

"A common and prevailing interest in conserving the environmental characteristics of one of Ann Arbor's oldest residential neighborhoods and adapting them to the needs of change inherent in community growth led to the organization of the Old West Side Association, whose members dedicate themselves to the conservation and improvement of the Old West Side and to the retention of its unique residential atmosphere."

Old West Side Association, Inc.
preamble to the Bylaws
adopted September 14, 1967

Foreword

The Old West Side Association, dedicated to the conservation and improvement of the community known in Ann Arbor as the Old West Side, was organized in May of 1967 as a non-profit neighborhood association chartered by the State of Michigan. In the words of its current President, Clarence Roy,

"The Old West Side is an older neighborhood, one of Ann Arbor's first, and still expresses as fully as any area of the community the environmental character that people associate with it. Historically a quiet, wooded university town, Ann Arbor is now a research center and has increased its population from 60,000 to 100,000 in 8 years. Until recently, our neighborhood has escaped much of the apartment development boom that has transformed other parts of the city. Because we are concerned about the forces of change that are so large and rampant, a group of us have organized a neighborhood association and acquired non-profit status. We hope to find ways and means to retain and improve our historic residential environment and to discover appropriate guidelines for the development of new construction that is sensitive to the physical characteristics of the neighborhood. We are not seeking preservation as such, but rather conservation and the careful replacement of deteriorated structures with new architecture compatible in scale, placement, form, material and character (as distinct from style)."

The thoughtful policy developed with professional skill by this organization during its short existence should serve as a model for other communities struggling to retain their identity in the face of the many problems caused by population growth, expansion, the automobile

and the rapidly changing patterns of today's life that concern us all. A step by step account of the organization and procedures followed by the Association is a blueprint of how to approach the problems of a city neighborhood.

From the first, the Association has displayed an unusual capacity to work congenially with municipal authorities and enlist civic, state and national support. In the three years since its organization it has developed sound guidelines and has now produced a perceptive survey of the Old West Side neighborhood that defines its characteristics and assets, relates it to the larger city, analyzes its architectural and historic significance, enumerates trouble spots and losses, and recommends a practical program for action.

It is hoped that this document, although produced independently of the city by private citizens, will be accepted by the City of Ann Arbor as an important and useful planning proposal and that they will incorporate many of its recommendations into the City's programs. It represents the hopes and the needs of the neighborhood residents.

It should be pointed out that it is extremely rare for a neighborhood to produce by its own incentive a comprehensive survey of this quality of the area makeup and the goals set for its protection. Many of the concepts set forth and the recommendations for action should be applicable not only to the Old West Side but to similar or related areas in Ann Arbor and even for other cities throughout the country.

Mrs. George E. Downing, Consultant,
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Board of Directors

Caspar M. Enkemann
Bill L. Hafner
William V. Heldreth (treasurer)
Mrs. Mary Anderson Holdren (secretary)
Robert T. Huber
Harold H. Koch
Clarence Roy (president)
Mrs. Peter Smith (vice president)
(vacancy)

Past Directors

Bert Britton
Charles J. Carey
Arthur E. Carpenter
Harold Doster
Mel Ivory
Mrs. Sherman Kuhn
Chet LaMore
Gerald G. Miller



Old West Side Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 405
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107

This study and report was made possible only through the willing cooperation and generous contributions of a number of organizations, firms and individuals. We are pleased to express our abundant appreciation

to the National Trust for Historic Preservation for the Environmental Survey made possible through their grants

to Mrs. George E. Downing for her expert consultation and inspiring guidance throughout the conduct of this study

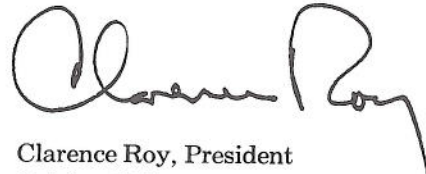
to Richard G. Wilson and Edward J. Vaughn, the authors of the survey, for their dedication to the task that far exceeded their remuneration

to the many contributors of funds and services toward the design, production and printing of this report including

Ann Arbor Area Foundation
Ann Arbor Bank
Ann Arbor Federal Savings
Ann Arbor Trust
Huron Valley National Bank
National Bank and Trust
University of Michigan
Johnson, Johnson & Roy, Inc.
Smith, Hinchman & Grylls Associates, Inc.
and individual members of the Old West Side Association

We regret the impracticability of recognizing each of the many other contributors individually and seek the understanding of those whose names are not included above. To all of you, the Old West Side Association dedicates its continued efforts to conserve our neighborhood.

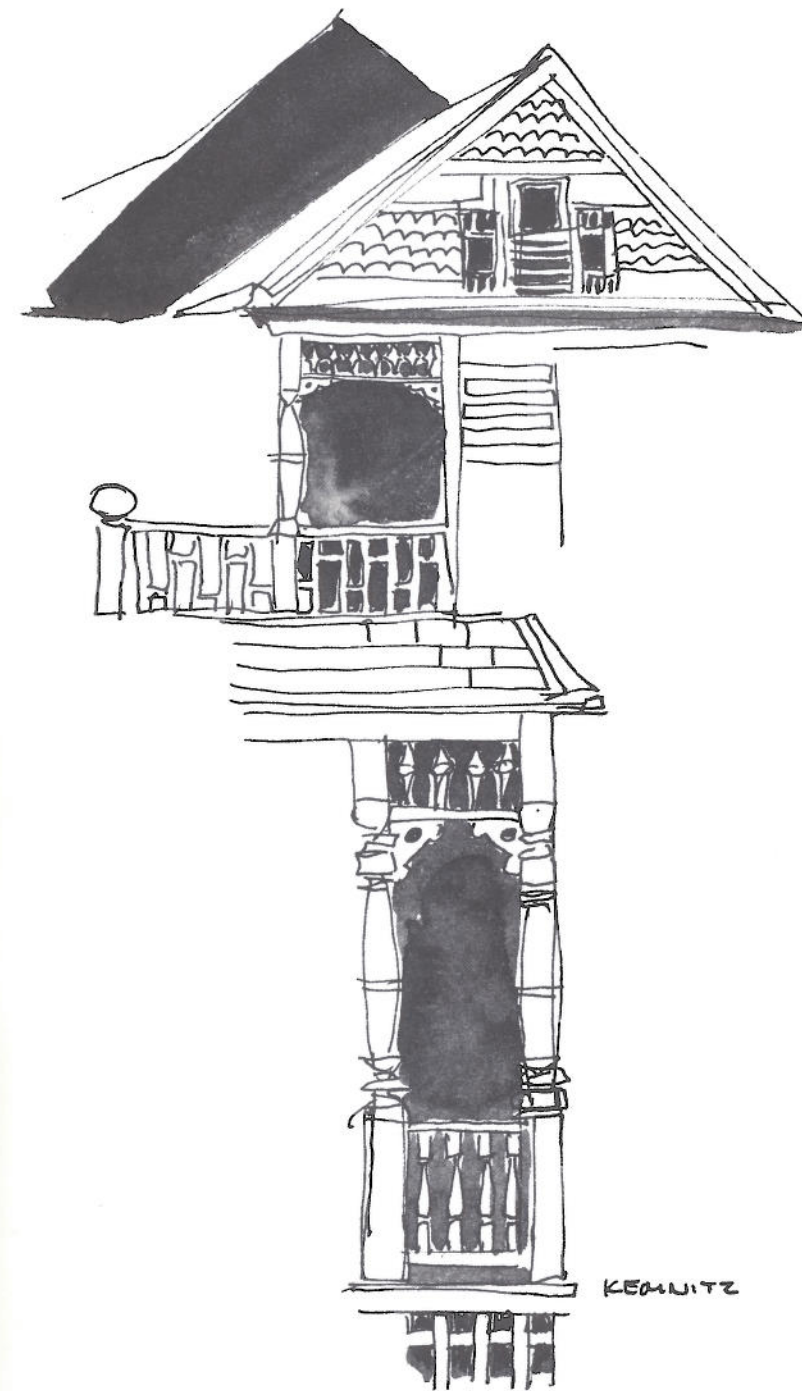
Old West Side Association



Clarence Roy, President
October 1971

Contents

1	Introduction	
3	The City/The Neighborhood	
4	The City	
6	The Neighborhood	
15	History	
18	Population	
19	Recommendations	
21	Streetscape/Landscape	
24	Traffic	
25	Streetscape	
26	Parking	
28	Street Furniture	
29	Landscape	
33	Recommendations	
35	Structures	
40	Multiple Apartment Buildings	
41	Commercial/Industrial	
44	Public & Semi-Public Buildings	
46	Individual Homes	
57	Recommendations	
	Principles of	
59	Preservation & Restoration	
65	Structure	
65	Interiors	
65	Additions	
65	Siding	
65	Color	
66	Porches, Columns & Steps	
66	Doors	
67	Windows	
68	Utility Equipment	
68	Outbuildings	
68	Signs	
71	Summary	
75	Appendix	
75	Methodology	
79	History of the Old West Side Association	
82	Notes	
85	Bibliography	



Introduction

This survey is concerned with the total environment, both its unique and typical aspects, of the Old West Side in Ann Arbor, Michigan; its aim is to establish the physical character of the neighborhood, to identify its assets and its problems and to suggest guidelines that will preserve its structures and landscape as well as its historical character.

By definition neighborhood is taken to mean the total environment. It is more than the sum of its parts; it is the entire ecology, the interrelationships of the residents with each other and their environment. For this reason the survey is wide-ranging, from fire plugs to factory buildings, with each element identified and then related to the whole.

Preserving a few houses because of their architectural / historical value will not prevent the remaining buildings and surrounding area from deteriorating. The character, amenities, and other features of the neighborhood are as valuable and as important to maintain as the structures. Isolated preserved or renovated buildings minus their physical, cultural and historical context are little more than relics of the past.

The City

The Old West Side is representative of the modest neighborhoods once typical of the Midwest in architecture, history and environment. It can be viewed as a symbol of a bygone era which is still relevant to today. The Old West Side is an important living resource for Ann Arbor.

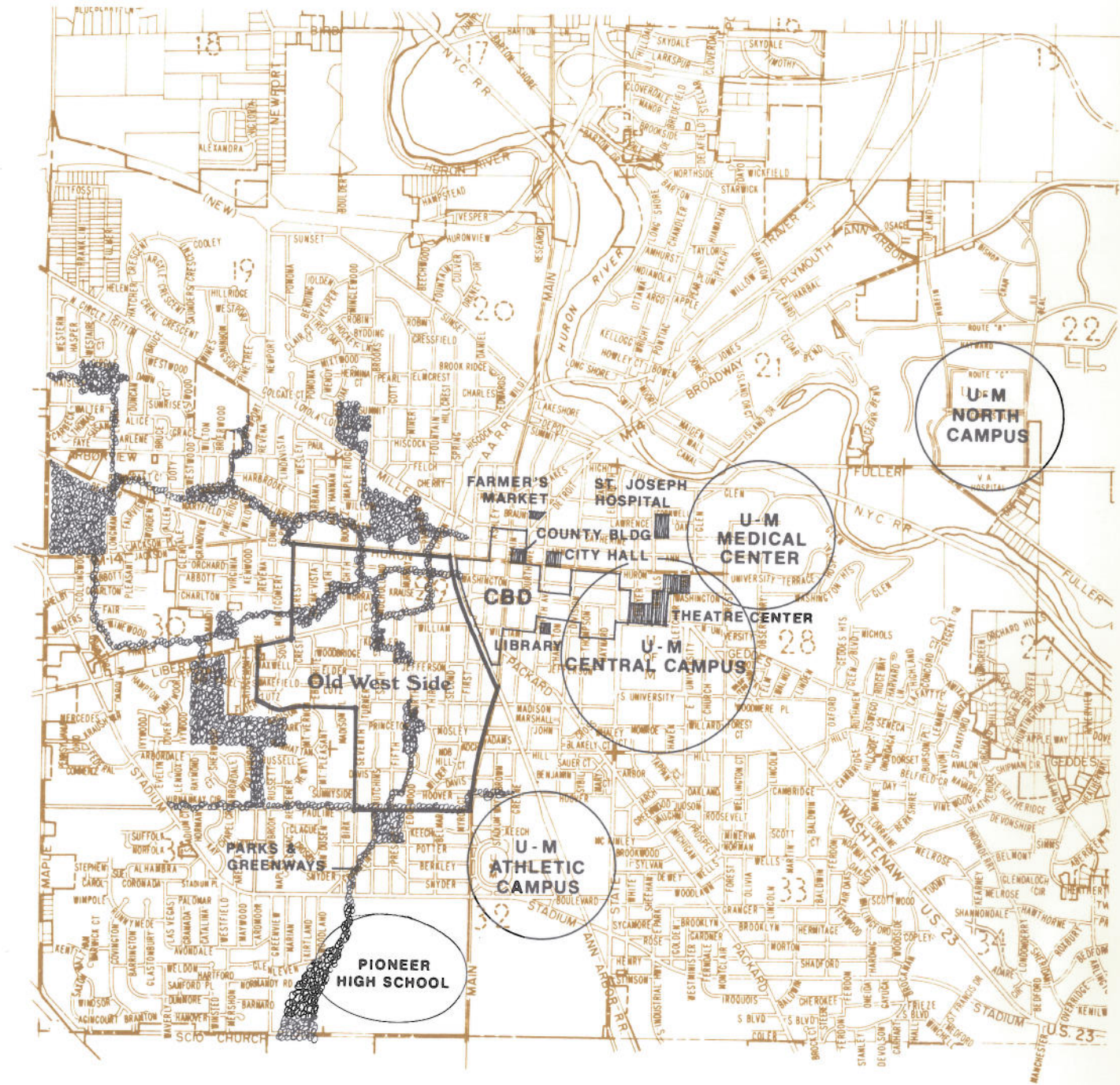
Ann Arbor is located along the banks of the Huron River, forty miles west of Detroit, Michigan. It was settled in 1824 by two land promoters, John Allen and Elisha W. Rumsey, who named the town "Annarbour" for their wives and an oak grove.¹ The predominant early settlers of the town in the mid-nineteenth century were mainly of New England and German origin. In 1837 The University of Michigan was located on a forty-acre site east of the town. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century the community grew to become a small industrial center with increasing emphasis on technological research.²

The city has experienced a population growth approaching 50% in the last decade and has a current (1970) population of 99,797. A great deal of this population is housed in the new multiple unit apartments in the inner city/University area (which includes the Old West Side) and the numerous suburban housing tracts now surrounding Ann Arbor. As a result of this growth, parcels of land in the Old West Side are now more valuable than the houses which occupy them. Purchase of property for the construction of multiple apartment building has become the most obvious threat to the integrity of the neighborhood.

The motto of the city, "research center of the Midwest," reflects the current orientation of many commercial/industrial firms and The University of Michigan. Over fifty firms engaged in industrial research are located in Ann Arbor. There are other manufacturers, generally of the smoke-free variety, with modern medium-sized plants that produce optical equipment, lasers, ball bearings, scientific tools, instruments and books among other products. In addition, Ann Arbor is a large professional center, a bedroom suburb for many employed in Dearborn and Detroit, and one of the largest medical centers in the nation. City fathers claim the city to be the "cultural center of the Midwest," due to its many operas, symphonies, theater and art activities related to the University.

In 1969, the occupations of its residents were 66.2% white collar, 12.8% manufacturing, and 12.7% retail and wholesale trade. In 1968, the city was the third highest in household income of all metropolitan county areas in the United States with the average income being \$13,547.00.³ Other pertinent data concerning Ann Arbor: it is the seat of Washtenaw County, the City government is of the council/mayor/city manager type, its school system is one of the strongest and best known, and it contains sixty-four churches representing thirty-three denominations.

These facts point out that Ann Arbor is a rapidly growing, fast-moving, wealthy city with highly educated residents.





existing neighborhood

The Neighborhood

The Old West Side, while a self-contained unit architecturally, historically, and culturally, is part of the greater city. As presently defined, it is basically a residential neighborhood, bounded by South Main and the Ann Arbor Railroad tracks on the east, West Washington on the north, Crest, Soule and South Seventh on the west and Pauline on the south. Its limits encompass both sides of the boundary streets. These boundaries include sections that are not similar in age, building style or type to the main or central area roughly bounded by Main/Ann Arbor Railroad on the east, Seventh/Liberty/Crest on the west, Washington on the north and Koch on the south.

The majority of the structures of this central area which is sometimes referred to as "old German Town," can be dated between approximately 1850-1914. Architecturally they are of eclectic revival styles, display similar historic associations and are positioned on their respective lots in a similar pattern. Lot sizes are typically sixty-six feet by one hundred thirty-two feet or forty feet by one hundred twenty feet.

Buildings south of West Liberty to Madison between Eighth and Soule are of a later, post 1920 style, and exhibit little association with the central area. This is also true of the area between Main Street and Seventh south of Koch (extended through to South Seventh on an imaginary line). This area is even more recent, dating from the 1920's through the 1960's.



HISTORIC & RECOMMENDED NEIGHBORHOODS



typical/unique

showing the distribution of properties selected as representing most fully the historic character of the Old West Side.

Structures on West Huron Street north of the originally defined area are compatible with those in the central area. This section is of interest for several reasons. It is contiguous, is of historic value, and it contains buildings of outstanding architectural and historical interest. While some multiple apartments have recently been built on West Huron there are many older buildings worth preserving. Generally larger in scale than those of the central area, they are of similar type and their location makes them natural focal points for preservation efforts. At least twelve are worthy of notice and two, the Gott House (Martha-Washington House, Bracket villa style, 1861) at 709 West Huron, and the Wheeler House (Gothic Period, c. 1853) at 1020 West Huron, are among the best examples of their type in the state.

Several important buildings near but outside the neighborhood are also compatible and significant to the Old West Side. One of these is the Eber White house at 1444 West Liberty. Several houses and buildings in the area north of Huron and east of Main may prove on closer study to be of architectural and historic value. While the main efforts will need to be concentrated within the Old West Side central area, there is opportunity for other homes and businesses on the west side of Ann Arbor to affiliate.

Businesses and manufacturing concerns are clustered near the Ann Arbor Railroad, west on Liberty and William to Second and Third and on West Huron to the Third/Chapin Street area. Except for the parking they require, these enterprises are not deemed a significant threat to the Old West Side. Their structures contribute to the character of the area as well as to the economic livelihood of many of its residents.

Martha Washington House >





multi-family

Although much of the neighborhood is suitably zoned for two-family dwellings, the scattered and unsympathetic distribution of some multi-family districts seriously jeopardizes the original environmental scale. As an example, one of the most significant architectural/historical areas — West Huron, portions of Second, Third, First and Ashley and West Liberty — is now zoned for multi-family. Although it will be necessary to find ways of incorporating multi-family building into the neighborhood without destroying its character, this use should not be expanded. Zoning distribution should be reconsidered and as much two-family zoning as possible should be retained. It is essential to preserve the intimate residential scale created by the small buildings.

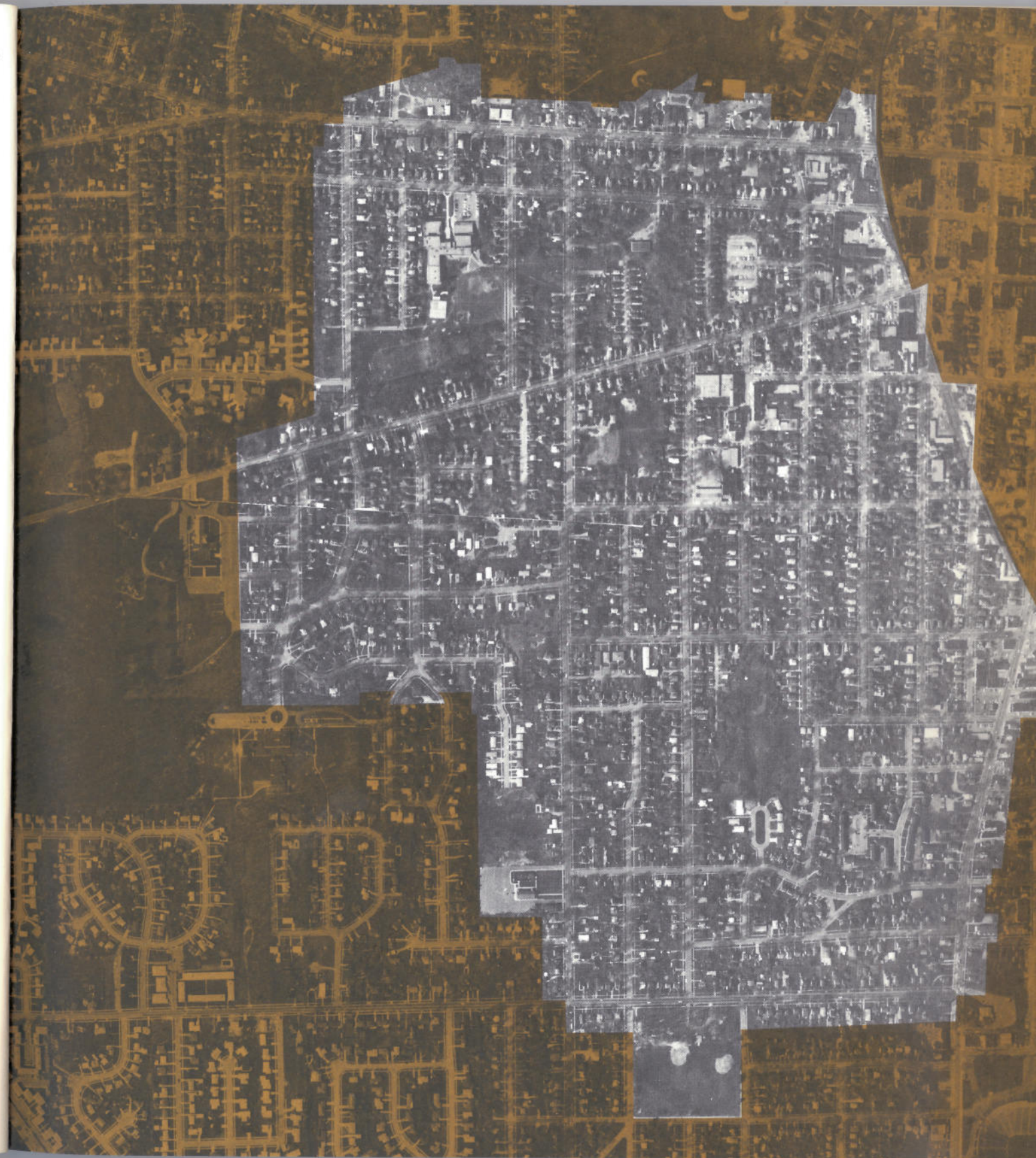


<i>R1C,-D</i>	<i>one-family</i>	<i>R4A,-B,-C,-D</i>	<i>multi-family</i>	<i>PL</i>	<i>public lands</i>	<i>C2B</i>	<i>business service</i>
<i>R2A</i>	<i>two-family</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>parking</i>	<i>C1</i>	<i>local business</i>	<i>C3</i>	<i>fringe commercial</i>
		<i>O</i>	<i>office</i>	<i>C2A</i>	<i>central business</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>limited industrial</i>



historic district

The most homogenous area in age, architecture, historic interest, landscape, streetscape and total environment is the section bordered by West Huron, Crest, West Liberty, South Seventh, Koch Avenue line, South Main and Ann Arbor Railroad with a "spur" on South Main from Koch to Pauline. This total area exhibits qualities of architectural/historical value, homogeneity and interest that recommends it for consideration as a historic district by the City of Ann Arbor and the State of Michigan and for entry on the *National Register of Historic Places*. The value of the Old West Side to the city is sufficiently great to have it viewed as a "residential park" to be accorded the same protection given other city parks. While the areas to the south around Pauline and west near Eber White are of later development, they should be included in the National Register nomination on a subsidiary basis and should be retained as part of the Old West Side neighborhood.





Streetscape/Landscape

Streetscape/Landscape

Streetscape and landscape are so inseparably intertwined that they need to be discussed together. It should be emphasized that they have a very intimate relationship to buildings and traffic; each is part of the neighborhood and changes in one will cause profound changes in the others.

The topography of the Old West Side is characteristic of Ann Arbor. It is sloped slightly to the northeast with some undulation typical of the glacial moraine geology of the region. With generally a one hundred foot differential in the area, the topography is most dramatic in the vicinity of Wurster Park. The neighborhood was originally traversed by Allen Creek (named for the founder of Ann Arbor, John Allen) which ran east between West Liberty and West Washington Streets and then turned north near the present Ann Arbor Railroad. Since the installation of the city storm drain system, Allen Creek has been dry for many years although some houses in the lower areas are still subject to spring flooding. Another stream with some mineral baths used to run near the present Ann Arbor Railroad but it has long since disappeared.

The streets of the Old West Side central area are laid out in a north/south, east/west grid pattern typical of most nineteenth century American city planning and the basic pattern for early Ann Arbor. West Liberty, used as a trail and road before it was incorporated in the city, is the only street in the neighborhood that is not true to compass lines. The areas west and south of the Old West Side central area (Eberwhite and Pauline areas) with their curved streets and cul-de-sac designs reflect a twentieth century concept in city planning that establishes their later character and distinguishes them from the older part of the neighborhood.



Traffic

One of the major threats to the coherence of the Old West Side is the automobile. Implicit in the concept of neighborhood is the basic premise that the homes should not be separated from each other by an excessive volume of traffic. Within a neighborhood there is a relationship between homes on adjoining properties and a close relationship between the houses facing one another across the street. High speed and large volume traffic is a serious disruption to this relationship. Producing disturbing noise levels and causing pedestrian movement to be unsafe, it can shatter a neighborhood and cause its disintegration. Because of its significant population of older citizens, the Old West Side should be especially concerned with this threat. The following specific problems are identified in full realization that their solutions will need to be developed in context with the larger community.

The Old West Side is bounded by four wide high speed major arterial streets: West Huron, South Main, Pauline and South Seventh. In addition, the central area is cross cut by four high speed streets: West Madison, West Liberty, West Washington, and South Seventh. It is recog-

nized that West Huron, West Liberty, South Seventh, and South Main are established arteries for the city and little can be done to reduce the volume of traffic carried on them. However, the speed of their traffic must be slowed down. Along sections marked as twenty-five miles per hour speed zones, traffic was observed at certain times of the day at thirty-five to forty miles per hour—far too fast for any residential area. The streets of West Madison and West Washington should not be high speed crosstown arteries. The installation of occasional stop signs on West Madison and on West Washington would slow down traffic to speeds compatible with residential use. Traffic at high speeds was also noted on William and Mosley suggesting that these streets, too, should be studied for possible placement of stop signs.

One-way streets tend to increase traffic volume and speed and disturb freedom of access and movement essential to neighborhood cohesiveness. Ashley and First Streets are one-way passages along most of their length. This use of these streets should be carefully re-evaluated and any extension of the one-way concept in the neighborhood should be avoided.



Streetscape

One of the most striking and significant aspects of the Old West Side is its tree-lined streets. Arresting even in winter, the huge maples, oaks, and elms are beautiful contributions to the appearance of the neighborhood in the spring, summer and fall. The tree-lined streets should be maintained at all cost. The City of Ann Arbor recently trimmed and removed diseased trees in the Old West Side and has planted some new trees. This is a welcome effort and should be extended to assure that all streets of the neighborhood maintain their landscape character.

Most streets have a narrow strip planted with grass and trees between the curb and sidewalk. Homes in the neighborhood have a front yard depth varying from five feet in some areas (South First, Mulholland, Murray Court) to thirty and forty feet in others. The average front yard is from fifteen to twenty feet in depth and is typically planted in grass. The visual pleasure of the neighborhood is derived from the full width of the street scape from house front to house front.

Two trees are of special importance: the oak at the corner of Third and Mosley is the largest in the State of its variety and the huge oak behind the backstop in Wurster Park was allegedly planted by John Allen, the town's founder. These prominent trees should be appropriately marked and carefully preserved.

Parking

Unfortunately the beautiful streetscape of some of the Old West Side is marred by on-street automobile parking. Excessive curb-side parking creates a visual and physical separation between homes facing each other across a street. More seriously, it increases the potential for automobile/pedestrian accidents due to the possibility of children or older citizens walking out from between cars into traffic lanes. On-street parking proposals developed in a previous Old West Side study by University of Michigan graduate students in Landscape Architecture suggested ways in which parking can be accommodated consistent with residential neighborhood values. These and other solutions should be implemented.

Parking is especially critical in the vicinity of the commercial/industrial area and the multiple dwelling district; notably on South Ashley, South First, West William and portions of Mosley and Koch. The multiple dwelling parking problem could be alleviated by limiting future apartment construction, requiring new construction in the area to provide on-site more than the current one and one-third parking spaces per living unit together with an appropriate increase in non-parking open-space. Because of its unique character, the Old West Side should petition the City for these variations from current standards.

The commercial/residential parking problem needs special attention, too. Some facilities have parking lots but additions to these generally require the destruction of buildings and homes causing a change in spatial scale that disrupts the intimate residential quality of the neighborhood. In addition, they are usually unbroken paved or gravelled surfaces that are unattractive whether empty or filled with cars. Solutions to this problem would appear to lie in innovative design ideas. Parking lots need not be disruptive, rather they should be considered as part of the total environment and designed to contribute, not to detract.



proposal to reduce parking impact



Street Furniture

Also detrimental to the outstanding streetscape of the Old West Side is the number and placement of signs along the street. Specific examples include too many "no parking to corner" and "no parking 2-5 a.m." signs. As many as six signs on individual supports were counted on a single side of one block. In addition, most signs are oversized. While this situation is being substantially alleviated in a part of the neighborhood through the Code Enforcement Program, continued study of sign size, location and design is in order.

Nearly all of the streets have telephone and/or electric poles. There are few underground cables. Although the street trees help to mask the poles and overhead wires now, their eventual decline and replacement with smaller trees will expose the utilities to view. Ideally the cables should be placed under the sidewalks or elsewhere underground. The City's recent legislation providing for districts in which utilities are to be underground should be applied to the Old West Side.

At present the street lighting is inadequate. Plans for new lights should be developed that will take into consideration the scale, character and needs of the Old West Side. Pedestrian lighting is especially necessary for the safety of residents in this central city neighborhood and should be an early priority. An initial step in this direction is anticipated in the City's Greenways Program.

Some unique elements add to the flavor of the streetscape. A wide variety of fire plugs exist in the area, some of ancient vintage. Several homes still retain granite hitching posts. Early street furniture of this type adds to the attractiveness and character of the neighborhood and should be retained.

Landscape

The yard maintenance of most homes in the neighborhood is highly commendable. The numerous picturesque gardens, well tended from early spring into late fall and exhibiting a variety of flowers and plants, contribute significantly to the landscape.

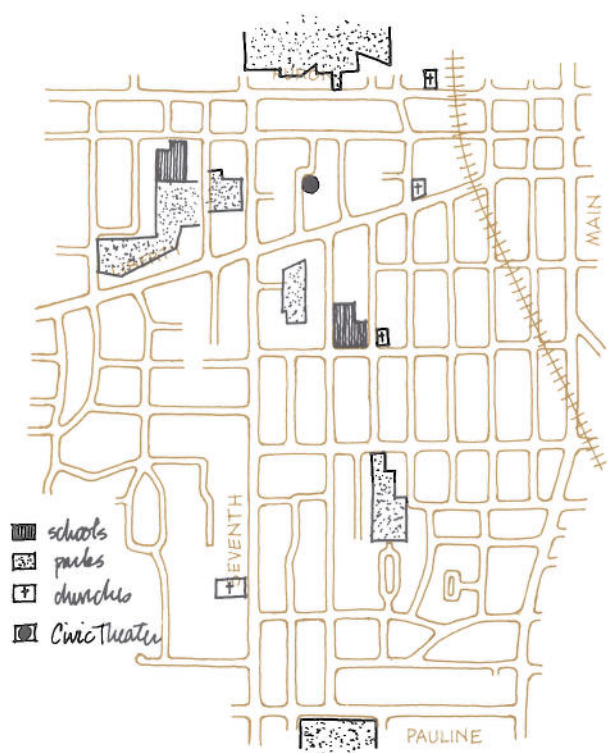
Although front yard fences are not especially typical, they can be compatible and congruent with the general character of the area. Front yard fences should be open and no more than three feet high. The wrought or cast iron fence is a very appropriate type but simple, open wood fences can be attractive and suitable as well.





Open green areas in the Old West Side are Wurster Park, the large playfield serving Slauson Junior High, the Water Works playlot and the playfield near Bach School located at Jefferson and Fifth. West Park opens on the proposed addition to the neighborhood on the north, Eberwhite School and Allmendinger Park are in close proximity to the south. Besides providing recreation for children, the parks and playlots are needed as a break in the scale of the landscape and to provide residents places to sit or walk near their homes. They should be designed for passive contemplation (such as Wurster Park) as well as active recreation and entertainment, and for use in winter as well as summer. The survey shows that the Old West Side needs more parks. Possible locations include the site at South Seventh and West Madison, the Ann Arbor Railroad right-of-way in combination with several adjoining lots and the vacant lots along Washington Street. Also, several small vest-pocket parks should be considered in locations such as Ashley Street.

The Old West Side is fortunate in its many long established amenities of streetscape and landscape. These should be guarded carefully. Subdivisions often have to wait for twenty years or more to realize less appealing environmental assets. Several problems exist, however, and should be dealt with expeditiously.



public/semi-public



KEMNITZ



< Wurster Park

Recommendations

- *traffic on West Huron, West Liberty, South Seventh, and South Main should be reduced in speed;*
- *stop signs should be installed on West Madison, West Washington, Mosley and West William; one-way streets should be reconsidered;*
- *the care, maintenance and replacement of street trees should be continued and amplified;*
- *parking should be studied to reduce its impact on the neighborhood environment;*
- *the city street sign policy should be reviewed toward developing appropriate guidelines applicable to the Old West Side. A distinctive Old West Side street sign would give identity to the historic neighborhood*
- *effort should be made to have the overhead utilities placed underground in accordance with the City's recently adopted utility ordinance;*
- *street and pedestrian lighting should be improved;*
- *new parks and play areas should be developed in the neighborhood.*