

Chapter 4

**FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

## **Introduction**

Proposed land use types and density of use are presented in this Chapter for all lands within the City. This Future Land Use Plan chapter is the culmination of analysis of data about the existing community, goals and objectives established during the planning effort and current land use patterns found in the City.

The Future Land Use Plan depicts a "built out" City of Reading wherein all now vacant land areas within the present City Limits are devoted to man-made uses or dedicated public open spaces. It should be noted that when additional lands become a part of the City in the future, planned use(s) of these lands should be determined at that time in the form of a formal amendment to this Master Plan as required by the Municipal Planning Act.

## **Purpose of Creating Future Land Use Plan**

The Future Land Use Plan is the key element of the Master Plan. The Future Land Use Plan forms the basis for zoning districts content and layout, guides future decision making concerning zoning changes, forms the substantive basis for planning utility services area expansion, utility capacity and line location designs, capital improvements as well as capital investment priorities for infrastructure and public facilities investment throughout the City. The Land Use Plan also services as an information resource for property owners, developers, other public agencies, governmental entities and the citizens of Reading.

## **Factors Considered in Planning Land Uses**

In analyzing future land use options for Reading, several specific factors were considered. These include but are not limited to: (1) existing land use within the vicinity, (2) land use types most compatible with established land uses, (3) vehicle access opportunities into areas of proposed new land use, (4) availability and capacity of municipal utilities (i.e., sanitary sewer, water supply both domestic and fire, storm drainage), (5) availability of non-municipal utilities (i.e., natural gas, electricity, telephone/communication/information services), (6) public safety services capacities, (7) volume/capacity of existing public streets which will experience additional traffic related to new development, (8) adequacy of community facilities such as parks and schools, (9) elimination of incompatible land use(s) or, alternatively, set forth means of providing visual screening or buffer to reduce negative influence of the incompatible use, and (10) land use(s) established or planned within border lands adjacent to the City. In any given location, unique conditions exist which may require giving greater importance to one or more factors while others are given minimal consideration. The goals and objectives for community development included in Chapter 3 have also been given consideration while forming this Future Land Use Plan element.

## **Future Land Use Categories Used in This Plan**

Basic land use types are already established in the City. The categories of land use used here are similar to existing land use types inventoried in Chapter 2. Since much of the vacant land within the City is closely adjacent to established land uses, land use type and density included in future development on these vacant lands must be carefully and thoughtfully considered. Protection of existing neighborhoods from incompatible land uses and uses with obvious high nuisance value is a paramount factor underlying the future land use recommendations in this Chapter.

### **Residential Use Categories:**

**Low Density Residential.** As shown in Chapter 2, of the 436 housing units in the City, fully 83 percent are single family detached homes. In general, existing homes fall into a density of 1-4 dwellings per acre of land with some older platted areas being slightly more dense at over 4 but less than 8 dwellings per acre of land. The low-density residential category used herein includes residential development with a density in the 1-4 dwellings per acre of land.

**Medium Density Residential.** This category includes residential development having a density range from 4 to 8 dwellings per acre of land.

**High Density Residential.** This category includes residential development having a density of from 8 to 16 dwellings per acre of land. Again, each residential category will relate to residential uses existing within the City as regards dwelling unit density.

**Discussion of Residential Housing Types.** It should be made clear that the low-density residential category does not mean that all dwelling units constructed in the future will be the traditional single family detached home. Conversely, the high-density residential category does not automatically infer apartment buildings. The type of dwelling structure built is less important than the density of residential use when planning for the future.

It is expected that the type of structure actually built in the future in the various areas planned for residential land use will be largely based on market conditions then present, affordability indexes and existing adjacent uses. This Plan encourages: (1) variety in the type of single family dwellings constructed, (2) innovation as to layout and design of future residential neighborhoods and (3) concurrency as regards new development and provisions of municipal utilities. Neo-traditional, cluster plan, zero-lot line and other innovative designs for single family neighborhoods are believed to offer the greatest opportunity for efficient, affordable owner occupied homes and cost effective use of municipal utilities. Moreover, multiple unit structures built at low density can offer greater areas of private open spaces, larger separations between structures, visual screening and zones of privacy.

This Plan sets out basic residential categories based on density limits. The type of residential structure actually allowed and built will be based on municipal review/approval to assure design and use compatibility with established residential uses nearby. This approach to planning residential land use by density should not be construed to permit incompatible residential mix by structural type nor inappropriate site layout and design. All dwelling units by type (i.e. single

family detached, single family attached, mobile home, two family or multiple family) must have firmly established minimum design and architectural standards spelled out within the City's zoning ordinance to assure good appearance and compatibility among neighboring dwelling units.

**Office Use Category.** This exclusive office use category is new to the City. It includes any type of professional or business office function as well as personal service uses such as beauty or barbershops.

The purpose of this category is two-fold.. First, the immediate area near Downtown contains many larger homes that share the same block with storefronts on Main and Michigan Streets. This strategy offers opportunity for office use in connection with serious building renovation to assert the fine historic character of these homes. Moreover, the limited number of store fronts on Main and Michigan Streets should be devoted to retail use as much as possible and limiting the office occupancy to structures nearby which can share available common public parking. Encouraging retail in existing street level storefronts will create more pedestrian and vehicular traffic on the main streets oin Downtown than office or other non retail service uses. By placing office uses in close proximity to retail, each use benefits from the existence of the other.

The second purpose is to provide an alternative use for areas outside of Downtown along Main Street and Michigan Street, much of which is now zoned commercial but contains mostly larger homes on smaller lots. Thus, as the community evolves, further office uses can locate in the larger homes. Again, the present historic values of these homes can be asserted and enhanced. Should the homes along the major streets and adjacent to Downtown be thus renovated and preserved for either residential and/or office occupancy, the visual character within the heart of the City would be greatly improved.

**Commercial Use Category.** This category includes general retail and business service uses. Physically, this category will incorporate all portions of the existing Downtown and some areas along Main Street and Michigan Streets beyond the Downtown.

There are types of commercial uses inappropriate for the Downtown or on parcels located along major streets in the City. These uses would include any business requiring outdoor storage of materials, equipment and the like such as lumber/building supply sales, contracting, vehicle repair, certain distribution services, and the like. The City currently has several commercial service type business operations located in conflict with residential use or within the Downtown. It appears the reasons this has occurred is a lack of prior concern, minimal prior planning consideration within the City and the lack of suitable sites for commercial businesses requiring either larger sites or outdoor storage.

The City currently has a fine industrial park at the north City Limits but lacks a similar area for commercial businesses having characteristics discussed above and not suitable for areas now zoned to permit commercial use. Thus, to better serve the business needs of Reading, an additional area planned for commercial service, repair services, wholesale and distribution uses should be identified in this Plan. Thus, a second category of commercial has been created to be known as Commercial Service. Commercial Service will be shown on the Future Land Use Plan

as one or more alternative locations. Some businesses in this category have physical and operating characteristics closely resembling light industrial use whereas others may incorporate retail sales as an ongoing function and may need a location along a major street. In fact, it may be necessary to create two distinct business activity areas not presently in existence to best serve the needs of these unique businesses.

**Industrial Use Category.** Industrial uses are currently located in several areas of the City. In some cases, adverse land use relationships exist whereby environmental conditions, operating characteristics and/or visual impacts attendant to the industrial use is very negative as they relate to nearby residential uses. An industrial land use plan element for Reading must include opportunity for relocation and or redevelopment of these industrial uses.

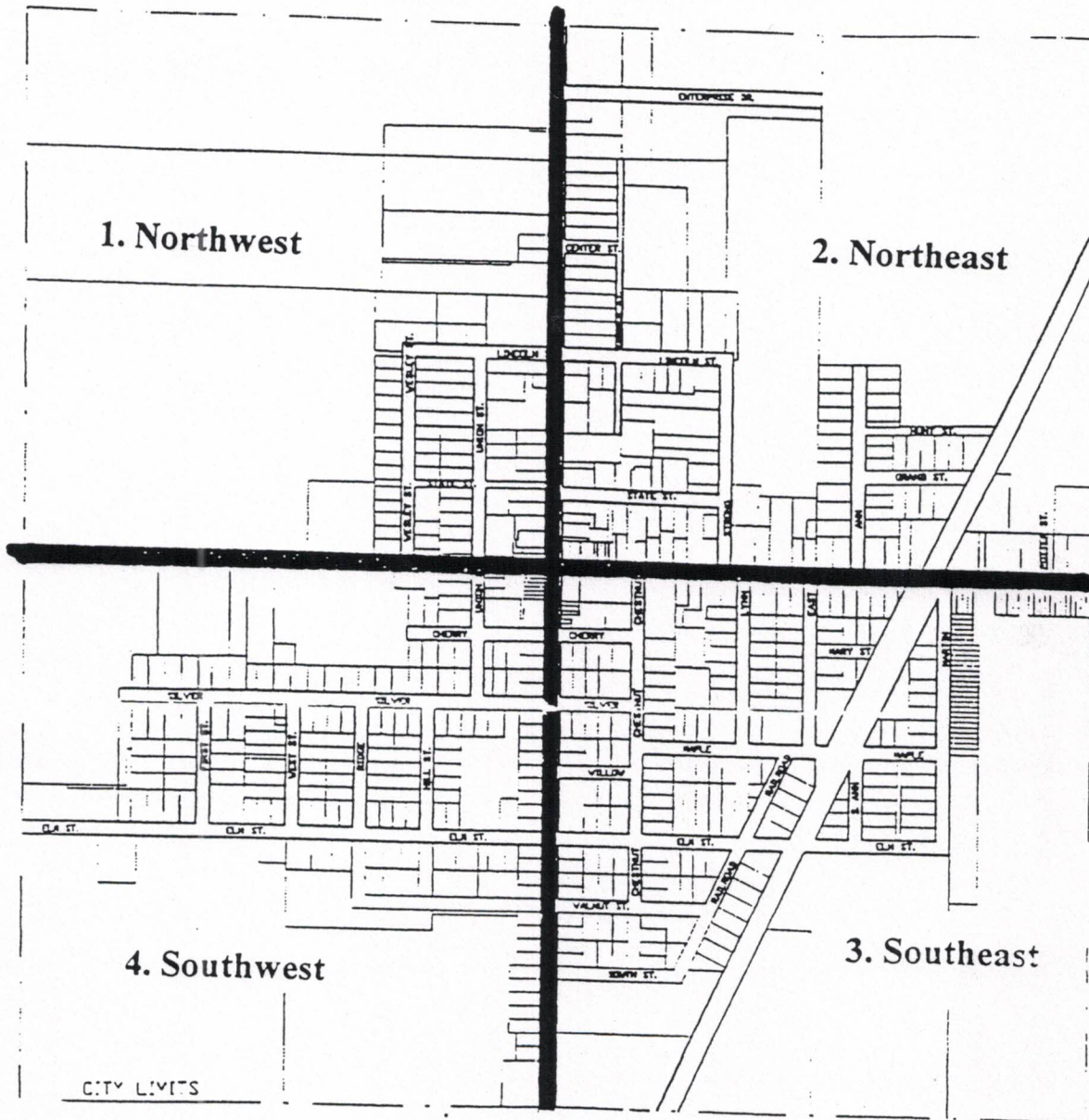
The Reading Industrial Park, located in the northeast portion of the City with access via Enterprise Drive from M-49, represents a significant opportunity to facilitate relocation/redevelopment of some existing industrial uses, but not all of them. The Park is owned and managed by the Reading Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA), created in 1981 under provisions of Michigan Public Act 450 of 1980, as amended. The TIFA Board's long standing policies regarding development of the Industrial Park discourage uses which are not industrial by definition ( manufacturing, assembly, physical or chemical change, research, engineering). Thus, some of the existing industrial or business uses exhibiting conflict with the neighborhoods in which they are located may not be admitted to the existing industrial park since they have retail aspects, involve largely transit service or may not be deemed industrial use. This reality further supports the idea the in addition to the industrial park, one or more areas dedicated to business use (e.g. a business park) is needed within the City or environs.

The Industrial Plan for future land use incorporates most existing industrial uses within the City and the Industrial Park An area north of the Industrial Park into Reading Township appears to be the best options for long term expansion. Of course, infrastructure questions and cooperation of Reading Township must be addressed..

**Public Use Category.** This category includes a wide array of public land uses. Public school buildings and properties, municipal buildings, parkland and open space are include here. As depicted on the Master Plan, each is identified by letter designation. School use is noted as S. Municipal uses are noted as M and Parkland as P. Open spaces for passive use and recommended buffer areas are not highlighted.

#### **Land Use Analysis and Planning Recommendation by Sub-Areas.**

The City of Reading contains a diverse set of land uses and various areas of the City contain unique land use issues requiring unique planning approaches. In view of this diversity, the City was divided into four sub-areas for the purpose of planning analysis and discussion of future land use preferences. Each sub-area contains distinctive planning and community development issues for which unique planning approaches are needed. The following map depicts the four sub-areas (quadrants) for which analysis is provided in this Chapter. Each quadrant has a land area equal to one-quarter of the total area of the City.



**Planning Sub-Areas  
Identified in Planning Analysis**

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## Sub-Area Planning Analysis

The sub-areas used in this analysis were established by using Main Street (M-49) as the north/south dividing line and Michigan Street with a west extension as the east/west dividing line.

**1. Northwest Area.** The first area evaluated within the City was the northwest quadrant lying west of Main Street and north of a line representing Michigan Street extended to the west City Limits. This quadrant has approximately 76 percent or 121 acres of the total area in cropland or vacant. Vacant lands in this quadrant have high development potential based on landforms and access possibilities.

Existing uses in and adjacent to this quadrant include:

North:	Public cemetery, vacant land, and woodland.
East:	Single family detached, City DPW facility, public park and Main Street.
West:	Cropland, vacant
South:	Single family detached at about 4 dwellings per acre and Silver Street

Access to undeveloped lands in this quadrant can be gained at several locations. On the northeast, M-49 offers good access. Lincoln Street extended west, Silver Street and Elm Street to the south all offer potential access points into this quadrant.

Municipal utility extensions into this area appear feasible. However, a general feasibility study as an element of a utility master plan is recommended to assure the most cost-effective approach to providing municipal utility services. These recommendation not only applies to this quadrant but also to other areas of the City likely to experience future development but which are not currently served.

**Land Use Recommendations-Northwest Area.** The general features of vacant lands in this quadrant are open fields, gentle slopes and little significant vegetation. Future land use in this quadrant should be in residential categories since most uses currently abutting the vacant lands within the quadrant are single family detached residential.

Opportunity exists to plan variable densities within a large area of undeveloped property. The existing city park/athletic field complex (Magic Square) at the end of Cherry/State Streets provides an excellent community open space to serve existing and future residents living within this quadrant and elsewhere in the City. A proposal is under study to purchase about 30 additional acres of land to the west of the present site for a new high school complex. A new school would require not less than 40 additional acres. This is a sound proposal that should be implemented. The school/park site is well situated to the entire City and has good access potential. This area represents the best opportunity within the City to create a school/park complex for community wide service.

It is recommended that low density residential (1-4 dwellings per acre of land) be planned to the west and south of the school/park complex with access from Elm Street, connection to Silver and extension of State westward to a new north/south collector street.

To the north of the school/park complex, medium density residential (4-8 dwellings per acre of land) is recommended. This use would extend north from the complex to the latitude of Enterprise Drive. It is conceived that Enterprise Drive would be extended west of Main Street to eventually intersect with the proposed north/south collector street. The collector street combined with West Enterprise Street would provide a loop road around the entire west side of the City.

Between West Enterprise Drive and the north City Limits is recommended High Density Residential. This use is also recommended south of West Enterprise Drive to foster redevelopment of current uses in the area. This area has very good access and is close to employment centers.

The area west of the north/south collector road is recommended for low-density residential use.

**2. Northeast Area.** Much of the vacant land in this quadrant of the City is owned by the City's TIFA and is intended for industrial land use. There are several obvious planning and community development issues present in this area of the City which should be addressed. These include:

- (1) Protection for existing uses adjacent to the industrial park. Unsightly views, environmental nuisances, outdoor operations/storage, truck movements and well as loading/unloading operations, site lighting and other features of industrial uses can create extremely negative impacts on adjacent non-industrial uses. The industrial park perimeter should be landscaped and earth berms installed to minimize negative sight and sound impacts on adjacent land uses. Moreover, deed restrictions should be put into place for industrial sites within the park assuring good site landscaping, muted lighting and proper placement of light standards or wall packs, separations from lot lines and screening of outdoor storage, truck parking and loading areas, refuse containers, materials storage and like activities having high nuisance value.
- (2) Vehicle access. In past considerations, it has been thought that Enterprise Drive would turn south and eventually connect to Ann Street at the south limits of the Industrial Park property. This concept is deemed to be unwise from a traditional planning view. The street connection would give rise to employment and truck traffic on Ann Street that is now a quiet residential street. The added traffic and noise would disrupt the quiet enjoyment of homes now located along Ann Street.
- (3) Expansion of the existing multiple family residential use is recommended. Adjacent vacant land and several large lots to the immediate south of the current apartments offer good expansion opportunity. Pedestrian facilities should be improved to connect the high-density residential use with the industrial park and the school complex to the south/southeast.



(4) Opportunity exists in the Downtown block bounded by Michigan, Main and State Streets and Strong Avenue to create public parking. This opportunity should be explored in the near future, since an ample supply of vehicle parking is an essential ingredient of a healthy Downtown business district.

(5) New in-fill medium density residential use should be encouraged at the north end of Ann Street. This small area of housing might be accomplished by way of a public/private partnership between the City and a private developer/home builder. The type and style of dwellings would be the subject of negotiations.

**3. Southeast Area.** Of all the sub areas studied, this Southeast quadrant of the City presents the most challenging planning and community development issues. There are significant vacant or under-utilized land areas south of Walnut Street to the south City Limits and east of the Hillsdale Railroad. This quadrant contains the City's major industry as well as large grain storage silos and a propane tank refurbisher with extensive areas of outdoor used tank storage. Single family dwellings are interspersed with or in close proximity to industrial activities. As a result, a number of homes east of the railroad right of way are in decline.

Future development of vacant land areas within this quadrant presents several difficult issues. Access to the vacant land areas will be difficult. Use of existing local streets to connect into and serve further non-residential development is not recommended due to traffic safety and nuisance concerns. The railroad represents a significant barrier and new street crossings are costly. Existing industrial and agricultural business uses east of the railroad have aspects detrimental to residential use. As such, non-residential uses appear most feasible for much of the area east of the railroad right of way.

**Land Use Recommendations-Southeast Area.** The existing residential neighborhood west of the Hillsdale Railroad is mostly stable and in good condition. The school bus parking area and propane tank storage are the two primary negative influences and should be eliminated. Occasional dust and chaff from the feed and grain operation to the east is also a negative influence.

The area south of Walnut Street and west of the Hillsdale Railroad represents the sole opportunity within the City Limits to create a commercial business park. A buffer zone along Walnut Street would be necessary to protect the existing residential neighborhood to the north.

One significant issue in this quadrant is truck and employment traffic using residential streets to access the southeast industrial area. (Elm, Maple and Martin all experience this traffic). To serve the proposed commerce park a new collector street will be needed extending eastward from South Main Street. Eventually, this collector would cross the Hillsdale Railroad. Once the crossing is achieved, a further extension of the collector is proposed running parallel with along the east side of the Railroad. This street would become a truck route connecting South Main (M-49) with Michigan Street on the east side of the City. Elm and Maple Streets at the railroad would be closed once the new truck route is completed.

Industrial expansion in this southeast quadrant is recommended only east of the Railroad right of way. This expansion is dependant upon creating the necessary collector street and truck route as described to better serve industrial users and protect residential areas from increased traffic operations. An element of industrial expansion in this quadrant could be construction of a new plant for the existing major industry next to the current facility. Ample land exists and the landform appears suitable for industrial building construction. Some discussion has been held concerning the reuse of the current plant. It has been suggested portions of the plant in good physical condition could be saved (the remaining portions demolished) for use by smaller industrial firms and businesses as an incubator facility. This concept has merit and should be investigated as to feasibility.

If the commerce park is created and successful, more land may be needed in the future. The area of vacant land just east of the Hillsdale Railroad could be considered for this expansion concurrent with the construction of the collector street.

Existing industrial uses along Martin north of Maple would eventually be relocated out of the area and the land east of the new truck route would be put into medium density residential use. The land between the truck route and the railroad not used for grain storage would remain open space as a buffer for residential uses nearby.

**4. Southwest Area.** This quadrant contains significant open land that is very suitable for development. The landform is unobstructed and gently rolling.

The Reading Public School District owns a 40-acre tract in this area located in the extreme southwest corner of the City. This site is eventually intended for a new high school. However, as recommended earlier, a new high school should be located west of Magic Square. The school bus parking and maintenance activities near the present high school should be relocated to the new site recommended and should incorporate suitable site amenities and screening.

**Land Use Recommendations-Southwest Area.** A second large tract of vacant land lies between the school site and South Main Street. This site offers excellent potential for residential use, preferably at medium density of 4-8 dwellings per acre of land. An existing trucking operation is situated on a portion of this site. The operation is located in the north-central portion of the tract and is very prominent as to view and elevation. This business should be relocated to an area planned for industrial use or into the commerce park.

A new collector street is proposed through this quadrant-extending west from South Main Street to the school owned property and looping northward to intersect with First Street and Elm Street. This new collector will serve both the new school/park complex to the north and homes to be developed on the school district property and the tract to the east.

Vacant land north of Elm Street along the west City Limits is recommended for use as low density residential at not more than 4 dwellings per acre of land. A new collector road would extend northward from Elm Street (see discussion of 1. Northwest Area).