

CITY OF OAK PARK MASTER PLAN



CITY OF OAK PARK

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INTRODUCTION

A community's Master Plan is a blueprint for the future. It is a comprehensive document, long-range in its view, and intended to guide positive change in the City over a period of 10 to 20 years. The Master Plan sets forth public policies that will be followed regarding growth, development, and redevelopment. The information and concepts presented in the Master Plan are intended to guide local decisions on both public and private uses of land, as well as the provision of public facilities. The Master Plan should be imaginative in projecting what the City can be while realistic in recognizing what is possible.

Unlike the City Zoning Ordinance, the Master Plan is a set of policies, not a set of rules and regulations controlling the use of land. While the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map are intended to regulate the use of land over the short term (3 to 5 years), the Master Plan and its maps and policy statements are intended to guide land use decision-making over the long term (10 to 20 years). While the Master Plan must guide the future, it must also be flexible enough to respond to the City's ever changing needs.

The Municipal Planning Act of 1931 empowers the City Planning Commission with the authority and the duty to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the City. Furthermore, the city must have such a master plan as the basis for its zoning ordinance and zoning map.

In order to make sound recommendations regarding public development policy, the City Planning Commission needs public input. This public input was solicited at two key points in the process. First, the Vision Statement that constitutes Chapter 6 of this document involved a group of up to 40 "stakeholders" in a series of three meetings. These meetings were designed to assist the Commission in developing a vision of what Oak Park should be in 20 years. The Vision Statement developed with the help of these 40 stakeholders became the basis for the Planning Commission's goals, objectives, and policies statements.

The second request for public input comes in the form of soliciting comments on the Master Plan at the official public hearing. The Planning Commission's careful consideration of these public comments ensures that the Master Plan truly reflects the needs of its citizens.

The Oak Park City Planning Commission is pleased to present their Master Plan for the future development of the City of Oak Park. This Plan is not a static document, forever "cast in stone". In order to truly reflect the City's changing needs, the Plan will likely require modification over time. Re-evaluation and adjustment, after all, is the final stage of the planning process. It is this re-evaluation and adjustment that ensures the Plan will remain relevant tomorrow as well as today.

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REGIONAL SETTING: Metropolitan Influences On The City

INTRODUCTION

The City of Oak Park is located in southeastern Oakland County, adjacent to the north boundary of the City of Detroit. Freeway and regional highway access are provided by I-696 (W.P. Reuther Freeway), US-10 (Lodge Freeway and Northwestern Highway), and M-102 (Eight Mile - Baseline Road). These provide regional connections to I-75, the Southfield Freeway, and Woodward Avenue to name only a few.

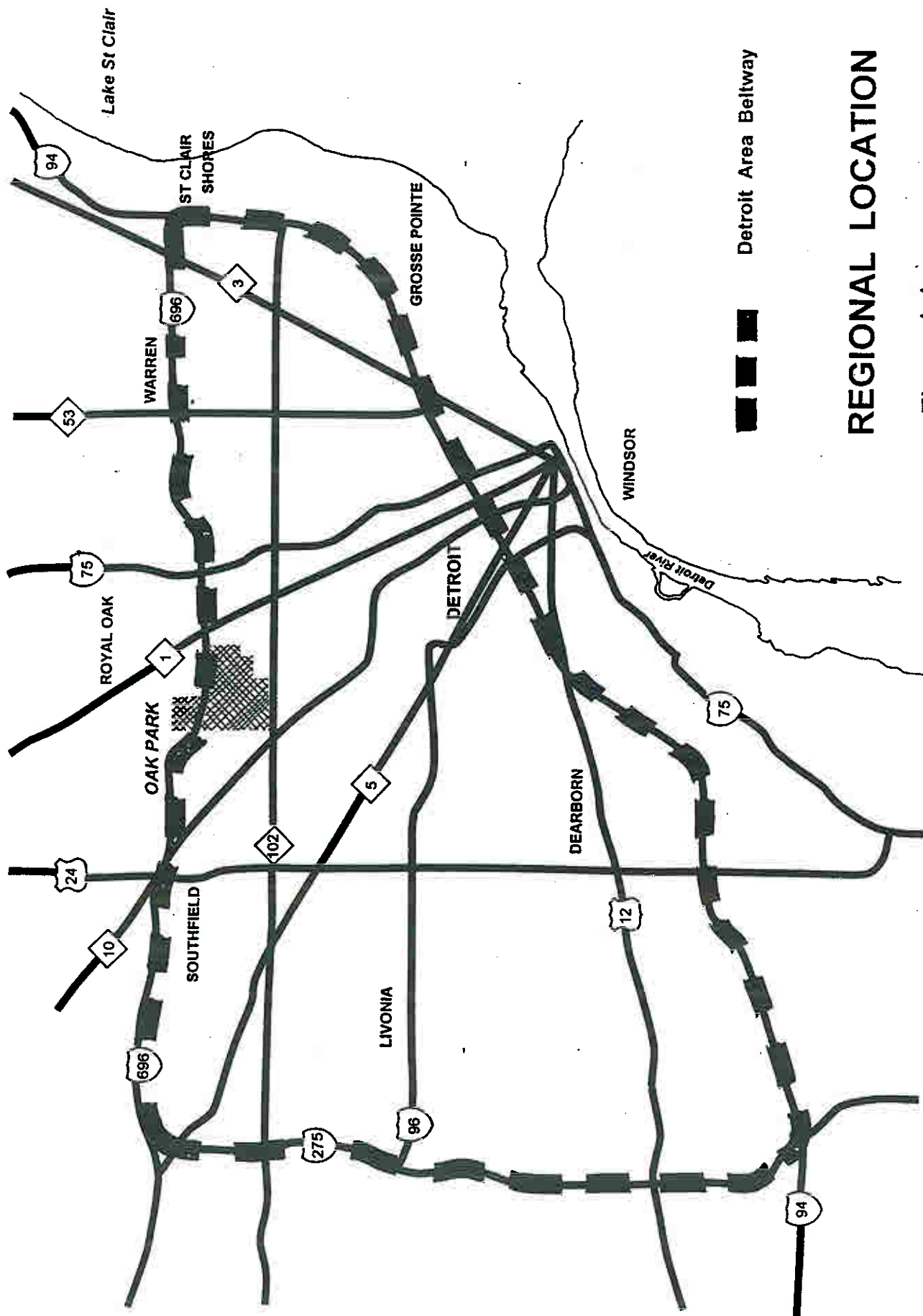
Oak Park developed as one of the inner ring suburbs of Detroit. Incorporated in 1945, Oak Park has grown and prospered so significantly over the past 50 years that the City is now 98% developed. According to a 1988 land use survey by the Development and Planning Division of Oakland County, only 2% of the City's total acreage was vacant land.

The growth that has occurred in Oakland County over the past several years is unprecedented. In 1992, total construction in Oakland County represented 36% of all construction dollars spent in the seven county SEMCOG region. Even though Oak Park is nearly fully developed, the City was 3rd in commercial permits issued from 1988 - 1992, behind only Waterford Township and Novi. In 1992, Oak Park ranked 2nd among the Top Six Communities of dollar amount in industrial buildings sales. Oak Park also had the highest average sales price of almost \$2 million that same year. Even though Oak Park is one of the County's older communities (in terms of when it fully developed) and one of the smaller communities (in land area) it ranked in the top 1/3 in 1993 for total real estate value at over \$350 million.

IMPACT OF I-696

The access that Oak Park residents and businesses have to the expanding southeast Michigan region has been improved by major new road construction. The most significant improvement is the completion of a 7.9 mile link of I-696 between Lahser Road and I-75. I-696 now connects I-275 in Farmington Hills with I-94 in St. Clair Shores, forming a ring road or beltway around the metropolitan Detroit area (Figure 1-1).

The significance of the I-696 freeway to traffic flow in the region can best be understood by examining its relationship to the existing freeway and trunkline system in the Detroit area. As illustrated in Figure 1, Detroit's freeway system developed in a "fan" or modified radial pattern. Major freeways and trunklines such as M-1 (Woodward Avenue), US-12 (Michigan Avenue) and M-53 (Van Dyke Avenue) "fan out" from downtown Detroit throughout the region. The most significant traffic flow problem created by this pattern is the lack of east-west and north-south routes away from the center city. The north-south flow issue was resolved with the opening of I-275 in the 1970's. The east-west flow has long been the burden of Eight Mile Road and, to a lesser extent, other mile roads to the north. The completion of I-696 not only serves the demand for east-west



REGIONAL LOCATION

Figure 1-1

traffic, but also completes what has been called the Detroit Area Beltway.

The common concern regarding the potential impacts of I-696 on the corridor communities was the impetus for the formation of the I-696 Corridor Committee. This coalition of municipal administrators shared the goal of maintaining and improving the quality of life and development opportunities in the corridor communities.

Because of its ideal location, Oak Park is in a position to realize significant economic benefits from the completion of I-696. The "uptown freeway" as it has been dubbed, will serve as the major corridor for commerce and industry in both Macomb and Oakland Counties. Because of its ideal location along I-696, the City of Oak Park will have new opportunities created by reduced travel times to other areas in the region.

- ☐ Prior to the freeway opening, Oak Park was somewhat isolated from much of the metro area. East-west travel was forced to rely on 8 Mile Road while north-south movement was accommodated by Woodward Avenue and southbound travel to Detroit by the Lodge Freeway.
- ☐ With the opening of I-696, Oak Park now enjoys superior access to the eastern suburbs and Lake St. Clair, the western suburbs and Lansing, and I-75 is now easily accessed.
- ☐ Job centers in the I-275 corridor to the west and those in the Pontiac - Auburn Hills area along I-75 are now within easy reach of Oak Park residents.
- ☐ I-696 was originally seen as a potential barrier that would divide and perhaps even ruin established neighborhoods in Oak Park. As a result of the citizen review process, the Michigan Department of Transportation committed several million dollars to construct Victoria and Rothstein Parks. These two award winning park facilities not only provide recreation areas above the freeway but they also maintain important pedestrian corridors in and between neighborhoods.
- ☐ Property along the 10 Mile/I-696 corridor that was once stagnant in value is now undergoing a resurgence, as evidenced by the success of projects like the Parkwoods Plaza shopping center.
- ☐ Metro area residents who may not have had a clear picture of Oak Park's physical location now pass by it frequently when travelling I-696. Current average daily traffic volumes on I-696 are estimated to be in excess of 171,000 vehicles! With the Greenfield and Coolidge exits both identified as "Oak Park", the City now has incredible regional exposure.

ADJACENT COMMUNITIES

Oak Park is bordered by the cities of Detroit, Ferndale, Pleasant Ridge, Huntington Woods, Berkley and Southfield, as well as Royal Oak Township. The suburbanization of Detroit proceeded at a fairly rapid pace until the population of the City reached approximately 2 million. Of all the major central cities in the United States, Detroit developed as the most suburban in form, with relatively large single family lots on tree lined streets and boulevards.

As Detroit's development began to strain its own boundaries, its suburbs also began to expand. Those located on the Woodward Avenue corridor to the north and the Jefferson Avenue - Lake St. Clair Shoreline to the east were the first to grow, as did Dearborn because of Michigan Avenue (US-12) and Henry Ford's auto empire. Oak Park, Southfield and Berkley saw their growth take off during the second wave that followed the Lodge Freeway and the infill area between the Lodge and Woodward Avenue.

The Woodward corridor communities experienced growth earlier and over a longer period of time than Oak Park. As a result, housing styles tend to have more variety in communities like Pleasant Ridge and Huntington Woods. In Oak Park, the peak development decades of the 1950's and 1960's saw the "midwestern ranch" style house take the City by storm!

Royal Oak Township

The future of Royal Oak Township is a question which cannot be ignored by Oak Park in planning its own future. The Municipal Planning Act authorizes Oak Park to plan beyond its current boundaries into the unincorporated township. In addition, the planning act requires that Oak Park consult with its neighbors during the formulation of a City Master Plan. Royal Oak Township is composed of two sub-communities which are geographically two miles apart: the West Eight Mile Road Community and the Ten Mile/Greenfield Community. (These two areas are the residual fragments of the original 36 square mile township of which Oak Park, Ferndale, and most of southeastern Oakland County were part.)

When communities like Royal Oak Township experience difficulties in providing competitive municipal services, they often examine alternate arrangements with their immediate neighbors. The possible range of discussion that could take place one day include at least the following:

- ☐ Continue the status quo;
- ☐ Contract with adjoining communities for various municipal services, such as police, fire protection, public works, etc.;
- ☐ Annexation by adjoining communities:
 - Ten Mile/Greenfield area to Oak Park, and Eight Mile area to Ferndale;

- Ten Mile/Greenfield area to Southfield, Eight Mile area west of Wyoming to Oak Park, and east of Wyoming to Ferndale;
- ☐ Other alternatives or combinations of alternatives.

EXISTING LAND USE: Changing Patterns & Implications For The Future

The City's future is impacted by many factors. One of the principal factors is the current distribution and intensity of existing land uses. In order to analyze growth, development, and redevelopment in the community and provide a reasonable base from which to make current and long-range planning recommendations, the existing use of land must be surveyed and evaluated. In many cases, the existing land uses have already set a pattern in certain parts of the community. In other areas, there may be vacant or underused land that can be evaluated for its development or conservation value.

The information contained herein is based primarily on a parcel-by-parcel survey of land use performed by the City planning consultants in September of 1994. The information was recorded in a detailed format on a base map of the City and checked with aerial photographs. In addition, the land use patterns were compared with two previous maps of Existing Land Use, one prepared by the County and another by a former City planning consultant in 1969. (Figure 1-2).

LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

The following is a description of the various land use classifications used in the survey.

Single Family - This classification is for those areas containing single-family dwelling units and accessory structures.

Two-Family - This classification is for those properties occupied by Oak Park's characteristic duplex homes containing two dwelling units along with accessory structures and yard areas.

Multiple Family - Included in this group are all apartment and multiplex type of units where three or more separate residential units occupy a single building on a lot.

Office - Land areas where professional, medical and general business offices are found.

Mixed Business - In some of Oak Park's older business areas, office, retail and service uses are intermingled in the same building or the same block. The Mixed Business category was used to identify these areas.

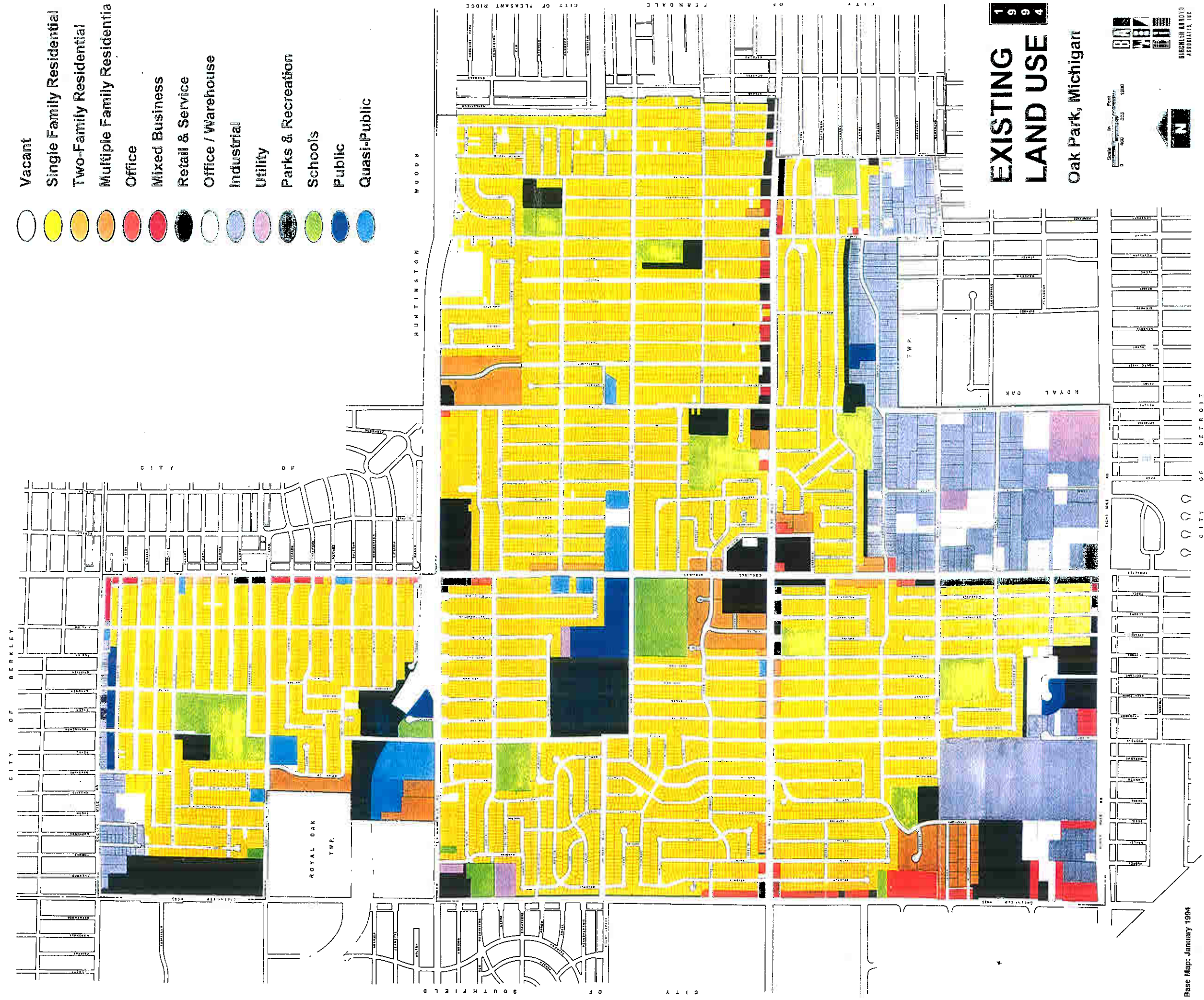


Figure 1-2

Retail & Service - This category was used to identify properties where retail sales, personal services, and business service establishments are concentrated.

Office/Warehouse - Within the City's industrial areas, many businesses combine corporate, sales or engineering office functions with product warehouse and/or distribution activities. These uses generally provide products and services but do not manufacture on-site.

Industrial - This category includes uses with or without buildings where materials are processed, fabricated, assembled, or manufactured, or where equipment, materials, or wastes are stored out-of-doors.

Utility - This category includes such uses as telephone, electric, gas, sewer and water stations and substations, as well as radio and television broadcast facilities and towers.

Parks & Recreation - This category identifies all public parks and recreation facilities, including active and passive outdoor uses as well as community centers and similar indoor uses. Also included in this category are the City's several open space greenbelts.

Schools - This classification identified all public and private elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. Also included are religious schools and nursery schools and child day care centers.

Public - All city-sponsored uses, such as City Hall/district court complex, Public Service yard, and similar public properties, except recreation facilities, were included in the Public category. This category also includes the new State Police Post at 10 Mile and Kenosha.

Quasi-Public - This category includes such uses as synagogues, churches, youth centers, community centers, and the like, sponsored by religious or private organizations.

Vacant - All land currently unoccupied by buildings or surface uses were designated vacant.

LAND USE ANALYSIS

The following is a brief analysis of existing land use by each major group described in the previous section.

Single Family Residential

Oak Park is well-known for its stable neighborhoods of primarily single family homes. The map entitled Dwelling Units By Neighborhood: 1994 illustrates the distribution of homes throughout six neighborhoods. Each neighborhood has an elementary school as its hub. The City's original design followed what have become traditional neighborhood planning principals: interconnected residential developments served by an elementary school with no penetration of the neighborhood by major thoroughfares.

DWELLING UNITS BY NEIGHBORHOOD: 1994

Single Family	9,262
Two-Family	156
Multi-Family	1,744
TOTAL	11,162

- E Elementary School
- M Middle School
- H Senior High School
- C Community Education Center
- P Private School

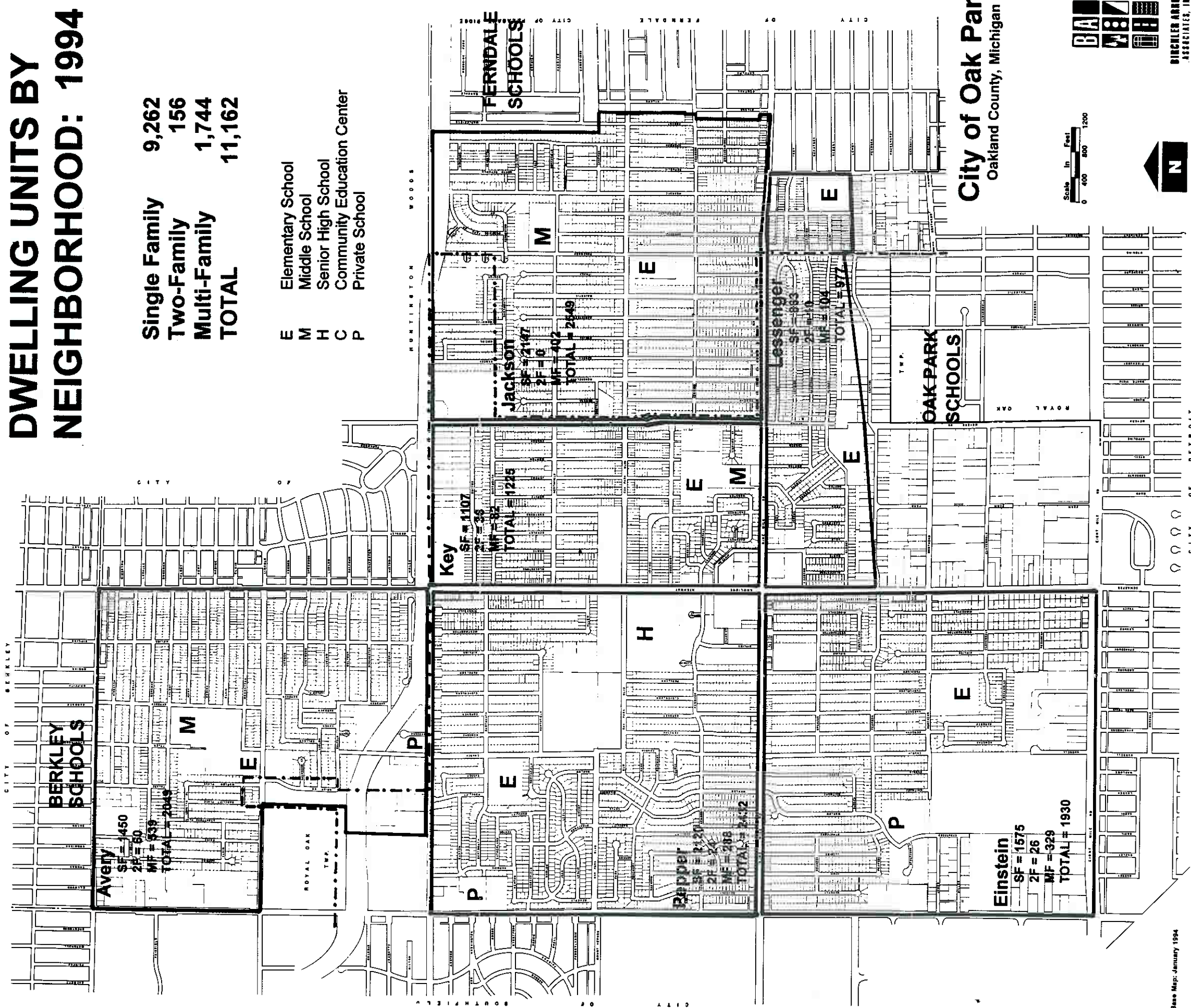


Figure 1-3

Oak Park has a total of 9,262 single family homes in six neighborhood areas, none of which is larger than one square mile. Housing quality is generally high in Oak Park. There were scattered examples of individual units in need of major repair, however, none of the six neighborhoods exhibited any significant signs of blight. Code enforcement and programs stressing neighborhood pride should easily correct the problems observed by the consulting team. The City's aggressive programs of street repaving and sidewalk repair have a very positive influence on neighborhood character.

The Jackson neighborhood is the only one that still has a number of gravel streets. Although the City's storm drainage system is generally adequate in this area, special assessment petitions for street paving have historically failed to garner the required 51% support of the frontage landowners.

Two-Family Residential

Oak Park is home to 156 two-family dwellings. The typical unit is a two-story, duplex style home. They are found primarily along the major thoroughfares, especially Coolidge Highway and Nine Mile Road. In many cases the duplex developments have served in a transitional role, separating one-story single family homes in the neighborhood interior from the traffic influence of the City's busiest streets. As with the City's single family homes, the duplex units are in generally good condition with only a few instances where major repair is warranted.

Multiple Family Residential

Rounding out the City's neighborhoods are 1,744 multiple family units. Most of these are rental apartments. A few of the smaller apartment complexes have undergone condominium conversions where residents are able to purchase their apartment rather than continuing to pay rent.

The City has several fine examples of well-planned, garden apartments. Perhaps the most notable of these is Village Green with its beautifully landscaped courtyards, each named for a vintage automobile!

The City's apartment developments have been properly integrated into the neighborhoods, rather than standing alone outside the boundaries. Several of the smaller complexes serve transitional roles similar to the duplex units.

Office

The primary concentration of office uses in Oak Park is found along the Greenfield Corridor between Eight Mile Road and just north of Nine Mile Road. The City's office development has suffered in recent years from high vacancy rates. These were due to a combination of factors, including:

- ☐ the continued shift in metropolitan Detroit's growth to the north and west
- ☐ a regional glut of new office space that resulted in raiding of older buildings by new developments offering free rent or other inducements,
- ☐ older office space, like that in Oak Park, whose owners did not keep buildings well-maintained and did not provide modern interiors and amenities for tenants. At the same time, rents were often maintained at unrealistically high levels

In addition to the Greenfield Corridor, small office uses are also found on the mile roads, especially Nine Mile, and along Coolidge Highway.

Mixed Business

The mixed business category occurs primarily along Nine Mile Road. This use group is characterized by older, multi-tenant buildings in linear strips. Over the years, tenant changes have resulted in a mix of retail stores, offices, and personal services establishments, such as hair salons, tailors, and the like. Though somewhat outdated in appearance, many of these mixed business areas provide vital goods and services within walking distance of many neighborhood residents, as well as a variety of clerical and service employment opportunities.

Retail & Service

The retail and service uses in Oak Park tend to occur in one of three distinct settings. The first includes the planned shopping centers, such as Northland Plaza, Lincoln Center, Parkwoods Plaza, and the three centers at Nine Mile and Coolidge. The second setting includes individual, large-scale uses such as the auto dealerships. The third setting includes the concentrated strips of primarily retail stores along Nine Mile Road and Greenfield south of Eleven Mile.

The age of many of these smaller, linear retail and service areas is beginning to affect their economic vitality. Because they are often unable to offer such amenities as the ample parking and wide selection of goods that is common at shopping malls, they have difficulty attracting a steady customer base.

These older commercial areas can adapt many of the merchandizing techniques that make the malls so successful. Downtowns have become fashionable places to shop once again. Downtown merchants are finding that updating their storefronts, pooling their advertising dollars, and agreeing to maintain the same store hours is winning the shoppers back from the malls. Older, linear commercial areas can benefit from these same approaches.

Office/Warehouse

Office/Warehouse uses are found in two of the City's three identifiable industrial districts. The most recognizable concentration occurs along Coolidge Highway south of Northend. Office/warehouse uses are generally considered a non-nuisance type of use because they do not involve manufacturing processes or outdoor storage. Their location in industrial zones is necessary because of the need for loading/unloading facilities capable of handling over-the-road trucks.

Industrial

Oak Park has three distinct industrial areas. The Eleven Mile Road Corridor is characterized by older buildings on relatively small parcels. Most of the frontage sites were originally fairly shallow. Land assembly and redevelopment activities, combined with earlier public improvements, are beginning to show promise in this area. Examples include the redevelopment of Lamina, Inc., the City-sponsored public parking along the north side of Kingston, and recent joint meetings of the Oak Park, Berkley, and Huntington Woods Planning Commissions to discuss visual enhancements along Eleven Mile.

The City's largest concentration of industry occurs in the southeast corner, bordering Royal Oak Township, from Eight Mile to Capital, East of Coolidge. The City has attempted to support the individual improvements of many of the businesses by public investment in rebuilding streets and parking areas within the right-of-way. Besides manufacturing activities, this area includes recognizable concentrations of contractors yards, food industry uses such as dairies, and iron and steel products distributors.

The final industrial concentration is found north of Eight Mile/east of Greenfield. The bulk of this district involves a single site - the Michigan National Guard Armory. Although the north ½ to 2/3 of this site is free of buildings at this time, new industrial development would require an environmental analysis of the site conditions and possibly an infrastructure investment in storm and sanitary sewer improvements.

Utility

The utility uses in Oak Park are dominated by the broadcast antenna facilities of the metropolitan area's radio and television stations. The City hosts three major tower sites. The remaining utility uses include the AT&T facility on Northend and several retention areas and lift stations for the storm and sanitary sewer systems.

Parks & Recreations

Oak Park has developed a comprehensive system of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and programs to serve its residents. A full range of facilities from tot lots and play grounds to city-wide major parks and recreation centers are conveniently located to serve all City residents.

The City's development, based on traditional neighborhood planning principles, is echoed by its park facilities. Each and every neighborhood is served by a City park, thereby avoiding the dangers associated with children crossing major thoroughfares to reach local recreation sites.

The use of open space greenbelts has assisted in properly separating residential areas from the impacts of industry and high traffic thoroughfares. The City's principal industrial district is ringed along its north and west edges by major greenbelts, thereby protecting the Lessinger and Einstein neighborhoods. The Pepper neighborhood is similarly protected from Greenfield traffic, although new tree plantings and a consistent, high quality screen fence are needed. The Avery neighborhood enjoys similar benefits from the greenbelt that was incorporated into the public parking development north of Kingston.

Schools

The City is served by three school districts: Oak Park, Ferndale, and Berkley schools. Each of the City's neighborhoods has at least one operating elementary school. All three districts operate middle schools in the City and Oak Park High School occupies a prominent site across the boulevard from City Hall.

In addition to the public schools, Oak Park is also home to at least six private schools.

Public

The public category includes the City Hall, district court and community center complex on Oak Park Boulevard and the DPW facility on Capital. Other public uses include the new post office on Eight Mile and the public parking lot north of Kingston. The state police post site at 10 Mile and Kenosha will finally become reality after effective lobbying by City and County officials along with the support of two governors and both major political parties.

Quasi-Public

There are a large number of quasi-public uses serving the City of Oak Park. Most of these are places of worship. Also included are such facilities as the Jewish Community Center and the youth center at Nine Mile and Parklawn.

Vacant

Only about 2% of Oak Park is vacant land. At 9.5 acres, the former Weber Brothers Nursery site is the largest vacant parcel. There are quite a few vacant or partially vacant industrial sites. About 40 vacant, buildable residential lots are left in the City. Many of these, however, are currently used as yard space by their owners.

The armory site on Eight Mile Road is the City's largest potential vacant site. If the facility is ever abandoned by the Michigan National Guard, a major development site of 80 acres could become available. At this location the City might expect a combination of retail and industrial or similar uses.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF LAND USE

One of the principal benefits of completing a survey of existing land use is the opportunity to observe on-going changes in the community's pattern of development. the more important changes identified included:

- ☐ Although a few vacant sites still exist, the past 25 years have resulted in the virtual build-out of the City.
- ☐ The Greenfield Road office corridor is experiencing constant pressure for retail conversion, due primarily to the weak metropolitan market for secondary office space.
- ☐ New retail development and redevelopment activities appear strong, as evidence by the new Parkwoods Plaza and Northland Plaza centers, along with major renovations and new tenants at Lincoln Center and Oak Park Shopping Plaza.
- ☐ The completion of I-696 has literally "put Oak Park on the map". Once thought of as a potential barrier, I-696 has connected the City with the rest of metropolitan Detroit and resulted in two major new City parks, built over the freeway decks in order to preserve neighborhood integrity.
- ☐ Because of the lack of large lots in Oak Park, large footprint contemporary homes typically require acquisition of two residential lots. Since Oak Park has very few residential lots remaining, the City has been experiencing "tear-downs" of small, existing homes in order to build large modern replacements. Many of these tear-downs have occurred north of Ten Mile. The following table reflects the tear-down/infill process occurring in Oak Park. While there has been new residential construction in the City, there has not been a net gain in residential units.

SINGLE FAMILY HOME CONSTRUCTION
City of Oak Park: 1984 - 1993

Year	Detached Single Family Homes	Less Demolition Units	Net Total Units
1993	8	7	1
1992	7	4	3
1991	0	1	-1
1990	5	0	5
1989	1	0	1
1988	1	4	-3
1987	0	1	-1
1986	0	3	-3
1985	0	0	0
1984	0	2	-2
TOTALS	22	22	0

Source: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, "Residential Construction in Southeast Michigan," 1984-1993.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The changes that occur within a community can be positive or negative. What is important is that the City recognize their potential impact then plan for a positive outcome. Several changes with implications for future development must be watched and carefully planned to avoid negative impacts. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- ☐ The City's aging housing stock must not be allowed to deteriorate and become substandard. Neighborhood conservation efforts should be designed to prevent this from occurring, rather than reacting after the fact.
- ☐ Revitalization of business districts is required to prevent harmful impacts on adjoining neighborhoods, and to maintain appropriate local retail and personal services for City residents. Organization of the business community under an umbrella group like the Chamber of Commerce may provide a best first step.
- ☐ Some industrial areas still exert negative influence on portions of neighborhoods. Opportunities are available to improve screening by improvements along the linear greenbelts.

- ❑ As the population of the City ages, new housing opportunities are needed to keep long-time residents in Oak Park after retirement. Housing types such as single family condominiums must be promoted to expand options for older citizens.
- ❑ Conversion of office areas to commercial activity must be carefully controlled so that it is not permitted to adversely affect adjoining neighborhoods. Working to develop a market niche for the older office space, with large scale community institutions like Providence Hospital and Oakland Community College, could result in encouraging owners to reinvest in these important properties. These institutions typically have a number of satellite centers for office and service activities related to their principal business.

Figure 1-4

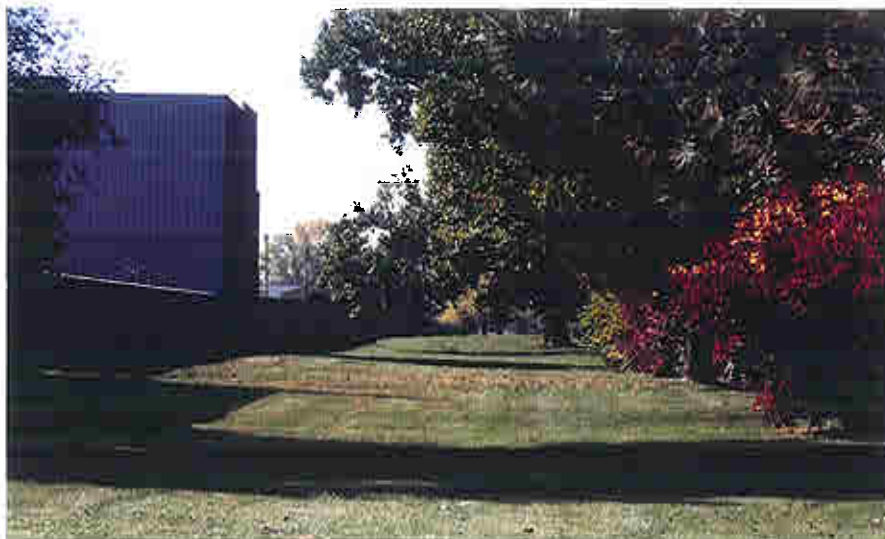


← Oak Park is recognized as a City of attractive residential boulevards and well-designed, garden apartments.
↓

Figure 1-5



Figure 1-6



← Many City neighborhoods enjoy the protection and recreational benefits afforded by greenbelts that separate them from industry and high traffic thoroughfares.

Figure 1-7



Attempts to screen incompatible uses are often ineffective or poorly located - prompting homeowners to devise their own protection.

Figure 1-8



Some businesses ignore their responsibilities leaving all efforts at beautification to the nearby homeowner.

POPULATION, HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, AND INCOME: Oak Park's Demographic and Housing Trends

SUMMARY

- ☐ Population has stabilized.
- ☐ Senior population grew sharply from 1970 to 1990.
- ☐ Substantial ethnic and racial change has taken place.
- ☐ Educational attainment has improved.
- ☐ Housing values have increased since 1990; declined from 1980 to 1990.
- ☐ High percentage of owner-occupied houses are owned by seniors, suggesting high turnover in the next few years.
- ☐ Oak Park is positioned for further growth in housing values; the quality of public education will be a key factor.
- ☐ Median household income is lower in Oak Park than Oakland County as a whole.
- ☐ During the 1980's, median household income in Oak Park grew at a lower rate than in Oakland County as a whole.
- ☐ Retail sales by Oak Park stores substantially exceed Oak Park residents' retail power.

GROWTH TREND

After a 20-year period of population decline, Oak Park's population has stabilized. From 1970 to 1990, Oak Park's population declined from 36,762 to 30,462, a 17% loss. This loss reflected a decline in birth rates and family size. From 1970 to 1990 the average household size decreased from 3.4 to 2.8 – a 17.6% drop. SEMCOG estimates that since 1990, Oak Park's population has shown a small increase of about 0.4%, and the number of occupied housing units grew by 34 or 0.3%. As younger families continue to move in, we expect to see little if any population loss in the next few years, and possibly a population increase. For planning purposes, the City's population is assumed to reach 31,000 by the year 2000 and 32,000 by 2010.

AGE GROUPINGS

Age groupings generally define several social categories. The preschool group includes those under five years of age. Those from age 5 to 14 make up the elementary/middle school age group, while the high school sector includes those between 15 and 19. The bulk of the work force is found from age 20 to 64, with the 25 to 44 age bracket representing family formation years and 45 to 64 representing mature families.

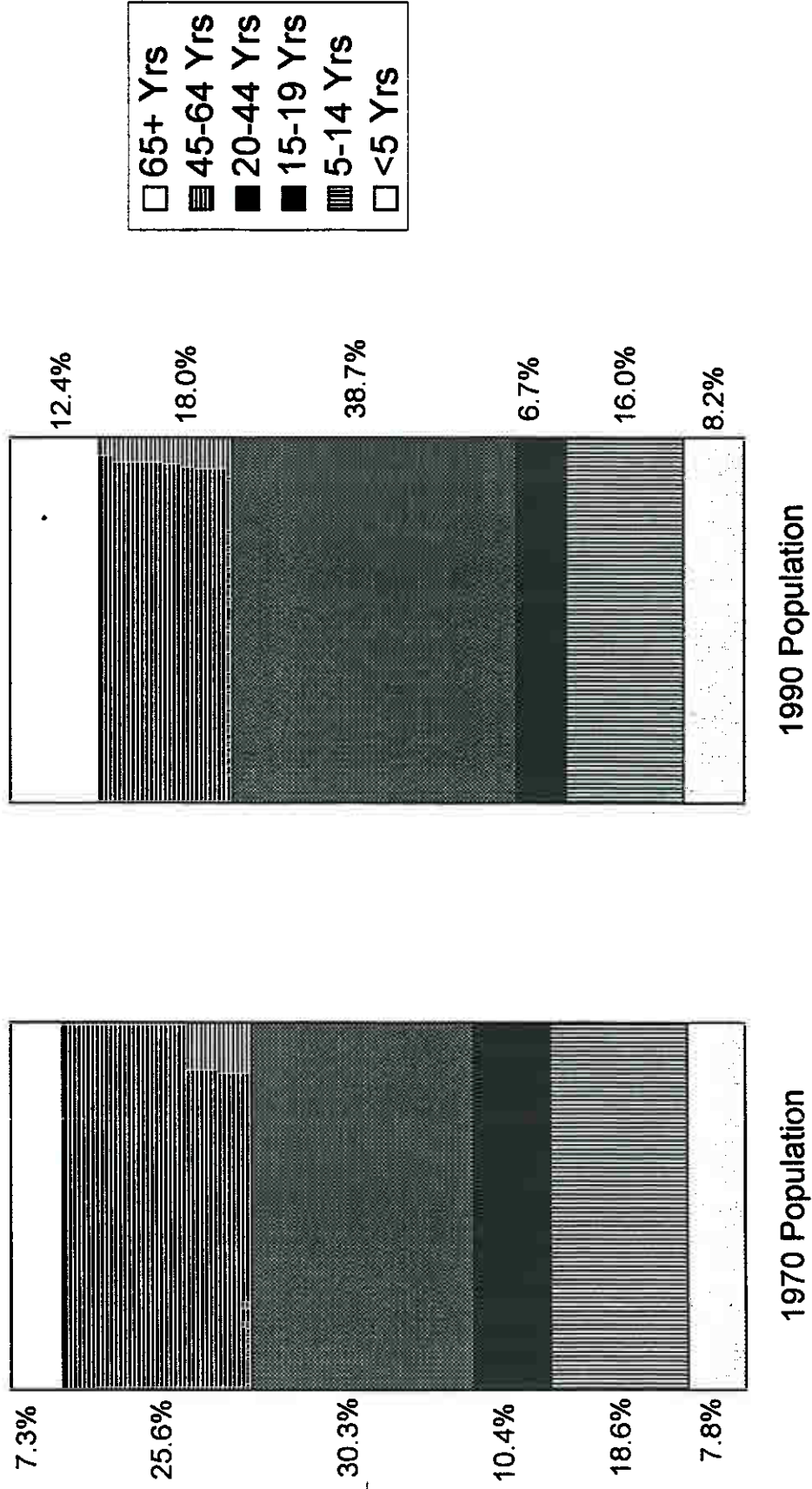
The accompanying figure and table (Figure 2-1 and Table 2-1) illustrate the sharp increase of the 65+ age group from 1970 to 1990. There was also a slight increase in the 20-44 age group and the two youngest age groups, indicating that Oak Park may be experiencing a slight influx of younger families with young children.

City of Oak Park, Michigan

1990 U.S. Census Information

Total Population		30,462		
Sex	Male	14,587	47.9%	
	Female	15,875	52.1%	
		30,462		
Race	White	19,071	62.6%	
	Black	10,512	34.5%	
	Am Indian, Eskimo	24	0.1%	
	Asian	678	2.2%	
	Other	177	0.6%	
		30,462		
Age	4 and under	2,500	8.2%	
	5 - 18	6,492	21.3%	29.5%
	19 - 29	4,570	15.0%	
	30 - 39	5,492	18.0%	33.0%
	40 - 49	4,004	13.1%	
	50 - 59	2,326	7.6%	20.8%
	60 - 69	2,708	8.9%	
	70 and over	2,370	7.8%	16.7%
		30,462		
Birthplace	Michigan	19,262	63.2%	
	U.S. other than Michigan	6,658	21.9%	
	Foreign Born	4,542	14.9%	
		30,462		
Education Persons 25 years or older	less than 9th grade	1,268	6.6%	
	9th - 12th, no diploma	2,434	12.6%	19.2%
	High School Grad	5,234	27.1%	
	Some College, no degree	4,813	24.9%	52.0%
	Associate's Degree	1,296	6.7%	
	Bachelor's Degree	2,809	14.5%	
	Graduate or Prof. Degree	1,474	7.6%	28.9%
		19,328		
Household Income	Less than \$10,000	1,254	11.5%	
	\$10,000 - 19,999	1,415	13.0%	
	\$20,000 - 29,999	1,675	15.3%	39.8%
	\$30,000 - 39,999	1,788	16.4%	
	\$40,000 - 49,999	1,614	14.8%	31.2%
	\$50,000 - 59,999	1,063	9.7%	
	\$60,000 - 74,999	1,055	9.7%	19.4%
	\$75,000 - 99,999	772	7.1%	7.1%
	\$100,000 - 124,999	154	1.4%	
	\$125,000 - 149,999	28	0.3%	
	\$150,000 or more	95	0.9%	2.5%
		10,913		
Median Household Income		\$36,090		

CITY OF OAK PARK MAJOR AGE GROUP COMPARISON 1970 vs. 1990



home, or whether the respondent is a fifth-generation descendent from a German immigrant. Also, at times the categories provided by the census are too general and encompassing to reflect the more specific ancestral groups, forcing people to choose a broader category for which they may not have a strong affiliation. For instance, Chaldeans are generally considered to be Arab or Assyrian in census information, though they may identify themselves as a totally different group.

The Arab and Chaldean populations continue to be a strong sector of the population in both Oak Park and in the metro region. Southeast Michigan has the largest concentration of Arabs and Chaldeans in the United States. SEMCOG's 1994 publication, *Patterns of Diversity and Change in Southeast Michigan*, states that over 1.7% of the region's total population (77,000 people) is of Arab or Chaldean ancestry, compared to only 0.4% nationally. See Figure 2-2 for the distribution of Arab and Chaldean residents in Oak Park.

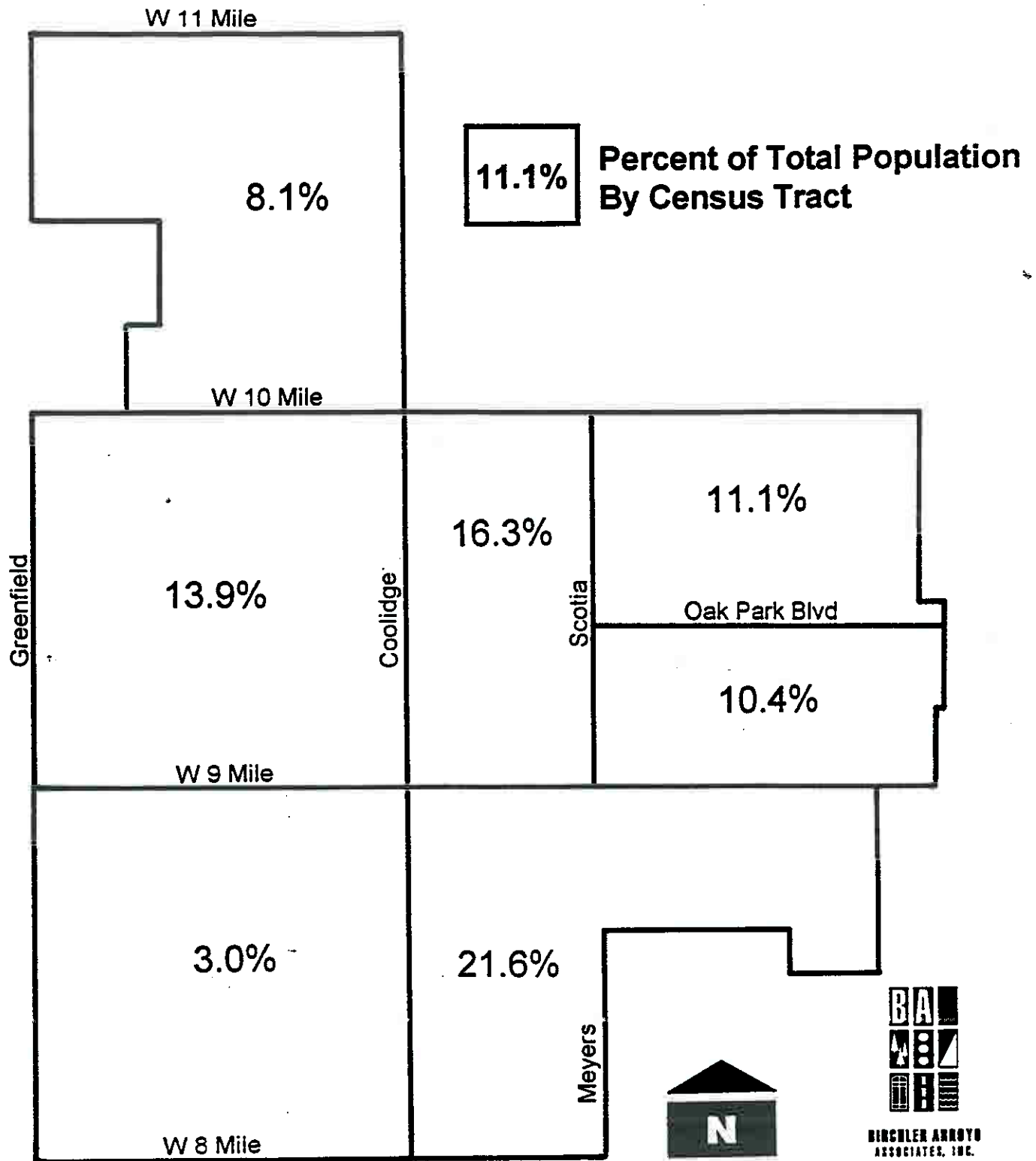
TABLE 2-3
Southeast Michigan
Arab And Chaldean Occupations

	% of Workforce
Managerial & Professional	27%
Technical, Sales, & Administrative Support	41%
Service	10%
Farming, Forestry, Fishing	1%
Precision Production, Craft, & Repair	10%
Operators, Fabricators, & Laborers	11%
TOTAL	100%

SEMCOG's *Patterns of Diversity and Change in Southeast Michigan*, 1994

As demonstrated by Table 2-3, the majority of Arabs and Chaldeans are employed in Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support. This is largely due to the many Arab and Chaldean family-owned retail businesses, such as grocery stores, party stores, and gas stations. Often times family members and recent immigrants are given jobs in these establishments to provide the necessary support when first arriving in a new country.

Within southeast Michigan, Oak Park is a popular destination for Chaldean immigrants. SEMCOG's report states that "since 1980, about half the new immigrants have settled in Oak Park, where families from north Detroit have purchased homes." (SEMCOG, p. 36). Table 2-2 illustrates the relatively large proportion of Arabs and Chaldeans that reside in Oak Park. The percentage of Oak Park's population which is Chaldean is seven times larger than Oakland County's. In fact, Oak Park is home to over 20% of Oakland County's entire Chaldean population.

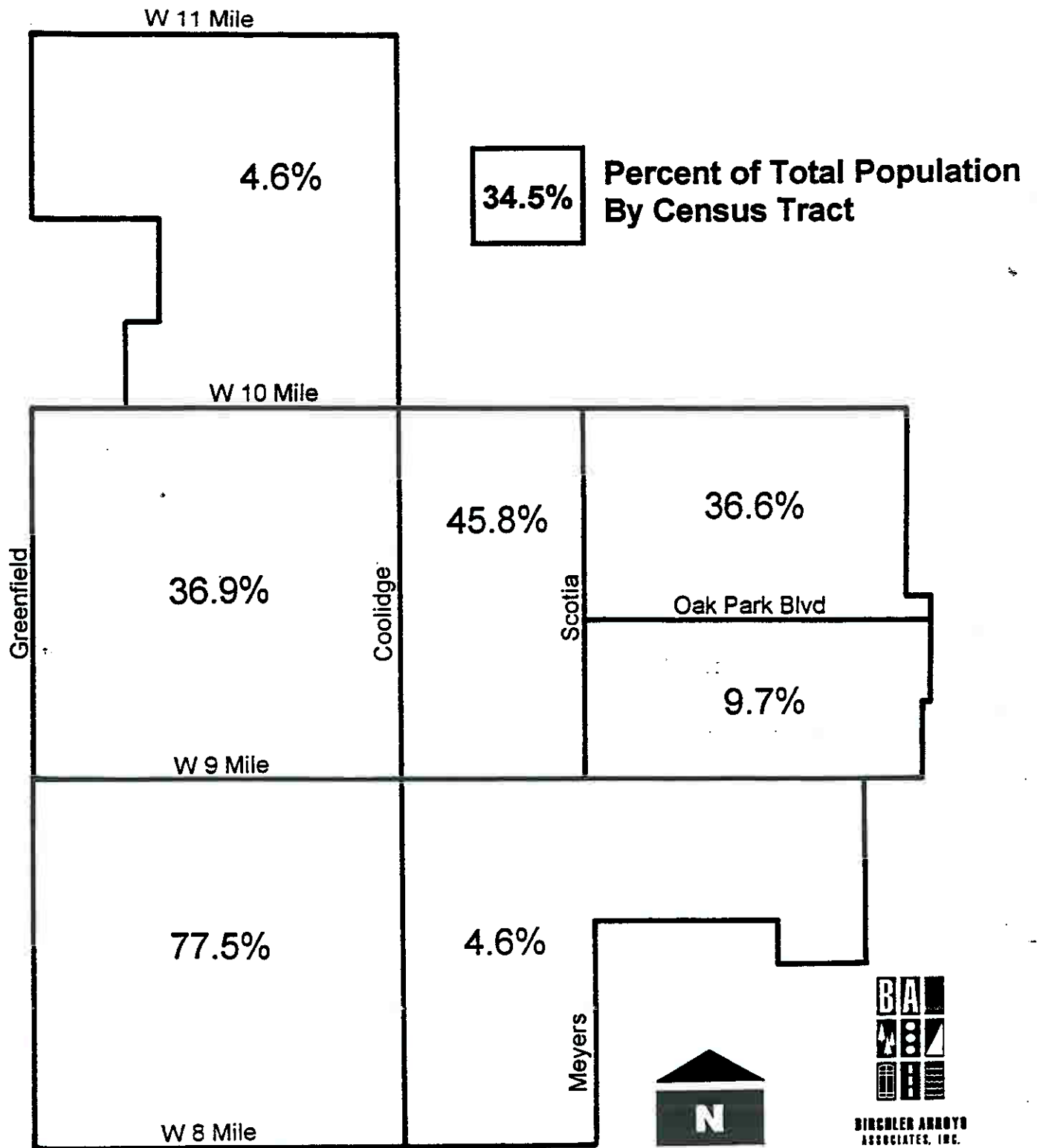


ARAB & CHALDEAN RESIDENTS
City of Oak Park, Michigan

On January 27, 1995 the Planning Consultant met with Father Kallabat, pastor of Mar Addai Catholic Chaldean Church. Father Kallabat offered estimates of the 1995 Chaldean population of Oak Park, provided insight into difficulties in the 1990 Census, and suggested the reasons why Oak Park is a popular destination for Chaldean immigrants.

The 1990 Census reported that 1,932 Oak Park residents were of Chaldean or Assyrian ancestry, and that 1,452 Oak Park residents were of Arab/Arabic ancestry. Father Kallabat, however estimates the 1995 Chaldean population in Oak Park to be between 4,000 and 5,000. He suggests that there are only a very few residents of Arab/Arabic ancestry in Oak Park. It is his opinion that most of the 1,452 persons enumerated as Arab/Arabic are actually Chaldean. Father Kallabat's explanation is that persons who answered the 1990 Census questionnaire are not always fluent or literate in English. He feels certain that many Chaldeans answered the ancestry question "Arabic" thinking that it was a question about language. If Father Kallabat is correct, there may have been nearly 3,400 persons of Chaldean ancestry in Oak Park in 1990.

Father Kallabat offered four primary reasons why Chaldean immigrants are settling in Oak Park. Foremost is their feeling of safety in the City. Chaldeans feel free to walk to church, shopping, schools, and the like with complete confidence in their personal safety. Second was this City's central location in the metropolitan Detroit area. Access to jobs throughout the region is simplified by Oak Park's access to I-696 and other major transportation routes. The third and fourth reasons are religious and political freedom afforded Chaldeans in the United States. They are free to worship without fear of reprisal. Once they become integrated into the community, Chaldeans enjoy taking an active role in local affairs.



AFRICAN-AMERICAN RESIDENTS
City of Oak Park, Michigan

Southeastern Michigan and Oak Park also have a proportionately large African-American population. Nationally, African-Americans constitute 12% of the population. In Southeast Michigan, African-Americans constitute 21% of the region's total population. Within Oak Park, African-Americans comprise 34.5% of the population. Table 2-2 shows that the percentage of Oak Park's population which is African-American is five times larger than Oakland County's. See Figure 2-3 for the distribution of African-American residents in Oak Park.

Table 2-4 illustrates the types of jobs that African-Americans in the Detroit metro area hold. Compared to other population groups, the percentage of African-Americans in managerial and professional occupations tends to be lower, while the percentage of African-Americans working in the service sector or as operatives or laborers is higher.

TABLE 2-4
Southeast Michigan
Employment Of African-Americans By Sector

	% of Workforce
Managerial & Professional	20%
Technical, Sales & Administrative Support	32%
Service	20%
Farming, Forestry, & Fishing	0%
Precision Production, Craft, & Repair	8%
Operators, Fabricators, & Laborers	20%

SEMCOG's Patterns of Diversity and Change in Southeast Michigan, 1994

Oak Park's African-American population has only recently been growing. SEMCOG's 1994 report, *Patterns of Diversity and Change in Southeast Michigan*, explains that the City of Detroit has traditionally been the center of the African-American population in southeast Michigan, but that "the 1980 census reflected a small change in this pattern...For the first time, the expansion of Black neighborhoods in Detroit crossed the city limits into the suburbs, in Oak Park and Southfield." (SEMCOG, p.24) This was due in large part to fair housing legislation in the 1970's. Another explanation, however, is that middle class African-Americans have been moving to the suburbs for the same reasons as other racial and ethnic groups -- better schools, less crime, shorter commutes to work, and similar motives.

Table 2- 5 offers additional insight into the ethnic and cultural diversity of Oak Park by looking at an aspect of everyday life--the language spoken at home. Compared to Oakland County, it is apparent that Oak Park has a greater racial, ethnic, and language diversity. In particular, the Arabic and Yiddish languages are well-represented in Oak Park relative to Oakland County.

TABLE 2-5
City Of Oak Park
Language Spoken At Home

Language Spoken At Home	Number Of Oak Park Residents	% of Oak Park Population	% of Oakland Co. Population
English Only	22,447	73.7%	84.7%
Arabic	1,345	4.4%	.8%
Yiddish	619	2.0%	.2%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	399	1.3%	1.2%
Tagalog	318	1.0%	.2%
Polish	151	.5%	.5%
Russian	123	.4%	.2%
German	123	.4%	.6%

U.S. Census, 1990

The higher percentage of ethnic and language diversity can be largely explained by the influx of immigrants into Oak Park. Table 2-6 chronicles the number of people from foreign countries entering Oak Park. Assuming that Oak Park's portion of Oakland County's population has remained steady throughout the years at approximately 3%, Oak Park has maintained an above-average rate of in migration from abroad as can be seen in the chart's last column.

TABLE 2-6
City Of Oak Park
Immigration Into Oak Park By Year

Year of Entry into U.S.	Immigrants into Oak Park	
	Number of Immigrants into Oak Park	As % of Total Immigration into Oakland Co.
1987 - 1990	351	3.8%
1985 - 1986	121	3.9%
1982 - 1984	299	7.7%
1980 or 1981	516	12.4%
1975 - 1979	1,004	11.7%
1970 - 1974	507	6.6%
1965 - 1969	185	2.6%
1960 - 1964	163	4.0%
1950 - 1959	413	3.9%
Before 1950	983	5.5%

U.S. Census, 1990

Table 2-7 shows citizenship status in Oak Park. The higher percentage of persons not native-born citizens in Oak Park compared to Oakland County again reflects the diversity found in Oak Park.

TABLE 2-7
City Of Oak Park
Citizenship Status

	Number of Oak Park Residents	% of Oak Park Population	% of Oakland Co. Population
Native of U.S.	25,920	85.1%	93.0%
Naturalized Citizens	2,590	8.5%	4.0%
Not Citizens	1,952	6.4%	3.0%

U.S. Census, 1990

As in many metropolitan areas, Detroit's Jewish population has been concentrated in a geographic area which has changed over time. In its 1991 report, *Jewish Population Study of Metropolitan Detroit*, the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit refers to this concentration as "the core." Having spread north and west from Hastings Street in Detroit to Orchard Lake and Maple in West Bloomfield, the "core" now ranges from 8 Mile along the Southfield and Oak Park borders north and west to include Lathrup Village, Franklin, Beverly Hills, Birmingham, Bloomfield, Bloomfield Hills, West Bloomfield, and the northern portion of Farmington Hills.

As the core has grown it has become less concentrated. Where neighborhoods used to be 85% Jewish, they are now more commonly about 35% Jewish in core areas. According to the Jewish Federation's report, "[t]he only section of the present-day core which approaches the Jewish density of 40 years ago is North Oak Park, the square mile between 10 and 11 Mile Roads, Coolidge and Greenfield." (Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, p. 4) Approximately one-half of all Jewish households within the core are located in Southfield and Oak Park. West Bloomfield has the largest concentration of Jewish residents in the outer suburbs.

There are about 12,200 Jewish persons and 5,100 Jewish households in Oak Park. The Jewish household in Oak Park tends to be smaller than its counterparts in the outer suburbs, due to the fact that approximately 50% of Oak Park's Jewish households consist of empty-nesters and older persons. Within the metropolitan Detroit area, 63% of Jewish persons own their own single family home; 10% own condominium units, and 27% rent. In Oak Park, where there are few condominiums, 71% own single family homes, 2% own condos, and 27% are renters. (Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, p. 7)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Educational achievement of the adult population has improved in recent years. Of persons 25 years and over, 80.8% were high school graduates (or higher) in 1990, compared to 75.5% in 1980. Persons with Bachelor's Degrees or higher were 22.2% in 1990, compared to 21.2% in 1980.

The unemployment rate declined from 1980 to 1990. However, the percentages of persons and families below the poverty level increased somewhat from 1980 to 1990.

EMPLOYMENT

Table 2-8 shows employment by sector in Oak Park in 1990. Like many other communities, the sector including the clerical, sales, and administrative support employs the most people. The percentage of people working in each sector has remained fairly constant from 1980 to 1990, while the total number of people working has decreased slightly, reflecting the slight decrease in Oak Park's population and growth of retirees during the eighties.

TABLE 2-8
City Of Oak Park
Employment Of Resident Workforce By Sector

	1980	% of Workforce	1990	% of Workforce
Managerial/Professional Specialty	4,185	28.4%	4,083	28.64%
Clerical, Sales, Administrative Support	5,885	39.9%	5,788	40.5%
Service	1,380	9.4%	1,308	9.2%
Farm, Fisheries, Forest	43	0.3%	65	0.5%
Precision Production, Craft, Repair	1,521	10.3%	1,248	8.8%
Operators, Fabricators, Laborers	1,749	11.9%	1,775	12.5%
TOTALS	14,763	100.0%	14,257	100.0%

U.S. Census, 1980 and 1990

HOUSING

Oak Park has been essentially built up since 1980. Except for a few scattered lots and sites, there has been very little potential for housing growth. Although the housing inventory remained somewhat static from 1980 to 1990, the number of owner occupied housing units declined by about 841 units or 9.5%; most of this change was accounted for by shift to rental. The U.S. Census reported a substantial decline (in inflation adjusted dollars) in the median value of owner occupied units from 1980 to 1990. (Value of owner occupied units reported by the U.S. Census is based on owners' estimates, not sales or assessed values.) This decline in housing values was not unique to Oak Park.

Several communities in southern Oakland County experienced declines in housing values in constant inflation adjusted dollars from 1980 to 1990, including: Southfield, Ferndale, Lathrup Village, Madison Heights, Berkley, and Farmington. Common elements seem to be a relatively older housing supply (compared to outlying suburbs), and little development of single family houses, due to the lack of new housing sites. However, since 1990 there has been a substantial increase of Oak Park's housing values as indicated by assessed valuations (largely reflecting actual sales). From 1990 to 1994, the

assessed valuation of the housing stock increased by 28.8%. This growth almost entirely reflects an increase in average values of existing houses, since few housing units were built during the eighties.

Of the 8,032 owner occupied units in 1990, 40% were owned by persons over the age of 54; 2,063 or 26% were owned by persons over the age of 64. (By comparison, 16% of the owner occupied units in West Bloomfield were owned by persons over 64. In Troy, the percentage was 12%.) These age characteristics reflect the concentrated period of residential growth in Oak Park from 1950 to 1970, and suggest the prospect of continued housing turnover at fairly high levels in the next few years. Housing conditions in the City appear generally sound, based on the survey of existing land use conducted in September of 1994. Very few units were identified that required more than ordinary maintenance. As housing turnover brings younger families back to Oak Park, modernization of older units can be expected to occur.

COMMUNITY ATTRACTIVENESS

As the experiences of Huntington Woods, Royal Oak, and Pleasant Ridge demonstrate, older built-up communities can experience growth in housing values largely through advantages in location, community facilities, and services. The I-696 Freeway has undoubtedly strengthened the competitive position of Oak Park and its neighboring communities. With geographic centrality and highway accessibility, these southeastern Oakland County communities are within 30 minutes driving time to most of southeastern Michigan's jobs and attractions. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the population center of metropolitan Detroit was at three blocks south of 8 Mile Road and one block east of Southfield Road.

Other factors of great importance are public education, and finance. The recent restructuring of public school financing through passage of "Proposal A" has given substantial school property tax relief to several school districts in southeastern Oakland County, including the Oak Park, Ferndale, and Berkley Districts which serve the City of Oak Park. The quality of public education in Oak Park and its neighboring communities will be of vital importance in determining the future viability and attractiveness of residential neighborhoods.

INCOME AND PURCHASING POWER

As the following tables show, growth of Oak Park's per capita income, and median household income lagged behind Oakland County during the 1980's. In 1979, Oak Park's median household income was 88% of that for Oakland County; in 1989 it declined to 83%. (The difference in per capita income is even greater, since average household size is larger in Oak Park than in Oakland County. Oak Park's 1989 per capita income was only 69% of that for Oakland County.)

TABLE 2-9
City Of Oak Park And Oakland County
1979 And 1989 Per Capita And Household Income

	1979	1989	% Change
Per Capita Income			
Oak Park	\$ 8,773	\$14,544	65%
Oakland County	\$10,658	\$21,125	98%
Median Household Income			
Oak Park	\$22,215	\$36,090	62%
Oakland County	\$25,323	\$43,407	71%

U.S. Census, 1980 and 1990

TABLE 2-10
City Of Oak Park And Selected Other Places
1989 Per Capita Income (As Reported In 1990 U.S. Census)

Royal Oak Township	\$11,182
Ferndale	\$12,704
OAK PARK	\$14,544
Royal Oak	\$18,065
Southfield	\$21,098
Oakland County	\$21,125
Huntington Woods	\$28,897

U.S. Census, 1990

EFFECTIVE BUYING INCOME

We estimate Oak Park's Effective Buying Income for 1993 at about \$40,298 per household. (Effective Buying Income is the same as "disposable income" or "after-tax income," and includes imputed rental income of owner occupied housing units).

The retail purchasing power of Oak Park's average household is in the magnitude of \$18,940, distributed approximately as shown in Table 2-11.

TABLE 2-11
City Of Oak Park
Average Retail Purchase Power Per Oak Park Household, 1993

	\$	%
Food	\$ 2,425	12.8
Eating and Drinking Places	\$ 1,670	8
General Merchandise	\$ 2,793	14.7
Furniture, Furnishings, Appliances	\$ 1,456	7.6
Automotive	\$ 4,703	24.8
Drug	\$ 678	3.6
Other (Including Non Store Retail)	\$ 5,215	27.7
Total	\$18,940	100%

Derived by proportionate calculations from Oakland County Retail Sales By Store Group and Oakland County Effective Buying Income as estimated by Sales and Marketing Management, August 30, 1993.

The total magnitude of annual retail purchases by Oak Park's 10,885 households is estimated at about \$206 million distributed as shown in Table 2-12.

TABLE 2-12
Annual Retail Purchases By
Oak Park's Resident Population, 1993

	\$ Million
Food	26.4
Eating and Drinking Places	18.4
General Merchandise	30.3
Furniture, Furnishings, Appliances	15.7
Automotive	51.1
Drug	7.4
Other (Including Non Store Retail)	57.1
Total	\$206.2 million

Derived by applying the percentage distribution of retail sales from Table 2-9 to the calculation of total retail sales potential for Oak Park.

Only a portion of these purchases can be expected to be transacted within Oak Park. On the other hand, Oak Park's merchants can and do attract sales from beyond the City's boundaries.

In the Land Use Plan, the potential for growth in Oak Park's commercial uses will be estimated. Inputs into this estimate will include:

1. The above estimates of annual retail purchasing power from the resident population.
2. Estimates of current retail sales in Oak Park's existing retail outlets.
3. Estimates of potential for Oak Park's outlets to attract a higher share of resident and non-resident purchasing power.
4. Strategies for attracting such potentials.

RETAIL TRADE

There are 257 retail establishments in Oak Park, which in 1992 had total annual sales of \$360,373,000. The distribution of total sales is shown in Table 2-13.

TABLE 2-13
City Of Oak Park
Annual Retail Trade, 1992

Type of Establishment	Number of Stores	Annual Sales	%
Miscellaneous Retail Stores	65	\$37,120,000	10.3%
Food Stores	56	\$81,331,000	22.6%
Gasoline Service Stations	35	\$47,895,000	13.3%
Eating & Drinking	33	\$16,596,000	4.6%
Apparel & Accessory	25	\$18,610,000	5.2%
Drug & Proprietary	12	\$17,259,000	4.8%
Furniture & Home Furnishings	10	\$13,311,000	3.7%
Building Materials / Garden Supplies	8	\$15,996,000	4.4%
Automotive Dealers	7	*	*
General Merchandise	6	*	*
TOTAL	257	\$360,373,000	100%

1992 Census of Retail Trade

* Due to the relatively low number of establishments in these two categories, the sales figures have been suppressed to protect the privacy of the owners. The combined retail trade total from Automotive Dealers and General Merchandise is \$112,255,000—approximately 31.1% of Oak Park's total retail trade.

Oak Park is home to 3.4% of total retail establishments in Oakland County, accounting for approximately 3% of total county sales. Comparison of these two figures illustrate that the retail establishments in Oak Park are grossing approximately 11.8% below their proportionate share of sales in Oakland County. This may be partially explained by the relatively small size of Oak Park's stores, which limits sales volumes. The nearby communities of Southfield and Royal Oak are more successful in retail trade. Southfield, which offers both larger stores and more variety, has a 12.5% share of Oakland County's retail establishments and attained 12.9% of County sales. Royal Oak where off-beat, interesting shops are more prevalent is home to 5.4 % of Oakland County's retail

market and received 5.3% of total County sales. Berkley is not doing as well with 1.5% of retail establishments and only 0.8% of sales.

The annual total payroll in Oak Park amounts to \$43,866,000 for 2,784 total employees. Oak Park retail employees tend to be paid higher than other Oakland County retail employees as they amount to 2.6% of the County's total employees, and are paid 3.1% of the County's total payroll.

COMPARING OAK PARK'S RETAIL TRADE AND RETAIL PURCHASING POWER

Oak Park retailers' total sales (\$360,373,000) were greater than Oak Park residents' total retail purchases (\$206,843,740) by \$153,529,260. Oak Park residents do not limit their shopping to stores in Oak Park; the amount of money spent in Oak Park by non-residents is therefore greater than \$153,529,260, meaning that at least 42.6% of Oak Park retailers' sales came from non-residents.

Oak Park food retail stores do a large part of their business with non-residents. Oak Park residents spent \$26,483,425 on food, consisting of only 32.6% of all food store sales in Oak Park. This can be partially explained by Oak Park's selection of ethnic food stores. Oak Park was home to Dexter-Davison Market, a traditional kosher market which carried many items difficult to find elsewhere. The Market has recently been incorporated into the Farmer Jack on 10 Mile and Coolidge, and still offers many of the kosher items the original Dexter-Davison Market did. Middle Eastern food markets are also located in Oak Park. People living in other communities are willing to drive a few extra miles to buy the special foods of their ethnic or religious background.

Three large supermarkets are located on Oak Park's borders, causing people who live in adjacent communities to shop in Oak Park. The Farmer Jack on 10 Mile and Coolidge – Oak Park's northern border – probably draws a large number of shoppers from Huntington Woods and Berkley, while the Farmer Jack on 8 Mile and Greenfield – Oak Park's southern border – draws people from Detroit. Also, the grocery store located at Lincoln and Greenfield (also a Farmer Jack), attracts patrons from Southfield.

Oak Park residents spent more money at eating and drinking establishments than received by such establishments in Oak Park. Oak Park residents spent \$18,238,070 at eating and drinking establishments, while total sales of Oak Park retailers equaled \$16,596,000. This suggests that there is a larger market for restaurants and bars in Oak Park, than what the present establishments are capturing. This can be partially explained by the fact that Oak Park does not have any bars within its borders. Oak Park residents who do want to go to a bar, must go to another community. Also, it is not unusual for people to frequent restaurants that are not in their neighborhood. Other factors, such as place of work, residences of family and friends, and simply favorite spots contribute to choosing a place. Even if more eating and drinking establishments were located in Oak Park, or if present restaurant owners were to increase advertising and promotion, this would not guarantee a rise in the sales of Oak Park's eating and drinking retailers.

Oak Park residents spent more money on furniture and home furnishings than received by such establishments in Oak Park. Oak Park residents spent \$15,900,976 on furniture, while furniture retailers in Oak Park made \$13,311,000. When purchasing rather expensive items like furniture, people tend to comparison shop. They do not necessarily buy in their own community.

Unlike the restaurant and furniture store owners, the majority of Oak Park retailers gross more than Oak Park residents spend. This can be explained by the location of Oak Park's major shopping centers. Northland Plaza at Greenfield and Eight Mile; Lincoln Center at Greenfield and Lincoln; Parkwoods Plaza at 10 Mile; and Coolidge Oak Park Shopping Plaza, Coolidge Park Plaza, and Park Place at 9 Mile and Coolidge are near the adjacent communities of Detroit, Southfield, Berkley, and Huntington Woods. Residents of the other communities shop in Oak Park, raising the level of non-resident purchases. The convenient access to Oak Park from two exits on 696 also gives Oak Park additional exposure to non-resident commuters and travelers.

EXISTING THOROUGHFARE CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

About 50 years ago the U.S government, realizing the need for a safe, efficient, and economical transportation system for the better defense of the United States, began building a large network of roads and freeways. Since then Americans have used roads--and the automobile--as their prime source of transportation. While such a transportation system provides an effective means to move people and goods among various geographical areas, it also has some side effects. Because transportation has a significant impact on land development, energy consumption, environmental quality, economic conditions, and the overall quality of life in a community, it is critical that future transportation needs and problems be anticipated and reflected in the Master Plan process. Figure 3-1 on the following page illustrates the relationships between transportation and other influencing factors.

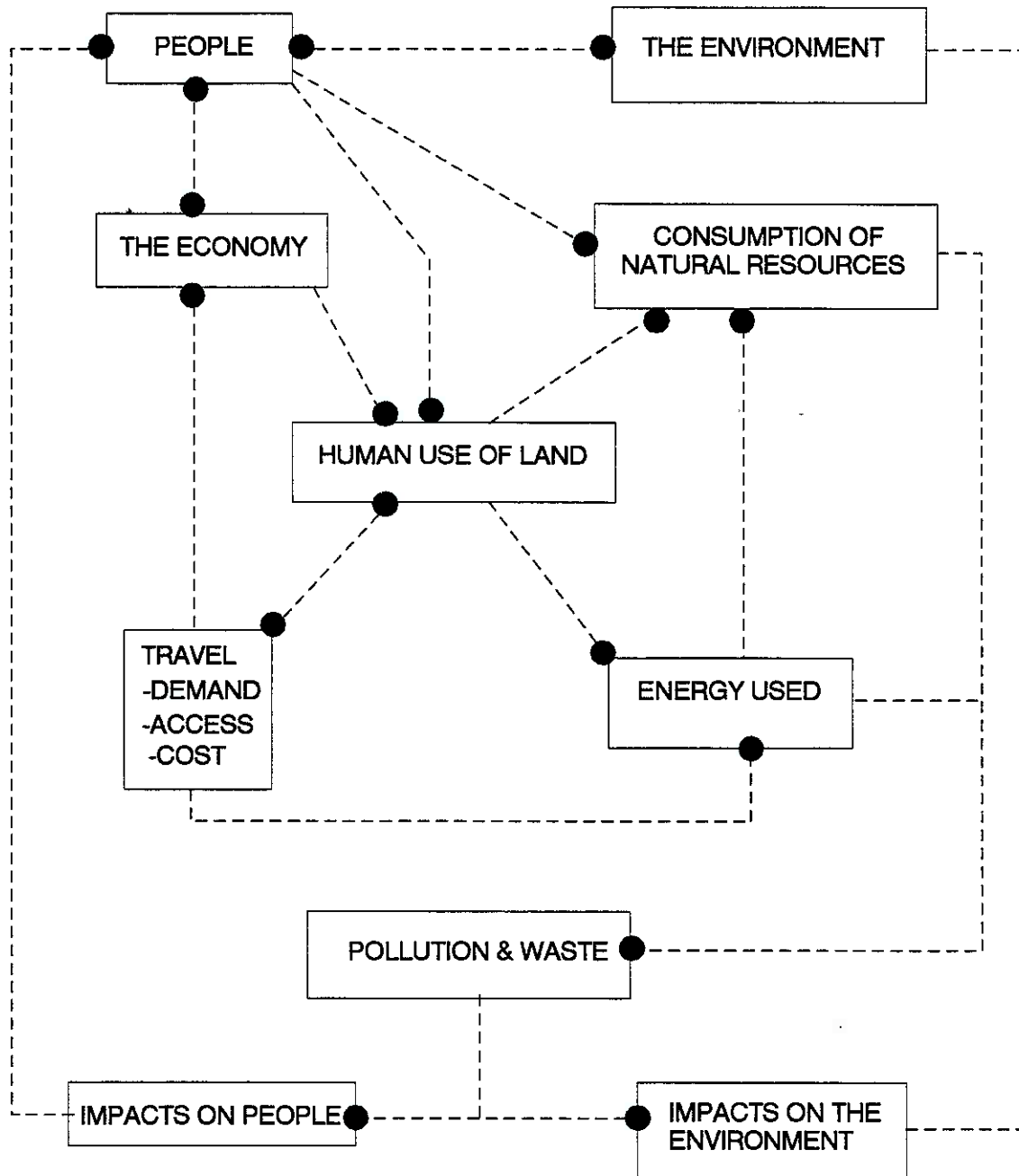
A community's transportation system is often related to other community functions. While the primary purpose of roadways is to move goods and people, the course of the road often determines the paths for public utility lines, including water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, gas, electrical power, and communications. Public services such as police, fire, and emergency rescue rely on the safe and adequate provision of roadways. Streets and rights-of-way are often used as the sites for unique landscaping, public art, and monuments, giving a community a distinct character.

Also impacting the character of a community is the arrangement of streets. A good example of a street pattern lending historical significance to a community can be found in the original plan for Washington, D.C. A French national, who was greatly influenced by a vision of the United States as a great industrial nation with a strong centralized federal government, positioned the Capitol building in a prominent location, with a radial plan of boulevards and roadways. The Capitol building became the dominant feature and hub from which all major roadways began. Similarly, the French Quarter in New Orleans is well-known for its straight narrow streets lined with balconies, which lend character and history to the city.

Like most cities west of the Appalachian Mountains, the layout of the City of Oak Park was influenced by the Ordinance of 1785, which established a land survey system to give the western-moving pioneers a definite description of their land. The area was divided into congressional townships of six miles square, equaling thirty-six square miles. Each one square mile was called a section. In addition to making land identification easier, the establishment of townships and sections provided a logical system for the provision of roadways along section lines.

As the City of Oak Park was originally part of Royal Oak Township, the major roads in the City represent a grid pattern generally following section lines. Major east-west roads are referred to as Mile roads (e.g., Ten Mile, Nine Mile, etc.) and major north-south roads have individual names (e.g., Greenfield Road, Coolidge Highway, etc.)

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TRANSPORTATION,
LAND USE, THE ECONOMY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT



Graphic By: Birchler/Arroyo Associates, Inc.
Source: Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc.
South Florida Regional Planning Council

Figure 3-1

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF ROADS

The physical condition, level of use, and direction of certain roadways, as well as the overall land-use pattern in American cities, cause automobile traffic to be concentrated on certain roadways. On average, about 20 percent of the roads carry approximately 80 percent of vehicle miles traveled.

In order to set priorities for funding the roads with the highest volumes, transportation planners established a street classification system. Figure 3-2 on the following page illustrates the street classification system concept.

Although there is some variation in their classification, roadways are typically divided into those that carry through traffic and those that carry local traffic. (Through roadways are further divided according to their function.) The distinction between through and local traffic is made due to the substantially different kind of street required to serve both types of traffic. It is desirable to physically separate these two road types as much as possible to eliminate conflicts between the two levels of traffic carriers.

In order to function successfully, the overall traffic circulation system, with both through and local streets, must be carefully integrated. Due to variations in traffic flow, there can be several types of through streets. Local streets include both traditional neighborhood streets and cul-de-sacs. In Oak Park, the four basic types of roads are freeways, arterials, collectors, and local streets. Freeway service drives are also found along I-696. The role of each road classification in providing access and mobility is illustrated in Figure 3-3.

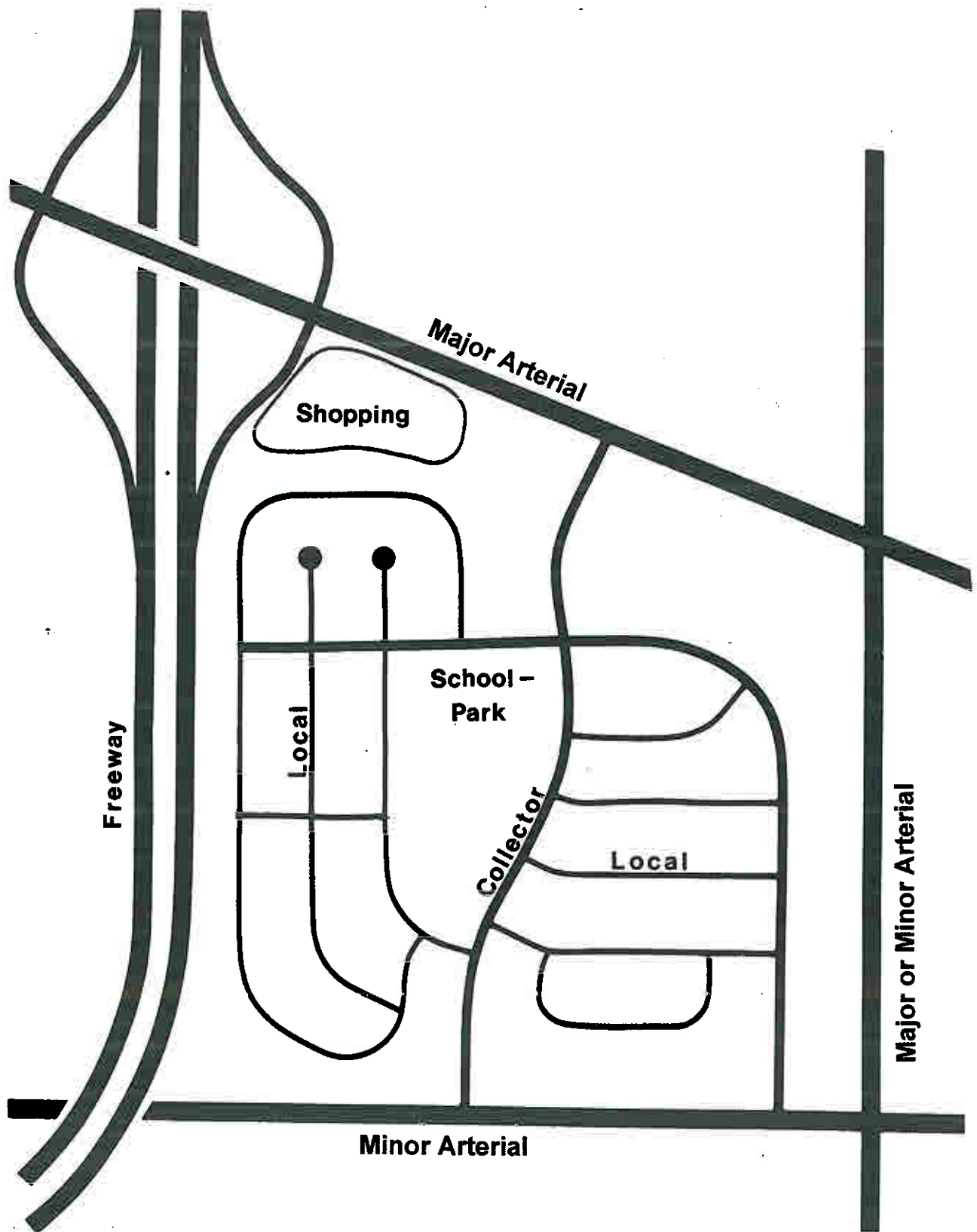
Freeways

A freeway is designed to handle large volumes of traffic moving at high speeds over long distances or between urban areas. Experience has shown that the addition of lanes to existing major thoroughfares usually cannot meet this demand, often times making the provision of a freeway the only answer to the problem of overburdened thoroughfares. A freeway's capacity is greatly increased by the elimination of all driveway curb cuts and all at-grade intersections. Points of entrance and exit are carefully controlled to maximize roadway capacities.

Arterials

Arterial roads -- the backbone of the one mile grid system-- provide continuity from one township/city to another. They can provide routes for lengthy trips if a freeway alternative is not available. In fact, some major arterials resemble mini-freeways by providing six or eight through lanes, partially-controlled access, and a wide median strip. Eight Mile Road is a good example.

Arterial roads have a dual function: to provide routes for through traffic volumes while providing access to abutting properties and minor intersecting streets. This often leads to congestion and traffic accidents because of turning vehicles conflicting with or impeding through traffic.



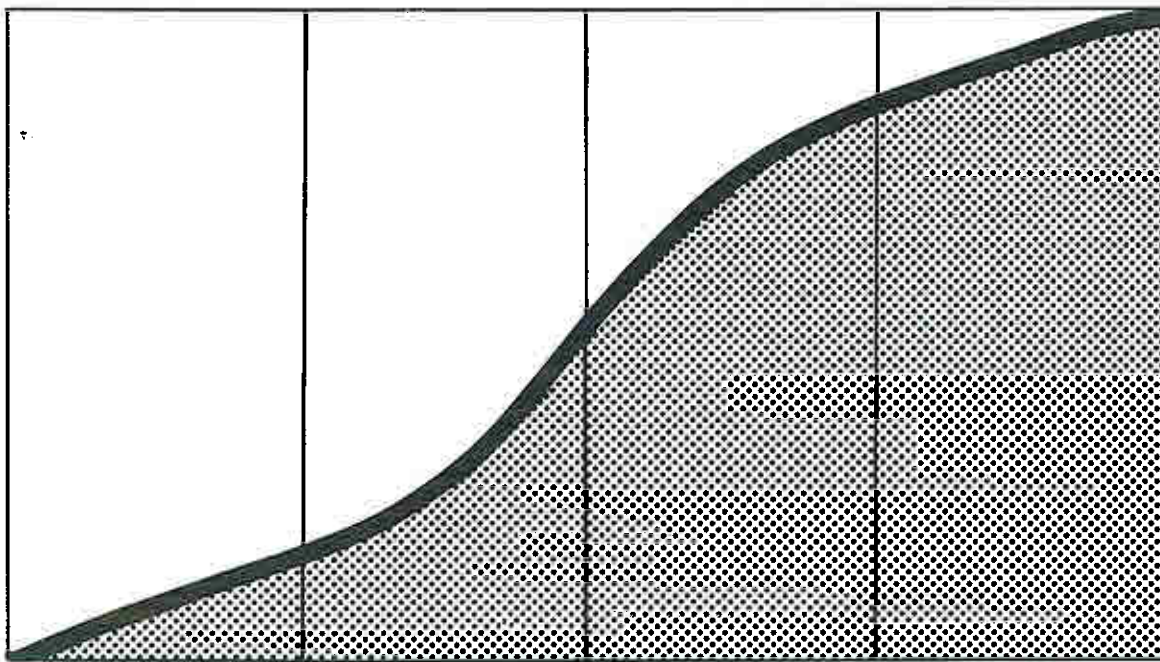
STREET CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM CONCEPT



BIRCHLER ARROYO
ASSOCIATES, INC.

MOBILITY & LAND ACCESS RELATIONSHIPS BY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Major Arterial	Minor Arterial	Collector	Local
----------------	----------------	-----------	-------



 **Mobility**

 **Access**



**BIRCHLER ARROYO
ASSOCIATES, INC.**

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Planning, Engineering & Transportation Systems

In the City of Oak Park, the effects of the Ordinance of 1785 are still apparent. All of the section line roads created by the traditional grid system--Eleven Mile, Ten Mile, Nine Mile, Eight Mile, Greenfield, Coolidge, and Wyoming (south of Nine Mile) -- serve as arterials. All of the arterials in Oak Park are one mile from each other.

Collector Streets

The intent of a collector street is to collect vehicles from the local subdivision streets and distribute them to either local destinations or to an arterial. The collector street system provides both land access and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial and shopping centers, and industrial areas.

In coordination with the arterials, which are found at one-mile intervals, collector roads in Oak Park are found at several half-mile locations. Collector roads in Oak Park include Lincoln, Oak Park Boulevard, Northend, Church, Scotia, and Meyers. These roads feed traffic from local streets to arterials, usually at signalized intersections, allowing motorists to efficiently access the arterial road system.

Local or Minor Streets

Providing access to adjacent land is the sole function of local streets. Although these streets make up a large percentage of total street mileage of the City, they carry a small portion of vehicle miles traveled. The aim of local neighborhood streets and industrial district service drives is to provide access to collector streets and through routes, but in such a manner that through traffic is not encouraged to use the minor streets as a shortcut route.

Service Drives

Service drives along urban freeways facilitate freeway access, increase interchange capacities, and eliminate "cloverleaf-type" interchanges, which consume large amounts of land. Slip ramps provide the connection between the freeway and the surface street road system. Service drives are usually designed and referred to as "one-way pairs" because there is typically one one-way service drive on each side of the freeway. The only service drives in Oak Park are found along I-696.

The following table shows the functional classification of major roadways within the City of Oak Park.

**City of Oak Park
Roadway Functional Classification**

<u>ROAD</u>	<u>TYPICAL PLANNED RIGHT-OF-WAY</u>
--------------------	--

FREEWAYS

I-696	300' to 350' (varies)
-------	-----------------------

ARTERIALS

Eleven Mile	120'
Ten Mile	120'
Nine Mile	120'
Eight Mile	200' - 300' (varies)
Greenfield Road	120'
Coolidge Highway	120'
Wyoming	120'

COLLECTORS

West Lincoln	86'
Church	86'
Oak Park Blvd	86'
Scotia	86'
Northend	86'
Meyers	86'

EXISTING VOLUMES, CAPACITIES, AND ROAD NETWORK

A good thoroughfare plan can be prepared only after a study of existing traffic conditions is completed. Figure 3-4 on the following page shows the location of existing traffic signals and the number of lanes provided on major streets. As the map illustrates, there are approximately 44 traffic signals in the City of Oak Park. The signals' cycles, distances between signals, and inability to coordinate signal timing make it difficult to travel long distances without stopping. This frequent

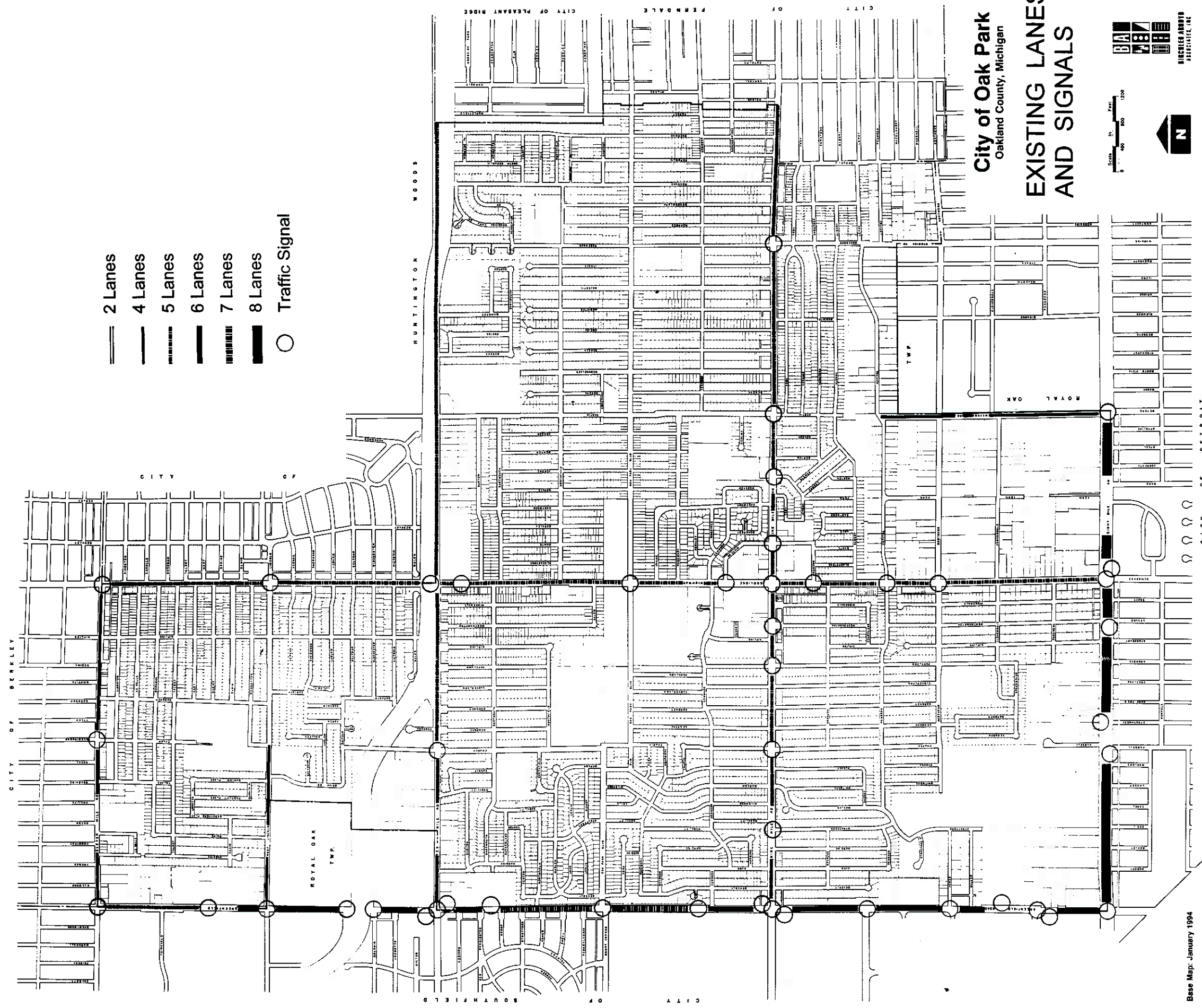


Figure 3-4

stopping, while eliminating high levels of speed, reduces road capacity, increases fuel consumption, and adds more air pollution emissions.

The Existing Lanes and Signals Map also shows the right-of-way width of Oak Park's streets. The majority of the streets are two lanes wide. Greenfield Road provides at least five lanes throughout Oak Park, and widens to six and seven lanes at some places. Coolidge provides four lanes with a left-turn lane. The four mile roads provide at least two lanes in each direction. Nine and Ten Mile Roads provide a left-turn lane, while Eight Mile Road provides four lanes in each direction.

The Existing Volumes Map (Figure 3-5) shows the 24-hour traffic volumes and approach counts on the major roadways. As expected, the highest volume road in the City is I-696, carrying approximately 174,000 vehicles per day at Greenfield and 180,000 vehicles per day at Coolidge. These numbers are high for the capacity of the road. According to the Transportation Research Board's, Highway Capacity Manual, Interstate-696, which is a divided six-lane highway, can carry 97,000 cars per day to be deemed adequate at Level of Service "D". For the sake of comparison, Level of Service "F" indicates gridlock and Level of Service "D", which is the minimum desired level of service for an urban area, borders on unstable flow.

The busiest intersection in Oak Park, as illustrated by the approach counts in Figure 3-5, is Coolidge and Ten Mile. Over 67,000 vehicles travel through that intersection each day.

The table below shows generalized urban and suburban arterial capacities based on methodologies in the Highway Capacity Manual. Two sets of values are provided for reference: one based on a road getting 50 percent of the effective green time at traffic signals, and the other based on 65 percent green time. These are generalized capacities for planning purposes only. Generally, consideration should be given to widening or other capacity/demand improvements before these volumes are reached, if stable traffic flow is desired.

Generalized Capacities Of Urban/Suburban Arterials

<u>Number of Lanes</u>	<u>Capacity (50% Green)*</u>	<u>Capacity (65% Green)**</u>
Two	16,000	20,800
Four	31,200	40,600
Six	45,700	59,400
<u>Eight</u>	60,300	78,400

* Assumes 50 percent of green time per signal cycle and is based on methodologies in the Highway Capacity Manual.

** Assumes 65 percent of green time per signal cycle and is based on methodologies in the Highway Capacity Manual.

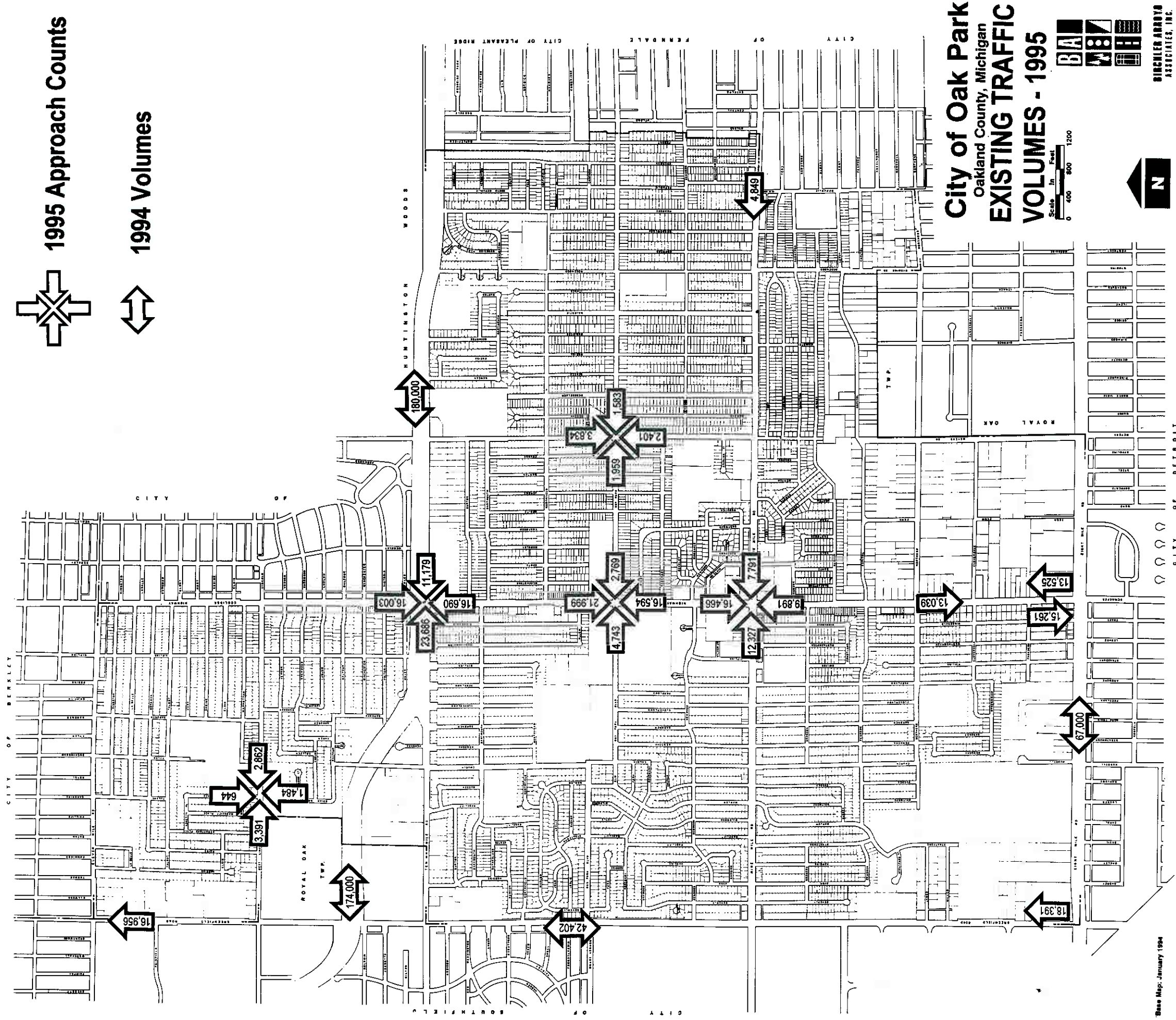


Figure 3-5

The figures reflected on this illustration represent Average Daily Traffic Counts at each location.

Based on a general capacity analysis of major surface streets in Oak Park, only Greenfield Road appears to be close to the maximum capacity guidelines set forth above.

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS AND HAZARD AREAS

In this section a general examination of traffic accident causes, factors that influence traffic safety, and traffic accident trends and conditions in Oak Park will be given.

Causes of Traffic Accidents and Factors that Influence Safety

Many factors influence the frequency and severity of traffic accidents: defects in the roadway or vehicle; violations or unsafe acts by drivers or pedestrians; and difficulties, such as low visibility and slippery conditions, caused by weather. The most frequent cause of traffic accidents is attributed to improper driving. Following too closely, excessive speed, and failure to yield the right-of-way are the principal sorts of improper driving behavior that can cause accidents. More than one-half of the fatal traffic accidents in the United States are attributed to the misuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Although it may seem that weather has a substantial effect on traffic accidents because a high number of accidents can occur during a short period of time, the majority of total traffic accidents take place on dry pavement.

When examining the relationship between increased traffic volumes and accident frequency, the impact of congestion becomes apparent. Studies show that as volume increases, accident rates also increase to a certain point; and then as congestion and volumes continue to rise, the accident rate drops. The peak in one study was found to be 650 vehicles per hour on California highways; another study of two-lane rural roads showed similar results with a peak at about 8,000 vehicles per day.

Roadway design and safety features also affect accident rates. A discussion on several roadway design and safety features follows.

Lane Width. Generally, as vehicle speeds increase the ability of roadway widths to reduce traffic accidents increases. One study illustrated that widening a highway from nine-foot wide lanes to 11-foot wide lanes for 240 miles reduced accidents by 47 percent on high volume roads and by 21 percent on low-volume roads.

Highway Shoulders. Studies have shown that increasing shoulder width can decrease the number of accidents. Motorists traveling on roads with wide shoulders have a stable area on which to drive if their vehicle leaves the edge of the pavement. The shoulder also provides extra room for motorists to swerve away from suddenly stopped vehicles or on-coming collisions.

Horizontal Curves. Curves in roadway pavement increase the possibility of traffic accidents. The most frequent accident type is skidding.

Vertical Alignment. A change in pavement elevation can also have an impact on accident rates. Long, steep grades and steep grade/horizontal curve combinations can greatly increase the frequency of accidents.

Intersections. The design, location, number of approaches, traffic controls and vehicular volume of an intersection influence the number and type of accidents that will occur at a given intersection. For example, an intersection with three approaches is generally safer than one with four approaches because of the reduced number of conflicting movements. The sight distance for the motorists approaching the intersection is also a critical variable.

Speed. The speed at which vehicles travel must reflect an appropriate response to existing road, traffic, and weather conditions in order to minimize the frequency and severity of accidents. On roads designed for high speed travel, high speeds are often safer than slow speeds, provided road and weather conditions are good. However, while decreasing the frequency of accidents, high speeds can increase the severity of accidents. According to the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the following principles apply to speed designation:

1. Motorists govern their speed by existing road and traffic conditions rather than posted speed limits.
2. Speed limits must be enforceable; a majority of motorists should be willing to observe the limit voluntarily.
3. Accidents are more related to the spread in speed (from highest to lowest) than average speed.
4. Speed limits based on study of prevailing speeds and existing road/traffic conditions tend to reduce the spread of speeds.

Other Factors. Other factors that influence speed and safety include night lighting, interchanges, pedestrian crossings, railroad crossings, and median designs. A comprehensive discussion of all these factors is beyond the scope of this report. The general discussion above has been included to provide the reader with some background on the causes of traffic accidents and the influence of safety factors before examining accident data within the City of Oak Park.

Traffic Accident Data and Trends - City of Oak Park

Traffic accident data collected by the Oakland County Traffic Improvement Association (TIA) provides some traffic accident statistics for the City of Oak Park for 1993, 1994, and 1995. In particular, accident frequency at intersections and road link segments will be discussed.

High Accident Locations

Traffic accident data is available for 33 intersections in Oak Park. The table below shows the 10 intersections with the highest accident frequency in the City for the years 1993, 1994, and 1995.

**City of Oak Park
High Accident Locations: 1993 - 1995**

<u>Intersection</u>	<u>Total Accidents</u>	<u>Annual Average</u>
Coolidge/Ten Mile	210	70
Greenfield/Ten Mile	152	50.7
Greenfield/Nine Mile	102	34
Coolidge/Nine Mile	88	29.3
Greenfield/Lincoln	82	27.3
Coolidge/Eleven Mile	78	26
Coolidge/Oak Park Blvd.	74	24.7
Eight Mile (WB)/Greenfield	63	21
Greenfield/Mt. Vernon	54	18
Eleven Mile/Greenfield	43	14.3

Data Source: Traffic Improvement Association Data Center

The TIA also collects accident statistics for the entire County. In 1995, the accident frequency for the top ten intersection accident locations in Oakland County ranged from 140 accidents to 80 accidents. Only one Oak Park intersection appears in the top ten accident locations. In 1995, 82 accidents occurred at Coolidge and Ten Mile, ranking it as ninth in intersection accident frequency in Oakland County for that year. (Note: This is an annual evaluation. The same intersections are not on the list each year.) The previous table shows that the three-year average number of accidents for this intersection is actually lower, suggesting that 1995 was an atypical year. Also, only 53 of these accidents actually occurred in Oak Park: the others occurred in Huntington Woods. An accident frequency of 53 would drop the Oak Park intersection far below the number of accidents experienced at the top ten intersection accident locations.

A commonly accepted "yard stick" by which to define high accident locations is to determine an accident rate per million entering vehicles (MEV) per year at an intersection. With a rate per MEV, intersections can be compared using a common denominator. The fact that a road has a higher traffic volume will not skew the MEV rate. The ten intersections with the highest MEV rate in Oak Park follow.

**City of Oak Park
High Mev Rate Locations: 1993 - 1995**

<u>Intersection</u>	<u>MEV Rate</u>
Coolidge/Ten Mile	6.39
Northend/Wyoming	2.61
Greenfield/ Ten Mile	2.61
Coolidge/Oak Park	2.38
Coolidge/Eleven Mile	2.05
Coolidge/Nine Mile	1.96
Greenfield/Nine Mile	1.39
Greenfield/Lincoln	1.36
Greenfield/Mt. Vernon	1.24
Scotia/Ten Mile	1.08

The Northend/Wyoming intersection has the lowest traffic volume of Oak Park intersections studied. Only 8,730 cars enter the intersection per day, yet it has the second highest MEV rate. This could be attributed to a variety of factors. The intersection is in an industrial area where there is a substantial amount of truck traffic. Trucks often travel at slower speeds and have limited sight

distance behind them and around corners. Several of the industrial and warehouse establishments do not have large turn-around areas in their parking lots, forcing trucks to use the street to change direction. While the low traffic volume indicates that such behavior does not cause traffic flow problems, all motorists should exercise caution and patience when driving in this area.

Compared to the MEV rates for other intersections in the County, the intersection of Coolidge and Ten Mile ranked twenty-third in 1995, which is substantially lower than its ranking as ninth in accident frequency.

TIA data is also available for 22 roadway links, which are road segments between intersections. The ten roadway links with the highest number of accidents in Oak Park follow.

**City of Oak Park
High Accident Locations: 1993 - 1995**

<u>Roadway Link</u>	<u>Total Accidents</u>	<u>Annual Average</u>
Coolidge Nine Mile - Ten Mile	183	61
Coolidge Eight Mile - Nine Mile	128	42.7
Greenfield Eight Mile - Nine Mile	99	33
Greenfield Lincoln - Eleven Mile	89	29.7
Nine Mile Coolidge - Greenfield	79	26.3
I-696 EB Coolidge - Oak Park	70	23.3
Greenfield Nine Mile - Ten Mile	67	22.3
Nine Mile Republic - Scotia	67	22.3
Eight Mile (WB) Coolidge - Greenfield	59	19.7
I-696 EB Oak Park Blvd - Coolidge	58	19.3

When comparing the frequency of roadway link accidents in Oak Park to roadway link accidents in Oakland County, Oak Park's statistics fall well below the County's most troubled areas. The accident frequency for the top ten roadway link accident locations in Oakland County ranged from 181 accidents to 126 accidents for 1995. There was an average of only 61 accidents per year at the roadway link in Oak Park that experienced the most accidents.

Similar to statistics for intersection accidents, roadway link statistics account for traffic volume by using a rate of how many accidents occur per million vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The following is a list of the ten locations within Oak Park that have the highest million VMT rates:

**City of Oak Park
High Million Vmt Rate Locations: 1993 - 1995**

<u>Roadway Link</u>	<u>VMT Rate</u>
I-696 EB Kenosha - Coolidge	18.63
Coolidge Nine Mile - Ten Mile	11.03
Greenfield Lincoln - Eleven Mile	5.33
Coolidge Eight Mile - Nine Mile	4.89
I - 696 EB Coolidge - Scotia	4.82
Nine Mile Hyland - Republic	3.26
Nine Mile Coolidge - Greenfield	3.25
Ten Mile Greenfield - Church	3.05
Nine Mile Republic - Scotia	2.40
Eleven Mile Greenfield - Coolidge	2.38

Both the intersection and roadway link data suggests that Coolidge Highway from Eight Mile Road to Eleven Mile Road is an area that may warrant further study. Although, the Coolidge intersections of Nine Mile, Ten Mile, and Oak Park Boulevard are three of the top ten locations for accidents for the City of Oak Park, they are not extremely high accident locations when viewed in the context of all Oakland County. The intersections of Nine Mile, Ten Mile, Eleven Mile and Coolidge are three of the ten locations with the highest MEV rate in Oak Park. In roadway link data the two one-mile segments of Coolidge from Eight Mile to Ten Mile are two of the top ten roadway links where most accidents occur in the City. The MEV rate indicates that Coolidge from Nine Mile to Eleven Mile has the most accidents per million VMT in Oak Park. When compared to other intersections and roadway links in the County, however, Oak Park does not appear to have serious problems concerning accident frequency.

CONCLUSION

The information presented in this chapter provides the background data necessary to understand existing transportation-related issues and apply this knowledge to future land use and transportation plans to be developed as part of the Master Plan Process. The type of data presented in this chapter is frequently used by the City's police and engineering staff to identify problem areas and design specific corrective measures.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

There are many aspects of Oak Park's historical development that exemplify appropriate land use and positive community character. Stable, tree-lined neighborhoods, attractive garden apartments, City-owned greenbelts, and neighborhood schools, parks and shopping areas easily come to mind.

There are also some excellent examples of redevelopment strategies that have produced positive results. These might include public parking between Eleven Mile and Kingston, the Northland Plaza and Parkwoods Plaza shopping centers, I-696, and the Rothstein and Victoria freeway deck parks, among others.

Oak Park continues to experience many challenges related to maintaining and improving community character. This chapter will attempt to identify some of these challenges and suggest design techniques that could be applied to address the challenges in a positive manner.

GREENBELTS

Oak Park has several greenbelts along major thoroughfares. These greenbelts are a unique resource among communities in the Detroit region.

The principal greenbelts are on:

- ☐ Greenfield Road
- ☐ Nine Mile Road
- ☐ Coolidge Highway

These greenbelts provide a buffer between the rear or side lot lines of houses and the major thoroughfares. In areas where the frontage was developed for retail use, such as the west side of Coolidge south of Nine Mile, the greenbelt area would normally transition into a landscaped area comprised of the street right-of-way and the front yard of the shops. Due to shallow business sites, however, this area was used to develop parking for the businesses.

Inspection of these greenbelts suggests conditions of quality and maintenance ranging from poor to fairly good. (In a range of 1 to 10, most sectors range between 3 and 6 in quality and condition). A major problem is the condition of rear line fences on private residential homesites, many of which are unsightly and in disrepair. Another problem in several locations is the accumulation of litter.

In several areas, such as the Coolidge greenbelt north of Eight Mile Road, there are opportunities for installation of flower beds and additional plant materials, which would add to the beauty of the community.

- ☐ The compost or wood chips pick-up area at Cloverdale and Coolidge could be improved by the addition of an attractive buffer composed of landscape plantings around the area where the chips and soil are stored.
- ☐ The following sketches illustrate concept(s) for uniform screen fencing along the residential property line of the greenbelts and a concept for screening the wood chips pick-up site.

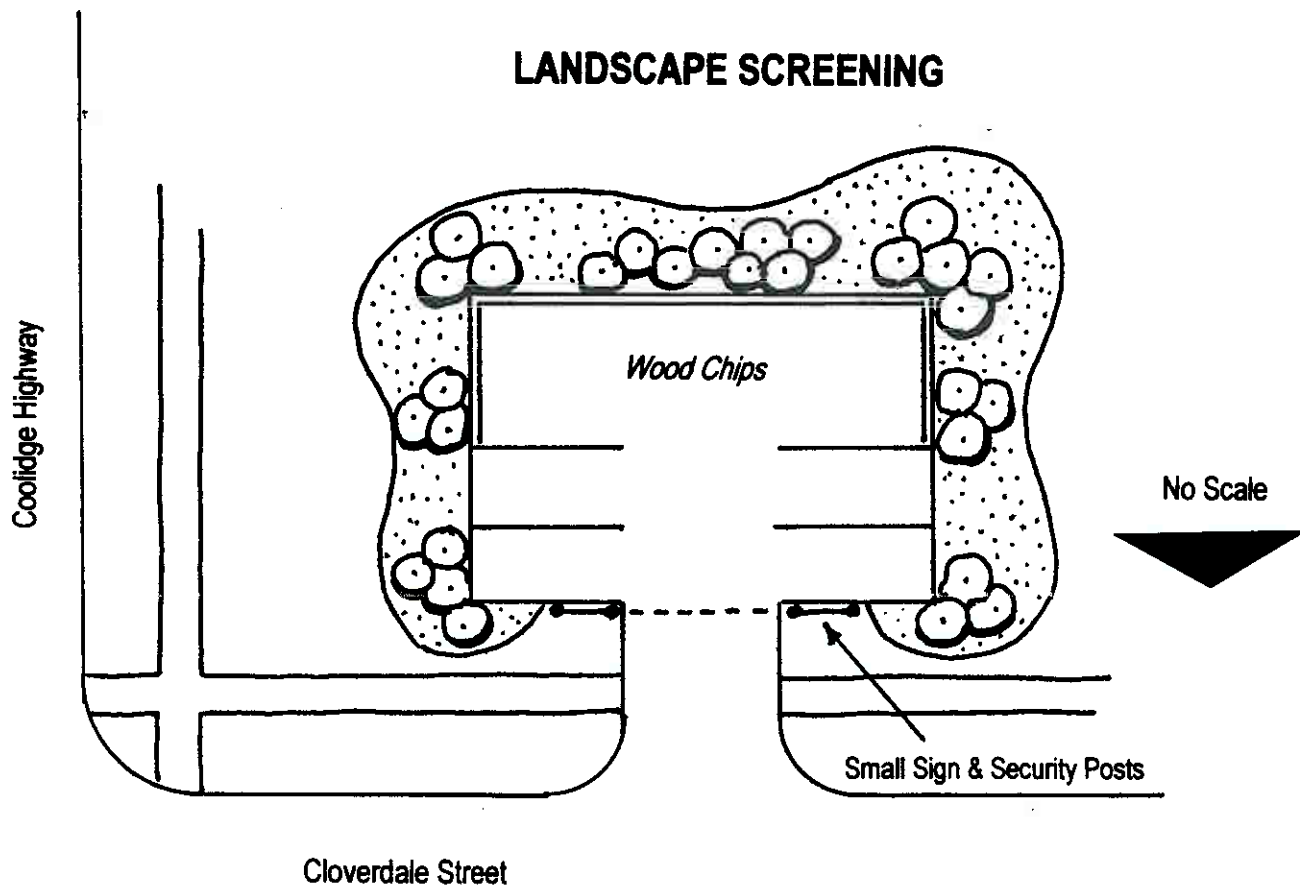
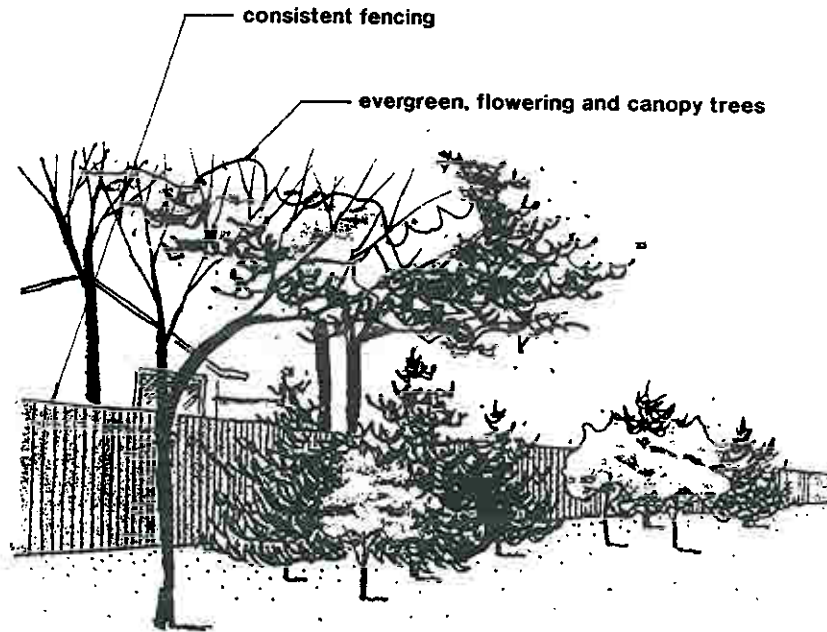


Figure 4-1

CONSISTENT FENCING - RESIDENTIAL GREENBELT



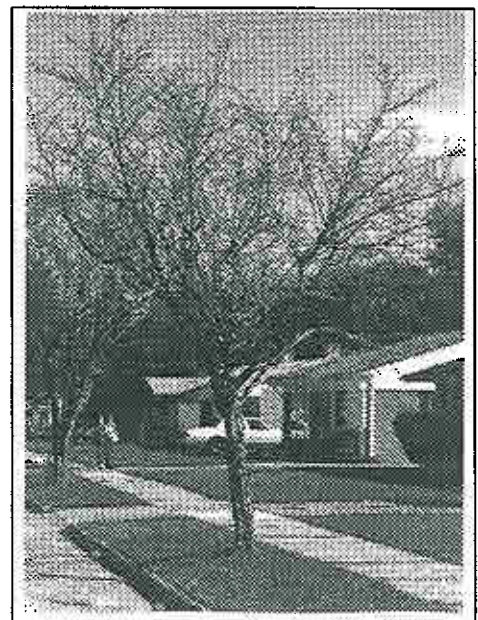
The residential greenbelt is enhanced by consistent color, height and style fencing, and evergreen, flowering and canopy trees

Figure 4-2

STREET TREES

In many neighborhoods of Oak Park, civic foresight resulted in generous planting of streets in the City's formative period from 1955 - 1970. Now, these neighborhoods enjoy the beautiful canopy of mature trees which add to the value and line ability of the homes. Other streets, however, are virtually bare or have experienced disease-related or other loss of street trees.

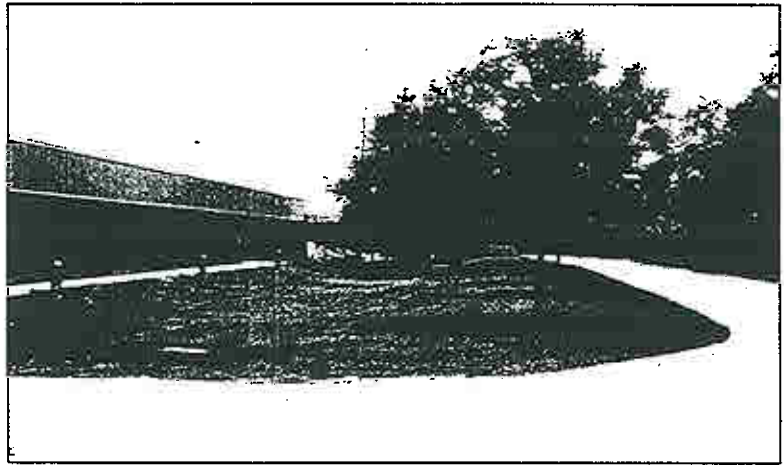
Figure 4-3



An ongoing program of street tree planting, organized to obtain the involvement and support of residents, will help to maintain essential neighborhood character.

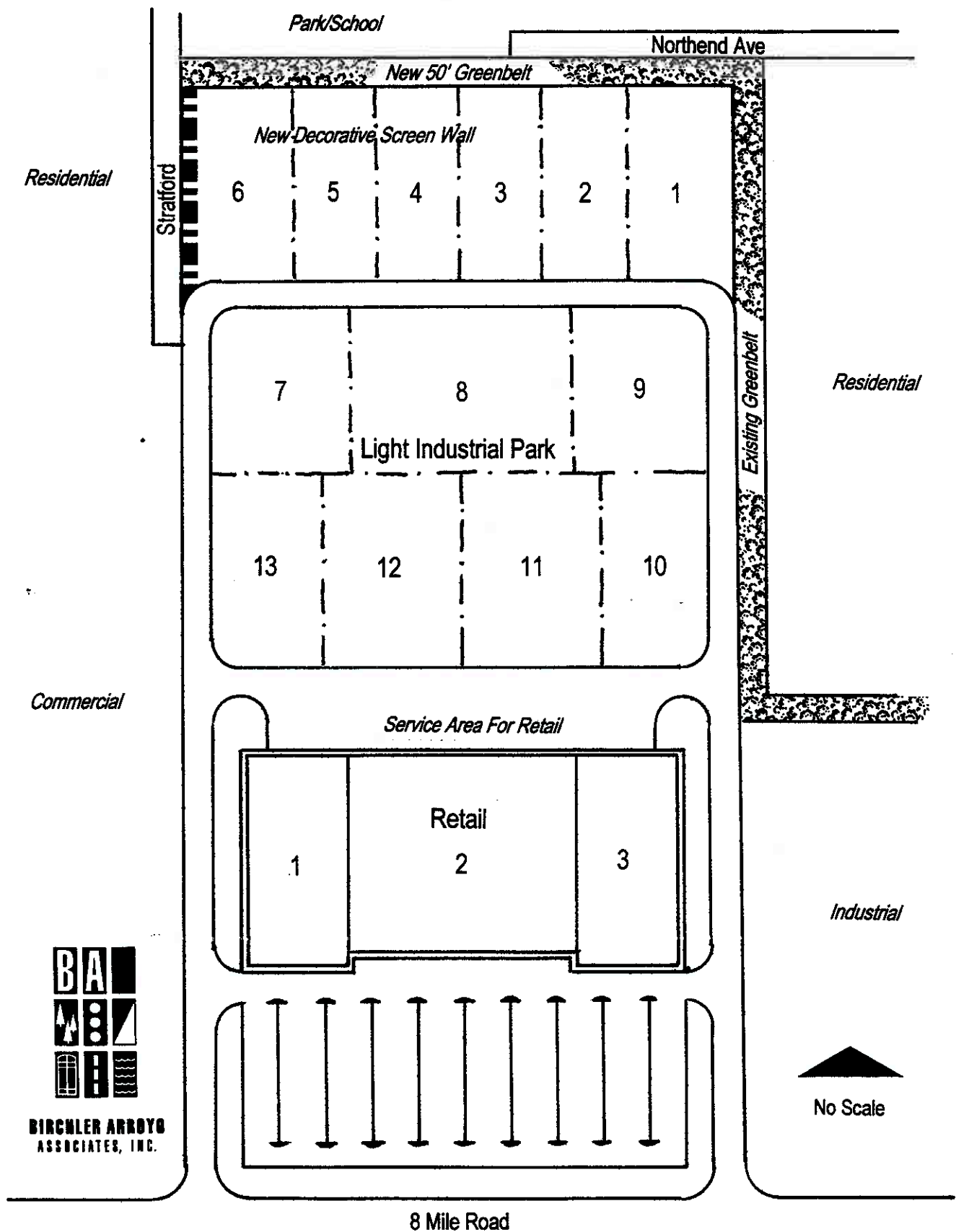
In commercial, institutional, and industrial areas, tree planting both in street rights-of-way, and on private properties presents a cost effective way to improve the attractiveness of the community and the district. The selection of a particular community by small to medium sized industries is frequently influenced by top management's impression of the city as an attractive place to live, work, play and attend school for their families and those of their employees.

Figure 4-4



EIGHT MILE BOULEVARD

Oak Park's Eight Mile Road frontage of 1.5 miles is in a transitional period. The completion of the I-696 freeway a few years ago relieved Eight Mile Road's congestion. Oak Park is participating with thirteen other communities, including Detroit, in a program to revitalize Eight Mile Road. Recent construction of a Kroger-anchored shopping center in Royal Oak Township, and Home Depot in Southfield point to the potential for major development in the corridor. Redevelopment of the National Guard Armory, long discussed, would be a major impetus to revitalizing the frontage. As has been seen from recent Eight Mile developments like Home Depot and the Royal Town Center, retail development is gaining new strength in the corridor. While the rear 40 acres of the armory site may still be well-suited for a modern, light industrial park, the 40 acres on the frontage may be better suited to large scale "big box" retail store development. Store location philosophy of such users often looks for older areas with stable homes that have reached a point in their life cycle where new owners are likely to be involved in major redecorating and renovation projects. Oak Park, Southfield and north Detroit exhibit these same demographic characteristics.



ARMORY REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Figure 4-5

LINEAR COMMERCIAL

There are several linear commercial districts composed mainly of small retail and service establishments. They are principally:

- ☐ Coolidge Highway, west side, south of Nine Mile Road
- ☐ Coolidge Highway, west side, between Ten and Eleven Mile Roads.
- ☐ Nine Mile Road, east of Scotia.

These districts are generally thriving, and include many small businesses which cater to diverse ethnic markets that represent the wonderful diversity of the City's population. The main problems in these districts are:

- ☐ Inadequate or poorly designed off-street parking
- ☐ Adverse relationship of parking and service areas to abutting neighborhoods

(As has been described earlier in this chapter, the greenbelt or setback area of many of these linear retail zones has been developed as parking for the businesses).

There are different ways of dealing with these interrelated problems:

- ☐ Development of parking within the existing linear commercial strip.
- ☐ Improved screening of service areas.
- ☐ Expansion of parking into adjoining residential districts.
- ☐ Provisions of City-sponsored trash receptacles and enclosures to serve businesses.

Refer to the following sketches for visual examples of these techniques.

Unlike some other cities with a similar problem (such as Berkley), the City of Oak Park has not developed any municipal parking lots to serve these linear retail districts, with the possible exception of the right-of-way and front setback areas identified earlier. This has not been the case regarding industrial areas, however. The parking lot between Kingston and Eleven Mile Road frontage was developed several years ago by the City to serve mostly industrial frontage. This parking area, together with its associated screen wall and landscaping illustrates one option for parking to serve linear districts. The most important design component of the Eleven Mile / Kingston project was the maintenance of a landscaped, residential - style front yard along the north side of Kingston.

PARKING EXPANSION FROM STREET CLOSURE

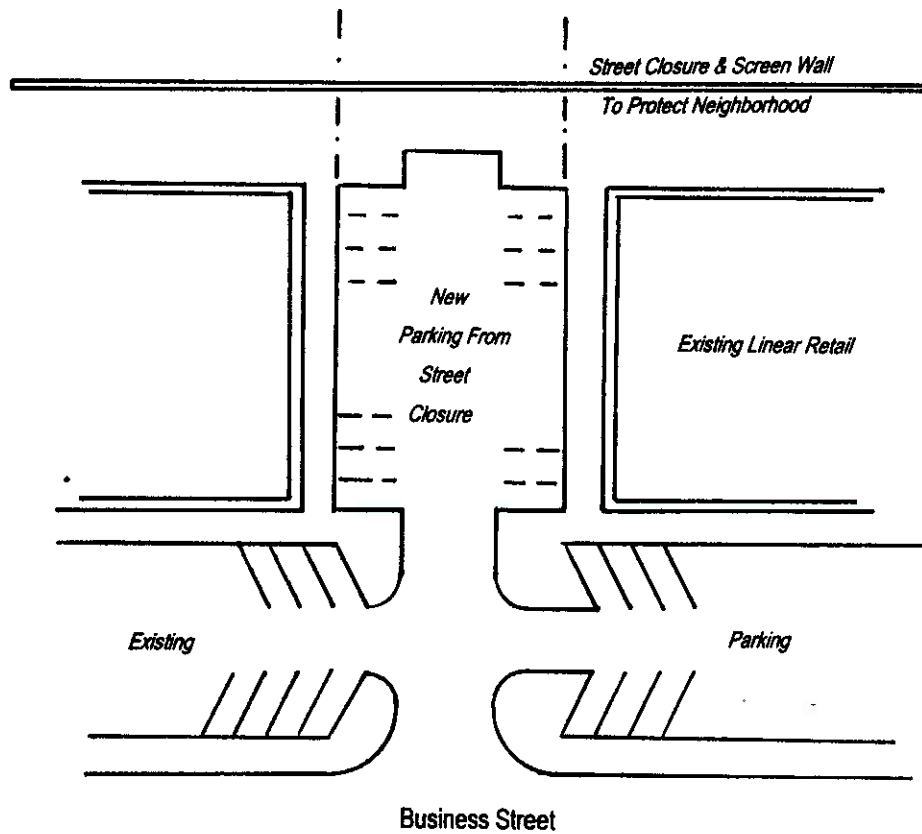


Figure 4-6

CITY - SPONSORED DUMPSTER ENCLOSURE

Business Alleys Adjoining Residential

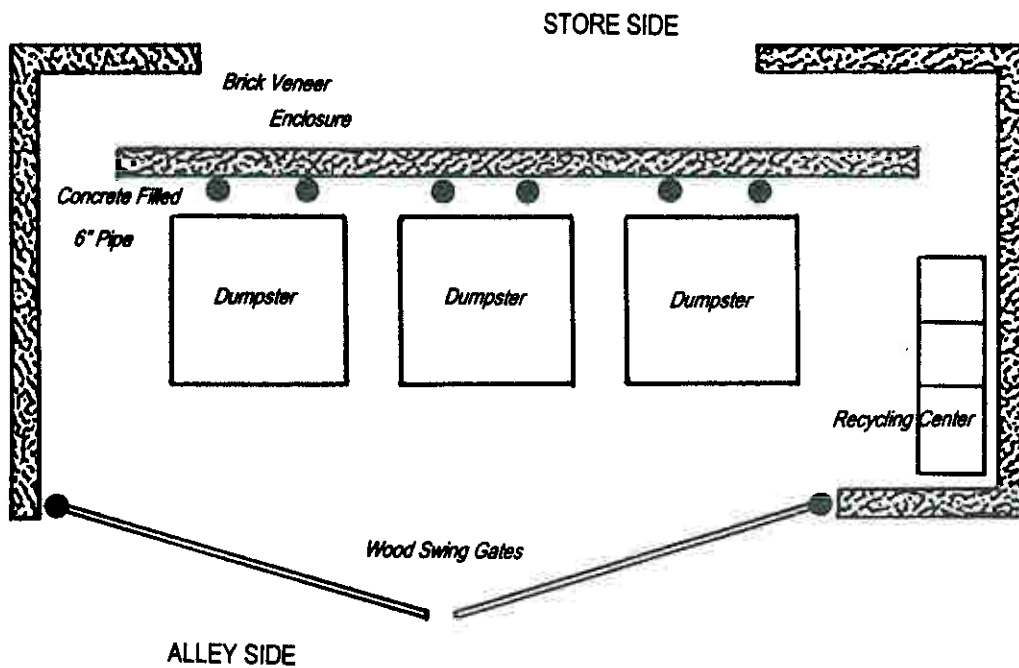


Figure 4-7

Any municipal parking solutions would likely require the financial participation of commercial property owners. If the owners and tenants seek improved parking the most likely method of financing the improvements would be the use of special assessment districts.

STREET SIGNAGE

Berkley has recently installed a system of overhead street signage on Coolidge between 11 and 12 Mile Road which greatly facilitates driver orientation at the more important intersections. Continuation of such signage system along Coolidge through Oak Park and Huntington Woods deserves consideration.

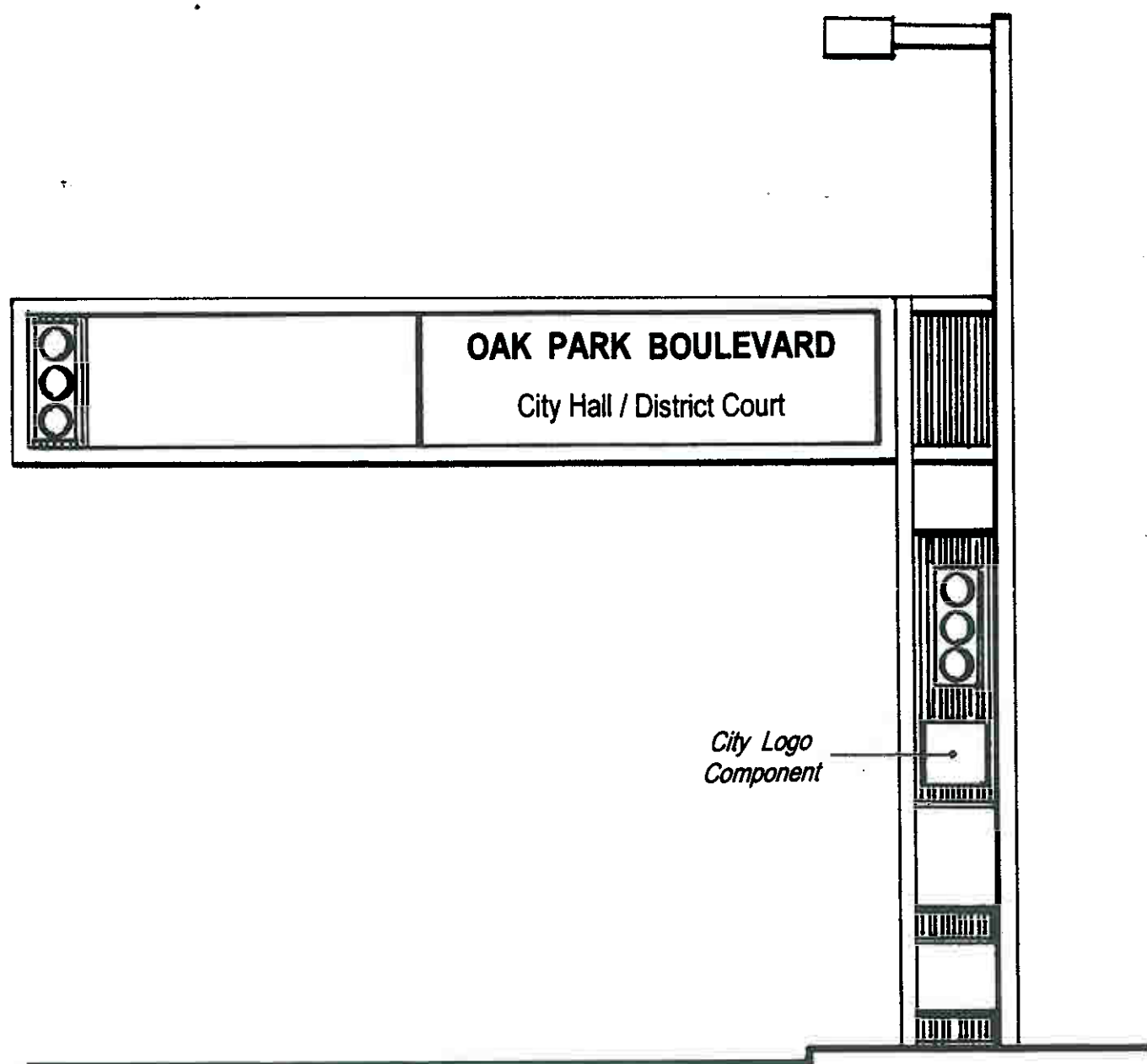


Figure 4-8

HOUSING DIVERSIFICATION

Oak Park would benefit by more diversification in its housing inventory, which is currently characterized by single family ranch homes, mostly between 950 and 1,500 square feet floor area, and rental apartments which by current standards are mostly rather small units. As sites become available for development, such as the Weber Site on the I-696 Ten Mile service drive, consideration should be given to up-scale condominiums or rental apartments.

Recently, the City has experienced a new trend of residents combining lots and demolishing existing homes in order to construct larger, more contemporary houses. This same trend can be seen in area communities like Birmingham, Franklin and Beverly Hills, among others. To-date, this trend has been most evident in the northernmost areas of Oak Park, north of 10 Mile and I-696.

EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

CITY BUILDINGS

The City of Oak Park's administrative office complex is located on Oak Park Boulevard between Coolidge and Church. The complex consists of six structures. City Hall houses the City's administrative offices, the Council Chambers, District Court 45-B Chambers, and the department of Public Safety offices. The General Services building houses the Department of Technical and Planning Services, Water Division, and the Department of Community Services. The Community Center provides large meeting rooms for various city groups and organizations, as well as serving as the meeting place for many of the Senior Citizen programs. It is also home to the Recreation Department. The Library is adjacent to the Community Center. The city complex also sports an ice arena, a swimming pool, and the Department of Public Information, where City information is prepared and distributed. The Department of Public Works has another building on Capitol Street between Meyers and Wyoming.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY: POLICE AND FIRE

The Department of Public Safety is located in City Hall on Oak Park Boulevard. There are 70 full-time officers, who are cross-trained as both police officers and fire fighters. Duties rotate between the officers. The department has 11 police-marked patrol units, and 5 fire trucks, which includes 4 pumper trucks and 1 ladder truck. The Emergency Services Council, a 9-person committee made up of 4 citizens, a City Council Representative, the Director of Finance, Director of Public Safety, Director of Public Works, and the Emergency Services Coordinator, meet once a month to discuss policy and recommendations that will be passed on to the City Council.

The Public Safety Department responded to a total of 20,526 calls in 1994: 18,810 police calls, 325 fire calls, and 1,401 emergency medical calls. The calls for service in 1994 are up slightly from the 1993 totals, while Part I crimes and Part II crimes reported declined by 3.1% and 2.8% respectively during the same period.

There are no precise statistics on the average response time of Oak Park's Department of Public Safety. Due to the relatively small size of the City and the central location of City Hall, the Department's response time objectives are as follows:

- ☐ 2 minutes for emergency calls
- ☐ 10 minutes for non-emergency calls
- ☐ 5 minutes for fire apparatus to arrive on the scene

The City participates in mutual aid, which provides fire and rescue assistance to/from surrounding communities in the event of a major emergency or severe shortage of equipment or personnel.

The City's fire department has not had problems with water availability in the event of a fire. The Insurance Services Organization, an organization which surveys fire department facilities and equipment, has given Oak Park a good rating for the adequacy of its water supply.

The Department of Public Safety offers its services to Oak Park citizens through a variety of programs. The Neighborhood Awareness Programs encourage residents to take an active role in protecting themselves and their neighbors' property. Information is presented to any group who asks.

The Department of Public Safety actively participates in promoting fire safety in October--Fire Safety Month. Presentations are made to kids in elementary and middle schools. Information and presentations are also given to the public on request. Block clubs, day camps, and industry are just a few examples of organizations that request information.

SCHOOLS

There are three school districts that serve the City of Oak Park: Oak Park School District, Berkley School District, and Ferndale School District. Within the City of Oak Park, there are 11 public schools and 6 private schools. The following list of schools identifies each school located in Oak Park by school district, and includes grade level and number of enrolled students.

	<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
<u>Oak Park</u>		
Einstein Elementary 14001 Northend Oak Park, MI	K - 5	471
Key Elementary 400 Jerome Oak Park, MI	Pre-K - 5	330
Lessenger Elementary 12901 Albany Oak Park, MI	K - 5	314
Pepper Elementary 24301 Church Road Oak Park, MI	K - 5	516
Eleanor Roosevelt Middle School 23261 Scotia Oak Park, MI	6 - 8	738
Oak Park High School 13701 Oak Park Oak Park, MI	9 - 12	961
<u>Berkley</u>		
Avery Elementary 14700 W. Lincoln Blvd. Oak Park, MI	K - 5	432

	<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
Norup Middle School 14450 Manhattan Oak Park, MI	6 - 8	494
<u>Ferndale</u>		
Jackson Elementary 23561 Rosewood Oak Park, MI	K - 6	316
Jefferson Elementary 22002 Republic Oak Park, MI	K; 4 - 6	174
Best Junior High School 24220 Rosewood Oak Park, MI	7 - 8	337

RECREATION

The Recreation offices are located in the Community Center building in the city complex on Oak Park Boulevard. The building also has 3 large meeting rooms, 5 small meeting rooms, an arts and crafts room, and kitchen, which are used for the many recreation programs.

The Department consists of 9 full-time employees, 8 part-time employees, and varying numbers of seasonal employees. In the summer, about 100 people are employed as lifeguards, scorekeepers, day camp counselors, etc. During the other seasons, 15-20 people are employed. The Recreation Advisory Board, which consists of the Mayor, 2 members of the Recreation Department, and 7 citizens meet once a month. They make policy recommendations to the City Council.

The table on the following page lists the City parks and the parks located on school grounds that are located in Oak Park and the type of recreation each facility offers. The Recreation Department and the School Districts of Oak Park, Berkley, and Ferndale have agreed to allow each other the use of their respective facilities for free or for a small charge to cover custodial expenses. Victoria and Rothstein Parks, which were built over 1-696 in order to preserve Oak Park neighborhoods, won the 1992 Michigan Municipal League's Municipal Achievement Award.

The Recreation Department also offers organized leisure activities. There are exercise, yoga, and dance classes, athletic events, programs for the physically and mentally handicapped, a summer and winter concert series, and a 10-day Funfest celebration that takes place during the 4th of July.

There are no exact numbers to describe how many people are involved in activities sponsored by Oak Park's Recreation Department. Many activities and events, such as a parade or fireworks show are free, or in the case of the City swimming pool are accessed by a seasonal pass or daily admission. Over 25,000 patrons used the swimming pool in 1995. The City's Recreation

Department Director estimated the number of people who have contact with at least one event or program sponsored by the Department per year to be around 250,000 people.

Senior Citizens Program

The Senior Citizens program in Oak Park is very popular. Approximately 50 seniors eat at the Community Center each weekday, with 30-40 more meals delivered to seniors in their homes. The Department of Recreation provides transportation to the center, and also provides transportation for errands, such as grocery shopping and doctor's appointments. Other services, such as mowing grass and shoveling walks are also provided to Oak Park seniors. The Program also promotes health awareness. Seniors can monitor their blood pressure and visit a podiatrist who comes to the Community Center once a week. The Department of Recreation organizes tutoring sessions, education and enrichment classes, arts and crafts, and volleyball games.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Road Maintenance and Construction

The Department of Public Works is responsible for the maintenance of 86 miles of residential and major streets. This includes the removal of snow and ice along thoroughfares, the construction and maintenance of sidewalks, and new road construction.

Water And Sewer

All of Oak Park is served by public water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer facilities. Water is supplied to Oak Park by the City of Detroit. Although there are problems with combined storm and sanitary sewers in some areas, there are no plans for separation in the future.

Grounds Maintenance

The Department of Public Works staff is responsible for the care of dozens of acres of parks, greenbelts, and other municipal properties. DPW staff also cares for 14,000 city trees. Recently the City of Oak Park's Beautification Committee, with assistance from the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Forestry refurbished the United Nations Tree Stand located at Shepherd Park, which showcase trees from 52 countries. Twenty kwanzen cherry trees have also been planted on boulevards throughout the City. Flyers printed in 3 languages were circulated, resulting in many volunteers, including people from Oak Park's Russian and Chaldean population helping with the tree planting. The Department of Public Works has been responsible for the continuing maintenance of these special trees.

Recycling Program

The City of Oak Park has been providing curb-side recycling in conjunction with garbage pick-up since 1993. The goal of the program is to reach a 60% participation rate. Presently, a large number of items are accepted into the recycling program, including newspapers, magazines, catalogs, brown paper bags, telephone books, plastic jugs and bottles, glass bottles and jars, metal

cans, pie tins, paint and aerosol cans, and household batteries. More products may be added as markets expand.

The City received a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to create a multi-lingual recycling education program. Flyers were distributed in Russian and Arabic to inform non-English speaking Oak Park residents about recycling. The program received statewide and national recognition. The City of Oak Park received a certificate of achievement from the Michigan Municipal League and also received an Honorable Mention from the Michigan Recycling Coalition. National recognition was given by Public Technologies, Incorporated through a program entitled "Winning Solutions '94," in which public entities are cited for their achievements.

The City of Oak Park is also working to encourage recycling in multi-family dwellings. Presently, the Jewish Federation Apartments and Coolidge Apartments have established on-site bins for recyclable materials. The Jewish Federation Apartments are experiencing an 80% participation rate.

In addition to collecting recyclable materials, the City of Oak Park also participates in curb-side collection of yard waste and leaves. The material is hauled to the nearby Southeastern Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority (SOCRRA) and turned into compost, which is made available to member communities and citizens.

LIBRARY

The Oak Park Public Library is located in the municipal complex adjacent to the Community Center. The Library employs a total of 31 employees, including 5 full-time librarians, (including the Director), 6 part-time librarians, 3 full-time clerks, 5 part-time clerks, and 6 part-time pagers.

The Library Advisory Board, a 5-member citizen Commission appointed by the City Council meets monthly. The Library Director and one City Council member serve as ex-officio members. The Commission makes policy recommendations to the City Council, who makes the final decisions about issues concerning the Library.

As of May, 1995 the Oak Park Public Library housed 86,240 books. This figure does not include the volumes written in Russian and Arabic, of which there are about 2,000. The Library also has 1,843 videos, 287 books on tapes and 501 audio tapes. The Library serves 16,170 regular patrons, which is about 53% of Oak Park's population.

The Oak Park Public Library is a member of The Library Network, a consortium of over 55 members libraries located in Wayne, Oakland, Livingston and Washtenaw Counties. These libraries are linked by computer so that patrons can quickly discover which materials are available at other libraries. More computerized access, including Internet capabilities, is planned for the Oak Park Public Library and may be on line as early as fall 1995.

The Library organizes various special programs for its patrons. Story Time for children 3 - 5 years old and Toddler/Parent Story Time for 2-year-olds is offered year-round. There is also a Summer Reading Program for school-age children. The Arts and Cultural Commission organizes activities

for adults, which take place at the Library. They sponsor art exhibits, dramatic readings, and invite contemporary authors to speak.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

The offices and studios of the Department of Public Information are located within the municipal complex. Within their offices the Department has a studio, three offices, equipment storage room, a conference room, and an elevator for the disabled. In addition, a multi-camera/audio live cablecasting system is in operation within City Council chambers. The department has 2 full-time employees, 2 part-time employees, and one intern. The Department's main activity is to provide governmental news to Oak Park citizens. They use 2 primary vehicles to illustrate how Oak Park city tax dollars are being used: a monthly newsletter and 2 cable channels.

The Oak Park Report is a 4-page monthly tabloid that contains news submitted by the various departments in city government. Articles include information about upcoming City events, City programs, road construction or maintenance schedules, and safety information. No articles from private citizens or businesses are included.

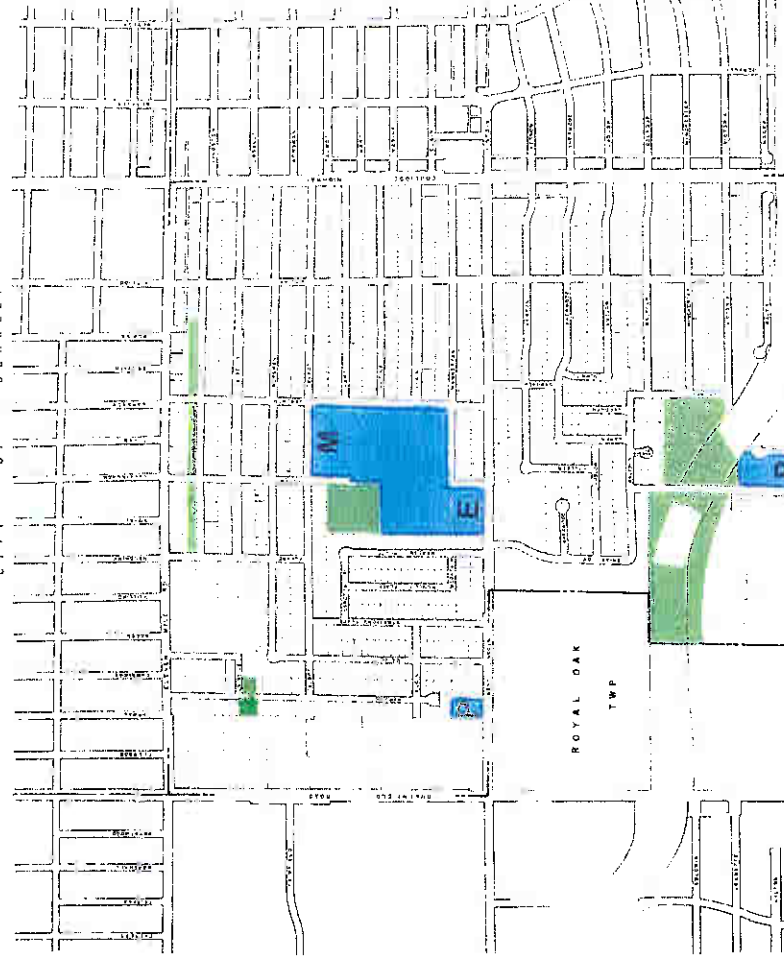
A division of the Public Information Department, Cable Operations, also sponsors 2 cable channels, (channels 15 and 29) which are available to Oak Park residents who subscribe to basic cable. About 68% of Oak Park households are cable subscribers. The cable channels offer live programming of City meetings and a bulletin board-style information board. The Department expects to have a new interactive channel on-line in late 1995. Oak Park cable subscribers will be able to use the keypad on their telephone to access hundreds of informational screens.

The Department also supplies internal technical support to City Departments. The Public Information Department publishes the Annual Report/Calendar and other departmental brochures. Many of the departments publish their own reports and brochures after obtaining advice from the Public Information Department personnel. In the past, the Department has been active in the Sidewalk Repair Program by providing technical support and helpful operational tips in videotaping those sidewalks that need to be repaired. Within this fiscal year, the Cable Operations Division will be purchasing an independent Ku Band satellite receiver for teleconferencing and downloading educational programming for employees.












ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

For the past several years, the City of Oak Park has been undergoing an ambitious reevaluation and reorganization of its administrative structure. The results have been very positive and the impact has been felt in all aspects of city government. The reorganization and new management philosophy has brought about a new openness in government, administration, and management in Oak Park. The new openness extends from the elected officials to the professional staff to the volunteer-appointed officials all the way down to individual citizens. While access to City government was always available, the City's new philosophy has truly opened up government to the community.

CITY OF BERKLEY



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

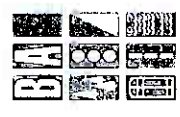
- | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
|  | School |  | Parks and Greenbelts |
|  | Elementary School |  | Department of Recreation |
|  | Middle School |  | Library |
|  | High School |  | Department of Public Works |
|  | Private School |  | Department of Public Safety |
|  | Community Education Center |  | District Court |

ROYAL OAK TWP

HUNTINGTON WOODS



City of Oak Park
Oakland County, Michigan



BIRCHLER ARROYO
ASSOCIATES, INC.

OAK PARK VISION STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The City of Oak Park is at an important crossroads in its development history. In the past 20 years, regional growth and development placed very little pressure on the City. Trends followed Northwestern Highway, I-75 and similar transportation corridors. The modest pressures of development on the City had virtually ended by 1975.

The changing character of regional development on the suburban edge brought new pressure to bear on the Detroit region beginning in the 1980's. The residential growth of northern Oakland County, the emergence of the Oakland Technology Park, construction of the new Chrysler Technology Park, the Palace of Auburn Hills, the I-275 Corridor's growth and similar events suddenly changed commuting patterns in the region. The regional employment center shifted from the central city of Detroit, through Southfield and Oak Park, eventually disbursing into outlying suburbs such as Troy, Auburn Hills, Novi and the like. This shift in employment centers has spawned a new regional phenomenon - cross suburb commuting.

About this same time, construction began on the final link of the I-696 Freeway. In the past, Oak Park's transportation connection to the far east and west suburbs was limited to an overtaxed Eight Mile Road. With the opening of the full length of I-696, Oak Park now has a freeway link from the Lake St. Clair/Detroit River shoreline suburbs on the east to Farmington Hills, Novi and even Ann Arbor to the west. Traffic volumes on Eight Mile Road decreased to a level that is now conducive to improving the business frontage. At the same time, traffic volumes on I-696 have reached an average of 175,000 vehicles per day!

With the City of Oak Park nearly 100% developed, neighborhood revitalization, commercial and industrial redevelopment, and similar strategies to stabilize and improve the community must be tackled by the City's Planning Commission and professional staff. A certain amount of new development and redevelopment will occur in the City without special effort by the community. It is important for local planners and elected officials to insure that all new development makes a positive contribution to the community. The most basic test of whether or not a development is positive involves its compatibility with the local Master Plan. When development and redevelopment projects cause controversy, there may be a signal that reevaluation of the plan is warranted. The City of Oak Park seems to be getting that signal with many, if not all new development and redevelopment proposals.

A NEW VISION OF THE FUTURE

The City's new philosophy of opening the government to its citizens calls for a new approach to planning for the future. One approach that is becoming increasingly more popular involves preceding the planning process with an exercise designed to develop "a vision of the future" for the City. The basic components include the following:

- ☐ Identify the "stakeholders", that is, those groups that have a stake in improving the quality of life in the City.
- ☐ Involve the stakeholders in a process designed to identify what the future should be like in the City.
- ☐ Build consensus among the stakeholders in setting forth the important characteristics of any new planning program.
- ☐ Prepare a vision statement from the stakeholders' consensus that will serve as the underlying direction for the Planning Commission's work of preparing a new Master Plan.

Two meetings were held, at which approximately 25 individuals representing various interests and organizations in the community discussed the future of Oak Park. The following statements have been formulated based on their comments from a short written survey, the consensus presentations by the four vision groups, and general group discussion following the presentations. While the statements of the participants were often specific, the vision statement is intended to present a set of general goals in order to offer a blueprint for the future physical arrangement of the community's land use. Programs, policies, and ordinances are then used as the implementation tools to help achieve the Future Vision.

VISION STATEMENT

The following statements are intended as a guide to provide direction to the Planning Commission as they formulate a new Master Plan for the City of Oak Park. While the participants' were not asked to organize their discussion around any pre-determined topics, many of the same topics continued to emerge from each group and from individual participants. A discussion of each topic follows.

Schools

A general perception exists that the quality of the schools serving Oak Park has deteriorated. While this may be over exaggerated, perception is very powerful and innovation is needed to overcome this perceived deterioration of the educational systems. The City of Oak Park must work to develop a cooperative spirit between the city and the three school districts. Schools are an important reflection on the community, making their educational quality, physical appearance, and facilities maintenance of prime concern to all residents. Attempts should also be made to forge stronger relationships between Oak Park's schools and the business community, similar to the program underway in the Oak Park Schools.

- ☐ A quality school district is an important criterion during selection of a new home.
- ☐ Quality schools are essential to stable property values.
- ☐ Any business - schools alliance should be a business - schools - city alliance.
- ☐ The perceived quality of services provided by the schools impacts the reputation of the City and vice versa. The City and school district need to be able to rely upon one another.
- ☐ An Educational Advisory Board with at least one member from the City Council and the School Board could be appointed as a liaison between City and schools.
- ☐ Additional change must come from school board action.
- ☐ City economic development literature should promote the successes of the community's schools.

Commercial/Business Areas

The City of Oak Park needs to focus on strengthening the heart of its commercial/ business areas. The disconnected linear pattern of the commercial areas does not create a strong, well-defined central business district or the sense of a "downtown." The 9 Mile/Coolidge area is the City's primary shopping district and is especially tired in appearance and lacking in character. Follow-up activities as an outgrowth of the Master Plan should include:

- ☐ Facade enhancement examples of before and after business building renovations
- ☐ Urban Design Plan to create a 9 Mile/Coolidge downtown or town center retail district
- ☐ Analyze the current business mix and survey residents' shopping and personal services needs
- ☐ Inventory available retail and office space and market it to prospective new merchants
- ☐ Evaluate available economic development tools and incentives

Oak Park's commercial areas should be physically improved to create a better image for the City's shopping district. This can be accomplished by:

- ☐ Enhance the pedestrian experience
- ☐ Sign improvements
- ☐ Building facade improvements and code compliance
- ☐ Enclosing dumpsters
- ☐ Stricter code enforcement should receive highest priority
- ☐ Providing more parking - a parking structure may be an appropriate solution
- ☐ The principal shopping district needs a retail post office facility

The City of Oak Park should adopt a proactive attitude to ensure a healthy business community remains in Oak Park. Examples of proactive activities include:

- ☐ Drafting a business retention plan and a plan that targets / recruits new businesses
- ☐ Drawing businesses together in order to learn how the City can assist them

- ☐ Chamber of Commerce or Business Improvement Association
- ☐ Taking advantage of proximity to I-696 as a way to market the City's business sector
- ☐ Reconsidering the City's liquor policy in order to attract more full-service restaurants
- ☐ Develop incentive programs such as sign grants, facade renovation grants, low interest loans, professional design services

Industrial Areas

Oak Park's industrial districts are experiencing too much vacancy, underutilization, and inappropriate activities in some instances. An Industrial Redevelopment Plan and Program should be developed to insure a strong supply of local industrial employment, and a balanced tax base to support resident services. Suggested actions include:

- ☐ Modernization of the 11 Mile Corridor with emphasis on corporate office, research and engineering, warehousing and very light manufacturing
- ☐ Promote the 8 Mile Corridor for larger scale, signature sites of major corporations seeking large development sites
- ☐ Application of modern industrial park planning and design concepts as older areas and facilities are upgraded
- ☐ Continued public investment in upgrading public streets and utilities in industrial zones
- ☐ Lamina and Paramount Boring on 11 Mile provide positive examples
- ☐ Oak Park needs to promote industrial opportunities in the City, including tax abatement policies for new investment

Housing

It is important that housing in Oak Park remain affordable, however neighborhood quality necessitates that housing be well-maintained. Pride in home ownership is evident throughout the City, however, improvement is always possible. Stricter code enforcement is necessary to ensure that houses are kept looking their best. A variety of housing types are required in order to provide for a natural transition of housing appropriate to stage of life. In particular, Oak Park needs additional condominium homes to keep retiring residents in the City.

In order to maintain Oak Park's present identity as a family city, it is important to encourage home ownership. Owner occupancy instills pride, and upkeep of the structure implies commitment to the community and promotes a family atmosphere. Home ownership can be encouraged by improving all aspects of the Oak Park community, creating an attractive city that interests new homeowners.

Aggressive use of the city's rental inspection and landlord licensing ordinances can help to maintain neighborhood quality. Neighborhood conservation and improvement activities should be identified and promoted through awareness programs, code enforcement, City newsletter, and the like.

Safety

The safety of Oak Park's residents and their property should not be at risk from any real or perceived threat. A well-staffed, well-trained public safety department is still important for the community's future. Neighborhood watches should continue to be encouraged and training provided by police and city staff. A sense of confidence and security among the residents of Oak Park will reduce loss of quality residents.

Cultural Amenities

The cultural diversity of Oak Park is perhaps its greatest strength. This diversity should be maintained, encouraged, promoted, and celebrated. Minority representation in all city organizations is imperative to ensure that Oak Park remains a place where all residents feel comfortable and well-represented. The variety of racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds represented in Oak Park, makes it an interesting place to live and visit. The uniqueness of Oak Park needs to be publicized to encourage more people to seriously consider Oak Park as a place to live, work, conduct business and the like.

The artistic talents of Oak Park residents need to be displayed. A city orchestra, theater, artist's studios, a cultural center/museum and similar facilities and organizations could help to celebrate the City's diversity.

City Facilities And Services

Insuring high standards in the maintenance and appearance of public buildings will serve to strengthen a positive image of Oak Park. Oak Park's city services will continue to be a major asset to the community. City officials should resist making cuts in services. Oak Park should market its excellent city services to lure potential new businesses and residents. A study is currently underway to determine the best utilization of space for the City administration offices and the District Court. These efforts should be on-going, rather than one-time, to insure continuation of superior City services.

Recreation

Additional recreation programs in Oak Park should address the needs of the City's youth. Additional after-school activities would be beneficial and involve children in positive after-school experiences. Park maintenance should continue to be a high priority of the City. Rental of city recreation facilities has been a major drawing card yet sometimes results in maintenance headaches. Rental deposits to ensure clean-up may help to address this problem.

Implementation

A blueprint, plan, or vision of the future will only be as good as the techniques employed for its implementation. The Vision program stakeholders suggest the following activities be considered, not to the exclusion of other potential actions:

- ☐ Make solutions happen by budgeting necessary funds
- ☐ Work cooperatively with neighboring communities
- ☐ Develop a plan for merchandising the City of Oak Park
- ☐ Work with the City Assessor and State Tax Commission to identify ways to permit improvement of property without penalty of increased property taxes
- ☐ Future plans for Oak Park should recognize the importance of the City as a part of the greater Detroit metro area
- ☐ Keep citizens involved in the implementation process - use the City's advisory boards and commissions to develop policy directions; convene occasional townhall forums as follow-up activity.
- ☐ Retain a professional team to work on solutions (City staff and special consultants)

Common Themes

The Vision Program stakeholders noted several common themes that appeared throughout the discussion of nearly all topics. These are summarized and highlighted below in order to attach particular emphasis to them:

- ☐ Code Enforcement is appropriate at all levels: neighborhood, business district, schools, and industrial areas.
- ☐ Never Be Satisfied: no matter how good our schools, parks, neighborhoods and businesses are now, they can always be better.
- ☐ Market The Good News: the cultural diversity, quality recreation, solid neighborhoods, excellent regional access, superior City services, and affordable industrial properties are worth tooting our horn about.
- ☐ Work Together As A Team: residents, city fathers, schools and businesses need to play off one another's strengths and benefit from each other's assistance.
- ☐ Keep The Process Alive: through public involvement in implementation and periodic reevaluation, the momentum of the Vision Process can be sustained.

TRENDS, PATTERNS, PROBLEMS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the Planning Commission with a list of observations compiled by the consultant team. These observations resulted from the data collection and analysis phase of the Master Plan program. The consultant team's observations are designed to assist the Planning Commission with the formulation of goals and objectives statements that will form the basis for the land use patterns shown on the Master Plan Map.

AREA TRENDS

As part of the larger Detroit Metro region, Oak Park is closely linked with trends occurring in Oakland, Wayne, and Macomb counties. Regional and local trends identified during the Master Plan program include:

- ☐ Money spent on new construction in Oakland County during 1992 was 36% of the total construction dollars spent in the entire SEMCOG region.
- ☐ Rapid growth in Oakland County was the main impetus for major transportation improvements, such as completion of I-696 and widening of I-75 north of Square Lake Road.
- ☐ Regional transportation improvements benefit Oak Park by providing improved access to job opportunities and giving Oak Park businesses better access to suppliers, customers, and employees.
- ☐ The new east-west regional connection provided by I-696 provides contact between communities as far apart as Farmington Hills and the Grosse Pointes that was nearly non-existent for the past 25 years.
- ☐ Improvements in travel times bring people of the region closer together economically and socially.
- ☐ Rising home prices in the northern and western suburbs tend to exclude first time buyers and some young families from those housing markets.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

- ☐ Oak Park is 98% developed. Very little vacant land remains.

- ☐ Due to the relatively small size of Oak Park's residential lots and modest sales prices of the older houses on those lots, tear downs have become more common in order to make room for new, larger houses.
- ☐ Between 1988 and 1992, Oak Park was third (behind Waterford Township and the City of Novi) in the number of commercial permits granted.
- ☐ The total value of Oak Park's real estate (\$350 million) put it in the top one-third of Oakland County communities.
- ☐ The excess of office space in Oak Park has led to some offices being converted to retail use.
- ☐ The City and MDOT have provided significant new recreation facilities for the enjoyment of its residents.
- ☐ The completion of I-696 has put Oak Park on the regional map. Over 175,000 vehicles pass through the City each day on this state-of-the-art facility.

PROBLEMS OR CHALLENGES FOR PLANNERS

As the metro region and the City of Oak Park continue to change and evolve, professional and lay planners are presented with a host of problems and hurdles. It is important to view these problems as "challenges," rather than insurmountable obstacles. Challenges can have positive results while obstacles are usually viewed with despair.

- ☐ Establishing "confidence" in southeastern Oakland County requires cooperation of over a dozen municipalities, each with its own ideas and programs.
- ☐ Some Oak Park business and industrial uses do not provide proper screening from residential uses, resulting in higher rates of deteriorating housing and adverse effects on livability and neighborhood character.
- ☐ The reputation of the public schools has discouraged some people from moving to Oak Park.
- ☐ Due to their age, outdated marketing, and lack of a local merchants association, many of the stores in Oak Park lack the vitality of the nearby shopping centers and malls.
- ☐ The glut of new office space in the metro area coupled with a lack of amenities and high rental rates in Oak Park's office buildings has led to high office vacancies.

- ☐ The median and per capita income in Oak Park is below the County average.
- ☐ The lack of condominiums in Oak Park may cause the City's senior population to look elsewhere for housing when they choose to leave their present houses for an ownership option that affords lower maintenance. Other options for development or redevelopment of new, single family condominiums should also be investigated.
- ☐ Residents and businesses need a positive climate to encourage maintenance, improvement, and reinvestment.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The most difficult task of any planning program is identifying ways to capitalize on opportunities that reverse negative development patterns and trends. The secret always seems to be related to identifying the positive aspects of the trends associated with local and regional change. Change must be viewed as a natural, evolutionary process. The fact that circumstances in the community change does not automatically mean that all change is bad. There are a number of opportunities available to Oak Park that result from ongoing change locally and regionally.

- ☐ The opening of the final segment of I-696 provides convenient, new contact with other suburbs. It also serves as a good advertiser for Oak Park. There are 2 exits that identify Oak Park to freeway drivers.
- ☐ Rising home prices in the northern and western suburbs makes Oak Park attractive to young families and first time home buyers. The City's neighborhoods are still basically sound and easily marketed to this segment of buyers.
- ☐ Oak Park's well-designed apartments could be converted to condos as the need for senior citizen housing becomes even more pressing. Other options for new condo construction may exist on a few vacant sites or as a redevelopment option on strategically important properties.
- ☐ Providing uniform, attractive barriers between residential neighborhoods and business/industrial areas will provide improved identity and pride for both sides of the fence.
- ☐ Oak Park businesses can develop merchandising techniques similar to those used in malls to improve the shopping climate of the City. Techniques include pooling advertising dollars, keeping the same store hours, and updating store fronts. Some type of formal organization, such as a downtown development authority, merchants association, and/or chamber of commerce, may be needed to lead such a renaissance.

- ☐ Strict developmental controls on office-retail conversions can ensure quality developments.
- ☐ The diversity in Oak Park's population makes it a very interesting place to live and visit. The strong Jewish, African-American, Chaldean, and Arab populations provide an eclectic mix of race, culture, and religion in a relatively small land area. This diversity is exciting and provides a strong marketing base.
- ☐ In the City's recent Vision Program, citizens outlined a future vision for Oak Park. The Planning Commission now has a valuable tool in directing the future of the City.
- ☐ As was noted repeatedly during the Vision Program, a strong and well-coordinated program of code enforcement will benefit the City's neighborhoods, shopping districts, office corridors, and industrial districts.
- ☐ The City needs an identifiable "center", especially related to shopping and personal service needs of its resident population. The Nine Mile and Coolidge area provides the base for redevelopment of a town center that could borrow from the successes of more traditional small city downtowns.

CONCLUSIONS

From the consulting team's perspective, opportunities abound in Oak Park. Building upon its strong tradition of affordable housing, stable neighborhoods, recreational amenities, and central location, recent regional trends of deteriorating housing and neighborhoods can be halted. In fact, a strong program and plan for neighborhood and business enhancement could project an image to the region of Oak Park as the location where change is measured by success rather than decline, and excellence is the vision of City officials and residents alike.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

The goals and objectives formulated by the Planning Commission are the cornerstone of the planning process. They are intended to provide the basic framework for public and private decision-making. The Master Plan's arrangement of future land uses is based on the community goals for the future. As such, the goals will effectively direct both public and private decisions regarding land use and development.

PURPOSES OF THE MASTER PLAN

The purposes of the Master Plan are:

1. To improve the physical environment of the City as a setting for human activities and promote the general health, safety and welfare by making the City more functional, beautiful, decent, healthful, interesting, and efficient.
2. To promote the public interest and the interest of the community at large, rather than the interests of individuals or special groups within the community.
3. To facilitate the democratic determination and implementation of community policies and physical development. The plan is primarily a policy instrument. The plan constitutes a declaration of long-range goals and objectives and provides the basis for a program to accomplish the goals.
4. To effect political and technical coordination in community development.
5. To inject long range considerations into the determination of short-range actions.
6. To bring professional and technical knowledge to bear on the making of decisions concerning the physical development of the community.

POLICY BASIS

Only through careful analysis of existing conditions and the forces which have brought them about, can the City understand their interrelationship, identify their underlying purposes, anticipate future problems, and devise solutions.

Accordingly, the community identifies its objectives by relating them to current problems and issues and to tangible alternative solutions. At the same time, the City must attempt to anticipate future

problems, and recommend the steps necessary to prevent their development or reduce their severity.

POLICY PURPOSE

Administration by City officials, legislative action by City Councils, quasi-judicial rulings by the Zoning Boards of Appeals, and administrative action and recommendations by Planning Commissions are frequently criticized as being capricious and arbitrary. Clear-cut statements of policy can go far to minimize the apparent arbitrariness of certain planning and planning related actions. They can guide and substantiate honest intelligent decisions. They can also serve the City's planning department and the Planning Commission as an anchor of objectivity. Policy statements also serve to inform the public about the Planning Commission's thoughts about land development.

DETERMINING POLICY

The Master Plan is not just a series of maps. Rather, it is first a series of statements describing the City's goals and objectives. They cannot cover every situation. Certain areas are so complex that it will be impossible to know what sort of policy decision can be made until all the facts are assembled. Also, there must be agreement and consensus in the first place before such statements can be adopted. Obviously, this concurrence will not always exist. None of this negates, however, the desirability of formulating and adopting goals and objectives statements in as many areas of planning concern as possible.

GENERAL COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- GOAL:** Maintain and protect the physical appearance of Oak Park's residential, commercial, and industrial areas.
- OBJECTIVES:**
- Strictly enforce city building codes for all land uses to bring below-standard buildings up to code.
 - Encourage screening and landscaping between incompatible uses.
 - Provide incentives to building owners to improve their property.
 - Continue upkeep of public medians, greenbelts, and rights-of-way.

HOUSING

- GOAL:** Maintain the quality of Oak Park's residential neighborhoods.
- OBJECTIVE:** Ensure that existing residential structures are well-maintained through code enforcement.
- Encourage home ownership in order to maintain Oak Park's identity as "the family city." Owner occupancy instills pride and fosters better maintenance of the structure.
- Pursue funding for a neighborhood maintenance and "fix-up" program designed to help residents fund needed improvements.
- GOAL:** Provide all residents of the City with opportunities for quality housing.
- OBJECTIVES:** Encourage and maintain a balanced variety of housing types including single family, two-family, apartments, and special senior citizen housing.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

- GOAL:** Strive to lower the vacancy rate in Oak Park's industrial districts, encourage improvement and/or redevelopment of older industrial areas, and encourage new industrial development in areas having the least impact on residential areas.
- OBJECTIVES:** Develop an Industrial Redevelopment Plan to insure a strong supply of local industrial employment and a strong tax base.
- Encourage the location of new industrial development in existing, improved industrial parks with vacant lots or buildings.
- Promote industrial opportunities in the City, including tax abatement policies for new investment.
- Continue public investment in upgrading public streets and utilities in industrial zones.
- Employ modern industrial park planning and design concepts when older facilities are upgraded.

Encourage the modernization of industrial uses on 11 Mile with emphasis on corporate office, research and engineering, warehousing, and light manufacturing.

Relocate the heavier industrial uses away from perimeter areas adjoining residential neighborhoods. The 8 Mile Corridor would serve well for the larger scale, signature sites of major corporations.

Work to eliminate the external impacts of industrial uses on residential areas through code enforcement, improved screening, and special programs designed to encourage private investment in visual enhancements.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: Improve the physical appearance of Oak Park's commercial areas.

OBJECTIVES: Encourage facade enhancements of older commercial buildings, especially those along 9 Mile/Coolidge. Examples of "before" and "after" building renovations may help to incite action.

Encourage sign improvements and sign code enforcement.

Improve the physical image of commercial areas for pedestrians through well-maintained sidewalks, benches, attractive trash receptacles, and street trees.

Require that all dumpsters be properly enclosed and screened.

Develop incentive programs such as sign grants, facade renovation grants, low interest loans, and professional design services.

GOAL: Strengthen the quality and identity of the commercial/business areas of Oak Park.

OBJECTIVES: Analyze the current business mix and survey residents' shopping and personal service needs.

Develop an Urban Design Plan to create a strong town center retail district.

Evaluate available economic development tools and incentives.

- GOAL:** Retain and recruit new businesses to Oak Park.
- OBJECTIVES:** Inventory available retail and office space and market it to prospective new merchants.
- Draft a Business Retention Plan and a plan that targets and recruits new businesses.
- Encourage the activities of the Chamber of Commerce, a Business Improvement Association, Merchants Association, Downtown Development Authority, or similarly structured organization.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- GOALS:** Provide police, fire protection, and emergency medical services that adequately meet the community's current and future needs.
- OBJECTIVES:** Resist making cuts in the outstanding package of city services that Oak Park provides.
- Market the city's outstanding services to potential residents and businesses to ensure the continuity of the tax base that provides these services.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

- GOAL:** Maintain existing parks and open space to preserve these resources for current and future residents of all age groups.
- OBJECTIVES:** Use all available State and Federal grant programs to stretch the City's available recreation dollars.
- Provide additional after-school activities for Oak Park's youth.

ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

GOAL: Strive to minimize through-traffic disruptions on thoroughfares, while keeping through traffic off the local residential streets.

OBJECTIVES: Promote a system of roads that is easily maintained.

Limit the number of driveways and curbcuts on major and secondary thoroughfares to the minimum necessary to provide for safe ingress and egress.

Promote the development of joint-use driveways and internal connections between adjoining businesses to reduce the number of curb cuts on major thoroughfares.

LAND USE PLAN

"Make no little plans,.... They have no magic to stir men's blood...."
Daniel Burnham, Architect and City Planner of Chicago, Illinois

INTRODUCTION

The Land Use Plan for Oak Park describes, in a generalized manner, those areas considered most appropriate for residential, office, commercial, industrial, public, and recreation uses. Because Oak Park is very near its capacity development, the most important characteristic of the Land Use Plan are its aggressive recommendations for redevelopment of key areas of the City.

The overriding goal of the Land Use Plan is the promotion of those characteristics of the City that stands out as examples of sound planning. All of the development and redevelopment proposals are intended to help upgrade and improve the City's already strong neighborhoods, enhance its industrial employment base, modernize declining commercial and office areas, and continue to provide superior recreation facilities and programs. The City's tradition of providing the highest quality municipal services was the catalyst for re-evaluation and reinforcement of the City's plan for future development, with special emphasis on redevelopment of areas at-risk for deterioration as well as those in transition.

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

A number of basic concepts are incorporated into the development scheme for Oak Park, including:

- ☐ The neighborhood unit concept for provision of recreation and school facilities and for the grouping of residential uses into a physical area with which residents can identify.
- ☐ Modern industrial parks and readily identifiable industrial corridors, grouping businesses together in high profile, corporate settings with Class A transportation, utilities and municipal services.
- ☐ Redevelopment of the Coolidge / 9 Mile commercial core to function as a Town Center shopping area.
- ☐ Planned shopping centers for neighborhood and community shopping needs, at locations that provide good access while discouraging heavy traffic through neighborhoods.
- ☐ Improvements to and redevelopment of linear commercial and office corridors, including uniform screening for adjoining residential areas and targeting uses that provide local services and consumer goods.

- ☐ Redevelopment of the 11 Mile Road industrial corridor by relocating intensive uses to the City's primary industrial district and replacing them with warehousing, corporate office, and business service uses.
- ☐ Development of transitional zones where new uses, such as local offices or higher density housing, will provide a much needed buffer for neighborhoods suffering from the external effects of misplaced business and industry.

LAND USE ARRANGEMENT

The Land Use Plan illustrates the general relationship between the various future land uses in Oak Park. The Land Use Plan combines the information in the basic data studies and the Planning Commission's Goals & Objectives, into an arrangement of future land uses that best portrays the community's goals and potential. Each of the categories in this general pattern for the City's future development is described briefly in the following sections.

Single Family Residential

All single family residential development will continue to associate with one of the City's 6 distinct neighborhoods. The plan provides secure boundaries for each neighborhood, proposes redevelopment of incompatible use that have pierced neighborhood boundaries, and proposes that minimum standards for neighborhood recreation space and facilities be adhered to in all future plans and programs. In-fill development of vacant residential lots will be promoted and the neighborhoods will be characterized by high quality, affordable housing, especially for young families with school aged children. New homesites are in short supply and high demand in Oak Park. Redevelopment of larger, underutilized parcels should be encouraged wherever possible.

Higher Density Single Family Residential

The City of Oak Park is currently unable to offer modern one and two-story condominium homes, especially attractive to older couples and single professionals. The following two areas may be well suited to this type of use:

- ☐ Special Project G on 10 Mile near Harding
- ☐ Special Project F on the former Weber Brothers Nursery site.

Multiple Family Residential

Recognizing the need for a balance of land uses and choice and variety of housing types, the Land Use Plan sets aside substantial areas for apartments, senior high rise, attached townhouses, and

similar multiple family dwelling types. Two key redevelopment areas propose multiple family as the ultimate use. These include:

- ☐ Special Project E is suggested for redevelopment with upscale townhomes or apartments.
- ☐ The south half of the Temple Emanu-El site on 10 Mile may provide an area for new mid-rise apartment development, due to its proximity to important cultural and recreation facilities.

Office

The City's primary office corridor is located along Greenfield between Miller and Kenwood. Due to the overbuilding of office space in the metro area during the late 1980's and early 1990's, much of the Greenfield Corridor office space has become "secondary" space. It does not compete well with new construction offering modern layout, new interiors, lease incentives, and the like. The City's Greenfield Corridor Plan establishes criteria for improving the corridor's image. As vacant space is absorbed throughout the region, this area will likely experience a rebirth by being able to offer a quality location and lower lease rates.

Commercial

The Land Use Plan emphasizes the need for improvements to the function, appearance, size of available sites, and range of goods and services in the City's linear commercial corridors. Highlights of the Land Use Plan's commercial proposals include:

- ☐ The Eight Mile Corridor has significant redevelopment potential for "big box" retail stores and large scale sales and service uses.
- ☐ The Nine Mile and Coolidge Highway area holds the potential to become a real "town center" or downtown shopping area for the City. Circulation, parking, facade enhancement and public space improvements are needed.
- ☐ The East Nine Mile Corridor provides much needed goods and services to nearby neighborhoods. Enhancements are needed, however, to provide better screening of the commercial activities from the adjoining residential homesites.

Industrial

The industrial proposals of the Land Use Plan continue the City's tradition of providing a Class A environment for business and industry in a physical setting that protects the residential neighborhoods. To enhance this tradition, the Land Use Plan proposals include:

- ☐ Developing the rear of the Armory property on Eight Mile for new, modern industrial park sites, including extension of the City's greenbelt concept along the perimeter.
- ☐ Upgrading the Eleven Mile Corridor by focusing on corporate office, engineering, research and light warehousing uses.
- ☐ Concentrating the heaviest industrial activities in the City's primary industrial area east of Coolidge and South of Capitol.

Public and Schools

The public and schools category has the straightforward purpose of maintaining the City's history of high quality public services and its system of neighborhood schools. Overall, the Land Use Plan intends to maintain Oak Park as a very livable city with strong neighborhoods of affordable housing. By keeping the City attractive to young families, school enrollment will stabilize and the neighborhoods schools can be maintained.

Public facilities included on the plan are the civic center complex with its governmental offices, court, police, fire, and library services; the senior citizen center; and public works yard.

Recreation

The Land Use Plan recommends continuing the City's established system of neighborhood parks, community park-playfields, and linear greenbelts. The City should work, through grant programs and agreements with developers, to meet any special needs identified in the previously adopted Recreation Plan.

Special Project Areas

The following are brief descriptions of the several residential, commercial, and industrial areas identified as Special Projects on the Land Use Plan Map. Most of these Special Project Areas would require more refined, detailed development concepts at a later date.

Special Project Area A. The Town Center Special Study Area is composed of the City's core retail development at the Nine Mile and Coolidge Highway intersection. This area is physically central to the City and has the basic skeleton necessary to function more like a traditional downtown. Previous efforts to unify public space, landscaping and street furniture has become somewhat dated in appearance. This is also true of many of the building facades. Analysis of this area should extend to the Oak Park Schools administrative / community education complex, including the residences on Westhampton and Ridgedale. This area would benefit from parking, circulation and landscaping improvements, image upgrade, organization of the merchants, a unified marketing plan, and the like, in conjunction with facade improvements to individual stores.

The concept sketch illustrates an expansion of McClain "Circle" to encompass all four quadrants of the intersection. This road feature serves to reinforce perimeter circulation. New retail stores in the northeast quadrant could establish a new "streetscape" for the area, consistent with a more traditional downtown appearance (store brought up to the sidewalk, parking at the rear). Several public plazas are illustrated. A new intersection alignment is proposed for the McClain Circle service road to connect the northwest and southwest quadrants. This new alignment would facilitate an appropriate pedestrian connection across 9 Mile where none presently exists. The shortening of Westhampton and Ridgedale helps to solidify the single family neighborhood while providing space for new public parking, expanded retail space, and additional office sites.

Granzon street is shown extending east-west between the two south quadrants. It would become the central street of the new townhomes complex in the southeast quad.

Special Project Area B. The East Nine Mile Neighborhood Retail Improvement Area deserves detailed study due to its linear impact on a significant portion of two large neighborhoods. Expanded parking, facade enhancements, and neighborhood protection, via strategic street closures and uniform screening, are warranted throughout this area.

Special Project Area C. The northeast corner of Greenfield and Eight Mile, including the frontage of the Armory site, is identified as an important commercial redevelopment site. The redevelopment of Northland Plaza Shopping Center to the north has proven successful. As the Community Character chapter pointed out, the frontage of the Armory site may be suited to development for "big box" retail stores. The remaining area to the east along Eight Mile and Greenfield is presently characterized by a mix of office, retail, warehouse and industrial uses. If redeveloped, this area could provide for extension of the Greenfield Plaza and Armory concepts, multi-screen theater site, or similar uses.

Special Project Area D. The redevelopment area immediately east of Special Project Area C is composed of the former drive-in movie site, the auto dealer, former lumberyard and frontage retail to the west. The new United States Postal Service facility recently moved to this area, thereby setting the tone for larger-scale, service uses. Redevelopment of this area could provide space for one or two large scale users and/or future expansion of the auto dealership.

Special Project Area E. The east side of Coolidge running west to Dante Street, between Granzon and Albany, has been identified as a potential location for redevelopment. As a companion to the Town Center Special Project Area A (described earlier in this section) this area appears suitable for attached single family housing or new apartment development. More modern units could be offered than those presently available in the City. The proximity to the City's primary neighborhood shopping area makes this location particularly well-suited for older residents. A townhomes development, at a density of 15 to 20 units per acre, would also provide new impetus for the commercial redevelopment of the Town Center area.

Special Project Area F. The former Weber Brothers Nursery site on 10 Mile Road is also suitable for addressing the need for more opportunity in types of housing. A single family condominium project of one and two stories would be appropriate at this location, compatible with the surrounding single family neighborhood.

Special Project Area G. The frontage along the south side of 10 Mile, between Harding and Radcliff, has been identified as having potential for land assembly and development for attached single family housing. This type of housing is much needed in Oak Park and would improve the diversity of the City's housing stock as well as provide new opportunity in the choice of housing type, especially for retired residents. A density of about 6 units per acre would be desirable.

Special Project Area H. The deep front yard of the Temple Emanu-El synagogue property on Ten Mile between the Federation Apartments and Church Street has been designated Special Project Area H. This site appears to have potential for new low-rise, luxury apartment development. This particular type of residential use is not presently available within the City. By promoting a small scale development of this type, some of the City's older residents who are interested in this option after retirement would have additional opportunities to remain residents of Oak Park.

Special Project Area I. The Eleven Mile Road Industrial Corridor has been identified for redevelopment analysis. This area impacts a lengthy border with a stable north Oak Park neighborhood and acts as a front door to the City along its northern boundary. A basic concept of promoting industrial research and corporate office uses is suggested, along with enhancement of the Eleven Mile Road streetscape. The site improvements underway at Lamina, Inc. and the Phase 3 plans of Paramount Boring provide potential examples for streetscape enhancement designed to upgrade the aesthetic image of this particular business corridor. Some of the potential corridor improvements include:

- ☐ Eliminate parking in front yards to encourage the underutilized public parking to perform more effectively.
- ☐ Improve screening along the common border with residential.
- ☐ Re-open alleys where circulation to parking areas would be improved.
- ☐ Develop standards for dumpster placement/screening to get them out of the alley circulation lanes.
- ☐ Post the alleys for No Parking to encourage use of the public parking lot.

Special Use

The radio tower site on Greenfield south of Ten Mile is not easily placed in any other land use category. This site should not be redeveloped for another use until such time as the existing tower

is removed. At that time, special study would be required to integrate a new use of this property into the surrounding neighborhood area.

CONCLUSION

The Land Use Plan for Oak Park is intended to provide the City with the following:

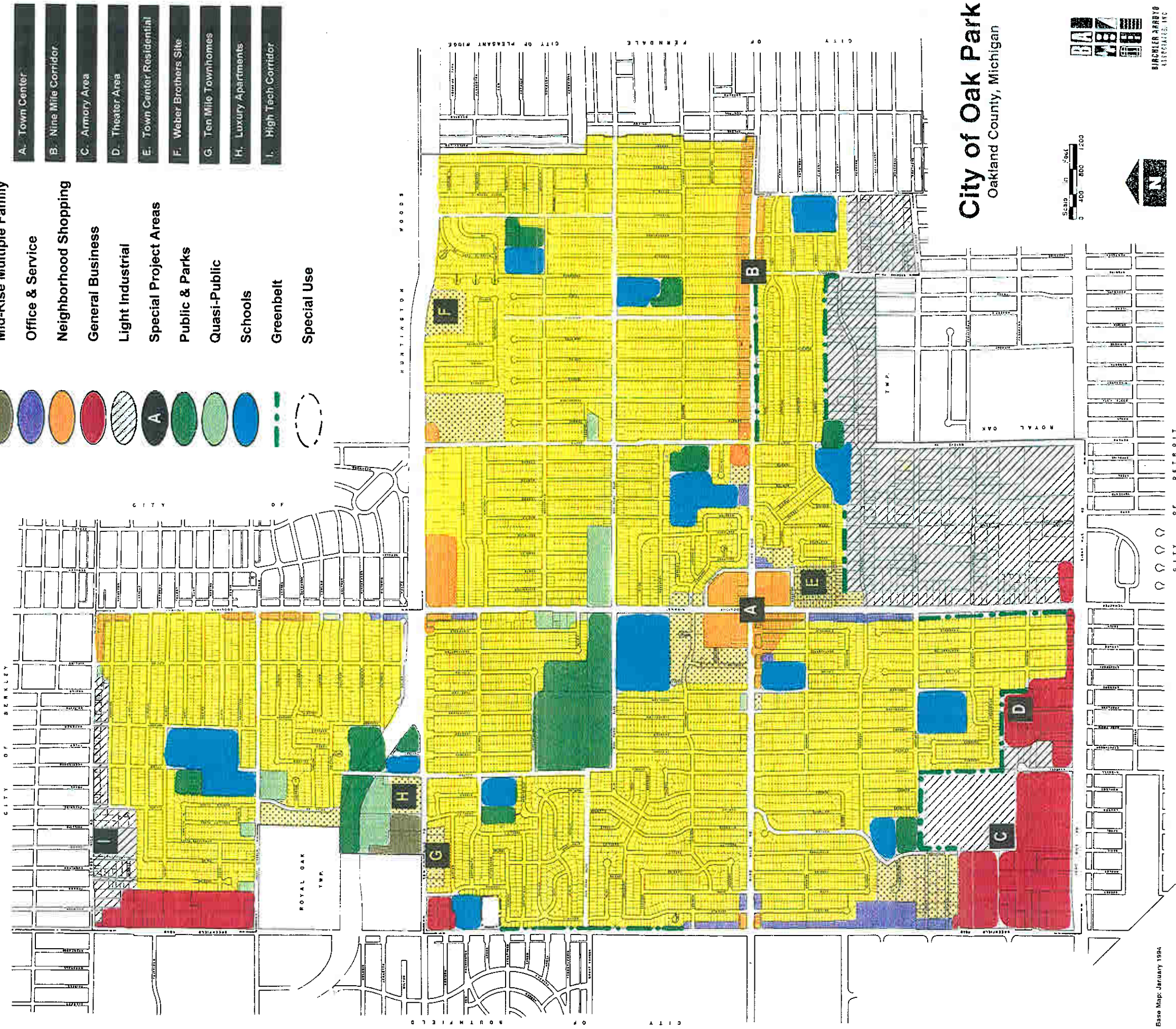
- ☐ A basic pattern for long-range development and redevelopment activities that concentrates similar uses together and provides for a logical transition between incompatible uses.
- ☐ An identifiable community character that distinguishes Oak Park by promoting examples of sound, state-of-the-art planning technique.
- ☐ Appropriate redevelopment proposals designed to improve neighborhood conditions and maintain their stability while enhancing business opportunities for the City's employers.
- ☐ An overall policy document to help the public and private interests arrive at proper solutions to the difficult development decisions they will continue to face over the next decade or more.

The Plan must not be considered a static document. Although the Planning time frame is long-range, periodic reevaluation is necessary if it is to continue being responsive to changing conditions and circumstances in the community. It is suggested that periodic review of the Plan's proposals be programmed to occur at least every 5 years. In addition, many of the redevelopment proposals require further detailed plans, urban design studies, and the like. These activities will be prioritized by the Planning Commission to direct short-term implementation activities.

LAND USE PLAN



- A. Town Center
- B. Nine Mile Corridor
- C. Armory Area
- D. Theater Area
- E. Town Center Residential
- F. Weber Brothers Site
- G. Ten Mile Townhomes
- H. Luxury Apartments
- I. High Tech Corridor



Base Map: January 1994



THOROUGHFARE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

In describing and illustrating the Thoroughfare Plan for the City of Oak Park, this chapter contains two primary components: Thoroughfares and Access Management. The Existing Road Conditions chapter of the Master Plan provides an overview of the current conditions in the City ranging from functional classification of roads and existing traffic volumes to traffic accident data. This background data, coupled with the Goals and Objectives chapter and the Land Use Plan chapter, provides the analysis necessary to develop the Thoroughfare Plan.

THOROUGHFARES

The City of Oak Park has been nearly 100% developed for many years. Consequently, its street pattern is well-established and consists almost entirely of paved roads. (Grant money has recently been secured to finance the paving of the final gravel industrial road that exists in the City.) The existing road network provides good access both within the City and to nearby communities. The section line roads in the city have at least two lanes in each direction, and I-696 provides quick east-west travel routes.

Like most developed cities, Oak Park's main concern about the road system involves the capacity and maintenance of existing roads. The completion of I-696 greatly alleviated the traffic volumes on the Mile Roads through Oak Park. Most of the maintenance of the City's major roads is handled by other governmental units. The Oakland County Road Commission is presently planning to reconstruct Greenfield Road from Eight Mile to Nine Mile Road. The reconstruction will continue north of Nine Mile as more funds become available.

Based on existing conditions and the changes proposed on the Land Use Plan, the following changes in land use may result in changes in traffic patterns and the use of Oak Park's thoroughfares:

- ☐ Many of the new development and redevelopment proposals of the Land Use Plan are related to the City's desire to increase housing opportunity. In particular, the Planning Commission is attempting to attract modern townhomes and single family condominiums, as well as luxury apartments. These are attractive to mature couples in or near retirement.
- ☐ The Town Center service road, referred to here as "Market Circle," could help to alleviate congestion at Nine Mile and Coolidge. This would be accomplished by providing an alternate means of circulation between the four quadrants of the Town Center that avoids the need to pass through the intersection. As a collateral benefit, retail stores may find that their customers enjoy improved access when shopping since they can circulate through the TownCenter without using Nine Mile or Coolidge.

- ☐ Redevelopment of the Armory property and the Eight Mile and Greenfield corner will require new commercial and industrial service roads.
- ☐ Access into the heart of the City's industrial district from Eight Mile would be improved by redevelopment and extension of Fern Street.

THOROUGHFARE PLAN MAP

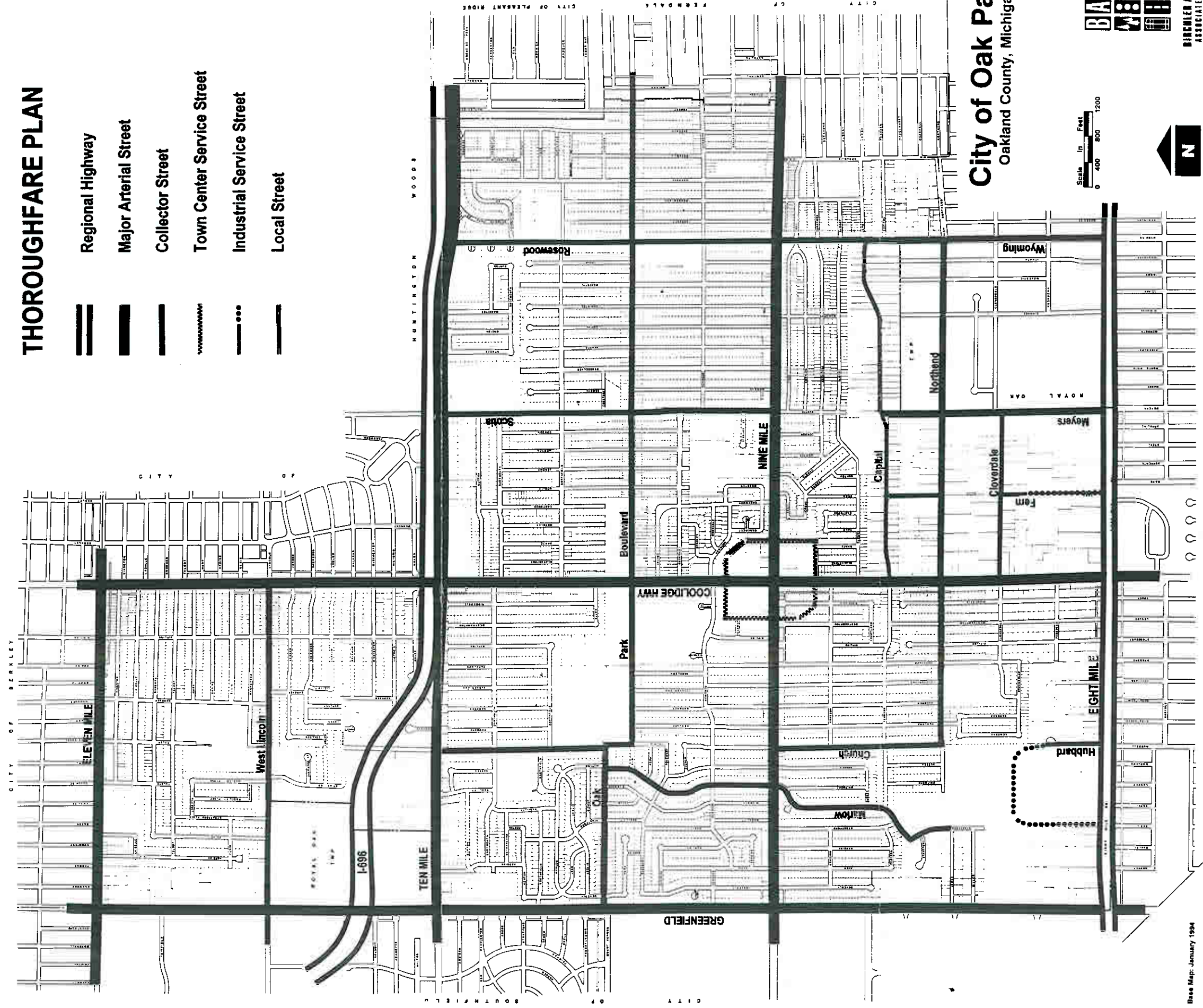
The Thoroughfare Plan Map on the next page identifies the functional classification of Oak Park's roads. I-696 and Eight Mile Road (M-102) are considered Regional Highways and require right-of-way of 300'. There are five major arterial roads shown on the map: Eleven Mile, Ten Mile, Nine Mile, Greenfield, and Coolidge Highway. The recommended future right-of-way range is 90' - 120' in order to accommodate up to 5 lanes of traffic.

There are seven residential collectors: West Lincoln; Oak Park Boulevard; Northend, from Church to Coolidge; Church from Ten Mile to Oak Park Boulevard; Marlow north of James; Scotia north of Nine Mile; and Rosewood. The right-of-way ranges from 70 feet to 86 feet on those existing residential collectors. Industrial collectors, which have recommended right-of-way of 70 to 76 feet, serve the same function as the residential collectors, but for a different land use. The industrial collectors include Northend, east of Coolidge; Meyers; and Wyoming. Pavement width, pavement strength, and corner radii must be appropriate for the larger and heavier industrial vehicles.

The Thoroughfare Plan Map also depicts Industrial Service Streets with a recommended right-of-way of 60 to 70 feet: Capital, between Coolidge Highway and Wyoming; Fern, between Capital and Northend; and Cloverdale between Coolidge Highway and Meyers Road. In addition, Fern, between Eight Mile and Cloverdale, and Hubbard are existing roads, which need extensions to fully serve industrial uses. (Those extensions are shown on the map with a dotted line.) The Hubbard extension will be instrumental in providing access to Special Project Area C. These are local industrial streets but may require special pavement design and corner radii to accommodate large vehicles.

The roads identified on the map as Town Center Service Streets are located around the intersection of Nine Mile and Coolidge. This system of roads, which the plan refers to as "Market Circle," would serve Special Project Area A. Existing roads McClain, Granzon, and Dante can be incorporated into Market Circle, however, the roads necessary to complete the ring on the west side of Coolidge would need to be constructed. The recommended right-of-way width is between 60' to 80'. The first 60 feet will accommodate all traffic, while the additional 20 feet will be used for a greenbelt where already existing or feasible. This greenbelt area will provide added protection and enhanced landscaping adjoining residential areas.

All remaining streets are local with a right-of-way width of 60 feet. They are mostly residential, with the exception of a few short sections south of Eleven Mile. These serve either the high tech industrial



Base Map: January 1994

CITY OF DETROIT

Figure 10-1

corridor along Eleven Mile or have a dual function, serving the high tech users and the adjoining residential neighborhoods.

The following table summarizes the Thoroughfare Plan by functional classification of street.

**Road Classifications and Right-of-Way Widths
City of Oak Park**

NAME OF ROAD	ROAD CLASSIFICATION AND RIGHT-OF-WAY
I-696 Eight Mile Road	Regional Highway 150' - 300'
Greenfield Road Coolidge Highway Eleven Mile Ten Mile Nine Mile	Major Arterial Street 90' - 120'
West Lincoln Oak Park Boulevard Northend, from Church to Coolidge Church, from Ten Mile to Oak Park Boulevard Marlow, north of James Scotia, north of Nine Mile Rosewood	Residential Collectors 70' - 86'
Northend, east of Coolidge Meyers Wyoming	Industrial Collectors 70' - 86'
McClain Granzon Dante	Town Center Service Street 60' - 80'
Capital, between Coolidge and Wyoming Cloverdale, between Coolidge and Meyers Fern, between Capital and Northend Fern Street Extension Hubbel Hubbel Extension	Industrial Service Streets 60' - 70'
All Others	Local Streets 60'

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

A mature community with a mix of land uses is likely to experience some level of traffic congestion. A city can, however, contribute to the smooth and efficient flow of traffic when new or redevelopment projects occur by implementing access management techniques as part of the site plan review process. Access management can also be implemented by municipal action, as in the case of the Thoroughfare Plan's proposal for Market Circle.

The premise behind the implementation of access management techniques is that property owners should be provided reasonable, but not unlimited access to their property. Safe and efficient access maximizes available road capacity on through streets, reduces accident potential, and provides for reasonable ingress and egress to property.

There are many access management techniques that can be implemented by the City ranging from adequate driveway spacing to frontage roads. These techniques are usually implemented through the site plan review process, although they should also be included as part of any redevelopment.

The standards noted below are suggested as guidelines in the site plan review process. Each case will require individual judgment and analysis to determine the appropriate action given the characteristics of the site and use.

Driveway Spacing/Placement

One of the primary access management techniques is driveway spacing and placement. Driveways located too close together are safety hazards and they can negatively impact capacity. The figures below show how accident rates increase as the number of access points increases and show the effect of control of access on accidents and fatalities in urban and rural areas. These two figures clearly show how unmanaged access on arterials has a negative impact on the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

ACCIDENT RATES FOR ROAD SECTIONS
WITH DIFFERENT ACCESS POINT FREQUENCIES

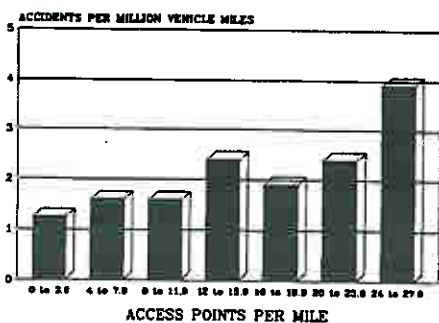


Figure 10-2

EFFECT OF CONTROL OF ACCESS ON ACCIDENTS
AND FATALITIES IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

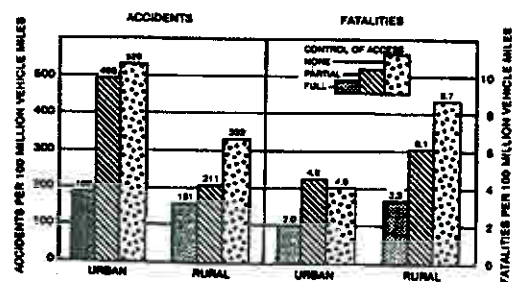


Figure 10-3

Source: Access Management for Streets & Highways, U.S. Department of Transportation, FHWA, 1982.

The following table shows the recommended spacing of driveways based on roadway speed. As an example, a 45 mph speed limit roadway should have driveways spaced at least 230 feet apart to avoid turning conflicts, increase safety, and improve capacity.

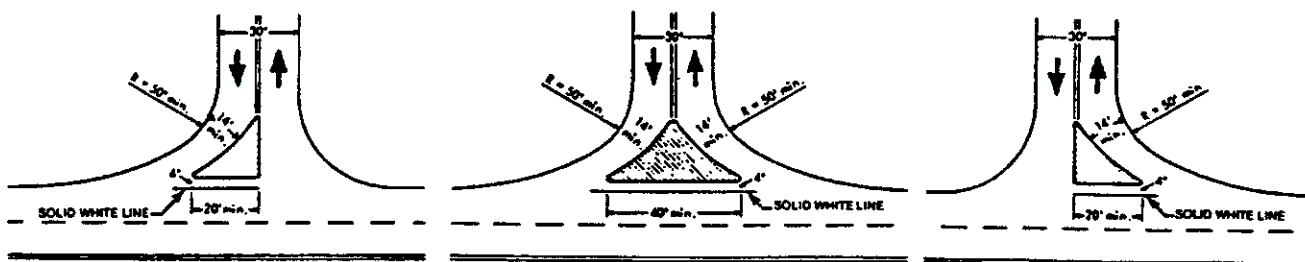
RECOMMENDED DRIVEWAY SPACING DISTANCES, NEAR CURB TO NEAR CURB

Road Speed (mph)	Driveway Spacing (feet)
20	85
25	105
30	125
35	150
40	185
45	230
50	275

Source: Flora, John W. and Kenneth Mikeitt, *Access Management for Streets and Highways*. FHWA Report IP-82-3, June 1982; and Glennon, J.C., et. al., *Technical Guidelines for the Control of Direct Access to Arterial Highways*, Volumes I and II. FHWA Report RD-76-86, August 1975.

In cases where narrow widths make implementation of the following guidelines burdensome, other options can be explored. One option is to provide a frontage road parallel to the main street that provides access to several properties with only one or two primary curb-cuts on the main road. Another option is to construct a shared driveway on the property line that can be used by two property owners.

During redevelopment projects, existing driveway problems can be an obstacle to implementing effective access management strategies. For example, when an existing driveway is located close to the intersection of two streets, it is possible to improve the access/safety problem by restricting turning movements to right turns in and out only. The figure below illustrates several variations on this approach including prohibition of left turns in and out. When one of these actions is implemented, additional, full-movement access should be provided at another location via a frontage road, driveway, on another main street, or rear service road.



PREVENTS LEFT-TURN EGRESS

PREVENTS LEFT-TURN EGRESS
AND INGRESS

PREVENTS LEFT-TURN INGRESS

Figure 10-4

Number of Driveways

For many of the reasons noted above, it is also important to regulate the number of driveways each development has onto a major roadway. In general, the following guidelines should be followed:

- ☐ All development should be provided with safe and reasonable access from public streets using the minimum number of access points (driveways) necessary to achieve this goal.
- ☐ Where access via a shared driveway, frontage road (located between public street and front building setback), or rear service road (located in rear yard) is not possible, one two-way drive or two one-way drives (one inbound and one outbound) may be provided.
- ☐ Additional driveways may be provided when it is demonstrated that one driveway cannot safely and efficiently handle the volume of traffic anticipated by the proposed development.
- ☐ If property frontage exceeds 600 feet, an additional driveway may be permitted.
- ☐ If a property has access to both an arterial and collector or other minor street, access shall be from the minor street.

ALTERNATIVE ACCESS

As noted above, a reduction in the number of driveways provides many benefits to the community and property owners. This reduction can be accomplished by limiting each development to one driveway, where feasible. But there are other alternatives which can provide even greater benefits by having more than one development share one access point.

Shared Driveways

One way to accomplish a net reduction of driveways to less than one per development is by installing a shared driveway. A shared driveway is typically located along a property line, with both owners having access via a reciprocal easement. Depending on the internal layout of the properties and the characteristics of the particular locations, this can be an excellent strategy to manage access. Sight distance concerns, relationships to other driveways/roads, and other factors may prohibit the use of this technique.

Service Roads

Rear service roads provide common access to several properties from the rear of the parcels. The road is constructed parallel to the public road right-of-way, and it is typically constructed by property owners. Access to the public street is provided via a collector or minor street which intersects with the main arterial. This concept is very similar to a public alley, although the service road is constructed to meet higher standards due to expected volumes and "greater than service vehicle" traffic. This mechanism is in place at certain locations in Oak Park and could be applied at additional points in the business districts.

Frontage Roads

A frontage road is located parallel to the public street right-of-way, and is located between the right-of-way and the front building setback. This type of road crosses several properties but only has one or two access points (typically). In the case of a major frontage road system, it may run for one mile or more, providing an access point to the main arterial road every 1/8 to 1/4 mile.

This type of roadway is often implemented in underdeveloped areas prior to the on-set of new development because of the separate parallel right-of-way necessary. There must be ample setbacks in place to install this type of system. Typically, the frontage road is located 30 feet from the main arterial road, although additional separation at access points to the main arterial are necessary to achieve traffic flow.

Frontage roads can be constructed privately using access easements and a common link from one property to the next. As with public right-of-way, the distance between the main arterial and the frontage road will have to be increased at access points in order to accommodate storage of outbound vehicles exiting from the frontage road to the main arterial. This mechanism is the most likely one for use in developed cities like Oak Park.

The graphic below illustrates how a rear service road and a frontage road would be used to provide access to businesses while minimizing deceleration on arterial and collector roads.

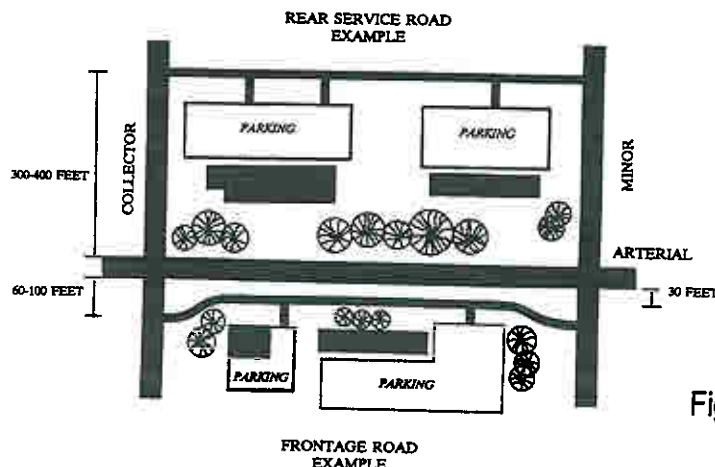


Figure 10-5

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

There are other access-related considerations worth noting when designing a comprehensive access management program.

Driveway Design

It is important that driveways be designed with the proper width and turning radii to minimize congestion and safety related impacts associated with new development. A large entering radius permits a smooth turn from the through traffic stream to the site, and proper driveway width, coupled with an adequate turning radius, enables turning vehicles to enter the site without crossing the path of outbound traffic.

The following figure shows the swept path of a test vehicle during right-turn entry when no exiting vehicle is present. The top sketch illustrates a driveway without an adequate entering radius. The vehicle leaves its own lane and crosses over the path normally used by cars leaving the site.

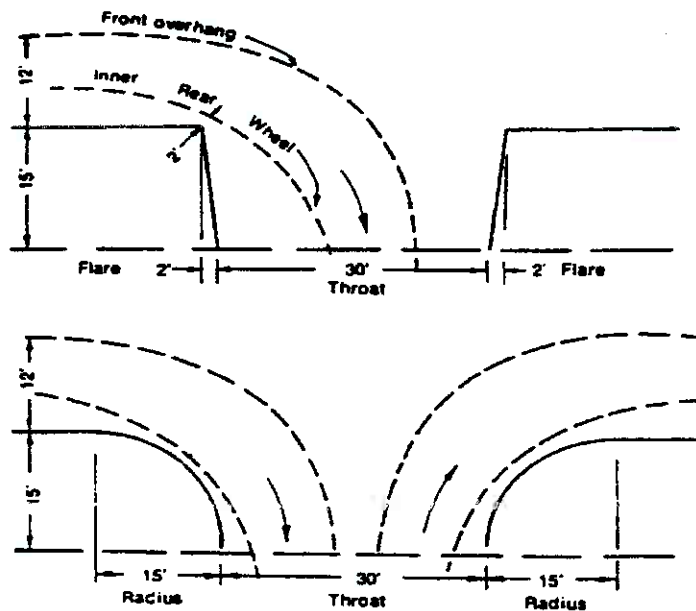


Figure 10-6

Source: Arterial Street Access Control Study. Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Lansing, MI: February 1981

It is obviously undesirable to have this type of maneuver at a driveway. A study of radii and driveway widths, published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, drew the following conclusions:

- ☐ At driveways with a curb radius of 20 feet or more, drivers remained on the entry side, regardless of driveway width, when no exiting vehicle was present.

- ☐ At driveways with a curb radius of 10 feet or less, drivers tend to make a wide turn using all available driveway throat widths.

The driveway standards of the Oakland County Road Commission, which generally call for a 30-foot commercial driveway width and 20-foot radii, appear to be sufficient to provide smooth traffic flow. As with all standards, individual conditions need to be considered as part of any site plan analysis. The City may need to re-evaluate its standards for maximum allowable curb cut width to accommodate large radii. Due to narrow property widths at certain points in the City, 30 foot wide commercial drives may not always be feasible.

Deceleration/Acceleration Tapers and Lanes

When right turns into a driveway are high, they can be a significant disruption to through traffic. Providing a deceleration taper or a combination taper and lane can improve the time it takes a right-turning vehicle to exit the through traffic stream, thereby improving road capacity and reducing delay.

The Oakland County Road Commission has established warrants for determining when a taper or combination taper and lane is necessary. The warrants are based on turning volume and total volume on the main road. These standards are usually applied to two-lane roads. When two lanes or more are provided in each direction, the outside lane serves as a deceleration lane. In this instance, right turn tapers and lanes are only installed for high volume driveways such as those serving regional shopping centers.

Internal Site Design

Regardless of the types of limitation placed on driveway design, spacing, and location, congestion and safety concerns can still be caused by poor internal circulation. Parking lot and internal driveway layout must be coordinated with the access points to public right of way to ensure a smooth transition from the public road to the "private road network".

The review of site plans should treat each development as a mini-road network, with parking bays feeding into higher volume internal drives, which in turn feed into the road network. Some of the key review issues should include the following:

- ☐ Internal turning radii and driveway width should be reviewed using the same concepts applied to main driveways.
- ☐ Smooth internal circulation requires a design conducive to passenger cars and delivery/service vehicles. If semi-trucks will serve the site, the internal truck route must be specially designed with larger turning radii.

PRIORITIES FOR FUNCTIONAL PLANS

As a follow-up implementation activity, the City's work program for the new master plan identified three strategic, functional plans that should be pursued following adoption of the master plan. These functional plans were judged to be a necessary second phase in the planning process. Each is intended to address one of the City's three most important redevelopment issues. The functional plans include:

- ☐ Neighborhood Conservation Plan
- ☐ Commercial & Office Revitalization Plan
- ☐ Industrial Redevelopment Plan

ASSIGNING PRIORITY

The three functional plans should be undertaken one at a time. This will allow the Planning Commission to concentrate on each one and devote its full energy to developing appropriate solutions and strategies. Since the plans will be prepared individually, it is important that the Planning Commission assign priority to each.

Priority 1- Commercial & Office Revitalization Plan

The City's commercial and office areas impact its residential neighborhoods in a number of ways. Many neighborhoods share long, common boundaries with commercial and office districts. Deterioration of these non-residential areas often introduces neighboring homes to the impacts from poor maintenance, blowing debris, inadequate parking and loading, lack of adequate screening, and the like. This can adversely affect residential property values and neighborhood pride.

Underutilization of retail and office properties forces City residents to travel farther for needed goods and services. This increases the time and travel cost for residents seeking goods and services. As a result, it can make Oak Park less attractive to existing and prospective new residents.

Lastly, the depressed values of the City's office and retail properties, along with reduced personal property tax revenues from vacant buildings, adversely impacts municipal services to City residents. As several studies have demonstrated, a properly balanced tax base is essential to a community like Oak Park that takes pride in its exceptional level of programs, facilities, and services.

For all of the above reasons, the Commercial & Office Revitalization Plan has been assigned first priority among the three proposed functional plans.

Priority 2 - Neighborhood Conservation Plan

Oak Park's residential neighborhoods are the foundation upon which the City has been built. The City has a well-deserved reputation for beautiful neighborhoods, affordable housing, quality home construction, excellent home value, personal safety, high level of City services, and quality recreation and school facilities, services and programs. Any decline in the City's neighborhoods affects the community's overall reputation. As a mature city, Oak Park needs improvements to its aging infrastructure in such areas as streets, sidewalks, storm drainage, street trees, parks, and the like. While Oak Park is actively engaged in these improvements on a continuous basis, it is appropriate for the Planning Commission to make recommendations for future capital improvements designed to stabilize and further enhance the quality of the City's neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood Conservation Plan has been assigned second priority.

Priority 3 - Industrial Redevelopment Plan

The City's industrial base is important as a source of jobs for its residents and tax revenues to pay for municipal services. The industrial base is one of the community's many strengths that continues to attract new residents and businesses. Older industrial areas must be modernized so that they remain attractive to newer, increasingly high-technology industries. Conflicts with neighboring residential areas need to be resolved. The image of the industrial districts and corridors should reflect today's and tomorrow's cutting edge in business. Planning for industrial corridors along the City's borders must be coordinated with the neighboring cities and township.

FUNCTIONAL PLANS CONTENT OUTLINE

Each of the functional plans needs to follow a logical outline for content. The master plan process has identified many of the City's strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. The functional plans should be designed to tackle these challenges and turn them into opportunities.

Commercial & Office Revitalization Plan Outline

The Commercial & Office Revitalization Plan has several very diverse components, both from a standpoint of the uses and the physical locations in the City. The Greenfield Road office corridor, the Armory redevelopment area, the former drive-in theater property, the Town Center, and the

Nine Mile Corridor each present the City with a variety of challenges. The following outline suggests the general content for this first priority functional plan:

- ☐ Regional demand for office, retail space
- ☐ Analysis of local vacancy rates
- ☐ Physical condition of office and shopping areas
- ☐ Tax base considerations
- ☐ Market factors for attracting new uses to older buildings
- ☐ Redevelopment of sites with incompatible existing uses
- ☐ Underutilized and poorly planned retail and office areas
- ☐ Detailed redevelopment and improvement plans
- ☐ Public policy action plan

Neighborhood Conservation Plan Outline

One of the roles of City planners is to prevent problems associated with deteriorating residential neighborhoods. A neighborhood conservation plan should be designed to prevent the blighting characteristics that cause neighborhoods to decline. Active involvement of neighborhood residents in developing such a plan builds support for its implementation over time. A plan to stabilize and further enhance Oak Park's neighborhoods should include the following:

- ☐ Housing conditions and neighborhood character analysis
- ☐ Choice of housing and neighborhood vitality
- ☐ Residential borders with non-residential districts
- ☐ The role of neighborhood stores in Oak Park
- ☐ Identify neighborhoods that are most at risk
- ☐ Neighborhood organizations and stakeholders, focus group meetings
- ☐ Neighborhood unit concept for parks and schools

- ☐ Redevelopment options for increased housing opportunities
- ☐ Neighborhood design plans for redevelopment and/or improvement options
- ☐ Public policy action plan

Industrial Redevelopment Plan Outline

There is an emerging need for planners to focus on the revitalization of older industrial parks and unplanned industrial districts that were originally developed in the 1950's and 1960's. These early industrial developments were built on what was then the urban fringe but is now the inner ring suburbs of major cities like Detroit. Builders are bypassing these older job centers in favor of green field sites in outlying rural areas where land costs are relatively low. The larger, open sites at these green field locations are also better able to accommodate today's modern campus-style buildings.

Older industrial sites do have advantages, however, including ample utility services, excellent road access to the more developed urban core and higher density suburbs, and proximity to the region's labor force nearer to the population center. City planners must be prepared to attract new industries to these established centers. A plan for redevelopment of Oak Park's industrial districts should include, but not be limited to, the following elements:

- ☐ Industrial districts conditions survey
- ☐ Evaluation of impacts on non-industrial neighbors
- ☐ Identification of underutilized properties
- ☐ Survey of industrial employer needs - site size, access requirements, building size, utility services, labor force characteristics, transportation facilities
- ☐ Locational characteristics of small to medium size industries - transportation, labor and energy cost savings versus quality of life and a stable work force
- ☐ Attracting stable firms versus those who move around for tax abatements
- ☐ Public investment as a tool to attract new industry
- ☐ Declining industrial employment and growth in the technology fields - impact on land use
- ☐ Alternate uses for large industrial buildings - office/warehouse, exposition centers, indoor recreation, large-scale retail, medical-institutional-educational use, and the like
- ☐ Physical improvement recommendations and redevelopment plan
- ☐ Public policy action plan

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

The Planning Commission's thoughtful preparation and adoption of the Master Plan would all be wasted effort without a program of implementation strategies. Fortunately, an active community like Oak Park has many implementation tools and techniques available to it. Aggressive implementation techniques permit the City to turn potential problems into real opportunities. As an introduction to the implementation strategies proposed by this chapter, a brief review of the statutory basis for the plan and its implementation appears appropriate.

STATUTORY BASIS

The Municipal Planning Act (Michigan Public Act 285 of 1931, as amended) provides that the City Planning Commission "shall make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality..." The master plan should illustrate the commission's recommendation for such things as land use, streets, parkways, playgrounds and open space, public buildings and properties, the extent of public utilities, widening or abandonment of public ways, the character of neighborhoods and the development of areas that are deteriorating. The Planning Commission may also adopt special plans devoted to a particular section or sections of the municipality, such as the three Functional Plans recommended in the preceding chapter.

State Law provides for continual oversight by the Planning Commission for both public and private improvements covered by the Master Plan. Review and approval of private development takes place through the procedures associated with rezoning, site plan approval, special use permits, subdivision plats, condominium plans, and planned unit developments, among others. Public improvements such as streets, parks, open spaces, and public buildings shall not be "constructed or authorized in the municipality.....until the location, character and extent thereof shall have been submitted to and approved by the (planning) commission....."

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

The City has a wide variety of techniques at its disposal to help implement its long range planning. These tools and techniques include but are certainly not limited to the following:

- Zoning Ordinance Standards
- Re-zoning Review & Approval
- Code Enforcement
- Subdivision & Condominium Regulation
- Special Design Plans
- Public, Private and Quasi-Public Regulation
- Utility Extension Policies and Utility System Design Capacities
- Public-Private Partnerships

Site Plan and Special Use Review & Approval
Capital Improvements Programming
Special Assessment Districts
Re-evaluation & Adjustment of the Master Plan

The sections which follow will attempt to correlate specific plan proposals with appropriate implementation techniques. These techniques should be referred to frequently and used systematically so that the outcome is a consistent program of implementation over whatever period of time is required to achieve the Master Plan proposals.

Zoning Ordinance Standards

The City's most effective tool to implement the land use arrangement of the Master Plan is zoning standards and districts. A city zoning ordinance is not meant to be a static document. The experiences communities undergo in the application of their zoning rules and the review of unusual new land uses constantly change the body of professional knowledge related to planning and zoning standards. Periodic review of the zoning ordinance will result in the application of the most up-to-date standards in the design of new uses and the maintenance of existing developments. Oak Park has already begun this process by a complete re-write of the entire Zoning Ordinance. The adoption of the new Zoning Ordinance has been timed to follow immediately after the adoption of the new Master Plan. Zoning Ordinance standards could be effective in addressing the following:

- ☐ Proper screening of industrial service/storage areas
- ☐ Adequate parking for non-residential uses
- ☐ Performance standards for external impacts of business uses
- ☐ Proper building setbacks from streets and neighboring uses
- ☐ Uniform landscape and screen wall standards
- ☐ New site planning standards for access management

Code Enforcement

Simple code enforcement can often turn the tide with regard to the image of an area and the livability of a neighborhood. More aggressive but fair enforcement of current codes and ordinances could be effective in the following instances:

- ☐ Eliminate blighting influences in residential areas

- ☐ Improve housing conditions
- ☐ Terminate improperly established, non-conforming uses
- ☐ Repair or replace ineffective greenbelts, screen walls
- ☐ Reduce business sign area to maximum permitted by ordinance
- ☐ Prohibit expansion where it overtaxes support facilities.

Site Plan and Special Use Approval/Rezoning

Many essential components of the Master Plan, such as the industrial, research, commercial, office, and public/quasi-public building sites, are likely to be the subject of a site plan or special land use application, perhaps preceded by an application for rezoning.

The City should consider making the appropriate zoning district changes immediately following adoption of the Plan only for those areas that are identified by the Commission as critical elements. This will help to avoid having to review and consider potentially incompatible requests from developers. Most of the plan's proposals will be implemented through zoning changes on a case by case basis. This allows the Commission to evaluate the quality of a proposal and its relation to the plan before recommending zoning changes to the City Council.

With regard to site plans and special approval uses, now is the appropriate time to review the community's approval process and standards. The standards should clearly set forth any discretionary powers the Planning Commission feels it must reserve for projects proposed by the Master Plan.

Special Design Plans

Frequently a general master plan must be followed by detailed design studies in order to illustrate specific concepts that can only be covered briefly in the plan. Corridor design plans, business district facade studies, sign control and improvement plans, and pedestrian facilities plans are a few examples of the types of detailed follow-up work that is needed. Special design plans could be used to address the following:

- ☐ Functional Plans for commercial, office, residential, and industrial area improvements.
- ☐ Parking facilities improvement plans to address deficiencies
- ☐ Building facade studies to enhance older business areas

- ☐ Corridor design plans to integrate circulation, parking, landscaping and pedestrian improvements

Recreation Plans & Grants

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources administers grant programs for recreation site acquisition and development. The Federal and State programs provide grant funds to local communities for both acquisition and development with 25% to 50% local matching funds required. All three programs require that the City keep its MDNR-approved Recreation Plan up-to-date to insure eligibility. These funds can be used for:

- ☐ New park site acquisition and development
- ☐ New development on existing sites
- ☐ Joint development on school district sites

Business Attraction, Retention And Relocation Programs

In the area of business attraction, retention, and relocation, the City plays the primary role as middleman or facilitator. Through careful inventory of available properties and close contact with business owners and landowners/landlords, the City could help existing business and industry locate new space more appropriate to their particular use. This City can also improve the quality of its shopping services by targeting needed businesses for recruitment activities. This type of program might:

- ☐ Move incompatible industry away from neighborhoods
- ☐ Find local business room for needed expansion
- ☐ Improve the business mix in retail areas
- ☐ Bring targeted business to the City of Oak Park
- ☐ Implement the Town Center concept at Nine Mile and Coolidge
- ☐ Improve the Nine Mile Corridor business mix to benefit adjoining neighborhoods

Commercial Improvements Programs

A number of activities can be undertaken to improve the City's retail/office areas, lower vacancies, encourage a better mix of goods and services, and precipitate upgrading of buildings and their surroundings. One tool becoming more popular is the creation of a downtown development

authority (DDA). The DDA has authority to plan for physical improvements, establish programs for business retention and new business recruitment, and actually accomplish improvements through bonding authority made possible by tax increment financing. The experience of successful DDA's suggests that the improvements within the business areas have a "spill-over" effect that also results in raising consciousness and values in nearby residential neighborhoods.

Commercial improvement programs could be used to address:

- ☐ Developing a unique character for business districts near Nine Mile and Coolidge
- ☐ Improving the mix of business and quality of shopping opportunities for city residents
- ☐ Correcting code violations related to inadequate screening of business uses
- ☐ Implementing new sign design guidelines through incentive programs and sign design assistance

Capital Improvements Programming

The Municipal Planning Act states that "for the purpose of furthering the desirable future development of the municipality under the master plan, the city planning commission, after the commission shall have adopted a master plan, shall prepare coordinated and comprehensive programs of public structures and improvements. The commission shall annually prepare such a program for the ensuing 6 years...." Hence, there is a specific State mandate for a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) as an implementation tool for the Master Plan.

Capital Improvements, by definition, are large-scale projects and equipment typically exceeding \$5,000 in cost and having a life of five or more years. New public buildings, streets, parks, police cars, etc. are included in Capital Improvements Programming.

The CIP typically includes as a major component the development of a "needs list". Looking over a six year horizon, capital needs are anticipated and ranked by priority and proposed year of acquisition. These needs and associated cost are then related to the fiscal capacity of the municipality to determine if funding will be available given anticipated revenues. New funding sources may be identified and pursued as part of the CIP process.

It is clear that the annual update of the CIP is an important component of the process because of changing costs, technologies, and revenues. It also forces the municipality to continually re-think priorities over a medium-range time horizon. The municipality must go beyond next year's budget in an attempt to inject planning into a traditional short-term budgetary process.

The end result of the CIP process is a policy document, adopted by the Planning Commission, that relates the long-range goals of the Master Plan to a medium-range program. This program can

then guide year-to-year budgeting. It also brings together the planning commission, city council, and city administration in an attempt to continually relate long-term goals to short term actions, which is the ultimate goal of the Master Plan Process.

The CIP process could be used to provide funding for:

- ☐ Improvements to facilitate business relocation
- ☐ Recreation site acquisition and development
- ☐ Business facade and sign improvement incentive programs
- ☐ Parking and street improvements
- ☐ Storm sewer and sanitary sewer improvement in industrial areas

Special Assessment District

A special assessment district, or SAD, is a very effective and flexible tool for generating the revenue needed for certain improvements. The SAD is an appropriate tool whenever direct benefit to the properties assessed can be demonstrated. A partial list of Plan proposals that could be financed in whole or in part by SAD's include:

- ☐ Creation of the "McClain Circle" concept for Town Center traffic circulation
- ☐ New public parking lots to serve the Town Center
- ☐ Median landscaping in business and industrial zones
- ☐ Utility extensions/improvements to promote redevelopment of the armory site

Access Management

The efficiency of the City's street network will depend in large part on proper access management. This is particularly true in the Town Center and Nine Mile Corridor where regional traffic and local access are a difficult and delicate balancing act. Proper zoning standards for business developments can help preserve vital roadway capacity while insuring access and economic vitality.

Federal & State Grant Programs

Federal and State grants are much smaller and more competitive than in their heyday during the 1950's through the mid-1980's. There are still programs in place, however, particularly for pollution abatement (sanitary sewers), pedestrian enhancements (related to roadway projects), and parks

and recreation. Proper planning in advance is generally the key to success in securing these grants. Often times the granting agency is particularly interested in innovative projects that stretch the grant dollars. Projects that involve two or more neighboring municipalities (like the work of the Eight Mile Boulevard Association) often receive priority for funding.

CONCLUSION

As the redevelopment of key areas of the City begins to unfold, many opportunities to work with a variety of developers in public-private partnerships will be presented. Each of these will present opportunities to implement pieces of the Plan. The list of implementation tools will grow as the City gains new experience. The suggestions presented in this chapter are offered as actions that should be taken in the short-term in order to set the basic concepts of the Plan in motion. As the City begins the delicate task of negotiating with developers, institutions, public agencies, state departments, and the like, additional actions will become necessary in order to maintain the momentum of the Plan.

APPENDIX

- 1) Public Hearing Notice
- 2) Minutes from Public Hearing
- 3) Resolution of Adoption
- 4) Letters of Transmittal
- 5) Newspaper Article



CITY OF OAK PARK

"The Family City"

Mayor
Gerald E. Naftaly
Mayor Pro Tem
Arthur Frohlich
Councilmen
Raymond M. Abrams
Louis Demas
Michael M. Seligson

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING OAK PARK PLANNING COMMISSION PROPOSED MASTER PLAN

Notice is hereby given that the City of Oak Park Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Monday, September 9, 1996, at 7:30 p.m., or thereafter, in the City Council Chambers, Oak Park City Hall, 13600 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park. The purpose of the hearing is to receive public comments on the proposed Master Plan for the City of Oak Park, Michigan.

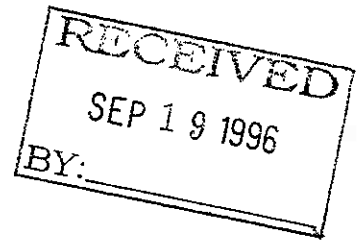
Copies of the proposed Master Plan are available for review at the Planning Division office, 13700 Oak Park Blvd., and the City Clerk's office, 13600 Oak Park Blvd. The Oak Park Public Library, has copies of the proposed Master Plan available for circulation.

Written comments on the application may be sent to: Chairperson, Oak Park Planning Commission, 13700 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI 48237. Oral comments will be taken during the public hearing.

This notice is published pursuant to the requirements of Michigan Public Act 285 of 1931, as amended, the Municipal Planning Act.

Sandra Gadd, City Clerk

**CITY OF OAK PARK PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
September 9, 1996**



Meeting called to order at 7:34 p.m. by Chairperson Dystant and roll call was made.

PRESENT: Chairperson Dystant, Commissioner Demas,
Commissioner Fitzpatrick, Commissioner Genser,
Commissioner Kassawa, Commissioner Naftaly
Commissioner Brown,

ABSENT: Vice Chairperson Torgow, Commissioner Knoppow,

OTHERS PRESENT: Planning Consultant Birchler
City Planner Rulkowski
Administrative Clerk Brooks

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairperson Dystant asked for any corrections or additions to the Agenda and since none were given, the Agenda was declared approved as submitted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING, AUGUST 12, 1996:

Motion by Commissioner Naftaly, supported by Commissioner Genser, to approve the minutes of August 12, 1996 as corrected.

Page 1, APPROVAL OF MINUTES, change "August 12...To June 10..."

Motion unanimously approved.

COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE:

None this month.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

A. Public comments and formal presentation of the proposed Master Plan:

Commissioner Joe Brown arrived at 7:38 PM.

Chairperson Dystant gave an overview of the Public Hearing process and introduced Planning Consultant Birchler who made a formal presentation of the proposed Master Plan.

Planning Consultant Birchler stated Oak Park's Planning Commission became involved in planning studies in 1990 when the formulation of the Greenfield Corridor Plan began. A host of problems related to land use, development, and image, including high vacancy rates in buildings along the Corridor, a perception of increased crime, shifting population centers, and newer competition in nearby suburbs prompted city officials to address ways to reverse the continued deterioration of this area. The study resulted in stronger relationships between Oak Park and the Southfield Downtown Development Authority. After working closely with the owners of Northland Plaza in redeveloping the shopping center, the Planning Commission created the Greenfield Corridor Design Guidelines Manual to encourage and assist other owners/developers with similar renovations throughout the Corridor.

The next step in planning for Oak Park's future was to adopt a new Master Plan. In 1994 Oak Park's Planning Commission began the work of re-evaluating the previous Master Plan, which was adopted in 1973. In creating this document, the Planning Commission followed five steps:

- (1) Research and Analysis - Chapters one through five in the Master Plan constitute the background studies portion of the process. Existing information about land uses, population demographics, thoroughfare conditions, community character, and community facilities was collected and reported.
- (2) Formulating Goals and Objectives - Chapters six, seven and eight address this phase of the planning process. The Vision Statement which was gleaned from the three Visioning meetings, the resulting Goals and Objectives statements and the seventh chapter on development trends and patterns and their consequences combine to form this third component of the planning process.
- (3) Develop, Choose Alternatives - Chapters nine and ten, which are the Land Use Plan and the Thoroughfare Plan, represent step three in the planning process.
- (4) Implementation - Chapter twelve highlights a variety of implementation techniques and strategies, the fourth step in the planning process.

- (5) Re-evaluation and Adjustments - Step five requires that the plan's effectiveness in addressing problems and challenges be constantly monitored. Unforeseen changes in the community, as well as changes at the State and National level can influence the goals of a plan and the expected outcomes of implementation strategies. Within the Master Plan (Chapter 11) there are three strategic functional plans that should be pursued: a Neighborhood Conservation Plan, a Commercial and Office Revitalization Plan, and an Industrial Redevelopment Plan. The adoption and implementation of these three plans are important follow-up planning activities. In order to truly reflect the City's changing needs, the Master Plan will likely require additional modification over time. It is this re-evaluation and adjustment that ensures the Master Plan will remain relevant tomorrow as well as today.

In order to make sound recommendations regarding public development policy, the Planning Commission needs public input. This public input was solicited at two key points in the process. First, the Vision Statement that constitutes Chapter 6 of the Oak Park Master Plan involved a group of up to 40 "stakeholders" in a series of three meetings. These meetings were designed to assist the Planning Commission in developing a vision of what Oak Park should be in 20 years. The Vision Statement developed with the help of these 40 stakeholders became the basis for the Planning Commission's goals, objectives, and policies statements.

The second request for public input comes in the form of soliciting comments on the Master Plan at the official Public Hearing. The Planning Commission's careful consideration of these public comments ensures that the Master Plan truly reflects the needs of its citizens.

Chairperson Dystant opened the Public Hearing at 7:51 p.m. and asked if anyone wished to speak on this matter.

There were no questions from any members of the audience.

City Planner Rulkowski stated there were no written communications.

The Public Hearing was closed at 7:56 p.m. by Chairperson Dystant and discussion by the Planning Commission was opened.

Commissioner Naftaly commended Planning Consultant Birchler and his staff who have spent a great deal of time coordinating the different phases toward adoption of the new Master Plan. He also stated Planning Consultant Birchler's involvement with the Planning Commission during the absence of a City Planner provided stability. City Planner Rulkowski's input once he became involved with the City tied the Master Plan together.

Commissioner Naftaly stated The Planning Commission members, City Planner Rulkowski, the City Manager's Office, residents and people who volunteered their time, have given a lot of input to the whole Master Plan for the last couple of years. He believes the lack of attendance at the Public Hearing, even with front page coverage in the Oak Park Report, does not denote complacency, but rather satisfaction with what the City Manager has done with the City for the last three years. The type of government he has run has gotten more staff members involved with team management, and is reflective of his performance as City Manager.

Commissioner Naftaly believes people are satisfied with the way city services are run and the improvements that are currently being made. The new Master Plan is something the City of Oak Park has needed, and will be a useful tool for future improvements.

Chairperson Dystant stated the Planning Commission has the legal responsibility to make and adopt a Master Plan. If approved, a informational presentation to the City Council will be made at the next council meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Genser supported by Commissioner Kassawa to Adopt Master Plan as follows:

Resolution of Adoption

City of Oak Park Master Plan

By Oak Park City Planning Commission

WHEREAS, the Oak Park City Planning Commission has the responsibility and is empowered by The Municipal Planning Act No. 285 of 1931, to make and adopt a master Plan for the physical development of the City and to amend the Plan as needed from time-to-time, and

WHEREAS, the Honorable City Council of Oak Park created the Planning Commission for the purposes stated in the Municipal Planning Act No. 285 of 1931, as amended, and

WHEREAS, the City of Oak Park has retained professional planning consultants to assist the Planning Commission with the technical studies necessary to make a comprehensive, new Master Plan of the City of Oak Park, and

WHEREAS, the Oak Park City Planning Commission has held a public hearing on its proposed new Master Plan for the City on September 9, 1996 in the Council Chambers of the Oak Park City Hall, and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the new Master Plan is necessary for the continued development and the appropriate redevelopment of the physical areas of the City of Oak Park,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Oak Park City Planning Commission hereby adopts this Master Plan for the City of Oak Park, along with the text, maps, charts, graphs, and other descriptive materials presented at the public hearing, and

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that an attested copy of the Master Plan shall be certified to the Oak Park City Council, the Oakland County Register of Deeds, the Oakland County Planning Commission, and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

ROLL CALL VOTE:	Yes,	Dystant, Genser, Kassawa, Naftaly, Demas, Fitzpatrick, Brown,
	No,	None
	Absent,	Torgow, Knoppow

Motion approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

None this month.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Request to schedule Public Hearing to rezone 10105 Ten Mile Road, parcel #25-29-228-062 from R-A Residential Agricultural District, to R-5, Planned Multifamily Residential District**

Chairperson Dystant asked City Planner Rulkowski to give background information.

Resolution Of Adoption
City Of Oak Park Master Plan
By Oak Park City Planning Commission

WHEREAS, the Oak Park City Planning Commission has the responsibility and is empowered by The Municipal Planning Act No. 285 of 1931, to make and adopt a Master Plan for the physical development of the City and to amend the Plan as needed from time-to-time, and

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WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the new Master Plan is necessary for the continued development and the appropriate redevelopment of the physical areas of the City of Oak Park,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Oak Park City Planning Commission hereby adopts this Master Plan for the City of Oak Park, along with the text, maps, charts, graphs, and other descriptive materials presented at the public hearing, and

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that an attested copy of the Master Plan shall be certified to the Oak Park City Council, the Oakland County Register of Deeds, the Oakland County Planning Commission, and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

Motion by Genser. Supported by Kassawa.

AYES: Dystant, Genser, Kassawa, Naftaly, Demas, Fitzpatrick, Brown.

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Knoppow, Torgow

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED THIS 9th DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1996.



CITY OF OAK PARK
"The Family City"

Mayor
Gerald E. Naftaly
Mayor Pro Tem
Arthur Frohlich
Councilmen
Raymond M. Abrams
Louis Demas
Michael M. Seligson

September 12, 1996

Lynn D. Allen
Oakland County Register of Deeds
1200 N. Telegraph Road
Pontiac, MI 48341

SUBJECT: City of Oak Park Master Plan

Dear Mr. Allen,

On behalf of the City of Oak Park Planning Commission, I am pleased to transmit our adopted Master Plan for the City of Oak Park. This Master Plan is intended to help guide the community's growth and development for the next 10 to 20 years. It represents the considerable efforts of our 9 member Planning Commission over the past 2½ years. We are confident that the Plan will provide an appropriate direction for the community's growth and development.

Respectfully submitted,

David Dystant, Chairperson
City of Oak Park Planning Commission

cc: All Planning Commission Members



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September 12, 1996

SEMCOG
660 Plaza Drive, Suite 1900
Detroit, MI 48226.

SUBJECT: City of Oak Park Master Plan

Ladies & Gentlemen,

On behalf of the City of Oak Park Planning Commission, I am pleased to transmit the enclosed copy of our recently adopted Master Plan for your information. The Planning Commission has spent the past 2½ years working on this important project. A Vision process, which consisted of a series of three meetings provided the public input basis for our goals, objectives, and policies statements. We are confident that the Plan will provide an appropriate direction for the community's growth, development, and re-development over the next 10-20 years.

Our planning consultant is David Birchler of Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc. If you have any questions about our Plan or would like more information, you can call Mr. Birchler at 810-543-0690.

Respectfully submitted,

David Dystant, Chairperson
City of Oak Park Planning Commission

cc: All Planning Commission Members



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September 12, 1996

Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Oak Park
13600 Oak Park Blvd
Oak Park, MI 48237

SUBJECT: City of Oak Park Master Plan

Honorable Mayor and Councilmen,

On behalf of the City of Oak Park Planning Commission, I am pleased to transmit our adopted Master Plan for the City of Oak Park. This Master Plan is intended to help guide the community's growth and development for the next 10 to 20 years. It represents the considerable efforts of our 9 member Planning Commission over the past 2½ years. As you know, the Goals and Objectives of this Master Plan were developed through a Vision process, which consisted of a series of three meetings which provided public input.

We hope the City Council is pleased with our effort and with the resulting plan. We thank you for your support throughout this long and difficult, yet rewarding process.

Respectfully submitted,

David Dystant, Chairperson
City of Oak Park Planning Commission

cc: All Planning Commission Members



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Oakland County Department of Community and Economic Development
Development and Planning Division
Executive Office Building
1200 N. Telegraph Rd. Dept 412
Pontiac, MI 48341-0412

SUBJECT: City of Oak Park Master Plan

Ladies & Gentlemen,

On behalf of the City of Oak Park Planning Commission, I am pleased to transmit the enclosed copy of our recently adopted Master Plan for your information. The Planning Commission has spent the past 2½ years working on this important project. A Vision process, which consisted of a series of three meetings provided the public input basis for our goals, objectives, and policies statements. We are confident that the Plan will provide an appropriate direction for the community's growth, development, and re-development over the next 10-20 years.

Our planning consultant is David Birchler of Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc. If you have any questions about our Plan or would like more information, you can call Mr. Birchler at 810-543-0690.

Respectfully submitted,

David Dystant, Chairperson
City of Oak Park Planning Commission

cc: All Planning Commission Members

A vision for Oak Park's future

Residents' views on Master Plan invited at Sept. 9 hearing

What will Oak Park's neighborhoods, commercial areas and public buildings look like in the year 2016? There's no way to foresee every detail, but all residents are invited to provide input into formulating the blueprint that will be the primary factor in shaping the community their children will inherit.

The Planning Commission has scheduled a public hearing at its Sept. 9 meeting for the purpose of receiving citizen comments regarding a draft Master Plan for the City's future growth, development and re-development. The meeting is scheduled at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers.

Residents currently are able to thoroughly examine this comprehensive document, which is available for review at the Planning Division office, 13700 Oak Park Blvd., and the City Clerk's Office, 13600 Oak Park Blvd. (City Hall). Circulation copies may be obtained at the Library.

The Master Plan is fundamentally a long-range policy document that is intended to guide positive change in the City over a period of one to two decades, rather than serve as a specific set of land-use rules and regulations, explained City Planner Kevin Rulkowski.

"Public input is essential and it's important to point out that you don't have to be familiar with urban planning principles in order to contribute," he declared. "A resident simply needs to review the draft plan and pass along his or her ideas."

"The information and concepts presented in the Master Plan are intended to guide future local decisions on both public and private use of land, as well as the provision of public facilities. With this in mind, public input has been solicited at two key points in the process of creating a

final document. A group of some 40 'stakeholders' — a cross-section of community representatives — were involved in three meetings at which they assisted the Planning Commission in developing a vision of what Oak Park should be in 20 years. This is expressed in a Vision Statement that is an integral portion of the plan.

"The second step will be the public hearing. The Planning Commission's careful consideration of all comments made by citizens will ensure that the Master Plan truly reflects the needs of Oak Park residents."

The Planning Commission is one of Oak Park's two-dozen City Council-chartered advisory boards and commissions. Like the others, it consists of appointed citizen volunteers: private residents who make recommendations to Council regarding proposals that require legislative action.

This role is essential in the creation of the Master Plan, explained Commission Chair David W. Dystant.

"While adoption of a Master Plan is the only issue that any City board or commission may approve on its own authority, without submission to Council for approval, we have made every attempt to include members of Council and of the Zoning Board of Appeals in the document's development," he said. "We similarly have relied on the meetings with stakeholders in forming the basis for the plan, and we will take into account any and all input residents provide at the public hearing."

"It is important to understand that the Master Plan is not set in stone. It will serve as a living document that will likely require modification as our community evolves over the years. The Master Plan will help to guide and direct this evolution."



Planning Commission Chairman David Dystant (left) and City Planner Kevin Rulkowski check a copy of the proposed Master Plan, which is available for residents' review in advance of the Sept. 9 public hearing.