

West Main Street Sub-Area Plan



A white semi-truck with a white trailer is driving in the left lane of the highway.

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A silver sedan is driving in the right lane of the highway.

A white sedan is driving in the right lane of the highway.



CHAPTER 10

West Main Street Sub-Area Plan

This West Main Street Sub-Area Plan provides the opportunity to address questions regarding future development along a critical corridor within Oshtemo. Since the last Master Plan was prepared in the late 1990's, significant commercial development has occurred at the intersection of West Main and 9th Street as well as east of US-131 along West Main Street. This plan focuses on the portion of West Main Street between 9th Street and US-131; this area was part of a larger focus area in the previous Master Plan which called for office uses along the frontage of West Main Street. However, since the previous plan, there has been little development of this nature. Rather, in that time period, the Township has denied several applications and development requests for other types of commercial uses because they were not in keeping with the Master Plan, along with other reasons. The result is a difference between what is allowed, what is desired, and what has been requested. This difference and the development of nearby areas have prompted the closer look at this section of West Main Street.

What is a Sub-Area Plan?

A sub-area plan is an individual component of the overall Township Master Land Use Plan. A sub-area is an area with unique circumstances that requires a deeper evaluation and further public input before establishing a plan for future development. This Sub-Area Plan includes a vision, goals, principles of development, and a future land use map just like the overall Master Plan, although in more detail than the Township-wide Plan.

Existing Conditions

Regional Location

The West Main Street Sub-Area is located in the eastern portion of the Township. The sub-area is located along West Main Street (M-43) between US-131 and 9th Street and includes the immediately adjacent lands to the north and south. While the sub-area is focused primarily on the parcels fronting on West Main Street, the plan recognizes that some of the issues relevant to the discussion of this area – such as transportation – extend beyond these frontage parcels.

The West Main Street Sub-Area, particularly on the south side, is an island of undeveloped land bounded by areas of intense commercial development and residential neighborhoods.

- To the west, the intersection of 9th Street and West Main Street has experienced significant commercial development, primarily in the form of big box commercial retail with adjacent outlots developed as service and retail uses.
- To the east is the interchange of US-131 and West Main Street. To the east of the interchange is existing commercial development including restaurants, strip malls, and big box retail development.
- To the north, southeast, and southwest are established single family residential neighborhoods with the most recent development occurring to the southwest.

The commercial development at 9th Street and West Main Street and the residential neighborhoods adjacent to this corridor represent the growth that has occurred and will continue to occur in Oshtemo Township. As this growth continues, pressure and demand for development of the vacant parcels within the sub-area will increase as well.

Existing Land Uses

Although much of the West Main Street corridor is highly developed, the sub-area remains largely undeveloped. On the north side of the highway, just to the east of the Meijer store and its associated outlots, is a large vacant parcel surrounding a few smaller homes and/or offices. Further to the east, developed parcels include several stand-alone office and financial institutions. The land that remains undeveloped is fairly flat with wooded areas mixed with open grasslands.

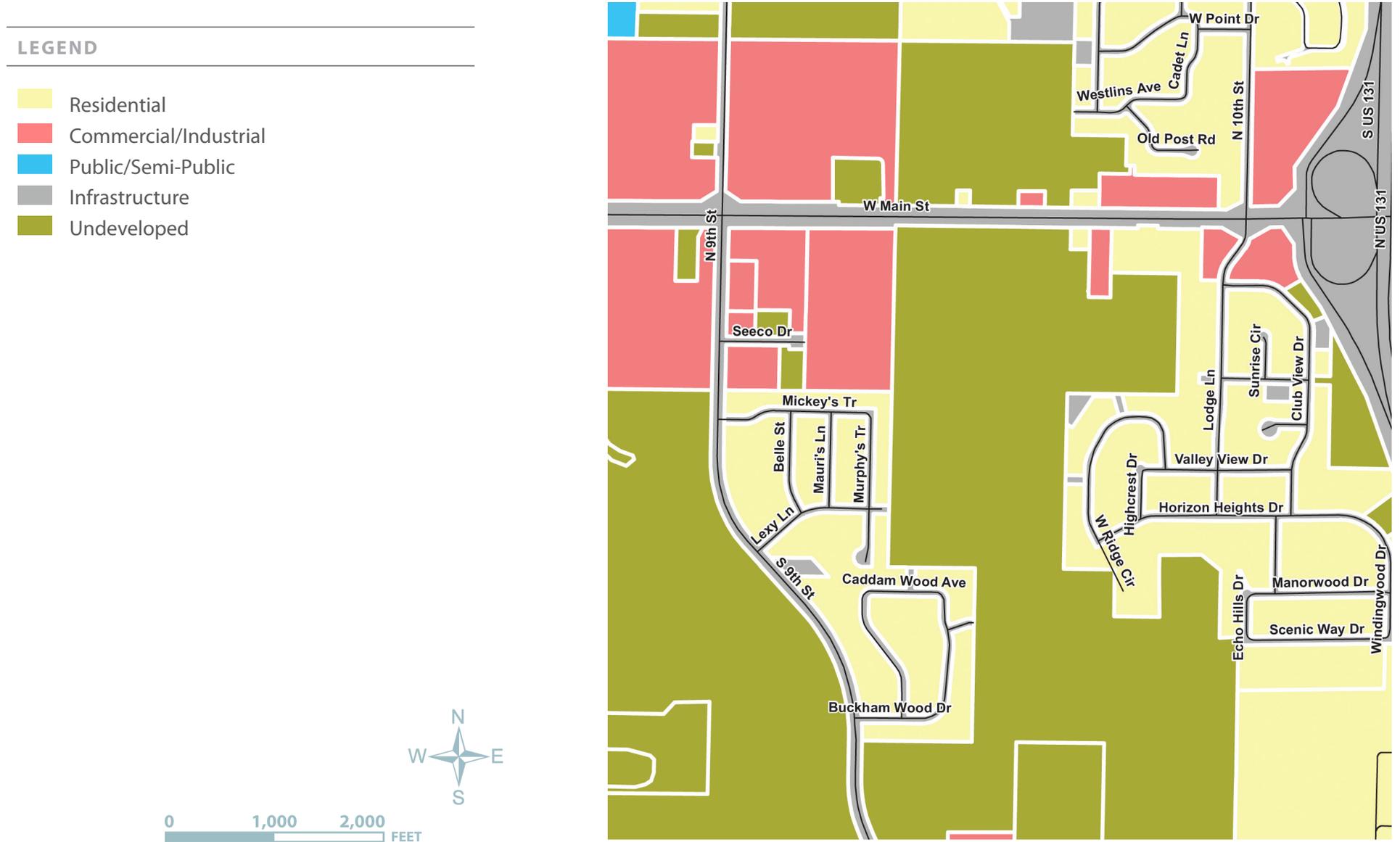
On the south side of the road, the corridor is more undeveloped and natural in character and appearance. Immediately to the west of Lodge Lane are several individual uses including commercial uses and single family residences. The rest of the land consists of large, vacant parcels. These parcels are mostly wooded and marked by areas of steep topography that may impact development potential.

Zoning

Most of this area is located in the R-2 Residence district with the south frontage of West Main Street also located within the 9th Street Overlay Zone. Participants raised several concerns during the focus group sessions about the existing zoning requirements, including difficulty working with the current PUD standards and procedures. As the Township implements the vision, goals, and development principles of this Plan and develops new zoning standards, the Planning Commission must review these concerns to ensure the zoning policies of the Township will achieve the vision of the community.

FIGURE 10.1

West Main Street Sub-Area – Existing Land Use



Public Services / Infrastructure

TRANSPORTATION

The West Main Street Sub-Area is located along West Main Street (M-43). West Main Street is a five-lane road (center turn lane) with a speed limit of 50 miles per hour. It has an average daily traffic count of 28,500 vehicles; it is currently the second busiest corridor in the County. Estimates by MDOT indicate only one percent of daily vehicles are commercial traffic. The roadway was improved in 2007; at that time bike paths were established along the north and south sides of the roadway. Immediately to the east is US-131, a limited access interstate freeway. To the west is 9th Street, a County Primary Road; a signal exists at the intersection with West Main Street. A signalized intersection also exists at the intersection of West Main Street and 10th Street/Lodge Lane just west of the US-131 interchange. MDOT maintains West Main Street and US-131 while the Kalamazoo County Road Commission maintains 9th Street, 10th Street, and Lodge Lane. Public transit extends west along West Main Street to 9th Street.

One of the primary assets of the West Main Street Sub-Area is its core transportation system and the access it provides to the surrounding community, adjacent activity centers, and nearby highways. Due to the undeveloped nature of the area, there are currently few internal streets or inter-connections. The vacant parcels represent opportunities to provide east-west links across this area and create the missing local street network similar to what exists between 9th and 10th Streets north of West Main Street, i.e. the Westport Neighborhood. The surrounding neighborhoods provide outlots and stub streets that create opportunities for interconnectivity through the creation of a local street network. As development occurs, outlots and stub streets will be utilized as appropriate to create this connected local street network. The network that results will allow for efficient movement of local vehicles, but would be designed to minimize opportunities for shortcuts and safety issues. This will be achieved through proper design, proper routing, and/or the introduction of traffic calming mechanisms.

Participants in the focus group sessions identified traffic along West Main Street several times as an influence on the potential development that can and should occur along the corridor. The high traffic counts and intensity of the highway create an environment that is not conducive to residential development. However, the number of vehicles is attractive to commercial development.

Currently, the West Main Street corridor operates at a service level of B (on a scale of A-F), which is good. The addition of several driveways will quickly decrease this

service level and increase the risk for accidents and injuries, if not properly located and designed. Proper design may include the installation of a central signalized intersection, minimal new curb cuts, and/or the creation of a boulevard with associated median to prevent left-turns. Compliance with the Township's access management plan will be important as development occurs along the corridor.

UTILITIES

Currently, only public water service is available along the entire West Main Street Sub-Area. Development in this area would be able to tap into the water supply and access public water.

On the south side of West Main Street, public sanitary sewer service is available for extension at both the east and west sides of the sub-area but does not extend across the area. This is due to both the lack of development that has occurred as well as the topography. The topography will make it more challenging to design and engineer the future sewer service, but as development occurs, it is accessible. Sewer is available across the study area on the north side.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

While the management and treatment of stormwater is important for any newly developing area, it is of particular concern in this area due to the existing soil conditions. In this area there are known conditions of a heavy clay layer that hinders ground water infiltration.

The plan encourages the use of natural, low-impact mitigation techniques, such as swales and rain gardens, designed to provide adequate capacity to make up for potential and existing soil conditions, in order to provide for effective, on-site management of stormwater. Shared systems are encouraged, particularly in areas with existing topographic conditions that encourage stormwater flow to continue its natural pattern or where other aspects of the development are already being coordinated. See the Physical Character and Environment chapter of this Master Plan for a more detailed discussion of stormwater management techniques.

PUBLIC INPUT

Township-Wide Public Input

Township-wide public input was gathered for the Master Plan in general. Because this comprehensive effort was well-received and involved the entire Township the results still carry weight for individual parts of the community. A review of these results provides some guidance for this particular area as well.

In the fall of 2008, Oshtemo Township conducted a visioning workshop consisting of several different exercises. This was followed in the spring of 2009 with an opinion survey of randomly selected residents throughout the Township. The opinion survey had a response rate of 34 percent, well above expectations and typical response rates for similar surveys. The Master Plan provides an overall description of the process and results; a detailed summary of the full results is provided in the Appendix. Below are some specific items that are relevant to the West Main Street Sub-Area:

- On the Township survey, when asked to select terms that describe the portion of the Township between Drake Road and 8th Street, the top four terms selected by respondents were “commercial”, “congested”, “high density,” and “open spaces threatened.”
- The survey asked respondents where future commercial development should occur and indicated that they could select two choices from a list of six (including “other”). “West Main Street, East of 9th Street” and “West Main Street / Drake Road” were the top two choices with about 44% of responses each.
- The majority of visioning session participants indicated that future development on vacant parcels along the corridor should be commercial.

Design Workshop

To focus on the vision for the West Main Street Sub-Area, a design workshop was held in November 2010. The workshop included four focus group stakeholder meetings. The sessions were held with the following groups of stakeholders:

- Government
- Vacant and non-residential land owners
- Transportation and public utilities Neighbors and residents

Attendees identified the positive attributes of the area, the challenges that exist there, and the principles the Township should apply to future development. The results of these discussions are provided in the appendix.

In the next exercise, land owners, neighbors, and residents allocated future land uses on a map of the sub-area in accordance with their vision for the future. Working in small groups, the participants discussed the best layout for future uses and illustrated their ideas on the map. This allowed them to understand the challenges faced by the Township and the Planning Commission and also gave them direct input in the planning process.

All of the information gathered was used by the design team to formulate a preliminary draft plan for the Sub-Area. The preliminary plan included principles for development and a draft land use map.

Vision, Goals, and Principles

The Master Plan contains Goals and Objectives to describe the vision for the Township as a whole and how to achieve them; see the Goals and Objectives Chapter of the Master Plan. These overall goals and objectives also apply to the West Main Street Sub-Area and will help shape the development that occurs along this corridor. However, due to the unique circumstances in this Sub-Area, a specific vision and set of goals developed for the Sub-Area will further guide development in this area.

Vision for the Sub-Area The West Main Street Sub-Area will develop in a manner that maintains the rural character of the Township and integrity and function of the transportation system while allowing for low-impact commercial and office uses.

Without standards or controls, this area would likely develop at a high intensity due to the high traffic levels, surrounding development, and success of the adjacent commercial development. Uncontrolled development would likely be detrimental to the Township, especially to those residents who live near this area. Therefore, clearly stating this vision and the corresponding goals is critical for establishing standards for development in this area consistent with the plan.

Goals for the Sub-Area

Goals for this Sub-Area describe how the vision for future development will be accomplished in greater detail. Principles have also been established that will guide future land use and development of the West Main Street Sub-Area. The development principles have been sorted and placed under the appropriate goal.

Future market conditions may change, development trends may evolve, and new ideas may emerge that were not anticipated; this plan is flexible enough to accommodate such changes. Regardless of the different uses developed in this area, the consistency will be in these principles of development and they will guide development and ensure that this Sub- Area is consistent with the vision presented by the community.

GOAL ONE

Character: Future development in the West Main Street Sub-Area will reflect the rural character of the Township and be respectful of surrounding development.

- Uses along the corridor will maintain the existing landscape and utilize the topography to provide screening and enhanced setbacks, as appropriate.
- Uses along the frontage of the corridor are envisioned to include low-intensity uses such as offices and low-intensity commercial development.
- Form and character standards will be established so that appearance becomes as important as the specific uses established in this area.

High intensity retail development exists just to the west of the designated sub-area.



GOAL TWO

Access: Future development in the West Main Street Sub-Area will limit access to West Main Street and provide interconnections with adjacent development to establish a safe and efficient local transportation network.

- Ensure all future development complies with the Township's Access Management Plan.
- Require interconnections between developments where reasonable and efficient.
- Design the local transportation network in a manner that discourages the direct connection between commercial development and adjacent neighborhoods and prevents commercial traffic from driving through the neighborhoods.
- Install a central, signalized intersection along West Main Street and/or construct a boulevard with medians designed to limit left-turns.
- Coordinate with MDOT and Kalamazoo County Road Commission to ensure future road improvements are consistent with this and other plans of the Township, including the Non-Motorized Facilities Plan.

GOAL THREE

Community: Future development in the West Main Street Sub-Area will occur in a manner that enhances the existing quality of life of all those who live, work, and play in Oshtemo.

- Protect the integrity and quality of life of existing and future neighborhoods including the dedication of public greenspace within new development.
- Promote use of Planned Unit Development to ensure development is coordinated and consistent across large parcels, particularly in regards to access, parking, and design.
- Work with the Kalamazoo County Road Commission on a Complete Streets design philosophy that integrates pedestrians and bicyclist into the road network.
- Provide trails and connections within the Sub-Area and with existing networks and activity centers outside the Sub-Area.
- Provide appropriate buffers that allow different land uses adjacent to each other to coexist.

FUTURE LAND USE

The following map illustrates the desired future land use for the West Main Street Sub-Area. It is a supplement to the Township-wide Future Land Use Map.

Also illustrated in the Sub-Area Map are a variety of opportunities and constraints that exist in the area. These are issues that can be capitalized on as the area grows and must be addressed in order to preserve and improve the quality of life and to remain consistent with the plan's principles of development.

Note that this sub-area map is preliminary and the exact location of features on it will not necessarily dictate where development and infrastructure improvements will be implemented. This map is a guideline to be consulted with when future development occurs.

FIGURE 10.2

West Main Street Sub-Area Plan

Oshtemo Charter Township, Kalamazoo County, Michigan

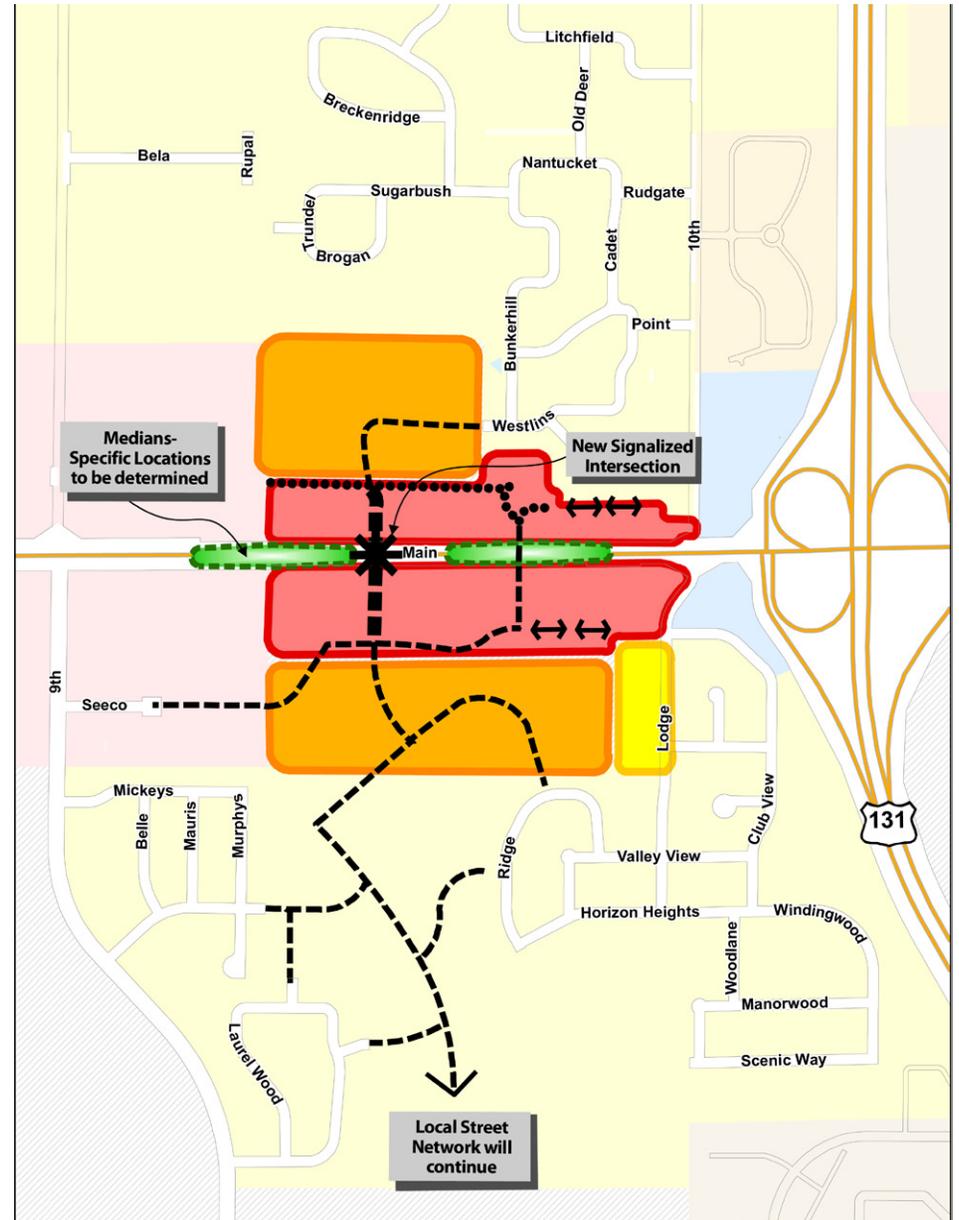
LEGEND

- Low Density Residential
- Transitional Residential
- West main Commercial
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Transitional Mixed Use
- General Commercial
- Sub Area

- * New Intersection
- Proposed Service Road
- Proposed Local Road
- Proposed Local Collector
- Interconnected Parking Lots



Base map Source: MiGCI v6b & v7b
 Data Source: Oshtemo Township, 2008;
 McKenna Associates, 2010



Transportation Network Improvements

The West Main Street Sub Area Plan indicates several proposed new streets, the extension of existing streets, and development of shared driveways and service drives. As this is a plan, they are drawn as generalities for now. Future studies and development patterns will dictate where and how the local street network will be developed as well as where shared parking and access drives and service drives will be located.

West Main Street

West Main Street is the second busiest corridor in Kalamazoo County; as such, improvements will be needed to accommodate the planned growth within the West Main Street Sub-Area while providing a safe and efficient way to access new development.

One improvement to the roadway may include the installation of medians placed at specific locations along this stretch of West Main Street or the installation of a boulevard between 9th and 10th Streets. Medians or a boulevard would serve to limit points of conflict by not allowing motorists to make left turns when entering or exiting a property.

Another improvement may include the installation of a central signalized intersection between 9th and 10th Streets. A new signalized intersection would allow motorists to make a protected left turn. A signalized intersection, and medians to a lesser extent, would allow for greater pedestrian and non-motorized connections between the north and south side of West Main Street. A signalized intersection would not necessarily be the only access point that new development would have on West Main Street; however, other access points should be limited to right-turn movements as much as reasonably possible.

Local Transportation Networks

The West Main Street Sub-Area Plan Map indicates several local transportation elements envisioned for the sub-area. Local streets, thin dashed lines, are envisioned to have new residential and commercial development fronting on them within the appropriate land use designations. Local streets will also provide connectivity between existing and new neighborhoods as well as between existing and new commercial developments. Local streets must be designed in such a manner so as to deter cut-through traffic.

Local streets will connect to the local collectors, thick dashed lines, intersecting with West Main Street at appropriate locations. Local collectors will also serve as the primary entrances off of West Main Street for new commercial development along West Main Street.

Service drives and shared access and parking between developments are also envisioned within the local transportation network. Service drives will be developed behind new commercial developments in order to reduce the number of West Main Street driveways. This network will be similar to the existing arrangement between Meijer and it's outlots and will provide rear access to new commercial development. Shared access and parking will also be encouraged to reduce West Main Street curb cuts by connecting new and existing parking lots.

Sub Area Plan Designations

West Main Commercial

The frontage of the corridor has been designated as West Main Commercial. This designation reflects a commercial and non-residential vision along West Main Street that would complement the rural nature of the Township as a whole.

Uses in this land use designation may consist of office buildings and low intensity commercial, similar to what has already developed along the West Main Street frontage between 9th and 10th Streets. Big box type retail is not envisioned in this land use designation. The Planned Unit Development tool will be promoted in this land use designation as a means to effectively and efficiently accommodate commercial development while keeping with the goals of this Master Plan.

Along the north side of the corridor, the future development pattern will likely mimic the pattern of development that has already started to the east and west ends of the Sub-Area. This pattern includes primarily smaller developments of an office or service nature with parking located to the rear. The exception to this pattern is that unlike the lots developed to the east where each unit has a separate drive onto West Main Street, a shared access system would be required. A shared access system on this side of West Main Street would logically entail the extension of the service drive between Meijer and its outlots. This shared access system would also have a properly designed shared access point along West Main Street.

Along the south side of the corridor, although no development pattern has yet established itself, the pattern of development will be similar to that proposed for the north side as areas of West Main Commercial have been designated along the frontage. To control access and create interconnections, the plan proposes a shared access system with connections to the west; connections to the east should be designed in order to prevent commercial traffic flowing into neighborhoods. Although the exact location of the shared access drive may shift when future development is proposed, it should largely mirror what is demonstrated here. The shared access driveway for parcels on the south side of West Main Street would align with the shared access drive for parcels on the north side with the potential for a signalized intersection.

The primary differences on the south side, compared to the north, are that the majority of the parcels are deep with steep topography along some of the frontage and are also heavily wooded. These characteristics lend themselves to the creation of an enhanced setback in this area with a requirement that the development maintain the existing landscape within the setback, as appropriate. This will serve to screen the new development that occurs and maintain the natural look of the corridor, both of which will further complement the rural character of the Township. The deeper West Main Commercial land use along this side of West Main Street is not intended to allow for a second tier of commercial development but to give developers more flexibility to design sites that respect the existing natural features. As there is not a specific open space land use designation in the Sub-Area, it is appropriate to note that the deeper parcels will allow for the creation and preservation of open space within a development.

ZONING / IMPLEMENTATION

The West Main Commercial designation may be implemented in the following ways:

- Creation of a West Main Commercial zoning district with form based code design standards
- Amendment of Local Business zoning district standards to incorporate intent of this plan, at least as it would apply here
- Compliance with Township Access Management Plan
- Inclusion of transportation and infrastructure improvements in Township CIP

Transitional Residential

Transitional Residential areas will serve as buffers between the traffic and non-residential uses along West Main Street and the adjacent neighborhoods and residential uses. Because of the infrastructure and surrounding development, this is an appropriate location for residential development as an extension of existing neighborhoods to the east and west. However, as development occurs along the corridor, the surrounding neighborhoods should be appropriately protected as necessary from any proposed development.

The Transitional Residential designation anticipates a mix of residential uses consistent with the goals and principles of the Sub-Area Plan:

- Development laid out to protect significant natural features
- Single family and two family residences
- Senior and/or empty-nester residential uses
- An interconnected local street network that discourages cut-through traffic
- Dedication of portions of developments to open space

Through the use of the Planned Unit Development tool, development standards can be applied flexibly to accommodate access issues, road interconnections, and to preserve natural features and open space. PUD developments may also incorporate commercial development, especially within the West Main Commercial land use designation. The inclusion of commercial uses in a PUD will take into account issues of access and traffic circulation between the residential and commercial uses. All development within the Transitional Residential land use designation must be designed carefully to limit through traffic and minimize negative impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.

ZONING / IMPLEMENTATION

The Transitional Residential designation may be implemented in the following ways:

- Creation of a new residential zoning district
- Establishment of overlay standards consistent with the intent of this area
- Review of PUD standards and ordinance to ensure it satisfies intent of Sub-Area Plan
- Compliance with Township Access Management Plan

