



EASTERN MARKET

2025 STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHY NOW?

THE FOOD ECONOMY IS CHANGING

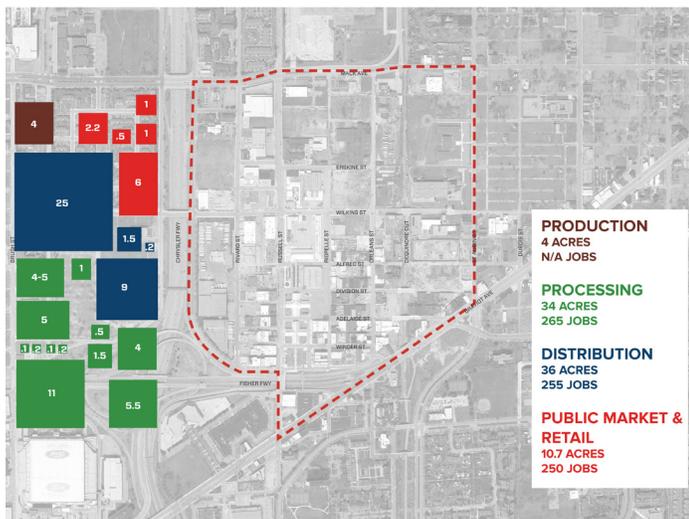
Eastern Market has been nourishing Detroit since 1891. Over those 125 years, food systems have changed radically, as has the city the market serves.

The Market enjoyed a near monopoly on the regional wholesale produce trade until the 1925 construction of the Detroit Produce Terminal Market. Served by rail, this market brought products from large growers in distant places as the nation's food system became increasingly larger in scale. From the 1950s until 2010s both markets shrunk as large grocery chains built their own regional distribution centers, bypassing the need for public or terminal markets.

Over the last decade, our food system has been again undergoing radical change. Consumers are driving fundamental shifts towards local, healthier, and more distinctive food products. Iconic, mass-marketed brand sales are diminishing and behemoth food enterprises are scrambling to reinvent themselves as smaller producers of specialty food products flourish.

Beer, while not exactly food, provides the clearest example of this shift. Since 1985, when the first micro-brewery opened, craft beer has grown to account for nearly 20% of sales and the number of breweries has risen from 103 to more than 3,200. Smaller, regional producers are taking market share from the titans and its happening across nearly all categories in the food and beverage industry.

CURRENT DEMAND FOR EXPANSION



GROWS ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

According to the Institute for the Competitiveness of Inner Cities, food businesses employ the widest range of skills among all economic clusters. Especially important for Detroit is the high number of entry-level, living-wage jobs that food businesses generate. Those jobs are desperately needed to solve chronic structural unemployment in the city's neighborhoods.

Moreover, Eastern Market has played a key role in promoting entrepreneurship across economic classes. In our long history new immigrants have found their economic footing as vendors at Eastern Market. Today, we honor that tradition with wider efforts to engage neighborhood based entrepreneurs whether they make food products or other goods.

Economic democracy defines Eastern Market's authenticity. Throughout this plan we have identified ways to ensure that the market continues to be a place where all are welcome regardless of their age, income, or race. As the food economy shifts towards greater variety and scale, it is time for Eastern Market to capitalize on its unmatched diversity of people and range of food businesses to continue the legacy of nourishing Detroit.

2 MILLION SHOP AND BUY FOOD AT EASTERN MARKET EACH YEAR

22% OF MICHIGAN JOBS ARE FOOD/AG BASED

\$360 MILLION OF WHOLESALE FOOD SOLD IN EASTERN MARKET

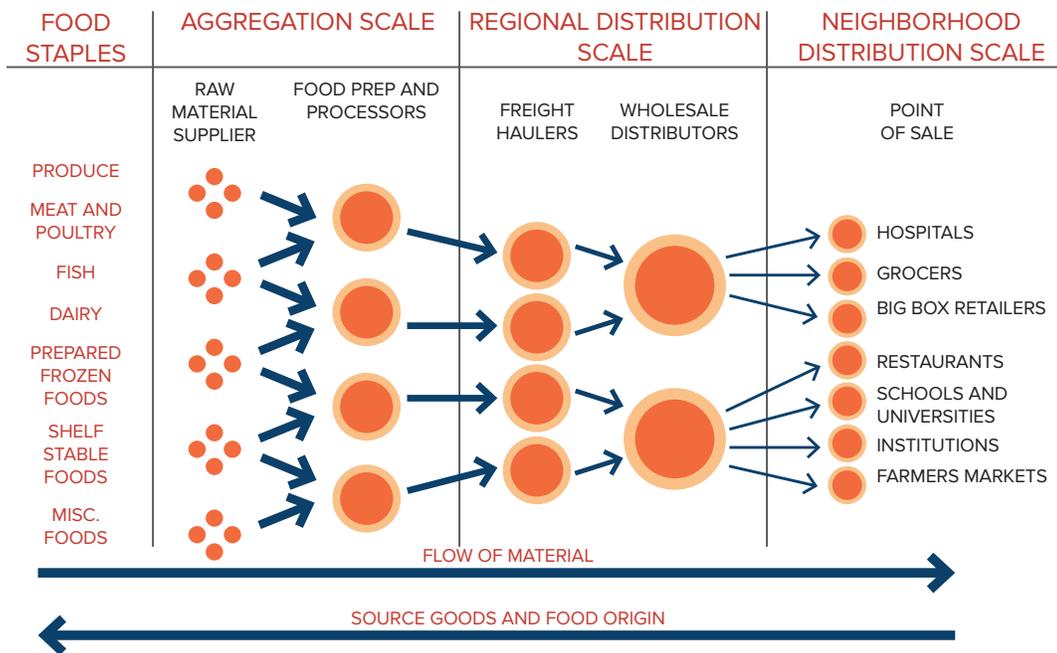
\$418 MILLION OF MEAT SOLD IN EASTERN MARKET EACH YEAR

1,300 PERMANENTLY EMPLOYED IN EASTERN MARKET FOOD BUSINESSES

\$631 MILLION IN MICHIGAN FOOD EXPORT TO CANADA

2:1 FOOD INDUSTRY WHOLESALE BUSINESSES NEED TO DOUBLE THE OPERATING FOOTPRINT IN EASTERN MARKET

Source: ReferenceUSA



EASTERN MARKET OPERATES AT ALL SCALES OF THE FOOD ECONOMY

Eastern Market District, anchored by a hybrid retail/wholesale public market and surrounded by regional food businesses is both a relic of the past and a portal to a healthier, fairer, and more sustainable food future. The Market is venerated largely because it remains a working food district. Ironically, Detroit’s resurgence threatens Eastern Market’s authenticity as a rising investment wave brings more non-food business and residential development to the District.

Reinforcing this trend of converting cool old buildings into other uses is the implementation of Food Safety Modernization Act, which will render many old building unsuitable for future use for most food processing or distribution uses.

Eastern Market survived in part because Detroit’s weak real estate market over the past fifty years spared it the fate of fellow markets / market districts in other cities which became hip districts filled with bars, boutiques, and lofts. As the planning team and District stakeholders looked at these trends, the central question of our 2025 strategic planning process became clear: How can Eastern Market keep its working food district authenticity in the face of market trends and buildings that are ripe for conversion to other uses?

In order to keep the Market’s working food district authenticity and taking advantage of national trends favoring regional, specialized food production the Market District must expand. A growing Eastern Market will provide Detroit with a launching pad for economic growth capable of creating thousands of new jobs.

Eastern Market’s ability to foster economic democracy and conviviality can be leveraged as food processing and distribution businesses relocate to adjacent sites. Space needed to marshal trucks can be given over to denser mixed use development. With new retail and residential space, Eastern Market can become a more compelling destination on days other than Saturday. Expanding the District also accelerates the transformation of the current market district into a more robust mixed-use district with more retail, housing, and people.

The largely vacant land to the north and east of the current market district can provide the space for food processing and distribution. Repurposing former residential land for industrial purpose will not be easy, but with careful planning, new jobs can be added enabling future development of new residential areas further to the east. Eastern Market can become more of a catalyst for near east side development.

Eastern Market has a rich history as a working food district. The District’s economic force now has the opportunity to grow because of two distinct advantages present in the area. Immediate freeway access, close reach to export markets, and other logistical advantages already in place make expansion easier here than in other areas with no existing industry. Additionally, former residential neighborhood areas adjacent to the District with high vacancy rates are a prime area for expansion. This is the place where Detroit works for everyone.

GOALS

AUTHENTICITY

KEEP IT A REAL, FOOD-FOCUSED ECONOMY

The authenticity of Eastern Market rests in its 125 year history of nourishing Detroit. As the heart of Detroit, it is both a part of the city's cultural legacy and its working economy. The future as a working food district is critical to maintaining the character of the District.



DEVELOPMENT EQUITY

ENHANCE THE MARKET AS A PLACE OF GENUINE ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

Eastern Market must manage future development to ensure that Detroiters from traditionally underrepresented populations are key participants in the growth and development of the Eastern Market District. Economic democracy is a key feature of the Market that has driven its history and made it one of Detroit's most beloved places. Beyond welcoming a wide variety of customers, Eastern Market has been the place where new immigrants and struggling households have turned to pursue their dreams that have propelled them to launch new businesses and achieve economic success. Most importantly, the opportunity to make a living in the District, for all Detroiters, must endure.



CONNECTIVITY

BRIDGE NEIGHBORHOODS AND BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

The District supplies food across the entirety of the Midwest and into Canada, yet the District itself is an island, cut off by freeways and blight, despite being a 10 minute walk from Midtown or 15 from Downtown. Strategically, Eastern Market seeks to be physically and culturally connected and accessible to all Detroiters. Overcoming the variety of barriers that divides Eastern Market from adjacent neighborhoods remains an important objective. While the completion of both the Dequindre Cut and Midtown Loop greenways are important steps, much more work remains to better blend Eastern Market into the urban fabric. There are many opportunities ahead as Detroit rides a wave of new investment unlike anything experienced in the last 60 years.



DENSITY

ENCOURAGE DIVERSE GROWTH; REBUILD THE URBAN FABRIC

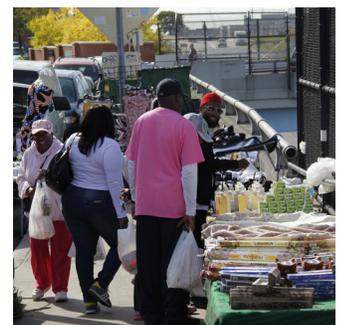
Eastern Market, like much of Detroit, was built for more people, more work, and more activity than it has today. Eastern Market aspires to support the next generation of food businesses as well as complementary development of a lively mixed-use commercial district to greatly increase the number of jobs in the District. The increased density of food businesses and other development will provide a fundamental building block for Detroit's future.



DIVERSITY

INCREASE THE MIX: PEOPLE, FOOD, AND OPPORTUNITIES

The District is a widely recognized common ground for Detroiters, Michiganders, and visitors alike. Part of the appeal is the cross-cultural informality and the ability to find a bevy of foods at an affordable price. Diversity entails a cultural openness and variety embracing all. For this dynamic mix to continue, the range of retail, food offerings, affordability and access must be present.



OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

The strategic direction of Eastern Market has evolved as a partnership of ideas. The District is made up of numerous stakeholders. For this planning exercise, the stakeholders were divided into 10 groups:

1. Retail Merchants
2. Customers
3. Market & Bridge Vendors
4. Arts & Hospitality
5. Food Distribution & Processing
6. Residents & Professional Services
7. Property Owners & Developers
8. Community Partners
9. Public Sector Partners
10. Funders

To learn from each of these constituents, a series of focus groups were organized by the planning team to discuss needs and concerns of the District. Additionally, a Task Force of representatives from each of these groups was assembled to review and advise the consultant team holistically throughout the process.

Public meetings were conducted at key points during the development of the 2025 Strategy to present analysis and planning proposals as well as solicit feedback through interactive engagement sessions. The sessions were participatory, encouraging attendees to share ideas in small groups as well as voice opinions to the entire public forum. The discussions were organized around both the strategic goals and on specific development issues related to connectivity, market access, mixed-use development, and the future pattern of development for food industry.

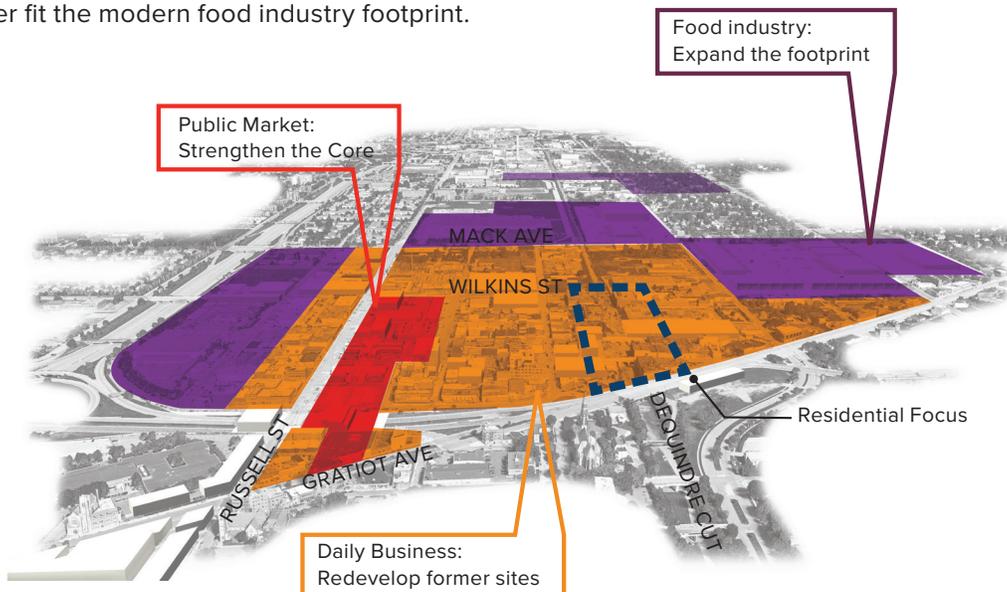
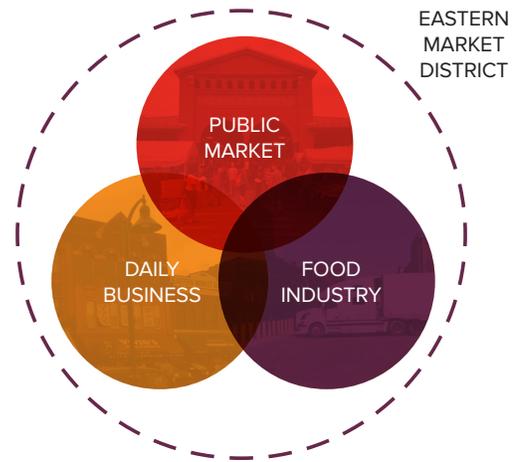


STRATEGY

FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

The framework for Eastern Market embraces a three-part structure of the District:

1. **Public Market** — The Market Campus is interlinked by a network of sheds and flexible spaces that support Market programming, parking, and community events. The hybrid nature of Eastern Market’s retail and wholesale operations must continue until wholesale operations are relocated to a future nearby facility dedicated to the produce trade. Once the wholesale functions of the Market are relocated, the Market Campus can focus more on retail and public events markets. The Market Core can become denser with less need for truck marshalling space.
2. **Food Industry** — An expanded Food Innovation Zone will be developed for local small-to-medium food businesses to have the flexibility to grow and remain in the Eastern Market District in the future. The development plan calls for an extension of the District boundaries to accommodate a larger footprint for food processing, warehousing, and distribution facilities.
3. **Daily Business** — East of the Market Campus, a mix-of-uses environment supporting small batch food processing, daily business, and residential development will preserve the signature grit of the District landscape, reflected in the urban fabric of old masonry warehouses. The development strategy is intended to preserve existing industry and historic businesses while permitting a broader range of businesses in the historically zoned industrial areas that no longer fit the modern food industry footprint.



DISTRICT IDENTITY AT STAKE

Without a comprehensive strategy for growth, Eastern Market's diverse food industry ecosystem cannot remain and the food making, processing, and distribution business of Eastern Market will decline. The loss of these businesses means not only a loss of identity as a working food hub, but a loss of jobs with living wage pay difficult to replace by typical service sector employment. Lacking room to grow, food processors and wholesalers that have defined the Market as a hub for the food economy have steadily migrated away over the last two decades. Recent departures such as the Butcher and Packer Co. and Maceri Produce demonstrate the problem. Butcher and Packer spread their operations across several historic buildings along Gratiot Avenue, when what was really needed for this distributor was a consolidated modern facility with office, warehouse, and distribution all under one roof with easy access to freeways. Maceri simply outgrew its current facility and moved into a larger warehouse space far from Eastern Market. Ironically, there are plenty of places to grow in former residential neighborhoods adjacent to the Market, owing to decades of flight. If the right steps are taken now, Eastern Market's food industry could do more than survive: it could thrive. A focused strategy for aligning parcels and reassembling deserted properties could enable the redevelopment of hundreds of acres of land.



STRATEGY

INNOVATIVE INDUSTRIAL INTEGRATION TEMPLATE

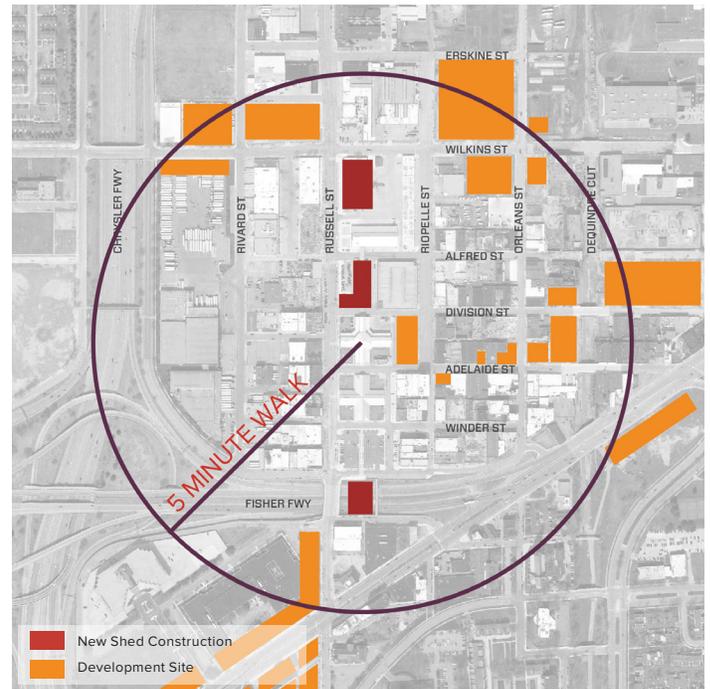
In expanding Eastern Market into a largely vacant area, the goal is to use greenways to separate areas of employment from schools and residential development. Current urban development patterns put great distance between residential areas and employment centers, but the proposed co-location of live, work, play, and learn uses will celebrate the benefits of proximity. Retail, greenways, landscape buffers, and building entry locations can all be thoughtfully implemented in order to combine a neighborhood with thriving industry. A neighborhood environment that supports the density of jobs of light food industry is an innovative development model for Eastern Market.



DENSIFICATION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF CURRENT MARKET DISTRICT

The future of the Market is focused on maintaining the accessibility and conviviality of the Market experience. It is fundamental that it remains a public venue centered on nourishing food. To do this, food must appeal to and be affordable to Detroiters, Michiganders, and all those who come to visit the Market. The sheds must also specialize to support the farmers and businesses that provide the attractions of the Market.

Transferring wholesale market operations to a dedicated produce terminal away from the current Market Campus will reduce space required for truck marshalling. This frees up space for Eastern Market to develop mixed-use sheds that add additional Market space and production space, along with permanent retail space, and upper floor space for offices and residences.



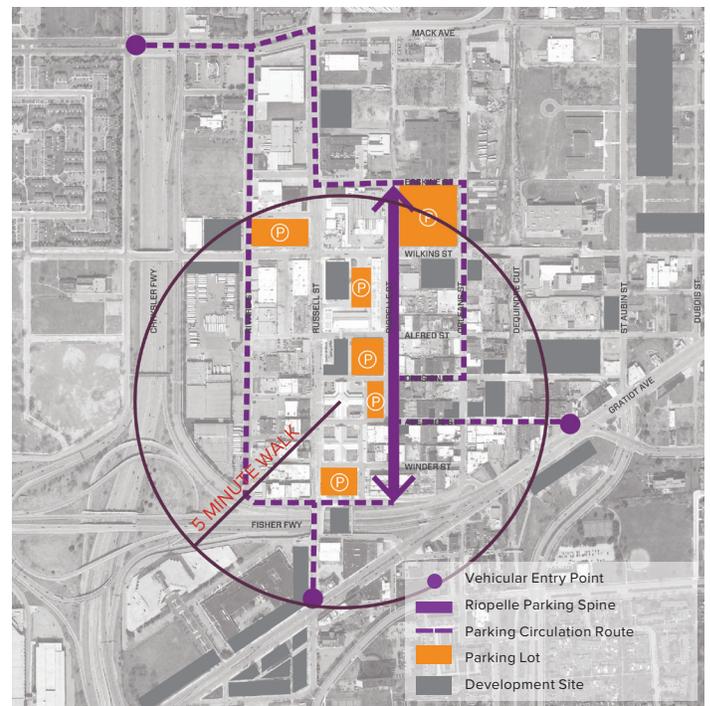
VISION

PUBLIC MARKET

The Sheds of the Public Market are historic landmarks, but unlike most historical sites, they continue to function and expand from their core mission of providing nourishing food to Detroit, while the retail functions of the Market continue to flourish—on peak Saturdays, from early morning to late afternoon, the Sheds are packed with over 40,000 visitors. While the District continues to function as a wholesale distribution center in the early morning hours, plans are underway to move that function to a dedicated facility more easily adaptable to increasingly stringent food safety regulations. As the wholesale market departs, the Market Campus will be more aligned with its role as a retail food outlet and as a place where Detroit gathers. Eastern Market is beloved because it is welcoming to all. This sense of high conviviality has led to a dramatic rise in the use of Sheds for community events and celebrations of all kinds. Along with adding more permanent retail and residential uses to the Market Campus, the increase in traffic to the District will help grow the everyday economy of the District.

DEVELOP PARKING LOOP

Driving to the Market today is a confusing, and sometimes frustrating, process. Parking lots are not easily accessible, and getting to a lot via car or on foot is complicated, as large crowds and vehicle movement are often in conflict. To clarify the parking process at Eastern Market, a parking loop concept has been developed with a clear parking spine along Riopelle Street. To support this plan, major entry points into the Market will feature parking signage and clear routes connecting drivers to Riopelle Street and the parking lots that flank it. When implemented, the parking loop will organize vehicular flow to minimize conflict with pedestrians so that the vehicular and pedestrian experience can become more harmonious.



IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN CIRCUITS

Vendors refer to the north-south pedestrian access through the Market as the “Main Line”. When visitors turn off of the Main Line, however, the experience begins to fray with circulation and destinations becoming less certain. To help strengthen the Market experience, two strategies are recommended to grow and enhance the pedestrian experience. The first recommendation is to extend the Main Line through the development of new sheds to the north and south. The second recommendation is to develop complementary paths off of the Main Line that connect pedestrians to Russell Street and relief areas for patrons to rest away from the hubbub of the Market. Pedestrian connections off of the Main Line will also act as access to parking and businesses surrounding the sheds.

VISION

FOOD INNOVATION ZONE

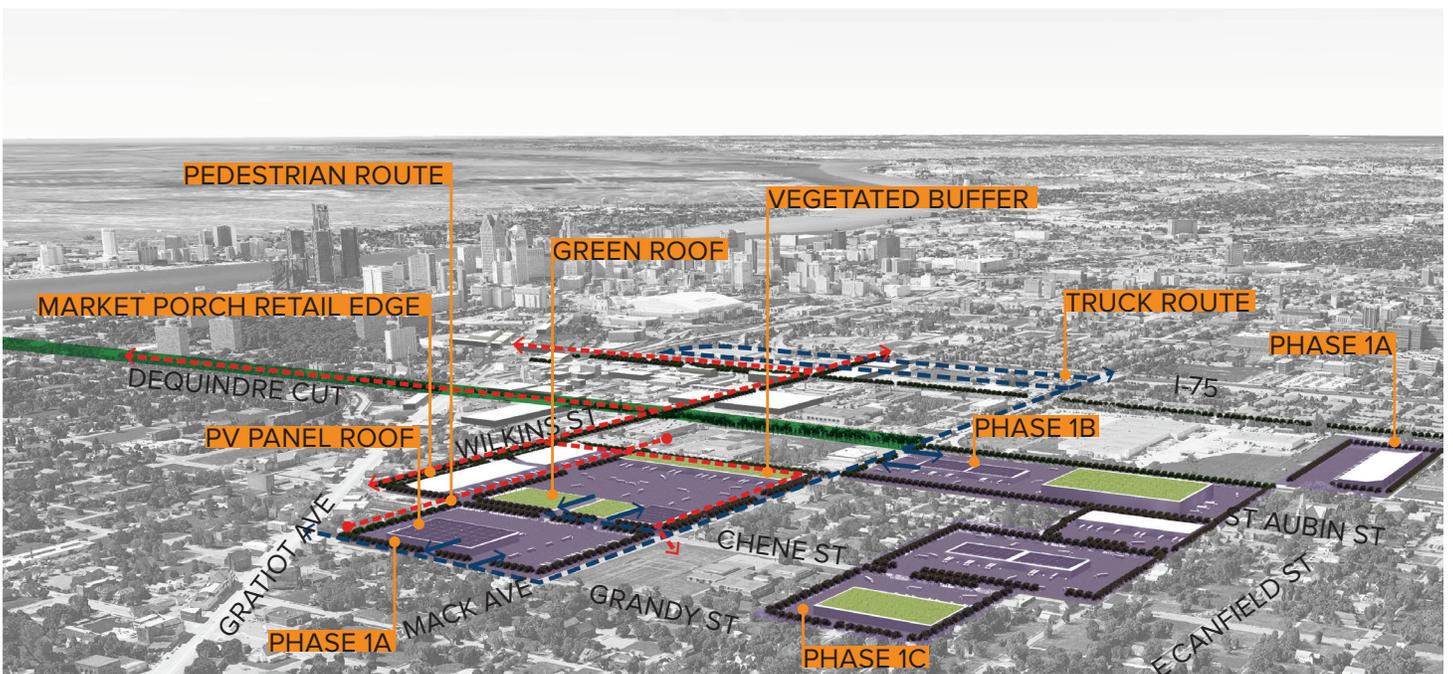
For Eastern Market's food industry to remain competitive and grow as a hub of living wage jobs, a concerted effort to assemble and prepare land for development as food based production, processing, and manufacturing must take place.

EXPANDED FOOD INDUSTRY SHOULD BE KEPT IN CLOSE PROXIMITY AND ALLOW FOR FUTURE EXPANSION

A site situated between Mack Avenue and Wilkins Street (titled Phase 1A on the above map) was chosen as the preferred location to pilot a pattern for new industry growth. While the site location is preliminary, it meets many of the needs and opportunities that stakeholders have described. The proposed site will have direct access to both Mack Avenue and Gratiot Avenue, while maintaining a tight connection to the historic Market District. It is envisioned that a cluster of modern industrial buildings will be designed so that retail and offices will front Wilkins Street, and trucking operations will be contained in the center of the industrial site. Along St. Aubin Street, green and blue (stormwater management) landscaping will create a buffer between the Detroit Edison Public School Academy (DEPSA) and the new industrial site, and create a safe pedestrian route to the new DEPSA athletic field.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR PHASE 1A

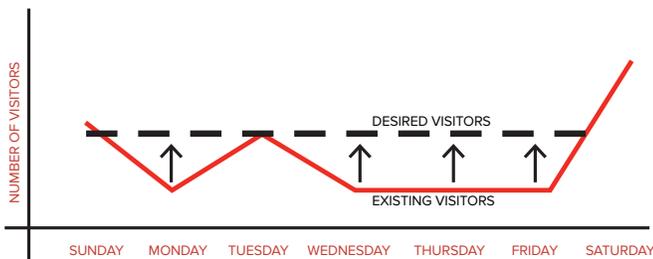
1. Accommodate four prototypical facilities in Food Innovation Zone.
2. Organize facility types within the Food Innovation Zone to match business needs and scale, and District urban design goals.
3. Design flexibility for phasing, expansions, and additional future demand.
4. Create truck access from Mack Avenue onto Chene Street.
5. Protect St. Aubin Street from truck traffic and negative impacts. Create a parking and landscaping strategy that will increase employment density and mitigate neighborhood impacts.
6. Establish visual and physical pedestrian/bike connections to Gratiot Avenue.
7. Establish Wilkins Street as a critical pedestrian/bike/bus connection to Eastern Market.
8. Support walk-to-work connection with future residential development via greenways and/or stormwater management retention areas.
9. Design for safety and security.



VISION

DAILY BUSINESS

The commercial fabric of the District is mostly located on Russell Street and Market Street directly adjacent to the Market sheds. In the last five years, new commercial businesses have begun to spread further from the Market core, centered on Riopelle Street, Winder Street, and the Gratiot Avenue corridor. These non-food commercial uses are gradually replacing vacated wholesale and warehouse businesses that are no longer viable at the scale provided by the historic building fabric; they need bigger yards, modern loading docks, and energy efficient buildings. This shift from food based industry to commercial use presents both a dilemma and an opportunity. New commercial and residential investment in these historic buildings will add more amenities and customers to the Market, but maintaining a food focus and the historic businesses that define the District identity must remain a priority if the District is to maintain its authenticity.



RAISE THE BASELINE, BUT DON'T SEEK SATURDAY CROWDS EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK

Retail in the District can be described as feast or famine. Saturday Markets bring 40,000 visitors to the District on a weekly basis, but during the week, visitor totals are far less, often congregating in very limited areas along Russell Street. A concerted effort to raise the baseline must be made in order to benefit existing and future retailers on non-Market days.

To improve retail in the District, actions can be taken to provide better transit and connect more efficiently to neighboring areas through physical conditions and wayfinding. Additional residential opportunities should be planned to bolster the convenience shoppers. Finally, providing a high quality pedestrian environment is critical to attracting more people on a daily basis.

The desired outcome is not to duplicate Saturday's energy every day of the week; Saturday Markets are special and should remain the outlier. Attracting more visitors on a daily basis, however, will benefit District business retailers.



TOOLS FOR FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT EQUITY

In order for EMC to effectively execute recommendations from 2025 Strategy planning study, the following tools for fostering development equity need to be implemented:

1. Establish a community-based development subsidiary to further economic development, education, community organizing, real estate development, micro-lending, and small scale financing support for food and other entrepreneurs.
2. Develop Live/Work projects that provide affordability.
3. Expand incubator spaces for entrepreneurs.
4. Initiate large scale job creation projects including: Regional Wholesale Food Terminal, Food Innovation Zone, and participation in HUD Choice Neighborhood Partnership.
5. Provide stormwater management planning, design and construction assistance to reduce cost burdens from DPSW stormwater fees.
6. Advocate for zoning changes that will be designed to prevent undesirable loss of food businesses through gentrification and promote food focused development.



GROWTH