

Century Highfield Sub-Area Plan

The Century Highfield Sub-Area Plan provides an opportunity to re-evaluate the vision that was set forth for this area when the Township conducted a similar planning exercise over 15 years ago. As a large, mostly undeveloped tract under primarily single ownership adjacent to a freeway interchange, the Township should have a clearly described vision for this area to ensure development occurs appropriately on the site. Although very little has changed on the property itself since that time, much has occurred in the immediate vicinity. In addition, over the course of 15 years, plans and intentions of property owners and communities may also change. Because the economic conditions and surrounding context have changed, the vision for the property needs to be reviewed and may need to change as well.

What is a Sub-Area Plan?

A Sub-Area Plan is an individual component of the overall Township Master 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. Completed after adoption of the Master Plan, the Township has amended the Plan to add this Sub-Area Plan as an appendix.

Existing Conditions

1996 Focus Area Plan

Following the completion of the last Master Plan, the Township completed several focus area plans, including one for the Century Highfield Focus Area. This Plan included goals and objectives to drive future development and zoning in this area. Land use goals for the area included signature gateway development such as a hotel, convention center, restaurants, and/or offices. The Plan also speaks to recognizing the benefits of the interchange location while complementing the surrounding land uses and topography.

Transportation and natural features were other key considerations raised in the 1996 Focus Area Plan. Transportation elements included maintaining the capacity and function along Stadium Drive, Drake Road, and West Michigan Avenue; minimizing conflicts between access and traffic movement; and improving the aesthetics along the Stadium Drive and Drake Road corridors. Other Plan elements included protecting the area's groundwater resources, preserving woodland areas to provide for erosion control, and maintaining the topography within the area.

The Plan additionally notes the role of the focus area as a gateway into the Township and the importance of coordinated, distinctive development to portray the appropriate character for the Township.

Regional Location

The Century Highfield Sub-Area is located along the eastern boundary of the Township. The Sub-Area is bounded by Drake Road on the east (Township boundary), West Michigan Avenue to the north, US-131 to the west, and Stadium Drive to the south. It is located immediately to the northeast of the Stadium Drive and US-131 interchange.

During the design workshop conducted as part of this planning exercise, the Sub-Area was described as a “residential enclave” surrounded by commercial development tucked against the highway. Indeed, significant commercial development is occurring on all sides of the Sub-Area:

- To the south, Western Michigan has developed the Business Technology and Research Park (BTR) and discussed possible expansion of the BTR Park onto the Colony Farm Orchard across Stadium Drive from the study area. Immediately at the southwest corner of Drake Road and Stadium Drive, the Western Michigan University Foundation owns the property with plans to develop support facilities – hotel, restaurant, etc. – in coordination with the adjacent BTR Park.
- To the east along Stadium Drive, new commercial development has occurred and/or is proposed including several car dealerships, restaurants, and retail centers.
- To the west, plans have developed for improvements in the Oshtemo Village area.
- To the north, offices and outlots have developed along Drake Road extending south from West Main Street and a new middle school has been built.

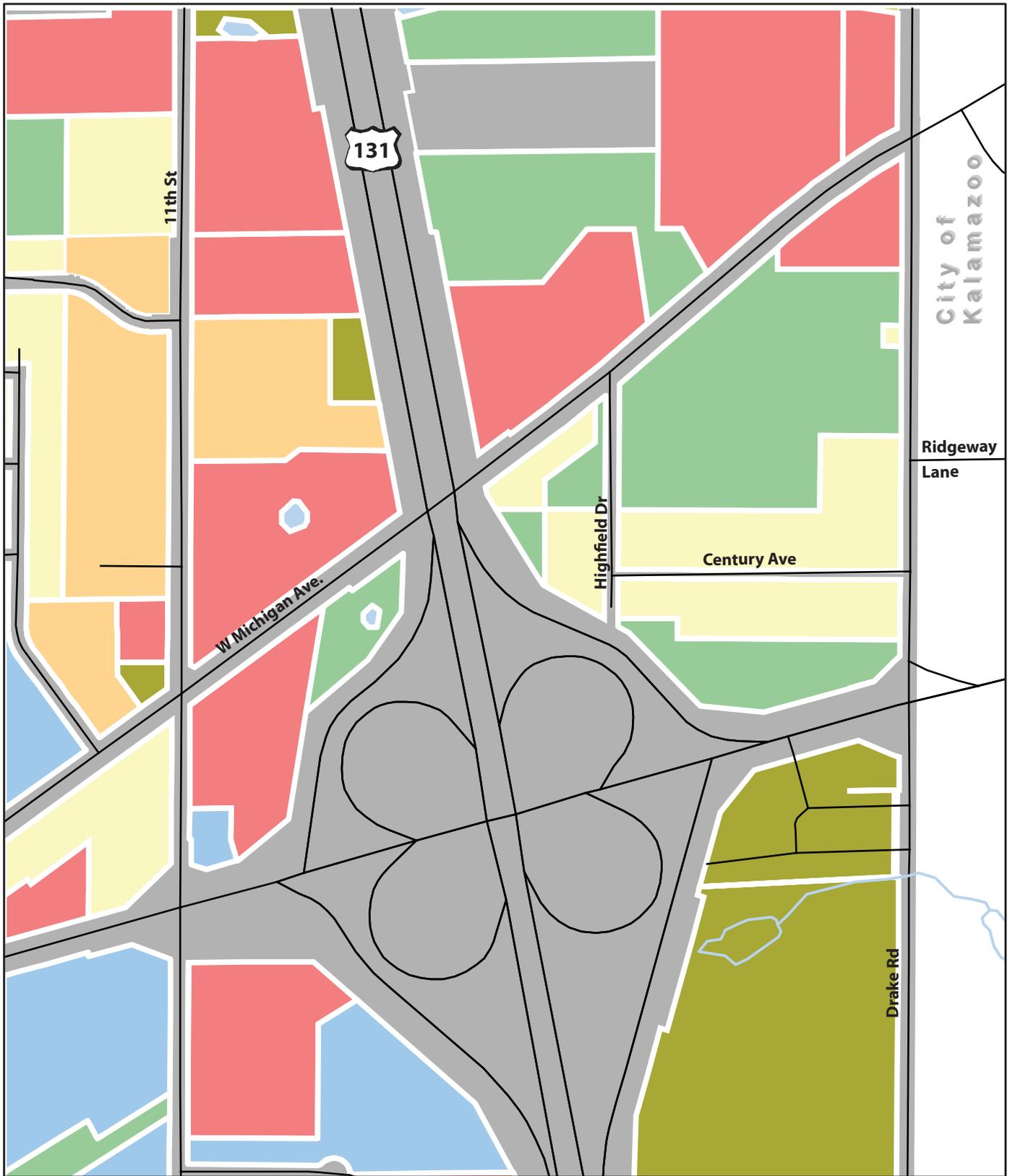
In addition, hotel and convention center development has expanded downtown and a new development of this type has been proposed near the Westnedge Avenue / I-94 interchange. Also, the Kalamazoo County Expo Center has expanded to accommodate smaller trade shows and events.

Ownership

The majority of the Sub-Area is owned by the same entity. This includes all of the large, vacant parcels and many of the residential parcels along Century Avenue and Highfield Street. Parcels not owned by this same entity include the two offices near the West Michigan Avenue intersection, two single family homes west of Highfield Street, and a few residential parcels along Century Avenue and Highfield Street.

Existing Land Uses

The Century Highfield Sub-Area is largely undeveloped. Two roads cut through the middle of the area – Highfield Street and Century Avenue. These roads contain approximately 26 single and two-family residential uses. These are primarily rental units. Two additional single family rental homes exist west of Highfield Street along West Michigan Avenue. Three single-tenant office buildings have developed along Drake Road; two clustered near the intersection at West



Existing Land Use

Oshtemo Charter Township, Kalamazoo County, Michigan

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Low Density Residential |  Utility |
|  High Density Residential |  Undeveloped |
|  Commercial/Industrial |  Woodland |
|  Office | |

Base Map Source: MiGDL v6b & v7b
 Data Source: Oshtemo Township, 2008;
 McKenna Associates, 2008

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Michigan Avenue. The remainder of the Sub-Area is filled with heavy woods and rolling topography.

(Insert Existing Land Use Map)

Zoning

The sub-area is divided primarily between the R-2 Residence district and the R-3 Residence district. The southern portion of the Sub-Area including the parcels along Century Avenue are located in the R-2 district. The northern portion of the Sub-Area, including the larger undeveloped parcels, are zoned R-3 Residential. Although it is a residential district, the R-3 district does allow for limited office development. There is a small area of C-R Local Business Restricted zoning in the northern part of the Sub-Area as well.

Public Services / Infrastructure

Transportation

The Century Highfield Sub-Area is bounded by Stadium Drive and Drake Road, two key arterials in the Kalamazoo region. Both of these are five-lane roads (center turn lane) with a speed limit of 45 miles per hour. A signalized intersection exists at Stadium Drive and Drake Road. Transit service is available along both Stadium Drive and Drake Road. A sidewalk is provided on the east side of Drake Road only but ends at Ridgeway Lane (just north of the vacant K-Mart). There is presently no sidewalk on the west side of Drake Road from Stadium Drive north to Ridgeway Lane, although this may be included as part of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) improvements to the Stadium Drive and Drake Road intersection planned for 2014 (see below). Presently, non-motorized facilities are not available along the Stadium Drive frontage.

In order to preserve the capacity of these important and highly traveled roadways, additional access points from new development within the Sub-Area are unlikely to be approved. On Stadium Drive, there simply is not enough distance between the on-ramp to US-131 and the Drake Road intersection to allow for a safe, functional access point, particularly if that access point served a development of significant size. Access points onto Drake Road will be limited by the width of the existing roadway as well as the topography that limits clear visibility for ingress and egress into the Sub-Area. The location of limited access along Drake Road should be strategically located considering the topography and the existing access points and roadways on the east side of Drake Road to maintain maximum efficiency of the road system.

One of the key issues along these two roadways is the vegetation that exists in the right of way immediately adjacent to the travel lanes. Particularly along Drake Road, the vegetation has grown so thick that it is not uncommon for greenery to be in the lane of travel as vehicles go by. The intersection of Century Avenue and Drake Road – already challenging for vehicles to use due to the speed of traffic and the grade change on Drake Road – is made even more

challenging by the vegetation. In addition, the vegetation overgrowth takes away from the aesthetic qualities of the corridor and the Sub-Area as a whole.

West Michigan Avenue is a two-lane road that also has a signalized intersection at Drake Road. No transit service is available along West Michigan Avenue. On-street bike lanes are available on both sides of the street. However, the bridge across US-131 is not wide enough to accommodate the bike lanes.

During the Design Workshop, the majority property owner within the Sub-Area indicated they had once visualized the possibility of realigning West Michigan Avenue from its current location where it crosses US-131 straight to the east so it would intersect with Drake Road south of the current intersection. This would provide better access to the large parcels in the Sub-Area and provide a public road and access point on to Drake Road at the top of the ridge likely aligned with Ridgeway Lane. The current alignment of West Michigan Avenue could be preserved as a local road to serve the existing businesses, or a new road network developed around these businesses and the existing intersection at Drake Road. Although West Michigan Avenue may never be realigned, the idea addresses enough of the identified concerns within the Sub-Area that it is worthy of evaluation.

Immediately to the west of the Sub-Area runs US-131 and the Stadium Drive interchange. This interchange is scheduled for major improvement and redesign in 2014. This project will also include improvement and redesign of the Stadium Drive and Drake Road intersection. The redesign of both the interchange and the intersection will increase the efficiency and capacity of the network in this area, particularly at peak periods. In addition, drainage improvements incorporated into the project will improve the treatment and handling of stormwater from the roads and parking lots in the area that have had a detrimental impact on the adjacent Asylum Lake Preserve and its watershed. MDOT also confirmed that the interchange design calls for 10 foot wide non-motorized pathways on both sides of Stadium Drive crossing the freeway. Another component of the project will be the location of a car pool lot in the southwest quadrant of the interchange.

Although not built to typical County standards, Highfield Street and Century Avenue are public roads. They are narrower than most public roads within narrow right of ways. The Kalamazoo County Road Commission (KCRC) has indicated that the access point of Century Avenue onto Drake Road is unsafe, and they will not consider additional access points within this area without a change to the Century Avenue access point or roadway (i.e. closure, cul-de-sac, realignment, etc.). In addition, it is possible that the Century Avenue access point will be compromised by the MDOT improvement project and the associated widening of Drake Road that will occur in 2014.

Utilities

Currently, there is no public water or sanitary sewer service available within the Century Highfield Sub-Area. Existing properties are served by private water (well) and septic services.

Public water and sewer service is immediately available for extension into the Sub-Area when desired. A water main runs along the east side of Drake Road, and a gravity sanitary sewer line runs under the center of Drake Road. Although it has not been confirmed, it is generally believed that the capacity of both the water and sewer at this location is adequate for reasonable development within the Sub-Area.

All other utilities are available to the property as well.

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 its proximity to the Asylum Lake Preserve to the south. This is a sensitive natural area that has been negatively impacted for many years by runoff from parking lots, Stadium Drive, and the US-131 interchange. Drainage to the north is also an issue as the Arcadia Creek and Arcadia neighborhood have been prone to flooding. Additional development and untreated stormwater runoff will only exacerbate negative trends already present in these areas.

The Plan encourages the use of natural, low-impact mitigation techniques, such as swales and rain gardens, designed to provide adequate capacity to provide for effective management of stormwater. Shared systems are encouraged, particularly in areas where existing topographic conditions 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 the Master Plan (Chapter 4) for a more detailed discussion of stormwater management techniques.

In addition, the Township is encouraged by MDOT's plans to incorporate significant drainage and stormwater improvements into their 2014 project along Stadium Drive. As described during the Design Workshop, these improvements will capture all of the runoff from the interchange as well as some from Stadium Drive east of the Drake Road intersection and route it toward a large detention and treatment area near the redesigned interchange prior to release into the Asylum Lake Preserve. This should significantly reduce the amount of untreated runoff that goes into the preserve by allowing for the filtering of any pollutants and other materials from those waters.

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 Century Highfield 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.”
- When asked what they liked about living in the Township, the most often indicated items were “shopping, services, convenience, close to city” (60%); “rural, open, small town” (38.8%); and “roads, freeways, convenient access to...” (17.7%). When asked for items they would improve, respondents most often indicated “roads (snow removal, maintenance, signals, etc.)” (23.1%); “sidewalks, pathways” (12.5%); and “growth, development, control and management of...” (11.7%).
- The majority of visioning session participants indicated that future development on vacant parcels within the Sub-Area should be commercial.

Design Workshop

To focus on the vision for the Century Highfield Sub-Area, a design workshop was held in June 2011. The workshop included four focus group stakeholder meetings. The sessions were held with the following groups of stakeholders:

- Property Owners
- Transportation and Utilities
- Neighbors and Natural Resources
- Government

Attendees engaged in a thorough discussion of the Sub-Area, past and current use of the area and surrounding property, and their vision for the future of the Sub-Area. Attendees identified the positive attributes of the area, the challenges that exist there, and the principles the Township should apply to future development.

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 –

Chapter 7). These overall goals and objectives also apply to the Century Highfield 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 Century Highfield Sub-Area represents a significant opportunity for future development in the Township due to its location adjacent to a freeway interchange as well as at a primary gateway into the Township to the west and City of Kalamazoo and Western Michigan University to the east. Any future development that occurs within the Sub-Area will need to recognize the significance of its location, contain an appropriate mix of uses, and present the character and quality of development representative of the Township as a whole. Keeping these tenets in mind, the use of the area will remain somewhat flexible in order to be responsive to the fluctuations of the market.

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 Century Highfield 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; as this occurs, it will become clear what the vision for the area should be. Regardless, the following goals and objectives are universal and shall apply irrespective of the type of development that is proposed.

GOAL ONE

Gateway: Future development in the Century Highfield Sub-Area will recognize the significant place it holds as a gateway to the community and the Oshtemo Village area as well as due to its location adjacent to a freeway interchange.

- Uses within the Sub-Area shall utilize quality design and materials consistent with the character of the Township and be coordinated throughout the larger development area.
- Form and character standards will be established so that appearance becomes as important as the specific uses established in this area.
- Township will work with the property owner(s) and MDOT to provide a sign or entry feature marking an appropriate gateway into Oshtemo Township.
- Standards shall allow for a flexible mix of uses but will emphasize that the desired future use is non-residential or mixed use with a higher density residential component.

- Promote use of Planned Unit Development to ensure development is coordinated and consistent across large parcels, particularly in regards to access, parking, and design.

GOAL TWO

Transportation / Infrastructure: Future development within the Century Highfield Sub-Area will include infrastructure improvements to the transportation and utility systems to increase safety and quality of life for residents in and around the Sub-Area.

- Ensure future development complies with the Township's Access Management Plan.
- Prohibit access from future development onto Stadium Drive. Relocate and/or close existing Century Avenue access point onto Drake Road. Provide limited access points onto Drake Road.
- Consider realignment of West Michigan Avenue to run east-west from US-131 to Drake Road and develop an internal road network.
- Coordinate with MDOT and KCRC to ensure future road improvements are consistent with this and other plans of the Township, including the Non-Motorized Facilities Plan. Complete or install non-motorized facilities on Drake Road and Stadium Drive adjacent to Sub-Area.
- As development occurs, provide Sub-Area with public water and sanitary sewer utility service.

GOAL THREE

Natural Features: Ensure future development in the Century Highfield Sub-Area respects the existing natural features in and around the area and does not detrimentally impact the natural systems or patterns.

- Include a natural setback / buffer from Stadium Drive and Drake Road to match the character of the Township, in contrast to the commercial development to the east on Stadium Drive.
- Integrate stormwater best management practices into development to limit off-site impacts of development, particularly on adjacent Asylum Lake Preserve.
- Coordinate with property owners and developers to maintain trees and topography within the Sub-Area to the extent possible as property is developed.
- Provide appropriate buffers by utilizing natural features allowing different land uses adjacent to each other to coexist.

Future Land Use

The following map illustrates the desired future land use for the Century Highfield Sub-Area. It is a supplement to the Township-wide Future Land Use Map. Also illustrated on 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. They should be addressed in order to preserve and improve the quality of life within the Sub-Area and to remain consistent with the Plan's principles of development.

Note that this Sub-Area map is generalized 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 when future development occurs.

Opportunities & Constraints

Several characteristics of the Sub-Area and the facilities and properties surrounding the area will ultimately guide the development of the land. The opportunities and constraints illustrated on this map summarize several of the important issues that will factor into future development decisions.

- There are several large, vacant parcels in the Sub-Area that are under common ownership and create an opportunity for development. These parcels are heavily wooded and have unique topography, which create an amenity for residential development but an obstacle for most non-residential development.
- The existing circulation system is poor with narrow, modestly maintained roads and limited access onto Drake Road. Future development will require improvement of the existing system, including addressing (likely through elimination) the access point of Century Avenue onto Drake Road.
- The area is already served by transit lines and there is a sidewalk on Drake Road, although on the east side of the road only. Additional non-motorized facilities will be needed in the future, particularly along Stadium Drive.
- The US-131 interchange and the Drake Road / Stadium Drive intersection are both slated to be significantly improved in 2014. This will create inconvenience during the project but ultimately result in upgraded capacity along both corridors and at this key intersection.
- Western Michigan University (WMU) plays a key role in the development of this part of the Township. The Business Technology and Research (BTR) Park is located to the south of the Sub-Area and is expanding north along Drake Road almost to Stadium Drive, and the University owns other property to the west of the Sub-Area. Having a stable neighbor like the University is an asset for the Sub-Area.
- The WMU Foundation owns the property immediately across Stadium Drive.

- Other neighboring uses include apartments and growing commercial areas to the north and east.

Sub-Area Plan Designation

Gateway Commercial North

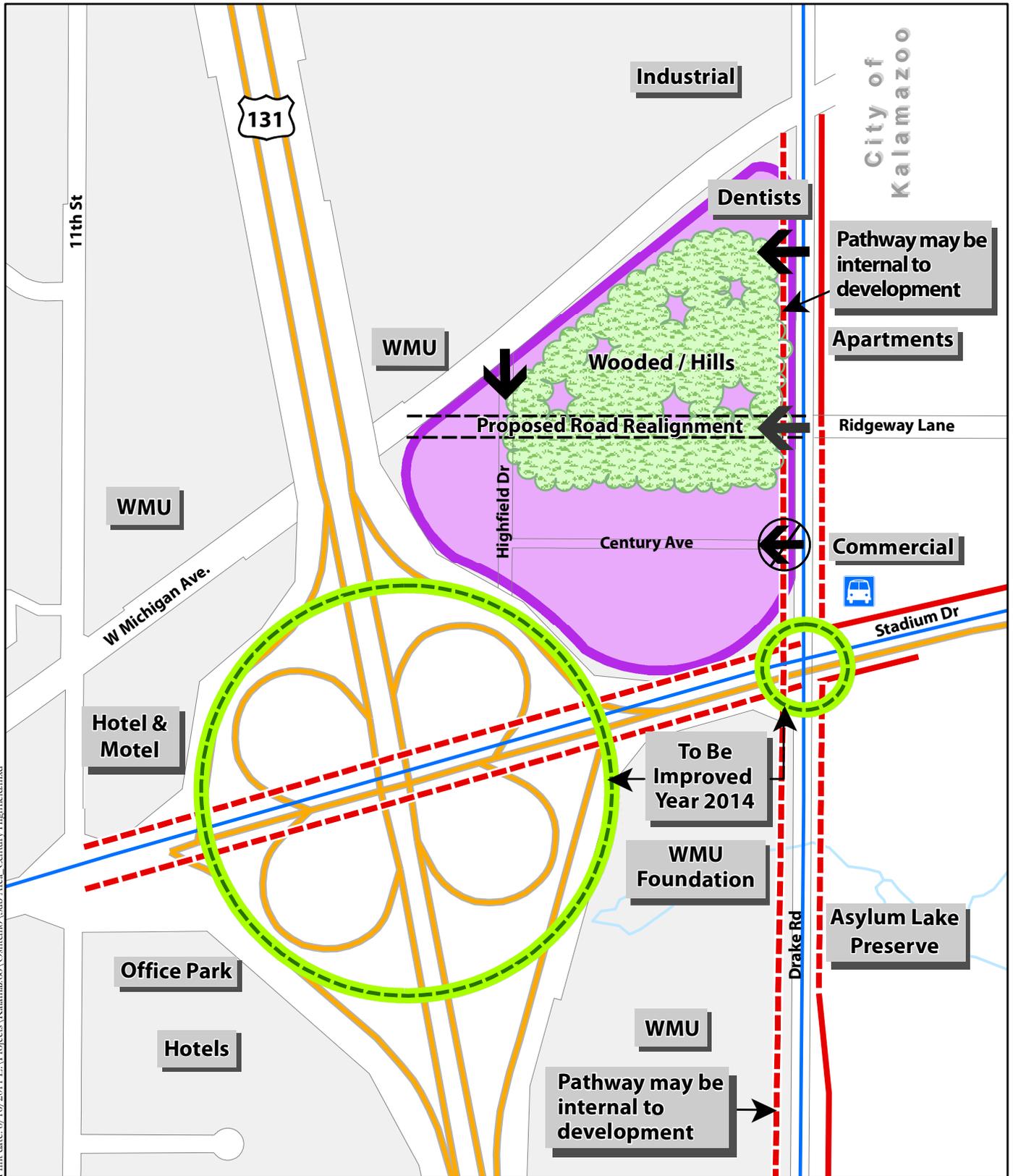
The entirety of the Sub-Area has been designated Gateway Commercial North. This designation is consistent with the designation given the property immediately to the south in the Genesee Prairie Sub-Area Plan. However, because it is much larger and was the focus of this planning exercise, it is provided the unique identifier “North” to separate it from its southern partner. It is important that there be consistency between these two properties along this corridor. However, there are a couple of areas where the plan must reflect the different characteristics and vision for the larger area to the north.

Low-density residential use is not the long-term, envisioned use of the Sub-Area considering its adjacency to the freeway and abutting arterials. The previous focus area plan conducted more than 15 years ago called for the area to include hotels, convention centers, and associated commercial uses. Considering recent development in and around the region, this no longer seems appropriate. A “lifestyle center” type development would be ideal under perfect conditions, but this also does not appear likely at present due to economic and lending conditions. A mix of commercial and residential uses at a density greater than presently exists is envisioned in the future and is therefore included in the Gateway Commercial North designation.

The zoning will remain unchanged until a rezoning request is made. However, when the time comes that a development proposal is submitted for this area, this Plan will guide its review and implementation understanding that the specific future use(s) of the area cannot be determined at this time.

For the Gateway Commercial area on the south side of Stadium Drive, the current zoning (CR, Commercial District Restricted) provides an excellent starting point for implementation. However, this may not be totally appropriate for the Gateway Commercial North area simply due to the restricted uses stated in this district. This zoning district focuses primarily on hotels, restaurants, and similar highway related commercial uses. As stated previously, that may no longer be practical for the Century Highfield Sub-Area due to the number of similar uses existing or proposed in the community and also due to the size of the Sub-Area, which can accommodate more development.

To allow for more flexibility in the area, it is intended that development here will occur through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process, with proposals for construction being reviewed against the goals and objectives presented previously for the Sub-Area. Whether development includes a lifestyle center, senior housing, office park, or some combination of the above, the Plan is flexible as to the particular uses to be developed, but the result must be consistent with the established goals and objectives stated in this Sub-Area Plan.



Print date: 8/16/2011 E:\Projects\Kalamazoo\Oshtemo\Sub Area_Century_Highfield.mxd

Century Highfield Sub Area Plan

Oshtemo Charter Township, Kalamazoo County, Michigan

Base Map Source: MiGDL v6b & v7b
 Data Source: Oshtemo Township, 2008;
 McKenna Associates, 2008

- Public Transit Routes
- - - Proposed Non-motorized Pathway
- Existing Non-motorized Pathway
- Gateway Commercial North
- ➔ Access Management
- 🚌 Bus Stop



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ZONING / IMPLEMENTATION

The Gateway Commercial North designation may be implemented in the following ways:

- Use of the PUD to develop in the Sub-Area.
- Compliance with Township Access Management Plan.
- Inclusion of transportation and infrastructure improvements.
- Coordination with MDOT, KCRC, and City of Kalamazoo during improvements to US-131 interchange and Drake Road / Stadium Drive interchange to ensure non-motorized and Sub-Area goals are satisfied.