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Into the Neighborhoods:  
A Master Plan Update &  
Strategic Action Plan for  
The City of Holland's  
Central Neighborhoods  
Adopted December 10, 2002

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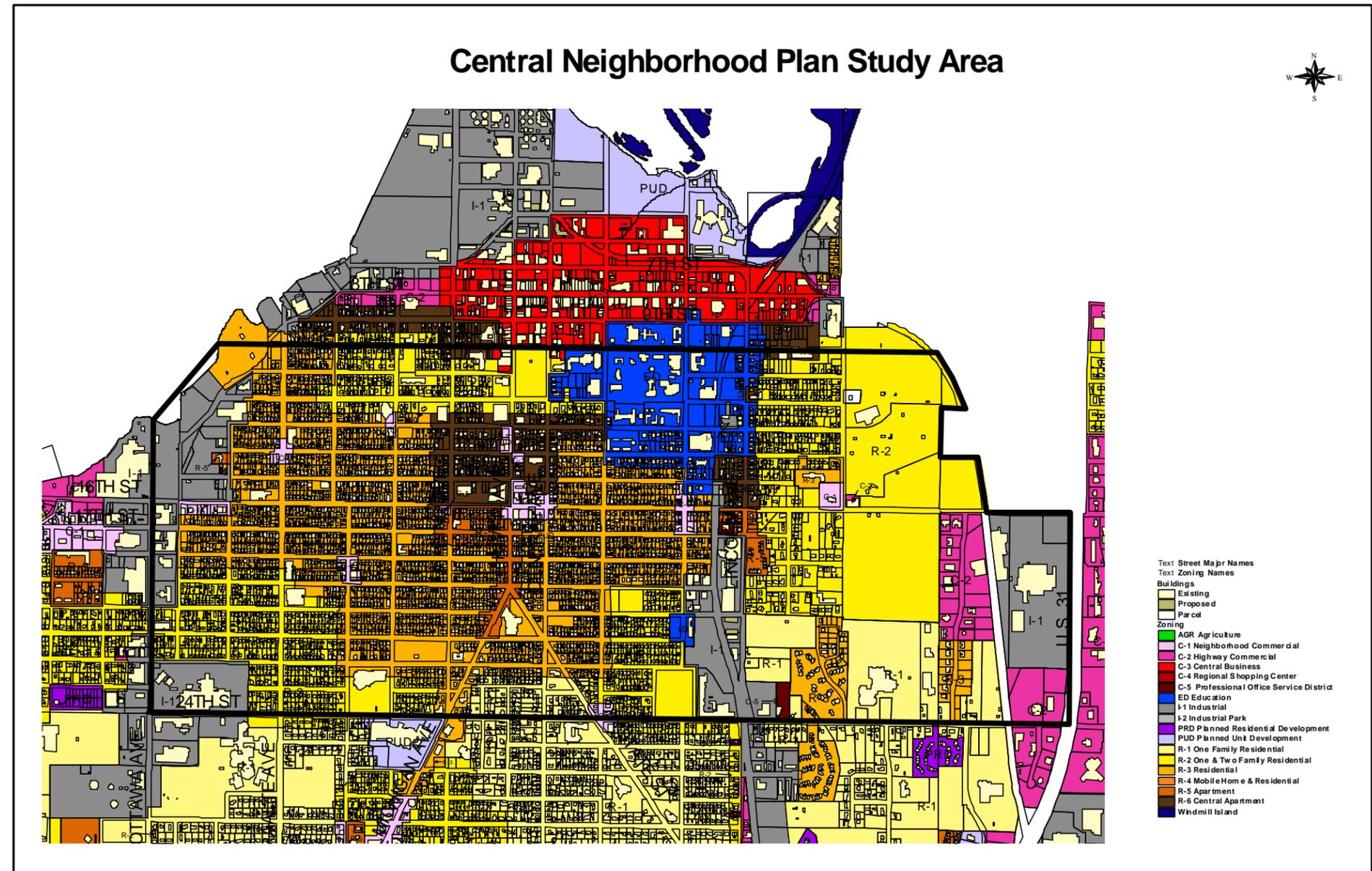
# Executive Summary

Cities in Michigan are required under State law to adopt a master plan for the physical development of the City. A Master Plan shows the collective vision and objectives for the development of the City. Pursuant to the Master Plan, a zoning plan is adopted providing for the regulation of the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and property.

The City of Holland last adopted a City-wide Master Plan in 1992. Since that time, the Plan has been updated to include a Strategic Plan for Downtown and a new plan for the recently annexed South End. The remainder of the Plan is due for review and updating. Rather than tackle the entire City at one time, this Central Neighborhood Plan provides a fresh approach for the Planning Commission by master planning for the future growth, development, and revitalization of this community by focusing on true building blocks- the neighborhoods, streets, blocks, and buildings that comprise the urban fabric and patterns of the City. This more detailed neighborhood-based approach provides more opportunity for direct involvement by neighbors and residents in this process, making this document more alive and meaningful for everyone.

The purpose of this Neighborhood Master Plan is to prepare an action-based framework to help guide future public and private physical planning, development, and improvement efforts in the Central Neighborhoods during the next five to ten year period.

The Central Neighborhood area is defined as the area generally bounded by 10<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, 24<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, Ottawa Avenue to the west, and US-31 to the east.



# Neighborhood Declaration of Beliefs

This Master Plan provides the following statements that summarize the bedrock Beliefs and Values that will help define and shape responses and action steps to issues central to the continuing work of maintaining and creating healthy and safe neighborhoods:

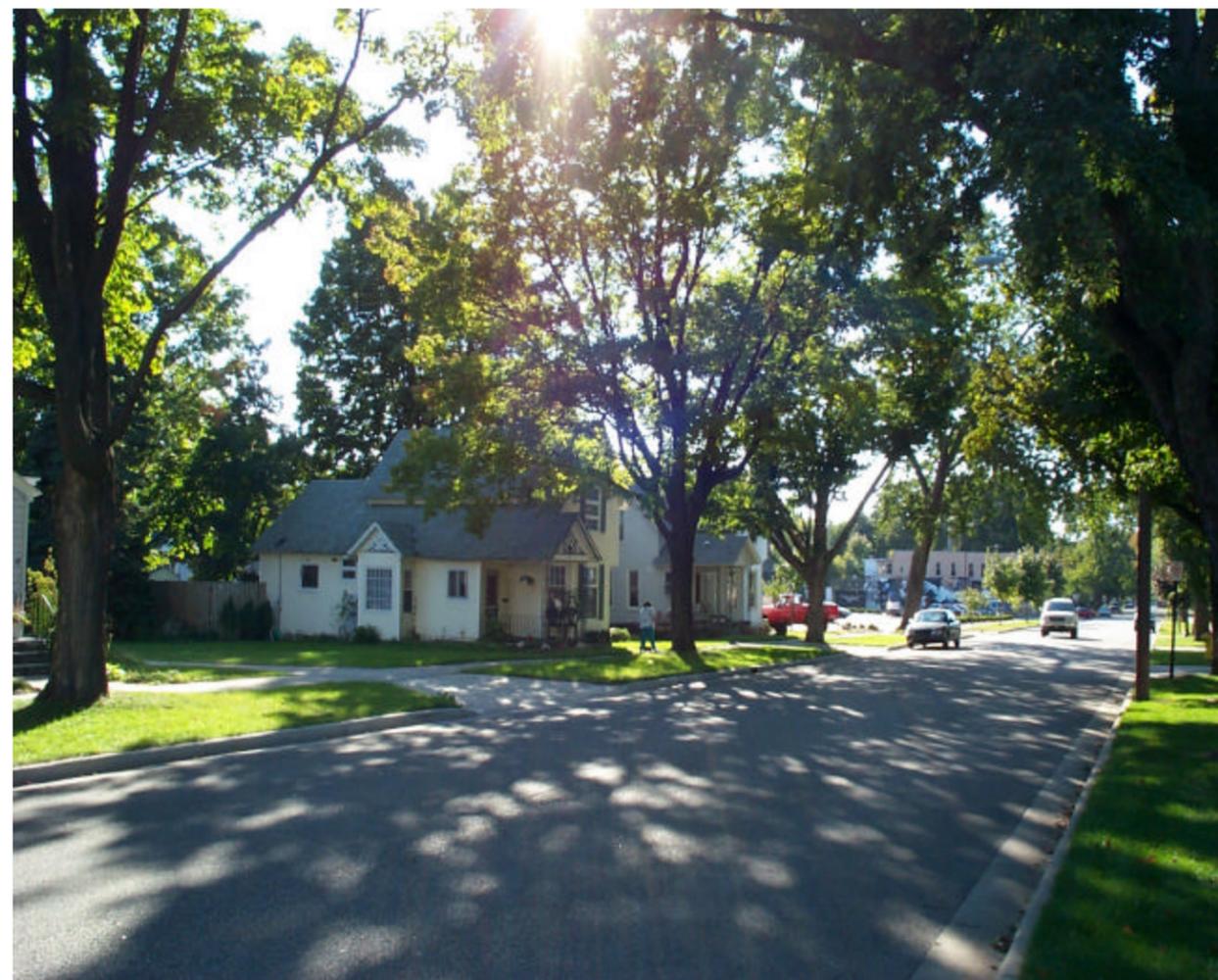
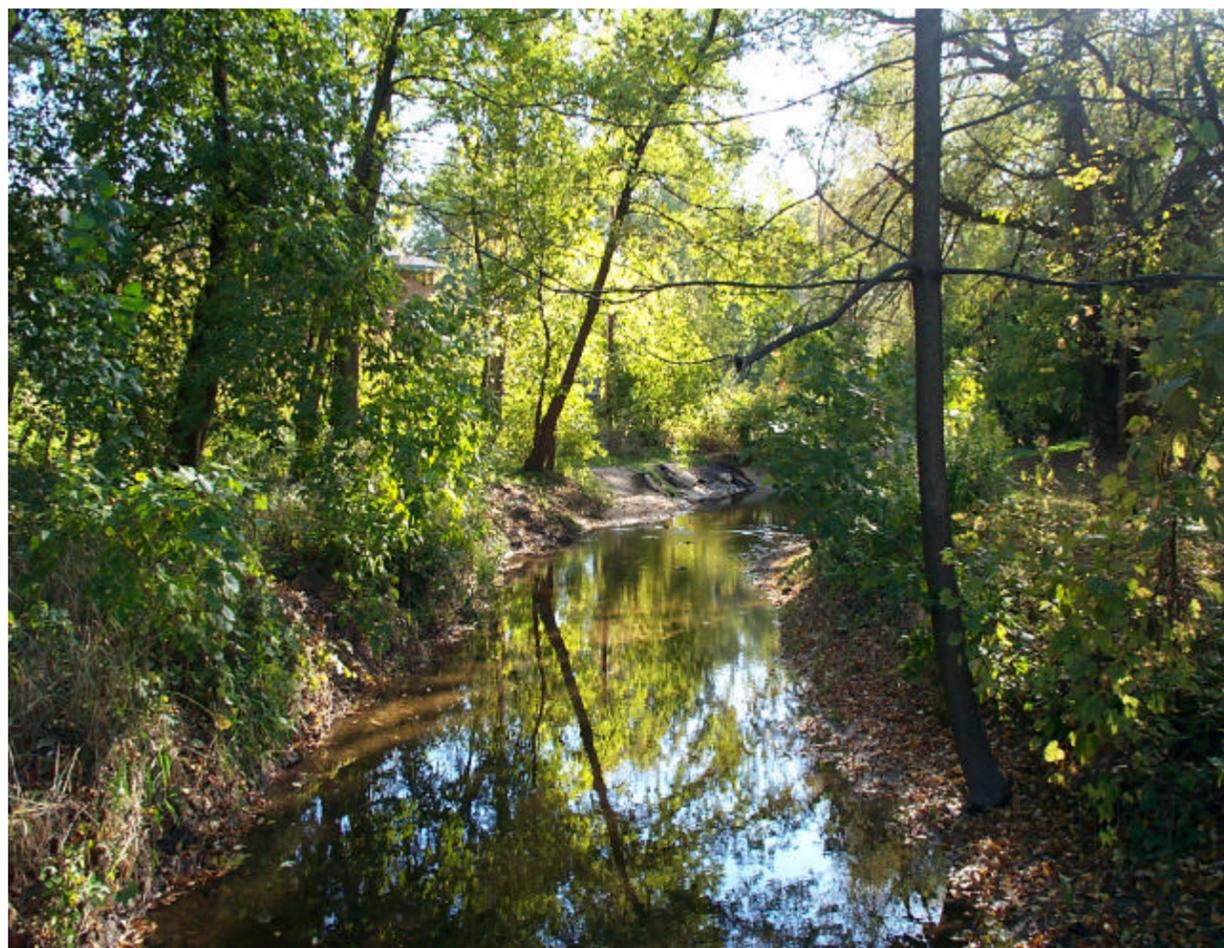
## We Believe That:

- Neighborhoods are an essential element of Holland's quality of life.
- Neighborhood character and environmental quality should be protected.
- Preservation of the Historic District and near-in historical neighborhoods, landmark features, and historical structures should be supported and significant structures should be preserved.
- Priority should be given to maintenance and rehabilitation of sound, usable structures rather than demolition.
- The expectation for high levels of maintenance continues for both public and private property.
- Building, housing maintenance, and zoning codes should be strengthened and effectively enforced to ensure continued and improved housing quality and community appearance.
- New housing and housing types should respond to current needs and trends while assuring that such development is compatible with the existing neighborhood character.
- Programs that support affordable housing for low and moderate-income households in the City should continue and be vigorously promoted at the regional level.
- The development and rehabilitation of small compatible neighborhood shopping areas to serve the needs of Central Neighborhood residents is encouraged through public policy and private actions.
- New or expanded “good neighbor” industrial and commercial developments are supportive of and characteristic of healthy mixed-use neighborhoods provided they are carefully planned and regulated to assure compatibility.
- The development of formal and informal neighborhood organizations for the purposes of self help, community watch, and neighborhood planning is encouraged through public and private resources.
- Environmental and civic design amenities that enhance neighborhood livability are encouraged in all neighborhoods.
- Synergies between and among public and private sector agencies and service providers should be encouraged whenever opportunities arise.





- Continued improvements to City streets and sidewalks, with automotive and truck circulation working in tandem with high quality pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transit systems, collectively will provide a transportation system that assures central neighborhood residents are connected to primary employment and service centers.
- Quality recreational and passive enjoyment opportunities should be available for all Central City residents and age groups.



# Master Plan Recommendations:

The following issues have been identified by the Planning Commission and the Stakeholders of the community as recommended items that need to be addressed, solved, and/or completed in order to fulfill our desire of nurturing our ‘Good Neighborhood’ model for the Central Neighborhoods:

## A. Neighborhood Organization and Planning (Grass Roots)

### 1. Neighborhood Organizing.

Working directly with neighborhood residents, the City should identify and organize (informally or formally) distinct residential neighborhood groups and neighborhood commercial areas.

### 2. Neighborhood Planning.

Acknowledging the success of the Ourstreet Program, challenge the Ourstreet Program and the City Community Services and Development Department to develop and implement sustainable grass root level neighborhood planning efforts in specific central neighborhoods.

### 3. Ourstreet Expansion Process.

The Ourstreet Program should establish a process by which it evaluates when, where, and how to expand or move its program into additional blocks of the central neighborhoods.



### 4. Conservation Districts.

Establish a task force to study and report to the Planning Commission and/or City Council on the feasibility and desirability of creating an ordinance to enable establishment of neighborhood conservation districts.

## B. Land Use and Zoning

### 1. Traditional “Close-Knit” Neighborhood Designs and Characteristics.

The City should review, modify as may be appropriate, and adopt a list of guiding principles regarding traditional neighborhood design and characteristics.

### 2. Land Use Map Amendments.

The City should adopt amendments to the Land Use Plan Map that:

- Shift the development paradigm for the central neighborhoods away from the urban redevelopment policies of prior decades towards one of preserving and maintaining existing housing stock and urban forms such as the grid street system;
- Creates a new Traditional Neighborhood planning designation that encourages the mixture of different residential types with commercial and even adjacent industrial type land uses and buildings;
- Provides small additions to the Public/Quasi-Public and Park planning areas recognizing the development of two public charter

schools;

- Provides a slight reduction in industrial area, yielding to the charter schools and certain residential uses;
- Slightly modify the Neighborhood Commercial areas with the following adjustments:
  - Reduce the neighborhood commercial area on the south side of 13<sup>th</sup> Street west of Maple Avenue;
  - Slightly expand the Washington Square area to include additional commercial building to the north;
  - Expand the area for commercial uses in the vicinity of Pine Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Street;
  - Slightly expand the area for commercial use in the vicinity of River Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Street;
  - Acknowledge a small area of commercial at the SE corner of 13<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue; and
  - Change the current office zoning along River Avenue from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Street to Neighborhood Commercial.
  - Slightly expand the Public/Quasi-Public Uses designation for Hope College south to 11<sup>th</sup> Street between Lincoln and Fairbanks Avenues, and along the east side of Lincoln Avenue south to 14<sup>th</sup> Street.



### 3. Coding for Building Behavior on Sites vs. Coding for Uses.

Move away from the use-based approach to the regulation and strict separation of land uses in favor of a more contextual and architecturally based approach that regulates building locations, massing, and scale, and protects against potentially negative effects of any land use.

### 4. Neighborhood commercial areas.

Elevate and re-establish the neighborhood commercial area as a viable center for neighborhood based commerce and provision of services by:

- Studying and evaluating whether many remnant commercial areas should be zoned back into conformance before they completely disappear; and
- Consider the creation of a City-wide neighborhood commercial planner/advocate position.
- Return to an emphasis on commercial nodes as the focus of neighborhood shopping opportunity rather than the corridor-oriented strip developments found along many heavily trafficked streets.

### 5. Neighborhood industrial areas.

Support the continued use and/or redevelopment of central neighborhood industrial corridor areas for benign, industrial uses.

### 6. Nurturing of Community Uses: Schools, Places of Worship, Libraries, and Parks.

Celebrate these community uses as vibrant centers of our social lives while assuring that these community uses are good neighbors to adjacent residential properties. Seek a healthy balance between the orderly everyday operations of these uses and the needs of surrounding neighborhoods. Explore opportunities to cooperatively provide recreational and other community facilities and programming of neighborhood schools and churches. Think “out of the box” to investigate the possibility of nurturing other completely new neighborhood gathering opportunities such as a Community Gardening program.

### 7. Density and Intensity of Uses.

Encourage additional supply of and opportunities for residential and neighborhood commercial uses in the Central Neighborhoods as a means to reduce the pressure on especially the existing housing stock.

### 8. Edges, Friction and Flare-up points.

The diversity of land uses and building types, and the close physical relationships between such uses in the central neighborhoods can be very exciting and stimulating to the senses on one hand, but can result



in friction at other times. This is the very nature of a diverse urban environment. The City should play an active role in mitigating any such problems, applying appropriate standards when reviewing proposed uses or buildings and investigate if any intervention is warranted where concerns arise amidst existing condition. To this end, the City should review existing standards to assure both that they address issues currently deemed of concern, and that they are reasonable and enforceable. Specific issues include industrial noise and traffic impacts.

### 9. Traditional Neighborhood Zone District/Concentration of Non-Conforming Buildings.

- Develop modifications to the Zoning Ordinance to make the vast majority of residential properties completely conforming again by the crafting of a new Traditional Neighborhood Zone District.
- Determine which commercially used but residentially zoned properties should be rezoned or brought back into conformance with the Ordinance, and what properties should continue to be nudged towards conversion to residential use.

### 10. Building Infill Guidelines for Residential and Neighborhood Commercial Buildings.

- Create an illustrated Residential Infill Guideline booklet or pamphlet that can be readily distributed to residents who may be interested in construction activities.
- Create infill guidelines and an illustrated booklet for commercial and other non-residential development within the central neighborhoods.

### 11. Wireless Communication Facilities.

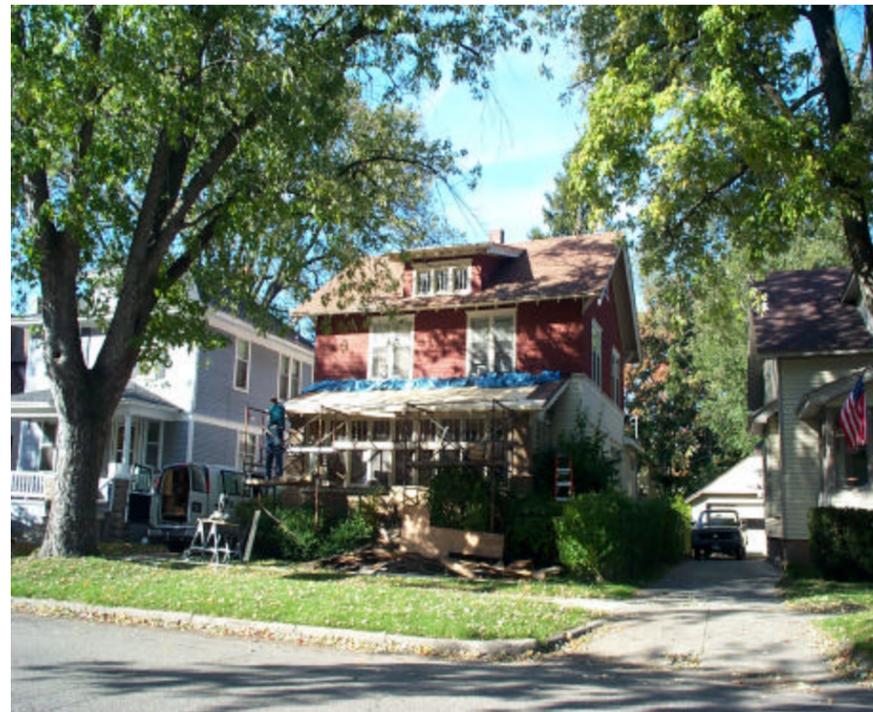
The City has embarked on a study of the need for towers and other related telecommunications infrastructure. Evaluate the findings of this study to determine the potential impact of these facilities on the central neighborhoods, with a clear interest in both providing optimal service while protecting the residential quality of life of the neighborhoods.

### 12. Proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendments.

The following is a list of zoning issues and potential amendments should be studied in depth and, if deemed important enough, moved forward to a public hearing stage.

- Develop Neighborhood Commercial Infill Regulations
- Require garages and other accessory buildings be setback more than the front façade of the house (prohibition on “snout houses”).

- Allow flexible uses to:
  - Allow Accessory Apartments
  - Streamline Home Occupation ordinances to create a tiered permitting process.
- Off-Street Parking and Loading:
  - Correct noticing procedures regarding parking determinations and correct reference sections.
  - Review City parking and loading requirements to: amend the tables establishing numerical parking requirements; clarify on-site versus off-site requirements; and examine loading/unloading requirements.
- Examine the Zoning Ordinance requirement that detached accessory buildings in residential districts must be a minimum of 10' from any dwelling.
- The definition of "Family" needs to be updated in light of recent court cases.
- Review permitted and prohibited accessory uses of residential yards.
- Examine the setback requirements for non-residential uses/buildings allowed in the R-1 District, and by reference then to all R Residential Districts.
- Conduct a study to determine the status of exceptional use properties along the Michigan and River Avenue corridor with an eye



towards the possible deletion of the exceptional use sections from the Zoning Ordinance. Consider, on a case by case basis, whether the existing exceptional use properties should be rezoned to a suitable commercial zoning district.

- Determine what adjustments should be made to ordinance language to keep porches truly functioning as porches. This may include reinstating the ZBA review or adding this to the list of Residential Infill review items that may be approved administratively based on specific standards.
- Conduct an open discussion of the pros and cons of instituting a building demolition ordinance.
- Undertake the review of amending language that will allow some expansions of non-conforming buildings and structures when the subject property is conforming in use.



### C. Housing

#### 1. Innovative Housing

Develop innovative market-based and regulatory approaches to promote/require additional and varying types of new housing.

#### 2. Zero Net Loss Housing Policy, Affordable Housing Fund

Develop a proposed policy that would result in a "Zero Net Loss of housing units" in the central neighborhoods. Explore the potential for utilizing an "affordable housing fund" or other mechanisms to assist in this effort.

#### 3. Affordable Housing, Diversity of Incomes.

The City's existing affordable housing policy states that new housing developments with over 10 dwelling units should contain 10% to 15% affordable units, and that the percentage of low-income households in each census tract be reduced below 51%. These policies and the definition of "affordable" should be reviewed in light of the most recent housing and demographic information, and their specific application to potential new development and public programs within the Central Neighborhoods.

#### 4. Building/Housing Codes.

Building and Housing codes should be reviewed to determine if there are any unnecessary regulations on the books that may reduce someone's flexibility to rehabilitate older homes and buildings.

#### 5. Long-term Vacant Housing.

The Community Services and Development Department, working with other City Departments, should develop a program to identify the long term vacant housing and to establish policies that will substantially reduce the amount of vacant housing in the Central Neighborhoods.

#### 6. Neighborhood Enterprise Zones.

The City should investigate the State Neighborhood Enterprise Zone (NEZ) Program that provides tax incentives for the development and rehabilitation of residential housing.



#### **D. Sub-Area Neighborhood Studies**

##### **1. Hope College and Western Theological Seminary.**

The College and Seminary should seek increased neighborhood input and dialogue regarding its growth and development issues. The City should take a more active and visible role in working with these institutions to publicly define the long term vision for this area of the Central Neighborhoods. Further, these institutions are urged to think vertically as much as possible in the development of new facilities.

##### **2. Cappon House and Settlers House and vicinity.**

This Plan is supportive of efforts by the Trust to revitalize their West 9<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood and encourages the City to identify synergies that may occur between what the Trust's desires and efforts and the City's efforts in the Western Gateway.

##### **3. Central Avenue Art and Pedestrian Corridor.**

This Plan calls for public discussion beginning with the neighborhood and the Holland arts community to explore the idea of establishing a truly safe corridor through the heart of the Central Neighborhoods that emphasizes pedestrian and bicycle movements integrated with a dose of public art to create a special streetscape character.

##### **4. River to Pine Avenues, 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Streets.**

The City should sponsor a workshop or a design charrette to help identify and establish a vision for the long term use, renovation, or redevelopment of property within this central neighborhood area.

##### **5. Neighborhood Workshops for Neighborhood School Areas.**

The Planning Commission and/or Community Services and Development Department should work closely with the neighborhood schools, defined neighborhood groups, and other City Departments to conduct on-going neighborhood planning efforts throughout the Central Neighborhoods.





**E. Public Infrastructure**

**1. Transportation and Streets.**

- Strategic planning should continue to identify opportunities that improve the physical conditions of neighborhood streets while slowing down vehicle traffic and keeping the streets livable for residential purposes.
- The City should fend off schemes that seek to close down streets in our grid system, with well-studied and limited exceptions to this policy dealing with a few streets crossing the main CSX Railroad line.
- The City should vigorously explore opportunities for implementation of location-appropriate “traffic calming” measures throughout the Central Neighborhoods, with particular attention to opportunities for such improvements in coordination with regular street paving and re-

- construction projects.
- The City should chart a course of action for defining and implementing improvements in the Pine Street corridor involving substantial public involvement.
- The City should meet with the Library and adjacent neighborhood residents to take stock of the current traffic and parking situation along 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets to whether traffic calming measures are needed.
- The City should examine all of the designated Truck Routes to determine if any movements can/or should be made to the route locations so trucks have less impact on the residences and schools in the neighborhoods.

**2. Vehicle Parking.**

- Create a limited number of pilot projects to help evaluate the pros and cons of an on-street overnight parking program.
- The City should examine ways of better using the public and private parking opportunities already in the central neighborhoods, rather than encouraging paving of existing yard areas for additional on-site parking.

**3. Public Alleys.**

Identify and undertake proactive measures to keep healthy alleys in good shape and to establish a pilot alley project to turn around those that need help before they reach a point where their vacating appears to be the only avenue to improvement.



**4. Sidewalks.**

In addition to sidewalk construction plans currently in the pipeline, it is recommended that sidewalk construction be examined along Hazel Avenue to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle access for school kids to East Middle School, and on the east side of Century Lane from 16<sup>th</sup> Street to 24<sup>th</sup> Street to provide a safer system for the residents on the east side of that street.

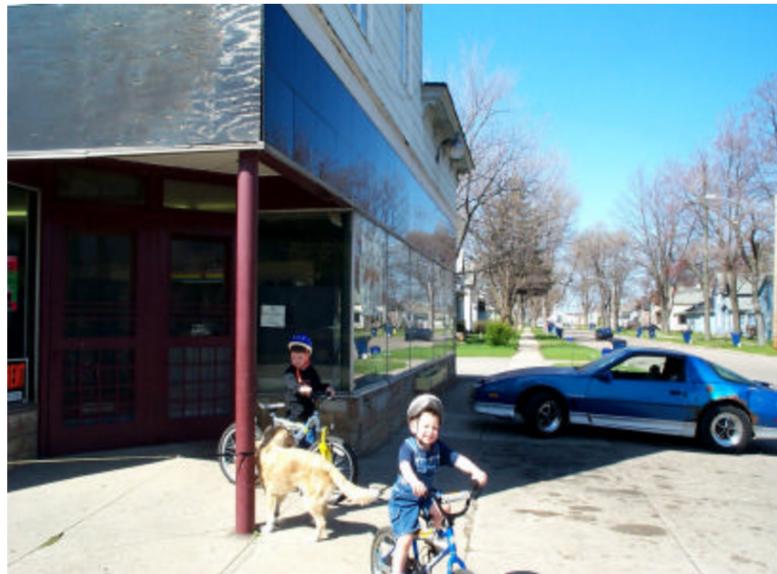
**5. Mass transit opportunities.**

Public mass transit will likely continue to provide transportation primarily to those who do not have their own personal vehicles. This Plan believes this “fact” is OK, as long as transportation opportunities remain available for all of our residents.

**6. Streetscape amenities.**

- Continue the informal and formal street furniture program that supports placement of streetscape amenities such as pedestrian lighting in conjunction with the street reconstruction and park renovation programs.
- Encourage the placement of more public benches throughout the Neighborhood, particularly in the vicinity of neighborhood commercial areas as a way to provide needed resting areas for elderly residents and others who may want to frequent the area.
- Promote the use of bicycles as an alternative means of transportation for adults in the Neighborhood. Additional bike racks should be placed in neighborhood commercial areas so bicycles can be secured.





- The City should investigate the idea of a pedestrian and bicycle “Way finding” signage system to identify and note preferred routes to link major destinations in the Central Neighborhoods.

7. “Electronic Village”.

The City should use the public fiber optic system to “wire” the Central Neighborhoods first, and then bring other neighborhoods into this state of the art communications system.

**F. Private Improvements**

1. Buildings and property.

The City must continue on its course of setting a tone that investment is welcomed and desired in the Central Neighborhoods by continuing its lead by making large investments in public infrastructure needs.

2. Landscaping.

- The City should at least maintain its current level of spring and fall cleanups and to investigate the possibility of organizing “landscape blitzes” at the smaller block level in conjunction with property owners, landscaping, and recycling businesses.
- The City should press harder for the provision of yard waste recycle bins for all properties at more reduced rates in an effort to get more residents to properly maintain and pay attention to the appearance of their properties.

**G. Administration and Provision of Services**

1. Provision of services at the neighborhood level.

- This Plan advocates for the continuation of a trend toward the provision of municipal services is at the neighborhood level.
- A study team should be appointed to gather information and prepare a report to the Planning Commission and City Council on the feasibility and desirability of providing more municipal services at the neighborhood and block level.

2. Streamlining of Permit process.

Instill a new “streamlining culture” in those who administer the ordinances and regulations to insure that the “process” never becomes too unwieldy for our customers, the residents of the Central Neighborhoods and indeed the entire City, and that it never fails to produce the intended results of bettering people’s lives and the environment in which they live.

3. Evening Code Enforcement.

The Environmental Health and Inspections Department should conduct evening Code enforcement in the Central Neighborhoods and indeed the entire City on at least an occasional basis.



4. On-site Notification of Proposed Land Use and Zoning Changes.

City noticing requirements should be reviewed to identify additional means that could be used to better notify the public of proposed and potential land use and zoning changes.

“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning”

Winston Churchill

“The future ain’t what it used to be.”

Yogi Berra



## Intro to the Neighborhoods:

# A Master Plan Update and Strategic Action Plan for Holland's Central Neighborhoods

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