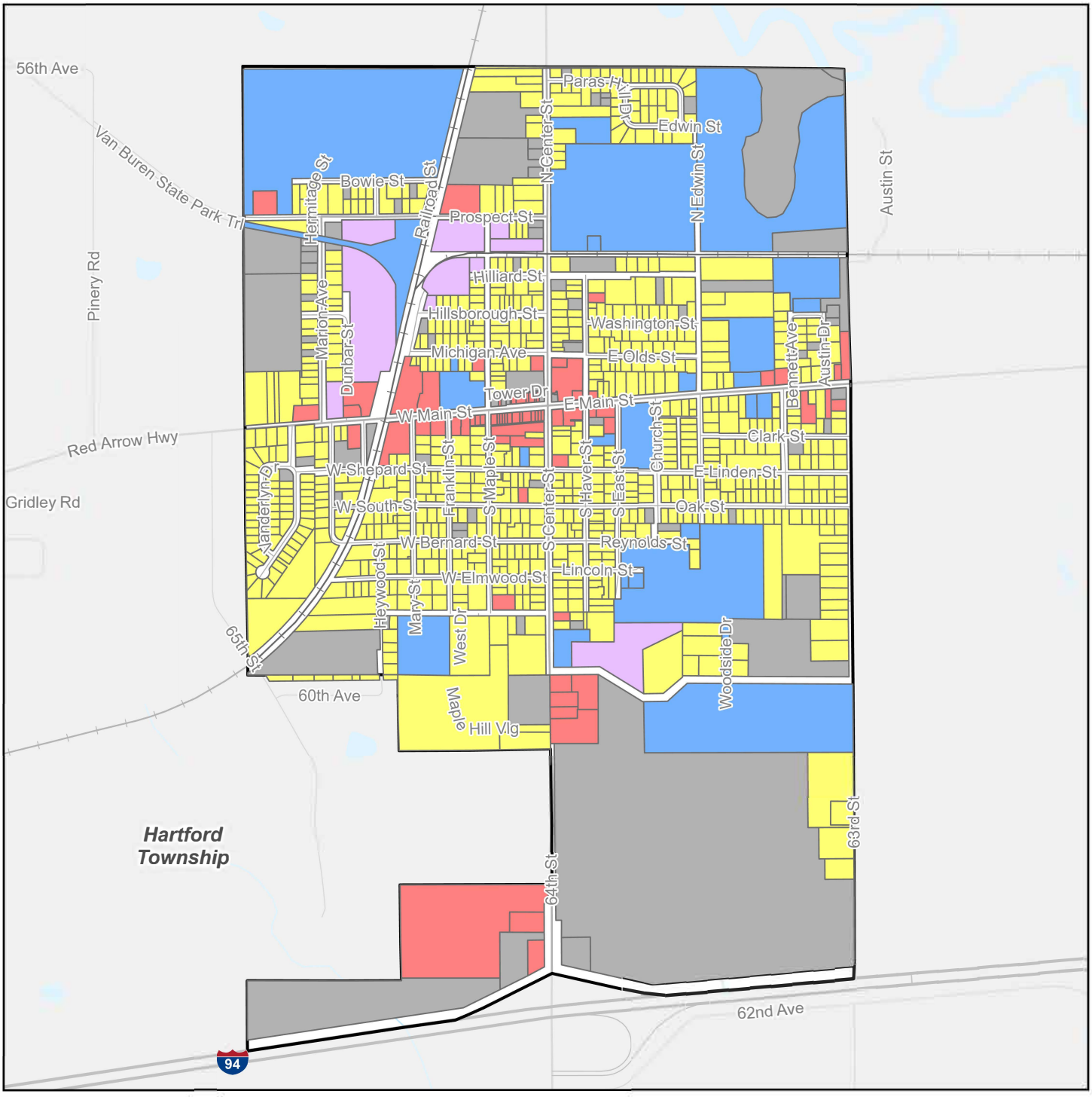
Public/Semi Public

The City has a few public parks located in all areas. These parks include the Van Buren State Park Trail, Ely Park, and the Hartford Athletic Fields.

Additionally, the City of Hartford includes numerous public institutions – City Hall, Police Department, Fire Department, Hartford Community Center, US Postal Service, facilities of the Hartford School District, and many churches and other religious institutions along major corridors and within neighborhoods.

Vacant

The Existing Land Use Map identifies parcels that are undeveloped but are not set aside for parks and preservation.



Existing Land Use

City of Hartford, Michigan

July 21, 2025

LEGEND

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public/Semi-Public
- Vacant

Parcels_Clip

ELU

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public/Semi-Public
- Vacant

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
Data Source: Van Buren County 2025.
McKenna 2025.

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NATURAL FEATURES

Wetlands and Water Features

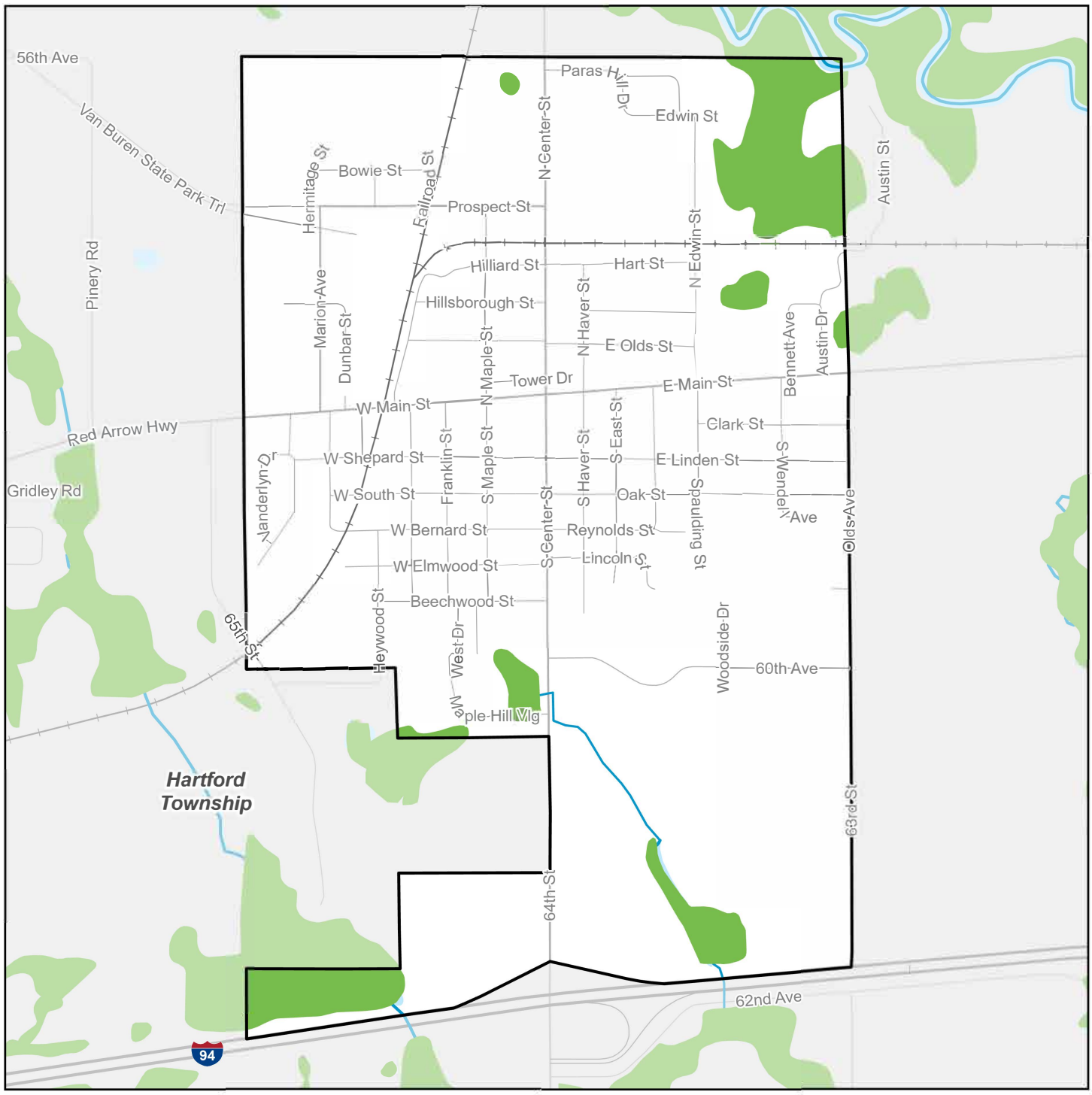
Hartford is located within the Paw Paw River Watershed. This watershed starts in Almena Township to the east and flows west towards the St. Joseph River and Lake Michigan. Pine Creek is located in the southwest corner of the City.

Because Hartford is located close to these water features, there are wetlands located in the northeastern portion of the City as well as a few in the south.

There are no floodplains located in the City.

Farmland and Topography

Most of the City is designated as not prime farmland or farmland of local importance. There are two small areas of the City designated as prime farmland however, most of the City is developed with housing or commercial land uses.



Wetlands and Water Features

City of Hartford, Michigan

June 16, 2025

LEGEND

- Marsh, Swamp, Bog, Prairie
- River

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
Data Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2024. McKenna 2025.

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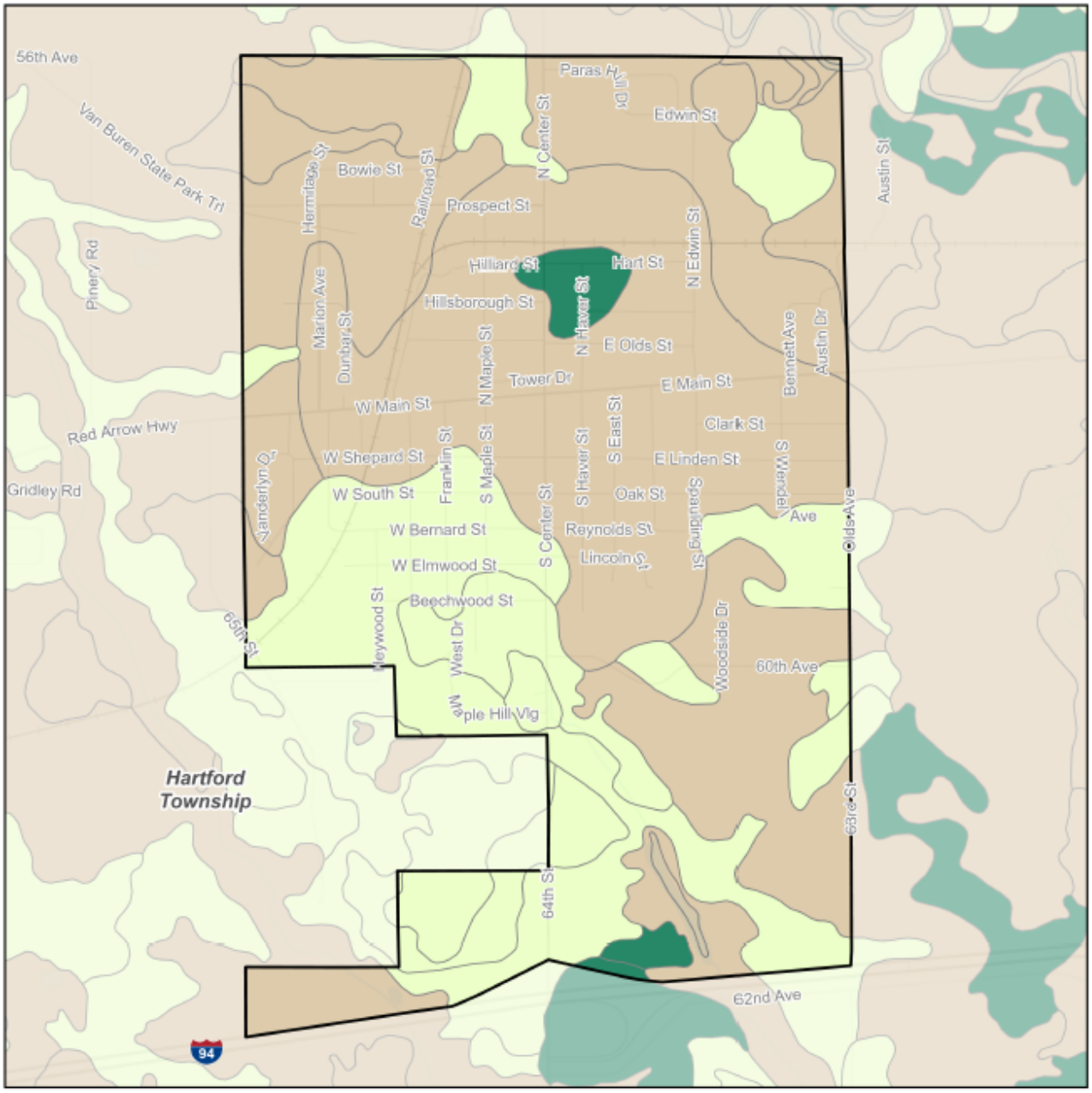

Prime Farmland

City of Hartford, Michigan

June 16, 2025

LEGEND

- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importace
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Farmland of Unique Importance
- Not Prime Farmland

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
Data Source: USDA 2024, McKenna 2025.

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EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Road Systems

A large component of the City's land mass is comprised of its transportation network. This includes the system of streets and roadways and bike trails. Much of the existing street system is designed in grid fashion, common to mature urban communities. This fact also aids in making the City easier to traverse on foot, as the grid connects most neighborhoods to one another and to the downtown. In general, continuing the existing grid system in the greater community should be encouraged.

Hartford has three (3) roadway classifications which function in a hierarchical fashion. These include minor arterials, major collectors, and local streets. The function of each roadway type is briefly described below. Note: depending on location, some systems may function in more than one capacity:

- **Minor Arterial :-** A Road/highway whose principal function is the movement of traffic received from the City's system of collector streets. Minor arterials often funnel traffic to major arterials. Main Street is the only Minor Arterial within the City.
- **Major Collectors:** Major collectors provide access to minor or major arterials by traffic originating from local streets. Major collectors include Prospect Street, Marion Avenue, and Center Street.
- **Local Streets:** Local streets are the neighborhood (residential) streets on which homes are located.

Hartford is also served by I-96 located just to the south. Interstates are major, federally funded highways designed for long-distance travel across state boundaries. They feature controlled access points, high speeds, and multiple lanes to ensure safe and smooth traffic flow. Connection to the City may be made from the I-94 and Center Street Interchange.

Mass Transit

Van Buren County provides Public Transit, STAR, to all Van Buren County. STAR provides the following services:

- **Dial-a-Ride:** Curb to curb service within the Paw Paw and South Haven areas.
- **County-Wide-Reservations:** Travel within Van Buren County. Reservations can be made 14 days to 24 hours in advance.
- **Out-of-County-Reservations:** Travel to surrounding area counties for medical/legal purposes only.
- **Flex Routes:** South Haven Metro Loop, Paw Paw Concord Loop.

Currently the Hartford area is not served by a flex route bus service. It does, however, have access to the Dial-A-Ride and reservation systems.

Airport

The nearest commercial air service available to Hartford residents is the larger Gerald R. Ford International Airport is located approximately 82 miles away, east of the City of Grand Rapids. Presently, twelve airlines fly from the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, with over 50 departures per day.

Gerald R. Ford International Airport

Rail

Rail infrastructure is a defining component of Hartford's existing transportation system, having played a central role in local industry historically and continuing to shape daily movement patterns within the City today. Hartford is served by both CSX Transportation and West Michigan Railroad Company (WMRC), a locally operated short-line railroad that enters the City from the west, runs north through the western portion of town, and then turns east along the northern edge of the community just south of the Hartford Public Schools campus. WMRC provides freight rail service to local and regional industries, transporting agricultural, food-related, and other industrial goods, and functions as a critical connection between Hartford-area businesses and the national freight rail network.

Railroad in Hartford

Unlike large Class I railroads, WMRC maintains a direct working relationship with local governments, schools, and businesses. WMRC leadership has regularly participated in coordination discussions with the City and other stakeholders, particularly around safety, scheduling, and infrastructure concerns, and has demonstrated a willingness to pursue operational adjustments and collaborative solutions where feasible.

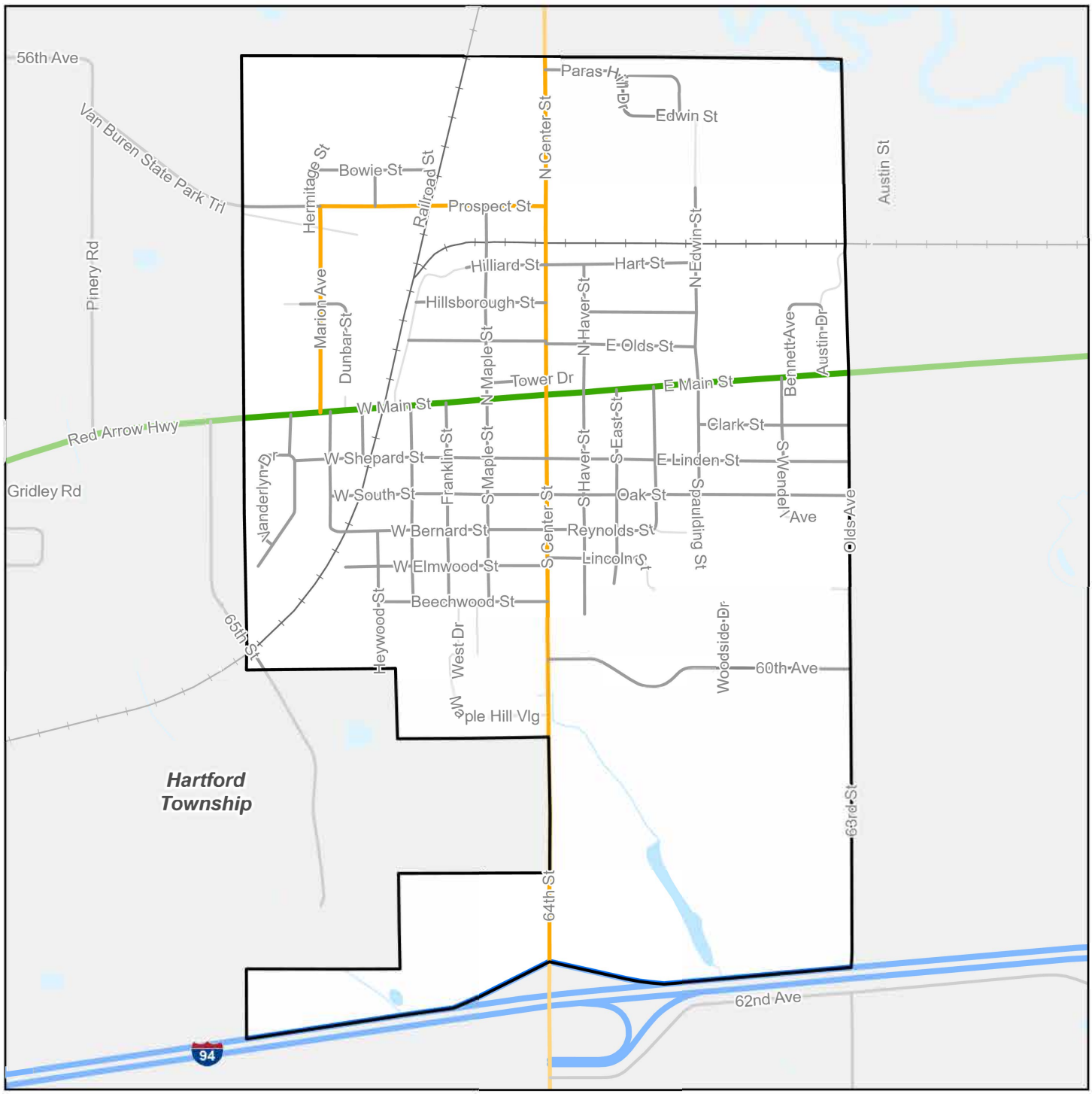
WMRC has made significant efforts to minimize conflicts with school traffic and pedestrian activity by primarily operating trains during evening and nighttime hours. Trains typically operate at low speeds—often 10 miles per hour or less—yet rail–pedestrian conflicts and near-misses remain a serious concern. These conditions reflect ongoing safety challenges related to trespassing along the rail corridor, particularly by students, and highlight the limitations of operational changes alone in fully addressing risk.

Despite WMRC's efforts, rail operations—particularly those tied to CSX scheduling—remain unpredictable and frequently occur during peak daytime periods, including school dismissal times. As a short-line operator, WMRC is operationally dependent on CSX for car handoffs, limiting the City's ability to anticipate or manage the timing and duration of blocked crossings through local coordination alone.

Several at-grade crossings, including Maple Street, Center Street, and Edwin Street, function as critical pinch points in the existing transportation network. As rail activity has increased, train lengths have grown, resulting in more frequent and prolonged blockages at these crossings. These conditions contribute to vehicle delays, constrained emergency access, and heightened safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists.

Noise impacts are also part of existing conditions, particularly when certain freight cars, such as refrigerated units, are staged within the City. These operations can generate elevated noise levels that affect nearby residential and institutional areas, including areas near schools.

Among all crossings, Maple Street presents the greatest safety concern due to extremely limited visibility and its proximity to adjacent industrial uses. Rail operators and local stakeholders have consistently identified this crossing as the most problematic location in the City's rail system, with few feasible mitigation options short of closure. As train lengths continue to increase, conditions at this crossing are expected to worsen without intervention.



Transportation

City of Hartford, Michigan

June 17, 2025

LEGEND

- Non-Certified
- Interstate
- Other Freeway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
Data Source: State of Michigan 2024.
McKenna 2025.

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COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Public Administration

The City of Hartford has a City Manager/Council form of government. The Council is elected by the citizens. City Council appoints the City Manager, and the City Manager hires all staff. Various committees including the Planning Commission and Downtown Development Authority are appointed by the Manager with approval from the City Council with liaisons from the council on each body. General management and day to day operations rests with the Hartford City Manager. The City's full-time public works employees perform maintenance for public infrastructure including the parks system. Other City staff members are involved in various aspects of City programming on an assigned or as-needed basis. The City Planning Commission advises the Council on a variety of planning and recreation matters. They have primary responsibility for formulating the plan.

Funding

The City of Hartford utilizes several sources of revenue: general fund revenues, fees for service, grants, and various financing tools. Specialized programs like downtown development can utilize tax capturing to focus redevelopment efforts. Programs like recreation rely on general funds, user fees, and donation of funds or volunteer services.

Utilities

The City of Hartford is served by a municipal water system from the Ryno Drain-Paw Paw River Watershed. The public water supply comes from groundwater made available by 20 wells. All have a heavy clay overburden and are rated by the Department of Environmental Quality as a highly protected aquifer. All the wells are approximately 180 feet, deep. Due to the reliance on groundwater the City of Hartford has instituted a D.E.Q. approved Wellhead Protection Program to protect the groundwater from contamination. An important aspect of this program is isolation of the well areas and avoidance of certain land uses at or near the well sites.

The Van Buren County Wastewater System provides sanitary sewer treatment for the City of Hartford. The collection system is owned and maintained by the City. Both the wastewater and sewage plants have capacity to allow for additional development if needed.

Public Safety

Police protection is provided by the City of Hartford, staffed by full-time and part-time police officers and a police chief. Fire service is provided by the Hartford Fire Department which includes the City of Hartford and Hartford Township. Service is provided by a full-time Fire Chief, a part-time Assistant Chief, and a full contingent of volunteer fire persons. The Fire Department is located at 436 E. Main Street.

The Corewell Health Watervliet Hospital Primary Care – Hartford provides a primary care facility which can provide assistance for general medical services. Though there are no major hospitals in the City, there are hospitals in the surrounding area. In the City of Watervliet there is Corewell Health Watervliet Hospital. Bronson LakeView Hospital is located in Paw Paw, east of Hartford. And Ascension Borgess - Lee Hospital is located just south in Dowagiac. The Van Buren Emergency Medical Services provides 911 ambulance services for the City. They also provide trauma transport, critical care transport, long-distance transfers, and non-emergency wheelchair transport.

Cultural & Civic Facilities

City Hall is located downtown as is the post office and library. These facilities are centrally located and generate activity for downtown merchants. The Vanderlyn Community Center Hartford Public Library provides many programs for the community. The Senior Center also provides an important community gathering place for residents. While public and civic facilities contribute to downtown health, they should remain a secondary land use in the downtown. Healthy downtowns need the bulk of their uses to be retail and service (like eateries) with government and office uses as a backdrop for retail activity. Housing is also important in downtowns. Hartford has a diverse mix of downtown land uses, but could add more variety of businesses, and additional housing.

Schools

The Hartford Public School District covers over 50 square miles. The total enrollment for the school district is 1,348 students in the 2023 school year. The school system provides education services to Hartford residents as well as others from the townships around the City limits including all of Hartford Township as well as portions of Bangor and Keeler Townships. The City is fortunate in that some school facilities are located within the City limits including the Hartford High School and the Red Wood Elementary School. Athletic fields and open spaces of the schools are available to public residents and are within walking distance from neighborhoods. The system has a high school, middle school, an elementary school and an alternative education center.

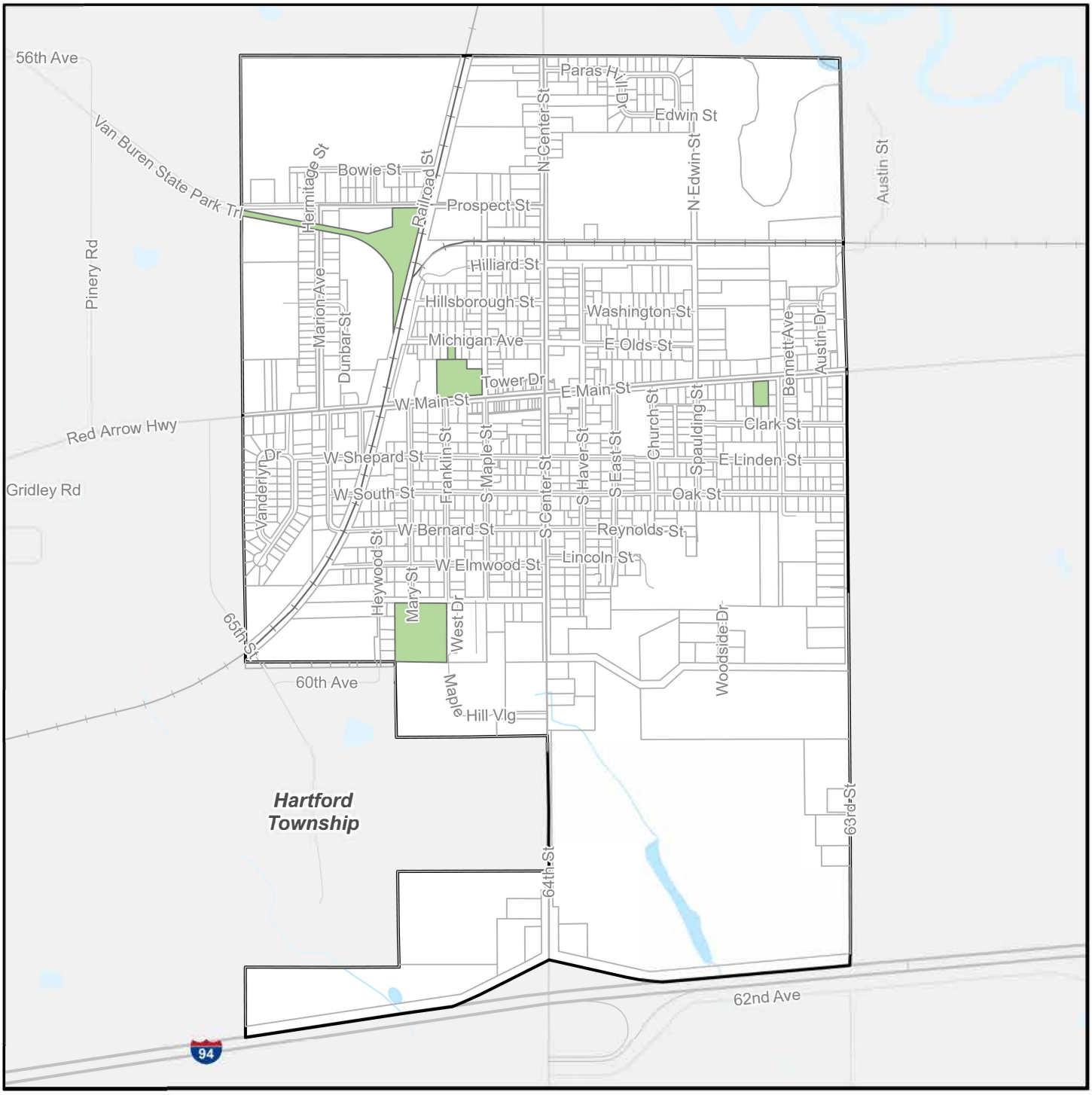
Recreational Facilities

There are several unique and impressive recreational facilities in the City which are important to tourism and the character of the community.

The **Van Buren Trail State Park** is an attraction that runs for 14 miles all the way to South Haven. Spurs of trails and paths from area neighborhoods connecting with the trail and downtown will help complete the system.

Ely Park is a 2.5-acre open space neighborhood park has a covered pavilion used for a variety of activities, most notably a popular outdoor concert series. This park is easily accessible and includes restrooms.

The **Hartford Speedway** is an important asset in the City. The Speedway hosts concerts, dirt track racing, providing seating, refreshments, restrooms, and kids play areas.



Parks and City-Owned Properties

City of Hartford, Michigan

November 25, 2025

LEGEND

- Parks and City Owned Properties
- Parcels
- City Boundary

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
Data Source: Van Buren County 2025.
McKenna 2025.

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Hartford Tomorrow

Housing plays a central role in shaping Hartford's long-term vitality, economic stability, and quality of life. As the community continues to evolve, future housing decisions must respond to changing market conditions, shifting demographics, and the need to balance affordability with reinvestment. The Housing Tomorrow section builds on existing conditions and trends to outline a strategic vision for how Hartford can support a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable housing market over the coming years.

This section identifies key housing priorities and opportunities to guide Hartford's future housing development, rehabilitation, and preservation efforts. Emphasis is placed on maintaining housing affordability, encouraging reinvestment in existing neighborhoods, diversifying housing types, and aligning local strategies with regional and state housing initiatives. Together, these approaches are intended to support a balanced housing market that meets the needs of current residents while positioning Hartford for sustainable growth and long-term community stability.

HARTFORD HOUSING

Community Housing Profile

Household income and home values are closely correlated, as income largely determines a household's ability to afford housing costs, while housing demand—driven in part by income growth—helps shape home values. As home values increase, associated costs such as mortgage payments, property taxes, insurance, and maintenance also rise. To absorb these higher costs without becoming cost-burdened, households generally must have higher incomes. In markets where incomes fail to keep pace with rising home values, housing affordability declines and the risk of displacement increases.

In communities where both household incomes and home values are rising, this relationship is more balanced. Higher incomes expand purchasing power, enabling households to manage increased housing costs, which in turn supports higher home values. This creates a reinforcing cycle: rising incomes increase housing demand, increased demand drives up home values, and higher values often attract additional investment and higher-income households.

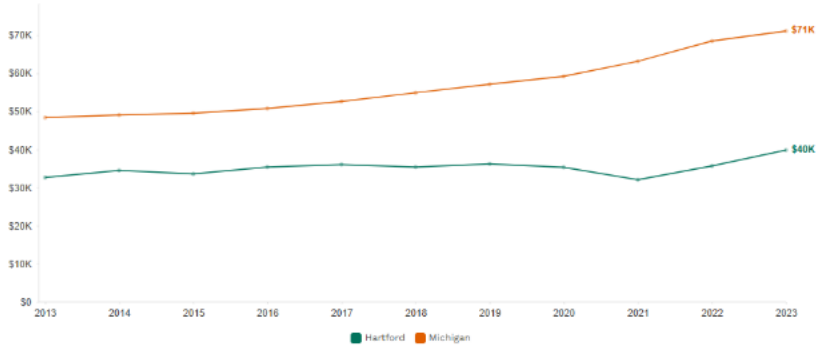
Hartford is experiencing this dynamic. The community has seen increases in home values and housing costs alongside growth in median household income, indicating that market appreciation is being partially supported by improved earning capacity. While this trend reflects economic strengthening and reinvestment, it also warrants continued monitoring. If home values and housing costs begin to outpace income growth, affordability gaps could emerge, particularly for lower- and moderate-income households.

Median Income

Hartford's median household income was $39,868 in 2023, an increase of $7,194 (+22%) relative to 2013.

In comparison, for Michigan, the 2023 median household income was $71,149, increasing $22,738 (+47%) since 2013.

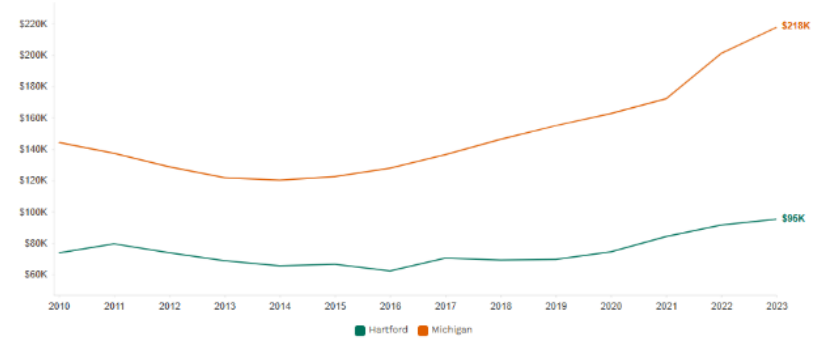
Median Household Income Over Time



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Dollar values are nominal.

Median Home Values Over Time



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Dollar values are nominal.

Hartford's median household income was $39,868 in 2023, representing an increase of $7,194 (22%) since 2013. By comparison, Michigan's median household income reached $71,149 in 2023, an increase of $22,738 (47%) over the same period. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), Hartford's median home values increased by approximately 29% between 2010 and 2023, while median home values statewide increased by approximately 51%.

Metric	Municipality	2013	2023	Change (2013–2023)
Median Household Income	Hartford	$32,000	$40,000	+$8,000
	Michigan	$54,000	$71,000	+$17,000
Median Home Value	Hartford	$75,000	—	—
	Michigan	$148,000	$218,000	+$70,000

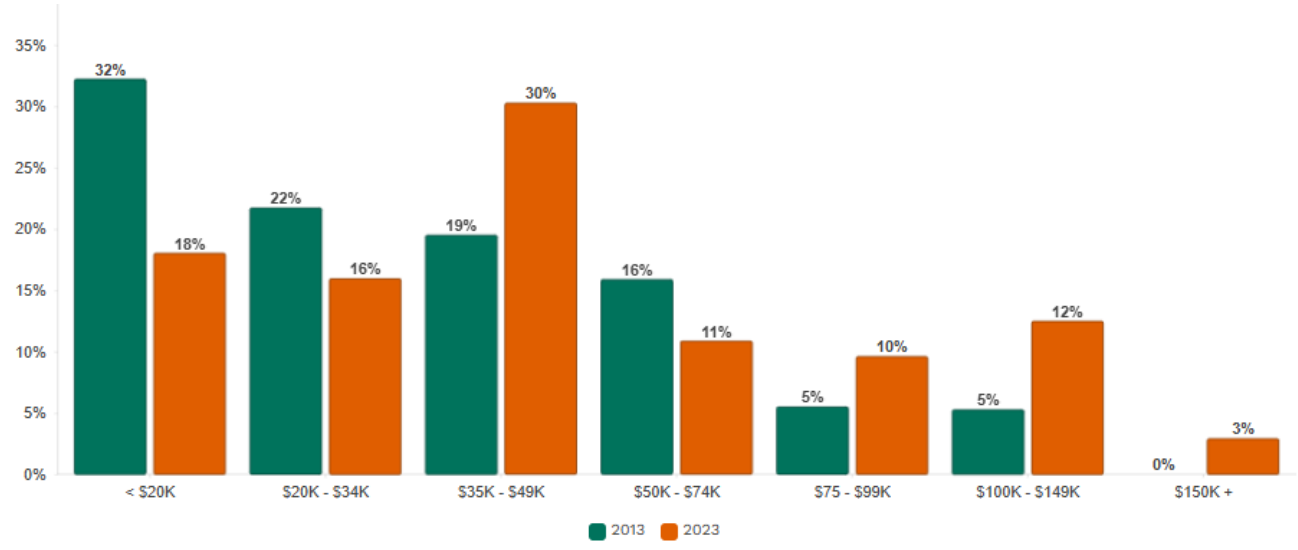
While local growth has lagged behind statewide averages, alignment with state housing strategies and continued income growth may help support Hartford's housing market and maintain consistency with broader state housing trends over time.

Household Income Distribution

As of 2023, approximately 18% of Hartford households earned less than $20,000 annually, while just 3% reported household incomes of $150,000 or more per year. Over the past decade, the share of households earning below $20,000 has declined by approximately 14%, indicating modest improvement in lower-income household earnings. During the same period, the proportion of households earning $150,000 or more increased by 3%, reflecting gradual growth at the upper end of the income distribution.

Despite these improvements, a significant portion of Hartford households continue to earn below key income thresholds. In 2023, approximately 34% of households earned less than $36,000, which is Hartford's median household income. Additionally, about 36% of households reported incomes at or above the regional area median income (AMI) of $64,000. The remaining households, with incomes ranging from $26,000 to $64,000, fall within 50% to 100% of AMI, representing a substantial share of the community's working and middle-income population.

Figure 4: Housing Income Distribution



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Dollar values are nominal.

Homeownership patterns vary significantly by income level. Households earning $150,000 or more annually exhibit the highest homeownership rates, reflecting greater financial capacity for home purchase and retention. However, the income group with the largest absolute number of homeowner households is the $35,000 to $50,000 income range, which includes approximately 158 homeowner households and has a homeownership rate of 60.3%. This highlights the importance of moderately priced housing options that support stable homeownership opportunities for middle-income households.

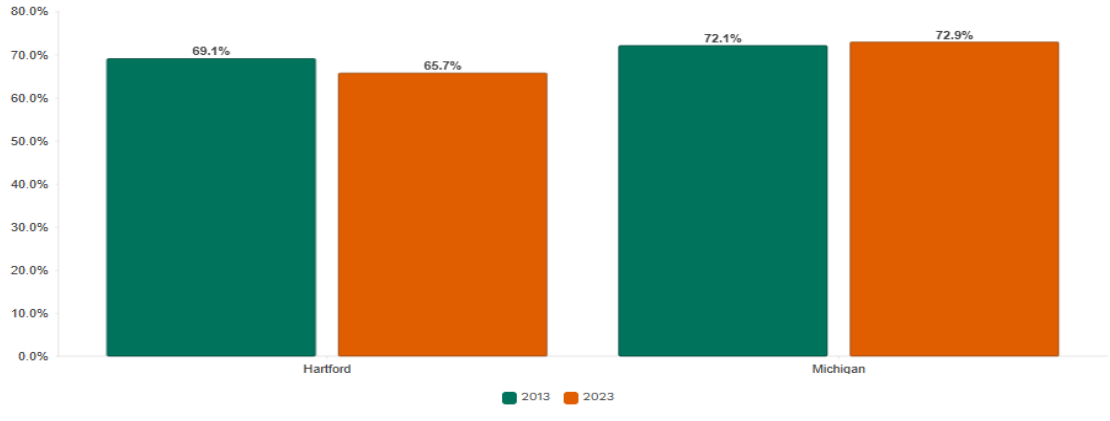
Collectively, these income and housing patterns underscore the need for a balanced housing strategy that supports affordability for lower-income households, stability for middle-income homeowners, and opportunities for continued economic mobility within the City.

Figure 5: Comparative Homeownership Rate by Household Income

Homeownership

Breaking down Hartford's households by their tenure, 34% were renters, and 66% were homeowners. For comparison, 27% of households in Michigan were renters, while 73% were homeowners. Between 2013 and 2023, the overall homeownership rate in Hartford decreased by 3.4 percentage points. Looking closely at homeownership disparities in 2023, homeownership rates were 6.05 percentage points more for Black households (66.7%) and 16.71 percentage points more for Hispanic/Latino households (77.3%) than for White households (60.6%).

Figure 6: Comparative Homeownership Rate



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Housing Affordability & Cost Burden

The maximum affordable rent is calculated as 30% of gross income, which is a national rule of thumb used by, among others, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). A household paying above these rates would be considered burdened by their housing costs. The maximum affordable mortgage payment is calculated as 25% of gross income, because of the other costs associated with homeownership, such as taxes, insurance, and maintenance.

The maximum affordable home price calculation uses interest rates approximating what a mortgage applicant might be offered in 2025, including an assumption that lower income households are likely to face higher interest rates. It also assumes a 30-year fixed rate mortgage and incorporates down payments that are realistic for households in given income ranges.

Housing Affordability

This section examines two different types of housing that can be considered affordable: deed-restricted affordable homes, many of which receive subsidy, and unrestricted affordable homes, which are often referred to as “Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing" or "NOAH."

Based on a decades-old standard set by Congress and implemented in US Department of Housing and Urban Developing (HUD) programs, housing is considered affordable when housing and utility costs combined are less than 30% of a household’s pre-tax income.

Households that pay more than 30% of their income towards these costs are considered “cost burdened.” The more a household spends on housing costs, the less residual income it has available for other basic household needs such as food and childcare. Even in places that have enough homes, some households may require assistance, such as with vouchers, because their incomes are too low to afford rents.

AMI Affordability

The AMI is a measure of the median income of a specific geographic area (known as a Fair Market Rent (FMR) Area) calculated by HUD to determine eligibility for housing assistance programs. If a household is earning 100% AMI, this means their income is exactly at the median for their household size.

HUD calculates AMI annually for each metropolitan area and non-metropolitan county in the United States. The calculation is based on the income levels of all households in the area, regardless of their tenure status (i.e., whether they own or rent their homes). The AMI for a specific area is then used as a benchmark for determining eligibility for various housing assistance programs.

Table 4. Area Median Income by Household Size (2023)

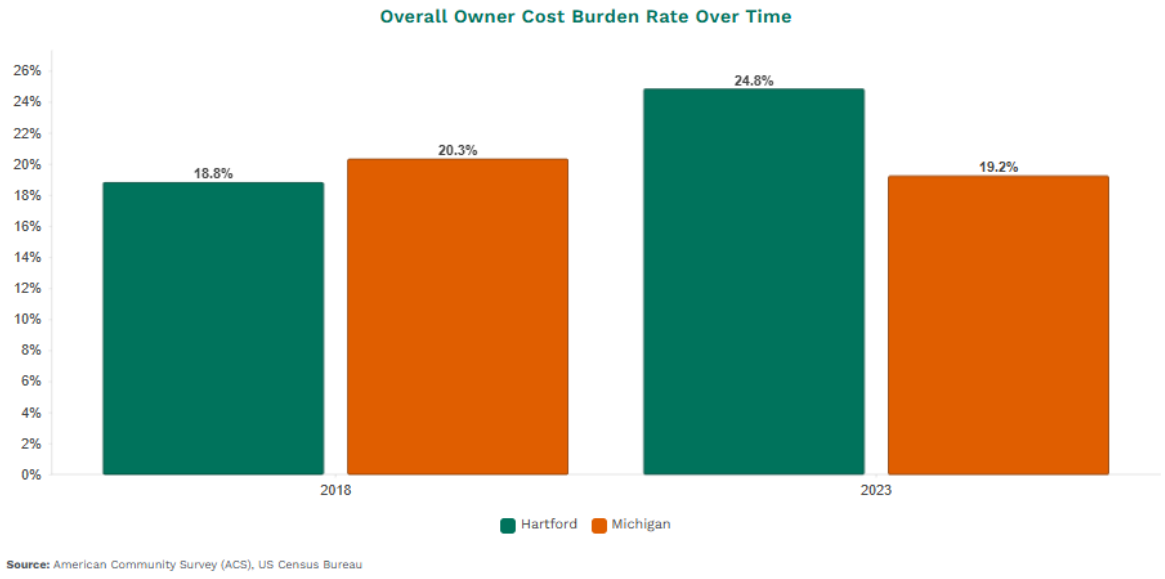
AMI	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
30%	$16,770	$19,170	$21,570	$23,940	$25,860	$27,780	$29,700	$31,620
50%	$27,950	$31,950	$35,950	$39,900	$43,100	$46,300	$49,500	$52,700
60%	$33,540	$38,340	$43,140	$47,880	$51,720	$55,560	$59,400	$63,240
80%	$44,720	$51,120	$57,520	$63,840	$68,960	$74,080	$79,200	$84,320
100% (Median)	$55,900	$63,900	$71,900	$79,800	$86,200	$92,600	$99,000	$105,400

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Cost Burdened Households

As populations age, it is informative to assess cost burdened households to better understand the potential needs of the aging population. For context, a household is considered cost burdened when 30% or more of household income is spent on gross housing costs. When households are cost-burdened and pay more than they can afford for their housing, they have less residual income available to cover other necessary expenses, like food and healthcare.

Figure 7: Overall Owner Cost Burden Rate Over Time, 2023

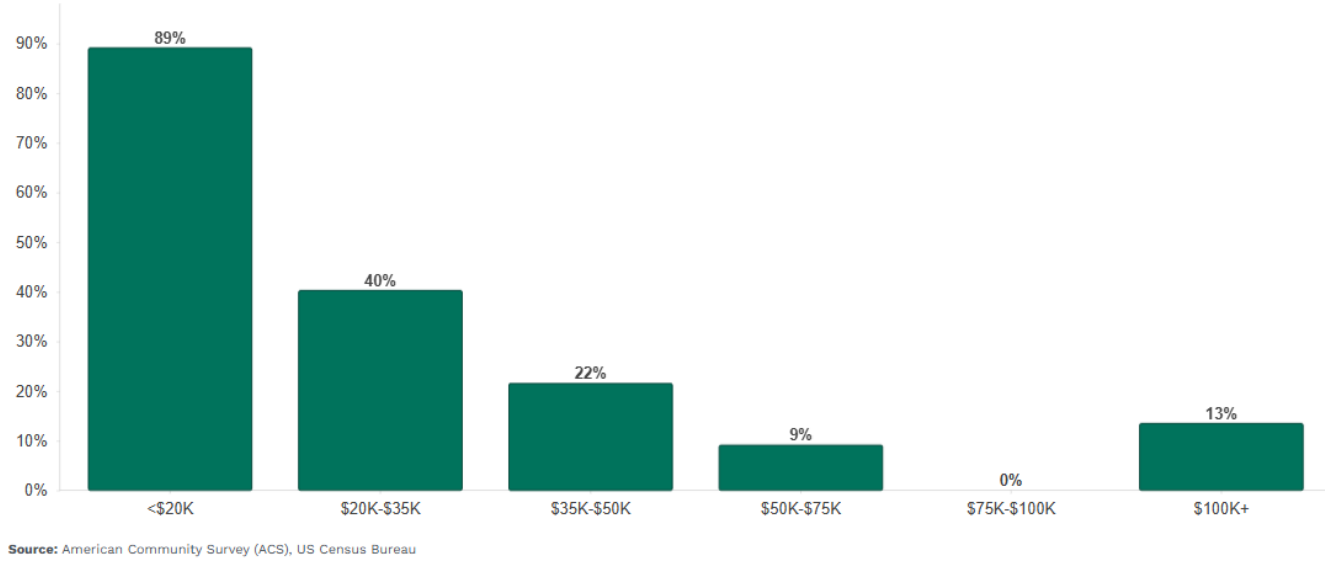


Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Households in Hartford collectively reflect a cost burden affecting 25% of all owner households, particularly effected are single-parent households, households without children, and 29% of all senior households experience cost burden. The figure above indicates the overall cost burden rate for homeowners in Hartford rose 6% between 2018 (18.8%) and 2023 (24.8%), a reflection of increased housing cost, values, and economic inflation in cost overall. The mismatch between housing costs that people can afford and what housing actually costs can lead households to stretch beyond what is affordable to access high-quality schools, safer neighborhoods, or proximity to jobs and amenities.

In 2023, 9.8% of homeowners in Hartford spent 30-49% of their income on housing meaning they were cost-burdened, while an additional 15.0% of homeowners spent 50% or more of their income on housing meaning they were severely cost-burdened. In total, the overall cost burden rate in Hartford was 24.8% of all homeowners. The greatest share of households affected by cost burden are those whose income are less than the state median household income of $75,000 (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Homeowner Cost Burden Rate by Household Income, 2023



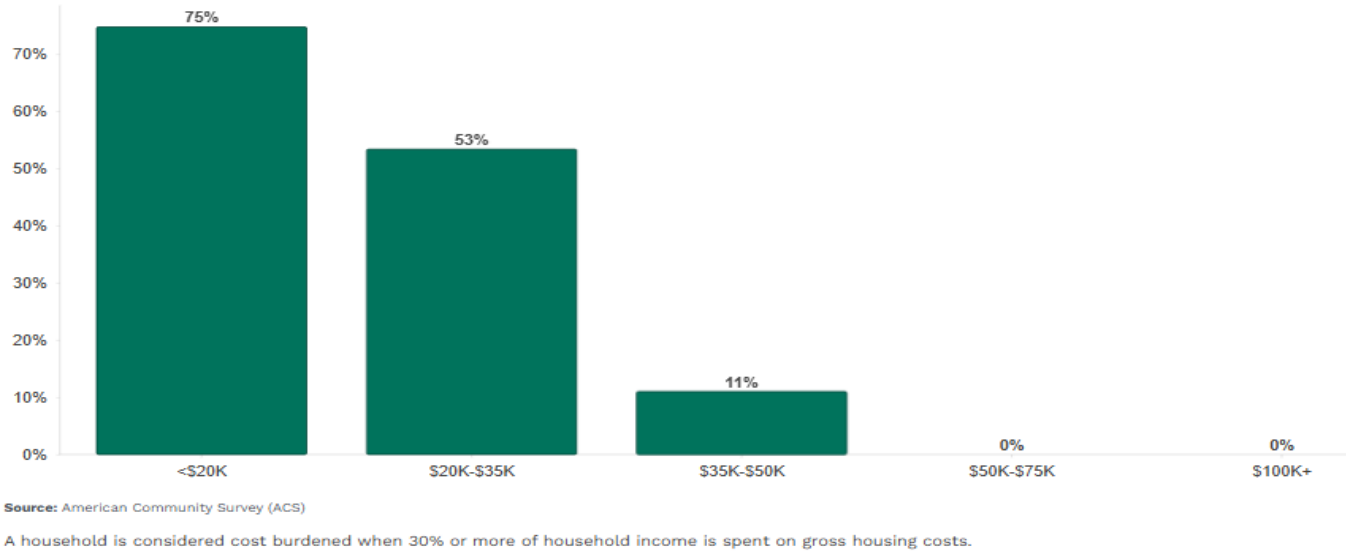
Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Cost Burdened Renters

In 2023, approximately 12% of renter households in Hartford spent between 30% and 49% of their income on housing, classifying them as cost-burdened, while an additional 23% spent 50% or more of their income on housing, making them severely cost-burdened. Combined, these groups account for an overall renter cost-burden rate of 35% in Hartford.

Renters most affected by housing cost burden are concentrated in income levels at or below Hartford's median household income of approximately $40,000, as illustrated in Figure 9. This pattern highlights ongoing affordability challenges for lower- and moderate-income renters and underscores the need for targeted housing strategies that address cost pressures among these households.

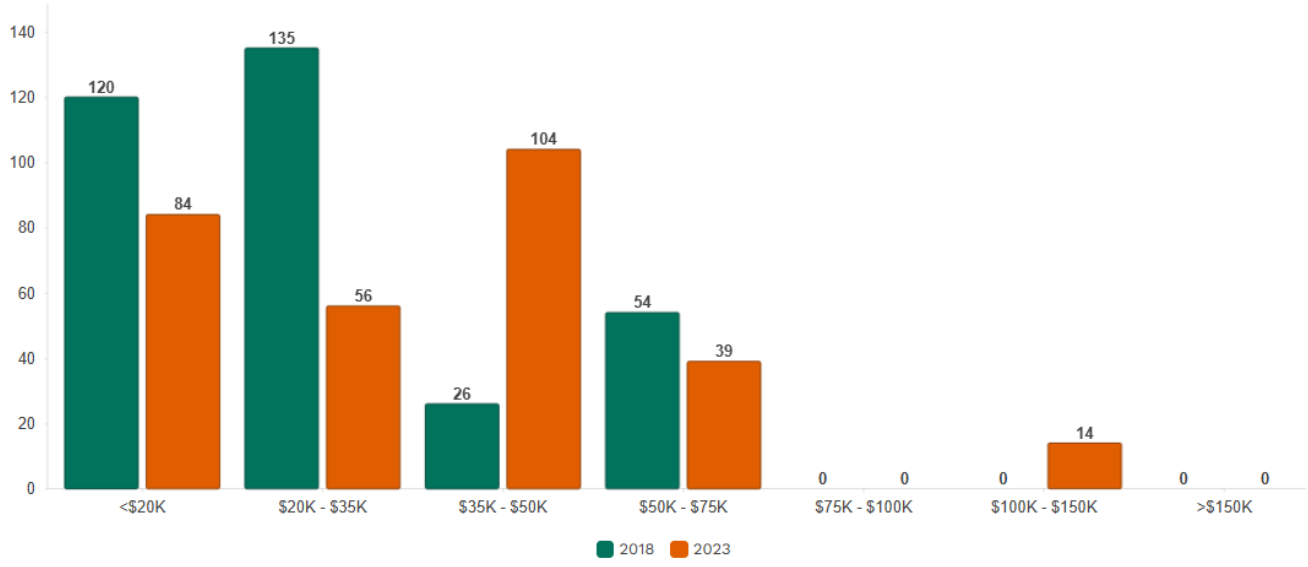
Figure 9: Overall Renter Cost Burden Rate by Household Income, 2023



Source: American Community Survey (ACS)

A household is considered cost burdened when 30% or more of household income is spent on gross housing costs.

Figure 10: Renter Households by Household Income, 2023



Furthermore, Figure 11 illustrates a shift in household income distribution between 2013 and 2023. During this period, the number of lower-income households earning below $35,000 declined, while a greater share of households transitioned into the $35,000 to $50,000 income range. This shift reflects an overall upward trend in median household income and suggests improving earning capacity among renter households over time.

Housing Supply

Single-family housing accounted for the largest share of Hartford's housing stock in 2023, representing 68.2% of all housing units, or approximately 603 homes. Multifamily housing followed, with 185 units, comprising 20.9% of the total housing stock. The number of units in multifamily buildings (two or more units) increased by 46 units between 2013 and 2023, reflecting a gradual diversification of housing types over the past decade.

During this same period, the total number of households fluctuated but showed a net increase, rising from 857 households in 2013 to 866 households in 2023 (Figure 3). When compared to surrounding communities, Hartford provides a housing supply that is relatively proportional to its population, with housing units equating to nearly half the number of residents. In contrast, neighboring communities with strong seasonal or tourism-driven markets exhibit higher housing unit counts relative to population, indicating a concentration of seasonal or vacant units and a degree of housing "leakage" into those communities (Figure 2).

Figure 11: Total Households Over Time

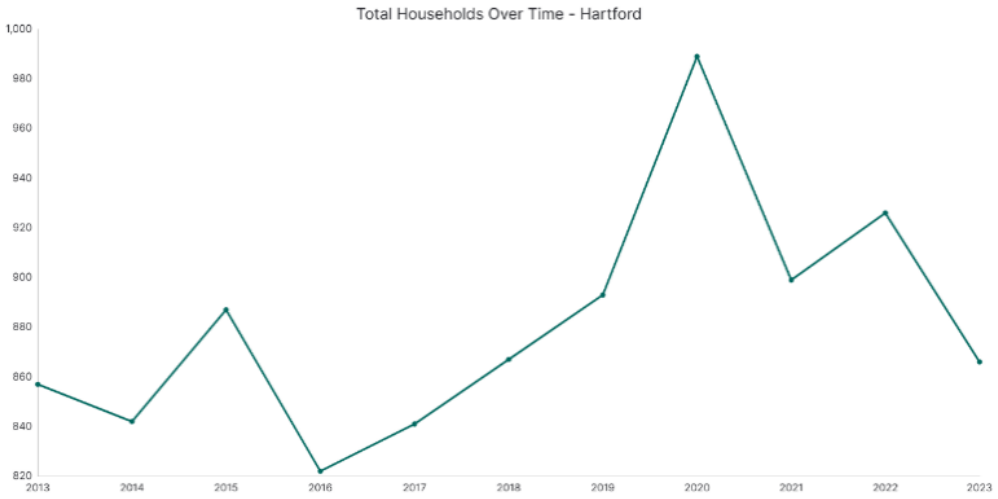


Table 5: Region Housing Units Comparison, 2023

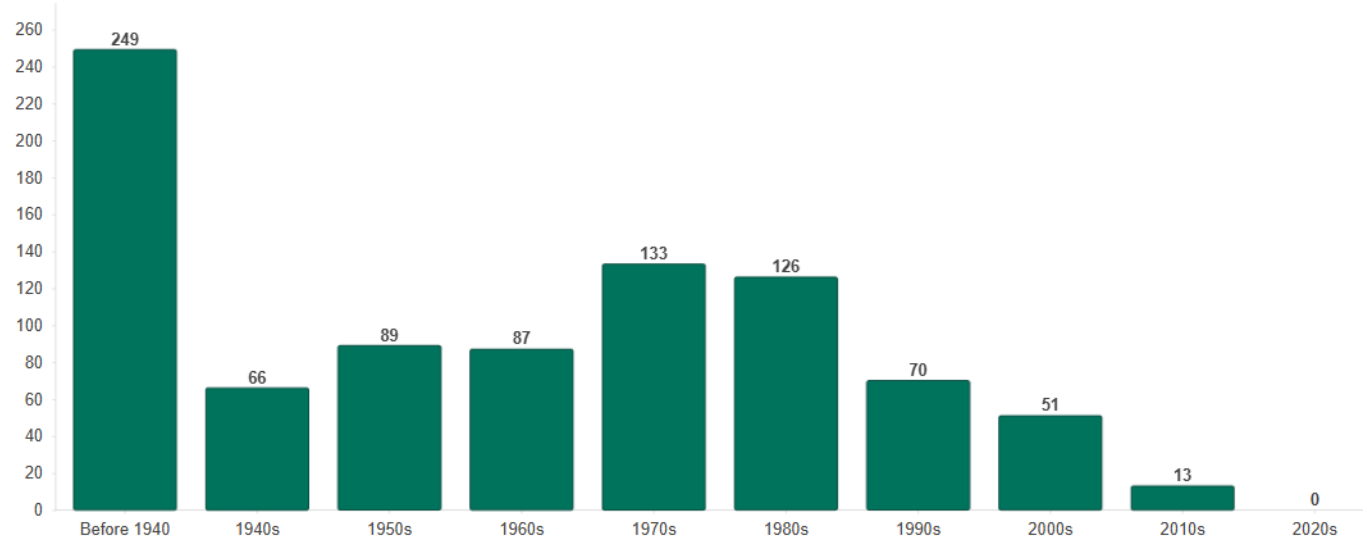
Community (Michigan)	Population (est.)	Total Housing Units	Housing Units per Resident
Benton Harbor City	~9,900	4,324	0.44
Hartford City	2,312	884	0.38
Lawrence Village	~1,000	458	0.46
Paw Paw Village	~3,400	1,499	0.44
South Haven City	~4,600	3,400	0.74

Housing Supply & Age of Housing

Housing age has long-term impacts on affordability and on a community's ability to attract the new residents and families needed to maintain and occupy aging homes. Older housing often requires increased maintenance costs, may need internal or external improvements, and can attract residents interested in renovation while deterring families seeking low maintenance starter homes.

Of the 884 homes in Hartford, 13 homes (1%) were built between 2010 and 2019. This was less than between 2000 and 2009, when 51 homes (6%) were built. 249 homes (% of 884) built before 1940's, and an additional 242 homes construction between 1940 and 1970. Together these homes account for (% of 884) homes build before 1970 and are aged over 50 years. Between the 1970's and 1990s, (259) homes were built (% of 884) and account for the city's second largest single family construction boom, by 2030 these homes will be 50 years old. The newest stock of single-family homes was construction between 1990 and 2020, accounting for 134 homes. (Figure 12)

Figure 12: Housing Stock by Decade

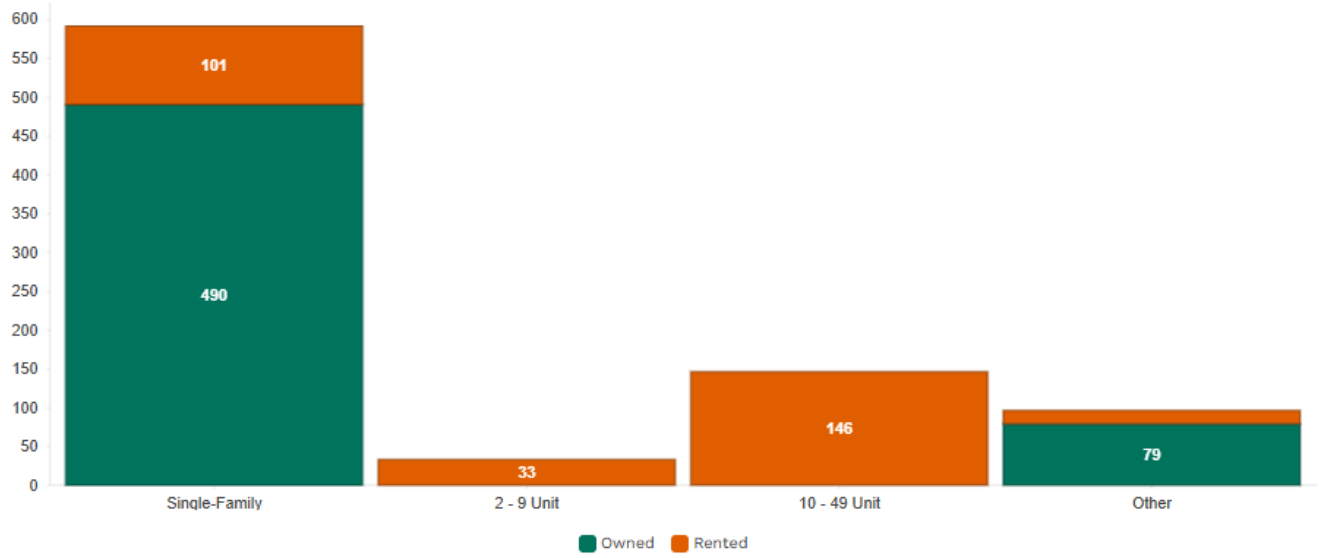


Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Single-Family Housing Supply

Hartford's Housing stock provides residential options to renters as well as homeowners. Of the 591 total single-family homes in Hartford in 2023, 17% were renter-occupied, and 83% were owner-occupied.

Figure 13: Typology by Tenure, 2023



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Mobile Park Housing

While the RV Park is intended to remain for the foreseeable future, the land could be re-zoned for multi-family uses that would allow the land to attract a variety of visions for the future.

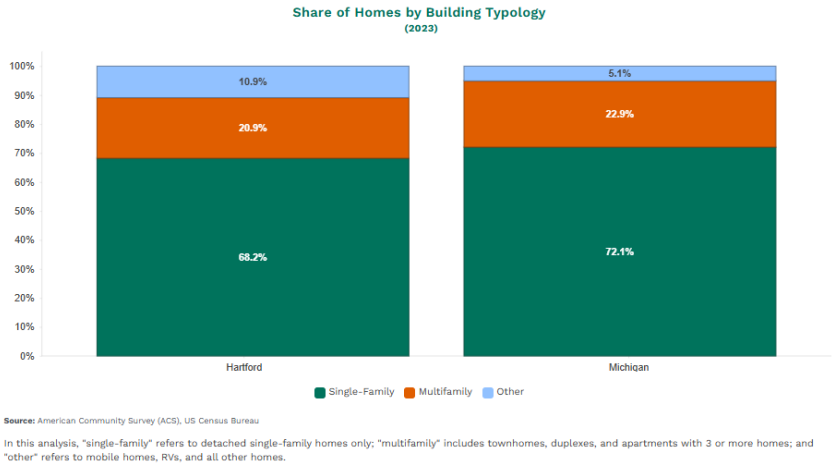
Rental Supply

Hartford's rental housing supply is distributed across a mix of housing types, with a notable reliance on single-family and small-scale multifamily units. In 2023, single-family homes comprised 68.2% of the City's overall housing stock, while multifamily units accounted for 20.9%. Other housing types, including mobile homes and recreational vehicles, represented 10.9% of total housing units. Collectively, Hartford's share of single-family and multifamily housing is slightly lower than the statewide averages for Michigan, reflecting a modestly higher proportion of alternative housing types within the community (Figure 14).

There were approximately 297 renter-occupied housing units in Hartford in 2023. Among renter households, nearly half (49.2%) lived in multifamily buildings containing 10 to 49 units, indicating that mid-sized apartment buildings play a central role in meeting rental housing demand. Single-family homes also represent a significant component of the rental market, accounting for 34.0% of renter-occupied units. Smaller multifamily buildings with two to nine units housed 11.1% of renters, while large multifamily developments with 50 or more units accounted for 5.7%. Other housing types represented a minimal share of the rental market.

This distribution suggests that Hartford's rental supply is concentrated in a combination of single-family rentals and mid-sized multifamily buildings, with limited availability of large-scale apartment developments. These patterns highlight the importance of maintaining and expanding diverse rental housing options, particularly those that can serve moderate-income households and support workforce housing needs.

Figure 14: Share of Homes by Building Typology



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

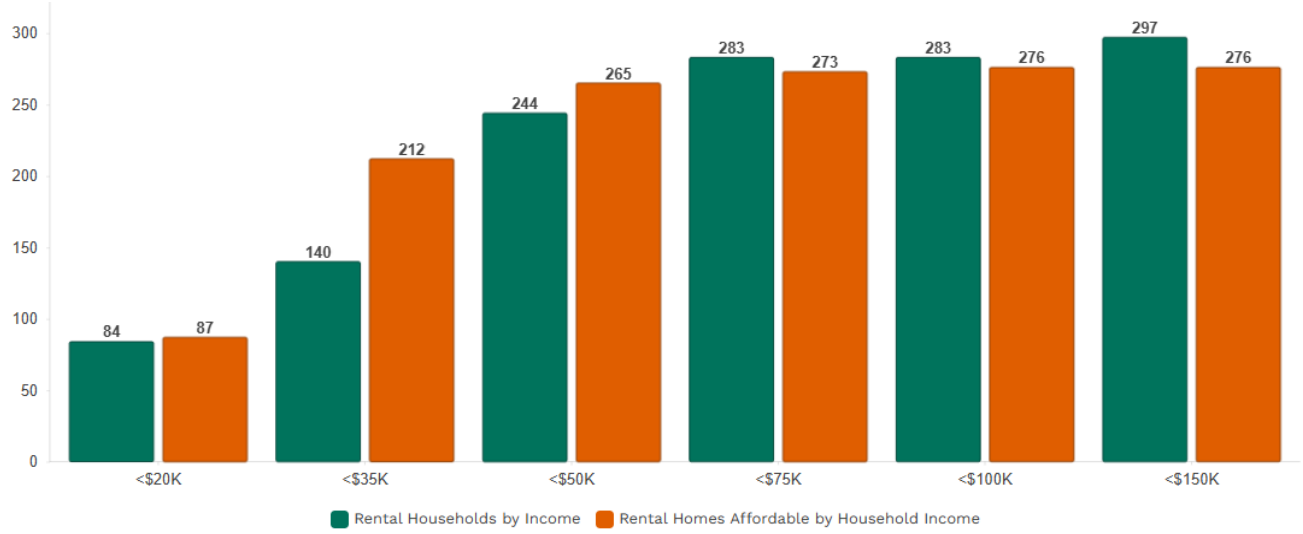
In this analysis, "single-family" refers to detached single-family homes only; "multifamily" includes townhomes, duplexes, and apartments with 3 or more homes; and "other" refers to mobile homes, RVs, and all other homes.

The rental housing gap is a measure that compares the number of renter households within a given income cohort to the number of housing units affordable to those households when spending no more than 30% of income on housing. A negative value indicates that there are fewer affordable housing units than households needing them at that price point.

In Hartford, there were approximately 140 renter households earning at or below $35,000 in 2023. In comparison, there were an estimated 212 rental units with rents affordable to households earning at or below $35,000 (defined as monthly rents of less than $750) (Figure 15). While this suggests adequate supply at the lowest income level, affordability gaps remain at higher income thresholds.

In 2023, Hartford experienced its greatest shortage of rental housing units for households earning less than $75,000 annually, with an estimated shortfall of approximately 100 units within that income band. This finding highlights the need for additional rental housing options that serve moderate-income households, particularly those earning between lower-income and upper-income thresholds.

Figure 15: Demand and Supply of Rental Housing by Household Income, 2023



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau

Subsidized Housing Supply

Deed-restricted affordable homes typically only have their rent restricted for a set period of time, depending on the subsidy source. For homes subsidized through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program for instance, rents are typically only restricted for the first 15 years of the subsidy.

This chart shows the number of newly delivered deed-restricted homes and the number whose subsidies expired in past decades, as well as the potential number of deed-restricted homes whose rent growth restrictions may expire in future years. While some expiring homes may have their affordability preserved, it is important both to continue producing new deed-restricted housing to make up for expirations as well as to identify critical points in time when the pace of expiration may rise and require additional intervention.

By 2050, all current subsidized housing units are subject to expire, and those affordable rents can increase, resulting in increased cost burden or displacement of residents from affordable units to less affordable housing options. While some expiring units may have their affordability preserved, it is important both to continue producing new deed-restricted housing to make up for expirations as well as to identify critical points in time when the pace of expirations may rise and require additional intervention.

Subsidized Housing Developments

- Woodside Apartments – 42 Housing units
- Doranne Green – 49 Housing Units

MSHDA Housing Goals & Strategies

The City of Hartford's housing goals, action strategies, and implementation framework are informed by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority's (MSHDA) Statewide Housing Plan. Incorporating statewide housing goals ensures that local housing policies are aligned with Michigan's broader housing priorities while remaining responsive to Hartford's unique market conditions and community needs.

MSHDA's Statewide Housing Plan provides a comprehensive framework for addressing housing affordability, housing supply gaps, and long-term housing stability across Michigan. By referencing these goals, Hartford is able to ground its housing strategies in data-driven, policy-supported approaches that reflect current best practices in housing production, preservation, and equitable access. This alignment also strengthens the City's eligibility and competitiveness for state and federal housing programs, technical assistance, and funding opportunities administered or supported by MSHDA.

In developing Hartford's action planning and implementation strategies, the City used MSHDA's goals to identify priority focus areas, including the preservation of existing affordable housing, the expansion of diverse housing options, and the reduction of cost burden for low- and moderate-income households. Statewide strategies related to subsidized housing preservation, regulatory reform, and capacity building helped inform locally appropriate actions that can be phased and implemented over time.

Strategic Housing Framework

Goal 1.1: Collect, analyze, and utilize housing and related data to identify the broad spectrum of systemic inequities for BIPOC, immigrants, refugees, migrants, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, those with low incomes, and other marginalized populations.

Goal 1.2: Identify and advocate for modifications to policies and practices to remove barriers across the housing continuum for BIPOC, immigrants, migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, those with low incomes, and other marginalized populations.

Goal 1.3: Increase the amount of housing that is accessible, safe, and healthy regardless of age, disability, or family size across all neighborhoods and communities.

Goal 1.4: Increase access to housing for returning citizens and justice-involved individuals, including those who have disabilities.

Goal 1.5: Increase opportunities for resident input throughout the development process.

Priority Area 2: Housing Ecosystem

Goal 2.1: Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the housing ecosystem by enhancing collaboration on housing among state agencies, philanthropy, local governments, Tribal Nations, education, and the wide variety of private-sector organizations that make up the housing ecosystem.

Goal 2.2: Increase the availability of statewide, regional, county-level, local/municipal-level, and market-level data on housing needs and opportunities to inform and improve policy, resource, and program decision-making.

Goal 2.3: Increase affordable high-speed internet access so Michigan residents can connect to a range of information and opportunities.

Priority Area 3: Preventing and Ending Homelessness

Goal 3.1: Increase access to stable and affordable housing options for households with extremely low incomes.

Goal 3.2: Increase cross-system partnerships to strengthen the homelessness response system, achieve greater housing stability, and impact social determinants of health.

Goal 3.3: Use qualitative and quantitative data to better understand and meet the housing and service needs of households at risk of and experiencing homelessness.

Priority Area 4: Housing Stock

Goal 4.1: Increase the supply of the full spectrum of housing that is affordable and attainable to Michigan residents.

Goal 4.2: Ensure that new housing development meets state climate and healthy housing goals and is affordable for the lifetime use of the building without increasing costs to residents.

Goal 4.3: Increase the rehabilitation and/or preservation of housing stock.

Goal 4.4: Increase missing middle and workforce housing stock to facilitate greater housing choice.

Goal 4.5: Expand the use of equitable and holistic local planning and zoning practices to increase housing supply.

Goal 4.6: Prevent the negative side effects of gentrification (e.g., displacement, loss of mixed-income housing) by promoting community-oriented revitalization.

Priority Area 5: Older Adult Housing

Goal 5.1: Equitably expand the supply of affordable and accessible rental units statewide for older adults.

Goal 5.2: Promote the ability of older adults to age in a place of their choice.

Goal 5.3: Increase the number of affordable facilities that offer a continuum of care within one building or complex (independent living, assisted living, and long-term care).

Priority Area 6: Rental Housing

Goal 6.1: Keep people housed by reducing the number of evictions.

Goal 6.2: Reduce the number of underserved and vulnerable populations experiencing rent burden by removing barriers and increasing resources.

Goal 6.3: Increase the quality of rental housing.

Priority Area 7: Homeownership

Goal 7.1: Increase homeownership among households with low to moderate income.

Goal 7.2: Increase access to education, products, and services that help more Michiganders achieve homeownership.

Goal 7.3: Stabilize and sustain homeownership.

Priority Area 8: Communication and Education

Goal 8.1: Increase awareness of and support for the importance and benefits of accessible, affordable, and attainable housing throughout Michigan.

Goal 8.2: Increase inclusive education and awareness of existing housing programs and services in the state.

Goal 8.3: Assist Michigan residents to increase housing stability through financial literacy and wealth-building.

MOBILITY PLAN

Overall, Hartford's existing road and street network is effectively meeting the daily transportation needs of residents.

Intentional road design provides guidance and highlights state goals for corridors and streets throughout Hartford. Because specific contexts may vary from street to street and neighborhood to neighborhood, the images and text on the following pages should be taken as guidelines and best practices, rather than specific designs.

Community Transportation At-A-Glance

An indication of this area's economic position relative to the surrounding region can be illustrated in travel time to work for residents. Table 6 further outlines the time residents, age 16 and older, spend traveling to their place of employment. The average travel time to work was estimated at 21.4 minutes.

Table 6: Travel Time to Work

Travel Time to Work	Percentage of Workers
Less than 10 minutes	18.0%
10 to 14 minutes	19.3%
15 to 19 minutes	4.6%
20 to 24 minutes	26.2%
25 to 29 minutes	1.9%
30 to 34 minutes	12.7%
35 to 44 minutes	3.3%
45 to 59 minutes	10.9%
60 or more minutes	3.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023

Table 7 showcases the place of work for residents 16 years and older within the City. 53.3 percent of those who are employed are shown to work outside of the County. Employment outside of the County may be due to it's location near the border of Berrien County. This may also be attributed to the regional draw of nearby employment centers. According to the U.S. Census site, much of those traveling outside of the County are traveling to Paw Paw Lake, Watervliet, Benton Heights, and Fair Plain. The larger populations in Benton Harbor and St. Joseph allow for higher levels of services that promote industry to support its residents and the region as a whole.

Table 7: Place of Work, 2023

Travel Time to Work	Percentage of Workers
Worked in state of residence	100.0%
Worked in county of residence	53.3%
Worked outside county of residence	46.7%
Worked outside state of residence	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023

Table 8: Means of Transportation, 2023

Means of Transportation	Number	Percentage
Car, truck, or van	883	97.5%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	0	0.0%
Taxicab	0	0.0%
Motorcycle	0	0.0%
Bicycle	0	0.0%
Walked	18	2.0%
Other means	0	0.0%
Worked from home	5	0.6%
Total	**906**	**100.0%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023

Vehicle availability among households is high, with 88% percent of all households having access to at least one vehicle, indicating a strong reliance on automobiles for daily travel. Households with one or two vehicles account for over 70% of all households, suggesting that most trips are likely accommodated without vehicle-sharing constraints. Transportation vulnerability is most pronounced among 1-person households, where 33% report having no vehicle available, significantly higher than any other household size. In contrast, larger households (three or more persons) show higher levels of multi-vehicle ownership, reflecting increased mobility needs related to employment, school, and household coordination. Overall, the distribution of vehicle access suggests limited dependence on non-auto modes, reinforcing the importance of roadway infrastructure while also highlighting the need for targeted mobility options such as transit, rideshare, or demand-responsive transportation services for smaller and zero-vehicle households.

Table 8: Household Size by Vehicles Available, 2023

Household Size / Vehicle Availability	Estimate	Percent
All Households		
No vehicle available	104	12.0%
1 vehicle available	346	40.0%
2 vehicles available	274	31.6%
3 vehicles available	104	12.0%
4 or more vehicles available	38	4.4%
Total – All Households	**866**	**100.0%**
1-Person Households		
No vehicle available	78	33.5%
1 vehicle available	130	55.8%
2 vehicles available	25	10.7%
3 vehicles available	0	0.0%
4 or more vehicles available	0	0.0%
Total – 1-Person	**233**	**100.0%**
2-Person Households		
No vehicle available	14	6.0%
1 vehicle available	67	28.6%
2 vehicles available	116	49.6%
3 vehicles available	37	15.8%
4 or more vehicles available	0	0.0%
Total – 2-Person	**234**	**100.0%**
3-Person Households		
No vehicle available	0	0.0%
1 vehicle available	58	42.6%
2 vehicles available	39	28.7%
3 vehicles available	22	16.2%
4 or more vehicles available	17	12.5%
Total – 3-Person	**136**	**100.0%**
4-or-More-Person Households		
No vehicle available	12	4.6%
1 vehicle available	91	34.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023

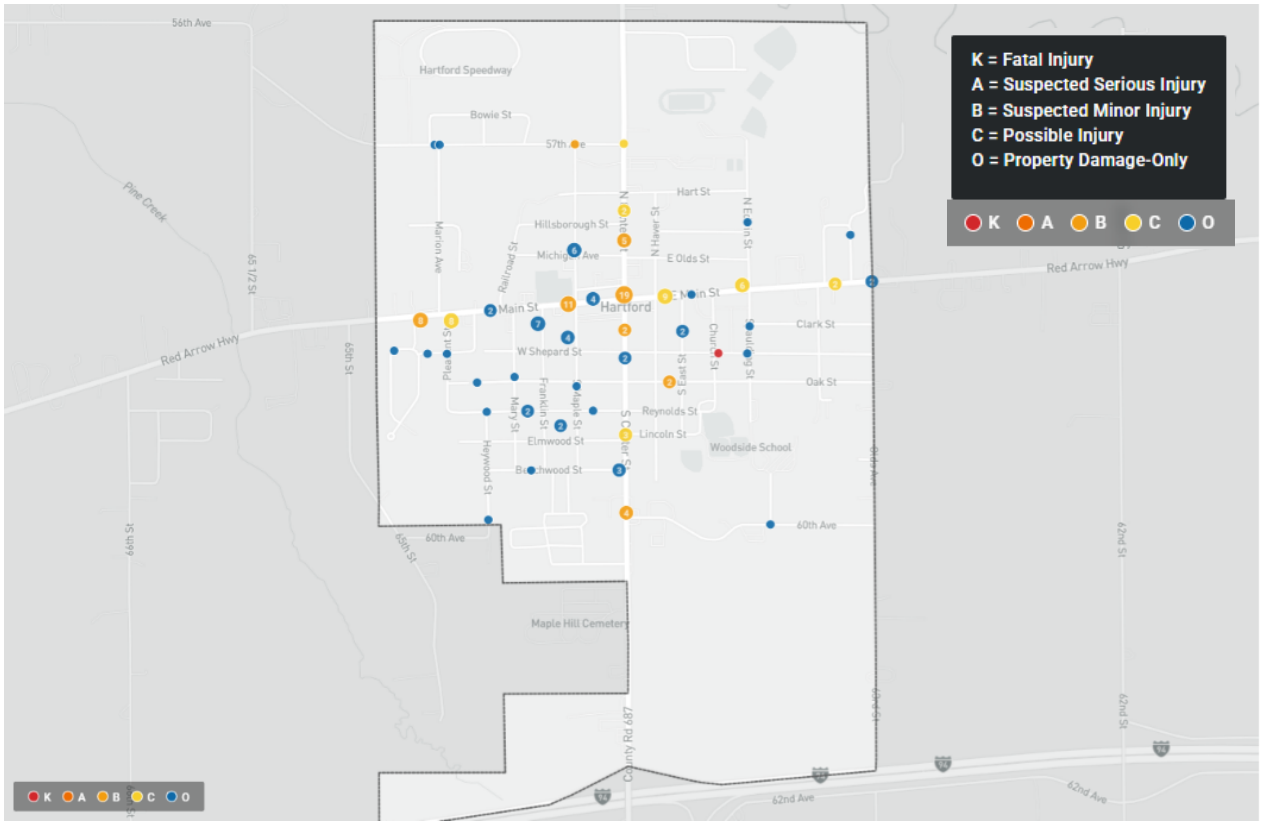
Traffic & Crash Analysis

An analysis of recent crash data in Hartford shows that most traffic incidents are relatively low severity, but important safety concerns remain. The majority of crashes result in property damage only, with no reported injuries. When injuries do occur, they are most often minor or possible injuries rather than serious or life-threatening. Fatal crashes are rare; however, even a single fatality underscores the importance of continued attention to roadway safety and prevention strategies. Overall, people involved in crashes are far more likely to walk away unharmed than to experience injury. This suggests that while Hartford's transportation system generally functions safely, there are still opportunities to reduce the frequency and severity of crashes, particularly for those most at risk.

Behavioral factors play a significant role in crash patterns. Crashes involving older drivers occur more frequently than any other age-related category, reflecting the community's aging population and the need for roadways that are easier to navigate, well-marked, and forgiving of slower reaction times. Distracted driving, including cell phone use, also emerges as a notable concern, indicating that inattention remains a meaningful contributor to crashes. Impairment related to alcohol or drugs is present but occurs far less often than distraction. Young and inexperienced drivers are another important consideration. Drivers under the age of 25 are involved in a sizable share of crashes, consistent with national trends showing higher crash risk among newer drivers. Continued education, enforcement, and safe roadway design can help reduce risk for this group.

Crashes involving vulnerable road users—such as pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorcyclists—make up a small portion of total incidents. However, these crashes typically carry a higher risk of injury and severity. Even infrequent crashes involving non-motorized users highlight the need for safe crossings, improved visibility, traffic calming, and street designs that better balance the needs of all users. Most crashes do not involve large trucks or buses, though when they do occur, they can lead to more complex safety and mobility challenges due to vehicle size and stopping distances.

Figure 16. Harford, MI Crash Analysis Map



Source: Mi-CAT – State of Michigan Police Crash Analysis Tool (2025)

Preventative Crash Planning

The crash data indicate that Hartford's mobility challenges are less about widespread severe crashes and more about addressing specific, recurring risk factors. Key priorities include reducing distracted driving, improving safety for both older and younger drivers, and strengthening protections for pedestrians and bicyclists. Strategies such as clearer signage, improved lighting, traffic calming, enforcement, education, and complete streets design can all contribute to a safer transportation system.

E. Main Street and N. Center Street are two of Hartford's most important transportation corridors, carrying higher traffic volumes and serving as primary connections for residents, businesses, and visitors. As a result, these corridors experience a disproportionate share of crashes compared to local residential streets. Of the 155 reported crashes in Hartford during the analysis period, 85 occurred along E. Main Street and N. Center Street, meaning that more than half of all crashes are concentrated on just two roadways. This pattern reflects their role as high-activity corridors with multiple access points, turning movements, and competing travel demands, all of which increase the likelihood of conflicts.

Most crashes along E. Main Street and N. Center Street result in property damage only, indicating generally low severity. However, these corridors experience a higher share of injury-related crashes than the community average. While no fatal crashes were reported during the analysis period, the presence of injury crashes highlights ongoing safety challenges along Hartford's primary roadways. Crash patterns along these corridors suggest that safety improvements should focus on reducing conflict points and improving roadway predictability. Measures such as access management, improved signal timing, enhanced crosswalk visibility, traffic calming where appropriate, and targeted enforcement of distracted driving can help reduce both crash frequency and severity.

By prioritizing safety investments along E. Main Street and N. Center Street, Hartford can make meaningful progress toward a transportation system that supports mobility, economic activity, and safe travel for users of all ages and abilities.

Table 8: Crash Analysis, City of Hartford, MI

Section	Measure	Category	Count	Percent
Crash Severity	Total Crashes	All Crashes	155	100.00%
	Crash Outcome	Property Damage Only	126	81.29%
	Crash Outcome	Injury Crashes	28	18.06%
	Crash Outcome	Fatal Crashes	1	0.65%
	Crash Outcome	Non-Traffic Crashes	0	0.00%
Injury Severity (People)	Injury Level	No Injury (O)	351	88.64%
	Injury Level	Possible Injury (C)	25	6.31%
	Injury Level	Suspected Minor Injury (B)	11	2.78%
	Injury Level	Suspected Serious Injury (A)	0	0.00%
	Injury Level	Fatal Injury (K)	1	0.25%
Injuries by Crash	Injury Level	No Injury (O)	145	93.55%
	Injury Level	Possible Injury (C)	20	12.90%
	Injury Level	Suspected Minor Injury (B)	9	5.81%
	Injury Level	Suspected Serious Injury (A)	0	0.00%
	Injury Level	Fatal Injury (K)	1	0.65%
Behavioral Countermeasures	Countermeasure	Older Drivers	48	30.97%
	Countermeasure	Distracted Driving (Cell Phone)	16	10.32%
	Countermeasure	Saturation Patrol – Impairment	10	6.45%
	Countermeasure	Seat Belt Enforcement	8	5.16%
	Countermeasure	Drug-Impaired Driving Enforcement	4	2.58%
	Countermeasure	Bicycle Enforcement	2	1.29%
	Countermeasure	GDL / Zero Tolerance Enforcement	1	0.65%

Section	Measure	Category	Count	Percent
	Countermeasure	Youth Programs – Impairment	1	0.65%
Alcohol Involved	Alcohol	No	146	94.19%
	Alcohol	Yes	9	5.81%
Drug Involved	Drugs	No	151	97.42%
	Drugs	Yes	4	2.58%
Distracted Driver	Distraction	No	139	89.68%
	Distraction	Yes	16	10.32%
Truck / Bus	Vehicle Type	No	144	92.90%
	Vehicle Type	Yes	11	7.10%
Bicycle	Road User	No	153	98.71%
	Road User	Yes	2	1.29%
Pedestrian	Road User	No	153	98.71%
	Road User	Yes	2	1.29%
Motorcycle	Road User	No	154	99.35%
	Road User	Yes	1	0.65%
Young Driver	Age Group	None	104	67.10%
	Age Group	Ages 21–24	18	11.61%
	Age Group	Ages 18–20	17	10.97%
	Age Group	Age 17	11	7.10%
	Age Group	Age 16	5	3.23%
	Age Group	Age 15	0	0.00%
Elderly Driver	Age Group	None	92	59.35%
	Age Group	Ages 65–74	28	18.06%
	Age Group	Ages 60–64	17	10.97%
	Age Group	Ages 75–84	15	9.68%
	Age Group	Age 85+	3	1.94%

Source: Mi-CAT – State of Michigan Police Crash Analysis Tool (2025)

Crash Narratives

A review of the crash narratives indicates that the majority of incidents were routine, low-severity crashes driven by inattention, following too closely, and intersection conflicts. Many crashes occurred while vehicles were stopped or slowing for traffic signals, during turning movements, or while changing lanes. These incidents most often resulted in property damage only, with few injuries reported.

Notably, several narratives reference the presence of traffic cameras, business surveillance systems, or dash cameras, which either captured the crash event or were identified as potential sources of corroborating evidence. In these cases, camera footage was used or noted to clarify vehicle movements, confirm right-of-way, or document fault.

- “No cameras were located in the area to verify the statements provided.”
- “Officer was unable to obtain video footage from nearby businesses.”
- “There were no traffic cameras at the intersection.”
- “Due to the lack of video evidence, fault could not be clearly determined

The inclusion of camera references suggests growing reliance on video evidence to support crash investigations and resolve conflicting driver statements.

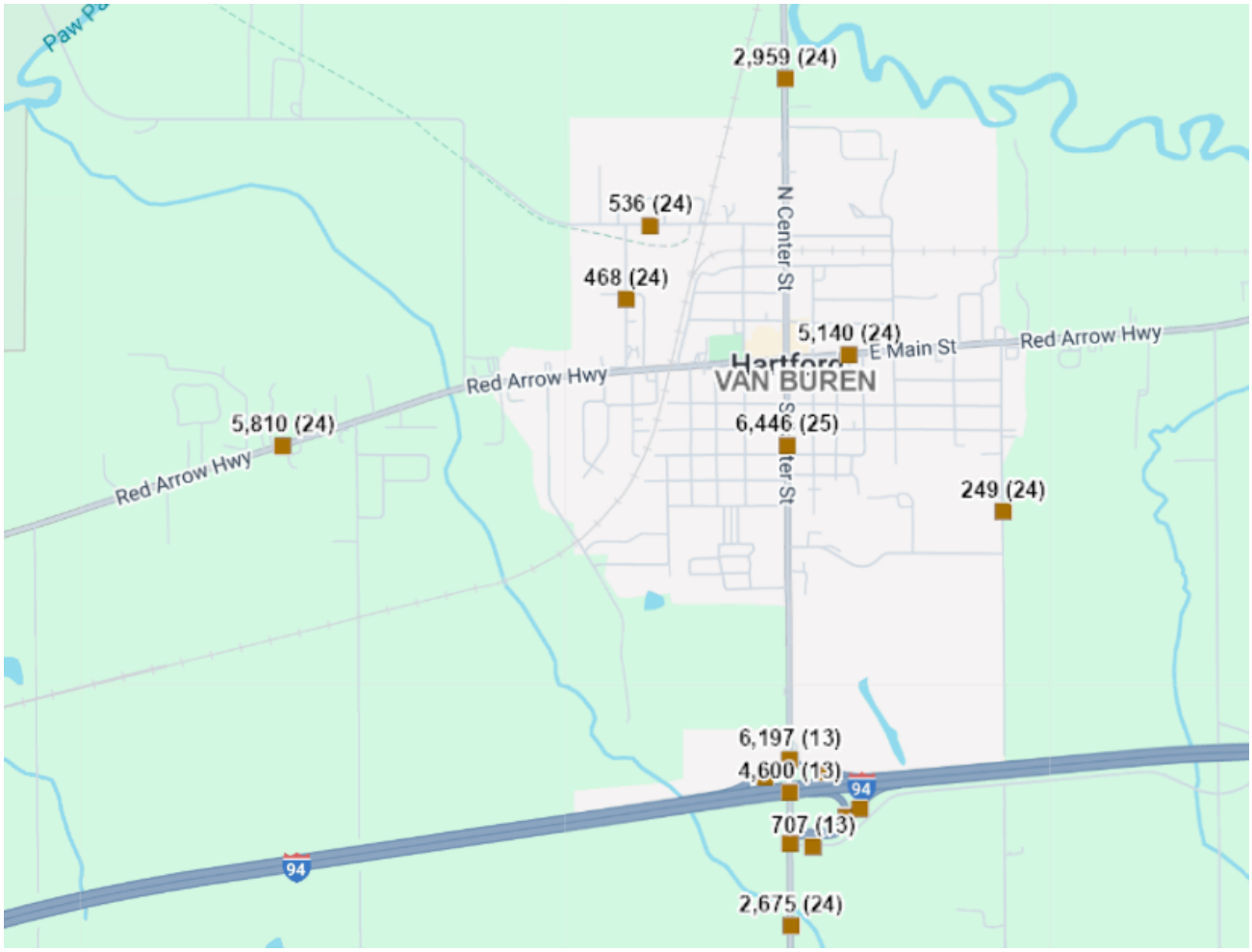
Crash narratives indicate that crashes are primarily driven by everyday driving behaviors inattention, following too closely, improper turning, and unsafe lane changes rather than extreme or unusual events. The narratives strongly support the quantitative findings that crashes are frequent but low in severity, emphasizing the need for behavioral countermeasures such as distracted-driving enforcement, intersection safety improvements, and targeted education for high-risk driver groups. Overall, the narratives reinforce that crashes are predictable and preventable, frequently occurring at known conflict points such as intersections and congestion areas. The documented use of cameras highlights an opportunity to leverage existing camera infrastructure including traffic signal cameras and private surveillance to improve enforcement, crash reconstruction, and future safety countermeasures.

Traffic Transportation Patterns

To further contextualize the observed crash patterns and better understand where safety risks are most likely to occur, traffic volume data were reviewed for the community’s primary roadways. Evaluating Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) provides insight into exposure levels and helps explain why certain corridors experience higher crash frequencies than others. The following traffic count analysis highlights the roadways carrying the greatest share of vehicular activity and establishes a foundation for prioritizing safety, maintenance, and operational improvements.

Center Street carries the highest traffic volumes within the community, with an Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) of 6,608 vehicles in 2024. Traffic volumes decrease along the corridor moving northward, with North Center Street carrying approximately 2,959 AADT. Main Street also serves as a key east–west connector, with the east side of town generating 5,140 AADT and the west side generating 5,810 AADT.

Figure 17. MDOT AADT Map



Collectively, these traffic patterns indicate that the majority of vehicular activity is concentrated along the southern segments of Center Street and the east–west Main Street corridors, which function as the primary circulation routes for local and through traffic. In contrast, substantially lower traffic volumes are observed in the northern portions of the city, suggesting more localized travel patterns and reduced regional connectivity in those areas. These trends have implications for future transportation planning, including roadway maintenance priorities, multimodal improvements, and targeted traffic calming or capacity enhancements aligned with observed demand.

Road Design Plan

The Road Design Plan is intended to give guidance and state goals for the corridors throughout Hartford. Because specific contexts may vary from street to street and neighborhood to neighborhood, the images and text on the following pages should be taken as guidelines and best practices, rather than specific designs.

However, it is the City's goal to achieve greater connectivity and pedestrian safety throughout Hartford using a policy of "Complete Streets" - designing corridors to be safe and attractive for all users and ensuring that streets contribute positively to the vibrancy and economic vitality of the community. Therefore, the guidelines expressed in this plan contain recommendations to re-orient streets away from the needs of through traffic, and towards the needs of local traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Complete Streets Context

The City's Master Plan supports the implementation of Complete Streets principles to ensure that streets are designed, operated, and maintained to safely accommodate all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. Complete Streets recognize that roadways are not solely for vehicular traffic, but are shared public spaces that serve pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, freight, emergency services, and motorists alike.

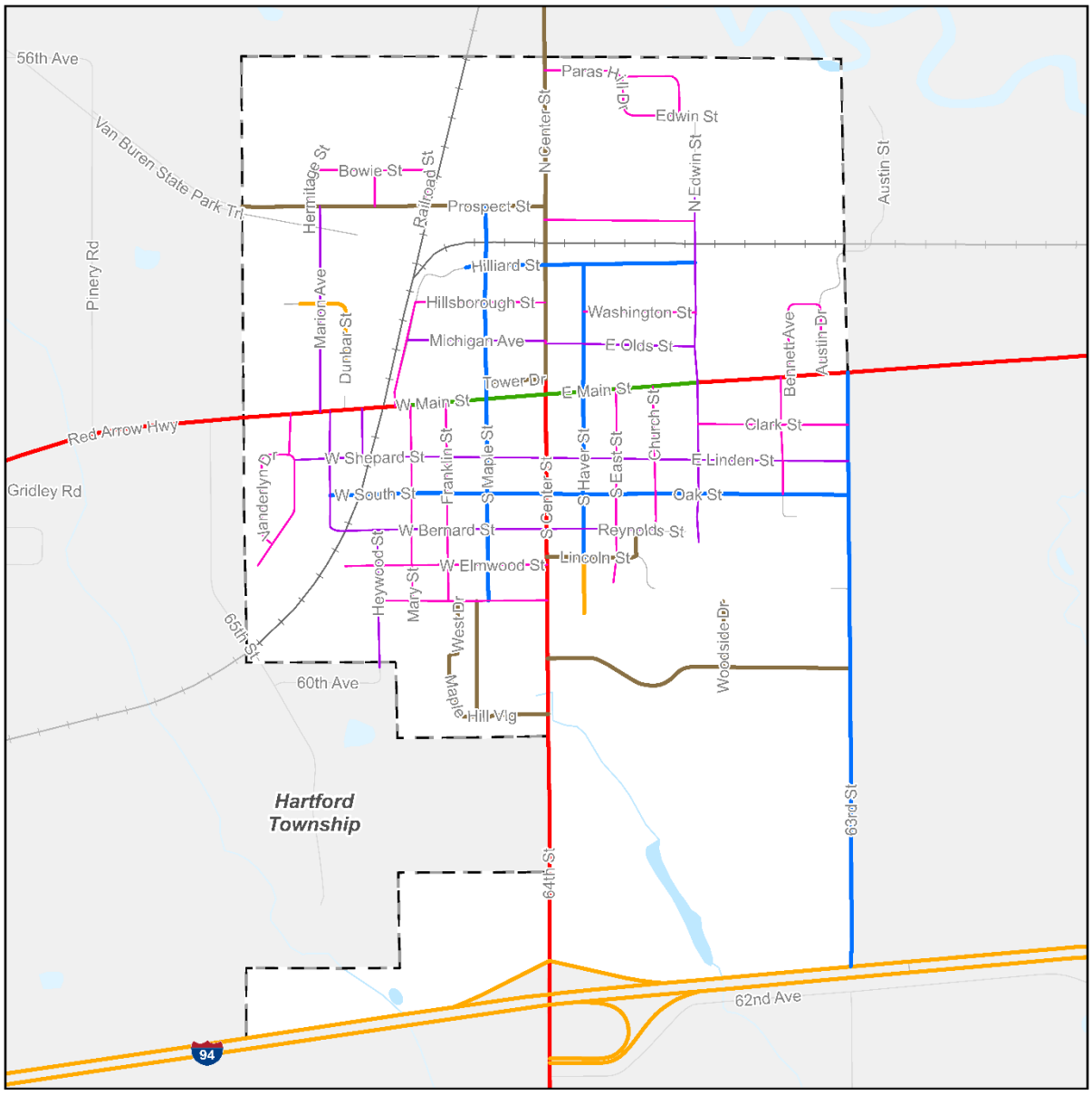
Incorporating Complete Streets into local planning promotes safety, accessibility, and mobility while supporting broader community goals related to public health, economic development, and quality of life. Improvements such as sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle facilities, traffic calming measures, and accessible transit stops help create safer and more comfortable environments for residents, workers, and visitors. These features are especially important in areas near schools, parks, downtown, and neighborhoods where walking and biking are common.

Types of Complete Streets Design

- Regional Through Road (4)
- Downtown Main Street (1)
- Business Connector (5)
- Neighborhood Connector (7)
- Neighborhood Streets (2)
- Collector Streets (3)
- Transit Priority Streets (6)

The current road and street network in Hartford reflects a traditional small-town grid centered on the downtown and connected to regional corridors. Regional traffic is concentrated along Red Arrow Highway and I-94, while Center Street and Main Street serve as the primary north–south and east–west routes within the city. Main Street functions as the community's Downtown Main Street and provides key connections between neighborhoods, downtown businesses, and regional destinations.

Collector and neighborhood connector streets, including Maple Street, Edwin Street, and Prospect Street, distribute traffic between residential areas, downtown, and community destinations. Most remaining streets function as neighborhood streets that primarily serve local traffic and provide direct access to homes and businesses.



Mobility Plan

City of Hartford, Michigan

January 13, 2025

LEGEND

- Regional Through Road (4)
- Transit Priority Streets (6)
- Business Connector (5)
- Downtown Main Street (1)
- Neighborhood Connector (7)
- Collector Streets (3)
- Neighborhood Streets (2)

0 500 1,000 Feet

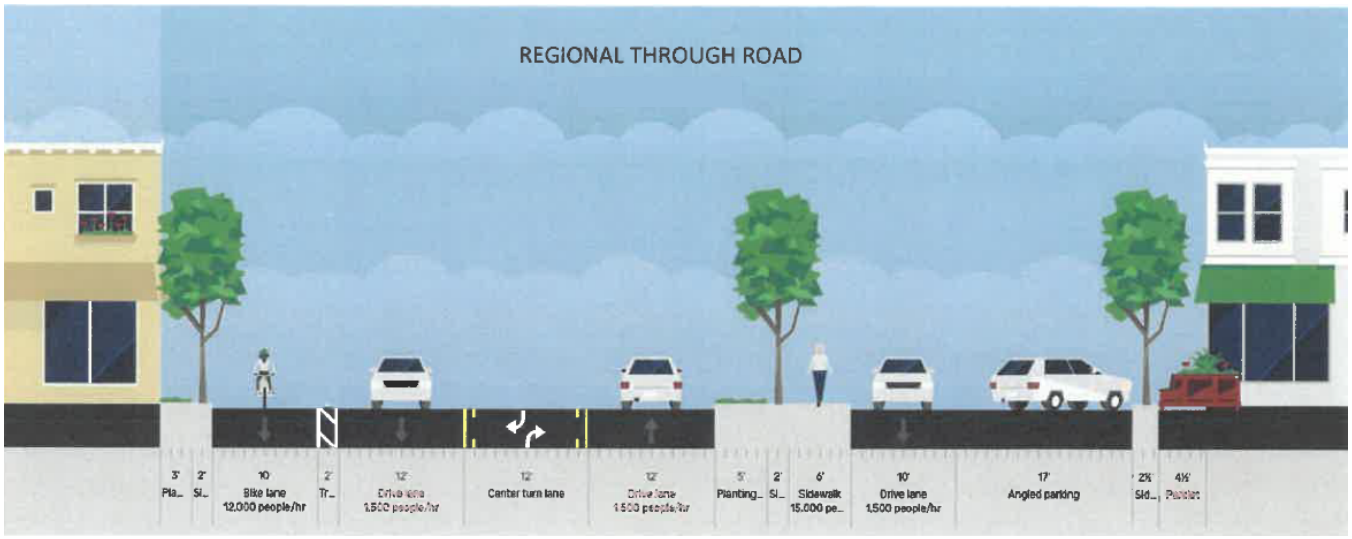
Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
Data Source: State of Michigan 2024.
McKenna 2025.

MCKENNA

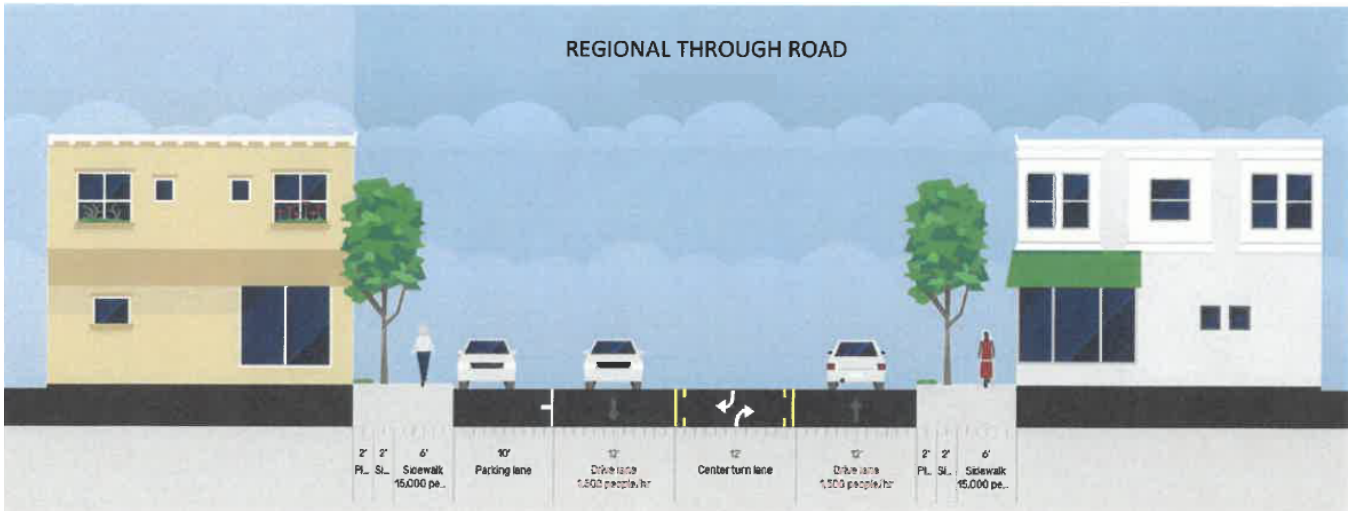
Regional Through Road

- *80-100 feet of ROW*
- *15,000 to 35,000 cars per day*

Regional Through Roads are heavily trafficked roadways because they carry more than just local traffic. These roads often run through areas that are either currently or planned to be urban districts. Therefore, they need to balance the needs of through traffic with anticipated high pedestrian traffic, non-motorized connectivity, and business access.



While pedestrian safety is important, through traffic is and will remain a priority. Turning lanes should also be used to ease business access. Where left turn lanes are not necessary, medians should be used.



Guidelines for Regional Through Roads:

- Regional Through Roads should be lined with trees and green space to slow traffic, improve the pedestrian experience, and add beauty and charm. Medians are a common tool to add landscaping and trees. Medians along Regional Through Roads need not feature “Michigan Lefts” and can have breaks at intersections to allow for left turns.
- Non-motorized connectivity on Regional Through Roads can be achieved through bike lanes, although bike lanes and on-street parking are not always compatible. Another option is a protected cycle track, particularly on roadways with wider rights-of-way.

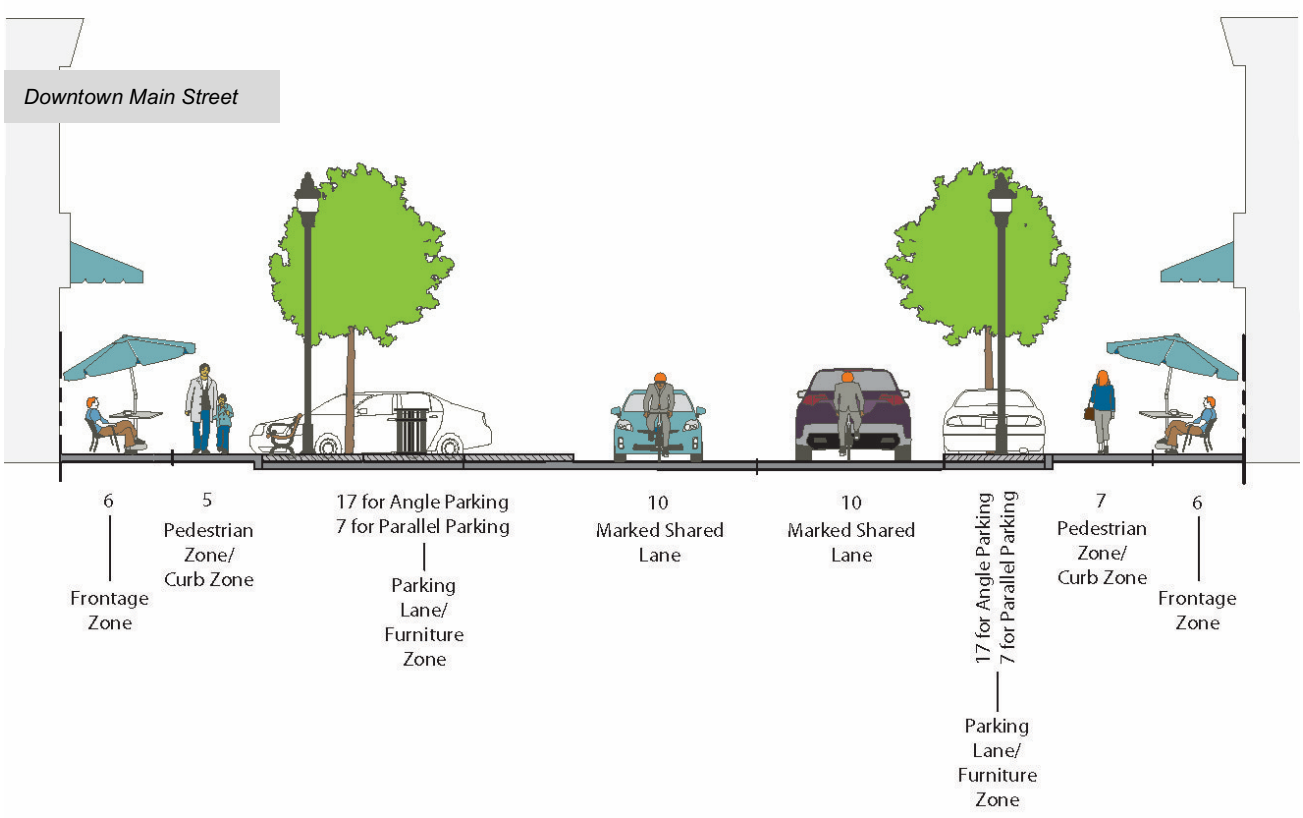
Regional Through Roads within the City of Hartford include:

- S Center St.
- Red Arrow Hwy.

Downtown Main Street

- *80-100 feet of ROW*
- *15,000 to 25,000 cars per day*
- *Heavy Pedestrian Usage*
- *On-Street Parking and Local Traffic*

Hartford's "Main Street" is Red Arrow Highway.



Guidelines for Downtown Main Streets:

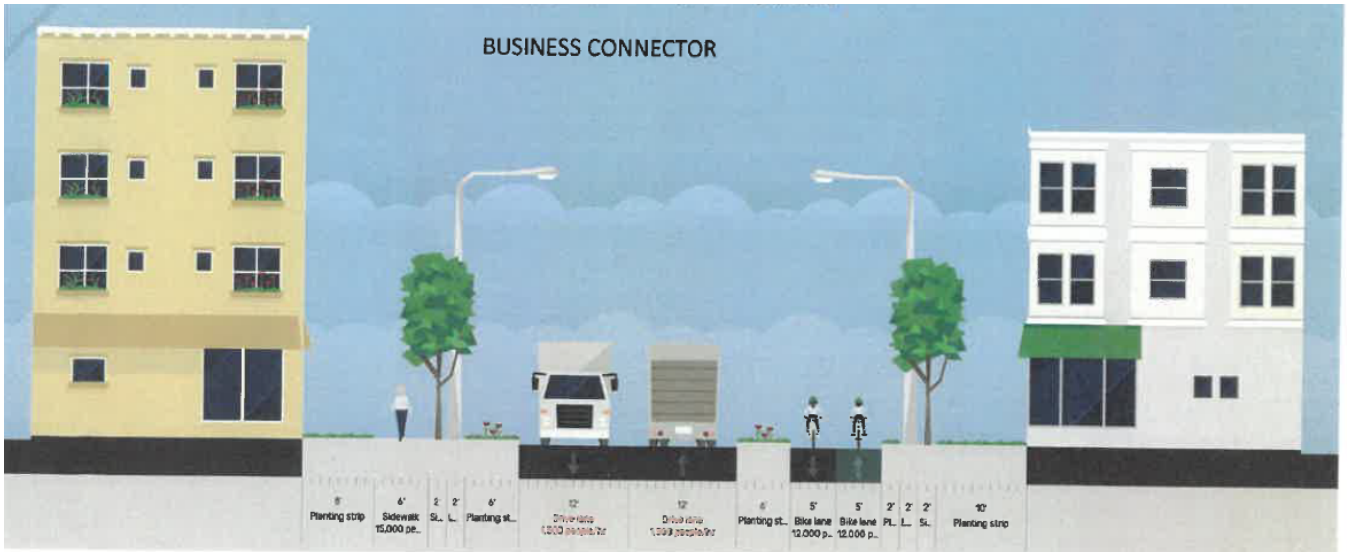
- Downtown Main Streets should have wide sidewalks, not only for pedestrian safety and comfort, but also to provide space for amenities, bike racks, landscaping, and potentially outdoor dining and shopping.
- On Street Parking is a crucial feature of Downtown Main Streets. On Street Parking buffers pedestrians from moving traffic and supports businesses that need easily accessible parking spaces near their front door. Signage that indicates where public parking exists is also a best practice for downtowns.
- Downtown Main Streets should be designed for slow traffic**.** Through traffic should be discouraged to the extent possible, in the downtown. The priority for automobile traffic in this area should be local motorists seeking to patronize downtown businesses. This means creating turn lanes and on-street parking spaces, even if they slow the traffic speed or make through traffic less efficient.
- Non-motorized connectivity on Downtown Main Streets can be achieved through bike lanes**,** although bike lanes and on-street parking are not always compatible. If bike lanes cannot be accommodated on the Main Street itself, they should be incorporated into parallel corridors. There are also opportunities to connect the Hart-Hartford bike trail to the downtown street network.
- Transit needs should also be assessed and prioritized for the City of Hartford. Currently, the city is served by the Muskegon Area Transit System (MATS) dial-a-ride service. Currently, Hartford does not seem to be a critical need for public transit services. As Hartford grows and evolves, it will need to plan to meet future transportation needs.

- 
DOLLAR GENERAL

Business Connector

- *66-100 feet of ROW*
- *10,000 to 25,000 cars per day (and heavy truck traffic)*
- *30-45 MPH*

Business Connectors are roadways that travel through non-residential areas – particularly intensive commercial and industrial areas. They are designed for high levels of truck traffic. Transit access should be readily available along business connectors. While pedestrians and bicyclists should be able to traverse them safely, they are predominantly corridors for commercial traffic and commuters.



Guidelines for Business Connectors:

- Business Connectors should have wide lanes**,** particularly turning lanes, to accommodate trucks safely.
- Although other designs may be appropriate, business connectors should generally have a 3 or 5 lane cross section with a continuous center turn lane. This prevents rear-end accidents and allows for efficient through traffic and turning movements.
- Sidewalks should be constructed where possible. Bike lanes (or other appropriate bicycle infrastructure) should be constructed where designated in this plan. Transit stops in these areas should be designed to keep through traffic moving.

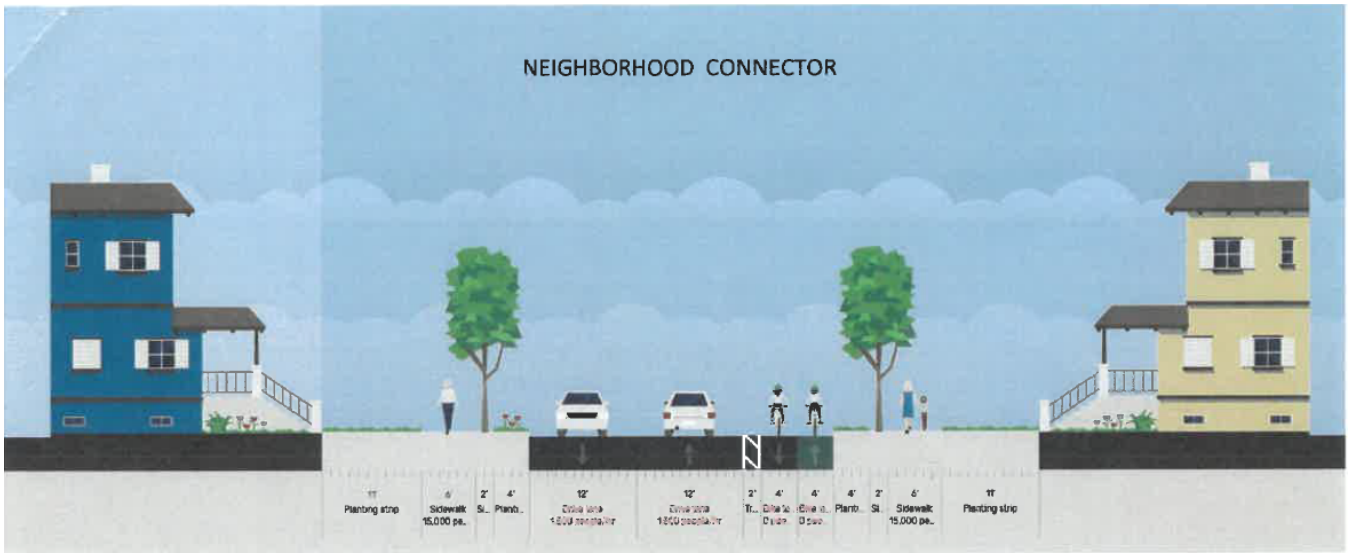
Business Connectors within the City of Hartford include:

- N Center St.
- Prospect St.
- 60th Ave

Neighborhood Connector

- *66-100 feet of ROW*
- *5,000 to 25,000 cars per day*

Neighborhood Connectors are roadways that travel through and between residential areas, connecting those neighborhoods together. Their land use context is generally residential but could also include low-intensity retail/service businesses, religious or educational institutions, recreational areas, or preserved open space.



Guidelines for Neighborhood Connectors:

- Neighborhood Connectors with frequent intersections and driveways should have a two-lane cross section.
- Where there are businesses nearby that need the support of on-street parking, it should be provided. On street parking is also appropriate in residential areas.
- Neighborhood Connectors should always have sidewalks, with wide, tree-lined buffer areas separating them from the automobile lanes.
- Bike lanes (or other appropriate bicycle infrastructure) should be constructed where designated in this plan.
- Truck traffic is discouraged on Neighborhood Connectors.
- Bus bulbs are desirable at transit stops to keep through traffic moving.
- In some areas, medians may be desirable, for aesthetic and tree canopy reasons, and to calm traffic. Medians are recommended for roadways with through traffic within residential areas.

Neighborhood Connectors within the City of Hartford include:

North-South Neighborhood Connectors:

- Marion Street
- N Edwin St.
- N Haver
- S Haver
- Olds Ave

Neighborhood Streets

Neighborhood Streets are low traffic corridors designed for local access, mainly to residential uses.

- *60-66 feet of ROW*
- *Local Traffic*
- *25 MPH*

Guidelines for Neighborhood Streets:

- Neighborhood Streets should be designed with narrow traffic lanes and space for on-street parking along the curbs.
- All Neighborhood Streets should have sidewalks**,** buffered from the roadway by wide, tree-lined landscape areas**.**
- Cycling on Neighborhood Streets should be encouraged, but bike lanes need not be specifically designated.
- Transit lines and truck traffic should not be permitted on Neighborhood Streets.
- Newly constructed Neighborhood Streets should be public roadways, dedicated to the City, and designed based on the guidelines of this plan and the City's engineering standards.
- Neighborhood Streets within the City of Hartford include all roadways not listed in one of the other categories.

Pedestrian Mobility (Non-Motorized Transportation)

Non-Motorized Connectivity is crucial for sustainability, vibrancy, and transportation efficiency. This plan envisions the following non-motorized transportation improvements.

Sidewalks and Bike Paths

Sidewalks and bike paths are important elements to the character of a community and to the safety of its residents. Sidewalks link homes and neighborhoods and allow children and adults to move freely and safely about. Sidewalks also link residential areas with the City's downtown, parks, schools, and other facilities.

While much of the City contains sidewalks, a large share does not. Generally, existing sidewalks are concentrated in the mature neighborhoods. Outlying areas possessing large lots or acreage parcels are void of sidewalks. Recent community input sessions show that sidewalk repairs and new sidewalks are the two most important aspects to improve walkability in the community.

This Master Plan recommends that all residential neighborhoods having a housing density of three (3) units per acre or more contain sidewalks. Sidewalks should be located on at least one side of the road, where placement in the right-of-way makes the most sense, and to complete sidewalk connections along major routes.

Lower density locations should also be encouraged to implement sidewalks, and installation of sidewalks where they do not exist should be encouraged for new construction projects regardless of residential density.

Where right-of-way permits, bike paths or sidewalks should be incorporated along each of the city's major and minor arterials and collector streets.

Bike Paths: Hartford is the proud home of the Van Buren Trail State Park, which runs between Hartford and the City of South Haven. The trail starts at the City and ends at the Van Buren State Park in South Haven. Off-street bike paths, like the Van Buren Trail, are ideal and provide the highest level of safety and efficiency for cyclists, but they require right-of-way that is not always available. Therefore, they are best prioritized on high-traffic corridors and roads that run through lightly developed areas. The following additional bike infrastructure is proposed:

Bike Lanes: On-street bike lanes are an effective design when space is limited, and through areas where denser development is existing or planned. On-street bike lanes in Hartford could improve bike infrastructure by providing connections to Van Buren Trail.

Other areas targeted for bike lanes include (but should be further vetted by the DDA and the DPW):

- Center Street
- Main Street (through downtown)
- Maple Street
- West South Street that turns into Oak Street

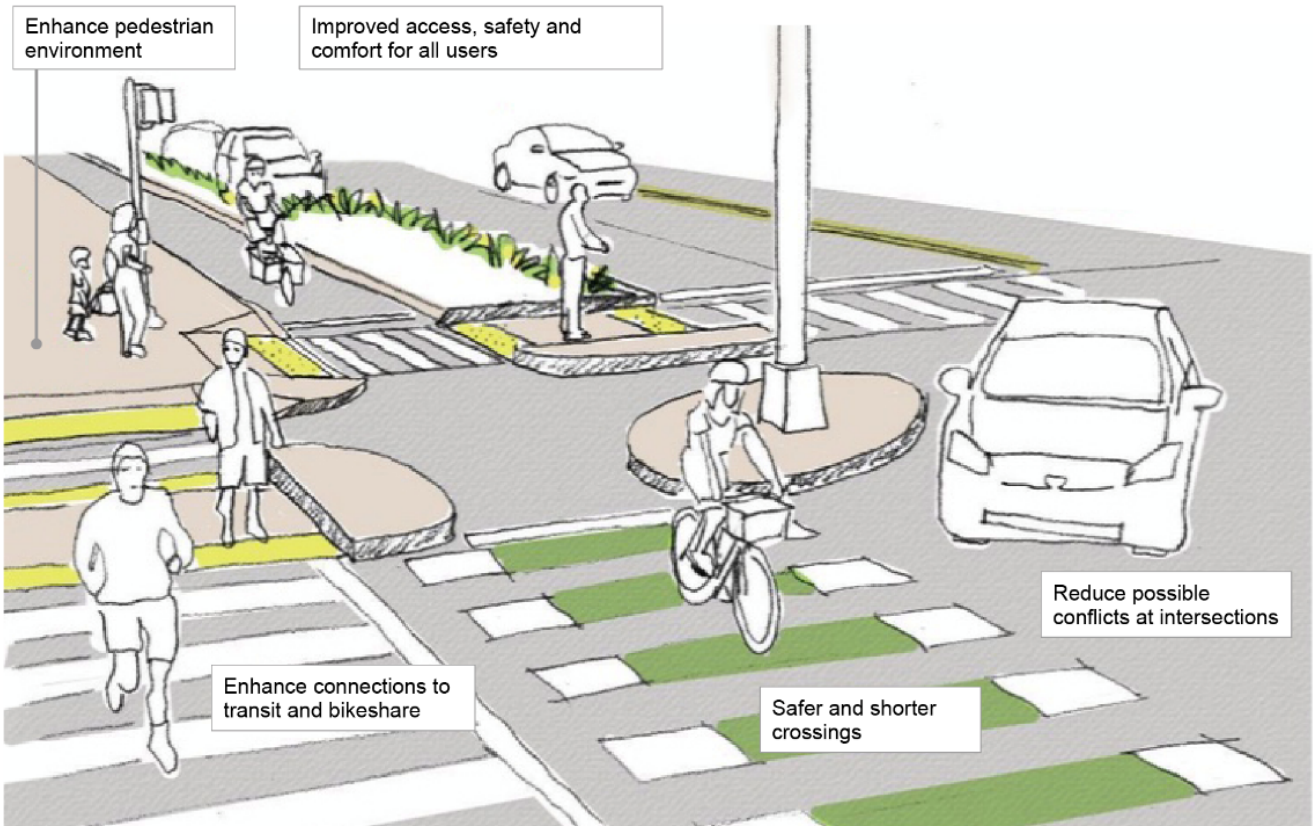
Pedestrian Improvements: During the public engagement process, most residents said they felt safe walking and biking in the City. About half of the respondents to the survey believe sidewalks should be installed wherever none currently exist, and the other half believe they should be installed in key locations. Sidewalks should be installed in all new and existing neighborhoods with densities of 3 or more housing units per acre.

Hartford can increase pedestrian safety by installing easily visible crosswalks, ADA accessible curb cuts, traffic medians with foliage, and traffic pork chops to create protected and shorter crosswalks, if appropriate. These pedestrian enhancements are highlighted in the illustration below. The specific improvements will be context dependent.

- A new sidewalk on Center Street from south of 60th Street to Main Street
- Increased width of sidewalks in the Downtown recommended 11 feet to 15 feet wide
- Improved pedestrian amenities at Main Street and Center

Crosswalks: Crosswalks, including upgrades like elevated crosswalks, HAWK signals, and pedestrian islands, help people navigate the community on bicycles and on-foot. The following are the highest priority crossings in the City.

- Wendell and Main Street
- Prospect and Center Street
- W Beechwood and Center Street



Rail

Hartford's future mobility strategy recognizes rail as both a critical economic asset and a transportation system that requires targeted coordination and mitigation to reduce conflicts with other travel modes. As rail activity is expected to continue intensifying—primarily through longer trains rather than increased frequency—the City's approach emphasizes safety, predictability, and strategic investment to better integrate rail operations into the broader transportation network.

Rail Safety at Crossings and Along the Corridor

As rail activity continues to intensify—primarily through longer trains rather than increased frequency—future rail-related mobility policy should prioritize reducing conflicts between trains, vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists. Persistent safety concerns identified under existing conditions, including student trespassing near school-adjacent rail segments and near-misses even at low operating speeds, indicate that operational practices alone are insufficient to fully address risk.

Future efforts should focus on targeted infrastructure improvements, enhanced physical separation where appropriate, and continued coordination with rail operators and schools on safety education. Particular emphasis should be placed on locations near the Hartford Public Schools campus, where daily pedestrian activity intersects with rail operations.

The City should continue to explore fencing, signage, and other corridor safety measures in coordination with rail operators, school officials, and state and federal partners to address safety challenges that cannot be resolved through scheduling adjustments alone.

Reduction and Consolidation of At-Grade Rail Crossings

Existing conditions analysis identifies Maple Street, Center Street, and Edwin Street as recurring pinch points where limited sightlines, increasing train lengths, and frequent blockages contribute to vehicle delay, constrained emergency access, and elevated safety risks. Among these, Maple Street has been consistently identified by rail operators and stakeholders as presenting the greatest safety concern due to extremely limited visibility and its proximity to adjacent industrial uses.

Future mobility policy should recognize that not all at-grade crossings serve equal transportation or safety functions. The City should evaluate the long-term role of individual crossings based on visibility, traffic function, emergency access, and cost-effectiveness, rather than assuming that all crossings should be preserved or upgraded.

Where crossings present persistent safety risks and limited opportunities for effective mitigation, closure should be considered as a viable and potentially preferred safety strategy, particularly when compared to the long-term cost and operational complexity of installing and maintaining active warning devices. This approach acknowledges the constraints identified in existing conditions while prioritizing overall network safety and reliability.

Reduction of Blocked Crossings Through Off-Site Rail Staging

Given the City's limited ability to influence Class I rail scheduling, future rail-related mobility strategies should focus on reducing in-town switching, staging, and car handoffs that contribute to unpredictable and prolonged crossing blockages. One potential long-term strategy is the development of a rail siding east of the City, just outside the City limits.

Relocating rail car drop-offs and pick-ups to this location could reduce the frequency and duration of blocked crossings, improve emergency response reliability, and minimize conflicts during peak travel periods, including school arrival and dismissal times. The City should continue to work with West Michigan Railroad Company, MDOT, and other partners to evaluate the feasibility, funding mechanisms, and implementation considerations associated with this strategy.

Noise and Quality-of-Life Considerations

Noise generated by certain freight cars, particularly refrigerated units staged within City limits, has been identified as an existing quality-of-life concern for residents living near the rail corridor. Future rail-related mobility policy should consider operational, infrastructure, and locational strategies that reduce noise impacts in residential and institutional areas, including opportunities to relocate staging activities outside the urban core where feasible.

Rail should continue to be treated as a foundational asset within Hartford's transportation and mobility framework. Future strategies should seek to align rail infrastructure improvements with broader mobility, safety, and economic development objectives by improving operational efficiency and reducing conflicts within the City.

By addressing the safety, predictability, and quality-of-life issues identified under existing conditions, Hartford can maintain the benefits of rail service while advancing a safer, more reliable, and multimodal transportation system.

Funding Sources

Safe Streets for All

Safe Streets for All (SS4A) is a federal discretionary grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation that provides funding for local and regional projects aimed at improving roadway safety for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, transit riders, and micromobility users. The program is designed to prevent roadway fatalities and serious injuries through strategic planning and implementation of safety improvements.

Incorporating SS4A as a funding source in Hartford's transportation or Master Plan can help the city secure federal dollars to implement safety projects that align with local goals, such as reducing crash rates, enhancing walkability, and increasing multimodal accessibility. A SS4A-funded Comprehensive Safety Action Plan can act as a foundational document that strategically guides future projects and opens eligibility for larger implementation grants.

Public Act 51 of 1951

Created jurisdictional road networks and manages the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF), which collects and distributes transportation-related taxes and specifies how these revenues can be spent.

Transportation Alternatives Program

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) offers federal grant money to help communities fund intermodal transportation and safe alternative transportation projects.

Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF)

The Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) aims to fund transportation projects that help communities throughout the state compete in the international economy and support economic growth. TEDF breaks up its funding into categories, some of which the City of Inkster can take advantage of. The City of Inkster may be eligible for TEDF Category A funds. Category A Funding supports transportation projects that can improve a community's economic competitiveness. Projects must relate to expanding the capacity, condition, safety, or accessibility of the transportation network and must relate to an immediate and nonspeculative development project.

DOWNTOWN GROWTH AND ENHANCEMENT

The purpose of this section of the Master Plan is to envision a vibrant and prosperous future for downtown Hartford, through targeted investment, innovative zoning regulation, and high-quality design. The downtown has experienced a period of underutilization and as a result some disinvestment. This has resulted in a quieter downtown with less activity. The Downtown Development Authority is in the process of adopting a new plan for the downtown. This Master Plan will be adopted at roughly the same time as the Downtown Development Authority Plan.

Downtown Redevelopment Vision (DDA)

The goal of land use planning in Downtown Hartford is to specialize the downtown district in ways that focus on the form of the buildings, as well as what uses can occur there, to create a downtown plan that incorporates what is existing and envisions the future.

The downtown includes areas on the Future Land Use Map that are designated Downtown and Downtown Core, but the Downtown also includes areas designated for residential and preservation and also has some legacy industrial uses. Thus, Downtown Hartford represents a diverse and vibrant economic core for the City – but one where land uses should, over time, evolve in a consistent direction of increased walkability, human-scale, and historic small-town character.

The Future Land Use Districts are designed to implement this vision of a downtown that both enhances the existing historic core and also grows to create a broader walkable urban district. While the districts may evolve over time, the goals and vision of each of the districts should remain consistent.

Core Downtown

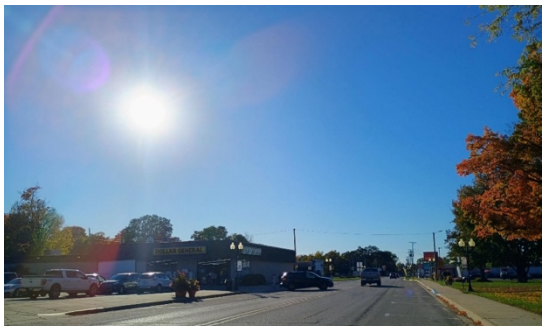
The Core Downtown District is generally centered around Main Street and contains the traditional small-town character of Downtown Hartford. The following elements are key aspects of this district:

- Buildings in this district should have a commercial storefront.
- Multi-story buildings are encouraged but should not be taller than three stories.
- There should be zero-foot front and side setbacks for all buildings in this district, except where front and side setbacks are necessary for pedestrian access. Then there should be a discussion with the developer to maintain the existing setbacks set by neighboring buildings, or that should be established by a new development.
- No first floor residential should be allowed in this district as a primary use, without Special Use Approval, or should be allowed if the residential is set behind a commercial use.
- Historic architecture and replication of existing architecture types should be encouraged.
- A minimum percentage of the front and side street facing façade should have windows.

Goals & Key Recommendations

1. Infrastructure Improvement
2. Promoting Community Events & Programming
3. Supporting Business Development
4. Sense of Place & Gateway

Infrastructure Improvement



The City is committed to improving streets and water utilities throughout the City and Downtown. These much-needed improvements will increase efficiency and cost effectiveness of utility distribution.

Access Improvements. Support the improvements of motorized and non-motorized access into and through the Downtown Area.

Other Infrastructure support. Support the City's efforts to enhance and develop other types of infrastructure including but not limited to utility upgrades.

Community Events & Programming

Amenities and Culture. Foster the growth of Hartford's cultural presence through the support of the arts, enhancement of public spaces, and sponsorship of public events.

Enhanced Partnerships. Continue to support and search for new public and private partnerships that will help build community connections, support project implementations, and pursue regional economic development options and assistance programs.

Ely Park Improvements. Continue to invest in Ely Park's physical character and assist in securing funding and allocating the funds to best serve the residents of Hartford.

Supporting Business Development

Business Assistance. Provide resources and guidance to businesses on how to best interact within the public realm to ensure consistency, equity, and uniformity within the district and provide businesses and community members with the necessary technical assistance to ensure success.

Business Attraction. Develop Strategies to promote and advertise Downtown Hartford as a means to attract businesses, residents, and customers, and develop and implement economic development, marketing, and regional outreach strategies to locate new and maintain existing businesses.

Business Investment. Support business improvements by investing funds into façade improvement programs and create a revolving loan fund for businesses.

Marketing. Assist the City in the development and implementation of a Marketing and Branding program.

Sense of Place & Gateway

To achieve many of these goals for the Downtown this Master Plan recommends that design guidelines are adopted as part of the Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, the City should adopt and implement a Blight policy that will effectively address blight in the community.

Gateway Development. Develop a vibrant entry into Hartford from I-94 to entice travelers to visit Hartford.

Wayfinding. Expand and improve the wayfinding signage to direct people into Downtown Hartford.

Streetscape Improvements. Improve the attractiveness, walkability and accessibility in Downtown Hartford by investing in plantings, flower baskets, banners, benches and other improvements.

Community Development. Support the maintenance of the exiting housing and the addition of new housing, especially mixed-use housing, within Downtown Hartford. In addition, assist the City with blight elimination by identifying priority properties for purchase for either renovation or demolition.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

In recent years, there has been a renewed emphasis on the concept of sustainability – i.e. the ability of communities to maintain themselves economically, environmentally, and socially in the years to come. The following pages include aspirational ways in which the City of Hartford and its citizens may work to protect the environmental and historical resources of the community.

Construction Techniques

While not required, the use of green building techniques can ensure that new and renovated buildings in Hartford are environmentally sustainable. Examples include the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, the International WELL Building Institute, Green Globes, the Building Research Establishment Assessment Method, and others. Each program certifies new construction and renovations as environmentally sustainable. The organization uses checklists of building techniques to grade construction projects and assign "Silver," "Gold," or "Platinum" designations to them.

The City of Hartford is looking to attract new developments and re-developments. Encouraging new development to attain LEED status by promoting sustainable design elements such as bike racks, sidewalks, reduced parking, and more can result in an overall cost savings to a project.

The table below lists a variety of construction materials, designs, and techniques that can reduce a community's environmental impact and improve its sustainability for the future. Some are expensive and technical, while others are simple, easy, and cost little-to-nothing. Picking just a few of the most feasible for a project can go a long way in reducing the project's environmental impact. Further, some techniques can be implemented inexpensively by homeowners if they are given the tools to execute them.

Site Design	• Minimize Disturbed Area • Maximize Permeable Surface • Stormwater Management • Density of Development	
Landscaping	• Plant Trees • Maximize Permeable Surface • Green Roof	
Water	• Rainwater Harvesting • Stormwater Management • "Graywater" Re-Use • High-Efficiency Fixtures	
Energy/HVAC	• Energy-Efficient Appliances • Efficient Hot Water Distribution • Pipe Insulation • Combustion Venting • Moisture Control	• Room-by-Room Controls • Enhanced Insulation • South-Facing Windows • Solar Panels • Geothermal Energy
Building Materials	• Recycled Materials • Efficient Construction Management (reduce over-ordering) • Environmentally-safe Materials • On-Site Waste Reduction	

Energy Consumption

With energy costs rising, one of the most important contributors to community sustainability is conservation. There are many ways to do so, ranging from expensive and complex technology to simple, everyday solutions.

Home Energy Conservation

The simplest and easiest way to save energy at home is simply to use the heat and air conditioning efficiently. This is easier said than done for many families, especially in Michigan winters. However, simple home remedies such as putting fans in the windows on hot days and dressing in layers on cold days can help reduce energy bills. Many families already practice these techniques as part of their everyday life.

Construction techniques can also help. Quality materials, such as insulation and windows, are obviously important, but design elements can also be important, such as large windows, especially facing south, to allow sunlight to heat (and light) the home. Finished basements are also a useful feature, because they tend to stay cool on hot summer days.

There are also more technical and complex solutions. These are not feasible for many families, but they should not be discouraged and indeed can be encouraged through zoning and other measures. Green roofs not only manage storm water, but they also serve to cool the home in the summer. Solar panels can dramatically reduce a family's electricity bill and can even, in some cases, be a source of income.

Geothermal heating and cooling systems can be especially effective in small towns and rural communities, because large lots mean piping can be laid horizontally through the ground, reducing the cost as compared to the vertical systems necessary in more dense areas. Furthermore, systems have been developed that allow river or stream water to be used as a natural cooling agent.

Transportation

Most people use a large amount of energy in getting from place to place, and with fuel prices rising, this is increasingly becoming a budgetary strain on families, especially in communities where residents drive a long way to reach jobs, shopping, or school. For that reason, it is important for communities to be walkable and bikeable. The creation of additional non-motorized transportation options, as described elsewhere in this Plan, will allow residents of Hartford to save on gas.

Another way that transportation resources can be saved is through improved communications technology. With better internet and wireless services, City residents can use technology to commute, shop, and communicate, and will not have to drive as often.

Development Patterns

The patterns of growth and development in a community are also a key element of sustainability. Hartford is a walkable community. Future development should reflect a partnership with neighboring communities to encourage sustainable growth patterns.

Education and Implementation

Many ways to improve community sustainability are simple but not widely implemented because people are unaware or do not understand their benefits. Thus, education about sustainability is important. A marketing campaign explaining the impact of various practices, not only on the environment, but also on the family budget, could be effective. Setting up a community garden, with or without composting, often results in other people starting their own backyard garden.

Federal tax incentives are available for energy efficiency upgrades by homeowners and landlords. Other communities have found success with these programs. Many homeowners would like to improve the efficiency of their properties but are unable to afford the upfront costs. This is especially true of seasonal residents, who worry about the cost of heating a home that they do not live in in the winter. Grant programs can offset those costs.

Other sustainability initiatives such as LEED certified buildings and solar or wind power installations built by the City are possible but are not economically practical in the short term. However, the City can make a big difference with simple transportation improvements such as sidewalks, street lighting, and bike lanes.

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Implementing Viable Change

A Master Plan is at its strongest and most actionable when specific implementation tasks and strategies are included, described in detail, programmed into a timeframe, and clearly marked by which organization will be responsible for leading or supporting each item. Thus, below is an Action Plan that should be implemented by the City. Further, the next section of this chapter includes potential resources for the City and its partners to utilize in implementing the Action Plan.

FUTURE LAND USE

In the summer of 2025, the City of Hartford embarked on a Master Plan update-the first since their joint plan with Harford Township in 2015. During the comprehensive planning process, Hartford engaged the public in a number of ways. The City conducted a community survey that asked residents to provide their opinion about different aspects of living and working in Hartford. A postcard was mailed to all addresses in the city with the survey link. The City also hosted a community workshop in the Summer of 2025. The Future Land Use plan serves to synthesize the comments and opinions of the community and to provide a vision for the community for the next 10 to 15 years. It is based on an analysis of land use issues facing Hartford, existing uses and conditions, demographic and housing data, physical constraints and resources, community infrastructure, circulation patterns, community engagement, and the goals and objectives of this plan.

During the public engagement process, some themes were more prominent than others. The sentiment gathered from the community survey and public engagement open houses was that residents wanted to improve housing stock through blight elimination and to grow the downtown to be a more vibrant, active place. Through land use planning and zoning controls, the City intends to ensure that housing is improved and developed, that economic growth is encouraged, and that the designated mixed-use areas become more vibrant and exciting places to be.

This Future Land Use plan constitutes the development policy of Hartford, and as the City moves into the future, the plan should be regularly updated to address how development and physical change has impacted the infrastructure and existing conditions.

Future Land Use Designations:

- Agriculture / Rural Residential
- Low-Density Residential
- Medium-Density Residential
- High-Density Residential
- Commercial Residential (Downtown Mixed-Use)
- Gateway
- Enterprise
- Institutional
- Recreation / Open Space

Future Land Use Categories

Agriculture

General Characteristics

This future land use designation encompasses active farmland and large-lot single-family residential land uses. Homes here are on large, rural lots and often have barns and sheds or other accessory buildings. Residential densities in this land use category should be under one (1) unit per 5 acres.

Appropriate Land Uses

Appropriate land uses include farms with associated accessory buildings and rural residential dwelling units matching the character and density of the surrounding area, agri-businesses, and parks.

Roads and Transportation

Roads within the Agriculture/Rural Residential Future Land Use designation are typically higher in speed and under the jurisdiction of the County Road Commission. These roads should be easily accessible and able to accommodate heavier vehicle traffic.

Roadways should maintain a rural character, with major thoroughfares paved. Paved shoulders or bike paths should be included where deemed appropriate.

Appropriate Zoning Districts

This district is not currently included on the Future Land Use Map; however, it has been included as it should be considered for future growth and development. This allows the district to remain flexible, support changes, and provide guidelines should the district be considered in the future.

Low Density Residential

General Characteristics

This future land use category is comprised of existing low-density residential areas. These areas typically feature single-family houses on winding residential streets. The key recommendation of this district is to protect and preserve the existing neighborhood character.

While significant changes are not proposed, these areas can still be upgraded with sidewalks, lighting, crosswalks, landscaping, and other improvements.

Appropriate Land Uses

Typical uses include single-family homes with neighborhood parks and/or open space with convenient access to schools, places of worship, and government facilities.

Streets and Transportation

Streets in these areas are typically low-speed and low-volume. These street patterns should include high connectivity with accessible sidewalks on both sides of the street and bicycle infrastructure where appropriate.

Building and Site Design

Consistent with existing lot and site layout. Neither additional lot splits, nor combinations of lots are envisioned. Any new construction or major renovations should be consistent with the existing character in terms of setback, height, architecture, and function.

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- Traditional Low Density Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Mobile Home Park

Medium Density Residential

General Characteristics

The Medium Density Residential category consists of single- and two-family dwellings on smaller lots, mostly located in older neighborhoods. It generally reflects existing land use patterns with a base density of 3-5 units per acre on smaller lot sizes.

Appropriate Land Uses

Appropriate land use in these areas are single-family houses, duplexes, townhouses, small apartment buildings, parks, schools, churches, and open spaces. Infill development should be similar in form, design, and intensity to the existing surroundings.

Streets and Transportation

Streets in these areas are typically low-speed and low-volume. These street patterns should include high connectivity with accessible sidewalks on both sides of the street and bicycle infrastructure where appropriate. On-street parking should be provided where it can be designed safely.

Building and Site Design

Sites should be designed to maintain a human, walkable scale that promotes social interaction and does not negatively impact any existing nearby residential. Buildings should be designed with quality materials and consistent with architectural styles common in the greater Van Buren County area. New construction or major renovations should be consistent with the existing character in terms of setback, height, architecture, and function.

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Mobile Home Park

High Density Residential

General Characteristics

The High-Density Residential designation consists of multiple family dwellings (three or more units per building) ranging in density from seven to twelve dwelling units per acre. The HDR designation reflects both existing multiple family development and land planned for additional high density residential projects.

Appropriate Land Uses

Generally, development within this designation will be apartment complexes, condominium apartments, townhouse complexes and senior housing (independent/ assisted living and continual care). Infill development should be similar in form, design, and intensity to the existing surroundings.

Streets and Transportation

Streets in these areas are typically low-speed and low-volume. These street patterns should include high connectivity with accessible sidewalks on both sides of the street and bicycle infrastructure where appropriate. Off-street parking should be provided to accommodate residents.

Building and Site Design

Sites should be designed to maintain a human, walkable scale that promotes social interaction and does not negatively impact any existing nearby residential. Buildings should be designed with quality materials and consistent with architectural styles common in the greater Van Buren County area. New construction or major renovations should be consistent with the existing character in terms of setback, height, architecture, and function.

Appropriate Zoning Districts

This district is not currently included on the Future Land Use Map, however, it has been included as it should be considered for future growth and development. This allows the district to remain flexible, support changes, and provide guidelines should the district be considered in the future.

Commercial Residential

General Characteristics

This future land use category is designed to promote a high-quality walkable atmosphere and enhanced live/work/play elements within downtown Hartford. This category is oriented towards granting greater flexibility towards specific uses while increasing building quality and livability in these areas.

Appropriate Land Uses

Typical land use in this area resembles traditional, walkable “main street” developments such as small retail businesses, restaurants, offices, and incorporated residential uses. Buildings must conform to a high standard of design and must fit the architectural style of the area. They must also be constructed close to the sidewalk to enhance walkability and the area’s sense of place. Businesses such as small retail stores, personal services, small offices (including medical) should populate ground floors of buildings.

This category also encourages small-lot residential. However, parks, community facilities, and houses of worship can all be acceptable uses in this area.

Streets and Transportation

This area is centered around Main Street and its connections with the Center, Maple, and Haver Street intersections. The area features a small-town street grid network surrounding it. Streets should be low-speed and low-volume with ample sidewalk and pedestrian facilities.

Building and Site Design

Buildings should be built with high-quality materials and should be architecturally compatible with surrounding architecture of other downtown buildings. Buildings must have a welcoming connection to the sidewalk, including designs with attractive front facades and easily accessible entrances. Architectural variation is highly encouraged to create a character on long and connected facades.

Parking areas may be located in the rear yards of buildings, but buildings should front the street and provide parking to the rear. Parking areas should be broken up with landscaped islands and trees, where applicable.

Appropriate Zoning District

- General Business District
- School/Civic

Gateway

General Characteristics

This future land use category is designed to serve as a zone of transition, from auto-oriented fringe areas to the more pedestrian-oriented downtown. Located outside of the downtown area, this category seeks to enhance the vibrancy of main corridors while maintaining a neighborhood character conducive to residential areas nearby.

Appropriate Land Uses

Commercial, residential, office, and industrial uses related to the needs of the residents.

Streets and Transportation

These areas are typically located along high-volume arterial roadways. These areas often exist near residential and commercial areas and must account for high levels of daily traffic variation, due to the mixture of land uses within the area. Where appropriate, pedestrian, transit, and bicycle upgrades should occur to support the development. Sidewalks should be constructed where they do not already exist.

Building and Site Design

Buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials which wrap around the entire building and feature attractive signage. Robust landscaping should be installed throughout the site. Commercial and industrial buildings should be supported by sufficient but not overly excessive parking areas.

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- Agriculture
- General Business
- Industrial

Enterprise

General Characteristics

In general, in order to preserve rural character, enterprise developments should be clustered along key corridors, as shown on the Future Land Use Map.

Appropriate Land Uses

Typical land uses in these areas include light industrial uses, gas stations, retail stores, personal services, offices, medical clinics, and restaurants. The intensity of development, and the degree to which it is automobile or pedestrian focused, should be flexible based on the proximity to major corridors, residential areas, and the downtown area.

Parking areas and loading zones must be properly buffered and landscaped.

Streets and Transportation

Streets should be designed in a pattern that allows access from abutting areas but does not encourage cut-through traffic by employees and trucks. In the immediate vicinity of the businesses, safe and efficient access should be prioritized, including left turn lanes and appropriately spaced driveways. Within the Industrial district, the streets should be designed to be sufficient for business-traffic.

Sidewalks should be constructed on both sides of the street in places where they do not currently exist.

Building and Site Design

Buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials which wrap around the entire building and feature attractive signage. Robust landscaping should be installed throughout the site, especially in areas that are adjacent to residential areas.

Industrial buildings should be supported by sufficient but not overly excessive parking areas. Parking areas may be located in the front, side, or rear yards for buildings. Large areas of parking should be broken up with landscaped islands and trees.

Appropriate Zoning District

- Light Industrial
- Industrial
- General Commercial
- Traditional Low Density Residential

Institutional

General Characteristics

This category includes existing public and private institutional uses such as schools, religious organizations, City Hall, the library, the Fire Department, and the Public Works Department.

Appropriate Land Uses

Public spaces, government offices, and religious institutions are appropriate here.

Streets and Transportation

Streets should be private and very low volume and used only to access the uses in questions.

Building and Site Design

Buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials which wrap around the entire building and feature attractive signage. Robust landscaping should be installed throughout the site. Public buildings should be supported by sufficient but not overly excessive parking areas.

Appropriate Zoning District

- School/Civic
- Industrial

Recreation

General Characteristics

This designation identifies park land and open space. Areas within this designation can be used for both passive and active recreation. Natural features and developed parklands should be compatible with the surrounding landscape and neighborhood.

Appropriate Land Uses

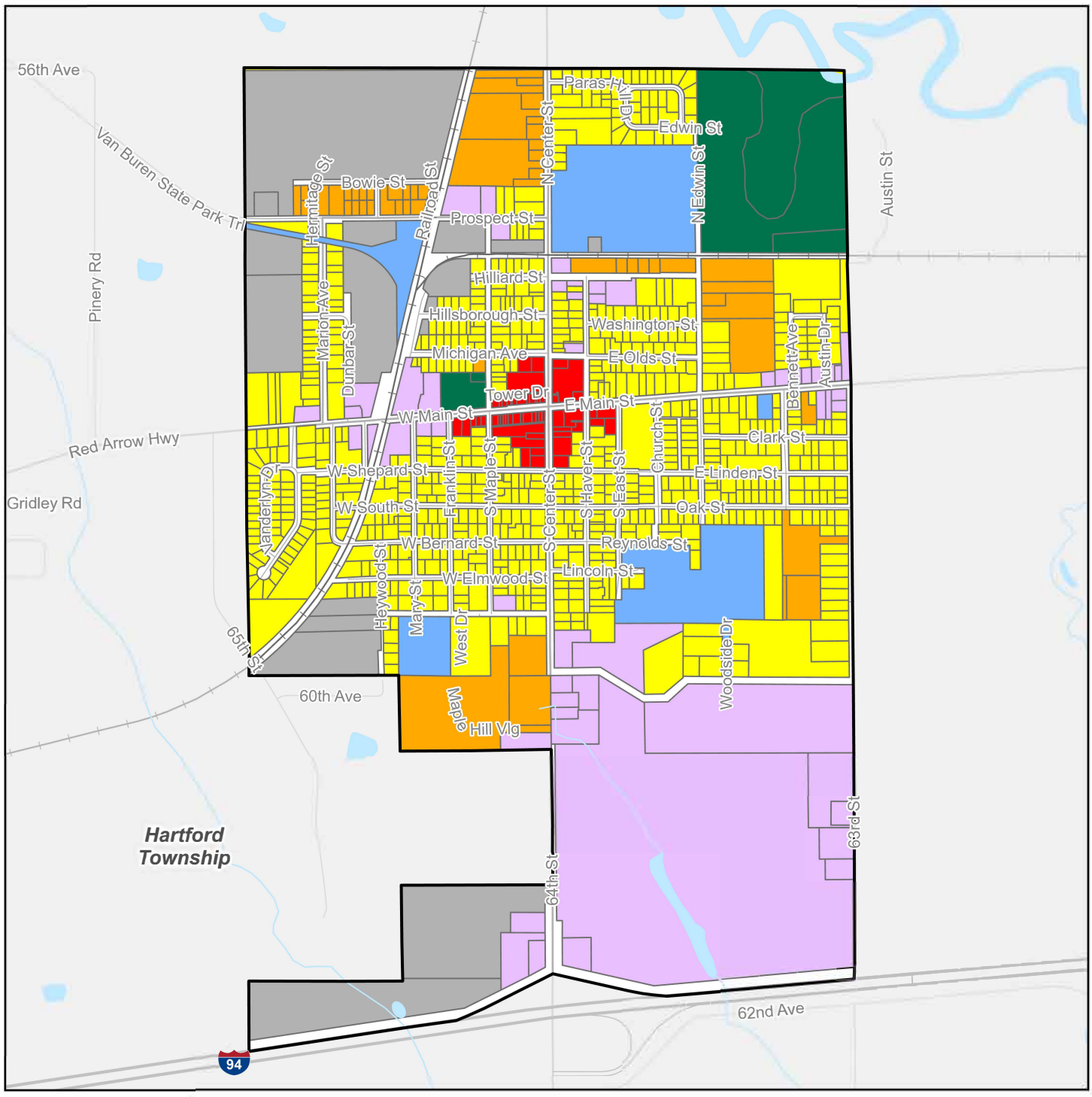
All areas should maintain uses which promote the inclusion of the public and provide recreational and gathering opportunities.

Streets and Transportation

Existing pedestrian and cyclist trails should be maintained. Additional pathways and associated amenities (e.g., bicycle racks, water fountains, wayfinding signage, lighting) should be constructed as needed. The connection of such pathways to connect the parks is strongly encouraged where feasible.

Building and Site Design

There are no specific Building and Site Design recommendations in this Plan for the Parks/Open Space designation, although high quality architecture is encouraged. Buildings should be well lit and highly visible, but of scale and appearance that is consistent with their surroundings and should provide public amenities. Parks should be maintained and upgraded as needed.



Future Land Use

City of Hartford, Michigan

November 6, 2025

LEGEND

- Agricultural
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial Residential
- Gateway
- Enterprise
- Institutional
- Recreation

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
Data Source: Van Buren County, 2025. McKenna 2025

MCKENNA

ZONING PLAN

Following the adoption of this plan, the City of Hartford is committed to enhancing and updating the City's Zoning Ordinance. One of the key purposes of the Zoning Ordinance updates and reviews are to ensure that the City's regulations and requirements align with best practices in planning, ensure the Zoning Ordinance is compliant with State laws, and to overall enhance the quality of life for residents and business owners.

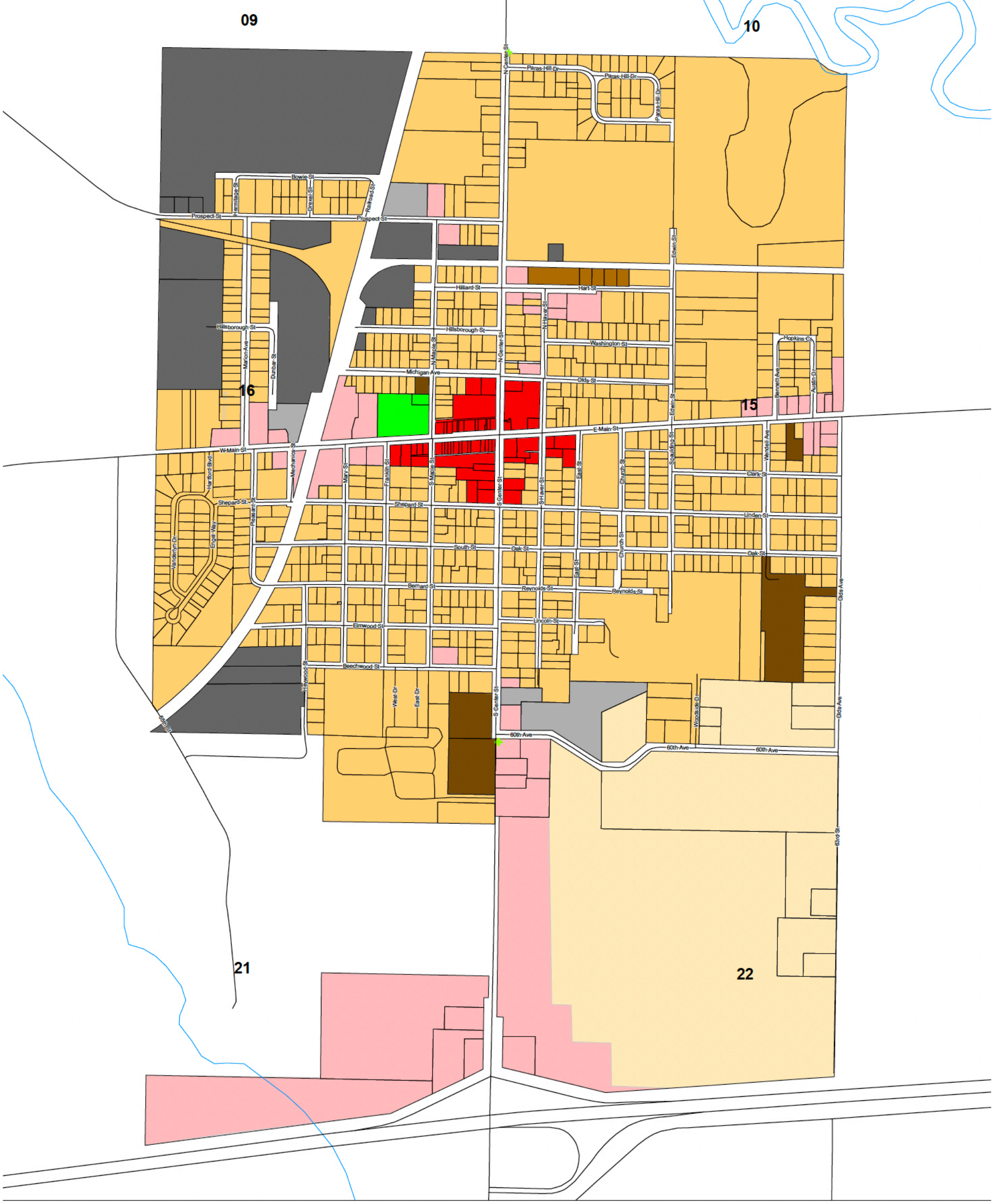
The current Zoning Ordinance for the City of Hartford is old, the goal is to overhaul the Zoning Ordinance to adopt and implement the Master Plan

The following Table shows the relationship between the City of Hartford Zoning Districts and Future Land Use categories as described in this Plan. Rezoning requests should be reviewed against this table to determine whether the requested district is supported by this Plan.

Zoning Districts	
Agricultural	Provides areas for low-density residential living integrated with ongoing agricultural activity, generally located on the outskirts of the City.
Traditional Low-Density Residential	Preserves the City's traditional low-density residential neighborhoods within the original block and street pattern.
Low-Density Residential	Accommodates low-density residential development at the periphery of the City while maintaining compatibility with surrounding land uses.
Medium-Density Residential	Supports moderate-density residential living in walkable, neighborhood-scale settings.
Medium–High Density Residential	Accommodates higher-density residential living in areas served by public infrastructure and access to transportation.
Mobile Home Park	Provides well-planned mobile home communities that offer affordable and flexible residential living options.
Residential Mixed-Use (RMU)	Provides walkable, neighborhood-oriented mixed-use areas that integrate housing with small-scale commercial and service uses.
Central Business District (CBD)	Serves as the City's primary commercial and civic center and the focal point of community activity.
General Business	Accommodates higher-intensity commercial activity serving both local and regional markets.
Light Industrial	Provides space for low-impact industrial, warehousing, and production activities in a controlled environment.
Heavy Industrial	Accommodates the City's most intensive industrial and manufacturing activities.
School / Civic	Provides locations for public, institutional, civic, and community-serving facilities that support the broader community.
Park	Preserves land for public parks, open space, and recreational uses.
Planned Unit Development (PUD)	Allows for flexible, innovative development that integrates multiple land uses under a unified plan while meeting community design standards.
Gateway District	Provides space for low- to medium-intensity industrial, transportation-related, and commercial uses at key community entry points.
Innovation District	Supports light industrial, makerspace, and innovation-oriented commercial uses that encourage entrepreneurship and job creation.

Zoning District and Future Land Use Relationship

Future Land Use Category	Corresponding Zoning Districts
Agriculture / Rural Residential	Agricultural
Low-Density Residential	Traditional Low-Density Residential; Low-Density Residential; Mobile Home Park
Medium-Density Residential	Low-Density Residential; Medium-Density Residential; Mobile Home Park
High-Density Residential	Future consideration; Medium–High Density Residential
Commercial Residential (Downtown Mixed-Use)	General Business; School/Civic; Residential Mixed-Use (RMU); Central Business District
Gateway	Agriculture; General Business; Light Industrial; Gateway District
Enterprise	Light Industrial; Heavy Industrial; General Business; Traditional Low-Density Residential; Innovation District
Institutional	School/Civic; Industrial
Recreation / Open Space	Park



Van Buren County GIS
2010
(269) 657-8243
www.vbco.org

City of Hartford Zoning, 2010

- Rural_Residential
- Single_Family_Residential
- Two_Family_Residential
- Multiple_Family_Residential
- Park
- General_Business
- Central_Business_District
- Light_Industrial
- Industrial_District

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

ACTION PLAN

The Hartford Master Plan and its goals, objectives, and strategies recommend a future vision for the community. This vision is to build upon the City's existing assets and make the most of opportunities that can attract new development and residents to the community while protecting the City's natural beauty and resources. To put it simply, the plan for Hartford is to create an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable community where people want to live, work, visit and play.

The goals and objectives of this plan should be reviewed often and be considered in decision making by the City. Successful implementation of this plan will be the result of actions taken by elected and appointed officials, City staff, the Downtown Development Authority, the Planning Commission, public agencies, and private citizens and organizations.

The tables on the following pages present a detailed summary of all of the recommended implementation activities, who is responsible for completing the activity, and available funding resources for each activity.

Below is the same content reformatted so that **all actions are numbered (no bullets)**, while preserving the goal structure and numbering hierarchy.

Master Planning Implementation Goals

1. Community Engagement

1.1 Increase community participation and implement the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Public Participation Plan (PPP), including continued community events.

1.2 Advance stormwater management planning and climate resiliency by developing a Climate Resiliency Plan.

2. Land Use

2.1 Develop and implement a Smart Growth and Housing Strategy.

2.2 Update permitted uses for middle housing in the Zoning Ordinance; advance Redevelopment Ready Communities & Sites; and develop Pattern Books.

2.3 Plan for a Mixed-Use and Mixed-Residential Future Land Use framework.

2.4 Conduct a historical survey; identify properties suitable for National Park Service (NPS) designation; evaluate feasibility of a Historic District and Commission; develop long-term strategies to preserve historic housing; and adopt a Historic Preservation Ordinance.

3. Housing

3.1 Address blighted properties through improved municipal codes; migrate and update Municode Online; and develop or strengthen blight ordinances.

3.2 Develop and administer a Rental Ordinance and Compliance Program.

3.3 Pursue CDBG and County funding for home repair and rehabilitation programs.

3.4 Align local housing policies with the Michigan Statewide Housing Strategies outlined in the Master Plan.

4. Economic Development

4.1 Develop a Business License Ordinance and Program, including updates to online presence, applications, and business resources.

4.2 Participate in the Michigan Main Street Program.

4.3 Support Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) programming and initiatives.

5. Transportation

5.1 Pursue Safe Routes to School grant funding.

5.2 Pursue Category A transportation funding.

5.3 Develop and annually update a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

5.4 Review and refine the community's Node Strategy.

6. Community Character

6.1 Combine the Business License Program with Façade Improvement Partnership Grants.

6.2 Administer an Arts Commission to review, approve, and site public art installations.

7. Parks & Recreation

7.1 Develop a comprehensive Parks & Recreation Plan.

7.2 Incorporate a River and Trail Connectivity Plan into Parks & Recreation planning efforts.

Becoming Redevelopment Ready

The City of Hartford strives to achieve Redevelopment Ready Certification from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Certification would unlock resources for the implementation of this plan.

In order to achieve certification, the City must update its planning and zoning documents and processes. This Master Plan update is one of the key steps. A subsequent update to the Zoning Ordinance is also important, and the City will need to evaluate its entitlement processes and public engagement policies.

KEY					
Priority		**Timeframe**		**Responsibility (Color)**	
A	Most Important	1	W/in one year		Project Lead
B	Very Important	2	1-3 years		Key Participant
C	Important	3	3+ years		Contributor

RESPONSIBILITY (ABBREVIATION)	
VBC	Van Buren County
DDA	Downtown Development Authority
BO	Business Owners
MDOT	Michigan Department of Transportation
SM	State of Michigan
HPS	Hartford Public Schools
HO	Homeowners
CM	Community Members
PC	Planning Commission
CC	City Council
CS	City Staff
CO	Consultants
PD	Private Developers

FUNDING	
Public	Includes public funds from the City operating budget, County, and State funding. May also include local government bonds and grants.
Private	Includes funds from private sources such as grant monies, corporate funding, or property owners
DDA/TIF	Tax increment financing provided by an authorized body. Please refer to the summary of economic development tools.

Community Engagement

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			CITY	OTHER GOVT		PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TIF/DDA
Implement Redevelopment Ready Certification work plan, including zoning audit and ordinance updates.	A	1	CS PC CC	SM VBC		✓		✓
Host a workshop for community stakeholders, identifying communication barriers and opportunities	B	1	CS	VBC		✓		
Coordinate a committee of environmental stakeholders and administration	B	2	CS	VBC SM		✓		
Develop framework for Climate Resilience Plan	B	2	CS PC	SM		✓		
Draft a Climate Resilience Plan	A	3	CS CC	SM VBC		✓		
Identify areas for potential hazard areas and mitigation opportunities	A	1	CS	VBC SM		✓		
Develop public-facing zoning guide and development process flowcharts to support Redevelopment Ready Certification.	B	2	CS					

Parks and Recreation

Develop a Parks & Recreation Committee and draft a Parks Plan Policy	A	1	CS PC CC	VBC		✓		
Adopt a Parks & Recreation Plan	A	2	CC PC			✓		
Conduct and assessment of water access, parks, and trail conditions	B	1	CS	VBC SM		✓		
Incorporate assessment into Parks and Recreation plan	B	2	CS PC			✓		
Incorporate proposed park system improvements with Capital Improvement Planning	A	3	CS CC			✓		✓
Update zoning ordinance to include open space preservation, parkland dedication (if desired), and recreation-supportive site design standards	B	2	CS PC CC			✓		

Land Use

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			CITY	OTHER GOVT	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TIF/DDA
CORE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK								
Comprehensively update the Zoning Ordinance to implement the Master Plan future land use strategy, housing goals, redevelopment priorities, and design standards.	A	1	CS PC CC			✓		
Evaluate and establish a new mixed-use zoning district to implement the Downtown Core and Downtown Edge future land use vision.	A	2	CS PC CC			✓		
Amend C-1 and C-2 districts to allow upper-floor residential by right and support mixed-use redevelopment.	A	2	CS PC CC			✓		
Update zoning ordinance setback requirements urban or downtown character in planned areas.	A	2	CS PC CC			✓		
Establish clear zoning standards for outdoor dining and ensure parking requirements do not increase when outdoor seating is added	B	2	CS PC CC			✓		
Adopt form-based or design-oriented zoning standards for downtown and mixed-use areas (such as build-to lines, storefront transparency, rear parking, walk-up windows, and public space features).	B	2	CS PC CC			✓		
REDEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC POSITIONING								
Identify and promote Redevelopment Ready Priority Sites	A	1	CS	MEDC SM		✓		✓
Identify Priority Sites for Mixed-Use and Housing Development opportunities	A	2	CS PC	MEDC		✓		✓
Develop Arts Commission Policy	B	1	CS PC CC			✓		
Revise Zoning Ordinance and Municipal Code to include regulations for the Arts Commission and Art Installations and murals	B	2	CS PC CC			✓		
HISTORIC PRESERVATION TOOLS								
Develop a committee of administration and historic community stakeholders to establish a Historic District framework	B	1	CS PC	SHP SM		✓		
Identify funding opportunities for historic survey and NPS designation reporting	B	1	CS	SHPO NPS		✓		
Pursue Certified Local Government (CLG) designation	B	2	CS CC	SHP NPS		✓		
Adopt a Historic Preservation Ordinance	A	2	CC PC	SHPO		✓		

Housing

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			CITY	OTHER GOVT	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TIF/DDA
STUDIES AND STRATEGY								
Conduct Housing Affordability and Demand Assessment	A	1	CS PC	SM VBC		✓		
Identify Priority Areas for Housing Redevelopment	A	1	CS PC	VBC		✓		✓
Adopt housing strategies aligned with the Michigan Statewide Housing Plan	A	2	CC PC	SM MSHDA		✓		
ZONING TO ENABLE HOUSING								
Amend zoning to allow additional housing types by right in appropriate districts (such as accessory dwelling units, duplexes, townhouses, small multiplexes, cottage housing, stacked flats, and accessory dwelling units) and establish clear standards for each	A	2	CS PC			✓		
Update R-1A and R-1B district regulations to ensure new neighborhoods reflect the Low Impact Residential and Village Addition development patterns	A	2	CS PC CC			✓		
Establish subdivision and zoning regulations for interconnected street networks and block patterns in new residential development	A	2	CS PC CC			✓		
Allow residential uses in commercial districts, including upper-floor and mixed-use residential where appropriate	A	2	CS PC CC			✓		
PROGRAMS AND ENFORCEMENT								
Identify internal or external resources to apply for and administer CDBG and public-assisted home repair funding and programs	A	1	CS	VBC SM		✓		
Develop policy for the development of processes for CDBG review, adoption, and management	B	2	CS CC	SM		✓		
Update Municipal Code with community Blight Ordinances	A	1	CS PC CC			✓		
Update Municipal Code with community Rental Ordinance and Property Maintenance Program	A	1	CS PC CC			✓		

Economic Development								
			RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	CITY	OTHER GOVT	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TIF/DDA
Develop an Economic Development Strategic Plan aligning housing, land use, and economic development goals	A	2	CS CC PC	SM MEDC		✓		✓
Develop and Public policy for administration and resources for local businesses	A	1	CS PC CC			✓		
Identify and develop resources for a small business and locate them on the city website	B	1	CS			✓		
Develop and adopt a Business License process and ordinance	A	1	CS PC CC			✓		
Develop a committee of community stakeholders which can support the Michigan Main Street Program	A	1	CS DDA CC	MEDC SM		✓		
Identify Corridors Suitable for the Michigan Main Street Program	A	1	CS PC	MEDC SM		✓		✓
Develop a framework and allocate resources to the implementation of a Michigan Main Street Program	A	2	CS DDA CC	MEDC, SM		✓		✓
Expand boundary of DDA	B	2	CS CC			✓		✓
Adopt an updated Downtown Development Plan	A	2	DDA CC	MEDC		✓		✓
Develop a policy with identifies the opportunities and benefits for a Corridor Improvement Authority	B	2	CS PC CC	MEDC, SM		✓		
Update zoning to support redevelopment of key commercial and mixed-use sites identified in the Master Plan and Redevelopment Ready process.	B	2	CS PC CC			✓		
Identify Partnerships for a community Façade Program	B	1	CS DDA	MEDC		✓		✓
Adopt Facade Improvement Program Policy	B	2	CC DDA			✓		✓

TRANSPORTION								
PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			CITY	OTHER GOVT	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TIF/DDA
Identify and allocate resources to apply and administer Safe Routes to School Grant	A	1	CS	MDOT SM		✓		
Develop a multi-modal transportation plan	A	2	CS PC	MDO SEMCOG		✓		
Develop and annually adopt a Capital Improvements plan	A	1	CS CC			✓		
Develop Sidewalk and Road Condition Assessment	A	1	CS	MDO VBC		✓		
Identify Community Nodes	B	1	CS PC			✓		
Conduct assessment and plan for community Node Improvements	B	2	CS PC	MEDC		✓		✓

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