Other remaining structures dating from the early years of settlement include:

- The Norman Spencer house, which was built in the mid-1880s, and which is now occupied by a catering business.

- The Methodist Episcopal Church of New Hudson, a wood-sided Gothic style church building, which was built in 1884, and is now used as a consignment shop.

- The tollgate keepers house, which was built in the 1850s when the Detroit and Howell Turnpike Company was organized and the Detroit-Howell Plank Road was constructed through the Township. Offices now occupy the two-story structure.

Through the 1950s New Hudson served three primary purposes: service center for the surrounding agricultural community, a convenient rest stop for travelers, and a business center for residents. The construction of I-96 in the early 1950s had a major impact on the Grand River corridor and New Hudson, replacing it as the main link between Lansing and Detroit, while simultaneously making the Township more easily accessible and attractive to developers. By removing traffic from Grand River Avenue, however, I-96 reduced the market for New Hudson businesses, contributing to its decline. Abandonment of the rail line and loss of the rail stop may also have contributed to the decline of New Hudson.

The construction of I-96 accelerated a transition that is still in progress in Lyon Township. Agricultural uses are being replaced by residential development. Responding to the growth in population, Lyon Towne Center was built. Businesses in New Hudson continue to adapt to the needs and desires of residents, as well as the current methods of doing business.

## Assets and Deficiencies

New Hudson has several features that make it an appropriate location for development as a major Township activity center. Foremost among New Hudson's assets is its location near I-96, at a major crossroads in the Township, near the Township's growing industrial sector, near the James F. Atchison Community Park and the Huron Valley Trail, and at the main entrance to the Township. Geographically, New Hudson is the most prominent location in the Township.

As a center of retail activity, New Hudson benefits from several features, including:

- Proximity to I-96 and location on Grand River Avenue. Both routes bring traffic by and/or into New Hudson.

- Continued residential development in Lyon and Milford Townships, which increases the size of the market.

- Construction of Lyon Towne Center, which draws substantial amounts of traffic into the area.

- Proximity of the Township Hall and Post Office.

- The presence of a few historic buildings, which can form the base for new development in the older part of New Hudson.

- A compact development pattern, which is conducive for development of a village center.

New Hudson's assets are balanced out by its deficiencies, foremost of which is poor maintenance of many buildings and sites. Certain buildings that should be landmarks because of their age and history are instead eyesores because of inappropriate façade improvements, inappropriate signage, unpaved parking, and lack of or poorly maintained landscaping.

Unsightly conditions are not confined to private property. Along Grand River, the road surface and shoulder are deteriorated, there is inadequate drainage, substantial grade differences between adjoining sites, and an incomplete sidewalk system.

Although a compact development pattern is an asset in one sense, it is a liability from another perspective: commercial building sites are too small to accommodate required parking and loading operations of modern business. Furthermore, there is a lack of space on each parcel for storm water detention.

Uncoordinated development is also a problem, stemming from the era when development occurred without zoning. As a consequence, incompatible residential and intensive commercial uses are located side by side and there has been no attempt to cluster similar uses to achieve a synergistic effect.

Solutions to these deficiencies are presented in the Lyon Center Vision Plan, a master plan for New Hudson that was completed in 2009. This Plan will be discussed further later in this chapter.

The stage was set for substantial change to the New Hudson profile on May 23, 2002, when the Township Board approved the Lyon Crossing and Lyon Towne Center Planned Developments. Lyon Crossing, located on the west side of Milford Road, north of Grand River Avenue, contains 48.8 acres, with a potential for approximately 160,000 sq. ft. of commercial development. Lyon Towne Center, located on the east side of Milford Road, south of I-96, contains 78.3 acres, with a potential for 560,000 sq. ft. of commercial development.

Lyon Towne Center breathed new life into the retail sector of New Hudson. It raised the bar in terms of quality building design, landscaping, and maintenance. Together with Lyon Crossing, the Towne Center made it feasible to extend the ring road (Lyon Center Drive) across the north part of New Hudson. Lyon Towne Center brought needed goods and services to residents of the Township.

The development of Lyon Towne Center had consequences. Businesses along Grand River Avenue found themselves outside the main business district, while facing intense competition. The older part of New Hudson finds itself in a struggle to maintain a viable small town character, with a regional marketplace at its doorstep.

One of the goals of the Lyon Center Vision Plan is to integrate the regional marketplace with the local New Hudson marketplace in a manner that they both thrive.

## Land Use Planning Considerations

**Village (Hamlet) Character.** The policies related to planning innovation, commercial revitalization, and preservation of historic resources focus attention on the opportunity for a more traditional development pattern in New Hudson. This concept is best described by Peter Calthorpe in The Next American Metropolis (1993):

> "The alternative to sprawl is simple and timely: neighborhoods of housing, parks, and schools placed within walking distance of shops, civic services, jobs, and transit – a model version of the traditional town. The convenience of the car and the opportunity to walk or use transit can be blended in an environment with local access for all the daily needs of a diverse community."

Perhaps the most important aspect of a traditional village development is that it is a walkable environment. Research has shown that a comfortable walking distance – the ideal radius for a village environment – is a quarter of a mile to 2,000 feet, or a 5 to 10-minute walking distance. Coincidentally, most development within the ring road in New Hudson will be no farther than approximately 2,000 feet from the crossroads of Grand River Avenue and Milford Road.

**Traditional Design Principles.** Implementation of the traditional village concept requires adherence to certain design principles to achieve diverse concentrated development without sacrificing land use compatibility. Key design principles include:

- Commercial areas should be configured to allow standard parking quantities, access, and visibility for the car, but must include convenient sidewalks for pedestrians.

- Ideally, off-street parking should be located in the rear of the building. On-street parking should be encouraged on all streets. On-street parking helps to "civilize" the street for pedestrians by creating a buffer between moving cars and the sidewalk

- Building setbacks from the street should be minimized. Minimal setbacks bring buildings closer to the street, and enlivens commercial areas by encouraging window shopping and street activity.

- Building facades should be varied to provide visual interest to pedestrians. Building designs should provide as much visual stimulus as possible, without creating chaos.

- The ground floor entrance to commercial buildings should be oriented to the street. The pedestrian life of a building is at its entrance. If the primary entrance is oriented to the parking lot, it steals the activity and life away from the street and distracts from the pedestrian environment.