

NEWS RELEASE

Oakland County and Pontiac Partner to Redevelop, Revitalize, and Reconnect Downtown

- Oakland County has closed on the sale of two office towers in Downtown Pontiac and is moving ahead on redeveloping, revitalizing, and reconnecting downtown.
- A Memorandum of Agreement between the city and county outlines plans for the relocation of the parking garage, the reopening of Saginaw Street, and the creation of walkable green space.
- The county will conduct a competitive bid process for each phase of the project. Visit OakGov.com/DowntownPontiac to stay informed and to share feedback with the county.

Aug. 17, 2023, Pontiac, Mich. – Oakland County’s major commitment to redevelop, revitalize, and reconnect Downtown Pontiac after decades of disinvestment, in partnership with the city, is taking another leap forward with the county closing on the purchase of two office buildings, several parcels of vacant land, and the Phoenix Center garage and Amphitheater. The county will refurbish the vacant former GM building on East Judson and move up to 600 employees into the building, returning a portion of the county’s talented workforce to downtown Pontiac after an absence of more than 50 years.

“In an historic opportunity, through a partnership with the city and state, we are re-investing in downtown Pontiac,” said **Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter**. “Since 2000, we have assisted communities in creating unique and vibrant downtowns and with this transformational project, it is Pontiac’s turn to shine.”

An agreement approved by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and Pontiac City Council outlines how the project will proceed:

- The city will use funds received from the State of Michigan to retire debt related to the Phoenix Center and will convey ownership of the property on which it sits to Oakland County.
- The county will demolish the Phoenix Center, reopening Saginaw Street through to what is now the south end of the Woodward Loop and creating a much more walkable environment in downtown Pontiac.
- The county’s plans include construction of a new parking garage for the use of workers in the two office buildings, as well as by residents and people doing business downtown.

Under the agreement, after removing the Phoenix Center, the county has committed to convey a minimum of two acres of land to the City of Pontiac. The city will own this property and will determine how it can be best used for the benefit of its residents.

Engaging with the people of Pontiac will be a key part of the planning process. In the coming months the people of Pontiac will be invited to participate in community meetings to ensure that they can ask questions and to share their ideas about how this project can best meet residents’ needs.

“The County’s investment will help spark a revitalization of our downtown and restore Pontiac’s rightful place as the Heart of Oakland County,” **Pontiac Mayor Greimel** said.

The project will cost more than \$120-\$130 million, \$50 million of which the State of Michigan will contribute to the project thanks to the leadership of State Sen. Jeremy Moss, State Rep. Brenda Carter, and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. Oakland County intends to invest \$10 million in funds received from the federal government through the American Rescue Plan as well. Other resources are available at the state level, including transformational brownfield redevelopment credits and community revitalization grants and credits, as well as at the federal level including through grant programs established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, including the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program. The county will also seek public/private partnerships to aid the project. The county will conduct a competitive bid process, with requests for proposals going out later this year.

“In Oakland County and across Michigan, we are building housing and commercial space, creating good-paying jobs, and making our communities better places to live, work, and invest,” said **Gov. Gretchen Whitmer**. “With funding secured in the recent, bipartisan budget I signed, Oakland County will demolish the Phoenix Center and will help redevelop the plot to make downtown more accessible to residents, workers, and visitors. Projects just like this one are part of our mission to help anyone ‘make it’ in Michigan. Let’s keep revitalizing places, investing in our communities, and building a brighter future.”

Oakland County will raze the Phoenix Center instead of rehabilitating it because cost estimates to bring the garage and amphitheater back into fully functioning shape, as well as for future maintenance, are \$61 million.

Factors that make this the right moment for this transformational investment in Downtown Pontiac include:

- The convergence of elected leaders with shared priorities: Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter and the County Board of Commissioners’ commitment to support our communities, the City of Pontiac’s revitalization efforts under the leadership of Mayor Tim Greimel and the Pontiac City Council, and Governor Whitmer’s and the Michigan Legislature’s and Gov. Whitmer’s willingness to invest in transformational projects in communities which have historically been left behind.
- Avoiding capital costs on existing county buildings following a Plante Moran study which revealed that more than \$550 million in critical repairs are needed at buildings on the Oakland County campus in northwest Pontiac and Waterford. By relocating up to 600 employees to downtown Pontiac and consolidating three existing buildings into one, the county will avoid up to \$54 million in costs that would have to be done to make current buildings safe and up-to-code for continued occupancy. The county will notify employees and the public when it determines which departments and divisions are moving downtown.
- The reconfiguring of the Woodward Loop by the Michigan Department of Transportation will be completed in 2025 or 2026.

Visit OakGov.com/DowntownPontiac to stay informed and to share feedback with the county.

Additional quotes from speakers and other leaders:

State Sen. Jeremy Moss: “Pontiac’s day has finally arrived. When our new majority was elected, we said we were going to pass a budget with a lens of equity and lift people up who had not been given a fair shot in many, many years. This \$50 million state investment in downtown Pontiac is the single

largest allocation for a district project in our state budget. This was my priority as President Pro Tempore of the Michigan Senate and as I told the Pontiac story to my colleagues, it soon became a statewide priority as well. I'm proud to be able to fight for Pontiac as State Senator and be a part of this city's journey."

State Rep. Brenda Carter: "The opportunities to improve the infrastructure and increase the investments in the urban cores of Michigan is real. The redevelopment and revitalization of the City of Pontiac will put county employees back downtown in offices. The purchase by Oakland County of the Ottawa Towers and the Phoenix garage and other properties is the right move. We're clearing out the blight and putting the fight back into making Pontiac an economic hub again. Pontiac is on its way back and I'm glad to be instrumental in making it happen."

Oakland County Board of Commissioners Chairman David T. Woodward: "Stepping foot on these properties really drives home the historic investment the county is bringing to Pontiac with this purchase. Through economic opportunities, additional green spaces and a county presence, we're re-rooting ourselves in our county seat for generations to come. Oakland County is coming home!"

Oakland County Commissioner Angela Powell of Pontiac: "This project is an amazing opportunity for our city, our community and our county. I look forward to moving forward with this project as a member of the community and representative for that community at the county level, and I know it will bring meaningful change for our residents."

Pontiac City Council President and Executive Director of Oakland County's Historical Society Mike McGuinness: "This is an historic moment for both Pontiac and Oakland County. For 150 years there were substantial county facilities in the heart of downtown Pontiac; with this collaborative transformational project, that will be true once more. There is much important work that now lies ahead, but together we can keep taking bold steps forward that'll positively shape our community's future."

Pontiac City Councilwoman Melanie Rutherford: "It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new time and Pontiac is feeling good! This deal is about to change the history of the City of Pontiac creating a true partnership with Oakland County and the City of Pontiac—where we have gotten past our fears and used our faith to give hope for a bright tomorrow, because when Pontiac wins we all win."

The Rev. Douglas P. Jones of Welcome Missionary Baptist Church: "This agreement and development signal the partnership of congruent goals between Pontiac and Oakland County through these two progressive leaders."