

HISTORIC HIGHLAND STATION
MASTER PLAN OF 2008



March, 2008

Prepared for
Highland Downtown Development Authority
Highland Township, Michigan

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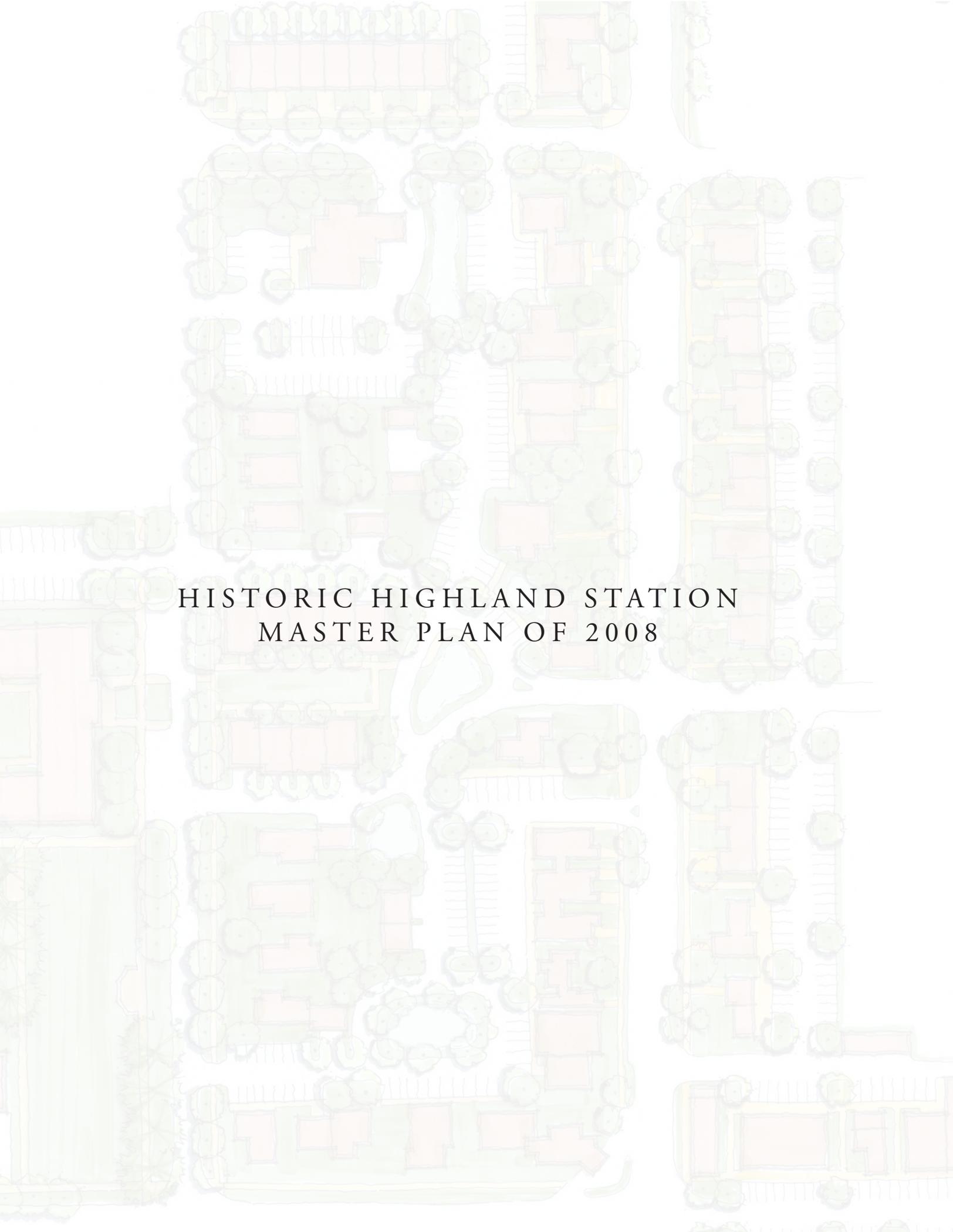
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HISTORIC HIGHLAND STATION
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The corner of Milford and Livingston Road, with the Asa Smith Mobil Gas Filling Station and the Needham Building

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Highland House Hotel (top) is now Highland Feed & Supply (bottom)



The south side of East Livingston Road at St. John Street

PROLOGUE

HIGHLAND STATION HAS BEEN QUIETLY WAITING FOR DECADES AS STRIP MALLS AND PARKING LOTS HAVE ENCROACHED ON ALL SIDES. ITS UNDERSTATED HOMES HAVE RETAINED THEIR CENTURY-OLD CHARACTER. THE CENTURY-OLD STORE HAS FOUND NEW USEFULNESS AND THE HOTEL IS A FEED STORE WHERE PEOPLE GATHER ON SATURDAY MORNINGS TO EAT COOKIES AND TALK. GRAVEL STREETS ARE SHELTERED BY A CANOPY OF TREES AND LAWNS WEAVE BETWEEN THE WIDELY SPACED BUILDINGS. JUST PAST THE RAILROAD TRACKS IS AN EXPANSE OF NATURE LACED BY TRAILS POPULAR WITH HORSEBACK RIDERS AND MOUNTAIN BIKERS. THIS IS AN UNFUSSY PLACE WITH SIMPLE LINES AND A CASUAL, RURAL ATMOSPHERE. IT IS A TRICK OF FATE—THE LACK OF PUBLIC SEWERS—THAT HAS KEPT HIGHLAND STATION IN WAIT, AND THAT HAS GIVEN THE PEOPLE A CHANCE TO WATCH PROGRESS, BOTH GOOD AND BAD. WITH THAT PERSPECTIVE, THEY HAVE CHOSEN TO PLAN THEIR EVOLUTION WITH FORESIGHT—AND MAYBE WITH HINDSIGHT AS WELL.

INTRODUCTION

Some towns are swept along as wave after wave of new development builds their economy but erases their history. Strip malls replace store fronts and country roads widen into highways. With no time to plan a strategy, these towns have no recourse when change is imposed rather than invited. The result is often a town indistinguishable from the rest of suburban America: a faceless, place-less Stripmallville.



Sometimes fate interferes and development doesn't occur. A highway bypasses a community and development stalls. Soils prove difficult to build on, sometimes precluding large structures. Or, like Highland Station, a lack of sewers means that more land is needed for each building to have a septic system. This requirement has kept densities low for the past quarter-century while nearby areas grew rapidly. Even though Highland Station sits near the intersection of two major routes, Highway M-59 and Milford Road, it has remained quiet and mostly residential. This has eroded the commercial core of the community and challenged the local economy, but it has also given Highland Station a chance to see what is coming and prepare.



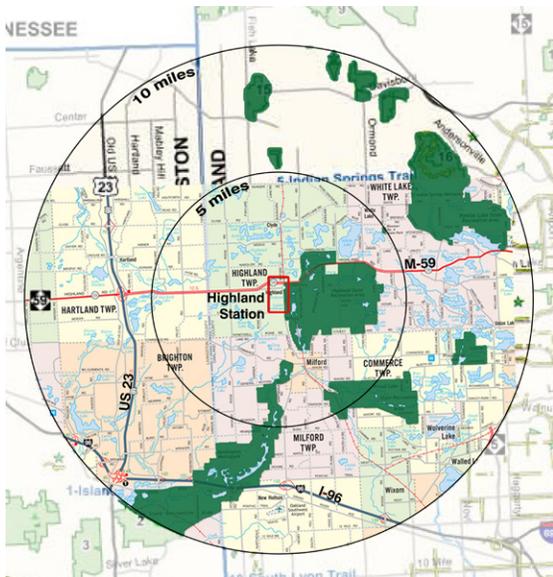
West Livingston Road in the early 1900s (top) and 2007 (bottom)

Today, Highland Station is a charming hamlet of mostly residential structures, many of them built more than a century ago. Several early commercial buildings still stand, although many have additions or modifications that mask their history. The downtown feels relaxed and close to its natural surroundings, with wide lawns between buildings, shifting setbacks from the road to the structures, and homes mixed between stores and offices. Gravel roads make up most of the secondary streets and sidewalks appear and disappear. People gather at the feed store and come from miles around to buy groceries and watch the ducks at the market. It doesn't look or feel like the more formal Milford to the south or the endless parking-lot-fronted malls along M-59. It looks and feels like Highland Station.

Sewers are coming to Highland Station soon, and with them, change. This is tremendous opportunity: the community can foresee growth and shape it to generate a new economy, create vibrant places, and preserve its character. Done well, new development will make Highland Station more walkable and bring goods and services residents need. Increased resources will make civic projects possible. New residents will be attracted by the amenities and peace of hamlet life. Building from its close proximity to the Highland Recreation Area and its location in the midst of horse country, the town can become more attractive to visitors seeking healthy outdoor recreation. With preparation, Highland Station will remain a unique and appealing place to live, work, and visit.



Homes, barns, businesses, and civic structures casually cluster into Highland Station.



Plans are in place to further connect Highland Station to Oakland County's rich park and trail system. The trails shown at top are proposed.

The first step in planning for the future is understanding current conditions. This is not just about analyzing individual buildings, counting cars, or identifying trees, although those things should be considered. It is about digging into what makes Highland Station feel like a unique place. How does the town's location affect its appearance? How do its buildings work together to give it character? How does the landscape create an experience for residents and visitors? The Design Team and residents have worked for months to find the words and images that define Highland Station.

Highland Station doesn't exist in a vacuum. Its spatial and temporal context has implications for the kinds of businesses it attracts and the structure of its landscape. The town came into being because of the need for a depot at a high point along the railroad. That depot was located near the intersection of East Livingston Road and the tracks. The oldest parts of the town lie around that intersection, with historic commercial and civic buildings spreading down Livingston towards Milford Road. Today, most traffic through town is moving along M-59 or down Milford Road, so newer commercial buildings have grown up near those thoroughfares. Because these areas were already residential when M-59 and Milford Road became important roads, commercial, residential, and civic buildings are mixed together throughout the town.

Additionally, Highland Station has been influenced by the surrounding rural landscape. There is one horse for every 25 people in Highland Township and horses have been an important part of the town's culture for decades. Integrating equestrian activities into the fabric of the town is a priority for many residents. The popular Highland Recreation Area and Dodge 10 Park are located just east of town and attract equestrians, mountain bikers, and other nature enthusiasts. The new Highland Oaks County Park will be opening in the fall of 2007. New businesses have moved into Highland Station to serve these visitors. Nature seems to have seeped into the town, both physically, with trees, lawns, and gardens, and culturally, with a sense of environmental stewardship.

These influences have created the place that people recognize as Highland Station. It has a distinct character formed by a combination of unique elements and intangible circumstances. In order to be sure that new designs build from the character of this place, it is necessary to first recognize Highland Station's character-defining features...

... its *landscape*, with trees visible over rooftops, the closeness of real and expansive nature, and the looseness of the introduced landscape...

... its *architecture*, one that finds a real beauty in its simplicity and its utility...

... the *spacing and density* of its buildings, with a certain imprecision in the ways they have been placed on their sites, and where the spaces between become as important—maybe more important—than the buildings themselves...

... its *scale*, where significant structures only subtly dominate their neighbors, and significantly, where the landscape is left to dominate buildings...

... its *walkability*, and its compactness, that allow people the real option of walking—the best way to appreciate the real character of the place...

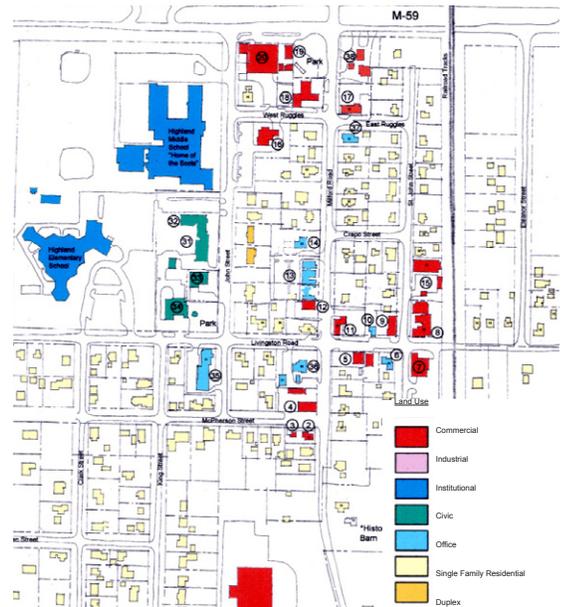
... its *neighborhoods*, which so closely surround the historic crossroads that homes and businesses are sometimes indistinguishable...

... its *sense of the casual and simple*, recognizing that the Highland Station that people seem to cherish is not fancy, not overly designed, and not elaborated or fussy...

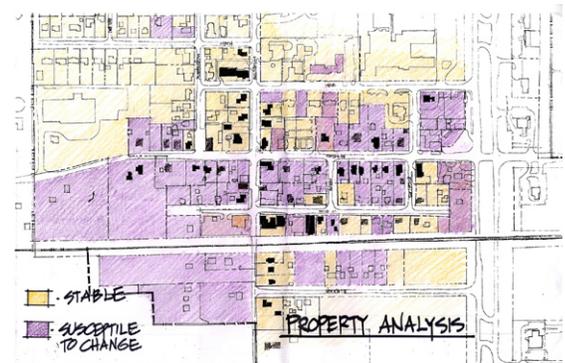
... its *closeness*, which allows people to recognize one another from across the street, and the ways that proximity creates engagement...

Seeing these features as the building blocks that begin to shape the feeling of this place will help determine what is needed to keep that feeling intact. Understanding what feels right to a place is at least as important as creating ordinances because it allows all stakeholders to think critically about each independent project while remaining in touch with the larger goals of the community. It is less definitive than numbers, but more likely to really get at what matters to people as they think about their community.

It is also necessary to design a process that allows stakeholders an active role, one that places emphasis on exploration and discovery, not presentation and reaction, and one that forges a bond with the community's vision and Highland Station's character-defining features. Residents, business owners, city officials, and other stakeholders have been working in just such a process for months to develop a working definition for their vision and then develop a Master Plan from that basis.



A study of Highland Station's buildings shows how land uses are closely intermixed.



Obsolescence, non-conforming use, historic value, interest of the owner in selling, and other factors make some lots susceptible to change in the next five years.

Facing these challenges and opportunities, the people of Highland Station have framed a vision for what their hamlet should be. Over the course of several meetings and workshops, they explored which of the town's features should be enhanced because they make this a special place and which problems needed to be addressed in order to improve the town's function and beauty. This visioning process is important because it provides criteria for judging the value of new plans. Plans that support the vision deserve the support of the community. The community's vision provides a foundation for all other planning by revealing the intent of stakeholders. It's also a goal in itself: eventually, the vision should be the image evoked when one thinks of Highland Station.



Coming into town after a day of horseback riding in Highland Recreation Area, one strolls by a bed and breakfast above a feed store, past an outdoor gear shop in a renovated historic commercial building, and stops to talk to friends eating ice cream in front of a cider mill. Historic homes, with simple lines and fresh paint, hold offices, galleries, and small shops, all tucked under a canopy of trees and lit by the glow of porch lights. Lawns, gardens, and paths lead between the buildings, giving each room to breathe and blanketing the town with a sense of nature.

The vision for Highland Station highlights several goals and ideals for the community:



An HDDA board person discusses the plans with a local family (top). Township staff and residents share ideas with the Design Team (bottom).

- Highland Station should be a charming modern hamlet. This place has a casual, small-town sensibility. Its streets and buildings form a recognizable place with the appeal of a place with history. It is the kind of town where neighbors know one another and keep an eye out for each others' children.
- It should preserve its attractive historical homes. These simple structures have "good bones" and speak to the practical, rural history of this place.
- Highland Station should retain and attract vibrant small businesses. Being able to walk to a friend's store to buy daily necessities and attracting visitors to stores that cater to recreational customers will encourage a growing economy and an enhanced sense of community.
- Amenities should be available that encourage a healthy lifestyle for all ages. Sidewalks and trails that connect destinations throughout the town would allow people to walk and bike more often and recreational areas would support an active lifestyle.

- Highland Station should be a center of the community. There should be places to gather and hold festivals, concerts, events, and meetings. It should also be a source for goods and services needed by people from around the area.
- Because of its proximity to Highland Recreation Area, Highland Station should be a regional destination for those seeking recreational activities. It should offer goods and services, as well as an atmosphere, that appeals to park users.
- The community should promote health, fitness, and appreciation for the natural environment. This includes integrating horses, bikes, and other outdoor activities into the fabric of the town. It also means highlighting ecologically healthy practices as part of an effort to see that the health of citizens, the community, and the environment are interlinked.
- Highland Station is a place that should encourage the expression and enjoyment of the arts. Galleries, concerts, outdoor art displays, and activities like art fairs should contribute to a community-wide appreciation for arts of all kinds.
- Highland Station should be the western gateway to Oakland County. It should introduce the county and act as a trailhead for its many parks and other amenities.
- Downtown should be an oasis from the intense auto traffic on M-59. There should be safe routes for pedestrians and cars to cross the highway, but in downtown, the highway should feel far away. Noise and views should be filtered out as one comes into Highland Station and the pace should slow.

These goals and ideals were generated during a series of meetings over many months. As the Master Plan was developed, the Design Team worked to make them an integral part of each element of the plan. Community members frequently stopped by to contribute ideas for developing these goals into more concrete projects and checked to see that the final plan would fit with their underlying sense of the community's direction. The Master Plan literally maps out how these goals can be expressed in the physical development of the town. It is not a building plan nor does it offer final decisions about implementation, but it is the first step to creating criteria that can be used to shape future projects.



Residents explore the results of the three-day charrette at a meeting on the last night



A PLAN FOR HIGHLAND STATION

THE VISION FOR HIGHLAND STATION IS COMPELLING, THE CHALLENGE IS TO BRING IT TO LIFE. HOW WILL “CHARM” BE EXPRESSED IN THE PATTERN OF BUILDINGS ALONG A STREET? WHAT DOES “HEALTHY” LOOK LIKE IN A PARKING LOT? CAN “RURAL” OR “ACTIVE” BE BUILT? AT EVERY LEVEL, THE VISION MUST BE INCORPORATED INTO A PLAN SO THAT THE VALUES OF THE COMMUNITY ARE MADE VISIBLE. TAKING THE BROADEST VIEW, A PATTERN OF USE AND STYLE ARE FORGED, CONNECTIONS ARE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE ELEMENTS OF THAT PATTERN, AND INFRASTRUCTURE IS LOCATED TO SUPPORT THOSE ELEMENTS. IN A PRACTICAL SENSE THIS LEVEL OF EXPLORATION PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR MORE DETAILED DECISIONS. IT ALSO BEGINS TO LITERALLY GROUND THE VISION—MAKING IT A PART OF THE TOWNSCAPE.

A FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHLAND STATION

Many community land planning efforts focus exclusively on use and scale. Comprehensive plans, zoning maps, and so on determine what kinds of businesses or homes belong in which part of a city. Ordinances outline building sizes and setbacks from lot lines. Unfortunately, “use” is not what people experience on their way to work and “size” is only part of what they see as they walk to the park. In Highland Station, the goal is to maintain the feel of a small, rural community even as uses change. The Framework Plan establishes patterns based on both use and style. This assures that activities are focused into certain areas in a beneficial way and styles remain stable so that the town’s character is maintained.

The design team identified several distinct combinations of use and style:

- Commercial Style, Commercial Use (CSCU) includes retail and service-oriented businesses located in buildings that have a recognizably commercial form. For instance, the carpet store on Milford Road is CSCU.
- Residential Style, Commercial Use (RSCU) allows existing homes to be renovated for the use of mostly service-oriented businesses and new buildings that resemble homes to be built for retail and office businesses. R. J. Miller’s accounting office on East Livingston Road is an example of RSCU.
- Civic includes township buildings, police facilities, the fire station, and so on.
- Special Style, Special Use (SSSU) is a bit of catch-all but is meant to accommodate the kinds of unique circumstances that are part of Highland Station’s casual atmosphere. The use of the former church for a day care is an example of SSSU.
- Highland Station Commercial (HSC) refers to commercial uses oriented towards M-59 or where larger sites suggest greater parking intensity. While they will have a style distinct from that within Highland Station, they should still refer to the town’s spirit and differentiate themselves from other developments along the highway. Although it is not directly adjacent to M-59, the credit union is an example of HC.
- Residential (RES) refers to single- and multi-family homes.

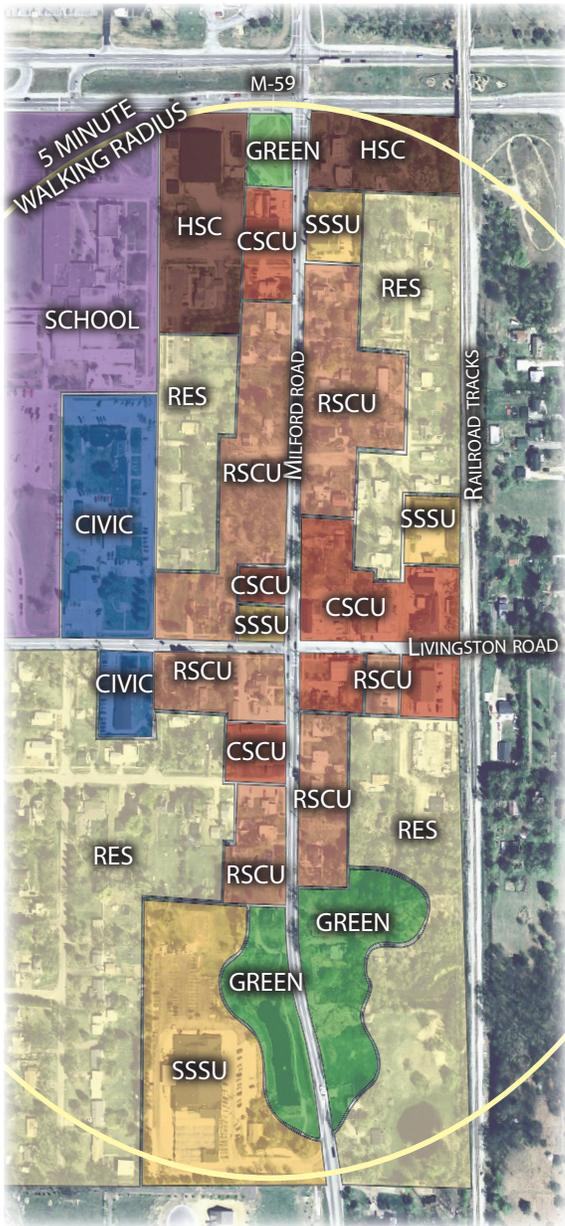


Fig. 1: The Framework Style of Use Plan derives new patterns for Highland Station from existing conditions--preserving form and character.

The Framework Style of Use Plan (Figure 1) suggests focusing CSCUs along East Livingston Road from Milford Road to the railroad. This area historically had these kind of styles and uses and remnants (the department store that is now a skateboard shop, the town hall which is now used for car repair, and the hotel which holds the feed store) are still intact. This area will have enough visibility from Milford Road to draw visitors but will focus pedestrian activity on the quieter,

safer road. Along Milford Road itself, there is currently a mix of CSCUs and RSCUs. New construction on this road should be primarily RSCU and an effort should be made to reuse existing homes. By encouraging RSCUs, there will still be a hometown atmosphere as one drives through Highland Station. Also, people can comfortably remain in their homes even after commercial uses begin moving in next door. Civic uses should stay in their current location west of John Street. Keeping these functions within easy walking distance of the town's center helps residents, businesses, and township activities stay connected. SSSUs can be scattered throughout the town wherever circumstances suggest, as long as they contribute to the character of the surroundings and, especially, to the character of their immediate neighbor.

A variety of streets and sidewalks connect the different parts of Highland Station. Milford Road has a distinct character, with different sidewalks, boulevards, parking arrangements, and lane configurations from other roads. It even changes along its length as it passes into and through Highland Station and intersects M-59. Livingston Road also has a distinct form and is different east and west of Milford Road. Secondary roads, such as St. John or Governor Crapo, can be considered in groups depending on adjacent styles of use (civic versus residential). Allowing the structure of these streets to be based on the needs of users will be in keeping with Highland Station's sense of practicality. Streets with more traffic and pedestrians may need to be paved and have sidewalks, lighting, and street trees. Quiet residential streets may be fine as gravel roads.

Relocating utilities and creating other new infrastructure will be necessary to support increased commercial uses and improve the function of existing areas. Clustering utilities in the middle of blocks, behind buildings, is an efficient way to serve many buildings within a limited easement and prevents utilities from becoming obtrusive. Running power lines, sewer pipes, and other utilities above and below parking lots keeps them accessible but out of view. Aggregating parking behind buildings, especially along Milford Road, will also ease congestion by controlling access points and improve the visibility of homes and businesses. It is also important to consider how stormwater will be managed as new structures and parking areas increase the impervious surfaces in Highland Station. Incorporating raingardens, which clean and infiltrate water, can create "parking gardens" with attractive landscaping. They would humanize the experience of walking among parked cars by breaking up views of parking stalls with spots of color and offering shade on pavement. And, just as important perhaps, Highland Station's sense of healthy living would be extended to the basic necessities of its evolving economy. This is just one of several stormwater management best practices that might be considered.

Together these three Framework Plans begin to illustrate how the vision for Highland Station will appear throughout the town. It helps the community understand how character can be maintained while the economy grows. It should not be seen as a static thing, however. Like many other elements of the overall Master Plan, these are things that will be refined as new guidelines and ordinances are created to guide the evolution of Highland Station as projects are created to breathe life into Highland Station's vision.



Stormwater management opportunities should be explored to help improve hydraulic functions such as infiltration, frequency, volume discharge, and groundwater recharge. Alternative stormwater management practices may include, but should not be limited to, functional landscape and grading, open drainage swales, bioretention, filtration areas, increased runoff travel time, and depression storage. Techniques should be practiced throughout the site on a micro storage level as many small scale efforts.

For more information, refer to:

*www.raingardens.org
www.mmsd.com/raingardens
www.raingardennetwork.com
www.rapidgrowthmedia.com/features/sustain5907.aspx
www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/raingarden_design/download.htm*

A MASTER PLAN INITIATIVE FOR HISTORIC HIGHLAND STATION

While the Framework Plan deals with overall patterns and connections, the Master Plan explores how these take shape in streets, buildings, parks, and paths. Since the goal is to keep the feel of a quiet hamlet, the plan proposes to build on the structure and character already present. While significant changes are shown, they would happen gradually as opportunities present themselves. The plan suggests what form changes could take as land becomes available. Because of this approach, each area presents unique opportunities, which are outlined in the following chapters. However, some general trends are present throughout the plan.

An increase in density is anticipated throughout Highland Station, but new businesses and houses should fit the informal, rural patterns that are intrinsic to Highland Station's charm. In RSCU areas, additions to existing homes and new buildings should be built with the clean, residential lines typical to the town. In CSCU areas, buildings should be consistent with traditional commercial building styles, with large front windows and doors. Lawns and gardens at least 10 feet wide should be maintained between buildings in order to avoid firewall requirements and create a sense of openness. Ideally these spaces would be irregular, however, so lawns wider than 10 feet should be encouraged. Ultimately, these spaces between buildings might become more cherished than the buildings themselves.



A sketch of a Highland Station streetscape

In order to avoid views of large parking areas, parking should be arranged along the back of commercial use lots. It will be safer and more efficient to limit driveways onto Milford Road and access these spaces from cross streets. The lawns and gardens between buildings will provide routes for customers to walk from parking areas to front doors. Breaking up parking lots with raingardens and other stormwater management systems will help with the practical and aesthetic challenges presented by both parking and stormwater. Threads of green lawn and raingardens should weave throughout the downtown.

A wider variety of housing options would be benefit Highland Station by inviting new residents who are looking for a small town atmosphere and convenient access to recreational areas and major roads. Cottages on narrow lots, townhomes, rowhomes, apartments above shops, and other forms of housing should be mixed with existing homes. These homes should have a scale and style appropriate to their neighborhood.

These trends take on some more specific forms as they are applied to different parts of downtown. Milford Road explores the many challenges of taming a busy street while maintaining its residential character. Livingston Road illustrates how a commercial district can become a vibrant retail core for the town. In the Township Center area there is an opportunity to create a civic core for Highland Station. Extending Governor Crapo Street to John Street in the form of an alley or lane would further interconnect this civic core. Connecting to M-59 requires consideration of access, crossings, and a sense of entrance into Highland Station. A green gateway along Milford Road, south of downtown, will establish the boundary of Highland Station and communicate its rural character.



The Master Plan shows how new roads, buildings, sidewalks, open spaces, and parking lots can be developed to fulfill the goals of the Highland Station Vision and Framework Plans.



*East Livingston Road has long been a commercial center for Highland Station.
Top photo: northeast corner of E. Livingston/Milford Rd., looking east.
Bottom photo: Highland Feed Store on E. Livingston looking east*

EAST LIVINGSTON ROAD

HISTORICALLY EAST LIVINGSTON ROAD HAS FORMED THE COMMERCIAL AND CIVIC CORE OF HIGHLAND STATION. THE TOWN HALL, GENERAL STORE, AND HOTEL ANCHORED THE STREET AND THESE BUILDINGS STILL EXIST, THOUGH THEY HAVE FOUND NEW LIVES WITH DIFFERENT OCCUPANTS. EAST LIVINGSTON IS STILL WELL-POSITIONED TO ATTRACT SHOPPERS TO TOWN. SHOPS WITH INVITING STOREFRONTS, AND CAFES WITH OUTDOOR DINING, SAFE SIDEWALKS AND CROSS WALKS, POCKET GARDENS, PATHS BETWEEN BUILDINGS, AND AMPLE PARKING WILL ENCOURAGE STREET LIFE. RESTORING HISTORICAL BUILDINGS FOR COMMERCIAL USES WILL GIVE THE STREET A SENSE OF CHARACTER AND NEW COMPLEMENTARY COMMERCIAL-STYLE BUILDINGS CAN FILL IN GAPS IN THE STREETScape.

EAST LIVINGSTON ROAD

Imagine driving home from work on Milford Road. As you come into Highland Station, you pass homes and offices sheltered beneath a canopy of trees. Ahead you notice a simple, old-fashioned store front—the Needham Building—with light pouring out its large front windows. As you get closer, more shops appear and you see that people are chatting on sidewalks that pass under second-story decks and eating in outdoor cafes. A restaurant, outdoor gear shop, horse tack shop, gallery, antique store, boutique, and other shops are scattered down the street, separated by lawns and garden paths. You pull out of rush hour traffic and onto Livingston Road.



A plan for East Livingston Road from Milford Road to the railroad tracks

East Livingston Road is the logical location for Highland Station’s retail core. It is visible and accessible from Milford Road, but is quieter and safer for pedestrians. It already features buildings with historical commercial significance and several successful shops. Visitors from the Highland Recreation Area use it to enter town and it links the Township buildings and homes on the west side of Milford Road. In order to make it successful, however, it should become a unified and attractive district.

Most of the buildings along Livingston should have a traditional commercial style that is consistent with buildings like the Feed Store. The Needham building, town hall, Meck building, and Jensen Building could be restored to their historical appearances. New buildings with a similar style could fill in spaces between existing structures, such as the gravel parking lot between the Needham and Meck buildings. Parking lots should be located behind the buildings and some 90-degree head-in parking spaces should remain along the street. This is preferable to angled or parallel parking along Livingston because most traffic will come from the west and 90-degree parking is the only type that allows that traffic to easily park on either side of the road.



A section through the front yard of a commercial building shows how porch lights and poles can light sidewalks.

Wide sidewalks on both sides of the road will encourage pedestrian access. The experience of walking beneath a canopy is appealing, so balconies could be built over the sidewalks on some buildings. Large storefront windows and glass doors allow pedestrians to see into stores and make the walk more interesting. Lawns and pocket gardens between buildings present opportunities for outdoor dining, sculpture display, or rest and provide access to back parking areas. Lighting the street is important, but lighting that is too bright or formal will interfere with character of the street. Porch lights, lit signs, some low pole lights, and the light coming from within the shops will be adequate pedestrian lighting. Larger overhead lights marking intersections should remain for safety and because they suggest a rural style of road.

Several buildings present special opportunities for the community. The Highland Feed Store is already an important center for the town. Eventually, it could also feature a bed & breakfast on the second floor. Genson’s building could be renovated to serve as a cider mill or restaurant with outdoor dining. Attracting other interesting businesses that serve residents and visitors from the recreation area will make Livingston Road a shopping area with a unique small-town character.



NORTH SIDE OF EAST LIVINGSTON ROAD



SOUTH SIDE OF EAST LIVINGSTON ROAD



Elevations of buildings of the north (top image) and south (middle image) sides of East Livingston Road show how restored historical buildings and new commercial buildings (in brown) combine to form an interesting streetscape from Milford Road to the railroad tracks. A view east down Livingston Road (bottom image).



An elevation of the east side of Milford Road from Ruggles to Governor Crapo Street shows new Residential Style Commercial Use structures and additions in brown.

MILFORD ROAD

MILFORD ROAD HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN THE MAIN ROUTE THROUGH HIGHLAND STATION. WHEN THE RAILROAD WAS THE CENTRAL FEATURE OF TOWN, MILFORD ROAD WAS SIMPLY A WIDE RESIDENTIAL STREET LINED WITH STICK-BUILT HOMES. THAT CHARACTER REMAINS MOSTLY INTACT TODAY. HOWEVER, MILFORD ROAD IS NOW THE MAIN NORTH-SOUTH ROUTE THROUGH WESTERN OAKLAND COUNTY. IT MAKES HIGHLAND STATION VERY VISIBLE AND ATTRACTIVE TO BUSINESSES. IT IS ALSO NOISY AND CAN BE DIFFICULT TO CROSS SAFELY. AS HIGHLAND STATION MAKES CHANGES TO ITS INFRASTRUCTURE AND DENSITIES INCREASE, IT IS CRITICAL TO CAREFULLY PLAN THE LAYOUT OF MILFORD ROAD. SIDEWALKS, BOULEVARDS, PARKING, DRIVE LANES, UTILITIES, INTERSECTIONS, AND DRIVEWAYS MUST ALL BE COORDINATED TO FUNCTION PROPERLY WHILE MAINTAINING A HIGHLAND STATION AESTHETIC.

MILFORD ROAD



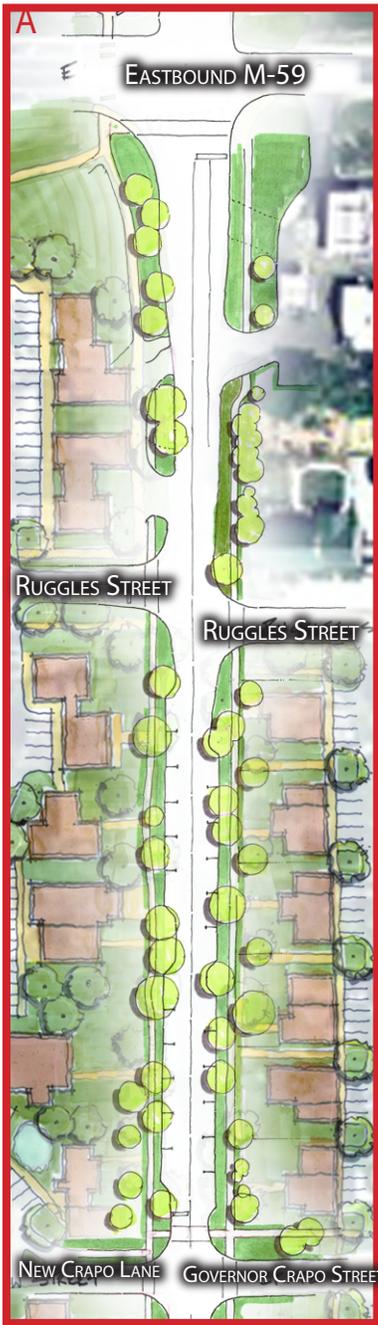
Looking across Milford Road towards East Livingston Road shows the effect of removing overhead data lines.

Milford Road is like a river which brings resources to Highland Station's core but whose swiftly moving current divides one side of town from the other. Finding the right balance of speed, access, and safety will ensure that Milford Road is an asset for the community rather than a hindrance. Milford Road is the perspective from which many people see Highland Station, so it is critically important to maintain its casual residential character while ensuring that it functions well. Since it is not possible to control the volume of traffic travelling on Milford Road, it is necessary to make it behave properly. A variety of elements can work together to both maintain the road's character and control traffic behavior.

The green gateway formed by Colasanti's Market and the wetland at the south end of town provides a logical starting point for beginning changes to the streetscape. As drivers come up the hill, they should have a sense of entering town. Crosswalks, sidewalks, and signage that announce one's arrival in Highland Station should begin at that point. Ideally, these elements combined with increased activity will slow traffic to a steady 25 miles per hour.

The road section from Colasanti's to McPherson Road should remain as it is now, except perhaps the travel lanes can be narrowed slightly by moving the fog line in one foot to reduce the perceived width of the road as a traffic calming measure. Also in this area, the sidewalk can be a widened shoulder with a stripe, color, and pavement type that differentiates it from the road. When topography allows, the sidewalk can move away from the road and a green boulevard can run adjacent to the street. Along the entire length of Milford Road, it is appropriate for the sidewalk to move relative to the street—even out of the right-of-way, if necessary—to accommodate parking, street trees, buildings, and so forth. A casual sidewalk pattern, as long as a complete connection is maintained, will communicate the easy atmosphere of the town.

From McPherson Road to Livingston Road, some curb cuts will have to remain, but they should be controlled and limited as shown in the illustration of the existing Carpet Classics store on page 25. No on-street parking should occur in this block. At the intersection with Livingston Road, left-turn lanes are now maintained to keep traffic moving smoothly. Turns at secondary roads may become necessary as private driveways are eliminated, but all measures should be taken to avoid a center turn lane that runs the entire length of Milford Road through Highland Station. As plans move forward, it is important to establish different road cross sections and character types which relate to the building types and uses. This will add variety to travel experience through town and maintain Highland Station's casual appearance.



A plan for Milford Road (starting at the north on the left) shows parking and lane layouts that change along the road's length depending on the requirements of each portion of road. Street trees and sidewalks form a casual pattern much as they do now.

Key

North of Livingston, some stretches of Milford Road might accommodate parallel parking. Parking in front of commercial buildings creates perceived accessibility that helps businesses succeed, even though most customers will probably find it more efficient to use the back parking areas. Parallel parking also adds to the sense of activity, helping slow traffic. Using a different paving type for parallel parking areas and having grassy bump-outs along the road's length will help visually narrow the road. Between Livingston Road and Governor Crapo Street, the goal should be to omit all curb cuts, although one on each side of the Road may be necessary. This block would have on-street parallel parking with the sidewalk adjacent to the parking in some areas and with boulevards between the parking and sidewalk in others.



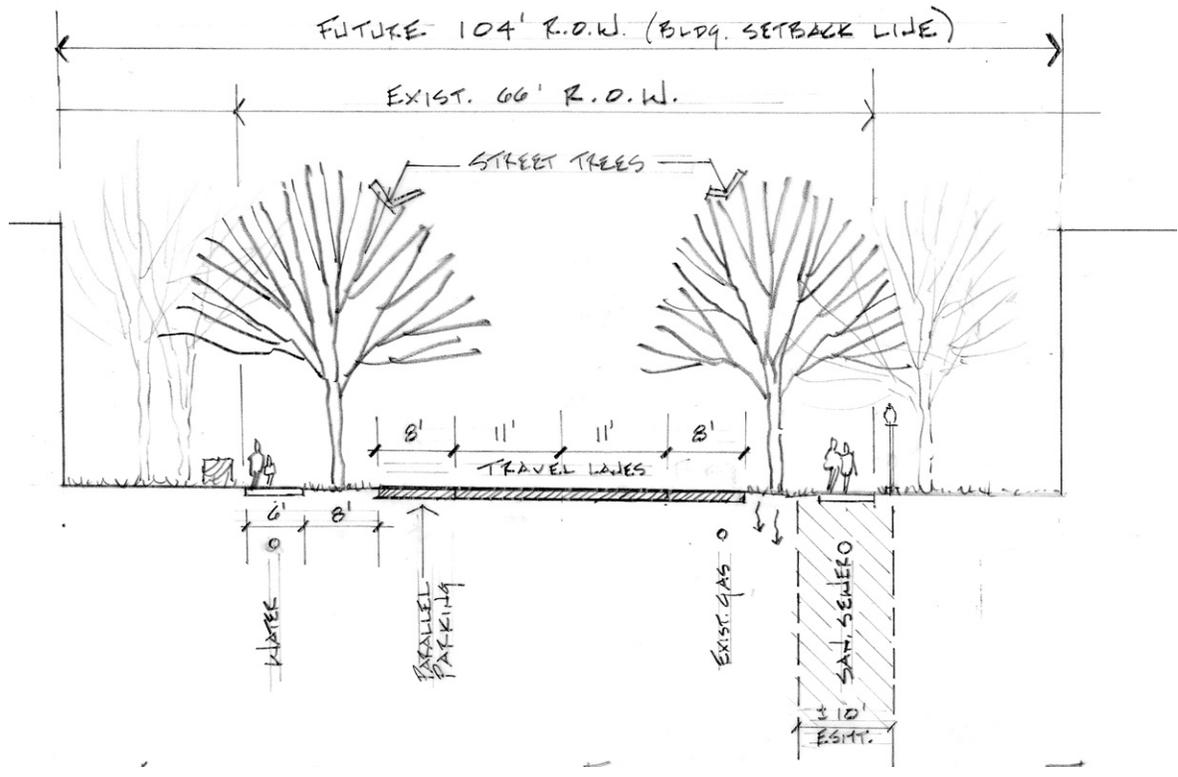
Between Governor Crapo Street and Ruggles Street, the long-term goal should be to eliminate all curb cuts. Access to the homes and businesses in this area would be from a rear service drive or alley. This block would also have on-street parallel parking with a boulevard between the parking and sidewalk. Curb cuts should also be eliminated along the west side of Milford Road between Ruggles Street and M-59. The gas station site should be limited to one access point. No on-street parking would occur on this block.



Milford Road homes as they appear now (top) and as they might appear with additions in a residential style (bottom).

Finding unobtrusive locations for utilities will also be important to the appearance of Milford Road. Private franchise utilities such as electric lines, communication lines, and storm sewers can be moved to the center of blocks, in the infrastructure areas shown in the Framework Plan. Power and data lines are the most visually invasive of the utilities and even if they remain above ground, moving them off the street will improve views of the town. Sanitary sewer, water, and gas lines will remain in the street right-of-way. Locating these underground utilities beneath sidewalks or using the infrastructure areas will allow utilities to function efficiently and allow street trees to be planted in the boulevards.

Creating a diverse experience along Milford Road, and one that is uniquely fitting to Highland Station's character, will capture the opportunity presented by the many travelers passing through town along its length. It will also help make it a safe and functional space for residents and business owners. The street will become a primary asset for the community.



Adding sidewalks, boulevards, street trees, and lawns dramatically changes the appearance of the Milford Road and Carpet Classics.



A view across Veteran's Memorial Park towards the Highland Station House

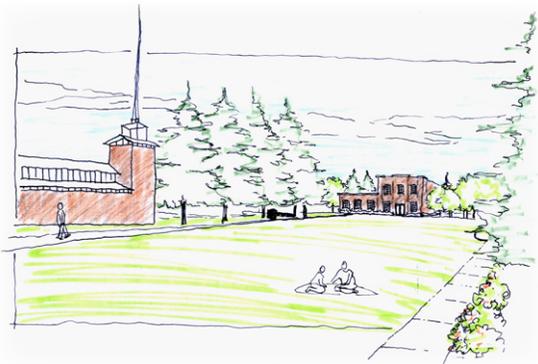
TOWNSHIP CENTER

A TOWN IS MORE THAN A CONCENTRATION OF HOMES AND BUSINESSES. IT IS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WELL BEING OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE LAND. IT IS A FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TOWARDS COMMON GOALS SUCH AS EDUCATING CHILDREN AND PROTECTING CITIZENS. IT FOSTERS A SENSE OF BELONGING AND OWNERSHIP. A PHYSICAL PLACE THAT HOUSES CIVIC FUNCTIONS CAN REPRESENT THAT SENSE OF OWNERSHIP. CIVIC BUILDINGS AND TOWN GREENS FORM A CORE FOR A COMMUNITY, FOCUSING THEIR ENERGY AND CONNECTING RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS TO THE RESOURCES OF THE TOWN. BEAUTIFUL PUBLIC SPACES INCREASE PRIDE IN PLACE AND CAN BECOME PART OF THE ICONOGRAPHY OF A SMALL TOWN.

TOWNSHIP CENTER

The west side of John Street has served as the home of various municipal functions and the public schools for many decades. The municipal presence, which currently includes the fire station, sheriff's substation, the Township Offices and senior center, functions as an anchor and draws residents and visitors to Highland Station.

In 1996, community leaders purchased property on the north side of M-59, adjacent to Downey Lake, with the intent of creating a Civic Center. This decision preceded efforts at downtown revitalization. The library, having outgrown its space in the Highland Station House moved there in 2002. The HDDA TIF plan indicates that once the Civic Center is moved adjacent to the library, the HDDA would acquire the current Town Hall building and establish a business incubator.



A Civic Green would provide a space for events, fairs, and concerts as well as passive recreational uses like picnics or a game of

Recent planning efforts for a revitalized Highland Station area have brought the issue of where to locate the Town Hall into question. While there are certainly benefits to consolidating municipal functions in a beautiful natural setting adjacent to the library, there is also a compelling argument to retain a civic presence in Highland Station. Municipal functions and resources would remain connected to the homes and businesses that make up the downtown. Retaining municipal functions in the downtown area signals the township's commitment to Highland Station and further strengthens the area as the identifiable center of the township.

As Highland Township grows, the Township may need new facilities to accommodate the variety of services its population demands. If located in Highland Station, a two-story building would be ideal, with a scale and style to denote its civic status. Building could be phased to minimize disruptions. Consolidating the township and police functions and using a two-story building would allow room for parking and expanding the Veteran's Memorial park into a Civic Green.



A view down John Street towards a new Township Building that could house Township offices, the sheriff department, the senior center, and other civic functions.

The Civic Green would provide space for concerts, art fairs, and other events. A pavilion on the east side of the green would act as a picnic space or stage which would be lit by evening light. When not in use for events, the Green would be a place to play frisbee, read a book, or eat a picnic. The Veteran's Memorial could be constructed near the northwest corner of the green, sheltered beneath evergreen trees like those already planted in the southeast corner. It would be a quiet, contemplative space with benches, adjacent to a raingarden. The existing Fire Station and new Township Building would anchor the green and give it a sense of enclosure.

Parking must be provided for day-to-day use and events. There is room for more than enough parking north and west of the Township Building for its normal use. During events, event parking could be expanded west of the fire station in what is now a septic field. This could be unpaved or a grass paving system could be used. Additionally, the township and schools should share parking as needed for their various events. Together, over 400 spaces would be available.

John Street would be constructed to look like the important civic street that it is. This is the place for more formal rows of street trees and traditional pedestrian lights. Some head-in parking stalls should remain in front of the Township Building for people who have to run into the building for quick business. A broad sidewalk, boulevards, and front lawn would connect the entire Township Center along the street's length. This Township Center would be an important part of the fabric of the community.

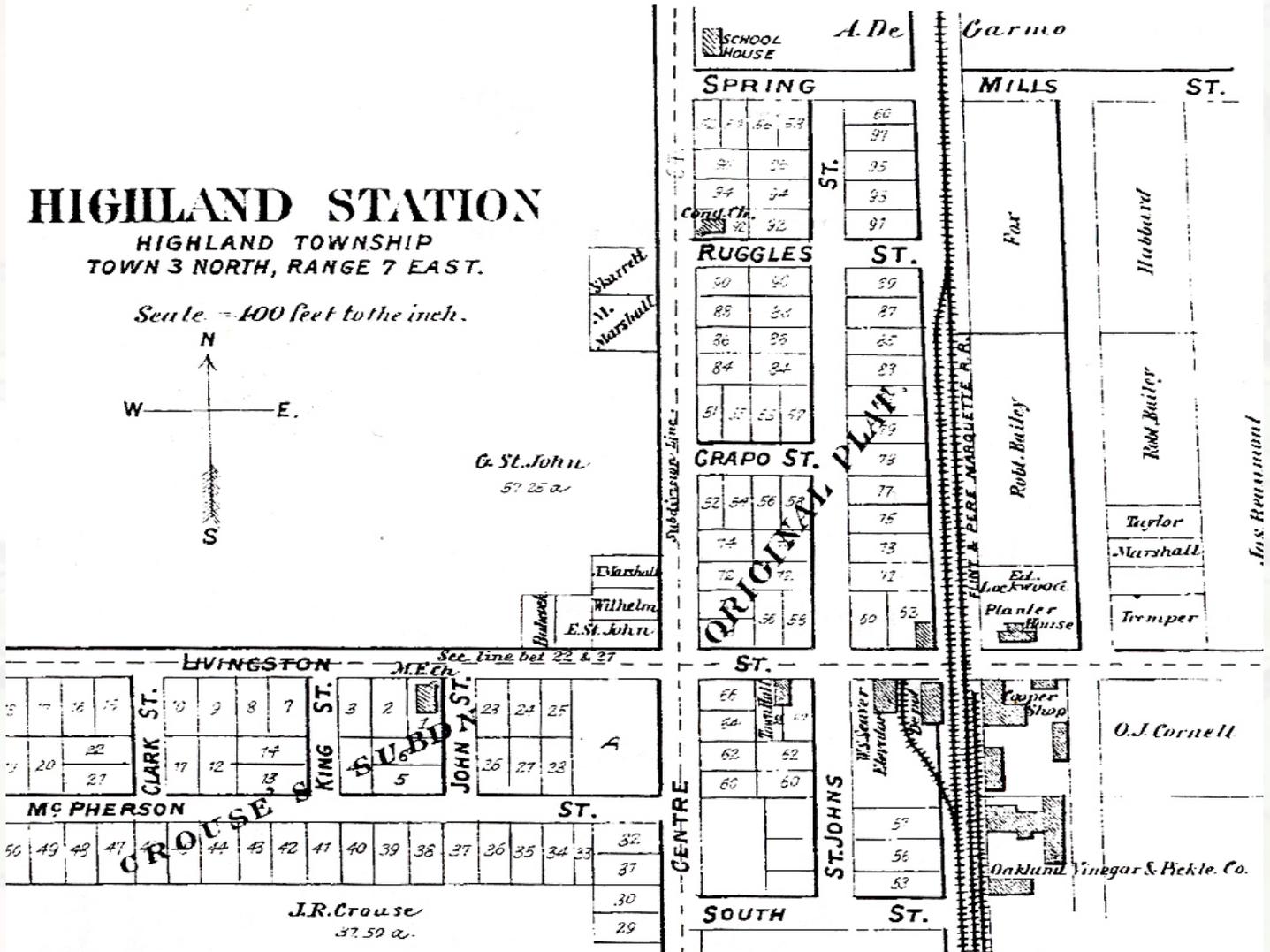
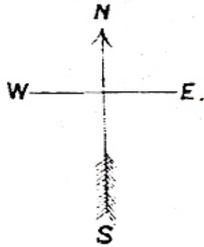


A plan for the Township Center shows how the fire station and new Township Building frame a larger Civic Green.

HIGHLAND STATION

HIGHLAND TOWNSHIP
TOWN 3 NORTH, RANGE 7 EAST.

Scale - 100 feet to the inch.



A historical plat map from 1872 shows Highland Station's street pattern of small blocks. It is also clear how important the intersection of East Livingston Road and the railroad was to the town center.

GOVERNOR CRAPO LANE

AS THE FOUNDERS OF HIGHLAND STATION PLATTED THE TOWN, THEY USED A SERIES OF SMALL BLOCKS. TODAY, ONE CAN SEE THERE IS A REGULAR RHYTHM OF BLOCKS AND INTERSECTIONS THAT MAKE UP THE TOWN. THIS CONNECTION WAS NEVER MADE, HOWEVER, AND TODAY THERE IS A “SUPERBLOCK” BETWEEN RUGGLES STREET AND LIVINGSTON ROAD. ADDITIONALLY, THIS BLOCK IS DEEPER THAN OTHERS IN HIGHLAND STATION, INCREASING THE SENSE OF SEPARATION. BEHIND IT, THE TOWN HALL IS HIDDEN FROM VIEW. CHILDREN WHO LIVE EAST OF MILFORD ROAD HAVE TO WALK TO RUGGLES OR LIVINGSTON TO GET TO SCHOOL. AS HIGHLAND STATION EVOLVES, THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESTORE THE INTENDED FABRIC OF THE TOWN.

GOVERNOR CRAPO LANE

An extension to Governor Crapo Lane does not have to look exactly like the existing road. Like other streets in Highland Station, the road should be built to serve the precise needs of its users. The reason to extend a street in this location is to create a better connection between Milford Road and residents living to the east to the Township Center and schools. There is a need for limited car traffic, good pedestrian access, and a visual connection. A narrow lane or alley would easily serve these goals and it could even wind and split to accommodate buildings or intersections. Narrow lanes and a differentiated shoulder for pedestrians would be sufficient.



Splitting the road around a raingarden and then creating a green front yard between two townhome buildings would slow traffic, create a direct and interesting pedestrian path, and allow clear views from Milford to the main entrance of the Township Building. The front doors of the townhomes would face the green and garage entrances would be at the back, from the lane. Together with the front door of the Township Building, the green would be framed by front doors and feel like a public space with an informal connection to the Civic Green. There would be a framed, slightly offset view of the front of the Township Building which would give the building a sense of entry and help visitors find the civic area. A raingarden at the eastern terminus of the green would dissolve the green space into the less formal center of the block.



Extending Governor Crapo Street as a lane or alley to John Street would open up views from Milford Road (top) to the John Street (bottom).

Raingardens create interesting features for the center of blocks. They are typically shallow depressions to which stormwater runoff is directed from nearby buildings and parking lots. They can be planted with attractive perennials and shrubs, such as willows, dogwoods, purple iris, prairie shooting star, goldenrod, prairie dropseed, and so forth. These plants help infiltrate and clean the water, tolerate changing soil moisture conditions, and require minimal maintenance, including weed control. Raingardens do not hold standing water for more than 24 hours, so they don't become hazards or mosquito breeding habitat. They would be a pleasant visual break in parking lots and help with the practical challenge of dealing with stormwater from increased impervious surfaces.

Governor Crapo Lane would be one of the more complex projects in terms of its affect on existing buildings. Currently there are a series of duplexes and small single family homes in the area. The homes have limited historical interest and their architectural style is less consistent with the styles found elsewhere in Highland Station. Replacing these homes with townhomes and small single-family cottages on narrow lots would create a wider variety of housing choices in Highland Station and make better use of the land once septic fields are no longer needed. These homes could have a style more in keeping with those of historical houses throughout town. Garages could be accessed from the new lane and from driveways serving the back parking lots. These new homes would quickly become part of the fabric of the town.



A lane, extending Governor Crapo Street would link the Township Center to Milford Road and create opportunities for housing and commercial development.



Widely spaced, charming homes along the south side of West Livingston Road

NEIGHBORHOOD

WHILE WE STAND IN AWE OF GRAND STRUCTURES AND FEATS OF ENGINEERING, IT IS THE EVERYDAY PLACES PEOPLE COME TO TREASURE BECAUSE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE: A NEIGHBOR ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HEDGE WHO ALWAYS HAS THE TOOL FOR THE JOB—AND IS HAPPY TO SHARE; THE PERFECT SHADY PATH FOR NEW MOTHERS TO WALK TOGETHER WITH THEIR STROLLERS; A HORSESHOE COURT WHERE FRIENDS WHO HAVE KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE CHILDHOOD STILL MEET. PEOPLE LOVE HIGHLAND STATION BECAUSE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE AND WORK HERE AND THE CHARM OF NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE THOSE RELATIONSHIPS UNFOLD. GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS MAKE PEOPLE FEEL CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER AND TO A PLACE.

NEIGHBORHOOD



Some portions of Highland Station have a single, clear use. The block north of West Livingston and west of John Street has a civic use. But most of Highland Station is much more fine-grained and complex. During its long history, residential and commercial uses have become intertwined. Dealing with a mix of uses in a sensitive way will benefit both the businesses and the residents throughout town. The two blocks south of West Livingston Road, between King Street and Milford Road, is an example of how a variety of uses combines to create a vibrant neighborhood.

There are several beautiful folk Victorian-era homes along West Livingston Road and the iconic Highland Station House is a landmark for the town. As part of preserving the integrity of these buildings, it is important to keep wide side yards and gardens. However, this area is also very close to both the commercial and civic cores of Highland Station, so it will probably experience pressure to increase in both density and variety of housing once septic systems are eliminated. Along McPherson Road, there is room for some cottages on small lots. Like the cottages proposed along John Street, these should have an architectural style that is complementary to their neighbors and garages should be located behind the homes.



The former Methodist church (top) is now Highland Station House, a space for several community groups (bottom).

At the northeast corner of the block, the Highlander House is an excellent example of RSCU, with parking located behind the building and wide lawns. Just south of that the Carpet Classics building presents a unique opportunity for restoring one of Highland Station's historical commercial buildings. Restoring the building's storefront and large front windows along with rearranging parking to create space for sidewalks, boulevards, and lawns that connect with nearby properties will help it feel integrated with the homes around it. Sharing parking with the Highlander House would also help reduce the parking lot by consolidating spaces and driveways.

Creating or restoring sidewalks around the block and down John Street would provide a vital link between the southern portions of Highland Station and the Township Building. Additionally, a pedestrian path from the south end of John Street to Colasanti's would be a pleasant way to get from the schools and Township Building to the store by foot or bike. It would also better connect the nearby schools and Prestwick Village to the entire community. Building this path in conjunction with sidewalks along Milford would considerably strengthen the relationship between important parts of Highland Station and create a pedestrian loop from one end of town to the other.



The block south of Livingston Road and west of Milford Road forms a transition into surrounding residential areas and provides for a connective pedestrian path to Colasanti's Market.



The intersection of Milford Road and M-59

CONNECTIONS TO M-59

HIGHWAYS ARE THE CONNECTIVE TISSUE OF OUR NATION. WE RELY ON THEM TO MOVE RESOURCES, PRODUCTS AND PEOPLE. LOCATIONS ALONG THEIR LENGTHS, ESPECIALLY AT INTERSECTIONS, ARE PREFERRED FOR MANY TYPES OF BUSINESSES BECAUSE THEY ARE VISIBLE AND EASY TO ACCESS. IN MANY CASES, THE PRESSURE OF THEIR POPULARITY HAS CAUSED THEM TO DEVELOP IN UNATTRACTIVE WAYS. CROSSINGS HAVE BECOME MORE DANGEROUS IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THEIR LEVEL OF USE. WHILE THEY LINK COMMUNITIES ALONG THEIR LENGTHS, THEY DIVIDE COMMUNITIES ACROSS THEIR PATH. M-59 POSES JUST THESE SORTS OF CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGHLAND STATION. IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF VISIBILITY FROM THE HIGHWAY WHILE MAINTAINING GOOD CONNECTIONS ACROSS IT.

CONNECTIONS TO M-59

Highland Station is poised to take advantage of that old real estate adage: location, location, location. It sits right at the corner of two important regional roads and is adjacent to the Highland Recreation Area. However, there is almost nothing on M-59 that tells potential visitors that they are approaching an interesting place. In fact, the only sign east of the intersection with Milford Road tells people to turn left to get to the town of Milford, with no mention of Highland Station. The businesses and buildings near the highway are not representative of the charm of the town.

In one of the community's early efforts to draw attention to Highland Station's rich heritage and unique character, the HDAA, Beautification Commission and skilled volunteers banded together to create the "Gateway Park" with its depot-style ticket station. The park stands as a visual sign of community pride, but does not serve as a desirable place for people to gather and interact with one another. The traffic noise and fumes from the busy highway and its relative isolation from convenient parking hamper its use and limit appreciation of the ticket structure's detail. It has been suggested that the ticket shelter might tell the story of Highland better if located in a more pedestrian-friendly location adjacent to the railroad tracks. Here it might also serve as a trailhead, with maps and bike racks for use by visitors of the Recreation Area. This could free the corner to be used to complement appropriate redevelopment of adjacent parcels. The community may wish to consider alternative treatments of this corner in the future, but the issue must be approached with sensitivity and respect for the efforts of volunteers who donated time, talent and materials to erect this statement of their support for Highland Station. In any case, the corner should remain a green and inviting gateway to the village center.



The existing pedestrian crossing at M-59 (top) is an exposed and unappealing path. A new cross walk on the west side of the intersection could include paving patterns, plantings, and a median crossing.

Having an open space to greet people coming to Highland Station is important. It is a space with the potential to create interest in the community. Unfortunately, it is difficult to access by foot or car and gets few visitors. The Depot building is charming, but it seems lost on the site and perhaps a little lonely without railroad tracks. It might be more fitting and useful located just east of the railroad tracks on Livingston Road where it could act as a terminus for the commercial area and a trailhead, with maps and bike racks, for visitors coming from the Recreation Area. Gateway Park needs parking nearby and features which attract users, including nearby retail areas. Additionally, moving the crosswalk over M-59 to that side of the intersection would increase foot traffic.

As it exists now, the pedestrian crossing at M-59 is hazardous and uninviting. There has been discussion about creating a pedestrian bridge, but the cost for this project could be close to \$1 million. It might be more practical to redesign the at-grade crossing. Moving the crossing to west side of the intersection would safely connect the school and new library, bring visitors into Gateway Park, and help students crossing M-59 for lunch. Striping and changing the pavement color in the crosswalk would make it more obvious to drivers. Continuing the path over the median and perhaps even creating a small bridge over the swale would further distinguish it and give pedestrians "refuge" in the center. Plantings and other landscape features could be added to make it more inviting. Another marker for Highland Station could be the railroad track underpass just east of Milford Road. Highland Station owes its existence to the railroad, so a marker that represents that relationship would be fitting. Creating a more visually appealing bridge and incorporating Highland Station signage would be a unique way to tell drivers they are approaching town. The other important clue that Highland Station is nearby should be the retail buildings along M-59. If they had a distinctive appearance that references the town's simple architectural aesthetic, without becoming overly ornamental, they would act as a kind of understated signal that something different is nearby. Moving parking to the back of these stores would further differentiate them from their neighbors and encourage people to drive a little ways into town.



Creating a safe crosswalk on the west side of the intersection of M-59 and Milford Road will provide important connections for the community. The block just south of M-59 and west of Milford Road has considerable potential for redevelopment.



Views of Colasanti's Market, a wetland, and a small farm form a Green Gateway into Highland Station from the south along Milford Road.

GREEN GATEWAY

FEW SMALL TOWNS CAN BOAST A STORE LIKE COLASANTI'S PRODUCE AND PLANTS. THIS GROCERY STORE, GARDEN SHOP, AND LOCAL LANDMARK ATTRACTS VISITORS FROM MILES AROUND AND WELCOMES TRAVELERS APPROACHING HIGHLAND STATION FROM THE SOUTH. ITS FLORAL SIGN AND DUCK POND ARE UNMISTAKABLE. TOGETHER WITH THE WETLAND AND CHARMING RED BARN ACROSS MILFORD ROAD, IT IS A GREEN GATEWAY INTO HIGHLAND STATION. IT CREATES A SENSE OF SEPARATION BETWEEN HIGHLAND STATION AND ITS NEIGHBORS THAT SPEAKS TO THE TOWN'S RURAL CHARACTER. MAINTAINING IT AS OPEN SPACE AND STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GATEWAY AND DOWNTOWN WILL BENEFIT BOTH AREAS.

GREEN GATEWAY

Natural spaces and agricultural landscapes are an important part of Highland Station's character. The nearby Highland Recreation Area is a major draw to the region. The town has an important connection to the large equestrian community in the county. Wide lawns weave between buildings and the town seems tucked beneath a canopy of trees. Activities that are healthy for the environment and people are an important part of the town's culture. This connection with the environment should be communicated by the landscape of the town, beginning at the entry.

Colasanti's pond, a wetland, and a small farm form a green band across Milford Road just south of Highland Station. This separates Highland from nearby development. Maintaining this visual open space and enhancing elements like signs and pedestrian paths could add to the sense of entering a town with a unique connection to its environment. Adding interesting elements also helps slow traffic. At the bottom of the hill, between the pond and wetland, a suggested bridge element would give drivers a sense that they are crossing into town. This plus the physical cue of the rise up the hill into town, would begin to slow traffic. Building on that with narrower lanes and pedestrian paths will create a slower driving environment.

Pedestrian paths linking downtown to Colasanti's are important because they would help both areas share customers and activities. Along Milford Road, sidewalks should be constructed so that as few trees as possible are disturbed. Taking into account the challenges of steep hills in this area, a pedestrian-friendly shoulder would probably be the most effective solution. Narrower lanes, clear striping and signage, and differentiated paving types would all help pedestrians feel comfortable along this road. Increased pedestrian activity also helps slow traffic, making both driving and walking safer. Additionally, off-road paths would be useful, connecting the end of John Street at McPherson to the north end of Colasanti's. Not only would that link the northwest portion of town to the area, but it would also create a walking loop from downtown to Colasanti's and back. Loops are inviting for residents who want an interesting exercise route and for visitors who want to explore.

The small hobby farm just east of Milford Road, across from Colasanti's, includes a charming red barn that is also a landmark for Highland Station. There is interest in developing a cider mill in Highland Station and this is one site that has potential for that use. It is a challenging site because of the slopes and wetlands, but it is very visible and its character is fitting with the cider mill use. Another cider mill concept could be an "urban" cider mill in Jenson's plumbing supply store on Livingston Road. That site has ample parking and buildings. Combining a cider mill with a retail component, ice cream store, winery, or restaurant could make it a year round attraction for Highland Station.

There are many unique opportunities for new attractions and amenities in Highland Station. It is easy to imagine a vibrant future for this hamlet.



A plan for pedestrian connections to the Green Gateway shows sidewalks in blue. Solid lines represent existing sidewalks and dashed lines represent potential connections.



Approaching Highland Station from the south, the view up Milford Road invites visitors into the town (top). Changes to lane widths and pedestrian paths would help slow traffic coming into town and improve connectivity from downtown to Colasanti's.



Highland Station has an opportunity to build upon its unique historical character. As the community moves forward, this should continue to be the town's goal. (Milford Road, looking north)

MOVING FORWARD

THE PEOPLE OF HIGHLAND STATION ARE READY FOR ACTION. THEY WANT TO BEGIN TO MAKE SOME OF THE CHANGES THEY HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING. THE QUESTION IS WHERE TO BEGIN AND HOW. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC PROJECTS? HOW DOES THE COMMUNITY ENSURE THAT PRIVATE DEVELOPERS FOLLOW THE VISION THEY HAVE LAID OUT? WHICH PROJECTS CAN BE DONE RIGHT AWAY AND WHICH WILL NEED TO WAIT? IMPLEMENTING A MASTER PLAN IS NOT SOMETHING THAT WILL BE DONE IN A YEAR, OR FIVE, OR PROBABLY EVEN A COUPLE DECADES. IT IS AN ONGOING AND EVOLVING PROCESS THAT REQUIRES DETERMINATION, PERSISTENCE, FLEXIBILITY, AND COMPROMISE. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT HIGHLAND STATION BEGIN TO CREATE A STRUCTURE OF INCENTIVES, GUIDELINES, AND ORDINANCES THAT WILL MAKE THE PLAN A REALITY.

MOVING FORWARD

Highland Station's Master Plan is more than just another round of talk. It is the first step in building a framework of guidelines, rules, and motivations that will begin to actually build the town's vision.

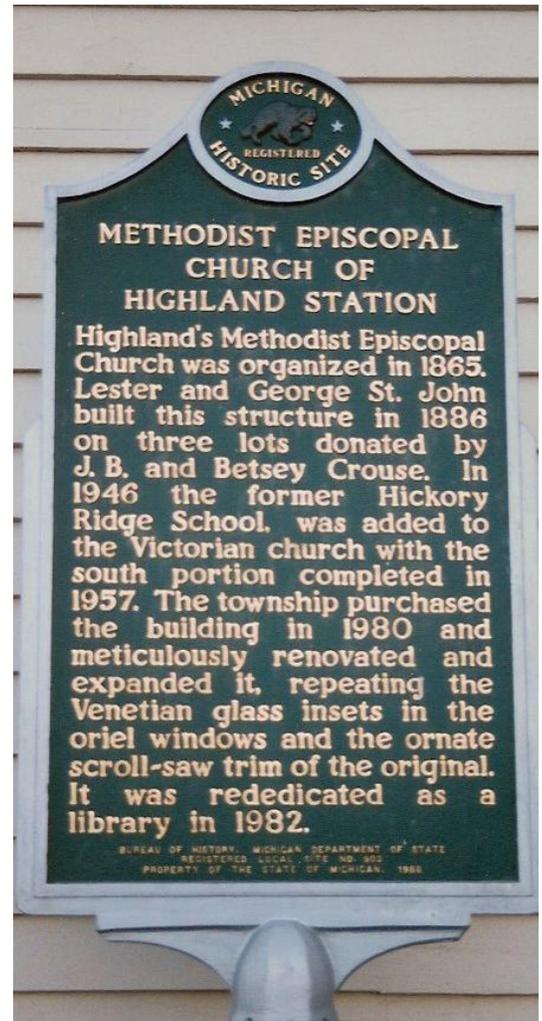
First Steps

- Form a steering committee with the following three-fold purpose:
 - Revisit the TIF plan to ensure project priorities line up with those contained in the Framework Plan; work with Oakland County to revise as necessary.
 - To steer the community through the master plan adoption process and implementation
 - Identify projects by priority given available funds and human resources
 - Create a timeline for implementation
- Retain a professional planning consultant to assist the steering committee on an as-needed basis
- Conduct a developer roundtable to discuss economic implications of master plan initiatives.
- Perform a retail market study to determine and support types of projected retail establishments for both Milford and Livingston Road. Include case studies for adaptive reuse of historic structures and associated mixed use parking requirements.
- Retain a traffic engineer with small town planning experience to develop short- and long-term road design geometrics. Work with Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) to adopt and implement road design standards.
 - Intersection bump outs
 - Crosswalks
 - Traffic calming devices
 - Parking and landscape bump outs
 - Traffic signage
 - Center turn lanes
- Formally identify HDDA bonding capacity for future projects and restrictions associated with funding.
 - Percentage of HDDA tax capture relative to Highland Station Core District
 - Land acquisition for future streets and service drives
 - Land acquisition for developments via developer RFPs (means of controlling future projects)
 - Land acquisition for future parking areas
 - Land acquisition for community open space and park land (visual and functional)
 - Stormwater management initiatives



A new RSCU development in Highland Station.

- Identify other funding sources
 - Research available grants and apply for grants to support identified projects.
 - Philanthropists
 - Endowments and foundations
- Although it is most likely that no new municipal building will take place in the next 5-7 years, the community should continue discussions relating to the future location of the municipal facilities. It is important to recognize that Highland Township library needs a “neighbor” for security as well as to draw more patrons from a compatible use..
- Highland Station Planning Commission recommendation to the board to adopt the Historic Highland Station Master Plan Initiative as part of the New Township Master Plan.
- Incorporate Highland Station Core Area Master Plan Initiative into the New Township Master Plan
 - How to handle areas outside of core within Highland Station?
 - DDA District?
- Complete current historic structures documentation to apply for and obtain Local and National Historic District Designation
 - Define Historic District Boundaries
 - Create Historic District Ordinance
 - Create Historic District Commission
- Identify developer and property owner incentives program to implement master plan strategies.
 - Efficient methods to obtain building permits and site plan approvals?
 - Highland Station development checklist
 - Informal concept plan review by special committee with representation of at least one member of the following:
 - Township Official
 - Planning Commission
 - Township Board
 - HDDA Director
 - Master Plan Task Force Representative
 - Township Planner
 - Township Engineering Consultant
 - Highland Station Planning Consultant(s)
 - Historic Commission (future)
 - Stormwater management (Area served by regional system)
 - Utility relocation participation by HDDA
 - Other.....



An existing historical marker

Revisions to and adoption of Ordinances (Highland Station specific)

- Sign Ordinance
- Stormwater management criteria (Highland Station Core Regional Basin District and pre-treatment methods)
- Permitted Uses
- Accessory Buildings
- Minimum Lot Size
- Minimum Yard Requirements
- Maximum Bulk Requirements
- Maximum Building lengths (per district)
- Architectural Guidelines
- Parking Requirements (Highland Station landbank parking fund)
- Develop design guidelines specific to Highland Station Core (see Village of Franklin Historic District Design Guidelines sample)
 - Zoning District Framework
 - HGC – Highland Gateway Commercial
 - SSSU – Special Style, Special Use
 - RSCU – Residential Style, Commercial Use
 - CSCU – Commercial Style Commercial Use
 - RES – All Types
 - Architecture
 - Adaptive Reuse and Complementary Structures / Materials
 - Masonry—old field stone foundations
 - Clapboard Siding
 - Building height
 - Details
 - Massing
 - Roof Lines
 - Landscape
 - Fencing
 - Tree Planting
 - Plant material palette (natives or plants common to historic times)
 - Lighting
 - Streetscape
 - Walk, materials, and location
 - Width, furnishings and lighting



Examples of distinct local signage



Looking south towards the southwest corner of Livingston Road and Milford Road.

APPENDIX A: PROJECTS

Project:

Description:

Reduce Milford Road Speed Limit/
Traffic Calming



POSSIBLE IMMEDIATELY

This project could be a living case study to determine the traffic effects of reducing the current posted speed limit from 35 MPH to 25 MPH. The objective is to start training drivers to slow down as they drive through the heart of the community.

The Township would need to request the speed reduction from the Oakland County Sheriff Office and, if granted, monitor its effectiveness. The Highland Station traffic consultant may need to analyze signal timing relative to traffic flow and other potential impacts. The State of Michigan might also be involved. Other signage systems and traffic calming systems could be implemented as part of this strategy.

New Street Signage



POSSIBLE IMMEDIATELY

This project will consist of developing new street signage that replaces the green metal County road sign standards with signs that are unique to Highland Station.

Signs may incorporate the Highland Station logo or a historic district designation along with hanging flower pots as seen in the Village of Franklin.

Tree Planting Initiative



POSSIBLE IMMEDIATELY

This project might initiate an Arbor Day tree planting program on private properties to begin a new succession of Highland Station's forest canopy. Consider hiring an arborist to give a brief seminar to residents and business owners on the value of trees and proper tree care.

Encourage planting of a diverse selection of traditional tree species in random patterns. Canopy trees might include Horsechestnut, Hickory, Elms, Beech, Oaks, and Sugar Maples. A list of recommended evergreen trees, fruit trees, and ornamentals should also be developed.

Renaming of Milford Road
"Centre Street"



POSSIBLE IMMEDIATELY

This project would explore renaming Milford Road from Colasanti's at the south end of town to M-59 at the north end of town to its historic "Centre Street" name. The goal is to give Highland Station some distinction from the current Milford Road identity and celebrate its original historic street name.

This project may have some logistical hurdles to overcome with police, fire and postal services. Address changes would be required for existing businesses and residents. There may be some issues with the RCO, map revisions, and wayfinding to Milford from the north.

Project:

Description:

Milford Road Streetscape Improvements



HIGH PRIORITY

The goal of this project would be to improve sidewalk conditions and connectivity, adjust driving lane striping, add parallel parking where appropriate, create boulevards, and integrate infrastructure changes to overhead and underground utilities.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township and HDDA. This project could be started now, in tandem with the current sewer project, but would be ongoing.

Milford Road Redevelopment



HIGH PRIORITY

This project would create frameworks to encourage RSCU developments along Milford Road in keeping with Highland's character. It will also be necessary to coordinate the development of parking, stormwater management and utilities behind buildings.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township and private developers. This project could be started in the short-term with changes to rules and incentives, but development would be ongoing.

East Livingston Road Streetscape Improvements



HIGH PRIORITY

The goal of this project would be to improve sidewalk conditions and connectivity, adjust driving lane striping, add head-in parking where appropriate, create boulevards, and integrate infrastructure changes to overhead and underground utilities.

The stakeholder primarily involved in this project would be the township. This project could be started in the short-term, but would be an ongoing effort to enhance the downtown commercial district core.

East Livingston Road Redevelopment Strategies



HIGH PRIORITY

This project would create frameworks to encourage CSCU developments along East Livingston Road in keeping with Highland's character. It will also be necessary to coordinate the development of parking, stormwater management and utilities behind buildings.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the HDDA and private developers. This project could be started in the short-term with changes to rules and incentives, but development would be ongoing.

Project:

Description:

Stormwater Management Initiatives



HIGH PRIORITY

This project would develop two naturalized Highland Station regional detention ponds and associated infrastructure. It would develop strategies for pre-treatment of water quality in the form of rain gardens, bioswales, and other green-oriented practices.

Detailed design and engineering should be completed to determine capacity, drainage districts, basin landscape treatment, and associated costs and funding sources. The required alternate methods for on-site treatments should also be developed in detail. Consider developing a model case study using an upcoming project to work out details.

Develop Maintenance Strategies



HIGH PRIORITY

As public projects are implemented, it is important to develop maintenance strategies to protect investments and maintain their integrity.

Ensure adequate funds are appropriated for proper maintenance and assign responsibility to appropriate parties to ensure the maintenance is carried out. Maintenance may be performed by volunteer groups (such as the Beautification committee), private contractors, or in-house by Township departments.

M-59 Pedestrian Crossing



HIGH PRIORITY

This project would include relocating the crosswalk to the west side of the intersection and making changes to the paving, striping, landscaping, and signage around the crossing to create better access to the library and school.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township, County Road Commission, and Highland Beautification Committee. This project could be started in the short-term.

Branding and Marketing



HIGH PRIORITY

This project will be critical to ensure that a clear vision of Highland Station's unique charm is promoted for visitors, business owners, and residents. It would highlight Highland Station's rural and casual character, long history, close connection to nature, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

The current logo selection for the HDDA is just the beginnings of an overall strategy to define the genus loci of Highland Station. The Promotions Committee could lead the charge to hire a professional marketing group to develop a distinct approach to attract compatible businesses.

Project:

Description:

M-59 Redevelopment Strategies



MEDIUM PRIORITY

This project would create frameworks to encourage commercial development in keeping with Highland’s character. It will also be necessary to coordinate the development of parking, stormwater management and utilities behind buildings.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township and private developers. This project could be started in the short-term with changes to rules and incentives, but development would be ongoing.

Green Gateway



MEDIUM PRIORITY

The goal of this project would be to maintain open space at the southern edge of town along Milford Road. It would also include adding sidewalks and trails, changing lane striping along Milford Road, and adding signage.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township, private developers and land owners, and the County Road Commission. This project could be started in the short-term.

Governor Crapo Street Extension to John Street



MEDIUM PRIORITY

This project would involve acquiring the land needed to extend a narrow lane or alley from Milford Road to John Street. It would require road building, landscaping, raingardens, and other infrastructure for stormwater management and utilities.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township and private developers or land owners. This project could be started whenever opportunity presents itself.

Crapo Lane and John Street Redevelopment Strategies



MEDIUM PRIORITY

This project would create frameworks to encourage residential redevelopment in keeping with Highland’s character. It will also be necessary to coordinate the development of parking, stormwater management and utilities behind buildings.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township and private developers. This project could be started in the short-term with changes to rules and incentives, but development would be ongoing.

Other Projects



MEDIUM PRIORITY

- Land acquisition for design control (developer RFPs and open spaces)
- Continue programming festivals and events to build community
- Farmers market
- Equestrian Bed, Breakfast, and Board
- Pursue cider mill initiative
- Pathway to Colasanti’s Market
- Promotion of the arts

Project:

Description:

Overhead Utility Relocation



MEDIUM PRIORITY

This project would involve moving overhead power and data lines to the back of lots or underground wherever possible, to improve views of Highland Station.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township and utility companies. This project could be started in the short-term or mid-term.

Civic Green



MEDIUM PRIORITY

This project would expand the existing green by moving the police facilities into a new Township Building. The Civic Green could include a performance area, a relocated Veteran’s Memorial, and space for events and recreation.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township and Highland Beautification Committee. This project could be started when the Township Building is constructed or possibly sooner if the Oakland County Sheriff office is relocated.

John Street Streetscape Improvements



MEDIUM PRIORITY

The goal of this project would be to improve sidewalk conditions and connectivity, add parallel and head-in parking where appropriate, create boulevards, add street trees and lights, and integrate infrastructure changes to overhead and underground utilities.

The stakeholder primarily involved in this project would be the township. This project could be started in the short-term or mid-term, but would be ongoing.

Railroad Bridge Improvements



MEDIUM PRIORITY

This project would redesign the railroad crossing over M-59 and incorporate Highland Station signage in order to create an entry into town.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the DDA, township, railroad company, MDOT, and Road Commission for Oakland County. This project could be started when the bridge needed repair or replacement.

Historic Plaques / Photos



MEDIUM PRIORITY

Throughout Highland Station there should be plaques with historic photos and interpretive information to reinforce the history of the town’s evolution, business, and commerce. A historic map at a kiosk near Livingston Road and the railroad tracks might highlight the town’s founding landmarks such as the vinegar cider mill, the train depot, the saw mill, and the pickle works.

This initiative could be done as an ongoing effort by the Historical Society volunteers and would raise the public’s awareness of the story of Highland Station.

Project:

Description:

Township Building



LOW PRIORITY

This project would build a new two-story structure to house township offices, the police station, the senior center, classrooms, and meeting rooms. It would also add parking lots and landscaping around the site.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township, Oakland County Sheriff, Fire Department, and senior groups. This project could be started when the township has a need and funding for a new building.

M-59 Median and R.O.W. Enhancements



LOW PRIORITY

This project would create a cultural landscape that reinforces Highland Station's presence as a gateway in this region of vast state and county parklands. Landscape enhancements using native naturalized planting, equestrian fencing, historic fieldstone masonry, and other landscape features will announce Highland Station as a unique place.

MDOT enhancement grants, potential funding from Oakland County as a western gateway to the county, funding from art endowments to promote environmental or historic art, and other implementation and funding strategies should be evaluated.

Gateway Park



LOW PRIORITY

This project would involve landscaping and signage in Gateway Park. It might also involve relocating the Highland Station structure in order to use it as a trail head just east of the railroad tracks along Livingston Road or as a book-end to the Township Hall at the end of Governor Crapo Street, adjacent to the railroad.

Stakeholders involved in this project include the township and Highland Beautification Committee. This project could be started in the short or mid-term.

West Gateway Signage / Monumentation



LOW PRIORITY

This project would announce Highland Station at the intersection of Livingston Road and M-59 for travelers heading eastbound on M-59. The idea is to reinforce the district at all potential gateway locations and possibly encourage some to use Livingston Road as an alternative route to Highland Station rather than Milford Road.

The Township would have to acquire an easement or property to create a space with a strong reference to the character of the Highland Station district. This could contribute to part of an overall wayfinding and branding effort.