

In the past week or so a social media discussion has blossomed regarding the Village property to the West of the former Downs buildings. Consistent with the Village of Lawton's Land Use Plan, the long term objective for the property has been seeing it developed as an industrial site. In the absence of interest in development, the property has been used for ballfields for our youth.

Lawton is in the process of several significant initiatives and projects, including:

- A successful fund-raising effort to construct a splash pad for area children, resulting in \$150,000 raised through local contributions and matching grants.
- The recent sale of a vacant nursing home to be redeveloped for several uses, resulting in approximately 30 jobs.
- Substantial efforts aimed at blight reduction, resulting in opportunities for residential infill, housing rehab opportunities, and improved quality of life.
- Planning for a 2023 major downtown streetscape project in cooperation with MDOT, resulting in improvement to walkability, downtown enhancement, and traffic calming on the M-40 Michigan trunk line – our Main Street.
- Local events and community involvement, including Summerfest, Christmas In The Village, and other opportunities to attract families to the community.
- Involved local leadership at all levels of the community.

The 27 acres west of the former Downs site is one of the few industrial properties remaining in the village. Next-Gen Customs, the company who now owns the Downs site, plans to expand into the land now occupied by the ball fields, if the Village will sell the property to them. The land has been appraised and they are willing to pay the full market value price. The Village intends to use all those funds to build four baseball fields on other land within the village.

The Village has already commissioned a Phase 1 environmental study for the proposed site on Fourth Street as the potential site of the new ball fields.

Next-Gen's current plans call for the creation of up to 150 jobs over the next couple of years as they complete building their manufacturing facilities. They are also looking at land in other communities but prefer their entire manufacturing operation located together, here in Lawton. Should they be unable to keep their entire operation in Lawton most of the anticipated jobs will go elsewhere.

The youth baseball program will have use of the current property for their 2020 season, and they have been involved in working with the Village to make the transition process as smooth as possible.

We hope the above information will help everyone understand what we're trying to do to bring more jobs and residents to our village, our schools, and the area community. We are confident the concerns and issues raised on social media can be addressed and resolved in the days and weeks ahead. We believe serving the long-term goal of building a more vibrant and appealing community will benefit everyone who calls Lawton our home.