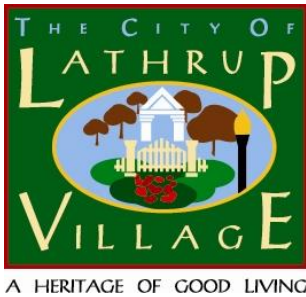


# Planning Commission Agenda

Tuesday, May 19, 2026 at 7:00 PM  
27400 Southfield Road, Lathrup Village, Michigan 48076

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1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
4. **Approval of Agenda**
5. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**
  - A. April Meeting Minutes
6. **Public Comment**
7. **New Business**
  - A. Master Plan Update – Parks & Recreation Discussion
8. **General Communication**
  - A. Site Development Update
9. **Public Comment**
10. **Commissioner Comments**
11. **Adjourn**



## Planning Commission Minutes

Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at 7:00 PM  
27400 Southfield Road, Lathrup Village, Michigan 48076

### 1. **Call to Order** by Chair Hillman at 7:07pm

#### 2. **Roll Call**

Present: Hillman, Nordmoe, Grewer, Abraham, Robinson, Hammond

Absent: Clarke

Also Present: DDA Director Colson, CED/DDA Project Coordinator Kennedy, City Clerk Emanuel,  
Attorney Baker

Moved by Commissioner Robinson, seconded by Commissioner Nordmoe to excuse Commissioner Clarke's absence.

Yes: Hillman, Nordmoe, Grewer, Robinson, Abraham, Hammond

No: n/a

Absent: Clarke

Motion Carried

### 3. **Approval of Agenda**

Moved by Commissioner Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Nordmoe to approve the agenda.

Yes: Hillman, Nordmoe, Grewer, Robinson, Abraham, Hammond

No: n/a

Absent: Clarke

Motion Carried

### 4. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

#### A. March 2026 - Meeting Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Robinson, seconded by Commissioner Hammond to approve the minutes from the March 17, 2026 meeting.

Yes: Hillman, Nordmoe, Grewer, Robinson, Abraham, Hammond

No: n/a

Absent: Clarke

Motion Carried

**5. Public Comment**

Diane Anderson, commented in part: that she had questions to ask the Planning Commission about development and the role of Giffels Webster, referencing that documents for tonight’s meeting show Lathrup Village associated with Oak Park and Royal Oak Township but not Birmingham, the City of Lathrup Village was called the “Grosse Pointe of the West”, that the School was not a high school it was an elementary school, and did that mislead the Planning Commission, and have they been advised to work with Preservation Michigan.

John Sousanis, expressed in part: that he was thankful for the Study Session with the Road Commissioner representative, but was underwhelmed, sharing that there is an idea but the path there is not clear, Commission questions are not answered, shared the reasons for his no vote, when looking at the Master Plan they should not take the mythical Boulevard into consideration.

**6. Old Business and Tabled Items None**

**7. New Business**

**A. Council Input – Master Plan Update**

Councilmember Sousanis, expressed in part: there is no technical difference between a redo and an update of the Master Plan other than budget, the definition of complete redo or an update will be the result of what people say they want, he didn’t understand that City Council had a spot on here and wished other Council members were here.

Councilmember Hammond, commented in part: The Master Plan from 2009 had a major concept of a Village Center District, to establish this vision and to encourage types of businesses that would create the idea, and the investment just has not been there, there were a lot of proposed plans like the Annie Lathrup School, and from public comments heard there needs to be an update to the Master Plan, with focus on the description of how it is described to be in line with public sentiment.

Commission Members, Hannah Prins and Eric Pietsch of Giffels Webster, DDA Director Colson, CED/DDA Project Coordinator Kennedy and Attorney Baker discussed in part:

- That the Planning Commission is expected to take Community input around the Master Plan and integrate it into their discussions and come up with a draft review by the Community at large and there has been a lot of Community input that they will get in May
- In June there will be an Open House, to review the entire engagement process (to provide data from what they have heard from surveys and meetings), and then transition over from the engagement process to Plan drafting, the (Master) Plan will not be finalized and adopted until early next year
- There are over 200 comments
- The PC is not seeing the comments as they come in and they are held from the PC
- We are still early in the phase, In 2021, there was not much feedback

- After going over all 4 topics (Housing, Transportation, Economic Development, and Parks and Recreation), reviewing what has been received and the Public comment, they will share the information at the Open House, and then review the data/comments and see what direction the public wants to go in
- The June meeting is: this is what we have heard, did we get it right?
- The PC will not have had a meeting to discuss what the data is before that?
- In July the PC will discuss the data received
- In advance of this conversation, thought it (the Open House) would be a presentation of findings
- Not coming to see the Plan, a draft new Plan, it is how it is presented and promoted
- Kick off in October first part to gather information and see what the tone is, what Open house intended to do, as an end cap to that process that will allow public to come and see what was collected, and have an opportunity to have additional comments and discussions, an end cap of the data collection process from October to June of this year
- this discussion has given clarity
- At the March meeting Councilmember Sousanis floated the idea of a joint session City Council and Planning Commission and other bodies, would be a good idea
- When the Surveys were decided – what was expectation of the response rate
- We have had 250 responses, other Communities have had less responses, residents don't normally get involved with Master Plan reviews, although we want more input
- How to get more people involved, and not portray this to residents as their input, with the amount of input received
- Graphing responses – there are different response rates from different areas of the City and there are low numbers from the SE Quadrant
- How to get better, thinks numbers are significantly high this time with new Committee for Communication and Engagement and with different forms of communication
- The Tree Committee and Clerical staff have shared it, and it is on the Bulletin Boards
- Can the QR Code be put on the City Wide Garage Sale signs
- The schedule of the project timeline – Hannah Prins of Giffels Webster, Shared the timeline, and it has been shared at each meeting with Comprehensive Plan Spring Timeline, Visioning phase and Engagement + Data Phase, and then plan drafting
- That the dates are not on the timeline, having a Swimlane diagram with the dates and phases of the Review
- Some areas on the Website have no information or are not clear
- Next month's meeting: review a draft invitation for the Open House – what the nature of the event is and agree in the way the invite is presented

Councilmember Sousanis, commented in part: asking for a clearer schematic to be shared, of the entire process, misunderstanding of where we are at has been a problem and continued, and that will go a long way to help people.

B. Master Plan Update – Economic Development Discussion

Hannah Prins and Eric Pietsch of Giffels Webster reviewed the Master Plan topic of Economic Development:

- Showing the timeline and Engagement Update information
- Shared the number of surveys by category and how people visit the hub website,
- The existing Economic and Development conditions and our current Master Plan related to it
- Where do we go from here
- Data related to: Median housing income, Poverty Rate, Educational attainment, Employment status, Employment by Industry, Employment by Occupation
- Previous Planning Efforts (2020 market study, Village Center District Concept from 2009, Redevelopment Sites (Annie Lathrup School, 26026 Southfield (between Rainbow and Margate), House in the Woods)
- DDA TIF-Tax Increment Financing District
- Post Pandemic Shifts (hybrid work, downsizing office space needs), Goals and Objectives for Economic Development.

Commission Members, Hannah Prins and Eric Pietsch of Giffels Webster, DDA Director Colson, CED/DDA Project Coordinator Kennedy and Attorney Baker discussed in part:

- Median income: does it consider Retired versus fully employed, can it be split out for retired versus working
- Why isn't Birmingham, Beverly Hills, or Bloomfield on this list of compared Cities
- Replacing Detroit or removing it as one of the comparison Cities we use for comparison
- Detroit is an anchoring City, using closest large City and how it differs from Lathrup Village, if on the West side of the State we would use Grand Rapids
- Looking at the data to give information, to the Planning Commission
- How looking at the data will help make decisions as a Planning Commission member
- The median income can help a developer make decisions
- Looking at the older Master Plans, helps give background, shows how the plans have evolved
- The Plans are for many people to use, not just for the Planning Commission, it helps the DDA, Developers, etc.
- Median Income for Michigan and Oakland County are on the chart to show how Lathrup Village is doing in comparison to those overall numbers
- Using Cities that are our closest neighbors only
- Looking at affordability
- Franklin and Bingham Farms
- The employment status is people 16 and over
- People that live here, mainly work elsewhere
- That we are a retail base, a place to visit
- Every piece of land developed and used to its highest value, increasing revenue/income flow
- Empty Office Spaces and business strips and how that fits with Southfield and Berkley
- Looking at Parking requirements and their impact
- Live/work space
- Having middle housing that is missing: Apartments, Townhouses, Row Housing, and Lofts
- Allowing the Public to have input on changes to the redevelopment site requirements
- Privately owned properties and the Planning Commission's role/abilities

DDA Director Colson, CED/DDA Project Coordinator Kennedy shared information about the Recast City Cohort:

- Maker spaces, where small-scale production can fit in and utilize vacant spaces
- Major shift in business: Class A -Amenities, Modernized, up-to-date, well positioned in metro area
- Class B: Few amenities, surface parking, older structure (10-30+ years) office vacancies, wanting modernized, up-to-date spaces and amenities
- Older buildings and small sized buildings
- Post-mall urban retail restructuring trend
- DDA Corridor Map: The Design District, The Maker's Mile and Project's focus area is the Village Center
- Engineering and Drafting businesses, 3D Printing, utilizing CNC machinery
- Discussing with stakeholders and with the Small Business Administration Representative
- Embraces modern technology, promotes entrepreneurs, focus on targeted (re) development forms long-lasting partnerships with community and business focused groups/organizations
- Where these types of businesses are currently choosing to locate
- 20% Retail and 80% online sales for these types of businesses
- Inspired by the specificity of the thinking and these types of businesses
- There is intrigue and interest in these types of businesses
- Example Zoning Language: Artisan manufacturing/galleries, Noise, pollution and odors, light pollution, traffic and distribution/delivery needs, outdoor storage, vibration and movement, Aesthetics
- Making them principle permitted uses to streamline the process, when process is drawn out that has deterred prospective businesses in the past
- Example businesses: Bready by Crispelli's - Royal Oak, Ophema Farms + Juicery - Clawson, and Epiphany Glass – Pontiac
- Cities sometimes evolve quickly

## 8. Public Comment

John Sousanis, commented in part: He appreciated the conversation, and thought he was going to be part of it as a Council member, suggested Housing and Economic Development together as a single chapter, bringing more opportunities for housing like townhouses, Class A offices with empty spaces and the Economic model, that makes it better to have empty spaces than lowering prices for tax purposes and other reasons, and retail frontage in the Central part of the City.

Jonathan Tara, commented in part: that he is impressed with the Recast City Cohort work (by DDA Director Colson and CED/DDA Project Coordinator Kennedy), slides showing larger grandiose spaces and we only have one and the owner has another idea (if that fails bring him around), a bad link on a from the City newsletter, and about the QR code related to the Master Plan surveys that is free and ads pop up, and asked if we could upgrade to the paid tier with no ads.

Tracey Williams, Bungalow Drive, commented in part: that she is excited about the opportunity with Recast City, she talks with many people and when she mentions it people stop and listen and want to learn more, a Commercial building owner is interested, she thinks this opens up new opportunities for economic development, and spoke about the Survey response rate.

## 9. General Communication

A. Site Development Report

DDA Director Colson, gave a site development status update.

**10. Commissioner Comments**

Chair Hillman commented in part:

- That he would like to put on the radar for the June meeting to review our Sign Ordinances to make them more favorable to the businesses without losing the meaning of the ordinances, and that at a City Council Study Session a District manager of XL Big and Tall Retail store spoke of our sign ordinances that are negatively impacting their business, and he has heard from the Mayor about other Businesses expressing concern too
- Debris by the HAWK signal that Mayor Kantor has mentioned and reaching out to get help with that being cleaned up and reaching out to T.J. Connolly who spoke at the Study Session

**11. Adjourn**

Moved by Commissioner Hammond, seconded by Commissioner Robinson to adjourn at 9:48pm

Yes: Hillman, Nordmoe, Grewer, Robinson, Abraham, Hammond

No: n/a

Absent: Clarke

Motion Carried

# memorandum

**DATE:** May 13, 2026

**TO:** Lathrup Village Planning Commission

**FROM:** Eric Pietsch, Jill Bahm, and Hannah Prins, Giffels Webster

**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Plan Update –Economic Development Study Session & Parks and Recreation Kickoff

We will use our meeting on May 19 to further discuss the topic of economic development at the 6:00 P.M. study session with the Planning Commission. The study session will be followed by the kickoff for this month’s discussion on parks and recreation at 7:00 P.M.

Please note our progress for the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Engagement Phase:

- ✓ **Surveys.** Four surveys are now live: Housing, Transportation, Economic Development, and Parks and Recreation. All four surveys are available on the hub website on the Join the Conversation page. We encourage city staff and commissioners to continue to leverage community communication channels and collaborate on spreading the word about the surveys, activities, and events for the comprehensive plan update.

The surveys are open until May 31· 2026, but so far, each survey has:

- Housing – 223 responses
- Transportation – 71 responses
- Economic Development – 51 responses
- Parks and Recreation – 46 responses

Preparation for the study session on Economic Development:

- **Review the 2021 Comprehensive Plan.** Particularly the Future Land Use chapter from pages 43-46, the Commercial Corridors/Downtown Plan chapter from pages 63-80, and page 95-96 for the Commercial Development action strategy.
- **Review the previously provided data on economic development in Lathrup Village.**
  - About the datasets: In most cases, we have gathered U.S. Census Data from the American Community Survey 5-year estimates. If you would like to learn more about this dataset you may visit:
    - <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about.html>
    - <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/estimates.html>
- **Review the previously provided economic development resources packet.** (Note: resource packets can be found at <https://giffelswebster.sharefile.com/public/share/web-s42042d07105041df8f9e34fdc3d5e6d2>)
- **Prepare any questions you may have or note resources or data you would like to have.**

Preparation for the regular meeting on Parks and Recreation:

- **Review the 2021 Comprehensive Plan.**
  - Land Use chapter on Open Space page 45 and the Future Land Use map on page 46.
  - Resiliency & Sustainability chapter on pages 47-54.
  - View the neighborhoods map on page 55 for reference to the parks in relation to each neighborhood area.
  
- **Become familiar with the previous 2021 Recreation Plan, this can be accessed in the provided resource packet.**
  
- **Over the next month, review the provided resource packet on parks and recreation topics for the study session in June.**
  - The selected resources are meant to spark conversation, illustrate actionable strategies, and point to successful models that communities can consider for local adaptation. The packet is not a complete collection, further materials addressing other topics or deeper dives may be introduced as community needs evolve.

Parks and Recreation in Lathrup Village:

The City of Lathrup Village has five municipal parks:

**Lathrup Village Municipal Park**

This park is located directly behind the City’s Municipal Building and encompasses two acres. It serves as the central gathering place for City events, including concerts in the park.

**Annie Lathrup Park**

This two-acre park is adjacent to City Hall. It features a 1/4-mile walking/jogging path.

**Goldengate Park**

This 2.5-acre park provides opportunities for residents in the south section of the City, south of I-696, west of Southfield Road. The park’s playground equipment was updated in 2012.

**Sarrackwood Park**

This 3/4-acre park is located at Saratoga, Rackham, and Woodworth Way streets. It serves the local neighborhood in the northeast quadrant of the City.

**Dorothy Warren Park**

This 1/2-acre park is located on Rainbow Drive in the northeast portion of the city. It is undeveloped but is maintained with a grassy lawn.

Goals from the 2021 Recreation Master Plan

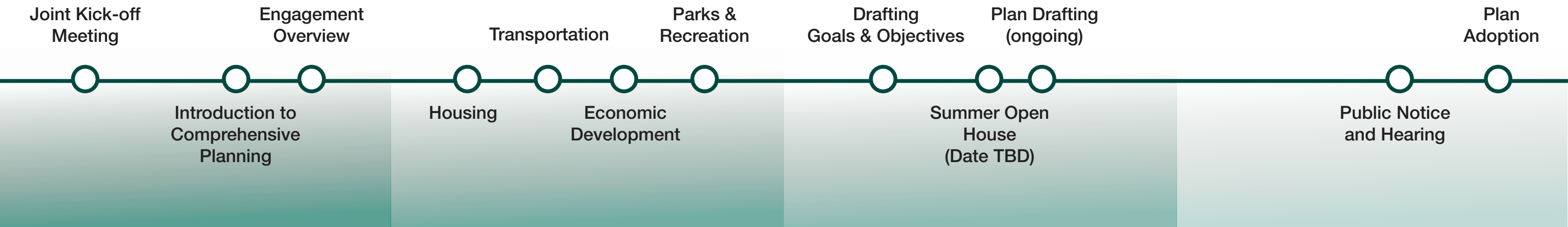
- **Take Care of Existing Parks and Recreational Facilities.**
  - To maintain continue cleanliness and functionality of recreation parks, facilities, and grounds.
  - Continue to build the volunteer base to help with park maintenance and increase pride in local parks.
  
- **Provide a Variety of New and Improved Recreation Facilities for Public Use.**
  - Develop neighborhood parks according to the residents' preferences and community knowledge.
  - Continue to work with adjoining communities to develop a non-motorized multi-use trail loop and system.

Parks and Schools Map

- **See parks map on the following page.**



# Lathrup Village 2026 Comprehensive Plan Timeline



## VISIONING October - January

The visioning phase establishes the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan update by identifying community priorities, key topics for exploration, and expectations for the process. It establishes how stakeholders will be engaged throughout the process while recognizing that maintaining a flexible framework is important as needs and ideas emerge through the process.

The visioning phase began in October 2025 with a joint meeting of the City Council and Planning Commission, officially launching the update process. City leadership, elected and appointed officials, committees, interest groups, and the public provided input on focus areas for the update. A timeline and preliminary engagement plan was developed, planning resources were shared, and the Planning Commission was recommended to review and become familiar with the previous plan.

## WORKSHOPS & DATA COLLECTION February - May

The public input and data collection phase focuses on listening and learning from the community. Feedback and data gathered during this phase are used to shape the plan's focus areas and to update, modify, or reaffirm elements of the existing comprehensive plan. While plan topics are closely interconnected, engagement is often organized by individual focus areas to better understand each topic before considering how they work together as a whole.

Building on the visioning phase, Giffels Webster partnered with City staff and the Planning Commission to develop an engagement strategy focused on four key areas: housing, transportation, economic development, and parks and recreation. The strategy offered a variety of ways for people to participate (including in-person and online engagement) and was promoted through flyers, social media, meetings, and the City website.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES June - August

The goals and objectives phase analyzes public input and data to identify existing challenges, opportunities, and trends. Common themes and key findings help determine where updates to the comprehensive plan's goals and objectives may be needed.

The Planning Commission will review the existing goals and objectives to determine whether they should be revised, expanded, or reaffirmed. Discussions also begin on the plan's chapters to identify topics that may need editing, expansion, or removal if they are no longer relevant.

## PLAN DRAFTING & ADOPTION September - January\*

The plan drafting and adoption phase translates the refined goals, objectives, and community priorities into a complete draft Comprehensive Plan. This phase focuses on clearly documenting policies, strategies, and recommended actions in a format that is easy to understand and implement.

The consultant prepares draft plan chapters for review by City staff and the Planning Commission, incorporating feedback and making revisions as needed. Formal public hearings are held providing opportunities for final input. The process concludes with adoption of the Comprehensive Plan by City Council.

### What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is a long-range vision (15-25 years) for the future of the community. It provides a framework for making big-picture decisions and can promote and strengthen valued community assets as well as encourage new partnerships and opportunities. In Michigan, comprehensive (master) plans are to be reviewed by the Planning Commission every 5 years. While major updates may not be necessary, it is important that communities review their plans to ensure they are relevant to the current and projected needs and wants of a community, and coordinate with other communities, county and regional plans and reports.

### What is the plan's role in development and land use decisions?

The master plan acts as a guiding document for future land use, zoning changes and developments. It does not legally change or alter existing uses or districts and it does not automatically permit uses that do not currently exist on a property. The role of the plan is to establish a vision and when the Planning Commission receives an application for a new project, they may reference this plan as precedent to determine if a change in use is consistent with this vision.



### Who might use or reference the Comprehensive Plan?

#### PLANNING COMMISSION

When reviewing an application, the Planning Commission may consult the community's adopted Comprehensive Plan to ensure decisions are made with due diligence and a clear understanding of long-term goals. While an application may be recommended for approval on its own, doing so without reference to the plan (and the public input embedded within it) can create legal and planning risks by failing to anticipate or mitigate impacts on surrounding land uses. The Comprehensive Plan **does not** change zoning, but it can inform whether a proposed change is appropriate should the owner choose to apply.

#### DEVELOPERS

Developers evaluate a range of market data, site conditions, and financial factors when deciding what to build and where. A community's adopted Comprehensive Plan is often a key reference because it signals the direction of future growth and the types of development a community is likely to support. Development inherently involves risk, and the Comprehensive Plan helps developers assess that risk by indicating which land uses may be viewed favorably, what the community's priorities are, and how a proposed project might align with long-term planning goals thereby increasing predictability in the approval process.

#### BUSINESS OWNERS

Existing and prospective business owners may also reference the Comprehensive Plan when deciding where to locate or expand. The plan helps signal whether a community is likely to support a proposed business use, whether there may be an existing or growing customer base, and if complementary businesses are anticipated nearby. It can also provide insight into future transportation investments, downtown programming, DDA support, incentives, and branding efforts, all of which influence foot traffic, visibility, and long-term business success.

#### PROPERTY OWNERS

Residents and property owners may reference the Comprehensive Plan to better understand current conditions and long-term changes that may occur in their neighborhood or near their property. Prospective residents can also use the plan to evaluate the character and direction of an area.



**SAFE**  
**ROUTES TO**  
**PARKS**



**Safe**  
**Routes**  
**PARTNERSHIP**

saferoutespartnership.org

## A Systems Approach to Safe Routes and Long-Term Change

Since 2017, the Safe Routes Partnership has worked with community-based organizations to make park access safe, convenient, and equitable for people walking and biking. However, making changes to a sidewalk or holding one community engagement meeting is not going to have as long-term of an effect if we don't zoom out to see the whole system that created unsafe routes or inequities in the first place. That is why in 2021, after assessing the national landscape of planning and funding opportunities at the state and regional levels, we built a cohort of state agencies along with state-based local leader networks to begin applying promising practices that engage grassroots and grass tops, then assessing how they work in the field. Below is a summary of our approach and high-level take-aways.



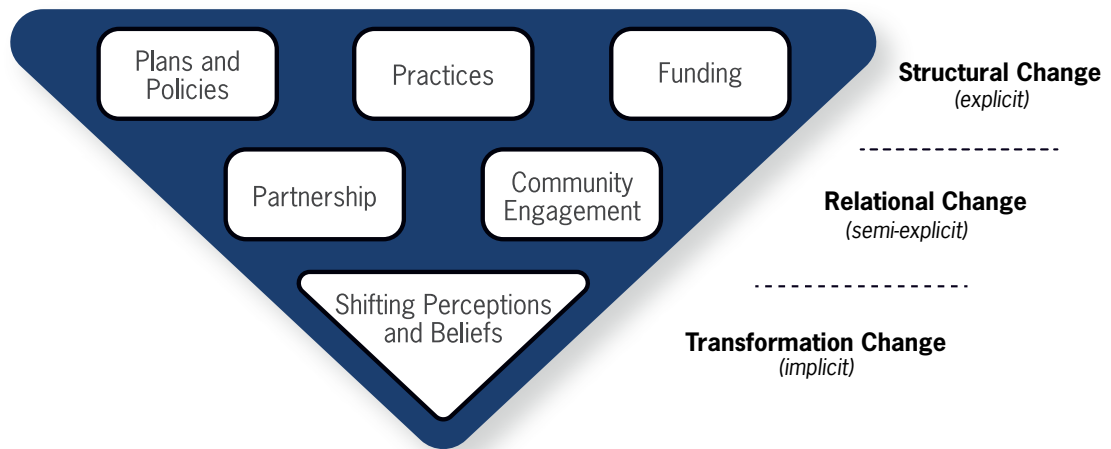
### Why Do This Work?

The places we live and the ways we get around are built through intentional policy and funding decisions. Those decisions are not random; they are influenced by humans who are subject to individual and societal pressures and biases. The challenges we see today, such as low rates of physical activity, less access to park space, and unsafe conditions for walking and biking are not the result of individual or community failure to maintain or improve neighborhoods, but rather are due to decades of intentional funding and policy decisions. For more context on this, watch this [brief video](#) on mobility justice or explore this [story map](#) that gives more historical background and how it connects to today. These systems are set up to continue producing more of the same even when communities are saying that it doesn't work for them. The Safe Routes to Parks work started at the local level, seeking to bring changes through public demand. We then expanded to also address

systems from the state level so that funding and planning processes could more accurately and efficiently address local desires and needs for safe, equitable, and convenient access to everyday destinations, especially parks and neighborhood green spaces.

Through this project, the Safe Routes Partnership sought to understand what could be changed at the local and state level to better support safe walking and biking access to everyday destinations, especially green spaces. We worked on park access specifically because parks are an essential community destination that brings together different government agencies and partners that might otherwise not work together, leading to tangible results. However, this approach can be adapted more broadly for connecting people to other everyday destinations like schools, grocery stores, and libraries.





The graphic illustrates the elements of systems change at each level, explicit to implicit. Imagine big rocks in a funnel and change is the water that could flow through if you address the various elements. Graphic adapted from FSG.

## Defining Systems Change

A tool that we have been using to frame this work is a “systems change” **model adopted from FSG**. FSG is a consulting firm based in Seattle, Washington that created a systems change framework focusing on identifying the conditions that hold a problem in place and how to meaningfully shift them in pursuit of a more equitable future. They liken these conditions to the water in this story: “A fish is swimming along one day when another fish comes up and says “Hey, how’s the water?” The first fish stared back blankly at the second fish and says “What water?”

Conditions can be invisible to people experiencing them every day. Whether or not they are noticed, these conditions can hold significant problems in place. Without addressing them, we can’t change the system and the outcomes it produces.

Our program’s goal is to increase equitable park access by dismantling systems of inequity, so here is how we have defined the different elements in FSG’s model.

- ▶ **Plans & Policies:** Update the rules, guidelines, and lists of projects that guide both government agencies and community organizations so that they include safe and equitable access to everyday destinations.
- ▶ **Practices:** Expand programs and standard operations to include activities that support equity and Safe Routes to Parks. Examples could be new data collection strategies, using data to inform where route improvements connect to parks, or scheduling events in park spaces that are accessible by biking, walking, and/or transit.
- ▶ **Funding:** Allocate funding as well as staff and volunteer time to make parks safer and easier to access via walking and biking. Prioritize that funding based on equity.
- ▶ **Partnerships:** Work with a variety of partners that represent different parts of the community to advance park access like public health, transportation, parks and recreation, schools, faith communities, and volunteer groups.
- ▶ **Community Engagement:** People are experts on the places they live, so make sure they are influencing decisions to address park access needs.
- ▶ **Shifting Perceptions and Beliefs:** Expand commitments to safe, convenient, and equitable park access. Change preconceived notions and in-grained ways of thinking.



## Why Now?

In 2021, we saw a window of opportunity to build sustainable systems that better deliver safe, equitable, and convenient access to everyday destinations that communities need. Putting in work to establish both local and state-level approaches established a solid foundation for future decades of work on access and equity. Below are the factors that we considered relevant and timely for our systems approach to Safe Routes to Parks.

### ▶ Federal Investment

- **Transportation:** In 2021, Congress passed a new surface transportation infrastructure law with historic levels of support for walking and biking moving through state and regional entities. State and regional entities are dealing with new requirements and programs which means there is an opportunity to guide how to use these funds effectively to meet access, equity, and climate goals. Now is the time to build intentional connections between local initiatives and the regional and state agencies that support their work toward safe and equitable local park access.
- **Environment:** In September 2022, the **Biden-Harris Administration made a public commitment to create more equitable access to parks in local communities**. A total of 10 federal departments and agencies (including the Department of Transportation) signed a memorandum of understanding committing to promoting equitable access to nature in nature-deprived communities. Some of the relevant goals to our work include “identify and leverage federal programs to invest in equitable access to nature”; “facilitate collaboration across all levels of government to reduce barriers to implementation and accessing federal resources”; and “develop the capacity of community leaders to implement their vision for their park spaces.”
- ▶ **Racial Equity:** The protests of 2020 shifted the public’s understanding of race, but there is still so much work to be done to address the past and ongoing inequities that Black, Indigenous, and other people of color face. We can use this elevated attention to establish ongoing practices that prioritize communities facing historical and current injustices while also building ongoing systems for improvement such as trainings and community engagement processes so that the work does not stagnate.
- ▶ **Global Pandemic:** The coronavirus pandemic underscored the importance of safe and healthy access to parks and public spaces. These spaces have provided much-needed exposure to nature and physical activity close to home during challenging times. Across the country, park and trail systems experienced increased demand, and many states responded with significant new investments.
- ▶ **New Research:** In a systematic review, the **Community Preventive Services Task Force** found a significant increase in physical activity related to parks, greenways, and trails when they are paired with at least one other intervention – community engagement, structured programs, public awareness, and/or access enhancements. Safe Routes to Parks is a programmatic way to leverage that research in communities.

In this context, the Safe Routes to Parks program was a timely opportunity to identify how to address systems so that planning, funding, and policies can all support safe, equitable, and convenient access to everyday destinations.



## How We Make Systems Change Tangible and Actionable to Improve Park Access

Here is an example of how we identified specific goals and strategies to address elements of systems change that we could cultivate through our one-on-one technical assistance calls with program participants. We listed expected outcomes, along with their potential indicator, and then prioritized a list of skills to help cultivate among program participants.

### Example of a Systems Change Goal

#### Relationships/ Connections

**Goal:** By project conclusion, participating organizations, their partners, and community members will have the skills and knowledge to improve the quality of connections and communication occurring between government agencies and community members.

Relationship/Connections Outcomes and Indicators	
Outcomes	Evidenced by
Participants are guided by continuous communication with community members about their needs and desires throughout the four phases of the <b>Safe Routes to Parks Framework</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Participant is holding multiple engagement opportunities throughout the process of assessment, planning, implementation, and sustainability.</li> </ul>
Participant is making decisions and prioritizing next steps based on authentic engagement with community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Established lines of communication between community leadership and government agencies.</li> <li>▶ Set process for how government agencies can select meaningful engagement strategies appropriate to each project.</li> </ul>
A mutually beneficial relationship between community leadership and government agencies that handle parks and the routes to them so that these lines of communication do not have to be rebuilt for each individual project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The number of points in a typical/template project timeline where community members engaged.</li> <li>▶ Increased funding allocated specifically for community engagement.</li> <li>▶ Increased opportunities for engagement reported by community members.</li> </ul>

#### Program participants and their partners will increase their ability to:

- ✓ Facilitate community engagement activities that bring together community members, other stakeholders, and government staff to build relationships and understanding of community priorities.
- ✓ Build and maintain sustainable, mutually beneficial relationships between community members and city staff and foster the community's leadership to own that connection.
- ✓ Identify where community leaders can connect to formal conversations, coalitions, and other groups that are working on public health, active transportation, and other issues related to Safe Routes to Parks.
- ✓ Encourage (and compensate) leadership in the community to actively communicate with their neighbors about the work, act as liaisons, and build relationships and connections with residents to increase safety in and access to parks.
- ✓ Identify champions within government staff and build trust between those champions and community members.



## Applying this Concept

To help ground all of this in tangible projects, we have included profiles from local-level Safe Routes to Parks grantees with notes about some of the areas of systems change that they addressed as part of their projects (whether they were thinking about it that way or not).

### Safe Routes to Parks Tactical Urbanism in Birmingham, Alabama (VIDEO)

This video highlights a pop-up bike lane demonstration project in the historic neighborhoods of Titusville and Smithfield of Birmingham, Alabama to show how bike lanes could be utilized to connect to local parks and green spaces.

- ▶ **Partnerships:** Community residents, leaders, bike share operators, and the City of Birmingham came together to plan and implement this demonstration project.
- ▶ **Community Engagement and Practices:** Survey results from the demonstration project showed interest and demand to make a bike lane permanent on Center Street. This made the case to the Department of Transportation who restriped the street to make this a permanent bike lane.
- ▶ **Shifting Perceptions and Beliefs:** Some community members who used the pop-up bike lane had not ridden a bike since they were a kid! By trying out this safer, more comfortable route, they could envision biking as a way to get to their local parks.



### Safe Routes to Cully Park in Portland, Oregon (VIDEO)

This video features community members in the Cully Neighborhood of Portland, Oregon installing a wayfinding system to incorporate maps, signs, and community art that resonates with and is designed by the people of color and low-income communities within the neighborhood.

- ▶ **Community engagement:** Living Cully, the lead organization, hosted a workshop on wayfinding and community members worked with bilingual artists to identify symbols that could represent each park. They engaged youth and family members to get broad input on routes to and from Cully Park.
- ▶ **Shifting Perceptions and Beliefs:** Living Cully hosted a total of 21 events to engage community members on routes and wayfinding to Cully Park, inviting people to be part of this co-creative process helped build community ownership and stewardship.



### Safe Routes to Apple Valley Park in Paonia, Colorado

Photos show how a community walk audit in Paonia brought together seniors, families with young kids, and teachers in this small town. Community members voiced a need for safe routes that include ADA-accessible routes for people using a wheelchair and slower car speeds on local streets with no sidewalks so teachers can safely shepherd their tiny students to the nearby park for play and learning.

- ▶ **Plans & Policies:** Paonia included Safe Routes to Parks as part of the Transportation Element in their Town's 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, looking to model policy language that aligned with the needs of a rural community. The town council also approved lowering speed limits near parks to 15mph and worked with partners to install signs and elevate awareness of these lower speed limits.
- ▶ **Shifting Perceptions and Beliefs:** Partners at the Nature Connection and Western Slope Conservation Center worked with town staff to install a painted walking and biking lane using paint and planters. They wanted to showcase that biking and walking projects do not mean "over-building" the town in a robust (and expensive) network of sidewalks and bike lanes as some residents fear, but could also include simple ways to improve everyday routes.





Community members taking notes. Photo by Tammie Mack



Walk audits can engage people of all ages. Photo by Tammie Mack



Using large sticky pads often helps capture ideas. Photo by Tammie Mack



Use different modes of transportation to better understand the space. Photo by Tammie Mack



Safety vests help participants be seen during the event. Photo by Tammie Mack





Taking data. Photo by Tammie Mack



Changing a system is a big task, but we can all contribute to shifting our communities to be more just, safe, and connected by addressing elements of the systems around us. Safe Routes to Parks is one tangible way to do that work!


**[To get started, check out our five tips to get started on Safe Routes to Parks.](#)**



## LATHRUP VILLAGE – SITE DEVELOPMENT STATUS

Facade	ADDRESS	APPLICANT NAME	PZE PROCESS TYPE	STARTED	NOTES
	17600 Eleven Mile	Hillenbrand Enterprises	Building Permit Review	5/15/2026	<p>This property was recently purchased by a chiropractor who intends to relocate their office from Beverly Hills to Lathrup Village. The existing tenant in the building is expected to remain in their current suite.</p> <p>Because the proposed chiropractic office is similar in use to the previous tenant occupying the space, the site plan was eligible for administrative approval. The applicant has submitted engineering documents for review in advance of applying for the required permits.</p> <p>The proposed scope of work is limited primarily to interior renovations, including the installation of additional divider walls and related interior improvements necessary to accommodate the new chiropractic office.</p>
	27411 Southfield Road	Jay Birds Bar & Grille	Building Permit Review	Spring 2026	<p>Administrative approval was granted for the installation of a canopy structure at 27411 Southfield Road to cover the existing paved patio area. The improvement is intended to provide shade and weather protection for outdoor seating and does not alter the existing building footprint. The building permit is currently under review, pending the submission of revised plans</p>

	<p>27651 Southfield Road</p>	<p>Surnow</p>	<p>Site Plan Review</p>	<p>9/29/2025</p>	<p>Middle Eats restaurant is expanding into the adjacent 1,800-square-foot unit to the south to enlarge its dining area. Because the space was previously occupied by a retail business, site plan approval was required to convert the floor area from retail to restaurant use. The Planning Commission approved the site plan at its November 18, 2025 meeting.</p> <p>Building permits have since been approved, and construction has commenced.</p>
	<p>27700 Southfield Road</p>	<p>Surnow</p>	<p>Site Plan Review</p>	<p>10/22/2024</p>	<p>The Lathrup Village Historic District Commission approved the project concept on February 19, 2025. Site plan approval was subsequently granted on April 15, 2025, for the historic preservation and adaptive reuse of the former Lathrup Village School into a mixed-use development that includes multi-family residential units, co-working space, and activity/event space.</p> <p>The applicant is currently awaiting a response from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority regarding project financing. Due to the extended financing review timeline, the applicant requested a twelve-month extension of the site plan approval originally granted on April 15, 2025.</p> <p>The Planning Commission recommended approval of the extension at its February meeting, and City Council subsequently approved the request at its February 23 meeting, granting the applicant a twelve-month extension of the site plan approval.</p>

	<p>28919 Southfield Road</p>	<p>Mahmood Mohamed</p>	<p>Site Plan Review</p>	<p>1/16/2026</p>	<p>Site plan approval was requested for a change of use at 28919 Southfield Road to allow a café serving coffee and pastries to occupy an existing tenant space. The proposed use does not include any expansion of the building footprint or changes to site circulation and represents the reuse of an existing commercial space within the multi-tenant plaza.</p> <p>The applicant received site plan approval at the Planning Commission’s February 17 meeting, with approval contingent upon receiving a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals related to the off-street parking requirements established in the Zoning Ordinance.</p> <p>The ZBA approved the requested parking variance at its February 23 meeting, allowing the project to proceed. Engineering plans have since been submitted for review.</p>
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