



Chapter 4

Land Use

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Introduction

Understanding a community’s land uses and development trends is critical in planning for its future. Existing land uses provide the framework from which the community’s long-term development vision is created. Historic development patterns assist in:

- Understanding past land use policy and what potential changes might be needed;
- Determining potential, appropriate, and responsible future growth;
- Capitalizing on economic development opportunities; and
- Addressing infrastructure needs.

Comprehensive plans allow communities to manage the location, quantity, and quality of growth. Location refers to where new development or redevelopment should occur. Quantity refers to the amount of new development that can be supported by the local and regional economy. Quality refers to the type and character of growth. Effectively balancing these three elements directly influences the function and character of a community and its transportation efficiency.



Quantity, Quality & Location are the backbone of land use policy in the Elkhart community.

Existing Land Use

Elkhart’s topography, natural features, and transportation system (water and surface) have all shaped the development of the City throughout its approximate 200 year history. Elkhart was first platted in 1832 with 51 lots near the north bank of the St. Joseph River. The first building was constructed at the northwest corner of Main and Jackson streets. With the development of rail lines, access to the St. Joseph River, and its location along the route between Chicago and Detroit, Elkhart became a transportation hub and commercial center which resulted in growth occurring beyond the original 51 lots.

Today, Elkhart’s land development and redevelopment patterns are an indication of its past and its evolving land use policies, as discussed throughout this chapter. Elkhart is a mature community with land uses and development patterns that represent its cultural history, manufacturing industrial base, and automobile-oriented suburban growth. These land uses contribute to the Elkhart community character, conveying its identity to residents and visitors. The City’s historic downtown has the building inventory and architectural composition representative of a Midwestern community of its age featuring a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. Parks are located along the Elkhart and St. Joseph rivers in the floodways and floodplains, where other uses are not safe or practical. Other pockets of natural areas and parks



Commercial uses and available retail space in the Downtown Area.

are scattered throughout the City with little to no connections to each other.

As the City has grown, several land use patterns have emerged and many of the City’s uses are inherited from Elkhart County, an outcome of annexations. Heavy industrial uses, some in operation and some remnants of Elkhart’s manufacturing past, line the Norfolk Southern, Elkhart & Western and Grand Elk rail lines, the 80/90 Toll Road, and anchor the corners of the City limits. Outside of the downtown commercial center, commercial uses, including both retail and office space, are located along the City’s major thoroughfares and are primarily automobile-oriented in character. Single-family residences are the dominant residential land use within historic neighborhoods located adjacent to downtown and in newer residential developments and subdivisions located in more rural settings. Community facilities, including parks, libraries, churches, and schools are equally dispersed throughout the City providing amenities for Elkhart’s citizens.

As stated earlier, the City of Elkhart’s policies, historic economic base, and annexation agreements with Elkhart County have allowed a variety of land uses to occur. Elkhart is an employment center for the Michiana region. As such, Elkhart has a slightly larger percentage of land use dedicated to industrial (29 percent) and commercial (9 percent) uses than residential use (35 percent). Elkhart imports employees from other communities within Elkhart County and the region. Serving as a regional employment base has economic advantages, but also has disadvantages pertaining to land use and strain on local resources. For example, with such high intensity and percentage of industrial and commercial uses, there are many instances of incompatible adjacent land uses throughout the City. It is not uncommon to find a residence next to an industrial use with little buffering or less intensive uses separating these incompatibilities. Because of the economic recession, many of the industrial and commercial uses are now vacant and no longer contributing to the City’s tax base. Without a comprehensive plan and future land use direction, the City’s tendency to incrementally permit industrial and commercial uses that encroach into established residential neighborhoods will continue.

The “Existing Land Use Distribution” diagram illustrates Elkhart’s land use composition. At 29 percent and 28 percent of total land within the City limits, industrial and low density residential, respectively, represent the largest land use categories. Public/institutional uses such as churches, schools, and libraries are eleven percent of the City’s land use. Commercial, which includes both office and retail, accounts for nine percent. Together, medium and high density residential comprises five percent. Two percent of the City is mobile home parks, one percent is the railroad, and

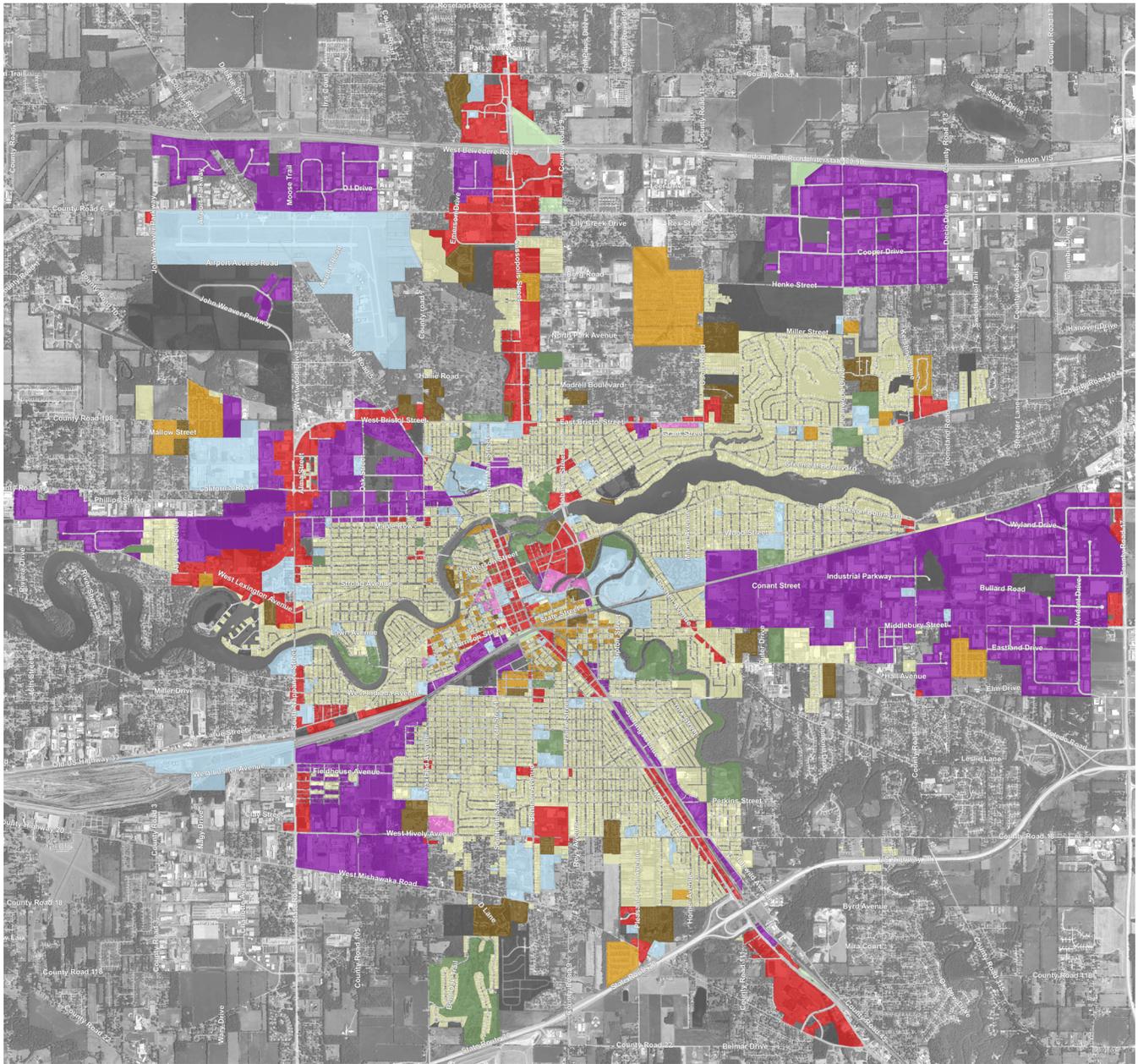
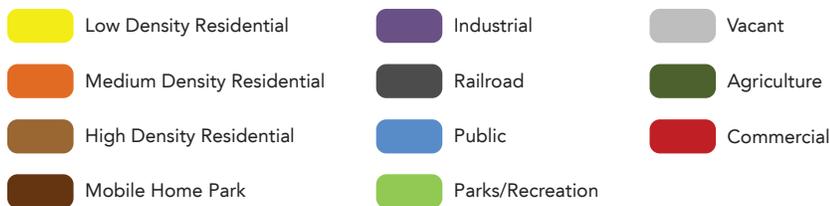


Figure 4.1: Existing Land Use Map



one percent is agriculture. Approximately nine percent of the land in Elkhart is vacant.

Existing Land Use By Geographic Organization

A noticeable characteristic of the City is its irregular incorporated boundaries. The City’s corporate limits occupy land in portions of Concord, Osolo, Cleveland, and Baugo townships. The City’s boundaries have expanded as City water and sewer service has been extended and Elkhart County land has been annexed.

The following description of Elkhart’s existing land use pattern is organized by five geographic sections of the City:

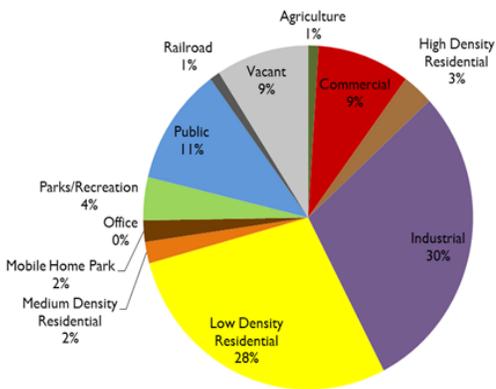


Figure 4.2: Existing Land Use Distribution

1. Downtown
2. Northwest/West
3. Southwest/West
4. Southeast/East
5. Northeast

Downtown

Single family residential and multi-family residential conversions within the inner city remain the most densely populated. The oldest housing stock occurs north and west of the downtown area. Those homes were constructed on smaller lots with the homes covering a large portion of the property. Many of the homes built within three to four blocks west of Main Street were formerly single family homes that have been converted to multi-family dwellings. In reviewing Polk Directories, many of these conversions occurred in the late 1930s and 1940s during and after World War II.

Many office and small retail uses exist in converted homes along Main Street and west toward Second Street and Third Street. A small number of new office buildings as well as a bank have been constructed primarily along Main Street in the last ten years. Those commercial uses begin to transition to converted residential uses at Third Street and beyond. The Main Street corridor has the most dense commercial uses with many of the oldest structures having converted the upper stories to residential and office uses. The most common land uses now found in the downtown are office, bank, medical office, recreational/park, restaurant, and apartments (multi-family). Ordinary commercial/retail uses have had varied success along Main Street with a few notable exceptions including Hopman’s Jewelry, Christian Science Reading Room, Seifert Drug Store, and Stephenson’s, an upscale women’s apparel shop.

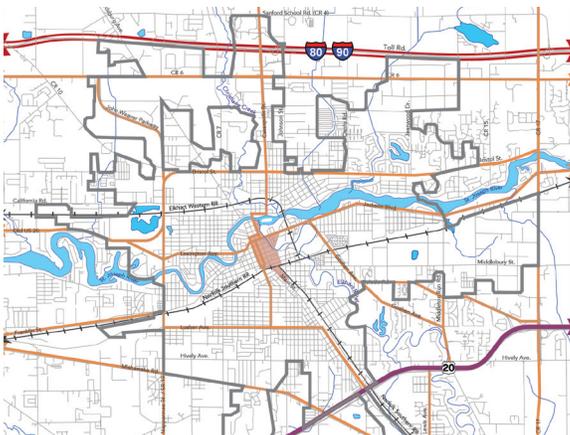


Figure 4.3: Downtown Geographic Boundaries

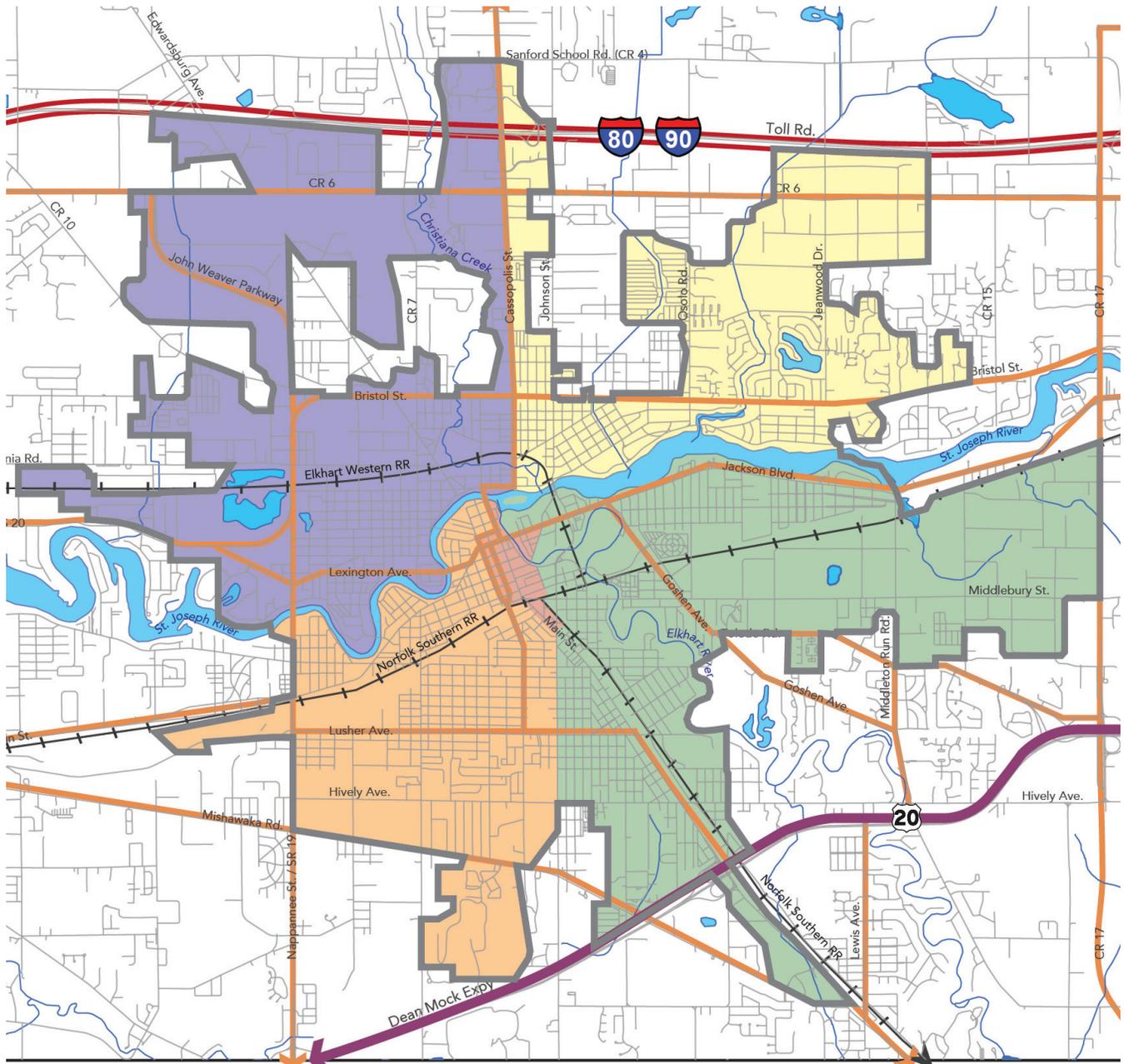


Figure 4.4: Geographic Location Map for Land Use

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--------------------|
|  | Indiana Toll Road |  | Northwest Quadrant |
|  | US 20 Bypass |  | Northeast Quadrant |
|  | Major Arterial |  | Southeast Quadrant |
|  | Rail Line |  | Southwest Quadrant |
|  | City Limits |  | Downtown |

Substantial investment has been made over the last several years with private and public dollars to implement the findings of the 2004 *Downtown Action Agenda*. The Arts and Entertainment District, as proposed in the study, has begun to take shape. The new Central Park in the 300 block of South Main Street, IUSB's Elkhart campus, Nibco Ice and Water Park, and two new office buildings on Nibco Parkway, along with the above noted long established businesses have begun to revitalize and reinvigorate the downtown.

Many of the existing downtown buildings have been renovated, and several have created new loft apartments above commercial, ground-floor space. The Riverwalk has provided an excellent backdrop for new office, restaurant, and recreational uses. Several new restaurants have opened within the last three years within the downtown Arts and Entertainment District.

The \$16 million renovation and restoration of the Lerner Theatre came to fruition with grand opening events in 2011. By expanding the footprint of the facility north to High Street, banquet and meeting space was created. These areas have already seen activity for parties, meetings, proms and the like. The renovation included enlargement of the performance stage which will accommodate larger productions. Area residents have attended theatrical presentations and concerts and restaurants in the district reported increased patronage during Theatre events.

Potential areas for redevelopment exist along the Elkhart Avenue corridor where a large manufacturing facility (Elkhart Foundry) had been idle for several years. With the foundry buildings now demolished and the site cleared and seeded, it is ready for private development. The site is approximately six acres and enjoys scenic frontage on the Elkhart River. A quality project, potentially including commercial and residential space, is needed which could in turn spur compatible development on nearby underutilized land.

Northwest/West

Summer 2011 marked the beginning of INDOT's work to widen and improve State Road 19, or Nappanee Street. The north boundary of the project will realign the intersection of Bypass Road and Nappanee Street. Bypass Road is proposed to connect to Nappanee Street at a newly formed 'T' intersection. This portion of the project caused the closing of a used car business at the site. The primary land uses in the area of the proposed project are auto sales and auto related services, fast food restaurants, office uses both medical and dental, and the city's sewer treatment plant and office. The southern limit of the project will be at the intersection of Franklin where Franklin will shift to the north to

allow for increased stacking of vehicles waiting to proceed north, east or west on State Road 19 north of the viaduct.

The West Bristol Street corridor is beginning to experience an increased demand for commercial uses. Historically, many of the uses adjacent to West Bristol Street have been manufacturing. For a variety of reasons, whether it be plant closure or relocation or redevelopment of vacant land, many of the recent uses have been commercial. Examples of those new commercial uses have been food service (i.e. restaurant, coffee shop) and retail. One recent example of redevelopment is a daycare center built on land formerly owned by the Bayer Corporation (formerly Miles). Some examples of existing commercial uses are the Elkhart Market West where Martin’s Super Market is the anchor tenant and the Parkmor Plaza shopping center, which has experienced some vacancies.

The area directly south of Elkhart Market West located where Bristol Street becomes Nappanee Street, has conflicting land uses. The area is zoned for industrial and manufacturing uses, however several single family homes remain as non-conforming uses. The residential uses were located in the area prior to the establishment of the manufacturing and industrial uses. Several smaller manufacturing uses currently operate in the area as well as auto service/repair shops. The property in that area was indeed originally platted for residential development which negatively impacts a transition to manufacturing uses. Hurdles to redevelopment include difficulty in meeting compliance with minimum setbacks, parking requirements and storm water retention requirements. Therefore, large scale redevelopment would be challenging due to the shallow depth of the lots and existing infrastructure.

Beyond the Bristol/Nappanee corridor to the northwest of CR 10 and John Weaver Parkway, are established manufacturing uses and a new industrial park. The Aeroplex Industrial Park, accessed via the John Weaver Parkway, offers 300 +/- acres of undeveloped land, some of which is adjacent to the airport. The Aeroplex Industrial Park is within five minutes of the Indiana Toll Road providing quick vehicular access to a major East/West thoroughfare.

The unincorporated Cleveland Township, beyond the municipal boundary, has experienced tremendous growth in suburban residential housing. Many of these homes are on estate size lots, many over one acre, with well water and septic systems. This area has easy access to St. Joseph County (Mishawaka and South Bend) so residents in this area may be employed there and/or do their shopping there. The closest place within Elkhart City limits for these county residents to shop for groceries, do banking or enjoy dining out would be the shopping center at the Elkhart Market

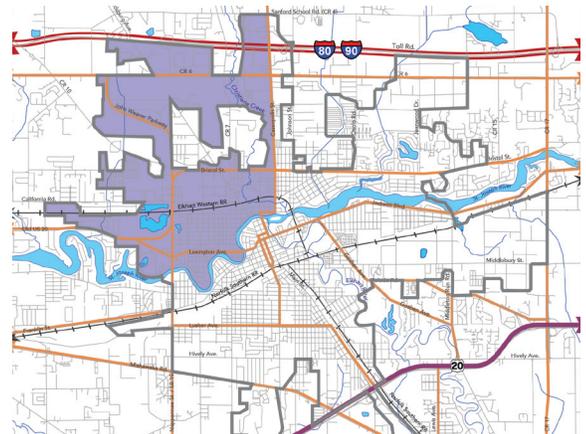


Figure 4.5: Northwest/West Geographic Boundaries

West. Other commercial locations could be accessed via CR 4 (Sanford School Road) or CR 10.

A Superfund Site exists at the intersection of CR 10 and John Weaver Parkway. Many of the county residences to the east, which are located in Elkhart County, have been connected to the municipal water system due to potable water contamination from the Himco area. A reuse plan was written several years ago for the Himco Dump, as the property has become known, that outlined potential passive recreation options for the property. None has been established to date.

Southwest/West

Discussed in the previous section, improvements to State Road 19 impact the Southwest/West area as well. This area’s primary land uses are auto sales and auto related services, fast food restaurants, office uses both medical and dental, and the City’s sewer treatment plant and office.

The retail and office uses along Nappanee Street, Franklin Street, Lexington Avenue were primarily constructed 20 to 30 years ago and many properties are beginning to show their age. A number of these properties were constructed for a specific use or have a unique architectural design that presents challenges for a new or alternative use. Some infill redevelopment has occurred. Very few of the properties along these corridors are linked with sidewalks and movement between the commercial uses depend on the use of an automobile.

The Southwest neighborhood is bounded by Nappanee Street on the west, Lusher Avenue to the north, Oakland to the east and Hively Avenue to the south and has had manufacturing zoning since at least 1957. The predominant land uses in the area are smaller manufacturing, auto salvage and repair, and warehousing. A number of residential properties still exist as non-conforming uses within this area and several have successfully sought variances from the Board of Zoning Appeals to legalize their existence. There has been a limited number of new businesses in this area. As noted in a previous section, lots here were also originally platted for residential uses which will cause challenges for a transition to large scale development where manufacturing uses rely on truck traffic for deliveries. There is typically not sufficient room for truck navigation on the property and as a result of that, navigation occurs in the public right of way potentially causing conflicts with other traffic.

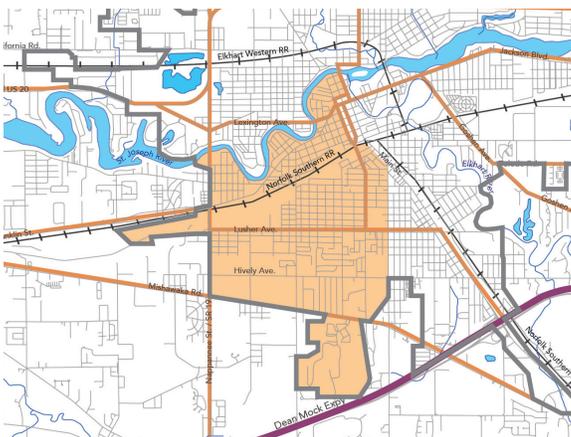


Figure 4.6: Southwest/West

Southeast/East

County Road 17, the eastern boundary for the municipality, has experienced substantial commercial development over the past

seven to ten years. Within the municipal boundary, most of the 1996 'future land use maps' call for the land fronting CR 17 to be industrial. That has not been the development trend however, as commercial uses have dominated the corridor. Several large strip centers with restaurants and office and service uses, as well as a large garden design center, and two financial institutions exist in the area. Presumably, these businesses look to nearby residents of unincorporated Jefferson Township (east side of County Road 17) as their base of patronage. Additionally, people living in Michigan and south/central Elkhart County, including the greater Goshen area, can now access this area with ease. County Road 17 is a four lane, limited access road that now extends from US 12 in Michigan and will eventually connect to US 6 in southern Elkhart County. County Road 17 also connects to the new Elkhart East exit at the Indiana Toll Road. The Dean Mock Expressway (US 20) terminates at County Road 17 which links Elkhart to South Bend and St. Joseph County.

Slightly west of the County Road 17 corridor, the manufacturing/ industrial park (Elkhart Industrial Park) is almost completely built out with little vacant land left for development. Recent construction activities have focused on additions to existing buildings. Many warehouses and manufacturing operations have existed in that area for 15 to 25 + years, with properties north of Middlebury Street being approximately 10 years older.

The residential neighborhoods to the east of the downtown and south of the Saint Joseph River from Jackson to Middlebury include many stable, mostly single family dwellings. A good portion of those homes were built after WWI, on through the 1950's and continue to be well maintained and home owner occupied.

Northeast/East

A major annexation from unincorporated Osolo Township to the City was the Northland Industrial Park. The annexation went into effect in January 2008. This annexation added 492 acres to the City of Elkhart. The Northland Industrial Park consists of many warehouses and manufacturing plants that continue to supply the recreational vehicle industry. Easy access to the Indiana Toll Road makes it a desirable location. The area has almost no vacant/ undeveloped land.

The single family residential area south of the Northland Industrial Park has experienced ground water contamination and has subsequently been connected to municipal water service. The homes are still located in Elkhart County with many of those residents choosing not to annex to the City. These neighborhoods connect to other neighborhoods located within the city via local streets.

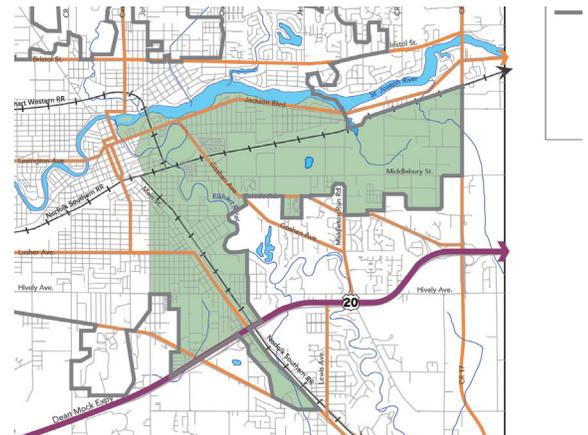


Figure 4.7: Southeast/East Geographic Boundaries

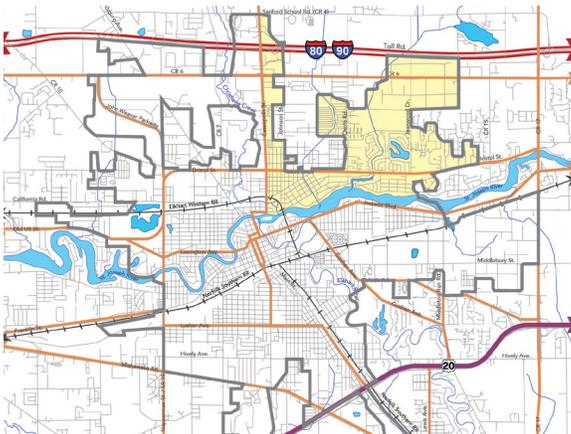


Figure 4.8: Northeast/East

The construction of these homes spanned several decades beginning in the 1950's to the present. The area remains desirable because of easy access to parks, schools and shopping. The East Bristol Street corridor has neighborhood retail, banks and a new grocery store within a five minute drive for residents in most of Osolo Township, both incorporated and unincorporated.

The residential neighborhoods north and south of the East Bristol Street corridor and north of the Saint Joseph River include many stable, mostly single family dwellings with several smaller apartment complexes located east of Osolo Road and in the Walnut Trails planned unit development. The homes vary in age with earlier build dates in the 1920's. Several new builds have occurred on lots where new owners have had older homes razed to make way for more modern architecture and floor plans. This phenomenon is especially noted at waterfront properties along Greenleaf, a trend found in many communities with waterfront sites.

The Remington Industrial Park is located just outside the municipal boundary on the City's northeast side. Developed within the last decade, this park has water and sewer services. The Elkhart East Business Park is also located outside the municipal boundary, but is served by city services. These two planned industrial/commercial areas have the largest amount of undeveloped land available.

The County Road 17 extension connects to a new Indiana Toll Road entrance and continues north to Michigan and US 12. As a limited access road, County Road 17 serves to connect southwest lower Michigan through Elkhart County to US Highway 6.

1996 Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations

The last major update to the City of Elkhart's *Comprehensive Land Use Plan* occurred in 1996. This reviewed, in general terms, the land use categories within the City of Elkhart and portions of the surrounding unincorporated townships of Osolo, Concord, Baugo, Cleveland and Washington. In contrast, this 2012 *Comprehensive Plan Update* only examines the land within the City's corporate boundary. The existing land use update was performed by Elkhart City staff using the most recent aerial photography and windshield surveys of the community.

The 1996 *Comprehensive Plan* cited the purpose of evaluating existing land use patterns within the community to determine the historic patterns of development, conflicting land uses, and provide a basis for establishing future land use scenarios. The 1996 *Comprehensive Land Use Plan* describes the following land use categories:

Residential. Residential uses are found throughout the city. In general, the area surrounding the downtown has higher density development. Often this is due to single family dwelling conversions and smaller lot sizes. The farther away from downtown the density becomes lower with larger suburban sized lots that in some areas of the city reach one half acre or more. With much of the City built out, new residential development occurs outside the City boundary in larger suburban, estate sized lots.

Office. This category includes all types of office uses – law, medical and dental, insurance, real estate, and other professional offices. These uses are found in the downtown and also along Bristol Street between Osolo Road and Cassopolis Street. Offices are also found in commercial shopping centers alongside less intense retail and/or service uses. Many office uses can be found in converted homes along streets that are heavily travelled.

Commercial. The commercial land use category includes a wide range of uses. Neighborhood retail, strip/power centers, malls, and the downtown Central Business District (CBD) are examples of commercial uses found within the city.

Industrial. This category provides for all types of manufacturing and warehousing uses. The 1996 plan cited the manufacturing and production of manufactured housing, mobile homes, recreational vehicles and associated support industry/businesses which still account for a large percentage of industrial uses within the community. Recent trends have introduced small building light industry/back office functions, and warehousing uses into the City. The trend of large areas needed for manufacturing are in the past and so large industrial sites should be able to be redeveloped to suit more light industry, warehouse and small manufacturing processes.

Public/Institutional. These uses include schools, government facilities, hospitals, places of worship, cemeteries, and other public facilities. These facilities are dispersed throughout the city, and there is typically a correlation between location and the population served. Public Uses are not usually found concentrated in one area.

Park and Recreation. Within the city limits the current inventory of park land covers 296.75 acres. Elkhart has 32 park facilities that range in size from a small mini-park to Boot Lake Nature Preserve which covers 226 acres. The existing park system offers residents and visitors a wide variety of activities. Those activities include passive recreation opportunities such as walking trails/paths, fishing, picnicking and horseshoe courts. Active recreational opportunities include multiple playgrounds, basketball courts, ball diamonds, soccer fields, a water park, and ice skating.

Agriculture/Undeveloped. These lands are used for the cultivation of crops and animal grazing, woodlands, and undeveloped land. Agricultural uses are typically located outside the urbanized areas. The city does not plan or zone for agriculture uses.

Vacant. This category includes land that is undeveloped and land tracts of land that were previously developed for residential, commercial, and industrial uses that are not currently in use.

Future Land Use

The future land use framework is a map illustrating how the City of Elkhart should grow, develop, and redevelop over the next 20 years. The City may, from time to time, annex additional property into its corporate limits in order to provide municipal services. Completing a financial feasibility study is important for the City to completely understand the fiscal impact on the City’s municipal budget due to the annexation. The future land use framework does not alter the 2009 City limits with the exception of the airport expansion area, where the Elkhart Municipal Airport is planning to expand its facility west.

Although the City’s boundaries are irregular and oftentimes confusing to residents and emergency service providers, it is unlikely that the City’s boundaries will substantially change in the next 20 years. As such, there are only slight differentiations between the existing and future land use maps. The future land use map does introduce a new land use category, mixed-use, to the City. This land use category is not represented in the City’s existing land use, nor is it mentioned in the 1996 *Comprehensive Land Use Plan*.

The overall concept of the future land use framework features a reduction of the City’s industrial land use inventory, reinvestment efforts directed downtown, and minimal annexation until the existing City core is strengthened. The reinvestment and strengthening of the core includes residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, industrial areas, institutions, infrastructure, and open space within the existing City limits. The future land use framework is not significantly different from the existing land use map, and reflects the intention of focusing future development and redevelopment within the current City limits.

The new future land use framework does, however, introduce a new land use category of mixed use development. The purpose of this new category is to encourage redevelopment on underutilized or vacant commercial or industrial land. New mixed land uses are primarily located along key transportation corridors and downtown. Mixed use promotes a combination of situations including several types of uses within one structure, such as street level retail or office with residential on upper floors. This type

of mixed use is most common in downtowns and reinforces the City’s Downtown Action Agenda’s four districts. Additionally, mixed use can apply to a mix of uses on a parcel or parcels where commercial, office, residential, institutional, and parks and open space are master planned as a coordinated development. To allow for the introduction of the mixed use category, the future land use framework reduces the industrial land use classification footprint along key transportation corridors, such as US 20 Bypass, Nappanee Road, Main, and Bristol in favor of more mixed use and commercial development.

2012 Comprehensive Plan Update Designations

The future land use framework diagram features 13 land use categories defined as:

Commercial. Lots devoted to uses that provide general retail, personal service, office, and sales operations which serve the everyday needs of people. Commercial uses should be located along major corridors, at neighborhood nodes, and in downtown.

Commercial uses located within neighborhood nodes are smaller scale establishments such as convenience stores, small restaurants or coffee shops, dry cleaners, service stations, professional and medical offices, and other similar uses that have a low impact on adjacent residential areas. Neighborhood nodes are typically located at an intersection of collectors roads that lead into residential neighborhoods.

Community-wide commercial uses provide a mix of business, service, and office uses that serve the larger region. Community commercial uses generally are larger scale such as strip malls and big box retailers that include grocery stores, shopping malls, vehicle sales, discount retail stores, chain restaurants, or bookstores. These areas typically develop along major arterial roadways.

Industrial. Industrial uses include light or heavy manufacturing, warehouse, production, logistics and distribution, or require a large amount of area for outdoor operations or storage. Future uses should be clean industry with enclosed/screened storage. Consideration should be given to location, buffering, and negative environmental impacts.

Recreation/Park. Recreation and park uses are lots or parcels which contain open space, green areas, ball fields, children’s play equipment, public and private golf courses, community gardens, natural features, animal habitats, conservation areas, wooded areas, and environmentally sensitive areas. Recreation and park areas should be used as a respite from urban development and link to each other through a system of greenways (or linear parks) and trails.



An example of a community-serving commercial shopping center.



Warehousing and logistics are considered an industrial land use.



A multi-use path in Island Park provides a recreation amenity in an environmentally sensitive area.

Natural. Natural areas are undeveloped lots or parcels unaltered by activity where vegetation is distributed in naturally occurring patterns. Such areas are not necessarily completely natural or undisturbed, but are substantially preserved for the appreciation of natural features.

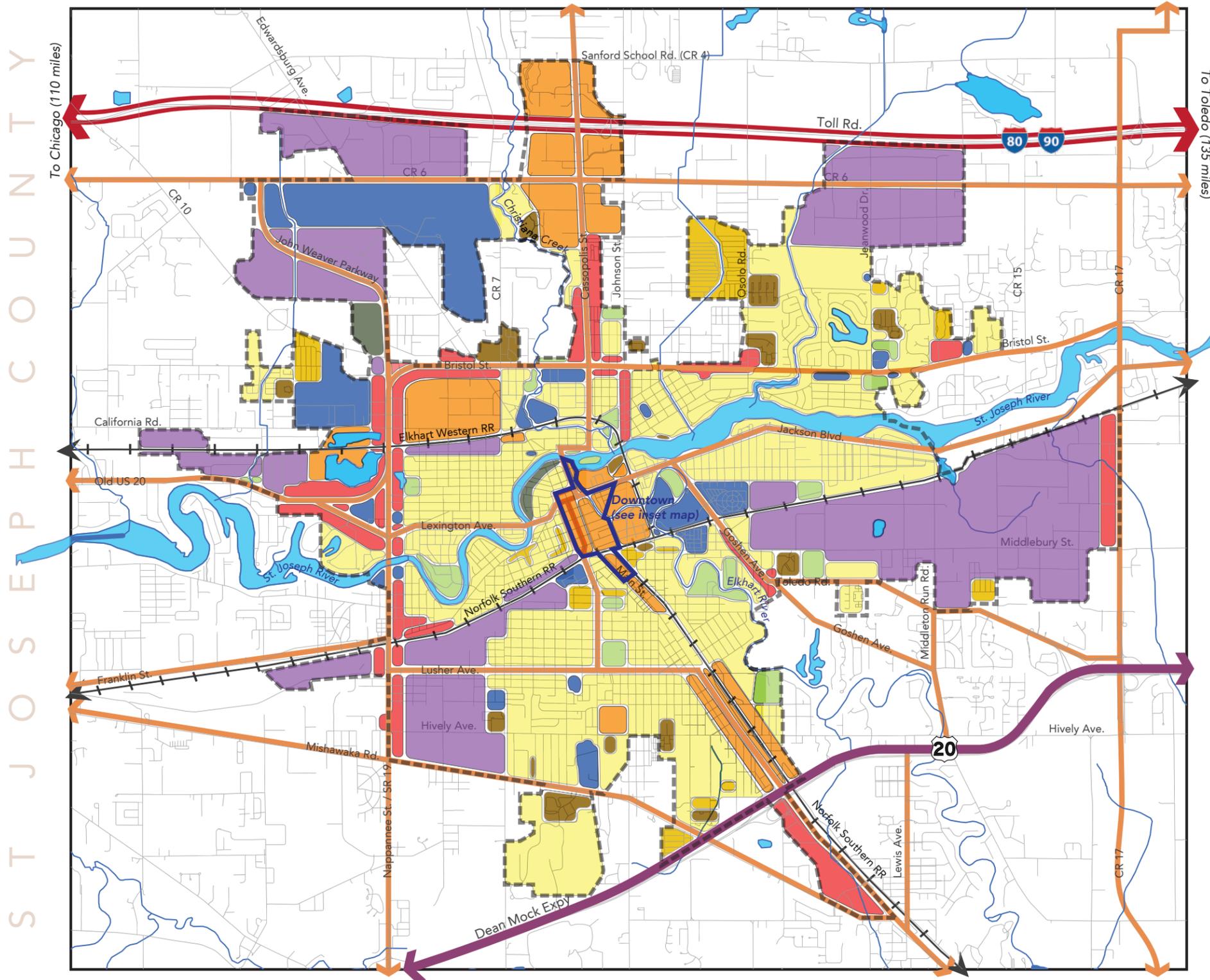
Institutional. Institutional uses are lots which contain schools, religious facilities, government facilities, hospitals, cemeteries, utilities, and other quasi-public facilities. These uses are typically located near residential areas or urban centers and serve the local population.

Residential. Residential uses are lots, parcels, or portions of mixed-use buildings which are devoted to detached and attached housing units utilizing municipal water, sanitary sewer, and sidewalks. Residential uses can have a variety of housing types including single-family, duplex, or apartments. Densities will vary depending on the location within Elkhart and can range from less than 1.0 dwelling unit per acre up to 24.0 dwelling units per acre. Consideration should be given to the location within the City, the surrounding density and type of adjacent housing, transportation network and location to parks, schools, and shopping areas. Future freestanding residential construction should be focused on filling in the existing community structure. Future single-family, detached residential development should occur in existing residential neighborhoods as “infill” development on vacant lots to complete the neighborhood residential block pattern rather than in undeveloped, “greenfield” areas. Density variations are defined as follows:

Low Density Residential. Residential development designed to provide for the lowest density single-family residential development typically requiring larger lot width and area. However, in urbanized or urbanizing areas the frontage of the lot may be narrower than 60 feet. The intent is to protect and conserve existing and future residential development, particularly in more recently developed areas. In all cases, the development characteristics of the dwellings are to be of a design that is compatible with its surroundings. Because of the provision for narrow lots in urbanized areas, the resulting average density in developments located within this classification is 6.0 units per acre. However, new developments should achieve a minimum density range of 4.5 to 7.2 units per acre dependent on dimensional requirements found in applicable municipal ordinances.

Medium Density Residential. Residential development designed to provide for both single- and two-family dwellings requiring average size lot width and area. In all cases, the development characteristics of the dwellings are

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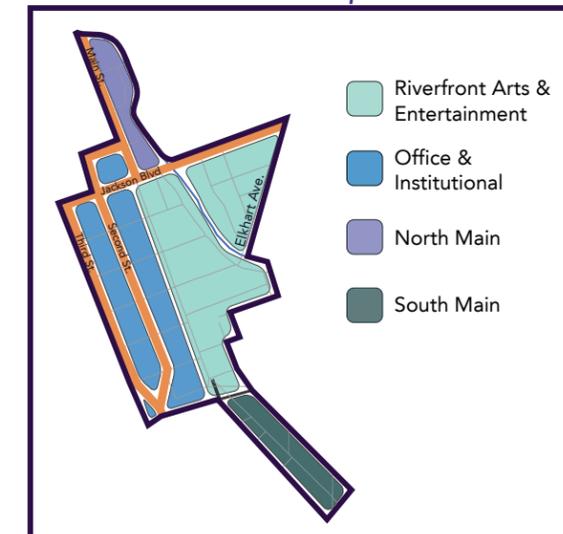


Future Land Use

Key

	Indiana Toll Road		Commercial		High Density Residential
	US 20 Bypass		Industrial		Mixed Use
	Major Arterial		Recreation / Park		Institutional
	Rail Line		Natural		Low Density Residential
	Downtown		Low Density Residential		Medium Density Residential
	City Limits				

Downtown Districts Inset Map



to be of a design that is compatible with its surroundings. Single-family dwellings should achieve a minimum density of 7.2 units per acre with two-family dwellings achieving a minimum density of 12.1 units per acre all dependent on dimensional requirements found in applicable municipal ordinances.

High Density Residential. A combination of single-family, two-family, and multiple-family residential development, including townhomes, intended to provide residential development achieving a minimum density range of 6.0 to 13.1 units per acre dependent on the dimensional requirements found in applicable municipal ordinances. Due to development pressures, increases in the intensity due to the conversion of older single-family residences to two or more residential unit structures historically has occurred within well-established areas of the City. The goal of this density classification is to ensure this development does not create a detriment to the surrounding area due to inadequate parking and infrastructure, undersized lots and general incompatibility with the surrounding area.



Religious facilities are considered institutional uses.

Mixed-Use. A parcel or lot with more than one use located within a building or occupying the site. Typical combinations of land use mixes on a lot or parcel can include residential, commercial, institution, recreation, open space, and office. These uses are typically developed within a coordinated development program. Buildings can also be mixes of uses where commercial or office are located on the ground floor and office or residential are located on upper floors. Review will need to occur to ensure that the appropriate mix of uses is compatible with one another and with adjacent land uses.



Single family homes comprise the majority of the low density residential land use in the City.

Downtown. Downtown Elkhart is comprised of four districts as identified in the 2004 Elkhart *Downtown Action Agenda*. Specific districts are defined as follows:

Riverfront Arts & Entertainment District. A Mixed use district with emphasis on pedestrian uses including art, entertainment, specialty retail and restaurants located on the first floor and office/housing in the upper stories. Land uses should be oriented to small retail businesses or services related to theater, dance, music, art, recreation, movie, and other compatible arts and entertainment uses. Institutional uses such as churches, schools and social services should be limited in this district.

Office & Institutional District. A district focusing on government, office and other institutional uses. This district should include uses such as government offices, library, churches, schools and other office uses. Support mixed uses are appropriate including office, convenience retail and



Townhouses are an example of a medium density residential development.



A multi-family apartment complex is classified as high density residential.



This example of mixed-use development includes apartments above retail shops.



An existing use in the Riverfront Arts & Entertainment District.

restaurants all co-located within a single building. General or specialty retail should be avoided in this district.

North Main Street District. This district’s focus should include office, convenience retail, and restaurants. Future development should include mixed-use development with office and convenience retail on the first floor and housing on the upper floors. Any residential should be situated with views to the river. The character of new residential development should be such that distinguishes it from the Riverfront Arts and Entertainment District.

South Main Street District. A district that functions as both a gateway to the downtown and an area in transition from residential to commercial uses. This district serves as a transition area between the core downtown area to the north and the residential areas to the south. Commercial uses should be primarily neighborhood-oriented businesses, including small convenience retail, service retail and restaurants. Efforts in this district should focus on building renovation, removal of dilapidated structures, and small business development.

Five Redevelopment Areas

The future land use framework maintains the general existing land use pattern. Five redevelopment areas are proposed for consideration and future economic development exploration. These include the following:

- Miles-Bayer Redevelopment Area
- Five Points Redevelopment Area (Old US 20/Bypass/ Lexington Avenue/Nappanee Road)
- Woodland Crossing Mall Redevelopment Area (formerly Pierre Moran Mall)
- Downtown East Redevelopment Area
- Airport Expansion and Redevelopment Area

The Miles-Bayer redevelopment area is a key economic development site that is being marketed by both the City of Elkhart and the Economic Development Corporation of Elkhart County. Given its proximity to major thoroughfares and access to the Elkhart Western rail line, and the environmental remediation that may be required because of its previous use, a mix of industrial and commercial uses is appropriate at this location.

There is a desire by the City to improve the appearance and function of the land uses adjacent to the Old US 20/Bypass/

Lexington Avenue/Nappanee Road intersection. This includes the land surrounding the quarry south of California Road to the land fronting Old US 20. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) has redesigned this intersection as part of the Nappanee Road improvement project, which allows the opportunity for additional land use changes and reconfigurations. Redevelopment of this area should include reorganizing the existing commercial uses fronting Bypass Road and Lexington Avenue, creating a unified streetscape, and recruiting complementary retail or commercial uses that will support the redefined aesthetic of these two potential redevelopment areas.

The Woodland Crossing Mall, formerly the Pierre Moran Mall, is a new, open concept retail center that has changed ownership in the last five years. The enclosed center section of the Pierre Moran Mall was razed to allow for the new retail concept. Elkhart's population has shifted both in the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the Woodland Crossing Mall as well as throughout the City. As this shift has occurred, so have retail shopping destinations. As stated earlier in this memorandum, the Michiana region is well-served by regional retail centers in Mishawaka. Southeast of the Woodland Crossing Mall site is the Concord Mall, which itself is struggling. Given the availability and relatively quick access to retail selections along Grape Road in Mishawaka, the City of Elkhart is unable to support multiple retail sites requiring a large trade area customer base. The Woodland Crossing Mall's new owners are targeting their tenant recruitment plan to focus on more neighborhood convenience retail. Further redevelopment of this area should consider civic or community destinations that could attract additional customers to the area while providing a service or recreational opportunity that is not available at other retail centers throughout the City.

As mentioned previously, Concord Mall, on the City's south side, has experienced changes from the volatility in the retail industry, changing consumer preferences and demographics, and regional retail consolidation. Tenant recruitment is ongoing for mall managers and JC Penney and Carson's have committed to remain in the mall. To support these and other national retailers, mall management is marketing space to locally owned businesses. Potential reconfiguration of the site to include non-retail components could serve to enhance the overall mall experience and complement and support existing retail tenants.

The *Downtown Action Agenda* was prepared in 2004 to guide the revitalization of downtown Elkhart. In this plan, four districts were proposed, each with a role in the overall function of downtown. The future land use framework supports the continued development of these four downtown districts focusing on the riverfront arts and entertainment opportunities, office and institutional uses

along the civic spine created by the library, City Hall, and other educational and government uses, mixed-use development on the north end of downtown, and gateway development on the south end of downtown. On South Main Street, in particular between Lusher Avenue and the US 20 Bypass, numerous ethnic businesses have opened creating an emerging destination for specialty retail and restaurants. To further encourage and support this success, and build upon the recommendations of the *Downtown Action Agenda's* South Main Street District, a South Main Street Cultural District designation is proposed beginning at downtown's southern gateway and continuing south along Main Street. The cultural district niche has the potential for a customer base that extends into the entire region.

Several neighborhood nodes are noted on the future land use framework diagram. A neighborhood node is a concentration of two or more significant uses or activity hubs that serve as a resource, destination, or community gathering space for nearby neighborhood residents. These neighborhood nodes may include the pairing of a school, church, retail establishment, and/or other community facility. Nodes are important to neighborhood identity and should be encouraged throughout the City. It is important that these nodes are accessible by means other than an automobile in order to be truly part of a neighborhood and ensure that all ages and abilities can make use of the amenities. Depending on the size of the node and the specific types of uses, the "reach" of a neighborhood node varies. The future land use framework considers the inclusion of these nodes, where appropriate, in the proposed redevelopment areas that are adjacent to significant residential populations. See Chapter Seven for more information on neighborhood nodes.

Land Use Interpretation & Application

The future land use framework is a graphic summary of the vision, goals and objectives of this document. It represents a 20 year vision of what the City should look like in the future. This framework is intended to guide overall development of the area, but it is not prescriptive in nature to control the regulatory development on individual lots. Land use plans and future planning initiatives are generally adopted as resolution in the State of Indiana and, as such, are policy, not law. This land use framework is needed in order to support any zoning within the City.

Zoning is adopted as legal ordinance and provides the specific standards for the development of individual or groups of parcels. This may include specific uses allowed in each zone, density, lot size, setback, and other development standards. The *Comprehensive Plan Update* should serve as the policy basis for any changes in zoning regulations whether it is a text or a map change. All future

development in the City of Elkhart should be consistent with both zoning and the future land use framework.

The City of Elkhart’s future land use framework was developed to reflect the desire for re-focused growth in the City for the next 20 years. Because of the uncertainty associated with the timing of new development or redevelopment, market conditions, and location of future development, the interpretation and administration of this plan will require that the City of Elkhart remain flexible in the possibilities associated with the future development, while still remaining true to the overall intention of this plan.

Currently, the City has an Advisory Plan Commission. The development approval process is undertaken by the City Planning Staff and Plan Commission. The City of Elkhart’s *Comprehensive Plan Update* should serve as a guide but does not contain the actual decisions that should be made. The *Plan* serves as a reminder and provides guidance of the community’s collective vision for the future growth and development of this area and should be interpreted as such.

New development or redevelopment within the City of Elkhart should be reviewed for consistency with the future land use map. If a new annexation, rezone, planned unit development (PUD), subdivision, or site plan review request is proposed for the City, a review and evaluation of the proposal against the City of Elkhart’s *Comprehensive Plan Update* and relevant ordinances should occur with a formal staff recommendation to Plan Commission. The evaluation should include an understanding of the development and the degree to which the proposed project conforms to the plan’s goals, objectives, recommendations, future land use and transportation maps as well as the corridor character. If the development petition is consistent with the future land use framework, multi-modal transportation recommendations, and other character frameworks, then the staff report to the Plan Commission should state that the proposal is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan Update* and, therefore, should be approved. There could be times when modifications may be necessary to a petition to ensure it is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan Update*. In those situations, City staff may make recommendations requiring certain conditions be placed on the approval or that the petition be denied until the petition is revised so that it is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan Update*.

There will be occasions, however, when a development petition is not in conformance with this *Plan*. In that situation, the development petition provides for a desired new policy or development character that changes the documented and projected character described for that area within the comprehensive plan. The discussion surrounding the petition will become clear that the

policy and graphic representation of the development character has changed. When this condition exists, the City staff should amend the comprehensive plan with the development petition in order for it to become a detailed site plan for the specific area with the community and override the policy and development character for that specific section of the City. If the *Comprehensive Plan Update* is amended, all policy decisions thereafter will need to be consistent with the new amendment. If this occurs, the City staff will need to determine if the comprehensive plan goals, objectives, and map should be revisited for an update or if the development petition addressed a change in the development character of a specific area and therefore the amendment solved the problem.