

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Manager Jim Ritsema
FROM: Arcadia Neighborhood Association, Rex Brueggemann, President
DATE: December 20, 2019
RE: Request on behalf of the Arcadia Neighborhood Association

We are the Arcadia Neighborhood Association. We are an informal association concerned with and purporting to represent the approximately 410, primarily owner occupied (primarily single family residential in design) properties (and the people who reside in these properties) in what has been known as the Arcadia Neighborhood. By way of description of those properties, see the attached map dated May 22, 2014 and entitled ARCADIA NEIGHBORHOOD RENTALS.

We ask that City staff and the City Manager, working with the Mayor and the Kalamazoo City Commission, do all things necessary to amend the Imagine Kalamazoo Master Plan to redefine the Arcadia Neighborhood per the attached maps. See attached maps setting forth the area to be redefined as the Arcadia Neighborhood. This would involve altering the area described as Arcadia in the Kalamazoo Neighborhood Map set forth at page 97 of the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Master Plan, and wherever else modification of the Master Plan needs to be made to make the Master Plan consistently reflect the redefined Arcadia Neighborhood.

Upon these revisions taking place, the Arcadia Neighborhood Association intends to enter into the neighborhood planning process, for the purpose of developing a neighborhood plan for the redefined Arcadia Neighborhood, as part of the neighborhood planning process anticipated by Imagine Kalamazoo 2025.

The Arcadia Neighborhood Association also wishes to communicate to City staff, the City Manager, and the Kalamazoo City Commission, that we ask at this time that the "orange strip" drawn across the front of the Arcadia Neighborhood as part of the Future Land Development Map set forth at page 26 of the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Master Plan be removed. The inclusion of this orange strip in that map encourages real estate speculation in a manner which conflicts with the existing West Side Area Plan, and is injurious to the predominantly owner occupied character of the Arcadia Neighborhood.

Please also find the attached excerpts from the West Side Area Plan. Putting aside possible quibbling over the precise edges of the area being discussed, two things are clear from these excerpts: the Arcadia Neighborhood as we are describing it is to be protected from encroaching development; and the Arcadia Neighborhood as we are describing it is repeatedly referenced by the West Side Area Plan.




Arcadia Neighborhood Rentals

Date: May 22, 2014

The maps from the City of Kalamazoo's GIS are not at surveyor accuracy. The City of Kalamazoo assumes no legal liability for the information contained on these maps.

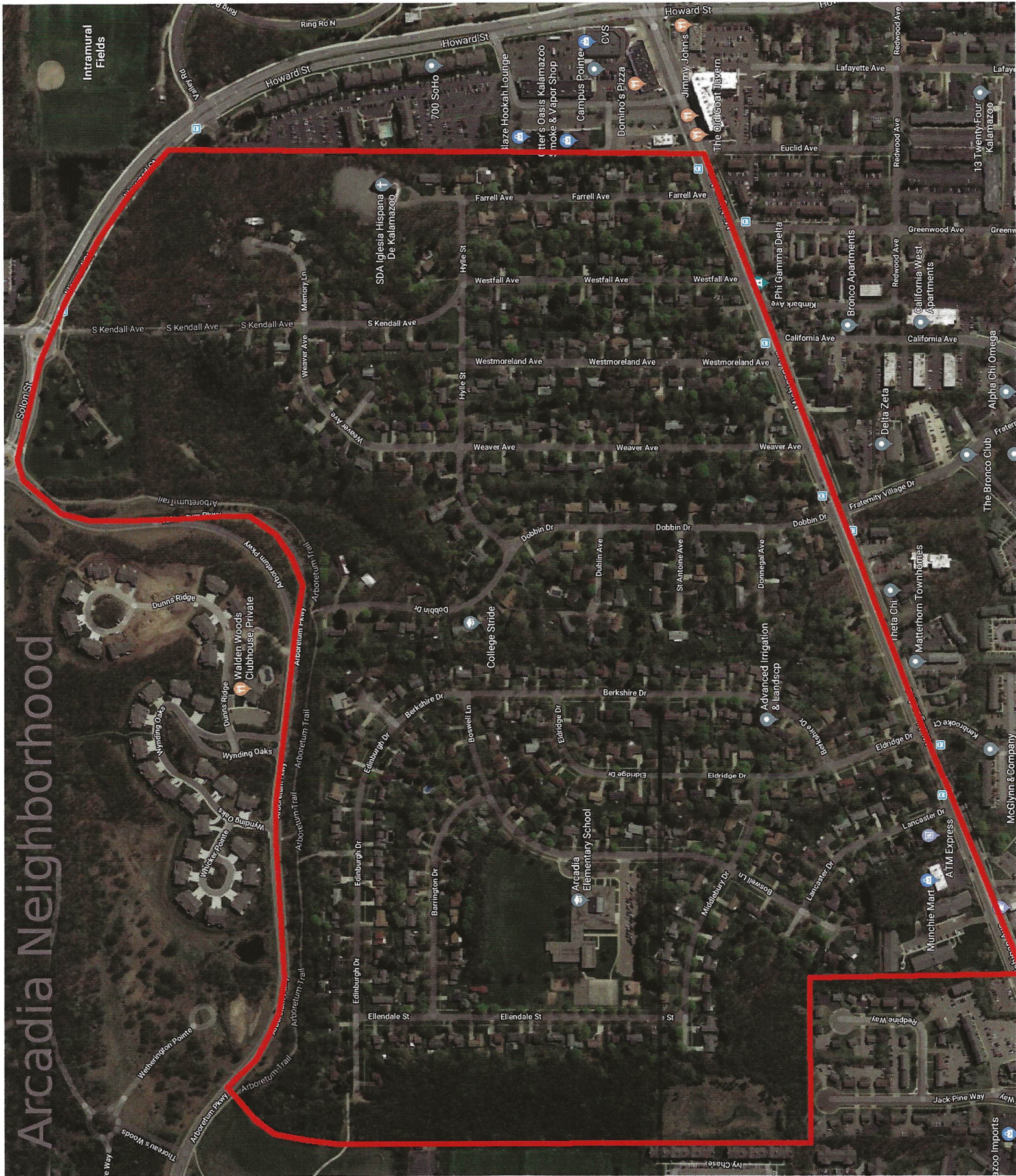
Legend

- Arcadia Neighborhood
- Rentals
- Parcel Lines



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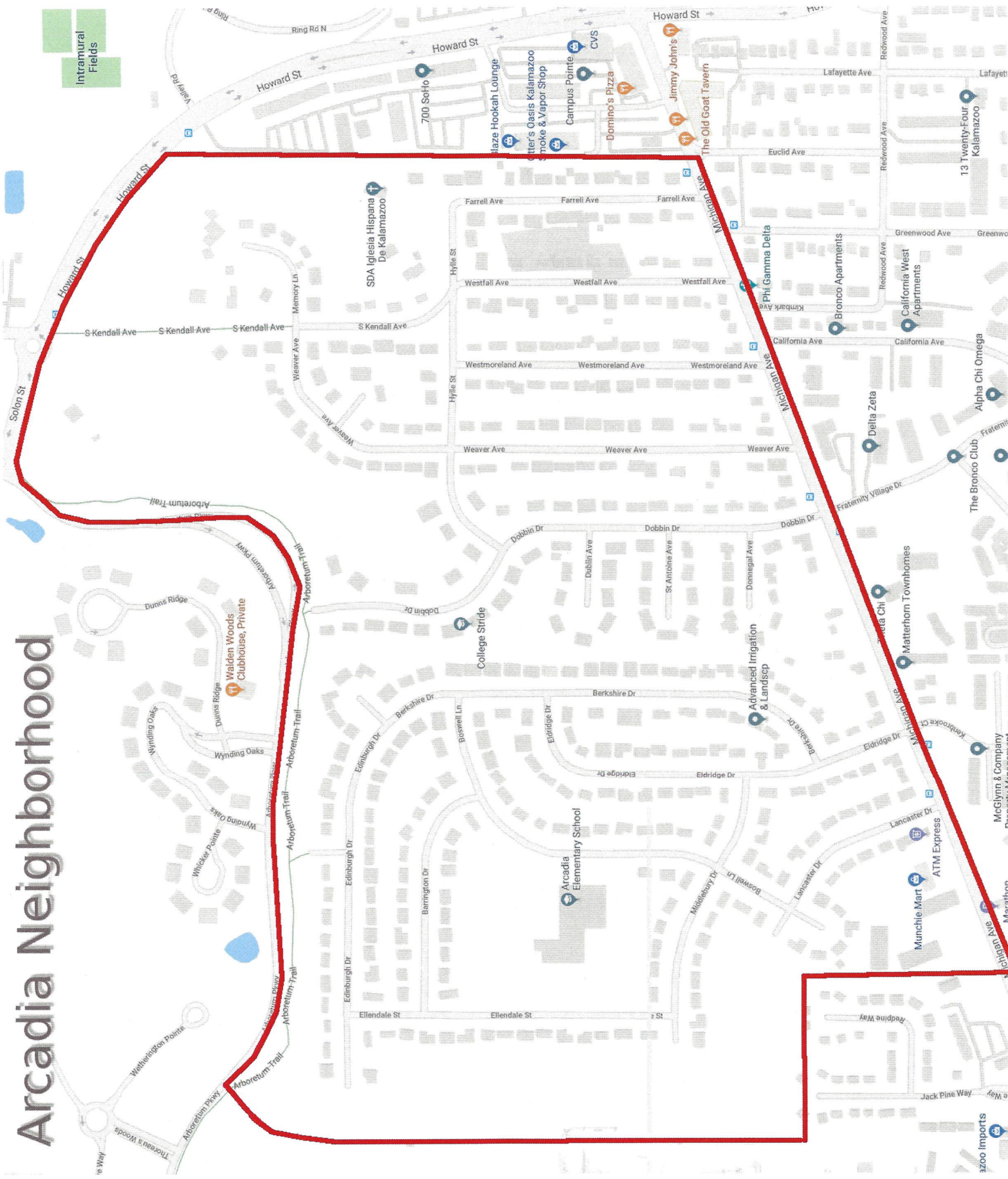
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Arcadia Neighborhood

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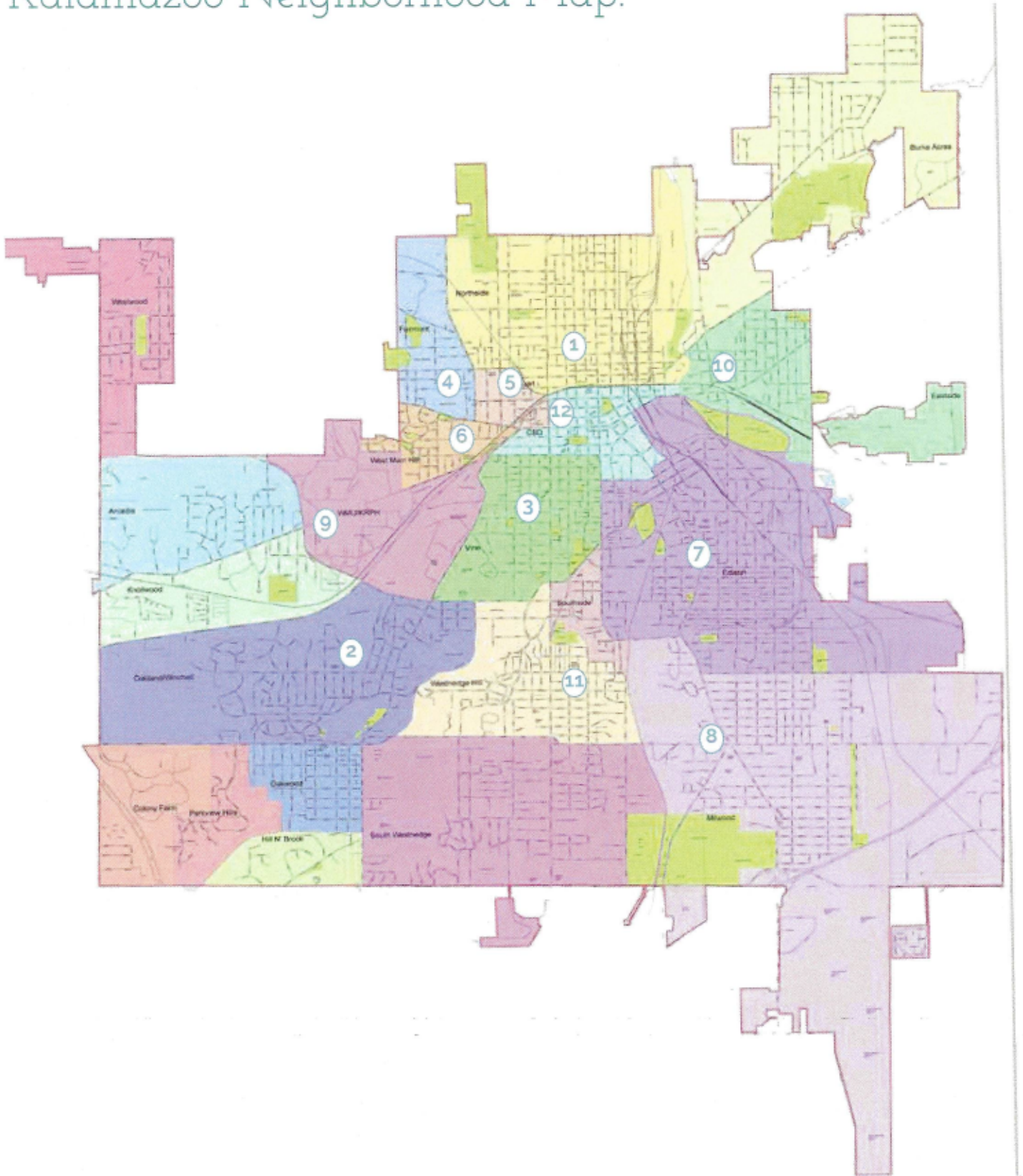
Arcadia Neighborhood



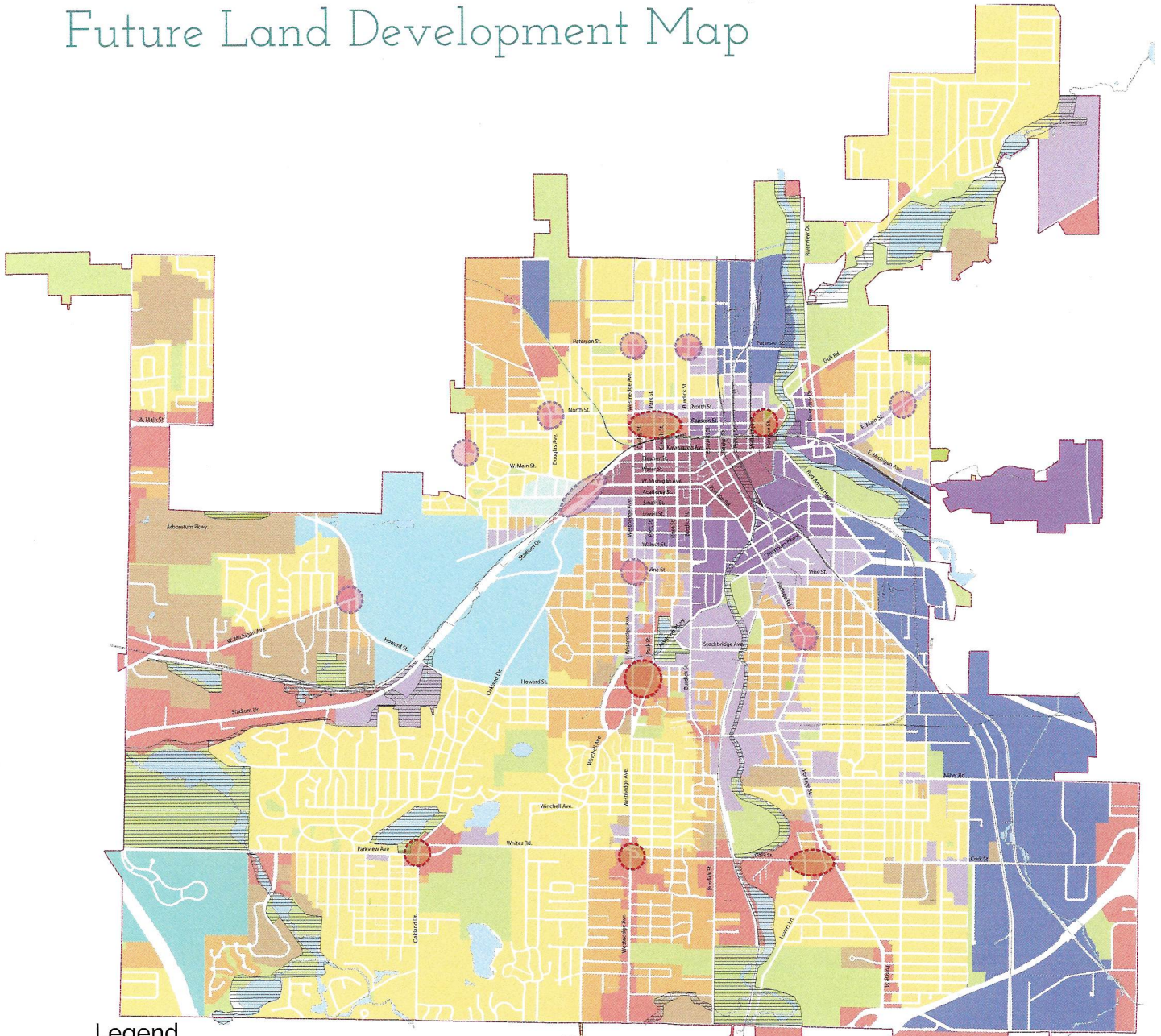
Intramural Fields

ANA "ASK"

Kalamazoo Neighborhood Map.



Future Land Development Map



Legend

- Downtown
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Urban Edge
- Neighborhood Edge
- R3-Residential
- R2-Residential
- R1-Residential
- Open Space/Parks
- Natural Features
- Campus
- Campus/Private
- Commercial Node
- Neighborhood Node

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the past decade, the west side of Kalamazoo has become increasingly urbanized, as a result of an increased demand for housing, particularly multi-family and student-oriented housing. In response to the high demand, the private market continues to build further west from the city, into adjoining townships, including Oshkemo and Kalamazoo Charter Townships. In addition, increasing numbers of single-family homes in these areas have been converted to student rentals, especially in the Knollwood neighborhood.

As more and more student housing is built further from the city, significant traffic congestion has resulted on streets leading into Western Michigan University (WMU) and the downtown area. This is particularly true on West Michigan Avenue. Heavy reliance on the private automobile, relatively low transit ridership, and the lack of pedestrian and bike routes has exacerbated traffic congestion on the west side of Kalamazoo. Without a sensible plan to address short-term problems and to guide future development in a sustainable fashion, the quality of life in this part of the city will deteriorate.

The West Side Area Plan makes recommendations for land use and transportation policy changes for the short term, for the long term sustainability of the West Side, and for a healthy "town and gown" co-existence between the University and its neighbors. This plan will be used to guide zoning, land use, and transportation decisions for the next several decades. Its recommendations focus on complementary land use policies to:

- Create better neighborhoods;
- Reduce car dependency;
- Expand choices for alternative modes of transportation;

- Improve the physical character of the public realm; and
- Preserve and enhance neighborhood quality of life.

The plan's key policy recommendations are summarized below.

LAND USE PLAN

WMU Foundation Parcels

Rezone approximately 180-acre WMU Foundation-owned parcel for residential, commercial and open space uses.

West Michigan Avenue/Howard Street Intersection

Rezone the southwest portion of this intersection for commercial/retail use, extending into the Knollwood neighborhood.

West Michigan Avenue and Drake Road Gateway

Create a gateway at the northeast corner of this intersection, marking this entry into the City of Kalamazoo and directing motorists to WMU.

Knollwood Neighborhood Improvements

Provide curbs, gutters and sidewalks throughout the Knollwood neighborhood to decrease pedestrian-traffic conflicts and inappropriate parking practices. Convert single-family homes to multi-family complexes and other high density housing, with Zone 7B design guidelines. Continue to use Knollwood Park used as an active, student-oriented park with disc golf and other amenities.

Arcadia Neighborhood

Protect and preserve the single-family character of this predominantly owner-occupied neighborhood.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

West Michigan Avenue

Reconstruct West Michigan Avenue as a five-lane boulevard with bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides.

Parkway through WMU Foundation Parcels

Construct a parkway connecting Drake Road to Kendall Street, if it is justified by traffic impact analysis and subsequent public deliberation.

Connector Streets

Extend Emajean Street north of the Arboretum Apartments to the proposed parkway to allow for access from West Michigan Avenue. The Emajean extension should be done only if the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) were to vacate their current site.

Extend Redwood Avenue from Knollwood Avenue to the Lawson Ice Arena, for bus, pedestrian, and bicycle access only.

Traffic Control

Improve the Howard Street and Stadium Drive intersection to reduce traffic delays.

Alternative Transportation

Add a pedestrian-only light sequence at the intersection of West Michigan Avenue and Howard Street.

Bike Lanes

Incorporate dedicated bike lanes into the design of all of the roadways proposed in this plan, as well as along the rail lines at the southern boundary of the study area.

INTRODUCTION

WHY A NEW PLAN ?

In recent years, the West Side of Kalamazoo has seen a boom in housing needs fueled by the growth of the university community in the area. Development pressure for more multi-family housing has resulted in the conversion of many single-family homes into rentals and has pushed development westward, into Kalamazoo and Oshtemo Charter Townships. This has resulted in haphazard development and serious infrastructure and traffic problems. To address these issues, the City of Kalamazoo commissioned a planning study to define land use and transportation policy recommendations. Over the course of a year, four public workshops with area residents, and many individual meetings with stakeholders and the Advisory Committee, were held. The result of those meetings is the West Side Area Plan, a document that will guide future development through sensible and sustainable land use and transportation policies.

THE SETTING

The primary focus of the West Side Area plan is the area to the west of WMU, particularly the Arcadia and Knollwood neighborhoods and their street networks. The planning area is bounded by West Main Street on the north, the railroad tracks on the south, Howard Street on the east, and Drake Road on the west (See Map 1).

WMU has a significant presence in the study area, both in size and importance as an educational institution employing and educating a large percentage of the people who live on the West Side. In implementing its current campus master plan, which addresses many of the same issues as the West Side Area Plan, WMU is particularly focused on policy and design changes to improve

vehicular and non-motorized transportation.

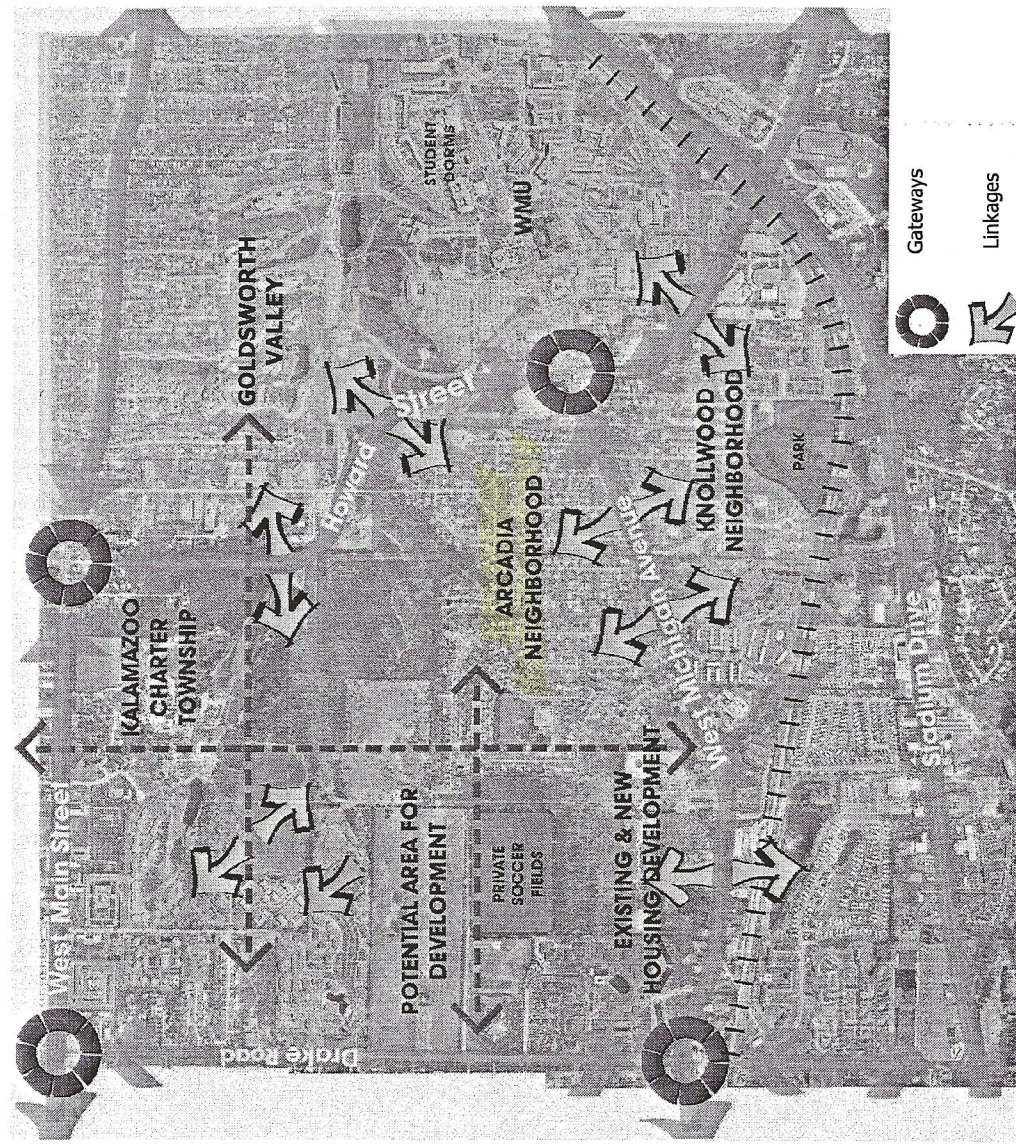
The Western Michigan University Foundation parcels, located north of the Arcadia neighborhood and stretching from Howard and Kendall on the east to Drake Road on the west, is an approximately 180-acre area used primarily for informal, passive recreation. This property, comprised of woodland and prairie, has been the subject of much controversy over the years. A Planned Unit Development approved for this property in the late 1990's (known as "The Arboretum") was the subject of extended public debate and was never constructed.

The Arcadia neighborhood, north of West Michigan Avenue, is a stable, single-family neighborhood. It is surrounded on three sides by encroaching commercial and multi-family residential uses. While change and growth in this area are inevitable, the neighborhood needs to be protected from adverse impacts from traffic and surrounding development.

The Knollwood neighborhood, the railroad tracks, and Stadium Drive are located in the southern half of the study area. This area is dominated by student rentals, including many single-family homes converted to multi-family rental use and many new apartment complexes. The architecture of this area's residential buildings lacks a unified character, and many buildings are in deteriorating condition. This is a pedestrian focus area, although most streets have no sidewalks, curbs, or gutters. As a result, pedestrians and vehicles frequently come into conflict. These problems are more pronounced in the winter months when heavy snow and ice on the roadways leave little room for pedestrians.

West Michigan Avenue is a major east-west street serving both the entry point to the study area from the west at Drake Road and as the entry point to WMU at Howard Street. It is also the thoroughfare that separates the very different neighborhoods of Arcadia on the north and Knollwood on the south. As the main connector between WMU and the area to the west of campus, it suffers from serious traffic congestion. The future of West Michigan Avenue is a major focus for plan recommendations.

INTRODUCTION



Map 1 Planning Framework

KEY ISSUES

Through a series of community workshops, three main topics of interest were identified:

Future use of WMU Foundation Parcels

- Interest in the future development of this land and its eventual impact on community open space needs.

West Michigan Avenue - Traffic Congestion

- The impact of increased traffic in recent years on the neighborhoods, on West Michigan Avenue, and on accessibility in the study area.

Land use/Open Space

- The impact of different land uses existing in close proximity to one another - commercial, multi-family and single-family housing, parks, and open space.

WMU FOUNDATION PARCELS - SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The parcels north and west of the Arcadia Neighborhood which are owned by the Western Michigan University Foundation ("Foundation Parcels") are critical to the planning for the West Side. The overall intent of this plan is to provide for orderly, quality, development of the Foundation Parcels which enhances the quality of life in the area and places most of the land back on the community's tax-rolls. As such, there are detailed recommendations for these approximately 180 acres. These recommendations are as follows:

- The entirety of the Foundation Parcels will be limited to 856 residential units which is equivalent to the number of units allowed on the Foundation Parcels prior to the adoption of this plan.
- The existing 240 units at the Arboretum Apartments are counted toward this total resulting in the possibility for 616 new residential units on the Foundation Parcels (856 - 240 = 616).
- The 80 acres north of Arcadia Neighborhood will remain zoned single family residential.
- 40 acres north of Arcadia Neighborhood will be set aside by the Foundation and/or future developer as protected open space, with access retained for neighborhood residents, students, and the community.
- This plan designates as open space a substantial portion of the mature basswood forest area north of the Arcadia Neighborhood, which will be part of the planned 40 acres of contiguous open space.

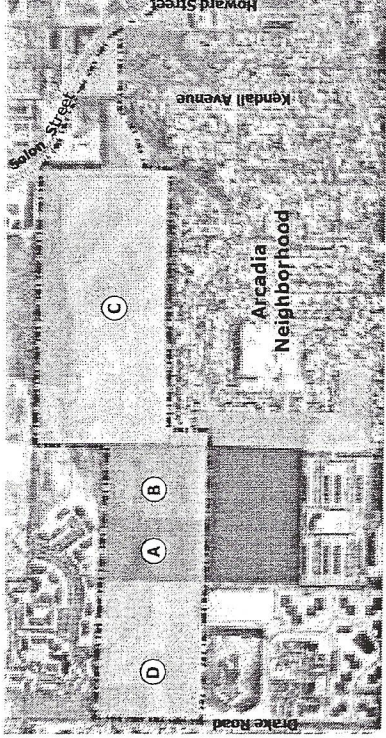


Figure 3 WMU Foundation Parcels

- 40 acres north of the Arcadia Neighborhood will be limited to a maximum of 232 units (40 acres x 5.8 units per acre).
- Deed restrictions will be placed on the property north of the Arcadia Neighborhood limiting occupancy to owner-occupied detached, single-family homes or attached, owner-occupied condominiums. Or, if rental, the rentals will be limited to persons aged 55+.
- The western portion of the Foundation parcels will be zoned multi-family residential.
- Approximately 30 acres along Drake Road will be rezoned to general commercial, with design guidelines to be drafted and implemented by the city of Kalamazoo.
- The small portion of vacant property directly to the west of the Arcadia Neighborhood will be either retained as open space or used for the expansion of the youth soccer fields.
- The City Commission recommended additional detailed traffic studies be undertaken to identify the traffic and infrastructure needs to facilitate the proposed land uses of the WMU Foundation parcels.
- Any road that is constructed in the area must follow City specifications, including traffic calming mechanisms, minimum traffic lanes necessary (as determined by the traffic impact analysis), bike lanes, sidewalks, and pedestrian connections to open space.
- In order to facilitate a smooth approval process, future developers of the Foundation Parcels are encouraged to consult with the Arcadia Neighborhood Association prior to developing designs for the area.

LAND USE PLAN

WMU FOUNDATION PARCELS

(A) High Density Residential

Approximately 10 acres of land immediately east of the retail/commercial area is proposed for high density residential use. Consistent with the Kalamazoo Comprehensive Plan's definition of high density, this area is envisioned to have 12 to 15 dwelling units per acre. The types of residential units here could range from multi-family apartments to single-family attached townhouses (See Figure 4). These units would be attractive to WMU faculty, students, and staff, with the adjacent retail/commercial area providing for their shopping needs. The parkway recommended through the WMU Foundation property will provide access to WMU (via shuttle, bus, bike or car), reducing traffic on West Michigan Avenue.

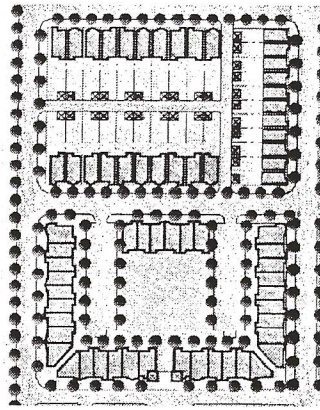
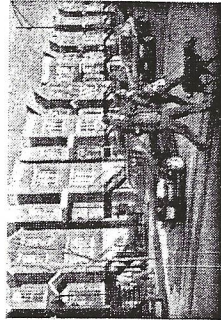


Figure 4 High Density Townhouse Example



High Density Townhouse Example

(B) Medium Density Residential

Approximately 20 acres of land immediately east of the proposed high density residential area is proposed as a medium density residential zone. According to the City's Comprehensive Plan, medium density residential is defined as having between 6 and 12 dwelling units per acre. This medium density residential development could include detached single-family, two-family, or cluster housing (See Figure 5). These units could be one or two stories in height and be located on lots approximately 40' to 50' wide.

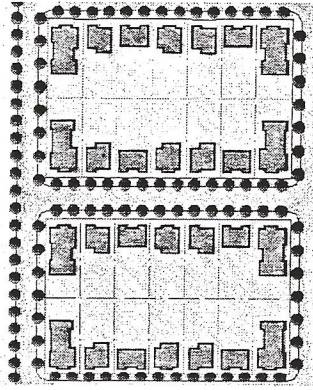


Figure 5 Medium Density Housing Example



Medium Density Housing Example

(C) Low Density Residential /Open space

Approximately half of an 80-acre area within the WMU Foundation site is proposed to remain as low density residential (as it is currently zoned) and allow approximately 40 acres of publicly accessible open space (See Figure 6). The 40 acres of open space may not be a dedicated public park, but it should remain accessible to the entire community. This plan designates as open space a substantial portion of the mature basswood forest area north of Arcadia Neighborhood, which will be part of the planned 40 acres of contiguous open space. This could be achieved by clustering new housing units and establishing pedestrian connections to link open space to the Arcadia neighborhood south of planned open space.

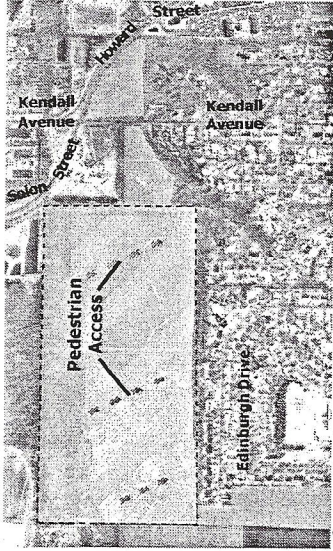
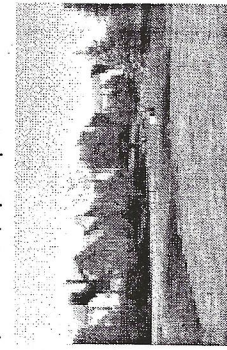


Figure 6 Low Density Residential/Open Space



Low Density Residential/Open Space Example