

Land Use and Community Character

2.1 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND PURPOSE

Residents seek to retain the small-town atmosphere that has characterized Valparaiso throughout its history. There has always been a “sense of place” associated with Valparaiso as a city and a regional center in Northwest Indiana. Most residents identify with the City’s historic Downtown and its highly livable neighborhoods. There are many design and aesthetic elements that combine to create this perception of Valparaiso. The older, tree-lined streets; newer neighborhoods with liberal open space and landscaping; and beautiful parks and greenways complete this picture. Likewise, Valparaiso University contributes to this “place-making” by creating a destination that leaves a lasting impression of the beautiful campus. Lastly, the major businesses and industries that employ residents contribute to the overall impression of the City. The issues that relate to land use, development and redevelopment, urban form and appearance, and Downtown are addressed in this chapter.

Much of the City’s existing land area is developed, so the protection and improvement of existing neighborhoods is of great significance. This was among the many issues that were voiced by residents at the Citizens’ Congress held in September 2010. Additional, continued efforts to beautify and reinvest in the older commercial and industrial areas that do not currently contribute positively to the City’s image is also of primary importance as is addressing the standards of new residential development to continue the City’s success in attracting quality development.

Lastly, the ongoing redevelopment of Downtown must continue to focus on attracting more commercial uses and businesses to the area. Downtown



Many of Valparaiso’s streets are tree-lined, which contributes to its character and adds to its beauty.



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Contributing to the appeal and attractiveness of the historic neighborhoods are their “great streets.”

redevelopment has had great success to this point, which provides sound footing for the future.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the necessary policy guidance to enable the City to plan effectively for its future development and redevelopment, while respecting the existing and pattern of development. Sound planning will ensure that community growth occurs in harmony with the natural environment and existing neighborhoods, while increasing employment opportunities and improving the commercial areas. The City has many assets and key planning considerations, including:

- The use of land and its context with the natural environment are integral to this Comprehensive Plan. Valparaiso is located at the intersection of beautiful, rolling farmland and a glacial moraine. Sound and sustainable planning will afford the opportunity for the highest quality of development.
- Valparaiso has a unique history of development that was triggered by the extension of the country’s first coast-to-coast highway rather than by the railroad boom. Therefore, the City benefits from a number of well-planned, historic neighborhoods.
- Valparaiso has attracted developers who have refused to take the route of production building. As a result, these developments provide a variety in the housing types they offer, include an abundance of open space and landscaping, and employ sustainable development techniques. This has led to neighborhoods that are beautiful and interesting for residents and visitors alike.
- The City offers a good balance of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses but is deficient in available land for attracting major employers within the City limits.

This chapter includes a Future Land Use Plan, as reflected in **Map 2.1 Future Land Use Plan** (including **Map 2.1.2, Future Land Use Plan, U.S. 30**) and concludes with land use policies and actions.

2.2 PLANNING CONTEXT AND ENVIRONS

Location and Region

Valparaiso is situated in Porter County, which is in Northwestern Indiana, approximately 50 miles southeast of Chicago. The City lies within close proximity to I-65, I-80, I-90, and I-94 by way of SR-49 and U.S. 30, both of which traverse the City. This places Valparaiso within a one-hour commuting distance from the Chicago Downtown “Loop” and confirms its status as an outer Chicago suburb. Valparaiso is also situated approximately 20 miles southeast of Gary, Indiana; 96 miles northwest of Lafayette, Indiana; and 55 miles west of South Bend, Indiana.



Map 2.1.1

Future Land Use Plan

Legend

- Estate Residential
- Neighborhood Conservation
- Suburban Residential
- General Residential
- Urban Residential
- Neighborhood Commercial
- General Commercial
- Central Business District
- Central Place
- Campus
- Planned Mixed Use
- Business Park
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Institutional
- Public Space
- City Limits
- Wetlands, Ponds, and Lakes
- Flood Zone (A)
- Flood Zone (AE)
- Streams and Rivers
- Railroad

See
Map 2.1.2

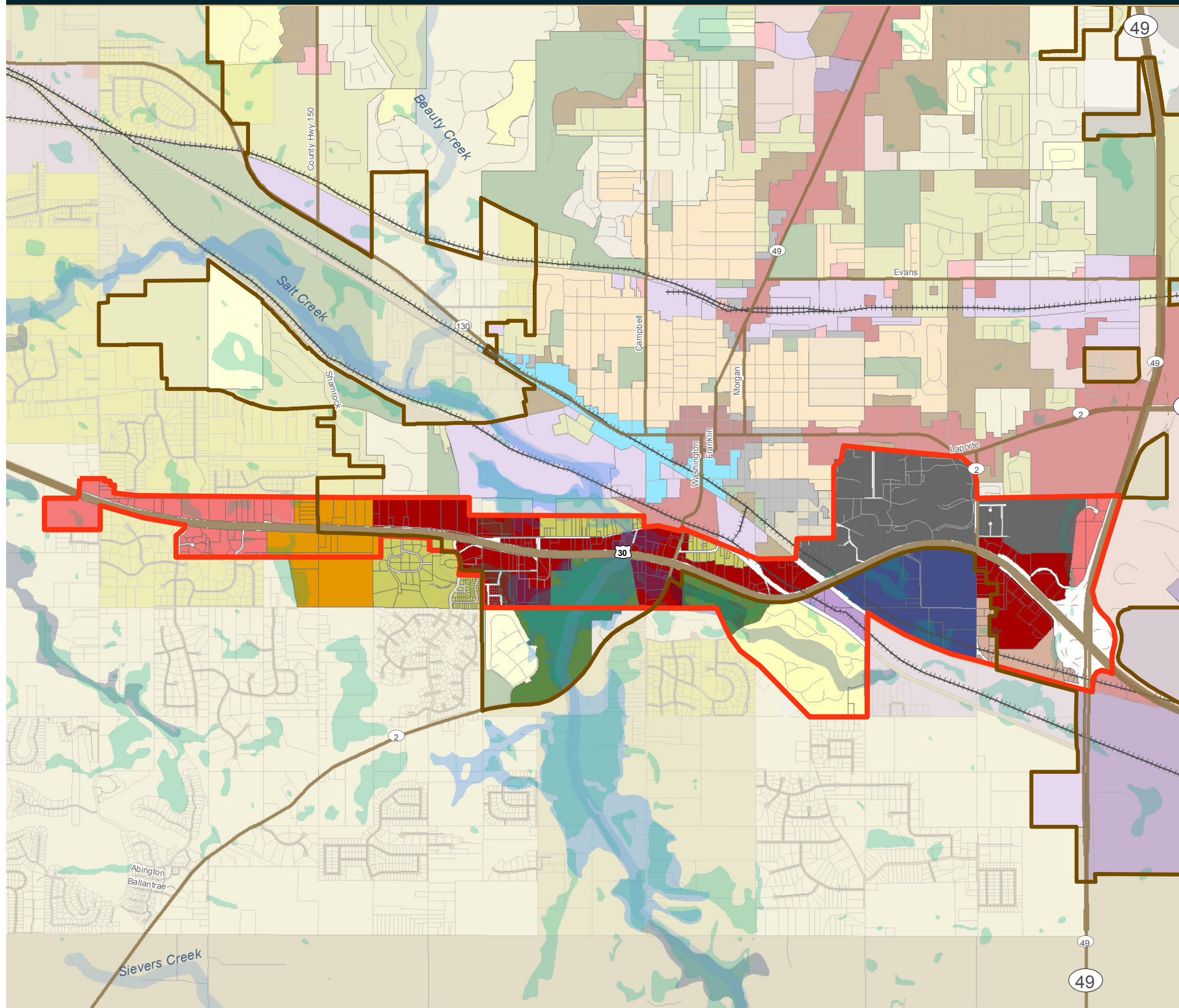
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Map 2.1.2

Future Land Use and Character, U.S. 30

Legend

- Estate Residential
- Neighborhood Conservation
- Suburban Residential
- General Residential
- Urban Residential
- Neighborhood Commercial
- General Commercial
- Central Business District
- Central Place
- Campus
- Planned Mixed Use
- Business Park
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Institutional
- Public Space
- U.S. 30 Corridor
- City Limits
- Wetlands, Ponds, and Lakes
- Flood Zone (A)
- Flood Zone (AE)
- Streams and Rivers
- Railroad



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Historically, Valparaiso was established at the site of a small Pottawatomie village along the “Great Sauk Trail,” which linked Rock Island, Illinois on the Mississippi River with Detroit, Michigan. Early settlers in the 1830s later improved this trail into a wagon road. This primitive route eventually formed the course of the celebrated Lincoln Highway, built around 1913. Access to this transcontinental highway supplemented by the diagonal connections with Gary and Indianapolis, Indiana, along with east-west railroads leading to Chicago, established Valparaiso as a strong local hub and robust rural community. Later establishment of the interstate highways and Indiana Toll Road enhanced Valparaiso’s accessibility.

Although there are a few scattered rural subdivisions and businesses around Valparaiso in Porter County, in large part, the City has retained its status as one of the few freestanding communities in the Greater Chicago area. Unlike many communities that are situated closer to Chicago that blend together to form a composite community, Valparaiso is still surrounded by farmland and natural areas to allow it to maintain a distinct edge and thus, its visual identity. This is an important contributor to the community character, which is addressed later in this chapter.

Geography and the Natural Environs

The extent for which geography affects the City’s growth and development cannot be underestimated. Valparaiso is situated on a significant land form known as the Valparaiso Moraine, which was formed approximately 10,000 years ago at the southern edge of the Great Lakes Basin with the final retreat of the Wisconsin Era glaciers. This land formation is characterized by rolling hills, pothole lakes (“kettles”) and wetlands, with occasional irregularly-shaped hills, or “kames”. Within the developed portion of the City, these kames were reduced in their distinctiveness by land grading. With a 150-foot change in elevation, a relatively undisturbed kame is the Pines Family Ski Resort located immediately north of the City on Meridian Road. Another distinctive feature borne by its glacial positioning is that the eastern edge of the City sits atop the continental divide between the Atlantic Ocean, by way of Salt Creek, the Great Lakes, and St. Lawrence River, and the Gulf of Mexico, by way of the Tippecanoe-Wabash-Ohio-Mississippi watershed system.

Because the glacier that formed the Valparaiso Moraine terminated here before receding, the City has an interesting juxtaposition of rolling hills with natural woodlands, gentle ravines, small lakes, and flat prairielands that were first drained and farmed before the end of the 19th Century. In the context of growth and development, Valparaiso benefits and is challenged by its geography. On one hand, there is an abundant supply of developable land to accommodate urban growth while on the other hand there is a warrant to protect the natural environment and its resources which distinguishes Valparaiso from the other Chicago suburbs and Northwest Indiana communities.

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Markers on Lincolnway describe its local significance along the greater Lincoln Highway route.

Further information on the geography, natural resources, and historical context of Valparaiso’s development can be found in the Salt Creek Watershed Management Plan for Porter County. This document, written in 2008, provides a comprehensive analysis of existing conditions and a needs assessment for improving water quality for the Salt Creek Watershed, which makes up a substantial portion of Valparaiso’s incorporated area.



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The Pines Family Ski Resort sits atop a kame and is surrounded by the moraine formation.

Source: Google Earth

A lift station is a pump that brings sewage to a higher elevation to allow it to further gravity flow within the system. These are used in relatively flat areas and have additional cost associated with them.

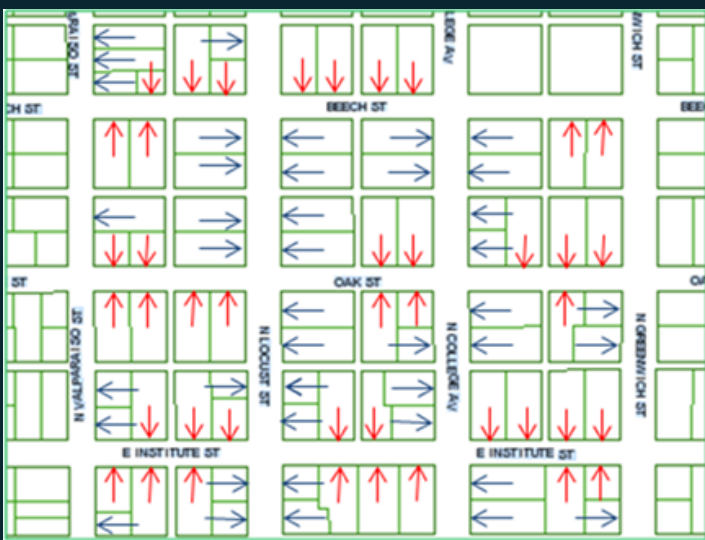
Also, because the glacier ended here, several small creeks and tributaries originate in Valparaiso and thus, natural drainage patterns in the flatter parts of the City are relatively undefined. This presents a challenge for providing adequate storm drainage, protecting areas from localized but sometimes severe flooding, and establishing gravity-fed sanitary and storm sewer systems that minimize the number of mechanical lift stations (see definition of “lift station” in the margin).

The absence of a significant navigable waterway or reliable stream flows (too close to the headwaters) for water-powered mills slowed Valparaiso’s early industrial development potential, until smaller-scale steam power and electricity became available after 1890. For this reason, the City was bypassed by the labor intensive mills, processing plants, and shipping centers that typified 19th Century industrial development in the Midwest. The lumber barons, railroad magnates, financial tycoons, and captains of industry of the Gilded Age lived in other cities. It was the self-sufficient toil and thrift of Valparaiso’s merchants and laborers, rather than “company-town” wealth and exploitation, that formed the City in its early years. This is reflected by the character of understated homes throughout the community’s longer-established neighborhoods.

Development Pattern

In many respects, but with one interesting exception, Valparaiso’s development pattern is typical of many smaller farm communities found in predominantly agricultural areas. Early settlement was oriented to the wagon road that preceded Lincoln Highway (Lincolnway). The 350’ by 350’ square, gridiron street pattern resulted in unusually short blocks. Shown in **Figure 2.1, Home Orientation** is 11 blocks of the original 1836 plat of the area

Figure 2.1, Home Orientation



northeast of Downtown, exhibiting the lot pattern and building orientations. The arrows indicate the direction that each house faces. The unique orientation of homes and abundance of corner lots add interest and uniqueness to this neighborhood. While interesting, this design may impede neighborhood cohesiveness and thus, could be among the reasons why there are no active neighborhood organizations in the older parts of Valparaiso. Change the development pattern is not advocated; rather, increased communication and organization is warranted to sustain neighborhood integrity as the homes continue to age.

Unlike many other communities, here, the three principal rail lines skirted the Downtown area rather than traversing it. The original



neighborhoods were platted in 1836, and Downtown was already well established before the first railroad came to Valparaiso in 1858. The location of the rail lines is most likely attributed to the railroad companies' difficulty in obtaining rights-of-way in the areas that were already platted and occupied by approximately 1,500 persons. Only an interurban railroad, operating between 1912 and 1938, directly served Downtown, which ran down the middle of Franklin Street.

Establishment of the Grand Trunk Railroad's Chicago-Detroit Line (at the northern edge of development in 1859) resulted in the creation of an industrial corridor situated eight blocks north of Downtown. This area remains to this day although in a state that would benefit from redevelopment. It was after World War II that highway-oriented manufacturing sites and industrial parks began to contribute to the success of the City.

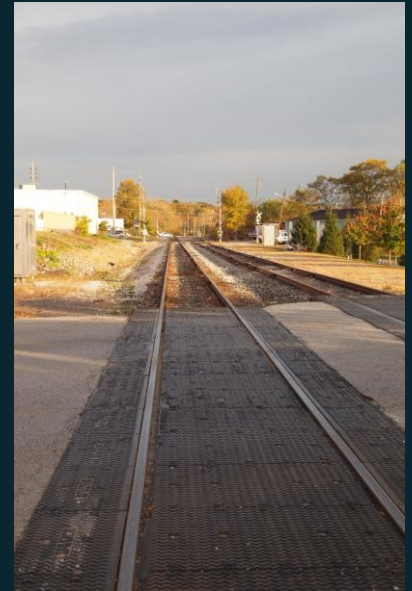
Residential development radiated outward from Downtown after 1900, maintaining the gridiron pattern but having larger and often irregularly-sized blocks. Growth was constrained to the south by the two diagonal railroad lines that flank the edge of the Moraine, along with a small part of the main stem of Salt Creek and the hilly areas around it. Development northward and eastward has continued in both grid and curvilinear street patterns with the latter occurring mostly in the far northwestern and northern edges of Valparaiso. This pattern is typical of post-War suburban development.

The earliest commercial and institutional development took place in downtown and in isolated locations on what is now East Lincolnway, as well as along Calumet Avenue. Development along these corridors gradually created the commercial "strips" that they are today.

Perhaps the most significant stage of development occurred in more recent times with the construction of the SR-49 and U.S. 30 (Morthland Road) at the east and south edges, respectively, of current development. These transportation arteries opened a considerable amount of new land for development. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, much of the development along U.S. 30 occurred in individually platted lots with direct access to the road. Later, with the onslaught of highway-oriented development along both highways, frontage roads were constructed and significant nodes of development occurred at major intersections.

Most recently, Downtown and now Eastgate are redeveloping as has parts of strip commercial development along East Lincolnway. Until recently, commercial growth along U.S. 30 and SR-49 had the effect of pulling developments away from the original town, leaving behind underutilized buildings and parking lots that began to fall into neglect. In response, focused attention was given by the City to rehabilitate these areas by upgrading roads and infrastructure, establishing flexible design standards appropriate to

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In Valparaiso, the railroads came after rather than before the original town settlement.



This segment of Calumet Avenue typifies the strip pattern of development.



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specific locations, and, in some cases, providing incentives for rebuilding. The Eastgate Corridor Redevelopment Project and other similar efforts are a direct result of City efforts.

Valparaiso University (VU) is situated in the City’s southeastern quadrant, at the edge and just outside of the original platted grid of the 19th Century. The original plat ended here because the steeper slopes of the moraine hindered smaller lot development. Thus, the area was well-suited for the planned, pastoral campus-style development. Development began in 1859 at the southern terminus of College Avenue in a small area now referred to as “Old Campus”. The largest share of VU’s growth occurred after 1950, south of Laporte Avenue and east of Garfield Street. The campus is now comprised of more than 40 buildings that occupy over 300 acres of land; it continues to grow and improve its facilities. However, until the vacation of Porter Hospital, the campus was landlocked by highways and existing non-campus development. Therefore, the University recently completed a campus master plan to guide its development and future growth in the coming years.

Land Use

The term “land use” literally refers to the use of land. In analyzing land use patterns, it is useful for long-range planning purposes to classify and calculate the existing land utilization. Doing so allows an assessment of the relative proportions and distributions of individual land uses, evaluation of existing density patterns, and determination as to the acreage of additional development needed to accommodate the projected population growth. Displayed in **Table 2.1, Existing Land Use** is the acreages and percentages of the individual classifications of existing land use.

Instead, it is how uses, districts, and neighborhoods are designed that influences their character. Hence, the character of an area is more distinctly defined by the intensity (height, bulk, and scale) of development, the placement and relative arrangement of buildings and parking areas, the preservation and integration of open space and natural resources, and lastly by other aesthetic design features. While the use of land is an important consideration, more importantly to Valparaiso is the character of development. As shown in the margin on the following page, itself land use has little to do with its character.

Table 2.1 Existing Land Use

General Category	Acres	Percent
Residential - 1 and 2 Family	2,690.1	36.3%
Residential - Mobile Homes	2.1	0.0%
Residential - Multi-family	325.2	4.4%
Commercial	714.8	9.7%
Offices	148.6	2.0%
Public/Institutional	519.5	7.0%
Industrial	524.9	7.1%
Parks/Recreational	20.4	0.3%
Vacant/Natural	2,456.9	33.2%
	7,402.4	100.0%

Source: City of Valparaiso GIS



A focus on community character is important to Valparaiso. During the public input process for the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and at the beginning of this Comprehensive Plan update, citizens spoke time repeatedly about the strong identity of the City and their desire to preserve and build upon it. To this end, policies and regulations that focus on land use will not be effective in meeting this goal. Nowhere is this more evident than across the community's many neighborhoods that shall a common land use but differ significantly in their character.

The City's commercial areas also exhibit different character. From Downtown to Eastgate and Porter's Vale Shopping Center, each is of a different character while all being of commercial use. For this reason, the policies and directions of this plan, as well as the UDO, aim to distinguish the types of character and then to provide a framework by which they may be achieved.

2.3 COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Character Themes

Following is a description of the community character types and how they apply to Valparaiso and the surrounding environs.

Natural. The natural character type applies to the undeveloped areas. Natural areas are generally large expanses of undisturbed open space, as well as environmentally sensitive features such as woodlands, wetlands, creeks and streams, and the kettle lakes. Few true natural areas exist within the city limits, consisting mainly of small, undevelopable pockets of land along Salt Creek. Other natural areas are situated outside the City, also along Salt Creek and to the northwest of existing development. The most significant natural area is the Moraine Nature Preserve, located east of SR-49 and just south of U.S. 6.

Rural. The rural character type consists of lands that are sparsely developed, and principally of an agricultural use with individual home sites on large acreages. This area provides its residents with near seclusion with a country setting, and away from more densely settled areas. For this reason, it is relatively unusual to find areas of rural character within the city limits. Most of what is rural is the tracts at the edge that have been annexed for eventual development. Given its freestanding state, Valparaiso is surrounded by rural land.

Countryside. This type represents a transition between the rural and suburban character types, which is characterized by informal, usually un-platted groupings of large-lot residential properties. The style and arrangement of these lots maintain separation between the homes creating a mostly rural setting while accommodating low-density development. In these often peripheral areas, countryside development sometimes takes the form of "equestrian" development where prominent fences define the property lines.

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The above images are similar in use but much different in their character.



These images from Aberdeen and along Lincolnway both represent commercial land uses yet their nature of design and hence, character are much different.

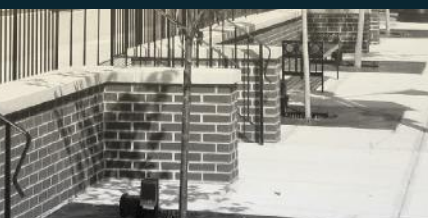
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Suburban development is characterized by green spaces, which may include public or privately owned nature areas, those that are heavily vegetated, or those with expanses of open space. This neighborhood and the VU campus are both suburban in character.



Most observers, laypersons and professionals alike, find the auto-urban environments they experience to be generally unpleasant. Strip commercial, older industrial parks, and other nonresidential land uses are subject to frequent criticism as a visual blight, and they routinely score poorly in community preference surveys.



This type of development is found in only a few locations around the City.

Suburban. The suburban character type represents a bridge between rural and urban areas. Development of this type is designed to thoughtfully transition from the least dense natural and rural areas to the forms of development that are dense and of greater intensity and scale. Within suburban development, nature in the form of preserved resources and common open space is incorporated into its pattern and design. Among many good examples of suburban development, the Harrison development characterizes this type by way of its protection of resources and liberal open space.

In a suburban setting, there is much less emphasis on the automobile. This is typically accomplished with open space that is either on private lots where the lots are relatively large or in an arrangement where lots are smaller and clustered around common open space. Golf course developments, for example, are typical of the suburban character.

Regarding nonresidential areas, business park uses that consist of planned or clustered areas with large lots and expanses of green space, are also suburban. They may include a blend of use types ranging from wholesale to light industrial, business service, and office uses provided they are situated in a well-landscaped or even park-like setting. The two most prominent business parks in Valparaiso are Eastpoint Centre and the more traditionally platted area south of Vale Park Road between Valparaiso Street and Cumberland Drive. The former is of a suburban character while the latter is auto-urban (as described below)

Auto-Urban. Development patterns that are auto-urban are generally characterized by roads, driveways, and parking areas that commonly exceed the area of buildings as a percent of ground cover. The strip-commercial areas along Lincolnway, Calumet Avenue, and U.S. 30 compose the more visually significant auto-urban commercial areas in the City. There are many neighborhoods that are auto-urban as well on account of the closely spaced and regular pattern of driveways, front-facing garages, limited separations between homes, and smaller yards with limited open space.

The industrial area situated east of SR-49 and south of U.S. 30 (Morthland Road) is also auto-urban by reason of its buildings and parking, loading, and storage areas all with limited landscaping or open space.

Urban. This character type is distinguished by enclosed space defined by buildings. Urban areas are typified by shallow or no front and side yards, a high floor area ratio, and mostly continuous row of structures that are unbroken by stand-alone parking lots.

Downtown is the only urban area in Valparaiso. This is so as buildings are located on the front building line, two and three-story buildings enclose the

street environs making it a more intimate pedestrian setting, and parking is mostly on-street or in common lots located behind the buildings. To the west along Lincolnway, the development pattern transitions to auto-urban where parking areas are more visible and the businesses are set back from the street.

The near Downtown neighborhoods that are part of the original 1836 plat are also urban by way of their still utilized alleys, relatively small lot sizes, dwellings that are nearer to the front property line, tighter spacing between homes, and more on-street parking. Unlike the newer neighborhoods, few of these homes have attached garages accessed by the street.

Historic Neighborhoods

The originally platted neighborhoods surrounding Downtown contain many residential structures that have recognized historical value and thus, are regarded as historic landmarks. The earliest structures built during the initial settlement were eventually replaced with more substantial homes. The few, oldest structures that remain today were built around 1860, after the railroads had been established. These represent a variety of architectural styles, ranging from the Greek Revival period in the early 1800s to the Arts and Crafts period nearly a century later. The structures identified in **Table 2.2, National Register of Historic Places and Sites**, together with the 15-block Downtown area, have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Table 2.2 National Register of Historic Places Sites

Name	Year Added	Location
Immanuel Lutheran Church	1982	308 N. Washington St.
Loring, Dr. David J., Residence and Clinic (Valparaiso Woman's Club)	1984	102 Washington St
McCallum, William, House	2006	507 E. Lincolnway
Porter County Jail and Sheriff's House (Old Jail Museum)	1976	153 Franklin St.
Porter County Memorial Hall (Memorial Opera House)	1984	104 Indiana Ave.
Rose, David Garland, House	1980	104 Indiana Ave.
Valparaiso Downtown Commercial District	1990	---

The presence of these structures, along with the interest that the community has taken in them, adds to the value of these highly-livable neighborhoods. Maintaining the stability of these neighborhoods is of great significance to many residents. However, residents and neighborhood groups are confronted by the ongoing challenges of maintenance and repair, averting foreclosures, and competing in a housing market with modern structures that are better suited for contemporary lifestyles.

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Alleys, narrower front setbacks, and few driveways and front-loaded garages distinguish these neighborhoods as urban in character.



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McCallum House

Source: Valparaiso Historic
Preservation Commission

In its effort to implement measures to protect the historical integrity of older structures, the Historic Preservation Commission succeeded in establishing a historic district for the Banta School Neighborhood in 2006. These provisions, however, were repealed three years later due to concerns about the costs and difficulties involved in complying with the preservation guidelines. After further considering its alternatives, the Commission has proceeded with steps intended to protect individual sites and structures; the first of these was the McCallum house, a Victorian/Italianate home located near Downtown (pictured in the margin). This site is one of the seven structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The richness of historic buildings and homes, coupled with a reality that there is little protection for most of them is a source of concern for many residents. While the previous effort to establish historic districts and preservation guidelines was eventually thwarted, likely due to real concerns, this plan advocates a renewed effort to seek amenable terms for re-establishing some sense of protection to preserve the value and integrity of these areas and structures.

The City adopted design standards in the UDO, where certain features of each district are identified and addressed by redevelopment standards. In this way, if all or a portion of an existing building is rebuilt, it would remain compatible with the neighborhood. Typical standards include characteristics that define the visual quality of an area, often addressing roof pitch and detail, fenestration, building articulation, and building materials. The City should monitor the difference that the regulations make in the coming years, and subsequently review and revise them as warranted, to ensure their effectiveness in meeting the goals of protecting the integrity of historic neighborhoods and Downtown.

Newer Neighborhoods

Newer neighborhoods are generally north of the Grand Trunk Railroad. In many respects, these auto-urban and suburban neighborhoods are defined by their street layouts. These areas discontinued the use of the traditional 350' x 350' grid block pattern, replacing it with an irregular pattern of rectangular lots and blocks of varying sizes. A result of this incremental succession of developments is many streets that are discontinuous or have staggered tee-intersections. This pattern, while marketable and sometimes necessary due to the topography has hampered the flow of through-traffic and pedestrian and bicycle circulation, which has caused increased traffic and congestion and significant capital expenditures to correct it.

Many streets in the newer areas were established to align with the township rural road system, which follows a one-half mile square grid. While these roads initially succeeded in providing a fair level of service and continuity, many were originally dedicated as 33' rights-of-way (a common practice



*These images reflect the newer
styles of development.*

throughout Indiana). Over the years, these two-lane roadways have become increasingly inadequate for handling growing traffic volumes. They now warrant widening, which is particularly expensive as land acquisition costs often require the removal of structures that were built too close to the roadways.

Unlike many Chicago suburban areas and mid-sized communities in Northern Indiana, with their large stretches of homogeneous tract home development, Valparaiso has done well in providing substantial variations of density and development forms. In many parts of the City, there is a variety of housing choices, including conventional single-family subdivisions, clustered development, townhouses, and multifamily complexes. In most instances, the transitions from one area to the next are well articulated through landscaping and due to the rolling topography of these areas. This is a development pattern that provides visual variety and a “sense of place.” It also provides a healthy variety of housing types for a wide range of family incomes and lifestyles.

The development standards in the UDO include provisions to allow a more creative approach through increased open space requirements, which allow density offsets on less environmentally sensitive portions of a parcel. It also allows for lot averaging and, in some cases, requires a mix of residential types, further increasing the likelihood that a new neighborhood will be of distinctive quality.

The City encourages and in some cases requires pre-application conferences between developers and the staff who is responsible for reviewing their plans. This practice allows for effective, two-way communication before developments are advanced in their design to avoid costly changes.

University Fringe

The University Fringe area includes much of the area between Lincolnway and U.S. 30 from Morgan Boulevard to Sturdy Road. Both sides of Sturdy Road are included, as is the north side of Lincolnway from Sturdy Road to Roosevelt Street. The fringe area includes the VU campus and also incorporates area of the Eastgate Master Plan.

The fringe area overlaps the U.S. 30 Corridor Plan and also the limits of the University’s recently completed master plan. It is recommended that the City Commission a University fringe master plan. This plan should dovetail with the plans for Eastgate, U.S. 30, and the University, and set out the strategies, initiatives, and investments to revitalize and improve the economic sustainability of these areas.

Downtown

During the public input process, many residents concurred with the statement of the one who said, “Downtown is the key to the continued

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success of Valparaiso".¹ In the early 1980's, the City began taking significant steps to revitalize and rehabilitate Downtown. In 1981, the Downtown Improvement Strategy was formed. Six years later, the State chose five pilot cities, including Valparaiso, as pilot projects for the Main Street Program. The City began studying the area with considerable public input. In 1995, the City established a Downtown District Taskforce to establish guidelines. Some buildings of historical importance were demolished over the years, but many remain and have since been rehabilitated. These include the Courthouse, "Old Jail", the Opera House, the former Post Office (now City Hall), First State Bank, Farmers' State Bank, and Business Block buildings on Lincolnway.

The Central Business District (CBD) zoning permits commercial uses typically found in a downtown environment, principally including retail, restaurants, bars, and lodging. It also allows multi-family uses if they are mixed with commercial uses in a building, along with live-work townhomes. New development and redevelopment is subject to architectural standards that are designed to encourage construction that is harmonious with the existing historic buildings.

The City recently amended the land use regulations for Downtown allowing a mix of uses to preserve the vibrancy of downtown. Public improvements like new sidewalks have complemented and inspired private reinvestment in the form of building rehabilitation. With the land use and regulatory adjustments, the City has positioned itself well for continued revitalization. Additional public investment in the form of parking improvements has been recently implemented.

In January 2010, the City completed the Downtown Valparaiso Parking Study.² The report concluded that overall, parking is adequate for Downtown, although it is inadequate during peak hours and there is an insufficient supply of handicap spaces to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The efforts of the City to promote reuse of vacant lease spaces and buildings will contribute to the parking deficiencies in the future. Public input gathered early in the study process indicated the opinion that parking in Downtown is inadequate, inconvenient, and confusing.

In addition to restriping existing lots to gain parking spaces, the study recommended expansion of the public parking lot at Chicago Street and Lafayette Street and to build two parking structures, including a three-story garage on the existing surface parking lot at Jefferson Street and Franklin Street and up to a four-story garage on Lincolnway at Michigan Avenue. However, from urban design and historic preservation perspectives, a three-

¹ The City of Valparaiso Quality of Life Survey, completed in March of 2010, found that almost 80% of residents believe that "the downtown business district must remain vibrant for the City to succeed as a whole."

² Conducted by Walker Parking Consultants

story garage off Lincolnway that doesn't encroach into the historic neighborhood, but is still close to Downtown may be a better suited location than that recommended in the study. Further, the garage recommended on Lincolnway also warrants reconsideration. Michigan Avenue forms the eastern boundary between the auto-urban commercial uses to the east of Downtown and the urban character of Downtown. A three or four-story structure at this location would obstruct the view of Downtown and also consume a prime location that should be reserved for uses that visually complement Downtown. The first recommended parking garage is recommended on a site one block north of Lincolnway, with a secondary site south of Lincolnway, potentially via a public/private partnership that would replace an existing surface lot with structured parking. At the time of this plan, it is unknown whether the sale of Porter Hospital will include the parking garage. If so, there may be an opportunity for the City to assume ownership of the structure, depending on the reuse of the hospital site.

Since January 2010, the City has been working diligently to implement the recommendations of the parking study. As the City undertakes the more significant projects, such as the recommended parking garages, it will be important to time the additional parking spaces commensurate with the demand for them.

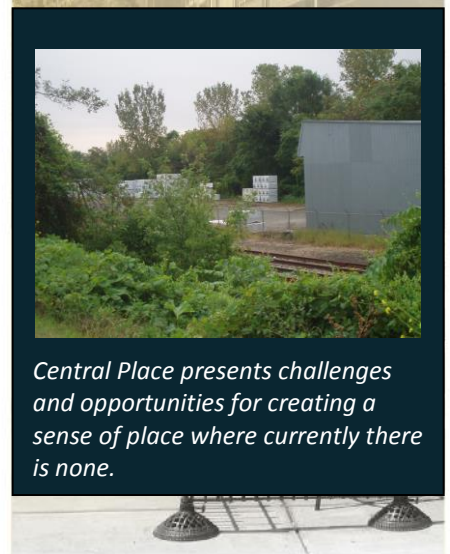
The parking study also recommended the management of parking areas to make the projected changes more effective and efficient, including public information efforts such as brochures, way-finding signage, and website postings.

With much energy and investment, Downtown has become an important and widely valued asset to the City. However, it has yet to reach its full potential. For instance, there are market needs not yet fulfilled, such as additional retail uses like groceries and specialty retail and extended nightlife. The upper floors and entire historical structures, together with some first-level retail spaces remain vacant. Strategies relating to the reuse of vacant spaces and a better mix of uses are discussed in *Chapter 4, Opportunity*.

Central Place

Central Place is essentially the entrance to the City from the west along SR 130 / Lincolnway. It makes a transition from the rural outlying areas to Downtown, and is one of the routes that leads to Chicago. From west to east, the zoning transitions from Commercial, General (CG) to Business Park (BP) and Central Place (CP) just west of Downtown. The CP district extends to the south for about one block, with additional CP zoning between the southern boundary of Downtown and the southern railroad tracks. The district permits residential, institutional, and commercial uses, including hospitality uses such as restaurants, bars, and hotels. Mixed use development is permitted and encouraged. Transit and stand-alone parking uses are also

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Central Place presents challenges and opportunities for creating a sense of place where currently there is none.

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permitted, as Central place presents an opportunity to expand on the existing bus transit station that is on Campbell just south of Lincolnway.

Reflected in **Figure 2.2, Central Place Planning Context and Concepts**, is the opportunities that exist in the area. The existing entry monument should be relocated to the western City Limits near Yellowstone Road in order to signal arrival in Valparaiso and to strengthen its identity. The open space at this intersection should become public parkland to reflect the City's values for its environmental resources. The park could transition into gardens and outdoor education exhibits for the students that attend the Saint Paul Catholic School, as well as nearby Memorial Elementary School and Benjamin Franklin Middle School. To help maintain the future viability of the area, mixed housing should be encouraged to develop to the west and east of the park. There is an existing historic building on the north side of west Lincolnway that once rehabilitated would add interest to this western gateway. The building has recently been approved for inclusion in the facade improvement program. Generally, the entire area should be master planned, involving lot consolidation and resubdivision. The area zoned Business Park (BP) is inconsistent with the vision and these concepts for the area. Therefore, it is advisable to rezone the area to Central Place (CP) as reflected on the Future Land Use Plan.

To the east of Center Street, there is an opportunity for a mix of urban townhomes, live/work units, and neighborhood retail uses. These uses could occur through infill and redevelopment of the existing sites over time. The area to the east and west of the Campbell Street intersection along Lincolnway should transition to an urban transit-oriented development (TOD) area.

Lincolnway is a historic road. Beginning in the early 1900's, it was the first coast-to-coast roadway in the U.S.³ The segment of Lincolnway in central Place should highlight its intended multi-modal character through capital improvement projects for complete streets enhancements such as pedestrian and bicycle paths and liberal open space and landscaping.

Implementation of a plan for this area will require coordination with the property owners involved, particularly to explore means of financing including the potential for creating a tax increment financing district. In order to further develop these concepts, a Central Place special area and West Lincolnway Corridor Master plan is recommended.

Finally, the reference to this area as "Central Place" suggests its location in the center of the City. The name thus, does not convey the area's intended development as an important link between Downtown and West Valparaiso. It is advisable to consider renaming the area to a place that is more

³ Historical marker, 166 Lincolnway, Valparaiso, Indiana

Figure 2.2

Central Place Planning Context and Concepts

-  Entry Monument
-  Streetscape Enhancements
-  Railroad Overpass
-  Context Areas

● Memorial Elementary School

Master-Planned Urban Neighborhood

- Mixed, Multi-Family Homes
- Garden Park
- Community Gardens
- Lot Assembly, Reparcelsation

(see inset)

Benjamin Franklin
Middle School

Jesse Pilfer
Park

Relocated
Entry
Monument
- Wayfinding

Railroad
Overpass

Urban Streetscape Enhancements
(to Creekside)

Conservation
Park

Urban Townhouses
Neighborhood Retail

Urban TOD

- New Station Facility
- Urban/Mixed Use Housing
- Extension of Downtown Streetscape
- Rehabilitation and Infill

Downtown

City Hall

Library

Porter County
Courthouse

Campbell Street Connections

- Bicycle-Pedestrian Tunnel
- Street Viaduct

Live-Work Loft District

- Rehabilitation/Adaptive Use
- Artisan Production and Merchandising
- Loft Residential



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descriptive of its proximity and role to the City (such as Mid-Town or West-Gate).

U.S. 30 Corridor

The U.S. 30 Corridor warranted special study for two main reasons. First, there was concern that continued commercial development along the corridor may eventually overshadow Downtown and its businesses. Secondly, the auto-urban development along the corridor does not convey or promote the unique and natural attributes of Valparaiso. Therefore, the corridor was the subject of the U.S. 30 Corridor Plan, which was approved by Resolution No. 25-2011 on July 25, 2011. The planned land use for the corridor study area may be found in Map 2.1.2, Future Land Use Plan, U.S. 30. The development and design concepts and implementation strategies are articulated in the master plan. The master plan provides the official policies and guidelines for the development along this corridor and in its defined study area.

Airport Influence Area

The Porter County Regional Airport recently completed In Plane View: A Clear Vision to the Future, which is the future land use, infrastructure, and economic development plan for the airport and its environs. This plan not only looks to the future expansion and changes on the airport property, but also looks beyond its boundaries to an area of influence. The City has interests that dovetail with those of the Airport, particularly to ensure careful and suitable planning to avoid or to mitigate the impacts of incompatible land uses, and to capitalize on the positive economic benefits of the airport.

The principles and recommendations of the plan addressing land use and zoning, transportation, utilities and infrastructure, multimodal connections, landscape and natural systems, community amenities, and economic development supplement those of this plan.

Redevelopment

The City's revitalization efforts have not been limited to Downtown. The City has used tax increment financing to capture tax dollars for reinvestment in infrastructure projects. The three areas include: Consolidated Valparaiso, North Central Redevelopment, and the Medical, Office, and Technology District, which are reflected in **Map 2.2, Redevelopment**. The City's Redevelopment Commission oversees the TIF process and makes decisions regarding redevelopment projects. Current projects are focusing on the City's roundabouts and the University Village development.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee identified several areas of the City that would benefit from redevelopment, including many within the TIF districts. In addition, several other redevelopment target sites are exhibited in *Map 2.2, Redevelopment*, which warrants future consideration for inclusion in a TIF District. Specifically, there are a few essential areas identified for

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U.S. 30 Corridor presents opportunities for beautification and redevelopment.



Some areas present redevelopment and reuse opportunities.



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redevelopment that are not within a TIF district. These include:

- That portion of "Central Place" that fronts on Lincolnway west of Downtown to the City Limits;
- The area south of Lincolnway along Joliet;
- Industrial development along the Canadian National/Grand Trunk Railroad;
- Business park development south of Laporte and east of SR-49; and
- Evans from SR-49 to N. Silhavy Road

Apartment complexes warrant addressing as well as many of them are in deteriorated conditions. While there may be increasing market demand to broaden housing choice by reason of the Great recession, the City must proceed cautiously with an eye toward quality and sustainability. The issues, options, and strategies for alternative housing are discussed in *Chapter 6, Housing and Neighborhoods*.

Infill Development

Shown by **Map 2.3, Infill Development Opportunities** is the vacant areas that are candidates for infill development. These areas, along with corresponding land uses shown on *Map 2.1, Future Land Use Plan*, are as follows:

- *Area No. 1* – This area is in the northwestern-most corner of the City limits and surrounds a development characterized as Suburban Residential. This area should be developed in a similar suburban character.
- *Area No. 2* – This area is south of Area No. 1 toward Lincolnway. It is situated between large-lot single family development and an area shown for light industrial development on the future land use plan. This area should be developed for single family, but may be developed more densely, consistent with the General Residential zoning on the property.
- *Area No. 3* - This is the light industrial area referenced in Area No. 2. The existing farmland between the railroad tracks and West Lincolnway, the separation from single family, and the relative shallow depth of the property leads to a recommendation for light industrial use for this area.
- *Area No. 4* – The tracts in the vicinity have developed as Suburban Residential. The remaining acreage of this tract should continue in the same manner, with adequate buffers along Ransom Road.
- *Area Nos. 5, 6, and 7* - The area between North Valparaiso Street and Calumet Avenue has developed as a mix of retail commercial with corporate offices and manufacturing uses. The areas near Bullseye Lake Road remain vacant. Area Nos. 5 and 7 should continue in this pattern with business park uses. Area No. 6 should offer neighborhood commercial uses to support the businesses in the area, as well as the neighborhoods to the west.

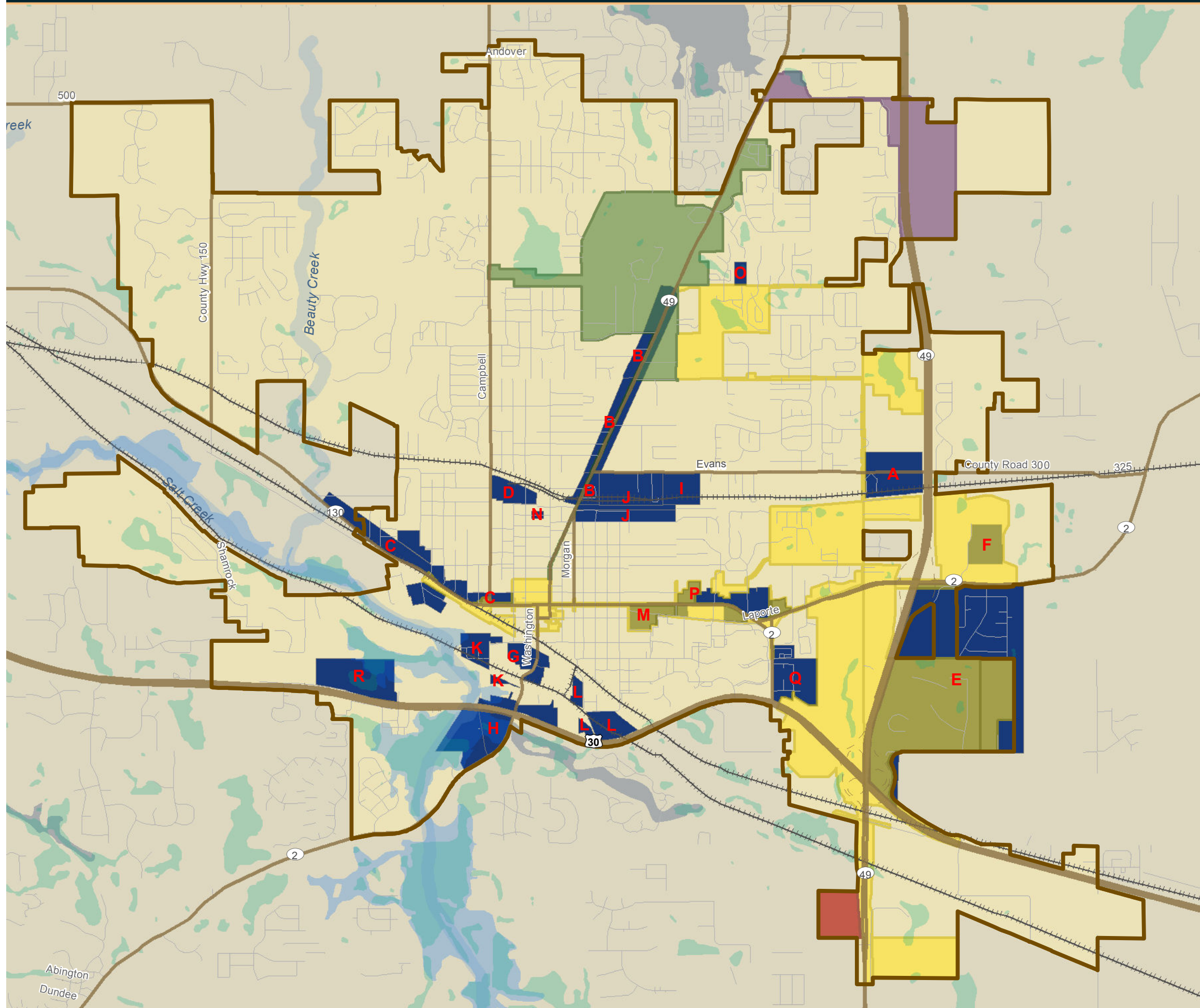
Map 2.2

Redevelopment

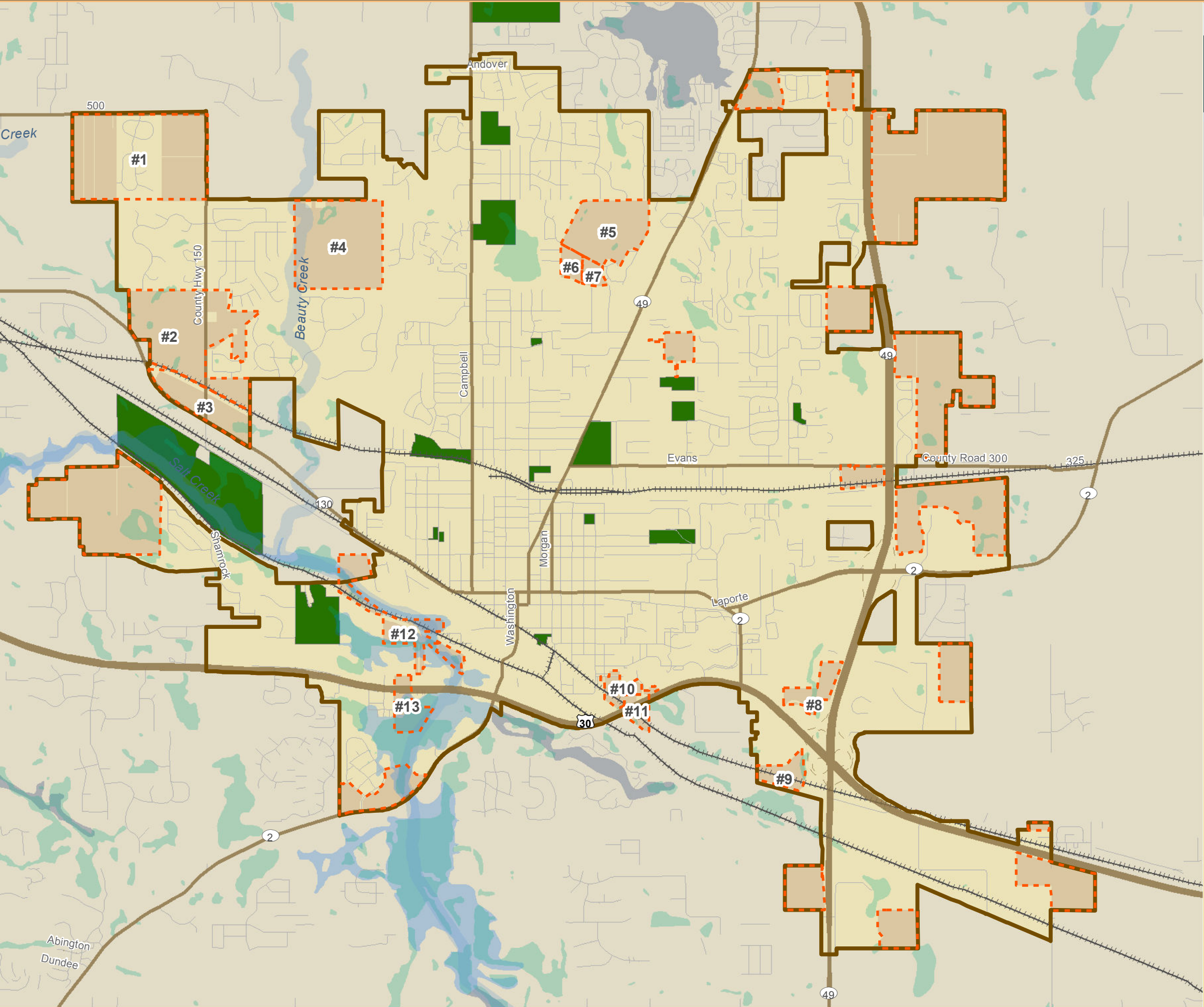
Legend

- Consolidated Valparaiso Allocation Area
- Medical Office Technology Allocation Area
- North Central Economic Allocation Area
- North Coast Allocation Area
- Redevelopment Target Sites
- City Limits
- Wetlands, Ponds, and Lakes
- Flood Zone (A)
- Flood Zone (AE)
- Streams and Rivers
- Railroad

- A: Evans Street between Silhavy and Route 2
- B: Calumet from the RR North to five points
- C: West Lincolnway west of Napoleon
- D: Campbell at the McGill site to Lafayette
- E: Commercial Area east of SR-49
- F: Porter's Vale development
- G: Washington Street south of Downtown
- H: SR-2 south of U.S. 30
- I: Roosevelt north of the RR tracks
- J: Elm Street between Calumet and Roosevelt
- K: South Campbell (Brown St. and West St.)
- L: South Morgan from Axe to U.S. 30
- M: Porter Hospital site
- N: Pine at Washington
- O: Keen Property
- P: Eastgate
- Q: Sturdy Road
- R: West Street and Morthland



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Map 2.3

Infill Development Opportunities

- Legend**
- Infill Opportunity Sites
 - Vacant Land
 - City Limits
 - City Parks
 - Wetlands, Ponds, and Lakes
 - Flood Zone (A)
 - Flood Zone (AE)
 - Streams and Rivers
 - Railroad

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- *Area No. 8* - This acreage along Silhavy Road is difficult to access due to the sharp differences in terrain between the property and the adjacent roadway. It is within the area that is formed by the intersection of SR-49 and U.S. 30, which is included in the study area for the U.S. 30 corridor. As shown in *Map 2.1.2, Future Land Use Plan, U.S. 30*, this area is proposed for general commercial, office, and hospitality uses.
- *Area No. 9* - This acreage is also within the U.S. 30 corridor, which is identified as appropriate for a business park. It has frontage with the intersection of U.S. 30 and SR-49, which heightens its exposure for businesses.
- *Areas No. 10 and 11* - The U.S. 30 Corridor Plan identifies these areas as part of the Valparaiso University campus, which are subject to the recently completed VU campus master plan.
- *Area No. 12* - Its location along the railroad right-of-way made this area originally conducive to industrial uses. However, its proximity to residential uses has rendered the site no longer conducive to heavy industry. Instead, the site should be shown as light industrial and zoned accordingly.
- *Area No. 13* - The U.S. 30 Corridor Plan identifies this area for open space. Since it is currently zoned and abuts general commercial zoning and uses, it may be appropriate for this land use.

2.4 KEY PLANNING THEMES

Gateways and Entrances

Valparaiso is a freestanding community, meaning that it does not have overlapping jurisdiction with other cities, as shown in *Map 1.1, Planning Jurisdictions*. Even the two-mile planning area around Valparaiso is freestanding, with the exception of the northwest corner of the study area, which overlaps Portage's planning jurisdiction. The relative location of the City results in an experience of definite arrival to the City from the rolling farmlands surrounding it. The only exception is the approach from the west along U.S. 30, which contains large-scale commercial uses and shopping centers through the cities of Merrillville and Hobart.

Valparaiso is accessible via SR-49 from the north and south. The approach to the City from the north is through rolling woodlands that are in a pristine state. This driving experience should be preserved and enhanced through the use of wide natural buffers where the native landscape is retained.

SR-2 approaches the City from the east and the southwest along the Valparaiso Moraine. As stated below in *Economic Stability*, the area to the east is reflected as light industrial on the future land use plan. As this area develops, there is an opportunity for an enhanced linear entryway along SR-2

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 The logo features the word "ENOVISION" in a bold, sans-serif font, with a stylized circular graphic element between the "O" and "V". Below it, "2030" and "VALPARAISO" are written in a smaller, similar font.


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 The logo features the word "ENOVISION" in a bold, sans-serif font. The "O" is stylized with a circular graphic containing three overlapping colored segments (blue, yellow, and red). Below "ENOVISION" is the year "2030" and the word "VALPARAISO" in a smaller, all-caps font.

east of the Airport to highlight the City's technology businesses. The City and Porter County Regional Airport should continue their partnership to seek funding for business park entry features, including monument signage and public art exhibits.

The segment of SR-2 to the southwest winds through large green fields with native landscaping. It provides access to large-lot single family subdivisions, which also present opportunities for enhanced entries. Should this be annexed, the City should consider adopting an entryway enhancement program for these and other subdivisions.

Lincolnway traverses Downtown and exits the City as SR-130. Lincolnway converges with Sturdy Road at the traffic circle, each of which is designated as SR-130 in the outlying areas. The area between the western City limits and Downtown is known as "Central Place".

Joliet Road is a narrow, winding rural road that transitions from the country to the City. At one time, this segment of roadway was part of the Lincoln Highway system, although it has gradually become less traveled as other, more direct connections were made in and outside of the City. The developments along this road could be candidates for redevelopment. However, much of frontage remains undeveloped with a well-established tree canopy. The function and character of this roadway should be protected and enhanced through zoning and land development regulations, and redevelopment.

Calumet Avenue transitions to a natural area to the north of the City and becomes Old Route 49. It traverses the Mink Lake Golf Course with vistas of Flint Lake, Mink Lake, and other pothole lakes in the area. Just beyond SR-49, the road provides access to the Moraine Nature Preserve. The natural areas along this roadway should be preserved as they provide linkage between the City's environmental resources and those of the larger region.

Campbell Street provides a pleasing entry to the City from the north. It follows the western boundary of Rogers Lake Park, and eventually provides access to Sunset Hill County Park. The natural frontage of this street should be protected and enhanced.

Both Calumet Avenue and Campbell Street should be protected by a minimum 60' buffer wherein existing hardwood trees are preserved. On Campbell Street, the buffer should extend from the City limits to just south of Vale Park Road, and on Calumet Avenue the buffer should extend from the City limits to Country Club Road. The areas outside of the City should be given priority for annexation to protect the nature and character of these roadway environs.



Economic Stability

Valparaiso is economically strong in the region. As discussed in *Chapter 1, Planning Context*, job growth and opportunities are important to the continued vitality, sustainability, and steady growth of the City. A significant segment of the population, however, is concerned about the future of the job market in the City.⁴ In this chapter, economic development is addressed from a land use perspective. More about the City's role in the region and its future objectives and strategies may be found in *Chapter 4, Opportunity*.

In addition to job creation, there is a concern that the City offers little opportunity for start-up businesses.⁵ Downtown Valparaiso is an important asset to the City, meaning that the City's investments should be protected so that businesses located elsewhere do not detract from it.⁶ Franchise businesses should complement but not dominate local businesses.⁷ As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, land use regulations are not effective in addressing such differences; however, they may address the design of sites and buildings. The UDO includes downtown design standards for building architecture, dimensions, roof structure, and colors. These standards should be consistently applied and interpreted in order to protect the uniqueness of this valuable asset. Other strategies to increase the diversity of commercial uses and to encourage the reuse of vacant tenant spaces are discussed in *Chapter 4, Opportunity*.

The current zoning map reflects the City's industrial and business uses, as displayed in **Map 2.4, Current Zoning**. It shows heavy and light industrial zoning along the railroad that runs east-west along the northern boundary of the historic neighborhoods south of Evans Avenue. The area runs in a linear-fashion along the railroad for roughly two and one-half miles, which contains several vacant buildings. Some of the tracts are zoned Heavy Industrial (INH). Reuse of the vacant buildings for heavy industrial use would be disruptive to the residential areas that have grown up around them by reason of air pollution, noise, vibration, and traffic impacts. Some of this area is identified for redevelopment in *Map 2.2, Redevelopment*. This presents opportunities for reuse as lighter, non-polluting, and smaller business uses. These tracts should be repurposed to maximize business opportunities that produce few externalities such as traffic, noise, and odors. Uses could include small-scale manufacturing, such as food manufacturing, micro-breweries, and

⁴ The Quality of Life survey report, completed in March 2010, indicated that 73.5% of the population is concerned about the continued existence of good jobs.

⁵ The Quality of Life survey also revealed that roughly 54% of the population either disagrees or is not sure that Valparaiso is "a good place to start and grow a business".

⁶ The Quality of Life survey report, completed in March 2010, indicated that 79% of the population considers Downtown vital to the City's success.

⁷ The Quality of Life survey revealed that about 63% of the population prefers a mix of local and chain businesses, as opposed to exclusively local or exclusively chain businesses.

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There are opportunities for reuse along the rail corridors.



Chapter 4, Opportunity, outlines strategies to assist in bringing more businesses to Downtown.



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other craft or service-based businesses; start-up business incubators; and other types of flexible space. The tracts that are zoned INH should be rezoned to Light Industrial (INL) as reflected by the Future Land Use Plan.

Heavy and light industrial zoning is also along the south side of the rail corridor that runs diagonally from Lincolnway through the southern portion of the City to U.S. 30. Some of the tracts are zoned Heavy Industrial (INH). Reuse of these sites as heavy industrial would be disruptive here as well, where the housing stock is at greater risk of deterioration. Most of this area is identified for redevelopment by this plan. This area presents an opportunity for reuse of the factory-style buildings as art studios or light manufacturing uses. The tracts that are currently zoned INH should be rezoned to Light Industrial (INL) as reflected on the Future Land Use Plan.

In addition to the historic Downtown shopping area, the zoning map reflects the following major commercial uses:

- The length of the U.S. 30 Corridor;
- Almost three miles of frontage along Calumet Avenue; and
- The LaPorte / Lincolnway Corridor.

The area east of Downtown is a transition area, where single family homes have been converted to low-impact commercial uses that form an attractive entrance into Downtown. The Calumet Avenue corridor, together with certain sites along LaPorte/Lincolnway, was developed in a strip commercial style with bland architecture, few amenities, and liberal signage. Much of the frontage in both corridors is identified for redevelopment by this plan. Several sites in these corridors have been redeveloped over the years, ranging from a face-lift under the façade improvement program to a major redevelopment of Cumberland Crossing.

From a regional employment perspective, SR-49 is the City's largest potential job center. The area just north and east of the airport contains upwards of 300-acres of developable land that could be annexed to the City. The frontage on the east side of the highway lends itself to large corporate "Class A" office space in a master-planned business-park. The relocation and expansion of Porter Memorial Hospital at the northwest corner of SR-49 and U.S. 6 is expected to attract development along SR-49. Major medical facilities, regional financial institutions, and technology-based businesses would be well suited for this area. Interior sites, on the other hand (especially those south of U.S. 30), are better suited for light production and smaller-scale distribution facilities that can take advantage of the airport. High visibility, nearby services (including broadband), large readily buildable sites, and easy access to the combined I-90/94, and I-80 corridors, makes this a prime business location. Although large distribution facilities (a major driver industry in Northwest Indiana) could be attracted to this area, they are not advised due to their high impact/low jobs characteristics.



This building is an example of the benefits of the Façade Improvement Program.

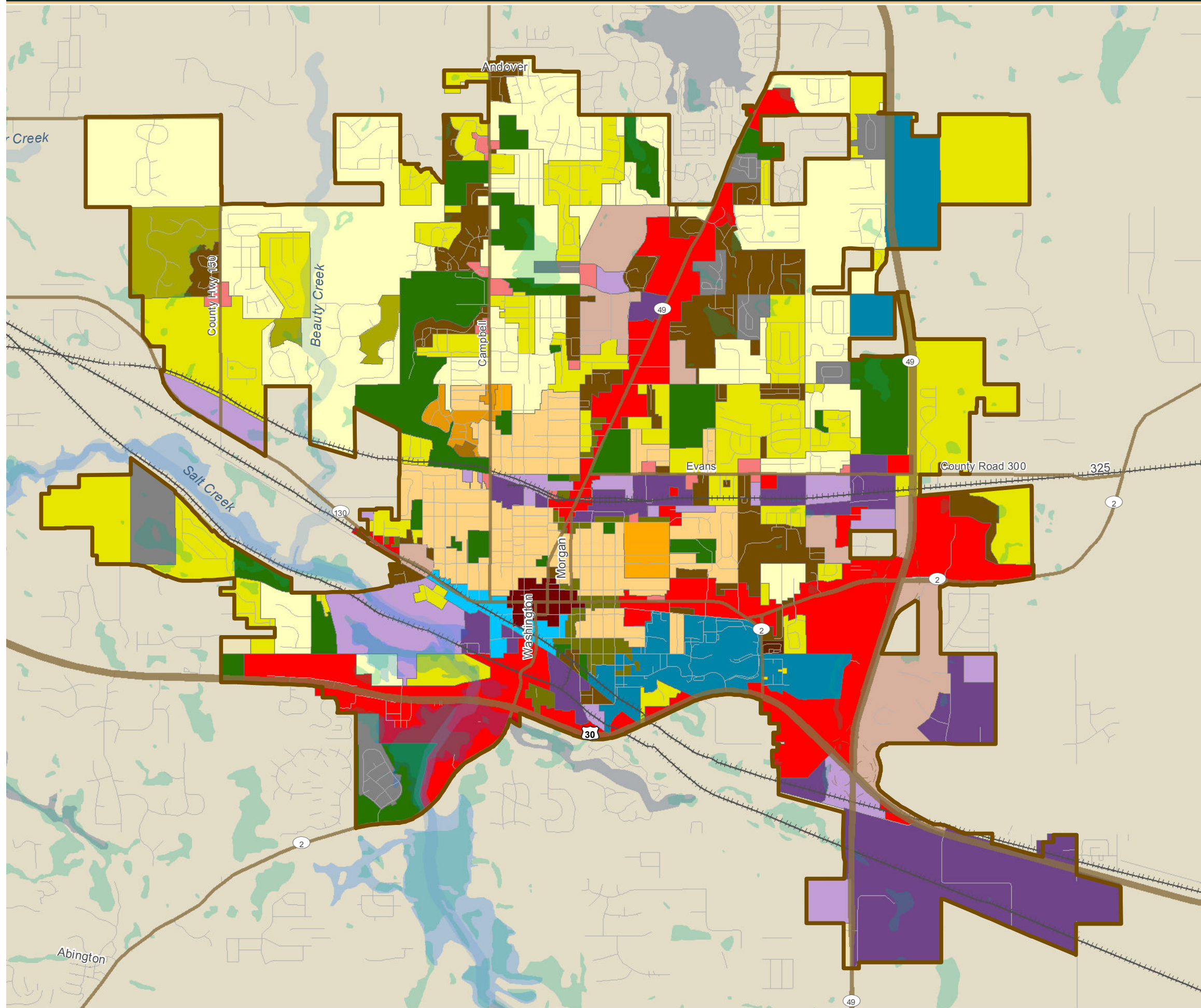


Map 2.4

Current Zoning

Legend

ER	PS
SR	CN
GR	CG
UR	CBD
NC 60	CP
NC 70	CA
NC 80	BP
NC 90	INL
NC-MH	INH
RT	PUD
City Limits	
Wetlands, Ponds, and Lakes	
Flood Zone (A)	
Flood Zone (AE)	
Streams and Rivers	
Railroad	



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On the southern end of SR-49, retail development dominates the western frontage, with an under-utilized shopping center on the eastern side at the LaPorte Avenue intersection. That shopping center is identified for redevelopment. The commercial acreage west of SR-49 between LaPorte Avenue and U.S. 30 fulfills many of the larger-scale commercial needs of the City (home improvements, groceries, and overnight accommodations). Members of the community, as well as those with business interests, expressed the desire to see the remainder of the SR-49 meet the business park needs of the community. This approach would help the City with additional land for "Class A" office and service needs, which would also help to balance future retail uses with uses that produce higher wage jobs.

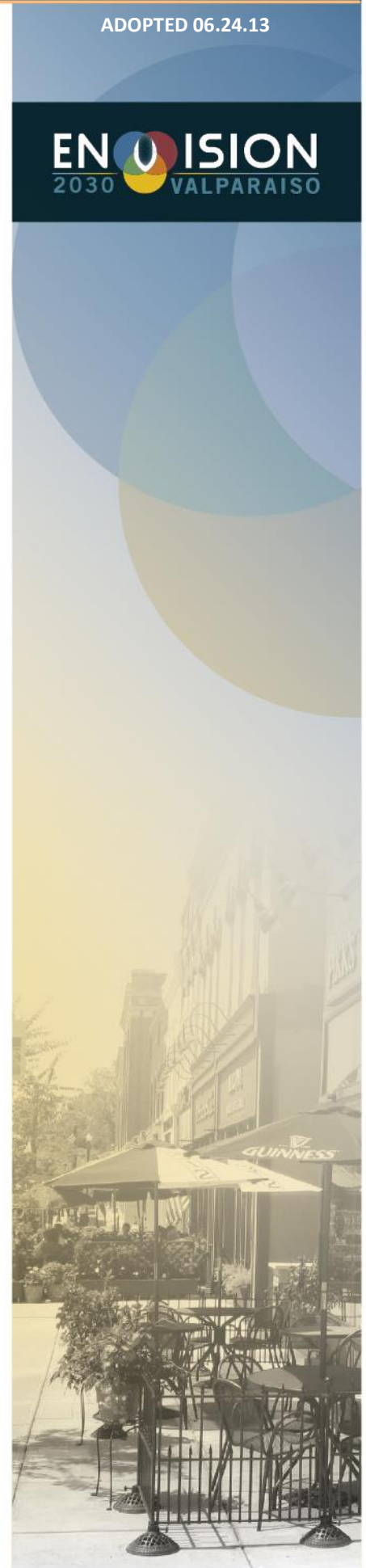
According to business leaders, there is a strong desire for clean industry that may be met by the area near Porter County Regional Airport. Areas that are impacted by the noise and airplane emissions are not optimum for residential uses. Industrial and shipping uses have a better, more symbiotic relationship with airports. Additional acreage for light industrial uses is available to the north and east of the Airport.

Managed Growth

The City's current extent of growth largely correlates closely with the City limits. Outside these boundaries, there are many smaller and medium-sized subdivisions and rural enclaves in unincorporated Porter County. These communities, some of which have been present for over 40 years, afford a rural or lakeside lifestyle to their residents, often with the accompanying notion of lower taxes and living costs.

In some cases, these developments have been established at the edges of the municipal boundary but in most instances, the City has gradually grown out to meet these rural subdivisions. Unless the City has an agreement to provide services, these unincorporated communities may constrain the City's future growth. However, there are several relatively large undeveloped tracts of land around the City that if left to unincorporated development will provide continuing opportunities for long-term expansion - even beyond the horizon of this Plan. This issue is discussed in *Chapter 7, Growth Capacity*.

It is important that the City take steps to protect these critical areas from unincorporated development that may preempt the City from expansion, particularly to the more desirable north, northwest, and northeast locations on the moraine. Statutes, utility extension policies, and municipal finance considerations make it difficult for the City to annex large swaths of undeveloped land for future growth. Similarly, Indiana communities have not been afforded the power of extraterritorial zoning or subdivision control without first obtaining county approval. As a result, the City will need to pursue utility extension policies and public investment strategies that make it



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attractive to become part of Valparaiso. A more detailed analysis of this issue and potential approaches to it are presented in *Chapter 7, Growth Capacity*.

Healthy Neighborhoods

The idea of a “healthy neighborhood” involves personal safety, stability, sustained housing values, convenience to amenities, and desirable aesthetics that complement the neighborhood. More measurable aspects of neighborhood livability include traffic levels, amount of noise, proximity to schools and parks, levels of public service, and time-distance to shopping areas and other desired activities.

As expressed in the focus group and Citizens’ Congress meetings, most participating residents expressed substantial satisfaction in the health of their own neighborhoods. Great concerns were expressed about the future of the older, smaller neighborhood elementary schools, which are facing the need for extensive renovations or even replacement. The concern revolves mainly around the potential loss of a long-standing and neighborhood anchoring school, with the accompanying replacement by bus transportation for neighborhood children. Valparaiso schools have a good reputation in the region, a fact that has contributed greatly to the City’s steady, sustained growth. The Valparaiso Community Schools (VCS) has eight elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and one vocational / technical school. Three of the elementary schools – Central, Memorial, and Park View, as well as Ben Franklin Middle School, are located within the City’s historic neighborhoods. The fact that schools are within easy walking distance and are deeply integrated into the fabric of the historic neighborhoods was a considerable draw for several of the current residents, not only to these residential areas but to Valparaiso.

However, the schools’ popularity, their age, the growth of the City, and changes in school standards have resulted in reported overcrowded conditions in the historic neighborhoods. This issue is being addressed by an ongoing comprehensive facilities evaluation and plan by the VCS. There may be other options to evaluate that would involve the redevelopment of existing sites to increase capacity, such as two-or three-story classroom buildings, structured parking, and/or the use of adjoining or other sites in the vicinity for certain activities. Such options would involve the cooperation and support of residents, as well as flexibility in the application of development standards. The City has an interest in encouraging VCS to analyze the potential for reuse of its sites within existing neighborhoods. The schools’ presence in the neighborhoods brings a certain level of cohesiveness. Also, if the schools become vacant without immediate occupants, the sites could have a negative impact, both to City services and to the immediate neighbors. Reuse of the sites could also have more of a negative impact to existing residential uses. Therefore, this plan recommends that these options be discussed between VCS and the City once the space needs have been evaluated.



Another ongoing concern expressed by residents is the need for continuing protection of neighborhoods from incompatible development and inappropriately designed or out-of-scale structures and renovations. These issues were addressed by the City in the form of Neighborhood Conservation District standards with the comprehensive revision of the Unified Development Ordinance. The UDO includes updated development standards intended to maintain the stability of existing neighborhoods and ensure that future development or redevelopment adheres to the same high standards that have typified most of the development that has occurred in the past.

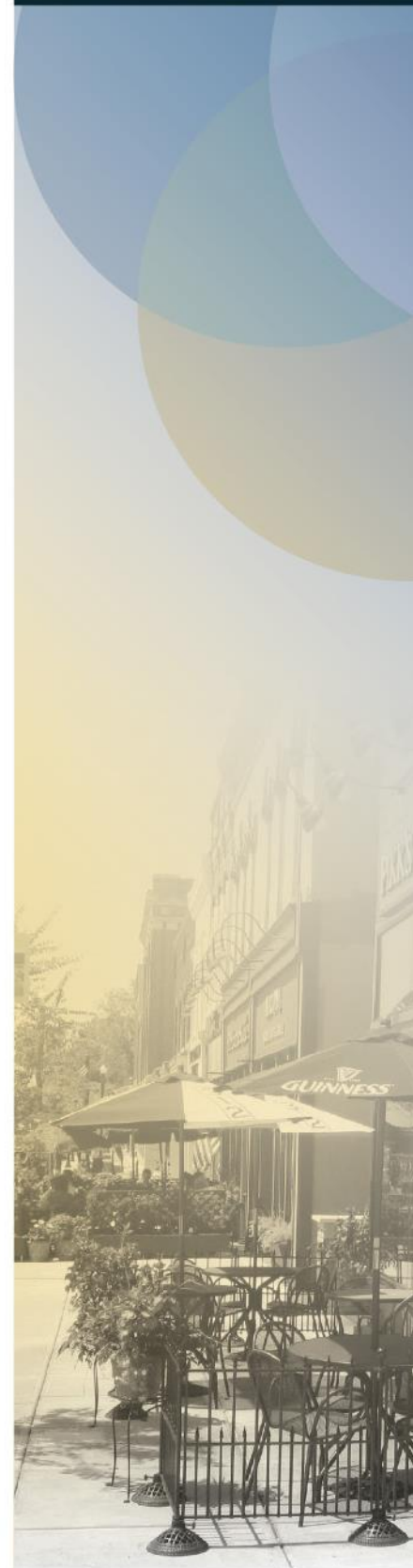
One theme that emerged from the Citizens' Congress was a desire to strengthen the City's neighborhoods. It was at times difficult for residents to describe their neighborhood. Some do not have a name for the area in which they live. The key to putting structure around the issues is communication – both among neighbors and between neighborhoods and the City. Valparaíso has recently recognized the importance of neighborhood communication and has devoted a new neighborhood liaison position to the effort. Some cities offer a program to educate community leaders regarding municipal matters. Typically referred to as "City 101", they provide information to the grassroots leadership about the inner-workings of local government. Such programs result in a more informed citizen base that interacts more effectively with city officials. The programs also pave the way for mutual support of the citizens with the decision-makers. Graduates of "City 101s" make better contributions when invited to sit on boards and committees.

Another consideration is the idea of people living in areas that are not in a traditional "neighborhood", and more within a mixed use environment. Another key for further improvement to Downtown would be to provide residential uses directly in the area to bring 24-hour life to it. This plan recommends a mix of residential and commercial uses in Central Place, as well as the potential for residential use in certain business corridors. The UDO addresses mixed use concepts in all commercial and business districts – the regulations are in place to facilitate such developments. However, in order to implement them, this plan recommends that the City identify opportunities for public/private partnerships to provide the additional incentive that may be necessary.

2.5 FUTURE LAND USE

As a guide for land development and public improvements, the plans depicted in **Map 2.1.1, Future Land Use Plan**, and **Map 2.1.2, Future Land Use Plan U.S. 30**, capture and incorporate the City's policies and the community's values regarding development and redevelopment in the coming years. This is significant since the findings and recommendations contained in this plan provide the policy direction for the City's development decisions regarding land use.

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 The logo for ENOVISION 2030 VALPARAISO. It features the word "ENOVISION" in a bold, sans-serif font, with a stylized "O" that is a circle containing a smaller circle. Below "ENOVISION" is the year "2030" and the word "VALPARAISO".


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In the future, whenever a zoning decision comes before the Planning Commission and City Council, the staff should consult the Future Land Use Plan as a basis for its initial recommendation. If a zoning request aligns with the Future Land Use Plan and impacts to public infrastructure can and will be mitigated, the recommendation may be to approve the proposed rezoning. If the proposal does not align with the Future Land Use Plan, the recommendation may likely be for denial, unless the plan is amended and other assurances are provided to ensure the appropriateness and compatibility of the proposed use.

There may be instances where, upon further analysis, it is justified to make an exception, and allow a proposed land use to proceed despite that it is contrary to its designation on the Future Land Use Plan. This typically occurs when a more detailed analysis of the subject property within its context reveals that the Plan warrants change. Another common justification occurs when, over time, circumstances affecting the subject property and those in its vicinity have changed. In this situation, it is a signal that it is necessary to review the Future Land Use Plan designation, at least within the area of the proposal.

There are zoning changes recommended in this chapter for three areas of the City. These include the two industrial areas along the rail corridors, where Heavy Industrial should be replaced with Light Industrial, and the area to the west of Central Place between it and the City limits. If the Future Land Use Plan is adopted reflecting these changes, this plan recommends that the City initiate rezoning of those properties pursuant to that policy direction.

The City's decision-makers will also look to the Future Land Use Plan when deciding a development case that includes an opportunity for public investment, such as development or redevelopment in a tax increment financing zone, or where public investment in infrastructure is needed to facilitate the development.

It is the recommendation of this plan to relate the land use plan designations closely with the zoning districts recently adopted in the UDO. This is due to the fact that the UDO districts were formed with the future land use classifications in mind. Because they were thought through in this context, there will be alignment and compatibility between the UDO, Future Land Use Plan, and the policies and directions of the Comprehensive Plan.

2.6 LAND USE POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Protection / Support of Neighborhoods

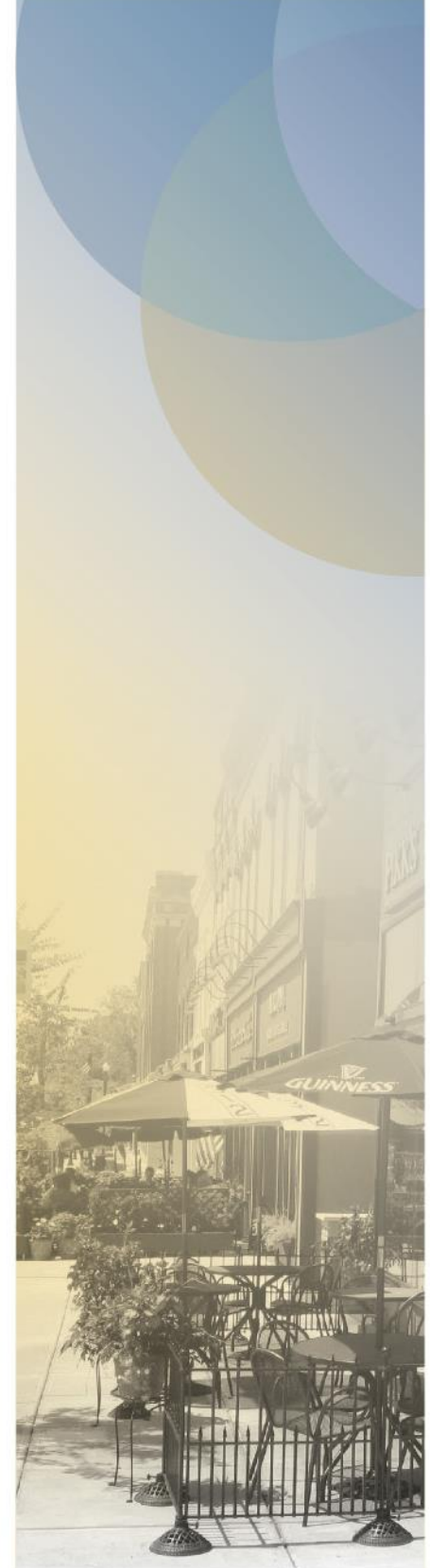
Policies

- 2.a. Continue close coordination with Valparaiso Community Schools School regarding new campus locations and joint planning for City-school park and recreation areas.

- 2.b. Use individual residential and neighborhood-wide redevelopment projects near non-residential uses as an opportunity to encourage and/or assist with new or supplemental tree planting, landscaping, taller fences, and other measures to enhance screening and buffering.
- 2.c. Continue coordination with area non-profits to address social services, educational attainment and skills training, and other fundamental factors in neighborhood and community revitalization (as well as housing rehabilitation and neighborhood redevelopment considerations addressed further in *Chapter 6, Housing & Neighborhoods*).
- 2.d. Schools, parks, golf courses, and community facilities should be located close to or within residential neighborhoods for accessibility and to provide a focal point for effective and cohesive neighborhood design.
- 2.e. The original historic neighborhoods will continue to be conserved through existing regulatory provisions and proactive planning measures.
- 2.f. New development will be compatible with existing and well-established neighborhoods through appropriate use and design transitioning and cohesive types and patterns of development.
- 2.g. Development patterns will provide for transitions and buffering between various land use intensities. Where land uses of incompatible intensities abut, there will be adequate bufferyards as required in the current development regulations to separate them.
- 2.h. The overall development pattern will transition from urban to suburban to rural with increased distance from the City center.
- 2.i. Adequate buffers will be applied to the northern entrance corridors of Calumet Avenue and Campbell Street.
- 2.j. Potential adverse impacts on adjacent land use types should be considered in the City's development review process (including factors such as noise, odor, pollution, excessive light, traffic, etc.).
- 2.k. New development or redevelopment on infill parcels in developed areas should maintain compatibility with existing uses and the prevailing land use patterns in the area.
- 2.l. Land uses with unusual characteristics or a higher likelihood of raising compatibility issues should be subject to more focused review and approval.

Actions

- 2.1. Design and renovate City buildings and facilities with area character in mind, especially in residential neighborhoods. This can have implications for building size and height; building arrangement and setbacks, roof and window design and façade treatments, extent of site coverage relative to open space and



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- landscaping, type of fencing and screening materials, buffering, and the location of site access and parking.
- 2.2. Use street and drainage improvements as an opportunity to install landscaping and screening that can further enhance the character of a neighborhood, as well as potentially addressing compatibility concerns between varying land use types.
- 2.3. Recognize screening and buffering between differing land use types and intensities as a key contribution and design consideration for pocket, neighborhood, and linear parks.
- 2.4. Work with VCS to discuss the budgetary and site design implications of expansion of the existing schools in the historic neighborhoods. Options could include bulk variances such as setbacks and height, structured parking, and new buildings that exceed a single story.
- 2.5. Following adoption of this plan, work with the City's neighborhood liaison to improve two-way communication between the City and its neighborhoods. More focused communication efforts provide an opportunity to coordinate more closely with key partners and entities, as well as to obtain public input at a more "grass roots" level.
- 2.6. Work with the neighborhood liaison to identify neighborhood leaders and then work with those groups to create a neighborhoods map to provide a basis for robust neighborhood identity.
- 2.7. Consider rezoning the areas that are currently zoned Heavy Industrial (INH) to Light Industrial (INL) along the rail corridors near Evans Avenue and between U.S. 30 and Lincolnway. Allow current heavy industrial users to continue until such time as the uses change.

Enhancement of Commercial Character

Policies

- 2.m. Continue to use special district mechanisms, together with City tax policy (such as TIF) and other incentives, to encourage revitalization and infill development, especially to invigorate commercial activity in the redevelopment areas.
- 2.n. Continue to offer mini-grants to existing commercial property and business owners to help finance building façade improvements, enhanced landscaping, or other site upgrades that might not otherwise occur where no construction or expansion activities are planned that would trigger compliance with newer development standards. Ensure that all areas shown as "Campus" on the Future Land Use Plan will be developed pursuant to all regulations applicable in the Campus (CA) zoning district.

- 2.o. Make efforts to continue to fund the Façade Improvement Program and work to rehabilitate commercial sites along LaPorte, Lincolnway, and Calumet. Consider funding to be made available for the reduction of sign clutter.
- 2.p. Continue to apply the CBD district regulations of the City's Unified Development Ordinance.
- 2.q. Continue to encourage the development and redevelopment of sites in Central Place as mixed use. Encourage and incentivize development that is transit-oriented in the Central Place area.
- 2.r. Downtown will continue to serve as the center of civic uses and activities and as a venue for culture and entertainment.
- 2.s. Reuse and redevelopment of existing property will strictly adhere to the policies and principles of this plan and the provisions of the UDO.
- 2.t. An increased focus will be devoted to corridor revitalization and enhancement.

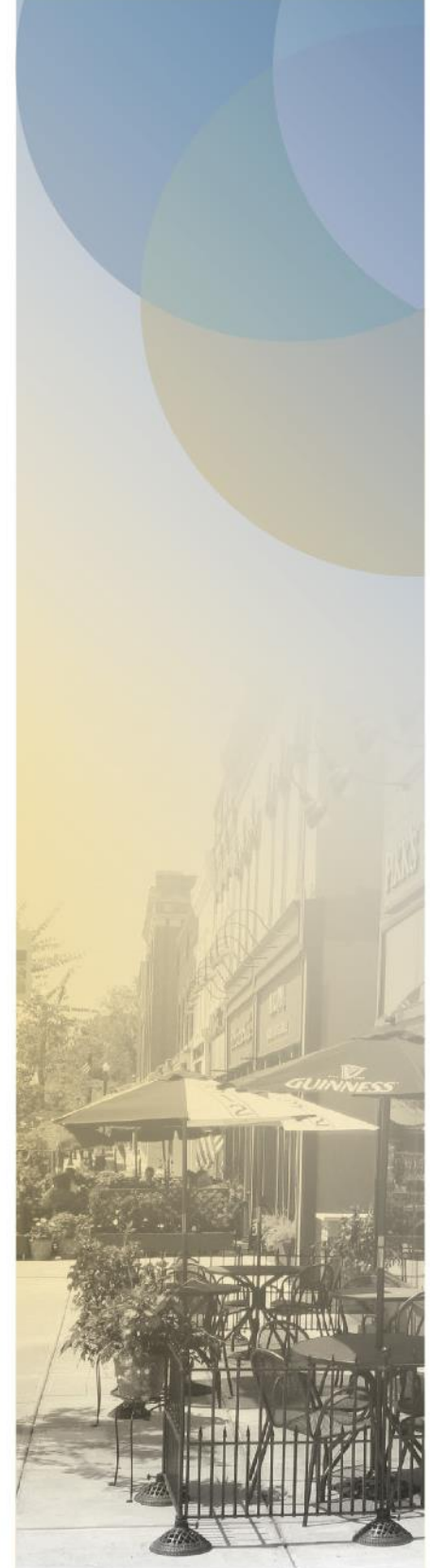
Actions

- 2.8. Facilitate the consolidation of the former Valparaiso Tech Institute property between Yellowstone and Milton south of Park Avenue (and outside of the future park area) for redevelopment as a mixed residential development.

Economic Stability / Continuous Promotion of the City

Policies

- 2.u. Continue to use the City's land use planning and zoning authority to safeguard economic assets (such as the new Porter Regional Hospital, business parks, and Porter County Regional Airport). Residential and/or non-residential uses could alter the area character or, if allowed to proliferate over time, might lead to objections about the operations and/or nature of the pre-existing economic anchors.
- 2.v. Work with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to incorporate design approaches that further the intended character themes in all construction and rehabilitation projects involving the community's primary corridors. This includes entry corridors to the City, such as U.S. 30, SR-49, SR-2, and Lincolnway. Take the same approach with Porter County regarding future public improvements to Campbell / Meridian and Calumet / Old Route 49.
- 2.w. Through the Planning Department, monitor the future reuse of existing buildings and lease spaces in Downtown to assist in coordinating appropriate timing of public parking improvements relative to the immediate need.



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*Actions*

- 2.9. Design and construct signature gateway and streetscape treatments at the identified high-profile entry points into Valparaiso. The gateway improvements should include monument signage, flags/banners, landscaping, special lighting, as well as public art. These should be carefully sited and of sufficient scale and quality design to stand out from other corridor signage and visual elements.
- 2.10. Consider creation of a technology entrance corridor along SR-2 north and east of the airport to identify future improvements in the right-of-way.
- 2.11. Consider changing the name Central Place to one that better describes the intended character and purpose of the area.
- 2.12. Commission a special area plan for Central place, together with a West Lincolnway Corridor Revitalization Master Plan.
- 2.13. Consider increasing the current 30' landscape buffer that is required along SR-49 to at least 60' for the entire length of the frontage. Within the buffer, consider requiring maintenance of existing hardwood trees unless special permission is granted to remove them.
- 2.14. Consider seeking an alternative location to the potential future parking garage site recommended on Lincolnway at Michigan Avenue. If it is decided to keep the location, work on the design of the building to keep the building at a maximum height of two stories for the portions closest to Lincolnway (e.g. a retail-wrapped building that screens the parking garage) so that the view into Downtown from the east is protected and preserved.
- 2.15. Consider changing the Zoning Map to expand the CP district into the areas that are currently zoned CG and BP to allow development and redevelopment as mixed use.

Promotion of a Healthy Environment*Policies*

- 2.x. Continue with efforts to inventory and subsequently identify protection measures for all sensitive environmental resources throughout the City and planning area.
- 2.y. Continue with efforts to encourage low-impact development strategies to protect the environment and the City's drinking water.



Overall Planning*Actions*

- 2.16. Incorporate the land use recommendations contained in this section into the Future Land Use Plan.
- 2.17. Coordinate Valparaiso University's planning efforts and the U.S. 30 Corridor and SR-49 Plan recommendations with the Future Land Use Plan and other applicable elements of this Comprehensive Plan.
- 2.18. Consider steps to lay out a program for an annual "Valparaiso 101" that targets community leaders and teaches them about all City functions, particularly the objectives, use, and value of this plan.

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