

Approved by the Highland Downtown Development Authority (HDDA) on March 3, 2004 for submittal to the Highland Township Board of Trustees.

Approved by the Highland Township Board of Trustees on \_\_\_\_\_, 2004 for submittal to the Oakland County Board of Trustees for approval of County participation in the Tax Increment Financing plan.

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**EXHIBIT 1:** Ordinance No. 418 (adopted October 25, 2000)  
Ordinance No. 432 (adopted March 10, 2004)

**EXHIBIT 2:** Micro-area Analysis  
Historic Highland Station Area (adopted December 19, 2002)  
HS, Highland Station Business District Zoning Ordinance  
(adopted February 11, 2004)

**EXHIBIT 3:** Photographic Survey of Highland Station  
Current and Proposed Future

**EXHIBIT 4:** Portfolio of News Coverage for Highland Station and HDDA

**EXHIBIT 5:** Resolutions of Community Support

# **Introduction**

## **Background and Purposes of the Development Plan, Downtown Management Plan and Tax Increment Financing Plan**

In October 2000, the Charter Township of Highland adopted Ordinance No. 418 which established the Highland Downtown Development Authority (HDDA), pursuant to Act 197 of Public Acts of 1975 of the State of Michigan. The Ordinance grants the HDDA the power and responsibilities prescribed under the state enabling legislation, and establishes the boundaries of the Downtown Development District.

The HDDA is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of the Township Supervisor and eight to twelve additional members appointed to represent the interests of the business community and residents in the areas surrounding the commercial node of Highland Station, centered at Milford Road and Livingston Road.

Since its formation, the HDDA has scheduled and conducted regular public meetings for the purpose of establishing priorities and objectives to improve the business climate in the HDDA district, to develop and implement programs to raise funds and raise awareness of the HDDA district, and to participate and coordinate with the Township Planning Commission in its master planning efforts for revitalizing the Highland Station area. The HDDA Board and its volunteers have continually sought to serve Highland Township as ambassadors of civic-minded spirit and community pride.

The HDDA has been pursuing the general objectives Downtown Development Authority Development Plan and Tax Increment Financing Plan prepared in 1999, in support of the proposal to establish the HDDA. This plan was amended in August 2003. Certain objectives of this prior plan have not been implemented, as funding through the County participation in the Tax Increment Financing Plan has not been realized as of this date.

The current Downtown Management Plan presented herein documents the HDDA efforts to date, and provides renewed vision and objectives for HDDA operations, based on the Main Street Oakland County model for effective community leadership. The HDDA also incorporated lessons gleaned from observing other Oakland County communities pursue their economic development goals.

It is the sincere hope of the HDDA that the vision articulated herein, as well as the practical action-oriented approach outlined herein, will capture the imagination of our current and future partners, including the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, and encourage their full participation in implementing our Downtown Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan.

# **Development Plan**

## **Overview**

The Downtown Development District totals nearly 700 acres, including the historic “Highland Station” core, centered on Milford Road and Livingston Road, as well as lands zoned, planned and currently used for office and commercial land uses up and down Milford Road and along M-59 in the immediate vicinity. The “Development Area” or Highland Station core and proposed Civic Center Complex, consists of approximately nine blocks, totaling about 114 parcels and 83 acres.

The Highland Station area represents the historic core of the community, including buildings of cultural significance such as historic churches, the former sites of the railroad depot, hotel and pickle works. A number of factors have led to the physical decline of the area and to the economic viability of commercial uses. A primary disincentive for reinvestment in properties is the lack of essential infrastructure, such as sanitary sewer and public water service.

The Highland Township Planning Commission has recently undertaken a study of the Highland Station core. The micro-area analysis and recommendations are included in this document as Exhibit 2. The Planning Commission is proceeding with efforts to draft flexible design regulations and guidance documents to facilitate creative redevelopment of parcels in the core area.

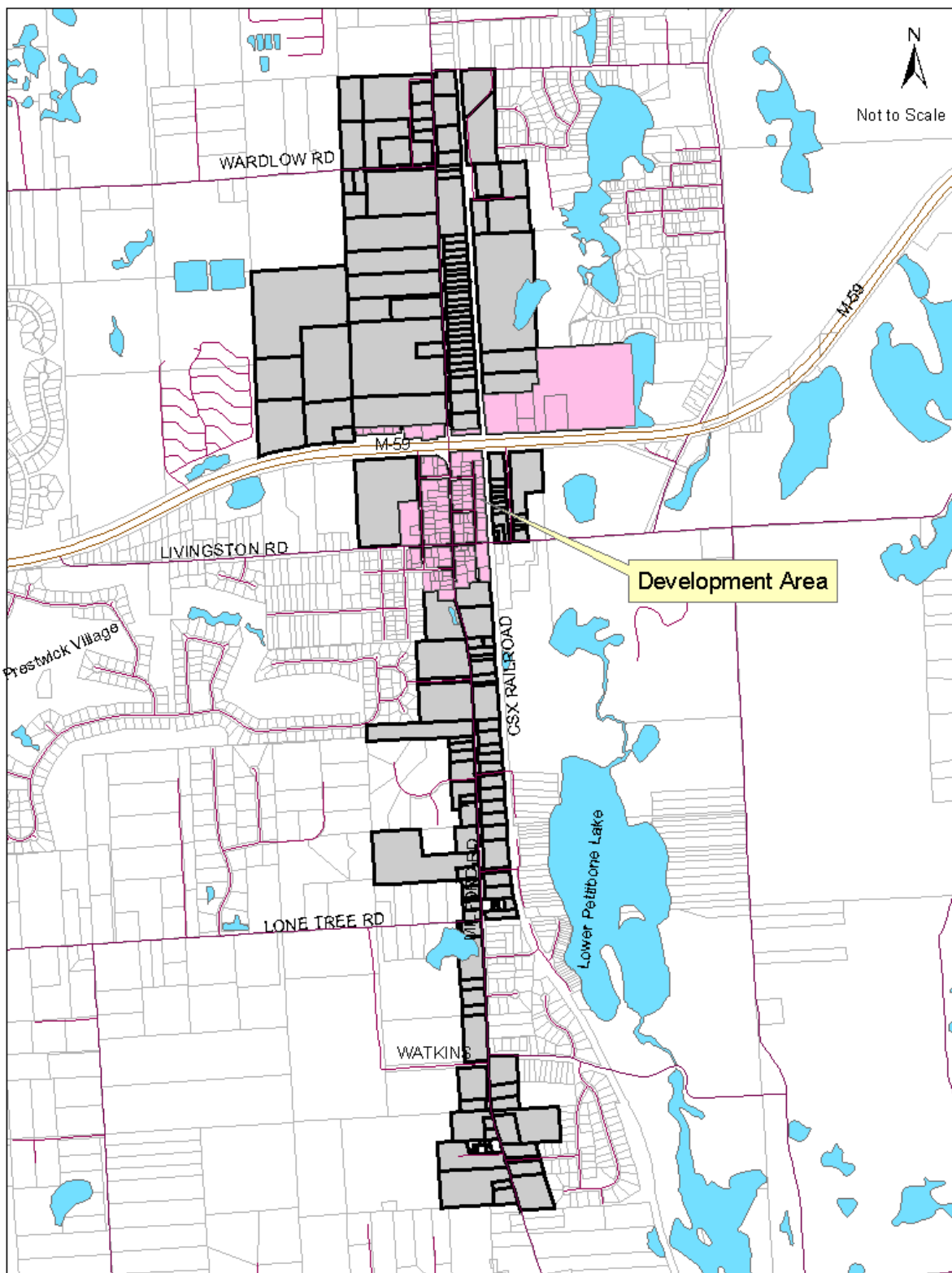
The Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Highland Township calls for preservation of open space and the rural atmosphere, as well as concentration of commercial activity in one of three areas—the primary area being the DDA district. The Zoning Map and Comprehensive Land Use Map are consistent with the goals of supporting and encouraging commercial growth within the Development Area.

The Township has demonstrated a commitment to improving the regulatory framework for redevelopment, extending utility service to the core area, and concentrating new commercial district within the DDA footprint. It is the community’s belief that an effective partnership between the Township, the HDDA, private property owners and residents will result in a vibrant zone of mixed land use, and in a “sense of place” our residents can identify as “Highland”. We believe the community’s vision for the future is captured in the photos and sketches included in Exhibit 3.

## **Designation of Boundaries of the Development Area in relation to Highways, Streets, Streams or otherwise.**

The Downtown Development District is centered on Milford Road as a north/south axis, beginning approximately ¼ mile north of Reid Road on the south end, and ending at Wardlow Road on the north end. The area also includes parcels along the north side of M-59 (Highland Road), approximately ½ mile east and west of the intersection of Milford Road (refer to figure 1).

**Figure 1: Downtown Development District**



Note: The legal description of the Downtown Development District is included in Ordinance No. 418, provided as Exhibit 1. Proposed additions to the District are reflected in proposed Ordinance No. 432, also provided in Exhibit 1.



The development area is bounded by M-59 on the north, the CSX Railroad on the east and John Street on the west. The development area extends approximately one block south of Livingston Street along South Milford Road. The development area also includes property along M-59, approximately ½ mile east and west of Milford Road, including the Highland Township Civic Center property.

### **Existing Streets and Public Facilities**

The streets which provide east-west circulation through the Downtown Development District include M-59 (Highland Road), Livingston Road, Wardlow Road, and Lone Tree Road. There are also minor local streets within the Development Area including Watkins Boulevard (serving the Huron Valley School District properties), Reid Road, Avanti Lane, Crapo Street and Ruggles Street.

Milford Road provides the only significant north-south circulation in the area.

Currently, Highland Township provides no sanitary sewer service.

Public water supply is currently available to the properties within the Downtown Development District located north of M-59, south of Wardlow Road and west of the CSX Railroad. A few parcels east of the Railroad are served by a watermain extension between the Township library and Milford Road. These include Magnetic Products and the 5/3 Bank on Town Center Boulevard.

In 2003, watermain was also extended to nine parcels on South Milford Road and Avanti Lane, located south of Prestwick Village.

The only properties within the Development Area that are served by municipal water are those fronting M-59, including the 5/3 Bank, US Post Office and Highland Township Library.

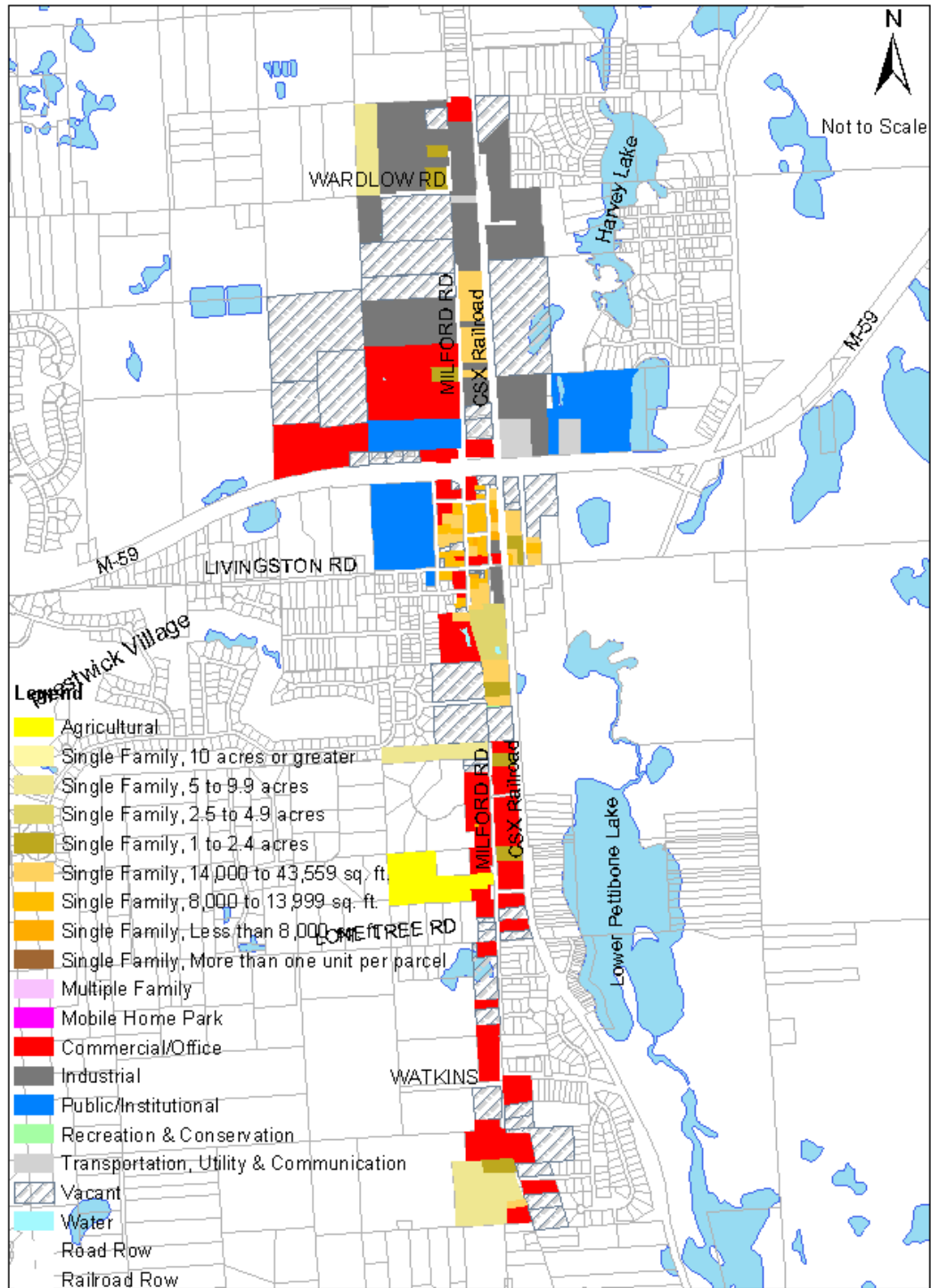
There is very limited storm sewer availability throughout the Development Area. All property owners are required to provide onsite stormwater management facilities.

Detroit Edison provides electrical service. Consumer's Energy provides natural gas service. Telephone service is provided by Verizon.

### **Existing Land Use**

Land uses within the Downtown Development District include a variety of older homes, commercial uses and a few industrial users. Existing land uses for the Highland Station Core area are fully documented in the Micro-Area Analysis included as Exhibit 2. See Figure 2 for a land use map for the Downtown Development District.

**Figure 2: Existing Land Use**



Properties within the DDA District and north of M-59 include a number of small homes on narrow lots that are undergoing a gradual transition to industrial uses such as automotive repair, pool installation, and contractor’s workyards. The Township’s major industrial employers, Numatics and Magnetic Products are also located within the DDA District.

Properties located within the DDA District but south of the core area of Highland Station include commercial and office land uses. There is one full service restaurant/bar (Dukes), one restaurant specializing in Chinese food (Furama’s) and a few small restaurants, ice cream and sandwich shops.

There are no substantial comparison commercial businesses in the DDA District. Businesses tend to be community service oriented, including medical and dental clinics, and service professionals. There are also two hardware stores.

The only public uses within the DDA District include the United States Post Office at Town Center Drive, the Highland Township Library on Beach Farm Circle, the Highland Township Cemetery on Milford Road, north of M-59 and our Highland Station “Gateway Park” on the southwest corner of M-59 and Milford Road. Other public uses are located in the immediate vicinity. These include the Township Offices, Senior Center, Fire Station no. 1 and the Sheriff Substation at North John Street and the surrounding Huron Valley School Properties. The School District also owns significant holdings just west of the DDA District at Watkins Boulevard.

While there is no recreational land use within the DDA District, it is largely bounded on the east by the Highland Recreation Area, approximately 3900 acres of state owned park land. The Civic Center Complex may include additional park uses in the future.

There is very little vacant property in the Highland Station core area, although there are a number of parcels that could be considered “underdeveloped”. There are a significant number of undeveloped properties along Milford Road, both north and south of M-59. Table 1 includes a survey of existing land use within the DDA District:

**Table 1  
Existing Land Use Inventory**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Number of Properties</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Commercial	65	123	18%
Industrial	37	108	15%
Residential—Single Family	105	97	14%
Vacant	49	229	33%
Public/Institutional	7	68	10%
Roads/Utilities		75	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Land Use Trends

The primary land use in the Development Area continues to be single-family residential use, although some structures have been successfully converted to small store fronts. The recently adopted Micro-area analysis for Highland Station sets the stage for greater integration of mixed land uses, and conversion of residential properties to “live/work” space.

Outside the core area, but within the Downtown Development District, a number of vacant properties along South Milford Road are being developed as office sites. These are primarily smaller lots, ranging from two to five acres. The typical office project is four or five buildings totaling less than 10,000 square feet total.

Site plans have been submitted for industrial developments north of M-59, but within the DDA District. These include one site condominium project for ten light industrial sites totaling approximately 40 acres in Section 21, north of an existing shopping center.

## Zoning

The Downtown Development District includes parcels zoned in 19 different zoning classifications, including Agricultural, Single Family Residential, Two Family Residential, Office, Commercial and Industrial Zoning categories. Figure 3 illustrates existing zoning classifications. Table 2 summarizes the zoning data for the DDA District.

**Table 2  
Existing Zoning Classifications**

Land Use	Number of Properties	Acreage	Percent of Total
Mixed Use (HS)	59	19	3%
Commercial	73	182	26%
Industrial	64	249	35%
Residential—Single Family*	58	95	13%
Residential--Multiple	3	25	4%
Agricultural	5	55	9%
Roads/Utilities		75	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*includes 26 acres owned by the Township and Huron Valley School District under institutional land uses

The predominant zoning category north of M-59 is I-1, Light Industrial. The predominant zoning categories south of the Highland Station Core Area are OB, Office-Business and CB-1, Restricted Commercial. The Planning Commission has recently adopted new regulations for a proposed HS, Highland Station Business Zoning District to cover all parcels in the core area and provide for mixed use zoning, adaptive reuse of historic structures and shared parking.

Details of the regulations for each zoning district are available in the Highland Township Zoning Ordinance, adopted October 11, 2000. The recently adopted HS, Highland Station Business District Zoning Ordinance is included in Exhibit 2.

## Land Use Plan

Highland Township completed an updated Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 2000. The Highland Station core area was subject of a Micro-Area analysis, which resulted in an amendment of the Master Land Use Plan. The Micro-Area analysis was adopted December 19, 2002. This document is included as Exhibit 2.

The Planning Commission is also undertaking a Micro-Area analysis of properties within the Downtown Development District along South Milford Road. This study should be completed by July, 2004.

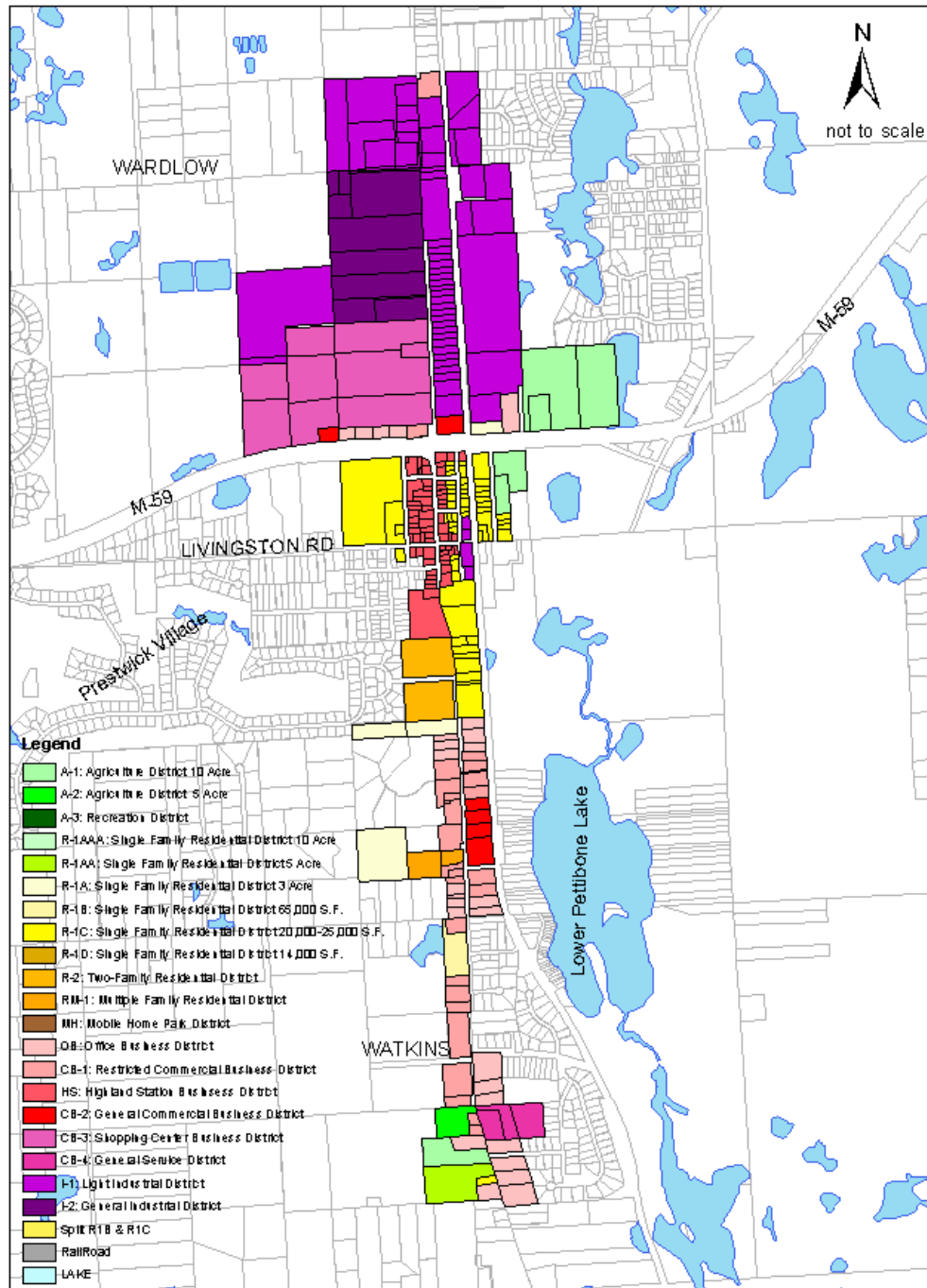
The Master Land Use Plan for the Development Area is shown in Figure 4. Table 3 summarizes planned future land use data for the DDA District.

**Table 3  
Future Land Use Classifications**

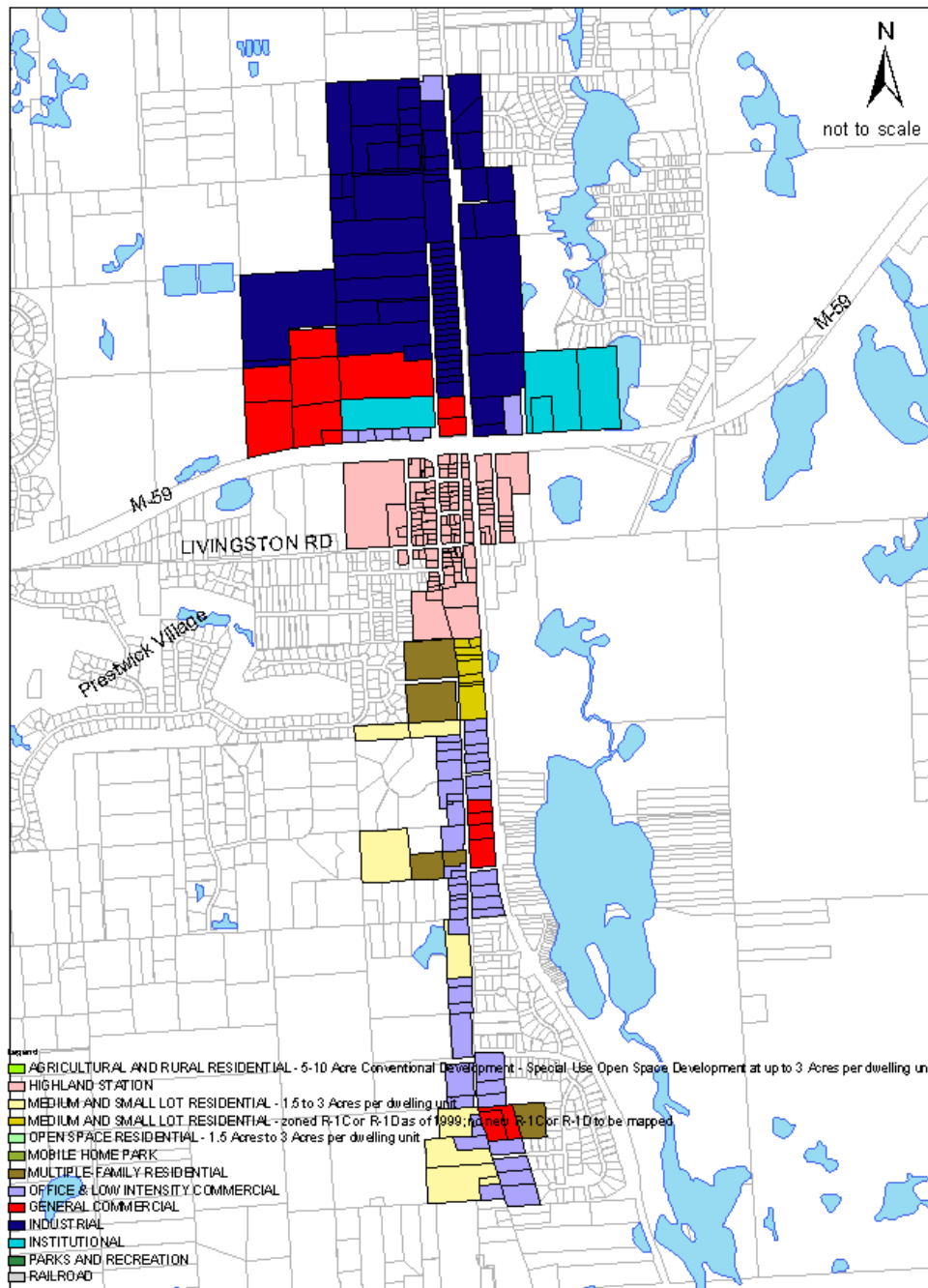
Land Use	Number of Properties	Acreage	Percent of Total
Mixed Use (HS)	107	82	12%
Office & Commercial*	69	78	35%
Industrial*	66	329	23%
Residential—Single Family	6	42	6%
Residential--Multiple	12	42	6%
Institutional	3	50	7%
Roads/Utilities		75	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Highland Township's Industrial Zoning and Land Use classification allows for development of properties with office or general commercial character, such as automobile dealerships, catering establishments, furniture rental, etc. We have assumed that approximately ½ of the property classified as industrial land use would in fact develop with office or commercial use.

**Figure 3: Existing Zoning Classifications**



**Figure 4: Comprehensive Land Use Plan**



## **Population Characteristics**

Highland Township reported a population of 19,169 persons in 2000, up only 6.84 percent from 1990, in a region that otherwise experienced nearly explosive growth. As a comparison, White Lake Township reported a population of 28,219 persons in 2000, for a 25 percent increase from 1990 and Hartland Township to the west reported a population of 10,996 persons in 2000, for a 60 percent increase since 2000. Oakland County, with a population of 1,194,156, grew 10.2 percent from 1990. It is believed that the influence of the State lands and the Township's Master Plan, which emphasizes large lots and open space have restricted growth in this decade, as well as the lack of sewers and central water systems. White Lake and Hartland Township do provide utilities in at least portions of the townships.

Within the Development Area, there are approximately eighty-five single family homes, with an approximate population of 240 persons. The DDA District boundaries include very little residential property. Future land use planning calls for creation of new housing opportunities within the DDA District (mixed land use and home-based office uses).

The Highland Township population is aging, with 44% of residents in the 35 to 64 year age group in 2000, compared with 36% of its residents in that age group in 1990. Approximately 7% of its population is in the age 65 and over group, despite the fact that there are very few senior housing units to service the population (approximately 17 units for 1395 persons).

The population is fairly well educated, with 89 percent of the population age 25 or older having graduated from high school, and 20 percent of the population holding a bachelor's degree or higher, according to the 2000 census. As a comparison, county-wide, 89 percent of the population age 25 or older have graduated from high school, but 38 percent hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Townships residents are served primarily by the Huron Valley School Systems, which consistently report above average MEAP scores in every subject compared to state averages.

The Township population is largely "white-collar", with nearly two-thirds of the population employed in service industries, according to estimates by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the regional planning agency. The average commute for a Highland Township resident is 35 minutes one way, whereas the county-wide average commute is 27 minutes.

The median household income in Highland Township for 2000 is \$62,805 (expressed in 1999 dollars), up from \$56,495 in 1990. Six percent of all persons live in poverty (up one percent from 1990). Twenty percent of households earn in excess of \$100,000 annually. This is similar to the County-wide median household income of \$61,907, with five percent of all persons living in poverty. Twenty-six percent of all households in Oakland County earn in excess of \$100,000 annually. Oakland County is considered one of the wealthiest counties in Michigan, and in the United States. Eighty-eight percent of all housing units are owner-occupied, with a median sales price exceeding \$160,000 (Source: RealComp, 1996-2000 sales)



## **Declining Properties in the Core Area**

Highland Township has not had a comprehensive reappraisal of properties within the Development Area since 1979. Changes in assessed value have been based only on Township wide adjustment factors, and limited sales data. This area appears to be under relatively stable ownership.

Only a handful of properties within the Development Area have changed ownership more than once within the last ten years. In each of these cases, sale prices increased by less than seven percent per year, which was the average increase in appraisals in Highland for 2003. The only property that realized a significant increase in value was subject to a major overhaul of all mechanical systems, and still sold for little more than surrounding properties with similar improvements.

Based on sales records in the Development Area, a typical village lot (66 feet by 132 feet) with a single family residence currently sells for between \$90,000 to \$130,000. This is well below the median sales price of homes in the Township, despite the advantages of its central location and investment potential as a mixed land use, commercial core.

There are homes and commercial buildings within the Highland Station Area that are showing signs of neglect—peeling paint, sagging roofs, missing trim, etc. Property owners report difficulty in finding new tenants for lease space, due to a variety of issues ranging from limited parking, the condition of septic systems and poor visibility from the main thoroughfare at Milford Road. These and other factors are constraining reinvestment in the Highland Station Area, and suppressing property value increases below those enjoyed by other properties in the Township. As noted in the discussion of Population Characteristics (above), Highland Township is also experiencing very slow population growth in comparison with that of contiguous communities.

## **Recently Completed and Planned Public Improvements not included in this Development Plan**

In 2002, Highland Township completed a watermain extension to provide service to properties in the DDA District along Milford Road, north of M-59, as well as parcels on the north side of M-59 from Cobblestone on the east to the Highland Township Library on the west. The project was financed primarily through a Special Assessment District. The project cost was approximately \$1.1 million.

In 2003, the Township completed a project to provide landscaping for portions of M-59 within the DDA District. The project costs of \$85,000 were paid through federal grants.

The Township has also been awarded enhancement grants from the federal government under TEA-21 to construct a safety path along the north side of M-59 from Cobblestone on the west to Downey Lake on the east. The Township expects to construct this project in 2004. The project budget is approximately \$435,000.

Also in 2003, Highland Township, in conjunction with the Downtown Development Authority and the Township Beautification Committee developed a small “pocket park” development on the southwest corner of M-59 and Milford Road, known as “Highland Station Gateway Park”. The improvements include a small “ticket booth” shelter, a meandering brick paver path and landscape areas. This park is intended to be a gateway to the Highland Station core area. The project cost was approximately \$125,000, raised largely by the HDDA through donation of materials and skilled labor.

In 1999, Highland Township and the committee that would later become the Charter HDDA Board, commissioned design of a historic light fixture that would be consistent with the vision of a historic “depot” era, and would be compatible with pedestrian scale development. The Township purchased approximately 20 lighting fixtures, were reserved for use on properties within the Development Area. In 2002, the Township completed a lighting project to install the historic lighting fixtures along Town Center Drive. The cost of that project was \$111,000. See Figure 5.

These projects demonstrate a determination on the part of the Township and the HDDA to make improvements to the Development Area and to be prepared to undertake future projects necessary for the success of the area. These projects, in conjunction with planning activities of the Township, are increasing the credibility of the community with private investors. The Township and HDDA believe that this incremental progress is essential in building support for future Special Assessment Districts to finance necessary infrastructure to serve the Development Area.

### **Proposed Public Improvements included in this Development Plan**

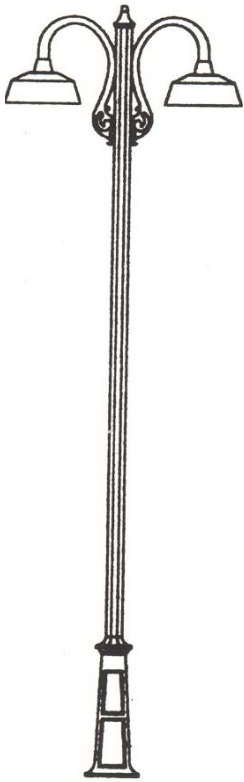
In order to achieve the economic development goals of this Plan, the Township and HDDA have proposed projects to serve the Highland Station Core, the Township Civic Center Complex, and connectivity between the two sub-development areas. The Township and HDDA also propose planning and promotional activities which support all properties in the Development Area and HDDA District.

In the Highland Station Core, the projects include sanitary sewer and watermain extension, a central storm sewer and retention system, and street improvements, including lighting, signage, landscaping and other streetscape features. Another project includes acquisition of the existing Township Office Building, and renovation to develop lease spaces to use as an “incubator” for promising new businesses.

At the Civic Center Complex, the projects include street improvements, landscaping improvements, and a variety of pedestrian oriented park projects designed to educate the public on Highland’s unique history and natural setting. These projects will provide additional space for public gatherings and festivals.

Connectivity projects include pedestrian paths and an overpass to provide access between the Civic Center Complex and Highland Station Core. Another project will provide a “trailhead” for equestrians and cyclists traveling between the Highland Recreation Area and Highland Station. Finally, the HDDA would manage a program for infill of missing links of sidewalk along South

**Figure 5: HDDA Lighting Standard**



Milford Road, and to provide pedestrian amenities along the sidewalk such as benches, planters and trash receptacles.

### ***Highland Station Projects***

#### Sanitary Sewer and Watermain

Sanitary sewer service is the first essential prerequisite to successful redevelopment of the Highland Station Area.

The Township authorized a feasibility study for sanitary sewers to serve the Development Area as well as other areas of the Township, in 2003. The draft plan has been presented to the Planning Commission and is undergoing final revisions prior to adoption. Levy Corporation has an obligation under its mining permit to construct a wastewater treatment facility capable of providing an initial capacity of 300,000 gallons per day, which would provide service for their development needs as well as other areas of the Township, including the Highland Station core area. The plant must also be expandable to 2.1 million gallons per day, which would meet the needs of all planned sewer service areas within the Township. While the Township has explored other treatment and disposal possibilities, including alternative sites and existing plants owned by other municipalities, the Levy option appears to be the most feasible alternative.

The estimated value of the plant Levy is obligated to construct is \$3.1 million, or approximately \$3250 per residential equivalent user (REU). The value of a 2.1 million gallon per day plant is estimated at \$14 million (in 2003 dollars), or \$2100 per REU. The value of the treatment capacity for the Highland Station core area is therefore estimated at between \$300,000 and \$500,000 based on a flow estimate of 50,000 gallons per day. The cost of the treatment capacity will likely be passed to the benefiting property owners through tap fees.

In order to provide sanitary sewer service to the Highland Station Core, area property owners must participate in a project to construct a pump station/force main to transport flows north to the WWTP site. Transport costs are estimated at approximately \$2.2 million, which will be shared with other users. The approximate cost to the Highland Station service area is \$440,000, or \$2800 per REU.

Sanitary sewer collection costs are estimated at approximately \$1,050,000 for the Highland Station core area, or approximately \$6600 per REU.

Therefore, the total cost per for sanitary sewer collection, transport and treatment is estimated at \$12,650 per REU.

Unfortunately, due to pending litigation, the timeline for construction of a wastewater treatment plant is currently uncertain. Once an agreement has been reached, it will take at least two years to permit, design and construct a plant. There may be additional time needed to organize Special Assessment Districts, design and construct the necessary sewers, pump stations and force main necessary to provide service to the Highland Station Core area. We anticipate construction could begin in 2006.

Water service is readily available for the Highland Station core area, and will be extended in conjunction with sanitary sewer service. Water main project costs are estimated at

approximately \$7500 per REU for the Highland Station core area. The property owners will also be responsible for payment of the necessary tap fees and lateral benefit charges of approximately \$2500 per REU.

The average property owner within the Highland Station core area would expect to pay approximately \$22,650 (per REU) for both sanitary sewer and water service through a combination of Special Assessments and fees. These costs are to be borne directly by the property owners, and will not be funded through the HDDA. However, the costs are presented herein to demonstrate the private property owners' investment in the economic development efforts for this area. The average annual payment per REU is \$1750 (based on a 20 year loan period at 4.5 percent annual interest). The Township believes that this burden upon the property owners justifies foregoing the 2 mills that other Downtown Development Authorities within Oakland County have levied on the properties within their jurisdiction.

#### Street Reconstruction and Streetscape

The HDDA proposes to time its initial streetscape improvement project to coincide with restoration of the streets disturbed by the utility construction. The DDA plan includes street trees, street furnishings such as waste receptacles and benches, a way-finding sign system, street lighting, new sidewalks and differential pavement treatment at pedestrian crossings (i.e. colored and patterned concrete or brick pavers). The project limits for the initial streetscape program include Livingston Road from John Street to the CSX Railroad. A second project will be undertaken when the revenues are available to cover debt service. The second project will cover Milford Road from McPherson Street to M-59.

The HDDA would also undertake the expense of upgrading the street surface on St. John Street from its existing gravel surface to a paved street surface and provide onstreet parking lanes for streets in the development core.

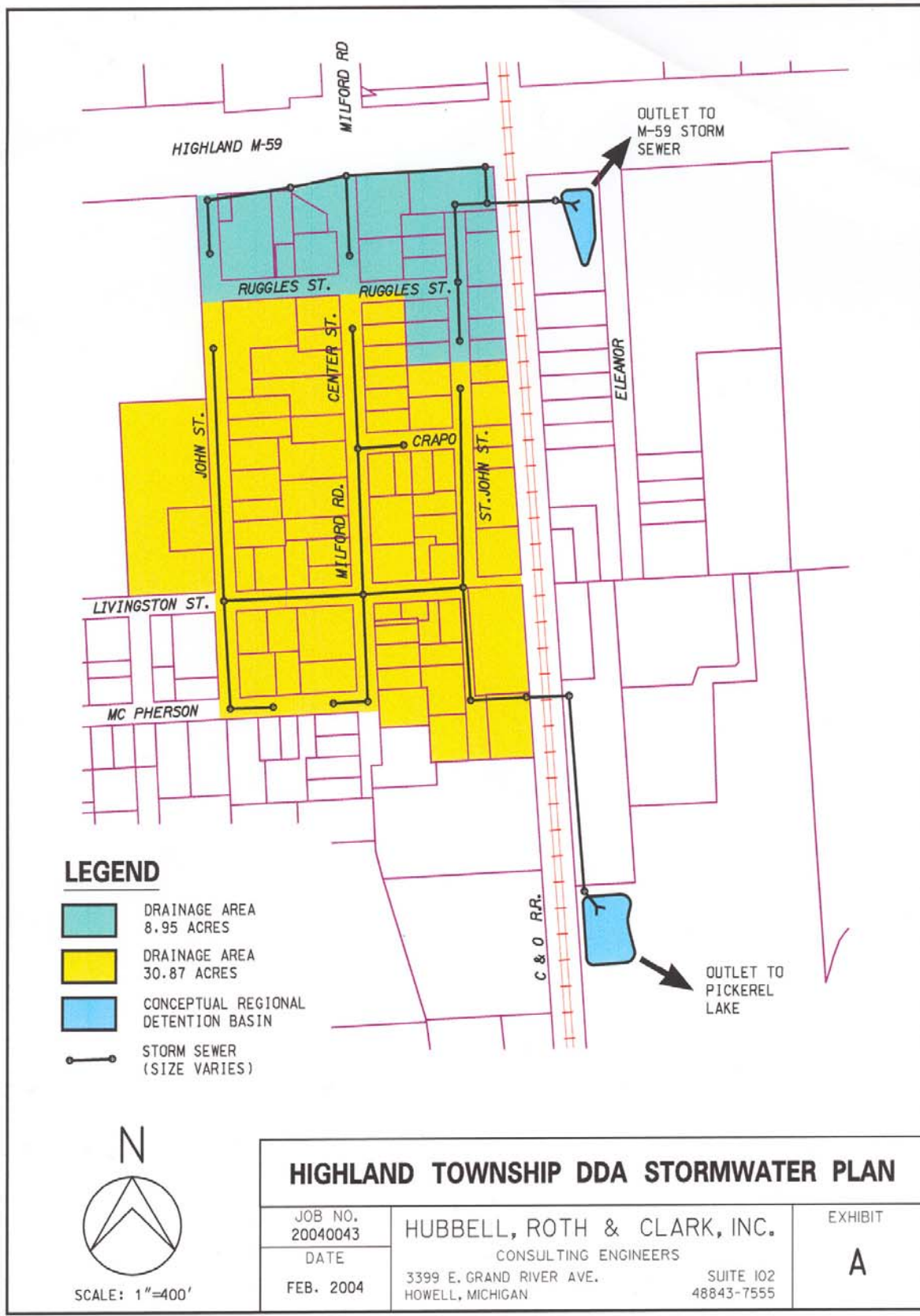
The probable project cost for the street reconstruction and streetscape elements is \$1,300,000 for the initial project, and \$1,000,000 for the subsequent project. These improvements would be financed through bonds repaid through revenues captured through Tax Increment Financing.

#### Stormwater System and Central Stormwater Retention Facility

Also in conjunction with the street reconstruction, the HDDA would undertake a storm sewer and central stormwater retention facility project. The project would include storm sewers ranging from 12-inch diameter to 42-inch diameter pipe. Two central basins will be required, one for properties north of Livingston Road, and one for properties south of Livingston Road. The Township owns a parcel at Eleanor and M-59 that could be used for one basin. A permanent easement on MDNR property or other privately held property would be required for the southern basin. See Figure 6.

The probable project cost for stormwater improvements is \$1,300,000. These improvements would be financed through bonds repaid through revenues captured through Tax Increment Financing.

**Figure 6 HDDA Stormwater Plan**



### Lighting Fixtures

The HDDA has also adopted a plan to deploy the historic lighting fixture throughout the Development Area. The HDDA plans to finance this project through voluntary participation of merchants and property owners where possible, with the HDDA covering the cost of lighting and installation on public properties, and along the frontage of those properties affected by the proposed sanitary sewer and water project. The total project cost is estimated at \$770,000 for approximately 168 lamps (including lamps already deployed.)

Figure 7 illustrates the lighting project limits.

### Highland Station Business Incubator

The HDDA and Township recognize the importance of the Township facilities at 205 North John Street for the future vitality of the Highland Station. However, the Township offices are already inadequate to meet the community's needs, and cannot accommodate any future increases in staffing, services or technology. The Township is committed to developing new office space at the Civic Center Complex in the future, although a specific target date has not been established. The Fire Station and Sheriff Substation will continue to be located at the existing Township complex. The Senior Center would eventually move to new facilities at the Civic Center Complex, but this move would likely be near the end of the 25-year life of the Downtown Development Plan.

Highland Township recently completed a renovation project to upgrade the electrical service, repair and re-roof the building, and construct an accessible public bathroom on the north end of the building. The total cost of these improvements is \$160,000.

The HDDA proposes to acquire the Township Office Building, and renovate the building to provide lease space for promising new businesses and to provide space for HDDA offices. The incubator program would include objective criteria to judge whether a business was suitable, and had potential to increase the vitality of the downtown. Participation would require an appropriate business plan leading to "graduation" to a location within the Highland Station or HDDA. Business owners would be expected to participate in community life.

The Township Office Building is approximately 7200 square feet, with a value of \$550,000. The project cost to acquire and renovate the facility is \$800,000. Lease revenues in the amount of \$70,000 per year would be directed back to the HDDA to finance purchase of the building from the Township.

This project would likely be initiated in 2016 or later, depending upon the Township's ability to finance construction of new office space of its own.

### Highland Station Legacy Building & Street Name Monuments

As a means to educate the public and to promote Highland Station's unique heritage, the HDDA proposes to construct "legacy" markers throughout the area in the locations where this history unfolded that briefly tell the stories. An example might include a marker on Governor Crapo Street that states:

In 1872, this street was named after Henry Crapo, elected Michigan Governor in 1864 and served throughout the Civil War years. After creating his wealth as a whale merchant in New

Bedford, Massachusetts, Governor Crapo came to Highland in 1856. Upon his death, his sole heir was his grandson, a young man named William Crapo Durant who went on to form the General Motors car company.

This project would be a joint venture undertaking with support of the Highland Historical Society and Highland Township Library. Project costs are estimated at \$100,000, to be financed through revenues from tax increment financing and private donations. This project is programmed for 2023.

### ***Civic Center Complex Projects***

The HDDA has worked with the Municipal Land Development Committee (MLDC) to identify projects that would enhance the properties and attract additional patrons to the library and future Township parks at this location.

#### Sanitary Sewer and Watermain

Before any new significant development is undertaken at the Township Civic Center Complex, sanitary sewer service would be extended to the site. Watermain is already available. The sanitary sewer extension project would cost approximately \$150,000 and would be borne by the benefiting parties, including the Township, U.S. Postal Service, Township Library, and adjacent privately held properties.

#### Streetscape

Given the uncertainty of timing for construction of a future Township Office Building, the HDDA proposes to complete the top lift of pavement on Civic Center Boulevard and Beach Farm Circle to better serve the needs of the patrons of the Township library, and prepare the area for greater traffic and visibility. While the Township lighting fixture has been installed throughout the median, planned landscaping and irrigation system has not been completed. An entry “image sign”, built with natural materials such as wood beams and stone, would also be included in a streetscape project.

The probable project cost for completing this streetscape project is \$100,000 to be financed through revenues generated through tax increment financing. This project would be initiated in 2005.

#### Civic Center “Highland Heritage” Park

The Municipal Land Development Committee is promoting the development of the Highland Heritage Park. This park would be located around the pond in the northwest corner where Beachfarm Circle joins with Town Center Drive. The theme of the park would be focused on Highland’s forefathers and pay tribute to them though the use of monuments in and around the park. The park would also include a timber structure constructed from some of the pines located in this area that could possibly be used as a comfort and concession station on the site.

The probable project cost for the “Highland Heritage” Park is \$200,000, to be financed through revenues generated through tax increment financing and private donations.



#### Civic Center/Downy Lake frontage pedestrian path

The HDDA proposes a pedestrian pathway connecting all buildings on the Civic Center Complex site together as well as providing access to Downy Lake frontage. The trail would include park bench sitting areas along the pathway.

The probable project cost for the Downey Lake Path system is \$150,000, to be financed through revenues generated through tax increment financing. Recreation grant funding from the state will be sought.

#### Civic Center/Downy Lake frontage outdoor amphitheater

Another project that has been discussed with the MLDC meetings has been the concept of constructing a facility that could accommodate events such as outdoor evening concerts. This project would contribute greatly to the idea of developing the Civic Center complex as a cultural destination point particularly during complex “off” hours such as evenings and weekends.

The probable project cost for the Downey Lake ampitheatre is \$250,000, to be financed through revenues generated through tax increment financing.

### ***Connectivity Projects***

#### Eleanor Street/M-59/Civic Center access Park

The HDDA proposes a pedestrian enhancement project to connect Highland Station and the Civic Center Complex. This project will include a means to promote safe crossing at M-59 (an overpass or tunnel as may be appropriate), anchored on the south end at the Township’s Eleanor Street property, and on the north end at the Detroit Edison property. This would provide an “eastern flank” gateway promotion opportunity for west bound traffic along M-59 while providing another enhanced greenbelt area. The project would also serve a practical purpose for those wanting to use the crossover. This would also serve to improve pedestrian safety by promoting foot traffic in this area.

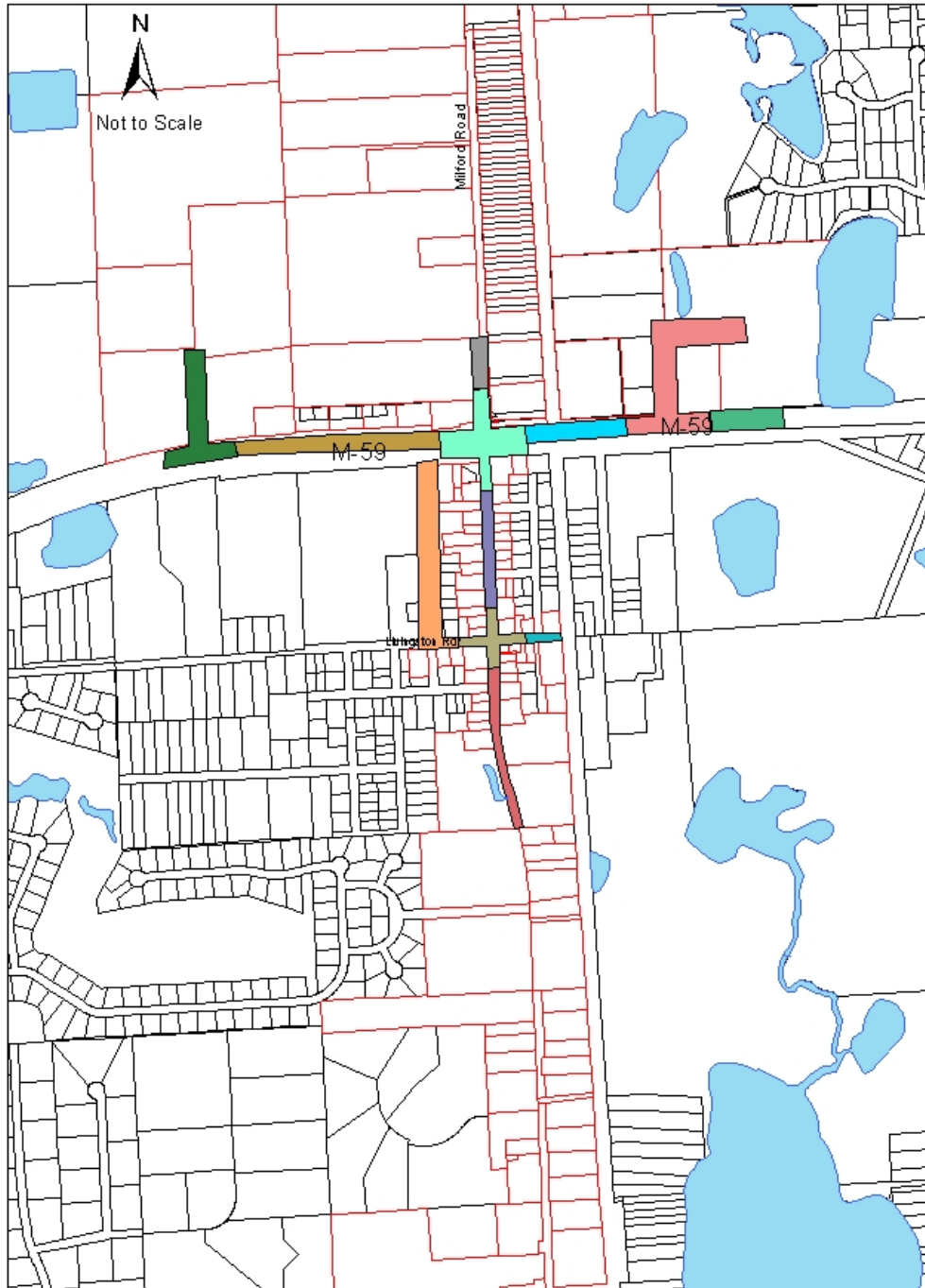
The total estimated cost of the project, including sidewalk along the south side of M-59 and Eleanor Street is \$1,000,000. The HDDA share of the project is estimated at \$500,000, to be supplemented by grants, private donations or other funding as required. The project would be initiated around 2019.

#### Equestrian Trailhead Project

A second connectivity project would be construction of a “trailhead” at the eastern edge of Highland Station, at Livingston Road. This would provide a place to hitch horses or lock up bicycles, with automatic watering troughs and sanitary facilities for the horses, and restrooms for the pedestrians.

The total estimated cost of the project is \$120,000, which will be constructed through tax increment revenues, grant funding and private donations. The HDDA portion of the project would be \$30,000. The project would be initiated around 2024.

**Figure 7: Public Lighting Program Limits**



Note: Each color on this map signifies a planned sub-area to be undertaken as a specific project.

### South Milford Road Sidewalk and Pedestrian Amenities

While much of the sidewalk along South Milford Road has been completed, there are gaps in the continuity. Property owners are required to install sidewalk as a condition of site plan approval, but past practice has allowed some properties to defer that installation.

The HDDA would organize a single project to provide sidewalk from the south end of the DDA District to M-59. The sidewalk costs would be assessed to the property owners. The HDDA would cover the costs of benches, planters, trash receptacles and lighting where needed. The total project cost is estimated at \$100,000.

### **Stages of Construction and Estimated Time of Completion**

The projects described above would represent an investment of \$11,416,000 in the Development Area, which includes public and private investments in infrastructure and streetscape. The DDA investment is \$5,763,000, leveraging another \$5,653,000 in investments from other sectors, as well as developing revenue streams through lease space at the business incubator and concessions.

The street lighting project is considered an ongoing project, which will be completed as funds are available, and as property owners express a desire to light their frontage. This program began in 2002 with the Town Center Drive lighting project, and is expected to continue through 2020.

The sewer, water and streetscape projects in Highland Station may be completed in multiple contracts, but would be completed in a single “phase” of construction. Detailed planning and design will begin in 2004, with anticipated completion of public improvements by the Spring of 2007. Construction would affect local business and traffic for approximately one construction season.

Other projects would be programmed as revenues become available.

### **Existing Improvements to be Demolished, Repaired or Altered**

The HDDA has no plans to materially alter any existing improvements other than replacement of streets and streetscape elements affected by proposed sanitary sewer and watermain construction, which are described above.

### **Description of any parts of the Development Area which will be left as open space.**

The only area within the Development Area which will be left as open space is the Highland Station “gateway park” at the southeast corner of M-59 and Milford Road, and the Eleanor Street/M-59/Civic Center Access park. These parks are passive pedestrian oriented uses, but may be used for small ceremonial gatherings such as the lighting of the Township Christmas Tree.

## **Desired Zoning Changes**

The Highland Township Planning Commission recently adopted a new zoning ordinance for the HS, “Highland Station” Zoning District. The proposed regulations are focused on adaptive reuse, and recognize the development constraints posed by smaller existing lot sizes in the Highland Station area. The regulations will also encourage cooperative planning among neighboring property owners for parking and site circulation. The Board of Trustees approved a zoning map amendment to establish the initial HS District boundaries at a regular meeting on February 25, 2004.

The Highland Station District limits will be expanded into adjacent neighborhoods as infrastructure improvements are completed.

## **Proposed changes in Streets, Street Levels, Intersections, and Utilities**

The only proposed changes in streets, street levels, intersections and utilities are those described above as part of the sewer and water main extension. These changes will be designed to enhance the area and improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

## **Persons or Corporations to whom or to which the Development is to be Leased, Sold, or Conveyed, and Project Beneficiaries**

All improvements undertaken in this Development Plan are public, and will remain in public ownership or under public control for the benefit of the public, with the exception of lease space developed in the “business incubator” for short term leases contingent upon a satisfactory plan for “graduation” to other space within the Downtown District. Lessees will be selected on the basis of objective criteria to be developed by the HDDA. There is no sale or conveyance to private entities to be made.

## **Procedures for Leasing, Purchasing, Conveying, or Bidding**

The HDDA will comply with the bidding and purchasing policies of the Charter Township of Highland, Michigan. All proposed contracts will comply with state law governing construction of public improvements.

The details of a selection process for leasing “incubator” space to new businesses will be developed prior to acquisition of the Township Office Building, and will be subject to a public planning process and approval of the Board of Trustees.

## **Estimates of the Number of Persons Residing in the Development Area**

Within the Development Area, there are approximately eighty-five single family homes, with an approximate population of 240 persons.

## **Relocation of Displaced Persons**

No persons will be displaced by the construction of the proposed public improvements. Upon completion of the projects, the Township anticipates that further housing opportunities will be provided through the expansion of mixed land use and work/live housing units. Since there is no relocation activity, there is no need to provide for a plan for compliance with Act 227 of the Public Acts of 1972 as amended.

## **Downtown Management Plan**

## Overview

The Highland Township Downtown Development Authority (HDDA), is a public corporate entity dedicated to the revitalization of the Highland Station area and its surrounding commercial and industrial district.

The HDDA was established through implementation of Ordinance No. 418 in 2000. The charter members of the Board of Directors consisted primarily of citizens organized to promote and establish an HDDA, and interested in developing a sense of place and identity for the Township—a goal identified in citizen surveys conducted during the update of the Township’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

The following Downtown Management Plan has been organized around the Main Street principles espoused by Oakland County.

## Mission Statement

The HDDA Board has adopted this concise mission statement to guide their decisions.

*“Preserving the past, with a vision of the future.”*



## **Summary of Downtown Development Goals**

The HDDA selects projects determined to further the goals established for the Downtown Development District of Highland Township as articulated below:

### **Economic Goals:**

- Improve the overall business climate of the downtown area through planning, promotion, coordination of activities, and implementation of specific improvement projects.
- Improve and maintain the residential and commercial vitality of the Development Area and the Downtown Development District.
- Encourage a balanced mix of commercial and residential uses, as well as opportunities for new and the expansion of existing businesses.
- Develop an attractive, safe and vital environment for the residential areas which lie within or adjacent to the Development Area.
- Support the development of vacant or underutilized land parcels in a manner which achieves the best appropriate use for the area.
- Assist in creating new employment opportunities by fostering commercial development, redevelopment and expansion within the Development Area.

### **Circulation:**

- Provide for facilities and amenities necessary to ensure convenient and pleasant pedestrian movement.
- Improve traffic safety through the improvement of the existing street network.
- Connect Highland Station and the Civic Center complex property to facilitate automobile, pedestrian and equestrian traffic.

### **Facilities and Services:**

- Develop the area in a manner which is consistent with existing municipal plans and capabilities.
- Provide public improvement needed to attract future private investment in the area.
- Encourage cooperation between the public and private sector to ensure a safe, well-maintained and attractive Development Area.
- Develop programs and projects to provide amenities which will enhance the viability of the Development Area. .
- Promote the Development Area as a focus of pride and support for the Highland business and residential districts in accordance with current zoning.



**Aesthetic:**

- To improve the visual appearance of the Development Area through the installation of landscaping and street lighting and improvement of building facades and structures.
- To preserve and promote the architectural heritage and aesthetic quality provided by existing buildings and to preserve the historic flavor of Highland Township.
- Promote architectural and aesthetic compatibility between existing structures and developments, and new infill projects.
- Reduce unattractive characteristics and negative influences within the Development Area.
- Encourage the sensitive design of lighting, signs and landscaping which reflects the scale of a pedestrian, historic area.

The HDDA has prepared a photographic survey of the Highland Station Area. We believe these photographs and sketches, capture our present reality and our vision for the future of Highland Station. Please turn to Exhibit 3.

# ORGANIZATION

## Membership

The Highland Township DDA (HDDA) is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of the Highland Township Supervisor, and at least eight, but no more than twelve members who are appointed by the Township Supervisor with approval of the Township Board of Trustees. The current membership includes the following persons:

**Keith Rhodes**, HDDA Chairman is the owner of Magnetic Products, Inc., a charter member of the Highland Municipal Land Development Committee and former member of the Oakland County Business Roundtable.

**Jim Gorman**, HDDA Vice Chairman is the owner of J. R. Gorman & Associates. L.L.C. and a former Highland Township Planning Commissioner and Zoning Board of Appeals member.

**Susan Happel**, HDDA Treasurer/Secretary is the Director of the Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce.

**Patricia M. Pilchowski** is the Highland Township Supervisor. She also serves as Secretary of the Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce, President of Oakland County Association of Township Supervisors, member of the Highland Business Association, and Board Member of the Joel Jeremy Association.

**Roscoe Smith** is a member of the Highland Township Planning Commission, Highland Township Historical Society, Beautification Committee, and Huron Valley Council for the Arts.

**Paul Mecklenborg** is a long-term area resident, the owner of Century 21-Meck Real Estate and a member of the Highland Township Water Board and Highland Business Association.

**Neal Kajy** is the owner of the Highland Food Center.

**Bob Matley** is the owner of Duke's restaurant.

**Jesse Sharpe** is a former Highland Township fire chief and local area resident within the HDDA district.

**Gail Perrin** is a member of the Highland Township Library Board.

**Laura Palmer** is the owner of Wee Friends Child Care Center.

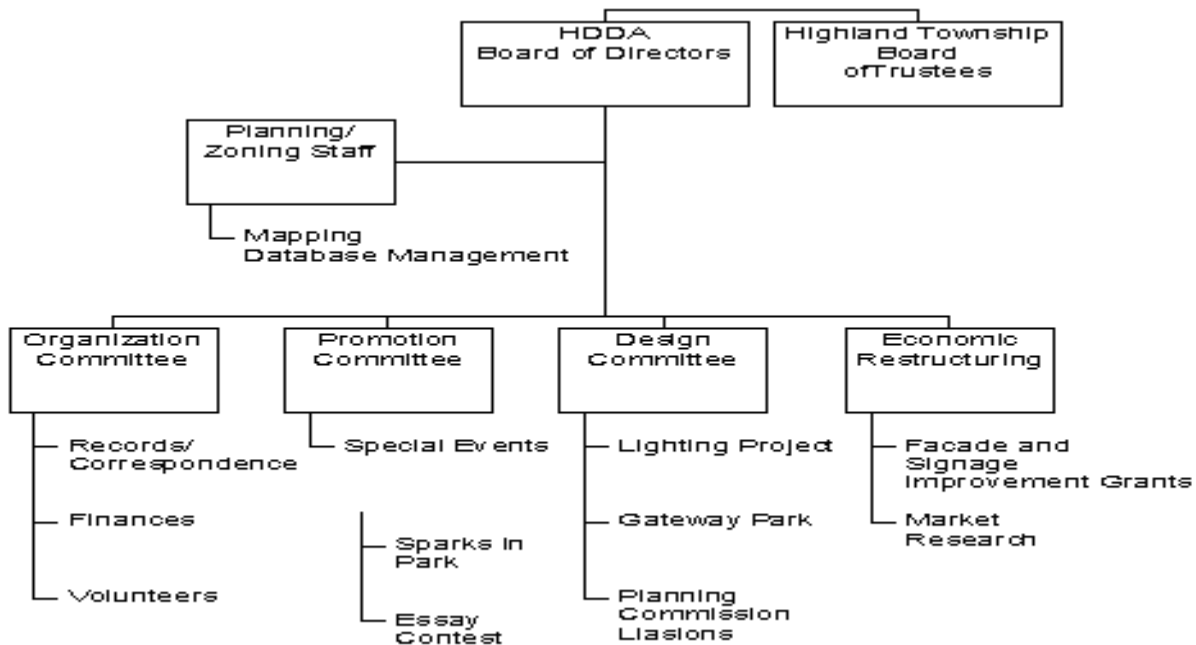
**Michael J. Hickox** is a resident at large, practicing attorney, President-elect of the Milford Rotary Club, President of the Huron Valley Educational Foundation and a member of the Huron Valley Council for the Arts.

**Sharon Greene** is a long-term resident , coach of the Highland Middle School Equestrian Team and Co-coordinator of the Oakland County Equestrian Coalition and advocate of the Highland Equestrians.

The HDDA leadership is committed to seeking Main Street Oakland County status. They are working towards a permanent subcommittee structure as follows:

- **Organization**—Handles minutes/agendas, correspondence, media relations, organizing volunteers and other administration tasks
- **Promotions**—Handles special events such as Sparks in the Park, and the Heritage Essay Contest
- **Design**—Acts as liaison to the Planning Commission, organizes Street Lighting Project, Highland Station Gateway Park and other projects. Will be responsible for providing technical assistance to property owners
- **Economic Restructuring**—Will be responsible for administering sign and façade improvement grant programs, for providing market research and business assistance.

### ***HDDA Organization Chart***



The HDDA is responsible for developing plans to aid in the economic growth of the DDA District. This includes plans for public improvements, promotions to aid local businesses, and civic events to raise community awareness of HDDA goals.

The HDDA is supported in its mission by the Highland Township Planning and Zoning Department staff and Township consultants, who provide technical support, including mapping, database management and project oversight as appropriate.

### **Partnerships and Community Support**

The HDDA enjoys broad support from a variety of private and public interests who consider themselves to be “stakeholders” in the success of revitalization of the Highland Station Area and Downtown Development District. Supporters include such groups as the Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce, Highland Business Association and Milford Township. Please refer to Exhibit 4 for letters of support and resolutions from our supporters.

The HDDA works in partnership with community groups to expand its capacity to promote its mission and vision, to raise awareness of our local heritage and to raise funds. These groups are as diverse as local boy scout troops, the Huron Valley Council for the Arts, and the Township Planning Commission. The annual “Sparks in the Park” fireworks event at Hickory Ridge Pines Park and the planned “Highland Heritage” history essay contest are two examples of successful community partnerships.

As an outgrowth of planning efforts for the Highland Station area, Highland Township sponsors an annual community summit each winter to gain feedback on progress within the Highland Station area and plans for future efforts. Participants include the Planning Commission, HDDA, all Township committees and commissions and interested residents. This is another example of active partnerships at work in Highland Township.

### **Communication**

The HDDA holds its public meeting at 5:30 PM the first Wednesday of each month at the Highland Township Senior Center. A special meeting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month during the months of February-July is also held in connection with HDDA sponsorship of its annual family-oriented event “Sparks in the Park”.

Since its inception, to ensure the HDDA continues to receive broad community support, all major projects undertaken have been submitted and received township Board resolutions of support. These projects include the community lighting designs and proposed location standards and our joint effort with the township Planning Commission to complete a Micro Area Analysis Study for the historic Highland Station.

Highland Township provides a link to its website to provide information to the public regarding current projects and to allow the general public to provide input to the HDDA regarding issues of interest. The HDDA website is [www.highlandtwp.com](http://www.highlandtwp.com). The public may email us at [HDDA@twp.highland.mi.us](mailto:HDDA@twp.highland.mi.us).

The HDDA membership includes liaisons to many other area community groups. These liaisons ensure that other groups are informed of our activities and invited to participate in our deliberations. There are liaisons to the following groups:

- Highland Township Board of Trustees
- Highland Township Planning Commission
- Highland Township Historical Society
- Huron Valley Council for the Arts
- Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Highland Business Association
- Highland Township Beautification Committee

## **Fiscal Responsibility**

Since its inception, the HDDA has received \$ 65,000 in “seed money” from the Charter Township of Highland through annual budget allocations. The HDDA received \$6,670 from local tax increment financing. The HDDA has also raised \$122,500 in cash and in-kind donations of labor and materials from private donations and fund raising activities.

To date the HDDA has invested \$13,000 in additional lighting fixture inventory for various development projects completed or in progress. The HDDA has also committed approximately \$100,000.00 for site improvements required to complete the new Highland Station Park project. The HDDA has also committed to fund \$ 1,000.00 for awards in a Highland Station community Art & Essay contest to be held in 2003.

Currently, the HDDA has a total account balance of \$47,200.00 less committed funds of \$ 1,000 leaving a current available balance of \$46,200.00 as of August 2003.

## **Fundraising**

### ***Sparks in the Park.***

The HDDA is the sponsor of what has become known as the “Sparks in the Park” annual fireworks show and park picnic. During the event HDDA members offer a day of family fun including a 5K and fun run followed with a pancake breakfast. The afternoon events include children’s rides, community group exhibits, live entertainment, food concessions, car show and culminating with a fireworks display at dusk. In 2002 the crowd estimate was 10,000 from 5,000 in 2001, the first year of this event.

### ***Highland Station Park project.***

Responding to a request from the Highland Township Beautification Committee, the HDDA became a co-sponsor in completing the new Highland Station Community Park located at the intersection of Highland Road (M-59) and Milford Road. This park has been developed to create a north gateway into what will once again, become known as Highland Station. This area is Highland’s historic hamlet originally settled as a rail station depot and is the current primary focus area of the HDDA. This area will be re-

developed with a primary focus on recalling Highland's historic past as a rail stop and farming community. To date the HDDA has attained private donations of products and services valued at over \$100,000.00 from local area businesses and individuals. The park features a train depot style waiting station shelter. The park is expected to open by September, 2003.

***Plans for lighting fixture sponsorships.***

The HDDA has used a significant portion of its financial resources to purchase and provide local property owners with the historic depot style lighting fixture to be installed following a Master Lighting Plan for the HDDA district area. Plans are being made to develop a Light Fixture Sponsorship program that will provide permanent recognition such as a brass plaque on the lighting fixture identifying sponsors that assist in funding the costs of the lights. To date, approximately 50 fixtures have been installed primarily in the Highland Road (M-59)/ Milford Road area including the new township Civic Center complex area along Town Center Drive.

## **PROMOTION**

### **Market & Visual Identification**

There are currently two (2) active defined areas of focus within the Downtown Development District, the Civic Center complex and Highland Station.

The HDDA is working to develop a “linkage” between these two areas, with the specific objectives of creating a truly unique image for the Charter Township of Highland and also creating a basis for a viable commercial and recreational destination location. The goal is to transform these areas into a successful mixed use “small town center” to promote and provide support for outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, fishing, canoeing and others. Given the proximity to the Highland Recreation Area and area lakes, it is hoped that an appropriate mix of businesses will draw customers from outside Highland Township, as well as our residents.

In particular, the HDDA supports and encourages the efforts of the Township and local Equestrian Group as it seeks support of land conservancies and trail development. Highland enjoys a greater horse population than any other area in the state (7000 horses). Highland Township is also home to a championship Equestrian Team at the High School level, and the first Equestrian Team in the state at the Middle School level. Highland Township is also home to a United States Pony Club, which provides training for the Olympics.

The HDDA believes that as awareness of Highland Township’s commitment to open space preservation grows, the HDDA is also aided in its efforts to “brand” Highland as a friendly small town and recreation destination.

### **Public Relations**

Through a steady promotion campaign throughout the past two years, the HDDA and Township have gained public support from local residents, businesses and community groups. As the HDDA continues to achieve success in its project work, such as the Highland Station Park, and as these projects become more “tangible” to the public at large, the ability for the HDDA to promote its causes will be enhanced. Methods used to promote the HDDA include local area press releases, community group newsletters, attendance and input at Township public hearings and specific community event sponsorships.

See Exhibit 4 for a portfolio of clips from local and regional press promoting Highland Township, the Highland Station area and the HDDA.

## **Cultural & Community Programs**

Highland Station is home to the Huron Valley Council for the Arts (HVCA), an umbrella organization encouraging and promoting the arts in Highland Township, Milford Township and the Village of Milford, as well as parts of White Lake Township and Charter Township. Their programs have reached more than 50,000 people in the past four years.

HVCA finds their home in the “Highland Station House”, a recently renovated 117 year old building, along with several other community organizations. The building includes a small venue 120 seat performing arts space and an arts gallery. This building provides a cultural and community anchor for the Highland Station Area.

The Highland Township Public Library is also located within the HDDA District. This new four million dollar, award-winning facility takes its architectural cues from a historical building located on the depot grounds at Highland Station. The library draws a large number of patrons of all ages to the Highland Station Area. The Library Board will partner with the HDDA on promotional activities and community and cultural events.

## **Events & Activities**

The HDDA is focusing considerable energy on spreading the word about Highland Township and fostering community pride through participation in and sponsorship of community events. Some recent accomplishments include:

- Sponsor for what is known as the “Sparks in the Park” annual fireworks and family picnic event. (see fundraising section)
- Initiated sponsorship of an Art & Essay contest for school age residents and seniors to actively participate in the promotion of the Highland Station area project.
- Promotion of project work as an exhibitor at the 2003 Highland Business Expo.
- Partnership with Highland Planning Commission in developing Highland Station Micro-Area analysis.
- Establishment of township lighting fixture standard.
- Co-sponsorship of new Highland Station Park project.

## **Sponsorship**

In addition to seeking local community support through active “liaison” HDDA membership, a steady campaign to communicate with all local area community groups is maintained. This ensures HDDA goals continue to support and compliment other community group efforts and also invites community group support and assistance on HDDA projects. (see Exhibit 5 for letters of community support) An example of this point is the fact the annual “Sparks in the Park” event is very reliant on broad support and active involvement from Highland township and a number of local area community groups.



## **DESIGN**

The HDDA recognizes that successful renovation of the Highland Station Area will be through capitalizing on and preserving the unique features that have shaped our past and the natural resources that attract residents and visitors today. The community's vision for the Highland Station Area was captured in the micro-area analysis and Comprehensive Land Use Amendment which was adopted in December, 2002 (see Exhibit 2). In short, the community hopes to create a "small town" center, serving our equestrian population and meeting the needs of visitors to our lakes and the Highland Recreational Area.

### **Ordinances**

As noted elsewhere in the Development Plan, the Planning Commission is working on two distinct projects to facilitate re-investment in the Highland Station area. The Township has recently adopted new zoning regulations specific to the Highland Station (HS) Zoning District, with a focus on mixed land use and adaptive reuse. The new zoning district includes flexible regulations that account for the smaller lot sizes, shared parking and other features related to a "small town" atmosphere.

The Planning Commission is also working on the Integrated Development Option Ordinance (IDO) that would apply here as well as other areas of the Township, providing for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) option for mixed land use for properties with some commercial zoning. This overlay option allows property owners to voluntarily collaborate on integrated site circulation, shared parking, signage and architectural schemes for their properties.

As a companion to the HS Zoning District regulations, the Planning Commission intends to develop a design guidebook, intended to illustrate the architectural and site features that define the small town vision. Larry Shew, a resident, dedicated community volunteer, property owner and local builder has undertaken an informal architectural survey of area homes and historic businesses such as the Highland Feed Store. His observations and sketches form a basis for the proposed design guidelines, which will include building materials, roof styles, window and shutter designs, as well as yard treatments, shared parking and access arrangements and pedestrian amenities.

The Highland Township Historic Commission has also proven to be a valuable resource in providing historic photographs of buildings in the area. They have also provided many stories and a written history which will be useful in creating the design guidelines.

The HDDA has participated in the Planning Commission meetings regarding the Highland Station micro-area analysis, and continues to participate in developing the regulations and design guidelines.

## **Utilities and Streetscape**

The Township Board has undertaken a feasibility study and master planning effort for sanitary sewer service through select areas of the Township. As part of this effort, the Township has also evaluated the feasibility and cost of providing water service to the Highland Station Area.

The HDDA will take an active role in educating property owners about the cost and benefits of the utility service, and will assist property owners in promoting a Special Assessment District to finance the utility service.

The HDDA will also take the lead role in designing the streetscape and public amenities involved in restoring Livingston Street and Milford Roads upon completion of the utility extensions. The HDDA took the lead role in designing the Township's historic light fixture that is used throughout the Highland Station area as well as a contemporary alternative that is used in other areas within the DDA District. The streetscape will include complementary elements such as benches, waste receptacles and the like. The HDDA also hopes to incorporate a landmark such as an information kiosk with a wayfinding sign system and public art within the final streetscape design. Street trees will be an important component as well.

Pedestrian comfort and safety will be a key issue in streetscape design.

## **Onstreet and Offstreet Parking**

Currently, businesses along Livingston Road provide a combination of onstreet and offstreet parking. The number of parking spaces does not comply with the numbers of parking spaces required by the current zoning ordinance in most cases. There are also issues related to the provision of barrier free parking for some businesses.

The onstreet parking varies from perpendicular parking to somewhat disordered angle parking, and some unauthorized parallel parking. Where parking is provided offstreet, there are few if any interconnections between businesses, and no plan for sharing parking or site access, even when times of peak demand do not coincide.

The proposed streetscape will include some parallel parking for the convenience of customers, and to encourage customers to utilize the storefronts, and not just "backdoor" entrances. However, much of the required parking will be provided by private property owners in rear yard parking lots. The regulations will be written so as to encourage shared parking and integrated site access.

The HDDA does not currently propose to own or operate any public parking. The HDDA will arrange agreements for festival parking as needed with the Township and Huron Valley School District.

## **Signage**

The HDDA also proposes to undertake a program to design and install wayfinding signs along the Milford Road and M-59 corridors in and around the DDA District. The program will include a distinctive sign shape and design, reminiscent of historic railroad depots, and a color coded guide system to lead visitors to such features as the Township Library, Highland Recreation Area, Township Offices, shopping and dining.

A second component of this program will be “image-banner” signs to be mounted from the historic light fixtures. Vinyl banners will be changed from season to season to announce special events, sales promotions, raise awareness of the HDDA or other suitable messages. The banners may be designed to incorporate sponsors names as well.

Signage on private property is also key to developing the overall image of the “small town center.” The HDDA has encouraged the Planning Commission to restrict or eliminate building mounted signage in the Highland Station District, in favor of the “shingle” at the gate or on the porch. The new ordinance will promote “pedestrian scale” signage. The HDDA proposes a grant program to encourage private property owners to replace inappropriate signs. The grant program will be initiated upon completion of the streetscape improvements.

## **Façade Improvements**

Building faces on private property also have a significant impact on the overall image of the “small town center.” There are homes and commercial buildings within the Highland Station Area that are showing signs of neglect—peeling paint, sagging roofs, missing trim, etc. The HDDA proposes a grant program to encourage private property owners to upgrade and renovate their buildings, in accordance with the design guidelines for the Highland Station District. The HDDA would also develop relationships with area architects willing to commit to working within the design guidelines to provide design assistance for interested property owners as part of the grant program. The grant program will be initiated upon completion of the streetscape improvements.

## **Maintenance**

An important element of any visitor’s perceptions of a commercial district is whether public areas are clean and well-maintained. The HDDA plans to coordinate favorable contracts for maintenance activities such as emptying trash receptacles, sweeping streets and sidewalks, snow removal, light maintenance, etc., on the behalf of all interested property owners in the Highland Station area.

## **ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING**

### **Broad Retail, Service & Housing Mix**

One conclusion of the Highland Station Micro-Area Analysis (HSMAA) states “Highland Station is envisioned as a “Small Town Center,” integrating commercial, residential and public uses to create a sense of place and foster a community identity. The vision for Highland Station is to attract a diverse population of residents, businesses and shoppers to this “Small Town Center” to interact with each other and involve them in a vibrant community life.

### **Market Potential**

As people throughout the Southeastern Michigan region continue to seek an improved “quality of lifestyle” environment, Highland is strategically located in the northwestern corner of Oakland County. Proper community planning coupled with local area natural resources can provide the essential underlying elements of a successful quality lifestyle community. In fact, Highland’s unique strength is its existing abundant natural resources, rural character and heritage as an early 19<sup>th</sup> century rail station community. By building a marketing plan around these strengths and supporting development projects that complement these attributes, Highland’s efforts to establish an attractive and unique community identity will be successful.

### **Business Retention/Expansion/Attraction/Recruitment**

The HSMAA concludes that specific block sections will require special new zoning regulations and development guidelines. These efforts will be designed to foster private investment in re-development and revitalization of the entire Highland Station area. Elements include HDDA mini grants to landowners for improvements on existing buildings and signage, private investment projects such as Special Assessment Districts for infrastructure improvements, public and private funding of public pathways and pedestrian linkages.

Highland Township ties to the equestrian community also provide a unique market within our region. The Highland Feed Store and Milford Saddlery have already established a presence within the Highland Station area. The HDDA plans to work with these established businesses and community groups to identify other complementary services that would strengthen the business mix.

The Highland Station House, as a cultural and community resource, also provides a sound anchor for a “Small Town Center.” The HDDA hopes to attract restaurants and other arts minded business pursuits that would serve the people who are served by the HVCA and other community groups.

The HDDA also proposes to acquire and renovate the existing Township Office building at 205 North John Street to use as a small business “incubator”. The HDDA will lease space and provide promotional and organizational support to promising new businesses. The HDDA will

develop objective criteria to evaluate whether an applicant business provides a suitable addition to the market mix for the area. The HDDA will also develop a framework to outline expectations for a business plan that will enable a new business to grow and “graduate” into an independent location within Highland Station. Business applicants will be expected to participate in community life.

### **Financial Incentives/Infrastructure**

In order for Highland to realize its goals for the future, community infrastructure improvements such as water and sewers, etc. in targeted areas will be essential. These improvements will require both public and private funding. The HDDA plans to use proceeds captured from its Tax Increment Financing Program to begin this public/private investment throughout the Highland Station area.

The Highland Township Board of Trustees has designated Highland Township as a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. The State of Michigan offers a variety of tax incentives and grants to encourage redevelopment of properties affected by contamination. The HDDA and Highland Township are prepared to assist property owners with guidance and technical assistance where appropriate to secure available funding.

# **Tax Increment Financing Plan**

## **Overview**

Under the Downtown Development Authority Act (P.A. 197 of 1975), a municipality establish a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) with the power to authorize the levy and collection of taxes, the issuance of bonds and other evidence of indebtedness, and the use of tax increment financing in order to pursue its duties and mission to encourage economic development of the downtown district.

Tax increment revenue is created when the assessed value of a property exceeds the initial assessed value of that property at the base year. That portion of the property tax attributable to the increased value of the property is “captured” by (directed to) the tax increment financing authority.

Highland Township established its DDA by adoption of Ordinance No. 418 in October, 2000. Whereas Oakland County exercised its ability to “opt out” of Tax Increment Financing at that time, Highland Township did proceed to establish a tax increment plan to finance the operations of the HDDA. The base year for the purpose of the Tax Increment Finance plan is 2001. The assessed value for the base year is \$22,177,990.

This revised Tax Increment Financing Plan provides a proposal for Oakland County to participate in financing the Development Plan for the Highland Township Downtown Development District, thereby investing in our vision of a unique small town atmosphere quite different than what other Oakland County communities can offer.

The HDDA has completed considerable groundwork over the last several years to demonstrate our commitment to build capacity, strengthen community “buy-in” to the vision, and develop a pro-active leadership structure to promote success. When Oakland County agrees to participate in the Tax Increment Financing Plan for Highland Township, they will be entering a partnership with a group who has demonstrated their readiness to build and reinvent a community—not just bricks and mortar projects.

## **Tax Increment Procedure**

Tax increment revenue is transferred to the HDDA when the current value of all properties within the DDA District exceed the initial assessed value of the properties. The initial assessed value is based on the 2001 property tax rolls, based on implementation of an earlier TIF plan. The assessed value includes real and personal property. That assessed value in excess of the initial assessed value is defined as “captured assessed value”. The tax increment revenue is calculated by applying the total tax levy of all participating taxing units to the captured assessed value.

Tax increment values can be used as they accrue annually, can be held to accumulate amounts necessary to implement projects described in the Development Plan, or can be pledged for debt services on tax increment bonds issued by the Township.

When bonds are sold, the Township may not pledge more for annual debt service than 80 percent of the estimated tax increment revenue to be received from the DDA District for that year. Should tax increment revenues fall below projections, any previously accumulated revenue, in excess of current operating expenses, would be devoted to retirement of the bonds. Any tax increment revenues collected in excess of 80 percent of the projected revenues will be used to pay current debt service, operating expenses, and provide for payment by deposit into an improvement fund which will pay for such projects as façade and signage mini-grants, banners and street lights as described in the Development Plan.

All bonds are subject to the Michigan Municipal Finance Act and may not mature in more than thirty years. If the tax increment revenues are insufficient for any reason, the Michigan Municipal Finance Act provides that the Township must meet the debt service requirement as a first budget obligation of the general fund.

The HDDA may expend tax increment revenues only in accordance with this Tax Increment Financing Plan. Surplus revenues revert proportionately to the respective taxing jurisdictions. This Tax Increment Financing Plan may be modified upon approval of the Township Board of Trustees after notification and hearings as required by Act 197. When the Township Board of Trustees finds that the purposes for which this Plan was established have been accomplished, they may abolish this plan.



## **Tax Increment Financing Area**

The area selected to incorporate tax increment financing shall include the entire DDA District, as previously described in the Development Plan.

## **Bonded Indebtedness to be Incurred**

The HDDA intends to incur bonded indebtedness to finance future projects within the Development Area. The initial bond sale will cover the costs of streetscape improvements for Livingston Road. Future bond sales are anticipated to cover streetscape improvements along Milford Road. Other projects identified within the Development Plan will be implemented as funds are available on a “pay as you go” basis.

## **Duration of the Program**

For the purposes of this program, the initial assessed value of all real and personal property for the original boundaries will be taken as of December 31, 2000 with a 2001 base year. The duration of this plan is a period of twenty-five years ending in 2028, with taxes collected in 2029 unless otherwise amended to extend or shorten its duration.

## **Estimated Impact on Taxing Jurisdictions**

The taxing units affected by this Tax Increment Financing Plan and their 2003 millage rates are as follows:

<b>Taxing Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Projected Captured Millage Rate</b>
Highland Township Operating Millage	0.6000
Highland Township Police and Fire Millages	3.7802
Highland Township Library	1.2912
Oakland County	4.6523
Oakland Community College	1.6090

Highland Township also levies 0.6800 mills for library debt retirement that will not be captured by the HDDA. Millages specifically levied for debt retirement are considered ineligible for capture.

The HDDA proposes that all of the eligible taxes levied by these jurisdictions on the captured assessed value with the DDA District be used by the Authority to the extent needed from year to year to accomplish the purposes of this Tax Increment Financing Plan.

Taxing jurisdictions will be affected to the extent that they will forego revenues that might otherwise accrue from increases in the taxable value of the properties within the DDA District. Table 4 provides an estimate of the potential tax revenue captured from each of the taxing jurisdictions over the life of this plan.

Upon expiration of this tax increment financing plan, all taxing jurisdictions will benefit substantially from new private development and reinvestment in the Development Area, and from a tax base that has been stabilized and enhanced as a result of the public improvement program.

### **Plan for use of Tax Increment Revenues**

Table 4 shows projected increases in property values over the next 25 years. For 2004, the growth estimate includes value of projects currently under construction. For the following years, the projected rate of increase in taxable value is estimated at 7% per year, which includes factors for appreciation in the District due to both inflation and new investments, based on a build-out analysis. Both real and personal property assessments are included in the taxable value projections. Table 4 also includes an estimate of tax revenues accruing to the HDDA.

Additional increases in the assessed valuation of the DDA District may result from other new construction, expansion, rehabilitation or further appreciation of property values in excess of the projections. These increases are beyond those projected in this Plan, but if such increases result, the tax increment revenues will be spent according to this Plan to further enhance the development area.

Should the tax increment revenues be less than those projected under this Plan, the available funds will be used to complete those projects that the HDDA and Township Board determine are most beneficial and best meet the goals and objectives of the Development Plan and adjust the priorities accordingly.

The program and schedule for the expenditure of the tax increment revenues is outlined in Table 5. Cost estimates shown are expressed in current dollars. These estimates are based solely upon concepts and have not been developed from engineered construction drawings. Stated cost estimates do include project planning expenses such as the survey and design costs and some contingencies.

The HDDA will review the projected revenues and proposed expenditures on an annual basis to prioritize the use of any additional funds. Other public improvements which would further completion of the Development Plan may be funded by the HDDA.

Table 6 includes a summary of the annual projected budget for the HDDA.