On February 18th, the City of Battle Creek held a Visioning Workshop at the Kool Family Community Center. Attendees were assigned to one of nine “breakout” groups and provided with markers and a large map of the city. Over the course of an hour, each group worked as a team to draw their “vision” for Battle Creek on a map of the city.

Topics were provided to guide each table’s discussion and they included: residential areas; commercial areas; industrial areas; transportation; parks, open spaces, and the environment; community facilities; and other. In addition to marking up the map, each group also recorded their recommendations in a workbook. At the end of the hour, the groups shared their findings with the entire audience.

Generally, workshop participants felt strongly about beautifying the community, supporting the city’s youth through programming, enhancing shopping options (particularly within neighborhoods), providing housing options for all income brackets and needs, and improving walkability and bikeability.

The following summary details the ideas and projects suggested by workshop participants. It is important to note that the items identified in this summary are not recommendations of the consultant, but rather ideas generated by the community at the Visioning Workshop. Photographs of each group’s map are attached to the end of this summary.

**Priority Ideas**

Each of the nine break-out groups were asked to propose “three big ideas” that could improve life in Battle Creek. Those ideas are recorded below.

- Beautify Battle Creek throughout all areas
- Better connect the community’s north-south and east-west corridors
- Create young entrepreneurs
- Utilize green energy
- In the north side of the community, new development must accommodate parking needs and development should be sustainable
- Connect the mall area to downtown; it is currently hard to walk and bike between the two
- Develop shopping areas about every square mile
- Develop small mixed-use neighborhood commercial areas
- Add more places for families and kids (e.g. Sky Zone, rock climbing, pizza places, etc.)
- Activate the river and add more recreational opportunities along the river
- Develop scattered site, low-income, and permanent supportive housing for vulnerable families
- Expand existing bus service to Fort Custer Industrial Park (24 hours)
- Restore the health of the Kalamazoo River, remove the cement channeling, and create integrated park space; host community events and concerts on the riverfront
- Create jobs
- Consolidate school districts
- Improve low-income housing opportunities
• Coordinate a city-wide fundraiser
• Connect cultural and service organizations
• Improve river access (better usage; redevelopment)
• Improve or remove vacant buildings

Ideas by Category
The following is a list of the ideas, suggestions, and concepts that were either drawn on the maps or written in the workbook, organized by topic.

Residential Areas
• Better property maintenance and code compliance
• Integrate compliance and inspections
• Clean up neighborhoods to ensure curb appeal and maintenance
• Better curb and leaf maintenance
• Freedom for individuals to do what they want with their property without obstruction for government
• Update zoning to keep up with technology and the times
• Avoid developing south of the town as it may pull people from the core neighborhoods
• Do not grant variances in the south of town without good cause
• New development on the north side of town must accommodate parking need, needs to be sustainable (code enforcement), and most should be zoned R1
• Connect the mall to downtown; it is currently hard to walk and bike between the two
• Revitalize core neighborhoods
• Ensure there are safe places and caring adults for children
• Reduce the volume of vacant buildings in Downtown
• Develop infill housing
• Allow commercial uses in residential areas
• Don’t tear down all the city’s historical houses
• Consolidate school districts
• Improve schools and afterschool programs
• Need things for young parents to do—family outdoor entertainment
• Clean up neighborhoods—church volunteerism
• Restore bungalow homes in Old Lakeview
• Build residential units along the river
• Promote mixed-use housing
• Develop ethnic neighborhoods
• Deal with blight
• Explore/find/make available funding for home repair
• Continue removal of blighted/abandoned houses/buildings IF renovation is not an option
• Support local fresh produce retailers in neighborhoods, eliminate food deserts
• Build Downtown housing—Riverside Dr. along Mill Pond
• Scattered site, low income, permanent supportive housing for vulnerable families
• Walkable neighborhoods with easy access to important resources (grocery stores, pharmacy, etc.)
• Teardown or restoration of abandoned, dilapidated houses and buildings, safety concerns
• Support systems for seniors who live independently (i.e. meals on wheels and assistance with home repairs)
• Fixing up ALL parks of city; all residential areas, not just downtown and places like that
• More parks in residential areas/bike paths
- All have good lighting—need to feel safe
- Urban farming
- Fix vacant housing/no boarding

**Commercial Areas**

- Fill in vacant buildings, have more business
- Civic theater, maybe movie theater
- Make use of river/make access/more events on river
- Redesign Columbia Ave to be more beautiful
- Route 66 and Beckley intersection is a nightmare—causes traffic backup on 66; too many lights, not timed properly
- Traffic lights not properly timed along Capitol Avenue
- Need to build bridges either for trains or traffic so that trains aren’t running through downtown and blocking traffic multiple times a day including morning commuting hours
- Columbia Ave needs complete redesign
- Heritage Tower needs to be occupied
- More dry cleaners
- Focus on key entry corridors into downtown i.e. Capital Ave, W Michigan, E Michigan
- Enable funding for business development
- Downtown—add a “Walgreens” type convenience store
- Downtown—add a laundry facility
- Development of small neighborhood commercial area (i.e. coffee, bakery, laundromat)—mixed use
- More grocery stores—access to food for more neighborhoods
- Bury power lines and add sidewalks along corridors
- Add pedestrian crossings across Columbia Avenue
- Increase restaurants/retain on North Ave.
- Increase family friendly restaurants/shops on vacant buildings in Downtown
- Add more places for families and kids (e.g. Sky Zone, rock climbing, pizza places, etc.)
- Restaurants downtown to draw people after business hours with more user friendly city policies
- Commercial beautification of major corridors; especially Columbia from Meijer at Helmer to M-66
- Split big buildings up into smaller, manageable spaces for businesses to rent
- Improvement of hotels and accommodations
- Beautification for outlet mall at mall area
- More shopping in north side of town
- Add shopping areas about every square mile
- Take vacant buildings and give them to people for $1 to start businesses
- Columbia Avenue needs sidewalks
- Corridors need to be spruced up, and have safe lighting
- City needs to snow plow commercial areas
- More commercial areas that cater to KCC school, such as a juice bar or lounge
- Get students involved in planning commercial areas
- Better maintenance of I-94, plus add plantings
- Business owners should have freedom to pursue their ideas without obstruction from government
- More shopping and commerce on Michigan Ave between downtown and Urbandale

**Industrial Areas**

- More retail/restaurants out by Fort Custer
- Industrial area in Emmet Township
• New industrial in old Kellogg/Porter Street location
• Strengthen restaurants and small businesses in Urbandale
• Development on the east side of town so people will not choose to live in Kalamazoo
• Allow industry wherever—people should be able to conduct business in their own homes
• Maintain industrial zoning districts separate from residential
• Incentivize eco-friendly industries to invest here and incentivize those that are here to change their processes
• Attract hi-tech industries
• Have a plan for how Battle Creek transitions away from industrial uses near the river
• We need pedestrian overpasses downtown to cross train tracks.
• Relocate downtown industrial to Fort Custer

Transportation
• Review Kal-Haven Trail to ensure that Battle Creek portion is continuous.
• Emphasize North County Trail Association 24 hour bussing—especially to Fort Custer
• Install solar roadways
• More regional bus systems
• Better link south part of town to north part of town
• Attractive shared spaces
• Pay attention to entry median, curbs—upkeep—looks tired, dirty, etc.
• Better route traffic from Exit 92 to downtown
• Expand bus service to Fort Custer – more departures, long hours of operation
• More routes/times around BCC/Downtown. Add routes 7 days/week
• More bike rental stations
• Budget maintenance of Linear Path
• Implement the Non-Motorized Master Plan
• Develop more bike lanes
• Encourage use Uber and Lyft
• Maintain buses but smaller fleet
• Making sure sidewalks/trails/street repair is good in all parts of town (especially residential)
• Keep streets cleaner; especially gateways into the community

Parks, Open Spaces & the Environment
• Better lighting of parks, paths, and trails
• Install lighting in Roosevelt Park (and some benches) for safety, and increased ability to use
• More parks in outskirts of town, not just in city core
• Create parks at the old Wilson School
• Connect trail systems between the City and other trial systems and parks including Calhoun County Trail (Bridge Park to Emmett)
• Add more green space along the rivers
• Support vision and development of a whitewater park
• Continue support of Leila Arboretum
• Develop areas alongside river
• Link parks system with walking/bike paths
• Extend Linear Park from downtown to the zoo
• Keep linear park plowed/usable all year round
• More recreational opportunities along the river
• More parks like Riverside Park, full of youth activities
• Claude Evans Park is a jewel; build on that success and expand on it (pavilion water feature, etc.)
• Wood walkway along Wagner Drive looks great but no one uses it

Community Facilities
• Allow or enable people to produce their own power; find alternatives to utility monopolies—burn our garbage for power
• Turn 700 W. Michigan Ave into a community center
• Develop youth activity centers throughout the city
• Consolidate the school system
• More youth activities
• Too hard to get special use permits in the City
• Cost too much to rehab vacant buildings
• Tear down vacant buildings
• Re-use the vacant Washington-Edison School—transform into residential
• Ensure community facilities are more accessible to residents for meetings, neighborhood groups, etc.
• Increase shared programming and facility usage for different recreation providers
• Add low cost and no cost facilities for youth and families
• Identify and ensure good spatial arrangement of community facilities
• Support a community/incubator kitchen
• Add sidewalks on all streets near elementary schools
• Promote what we have
• More community facilities for artistic people and musicians

Other
• More publicity
• Active updated map for people of the City and people coming in
• Events page/place for people to see all that is going on around town easier
• Restore the health of the Kalamazoo River, remove the cement channeling, and create integrated park space; host community events and concerts on the riverfront
• Change some four-lane roads into three lanes with bike lanes
• We have to decide what we want our community to look like
• Keep rivers open for recreational use; keep industrial away
• Need four-year college
• Uniform zoning
• NPC citywide communication
• Recycling/repurpose (not included in recycling bins) for reuse
• Neighborhood resource center
• Reform city government – elect mayor and reform the ward system