

Sub Area #1 Land Use Plan

City of Walker, Michigan

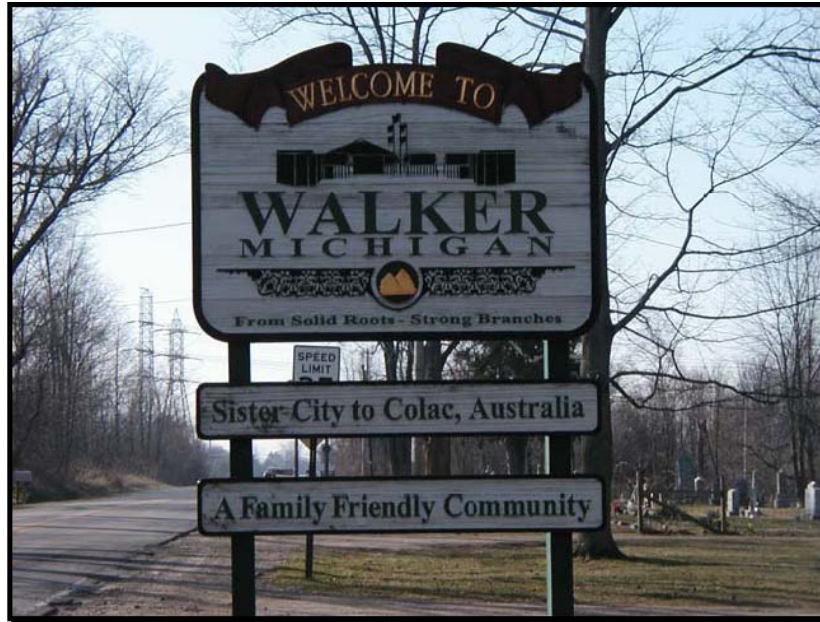


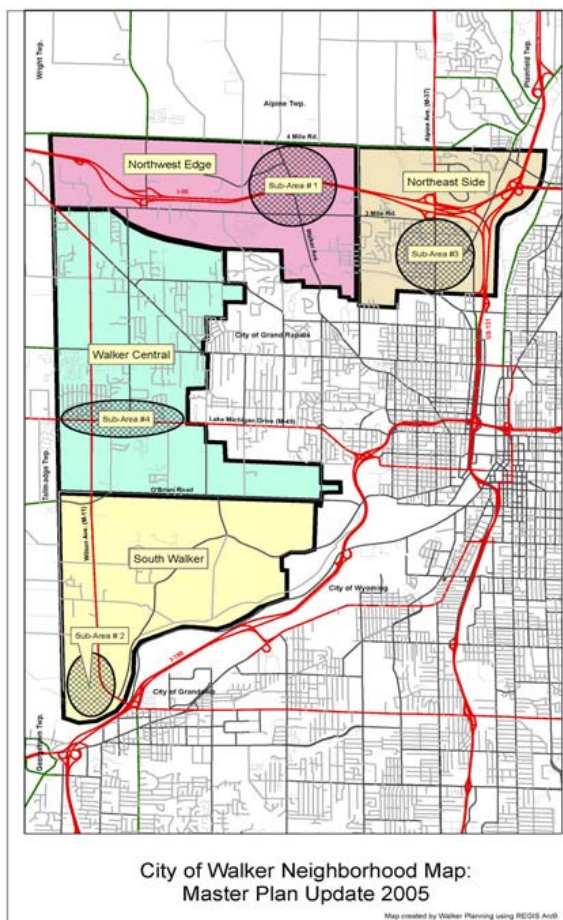
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Introduction

The City of Walker has undertaken an update of its 1998 Master Plan. The main goal of the process has been to create a guidebook for future land use decisions that will be understood and supported by the community while concurrently addressing the economic, social and environmental realities facing the City of Walker.

Much of the 1998 Walker Master Plan remains valid. However, new planning issues have arisen that require additional analyses. To that end, four sub-areas have been identified by the Walker City and Planning Commissions for detailed study, including (see Neighborhood Map, below):

- ◆ **Sub-Area #1** - defined by Four Mile Road, 3 Mile Road, Bristol Avenue and Fruit Ridge Avenue.
- ◆ **Sub-Area #2** - located west of Wilson Avenue adjacent to I-196.
- ◆ **Sub-Area #3** - located from I-96 to Ann Street along the Alpine Avenue corridor.
- ◆ **Sub-Area #4** - located along the M-45/Lake Michigan Drive corridor in Standale.



This report will deal specifically with Sub-Area #1.

The planning process and resulting land use recommendations for Sub-Area #1 provide a sound foundation on which to base future land use decisions.

The Sub-Area #1 plan will act as an effective implementation tool that reflects a balance between citizen desires and the long-term best interests of the City of Walker.

Other actions that may be taken as a result of this effort include updates to the City's Zoning Ordinance, Parks and Recreation Plan and Capital Improvements Plan.

Although elected and appointed

officials adopted the Sub-Area #1 plan for the City of Walker, the public played an important advisory role in this process, providing input and acting as an effective sounding board for both the Planning Commission and the City Commission. The guiding principles for public participation were to:

- ◆ Provide the public with an opportunity to actively participate and be heard.
- ◆ Ensure the master planning process was fair and open to all.
- ◆ Establish respect for a diversity of ideas and opinions.

The master planning process encouraged citizen participation at two junctures.

The first occurred during the initial planning phase for Sub-Area #1 during a Community Forum. The public was given the opportunity to learn about the planning process, identify relevant issues and opportunities, learn about the context and physical parameters for the Sub-Area, and participate in the development of land use and planning concepts. Planners, designers and members of the Walker Planning Commission and City Commission used results from these Forums to develop an initial land use concept for the Sub-Area that could be later tested and evaluated by the public.

The second opportunity for public participation occurred when, based on the outcomes of the previous public meeting, the draft land use concepts were presented and discussed. During this second round of Community Forums, the public had the opportunity to comment and provide additional opinions. These comments proved helpful and insightful when completing the final future land use plan for Sub-Area #1.

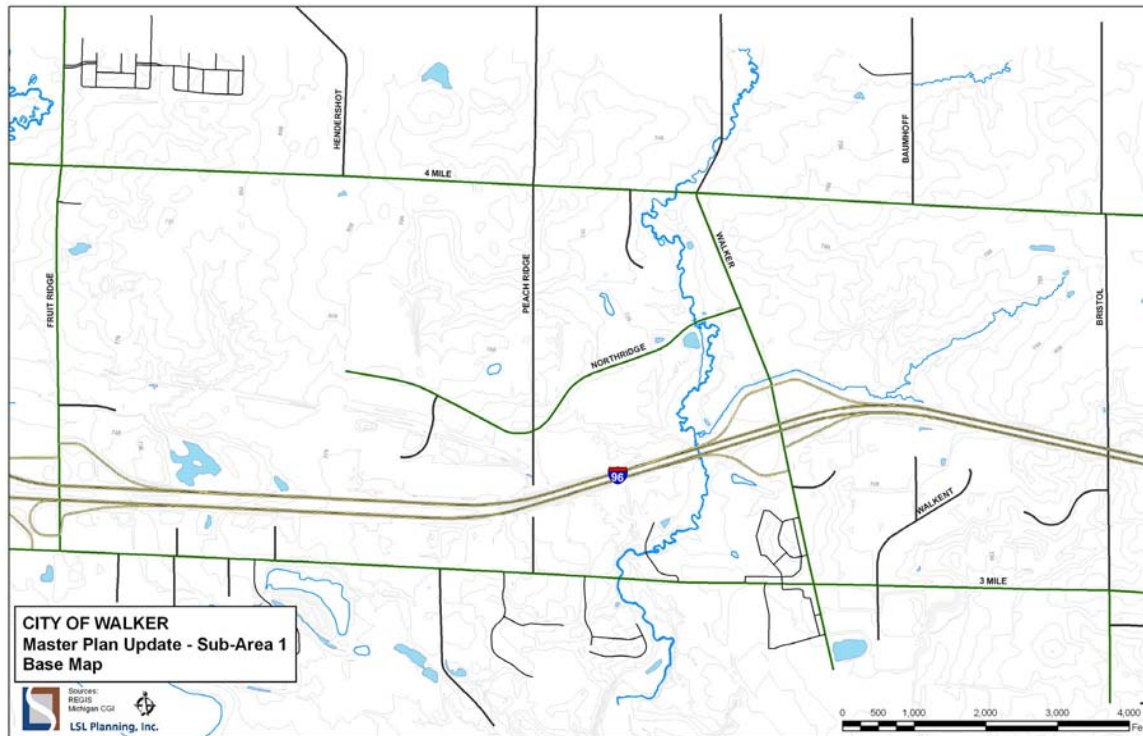
It should be noted that each meeting was noticed using the following methods:

- ◆ Direct mailing of post cards
- ◆ Notices in the Grand Rapids Press and The Advance newspapers
- ◆ Posting of meetings on the City Hall entryways
- ◆ Posting of meetings on the City of Walker website.

Following the two public participation meetings, a third meeting was held. This third meeting was also open to the public yet was reserved for decision-making processes for the Walker City and Planning Commissions. Staff and consulting planners reviewed the progress to date, analyzed gathered information and offered recommendations on future land use plans for Sub-Area #1. The City and Planning Commissions then deliberated and eventually decided upon a draft Sub-Area plan, which was then plugged into the formal State of Michigan Planning Act's review and approval process.

Sub Area #1

Sub-Area #1 contains approximately 1,500 acres and is bounded by Four Mile Road on the north, Bristol Avenue on the east, Three Mile Road on the south and Fruit Ridge Avenue on the west (see Base Map, below).



Base Map

Existing Conditions

Land Use

The industrial land uses north and south of I-96 are part of a major employment corridor that parallels I-96 west from US-131 (see Regional Context map). The corridor south of I-96 has been developed; however, much of the area to the north is still vacant.

Residential uses, at relatively low densities, are present along Four Mile Road, as well as along portions of Fruit Ridge and Peach Ridge Avenues. Very low density residential has developed along Indian Mill Creek, south of Four Mile Road. Homes are also located along Three Mile just to the east of Walker Avenue and a new residential subdivision is under development along Bristol Avenue, just south of I-96. Although homes are located along sections of Walker Avenue, some are in the process of being moved, or demolished to make way for new development, as called for in the 1998 City of Walker Master Plan.

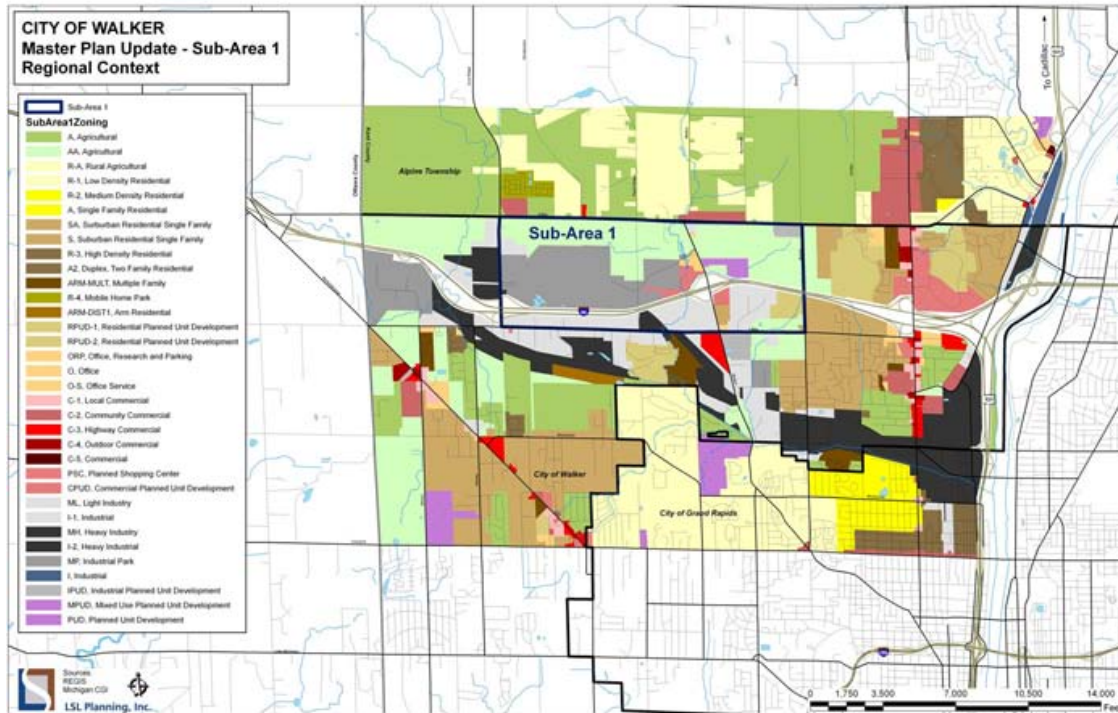
The majority of office uses, including the Meijer headquarters building, are currently clustered around the Walker Avenue interchange.

Commercial development in Sub-Area #1 is relatively low at this time, with the majority located at the I-96 interchanges with Walker Avenue and Fruit Ridge Avenue. A mixed commercial and office development is under construction north of the expressway along

Walker Avenue, while an industrial greenhouse operation is located at the corner of Bristol Avenue and Four Mile Road.

Zoning

Along with the dominant industrial zoning, there are large areas zoned Agricultural covering nearly all of the existing residential neighborhoods-see Regional Context map.



Many of the existing commercial and office developments, especially near the Walker Avenue interchange, are zoned PUD. The greenhouse operation at Bristol Avenue and Four Mile Road is zoned as an Industrial PUD.

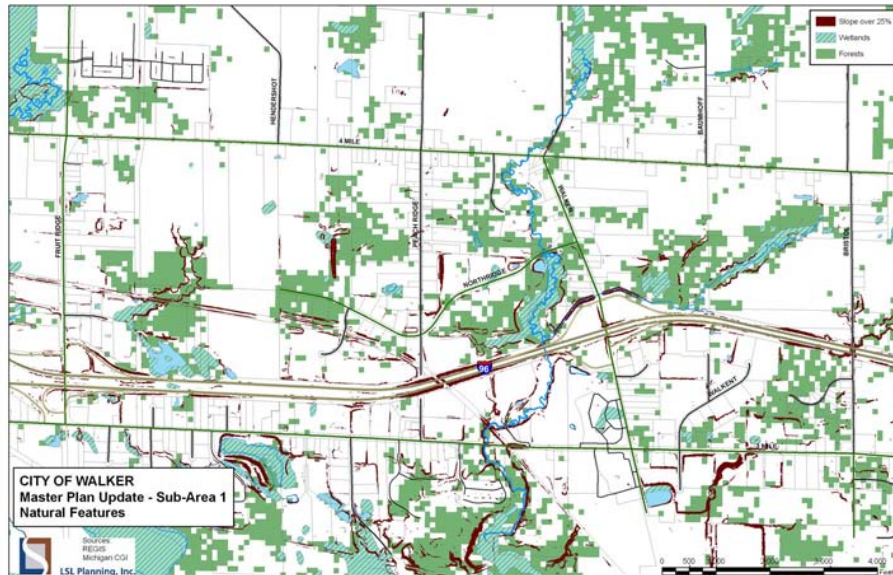
It is important to note that industrial zoning stretches from Walker Avenue west to Fruit Ridge Avenue, along a public street route called North Ridge Avenue.

Alpine Township Land Uses

Kenowa Hills High School and Middle School are located near the intersection of Four Mile and Hendershot Avenue in Alpine Township, north of Sub-Area #1. The Gracewil Country Club, which includes a 36-hole golf course, is located near Four Mile Road and Walker Avenue. Although the dominant land use pattern in the township along Four Mile Road is low density residential and agriculture, some small-scale commercial development is present between Walker Avenue and Baumhoff Avenue. Other commercial zoning may be found at the northeast corner of Fruit Ridge Avenue and Four Mile Road.

Natural Features

Sub-Area #1 was historically characterized by farm fields and orchards, many of which have already transitioned to other land uses. Some farms remain in operation and in varying states of repair.

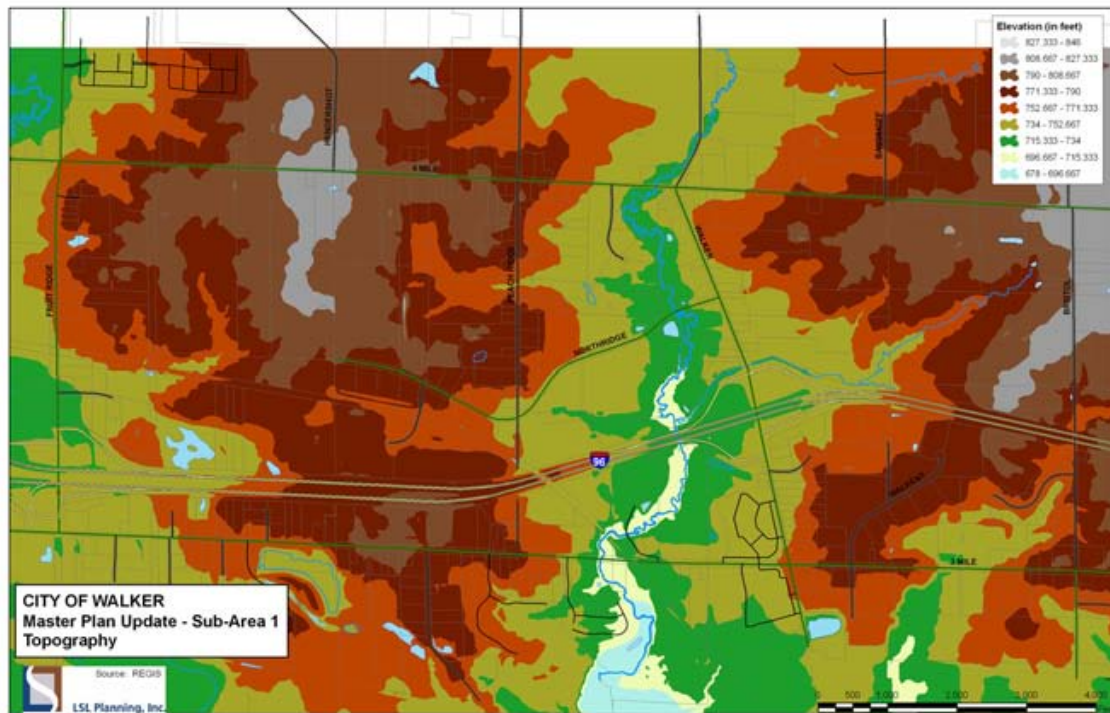


Natural Features Map

Forests and woodlots are somewhat limited due to clearing for agricultural uses. Current forest cover is primarily found along watercourses, such as Indian Mill Creek, which bisects the study area and ultimately connects with the Grand River. Wetlands and areas of steep slopes are also located along this watercourse.

Topography is gently rolling and landforms have a general north-south orientation. This area is part of the southerly edge of the Fruit Ridge – a series of end moraines generated by historical glacial activity.

A ridgeline along Hendershot Avenue splits the Sub-Area into two localized watersheds, which requires sewer flows to be directed to two separate service districts (see Topography map, below).



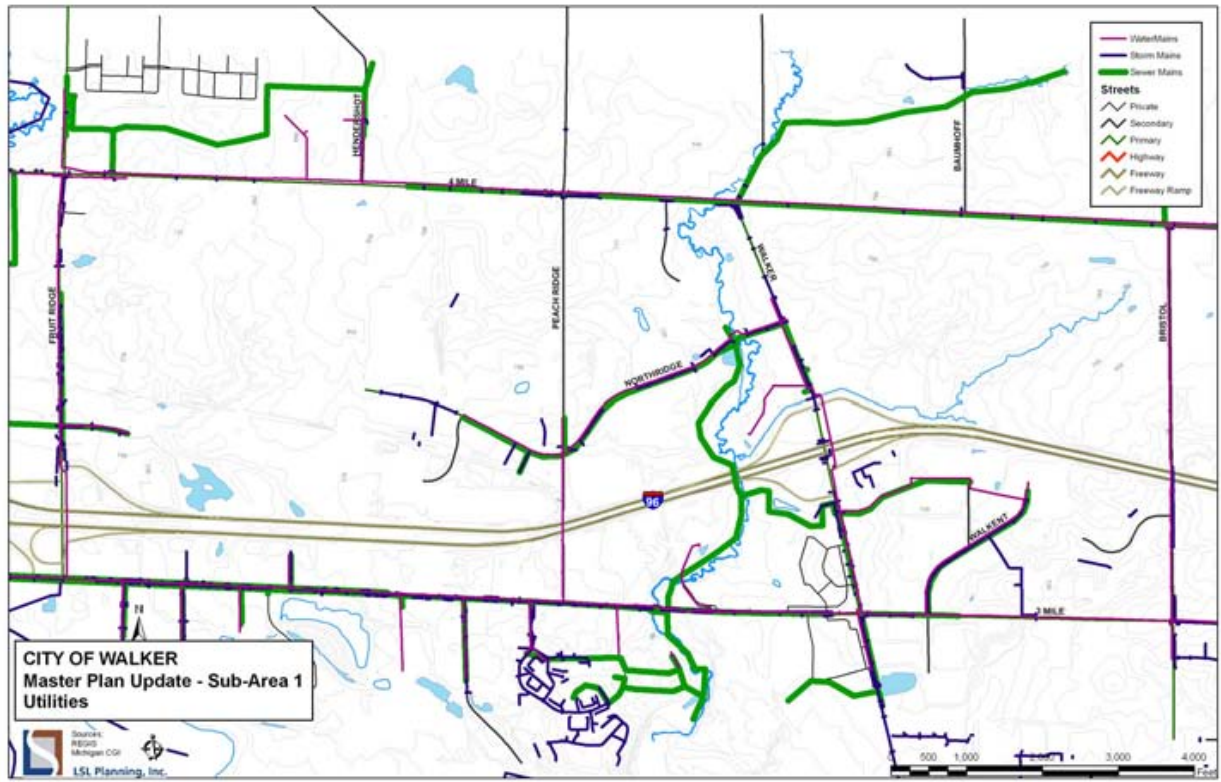
Topography Map

Infrastructure

Sub-Area #1 is currently served by public water lines and sanitary sewers; however, both require upgrading (see Utilities map).

Low water pressure is a developing issue. A water storage tank is planned near the intersection of Hendershot Avenue and Four Mile. This tank will improve water line pressures in the district.

Sanitary sewer problems are due to overburdened facilities downstream. The Three Mile Road-Remembrance lift station, accepting westerly flows, is undersized and will require phased reconstruction over five to ten years. The Indian Mill Creek service district, serving the majority of the area, is planned for a \$12 million, three-phase reconstruction project that is slated to start during the fall/winter of 2005.



Public Utilities Map

Transportation

Sub-Area #1 is bisected by I-96, which connects US-131 with US-31 (see Aerial Base Map). Sub-Area #1 is served by two highway interchanges at Fruit Ridge Avenue and Walker Avenue, both of which are constrained by narrow bridge crossings and inadequate ramp configurations.

The Walker Avenue interchange is slated for major reconstruction beginning in 2006 to widen the overpass bridge to six lanes. The project will include two left turn lanes onto southbound Walker Avenue from the westbound off-ramp plus the addition of a partial cloverleaf to the southwest quadrant of the interchange, permitting unimpeded movement onto eastbound I-96 from southbound Walker Avenue. No improvements are currently planned for the Fruit Ridge Avenue interchange.

North Ridge Drive currently serves the major employment center west of Walker Avenue and north of I-96. However, it terminates with an approximately 6,000 foot long cul-de-sac, which forces traffic from the industrial area to use Walker Avenue and its interchange with I-96. An extension of North Ridge Drive to Fruit Ridge Avenue would relieve traffic on Walker Avenue and the interchange and provide increased public safety routing in case of emergencies.



The offset intersection alignments of Four Mile Road with Walker Avenue and Bristol Avenue also present traffic congestion and safety problems. Realignments should be studied and implemented as soon as possible.

Other issues include the I-96 underpass on Bristol Avenue where the bridge piers are located close to the pavement edge, thus affecting the potential to widen Bristol Avenue. A similar issue applies to Three Mile Road where a railroad viaduct is closely spaced with a bridge crossing of Indian Mill Creek. The result is a potential future traffic bottleneck on Three Mile Road.

The Alpine Avenue commercial corridor lies just to the east of Sub-Area #1. This is also route M-37. Traffic volumes have been heavy since the 1970s on this stretch of M-37. The maturation of the Alpine Avenue commercial strip has generated many more vehicle trips per day. Fruit Ridge Avenue is becoming used as an alternate route to M-37, as supported by recent traffic count data.

An additional parallel road connector from Alpine Avenue to Fruit Ridge Avenue should be examined. Extensions of North Ridge Avenue to Fruit Ridge Avenue and Cordes Avenue should be studied. A modified grid system will help disperse traffic loads and lessen peak hour congestion. Continuing the status quo system of cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets will exacerbate congestion problems.

Sub-Area #1 Project Timeline

The Walker City and Planning Commissions agreed to the following master plan update process:

- ❖ First, engage the public via community meetings and workshops;
- ❖ Second, provide community leadership via decisions made by the elected and appointed officials, based largely on citizen input, with recommendations offered by the Walker planning department and LSL Planning consultants.

The following list displays the steps taken to create this draft plan:

- 6/23/05: Community Forum design charrette – 100+ people in attendance
- 7/12/05: Master Plan Committee reviews outcome / provides direction
- 7/27/05: Community Forum Visual Preference Survey and Preliminary Future Land Use Plans - 70+ people in attendance
- 8/9/05: Master Plan Committee reviews outcome / provides direction
- 8/31/05: City and Planning Commission Review – “Want to see draft Tom Carter site plan”
- 12/14/05: Tom Carter’s presentation to CC and PC – “To Master Plan Committee”
- 12/22/05: Master Plan Committee reviews and refines plans
- 1/11/06: Master Plan Committee forwards revised plans to PC & CC
- 2/8/06: Revised plans and text back to CC and PC
- 3/1/06: Master Plan Committee reviews final draft plan
- 3/15/06: Planning Commission “creates plan” and forwards it to City Commission
- 3/27/06: City Commission approves draft plan for distribution.
- 7/24/06: Review period ends with only one comment...from WMRPC.
- 8/16/06: Planning Commission holds final public hearing.

Community Forum One

As previously noted in this report, the public participation process was an important element in creating future land use concepts for Sub-Area #1.

Community Forum One (held on 6/23/05) was well attended, with over 100 design charrette participants. The meeting goal was to determine the key issues, opportunities and concerns for the Sub-Area, as well as to develop initial land use, transportation, open space and infrastructure ideas. The results were compiled, analyzed and translated into a concept plan for the Sub-Area. Results were also used to further refine a more detailed plan for the area defined by Four Mile Road, Bristol Avenue, I-96 and Walker Avenue – called hereafter the “Village Center”. The following are compiled notes from facilitated discussions with the public at Community Forum One.

Issues/Opportunities and Concerns

I. Positive Features

Environment

- ◆ Rolling topography
- ◆ Scenic views
- ◆ Farmland / orchards
- ◆ Quiet / not crowded
- ◆ Rural / open country look
- ◆ Open space and large yards
- ◆ Natural habitat/ woodlands/ wetlands
- ◆ Wildlife

Land Use

- ◆ Close to schools
- ◆ Wooded buffer separates industrial and residential uses
- ◆ Limited, low density residential prevents future land use conflicts
- ◆ Close proximity to Grand Rapids and services
- ◆ Mixed uses and shopping located nearby (Alpine Avenue)
- ◆ Employment center nearby
- ◆ Recreation areas, parks and trails nearby

Transportation

- ◆ Easy access to main roads, highways and Alpine Avenue
- ◆ New 4-way stop at Walker Avenue and 4 Mile Road has increased safety
- ◆ Easy access to I-96 corridor
- ◆ Easy commuting

Services

- ◆ Private wells (no issue with public water line pressure)
- ◆ Sufficient City services

Perceptions

- ◆ Feels safe
- ◆ Good school system
- ◆ A good neighborhood feel
- ◆ Stable and growing home values

II. Constraints

Land Use

- ◆ Warehouse look of industrial buildings (especially along I-96)
- ◆ Abrupt land use changes without buffers and other controls (visual, noise, lighting & safety)
- ◆ Heavy industrial uses too close to residential
- ◆ Large amount of industrial property surrounding and limiting residential and agricultural development
- ◆ Industrial noise impacts residential
- ◆ Too much industrial along Fruit Ridge

Transportation

- ◆ Interchange capacity not keeping up with development
- ◆ Alignments of Bristol and Walker with 4 Mile Road
- ◆ Cut through traffic on Walker Ave.
- ◆ North Ridge cul-de-sac forces truck traffic to Walker Ave.
- ◆ No sidewalks (especially along 4 Mile)
- ◆ Traffic speed on rural roads
- ◆ Cul-de-sac roads
- ◆ Rush hour traffic
- ◆ Local government does not follow-through on traffic improvements
- ◆ Closely spaced residential drives along busy two-lane roads
- ◆ High traffic volume on Peach Ridge and Alpine Avenue
- ◆ Viaduct on 3 Mile Road
- ◆ No school zone designation
- ◆ Congestion near high school and middle school campus
- ◆ Lack of shared access between businesses
- ◆ No truck route management
- ◆ No updated roadway maps
- ◆ Dangerous left turns onto Wilson
- ◆ Train bridges create bottlenecks

Other

- ◆ No DSL service
- ◆ Restricted property rights
- ◆ Disproportionate impact of large city facilities designed to serve other areas
- ◆ Lack of government coordination and cooperation

III. Opportunities

Land Use

- ◆ Prevent industrial creep to north
- ◆ Use high tech & medical as buffer to residential
- ◆ High tech & medical as buffer along Walker & Fruit Ridge Avenues
- ◆ Promote residential at densities consistent with existing homes along 4 Mile from Walker Avenue to Fruit Ridge Avenue
- ◆ Restaurant/hotel at northeast corner of Fruit Ridge interchange
- ◆ Retail/lifestyle center
- ◆ Continue light Industrial uses
- ◆ New commercial should serve local not regional market
- ◆ Expand local business opportunities
- ◆ Use power line as natural divide between commercial and residential
- ◆ Use existing trees and vegetation to buffer new development
- ◆ Develop the rears of deep lots
- ◆ Commercial/medical office at interchanges
- ◆ Retirement living center/senior housing
- ◆ Preserve existing natural environment and agriculture
- ◆ Restrict development to low-density housing
- ◆ Provide public improvements before development begins
- ◆ Expand village character near Walker Avenue and 4 Mile Road
- ◆ Plan for residential around the high school
- ◆ Create an identifiable “downtown” around existing public buildings
- ◆ Provide a “green” transition between industrial and residential
- ◆ High tech & office uses along Walker Avenue, south of power line
- ◆ Create mixed use PUD to allow residential, commercial and office

Transportation

- ◆ Construct detached bike path along 4 Mile
- ◆ Provide shared access between existing and new developments
- ◆ Provide at least 2 access points for all development
- ◆ Extend North Ridge to Fruit Ridge using precise plat
- ◆ Development should be bike and pedestrian friendly
- ◆ Designate school routes/pathways and walkways for enhanced safety
- ◆ Inter-connect trails/sidewalks through community; use creek corridor

- ◆ Pre-plan road improvements/traffic signals before development occurs
- ◆ Provide sidewalks near the high school
- ◆ Realign Walker at 4 Mile Road (could allow residential cul-de-sac)
- ◆ Calm traffic near high school

Environment

- ◆ Protect Indian Mill Creek as a high quality trout stream
- ◆ Provide on-site storm water management and improve water quality
- ◆ Prevent premature land clearing
- ◆ Explore artifacts and establish preserve areas

Government

- ◆ Coordinate land uses along border between jurisdictions and promote regional planning
- ◆ Coordinate road improvements between agencies
- ◆ Create better, updated maps
- ◆ Improve relationship between Walker and Alpine Township
- ◆ Install new, high tech infrastructure
- ◆ Promote pro-active planning

IV. Threats / Concerns

Land Use

- ◆ Industrial/commercial uses moving north of the power lines
- ◆ 4 Mile becoming another Alpine Avenue with heavy commercial land uses
- ◆ 3 Mile becoming a heavy office/commercial/industrial corridor
- ◆ Loss of “The Ridge” character
- ◆ Industrial & heavy commercial abutting residential neighborhoods
- ◆ Development of a mall or regional center
- ◆ Disproportionate uses
- ◆ Inappropriately sized residential lots and areas
- ◆ Existing homes torn down or surrounded by development on Walker and 4 Mile
- ◆ Industrial noise affecting nearby residential neighborhoods
- ◆ Not containing small scale commercial near the Walker interchange
- ◆ Lack of significant setbacks and buffers to residential when adjacent to industrial or commercial development
- ◆ Condos and apartments dominating the landscape; (losing a sense of neighborhood)
- ◆ Multi-family development burdening the school system
- ◆ Promoting industrial uses and new buildings when existing ones are Empty
- ◆ Too much industrial development along Fruit Ridge; not containing it to 3 Mile Road

- ◆ Small businesses being squeezed out by development
- ◆ Not protecting large trees and woods from development
- ◆ Industrial uses fully surrounding Peach Ridge residential

Transportation

- ◆ Not improving the Fruit Ridge interchange
- ◆ Not fixing the rail bridge bottlenecks
- ◆ Not improving dangerous and worsening roadway congestion
- ◆ That uncontrolled development will worsen traffic problems

Infrastructure

- ◆ Water and sewer infrastructure having to catch up with development
- ◆ Constrained budgets not permitting currently needed improvements

Other

- ◆ Uncontrolled development resulting in higher service needs
- ◆ The City “caving in” when threatened with lawsuits by private developers
- ◆ Development dictated by “outsiders”; not City or public
- ◆ Property values being negatively impacted by inappropriate/undesired uses
- ◆ City objectives versus public desires leading to loss of a vision for the area

Concept Alternatives

The development of a Concept Plan and a more detailed plan for the Village Center area (see Concept Plan, page 17, and Village Concept, page 21) was guided by the information gained during Community Forum One. Although not every idea, desire, or concern could be reflected, many were incorporated.

As is always the case when engaging the public, many competing interests arise. And as is increasingly the case, the public’s tolerance for land use change is quite low. This combination makes the development of a compelling, visionary and realistic master plan a tremendous challenge. Economy, environment, transportation and social needs present difficult and sometimes conflicting issues to incorporate into a master plan.

The concept alternatives developed for Sub-Area #1 were later presented, discussed and evaluated at a second public forum.

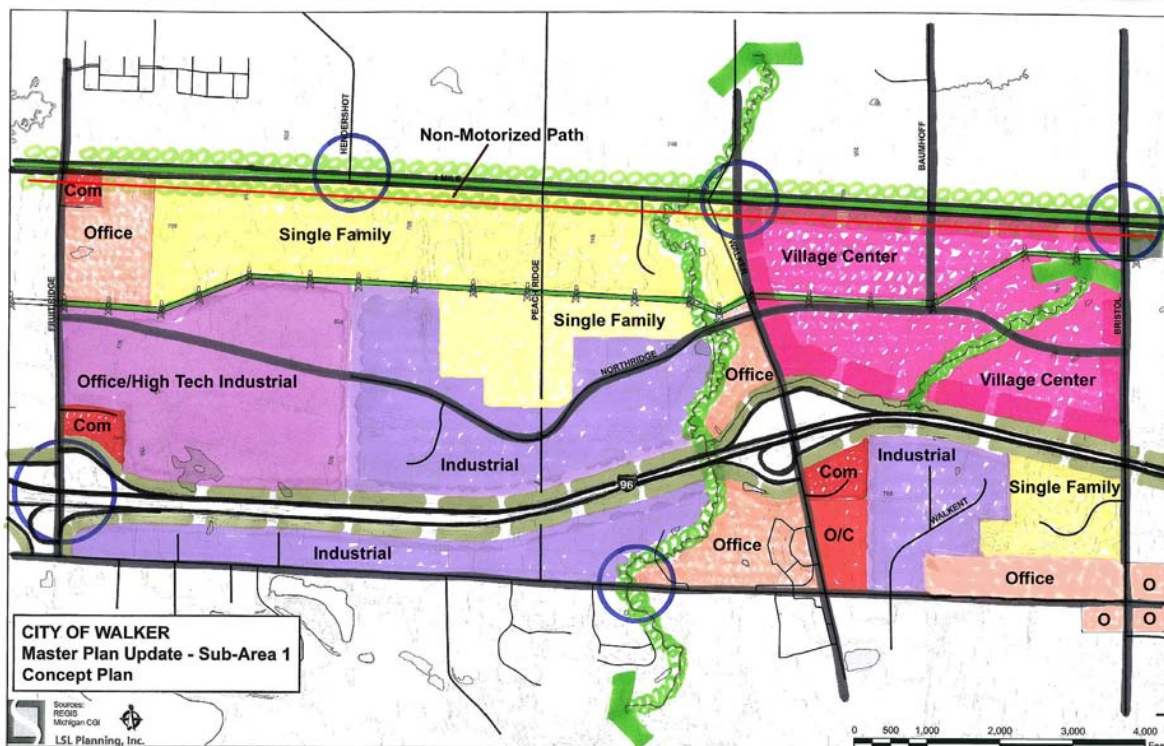
Community Forum Two

Community Forum Two (held on 7/27/05) was also well attended. Approximately 70 people were involved. Participants were given an opportunity to review and comment

on the previously prepared concepts for the study area. In addition, they were offered a more detailed assessment of the Village Center.

In order to help explain concepts and to get a better sense of density, use and character preferences for the Village Center, images were presented indicating various design and build-out options. These images were ranked by participants as to their appropriateness and desirability. The following describes citizen comments and preferences for the broader Sub-Area and the potential Village Center:

Sub Area Plan



1. **Do you like the plan for the entire Sub-Area? If so, what do you like?**
 - ◆ Yes, but would like to see Northridge become a green boulevard welcoming you to the Village Center. This is an opportunity to create a beautiful area.
 - ◆ Generally yes, however, I question the positioning of the residential immediately next to the industrial. Northridge Rd. is a new road; it should be developed as a landscaped boulevard with walking paths, as a gateway to a “Downtown” core with mixed use. Residential in the “Downtown” area is a must; incentives may be needed to start this.
 - ◆ Low density along 4 Mile, limited industrial.

- ◆ Village Center concept is great! Design and traffic layout very important.
- ◆ Keep any commercial use south of the new Northridge Ave.
- ◆ Overall, yes Village concept Great!
- ◆ No.
- ◆ Yes, I like the mix.
- ◆ Generally.
- ◆ Yes, generally speaking I feel area closest to the highway should have higher densities, commercial, village center type use.
- ◆ Yes, extension of Northridge Drive.
- ◆ Not really, it appears that Walker just wants to have more tax base.
- ◆ Overall concept may be as good as we can do.
- ◆ Some green / plant growth.
- ◆ Basically yes; limit the number of homes where there would be lots of kids, which would require another school.
- ◆ Yes.
- ◆ No, with higher density increased crime. Too much development already. Do not need more malls. Am concerned about info, I have heard re: Indian artifacts. Can this be explored and possibly maintain area?
- ◆ I like the ½ to 1 acre lots for residential on 4 Mile and Peach Ridge. Would be nice to keep it that way with the plans for housing to be built off Peach Ridge in the near future.
- ◆ I like all of it, extend Baumhoff, extend Northridge; we need that. I like bike path, boulevard, 4 Mile Rd.
- ◆ It does a good job of dealing with the existing realities.

2. What don't you like about the Sub-Area plan?

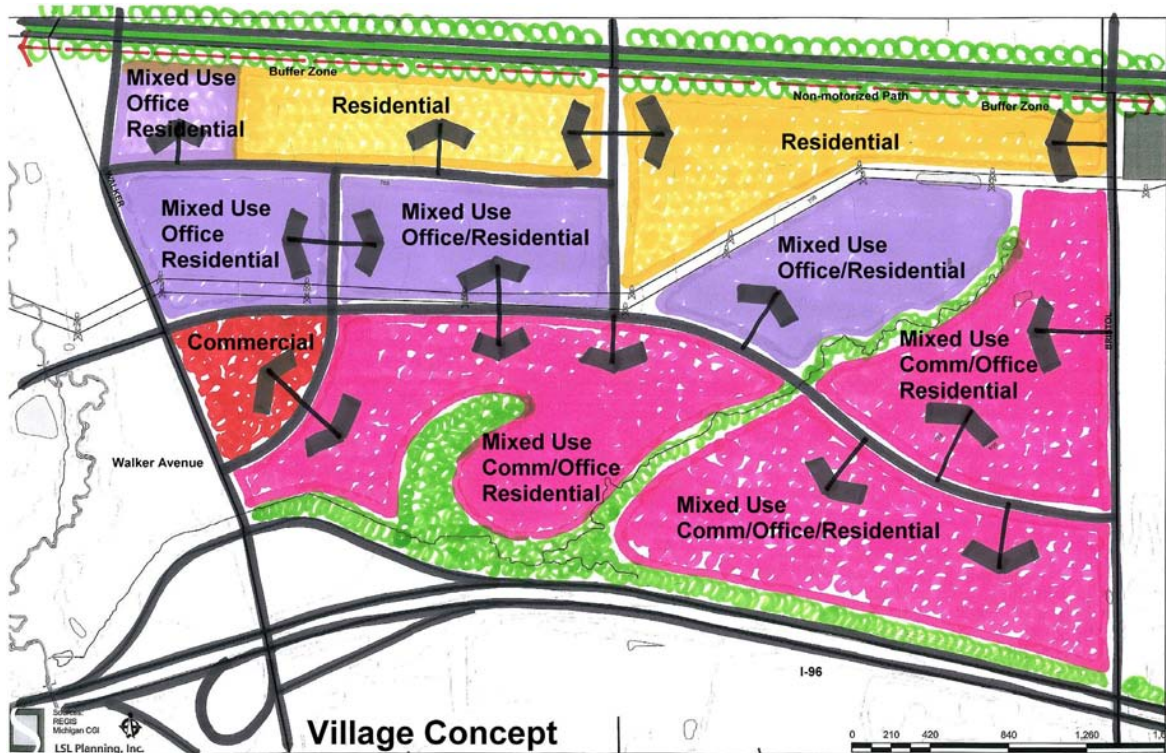
- ◆ Do not see any parks or green space. Lot of industrial when much industry is going out of the country.
- ◆ I question the future of industrial, manufacturing. It is less of a factor each year; consider what second generation uses may occur with these buildings.
- ◆ Needs more green space.
- ◆ Office / commercial use should continue north of Northridge Dr.
- ◆ Single family area south of the power lines.
- ◆ The chance that large chain retail can still come in.
- ◆ Residential on 4 Mile between Walker and Bristol.
- ◆ I don't believe that the land uses should have commercial and office go together.
- ◆ I think the residential is better suited toward Hendershot than Baumhoff along 4 Mile.
- ◆ Would like to see more industrial to the north toward 4 Mile.
- ◆ We have existing vacant offices and stores along Alpine not being used. Not saving green areas – nature.
- ◆ Would like the commercial area closer to 4 Mile and residential to the east toward Bristol and further south of 4 Mile.
- ◆ Yes.
- ◆ Too much development, need to maintain control. The wetlands are not being preserved.
- ◆ I don't like single family between Walker and Indian Mill Creek, should be zoned office. Extend office up Walker on both sides of road and shops, restaurants, etc.
- ◆ West side of Walker to creek buffer, office professional, purple color, I like.
- ◆ Commercial use of property defined by new 4 Mile boulevard, old Walker and new

Walker extensions. This land should not have much appeal if only as residential. I think it looks better in every respect.

3. Do you have any suggestions?

- ◆ Keep the 3 Mile and Bristol corners (all four) office. Office buildings as a buffer between the single-family homes and busy corner crossing Alpine & Walker.
- ◆ West side of Walker Ave. N of I-96 to 4 Mile should be planned for commercial and or office.
- ◆ Expand creek green space and include a connector to the 4 Mile bike trail, with future plans to connect to Kent Trails / Standale, etc.
- ◆ No big box retail.
- ◆ Move residential off 4 Mile onto Bristol.
- ◆ Is traffic on 4 Mile expected to increase in volume? How much?
- ◆ No one likes change but I think this is a good start for practical use of land that is close to the highway.
- ◆ Propose some park style areas with nature trails.
- ◆ What is the time frame for this undertaking, from plan acceptance to moving earth???
- ◆ Another access road to 4 Mile Rd.
- ◆ If there has to be any development, take small steps. Keep residential away from commercial, keep lots at ½ - 1 acre, and maintain the wetlands.
- ◆ Be sure to have a senior living/ adult care, a nursing home type program, assisted living and self-sufficient residential.
- ◆ As small office area or some other low traffic use (Walker near Four Mile). Show it with a cul-de-sac because I thought it would be better for traffic on 4 Mile, but not important is to allow this piece to be used for some commercial purposes.

Village Concept Plan (Walker to Bristol & 4 Mile to I-96)



1. Do you like the plan for the Village Center? If so, what do you like?

- ◆ Yes, expansion of Northridge Dr.
- ◆ Yes, mixed use with shopping and office or light commercial. Makes good sense, townhouse or traditional type housing (not single family or apartments) makes sense in village.
- ◆ Yes.
- ◆ Generally yes, I like the extension of Northridge and extension of Baumhoff.
- ◆ Need a more organized commercial mix.
- ◆ No big box stores, no inside out mall.
- ◆ Commercial close to Walker, easy in and out.
- ◆ Mixed-use concept, residential 4 Mile to reduce access.
- ◆ Yes, residential is required to keep the center healthy as well as green space, street side parking, etc.

- ◆ Yes, sense of community.
- ◆ Not really, do not need commercial or offices in this area.
- ◆ I think that it does a good job of dealing with existing conditions and buildings.
- ◆ Yes, layout looked well thought out.
- ◆ Good blend of office, commercial and residential.
- ◆ I am not sure what the plan is, how large will the Village commercial area be square feet? Bristol Ave is residential now!
- ◆ Yes, I like mixed-use office / commercial mixture.
- ◆ No, do not want Northridge to go through to Bristol. Already too much traffic on the street.
- ◆ I like all of it as proposed.





2. What don't you like about the plan for the Village Center?

- ◆ No homes for seniors.
- ◆ Residential on 4 Mile Rd.
- ◆ The purple areas along Walker; need commercial too!!
- ◆ Concerned about proper proportion of residential, office and commercial. Would like emphasis on high proportion of single-family homes. Needs more green space, possible small park for residents and area toward lot from industrial to west plus offices. Enlarge green spaces.
- ◆ I don't like to see too many condos or apartments in one area.
- ◆ Northridge connecting with Bristol Ave. It's two lanes and can't handle the existing traffic at certain times; I don't like the mall running right up to my back door.
- ◆ I do not see the need for residential in this Village Center since it does not impact any existing residential, due to fact 4 Mile Rd. to north is zoned commercial for 500 feet.
- ◆ Too much density and development. The plan will take my home.

3. Do you have any suggestions?






- ◆ Don't let old-timer complaints keep the city from having a good forward-looking view of what makes sense.
- ◆ Put offices on Walker up to 4 Mile to blend in with Village Center.
- ◆ Don't put residential next to power lines, hard to sell, perhaps dangerous, what is voltage of power lines?
- ◆ I suggest at least one nice dress shop and beauty salon in there, maybe a pharmacy.
- ◆ Move residential to Bristol.
- ◆ Create design standards with regard to signage, materials, landscaping, parking, etc. They will create a small town main street feel.
- ◆ Taking away green space and nature, no parks planned.
- ◆ How about some needed offices need center near expressway. Meijer / some food stores, auto repair shop, restaurants.
- ◆ Make sure no apartments!
- ◆ Stop and smell the roses.
- ◆ Leave it or develop in residential with acre lots.
- ◆ Where is senior center going to be? Should have garages, one-story homes.
- ◆ Keep on planning, you are doing an excellent job with all of the negativity at the meeting.






Village Center Visual Preference Survey

On a scale of 1 to 5 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree		Village Center Concept Plan Residential Area Density Preferences	
			
This residential density is appropriate for Residential areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This residential density is appropriate for Residential areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This residential density is appropriate for Residential areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This residential density is appropriate for Residential areas on the Village Concept Plan:
AVERAGE: 2.6	AVERAGE: 2.6	AVERAGE: 2.6	AVERAGE: 3.3
Leaves asked for nature and green area. Higher income = less crime, less traffic to deal with.	I would like this concept, but I would like mainly houses with a little bit of greens (more grass)	Too much traffic from amount of people.	Need to make sure the residential density is low to keep 4 mile traffic at a minimum.
Best – low density to keep 4 mile traffic from this area at a minimum, allows for more "green space".	Looks good from the front = back of house will look like hell.	1 – 2 too close.	Love it – cozy upscale.
Needs to provide more housing for population.	Need good berm to hide from 4 mile more traffic.	Bland	Not dense enough.
Not appropriate on 4 mile, never sell this level of home on 4 mile, not dense enough to be commercial.	4 [Mile] it's ok, single resident, different style and design.	OK	Too dense / too close.
Residential should not be on 4 mile between Walker and Bristol.	No residential on 4 mile.		
The openness is the reason we've made our home here.	More desirable.		
Impractical for area close to highway, etc.			
10 – 15% with 1 – 5 acre parcels.			

On a scale of 1 to 5 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree		Village Center Concept Plan Mixed Use Area Residential Design and Density Preferences			
					
This residential style & density is appropriate for the Mixed Use area on the Village Concept Plan:	This residential style & density is appropriate for the Mixed Use area on the Village Concept Plan:	This residential style & density is appropriate for the Mixed Use area on the Village Concept Plan:	This residential style & density is appropriate for the Mixed Use area on the Village Concept Plan:	This residential style & density is appropriate for the Mixed Use area on the Village Concept Plan:	This residential style & density is appropriate for the Mixed Use area on the Village Concept Plan:
AVERAGE: 1.5	AVERAGE: 1.7	AVERAGE: 2.6	AVERAGE: 2.8	AVERAGE: 3.5	AVERAGE: 2.8
Parking???	Just ok.	Very plain.	Most desirable.	Condo Units as opposed to apts.; would be much more positive in the long haul.	Looks like campus living.
Look at York Creek crime and problems.	Look at York Creek crime and problems. Increase in traffic.			COOL!!!	Townhouses, no apts.
					Density is good here.
					Will soon turn to lower income which will bring crime.

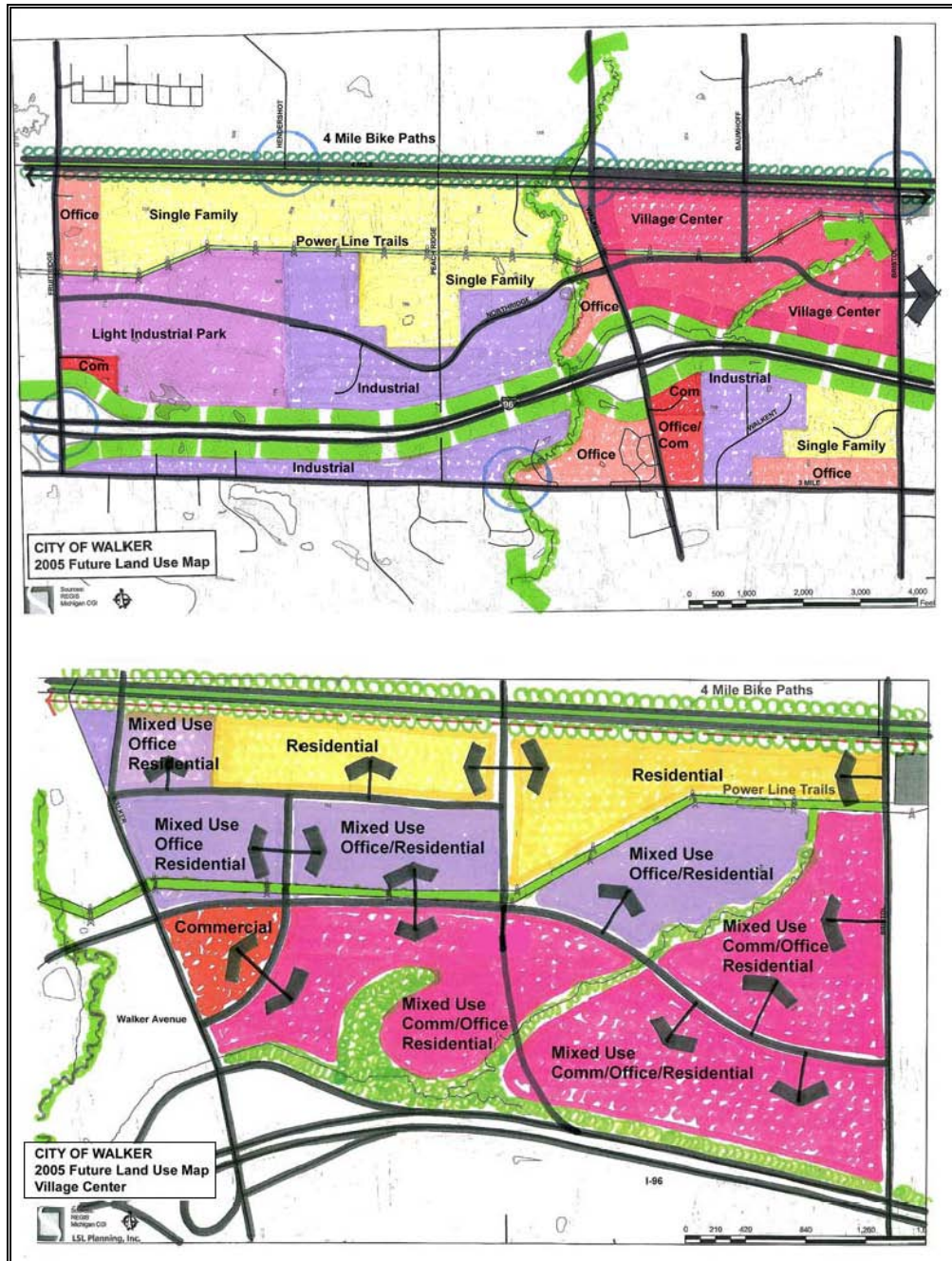


On a scale of 1 to 5 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree		Village Center Concept Plan Mixed Use Areas Office and Commercial Preferences			
					
This scale and type of office is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This scale and type of office is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This scale and type of commercial is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This scale and type of commercial is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This scale and type of commercial is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This scale and type of commercial is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:
AVERAGE: 2.6	AVERAGE: 3	AVERAGE: 3.8	AVERAGE: 2.6	AVERAGE: 1.9	AVERAGE: 2.2
Getting to large to have next to residential. Too much traffic.	Would be ok have park in and around. Too far between buildings.	Looks ok, have well lighted for evening walking / jogging. Very eye appealing. Sharp. Very nice. Great idea. Looks like small village.	We have on Alpine with vacant stores. Looks like every other generic strip mall.	We have this on Alpine. Keep this on Alpine.	No national chain stores who have little long term commitment to local community. We have this on Alpine. Maybe limit to a few sites in development or limit. Where are the parks?

On a scale of 1 to 5 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree		Village Center Concept Plan Mixed Use Areas Use, Design and Density Preferences		
				
This scale and type of vertically integrated retail and residential use is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This scale and type of vertically integrated retail, office and/or residential use is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This scale and type of vertically integrated retail, office and/or residential use is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This scale and type of horizontally integrated retail, office and/or residential use is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:	This scale and type of horizontally integrated retail, office and/or residential use is appropriate for the Mixed Use areas on the Village Concept Plan:
AVERAGE: 1.7	AVERAGE: 3.8	AVERAGE: 2.9	AVERAGE: 3.4	AVERAGE: 1.6
Don't need apartments.	Looks ok, keep lighted for evening, have park in between, need more open. Nice. Looks like South Division. Very nice, tight feel, this feel like Petoskey or a lovely small town. This would be walkable head downstairs in the morning for coffee, croissants in the local café. Really cool!!!	No green area saved. Add a few trees, but good otherwise.	Don't need apartments switch to duplex style. Nice. Business looks great. Bad apartments. Apartments in background is ok. Don't like the island's in asphalt. Nice!!	Looks like Hell, will bring in lower income people. Looks junky. Ugly.

Sub Area #1 Master Plan

The information and comments gained from the second Community Forum were evaluated and considered in preparing a future land use plan for the Sub-Area and a more detailed plan for the Village Center (see below). The differences between the initial concepts and the draft plan are somewhat minor; however, they are worth noting and are reflected in the following general description:



Land Use

- ◆ Commercial land uses are located at the Fruit Ridge Avenue interchange.
- ◆ Office land uses are located at the southeast corner of Four Mile Road and Fruit Ridge Avenue. The previously proposed commercial land uses were eliminated and the extent of office was reduced.
- ◆ Single-family residential uses, at densities comparable to existing development (1/2 to one-acre lots), are located to the south of Four Mile Road between Fruit Ridge and Walker Avenues.
- ◆ Office land uses are situated to the west of Walker Avenue, adjacent to the I-96 interchange, and west of Bristol Avenue, north of Three Mile Road.
- ◆ Office/Commercial uses are located on the east side of Walker Avenue, north of Three Mile Road.
- ◆ Industrial land uses are located along North Ridge Drive, between I-96 and Three Mile Road, and to the north of Three Mile Road, east of Walker Avenue.
- ◆ A light industrial employment park is proposed along North Ridge Drive, extended west to Fruit Ridge Avenue. The park is characterized by the following:
 - The site, buildings and parking lots are extensively landscaped.
 - Site illumination is appropriately scaled and shielded to prevent glare and light pollution.
 - Buildings are well designed and are constructed of durable, high quality materials.
 - Buildings that are designed to avoid large expanses of blank, windowless, walls.
 - The development edge adjacent to I-96 and Fruit Ridge is landscaped and bermed to help screen views of parking lots and service areas.
 - Signs, light fixtures and other design elements reinforce the overall design theme.
- ◆ A mixed-use Village Center is located north of I-96, east of Walker Avenue to Bristol Avenue and is characterized by the following:
 - Commercial, office, cultural, institutional and residential uses are integrated and blended into a cohesive development.
 - Buildings orient toward interior streets and are designed to reflect the atmosphere of a downtown.
 - Buildings are designed to maintain a human scale with clearly recognizable buildings entrances and facades with ample windows and articulated rooflines.
 - Parking lots are screened from view using buildings, and landscape

- buffers such as berms, fences/walls and plants.
- The development has a clearly recognizable and distinct focal point.
- An area of inwardly oriented residential uses is well screened from Four Mile Road.
- Mixed office/residential land uses act as a transition to commercial land uses.
- A mix of office/ commercial/residential uses is located along I-96 and Bristol Avenue.
- Sidewalks and paths interconnect with surrounding areas.
- The potential for future transit service is integrated into the overall design.

Transportation

- ◆ Four Mile Road is planned as a tree-lined, boulevard with berms and landscaping to buffer adjacent land uses.
- ◆ Bike lanes are located along Four Mile Road that link the entire community and provide connections with adjacent neighborhoods, schools, employment and commercial areas. *(The previous concept included a non-motorized path along Four Mile Road; it was separated into bike lanes along Four Mile and a pedestrian trail that follows the power line corridor).*
- ◆ A pedestrian/non-motorized path follows the power line corridor, links with surrounding neighborhoods and provides an east-west trail connection to the future Village Center.
- ◆ North Ridge Drive is well landscaped and tree lined and connects with Fruit Ridge, Walker and Bristol Avenues.
- ◆ The Walker Avenue and Fruit Ridge Avenue interchanges are improved to enhance traffic flow, minimize congestion and accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.
- ◆ A separate off-ramp entrance into the Village Center from the Walker Avenue interchange with I-96 is proposed.
- ◆ Northridge Drive also extends east of Bristol Avenue.
- ◆ The Walker Avenue/Four Mile Road and Bristol Avenue/Four Mile Road intersections are realigned to enhance traffic safety.
- ◆ Baumhoff Avenue extends south to connect with North Ridge Drive, extended east.
- ◆ The bridges on Three Mile Road, near its crossing of the Indian Mill Creek, and the

Bristol Avenue/I-96 underpass are reconstructed to eliminate potential bottlenecks.

- ◆ Safety improvements associated with school traffic impacts are explored for the intersection of Hendershot Avenue and Four Mile Road.

Environment

- ◆ Indian Mill Creek becomes a linear park/open space connection and natural buffer area.
- ◆ Landscaping and buffering along I-96 have been enhanced to soften views of existing and future industrial development.
- ◆ Wetland areas are protected and are part of an inter-connected open space/wildlife corridor system.

Revisions to Draft Sub-Area #1 Master Plan

As noted on the Sub-Area #1 timeline on page 11, the process of developing a draft master plan update was a complex, multi-step endeavor. The draft Sub-Area #1 master plan update, maps, and report were presented to the City and Planning Commissions on 8/31/05. Both Commissions decided that they would like to see a conceptual site plan from a potential developer (who had been part of the master plan update process) prior to making any decisions on the Sub-Area #1 master plan update.

The presence of a potential developer waiting in the wings for the Village Center area made the master planning process even more of a challenge. In the eyes of some citizens, this was an example of the City working for the developer, when in fact, the opposite was true. The City was leading by master planning example and testing to see if the potential developer was understanding and accepting the City's vision for Sub-Area #1 in general and specifically the Village Center area.

The potential developer presented a conceptual site plan for the Village Center area to the City and Planning Commissions on 12/14/05 at a public meeting. The conceptual plans called for a mixed-use development, with overarching design guidelines and a heavy Traditional Neighborhood Design emphasis. There was also a retail pod proposed along I-96 west of Bristol Avenue. Discussion centered upon the possibility of a Cabela's sporting goods store and associated outlot uses landing there.

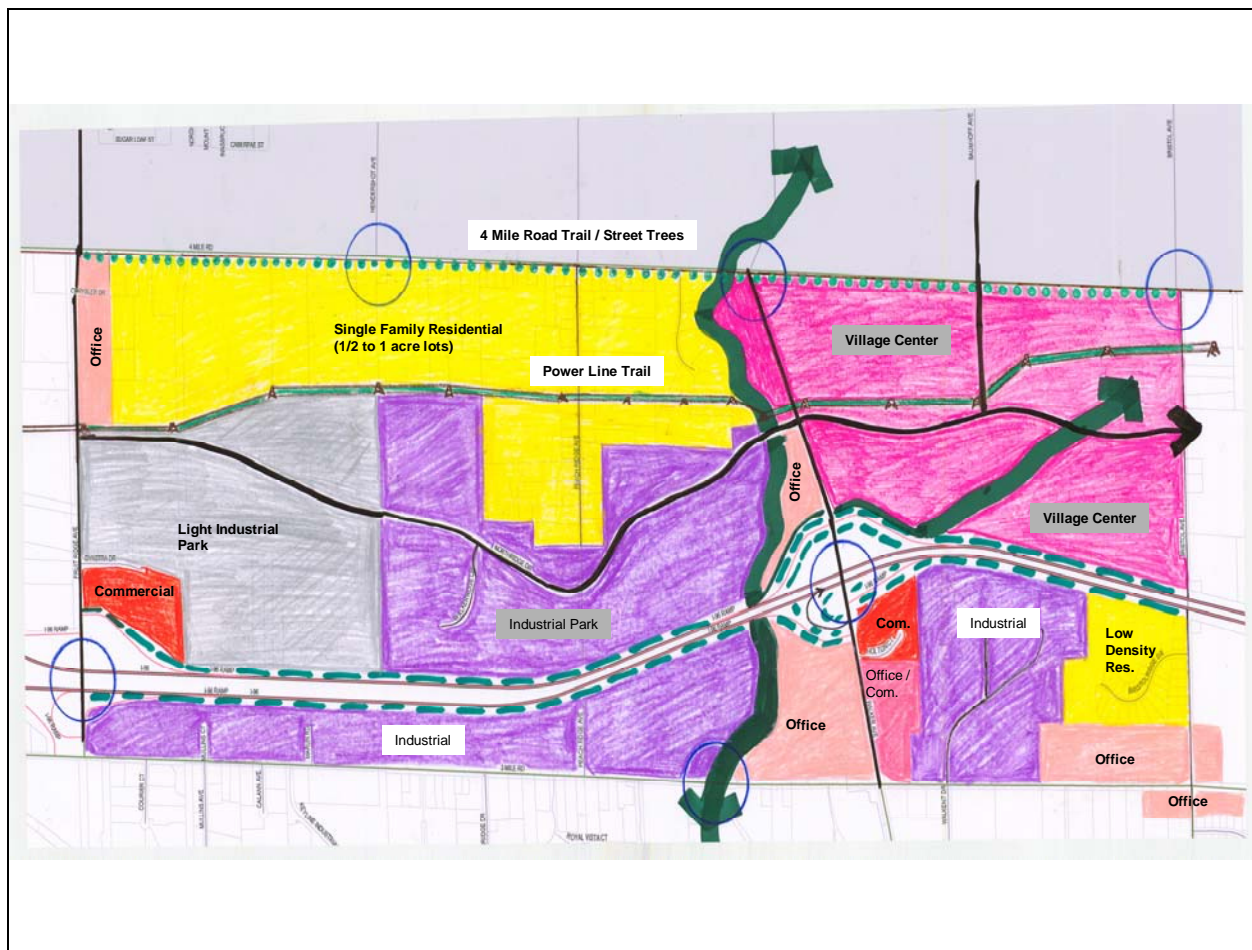
The outcome of the 12/14/05 meeting was that the original draft Sub-Area #1 plan, maps and report were referred to the Master Plan Committee for further study, discussion and refinement.

The revised Sub-Area #1 plan was presented to the Walker City and Planning Commissions and general public on 2/8/06, with a conceptual recommendation from the

Master Plan Committee. The City and Planning Commissions expressed conceptual acceptance of the revised Sub-Area #1 plan. The revised plan was referred to the Master Plan Committee for final draft polishing and updating of the report.

The final draft of the Sub-Area #1 master plan map follows.

Sub-Area #1 Future Land Use Map



Updates and improvements to the overall Sub-Area #1 Future Land Use Plan include the following:

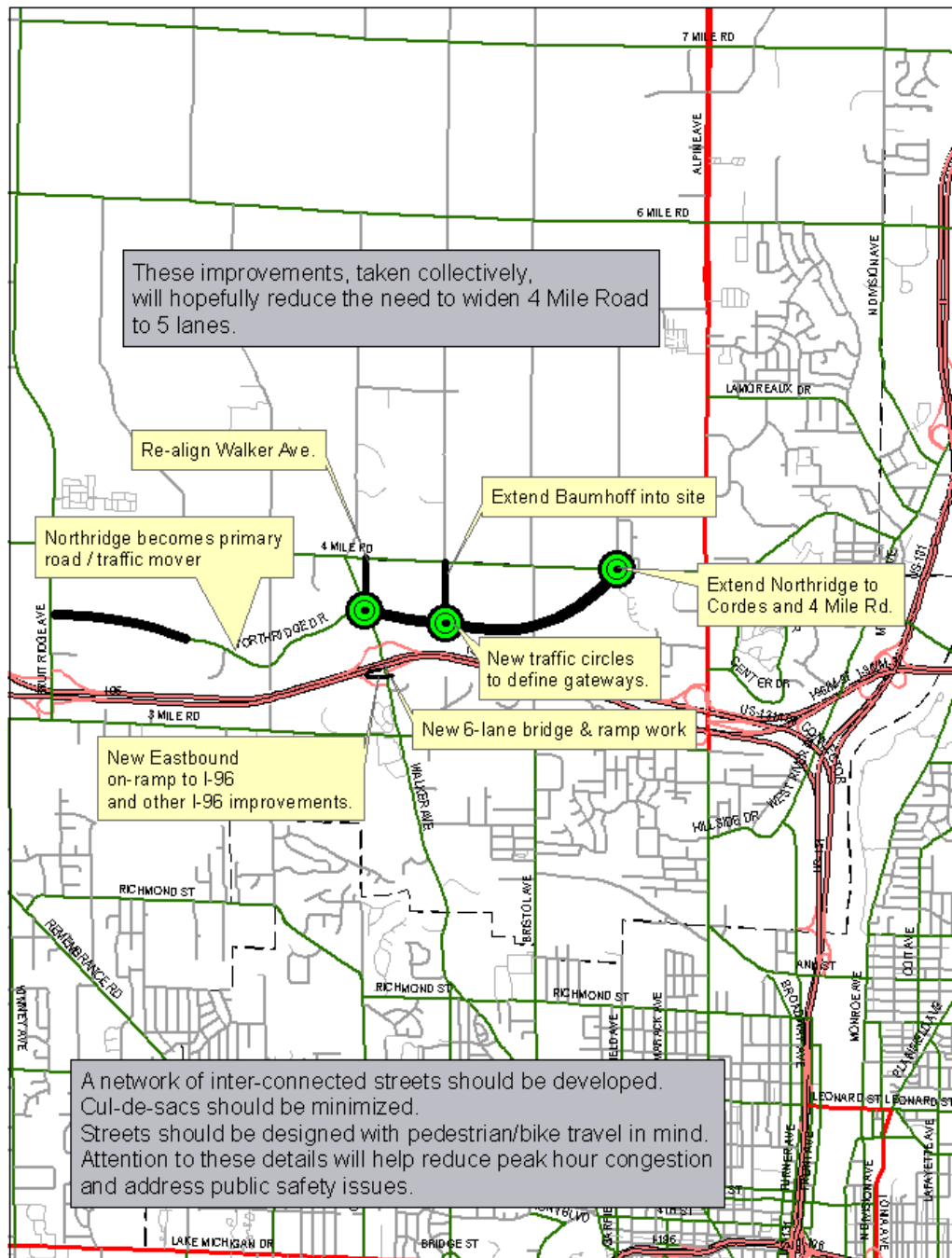
- ❖ The future office uses at the intersection of 3 Mile Road and Bristol Avenue were expanded to all four corners.
- ❖ The Village Center concept was extended to the west side of Walker Avenue between North Ridge Avenue and 4 Mile Road.
- ❖ The 4 Mile Road trail concept was refined based upon the Kent County Parks and Recreation Department's successful bid for Federal funding for a separate trail

system that would link the Musketawa and White Pine Trails via 4 Mile Road.

Sub-Area #1 Street Improvement Map on next page.



Sub-Area #1: Transportation Plan



Street Network Improvements

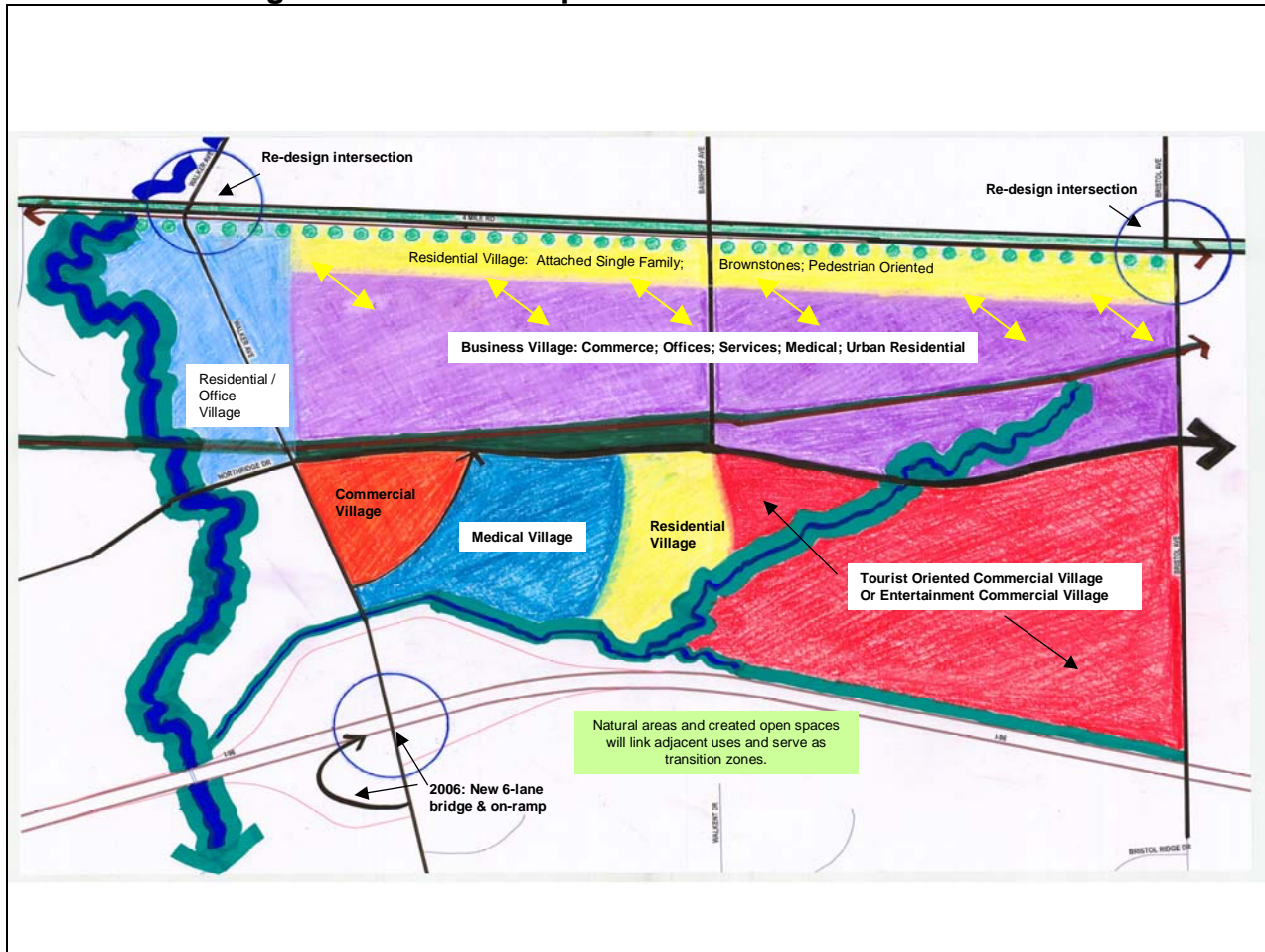
Sub-Area #1 Master Plan Update 2006



Updates to the Sub-Area #1 Street Improvement Map include the following:

- ❖ Based upon recommendations and findings from MDOT and the Federal Highway Administration, the proposed off-ramp directly into the Village Center was deleted.
- ❖ North Ridge Avenue is now proposed to attach from Fruit Ridge Avenue to Cordes Avenue and function as a major collector street and potential bypass to 4 Mile Road.
- ❖ Properly designed and located roundabouts are proposed along North Ridge Avenue between Walker Avenue and Cordes Avenue. These roundabouts should help reduce intersection congestion while also dropping the number of high-speed crashes. Roundabouts could also serve as a “branding” tool for the Village Center area, given their relative infrequent use in western Michigan.
- ❖ The map calls for the development of an inter-connected system of hierarchical streets. Such a system will help reduce peak hour congestion and address public safety issues. Public transit will also function better with a connected road system.
- ❖ All new streets are proposed as pedestrian and bike friendly. The use of context sensitive design details is essential.
- ❖ Walker Avenue is proposed for relocation and/or reconstruction to correct the present geometry shortcomings and floodplain concerns.
- ❖ Walker Avenue south of the Northridge roundabout will require substantial improvements to handle increased traffic volumes.
- ❖ Walker View Drive may require modification to limit left-turning movements onto Walker Avenue.
- ❖ Baumhoff Avenue is proposed to extend into the site and provide a connection to North Ridge Avenue.
- ❖ Bristol Avenue is proposed to remain an open north-south street, both for public safety access and congestion management purposes.
- ❖ The Bristol Avenue / 4 Mile Road off-set intersection must be fixed.
- ❖ The 2006 MDOT improvements to I-96, the Walker Avenue overpass/ramps and other scheduled upgrades are noted.
- ❖ These collective street network improvements should hopefully address current and projected congestion problems while also lessening the need to convert 4 Mile Road into a 5-lane or wider street.

Sub-Area #1 Village Center Detail Map



- The intent of the Village Center is to creatively place a comprehensively designed mixture of complementary uses.
- The residential villages will provide open spaces and parks with pedestrian and transit links to enhance a significant and viable neighborhood system.
- The residential villages will follow the design principles of a traditional neighborhood development and will be directly connected into the business village.
- The residential – office village will consist of residentially styled buildings in a pedestrian oriented arrangement. Various residential uses and low intensity offices will be allowed.
- The business village will include a main street, public focal points and gathering spaces, active and passive recreation areas and civic / cultural activities.
- The business village will benefit from a unique and traditional design, pedestrian scale and a planned mixture of synergistic uses.
- The commercial village will not devolve into a typical “highway service” set of isolated site plans.
- The medical village will be linked to the other villages via streets, sidewalks, public transit and trails.
- The tourist oriented / entertainment commercial village will be anchored by either a regional tourist draw or a significant collection of entertainment uses.
- The tourist oriented / entertainment commercial village will not devolve into a typical “highway big box” or “strip commercial” area of isolated site plans.

- The Village Center will be designed to evolve over time and adapt to changing conditions.
- The Village Center will be a sustainable foundation of land use design, form and function for the City of Walker in the 21st Century.

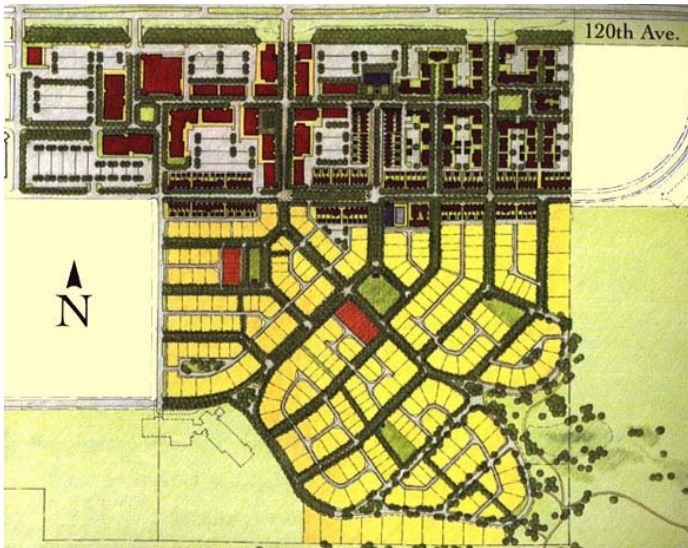
The revised Sub-Area #1 Village Center Detail Map has been improved via the following changes:

- ❖ The area is now defined via the application of core traditional development techniques, such as interconnected streets, pedestrian links, public transit stops, viable neighborhoods, sustainable building design and useable open space preservation. The Village Center is projected to become a centerpiece for the City of Walker. The design details inherent to a traditional development are called out according to “villages.”
- ❖ The design intent of the Village Center has been refined to raise the expectations for comprehensive site planning and integration of multiple uses under one umbrella.
- ❖ Transitions from village to village should be gradual and assisted by public open spaces, squares, parks and pedestrian connections.
- ❖ The residential villages will not be only strips of neighborhood parts along 4 Mile Road and I-96. Rather, these villages will be viable and sustainable neighborhoods that provide an urban living environment. The residential villages will fill a niche housing market not otherwise provided within the northern part of the City of Walker.
- ❖ Offices within the “Residential – Office Village” should be designed at a human scale. Buildings should exhibit a residential and neighborhood character.
- ❖ To the extent practical, the tourist oriented commercial area should not be distinctly separated from the other villages. Rather, the tourist oriented commercial area should blend into the overall Village Center plan via gradual land use transitions, pedestrian linkages and a unified set of architectural design guidelines. The tourist oriented commercial area should not be allowed to devolve into a series of disconnected site plans, such as is found in typical highway strip retail areas.
- ❖ If a large, tourist-oriented retail use cannot be drawn to the site, then the primary default for this area will be an “**Entertainment Commercial District.**” This default category would require a core of entertainment uses complemented by other commercial service uses. Again, in no way should this default plan be allowed to devolve into a highway strip commercial hodgepodge of isolated site plans and disposable buildings.
- ❖ Existing natural features should be accommodated into the overall Village Center plan. Degraded natural features should be restored where possible during the layout and development of open spaces.
- ❖ Stormwater management systems should treat both runoff quantity and quality using

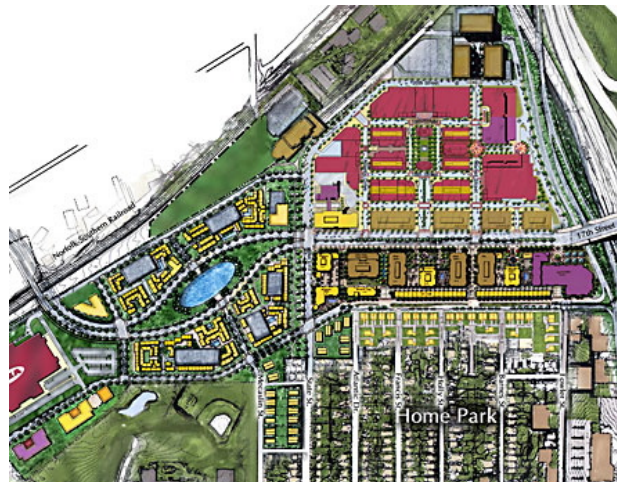
creative design tools.

- ❖ The power line easement area should be utilized for a public trail system and connection into the new 4 Mile Trail and the City of Walker's recommended trail route to City Hall and Millennium Park.
- ❖ A comprehensive public sidewalk system and associated public transit stops should be designed and constructed in partnership with The Rapid / ITP.

Residential Village and Residential-Office Village Visions



Business Village Visions



Tourist Oriented Commercial Visions

