



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

... A LAND USE PLAN TO BEGIN THE 21ST CENTURY

JULY, 2000

W I L L I A M S & W O R K S

CITY OF NORTON SHORES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

July, 2000



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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1. SUMMARY

This Comprehensive Plan represents the culmination of nearly two years work by numerous local residents and local officials. It reflects the community's strong commitment to retain and strengthen local quality of life. The document outlines the preferred future for the City and a comprehensive plan to realize it. The Plan is appropriately general, recognizing that planning for the future is a delicate blend of art and science and that sufficient flexibility will be needed to respond to the challenges of the future.

This Plan reflects the community's strong commitment to retain and strengthen local quality of life.

The fundamental purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to enable the City to establish a future direction for the community's physical development. The Municipal Planning Act, Public Act 285 of 1931, as amended, specifically gives a City Planning Commission the authority to prepare and officially adopt a plan. Once prepared, officially adopted and maintained, this Plan will serve as an advisory guide for the physical conservation of certain areas and for the development of other areas.

Because of constant change in our social and economic structures and activities, the Plan must be maintained through periodic review and revision so that it reflects contemporary trends while maintaining long range goals. The Plan will be effective to the degree that it:

- ◆ reflects the needs and desires of the citizens of the City of Norton Shores;
- ◆ realistically interprets and reflects the conditions, trends and the dynamic economic and social pressures that are brought about by change; and
- ◆ inspires consensus and cooperation among the various public agencies, developers, and the citizens of the City toward achieving common goals.

THE PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

When the City of Norton Shores began the plan preparation process, it had several objectives. First, it was important to achieve an understanding of the scale and scope of growth and development and the likely future trends in the community. Secondly, the City sought to clearly define community priorities with regard to growth, development and land use. Thirdly, the planning process was seen as an opportunity to build and strengthen a community consensus about the future land use patterns in the City. Finally, the City sought to address specific issues and neighborhood land use challenges and to develop realistic and effective mechanisms to achieve the plan's objectives.

This Comprehensive Plan accomplishes all these objectives. More specifically, this Plan will serve the City in the following ways:

1. It provides a comprehensive means of integrating proposals that look years ahead to meet future needs regarding general and major aspects of physical conservation and development throughout the City.
2. It serves as the official, advisory policy statement for encouraging orderly and efficient use of the land for residences, businesses and industry and for coordinating these uses of land with each other, with streets and highways, and with other necessary public facilities and services.
3. It creates a logical basis for zoning, subdivision design, public improvement plans, and for facilitating and guiding the work of the Planning Commission and the City Council as well as other public and private endeavors dealing with the physical conservation and development of the City.
4. It provides a means for private organizations and individuals to determine how they may relate their building and development projects and policies to official City planning policies.
5. It offers a means of relating the plans of Norton Shores to the plans of other communities in the West Michigan region.

PLAN METHODOLOGY

The planning process involved four inter-related phases:

- ◆ Data Analysis – A Current Assessment.
- ◆ Goals and Objectives – Creating a Policy Foundation.
- ◆ Plan Preparation – Analyzing the Issues and Defining the Preferred Future, and
- ◆ Implementation Strategies – Getting There from Here

The first phase of the effort involved the formation of a citizen input structure (Study Team) and a summary review and analysis of available data gathered from local and regional sources. The Study Team was appointed by the Mayor and City Council. It included residents, business owners, public officials from the City and school district, as well as the members of the Planning Commission and the City Council. The Study Team was formed as an *ad hoc* entity to guide the planning process and to serve as a sounding board for the consultant throughout the process. During the first phase, demographic, economic and land use data was gathered to support the Plan. The purpose of this effort was to develop a comprehensive impression of the patterns of growth and the challenges that will impact the City. This phase culminated in the preparation of the Current Assessment Report. That report served as a technical resource for the Study Team and the consultant and it also represents the essential Community Profile which constitutes Section II (Chapters 2 through 6) of this Plan.

The objective of the second phase was to establish a policy basis for the City's planning and land use regulations. A futuring workshop was held on September 30, 1998 to gather public input through a nominal group process. Using the output of the futuring workshop, the Study Team began the process of defining goals and objectives for the future of the City of Norton Shores. These are presented in Chapter 7 of this Plan.

The third phase involved drawing together the input from the previous two and preparing a revised Future Land Use Plan which is reflected in Section III of this Plan. The third phase began with the conduct of a detailed analysis of specific areas of concern. These included:

- ◆ Transportation and Land Uses
- ◆ Utilities and Growth Management
- ◆ Lakeside Manor

From these analyses, the future land use designations and map (Chapter 11) were developed in a series of interactive meetings of the Study Team and City staff. This process included a special public workshop to gather general community input.

The final phase of the process involved the development of specific implementation strategies to carry out the plan. These are reflected in general terms in Chapter 12. At the conclusion of the fourth phase, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the entire plan.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This Plan is organized into three sections, each consisting of one or more chapters. Section I includes this introductory chapter which outlines the purpose of the plan, the process for its development, and acknowledgements to those involved. Section II is the Community Profile, which presents an overview description of the City of Norton Shores from the perspective of:

- ◆ Natural Features, the Environment and Utilities (Chapter 2)
- ◆ Population (Chapter 3)
- ◆ Income, Housing and Economic Development (Chapter 4)
- ◆ Land Cover, Development Patterns, Community Facilities and Services (Chapter 5), and
- ◆ Transportation (Chapter 6)

Section III constitutes the Future Land Use Plan, which includes the City's Goals and Objectives (Chapter 7), issue analyses on Transportation (Chapter 8), Utilities (Chapter 9) and Lakeside Manor (Chapter 10), the Future Land Use Plan (Chapter 11) and the Implementation Strategies (Chapter 12).

The final section of the plan is the Bibliography which outlines all the various resources consulted in the completion of this Plan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process to prepare this Plan has involved numerous community residents as well as public officials. The following individuals have provided key input and their contributions are gratefully acknowledged:

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SECTION II. COMMUNITY PROFILE

In this section of the Comprehensive Plan, a general profile description of the City of Norton Shores is presented. This section is not intended as an exhaustive inventory of all the numerous aspects of the community. Rather, its purpose is to give some general impressions of the natural features, demographics, land use patterns and infrastructure that make up the City.

The material in this section has been drawn from *City of Norton Shores, A Current Assessment Report*,¹ published by the City as a part of this plan preparation process in July, 1998. That report presented a “snapshot” of current conditions within the City and recent trends in population and housing. It set the stage for the finalization of plan goals and objectives, the future land use plan and map, and implementation strategies. All of those materials form the actual Comprehensive Plan set forth in Section III of this document.

Each of the following chapters includes an overview of its subject matter along with a brief discussion of the planning trends that are relevant. The material presented in the Community Profile has been drawn from existing research and published texts. This approach provides an efficient use of the resources of the City in the completion of the Plan. However, in a few instances, this approach may result in some unanswered questions. Further research or analytical work could be undertaken to find answers to those questions, but extensive refinement of the details at this stage of the process seldom results in large-scale shifts in policy. The City and the consulting team have found that the resources available for the completion of the Plan are best directed at forming the general outlines of land use policy with the intent of refining the details of strategies as implementation proceeds.

¹ Williams & Works in conjunction with City of Norton Shores, *The City of Norton Shores, A Current Assessment Report*, July, 1998.

CHAPTER 2. NATURAL FEATURES, ENVIRONMENT & UTILITIES

The City of Norton Shores is situated in Muskegon County, in the Muskegon metropolitan area of West Michigan (see Map 1, page 9). The northern two-thirds of the community is characterized by fairly intense residential, commercial and industrial development while the balance of the City remains in larger tracts of woodlands and open areas. Norton Shores is blessed with the shoreline and beaches of Lake Michigan. In addition, the City is bisected by the sizable Mona Lake. Both lakes provide attractive vistas and recreation opportunities for area residents and help to define the community's unique character. The City is experiencing significant growth pressures and the effects of growth and development are impacting its natural features.

The following paragraphs discuss significant natural features in the community of Norton Shores.

SOILS

According to the Soil Survey of Muskegon County (1968)², the soils in the City of Norton Shores fall into two distinct soil groups; the Rubicon-Croswell-Deer Park Association and Rubicon-Au Gres-Roscomon Association. Map 2 on page 11, Environmental Features, illustrates the general coverage of these soil groups and the following discussion describes the characteristics of each.

Covering about 30 percent of the City, the *Rubicon-Croswell-Deer Park Association* soils consist of steep sand dunes along Lake Michigan and rolling hills and nearly level plains that extend inland from the lake. Generally, this soil group traverses the Lake Michigan shoreline, extending about one mile inland, and covers the northern Sections (Sections 2, 3, and 4) of the City. (Note that this soil group is overlapped with the Critical Dunes areas illustrated on Map 2 on page 11). From an area-wide perspective, the Soil Survey indicates that this association covers 38 percent of Muskegon County as a whole.

The soils in the City provide good foundations for buildings, roads, and other structures

From a land use planning standpoint, this soil association is good for recreational uses and community development. The soils provide good foundations for buildings, roads, and other structures. The scenery in

² Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Muskegon County*, October, 1968.

these areas, especially in the dune area, serves as attractions to both residents and tourists. Also, throughout the County, many of these areas have been converted to wildlife and recreational uses. For example, in Norton Shores, the Hoffmaster State Park campground serves as a recreational anchor in the southwest corner of the City adjacent to the lakeshore.

The remaining 70 percent of the City lies in the *Rubicon-Au Gres-Roscommon Association*. This association consists of sloping, dry sands intermingled with dark-colored wet sands that lie at the base of slopes and in depressions. Typically, land within this soil group is flatter than the *Rubicon-Croswell-Deer Park Association* described above. Regionally, the *Rubicon-Au Gres-Roscommon Association* covers about 17 percent of Muskegon County.

In terms of land use capabilities, the Soil Survey indicates that the soils in this association are suited as woodland and community developments, recreation, and limited farming. This is consistent with the growth of Norton Shores as this soil group has sustained the majority of the City's residential, commercial, and industrial land uses.

It should also be noted that with any soil group, limitations may exist for septic tank and drainfield construction. A detailed analysis and inventory of soils with these limitations is typically warranted in a community with little or no public utilities. Most of the soils in Norton Shores have been deemed unsuitable for septic tank drainfield development use. However, given the relatively large service area of public water and sewer in Norton Shores, this is less of a community wide issue. Rather, as development is proposed in areas not served or intended to be served by public utilities, an on-site investigation to determine the characteristics and capabilities of the existing soils may be needed. Throughout this Plan, an underlying rationale for future land use and utility extension recommendations is the need to protect groundwater and the public health.

Insert map 1, location map

CRITICAL DUNES

Michigan offers the largest assemblage of freshwater sand dunes in the world. The City of Norton Shores is home to a nearly 6 mile-long stretch of those mountains of sand along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Michigan offers the largest assemblage of freshwater sand dunes in the world. The City of Norton Shores is home to a nearly 6 mile-long stretch of those mountains of sand along the Lake Michigan shoreline. About 770 acres of dune lands and open space along Lake Michigan are in public parks. The popularity of this shoreline and sand dune area has led to increased demand for residential development and industrial use (sand mining) within the dunes, creating a conflict between preservation and disturbance. In fact, in many shoreline communities indiscriminate and unwise development has historically resulted in significant damage and in some cases elimination of the beautiful sand dune features. These dunes also provide benefits by providing homes for numerous varieties of birds and other wildlife as well as protecting erosion of the shoreline.

To protect the sand dunes, the State of Michigan enacted the National Resources and Environmental Protection Act (Act 451 of 1994), administered by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). This act expands protection to areas identified as “critical dune areas.” As illustrated on Map 2 (page 11), the entire shoreline in the City of Norton Shores is designated as a critical dune area.

Land within the designated critical dune areas is subject to strict development regulations and the MDEQ retains some final review and approval authority over local ordinances. In addition to MDEQ regulations, the City of Norton Shores imposes development regulations as provided in the General Environmental Provisions of the City’s Zoning Ordinance.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are valuable natural resources that provide such important benefits as surface and ground water quality and storm water management.

Map 2 (page 11) also illustrates the location of wetlands in the City. Wetlands include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas often found between open water and higher elevated areas. Wetlands are valuable natural resources that provide such important benefits as surface and ground water quality and storm water management.

The wetlands shown on Map 2 (page 11) reflect the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) prepared by the United States Department of the Interior. These are generalized areas and accurate and reliable regional mapping of wetlands is limited. The most accurate delineation of wetlands is derived from on-site field inspection of a parcel.

Insert map 2, environmental features map

The NWI map is based on interpretation of high altitude aerial photographs and should only be utilized as an “indicator map.” In other words, if a development is proposed in an area where wetlands have been identified on the NWI map, an on-site investigation is typically warranted. This on-site investigation is necessary to first confirm and delineate the boundary of the wetland(s), and second to determine if the wetland is regulated.

Certain wetlands are regulated by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). According to the MDEQ, a permit to drain, fill or modify a wetland must be obtained if the wetland(s) is five acres or larger or if the wetland is located within five hundred feet of surface water (i.e. lake or stream). Wetlands that are smaller than five acres may be regulated by a local community ordinance. In addition to MDEQ regulations, the City of Norton Shores imposes development regulations as provided in the General Environmental Provisions of the City’s Zoning Ordinance.

MONA LAKE WATERSHED

Mona Lake has long been an attractive and defining feature in Muskegon County and especially in the City of Norton Shores. Mona Lake is one of the important centers of residential development, tourism, and recreational activities. The watershed that feeds Mona Lake has not fully recovered from the County’s industrial era of the early 1900’s. This has led to numerous special studies by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. EPA, engineering firms, and university research groups during the 1970’s and 1980’s.

Mona Lake is one of the important centers of residential development, tourism, and recreational activities.

The most recent watershed management study³ for the Mona Lake Watershed was completed by the West Michigan Regional Shoreline Development Commission. This study is intended to be both a policy guide for elected and staff decision-makers alike, and a reference tool regarding conditions in the watershed. As such it focuses on land uses in the watershed rather than on water quality. It provides recommendations involving best management practices, intergovernmental relations, and lake user activities.

According to the study, the watershed which feeds Mona Lake covers an area over 48,000 acres in size, and includes portions of the City of

³ The Mona Lake Watershed Study, *An Analysis for Change*, March, 1996. West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission.

Norton Shores, the City of Muskegon, the City of Muskegon Heights, Muskegon Township, Sullivan Township, Fruitport Township, Mooreland Township, Egelston Township, and in Newaygo County, very small portions of Bridgeton Township and Ashland Township. Previous studies have shown some improvement in water quality in the lake itself with the diversion of wastewater to the County wastewater system.

The study analyzed the impacts of development and overuse on water quality. Natural restrictions and development limitations such as soil characteristics and point source pollutants were identified and mapped in a Geographic Information System to provide future reference in development activities. In addition, the study assessed techniques for minimizing impacts without heavily regulating development opportunities through the use of Best Management Practices (BMP's) and optimum land use location strategies.

As summarized in the study: “The concept of BMP’s was originally developed to assist in the agricultural management of soil erosion, croplands, pastures, barnyards, manure, and pesticides. These practices were quickly adopted by many other land use professionals, particularly forest and urban managers. Forest practices include road construction in timberlands, harvesting, pesticide use, and regeneration. Urban techniques have revolved around keeping streets clean and preventing runoff and erosion associated with development. There are many types of BMP’s; each is classified as being useful given a particular land use or activity. For instance, crop rotation is a popular BMP in areas which are used for agriculture. Water quality protection was not a goal when the BMP’s were first developed but rather to maintain the productivity of land and reduce production costs. However, these practices have proven useful in the restoration and protection of water resources. Watershed management should focus on four connected processes: 1) erosion control; 2) runoff control; 3) nutrient control; and 4) pesticide or toxin controls.”⁴

UTILITIES

In a discussion of the natural features of a community, it is appropriate to consider its utility systems. For example, throughout history, groundwater in many developed parts of the City has shown the impacts of on-site domestic wastewater disposal and/or use of fertilizers. This will remain an environmental issue for those residents in portions of the

⁴ Ibid.

City that have been developed for some time but which still lack public water and sanitary sewer facilities. Map 3 on page 16 illustrates the service areas for public water and sewer in the City of Norton Shores.

Water

The following summarizes the findings from a recent evaluation of the water system in the City.⁵ Another water reliability study was recently completed with the purpose of evaluating the City’s water system. The discussion that follows reflects the latest information available at the assembling of this Current Assessment.

The existing City of Norton Shores water system consists of a network of water distribution mains ranging in size from 4-inch to 30-inch diameter with several supply connections to the City of Muskegon Heights water distribution system. The Muskegon Heights water plant located on Seminole Road in the City of Norton Shores serves the City of Muskegon Heights, the City of Norton Shores and Fruitport Township and Village. As this Plan is being prepared, the Muskegon Heights Plant and water distribution system is undergoing extensive improvements as outlined in the Water System Reliability Study and as required by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

Water storage in the system includes 4.35 million gallons of ground storage located at the treatment plant in Norton Shores and 1.5 million gallons of ground storage located at the Sherman Boulevard pumping station in Muskegon Heights. In addition, a 750,000 gallon elevated water storage tank located in Muskegon Heights and a 500,000 gallon elevated storage tank located in Fruitport Township serve the multi-community water system. The water distribution system is comprised of a single pressure district.

While the water system is fundamentally sound, important improvements will result from the modifications underway

A hydraulic network analysis model was developed for the water system to allow computer model simulation of the system under various conditions. Based on these analyses, it was concluded that, while the system is fundamentally sound, important improvements could result from minor modifications.

- ◆ The existing water distribution system provides a good local network of mains for supplying water within the City

⁵ Ayres, Lewis, Norris & May, *Report on the Water System for the City of Norton Shores, Michigan*, June, 1992

- ◆ Analysis of the existing water system indicates a lack of adequate water transmission from the ground storage facilities at the water plant to distant areas of Norton Shores and Fruitport Township/Village resulting in inefficient use of the water plant storage and excessive dependence of the Fruitport elevated tank during high demand periods.
- ◆ The Fruitport elevated storage tank was found to have a very short depletion time under high demand conditions due to its limited usable capacity and the lack of major water transmission to areas of Norton Shores and Fruitport Township/Village from other water storage facilities.
- ◆ Construction of a proposed 30-inch Lake Harbor Road water transmission main will insure effective use of the ground storage located at the water plant, increase available fire flows in Fruitport Township/Village and in the City of Norton Shores, decrease dependency on the Fruitport elevated tank during high demand periods and eliminate the risk of encountering unacceptably low system pressures in Fruitport if the Fruitport tank is depleted.
- ◆ Modification of the Fruitport elevated tank in order to render its 500,000 gallon capacity usable will increase depletion times, and provide increased pressure and flow in both Norton Shores and Fruitport Township/Village during fire fighting events and other high demand periods.
- ◆ Adequate system water storage exists to meet present and future water use requirements.
- ◆ Several dead end mains exist and should be eliminated to provide reliability and increased flows during periods of high demand such as fires.

Wastewater

The City of Norton Shores has an extensive public sanitary sewer service area as shown on Map 3 (page 16). The City, in partnership with the Muskegon County wastewater system, provides for sanitary sewage collection treatment sufficient to serve the long term needs of the City. While the City has the available capacity, it is important that the collection system be extended into proposed developments and to older portions of the City that are not yet served.

Map 3 water and sewer system map

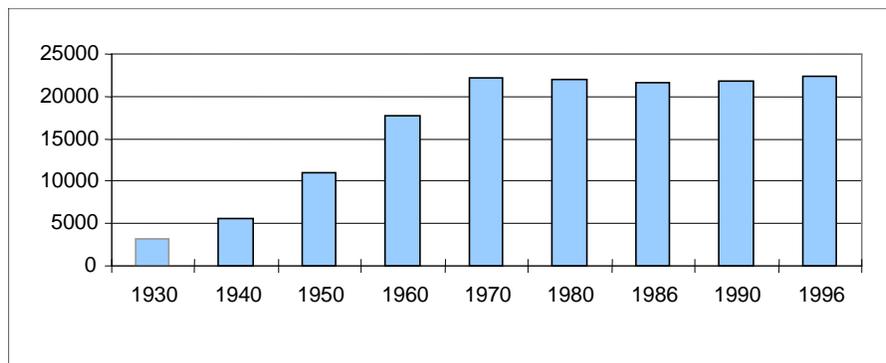
CHAPTER 3. POPULATION

Population is among the most important measures to express growth and its likely impact on land uses in a community. Therefore, it is vitally important to achieve an understanding of the City's population and its growth trends in order to prepare a meaningful and realistic Comprehensive Plan. In this section, the population of Norton Shores is analyzed and the current and likely future growth trends are discussed.

For most of the past two decades, the City's official population count has remained relatively constant.

To begin with, it is appropriate to determine the overall growth the City has experienced in the recent past. From its relatively rural beginnings as Norton Township, a rural Township with a population of less than 3,200 persons in 1930, the City had grown to over 22,000 by 1997.⁶ Although the community has experienced significant growth over most of the 20th century, over the past two decades, the City's official population count has remained relatively constant.

**Figure 1. City of Norton Shores
Historic Population Growth**



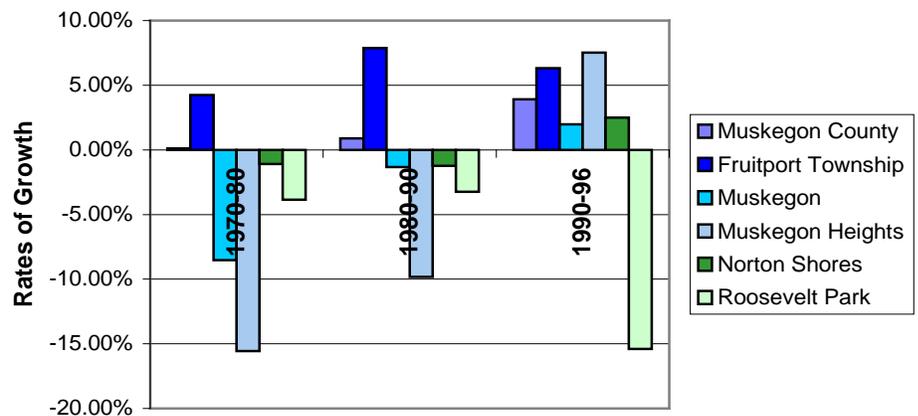
To put this stagnant rate of growth in perspective, it is also appropriate to compare the community with its neighbors. Figure 2 compares the 25-year population growth history in Norton Shores to that of other communities in western Muskegon County. All of the communities in the comparison have struggled to maintain their population base with the total County population growing by less than 1% from 1970 through 1990. (In Chapter 3, there is a discussion of the shift in the County's basic employment base and the resulting out-migration of population.) In the 1990s, however, this trend has begun to reverse. From 1990 to

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau

1996 alone, Muskegon County grew by nearly 4% and in Norton Shores, a similar trend was apparent.⁷

It should be noted that there are many reasons to believe that the 1990 Census undercounted the Norton Shores population. In fact, a block-by-block check of the 1990 Census results indicates that the City's 1990 population was actually 22,356 rather than the 21,755 reported; an error of about 2.6%.⁸ Furthermore, since Census information is typically reported by minor civil division (i.e., City, Township, etc.) and since about 5 square miles of the City must use a Spring Lake mailing address, there is reason to believe that the southern and southeastern portion of the City may have not been included in the 1990 census count.

Figure 2. Comparative Rates of Population Growth
(Source U.S. Census)



During the 1970s, most of the urban communities in the County experienced some significant loss of population, with the cities of Muskegon Heights and Muskegon leading the way with 15.5% and 8.5% losses, respectively, over the decade. At the same time, the rural parts of the County were growing steadily, with Cedar Creek, Blue Lake and Holton Townships experiencing the strongest growth, at least in terms of the rate of growth. In terms of total additional population, however, the growth in the rural portions of the County barely offset the losses in the urban communities and, on the whole, Muskegon County grew by only 163 persons from 1970 to 1980.

⁷ West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission estimates.

⁸ Williams & Works, Inc.

By the 1980s, this trend continued, although the population losses experienced by the cities in the 1970s abated somewhat. Assuming the Census figures for 1990 are accurate for the City of Norton Shores, the community's population losses in the 1980s were even more pronounced than in the 1970s. On the other hand, using the block-by-block count from the 1990 Census prepared by the Michigan Information Center ⁹ and Williams & Works, the City actually experienced an increase of 600 persons, or about 1.5% from 1980 to 1990. This may be compared with the County overall which grew by less than 1% during the same period.

Of more significance for this analysis is the fact that the City's rate of growth has accelerated significantly since 1990. In addition to independent projections, there are several secondary indicators that confirm this trend. The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMRSDC) estimates that the City has grown by about 543 persons since 1990, or by about 2.5% overall. This may be compared with a similar projection for City of Muskegon and the County overall with growth estimates of 1.97% and 3.9% respectively.

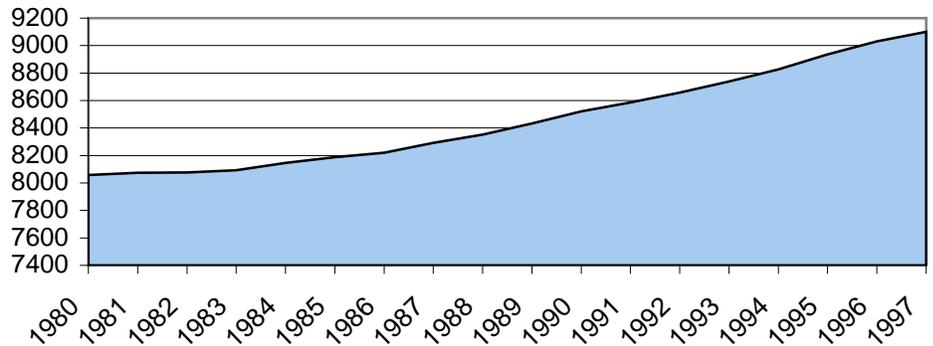
...since 1990, the City has averaged 83.3 net new housing units per year.

However, there is much evidence that the City of Norton Shores has actually started to grow even more rapidly. Since 1980, the number of net new housing units (total new housing units less units demolished) has ranged from a low of 4 in 1982 to a high of 110 in 1995. Over the 17 year period ending in 1997, the City averaged 59.8 net new housing units per year. Even more striking is the fact that since 1990, the City has averaged 83.3 net new housing units per year. Based on an average of 2.69 persons per household over this period, ¹⁰ the City should have added about 160 persons per year to its population. Again, these figures call into question the 1990 U.S. Census count.

⁹ Michigan Department of Management and Budget

¹⁰ Woods & Poole Economics, Inc., *Muskegon County Data Pamphlet, 1997.*,

Figure 3. Net Housing Units, 1980 - 1997



Source: Norton Shores Community Development Dept.

Projections

Based on an average of 2.69 persons per household over this period, the City should have added about 160 persons per year to its population.

For the purposes of this Current Assessment, statistical averaging techniques were utilized to project the City's population growth to the year 2020. These approaches are adequate to give a general sense of growth trends but they have limitations especially in areas of rapid growth or decline that may run counter to statistical trends. Furthermore, in view of the questions around the 1990 U.S. Census count, care must be taken in projecting the future based on questioned past results.

Nevertheless, these approaches do help give a sense of scale to future land use requirements as well as the demand for various public services and capital improvements. The following summarizes the projection techniques.

The Constant Proportion (or ratio) method of projecting population assumes that Norton Shores will continue to represent the same percentage of Muskegon County's projected population in the years 2000, 2010, and 2020 that it represents today. Using the population projections for Muskegon County prepared by WMSRDC, the following illustrates the results of the constant proportion method for the City of Norton Shores.

CONSTANT PROPORTION METHOD

	1996 Population *	2000 Population <u>Projection</u>	2010 Population <u>Projection</u>	2020 Population <u>Projection</u>
Muskegon County per WMSRDC	165,193	167,980	175,158	182,642
Norton Shores	22,298	22,677	23,646	24,656

Percent of County's total 1996 estimated population residing in Norton Shores = 13.5%.

* Both 1996 projections based on WMSRDC estimates.

The Growth Rate (or geometric) method projects future population growth or decline based on the rate of growth in the City in the past. Utilizing the growth rate method, the following assumes that growth in the future will occur at the same average rate as has occurred annually between 1970 and 1990. In this instance, the results of the block-by-block analysis of the 1990 Census information has been used to establish the 1990 population at 22,356. According to that data, Norton Shores grew .19% annually between 1970 and 1990.

GROWTH RATE METHOD

	Average Annual Growth Rate <u>1970-1990</u>	<u>1990*</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2020</u>
City of Norton Shores	.19%	22,356	22,784	23,221	23,666

* Per Williams & Works block-by-block analysis

The Arithmetic Method is similar to the growth rate method in that population projections are based on growth that occurred in preceding decades. This method, however, bases population growth on the overall average increase in the number of persons per year, rather than on growth rates. The following projections are based on the average increase of 160 annually between 1980 and 1996 in Norton Shores, based on WMSRDC estimates.

ARITHMETIC METHOD

	Average Annual Increase (Number of Persons)	1996 Population *	2000	2010	2020
City of Norton Shores	17	22,298	22,366	24,536	24,706

* WMSRDC estimate

The **Building Permit** method may be the most reliable projection method because it portrays the growth based on current building permit data. The City of Norton Shores has issued residential building permits for an annual average of 59.8 units over the last seventeen years (1980-1997).¹¹ Assuming that building activity will continue at this rate, this method utilizes the City’s average household size of 2.69 persons¹², to calculate the growth in population. In other words, this method says that Norton Shores will increase by about 161 persons per year.

BUILDING PERMIT METHOD

Average No Permits/Year	Pph	1996 Population *	2000	2010	2020
59.8	2.69	22,298	22,941	24,551	26,161

* Per WMSRDC

The anticipated population levels for the City using each of the population techniques are summarized on the next page. By averaging the results of these methods, it is reasonable to predict that the population will approach approximately 22,700 persons by the year 2000, 24,000 by the year 2010, and almost 24,700 by the 2020.

It is reasonable to predict that the population will approach 22,700 persons by the year 2000, 24,000 by the year 2010, and almost 24,300 by the 2020.

Each of the projection techniques illustrated here assumes that the City will continue past patterns of growth. However, growth in housing and population in Norton Shores will be impacted by many factors. These include the types and quality of housing permitted or encouraged within the City, the image of Norton Shores as a desirable place to live, the public school systems, the quality and quantity of commercial and industrial development, and the overall economic health of West Michigan.

¹¹ City of Norton Shores Community Development Department, net new housing units (i.e., new units less demolition).

¹² U.S. Census, 1990

SUMMARY POPULATION PROJECTION SUMMARY

	<u>1996</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2020</u>
Constant Prop.	22,298	22,677	23,646	24,656
Growth Rate	23,356	22,784	23,221	23,666
Arithmetic	22,298	22,366	24,536	24,706
Building Permits	<u>22,298</u>	<u>22,941</u>	<u>24,551</u>	<u>26,161</u>
Average	22,562	22,692	23,988	24,797

It should be noted that the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission has undertaken a similar exercise to project population at the local and County level through the year 2025. That analysis would bring the City's population to 23,643 by 2010 and to 24,653 by 2020. These projections appear to recognize the more rapid growth that has occurred in the City since 1990.

Age Characteristics

Comparing the age distribution of a community over time provides another opportunity to measure change. Also, an age breakdown of a community's residents helps to determine the type of housing demands and recreational facilities that may be needed. In 1990 the median age of Norton Shores residents was 36.5 years compared to the median age for the county overall of 32.7 years. The median age represents the midpoint in the range of all ages within the City and County with one-half of the population younger and one-half of the population older than the median. Typically, the median age is viewed as an appropriate measure of the overall age of the population.

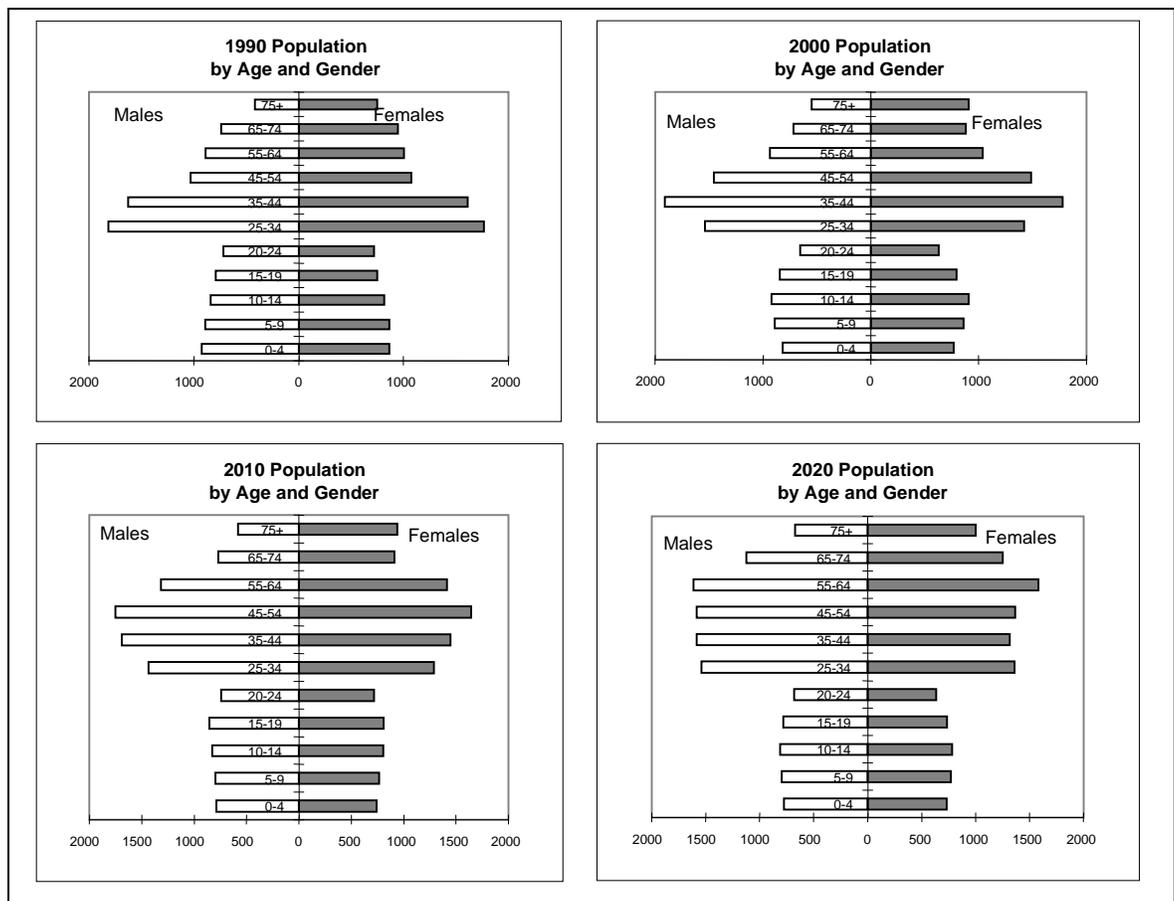
Paralleling national trends, the population of Muskegon County, the population of the City is aging.

Paralleling national trends, the population of Muskegon County and the population of the City is aging. In 1980, the median age of the County was 28.9 years. By 1990, it had risen to 32.7 years and it is expected to reach 39.5 years by the year 2020.¹³ By way of comparison, the median age for Norton Shores increased from 31.8 years in 1980 to 36.5 years in 1990. A part of this increase in median age may be accounted for by the higher home values in the City. Higher income population groups tend to be more established in their careers and, therefore, somewhat older than the rest of the population.

¹³ Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.

Figure 4 below illustrates the age of City residents by gender currently and projected into the future to the year 2020. This projection was prepared based on independent projections¹⁴ for Muskegon County adjusted by the City’s ratio of the County population. For the purposes of this Plan, this approximation provides a general sense of the scope of population change that will impact the City and it will be useful for general projections of land and housing use demand into the future.

Figure 4. Norton Shores Population Age Projections



Source: Woods & Poole Economics, Inc., Muskegon County, Michigan, 1998 Data Pamphlet, with City Age Projections prepared by Williams & Works using the ratio of City population to the larger County. Note that the age cohorts from 0 to 24 years are in five-year increments while older age cohorts are expressed in ten-year increments.

In general, it is possible to identify more uniformity in the age distribution as the population ages. The aging of the “baby boomer” generation (26 to 46 year-olds in 1990) is clearly evident and as the children of that generation continue to mature and have children, there

¹⁴ Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.

is less variance in the numbers of individuals from one cohort to the next. This greater uniformity suggests a slowing in the rate of natural growth of the City's population after the year 2020. Of course, growth through in-migration may continue and at least partially offset this trend.

The 20 to 54 years age group is important as it represents the prime wage earning population as well as the principal child rearing group. About 47.4% of the population falls in this age group in Muskegon County. A similar percentage (46.9%) of the City also falls into this category. This relatively high percentage of the population translates into family formations, the need for single-family housing stock, recreational facilities, future increases in the under 5 and 5 to 19 years age groups, and increases in retail trade.

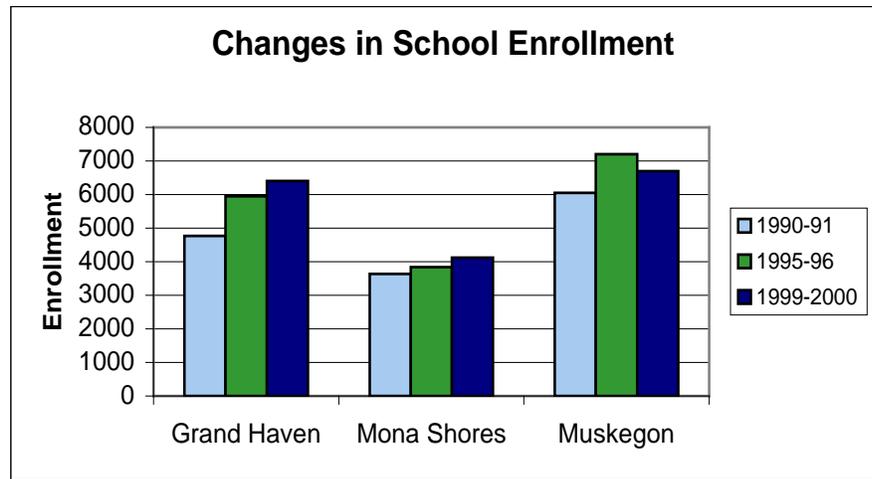
The "empty nesters" group (55 to 65 years) comprises nearly 11% of the City's residents. Persons in this age group typically have reached their peak earning potential and have higher disposable incomes. The age group of 65 and older represented nearly 15% of the City's population in 1990 and it comprised about 13% of the population in the county. By 2020, these proportions will reverse with about 16% of the City's population and about 17% of the County falling into the 65+ age category. Thus, while the City's population is aging, it is not aging as fast as that of the county.

School Districts

The quality of the local school system is generally an important consideration for families choosing a place to raise a family. In Norton Shores, residents are served by three public school systems: Mona Shores, Grand Haven and Muskegon. Map 4 on page 27 illustrates the boundaries of each district within the City of Norton Shores. Most of the heavily populated portions of the City are served by the Mona Shores and Muskegon Public School systems, while the Grand Haven Public School system incorporates most of the southern portion of the City where further growth is likely.

Figure 5 below presents the enrollment of all three districts over the period from the 1990-91 school year to the 1995-96 year.

Figure 5. Student Enrollment



Source: G.R. Metro Data Book & City of Norton Shores

Educational Attainment

The table below compares the educational attainment of residents of Norton Shores, Muskegon County, and the State. As shown, the residents of Norton Shores (25 years and older) rank higher in the percentage of high school graduates and especially in persons with a bachelor’s degree or higher than the County or State as a whole. These significant levels of educational attainment typically indicate a community of professionals that attain better paying jobs. This is verified in Chapter 4.

The residents of Norton Shores rank higher in the percentage of high school graduates and especially in persons with a bachelor’s degree or higher than the County or State as a whole.

Education Attainment

The City of Norton Shores, Muskegon County, and the State of Michigan
1990

	High School Graduate (%)	Bachelor’s Degree or Higher (%)
Norton Shores	80.8%	20.4%
Muskegon County	74.2%	11.1%
Michigan	76.8%	17.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Insert Map 4 - School Districts

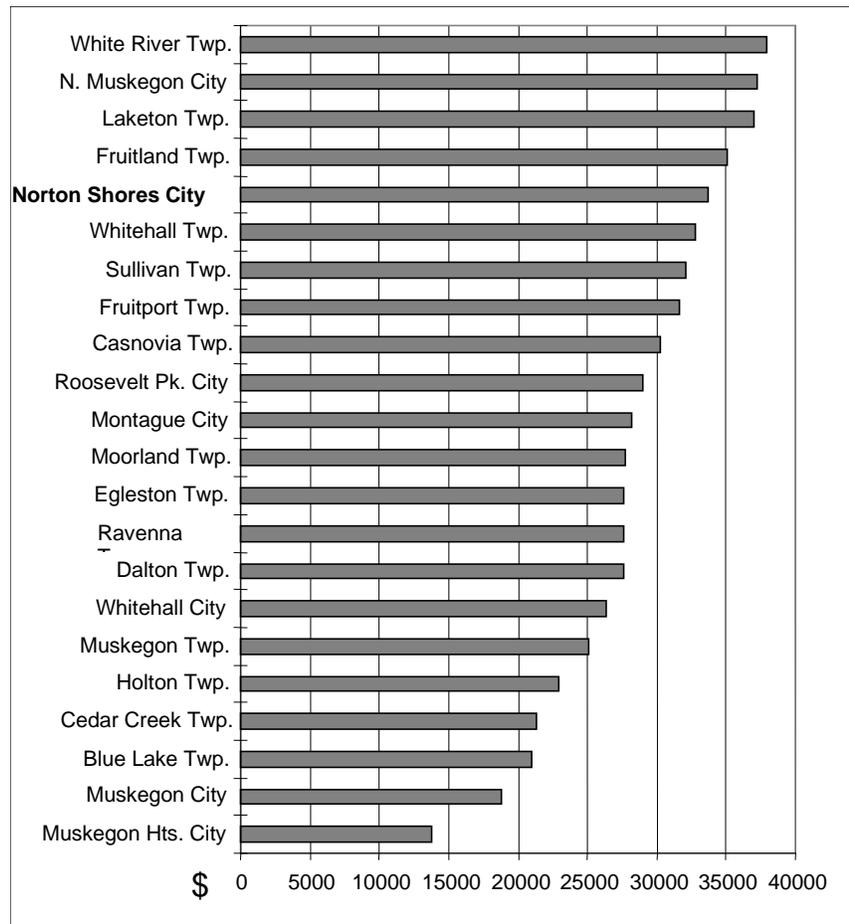
CHAPTER 4. INCOME, HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An important measure of the overall vitality of a community is its economic health. Incomes and job growth are key indicators in this area and this chapter seeks to evaluate the City’s position relative to other communities.

Income

The median household income in the City in 1980 was \$20,906 and by 1990 it had increased to \$33,646, placing the City above the median for Muskegon County which was \$25,617. For perspective, these figures should be compared to the other jurisdictions in the County. Norton Shores ranks fifth in the County among its twenty-two jurisdictions.

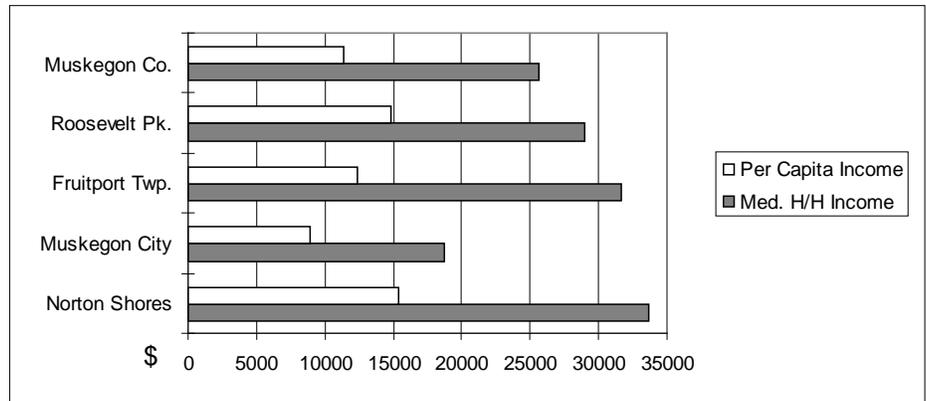
Figure 6. Comparison of 1990 Median Household Incomes



Source: US Census, Summary Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics

The median household income in the City of Muskegon in 1990 was \$18,748, while in Fruitport Township it was \$31,626. Figure 7 illustrates median household income and per capita income in the City of Norton Shores as compared with that of the County and other jurisdictions in the western part of the County.

Figure 7 Comparison of 1990 Median Household (H/H) and Per Capita Incomes



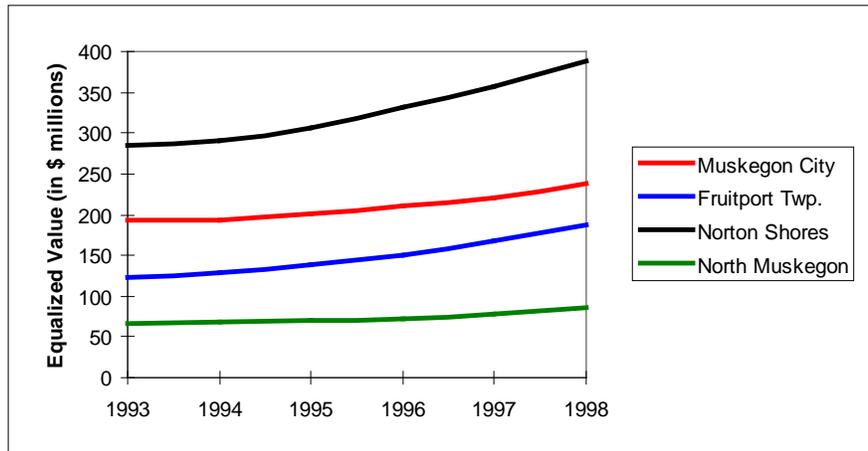
Source: US Census, Summary Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics

The relatively higher incomes of City residents have important implications for the community relating to the development of land use and growth management goals. Generally, higher income populations invest relatively greater sums in housing and expect higher levels of service from their local government.

Housing

The attractiveness of Norton Shores is evident in the pace of new home construction within the community. This includes homes in platted subdivisions and condominiums and on scattered parcels in rural areas. Residential building permit activity in the City has risen steadily for the past ten years. Figure 3 in Chapter 2 reflects the trends of the past seventeen years, indicating a total of about 1,000 net new single family residential building permits, for an annual average of about 60 permits per year. However, in recent years, (i.e., 1994 through 1997) the pace of new development has increased, averaging over 90 permits per year. Figure 8 on the next page compares the growth in housing values in Norton Shores with similar figures for the neighboring communities.

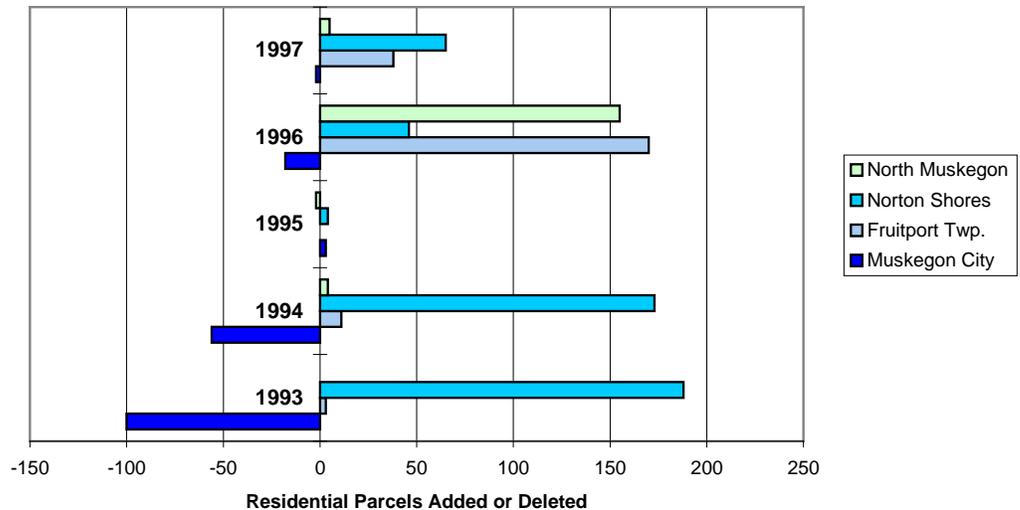
Figure 8. Growth in Residential Valuation



Source: Muskegon County Equalization Reports, 1993 -- 1998

A further indicator of growth in the residential land uses in the community is the number of new parcels established each year for new residences. From the period 1993 through 1997, a total of 2,805 new residential parcels were added in Muskegon County. Of these, 476, or 17% were added in Norton Shores. For perspective, it is important to note that the City comprised 14% of the county's population. Figure 9 compares the numbers of new residential parcels added among the City and its neighbors.

Figure 9. Comparison of New Residential Parcels Established



Source: Muskegon County Equalization Reports, 1993 -- 1998

In addition to housing values, it is appropriate to compare the proportion of the local tax base made up of various types of property. The following table provides such a comparison for the City and its neighbors and for the county overall for the current year.

Comparison of 1998 Real Property Valuation ¹⁵

Jurisdiction	Agricultural		Commercial		Industrial		Residential	
	TCV (millions)	% of Total	TCV (millions)	% of Total	TCV (millions)	% of Total	TCV (millions)	% of Total
Norton Shores	\$7.103	1%	151.096	15%	58.829	6%	787.249	78%
Muskegon City	.184	<1%	205.908	23%	204.247	23%	478.159	54%
Fruitport Twp	8.556	2%	53.077	12%	3.88	1%	374.731	85%
Roosevelt Pk.	0		42.270	29%	3.712	3%	100.380	69%
Muskegon Co.	119.136	2%	756.769	14%	359.411	7%	4056.770	77%

The base for the City of Norton Shores is approximately proportional to that of the County. That is, slightly more than three-fourths (78%) of the community's tax base is comprised of residential properties, as compared to 77% county-wide. In addition, industrial and commercial properties are similarly representative of the overall county. Looking at nearby jurisdictions, some show greater emphasis on commercial and industrial properties.

This balance (or lack of balance) in the local tax base will be important in future land use decisions and municipal revenue-expense projections for both the City and local school districts, as residential properties tend to require government and school services valued in excess of the property tax revenues they generate. Typically, residential uses require between \$1.10 and \$1.30 in municipal services (i.e., schools, police, fire, roads, parks, etc.) for every \$1.00 contributed in tax base. ¹⁶

Employment

Consistent with the income levels in the City, occupations among its residents tend to fall most heavily in the "white collar" professions and technical crafts. Positions in these categories tend to be slightly higher

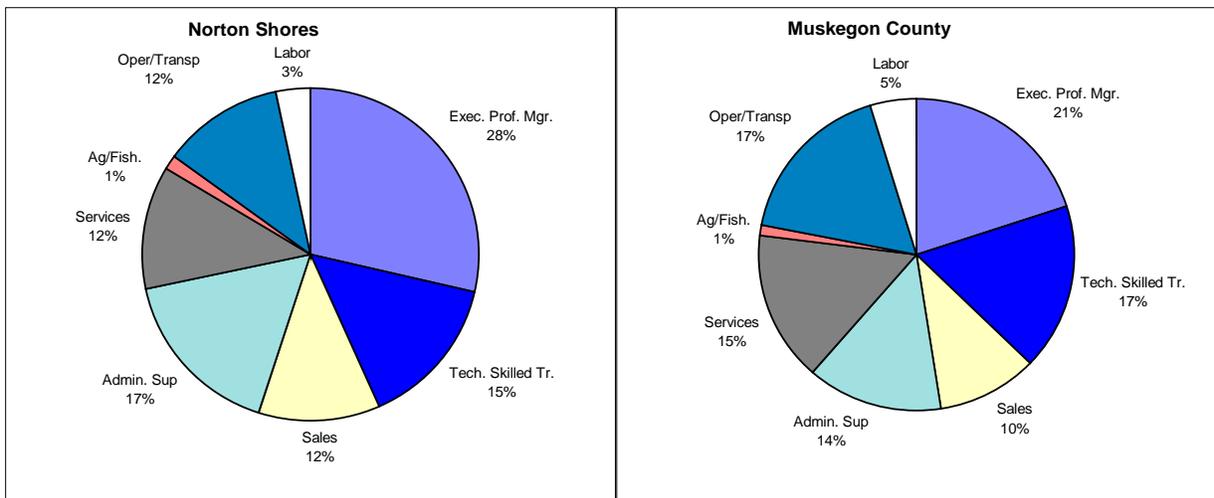
¹⁵ Muskegon County Equalization Department, 1998 Equalization Report, April 28, 1998

¹⁶ Thomas, Holly L. *The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation*, Planning & Zoning News, January, 1993.

paid. This is also consistent with the higher education levels found in the community as compared to the balance of the County.

Figure 10, below compares the mix of occupations in the City to those found in the larger community in Muskegon County. For ease of comparison, the employment categories reflected in the Census report have been combined into general headings. This is useful for general comparative purposes, but for a more detailed analysis of employment in the region, the reader is referred to the Overall Economic Development Program Annual Report published by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission.

Figure 10. Comparison of Occupations



Source: U.S. Census, 1990

Economic Development

About 1,185 acres, or 7.5% of the land in Norton Shores (as a whole) is dedicated to industrial and commercial land uses. In terms of developed land (residential, commercial, institutional, etc.), industrial and commercial uses represent over 16% of the land cover in the City. With its proximity to the intersection of US-31 and I-96 and as the home of Muskegon County Airport, the City has attracted significant commercial and industrial investment. The City makes judicious use of the tax abatement provisions and the Industrial Facilities Tax available under P.A. 198 to attract industrial investment. Map 6 in Chapter 4 (page 41) illustrates the location of significant areas of growth within the City.

The following table presents the top employers in the community and their product or service:

<u>Company</u>	<u>Product or Service</u>	<u>Approximate No. of Employees</u>
Meijer	Retail	650
Knoll Group	Office furniture	585
Mona Shores Schools	Public education	560
Structural Concepts	Display cases	247
Kaydon Industries	Bearings	200
ACEMCO	Manufacturing	200
Quality Stores	Corporate offices	200
D&W Food Center	Retail	150
Burnside Manufacturing	Metal stamping	150
Enterprise Brass	Petroleum Equipment	120
General Dynamics	Heavy equipment	120
City of Norton Shores	Local government	101
Almond Corporation	Metal finishing	100
K-Mart	Retail	100
Air Master	Laboratory furniture	40
Tholstrup Dairies	Dairy	30
Ground Heaters	Heating equipment	20

From 1990 to 1995, employment in Muskegon County has grown by about 0.85% per year, according to the Overall Economic Development Program Annual Report, prepared by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission. The Muskegon region has long been seen as a major manufacturing community, with several heavy manufacturing facilities. However, from 1990 to 1995, jobs in manufacturing declined by about 9.5%, even as overall employment expanded. This reflects a larger decline in base industry manufacturing throughout the midwest.

On the other hand, the City of Norton Shores has continued to see expansion in industrial land uses both along the Grand Haven Road corridor including the Norton Industrial Center and the Norton Shores Industrial Park and the Airport Business Park. The City offers excellent access to the expressway system with the new interchange at Sternberg Road as well as the important access to air transportation. These important amenities and more modern facilities should help the City to retain and expand its higher-wage jobs even as manufacturing employment declines elsewhere in the region.

In its Overall Economic Development Program Annual Report for 1998, the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) identified four “Regional Development Hot Spots” in the five county region that is the focus of the agency. Of these, three are located within the City of Norton Shores. They are the Lakeshore Market Place, the Airport Business Park and the Grand Haven Road Corridor. The proximity of the City to the I-96 and US-31 expressway network and to the Muskegon County Airport has positioned the City to attract significant business investment.¹⁷

¹⁷ WMSRDC, 1998 *Overall Economic Development Program Annual Report*, June 1998

CHAPTER 5. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Land cover in the City of Norton Shores spans the entire range from sensitive environmental features to intense urban development.

The total land area of the City of Norton Shores is about 15,700 acres divided into 21 full sections and portions of 6 sections along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Norton Shores is located on the southern edge of the Muskegon metropolitan area, contiguous to the City of Muskegon as well as to the cities of Roosevelt Park and Muskegon Heights. The City is also adjacent to Fruitport Township (east), and Spring Lake Township (south) in Ottawa County.

Land Cover

The land cover in Norton Shores is reflected in Map 5 on page 37. Map 5 is an Existing Land Cover map based on computerized mapping prepared by the Michigan Resources Information System (MIRIS), as updated in 1997 by the Water Resources Institute at Grand Valley State University. It is important to note that the map was prepared from aerial photography and reflects composite groupings of land uses categories.

The land uses in the City have been consolidated into nine categories. The allocation of the acreage for each category has been estimated as well:

LAND COVER CATEGORY	
<u>CLASSIFICATION</u>	<u>LAND COVER DESCRIPTION</u>
Residential (4,944 acres, 31.5%)	Including single- and multi-family dwellings
Mobile Home Park (47 acres, 0.3%)	Mobile home parks with single and double-wide units
Commercial (585 acres, 3.7%)	Neighborhood scale commercial and highway commercial areas
Industrial (600 acres, 3.8%)	Industrial, utilities, assembly manufacturing
Institutional (343 acres, 2.3%)	Colleges, schools
Airport (717 acres, 4.6%)	Muskegon County International Airport
Agricultural (1,389 acres, 8.8%)	Cropland, orchards, permanent pasture, other agriculture
Water/Wetlands (1,293 acres, 8.2%)	Lakes and streams, wetlands

Open/Wooded (5,793 acres, 36.8%) Fallow fields, woods, camps and park lands, beaches

The most predominate current land cover is open and wooded lands closely followed by a substantial amount of residential lands. The open and wooded areas account for 5,793 acres or 36.8% of the City’s existing land cover. Most these areas can be found in the southern third of the City. This is consistent with the fact that the southern third is the least developed portion of the City. However, according to City staff, this is also the area receiving the most attention for potential residential development. It can be expected that the amount of this wooded and open area will dwindle if future residential developments do not preserve these features. It should also be noted that the “open area” adjacent to the Lake Michigan shoreline consists of dunes and beaches as well as the PJ Hoffmaster State Park.

The most predominate current land cover is open and wooded lands closely followed by a substantial amount of residential lands.

Residential development dominates the northern half of the City accounting for 31% or 4,944 acres of the existing land cover. The market place in Norton Shores is producing large-scale high quality subdivisions. In addition, much of the shoreline of Mona Lake has become fully developed with residential land uses. Examples of recent significant residential developments (since 1995) include the subdivisions of Norton Hills Estates, Timberbrook, Evergreen Estates, and Forest Park Hills (Phase 8). These four developments added 52 new residential sites to the City.

The City is home to six mobile home parks. The highest concentration of mobile homes is situated among four parks located in the northeast corner of the City. Those parks are Chateau Norton Shores, The Oaks, Nomad and Hillcrest. Two other mobile parks, both small in size, are located in Norton Shores; The Dunes is located southwest of the Sherman/Lincoln intersection and Pontaluna Shores is located south of Pontaluna, just west of US-31. Overall, mobile home parks make up about 0.3% of the City’s land cover.

Numerous commercial land uses are found in Norton Shores, with the majority found along Henry Street, north of Seminole Road, on Grand Haven Road north of Hile Road and along the northern side of Seaway/Airline Drive. Other significant commercial uses are located in close proximity to the US-31 interchanges at Sternberg and Pontaluna Roads. Commercial uses in Norton Shores account for 585 acres or 3.7% of the land uses, and include a healthy mixture of both local and regionally oriented services and facilities.

Insert map 5 existing land cover

Industrial land uses are found west of US-31 adjacent to Grand Haven Road, extending between the interchanges of Sternberg and Pontaluna Roads. The largest of these uses are trucking, delivery and warehousing operations. Also, industrial land uses are found within the Airport Business Park near the Ellis/Grand Haven Road area. Overall, approximately 3.8% or 600 acres is classified as industrial.

It is important to note that the Nugent Sand Company's mining facility, also classified as an industrial use at this point in time, is located in the northwest corner of the City. The future reclamation and re-use of the subject property has not yet been determined. However, it is anticipated that this area may evolve into an exclusive single family residential development.

The City of Norton Shores has several institutional land uses throughout the City, including school facilities such as the Mona Shores High School and Junior High, Ross Park Elementary, Lincoln Park Elementary, Churchill Elementary, Porter Elementary, Michigan Dunes Montessori and the Mona Shores Public Schools administration building. Examples of other institutional uses include the Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference Center located along Lake Harbor Road south of the Mona Lake channel, St. Francis Church/School located along McCracken Street, south of Plainfield Road and the City of Muskegon Heights Water Treatment Plant. Overall, 2.3% (343 acres) of the City's existing land cover is considered institutional.

A major and significant land use in the City is the Muskegon County Airport. Consuming about 717 acres of land cover, this regional transportation facility provides essential services to the numerous nearby commercial and industrial corridors. This facility will continue to support and in some cases attract business and industry to Norton Shores.

Agricultural uses account for 1,389 acres of land in the City. A majority of the City's agricultural base is located in the southeast quadrant. The agricultural uses are scattered on 10 to 80 acre parcels. Although agriculture accounts for only 8.8% of Norton Shores land use cover, these areas are important to supporting the rural atmosphere in that portion of the City.

The remaining land cover consist of lakes, streams, and wetlands accounting for 1,293 acres or 8.2% of the land in the City. Chapter 1 provides a description of these natural features.

GROWTH AREAS

The Growth Areas Map (Map 6 on page 41), illustrates the top ten commercial/office and/or industrial projects (based on construction value) each year over the last nine years (1990-1999). These projects include new facilities as well as remodeling or additions to existing buildings.

As shown on Map 6 (page 41), commercial and industrial growth has occurred throughout the City yet the highest concentrations of growth can be narrowed to five corridors (numbered on the map). The following provides a brief discussion of the activity in each corridor.

Corridor 1 is located in the northwest corner of the City just west of the City of Roosevelt Park. This area includes shopping, service, and office uses. A few of the significant projects in this corridor include the Glenside Shopping Center, J&M Machine, and the Knoll Group additions.

Corridor 2 is situated in the small stretch of Norton Shores between the Cities of Roosevelt Park and Muskegon Heights. Further, this corridor extends south along Henry Street where it meets Seminole Road. This area has a long history as a commercial district in the community and yet has witnessed several significant new projects over the past eight years.

The commercial uses in this corridor can best be characterized as serving to both local a regional or “passer-by” traffic. Examples of notable projects include Old Kent Bank, Donato’s Pizza, Meijer, Camera Shop, Billy the Printer, Kmart, Art Van (remodel), Maple Grove Office Center, and the Norton Shores Medical Center. Most of these projects took place in the early 1990’s.

The third growth corridor reflects growth in the Airport Industrial Park. The growth can be characterized as light industrial/office uses. A few of the projects included the airport terminal remodeling, HGI Headquarters, and Structural Concepts. These projects took place in the mid 1990’s.

The fourth growth corridor lies just northeast of the Sternberg Road/US-31 interchange. Most of this growth occurred in the mid 1990’s in sync with the construction of the Sternberg Road interchange. The projects in this corridor reflect highway commercial intended to attract customers regionally. For example, most of these projects are

located in the Lakeshore Market Place facility including Toys-R-Us, Elder Beerman, Hobby Lobby, Barnes and Nobel and, TJ Maxx. Other significant projects in this corridor include Hooters restaurant and Menards.

The fifth growth corridor, which is the largest, includes numerous industrial facilities that have been built throughout the 1990's. This corridor is generally located northwest of the Pontaluna Road/US-31 interchange or between Pontaluna Road and Mt. Garfield Road, east of Grand Haven Road.

Examples of notable projects in this corridor include facilities for Industrial Metal Cleaning, Grooters, Wolverine Power, Concord Plastics, Gary Smith Industrial, Air Masters, and Flairwood Industries.

Insert Map 6 - Growth Areas

CHAPTER 6. TRANSPORTATION

CONNECTIONS

Transportation linkages between the City of Norton Shores and the remainder of the community are quite good, however, like any growing community, each year the roads become increasingly congested at peak periods. The arterial road network is laid out in a traditional grid pattern on section and half-section line intervals, with numerous collector and local streets adjoining as appropriate. Internal circulation within subdivisions and residential neighborhoods is generally accomplished on paved and fully improved streets.

The community is directly influenced by US-31 which parallels the City's eastern border. US-31 is one of the most heavily traveled facilities in the area as it is the primary north-south connection between the Holland and Muskegon metropolitan areas. Regionally, US-31 currently exists as a limited access north-south expressway primarily traversing the Lake Michigan shoreline communities. In fact, US-31 extends from the Michigan-Indiana border (South Bend area) to the Mackinaw Bridge.

Currently, the Michigan Department of Transportation is studying the possibility of re-aligning US-31 through the Grand Haven and Spring Lake areas to the south in Ottawa County. The objective of the realignment would be to eliminate the "bottle neck" situation that occurs along the roadway as it becomes an urban arterial in the City of Grand Haven with frequent interruptions from the Grand River drawbridge. Should this improvement ultimately take place, regional traffic patterns will adjust and likely impact land uses in the City.

In the City of Norton Shores, interchanges with US-31 exist at Sherman Blvd., Pontaluna and Sternberg Roads and at Interstate 96 (I-96) in the northeast corner of the City. This connection at I-96 also provides easy access for east/west travel to and from the Grand Rapids metropolitan area, and Lansing and Detroit beyond.

TRAFFIC

Traffic volumes are an important indicator of growth and development. These are reported as two-way average daily traffic (ADT) counts as reported by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development

Commission. These counts were taken from 1994 through 1996 and are felt to reflect current traffic volumes. Of course, as development increases in the City, these volumes are likely to be somewhat greater.

The most heavily traveled street segments are Grand Haven Road north of Hile Street (21,541, ADT - 4/11/96) and Grand Haven Road south of Hile Street (21,409, ADT - 4/11/96). High volumes are found along Henry Street, Norton Street, and Airline Road as well.

It should be understood, that ADT volumes are averaged for a 24-hour day and a more detailed analysis of peak-hour traffic flow would be required to gain a complete understanding of traffic volumes. For the purposes of this report, however, ADT volumes are felt to be an adequate measure of volume despite the fact that they may mask some localized or periodic congestion problems. A more detailed analysis will likely reveal “rush-hour” peak loads in some locations that are beyond road capacity.

Increased volumes of traffic along arterials may be anticipated with further expansion of the housing stock. A typical single family residence generates about 9.55 trips per day.¹⁸ The population of the City will increase by about 2,000 persons by nearly 2020, and sources project that an average household in 2020 will consist of 2.53 persons.¹⁹ With these simple “rule-of-thumb” standards, it is possible to project over 7,500 additional car trips per day will be generated in the City. These estimates do not take into account additional trips emanating from outside the City and either passing through to destinations elsewhere or destined for local facilities.

MASS TRANSIT

Mass transit in Muskegon County is provided through the Muskegon Area Transit System (MATS). Administered through the County, MATS offers three services; line haul, demand-response, and a trolley system.

The *line haul* service consists of the large buses that travel a daily scheduled route. In Norton Shores this type of service is limited. Specifically, this service runs three routes which only skirt the northern fringes of the City. Given the location of primary residential corridors

¹⁸ Institute of Traffic Engineers, *Trip Generation*, 5th Edition, 1991.

¹⁹ Woods & Poole Economics, Inc., *Muskegon County, MI 1997 Data Pamphlet*, 1997

in the City, it appears that the number of users of this service from Norton Shores is minimal.

The *demand-response* system is a service that transports seniors and the disabled county-wide based on specific user request. The County has two vehicles that provide this service. While this service covers the entire City, it is limited to a specific, needs-based clientele.

The *trolley* service, known as the “South Trolley,” provides transport via routes throughout the City of Norton Shores. Although this service is the most extensive into the City, it operates on a seasonal basis only.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Commercial air passenger service is available through the Muskegon County Airport located near the center of the City of Norton Shores. Daily service is provided to and from Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee. The airlines that operate out of Muskegon are United Express, Midwest Express, and Northwest.

According to the statistics provided by Airport officials, in 1997 there were a total of 85,645 flight operations (i.e. take offs and landings). Of these 10,327 were commercial flights carrying 65,390 passengers. In comparison, since 1996 the total number of flight operations increased by only 19 while the total number of passengers serviced decreased by 2%.

The following provides a breakdown of the flight operations in 1997:

Local	28,416
Itinerant	41,118
Commercial	10,327
Military	<u>5,784</u>
Total	85,645

In terms of development adjacent to the airport, the City has zoned this area Special Use District, SUD. The provisions adopted for this district allow the City to evaluate development on a case by case basis for compatibility with the airport facilities and operation. In addition, both Muskegon County and the Federal Aviation Administration are involved with review and approval of applications for development within a certain proximity to the airport.

According to the Muskegon County Airport Master Plan Update, expansion plans over the next 20 years are limited. Specifically, the Plan identifies the acquisition of about 135 acres of land to accommodate any needed expansions to meet Federal Aviation Administration requirements. It is important to note that the Airport's Land Acquisition Program assumes a "willing seller" approach subject to negotiations with the property owners. These lands are directly adjacent to the existing airport property lines. The nature of the lands in question range from vacant to single family residential.

Other future improvements to the airport facilities consist of internal projects such as expansions of the terminal building, parking lots and service roads.

ROAD IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

According to the Year 2020 Long Range Plan for Muskegon County (November, 1997), several road improvement projects are planned as funding becomes available. The Long Range Plan includes road improvements and a separate list for enhancements. Specifically, road improvements consist of such projects as lane widening and reconstruction; road enhancements include projects specifically for the augmentation of the surface transportation system. These enhancement projects range from bike paths to historical preservation to landscaping and scenic roadway preservation.

The following lists those improvement enhancement projects included in the Plan. These projects are based on capacity deficiencies and local concerns.

IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

<u>Road</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Improvement</u>	<u>Status</u>
Grand Haven	Sternberg to Pontaluna	widen to 3 lanes	Complete
McCracken	Seminole to Bonneville	widen to 3 lanes	Complete
Business Park Blvd	Sternberg to Ellis	new 4 lanes	Complete
Porter	W. of Grand Haven	new 2 lanes	Complete
Grand Haven	Seaway to Vick	widen to 5 lanes	Planned
Sternberg	Martin to Lake Harbor	new 2 lane roadway	Planned
Airline	Merriam to Getty	Resurface	Planned
Harvey	Mt. Garfield to Sternberg	Widen to 5 lanes	Planned
Sherman Blvd.	Glenside to Lincoln	Reconstruction	Planned ('01)
Henry Street	Hile to Porter	Reconstruction	Planned ('01)
Henry Street	Porter to Pontaluna	Reconstruction	Planned ('02)
Airline Drive	Getty to Shettler	Reconstruction	Proposed ('02)

ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

<u>Road</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Enhancement</u>	<u>Status</u>
Hendrick	Henry to Lake Harbor	add paved shoulders	Planned
Forest Park	Henry to Lake Harbor	add paved shoulders	Planned
Lincoln St.	Sherman to McCracken	add paved shoulders	Planned

SECTION III. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

This section of the Plan builds on the Community Profile presented in Section II and extends the Community's vision into the future. The Future Land Use Plan begins with the broad policy foundation upon which the Plan is formed. This foundation is found in Chapter 7 which includes the goals of the City and the objectives or milestones that support them. From the general goal and objective statements, the Plan examines three important issues that may impact growth and development in the City. These areas:

- ◆ Utilities and Growth Management
- ◆ Transportation and Land Use, and
- ◆ Land Use Conflicts in the Lakeside Manor Neighborhood

Based on the goals and objectives of the City and the analysis of these three key issues, the future land use plan is presented in Section III. That section includes the Future Land Use Map (Map 12 on page 92), a description of the general land uses planned for the City and more detailed sub-area plans for the Grand Haven Road Corridor and the East Broadway Neighborhood. Finally, this section concludes with a series of implementation strategies that outline a course of action to realize the vision of this Plan.

CHAPTER 7. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals are intended to describe a desirable end state or the condition of the City about twenty-five years into the future.

As a part of the effort to develop this Plan, the City of Norton Shores undertook a community-wide effort to establish a broadly-held consensus about the preferred future of the community. A study team comprised of nearly seventy community members participated in a two-year process to aid the Planning Commission in the completion of the Plan and to serve as a “sounding board” for the Plan’s goals, objectives and strategies. In addition, a community futuring session was held to identify and rank the various land use “opportunities and threats” facing the City.

The result of these activities is a series of nine broad goal statements each supported by more specific objectives. This Plan is founded on the policies outlined in the following statements. The goals are intended to describe a desirable end state or condition of the City about twenty-five years into the future. They are intentionally general but all are felt to be attainable through concerted effort. The objective statements tend to be more specific and may be regarded as milestones in the journey to achieve the larger goal.

The following statements set forth the fundamental goals of the City of Norton Shores Comprehensive Plan. These goals describe the community in 20 to 25 years.

A. NATURAL FEATURES PRESERVATION

GOAL. The essential natural features in the City of Norton Shores will contribute to the community’s character. Its undisturbed woodlands, shoreline, wetlands and lakes, and the natural elements carefully integrated within its developed neighborhoods will contribute to the quality of life for city residents. In return, the community’s commitment to its natural features will be reflected in effective measures to preserve, improve and enhance its lakes, streams, groundwater, woodlands and wildlife habitat.

OBJECTIVES

1. Prepare an inventory of important public and private natural features in the community, identify the valued characteristics, likely threats and the relative priority among the various natural assets.

2. Establish systems to monitor the viability of natural features and to control and limit development in affected areas.
3. Establish and strengthen cooperative and supportive relationships with neighboring communities to protect natural features.
4. Build and strengthen relationships with state and federal agencies to further the community's goals for the protection of natural features.
5. Establish and continually strengthen a community consensus to support rational growth management policies.

B. ECONOMIC GROWTH

GOAL. The economic vitality of the City of Norton Shores will be assured through a rational and sequential pattern of land uses that promote a range of quality job opportunities and clean and desirable development. An on-going commitment to renew and redevelop will assure a stable tax base and the formation of a strong core identity for the City within the regional context of West Michigan.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop an inventory of important economic assets and mechanisms to strengthen them.
2. Evaluate existing zoning for its impact on economic development and develop appropriate amendments to foster desired investment.
3. Develop and implement mechanisms to evaluate planned and proposed development for its impacts on the economic health of the community.
4. Define the community's core and develop and implement mechanisms to establish and strengthen that core area.

C. PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY CENTER

GOAL. The quality of life for Norton Shores' residents will be enhanced through a combination of public and private recreation facilities and activities that serve the social and recreational needs of all. A community center with places for social activities, recreational

facilities (e.g., pool) and programming to meet the needs of all, a system of bike and pedestrian paths, public access points to the area's natural features and a community-wide network of parks and open spaces will be the key elements of the City's recreational framework.

OBJECTIVES

1. Create an inventory of the significant recreational assets of the City and determine an appropriate and sustainable level of public use for each. As a part of this inventory, identify key sites and appropriate mechanisms to acquire public title or easements for their continued use.
2. Maintain and continually update the City's Recreation Plan to prioritize needs, mark progress toward full implementation and to position the City for available financial support.
3. Develop and implement a plan for a community center with places for social activities, recreational facilities (e.g., pool) and programming
4. Develop and implement a plan to establish a system of bike and pedestrian paths, public access points to the area's natural features and a community-wide network of parks and open spaces.
5. Build and strengthen community consensus concerning recreation and the public role in providing the necessary facilities.
6. Strengthen ties with the local school districts to incorporate school facilities, including playgrounds and open space, within the broader recreation network.

D. PLANNING, ZONING & GROWTH MANAGEMENT

GOAL. Land uses in Norton Shores will be arranged to protect open and green areas, to foster an appropriate measure of commercial and industrial expansion within defined areas, to encourage a diverse range of housing types and cultural backgrounds, and to continually improve and enhance the aesthetic qualities of the City and its neighborhoods. Land use decisions will be made in accord with a living Comprehensive Plan and will be reached with broad community involvement and support.

OBJECTIVES

1. Evaluate the Zoning Ordinance and develop needed amendments and adjustments to further the goals of the Plan.
2. Establish incentives for development patterns that support the City's goals and disincentives for patterns that encourage sprawl.
3. Develop an inventory of infill opportunities and tools to encourage investment and reuse of underutilized properties
4. Develop tools to foster "starter" homes.
5. Create an informed and educated community concerning the advantages of managed growth.
6. Build and strengthen relationships with local school districts to coordinate capital investment and development opportunities.
7. Foster and maintain a community commitment to continuous improvement and to re-energize the Plan.

E. PUBLIC SERVICES AND SAFETY

GOAL. The residents and businesses of Norton Shores will enjoy a safe and efficient community with public safety and public works services provided by appropriately staffed and equipped agencies. Public safety services will be delivered with an emphasis on risk reduction and prevention and public works services will emphasize efficient reuse and recycling. All necessary community services will be founded on an adequate and stable tax base.

OBJECTIVES.

1. Develop and implement standards for new development that balance public safety, efficiency, livability and aesthetics.
2. Provide continuous training for staff to build skills in all key areas.
3. Develop and implement a program of community involvement in public safety and service activities to strengthen neighborhoods and communication channels.
4. Create an informed and educated community concerning the challenges facing local government.

F. REGIONAL COOPERATION

GOAL. Norton Shores will play a role of regional leadership in promoting cooperation and mutual support between and among the communities and school districts of West Michigan to strengthen the entire region. Appropriate consolidation of services will be undertaken to provide the citizens of the region with the most responsive and efficient services possible.

OBJECTIVES.

1. Inventory existing relationships with local, regional and state units of government and evaluate the City's role and the effectiveness of the relationship.
2. Maintain continuous and active participation in regional activities, capital improvements, economic development, land use and transportation planning.
3. Continually seek common goals and cooperative approaches to meet them.
4. Strengthen cooperative relationships between City and all schools – public, private, K-12 and higher education and seek opportunities to build on mutual interests.

G. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

GOAL. A safe and efficient system of roadways, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian connections will serve the citizens of Norton Shores. This system will include effective linkages between and among neighborhoods and with shopping and employment areas for walkers and bicyclists, for the private auto and for public transportation. In addition, the City's connections with the rest of the nation will be enhanced through improved interchanges with the expressways and through balanced growth of air service coordinated with the land use goals of this Plan.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop enhanced connections with the rest of the nation through improved interchanges

2. Expand involvement in airport master planning with the Muskegon County Airport to balance growth of air service with land use goals.
3. Define and evaluate trade-offs between and among transportation improvements and land use and development goals.
4. Expand cooperation with MDOT to monitor progress on the US-31 bypass, improved Pontaluna Road interchange and other significant regional roadway improvements.

H. HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOODS & COMMUNITY

GOAL. The neighborhoods of Norton Shores will help shape the City's identity through strong community values and a deep sense of pride in the City.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop tools to foster a range of housing types including "starter" homes for young families, efficient and attractive housing for seniors and solid neighborhoods for the area's professionals.
2. Expand programs to renew and improve existing housing and pursue funding to renew areas that require attention.
3. Define the aesthetic values for City neighborhoods and develop vehicles to strengthen them.
4. Strengthen code enforcement measures to assure safe, sanitary and pleasing neighborhoods.
5. Provide support to aid and strengthen neighborhood associations.
6. Implement a process to celebrate successful neighborhood-building efforts.

I. GOVERNMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE & FINANCE

GOAL. The citizens of Norton Shores and their elected and appointed leaders will share a covenant based on a commitment to the finest quality services delivered efficiently and effectively in exchange for

citizen investment in the affairs of government and in the revenue base necessary to maintain those services. The community will expect efficiency and innovation and the use of proven approaches to service delivery and will support a diverse mix of land uses to provide the required tax base needed for the continued economic health of the community.

OBJECTIVES.

1. Develop and implement a program to educate citizens concerning the challenges of local government and to build consensus building and communication within the community.
2. Continually encourage citizen involvement in the affairs of the City.
3. Provide assistance to strengthen listening skills among City personnel.
4. Develop and implement a long-term financial plan and capital improvements plan for the City coordinated with and supportive of the City's Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives.
5. Continually evaluate services needed and most effective delivery approaches.

CHAPTER 8. TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

This Chapter examines the growing demand being placed on the road system in Norton Shores and identifies the implications of this transportation service necessity in terms of land use and the goals and objectives of the City. It recommends an approach for incorporation into the City's updated Comprehensive Plan.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION.

The City of Norton Shores is blessed with both natural and manmade amenities that make life in the City attractive and enjoyable. Unfortunately, the physical location of these features present design and engineering considerations that greatly challenge road planning. For example, Mona Lake bisects the City and makes north-south commuting difficult. Moreover, the Muskegon County Airport just south of the lake hinders east-west mobility and prevents the possibility of a third, major, north-south connection.

The City is bisected by Mona Lake and the Muskegon County Airport, both of which constrain mobility within the community.

When considering the big picture, these features have also worked positively to manage growth in the area. As Muskegon's southern neighbor, Norton Shores offers desirable residential and business opportunities for those wishing to locate in the Muskegon Metro-area. To date, the majority of development has occurred north of Mona Lake or on the southeastern edge of the City where transportation connections to Muskegon and elsewhere in the region are good.

Circulation pattern improvements in the northern tier are limited by development which is nearly built-out and the jurisdictional boundaries of the City. Roosevelt Park and Muskegon Heights control most east-west connections north of the lake. This restricts the range of improvements that may be considered unilaterally by the City.

However, it is believed that as time passes, commuting patterns will reflect more residents working outside the Muskegon Metropolitan area, placing greater burden on connections to the east and south. New development is occurring south of Mona Lake generating more trips that originate and terminate in the southern third of the City.

Encouraging greater accessibility and increasing service to the southern portion of the City may negate growth management initiatives

Yet, another conflict exists. Encouraging greater accessibility and increasing service to the southern portion of the City may negate growth management initiatives and ultimately prove very costly. Generally speaking, significant roadway improvements which result in improved traffic flow also result in greater pressure to develop along and near the improved road. High traffic and high visibility roadways are frequently sought out for intense commercial, office and industrial development. Any improved traffic corridor that passes through Norton Shores will likely have this effect unless it is very carefully planned. Currently, the City has zoned for pockets of commercial development in the vicinity of the US-31 Interchange at Sternberg and the US-31 off ramp at Pontaluna Road. It is likely that the westerly extension of Sternberg Road will generate strong development pressure to adjust land use plans and the Zoning Ordinance to allow for more intense development. If this happens, there will almost certainly be further pressure for more intense development emanating from the corridor in all directions. Although, it is recognized that the City will experience growth, there is a strong desire to manage it to avoid unnecessary sprawling development and to mitigate the influences of developments that may foster sprawl.

It is important to note that improving a road based solely on engineering standards will not always generate the optimal result. Roadway planners are frequently frustrated that improved roadways seldom “cure” the problem of congestion. New capacity encourages changes in land use that increase the demand on roads until the congestion returns to previous levels.²⁰

It is true that people not only desire the freedom and convenience of fast personal transportation, but the structure of most communities actually requires it. The required economies of scale to support efficient mass transit are not found in most communities (certainly including Norton Shores). Sprawling, diverse land use patterns and consumer desires for quick transport at their convenience make routing and scheduling an impossibility at a cost that is competitive with the private auto.

The compact nature of the northern tier of the City lends itself well to pedestrian mobility, yet the existing pedestrian network is weak and, in turn, unsafe for drivers, pedestrians and bikers. There are a number of traffic-pedestrian conflicts in the northern tier. As traffic congestion increases in Norton Shores, so too will the potential for all types of

²⁰ Moore and Thorsnes, *The Transportation/Land Use Connection*, APA, 1994

accidents, including pedestrian. Now is a critical time to make improvements to pedestrian linkages to protect school children, recreation bikers and walkers, and the pleasurable sense of community in the northern tier.

SUMMARY

With this background, it is possible to focus on three key questions;

- ◆ First, is it possible to significantly improve traffic circulation north of Sternberg Road?
- ◆ Second, what improvements should be made south of Sternberg Road including its extension to the west? Is it possible to improve transportation service to the area without increasing development pressure? Or can a circulation network be created that fosters desirable land use patterns?
- ◆ Third, what pedestrian linkages should be considered for improvement? Is there a network that makes sense to the area? Which intersections require attention?

If it is the goal of the City to direct growth in an orderly manner to preserve natural features and the quality of life that existing residents enjoy, transportation alternatives should be explored. The issues affecting transportation planning in Norton Shores are growth management, circulatory necessity, and financial responsibility. These issues are significant to planning for improved connections through the north, extended roadways in the south and pedestrian access throughout the City. The next section explores alternative solutions and recommendations incorporated in the Future Land Use Plan. Each of the above issues will be addressed when evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

For the purposes of the Norton Shores Comprehensive Plan, it is appropriate to consider many approaches that may achieve the objectives for transportation planning in the City. Therefore, the following land use alternatives explore options for transportation network improvement that could broadly work to improve circulation.

1. **Do Nothing and Respond to the Market.** This alternative may best be described as a “wait and see” approach to growth patterns. While it is likely that the current patterns of traffic and growth will eventually force improvements to southern circulation through the City, this approach would wait for action to occur and then respond accordingly. It evaluates transportation systems from an engineering standpoint and makes suggestions based on road capacity and design.

As future requests for zoning changes materialize, the City may consider appropriate modifications or revisions either to the Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Ordinance. In addition, access management controls and expanded site plan review requirements to address future traffic considerations may also be considered as warranted.

Advantages. The primary advantage of this approach is that it leaves little to chance since roadway changes are made only as dictated by external circumstances. The City would take no action until required by circumstances. Furthermore, in the unlikely event the expanded roadway system is not needed, the City would not have undertaken any unnecessary land use changes. Financially this assures the City that no undue costs will result, as action will be taken only upon necessity.

Without a far-reaching and careful plan for land use, a “wait and see” process will result in a piecemeal set of solutions that are unlikely to effectively serve the City’s long term goals.

Disadvantages. The primary disadvantage to this alternative is that it leaves the community in a largely reactive posture while developers and landowners are required to speculate on the form and intensity of development that would be acceptable. In short, it does not evaluate the “big picture”. This method is generally only effective once a city has fully developed. In addition, under this approach, the City would essentially abdicate any planning responsibility to such other agencies as the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC). This virtually eliminates the possibility for the City to coordinate desired future land use with road and transportation systems. Since the southern third of the City will not achieve build-out for some time, it is likely that transportation network improvements would prompt intense development pressures from interested investors. Moreover, it would not consider pedestrian utilization of transportation systems until there was a problem with present pedestrian access. The lack of a comprehensive planning

process will make transportation assistance funds difficult to obtain. Finally, without a far-reaching and careful plan for land use, a “wait and see” process will result in a piecemeal set of solutions that are unlikely to effectively serve the City’s long term goals.

2. **Master Plan New Routes.** This alternative evaluates the transportation network in Norton Shores as it relates to land use. It suggests improvements as they correspond to the need assessed in the Comprehensive Plan process. New and/or improved roadways are identified in the Comprehensive Plan and the conditions that would trigger development are established. This alternative would allow the City to take an incremental approach to improvements as appropriate. It provides tools that identify approximate rights-of-way for city access.

Master planning for new roads enables the City to evaluate transportation needs in the context of the other recommendations the Comprehensive Plan addresses.

Advantages. Master Planning for new roads and network improvements has many benefits. It enables the City to evaluate the transportation needs in conjunction with other recommendations the Comprehensive Plan addresses. Master Planning, when coordinated with a regional approach to transit, offers funding resources that may not be leveraged without the crucial evaluating and planning process of a Comprehensive Plan. It allows the City to utilize planning tools that must result from a comprehensive planning process. For example:

- ◆ **Identify Arterial Connections.** Master planning transportation networks allows cities to identify arterial connections in areas that currently are low density and maintain few major corridors for circulation. This identification is merely recognizing that there may be a time in the future when a connection might be necessary. It could mean no more than placing a dotted line on a map, but yet it clarifies the intentions of the City and precludes the possibility of inadequate transportation access.
- ◆ **Precise Plat Future Corridors.** Created in 1943 by Act 222, this alternative is a tool that allows for future creation, extension or widening of roadways,

Precise platting works with market needs by selectively incorporating roadways when they are required.

public ways, or public grounds. The Act enables the Planning Commission of any city or village, after the adoption of a master plan, to certify plats of precise portions of the community to the legislative body. This enables cities and villages by ordinance to adopt such certified plats showing the future outside lines of the proposed public road, and to regulate buildings within such lines. The greatest advantage of using precise platting to direct the development of new roads is it allows the City to take an incremental approach to the network improvements, while maintaining the ability to build at any time. This works with market needs by selectively incorporating roadways when they are required. It also enables the City to plan for roads, establish future road alignment and reserve property for the completion of the plan by denying applications for building permit.

- ◆ **Pedestrian Access Improvements.** A Comprehensive Plan enables the City to generate a formula for the application of pedestrian treatments to roadways and intersections. For example, often times it is desirable for a community to make improvements for pedestrians at intersections that are located within a reasonable walking radius of a school.

Disadvantages. The disadvantage of Master Planning road improvements is it entails additional staff attention and direction. For example, it is necessary to periodically monitor the market and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. A Comprehensive Plan may inhibit the natural progression of the market, and the City must continually assess whether the Plan is positively or negatively directing market pressures. Furthermore, a Comprehensive Plan is difficult to implement. This is especially true when property acquisition, financial limitations, or political agendas constrain the effectiveness of the plan.

Using the transportation tools for Master Planning may also have disadvantages. Precise Platting can be time consuming and, oftentimes, politically controversial. It

requires professional support (i.e., survey, engineering and legal services) and it may be costly to obtain easements for the extension. If not planned carefully, identifying arterial connections could have the negative affect of triggering intense development proposals and creating a multiplier that is based on incorrect or speculative information. Finally, pedestrian improvements, when they require street redesigns, may also be costly.

RECOMMENDATION

In light of the population growth and economic investment that has occurred in Norton Shores over the past few years, it is very possible that future population growth will meet or exceed projections. This pace of growth is manageable for the City of Norton Shores with proper planning. This Chapter recommends that the appropriate planning for transportation occur as an incremental phasing process in the Comprehensive Plan. This should help to manage assets, preserve natural features and maintain the City's character. At the same time, transportation will be improved by planning for future routes in the southern third, improving circulation patterns north of the lake, and creating pedestrian connections throughout the City where appropriate.

SOUTHERN TIER TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS

Transportation planning for the southern portion of the City involves a "balancing act." Challenging the extension and improvement of roads is the threat of unwanted development patterns and loss of rural, low-density character. For this reason, any improvements made in the southern tier of the City must be carefully planned and well justified. Nevertheless, improving connectivity by paving, developing, or extending roads in this portion of the City might alleviate traffic congestion throughout the city.

◆ **Precise Plat Sternberg Road**

Currently Sternberg runs east and west, south of the airport. It originates at Martin Road and carries traffic through Grand Haven Road, to the US-31 Interchange and into Fruitport Township. The road does not exist at all between Martin and Henry, but picks up again in places between Davis and Lake Harbor. While some property has been acquired for the extension of Sternberg, most of the remaining right-of-way is yet to be obtained.

Sternberg offers a critical option for east-west access through the City. It provides the potential to alleviate congestion on Seminole Road, Norton Avenue, and Seaway Drive. It contributes a vital connection to US-31 and, if fully extended, would offer a direct route from US-31 to the lakeshore. But, most importantly, Sternberg might act as the south beltline for higher intensity uses. By extending Sternberg, the City may create a physical definition for urban growth, if that extension is accompanied by effective land use controls.

In order to complete the extension of Sternberg Road, the following steps should occur in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. First, the right of way for the road should be precisely platted. This process will benefit all parties involved. It identifies and maps the exact alignment of the future extension. It gives the City authority to deny building permit requests in an effort to preserve the right-of-way for the future road. But equally important, it notifies developers of the City's intent to extend the corridor and increase accessibility through the region. This in turn clarifies the City's objectives to future investors. If Sternberg Road is indeed to act as a southern border for intense development, merely precise platting the right-of-way begins to facilitate the objective.

If Sternberg Road is indeed to act a southern border for intense development, merely precise platting the right-of-way, begins to facilitate the objective.

◆ **Plan Extensions of Farr Road and Wood Road.**

It is likely that this will not need to take place within the next twenty years; however, it is important to recognize the possible need for a road extension and to plan accordingly. As densities increase in an area and more services are required, it is crucial to have arterial routes available for emergency access. If the southern third of the City is able to remain largely open and agricultural land, Farr and Wood Roads may never need to be extended. This is the optimal case. The southern third of the City has a very high watertable, beautiful natural amenities and is well suited for agricultural, open

space, and large lot, residential uses. In addition, the areas north of Sternberg Road and immediately west of Grand Haven Road will be able to handle the twenty year projected growth of the City, and much more.

Yet, because it is impossible to be certain of the demands that may be placed on the City of Norton Shores, it is best to be prepared for every development pattern. By identifying the general area where the roads might be extended if the necessity arose, City staff will be able to identify applications that may conflict with the road extensions and notify applicants. This informs potential investors of the eventual impacts on their proposal without having planned acquisition of property. It also gives the applicant the freedom to decide whether or not to proceed with a given project.

◆ **Phase Transportation Improvements with Sewer Management Plan**

In Chapter 9, Utilities and Growth Management, it is recommended that the City create a Sewer Management Plan. Such a plan is similar to a Master Plan for the incorporation of utilities. It was recognized that if the area to the south of Sternberg Road continues to develop, sanitary sewer will become a necessity as risk of ground and surface water contamination increases. The Sewer Management Plan may help to direct growth by expanding the system incrementally. This would allow for well-organized, innovative development. To further strengthen this as a tool for asset management, transportation planning in the southern tier should also be coordinated with this plan.

The City may increase the effectiveness of the plan, create an appropriate pattern for development and timetable, and offer a well organized and easily understood program for transportation improvements.

The Sewer Management Plan recommends seven steps for implementation. These steps include identifying non-serviced areas, suggesting a pattern for the sewer expansion zone, selecting and mapping sections within the expansion zone, creating a timetable for expansion, delineating “triggering” criteria, identifying possible exception(s), and creating a financial plan. By tying roadway extensions and arterial planning to the Sewer Management Plan, the City may increase the effectiveness of the plan, create an appropriate pattern for development and timetable, and offer a well organized and easily understood program for transportation improvements.

NORTHERN TIER TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS

The City is very limited in its options for the area of Norton Shores north of the lake. Many of the roadways are under the jurisdiction of neighboring cities. Because of this, there are few through connections between cities. In addition, the northern tier has nearly reached build-out and there is little available land to provide for improved traffic circulation. However, there are some minor improvements that should be addressed.

◆ Precise Plat a Roadway Between Seminole and Forest Park

Presently Wickham Drive originates on Seminole Road, east of Roosevelt Road. Fire Station #1 is located at the intersection of Wickham and Seminole and it serves much of the western portion of the City. Likewise, Grueling Road is a north-south road that originates on the south side of Seminole. Both Grueling and Wickham terminate after a little over a quarter of a mile. Just south of their terminus are woodlands and open area before the development emanating north from Forest Park is found. There are several drains and natural ravines in this area and most streets end in cul-de-sacs. Emergency circulation is difficult here and a precise platted roadway in this area will provide better access.

The corridor should be planned as a low speed (25 mph) collector street. The right of way should be fairly narrow, consistent with the residential character of the area and prevent high traffic volumes. This will improve traffic circulation to the residential neighborhoods in the area and provide better access for emergency vehicles.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

The compact nature of the northern tier of the City lends itself well to pedestrian mobility. As the population of Norton Shores increases, so too will the demand on roadways. Pedestrian linkages are important to provide residents with options other than their private automobiles and to reduce the number of traffic-pedestrian conflicts. There are numerous options that should be explored when addressing pedestrian access and a few crucial improvements that must be made.

It is dangerous for both the pedestrian and the driver to have pedestrians on the road.

- ◆ Create a sidewalk and walkway ordinance for the more densely populated portions of the City.

At present the City has no sidewalk ordinance. It may be true that residential streets are not heavily traveled enough to warrant a need for sidewalks; however, major arterials and collector streets should be required to have sidewalks. It is dangerous for both the pedestrian and the driver to have pedestrians on the road. Children that walk to school, parks, the library or other locations often must travel along the major streets.

The ordinance may be immediately applicable to any investor proposing either a new site plan or wishing to improve an existing use. In other cases, sidewalk and pedestrian walkways will need to be ordered by the City Council. Some grants, such as Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) or ISTEAs funds might be used to help pay for the additional sidewalks and walkways. However, it is likely that the City will have to gain voter approval to levy a special assessment in order to fully fund the project.

◆ **Make Intersection Improvements**

Any major intersection within a half-mile radius of a school should be fully accessible to pedestrians. These intersections include (see Map 7 on page 66):

1. McCracken and Norton Ave.
2. Roosevelt and Norton Ave.
3. Henry and Norton Ave.
4. Seminole and Henry
5. Henry and Hendrick
6. Randall and Martin
7. Hile and Martin

A landscaped median with designated mid-block crossing would deter careless crossing, improve safety for pedestrians and drivers, and aesthetically identify the route as a residential corridor despite its use as a major arterial.

All seven intersections should have well marked pedestrian crosswalks, stop bars, and highly visible pedestrian crossing signs. Signalized intersections should incorporate pedestrian signals and a crossing button. This will improve the ease of movement for pedestrians and make drivers, walkers, and bikers alike more comfortable using the transportation network.

Map 7. Transportation map

◆ Bike Paths

The City has created a Bike Path Committee to identify the needs of bicyclists for both commuting and recreation. The Committee identified five objectives for the creation of a bike path network:²¹

1. Definition of bike path development. The definitions will address shared and non-shared bike paths, bike lanes via pavement allocations and those independent of other traffic corridors.
2. Develop a bike path network, which addresses interconnecting major streets in Norton shores and bike routes in neighboring communities.
3. Prioritize bike route development by identifying streets in need of bike path improvements.
4. Address safety concerns on target roadways such as Forest Park Road, Seminole Road west of McCracken, and Hendrick Road.
5. Identify funding sources.

This committee has identified the current bike path system in Norton Shores, regional and adjoining jurisdiction networks, and created a valuable citizen questionnaire. The Committee recommendations are incorporated as a part of this Comprehensive Plan.

²¹ Notes of Bike Path Committee Meeting of October 15, 1990.

CHAPTER 9. UTILITIES AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

This Chapter examines the current facilities, opportunities, and constraints that effect the City's ability to manage growth through public water supply and sanitary sewer service. In addition, it analyzes possible financing alternatives for utility service extension and the issues of equity that arise from those alternatives and explores the implications of utility management and growth and how they relate to the future land use direction of Norton Shores.

CHALLENGE IDENTIFICATION

The City of Norton Shores is blessed with both a remarkable mix of development and unique and valuable natural features. This combination of land cover lends itself to a wide variety of opportunities for living, working and recreation. However, in a growing community like Norton Shores, it is difficult to maintain a healthy balance between urbanized acreage and protected natural lands.

Accompanying growth is the potential of environmental degradation if the impacts of that growth are not properly managed. A major development in the community may degrade surface water and groundwater quality if it is not connected to a public wastewater system or an adequate on-site disposal system (i.e., septic tank and drainfield). In a community that hosts sensitive lands and a high water table like Norton Shores, this issue rationalizes the policy of managing growth via utilities.

Norton Shores' previous Master Plan evaluated utility systems as growth management tools. It recognized that the denial of services to an area may inhibit growth. The plan introduced a "utilities management zone" concept. A utility management zone (also referred to as an urban service boundary) is an area beyond which the city will not provide utility service in the foreseeable future. This tool enables a community to, "guide timing, location and quality of development, while not constraining innovation and creative design, 'taking' of private property or directly engaging government in the business of development."²² The utilities management zone concept was created to

²² *Norton Shores Master Plan Program*, 1981 p. 135. This plan was created by city staff and officials in conjunction with Leo Jakobson Madison, WI. Efforts

enable the city to better respond to private sector initiatives in accord with community objectives.

This policy was useful and a good choice in 1980 for two reasons. First, the City of Norton Shores has a high water table that may easily be contaminated. Zonal boundaries were drawn to follow those of the interior high groundwater zone and the Lake Michigan Shorelands policy zone. These are important because they have either unique environmental amenities or fragile ecosystems. The second reason for limiting the extension of utility services was that the expected growth in population was minimal and could be managed by existing facilities. In 1980, population growth in Norton Shores appeared to stabilize and the expansion of utility systems would have been inefficient. Areas within the utility management zone could accommodate any projected growth with ease.

Now, roughly twenty years after the adoption of the Master Plan, many of the challenges surrounding utility services still exist, yet other dilemmas have arisen. Environmental constraints are still a factor. The water table remains very high throughout the city, but particularly in the southern third of the community (see Map 8 on page 70), making water contamination very likely and difficult to avoid. In some locations, the springtime water table reaches a mere six inches below grade. Very little land can safely accommodate development and almost all requires filling. This also makes sanitary disposal difficult because septic facilities must be raised and lagoons and other open treatment systems violate Sec. 15.321 of Norton Shores Zoning Code. Furthermore, in most areas it is not possible to develop wells that reach the ground water aquifer below an impermeable soil stratum, making the accessibility of clean water nearly impossible. These limitations and the lack of utility service to this area should theoretically lessen pressures for growth.

toward the creation of the 1981 Master Plan began in 1969 in conjunction with the Muskegon County Shorelands Management Studies.

Map 8 Environmental Issues

Development beyond that which the area can naturally support is detrimental to the environment and surrounding fragile ecosystems. For these environmental reasons, the previous Master Plan’s concept of limiting growth in the southern region was appropriate and would have encouraged the balance the City sought between urbanized and natural areas. However, the City departed from the Master Plan’s utility extension recommendations. The plan suggested the City not extend services on any East-West route south of Sternberg Road. Since then, however, both sewer and water services were installed on Pontaluna Road and water mains are found in many areas in the southern third of the City. Despite the significant filling that is required to build a home in this area, the number of residential building permits has risen since 1980. Safe wells are difficult to achieve here and municipal wastewater services are minimal through the southern third.

The second argument posed in the previous Master Plan is still applicable. Chapter 3 indicates the rate of population growth remains relatively modest. The City of Norton Shores will likely host between 1,800 and 4,000 new residents by 2020. That increase represents a growth rate of 0.4% to 1% per year, or about 33 to 74 new homes per year. As was true in 1980, the area within the utility management zone is clearly large enough to accommodate the projected growth.

With this background, it is possible to focus on three key questions.

Have the departures that have been made from the earlier plan defeated the effectiveness of that plan?

- ◆ First, is it important for the City of Norton Shores to continue to define a utilities management zone? Given the service extensions that have been made, does it make sense to use the zone as a growth management tool? Or, have the departures that have been made from the earlier plan defeated the effectiveness of that plan?
- ◆ Second, considering the potential for groundwater contamination, should limiting utility service even be an option? Or is the problem not great enough to warrant the necessity of public wastewater collection?
- ◆ Third, how should service extensions be financed? Is there a financial equity that may be achieved in creating new water and/or sewer opportunities?

The issues affecting planning for utilities in Norton Shores are growth management, environmental necessity, and financial responsibility. The dilemma created by a utilities expansion discussion eventually resolve to health versus growth management. The next section identifies alternative solutions and recommendations incorporated in

the Future Land Use Plan. Each of the above issues will be addressed when evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

For the purposes of the Norton Shores' Comprehensive Plan, it is appropriate to consider many approaches that may achieve the objectives of the city. Therefore, the following land use alternatives explore potential utility management solutions.

1. **Do Not Extend Services or Manage Growth via Utilities.** This alternative would alleviate the City's need to coordinate existing and proposed developments and future land use direction with utility service. Essentially, this alternative would allow development to be scattered throughout the city. In addition, most of these scattered developments would rely upon private wells and septic systems as long as they can be permitted.

Advantage. The primary advantage of this alternative would be to limit the amount of initial public capital investment that would be required to meet the demands of growth. For example, public funds would not need to be utilized to improve, expand, and maintain public water or sewer to service future developments that are not within a certain proximity to existing infrastructure. In addition, from a review and enforcement standpoint, this alternative would position the County Health Department as the sole regulating agency for private wells and on-site septic systems; thus reducing the effort needed from the city staff.

Disadvantages. The primary disadvantage of this alternative is that it opens the door to sprawling patterns of development as well as the potential for environmental degradation due to failing private septic systems resulting in impacts on surface and ground water quality. In the long run, this option may be most costly as utilities must eventually be extended to serve low density neighborhoods, thus requiring fewer homes

The primary disadvantage of this alternative is that it opens the door to sprawling patterns of development.

to support the entire cost. This alternative would defeat the city’s desire to manage growth and sprawl, and preserve natural features. It would not offer a solution to the potential problem of failing septic systems or contaminated wells and it ignores the health risks associated both for current residents and future development without utilities.

2. **Extend Utilities to Southern Third and Do Not Manage Growth via Utilities.** This alternative would address the environmental difficulties being amplified by the lack of sewer and water in the southern third of the city. It would provide the option for residents, to hook up to the municipal system if they found their water was contaminated or their septic system failing or not permitted. Scattered development practices would continue under this alternative as long as residents are not required to connect to the municipal water or sewer system. Larger residential developments are feasible using this alternative. To some extent, Norton Shores has used this alternative in recent years when considering utility extensions. The inclusion of sewer and water on Pontaluna Road is an example.



The availability of water and sewer will certainly foster further residential development

Advantages. The primary advantage of this alternative is it ensures the health and safety of those who chose to reside in the southern third of the city. It would enable landowners to utilize environmentally challenging sites for development and increase the amount of development options south of Sternberg Road.

Disadvantages. Several disadvantages are associated with this alternative. The extension of both sewer and water throughout the area of the city south of Sternberg would be a great cost to the city. Water and sanitary sewer mains would have to run the length of Mt. Garfield, Farr Road, Martin Road and the Sternberg Road extension. The availability of utilities would likely encourage growth in the southern regions of Norton Shores, when the northern, fully serviced region has the capacity to handle all foreseeable growth. Full expansion of the system would likely lead to disorderly development and force the construction of many new

roads, with the expansion of public works and safety services. This in turn would negatively affect the natural environment and fragile ecosystems of the area. The challenge of the high water table would be exacerbated by the proliferation of impervious surfaces throughout the area. Environmentally sensitive lands would need to be filled in order to construct development on stable soils. Finally, the unique natural features and rural character of this part of the City would be threatened by sprawling development.

The greatest advantage of this alternative is that it encourages new development to locate in areas of the City that are already served.

3. **Manage Growth by Selective Extension of Utilities.** This alternative would not extend services throughout the area but would require any new development to connect to other public sewer and water or more sophisticated privately managed and regulated on-site systems. Such a philosophy restricts new development from locating any distance from the established utility lines because of the cost associated with private extension or more sophisticated on-site systems.

Advantages. The greatest advantage of this alternative is that it encourages new development to locate in areas of the City that are already served. Like the first alternative, this would minimize the capital investment costs to the city; but unlike the first alternative, it discourages sprawling development. The lack of utility service would make environmentally sensitive lands difficult to use for intense forms of development, thereby protecting natural amenities. Given the municipal system connection requirement, development is confined to certain geographic limits or within close proximity to existing infrastructure. Creative design patterns such as clustering and openspace preservation techniques could be utilized to enable development to occur at densities great enough to support licensed, on-site treatment systems.

Disadvantages. This policy would not change the existing use of wells and septic systems. Tanks that are currently in place may still pollute ground water and wells, which may in turn force the city to extend services to existing properties to ensure the health and safety of current residents. The burden of such an expansion

might need to be shared by the City and private landowners. In addition, this may prompt new-comers to locate on Pontaluna Road or make extensions from that main where the watertable is very high and the ecological environment is quite fragile. As individual expansions are made north of Pontaluna, the circumference of protected land will become smaller and smaller. This reduces the extent to which growth management via utilities will be effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Norton Shores is one of the most desirable locations in Muskegon County for growth, especially in residential development. While the projected population growth is fairly modest, it is important to plan for any growth in order to preserve key natural features and allow for sensible and efficient development.

Utilities planning in the southern third of Norton Shores challenges two competing goals. One goal for the City is to preserve the natural and rural character of the region and prevent unnecessary sprawling development. A second objective is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Norton Shores, which means providing clean drinking water and preventing pollution.

The following recommendations move the city toward a working balance between the two objectives and begin a process for the preservation of the natural environment and the health of Norton Shore's citizens while remaining fiscally responsible. Four strategies are outlined and incorporated in the implementation strategies of this Plan.

Fully Incorporate Water Services

First, municipal water should be extended on major roads throughout the city. Public water connections are encouraged for all residents, particularly those within the Groundwater Hazard Overlay Zone. Many of the wells in the area are too shallow to supply suitable water and the high watertable virtually guarantees septic system failures eventually. At present, most of the city has access to municipal water; however, private connections are not required.

Require Water Connection

The second recommendation is that the city require connection to municipal water if a structure is within 200 feet of a watermain and does not have a well that is protected by an impermeable soil stratum. For residences and businesses with currently functioning wells, these connections could be deferred until either the wells fail or when the property changes hands. The 200 foot standard is the same that the City has enforced for sewer connection. It is a reasonable requirement and would be a step toward ensuring the safety of residents. Financing for private hook up should be privately funded. The Safe Drinking Water Act might be a good resource to 'tap' for funding assistance if contamination can be documented.

While this policy adjustment is appropriate, it is recognized that there are about 1,000 existing residences located on watermain which have not connected to the municipal system. It is unrealistic to expect residents to connect if they do not perceive a need and a compulsory connection program will likely be met with resistance. A balanced approach would be to require connection for all new dwellings and for all existing dwellings at the time of sale. Of course, others may voluntarily elect to connect at any time.

Create a Sewer Management Plan

It is recommended that the City establish and implement a Sewer Management Plan to provide a set of wastewater policies that would function in harmony with the long-term land use goals of the City.

If the area south of Sternberg Road continues to develop, sanitary sewer will also become a necessity. The water table is too high to rely upon septic systems and the risk of ground and surface water pollution that might result from the use of on-site disposal is too great. Without a plan, the sewer extension made along Pontaluna Road almost precludes the city from using utilities incorporation as a tool for a growth management. However, a Sewer Management Plan may help to direct growth by expanding the system incrementally. This would allow for well-organized innovative development. There are seven steps recommended to proceed with a Sewer Management Plan.

1. Identify non-serviced areas.
2. Suggest a pattern for the sewer expansion zone.
3. Select and map sections within the expansion zone.

4. Create a timetable for expansion.
5. Delineate “triggering” criteria.
6. Identify Possible Exception(s).
7. Create a financial plan.

First, the city should identify areas within Norton Shores that are currently not serviced by sewer. Generally speaking, this includes Sections 19, 20, 29, and 30. (Map 12 on Page 92 illustrates Section numbers.) The second step in creating a Sewer Management Plan is to establish a desired pattern of development for the southern third of the City. This pattern must be consistent with the future land use plan. Map 9 on page 78 presents a general phasing pattern.

For example, it might make the most sense to adopt a pattern of development which begins in the southwest corner of the non-serviced area near the new Black Lake development projects. Because this area has seen the highest rates of growth, it makes sense to begin the phasing here. It is recommended that this phase include all property from Henry Street to Martin and from Farr Rd. west and south to the Hoffmaster State Park property. A good part of this area is currently serviced which makes this section the natural next step in the completion of the sanitary sewer system. In addition, any pockets of non-serviced residential areas that may exist between Lake Harbor Road and Henry Street should also be included in the first phase. It is suggested that each phase be sized for completion in increments of about five years. Thus, completion of phase one should be scheduled for 2005.

Phase two would include the property from Martin Rd. to Grand Haven Road and Farr Rd. to Pontaluna to be completed by about 2010. The third phase would be initiated after that and would be described as Grand Haven Road to Martin Road from Sternberg Rd. to Farr Road. The final stage, which may never need to be incorporated, should be Martin to Henry Street from Sternberg to Farr Road. If there is a demand for this area to be served during the life of the revised Comprehensive Plan, construction would begin after 2015.

The third step involves a more detailed analysis of each phase area both from the perspective of likely market demand and the technical requirements of the system. As each phase is developed, the City would identify areas where sewers are likely to be needed and develop and implement incentive mechanisms to spur private sector investment. These incentives may include density bonuses that help spread the cost of sewer expansion over more homesites. On the other

Map 9, conceptual sanitary sewer phasing plan

hand, in areas not yet to be served, the City should continue and expand its policy of requiring “dry systems”²³ and require that licensed community collection and treatment systems be installed with properly licensed and operated treatment capabilities. These systems should be designed to ultimately connect to a future public system when it becomes available.

Next, a series of decision criteria should be developed which may be applied to each section. These would provide guidance for the staff, Planning Commission and City Council in evaluating when it is appropriate to adhere to the policy or depart from it. In addition, these criteria should be the “trigger” to begin planning and development of sanitary sewers in subsequent phases. A detailed presentation of such criteria should be developed with extensive technical and policy input. However, some examples might include:

1. Build-out: If the earlier phase has reached build-out before the subsequent phase is scheduled to be incorporated, the City should have the ability to transition to the next phase without significant disruptions of land use patterns or utility systems.
2. Project sensitive: If the City receives an application to extend sewer services as a part of a site plan that includes attractive clustering, amenities and density/open space ratios, the phasing may be moved ahead. That is, the site plan should be proposed within the area that is currently active or, the next sequential area for incorporation.

If the intent of the plan is to encourage organized and efficient growth patterns, each time the extensions are made that are not contemplated by the Plan, sprawling development may result.

Then, the city will need to determine what, if anything would allow the City to diverge from the prioritization process in the Sewer Management Plan. This is important because there will always be initiatives that may imply a use for sewer. However, if the intent of the plan is to encourage organized and efficient growth patterns, each time the extensions are made that are not contemplated by the Plan, sprawling development may result. Guidelines for exceptions will allow the City to adhere to the Plan and allow for extensions in special cases that are specifically delineated within the plan. For example, the City might make an exception if service is requested within 200 feet of the phase border. This creates flexible boundaries for the service area and should be done by amending the Sewer Management Plan and

²³ The term “dry system” refers to the installation of wastewater collection lines infrastructure which will not be used until a public trunk sewer is installed in the future.

possibly the Comprehensive Plan. Another obvious grounds for an exception would be cases involving actual groundwater impacts.

Finally, the City should create a financial plan. The Sewer Management Plan itself will cost little to prepare and allow the City to plan for funding on a section by section basis. In addition, since the triggering factors will likely involve either developer interest or a petition by citizens, the City may utilize private investment or special assessments to fund any expansion projects. However, it is possible that the initial capital cost of system expansions may require public investment and the City should explore whether the terms of public participation could be varied depending on the extent the project supports the goals of the plan. Some options for funding might include applying for the State Revolving Loan Fund or the Community Development Block Grant Program to assist with individual financing.

COORDINATING PAVING WITH SEWER EXTENSIONS

The question of when to pave roads in areas without sanitary sewer includes issues of appropriate road design and prudent fiscal policy. If it is expected that an unimproved segment of roadway will eventually receive sewers, a conservative fiscal approach would dictate that the paving be deferred until all contemplated improvements can be installed. The alternative of paving a road as a short-term measure to improve the riding surface may be politically expedient, but could result in wasted investment, if the improved roadway (including the pavement, under drainage and storm water structures) must be completely rebuilt when the sanitary sewers are installed in the future.

However, this policy also has land use implications. An improved roadway will generally carry more traffic and be marginally more attractive for development. Thus, in those areas where the City seeks to encourage development (Phase 1 on Map 9, page 78, for example), it would certainly be appropriate to continue to follow the existing policy. In other words, since the City's goal is to encourage development in a particular area, road improvements should include all utilities to spur that development. In subsequent phase areas, a more difficult analysis must be undertaken. If the requested paving of the roadway is intended to serve as a regional arterial and appropriate measures are in place to limit development in its proximity, then the City may consider departing from its policy and permit paving without sewers. One example of this might be the western extension of Sternberg Road through the area designated as Phase 4 on Map 9 (page 78).

CHAPTER 10. LAKESIDE MANOR

This Chapter examines the Lakeside Manor area located in the north-west corner of Norton Shores and identifies land use and zoning conflicts, neighborhood desires, and aesthetic problems in the area. Finally, it recommends an approach incorporated in the Future Land Use Plan. The scope of this chapter encompasses a review of previous studies and data collection.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

This neighborhood was developed in the 1930's primarily with moderate-sized, single family homes. The homes are wonderful starter homes for families. As Norton Shores grew and Nugent Sand located due west of Lakeside Manor at the lakeshore, more non-residential uses began locating in the area. The sand mining business brought a rail line that runs east-west just south of Lakeside Manor.

Many years ago, city officials expressed an interest in rezoning the Lakeside Manor area. They felt because the area was located next to the railroad tracks and near the industrial uses in Roosevelt Park, General Industrial (GI) was a good match for Lakeside Manor. In 1981, this quarter square mile area was rezoned from R-1 Residential to GI General Industrial. At that time all but one of the industrial and commercial land uses were located east of Torrent Street. These included Seabrook Plastics, J&M Machine, and a credit union. The western portion of Lakeside Manor remained residential with the exception of A&C Machine Company.

Since that time, existing industrial uses have made expansions, but no new businesses have located in Lakeside Manor. Site plan applications and structural improvements have been requested by residential developers and residents since the rezoning. However, since the rezoning, residential structures are non-conforming uses in Lakeside Manor, and the Zoning Ordinance only permitted improvements valued at no more than half the assessed value of the home. No new residential structures are permitted.

In spite of this, in 1984, the City Council approved both a rezoning to R-1 and site plan applications for two duplexes on Manor Street. Other residents have approached the City for approval of improvement

plans that exceeded the assessed value of their homes. To permit improvement of these non-conforming uses, the City Council amended the Zoning Ordinance in December of 1998 to permit improvements to any residential structure identified as a legal non-conforming use.

This amendment could create future difficulties and exacerbate the problems of other areas of mixed uses. If a residential use exists in an area that has been designated as a zoning district other than residential, the home is classified as a legal non-conforming use. Virtually all Zoning Ordinances include similar provisions. Generally this is intended to protect the health, safety and financial welfare of the homeowner. In addition, if residential uses are permitted in every zoning district, a clear plan for an area may be impeded. If an area is zoned industrial, yet contains homes that are encouraged to expand, the city must then provide services for both residential and industrial uses to the area. Even more importantly, it creates a direct contradiction with the General Industrial classification in the Zoning Ordinance. Section 15.451 B. states that the GI zoning district will, “protect abutting residential and business districts by separating them from manufacturing activities, and by prohibiting the use of such industrial areas for new residential development”²⁴.

The northwest region of Norton Shores has a variety of uses (see Map 5 on page 37). The quarter section directly east of Lakeside Manor has been zoned as a Planned Unit Development. The block west and across McCracken is R-1 Residential. The block south of Lakeside Manor is General Industrial, and everything south of that nearly to Norton Avenue is R-2 Residential. Just north of Lakeside Manor along Sherman Road, the corridor is zoned as a General Retail District. Lakeside Manor has become a reflection of the land uses in the area around it. Within the neighborhood there are single-family residences, two-family residences, a service/commercial use, and general industrial businesses.

Traditionally, this sort of mix of uses has been characterized as conflicting and undesirable. However, there has been little difficulty with the land use discrepancies. The residents have raised concerns about some of the business operations that take place in the area. But in general, even though the uses exist to accomplish diverse objectives, they seem to function well as neighbors. This, in itself, is not a problem. Yet, without spot zoning each site on a case-by-case basis, there are very few legal definitions or standards for an area of this sort.

²⁴ City of Norton Shores, *General Industrial Zoning District*, Reprinted, 1998.

Lakeside Manor challenges the entire theory of zoning. Without a PUD application for the entire neighborhood, the City has no zoning classification it may apply to address the needs of all uses.

Finally, there are many possibilities for aesthetic improvements in the Lakeside Manor neighborhood. The streets have no curb, gutter or sidewalks. There is little uniformity in architecture. This is partly due to the odd mixture of land uses and partly a characteristic of the housing stock. A drain bisects the Lakeside Manor neighborhood, which also makes the location of a large industrial operation a challenge. While the drain is an interesting, natural amenity, it divides many of the lots and creates unequal lot sizes.

SUMMARY

With this background, it is possible to focus on four key questions:

- ◆ First, is the current zoning still relevant?
- ◆ Second, is there a zoning classification that might address all desired land uses in the area? Should the City use a combination of zoning classifications? What are the implications of these zones?
- ◆ Third, how can the City eliminate or at least mitigate land use conflicts that are presently occurring and will likely occur in the future?
- ◆ Fourth, what can the city do to aesthetically improve the area? How can landowners be encouraged to beautify the neighborhood?

If it is the goal of the City to create a unified land use pattern, reduce the number of site conflicts, and improve the quality of life for existing residents, business owners and employees, alternatives should be explored for Lakeside Manor. The next section of this Chapter explores alternative solutions and recommendations incorporated in the Future Land Use Plan.

Insert map 10 Lakeside Manor Existing Land Use

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

For the purposes of the Norton Shores Comprehensive Plan, it is appropriate to consider many approaches that may achieve the objectives for Lakeside Manor in the City. Therefore, the following paragraphs explore land use alternatives for the quarter section.

1. **Do Nothing.** This alternative does nothing to change the present zoning classification. Lakeside Manor would remain General Industrial (GI) and the tiny area where the two duplexes are located would remain R-1 Residential.

Advantages. The greatest advantage of this approach is that it has no direct costs for the City. Now that the City Council has provided a mechanism that would allow existing residential structures to be improved, despite their non-conforming status, residents may add value to their homes as they choose. Industrial uses would also be allowed to locate or expand anywhere within the Lakeside Manor area.

Disadvantages. Doing nothing to improve the Lakeside Manor area only validates the residential spot zoning for the duplexes that has occurred, disregards present and future conflicts in use, and ignores the poor aesthetic quality of the neighborhood. Industrial uses would be able to locate anywhere within the neighborhood where concentrating the businesses in one area is the optimal end. The western half of the quarter section is still all residential. The market has not indicated a need or desire for new industry in the Lakeside Manor area. This indicates that the homes, at least on the western half of the neighborhood, are non-conforming uses without a justifiable reason. While there may be no direct costs associated with ignoring the needs of this neighborhood, there may be significant indirect costs. Because there is no real plan for the area and spot zoning has occurred, its future is unclear. Business and industries seeking to locate in Norton Shores would likely avoid this area as lacking definition. Residents do not want to make significant improvements to their homes if they are unsure of the future of their neighborhood. Similarly, businesses would likely look elsewhere for a more predictable land use mix.

Because there is no real plan for the area and spot zoning has occurred, it is likely that business and industries seeking to locate in Norton Shores would avoid this area as lacking definition.

2. **Rezone to Residential.** This alternative suggests rezoning the entire Lakeside Manor neighborhood back to R-1 Residential. This would make the industrial uses in the area non-conforming uses and the residential homes would be characterized as the primary use.

Advantages. Since the market has not indicated the area as a good location for industrial uses, rezoning it back to residential might encourage investment from homeowners. The rezoning would give homeowners a greater sense of security about the future of their neighborhood and the stability of the area. If industrial uses do in fact relocate and new residential structures are erected, the aesthetic qualities of the area could improve dramatically.

Disadvantages. A residential rezoning would prevent the business and industrial uses from expanding, or investing amounts in excess of 50% of the value of the structures. If the industry plans to grow, Lakeside Manor would no longer be a viable location for that business. The business would be forced to relocate. This would likely result in a vacant industrial site with little prospect for a viable reuse. It is unlikely that a resident would seek to raze an industrial building in order to build a new, single-family home. If the industrial sites do become vacant, it is likely that the aesthetics of the community will degrade further and there will be little opportunity for improvement.

A business could be forced to relocate, resulting in a vacant industrial site with little prospect for a viable reuse.

3. **Use a Combination of Zoning Districts.** This alternative would allow the City to zone parts of the Lakeside Manor area to Residential and other portions would remain General Industrial. A zoning pattern to mirror the existing land uses would be attempted.

Advantages. The advantage of this approach is that the City would be able to meet most of the needs of all the uses in the neighborhood. It would cost the City very little to rezone portions of Lakeside Manor to residential, and it may generate investment by the residential landowners. In addition, industrial uses could remain the primary uses on their sites.

Disadvantages. Depending upon how this alternative is approached, it could be viewed as spot zoning. Residential and Industrial uses would remain neighbors and if industrial uses do seek to expand, they may not only need to purchase neighboring properties, but also apply for rezoning if the expansion extends into a residential district. This approach does not address the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood. It further discourages a uniformity of uses contributing to the area's disorderly appearance. It does nothing to lessen the consequences of conflicting uses. While the conflicts may be minor currently, there is nothing to prevent more serious problems in the future. This approach will not improve the quality of life on its own.

4. **Apply Performance Zoning.** Performance zoning is an innovative tool used when traditional zoning is not flexible enough to allow for a mix of uses.

“Performance-based zoning employs standards and criteria rather than prescribed lists of uses and requirements that allow more choices among potential land uses and design treatments. Standards and criteria set limits to the impacts of land uses to assure compatibility among adjacent uses and encourage development in preferred locations.”²⁵

In this alternative, the area would be re-zoned from General Industrial to a new designation, Performance Zone, which would offer standards for aesthetic improvement and use compatibility.

Advantages. This provides an opportunity to significantly improve the aesthetic character of Lakeside Manor. It would include provisions to assure compatibility of the neighboring uses while recognizing that in some cases, industrial and residential districts can work well together. It allows for all existing uses and any future uses as long as the applications meet the suggested performance criteria.

The area would be re-zoned from General Industrial to a new designation, Performance Zone, which would offer standards for aesthetic improvement and use compatibility

²⁵ Porter, Douglas R., *Managing Growth in America's Communities*, Island Press 1997, p.50.

Disadvantages. While this zoning might be very effective for new or proposed developments, it does little to improve the nature of the area at present. Performance zoning standards could not be applied to existing structures unless a landowner applied for improvements or changes to his or her property.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Norton Shores has shown an interest in and dedication to the stability of the Lakeside Manor Neighborhood. This is clear from the fact that residential and industrial uses continue to succeed in the neighborhood. Yet the area is at a crucial turning point where the City must decide the future for the neighborhood. The following strategies are suggested to address the challenges of the Lakeside Manor Neighborhood. These are illustrated in Map 11 on page 90.

1. The City should rezone the western half of the quarter section, from Lindberg south to the southern side of Manor, back to Residential (R-1). This area consists of exclusively residential uses and there appears to be no interest in industrial development here. This will encourage residents to invest in their homes and help to secure one of the few starter home neighborhoods in the community.
2. The City should vacate Torrent between Manor and Bundt and install a landscaped buffer between the residential and industrial areas. In the northern third of the quarter section, the drain provides a natural buffer; however, such an amenity is lacking in the southern half of the neighborhood.
3. The City should create a Performance Overlay Zone for the remaining area, east of the vacated Torrent right-of-way and following the drain north to Lindbergh and including the lots fronting Harbor Drive west of Torrent. This would entitle new developers and those wishing to improve or expand their existing structures to meet the performance criteria specified by the Overlay Zone. It is suggested that the City develop criteria for noise, fumes, dust, odors, exterior lighting, loading bays, landscaping, architecture,

and parking that promote a residential feel to the area, while allowing the compatible uses.

4. It is important for the City to eliminate the non-conforming use amendment that was adopted in 1998. This amendment is inconsistent with the remainder of the Zoning Code and will make code enforcement difficult for City staff. It may open the City up to efforts to extend this preferential treatment to other land uses, thus essentially obviating the effectiveness of the entire Ordinance.
5. The City should develop a clean-up program for the Lakeside Manor neighborhood. Sidewalks should be installed throughout the neighborhood. Some truck traffic must use the neighborhood roads. Children walking to school presently must share the roadway with trucks and business traffic. This is dangerous and inhospitable to residential quality of life. In addition, sidewalks will add uniformity to the neighborhood and provide recreational and transportation opportunities to residents and business personnel. These may be financed through a combination of street funds, possibly including ISTEAs or TEDFs, to support the economic development activities of the local industries, special assessments, or Community Development Block Grant monies. The CBDG may be appropriate if benefit can be shown for a low to moderate income neighborhood.

Lindberg, Bunt, and Manor should be on the City's agenda for repaving with the addition of curb and gutter. Water run-off from the roads is presently filtered straight into the drain for lack of a stormwater system installation. Because the neighborhood streets carry more trucks and traffic than other residential corridors, it is likely that the storm water run-off has inordinate levels of pollutants. In addition, curb and gutter will improve the appearance of the neighborhood by, "cleaning up the rough edges."

The City should invest in a street tree program. While there are numerous large trees growing naturally throughout the neighborhood, a street treatment such as small, flowering trees would beautify the neighborhood and also provide a buffer between the street and residences. This will help mitigate the effects of truck and business traffic while adding value to the neighborhood.

Map 11, Lakeside Manor Performance Zoning Overlay

CHAPTER 11. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

This Future Land Use Plan seeks to foster efficient patterns of development that preserve the community's important natural features and suburban lifestyle while accommodating anticipated growth.

The City of Norton Shores Comprehensive Plan establishes general patterns of land use to guide growth and development for the next twenty to twenty-five years. The primary intent is to foster efficient patterns of development that preserve the community's important natural features and suburban lifestyle while accommodating the 1,800 additional housing units by the year 2020. To this end, this Plan seeks to encourage concentrated growth patterns where utilities and infrastructure currently exist, or will be available to support it. Essentially, this Plan seeks to promote efficient and aesthetic growth north of Sternberg Road while promoting the preservation of open lands, woodlands, wetlands and the rural character of the community to the south. In the portion of the City south of Sternberg Road and west of the Grand Haven Road area more rural patterns are possible and should be encouraged. This area includes about 6,000 acres, or slightly more than 35% of the land area in the City. It includes the Lake Michigan Shoreline, Hoffmaster State Park and Black Lake and it adjoins the rural portions of northern Spring Lake Township.

To further the City's objectives for efficient, human-scale development, this future land use plan also contemplates a more intensely developed area along the Grand Haven Road Corridor terminating at the intersection of Pontaluna Road and Grand Haven Road with a "village-scale" development. This portion of the plan is referred to in this Future Land Use Plan as "Pontaluna Village" and would include a mix of uses including neighborhood commercial, single family and potentially multifamily development.

By encouraging relatively intense development within the growth area to the north of Mona Lake and in the vicinity of Pontaluna Village, it should be possible for the City to continue to protect and to preserve significant tracts of important natural features and to promote high quality residential development in a form that complements those features. The following describes each of the future land use designations as illustrated on Map 12 on the following page.

Map 12, Future land use map

RESOURCE CONSERVATION/RECREATION

Natural features and sensitive lands are a vital part of the community's identity and, with careful planning, they may be preserved and protected.

The City of Norton Shores is blessed with large tracts of land offering important wetlands, wildlife habitat, forest lands, shoreline and lakes. These lands are a vital part of the community's identity and, with careful planning, may be preserved and protected so that future generations may continue to enjoy an unspoiled natural environment. The overall purpose of the areas designated as Resource Conservation/Recreation is to foster the protection of these natural features with as little disturbance as possible. Much of the area designated is in public or quasi-public ownership and efforts should be directed to maintain and provide more public stewardship. Those lands that are not in public ownership may see low intensity development similar to rural residential or conservation cluster development incorporating careful measures to limit the impact on natural features. Such techniques as conservation easements and planned unit development (PUD) should be encouraged. Extensions of public utilities and roads into these areas should be avoided.

Development in the Resource Conservation areas should be limited to single family housing limited to very low density or conservation cluster design that preserves natural areas at a ratio of at least 20 acres preserved for each 1 acre developed. Recreation related development of a low intensity nature may also be expected. Overlay zoning districts may be developed to identify unique resource areas that require special protection. These may include dune and beach areas, sensitive stream corridors, steep slopes, wildlife corridors, wetlands and groundwater recharge areas.

Where conservation cluster developments are proposed, the City will utilize its PUD mechanism to implement a development that is consistent with this Plan. The first step would be to conduct a site analysis to identify those features on the site that should be preserved and those portions that may be developed without impact. Based on the underlying zoning density, a set of performance measures will be developed to measure possible impacts. These may include buffer/filter strips from stream or wildlife corridors, isolation from steep or high risk dune areas, tree protection and other appropriate techniques. To the extent development can be accommodated within a portion of the site without impact on the important features, some additional density may be permitted. Conservation easements should be strongly encouraged as a part of such a development to assure that the undeveloped portions of the site remain in a natural state.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL

This land use designation is intended primarily to address the need for scattered single-family development in relatively rural and low density patterns. These areas are not intended to be served with public utility systems that would promote greater densities. Agricultural land uses such as field crops, blueberries, vineyards and hobby farms may also be anticipated in these areas. Concentrated animal feeding operations, however, will be incompatible with nearby residential uses.

To avoid these patterns, the City will require that all future parcels front on a public street or private road with a minimum right-of-way width equivalent to that required for a public street.

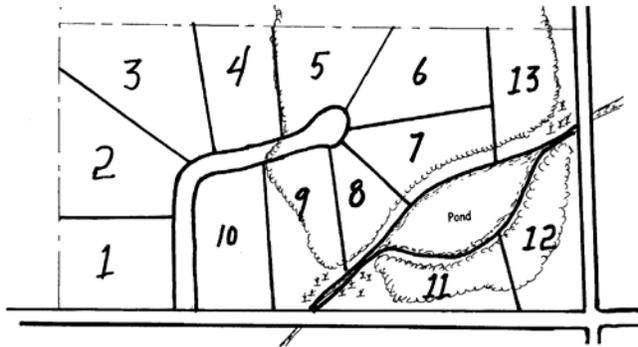
The primary land use within this area will be single family homes developed on unplatted lots of greater than one acre, or in conservation clusters that result in the preservation of significant open lands and overall densities of less than one unit per 2 acres. While this is a relatively low-cost mechanism to permit some development, it may ultimately set the stage for much more costly infrastructure in the future to retrofit an area. In addition, the City will likely receive an increasing number of requests for additional land divisions including “front-to-back” parcel splits. These can foster an extremely disorganized development pattern including private roads, multiple-use driveways, flag lots and similarly awkward configurations. To avoid these patterns, the City will require that all future parcels front on a public street or private road with a minimum right-of-way width equivalent to that required for a public street. In addition, the City will permit a maximum depth to width ratio of 3 to 1 to prevent the establishment of excessively deep and narrow lots within this area.

The Rural Residential land use designation incorporates most of the area of the City currently without wastewater service. As recommended in Chapter 9, Utilities and Growth Management, the extension of wastewater service should be phased over the life of this Plan. Therefore, the City’s land division policy should be coordinated with the Sewer Policy. In the areas where wastewater is anticipated soon, the City will encourage the extension of utilities by financing private extensions over an extended repayment period. This will have the effect of encouraging greater densities within the constraints of the zoning ordinance. In the limited portions of the area that are currently served with utilities, higher densities shall be encouraged. Conservation cluster and open space design techniques should be promoted to enable a reasonable yield for development purposes while seeking to preserve the rural character and natural features of the area.

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

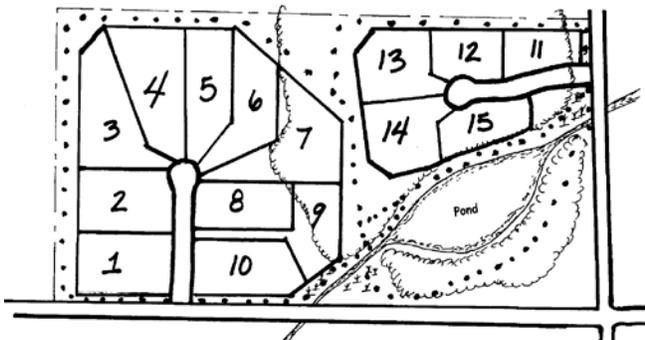
A significant portion of the City lends itself to suburban style single family neighborhoods. These communities are relatively homogenous in form and land uses, scaled for passenger car travel and developed

R-3 Subdivision, Permitted by Right



primarily for families with small and school-age children. The primary land use within this area will be single family homes developed in density patterns ranging from one to two dwelling units per acre or in conservation clusters that result in the preservation of significant open lands and overall densities of about 2 units per acre, or more. In all cases, public or properly permitted private utilities will serve residential sub-divisions in the low density land use designation.

P.U.D. - Conservation Cluster Design



A conservation cluster approach to development can be used to preserve important natural features, establish open lands for walking or recreation and reduce infrastructure costs when compared to a “by right” approach to development. This hypothetical example results in about 1/3 of the site as permanent open space and nature trails, about 10% less infrastructure and two “bonus” lots.

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

In proximity to more intense land uses and community facilities, the City will encourage medium density residential developments. These may be single family or two-family homes configured for families with children or for “empty-nester” families. Conservation design techniques will be encouraged, where appropriate, to establish small pockets of natural lands within this development form. These neighborhoods are scaled for public transit or for passenger car travel with good pedestrian connections to commercial and institutional land uses nearby. In all cases, public or properly licensed private utilities will be required in all developments in the medium density land use designation.

The primary land use within this area will be single family, two-family and small scale multi-family homes developed in density patterns ranging from two to five dwelling units per acre or in conservation clusters that result in the preservation of significant open space and somewhat greater overall densities. Small neighborhood commercial nodes may be encouraged in appropriate locations. These should be restricted to uses intended to serve the immediate neighborhood.

HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

A primary goal of this Comprehensive Plan is the development of high quality and aesthetic forms of development that increase density while creating a very attractive living environment for residents. The high density residential designation is key to this goal. The primary purpose of this designation is to establish human scale, walkable neighborhoods in close proximity to commercial and recreational services with good amenities and design that works with the area’s natural features. These neighborhoods are scaled for public transit or for passenger car travel with good pedestrian connections to commercial and institutional land uses nearby. In all cases, public or properly licensed private utilities will be required in all developments in the high density land use designation.

Conservation design techniques will be encouraged, where appropriate, to establish small pockets of natural lands within this relatively intense development form.

The primary land use within this area will be single family detached and attached homes developed in clusters or in multi-unit buildings. Conservation design techniques will be encouraged, where appropriate, to establish small pockets of natural lands within this relatively intense development form. Innovative design techniques will be considered to accommodate mixed uses that complement one another. Overall residential densities from five to ten dwelling units per acre will be achieved.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

This land use designation is intended to provide goods and services primarily to meet the needs of the immediate neighborhood. Facilities will be developed in harmony with the area’s natural features and in a scale and form to encourage pedestrian access and to minimize auto-pedestrian conflicts. Innovative techniques will be encouraged to include a mix of office and residential uses with neighborhood commercial land uses in the Pontaluna Village area. In those locations where mixed commercial and residential can be accommodated effectively consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan, overall residential densities of up to 5 units per acre will be permitted.



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In addition to the Pontaluna Village area, neighborhood commercial land uses are anticipated in isolated nodes along Grand Haven Road, north of Sternberg and between Mt. Garfield and Farr, along Sherman Boulevard east of Lincoln

Street, along Broadway Avenue adjoining the East Broadway Sub Area and at Henry Street and Porter Road. The neighborhood commercial node at Henry Street and Porter Road and on Grand Haven Road between Mt. Garfield and Farr should be limited to modest service and retail uses to serve the surrounding neighborhood. The City will limit the scope and extent of these uses to prevent commercial sprawl either along Henry Street or Grand Haven Road or to the east along the extended Sternberg Road, once it is completed.

REGIONAL COMMERCIAL

This land use designation is intended to provide goods and services to meet the needs of the larger West Michigan Region, including jobs for residents and goods and services for residents and visitors. Facilities likely include large-scale retailing, auto-related services, lodging and entertainment services. To the greatest extent possible, such uses will be developed in harmony with the area's natural features and in a scale and form to promote smooth traffic access to I-96 and US-31 and to the other portions of the community.

Regional Commercial land uses must be consistent not only with the immediate neighborhood in Norton Shores but with those in adjoining communities. Thus, sizable tracts are planned along the US-31 corridor adjoining Fruitport Township to the east. In the Township, the community has encouraged such regional facilities as Great Lakes Downs, a thoroughbred horse race track and regional shopping and hotel developments. Comparable development is planned in Norton Shores west of Harvey Road both north and south of Sternberg Road and at the Pontaluna Road interchange. In addition, the Plan recognizes the existing regional commercial development along Seaway Drive and in the three-block wide strip along Seaway and Henry Streets, between Muskegon Heights and Roosevelt Park.

OFFICE

This land use designation seeks to broaden the City's role in economic development and training in the region by fostering service, medical and related office uses both to serve the area's residents and in support of the significant industrial development in the City. The City's location at the interchange of I-96 and US-31 and its commitment to rational and balanced growth will work together in support of this use. The areas proposed for this designation have been identified as ideal because of their proximity to transportation corridors along US-31,

Seminole Road and Sherman Boulevard near Mercy General Health partners.

INDUSTRIAL

This land use designation is intended to further the City's role in providing employment for area residents and manufactured goods and services to meet the needs of the larger West Michigan region. Facilities will be developed with appropriate utility and transportation connections and in harmony with the area's natural features. Industrial uses to be promoted will include manufacturing and transport operations with minimal impact on the environment or on the surrounding community. The primary industrial area is located east and south of the Muskegon County Airport and along the Grand Haven Road Corridor adjoining US-31. Pockets of industrial land uses are also planned in established industrial areas. One such area is found in the Lakeside Manor neighborhood where industrial and residential land uses have the potential to conflict with one another. As discussed in Chapter 10, a performance zoning overlay district is suggested to address the potential off-site impacts and permit the coexistence of these land uses.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE ZONING

The Norton Shores Zoning Ordinance provides for the use of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) technique to provide needed flexibility in working with the natural features and in providing an attractive and appropriate mix of land uses. This mechanism may be useful in a number of locations, and the Future Land Use Map (Map 12, page 92) illustrates some significant locations for treatment under the provisions of the PUD ordinance.

A sizable sand mining operation is found in the northwestern portion of the City along the Lake Michigan shoreline. During the life of this Plan, the mining operation will cease and this area will become available for reclamation. A mixed residential planned unit development is anticipated for this site. The development would include a variety of housing types, open lands and an inland lake. The actual form and content of this development will be the subject of a collaborative planning effort involving the City and the property owners.

An area south of the East Broadway Sub Area is also identified as an excellent candidate for a Planned Unit Development. The area

bounded roughly by Summit Avenue, Bailey Street, Cleveland Avenue and Getty Street may include a mix of residential and commercial uses including the redevelopment of some industrial properties and an underutilized drive-in theater.

Two areas of the City lend themselves to land use regulation through performance zoning techniques. These permit mixed-uses by regulating the impacts of one use on others rather than through more traditional spatial isolation. A performance zoning approach may be considered for a portion of the Grand Haven Road frontage between Mt. Garfield and Farr Roads. This area is a part of the Grand Haven Road Sub-Area Plan (see below) which calls for the establishment of a new planned residential community to the west of Grand Haven Road providing an attractive, fully-served community extending north from Pontaluna Village. A limited amount of low intensity neighborhood commercial land uses intended to serve the needs of the growing residential area may be appropriate in this vicinity. However, careful site design and mitigation of off-site impacts will be critically important to assure that the residential areas are desirable and successful and to curtail potential commercial sprawling influences. To this end, zoning techniques may be utilized to accommodate this careful balance.

Another portion of the City known as the Lakeside Manor area - bounded by Lindbergh Drive, McCracken Street, Harbor Drive and Estes Street - includes a mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses. These uses may co-exist compatibly with performance zoning measures to minimize the impacts of one use on others. A special analysis of this neighborhood identified a series of land use approaches and the application of performance zoning techniques will be central to achieving the varied objectives for this neighborhood.

PONTALUNA VILLAGE



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The area surrounding the intersection of Grand Haven Road and Pontaluna Road presents the community with important challenges and opportunities. This area is more fully described in the Grand Haven Road sub-area plan. It will incorporate a mix of commercial and residential land uses planned to complement one another and to manage the relatively heavy traffic through this intersection. This Sub Area plan will include access management and

cross access standards to manage the impact of more intense development patterns on traffic flow. In addition, the plan will incorporate complimentary architectural and design standards as well as pedestrian linkages.

NATURAL AREA BUFFERS

Typical of many developing cities, potentially conflicting land uses have developed in close proximity to one another. Conflicts need not develop, however, if effective borders and edges can be maintained. In several areas of the community, natural area buffers may be incorporated within larger-scale developments. These are intended to consist of negotiated easements and/or deeper setback standards. To the greatest extent possible, the lands and vegetation within these areas would be left undisturbed to screen the more intense development patterns that are anticipated within the area of concentrated growth and to retain a rural character within some developing neighborhoods.

PLANNED ROADWAYS

Most of the roadway system in the City is well established. However, it is clear that the planned westerly extension of Sternberg Road to Lake Harbor Road will ultimately be needed to improve circulation in the southern portion of the City around the Airport. This roadway improvement is illustrated on the Future Land Use Map (Map 12 on page 92) and it is expected that this facility will quickly become a relatively important arterial in the City. However, the Plan recognizes the desire to limit sprawling development along this new roadway and incorporates a natural area buffer to separate the existing segment of the road west of Grand Haven Road. The one-mile extension between Martin Road and Henry Street will traverse an area of low density residential development and rural residential development. A natural area buffer should also be incorporated within the roadway design to further protect these low intensity uses and to minimize pressure for higher intensity uses.

As it is extended, Sternberg Road will quickly become a relatively important arterial that may be subject to development pressures and sprawl influences.

Another new roadway segment is illustrated in the Future Land Use Map (see Map 12 on page 92) to provide a public safety connection between Seminole Road and Forest Park Road. The purpose of this connection is to aid emergency vehicles from Fire Station #1 in providing service to the south and west. This would be constructed as a low speed extension of Wickham Drive to Forest Park Road.

In the East Broadway neighborhood, traffic calming measures are suggested to provide an effective demarcation between the commercial and office uses along Sherman Boulevard and the low intensity residential land uses to the south. In addition, the Future Land Use Map illustrates the vacation of portions of Utah, Idaho and Oregon Streets and the development of a new roadway to serve a newly assembled office park.

The Grand Haven Road Corridor sub-area plan illustrates a new collector roadway which would serve the planned residential neighborhoods to the west. Its purpose would be to access the developing neighborhood and provide controlled access at logical points to Grand Haven, Sternberg, Mt. Garfield, Farr and Pontaluna Roads.

All new roadways are illustrated in a conceptual alignment at this preliminary planning stage. The specific alignment must be established as based on the technical constraints of each facility.

Finally, it is likely that as north-south traffic grows in the City, Henry Street traffic volumes will exceed the capacity of the current roadway. Future intersection improvements and, potentially, a center turn lane may be required to increase the capacity of the facility,.

A CENTRAL PARK

A planned recreational and passive natural area is reflected south of Porter extending to the planned Sternberg Road extension. This facility would center on a 40 acre parcel owned by the City and a 20 acre parcel owned by the County in the approach zone for the airport. Thus it is well suited to low intensity recreational use. It is also adjacent to the Churchill Athletic Fields and a drainage and utility corridor which may present pedestrian connections to other neighborhoods. Finally, the location of such a low intensity facility along the Sternberg Road extension will help to forestall pressure for strip commercial type development along that new roadway.

SUB AREA PLANS

A sub-area plan (sometimes referred to as a ‘focus area plan”) is often needed to address the particular needs of an area of mixed uses or an area facing a transition. More specific in focus than an overall community comprehensive plan, a sub-area plan seeks to work within the constraints of such factors as existing land uses, topography, and traffic patterns to develop a long-range plan for a neighborhood. Two areas of the City warrant more detailed attention in this fashion: the East Broadway neighborhood and the Grand Haven Road Corridor.

EAST BROADWAY

The East Broadway neighborhood is an appropriate subject for a sub-area plan since it qualifies both as an area in transition and it is characterized by a broad range of mixed uses. The neighborhood includes about 150 acres and is bounded by the US-31 right-of-way on the east, Sherman Boulevard on the north, Getty Street on the west and Broadway Avenue on the south. This narrative supports and expands on Map 13, the future land use map prepared for the East Broadway neighborhood.

Land Use Challenges.

The land use challenges found in the East Broadway neighborhood include the following:

1. **A significant amount of vacant land.** Within the neighborhood, there are forty-nine vacant parcels with an estimated combined land area of about 20 acres, or about 13% of the area. While a detailed historic survey of the area was not conducted, some of these vacant parcels appear to have resulted from the removal of older residences and some appear to have never been developed.
2. **Modest housing stock** ranging from older and well-kept homes to dilapidated and unsightly dwellings. This usually suggests a declining neighborhood facing disinvestment. In addition, absentee owners likely own much of the housing in the neighborhood. Research conducted on the block bounded by Sherman, Utah, US-31 and Oregon revealed only four owner occupied homes.

3. **Increasing traffic volumes** on Sherman and Broadway Streets. Expanding commercial land uses to the east in Muskegon and Fruitport Township are creating more traffic on both arterial roads. In addition, the expansion of the Mercy General Medical campus immediately north in Muskegon creates further traffic volume, especially on Sherman.
4. **Office development pressure** emanating from the Mercy General Medical Complex north of the neighborhood. The medical complex is largely land-locked by industrial or commercial uses. As a result, medical practices and health care support businesses may seek sites in the immediate area and the East Broadway neighborhood offers a feasible location.

FUTURE LAND USES.

Sherman Boulevard Commercial. A significant number of parcels fronting on Sherman Boulevard either have developed or are slated to develop into commercial uses. Many of these are medical or health care uses. This is understandable in view of the proximity of this frontage to the Mercy General Medical complex in Muskegon. Furthermore, it is not inappropriate, especially given traffic volume on Sherman Boulevard which makes this frontage less desirable for residential uses. The frontage has been zoned for General Office (GO) for some time, and a few office uses have developed (i.e., credit union, insurance, etc). However, there also appears to be a demand for commercial land uses (i.e., pharmacy).

As current trends continue, the City may expect professional offices and health-related commercial and specialty services in this vicinity.

The sub-area plan seeks to further this shift in land uses by establishing a band of Office-Commercial land uses along the south side of Sherman Boulevard approximately 300 feet deep. As current trends continue, the City may expect professional offices and health-related commercial and specialty services in this vicinity. It will be important to guide this growth to minimize the impact on the arterial traffic flow along Sherman Boulevard. Therefore, implementation strategies should incorporate access management and cross access requirements to limit curbcuts and to control turning movements.

Professional Office Park. The northeastern end of the sub-area includes significant areas of vacant land. Immediately to the south of this area Phillips School and a Church are the primary land uses. The sub-area plan suggests that the City plan for a small professional office park on a re-assembled site consisting of about 10 acres. The intent would be to utilize the northern 200 feet of Utah Street as an access

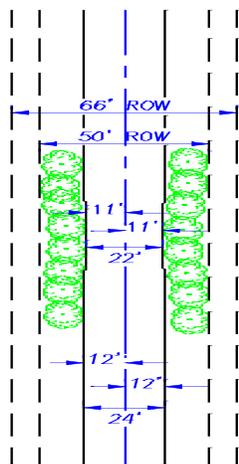
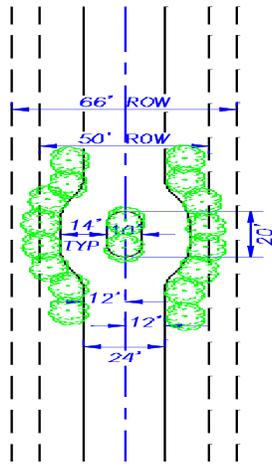
Map 13 - East Broadway Sub Area Plan

drive, vacating the remainder of that street and establish a new public street slightly north of the existing Idaho Street right-of-way. About four to six office sites would be made available, again largely targeted at the medical professional. It is not intended that the City would assemble this property itself but rather provide the necessary planning framework for the private sector to ultimately implement.

The establishment of the small professional office park and the vacation of a part of Utah Street would also make it possible to vacate a portion of the Oregon Street right-of-way at both the west and east ends. This will result in slightly larger rear yards for properties fronting Worden Street and eliminate “cut-through” traffic near Phillips School.

Residential Buffer. In order to protect the existing residential neighborhood from the effects of the expanding commercial and office development along Sherman Street, the sub-area plan includes a green belt buffer ranging from 20 to 50 feet in depth. This would be incorporated in the site plan requirements for new commercial development along Sherman Street and in the new office park. In addition, the plan incorporates traffic calming measures in Worden, Valk, Roberts, Vulcan and Huizenga Streets. These would be lateral deflections in the pavement around a small landscaped island or a slight narrowing of pavement width. While not preventing commercial traffic from moving between Sherman and Broadway through these residential streets, these measures will help to slow and calm that commercial traffic and further enhance the green buffer to protect residences. These relatively modest improvements will also signal the City’s commitment to help stabilize this residential neighborhood.

Getty Street Commercial. In accord with current planning, regional commercial development should be encouraged along the Getty Street frontage and along the western end of Sherman Street and the westerly 400 feet of the Broadway frontage in the sub-area. The frontage in this area is isolated from the residential uses by a fairly pronounced change in elevation. In addition, the surrounding uses in Muskegon and Muskegon Heights are compatible with commercial development. Along the Broadway frontage a relatively deep parcel extends north into the existing mobile home park about 550 feet. The northern 350 feet of this parcel should ultimately be considered for inclusion into a high density residential PUD (see below); to avoid dividing buildable portions of an existing parcel between two land use types, the Plan illustrates a “peninsula” of commercial land use extending into the PUD. The industrial land uses located on Broadway immediately east of Getty may not detract from regional commercial in this location. A



Slight lateral deflections in the travel path together with effective landscaping serve to calm traffic and serve as a demarcation between commercial and residential land uses.

performance zoning approach could be considered to enable these two divergent land uses to coexist in the neighborhood.

A possible future land use in the East Broadway neighborhood might be a congregate care facility for senior citizens offering a range of housing types from independent living to nursing care.

High Density Residential. An area of high density residential exists on the western end of the sub-area in the form of the Nomad Mobile Home Park. This facility abuts both residential and the some industrial land uses. However, there would be an opportunity to assemble frontage along both Broadway and Huizenga for further high density residential development which would be compatible with the other uses in the area. One such possible use might be a congregate care facility for senior citizens offering a range of housing types from independent living to nursing care. A Planned Unit Development (PUD) or Planned Unit Residential Development (PURD) approach would be preferable in this area to maximize the potential of the site while preserving the existing trees on the site. The industrial land uses in this area should be assisted to relocate to a more appropriate portion of the City.

Mixed Commercial and Residential. The north side of Broadway Street between Vulcan and Valk Streets includes a mix of residential, industrial, commercial, church and vacant lands. The future land use plan should seek to accommodate an appropriate mix of uses similar to the existing uses. The City's PUD ordinance may offer a mechanism to accomplish this. The sub-area plan suggests a compatible mix of urban neighborhood uses such as neighborhood commercial (i.e., beauty/barber shop, convenience store), potentially including some second story residential units. This area may evolve either one parcel at a time or through the private assembly of the site for redevelopment, possibly as a new neighborhood center drawing its clientele from both the neighborhood and the Broadway Street traffic.

Medium Density Residential. The interior of the sub-area includes a number of single-family residences as well as significant areas of vacant land. A policy to repair and rehabilitate this housing is most appropriate here. This should include loan and grant assistance as well as an effort to inventory vacant lots and work to combine them with adjoining properties. In the alternative, vacant parcels may be assembled for new construction of appropriately scaled, in-fill housing. Housing in this neighborhood is very convenient for employees working in the Medical Center as well as in some of the commercial businesses both in the immediate vicinity and east of US-31. While the area may not be currently perceived as desirable, with repair and rehabilitation assistance, this housing could be attractive to low-to-moderate income working families, especially as starter homes.

It is dangerous for both the pedestrian and the driver to have pedestrians on the road.

Pedestrian Connections. As a fairly dense residential neighborhood, it will be important to develop safe and effective pedestrian connections within the East Broadway area. As indicated in Chapter 8, the compact nature of northern tier of the City lends itself well to pedestrian mobility. Pedestrian linkages are important to provide residents with options other than their private automobiles and to reduce the number of traffic-pedestrian conflicts. In the East Broadway area, the City may explore options to improve pedestrian connections through publicly supported loan and grant assistance or as a long-term measure as redevelopment occurs.

GRAND HAVEN ROAD CORRIDOR

This area is an appropriate subject for a sub-area plan since it is experiencing some transitional effects and it includes a fairly broad range of uses. The study corridor extends about three miles from Ellis Road on the north to Wilson Road (the county line) and from the U.S.-31 right-of-way on the east to about ¼ mile west of Grand Haven Road. The study corridor includes about 1,600 acres. This narrative supports and expands on Map 14, the Grand Haven Road Corridor sub-area plan map (see page 110).

Land Use Challenges.

The land use challenges found along the Grand Haven Road Corridor include the following:

1. **A variety of existing land uses** ranging from vacant land, to industrial and commercial to housing ranging from neglected to well-kept. Certainly an area of nearly 1,600 acres is able to support a broad mix of land uses without fostering conflicts. In this area, however, many of the varied uses are interspersed and the only discernable patterns are a fairly clear east-west dividing line between industrial and other uses along the Grand Haven Road right-of-way and developing commercial nodes at Sternberg Road and Pontaluna Road.
2. **A weak market for office uses** despite the office zoning along the western frontage. Between Pontaluna and Sternberg Roads, the western Grand Haven Road frontage has been zoned General Office (GO) for many years. This area was contemplated as an area for Offices or Apartments in the 1981 Master Plan. The intent was

to foster a strip along the western side of Grand Haven Road for these uses to serve as a buffer between the industrial land uses to the east and the low intensity residential uses to the west. This was appropriate, but the market has not responded. The slow rate of population growth in the City has not fostered a market for larger apartment locations and large-scale office uses have tended to seek either park-like settings or downtown locations. As a result, property owners along Grand Haven Road have found it difficult to market their properties for the uses contemplated in the previous plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Property owners along Grand Haven Road have found it difficult to market their properties for the uses contemplated in the previous plan and Zoning Ordinance.

3. **An increasing potential for land use conflicts** as industrial development closes in on residential areas. While office and apartment uses have not materialized, the City has found a ready market for new industrial investment. Industrial land uses predominate between Grand Haven Road and U.S.-31 and there has been some interest expressed in extending these uses to the west. The difficulty is finding an acceptable demarcation between these conflicting uses which preserves the residential integrity of the community while permitting the reasonable growth of the industrial base.
4. **Potential for strip commercial sprawl** along Grand Haven Road and along Sternberg Road when it eventually connects to Henry Street. Both Sternberg and Grand Haven Road will see growing traffic volumes over the life of this Comprehensive Plan. As volumes increase so will the interest in regional commercial development. In addition, the City has zoned lands at the Sternberg and Grand Haven Road intersection for regional commercial development. Once Sternberg Road is extended to Henry Street it will become an important outlet for much of the western portion of the City and commercial pressures will expand further. Without a guiding plan, this type of commercial development typically forms in strip patterns consuming the road frontage with parking lots, strip centers and underutilizing the interior of deeper parcels.
5. **A tendency to low density, low efficiency residential development.** A rural residential development pattern has been established in the part of the City west of the Grand Haven Road Corridor. This is characterized by larger unplatted parcels accommodating single family homes on private wells and septic tank systems. The slow and steady growth of the City will foster more of this type of development unless a better opportunity is provided. As more of this low density development occurs, several impacts will be felt. First, the rural character of the southern third

of the City will be eroded. Secondly, groundwater impacts will begin to be seen as more wastewater is discharged through on-site systems. Thirdly, residents will begin to expect public sewers and water but will find them costly to install due to the low density nature of the development. Finally, if demand in the area remains strong, property owners will begin to seek “front-to-back” land divisions and other awkward splits to capitalize on the demand.

THE SUB-AREA PLAN.

Suburban Residential. The sub-area plan recommends a shift in the frontage west of Grand Haven Road from office uses to residential. This recommendation is founded on the shifts experienced in the marketplace which indicate little demand for individual suburban office buildings and the likelihood of continuing demand for residential development. The sub-area plan contemplates the development of a new roadway which is illustrated on the map in conceptual alignment only. This would parallel Grand Haven Road approximately 600 to 800 feet to the west. This roadway would serve as a collector for new residential development which would develop incrementally over the next twenty to thirty years. A mix of low density (i.e., 1 to 2 dwelling units per acre) and medium density residential (i.e., 2 to 5 dwelling units per acre) is suggested. This housing should be formed in open space subdivisions with significant areas of open lands and natural feature preservation. These subdivisions would be developed and oriented from the new collector road rather than from Grand Haven Road. To further buffer the residential land uses from the industrial uses to the east, a natural area buffer of 50 to 100 feet in depth is proposed, along Grand Haven Road. This will serve both as a buffer and an effective mechanism to maintain a rural cross section along Grand Haven Road. To avoid a ‘takings’ argument, the City will need to utilize a PUD or similar flexible mechanism in this area to create nominal equity between the “by right” uses and the PUD.

The sub-area plan recommends a shift in the frontage west of Grand Haven Road from office to residential uses.

In total, this area includes about 250 acres, so on average about 750 additional homes could be accommodated in this area. Chapter 3 of this Comprehensive Plan estimates that the City’s total population will grow by about 1,800 to 4,000 persons over the next twenty years. It also anticipates housing growth of upwards of 1,800 units. Properly carried out, the residential development west of Grand Haven Road would accommodate a significant share of that housing, thus relieving

Map 14, Grand Haven Road Corridor Sub area plan map

development pressure on the rural residential portions of the City. Furthermore, since utilities would be available in this area, housing arranged in efficient patterns in this area could be served economically and sequentially, generally in accord with Chapter 9 on Utilities and Growth Management.

Grand Haven Road. This sub-area plan continues and reinforces the essential pattern established in the current zoning ordinance, with some important adjustments. Grand Haven Road has served as a boundary between the industrial land uses to the east and existing residential and anticipated office development to the west. It is appropriate to employ an arterial roadway in this manner, and Grand Haven Road may continue to function as such. The natural area buffer discussed above will reinforce this function. However, it will be important to maintain effective access management measures to limit curb cuts and to establish internal circulation patterns in the uses that abut the road. This will be especially important in establishing the residential neighborhoods to the west.

The goal of preserving the rural character of the southern portion of the City is not well served by a large area of office zoning.

The shift in zoning on the west side of the road from office to a spectrum of residential uses is in keeping with the expressed preference of the community. The goal of preserving the rural character of the southern portion of the City is not well served by a large area of office zoning. In addition, the shift to residential zoning should help to overcome the uncertainty faced by existing owners of property on the west side of the road. Some are interested in improving their homes but find their non-conforming status to be problematic. As a short-term measure, the City has recently amended the Zoning Ordinance to permit the expansion of non-conforming residential properties in any zone. However, if this approach is left in place, it will diminish the effectiveness of any planning effort and foster confusion among property owners. As time goes on, residential uses may be found in any district, creating continuous land use conflicts. Those conflicts will lead to weakened markets as buyers seek out more predictable land use patterns in other communities. By adopting and implementing a plan for the Grand Haven Road corridor where the greatest potential exists for those conflicts, it will be appropriate to rescind the recent amendment.

“Pontaluna Village.” Norton Shores can anticipate slow and steady growth through the next twenty years. Based on the current zoning and the scale of growth, development will likely follow major arterials in relatively low density patterns. The result will be a fairly typical emerging suburban landscape of less than desirable strip commercial

and residential development, primarily on large un-platted parcels. Since the pace of growth will probably be relatively slow, the City has an opportunity to guide development in more desirable patterns.

The village would consist of neighborhood commercial, and a range of housing formed in a compact and walkable community.

A small “village-like” center is suggested at the Pontaluna/Grand Haven Road intersection. The village would serve several purposes. First it would offer an attractive residential alternative to either low density rural residential housing or more traditional subdivisions. Secondly, it will “anchor” the southern end of Grand Haven Road and provide convenient commercial services to the planned residential area west of Grand Haven Road as well as to visitors at Hoffmaster State Park. Thirdly, it will provide an attractive entry into Norton Shores for those visiting the state park.

The village would consist of neighborhood commercial and a range of housing formed in a compact and walkable community. The village would have walking and bicycle connections to existing and planned residential land uses nearby, enabling residents of these neighborhoods to shop and use the services of the village. Development in the village would be guided by a set of zoning, architectural and landscaping standards that will assure an aesthetic and functional community. The City’s planned unit development (PUD) ordinance, possibly supplemented by an appearance code, will help to assure an attractive, compact and human scale community.



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The location at Pontaluna and Grand Haven Roads will assure a flow of traffic through the area to support a small commercial node. Encouraging a more compact and concentrated community at the southern reaches of the City will also help to relieve some of the growth pressure that will likely materialize on the more sensitive and low density areas in the rural

residential area between Lake Harbor and Martin, south of the Airport. The Pontaluna and Grand Haven Road intersection is also important in local tourism as it provides the primary entry to Hoffmaster State Park. Thus, the commercial land uses in the village may take advantage

of the tourism component of the local marketplace. The existing restaurant and snack shop are good examples of businesses that can serve both a tourist market and local residents and are very appropriate within the village. Other similar uses might include convenience retailing, personal services, bank, day care and other eating and entertainment establishments. Drive-through restaurants should not be encouraged.

Encouraging a more compact and concentrated community at the southern reaches of the City, will help to relieve some of the growth pressure expected in the more sensitive and low density areas.

An important element in a village plan is the technique used to preserve the identity of the village area. Without some mechanism in place to accomplish this, the village will eventually become absorbed by the residential and/or commercial growth around it. US-31 will form an effective boundary on the east and rural residential land uses and zoning will have a similar effect on the south. To the north and west, however, it will be necessary to establish regulatory mechanisms to preserve the identity of the village. In both instances, natural area buffers are proposed. Along Grand Haven Road, a natural buffer of native vegetation is proposed ranging from 50 to 100 feet in depth along the west side of the road. A similar mechanism may be employed on both sides of Pontaluna Road. It is unrealistic to expect existing property owners to meet this standard although some may elect to do so. However, as growth occurs in the area to the north (see above), the scenic easement requirement may be put in place. To avoid a 'takings' argument, the City will need to utilize a PUD or similar flexible mechanism in this area. On the east side of Grand Haven Road, a similar approach may be employed, as new or expanded industrial uses are proposed.

CHAPTER 12. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1. **Implementation mechanisms for the natural area buffers.** The City will use its PUD mechanism to provide for natural area buffers while preserving the right of property owners to realize an appropriate yield from their lands. The PUD ordinance will be evaluated for the flexibility to promote the preservation of open lands and natural area buffers. With regard to larger tracts of natural features, the City will consider the formation of a nonprofit conservancy or the use of existing conservancies in the area to accept title or easements. The use of a non-profit conservancy may be important to provide tax incentives, in some instances.

In addition to buffers and open lands this strategy will also include the formation and implementation of a long-range plan to create non-motorized connections between neighborhoods, activity centers, parks and schools. These pathways will help to relieve some of the traffic and vehicle/pedestrian conflicts at critical intersections. More importantly, they will add a further amenity to the Norton Shores Community.

A final element of this strategy will be the development and expansion of the central park project to serve the southern portion of the City and the enhancement of neighborhood parks. These facilities will help to strengthen neighborhoods and provide convenient recreational opportunities for local residents.

2. **Evaluate and revise the Zoning Ordinance consistent with the plan.** The Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for this Plan. In many of the strategies, reference is made to evaluations and updates of the Ordinance to conform with this Plan. This strategy contemplates a complete evaluation of the entire Ordinance including all of the other, more specific, recommendations included in this Comprehensive Plan. This will include a revision of the Zoning Map to support the future land use map, and a revision of some zoning classifications to better conform to the future land use designations in this Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the Ordinance should be evaluated for flexibility to address innovative development techniques and for its ability to control inefficient development patterns. This strategy may be implemented by the Planning and Community Development staff and the Planning Commission.

3. **Develop land division policy consistent with the terms of this Plan.** When the Sub-division Control Act was amended in 1996, it provided a framework and incentives to limit wasteful land divisions. However, it also calls for streamlined local processing of requested land divisions. Communities that seek to use the land division process to guide development must develop detailed local policies that are consistent with local plans. This strategy contemplates an evaluation of the City's current land division policies and procedures and possible alternatives that will further the objectives of the Plan without severely limiting property rights. One issue to be considered is the inter-relationship between the City's private road standards and lot frontage requirements. Proposals to divide parcels front-to-back set the stage for very low density patterns of sprawling suburban development with little overall direction. Such areas are virtually impossible to serve with public utilities due to the excessive cost per parcel. With a coordinated set of policies governing land divisions, private roads, utility service and lot size and configuration, however, many of these potential problems may be averted.
4. **Precise Plat Sternberg Road.** The City has recognized the need to provide better east-west connections through the southern portion of the community. The completion of the Sternberg Road interchange with US-31 set the stage for the eventual extension of Sternberg Road westerly to Henry and Lake Harbor Streets. Act 222 of 1943 authorizes the City to establish the future alignment of the roadway using the precise platting process. Essentially, this mechanism provides for the establishment of the outside lines of the future right-of-way limits. This further permits the City to control development within that area. This step is important to the efficient development of the roadway and to signal private property owners of the proposed road and enable them to plan accordingly.
5. **Refine and implement a sewer management plan.** The City will establish and implement a Sewer Management Plan to provide a set of wastewater policies that would function in harmony with the long-term land use goals of the City. This will permit an orderly development pattern for the southern portion of the City. The seven steps recommended to proceed with a Sewer Management Plan include the following:
 - ◆ Identify non-serviced areas
 - ◆ Suggest a pattern for the sewer expansion zone

- ◆ Select and map sections within the expansion zone
- ◆ Create a timetable for expansion
- ◆ Delineate “triggering” criteria
- ◆ Identify Possible Exception(s)
- ◆ Create a financial plan

First, the City should identify areas within Norton Shores that are currently not serviced by sewer. Generally speaking, this includes Sections 19, 20, 29, and 30. The second step in creating a Sewer Management Plan is to establish a desired pattern of development for the southern third of the City. This pattern must be consistent with the future land use plan. Map 9 (see page 78) presents a general phasing pattern.

The third step involves a more detailed analysis of each phase area both from the perspective of likely market demand and the technical requirements of the system. As each phase is developed, the City would identify areas where sewers are likely to be needed and develop and implement incentive mechanisms to spur private sector investment. These incentives may include density bonuses that help spread the cost of sewer expansion over more homesites. On the other hand, in areas not yet to be served, the City should continue and expand its policy of requiring “dry” systems and require that licensed community collection and treatment systems be installed with properly licensed and operated treatment capabilities. These systems should be designed to ultimately connect to a future public system, when it becomes available.

Next a series of decision criteria should be developed which may be applied to each section. These would provide guidance for the staff, Planning Commission and City Council in evaluating when it is appropriate to adhere to the policy or depart from it. In addition, these criteria should be the “trigger” to begin planning and development of sanitary sewers in subsequent phases. The plan should include a detailed presentation of such criteria with extensive technical and policy input. The final step in implementation of the plan will be the completion of an overall financing plan.

5. **Plan for extensions of Farr and Wood Roads and collector system.** As development eventually moves into the southern portion of the City, additional collector and arterial roadways will be needed. The proposed residential development along the

western portion of the Grand Haven Road corridor will include a network of collector streets to provide access to the interior portions of the site and to manage internal circulation. These roadways will be developed by the private sector as development interest expands. The City will, however, need to plan appropriate land uses and manage access along existing arterials to encourage the development of this collector network.

In addition, to permit the efficient development of properties in the low density and rural residential area of the City, at least one and possibly more arterial roads will eventually be needed. Initially, the properties to the north of the current terminus of Wood Road and those to the west of Farr may require improved access. The eventual extension of these and other roadways will open areas in the vicinity for more efficient patterns of development.

- 7. Expand public understanding of growth management.** The adoption of the City's Comprehensive Plan is an important milestone, but without on-going support from the broader community, it will be ineffective in guiding growth. An on-going program of public discussion and education on the importance of effective growth management will help to assure the long-term viability of the plan. This program may include public service announcements, a speaker's bureau and school curriculum on the importance of the careful management of the City's open lands and natural areas. The theme may be directed at explaining that it is possible and desirable to have both development and a quality natural environment, but effective management is needed. The speaker's bureau would periodically target service clubs, neighborhood and community organizations, and other interest groups.

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