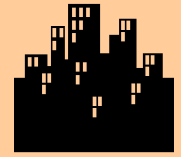


Chapter 7 – Future Land Use Policy



Future Land Use Goals

The Future Land Use Plan is designed to guide the 20-year vision for Pontiac created during the Master Planning process. The key components of the Future Land Use vision are:

- **ENCOURAGE MIXED USES**
Downtown redevelopment demands a mix of uses, including various combinations of residential, commercial, office, and other uses. Mixed uses create opportunity for innovative and new transit oriented development and more vibrant neighborhoods.
- **STRENGTHEN SENSE OF PLACE**
In the contemporary economic market, place matters more than ever before. Therefore, to better compete for business development and residential redevelopment, Pontiac needs to focus on creating a stronger sense of place, improving the quality of life, and changing the perception of the City. This includes a significant effort to improve the image and appearance of the City's principal thoroughfares.
- **IMPROVE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK**
Pontiac's housing stock should offer a range of product types and prices. Revitalizing the aging urban housing stock will require an innovative and simplified vision. The form-based approach will allow for the flexibility to address market conditions while retaining the features that define neighborhood character.
- **LIMIT STRIP COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**
Strip commercial development should not expand beyond their current limits. Limiting strip commercial development will encourage the redevelopment of the downtown and existing neighborhood commercial areas.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- In-fill development in residential neighborhoods with significant amounts of vacant land should be prioritized.
- The City should work with Oakland County to set up a land bank program similar to Genesee County to encourage development on vacant lots.
- The existing zoning ordinance should be amended to provide greater flexibility within these districts.
- The City should work with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), Cities of Promise, Oakland County, and the non-profit and private sectors to combat blight and demolish abandoned and neglected buildings, particularly within residential neighborhoods and along major thoroughfares.
- Pontiac should work more closely with Oakland County and its neighboring municipalities to pool resources and ensure each community is able to enforce its zoning and building codes.
- The City should work with neighborhood groups and residents to provide the opportunity to develop urban gardens and agricultural plots on vacant properties.



Transportation

- Adopt access management standards to minimize curb openings on major and minor arterials.
- Encourage shared drives and shared parking wherever possible.
- Revise landscape standards to enhance image along thoroughfares.
- Adopt street design standards to include pedestrian walkways and bike paths wherever possible.

Commercial Development

- Additional strip commercial development should occur only at key intersections and nodes as indicated on the Future Land Use Plan.
- Any new commercial development along major thoroughfares needs to meet design guidelines to ensure they have a positive impact on the City's image.
- Amend the zoning ordinance to outline specific design, landscape, and buffer requirements for corridor and neighborhood commercial properties.

Downtown Development

- Prioritize development of Lot 9 and other vacant parcels in the downtown for mixed uses.
- Create incentives for adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
- Work with the Oakland County Drain Commission to daylight the Clinton River through the downtown.

Transit Oriented Development

- Work with SEMCOG, MDOT, Oakland County and other governmental organizations to create a transit hub in Pontiac.
- Update the Zoning Ordinance to allow a high density mixed use development around the transit hub.

Industrial, Research and Development District

- Modify Zoning Ordinance to encourage new economy uses- high tech rather than manufacturing based uses.
- Adaptive reuse of existing outdated large scale manufacturing buildings for other appropriate uses should be a top priority.

Civic Center

- All municipal offices should be consolidated at a central location adjacent to city hall as the civic center complex.
- Expand the civic center site as opportunity arises.

Historic and Cultural Resources

- Historic and culturally significant community resources such as the five historic districts and the seven historic sites, landmark trees, or other places of significance must be considered when making land use decisions.
- These historic and cultural resources create a sense of continuity and identify places in the community, and are irreplaceable resources that cannot be recovered if lost.
- Therefore, community must make the effort to preserve historic and culturally significant community resources rather than razing them in the name of redevelopment.

FUTURE LAND USE POLICY

This chapter describes future land use policy, land use goals and the future land use categories and proposed guidelines.

FUTURE LAND USE POLICY

Land use decisions should be guided by the principles that are outlined in the Asset-Based Economic Development Strategy (see Appendix B) and throughout this plan. When considering a proposed zoning or land use change in the community the Planning Commission and City Council should include the following factors in their consideration of each change.

Green Infrastructure and Natural Features

Green infrastructure – the connected network of natural areas, wetlands, streams, lakes, woodlands, parks, and open space – is critical to a city’s sustainability. Pontiac needs to strengthen and enhance its green spine. To improve the City’s green infrastructure, Pontiac should create opportunities for new connections between green nodes like parks and natural areas. This may include creating new parkland, allowing residents to claim vacant lots for use as urban gardens, designating key natural areas for only limited development, and building additional pocket parks and urban plazas in the Downtown.

The City has no excess parkland and, therefore should not consider disposing of existing parkland for development. Underutilized park areas may become ‘no-mow’ areas and the City should work with Oakland County to develop long-term management strategies for underutilized parks that may be better suited for more passive recreation and natural areas.

Additionally, Pontiac should work with Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services, IT department and the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) to identify and map sensitive land, resources and habitats. The Planning Commission and City Council should use the information to create a Natural Features/Future Land Use overlay map as a guide when considering the potential impacts of zoning changes or development in areas where natural features are located.

Chapter 7



Future Land Use Goals

- **ENCOURAGE MIXED USES**
Downtown redevelopment demands a mix of uses, including various combinations of residential, commercial, office, and other uses. Mixed uses create opportunity for innovative and new transit oriented development and more vibrant neighborhoods.
- **STRENGTHEN SENSE OF PLACE**
In the contemporary economic market, place matters more than ever before. Therefore, to better compete for business development and residential redevelopment, Pontiac needs to focus on creating a stronger sense of place, improving the quality of life, and changing the perception of the City. This includes a significant effort to improve the image and appearance of the City’s principal thoroughfares.



Future Land Use Goals

The Future Land Use Plan is designed to guide the 20-year vision for Pontiac created during the Master Planning process. The key components of the Future Land Use vision are:

- **IMPROVE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK**

Pontiac's housing stock should offer a range of product types and prices. Revitalizing the aging urban housing stock will require an innovative and simplified vision. The form-based approach will allow for the flexibility to address market conditions while retaining the features that define neighborhood character.

- **LIMIT STRIP COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Strip commercial development should not expand beyond their current limits. Limiting strip commercial development will encourage the redevelopment of the downtown and existing neighborhood commercial areas.

The city should form a strategic alliance with adjoining communities and Oakland County to complete the Clinton River Trail through Pontiac.

Energy Efficiency and Environmentally Friendly Design

The built environment has a profound impact on our natural environment, economy, health and productivity. For instance, the U.S. Green Building Council reports that in the United States, buildings account for 36% of total energy use, 65% of electricity consumption, 30% of greenhouse gas emissions, 30% of raw materials use, 30% of waste output (136 million tons annually), and 12% of potable water consumption.

“Green Development” refers to environmentally friendly and energy efficient site and building design. Breakthroughs in building science, technology and operations are available to designers, builders and owners who want to build green and maximize both economic and environmental performance.

Green buildings offer both environmental and economic benefit. Environmental benefits include the use of less electricity, the reduction of solid waste and greenhouse gas emissions, and the conservation of natural resources, while economic benefits include reduced operating costs, reduced strain on local infrastructure, increased employee satisfaction and performance, and increased life-cycle economic performance, and increased sales at retail stores.

In summary, green buildings typically require a small additional cost (estimated to be 1-5%) to construct when compared to conventional construction, however, green buildings are less costly to operate and maintain, are energy- and water-efficient, have higher lease-up rates than conventional buildings in their markets, and are a physical demonstration of the values of the organizations that own and occupy them.

Design guidelines for new development should include as many green building standards as possible. As a part of changing the perception of the City, Pontiac should embrace green development and begin to create the image that Pontiac seeks to be the “greenest” municipality in Michigan. Particularly within the southeast Michigan market, this can prove to be a competitive advantage for redevelopment and new business attraction.

Pontiac should become a leader in energy efficient design and construction and should develop incentives for using recycled building materials, alternative stormwater management principles, energy efficient design and strong neighborhood design standards. Provide incentives for LEED certified buildings and set an example by making all Municipal buildings more energy efficient and /or LEED certified.

Certain building materials and outdated site design standards often have a negative impact on the environment. Neighborhood design standards should emphasize connectivity between neighborhoods, provide transportation alternatives, and create a safe and walkable community. Building standards should encourage adaptive reuse, recycling and reuse of building materials and design guidelines should provide incentives for residents, builders, and developers to use environmentally-friendly or green materials.

Residential Development

In-fill development in residential neighborhoods with significant amounts of vacant land should be prioritized. The City should work with Oakland County to set up a land bank program similar to Genesee County to encourage development on vacant lots. The existing zoning ordinance should be amended to provide greater flexibility within these districts. These standards should emphasize building form and outline acceptable materials and standards for each district.

Blight and abandoned property is a major obstacle for neighborhood redevelopment. The City should work with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), Cities of Promise, Oakland County, and the non-profit and private sectors to combat blight and demolish abandoned and neglected buildings, particularly within residential neighborhoods and along major thoroughfares. Public-private partnerships are essential tools for fighting blight within the City. A regional partnership between governments, non-profits, and the private sector is essential for this effort.

Code enforcement is an essential component of the fight against blight. The City's current economic condition limits the number of code enforcement officers and allows violations to continue. Pontiac should work more closely with Oakland County and its neighboring municipalities to pool resources and ensure each community is able to enforce its zoning and building codes.

Figure 7.1: Opportunity for infill residential development on Baldwin Avenue





The City should work with neighborhood groups and residents to provide the opportunity to develop urban gardens and agricultural plots on vacant properties.

Transportation

Adopt access management standards to minimize curb openings on major and minor arterials. Encourage shared drives and shared parking wherever possible. Revise landscape standards to enhance image along thoroughfares. Adopt street design standards to include pedestrian walkways and bike paths wherever possible.

Commercial Development

The City has an abundance of strip commercial development. Additional strip commercial development should occur only at key intersections and nodes as indicated on the future land use plan. Any new commercial development along major thoroughfares needs to meet design guidelines to ensure they have a positive impact on the City's image. The Planning Commission should amend the zoning ordinance to outline specific design, landscape, and buffer requirements for corridor and neighborhood commercial properties.

Downtown Development

Development of Lot 9 and other vacant parcels in the downtown for mixed uses should be a top priority for the city, along with adaptive reuse of existing buildings. The City should continue working with the Oakland County Drain Commission to daylight the Clinton River through the downtown.

Transit Oriented Development

The City should work with SEMCOG, MDOT, Oakland County and other governmental organizations to create a transit hub in Pontiac. The Zoning Ordinance should be updated to create zoning regulations to allow a high density mixed use development around the transit hub.

Industrial Research and Development District

The Zoning Ordinance should be modified to encourage 'new economy' uses- high tech rather than manufacturing based uses. Adaptive reuse of existing outdated large scale manufacturing buildings for other appropriate uses should be a top priority.

Civic Center

All municipal offices should be consolidated at a central location adjacent to city hall as the civic center complex. The city should look into expanding the civic center site as opportunity arises. .

Historic and Cultural Resources

Historic and culturally significant community resources such as the five historic districts and the seven historic sites, landmark trees, or other places of significance must be considered when making land use decisions. These historic and cultural resources create a sense of continuity and identify places in the community, and are irreplaceable resources that cannot be recovered if lost. Therefore, community must make the effort to preserve historic and culturally significant community resources rather than razing them in the name of redevelopment.

The Historic District Commission (HDC) should play an integral role in defining the guidelines for the five Historic Residential districts. The Historic District Guidelines should reflect the unique architectural character of each district, provide specific guidelines about siding, windows, doors, fences, roofs and lighting. The HDC, with assistance from the Oakland County Historic Preservation Architect should also prepare a reference containing information about contractors and materials with a special emphasis on energy efficient and historically appropriate materials.

Historic Preservation Policy

The City's Historic District Commission plays a critical role in providing information to property owners about historic preservation standards, the financial benefit of preservation, and the procedures to renovate historic buildings. The Planning Commission and City Council should continue to rely on the HDC to serve as the authority on historic buildings and structures in Pontiac. Therefore, the City Council should make every effort to appoint a full HDC board with well-qualified and trained individuals familiar with historic preservation.

The benefit of placing such value on historic preservation is that it strengthens the sense of place for the entire City. To ensure these districts are preserved, maintained and exude the proper image of Pontiac, the following steps should be taken:

Existing and Potential Historic Sites. Maintain a listing of historic sites and update the Historic Districts/Future Land Use Map



as necessary. Potential historic sites will be identified based on the criteria for designation, and any sites that qualify should be added to the list of historic sites.

Development or Redevelopment. The impacts of development on a historic site or resource must be evaluated whenever development is proposed on or adjacent to a historic site, and land use decisions within a historic district must be made in accordance with the preservation policy objectives.

Zoning and Land Use. Historic properties should be zoned to assure ongoing use and maintenance of the structure. Ideally, the first choice for historic properties would be to maintain the original use(s) of the property. Flexibility in zoning and consideration of adaptive reuse of historic structures is encouraged, but must be authorized according to procedures that will maximize retention of the historically significant aspects of the site or structure.

Public Awareness. Public awareness of historic sites/structures and historic preservation activities in Pontiac should continue to be bolstered through informational materials, technical assistance and other programs, including outreach to the Real Estate community to educate realtors and potential buyers about the impact of historic district standards. The Pontiac HDC should work with the Oakland County Historic Preservation officer to provide information regarding financial incentives for historic preservation.

Economic Feasibility. Available options for historic preservation purposes must be communicated to the owners and potential buyers of historic properties by the Planning Commission, City Council, HDC with the assistance of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Many creative options are available to assist in the rehabilitation and renovation of historic properties, including state and federal tax credits, grant and loan programs, and local technical expertise.

POTENTIAL INTENSITY CHANGE AREAS (PICAS)

Proposed zoning changes or development in the designated PICAs as detailed in the previous chapter where the Master Plan recommends a change in land use (i.e., areas where the future land use designation is different from the existing zoning designation) must not occur in a piecemeal fashion.

Where there are established residential neighborhoods that are planned for land uses other than single family residential, a rezoning

to a nonresidential land use must not be approved unless the proposed rezoning parcel includes a clear majority of the existing residences and will not isolate existing residential land uses. For instance, a proposed rezoning to a nonresidential zoning district on an isolated lot that will be surrounded by single-family homes shall not be approved.

It is imperative that piecemeal rezonings that would create a patchwork of land uses in an area be avoided, and that stable residential neighborhoods be maintained until such time as the entire residential area is ready to transition to a new land use as a whole.

Special Districts

Certain areas have been designated as special districts to provide some level of flexibility in development. These areas are:

1. The Silverdome Site- Mixed use development would be most appropriate for this site, however market conditions will determine the appropriate use.
2. Collier Road Landfill- This site has been designated for future alternative energy development such as solar or wind power.
3. Property North of Stonegate - This property has potential for either new low density residential development or a Technology Park.
4. Kennett Road Landfill- Appropriate redevelopment of this site would be as a regional recreational complex or light industrial use.

