



MASTER PLAN | CITY OF WALKER, MI

**Book 3:**

# Past Walker Master Plans

# Acknowledgements

The participation and cooperation of the numerous community leaders and residents in the preparation of the City of Walker Master Plan is greatly appreciated. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of the following individuals:

## **City of Walker Commission**

Gary Carey Jr., Mayor

Steven Gilbert, Mayor Pro Tem

Dan Kent

Roxanne Deschaine

Carol Glanville

Elaina Huizenga

Melanie Grooters

## **City of Walker Planning Commission**

Terry Schweitzer, Chair

Tyler Korfhage, Vice Chair

Jason Nyhuis, Secretary

Patrick Laurie

Mark Davey

Tom Byle

Joseph Taylor

Scott Funke

Steven Gilbert, Commissioner

## **City Staff**

Darrel Schmalzel, City Manager

Frank Wash, Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director

Scott Connors, City Engineer

Dan Power, Planning Director/Zoning Administrator

# Contents

- Book 1: Citywide 2040 Vision**
- Book 2a: Alpine Avenue Neighborhood Cluster**
- Book 2b: South Walker Neighborhood Cluster**
- Book 2c: Standale Neighborhood Cluster**
- Book 2d: Northwest Neighborhood Cluster**
- Book 3: Past Walker Master Plans**
- Book 4: 1998-2018 Sub-Area Plans**
- Book 5: Appendix**

<b>1. A Brief Review of Walker Master Plans (1956-2019)</b>	<b>1</b>
The Past is Prologue... Sometimes	2
A Look Back at Walker Community Planning	3
1956 Walker Township Plans for its Future – A Long Range Guide for Sound Development.	3
1969 City of Walker, Michigan General Development Plan	5
1983 City of Walker Community Development Plan & Technical Report.	8
1998 Master Plan - City of Walker, Michigan	12
From the 1998 Master Plan to the Walker 2020 Master Plan	17



# 1.

## A Brief Review of Walker Master Plans (1956-2019)

**Author: Frank Wash, AICP**

City of Walker Community Development Director

# The Past is Prologue... Sometimes

Welcome to the City of Walker 2020 Master Plan. This document is the result of a multi-year process of public engagement, information analysis and future land use forecasting. We realize that effective community planning must look backwards and forwards at the same time while also carefully understanding the temperatures and pressures of the present day. Therefore, we created this “chapter” for the Walker 2020 Master Plan. We hope future readers find the following content useful as a sort of time capsule. The original documents referenced herein will be stored in the office of the City Clerk.

The years of 2018 and 2019, during which this report was developed, have been prosperous for the City of Walker. Most typical indicators are pointing in a positive direction. However, the sting of the recent and historic recession is fresh in the minds of many City stakeholders. We therefore recognize that the City must create a master plan that can withstand the cycles and trends that impact this community.

How do we create a visionary yet realistic master plan for the City of Walker that will guide the community into the year 2040? As you might expect, there are many opinions about this subject. We followed State of Michigan law and community planning best practices by researching and developing the following content and context:

- Community goals and values
- Detailed information to evaluate future development decisions
- A predictable yet situational guide for capital improvements
- Current and factual data...for people, businesses, transportation and the environment
- Distinct links to City ordinances and codes
- Identification of local uniqueness, opportunities for guided development, and quantifiable areas to be preserved
- An ability to capitalize on community strengths and opportunities
- Language that is accessible to all members of the community.

The term “**quality of life**” is very significant to our community members. However, this “**Q Factor**” tends to be subjective and difficult to define in a community as large and complex as the City of Walker. Therefore the 2020 Master Plan digs deeply into Walker neighborhoods and goes further into specific areas within individual neighborhoods of the City. All politics might be local but effective community planning must concurrently be local, regional, statewide and sometimes national in context.

We hope future readers of the Walker 2020 Master Plan find our efforts worthwhile and applicable. We have taken great care to develop a “living” master plan that should provide a solid strategy and policy foundation for future City of Walker decisions.

This report was not created in a vacuum. It has been thoroughly filtered through past Walker Township and City of Walker master plans. The authors subscribe to the saying that you cannot truly understand where you are going unless you know where you have been. Therefore, the remainder of this “chapter” will review the four major master plans that form the historical backbone of Walker community planning.

Please keep in mind that several Walker neighborhood-level “subplans” were approved from 2005 through 2018. Subsequent chapters of this document pull the content of those subplans into this Walker 2020 Master Plan report.

# A Look Back at Walker Community Planning

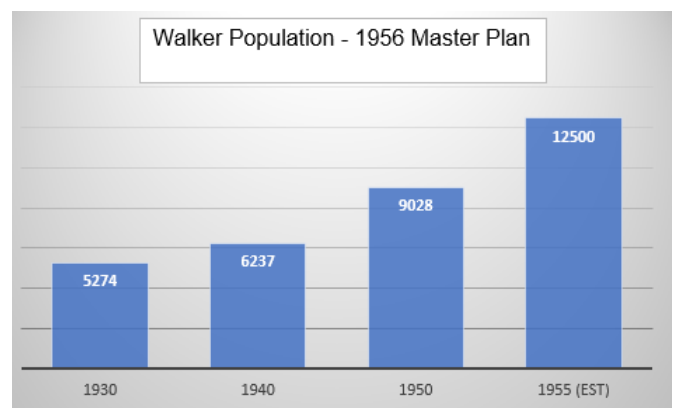
## 1956

### Walker Township Plans for its Future – A Long Range Guide for Sound Development

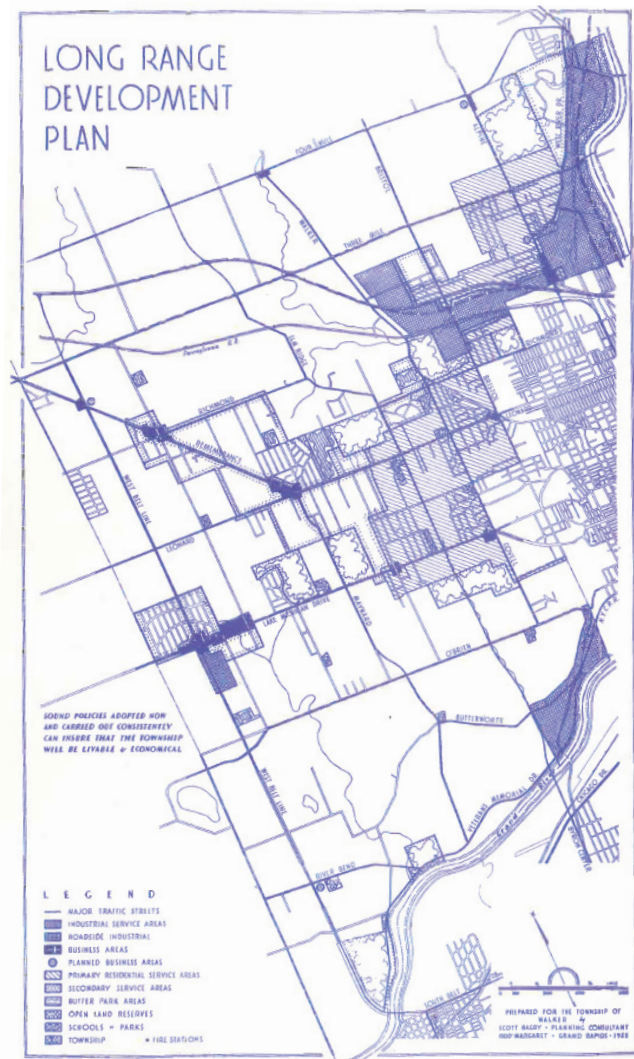
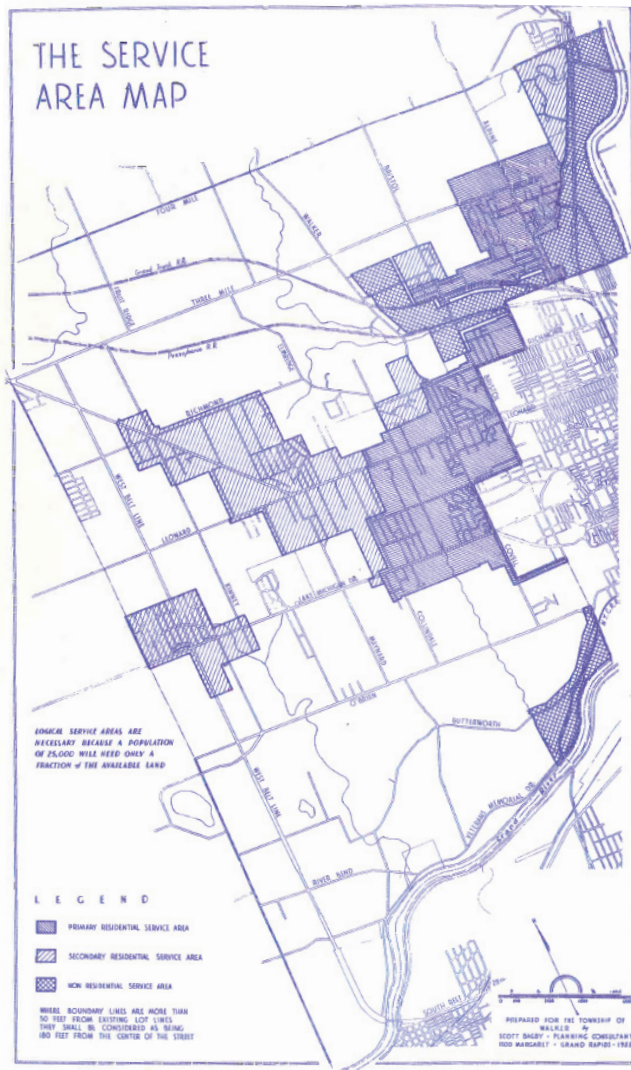
Consider the context in which the 1956 Walker Township plan was written. The Great Depression was a relatively recent memory. World War II veterans were in their late twenties and thirties. President Eisenhower's interstate highway system was just starting to come into focus. Walker was largely a rural community, but local stakeholders were already planning for the future.

#### Interesting 1956 Master Plan Content

- Notes that Walker Township was formed in 1837
- Calls for a “modern planning approach”
- Maps reveal the lack of I-96 and US-131...they were not yet built
- Maps label the current M-11/Wilson Avenue as the “West Belt Line”
- Map shows pre-annexation Walker municipal boundaries to Bristol Avenue and Leonard Street
- 1930 US Census population: 5,274
- 1940 US Census population: 6,237
- 1950 US Census population: 9,028
- 1955 population estimate: 12,500
  - Note that the City did not reach the 1955 population estimate until the 1970's
- Application of a technical population increase projection requiring careful planning
- The Plan analyzes housing, transportation, public utility service costs and preferred development locations
- From Page 6 – “Let's Plan to Double in Population”
- Interesting and far-sighted content on the costs and inefficiencies of suburban growth
  - “The Service Area Map” from Page 9 is essentially an Urban Growth Boundary



- The Plan impressively relates future land use categories to Walker zoning districts
- Prototypical post-WWII street planning methodology...a few major streets as collectors for neighborhood streets that are protected from "through traffic"
- US-16 in process of conversion to I-96
- US-131 under construction
- From Page 17 – "Traffic Needs Will Double"
- Significant detail on the need for planned connections between housing, public utilities, schools and parks
- Interesting content on Pages 20-21 regarding the "personal jealousies" involved in public school district divisions
- From Page 23 – description of a fire station on Alpine Avenue and a city complex on Leonard Street
- Six pages on financial and capital improvement planning
- Targeted future population of 25,000 Walker residents
- A list of implementation items ends the report.
- A "Long Range Development Plan" map is included on Page 27





# 1969

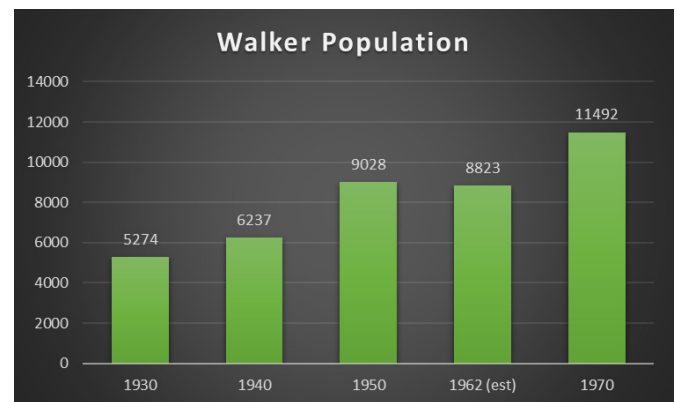
## City of Walker, Michigan General Development Plan

The United States and its citizens experienced a tremendous series of changes between 1956 and 1969. We assume that stakeholders in Walker Township, and in the 1962-incorporated City of Walker, were deeply impacted by these changes.

On a local scale, the leaders of the new City of Walker engaged in a master planning process for their community. This effort began with a Community Facilities, Utilities, and Resources Report, which was approved on January 4th, 1968. A master planning process was then initiated, and a final report was approved by the City on January 2nd, 1969. It is interesting to note that both community planning efforts were financially aided through Federal grants from the Urban Renewal Administration of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

### Interesting 1969 Master Plan Content

- The defunct Kent County Planning Commission was noted to also be updating its master plan
- The document is noted as the City of Walker's first general development (master) plan
- The project consultant notes the opportunity for regional planning between Kent County and local units of government, including the City of Walker
- Page 1 headline – **"Basis For Growth Is Regional"**
- Summarizes 1962 Walker incorporation, which was attributed to actual and anticipated annexation by Grand Rapids and the growing need for public utility services and facilities in then-Walker Township
- 1962 population estimate: 8,823 at time of City of Walker incorporation
  - Interesting to see the reduction in population from the 1950 population of 9,028...the impact of spatial annexation by the City of Grand Rapids
- 1969 population estimate: 12,000
- 1985 population estimate: 26,000
- Actual 1970 US Census population: 11,492
- **Walker's ultimate population capacity was projected at 80,000 – 90,000 people**
- There are several natural resources maps but none showing oil wells or the Fenske landfill in south Walker
- Page 8 headline: **"Highways and Thoroughfares Need Upgrading"**
- A "belt highway" was proposed by the Kent County Planning Commission to be south and west of the City of Walker to complement the fairly-new US-131, I-96 and I-196
  - The south leg was initially 28th Street but eventually becomes M-6
  - **The west leg becomes, by default but not design, M-11 / Wilson Avenue**
- Page 12: Interesting comments regarding an interchange at I-196 and Maynard
- Page 12: Interesting comments about reuse of gravel and gypsum mine areas for public recreation...the seeds for Millennium Park
- M-11, M-45 and Alpine Avenue are all identified as "deficient" in road right-of-way
- Three Mile Road identified as the main "industrial spine" of Walker and noted as needing a road right-of-way of at least 120 feet
- Page 12: "Fruit Ridge Road south of the I-96 interchange should be realigned to tie in with Kinney"

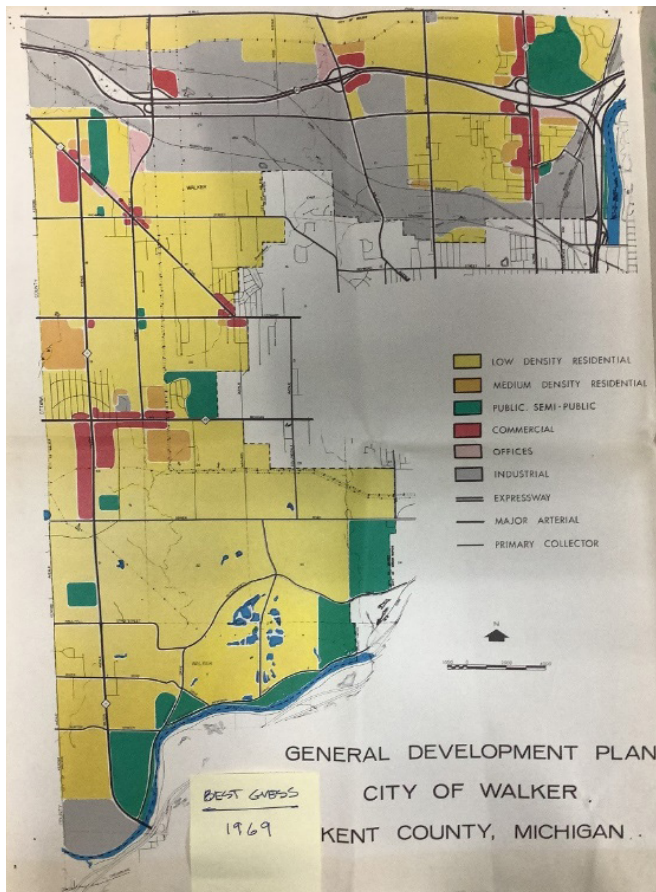


- 1966 Traffic Survey Report for Walker by the Automobile Club of Michigan notes:
  - City should consider the use of anti-skid road materials
  - Almost 80% of drivers in accidents were local residents
  - “A number of high accident locations in Walker are on the state trunk line system...”
  - “Of the total 471 recorded accidents in 1965, 71 occurred on Alpine Avenue...determine the feasibility of a median throughout the length of this Avenue. There seems to be no way to provide an alternate route to relieve traffic on this route, so steps should be taken to upgrade it in terms of capacity and safety”
  - “The streets in Walker are still rural roads, but they are being subjected to urban traffic loads”
- Guidelines on Industrial Development: Page 15
  - Regional Picture
  - Tax Base
  - Excessive Zoning is Dangerous
  - The Myth of the Self-Contained Community
- Ample Commercial Land Provided: Page 18
  - Projected local commercial land area needs in 1985: 698,481 square feet of building space on 73 acres of property
  - **“Consolidating shopping centers uses land more efficiently than strip commercial”**
- Utilities and Community Facilities: Page 19
  - Water and Sanitary Sewer Maps done by Moore & Bruggink
  - “...the southerly and northerly parts of the City generally are not planned for public water service...the sanitary sewer plan...is generally correlated...The Land Use Plan...reflects the planned provision of water and sewer...”
- Stages in School Development in a Four-Neighborhood Area: Page 23
  - Conceptual development patterns over time to accommodate an estimated population build-out of 80,000 – 90,000 Walker citizens.
- Recreation Sites Needed Early: Page 24
- Fire Stations: Page 24
  - There was a Walker fire station at Alpine Avenue and Three Mile Road
  - Fire station location planning was done with the Kent County Planning Commission...**in preparation for a metropolitan fire station location plan**
- City Hall is Nucleus for Remembrance Road Civic Center: Page 25
  - Civic Center Map on Page 26
  - Interesting discussion on public library location... Standale vs. Civic Center
- Proposed Land Use: Page 27
  - Interesting conflict north of I-96...no planned public utilities but planned industrial growth
  - “This industrial corridor is considered to have outstanding potential for expansion...over the next 20 years”
  - Central Walker would exhibit “the most urban character” with dwellings at two units per acre
  - O'Brien Street to the Grand River would be one unit per acre residential density
  - Page 28: “The Plan proposes several multiple areas intended for town houses and rental apartments, oriented to nearby future shopping services and public transportation.”
  - Page 28: “Existing commercial districts on Alpine, Lake Michigan Drive, and Remembrance Road, primarily serving the local community, will be expanded.”
  - Interesting plan for “Neighborhood Units” and school location planning
  - Table V – Existing and Proposed Land Use
    - » Future Walker industrial land area was benchmarked to Grand Rapids, Warren and Flint (see Table V on next page)
- Financial Capacity for Capital Improvements: Page 32
  - Examination of 1962 City Charter and limits on taxation and bonding
  - “Walker has no general obligation bonded debt”
  - “The tax base, therefore, appears to be enjoying a rapid rate of increase”
  - In 1966-67 per capita SEV was \$4,750. 1968 estimate was \$5,120 per capita.
  - Well diversified tax base...35% Residential; 35% Industrial; 20% Commercial
  - The Plan notes that Walker has a high proportion of Industrial compared to similar Michigan cities.
  - “Many Michigan cities rely on between 50 and 95 percent of this tax base in residential property.”
  - “Walker’s tax rate in the 1967-68 Fiscal Year was 4 mills plus ½ mil voted for fire equipment, which is among the lowest in the State.”

Table V  
CITY OF WALKER  
EXISTING AND PROPOSED LAND USE

Land Use	EXISTING		PROPOSED	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Single Family Residential	1,094	6.6	7,100	42.6
Multiple Family Residential	7	0.04	374	2.3
Education-Research-Office	56	0.4	238	1.4
Commercial	115	0.7	378	2.3
Public and Semipublic	597	3.5	1,596	9.6
Industry	611	3.6	2,798	16.8
Undeveloped Land	12,362	74.3	0	0%
Vehicular Rights-of-way and Railroad	1,773	10.7	4,131	24.8
Water	25	0.2	25	0.2
TOTAL	16,640	100%	16,640	100%

- "County, school and other taxes account for over 80% of the typical tax bill in Walker."
- Interesting discussion on State of Michigan revenue sharing
- Walker received \$136,000 per year for roads from Public Act 51
- Page 34: Interesting discussion on State funding for local schools
  - » **2019 Author's Comment:** You can see the seeds being planted for Reagan's New Federalism, given the 36.5% of total local government funding coming from the Federal and State levels
- Page 35: First comment on local income tax for Walker
- Page 35: Refuse Collection and Disposal.
- Page 36: "The City is currently in a sound fiscal position..."
- Encourages the City to aggressively pursue land for parks, fire stations, libraries and other public facilities (especially road right-of-way), consistent with the Plan.
- Extended discussion on use of ½ mil to prepare City for predicted 1985 population of 26,000 citizens.
- Plan ends with special emphasis on the need for a well-considered and updated six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
  - » Planning Commission would recommend the CIP to the City Commission for approval.
- **2019 Author's Comment:** It is very interesting to see the emphasis on local support, grants and loans from the Federal, State and County levels.
- **Page 43 - The 1969 Future Land Use Map**



# 1983

## City of Walker Community Development Plan & Technical Report

The City of Walker selected the Grand Valley State College – Departments of Planning and Resource Management and Public Administration as consultants on the 1983 master plan. The final report is divided into two documents. The Walker Community Development Plan document is only 26 pages long and single-sided. The second document, the Walker Community Technical Report, is voluminous and filled with community information. A knowledgeable reader can extract typical master plan content, although substantial effort is required.

### Interesting 1983 Master Plan Content

- A 13-member planning committee determined project goals
- A community survey was sent to 600 Walker citizens
  - **2019 Author's Comment:** This does not appear to have been a statistically-valid survey
- City logos were created, and a master plan motto task force was instituted
- The logos and mottos were voted on by the public
- A business survey was distributed
  - **2019 Author's Comment:** This does not appear to have been a statistically-valid survey
- 1970 US Census population: 11,492
- 1980 US Census population: 15,088
- Population projections were significantly adjusted following the difficult economic times of the 1970's decade (See Table I on next page)
- The planning team created five future land use alternatives for the City
  - The selected plan was based on then-current growth and density patterns
- The 1983 Plan begins with recommendations and implementation techniques, which is unusual
- Issues are generalized under headings of:
  - Housing
  - Human Resources
  - Industrial Development
  - Transportation
  - Open Space
  - Water Resources
  - Design

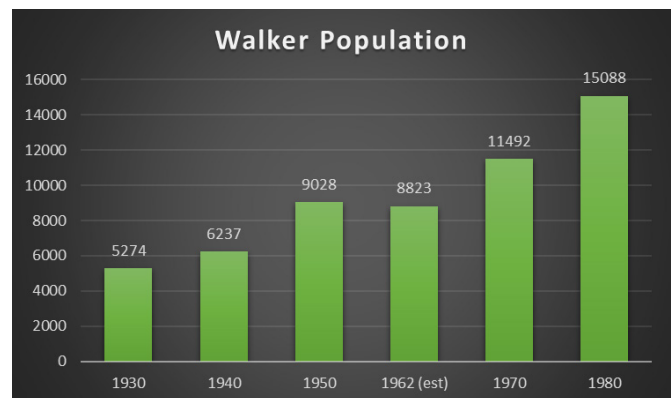


TABLE I

1983 WALKER  
MASTER PLAN

#### Population Projection

	1970	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Grand Rapids Metropolitan Development Plan May 16, 1969	13,000	18,000		27,000		
Walker Development Plan 1969			26,000			
West Michigan Regional Planning Commission 1970/1980 Census	11,492	15,088				22,000
Walker Park & Recreation Plan 1975				20,000		
Walker Development Plan 1983					(High) 20,000 (Trend) 19,000 (Low) 18,000	

Source: Compiled from various studies

- Citizen Attitudes
- Nominal Group Technique
- Land Use
- Top 8 Walker Issues (per Nominal Group Technique):
  - Attract more industrial development
  - More recreational facilities
  - Zoning for the good of the community, not individuals
  - Maintain a rural atmosphere
  - Provide the best possible school system
  - Keep commercial and industrial development in general locations
  - Keep wide open spaces and residential large lots
  - More community spirit
- Land preservation – Although only 29 acres in the City are noted as being enrolled in farmland preservation program P.A. 116, there is talk of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program.
  - “The zoning ordinance should be immediately revised to reflect a strong agricultural preservation section...”

#### Land Use Plan:

- “A majority voted to retain a 90-foot frontage for residential property under any circumstances...”
- “All of the (5) alternatives would be suitable for the City...”
  - Alternative #5 was recommended for adoption
  - “Development should not occur in those areas that are not identified for development...”

#### Alternative Land Use Plan:

- Performance Development Standards and Performance Zoning are covered
  - South of O’Brien Street is identified as environmentally sensitive
    - » Direction for either larger lots or cluster development
      - Or smaller lots based on development costs
      - **2019 Author’s Comment:** Very confusing
  - Sprawl prevention concern noted

#### End of Development Plan Report

- **2019 Author’s Comment:** Even for 1983 vintage, this Development Plan is short on detail and useful direction. It appears to be designed as an Executive Summary.

The massive **Technical Report** contains useful information that is typically found in master plan documents.

- The Report notes that the original Walker city incorporation was a “partly defensive” effort, aimed at stopping the westward annexation movement by the City of Grand Rapids
  - The Report states that the City of Walker incorporation was started in 1962 and then expanded westerly to include the remainder of Walker Township in 1963.
- Housing Data:
  - Population projections for the Year 2000 were generally accurate
  - Housing...areas of concern
    - » Alpine-Pannell-Voorheis, from 3 Mile Road to Ann Street
    - » Winslow Street east of Bristol Avenue
    - » Oakwood Heights Mobile Home Park, west of Bristol Avenue
    - » Butterworth Avenue – environmental concerns about water quantity and quality
  - Housing – **Seniors**
    - » 1980 Census counted 1,368 residents over 65 years old
    - » Report notes pending MSHDA elderly housing of 100 units going up on Remembrance Road...what becomes Coventry Woods
    - » Plan estimates that in 1980 there were 387 seniors in need of assisted living housing
  - Housing – **Supply and Needs**
    - » “Walker does project a sense of well-being...”
    - » One case of a rental assistance program via the Kent County Housing Commission
    - » The Report notes that since 1971 there had been 121 single family subsidy commitments under the Section 235 HUD program. These houses were built in Chesterfield Heights, Census Tract 117
    - » Edward Rose Associates, the owner of the two largest apartment complexes in Walker at the time (Old Orchard and Apple Ridge), was uncooperative with the report and its representatives, taking a largely anti-government tact in Edward Ravitz’s letter dated 3-22-1983

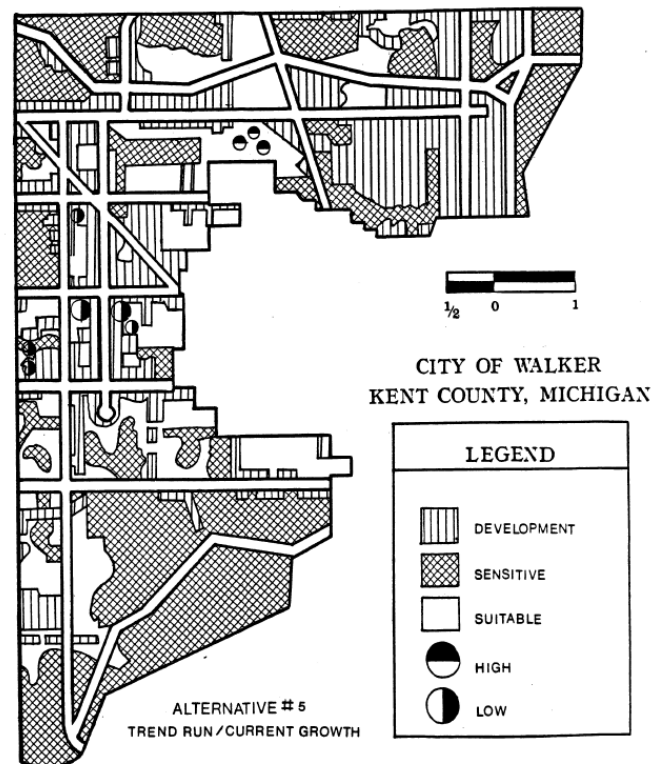


- Residential Lot Sizes
  - » **“Can we accommodate two seemingly conflicting goal sets...Services at a reasonable cost, more development, better drainage and sewer systems versus more aesthetic values, “large lot,” rural atmosphere, and wide-open spaces?”**
  - » The Report suggests that performance zoning, cluster development and Planned Unit Developments might help solve the conflicting goals issue.
- Human Resource and Quality of Life
  - This part of the Report defines the following:
    - » Human Resource Study
      - Demographics
      - Poverty
      - Education
      - Health
      - Human Resource Services
    - » Quality of Life
      - Socioeconomic Status
      - Housing
      - Fire
      - Air Quality
      - Noise Pollution
      - Cultural Opportunities
      - Recreation
      - Open Space
      - Density
      - Crime
  - Human Resource Study Process and Data
    - » The Walker community assisted plan development by:
      - Identifying issues and problems
      - Setting goals
      - Exchanging information
      - Making decisions.
- There were five methods / process for public input:
  - Walker Citizens Advisory Committee
    - » Worked with planning professionals to develop the Plan
  - Nominal Group Technique
    - » Process used to form goals and rank issues
  - Multi-Service Citizens Survey
    - » Mailed to 500 random Walker residents
    - » Actual number of results not quantified but said, “returns were good...”
  - New City Logo
    - » Three logo choices were offered up for public vote
  - Business Survey
    - » “...sent out to most of the major commercial and industrial firms in Walker.”
- **Demographics**
  - Useful and typical population data and trends with basic analyses
  - **2019 Author’s Comment:** Interesting that the 1983 plan authors expressed a desire to avoid “hazardous” future Walker population projections. They used a standard linear method for increases in population. Perhaps the 80,000 – 90,000 citizen build-out capacity from the 1969 Master Plan was not acceptable in 1983.
  - **Poverty**
    - » Concern expressed about relatively high level of senior citizens living in poverty.
  - **Education**
    - » Data taken from aforementioned Multi-Service Community Survey, which is described as a “statistically valid” tool:
      - “Table 6 indicates that the education levels for Walker residents are significantly higher than both Grand Rapids and Kent County.”
  - **Public Schools**
    - » Negative enrollment trends from 1970/71 – 1982/83
      - Kenowa Hills Public Schools: -29.7%
      - Grandville Public Schools: -7.2%
      - Comstock Park Public Schools: -32.2%
- Quality of Life
  - Community information included under the Quality of Life category included the following:
    - » Socioeconomics
      - “The Walker labor force is primarily professional...”
      - “Question #9 of the citizen survey deals with total household income before taxes. The \$20,000 - \$29,999 bracket being the most common...”

- “So per capita income in Walker is slightly lower than Michigan’s but higher than the immediate surrounding area.”
- » Housing
- » Fire Data (including Walker Fire Department equipment list)
- » Air Quality
- » Noise
- » Cultural Opportunities
- » Recreation
  - Needs, Deficiencies and Principles are included
  - “The average age (of Walker residents) in 1980 was 27.8 and the percentage of the population over 60 years old was relatively low.”
  - An inventory of programs and park sites is included. Schools and private sites are included in the inventory.
- » Open Space
- » Density
  - Compared to surrounding communities, Walker is noted to be lower in people per square mile and housing units per square mile.
- » Crime
  - Significant police department statistics are included.

▪ **1983 Future Land Use Map**

- ALTERNATIVE #5 TREND RUN / CURRENT GROWTH, shown on next page, was recommended as the official future land use map for the City of Walker
- **2019 Author’s Comment:** The practical usefulness of this map is debatable.



# 1998

## Master Plan - City of Walker, Michigan

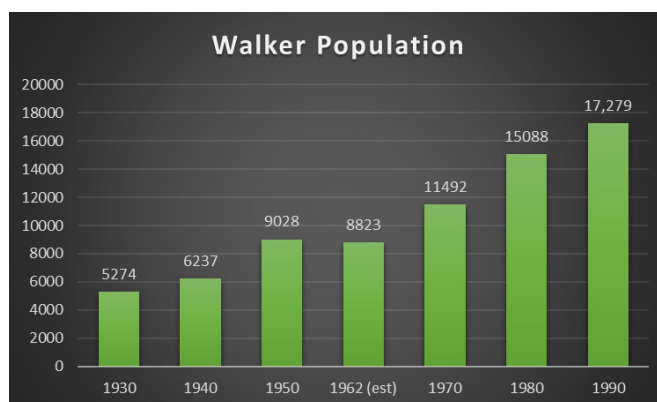
The 1998 Master Plan was guided by consultant Steve Langworthy. The project budget was \$50,000. The final report was adopted on July 20th, 1998.

This master plan report is traditional in style and content. (2019 Author's Comment: The plan seems designed for, and better applied to, a township rather than a city.)

The true value of the 1998 Master Plan is its applicability as a benchmark for the Walker 2020 master planning process. The 1998 Plan established a firm foundation for future community planning efforts in Walker.

### Interesting 1998 Master Plan Content

- Walker is noted as being a principal employment center in the Grand Rapids area, per the Grand Valley Metro Council's Blueprint report.
- 1990 US Census population: 17,279
- "A Plan which is not actively followed and implemented may lead to problems for the City in the future."
- "Despite predictions to the contrary for the rest of the State (Michigan), the economic and living environment of Kent and Ottawa County and the surrounding region is likely to continue to attract new employers and residents throughout the coming decade and beyond."
- "Land use in the south Walker area will probably dictate the eventual rate and number of population growth."
- "The 1990 median age jumped significantly from the 1980 figure of 27.8 to 31.3."
- "Especially dramatic is the growth of the 65 and over population."
- "Quality of neighborhoods" was identified by 90 percent of the 1995 community survey respondents as either "extremely important" or "important"
- "Among the major cities in the Grand Rapids area, Kentwood and Grand Rapids have a higher percentage of renter occupied housing than Walker. Grandville and Wyoming have somewhat lower percentages of renter occupied homes."



### Chapter 3 - A Vision for the City of Walker

- **Vision Statement:** The City of Walker will be a community with a distinct identity, forged through a strong sense of neighborhood and family; a planned, balanced use of land considering the needs of residents and businesses; and firm ties between its people and government.
- **Goals:**
  - **Community Image**
    - » The City will work with its residents to establish a sense of community and belonging through activities, such as an annual Walker Fair with community and family events, and a distinctive theme, logo or slogan.
    - » The City of Walker will identify and develop a central "place" as a focal point of the city. The "Heart of Walker" will be a place for recreation, community events, festivals, and other activities to promote interaction among the people of the City.
    - » Efforts will be made to strengthen community and neighborhood pride through improvements aimed at improving the physical and social conditions of the City's residents.



#### ○ **Neighborhoods and Families**

- » The City and residents of Walker will work together to develop strategies to maintain positive features and character of its neighborhoods. These may include such activities as road maintenance, upkeep of homes, preserving trees and other natural features, and other similar efforts.
- » The City of Walker will promote safer neighborhoods by assisting neighborhood organizations and encouraging more interaction between neighborhood residents.
- » The City will work with neighborhoods and other community organizations to promote structured programs for all age groups to encourage recreation and interaction between residents.
- » The City will work to develop a partnership with the community school systems to utilize existing facilities and programs and to develop new facilities and programs to meet the needs of Walker's residents.
- » A list of **Characteristics of Living Neighborhoods** is provided on Page 3 – 7.

#### ○ **Land Use**

- » Future land use decisions in the City will seek to balance the physical, social and economic effects of development with the needs and desires of its existing residents, the environment, and all necessary community services.
- » Land use decisions must recognize the rights of private property owners as well as those of neighboring owners and the interests of all the City's residents and businesses.
- » The City of Walker will identify and develop a central "place" as a focal point of the City. The "Heart of Walker" will be a place for recreation, community events, festivals, and other activities to promote interaction among the people of the City.
- » A process for establishing a Land Use Policy is included on Page 3 – 8.

#### ○ **Resident Communications**

- » The Master Plan for the City of Walker will be citizen based with emphasis on neighborhoods. The Plan will be a document upon which the people of the city may rely.
- » The Master Plan will be kept current and consistently followed by the Planning and City Commissions.

- » The City of Walker will promote community involvement by assisting in the organization of neighborhood and business associations and encouraging more interaction between neighborhood residents.
- » The City will provide regular communication at the ward level between City Commissioners and neighborhood and business associations.
- » The City of Walker will promote the widest possible awareness of projects and issues that will affect the entire community.

### **Chapter 4 – Caring for the Land – Future Land Use**

- Specific links between the previous Goals and future land use decisions are stated.
- 1998-era "Midcity (O'Brien Street to Railroad)" and "East End (Bristol Avenue to US-131 south of I-96)" are called out.

#### ▪ **THE WALKER OF TOMORROW – Future Land Use Designations**

##### ○ **Residential**

- » Rural Residential (RR)
  - Density not to exceed 1 dwelling unit per acre
  - Major issues include public utility service challenges and limits to road connectivity
- » Low Density Residential (LDR)
  - Density up to 4 dwelling units per acre
  - A list of elements central to the aforementioned Living Neighborhoods is included on Page 4 - 4
- » Medium Density Residential (MDR)
  - Density up to 8 dwelling units per acre
  - "Many of the same qualities that influence LDR neighborhoods should also be encouraged for these higher density neighborhoods..."
- » High Density Residential (HDR)
  - Density up to 12 dwelling units per acre
  - The controversy of high-density housing is acknowledged, and an Issue Paper is included
  - HDR design characteristics are listed on Page 4 – 7

##### ○ **Commercial**

- » Neighborhood Commercial (NC)
  - The intent of the NC classification is to limit the overall size and intensity of commercial development

- » Village Commercial (VC)
  - “These areas often include a wide range of uses; older residential lots, multiple family buildings, small commercial uses, offices, and even industrial operations, all within a small area.”
- » Community Commercial (CC)
  - “Community Commercial represents the most intensive areas of commercial services, offering a wide range of goods and services of varying sizes and markets.”
  - The Standale shopping area is called out, combined with the then-recently completed Lake Michigan Drive / M-45 Corridor Study.
  - Access Management for traffic impacts is called out as essential in CC areas
- » Office (O)
  - Identified as “the least intensive Commercial category.”

#### ○ Industrial (IND)

- » Potential land use conflicts with neighborhoods are listed
- » Heavy Industrial is called out as needing special placement and design characteristics.

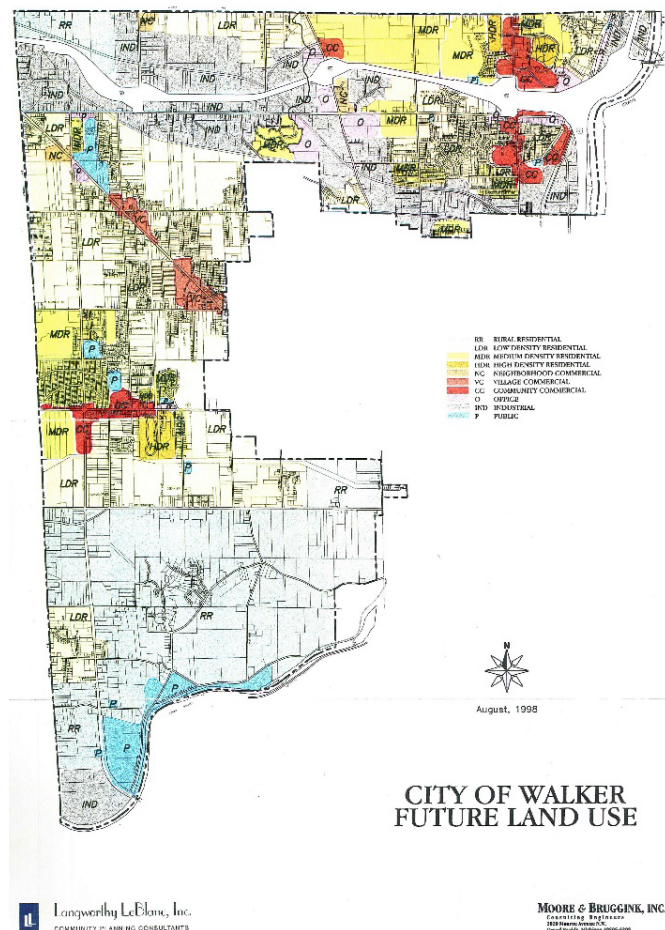
#### ○ Public / Quasi-Public (P)

- This designation is identified for public land uses.

### ▪ 1998 City of Walker Future Land Use Map

#### ▪ Future Transportation Improvements

- Road projects are listed incrementally based on the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan
- On Page 4–18, a list of non-GVMC Plan road improvements are stated, including:
  - » Leonard Street, from Remembrance Road to M-11 / Wilson Avenue
  - » North Ridge Drive Extension to Fruit Ridge Avenue via Dykstra Drive
  - » Wilson Avenue / M-11 from Burton Street to Leonard Street
  - » Three Mile Road from Wilson Avenue to Remembrance Road / M-11
  - » Bristol Avenue and Pannell Street realignment



- » Kloet Street connection to Walker Avenue
- » Three Mile Road to Richmond Street connection via Key Line Drive or Mullins Avenue
- » I-96 overpass bridges at Alpine Avenue / M-37, Walker Avenue and Fruit Ridge Avenue.
- Plan contains several maps and data sheets clarifying Walker street functions and capital needs
- Maps are also provided for public water system and public sanitary sewer system features
- Between the street system and public utility maps is a Walker Parks & Recreation map, showing the location of facilities in Walker

## Sub-Area Plans

### ▪ Walker Avenue and I-96 Land Use Study

- A regional commercial mall had been proposed at this location
- A local and regional market demand analysis was provided in short form
- The subarea plan divides the general area into planning units and lists land use concerns and potential remedies for application by the City
- The subarea plan extends to the northerly and westerly City limits.

### ▪ M-11 / Wilson Avenue Development Guide

- Subarea spatial limits were 3 Mile Road to south of Lake Michigan Drive / M-45
- Subarea study units included:
  - » Roadway Function and Design
  - » Existing Land Use Analysis
  - » Land Use and Zoning
  - » Commercial Location Standards
    - There was concern for commercial sprawl along M-11 / Wilson Avenue
  - » Cooperative Planning with residents, land owners, MDOT and the Kent County Road Commission
  - » Access Management – References Issue Paper on Corridor Development
  - » A M-11 future land use plan was divided into four planning units, with specific design and zoning recommendations for each
  - » Wilson Avenue (M-11) Planned Improvements were noted per the GVMC 2020 Long Range Plan.
    - M-11 is described as “well over capacity” and a “deficient corridor” in the GVMC 2020 LR Plan.
    - A non-motorized pathway along M-11 is suggested.

### ▪ South Walker Land Use Study

- Subarea spatial limits were M-45/Lake Michigan Drive to the Grand River
- Challenges were identified per planning topics as follows:
  - » Existing Land Use
  - » Natural Features
    - **2019 Author’s Note:** It is interesting that

surface sand and gravel mining impacts are covered but crude oil well impacts are not covered. There are 200+ crude oil wells in south Walker.

#### » Future Land Use

#### » Public Improvements

- Public sanitary sewer – not a high priority
- Public water service – a high priority
- A future fire station at Hall Street and Wilson Avenue was discussed
- Bike paths / trails were recommended

#### » Transportation Improvements

- The widening of M-11 / Wilson Avenue was the dominant theme
- A public road connection between Butterworth Avenue and O’Brien Street was discussed

#### » Environmental Issues

- Topics included surface mining and a brief reference to crude oil wells
- Floodplain planning was discussed

#### ○ Development Policies

#### » Topics centered upon the following:

- Land Use Character
- Sensitive Land Development
- Open Space Design / Residential Clustering
- Zoning Regulations
- Lots on Arterial Streets
- Living Neighborhoods details were again referenced from earlier in the 1998 Plan.

### ▪ Northeast Walker Street Network

- Subarea spatial limits were described as along and adjacent to the entire Alpine Avenue corridor, north and south of I-96

- The impact of Greenridge Square was highlighted

#### ○ Street Planning:

- » “...it is important that a well-planned street network be in place to ensure that adequate circulation is provided. Rather than having each development provide individual access to the major public street (Alpine Avenue), project approvals should include provisions for stub streets to vacant properties that may be available for future development.”

» Issues were identified as follows:

- Traffic volumes
- Traffic accidents
- Jurisdiction
- Protection of existing neighborhoods
- Lack of sidewalks
- Signal timing

» Recommendations included the following:

- A M-37 bypass
- Connectivity to 4 Mile Road...without connections to existing neighborhood street
- Service drives along Alpine Avenue
- Driveway movement restrictions
- Improved signal timing
- A connection from Old Kent Park to North Park Street
- Alpine Avenue streetscaping
- Additional Alpine Avenue left-turn lanes and signals
- Partnership with MDOT
- Pedestrian bike path to the Grand River.

- **Issue Paper – Dealing With Development Controversy**
- **Issue Paper – Evaluating Development**
- **Issue Paper – The Image of the City Of Walker**
- **Issue Paper – Highway Corridor Development**

# From the 1998 Master Plan to the Walker 2020 Master Plan

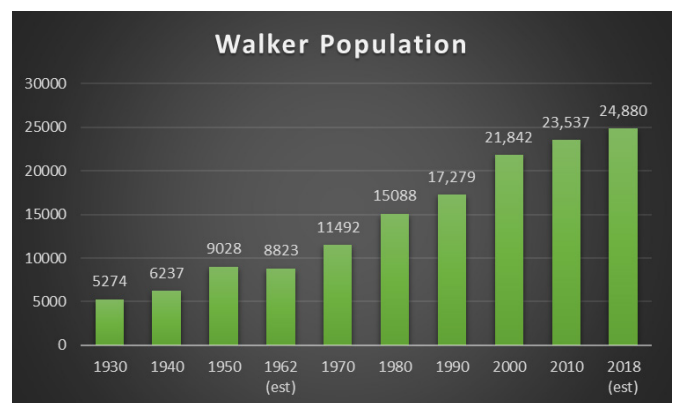
The City of Walker joined all of Michigan, the entire United States and much of the world in living through a major economic recession from 2008 until approximately 2012. Michigan as a state suffered through a prolonged recessionary period that started following the 1999-2000 “Dot Com” bubble bursting. The domestic automotive industry and associated businesses experienced significant instability during these years.

The City of Walker was certainly impacted by both recessionary periods but much more so during the latter. Local economic health returned in force in the year 2013 and continues through 2019.

- 2000 Walker US Census population: 21,842
- 2010 Walker US Census population: 23,537
- 2018 Walker ACS population estimate: 24,880

The City of Walker built upon the foundation of the 1998 Master Plan by approving a series of subarea plans / subplans between the years 2005 and 2018. The detail inherent to these subarea planning efforts has been carefully incorporated into the remainder of this document.

Going forward, the key to effective community planning in the City of Walker will be neighborhood-specific subplans that blend together into a coherent whole.



This page intentionally left blank.

Planning Consultants:



235 E. Main Street, Suite 105

Northville, MI 48167

**T:** 248.596.0920

**F:** 248.596.0930

**[www.mcka.com](http://www.mcka.com)**

John Jackson, AICP ..... President

Christopher Khorey, AICP ..... Project Manager

