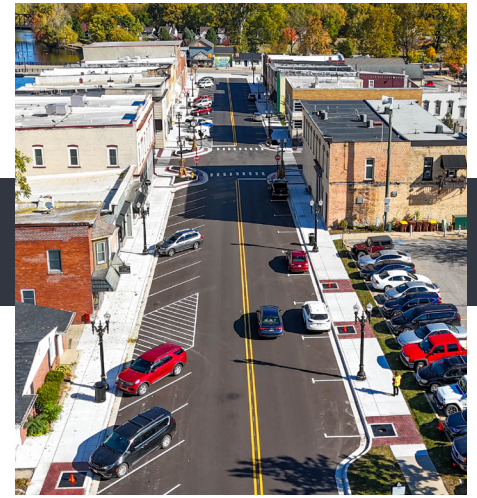




FLEIS & VANDENBRINK

DESIGN. BUILD. OPERATE.

SMALL-TOWN MAIN STREETS: HOW INCENTIVES CAN DRIVE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION



Downtowns have long been the social and economic centers of Michigan communities. Once thriving with small businesses and local pride, many have struggled in recent years due to shifting demographics, aging infrastructure, and changing shopping habits. Recognizing the need to reinvigorate these areas, communities across the state are turning to targeted solutions to revitalize their “Main Street.”

Communities often face challenges in attracting private investment or may lack the resources to thoroughly package and promote redevelopment opportunities. At Fleis & VandenBrink (F&V), we help communities find creative solutions that blend policy, funding, infrastructure planning, and design to create lasting, visible impact within the municipalities we serve.

For example, in the City of Allegan, F&V helped reactivate their Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and establish local policies to support attainable housing. Through a combination of brownfield incentives and Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) support, underutilized sites are being revitalized.

“By reactivating our BRA and contracting with F&V as our brownfield consultant, the city’s redevelopment strategy has been strengthened by better understanding how we can utilize BRA tax increment financing to help develop more housing units,” stated Joel Dye, Allegan’s City Manager.

FUNDING THAT FITS SMALL COMMUNITIES

Recent updates to Michigan’s brownfield legislation now enable the use of tax increment financing (TIF) to support attainable housing and mixed-use redevelopment of functionally obsolete or blighted properties, without increasing the tax burden to residents.

Communities are also leveraging infrastructure grants through state and federal agencies, using Downtown Development Authority (DDA) TIF as matching funds. These programs support the development of complete streets, placemaking, and infrastructure improvements, helping to revitalize downtown areas while enhancing safety, sustainability, and curb appeal.

“F&V has been instrumental in educating our BRA, city staff, and city council, and has been a great partner as we walked our first BRA TIF development from concept to implementation,” Dye said.

PRE-PLANNING FOR PURPOSEFUL REDEVELOPMENT

One of the most effective tools a community can use is deliberate site planning. By identifying priority sites, setting design standards, and creating redevelopment concepts that reflect local vision, communities are better positioned to:

- Compete for grants
- Attract aligned development partners
- Streamline implementation timelines

“I encourage communities to reach out to experts in the field and contract with a firm that is well-versed in this arena,” Dye suggested. “There is a lot to know when it comes to this field, and this is one area where an expert is beneficial.”

ENGINEERING THE PATH TO REVITALIZATION

F&V supports communities through every phase of revitalization—from utility upgrades and green infrastructure to streetscape design and local grant programs. We also assist with:

- DDA TIF and development plan updates
- Brownfield Redevelopment Authority consulting
- BRA TIF plan preparation
- Incentive policy creation
- Façade improvement programs
- Municipal services agreements

With the right mix of planning, infrastructure investment, and incentives, Michigan’s downtowns can once again thrive as centers of commerce, housing, and community life. Communities that act strategically and leverage available tools will lead the way.

SUCCESS STORY

In Shiawassee County, F&V has advanced numerous high-impact redevelopment projects by using brownfield TIF to support adaptive reuse of vacant commercial and land bank-owned properties. These projects not only provide new affordable housing units, but also restore activity and tax value to vacant, dilapidated properties.

To learn more about how your community can take advantage of economic revitalization and brownfield redevelopment incentives, contact Samantha Mariuz, F&V’s Economic Development and Incentives Specialist, at 248.224.0305 or email smariuz@fveng.com.

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"F&V has been a great partner as we walked our first BRA TIF development from concept to implementation."

- Joel Dye, City of Allegan

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