



# City of Reading

## DRAFT MASTER PLAN 2021



Insert Resolution

# Acknowledgements

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# 1

## Background



### REGIONAL CONTEXT

Located in southwestern Hillsdale County in south central Michigan, the city of Reading is a small urban area in a predominantly rural and agricultural region. Interestingly, Reading Township, which surrounds the city, has the highest elevation above sea level in this region of the state, creating what is known as the “Great Divide” of southern Michigan. At the “Great Divide,” the city is the source of two major rivers – the St. Joseph that travels west to Lake Michigan and another St. Joseph that connects to the Maumee River which flows into Lake Erie. The several lakes to the west of the city are apt for seasonal homes and recreational opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

Reading has easy access to both Indiana and Ohio, being only ten miles from each state line. Furthermore, the city has access to the major cities in the tri-state area, being within one to one and one-half hour’s drive to Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Jackson, Kalamazoo, and Ypsilanti in Michigan; Toledo in Ohio; and Fort Wayne and South Bend in Indiana.<sup>2</sup>

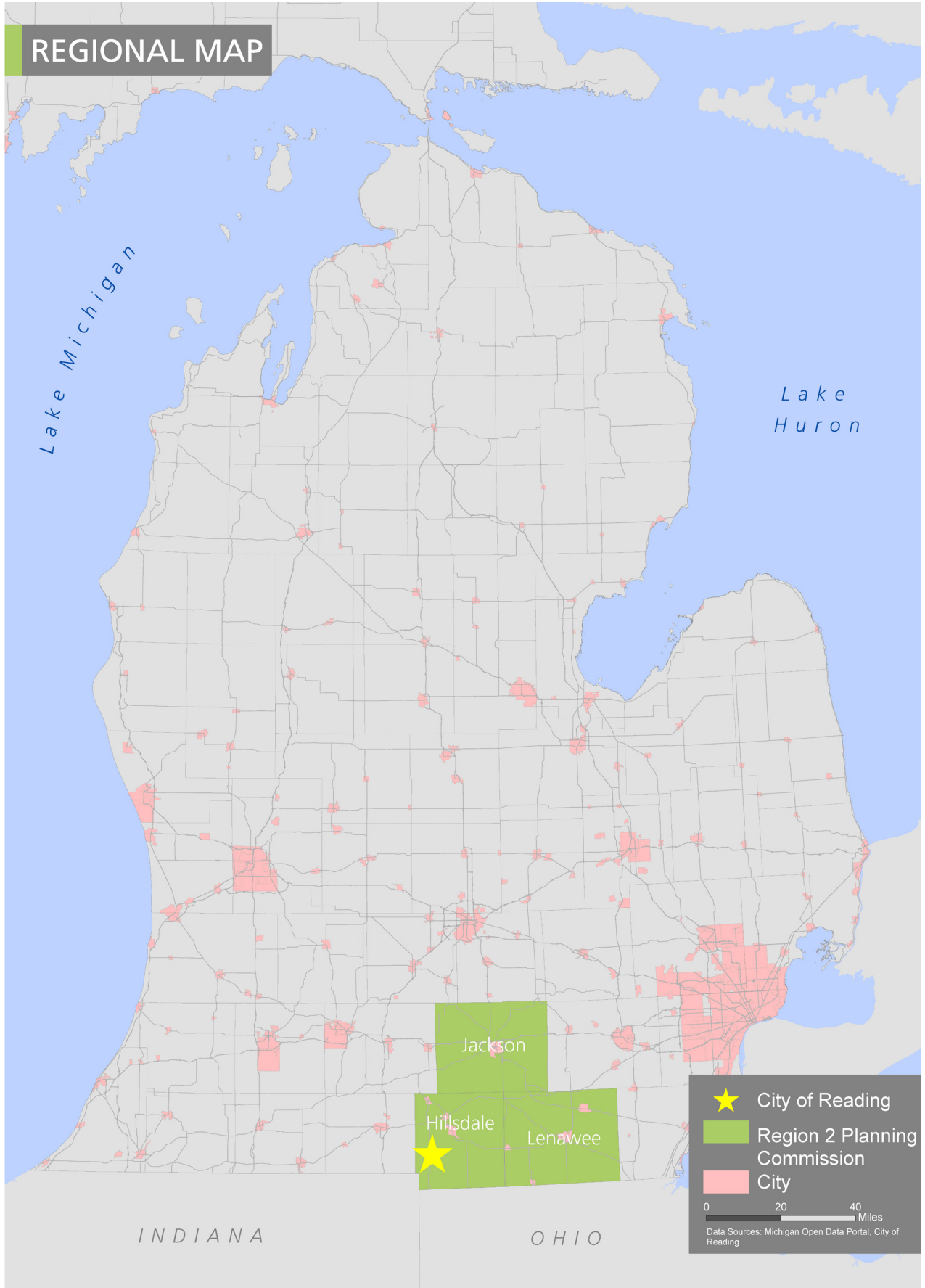
### TIMELINE

The timeline on the following pages provides a graphic overview of Reading’s history and the key events that helped shape the city.

### Sources

- <sup>1</sup> *City of Reading. About.* Access 3 June 2020. <http://reading.mi.us/about.aspx>
- <sup>2</sup> *City of Reading. Existing Conditions and Trends. 2000 Master Plan. P. 1*

Map 1: Regional Map



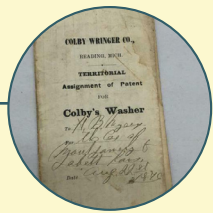


Railroad service through Reading began, marking the beginning of a business and population boom for the area.



August 15 – The great fire of 1899 destroyed much of the Village. As a result, the Village reconstructed more substantial buildings, many of which still exist today.

The first European settlers arrived in the Reading area – Judge John Mickle and his family from Maumee, Ohio settled on a tract of land three miles north of present-day Reading. Dozens of settlers from the Maumee area later followed. During the same year, Eleazer Gleason moved to Reading Township, settling on land south and east of the present city. Gleason's descendants remain on the homestead to this day.



The Colby Wringer Company of Waterbury, Vermont, became the first large manufacturing industry to locate in Reading.



Reading Township was officially organized, named after Wright Redding, one of the Township's early settlers.

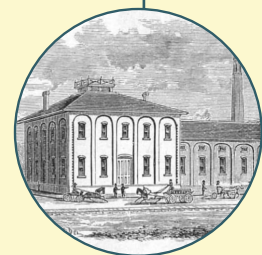
1835 1837 1839 1850 1869 1872 1873 1877 1887 1899

Reading Township was reorganized as six square miles and officially designated by the United States Survey as Town 7 South, Range 4 West (T.7.S, R.4.W).



The Village of Reading was formally created.

Stillman Parker started a small tannery for tanning and manufacturing buffalo hides. This establishment flourished, employed about 200 people, and quickly became the largest buffalo tannery in the world.



The Darwin brothers purchased the Colby Wringer Company and renamed it to the Acme Chair Company, which would become the largest industry in Reading.

The original settlement, a de facto village called "Basswood Corners," consisted of a small mercantile store, a grain cradle factory, and a blacksmith shop. The name "Basswood Corners" came from the seven large Basswood trees that stood at the corner of present-day Main and Michigan Streets.





# City of Reading **TIMELINE**



The Village's first municipal water plant began operation.



President Theodore Roosevelt visited the Village and gave a brief speech, marking the first time that a US president visited Reading.

The Reading City Council adopted an updated Tax Increment Financing Authority Development Plan.

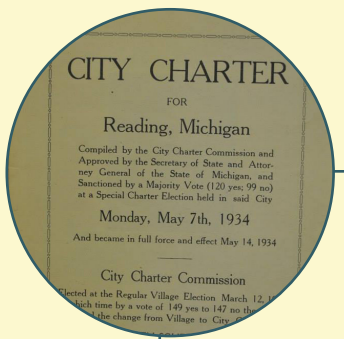
The city of Reading adopted its first and most recent Community Master Plan.

The Region 2 Planning Commission adopted a Hazard Mitigation Plan for Hillsdale County.

The city of Reading established a Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA) and adopted a Tax Increment Financing Authority Development Plan.

The city adopted its most recent Zoning Ordinance.

1900 1907 1934 1947 1966 1981 2000 2002 2010 2018



May 14 – Village residents adopted a city charter and the Village became the city of Reading.

Reading Public School District consolidated.



The city of Reading was selected to host the cross representing Spiritual Foundations Day, because it is the highest place in lower Michigan.

The Region 2 Planning Commission adopted an updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Hillsdale, Jackson, and Lenawee Counties.

SOURCES: "Reading Thru the Ages" Facebook page; City of Reading 2000 Master Plan; City of Reading Website; Hillsdale County Historical Society

# 2

## Demographics & Housing



### Opportunities

- » Age distribution stabilization
- » Growing household sizes that are primarily family-oriented
- » Consistent housing tenure
- » Several “Residential Vacant” parcels prime for housing development



### Challenges

- » Population decline
- » Financial insecurity
- » High disability rates
- » Lack of new housing
- » Housing affordability
- » Lack of housing diversity
- » Deteriorating housing conditions



### Connection to Major Land Use Implications

- » A declining population threatens greater housing vacancy and blighted structures, lower property tax revenue for the city, and less appeal for business investment.
- » Financial insecurity extends beyond the household it directly affects, making it more difficult to recruit desired business to the city.
- » High rates of disability and a growing elderly population require greater attention to design and accessibility to essential land uses.
- » The lack of housing options could compel residents to move out of the city where they can find housing that better suits their lifestyle and budget.
- » “Residential Vacant” land provides the opportunity to provide new, diverse, and affordable options.

Demographic trends underpin a master plan's central goals of land use planning and coordinating development for the benefit of its residents. To plan responsibly for the next five to ten years, it is incumbent on a community to understand its residents' basic characteristics and preferences in order to attract development with matching scale and intensity. While demographics are linked to every aspect of planning, their most direct connection is to the housing market, which is why these two topics are discussed together. A person's age, income, and disability status influence the type of home and neighborhoods/he lives in.

## MAJOR DATA SOURCES

- » **2010 US Census.** This is the gold standard for demographic data. It measures 100% of the population and offers comparable data points at regular intervals throughout most of the United States' developed history. However, available data is limited to population and housing information, and the ten-year interval between data points means it is rarely "fresh."
- » **American Community Survey.** The ACS program replaced the "long form" Census questions beginning in 2000, collecting the same types of detailed information about social, economic, and housing conditions on a rolling basis instead of once per decade. For smaller communities, data is collected over the course of 60 months of to achieve a valid sample size, called a "five-year estimate." This system exposes the statistical tradeoff between the reliability gained by increasing sample size and the currency that is sacrificed in the time it takes to do so. The dataset used for this project was 2018 5-Year Estimates.

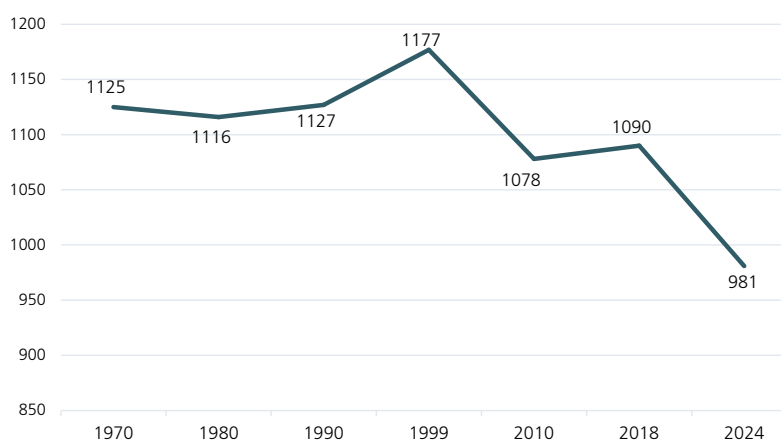
- » **Esri Business Analyst.** This proprietary software presents privately generated market research data. In addition, it estimates Census and ACS data for geographic configurations other than Census-defined tracts, blocks, and places.

## POPULATION CHALLENGES

### Population Decline

The 2018 ACS estimated the city's population at 1,090 residents. Decennial census data since 1970 shows a series of slight spurts of growth among an overall trajectory of decline. Esri Business Analyst offers a five-year population projection that suggests a further decrease to 981 residents by 2024. Interestingly, Reading's projected decline is set against a backdrop of projected population growth in the city and county of Hillsdale, indicating that Reading was not expected to capture any portion of that growth in the next five years.

Figure 1: Population Change, 1970 -2024



Source: Decennial Census, ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates, ESRI

## Median Household Income (2018)

Reading: \$42,228

Hillsdale County: \$48,392

Michigan: \$54,938

### Income & Poverty

The 2018 median household income for Reading residents was almost \$13,000 less than the state and about \$6,000 less than Hillsdale County annually. Based on the 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Reading's median household income has grown noticeably from \$29,583; however, the gap in annual earnings when compared to the county and the state has not closed. The lower wages are likely tied to:

- » Lower levels of educational attainment: 54% of the residents over the age of 25 have earned a high school diploma or less (38% statewide)
- » A disabled population of 18% that may limit job prospects due to a physical or mental impairment
- » 34% of residents earn social security and the mean income is \$18,235 per year.

Despite the disparity in incomes, Reading does not have a higher poverty rate than Michigan; both hover at about 15% of the population. When an even more telling figure of a household's financial circumstances is calculated, the story of economic constraint broadens. United Way calculates a figure referred to as ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. These households are above the poverty threshold but do not earn sufficient wage to cover the following necessities:

- » Housing
- » Childcare
- » Food
- » Transportation
- » Technology
- » Miscellaneous
- » Taxes<sup>1</sup>

For Hillsdale County, when ALICE and poverty figures are combined, 45% of households are struggling financially.

### Land Use Implications for Population Challenges

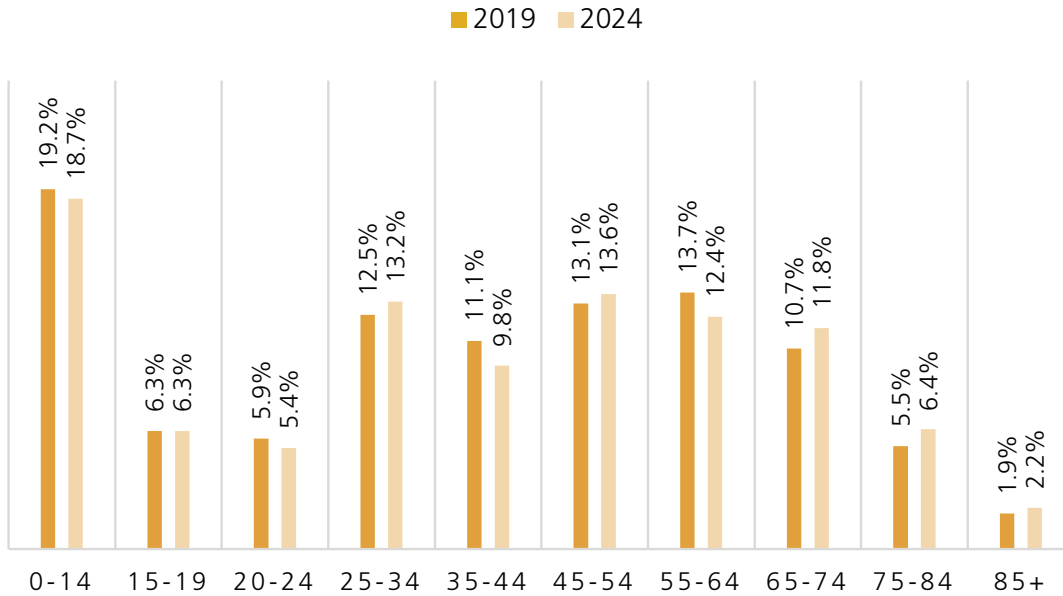
- » A declining population poses several threats: the potential for greater housing vacancy and blighted structures, lower tax property tax revenue for the city, less draw for business investment.
- » Financial insecurity extends beyond the household it directly affects, making it more difficult to recruit desired business to the city.
- » High rates of disability and a growing elderly population require greater attention to design and accessibility to essential land uses.

## POPULATION OPPORTUNITIES

### Age Distribution

Reading's age distribution is not expected to experience wild shifts over the next five years. Between 2010 and 2019, the largest changes were in mid-career age groups 35-44 from 14% to 11%. Corresponding to a loss of the mid-career cohort was a loss of school-aged children, which was even greater during that time period. Age group 0-19 dropped from 35% to 26%. Projecting to 2024, small drops in the age cohort 14 and younger is expected as is a slight rise in the age groups 65

Figure 2: Age Distribution 2019 & 2024



Source: ESRI

years and older but at much smaller rates than the previous eight years.<sup>2</sup> The age population stabilization indicates that the loss of the most economically productive cohorts and their children has tapered off.

### Household Size & Composition

The average household size in Reading has grown since 2010, bucking national trends towards shrinking households. Already bigger than the county and the state at 2.72 persons per household in 2010, the average household size grew to 2.89 persons over the following eight years. The trend-defying growth of average household size is partially based on Reading remaining a primarily family-household community. Since 2010, family households have grown to 76% of total households, and correspondingly non-family households have shrunk to less than a quarter of total households. A growing household size that is primarily family-oriented is an opportunity to maintain the age distribution and induce population growth.

Family

A group of two people or more related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing together.

Non-Family

A household that consists of a householder living alone or where the householder shared the home with people to whom he/she is not related.

Source: Census Definitions  
<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/subject-definitions.html#family>

## HOUSING CHALLENGES

### Lack of New Residential Construction

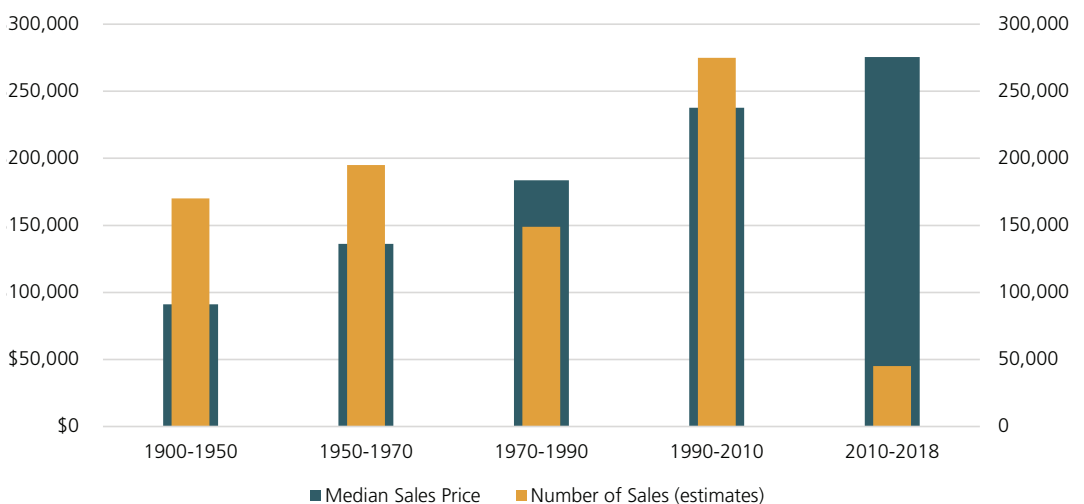
According to the assessor, only eight new homes have been built since 2000; over half of the housing stock was built before 1939 (56%). Historic homes undeniably add character to neighborhoods, but if they are not adequately updated, they also often lack amenities that modern residents are looking for. Common shortcomings of historic homes include poor insulation, lack of storage, higher maintenance costs, and noncompliance with modern building code that may be intimidating to inexperienced homeowners.

The lack of new residential units may be one of the causes of population decline. The census shows that even as new residents continue to move into the County, they are not choosing to reside in Reading. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) conducted a housing study in 2019 that analyzed sales trends by region. Reading is in Prosperity Region 9 where the findings show that on average, new

single-family homes sold for 32% more than existing units. The premium for new units exposes a greater demand for new housing that is in short supply in Reading.<sup>3</sup> The premium for new housing also exposes a trend in building larger homes with luxury finishes for higher earners, leaving a gap for modestly priced new homes, and therefore many Reading households.<sup>4</sup>

While those who can afford it are willing to pay more for a new home, the figure “Median Single-Family Sales Prices by Decade Built, Region 9” illustrates that as median sales price continue to grow, fewer sales are completed. This relationship indicates that sales prices have outpaced household’s ability to purchase new construction single-family homes. The data for 2010-2018 reflects the Great Recession’s lingering impact on the housing market and household’s strained purchasing power. However, the slow recovery from the Great Recession coupled with the uncertainty of the coronavirus’ lasting impact on the economy likely means that single-family sales will remain lower than previous decades.

Figure 3: Median Single-Family Sales Prices by Decade Built, Region 9



\*2018 is a partial year of data

Source: MSHDA Homeownership Companion Report (p. 257), MLS

## Cost-Burden

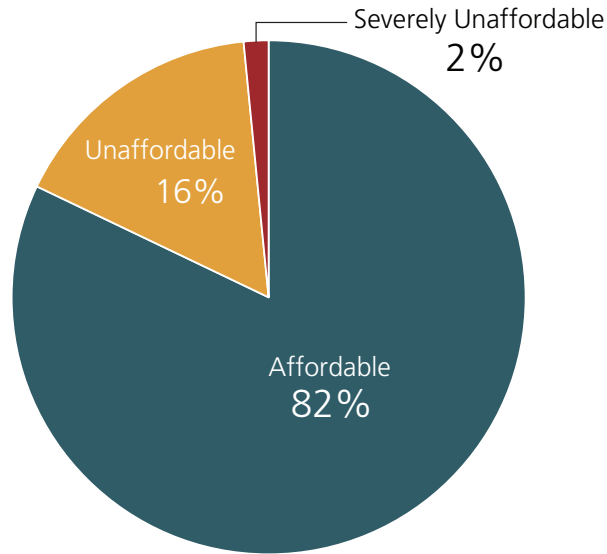
The challenge with new construction is that price of a new single-family home exceeds what most Reading residents can afford. For example, the vast majority of Reading survey-takers recorded that they feel financially comfortable buying a home between \$20,000-\$150,000. However, the MSHDA report finds that in 2017, the median sales price for a new single-family home was \$284,254 in Prosperity Region 9.<sup>5</sup>

Even when looking at 2018 median monthly mortgages and rental payments for existing units, homeowners and renters were “cost-burdened” (defined as households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs), a figure that is likely to be higher for both groups in 2020. That is to say that the options on the market now still leave households in financially precarious situations; nearly one in five owner-occupied homes and over half of renters suffer from unaffordable housing costs, which helps explain why new development of single-family homes has not come to Reading.

### Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)

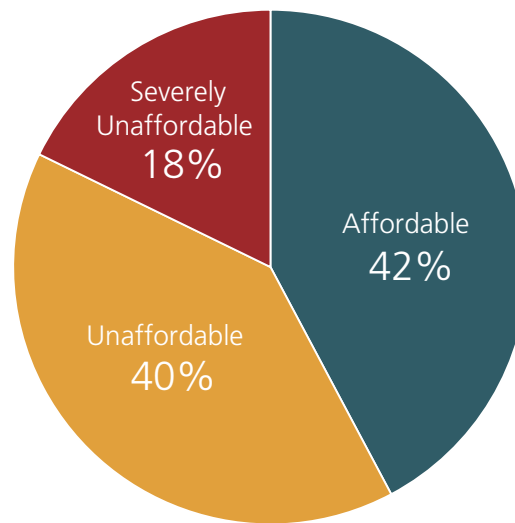
The Michigan State Housing Development Authority Act (PA 346 of 1966) exempts housing projects that receive federal or authority assistance from property tax. In lieu of property taxes, the housing provider may pay a service charge for new development that is outlined in the municipal ordinance. In Reading, this could help lower the price of new housing development. The first step is to adopt a PILOT ordinance and then to pursue reputable organizations to build units that fit within household’s budget and fit within the neighborhoods.

Figure 4: Owner Housing Affordability



Source: *Envision Tomorrow, ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates*

Figure 5: Renter Housing Affordability



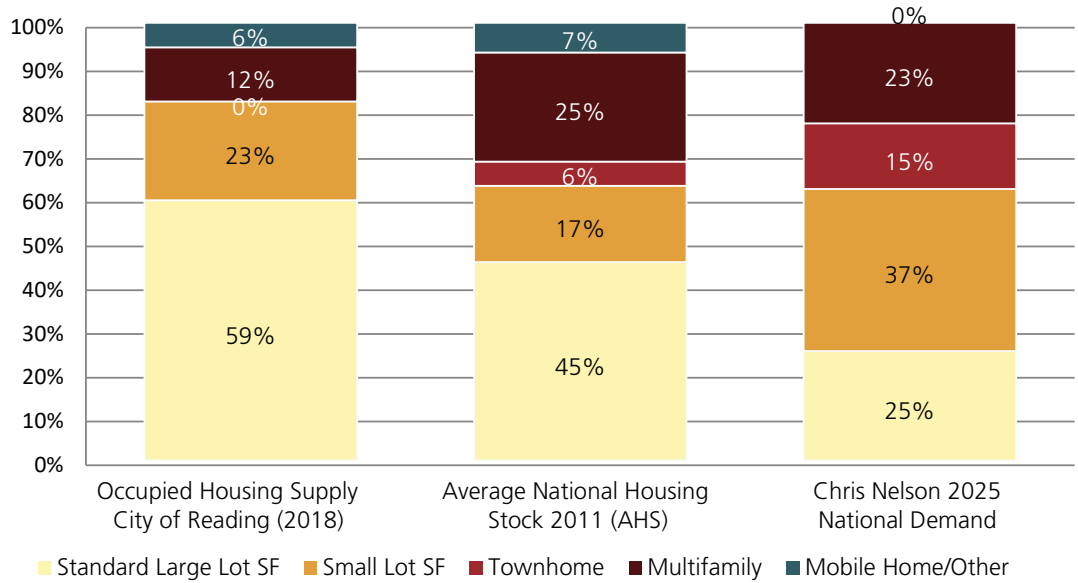
Source: *Envision Tomorrow, ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates*

## Region 9

Jackson County	Lenawee County
Washtenaw County	Monroe County
Livingston County	Hillsdale County

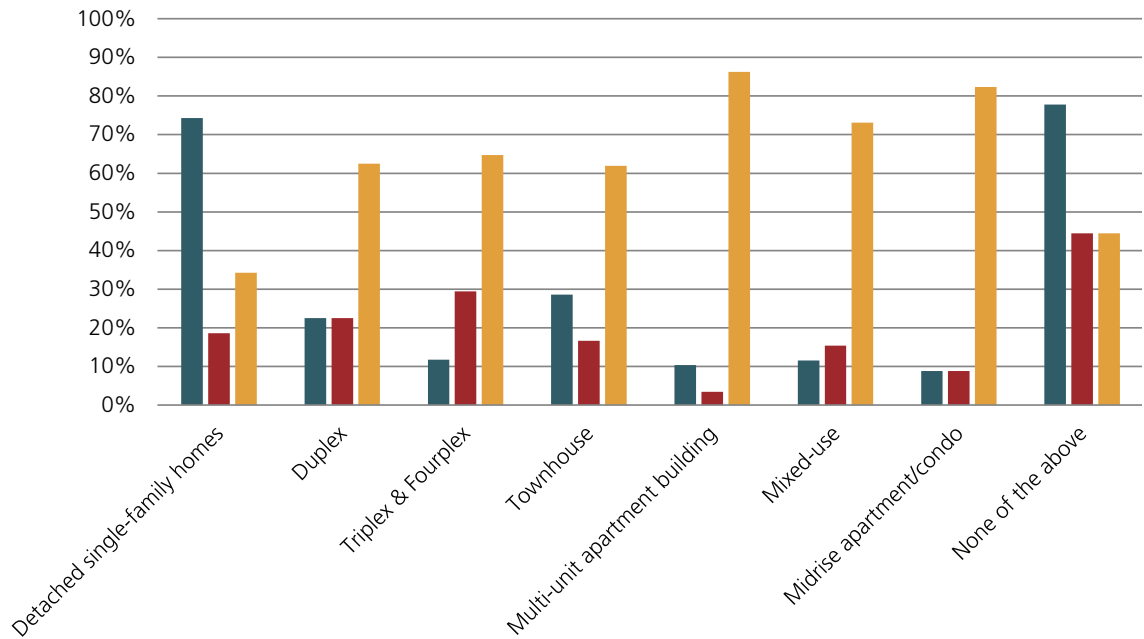
Source: *MSHDA*

Figure 6: Shifting Housing Preferences



Source: Envision Tomorrow

Figure 7: Willingness to Live Near Denser Housing Options



Source: Master Plan survey



## Housing Diversity

A dearth of housing options contributes to the problem of “cost burdened” households. With 81% of the housing stock dedicated to single-family detached units, there are few formats for groups that prefer lower maintenance and less expensive options. For example, empty-nesters who wish to downsize, working households with limited discretionary income, and young couples without children may prefer smaller units or smaller parcels. When those options are not available to them, persons with social mobility will seek them elsewhere. Despite the high cost of housing relative to household income, the highest number of survey-takers prefer to live in single-family detached homes, a preference steeped in cultural significance as the “American Dream” regardless of the financial reality. However, survey-takers showed more flexibility when asked what type of homes they would be willing to live near as shown in the figure, “Willingness to Live Near Denser Housing Options.” This finding indicates that neighborhoods can host a greater variety of housing formats.

At a national scale, documented shifting housing preferences confirm a shrinking willingness for households to invest in standard large single-family lots. “Missing Middle” housing, the range of attached housing with multiple units that are compatible in scale and form with single-family homes, allows for flexible diversity without disrupting the fabric of traditional neighborhoods.<sup>6</sup> This trend is alive in the region, the 2019 MSHDA study found that the demand for condominiums is growing

as evidenced by the dropping median number of days on the market and rising sales prices.<sup>7</sup> Typically, when smaller units are built on less land, they generally have lower purchasing prices and maintenance costs. Permitting and proactively seeking out alternative options is a matter of equity and can be one way to keep and attract residents. The figure “Shifting Housing Preferences” is the output of a model done by Envision Tomorrow, a scenario planning tool. The left column reflects Reading’s most up-to-date data, the center column is of national trends, and the third is a scenario prediction based on empirical research conducted at the Metropolitan Research Center, led by Chris Nelson.

Another low impact way to diversify housing types is to permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in the rear lots of residential parcels. Known colloquially as “in law units” or “granny flats,” they are smaller units, subordinate to the principal structure, that can be used to house family members (as the name suggests) or rented to tenants. In a housing market where very little is being built, this offers a lower cost way to add units that are not being supplied by the private market. The lower costs can be passed on to the tenants to provide more affordable housing options for young adults, the elderly, or residents in transition to homeownership. They can be regulated in several ways to ensure that they fit into the neighborhood, for example, a quota can be placed on the number that are permitted annually, dimensions are regulated by relation to the size of the yard or the principal structure, and parking can be limited or even prohibited.

## Missing Middle Housing Options



Duplex



Triplex



Bungalow Courts



Townhomes



Accessory Dwelling Unit



Converted Multifamily

**Table 1: Housing Conditions, 1999 & 2020**

Year	Sound	Minor Repair	Major Repair
1999	82%	16%	2%
2020	69%	22%	7%

Source: 2000 Master Plan and 2020 fieldwork

## Housing Quality Assessment

In 1999, Reading conducted a visual enumeration of all 436 dwelling units within the city. The dwelling unit types were categorized based on their exterior conditions as “sound,” “minor repair,” and “major repair.” At the time, 82% fell into the highest category and only 2% of units had unsafe conditions. In the summer of 2020, the city sampled 310 housing structures, or about 75% of the housing structures to assess a change in exterior conditions. Because in 2020 only a sample of homes were assessed, it cannot with 100% reliability reflect the city’s housing conditions nor is directly comparable to the fieldwork conducted in 1999. The current sample was also limited by technology; using the GIS collector app to store each home’s score was not always possible

due to poor connectivity. The table “Housing Conditions, 1999 & 2020” shows a likely trend: that housing conditions have likely deteriorated over the last twenty years. The findings from 2020 also show the divergence in housing conditions between owner-occupied and renter-occupied units is the most pronounced in the “poor” condition category. The decline in housing condition is likely attributed to the Great Recession; when the value of homes dropped significantly, it was no longer worthwhile, or for many households financially feasible, to continue to invest in their homes. As a result, blight has become a larger issue over time. In fact, survey-takers reported “blighted housing” as the city’s biggest challenge over the next five years.

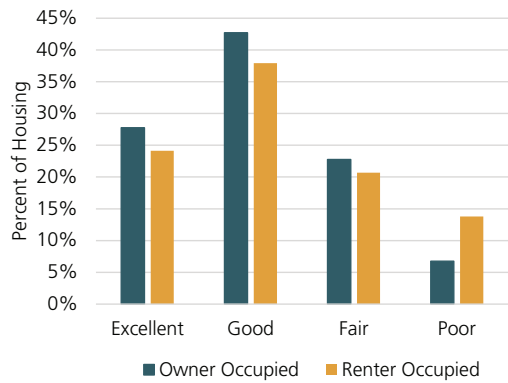
## Land Use Implications for Housing Challenges

- » Homes will continue to age and potentially fall into blight, if assistance is not provided and no new homes are built.
- » The lack of new housing options could compel residents to move out of the city where they can find housing that suits their lifestyle.



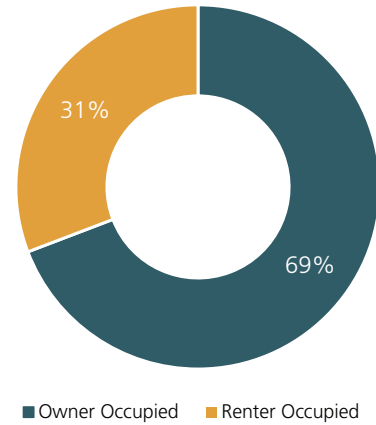
Sample images of “good” and “fair” condition (not from Reading)

**Figure 8: Housing Condition By Tenure Status**



Source: Summer 2020 fieldwork

**Figure 9: Housing Tenure Status**



Source: 2018 5-Year Estimates

## HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

### Property Maintenance

The ratio of homeowners to renters is in line with the state and has not changed much since 2010 (69% and 31%, respectively). The ratio alone does not reveal a problem. However, rental units are the responsibility of landlords who either do not or cannot maintain the properties to the community's preferred standards. Absentee landlords do not live in the community and thus may be less attuned to their condition. The city has recently adopted the International Property Maintenance Code to enforce standards that keep rental properties in better condition. It would also benefit the city to establish an ordinance that prohibits landlords or property managers from living farther than a predetermined radius from Reading.

As a probable precursor to homeownership, renter-occupied units should be decently maintained so that residents can eventually transition into owner-occupied units.

### Historic Preservation

The city is fortunate to have several historic homes. To preserve them would be to maintain the city's authenticity

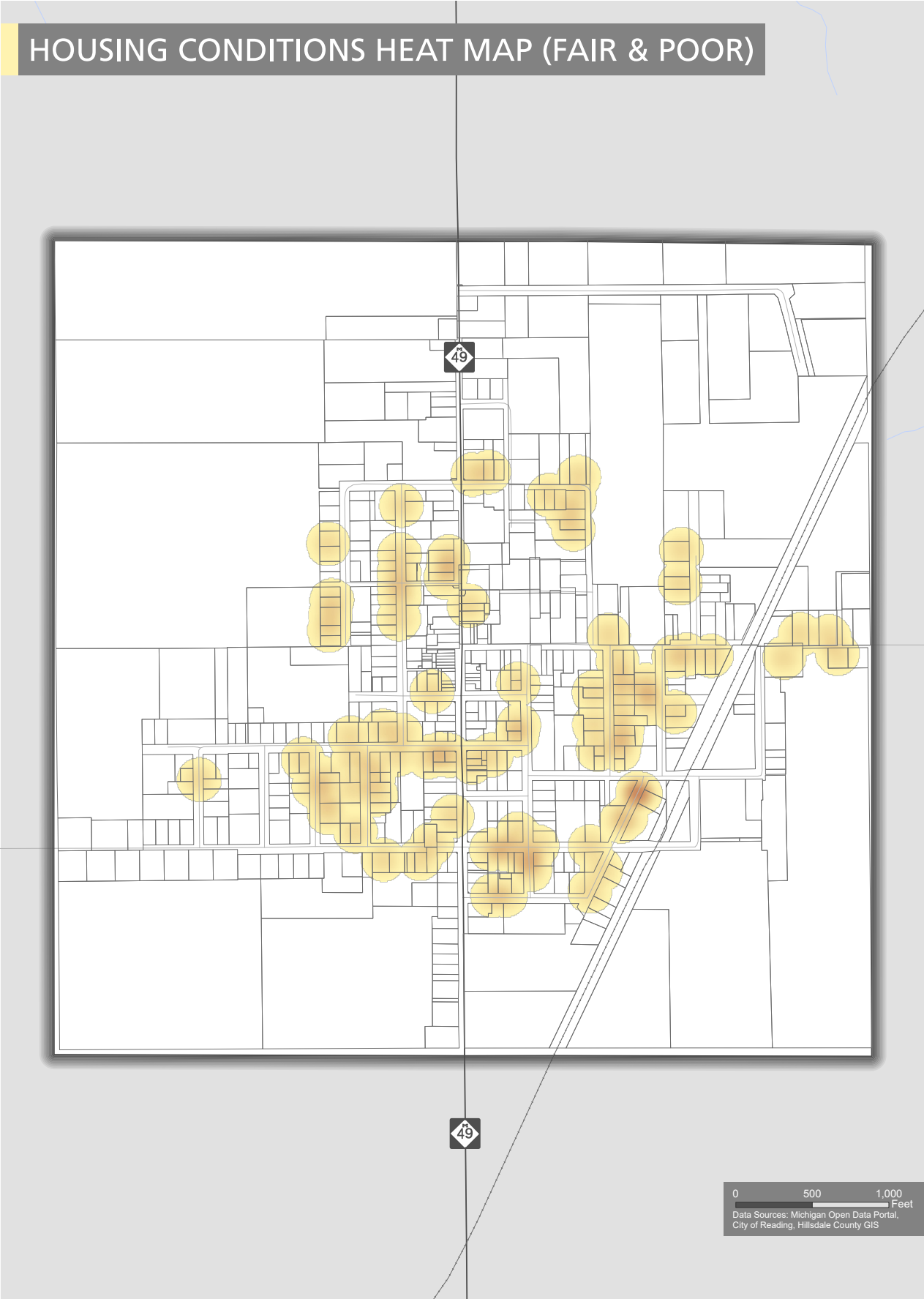
and heritage, yet, to preserve them is a large undertaking. To start, the city can establish a Historic Commission to identify historic homes and provide local markers to share the home's story, while in the meantime, coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Michigan Historic Preservation Network to identify funding and strategies to maintain such homes.

## NEXT STEPS

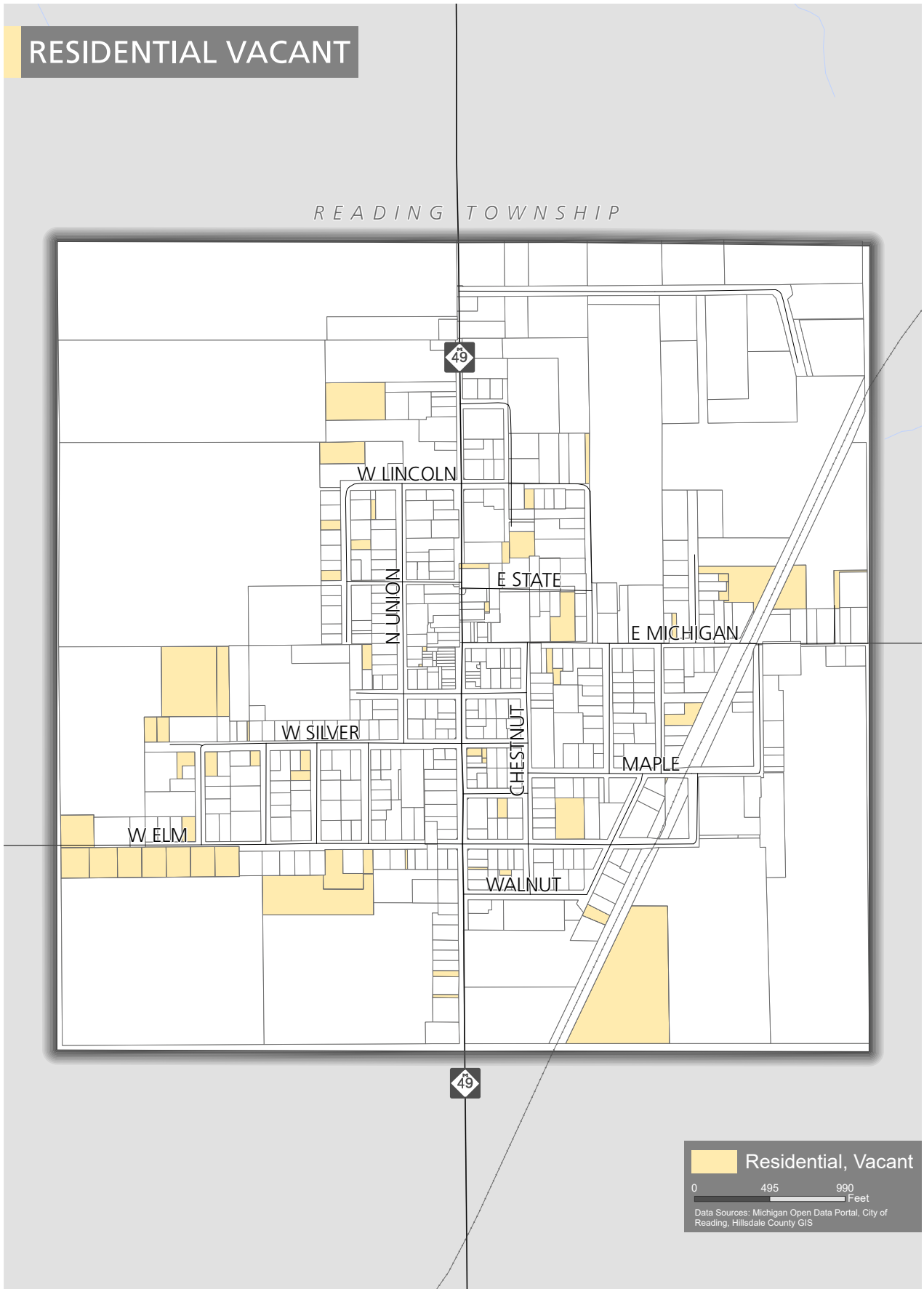
### New Housing

There are several ways Reading can induce housing production. Using the assessor's land codes, residential parcels without structures are identified and classified as "vacant." The map "Residential Vacant" shows where new housing can be built. When considering what type of housing to attract to these lots, the numbers help direct action. Based on assessor data, multi-family housing generates significantly more revenue per acre than large lot detached single-family homes. Not only would density increase the city's tax base, it could provide more homeownership options to residents who cannot presently afford a detached home. On average, a single-family home on an 11,000 square foot lot or

Map 2: Housing Conditions Heat Map (Fair & Poor)



Map 3: Residential Vacant





historic home

larger generates \$3,611 per acre of property tax revenue annually whereas multi-family units (i.e. Meadowland apartments) generate \$9,009 per acre. It is worth the city's time to infill these residential parcels with denser units. The Zoning Ordinance can be updated to include design standards for multi-family unit to ensure that these areas contribute to the neighborhood's aesthetic.

Another trend in housing that permits greater variety is modular installation. MSHDA has a pilot program to encourage this type of development because it reduces the cost and time to add housing to a community. Modular technology has advanced to the point that many people would not visually distinguish a modular home from stick-built. Where there is a housing crunch,

some communities have invested in the exact design they want and offered an administrative approval process to streamline production and installation.

### Quality

The city has taken the right step by adopting a property maintenance code. Fair and consistent enforcement will be the next challenge. Using the "Housing Conditions" heat map that shows clusters of "fair" and "poor" housing quality, the city can look to state resources that help to rehabilitate homes through MSHDA or USDA, partner with a local agency to create and administer a local revolving fund, or develop a volunteer network that can repair the exterior of dilapidated structures in areas with concentrations of blight.

### Sources

- 1 *United Way. Alice in Michigan: A Financial Hardship Study. 2019 Michigan Report. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52fbd39ce4b060243dd722d8/t/5c902a7e971a186coa29dff2/1552951937149/HR19ALICE\\_Report\\_MI\\_Refresh\\_02.26.19b\\_Final\\_Hires+%283%29.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52fbd39ce4b060243dd722d8/t/5c902a7e971a186coa29dff2/1552951937149/HR19ALICE_Report_MI_Refresh_02.26.19b_Final_Hires+%283%29.pdf)*
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- 5 *The Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Companion Report: Key Trends and Measures by Prosperity Region. March 2019. Page 245.*
- 6 *Opticos Design. Missing Middle Housing. <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/>*
- 7 *The Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Companion Report: Key Trends and Measures by Prosperity Region. March 2019. Page 258-260.*

# 3

## Mobility



### Opportunities

- » Improved nonmotorized infrastructure to increase activity and safety
- » Regional transportation access
- » Complete Streets



### Connection to Major Land Use Implications

- » A phased sidewalk network will enable safe pedestrian mobility, decreasing the need for motor vehicle travel within city limits.
- » Increased pedestrian amenities, such as visibility improvements, through crosswalks and signalized crossing, can boost foot traffic on commercial corridors.
- » The locations of existing nonmotorized activity show where to focus nonmotorized infrastructure (see the map, "Nonmotorized Activity").
- » A Complete Streets ordinance would enable roads to be designed for all users and transportation modes



### Challenges

- » Deteriorating road conditions
- » Limited control over road maintenance and funding
- » High commuting rate with no public transportation options



Mobility plays a critical role in land use planning as a community's physical network enables how and where residents go. Communities' roads, sidewalks, and bicycle infrastructure allow residents to move between home, work, places to socialize, and other everyday destinations. Furthermore, connections with other locations via road, rail, air, or other modes enable the exchange of products and services with other economic markets to give Reading access to what lies outside of its boundaries. It is important for Master Plan goals and strategies to not only address land uses, but to also plan for how different users will access such destinations.

## MOBILITY CHALLENGES

### Road Ownership and Quality

All roads in Reading are locally maintained, excluding the city's three most heavily trafficked roads: the state of Michigan maintains Main Street (M-49), Reading's busiest road, and Hillsdale County maintains East Michigan Street (East Reading Road) and West Elm Street (West Reading Road).<sup>1</sup> The table titled "Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)" shows the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) roads counts. The AADT numbers are relatively low compared to other similar areas in Michigan, though not drastically different.

AADT numbers play a role in determining road funding, which has a significant impact on Reading, especially because maintenance and quality of these three main roads are not under the city's jurisdiction.

**Table 2: Annual Average Daily Traffic**

Road	AADT	Condition
Main Street (M-49)	2,950 vehicles	Good
East Michigan Street (East Reading Road)	2,090 vehicles	Poor
West Elm Street (West Reading Road)	1,152 vehicles	Poor

Source: Michigan Department of Transportation

The Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council uses the PASER rating system, a visual survey based on engineering principles used to evaluate road conditions. Two major roads in Reading are currently rated as "poor"<sup>2</sup> but Main Street reached "good" when it was repaved in the summer of 2020. In Reading, the asphalt on East Michigan has buckled due to heavy truck traffic near the railroad track and industrial uses. Funding for repairs is available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), but is contingent on a plan with cost estimates. Reading is considering a phased approach that would lay concrete on both sides of the railroad tracks, install sidewalks with curb and gutter, and re-do water and sewer lines. If USDA funding does not come through, the city will consider bonding the project.

### Local Road Quality

On a hyper local level, residents were asked to score the road quality of their neighborhoods (determined by quadrant). The results vary. A disparity arises, SW and NE neighborhoods rated roads as excellent, whereas the NW neighborhood reports roads as failing. This scorecard can be used as a part of the evaluation for where to target future local road improvements.

**Table 3: Road Quality Scores**

Neighborhood	Score (scale 1-10, 10 highest)
1 (NW)	4.5
2 (NE)	9
3 (SE)	6
4 (SW)	9

Source: 2020 Community Survey

## Commuting & Public Transportation

Very few people both live and work in the city of Reading. In fact, according to the US Census Bureau, only 25 people in Reading both lived and worked in the city (5% of the employed Reading population) as of 2017. The remaining 95% of the employed Reading residents are employed outside of the city.<sup>3</sup> Due to Reading's small size, it is unsurprising that almost all the population must commute outside of the city for work. In this area of the state, there are no public transportation options; therefore, all commuters are dependent on personal automobiles to get to work and other destinations, presenting a real challenge for persons with disabilities, for persons who do not have access to a motor vehicle, and for low-income households.

Inadequate public transportation becomes an equity issues when it is estimated in Reading that transportation costs account for over, on average, 34% of household's income.<sup>4</sup> This is more than double the recommended

amount of 15%, and more than the recommended amount to spend on housing (30%). Between the two, households spend over half of their incomes on basic necessities.

## Land Use Implications for Mobility Challenges

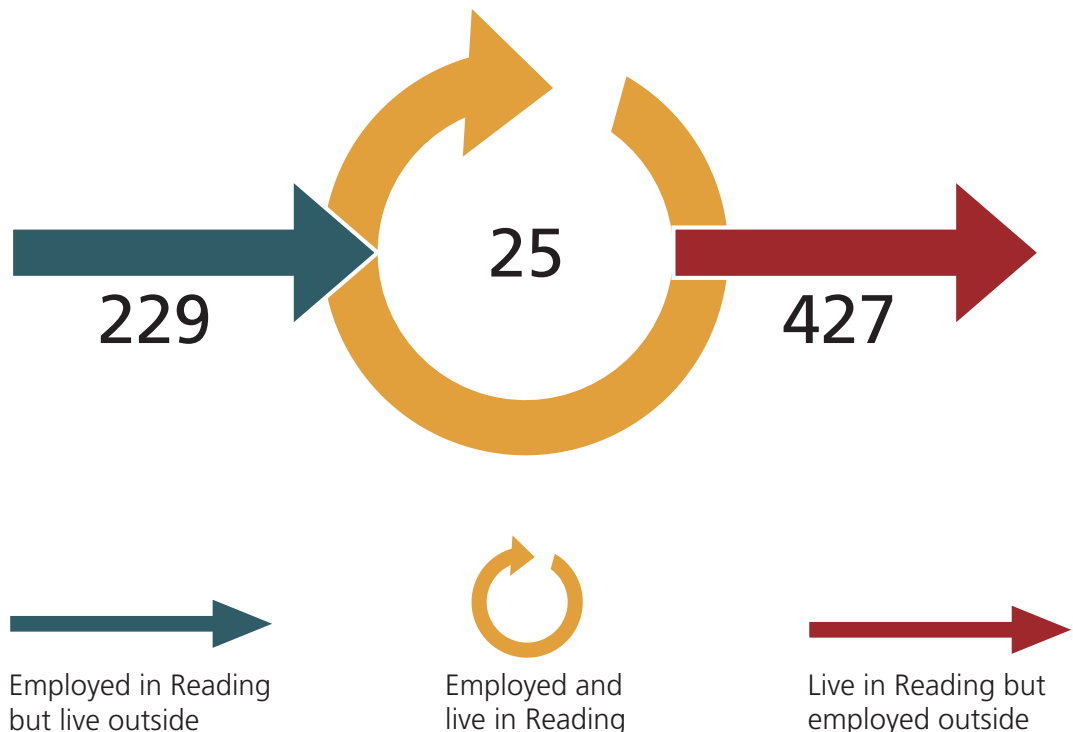
- » Inadequate funding for roads will exacerbate the city's primary transportation network.

## MOBILITY OPPORTUNITIES

### Movement by Other Means

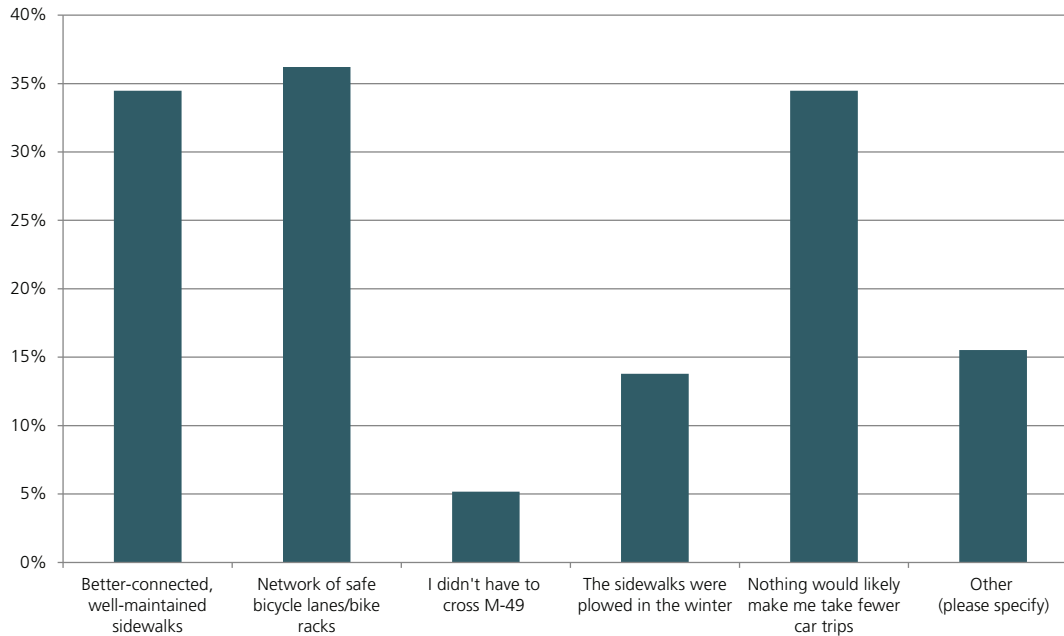
In addition to commuting, good nonmotorized infrastructure can entice people out of their cars for shorter trips. The community survey asked residents what would cause them to take fewer car trips and the top two most selected answers were "better connected, well-maintained sidewalks" and a "network of safe bicycle lanes/bicycle racks." There was still a considerable

Figure 10: Commuting Patterns in Reading



Source: US Census Bureau – On The Map

Figure 11: I Would Take Fewer Car Trips If...



Source: Master Plan survey

portion who claim that nothing would likely reduce the number of car trips taken, but this result indicates that a balanced approach for motorized and nonmotorized infrastructure warrants greater exploration.

## Sidewalks

The condition of nonmotorized infrastructure is less varied. When the survey responses were filtered by neighborhood, the scores show that residents view them in equally poor condition. It is an expensive order to install and maintain sidewalks. As such, the survey asked residents if they were willing to create a special assessment district to increase taxes to fund a sidewalk network; 58% of residents agreed to this.

Table 4: Sidewalk Scoring

Neighborhood	Score (scale 1-10, 10 highest)
1 (NW)	4
2 (NE)	4
3 (SE)	4
4 (SW)	5

Source: 2020 Community Survey

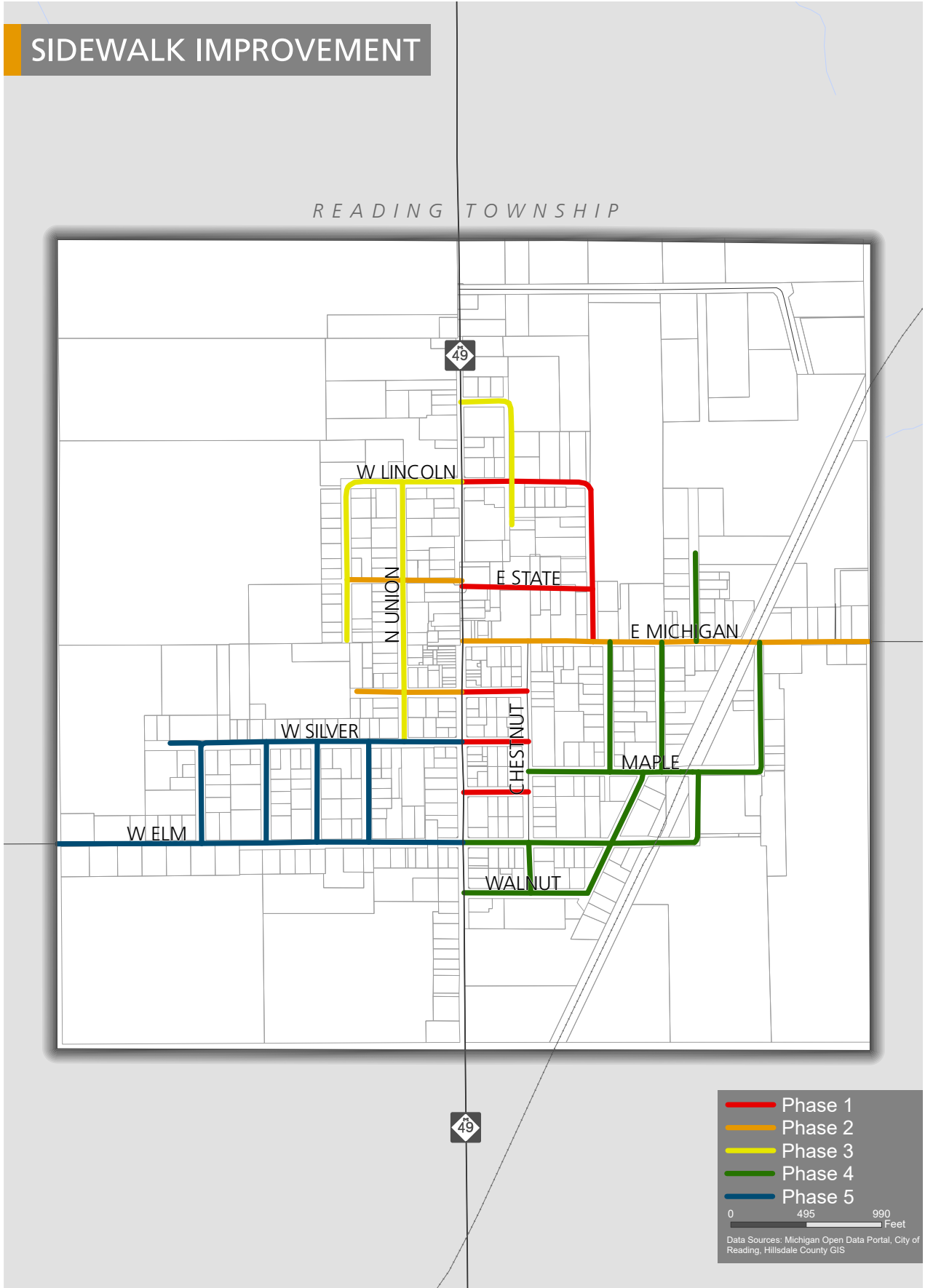
## Sidewalk Prioritization

With an area of only one square mile, residents can rarely claim that pedestrian travel is not an option, except for when the sidewalks are nonexistent or in poor condition. As Reading's main spine, Main Street (M-49) has well-maintained and complete sidewalks traversing from the city's northern to southern borders. The sidewalk widens and offers other pedestrian amenities such as seating and lighting in the downtown core.

Outside of downtown, however, sidewalks are lacking. As a result of both the recommendations in the 2000 Master Plan and resident desire for more and improved sidewalks, the city of Reading created a prioritized sidewalk improvement plan shown in the map "Sidewalk Improvement." There are five phases:

- » Phase 1 prioritizes school access; approach the school district and collaborate on a safe routes to school grant application
- » Phase 2 prioritizes higher traffic and higher visibility roads, such as East Michigan Street;

Map 4: Sidewalk Improvement



- » Phases 3 – 5 prioritize neighborhoods based on the existing presence of sidewalks and existing sidewalk conditions.

## Regional Transportation Access

Freight rail passes through Reading, and it plays a major role in transporting goods into and out of the city. For instance, the Anderson grain facility on the east side of Reading generates a significant amount of rail traffic; thus, the Michigan Southern railroad that runs through the city serves as a major economic engine for the community.

## Nonmotorized Infrastructure Improvements

The “Nonmotorized Activity” map shows data from the online platform, Strava, which tracks app users’ exercise, predominantly in the forms of running, walking, and bicycling. The map shows that there are five primary areas of high nonmotorized activity in the city: Main Street (M-49), West Elm Street, East Michigan Street, Chestnut Street, and Strong Street up to the community track. This map highlights two main opportunities:

1. By knowing where the areas of high nonmotorized activity are, the city can prioritize its investment in nonmotorized infrastructure based on popular usage;
2. By knowing where areas of low nonmotorized activity are, the city can investigate connections to nonmotorized infrastructure to increase safety.

In terms of safety, Reading has had a low number of vehicular crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians. Since 2004, there have only been four recorded crashes, which is incredible considering the number of vehicular crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians has increased significantly

across the country over the past several decades.<sup>5</sup> The locations of these four crashes show where additional safety amenities may be appropriate, especially to improve visibility and signage that convey pedestrian laws. Because these crashes occurred on two primary roads – Main Street and East Michigan Street – the city could work with MDOT and Hillsdale County to provide more pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure on these primary arterials, such as more visible cross walks, mid-block crossings, bulb outs, and signalized pedestrian crossings on Main Street.

Adopting a Complete Streets ordinance is another way to improve safety for all users. A Complete Street is one that is designed for everyone, including bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists.<sup>6</sup> It is not necessarily a multi-million dollar endeavor, but can include an array of lower-cost features that make nonmotorized travel safer and more pleasant. By adopting a Complete Streets ordinance, all roads that undergo repair shall consider how to incorporate such elements during the design phase. Having a network of Complete Streets would increase pedestrian and bicyclist safety, encourage modes of

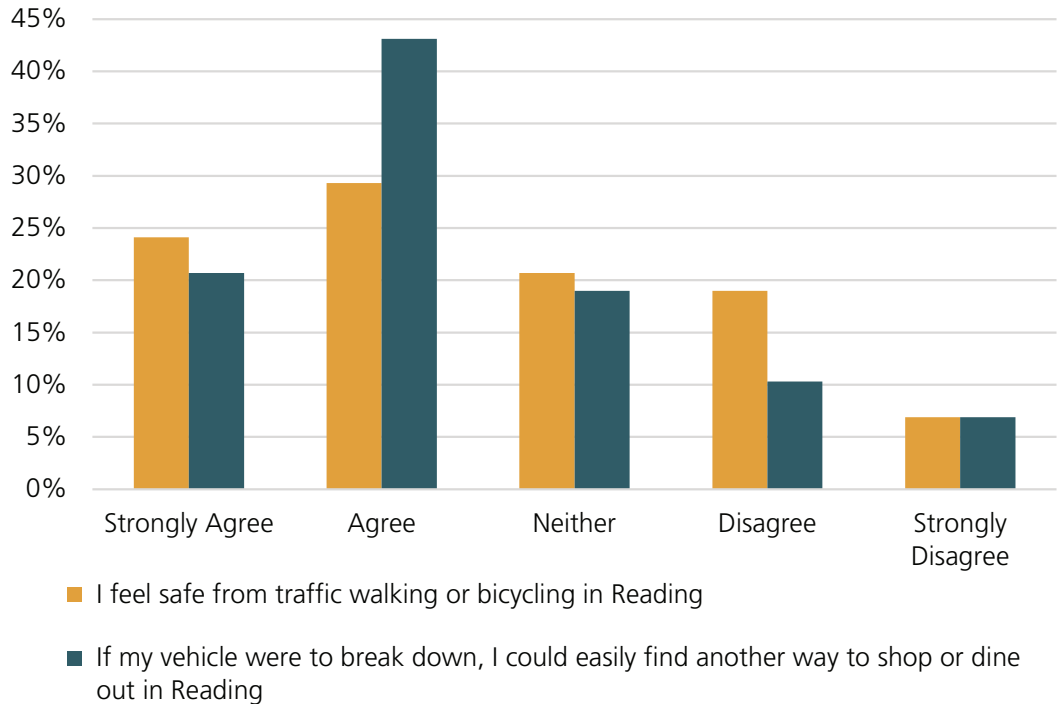


*Existing sidewalk condition in need of repair.*

## Elements of Complete Streets

- Wide sidewalks
- Bicycles lanes and racks
- Safe crossings
- Medians
- Curb extensions
- Benches
- Lighting

Figure 12: Alternatives to Personal Vehicles and Nonmotorized Safety



Source: Master Plan survey

transportation beyond the personal vehicle, and liven up neighborhoods and the downtown.

### NEXT STEPS

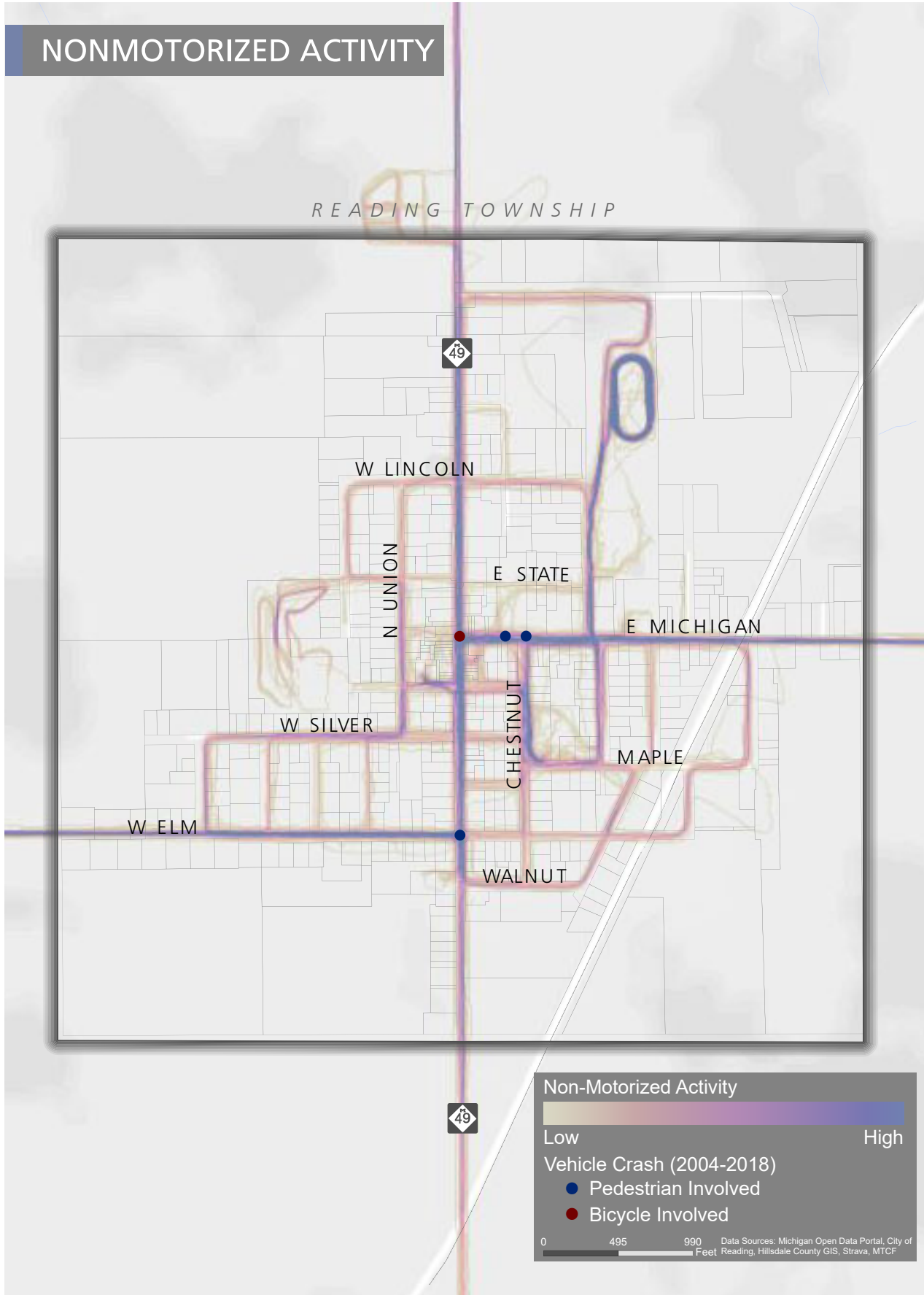
Reading should continue to follow the phased sidewalk network to enable full and safe pedestrian mobility. One way to expedite filling in some of the gaps near school campuses is to reach out to the school district administration to assist with a Safe Routes to School grant application. In addition to sidewalks, pedestrian amenities such

as improvements to visibility, through crosswalks and signalized crossing would improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety. These amenities should be focused where crashes occurred based on the “Nonmotorized Activity” map to address public safety issues. Adopting a Complete Streets ordinance would help ensure that roads in Reading are designed for all users and transportation modes, which would encourage modes of transportation beyond the personal vehicle.

### Sources

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Map 5: Nonmotorized Activity



# 4

## Community Livability



### Opportunities

- » Sanitary sewer system expansion for new development
- » Green infrastructure for stormwater management
- » Increased tree canopy
- » Community pavilion programming
- » Parks and recreation expansion



### Challenges

- » Water system needs substantial upgrade
- » High areas of impervious surface coverage
- » Poorly draining, heavy clay soil conditions
- » Community festivals during a pandemic



### Connection to Major Land Use Implications

- » The existing water infrastructure is not sufficient to meet demand, and any future major development would be stifled by insufficient capacity.
- » Any new commercial or industrial establishment would trigger sanitary sewer system expansion.
- » Existing soil conditions – heavy clay that drains poorly – should be an important consideration when determining where and how develop.
- » Tree canopy coverage and green stormwater infrastructure should complement development as a required part of landscaping standards.
- » Any development of new parkland must be based on Reading's capacity to maintain it in good condition and its potential to meet community goals laid out in a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. (i.e. equity, access)



Several factors determine how “livable” a community is. The term livability refers to what may seem like the “intangibles” of a high quality of life, but for planning purposes, are indicators that can be discussed in more certain terms. This section discusses these factors by the type of infrastructure they provide to the community as either physical or social. The physical infrastructure that a community maintains is often unseen or not top-of-mind for residents, but it includes essential amenities that keep a city running. Likewise, a community must also offer or support social infrastructure – opportunities to gather with other community members – so that residents may congregate, socialize, share, and create positive memories. Only when both systems are running smoothly can residents experience a high quality of life.

## PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

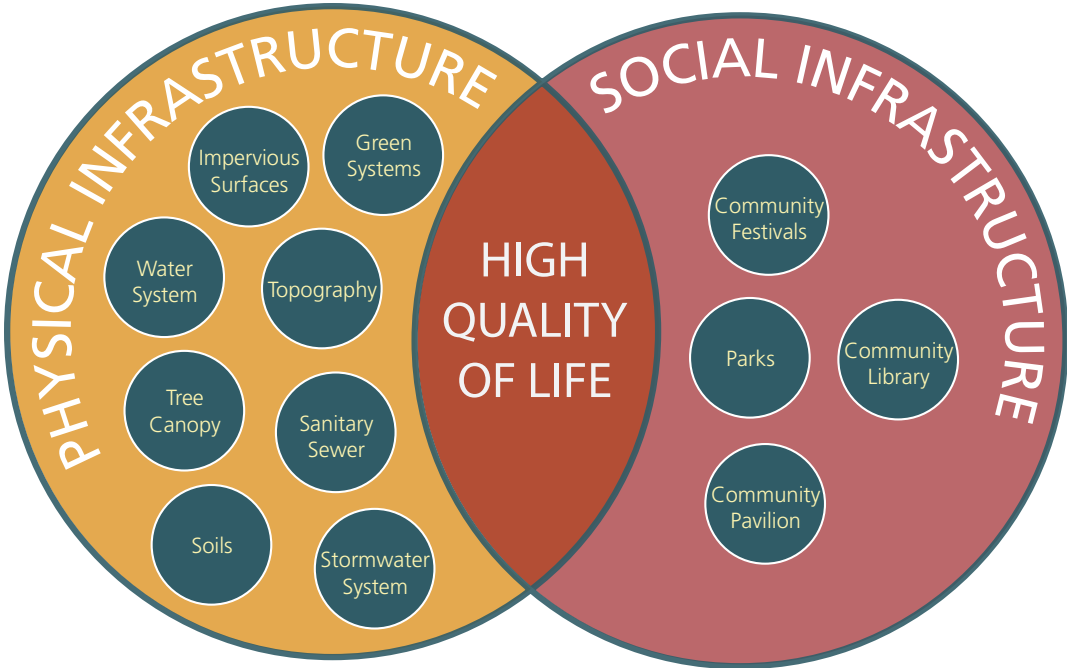
### Physical Infrastructure Challenges

#### Water System

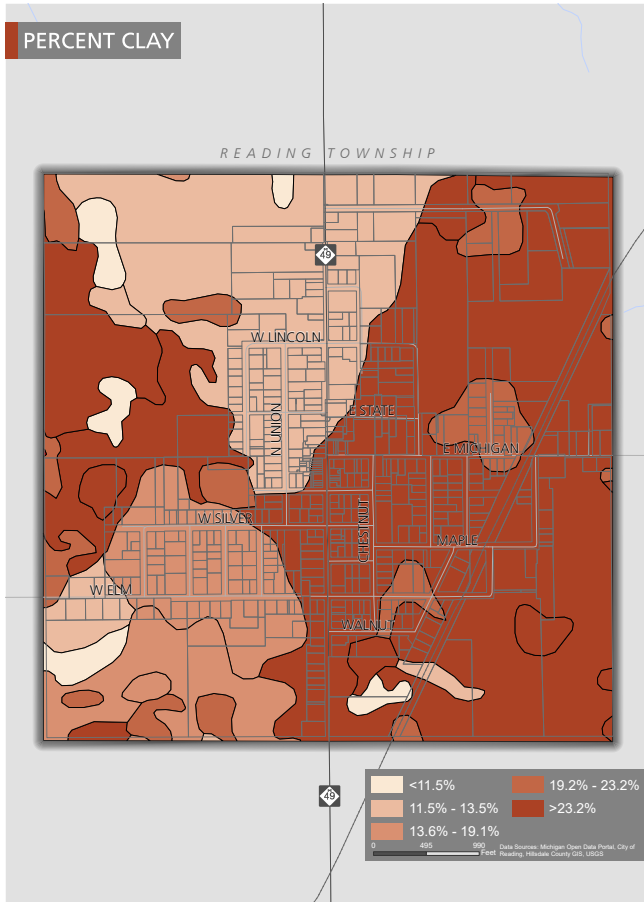
There are two wells located three miles south of the city limits that feed Reading’s existing water distribution system. The wells are part of the Reading Wellhead Protection Zone, a buffer and set of development guidelines that protect the groundwater supply.<sup>1</sup> Despite their protection from potentially harmful development, wells must be cleaned when annual inspections show greater than a 10% loss of production – from the city’s perspective, funds should be reserved for those instances.

The water is stored in the water tower which holds 100,000 gallons of water. The water tower is 41 years old, and although maintenance has been done, it still has exceeded its life expectancy

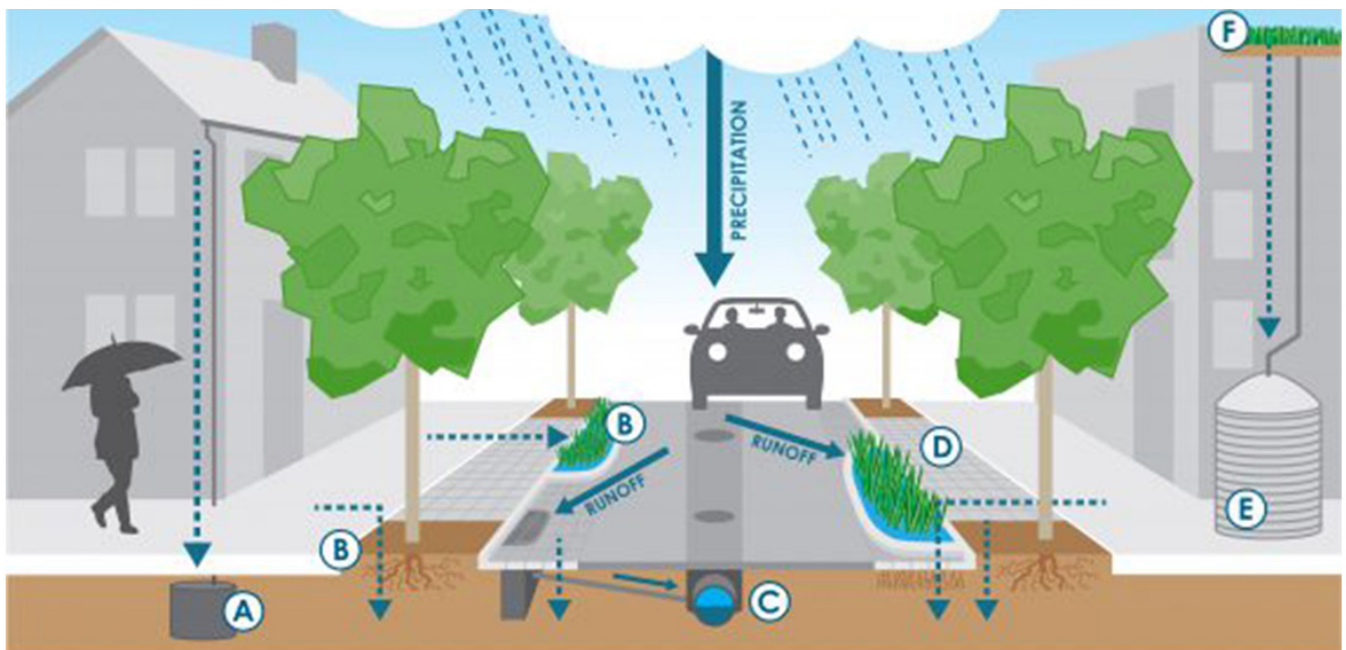
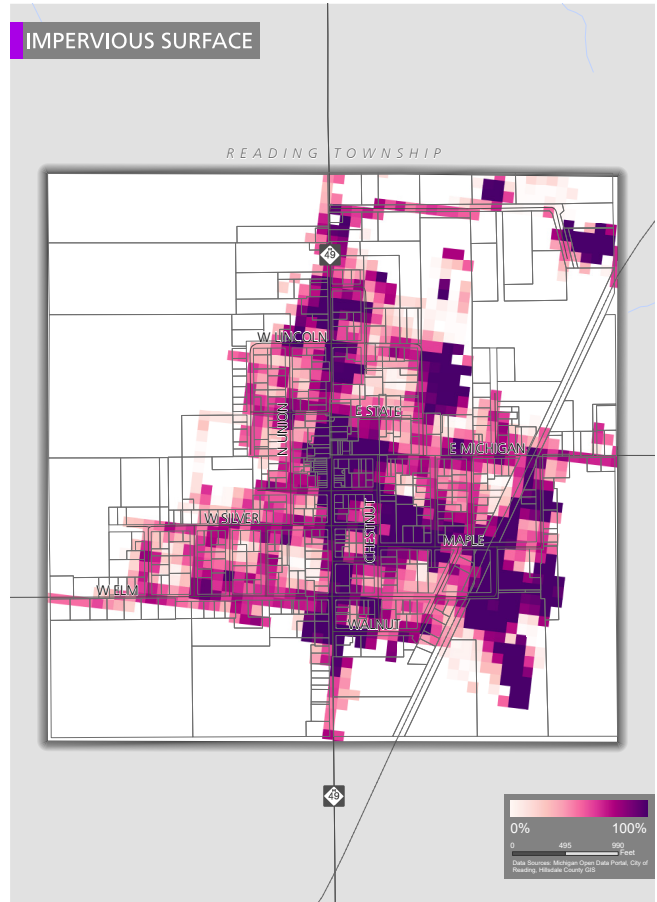
Figure 13: Physical and Social Infrastructure System



Map 6: Percent Clay



Map 7: Impervious Surface



**A: Dry Well B: Stormwater Planter C: Storm Drain D: Permeable Paving E: Rainwater Harvesting Cistern F: Green Roof**

Impervious surfaces prevent rainfall absorption, which increases the amount and speed of runoff, but GSI can help. Source: Nation of Change <https://www.nationofchange.org/2019/11/04/as-cities-interest-in-green-infrastructure-grows-so-does-the-need-to-develop-strategies-and-resources-to-maintain-it/>

is in need of replacement. The amount of water the tank holds is not sufficient for residential and fire use. The system needs to increase capacity to not only meet EGLE requirements, but also to support any new development.<sup>2</sup>

While there have been recent updates to the water system treatment plant, including new lagoons and a new lift station on Cherry Street, there remain some significant challenges. In addition to replacing the water tower to increase capacity, the water mains need to be replaced as the existing pipes are likely from 1899. These are two substantial but necessary capital improvement projects and should be completed in the shorter-term to ensure that the community has a safe, healthy, and ample water supply.

### *Soil and Topography*

The soils in Reading are mostly clay loam, which are heavy and do not drain well. As shown in the map titled “Percent Clay,” almost the entire eastern half and about one-third of the western half of the city have a high percentage of clay soil (shown in dark brown). Additionally, the city sits at a ridge of sorts with the highest elevation above sea level in this region of the state.<sup>3</sup> Within the city limits, however, the topography is essentially flat. Combined, heavy soils and relatively flat terrain results in pooling water during heavy rain events.

### *Impervious Surfaces*

Impervious surfaces are hard surfaces, such as parking lots, roads, and rooftops, that do not allow rainfall to infiltrate the soil and groundwater.<sup>4</sup> Instead, impervious surfaces prevent absorption, which increases the amount and speed of runoff, carries more pollutants to the waterbodies, and exacerbates erosion. These surfaces have considerable influence on natural systems and tend to intensify the

severity of flooding. The map titled “Impervious Surface” shows that the areas of high impervious surface coverage (shown in dark purple) clustered along Main Street (M-49) and the southeastern portion of the city near the Anderson facility, with additional pockets of high impervious surface coverage scattered throughout the city.

## **Physical Infrastructure Opportunities**

### *Sanitary Sewer System and Stormwater Management*

Sanitary Sewer System upgrades in 2007 included the addition of a new lagoon and new lift stations, but there still remains some challenges. Reading has its own well-functioning sanitary sewer system. Every household and business in the city are connected to the sanitary sewer system. No structure relies on a septic system – this is quite an accomplishment and is a reliable way of protecting the area’s groundwater. The system could accommodate approximately 10-20 new houses, but a new business would require the system to expand.<sup>5</sup>

Reading built the existing sanitary sewer system in 1913 and updated it in 1970. As constructed, it is not adequate to serve sanitary sewer management purposes. The existing sanitary sewer management system involves sump pumps that pump into the sanitary sewer system. The city is trying to remove the sump pumps as the sanitary sewer system is not designed to accommodate this additional burden. Until all sump pumps stop pumping into the sanitary sewer system this will continue to be a burden on the City’s sanitary sewer system.<sup>6</sup>

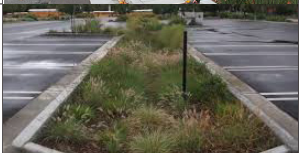

When the sanitary and stormwater sewers are updated, utility locators with video capabilities should also be installed so that the DPW can navigate its underground system. With this technology, early detection of repairs can save the city money in the future.

The City has implemented some storm water management solutions, such as the installation of the storm water detention pond on Walnut Street, as well as upgrades to the storm sewer tile on Walnut Street, and portions of E. Elm Street. Also, upgrades to storm tile and installation of curbs and gutter on Main Street and Michigan Street to Chestnut Street during the 2009 M49 Street Project as well as some upgrades of storm tile and installation of curbs and gutter as part of the Chestnut Street Renovation Project in 2015.

The current stormwater management system is not sustainable. The

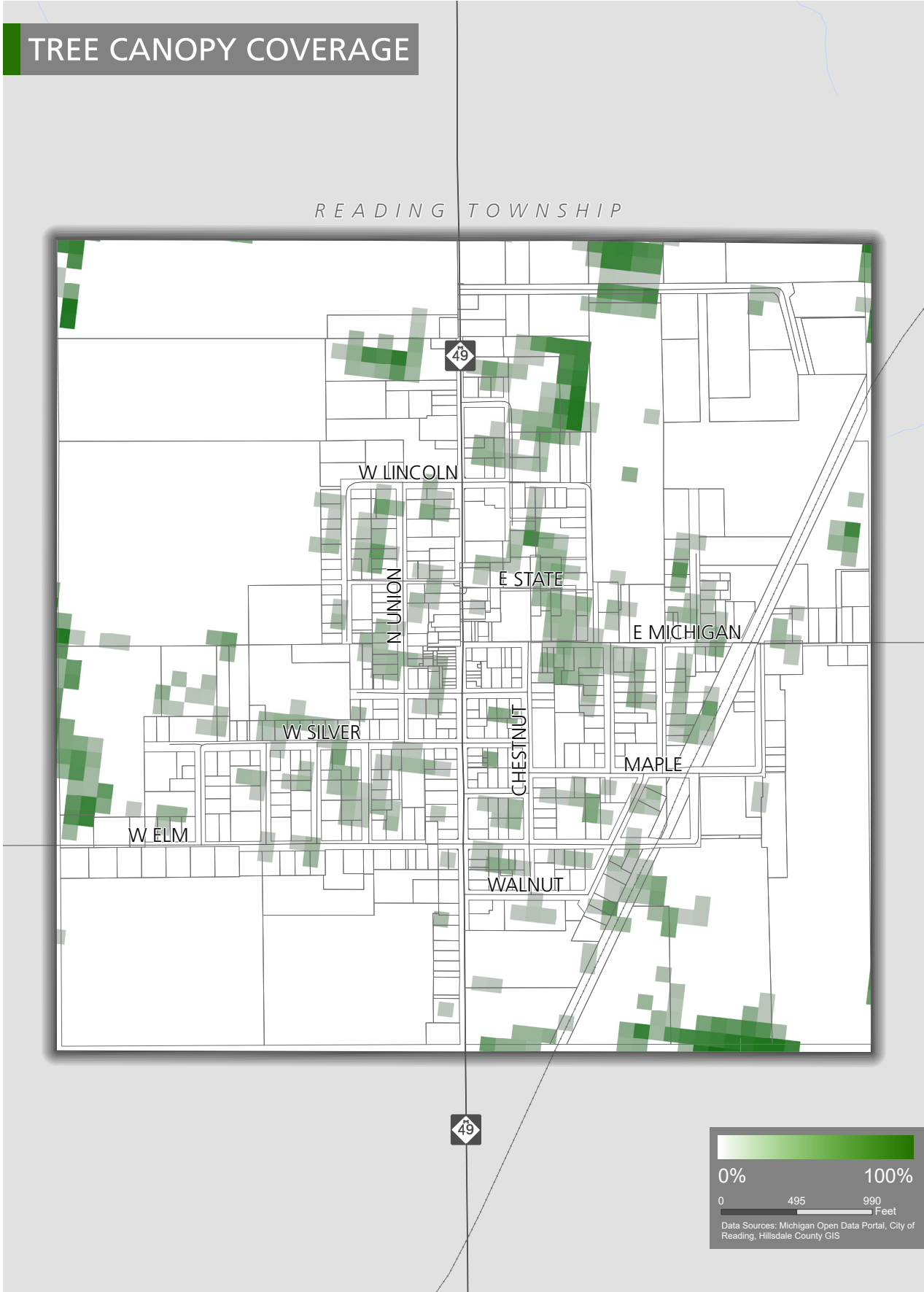
combination of poorly draining soils and minimal stormwater management results in standing water and significant flooding during a major storm event, especially in the spring.<sup>7</sup> Besides investing in an expensive and conventional “grey” system – manufactured structures that collect and convey stormwater and sewage – the city should also implement “green infrastructure” stormwater management systems. “Green” systems are cost-effective and efficient. Even newly designed conventional “grey” systems cannot handle the heavy rain events that Michigan is experiencing and expected to experience with greater intensity.

**Table 5: Green Infrastructure Methods**

Method	Description	Example
<i>Rainwater Harvesting</i>	Systems that collect and store rainwater for later use.	
<i>Rain Gardens</i>	Shallow, vegetated gardens that collect and absorb runoff from streets, sidewalks, and roofs.	
<i>Planter Boxes</i>	Boxes along sidewalks, streets, or parking lots that collect and absorb rainwater. These also serve as streetscaping elements.	
<i>Bioswales</i>	Linear and vegetated channels, typically adjacent to a road or parking lot, that slow, retain, and filter stormwater.	
<i>Permeable Pavement</i>	Pavement that absorbs, filters, and stores rainwater.	
<i>Green Roofs</i>	Vegetated roofs that absorb and filter rainwater.	
<i>Tree Canopy</i>	Trees reduce and slow stormwater flow.	

Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency

Map 8: Tree Canopy Coverage



Map 9: Green Infrastructure Priority Areas



“Green” systems give communities greater flexibility and security by mimicking natural systems.<sup>8</sup> Green infrastructure absorbs, harvests, and retains stormwater through a natural hydrologic process, effectively reducing the instances of stormwater runoff by absorbing and removing pollutants as it infiltrates the soil.<sup>9</sup> The table titled “Green Infrastructure Methods” details several green infrastructure strategies that would be appropriate for Reading.

### Tree Canopy

Trees are a vital element of a city’s physical infrastructure with numerous benefits. Not only do trees provide essential stormwater management services by storing and filtering water, but trees also clean the air, lower temperatures, absorb and store climate-warming carbon dioxide, prevent soil erosion, and provide aesthetic value.<sup>10</sup>

As the map titled “Tree Canopy Coverage” shows, the city’s neighborhoods have a moderate level of tree canopy coverage, but the areas outside of the city’s core streets have little to none. This is unsurprising, however, as much of the area surrounding the neighborhoods consists of agricultural fields. Pockets of no tree canopy cover in the street grid indicate where there is need for expansion.

Survey respondents understand the importance of trees in their neighborhoods as almost half (44%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with establishing a special assessment district to fund upgrades to street trees. On a scale of 1 to 10,

**Table 6: Tree Canopy Scoring**

Neighborhood	Score (scale 1-10, 10 highest)
1 (NW)	6
2 (NE)	7
3 (SE)	5
4 (SW)	6

Source: 2020 Community Survey

with 10 being the best, respondents were moderately satisfied with the city’s existing tree coverage with a score of 6, yet residents’ support of a special assessment shows a desire to see coverage expanded. At the neighborhood level, the range of tree canopy coverage scores is limited to below average to slightly above. Funding and maintaining new trees is a challenge for many cities, but exploring new funding opportunities is worth pursuing because of the wide-ranging benefits that trees provide.

In terms of prioritization, the city should initially focus green infrastructure implementation on areas that have both a high percentage of clay soils and high impervious surface coverage. These priority areas are shown on the map titled “Green Infrastructure Priority Areas”:

- » Along Main Street between East Michigan Street and West Elm Street.
- » The southeast corner of the city, especially east of the railroad tracks and the area between Chestnut Street and the railroad tracks
- » The northeast corner of the city in the Industrial Park
- » The area around Reading Elementary School.

### Land Use Implications for Physical Infrastructure

- » Reading’s water system is long overdue for a substantial upgrade. The existing water tower’s capacity is not sufficient to meet demand, and any future major development would be stifled by insufficient infrastructure capacity.
- » The city’s sanitary sewer system could accommodate several more houses, but any new commercial or industrial establishment would trigger a system expansion. This



Reading Community Library

required expansion should be an important consideration, especially in terms of development agreements with potential developers.

- » Existing soil conditions – heavy clay that drains poorly – should be an important consideration in the site plan review process to determine where and how develop depending on soil type.
- » Trees provide a host of benefits to the community, and Reading stands to increase its tree canopy coverage. Exploring funding opportunities, such as establishing a special assessment district, and partnership opportunities for maintenance, are worth pursuing to increase tree canopy coverage in the city.
- » The city does not have a sustainable stormwater management system. Implementing green infrastructure strategies, prioritizing areas that have both a high percentage of clay soils and high impervious surface coverage, is an effective way to better-manage the city's flooding and stormwater issues.

## **SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Social infrastructure is a crucial part of a community because it enables residents to gather and communicate with each other. Social infrastructure offers the “third place” – important spaces where life outside of one’s home or workplace can occur. In a very short time, however, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the nature of the “third place” with the associated public health risks of congregating. Cities all over the world, Reading included, have had to change how they think about public spaces and social gatherings. It is still too soon to determine if the way we gather will be permanently changed or will return to business as usual once the pandemic is over, but COVID-19 has exposed how valuable outdoor public space is to our well-being.

### **Social Infrastructure Challenges**

#### *Community Festivals*

As a small, tight-knit community, Reading has several annual festivals, including Reading Festival Days,





Left: The Big Brother / Big Sisters of RHS help an elementary student carve a pumpkin at the Fire Barn for the annual Pumpkin Glow before the Halloween Parade. Right: Old-fashioned Christmas

Oktoberfest, and Old-Fashioned Christmas.<sup>11</sup> Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, these treasured festivals are not a current reality; however, they remain a unique part of living in Reading and will return when it is safe to do so.

## Social Infrastructure Opportunities

### *The School District*

Reading School District: <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/michigan/reading-community-schools-school-district/2629400-school-district>

### *Reading Community Library*

The Reading Community Library sits in the heart of downtown along Main Street and serves both the city and neighboring townships. The library offers a host of opportunities and resources for kids, teens, and adults, including books and digital materials, internet and workspace, and summer programs. The library's central location makes it a prime spot to further community opportunities and programming.









### *Community Pavilion*

Reading recently transformed the formerly vacant downtown grocery store into a community pavilion. The pavilion now serves as the location for the weekly farmer's market, it will be a central gathering space for the many community festivals. It is also available for community members to rent for events such as weddings or graduation parties. This new public space is an added asset to the community, and it certainly has potential to become a key space for the city's downtown.

### *Regional Recreation*

One of Reading's assets is its rural character and access to natural beauty and resources. Where recreational opportunities may feel limited within the city, the regional recreational opportunities are vast. There are many lakes within the region, most notably the chain of lakes to the west of the city, offering many nearby water recreation opportunities to Reading community members. The area's lakes also serve as a regional destination,

Table 7: Reading Parks and Recreation Facilities

Facility	Acreage	Description
<p>Waterworks Park</p> 	0.63	Small neighborhood park that offers play equipment, a basketball court, and a picnic pavilion.
<p>Magic Square Park</p> 	4.24	Hosts the area's local truck, tractor, and horse pulls, and it offers a large pavilion, picnic tables, and parking area.
<p>Rotary Park</p> 	0.31	Small neighborhood park that offers playground equipment and basketball courts, and it hosts the annual 3-on-3 basketball tournament during Reading Festival Days.
<p>Barre Field</p> 	7.35	Home of the Reading Rangers, and it includes a football and baseball field with bleachers and a concession area.
<p>Michigan Street Pavilion</p> 	0.93	A new hub close to downtown to hold events and host the weekly farmer's market
<p>Tennis Courts</p> 	0.54	The tennis courts are available for all community members.
<p>Reynolds Elementary Track</p> 	13.84	The Elementary School track is one of the community's most popular recreation sites, and it hosts several events annually.
<p>Reynolds Elementary Playground</p> 	2.32	The Elementary School playground is a popular location for children to play.
<p>Total</p>	30.16	

change pavilion photos

bringing tourists to the area.

### Local Parks and Recreation

In addition to the regional recreational opportunities, there are four parks within the city limits: Waterworks Park, Magic Square Park, Rotary Park, and Barre Field.<sup>12</sup> The table titled “Reading Parks and Recreation Facilities” summarizes the city’s parkland and four other recreation amenities provided. Together, the total acreage of land dedicated to recreation is about 30 acres or 4.71% of the city’s land.

When the school facilities are added, they more than double the city’s acreage dedicated to recreation. Undoubtedly, the campuses play a pivotal role in offering specialized facilities that cities do not usually provide, for example, the elementary school offers one of the community’s more popular recreational amenity, the track, which can host a variety of activities.

Community survey results indicated a desire for more recreation opportunities. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest score, survey respondents gave the recreational opportunities in their neighborhoods an average score of 4 – this is a below-average rating; respondents found that the recreation opportunities in their neighborhoods are lacking. Furthermore, over half (52%) of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they would support a special assessment district for upgrades to recreational opportunities in their neighborhood. The results at the neighborhood level reflect a similar narrative but show the fuller range of scores, dipping as low as a three in the southeast quadrant that is largely consumed by the railroad track and industrial uses.

Currently, Reading does not have a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. For a community to be eligible for recreation funding, it must adopt an up-to-date Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This

**Table 8: Recreational Opportunity Scoring**

Neighborhood	Score (scale 1-10, 10 highest)
1 (NW)	5
2 (NE)	4
3 (SE)	3
4 (SW)	4

*Source: 2020 Community Survey*

would be a first step for the city to assess the condition of its inventory, its level of accessibility, and check in with the community more specifically on its recreational preferences. This analysis would help Reading secure funding to upgrade and expand its parks and recreation facilities. Based on the community’s fairly low scores for recreational opportunity, it is recommended that the city reviews its vacant parcels for potential parkland acquisition, prioritizing the southeast quadrant where there is the largest gap in the provision of parkland.

### Healthcare

Proximity to healthcare is another benefit to living in Reading. There are two medical clinics in the city’s limits, located downtown. Hillsdale County is experiencing a shortage of primary care and mental health professionals. As of 2017, there were only 2.6 medical doctors per 10,000 residents.<sup>13</sup> Given this shortage in many rural areas in Michigan, access to a clinic can be an attractive feature for moving to Reading and improving quality of life.

### Land Use Implications for Social Infrastructure

- » The Reading Community Library’s location in the heart of downtown makes it a prime spot to increase community offerings and programming.
- » The new community pavilion is an asset. The public space will likely serve as a key gathering space for

community festivals, once they are safe to have again, and other community events.

- » Any acquisition or development of new parkland must be based on Reading's capacity to maintain it in good condition and its potential to meet community goals laid out in a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- » The development of parkland shall be balanced strategically with the development of residential uses.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The City's priority should be on securing funding to improve its water and sewer capacity, not only for its existing households but so that it can grow responsibly. In the meantime, the city should invest in green stormwater infrastructure to reduce instances of flooding. To target problem areas, Reading can set up an online database for residents to enter details for the city to track the location and type of incident causing the flooding. Parkland preservation can also help with flood mitigation; the city can in a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to identify potential areas for acquisition.

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# 5

## Downtown



### Opportunities

- » Perception of downtown
- » Investment in local retail, services, & entertainment
- » 2nd-story residential
- » Business recruitment
- » Food trucks
- » Partnerships
- » Technology
- » Redevelopment parcels



### Challenges

- » Deteriorating facades with lack of design standards
- » Limited streetscaping options with MDOT highway in downtown
- » Lacking streetscape tree canopy
- » Parking



### Connection to Major Land Use Implications

- » The deterioration and lack of architectural cohesion of downtown facades will make it more difficult to sell buildings and/or attract new businesses
- » Commercial vacancy should be actively monitored to avoid hitting an unfavorable tipping point; market the potential redevelopment properties
- » Streetscaping improvements, which entice residents and visitors downtown have to follow MDOT's schedule, which can delayed desired upgrades
- » Increased second floor occupancy can help secure building owner's cash flow and keep them invested in downtown
- » Providing a dedicated space and consistent regulations for food trucks (or other mobile vending) is a tool for piloting new ideas with the ultimate goal of converting them into downtown brick and mortar businesses
- » Parking is a challenging land use that should be used in place of a higher and better use.

Downtown is the geographic and figurative heart of Reading. Like many small cities in the Midwest, the downtown has suffered from the global shifts to online shopping, competition with big box stores, and stagnating wages for workers. These changes do not preclude a downtown from thriving but necessitate new, multi-faceted strategies and creative partnerships and programming to build a positive perception. This section will describe how the downtown is managed, its challenges, and potential solutions.

## HOW IS THE DOWNTOWN MANAGED?

### Tax Increment Finance Authority

The downtown's importance to the city requires that it be managed by a separate governing organization. The Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) is a volunteer authority, formed in 1981 under the auspices of the Public Act 450 of 1980 (which has since been codified to PA 57 of 2018) with the mission to:

*“re-establish and maintain the vitality of the city of Reading by increasing the tax base and fostering industrial and commercial development and redevelopment.”*

The TIFA's boundaries encompasses the majority of the city's eastern half. Within these boundaries, the TIFA can capture property tax revenue from the incremental increase in value (compared to its base value) and use that additional revenue to fund projects. Known as “tax increment finance” it is an economic development tool often employed for making wide scale improvements within a designated area. Under the state act, the TIFA is enabled:

- » To correct and prevent deterioration in residential, commercial, and industrial areas

- » To authorize the acquisition and disposal of interests in real and personal property
- » To authorize the creation and implementation of development plans and development areas
- » To promote residential and economic growth
- » To authorize the issuance of bonds and other evidences of indebtedness
- » To levy certain taxes
- » To authorize the use of tax increment financing

## DOWNTOWN CHALLENGES

### Façades

The downtown core is one block long on M-49, known locally as Main Street. The core follows a traditional development pattern of two story, brick buildings that are strung together with an uninterrupted façade, punctuated with architectural features of the era it was built: arches, parapets, and cornices. The parking is in the rear of these buildings so that the emphasis remains on the building's beauty and the wide decorated sidewalks. The right of way is dotted with planter boxes, historic lighting posts, benches, and

### In the last few years, TIFA has used the funds to:

- » Removed a blighted structure
- » Maintained parking lots
- » Sold land in the industrial park for development
- » Purchased properties
- » Engage in the state program, Redevelopment Ready Communities



*Downtown facades have a mix of building materials.*

waste receptacles. Over time however, the condition of some facades has deteriorated, and equally consequential to the corridor's aesthetic, exterior building materials from different eras have been incorporated, chipping away the facades' visual cohesion and historic theme. Typically, lax enforcement of design standards is a sign that the market is too weak to demand that property owners comply with the more expensive, more impactful requirements. Public boards are faced with a difficult tradeoff: increase commercial occupancy and dilute the historic character of the downtown or hold the design standards high and risk higher vacancy rates.

The TIFA acknowledges the importance of its heritage and offers façade improvement grants with a 75/25 ratio to applicants that make historically accurate improvements visible from the right-of-way. The projects are limited to two per twelve-month period and are capped at \$7,500 (although there is room to grant more). Leveraging public funds to spark private investment is a common approach to upgrading a downtown, however, this program has had limited effect. Despite this program being marketed to numerous property owners, in the last eight years, only the library has successfully received and used the grant. Improvements to the program are necessary to distribute more funds; granting a larger sum of money to make it financially worthwhile for applicants, helping with cost estimates, streamlining the application process, and/or changing promotion strategies could make the program more appealing to building owners.

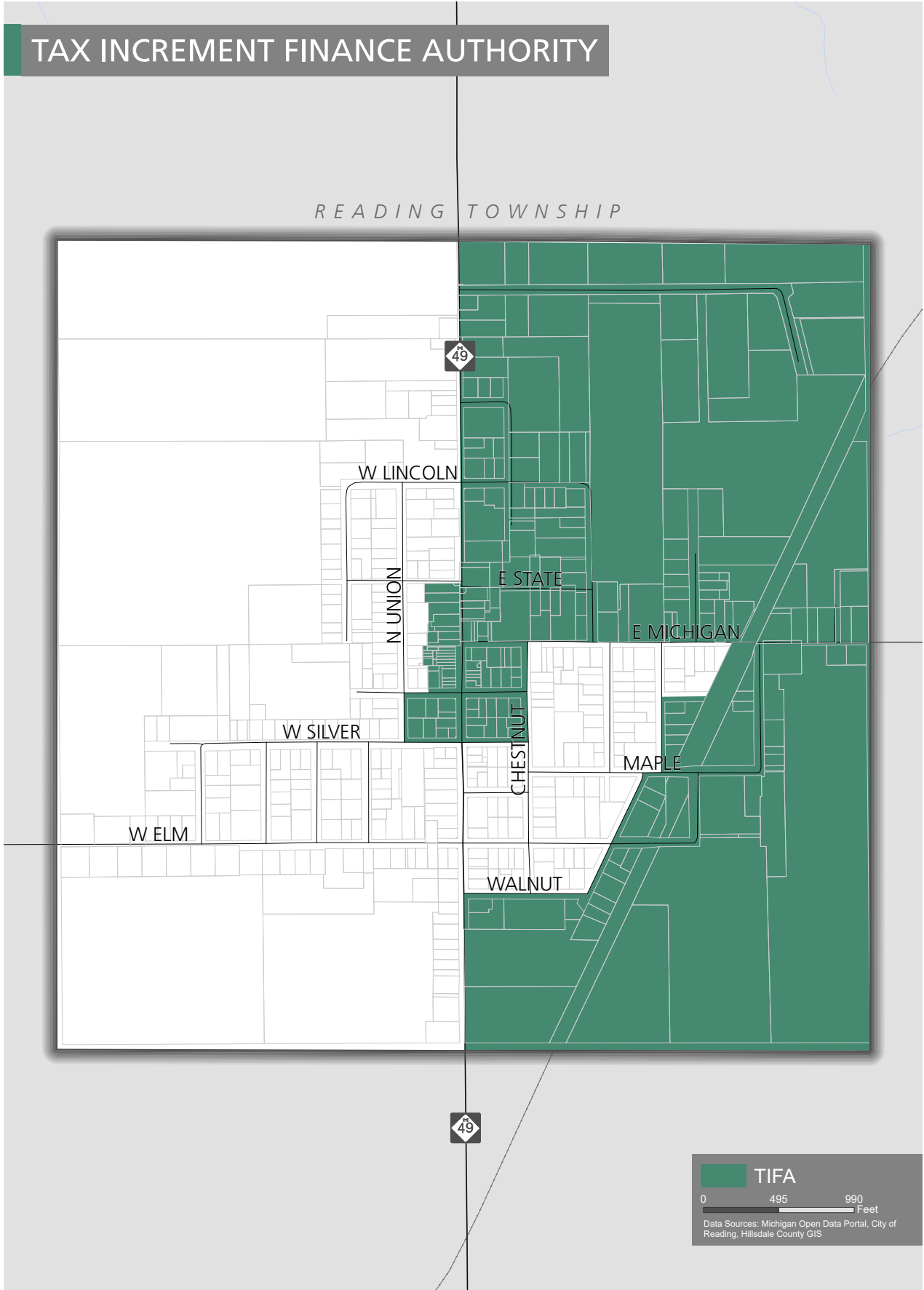
As much of that time spanned the Great Recession, facade grants were not available during that time. However, as TIFA's financial capacity grows, so should funding for façade improvements. The timing for proactive improvements is opportune; as more visitors frequent the downtown, its simultaneous revamping could build on the momentum of increased foot traffic.

## **Streets and Streetscaping**

Aside from façades, the public realm – made up of the right-of-way and publicly owned parcels – is where a community can add appeal, attraction, and convenience to its downtown. The success of such streetscaping features, like benches, artwork, landscaping, and wayfinding signage requires consistent monitoring to determine if it is achieving its function. If you have benches on the sidewalk, are they being used? Would they provide a better respite if located in the shade or in a quieter location? In 2009, the TIFA invested in several



Map 10: Tax Increment Finance Authority





*Downtown bench*

elements of streetscaping using MDOT grants: replaced the streetlights with decorative lighting, converted storefront entrances to be ADA compliant, installed stamped concrete on the sidewalks, and repainted the crosswalks.

There are limits to dimensional changes that can be implemented on Main Street. Having a MDOT highway run through your downtown comes with the benefit of increased exposure to your businesses but also with a loss of control in modifications to the right of way. For example, on average 2,950 vehicles pass through the downtown daily bringing visibility to the community's local businesses, but if the city wanted to widen the sidewalk or add a stoplight or pave the road, it would first have to go through MDOT who works on a predetermined project schedule.

### **Tree Canopy**

The most noticeable missing feature from the streetscape is a tree canopy. Trees help to soften a hard landscape

and provide a buffer between pedestrians and fast-moving vehicles; the tree canopy offers a sense of enclosure and security from traffic. The investment in trees has shown to pay off when properly cared for: businesses on tree-lined streets show 12% higher income streams.<sup>1</sup> Trees are a placemaking feature that can help convert a pass-through downtown into a destination. Beauty of a downtown matters, and it will require public and private investment and enforcement of design high standards. Trees do come with certain challenges that are discussed in the table "Common Tree Concerns."

### **Parking**

Insufficient parking in the downtown was mentioned several times in the community survey. Supplying the "correct" number of parking spaces is always a challenge because demand varies by day of the week, time of day, and the changing popularity of the business and events. The common



Downtown planter boxes.

Table 9: Common Tree Concerns

Common Concern	Solution
Trees block commercial signs and storefronts	Co-design trees and signs.
Trees cost money	There is an initial investment, but the benefits grow as the tree grows in property value, air and water quality, and stormwater management.
Trees get into power lines and underground pipes	Careful choices of tree species suited to the root and canopy space available.
Tree roots crack the sidewalk	Provide enough space to the tree to grow so that it doesn't have to push through the pavement
Trees are messy	Careful plant selection can reduce problems of fallings flowers, fruit, and leave.
Tree upkeep and maintenance is expensive	Yearly tree care and maintenance prevent major tree failures. The cost can be shared by all merchants in the district.

Source: Main Street News No. 263 August 2009

complaint from survey respondents was that visitors now exceed the number of parking spaces available, largely due to the city's new adult use marijuana businesses, and visitors overflow parking goes to the neighborhoods.

Municipalities have much to consider when expanding parking capacity.

While they serve their purpose in peak demand, most of the time, unoccupied parking lots create other challenges – the cost of maintenance, ponding and becoming sources of contaminated runoff, detracting from the walkability of downtown, and the loss of potential tax revenue if another use could locate

on site. There are 104 parking spots; enough for nearly 10% of the population and 20% of households; these numbers would signify that there is sufficient parking, given that most households are within walking distance from the downtown.

Fortunately, Reading has a historic building pattern with parking in the rear. This is where it should remain; side and corner parking lots remove façade continuity and make it less likely that patrons will want to stroll through the downtown. Second, all attempts to screen parking lots should be employed. Fencing, bollards, trees, and vegetation remove the immediate sight of parking from the streetscape. A distinct color sign for parking can indicate to patrons where to park.

Lastly, a reversal of parking minimums to parking maximums can help right size parking lots and/or provide flexibility to businesses to provide parking without crossing a threshold. Parking formulas are often out of date and not monitored for efficiency. At the very least, parking formulas determined by land use should be reviewed and adjusted where necessary.

### Commercial Vacancy

Vacancy begets vacancy. The domino effect of closed businesses is real, and should be tracked to avoid hitting a threshold that makes a recovery even harder. Currently, the commercial vacancy rate is close to 50% (11 out of 24 ground floor buildings are vacant), but should remain below 10% to be a healthy hub of commerce.

### Land Use Implications for Downtown Challenges

- » The deterioration and lack of architectural cohesion of downtown facades will make it more difficult to sell buildings in the future/attract new businesses

- » Commercial vacancy should be actively monitored to avoid hitting an unfavorable tipping point
- » Streetscaping improvements, which entice residents and visitors downtown have to follow MDOT's schedule, which can delay desired upgrades

## DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITY

### Perception

In the community survey, the respondents were split over how downtown has changed in the last five years. Excluding the recent effects of COVID-19, 40% think the downtown has improved, 40% think it has declined, and 20% think it has stayed largely the same. During this time of inactivity due to ever-changing orders from the state, it is time to plan for design, promotion, and business starts to hit the ground running when the world opens up again. The community's current perception of the downtown can serve as a baseline, an opportunity, to build momentum over the next five years so that the majority of residents can confidently state the downtown's ascent when surveyed again.

### Market Data

Esri Business Analyst, a proprietary software program, compiles demographic and consumer data that provides a richer level of detail when analyzing residents' social and economic behavior. Esri groups retail into 13 categories and estimates the retail gap based on the supply and demand of each retail category. Where money leaves the community, it is called a leakage, and where money is being drawn into the community from outside is called a surplus. Surpluses in Reading's market are found in four categories; two are related to automotive uses through the sale of automobiles and automobile

Table 10: Retail Surplus and Leakage

Retail Type	Number of Establishments	Leakage/Surplus	Amount of Retail Gap
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	1	Surplus	\$4,840,504
Furniture & Home Furnishings	0	Leakage	\$256,460
Electronics & Appliance	0	Leakage	\$252,683
Building Materials, Garden Equipment, & Supply	0	Leakage	\$663,306
Food and Beverage	0	Leakage	\$1,559,925
Health & Personal Care	0	Leakage	\$658,693
Gasoline	2	Surplus	\$11,622,876
Clothing and Accessories	0	Leakage	\$383,833
Sporting goods, hobby book & Music	0	Leakage	\$215,655
General merchandise	1	Leakage	\$693,342
Miscellaneous	3	Surplus	\$1,557,325
Nonstore Retailers	1	Surplus	\$1,903,786
Food Services & Drinking	3	Leakage	\$55,425
<b>Total surplus</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>\$19,924,491</b>
<b>Total leakage</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>\$4,739,592</b>

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, 2017

parts and accessories, the other two are nonstore retailers (online purchases), and miscellaneous (florist, office supplies, stationary, gift shop, use merchandise). Even though the surpluses generated far exceed the leakage, the wealth is not well distributed as almost 60% of the surplus goes to two gas stations. The leakages appear in nine of the retail categories as shown in the table "Retail Surpluses and Leakages."

In Reading, the leakages correspond to retail categories where no establishments provide such goods. The retail gap represents an opportunity for capturing at least a portion of the money that is being spent elsewhere. The survey results reflect the cause of the \$4.7 million in annual leakage; 50% of survey-takers reported that what prevents them from going downtown more often is "there is little/nothing I want to do" and "there is little/nothing that I want to buy." Also noted in the survey by nearly a dozen respondents was that existing businesses prevent them from going downtown,

namely the aggressive soliciting of the marijuana dispensaries to people on the sidewalk is unpleasant.

When asked what type of retail and services residents would like to see come downtown and how often they would frequent such places, it becomes clearer where the demands lies. The majority of residents recorded that they would visit the following retail categories monthly or more frequently:

- » Food and beverage (96.3%)
- » General merchandise (81.4%)
- » Building material, garden equipment and supply (81.4%)
- » Health, beauty, and personal care (75.9%)
- » Sporting goods, hobby, books, and music (66.7%)
- » Clothing and accessories (65.5%)

If only 20% of that money spent on retail was kept in the community,



*Potential open space downtown that can used for programming.*

nearly \$1 million would flow through the city annually. In a study conducted by the American Independent Business Alliance, an estimated 48% of each purchase at local independent businesses recirculated locally, compared to 14% of purchases at chain stores.<sup>2</sup> This means that local business owners are more likely to buy inventory and equipment locally and spend and donate their discretionary income locally. On top of that, local businesses generate more jobs and wealth for the community. Knowing the multiplier effect of local business, the TIFA should concentrate its resources on the expansion of existing business and on the creation of new business with local investors.

Similarly, survey-takers were asked what types of services/spaces they would want to see in the downtown; respondents reported that they would visit the following monthly or more frequently:

- » Restaurants/cafes (93.2%)
- » Bars/entertainment venues (71.9%)
- » Recreation/public spaces (69.6%)

When residents were asked what draws them downtown, the most common answer selected by more than half of the survey-takers, was dining (51.7%), followed by services (48.3%), and then events (31.7%). Services and entertainment ranked higher than retail which reflects the trend towards experience over convenience. Because people can buy what they need online and have it delivered to their homes, the downtown has to offer an experience to attract patrons. For example, in addition to a craft store selling product, it can host classes, feature students' work in the store, and/or throw an event to showcase local projects. A clothing store can host fashion shows and exclusive peeks at new inventory. Downtown businesses can no longer only rely on local clientele if they are to compete in a globalized economy, yet to make that transition to a multi-channel, technology-based marketing plan, they will likely need the support of the TIFA to make these changes.

### **Connection to Housing**

Another way to build demand for local business is to increase density and

foot traffic on Main Street. Bringing potential clients in closer proximity to businesses is a tried and true method for business retention, and a selling point to attract new businesses to town. Because of the age of downtown's building stock, many are outfitted with residential potential on the second floor. To date, there are 11 occupied rentals downtown, but the potential for how many could be converted is unknown. It is recommended that an inventory of potential second stories units is conducted and that the city works with business owners to convert or rehab these units as an economic development strategy for revitalizing the downtown.

## Business Recruitment

Active business recruitment is a full-time job. And when there is no dedicated staff to handle this part of a downtown revitalization, it often gets pushed to the back burner. Survey respondents recorded business recruitment as their top priority for downtown; 61% of respondents selected this answer as a way to fill the missing retail and services in the downtown. The survey also asked if residents wanted to start or expand a business, nearly one in five of the respondents answered affirmatively but were unaware of resources to help them get started. A staff person could reach out to interested investors, share resources with them, and connect them to the correct building to start their business.

## Food Trucks (Mobile Vending)

Food trucks are a modern example of how to recruit new business to a city. By providing a space, reasonable regulations, and consistent exposure, cities can benefit from "testing" new businesses with lower stakes. Not only does this flexibility behoove the entrepreneur, but it can also benefit the city as the food truck experiments with its products and gains popularity before investing in building stock. With already

established patronage, food truck operators can convert more confidently to a building, likely with greater longevity than an unknown newcomer. A food truck ordinance should clearly outline where the trucks are permitted, hours of operation, access management, and a collaboration with existing restaurants to mitigate any conflict. Weekly food trucks are already a part of Reading's landscape, the next step is to guide them to a vacant building to retain all of their hard work and customer following.

## Partnerships

Reading has a working history with the Hillsdale Economic Development Partnership (HEDP), a non-profit, investor-governed organization focused on increasing employment opportunities, private sector capital investment, and tax base.<sup>3</sup> Reading has connected interested business owners to the HEDP for their services in teaching how to write a business plan, explaining financing options, and showing available properties for businesses. Reading also works closely with the Hillsdale County Chamber of Commerce, a membership-based organization that offers marketing, networking, and business resources.

In addition to the focusing on placemaking, the TIFA can actively seek out and connect current and potential business owners to resources that will cultivate talent and keep investment in the community. In the same vein, the TIFA can work with business owners nearing retirement to develop a transition plan, as another common way that commercial vacancy grows over time is when business owners retire, they close shop instead of grooming someone to take over.

## Technology

Three quarters of survey respondents were unsure of whether the businesses

they visit downtown have a website. When asked if purchasing products or services online would mean they'd shop locally more often, the results were mixed. The responses for "true" and "not sure" were split around 42%. When the responses are filtered for the younger age group, 25-34, two-thirds of respondents agree they'd shop more locally if they could make purchases online. Even if business owners are not convinced by the local clientele's willingness to shop online, embracing technology means they can expand their platform to the entire globe through popular third-party websites. In smaller cities, where density is low and wages are strapped, the cost of maintaining a local brick and mortar can be alleviated by expanding its base on the internet.

## REDEVELOPMENT PROPERTIES

In addition to understanding what types of commerce is missing from the local market, and what the community would like to see, the TIFA should focus on matching appropriate building stock

to desired new business. For example, if the community wants to see a new restaurant come to town, then the priority would be to find a building with a commercial kitchen to market for that purpose. There are three major sites that the TIFA would like to redevelop and through the survey asked residents what they'd like to see there. That information is summarized per property on the following pages.

In addition to these three properties, it is best practice for the city to keep a list of other vacant, underutilized, or abandoned properties that can be redeveloped. The data would contain the sites' basic characteristics and uses that could feasibly occupy the space, for example, some data points to collect include square footage, parking availability, utility connection, contamination, compliance with building code, building features, among others. The database should be regularly updated so that it can be marketed to appropriate businesses. Moreover, the city can put together packets that share useful data for a potential investor.



*MEDC grant money used to rehabilitate rental units on the second floor.*



## The Opera House (116 Michigan Street)



### Property Description

The TIFA purchased this property in June 2020. Known locally as the “opera house,” its second floor features a domed roof and staged used previously for performances. The ground floors have featured several different types of businesses: a hardware store, a funeral home, a movie rental store. Once occupied, it can repeat its history with retail on the ground floor and entertainment above. The TIFA is actively working to seal it up by installing new windows to prevent further deterioration. Due to the year it was built and its vacancy, the building has not been brought up to building code.

### Basic Site Information

<b>Zone</b>	B-2, Central Business District
<b>Square footage</b>	11,696 (both floors)
<b>Utilities</b>	Connected to municipal water/sewer
<b>Building features</b>	Historic, freight elevator, new windows
<b>Owner</b>	TIFA
<b>Sales price (\$62K)</b>	Requires renovation

### Top Desired Uses from the Community

Desired Use	% of Mentions	Survey Comments
Retail	25.5%	Antiques, boutique, food co-op, bookstore, hardware, flower shop
Cafe	20%	Coffee shop/bakery
Teens/kids	10.9%	Somewhere for kids to go
Not a marijuana shop	9.1%	Something other than marijuana paraphernalia
Housing	7.3%	Apartments
Entertainment	7.3%	Movies, arcade, venue for local performances

Source: Master Plan Survey, 2020

## The Corner Lot (150 S. Main Street)



### Property Description

This corner property was once occupied by the city's only three-story historic building. However, due to limited maintenance, the building was deemed dangerous by a structural engineer that was too costly to repair. In the beginning of 2018, the TIFA demolished the building and now the vacant parcel is ready for redevelopment. Its corner exposure, and adjacency to a vacant lot and another business make it a good candidate for land combination to host larger outdoor dining areas, food truck rallies, or shared and programmed open space.

### Basic Site Information

<b>Zone</b>	B-2, Central Business District
<b>Square footage</b>	6,098
<b>Utilities</b>	Connected to municipal water/sewer
<b>Site features</b>	Vacant, corner parcel
<b>Owner</b>	TIFA
<b>Sales price</b>	Negotiable; willing to give property to applicant with business plan

### Top Desired Uses from the Community

Desired Use	% of Mentions	Survey Comments
Parking lot	28.3%	Nice paved parking lot, not a structure, provide overflow for patrons so they don't have to park in the neighborhoods
Public space	22.6%	Green space, community garden, small park with trees and benches
Retail	13.2%	Grocery store, general store, small local business
Café/bakery	9.4%	Coffee shop

Source: Master Plan Survey, 2020

## The Vacant Lots (209, 213, 229 S. Main Street, 100 E. Silver)



### Property Description

The four adjoining parcels are vacant (structures have been removed) and form an L-shape around the corner of Main and Silver to sit at the gateway to downtown. Formerly, the corner lot was a gas station and therefore should be reviewed for environmental contamination. The parcels are serviced by a sidewalk.

### Basic Site Information

<b>Zone</b>	B-2, Central Business District
<b>Acres</b>	0.69
<b>Utilities</b>	Connected to municipal water/sewer
<b>Site features</b>	Vacant lot; corner exposure
<b>Owner</b>	TIFA

### Top Desired Uses from the Community

Desired Use	% of Mentions	Survey Comments
Public space	23.4%	Green space, kid's recreation area, small park
Restaurant	19.2%	A small new restaurant, fast food
Services	12.8%	Gym, pharmacy, medical offices
Grocery	10.6%	Small grocery store for fresh food; with a pharmacy
Parking lot	10.6%	Expand parking for nearby businesses
Retail	10.6%	Butcher shop, snack shack, candy store

Source: Master Plan Survey, 2020

These property information packages could share the survey results for the what community wants, the number of visitors that enter the city on a monthly basis, exposure on major thoroughfare, and other relevant market data to entice them to the city.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The TIFA manages a much larger territory than just the downtown, and economic development has a much larger scope than the central corridor. This section talks about the larger regional economy and how Reading can position itself for greater growth within it.

### Employment Sectors

The employment figures and the survey results tell a larger story of the regional economy over time. When the results to the question “why did you move to Reading” are filtered by decade, survey-takers selected “job availability” as the second most common reason prior to 2000. After 2000, “job availability”

slips towards the bottom of the list and “housing affordability” rises to the top. The change in what draws residents to the city over time reflects economic instability in the region as jobs become less readily available, and as a result wages have to be stretched further for lower-cost housing.

### Summary of Employment Changes

#### Losses

Construction suffered a loss between 2010 and 2018 due to the effects of the Great Recession. Even as the economy rebounded, shortages in skilled labor and materials delayed a full recovery. A loss in agricultural-related jobs is likely due to the continued loss of farmland in the area, but this number could change with the popularity of marijuana grow facilities.<sup>4</sup> Because adult use marijuana is not recognized by the federal government, it is not officially classified under any employment sector, but if it were classified as agriculture, this sector would have seen growth during this period.

**Table 11: Employment Sectors for Reading’s Labor Force**

Sector	2010	2018	% Change
Ag/forestry/fishing/hunting/mining	4.9%	1.1%	-77.6%
Construction	7.0%	4.8%	-31.4%
Manufacturing	24.2%	26.8%	10.7%
Wholesale trade	3.4%	1.1%	-67.6%
Retail trade	13.9%	15.8%	13.7%
Transportation and warehousing, utilities	1.8%	3.7%	105.6%
Information	0.0%	2.9%	290.0%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	9.5%	3.1%	-67.4%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	3.1%	4.8%	54.8%
Educational services, and health care, and social assistance	21.4%	25.9%	21.0%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4.1%	6.1%	48.8%
Other services, except public administration	6.2%	3.3%	-46.8%
Public administration	0.5%	0.7%	40.0%

*Source: ACS 2018 and 2010 5-Year Estimates - The figures refer to the employment sectors that Reading residents work in – not necessarily located within the city of Reading.*



*A property in the industrial park.*

### Gains

Manufacturing and educational and healthcare services remain dominant employment sectors; over half of the city's labor force works in those two sectors. The city's labor force is firmly rooted in "old economy" jobs (commodity-based, manual production) and "new economy" jobs (knowledge-based services and communication). This strikes a good balance as a diversified economy and labor force are more resilient to potential shocks and stressors to the system.

## PROJECTED AREAS OF GROWTH THROUGH 2026

### Competitive Advantage

Using 2010 data, the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy found that Hillsdale County had a strong competitive advantage in the following:

- » advanced materials
- » agribusiness

- » food processing, and technology
- » fabricated metal product and manufacturing
- » machinery and manufacturing
- » transportation equipment manufacturing
- » primary metal manufacturing
- » electrical equipment, appliances, and components.

To ensure that a competitive advantage is not wasted, the city of Reading should work with the County to strategize how to fill the industrial park with said industries. One way to determine competitive advantage is to calculate the location quotient (LQ), which is a simple estimate of an industry's concentration of jobs in comparison to the region, state, or nation. For example, if the share of workers in food processing is divided by the share of food processing workers in the state, and the total is greater than one, food processing would be considered a

concentrated industry that is likely to be export-oriented and have a competitive advantage.

Another key indicator to the success of these established industries is a trained workforce. Should the emerging workforce not be adequately trained to replace retiring workers in this field, then the city should prioritize growing industries with an ample supply of workers, or develop programs to help fill those gaps. Working with the school district to determine how training can be incorporated into the curriculum or as an extracurricular activity to restore a shrinking workforce pipeline may be necessary to keep a competitive advantage. Some regions have even offered to pay for half of a trainee's wage during the training period, if the industrial business agrees to hire local residents.

### **Adult Use Marihuana**

As of January 2020, the Cannabis Jobs Report estimated 243,700 full-time jobs in legal cannabis, a 15% year over year increase, making it the fastest-growing industry in the U.S.<sup>5</sup> Michigan's market contributes to the national job growth. As one of the relatively few cities opting in for adult use marihuana, Reading's TIFA district has seen increased interest since its legalization (at the state level) in its northern industrial park. Recently, TIFA has sold 16 acres of land in the industrial park to marihuana grower facilities. From the sale of the land to the new revenue capture, the TIFA's funds are expected to grow significantly and therefore requires an updated TIFA Plan for responsibly and strategically investing captured funds.

In the downtown, cannabis businesses have tracked an average of 400-600 visitors per day in the summer of 2020. This is a major boon for complementary businesses that can take advantage of Michigan and out of state visitors that might otherwise not visit a small town

in such great numbers. Now is the time to market the city's building stock when the values are low enough to not bar independent businesses from entering the Reading market.

### **High Demand Jobs**

Educational attainment and training are key to economic growth. Because over one-third of residents have "some college" and "associates degrees" it is important to find employment sectors that do not require a bachelor's degree to move to Reading. The state agency, Department of Technology, Management, and Budget determined which jobs are in high demand regionally based on levels of education and training. Based on annual openings, growth rates, and wage range, a higher education does correlate to more opportunity and a higher salary, but the table "High Demand Employment by Education/ Training" shows that moderate training outside of a four university can provide in demand jobs with decent wages. With this information, the TIFA can align strategies to invest in or dispose of its land or property to growing employment sectors. Matching available land and infrastructure to uses that can provide good jobs in the city falls precisely in the TIFA's mission.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Revitalization of the downtown will only come with greater professional or community capacity to track data, follow up and improve existing programs, initiate and manage projects, and coordinate with the business owners. Reading could expand capacity by applying for Michigan Main Street, an organization that provides staff and a framework for implementation. If Reading is not accepted into the competitive program, it should consider hiring a TIFA Director to carry out the recommended projects.

Table 12: High Demand Employment by Education/Training

Postsecondary Certificate	Growth	Associates Degree	Growth	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Growth
Commercial Pilots	24.4%	Physical therapist assistants	37.0%	Software Developers	33.4%
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	22.5%	Respiratory therapists	22.5%	Market Research Analysis	32.5%
Massage Therapists	22.1%	Dental hygienists	21.5%	Health Specialties Teachers	27.2%
Dental Assistants	20.9%	Environmental science technicians	20.9%	Industrial Engineers	23.2%
Billing and Posting Clerks	17.3%	Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	19.2%	Financial Managers	20.1%
Operating Engineers	16.6%	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	18.8%	Management Analysts	16.5%
Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	13.8%	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	15.5%	Mechanical Engineers	14.3%
Computer User Support Specialists	12.8%	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	14.8%	Sales Manager	14.1%
Roofers	12.4%	HVAC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	14.3%	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	13.3%
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	11.9%	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	13.1%	Computer and Information Systems Managers	13.1%

Source: Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

## Sources

- 1 Burden, Dan. "Urban Street Trees." [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/22\\_benefits\\_208084\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/22_benefits_208084_7.pdf) 2006.
- 2 American Independent Business Alliance. *The Local Multiplier Effect: How Independent Local Businesses Help your Community Thrive.* <https://amiba.net/refresh/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Local-multiplier-effect-whitepaper.pdf>
- 3 Hillsdale Economic Development Partnership. "The Partnership." <https://www.hillsdaleedp.org/about-the-partnership>
- 4 The Hillsdale County Planning Commission Draft Land Use Report. 2014. [https://f2d16663-cef7-4b14-8aea-4d2b6d552bce.filesusr.com/ugd/23c3ae\\_cd33a0b045ce48c2922d2ed3be074192.pdf](https://f2d16663-cef7-4b14-8aea-4d2b6d552bce.filesusr.com/ugd/23c3ae_cd33a0b045ce48c2922d2ed3be074192.pdf)
- 5 Leafly. "Cannabis Jobs Report: Legal Cannabis Now Supports 243,700 Full-Time American Jobs." February 2020. <https://www.leafly.com/news/industry/243700-marijuana-jobs-how-many-in-america>

# 6

## Land Use & Implementation



Land use is the heart of community planning. It is the attempt to accommodate demographic projections, community input, and economic transitions through coordinated development so that a city can reasonably adapt to an ever-changing context. Reading has developed in predictable patterns; because some of the city was built before the advent of automobiles, older neighborhoods follow a traditional grid pattern,

the downtown is compact, and the industrial and agricultural uses lay on the periphery. Over time, however, development pressure, economic realities, and the loss of history through building degradation necessitates that some areas of the city are preserved, redeveloped, transitioned, or contained to fit into Reading's vision growth and development. The map "Land Use Framework" displays the loose spatial boundaries of these areas.

### Infrastructure Obstacles

It is important to note that any large-scale change in Reading will be contingent upon the city's execution of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) which lays out a dire need to improve and expand its water and sewer capacity. Without a significant modernization process that increases the volume of materials that can be stored and circulated through new development, growth in Reading is not possible. The city has adopted a CIP and is in the process of finding funding to improve its infrastructure so that it is no longer an obstacle for growth and/or quality of life.



## CONNECTION TO THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The map “Land Use Framework” is the basis for creating a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and an action plan. Once areas of the City are classified based on the preserve-redevelop-transition-contain spectrum, those broader categories can be converted into two essential components for planning: greater site-specific land use detail in the FLUM, and more comprehensive overarching strategies in the action plan. The FLUM identifies preferred future land uses in the City. As a land use visualization tool, it is intended to guide land use changes in the Zoning Ordinance over the next 10 years. The new land use categories allow the community to identify where certain development should expand or contract without committing it to by law (like the Zoning Map does). If the Planning Commission and staff are not consulting the FLUM for such purposes, then the map should be re-evaluated and updated to reflect the community’s preference for change.

To convey the extent that Future Land Use categories represent a change from the status quo, the proposed future land use categories are compared to the existing land use codes. Existing land use codes are applied to parcels by the assessor for taxation purposes and broadly categorized as agriculture, residential, commercial, industrial, and exempt (does not generate property tax); the future land use categories are grouped into the broader land use categories for comparison (although they provide much greater specificity later in this section).

The table “Existing Land Use vs. Future Land Use” demonstrates the proposed high-level changes by comparing the varying acreage tied to each land use category. The largest proposed change is the gradual conversion of agricultural land in the city to residential neighborhoods over time.

### Preserve (& Enhance)

Preservation of the area’s architecture, site design, natural features, and public realm to its highest quality. The focus of maintaining quality means minor updates are not excluded.

### Redevelop

The underlying fabric of the area is intact but there are instances of blight; vacant, abandoned, or poorly maintained properties; and visual degradation of public spaces. The focus is on reinvestment, targeted code enforcement, redevelopment of deteriorated properties, and selective infill with new construction.

### Transition

Transition calls for a large-scale shift in the appearance and function of an area with the intention of a dramatic change in use, design, and accessibility. This strategy could call for a strong public-private partnership and the utilization of available public financing tools, and capital improvements plans.

### Contain(ed) Growth

The type of development either falls out of step with the City’s vision, or its growth should be contained to specific boundaries so it doesn’t negatively affect other land uses. It is not necessarily harmful but should not be encouraged to sprawl beyond its current footprint.

**Table 13: Existing Land Use vs Future Land Use**

Existing Land Use Category	Acres of Land	Future Land Use Category	Acres of Land
Agriculture	225	Agriculture	0
Residential	184	Residential	413
Commercial*	23	Commercial	32
Industrial	54	Industrial	100
Exempt	109	Exempt	38
TOTAL:	595	TOTAL	583**

\* Reading classifies multi-family as a commercial use, but in the future land use category, it is moved to residential because while the use generates income for a landlord, it is not a place of commerce.

\*\* the total acreage is less than the existing land use because the FLUM does not cover the railroad line and ROWs

This conversion is a long-range plan for growth, an outline anticipating where residential growth can occur. It is not expected to happen immediately or without a coordinated, phased approach. The other large change assumes that “exempt” property owned by the TIFA in the industrial park will be sold and function thereafter as privately-run industrial uses.

### **FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES**

Future land use categories lay the groundwork for modifying the land use regulations in the Zoning Ordinance so that eventually local law aligns with the vision set forth in the Master Plan. Table 14 compares the descriptions of the proposed land use categories to the existing zoning districts. A new proposed land use category, “Public,” was developed to provide an additional

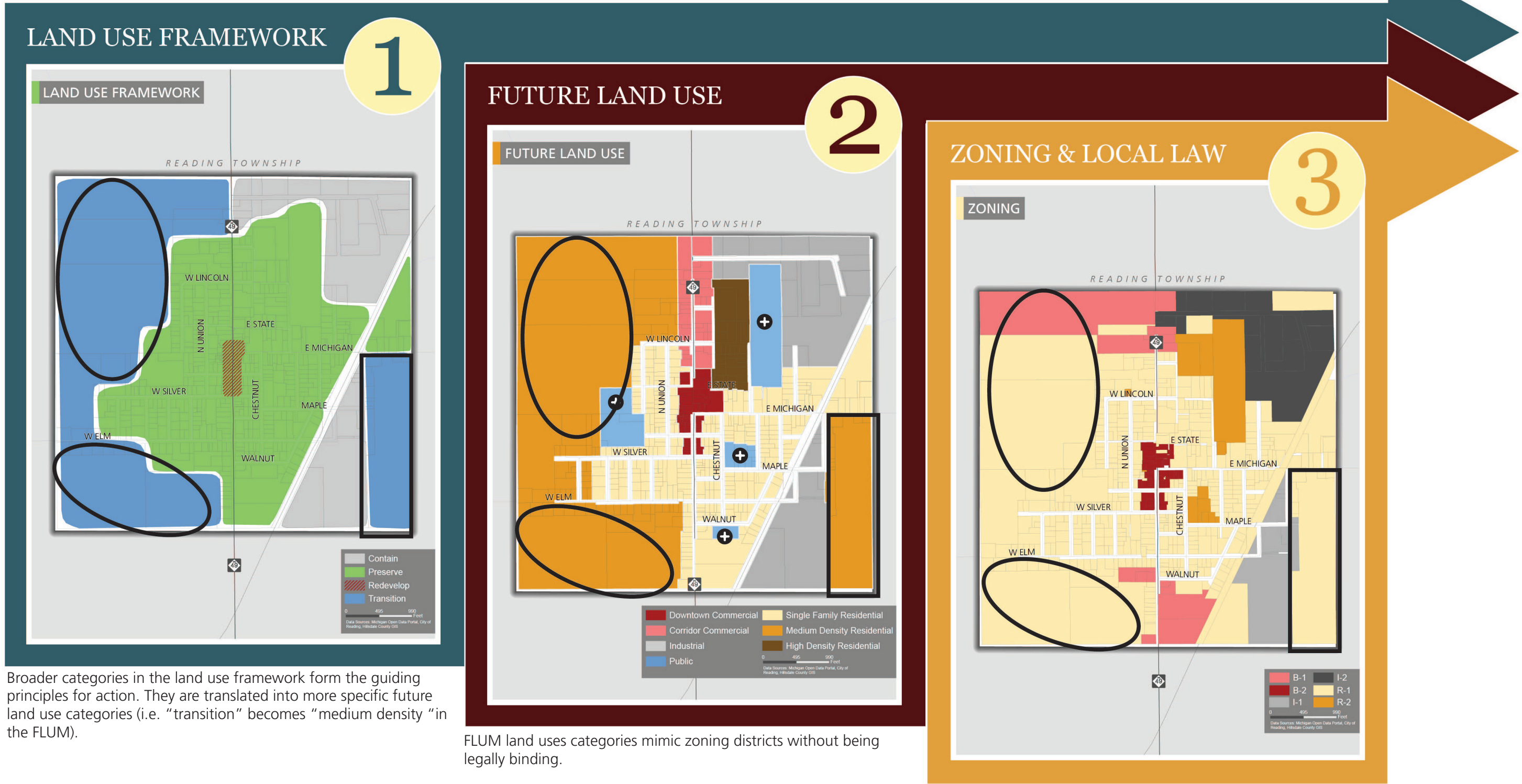
layer of protection from potentially unwanted development. For example, if a school were to close in a residential zone, it could be redeveloped into housing without any input from the community. When faced with the possibility of losing such a valuable neighborhood asset and specialized land use, the city should consider giving it its own zone. That way, should it close, there is an option first for the community to convert it into a similar community-oriented use. And, if there is no option to maintain it as is, then it can be rezoned to residential.

Aside from the addition of this new land use category, there are only slight modifications to the existing zoning districts. The main differences are bolded with red text in Table 14, and they are discussed in more detail in the one-page summaries of the guiding principles.

Table 14: FLUM Categories and Corresponding Zoning Districts

Proposed Land Use Category	Description of Proposed Land Use Category	Current Zone	Description of Zoning District
Public	Encompasses primarily school campuses, parkland, and open space to protect them from future development without prior community deliberation	New	N/A
Low Density	Largest residential lots in the city; <b>remove agricultural classification</b> , single-family housing and complementary residential uses	R-1	Primarily single-family housing; complementary residential uses; largest minimum lot; special land use permits up to 2-4 units per parcel
Medium Density	Smaller residential lots than low density zone; permit slightly greater variety of housing options <b>by right</b> , complementary residential uses	R-2	Two-family homes and multi-family up to 8 units; complementary residential uses
Higher Density	<b>No single-family residential permitted, greatest variety and density of units provided to exceed 8 units by right</b> ; screening when adjacent to less intense uses	R-3	Multi-family up to 8 units/ building, more units permitted as a special use
Downtown	Compact building footprints, emphasis on walkability, high quality architecture and design aesthetic, <b>uses reserved primarily for retail, dining, and entertainment</b> . Mixed-use permitted primarily to provide housing and office space on the second story.	B-2; OS	<b>B-2 (central business district)</b> : retail by comparison, service, and office; high density, eliminates yard and lot requirements <b>B-1 (highway)</b> : various commercial offerings and services that require visibility and should be located on a major thoroughfare; discourage strip development
Commercial Corridor	Commercial uses that are primarily auto-oriented and large building footprint, <b>emphasis on efficient access management and screening from less intense uses; offices permitted</b>	B-1; OS	<b>OS</b> : limited area adjacent to downtown; encourage adaptive reuse of older buildings; coincide with restoration of those buildings and homes in a historically correct manner
Industrial	Larger building footprints, buffered and properly screened from residential uses	I-1 & I-2	<b>I-1</b> : primarily manufacturing and assembling, to operate adverse effects on the residential and commercial areas; visual and sound buffers to residential uses <b>I-2</b> : The standards for this district parallel private land use covenants in place for the entire industrial park property; except provisions for visual and sound buffers from residential uses

Figure 14: Relationship Amonast Land Use Framework. Future Land Use. & Zonina



Broader categories in the land use framework form the guiding principles for action. They are translated into more specific future land use categories (i.e. "transition" becomes "medium density" in the FLUM).

FLUM land uses categories mimic zoning districts without being legally binding.

Changes to zoning districts should be based on the recommendations from the FLUM to ensure they align with the findings from the Master Plan process.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The following sections are organized by the guiding principles of the Land Use Framework: Preserve, Redevelop, Transform, and Contain. Each principle will follow the format below.

### Metrics for Success

These should be easy to track and calculate figures to measure progress over time. If more detailed research has produced a specific target to reach, that should be used, but in its absence, the desired direction for each metric indicates if progress has been made. These metrics are designed to create a data-driven approach to planning and allow for more frequent evaluation of a city's actions in advancing towards the guiding principle.

### Future Land Use and Zoning Plan

This section features each guiding principle's connection to the FLUM, both spatially (map) and textually (table with recommended changes). The tables "Future Land Use and Zoning" for each guiding principle also features the Zoning Plan, a short description of proposed dimensional, structural, or land use changes that must be made to the current Zoning Ordinance in order to comply with the vision set out in the Master Plan and FLUM.

### Seven Tools

There are seven common tools at a city staff's disposal for implementation. The action plan is based on which tool is most appropriate to use, and lists the responsible party and the desired timeframe for completing this action.

### *Plans*

- » Reference to an existing plan that provides guidelines and/or strategies
- » Creation, amendment, or adoption of new plans or studies

### *Code*

- » Creation of or update to a new police power ordinance or zoning regulation

### *Operations*

- » Continue, expand, or modify an existing program, practice, or policy

### *Financing*

- » Identification of grants, loans, foundations, donations, revolving funds, and CIP

### *Knowledge*

- » Develop public awareness campaigns, communication
- » Increase professional expertise and capacity of staff

### *Partnerships*

- » Identify potential collaborators and develop a working relationship to achieve common goals

### *Citizens*

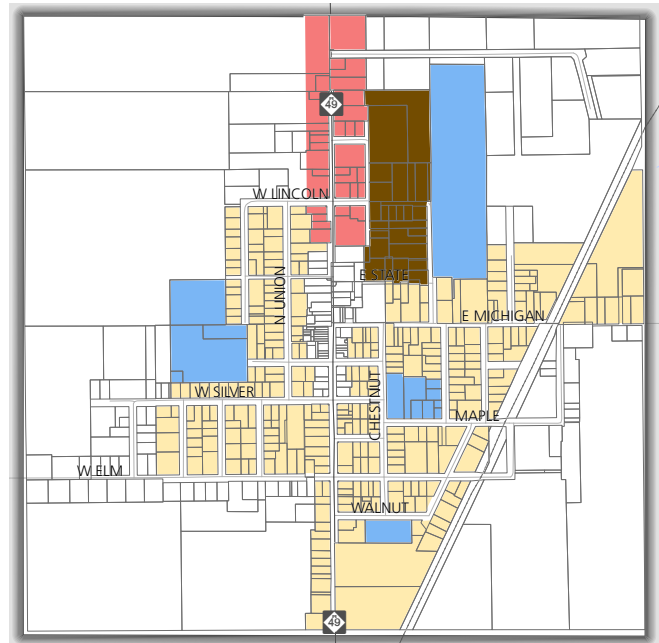
- » Identify ways that citizens can help to achieve the city's goals

# Preserve: Neighborhoods & Corridors

Preservation, in this context, is not a “no change needed here” policy. The city’s existing neighborhoods fall into this category because their primary purpose should be maintained as residential areas, but necessary enhancements to their basic structural elements - housing structures, pathways (roads and sidewalks), and parks - were demonstrated as areas for improvement in the master planning process. To preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods, all three elements must be tended to simultaneously to reach its greatest maximum potential.

## Future Land Use & Zoning Plan

The proposed changes to land use categories help to achieve the preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods by providing greater housing options for residents through varying life stages, income levels, and disability status. The intended benefits of greater housing diversity are to fill in vacant parcels in the neighborhood with more manageably sized units to reduce instances of blight; smaller yards and units could help to alleviate some of the financial burden of homeownership so that residents have discretionary funds to spend on upkeep. Slight increases to density will generate greater tax revenue to the city for funding public infrastructure to service these neighborhoods such as parkland acquisition and maintenance, tree canopy coverage, complete sidewalk networks, and improved road conditions.



### Basic Strategies

Equitable code enforcement for blighted structures, targeted funding for home repairs, and upgrades to public infrastructure should be designated for these areas.

### Zoning Plan

Loosen restrictive dimensional standards and expand housing options in R-1, R-2, and R-3.

### Recommended Density

Low density	Up to 5 du/acre
High density	Up to 15 du/acre; expand maximum coverage threshold to achieve this

### Recommended Structure Form

Low density	Large and small lot single-family
High density	Up to three story townhomes, quadplex, bungalow courts, condo/apartment buildings

*Du=dwelling unit*

## Metrics for Success (2019 baseline)



Blight complaints (117)



Average residential parcel value (\$50,922)

Parkland acreage  
(14 acres)

Feet of sidewalk replaced 2015-2020  
(4,130 that was either 4' or 5' wide)

TOOLS	ACTIONS	PARTY & TIME FRAME
<b>Plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to identify specific recreational needs and potential sites for parkland acquisition</li> <li>» Once completed, apply for MDNR grants to complete project based on findings from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan</li> </ul>	<p>PC, 2022</p> <p>Parks and Rec Dept, 2022</p>
<b>Code</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Increase housing variety in the Zoning Ordinance by loosening restrictive dimensional standards and expanding types of housing units permitted</li> <li>» Update the ordinance to prohibit absentee landlords</li> <li>» Create design standards for higher-density housing</li> </ul>	<p>PC, 2022</p> <p>City Manager, 2021</p> <p>PC, 2022</p>
<b>Operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Equitably enforce the International Property Maintenance Code</li> <li>» Follow the Sidewalk Prioritization map to fill in gaps in the nonmotorized network</li> <li>» Use the “Residential Vacant” map to determine suitability of sites for infill housing</li> <li>» Develop a system for residents to submit instances of home flooding and track data to target interventions at higher risk areas</li> <li>» Continue to require that all new construction is hooked up to municipal water and sewer</li> <li>» Develop a Historic Commission to identify historic properties in the city and strategize how to preserve them</li> <li>» Expand water and sewer capacity according to the CIP</li> </ul>	<p>Code enforcer, Ongoing</p> <p>DPW, 2025</p> <p>Zoning Admin., Ongoing</p> <p>DPW, 2021</p> <p>DPW, Ongoing</p> <p>City Council, 2021</p> <p>DPW, 2025</p>
<b>Financing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Apply for USDA Housing Preservation grants to fund repairs and rehabilitation for low to very low-income homeowners</li> <li>» Develop a revolving fund to loan to qualified homeowners in need of home repair</li> <li>» Investigate a special assessment district in neighborhoods that wish to see greater tree canopy coverage, sidewalk and road improvements, curb and gutter, and recreational opportunity</li> </ul>	<p>TIFA, 2021</p> <p>TIFA, 2022</p> <p>City Manager, 2022</p>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Educate private property owners on how they can retain stormwater onsite to reduce instances of flooding</li> <li>» Market available vacant residential sites to reputable developers</li> </ul>	<p>DPW, 2021</p> <p>City Manager &amp; Assessor, Ongoing</p>
<b>Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Apply for the <b>MSHDA MOD</b> program to pilot modular housing units</li> <li>» Collaborate with the <b>school district</b> to apply for a Safe Routes to School grants</li> <li>» Partner with the <b>Michigan State Land Bank</b> to fill vacant residential lots with modular housing uses</li> </ul>	<p>City Manager, 2021</p> <p>City Manager, 2022</p> <p>Assessor, 2023</p>



## Citizen Opportunities

Volunteer hours for park maintenance and for assisting homeowners with home repairs

# Redevelop

The downtown is the only area of the city that falls into this category. While the downtown has good bones, it is in need of a revamp. As discussed in the Economic Development section, the downtown building stock is losing touch with its architectural heritage and also suffers from commercial vacancy and underutilized buildings.

## Recommended Density

Compact, new construction does not exceed 3 times the width of originally platted downtown parcels without special consideration.

## Recommended Structure Form

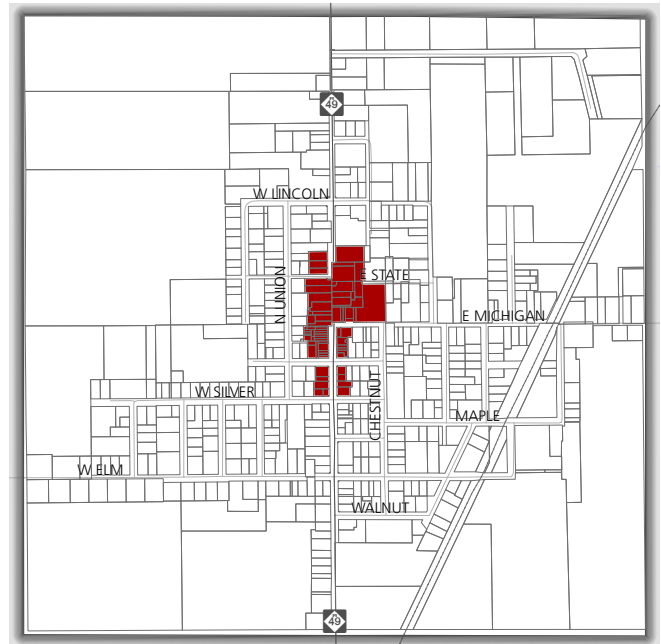
2-3 story historically appropriate building façade with rear parking

## Basic Strategies

The strategies for this area include façade improvements and building rehabilitation, nonmotorized enhancements, and business recruitment.

## Zoning Plan

Update and strengthen the historic design standards to include regulations on building materials and historically accurate architectural features; minimize the presence of parking with screening requirements and maximums.



## Metrics for Success (2019 baseline)



Commercial vacancy (45%)



- Facade grants disseminated (\$15,000)
- Downtown businesses with a website (2)
- New business starts (4)
- Resident perception that downtown has improved (40%)
- Second-story residential (11 units)
- Average downtown commercial values (\$65,560)



TOOLS	ACTIONS	PARTY & TIME FRAME
<b>Plans</b>	» Update the TIFA Plan	TIFA, 2021
<b>Code</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Update and strengthen the standards in the historic district overlay</li> <li>» Provide a designated space and regulations for food truck rallies</li> <li>» Continue to permit parking only in the rear of a building</li> <li>» Continue to enforce code against aggressive solicitation in the downtown rights-of-way</li> <li>» Require that parking lots that abut a public right-of-way are screened</li> <li>» Consider updating the parking formulas for land uses and instituting parking maximums</li> </ul>	PC, 2022 PC, 2022 PC, ongoing Code enforcer, ongoing PC, ongoing PC, 2022
<b>Operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Apply for Michigan Main Street, if denied, hire a TIFA Director to increase professional capacity</li> <li>» Update the façade improvement grant program</li> <li>» Create a database of all commercial properties and market property information packages that detail the sites basic characteristics and selling points to investing in Reading</li> <li>» Conduct an inventory of all second-story units in the downtown and determine how they can be repurposed</li> <li>» Improve stormwater management through the installation of GSI</li> <li>» Convert enclosed vacant parcels in the downtown core into programmed public space</li> </ul>	TIFA, 2021 TIFA, 2021 TIFA, 2022 TIFA, 2022 TIFA, DPW, 2024 TIFA, ongoing
<b>Financing</b>	» Apply for MEDC grants to prepare sites for redevelopment	TIFA, ongoing
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Train business owners on how to establish and maintain a web presence</li> <li>» Expand promotional channels for marketing local businesses</li> </ul>	TIFA, 2022 TIFA, 2022
<b>Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Actively seek out and direct potential entrepreneurs to the <b>Hillsdale Economic Development Partnership</b> to develop business plans</li> <li>» Continue to partner with <b>MEDC</b> to secure funding and/or support on redevelopment properties</li> <li>» Collaborate with <b>MDOT</b> to make M-49 pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly through visibility improvements and streetscaping efforts to the right of way (tree canopy, bulb outs)</li> <li>» Work with the city's <b>youth</b> to gain their insight on how to make the downtown more user-friendly for teenagers</li> </ul>	TIFA, ongoing TIFA, ongoing TIFA, ongoing TIFA, 2022



## Citizen Opportunities

Shop locally and attend downtown events

# Transition

The housing analysis revealed an insufficient supply of different housing types. While there is infill potential for residential development, the larger swath of agricultural land on the western portion of the city presents greater opportunity for neighborhood development. This is the city’s opportunity to plan growth using best practices for neighborhood design and layout. Before development pressure becomes urgent, the city should plan for a continuation of the original grid pattern, as opposed to curvilinear subdivisions with cul-de-sacs, with smaller lots and varied housing styles, along with the associated upgrades that the community expressed in the survey: tree line streets, curb and gutter, sidewalks, and recreation access.

While there may be some objection to loss of farmland in a rural community, when cities incorporate, they are responsible for being a population center, a hub of goods and services to serve the needs of the region. Farmland preservation is noble and necessary task but in this instance is more suitable for surrounding rural townships.

## Recommended Density

8 du/acre

## Recommended Structure Form

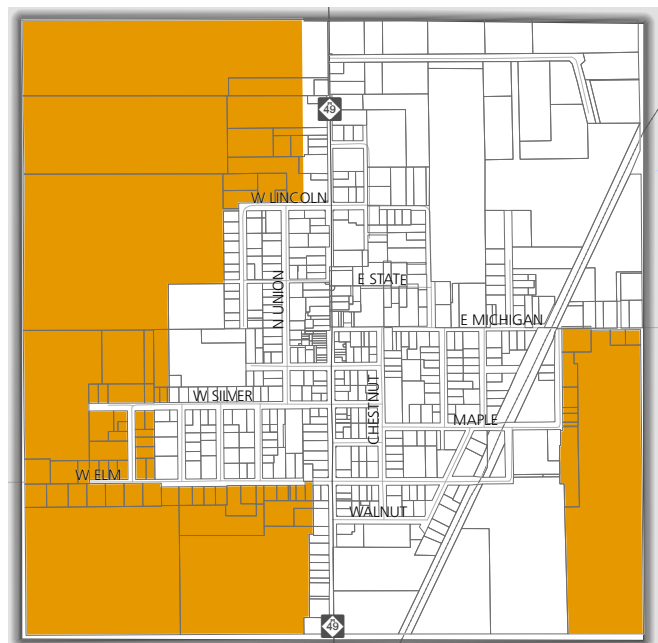
Range of small lot single-family, duplex, triplex, townhome, bungalow courts

## Basic Strategies

Create a subarea plan that details how to phase in medium-density neighborhoods

## Zoning Plan

Rezone agriculture to medium density residential.



## Metrics for Success



Sales price of new construction is attainable for a range of current residents (60% AMI)



% of pre-sold units (50%)

Adequate tree canopy coverage (1 tree/parcel)

Completed sidewalk network that is ADA-compliant (no gaps)

Majority of residents are within walking distance to a park/open space (60% of households live within .25 miles of a park)

TOOLS	ACTIONS	PARTY & TIME FRAME
<b>Plans</b>	» Adopt a specific neighborhood subarea plan that includes rendering of proposed development	PC, 2023
<b>Code</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Update the Zoning Ordinance to create standards for neighborhood development including design regulations for multi-family homes</li> <li>» Require that neighborhoods are connected (no cul-de-sacs), unless necessary to protect natural features or public safety</li> <li>» Adopt a PILOT ordinance</li> </ul>	PC, 2022  PC, 2022  City Manager, 2022
<b>Operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Conduct a fiscal impact analysis* prior to approving neighborhood development</li> <li>» Extend water, sewer, and stormwater to new residential development and charge based on the findings from the fiscal impact analysis*</li> </ul>	DPW, 2022  DPW, during site plan review process
<b>Knowledge</b>	» Inform the public through several community meetings about the transition process	DPW & PC, during site plan review process
<i>* Fiscal impact analysis is a tool that compares, for a given project or policy change, changes in governmental costs against changes in governmental revenues.</i>		



## Citizen Opportunities

Provide constructive feedback on the neighborhood transition

# Contain

The city's industrial areas are essential employment centers and a part of the region's economic history. Yet industrial uses have the highest probability for conflict. The intensity of the activity and space needed to buffer the effects from residential and commercial areas warrants a plan for physical containment within its designated boundaries and strategic growth within. For the industrial park in the norther part of the city, containment is of utmost importance as it shares a border with the elementary school. The other industrial area in the southeast corner of the city is physically bounded by railroad tracks on its western border. Between this site and the city's eastern border there is room that could be better occupied by other land uses; therefore, this industrial area should be contained to its current boundaries.

## Recommended Density

Consider greater flexibility in minimum lot widths and maximum coverage requirements

## Recommended Structure Form

Modern and attractive building materials, treated as a campus with uniform design, not to exceed downtown heights, properly buffered from rights-of-way

## Basic Strategies

Do not expand industrial zoning, recruit businesses with a competitive advantage

## Zoning Plan

Update stormwater and landscaping standards.



## Metrics for Success (2019 baseline)



No soil contamination  
(unknown)

Available land industrial park  
(20 acres)



New hires are Reading area residents  
(unknown), total employees (32)

Number of new business starts (0)

TOOLS	ACTIONS	PARTY & TIME FRAME
<b>Plans</b>	» Refer to Region 2 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies to align business recruitment efforts for the industrial park with industries that have a competitive advantage	TIFA, ongoing
	» Develop a site master plan that includes preferred circulation, landscaping, building design and orientation, and infrastructure	TIFA, 2022
<b>Code</b>	» Require onsite stormwater retention and improve landscaping standards as a means of screening from other uses	PC & TIFA, 2022
<b>Operations</b>	» Require that new businesses conduct a soil sample to test if contaminants have leaked	TIFA, 2023
	» Incentivize new industrial operations to hire local residents	TIFA, 2022
<b>Knowledge</b>	» Develop marketing material for promoting available spaces in the industrial park	TIFA, 2022
<b>Partnerships</b>	» Partner with the school district to train students for jobs in Reading and Hillsdale County	TIFA, 2023

