

THE CITY OF LITCHFIELD, MICHIGAN

20 YEAR MASTER PLAN

CITY COUNCIL

Edwin Smith, Mayor	Dan Efstathiou
O.R. Smith	Don Bannick
Rick Siebert	Brenda Thomas
Jessica Bills	

CITY OFFICERS

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Jill Pelham	Treasurer/Finance Director
Susan Ballinger	Clerk/Asst. Zoning Administrator
Anthony Langhann	Superintendent – Public Works
John Michelin	Chief of Police

City of Litchfield Master Plan, 2016

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**THE CITY OF LITCHFIELD, MICHIGAN
20-YEAR MASTER PLAN**

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Edwin Smith - Mayor
E. Dean Edwards - City Manager

LITCHFIELD PLANNING COMMISSION

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SPECIAL BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE

John VanNieuwenhuyzen
Rosemary Chapman
Edwin Smith
Scott Benjamin
Dean Wooden
John Michelin

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Edwin Smith, Mayor
O. R. Smith
Robert Keeney
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Randy Hawkes
Charles Phelps
Patsy Jones

CITY OFFICERS

E. Dean Edwards	-	Chief Administrative Officer
Marguerite Dooley	-	Clerk and Treasurer
Roger Sprague	-	Deputy Clerk
Gloria Wooden	-	Deputy Clerk
Dean Wooden	-	Superintendent - Public Works
John Michelin	-	Chief of Police

The CITY OF LITCHFIELD, MICHIGAN
20-YEAR MASTER PLAN

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The City of Litchfield, Michigan 20-Year Master Plan

INTRODUCTION

In January, 1996, the City of Litchfield retained Feller, Finch & Associates, Inc. to update its 20-Year Master Plan. The City's first comprehensive plan, titled Litchfield-1992: Community Development Plan, Part One, was adopted in 1967. The present plan was approved by the Litchfield Planning Commission on August 28, 1996. It was adopted by the Litchfield City Council on September 9, 1996. The plan will act as a guide or "roadmap" for the City from now until the year 2015.

The planning process utilized a number of sources for primary information to assist in the development of the plan. The sources included public meetings, including a "charette" (public "brainstorming" session), "blue-ribbon" Master Plan Committee meetings, and one-on-one interviews to acquire input from residents and community leaders, as well as government officials. The Master Plan Committee consisted of the members of the City of Litchfield Planning Commission, including the Honorable Edwin J. Smith, Mayor, and Mr. E. Dean Edwards, City Manager, as well as other interested members of the community. Mr. Marvin Smith was the Chairman of the Master Plan Committee. Mr. Edwards also had a significant role in coordinating the activities of the committee. The Master Plan Committee met several times to review the status of the project and to provide guidance for future efforts.

The information obtained from the public meetings, the charette, the Master Plan Committee meetings, and from research conducted over the course of the study, including demographic research and fieldwork, provided the basis for the recommendations contained herein.

The Master Plan is an inventory of the City's resources and a mission statement built on the foundation of the City's resources and its vision for the future. The overall goal of the Master Plan is to provide a supportive framework for decision-making so that the City of Litchfield will experience orderly and planned growth and economic development in such a manner to maintain the quality of life which its citizens enjoy. A major goal of the plan is to prevent future land use conflicts and reduce existing conflicts between land uses.

The Plan is divided into a number of sections dealing with a variety of issues related to the future of Litchfield. The major forms of development which are discussed include residential, commercial (including the Downtown and the Marshall Street Corridor), and industrial. Additionally, transportation and utilities are discussed, with particular emphasis on the relationship of these elements to future development. The Plan also addresses community services issues, including parks and recreation, as well as environmentally-sensitive areas. Recommendations related to each aspect of development are integrated into the appropriate section(s).

The plan should be reviewed on an annual basis so that the City can set its annual priorities and set short-term (three-to-five years) goals. The various City committees should study the sections relevant to their area of concern in defining the short-term goals. As priorities change, the City should be flexible in re-ordering its priorities, so that the best interests of the citizens are served.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Residential Development

Goal: To foster the development of a family-oriented residential community clustered in neighborhood settings centered around neighborhood services (e.g. recreation), and separated from other developments by buffers or screens, open space, floodplains, other natural barriers or transportation corridors. To maintain and preserve historic and traditional neighborhoods. To encourage a broad range of housing opportunities for citizens in keeping with demographic changes, economic conditions and availability of land.

The location and density of housing should be established in consideration of: (1) master plans and policies for the provision of municipal services (water, sewer, walkways, bikeways); (2) accessibility to business/service centers; (3) geographic limitations (soil conditions, flood plain, etc.); and (4) proximity to potentially conflicting land uses, e.g. heavy industry.

Future single-family home construction should be located in the northern half of the City. Utility lines are sized for continued growth on the north end of the City.

Future mobile home development should be located on the west side of the City in appropriate areas between Marshall Street and the industrial park.

Provisions should be made for multi-family and attached housing (condominiums and townhouses) as the median age of the population increases, and household size decreases, and the demand for smaller-scale housing grows among senior citizens and "empty-nesters."

Future multi-family and attached housing should be located on the north, west, or east sides of the City.

Where possible, residential land uses should be buffered or screened from conflicting (e.g. commercial and industrial) land uses.

In-fill housing should be encouraged in mature areas to develop vacant lots.

Commercial Development

Goal: To promote commercial development consistent with the overall character of the City and to locate the development to maximize economic viability and integration with adjacent land uses. To maintain the Downtown as a vital center of the City's economic and governmental activity. To support the Downtown in efforts to make it competitive with other

commercial centers. To preserve local architectural heritage and protect investments in the Downtown.

Future commercial development should be located in defined commercial areas which currently are the Downtown area and on the west side of the City in the Marshall Street Corridor.

Downtown

To maintain and/or improve the visual character of the Downtown and maintain civic pride, the City should encourage the coordination of activities to improve the appearance of the Downtown business establishments. These improvements should include facade rehabilitation, plantings, new street lighting, and street furniture. Building code regulations should be enforced to bring existing Downtown buildings up to standards.

Incompatible land uses in the Downtown should be discouraged and should be assisted in relocating to more appropriate locations.

Adequate and convenient parking space is needed in the Downtown. The City should survey its possible alternatives and pursue a course to increase the Downtown parking capacity.

Downtown business establishments should promote themselves to non-Litchfield residents employed in the City. This will encourage the development of increased ties between the City proper and the industrial park.

Encourage the opening of businesses in the Downtown that will draw a customer base from outside the City as well. Such businesses will have the greatest opportunity for success. The City should also assess the chance of success for a business before encouraging the opening of the business in the Downtown.

Evaluate the impact of a potential business on the image of the City and the image of the Downtown in particular before encouraging the entry of the business in the market.

Work together with appropriate organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Retail and Commercial Development Committee to create a Downtown Development Authority.

The Downtown Development Authority, in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Retail and Commercial Development Committee should implement and maintain a coordinated development plan for the Downtown.

Promote and encourage the development of office space in appropriate Downtown locations, particularly in vacant rental space.

Evaluate the recommendations of the Litchfield Market Study conducted in May, 1996 by Michigan State University undergraduates and implement appropriate, realistic recommendations.

Use available resources to assist in determining a successful permanent use for the Youth Center. Its river location gives it the potential to be a restaurant or similar facility.

Marshall Street Corridor

For safety and beautification purposes, the City should encourage the common use by commercial enterprises in the Marshall Street corridor of signage, parking lots, and ingress and egress points to reduce the number of locations at which traffic enters and exits the roadway.

Industrial Development

Goal: To support, encourage, and create conditions conducive to attracting desirable new business and industrial development in appropriate areas which is consistent with and maintains the quality of life of the community.

Future industrial development should be located on the south side of the City extending south of Herring Road from the existing industrial park.

Control the development of existing and future industries to prevent or limit the creation of neighboring incompatible land uses.

Use screens or buffers where necessary to reduce conflicts between industrial areas and other land uses.

Encourage the location of light industry-type firms (e.g. manufacturing and warehousing), rather than heavy industry (e.g. "smokestack" firms).

Areas zoned industrial in the vicinity of the south side of the Downtown just north of the St. Joseph River should be reclassified and new zoning implemented when use or ownership of properties changes.

Maintain existing and encourage the development of additional partnerships between the tenants in the industrial park and the community as a whole, such as the existing partnership between the Litchfield School District and Walker Manufacturing.

Determine ways to use the managerial resources of the City's major employers to aid in formulating increased partnerships between the City and the industrial park.

Transportation

Goal: To allow for safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the City. To maintain safe and easy access from and through the City's various neighborhoods through the use of a multi-modal transportation system for travel to work, school, providers of goods and services, and other purposes. To develop and encourage the efficient use of a multi-modal transportation system that provides an optimum level of service, choice, mobility, convenience and safety. To ensure that existing streets, intersections, and traffic signalization meet current and projected needs. To maintain and provide efficient traffic circulation throughout the City. To provide for adequate ingress/egress routes from residential, commercial, and industrial areas for the purpose of public safety.

Continue to appeal to the State for a traffic signal in the Downtown at the intersection of M-49 and M-99.

Review traffic flow in the Downtown square and make recommendations to the appropriate authorities. Downtown intersections should have improved visibility and signage to protect travel through the Downtown area.

Identify and enforce the designation of truck routes in the interest of public safety, traffic flow, and to prevent deterioration of the transportation infrastructure.

Continue to take action to divert heavy load traffic from the central portion of the City, particularly traffic headed toward the industrial park. Towards this end, the City should continue to pursue State funding to improve Herring Road to increase its load limits.

Encourage the development of a comprehensive system of walkways and bikeways as an alternative to automobile usage. The sidewalk improvement program should be maintained, and the need for improvements in specific areas should be carefully monitored.

Develop plan for unimproved roads adjacent to existing City limits for when roads are annexed into City.

Parks and Recreation

Goal: To provide a comprehensive system of recreational facilities and programs that will serve the needs of the community as a joint effort among the City of Litchfield Parks and

Recreation Committee, the Litchfield School District, Litchfield Township, and other providers. To maintain and improve the City's recreational system through the construction or acquisition of new facilities at appropriate locations. To preserve and protect environmentally-sensitive areas. To promote a cooperative relationship between public and commercial recreation programs.

Parks

Continue to develop Firemen's Park, Phase II. The improvements include landscaping of the park area; installation of additional playground equipment; and the construction of a beach volleyball court, horseshoe pits, basketball courts, an ice skating rink, and shuffleboard courts with sheltered seating areas.

Continue to develop area from Firemen's Park eastward along the St. Joseph River to the vicinity of the Memorial Mile Roadside Rest Park. The improvements include construction of a 1.5 mile walkway along the river, excavation of Litchfield Pond and the addition of access to the new park development from Herring Road. Other improvements to be included in the development are: an eastside parking lot; tree plantings; a picnic shelter; trail benches; camp sites; playground equipment; and observation blinds to view wildlife.

Continue to develop Simpson Park. The improvements include reconstruction of the existing tennis courts and the addition of more tennis courts; construction of volleyball courts, including beach volleyball courts; and the construction of shuffleboard courts.

Begin to study potential sites for a park in the northwest sector of the City.

Analyze the need for and the cost of enclosing the City Pool to make it a year-round facility.

Determine the feasibility of converting the old New York Central Railroad (Hillsdale County Railway) spur to a walking trail or bikepath.

Recreation

Consider creating a position for a full-time Parks and Recreation Director.

Increase recreation programming for residents, including youth and senior citizen groups, incorporating both structured (e.g. leagues, instructional programs, e.g. arts and crafts) and unstructured (e.g. "drop-in" activities).

The City and the School District should study ways in which they can partner more to serve the recreation needs of the community.

Construct day-camp facilities and develop program.

Environmental/Historic Heritage

Identify, assess, preserve, protect and enhance environmentally-sensitive areas, including floodplains, wetlands, wooded areas, open space, other natural areas, and historic and archaeological buildings and sites.

Develop management plans for open space to protect these areas from transformation to other land uses without City approval.

Retain open space, wooded areas and other natural areas as buffers between neighborhoods and/or conflicting land uses.

In concert with Litchfield Area Historical Society, City should identify buildings and artifacts in the community that should be preserved to maintain Litchfield's heritage.

Preserve, enhance and manage change within local historic and/or traditional areas and properties in the City.

Develop gateway improvement at one or more entrances to City, possibly on M-99 at east side of City.

Storm Drainage

Goal: To maintain an adequate system of storm drainage.

The St. Joseph River and the Herring Drain, and their respective floodplain and floodway areas need to be protected from adverse drainage policies.

In the site planning of large-scale developments, where there will be a significant increase in the amount of storm water runoff, such developments should be required to plan for control of storm drainage, through the use of detention ponds, retention areas, or other appropriate means.

The City should work with Litchfield Township to design a master storm drainage plan for the area.

Adhere to and enforce flood insurance mapping and regulations for the City, in cooperation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Identify areas in need of drainage improvement.

Utilize innovative construction approaches for developments of significant size to limit adverse impact on the storm water drainage system.

Utilities

Goal: To provide an adequate water supply and distribution system which serves the domestic, recreational, commercial and fire protection needs of the community. To provide an adequate wastewater system serving the needs of the community in an environmentally safe manner. To coordinate with providers of electric, gas, and telecommunications services to assure the residents of the City the full benefits offered by these providers.

Coordinate with appropriate agencies to extend waterlines and sanitary sewer lines to unserved areas.

Adhere to master plans and policies for the provision of water and wastewater services in the site approval process.

Evaluate the City's electric services contract and determine if a change should be made when the City's current contract with Consumers Power runs out.

Community Services

Goal: To promote the provision of adequate community services including both facilities and programs by the City and other appropriate providers, for the residents of the City of Litchfield to: maintain a safe and secure environment; maintain safe and adequate facilities for removal, disposal and reduction of solid waste; and to promote daycare (pre-school, school-age children, elderly care), senior citizens's activities, community education, and cultural activities.

Maintain and continue to provide the leadership and professional support required to sustain the City's police efforts.

Maintain and continue to provide firefighting facilities which offer maximum service to the community and develop personnel and programs to meet the community's needs.

Continue to coordinate and provide adequate youth programs and activities during and after school in coordination with the school district, Hillsdale County and other providers as part of the juvenile crime prevention program.

Maintain and expand the City's existing recycling program.

Evaluate the need for a taxi service, and consider a City-owned service if there is a definable need.

Encourage the introduction of additional child care and elderly care programs and facilities through appropriate providers to meet the demand in the community. The City should coordinate these efforts with the school district and the City's major employers.

Provide expanded services and programs for senior citizens, including facilities that are accessible to the elderly, through appropriate providers.

Support the development of community education efforts in coordination with the School District and other providers.

Provide cultural programs, e.g. Sweet Corn Days, for all age groups as a joint effort among the City of Litchfield, the School District and other providers.

Zoning Code

Utilize traditional and innovative zoning regulations and subdivision requirements to aid in achieving the Master Plan's goals.

General

Apply the parameters and proposals set forth in this Master Plan to the areas outside of the City when they enter the City's jurisdictional limits.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The City of Litchfield is located along the St. Joseph River in northwestern Hillsdale County. The City is approximately two miles from the Calhoun County line to the north, four miles from the Branch County line to the west, and four miles from the Jackson County line. It is intersected by two state routes, M-49 and M-99. M-49, of north-south orientation, begins at Litchfield and extends south through Reading (14 miles) to the Ohio border. M-99, of northwest-southeast orientation, extends southward past Jonesville (seven miles) to the City of Hillsdale (15 miles), the Hillsdale County seat, and then south to the Ohio border. Beyond Litchfield, M-99 continues northward to Homer (eight miles), and Albion (18 miles), and then to the southern suburbs of Lansing.

The City's topography can be characterized as one of gently rolling hills. There are large wooded tracts surrounding the City, particularly along the east and southeast portions of the City, including along the St. Joseph River.

The 1981 Soil Map for Hillsdale County compiled by the Soil Conservation Service indicated that the primary soils in the City of Litchfield are Hillsdale-Spink and Boyer-Fox. These soils are generally strongly sloping to nearly level sandy over sand and gravel soils. Soils with development limitations in the City consist of Carlisle Muck which parallels the St. Joseph River.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Though the City of Litchfield primarily functions as a residential community, it is unique in that it has a very large industrial base for a community of its size. In discussing the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the City, it is important to keep in mind that the City's industrial park employs 2,500 workers, or 1,000 persons more than the total population of the City. Therefore, in planning the needs of the community, though an understanding of the characteristics of Litchfield's citizens is important, it is also imperative that the needs of the workers in the City be considered as well. The following characteristics apply to the permanent residents of the City who lived in Litchfield in the year 1990.

The population of the City of Litchfield is estimated to be approximately 1,500 persons in 1995. This represents a 14 percent increase from the 1990 population of 1,317 persons (U.S. Census, 1990). The population is projected to increase to 1,700 persons by the year 2000 (a 13 percent increase over the current level) as the Hawthorn Heights subdivision is built out.

By gender, the population is 47 percent male (616 males) and 53 percent female (701 females). The percent of the population 60 years of age or older is 22 percent (292 persons). The percent of the population under 18 years of age is 26 percent (344 persons). The median age of the total population is 33.8 years.

There are 508 households in the City, with 138 households, or 27 percent of all households, consisting of one person living alone. The average household size is 2.47 persons.

Racially, the vast majority of the population is White (97.9 percent). Other racial components in the City are: Black (3 persons or 0.2 percent), American Indian (12 persons or 0.9 percent), Asian (1 person or 0.1 percent), and Other Race (12 persons or 0.9 percent). Persons of Hispanic origin (of any race) total 2.4 percent, or 32 persons.

Of the City's 508 occupied households, 64 percent, or 323 households, are owner-occupied. The remaining 185 occupied households are renter-occupied.

Of the total housing units (occupied and vacant) in the City, 357 units, or 67 percent, are single-unit, detached homes. In 2 to 4 units structures, there are 73 units, or 14 percent of all units. In 5 to 9 units structures, there are 62 units, or 12 percent of the total. Mobile homes and trailers account for 6 percent of all housing units, or 32 units. Approximately 39 percent, or 211 housing units, were built prior to 1940. Thirteen percent of the City's housing units, or 69 units, were built since 1980.

Persons (3 years and over) enrolled in school equal 21 percent of the population, or 272 persons. The majority are enrolled in elementary or high school (208 students), with other components enrolled in college (46 students) and pre-school programs (18 persons). Of all persons 25 years and over, 662 persons, or 78 percent, have graduated high school or received a higher degree. The

population having received a Bachelor's Degree or higher, equals 11 percent of the total population 25 years and over, or 95 persons. There is a wide spectrum of educational attainment. On one hand, 11 percent of the population has at least a Bachelor's Degree, while on the other hand, 22 percent of the population does not have a high school degree.

Of the population 5 years of age and over, slightly over half (52 percent, or 615 persons) lived in the same house in both 1985 and 1990.

Of the population 16 years and over (942 persons), 6 percent, or 60 persons, have a mobility or self-care limitation.

The primary occupations among employed persons 16 years and over (521 persons) in the City are: Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors (120 persons, 23 percent); Administrative support occupations, including clerical (77 persons, 15 percent); Sales occupations (56 persons, 11 percent); Precision production, craft, and repair occupations (56 persons, 11 percent); Executive, administrative, and managerial occupations (45 persons, 9 percent); and Professional specialty occupations (41 persons, 8 percent).

The median household income in the City in 1989 was \$21,122.

The summary of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics reveals that there is a wide range of demographic groups whose needs have to be addressed. There is a significant senior citizen population, and, at the other end of the spectrum, there is a significant pre-school population.

Analysis of the demographics provides evidence of the need to meet the needs of limited clientele groups. The number of people living alone (138 households) speaks of the need to provide community services to assist those living alone in feeling part of the community. The number of handicappers, though not a significant part of the overall population (6 percent of the population 16 years and over), suggests the need to consider handicap access in the planning of community facilities.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The City of Litchfield primarily functions as a residential community. More of the City's land area is devoted to residential use than to any other use (though, as noted, the City has quite a large industrial base for a community of its size.)

The City should encourage the development of a mix of housing type and price. Housing should be provided for a variety of household needs, including elderly, small families, "empty-nesters" (middle-aged couples whose children have left home), and younger, larger families.

In the determination of future residential needs, there should be more of an emphasis on housing suitable to the older age groups, e.g. low-maintenance multi-family units. Ideally, new housing for seniors should be located where there is pedestrian access to community services and downtown business establishments. Though housing for seniors should be a priority, there is still a large population in the community in the younger age groups. Therefore, there will still be a significant need for single-family detached housing to accommodate younger age groups.

As indicated in the previous section, the vast majority of the housing in the City of Litchfield is single-family detached homes (67 percent). Additionally, the majority of the housing in the community has been constructed since 1940 (61 percent). The more mature housing is located around the center of the City. Housing constructed in the 1950s is located in the area surrounding Jonesville Street (M-99) on the east side of the City. Housing from the 1960s is located west of the city center north of Marshall Street, along Washington, Park, and Centennial Streets.

The newest housing in the community is being built in the City's self-financed Hawthorn Heights subdivision. Hawthorn Heights is located in the northeast section of the City, east of North Chicago Street, and north of Williams Street. The subdivision was developed through the use of Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) funds from the City's industrial park. The justification for the use of the industrial park funds to construct the subdivision was the need to provide housing for the employees in the park. The vast majority of those employed at the industrial park live outside of the City of Litchfield. Presently, there are a number of single-family, detached housing units under construction in the Hawthorn Heights subdivision. There are also parcels set aside for the development of multi-family housing in the subdivision.

Once a significant amount of development occurs in Hawthorn Heights, another area, north of St. Joseph Street, and west, north, or east of the Hawthorn Heights subdivision should be pinpointed for future single-family housing development. The City's master plans for water and sewer allow for the development of more single-family housing in the north half of the City. The location of single-family housing in the area on the north side will prevent land use conflicts with commercial and industrial land uses in the City.

Multi-family housing is primarily located on the west side of the City in the Marshall Street area, and further south, in the Mill Street area. As noted above, there will be a greater need for this form of housing as the median age of the City increases. The increasing number of senior citizens and "empty-nesters" will create a demand for low-maintenance housing. The character and quality of multi-family housing (including condominiums, townhouses and garden apartments) should complement the existing housing in the area where the new housing is constructed. The locations of multi-family housing should be consistent with neighboring land uses, and can be used as a transitional use, e.g. between an area of single-family homes and a commercial district.

Mobile home development, which in recent years has been more often referred to as manufactured housing, is located along the western periphery of the City in the St. Joseph Street area. It is anticipated that there will be a need to allocate more land for this type of housing development in the near future. Future locations of mobile home development should be in the area of existing mobile home development along the periphery of the City and away from the major entryways to the City. Mobile home development should be located on the west side of the City in appropriate areas between Marshall Street and the industrial park. Mobile home development should not be located adjacent to or be visible from the major gateways to the City along M-99 and M-49.

Buffers and screening should be used to protect residential areas from conflicting land uses. Any existing areas of conflict or potential future confrontations can be alleviated through the use of screening or buffering at critical borders. For existing and mature developments, natural screening, e.g. a row of trees or fencing constructed of natural materials, can be used to reduce the conflict between the opposing land uses.

In areas of new development, where there is an opportunity to create a wider border between two differing land uses, buffers should be used to separate the areas. Depending on the circumstances, buffers can be of varying width and can consist of variable-slope mounding and natural screening. In areas where there is the greatest discrepancy between neighboring land uses, the buffer width should be the widest.

In new developments, the responsibility of providing the buffer lies with the newer of the bordering developments, that is, the development that is encroaching upon the existing development with an opposing land use. If possible, it is preferable that buffers be in the public domain, in consideration of their potential availability for passive recreation purposes. However, buffers can also be placed in restrictive ownership, such as by a homeowners's or industry owners's association.

Any future residential development within the City should be in accord with master plans for water and sewer development. This applies particularly to subdivision approvals, but should also be a part of the approval of any significant development. This requirement can be used to control development in a logical and orderly manner.

The City should review the locations of existing water and wastewater infrastructure and determine the needs of unserved areas, particularly those areas suitable for future residential development. A recommendation for specific infrastructure improvements, along with a timetable for improvements, should be developed.

The impact on the local environment of any future residential development, particularly in regard to any disturbance which may be potentially harmful to the ecological balance in the City, should be considered in the review of these future developments, in the interest of maintaining the City's quality of life.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Commercial development in the City of Litchfield is primarily located in two areas: the Downtown, and along Marshall Street, west of the center of town. These two areas are discussed in greater detail below in this section.

At the present time, the City's zoning code incorporates two zoning classifications for businesses, B-1, Highway Business District, and B-2, General Business District. The differences between the districts relate to the concentration and configuration of business establishments in the specific area. The B-1 district corresponds geographically to the Marshall Street commercial area. The B-2 district corresponds geographically to the City's Downtown commercial district.

Downtown

The image a community presents to a visitor is largely dependent on the state of its commercial development, and particularly, on the state of its downtown. Litchfield's downtown is located at the crossroads of the community, at the intersection of M-99 and M-49. Because of the Downtown's high-profile location at the crossing of the two state routes, for many travelers, it is the character and condition of the City's downtown that define the lasting impression that through travelers have of the City of Litchfield. Therefore, it is imperative that the character and condition of the downtown reflect the perception that the City wants passersby to have of the community.

The Downtown boundaries basically follow those of the B-2 General Business District zoning classification, except for the area zoned B-2 located south of the St. Joseph River and east of South Chicago Street, which is the location of Firemen's Park. In the midst of the B-2 area, at the south end, is a small area zoned I-1, Industrial District. This area should be changed to conform with the surrounding B-2, General Business District zoning classification.

In Litchfield, there are currently a number of initiatives directed at the improvement of the Downtown. A Downtown Retail and Commercial Development Committee was formed. This committee has prepared a list of improvements for the downtown area. The same committee commissioned a study of the Downtown by Michigan State University marketing students. The Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Retail and Commercial Development Committee are involved in the creation of a Downtown Development Authority. The City should continue to encourage and participate in these efforts to assure the realization of the Downtown improvements.

In addition to the above-listed initiatives, the City should consider creating an architectural review board to assure that future commercial development (not only in the Downtown, but in all sections of the City) will be consistent with the character of the City of Litchfield. With an architectural review board in place, consistent design standards can be applied to the commercial areas in the City.

In the Downtown, improvements needed include the rehabilitation of building facades, and the addition of plantings, benches, and street lighting. Further, there is a need to increase the Downtown parking capacity. This can be realized through the demolition of an existing building or buildings, or through the development of access to the rears of commercial establishments.

The City, through its Downtown Retail and Commercial Development Committee, or through the Chamber of Commerce, or the future Downtown Development Authority, should take an active role in deciding whether a particular business is appropriate for the City's downtown. The City should be careful to only encourage businesses that will enhance the character and condition of the Downtown, and be consistent with the overall character of the City.

Presently, there are a number of vacancies in the Downtown. Alternative uses should be considered for the vacant spots, which will be compatible with their location. These may include, retailwise, neighborhood convenience or service operations or small specialty shops; or office space, possibly even functioning as a small business incubator for new enterprises in need of office space.

There are several properties located adjacent to and south of the Downtown which are zoned Industrial. The area on the east side of South Chicago Street (M-49) is currently occupied by an industrial operation. The property on the west side of the street is occupied by a commercial establishment. If and when the present enterprise on the east side sells or relocates, the use and zoning should be changed to the B-2 General Business District zoning classification to be compatible with the surrounding land uses. (The City may want to change the zoning to a new Parks/Open Space/Green Space classification aimed at protecting the City's natural resources, including the area around the St. Joseph River.) The property on the west side of South Chicago Street should have a zoning change to B-2 General Business District to prevent any undesirable land use conflicts. Also, there is a pallet distributor located at the crossroads of M-49 and M-99 in the middle of the Downtown that does not fit in with the character of the area. The business should be encouraged to move to the I-1 district where it would be more conforming to the area.

In lieu of (or in addition to) adjusting the boundaries of the B-2 General Business District, an overlay zone can be used to add special requirements (particular to the Downtown area) to the existing requirements of the B-2 zoning classification. This zone could "overlay" all or part of the B-2 area plus the I-1 area north of the river. It would assist in controlling development in a manner consistent with the image that the City and its downtown enterprises envision for the downtown. For more information about overlay zones, see the "Innovative Techniques" section in the "Zoning Ordinance Review" chapter.

The special requirements of the overlay zone could address such issues as building design, signage restrictions, lighting, landscaping, design of parking areas, identification of areas of parcels which should be screened from the street and from neighboring properties, and types of screening which should be used, and other requirements to create a uniform image for the overlay zone district.

The use of overlay zones complements the existing Zoning Ordinance. It offers the City a means of control over a particular area without creating a new zoning classification. It also allows for flexibility in the interpretation of the requirements of the existing ordinance.

The intersection of the three routes in the Downtown also presents unique opportunities related to the revitalization of the Downtown. The physical characteristics of the square formed by the intersection of M-49, M-99, and St. Joseph Street in the Downtown lends itself to the development of a focal point in the center of the Downtown that can communicate the image of the Downtown and the City of Litchfield as a whole. The City should consider a number of creative ways to increase the profile of the central square to aid in the definition of the positive character of the City. When considering alternatives for the use of the Downtown square, it will be imperative to consider safety issues related to the traffic passing through the Downtown area.

In order to preserve the integrity of the Downtown, it is important that residential uses continue in the Downtown and adjacent to the Downtown. Residential uses within the "heart" of the Downtown area should be multi-family in nature. The proximity of residential uses to the Downtown district will inhibit the development of businesses which are not community and/or family-oriented.

Marshall Street Corridor

The Marshall Street corridor, in the northwest section of the City, extends from the vicinity of Park Street northwesterly to the City limits. The corridor boundary basically coincides with the boundary of the B-1 Highway Business District. Uses along Marshall Street are primarily retail in nature, though there is some professional office space in the area. Though the corridor does not have as high a profile as the Downtown area, it is important that the Marshall Street area be maintained in a good condition as well.

As in the Downtown area, the City should consider the application of overlay zoning concepts to its commercial strip. Through the use of an overlay zone, special requirements can be added to the existing requirements of the B-1 Highway Business District zoning classification that will result in safer traffic patterns and beautify the area as well. Through overlay zoning, standards can be developed that will apply to all commercial establishments in the defined zone. An overlay zone will assist in controlling development in a manner consistent with the image that the City and the commercial enterprises in the corridor desire to project for the area. If the City desires to utilize an architectural review board, in addition to the utilization of recommendations of said board, architectural review can be incorporated into the requirements of an overlay zone.

The special requirements of the commercial strip overlay zone could address such issues as building design, signage, lighting, landscaping, limitations on number of curb cuts, common access roads and parking lots, design of parking areas, increased setback requirements, identification of portions of parcels which should be screened from the street and from neighboring properties, and types of screening which should be used.

The use of overlay zones complements the existing Zoning Ordinance. It offers the City a means of control over a particular area without creating a new zoning classification. It also allows for flexibility in the interpretation of the requirements of the existing ordinance. For more information about overlay zones, see the "Innovative Techniques" section in the "Zoning Ordinance Review" chapter.

When possible, future commercial development should not extend beyond the areas currently zoned for business enterprises. Efforts should be made to deter the development of lots with narrow frontage which results in the proliferation of curb cuts. Developers should be encouraged to consolidate operations which will offer them the opportunity to share traffic controls, access, service roads, parking lots, maintenance costs and other amenities.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The City of Litchfield has been an active location for economic development. In the past five years, the City has been presented with four Community of Economic Excellence Awards. The City's efforts have been recognized because of the growth that has occurred in the City's industrial park. As noted earlier, this city of 1,500 residents is also home to an industrial park that supports 2,500 employees.

Almost all of the industrial development in the City is located in the 220-acre Litchfield Industrial Park located in the southern end of the City. The land that makes up the major portion of the industrial park was donated to the City in 1979 in the name of R.J. Simpson and N.B. Purdy by Simpson Manufacturing. The City began to develop the site with roads and utilities in 1984 with the assistance of an Economic Development Administration grant. The businesses in the industrial park are primarily manufacturing businesses that are light industrial in nature, except for the electric power plant. Large employers at the industrial park include Walker Manufacturing (700 employees), Simpson Manufacturing (250 employees), Hi-Lex Controls (500 employees), Jesco Industries (75 employees), and Yukon Industries (250 employees).

The City has made successful use of its Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA) to create and retain jobs in the Industrial Park. The TIFA operates by redirecting taxes from new developments towards improvements related to economic development. The City has used its resources to provide incentives to companies that will create jobs in the park. One firm was given a parcel of land for no cost, with the understanding that the firm would create a certain number of jobs. Tax abatements are offered to attract industries to the park. Litchfield offers 50 percent tax abatements on the assessed value of buildings and equipment for a period of up to twelve years.

There are several industrial sites located outside of the industrial park including the grain elevator, Harvard Clothing (an apparel wholesaler), and a pallet distributor. If and when the grain enterprise, located adjacent to the Downtown along the St. Joseph River, and the pallet distributor, located Downtown at the intersection of M-49 and M-99, are sold or relocated, the use of the properties should change to a use more compatible with the surroundings. The future use of the two properties in question should be a commercial use.

At present, there are approximately 2,500 persons employed by the various firms located in the industrial park. There are still undeveloped parcels in the park to accommodate the entry of more business enterprises into the industrial park in the future. All future industrial uses within the present City limits should be located within the industrial park area, as long as there is available land in the park.

The City does need to consider the location for future industrial development when the time comes that the industrial park is built out. The best place for continued growth of the City's industrial base

is adjacent to and south of the existing industrial area. By expanding southward, land use conflicts with other land uses in the City will be at a minimum. The City should discourage any development in the area south of the existing industrial park that will conflict with the future expansion of the industrial park.

As the industrial park borders expand, consideration should be given to the types of land uses that will abut the expanded boundary of the industrial park. Through the use of transitional zoning, e.g. the location of a commercial business district, or open space adjacent to the industrial land use, rather than single-family homes, land use conflicts can be alleviated. A stepped pattern of land uses from light industrial to office/commercial to multi-family to single family could be applied to the transitional zone between the future industrial park expansion and future residential neighborhoods to the south.

Surrounding land uses should be buffered from the future industrial park expansion to protect the character of the surrounding areas. Since the expansion of the industrial park will be an area of new development, there will be the opportunity to create a wider border between the industrial land use and other land uses. Depending on the circumstances, buffers can be of varying width and can consist of variable-slope mounding and natural screening. In areas where there is the greatest discrepancy between neighboring land uses, the buffer width should be the widest.

In new developments, the responsibility of providing the buffer lies with the newer of the bordering developments, that is, the development that is encroaching upon the existing development with an opposing land use. If possible, it is preferable that buffers be in the public domain, in consideration of their potential availability for passive recreation purposes. However, buffers can also be placed in restrictive ownership, such as by a homeowners's or industry owners's association.

The overall goal for industrial development stated in this Plan's Goals and Recommendations expresses the need to support and encourage industrial development that is consistent with and maintains the City's quality of life. The impact on the local environment of any prospective industrial park occupant, in regard to the production, storage or transportation of elements potentially harmful to the ecological balance in the City or any harmful disturbance of the landscape, should be considered, in the interest of maintaining the City's quality of life.

The City should consider the development of standards to enhance the image of the industrial park and make the park a more attractive site. Through the use of architectural review or overlay zoning techniques, standards can be applied to future and existing development to provide a consistent and attractive theme at the Industrial Park. A Litchfield Industrial Park logo could be created and displayed at entryways to the park. Such a logo could be incorporated into each individual firm's sign as well. Since the park is located at the southern gateway to the Litchfield community, it is important that the park present an image consistent with the character of the City. Though an industrial park, by nature, may not lend itself to the beautification process in the way that such a

process may be applied to an office park or commercial development, there are still standards related to uniform signage, landscaping, and screening of unsightly areas that can be utilized in an industrial park area so that it can make a positive statement about the community in which it is housed. For more information about overlay zones, see the "Innovative Techniques" section in the "Zoning Ordinance Review" chapter.

Firms located in the industrial park should take the lead in organizing efforts for redevelopment of the area, through the establishment of an association or a similar entity. The City and the Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA) and other related groups should offer direction to companies in the park area which are in need of financial and/or technical assistance for retention and/or expansion purposes. The City, the Hillsdale County Industrial Development Commission, and other related groups should be active in recruiting firms to locate in the industrial park. Firms which are complementary to existing firms in the park should be identified and targeted as candidates for location in the park.

Firms located in the industrial park should be encouraged to develop partnerships with the community, such as the job training partnership established by Walker Manufacturing and the School District. More ties between the occupants of the industrial park and the City will assure continued strong economic health over the long-term in the community.

The City should consider the use of screening at the north end of the industrial park to relieve the existing conflict between the industrial and residential land uses. For existing and mature developments, natural screening, e.g. a row of trees or fencing constructed of natural materials, can be used to reduce the conflict between the opposing land uses.

Where the existing boundary of the industrial park abuts undeveloped areas that in the future will not be added to the industrial park, buffers should be constructed to reduce the land use conflict. The buffers can be of variable width, again depending on the particular situation, though they should be extensive enough to effectively screen the conflicting land uses from each other. Buffers can consist of variable-slope mounding and natural screening, e.g. evergreen trees. The higher the industry is on a scale of light-to-heavy industries, the wider the buffer should be.

TRANSPORTATION

The primary transportation goal of this Master Plan is as follows:

To allow for safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the City. To maintain safe and easy access from and through the City's various neighborhoods through the use of a multi-modal transportation system for travel to work, school, providers of goods and services, and other purposes. To develop and encourage the efficient use of a multi-modal transportation system that provides an optimum level of service, choice, mobility, convenience and safety. To ensure that existing streets, intersections, and traffic signalization meet current and projected needs. To maintain and provide efficient traffic circulation throughout the City. To provide for adequate ingress/egress routes from residential, commercial, and industrial areas for the purpose of public safety.

The City of Litchfield is located at the intersection of two state routes, M-49 and M-99. M-49 begins in Litchfield and goes directly south through Allen and Reading to the Ohio border. M-99 is oriented northwest-to-southeast, and provides direct access to the City of Hillsdale, to the southeast, and to Homer, to the northwest. Both routes are truck routes, and heavy-load vehicles pass directly through the center of town. Also intersecting the town center is St. Joseph Street, an east-west route that extends from one side of the City to the other.

Because of the orientation of the St. Joseph River, which passes through the town from the northwest to the southeast, the road network in the City of Litchfield has a unique layout. The original alignment of M-99 was influenced by the location of the river. The other two major streets in town, North Chicago Street (M-49) and St. Joseph Street, are oriented north-south and east-west, respectively, and intersect in the center of town. If M-49 and St. Joseph Street were the only two major streets in the City, Litchfield would possess a transportation network like many other area communities in southeast Michigan, and throughout the Midwest, for that matter. However, the northwest-southeast orientation of M-99 presents unique concerns and opportunities for the City of Litchfield.

The principal transportation concerns relate to safety. The intersection of the three routes in the Downtown makes it difficult for drivers passing through the intersection to determine who has the right-of-way. The City has petitioned the State for a traffic signal or stop signs to help control the situation but the request has been denied by the Michigan Department of Transportation. The City needs to continue to appeal to the appropriate authorities for signalization improvements at the intersection. The City should collect traffic flow data to assist in presenting the argument for the need of signalization at the intersection. Additionally, there needs to be increased signage, and improvements in visibility to relieve the safety concerns at the intersection.

The Downtown intersection can be made safer if the portions of the intersecting roads that actually form the Downtown square were changed to one-way roads. If the "square roadway" was one-way, the result would be a reduction in the number of directions from which oncoming traffic comes, thereby making it easier for traffic to enter the square safely.

The intersection of the three routes in the Downtown also presents unique opportunities related to the revitalization of the Downtown. As discussed in the Commercial Development section earlier, the physical characteristics of the square formed by the intersection of the three routes in the Downtown lends itself to the development of a focal point in the center of the Downtown that can communicate the image of the Downtown and the City of Litchfield as a whole.

As noted above in this section, both M-49 and M-99 are significant truck routes. This leads to a large amount of truck traffic passing through the Downtown. For safety purposes, primarily, but also for aesthetic purposes, the City should consider alternative routes for truck traffic to pass through the town. The City has approached the Michigan Department of Transportation for assistance in improving Herring Road, along the south boundary of the City, to increase its load limits. The realization of this improvement should be encouraged, as it will lead to the diversion of truck traffic heading north on M-99 towards the industrial park. Currently, much of this traffic enters the center of Litchfield before heading south on M-49 to their destinations at the industrial park.

The City needs to designate and enforce truck routes. At present, there are no regulations prohibiting trucks from traveling any street in town. For safety purposes, and to prevent wear and tear on roads not designed for heavy loads, specific routes should be designated.

The City also needs to consider routes to divert truck traffic that passes along M-99 from one end of the City to the other and right through the Downtown. It would be advantageous to create a "beltway" connecting M-99 to an improved Herring Road to divert heavy-load vehicles away from the center of Litchfield, and its residential neighborhoods.

There are a number of unimproved roads located along the periphery of the City. These include Mosherville Road to the north, Adams Road to the east, and Wade Road to the west. The City should develop a schedule for the permanent improvement of these roads (in consideration of whether and when they are annexed into the City) and incorporate the schedule into the City's overall capital improvements plan. When improved, the peripheral roads can act as a "beltway" around the City.

The City should consider the construction of additional through routes in the future, as the undeveloped areas of the northern and western portions of the City begin to develop. These routes can act to define neighborhoods and provide access around these neighborhoods without adding extra traffic within the neighborhood. An east-west street located just north of the Hawthorn Heights subdivision and connecting Adams Road to North Chicago Street would provide such a function.

In the northwest quadrant of the City, a route of southwest-northeast orientation connecting North Chicago Street to Marshall Street will provide access to the Marshall Street corridor from the growing Hawthorn Heights area, and will reduce traffic on two residential streets, Park Street and Centennial Street.

As an alternative to motorized transportation, the City should consider the development of bikeways and walkways. Bikeways do not only serve recreation purposes, but can also be used to "procure goods and services" (as stated in the overall transportation goal), and to travel among the City's various neighborhoods. An area bikeway plan should be developed and then should be incorporated in the review process for future development proposals. Bikeways and walkways are appropriate instruments to interconnect the various spheres of development in the City, whether these areas are residential, commercial or recreation in nature. Bikeways and walkways can be constructed along routes when the roads are widened.

At present, there are a number of areas where walkways are in need of improvement. The sidewalk improvement program should be maintained, and the need for improvements in specific areas should be carefully monitored.

The City should explore the possibility of supplying a transportation service to citizens with mobility needs. For example, there may be need for a van service to the local supermarket on a weekly basis for citizens who do not have independent means to travel to retail establishments.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The primary parks and recreation goal of this Master Plan is as follows:

To provide a comprehensive system of recreational facilities and programs that will serve the needs of the community as a joint effort among the City of Litchfield Parks and Recreation Committee, the Litchfield School District, Litchfield Township and other providers. To maintain and improve the City's recreational system through the construction or acquisition of new facilities at appropriate locations. To preserve and protect environmentally-sensitive areas. To promote a cooperative relationship between public and commercial recreation programs.

In the interest of developing an orderly and realistic plan for parks and recreation improvements in the City, the City of Litchfield has recently organized a Parks and Recreation Committee. The Committee meets at least quarterly, and acts in an advisory capacity in regard to parks and recreation issues. The City Council approved the establishment of the Committee, and approves the appointments to the Committee. The Parks and Recreation Committee has seven members, including two members of Council. The Parks and Recreation Committee makes its recommendations to the City Manager, who passes along the recommendations to City Council.

Presently, there are no full-time permanent parks and recreation employees in the City. Members of the Public Works staff are assigned as needed to parks and recreation duties. The City does hire several seasonal full-time employees for parks and recreation employment. The City hires a Pool Director and an assistant to the Pool Director for the outdoor community pool. The City also hires several lifeguards on a seasonal basis for the pool. All seasonal full-time employees report to the City Manager.

The Parks and Recreation Committee makes budget recommendations to the City Manager. The City Manager, then, sets the budgets for parks and recreation functions, and takes these to Council for approval. There are four sources of revenue for parks and recreation. The sources include: (1) general fund tax dollars; (2) grants and loans; (3) gifts and donations from local industries and private citizens; and (4) user fees. Recent annual operating budgets for the City's parks and recreation program have been in the area of \$40,000 to \$45,000. The bulk of the budget (approximately \$30,000) goes to maintenance and operation of the public outdoor pool. Additionally, in 1995, the City received a \$47,700 grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for the first phase of improvements at Firemen's Park.

In Spring, 1996, the City of Litchfield submitted an updated Community Recreation Plan to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The purpose of the submittal was to take an inventory of existing parks and recreation opportunities, and to design a plan for parks and recreation improvements for the next five years. MDNR approved the Litchfield Recreation Plan, thus making

the City eligible to apply for grants from the various parks and recreation funding programs administered by MDNR, including, most importantly, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

An inventory of existing park acreage is presented in Table 1. The locations of the existing parks are shown on the land use plan maps.

Recreation sites at the City's elementary school and high school are available for public use, including playground equipment and ball fields.

In addition to the facilities listed in Table 1, the following facilities are potentially available for recreation programming in the City. They are:

Youth Center (inactive) which is owned by Litchfield Rotary, and is currently being leased to Walker Manufacturing. The firm uses the facility as a training center.

Senior Center at Odd Fellows Village which has an active lunch program for seniors.

An inventory was made of existing recreation programming in the City. It is included in Table 2.

Table 1
 City of Litchfield
 Inventory of Existing Park Acreage

Map Code	Park Name	Acreage
Neighborhood Recreation		
1	Litchfield Elementary School Playground	3.9
2	Central Park	0.5
3	Riblet Park	0.2
4	Hervey Smith Park	1.0
Total Acreage (Neighborhood Recreation)		5.6
Community Recreation		
5	Litchfield High School Recreation Complex	46.8
6	Simpson Park	17.0
7	Firemen's Park	6.0
Total Acreage (Community Recreation)		69.8
Private/Commercial		
8	Jenkins Golf Course	63.0
Grand Total		138.4

Table 2
City of Litchfield
Existing Recreation Activities and Programs

Program	Sponsor	Population Served
Summer Swimming Program	City	180/Day
Little League Baseball	Merchants	50-60
Pee Wee League Baseball	Merchants	50-60
Mickey Mantle League Baseball	Merchants	50-60
Slow Pitch Softball (Girls)	Merchants	30
Senior Citizen Programs	Sr. Complex	30
Basketball (Summer)	Schools	30
Summer Reading Clubs	Library	25
Football	School	70
Basketball (Boys)	School	60
Basketball (Girls)	School	44
Volleyball (Girls)	School	50
Track (Boys & Girls)	School	80
Cross Country (Boys & Girls)	School	20
Cub Scouts/Boy Scouts	Self-Supporting	40
Girl Scouts	Self-Supporting	35
Golf	Jenkins Public Golf Course	250
Odyssey of the Mind	School	40

As part of the community-wide recreation plan, the City of Litchfield has developed an Action Program of parks and recreation improvements. Some of these are physical improvements, while

others are programming and managerial improvements. The following identifies the improvements the City desires to see come to fruition in the next five years.

A primary focus of the City's park improvement efforts has been at Firemen's Park, located east of M-49 at the St. Joseph River. With the benefit of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant, the City has been able to construct a parking lot, and add playground equipment, a floating dock, and restrooms to the park.

Presently, the City is in the midst of adding the Phase II improvements to the park. These improvements are being funded through local sources and volunteer help provided by the Firemen's Flames, a volunteer group made up of wives of the members of the Volunteer Fire Department. The group has been involved in fund-raising activities related to the development of Firemen's Park.

The improvements in Phase II include landscaping of the park area; installation of additional playground equipment; and the construction of a beach volleyball court, horseshoe pits, basketball courts, an ice skating rink, and shuffleboard courts with sheltered seating areas.

Firemen's Park will also act as a gateway for park improvements that will extend eastward along the St. Joseph River to the vicinity of the Memorial Mile Roadside Rest Park. As part of this development, the City plans on constructing a 1.5 mile walkway along the river, excavating Litchfield Pond and adding access to the new park development from Herring Road, east of the City's new wastewater lagoons. The City proposes to develop the park with a naturalistic concept so that it will offer the opportunity for nature walks, nature study and observation. Other improvements to be included in the development are: an eastside parking lot; tree plantings; a picnic shelter; tree plantings; trail benches; camp sites; and playground equipment.

The City envisions part of the development as a nature area and wildlife refuge. The area will be a preserve for a variety of woodland animals. To this end, there are also plans to construct observation blinds to view wildlife. Additionally, the Pond will be stocked with fish. The proposed park development rests on part of the floodplain of the St. Joseph River and provides an appropriate method of floodplain management.

The development of the area east of Firemen's Park provides a model for future park and floodplain development in the area. The development will offer a refuge for both citizens and wildlife in an area almost contiguous to the "busiest" portions of the community, i.e. the Downtown and residential areas to the north, and the industrial park to the south. The proposed park provides a "natural corridor" between the two areas of development. It protects the floodplain of the St. Joseph River, thus "preserving and protecting an environmentally-sensitive area" which is part of the overall goal of this master plan.

Just north of the proposed development along the St. Joseph River is the Mill Race, which is currently dry. The City will encourage and assist the owners of the property to help the Mill Race run again.

The City will continue to develop Simpson Park in the northeast section of the City. Recent improvements at the park have included the installation of scattered and group picnic facilities, and the construction of support facilities including restrooms, a concession stand, and storage facilities.

Among the improvements needed at the park are: reconstruction of the existing tennis courts and the addition of more tennis courts; construction of volleyball courts, including beach volleyball courts; and the construction of shuffleboard courts.

In addition to physical improvements related to the City's parks, there are also a number of recreation improvements that the City desires to realize in the next five years. The top priority towards the realization of the recreation improvements is the hiring of a recreation director (part-time or full-time) to initiate and oversee programs, and organize leagues.

Some of the recreation programming initiatives that the City has pinpointed are: increased recreation programming for seniors, including crafts (possibly at the Odd Fellows Village location); public soccer program for City and surrounding area; and a day-camp program.

Beyond five years, there are a number of other park improvements that the City should consider. There is a need for more neighborhood park coverage in residential areas without walking-access to parks and recreation. Presently, there is no park development west of M-49, though a good portion of the City's residential development is located in this area. The City should encourage the development of Hervey Smith Park, located in the southwest quadrant of the City between Mill Street and Clay Street, so that it will function more as a neighborhood park. The City should also study potential sites and consider securing property in the northwest quadrant of the City for development as a neighborhood park. Any future park development in the City should take into consideration the park's function as a natural separator of areas of development, as a use consistent with floodplain management, and as a wildlife refuge.

Recently, a portion of the old New York Central Railroad (Hillsdale County Railway) line that extends in a northwest-southeast orientation from the southeast limits of the City to the vicinity of the intersection of Marshall Street and Park Street, was abandoned. The City should attempt to secure the railroad right-of-way for use as a walking trail and/or bike path. The section that was abandoned stretches from the Walker Manufacturing property to the northern terminus of the line. The impetus for the abandonment was the desire by Walker Manufacturing to acquire the railroad right-of-way directly behind its property, so that it would have access to property it owns that is presently separated from its existing facility by the rail line. The spur north of the Walker property

was not active. The last time a rail car departed from the grain elevator at the top of the spur was in 1989.

As discussed above in the Transportation section, bikeways and walkways also provide a recreation function, and can be useful to connect the varying clusters of development in the City. Bikeways and walkways are an appropriate use for open space areas in the City. Bikeways and walkways in open space areas can provide a means for linking the various enclaves of development together, in addition to buffering conflicting land uses. Portions of the City's floodplains should be considered for the development of bikeways and walkways.

In addition to alleviating land use conflicts, buffer zones can be used for recreational activities, including walking and biking, and more passive recreation pursuits. Buffers should be maintained as open space, natural areas, and green space. As an undeveloped area, a buffer provides the same positive attributes as an environmentally-sensitive area. In addition to providing recreation opportunities and buffering conflicting land uses, buffers circumscribe neighborhoods, allow the opportunity for scenic views, may act as means of transit, provide drainage for the area, allow for recharging of the water supply, and aid in protecting vegetation and wildlife habitats.

In terms of recreation programming needs beyond five years, there are a number of initiatives that should be undertaken. The City, the School District, Litchfield Township, and other providers should study ways in which they can partner more to serve the recreation needs of the community. One study should consider the need for and the cost of enclosing the City Pool to make it a year-round facility. A second area of potential partnership is in the area of increasing recreation programming for residents, including youth and senior citizen groups, incorporating both structured (e.g. leagues, instructional programs, e.g. arts and crafts) and unstructured (e.g. "drop-in" activities).

As noted earlier, 20 percent of the City's population is 60 years of age and older. Over the next 20 years, this percentage will increase as "baby boomers" begin to enter the 60-years-old-and-over group. Therefore, the City needs to consider appropriate programs for its current senior citizen population, as well as the future population. Venues for these activities should be readily accessible.

The City should consider the creation of a Parks/Open Space/Green Space zoning district classification in order to provide a level of protection for these locations in the City, as well as to allow the City to be able to review any potential impacts on these areas. If such a classification can not be implemented, then, an overlay zone should be used by the City to provide some control over potential impacts on the City's open space and green space. For more information about overlay zones, see the "Innovative Techniques" section in the "Zoning Ordinance Review" chapter.

Also, prior to acceptance of any development of significant size, a developer should provide evidence to the City of a workable management plan for any open space associated with the

development. The City should also examine and formulate a plan for acquiring any open space that it wishes to protect from future development.

In addressing alternative means of funding existing and future parks and recreation facilities, the City should consider the potential of collecting fees from developers in lieu of park land dedication. This concept should be incorporated into the City's Subdivision Regulations.

Environmental/Historic Heritage

The City of Litchfield has been endowed with natural beauty in the form of the St. Joseph River, rolling topography and wooded areas. One of the major goals of the City is to preserve these areas in their natural state wherever possible in any future development considerations. The natural features of the City define its character and should be preserved. The historical heritage of the City needs to be preserved as well, in the face of surrounding development.

Though, in a sense, the entire City is an environmentally-sensitive area, there are a number of environmentally-sensitive areas, particularly in the vicinity of the St. Joseph River, which are undeveloped or have experienced little development. These include the river, the Herring Drain, the corresponding floodplains of these streams, and the parks and recreation areas in the City. Other environmentally-sensitive areas in the City are the remaining open space, including undeveloped woodland and open land, as well as areas of limited development. These areas of limited development include Jenkins Golf Course and the City Cemetery.

Rules and regulations which apply to the protection of floodplains and wetlands should be updated and enforced. Existing flood insurance regulations should be reviewed and updated if necessary in response to current needs in order to aid in preserving the areas (floodplains, floodways, and wetlands) which are integral to the storm water drainage system.

The City should examine its floodplain maps and note any discrepancies between the maps and existing conditions. The effective date of the current Flood Insurance Rate Map is February 4, 1987. The map is based on research that was completed in May, 1985. Once the City has compiled a list of discrepancies, the City should notify the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the need to update the present map, including the revision of the boundaries of the floodways and the floodway fringes. (The floodway is the stream channel, plus the adjacent area around a stream that must be kept free of encroachment in order that flood heights do not rise greater than 10 feet above the normal water level, and that hazardous velocities do not result.)

Any encroachment on a floodplain which impacts on the stream's capacity to drain the area or results in the addition of pollutants to the stream should be prevented. Permeable soils in the vicinity of the 100-year floodplains should not be made impervious, through traditional paving techniques or other construction which will disturb the soil mantle. Areas in the vicinity of the floodplains should not be filled because this reduces the stream capacity, and thereby, increases flood heights.

Use should be made of innovative construction approaches in order to limit adverse impact on environmentally-sensitive areas. Several approaches are listed in the Storm Drainage section below.

The City should encourage the preservation of its historical heritage to underline the character and tradition of the community. Presently, there are no sites on the National Register of Historic Places in the City of Litchfield. As a first step towards determining what sites are eligible, an architectural survey should be conducted of a historic portion of the City. Though not mandatory, the survey is useful for determining what, indeed, is historic in the area. The Litchfield Area Historical Society should survey the City to gather information on historic sites in the area. A first step may be to consider all homes which were built prior to 1920. If enough historic homes are in one general area, an historic district can be created. This area may include the Downtown. This will highlight the Downtown as the focal point of the community's heritage. The creation of a historic resources committee is encouraged to focus the efforts of those interested in preserving the local history of the City of Litchfield. The City should contact the State Historic Preservation Office to find out about available resources to assist in conducting an architectural survey. Often, university students are available to undertake historic surveys on a volunteer basis.

STORM DRAINAGE

The major portion of the storm water drainage in the City of Litchfield flows into the St. Joseph River, which enters the City in its northwest quadrant and exits from the southeast quadrant. The Herring Drain, which connects with the River in the northwest quadrant of the City, provides a drainage function for the southernmost portions of the southwest and southeast quadrants of the City.

In light of the present and anticipated development in the City, the City should review the impact of any future development on the existing storm water drainage system. The above-listed waterways and their floodway and floodplain areas need to be protected from adverse drainage policies. In the site planning of large-scale developments, where there will be a significant increase in the amount of storm water runoff, such developments should be required to plan for control of storm drainage, through the use of detention ponds, permanent ponds located on the site, or retention areas, areas for temporary storage of runoff, or other appropriate means. This element should be incorporated into the City's site plan review process.

Because developments in the surrounding area, particularly upstream within Litchfield Township, will have a significant impact on the City's storm drainage system, the City should work with Litchfield Township to design a master storm drainage plan for the area.

Floodplains and wetlands are integral to the City's storm water drainage system. It is important that these areas be maintained in a natural state wherever possible in order to limit storm drainage problems. As noted in the Parks and Recreation section, the City is planning on developing a portion of the St. Joseph River for (primarily passive) recreation purposes. This is a positive use that will allow the River to maintain its role as an effective storm drainage resource. The preservation of floodplains and wetlands are discussed in greater detail in the Environmental/Historic Heritage section.

Additionally, in the same section, there is a discussion regarding the need to notify the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of discrepancies between the current Flood Insurance Rate Map and existing conditions in the City. Floodplain mapping for the City was last updated in 1987. Any regulations related to preserving the areas (floodplains, floodways, and wetlands) which are integral to the storm water drainage system should be reviewed and updated if necessary in response to current needs.

A review could be conducted Citywide of storm drainage outlets in order to determine their adequacy and to note areas in potential need of improvements. The required improvements should then be incorporated into a plan to upgrade the system and appropriate funding should be sought in order to implement the improvements.

Use could be made of innovative construction approaches for developments of significant size to limit adverse impact on the storm water drainage system. Several approaches are listed below. These have been gleaned from a report entitled Stormwater Management in the New Jersey Coastal Zone, April, 1989 prepared for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Coastal Resources. An approach called "minimum disturbance/ minimum maintenance" is used to limit the disturbed area around new construction. Once construction is complete, any disturbed areas are replanted with indigenous vegetation, which will require little or no maintenance, including no application of herbicides or pesticides. In this approach, the creation of lawns or gardens is discouraged or prohibited.

Porous paving is another approach which allows water to pass through into the soil, while reducing runoff into the neighboring storm water system. This approach has been used in areas with climatological conditions similar to that in the City of Litchfield. It is not very effective in areas of clayey soils, high water table, or little depth to bedrock.

Another approach is to make use of dual purpose/water quality detention basins. The purpose of these basins is to extend the time water is kept in the basin. It postpones runoff to the storm drainage system and is effective in removing most particulate pollutants. There are a number of designs which can be used to increase detention time.

UTILITIES

Water and Wastewater

The City of Litchfield owns and maintains its own water supply and distribution system. The City's water supply is drawn from local well fields. A recent report conducted for the City by C.J. Linck and Associates, Preliminary Hydrogeologic Study of the Litchfield Area for the City of Litchfield, Michigan, submitted in November, 1995, provides details about the City's wells and water supply. After treatment, water is distributed to the City's customers through the City's water distribution network. Presently, the City is constructing a new 300,000 gallon water tower in the northeast section of the City.

The City of Litchfield sanitary sewer collection system is composed of approximately eight (8) miles of gravity sewers that range in diameter from six (6) to twelve (12) inches. The system includes seven (7) pumping stations and approximately one mile of force main. The force mains range in diameter from four (4) to ten (10) inches. Wastewater is directed to the South Chicago and Hawkes Drive pumping stations. From the pumping stations, it is sent to the wastewater treatment plant.

In 1995 the City began to use its new lagoon system. The lagoon system uses a three (3)-cell waste stabilization process. Wastewater in the lagoon is treated by natural biological and physical processes. Effluent is discharged approximately twice each year to the St. Joseph River when the level of the river is high enough to absorb the discharge without any harm to the environment.

Any future development within the City should be in accord with master plans for water and sewer development. This should be a part of the approval process of any significant development. This requirement can be used to control development in a logical and orderly manner.

The City should review the locations of existing water and wastewater infrastructure and determine the needs of unserved areas, as well as repair and replacement projects within the existing infrastructure. A recommendation for specific infrastructure improvements, along with a timetable for improvements should be developed.

The atlas showing the locations of all water and wastewater lines in the City, with their associated dimensions should be revised and updated in order to respond to concerns related to future development in the City. Further, the City should consider transforming its utilities's atlas to a computerized format using geographic information systems (GIS) technology.

Electric/Telecommunications

Any future extension of electric service should be through underground transmission lines.

Any future geographic expansion of phone and cable service should be via underground lines.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Police and Fire Protection

The City Police Department has five officers. This number is expected to remain the same in the foreseeable future. The Police Department has two vehicles. The City is serviced by its own Fire Department and has approximately 20 volunteer firemen. The firehouse is located just southeast of the center of town adjacent to the City building.

The City should continue to monitor the needs of its police and fire departments, including staffing, and should determine areas where services can and should be expanded to the community.

Solid Waste Disposal

Presently, the City of Litchfield contracts with a private hauler for collection of waste and contracts for disposal at a private landfill.

Additionally, the City provides a monthly curbside recycling pickup service for residents, which is staffed by the private hauler's personnel. The City should continually evaluate the need to increase recycling efforts.

Transportation Service

The City should explore the possibility of supplying a transportation service to citizens with mobility needs. For example, there may be need for a van service to the local supermarket on a weekly basis for citizens who do not have independent means to travel to retail establishments.

ZONING ORDINANCE REVIEW

Zoning Districts

The City's Zoning Ordinance was last revised in December, 1993. The districts are: R-1, Residential District; R-2, Residential District; B-1, Highway Business District; B-2, General Business District; and I-1, Industrial District. The current zoning map is included in this plan as Figure .

The R-1 Residential District (which primarily consists of single-family detached dwellings) is spread throughout all sections of the City. The major portion of the R-1 district is located east of M-49 and north of the industrial area. There are also large areas of R-1 zoning west of M-49 and north of the industrial area. This area is broken up more by areas of R-2 Residential zoning and B-1 Highway Business zoning.

The R-2 Residential District is located primarily west of M-49, except for a portion on the north side of town along the east side of North Chicago Street, and an area east of the downtown. Other R-2 areas are located (1) south of the downtown between Mill Street and the industrial area; (2) west of the downtown between Marshall Road (M-99) and St. Joseph Street; and (3) further west and north in the northwest corner of the City adjacent to a highway business district.

The B-1 Highway Business District is located in two portions of the City: (1) along M-49 south of the downtown between the downtown area and the industrial area; and (2) along M-99 in the northwest corner of the City. The B-2 General Business District is located in the central portion of the City where M-49, M-99, and St. Joseph Street converge.

The I-1 Industrial District stretches across most of the length of the southern third of the City. There is also a small area zoned I-1 that is not contiguous with the rest of the I-1 Industrial District. This area is located along M-49 on the north side of the St. Joseph River.

At the outset of this plan update, it was stated that traditional and innovative zoning regulations and subdivision requirements be used to aid in achieving the community's goals.

Most of the issues discussed in this section have been referred to previously in this plan update. Recommendations will be made relative to existing or potential conflicts or deficiencies found within the City of Litchfield Zoning Ordinance.

Rezoning Issues

Rezoning of certain areas of the City has been discussed in the Plan. The Zoning District map should be reviewed and changes made to protect the integrity of areas where conflicts exist.

There are several properties located adjacent to and south of the Downtown, which are zoned Industrial. The area on the east side of South Chicago Street (M-49) is currently occupied by an industrial operation. The property on the west side of the street is occupied by a commercial establishment. If and when the present enterprise on the east side sells or relocates, the use and zoning should be changed to the B-2 General Business District zoning classification or to a new zoning classification to be compatible with the surrounding land uses. The property on the west side of South Chicago Street should have a zoning change to B-2 General Business District to prevent any undesirable land use conflicts.

The area south of the St. Joseph River and east of South Chicago Street that is zoned B-2 General Business District should be rezoned to protect the river resource. A portion of this district is occupied by Firemen's Park. This area should be protected by an appropriate zoning classification. This is discussed further below under "New Zoning Classifications."

A portion of the I-1 Industrial district in the southeast corner of the City is contiguous with the south bank of the St. Joseph River on the east side of the City. This area would not be appropriate for industrial development activities, particularly as it encroaches upon the floodplain of the stream. Therefore, it is suggested that this area be reclassified to protect the City's river resource.

In lieu of (or in addition to) adjusting the boundaries of the B-2 General Business District, an overlay zone can be used to incorporate zoning requirements particular to the Downtown area. This zone can be drawn to bound the entire B-2 area, including the I-1 area north of the river. See "Innovative Techniques" below.

New Zoning Classifications

The City should consider the creation of a Parks/Open Space/Green Space zoning district classification in order to provide a level of protection for these locations in the City, as well as to allow the City to be able to review any potential impacts on these areas. Existing areas which will be protected by this designation include all City parkland, the wooded and open areas around the St. Joseph River and the Mill Race, the Jenkins Golf Course facility, and the City cemetery. The portion of the I-1 Industrial District that is contiguous with the south bank of the St. Joseph River in the southeast portion of the City would be an appropriate area to be reclassified to a new Parks/Open Space zoning district designation. If such a classification can not be implemented, then, an overlay zone should be used by the City to provide some control over potential impacts on the City's open space and green space. (See Innovative Techniques below)

Innovative Techniques

Several different innovative zoning techniques have been used. The use of innovative techniques in a zoning ordinance provides flexibility in various use situations. The following techniques are recommended for further investigation.

Overlay Zones

An overlay zone is a defined geographic area in which special requirements are added to the existing requirements of particular zoning classifications. These special requirements may only apply to one section of the geographic area that is zoned in a particular classification. For example, the City may want to create an overlay zone that applies to the immediate Downtown area, but not to the entire area zoned B-2, General Business District. The special requirements would then apply to the Downtown overlay zone, but not to the surrounding B-2 area. The special requirements can include signage restrictions, parking lot requirements, or other requirements to create a uniform image for the overlay zone district.

An overlay zone can also be a geographic area consisting of parts of two or more zoning classifications. The special requirements are then "overlaid" over the whole overlay zone area even though the area is made up of pieces of different zoning classifications. For example, an overlay zone for the Downtown may include parts of the B-2, General Business District, the I-1, Industrial District, and the R-2, Residential District.

The use of overlay zones complements the existing Zoning Ordinance. It offers the City a means of control over a particular area without creating a new zoning classification. It also allows for flexibility in the interpretation of the requirements of the existing ordinance. There are a number of areas in the City of Litchfield that are candidates for overlay zoning, including, open space areas, particularly along the St. Joseph River, the Downtown, the Marshall Street Corridor, and the Industrial Park.

Among other things, the overlay zones could address such issues as building design, signage, lighting, landscaping, number of curb cuts, design of parking areas, identification of areas of parcels which should be screened from the street and from neighboring properties, and types of screening which should be used. It would assist in controlling development in a manner consistent with the image that the City envisions for the community.

The requirements specified for an overlay zone for the Downtown can be applied to other commercial areas in the City as well. Architectural review of the Marshall Street Corridor can be incorporated into an overlay zone.

An overlay zone can be applied to the Litchfield Industrial Park to enhance the "image" of the area through the use of provisions which firms in the area will be encouraged to follow. The provisions can include a uniform signage system to aid in providing a consistent and attractive theme to the park.

If a new Parks/Open Space/Green Space zoning district classification can not be implemented to protect the environmentally-sensitive areas in the City, then, an overlay zone can be utilized to provide some control by the City over potential impacts on the City's open space and green space.

Buffer Zoning

Potential areas of land use conflict can be ameliorated through the use of buffering at critical borders. Depending on the neighboring land uses, buffers can be of varying width and consist of variable-slope mounding and natural screening, e.g. trees or shrubbery. In areas where the neighboring land uses are in great conflict, the buffer width should be the widest.

In new developments, the responsibility of providing the buffer normally lies with the newer of the bordering developments, that is, the development that is encroaching upon the existing development with an opposing land use. Buffers should be maintained as open space, natural areas, or green space, and can be used for recreation and, particularly, for passive recreation pursuits. If possible, it is preferable that buffers be in the public domain. However, buffers can also be placed in restrictive ownership, such as by a homeowners's or industry owners's association.

As an undeveloped area, a buffer provides the same positive attributes as an environmentally-sensitive area. In addition to providing recreation opportunities and buffering conflicting land uses, buffers circumscribe neighborhoods, allow the opportunity for scenic views, may act as means of transit (particularly for bikeways and walkways), provide drainage for the area, allow for recharging of the water supply, and aid in protecting vegetation and wildlife habitats.

Other Issues

The City should consider implementing and utilizing the following devices:

Require landscaping in parking lots which are over a certain size. Landscaping could take the form of islands containing trees and bushes. This could be accomplished through an ordinance.

Efforts should be made to deter the development of lots with narrow frontage which results in the proliferation of curb cuts. Developers should be encouraged to consolidate operations which will offer them the opportunity to share traffic controls, access, service roads, parking lots, maintenance costs and other amenities.

Transitional Zoning

Transitional zoning, like buffering, is an appropriate instrument to use in order to reduce conflicts between land uses. A stepped pattern of land uses from Industrial to Business to Multi-Family to Single Family should be applied to the transitional zone between the Industrial Park and future growth areas.

Appendix A Public Participation Meeting Summaries

An important component of a community's master plan is the input of its citizens. The input of local residents makes the plan stronger and more viable. The comments, suggestions, and recommendations of the citizens of the City of Litchfield, the people most familiar with the community, the people who make their home in the City and are rooted in the very fabric of its daily life, provide the foundation for the plan, and thereby, the basis for the future of the City of Litchfield.

On April 24, 1996, the City of Litchfield conducted a public meeting to involve local residents in the planning process. The purpose of the meeting was to have the residents of the community actively take part in grappling with the issues that face the City as it moves forward into the 21st Century. Approximately 40 local residents took part in the meeting. Facilitating the meeting were Kenneth G. Bielen, Ph.D. and Christopher E. Crisenbery, P.E., representatives of Feller, Finch and Associates, Inc., Jackson, Michigan, the firm assisting the City with the realization of the Master Plan.

The format of the meeting was as follows:

General comments regarding the formation of the City's Master Plan.

Purposes and expectations of the meeting.

Breakup into groups to discuss issues regarding the various components of the plan. Components included: Residential Development, Commercial Development, Industrial Development, Parks and Recreation, Open Space/Floodplains/Wetlands, Transportation Issues, Utilities, Community Facilities and Services, Parks and Recreation, and Floodplains and Wetlands.

After approximately 20 minutes, all groups re-convened and a spokesperson from each group presented the recommendations of the group to the session at large. These recommendations are listed below. All attendees had an opportunity to comment on the recommendations and suggestions put forward by each group.

Each of the "breakout" groups received a list of questions related to a specific component of the plan, such as residential development. These questions were to be used as a "launchpad" to discuss the particular component of the plan that the "breakout" group was responsible for. The purpose of the discussion group was not to treat the list of questions as a questionnaire to be filled in, but rather as a guideline to stimulate discussion amongst the group.

The participants were reminded that they were creating a vision for the community for the next 20 years. They were told to think of the various dynamics and pressures that will come into play in the City over the course of the next two decades.

The comments, suggestions, and recommendations that come forth from the session were compiled by Feller, Finch and Associates, Inc. The results became an integral part of the plan and provided the direction for the remainder of the development of the master plan.

The comments made by each of the discussion groups are presented below, along with the questions that the individual groups addressed during their "breakout" time.

Residential Development Discussion Group

Where should future Single-Family Housing be located?

Expand Hawthorn Heights

What can be done to make the Hawthorn Heights subdivision a success?

Promotion through the newspaper, cable TV, Realtors

Are there any existing land-use conflicts between areas of Single-Family Housing and other land uses?

No major conflicts

Is there a need for more Multi-Family Housing in the City?

Need for senior housing in the City

Are there any existing land-use conflicts between areas of Multi-Family Housing and other land uses?

No major conflicts

What is the condition of existing Multi-Family Housing?

Some upgrading needed

Is there a need for more Mobile Home Park space in the City?

Commercial Development (Retail, Services, Office Space) Discussion Group

Downtown

What are the strengths of the Downtown area?

What are the weaknesses of the Downtown area?

Street lights
Parking
Bad layout/traffic flow
Buildings not up to code

In what ways do the Downtown merchants work collectively as a community?

Chamber of Commerce, is it working?

Will the formation of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) be beneficial for the City?

If there are funds

What businesses are successful in the Downtown?

Shell, HWI, Drugstore, Bank, Kasey's

What businesses would be successful if introduced in the Downtown?

Bakery, Law Office, Day Care Center, more Eateries

Area Outside of the Downtown

Is there a need for more commercial development in the City (outside of the Downtown)?

Need a laundromat and drycleaner

Where should future commercial development be located?

Northwest of the Downtown; West St. Joseph Street

Industrial Development Discussion Group

What are the strengths of the Litchfield Industrial Park?

TIFA
Utilities
Setting and space available
Access to transportation routes:
I-94 and I-69, M-49

What are the weaknesses of the Litchfield Industrial Park?

Traffic congestion in City
Securing industry with high wages and high number of employees
Semis traveling through town

Is there a need for more light industrial development in the City?

Yes

Is there a need for more heavy industrial development in the City?

No

Where should future light and/or heavy industrial development be located?

Land behind Murphy's; would have to annex to City

Are there any existing land-use conflicts between areas of industrial development and other land uses?

Potential conflicts with surrounding farmland

Are there any hindrances to industrial development in the City?

Affordable housing
Available labor pool
Farm land for future use

What, if any, action should be taken in regard to the areas zoned industrial along M-49 north of the St. Joseph River in the vicinity of the Downtown?

Defer action; Landlocked with river and tracks

Parks & Recreation Discussion Group

Is there a need for more park space in the City? Where should future park space be located in the City?

Northwest side of town
Washington Street
Apartments

Is there a need for more park facilities in the City?

Picnic tables
Pavilion
Grills

Is there a need for more structured recreation programs (such as leagues, instructional programs) in the City? What programs are needed?

Leagues (e.g. Water Volleyball, Soccer, Softball, Beach Volleyball, Golf)

Is there a need for improvements to the City Pool or its programs? Would there be any benefit to enclosing the City Pool?

Pool should be enclosed; Improve programs for all age groups, and so that school can use pool year-round

In what ways can the City's location on the St. Joseph River be used to benefit parks and recreation in the City?

Provide more river-related activities including educational opportunities

In what ways can the School District and the City partner to provide improved parks and recreation facilities and services to the community?

Open classes, e.g. photography; open movies (indoors, outdoors)

Is there a place for the former Youth Center in the future of the City's parks and recreation program? If so, what can it be used for?

Classes for senior citizens; educational classes

Open Space/Floodplains/Wetlands Discussion Group

Open Space

Is there a need to preserve open space in the City?

Open space should be preserved

Should a green belt be preserved around the outskirts of the City?

No green belt needed

Transportation/Utilities/Community Facilities & Services Discussion Group

Transportation

What transportation issues are there in the City?

Need taxi service for seniors

In what ways can the transportation infrastructure in the City be improved to prepare for future growth in the City?

Improve parking

What is the effect of the industrial park on the transportation network?

Traffic problems

What improvements, if any, are needed in the Downtown road network?

City must have control of the situation and have authority to do improvements

Utilities

What, if any, capital improvements are necessary in the areas of: Water Supply; Sanitary Sewer System; Drainage, Storm Sewer, Ditches; or Solid Waste Disposal?

In good shape

Community Facilities & Services

Is the City's recycling program satisfactory?

Current program is okay, but will have to be concerned with the area outside the City limits within the next 20 years

Is there a need for community education opportunities in the City?

Yes, for senior citizens; computer courses, etc.

kenblitch26.mp