Visions, Goals and Policies for the Downtown District, Hilltop Neighborhood, Waterfront, Gateway Locations, Centertown and Olde Towne Neighborhood
The Vision Plan acknowledges the following key players for their work to make this Downtown Vision Plan a reality:

- Central Business Downtown Development Authority (CBDDA)
- Downtown Grand Haven, Incorporated
- Chamber of Commerce - Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg
- The Loutit Foundation
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)
- Former Mayor Edward Lystra
- Former City Council member Linda DeLano
- Interim City Managers W. Robert Huff and William Baldridge

“All of this suggests a most important lesson. There is not a single thing one can do to achieve a quality downtown. Instead, a vital, vibrant downtown depends on and results from a synthesis, often not fully understood, of many different factors. Some of these are physical, involving buildings, streets, parks. Some of the most important, however, are intangible; they involve commitment, relationships, integrity, trust, and a confidence and hope in the future. Most of all, a quality downtown depends on people – people of character and goodwill – willing to give of themselves, in accordance with their gifts, responsibilities, and resources, to achieve what our forefathers called the common good”

The Vision for Downtown Grand Haven is to revitalize the heart of the community and foster a Downtown that is financially viable and competitive, physically attractive, pleasant, and energetic with an appropriate mix of:

- New and re-furbished retail and restaurant facilities;
- New office and service business locations;
- A range of additional housing options;
- One or more new lodging properties;
- Strengthened linkages to the waterfront, Grand River, Lake Michigan and US-31 and the east side of Grand Haven; and
- A variety of public gathering spaces and attractions that interest and serve local community members and visitors.

In so doing, Downtown Grand Haven will continue to be the historic and predominant Downtown for the Tri-Cities community.

Summary
The Vision is designed to be the framework for future physical changes to Downtown Grand Haven. The Vision will be integrated into a larger Downtown Strategic Plan, and be the blueprint for ongoing planning efforts and for future development projects. These projects will be carried out by a broad array of public and private parties including civic organizations, property and business owners, developers, and future entities attracted to this dynamic and vibrant city.

This Vision for the future is designed to appeal to local residents and visitors to the community, and will be anchored by improvements to the Grand River Waterfront, the historic Washington Avenue business district, various Gateways into Downtown, and revitalized areas around Central Park and along First and Second Streets.

The Purpose of this Vision document is:

- To inform the general public of the Vision for Downtown Grand Haven.
- To guide elected and appointed officials in evaluating proposed public and private projects in the Downtown core area of Grand Haven. Specifically, these evaluations will use both this Vision Plan document and the Evaluation Guidelines (Appendix One) to determine the project worthiness.
- To inform and guide property owners as well as prospective property owners and potential developers as to what is needed and desired, and likely to be approved for the downtown, by the City staff, Planning Commission, the CBDDA, and City Council. This purpose also responds to comments made during both the physical and economic development visioning processes when participants consistently voiced the need for clear and transparent downtown goals and guidelines.
- To measure progress and effectiveness in the re-development of Downtown Grand Haven. While the Vision document is meant to be broad and general in overall character, there are many specific projects, goals, and policies identified as well. These are included in the text and the Work Program Matrix (located at the end of this document) which can be used as a checklist for, and a means to, measure effectiveness and tax base improvements, as well as provide a basis for future citizen surveys.

Qualities of the Vision to Which We Aspire

AUTHENTICITY: Projects should be true to Downtown Grand Haven, with unique one-of-a-kind solutions to particular design and marketing opportunities. Projects should celebrate the roots of the community - including its extraordinary natural assets and Great Lakes cultural history.

FAMILY FOCUS: Downtown and its events should be attractive to both local and visiting families. Projects should be personal and intimate in scale and provide safe walkable conditions.

QUALITY OUTCOMES: Downtown should foster and encourage quality developments that provide long-term stability and lasting value to the community as reflected in their design, choice of construction materials, and integration with the rest of Downtown.

SMART DEVELOPMENT: Projects should have synergetic qualities that strengthen Downtown as a whole. They should address the public street and sidewalk and encourage an overall healthy mix of businesses and activities. Each individual project should reinforce the Vision and Framework of actions and projects.
The timely and robust revitalization of Downtown Grand Haven depends upon a clear Vision of future physical possibilities and a Strategic Plan for achieving these potentials.

During 2002, Grand Haven City Council established priorities for intensifying planning work within the City during the remainder of 2002 and 2003. Among several priorities, City Council focused on the following elements: hiring a full-time professional planner, giving special attention to the future of Downtown Grand Haven, and updating the City’s zoning ordinance.

Subsequently and coincidentally, in late 2002, a significant proposed mixed use redevelopment project called City Place was presented to the community and City Council. While the project developer and other supporters were eager to initiate this $20 million project, City Council was not prepared to approve the project (which involved closing a city street and relinquishing over 100 city-owned parking spaces and related land) without careful review and analysis.

The City was not genuinely equipped to properly evaluate the City Place proposal (or any other complex project involving significant public policies and properties) because it did not have the necessary personnel and analytic tools to undertake the task. As a result, the City hired The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio to prepare an Evaluation Guidelines document that would allow the City to critically review the City Place proposal in addition to others that may be proposed in the future. Prior to a full review of the development proposal, the City Place proposal was withdrawn.

In essence, this Vision effort is part of a comprehensive Downtown Strategic Plan initiated by Grand Haven City Council to foster and facilitate the revitalization and enhancement of Downtown Grand Haven. In the past six months, the City has accomplished the following.

1. Professional Staff:
   - Hired a permanent City Manager (following two interim managers)
   - Hired a full-time professional planner

2. Strategic Studies:
   - Retained The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio to prepare the Vision Plan for Downtown Grand Haven.
   - Retained Wade Trim, Inc. to conduct a Downtown Traffic and Parking Study of present and future development conditions.

**Vision Content and Background**

The timely and robust revitalization of Downtown Grand Haven depends upon a clear Vision of future physical possibilities and a Strategic Plan for achieving these potentials.

During 2002, Grand Haven City Council established priorities for intensifying planning work within the City during the remainder of 2002 and 2003. Among several priorities, City Council focused on the following elements: hiring a full-time professional planner, giving special attention to the future of Downtown Grand Haven, and updating the City’s zoning ordinance.

Subsequently and coincidentally, in late 2002, a significant proposed mixed use redevelopment project called City Place was presented to the community and City Council. While the project developer and other supporters were eager to initiate this $20 million project, City Council was not prepared to approve the project (which involved closing a city street and relinquishing over 100 city-owned parking spaces and related land) without careful review and analysis.

The City was not genuinely equipped to properly evaluate the City Place proposal (or any other complex project involving significant public policies and properties) because it did not have the necessary personnel and analytic tools to undertake the task. As a result, the City hired The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio to prepare an Evaluation Guidelines document that would allow the City to critically review the City Place proposal in addition to others that may be proposed in the future. Prior to a full review of the development proposal, the City Place proposal was withdrawn.
Taken together, these actions are the key ingredients needed to craft a Downtown Strategic Plan for Grand Haven (see diagram below). It is expected that this Strategic Plan will emerge and be produced in 2004 as public and private participants in Downtown work together to formulate this consensus document. It is in the light of this community condition and planning context that The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio was retained to develop an accurate and realistic Vision for future growth and preservation of the Downtown core of Grand Haven.
Regional Context

Grand Haven is located on both Lake Michigan and the Grand River in Western Michigan. The area was settled in the 1830’s and 1840’s and became prosperous due to its rich natural resources and river and lake transportation networks. Grand Haven’s location at the mouth of the Grand River was very important for commercial production and shipment.

The City of Grand Haven, along with nearby Ferrysburg and Spring Lake, are known as the Tri-Cities. Together, the Tri-Cities and surrounding townships support a population and primary trade area of 27,448 households and a total population of 72,982. (Data source HyettPalma, “Grand Haven Downtown Blueprint 2003,” p 19.)

Grand Haven is also the county seat of the County of Ottawa, which maintains executive offices and several district and circuit courts in a prominent downtown Grand Haven building.

The US-31 highway corridor serves the western portion of Michigan and bisects Grand Haven, traverses the Grand River, and connects to Ferrysburg and Spring Lake and numerous other communities north of the Tri-Cities. US-31 is the predominate regional arterial for travelers as well as local residents for transportation needs and as a setting for larger, auto-oriented general retail and service businesses. In addition to historic commercial developments, the corridor has grown steadily over the years and has recently seen significant growth including a new Meijer store and a planned WalMart facility to the south and other national retailers such as Home Depot, Walgreens, and Applebee’s. Similar to the commerce that results from Grand Haven’s location on the Grand River, the US-31 corridor might be viewed as a “river of commerce” that simply needs to be diverted into the Downtown area. One of the challenges and opportunities for revitalizing Downtown Grand Haven is to attract more of the US-31 vehicles and drivers into Downtown.

Community Cross Section

The unique location of Downtown Grand Haven along the Grand River and near Lake Michigan is one of Downtown’s strongest attributes. This proximity is illustrated below in the cross-section sketch beginning with Lake Michigan and stretching through the dune zone and over Dewey Hill, across the Grand River and through Washington Avenue to the US-31 corridor. The sketch illustrates the unique and special relationship between Downtown and Michigan’s largest river and Lake Michigan. Grand Haven is truly a Great Lake port and city, and its unique and beautiful downtown location is a prime destination for commerce and its many visitors. They are drawn to the community and Downtown to enjoy these outstanding natural features and recreational/commercial advantages. These are unique qualities that must be enhanced and accentuated.
Community Context

Downtown Grand Haven is located immediately west of US-31 and is accessed by several major streets: Washington and Jackson Avenues, as well as the one-way pair of streets, westbound Franklin and eastbound Columbus. Improving these gateways into Downtown will certainly enhance the flow of Downtown users into the center of the community. It has also been noted that US-31 divides the eastern Grand Haven population from Downtown, and any improvements to these east-west arterials across US-31 would strengthen the community and make the Downtown more attractive to local citizens.

Another major real estate effort adjacent to the US-31 corridor is the GrandWater project, a 23-acre parcel that has been assembled by the City of Grand Haven for redevelopment. The project is expected to be a mixed use project with a focus on residential development which will take advantage of views to the Grand River and Harbor Island plus excellent access to and from US-31. GrandWater may also contain commercial office and service uses and a limited amount of commercial and retail businesses.

The City of Grand Haven views GrandWater as an important anchor to the northern portion of Downtown and expects the project to be coherently integrated with the central business district along Washington Avenue and the adjacent Olde Towne Neighborhood.
Visioning as a Process… Framework Thinking

The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio with William J. Johnson, FASLA, one of the nation’s outstanding landscape architecture and community planning teams, has utilized similar visioning processes in numerous settings with diverse groups of persons. The Studio Team emphasizes the need to view “visioning” as an ongoing process of “working toward design solutions”. The Vision for Downtown Grand Haven is also a “framework” for approaching specific project opportunities and evaluating their merit within a larger geographic context.

A Vision is not meant to be precise, but rather directional in nature. Its purpose is to help prioritize future occurrences and opportunities so that, for example, when an underutilized defunct Downtown property suddenly becomes available, it is relatively easy to refer to the Vision and have a good sense of what belongs (and what does not) and how development concepts might be shaped to best fit the property into the overall Vision.

The visioning process is a logical progression of steps which taken together will establish the future goals and direction for a community. This diagram was devised by William J. Johnson to graphically define the process.

Overview of the Process

1. **Stakeholder Meetings**: Structured discussions with key organizations and individuals involved in and concerned with the future of Downtown.

2. **Public Meeting #1**: Presentation of findings and observations from Stakeholders and other sources (from the HyettPalma report and Wade-Trim findings). The Team solicited comments and feedback during an open public session with more than 100 participants.

3. **Design Charrette**: This structured design exercise involved more than 50 persons working with The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio team for a morning to discuss, design, and present concepts and designs for improving downtown.

4. **Design Team**: The team worked internally to digest and process the results of the above to create preliminary Vision concepts and sketches.

5. **Public Meeting #2**: The Team made a presentation of the results of the Design Charrette and Team work since Public Meeting #1. Planning and design principles along with concepts for future development were discussed. In addition, comments and refinements from public participants were solicited.

6. **Documentation**: Follow-up meetings were held with the Project Steering Committee and draft reports were reviewed by Committee members.

7. **Open House Community Meetings**: Two open house meetings were held to present draft recommendations of the Vision Plan and solicit feedback for refinement of the documentation.

Community Participation

The Community participation in this process included elected and appointed public officials, interested citizens, downtown property and business owners, and other members of the general public, and was critical to the success of this visioning process. Approximately 300-400 persons actively participated in numerous stakeholder meetings, two major public meetings, and an all-morning design workshop with The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio team.

Other Consultants’ Input

In addition, the findings of the HyettPalma Downtown Blueprint 2003 report (see Summary Notes from this report in Appendix Two) and the Wade-Trim study of parking needs and traffic conditions (see Executive Summaries in Appendix Two) were incorporated into the visioning process. The economic vision helped the team and public move toward more realistic opportunities for future growth and change, while the Wade-Trim work explained the current and future constraints of the City’s traffic patterns and parking conditions.
Overview of Potentials

This Vision drawing represents a composite of all inputs to the Team including the various stakeholder and public meetings, the public design charrette, HyettPalma Downtown Blueprint 2003 and Wade-Trim reports, and subsequent Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio Team processing.

The study effort concentrated on the following six key areas:

1. **Downtown District**: Washington Avenue is the heart of the Downtown Central Business District.
2. **Hilltop Neighborhood**: The Civic Center area including Central Park plus the blocks immediately surrounding the Park.
3. **Waterfront**: The Grand River waterfront from the Coast Guard complex to the Farmers Market.
4. **Gateway Locations**: The predominate entrances to Downtown including US-31 at Franklin, Washington, Columbus, Jackson Avenues and Seventh Street, as well as First, Second, and third Streets off Harbor and Jackson Avenue.
5. **Centertown**: The retail and service area east of Sixth Street along the western edge of US-31.
6. **Olde Towne Neighborhood**: The historic neighborhood north of Washington Avenue.
Downtown District

Washington Avenue is the heart of Downtown Grand Haven and contains great vitality and also great potential for improvement. Both public and private leadership and capital will be needed to transform deteriorating public infrastructure and under-performing private properties into more desirable Downtown assets.

Key opportunity for the Downtown District include:

- Washington Avenue at Harbor Drive Intersection
- First and Second Street Corridors
- Alley Improvements and Mid-block Access
- Beautification
- Infill Opportunities

This area is one of the most important development zones in Downtown for new construction. It is also able to support a wide range of uses including housing and lodging, retail and possibly office functions. Public infrastructure improvements will be needed along with additional public and private parking facilities.

Hilltop Neighborhood

This Civic Center area is an anchor to civic and community life in Grand Haven, and, to a lesser extent, Ottawa County. Yet, it is also in flux due to current dynamics involving the Louit District Library, the North Ottawa Council on Aging, and proposed building changes at the Ottawa County building. It is critical that public officials pay close attention to these elements and be prepared to re-program and re-vitalize these facilities in the future.

Waterfront

Efforts should be made to create a stronger visual and physical connection to the Grand River waterfront, especially at Harbor Drive. In addition, public access should be enhanced and there is a need to carefully evaluate and improve public and private re-development proposals. Specific opportunities include the re-examination of the stadium area including the depot and museum building, the existing bleachers and landscaping, amphitheater possibilities, as well as the future of the Chinook Pier complex, the public docks and marina, and the Farmers Market facility.

Gateways Locations

- US-31 at Jackson, Washington, Columbus Avenue, and Seventh Street
- Jackson Avenue at First, Second, and Third Streets
- Fifth Street at Franklin Avenue

These key entries into Downtown Grand Haven offer opportunities for both improving specific Downtown intersections and attracting more Downtown users. Coordinated treatments and the use of common materials and messages could be used to integrate these areas into Downtown. These changes might also build on the City’s system of wayfinding signs.

Centertown

This commercial area holds promise for internal improvements to bolster its own potential value, but also gateway opportunities for enhancing all other Downtown locations. For example, to the extent streetscape improvements extend eastward along Washington Avenue from Harbor Drive, it would be appropriate to use similar treatments in Centertown, too.

Olde Towne Neighborhood

This historic Downtown neighborhood contains numerous opportunities to become stronger and more vital through selective in-fill housing projects (of traditional and possibly new designs). There may also be some strategic infrastructure programs which can serve to prime the pump and foster deeper private sector investment and revitalization efforts.
Overview
Washington Avenue is the heart of Downtown and is perceived as “Downtown” due to its historic role and current home of a wide variety of pedestrian-oriented retail and service businesses, non-profit and civic organizations, and a cross-section of community events and activities.

Vision
Strengthen Washington Avenue through a coordinated, comprehensive program of new public and private sector improvement projects, revitalized and new business ventures, and infill projects which increase vitality, raise community spirit, and increase the tax base of Downtown.

Goals
Further identify, define, and prioritize the various Downtown projects that were identified during the visioning process. Utilize the most important projects – as determined through consensus meetings – to form the backbone of the Downtown Strategic Plan.

Policies
Create the conditions most critical for fostering and encouraging these backbone projects to proceed.
Washington Avenue at Harbor Drive

Overview: Northeast Corner Public Parking Lot
This very strategic corner contains a 116-car City-owned parking lot and has been cited as a key missing piece of a stronger Harbor Drive and connection to the Washington Avenue business district. The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Team spent considerable effort on this parcel — treating it as a case study — to illustrate specific potential options for re-developing the specific property, but also as an example of "how to plan, refine, and evaluate" any and all re-development options for various properties. This technique encourages quick sketching and cycling of ideas to study and evaluate a variety of potential ideas and proposals. Such an approach is equally useful to both private sector developers and public sector officials considering planning and re-development opportunities.

Vision
Add new building(s) containing a mix of retail and residential uses in order to create a stronger connection with Harbor Drive and intensify the physical continuity along Washington Avenue; add components which create public gathering spaces and foster the year-round appeal of downtown. These areas are addressed in greater detail on pages 18 and 19.

Goals
Encourage new, surgical re-development of a portion of this parcel with retail, restaurant, and residential uses to take advantage of the present context, pedestrian volumes, water/harbor views, all while enhancing existing adjacent uses. In order to achieve these goals, it will be necessary to remove some parking, which, especially in this location, ought to be viewed as an interim use. The site is critically important for providing this important physical connection and is a key re-development site.

Policies
Parking spaces can be removed from use but such spaces should be "purchased" by providing a market appraised value for the property taken. This value should not be less than $3,000 per space, approximately, and placed in a fund for acquiring additional parking spaces.

The adjacent sketches on this page illustrate a way of doing conceptual planning and development work both by the public and private developers to explore options for analysis and tradeoff determinations.

An example of the Harbor Drive and Washington Avenue parking lot with new retail fronting on Washington Avenue and a plaza at the intersection.

Harbor Drive and Washington Avenue with a plaza-style park oriented toward the Grand River. Note the use of retail on the first floor with residential on the upper floors.

In this scenario, the view broadens by employing a ribbon concept for the building footprint. Here the new building turns the corner opening up to the waterfront.

In this scenario, the existing parking lot has been converted into an open park-plaza with winter skating and entertainment features. A portion of the existing building has been extended northward toward the waterfront.
Vista Study

The property at the northeast corner of Harbor Drive and Washington Avenue may well be the most important location for energizing the Downtown as there exists in the Downtown District. With frontage on both Washington Avenue and Harbor Drive, the ultimate use of this parcel could be the impetus behind new improvements to the waterfront area as well as additional development along Harbor Drive, and infill development on Washington Avenue. One thing is apparent; while parking is at a premium in this area, parking alone is not the highest and best use for this space.

A number of issues will need to be addressed relative to any development proposal for this property at Washington Avenue and Harbor Drive.

- Can parking be reduced or eliminated and if so, where will the displaced spaces be relocated?
- How much public gathering space can or should be provided at this location?
- The size of the view "window" to the Grand River and Dewey Hill beyond will be determined largely by the placement of any potential buildings at this location.
- What impact will development of this parcel have on the “piano factory” Harborfront Place property at 41 Washington Avenue?
First and Second Street Corridors

Overview
These two avenues form a key development zone and opportunity corridors due to proximity to Washington Avenue and Harbor Drive. The northern portions contain largely vacant and underutilized properties.

The areas which hold tremendous potential for reinvestment and revitalization include:

- Stanco property
- Covenant Life Church (2nd and 3rd floors)
- General corner redevelopments
- Reuse of some existing surface parking lots

Vision
New, mixed use projects including residential, lodging, and supportive retail and service businesses. There are also important, complimentary infrastructure improvements to be undertaken to the street, sidewalk, and utility systems.

Goals
Foster the redevelopment of this district which contains significant development and tax-generating potential.

Policies
Collaboration between City and Downtown staff to work with existing property owners to further develop re-vitalization concepts and potential programs in the area.
The use of speciality pavements, such as brick, concrete pavers, and patterned concrete can help to distinguish between different use areas while at the same time dressing up the overall image and identity of the Downtown District.

Vision
Update and freshen public street and sidewalk finishes in a comprehensive program. Similarly, improve street trees and consider adding flower planters with irrigation to the street. Provide clear wayfinding signage directing visitors to parking locations, the waterfront, and other key areas on the Downtown District. Improve sub-surface utilities to serve robust redevelopment.

Goals
Create a fresh, clean look that reflects positively on users’ perception of the Downtown District and enhances the ability to attract new customers and entice new businesses to Downtown.

Policies
Undertake a careful review of the entire Washington Avenue corridor to identify and prioritize the most important improvements to the public and private features along the street.
Infill Opportunities

Overview
A wide variety of infill opportunities exist in Downtown Grand Haven. While the majority of the storefronts along Washington Avenue are filled, great potential exists for additional vitality by encouraging increased usage of second- and third-floor space for residential and or office uses. New space can also be made available by building up, adding new floors to the existing one-story buildings.

Vision
A vibrant retail business district characterized by full storefronts and complementary businesses. A vital upper floor environment, which includes service businesses and residences, adds depth and market opportunities to the entire district.

Goals
Full occupancy of all existing buildings through revitalization and re-purposing efforts. Additional square footage added where physically appropriate and financially feasible.

Policies
Foster the reuse of existing vacant space through design incentive grants and low-interest building improvement loans. Encourage one-story and vacant lot owners to consider the development of new multi-story buildings.

While the majority of the storefronts along Washington Avenue are filled, great potential exists for additional vitality by encouraging increased usage of second- and third-floor space for residential and or office uses. As indicated above in the “after” scenario, new space can also be made available by building up, adding new floors to the existing one-story buildings.
Alley Improvements and Mid-Block Access

Overview
Alleys and mid-block access-ways provide important entrances to parking areas, shops, businesses, and residences.

Vision
Create attractive entrances to all Downtown buildings from Washington Avenue as well as Franklin and Columbus Avenue parking facilities. Develop enhanced access between Washington Avenue and rear parking areas and entrances.

Goals
Improve and create these secondary entrances to Downtown businesses by relocating overhead utilities, redesigning rear entrances, re-landscaping, and or consolidation of existing buildings.

Policies
Encourage public agencies and officials to coordinate with private owners to create these improvements, especially when a specific project could be expanded and coordinated to create much larger benefits.

Providing mid-block access connections between Washington Avenue and small surface parking lots located at the rear of commercial buildings creates new opportunities for a vibrant live-work-shop environment in the Downtown District.
Overview
The area is the center of civic institutions and an anchor for several leading financial organizations. There is great potential for expansion and re-vitalization of several of these institutions which will further enliven this critical focal point of Grand Haven.

Vision
Strengthen the Hilltop neighborhood with appropriate building additions and or re-purposing efforts. Add appropriate community enhancements and activities to Central Park.

Goals
Encourage existing institutions to remain and become stronger and more vibrant through re-programming and re-purposing efforts.

Policies
Active involvement by City officials in encouraging these organizations to stay in downtown and emphasize the value of centrality and remaining and prospering in Downtown.
A key component of the Hilltop Neighborhood is Central Park. Located at the crest of the hill and in the center of the neighborhood, this park is very much a “village green”, a place where outdoor civic functions and neighborhood activities can occur. The many mature trees, walkways, fountain and lawn are pleasant and relaxing for users.

The future health and vitality of the Hilltop Neighborhood is dependent upon the continued enhancement of the civic and public uses that currently exist in this area. As such, it is essential that this area remains the hub of City and County government activities, that the churches, the civic center, and other existing and new activity centers grow and prosper, and that additional residential opportunities be provided within walking distance of these activity areas.

Currently under-utilized, Central Park has the potential to be the unifying element behind revitalization of the Hilltop Neighborhood. A more dynamic park, in terms of use, will only act to enhance the area. Central Park provides the perfect location for increased programs and activities. Increased interest and use by neighborhoods that surround it is driven by the opportunities and types of activities offered.

The park itself is diminished by the many gaps - vacant parcels and surface parking lots - that punctuate its edges. New infill development that define the edges and more effectively enclose the space will help to define the park as an urban oasis - or green respite - from the urban environment. Scale is also important; the size of the space can easily accommodate buildings of three or four stories. In addition, the increased square footage would provide premier residential and office space (see the example Before and After illustration to the left).

This before and after section series illustrates the potential for increasing the density and mass of the existing structures which face onto Central Park in the Hilltop Neighborhood area. The expansion of some existing structures by adding one and two additional stories would in effect frame the park space and add to the vibrancy of the civic center area of Downtown Grand Haven.
Overview
This primary location is the principal visual and physical connection to the Grand River waterfront, especially at Harbor Drive. As such, public access should be enhanced and there is a need to carefully evaluate and improve public and private re-development proposals.

Vision
Enhance the “jewel of the community” through improved public access and usability, protection of key views and vistas, additional residential, lodging, and commercial re-development projects opportunities.

Goals
Carefully re-examine all public facilities along the Grand River within Grand Haven and determine if and how such facilities could be improved (including modification, removal, expansion...) to make the waterfront zone more appealing to the public and the adjacent private properties more valuable to investment and re-development.

Policies
Identify and rate all existing public facilities along the waterfront and initiate a thorough examination. Identify and categorize all private parcels within one block of Harbor Drive and work with these property owners to begin to define possible re-development options for each parcel. Priority should be given to residential, lodging, and selective retail uses.
The grades between Harbor Drive and the water are such that seating can be recessed into the grade thereby opening up views towards the waterfront walk, the Grand River and Dewey Hill.

This illustrated example of a waterfront plaza utilizes the space currently occupied by the One South Harbor building for pedestrian and public gathering activities. A linear multi-use surface for parking, walking, roller-blading and winter time ice skating extends northward along Harbor Drive.

This illustrated example of a possible waterfront plaza retains much of the existing Downtown fabric but enhances the connection between the Downtown and the waterfront.

The foot of Washington Avenue is the point where Grand Haven meets the water, both literally and figuratively. Grand Haven touches the water at numerous locations but this is where the historic downtown accessed the waterfront, originally for commerce and shipping. As such, improvements in this area should be examined in regards to their ability to meet the following objectives:

- Celebrate the water
- Open up and retain views to the water
- Enhance the waterfront character
- Provide space for community gathering and use

A better integration of the Downtown to the waterfront is also critical. Improving pedestrian movement across Harbor Drive and raising the awareness of the Downtown District by focusing attention on the intersection of Washington Avenue and Harbor Drive are clearly important steps to be taken. (See page 10 for a discussion of options for the parking lot at northeast corner of Washington Avenue and Harbor Drive)
Overview
There are key entry points into Downtown Grand Haven at the following locations:

1. US-31 at Franklin, Washington, Columbus, Jackson Avenues, and Seventh Street.
2. Jackson Avenue at Third, Second and First Streets.
3. Fifth Street at Franklin Avenue.

Vision
The Vision for these gateways leading into Downtown Grand Haven is that these special entries will be improved to welcome local citizens and invite visitors into Downtown. There should be a design consistency among these gateways to integrate with other Downtown themes and patterns. Gateway improvements could borrow on and embellish the present signage system or existing or future beautification elements along Washington Avenue.

Goals
Re-design key entrances to Downtown Grand Haven using professional assistance working with local citizens to determine appropriate treatments and common elements among the various intersections, such as the addition of decorative and character-defining brickwork, plantings and signage. Modify gateways over the next three years.

Move towards renaming Jackson Avenue "Harbor Drive" as a means to better convey the linkage to the waterfront of Grand Haven.

Policies
Prioritize gateways and allocate funds to undertake: a more extensive survey of gateways in other communities, prepare a preliminary program and budget for possible gateway projects.
Overview
The Centertown district contains a variety of commercial uses and services important to local citizens. The area also acts as a transition zone to and from Downtown and US-31 along Columbus, Washington, and Franklin Avenues.

Vision
Improve area for emerging markets of local and US-31 corridor users through the selective public infrastructure programs and private improvement projects. Assist other portions of Downtown through the careful and consistent improvement of key gateway intersections along US-31 at Seventh Street, Columbus, Washington, and Franklin Avenues.

Goals
Conduct a thorough strategic review of the Centertown area for public and private sector strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities.

Policies
Form a committee of public and private parties to undertake the strategic review and prioritize the most important elements and create a medium term improvement program, including estimated budgets, for this program over the next five years. Priority should be given to gateway work elements of this program.

Undertake a review of the existing signage ordinance and modify the ordinance as necessary with the intention of minimizing visual "clutter" along the US-31 corridor in Grand Haven.
Overview
This downtown neighborhood contains modest housing stock and somewhat deteriorating infrastructure elements. Development opportunities include in-fill housing single family, multi-family, and possibly selective commercial re-vitalization related to Jackson or Washington Avenues.

Vision
A revitalized neighborhood with refurbished housing stock, some new residential units, plus street, sidewalk, and possibly lighting improvements to foster re-investment and civic pride.

Goals
Foster private sector improvements to existing housing stock and new investment in vacant/underutilized properties. Facilitate improved gateway corridors along Fourth, Second, and First Streets (see gateway section), and new investment in public infrastructure.

Policies
Conduct a thorough strategic review of the Olde Towne neighborhood for public and private sector strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. Prioritize the most important elements and create a medium term improvement program, including estimated budgets, for this program over the next five years.
The Future Results

The quote on the inside cover of this Vision Plan report refers to the common good...that quality of a place that supports everyone’s well being and collective livelihood of the community. It is hoped that this Vision, along with the other planning work that has been conducted recently in Grand Haven, will be utilized to shape and implement the Strategic Plan for Grand Haven, and in so doing, enlarge the common good of this community. In the future, this expansion of the common good will be noticed in the following ways:

Public Sector Leadership
Public leadership will focus on public infrastructure improvements, and will foster and set the quality, tone, and direction for complimentary private investments. The public process will be marked by transparency, clarity of purpose, and measured leadership on the most important civic projects. Public projects will help prime the pump for others to follow and share in re-development opportunities and responsibilities.

Private Sector Involvement
Private sector property owners and businesses must engage in continuous thinking about improvements to their property’s profitability and business opportunities. This includes collaboration with neighbors on joint projects related to the overall Vision. The private sector will provide input and support to joint public and private projects because these challenges will require political and financial support to achieve short-term, medium-term, and long-term advantages. Private citizens will provide meaningful feedback to City officials as to ways that Downtown businesses and public officials can seek and achieve win-win solutions.

What Does Success Look Like?

1. The physical appearance of Downtown Grand Haven will be enhanced through beautification and revitalization projects on streets, sidewalks, rear entrances or alleys, landscaping, and existing and new buildings.
2. New and rejuvenated existing retail and service businesses will reach new levels of vibrancy and profitability.
3. The Washington Avenue business district and the Grand River waterfront will be more coherently connected physically and new public spaces will be created for formal and informal events, activities, and gatherings.
4. New residential homes of various designs as well as new lodging options will emerge to serve resident and visitor needs.
5. Significant private capital will be attracted to invest in Downtown Grand Haven because of the long-term quality and value imbedded in the Vision, Strategic Plan, and shared expectations for future Downtown development.
6. Public and private partnerships will be established and/or expanded to meet the expected leadership and financing needs for future projects. These collaborations will require integrity, trust, confidence and faith in the future. These are the very aspects of the common good that this Vision Plan endeavors to expand.

The results will be a revitalized Downtown Grand Haven with unique and interesting facilities that are well designed to complement existing buildings and context. These will be appealing to both local and visiting users, strengthening the tax base and contributing to the vitality of Downtown and the entire greater Grand Haven community.

Looking Ahead: What Can This Vision Plan Help To Facilitate?
## Grand Haven Strategic Work Program Matrix

### Key
- **Importance**:
  - 1. Catalytic/Very Important
  - 2. Very Important
  - 3. Important
- **Timeframe**:
  - 1. Now
  - 2. Soon: 1 - 3 years.
  - 3. 3 - 5 years
  - 4. Ongoing/As Available
  - 5. Incomplete
- **Responsibilities**:
  - 1. Lead or Coordinating
  - 2. Key Participant
  - 3. Task Force Opportunity
- **Private / Public Responsibility**:
  - LF - Loutit Foundation
  - CC - Chamber of Commerce
  - VB - Visitors Bureau
  - CF - Community Foundation
  - AC - Arts Council
  - OTNA - Olde Towne Neighborhood Association
  - P - Parks
  - BLP - Brd. Of Light and Power
  - PSG - Public Safety
  - CS - Community Services
  - P - Parks

### Downtown District
- **Washington / Harbor Drive Intersection**
  - **Timeframe**: Now, Soon: 1 - 3 years.
  - **Responsibilities**: LF, CC
  - **Project**: Beautification program
  - **Public Responsibilities**: Street furniture, Flowers / planters
  - **Private Responsibilities**: Street furniture
  - **Approvals**: LF, CC
  - **Funding Opportunities**: LF / CF

### Other Private / Public Responsibility
- **Downtown Area**
  - **Project**: Beautification program
  - **Timeframe**: Now, Soon: 1 - 3 years.
  - **Responsibilities**: LF, CC
  - **Public Responsibilities**: Street furniture, Flowers / planters
  - **Private Responsibilities**: Street furniture
  - **Approvals**: LF, CC
  - **Funding Opportunities**: LF / CF

### Other / Private Responsibility
- **First and Second Street Corridors**
  - **Timeframe**: Ongoing/As Available
  - **Responsibilities**: LF, CC
  - **Project**: Beautification program
  - **Public Responsibilities**: Beautification program, Street furniture
  - **Private Responsibilities**: Beautification program
  - **Approvals**: LF, CC
  - **Funding Opportunities**: LF / CF

### Hilltop Neighborhood
- **Envison Central Park**
  - **Timeframe**: Ongoing/As Available
  - **Responsibilities**: LF, CC
  - **Project**: Beautification program
  - **Public Responsibilities**: Beautification program
  - **Private Responsibilities**: Beautification program
  - **Approvals**: LF, CC
  - **Funding Opportunities**: LF / CF
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterfront</th>
<th>Gateway Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage devel. on Harbor Dr.</td>
<td>US-31 at Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Chinook Pier viability / value</td>
<td>US-31 at Franklin, Wash., Colum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Farmers Market relocation</td>
<td>Jackson at First, Second, Fourth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add housing &amp; lodging</td>
<td>Franklin at Fifth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign stadium area for more uses, views, flexibility</td>
<td>Identify and prioritize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquila property re-development</td>
<td>Design consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Test w/ locals, visitors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gateway Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US-31 at Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway enhancements (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centertown Neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway enhancements (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautification program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olde Towne Neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway enhancements (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautification program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify infill projects - housing, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway enhancements (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve connections w/ downtown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Franklin at Fifth                                                            |
| Identify and prioritize                                                      |
| Work w/ constituents                                                          |
| Test w/ locals, visitors                                                      |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
<th>Funding Opportunities</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expand green and open spaces</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eliminate/Minimize intrusions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Create more gatherings spaces</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Redesign intersections to make more pedestrian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>$4,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Funding**

- Public - Public funding including grants
- Tax Incremental Financing - TIF
- Special Assessment - SA
- Private Investment - Private

**First & Second Streets**

- Beautification Program
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Progress
  - Estimated Cost: $3,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public

- Infill Projects
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Progress
  - Estimated Cost: $1,000,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Private

- Gateway Enhancements
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Progress
  - Estimated Cost: $5,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public

- Improve integration w/Downtown System
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Progress
  - Estimated Cost: $25,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public

- Stanco Property re-development
  - Importance: 3
  - Status: Progress
  - Estimated Cost: $1,000,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Private

**Beautification**

- Street Landscape program
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Annual
  - Estimated Cost: $55,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- Street Furniture
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: $2,500
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- Flowers and Planters
  - Importance: 3
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $2,500
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- Light Fixtures
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $2,500
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- Traffic Signals
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $2,500
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- Banner/Flag/Poles
  - Importance: 3
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $2,500
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- Snowmelt System
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $272,344
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- Infill Opportunities
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $1 million
  - Funding Opportunities: Private

- Parking Lots
  - Importance: 3
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: $250,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/Private

**Alley Improvements and Mid-block Access**

- Surface Beautification
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $200,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- Underground utilities
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: $500,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

**Trash enclosures**

- Rear entrance program
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $27,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- First Street enclosures
  - Importance: 3
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: $200,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF/SA/Private

**Parking Lots**

- Configuration
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Progress
  - Estimated Cost: $5,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF

- Signage/Function
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Progress
  - Estimated Cost: $5,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF

- Beaufication
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: $10,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF

- Residential Parking Options
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Progress
  - Estimated Cost: n/a
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/TIF

**Gathering Places**

- Intra-block passageways
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $20,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/Private

- Pocket parks
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: $3,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/Private

- Corner kitch/habor
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: $4,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/Private

- Stadium
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Progress
  - Estimated Cost: $3,000,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/Private

**Hilltop Neighborhood**

- Enliven Central Park
  - Consider stage, gazebo, add benches, picnic table, lighting
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Community input on changes
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Encourage new infill projects
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Ottawa County court expansion
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Re-vitalization of Community Center
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Re-vitalization/repurposing of Library
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Re-use of Council on Aging (if moved)
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Complete
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Study corners for re-devl. opps
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

**Waterfront**

- Encourage develop. On Harbor Dr
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Evaluate Chanook Per viability / value
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Evaluate Partners Market relocation
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Attract additional housing & lodging
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Redesign stadium area for more uses, vistas, flexibility
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Aquila property re-development

**Gateway Locations**

- US-31 at Jackson
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: No Action
  - Estimated Cost: Private

- US-31 AT Franklin, Washington, Columbia
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: No Action
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Jackson at First, Second, Fourth
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: No Action
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

- Franklin at Fifth
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: No Action
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private

**Centerstown Neighborhood**

- Gateway enhancement (see above)
  - Importance: 2
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/TIF/SA/Private

- Beaufication program
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/TIF/SA/Private

**Olde Towne Neighborhood**

- Identify infill projects - housing, other
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: $50,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/Private

- Gateway enhancements (see above)
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: $50,000
  - Funding Opportunities: Public/Private

- Improve connections w/downtown
  - Importance: 1
  - Status: Ongoing
  - Estimated Cost: Public/Private