

4 Housing and Residential Character

- Goals**
- Continue to preserve, protect and enhance the integrity, economic viability and livability of Southfield’s neighborhoods.
 - Provide a diverse and stable housing stock offering a range of housing opportunities for all income groups and a quality living environment for all persons.
 - Create an identity for all Southfield neighborhoods.

Current Conditions

This Chapter provides background information on housing in Southfield and some comparisons with historical data and the region. The evaluation serves as a basis for the future land use plan and strategies regarding housing and public improvements to support the needs of residents.

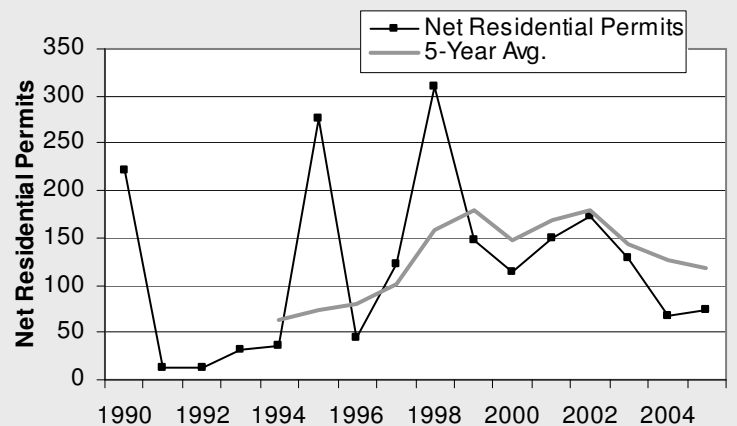
Planning for housing is critical because nearly 60 percent of land in the City is devoted to residential uses. Also, people seeking a place to live or deciding whether to stay in a community base their decisions in part on the community’s housing characteristics such as home values, affordability, services and amenities.

Housing Units. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a housing unit may be a house, an apartment, a group of rooms or a single room. Housing units are occupied by families or individuals who live separately from other families/individuals in the building and have direct access from outside the building or through a common hall.

The number of housing units in Southfield has been increasing while population and household growth have been relatively flat. (*Chapter 3 Population Trends* has a detailed discussion of population characteristics.) Figure 4-1 shows the annual number of net building permits from 1990 to 2005 increased by about 2,000 units. Figure 4-2 shows the total number of housing units in Southfield over the same period according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Both sources note a slow but gradual increase in total housing units.

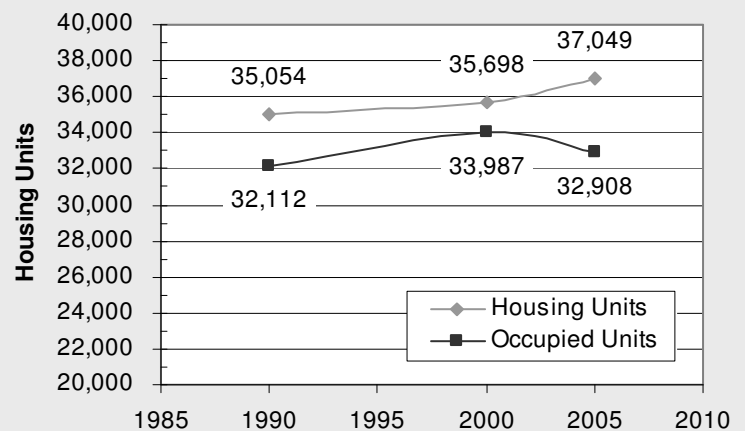
Occupancy. Housing occupancy is the percentage of total housing units that are occupied at a given time. The figure can be an indicator of housing stability, with a high percentage generally indicating a stable or growing residential housing market. With little change in population or households and a shrinking average household size, demand for housing can be expected to decline. This is reflected in Figure 4-2 which depicts a drop in occupied housing units along with a continuing increase in the housing stock. It is also reflected in the occupancy rate, which declined from 95 percent in 2000 to 89 percent in 2005, as shown in Figure 4-3. Over the same period, Oakland County also experienced a similar decline in occupancy from 96 percent to 93 percent.

Figure 4-1: Southfield Residential Construction, 1990-2005



Source: SEMCOG Regional Forecast

Figure 4-2: Southfield Housing Units and Occupancy, 1990-2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Residential construction has been fairly responsive to recent population trends. The net number of residential building permits issued in Southfield peaked in 1998 and has generally been declining since, mirroring the City’s population change.

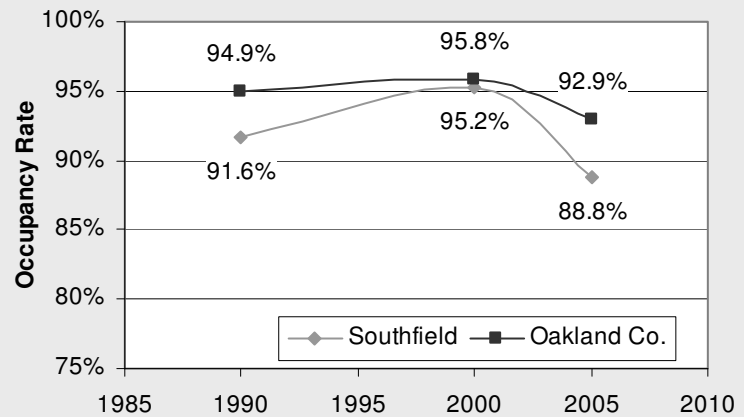
Certain neighborhoods have more vacant housing units than others. These neighborhoods may face challenges like a housing stock in various state of repairs and low interest in homes relative to home prices. Identifying the location of those neighborhoods helps in addressing their issues and reducing vacancies. The areas with the highest vacancies can be seen in Figure 4-4. These areas are generally south of Northwestern Highway from the City Centre area to Franklin Road; along I-696 west of Telegraph Road; around the Cornerstone Development Authority district; and between Telegraph Road and Beech Woods Park, south of 9 Mile.

Home Ownership. Even with occasional drops in housing value, home ownership is the single largest factor in the generation of wealth for individuals and families. Like occupancy rates, the percentage of owner-occupied housing units can be an indicator of housing stability.

In 2005, approximately 58 percent of Southfield residents owned their residence while 42 percent rented. The home ownership rate is up from approximately 54 percent in 1990 and 2000. As Figure 4-5 shows, home ownership rates are significantly lower in Southfield than in Oakland County. This can be expected given the large portion of multiple-family residential units, particularly apartments, in Southfield. Nevertheless, ownership is rising in Southfield faster than in the County, especially over the last five years, where ownership is up nearly 4 percent. Home ownership is rising despite rising housing costs (noted below) and decreasing median household incomes (noted above in *Chapter 3 Population Trends*).

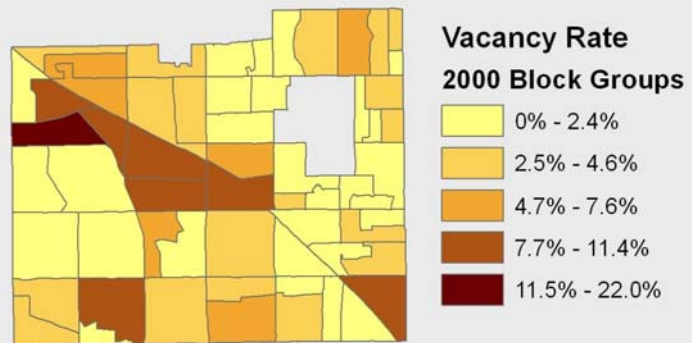
Certain neighborhoods in Southfield are experiencing lower homeownership rates than others. These areas are generally less stable because the residents can

Figure 4-3: Regional Occupancy Rate, 1990-2005



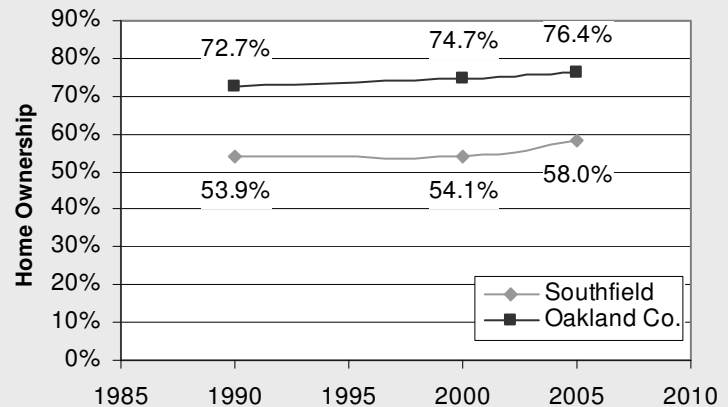
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 4-4: Southfield Vacancy Rates, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 4-5: Regional Home Ownership Rate, 1990-2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

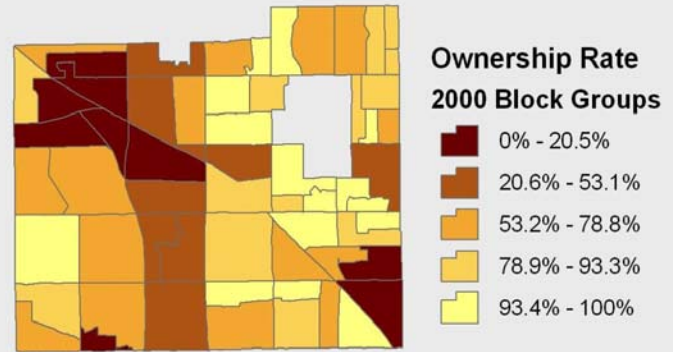
easily move out of the neighborhood. Many of these neighborhoods have high numbers of multiple-family units. These areas are highlighted in Figure 4-6 and include the areas around Northland, northwest of the Telegraph/I-696 interchange; along Shiawassee east of Beech; between Telegraph and Lahser; the City Centre; and along I-696 on the City’s eastern edge.

Housing Costs. The cost of housing combined with income determines housing affordability, and housing has been getting more expensive in Southfield. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median value of owner-occupied homes in Southfield was \$155,400 in 2000, up from \$107,705 in 1990 (both figures in 2000 dollars). Data from Oakland County indicates that average housing costs have continued to rise from \$161,217 in 2001 to \$182,820 in 2005. The rising cost of housing, depicted in Figure 4-7, makes it increasingly difficult for potential home buyers to enter the housing market. The recent decline in occupancy rates since 2000, noted above, may hint that the rise in housing prices has been outpacing demand for housing. As of 2005, this decline in occupancy did yet not appear to have slowed the rising cost of housing as might be expected.

The most recent housing statistics (September 2006) from the Michigan Association of Realtors® indicate that the rising housing values may be coming to an end. The number of housing sales in 2006 was 21 percent lower than in 2005 in southern Oakland County. This resulted in a 3 percent reduction in average sales price over that period. Statistics from the National Association of Realtors® indicate existing home prices in metro Detroit experienced the worst decline of U.S. urban areas in the third quarter of 2006. As a result, housing values in Southfield may be in the midst of a period of adjustment as housing values dropped in 2007.

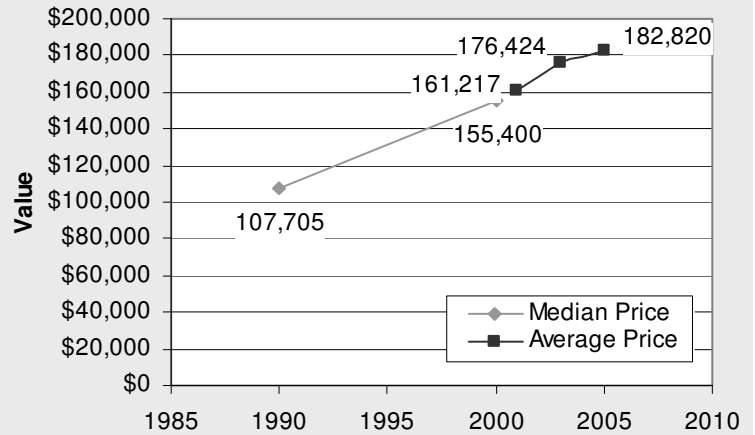
As it became more expensive to buy a home in Southfield in the first half of the decade, home ownership rates continued to rise, as noted above. However, while housing price increases can generate wealth for those who already own a home, they can increase property taxes and make it more expensive to buy a home. Figure 4-8 portrays the distribution of housing values in Southfield in 2000. Housing values were distributed fairly even, with the great majority of homes valued between \$100,000 and \$200,000. This general distribution is a reasonable approximation of current conditions, despite the fluctuating housing market.

Figure 4-6: Southfield Homeownership Rates, 2000



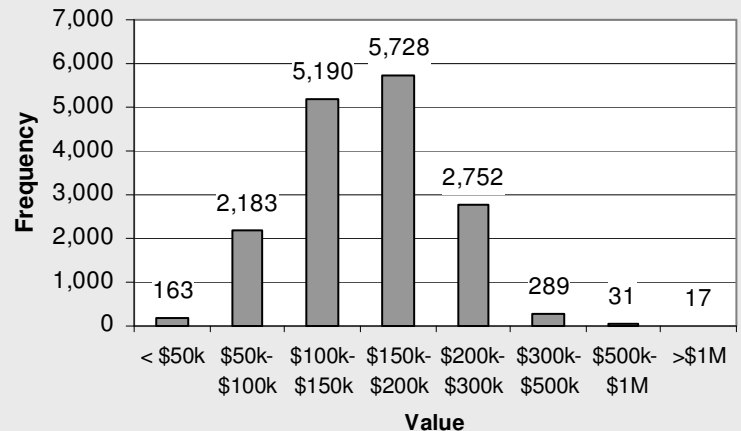
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 4-7: Southfield Housing Values, 1990-2005



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Oakland County

Figure 4-8: Southfield Housing Values, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Southfield has a large supply of rental housing, particularly when compared with the region as a whole. Figure 4-9 shows that in 2000, rental housing comprised 46 percent of Southfield’s occupied housing units, compared to just 25 percent in Oakland County and 28 percent in the metro area. Further, the share of rental housing in Southfield was unchanged since 1990 while simultaneously shrinking in the County and metro area.

As the share of rental units increases, a higher percentage of households are impacted by rental rates. In 2000, gross rents for Southfield residents were higher on average than for residents in Oakland County or metropolitan Detroit. Renters appear to be willing to pay a premium to live in Southfield. The median gross rent Southfield residents paid in 2000 was nearly \$800 per month, compared to \$710 per month in the County and \$580 per month in the metro area. Figure 4-10 shows the distribution of gross rent paid by residents of Southfield compared to those of Oakland County and the metro area. A higher share of Southfield households pay higher rents than in the County and metro area, especially in the \$750 to \$999 per month category.

As noted in *Chapter 3 Population Trends*, the median household income declined slightly between 1990 and 2000 and was lower than that of Oakland County for the entire period. When combined with increasing rents, Southfield renters should be spending a higher portion of their income on rent. This, however, does not appear to be the case. As Figure 4-11 shows, the portion of income spent on rent is generally comparable in Southfield and in the County. The largest discrepancy occurs in the 15-19.9 percent category, where a larger relative portion of Southfield renters are paying a smaller share of their income as rent. This may be related to the poverty rate in Southfield, which is higher than in the rest of the County. Low-income residents are more likely to receive housing assistance, which would lower their rents relative to their incomes.

Housing Types. Single-family detached residences comprise the largest share of residential housing. In 2000, these types of housing structures comprised nearly 50 percent of all residences. Nearly half of the remaining housing units were in multiple-family structures with 20 or more units. Relative to the surrounding area, detached single-family residential homes comprised a low portion and multiple-family residences a high portion of Southfield’s total housing units, as seen in

Figure 4-9: Regional Residential Rental Share, 1990-2000
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

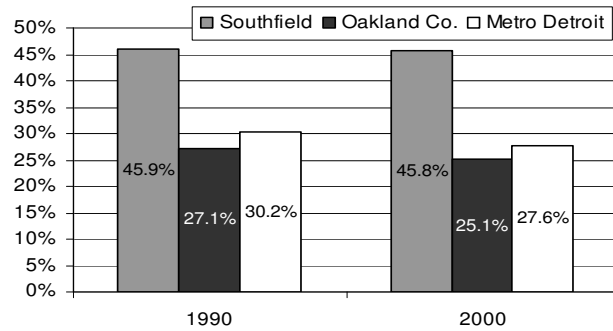
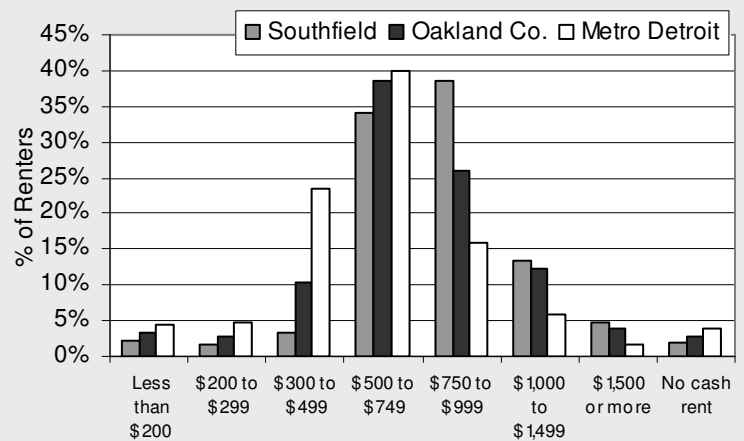
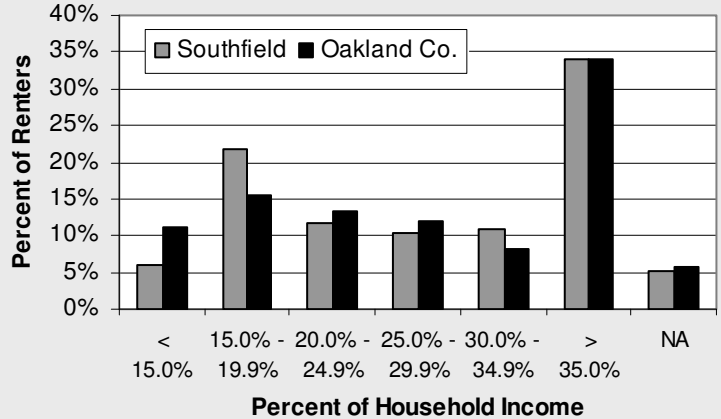


Figure 4-10: Regional Gross Rent, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 4-11: Regional Rent as a Percentage of Household Income, 2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

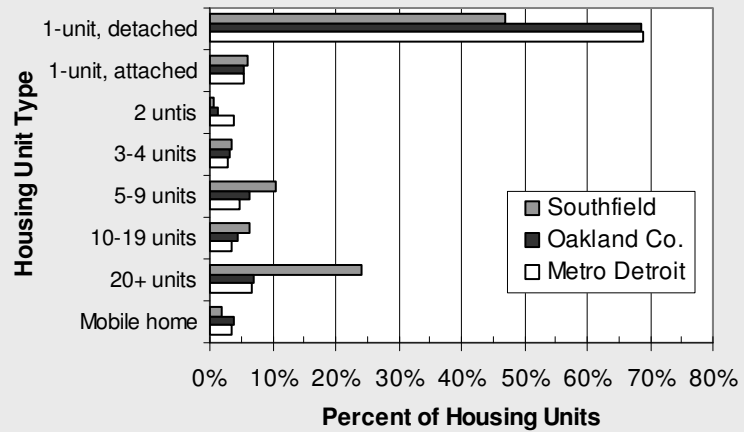
Figure 4-12. According to the 2000 census, Southfield has an approximate 23 percent lower share of single-family residential units and a much larger share of multiple-family residential units compared to Oakland County and metro Detroit. In particular, the

share of large (i.e. containing 20 or more units) multi-family structures in Southfield is nearly 3.5 times that of the County or metro area. Many of these structures are apartment and condominium towers. The presence of apartment buildings helps explain the high residential rental share noted above and reemphasizes the impact that higher rents have on Southfield’s large rental population. The acres of land devoted to multiple-family residences can be a deceiving statistic; residential densities can vary widely within the multiple-family designation.

Age of Existing Housing. Southfield has a diverse mix of housing that has been developed over the course of its history and the City’s residential architecture reflects the historical growth of the community. In the early 1950s, prior to the City’s incorporation, the township of Southfield was home to approximately 19,000 residents. By the end of the 1970s, the City had more than 75,000 residents. This explosive growth is reflected in the age of Southfield’s housing stock. As Figure 4-13 shows, the greatest share of existing housing units were constructed during that period. Afterward, as the population growth flattened, the share of new structures decreased. Only about 8 percent of Southfield homes were built since 1990. Because Southfield is largely built out, the annual number of new structures can be expected to remain low as new development will primarily consist of redevelopment of existing land. Over time, as newer structures replace older ones and as residential densities increase, the share of newer housing units will begin to increase. As the housing stock continues to age, efforts to preserve and rehabilitate existing units will be critical in preserving property values and maintaining a high quality of life for Southfield’s residents.

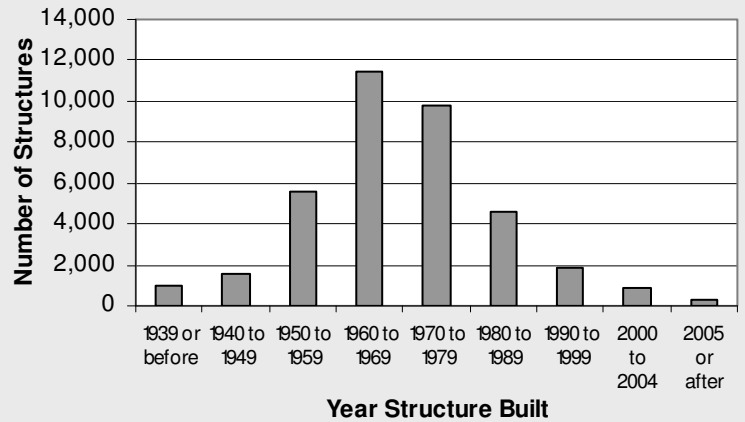
Residential Longevity. The length of time that residents live in a home is a measure of a community’s stability. In 2005, nearly 50 percent of Southfield residents had moved into their home in 2000 or later. This statistic can be seen in Figure 4-14. While this figure may seem high, it is in line with U.S. households on the whole. In Southfield, as noted in Chapter 3, the City’s racial makeup changed significantly sometime after 1990, indicating a large number of residents moved out of the City and an equally large number moved in. Additionally, renters can be expected to move more frequently than homeowners. These conditions help explain the high frequency of households that moved after 1999. As the housing market slows relocation options residents can be expected to remain in their homes for longer durations, as was the case in the 1990s before the housing boom.

Figure 4-12: Regional Residential Housing Distribution, 2000



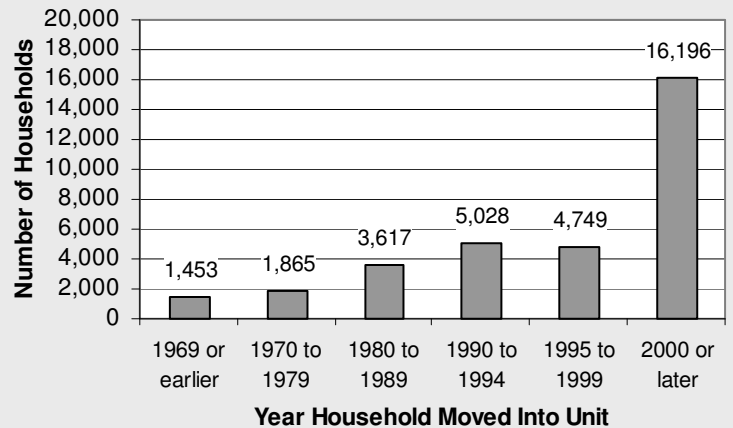
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 4-13: Year Built for Southfield Residential Structures, 2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 4-14: Year Householder Moved Into Unit, 2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Recommendations

Southfield's neighborhoods are diverse in nature, ranging from suburban neighborhoods characterized by unpaved roads and larger lot sizes to urban development with curb and gutter streets and narrow lots. This mixture of housing options allows families to grow into larger homes without having to move out of the community. As developments are planned, they should be designed to complement and enhance the existing character of the surrounding neighborhoods. The recommendations of this chapter seek to retain neighborhood character while improving the quality of homes, public facilities and infrastructure.

Housing Preservation and Maintenance. The importance of maintaining housing units on a daily basis cannot be overemphasized. To ensure the preservation and maintenance of existing housing by property owners, Southfield should use a variety of basic strategies/programs to improve the appearance and value of existing neighborhoods, as described below.

- **Neighborhood and Information Center (NIC).** As part of the Community Relations Department, the City's Neighborhood and Information Center (NIC) provides a link between City government and Southfield residents. For visitors, home seekers and homeowners, the NIC is a valuable source of information about the City. The Center provides relocation information, welcome packets, school information, as well as information about City services and programs. More than just an information source, the NIC serves as a liaison to City government for residents and neighborhood associations, refers complaints to City departments, and monitors their resolution. The NIC also strengthens existing neighborhood associations and reactivates dormant ones, arranges for neighborhood association block parties, meeting rooms and mailings, and arranges yearly training and workshops for neighborhood leaders. NIC should continue to maintain consistent coordination with the Housing Department and administration of many of the programs and recommendations of this Plan.
- **Housing Programs.** The City's Housing Department currently administers a variety of optional programs to residents including home repair, ownership encouragement and housing affordability as described below:
 - **Section 8.** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides funding for its Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, formerly known as Section 8. The HCV Program subsidizes rent for income-qualified individuals through the Southfield Housing Commission. As a tenant-based program, the Voucher holder is subsidized - not the rental unit. The Program is often referred to as "Finders Keepers" because the family must locate a unit that meets Housing Quality Standards (HQS) established by HUD.
 - **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).** The city of Southfield receives CDBG funds annually from HUD. Fund allocations are based on development of viable urban communities by providing proper housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate income. The CDBG program allows the city of Southfield to develop and implement activities and projects that are uniquely suited and beneficial to Southfield residents within the framework of federal guidelines.
 - **The Southfield Home Improvement Program (SHIP).** SHIP is a low-interest loan program for income qualified homeowners. The focus of the program concentrates on maintenance of the existing structure as it relates to health and safety issues and minimum housing standards. The city of Southfield participates in the efforts to reduce lead-based paint hazards. It does not get involved with remodeling or updating for cosmetic purposes, additions or new construction projects. Typical improvements include roofs, windows, doors, siding, insulation, heating, electrical, and plumbing repairs. The program is funded by HUD through the CDBG program.
 - **CHORE.** The city of Southfield's CHORE program has been helping senior adults maintain their homes since its inception in 1983. Funded through the CDBG, CHORE provides an annual spending account for each income-qualified senior adult household to be used for labor associated with lawn care, snow removal, window and gutter cleaning, minor plumbing, furnace and electrical repairs.
 - **MSHDA.** The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) offers low-interest loan programs that give people with lower incomes an opportunity to buy their first home.

- Other housing programs the City should consider include those for larger-scale housing rehabilitation, housing façade improvements and emergency repair grants.

As the demand for these programs increases, the City may have an opportunity to conditionally approve financing for those that follow more extensive guidelines or for those willing to participate in desired community programs. These conditions could include implementing enhanced design improvements (i.e. development of an attractive second floor addition over a simple dormer addition), use of high quality building materials (i.e. use of cement fiberboard siding over vinyl), participation in desired special assessment districts or spearheading development of active community or homeowner’s associations.

- **Community/Neighborhood Reinvestment Programs.** Continue to work in coordination with local lending institutions and realtors to explore the availability and application of neighborhood investment/reinvestment programs.
- **Neighborhood Associations.** The City encourages the creation of and coordination with neighborhood associations and organizations, including condominium associations. Such organizations can coordinate with the City and develop improvement and organizational strategies that apply to their neighborhood, such as a neighborhood watch program. Neighborhood organizations can also work with the City to set up Special Assessment Districts (SAD) for infrastructure and streetscape improvements such as road and sidewalk maintenance and decorative street lighting. The City, through the NIC and the Southfield Parks and Garden Club, currently issues “Community Pride Awards.” Awards are granted to reward residents, condominium associations, apartment complexes and neighborhoods in their efforts to maintain, improve or beautify their neighborhood or development.
- **Annual Neighborhood Beautification Programs (Clean-up Programs).** A spring and fall household hazardous waste clean up day provides opportunities for disposal of products that cannot be sent to the landfill. To build on these services, the City should consider curbside pick-up of large-scale trash, debris, and appliances, and possibly expanding their hazardous waste services to include collection sites for the regular disposal of household products such as paints, vehicular fluids and the like.

- **Education Programs.** Community awareness programs are conducted on topics such as neighborhood blight, annual refuse collection, and comprehensive code enforcement efforts in and around residential neighborhoods. The City’s newsletter and Web site should continue to provide information on existing codes and ordinances, clean-up efforts, rehabilitation and other housing assistance programs.
- **Enforcement Practices.** The City should continue to review its enforcement policies and procedures to identify ways to improve regulatory enforcement of and compliance with existing laws. This review could also include an analysis of the City’s violation management procedures and penalty (fine) structure.
- **Infrastructure Maintenance.** A well-maintained infrastructure is very important to perceived neighborhood quality. Broken sidewalks, streets with potholes and broken curbing all portray images of neighborhood instability, declining property values, and negatively reflect on the community as a whole. It is imperative that “surface infrastructure” is regularly inspected and improved as needed.
- **Traffic Calming.** The perception of “neighborhood livability” is strongly influenced by such factors as traffic volumes and speeds. A traffic calming program could be instituted in neighborhoods that have problems with cut-through traffic, as described in the Transportation Chapter.
- **Neighborhood Safety.** Proper planning of neighborhoods can prevent future crime. Traffic calming, street layout and architectural requirements can all enhance safety in a neighborhood. More specifically, roads should be designed to prevent cut-through traffic and encourage lower speeds, and the layout of homes can provide a more pedestrian environment, encourage neighbor interaction and overall awareness, or “eyes on the street.”

Redevelopment of Outdated Housing. There are a number of neighborhoods with small houses, typically less than 1,000 square feet located on smaller lots. These homes are outdated and do not offer many of the amenities desired by today’s home buyers. In many areas of the City, homes can be expanded as described in the previous section. In those neighborhoods where the housing costs are lower, such as neighborhoods with small aluminum/vinyl siding homes and homes on slabs, gradual redevelopment of the neighborhoods should be encouraged. Any redevelopment should be initiated by property owners and driven by the

market, with the City’s role as facilitating or assisting the homeowners.

Home, Home on the Ranch. The 1950s style ranch house is witnessing a resurgence, fed by nostalgia for a simpler time. Even the historic preservation movement, which has spent most of its energy fighting to save century-old artifacts, now has its sights on the preserving this vital component of our shared heritage (social, economic and design history), a part of the narrative of American architecture. The City should consider working with the State Historic Preservation Office and its program to develop a historic resources survey for select individual ranch houses and/or districts. The survey could identify and document historic resources that provide character, continuity and a sense of uniqueness to the community, and evaluate their significance and plan for the wise use of the community’s valuable historic residential resources.

Multiple-Family Housing. Multiple-family housing is provided throughout the City in a variety of forms. The most commonly found is apartment-style housing, characterized by larger parking lots and buildings with few entrances. Some complexes include a grouping of smaller multiple-family homes, some with individual entrances. More modern approaches to multiple-family housing include townhomes and single-family attached and low-rise condominiums. These are becoming more desirable to those looking for high-quality housing with low maintenance requirements, particularly younger residents, retirees, or families reducing in size.

Senior Housing. Providing appropriate senior housing options is increasingly important as the general population ages. Fewer financial resources are available to older residents, and so they need affordable options that are safe, attractive and stimulating. Many seniors live in established neighborhoods, and some find their financial resources strained over time, leaving them to struggle to maintain their homes, or even worse, to heat them. Others live in multiple-unit complexes or in assisted living facilities. The city of Southfield should ensure local ordinances provide for the retention and development of a variety of housing options, including:

- Independent living options that include ranch-style, single-family detached or attached units that are small in size and low in purchase price and maintenance costs. Often these developments offer community amenities, such as walking trails or fitness centers, which support the active lifestyle of early retirees.

- Apartment style units are also desired for the independence they offer, but are even more affordable. In this setting, residents are often closer to local shopping and services, which can be especially helpful to residents with mobility issues or those who no longer drive.
- Assisted living is similar to apartment style units, but they maintain on-site services for residents, including medical assistance, food service, housekeeping, recreation and sometimes even limited retail or bank services. These developments provide a community within itself where residents are active, but prefer some assistance due to health reasons or when family members live far away.
- Institutional options are also important in the later stages of life. Most residents needing full-time care prefer not to move far distances, as this can cause mental stress and trauma. Allowing residents to stay in their home community is important when the decision is made to move to an institutional facility.

Buffering between Residential and Non-Residential Uses. Limited commercial uses in neighborhoods can provide conveniently located services and enhance neighborhood quality of life. It can negatively impact neighborhoods when not properly screened or when allowed to encroach into the neighborhood area. Commercial and industrial activity tends to infiltrate residential neighborhoods in maturing communities. This can be seen along some of Southfield’s main road corridors. Some areas, including residential areas adjacent to commercial properties, may become ripe for conversion to non-residential use. In some cases, this is a reasonable change to provide greater lot size or depth needed for certain types of modern non-residential uses. When this type of land use change is determined to be appropriate, the City requires site design to limit conflicts with the adjacent neighbors such as:



- Screening with brick walls supplemented by landscaping.
- Lighting with downward directed cut-off fixtures to prevent light from spilling onto residential properties.
- Locating and screening waste receptacles and loading areas to minimize noise impacts and protect views from adjoining residential properties.
- Ensuring building design incorporates architecture that enhances the quality of the neighborhood, with mechanical equipment properly screened and setback to not create noise issues with nearby residential. In some cases, the non-residential use should be designed to have a residential appearance in terms of scale, height, materials and overall design.