

WARREN POLICIES PLAN



WARREN POLICIES PLAN

CITY OF WARREN PLANNING COMMISSION

GERALD LUEDTKE AND ASSOCIATES, INCORPORATED
Urban Planning Consultants 100 Renaissance Center



Ronald L. Bonkowski, Mayor

November 1, 1989

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Honorable Ronald L. Bonkowski, Mayor
Honorable City Council
City of Warren

Dear Mayor Bonkowski and Honorable Council:

The Planning Commission is pleased to transmit herewith the document Warren Policies Plan. The Policies Plan sets forth policies to guide the future development and redevelopment of the City of Warren for the next twenty years. This plan is an amendment to the present Comprehensive Development Plan which was adopted in 1966.

The Policies Plan was adopted September 18, 1989, by the Planning Commission pursuant to the Public Act 285 of 1931.

The Planning Commission would like to extend its appreciation to your good offices, the department and division heads within the City administration, other public and private agencies and the many Warren citizens who participated and assisted in the preparation of this document.

It should be noted that the plan document has been recognized for its excellence through receipt of the 1989 Honor Award from the Michigan Society of Planning Officials.

We are confident that with your support, this plan will provide the springboard to an ongoing planning program in order that this great City will be prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank L. Ventura
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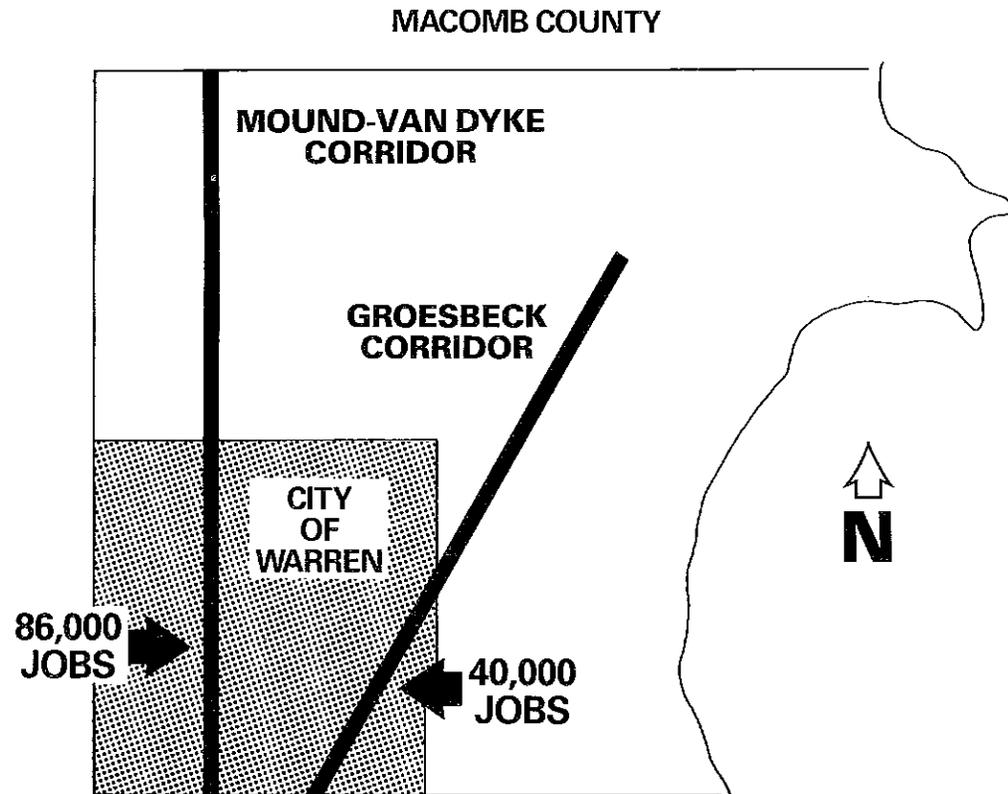
CITY OF WARREN POLICIES PLAN

This plan sets forth policies to guide the future development of the City of Warren for the next twenty years. In 1966, over 22 years ago, the city adopted its present comprehensive development plan. The 1966 plan set forth several important development concepts for the city:

1. Development of a city center to provide a sense of identity to Warren.
2. Elimination of blight and deterioration from the city's older neighborhoods.
3. More efficient development of the city's commercial areas.
4. Development of vacant and underutilized industrial properties.
5. Development of a good thoroughfare system which anticipates future traffic needs.
6. Provision of community facilities to meet the needs of the city's growing population.

Some of the development concepts contained in the 1966 plan have been achieved during the past 22 years; while other development concepts have only been partially implemented. For example, the city has developed a very impressive city center on Van Dyke Avenue which includes governmental and private developments in a coordinated downtown-like setting. The city also has developed or redeveloped many vacant or underutilized industrial properties. The city's thoroughfare system has been substantially extended and improved during the last two

EMPLOYMENT CONCENTRATIONS



decades. However, the blighted condition of many residential areas in the southern portion of Warren continues to exist and has worsened in some areas. The need for additional and newer community facilities has also not been met and many public buildings are now inadequate in size or condition. Generally, the design and condition of the city's commercial areas has improved in recent years as more stringent development controls have been applied to the design of newer shopping centers.

The adoption of a new Policies Plan for the City of Warren provides an opportunity to stand back and take stock of how the previous plan has been implemented during the past two decades. What can we do to ensure that the city's new long-range development plan will be effective? What are the major obstacles which with the new plan must deal?

The economic viability of the City of Warren lies in its industrial strength. Over 86,000 persons are employed in Macomb County's Mound Road/Van Dyke Avenue corridor and over 40,000 persons are employed in the Groesbeck Highway corridor. Major employers in Warren include the General Motors Technical Center, General Dynamics, Chrysler Corporation, Prince Macaroni Company, Bundy Corporation, Lamb Company, Pioneer Engineering Company, Dana Corporation, Cadillac Gauge, Precision Components Incorporated, Holly Carburetor, Modern Engineering, Wilson Automation, Hofley Manufacturing, Veet Industries, and ACCO/Chain Conveyor.

The Macomb Community College Center for Community Studies has identified two general trends which have a major influence on the local economy of the City of Warren.¹ These trends are: a) the general recovery of the American automobile industry since the 1979-1982 recession, and b) the new changes in modern manufacturing technology.

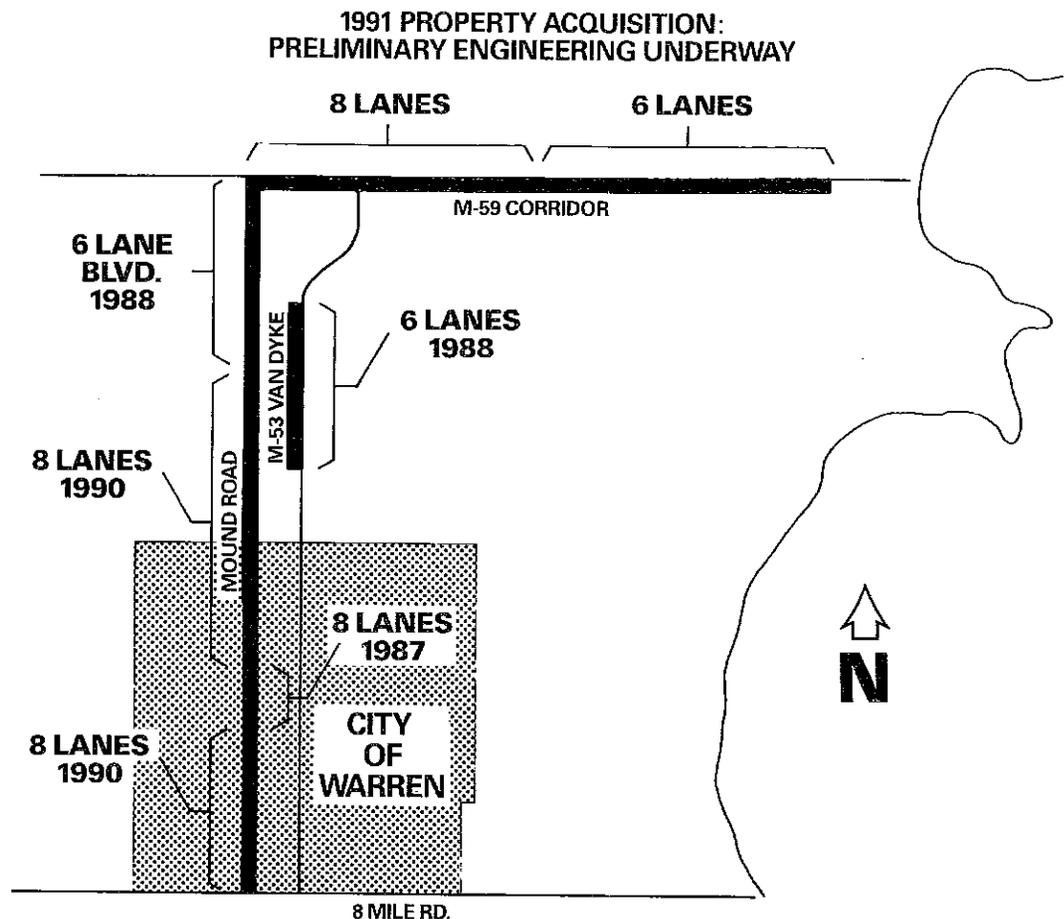
The renewal of the American automobile industry has been facilitated by the infusion of modern manufacturing techniques. While there are many different types of techniques, the major unifying factor in this technology is the use of informational systems to drive the production of parts. The result of the new technology developments will be to alter existing relationships between the automobile companies and their suppliers, promoting greater need for just-in-time delivery, quality of parts, and higher levels of dependability. This national trend affects Warren in two primary ways. First, the city's workforce is not highly educated. It includes a large proportion of adults which have not completed high school. During future years, a large number of existing unskilled jobs will be eliminated. Future industrial jobs will demand a highly educated worker. Secondly, the modernization of the automo-

tive supply industry will require the infusion of new technologies and modern equipment. Most industry analysts believe that there will be a "shake out" in which those firms willing to spend the money on new equipment will survive and many smaller companies will not. A large number of Warren's metal forming industries are small family-owned businesses which may not have access to the necessary capital markets to borrow money for new machinery. Some of these existing firms may be forced to leave the market place.

Analyses of the economic development structure of the Detroit Metropolitan Area have indicated that Washtenaw, Oakland, Wayne, and Macomb Counties are each emerging with their own particular economic strengths. Because of the presence of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County has become a focus for development of technical expertise in manufacturing systems technology. Oakland County is emerging as a strong center of professional services, finance, and applied technology. Macomb County will continue to be a strong center of manufacturing industries and may diversify its economic base. The City of Warren is really at the center of Macomb County's future strength as the Metropolitan Area's industrial manufacturing center. Bernard Giampetroni, Macomb County Planning Director, recently remarked that "technologies developed in Washtenaw County will be implemented in industrial Macomb County." There are over 600 firms in Macomb County which function as automobile suppliers. Over a third of these firms are located within the City of

¹ Portions of the Macomb Community College Center for Community Studies report, An Economic and Demographic Analysis of the City of Warren are summarized on pages 3 and 8 of the plan.

REGIONAL THOROUGHFARE IMPROVEMENTS

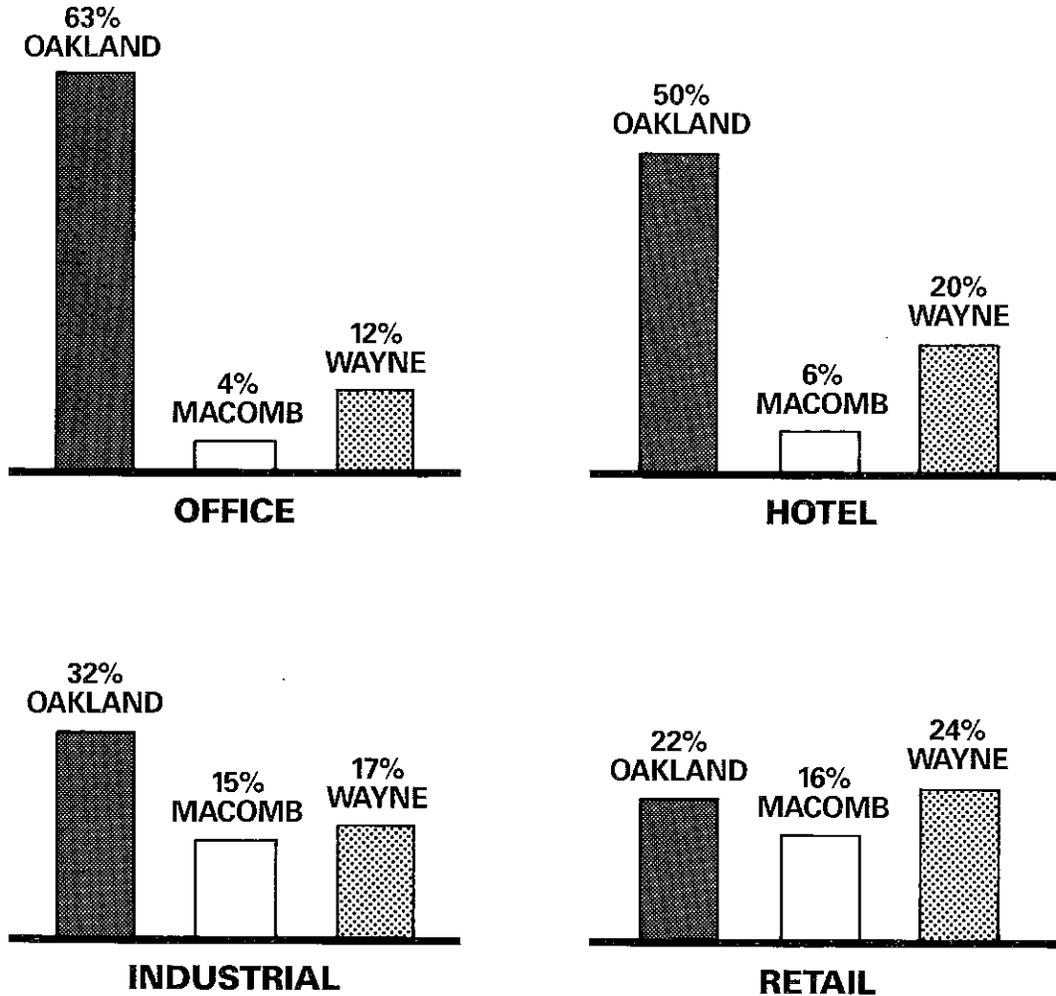


Warren. Of the 652 tool and die establishments in the tri-county area of Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne Counties, 95 (15%) of the total are located in Warren. This strong manufacturing base will enable the City of Warren to remain as a viable and important center of economic growth during the next 20 years.

During the next 20 years, it is projected that intensive urbanization will take place in the middle and northern portions of Macomb and Oakland Counties. Certain transportation facilities improvements which are now under construction will more effectively link Warren to these future growth areas. Mound Road and Van Dyke Avenue are currently being widened and improved and will be linked to M-59 which will also be upgraded to carry increased traffic volumes. It is projected that Mound Road will be transformed to an eight-lane thoroughfare between Eight Mile Road and M-59 by the year 1990. Van Dyke Avenue will be upgraded to a six-lane thoroughfare. M-59 will be upgraded to a six- to eight-lane thoroughfare by the year 1991. These transportation linkages will substantially strengthen the future economic viability of the City of Warren. Linkages between Mound Road, Van Dyke, I-696, and M-59 will strengthen economic interdependencies between the growth areas of northern Macomb and Oakland Counties and the City of Warren during the next 20 years. Many people who live in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne Counties will find employment within Warren's strong industrial corridors. The key to providing a strong economic future for the City of Warren during the next two decades lies in creating strong functional relationships between Warren and the rapidly urbanizing suburban communities to the north and west. The City of Warren should continue to strengthen its role as a regional employment center. By strengthening its industrial base, the city will be able to provide additional tax revenues needed to maintain the quality of life and the level of services which the resi-

ECONOMIC EXPANSION STATE OF MICHIGAN

TOTAL MICHIGAN EXPANSION IN TRI-COUNTY AREA



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU JAN.-SEPT. 1986

dents of Warren require. Short-term financial problems of the city should diminish as an aggressive long-range economic development strategy is carried out.

Recent economic development trends in the Wayne-Oakland-Macomb tri-county area show that Oakland County far outstrips both Macomb and Wayne Counties in most categories of economic development. Macomb County is far behind Oakland and Wayne Counties in development of office space and hotel facilities. However, with respect to industrial growth and development of retail shopping facilities, Macomb County shows strong growth rates. New transportation improvements which will link the growth areas of Oakland and Macomb Counties more efficiently, will cause accelerated economic growth to occur in Macomb County. The outward expansion of urbanization in Macomb County during the next 20 years will also contribute to the county's economic development. The extension of sewer and water facilities into urbanizing portions of Macomb County and the completion of major thoroughfare improvement programs will support this northward economic push.

What effect will these economic development trends have on the City of Warren? Macomb County should emerge as the leading growth area for industrial development during the next two decades. The rate of industrial growth in Macomb County could very likely surpass that of Oakland or Wayne Counties. A substantial amount of future industrial growth could take place in the City of Warren through better utilization of existing industrial land, through redevelopment of industrial areas, and through the planning and zoning of new land areas for industrial development. Because Warren has an already available infrastructure and the needed services required by new industries, it can be very competitive in attracting projected industrial growth to the community. Similarly, there will also be an increasing demand for

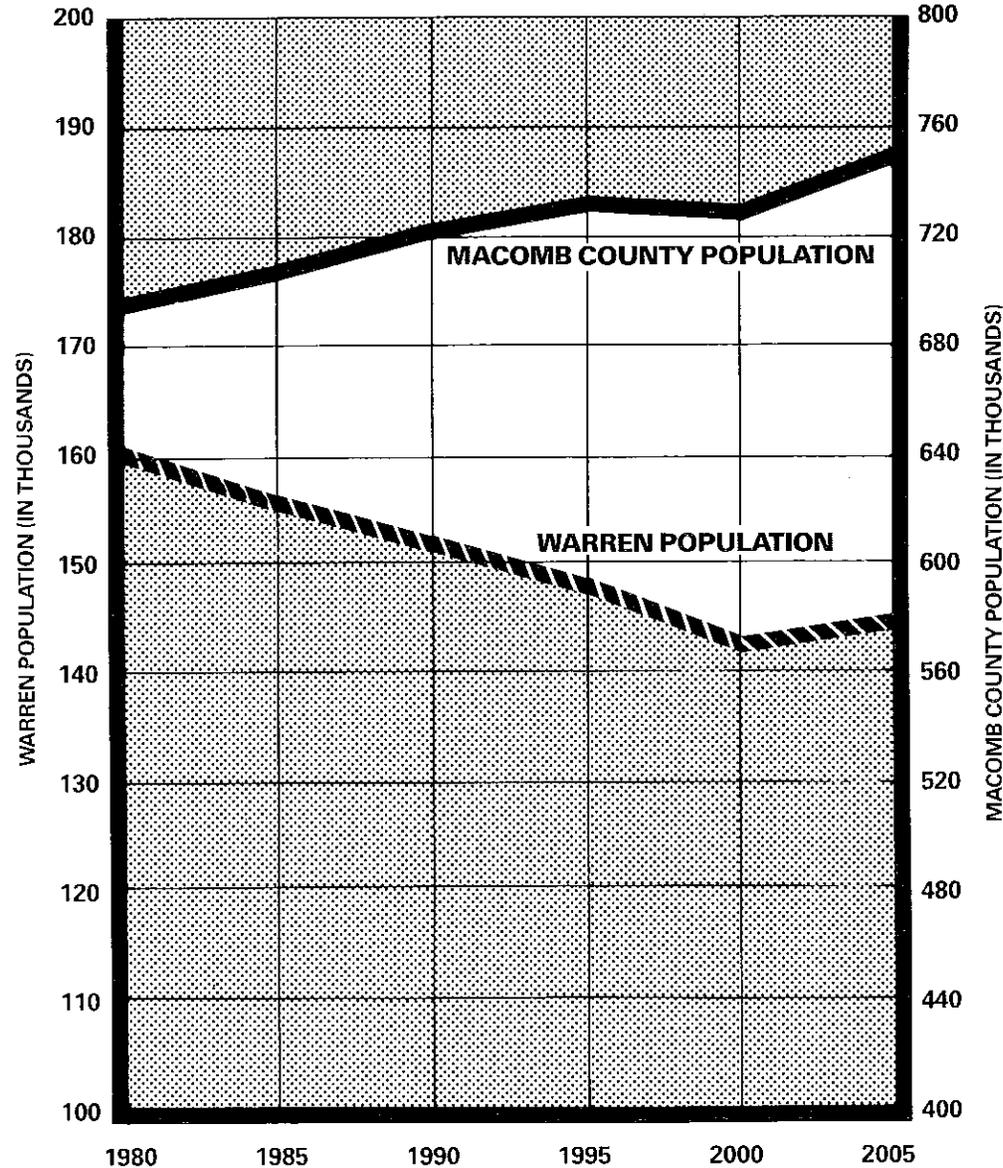


further office and hotel development in Macomb County to serve the needs of the growing industrial sector. While Macomb County will not show the dramatic office growth which has occurred in Oakland County, it will need additional office and hotel facilities to serve its industrial base during the next two decades. Areas of Warren which are not well utilized could be replanned and rezoned for the additional office and hotel development which will be needed. There will also be a demand for additional retail facilities in Macomb County during the next two decades to serve the new populations which will live in the urbanizing portions of the county. Many of the existing shopping centers in the City of Warren could be revitalized and strengthened to better serve future commercial needs both within the City of Warren and within the broader Macomb County market. The City of Warren, through careful planning, can become a major industrial and retail service center for the expanding economy of Macomb County during the next 20 years. If Warren does not pursue a progressive planning and redevelopment strategy, the needed industrial, retail, office, and hotel facilities will simply locate in other growing communities north of the city and Warren will be bypassed by this development potential.

The City of Warren lost about 10 percent of its population between 1970 and 1980. The city's 1970 population was 179,260 and by 1980 the population had dropped to 161,136. During this same period, there was a much more dramatic decline in the number of young people in the city. Between 1970 and 1980, the City of Warren lost over 56 percent of children under 9 years of age. During the past 20 years, a large number of public schools have been closed in Warren. These data indicate the following trends which are very significant for this policies plan:

1. The overall population of Warren is steadily shrinking.

SEMCOG POPULATION FORECAST



2. The city's population is becoming increasingly elderly and is losing its younger citizens.
3. It will be increasingly difficult for Warren to maintain its viability as a community of primarily single-family dwellings unless specific actions are taken to attract younger childbearing families.
4. The city's services and facilities were designed for families, and a new approach to municipal services will be needed if the population becomes predominantly elderly.
5. A predominantly elderly population would further weaken the tax base resources of the community.

The City of Warren is the third largest city in the State of Michigan. Only Detroit and Grand Rapids have larger populations. Despite a very constricted tax base and an overburdened municipal budget, the municipal government is still expected to provide first class services to an extensive number of businesses and residents in the city. For example, the city has over twenty-five shopping centers which demand good police and fire services. Five libraries which serve the city must be staffed and fully equipped to meet the needs of the public. Warren has over 300 acres of public park space which must be maintained and programmed to serve the leisure time needs of residents. In order to strengthen the manufacturing base of the city, the municipal government must continue to operate an effective industrial development program with needed infrastructure infusions.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments has prepared a population forecast for the City of Warren to the year 2005. The SEMCOG forecast shows Warren's population steadily declining through the year 2000. Between the year 2000 and 2005, the city's population

will begin to increase. The steady rate of decline shown in the SEMCOG forecast is due primarily to the aging of the city's population and the reduction in household size. Household projections were developed by estimating the capacity for household growth within each community based on master plans, zoning ordinances, and existing land use. SEMCOG fitted time series of building permit data to a logistic growth model, using the estimate of capacity for future growth as a growth limit. The logistic curve describes the pattern of development in which the rate of growth in a community increases in the early stages of development and begins to decrease as the capacity for future growth is exhausted. The logistic model is an excellent predictor of household growth for the vast majority of communities in Southeast Michigan. SEMCOG projected households by life cycle and income group by taking into consideration the effects of residential mobility, aging, and characteristics of the housing stock.

In 1980, the City of Warren had a population of 161,136 persons. By 1985, it is estimated that the population had decreased to 157,103 persons. SEMCOG forecasts that the population will decrease to 153,700 by 1990, to 149,636 by 1995 and will bottom out at 144,073 by the year 2000. By the year 2005, the city's population will reflect a slight increase to a projected total of 145,174. Between 1980 and 2005, it is forecast that the city will lose about 9.9 percent of its population. During the period between 1980 and 2005, the number of persons per household will steadily decrease from a high of 3.01 persons per household in 1980 to a low of 2.44 persons per household in the year 2005. The decrease in number of persons per household is due to the increasingly elderly proportion of the city's population as well as to an overall trend toward substantial reduction in family size. The beginning of an increase in the city's population between the year 2000 and 2005

will be due to the increase in younger childbearing families taking over homes previously occupied by elderly residents in the city. The city had a median population age of 31.56 years in 1980. The median age will increase to 33.55 years in 1990 and to 36.39 years by the year 2000. The SEMCOG population forecast shows that Macomb County population as a whole will steadily increase to the year 1995, will taper off slightly between 1995 and the year 2000, and then will begin to increase in rate of growth between 2000 and 2005. The projected increase in the rate of the county's population growth between 2000 and 2005 coincides with the beginning of an increase in the growth rate in several of the mature communities in Macomb County including the City of Warren. The county as a whole will show substantial rates of decrease in the number of persons per household but not as dramatic as the household size reductions which will be exhibited by the City of Warren.

The demographic analysis prepared by Macomb Community College indicates that the population of younger people appears to be most stable in the southern quadrants of the city. The northern quadrants of Warren, and in particular the northeast, appear to be steadily losing a large number of their younger citizens. The study concludes that, "If the city wants to encourage the growth of a younger population, it must take steps to ensure that numbers of younger residents of the city do not leave. The nature of the population changes in Warren are a disturbing sign for the future of financial matters, city planning, and school districts."

GENERAL POLICIES

The following four general policies are extremely important to the future viability of the City of Warren:

WARREN AS SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN'S CENTER OF AUTOMATED MANUFACTURING

Policy Recommendation:

The City of Warren should focus on its potential future role as Southeast Michigan's center for automated manufacturing. The city should establish effective linkages with the automated manufacturing systems technologies being developed in the Ann Arbor region. Similar linkages should be created with universities in Wayne and Oakland Counties. Warren has a manufacturing capability which will be essential to utilizing the technical expertise provided by the region's colleges and universities during the next 20 years. The city should take a lead role in establishing effective linkages between the developers of new technologies and the manufacturer/users of such technologies. Macomb Community College could serve as an effective conduit for linking emerging technologies to Warren's industrial facilities.

The City of Warren should work very closely with Macomb Community College to develop the skilled employment workforce needed to staff new industrial technologies during the next 20 years. Many persons now employed in Warren industries will not be able to fill new technical education requirements.

INCREASING THE AMOUNT OF LAND PLANNED AND ZONED FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Policy Recommendation:

The city should carefully inventory all available industrial land to accurately determine the remaining amount of industrial expansion capability in Warren.

Careful consideration should be given to increasing the amount of land planned for future industrial development in the city. In particular, blighted residential or commercial areas in the south end of the city should be evaluated for potential industrial redevelopment.

ATTRACTING A YOUNGER POPULATION

Policy Recommendation:

The city should attract and keep as many young people as possible as residents of the community. The city should also effectuate planning approaches which will make Warren more attractive in future years as a place for younger people to live and to raise a family. Emphasis must be placed on maintaining attractive neighborhoods, good schools and recreation facilities, as well as alternative forms of housing such as multiple-family housing which will serve the needs of single persons or young married couples who are not yet ready or able to purchase a single-family home.

THE VISUAL APPEARANCE OF WARREN

Policy Recommendation:

If Warren is to attract and keep younger childbearing families and is to remain a single-family residential community, the city will have to become a more attractive and inspiring place in which to live. Ugly and obsolete commercial corridors should be rebuilt and improved in appearance, dirty and cluttered industrial areas should be cleaned-up and modernized, community facilities and park facilities should be upgraded and increased in future years. The city council, planning commission, zoning board of appeals,

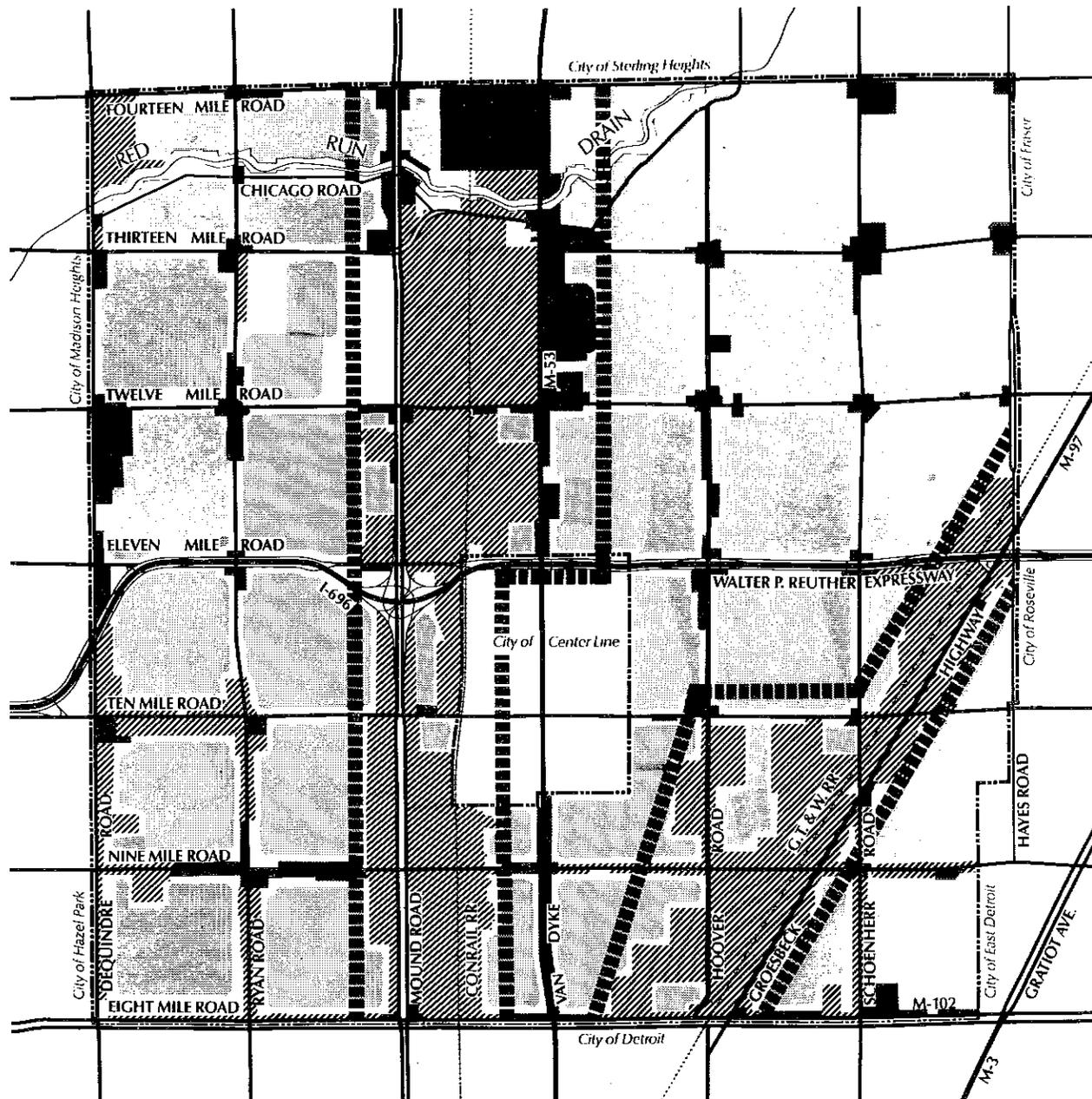
and other municipal agencies responsible for future planning and development should work diligently to plan and build a more visually pleasing and functionally efficient community. More stringent and effective regulations for zoning, sign control, housing code enforcement, and commercial property maintenance should be developed and carefully implemented. The city should continue to vigorously defend itself against litigation seeking to force detrimental land use developments which are contrary to the policies set forth in this plan.

LAND USE STRUCTURE OF WARREN

The land use configuration of the City of Warren is essentially determined by two large industrial corridors. One industrial corridor extends on a north-south axis along Mound Road and the Conrail Railroad Line. The other industrial corridor extends diagonally across the southeastern section of the city across the alignment of Groesbeck Highway and the Grand Trunk Western Railroad. These two industrial corridors have established a basic skeletal structure around which large residential areas have developed. The city's commercial shopping areas have largely adhered to the major thoroughfares which penetrate and serve the residential areas. The I-696 expressway is also a major structural element in the city; but the land use form of Warren was already well established before the construction of I-696. In 1952, the Master Thoroughfare Plan for Warren established a 204 foot right-of-way for Mound Road and Eleven Mile Road. This substantial right-of-way set the stage for the later development of I-696. The City of Centerline, a smaller enclave community, really follows the larger basic land use pattern of the City of Warren.

POLICY

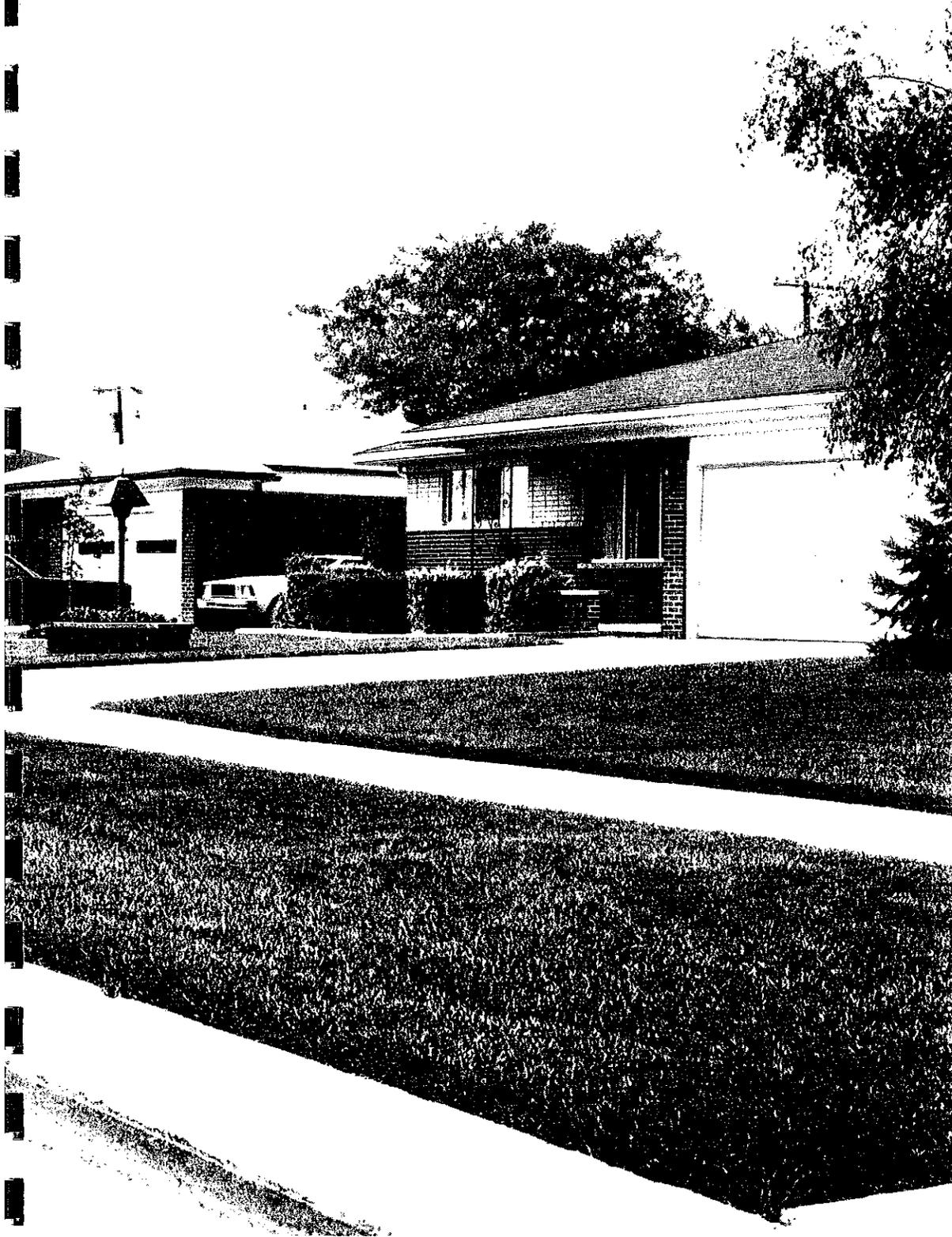
The basic land use development pattern of Warren should be continued and strengthened in the future. Both the Mound Road Industrial Corridor and the Groesbeck Highway Industrial Corridor should be kept viable. Non-industrial uses should be phased out of these industrial corridors. Similarly, incongruous industrial uses should be phased out of the city's residential areas. In the early development period of Warren Township, industrial uses were freely interspersed with the residential development pattern. Commercial facilities should continue to locate on the major arterial thoroughfares which serve the residential sectors of the city. The city's City Center Area should be strengthened in future years to evolve as a true "downtown" for the City of Warren. Quality recreation facilities should be maintained in all of the city's major residential sectors.



LAND USE STRUCTURE OF WARREN

KEY

-  RESIDENTIAL
-  COMMERCIAL AND OFFICE
-  INDUSTRIAL



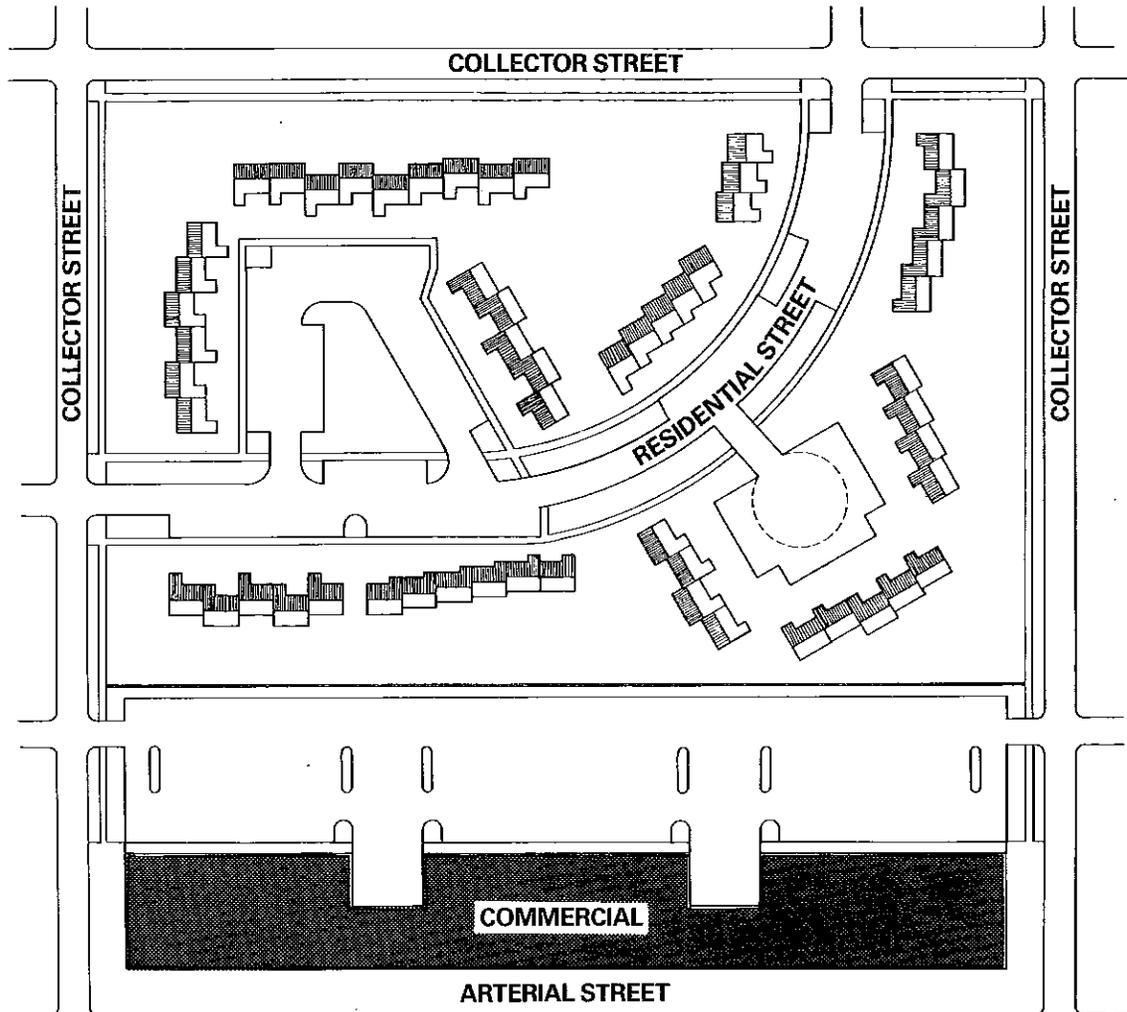
THE NEIGHBORHOOD UNIT

The City of Warren's 1966 Master Plan emphasized the neighborhood unit concept. A neighborhood unit or residential area usually consisted of the attendance area of a single elementary school. The neighborhood was bounded by major arterial streets and was penetrated by collector streets. Each neighborhood had a park which was usually developed as part of the elementary school site. A recent planning survey indicated that residents of Warren generally no longer consider the neighborhood unit as a valid planning concept in the city. Many elementary schools have been closed and no longer serve as the focal point of the neighborhood unit. Similarly, former park and playground facilities have been removed from active use. Furthermore, many of the newer subdivisions in the northern portions of Warren tend to blend with one another and no discernable "neighborhood" is evident. From time to time, various community groups will become vocal on a zoning or traffic issue, but these groups are usually broader-based community improvement organizations and do not reflect the more limited definition of a neighborhood unit contained in the 1966 Master Plan.

POLICY

While the neighborhood unit concept no longer appears to be a viable planning tool in Warren, the principles and benefits of neighborhood unit planning continue to be important to the city's residential areas and should be continued. These principles include: (1) residential areas should be bounded and not be penetrated by arterial streets carrying heavy traffic; (2) each neighborhood should have local recreation facilities. If it is infeasible to provide a separate park or playground in every neighborhood, recreation facilities should be strategically located so that they adequately serve groups of neighborhoods; (3) if it is necessary to phase out school facilities, the land should be redeveloped with land uses and densities which are compatible with the existing neighborhood; (4) neighborhood shopping facilities should be located on the edge of a neighborhood or groups of neighborhoods; they should be of a scale to serve only the local neighborhood area and should not be located on the interior of the neighborhood.

PLANNED NEIGHBORHOOD REDEVELOPMENT



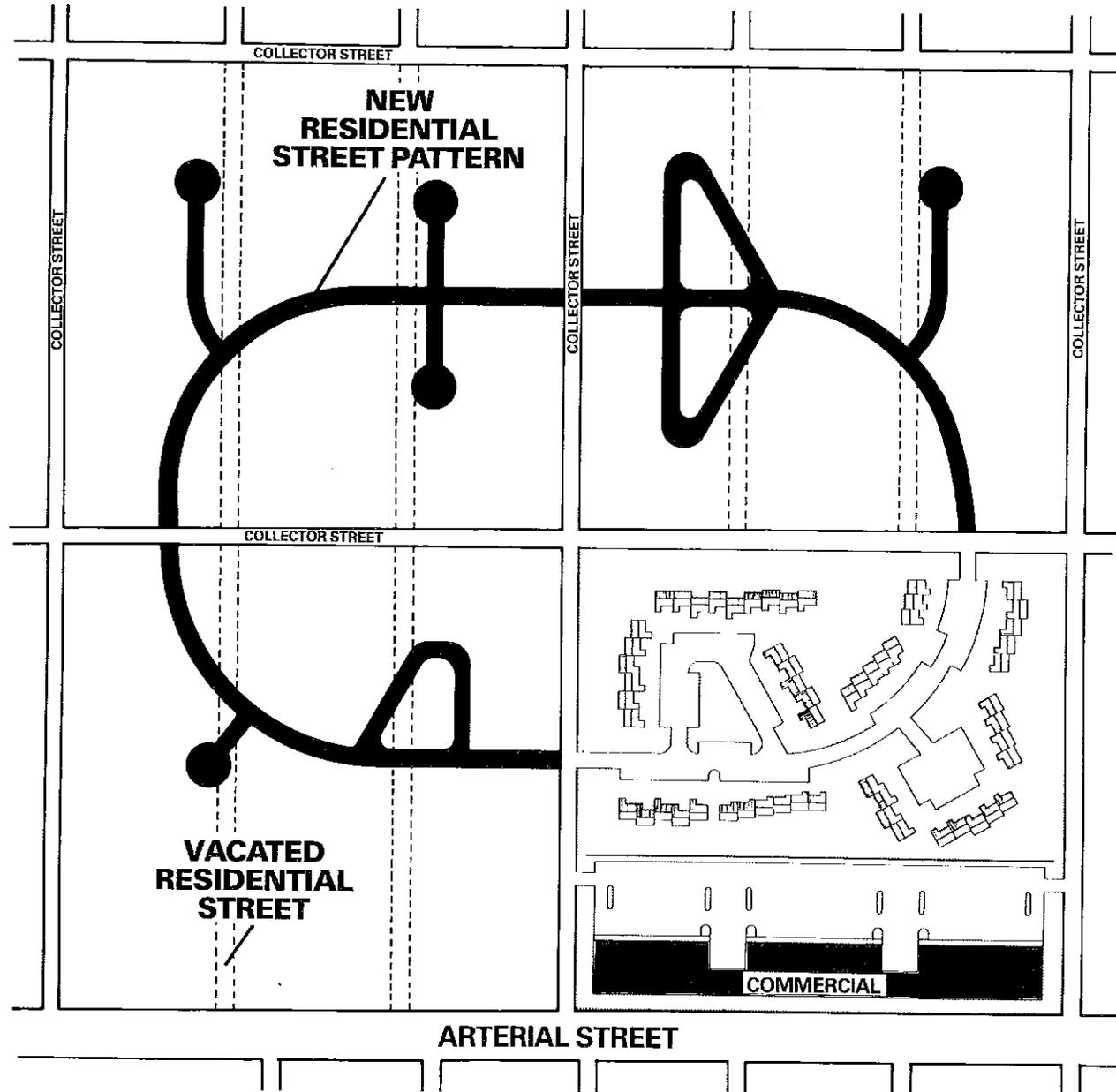
PLANNED NEIGHBORHOOD REDEVELOPMENT

Older residential neighborhoods in the southern portion of Warren evidence substantial amounts of deteriorated housing. During recent years, many deteriorated homes have been removed from this area of the city. Many of these residential streets have a checkerboard character which shows several vacant lots due to removal of deteriorated homes. As deteriorated and dilapidated residential structures continue to be removed from some of these older blighted neighborhoods, it will be possible to assemble small- to medium-sized land areas for new housing developments.

POLICY

When sections of older residential neighborhoods are gradually cleared and made available for new residential development, consideration should be given to assembling enough land to create superblocks for residential development. A superblock would normally be a larger land area at least one city block or larger in size which would be free from any vehicular traffic and would permit the design of planned residential developments with internal pedestrian circulation, recreation facilities, and other amenities. Because the superblock concept allows the developer to create an internal environment within the superblock, such an approach is useful in carrying out a staged redevelopment process in older sections of Warren. Each new superblock residential development will have its own internal amenities and character despite the fact that it may be located near adjoining blighted residential areas.

PLANNED NEIGHBORHOOD REDEVELOPMENT



SENIOR CITIZEN HOUSING

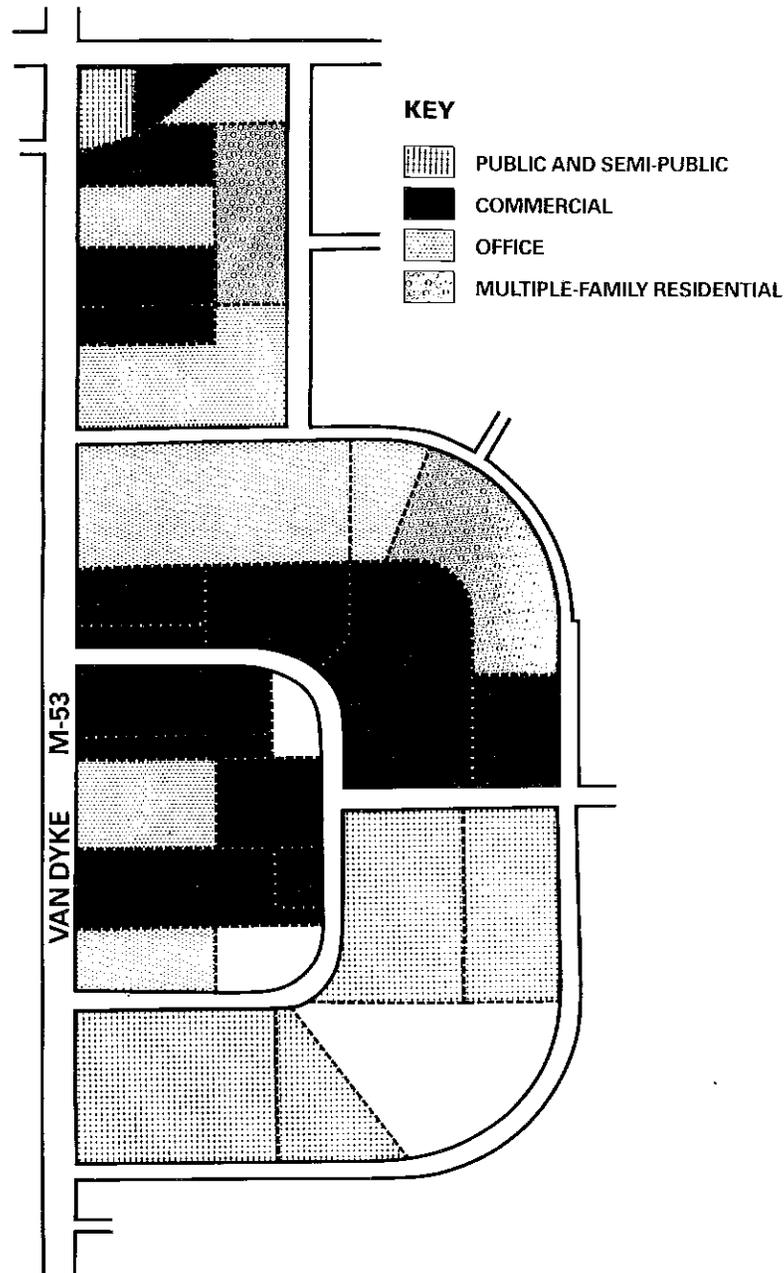
As Warren's population continues to age, there will be an increasing need for housing suitable for senior citizens.

POLICY

The city should maintain an inventory of available parcels for construction of senior citizen housing. Potential areas for senior housing are located in the Nine Mile and Van Dyke area, the Ten Mile and Hayes area, and the Nine Mile and Ryan area. Consideration should also be given to redeveloping former school sites for senior housing.



LAND USE FUNCTIONS IN THE CITY CENTER



LAND USE FUNCTIONS IN THE CITY CENTER

A recent survey indicated that many residents of Warren are concerned that the new City Center should be a true downtown area with a broad complement of inter-related land uses, not simply a collection of apartment and office buildings with an adjoining retail mall. The City Center plan prepared in 1967 proposes that the City Center include facilities for shopping, offices, entertainment, restaurants, hotels, and theaters.

POLICY

Implementation and refinement of the 1967 City Center Plan should ensure that the city center is a true central activity place in Warren which provides a broad range of shopping facilities, entertainment and restaurants, governmental offices and services, hotels and multiple-family housing, and special community facilities such as a central library. The city center should also exhibit a higher level of urban design. The city center area should include substantial areas of trees and shrubbery, civic flower gardens, and fountains and public art in the the form of outdoor sculpture, murals, and other design treatments. It must not be simply a collection of intensive land uses; it must be a visually more attractive and functionally more stimulating and interesting section of the City of Warren. It should be unique. It should attract people from throughout the city and surrounding communities. It should be the place where major civic events and ceremonies are held. It is the heart of the city -- both functionally and symbolically.



OLDER STRIP COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Van Dyke Avenue has an excessive amount of strip commercial development. Many of these commercial facilities are no longer viable and some have become blighted. These deteriorating strip commercial areas also blight adjoining residential neighborhoods. This problem is particularly evident in the section of Van Dyke between Eight Mile Road and Stephens. There is a need to identify specific segments of existing strip commercial development along Van Dyke which could be redeveloped for new commercial uses or used for other land uses. Consideration should be given to multiple-family housing, senior citizen housing, and small shopping malls and office complexes as possible land uses in redeveloped areas adjacent to Van Dyke Avenue.

POLICY

Excessive or deteriorating commercial strip development along Van Dyke Avenue should be gradually phased out and redeveloped for other more viable uses which are needed in the city. Consideration should be given to multiple-family apartment development, senior citizens housing, and smaller commercial shopping malls and office complexes. The City of Warren should actively consider use of tax increment finance authorities, municipally-sponsored commercial improvement programs, strategic revision of zoning regulations, infrastructure improvements, and more effective code enforcement. Some obsolete strip areas could be redeveloped as special use projects such as an international shopping village, an entertainment district, or an automotive sales and services complex.

DEVELOPMENT OF OFF-STREET PARKING IN OLDER COMMERCIAL AREAS

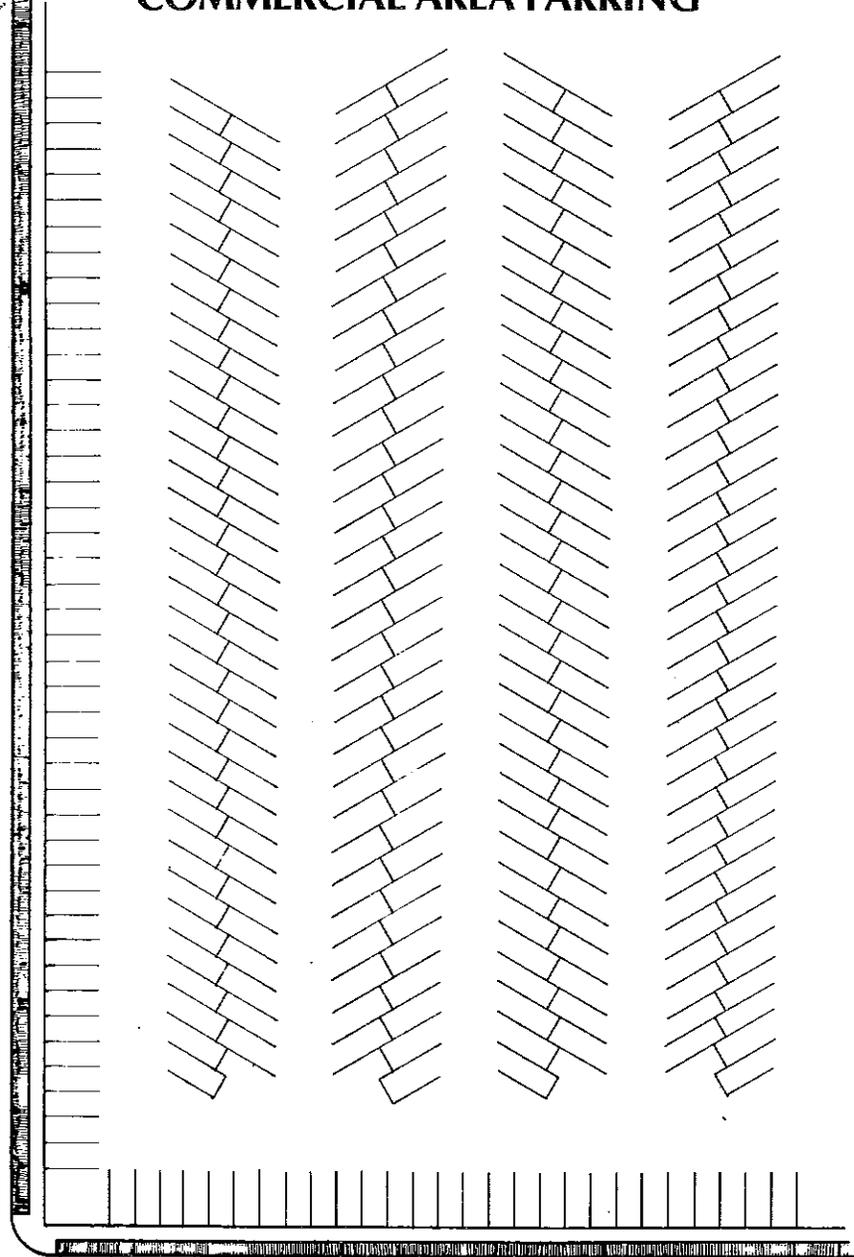
One reason that commercial strip shopping facilities along the Van Dyke Corridor have deteriorated in some places is the scarcity of convenient off-street parking. Since parking is not allowed on Van Dyke, the customer must seek parking on a side street or behind the store. Although the City of Warren has carried out a parking lot development program along Van Dyke Avenue for several years, there are still large segments of Van Dyke which exhibit inadequate off-street parking.

POLICY

Because of the high cost of developing off-street parking facilities to service strip commercial frontage, the City of Warren should encourage owners of commercial properties to jointly develop off-street parking facilities which can serve a block of commercial development or a larger segment of strip frontage. If voluntary participation of merchants in a parking lot development program does not work, the city could create an assessment district to finance new parking lots. New commercial redevelopment projects such as a supermarket or neighborhood convenience center should provide sufficient parking as part of their development.



APPEARANCE OF COMMERCIAL AREA PARKING



APPEARANCE OF COMMERCIAL AREA PARKING

Many of the larger commercial developments in Warren are unattractive because they have large asphalt-paved parking lots which are devoid of any landscaping. Historically, developers of shopping malls in the city have been reluctant to provide any landscaping within or adjacent to the parking areas of the shopping center. Consequently, most of these shopping areas have a large sea of asphalt in front of them which is visually dull and uninteresting.

POLICY

Because of the difficulty in getting developers of planned commercial developments to include landscaping in their parking lot designs, the city should consider adopting more stringent landscape requirements for commercial parking lots. Requirements for landscaping of parking lots should be enforced during the site plan review process. The city should also initiate a voluntary landscaping improvement program for owners of presently existing shopping centers. The city's Planning Department could work cooperatively with the owners of shopping centers to identify areas in parking lots where trees and flowers could be incorporated into the overall design. A limited amount of Block Grant or other funds could be used to prepare illustrative landscape designs for use in selling shopping center owners on the idea of installing new landscaping.



COMMERCIAL SIGNAGE

Commercial areas in Warren are characterized by an excessive amount of large and gaudy signage. There is a need for the city to reevaluate its sign regulations and to set forth more stringent standards to control the location, size, and type of commercial signage along the city's major arteries. The control of signs has become a complicated and difficult task in recent years. Business people, garage sale entrepreneurs, and even churches have found new and different ways to legitimately put up larger, brighter, and bolder signs. Although signs are usually erected for legitimate purposes, they often contradict the basic goals and objectives of other land-use regulations. Communities have carefully formulated their zoning ordinances so as to create an orderly land-use pattern and protect land values, to assure pedestrian and traffic safety, and to prevent annoyance and disturbance to citizens, only to have these same objectives violated by excessive and unattractive signage.

POLICY

The City of Warren should perform a comprehensive reevaluation of its sign ordinance. In evaluating the sign ordinance, particular attention should be paid to those sections pertaining to purpose and intent, scope of requirements, definitions, enforcement, general limitations and provisions, residential district signs, office and commercial district signs, and industrial district signs.

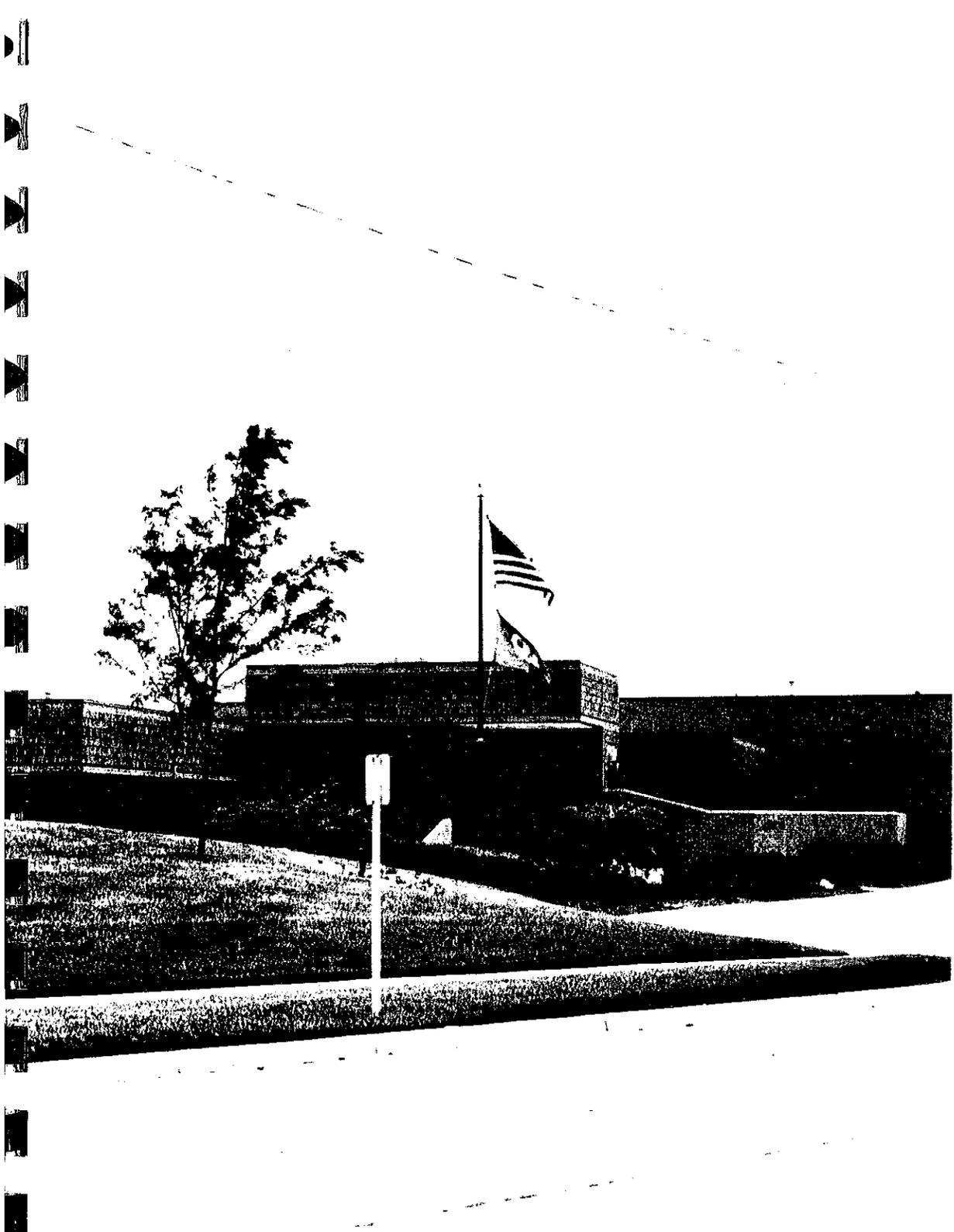


INDUSTRIAL OBSOLESCENCE

Warren has many older medium-sized industrial establishments located along its mile roads. These industrial buildings are located on shallow lots which prohibit the development of adequate off-street parking or loading or provision of adequate set-backs and screening to separate the industrial use from adjoining residential neighborhoods. Consequently, these older factories blight the adjoining neighborhoods through noise, fumes, and traffic which penetrate the adjoining residential environment.

POLICY

The city should seek to gradually relocate these older industrial buildings to designated industrial park areas within the city which are more suitable for industrial uses. As these industrial buildings are removed from the older neighborhoods, sites will be made available for apartment development, senior housing, community recreation facilities, neighborhood shopping, and other types of uses needed in a residential setting. In order to carry out this policy, it will be necessary to implement a complementary policy which establishes industrial parks within the city specifically for relocation of smaller and medium-sized industrial buildings. Such industrial parks for smaller industries, could be located in older deteriorating industrial areas which are replatted and marketed for redevelopment.



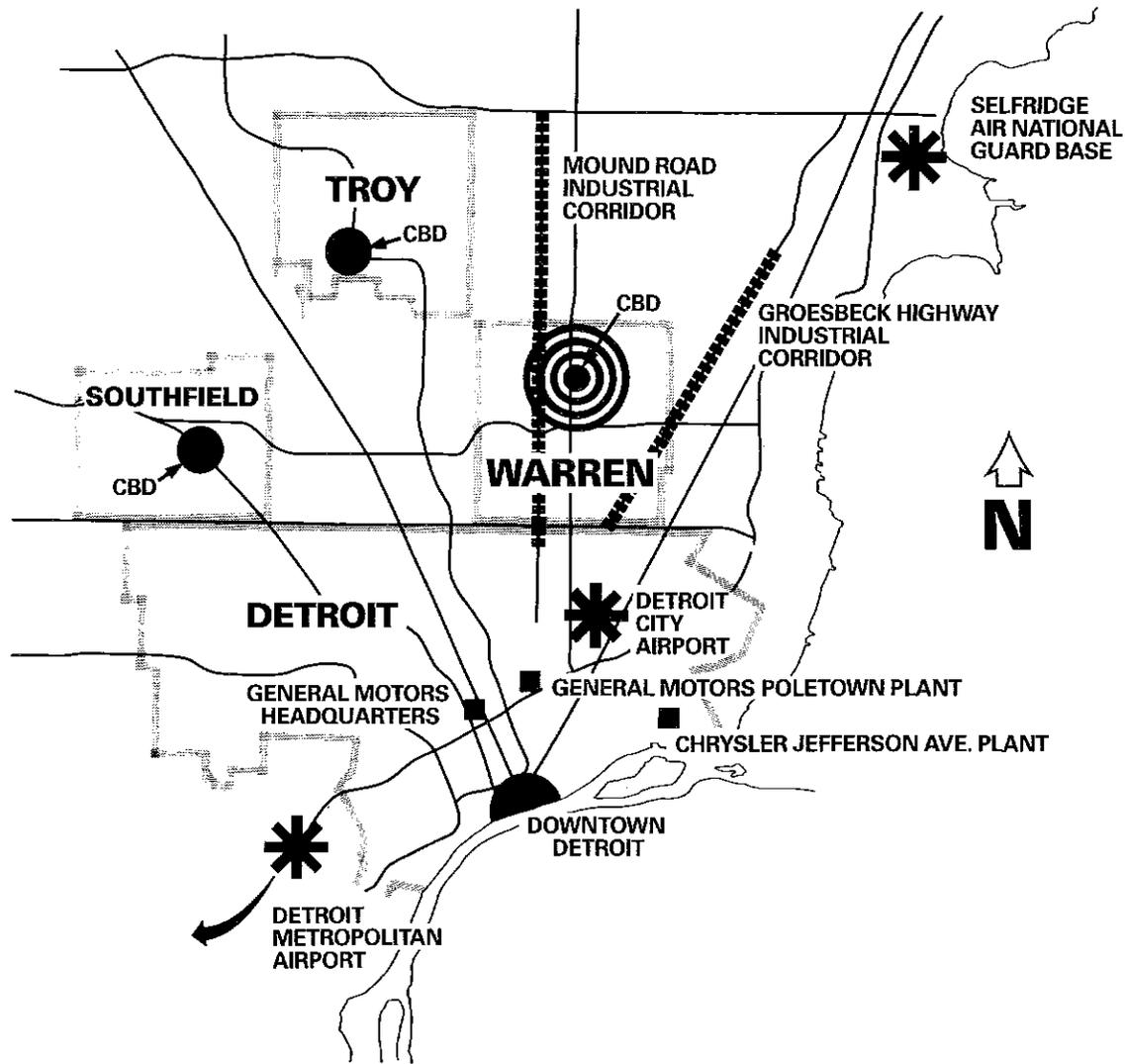
RECYCLING OF INDUSTRIAL AREAS

Many older industrial areas in Warren exhibit varying degrees of obsolescence ranging from older industrial buildings which are marginally used to industrial buildings which are boarded up or vacant.

POLICY

The city should continually inventory these declining industrial areas in order to actively assist in their recycling. Older industrial areas should be evaluated carefully for possible recycling as new industrial development parks. Such industrial parks could be designed to meet specific needs such as a research and development park, an industrial park for small- or medium-sized industries, or an industrial park which has a number of automotive related companies located in close proximity. It may be necessary for the city to prepare conceptual plans showing how such older industrial areas could be recycled as new planned industrial parks. This kind of preliminary planning would help to show the property owners the potential which exists for recycling their property for newer, more viable industrial uses. In some cases, older industrial buildings themselves may be gutted out and modernized to meet current industrial needs.

WARREN AS A METRO CENTER



WARREN AS A METRO CENTER

The City of Warren is well situated within the metropolitan area for industrial, commercial, and office development. Both I-696 and I-75 connect Warren to the entire Detroit Metropolitan area. Van Dyke Avenue and Mound Road also provide excellent economic linkages to other communities. Warren is well served by excellent railroad lines. Despite these strong regional linkages, the city has not reached its full potential as a metro center. Other communities such as Southfield or Troy have been extremely successful in marketing their communities as metro centers for finance, professional services, and commerce. Because of the large number of industrial developments in Warren, the city should be able to more effectively market itself as a metro center for supporting financial, professional, and commercial activities which relate to the city's industrial base. If Warren does not effectively market itself as a location for these uses, they will very likely locate in adjoining communities.

POLICY

The City of Warren should design and implement a marketing program to encourage more development of metro center type developments related to its strong industrial base including such activities as legal and medical services, accounting, data processing, computer programming, telecommunications, public relations, management, advertising, financial services, and software. This marketing program should be carefully coordinated with the city's overall planning program and capital improvements programming process so that developable sites with necessary utilities and services are available to interested developers on a timely basis.

COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL LAND USE TRANSITIONS

There are areas in Warren where an inadequate transition exists between commercial areas and adjoining residential neighborhoods. Often the traffic, noise, and other activities of commercial areas spill over into the residential environment and make it less desirable. Examples of poor transition between commercial areas and adjoining residential neighborhoods can be seen along Van Dyke, Eight and Nine Mile Roads, Dequindre, Ryan, Mound, Hoover, and Schoenherr Roads. In many of these areas, commercial parking lots, dumpsters, loading areas, and bright lighting are directly adjacent to residential development and create conflicts.

POLICY

The Warren Planning Commission, through use of effective zoning controls and the site plan review process, should carefully monitor the relationship of commercial areas to adjoining residential neighborhoods. In older areas of the city, particular attention should be paid to the creation of effective transitions or buffers between commercial areas and adjoining residential neighborhoods. Such approaches as removal of obsolete residential buildings adjacent to strip commercial development, development of new off-street parking lots to serve commercial areas, and the introduction of landscaped green buffers between commercial and residential areas should be considered. In proposed commercial developments in newer portions of the city, more stringent controls should be applied which require substantial buffer areas between commercial developments and adjoining residential neighborhoods. Where a very large commercial or office complex is proposed, it may be desirable to require that a transitional land use such as low-density multiple-family development be required as a transition between a commercial development and an adjoining residential neighborhood.

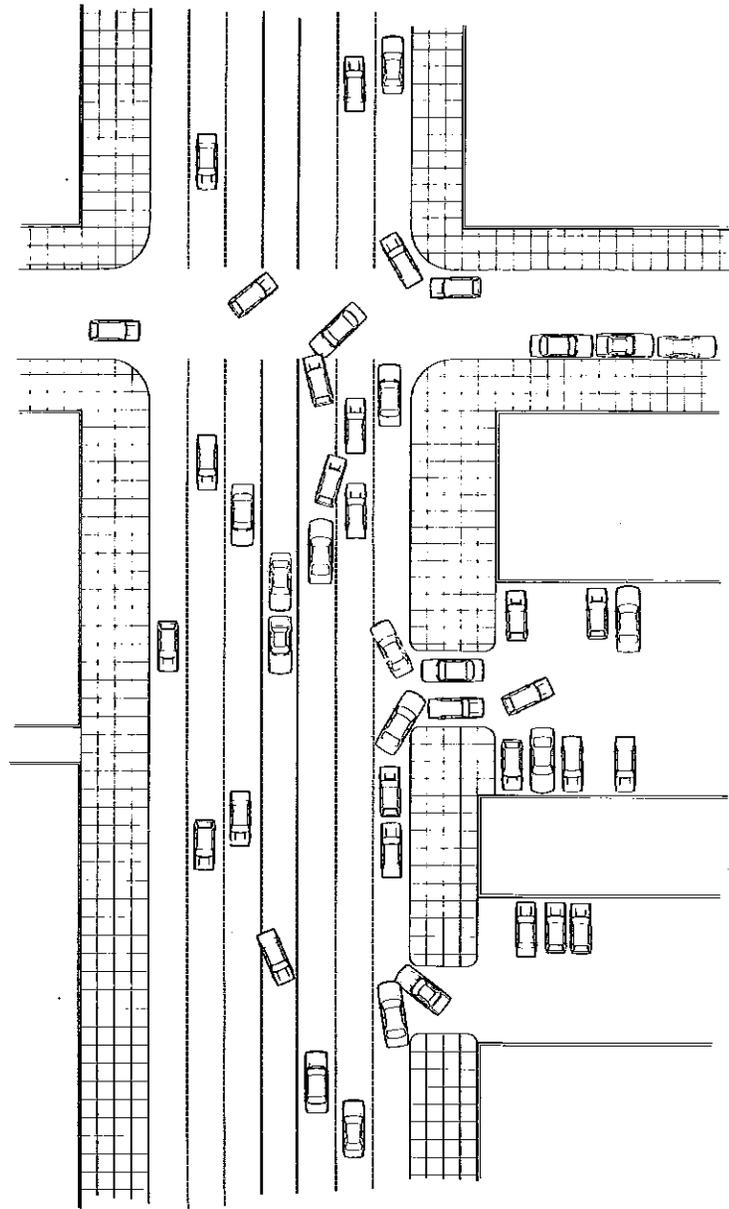
INDUSTRIAL/RESIDENTIAL LAND USE TRANSITIONS

Several industrial areas in Warren are located directly adjacent to residential neighborhoods. There is no transitional area or landscaped buffer to separate these incompatible uses.

POLICY

As older industrial areas are replanned, replatted, and redeveloped, care should be taken to require that substantial landscaped buffers be required to separate industrial uses from adjoining residential communities. In some cases, it may be desirable to provide a transitional land use such as office or multiple-family residential development to separate a residential area from a large industrial complex. In older areas of the city, it may be possible to remove a limited number of deteriorated housing units adjacent to industry in order to introduce a new greenbelt. The creation of a new greenbelt in an older neighborhood will often help to support the revitalization of the residential area.

TRAFFIC FRICTION ADJACENT TO COMMERCIAL AREAS



TRAFFIC FRICTION ADJACENT TO COMMERCIAL AREAS

In some of the commercial areas in Warren, friction exists between through traffic and traffic destined to shopping areas. Friction occurs when cars entering or leaving shopping areas conflict with through vehicular traffic which is moving at a higher speed. Such friction makes it difficult for people to reach or leave shopping centers, it slows down the overall flow of traffic, and often creates high accident points along major thoroughfares in the city. For example, serious land use/traffic friction exists adjacent to Universal Mall and Universal Condominiums. Such friction is evidenced not only in older strip areas of the city, but is also evident in new commercial facilities which have developed more recently in Warren.

POLICY

New commercial developments should be carefully reviewed to determine if there is a potential for traffic friction to occur and how such friction can be minimized. Older commercial areas should also be evaluated to determine ways in which land use and traffic friction can be reduced. Consideration can be given to such approaches as limiting the number of curb cuts into commercially-zoned land, consolidating ingress and egress points in strip-commercial areas, the installation of special traffic controls at major traffic conflict points, and the use of commercial service drives adjacent to larger commercial or office developments.

EXTRANEIOUS TRAFFIC IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Many residential neighborhoods in Warren which were developed in a gridiron pattern suffer from excessive cut-through traffic. Cut-through traffic is often caused by motorists seeking an easier way out of a congested intersection or trying to avoid making a left turn at a congested intersection. Cut-through traffic also results from major community facilities which are located near a residential neighborhood and cause traffic to cut-through the neighborhood as people enter or leave the facility. In some neighborhoods of Warren, cut-through traffic has become so excessive, that it is causing deterioration of the neighborhood. Many neighborhood improvement associations have repeatedly complained to the city about problems of traffic in the neighborhood.

POLICY

The city should carefully identify all neighborhoods where cut-through traffic is a serious problem. Generally, cut-through traffic is most severe in the area between Eight and Ten Mile Roads. Older subdivisions with long straight streets provide a ready opportunity for cut-through traffic. The city's Planning and Traffic Engineering Departments should evaluate each neighborhood which has a cut-through traffic problem to determine the most appropriate solutions. Such approaches as improved traffic signalization, special turning lanes, traffic barriers, and the closing of streets should be considered. In some very deteriorated residential areas of the city, it should be possible to redesign the street pattern to eliminate cut-through traffic at the same time areas are redeveloped for new residential uses. As older residential neighborhoods are redeveloped, it may be possible to assemble larger superblocks of land for construction of new housing. Such superblocks should be free of any cut-through traffic.



THE APPEARANCE OF THOROUGHFARES

The City of Warren is not known for its beautiful boulevards and arterial streets. Many portions of Eight and Nine Mile Roads, Van Dyke, Ryan, Hoover, Schoenherr, Mound, and Dequindre are visually ugly at worse or visually bland and uninteresting at best. These thoroughfares show excessive amounts of gaudy signage, lack of maintenance of the area between the sidewalk and the curb, poorly maintained driveways penetrating adjoining developments, and a lack of landscaping along the right-of-way. In many cases, the area between the sidewalk and the curb consists of mud, potholes, and debris spread between the sidewalk and the street.

POLICY

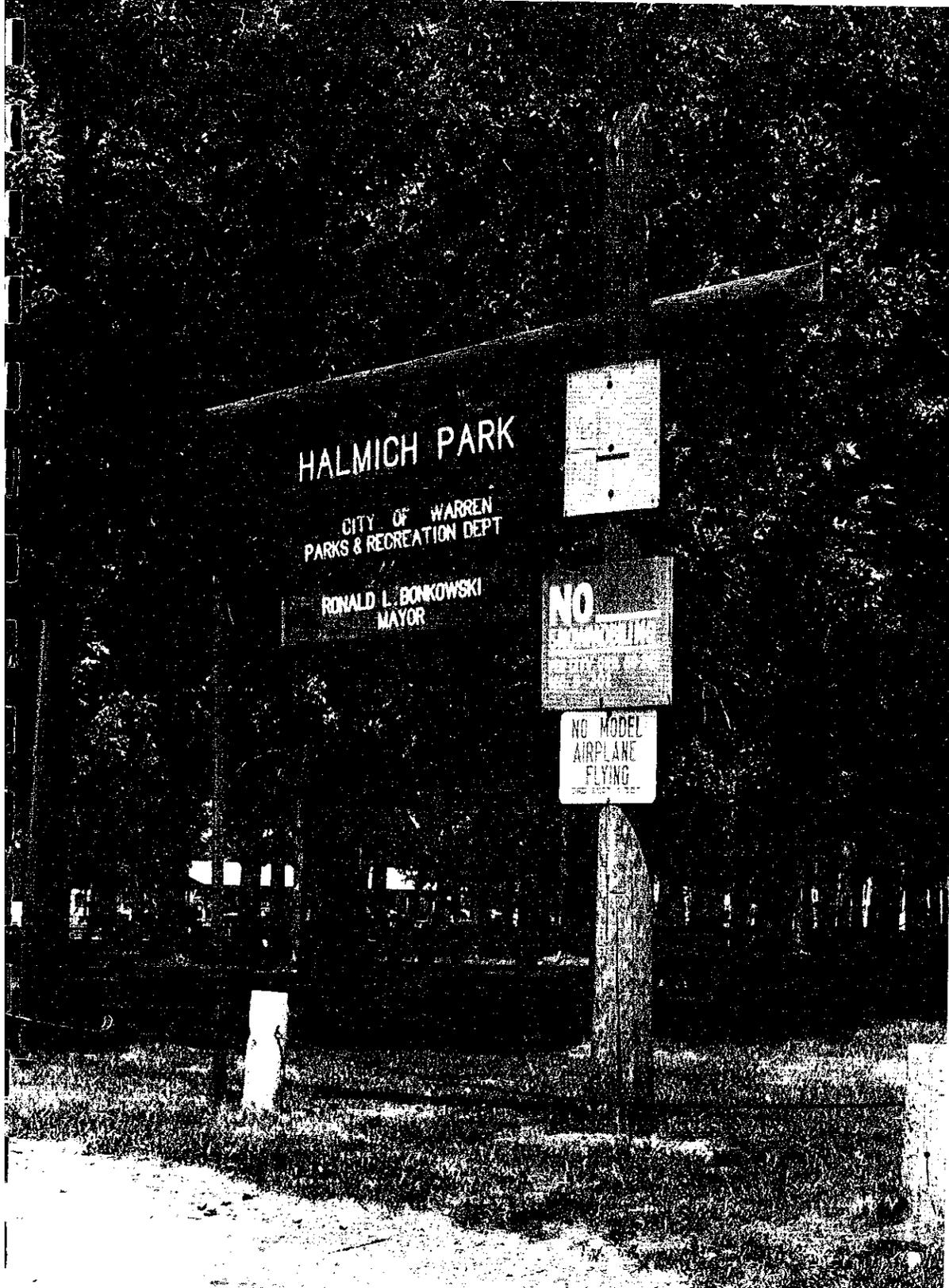
Improvement of the visual quality of the city's major thoroughfares is both a planning issue and a maintenance issue. Prohibition of excessive signage and landscaping along the right-of-way can be achieved through sign and zoning regulations. However, lack of maintenance evidenced through potholes and debris adjacent to the right-of-way would require an effective maintenance ordinance which would need to be enforced evenly along each thoroughfare to require each property owner to carefully maintain the area between their property and the street. Visually ugly thoroughfare segments can be seen on Dequindre between Eight Mile Road and Stephens; several portions of Mound Road; Schoenherr between Eight and Nine Mile Roads; Nine Mile Road between Sherwood and East Detroit; and almost all of Eight Mile Road along the entire breadth of Warren.

THE DIVISIVE EFFECT OF I-696

Many people are of the opinion that Warren actually consists of two communities, a desirable "quality" community located north of I-696, and an older less desirable community located south of I-696. People commonly refer to the southerly portion of Warren as "the south end." Realtors, for example, point to the desirability and solid residential sales market in the northern portion of the city, and the more sluggish real estate market in the south portion of the city when homes are deemed less desirable. This bifurcated attitude toward the city is self-defeating and should be addressed. Some people also refer to I-696 as "the new Eight Mile Road." They believe that blight below Eight Mile Road will extend all the way up to I-696, and that the area south of I-696 should be written off as an area which is lost to the northward travel of blight.

POLICY

Warren could be perceived in future planning as a single interdependent community. Not as a north end and a south end. The best way to ensure that the city is perceived as a total community is to provide a sound complement of community facilities and services throughout the City of Warren. The quality of school systems must be maintained at a high level throughout the City of Warren. Ironically, the "south end" has some of the highest rated school systems in the entire city despite the fact that many people speak negatively about the south end. Since most of the newer development in Warren is located north of I-696, the city should vigorously promote new redevelopment in the southern portion of the city below I-696. In order to promote private redevelopment in the southern area of the city, excellent police services must be focused on this area to minimize crime and older obsolete buildings must be promptly removed through an effective code enforcement program. As the portion of the city south of I-696 begins to redevelop and improve, the tendency to distinguish between a north and south end should diminish.



LACK OF A MAJOR CENTRAL PARK

An in-depth recreation opinion survey conducted in 1985 by the Macomb Community College Center for Community Studies indicated a strong community desire and need for a central park facility in the city. Such a central or "anchor" park would be the place where major outdoor athletic events are held. It would also be the location of major outdoor civic festivals, band concerts, and other special events. Such a central park facility could also have a wooded or natural area for passive recreation pursuits.

POLICY

The development of a major central park would require a large land area which would be difficult to assemble in Warren since the city is over 95 percent developed. However, it may be possible to assemble such a site through combining land parcels from closed schools or vacated industrial facilities. The city should actively seek a property which can be donated to the community for development of a central park. Although a first class central park would be very costly to develop, it could be developed in several stages over a period of years so long as a well-designed master park plan is adopted at the outset.

COORDINATION OF RECREATION FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

Because of decreases in the city's school age population, the large number of school closings in recent years, and the scarcity of money to build and operate municipal recreation facilities, it is essential that the city's Parks and Recreation Department closely coordinate its planning and development program with the six school districts serving the city. Because of the relatively large number of separate school districts, achievement of effective coordination between the city and the school districts is not easy to accomplish.

POLICY

The city should maintain an open and on-going dialogue with the six school districts on the most effective role each organization can play in the total delivery system for recreation facilities and services in Warren. Policies should be clear on the use of school facilities by the Warren Parks and Recreation Department, including possible wider use of school facilities by the city. The reuse of vacant school properties for recreation facilities should be studied before the actual closing of a school when possible.

INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

Because of the often severe winter climate in Michigan, there is a need for good indoor recreation facilities which are accessible to all age groups in a community. A city the size of Warren could well support several indoor recreation centers. The city's Boys Club is located in an older facility and should be relocated to a new building which is specifically designed to meet its program needs. Although the Boys Club is privately operated, it would be beneficial to include this facility in any municipal planning effort for new indoor recreation centers.

POLICY

The city should develop a strategy for location of new indoor community recreation centers. Such centers should be within walking or bicycling distance of as much of the population as possible. The city could actively use from four (4) to six (6) new indoor recreation centers. Such centers could be related to a school complex or could be related to a municipal park. Indoor centers could be located in existing buildings which are donated to the city if suitable remodeling can be accomplished.

A CENTRAL LIBRARY

There is considerable interest in the City of Warren for development of a central library in the City Center. The city currently has a municipally-operated library system consisting of five branch libraries and an administrative headquarters. The branch libraries are well located to serve the various residential areas of the city. Each branch library contains about 50,000 to 80,000 volumes. A proposed millage for a new central library and civic auditorium was defeated in 1985. Although there is strong interest in a central library it may be an uphill battle to sell the idea to the taxpayers.

POLICY

The city should reevaluate the possibility of building a future central library in the City Center. Such a library could provide about 200,000 to 300,000 additional volumes for use of the people of Warren. A central library would serve as a first-class research library for students in the community and would provide a focal point for cultural activities in the community. The 1985 defeated millage issue proposed a combined central library and civic auditorium. It may be necessary to propose only a central library in the future without a related civic auditorium -- desirable as it may be. The central library issue should be studied.

MUNICIPAL OFFICE FACILITIES

The 1957 Warren municipal building is obsolete and does not meet the needs of operating an efficient government. Most departmental personnel are cramped in their available office space, and the building is inefficient with respect to heating and air conditioning. There is inadequate space for holding public meetings and discussions.

POLICY

The city should retain an architecture firm to perform an evaluation of the existing municipal building to determine necessary modifications, additions, or replacements to provide an up-to-date municipal building which meets current governmental needs.



EXPANSION OF MACOMB COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Macomb Community College is a widely respected educational institution. Many residents would like to see MCC transformed into a full four-year degree granting institution.

POLICY

The possible expansion of Macomb Community College into a four-year degree granting institution could have very positive effects on the future development and revitalization of the City of Warren. The MCC South Campus is located in Warren. The Center Campus is located in Clinton Township. If Macomb Community College continues to expand its physical plant, some of the new expansion could be directed to deteriorating sections of the city which need to undergo large-scale redevelopment. The creation of a four-year college also will provide numerous economic incentives for faculty and students to work in various local industries and businesses. The city should initiate an exploratory analysis with Macomb Community College to determine how future development and expansion of MCC could be related to long-range planning for development and redevelopment of the City of Warren. Such a cooperative planning effort could provide maximum benefits to both the college and to the city.