

# City of Portage, Michigan Historic District Study Committee

## Historic District Modification

The “Van Riper” Property  
3821 West Milham Avenue · Portage, Michigan 49024

## Preliminary Report

February 18, 2015  
Revised March 11, 2015

### Summary

A request from Patrick and Lisa Lynch/ Story Point-Triple M Investments, owners of the property commonly known as 3821 West Milham Avenue, seeks to remove an approximately 17.31 acre portion from the approximately 21.02 acres from the Van Riper property located within the City of Portage Historic District. It is the recommendation of the Historic District Study Committee (“HDSC”) that the City Council **APPROVE** the request as outlined and requested.<sup>1</sup>

### Authority

*The Local History Districts Act*, being Act 169 of 1970 as amended;  
The City of Portage City Council resolution designating the Historic District Commission as the standing Historic District Study Committee, pursuant to MCL 399.214, to review and make recommendations as recited in the February 9, 2015 Communication from Erica L. Eklov, Administrative Assistant to the City Manager.

### The Charge of the Committee

The Historic District Study Committee is charged with reviewing the request and acting as set forth in Public Act 169 of 1970. Specifically, the HDSC must:

1. Conduct a photographic inventory of resources within the existing historic district.
2. Conduct basic research of the historic district and the historic resources located within the district.
3. Determine the total number of historic and non-historic resources within the historic district and the percentage of historic resources of that total. In evaluating the significance of historic resources, the committee shall be guided by the selection criteria for evaluation issued by the United States secretary of the interior for inclusion of resources in the national register of historic places.
4. Prepare a preliminary report that addresses at a minimum all of the following:
  - a. The charge of the committee.
  - b. The composition of the committee membership.
  - c. The historic district studied.
  - d. The boundaries for the historic district in writing and on maps.

---

<sup>1</sup> The filing by Patrick and Lisa Lynch was originally styled as an “*Application for Certificate of Appropriateness for Modification to Historic District Structures.*” The HDSC has treated said *Application* as a request for a recommendation from the Historic District Study Committee for removal of property from the historic district pursuant to MCL 399.214 and related authority as granted by the City Council.

- e. The history of the historic district.
  - f. The significance of the district as a whole, as well as a sufficient number of its individual resources to fully represent the variety of resources found within the district, relative to the evaluation criteria.
5. Transmit copies of the preliminary report for review and recommendation to the Portage Planning Commission, to the Michigan Historical Commission and to the state Historic Preservation Review Board.
  6. Make copies of the preliminary report available to the public.
  7. Hold a public hearing within 60 days after the transmittal of the preliminary report.
  8. Following the public hearing, prepare and submit a final report with its recommendations and the recommendations, if any, of the Portage Planning Commission to the City Council. If the recommendation is to modify the historic district, the final report must include a draft of a proposed ordinance.

### **The Composition of Committee Membership**

#### Voting Members

The HDSC is comprised of members of the Portage Historic District Commission, including: Christine Broberg, Suzanne Nemeth, Russell Randall, E. James Ebert, Jamie Jager, Larry Ahleman, Fred Grunert.

#### Non-Voting Participants

City of Portage Liaison: Erica Eklov

#### Abstentions

Mark Reile and Katie VanLonkhuyzen have abstained from participation in this review due to potential conflicts of interest.

### **Historic District Studied**

Property Address: 3821 West Milham Avenue  
Portage, Michigan (County of Kalamazoo)

Parcel ID No.: 00007-025-A

This property is commonly referred to as the “Van Riper Property.” The total size of the property is approximately 21.02 acres of which approximately 17.31 acres is sought to be removed from the historic district for a senior living facility development.

On February 7, 2015, Fred Grunert visited the property and photographed the historic resources, which include the house, outbuilding, and the property generally. Photographs were taken of proposed area to be removed from the historic district, in context within existing boundaries and the street, are attached hereto.

The proposed modification of the Van Riper Property would remove approximately 17.31 acres to the west of the historic home. The modification does not affect any existing structure, building, or edifice and leaves the historic property with approximately 3.70 acres of the remaining land. Any new construction on the new parcel will be subject to the City of Portage construction and development regulations.

## The Boundaries for the Historic District in Writing and on Maps

The legal description for the historic property under the prior Historic District Ordinance (approximately):

SEC 7-3-11 W ½ NE ¼ SEC 7 EXC S 165 FT ALSO EXC US 131 ROW, ALSO EXC MICHIGAN HIGHWAY EASEMENT.

The legal description of the current historic district property under the City Assessor (approximately):

THAT PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: BEGINNING AT A POINT ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 THAT IS 868.34 FEET SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST OF THE NORTH QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST ON SAID NORTH LINE 77.75 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF "THE HOMESTEAD OF PORTAGE NORTH", ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 42 OF PLATS, PAGE 16, KALAMAZOO COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 745.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 89° 57' 40" WEST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 285.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 261.87 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 47° 07' 46" EAST 42.56 FEET TO THE NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MCGILLICUDDY LANE; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY 127.20 FEET ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE AND ON A 230.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH 27° 01' 34" WEST 125.59 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 11° 10' 57" WEST ON SAID RIGHT OF WAY LINE 10.65 FEET TO THE NORTH LINE OF THE SOUTH 165.00 FEET OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE NORTH 89° 46' 18" WEST ON SAID NORTH LINE 631.86 FEET TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE NORTH 00° 05' 48" WEST ON SAID QUARTER LINE 745.80 FEET TO THE EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF HIGHWAY U.S. 131; THENCE NORTH 09° 52' 01" EAST ON SAID EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE 359.76 FEET TO THE SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF WEST MILHAM AVENUE; THENCE SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST ON SAID SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE 806.09 FEET; THENCE NORTH 00° 05' 48" WEST PARALLEL WITH SAID QUARTER LINE 60.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 21.02 ACRES MORE OR LESS.

The new legal description of the proposed modified district (approximately):

Commencing at the North 1/4 post of Section 7, T. 3 S., R. 11 W., City of Portage, Kalamazoo County, Michigan; thence South 89°-42'-49" East along the North line of said Section, 868.34 feet for the place of beginning of the land hereinafter described; thence continuing South 89°-42'-49" East along said North line, 77.75 feet to the West line of The Homestead of Portage North, as recorded in Liber 42 of Plats on Page 16, Kalamazoo County Records; thence South 00°-02'-20" East thereon, 745.00 feet; thence South 89°-57'-40" West, perpendicular to said West line, 233.00 feet; thence North 00°-02'-20" West parallel with said West line, 518.35 feet; thence North 18°-54'-25" East, 77.00 feet; thence North 00°-02'-20" West parallel with said West line, 95.00 feet to the South right-of-way line of West Milham Avenue; thence South 89°-42'-49" East thereon, 130.32 feet; thence North 0°-05'-48" West parallel with the North and South 1/4 line of said Section, 60.00 feet to the place of beginning. Containing 3.70 Acres.

The legal description of the property to be removed from the district (approximately):

Commencing at the North 1/4 post of Section 7, T. 3 S., R. 11 W., City of Portage, Kalamazoo County, Michigan; thence South 89°-42'-49" East along the North line of said Section, 868.34 feet; thence South 0°-05'-48" East parallel with the North and South 1/4 line of said Section, 60.00 feet to the South right-of-way line of West Milham Avenue; thence North 89°-42'-49" West thereon, 130.32 feet for the place of beginning of the land hereinafter described; thence South 0°-02'-20" East parallel with the West line of The Homestead of Portage North as recorded in Liber 42 of Plats on Page 16, Kalamazoo County Records, 95.00 feet; thence South 18°-54'-25" West, 77.00 feet; thence South 00°-02'-20" East parallel with said West line, 518.35 feet; thence South 89°-57'-40" West, 52.00 feet; thence South 00°-02'-20" East parallel with said West line, 261.87 feet; thence South 47°-07'-46" East, 42.56 feet to the Northwesterly right-of-way line of McGillicuddy Lane; thence Southwesterly thereon, 127.21 feet along a non-tangent curve to the left with a radius of 230.00 feet and a chord bearing South 27°-01'-34" West, 125.59 feet; thence continuing South 11°-10'-57" West along said

right-of-way, 10.65 feet to the North line of the South 165.00 feet of the Northwest 1/4 of the Northeast 1/4 of said Section; thence North 89°-46'-18" West thereon, 631.86 feet to the North and South 1/4 line of said Section; thence North 0°-05'-48" West thereon, 745.80 feet to the Easterly right-of-way line of Highway U.S. 131; thence North 09°-52'-01" East thereon, 359.76 feet to said South right-of-way line of West Milham Avenue; thence South 89°-42'-49" East thereon, 675.77 feet to the place of beginning. Containing 17.31 Acres.

### **The History of the Historic District**

The property located at 3821 West Milham Avenue was first owned by Allison Kivine (asa Kinne), sold in 1836 to brother-in-law Stephen Howard. It is believed that the first brick home, in the style of Greek Revival, was built on the site which is today within the City of Portage territorial limits. The home-structure currently existing on the property was built in 1859. The barn is considered to have been built at the same time. The house was constructed using hand-hewn oak timbers, cut by Howard himself, for the basement along with handmade bricks. In the 1920s, the house was then utilized by Albert Henwood and his family, who modernized the home with the installation of plumbing and electricity.

The Henwoods also planted the well-known rows of lilac bushes that still exist on the property. The Van Ripers planted approximately 300 oaks and maples, which still exists on the south side of the property.

In 1945, Dr. Charles Gage Van Riper and his wife bought the property. Van Riper was a well-known audiologist and speech therapist, and founder of the Van Riper Speech Clinic at Western Michigan University.

A written history of the home is at the Portage District Library entitled "Our House."

### **The Significance of the District**

The Van Riper Property, with its structures and vegetation, are historically significant to preserve. However, the proposed removal of 17.31 acre parcel from the historic district will have an insignificant contextual impact on the historic resources.

### **Recommendation**

Following the study of the information contained within, the Historic District Study Committee recommends that the request to modify the Historic District as presented be **APPROVED**. It is recommended that City Council approve amending the City of Portage Historic District Ordinance, specifically Section 38-35 "District Established; Boundaries," to reflect the ensuing legal description for 3821 West Milham Avenue. (parcel #00007-025-A).

## Photos of 3821 West Milham for HDSC Report



1. View looking East at proposed drive



2. View looking South at proposed drive



3. View looking at House from drive



4. View of tree line separation at drive



5. View looking South at House



6. View of tree line West of Barns

## Photos of 3821 West Milham for HDSC Report



7. View from corner of house looking West



8. View looking from house to Milham



9. View from South West corner of property



10. View of tree line looking North East



11. View of barns looking North East



12. View of barns looking North

## Photos of 3821 West Milham for HDSC Report



13. View of barns looking East



14. View of barns looking East



15. View of tree line looking North



16. South of property looking North



17. South of property looking North at barns



**Current Parcel**  
**3821 W. Milham**



  
 1:5000  
**Map Publication:**  
 Wed Dec 31 2014 01:48:07 PM

**Disclaimer:**  
 This map does not represent a survey or legal document and is provided on an "as is" basis. City of Portage expresses no warranty for the information displayed on this map document.

# TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP FOR MMM DEVELOPMENT

LOCATED IN SECTION 7, T. 3 S., R. 11 W.  
CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
BY

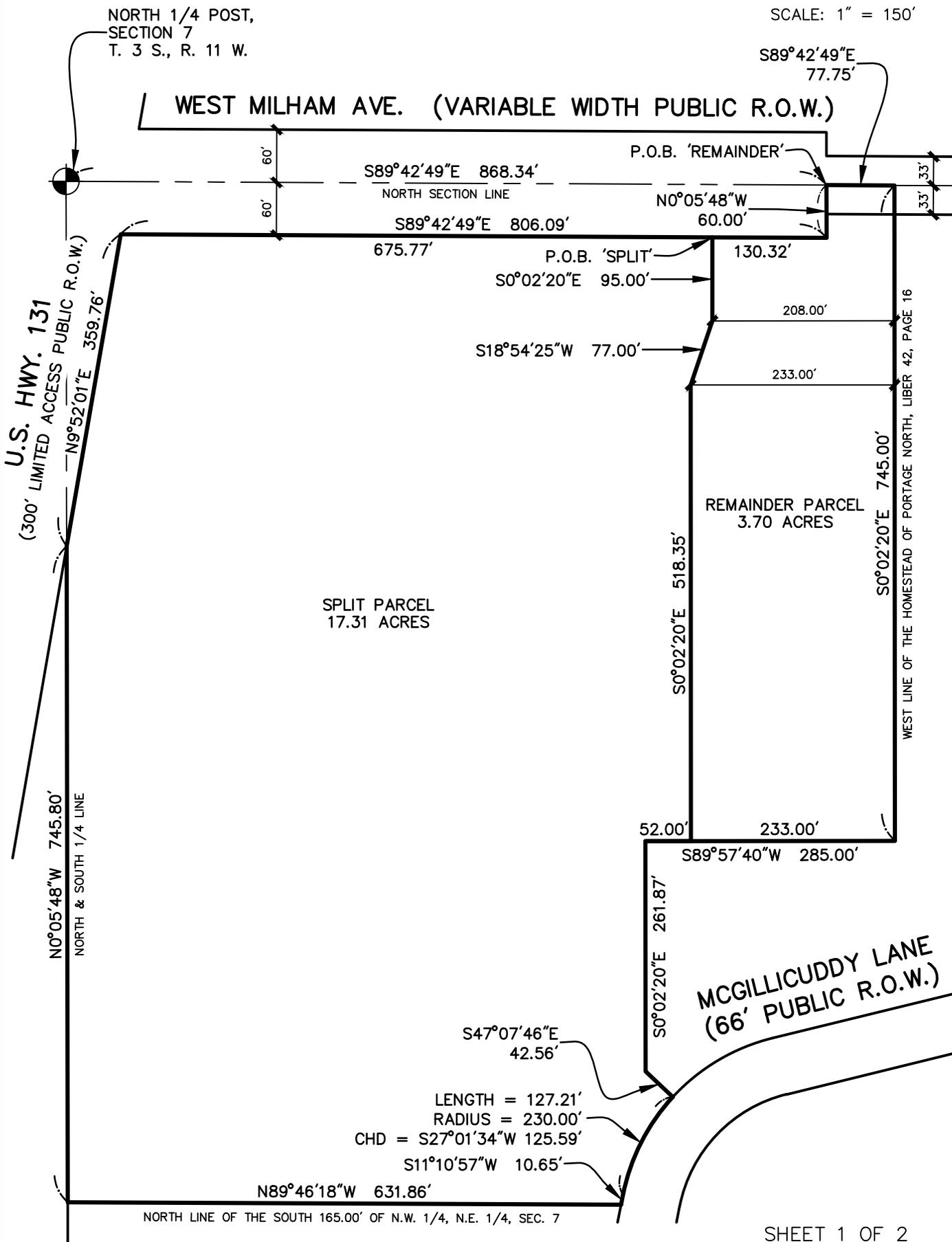
**Prein & Newhof**  
Engineers ■ Surveyors ■ Environmental & Soils Laboratory

7123 STADIUM DRIVE  
KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN 49009  
PHONE: (269) 372-1158

FEBRUARY 17, 2015  
REV. MARCH 17, 2015



SCALE: 1" = 150'



TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP  
FOR  
MMM DEVELOPMENT

LOCATED IN SECTION 7, T. 3 S., R. 11 W.  
CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
BY

**Prein&Newhof**  
Engineers ■ Surveyors ■ Environmental & Soils Laboratory

7123 STADIUM DRIVE  
KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN 49009  
PHONE: (269) 372-1158

FEBRUARY 17, 2015  
REV. MARCH 17, 2015

Split Parcel:

Commencing at the North 1/4 post of Section 7, T. 3 S., R. 11 W., City of Portage, Kalamazoo County, Michigan; thence South  $89^{\circ}-42'-49''$  East along the North line of said Section, 868.34 feet; thence South  $0^{\circ}-05'-48''$  East parallel with the North and South 1/4 line of said Section, 60.00 feet to the South right-of-way line of West Milham Avenue; thence North  $89^{\circ}-42'-49''$  West thereon, 130.32 feet for the place of beginning of the land hereinafter described; thence South  $0^{\circ}-02'-20''$  East parallel with the West line of The Homestead of Portage North as recorded in Liber 42 of Plats on Page 16, Kalamazoo County Records, 95.00 feet; thence South  $18^{\circ}-54'-25''$  West, 77.00 feet; thence South  $00^{\circ}-02'-20''$  East parallel with said West line, 518.35 feet; thence South  $89^{\circ}-57'-40''$  West, 52.00 feet; thence South  $00^{\circ}-02'-20''$  East parallel with said West line, 261.87 feet; thence South  $47^{\circ}-07'-46''$  East, 42.56 feet to the Northwesterly right-of-way line of McGillicuddy Lane; thence Southwesterly thereon, 127.21 feet along a non-tangent curve to the left with a radius of 230.00 feet and a chord bearing South  $27^{\circ}-01'-34''$  West, 125.59 feet; thence continuing South  $11^{\circ}-10'-57''$  West along said right-of-way, 10.65 feet to the North line of the South 165.00 feet of the Northwest 1/4 of the Northeast 1/4 of said Section; thence North  $89^{\circ}-46'-18''$  West thereon, 631.86 feet to the North and South 1/4 line of said Section; thence North  $0^{\circ}-05'-48''$  West thereon, 745.80 feet to the Easterly right-of-way line of Highway U.S. 131; thence North  $09^{\circ}-52'-01''$  East thereon, 359.76 feet to said South right-of-way line of West Milham Avenue; thence South  $89^{\circ}-42'-49''$  East thereon, 675.77 feet to the place of beginning. Containing 17.31 Acres.

Remainder Parcel:

Commencing at the North 1/4 post of Section 7, T. 3 S., R. 11 W., City of Portage, Kalamazoo County, Michigan; thence South  $89^{\circ}-42'-49''$  East along the North line of said Section, 868.34 feet for the place of beginning of the land hereinafter described; thence continuing South  $89^{\circ}-42'-49''$  East along said North line, 77.75 feet to the West line of The Homestead of Portage North, as recorded in Liber 42 of Plats on Page 16, Kalamazoo County Records; thence South  $00^{\circ}-02'-20''$  East thereon, 745.00 feet; thence South  $89^{\circ}-57'-40''$  West, perpendicular to said West line, 233.00 feet; thence North  $00^{\circ}-02'-20''$  West parallel with said West line, 518.35 feet; thence North  $18^{\circ}-54'-25''$  East, 77.00 feet; thence North  $00^{\circ}-02'-20''$  West parallel with said West line, 95.00 feet to the South right-of-way line of West Milham Avenue; thence South  $89^{\circ}-42'-49''$  East thereon, 130.32 feet; thence North  $0^{\circ}-05'-48''$  West parallel with the North and South 1/4 line of said Section, 60.00 feet to the place of beginning. Containing 3.70 Acres.

NOTE: The above descriptions were prepared from available records, no field survey was performed.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY  
FOR  
MMM DEVELOPMENT

Located in Section 7, T. 3 S., R. 11 W.  
City of Portage, Kalamazoo County, Michigan

Split Parcel:

Commencing at the North 1/4 post of Section 7, T. 3 S., R. 11 W., City of Portage, Kalamazoo County, Michigan; thence South 89°-42'-49" East along the North line of said Section, 868.34 feet; thence South 0°-05'-48" East parallel with the North and South 1/4 line of said Section, 60.00 feet to the South right-of-way line of West Milham Avenue; thence North 89°-42'-49" West thereon, 130.32 feet for the place of beginning of the land hereinafter described; thence South 0°-02'-20" East parallel with the West line of The Homestead of Portage North as recorded in Liber 42 of Plats on Page 16, Kalamazoo County Records, 95.00 feet; thence South 18°-54'-25" West, 77.00 feet; thence South 00°-02'-20" East parallel with said West line, 518.35 feet; thence South 89°-57'-40" West, 52.00 feet; thence South 00°-02'-20" East parallel with said West line, 261.87 feet; thence South 47°-07'-46" East, 42.56 feet to the Northwesterly right-of-way line of McGillicuddy Lane; thence Southwesterly thereon, 127.21 feet along a non-tangent curve to the left with a radius of 230.00 feet and a chord bearing South 27°-01'-34" West, 125.59 feet; thence continuing South 11°-10'-57" West along said right-of-way, 10.65 feet to the North line of the South 165.00 feet of the Northwest 1/4 of the Northeast 1/4 of said Section; thence North 89°-46'-18" West thereon, 631.86 feet to the North and South 1/4 line of said Section; thence North 0°-05'-48" West thereon, 745.80 feet to the Easterly right-of-way line of Highway U.S. 131; thence North 09°-52'-01" East thereon, 359.76 feet to said South right-of-way line of West Milham Avenue; thence South 89°-42'-49" East thereon, 675.77 feet to the place of beginning. Containing 17.31 Acres.

Remainder Parcel:

Commencing at the North 1/4 post of Section 7, T. 3 S., R. 11 W., City of Portage, Kalamazoo County, Michigan; thence South 89°-42'-49" East along the North line of said Section, 868.34 feet for the place of beginning of the land hereinafter described; thence continuing South 89°-42'-49" East along said North line, 77.75 feet to the West line of The Homestead of Portage North, as recorded in Liber 42 of Plats on Page 16, Kalamazoo County Records; thence South 00°-02'-20" East thereon, 745.00 feet; thence South 89°-57'-40" West, perpendicular to said West line, 233.00 feet; thence North 00°-02'-20" West parallel with said West line, 518.35 feet; thence North 18°-54'-25" East, 77.00 feet; thence North 00°-02'-20" West parallel with said West line, 95.00 feet to the South right-of-way line of West Milham Avenue; thence South 89°-42'-49" East thereon, 130.32 feet; thence North 0°-05'-48" West parallel with the North and South 1/4 line of said Section, 60.00 feet to the place of beginning. Containing 3.70 Acres.

February 17, 2015  
Revised: March 17, 2015

Ck'd 

NOTE: The above descriptions were prepared from available records, no field survey was performed.

7123 Stadium Drive Kalamazoo, MI 49009 t. 269-372-1158 f. 269-372-3411 www.preinnewhof.com