

## Chapter 3: Residential Redevelopment Strategy

### Key Findings:

- Inappropriate renovation of existing homes is prevalent throughout the neighborhood.
- Historic District Designation provides opportunity for additional funding for renovation.
- There is a need for new housing stock to maintain the context, scale and architectural style of the existing development.
- There are limited housing options for residents.
- Building and site maintenance is an on-going problem.
- Zoning and building code requirements are not being regularly enforced.
- Off-street residential parking is unorganized and insufficient for the number of tenants.
- Minor security issues exist throughout the neighborhood.

### Existing Neighborhood Conditions

Ypsilanti is a city with well-established, attractive and historically significant neighborhoods. The preservation and enhancement of neighborhoods are essential to the success of any community. Intrinsic to the success of the Cross Street Neighborhood and to a stable and attractive quality of life for its residents is an emphasis on the preservation and rehabilitation of viable housing stock, the development of new infill housing and mixed-use projects in key locations and the provision of a variety of housing options throughout the neighborhood.

The Cross Street Neighborhood exhibits a variety of residential housing types. The predominant use is residential, mostly in single-family and two-family dwellings renovated into apartments. The neighborhood also has four apartment buildings, accommodating 9, 14, 18 and 24 units. Several rooming houses and a few single-family homes are located here. Deteriorated and unkempt buildings and properties are a serious problem throughout the neighborhood.

The Ypsilanti Historic District encompasses the east half of the Cross Street Study Area, between Huron and Hamilton and Cross and Washtenaw (see Map 2). Although there are blocks in this neighborhood with structures in poor and fair condition, the architectural quality has potential for creating an attractive setting.

A large part of the neighborhood is designated as the city's Student Housing District. The southern boundary is the rear lot line for homes on the south side of Emmet, from Normal to Ballard, and continuing north to Cross Street (see Map 2). The district then extends north along the EMU Campus. Blighting influences in the neighborhood are most evident in the Student Housing District, despite efforts by some landlords to upgrade and properly maintain their properties. Blight is causing this area to become one of the least desirable alternatives for students to live.

A tremendous amount of stress is placed on infrastructure when homes on small lots, originally intended for families, are converted into apartments. Many multi-



Multiple Family Housing Styles found in the Cross Street Neighborhood. Clockwise from top left: 18-unit apartment structure on Washtenaw; Apartment structure on Adams; Home conversion and addition in context with the existing architectural style of the Historic District; Home conversion/rooming house for lease.

family properties in the Cross Street Neighborhood have absentee owners who do not attend to basic maintenance needs, enforce proper trash disposal, or provide adequate parking for tenants. In one instance, a home has been converted into ten apartment units. The loss of owner-occupied housing and the ineffectiveness of code enforcement efforts are viewed as destabilizing factors for the neighborhood.

In addition to problems of blight and density, homes that have been converted into apartments create unsightly exterior views. Inappropriate room additions, a lack of strict code ordinance enforcement and architectural standards, enclosed porches, plus added exterior stairways and fire escapes detract from architectural integrity. The overall appearance of the neighborhood suffers, initiating a cycle



Clockwise from top left: Makeshift parking in front yard; Unorganized parking in rear yard; Inappropriate exterior elements; Unenclosed trash storage areas

that depreciates property values and discourages quality residential investment. As a result, few housing options exist within the Cross Street Neighborhood.

Apartment conversions and rooming houses lead to demands for more parking spaces that cannot be reasonably accommodated on individual properties. For example, an analysis shows over eighty spaces would be necessary to meet the parking demand for one of the blocks in the study area. Tenants resort to parking vehicles on front lawns, narrow side yards and sidewalks. Landlords create makeshift parking lots that crowd cars into rear yard areas. Poorly maintained drives snake between homes and connect parked cars to the street.

#### Residential Development Strategy

Improvement and rehabilitation of existing homes throughout the neighborhood should be encouraged through strict code enforcement, modifications to



Clockwise from top left: Rear parking areas often require the removal of the rear yard; Unsightly exterior elements on Cross Street; Excessive parking in residential neighborhood.

ordinances and design guidelines that monitor and direct the quality of renovations and additions. Once the changes are in place, appropriate reuse and renovation can serve as an effective way to preserve and enhance existing architectural features. Information, seminars and workshops should be provided to assist homeowners with programs that provide incentives such as Historic Tax Credits.

The Archdiocese of Detroit was featured in a recent newspaper article on the intent to curb suburban sprawl and rebuild urban neighborhoods (See Appendix C – Additional Information). This raises the possibility that new town homes could infill the gap created by the large parking area for St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. Redevelopment of the front of this lot would strengthen the character of the neighborhood and contribute to linking the neighborhood to Depot Town. New town homes could provide housing options for senior

#### Key Findings:

- Financial resources and attention are focused on rehabilitation rather than prevention.
- The Perrin Street Police Mini-Station was discontinued, leaving the Cross Street Neighborhood without a strong police presence. Residents indicated that there are occasional disturbances due to student parties and fights.
- Certain areas along the neighborhood are seen as safety and security problems. Certain businesses are perceived as eyesores, as negative to the community or as aiding criminal activity.
- Vacant buildings, including empty houses, are an eyesore and a safety concern.

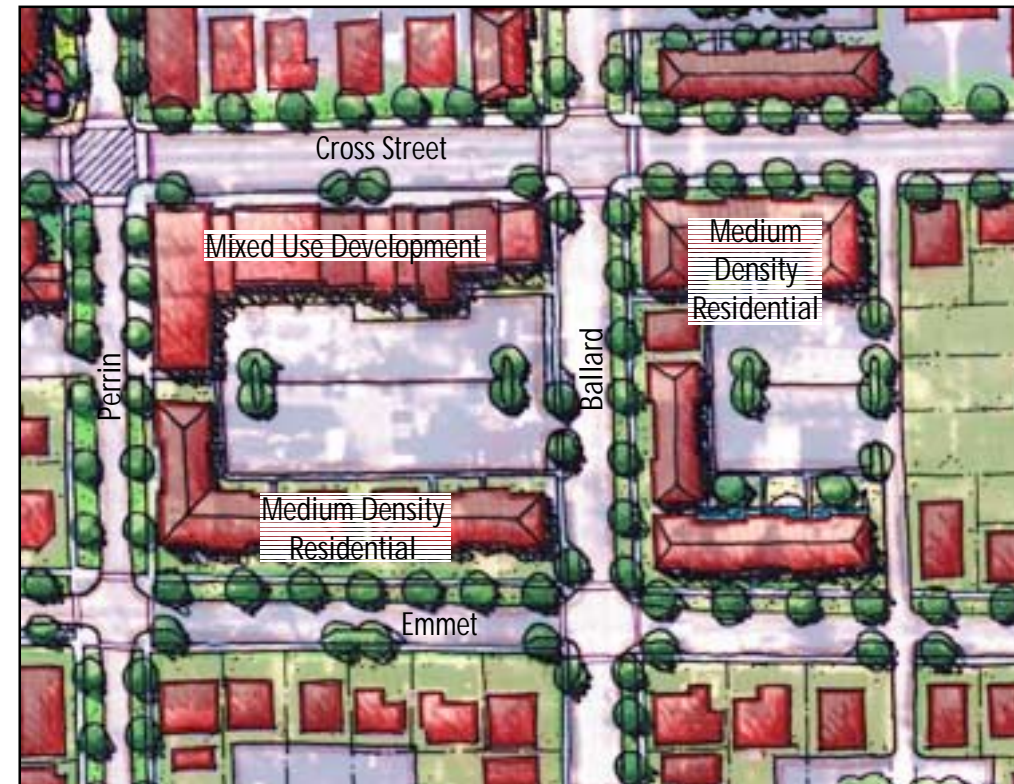


Figure 1: Potential residential infill construction could occur throughout the neighborhood.

parishioners and others. Although it is clear that parking is at a premium, exploring church-sponsored housing on this site could be a viable option in the future.

New infill construction on vacant and underutilized properties would provide competition and alternatives to the existing housing market. Mixed-use buildings with a residential focus are encouraged along Cross Street. New construction should respond to architectural features of the traditional neighborhood setting. Design standards would encourage elements such as appropriate siding materials, window and door treatments, consistent rooflines, and residential landscaping. New construction and reconstruction should complement the scale and existing historic fabric of the neighborhood.

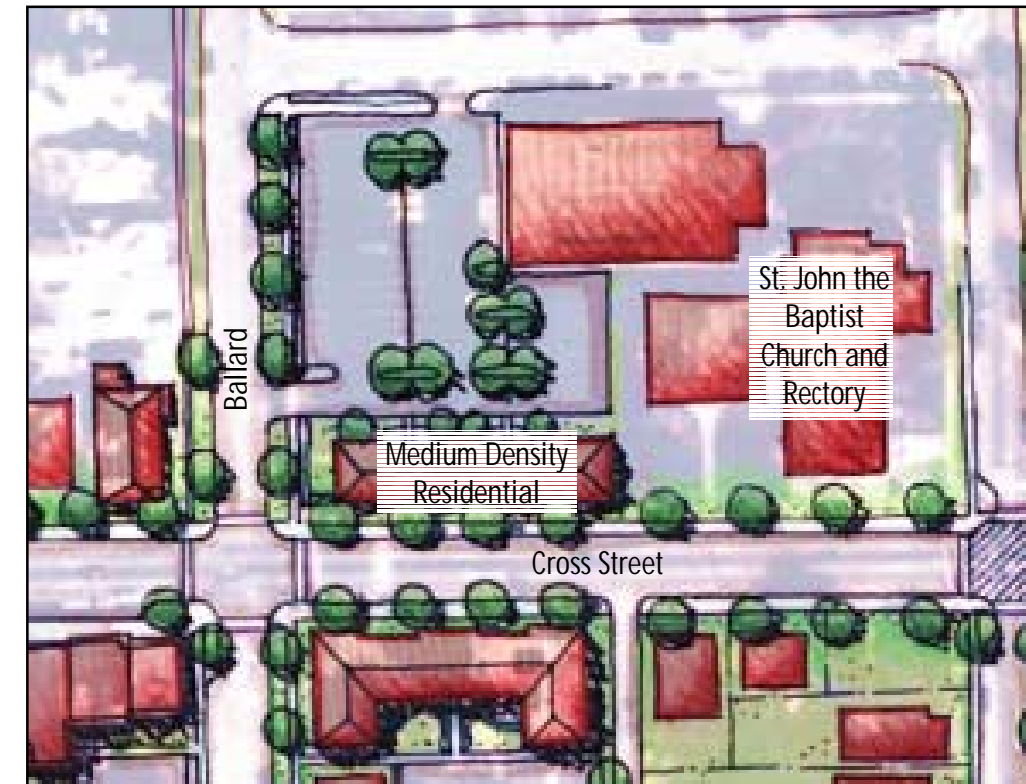


Figure 2: New medium density residential uses can revitalize street frontage along Cross Street frontage

## Residential Parking Strategies

More stringent off-street parking requirements and improved enforcement would assist in enhancing the viability and livability of the neighborhood. The current zoning requirements for the number of parking spaces per unit in a multiple-family structure should be increased to accommodate existing and anticipated student use. Residents and property owners would be required to use only the space behind their homes for parking, and parking on pervious surfaces such as lawn areas would be prohibited. Although existing multiple family structures would be considered non-conforming uses under this zoning amendment, any expansion of these structures, as well as any new developments would be required to provide the increased number of off-street parking spaces. This would help limit the proliferation of the existing residential parking problems in the future. Designating "Permit Only Parking" between 8:00 am



Figure 3: Consolidated parking lots would be paved, landscaped and lighted.

and 5:00 pm on Emmet, Ballard, Hamilton, Adams, and Washington would also assist in relieving residential parking pressures. These spaces are primarily used by commuter students. Permits would be available through the City on a first come, first serve basis to Cross Street Neighborhood residents for a nominal fee. A limited number would be available for students for a larger fee. The permits would be distributed on a yearly basis. Once the permits allocated for one year are exhausted, applicants are put on a waiting list. If a permit program cannot be implemented immediately, the City should consider requiring a time limit on parking during the day. Whether the City requires permits or requires time limits, it is of utmost importance that either program be strictly enforced.

It is also critical to improve the aesthetics and circulation within the alleys and rear yards that are used for parking. It is not unusual for one leasing company to control several homes in a row, or for a few owners to control an entire block. As redevelopment occurs, property owners should be encouraged to work together and organize the back areas of the properties into shared parking lots, possibly through easement and maintenance agreements. The efficiency of consolidating parking into lots would increase the number of spaces available to tenants. The lots would reflect standards for paving, landscaping, a trash pickup station, and lighting to provide a sense of security to residents. Parking permits would control use. The lots would be accessed from alleys or side streets, eliminating the problem of multiple curb cuts on residential streets or arterials.

**Residential Policy Statement:**

Revitalize the Cross Street Neighborhood through the stabilization and diversification of housing stock, thus raising the quality of existing homes, broadening the target market, expanding home ownership opportunities and increasing resident pride in their neighborhood.

Residential Redevelopment Policies, Goals and Objectives

The policies, goals and actions make a statement of the desires, values and direction of the community, reflecting the neighborhood’s social and aesthetic values. The following goals and objectives set the framework on which future development decisions should be made.

**Goal 1:**

***Develop a cohesive neighborhood by facilitating rehabilitation of existing homes, encouraging the construction of new housing, promoting the development of public improvements and open space and increasing neighborhood pride.***

**Short Term Actions:**

- Identify sites and structures that should be removed and/or demolished.
- Identify preferred housing types for noted infill redevelopment locations.
- Develop comprehensive detailed engineering plans addressing public improvements (street lights, open space, sidewalks, and street furniture), homes in need of improvements, and vacant lots for new housing construction.
- The City, EMU and the DTDDA should jointly build strong partnerships with developers, community-based organizations and non-profit groups to develop programs dedicated to home ownership and improvement assistance.
- Promote the organization of a neighborhood association(s) and institute a community meeting bi-annually.
- EMU, City and residential property owners should partner on establishing additional residential housing programs whereby, faculty is encouraged to purchase homes in the neighborhood.
- Develop a “Handbook of Resident Services” which would cover a wide range of concerns that citizens may have. Each entry or concern listed would include a brief description of the procedure citizens should follow, and the action that will be taken by the city. Each entry would include the appropriate department to contact and the department telephone

number. Additionally, the names and phone numbers of various government and social service agencies would be included at the end of the “Handbook for Resident Services”.

**Long Term Actions:**

- Implement a street and tree maintenance program to improve the pedestrian experience throughout the neighborhood.
- Develop additional open space on EMU’s campus for use by students and Cross Street residents.
- Promote the virtues of residing in the improved Cross Street Neighborhood to realty boards, realtors and developers.

**Goal 2:**

***Maintain and upgrade current housing stock.***

**Short Term Actions:**

- Develop a targeted enforcement program to enforce building and property maintenance codes.
- Work with Washtenaw County, the State, the Federal government, local financial institutions and non-profit organizations to develop financial-assistance and incentive programs for home rehabilitation.
- Properly seal abandoned homes as an immediate safety solution. The City should consider amending the ordinance so that homes are removed or rehabilitated as quickly as possible, or within a specified time frame.

**Goal 3:**

***Preserve and enhance the existing historic district and ensure new residential projects preserve the contextual character of the neighborhood.***

**Short Term Actions:**

- Formulate and adopt design guidelines for both renovation and new construction.
- Review and amend the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate regulations to ensure compatibility with the vision for the neighborhood.

- Prepare self-guided walking tour pamphlets listing all the historic sites within the historic district.
- Educate residents and businesses on the economic benefits of historic preservation and promote the use of historic preservation tax credits for eligible properties.
- Publicly recognize those residents that renovate buildings in accordance with design guidelines (thank you ads or editorials in local papers and newsletters; an annual design award program for Cross Street Neighborhood residents).

#### **Long Term Actions:**

- Pursue funding sources to provide assistance in preserving existing structures, whereby property owners submit an application to receive funding to renovate and upgrade their building in accordance with the design guidelines.

#### **Goal 4:**

##### ***Improve residential parking throughout the neighborhood.***

#### **Short Term Actions:**

- Explore residential parking permit options.
- Assist in strategizing with residential property owners to introduce a common off-street parking lot in the rear yard of select residential blocks.
- Explore parking layout/design opportunities.
- Encourage the use of commuter parking facilities for staff and students to minimize the impact of student parking on Cross Street.
- Limit allowable parking for tenants.
- Develop a reciprocal agreement with Eastern Michigan University whereby grades will not be released unless parking fines are paid.
- Implement a “Permit only” parking policy on Emmet, Ballard, Hamilton, Adams and Washington.

#### **Long Term Actions:**

- Adopt design standards for shared off-street parking lots.

- Work with property owners to implement a prototype consolidated parking lot.

#### **Goal 5:**

##### ***Minimize crime related concerns.***

#### **Short Term Action:**

- Require all new development and redevelopment projects to follow “Crime Prevention through Environmental Design” (CPTED) principles.
- Enforce compliance with current zoning laws and building codes regularly.
- Conduct curfew sweeps of areas where there are problems with persons loitering during late hours.
- Advertise and promote involvement in Crime Watch and Senior Watch.
- Continue and enhance the neighborhood's communication with the Police Department.
- Encourage all multi-family property owners to participate in the Ypsilanti Police Department Crime Free Multi-Housing Program. This program is a partnership between the Ypsilanti Police Department and rental property managers to help tenants, owners and managers keep drugs and illegal activity out of rental properties.
- Identify areas within the neighborhood where inadequate lighting is a concern.
- Seek funding for and install additional pedestrian-oriented street lights along corridors that connect to Downtown and Depot Town.
- Clean existing lights to improve light levels within the neighborhood.
- Install pedestrian lighting at parking lots to provide safe access and egress.
- Remove graffiti promptly.

#### **Long Term Actions:**

- Explore funding options and partnerships to reestablish a Police mini-station in or adjacent to the Cross Street Neighborhood.

- Seek funding for and install residential neighborhood lights as appropriate and necessary creating pedestrian brightway corridors.

**Goal 6:**

*Transform Cross Street into a clean, well-maintained neighborhood.*

**Short Term Actions:**

- Work with merchants, EMU and neighborhood residents to organize on-going neighborhood clean-ups against graffiti, vandalism, illegal dumping and litter.
- Encourage the merchants and residents to keep their properties clean and to maintain their buildings.
- Encourage business and property owner compliance by offering incentives.
- Enforce environmental and safety regulations.

**Long Term Action:**

- Require installation and use of trash dumpster enclosures by businesses and haulers.
- Sponsor events that work toward neighborhood improvements, such as a Clean-Sweep Weekend and Paint the Town.

