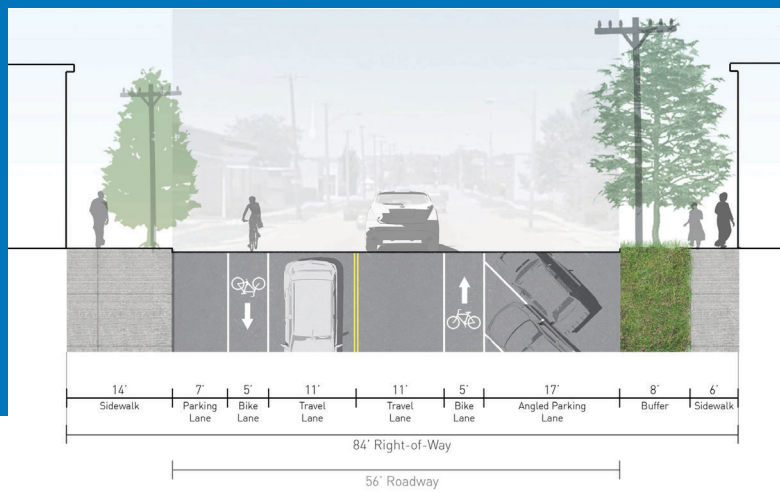




GRAHAM  
SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

## Applied Research and Service by Urban Planning Students in the HOPE Village Initiative Area



### Sustainability and the HOPE Village Initiative Integrated Assessment

Graham Institute Integrated Assessment Report Series Volume III Report 1



**Focus: HOPE**  
*Celebrating Diversity Since 1968*





An aerial photograph of a neighborhood in Detroit, overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle. A grid of green lines is drawn over the map, primarily within the blue area. Some lines are solid, while others are dashed. A single orange line runs vertically through the grid. The background shows a street grid and building footprints.

## About The Reports

The Sustainability and the HOPE Village Initiative Integrated Assessment (IA) is the result of a partnership between the University of Michigan (U-M) Graham Sustainability Institute and Focus: HOPE. The IA was developed to support Focus: HOPE's comprehensive place-based effort known as the HOPE Village Initiative. The Initiative's goal: by 2031, 100% of residents living in a 100 block area surrounding the Focus: HOPE campus will be educationally well-prepared and economically self-sufficient, and living in a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment.

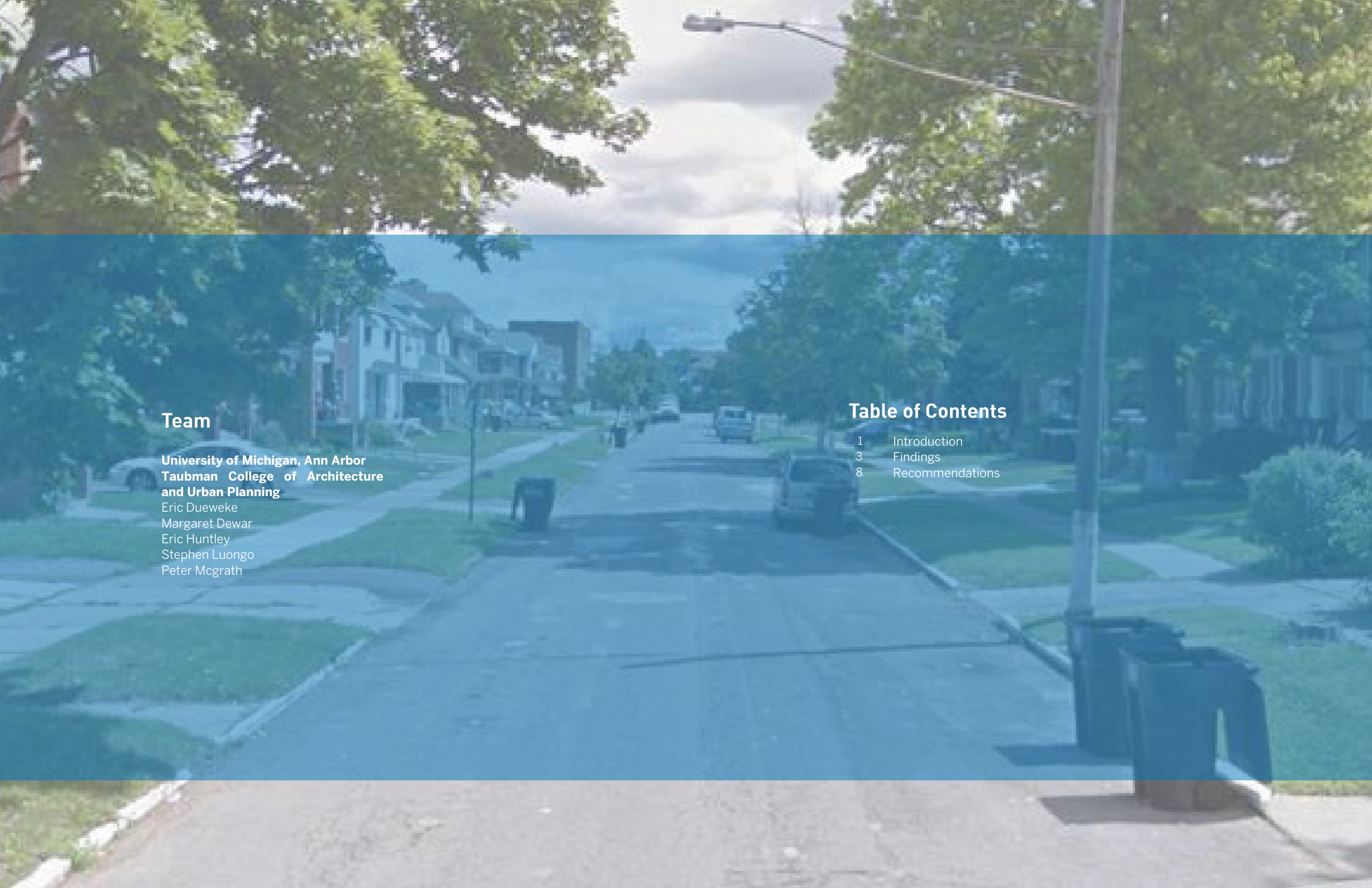
The IA recognizes that the success of the HOPE Village Initiative is tied to sustainability factors including the physical environment, economic development, community health, and education. Through collaboration with U-M researchers, residents, and Focus: HOPE staff, the IA developed data, tools, and concepts to advance the HOPE Village Initiative. This document is one of six final project reports completed for IA.

This work was made possible with support from the Graham Sustainability Institute, Focus: HOPE, and neighborhood residents.

## Reports In This Series

- Applied Research and Service by Urban Planning Students in the HOPE Village Initiative Area
- Building a Healthy Community in Detroit: Tracking the Impact of the HOPE Village Initiative Area
- Legal Issues in HOPE Village Housing Cooperative and Green Space
- Mapping Community Economies and Building Capabilities in HOPE Village
- Play & Grounds
- The Development of a Community Based Coalition to Promote Career and College Preparation in the HOPE Village Neighborhoods of Detroit and Highland Park





## Team

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Taubman College of Architecture  
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Stephen Luongo  
Peter Mcgrath

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# Introduction

*“A tradition of providing summer service to the Focus: HOPE community development department for over a decade.”*

Graduate students from the University of Michigan (UM) Urban and Regional Planning Program have maintained a tradition of providing summer service to the Focus: HOPE community development department for over a decade. Funding through the Graham Institute presented an opportunity to continue and expand student service and learning experiences by concentrating on planning-related projects in the HOPE Village Initiative neighborhood during 2012-2013. This project was not designed as a traditional academic research effort, though considerable field research and informal best practices surveying were employed.

Building on the work of previous students and Focus: HOPE staff, the initial project scope looked to address three broad issues/topics:

1. Community asset mapping
2. Linwood Avenue commercial corridor
3. Industrial corridor along Fenkell and Linwood

Projects selected aimed to help increase employment and services, along with improving health and safety conditions associated with vacant buildings and land. We developed these initial topics in collaboration with Focus: HOPE staff, but as often happens in community planning, priorities expand and shift in response to current neighborhood and organizational conditions.

From May through August of 2012, students Stephen



Luongo and Peter McGrath worked onsite at the Focus: HOPE offices with community development staffers Megan Wilbur and Stephanie Johnson-Cobb under the direction of Debbie Fisher. Both students met bi-weekly with Eric Dueweke as UM project lead. Luongo wrapped up some details during September-October 2012, and assisted in the transition to student Eric Huntley in early 2013. Huntley's service, again based mainly at the Focus: HOPE office, continued through mid-August. Outputs generated by the three students are described below and have been provided directly to Focus: HOPE and made available to the teams involved in the Sustainability and HOPE Village Initiative Integrated Assessment.

# Findings

*“Good community planning often requires adjustments to meet changing situations.”*

## Community Asset Map

Our first project for students Luongo and McGrath in 2012 was researching and designing the long-awaited HOPE Village community asset map and brochure, entitled “Community Connections.” This project required collaborating with residents and Focus: HOPE staff outside the department. Students researched the over 140 businesses and organizations listed in the document directory, took appropriate photos and created the map. One important leave-behind product of the brochure process is a spreadsheet of all organizations listed in the directory, so that the database can be easily maintained and updated by staff.



Figure 1 **Community Asset Map**

## Linwood Avenue

A major focus for planning students’ HVI effort was the Linwood Avenue commercial corridor. A revitalized HOPE Village area could feature Linwood as its “Main Street.” One early step toward achieving this vision was Luongo and McGrath’s work, led by Megan Wilbur of FH, to further organize and get feedback from the Linwood Business Owners Association (LBOA). Extensive field research by the two students enabled them to produce a database of every parcel along Linwood showing land use, zoning and building condition. These data were then mapped using GIS (Geographic Information System) software.



Student research also provided the basis for “Linwood: Main Street, Gateway, Catalyst” an extensive 38-page report and master plan detailing current conditions along the avenue, as well as a corridor improvement plan with short-, medium- and long-term recommendations for Focus: HOPE and other stakeholders. Strategies range from branding and property maintenance to streetscape improvements and infill development. The Linwood

report contains professional-grade designs and graphics that encourage adoption of its concepts. A powerpoint presentation was created to show report highlights. Design work benefited from collaboration with a volunteer architect recruited from a suburban church partner, as well as coordination with the UM Play + Grounds team.

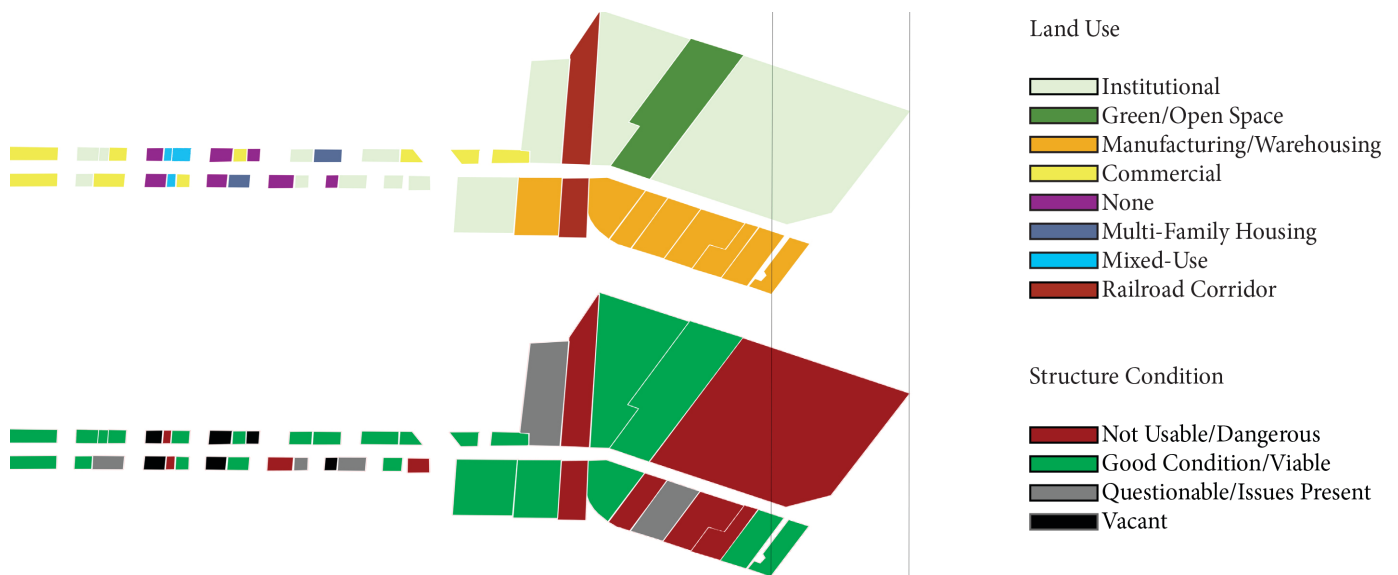


Figure 2 **Linwood Corridor Conditions GIS Map**

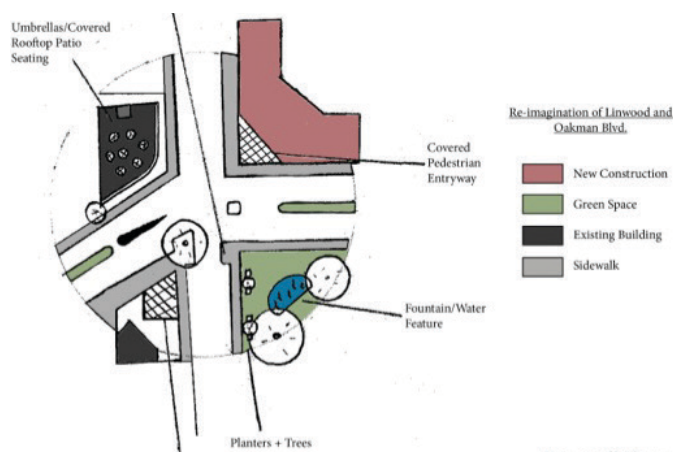


Figure 3 **Linwood/Oakman Intersection**

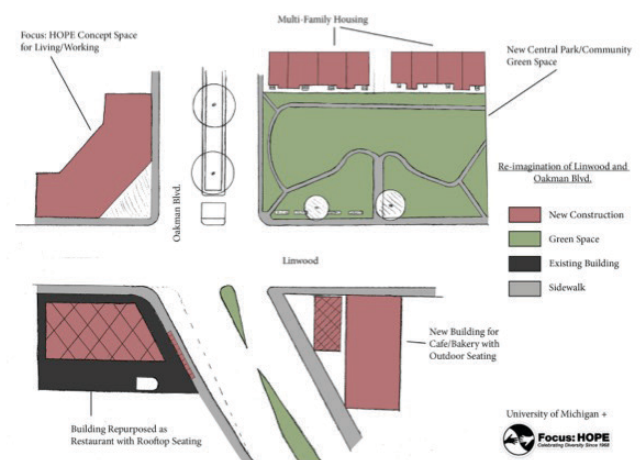


Figure 4 **Linwood at Oakman Concept #2**

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## Industrial Corridor/Greenway

Similar to Linwood, we completed field and internet research for every land parcel along Fenkell between the Lodge Freeway and Linwood. Properties along the south side of the street are industrial and adjoin the recently abandoned railroad line. Focus: HOPE and others are exploring the potential for converting the rail line into the Inner Circle Greenway. McGrath and Luongo interviewed greenway experts in Pittsburgh, Milwaukee and Chicago to learn best practices in greenway development. They also met with representatives of the (Detroit) Greenways Coalition and Conner Creek Greenway. Their research culminated in a four-page greenway briefing memo to Focus: HOPE staff.

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## Robeson School Site

Good community planning often requires adjustments to meet changing situations. In May, 2011 the Paul Robeson Academy, one of the anchors of the HOPE Village neighborhood, experienced a major fire. By early 2012—after the scoping of the Graham projects was complete—Detroit Public Schools made the decision to tear down the fire-damaged historic school structure and offer the property for sale. The two UM urban planning students were tasked with analyzing potential new uses for the property, including an urban recreation center and park with an urban agriculture focus. A four-page illustrated report by Luongo and McGrath titled “More Than a Park” described the possibilities. The two-man team also researched the re-use of similar parcels and presented the results of that research to Focus: HOPE.



Figure 5 **Robeson School Site**



Figure 6 **Robeson Site Idea**



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## Façade Improvement

Focus: HOPE staffer Megan Wilbur asked McGrath and Luongo to assist with implementation of a federally-funded façade improvement program for businesses along Linwood and Davison avenues. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program administered through the City of Detroit allows business owners working with select nonprofit partners to receive matching funds for approved exterior improvements. Our tenacious tandem contacted business owners, and worked with installation contractors and reviewing paperwork. Luongo also designed a concept awning for a local restaurant. The CDBG work leveraged over \$100,000 of new investment in the HOPE Village target area.

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## GIS and Grant Writing Support

One big advantage of having talented UM students onsite each day is the opportunity for staff to “draft” them for assistance with tasks utilizing specific skill sets. As in the Robeson and façade improvement examples, Luongo and McGrath supported FH staff in several smaller ways. Luongo researched and reported on the capabilities of a new open-source GIS software system called QuantumGIS which could prove less complex and certainly less costly than the commonly accepted ArcGIS software. He and McGrath also provided graphic and writing back-up for grant applications being prepared by Focus: HOPE.

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## Streetscapes

The arrival of grad student Eric Huntley in February 2013 coincided with another new opportunity for planning assistance to Focus: HOPE. An opportunity

arose to consider streetscape improvements as part of the scheduled repaving of various streets within the HOPE Village boundaries. Huntley was able to use his urban design skills to expand on the Linwood work that Luongo had started in 2012, while also coordinating with design efforts by the Play + Grounds team led by Arquero and Maigret.



Figure 7 *Linwood Streetscape Proposal*

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## Glazer Property Survey

The Glazer Elementary School located on 14th Street is a major asset within the HOPE Village. Determined advocacy by neighborhood residents and Focus: HOPE staff prevented the school from closing in 2011, leading to an increased emphasis on stabilizing the surrounding blocks. Many of the homes surrounding the school are vacant and abandoned; some are fire damaged. Finding the owners of those properties and addressing these blighting influences is an important part of this stabilization effort. Huntley researched ownership of those parcels and provided information about their tax status.

Both the property survey and streetscape work were highlighted in graphics created by Huntley for our poster included in the Graham Institute poster display. Huntley also staffed the display area at Parkman Library along with the Focus: HOPE community celebration on July 27.

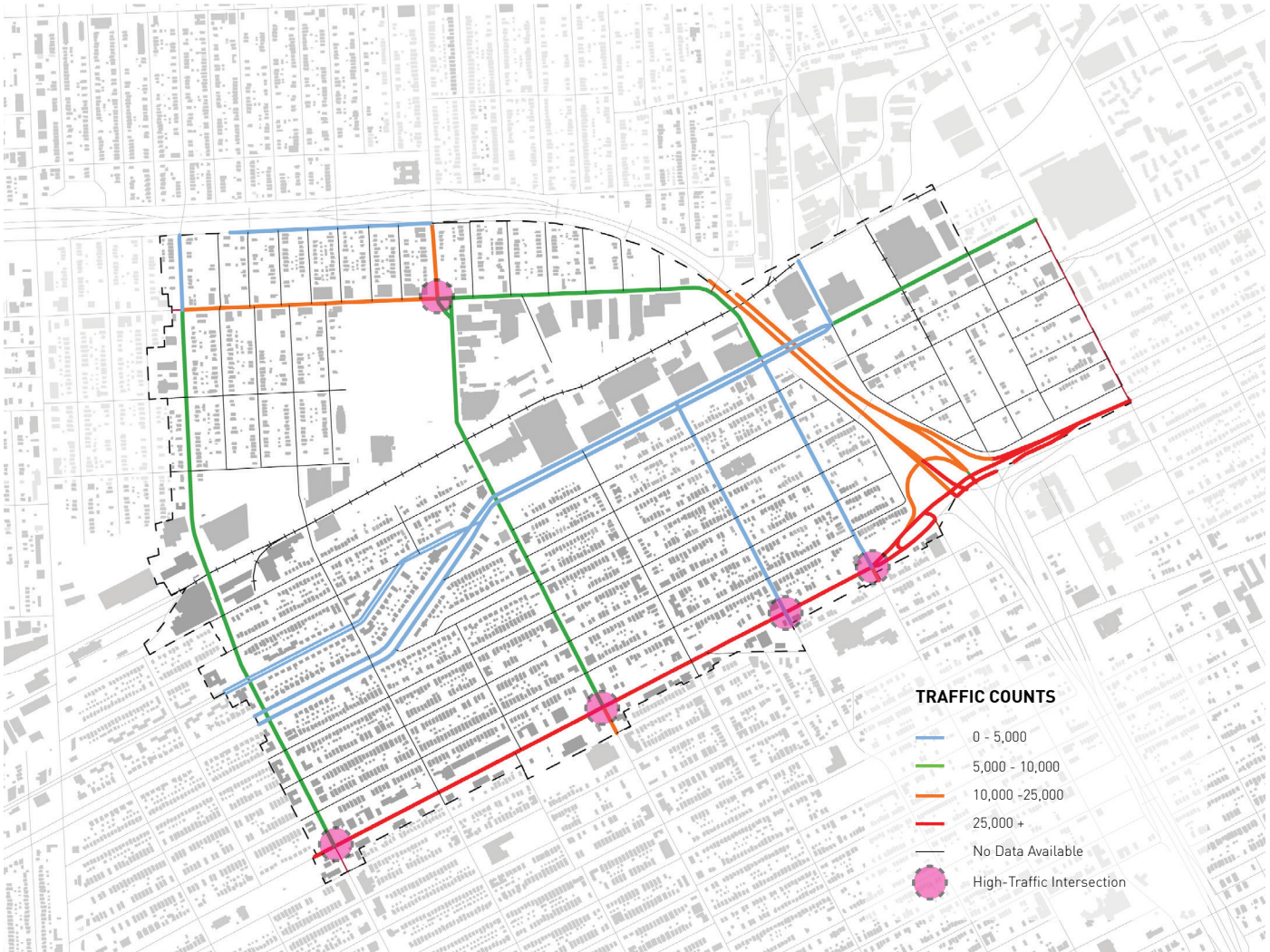


Figure 8 Traffic Count Study

## Davison Traffic Studies

A significant portion of our student’s summer 2013 activity was centered on the need for pedestrian accessibility and safety along busy Davison Avenue. Working with Focus: HOPE volunteer and retired traffic engineer, Dick Beaubien, Huntley researched best practices in pedestrian safety and helped draft detailed memos for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). He also researched traffic crash data and road safety audits and created multiple maps detailing HVI street conditions. Sources used included publications from the Institute of Traffic

Engineers, especially those involving “context sensitive solutions.”

Huntley also organized and staffed a community focus group to solicit ideas from residents and businesses on how to make crossing Davison safer. Another safety effort that benefited from Huntley’s work involved a letter writing advocacy campaign for improved street lighting led by Focus: HOPE. Letters drafted by Huntley were timed to influence the early days of the new Detroit Lighting Authority.



# Recommendations

*“This project’s applied research and service was designed to be used by Focus: HOPE staff on an ongoing, ‘real-time’ basis.”*

This project’s applied research and service was designed to be used by Focus: HOPE staff on an ongoing, “real-time” basis. Each of the projects described above generated a timely report, memo and/or activity that put student research into practice. Research products are stored on the Focus: HOPE server and currently in the Dropbox for the overall Graham project set.

Highlights of the recommendations produced by urban planning student researchers include the following ideas, most of which have already been conveyed to Focus: HOPE staff. Indeed, staff are likely already working on most of these ideas at some level.

## Community Asset Map

- Solicit staff and residents’ feedback on usefulness of and needed corrections to the 2012 map.
- Update quarterly, or as needed, the database generated by the UM urban planners.
- Plan now for a revised edition in 2015.

## Linwood Avenue

- Concentrate efforts and resources on Linwood as a gateway and catalyst
- Continue support for, and dialogue with, the Linwood Business Owners Association.

- Begin by implementing a streetscape maintenance program.
- Work with LBOA to pursue a branding strategy.
- Pursue traffic calming measures with City of Detroit Department of Public Works.
- Focus on intersection of Oakman/Linwood as a redevelopment hub. First step: removal of parking lot at SE corner.
- Use master plan report by UM planning students as a guide for future activity.

## Greenway

- Continue cooperation with Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan and other greenway supporters.
- Recognize that development of the Inner Circle Greenway will be a long-term venture.

## Robeson Site

- Incorporate generous green space(s) in any new use.
- Consider short-term or “interim” program utilizing a greening strategy.

## Streetscapes

- Keep working with the City of Detroit to advocate for new amenities whenever major streets such as Linwood and Oakman are repaved.
- Adapt and make use of designs created by UM urban planning teams. (Also see Play + Grounds.)
- Advocate for inclusion of streetscape improvement guidelines within Detroit Future City implementation documents.

## Property Survey

- Prioritize action/new investment for properties near neighborhood anchors or in highly visible

locations, e.g. near Glazer School, on commercial streets, corner lots.

## Davison Avenue

- Pressure MDOT and City of Detroit traffic engineers for immediate measures to improve pedestrian safety on this dangerous road.
- Work with business owners and residents to mount a campaign for better lighting and pedestrian crossings.
- Consider focusing on the intersection of Linwood and Davison, which has seen many traffic accidents over recent years.

## General Recommendations

- Create a marketing or promotional campaign to get the word about the HOPE Village Initiative out to a wider metro area audience.
- Negotiate with University of Michigan units to provide ongoing support for Hope Village Initiative program activities.
- Partner specifically with the Urban and Regional Planning and Undergraduate Research Opportunity programs to provide students for summer assistance to Focus: HOPE’s Community Development Department.

**LINWOOD AVE**  
BUSINESS DISTRICT

**LINWOOD AVE**  
BUSINESS OWNERS ASSOCIATION

**LINWOOD AVE**

Figure 9 Logo Concepts for Linwood





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