

Chapter Five: Existing Land Use

Existing Land Use

The analysis of existing land use patterns is a fundamental step in preparing a community master plan. The analysis not only examines the historic land use relationships, but also helps to predict future development trends and ensure that sound decisions can be made in the future.

Land use patterns develop according to geographic location, land use and zoning policies, and environmental, economic, social and cultural influences. The location of a building, the routing of a street or highway, construction of sanitary sewers, and many other factors affect, and have an effect on, the shape of existing and future land use patterns.

Documenting changes in land use helps to assess how land is being used, and identify changing trends

Documenting existing land use and looking at how uses have changed over time in a community is an important part of the planning process. It helps to identify how land is being used, and various changing trends by determining land uses experiencing growth, such as commercial or residential and those that may be in decline, such as vacant land or agriculture.

This section discusses the types of land uses that currently occupy the City of Grayling. The existing land uses in the City were established from physical surveys conducted by the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments, which were verified by the City of Grayling. They represent how land is being used in Grayling today. This analysis is helpful to understand where uses are in growth and demand or where they are dissipating and moving elsewhere. Areas experiencing activity or changes in the land use quickly emerge as areas of focus or discussion. Evaluating this element of the City, along with the other existing conditions, helps City planners to recommend proper land use patterns for the City's future.

The categories described below are shown graphically on Map Two: Existing Land Use.

Existing Land Use Categories

Single Family Residential

Typical of most communities, single family residential uses are the most predominant land use in Grayling. The majority of homes were built between 1940 and 1959, when post WWII development along the newly constructed highways was at its peak. However, the earliest homes are expected to have been built in the late 1800s, as the earliest plat of the “Village of Grayling” was recorded back in 1874. While housing values in Grayling are moderate; values increased dramatically (by almost 40%) between 1990 and 2000, when the median housing value reached \$62,400. Since 2000, housing values have shown a moderate increase with a median value of \$76,200 in 2010. Housing in Grayling consists predominantly of detached single-family homes located in traditional neighborhoods located in the northern portion of the City. Some vacant lots, scattered among the existing residential neighborhoods, indicates a potential for residential infill development.



There is one primary area of single family residential located northeast of the railroad tracks. Following the original development pattern as the original Village of Grayling plat, lots generally measure 60 feet by 120 feet, and are around one sixth of an acre in size or less. Because the remainder of the City, platted in the late 1800s and early 1900s, also followed this development pattern, small parcels of this size dominate the neighborhoods. Very few large residential parcels exist, except where several platted lots have been combined.

Areas around the periphery of the residential core have been converted into other, compatible uses including civic uses like schools, churches, additional assisted living facilities and municipal buildings located near the I-75 Business Loop, and commercial and office uses associated with Munson Healthcare Grayling Hospital located along Michigan Avenue.

Multiple Family Residential

This category includes buildings that contain more than two dwelling units including converted homes, apartment buildings, townhouses and senior housing. There are only a few scattered multiple-family residential areas

in Grayling. Most multiple family structures are located north of M-72 and east of State Street. However, other multiple-family areas have developed within the single-family areas. Most of these structures are residential in appearance and include duplexes, quad-plexes or residences that have been modified into multiple-family structures. Other, larger apartment and senior housing complexes have emerged where the I-75 expressway crosses the railroad tracks, in the southeast quadrant of the City.

Commercial

This classification includes general commercial and office uses located within the City, but outside of the downtown. Commercial development in the City generally follows the corridors of the I-75 Business Loop, M-93, Michigan Avenue, Norway Street and M-72 East and West. While some lower-intensity office and neighborhood-scale commercial uses are scattered around the hospital complex and within the industrial portions of the City, most of the general business activity centers around the I-75 Business Loop. Businesses within proximity to the north-bound I-75 off-ramp, at the south end of the City, generally cater to the traveling public and include lodging, fast-food, grocery and gas station uses. The uses near the medical complex are generally located along North Down River Road, but some can also be found along Michigan Avenue near the hospital and elementary school. These uses include medical offices and financial establishments that are compatible with their residential surroundings, and are appropriate given the continued growth of the medical facility and the increasing needs of their employees and patrons.

Central Business District



The Central Business District (CBD) refers to the downtown commercial area, which is generally described as the area along Michigan Avenue between Spruce Street and the railroad tracks just southwest of Norway Street. The uses in this classification are primarily retail and service related businesses. However, due to

their location and proximity to the traditional neighborhoods that surround

it, the businesses in the CBD also provide valuable services within walking distance for many residents. Recent improvements to the streetscape are evidence of the City's commitment to maintaining the vibrancy of this district (see photo insert, right). The City installed wider sidewalks, improved pedestrian amenities and traditional lighting to accent the downtown. Further efforts are needed to attract more businesses, improve the structural integrity of some older buildings, and upgrade and unify building facades. The CBD is also a center of municipal activity, containing a post office and the Crawford County municipal building.



Industrial

Industrial uses provide important employment opportunities and tax base to support improvements to capital facilities and municipal services. Most industrial uses are contained within an industrial park at the south end of the City that contains various manufacturing, assembly and industrial office and storage uses. The City's wastewater treatment lagoons are located at the extreme south of Industrial Street, and the public works storage facility is also located in this area.



Institutional

This category includes City, State and Federal buildings, schools, churches and other public or quasi-public sites, such as Munson Healthcare Grayling Hospital. As the County seat, Grayling is home to various local, City, County and Federal offices, which are all indicated on the Existing Land Use Map, but are more specifically discussed in the Transportation and Community Facilities Chapter of this Master Plan.



Recreation



The City maintains one main park along the AuSable River, where it crosses the I-75 Business Loop. This park has recently been improved with riverside walks, which allow for excellent fishing and wildlife viewing. The Nature Center located across the river from the park opened in November, 2007. The Grayling Country Club surrounds the AuSable River City Park and provides 18 holes to the public. The Fish

Hatchery, owned by Crawford County, is located in the City's northeast corner, along North Down River Road. A top-notch concrete Skate Park is located adjacent to City Hall with continued improvements and expansions being planned.

Wetlands, Lakes and Rivers



These categories refer to lands which are currently under water, such as the bottomlands of the Au Sable River. In addition, wetlands are indicated by a hatched overlay that shows areas which are not easily prone to development because they possess the typical wetland characteristics of saturated soils, heavy wetland vegetation, and seasonal presence of water. Wetlands are generally shown on the Existing Land Use Map. More specific delineation of wetland boundaries can be

determined from physical surveys of each site is conducted by a qualified wetland specialist. These surveys are typically completed on a site by site basis; therefore, the information presented here is based on aerial photography and soil surveys.

Undeveloped

While not specifically identified on the Existing Land Use Map, there are a number of vacant parcels located throughout the City, primarily within the residential neighborhoods. These include lots that have been combined with home sites to create larger lawn areas, or vacant lots that are available for redevelopment.