

CHAPTER 3:

Land Use & Community Character

The future land use concepts described in this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan focus on the following key themes emanating from the vision and guiding principles:

The character, harmony, and attractiveness of Ironwood's homes, businesses, parks, and public spaces contribute to the image of a **FRIENDLY COMMUNITY**. The Comprehensive Plan provides guidance for the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances as well as the programmatic and capital improvements that will preserve and maintain neighborhood character, enliven retail and employment destinations, and create visible and welcoming gateways for the community, region, and state.

By encouraging continued development of core areas for tourism, local-serving and destination retail, civic and cultural life, outdoor recreation, and employment, the future land use framework ensures that Ironwood is a **THRIVING COMMUNITY** and a **GREAT DESTINATION** for residents, employees, and visitors near and far.

A **CONNECTED/COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY** requires not only physical connections, but also the social and cultural connections created by strong, cohesive district and neighborhood identities. The future land use framework begins to define this place character and identity, and underscores the importance of celebrating the **RICH STORY** of Ironwood's past as expressed in its present day neighborhoods, parks, institutions, and public spaces.

In a community of vibrant **NEIGHBORHOODS**, accessible **PARKS** and recreational amenities, and thriving places of **WORK, CULTURE**, and **COMMERCE**, Ironwood's story continues to be told through its **HISTORIC** character and **UNIQUE** sense of place.

OVERVIEW



Aerial Map of Ironwood and its surroundings

A city's land use and development patterns are often an expression of community heritage and history. This is certainly the case in Ironwood where today, vast land areas commemorate the community's mining history, from the mining ruins in Miners Memorial Heritage Park, the historical and physical "backbone" of the community, to the many neighborhoods, streets, and institutions that bear the names of Ironwood's mining and timber past.

The future land use patterns described in this chapter are grounded in a respect for these historic patterns and desire to build upon existing assets

and community character. At the same time, the plan recognizes the transformations and evolutions that have taken place in the community over the past fifty years since the last mines closed: The growth of outdoor recreation, decline in population, downtown revitalization efforts, and the development of new industries. The vision for Ironwood is informed as much by recent and emerging trends, as by its historic themes and storylines.

The future land use chapter focuses on four major concepts to guide public infrastructure investments, as well as future development, redevelopment, and growth:

1. Community image: The tangible and intangible characteristics that impact how the community is perceived by current and prospective residents and businesses, visitors, and neighboring communities.
2. Maintenance and preservation of existing assets (housing, infrastructure, parks and open space, historic assets, etc.).
3. Targeted revitalization and reinvestment to promote thriving residential, commercial, and industrial districts.
4. Potential for growth on the edges of the community within limited and strategic parameters.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Improvement and maintenance of **City infrastructure** (sidewalks, roads, and utilities) was consistently cited by community members as a high priority. 63% of survey respondents ranked "strengthening existing neighborhood infrastructure" as one of their top three priorities for future investment. Respondents emphasized the importance of infrastructure in enhancing Ironwood's image as a well-maintained and affordable community.

Improving job opportunities for existing and prospective residents and providing more places to shop and eat, were also among the most common concerns. Residents described **job and retail growth and diversity** as critical to creating an attractive place to live and work. In the community survey, "economic development, job creation, and expansion" was the highest ranking priority for future investment with 68% of respondents ranking it among their top three priorities.

Community members expressed mostly positive feelings about the **downtown** area and recent improvements (Depot Park, Ironwood Theater, DAP, etc.), but the prevailing sense is that much work is still to be done to ensure that downtown is a truly vibrant civic, retail, and cultural center. In the community survey, 63% of survey respondents ranked "improving existing downtown buildings" as "important" or "very important."

Concerns about **housing** diversity and maintenance were raised, but not emphasized as highly as other issues like infrastructure and jobs.

Community members expressed a strong value for the area's **outdoor recreational opportunities** and access to local **parks and trails**. Concerns focused less on the quantity of park space in the city and more on the quality, programming, and maintenance of facilities.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

"Redeveloping existing neighborhoods... along with infrastructure improvements makes the city a more desirable place to live."

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 3.1 COMMUNITY IMAGE

Enhance Ironwood's image as a community of vibrant, desirable neighborhoods; a gateway to the Upper Peninsula and the state of Michigan; and a regional hub for commerce, recreation, arts, and culture.

Policy 3.1.1 Establish, communicate, and enforce clear standards for built form, site design, building materials, and landscaping requirements for future development and redevelopment projects.

Policy 3.1.2 Collaborate with developers on future development and redevelopment proposals to ensure high quality design that enhances the community image.

Policy 3.1.3 Encourage the use of design elements to create safer streets, facilitate social interaction between neighbors, and enhance neighborhood character.

Policy 3.1.4 Encourage the use of quality, durable building, and landscaping materials to create attractive residential developments.

GOAL 3.2 MAINTENANCE & PRESERVATION

Ensure that future investment: prioritizes infill and redevelopment within the existing city footprint; enhances community vibrancy, health, and character; and respects and preserves the historic context and development patterns in the community.

Policy 3.2.1 Encourage residential infill and redevelopment that respects the integrity and character of existing neighborhoods.

Policy 3.2.2 Promote continued maintenance of and reinvestment in Ironwood's primary commercial centers in downtown and along the Highway 2 corridor.

Policy 3.2.3 Focus industrial development in identified areas with existing industrial uses, appropriate roadway access, and complementary adjacencies.

Policy 3.2.4 Identify historic buildings and sites in the community and encourage preservation through incentives and programs.

Policy 3.2.5 Collaborate with local businesses, institutions, and community groups to promote and celebrate local history, including historic sites and buildings.

Policy 3.2.6 Preserve and enhance park, open space, and recreational facilities to serve neighborhood, community, and regional needs.

GOAL 3.3 REVITALIZATION

Encourage revitalization in key areas through infill and redevelopment.

Policy 3.3.1 Encourage infill and redevelopment in areas with existing infrastructure, major commercial/employment destinations, and in areas impacted by high levels of blight, vacancy or underutilized land.

Policy 3.3.2 Pursue public reinvestment strategies such as land acquisition and blight removal to facilitate private redevelopment and infill.

Policy 3.3.3 Ensure that city policies allow for diverse housing types that meet the needs of the market and accommodate changing needs of residents.

Policy 3.3.4 Form effective partnerships with private investors to undertake redevelopment efforts.

Policy 3.3.5 Establish clear development review procedures, guidance, and technical assistance for developers and homeowners.

Policy 3.3.6 Coordinate infrastructure improvement projects with redevelopment efforts.

Policy 3.3.7 Market redevelopment sites to prospective developers as a first priority rather than land areas at the edge.

Policy 3.3.8 Invest in community infrastructure improvements that support revitalization and redevelopment as a priority.

GOAL 3.4 LIMITED & STRATEGIC EXPANSION

Expand corporate limits of Ironwood through annexation where expansion helps advance the community's vision and improves upon the efficiency of infrastructure systems (operations and usage) and community services.

Policy 3.4.1 Evaluate infrastructure expansion in consideration of current system capacities and unused infrastructure.

Policy 3.4.2 Prioritize expansion that provides services to areas where human and/or environmental health are at risk.

Policy 3.4.3 Prioritize expansion that supports civic/community oriented institutions such as colleges and hospitals.

Policy 3.4.4 Evaluate the near term and long term fiscal impact of annexation relative to community revenues and ongoing operations and maintenance costs.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

The goals and policies on this page support the vision and guiding principles of the plan and should be used to inform future decision-making and action.

Goals: are broad statements that describe a desired outcome or end-state. Goals are often long-term in scope.

Policies: describe the general course of action or way in which programs and activities are conducted to achieve a stated goal or objective. Policies speak to underlying values, context, or principles and are often place-specific.

FRAMING CONCEPTS

FUTURE LAND USE: A DISTRICT-BASED APPROACH

The future land use plan for the City builds on existing land use patterns and guides future development towards desired patterns of use, form, and character. Unlike traditional comprehensive plans which often focus primarily on “use,” Ironwood’s plan integrates discussion of character and form, describing these qualities within a district-based framework.

The land use districts (see Figure 3-1 opposite) are generalized areas that aspire to a unified character and development form. Within each district, land use is driven by the district’s intended character and identity. The Land Use Plan is not the same as “zoning.” The land use plan provides a general direction and intent for what lands should be used for and a description of the desired character.

While the actual zoning assigned to parcels within a given district may vary, zoning should as a whole, support the desired character. Should future developments propose uses outside of the designated zoning for a given parcel, rezoning should be permitted provided that the proposed development is in keeping with the overall character, features, and form of the district as described in the Comprehensive Plan.

The boundaries of the future land use districts are defined based on existing land use patterns (similarity of uses, form, and character), location relative to existing City infrastructure, and suitability for future development (topography, soils, wetlands, roadway access, etc.). Additional consideration was given to minimize the number of “non-conforming uses” created under the proposed district framework.

The Future Land Use District Map, shown in Figure 3-1, identifies seven (7) land use districts, and one overlay district. Some of the districts cover a single contiguous area, others are broken down into smaller sub-districts.

The discussion on the following pages outlines the land uses, character, and form for each of the future land use districts. The descriptions provide policy direction and a framework for future zoning actions and infrastructure investments.

Future Land Use Districts:

The **Downtown District** is the heart of civic and cultural life in Ironwood and a unique and historic mixed use district.

The intent of the **Gateway District** is to maintain visible and welcoming entries into the city, signalling to travellers that they have arrived at their destination, be it Ironwood, the Upper Peninsula, or the state of Michigan. These districts provide a variety of activities more of a commercial nature.

The **Moderate Density Residential District** features a diversity of attractive housing options and local amenities within relatively compact residential neighborhoods defined by a street grid with a high degree of connectivity.

The **Low Density Residential District** is characterized by larger lot sizes (lower development densities). These are a result of unique circumstances including topography, natural features, and in some cases, the historic development of a mining town.

The **Limited-Services Residential District** applies areas of the city that receive limited public utility services and are largely undeveloped and rural in character. This area is also characterized by low lands and significant natural resource/open space areas.

The **Highway 2 Overlay District** aims to preserve a diverse character along Highway 2, while allowing for higher levels of commercial intensity at major activity nodes/corridors. As a key commercial corridor, this district recognizes the need to accommodate commercial uses, but emphasizes a form and pattern that enhances image, identity, and traffic flow.

The **Industrial / Employment District** is an area characterized by a wide diversity of jobs including: manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, office, service, and limited destination oriented/specialized retail. These districts carry a wide range of impacts including noise, odors, and heavier traffic.

The **Miners Park District** recognizes Miners Park as an important heritage site and recreational and open space amenity in the community to be protected and preserved for the enjoyment of all users.

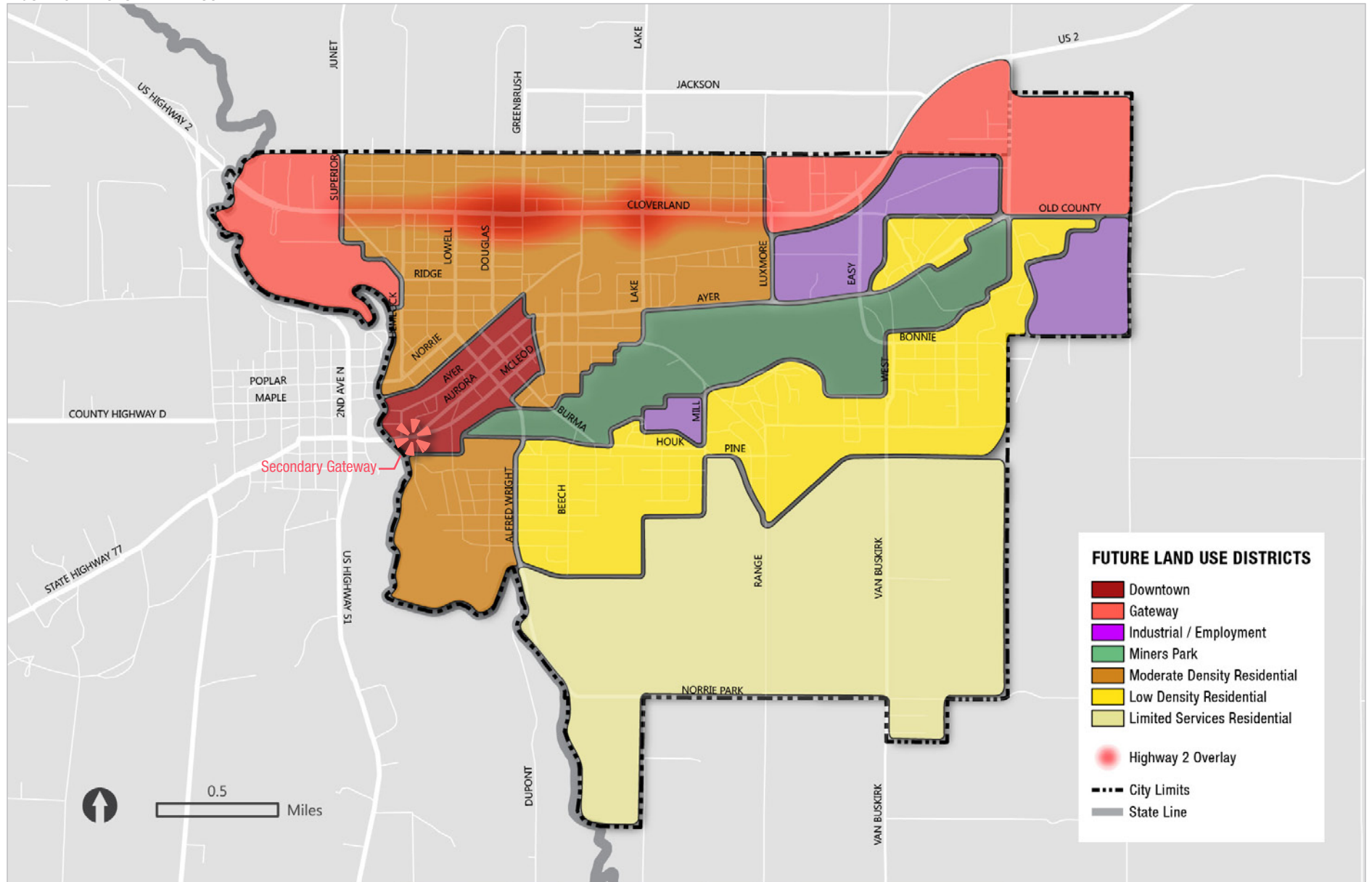
RELATED STRATEGIES:

Strategy 3.1:
Update city ordinances

Strategy 3.2:
Facilitate public understanding of land use policies and procedures

SEE P. 3-16 FOR MORE ON
THE STRATEGIES LISTED ABOVE

FIGURE 3-1. FUTURE LAND USE MAP



FRAMING CONCEPTS



Cultivate new housing types in downtown such as live-work spaces and artist lofts



Encourage active street frontages and cultivate a diverse mix of uses and that brings people and activity to downtown throughout the day



Murals and other forms of public art enliven the public realm in downtown

■ DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

The downtown district is the heart of civic and cultural life in Ironwood, and a unique and historic mixed use district. Visitors come to downtown to explore local history, arts, food, and culture; to shop and do business; and enjoy lively community events and performances. Downtown is not just fun to visit, but a great place to live and work- a unique “lifestyle” district that attracts artists, young families, single adults, and empty nesters seeking the amenities and convenience of downtown living.

Land Use, Form, and Character:

- Encourage higher density mixed use buildings and apartments (2-3 story buildings) in the core areas of downtown; residential densities of **12 or more units per acre**. In keeping with current development patterns, allow for lower density residential on the periphery of the district with densities of **4-8 units per acre**.
- Promote a diversity of uses (residential, retail, office, civic, and cultural) that generate activity in downtown throughout the day, evening, week, and year.
- Consider cultivating unique housing options in downtown such as live/work housing and artist lofts.
- Continue to concentrate the location of city-wide community uses and attractions, such as civic buildings, museums, arts and cultural attractions, entertainment venues, community events, and gatherings in downtown.
- Differentiate commercial character from Highway 2; tenants should feature smaller, local businesses, “mom and pop” stores, specialty goods, boutiques, and unique food and retail offerings.
- Encourage office uses and other convenience retail and services to support the day to day needs of downtown residents and workers.
- Prioritize improvements, infill, and redevelopment within the seven-block focus area identified in the [2009 Downtown Blueprint Plan](#) (Aurora, from Lawrence to Norfolk, and Suffolk, from Frederick to McLeod, including Depot Park and the Post Office).
- Preserve and showcase historic character and “small town” feel through preservation and restoration of historic buildings; consider creative re-use of historic structures.
- Preserve the integrity of historic structures and encourage use of quality building materials (in rehab and new construction projects) that complement existing historic architecture.
- Building orientation, setback, height-to-width ratios and placement of door and window openings should be consistent with and proportional to those of surrounding buildings, where present.
- Encourage active street frontages with active ground-floor uses and windows at specified minimum intervals to allow views into and out of buildings; allow outdoor seating for private businesses where space allows.
- Activate vacant and underutilized upper floors of buildings.
- Maintain historic street grid and block sizes and avoid redevelopment that creates super blocks.
- Maintain an attractive, high quality streetscape that allows for safe and convenient traffic movements and efficient snow removal, and enhances pedestrian comfort and safety (attractive/distinguishable crosswalks, on-street parking, bike lanes, seating, lighting, landscaping); applies not only to downtown streets, but key corridors into downtown.
- Integrate public art such as sculpture and murals, into the design of the public realm (parks, streets, storefronts, signage, etc.).
- Maintain appropriate trail connections to the district for all users.
- Downtown parks should be designed as community gathering and event spaces (e.g. Depot Park) with hardscape surfaces, shelter, and other amenities (lighting, seating, and landscaping).
- Plazas, pocket parks, and other informal gathering spaces should be cultivated throughout downtown to serve downtown residents and employees and provide relief space for shoppers and tourists.
- Retain on-street parking. Off-street parking areas should be located within organized lots or structures behind buildings and off of primary streets. Accommodate parking on a district, rather than site-by-site basis. Allow and encourage development of shared parking.
- A clear [wayfinding system](#) within and connecting to downtown directs visitors to key destinations and public parking lots.

■ GATEWAY DISTRICT

The intent of the gateway district is to maintain visible and welcoming entries into the city, which signal to travelers that they have arrived at their destination, be it Ironwood, the Upper Peninsula, or the state of Michigan. The gateway district is applied within two sub-districts, the “East Gateway” and “West Gateway,” the two primary entry points into Ironwood along U.S. Highway 2. Business Route 2, between the city’s border with Hurley and the junction at McLeod Avenue, is designated as a “secondary gateway” for those travelling east from Hurley, WI toward downtown Ironwood. While this portion of BR-2 is part of the downtown district, the wayfinding, signage, landscaping, and blight management directions prescribed for Highway 2 also apply.

Land Use, Form, and Character:

- Development along Highway 2 within the gateway district should feature primarily highway-oriented commercial uses (e.g. hotel/ lodging, destination and convenience retail) and civic facilities.
- Consider higher density, multifamily residential infill development within the East Gateway sub-district in the areas off of Highway 2; residential densities of **16-20 units per acre**. Existing lower density residential development may remain in the district, but should not be expanded in the future.
- West Gateway uses are more “civic” in nature, supporting the image of Ironwood as the gateway to the state and the Upper Peninsula region. Appropriate uses include:
 - › Visitors center/kiosk (for State and City)
 - › Open space amenities such as a “gateway park” near the visitors center and campsites/RV park within Curry Park
 - › Commercial uses such as hoteling, outdoor retail/outfitters
- East Gateway uses are more service-oriented, providing an attractive regional destination for shopping and services, as well as a stopover for through-travellers seeking convenience goods (gas and fast food). Commercial development on larger lots is appropriate in this sub-district. Uses include:
 - › Region-serving, big-box retail destinations
 - › Chain stores (electronics, pharmacies, etc.)
 - › Drive-through businesses (fast food, gas stations)
 - › Grocery and liquor stores
 - › Auto-related businesses (sales and showrooms)



Conceptual rendering of the Business Route 2 gateway area from the U.S. 2 Visual Enhancement Plan (2003)

- Develop and enforce signage and landscaping standards for private properties along Highway 2 to enhance overall appearance, improve wayfinding, and reduce visual blight.
- Attractive, consistent, and contextual appropriate gateway signage should be placed in visible locations for travelers entering Ironwood. A clear [wayfinding system](#) should connect visitors to key community destinations.
- Screen existing industrial uses off of Highway 2 with landscaping to minimize visual impact from the roadway, and design utilities to enhance the public realm (e.g. bury power lines and screen utilities with public art, landscaping, etc.)
- Encourage side-lot parking and screening of parking areas with landscaping and/or ornamental fencing.
- Continue sidewalk, trail, and streetscape improvements (lighting, paving, planting, etc.) as part of the planned Highway 2 reconstruction project; streetscape design should facilitate bike and pedestrian safety and allow for snow storage and removal.
- Connect Gateway areas to the City and Regional trail network; enhance trailhead areas off of Highway 2 and encourage complementary private development (e.g. outdoor retail, outfitters, food/beverages, etc.); and maintain a clear wayfinding system for City trail network.
- Integrate landscaping and [stormwater features](#) into the design of formal and informal green spaces along major roadways.
- Integrate public art and historic interpretation into the design of the public and private realm along major roadways (e.g. outside the visitors center and at the BR-2 gateway).



Integrate public art and local history in the design of gateways

FRAMING CONCEPTS



Single family housing type found within the Moderate Density District



Individual entryways and porches and building articulation can reduce the visual scale of multi-family housing

■ MODERATE DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

The moderate density housing district is comprised of relatively compact residential neighborhoods that feature a mix of attractive and affordable housing options. Neighborhood residents enjoy proximity to local-serving amenities (parks, trails, schools, churches, and corner stores), as well as convenient access (often within walking distance) to major commercial destinations in downtown and along Highway 2. A higher intensity redevelopment and infill in these areas capitalizes on the presence of existing above and under ground infrastructure capacity.

Land Use, Form, and Character:

- Primarily residential development with a mix of single family homes and smaller multi-family housing types mixed in; overall density of this district should range from **4-8 units per acre**. Some areas may be appropriate for higher density, stacked housing at densities **greater than 12 units per acre**.
- The design of multifamily housing should be context-sensitive—that is, aim to minimize the perceived density, provide sufficient setbacks or open space/relief areas between properties, and contribute to a safe, walkable public realm; consider locating with direct access to arterial or collector roadways, adjacent to parks and/or trailways, and adjacent to existing non-residential uses. Garages should be attached where possible and should have a design aesthetic that is consistent with the primary structure and sensitive to adjacent uses.
- Non-residential uses such as corner stores and civic institutions (schools and churches) may be allowed with appropriate site design and form:
 - Commercial uses should be local-serving (i.e. not a destination that generates a large volume of traffic or requires large truck access); includes small retail, coffee shops, or service businesses; smaller in foot print, approximately 1,000 to 2,000 square feet in size.
 - Non-residential uses should have good access to arterial or collector roadways.
 - Parking should be on-street where possible; small side or rear lots; and, screened with landscaping and/or ornamental fencing.
 - Site design should include walkways/access to public sidewalks or trails.
- Building should be residential in character with only one or two stories and an entrance oriented to the street.
- Garbage and refuse should be small scale and stored within the building.
- Small-scale home business operations and live-work housing should be encouraged (e.g. personal office, small studio/workshop, professional office for doctor/lawyer) provided that business use of the property does not negatively impact the residential character of the district (i.e. noise, odors, traffic).
- Front residential streets with the primary entrances to residences, porches, stoops, and windows rather than garage doors to promote social interaction and eyes on the street; utilize alleys where they exist for garage/automobile access.
- Encourage preservation and rehabilitation of historic homes, structures, and sites. Develop historic interpretation and signage to highlight “hidden” historic sites and tell the story of Ironwood’s neighborhoods.
- Encourage infill and redevelopment of underutilized/vacant properties for various uses.
- Encourage new housing that contributes to housing diversity, while maintaining the existing character; provide housing for residents in all stages of life, including seniors, married couples without children, and single young adults and young families.
- Maintain street grid, where it exists today, as well as spacing of collector streets to distribute traffic and minimize congestion; avoid use of cul-de-sacs in favor of connected street grid.
- Develop pedestrian and bike facilities on primary corridors and in the vicinity of and connecting to neighborhood destinations (schools, parks, institutions, and businesses).
- Ensure that residents have access to a range of high quality parks and recreation options (active and passive park space, motorized and non-motorized trails), and at least one neighborhood park located within a 5-minute (ideal) or 10-minute walk.
- Locate and design [stormwater management infrastructure](#) (ponds, swales, planting) in a manner that enhances the public realm; encourage integration of stormwater features in the design of neighborhood parks, public right-of-way, and private property.
- Design utilities in the area to enhance the public realm (e.g. bury power lines and screen utilities with public art, landscaping, etc.)

■ LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

The Low Density Residential District applies to slightly more remote neighborhoods in the City, featuring primarily single-family homes with more options for those seeking larger, more flexible lot sizes, and lower development densities. These areas have access to neighborhood amenities including parks, trails, and civic institutions. Redevelopment and infill in these areas capitalizes on the presence of existing above and under ground infrastructure capacity.

Land Use, Form, and Character:

- Predominantly single-family residential development; residential densities of **2-4 units per acre**.
 - Non-residential uses such as corner stores and civic institutions (schools and churches) may be allowed with appropriate site design and form:
 - › Commercial uses should be local-serving (i.e. not a destination that generates a large volume of traffic or requires large truck access); includes small retail, coffee shops, or service businesses; smaller in foot print, approximately 1,000 to 2,000 square feet in size.
 - › Non-residential uses should have good access to arterial or collector roadways.
 - › Parking should be on-street where possible; small side or rear lots; and, screened with landscaping and/or ornamental fencing.
 - › Site design should include walkways/access to public sidewalks or trails.
 - › Building should be residential in character with only one or two stories and an entrance oriented to the street.
 - › Garbage and refuse should be small scale and stored within the building.
 - This district should provide more flexibility for home businesses and live-work situations (including personal or professional office, studios, workshops, and small-batch production) provided that business use of the property does not negatively impact the residential character of the district (i.e. noise, odors, traffic); allow for larger accessory buildings with appropriate guidance regarding maximum size and setbacks.
- Encourage preservation and rehabilitation of historic homes, structures, and sites. Integrate historic interpretation and signage to highlight “hidden” historic sites and tell the story of Ironwood’s neighborhoods.
 - Encourage new housing that contributes to housing diversity, while maintaining the existing character; provide housing for residents in all stages of life, including seniors, married couples without children, and single young adults and young families.
 - Front residential streets with the primary entrances to residences, porches, stoops, and windows rather than garage doors to promote social interaction and eyes on the street.
 - Maintain street grid where it exists today, as well as spacing of collector streets to distribute traffic and minimize congestion; avoid use of cul-de-sacs in favor of a connected street grid. Where topography and existing roadway patterns inhibit the grid, provide appropriate wayfinding and signage to facilitate neighborhood navigation.
 - Develop pedestrian and bike facilities on primary corridors and in the vicinity of and connecting to neighborhood destinations (schools, parks, and institutions).
 - Ensure that residents have access to a range of high quality park and outdoor recreation options (active and passive park space, motorized and non-motorized trails), and at least one neighborhood park located within a 5-minute (ideal) or 10-minute walk.
 - Locate and design [stormwater management infrastructure](#) (ponds, swales, planting) in a manner that enhances the public realm; encourage integration of stormwater features in the design of neighborhood parks, public right-of-way, and private property.
 - Design utilities in the area to enhance the public realm (e.g. bury power lines and screen utilities with public art, landscaping, etc.).



Features like porches, stoops, and seating that faces the public street encourage social interaction and neighborhood safety.



Stormwater management infrastructure should be designed as a public amenity that enhances the public realm.

FRAMING CONCEPTS

■ LIMITED SERVICES RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

The Limited Services Residential District applies to the very low-density residential areas in the southern portions of the city that receive limited public utility services and are largely undeveloped and rural in character. Existing infrastructure and roads in this area are limited and are not anticipated to grow beyond the current service level. Development potential is limited due to existing wetlands and topography.

Land Use, Form, and Character:

- Residential and limited agricultural uses are permitted in this district.
- Larger properties with acreage and “estate” feel.
- Municipal water and sanitary services not provided except in cases where environmental or human health are at risk.
- Limited road network/connectivity with pedestrian/bike facilities on key corridors only (connecting to outlying recreational destinations at Norrie Park and ABR).

Vibrant Neighborhoods

Ironwood aspires to be a community of vibrant residential neighborhoods that showcase the community's values, neighborhood pride, and local history. Many of the goals, policies, and strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan aim to strengthen neighborhood character and identity. The following are some core neighborhood qualities promoted in the plan:



WALKABLE SCALE & DESIGN *Approximately 1/4 mile radius (or a 10-minute walking distance from end to end); accommodates multiple modes, including bikes and pedestrians.*

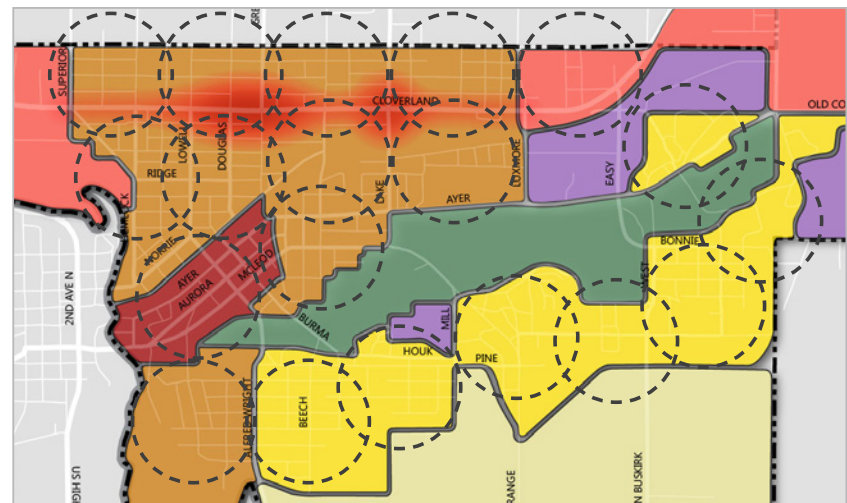
COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS *Anchored by key institutions (schools, churches, etc.) - may include services that support day-to-day needs (corner stores and other local serving commercial)*

PARKS / OPEN SPACE *Provides access to parks and recreational facilities that promote healthy, active living.*

IDENTITY / CHARACTER *Memorable character and interesting architectural and landscape design.*

PUBLIC SPACES *Design of public realm encourages human contact and social activities (public gathering spaces, front porches, sidewalks, etc.)*

NEIGHBORHOOD COHESION *Activities and organizations that engage and connect residents and promote a safe, welcoming environment.*



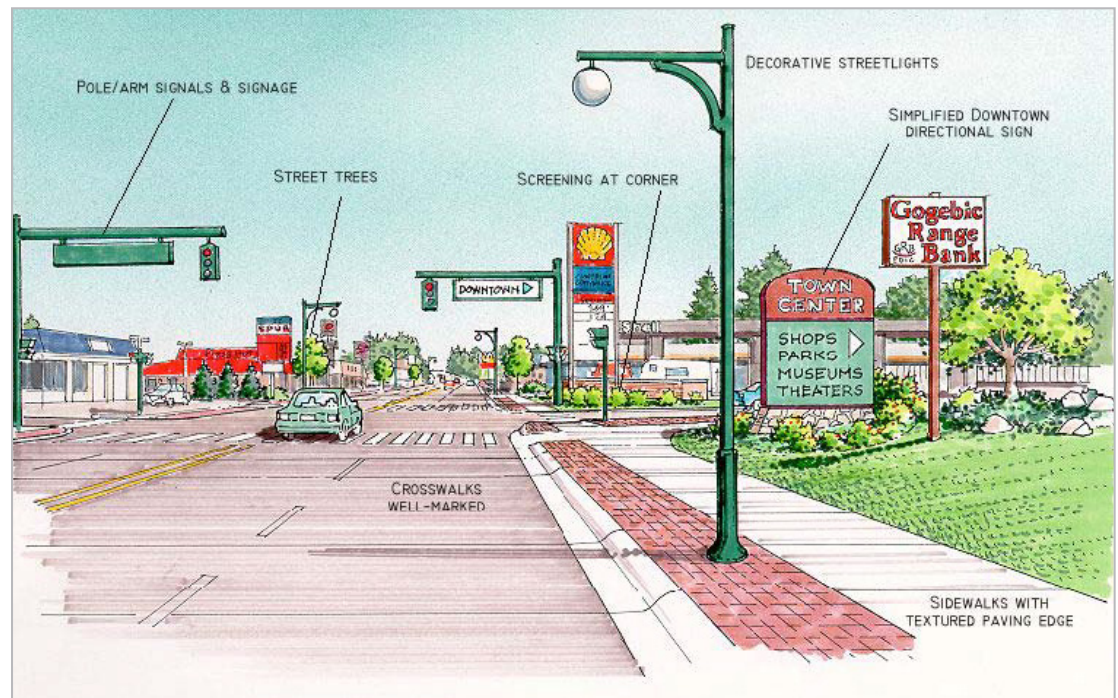
● HIGHWAY 2 OVERLAY DISTRICT

The Highway 2 Overlay District applies to portions of the Moderate Density Residential District within the Highway 2 corridor, providing for a higher level of commercial intensity and use in the areas along Highway 2 and particularly around major commercial activity nodes. These nodes are defined by the key north/south corridors off of Highway 2 (Lowell, Douglas, Greenbush, Lake) that connect to important destinations such as downtown, the community college, and ski hill. Some rezoning may be necessary in the future as redevelopment occurs around these nodes. In contrast to the Gateway Districts, the Highway 2 Overlay aims to offer a more varied character and look to the commercial corridor while respecting the desired commercial pattern of uses.

Land Use, Form, and Character:

- Development along Highway 2 within the Overlay District includes a mix of residential uses (largely existing) and commercial retail and services (convenience, restaurants, pharmacy, client-oriented office, auto repair)
- At the major commercial activity nodes around Lowell St, Douglas Boulevard, Greenbush Street, Lake Street, and Luxmore Street, commercial development is more intense, featuring larger lot sizes and more highway-oriented uses such as hotels, gas stations, and restaurants; at the major cross streets, commercial development may extend north and south off of Highway 2, in the direction of other local destinations for short distances.
- Residential development of a moderate density (townhomes or stacked units) should be considered along the corridor, particularly in mid block areas. Residential uses should be set back further from the street edge, and where possible, access should be from side streets.
- Maintain a walkable, residential feel along the corridor by minimizing direct access to Highway 2; utilize alleys, access from side roads and consolidating of driveways where possible.
- Encourage side lot parking and screening of parking areas with landscaping and/or ornamental fencing.
- Develop and enforce signage and landscaping standards for private properties along Highway 2 to enhance overall appearance, improve wayfinding, and reduce visual blight.

- Design utilities in the area to enhance the public realm (e.g. bury power lines and screen utilities with public art, landscaping, etc.)
- Continue sidewalk, trail, and streetscape improvements (lighting, paving, planting, etc.) as part of the planned Highway 2 reconstruction project; streetscape design should facilitate bike and pedestrian safety and allow for snow storage and removal.
- A clear [wayfinding system](#) should direct visitors to downtown and other community destinations.
- Connect to the City and Regional trail network from Highway 2; and maintain a clear wayfinding system for City trail network.
- Integrate landscaping and [stormwater features](#) into the design of formal and informal green spaces along Highway 2.



Conceptual rendering of the signage, landscaping, lighting, and paving improvements from the [U.S. 2 Visual Enhancement Plan \(2003\)](#)

FRAMING CONCEPTS



Industrial/flex development type

■ INDUSTRIAL / EMPLOYMENT DISTRICT

The Industrial/Employment district is a broadly defined district, the intent of which is to foster economic growth through a job-rich and activity-rich development pattern. The industrial/employment district should accommodate job growth across a range of industrial categories from heavy industry to the professional office user needing outside storage or yard space.

Land uses in this type of district may generate noise, traffic, odors, and at times unsightly storage of product or supplies. Site design and building aesthetics in this district should aim to mitigate these effects, contributing to the view from public streets and conveying the quality and durable construction of spaces within. Such design considerations support the image of Ironwood as an attractive community for visitors and prospective businesses.



Aerial image of the Ironwood Business Park

Land Use, Form, and Character:

- Outside storage and heavy equipment should be oriented on the site to minimize impacts on adjacent uses that are not of a similar nature (i.e. sites that are adjacent to a residential district or Miners Park should orient heavier uses and storage away from these districts)
- Design utilities in the area to enhance the public realm (e.g. bury power lines and screen utilities with public art, landscaping, etc.)
- Building fronts facing the public street right of way should be of a higher architectural character.
- Signage should be scale appropriate and clearly identifiable to the business name and address.
- Park and recreation areas should be considered in these districts to enhance the physical environment for employees and provide places to take walks, host corporate events, or simply eat lunch.
- Stormwater management should be thought of as an amenity to the site and not as simply a required improvement.
- Consider landscaping improvements that are appropriate to the region and include tree plantings where possible.
- Ped/Bike facilities on key corridors connecting key destinations to the districts should be prioritized.
- Parking and truck circulation should be well thought out on a district level. Sites that require occasional truck movements might explore shared driveways and access areas to minimize unused hard surfaces; this reduces the area required for snow removal and areas that generate runoff.



Provide park and trail amenities within industrial/employment districts

■ MINERS PARK DISTRICT

The Miners Park District recognizes Miners Memorial Heritage Park as an important heritage site and recreational/open space amenity in the community to be protected and preserved for the enjoyment of all users. The district includes park land and open space areas within and in some cases adjacent to Miners Park, including undeveloped areas not within the official park boundaries.

Land Use, Form, and Character:

- There is one existing industrial parcel located within the district. This property shall be regarded as a legal non-conforming use and shall continue to be zoned industrial. The intent is not to convert this area to parkland, but to ensure that future development and improvements on the site are compatible with park uses and ideally enhances the look and function of the park, trails, and historic sites.
- Continue development of park and historic assets in this area as a local and regional amenity and point of interest. Develop historic interpretation (mining history, ruins, buildings, and historic homes).
- Existing development that is adjacent Miners Park should be encouraged to consider site improvements or building improvements that are sensitive to the passive nature of the park and recreation amenity of Miners Park.
 - Outside storage should be screened through landscaping, berming and fencing from views from the park (particularly the areas within the park where users are)
 - Driveways, parking, and circulation areas should be located on areas that are not adjacent the park where possible.
 - Buildings should front on the park where possible.
- See Miners Park recommendations in [Chapter 5: Parks & Recreation](#).



Existing industrial use within the Miners Park District



Highlight historic assets in the parking and mining history

FRAMING CONCEPTS

INFILL & REDEVELOPMENT

Redevelopment is a key goal articulated within this chapter and other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. Redevelopment is often a challenging and complicated tasks that requires collaboration between the city, agencies responsible for service delivery, property owners, adjacent property owners, and ultimately the developer who redevelops the property. The City should consider a variety of roles vis a vis infill and redevelopment of key sites:

The City as a Broker: This applies where city owns the property in question and has the ability to make key decisions. The City's primary responsibility is to package the site and market it to potential users. The City has the added benefit of being able to assist with property entitlements for the site and removing barriers to redevelopment.

The City as a Facilitator: This approach requires the city to provide the linkage between prospective developers and property owners.

The City as a Developer / Partner: As the developer/partner, the city becomes an invested partner in the project, and as such, the city may have a direct role in completing a public improvement or securing financing in support of the redevelopment project.

In any of the above redevelopment roles, the City's objective is to help revitalize tired or under-utilized areas, return vacant land to revenue generating uses more quickly, and to help advance the city's vision.

Figure 3-2 (opposite) illustrates priority infill and redevelopment sites in Ironwood. The areas identified as "key infill opportunity sites" were identified based on the following criteria:

- Public ownership or landowner interested in redevelopment
- Vacant or underutilized land / buildings
- Location within city limits and availability of (and capacity of) existing infrastructure
- Suitability for future development (soils, wetlands, etc.)
- Potential for redevelopment to serve as a catalyst for other public improvements or remediation of environmental problems

Further planning may be necessary to accelerate infill and redevelopment in these areas. The City should look to align its redevelopment strategies and planning efforts with requirements of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) [Redevelopment Ready Communities](#) program.

RELATED STRATEGIES:

Strategy 3.3:
Conduct regular land use & building condition inventories

Strategy 3.4:
Identify project area for a pilot small area plan

Strategy 6.11:
Support infill & redevelopment

SEE P. 3-16 & P. 6-10 FOR MORE ON THE STRATEGIES LISTED ABOVE

Florence Street Site

Acres: 6.5

Ownership: Private

Potential future uses: Senior, Live-work, Commercial, Park

City Role: Facilitator/Partner

Redevelopment Strategy: Public/private partnership to study redevelopment options



Potential Character

Former Grocery Store Site

Acres: 1.6

Ownership: Private

Potential future use: Mixed Use Commercial/Housing

City Role: Facilitator/Partner

Redevelopment Strategy: Public/private partnership to study redevelopment options



Potential Character

Former School Site

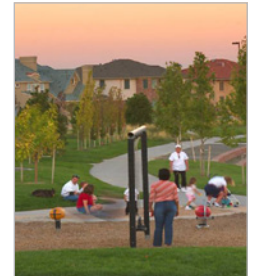
Acres: 2.2

Ownership: Public (School District)

Potential future uses: Residential, Park

City Role: Broker

Redevelopment Strategy: Prepare design concept and market to developers



Potential Character

East Ayer Site

Acres: 26.2

Ownership: City-Owned

Potential future uses: Residential, Live-Work

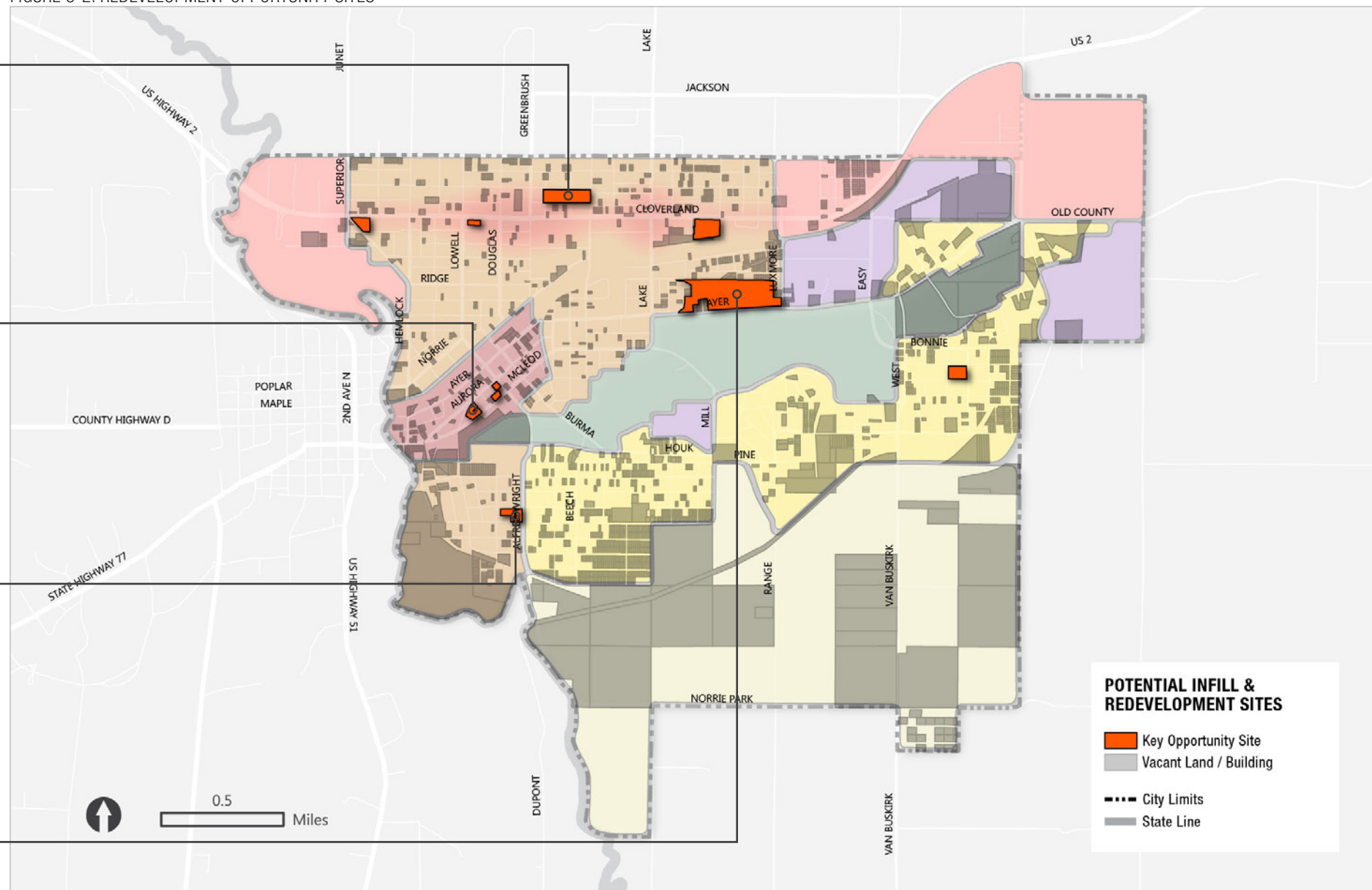
City Role: Broker

Redevelopment Strategy: Prepare design concept and market to developers



Potential Character

FIGURE 3-2. REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY SITES



The redevelopment opportunity sites described on the preceding page include suggestions for future land use, potential redevelopment roles for the City, and general strategies for redevelopment. Further planning and study is strongly recommended to understand redevelopment potential and desired community outcomes for these sites.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

“Strategies” are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan’s goals and policies. Strategies address the “who, what, when, where, and how” of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies.

The following strategies support the Land Use goals and policies described in this chapter.

STRATEGY 3.1: UPDATE CITY ORDINANCES

Successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan’s vision for future land use requires the alignment of land use regulations, primarily the City zoning ordinance, as well as administrative practices that facilitate public understanding of City policies.

Strategy 3.1(a): Update zoning ordinance

Ironwood should update its zoning ordinance to reflect modern building standards, ensure compliance with state regulations, and alignment with land use directions in the Comprehensive Plan. Key considerations include:

- Provide more explicit direction in the zoning around built form and design character rather than use per se; provide flexibility for proposed developments that conform to design standards, but may not adhere to permitted uses.
- Understand the scope of non-conformities in the community, including types of existing non-conformity (lot size, structure, use) and the issues and impacts related to such properties; to the extent that non-conforming uses are an issue, consider using the zoning update process to rectify or mitigate.
- Ensure that zoning allows for a mix of housing types in downtown, appropriate to both the higher-density mixed use core and more peripheral neighborhoods; within the downtown core, specify a higher-level of design standards for store front design, signage, and pedestrian-friendly elements.
- Permit flexible uses within the Industrial/Employment district to encourage diversity and accommodate new economy type businesses.
- Due to the historic platting of lots, many properties are too small to accommodate modern standards for garages and accessory structures. Provide flexibility in the zoning to allow adjacent vacant residential parcels under single ownership to be regarded as a single property when applying dimensional standards for accessory buildings.

Strategy 3.1(b): Update the City’s Zoning Map

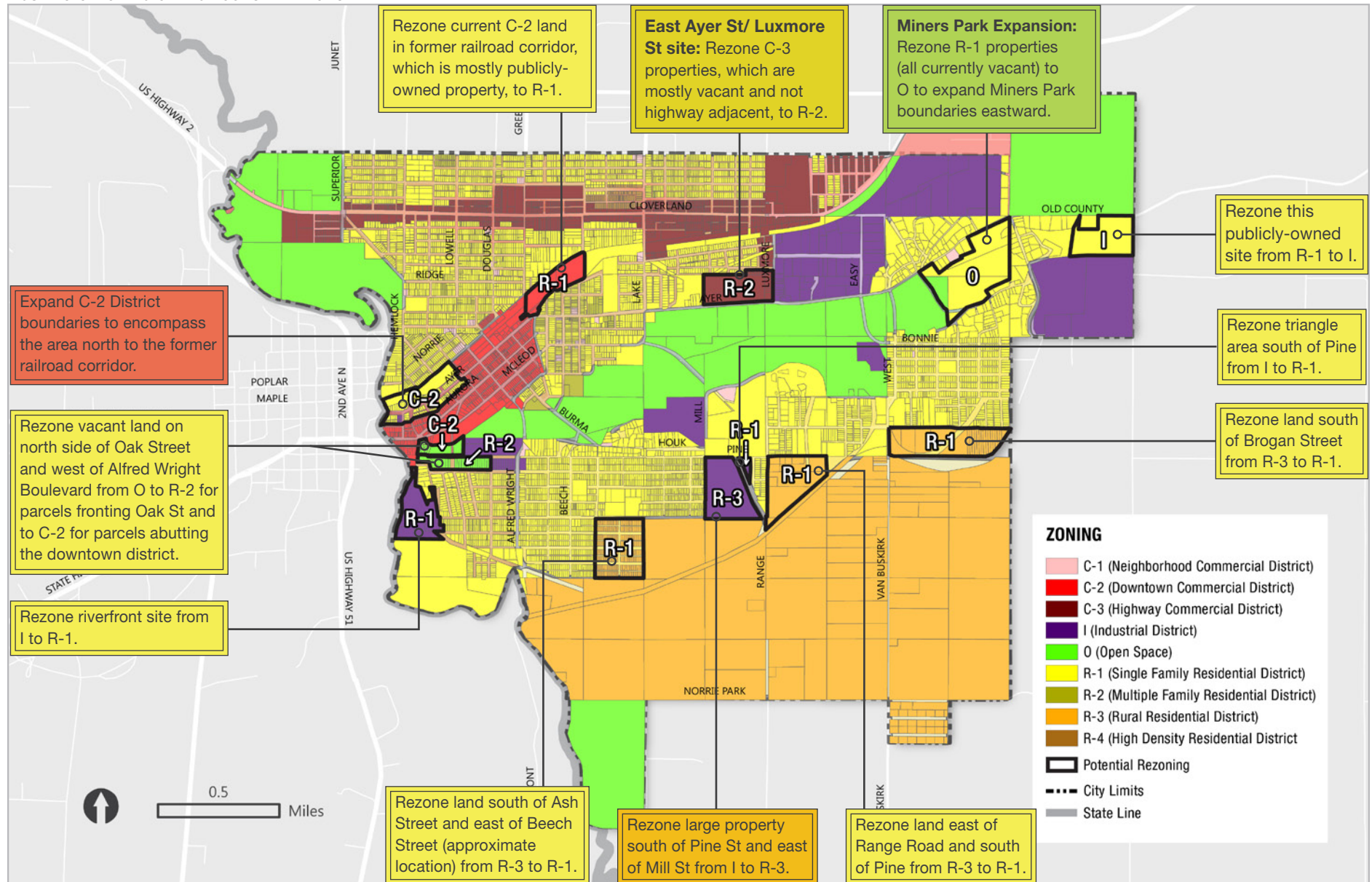
To align the City’s zoning map with the Comprehensive Plan’s Future Land Use Map, the following areas should be considered for potential rezoning. Figure 3-3 shows these potential rezoning areas on the City’s current Zoning Map.

Table 3-1 below shows the potential alignment between future land use districts described in this chapter and existing zoning districts. An in-depth evaluation and update of the City’s zoning ordinance is recommended to ensure that zoning supports the land use character and form described in the Comprehensive Plan.

TABLE 3-1. FUTURE LAND USE & APPLICABLE ZONING DISTRICTS

Future Land Use District	Applicable Zoning Districts
Downtown	C-2
Gateway	C-2, C-3, O
Industrial	I
Miners Park	O
Moderate Density Res.	R-1, R-2, R-4, C-1
Low Density Res.	R-1 could be applied with appropriate modifications to the zoning description, or a new zoning district could be created.
Limited Density Res.	R-3

FIGURE 3-3. ZONING CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS



STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

Strategy 3.1(c): Create subdivision ordinance

- Consider creation of a subdivision ordinance that aligns with the land use, infrastructure, and other directions in the Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy 3.1(d): Formalize the development review process

- Clearly articulate City's development review processes and administrative procedures within City ordinances.

Strategy 3.1(e): Consider creation of a unified development code

- The City may also consider creation of a Unified Development Code that bring together zoning, subdivision ordinance, and development review procedures under one ordinance structure.

STRATEGY 3.2: FACILITATE UNDERSTANDING OF LAND USE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The city should maintain and encourage practices that support public understanding of city policies and procedures with regard to development, redevelopment, and property rehabilitation.

Strategy 3.2(a): Provide print and online access to information and technical support

- Maintain printed and online versions of City plans and regulations that can be easily accessed by the public, as well as technical support to assist developers and property owners in navigating administrative processes for development review, permits, zoning issues, etc.

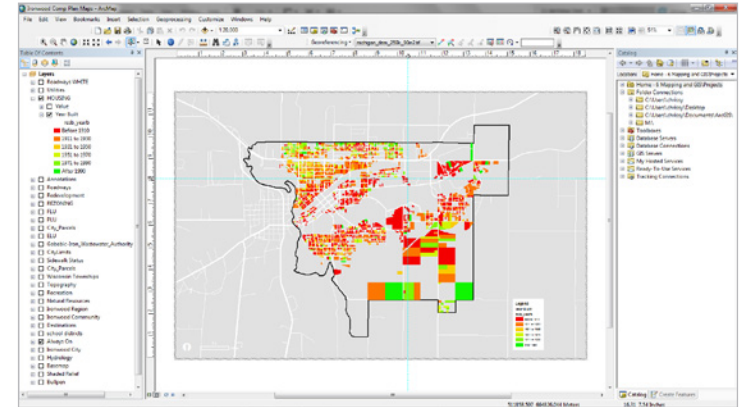
Strategy 3.2(b): Develop resources to explain administrative processes to developers and property owners

- Such resources may include a development checklist, FAQs, or homeowner's guides (e.g. How to apply for a permit for a home addition/fence/etc.).

STRATEGY 3.3: CONDUCT REGULAR LAND USE & BUILDING CONDITION INVENTORIES

The City should conduct regular inventories of land use and building conditions to inform the City's reinvestment priorities. This includes maintaining a database of vacant and development-ready sites as well as sites with structures on them that are in poor condition.

The City should use the land use and building inventory to assess the condition and scope of vacant and blighted properties in the



GIS software can be used to analyze existing land uses and building conditions and identify future redevelopment priorities

community (size and location of lots, adjacencies, etc.); identify future redevelopment priority sites; and inform vacant land management policies and practices, including recommendations for how to manage the City's surplus property list. The City should reevaluate the surplus list on an annual basis. See also [Strategy 6.11: Support Infill & Redevelopment](#). Criteria for identifying redevelopment opportunity sites should include:

- Public ownership or landowner interested in redevelopment
- Vacant or underutilized land / buildings
- Availability of and capacity of existing infrastructure
- Suitability for future development (soils, wetlands, etc.)
- Potential for redevelopment to serve as a catalyst for other public improvements or remediation of environmental problems
- Location within city limits

The City may consider enlisting the assistance of local students (from Gogebic community college or other post-secondary institutions in the region) to collect and analyze data using GIS mapping software. This strategy may also involve working with the community college to develop a program for students interested in GIS technology and related career paths. Other partners in this venture may include ESRI (a GIS software company), the Urban Land Institute (ULI), and the American Planning Association (APA).

STRATEGY 3.4: IDENTIFY A PROJECT AREA FOR A PILOT SMALL AREA PLAN

The City should consider the preparation of small area plans to guide revitalization efforts around key nodes and neighborhoods. Given the costs associated with small area planning and the limited market demand for redevelopment master planning, in the near term, the City may consider a pilot small area plan in a project area where there is: (1) a significant cluster of redevelopment opportunity sites (see [Figure 3-2](#)); (2) potential for public-private partnership and financing for redevelopment planning; and (3) opportunities to incorporate and leverage funding for priority infrastructure planning projects (e.g. road reconstructions, complete streets pilot project, stormwater improvements, etc.).

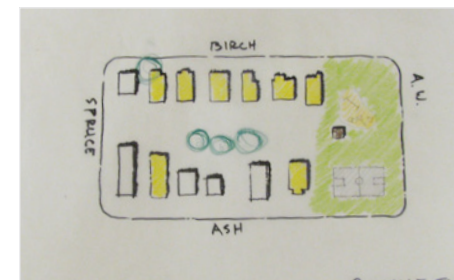
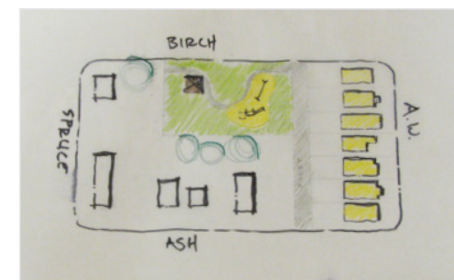
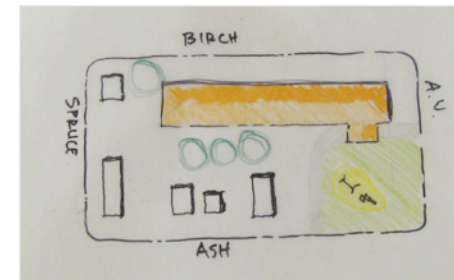
Small area plans should:

- Align with requirements of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) [Redevelopment Ready Communities](#) program.
- Articulate a vision for the project area based on community input.
- Include site analysis, redevelopment scenarios (see examples, right), and development yield calculations for key redevelopment sites within the project area.
- Identify priority capital improvement and maintenance projects, best management practices, design guidelines, and recommendations for community-led revitalization projects.
- Address potential funding sources, implementation partners, and marketing strategies.
- Identify the City's role regarding key redevelopment opportunity sites (i.e. as broker, facilitator, or develop/partner - see [p. 3-14](#)).
- Consider a variety of potential City-led actions:
 - › Site acquisition and/or marketing of city-owned redevelopment sites.
 - › Assisting with property entitlements for the site and removing administrative barriers.
 - › Facilitating redevelopment of privately-owned sites.
 - › Completing public improvements around the site to encourage redevelopment.
 - › Securing financing for redevelopment projects.

- Leverage other infill/redevelopment strategies described on [p. 6-10](#) in the Community Development chapter as appropriate.

The potential for additional small area plans should be evaluated based on future site, funding, and market opportunities.

Small area planning should be considered for certain neighborhoods within the Low-Density Residential district (e.g. around the former Newport mines) where topography and historic settlements have resulted in a unique residential development pattern. Small area planning should be used to explore the development of a possible live-work zoning district within these neighborhoods that supports the growth of cottage industries, artisans and craftsmen, and other home business uses.



Redevelopment scenarios sketches were developed for the former school site in Ironwood as part of this planning process to demonstrate at schematic level, the range of potential future uses, building types, and site design options.

MAKING IT HAPPEN!

Priority Actions

Priority action steps are identified in the matrix on the following page. This matrix focuses on immediate (0-1 year) and short-term (1-5 year) action steps, as well as ongoing actions and practices. A complete matrix including longer term actions has been prepared and is maintained by the City as part of the on-going comprehensive planning process. Once these immediate and short term actions have been substantially completed, the city should initiate a comprehensive plan update process to revisit the vision, guiding principles, goals, policies, and strategies and renew the list of action steps. The matrix identifies the key strategy, related sub-strategy, responsible implementing entity (most often the City), partnership resources, general costs, and possible funding sources.

The Comp Plan and YOU!

The Comprehensive Plan serves not only as a guiding document for city government, but as a collective expression of community values, desires, and visions. Just as the creation of this plan was fueled by the input and ideas of community members like you, its successful implementation requires your continued engagement, advocacy, and action.

So, what can you do to support the vision, goals, and policies expressed in this chapter? Here are just a few ideas to get you thinking, talking- and hopefully, taking action!

- Familiarize yourself with the land use directions in the Comprehensive Plan and advocate for future zoning and policy updates that will help to realize the land use vision presented in the plan.
- Serve on citizen-led committees that advise on land use policy, parks planning, or infrastructure investments, or attend public meetings pertaining to future zoning changes.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

The City has developed a number of **Spark Plans**, or “mini action plans,” to support implementation of select strategies in the comprehensive plan. Spark Plans focus on strategies that: (1) are high-priority actions, (2) may require additional explanation and planning, and (3) may be implemented by groups other than City agencies (community groups, civic organizations, individuals, etc.). Strategies for which a Spark Plan has been developed are noted in the priority action matrix with the following symbol: ★

See [Appendix C: Spark Plans](#) for the complete set of Spark Plans.

NOTE: No Spark Plans were created for the strategies listed in this chapter.

Performance Measures

To ensure accountability around the Plan, the community needs to measure and report on accomplishments. Performance measures provide a way to measure progress and success in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Some performance measures are quantifiable, concrete figures; others are more qualitative in nature. The following are the key performance measures for the land use-related action steps recommended in this chapter:

- Number of zoning requests and building permit applications.
- Number of redevelopment projects led, facilitated, or brokered by the city.
- Reduction in blighted properties.
- Improvement in neighborhood character, cohesion, and identity.
- Improved appearance and vitality of downtown and key gateway areas in the community.

TABLE 3-3. PRIORITY ACTIONS - LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

IMMEDIATE ACTION (0-1 YEARS)						
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Implementing Entity	City Role	Potential Partners	Cost	Possible Funding Sources
3.1 Update City Ordinances	3.1(a) Update zoning ordinance	City (Community Development)	Lead		\$\$ (\$10,000-\$50,000)	General Fund
	3.1(b) Update zoning map	City (Community Development)	Lead		\$\$ (\$10,000-\$50,000)	General Fund
	3.1(c) Create subdivision ordinance	City (Community Development)	Lead		\$\$ (\$10,000-\$50,000)	General Fund
	3.1(d) Formalize the development review process	City (Community Development)	Lead		\$ (0-\$10,000)	General Fund
	3.1(e) Consider creation of a Unified Development Code	City (Community Development)	Lead		\$\$\$ (\$50,000-\$200,000)	General Fund
3.2 Facilitate understanding of land use policies and procedures	3.2(b) Develop resources to explain administrative processes to developers and property owners	City (Community Development)	Lead	Developers, Brokers, Contractors and Realtors	\$ (0-\$10,000)	
SHORT-TERM (1-5 YEARS)						
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Implementing Entity	City Role	Potential Partners	Cost	Possible Funding Sources
3.4 Identify a project area for a pilot small area plan	-	City (Community Development)	Lead		\$\$ (\$10,000-\$50,000)	General Fund - CDBG - other Grant Resources
ONGOING						
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Implementing Entity	City Role	Potential Partners	Cost	Possible Funding Sources
3.2 Facilitate understanding of land use policies and procedures	3.2(a) Provide easy access to print online resources and technical support. See p. 3-18 .	City (Community Development)	Lead		\$ (0-\$10,000)	General Fund
3.3 Conduct regular land use and building condition inventories	-	City (Assessor/ Building Inspector)	Lead		\$ (0-\$10,000)	General Fund



Photo Credit: Heather Brown

