



Master Plan

City of Walker

Michigan

Adopted: July 20, 1998

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	Walker - A Changing Community	1 - 1 - 1 - 6
The Master Plan and Zoning	1 - 2
Following Through	.....	1 - 4
Future Land Use Evaluation Factors (Table)	.....	1 - 5
How Does the Land Use Plan Affect You As a Resident or Landowner?	.....	1 - 5
Conclusion	.....	1 - 6
Chapter 2	The Community of Walker	2 - 1 - 2 - 7
Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area	.....	2 - 1
Population History - City of Walker	.....	2 - 1
Future Growth	.....	2 - 3
Age	.....	2 - 4
Neighborhoods	.....	2 - 5
Chapter 3	A Vision for the City of Walker	3 - 1 - 3 - 13
Background	.....	3 - 1
The Need for a Vision	.....	3 - 1
Goals	.....	3 - 2
Setting Our Goals	.....	3 - 3
Goal: Community Image	.....	3 - 4
Goal: Neighborhoods and Families	.....	3 - 6
Goal: Land Use	.....	3 - 8
Goal: City-Resident Communications	.....	3 - 11
Chapter 4	Caring for the Land	4 - 1 - 4 - 20
Background	.....	4 - 1
Land Use Today	.....	4 - 1
Midcity	.....	4 - 2
East End	.....	4 - 3
The Walker of Tomorrow	.....	4 - 3

Future Land Use Designations	4 - 3
Residential	4 - 3
Commercial	4 - 8
Industrial	4 - 14
Public/Quasi-Public	4 - 15
Future Transportation Improvements	4 - 16

Maps

Natural Features
Parks and Recreation
Land Use
Future Land Use
Watermain System
Sanitary Sewer System

Master Plan Attachments

Subarea Plans	A - 1 - A - 35
Walker Avenue and I-96	A - 1
Wilson Avenue	A - 11
South Walker	A - 20
Northeast Walker Street Network	A - 31
Issue Papers	B - 1 - B - 43
When is Enough, Enough? Dealing with Development Controversy	B - 1
Evaluating Development	B - 8
Community Image	B - 25
Highway Corridor Development	B - 35
Community Attitude Survey	C - 1 - C - 10

CHAPTER 1

WALKER - A CHANGING COMMUNITY

Walker is a diverse community, exhibiting many contrasts. While it contains areas developed many years ago, there is considerable new development occurring throughout the city. Even though much of the area is intensely developed, there are large sectors which still remain undeveloped. Noted by the Metropolitan Development Blueprint as one of the principal employment centers in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area, it is also home to a population of over 19,000 (based on a Michigan Department of Management and Budget 1994 estimated population of 18,835).



Many changes have taken place in Walker since the General Development Plan of 1969 and the 1983 update. Industrial development continues to spread. Alpine Avenue has exploded as the retail center for a large segment of northern Kent County and beyond. And, unlike many older cities, Walker's population continues to grow -- by an estimated 3,747 persons between 1980 and 1994.

New development often brings out concerns over land use. Residents become concerned about preserving the character of their community. Those who propose changes are acting to protect their own investment, whether personal or professional. The City's decision makers must keep a balance between land uses and the features that attract them.

Development creates the need to focus on transportation and utility corridors; preservation concerns revolve around open space, neighborhoods, natural features, and safe roads. A successful plan must weigh all of these. Usually, there are many points of agreement about quality of life, the protection of the environment, and ensuring that development "fits" the community.

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The amount of development activity facing Walker and the "infill" of many of the City's partially developed areas requires a strong sense of direction to guide land use decisions. Key to providing this guidance is a need to understand the community's current make-up, to fully appreciate the influences that will shape its future, and to determine the kind of community Walker should be in years to come.

Any City needs to plan locations for new development where natural features and the environment are not at risk; where neighborhoods and community character will not be diminished; and where expenses for new roads and services will be at a minimum. To accomplish this, the City must have an overall policy regarding growth to carry it into the next century. A growth policy may range from:

1. Actively encouraging growth.
2. Allowing growth to take its own course with as little government interference as possible.
3. Allowing development provided that adequate utilities, roads, schools, fire and police services, and other public services are available.
4. Trying to slow down the rate of growth.
5. Attempting to stop all new development.

By properly selecting and implementing a growth policy, the City can ensure its quality of life--neighborhoods, views, trees, roads, schools--those factors that make each community different from others. Effective use of the right planning tools can assure that the City of Walker continues to be a special place.

The Master Plan and Zoning

The City of Walker Planning Commission has a responsibility to look beyond the day-to-day zoning issues and provide a guide for land use and development in the city through the Master Plan. A properly developed, well thought-out Master Plan can be of great value by providing tangible benefits in improved quality of life, more efficient use of financial and other resources, a cleaner environment, and an economically healthy community.

The value of a Master Plan is directly related to the City's willingness to follow it, and its diligence in keeping the Plan current and relevant to today's conditions. It is hard work; but the rewards make the effort worthwhile.

Master Plans must be constantly reviewed to make sure that the new growth conforms to what was planned. But as events unfold the Plan may have to be changed to take unanticipated events into account.

Local control of the use of land (with some exceptions, such as state and federal land uses) is an accepted legal principle. Land use is controlled through the separation of land into various use areas, called zoning districts. The rules governing these districts are contained in a zoning ordinance which contain provisions controlling the type and intensity of development allowed.

Perhaps the most difficult aspects of zoning and the exercise of local control of land use is the need to balance competing interests of property owners with their property rights, and the public interests of the residents.

- ***On the one hand***, the law tells us that residents have the right to peace and quiet of the their neighborhoods and to have the value of their property protected.
- ***On the other hand***, we are also told that owners of property have a right of a reasonable return on their investment through zoning and that zoning cannot deprive the owner of that return.

In the midst of these many competing interests and views is the local authority for zoning; the Planning Commission and the City Commission.

Zoning, as the process for local control of land use (with some exceptions, such as state and federal land uses) is an accepted legal principle. The planning principles upon which zoning is based include the need to:

- balance the interests of all landowners and residents with the rights of individual landowners;
- help provide a long term vision for the city;
- protect the environment;
- ensure development is adequately served by roads and utilities;
- achieve the quality of life desired by residents; and
- provide fair and consistent review of development proposals.

One of the purposes of the Master Plan is to provide a sense of fairness in dealing with each of these interests by outlining a guide for the future that allows planning and zoning officials to consistently act in the best interests of the future of the city as a whole.

Following Through

Once the Master Plan is in place the normal reaction is a let-down; the Planning Commission's hard work has paid off and the Plan is completed and ready to be filed. But, in reality, the work has just begun. The often heard, and just as often fulfilled, phrase is "the Plan sits on a shelf and collects dust."

But the usefulness of the Master Plan goes far beyond land use. It may also provide direction for infrastructure improvements, protection of natural features, provision of services, and many other elements of community building.

However, a Plan which is not actively followed and implemented may lead to problems for the City in the future. Failure to follow the Plan will discredit any attempt to use it as a defense for actions which may be challenged by property owners or developers.

A Plan which is not actively followed and implemented may lead to problems for the City in the future.

Likewise, consistent and vigorous use of the Plan will lend credibility to the City's attempts to implement controversial decisions on rezonings or other zoning actions. While the courts of the State of Michigan do not recognize the absolute authority of the Master Plan, they do lend much more weight to actions supported by careful planning than those which appear to be taken arbitrarily against an individual property owner.

Since the Master Plan predetermines land use, rezoning decisions should be consistent with its provisions. This is not to say that all rezonings that are consistent with the Future Land Use map should automatically be approved. However, if all of the preconditions of the Master Plan are met, approval of the request should logically be forthcoming.

If, however, a rezoning request is different than that shown in the Plan, it should not automatically be rejected, particularly if the Plan has not been reviewed in some time. Each request should be evaluated to determine if the conditions which were originally considered when the Plan was adopted have changed; if so, the Plan deserves reconsideration.

The following page contains a series of evaluation factors which may be used to determine if a change to the land use element of the Master Plan is appropriate.

THE CITY OF WALKER FUTURE LAND USE EVALUATION FACTORS

EVALUATION FACTOR
Does the proposed new classification meet the qualifications noted in the appropriate portion of the Future Land Use chapter?
Are the zoning districts and their uses which may apply to the new classification compatible and appropriate in the vicinity of the property under consideration?
Have any conditions changed in the area since the Plan was adopted which might justify this change?
Will there be any community impacts which should be considered, such as increased traffic, or others which might create a need for additional services or improvements?
Are there any potential environmental considerations which will be contrary to the intent of the existing or proposed classification of land use?
Was the property improperly classified when the Plan was adopted or amended? Are the qualities of the property different than those that are described in the Plan?
Will there be any adverse effects on adjacent properties as a result of the proposed land use change?

HOW DOES THE LAND USE PLAN AFFECT YOU AS A RESIDENT OR LANDOWNER?

It is important that you, as a resident and/or property owner in the city, understand how the Plan works and how it may affect you. For most, the Master Plan will not have an immediate impact. However, as someone who is concerned about the future of Walker, the Plan should be of great interest to you.

- If you are a *property owner* of either vacant or developed land, you may have several interests, including not only your property but properties in the general area. The Plan's view of future development of these lands may affect the intensity and type of development which may be expected on your property and adjacent properties.
- As a *homeowner*, you will be interested in the properties in your immediate neighborhood. You will want to know what uses are proposed for vacant land in your area.

- As a *city resident* you will be interested in the overall concepts of the Plan as an indication of the Plan's intent for the City now and for the future.

The adoption of this Plan does not mean that you cannot continue to use your property as you do now (provided that the use is legal). The Zoning Ordinance allows an existing use to continue, even if it does not meet the requirements of the Ordinance, as long as it met the requirements when the use was begun.

Conclusion

The **City Of Walker Master Plan** may affect the future use of your property, regardless of whether you are a land owner, business owner, or a homeowner. As a resident or property owner of the City you will want to become familiar with the Plan since it will be used to determine the future of the City of Walker. Our community is constantly changing, but this Plan can help us maintain our focus and allow us to become the community we want to have.

CHAPTER 2 - THE COMMUNITY OF WALKER

The Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area

The City of Walker lies on the edge of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area and borders Ottawa County. Both Kent and Ottawa County stand out as two of the fastest growing counties in Michigan. While the State's population has barely managed to stay constant over the past decade, Kent and Ottawa Counties rank second and third, respectively, among those counties which have had the largest increases since 1980, with a combined increase of 86,719 people.



This growth is especially remarkable considering that the seven counties of the Detroit metro area had a net loss of nearly 100,000 people during the same period; and the entire State only grew by 33,000 people (slightly more than the increase in Ottawa County, alone). Since 1960, the Kent County's population has grown by nearly 40 percent and has had the highest numerical increase of all area counties.

Despite predictions to the contrary for the rest of the State, the economic and living environment of Kent and Ottawa County and the surrounding region is likely to continue to attract new employers and residents throughout the coming decade and beyond.

COUNTY	1960	1970	1980	1990	% Change 1960-1990
KENT CO.	363,187	411,044	444,506	500,631	37.8%
Ottawa Co.	98,719	128,181	157,174	187,768	90.2%
Muskegon Co.	149,943	157,426	157,589	158,983	6.0%
Allegan Co.	57,729	66,575	81,555	90,509	56.8%
Michigan	7,823,194	8,875,083	9,262,071	9,295,297	18.8%

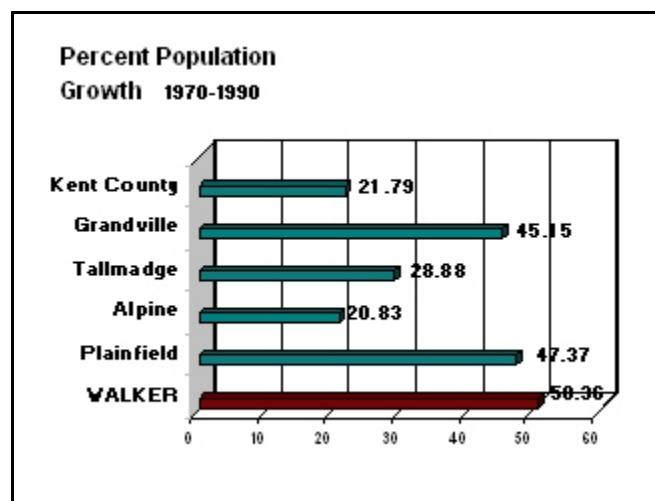
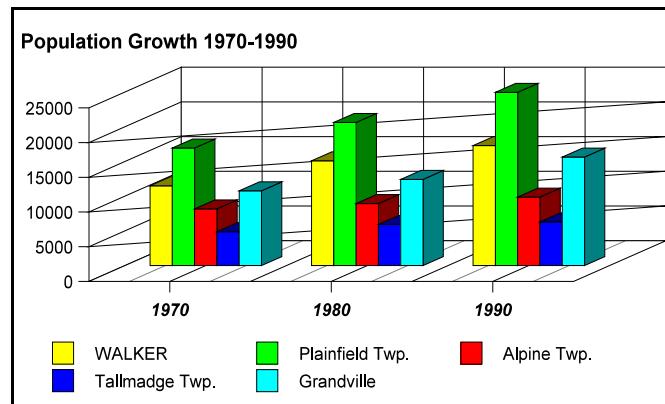
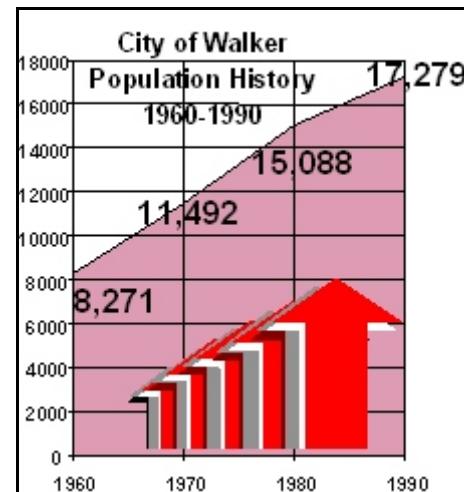
Population History - City of Walker

Walker began as a township, incorporated by the State of Michigan in 1837. At the time, the township boundaries extended to include all of the land north of the Grand River. As the area grew, new townships were formed from Walker until, by 1847, Walker was a standard 36 square mile township. Incorporation as a city was completed in 1962, although the entire township was not taken into the city boundaries until the following year. Previous annexations had eaten away at the boundaries of the township and, in part, contributed to the formation of the city as a form of government.

Since its formation in 1962, the City of Walker has grown steadily. From its 1960 population of 8,271, the city grew to reach its 1990 population of 17,279. A Michigan Department of Management and Budget 1994 estimate placed the 1994 population at 18,835. This amounts to a more than doubling of the city within a 30 year period, with the most rapid growth occurring from 1970 to 1980. This despite the fact that housing construction in the metropolitan area was greatly affected by conditions created by the economic recession that occurred through much of the period.

From 1970 to 1990, the City of Walker experienced the highest growth rate of the near northeastern communities of the Grand Rapids area, although Plainfield Township had a higher numerical growth.

Much of the growth in Walker was created by the construction of additional apartment and manufactured home dwellings. This accounts for the lower growth rates and numbers for the nearby townships, which did not experience this rate of higher density development during the last two decades.



In addition, the rate of single family home construction was greater because of the increased access to public utilities, which allowed higher density neighborhoods.

Community	1970	1980	1990	% Change 1970-1990
WALKER	11,492	15,088	17,279	50.36
Plainfield Twp.	16,935	20,611	24,957	47.37
Alpine Twp.	8,163	8,934	9,863	20.83
Tallmadge Twp.	4,883	5,927	6,293	28.88
Grandville	10,764	12,412	15,624	45.15
Kent County	411,044	444,506	500,631	21.79

Future Growth

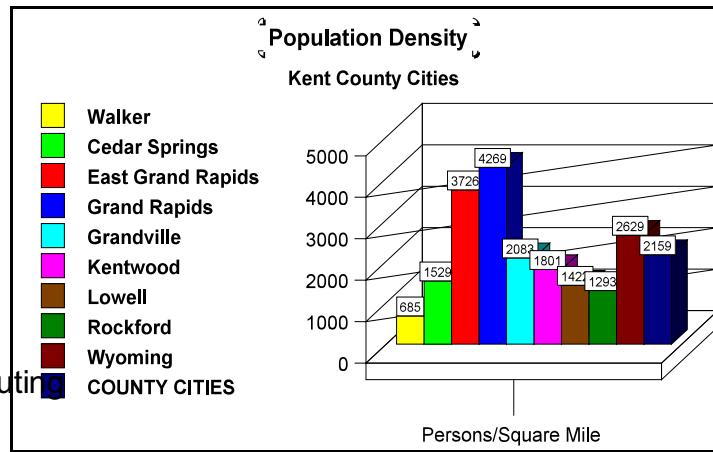
Although population projections are generally difficult to complete with a fair degree of accuracy, it is likely that over population growth in the city will tend to level out, particularly given the attitudes toward further higher density development, and the gradual filling of available residentially zoned land.

CITY	Persons /Square Mile
Walker	685
Cedar Springs	1529
East Grand Rapids	3726
Grand Rapids	4269
Grandville	2083
Kentwood	1801
Lowell	1422
Rockford	1293
Wyoming	2629
COUNTY CITIES	2159

Land use in the south Walker area will probably dictate the eventual rate and number of population growth. Since the most developable residential land is located north of Obrien Road this land is gradually being filled in with new homes, industries, and businesses. Once this land is taken up with new development the only available land will be in south Walker, and its developability is much more limited, due to natural conditions (see Chapter 4 and the South Walker Subarea Plan).

One effect evidenced by the lack of development in south Walker is in the persons per square mile. While most of the cities in Kent County range from well over 1,000 persons per square mile to over 4,000, Walker is the lowest in the county at 685. The land area of the community has little affect on these figures; Wyoming and Kentwood have approximately the same area as Walker.

Another trend that will affect population growth is the increasing residential development in outlying areas, particularly in northern Kent County, and in the adjacent counties around Kent. Convenient highway access allows commuters to live further from their jobs, using the highway system to extend the distance but keep commuting time the same. With relatively cheap operating costs for individual vehicles residential development can easily extend well beyond the job site.



This trend was noted in the Metropolitan Development Blueprint and is further evidenced by population growth in the northern townships. For instance, Cannon and Plainfield Townships alone accounted for about 25 percent of the population growth in all Kent County townships from 1980 to 1990, and nearly 15 percent of the entire County's growth during that same period. Conversely, the development policies and orchards of Alpine Township has tended to keep development from spreading too far beyond Walker's northern border.

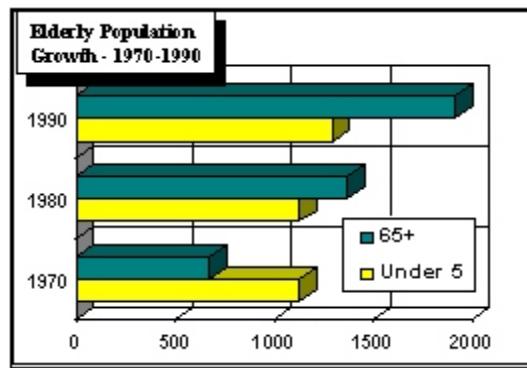
Another factor that will influence future growth is market demand. Residential builders react to the demand created by the market place. The attractiveness of the city, due to its proximity to Grand Rapids, and easy access to other metropolitan areas, including Muskegon and Grand Haven, via I-96 and U.S. 131, along with its quality schools, and other factors has made the area a magnet for new residents and businesses. The range of development sites available, along with such factors as size, site amenities, access, availability, environmental restrictions, utilities, cost, zoning, etc., determine the ultimate market draw of the city.

Age

Age is an important indicator for planning, helping to determine the need for schools, social programs, housing, and other community facilities and services. The 1990 median age jumped significantly from the 1980 figure of 27.8 to 31.3. Even though this was a large increase in a relatively short period of time, it is consistent with national demographics which show a rise in the median age.

Especially dramatic is the growth of the 65 and over population, particularly when compared to the Under 5 years of age category. In 1970 there were 671 persons 65 years of age and older, compared to 1,128 Under 5 years. By 1990 that ratio had shifted to 1,918 persons that were 65 and over, compared to 1,296 Under 5.

While the Under 5 population remained relatively stable, the 65 and over age group nearly tripled in size. Some of this growth can be credited to development of retirement housing, but a significant portion of the population has also stayed in the city for a long period of time. By way of example, one-third of all respondents to the Community Survey had lived in the city of Walker for more than 20 years; of those, 24 percent had lived in the city all of their lives.



The age distribution for the city is typical of most cities. The impact of the aging population is evident in a 1980 to 1990 comparison (above), which is reflected in the increase in the median age.

Neighborhoods

One of the strongest attachments people have to their communities is the neighborhood in which they live. "Quality of neighborhoods" was either "Extremely Important" or "Important" to 90 percent of those responding to the Community Survey. In addition, "my neighborhood" was noted by 93 percent as "Extremely Important" or "Important" to their image of the city. These results were not substantially different for owners and renters, nor did they differ between areas of the city.

A number of questions were posed to determine the relative stability of the city's neighborhoods. One of the critical questions was whether or not the residents believed that their home had retained its value. A positive response would indicate that their attitude about the future of the neighborhood was also positive. Respondents supported the statement that their home had, in fact, retained its value, with 69 percent agreeing to the statement and 9 percent disagreeing. Most respondents (82 percent) agreed that homes in their neighborhoods were well kept.

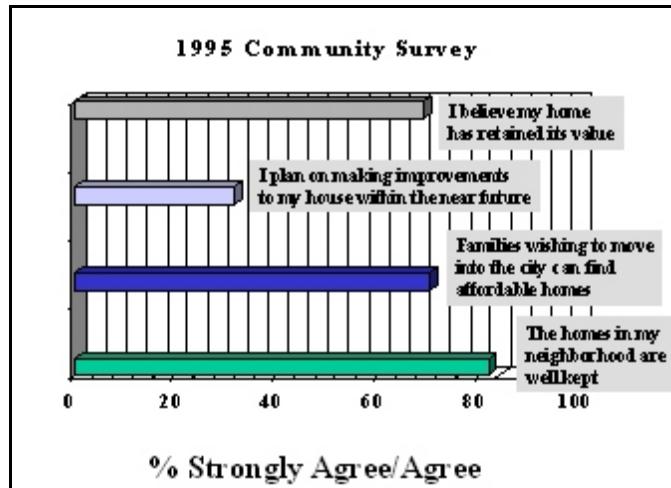
Affordability was another issue of concern in the Survey. Nearly a third of the respondents also indicated that they planned to make improvements to their home in the near future.

Affordability was also a factor in why people have chosen to live in Walker. The survey indicated that one of the reasons people moved to Walker was that they were able to find housing in a price range they could afford. Affordability was also addressed in another question about whether or not families moving into the city could find a suitable range of available housing types, and, the ability to find affordable housing. In both instances respondents agreed that both statements were true.

However, owners and renters showed significant differences in their answers to these questions. When asked if families could find a broad range of housing types 75 percent of owners agreed; but only 49 percent of renters. When asked whether or not affordable homes could be found 77 percent of owners agreed; but only 36 percent of renters.

Homes in cities tend to be more affordable because they are usually on smaller lots and, on average, are older homes than those being constructed in neighboring townships. Walker's owner-specified median home values (\$71,300) were consistent with other cities in Kent County, having the third highest value of all cities, but comparatively lower when compared to surrounding communities.

Another issue of significance for the city is the number of rental apartments that have been developed in the past 10-15 years. As of 1990, the U.S. Census reported 4,287 (61 percent) owner occupied housing units and 2,382 (34 percent) renter occupied units of a total of 7,060 units in the city. This concern was reflected in the Community Survey when 62 percent of respondents wanted "fewer" rental apartments in the city.



COMMUNITY	Owner-Occupied		Renter-Occupied		Total Units
	Units	%	Units	%	
WALKER	4,287	60.72	2,382	33.74	7,060
Grandville	4,070	69.32	1,573	26.79	5,871
Wyoming	16,297	65.04	7,871	31.41	25,056
Kentwood	8,798	53.85	6,449	39.47	16,337
Grand Rapids	41,349	56.09	27,680	37.55	73,716

Among the major cities in the Grand Rapids area Kentwood and Grand Rapids has a higher percentage of renter occupied housing than Walker. Grandville and Wyoming have somewhat lower percentages of renter occupied homes.

One statistic that reflects this fact is the persons per household. In 1990 the city had 2.54 persons per household, which is lower than any of the surrounding communities. In part this is due to a steady decline in the number of persons per household over the last two decades. This has been due at least in part to lower birth rates, an increased divorced rate, and an aging population.

CHAPTER 3 - A VISION FOR THE CITY OF WALKER

Background

The City of Walker will always be changing. The challenge to the City is to manage those changes and take advantage of them to better the quality of life for all of its citizens, businesses, and institutions.



There are many directions the City could take.

- ◆ The City *government* could take a passive approach and hope that the business community takes charge.
- ◆ The *business* community could lean heavily on the City for assistance.
- ◆ The *residents* of the City may become apathetic about any change, simply accepting whatever happens.

Each potential path will have individual consequences for the attractiveness, vitality, and image of the City of Walker. These consequences are, of course, not set in stone; even seemingly minor events may have an impact on the future.

The Need for a Vision

The closing decade of the Twentieth Century and the dawn of the Twenty-First will be an exciting time for the City of Walker.

The question isn't whether the city will prosper--but how much, and what will be the quality of life for those who live and work here.

The question isn't about whether growth will be good for us or bad--but how will we take advantage of the opportunities presented to us.

The question isn't if we should care about the quality of life--but how will we keep Walker a place where we want to continue to live and work.

We don't always agree. Some people think that doing things the way we have always done them is in the community's best interest. Those views must be respected and considered.

The planning process itself is not mystical; its effectiveness will not center on the ability to devise a new and wonderful planning theory. The challenge, rather, will be to use sound planning principles to educate the public on the value and practical benefits of a common Vision and the need to work together to achieve that Vision.

To that end the Vision for Walker should act as a catalyst to encourage understanding of the need to work as a community, unite diverse interests, and achieve common goals to shape the destiny of the city. To accomplish this the Vision must identify the key factors which affect the rate, type, quality, and pattern of growth. It must also lead to agreement on actions which meet future needs, solves problems, and helps us realize our Vision.

The Vision for the City of Walker was generated by a group of Walker's citizens who worked with members of the Planning City Commissions to produce a statement that embraced their hopes for the future of the city. Four draft Visions were developed from which a composite statement was shaped. The final Vision was approved by the Planning Commission. The four drafts and the Vision statement are on the following page.

Goals

The Master Plan is based upon the assumption that a community-wide consensus on Goals must be in place before realistic plans for the future can be prepared. It further assumes that once a Vision for the city has been accepted the Plan will be more readily used by City leaders because it reflects accepted goals.



Goals guide progress by bringing the social, physical, economic, and political needs of the city into more meaningful focus. Goals are statements of the intent of the community with respect to its future and the Master Plan is based on the desire to carry out those intentions.

Setting Our Goals

The first step in the process used to Walker's Goals was to sort out the major issues and desires of the community. These major issues were highlighted in the Vision for the City of Walker.

The City of Walker will be a community with a distinct identity, forged through a strong sense of neighborhood and family; a planned, balanced use of land considering the needs of residents and businesses; and firm ties between its people and government.

The City's Goals were based on these issues. As with the Vision, the Goals were developed through the Focus Group and other residents attending the work sessions for the Plan. Goals were written for each of the main issues of the Vision:

- Community Image
- Neighborhoods and Families
- Land Use
- City - Resident Communications

These Goals are noted on the following pages.

GOALS

COMMUNITY IMAGE

The City will work with its residents to establish a sense of community and belonging through activities, such as an annual *Walker Fair* with community and family events, and a distinctive theme, logo, or slogan.



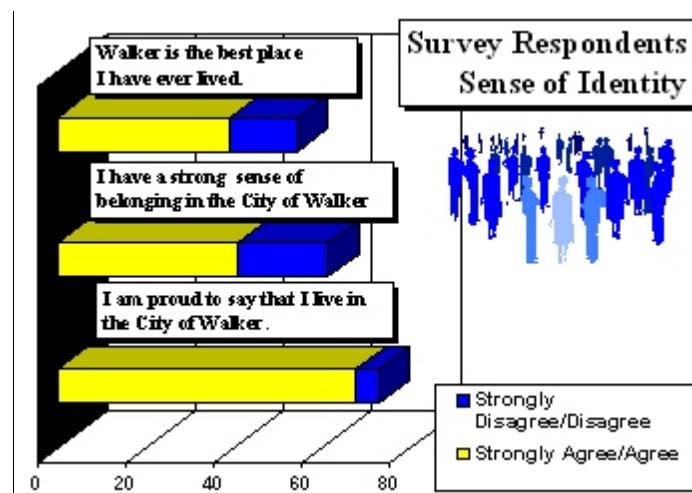
The City of Walker will identify and develop a central “place” as a focal point of the city. The “Heart of Walker” will be a place for recreation, community events, festivals, and other activities to promote interaction among the people of the city.

Efforts will be made to strengthen community and neighborhood pride through improvements aimed at improving the physical and social conditions of the city’s residents.

Goal Justification

One of the concerns consistently expressed by Walker residents during the planning process was the feeling that they were simply a part of Grand Rapids and had no distinct identity. A lack of identity can create difficulties in passing operating millages, gaining approvals for infrastructure projects, developing consensus on zoning issues, and others. In part, these difficulties may exist because the residents have little sense of commitment to Walker as a community; their concerns may not go beyond the boundaries of their own neighborhood.

A Community Survey, conducted as part of the Master Plan process, indicated a fairly weak sense of identity and belonging to the city.

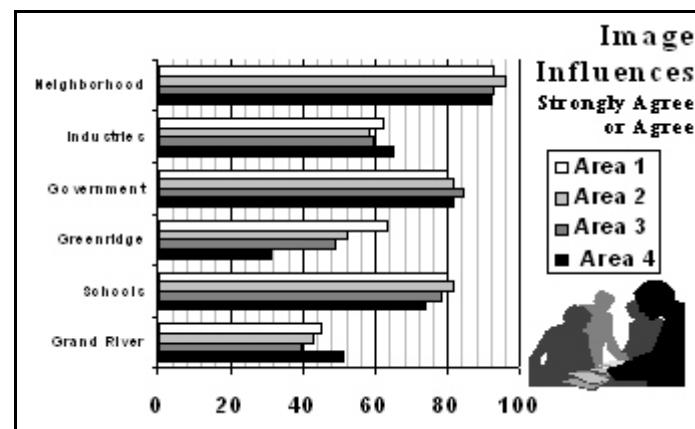


While it was clear that people are **proud** to live in the city, they do not seem to have a clear sense of identification with the community. There may be several reasons for this, including the proximity of the City of Grand Rapids, the lack of a "Walker" school system, multiple mailing addresses, and others.

Some communities are easy to recognize, because they have a unique image, a distinguished (or sometimes infamous) history, a strong industrial identity, or simply because their citizens take pride in their community and spread the word. Some communities create their own uniqueness. But more often, uniformity of development within a metropolitan area often makes it difficult to tell one community from another.

As a result, before a resident can form an attachment to the city of Walker, it is necessary that their images and identity with the city be strengthened. The Community Survey identified the cultural and natural images that are recognized in Walker. The cultural images include *neighborhoods*, *government*, and *schools*; the natural images include *trees*, and *parks/open space*. The wide consensus on the value of these elements to the image of the city is important. But what is most important is that the City undertake an active effort to improve the overall image of the community by taking advantage of the positive elements and working to improve any negatives.

While there are physical changes that can be made to enhance the image of Walker, creating that connection will take much more. The elements of the Master Plan must work in concert to improve the sense of belonging people have with Walker. This will take the dedicated efforts of the city's leaders and citizens to become "ambassadors." This will require positive and continuous communication between the City and its citizens, as addressed by other Goals.



GOALS NEIGHBORHOODS AND FAMILIES

The City and residents of Walker will work together to develop strategies to maintain the positive features and character of its neighborhoods. These may include such activities as road maintenance, upkeep of homes, preserving trees and other natural features, and other similar efforts.



The City of Walker will promote safer neighborhoods by assisting neighborhood organizations and encouraging more interaction between neighborhood residents.

The City will work with neighborhoods and other community organizations to promote structured programs for all age groups to encourage recreation and interaction between residents.

The City will work to develop a partnership with the community school systems to utilize existing facilities and programs and to develop new facilities and programs to meet the needs of Walker's residents.

Goal Justification

The Metropolitan Development Blueprint, commissioned by the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council stated:

"There is great value in promoting compact, livable communities consisting of a blend of residential areas which are livable cities, villages, and neighborhoods, served by efficient utility and transportation systems each having its own identity and access to the area's natural resources."

Walker has a strong residential neighborhood character. This character is part of the fabric of what is often meant by "quality of life." People who have a sense of belonging to an area or a community will put more effort into preserving the qualities that make their neighborhood a desirable place to live. Our term for this concept is "Living

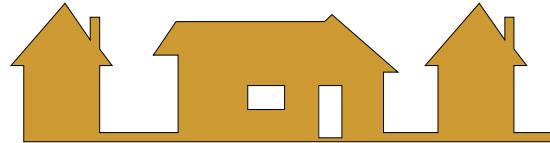
Neighborhoods." This term not only implies the spirit of a neighborhood, but is intended to represent continuity which itself implies the need for constant support and maintenance.

Characteristics of Living Neighborhoods

Individual areas may be evaluated using the common characteristics of Living Neighborhoods to see what, if any, obstacles to their development might be overcome through revisions of existing regulations or policies, or physical improvements. These characteristics include:

- Density adequate to make efficient use of infrastructure.
- Variety of housing types and prices.
- Well maintained homes.
- Provisions for meeting spaces, green areas, walking paths.
- Streets allow safe movement within the Neighborhood.
- Access to open space.
- Preservation of valuable natural features.
- Pedestrian links between shopping areas, open spaces, and other features.
- Small scale shopping areas for day-to-day needs of the residents.
- Nearby day care, schools, medical facilities, and other similar uses.
- Neighborhood Association which looks after the common interests of the Neighborhood.
- Preservation of cultural and historical resources.
- Flexibility in the application of setbacks, yards, accessory building regulations.
- Streets and sidewalks appropriate for the level of development that they are designed to serve.
- Use of curbside recycling, composting, and other environmental programs.
- Access to transit services.
- Sense of safety and security--adequate lighting in public areas, Neighborhood Watch and community safety programs.



GOALS
LAND USE

Future land use decisions in the city will seek to balance the physical, social, and economic effects of development with the needs and desires of its existing residents, the environment, and necessary community services.

Land use decisions must recognize the rights of private property owners as well as those of neighboring owners and the interests of all of the city's residents and businesses.

The City of Walker will identify and develop a central "place" as a focal point of the city. The "Heart of Walker" will be a place for recreation, community events, festivals, and other activities to promote interaction among the people of the city.

Goal Justification

The "ideal" balance of land uses is elusive. There is no formula for the perfect city. Rather, each community seeks its own balance based on the changing needs and desires of its residents. But it is important that Walker follow a consistent course, one that respects changes brought about by time but recognizes the need for stability and consistency in how decisions are made regarding the future of the city.

Therefore, as Walker seeks its own balance it will be important that land use decisions be based on consistent policies developed through a systematic series of steps designed to take into account a wide variety of circumstances and opinions.

Setting a Land Use Policy

Setting a policy for any land use issue involves a series of steps. Citizen involvement throughout this process is critical, but the ultimate responsibility rests with a cooperative effort between the Planning and City Commissions.

1. *Develop a clear statement of the problem/issue.*

Developing a land use policy requires a clear understanding of the effect of the issue on the City. Facts and perceptions must each be understood. An over balance of any land use can have far reaching affects on other parts of the community. Too much industrial land, especially if improperly located, can severely affect the feelings of residents about the community. These elements should be written as a statement of the problem/issue which can then be used as a basis on which to build a policy.

2. *Collect information.*

Some preliminary information may have to be collected to help develop Step 1, but the bulk of the data will be needed to address the Problem Statement. This may include:

- ▶ calculation of land use “build out;”
- ▶ base information for calculation of impacts (trips per day, students per unit, etc.);
- ▶ basis for effects of perceptions and the tangible and intangible problems created;
- ▶ other information related to basic issues of Problem Statement.

3. *Develop and evaluate alternative policies.*

At this point some general approaches to the Problem Statement should be explored, based on the information collected in Step 2. These alternatives should be developed without consideration of legal issues, economic/social factors, or land use impacts which might eliminate a policy. The first part of this step will simply list the approaches that could resolve the problem.

Once a list is in place, the other considerations can be used to help in the evaluation of the most useful approach. Constitutional and legal issues can be described and other potential negative impacts examined. This will eliminate the alternatives that could be used.

4. *Develop a Policy Statement.*

Any approaches remaining can be worded into a Policy Statement that clearly expresses the desired outcome and the measures that will be used to achieve that outcome. The Policy should be tested against the following.

The Policy Statement should:

- a. be **achievable**;
- b. be **realistic**;
- c. be broad enough to **inspire** but narrow enough to meet #1 and #2;
- d. be **limited** to no more than 2-3 major points; and
- e. provide clear direction for future decision makers.

5. *Implement the Policy*

This step may include some tough decisions. Master Plan and zoning changes may be required, including new zoning districts and regulations. This will require a close working relationship between the Planning and City Commissions. It is probably better to undertake these steps as part of a comprehensive package, rather than trying to implement them over time. But this will depend on the adopted policy.

6. *Evaluate the Policy and adopt needed changes.*

The Policy Statement, if properly drafted, will provide direction on evaluation measures; such as a numerical goal to allow an annual calculation of progress. The evaluation measures should indicate the effectiveness of the Policy. Changes may be needed if over time the Policy appears to be ineffective, or the implementation measures inadequate.

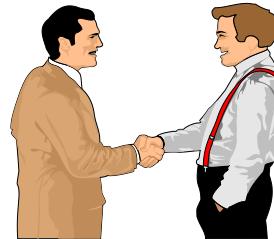
Conclusion

Land use is intended to help a community achieve its Vision. Consideration of social and economic factors should be an important part of that Vision. At the same time the needs of existing residents must also be taken into account. Balancing these interests where they conflict is part of the decision makers job. Building a better community is ultimate goal.

GOALS

CITY - RESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

The Master Plan for the City of Walker will be citizen based with emphasis on neighborhoods. The Plan will be a document upon which the people of the city may rely.



The Master Plan will be kept current and consistently followed by the Planning and City Commissions.

The City of Walker will promote community involvement by assisting in the organization of neighborhood and business associations and encouraging more interaction between neighborhood residents.

The City will provide regular communication at the ward level between City Commissioners and neighborhood and business associations.

The City of Walker will promote the widest possible awareness of projects and issues that will affect the entire community.

Goal Justification

The Community Survey drew out responses about the relationship between the Walker government and its citizens, with mixed results. The weakest responses dealt with how well the respondents felt that they were represented by the City and how the City valued their opinions. More positive responses were given about how well the City communicated with its citizens.

The opening chapter, *Walker - A Changing Community*, noted that the principles upon which zoning is based include the need to:

- balance the interests of all landowners and residents with the rights of individual landowners;
- help provide a long term vision for the community;
- protect the environment;
- ensure development is adequately served by roads and utilities;

- achieve the quality of life desired by residents; and
- provide fair and consistent review of development proposals.

One of the most difficult challenges for city officials is determining how much of a decision involves their judgment and how much the opinions of residents. Similarly the most difficult aspect of zoning and the exercise of local control of land use is the need to balance the various and often competing interests of property owners and residents presented by the concept of property rights.

On the one hand, the law tells us that residents have the right to peace and quiet of their neighborhoods and to have the value of their property protected.

On the other hand, we are also told that owners of property have a right of a reasonable return on their investment through zoning and that zoning cannot deprive the owner of that return.

The foremost concern that any decision maker should have is to ensure fairness for all concerned; the applicant as well as the public. The interests of all parties need not be mutually exclusive. The first chapter of the Plan describes how the Plan should be used by those who are affected by it.

A fundamental part of the Master Plan is the ability to rely on its principles and findings. Even though the Plan is intended to be flexible enough to meet unanticipated events, it should only be changed after careful study and consideration.

For the City of Walker this means communicating the contents and reasoning of the Plan to the public and observing its Vision and Goals.

For the residents of Walker this means participating in the development of the Plan, staying informed about the need for changes, and understanding the rights of all concerned.

The need to communicate:

- will continue after the adoption of the Plan;
- will require constant attention;
- must work both ways - from the City to its residents and from the residents to the City; and
- must occur on a planned basis.

CHAPTER 4 - CARING FOR THE LAND: Future Land Use

Background

The shape and vitality of any community is defined largely by how its citizens see the way land is used and how that use relates to their daily life. As a result, the way we use the land is linked directly to the quality of life of Walker. The Goals set forth for the Master Plan set for clearly the intent of land use in the city.



- *Future land use decisions in the city will seek to balance the physical, social, and economic effects of development with the needs and desires of its existing residents, the environment, and necessary community services.*
- *Land use decisions must recognize the rights of private property owners as well as those of neighboring owners and the interests of all residents and businesses.*
- *The City of Walker will identify and develop a central place as a focal point of the city. The Heart of Walker will be a place for recreation, community events, festivals, and other activities to promote interaction among the people of the city.*

The shape and vitality of any community is defined largely by how its citizens see the way land is used and how that use relates to their daily life.

This chapter will put into place the land uses that will implement and maintain these goals. The accompanying maps are intended to illustrate these principles, but it is the text of this chapter that most directly describes the future use of land for the City of Walker. Several development policies are also recommended throughout.

LAND USE TODAY

The reasons that land has developed to this point in time vary widely. Some uses of land predate zoning; others were approved by previous administrations with or without the benefit of a master plan.

Many of these areas are stable, active areas that are thriving economically and socially. Others have a wide mix of uses that often conflict with one another. And still others have seen their best days pass by and are in need of attention.

Much of the land area of the city has been covered as part of the Subarea Plans. This chapter describes the lands outside of the Subareas, and links the Subareas to the rest of the city. The largest remaining portion not covered by the Subareas is the middle of the city--here called Midcity.

Midcity (Obrien to Railroad)

Midcity Walker is dominated by large subdivisions of homes, mixed with some areas of apartments. The homes in the area tend to be formed into pockets of neighborhoods that are generally protected from through traffic and unwanted uses. There are large, scattered areas of vacant lands that will need to be treated in a manner that is sensitive to these neighborhoods. A number of the vacant parcels are odd-shaped and will likely need to be combined to make them suitable for development.

Keeping these neighborhoods intact should be a high priority, as described in the Neighborhoods and Families Goals. One important part of achieving this Goal will be land for parks and open spaces. The 1994 Recreation Plan identifies the need to provide a geographically balanced system of park and recreation facilities and sets an objective of obtaining more land for neighborhood parks. The Plan also indicates the need to have a strong working relationship between the city and the schools in this regard.

Wilson Avenue, included as a Subarea Plan, provides an important link between the Midcity neighborhoods and the rest of the city. The Recreation Plan indicates a planned bike path along Wilson that would help connect several neighborhoods with shopping and recreation areas. This also links to a bike path along Lake Michigan Drive. As noted in the Subarea Plan, land uses along Wilson Avenue will generally be kept as residential, rather than permitting another strip commercial area.

Recommended Development Policy

The Planning Commission should work closely with the Parks and Recreation Committee to identify locations for neighborhood parks and open spaces. The selected locations should support the Characteristics of Living Neighborhoods noted in the Goals for Neighborhoods and Families.

East End

Another unique area of the city lies generally between Bristol Avenue and U.S. 131, south of I-96, here called East End. The largest residential area lies between Alpine and Bristol Avenues. The northern and western portions of this area are the more traditional subdivision lots, with larger homes. In contrast, the southern and eastern areas are some of the oldest in the city, with smaller, platted lots on a grid street system.

The East End also contains the largest number of potential land use conflicts, with several residential areas directly abutting either industrial or commercial uses.

THE WALKER OF TOMORROW

Future Land Use Designations

Residential

Rural Residential

Rural Residential: Density not to exceed 1 dwelling unit per acre

This classification is limited primarily to the South Walker area and a small area east of Collindale and north of Obrien. The intent of this land use is to provide an area where residential uses are developed at densities not exceeding 1 unit per acre. Where natural features make up a substantial portion of the property, open space (or cluster) development will be encouraged through the use of planned unit development provisions and possible density bonuses where significant natural features and open spaces are preserved through sensitive development design.

This method of development may also prove beneficial in the areas where mining activities have severely disturbed the natural landscape. Not all properties will be suited to cluster development. Applicants for cluster development approval should be able to demonstrate that the project will preserve large open spaces or natural features that might otherwise be eliminated, or plan the site around the areas affected by mining activities.

These concepts are described more fully in the South Walker Subarea Plan.

Significant issues in this area include development of a policy regarding public sanitary sewer and water. Expressions from many of the residents in South Walker noted that sanitary sewer was not desired but that public water would be

beneficial. At the densities proposed, sanitary sewer service would not necessarily be required. However, other water quality conditions may make public water a necessity at some point.

The second issue concerns access. There was a consensus on the need to provide additional north-south access, generally along a line from Butterworth Drive to Sunset Hills Avenue. The only existing north-south roadway, apart from Wilson Avenue, is a segment of Maynard. Topography in this area complicates the ability to construct this additional access, but continued examination of a possible route is warranted.

Low Density Residential

This classification covers large areas of the city that are, or will be, developed in what is considered as the traditional suburban subdivision style, with densities of up to 4 units per acre. The Goals of the Master Plan identified characteristics that make neighborhoods livable. These elements need to be considered when planning for new development under this classification, and when changes are proposed to existing areas.

Low Density Residential:

Density up to 4 dwelling units per acre

- Density adequate to make efficient use of infrastructure.
- Variety of housing types and prices.
- Well maintained homes.
- Provisions for meeting spaces, green areas, walking paths.
- Streets that allow safe movement within the neighborhood.
- Access to open space.
- Preservation of valuable natural features.
- Pedestrian links between shopping areas, open spaces, and other features.
- Small scale shopping areas for day-to-day needs of the residents.
- Nearby day care, schools, medical facilities, and other similar uses.
- Neighborhood Association which looks after the common interests of the neighborhood.
- Preservation of cultural and historical resources.
- Flexibility in the application of setbacks, yards, accessory building regulations.



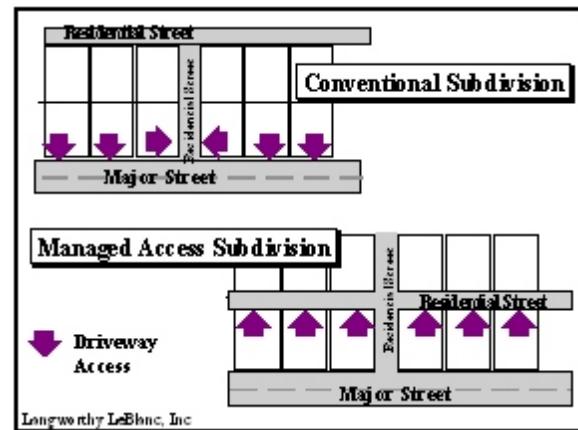
- Streets and sidewalks appropriate for the level of development that they are designed to serve.
- Use of curbside recycling, composting, and other environmental programs.
- Access to transit services.
- Sense of safety and security--adequate lighting in public areas, Neighborhood Watch and community safety programs.

(These concepts are described in the Community Image Issue Paper.)

Some of the undeveloped Low Density Residential land along major streets, such as Wilson Avenue may develop one lot at a time. As a result, the homes that are built utilize the existing roads for access, creating a "strip residential" effect. These homes, if spaced too closely, will have numerous driveways, creating safety concerns along the roadway. Since some of these streets may have a speed limit of 45 to 55 miles per hour, driveway spacing between homes along these major streets is a significant concern.

Also, if homes are placed near the street, and traffic volumes increase dramatically, owners may wish to see their properties rezoned for commercial use, once they feel that they are no longer viable for residential. This possibility may require increasing the distance between each driveway to provide a measure of safety by ensuring that drivers are not confused as to the location of driveways and allowing sufficient distance to slow down to enter the driveway.

Where properties are developed as part of a subdivision or other planned development, direct driveway access to the major street should be limited by requiring as many lots as possible to have their access on internal streets.



Medium Density Residential

The Medium Density Residential classification covers a broad range of residential development generally ranging up to 8 units per acre. This may include more mature single family areas on small lots platted prior to the 1940s and 1950s. It also includes lower density multiple family developments, such as single story condominium and apartment projects, and manufactured home communities.

These areas may also serve as effective transition points between commercial or industrial land uses and lower density residential areas.

Many of the same qualities that influence Low Density Residential neighborhoods should also be encouraged for these higher density neighborhoods, such as access to transit, availability of open spaces, safe streets, access to small scale shopping areas for day-to-day needs of the residents, and nearby day care, schools, medical facilities, and other similar uses. In fact, these qualities take on increased importance as densities increase.

There will be longer term concerns in the older, platted and developed areas, such as those east and west of Alpine Avenue south of Three Mile Road, that must be addressed. Attention will need to be directed to such issues as housing maintenance and nuisance violations. In addition, aging infrastructure, including streets, sidewalks, and utilities will require repairs and replacement. As these areas continue to age a commitment of resources will likely be needed to improve neighborhood conditions.

High Density Residential

Development guidelines for higher density neighborhoods are just as important as any other. At the same time, concentrations of population in smaller areas call for more attention to traffic, parking, lighting, security, drainage, compatibility with adjacent land uses, and treatment of natural areas.

High Density Residential areas may be developed at up to 12 units per acre and will generally consist of low rise apartments, either rented, or owned as

Medium Density Residential: Density up to 8 dwelling units per acre

Many of the same qualities that influence Low Density Residential neighborhoods should also be encouraged for these higher density neighborhoods...

High Density Residential: Density up to 12 dwelling units per acre

condominiums.

In the past higher density projects have proven to be controversial (see Issue Paper When is Enough, Enough). However, there is a recognized need for homes that are both affordable and available. The key to locating such projects is ensuring that public facilities are adequate and that the project design is sensitive to the natural and built environment.

Therefore, High Density Residential areas should have the following characteristics:

- Access should be available to an arterial street. Higher volumes of traffic coming from a concentrated source must have adequate access to a street capable of safely accommodating the traffic generated from the project. In particular, the locations of such access should be at least 150 to 200 feet from any street intersection.
- Locations should be selected that have the least effect on adjacent land uses, or where these land uses do not negatively affect the project itself. Higher density projects should not be located in isolated pockets surrounded by lower density areas. They should be located where services are convenient.
- The site should be able to accommodate larger parking areas and buildings without significantly affecting the natural features of the site. The need for larger parking areas and building envelopes tends to dictate some alteration of the site. However, project designs must be sensitive to the terrain, natural drainage courses, and existing significant vegetation, as well as areas of poor soils or wetlands.
- Design of the project should also consider visual monotony. Large buildings, particularly several of the same overall design, can tend to create a negative appearance. Variety of architecture (without chaos), sensitive placement, landscaping, and other design elements can help create better living environments and avoid the stigma of monotony often associated with higher density neighborhoods.

- Open spaces and recreation areas must be provided. In some instances public recreation areas within walking distance can provide adequate open space and recreation area. But where these are not convenient, projects should be willing to provide useable open spaces and activities for recreation.

Commercial

Neighborhood Commercial

There are specific locations within the city where commercial uses and services may be desirable or necessary, but require sensitivity both in the nature of the uses permitted and in the manner in which the site is developed. The Neighborhood Commercial category is intended to designate areas with these characteristics.

The intent of the Neighborhood Commercial classification is to limit the overall size and intensity of commercial development.

Overall, development within these areas will be of low intensity, with limited square footage, and allow such uses as offices, personal services, and limited commercial uses. These areas are not intended for large retail operations, either freestanding or in strip centers. Rather, uses should be limited to those serving the daily needs of nearby residential and employment areas.

The intent of the Neighborhood Commercial classification is to limit the overall size and intensity of commercial development. Businesses and services will be those that cater to residents of nearby areas. Generally, total square footage should be limited to 5,000 to 10,000 square-foot areas or less. Sites should be located on lots of sufficient size and width.

Generous setbacks, sign limitations, reduced lighting levels, and landscaping will be necessary to ensure that these uses fit within the neighborhood in which they are located. Driveways will be located as far from a public street intersection as possible to minimize traffic conflicts, but generally not less than 150 feet from the intersection. In most situations only a single driveway will be permitted unless a professional traffic study determines that a second drive is needed to accommodate higher volumes of traffic.

Other specific considerations may include proper sufficient separation from adjacent residential areas, proper lighting controls, landscaping, and other site design features.

Village Commercial

Over the years there have been small areas that have witnessed a number of zoning changes, development and redevelopment plans, and the presence of long-term uses. These areas often include a wide range of uses; older, residential lots, multiple family buildings, small commercial uses, offices, and even industrial operations, all within a small area.

For the most part these uses have grown up with one another and have found ways to coexist with relatively few conflicts. Attempts to force land use changes, even over extended periods of time, could prove unsuccessful, and probably unnecessary. In some ways, these areas have unique qualities that could act as useful examples of ways to successfully mix seemingly incompatible uses.

For instance, allowing apartments above retail stores, permitting retail sales of industrial-related products, and including offices in homes would be consistent with the mixed development concepts of these areas. In some cases the City may wish to more carefully review the relationships between these uses to lessen potential safety and nuisance considerations.

Some of the design elements that need to be considered might include ensuring circulation that places a priority on pedestrians rather than vehicles, permitting small open spaces for gathering places, and keeping light fixtures in scale with the surroundings.

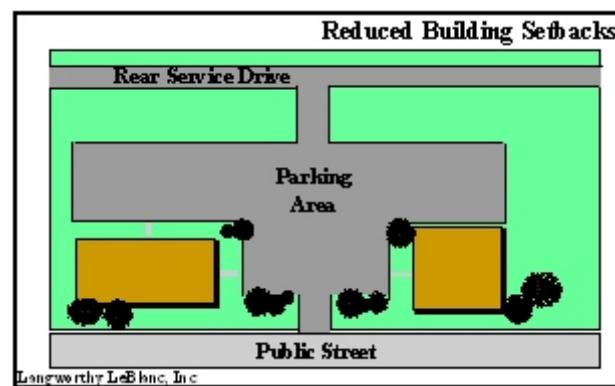
Community Commercial

Community Commercial represents the most intensive areas of commercial services, offering a wide range of goods and services of varying sizes and markets. These may include shopping areas that serve consumers living well outside the boundaries of the city, as well as more localized services, such as franchise restaurants and retail stores.

Community Commercial represents the most intensive areas of commercial services, offering a wide range of goods and services of varying sizes and markets.

Traffic and relationship to adjacent land use are among the most important considerations for Community Commercial locations. Primary among the traffic considerations is access management (see Issue Paper, Highway Corridor Development).

Transportation studies have consistently shown that the number, design, and location of driveways can have a great affect on the ability of a road to safely move traffic and provide access for adjacent land uses. Driveways along major roadways affect traffic flow, ease of driving, and accident potential. Every effort should be made to limit the number of driveways and encourage access from side streets, service drives, frontage roads, and shared driveways.



Traffic safety is also an important consideration. Intensive development of commercial areas of include such needs as intersection improvements. A review of needed improvements must be included in the overall plan for development. Other specific considerations will include adequate turning lanes, improved shoulders, and signal improvements (as needed).

There are a number of Community Commercial areas that abut residential land uses. While these uses need not be inherently incompatible, site plans must address landscaping, buffers, and/or greenbelts to ensure that proposed uses will be adequately buffered from surrounding property. It may also be necessary to require screening of loading areas, dumpsters, rooftop mechanical equipment, and other areas of intense activity.

Standale

The Standale shopping area, along Lake Michigan Avenue and included in this classification, contains a mix of commercial and service uses. Standale is one of the few areas clearly identified as part of the city. In fact, almost 70 percent of respondents to the Community Survey considered Standale as either Very Important or Important to their image of the City of Walker.

Standale is a unique, healthy, attractive shopping district which serves the needs of homes in the area with a variety of retail stores, restaurants, banks, and service

businesses. A number of improvements have been accomplished in the past several years, including street and parking improvements, planting of street trees, and general clean up work.

Pursuant to Act No. 120 of the Public Acts of 1961 (MCLA 125.981 et seq.), as amended ("Act No. 120"), the City has established a Downtown Redevelopment Management Board.

The Downtown Redevelopment Management Board is responsible for managing the ongoing maintenance, security, promotion, and continued operation of redevelopment projects within a designated "principal shopping district" within Standale. The Planning Commission finds that the development or redevelopment of a designated principal shopping district in Standale advances the goals and policies of the Master Plan. The Planning Commission further designates the downtown district of the Downtown Development Authority of the City of Walker as the "principal shopping district" pursuant to Act No.

120 as described in the accompanying map.

Recommended Development Policy

The merchants and city have made a significant investment in keeping Standale vital. It would be in the interests of the city and the merchants to limit the growth of this area east and west along Lake Michigan Drive to maintain a vital core of uses rather than creating a typical strip commercial area. This effort would also be aided by ensuring that buildings are set close to the street, parking is convenient but generally hidden from the view of the street, and that the needs of pedestrians are met.

Lake Michigan Drive

Standale makes up a portion of the Lake Michigan Drive corridor, but other areas along this important corridor are also important. The City of Walker recognized the critical nature of this roadway and commissioned a special study, the Lake Michigan Drive Corridor Study, to evaluate its traffic and land use characteristics. Three primary areas of concern identified for this area were access management, safety/efficiency of the Wilson/Lake Michigan intersection, and the lack of consistent pedestrian/bicycle facilities.

Access Management

The two distinct land use areas (older commercial and emerging development) both need to have access standards adopted to retain/maintain a safe and efficient corridor. In the older central commercial area, there are still too many poorly spaced driveways even with the improvements completed a few years ago. As outlined in the Lake Michigan Drive Corridor Safety Study, there are further opportunities to combine or close several driveways in this area. Due to the retrofit situation, these opportunities will likely only come when a site/building comes in for other redevelopment/expansion approvals.

For the emerging commercial and residential areas, a set of specific access management standards and an access plan need to be utilized for future development. The parameters outlined in the Issues Papers and the recently adopted access guidelines by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) should be used to define acceptable access spacing/locations in these areas.

For the emerging commercial and residential areas, a set of specific access management standards and an access plan need to be utilized for future development.

The City has a preliminary access plan for the undeveloped portion of Lake Michigan Drive west of Wilson Avenue on the south side. This plan calls for the eventual construction of a new north/south street or service drive aligned with Ferndale Avenue. This street would be approximately 1200 feet before turning east to connect with Wilson. An additional east/west drive would connect this roadway to Wilson approximately 450 feet south of Lake Michigan drive. Although not identified on the plan, additional access points on this south side section should also be aligned with the existing public streets of LaSalle and Macomb Avenues.

Given the expected traffic growth, both undeveloped/emerging areas of this corridor (west of Wilson, east of Rolling Green) will need additional roadway improvements to safely accommodate site generated traffic. The most important improvement will be the widening of Lake Michigan Drive to incorporate a center turn for left turns. This lane would provide safe storage area for left turn traffic in relatively high speed roadway sections and enhance the capacity of Lake Michigan Drive in these areas at the same time.

Intersection with Wilson Avenue

The history of this intersection has long included a relatively high number of accidents/crashes (greater than 30 per year). MDOT has been consistently monitoring the operations and geometrics of this intersection to help identify any crash patterns that can be corrected through design. That ongoing analysis led to the addition of left-turn traffic signal phases recently.

The City should continue to work with MDOT to provide help with improving the safety of this intersection. This help may be limited to redevelopment/expansion site plan approval where adjacent properties should have additional access limitations placed upon them. For example, the site(s) on the northwest quadrant of this intersection has four access points within a small frontage area. At least one if not two of these driveways could be closed without affecting the commercial viability of the site.

Adjacent Pathway Facilities

Except for the Standale area, Lake Michigan Drive lacks adequate bike path and/or sidewalk facilities. The eastern and western sections of this corridor have “paved” shoulders but their condition is such that it is unsafe for bicycle use. A separate pathway is likely the best solution given the traffic conditions if sufficient right of way is available.

Consideration should be given to constructing a bikepath on the north side (if not both sides) of the eastern end of the corridor to tie into the existing City of Grand Rapids’s pathway. On the western end, a separate facility on the south side would dovetail with recommendations made for the adjacent Ottawa County section of Lake Michigan Drive in the M-45 Corridor Enhancement Plan completed in 1995 for the Grand Rapids and Environs Transportation Study (GRETS).

In either case, current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) criteria should be followed for design of these pathways. Those guidelines include pathway widths of at least 10 feet if it is to be a separate two-way facility for use by both bicycles and pedestrians.

Office

The Office designation is the least intensive of the Commercial category. Office land uses generally function in two ways; as a transition use between intensive, nonresidential land uses and residential uses, and as independent areas for concentrations of office uses.

Many of the same considerations noted for High Density Residential development may also be applicable for the Office designation, particularly those related to site design, access, and relationship to adjacent land uses. Larger parcels of Office land should be planned as integrated projects, with shared parking, access, signs, and consistent landscaping, lighting, and other coordinated site features.

 Industrial

Industrial land uses require sensitive treatment. The traffic, noise, visual, and environmental effects of industrial activity can be some of the most intrusive of any land use. These considerations are compounded by the fact that older industrial areas, particularly in the southeastern portion of the city, are located near or abutting residential areas. Many of these areas follow the course of a railroad line, which slices from the northwest corner of the city to the south city limits at Alpine Avenue.

The other major Industrial corridor extends west from Walker Avenue along Three Mile Road. This corridor has developed quite differently than some of the older industrial areas. Many of the sites are on campus-like settings with ample setbacks, landscaping, screened loading and storage areas, and well designed parking lots.

Intensity of development is a primary consideration for Industrial land uses. Some areas of the city have been developed more intensive, or heavy, industrial use. Others conduct assembly, warehousing, and other, less intrusive activities. These differences are highlighted in the Three Mile corridor and the southeastern industrial areas where the variety of effects of heavy and light industrial uses are most noticeable. It is in the older industrial areas that land use conflicts are most likely to occur.

The key element in dealing with land use conflicts is their identification. As noted in the Village Commercial discussion, some areas of land use conflicts have existed for such a long period of time that they are generally accepted. Normally these conflicts will not have a negative influence on surrounding land uses. These

conflict areas should be identified, but eliminating them will not be a high priority.

Other areas of conflicts may have a clear adverse effect on the neighborhood. These areas also need to be identified and planning strategies developed to deal with them. Most often these conflicts will be identified by noticeable effects, such as:

- excessive truck traffic on residential streets;
- lack of sufficient parking area, forcing vehicles to park along the street;
- excessive noise;
- local congestion caused by nonresidential traffic;
- late hours of operation;
- odors, smoke, or other nuisance; and
- building sizes that are out of scale with the area.

Normally there will not be just one or two land use conflicts; more often several will exist in combination. Once identified, it is necessary to plan for the elimination of the conflict. This does not mean that the use is encouraged to leave (for example, through the denial of zoning approvals), but rather appropriate screening or enforcement of Zoning Ordinance provisions may be undertaken to make the use "fit" in the neighborhood.

Other, more objectionable uses may be encouraged to relocate through the denial of expansion requests or strict enforcement of nuisance regulations. However these actions should not be accomplished with the objective of removing the conflict; they should only be undertaken where clear adverse effects can be documented and strict compliance with review standards of the Zoning Ordinance is maintained.

These same considerations may be used to determine the intensity of new land uses. Heavy industrial areas should be able to be developed in a manner that reduces the likely conflicts with surrounding uses, as noted in the characteristics of conflicts.

Public/Quasi-Public

This designation is intended for areas that are publicly owned or used, such as City-owned property, schools, parks, and other large, public, open spaces.

Future Transportation Improvements**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC)****2020 Long Range Transportation Plan**

The draft version of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan is currently under the review process and outlines many of the planned roadway improvements that will likely be funded and constructed within the next 20 or more years. These roadway improvements vary widely in terms of complexity and cost but all of them are seen as necessary to allow Walker's roadway system to meet current and expected future traffic volumes. Funding for most of these projects will be from state and federal programs through the metropolitan area with a local match.

Most of the planned improvements are required due to existing or expected capacity deficiencies within the roadway system. The roadway computer model used for the plan has projected 24-hour traffic volumes for most of the main roadways in Walker. The preliminary projections for the year 2020 (and counts for previous years) are in the following table.

Location	Vehicles Per Day	
	2020	1995
Wilson Avenue (south of Lake Michigan Drive)	23,000	17,000
Lake Michigan Drive (east of Wilson Avenue)	33,500	27,000
Remembrance Road (north of Leonard Street)	18,800	13,000
Three Mile Road (east of Fruitridge Avenue)	20,400	12,200
Fruitridge Avenue (north of I-96)	18,100	9,000
Walker Avenue (south of Three Mile)	15,400	7,000
Walker Avenue (north of I-96)	18,100	6,100
Bristol Avenue (north of Three Mile)	15,100	4,500
Alpine Avenue/M-37 (south of Three Mile)	36,700	33000
Alpine Avenue/M-37 (north of I-96)	51,700	47000

Projected Improvements

The transportation improvements are outlined below relative to three projected horizon years; 2000, 2010, and 2020.

Projects to Be Completed by 2000

1. *Four Mile Road/Alpine Avenue Intersection Reconstruction (County project).* The eastern leg of this intersection is scheduled to be widened within the next year to provide much needed peak-hour capacity on this approach.
2. *Fruitridge Avenue - I-96 to Four Mile Road.* Fruitridge will be widened from two lanes to four lanes from just north of the Irwin Seating site up to Four Mile Road. Left turn lanes and signalization will be included as improvements to the Fruitridge/Four Mile intersection.

Projects to Be Completed by Between 2000 and 2010

1. *Three Mile Road - Walkent Drive to Bristol Avenue.* This two-lane section of Three Mile Road is scheduled to be widened to four lanes. The project will likely be completed early in the 2000-2010 timeframe to accommodate expected traffic volumes.
2. *Three Mile Road - Elmridge Avenue to Meijer property.* This short section of Three Mile Road has not been widened to date primarily due to the railroad overpass. This project will widen Three Mile to four lanes to match the adjoining sections and will include reconstruction of the railroad overpass.
3. *Walker Avenue - Bridge expansion over railroad.* This is the last portion of the overall plan to widen Walker Avenue from Leonard Street to I-96. This short section of two lane roadway over the railroad will be expanded to four lanes with appropriate bridge construction/widening.

Project to Be Completed by Between 2010 and 2020

Kinney Avenue - Remembrance Road to Three Mile Road. In addition to interim improvements, this section of Kinney is scheduled to be widened to four lanes by the year 2020.

Other City Roadway System Improvement Plans

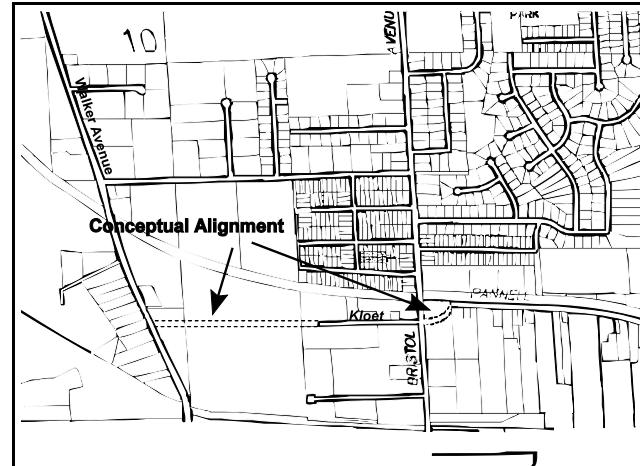
Several other roadway system improvements have been identified that will help accommodate current and future transportation demands. The improvements listed below are not prioritized in any specific manner. Several of these may be added to the GVMC lists during upcoming Long Range Planning processes as funding commitments come on line.

1. *Leonard Street - Remembrance Road to Wilson Avenue (M-11).* The first part of this overall corridor project may likely be the intersection of Leonard/Remembrance/Nixon that is already been identified as a “capacity deficient” intersection. The current nonstandard geometry and operation of this intersection has lead to ongoing driver confusion and congestion problems. Several realignment/redesign alternatives have been discussed to date.

Leonard Street to the west will be widened to three to four lanes to address congestion and safety concerns. This widening will likely be completed in two phases; Remembrance to Kinney as a first phase and Kinney to Wilson as the second phase.

2. *North Ridge Drive Extension.* The industrial area (per the master plan) just north of I-96 between Walker Avenue and Fruit Ridge Avenue needs access to the adjacent freeway system. Current plans call for an extension of North Ridge Drive westward to connect with Fruit Ridge (likely at Dykstra). Final alignment of this roadway will reflect constraints created by the railroad and numerous wetland areas. There will likely be no internal connection to Four Mile Road due to desired separation of industrial and residential activities.
3. *Wilson Avenue (M-11) - Burton Street to Leonard Street.* This roadway section is listed as a capacity deficient corridor although MDOT funding has not been identified. The project will likely call for widening to four through lanes for the entire section. A boulevard cross section would substantially enhance the traffic capacity and safety of this roadway. It would also contribute to the City’s efforts to maintain lower intensity land uses along much of this important highway corridor.

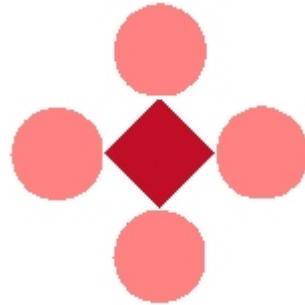
4. *Three Mile Road - Wilson Avenue to Remembrance Road (M-11).* Given the expected growth in this area (industrial, residential), this last segment of Three mile Road is also expected to be widened to four lanes.
5. *Bristol Avenue/Pannell Street Intersection Realignment.* Under existing conditions, the Pannell approach (westbound) meets Bristol very close to the adjacent railroad overpass. This results in very poor sight distance and unsafe intersection operations especially in light of the substandard width of Bristol under the overpass. Pannell Street should be shifted southward as it approaches Bristol Avenue to provide a safer intersection environment. The shift distance may very dependent upon the potential for alignment of Pannell with (or sufficient offset from) Kloet Street on the opposite side of Bristol.
6. *Kloet Street Extension.* Currently the only nearby east-west connection between Walker Avenue and Bristol Avenue is the residential Waldorf Street. This improvement would provide a better commercial connection by extending Kloet westward to connect with Walker. Final alignment of this extension will be defined by topographic and sight distance constraints. As noted above, this improvement would need to be coordinated with the realignment of Pannell Street and reconstruction of the Walker Avenue railroad overpass.
7. *Three Mile Road/Richmond Street Connector.* Concerns have been expressed regarding the increasing traffic volumes on the Kinney Avenue corridor given its residential nature. Preliminary analysis indicates that an additional north/south connection between these two major roadways east of Kinney may become necessary. Potential alignments include connections from the Mullins Avenue area on Richmond up to Key Line Industrial Drive or Mullins Avenue on Three Mile. Significant topography variations will also likely affect alignment and design.



8. *I-96 Interchanges Overpass Bridges.* All of the I-96 overpass bridges within the City of Walker have been identified as having capacity problems are in need of reconstruction. It is likely that these deficiencies will be resolved either as part of a normal budgeting process or as major development projects are approved which might increase the need for improvements to specific bridges.

**WALKER AVENUE
AND I-96
LAND USE
STUDY****Introduction****Purpose**

An interchange to an interstate highway attracts growth since there are only a limited number of access points to the highway. The road system serving that interchange is used to funnel traffic to the highway and development is often attracted to that system as a result. The growth patterns of the metropolitan Grand Rapids area clearly show the influence of interchanges on land use patterns in the vicinity of interchanges and major intersections of arterial roadways.



The purpose of this subarea study of the City of Walker Master Plan is to evaluate the land use potential for the interchange of Walker Avenue and I-96. The study area extends from Three Mile Road to Four Mile Road, centered on Walker Avenue. Major new development proposed for the area north of I-96 has prompted the need to examine potential land use changes, the need for infrastructure improvements, and the impact on the adjacent community of Alpine Township.

Existing Land Use

Development south of the interchange is dominated by a complex of office and warehouse structures west of Walker Avenue for Meijer, Inc. Nearer the interchange, still south of I-96, are typical highway commercial uses, including a fast food restaurant and motel. Industrial uses line the street further east and west along Three Mile Road with some scattered single family and office uses, including a bank on the northeast corner of Three Mile and Walker. A large vacant area of rolling hills is located south of Three Mile, east of Walker Avenue bordering I-96.

North of the interchange is a mixture of uses, including a church, several moderate to large industrial uses, small commercial establishments, and some existing single family homes. North of Four Mile, in Alpine Township, vacant lands, and agricultural and residential uses dominate the landscape.

Much of the land nearer Bristol Avenue on either side of I-96 is in agricultural or residential use.

The dominant land uses along Four Mile Road are residential and agricultural. The agricultural lands extend south to I-96 and take up most of the interior land between Peach Ridge and Fruit Ridge Avenues. Single family uses on Fruit Ridge give way to commercial nearer the I-96 interchange.

Land Use Needs

Market Demand

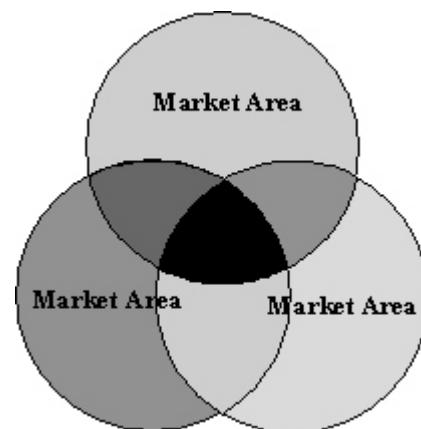
Although land use planning is intended to focus attention on the physical development of the community, it is not intended to play a major role in the manipulation of the market economy. Instead, the community's interest in market demand is to ensure that excessive construction of one type of land use beyond its need does not create conditions that lead to the blighting of a specific area. This blight can occur either in the newly developed area, or be caused as a result of the development. For example, an outlying shopping center may have a negative impact on a community's downtown as businesses leave to take advantage of the new project.

Therefore, this discussion is not intended as a market study, or as a debate on the wisdom of constructing new commercial or industrial centers. Rather, it is intended to highlight the land use concerns that arise with new development proposals.

Commercial Development

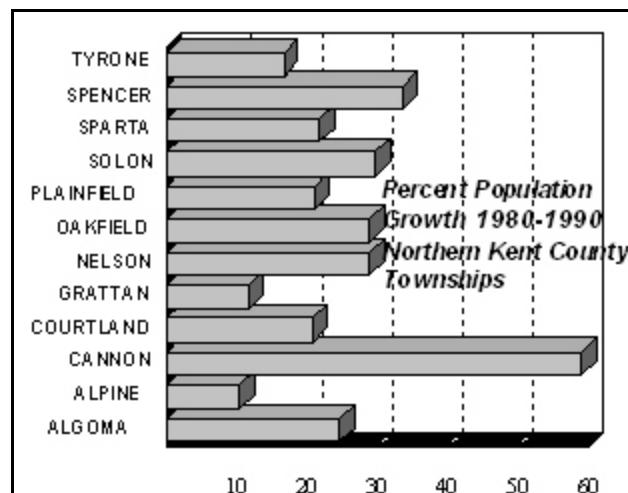
The nature of commercial development in a city on the fringe of a metropolitan area can vary widely. National franchise businesses, such as service stations can often mix with local businesses providing limited services. "Big box" retail can be found on virtually any major street. A number of factors must be evaluated when reviewing commercial development needs. These include market demand, surrounding land uses, the community's location in the region, and the desires of the residents.

But, unlike isolated communities with a defined population and boundaries, the City of Walker is part of a metropolitan area of over a half million people. As a result, the market area, or Primary



Trade Area, crosses many municipal boundaries and overlaps numerous other business market areas. This makes a reliable estimate of market demand nearly impossible for the City of Walker alone.

Market demand depends on the overall population within the market area. It is clear that population growth in northern Kent County has strongly influenced the location of business and industry. The Greenridge Shopping Center is a stark example of the demand created by this growing population. This increase has also lifted the demand for commercial services in Cedar Springs, Plainfield, Cannon, Algoma, and Rockford.



Planning Standards for Commercial Development indicate the following commercial needs for each 1000 people:

<i>Neighborhood Commercial</i>	1 acre
<i>Community Commercial</i>	.75 acres
<i>Regional Commercial</i>	.67 acres

Using these strict standards for the City of Walker, and the presence of commercial centers within a reasonable distance of the city, there would appear to be a very limited need for new commercial zoning. However, some consideration must be given to the larger market area, which includes more than just the city.

For example, the northern Kent County townships have seen dramatic growth over the past decade or longer. Many of these townships do not have the commercial base available to serve their population, particularly for major shopping needs, such as appliances, furniture, etc. As a result, the residents of these townships may be included in the market areas of major shopping centers, such as Greenridge.

The problem that arises is how to know the amount of commercial development that is likely to be needed, particularly when the extent of the market area for any single development is so difficult to determine.

Commercial Location and Design Standards

Consequently, it is difficult to determine how much additional commercial zoning is actually needed. It may be more important to ensure that the location of such development is consistent with sound land use and infrastructure planning. The following characteristics should be examined for commercially zoned locations.

- Arterial or Major Collector roadways
- Adjacent land uses
- Sufficient required road frontage and lot depth
- Parking setbacks
- Access management (shared access, frontage roads) and design
- Street and intersection access and design standards
- Functional landscaping (screening)
- Sign management
- Adequacy of public services

Of particular concern is the question of commercial land use, and subsequent zoning, at the interchange of I-96 and Walker Avenue, as well as the impact on Four Mile Road. One aspect of interchange and corridor development is the impact that development projects in one community have on adjacent communities. Traffic and other effects of commercial development have little respect for community boundaries.

Since all of the roadways involved are major access routes to all points of the compass, development along any one will necessarily affect traffic and quality of life along the corridor in every community. Therefore, solutions to the potential problems of corridor development need to be viewed as regional issues and addressed with a unified approach, involving property owners, developers, Alpine Township, the Michigan Department of Transportation, Kent County Road Commission, and the City of Walker.

Land and Infrastructure Constraints

Natural Constraints

The land east of the I-96 and Walker Avenue interchange lies as a series of rolling hills, dropping in elevation from west to east. I-96 rests in the valley between higher points on both sides, with Four Mile Road generally running along the crest of a ridge. Any major development in this area will be

particularly susceptible to soil erosion and drainage concerns.

Other environmental issues are associated with Indian Mill Creek and its associated wetlands. There are also several major drainageways that cross the area that have also developed their own marsh and wetland pockets. One of the areas affected by this is at the northwest corner of Bristol and Three Mile. Similar conditions of poor soils and other factors constraining development are found west of Fruit Ridge Avenue south of Four Mile Road, as well as east of Fruit Ridge just north of the railroad tracks.

These sites should be examined closely to determine their environmentally sensitive features and development should be required to carefully incorporate those features and prevent their destruction.

Street System

The principal arteries serving the subarea include Four Mile Road, Bristol Avenue, Walker Avenue, Three Mile Road, and I-96. At present most of the roadways operate efficiently with only occasional peak hour congestion problems. Of these, the intersection of Fruit Ridge and Three Mile currently operates with the least efficiency. This is generally due to the design of the ramps to and from I-96. Some easing of the congestion in this intersection is likely with the construction of a new entrance ramp to eastbound I-96 from Fruit Ridge.

The intersection of Walker and Four Mile is of concern due to its angled design. This is less of a concern if the land use intensity in the area is relatively low, although improvements will still be desirable. A complicating factor is the amount of commercially planned and zoned land in Alpine Township north of Four Mile Road. Should this property developed as zoned, it is likely that improvements will be necessary to Four Mile Road, and intersection improvements at Walker Avenue will become a higher priority.

More severe traffic problems may be found at other intersections and road segments lying outside the study area, such as Alpine Avenue and Four Mile Road, and 3 Mile and I-96.

A new roadway is planned between Fruit Ridge and Peach Ridge to serve industrial lands between the railroad tracks and the I-96 right-of-way. A new road has been constructed to intersect with Walker to serve the Northridge Industrial Park. Natural constraints prevent this roadway from being

constructed as a continuous access. One option that may be considered is to cross the rail line at a point which meets applicable safety guidelines. This would permit access to properties planned for industrial use south of the power line easement, including the lands both north and south of the rail line between Fruit Ridge and Peach Ridge. It also affords protection from through traffic for residential property north of the power line easement.

Utilities

Public sanitary sewer and water service coverage in this subarea is limited in specific areas. Of particular concern is the lack of adequate water pressure in some portions of this area. Other considerations are also present, such as the existence of utility lines in other jurisdictions.

Two portions of this subarea, one near Four Mile and Bristol, the other near Four Mile and Hendershot, are above the hydraulic grade of the existing water system. Accordingly, improvements will be necessary to create a high pressure district to allow adequate public water service to these higher grade areas, including the construction of an elevated storage tank. Some of these improvements have been completed, but additional work is necessary to complete the project.

Most of the sanitary sewer improvements will be constructed as development occurs.

Future Land Use

The I-96/Walker Avenue Subarea Working Group produced a land use plan that offers a reasonable development scheme that is sensitive to surrounding property owners and consistent with the Vision and Goals for the City. This Plan was reviewed and revised by the Planning Commission. However, the revised Plan is generally consistent with the overall land use pattern established by the Subarea Working Group.

To develop their Plan, the Working Group was split into three working teams and asked to develop a future land use scheme independent of the other groups. These alternatives were then presented to the entire group. These alternatives had some areas of consensus development, but several areas required further discussion to arrive at a plan on which the entire Group could agree.

At a subsequent meeting, the Working Group met to discuss each plan and arrive at a consensus plan. This Plan, as revised by the Planning Commission, is presented in the following narrative.

South of I-96, west of Peach Ridge Avenue

Since this area was primarily already industrial, the consensus was to continue this land use pattern. Other concerns expressed included traffic speeds and truck movements on Three Mile, the need to maintain a quality industrial area with landscaping and appropriate buffers, and managing locations for curb cuts.

South of I-96, Peach Ridge Avenue to Walker Avenue

The large parcel sizes and existing industrial uses were indicated as significant elements of this area. The consensus plan indicated that Industrial land uses should be continued from Peach Ridge to a line approximately 1,000 feet west of Walker Avenue. An Office designation is recommended from that point to Walker Avenue. This takes into account the Meijer Corporate Headquarters as well as some vacant land just west of the Meijer complex. The same development requirements noted in the previous segment also apply to this area.

South of I-96, Walker to Bristol

This area was divided into four distinct land use segments beginning with the mixed use development at the northeast corner of I-96 and Walker. This development is primarily commercial in nature and that designation was applied. A Neighborhood Commercial classification was applied south along Walker to the corner of Three Mile.

This includes a series of individual single family lots and the corner development. The narrow lots on which the single family homes site will require a cooperative development to ensure coordination of access, proper design of internal circulation, shared parking facilities, etc. Prior to any single rezonings for this designation, the Planning Commission will require some evidence of consideration of coordinated development for this area. Without such consideration it is likely that the existing homes will be negatively affected by any isolated rezoning.

Further east is an existing industrial area which is continued. This area has little frontage on Three Mile but extends north to the I-96 right-of-way. The

remainder of the area is planned for either Low or Medium Density Residential. The vacant lands in this area need to be treated with sensitivity to existing natural features, including rolling hills, a major drainage way, and mature vegetation.

The Working Group also noted the need for improvements to Three Mile Road, including widening and installation of sidewalks.

North of I-96, Bristol Avenue to Walker Avenue

The majority of the property in this area, particularly west of Bristol, is classified as Residential. Of particular note was the rolling nature of the property, which makes this property especially suited for residential development, and the large drain running roughly from the northeast to southwest. The drain is centered in a steeply sloped ravine. This portion of the site will need to be treated with care; portions of this area are not suitable for building.

A substantial woodland pocket affords protection from any perceived effects from I-96. Care should be taken to preserve this existing vegetation. In addition, the elevation difference between the proposed residential area and I-96 also offers a method of separation and transition. Properly developed only a few homes will even be visible from the highway.

The residential neighborhoods should be designed with the Living Neighborhoods concepts described in the Community Image Issue Paper. These characteristics will be especially important since this area encompasses a large expanse of land with environmentally sensitive areas.

A more intensive, Community Commercial development pattern is suggested to take advantage of the I-96 interchange and to be more compatible with other development closest to the interchange. The character of this development will likely be oriented to highway related uses. The ravine and wooded areas just east of this area provide adequate opportunities to buffer this development from any residential uses constructed in the Medium Density Residential area. But any review of this development should ensure that adequate landscaping, lighting controls, and locations of intense activity (loading areas, etc.) be considerate of nearby planned or constructed residential uses.

The Working Group also noted the need to improve the intersection alignment of Walker Avenue with Four Mile Road. This improvement, if completed could affect the land use recommendations presented for the next land segment.

North of I-96, Walker Avenue to Peach Ridge

Should the intersection of Walker and Four Mile be straightened and properly aligned to the north, the existing segment of Walker would be isolated and could be reconstructed with a cul-de-sac at the south end. This would provide a degree of protection to the existing homes fronting Walker east of Indian Mill Creek. If, however, the present alignment continues, this area could transition to Office.

The properties further south along Walker to the interchange of I-96 were designated for Office as well. This serves as the entry point to the Northridge Industrial Park which extend to Peach Ridge. Office development should be accomplished in a coordinated manner to avoid individual curb cuts on Walker Avenue including proper design of internal circulation, shared parking facilities, adequate landscaping and setbacks, etc. This area would then serve as a transition to the neighborhoods to the north.

The remainder of the area south of Four Mile between Indian Mill Creek and Peach Ridge remains in a Residential classification, consistent with designation further to the west. The construction of the Peach Ridge cul-de-sac south of Four Mile helps separate the Northridge Industrial Park and other industrial areas further west from this residential area.

North of I-96, Peach Ridge to Fruit Ridge

All of the area south of the power lines parallel to the I-96 right-of-way, including the frontage properties along Fruit Ridge, is proposed as an Industrial classification. The power line will serve as the transition between this area and the properties to the north, all of which (except for the properties fronting Fruit Ridge) are shown as Residential. The proximity of the Industrial designations east of Fruit Ridge will dictate that lesser intensity industrial development be favored that will be more compatible with the other land uses in the area.

It is also important that the street system be designed to separate the Industrial and residential designations. Rather than a north-south street system, these two land uses must be separated to ensure that truck and employee traffic remains oriented only to the industrial area and the roadways leading to I-96.

As with the area east of Walker, residential development east of the Industrial designations and north of power lines should adhere to the Living Neighborhood concepts. There will also be a need for either public or private

open space in this area to serve the recreation needs of residents in this area. The new Kenowa High School will provide some recreation opportunities but the future residents of the area will also need facilities that are more neighborhood oriented.

A relatively small Neighborhood Commercial designation is placed at the southeast corner of Fruit Ridge and Four Mile. As with the other NC designations, development within this area will be of low intensity, with limited square footage, and allow such uses as offices, personal services, and limited commercial uses. It is not intended for large retail operations, either freestanding or in strip centers. Rather, uses should be limited to those serving the daily needs of nearby residential and employment areas. Protection of nearby residential areas will also be a high priority.

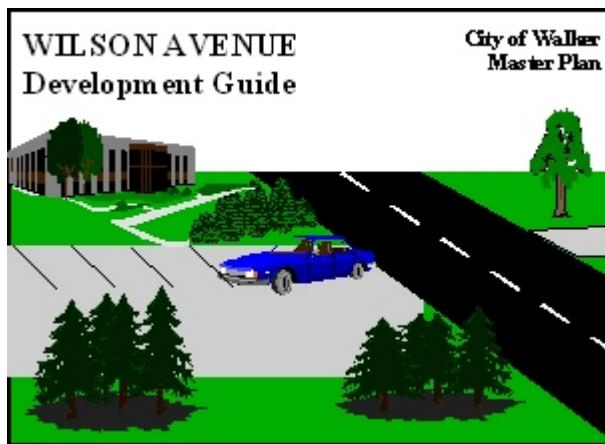
It is expected that the remaining frontage properties in the NC classification along Fruit Ridge will develop over a longer period of time. In the interim period, a high priority will be placed on preserving existing residential uses and ensuring that adjacent development provides proper buffers to these homes.

One way to help reduce the overall effects on the residential properties is to employ a careful implementation of the transition. Rather than rezoning isolated lots, the Planning Commission should consider coordinated development for this area to ensure proper access and design of internal circulation, shared parking facilities, etc. Without such consideration the Planning Commission will be less likely to be able to reduce any negative effects to existing homes caused by any isolated rezoning.

Roadway improvements are also indicated for Four Mile, Fruit Ridge and Peach Ridge. The improvements should be related to traffic needs dictated by the land use. Sidewalks and/or bike paths will be particularly important, both in this area as well as the neighborhoods east of Walker.

North of I-96, Fruit Ridge to West City Limits

Frontage properties west of Fruit Ridge are designated for Industrial, in part to accommodate existing uses. Portions of the Industrial just south of Four Mile will be difficult to develop due to poor soil conditions. This factor, along with poor utility coverage, also prompted the designation of Rural Residential lands further west of the Industrial areas.



WILSON AVENUE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

The 1995 Community Survey asked respondents to indicate their concerns regarding traffic. A number of key streets in the city were listed for response. Of these, Alpine Avenue and Wilson Avenue received the greatest attention. Between 60 and 80 percent of respondents from the areas in which Wilson Avenue was located described the street as either a Problem or a

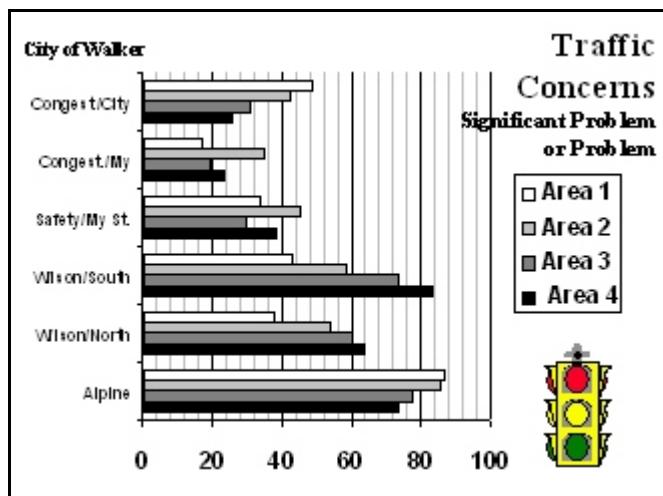
Significant Problem. Area 4, which included the part of the city south of O'Brien Road, showed significant concern for Wilson Avenue both north and south of Lake Michigan Drive. In particular, the area south of Lake Michigan received the highest number of concerned replies, even from those respondents living north of O'Brien.

This Subarea covers the Wilson Avenue corridor from 3 Mile Road to just south of Lake Michigan Drive.

Existing Conditions

Roadway Function and Design

Wilson Avenue is a state trunkline highway, M-11, connecting I-96 to I-196, from Remembrance Road south continuing into Grandville as 28th Street. As such, the street is intended to function as an arterial highway. This permits the speed limit to be set at 55 miles per hour to allow larger volumes of traffic to travel longer distances. In part, Wilson acts as a west beltline roadway. Its long, straight design allows for efficient movement from the north to south sides of Grand Rapids without entering the downtown or using U.S.131.



The right-of-way width varies along Wilson. This right-of-way is typical of a state trunkline highway and is intended to permit a wider cross section to be constructed if necessary. The varied right-of-way may either require additional acquisition or dictate the ultimate design of the roadway should it be widened.

Most of the roadway is two-lane, with wider segments near I-96, between 3 Mile and Remembrance, and at the intersection with Lake Michigan Drive (M-45). The pavement is in generally serviceable condition, with some exceptions caused by frost heave deteriorating shoulders.

Travel along the street is generally unrestricted and functions well in most areas. Traffic signals are located at Remembrance Road, Leonard Street, Lake Michigan Drive, and at the entrance/exports to I-196. Traffic speeds range from 45 to 55 mph.

Existing Land Use Analysis

Existing land uses along Wilson Avenue vary from residential to commercial. The predominant land use is residential, with substantial areas of commercial use at and near the intersection with Lake Michigan Drive. Much of the corridor is relatively undeveloped.

Wilson Avenue between 3 Mile Road and Remembrance is the only portion of the corridor that is not part of the state trunkline (M-11). The principle land use is an attractive, residential condominium project on the east side. Another land use which influences this area is the Northwest Commerce Industrial Park approved on the north side of 3 Mile at the intersection with Wilson. The entrance to the industrial park has created a four-way, signalized intersection.

West of Wilson there is a large parcel which is partially used for farming. The properties in this area have frontage on both Wilson and Remembrance as well as 3 Mile and will have a significant influence on the future development patterns in this portion of the corridor.

The intersection of Remembrance and Wilson has a few auto related uses on its west side. The northeast corner has been purchased by the City and the properties on the southeast corner are vacant. The angled intersection and wide cross section present a unique design challenge for site and roadway design.

Further south from Remembrance to Leonard there are long stretches of single family homes, along with large areas of vacant and farm lands. Homes are in generally good condition but many lots have shallow depths with direct access to Wilson. The City of Grand Rapids maintains a water tank north of Leonard.

Land uses become decidedly mixed between Leonard and Lake Michigan Drive with commercial uses at the Leonard and Lake Michigan Drive intersections. The Leonard Street businesses are fairly small and fit in reasonably well with the neighborhood. The Lake Michigan Drive uses are part of the commercial corridor which extends either side of Wilson and has tended to encroach on the single family neighborhood north of Lake Michigan Drive.

This encroachment has tended to weaken the stability of the neighborhood, particularly for those homes directly along Wilson. Other residential uses are located in a manufactured home park and multiple family complexes just south of Leonard.

Development Standards

Land Use and Zoning

One of the greatest influences on corridor planning is the management of land use. Examples abound of highway corridors which can no longer move traffic efficiently because of the traffic attracted to the land uses lining the street. Several examples are legendary in the Grand Rapids area: 28th Street, Plainfield Avenue, and now, Alpine Avenue.

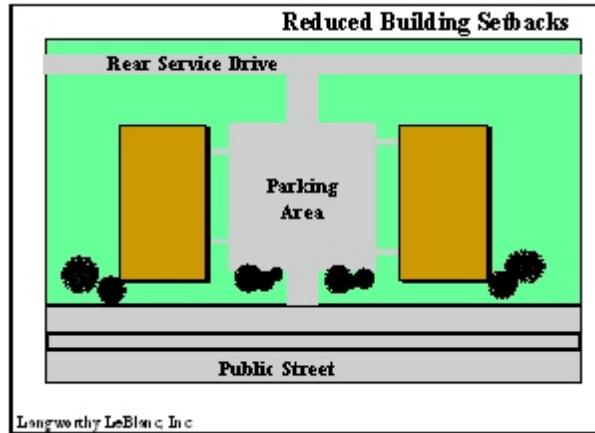
To gain some perspective on this problem, one mile of commercial zoning (both sides of street) at a lot depth of 400 feet would equal:

- 97 acres of commercial zoning;
- 53 commercial establishments (200 foot frontage each); and
- 633,800 square feet of retail space (15% of total lot, or an average of 12,000 square feet per establishment)

A variety of uses within this single mile could generate around 8,500 trips per day, without considering any traffic using the street for through travel. The same amount of single family residential zoning would likely generate less than 1,500 trips per day. This highlights the need for careful consideration of land use along a corridor like Wilson Avenue.

Commercial Location Standards

These statistics are not intended to mean that the City of Walker should not consider additional commercial zoning along Wilson Avenue. Location is still an important element which has to be considered along with the proper amount. In a metropolitan setting specific calculation for any particular business area cannot be made solely on the basis of the population of one community. Businesses in Walker draw people from long distances for many reasons, including availability of specialty items, customer loyalty, and others.



The following characteristics should be examined when considering new commercial zoning locations.

- Arterial or Major Collector roadways
- Adjacent land uses
- Sufficient required road frontage and lot depth
- Parking and building setbacks
- Access management (shared access, frontage roads) and design
- Intersection access and design standards
- Functional landscaping
- Sign management

Consideration will also be given in some areas for requiring a reduction in building setbacks along major roadways. This will accomplish two major objectives. First, by bringing the buildings forward the visual perception of the street will be narrower. This can have a positive effect on reducing traffic speeds.

Second, it will improve the aesthetics of the area by pushing parking to the sides or rear of the property. This will also allow for more efficient use of parking areas, which can reduce paved areas and, in turn, reduce storm water runoff and parking lot heat and glare.

From a business perspective requiring buildings closer to the street may improve visibility and business identification. It may also reduce overall costs by providing the opportunity to share maintenance costs for parking and landscaped areas.

Cooperative Planning

One aspect of corridor development that is universally true is the impact of one community on another. Traffic and other effects of commercial development have little respect for community boundaries. Since roadways are major access routes to all points of the compass, development along any one will necessarily affect traffic and quality of life along the corridor in every community. Therefore, solutions to the potential problems of corridor development need to be viewed as regional issues and addressed with a unified approach, involving property owners, developers, the Michigan Department of Transportation, Kent County Road Commission, and the City of Walker.

Access Management

The additional capacity provided by any improvements to Wilson Avenue will be diminished if access along this important arterial is not carefully controlled. As on any of Walker's major roadways, the utilization of sound driveway spacing and location standards have a significant effect on both the safety and efficiency of the corridor.

The spacing of any commercial driveways is predicated upon the speed limit in that area. Minimum driveway spacing requirements should range from approximately 350 to 500 feet depending upon those speeds based upon Michigan Department of Transportation guidelines. Also, access to any new residential plats should be well spaced with access to individual lots occurring internally to the plat only.

Access to developments at or near cross streets, regardless of the type of land use, should be oriented primarily to those cross streets if possible thereby helping to preserve the capacity of Wilson Avenue.

The Issue Paper on Corridor Development provides additional guidelines for street planning and managing access along major corridors. The recommendations noted in the Issue Paper are applicable to, and should be implemented along the Wilson Avenue corridor.

Future Land Use

The Wilson Avenue Subarea Working Group produced a corridor land use plan that offers a reasonable development scheme that is sensitive to surrounding property owners and consistent with the Vision and Goals for the City.

3 Mile to Remembrance

The properties immediately at the 3 Mile and Wilson intersection are slated for Office, to include the 3 Mile frontage properties just east of Wilson. The Office designation will complement the existing residential uses to the south and offer a suitable transition from the industrial park north of 3 Mile.

The majority of the rest of the property in this segment is recommended for residential uses. The existing multiple family use east of Wilson remains, while the vacant area west of Wilson is set aside for Low Density Residential. It would be useful to plan this area as a single development to avoid breaking up the property into smaller pieces.

The Remembrance and Wilson intersection continues the Neighborhood Commercial designation in place on the west side of the intersection. As these properties develop they should be improved with landscaping, parking setbacks, and well placed driveways. Shared drives, frontage roads, and rear service drives should be encouraged to avoid curb openings from being placed too close to the intersection.

The northeast side of the intersection should continue as Public land to complement the remainder of the City Hall complex on Remembrance. The southeast corner should be planned for Office use to provide a suitable buffer for the residential uses to the south and to lessen the development intensity at the intersection. As with the other side of the street, driveways should also be carefully planned.

Remembrance to Leonard

With the exception of the southeast corner of Remembrance and Wilson, this entire segment is planned for Low Density Residential. This includes the larger acreages that have frontage on Wilson. Individual driveways should be discouraged where possible and setbacks should be generous to accommodate future roadway improvements and to allow greater separation from the roadway.

This segment could also be a candidate for street tree plantings to narrow down the field of view of drivers and encourage slower speeds. As development increases on interior properties on either side of Wilson the intersection with Richmond should be monitored to determine if warrants are met for a signalized intersection.

Leonard to Lake Michigan Drive

The lands east and west of the south side of the intersection with Leonard are slated for Medium Density Residential, with a limited amount of Neighborhood Commercial at the southeast corner. This NC node should be developed as a cohesive unit to avoid separate driveways and inconsistent landscaping. It is also intended to be developed for smaller commercial uses suited to the neighborhood. Highway related and large commercial uses are not appropriate for this site because of the potential negative effects on adjacent residential areas.

The portion of the corridor from Waybury to Lake Michigan Drive presented the most difficult issues faced by the Working Group. Of particular concern was the need to be sensitive to the existing single family uses while allowing an eventual conversion to commercial land uses. One of the problems in this area include the lack of lot depth for the existing single family uses which will be further affected at the time of the widening of the roadway.

Other problems included the encroachment of commercial uses which is occurring in this segment and the presence of a number of vacant lots, which are unlikely to be used for single family homes. As a result, the Group recommended this area for conversion to commercial land use over time. However, several conditions were noted:

1. The required frontage and lot sizes for commercial uses in this segment should be high enough to require the acquisition of several lots to allow for sufficient depth and width to allow adequate setbacks, driveways controls, landscaping, and other elements of coordinated and planned development.
2. Conversion of the existing residential uses should only be permitted in contiguous blocks beginning at the south end and working toward the north. This is to avoid further encroachment on the single family areas that remain stable and healthy.

3. Access for the commercial uses should not be permitted to utilize the interior residential streets. Driveway controls and well designed service drives will be needed to properly manage access in this area and carry out this objective.

The Planning Commission, following a review of the recommendation from the Working Group revised this area to keep it residential. In part this was due to the development control available to the city through their ownership of a number of lots in the area. The Planning Commission also felt that the conditions noted by the Working Group, while valid, would be difficult to implement. Further, the Commissioners noted the potential for negatively affecting the homes already present in the area.

Lake Michigan Drive to Obrien

The intersection with Lake Michigan Drive is planned for Community Commercial to accommodate the existing uses. This designation is extended south of Lake Michigan Drive for several properties. South of that point to Obrien a Low Density Residential classification is recommended.

Commercial development on the west side of Wilson south of Lake Michigan should be planned as a single unit, to the extent possible. This will allow the best use of service drives, shared parking areas, and permit a more uniform development. Residential development should also be planned to avoid individual driveways on Wilson Avenue.

The Planning Commission reviewed this recommendation and elected to extend the Community Commercial designation south of Lake Michigan Drive somewhat farther to the south. This extension provides a better, natural break point in the commercial strip. The Commission, however, agreed with the need to strictly monitor and control curb cuts along this area.

Wilson Avenue (M-11) Planned Improvements

Wilson Avenue will continue to operate as one of the primary north/south routes on the western side of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. As such, the traffic volumes are expected to steadily increase with daily volume projections in the 19,000 to 25,000 range depending upon the roadway section. For a two-lane roadway, this is well over its capacity and is listed as a “deficient corridor” in the draft Grand Valley Metropolitan Council’s 2020 Long Range Plan. Therefore, improvement priorities should focus around capacity but should also reflect the

need for ongoing access management review and pathways planning.

Wilson Avenue Widening

Although a funding source and timing has not yet been identified, widening of Wilson Avenue will likely occur by 2010. Currently the section from Burton Street up to Leonard is considered to be capacity deficient although portions north of there may be also be added as traffic increases.

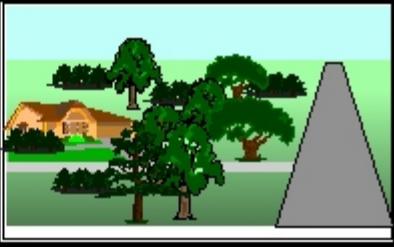
This section of state trunkline roadway should be widened to four lanes in non-commercial areas with left-turn lanes constructed at cross streets. A boulevard cross section would substantially enhance the traffic capacity and safety of this roadway. It would also contribute to the City's efforts to maintain lower intensity land uses along much of this important highway corridor. In existing or future commercial areas, a continuous center turn lane should be part of the widening to accommodate traffic turning into higher volume commercial driveways.

The improvements may also need to include installation of one or more traffic signals, especially on the section south of Lake Michigan Drive. Intersections with cross streets such as Fennessy Street may already meet one or more of the standard traffic signal warrants based upon traffic volumes and/or delays.

Pathway System

The likelihood of the Wilson Avenue widening also provides a good opportunity to develop another significant part of an overall pedestrian/bicycle system. A path or paths running parallel to Wilson would provide a key link to the existing Kent Trails path near Johnson Park.

As suggested for the Lake Michigan Drive corridor, the best location/design of a pathway facility will likely be a separated two-way bikepath along one side of Wilson. The final location and design will be based upon right-of-way considerations, adjacent topography, and the number of existing/potential access points that would need to cross the path.

**South Walker
Land Use Study**
**Lake Michigan Drive
to South City Limits****"South" Walker**

Traveling along Wilson Avenue south of Lake Michigan Drive, the character of Walker changes drastically between the commercially developed areas of the north and I-196 on

the south. This area, here named South Walker, is a unique combination of residential development, abandoned and active mining areas, and sensitive natural areas; and includes Wilson Avenue (M-11), a primary north-south metropolitan roadway.

South Walker represents one of the few remaining, largely undeveloped portions of the city. Although significant areas have been affected by sand and gravel mining, there are still large expanses of relatively unspoiled property. The natural features and open space are highly valued by South Walker residents.

In the Community Survey the respondents from South Walker placed a significant level of importance on river, trees, and other natural features. Over 85 percent of the respondents rated these features as either Extremely Important or Important in their decision to live in or move to the city. The next highest total was the northwestern portion of the city with just under 73 percent.

Existing Land Use

South Walker may be viewed in three pieces, each of which has a distinct character. The Wilson Avenue corridor has much of its frontage taken up by single family homes, either within subdivisions or on large lots. There are also stretches of vacant lands fronting Wilson and reaching east and west into larger acreages. Toward the southern end of the area lies Johnson Park and the Fenske landfill. A few office uses may also be found.

The second piece is located along O'Brien Road south to the east-west segment of Butterworth Drive. This area contains larger parcels of farmland and vacant lands, with individual single family homes on generally larger lots. Finally, the land lying south and east of Butterworth has seen massive disturbance for sand and gravel mining. This has also created a number of lakes. A few scattered clusters of single family home may be found as well.

Natural Features

The abundant natural features of South Walker make it a unique and sensitive area. These include active farmland, moderate single family development, and large blocks of dense vegetation and wetlands that can provide recreation and act as wildlife habitats and natural filters for sediments and pollutants. Large portions of land along the Grand River have been set aside within Johnson Park, with its large blocks of dense woodlands.

The southeast portion of South Walker has been greatly affected by sand and gravel mining. The mining operations have left behind disturbed topography, sand and gravel soils, and several large ponds.

Land use descriptions have been used to outline existing natural features that should be protected. These categories will allow for development in some areas while trying to preserve the natural features that have made South Walker unique.

Restricted: Development in these restricted areas would disturb natural features that are unique to South Walker and efforts should be taken to protect them. Restricted areas include flood plain, wetlands with associated muck soils, and existing public parks.

The area south of O'Brien Road on Kenowa Avenue has muck soils, valuable wetland habitat and dense woodland vegetation. These three natural features make this area sensitive and restrict potential development. The area east of Kenowa Avenue north of River Bend Road has prime farmland with associated muck soils which limit suitable development.

Areas along the Grand River are restricted because they are located within the flood plain. These areas are a risk for flooding and are not safe for permanent development. The areas along the Grand River provide open space and woodland habitat for recreation and wildlife.

Constrained: Development in these areas should be limited to protect natural features and enhance rural character. Large blocks of land contain dense woodland vegetation and steep slopes that limit development. Smaller areas have constrained development due to active farmlands, wetlands, and dense vegetation that are valuable to preserve the rural character of South Walker.

There are two large constrained areas south of O'Brien Road. The large area on the east side has dense vegetation and steep slopes that will limit development potential. Other large area on the west side contains valuable farmland and dense

vegetation that should be protected from intensive development. The area south of Butterworth Drive provides a buffer along the edge of the subarea and connects large contiguous blocks of dense vegetation that provide excellent wildlife habitat and increase the aesthetic qualities of South Walker.

Several small constrained areas due to farmlands, wetland, and woods, are scattered on both sides of Wilson Avenue. Consideration should be taken with these areas to determine whether the loss of valuable farmlands, wetlands, and vegetation outweigh the need for development in these areas.

Development: Development in South Walker has been limited by sand and gravel mining operations, public parks, farmland, wetlands, dense vegetation, soils, flood plains, and steep slopes. Even with all the limitations for development there are still significant vacant lands that can be developed with few restrictions.

Single family development has advanced along the road edges in the western portion of South Walker and along Obrien Road very little development has occurred along the Grand River Corridor or in the extensively mined areas of the southeast portion of the subarea. Development should be limited along the flood plain and mined areas. There are several vacant lots along the western and northern edges of South Walker that have potential for development. Many of these vacant lots are adjacent to existing residential development and are not restricted by soils, wetlands, or will destroy large amounts of dense vegetation.

Reclamation: Reclamation is returning the land back to its original use or best possible use based on its existing conditions. Mining operations have altered the area to the extent that the area can not be brought back to the original use. However, these areas with minimal effort can be revegetated to regain the use of the land as a natural area.

Reclamation is a viable option for the areas in the southeastern corner of South Walker. This area has been extensively mined for sand and gravel which has created a disturbed topography and several lakes and wet areas. Development may occur in these areas with careful planning due to the flood plain restrictions and close proximity to the water table. Reclamation of the sand and gravel yards will provide open space for recreation and enjoyment.

South Walker Subarea Working Group

The South Walker Subarea Working Group (SWS) conducted a workshop to develop a suitable recommendation for future land uses and development policies in this area. The following is a summary of the recommendations of the SWS.

Land Use

The consensus of opinion of the SWS was that South Walker should continue to developed primarily for single family homes at generally low densities. In part this was to preserve the residential character but protection of the natural features was a primary consideration. The use of open space, or cluster, development was also expressed as a potential method to help ensure sensitive land development.

Public Improvements

At the densities desired, public sewer would not be considered a high priority for the bulk of South Walker. However, the opinions expressed were that water quality problems would soon lead to a critical need for public water services in some areas.

It was also suggested that a new fire station location be finalized. The intersection of Hall and Wilson was noted as a possible location. A suggestion was also made to extend a bike path from Johnson Park as part of the Grand River bike trail.

Transportation Improvements

The widening of Wilson Avenue tended to dominate the roadway improvement discussions. Suggestions included four or five lanes, or a boulevard cross section. However, the lack of sufficient setbacks for many of the existing uses along the roadway, and the effects of widening on these uses was noted as a concern. The potential need for traffic signals at O'Brien and River Bend or Hall Street was also noted. The purpose of the signals would be to create gaps for exiting traffic at other locations and to allow a safe outlet for school buses coming from Kenowa Avenue.

It was also suggested that a new roadway from Butterworth north to O'Brien, intersecting with Sunset Hills, be considered. This road could be extended from Sawyer Court or other location. It is likely that the construction of this roadway would be difficult given the topography and other natural constraints. Traffic speed along all the roadways was also noted.

Environmental Issues

Many of the environmental issues noted were based on the mineral extraction activities, including both the sand and gravel mines as well as uncapped, non-operational oil and gas wells. Other issues included well water quality (as previously noted), and drainage problems, both natural and man-made. Development restrictions in the Grand River floodplain were also stressed.

Of special note was the need to preserve the natural features of South Walker in order to keep the character of the areas intact. Although not a natural feature, the lakes and ponds created by mining activities was noted as a desirable site for single family development. Although the lay of the land in some areas has been severely affected, the presence of water features may make development possible.

Development Policies

Land Use Character

The Subarea Working Group expressed a strong desire to preserve the character of their area. Use of the term character when discussing land use can vary depending on the perspective of the observer. An urban dweller may feel that having homes close by is a desirable character for his or her neighborhood. From the rural resident's view, character may be expressed as not seeing a neighboring home. There are, however, some common characteristics of the character of South Walker upon which many may agree.

- **Presence of open space:** While the amount of open space available varies throughout the area, most would agree that the presence of some open space is an important aspect of South Walker. Open space will generally include lands which lack evidence of man-made structures or activities. But it may also mean parks, farms, and other outdoor activity areas.
- **Natural features:** There would be little disagreement about the importance of natural features in South Walker. Stands of mature trees, areas of rolling hills, and the Grand River and other features combine to make this an exceptional area.
- **Low development densities:** Again, the definition of density may vary, but common to South Walker is a less-than-urban intensity of development.

- Lack of man-made features: Overall, the clearest sense of South Walker's character may be that of not being able to see an overabundance of man-made features or activities.

The residents of South Walker identify with the blend of natural settings (such as fence rows or wetlands) and managed open space (such as farms or woodlots). If natural areas are dominated by driveways, or farm fields sprout lawn furniture, their attraction disappears. Preserving this character requires balancing a combination of careful planning, consideration of property rights, appropriate regulation, and clear objectives. There are several means of achieving this balance.

Sensitive Land Development

As development pressures in South Walker grow emphasis should be placed on methods to preserve natural features and open spaces. Preserving these features will require innovative and sensitive development methods. Two approaches to development of sensitive lands that may be used include preservation and integration.

Preservation measures should be applied to those features which are so sensitive or so valued that any alteration would have a negative impact on the community, in terms of aesthetics, environmental quality, and safety. In these areas, development should be either prohibited or restricted to those projects which have a negligible effect on the environment. Regulated wetlands and the identified flood prone areas adjacent the Grand River are examples of lands requiring preservation techniques.

Sensitive lands may also be *integrated* into the development of a site, allowing the sensitive areas to remain as pristine as possible. The use of small wetlands as aesthetic features or stormwater detention areas, or maintaining vegetated areas as screening or visual interest is becoming more common. In this way, natural features often help market development projects. In South Walker the lakes and ponds of the mining areas may be able to be integrated into single family developments.

Another concern expressed by the South Walker Subarea Working Group was the ability to accommodate dense development where public utilities are not available. It was noted that a concentration of private septic and water systems can lead to groundwater contamination or other environmental problems in addition to the poor water quality already experienced.

This is a legitimate concern and one that cannot be addressed simply by adding a condition to the approval. Instead, submission of credible evidence, including engineering studies and soil testing should be stressed where higher concentrations of septic and well systems are anticipated.

Reliance on public health department approvals should not be the sole factor when deciding whether or not the development is safe for septic use since they often do not have the time or budget to do extensive soil testing over larger areas. County soil surveys likewise should not be accepted since they have a limited degree of accuracy. Where appropriate, septic and well systems may also be contained within any designated open space of the development.

Care should be taken to recognize the potential of other sources of environmental contamination, particularly where underground storage tanks are, or have been, present. Many lending institutions now require the completion of an environmental audit to determine the likelihood of contamination prior to approving funding of projects.

Open Space Design

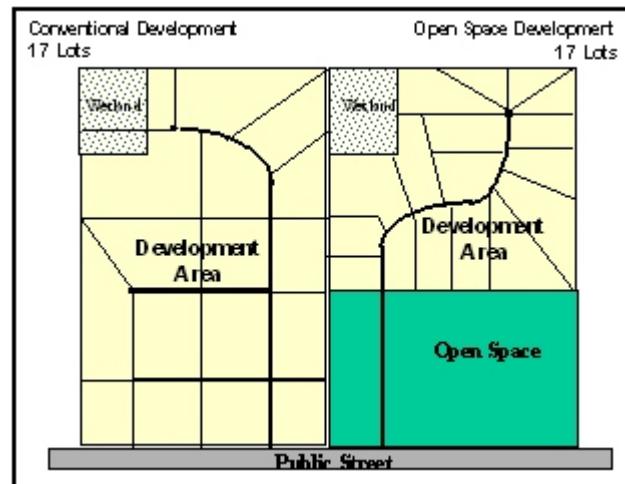
Traditional zoning regulations encourage the use of available space by requiring minimum lot sizes, setbacks, and lot widths. Planned unit developments (PUDs) can be used to set aside open space to preserve sensitive lands. However, PUDs are most often used simply to exercise more control over development; substantial open space requirements are seldom found. One method that may prove useful in preserving sensitive lands is the use of open space design, sometimes called cluster development.

Definition

Open space design is a method of land planning which concentrates allowable density within a limited area. Except where used as an incentive, open space design is not intended to increase the number of dwellings allowed; nor does it allow higher densities to make up for land lost within floodplains, wetlands, or other unbuildable areas. This design simply allows the same amount of development that would otherwise be permitted to take place within a smaller area.

Benefits

The benefits to the developer, and the home buyer, are in the form of reduced lot costs, obtained through shorter street lengths and utility extensions, reduced site grading and soil removal/replacement, and less overall site preparation. The benefits to the community are in the form of preserved open spaces, agricultural lands, and natural areas. Reduced utility and street segments also mean public savings for maintenance.

*Community Concerns*

Resistance to open space design generally stems from either a lack of understanding of the concept or specific concerns related to certain aspects of the development. One of the reasons people live in the South Walker area is its larger lots and the ability to enjoy the area's natural and rural character. As a result, open space design in such areas may defeat the very reason why people moved there in the first place.

Not all properties will be suited to open space design. Applicants should be able to demonstrate that the site has unique characteristics that would allow the preservation of large open spaces, active agricultural land or natural features that might otherwise be eliminated.

One concern often expressed is the ability to guarantee that the open space will be permanently restricted from future construction. Apart from being a requirement of the PUD, which is enforceable by the City, the open space can be deeded in equal parts to the property owners of the project with restrictions on individual sales, requiring approval of a majority (or greater number) of the remaining owners. Or the deed may simply prohibit sale of the property. The open space may also be held in individual or joint ownership of a nonprofit land trust.

Regulations

Planned Unit Developments: Communities looking for the means to preserve open space and rural character have traditionally used planned unit developments (PUDs). While PUDs may have some usefulness in preserving open space, they do not always offer the incentives needed to gain widespread use. PUDs can be used successfully if combined with regulations specific to open space design.

Such regulations should contain qualifying conditions, such as requiring unique site characteristics that would allow the preservation of large open spaces or natural features that might otherwise be eliminated. Minimum parcel sizes should also be required, perhaps as great as 20 to 40 acres. An overall maximum density figure should also be established.

There should also be a minimum lot size required consistent with public health requirements, particularly where private utilities may be required. The lot size must be substantially lower than that otherwise allowed to make this method of development worthwhile. There should also be a specific set of standards for approval, in addition to those already used for the PUD. These standards can be used to address the concerns noted above. For example, the City may require additional engineering studies to ensure that the soils are adequate to accommodate the development.

Front Setbacks: Ordinances may establish a "no clearance zone" in the front setback. This zone may be of any width, but should be at least 50% of the depth of the required front setback. Within this zone urban vegetation (manicured lawns, flower gardens, etc.) should be minimized or prohibited in areas visible from the roadway. Instead native plantings and vegetation should be maintained in these areas. This regulation can be instituted within the district regulations, perhaps as a footnote to the yard requirements.

A companion regulation would be to increase the required setback for homes. Rather than viewing a strip of homes along the street, increasing setbacks would maintain a view of natural areas near the street. Potential problems and resistance to this regulation might stem from the length of driveways that would be required to serve homes set back further from the roadway.

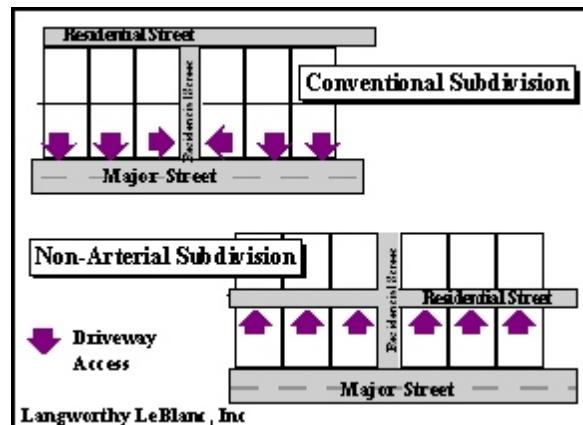
Tree Preservation: Tree preservation ordinances are sometimes difficult to enforce, if drawn too strictly. There are reasonable regulations which could be drafted that would not necessarily treat individual trees, but rather look at the building site as a whole and attempt to restrict buildings to those areas which are most suited for development, and which preserve the most natural features. In fact, tree regulations should be part of an overall program to preserve all natural features on the site.

This regulation would nearly require a site plan review for individual lots; something which is generally avoided. However, if the regulations are specific enough, the review can be more of an administrative one, conducted by the building official or zoning administrator. It would require individual lot owners to provide additional information as to the resources available on their property, such as tree clusters, wetlands, etc.

Lots on Arterial Streets

Lots which face major section line streets often have no other access but through those streets, particularly if the interior lands are not part of the development. As such, a large number of individual driveways along major streets, often carrying high speed traffic, can create a hazard.

Two solutions are possible. If the interior of the property is also being developed, as many lots as possible should be required to gain access from the interior streets. Rather than stripping lots along the roadway, the interior street should be placed on lot depth into the property and the homes should back up to the section line street. Additional landscaping or fencing may be provided for the back yard areas of these homes. Ideally, the "no clearance zone" established for front yards could apply to this situation as well.



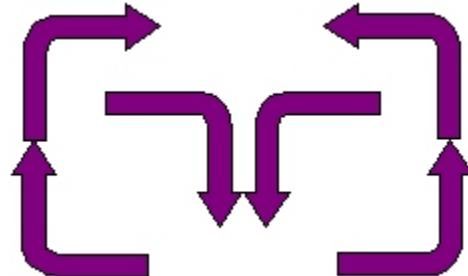
The second solution can be used if interior development is not taking place. Rather than each lot having its own driveway, two or more lots can share a common driveway for the first several feet of the lot, then split into individual driveways to reach the building sites. If neither of these solutions prove useful, each lot fronting on a major street should be required to construct a turn-around area to allow vehicles to enter the street facing forward.

Living Neighborhoods

The residential neighborhoods should be designed with the Living Neighborhoods concepts described in the Community Image Issue Paper. These characteristics will be especially important since this area encompasses large areas of environmentally sensitive lands.

**NORTHEAST WALKER
STREET NETWORK****Area
Description**

The study subarea includes the Alpine Avenue corridor from Four Mile Road to I-96; and from Alpine Avenue east to West River Drive. The Kingsbury/Gage neighborhoods, north of Greenridge Square, consists of a relatively small number of single family homes on small to moderately sized lots. Most of the homes are in good condition. A new service drive, the Kingsbury Connector, provides access for these neighborhoods from a signalized intersection to Alpine Avenue.



A second, larger, residential neighborhood is located east of Greenridge Square. This area has a large number of homes in good condition on moderate to large lots. Access to this area is either to Four Mile Road or West River Drive. No access is available to the west.

Greenridge Square contains a variety of commercial uses in both shopping centers and as free standing uses. Two points of access are available to Alpine Avenue. Internal circulation is through two east-west streets, North Center and Center Drives; and north-south by Weatherford Drive and a parallel street to the east serving a newly developing apartment and condominium residential neighborhood.

Street Planning

As new subdivisions, site condominiums, commercial developments or other projects are considered by the City, it is important that a well planned street network be in place to ensure that adequate circulation is provided. Rather than having each development provide individual access to the major public street, project approvals should include provisions for stub streets to vacant properties that may be available for future development.

These street networks improve overall traffic flow by allowing multiple points of access to adjacent roadways. In addition, circulation between projects improves access for emergency vehicles. Finally, maintenance and snow removal costs are reduced.

Street Systems

Roadways serve two essential functions: moving traffic and providing access to adjacent land uses. An ideal street system would dedicate each roadway to one of these functions; an interstate highway moves traffic quickly and efficiently, a local residential street provides safe and convenient access to adjacent homes. In between lies a broad range of street types which attempts to serve both functions. Most traffic problems can be traced to an improper balance between the need to move traffic and the need to serve adjacent land uses.

In Walker this conflict is especially evident along Alpine Avenue. Alpine Avenue serves as a state trunkline (M-37) and provides the principal access to the northwestern portions of Kent County and to the northern lakeshore counties. It also connects to I-96 and U.S. 131. The traffic attracted to this roadway in turn attracted a wide variety of commercial uses, anchored by Greenridge Square. Other *big box* commercial centers soon followed and spread north into Alpine Township.

In recognition of the traffic problems created along Alpine, the City commissioned a study to determine improvements that were needed for Alpine Avenue, including curb cut closings, signals, geometrics, and others. This subarea plan is not intended to repeat that study; its findings should be incorporated as part of the planning of the City. Instead, this plan is intended to supplement and confirm that study and to further address circulation on the street systems east of Alpine Avenue between Four Mile and I-96.

Traffic Concerns

Many of the traffic concerns related to Alpine Avenue and Greenridge Square have been well documented in other studies. Of note is the intersection of Four Mile and Alpine which currently operates over its designed capacity. Specific access management recommendations have also been made and should be implemented as opportunities arise. Traffic congestion in the area has led to significant increases in traffic accidents (although the accident rate is not as greatly affected).

Northeast Walker Subarea Working Group

The City convened a meeting of area property owners, interested citizens, and members of the Master Plan Focus Group to identify problems and issues in the area and to suggest a series of recommendations to address these issues. The Working Group did not choose to confine themselves to discussing adjacent streets; some of the issues dealt with Alpine Avenue.

Issues

- Traffic volumes

The Group noted the high traffic volumes on Alpine Avenue, created by the commercial developments along the roadway and by the state trunkline serving communities to the north. An additional problem was also noted at North Park and West River Drive.

- Traffic accidents

The high traffic volumes and turning movements of vehicles were key concerns of the Group because of their relationship to traffic accidents. Other related concerns included discourteous and impatient drivers, often frustrated by slow moving traffic; and the excessive number of driveways permitted along the street.

- Jurisdiction

The Group noted that there were several agencies that had some degree of jurisdiction over Alpine Avenue and connecting roadways, including the Michigan Department of Transportation, Kent County Road Commission, and the City of Walker. The Group noted the difficulty of obtaining prompt action because of the number of people and agencies involved.

- Protection of existing neighborhoods

The Kingsbury/Gage neighborhoods north and east of Greenridge Square have been affected by the increasing activity along Alpine Avenue and Four Mile Road. These neighborhoods are virtually surrounded by intensive development. This has made it increasingly difficult for residents to reach or leave their homes. To ease this situation the City has installed a rear service drive, the Kingsbury Connector, to provide access to a signal on Alpine Avenue for these neighborhoods.

There was particular concern about allowing traffic through the residential areas east of Greenridge Square and west of North Park to provide relief from the Greenridge traffic. The Group noted that the City had committed to protect this neighborhood from through traffic.

- Lack of sidewalks

Pedestrian movement in the Alpine corridor and on surrounding streets is discouraged by the lack of sidewalks or bike paths.

- Signal timing

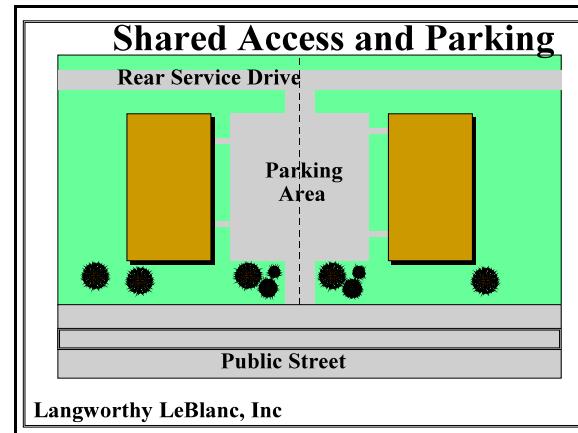
Traffic signal timing was also raised as an issue. Additional signal green time appears to be needed as left turn movements increase at both Four Mile and at Old Orchard/Center Drive. The opening of the new apartments and condominiums east of Greenridge Square will complicate this existing situation.

Recommendations

The Working Group attempted to address the issues they had identified through a series of recommendations. Although no specific priorities were established, the Group did designate some of the recommendations as higher priorities than others.

Priority Recommendations

- A. Examine the potential for an alternative route for M-37 from the vicinity of 8 Mile Road to U.S. 131. This would permit northbound traffic to travel north on U.S. 131 and act as a bypass of the Alpine commercial area.
- B. Provide a new outlet road from Greenridge Square residential area to Four Mile Road; no connection should be permitted to existing neighborhood streets.
- C. Provide service drives along Alpine Avenue. The drives may be either front or rear, depending on the situation. Other situations similar to the rear service drive constructed along the east side of Alpine



Avenue north of Greenridge Square, the Kingsbury Connector, should be explored.

- D. Restrict driveway movements where necessary. Some drives may be located too near intersections or other drives and should be restricted to right turn movements.
- E. Improve signal timing. As traffic increases it will be necessary to continuously monitor traffic signal timing to improve safety and efficiency. Left turn movements should be examined as the Greenridge Square residential areas continue to develop.
- F. Investigate a connection from Old Kent Park south to North Park.
- G. Improve streetscape along Alpine, including street trees, sidewalks, and additional landscaping. In part, this is recommended for aesthetic reasons. But the improvement of the streetscape can also contribute to a slowing of traffic by helping to identify drives and other effects.

Other Improvement Recommendations

- 1. Provide additional left turn lanes and signals, where warranted.
- 2. Forge a working relationship with the road agencies and surrounding communities to work as partners.
- 3. Provide additional sidewalks and bike paths for pedestrian movement.
- 4. Examine the potential for a pedestrian/bike path along the Grand River.

Conclusions

It is clear to even the casual observer that traffic problems along Alpine Avenue will not be solved overnight. The recommendations included in this and other reports will require a consistent and ongoing effort by all parties. Although events may not occur as everyone would like, it will be important to keep working on solutions over a long period and, in some cases implementation will require a piecemeal approach. But in the long term, a consistent application of the principles and recommendations suggested here can result in a safer, more efficient street system.

DEALING WITH DEVELOPMENT CONTROVERSY

When Is Enough, Enough?

Over the past few years concerns have been raised by residents in several suburban communities about proposals for new apartment complexes. In the early 1980s the City of Kentwood was embroiled in a controversy regarding the number of apartments that should be permitted in the city. Other communities in the Grand Rapids area have had to confront the same problem.



Concerns expressed by opponents to these projects are wide ranging but generally include:

- Traffic
- Impact on the schools
- Lowering of property values by low income/subsidized housing
- Crime
- Transient residents
- Loss of natural features
- Drainage problems

Other concerns, while often not expressed openly, relate to racial and economic differences between the apartment residents and neighboring residents. Even though these concerns are largely perception rather than fact, they still affect the decision making process.

The expectations of opponents to apartment projects are sometimes beyond what the City can fulfill. When zoning permits such projects, the City is limited to a review of the site plan. As a result, the neighboring property owners are frustrated and express disbelief that the power of the City is so limited. The City is then placed in the position of attempting to negotiate points to appease the opponents.

The expectations of opponents to apartment projects are sometimes beyond what the City can fulfill.

Other times the power of the City is greater, particularly when the applicant must request a rezoning. Ideally, the City will look to the Master Plan to provide guidance as to the action it should take. Even then, the decisions are not easy ones to make. The Master Plan may be out of date, changed conditions may have reduced the usefulness of the Plan.

The Issue Paper on Evaluating Development provides guidelines for review of development projects. Using the process described will allow the City to make decisions in a fair and consistent manner. But there remains the question of dealing with the public and their expectations.

The question arises as to what the role of the public should be. Various zoning approvals require participation by the public in the decision making process, usually in the form of public hearings. The dilemma in which most decision makers find themselves is trying to determine what weight to give the comments (and complaints) of the public.

Most of you probably know by now that people do not generally come to a meeting in support of a particular project; most have concerns that they wish addressed, many are simply opposed to what is proposed. The foremost concern that any decision maker should have is to ensure fairness for all concerned; the applicant as well as the public. To ensure fairness, keep some simple things in mind.

- Everyone must have the opportunity to speak and present evidence at public hearings. While some limitations may be placed on this right, as described later, no action should be taken that would deprive a person of their right to be heard.
- Most people are uncomfortable speaking in public. One of mankind's greatest fears is not death; it is public speaking. While the Chair cannot make everyone effective speaker, he/she can make sure that meeting rules are followed and order maintained. Keeping a subtle balance between the degree of formality required, and the degree of informality that is sometimes needed is a learned art.
- Recognize emotional responses and treat them with concern and understanding. Land use issues, as you may have discovered, can bring out strong emotions. Strong responses, within limits, should be expected and understood. Controlling your own emotions is essential, even when the comments get personal.

- The Chair can help things stay calm by following meeting rules and requiring that comments are made only on the subject at hand. (It is often helpful to point out what request is being made and to ensure that the public understands the limitations of the City).

Your responsibilities remain the same: following the standards and making decisions based on the facts presented as applied to those standards. However, you cannot ignore the concerns and fears of the public. As noted above, the strong emotions you must sometimes face are difficult to overcome. But your concerns can be expressed with some very simple steps.

1. Repeat the concerns that you hear. "What I hear you saying is..." When doing so try to take some of the more heated terms out of the sentence.
2. State your concern. Restate the concern by noting your understanding and agreement. "I agree that we should be concerned about...?"
3. Narrow the issue to the items which are at the root of the concern. If the issue is safety, try to narrow down the issue to one or two items. If the comments are about danger to children, is this caused by traffic speed, narrow roads, traffic volumes? Do this by a series of questions that will not embarrass the speaker, but will force them to confront the true issues.
4. Find out what you can do about the issues that surface. Perhaps through conditions to the approval you can help matters. If a sidewalk is needed, place a condition on the approval that a sidewalk be constructed. If a better roadway is needed, make a separate motion to contact the County Road Commission about the need to fix the road.

Dealing with Emotional Issues

1. Repeat the concerns..
2. State your concern..
3. Narrow the issue..
4. Find out what you can do..
5. Don't try to answer all questions..

What you are trying to do is: a) take out the emotional content of the issue by showing understanding and concern; and b) determine what actions can be taken to make the situation better. This will not be possible in all circumstances and you must be careful not to promise more than can be delivered.

5. Do not try to answer all questions. Some questions will not have an answer; or the answer must come from the applicant. For example, "why don't you build this in the township?"

In the final analysis, the role of the public is to provide information to the decision maker. The residents of the area can provide a unique perspective on the neighborhood which may cause the need for further studies or information to be provided by the applicant, or gathered by the City.

Petitions, letters, and other expressions of concern are useful, but only to the point where they provide information not previously known by the decision makers. Zoning decisions must always be based on the facts and standards applicable to the application; they are not based on a show of hands or the number of names on a petition.

How Much is Enough?

A broader question related to this issue is when the City has enough apartments. This is a question that has no clear answer. Land use planners are accustomed to calculating land use needs based on population projections and other measures. However, in a metropolitan area these calculations are difficult and probably useless since the land use needs of any one community tend to overlap with others.

In the late 1970s a concept was developed in Montgomery County, Ohio (Dayton) which described a Fair Share concept for housing. This concept stated that each community should be required to shoulder its fair share of providing federally subsidized low income housing, rather than concentrating it in a few areas. This idea was broadened to include other land uses as well to avoid the stigma of just dealing with low income housing.

This brought about a discussion of the responsibility of each community to provide for their citizens. As a result the issue of fair share housing began to be framed as a social and economic issue. In turn, this made the issue a matter of local government policy rather than one of calculating land use needs.

One example of how a policy was expressed is to be found in the City of Kentwood. City leaders and neighborhood groups became alarmed at the extent of multiple family housing already constructed and that which could be constructed in the future. The City Commission, working with the Planning Commission and the neighborhood groups, adopted a policy that set a goal of 70-30, i.e., 70 percent single family and owned housing to 30 percent rental.

Although achieving the goal would be some years away it gave the City a framework within which it could help determine future land use patterns. At the same time it limited the use of land in some areas of the city that would otherwise be well suited for multiple family housing but might not be suited for single family. One partial resolution to this was to include condominiums as part of the 70 percent, even in a multiple family setting.

Decision makers will have to recognize that setting a policy will affect property owners, residents, investors, potential new residents, and many others, regardless of the policy adopted. This must be taken into account when developing a policy. Following a clear process will help reveal these effects.

Setting a Land Use Policy

This approach is not intended as a model, but does illustrate the use of land use policy to achieve community goals. Setting a policy for multiple family housing, or any other land use, involves a series of steps. Citizen involvement throughout this process is critical, but the ultimate responsibility rests with a cooperative effort between the Planning and City Commissions.

1. Develop a clear statement of the problem/issue.

Developing a land use policy requires a clear understanding of the affect of the issue on the City. Facts need to be expressed and the effects of perceptions must be understood. As noted on the first page, many of the impacts of apartment projects are perceptions rather than fact, but that does not mean that the issue is not important. An overall balance of any land use can have far reaching affects on other parts of the community. Too much industrial land, especially if improperly located, can severely affect the feelings of residents about the community. These elements should be written as a statement of the problem/issue which can then be used as a basis on which to build a policy.

Setting and Land Use Policy

1. Develop a clear statement of the problem/issue..
2. Collect information..
3. Develop and evaluate alternative policies..
4. Implement the policy..
5. Evaluate the policy and adopt needed changes..

2. *Collect information.*

Some preliminary information may have to be collected to help develop Step 1, but the bulk of the data will be needed to address the Problem Statement. This may include:

- calculation of land use build out;
- base information for calculation of impacts (trips per day, students per unit, etc.);
- basis for effects of perceptions and the tangible and intangible problems created;
- other information related to basic issues of Problem Statement.

3. *Develop and evaluate alternative policies.*

At this point some general approaches to the Problem Statement should be explored, based on the information collected in Step 2. These alternatives should be developed without consideration of legal issues, economic/social factors, or land use impacts which might eliminate a policy. The first part of this step will simply list the approaches that could resolve the problem.

Once a list is in place, the other considerations can be used to help in the evaluation of the most useful approach. Constitutional and legal issues can be described and other potential negative impacts examined. This will eliminate the alternatives that could be used.

4. *Develop a Policy Statement.*

Any approaches remaining can be worded into a Policy Statement that clearly expresses the desired outcome and the measures that will be used to achieve that outcome. The Policy should be tested against the following. The Policy Statement should:

- a. be achievable;
- b. be realistic;
- c. be broad enough to inspire but narrow enough to meet #1 and #2;
- d. be limited to no more than 2-3 major points; and
- e. provide clear direction for future decision makers.

5. *Implement the Policy.*

This step may include some tough decisions. Master Plan and zoning changes may be required, new zoning districts and regulations adopted, and other actions. This will require a close working relationship between the Planning and City Commissions. It is probably better to undertake these steps as part of a comprehensive package, rather than trying to implement them over time. But this will depend on the adopted policy.

6. *Evaluate the Policy and adopt needed changes.*

The Policy Statement, if properly drafted, will provide direction on evaluation measures; the 70-30 policy of Kentwood contained a numerical goal which allowed an annual calculation of progress. The evaluation measures should indicate the effectiveness of the Policy. Changes may be needed if over time the Policy appears to be ineffective, or the implementation measures inadequate.

Conclusion

Land use is intended to help a community achieve its Vision. Consideration of social and economic factors should be an important part of that Vision. At the same time the needs of existing residents must also be taken into account. Balancing these interests where they conflict is part of the job of the decision maker. Building a better community is the ultimate goal.

EVALUATING DEVELOPMENT

Changing the use of any property can have far reaching consequences, physically, environmentally, financially, and legally. Therefore, a careful evaluation of proposed development is essential. As with any development decision, the use of standards is essential to reaching fair and consistent decisions. The following factors may be used in considering development approvals.

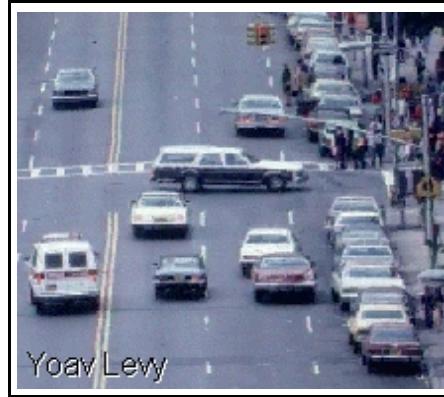
1. Consistency with the goals, policies, and future land use plan of the Master Plan

Policies regarding land use are expressed through the Master Plan. A master plan will include a description of the community, outline goals and objectives, and map areas of different land uses, ranging from agricultural to industrial uses. The Master Plan must be reviewed to make sure that the new growth conforms to what was planned. But as events unfold these plans must be changed to take unanticipated events into account.

The Master Plan lays out the intended land use for property within the community. Since the Master Plan helps determine land use, rezoning decisions should be consistent with its provisions. This is not to say that all rezonings that are consistent with the Future Land Use map should automatically be approved. If all of the preconditions of the Master Plan are met, approval of the request should logically be forthcoming.

If, however, a rezoning request is different than that shown in the plan, it should not automatically be rejected, particularly if the plan has not been reviewed in some time. Each request should be evaluated with respect to the plan with the idea that if conditions which were originally considered when the plan was adopted have changed.

If conditions have changed significantly since the Master Plan was adopted, such as economic factors, demographic shifts, new utility lines, changing traffic conditions, or other reasons, the Planning Commission and legislative body should consider these events as part of their deliberation to insure that the Master Plan is current.



2. *Compatibility*

ALL of the uses allowed in the proposed district should be compatible with the conditions present on the site and in the immediate vicinity of the site. Environmental constraints should be considered. Is the land itself able to accommodate the planned use? Are the soils and drainage facilities capable of handling the density of development planned? Where public utilities are not available, what will be needed?

Compatibility may take many other forms. Architectural and aesthetic considerations most often come to mind when compatibility is desired. However, making judgments solely on this basis can be problematic. Instead, compatibility should be determined through similarities in use. Many communities do not care to mix commercial and industrial uses, for example, since their traffic characteristics and lot sizes are usually very different. Do the uses generate about the same amount of traffic? Are they generally for the use of the public, or are they occupied only by the employees?

3. *Reasonable return on investment*

It is the right of every property owner to receive a reasonable return on the investment placed on property. This does not mean that zoning is a slave to the "highest and best use," which is not a zoning, but a real estate, term. It does mean that there should be a reasonable use available within the zone district.

Perhaps the most difficult aspects of zoning and the exercise of local control of land use is the need to balance these various, often competing interests, of property owners and residents. These competing interests are presented to us by the concept of property rights.

On the one hand, the law tells us that residents have the right to peace and quiet of the their neighborhoods and to have the value of their property protected.

On the other hand, we are also told that owners of property have a right of a reasonable return on their investment through zoning and that zoning cannot deprive the owner of that return.

Then there are the groups of people who follow the *NIMBY* and *BANANA* principles. The *NIMBYs* believe that the project is well designed, needed in the community, but located in the wrong place. Not In My Back Yard, *NIMBY*, is their battle cry. Others may believe that the project should not be built anywhere in their community, or perhaps anywhere at all. Their motto is Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything - *BANANA*.

In the midst of these many competing interests and views is the local authority for zoning; the Zoning Administrator, City Planner, the Planning Commission, the Board of Appeals, and the City Commission.



Dealing with each of these conflicting views is simply not always possible, and the intent of zoning is to avoid the necessity of trying to judge between them. Instead, zoning follows some basic principles and procedures designed to treat each person and property in a fair and consistent manner.

4. Consistency with surrounding property

ALL of the uses allowed in the district should be consistent with the existing or planned characteristics of neighboring properties, especially in terms of density, character, traffic, aesthetics, and property values. The purposes of zoning, as noted earlier, are designed to insure this consistency. How will the planned land uses impact existing uses? Are there some areas that are residential now that the community would like to see become commercial in the future? How will planned uses affect those uses already established nearby?

5. Availability of services.

ALL of the uses permitted in the district should be able to be served with appropriate public or private facilities and services. This includes not only water and sewer, but fire and police protection and other necessary services. Are services capable of handling planned development? Are utility systems able to accommodate the intensity and type of development desired?



What kind of strain will new commercial and industrial development place on the ability to provide adequate fire protection? What road improvements may be required?

While this analysis may not be a direct cost-benefit issue, it should be at least clear that the community will benefit in both tangible and intangible ways. It should be equally clear that the cost ratio should not unduly affect the value and use of surrounding properties.

6. *Demand for the use*

There should be some relationship between the amount of land zoned to accommodate certain uses and the logical demand for those uses. An excessive amount of land zoned for individual categories of use can lead to blighted areas and haphazard development. What uses are needed in the community? If a shortage of quality housing was determined to be a community issue, providing appropriate land uses in desirable locations would be an appropriate response. If a regional shopping center seems appropriate for the community and the region, a location should be selected and planned, based on the ability of the location to accommodate the use.

7. *Appropriate district*

This standard may be especially helpful if the applicant has a specific use in mind. It may be possible that the use is allowed in another, more suitable district, or it may be that an amendment to the uses allowed in the existing district would be more appropriate. In some circumstances the type of development may not fit the existing ordinance and new language may need to be developed that better accommodates the needs of the community and the development.

8. *Ordinance compliance*

The site should be able to safely accommodate the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance for parking, setbacks, etc. In addition, the Ordinance may be written so as to not permit requests that have been submitted (and denied) within the past year, without a significant change in the conditions that caused the denial.

The density and intensity planned for the land use districts should be able to be related to lot sizes, density, lot coverage, and other regulations.

If the Master Plan calls for improved aesthetics, landscaping, sign control, driveway controls or other similar actions, the zoning ordinance may be a logical place to develop regulations to enforce these measures. Protection of environmentally sensitive areas may be regulated through the ordinance as a part of site plan review.

One important point: site plans should never be considered as part of a rezoning request (with the exception of a PUD). The Planning Commission and/or legislative body should not be swayed by what is proposed by the petitioner. Instead, keep in mind that ALL of the uses permitted in the proposed district may be placed on the site; not just the one shown on the site plan.

Planned Unit Development

Depending on the nature of the proposed use, a planned unit development may be more appropriate than a commercial zone district. However, PUDs should not be viewed as a substitute for rezoning; some communities view PUDs as a method to "lock in" uses for various parcels. Using a PUD solely for this purpose is not justified; land use issues must still be addressed.

PUDs should be reserved for special situations, such as preserving natural areas, site related difficulties, unique development characteristics (mixture of land uses), or innovative land development. Where these conditions apply, a PUD may be preferable to a rezoning.

What is a PUD? A Planned Unit Development, commonly known by its abbreviation - PUD, is a regulation that allows some flexibility in the normal zoning requirements, such as uses allowed, setbacks, density, and others.

When should PUDs be allowed? The intent of a PUD is to allow for special conditions for which normal zoning regulations are inappropriate. Approval of PUDs are intended to be reserved for special situations, such as preserving natural areas, development on larger parcels, allowing multiple uses on the same property, or innovative project designs.

How are PUDs approved? PUDs may be approved by one of several methods. A *rezoning* may be required, which will create a separate zone district with its own set of development requirements and approval standards for site plans. The PUD zone may either be mapped, as any other zoning district, or as a "floating" zone.

If the PUD is a mapped zone, a change is made to the Zoning Map to indicate the PUD District. A PUD District may have both Permitted and Special Land Uses. For example, the District may permit by right residential uses, but require commercial uses within the PUD to obtain a Special Land Use approval.

A floating zone is one that attaches special regulations to the underlying zone district. Thus, the basic district does not change, but additional regulations are associated with that district as a PUD.

PUDs may also be approved as a *Special Land Use*. This requires that the ordinance list PUDs under the appropriate zoning districts and that standards and requirements be developed for their approval. The review standards may be the same as those for all special land uses.

The PUD regulations may also be divided into different types of PUDs. For example, there may be a Residential PUD, which has only residential uses as a primary use. Although commercial or office uses may also be allowed, they generally will be very limited, often by restricting their size to 5 or 10 percent of the total site area. There may also be Commercial and Industrial PUDs, and a PUD which allows a combination of these uses (Mixed Use PUD).

All PUDs are required to receive a site plan review. The ordinance may permit a larger, multiple phase PUD to be reviewed on two levels. The first may be a preliminary approval a conceptual site plan, including a general description of land uses, road layout, and other major elements proposed in the entire PUD. The second may allow a detailed, final site plan review of individual phases. This review would ensure that the plans were generally in compliance with the concept plans and that they meet the requirements of the ordinance.

What should be in a PUD regulation? At a minimum, the State Zoning Acts require that PUD provisions state the reviewing authority or authorities, eligibility requirements, the process/application procedures, and the standards by which the PUD will be reviewed and approved. The following are also generally considered to be acceptable elements of a PUD regulation.

Objectives

The PUD provisions may list separate objectives that a PUD is designed to achieve. If a community goal is preservation of the environment, this may be reflected in the PUD objectives as an intended purpose of the regulations.

Other objectives will tend to paraphrase the language of the Zoning Acts, which call for "innovation in land use and variety in design, layout, and type of structures constructed; economy and efficiency in the use of land, natural resources, energy and the provision of public services and utilities; encourage useful open space; and provide better housing, employment, and shopping opportunities.."

Qualifying Conditions

The ordinance should list those characteristics that a site must possess in order to be considered as a PUD. These might include a minimum size, a requirement that the property be under one ownership or jointly developed under multiple ownerships, minimum open space requirement, and others that relate to the objectives desired by the community.

Review Procedures

As noted earlier, the review procedures may take a number of forms, but the procedure, including application and site plan requirements, and the process to be used to evaluate the proposal, such as public hearings, staff reviews, etc., must be specifically stated in the ordinance.

Uses Allowed

There should be some indication as to what uses are permissible in the PUD. They may be very specific--only allowing unique uses, such as airports, landfills, etc.; or, at the other end of the spectrum, they may be broad, allowing virtually any use permitted by the ordinance, subject to the requirements of the PUD.

Site Development Requirements

The PUD may require some specific site development elements, such as minimum open space percentages and ownership/maintenance details, minimum site perimeter setbacks, density, landscaping, signs, architectural elements, utility placement, parking, and other site-related characteristics. These provisions should be as specific as possible in order for the applicant to know what is expected.

Review Standards

All PUD provisions must include the standards by which the development will be evaluated. The Zoning Acts contain some guidance on suitable standards, but they will often include protection of the environment, general compatibility with adjacent land uses, ability to be served with public facilities and services, and protection of the public health, safety, and welfare. Other standards, such as those noted for site plan review, will also be applicable, since a site plan review is required for all PUDs.

PUD Documentation

PUDs approved as a rezoning will require a Zoning Ordinance amendment to implement that action. The amending ordinance will normally contain all of the site development requirements, any conditions of approval (conditions may be attached to an affirmative decision for any PUD), and other relevant information, such as site location, uses permitted, reference to a dated site plan, etc. The ordinance amendment should contain as much detail as possible in order to properly document the approval and the requirements attached to the approval.

A Special Land Use PUD will be documented through the minutes of the meeting and any other administrative notices normally completed for any Special Land Use approval.

What is Spot Zoning?

Often a review of individual development will raise a concern about *spot zoning*. Spot zoning is an often misused term. In order to qualify as an inappropriate spot zone the property in question must:

1. generally be small in size in relation to surrounding properties;
2. allow uses which are inconsistent with the surrounding land uses;
3. confer a special benefit on a single property owner which is not available to others; and
4. be contrary to the Master Plan.

Permitting a spot zone meeting these criteria is a poor zoning practice since it introduces a use into an area which is unlike all the other uses around it. However, as the characteristics of a spot zone imply, simply rezoning a small parcel for commercial use, when surrounded by residential uses, does not make it a spot zone. A Master Plan will often designate such properties for commercial use to serve surrounding neighborhoods.

Consequently, a rezoning consistent with that designation is not a spot zone. As a result, calling a rezoning a "spot zone" simply because it is different from the other uses around it is not always correct.

Remember...

- Rezoning approvals run with the land, not with an owner. Therefore, a change to the zoning map is permanent and stays in place regardless of the property's ownership.
- Rezonings cannot be conditioned upon other factors. You cannot, for example, approve a rezoning subject to the applicant's compliance with a site plan, public improvements, or any other condition.

THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

Site Visits

Before making any decision, it is necessary that those charged with that responsibility have an adequate amount of information to allow a reasonable conclusion. Visiting the site is often critical in rendering a good decision. Still, some precautions should be used. A site visit by a majority of the membership of a decision-making body must be preceded by notice under the **Open Meetings Act**.

Given the potential problems associated with Open Meetings Act compliance, as well as other regulations, such as the Americans With Disabilities Act (**ADA**), site visits by individual members is a suggested option.

Two cautions for individual visits: 1) do not go onto the site unless specific **written permission** has been granted by the property owner or the site is otherwise available to the public (such as an existing shopping center); and 2) do not talk to the property owner, neighbors or applicant outside of the meeting. This is known as an **"ex parte" contact** (or from only one point of view) and can be perceived as prejudicial.

The intent of information gathering is to insure that everyone has the same information on which to base a decision. If a contact cannot be avoided, it should be reported to the rest of the Planning Commission, along with the general content of the conversation.

The intent of information gathering is to insure that everyone has the same information on which to base a decision.

Details to look for during a site visit include traffic conditions, natural features, surrounding land uses, and general neighborhood characteristics. Visits at different times and days would also be useful. You should describe your findings to the rest of the Planning Commission so that they may have the benefit of your observations and comments. Photographs, slides or video tape may be a good option, particularly for larger, inaccessible sites.

Meeting Preparation

Prior to the meeting you should take the time to review all of the material made available to you. Make sure that the Zoning Ordinance requires that applications be submitted early and that enough site plan copies are provided so that each member can be sent a plan prior to the meeting. The Zoning Ordinance should also be reviewed to determine the applicable standards and requirements prior to the meeting. Questions about the proposal should be written down.

In some circumstances, it may be advisable to contact community staff to determine the availability of special studies that may be applicable to the site or the area. Staff reports and materials submitted by the applicant should also be available for review.

Making Decisions

Decisions must always be based on the standards of the Zoning Ordinance and facts, not on emotion or opinions. The following guidelines may prove useful in determining whether or not a decision is reasonable.

- The record must show sufficient **facts** to back up the findings made according to the ordinance standards. If traffic is a concern, describe those concerns as precisely and factually as possible.
- It is not enough to deny an application because of a vague notion that the use is not a "good idea," or that it will "harm the neighborhood."
- Simply because a roomful of people show up to oppose the project is not sufficient reason to deny an application.
- The past performance of the applicant (positive or negative) should not be used as a basis for a denial. If there are doubts about performance, make proper use of conditional approvals (except for rezonings), performance bonds, and proper documentation.

- Approvals and denials should each be thoroughly documented, clearly stating how the Ordinance standards were, or were not met.
- Resolve questions of doubt before taking action; do not act hastily. Zoning decisions are permanent; take care that the decision you make is the correct one.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

The Zoning Acts indicate that a community may "require the submission and approval of a site plan before authorization of a land use or activity regulated by the zoning ordinance." Accordingly, the Zoning Ordinance must state which land uses or activities will need site plan approval and the conditions under which a site plan will be reviewed.

The Zoning Acts state that the Ordinance must specify the "body, board, or official" who will review site plans. Review responsibilities can be divided; the Planning Commission may review certain plans and the Zoning Administrator others. The legislative body may also be made the final decision maker for site plans, if desired. The Board of Appeals cannot conduct site plan reviews since they may have to hear an appeal of a site plan decision.

The reviewing authority may attach reasonable conditions to a site plan approval. Conditions must be related to the review standards contained in the Ordinance. A performance guarantee may also be required. In practice, site plans are rarely denied approval. Instead, the reviewers tend to place the conditions necessary to meet the standards of the Zoning Ordinance. If the site plan is greatly deficient, it may be tabled pending submission of corrected plans. The approved site plan becomes part of the community's records and the project must be constructed in accordance with that plan.

Site Plan Review Standards

All Final Site Plans must be approved, approved with conditions, or denied based on the purposes, objectives and requirements of this Ordinance, and specifically, the following considerations when applicable:

1. *The uses proposed will not adversely affect the public health, safety, or welfare. Uses and structures located on the site shall be planned to take into account topography, size of the property, the uses on adjoining property and the relationship and size of buildings to the site. The site shall be developed so as not to impede the normal and orderly development or improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in this Ordinance.*

This standard is used to ensure that the proposed development *fits* the site, particularly with respect to features and relationships to adjoining properties. For example, off-street parking can be a source of problems related to circulation, but they can also have a significant effect on adjacent properties if not properly located and designed. Entrances to parking areas should be located in areas convenient to the street to which they provide access. The parking areas should be located in areas convenient to the use that they serve.

However, the location of parking areas depends largely on the use that they serve and how they relate to adjoining properties. For example, parking areas in commercial areas should, to the extent possible, connect with one another to provide internal circulation between adjacent uses. This may be accomplished through a formal arrangement, such as front or rear service drives, or simply by making it convenient to move between adjoining parking areas.

On the other hand, nonresidential parking areas located next to residential uses should be located as far from the adjacent properties as possible and/or have sufficient screening to protect adjacent properties.

This standard also allows the reviewer to require that landscaping, buffers, and/or greenbelts be preserved and/or provided to ensure that proposed uses will be adequately shielded from surrounding property. It is useful to define minimum buffers, in terms of widths, landscape plantings, berms, wall materials, heights, etc. Minimum requirements should be stated as such, with a clarifying statement that additional screening may be required by the Planning Commission or other reviewing authority.

This standard may also be used to require screening of loading areas, dumpsters, rooftop mechanical equipment, and other areas of intense activity. Screening of loading and waste storage areas can provide not only a visual buffer, but can help contain litter from blowing onto adjacent properties.

Lighting should be adequate to illuminate the area, yet not "spill over" on adjacent properties, particularly residential areas. Requiring "cut-off" fixtures for lights, or reducing the height of light poles can be effective ways to meet this standard. Sign lighting should also be considered under this standard to prevent the glaring of lights onto the roadway or adjacent properties.

2. *Safe, convenient, uncongested, and well-defined vehicular and pedestrian circulation shall be provided for ingress/egress points and within the site. Drives, streets and other circulation routes shall be designed to promote safe and efficient traffic operations within the site and at ingress/egress points.*
3. *The arrangement of public or private vehicular and pedestrian connections to existing or planned streets in the area shall be planned to provide a safe and efficient circulation system for traffic within the City.*

The purpose of reviewing circulation is to ensure proper driveway spacing, adequate setbacks for clear visibility, and proper placement of parking areas. Requiring parking setbacks, particularly along the roadway, can have a beneficial effect on the community in terms of improving driveway placement and control (stacking capacity at the driveway opening), control of glare and headlight spray, and community aesthetics.

Special consideration should be given to uses with large parking areas to ensure that circulation is safe and does not conflict with pedestrians, other vehicles, and adjacent uses. Shared driveways may also be required to reduce the overall number of access points. It is also advisable to require access between properties so that vehicles do not have to enter the roadway to reach adjacent uses. Other considerations, such as service drives (front and/or rear), may also be required.

A common misconception is that local communities have no input on driveway locations if the state has jurisdiction over the roadway. Although local regulation cannot conflict with the road authority (i.e. be less restrictive), it can control driveway locations through the site plan review process. Local governments do have authority to control the placement and spacing of curb cuts (as long as they are not less restrictive than the road authority).

Other aspects, such as providing sidewalks for pedestrians, will largely depend on local policies. Compliance with state or federal regulations for handicap parking and access is also important.

4. *Removal or alteration of significant natural features shall be restricted to those areas which are reasonably necessary to develop the site in accordance with the requirements of this Ordinance. The Planning Commission or Zoning Administrator may require that landscaping, buffers, and/or greenbelts be preserved and/or provided to ensure that proposed uses will be adequately buffered from one another and from surrounding public and private property.*

Site plans should show any "significant natural feature," which is defined as:

"Any natural area as designated by the community, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, or other agency which exhibits unique topographic, ecological, hydrological, or historical characteristics such as a wetland, flood plain, water features, or other unique natural features."

There are two approaches to natural features: preservation and integration. Preservation measures should be applied to those features which are so sensitive or so valued that any alteration would have a negative impact on the community, in terms of aesthetics, environmental quality, and safety. In these areas, development should be either prohibited or restricted to those projects which have a negligible effect on the environment. Regulated wetlands and identified flood prone areas are examples of lands requiring preservation techniques.

Natural features may also be integrated into the development of a site, allowing them to remain as pristine as possible. The use of small wetlands as aesthetic features, or maintaining vegetated areas as screening or visual interest is becoming more common. In this way, natural features often help market development projects.

Preserving natural features, such as woodlands and topography, may be accomplished through conditions of approval, using this standard as support. Reviewers should also be aware of the potential of environmental contamination, particularly where underground storage tanks are, or have been, present. Many lending institutions now require the completion of an environmental audit to determine the likelihood of contamination prior to approving funding of projects.

5. *Satisfactory assurance shall be provided that the requirements of all other applicable Ordinances, codes, and requirements of the City will be met.*

This standard gives the Planning Commission the latitude to condition development approvals on the review of city professional engineers and others. For example, most Planning Commissioners are not adequately trained to ensure that a site is properly engineered to avoid excessive amounts of stormwater runoff.

Normally, local engineering or other sources need to be consulted. Having this standard allows the community to consider these engineering factors in their approval. The same is true of the adequacy of sanitary sewer and water services, safety services, and others. Perhaps the best way to ensure that this standard is met is to involve public safety authorities in the site plan review process. Many communities may have local regulations that address fire lane standards and building access that must be taken into account to ensure that ordinance conflicts are avoided.

6. *The general purposes and spirit of this Ordinance and the Master Plan of the City shall be maintained.*

The intent of any Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan is to protect properties from the harmful effects one may have on the other. It is important to note that this does not just mean residential properties. For example, mixing commercial and industrial uses can foster traffic and circulation problems by creating conflicts between truck, employee, and customer vehicles. Ensuring proper land use relationships is the function of the Ordinance and Master Plan; site plan review helps ensure that those principles are implemented.

To ensure that this standard is met, the Master Plan should be reviewed to determine if there are any particular aspects that apply to the property being reviewed. Access management principles, goals that encourage protection of environmental areas, and guidelines for managing community aesthetics are all involved in this review.

HOW TO AVOID LITIGATION

The short answer to avoiding litigation is simple; you can't! Governments are always open to lawsuits, regardless of the methods used to reach a decision. Disappointed applicants and neighbors far too often look to the courts to make a decision favorable to their position. However, there are some actions that you may take to strengthen your legal position.

The first way to deal with a legal challenge to your decisions is to follow the procedures and principles outlined in this handout. As you have seen, the zoning process involves a wide variety of technical, administrative, and judgmental factors. The technical factors may include compliance with the numerical requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, such as setbacks, height, parking, etc. The administrative requirements include such items as ensuring that notices are mailed and published, meeting procedures followed, and other similar actions.

Finally, and probably most important, are the judgmental factors that are required in making effective zoning decisions. **The standards provided in the Zoning Ordinance for various types of decisions are the clearest guide given to decision makers. All decisions should be based on these standards and the facts that are used to apply them.**

Other factors that should be remembered:

- Keep the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance up-to-date. A current Plan and Ordinance, reflecting the needs and desires of the community can bolster an effective defense. An outdated Plan or Ordinance is subject to attack as not relevant to today's conditions.
- Recognize the landowners right to a reasonable rate of return, but remember that it may not be the use which provides the highest profit.
- Do not exclude lawful land uses if there is a demand and an appropriate location in the community (see zoning enabling acts). Don't try to steal or extort property by zoning; buy it.
- Base decisions on the ordinances and facts, not emotion or an opinion of the applicant.
- Make consistent decisions using the standards written into the Zoning Ordinance.
- Know the rules of procedure and follow them, consistently.
- Do not make decisions which have the effect of polluting, impairing or destroying the air, water, and other natural resources of the state and the public trust therein.

- Resolve questions of doubt before taking action; do not act hastily. Zoning decisions are permanent; take care that the decision you make is the correct one.
- Know the limits of your authority and act in good faith.
- Correct immediately any situations which could be/are found liable.
- If sued, hire competent legal counsel familiar with the type of litigation involved.



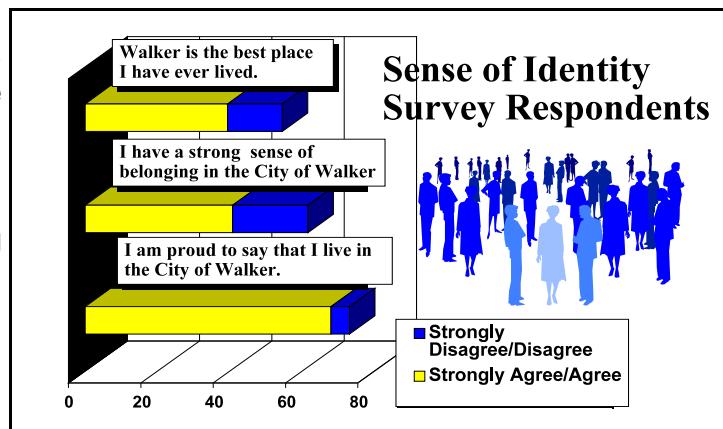
THE IMAGE OF THE CITY OF WALKER

What Is a Community?

One of the concerns consistently expressed by Walker residents is the feeling that they are simply a part of Grand Rapids and have no distinct identity. While in some areas this concern may not be a significant problem, the needs of the City of Walker and its residents can be affected by this lack of identity.

Some of these effects may include difficulties in passing improvement millages, gaining approvals for infrastructure projects, developing consensus on zoning issues, and others. In part, these difficulties may exist because the residents have little sense of commitment to Walker as a community; their concerns may not go beyond the boundaries of their neighborhood.

A Community Survey, conducted as part of the Master Plan process, indicated a fairly weak sense of identity and belonging to the city. While it was clear that people **are** proud to live in the city, they do not seem to have a clear sense of attachment to the community. There may be several reasons for this, including the proximity of the City of Grand Rapids, the lack of a *Walker* school system, multiple mailing addresses, and others.



Some communities are easy to recognize, because they have a unique image, a distinguished (or sometimes infamous) history, industrial identity (Detroit, Milwaukee), or simply because their citizens take pride in their community and spread the word. Many American cities suffer from a lack of uniqueness. In a metropolitan area the problem is compounded since the uniformity of development makes it difficult to tell one community from another.

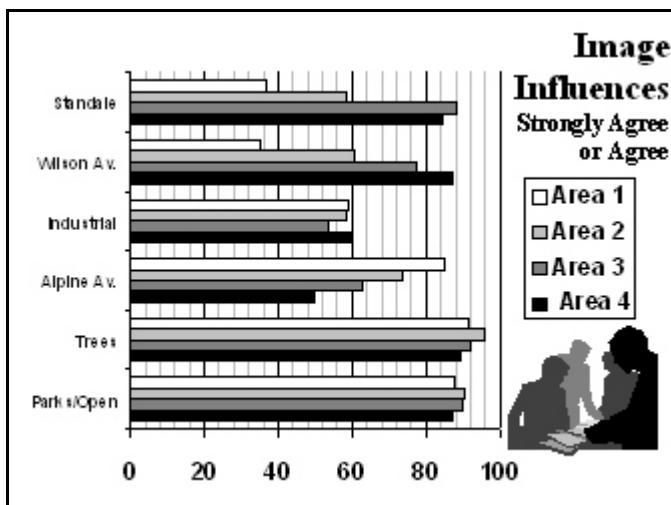
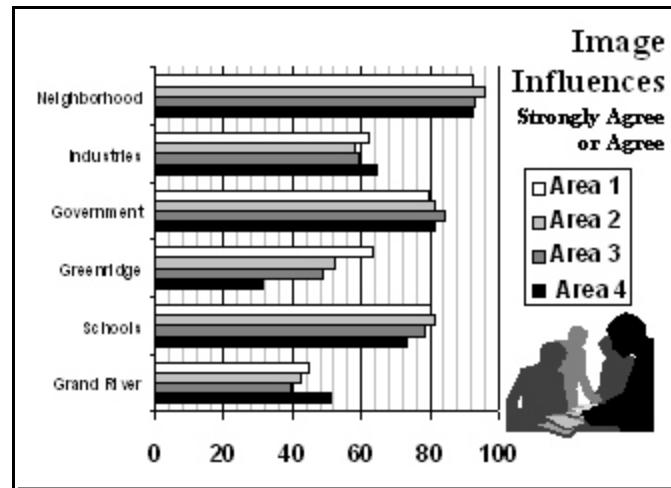
Some communities create their own uniqueness. A small town in Indiana has the distinction of having several public buildings designed by world renowned architects.

In Michigan, the cities of Frankenmuth and Gaylord have encouraged German and Scandinavian themes for their downtowns.

One question asked that the respondents to the Survey identify images of the community that were important to them. The responses were broken down by four areas of the city (see illustration). While there were some elements that were stronger in some areas than others, there were a number of images common to each.

Areas 1 and 2 were more likely to identify Greenridge Square and Alpine Avenue as part of their image of Walker. Areas 3 and 4 viewed Standale and Wilson Avenue as part of their image. Each area, while not ignoring the distinctness of the images of others, viewed these four as strong in their area.

On the other hand, several images were rated strongly in all areas of the city: neighborhoods, government, schools, trees, and parks/open space. Accordingly, it will be important to carefully consider each of these elements in the development of the image of the City. The wide consensus on the importance of these elements to the image of the city will help in the development of an image strategy. But what is most important is that the City undertake an active effort to improve the overall image of the community by taking advantage of the positive elements and working to improve the negatives.



In summary, the images of the city that appeared to have the most impact were those that provide a sense of character and place, the city's neighborhoods; and natural scenes, such as trees, parks, and open spaces. Therefore, the image of the City of Walker should evolve from those two elements: neighborhoods and a sense of place and the natural environment.

Neighborhoods and Sense of Place

The term, *Compact Livable Community*, originated in the Metropolitan Development Blueprint, commissioned by the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council. The Blueprint stated:

"There is great value in promoting compact, livable communities consisting of a blend of residential areas which are livable cities, villages, and neighborhoods, served by efficient utility and transportation systems each having its own identity and access to the area's natural resources."

Walker has a strong residential neighborhood character. This character is part of the fabric of what is often meant by "quality of life." People who have a sense of belonging to an area or a community will put more effort into preserving the qualities that make their neighborhood a desirable place to live.

Our term for this concept is "Living Neighborhoods." This term not only implies the liveliness of a neighborhood, but is intended to represent continuity which itself implies the need for constant support and maintenance.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

"Living Neighborhoods" is one in which its residents live with a sense of community, safety, and security. These neighborhoods have common characteristics which provide the necessary critical mass for support and continuity. The characteristics described below are those of an ideal neighborhood, which is rarely achieved. However, it is possible to examine existing or proposed neighborhoods to see what, if any, obstacles might be overcome to get closer to this ideal.



- Density

Residential densities should be sufficient to make efficient use of the existing or provided infrastructure, yet be appropriate and compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods. Neighborhoods should contain a variety of housing types and prices. Maintenance of existing homes should also be a high priority.

- Village Character

The Neighborhood should encourage resident interaction by providing meeting spaces, green areas, walking paths, and other amenities. Buildings and uses should be of a scale and nature that provides a small town quality.

- Internal Street Network

The street network should allow movement within the Neighborhood without using abutting arterial streets. The street network should access abutting arterial or collector streets at the safest and most efficient point. Intersections with abutting major streets should be planned to allow signalization.

- Open Space

The Neighborhood should provide, or have easy access to, open space that is usable, or preserves valuable natural

features. The open space may also have a function within the Neighborhood, i.e., separates different land uses, etc.

- Pedestrian Links

The Neighborhood should have links between attractors, such as adjoining shopping areas, open spaces, and other features. Such links need not follow street systems.

- Walkability

The Neighborhood should be sufficiently compact to promote walking between features by ensuring proper security, separation from vehicles, and attractiveness. Features requiring access by all areas should be located within a reasonable distance of residential areas.

- Related Commercial

Small scale shopping areas of sufficient size to be economically practicable, yet appropriate for the population of the neighborhood, may be provided. Uses should be those which provide for the day-to-day needs of the residents.

- Support Services

Services such as day care, schools, medical facilities, and other similar uses may be provided.

- Neighborhood Association

Neighborhood interaction and cooperation should be facilitated through the use of an association which looks after the common interests of the Neighborhood. The association should provide a social as well as a service function.

- Preservation of Views

Design of the development should permit the preservation of significant views to natural or cultural features. These views should be identified early in the planning of new development. Views should be available to as many residents as possible and not reserved for a single or a few residents.

- Cultural and Historical Preservation

Among the characteristics that makes neighborhoods unique is the variety of cultural and historical elements that make up the social and physical fabric of the area. Ethnic architecture, neighborhood service centers, and other features help keep neighborhoods distinct and interesting. Identifying and preserving these elements should be a high priority.

- Preservation and Integration of Natural Features

Valuable or irreplaceable natural features should be preserved from the

effects of development; other natural features may be integrated into the development as part of the open space or common areas.

- Flexible Zoning

The governing community should recognize the unique aspects of Neighborhood development and permit flexibility in the application of setbacks, yards, accessory building regulations, and other requirements, consistent with safety and compatibility with surrounding areas.

- Flexible Utility Standards

Street designs, sidewalk locations, utility easements, and other standards should be appropriate for the level of development that they are designed to serve.

- Environmental Programs

Neighborhoods should be planned to utilize environmental programs, such as curbside recycling, composting, and other appropriate programs.

- Transit service

The Neighborhood, if of sufficient size and appropriate location, should provide central points for transit pickup. Other programs, such as Dial-a-Ride, may also be considered.

- Security

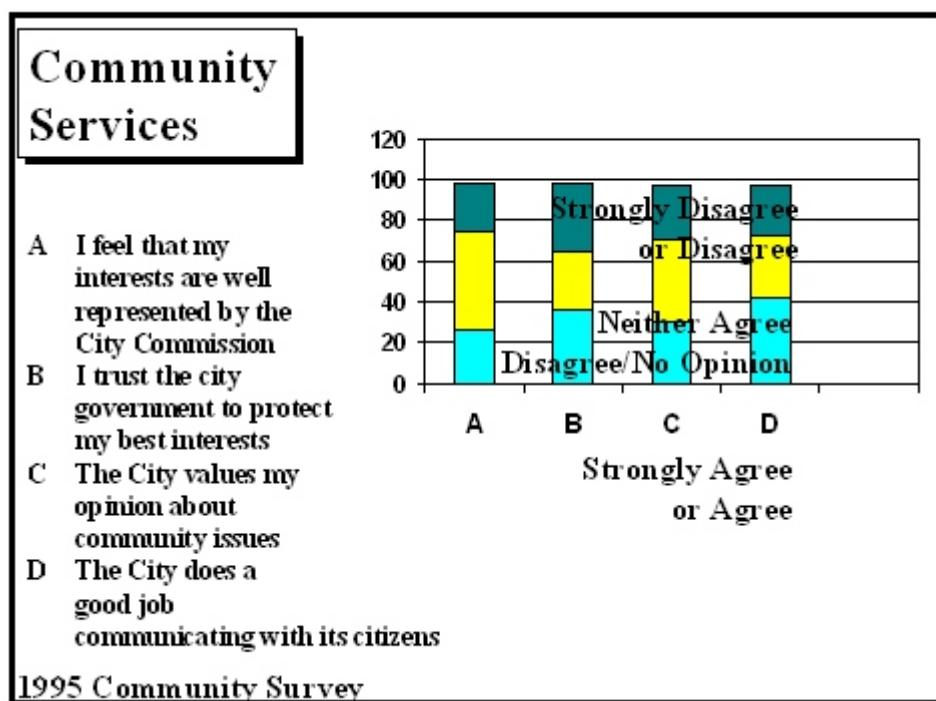
The Neighborhood should possess a sense of safety and security. This can be obtained through physical measures, such as ensuring adequate lighting in public areas, as well as community methods, such as Neighborhood Watch and community safety programs.

Ultimately it should be realized that security depends as much on the interaction of residents as it does on reliance on public safety officials.

Sense of Place

Two other images, government and schools were also strongly identified as images for the city. Most often, these institutions are recognized for their names: the *City of Walker* or the *Walker Schools*. The Survey drew responses about the relationship between the Walker government and its citizens, with mixed results.

The weakest responses dealt with how well the respondents felt that they were represented by the City and how the City valued their opinions. More positive responses were given about how well the City communicated with its citizens.



For Walker the school systems do not bear the name of the city, but the connection within families is still present. School aged children and their parents develop ties with the school system. This tie between the community and the schools would be strengthened if the names were related, particularly with respect to financial support and community activities planned in conjunction with the schools.

The Natural Environment

Trees

As with many developed communities, the landscape of Walker is dotted by mature trees within its residential neighborhoods. Many also line the Grand River and the roadways in and around the city. The largest concentrations of trees and other vegetation may be found in the area generally south of Lake Michigan Drive to the Grand River.

Trees provide natural functions, such as influencing the microclimate and providing wind breaks. But the most important aspect of vegetation in a suburban environment is the aesthetic benefits of shielding unfavorable views and simply providing a sense of serenity.

Some of the other values of trees include:

- Providing a varied and rich environment for plants and animals. Forest layers, including canopy, branches, trunks, shrubs, and plants on the forest floor provide breeding, feeding, and refuge areas for many species of insects, birds, and mammals.
- Protecting watersheds and soils. Vegetation moderates the effects of winds and storms, stabilizes and enriches the soil, and slows runoff, allowing the surface of the ground to filter groundwater.
- Serving as buffers to the sights, sounds, and odors of civilization. Trees mute noise from freeways and factories, and absorb air pollutants. Along roadways trees can provide visual relief and help slow speed of traffic by limiting the sight lines of drivers to make the street appear narrower.
- Moderating climate, when present in large areas. The microclimate of a stand of trees, created in part by the shade of the trees and the transpiration of water from the leaves, keeps surrounding air at an even temperature.

Temperatures of treed areas are generally cooler in the day and warmer at night than the more widely varying temperatures of unforested areas, creating natural air conditioners.

Woodlands on private lands deserve greater concern. Without tree cutting regulations, a community risks losing its tree resources. Designed to prevent these losses, tree management regulations can identify the specific benefits trees provide to the community.

Green Spaces

Green, or open, spaces come in many forms and varieties, from lawns to parks to vacant fields. Some open space is formal, owned and maintained for the purpose of providing a place for recreation and enjoyment of all. Other open space adds visual distraction, such as landscaping for businesses and institutions. Still others are provided by private property owners for their own enjoyment.

In an urban environment, open space is highly valued as a means to ease the view of hard surfaces, such as parking lots, buildings, and streets. Conversely open space in urban areas is the most difficult to preserve and maintain. Land values make preservation or larger open spaces difficult unless owned by a public entity.

The need to maintain and increase available open space and parks and recreation activity was an opinion expressed by participants throughout the planning process. In the Community Survey only 18 percent of respondents would support additional taxes for *new parks* and 13 percent for *more recreational facilities*. However, a stronger 69 percent would support the use of existing taxes for the *operation and upkeep of existing parks*. In addition, 55 percent support existing taxes for recreational programs, and 47 percent for the purchase of open spaces.

Yet, in the same survey, 47 percent felt that parks and open spaces were "very important" to their image of Walker. This would seem to indicate that residents appreciate the aesthetic quality of parks and open spaces, but are not as willing to commit additional resources to preserving, increasing, or maintaining them.

Sense of Arrival

When people take long trips away from their home, after a time, they begin to picture various parts of their community with which they are familiar. This is the "sense of place" that we all have; that place where we are most comfortable. When returning those same people will quickly identify landmarks that announce that they have arrived at their "place."

This sense of arrival may take many forms, but whatever form it takes, it provides a distinct feeling of comfort and identity. By placing a physical landmark at the entrances to the city, the arriving resident, or visitor, can gain a sense of arrival.

Conclusion

Even though there are some physical changes that can be made to enhance the identity of Walker, creating that connection is much more than appearances. The other elements of the Plan must work in concert to improve the sense of belonging that people should have with their community. This will take the dedicated efforts of the leaders and citizens of Walker to become "ambassadors" for their community. This, in turn, will require a positive attitude and continuous communication between the City and its citizens.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

The following are alternative actions; they are not intended to be all encompassing. Instead they should be used to provoke new ideas and approaches toward improving the sense of identity and belonging that the residents of Walker need to have with their community.

Neighborhoods and Sense of Place

1. Identify with residents neighborhood units within the city, defined by geographic boundaries, housing similarities, road networks, and other similar factors.
2. Identify leaders and communicators within these neighborhoods through which information about city activities may be circulated. Technical assistance may be provided to help form neighborhood associations, watches, etc., as desired.
3. Begin a *Living Neighborhood Quality Evaluation* process, using the criteria suggested in this Issue Paper. Identify and address deficiencies within individual neighborhoods.
4. Establish a Neighborhood Council where leaders within each neighborhood can meet to discuss common concerns and suggestions; and where the City can communicate its concerns and suggestions.

5. Consult with the school system to determine the potential for relating the schools more closely with the community. This may include joint City Commission and School Board meetings, joint sponsored activities (clean up days, holiday celebrations, City/School charity games, logo contest - see #7, etc.).
6. Create an attractive Web Page on the Internet for the City of Walker. Include information about City officials, mailboxes for the Mayor and Commissioners and key staff, City announcements, minutes of meetings, etc. Provide computers in City Hall and the Library for access.
7. Find a simple, modern, and distinctive City logo (consider the existing logo as a seal of the City). Use it at the entrances to the City, street signs, and other visible locations.

Natural Features

1. Require street trees as part of all street projects. Consider a tree management program.
2. Develop landscape standards for all construction projects requiring City approvals.
3. Plan a *Walker Trail* looping through the City. Provide periodic rest stops with information about City activities and natural features visible from the stop, exercise stations, and other attractions. Plan connections to regional trails (Grand River).
4. Implement a Walker Central Park for community activities.
5. Utilize the *Residential Development Checklist for Environmental Concerns* adopted by various agencies and development interests in Kent County.
6. Ensure that City ordinances properly address natural features and environmental considerations.
7. Consider adopt a street/stream/open space program for neighborhood residents.

HIGHWAY CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT

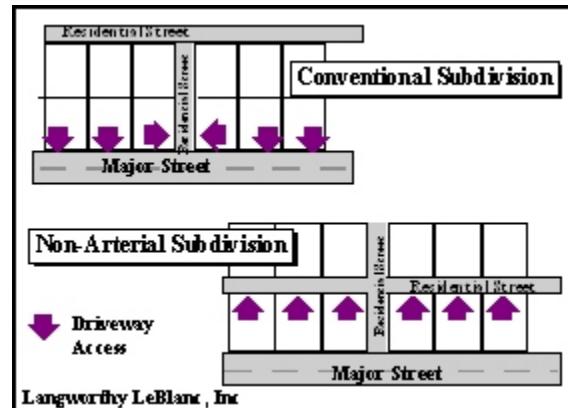
One aspect of highway corridor development that is universally true is the impact of one community on another. Traffic and other effects of commercial development have little respect for community boundaries. Since all of the roadways involved are major access routes to all points of the compass, development along any one will necessarily affect traffic and quality of life along the corridor in every community. Therefore, solutions to the potential problems of corridor development need to be viewed as regional issues and addressed with a unified approach, involving property owners, developers, the Michigan Department of Transportation, Kent County Road Commission, and the City of Walker.



Street Planning and Access Management

Internal Streets

Lots which face major streets are often limited to access using those streets. A large number of individual driveways along major streets, often carrying high speed traffic, can create a hazard. Two solutions are possible. If the interior of the property is also being developed, as many lots as possible should be required to gain access from the interior streets. Rather than stripping lots along the roadway, the interior street should be placed on lot depth into the property and the homes should back up to the section line street. Additional landscaping or fencing may be provided for the back yard areas of these homes.



The second solution can be used if interior development is not taking place. Rather than each lot having its own driveway, two or more lots can share a common driveway for the first several feet of the lot, then split into individual driveways to reach the building sites of each lot. Finally, the subdivision could be redesigned to accommodate a cul-de-sac providing access to an interior street. If none of these solutions prove useful, each lot fronting on a major street should be required to construct a turn-around area to allow vehicles to enter the street facing forward.

Access Management

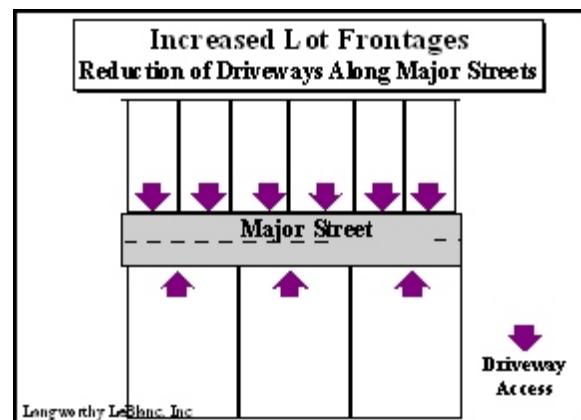
Preserving the traffic carrying capacity of a roadway is another way to prevent costly improvements. Transportation studies have consistently shown that the number, design, and location of driveways can have a great affect on the ability of a road to safely move traffic and provide access for adjacent land uses. The number, design, and location of driveways along major roadways will affect traffic flow, ease of driving, and accident potential. Every effort should be made to limit the number of driveways and encourage access from side streets, service drives, frontage roads, and shared driveways.

A common misconception is that local communities have no input on driveway locations if the state or county has jurisdiction over the roadway. Although local regulation cannot conflict with the road authority (i.e. be less restrictive), it can control driveway locations through the site plan review process. Local governments do have authority to control the placement and spacing of curb cuts (as long as they are not less restrictive than the road authority).

The most effective means of ensuring proper access management is the site plan review process, enforced through the zoning ordinance. However, in order to properly administer site plan review, the city should oversee the implementation of Future Land use along the corridor. It would be preferable to complete a joint land use plan between all affected communities along the roadway.

The Zoning Ordinance will require a minimum lot frontage on major roadways in many residential areas of the city. This distance helps ease traffic conflicts between driveways and vehicles on the street. Driveway spacing (and lot frontages) will be less on those streets that are more developed and where speed limits should be reduced.

Driveway controls are also important when considering commercial and other nonresidential development. Driveways should be as far from the intersection of public streets as possible. Sharing of drives for adjacent properties should also be required, where feasible. Limiting access points clearly helps provide an added measure of safety for uses that generate higher volumes of traffic.

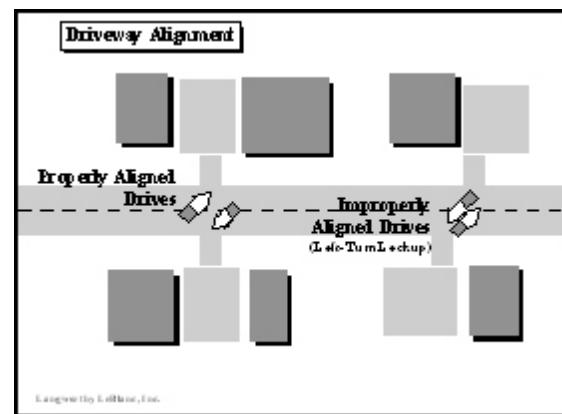


Driveway Spacing and Alignment

Since many of the primary roads within the city have a speed limit of 45-55 miles per hour, driveway spacing between land uses along these major streets is a significant concern. Increasing the distance between each driveway provides a measure of safety by ensuring that drivers are not confused as to the location of driveways, since they may be separated by a wide distance. This also allows for a sufficient distance to slow down to enter the driveway.

Access to major roadways should be provided at a safe and convenient location. Adequate sight distances need to be provided. Access points should directly oppose or be offset from opposing property access by a distance sufficient to prevent conflicts with turning vehicles, or what is commonly known as a "left-turn lockup." A minimum driveway offset distance is 150 feet.

Driveway spacing from intersections should be measured from the centerline of the driveway to the extended edge of the travel lane on the intersecting street, unless otherwise noted. The minimum distance between a driveway and an intersecting street should be:



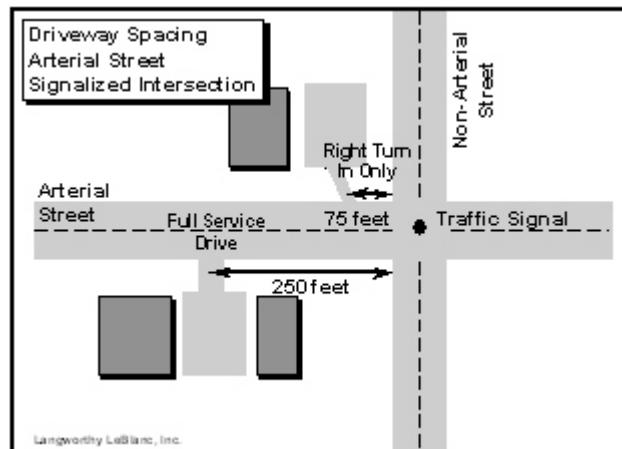
1. 100 feet along streets intersecting with major arterial roadways;
2. 250 feet from any existing signalized intersection or location designated for a future traffic signal;
3. 75 feet for driveways designed and signed for right turn ingress only, excluding tapers or parallel lanes;
4. 75 feet along non-arterial streets which intersect an arterial street at locations not designated for future traffic signal;
5. If the amount of street frontage is not sufficient to meet these criteria the driveway should be constructed along the property line furthest from the intersection to encourage future shared use, and/or a frontage road or rear access service drive should be developed or access limited to side streets.

Changes to these guidelines should only be considered if it can be demonstrated by a traffic impact study that the driveway operation will not result in conflicts with vehicles at the adjacent intersection.

Minimum and desirable driveway spacing requirements should be determined based on posted speed limits along the parcel frontage. At 55 miles per hour spacing between driveways should be at least 425 feet apart, although 875 feet is desirable. The "Desirable" values are based on sight distance necessary to allow an egressing vehicle to enter the arterial traffic stream without causing oncoming traffic to decrease their speed by more than 10 mph, and should be required, to the extent feasible, where parcel size permits.

The "Minimum" values are based on the distances required to avoid conflicts between vehicles turning right or left from adjacent driveways. In order to prevent left turn conflicts, where possible, driveways should be aligned with those across the street or offset a sufficient distance from driveways across the street to avoid the possibility of turning conflicts.

In the case of expansion, alteration, or redesign of existing development where pre-existing conditions prohibit adherence to the minimum driveway spacing requirements, driveways may be located closer than the minimums, but in no case should driveway spacing of less than 60 feet be permitted.



Number of Driveways

Access to individual parcels should consist of either a single two-way driveway or a pair of one-way driveways. Certain developments generate enough traffic to consider allowing more than one driveway along a major street. Where possible, these second access points should be located on a side street or shared with adjacent uses.

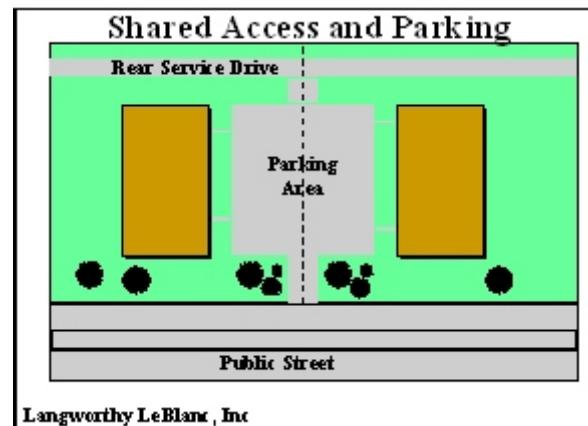
For parcels with frontages of at least 300 feet, an additional driveway may be allowed, but should only be considered following a traffic impact study which demonstrates a need.

Finally, where parcels have frontage on both an arterial and a side street, access should be provided from the side street. For parcels with at least 100 feet of arterial frontage, a right turn in/right turn out only driveway along the arterial could be allowed.

Shared Driveways, Frontage Roads, and Service Drives

Sharing or joint use of a driveway by two or more property owners should be encouraged. This will require a written easement from all affected property owners during the site plan approval process. Where a future shared access is desired, the developer should indicate an easement which will be provided to future adjacent uses.

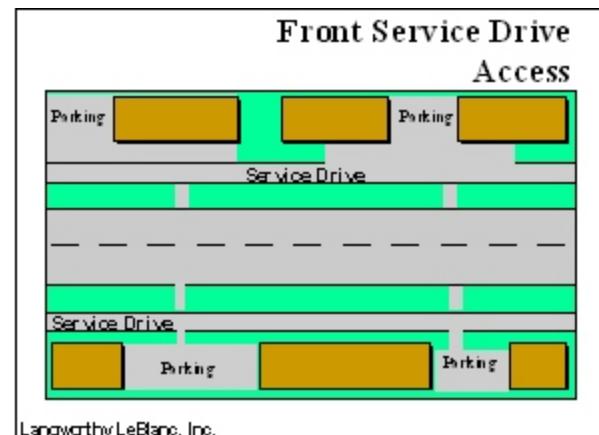
Shared driveways may also be required to reduce the overall number of access points. At a minimum, it is advisable to require access between properties so that vehicles do not have to enter the roadway to reach adjacent uses. Other considerations, such as service drives (front and/or rear), may also be required.



In areas within 1/4 mile of a future signal location access to individual properties should be provided by alternative access methods (frontage roads, service drives) rather than by direct connection to the arterial. No driveways from individual homes should be permitted direct access to any major road.

In the case of existing, proposed or recommended rear service drives, additional access to individual properties may be allowed through a direct connection to the adjacent arterial street, provided that movements at these driveways are restricted to right turns into and/or out of the site, and are appropriately spaced.

In areas where frontage roads or service drives are proposed or recommended but adjacent properties have not yet developed, the site should be designed to accommodate a future drive, with access easements provided.



The city may grant temporary direct access for individual properties to the arterial street until the frontage road or service drive is constructed. This access point should be closed when the frontage road or service drive is constructed.

Frontage road and service drive intersections at the arterial street should be designed according to access management guidelines. A frontage road can be delineated through a parking lot by raised islands separating parking from the traffic lane.

Aesthetics

While aesthetics alone should not dictate the full extent of improving development along roadways and on developing sites, attention to details, such as parking setbacks, landscaping, and signs, will help manage that development and contribute to preserving the character and attractiveness of the city. The following discussion outlines some of the aspects of aesthetics which should be examined.

Landscape Design

An important element of any development is landscaping. Landscaping can perform a number of vital functions, including screening, micro-climate control, improving aesthetics, and preserving the natural environment. Landscaped setbacks for nonresidential uses can improve aesthetics and, if properly designed, help define the locations of driveways.

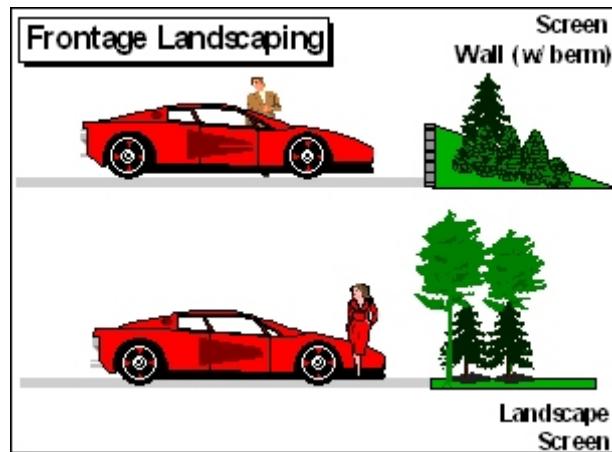
Another advantage of roadside landscaping is that it may appear to the driver that the roadway is narrower, which can have a tendency to slow traffic speed.

Requiring parking setbacks, particularly along the roadway, can have a beneficial effect on the city in terms of improving driveway placement and control (stacking capacity at the driveway opening), control of glare and headlight spray, and city aesthetics. Special consideration should be given to uses with large parking areas to ensure that circulation is safe and does not conflict with pedestrians, other vehicles, and adjacent uses.

The most effective style of landscaping will often depend on its location and function. For example, landscaping along a high speed roadway should be clustered to provide a clear visual impact; stringing out plantings will not make an impression on the driver. Plantings may also be used to screen objectionable views, such as dumpsters, parking areas, storage areas, and others.

Large parking lots may also require landscaping to break up the view of acres of asphalt. Interior landscaping in parking lots should be required when the lot exceeds a certain number of spaces. Some guidelines that should be considered include:

1. The interior area of any parking lot should incorporate planting islands at a minimum ratio of one (1) island per each twelve (12) parking spaces, or part thereof.
2. Each planting island should be at least ninety (90) square feet in area with a minimum horizontal dimension of nine (9) feet.
3. Landscaped islands should be dispersed evenly throughout the entire area of the parking lot in order to break up large expanses of pavement and may be used to separate pedestrian areas, maneuvering areas, and drives.
4. A minimum of one (1) approved canopy tree should be provided for each planting island, with the balance of the island covered with grass, or approved shrubs or ground cover.
5. Fifty percent (50%) of the required trees should be required to be installed in the interior of the parking area and fifty percent (50%) on the perimeter, in addition to those which may be required as part of the front yard landscaping.



Architectural Guidelines

Of all the development guidelines architectural quality is the most difficult to ensure. The variety of uses that are likely to occur in any city make enforcement of a consistent set of architectural guidelines impractical. Innovation and unique design should be allowed to flourish.

In keeping with the landscape guidelines architectural design should, to the extent possible, take into account the natural features of the land. Incorporation of wetlands, orientation of buildings to woodlands and water bodies, and other techniques to combine the natural and built environments should be highlighted in the design and placement of buildings.

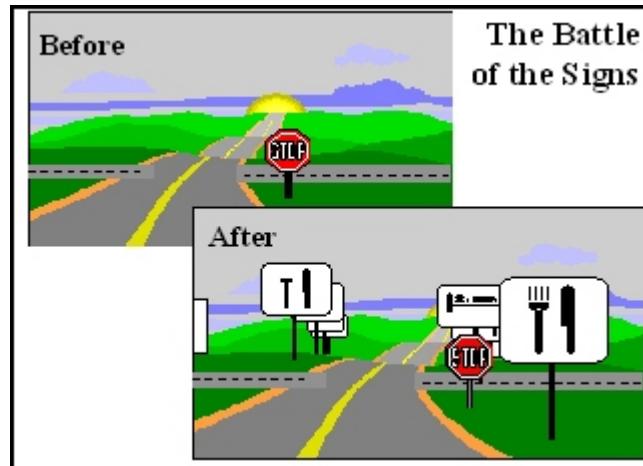
Rigid architectural controls tend to stifle creativity, can be counterproductive, and encourage monotony. Architectural controls may be appropriate in areas rich with historical buildings and character. Most often, these measures are found in designated historic districts and require the formation of an architectural review board. This board is given the authority to review exterior finishes and improvements. Their function is to ensure that the historical character of the area is not jeopardized.

Signs

Signs should reflect their function. Those uses which require a high profile should have enough signs to adequately identify their purpose for the motorist. Those uses which require less identification should have smaller, less intrusive signs. For example, "destination" uses require fewer and smaller signs, since the driver is specifically looking for that use. On the other hand, "impulse" businesses tend to rely heavier on their signs to attract customers, and therefore generally desire larger and more visible signs.

The problem with signs along major commercial roadways tends to be one of competition. Impulse businesses in particular look for ways to attract attention to their signs, not just for identification, but for advertising as well. As each business struggles to compete in the sign battle, ever larger signs, pennants, streamers, balloons, and a wide variety of other visual features are planted in the landscape.

Eventually, the competition becomes so fierce, that no winner emerges; all of the signs are lost in a blizzard of visual impact with virtually no means to distinguish one sign from the other. While sign regulations need to permit visibility, they need not allow a blight on the landscape. For example, requiring a reasonable setback from side and front property lines can provide some visual relief between signs.

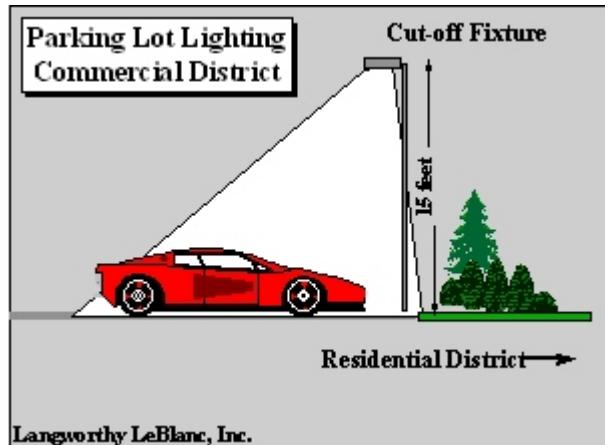


For each zone district (or groups of zone districts, such as Commercial, Industrial, etc.) there should be a list of permitted signs, along with regulations governing their location, size, and number. Sign regulations are generally restricted to "time, place, and manner" rather than content, with certain exceptions pertaining to advertising related to particular products. The regulations need to be as content neutral as possible.

Lighting

In residential areas, lighting is a significant concern. High levels of background lighting can light up nearby buildings and create a nuisance to neighbors. Commercial areas in particular can have an impact on lighting levels since parking lots tend to be larger and require more illumination.

There is a need to balance the requirements of safety, which require higher levels of illumination, and the affect of that lighting on the night sky. Limiting the height of lighting and requiring "cutoff" light fixtures can be effective in restricting light levels and properly directing that lighting to the areas that are most in need.



**CITY OF WALKER
1995 COMMUNITY ATTITUDE SURVEY****Results by Percentage of Respondents**

Total Surveys Sent	2,000
Surveys Tabulated	947

GENERAL QUESTIONS**1. Which of the following best describes your home?**

1. Single family	77.0
2. Duplex	2.0
3. Condominium	4.4
4. Apartment	12.0
5. Manufactured home	4.1

2. How long have you lived in the City of Walker?

1. Less than a year	6.1	2. 1-5 years	25.1
3. 6-10 years	15.4	4. 11-15 years	10.0
5. 16-20 years	9.7	6. More than 20 years	33.3

Is that all of your life? **Yes - 23.8 No - 70.8**

2B. How long have you lived in your current home?

1. Less than a year	7.9	2. 1-5 years	30.8
3. 6-10 years	17.4	4. 11-15 years	10.3
5. 16-20 years	8.1	6. More than 20 years	24.7

Is that all of your life? **Yes - 8.5 No - 82.1**

2C. Do you own or rent your home in Walker?Own **83.0** Rent **15.6****3. What is your age?**

1. 24 or under	3.3
2. 25-44	19.0
3. 45-59	23.9
4. 60-64	9.2
5. 65-74	11.5
6. 75 and older	7.6

COMMUNITY CHARACTER**4. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statements about the quality of life in the City of Walker? Circle your response (1 Strongly Agree to 5 Strongly Disagree).**

		<u>Strongly Agree</u>		<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	
a.	I am proud to say that I live in the City of Walker.	18.8	49.2	21.4	3.9 1.2
b.	Walker is the best place I have ever lived.	10.3	30.4	30.4	17.3 3.5
c.	The people in my neighborhood look out for each other.	16.1	49.1	16.9	9.3 1.6
d.	Traffic is a problem in my neighborhood.	26.3	21.9	13.1	29.6 5.5
e.	Walker should encourage more industrial and commercial uses to locate within the city.	6.7	20.6	19.1	24.8 21.3
f.	The City of Walker has a strong neighborhood character.	6.9	46.7	24.2	11.5 2.4

		Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree		
g.	I feel safe walking in my neighborhood.	22.6	56.9	8.0	7.7	1.4
h.	I have a strong sense of belonging in the city of Walker.	6.7	32.7	36.2	11.4	3.7
i.	I am concerned about how growth in nearby areas will affect my neighborhood.	43.0	32.8	9.8	6.5	1.5
j.	Homes on smaller lots would be acceptable to me as long as there was a lot of open space in the neighborhood.	6.5	28.2	13.4	29.3	15.2
k.	Walker has a small town character.	5.3	46.0	17.5	20.2	5.2

5. Please select the ONE statement that best describes your feelings about growth in the city of Walker. Read all responses before selecting ONE.

22.1	a. I would like to see growth encouraged in the city.
28.5	b. I believe that growth should be allowed to take its own course with as little government interference as possible.
41.5	e. Growth should be tightly restricted throughout the city.
4.2	f. The City should attempt to stop all new development.

6. How important are the following to your image of Walker? Circle your response (1 Very Important - to - 5 Not Important At All)

		Very Important		Not Important At All	
a.	Grand River	9.6	33.4	24.1	15.7
b.	School District	40.2	38.6	8.8	4.1
c.	Greenridge Square	8.6	42.4	21.6	12.2
d.	City government	32.6	49.4	8.3	3.9
e.	Industries	12.7	47.5	17.3	11.1
f.	My neighborhood	55.2	38.1	2.3	1.0
					.3

CITY OF WALKER**MASTER PLAN**

g. Parks and open spaces	47.7	41.4	4.8	1.8	.6
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h. Trees	55.0	37.2	3.5	1.2	.4
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	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Not Important At All</u>			
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i. Alpine Avenue	28.7	40.4	12.2	8.6	4.6
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j. Industrial areas	12.9	43.8	19.6	11.7	5.6
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k. Wilson Avenue	29.8	34.6	17.8	7.3	2.9
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l. Standale	28.4	40.1	14.6	6.1	3.8
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**7. How much of a problem are the following conditions? Circle your response
(1 Significant Problem to 5 No Problem).**

	<u>Significant Problem</u>	<u>No Problem</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>		
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a. Traffic on Alpine Avenue	57.7	23.4	11.6	3.1	2.4
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b. Traffic on Wilson Avenue <i>north of Lake Michigan Drive</i>	27.9	25.8	20.6	10.3	13.2
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c. Traffic safety on my street	20.0	15.1	23.5	38.6	1.0
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d. Traffic congestion on my street	2.7	10.2	19.3	53.7	1.2
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e. Traffic congestion on city streets	12.4	25.0	40.4	16.6	3.2
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f. Parking in my neighborhood	4.3	5.6	15.4	68.6	3.8
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g. Timeliness of snow removal	4.8	6.1	23.5	56.8	6.7
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h. Condition of my street	5.2	4.5	17.1	68.6	2.0
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i. Condition of city streets	5.6	13.1	40.8	33.7	4.1
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j. Too many driveways on major streets	10.6	17.6	33.2	28.4	8.0
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k. Condition of sidewalks	4.6	5.2	20.3	52.3	15.1
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CITY OF WALKER	MASTER PLAN
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I. Lack of public bus service	5.1	11.0	18.7	43.5	20.4
m. Lack of north-south streets.	5.7	12.0	22.8	40.0	17.4
n. Signs in commercial areas	3.3	7.7	25.3	46.3	14.3
o. Lack of sidewalks in my neighborhood	14.0	11.1	15.2	52.9	5.0
p. Crime near my neighborhood	2.4	11.6	39.4	40.5	4.3
q. Traffic on Wilson Avenue <i>south of Lake Michigan Drive</i>	41.9	21.8	15.0	6.0	13.4

8. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statements? Circle your response (1 Strongly Agree to 5 Strongly Disagree).

	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree			
a. Development should be allowed as long as there are adequate services available (sewer, roads, water, fire, police, etc.).	11.9	50.1	10.8	16.6	6.8
b. Development is all right as long as the city keeps its small town character.	11.4	41.0	20.5	15.4	4.2
c. Commercial and industrial development helps keep my taxes reasonable.	7.0	38.4	22.2	15.2	7.8
d. Growth and development is not a problem as long as the natural areas of the city are preserved.	14.9	45.6	10.0	17.1	6.2
e. The City should carefully control the rate and location of growth.	30.2	44.2	11.5	6.5	2.7
f. New development will cause Walker to lose its small town character.	13.8	25.9	22.7	25.4	3.6
g. I will still live in the city even if the present rate of growth continues.	6.8	47.8	17.3	11.2	7.5
h. Commercial and industrial development should be encouraged in the city as long as residential areas are not affected.	17.5	47.4	11.0	12.5	6.4

CITY OF WALKER**MASTER PLAN**

i. New industrial development should be kept out of the city.	10.0	16.6	20.2	37.4	8.9
j. New commercial development should be kept out of the city.	7.8	13.7	20.3	41.0	10.5
k. Developers have too much influence over growth in the city.	24.1	30.1	21.1	11.2	3.6
l. I am satisfied with the way growth is occurring in the city.	2.0	37.7	17.3	23.0	13.3
m. Growth is inevitable and the city has little control over it.	2.5	15.7	11.8	42.4	20.5

9. Please select the ONE statement that best describes the kind of development Walker should attract. Read all responses before selecting ONE.

5.9	a. Walker should encourage only residential uses.
40.9	b. Walker should encourage a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial uses, with an emphasis on residential uses.
33.9	c. Walker should encourage a balance of residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
2.2	d. Walker should encourage a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial, with an emphasis on commercial and industrial uses.
0.8	e. Walker should encourage more commercial and industrial uses.
13.2	f. Walker should not try to encourage any new development.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND GOVERNMENT**10. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statements about public services in the City of Walker? Circle your response (1 Strongly Agree to 5 Strongly Disagree).**

		Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree	
a. The City should improve planning, coordination, and communication with adjacent communities.		11.0	45.4	23.7	4.1
b. In my contacts with city departments and personnel I have been treated fairly and efficiently.		8.0	54.3	13.0	9.0
					5.1

CITY OF WALKER**MASTER PLAN**

c. I would like to become more involved in city government by serving on a city board, commission, or committee.	3.9	11.7	28.4	27.0	9.2
d. I feel that my interests are well-represented by the City Commission.	1.5	25.0	35.4	15.3	7.9
e. I would volunteer my time to help with organized community projects.	2.3	26.1	29.6	19.2	5.7
f. I only want to be involved in city affairs when it might affect me directly.	2.5	22.5	28.3	28.9	5.5
g. I trust the city government to protect my best interests.	3.8	32.6	22.0	21.3	12.1
h. The City values my opinion about community issues.	1.7	29.3	28.5	16.9	9.0
i. The City does a good job communicating with its residents.	3.4	39.1	23.9	17.2	7.5

11. How would you rate the following services?	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
a. Street maintenance	15.2	53.6	22	4.1	1.5
b. Snow plowing	24.2	48.8	16.6	2.7	1.6
c. Fire protection	24	50.2	8.2	1.3	0.6
d. Police protection	29.8	51.1	11.2	1.9	0.6
e. Park maintenance	16.5	50.6	12	1.1	-
f. Assessing	2.9	27.6	34.6	8.8	2.7
g. Library services	20.5	41.5	12.5	3.6	0.3
h. Stormwater drainage	7.3	40.3	22.2	9	5.2
i. Building Inspections	5.2	28.4	17.8	5.4	2.4
j. Street lighting	9.9	47.4	27.8	7.9	2.5
k. Sidewalk repair	7.1	37.2	17.5	3.5	1.3
l. Recreation facilities	8.6	39.5	20.6	6.2	1.8
m. Recreation programs	7.4	34.4	19.6	6.9	1.3

12. Please indicate your level of support for the following projects or services.	Would vote for additional taxes to support	Would support use of existing tax revenue but not new taxes	Would not support use of existing tax revenue or vote for additional taxes to support
a. Purchase of open spaces	7.8	47.3	25.2
b. Grand River bike paths	11.1	49.5	24.1
c. All-Purpose Community Building	6.9	41.4	33.9
d. Purchase of land to slow down development	11.4	32.6	35.5
e. Recreation programs	9.8	55.5	19.2
f. More Recreational Facilities	13.2	44.4	25.6
g. Operation and upkeep of existing Parks	11.3	69.5	8.2
h. Fire and Police Services	29.9	55.1	6.5
i. Curbside recycling	15.3	41.9	27.6
j. City operated trash collection	15.3	35.8	33.6
j. New parks	18.5	42.1	24.7

HOUSING

13. Should the City of Walker have more, about the same, or fewer, of the following housing types?	More	About the Same	Fewer	No Opinion
a. Single family detached homes on large lots	38.3	42.7	6.4	9.1
b. Single family detached homes on smaller lots	11.5	38.3	36.4	10
c. Affordable single family homes	38.4	42.6	10.5	5.9
d. Housing for lower income families	12.7	26.2	48.4	10.2
e. Rental apartments	5.4	25	62	5.7
f. Condominiums	10.9	43.4	37.1	6.5
g. Expensive, larger homes	21.9	44.2	22.2	9.7
h. Senior citizen housing	29.4	52.6	8.6	7.8

14. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statements about housing in the City of Walker? Circle your response (1 Strongly Agree to 5 Strongly Disagree).

		Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree			
a.	Families wishing to move into the City of Walker can find a broad range of housing types available to them.	9.4	61.4	9.0	9.4	1.7
b.	Families wishing to move into the City of Walker can find affordable homes.	8.2	62.3	9.3	10.2	1.1
c.	I believe my home has retained its value.	12.2	57.0	7.6	7.4	2.0
d.	Development near my neighborhood has reduced the value of my home.	5.5	9.5	20.4	40.8	6.8
e.	The homes in my neighborhood are well kept.	17.3	64.6	7.5	5.0	0.6
f.	My home is assessed in a fair and equal manner, as compared to homes that are similar to mine.	4.3	46.1	18.7	7.8	2.4
g.	I plan to make improvements to my house within the near future.	6.0	25.6	20.6	20.8	4.5
h.	Traffic in my neighborhood has reduced the value of my home.	7.6	12.0	21.4	37.8	5.1

15. How important were the following when you decided to move to/live in the City of Walker? (1 Extremely Important to 5 Not At All Important)

		Extremely Important	Not At All Important		
a.	Family nearby	10.6	34.2	17.2	10.1
b.	Quality of schools	28.6	36.4	11.3	4.5

CITY OF WALKER**MASTER PLAN**

c. River, trees, and other natural features	25.1	47.1	12.6	5.9	3.7
d. Parks and recreation facilities	9.9	39.1	28.0	11.1	5.5
e. Good air and water quality	26.3	51.4	10.2	3.0	2.9
f. Low crime rate	41.9	45.6	4.6	1.5	1.4
g. Small town character	20.9	42.3	19.0	7.6	3.8
h. Sense of separation from Grand Rapids	20.8	32.9	22.1	10.0	6.9
i. Church	17.0	29.6	26.1	8.8	9.7
j. Housing in a price range I could afford	29.1	54.0	7.9	2.0	1.0
k. Quality of neighborhoods	37.8	51.8	3.7	1.1	1.2
l. Availability of housing	17.3	49.4	17.5	4.4	3.4
m. Job	16.1	25.1	25.7	11.4	13.0