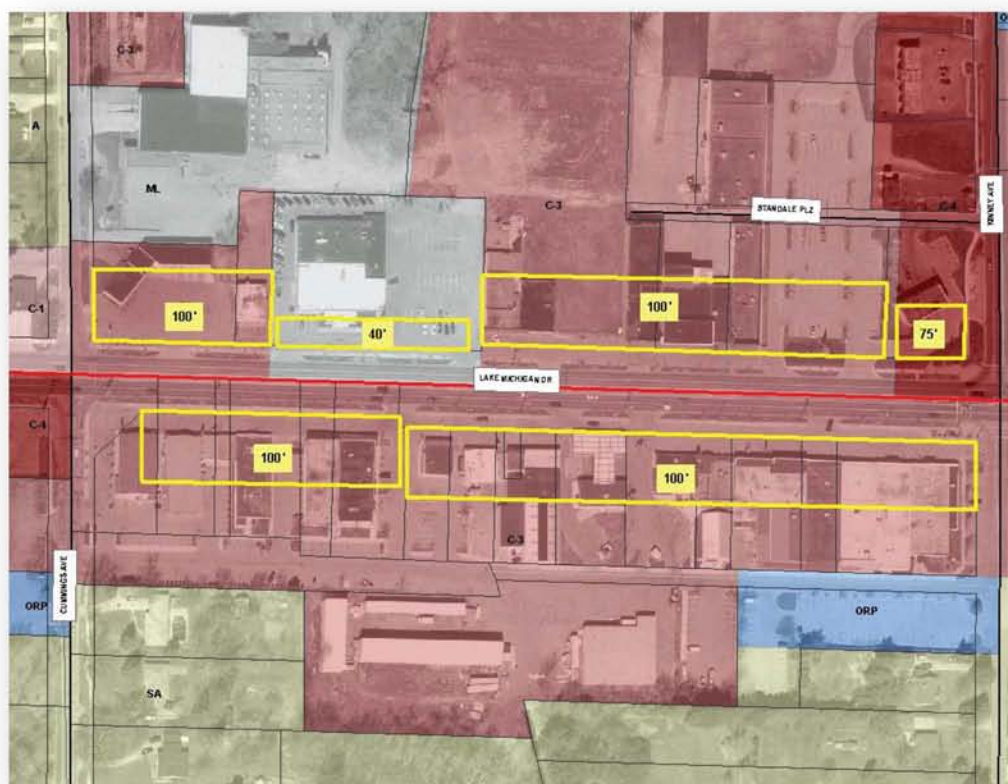


City of Walker 2008 Standale Downtown District Property Analysis Report



Report Date: Dec. 10th, 2008



Introduction: This report was compiled and created by the City of Walker Planning Department, following the direction of the Planning Commission and Ordinance Committee.

The physical extent of the study area can be defined as the “purple” properties identified on the Regulating Plan Map in the Standale Downtown District Zoning Ordinance. In general terms, these properties are located along Lake Michigan Drive from Wilson Avenue to Kinney Avenue. These properties include “side streets” such as St. Clair and Cummings plus “downtown entrance areas” that wrap around the corners at Wilson and Kinney.

The goal of this report is to reveal and explain the following within the study area:

1. Existing non-conforming situations under current “traditional” zoning;
2. Existing building setbacks;
3. Front setbacks prescribed by the Standale Downtown District ordinance.

Items 1 and 2 above were relatively easy to generate, as they describe existing conditions. Item 3 was more difficult and was generalized using the “Primary Frontage Zone” standards in the Standale Downtown District ordinance. Side and rear setbacks plus the potential complexity of “Secondary Frontage Zone” building locations were avoided for the sake of clarity.

Maps and photos contained in this report were generated in REGIS using orthophotos from 2003 and Pictometry images from 2008. Parcel lines are presented as currently existing in the Assessor’s database. Zoning classifications are current per City of Walker records.

Item 1: Existing Non-Conforming Situations Under Current “Traditional” Zoning

Existing zoning classifications within the study area vary from C-1 Local Commercial to C-4 Outdoor Commercial. The majority of the study area is zoned C-3 Highway Commercial. A limited area is zoned ML – Light Industrial.

The following table identifies setback requirements per the existing zoning districts.

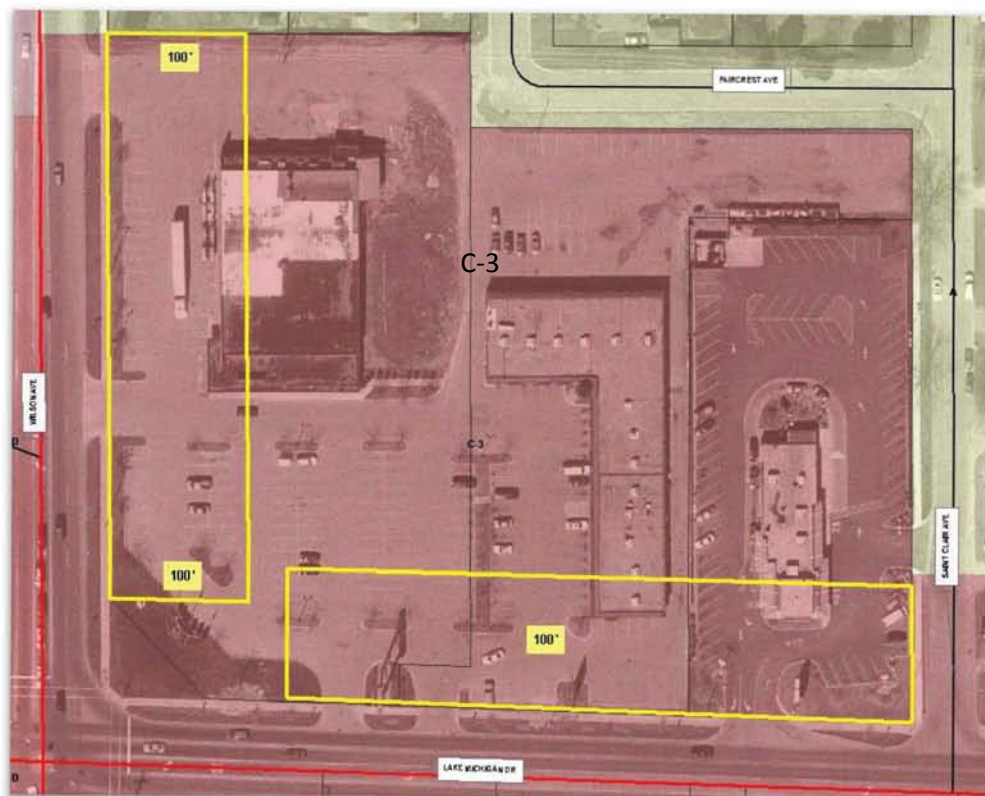
Zoning District	Front Setback*	Side Setback	Rear Setback
C-1	35'	0 or 15'	24'
C-2	200'	15'	24'
C-3	100'	15'	24'
C-4	75'	35'	24'
ML	40'	20'	20' or 50'

*Front setbacks are measured from street Right Of Way lines.



Given the variety of zoning districts within the study area, plus the inconsistent location of adjacent Rights Of Way, the non-conforming situation often varies from parcel to parcel.

The following maps use a yellow line to show the required front setback per the existing zoning of particular properties. The maps start at Wilson Avenue and Lake Michigan Drive and proceed eastward to Kinney Avenue. The underlying aerial photo (dated 2003) illustrates existing building setback non-conformities within the study area.

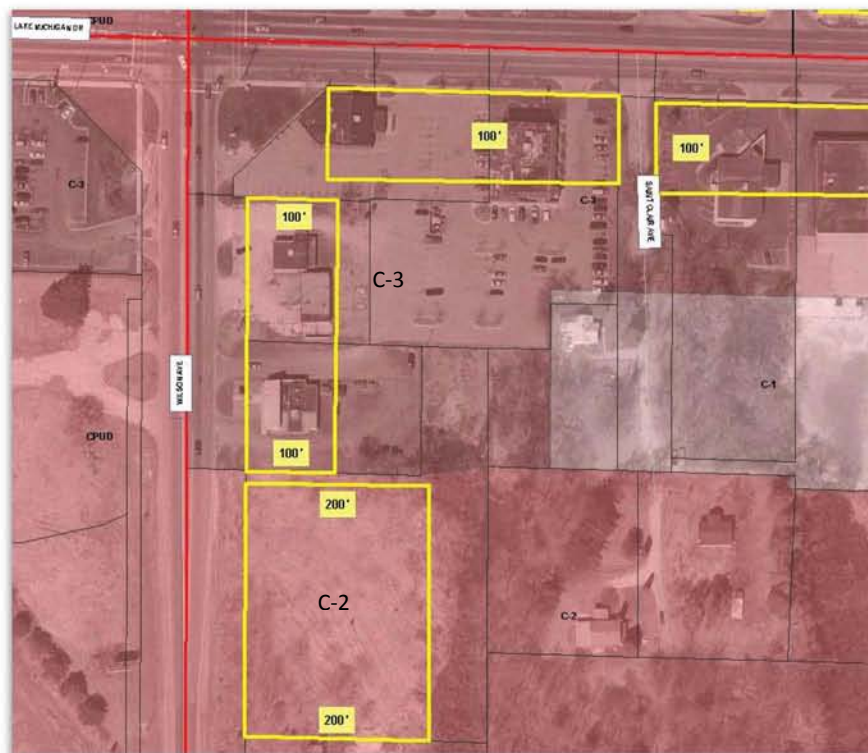


Map 1: Northeast Corner of Wilson and Lake Michigan Drive

The new Walgreen's building will be located within the current Ralph's Market parking lot. Setbacks variances were obtained based on site plans approved by the Planning Commission to "frame the corner" as an entrance into Downtown Standale.

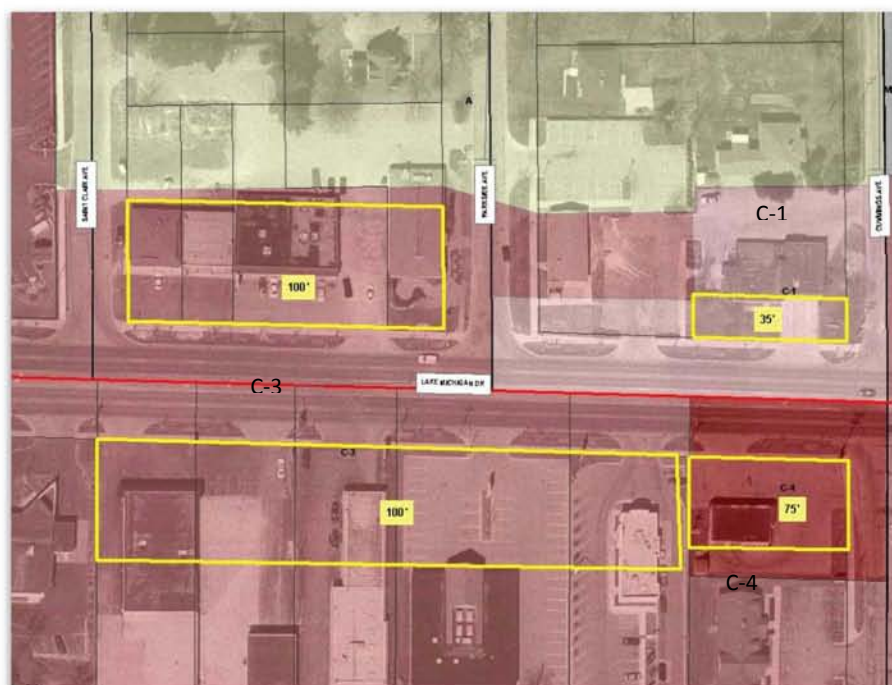
All of the existing buildings shown in Map 1 are non-conforming in some manner. This is quite common within the study area, as subsequent maps will show.





Map 2: Southeast corner of Wilson and Lake Michigan Drive.

All existing buildings are non-conforming and fall within required front setbacks. This map is a good example of the inconsistencies between existing zoning districts and their regulations.

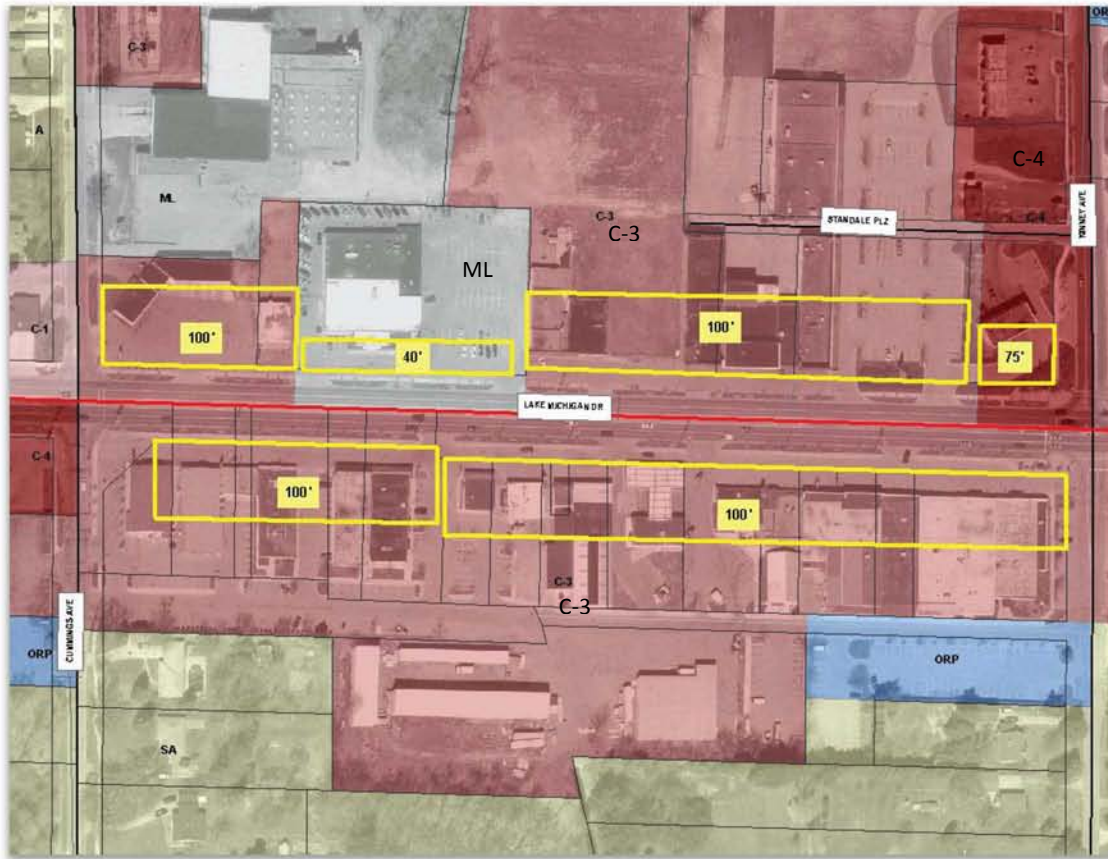


Map 3: St. Clair to Cummings along Lake Michigan Drive.

The existing zoning is a mixture of C-1, C-3 and C-4 commercial.

All buildings except the old Fire Station #2 structures are non-conforming.





Map 4: Cummings to Kinney along Lake Michigan Drive

This stretch of the study area has the many existing elements of “downtown form,” as will be discussed later in this report.

Many of the buildings on the south side of M-45 were constructed in a 1950’s-60’s “Motor Mall” style. All of the structures except those in the ML district are non-conforming.

Item 1 Summary:

Most of the existing structures within the study area are non-conforming due to front setbacks. This is not surprising, given the variety of zoning districts and the differing dates of construction for the buildings.

As such, the existing zoning classifications may not be beneficial to landowners, aside from the associated lists of permitted “commercial” and “industrial” land uses, which obviously add value to the properties.

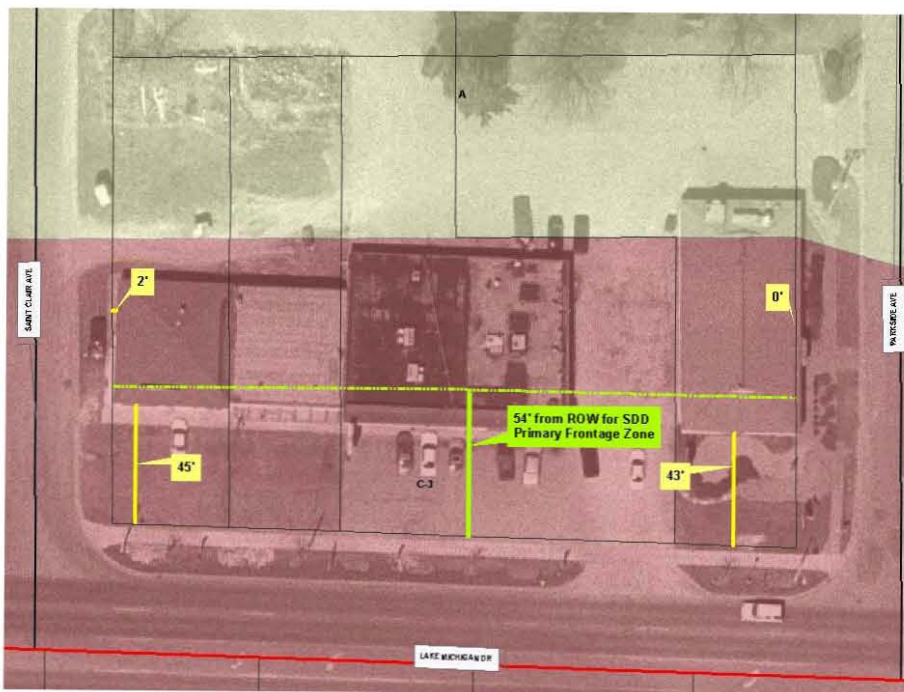


Items 2 and 3: Comparison of Existing Building Setbacks to Standards of the Standale Downtown District Ordinance.

Items 2 and 3 are combined herein to make a “compare and contrast” review easier for the reader.

The following maps project Primary Frontage Zone setbacks under the Standale Downtown District (SDD) ordinance onto the existing building base. Side setbacks and Secondary Frontage Zone specifics have not been projected due to numerous variables in the site plan design process.

This section ends with the current “Cummings – Four Corners” proposal, submitted by Cornerstone Architects and accepted by the City of Walker.



Map 5: Focus on north side of M-45 from St. Clair to Parkside.

This is a short block with significant Primary and Secondary Frontage Zone area under the SDD.

The existing buildings have been developed somewhat consistent with the standards of the Standale Downtown District ordinance.

Note the existing building setbacks in comparison to the 54-foot requirement of the Standale Downtown District (SDD) ordinance. While the existing structures are built as “strip malls” the site is designed with many “downtown” components required by the SDD: A front service drive; a side access to the rear of the property; rear parking; pedestrian access; street trees, etc.

The figure below is taken from the SDD ordinance on Page 5. It shows cross-section and plan view perspectives of the Primary Frontage Zone’s prescriptive building form layout. There is some consistency with the current arrangement of structures and functions shown in Map 5 above.



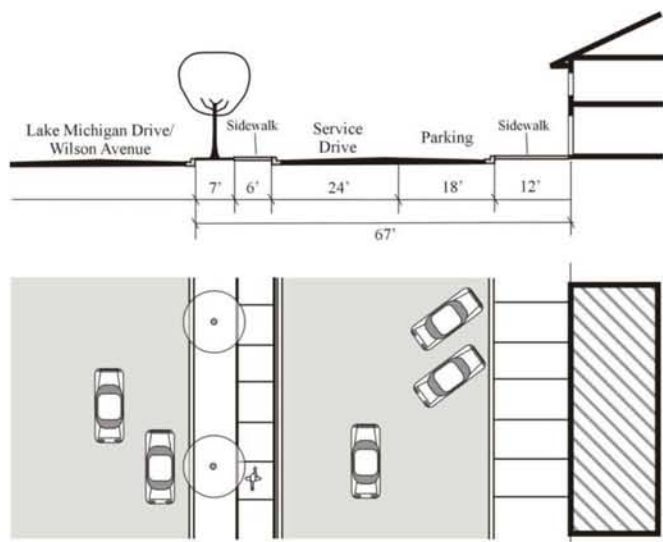


Figure 1: Primary Frontage Zone requirements from SDD Ordinance, Page 5.

Note that the roadside sidewalk and street trees will likely be located within existing Rights Of Way. The service drive, front parking and building sidewalk will be located within the subject property.

This facilitates the preservation of streetscaping improvements that have been created and maintained by the Walker Downtown Development Authority (DDA).

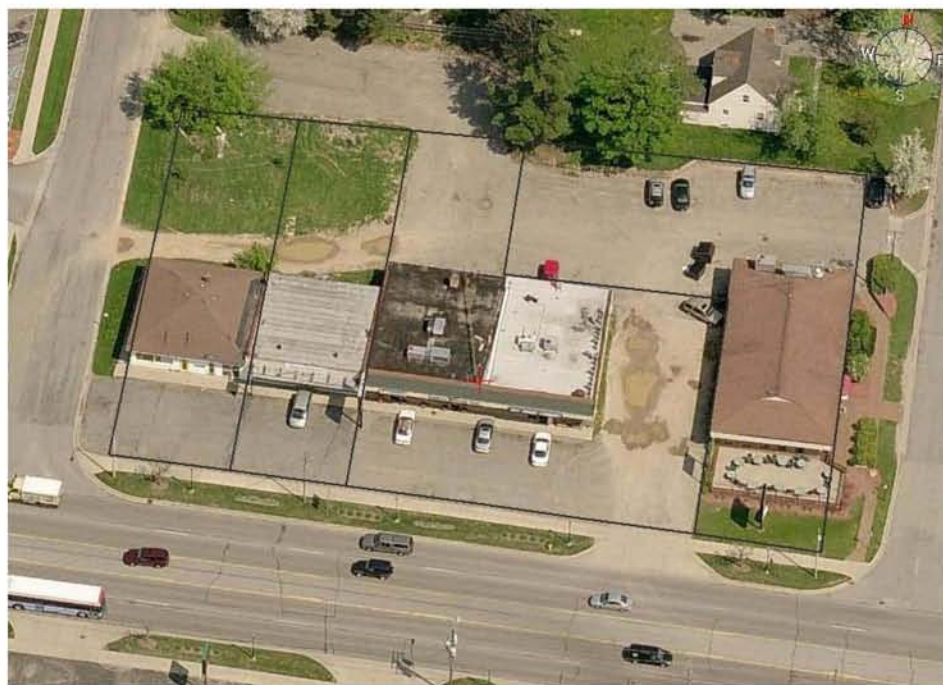
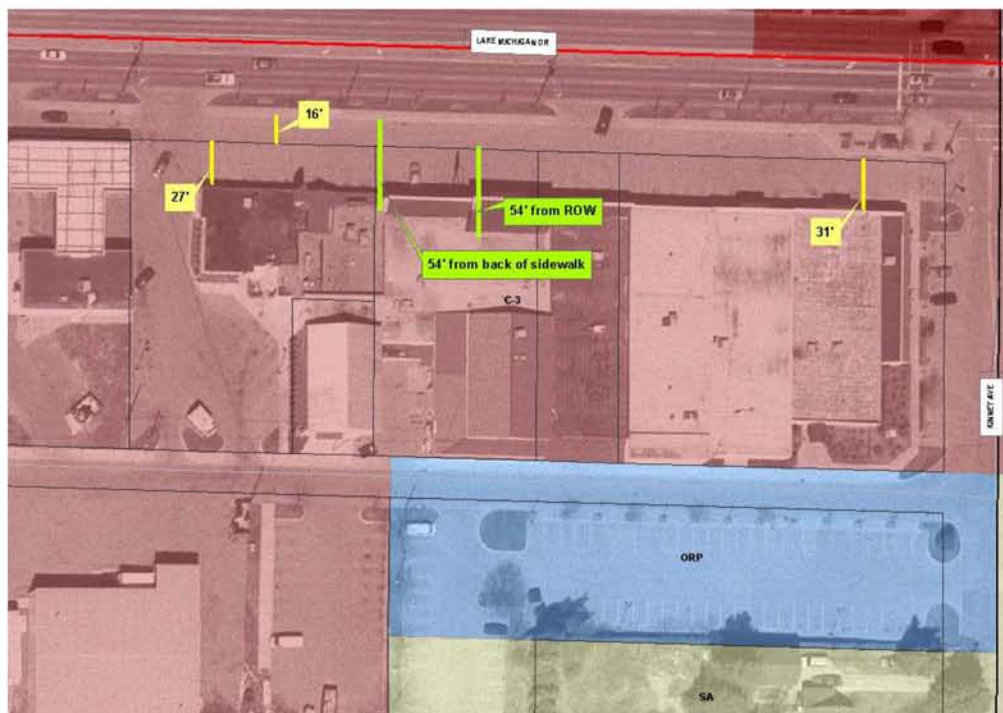


Photo 1: Pictometry image (2008) of area shown on Map 5.

This image further reveals the current presence of several SDD “downtown details” between St. Clair and Parkside along Lake Michigan Drive.

Redevelopment of this site consistent with SDD standards would reproduce and enhance many of the “best design principles” already in existence on these properties.





Map 6: Focus on south side of M-45 west of Kinney.

This stretch of Lake Michigan Drive currently exhibits several “downtown form” requirements of the SDD.

Buildings are close to the street. A front service is in place. Side and rear parking is available, some owned and maintained by the Standale DDA. Pedestrian access and streetscaping are present.

One of the challenges facing this focus area involves the location of the M-45 Right Of Way (ROW). Map 6 displays the ROW line as it bisects the front service drive. Measurements for existing buildings are shown from this ROW line. The green lines show the 54' SDD setback, both from the ROW line and the back of the Lake Michigan Drive sidewalk.

It would obviously be beneficial during redevelopment activities to measure from the back of the existing sidewalk. This requires discussion with MDOT.



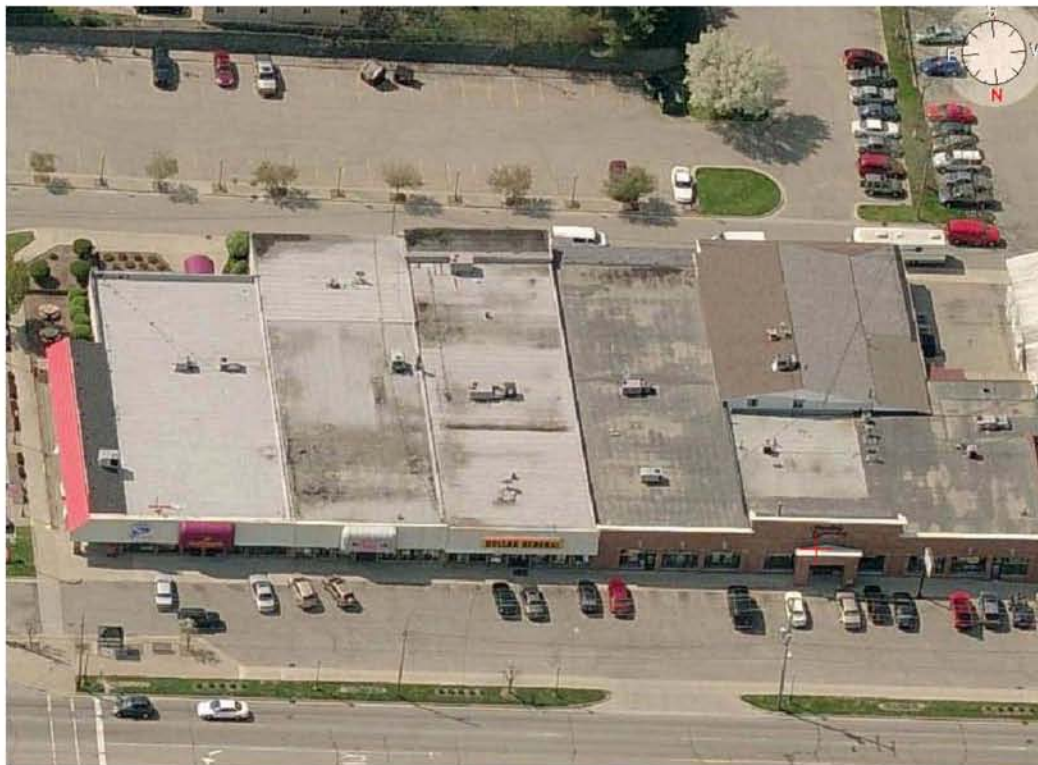


Photo 2: Pictometry (2008) image from LaVeen's to Standale Interiors, see Map 6.

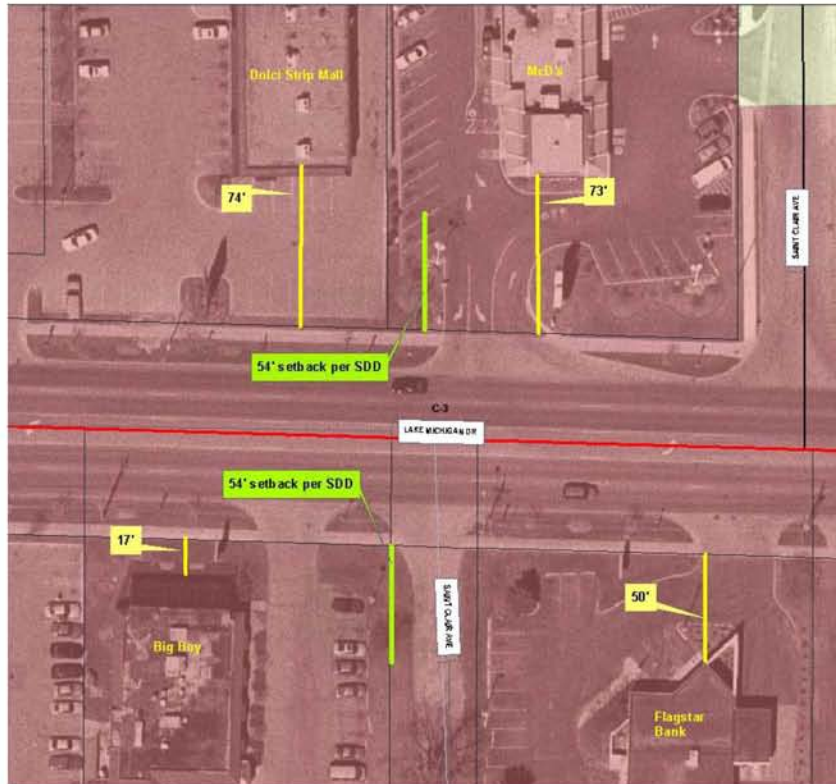
The image above illustrates this focus area's consistency with many elements of the SDD: Standale Interiors has recently remodeled their front façade using modular brick. The buildings are served by a generous sidewalk. A public bus stop is located at the corner. The DDA has made numerous streetscaping investments that draw attention to the site as a desirable place to stop and shop.

If the reader imagines this focus area with two and three story, mixed-use brick buildings, then a visual image of the desired outcome of the Standale Downtown District ordinance will be created.

There are numerous individual properties within this stretch of buildings. Redevelopment might require a significant effort to assemble these properties into one project.

The next focus area examines a part of the study area that is rather inconsistent with the standards of the Standale Downtown District ordinance.





Map 7: Focus on McDonald's and Flagstar Bank sites.

This area has developed under more recent "highway commercial" site planning. As such, these sites lack connectivity for pedestrians or vehicles. They are designed for quick "in and out" service. The main buildings are not designed or located in a "downtown" manner.

However, given the corporate ownership of these properties, redevelopment may occur sooner than in other locations where local businesses are owned and operated.



Photo 3: Pictometry image (2008) of sites shown on Map 7

Note the lack of parking lot connectivity between the sites.

Note the "stand alone" nature of the built environment.

An additional issue in this location is the status (present and future) of St. Clair south of Lake Michigan Drive.



The Cummings – Four Corners Project

The City of Walker has already tested the practical application of the Standale Downtown District ordinance via a process called The Cummings – Four Corners Project.

Cornerstone Architects and Constructors Inc. has successfully completed a deliberative Request For Qualifications and Request For Proposals process with the City regarding property at the intersection of Cummings and Lake Michigan Drive.



Map 8:

Cummings - Four Corners Site.

The property outlined in blue is owned by the City of Walker.

The site is approximately 1.7 acres in area and fronts on Lake Michigan Drive, Cummings and Parkside.

The property has been identified in the Downtown Standale Master Plan as a “Four Corners” redevelopment area...a focal point in the spatial center of Downtown Standale.

The site contains the old Fire Station #2, which was being leased by the Standale DDA. The building with the red “X” on it has been removed.

Figure 2 below displays the Four Corners built environment standards found on Page 5 of the Standale Downtown District ordinance. The Cornerstone team worked within these prescriptive regulations when designing their proposal for the Cummings – Four Corners project.



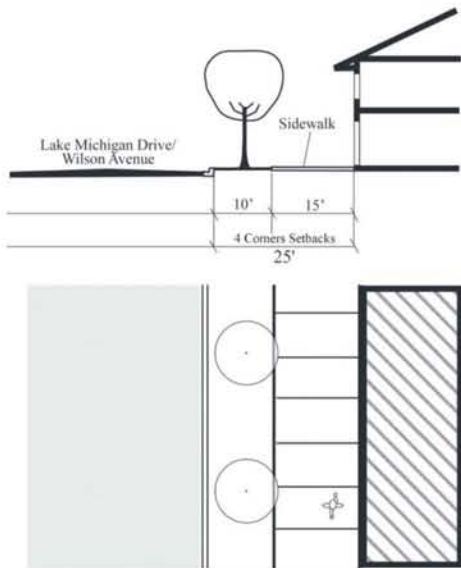


Figure 2: Taken from Page 5 of the SDD ordinance for the Four Corners Intersection.

This figure alters the built environment requirements for the Four Corners area by pulling the structures up to the corner and encouraging a tall, prominent building that makes a “downtown statement.”

Figure 3 below shows the building elevation plan submitted by Cornerstone Architects and, subsequently, approved by the City of Walker.



Figure 3: Approved Building Elevation Plan for the Cummings – Four Corners Project

The project is on hold due to the economic downturn but will eventually become reality, forming a true “cornerstone” for Downtown Standale.



Staff Conclusions:

1. Many, if not most, of the existing commercial buildings within the study area are non-conforming due to encroachment in front setbacks as required under the current zoning district standards.
2. Many locations within the study area currently exhibit “downtown form” characteristics similar to those required within the Standale Downtown District ordinance.
3. Some corporate locations do not exhibit “downtown form” characteristics and may be difficult to retrofit. However, these properties may turn over quicker than lots owned and operated by local businesses.
4. The Cummings – Four Corners Project has provided “ground truth testing” for the Standale Downtown Ordinance. The eventual economic rebound will facilitate the construction of this project, thereby creating redevelopment synergy in the rest of the Downtown Standale study area.

Respectfully submitted,



Frank Wash, AICP, PCP
City of Walker Planning Director

