



IMPACT STUDY

MEDC RESILIENCY STUDY | CITY OF HOUGHTON | SUMMER 2023

progressive|ae





Special Thanks!

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the City of Houghton for the incredible hospitality, insight, and generosity extended to our team during our recent visit. From the moment we arrived, we were warmly welcomed and provided with a comprehensive overview of your beautiful city. Your willingness to share valuable information, offer recommendations, (and even provide snacks when we were hungry) truly exemplifies the kind-hearted nature of your community.

The coordination of stakeholders and business owners, as well as the meticulous scheduling that it required, made our visit seamless and allowed us to maximize our time in Houghton. It is inspiring to witness the passion for bettering the city and embracing the challenge of meaningful growth. The commitment to creating a vibrant and thriving community is evident in every aspect of Houghton's team and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from your collective wisdom. Special thanks to:

City Staff Eric Waara,
City Manager
Ann Vollrath,
Assistant City Manager + Clerk
Amy Zawada,
Community + Business Development Director
Jeff Jepsen,
Code Enforcement Officer

We also want to express our sincere gratitude to the business owners and staff for their incredible candor, honesty, and evident passion for the community during our visit. The willingness to share the rich history, detailed plans, and aspirations for the future of your businesses was truly invaluable to us.

We were given thorough tours and all-encompassing overviews of the business operations, allowing us to gain a deeper understanding of your dedication and the remarkable work happening downtown. Your drive for excellence and the betterment of the community is exemplified by your operations.

We are grateful for the valuable insights and knowledge you shared with us. Your openness in discussing both the triumphs and challenges of running a business have provided us with lasting lessons and perspectives.

Thank you for warmly welcoming us and for your genuine commitment to the community. It is clear that your passion and dedication are driving forces behind your success. We look forward to sharing the stories of your businesses and the vibrant community you contribute to.

The Den

Paul Gemignani, *Owner*
David Goodman, *Operations*
Lisa Nelson, *Operations*

The Print Shop

Tom and BJ Litsenberger

Joey's Seafood

Alan Kiley, *Owner*

Down Wind

Arni Ronis

Rukkila + Assoc.

Brian Kangas

The Market Place

Gail Sanchez

The Hall Building

Bud Cole, *Owner*
Jan Cole, *Property Manager*
Jeff Bugni, *Douglas Agency*
Andrew Lorenz, *Douglas Agency*
Mike Borsum, *Owner Remax*

Swift Hardware

Leanne Weeks, *Manager*
Byron Quinn
Kirsti Sakari

Executive Summary

There are two quotes that come to mind when talking about change in downtown Houghton. One is “change is the only constant in life” and the other is “when you are finished changing, you are finished.” The removal of the East Lakeshore Drive parking deck is a dramatic change for business owners, but it represents the vibrant cycle of life and consistent adaptation.

The parking structure was 45 years old and in poor condition, creating a liability for the City. It did provide, however, easy and efficient access to businesses on the North side of Shelden Avenue. There is a substantial grade change from Shelden Avenue to the Canal. The -20-foot decline placed the top of the parking deck at the third floor of many businesses, which is the first floor’s front door on Shelden Avenue. The decades-long, back-door convenience has been an asset for businesses and its loss brings feelings of uncertainty and doubt about the future. The City nor the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) have the finances to build a new parking deck so we must plan how businesses can adapt to this new reality.

The second quote is more aligned with the future. Cities are dynamic places that either grow or wither. Removing the parking deck provides the opportunity to reconsider the use of City-owned land, to build new and/or stronger partnerships with businesses, and to think about new possibilities. To that end, an evaluation was done of existing and potential future conditions for those buildings and businesses adjacent to the parking deck. Interviews were conducted over two days with City staff and business owners. Once recommendations were developed, this cycle was repeated. It is hoped that the suggestions contained herein provide a strong foundation for the future of downtown Houghton.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	03
Introduction + Process Overview	04
Design Principles + Guidelines	07
Site Overview	08
Business Owner Location Details	09
Location Studies + Findings	10
Additional Insights	24
Conclusions	27



Process + Guidelines

Understanding that the removal of the existing public parking deck project is a catalytic change for the City of Houghton, we worked diligently to understand the transformation of this under-utilized waterfront into an active community feature. To start, we engaged one-on-one with business and land owners to listen and facilitate discussion on how to leverage their existing assets as a part of the Pier Placemaking Project. Change is challenging - especially with those who have a lot invested in their local businesses - and we worked with individuals to explore their plans for improved layouts and building envelopes to embrace a new physical connection to East Lakeshore Drive and ultimately to the waterfront.

In early 2023, we began discussions around what this framework would look like. We initiated a trip to the Upper Peninsula with a dense two-day schedule on April 10 and 11, 2023, beginning with a kick-off at the City Center location on Sheldon. After this initial overview, we commenced four individual interviews with the business and land owners directly adjacent to the soon-to-be removed parking deck. On the morning of April 11, we conducted four more interviews, and presented our preliminary conclusions to City Staff. Some of these conclusions took the form of themes desired for growth, and others were common issues within the process. These are listed on the adjacent page.



Project Overview

A Kick-off Meeting

Beginning with the City Staff, we shared intent, research conducted on existing conditions and process for the project. We then prepared to engage the local community to create a shared vision.

B Interviews

Meeting with each Owner and/or Representative on-site in their business location, we workshopped potential scenarios, impacts, and resulting outcomes of the parking deck removal.

C Refinement

Presenting a drafted document of what we heard from the community, with input from the City and each Business Owner/Representative incorporated into our recommendations and proposed considerations.

D Recommendations

A final document is available for the public's use and reference as the deck removal and future development planning will happen over the next year.



- 1 Integrity + Authenticity**
Maintain the existing history and character of the downtown is crucial. We are stewards of the built environment and have a responsibility to preserve what makes us unique.

- 1 Uncertainty of Change**
While all change is uncomfortable, the future needs to have some framework by which we can continue to make informed decisions.
- 2 Transparency**
All concerns should be voiced and sufficiently addressed. With the analysis that has been done, our due diligence should be foundational to our public space decisions and agendas not hidden.
- 3 Partnerships**
Improvements resulting from the deck removal require investment from either grants or private funding. This could be assisted and/or facilitated by Staff in order to successfully support optimal business operations.

- 2 Hospitality**
Our focus should be on the customers' experience, which then strengthens our community. Not only does this mean prioritizing ease of access for pedestrians of all abilities, but also staff and tenant accommodations.

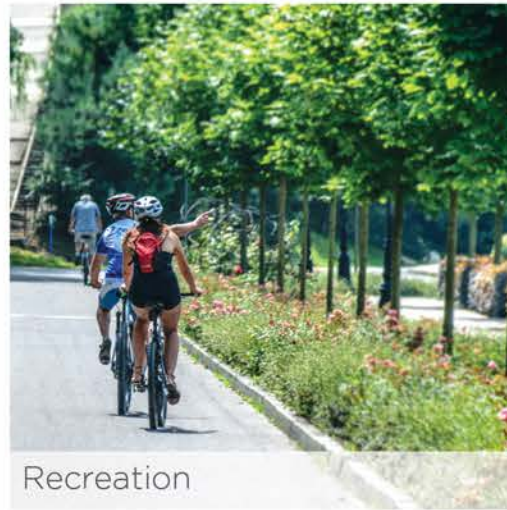
KEY PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

- 4 Streetscape**
The street profile of Sheldon currently does not successfully provide comfort to pedestrians, affecting it's ability to adequately facilitate the movement of individuals to the storefronts and businesses.
- 5 Investment**
Allocation of funds - magnitude of decisions and ramifications. We must determine level of investment/type of improvement which will make best financial sense.
- 6 Logistics**
Rework loading, business adjustments and access accommodations. Vehicles are a method of getting to our downtowns and need to be planned for.

KEY GROWTH THEMES

- 3 Pride + History**
Many of the owners have been doing business in Houghton for generations, and their role in shaping who Houghton is today and who we will be in the future should be celebrated and is a point of immense pride.

City Vision + Placemaking



As a part of an activity, City Staff were encouraged to select five identifiers for Houghton and its path towards the future. Selecting these images collaboratively, the priority was heavily placed on people and their experiences while in Houghton.

The priority for attracting individuals should be within the downtown center, maximizing engagement, activity, and the character of the historic buildings and streetscape. Because of the proximity to the very popular waterfront trail, the access to and from this urban center necessitates a walkable, safe community.

In order to maintain Houghton's small-town feel, an emphasis should be given to beautification of our streets, the use of art to activate previously under-utilized spaces, and the creation of physical buildings and places that enable a thriving community.



DESIGN GUIDELINES

1

Leverage

Leveraging city assets involves utilizing the existing infrastructure, amenities, and natural resources within the area to drive economic growth.

By maximizing the potential of these assets, cities can attract investment, create job opportunities, and improve the overall quality of life for residents. Collaboration among businesses, both large and small, fosters innovation, creates synergies, and encourages a supportive business ecosystem. By encouraging partnerships, knowledge sharing, and networking, cities can stimulate entrepreneurship and drive economic growth.

The waterfront is a valuable asset for the city, as it provides opportunities for tourism, recreation, and economic development. Waterfront areas often attract visitors, generate revenue through tourism-related activities, and serve as a focal point for cultural events and entertainment.

The presence of a university, such as Michigan Tech, adjacent to the city offers tremendous advantages. Universities bring intellectual capital, research capabilities, and a highly skilled workforce.

2

The Walking Problem

The city faces a walking problem, displaying a need for improvements in safety, particularly regarding pedestrian crossings and overall comfort for pedestrians.

Measures such as reducing travel speeds and altering street configurations can contribute to addressing these issues effectively. Public transit also requires enhancements to better serve the community.

The walking problem is twofold; there is a mobility issue due to grade and climate and there is minimal desire for walking long distances in general. The perception of pedestrian walks being shorter can be achieved by creating visually interesting environments. This can be accomplished through various means, such as incorporating transparent storefronts that allow walkers to see inside shops and businesses.

Additionally, the presence of a tree canopy and thoughtful landscaping can enhance the overall aesthetic appeal and create a more pleasant walking experience. Providing a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles, as well as activating facades with engaging storefronts and attractions can further contribute to making the "through" experience more engaging.

3

Access

When designing urban spaces, it is essential to prioritize access and mobility for people of all ages and abilities. Creating a streetscape that is both beautiful and functional is crucial in achieving this goal.

To accommodate various needs, the design should include provisions for on-street parking and deliveries that are not disruptive for visitors, residents, and staff.

Shared streets, where pedestrians and vehicles coexist harmoniously, can create a more inclusive and vibrant urban environment. By designing streets that prioritize the safety and comfort of pedestrians while still accommodating vehicular traffic, a balance can be reached to ensure the needs of all users are met.

To achieve this, it may be necessary to reconfigure the traffic network and reallocate space to balance the priorities of different modes of transportation. Prioritizing access and mobility for all individuals, creating a beautiful and functional streetscape, and reconfiguring the traffic network to balance priorities are essential considerations for designing inclusive and efficient urban spaces.



Deck Overview

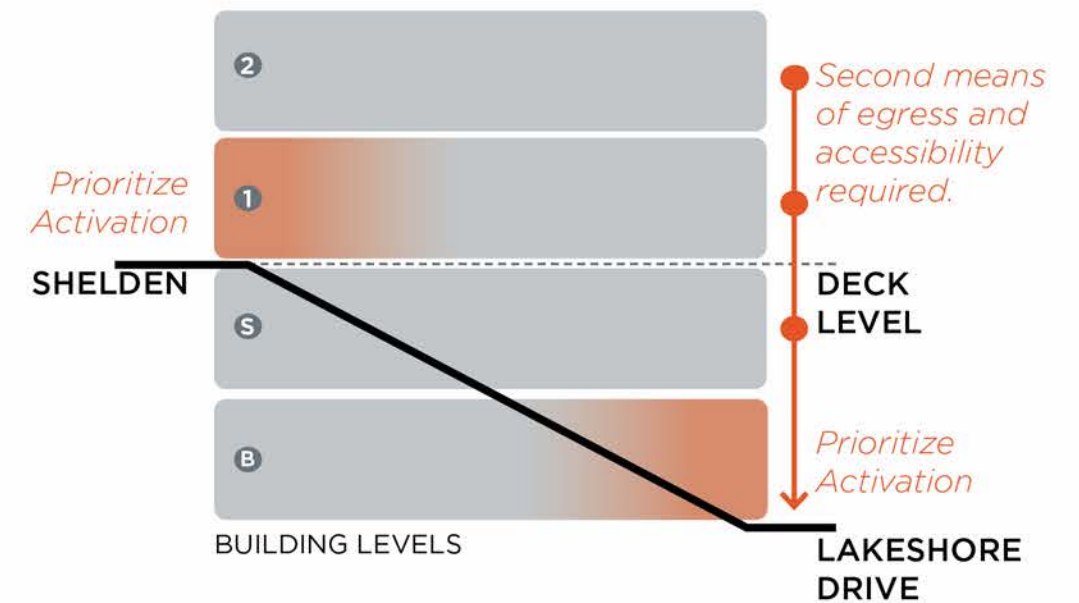
The parking deck was constructed in 1978 and has a current capacity of approximately 220 parking spaces. In 2011 the deck was evaluated for its structural capability and surface slab deterioration. Temporary repairs were done in order to extend the service life another 10 years. In 2020 another inspection was performed which identified further structural issues. The matter was evaluated by the Planning Commission and Council and in 2022, the decision was made that removal was necessary for public safety and the long-term vision of connecting the downtown of Houghton back to it's waterfront.

- Parking Deck
- # Business Owner/
Representative locations

Cars enter the deck off Shelden Avenue, by the Pewabic Street ramp and via a grade slab and incline ramp from Lakeshore Drive. It provides parking for businesses and student lofts along Shelden for a distance of nearly three city blocks. It is common to see trucks, loading, and service vehicles below the decks, providing support to the businesses facing Shelden Avenue.

The site itself has a large area, ideal for redevelopment or designation as public space. It's biggest challenge is the grade change from Houghton's main street, Shelden, down to the waterfront. Between Shelden and Lakeshore there is approximately a story of grade change, making accessibility and pedestrian movement a challenge with the deck's removal.

Current Zoning Classification: **B-2 Community Business**
 Area: +/- 85,800 sf
 West Deck Dimension: 115'x300' +/-
 East Deck Dimension: 142'x310' +/-



SECTION DIAGRAM

NTS

Business Owner Profiles



Constructed after the deck, and originally a McDonald's, 210 Shelden has a former drive-thru on the west side connecting the sidewalk to the deck. It is currently a restaurant use.



220 Shelden holds retail/service uses with apartments above. There are entrances off of Shelden, the deck, and from Lakeshore Drive.



302 Shelden is a shop and restaurant with apartments above and below. This building is owned by Joey's owner/proprietors, Alan and Cheryl Kiley.



Located in the same building as 310 Shelden, 308 Shelden is occupied by Down Wind. Down Wind has a separate Shelden-level and off-the-deck entrance from Rukkila (310 Shelden). The owner of Down Wind plans to retire the off-the-deck entrances and install windows. Apartments are accessed from the sidewalk on Lakeshore Drive.



Located in the same building as 308 Shelden, 310 Shelden is occupied by Rukkila, owned by Brian Kangas. The Shelden-level is split into service and retail space (CPA Firm and Outdoor Outfitter).



Retail/Service with apartments. This building is owned by The Market Place LTD. The building owner is Gail Sanchez and her rental office located in one of the storefronts.



This building contains an insurance office, realtor, and a retail business in the Shelden level. The upper floors have some office spaces leased out. The lower Lakeshore Drive level is unoccupied.



This building is a hardware/housewares retailer. The lower floor of the building, accessed from Lakeshore Drive, houses Center Ice Skate and Sport, a retailer specializing in hockey equipment and printing/embroidery.

1 Accessibility as Design Elements

Designing urban environments with accessible features, not only individuals with disabilities, but also parents with strollers, older adults, and people with temporary injuries creates a welcoming environment for all customers. This enhances inclusivity and equal enjoyment of dining experiences in urban settings.



2 Alley-Activated Restaurant/ Dining Experience

Activating these spaces encourages foot traffic, stimulates economic growth, and fosters a sense of community and connection in the urban fabric. By repurposing alleys and service areas, cities can unlock their hidden potential and create memorable and enjoyable dining and lounge experiences for residents and visitors alike.



3 Scenic Vista

Offering scenic vistas creates a sense of relaxation and escape, allowing patrons to unwind and savor their meal in a unique setting. Dining with a view has a strong appeal for special occasions, date nights, and tourists seeking a memorable dining experience. It combines cuisine with a visually stunning environment, making it a winning combination that leaves a lasting impression on guests.



4 Egress Stair Down to Loading Dock

Vertical egress is essential for safe access off a deck. Having a properly designed and accessible vertical egress ensures that individuals can evacuate. Another opportunity here exists for activation, once electrical is assessed. The potential for a second kitchen at the Lakeshore Drive level could provide support for a coffee shop or small retail/restaurant.

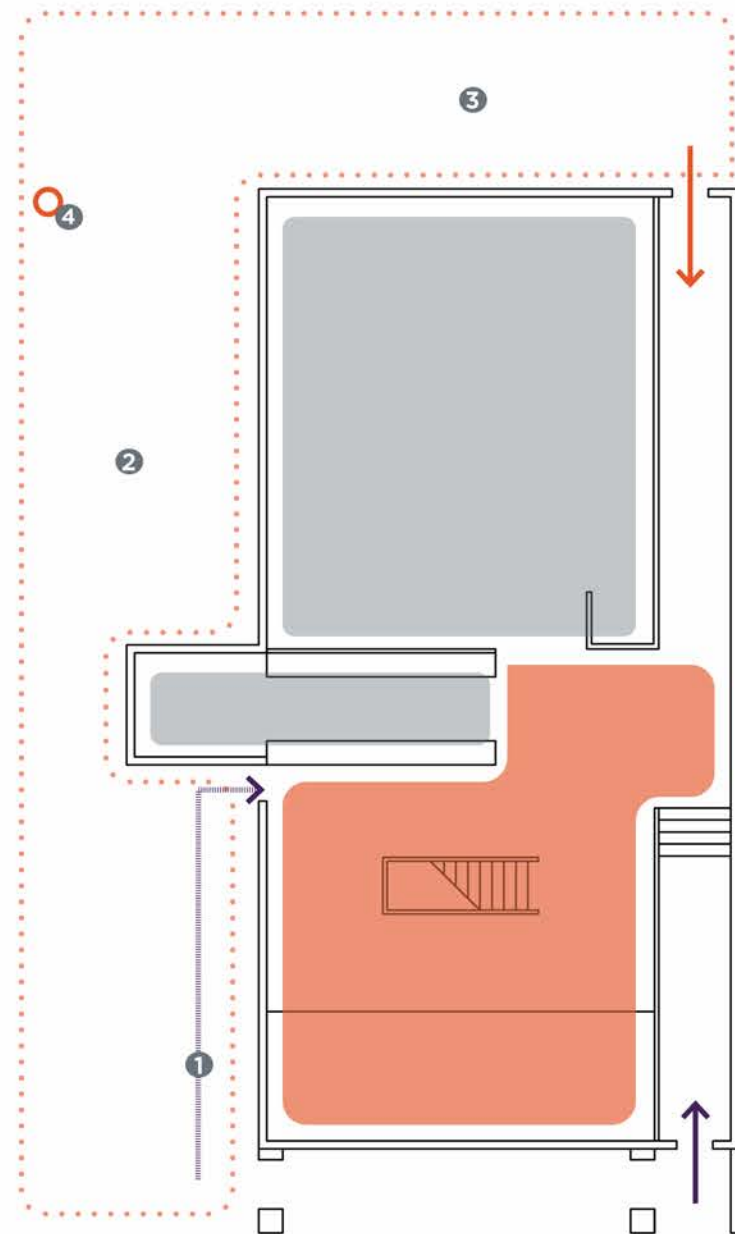


Portion of ramp to remain, extended for additional dining.

Portion of deck to be removed

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Activation Area
- Potential Egress Location
- Impaired Access
- Access to upper floors
- Street Access
- Support Spaces
- Office Use
- Residential
- Activated Use
- Retail + Dining



FIRST FLOOR



The Den

CONCERNS:

- Loading dock access concerns, as multiple deliveries are received per week
- Parking for staff
- Streetscape feels unsafe for walking pedestrians and on-street parking, especially for individuals with disabilities

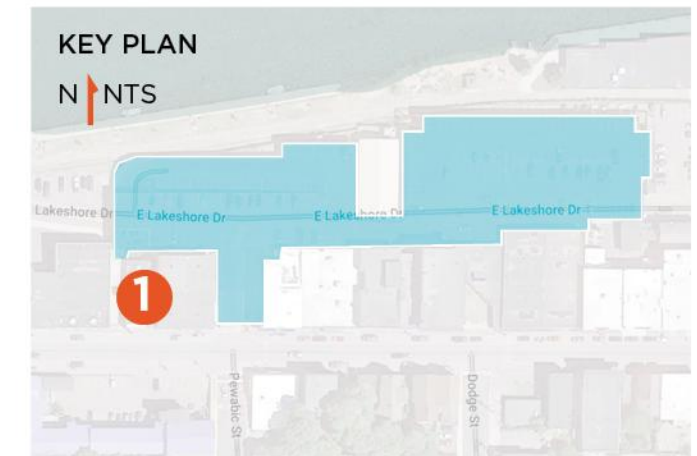
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Continued support at Lakeshore Drive to accommodate deliveries and loading
- 2 Outdoor dining (in progress) and deck for dining experiences with a view
- 3 Additional egress from upper deck and existing north door
- 4 Assess future improvements to lower level for future retail or small scale dining opportunities and activation of Lakeshore Drive



Former drive-through to be re-imagined as outdoor seating.

This building was constructed after the deck was built, originally as a McDonald's. The building is owned by Canal Crossings LLC and Cibo, Inc. There is a former drive thru on the west side which connects the deck to the sidewalk at Sheldon Avenue. This area also has a door to the main floor dining area. This presented an opportunity to reorganize the space into outdoor seating elevated above Lakeshore Drive. The main Sheldon entrance requires customers to climb several stairs. There is a loading dock and an entrance that comes in the "back door" at the lower level. The entrance from the deck on the north side of the building could be replaced with stairs and would connect to the outdoor space on the former drive-thru. The City assisted The Den in obtaining a Match on Main Grant to level the north portion of the drive thru to be utilized for outdoor seating. This will be constructed summer of 2023.



Current Zoning Classification: **B-2**
 Area: +/- .138 acres | Frontage: +/- 60 feet

1 Egress

The importance of egress from a second-floor business level is paramount for ensuring the safety and efficient evacuation of occupants in emergency situations. Creating an access stair from an existing door opening provides a safe and efficient means for occupants to reach ground level, ensuring their well-being.



2 Elevated/Shared Boardwalk

An elevated boardwalk not only serves as a shared access point for businesses but also enhances the City's amenities by providing a unique and picturesque setting for pedestrians. Furthermore, the elevated boardwalk solves egress issues by providing a safe and efficient pathway while offering visitors an opportunity to enjoy an overlook with views of the street.



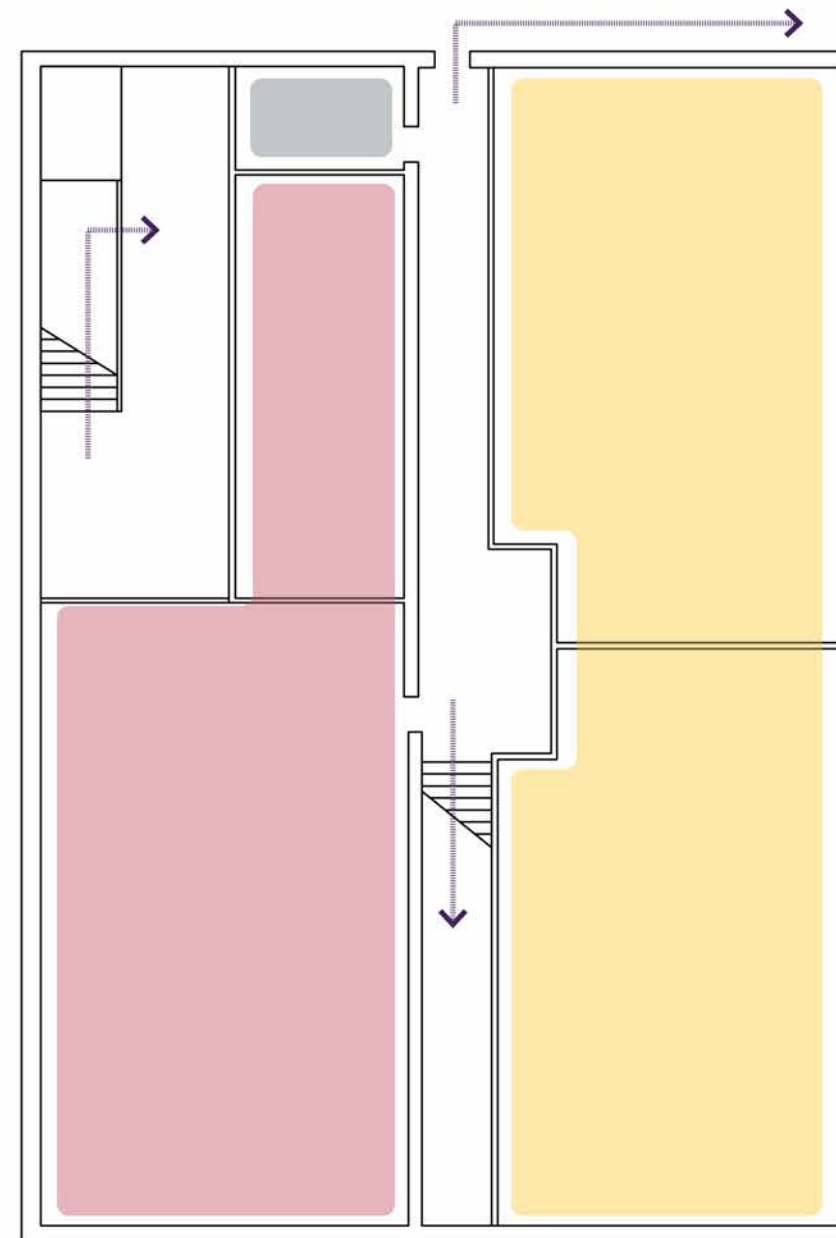
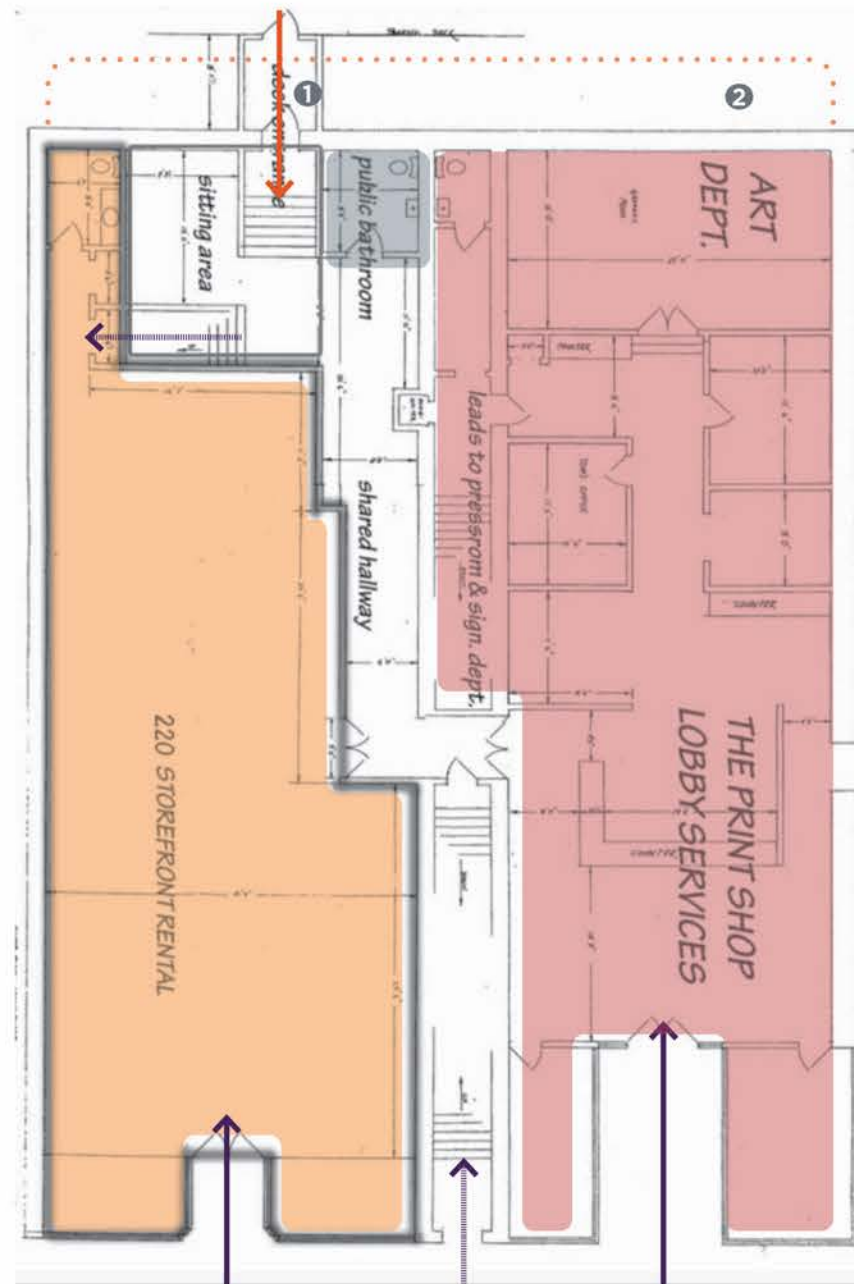
RECOMMENDATIONS

3 Assess Historic Side-Entry

Confirm and assess wall opening for new door to replace the removed one.



- Activation Area
- Potential Egress Location
- Impaired Access
- Access to/from upper floors
- Street Access
- Support Spaces
- Office Use
- Residential
- Activated Use
- Retail + Dining



MAIN FLOOR

UPPER FLOOR



The Print Shop

CONCERNS:

- Egress concerns for the main floor retail rental and financial impact of addressing parking deck access removal
- Utilize shared access strategy with City to benefit all businesses
- Parking availability and proximity
- Street speed and safety, beautification and pedestrian comfort, need for traffic lights, access at cross streets
- Desire awnings and storefront improvements along downtown core

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Continued support at lower entrance at Lakeshore Drive to accommodate deliveries and unloading
- 2 Additional egress for main floor tenant



Access doors to lower level, will be preserved with new infill park.

Retail/Service with apartments/office space upstairs: this building has entrances at Shelden Avenue, off the deck, and from Lakeshore Drive. The Off-the-deck entrance was built after the parking deck was constructed. The building is owned by the Print Shop owners/proprietors, Tom and BJ Litsenberger. There is secondary access from the entrance off the deck. The Print Shop is a printing company with their main customer-facing space at Shelden level.

There is an entrance off the deck which requires customers to take stairs down to the sales floor. They have production facilities on the Lakeshore Drive level. The upper apartments are entered from Shelden. There is a fire escape between the upper floor of the building and the deck on the north side. A yoga studio is operated in one of the apartments.



Current Zoning Classification: **B-2**
Area: +/- 0.172 acres | Frontage: +/- 75 feet

RECOMMENDATIONS

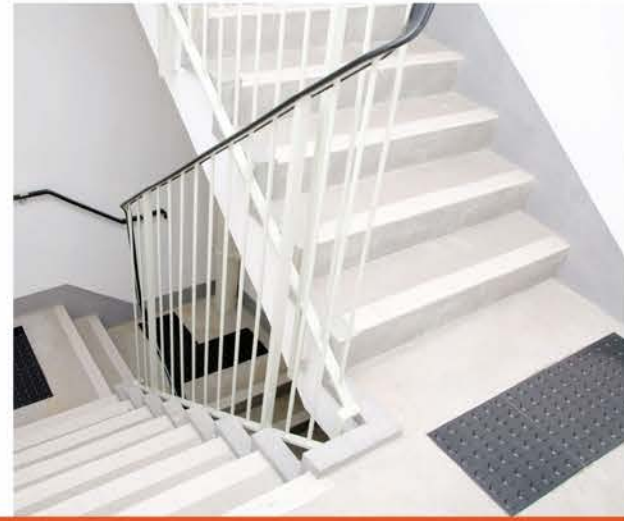
1 Rooftop Dining

A small, intimate dining experience will always be highly sought after. If this experience is connected to nature and features a view of your environment, it acts as a catalyst for the business and a draw for special events and memory-making.



2 Egress Stair

An existing stair will be reopened and reconstructed to reflect current building code. The space previously designated for access to the parking deck will be repurposed as a part of this stair. Branding this as a "back entry" for the restaurant increases visibility and access from Lakeshore Drive.



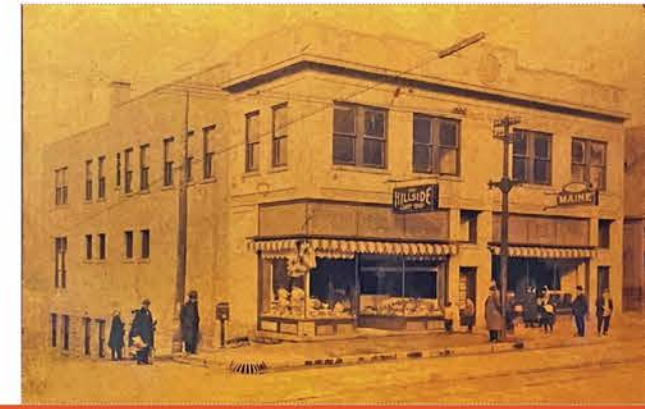
3 Activated Retail

Activated storefronts play a crucial role in enhancing the vibrancy and attractiveness of urban places. By creating engaging and dynamic spaces, storefronts draw in pedestrians, create a sense of community, and contribute to the vitality and economic success of the urban environment.

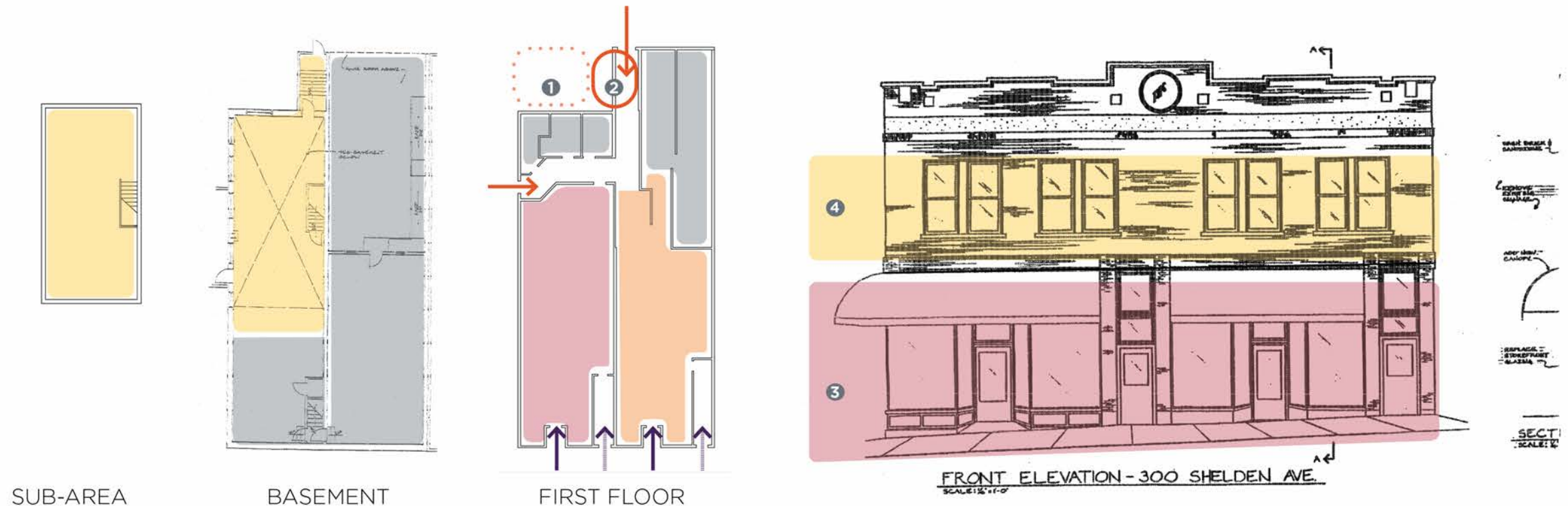


4 Residential Above

A successful mix of uses in an urban environment involves incorporating residential apartments above ground floor active uses, such as retail or dining establishments. This synergy creates a dynamic urban setting, where residents have convenient access to amenities and services, while the ground floor active uses benefit from a built-in customer base and lively atmosphere.



- Activation Area
- Potential Egress Location
- Impaired Access
- Access to upper floors
- Street Access
- Support Spaces
- Office Use
- Residential
- Activated Use
- Retail + Dining



Joey's Seafood

CONCERNS:

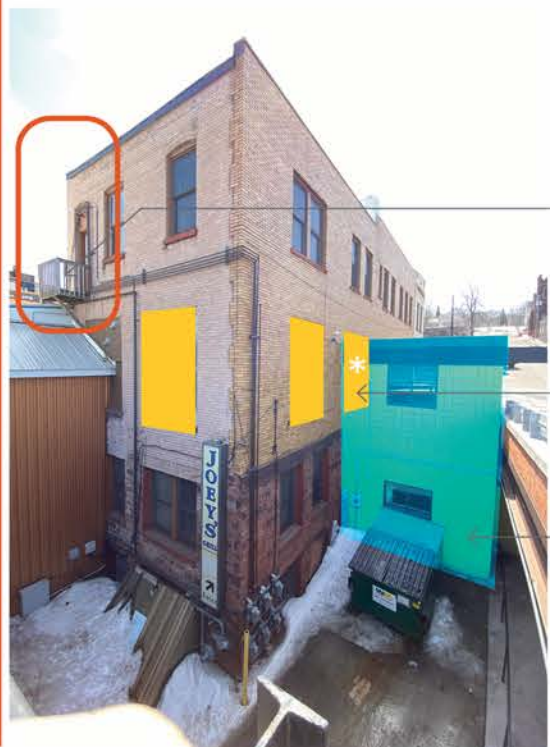
- Investment required to address egress
- Parking for clients and staff is inconvenient and may threaten business
- Streetscape unsafe for pedestrians on-street parking, and weather prevents comfort with hilly landscape of the downtown.
- Snow, trash and loading from Lakeshore Drive area

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Utilize existing concealed stair for secondary means of egress from restaurant level
 - 2 Attach exterior stair for egress from upper apartment levels
 - 3 Create exterior dining experience with new deck and reconfigure interior as needed for access
- * Secondary option for egress at location to the west, where stair enclosure being removed



Historic photo of building with existing windows open.



Current egress from upper level to adjacent roof.

Windows to be re-opened in correlation to new exterior dining deck.

Access stair and enclosure to be removed as a part of the parking deck demolition
Access through accessory structure to the left, proposed new openings mid-level for opening interior.

Joey's Seafood & Grill, along with Michigan Made, make up the first floor retail spaces in the 1916 building at 304 Shelden. Containing residential units above, this location will grow in popularity because of its mix of uses, but also due to the adjacent linear park scheduled for completion over the next two years. Maintaining the priority of access and activated storefronts towards Shelden provides an opportunity for outdoor dining at the north side, where the parking deck is being removed.

The building is owned by Joey's owner/proprietors, Alan and Cheryl Kiley. This building has separate entrances off Shelden, a central entrance off the deck (stairs down), and a side entrance to a stair tower along Pewabic Street, which is part of the deck. Upper apartments are entered off of Shelden. Off-the-deck entrance was built after deck was constructed.

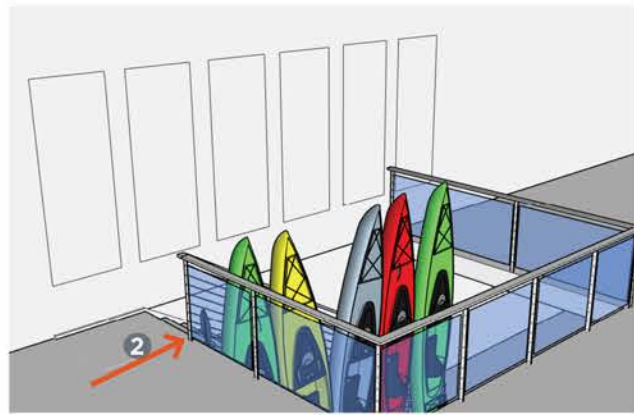


Current Zoning Classification: **B-2**
Area: +/- 0.115 acres | Frontage: +/- 50 feet

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Multi-Level Retail

Multi-level retail spaces offer a seamless experience for customers, allowing them to explore different levels and enjoy an expanded square footage of shopping options. Additionally, these spaces can cater to the needs of outdoor sports enthusiasts by providing dedicated areas for retailing outdoor sports equipment, creating a specialized shopping experience.



2 Bicycle Wheeling Ramp

The implementation of loading tools like bicycle wheeling ramps in multi-level retail spaces for outdoor sports equipment offers the benefit of easy and efficient movement of bulky items between levels, enhancing the convenience and accessibility for customers.



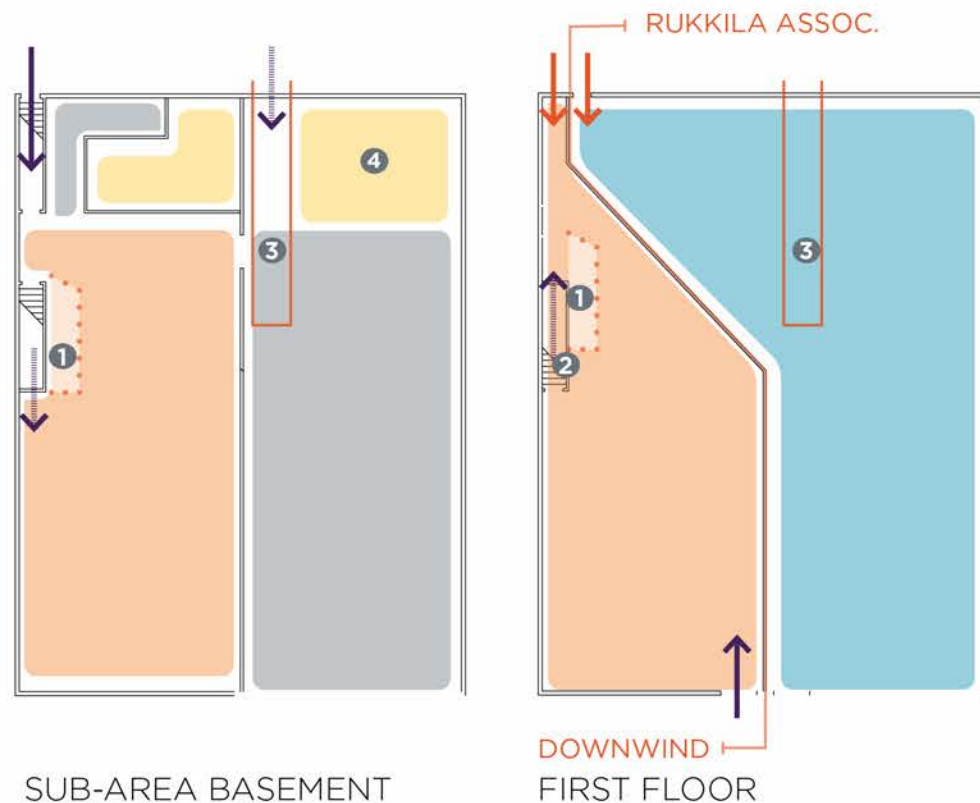
3 Internal Stair Extension

An internal egress stair in a multi-level building serves as a crucial means of access, providing a safe path for occupants to reach ground level. It ensures convenient, efficient access for both occupants and visitors to the main floor, facilitating daily activities and allowing for a quick and orderly evacuation in an emergency. This stair needs to be considered and designed from a customer experience to avoid the "service door" aesthetic. The retail activity should feel seamless as someone moves between mid-level and upper levels. (Confirm width of existing stair and enlarge as necessary.)



Location for new emergency egress stair extension to first floor.

- Activation Area
- Potential Egress Location
- Impaired Access
- Access to/from upper floors
- Street Access
- Support Spaces
- Office Use
- Residential
- Activated Use
- Retail + Dining



4 Optimizing Space

Micro-units play a significant role in addressing the housing crisis while providing residential opportunities in urban areas. These small, affordable living spaces cater to the needs of individuals or students seeking housing options that are more affordable and conveniently located, helping to alleviate the pressure on housing availability and reducing the reliance on university-owned student rentals. There is an opportunity to add additional units above the existing building.



**Please note, lower floor at Lakeshore contains three at-grade apartments. One unit occupies the mid-level "Sub-Area Basement" along with another future unit to be added.*



CONCERNS:

- Egress for first-floor tenants
- Access and loading capability for large outdoor sports equipment.
- Loss of bike “testing” area, inconvenience of lugging bikes up and down stair
- Opportunity for common elevator/back access
- Shared street to attract bikers to lower level

RECOMMENDATIONS:

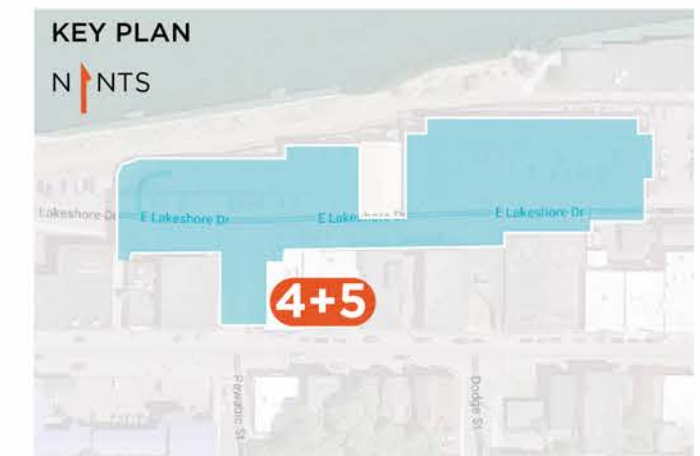
- 1 Explore “double-frontage” for Down Wind retail business, capturing potential customers from Lakeshore Drive
- 2 Pursue improvements for ease of access between levels (bike ramp, etc)
- 3 Fit-out mid-level for retail area to increase square footage for shopping
- 4 Consider additional small/micro residential units in renovated mid-level



Door access for loading of large outdoor sports equipment and bicycles to upper level retail

Down Wind + Rukkila Associates

This building is owned by Brian Kangas (Rentcom, LLC). The Sheldon level is split into service and retail space (CPA Firm and Outdoor Outfitter). Apartments below are leased. Each business has a separate Sheldon level and off-the-deck entrance. Off-the-deck entrances were built after deck was constructed and the owner plans to retire the entrances and install windows. Apartments are accessed from sidewalk on Lakeshore Drive.



Current Zoning Classification: **B-2**
 Area: +/- 0.172 acres | Frontage: +/- 75 feet

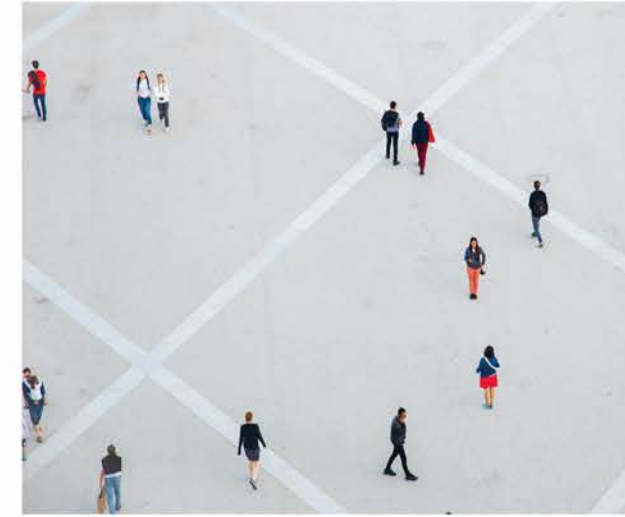
1 Egress

The importance of egress from a second-floor business level is paramount for ensuring the safety and efficient evacuation of occupants in emergency situations. Creating an access stair from an existing door opening provides a safe and efficient means for occupants to reach ground level, ensuring their well-being.



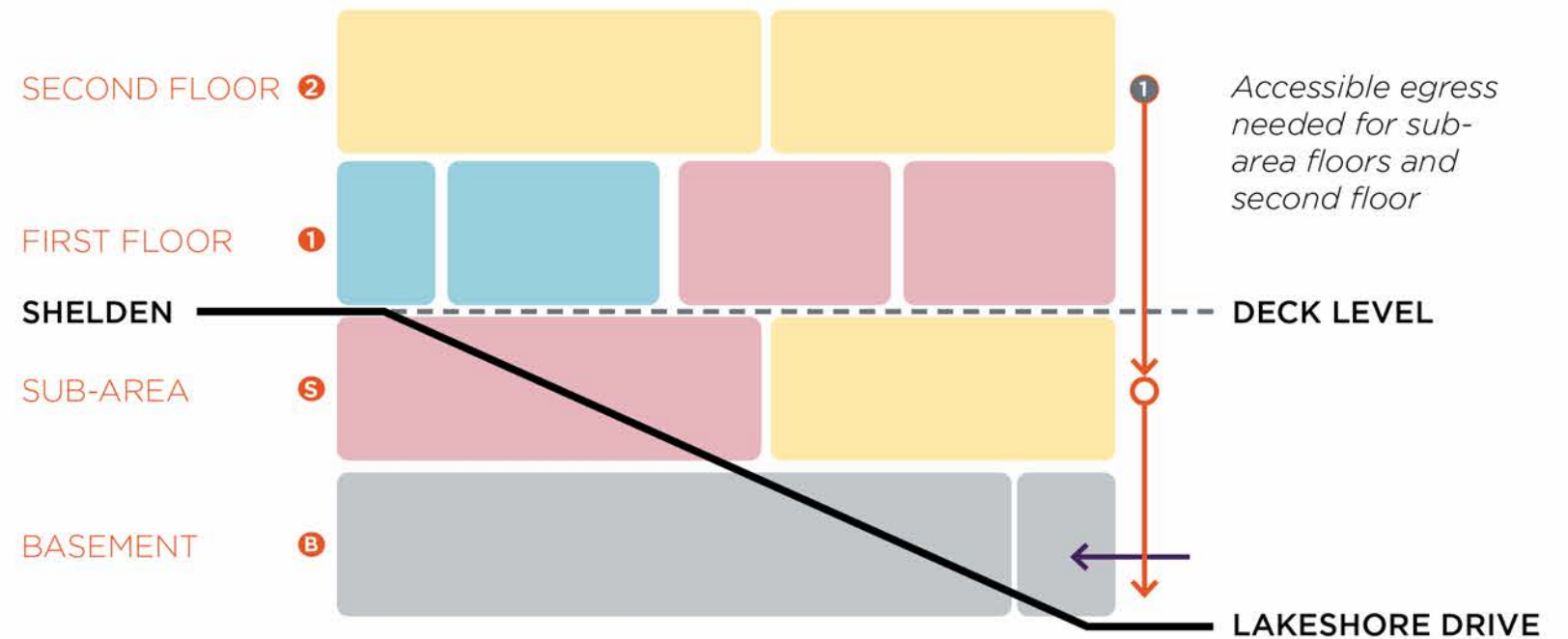
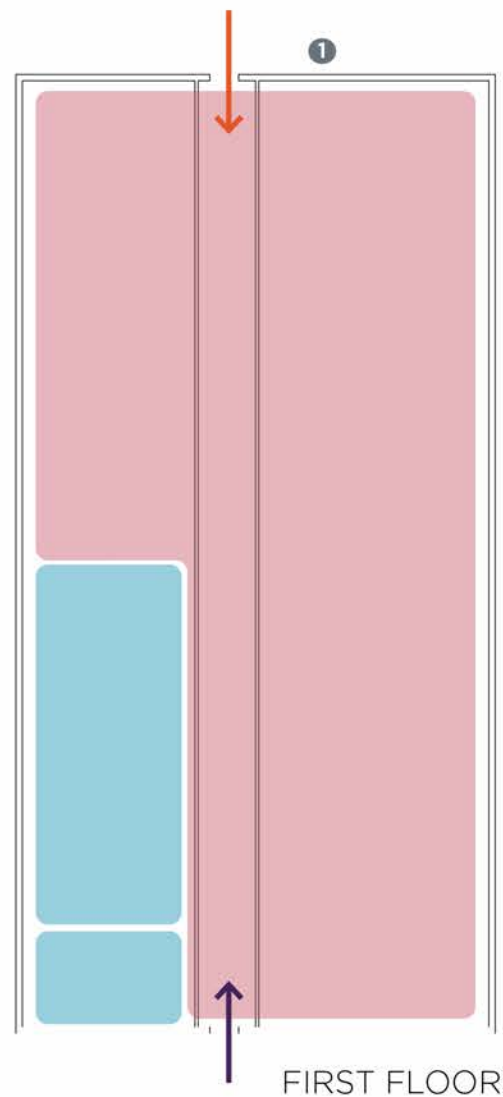
2 Variety of Uses

Mixed-use developments that incorporate office, retail, and residential spaces contribute to the urban vibrancy of a neighborhood or district. The integration of these different uses creates a dynamic environment where people can live, work, and shop in close proximity, fostering a sense of community and enhancing the overall liveliness and attractiveness of the urban area.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Activation Area
- Potential Egress Location
- Impaired Access
- Access to/from upper floors
- Street Access
- Support Spaces
- Office Use
- Residential
- Activated Use
- Retail + Dining





The Marketplace

CONCERNS:

- Parking enforcement
- Streetscape improvements
- Safer sidewalks, promote cycling circulation network, marked and identify cycling parking locations
- Lack of directional signage; two-way traffic on Sheldon would be an improvement
- Houghton's lack of short term rentals impacts potential revenue from tourism

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Investigate options for accessibility and egress options for upper floors to street level at Lakeshore Drive
- 2 At Lakeshore Drive facade, consider alternate/retail/restaurant use for street activation



Door access for loading lower level storage and businesses

This building is owned by The Market Place LTD. The building owner is Gail Sanchez and she has her rental housing office located in one of the storefronts. The Sheldon level has one main access which serves multiple retail/service tenants within the building. There also is an off-the-deck entrance which was constructed after the deck. The second floor is office space and apartments. The Lakeshore Drive level has an entrance door to a retail warehouse space for an office furnishings supplier.



Current Zoning Classification: **B-2**
 Area: +/- 0.115 acres | Frontage: +/- 50 feet

1 Activate at Entrances

The importance of outdoor space can not be overstated when it comes to dining and urban environments. With the redevelopment of Lakeshore Drive, there will be ample activity, visibility and sheltered space for outdoor seating, bar or patio, and extension of activity into the streetscape.



3 Elevated Deck

Deck bars and patios are among the most sought-after amenities in downtown spaces. Not only do these places offer new vantage points and sights, but they often extend the hours of use into evening hours. Utilization of the previous vestibule could offer plenty of area for this urban asset.

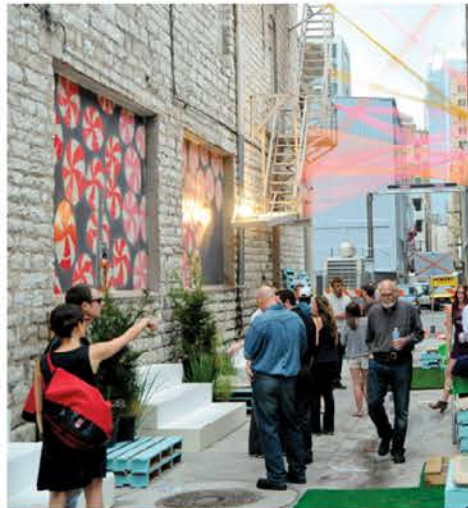


4 Egress Stair

Due to the parking deck removal, secondary egress can be challenging. With the addition of an exterior access stair used in emergencies, we accomplish vertical exit with minimal interruption to the existing building envelope. (Window size must be verified and modified to allow for adequate sizing and operation.)

2 Off-street + Alleys

When crafting space not directly on the main thoroughfare, there are challenges with visibility, access and pedestrian comfort. By creating art-filled, visually engaging spaces, these often forgotten zones become pockets of connectivity and destinations for new discoveries.



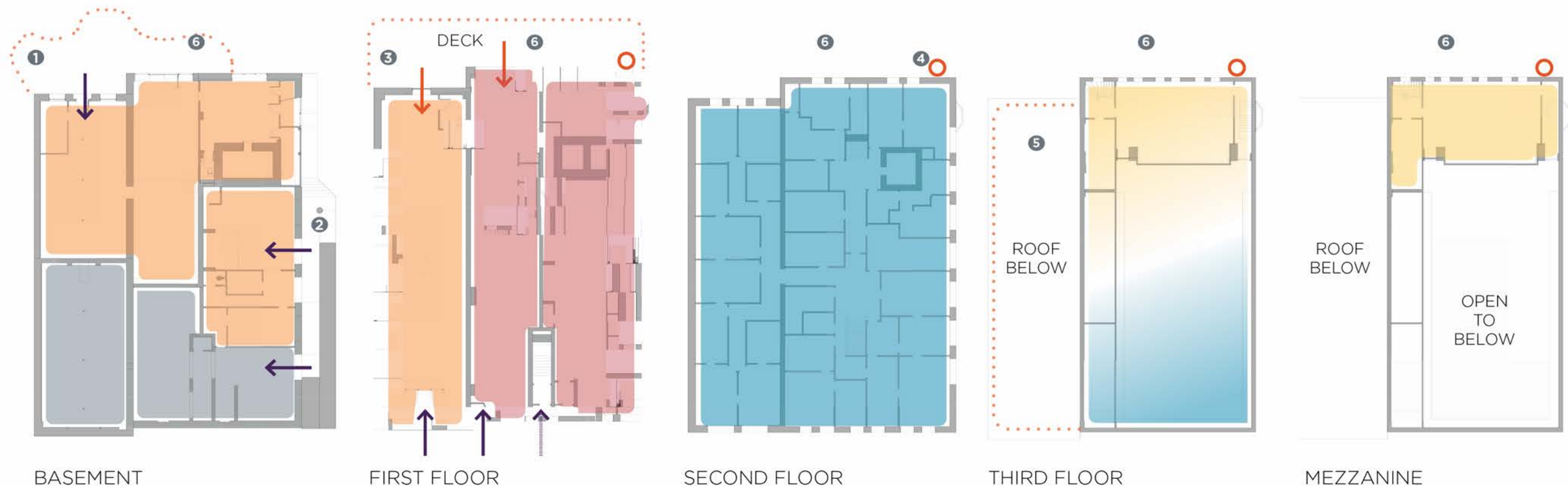
5 Roof Deck/Patio

Flexible by nature, elevated spaces further connect interiors to nature and the outside world. From dining, to lounges, night clubs, and extensions of corporate workplaces, outdoor rooftops are high on the desired amenity list for a diverse group of clientele.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Activation Area
- Potential Egress Location
- Impaired Access
- Access to upper floors
- Street Access
- Support Spaces
- Office Use
- Residential
- Activated Use
- Retail + Dining





The Hall Building

CONCERNS:

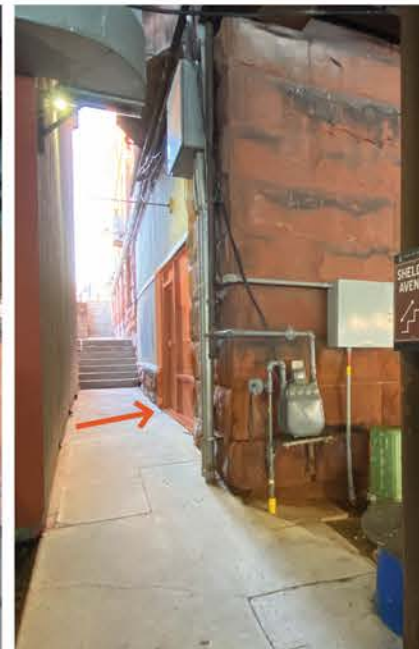
- Investments previously spent (facade grants); ensure that these investments are effectively utilized to enhance the building's appearance and attract potential tenants
- Adjacent development + Visibility
- Access to upper floors and egress for tenants
- Parking for tenants
- Convenient access to upper floors and ensuring proper egress for tenants

RECOMMENDATIONS:

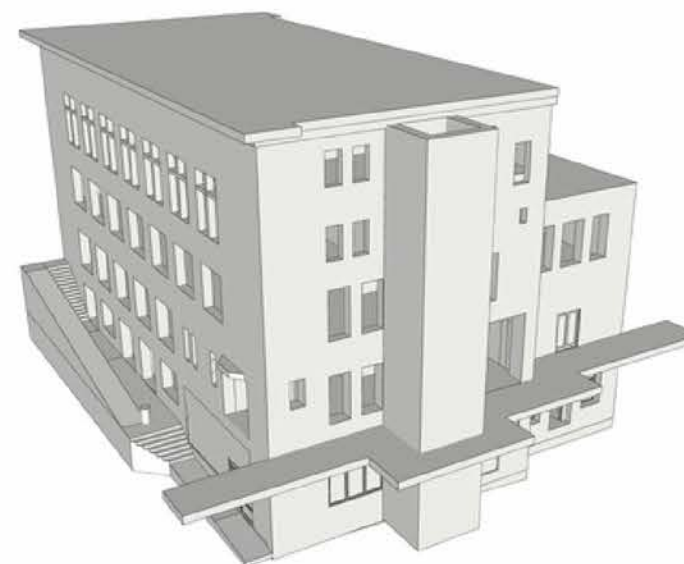
- 1 Pursue encroachment permits required for accessibility to lower and upper floors
- 2 Investigate potential for elevator located on north wall for access and egress
- 3 Explore and design dining/storefront improvements at Lakeshore Drive level for future businesses



Door access for loading lower level storage and businesses



Access for future lower level businesses



6 Elevator Concept
Owner-provided

The Hall Building is one of the most unique assets to downtown Houghton. Having one of the highest potential for mixed-use activation, it's combined floors and existing spatial layout provide opportunity for optimization for the increased connection to the waterfront and urban engagement for it's users. Not currently utilized is the third and mezzanine levels, which would make incredible spaces for downtown living. It's current tenants on the first floor are less active uses which could be considered for relocation to an upper level to make way for activated storefronts (either retail or restaurant). Uniquely positioned to activate its adjacent roof-top space in the summer months, this provides an opportunity for a roof-garden, outdoor work space, patio for event space, and more.



Current Zoning Classification: **B-2**
Area: +/- 0.172 acres | Frontage: +/- 75 feet

**Verification of lot lines and any necessary encroachment permits should be verified prior to installation of decks, stairs, egress assets, etc*

1 Egress

The importance of egress from a second-floor business level is paramount for ensuring the safety and efficient evacuation of occupants in emergency situations. Creating an access stair from an existing door opening provides a safe and efficient means for occupants to reach ground level, ensuring their well-being.



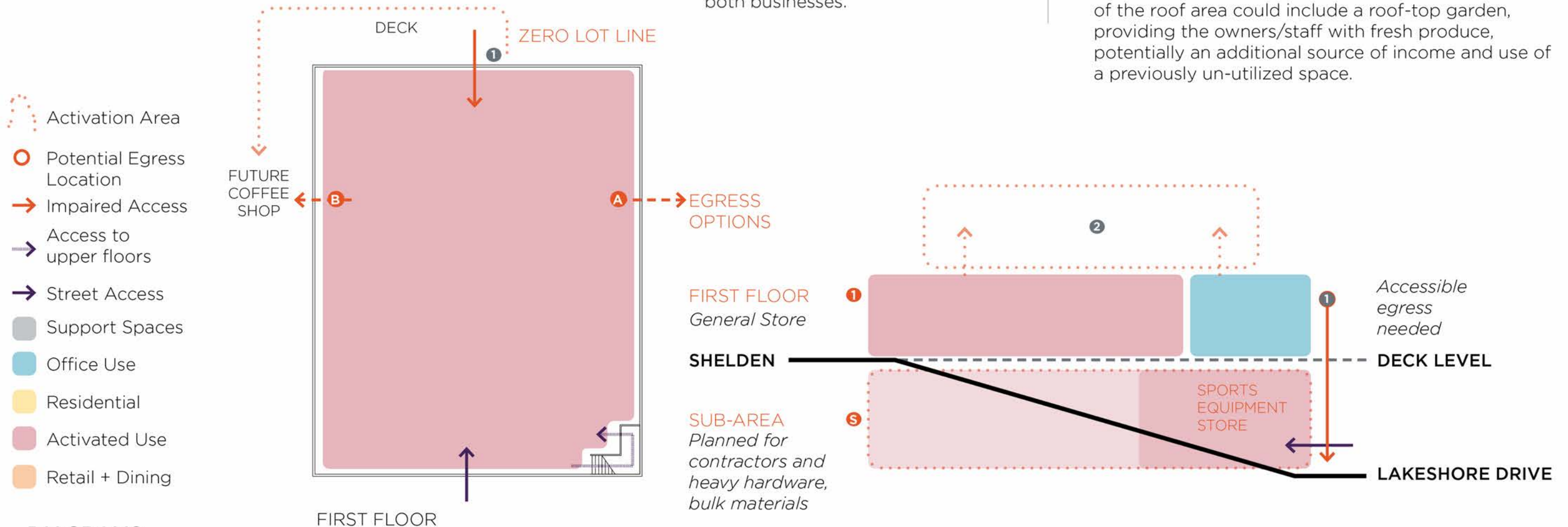
RECOMMENDATIONS

Keewenaw Brewing Company, directly adjacent, began renovating their existing deck and staircase in August, 2023 to accommodate for the parking structure removal.

On the west side of the building, a new development is taking place with a coffee shop on the ground floor at Sheldon. A passage between and/or deck to the north, connecting coffee-goers to the back of the hardware store offers unique seating areas, views and could enhance and activate both businesses.

2 Upper-Floor Rentals

Adding upper story residential units in a city has several potential positive impacts. Firstly, it can serve as a revenue generator for building owners, increasing the income potential of their properties. Secondly, it promotes the engagement and vibrancy of the downtown area by bringing more residents into the heart of the city, supporting local businesses and creating a sense of community. Another occupation of the roof area could include a roof-top garden, providing the owners/staff with fresh produce, potentially an additional source of income and use of a previously un-utilized space.





Swift Hardware

Swift Hardware is owned by IE Swift and Company. This building is a successful hardware/ housewares retailer in downtown Houghton. The lower floor of the building, accessed from Lakeshore Drive, houses Center Ice Skate and Sport, a retailer specializing in hockey equipment and printing/embroidery. The current management is planning on restoring a former Lakeshore Drive entrance to access the hardware store above as the "back entrance" directly off the deck will no longer be viable.

CONCERNS:

- Investment required for creation of second egress from Shelden Ave level
- Access to lower level not ADA compliant
- Parking for tenants and staff, aging customer base
- Deliveries and access for loading
- ADA parking on-street limiting. parking enforcement to be improved
- Ease of access and catering to customers
- Staffing, computers and business operation need to adjust
- Lack of A/C and mechanical system support

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Pursue joint egress opportunities and deck addition with neighboring businesses
- 2 Improve entrance at East Lakeshore Drive for accessibility and loading and add an additional point of entrance
- 2 Provide parking and loading spaces for contractor use at East Lakeshore Drive entrance



Future "Pro" Entrance



Sports Equipment Store

E Lakeshore Dr entrances, as they are today



Current Zoning Classification: **B-2**
 Area: +/- 0.287 acres | Frontage: +/- 200 feet

**Verification of lot lines and any necessary encroachment permits should be verified prior to installation of decks, stairs, egress assets, etc*

Street Network

Streets play a crucial role in contributing to vibrant urban places. They assist pedestrians in feeling safe and comfortable by providing well-designed sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian-friendly amenities. Additionally, streets that incorporate traffic calming measures, such as reduced speed limits and two-way traffic patterns, create a more pedestrian-friendly environment, while the presence of a tree canopy adds aesthetic appeal and helps create a sense of comfort. These elements collectively enhance the urban experience, making walking distances feel shorter and encouraging a more livable and enjoyable cityscape.



One of the major changes which should be considered to alleviate some of the business owners' concerns voiced earlier in this package is the study and potential conversion of the one-way downtown streets to two-way. Conversion to two-way traffic offers numerous benefits for urban areas. It brings economic advantages by increasing retail visibility and attracting more customers to businesses. It also improves traffic safety by reducing conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. The conversion stimulates new development and can lead to an increase in property values. Furthermore, it enhances safety and attractiveness. Additionally, the conversion reduces the distance traveled by vehicles, making navigation easier and more convenient for drivers.

DESIGN GUIDELINES:

- 1 Leverage:** Leveraging city assets involves utilizing the existing infrastructure, amenities, and natural resources within a city to drive economic growth.
- 2 The Walking Problem** The city faces a walking problem, and has a need for improvements in safety, particularly regarding pedestrian crossings and overall comfort for pedestrians.
- 3 Access** When designing urban spaces, it is essential to prioritize access and maneuverability for people of all ages and abilities. Creating a streetscape that is both beautiful and functional is crucial in achieving this goal.



LEGEND

-  CITY-OWNED PROPERTY
-  WORK WITHIN EXISTING EASEMENT
-  PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY/CITY STREET
-  PROJECT LIMITS
-  EXISTING PARKING DECK FOOTPRINT

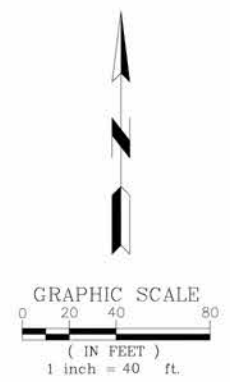
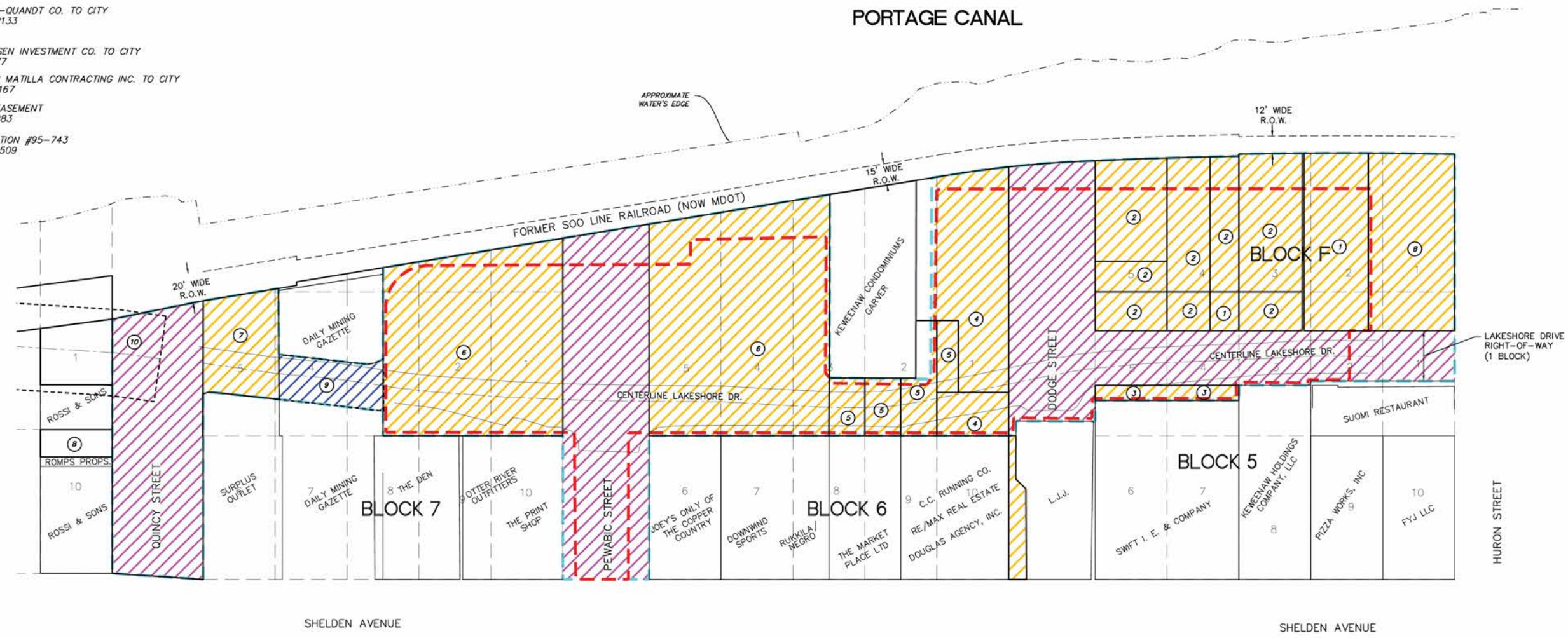
DOCUMENT KEY

- ① COHODAS PAOLI TO CITY L33-P185
- ② NEVA TO CITY L32-P597
- ③ VERTIN BROTHERS TO CITY L50-P729
- ④ VOLLWERTH BUILDING CO. TO CITY L32-P595
- ⑤ I.E. SWIFT TO CITY L32-P601
- ⑥ HAMAR-QUANDT CO. TO CITY L144-P133
- ⑦ MICKELSEN INVESTMENT CO. TO CITY L75-P77
- ⑧ YALMER MATILLA CONTRACTING INC. TO CITY L121-P167
- ⑨ ROAD EASEMENT L63-P283
- ⑩ RESOLUTION #95-743 L100-P509

BUSINESS	ADDITIONAL EGRESS NEEDED	ACCESSIBLE ACCESS NEEDED	ENCROACHMENT PERMIT NEEDED
① The Den			
② The Print Shop	X	X	
③ Joey's Seafood			X
④ Down Wind		X	
⑤ Rukkila + Assoc			
⑥ The Marketplace	X	X	X
⑦ The Hall Building	X	X	X
⑧ Swift Hardware Co.			X

Parking Deck Ownership Map

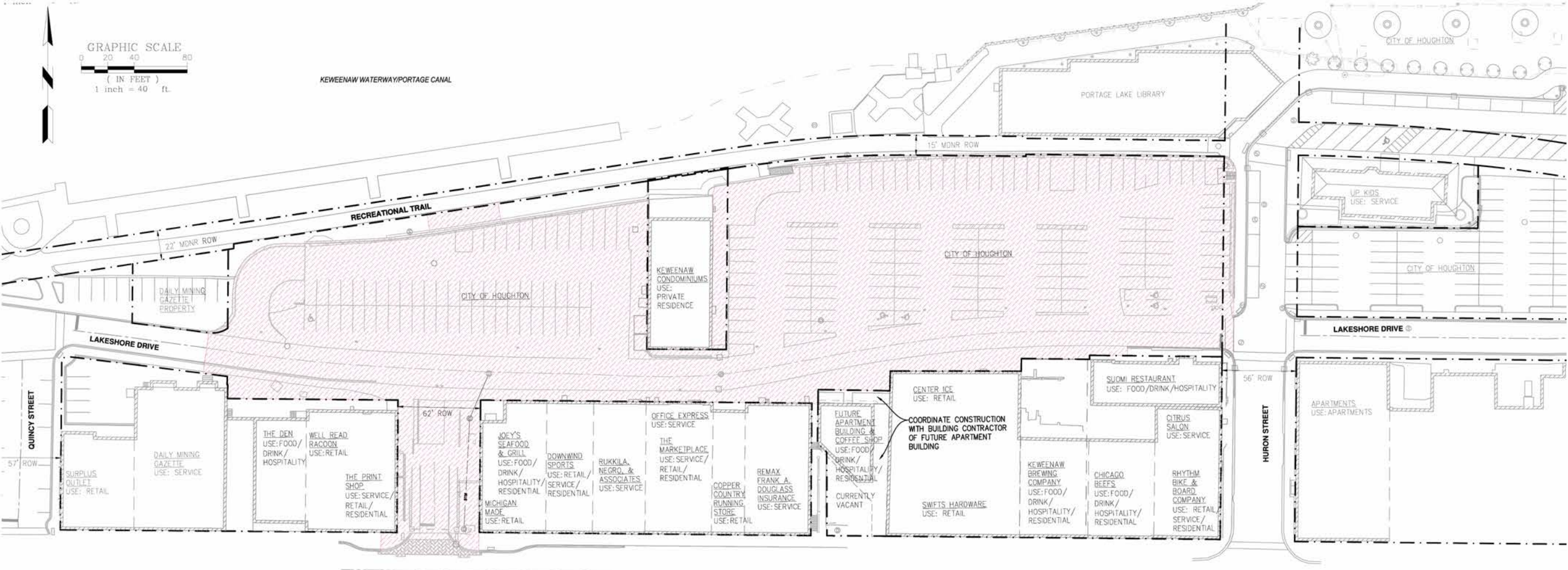
Below is an excerpt from the Ownership map produced in January 2023, outlining the impact of the deck removal and the adjacent parcel locations. As the deck was heavily integrated and connected to the existing downtown buildings, there is some overlap of ownership and necessary coordination. The adjacent matrix provides clarity on which locations studied will require specific egress considerations, and/or partnership with the City to obtain an encroachment permit. This permit would allow for attached structures, facilitating safe exiting from upper levels to grade at E Lakeshore Drive.



Looking Forward

Below, the Construction Limits and Property Map shows the extent and content of the new construction once the Parking Deck has been removed. While parking contributes very little to an active urban environment, vehicles are a necessary consideration to any City or downtown because they are an integral part of how we live our lives.

Providing for some of the parking spaces that will have been removed, the future plan looks to provide an interim use before partnering with the community to determine this area's future purpose and long-term impact.



Additional Insights

BIG IDEAS



As we conclude, we want to bring attention and give voice to some of the aspirational ideas and solutions offered during our time in the City of Houghton.

- Raised connected boardwalk at back of buildings for emergency egress and access to East Lakeshore Drive.
Please note: This does not solve all accessibility issues.
- Shared exterior elevator, lift and/or covered walk. etc
- Outdoor social district and shared dining area
- Lakeshore Drive to be designed as a shared street, prioritized for pedestrians
- Enhanced parking system and enforcement
- Walking shed analysis and street improvements (specifically Sheldon)



FINANCIAL RESOURCES

MEDC Resources

- **Brownfield Tax Increment Financing** | Allows for capture of the incremental increase in tax revenue resulting from a redevelopment project to reimburse the investor for eligible activities defined in a brownfield plan and approved by a local Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.
- **MCRP: Michigan Community Revitalization Program** | Promotes community revitalization through the provision of grants, loans, or other economic assistance for mixed-use projects downtown.
- **PSCP: Public Spaces Community Places** | The first program of its kind in the country where local residents can be part of the development of transformational projects in their communities and be backed by the State, dollar for dollar.

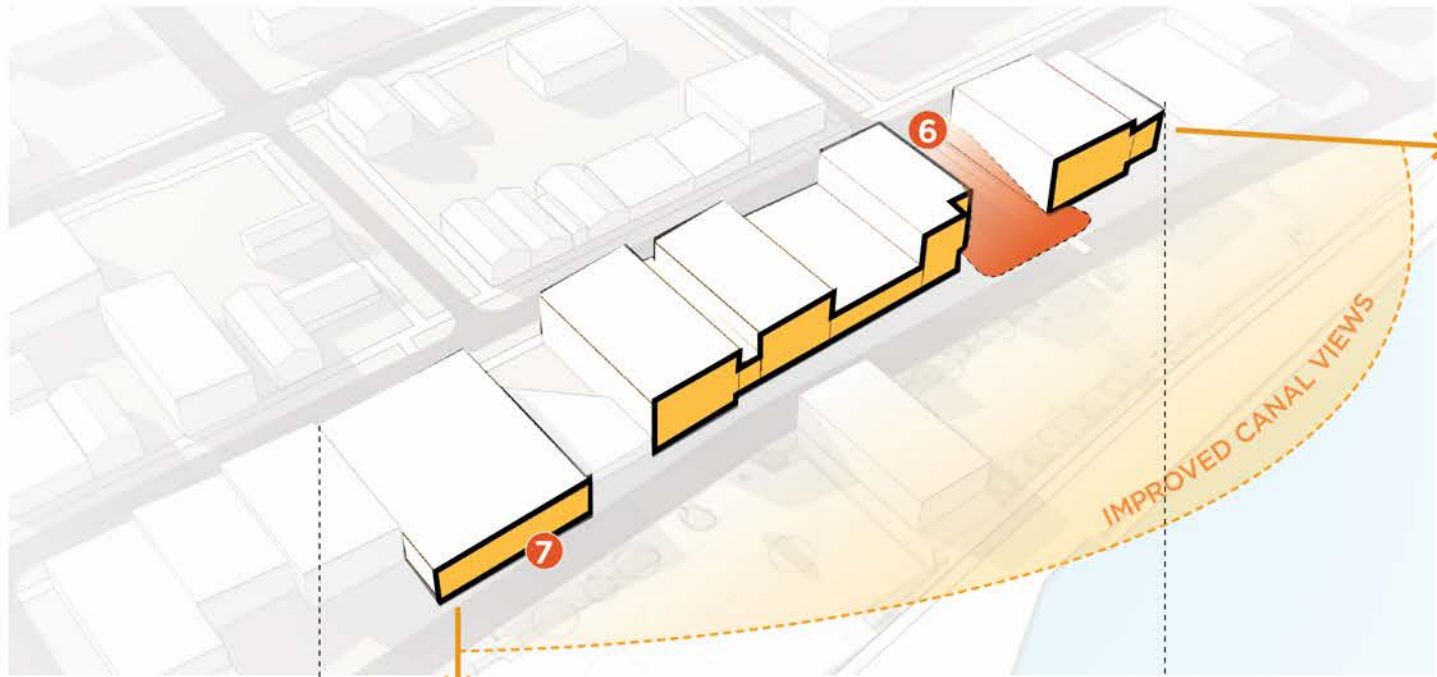
City Partnerships

- **Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce** | An organization of business professionals from Houghton and Keweenaw Counties, who have joined together for the purpose of promoting the economic well-being of the business community in the Keweenaw Peninsula.
- **MTEC SmartZone** | A nonprofit entrepreneurial support center providing services to facilitate the commercialization of technology emerging from Michigan Tech Research and private companies.

DDA

- **Mini Facade Grants** | Allows for capture of up to \$5,000 for smaller projects like painting, fixing broken windows, or signage. The building owner is required to match the grant.

CONCLUSIONS



KEY

- 1 WATERFRONT TRAIL
- 2 CONTRIBUTING BUSINESSES
- 3 BRIDGEVIEW PARK PAVILLION
- 4 BRIDGEVIEW PARK KAYAK LAUNCH
- 5 SITE OF REMOVED DECK TO BE SURFACE PARKING
- 6 NEW PARK PLANNED
- 7 AFFECTED FACADES



Change is oftentimes not easy. It can bring with it anxiety about the future. Understandably, downtown Houghton business owners reliant upon the presence of the East Lakeshore Drive parking deck have experienced a substantial change in what they have known. To ensure their continued success, downtown Houghton needs to become more walkable so that available parking feels accessible and safe. Wayfinding signage and education about parking options is important to convey to customers and visitors.

Economic support, in partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), should be explored to allow for retrofitting and refreshing. Action from both the public and private sectors is important to continue to move towards making downtown Houghton prosperous and vibrant.

Eric T. Waara, P.E.
 Houghton City Manager
 P: 906-482-1700
 eric.waara@cityofhoughton.com
 616 Shelden Avenue
 Houghton, MI 49931

