

5. Land Use Compatibility

Grouping compatible and separating incompatible land uses is a core matter that urban planning addresses. The primary method to manage land use compatibility is through the designation of land into separate categories that identify the types of uses that are permitted to be located on lands in different areas of the city. The Official Plan contains the general high-level designation for each parcel of land in the city, such as Residential or Commercial. The Zoning By-law, which must conform to the Official Plan, contains the more detailed designation for each property, such as Single Detached Residential or High Density Residential. Additionally, the Official Plan and Zoning By-law address specific land use compatibility considerations, including minimum distance separation between incompatible uses and restrictions for uses that may have undesirable impacts.

What We Know

Key Points

- About 75% of land in Sault Ste. Marie is designated as Rural Area, including the Precambrian Shield. Within the Urban Settlement Area (USA), Residential and Industrial are the dominant land use categories.
- The City and senior levels of government have established regulations requiring minimum separation distances between potentially noxious land uses and sensitive land uses that may be negatively impacted if located too close to each other.
- Recognizing the size and scope of certain land uses and granting greater flexibility to locate small-scale businesses will help to support local businesses and entrepreneurs.

Existing Land Use Categories in the Official Plan

The existing Official Plan organizes land into 7 different **land use designations**:

- A. **Residential:** Lands that are primarily used for dwellings, but can also be used for associated neighbourhood amenities, such as schools, parks, churches and small-scale commercial uses.
- B. **Commercial:** Lands that are used for business uses including retail, accommodation, entertainment, finance and office buildings. Current major commercial areas include the Downtown, Great Northern Road, Trunk Road and Second Line West.
- C. **Industrial:** Lands that are used for businesses that are more intensive in nature and/or have greater potential impacts on surrounding properties, such as manufacturing, construction, utilities and storage.
- D. **Institutional:** Lands that are used for major public and quasi-public purposes of a community or regional nature, such as hospitals, post-secondary institutions, correctional facilities and government buildings.
- E. **Parks and Recreation:** Lands that are occupied by major community parks and open spaces, such as Bellevue Park, Fort Creek Conservation Area, Sault Ste. Marie Golf Club and the Sault Ste. Marie Canal National Historic Site.
- F. **Rural Area:** Lands located outside of the defined Urban Settlement Area.
- G. **Airport Lands:** Lands owned by the Sault Ste. Marie Airport Development Corporation.

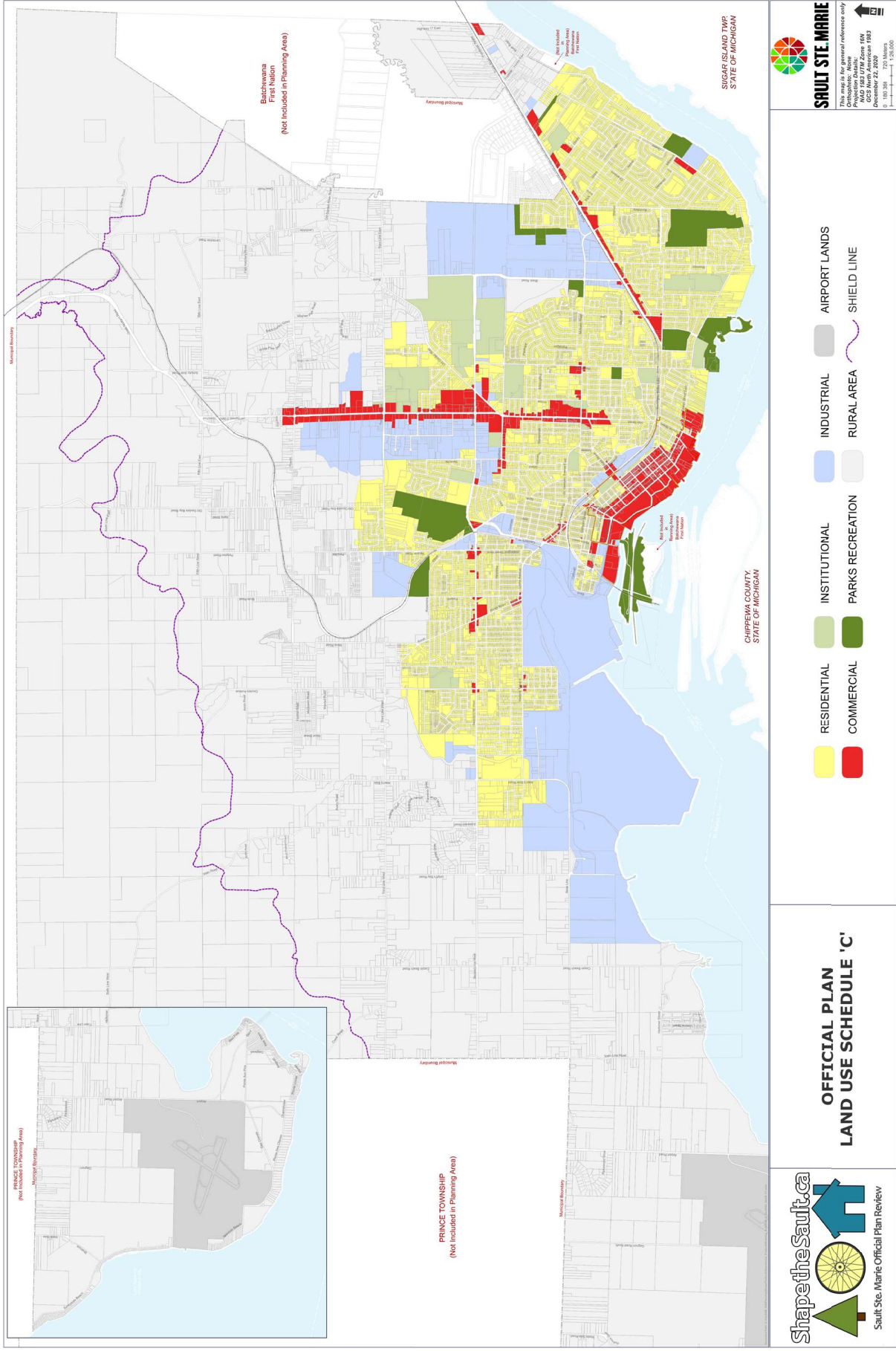
About 2/3 of land in Sault Ste. Marie is designated as Rural Area. Within the Urban Settlement Area (USA), Residential and Industrial are the dominant land use categories.

Table 5.1: Area and Proportion of Existing Official Plan Land Use Designations.

Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.

Land use designation	Total area		Proportion of total designated land within city
	Hectares	Acres	
Residential	2,501 ha	6,181 ac	11.2%
Commercial	370 ha	913 ac	1.7%
Industrial	2,469 ha	6,101 ac	11.1%
Institutional	329 ha	812 ac	1.5%
Parks and Recreation	284 ha	703 ac	1.3%
Rural Area	15,000 ha	37,066 ac	67.2%
Airport Lands	735 ha	1,816 ac	3.3%

Figure 5.1: Map of Existing Official Plan Land Use Designations (Existing Schedule 'C').
 Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.



Land Use Compatibility — Minimum Distance Separation

Separating incompatible land uses is a cornerstone of land use planning. Sensitive land uses are those where routine or normal activities would be negatively impacted by a nearby use that emits noxious discharges such as noise, dust, odour and vibrations. Examples of sensitive land uses include residential uses, day care centres, parks, and educational and healthcare facilities. Uses that can produce noxious discharges include industrial uses, aggregate pits and quarries, major transportation and public infrastructure facilities, and agricultural uses where livestock are kept. The construction of new sensitive or incompatible uses within the influence area of a noxious use is generally discouraged.

Table 5.2: Summary of Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) D-6 Guidelines* — Compatibility between Industrial/Noxious and Sensitive Uses.**

Source: Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Industrial Facility Type	General Characteristics	Minimum Recommended Separation Distance	Potential Influence Area
Class 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small scale, self contained, no outdoor storage. • Fugitive outputs are infrequent. • Daytime operation only. • Infrequent movement of products/trucks. 	20m	70m
Class 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium scale processing or manufacturing, with outdoor storage. • Periodic outputs of minor annoyance. • Shift operations are permitted. • Frequent movement of products/trucks during daytime hours. 	70m	300m
Class 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale manufacturing or processing with outdoor storage of raw and finished products. • Shift operations are permitted. • Large production volumes and continuous movement of products/trucks 24 hours per day. 	300m	1000m

Notes:

*The D-6 Guideline is presented as a general summary. There exist other D Series Guidelines that apply to specific land uses.⁸

**The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is working to create new Land Use Compatibility Guidelines to replace a number of the existing D-series guidelines. It is anticipated that the new guidelines may be in place in early 2022, which may necessitate changes to the Official Plan.

⁸ For more information on the D-Series Guidelines, please see: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/environmental-land-use-planning-guides>

Below are a number of minimum separation distances between sensitive uses and specific major facilities:

- Rail Yards: 300 metres — Class 3 Industrial Use (MECP D-6 Guidelines).
- Rail Lines: 70 metres — Class 2 Industrial Use (MECP D-6 Guidelines).
- Landfill: 500 metres from the landfill footprint (MECP D-4 Guidelines).
- Wastewater Treatment Plants: 150 metres from the periphery of the noise/odour producing source structure of the East End Plant and 100m from the West End Sewage Plant (MECP D-2 Guidelines).
- Airport Runway Approaches: Noise Exposure Forecast 30 (NEF 30) regulations (Transport Canada).

Reductions to established minimum distance separations may be permitted where:

- Mitigation measures such as berms and vegetated buffers will sufficiently reduce potential impacts.
- In support of infill development and redevelopment, where there is existing intervening development between the proposed sensitive and/or noxious use.

The minimum distance regulations related to the keeping of livestock (barns) and nearby rural residential uses are discussed in greater detail in the [Rural Area and Agriculture Chapter](#).

Community Hubs and Public Service Facilities

Recent development trends have seen an increase in the grouping of a wide variety of public service-oriented uses within the same facility. In many cases, these facilities are operated on a non-profit basis, occupied by various service providers, and aimed at providing services to Sault Ste. Marie's vulnerable populations. In some cases, these "community hubs" may include a residential component or private commercial component. Local examples include:

- YMCA: a longstanding establishment that provides recreational activities, child care, health and fitness programs and various other programs.
- United Way's Harvest Algoma Food Resource Centre: includes a food warehouse and distribution operation, and a community kitchen for food preparation and for hosting food-related courses.
- Former Rosedale School: one of Social Services' two community hubs in Sault Ste. Marie that provide access to multiple programs such as Ontario Works and Early Years Services. The Rosedale site also contains seniors' apartments.
- Former St. Bernadette School: Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services' affordable housing development for Indigenous women and children includes support services such as child and family care as well as assistance with education and employment.
- Indian Friendship Centre: provides services and programming primarily for Urban Indigenous people. Their main site on East Street offers health services, programs for children, youth, elders and families, employment and training programs, and more.
- Soup Kitchen Community Centre: provides daily drop-in lunch services, a food bank, after-school children's programs, and weekly community kitchen cooking classes.

- Former Neighbourhood Resource Centre on Gore Street: provided drop-in services such as meals, a walk-in clinic with access to various health practitioners, and access to local social service agencies.

Under current Official Plan and Zoning regulations, such uses are viewed as institutional or commercial in nature and generally fall under the broadly defined ‘office use’ definition. Given the grouping of uses, such facilities often exceed the 300m² floor space cap and must locate in the Downtown. In other cases, especially where residential uses are included, the grouping of uses does not ‘fit’ into any existing zoning provisions, even though the mix of uses are complementary and compatible. From a permitted use standpoint, each use is reviewed on its own, rather than one cohesive development — a community hub.

Community hubs can generally be defined as a grouping of public service facilities, frequently operated on a non-profit basis with a focus on providing public services and supports, often to vulnerable populations. The general intent for these facilities is to make it easier for local residents to access the health, social, cultural and recreational resources they need, together in one place. The Provincial Policy Statement supports the idea of community hubs to promote service integration and cost effectiveness, as well as easy access to services for residents, especially via transit and active transportation. Thus, community hubs should be located throughout the community, including within residential areas.

Recognizing the Size and Scope of Certain Land Uses

There are a number of land uses that are often treated as equal, even though the overall size and scope of the use directly affects off-site impacts. For example:

- A micro-brewery or bakery might be more of a commercial use, whereas a larger-scale brewery or bakery could be more industrial.
- Micro scale manufacturing to produce custom, made-to-order (artisan) products may be appropriately located in commercial areas or even as a home-based business, whereas larger manufacturing uses are more appropriately treated as industrial.
- Small-scale contractors’ yards (sub-contractors) that do not utilize heavy equipment or machinery and do not require outdoor storage may be appropriately located in commercial areas or even as a home-based business, whereas large-scale contractors yards with heavy equipment and outdoor storage are more appropriately located in industrial areas.

Recognizing the size and scope of certain land uses and granting greater flexibility will help to support local business start-ups by making it easier and cheaper to locate small-scale, start-up businesses. With this in mind, specific regulations would need to be designed to ensure that such small-scale businesses do not negatively impact neighbouring areas, while recognizing that many start-up businesses may grow over time.

Home-Based Businesses

Permitting a variety of small-scale businesses to operate from a residential dwelling is another way of supporting the viability of small-scale businesses and supporting start-up businesses. The following uses are currently explicitly permitted as home-based businesses:

- Office uses, excluding high-traffic office uses such as ambulatory health care services.
- Personal services.
- Repair and maintenance services, excluding work on fuel powered vehicles, motors or equipment and the painting or priming of any products.
- Private home daycare to a maximum of 5 children, and some arts, culture and heritage uses.
- Instructional businesses based upon appointment.

There are also existing regulations aimed at ensuring impacts like noise, traffic and parking do not negatively impact the surrounding residential neighbourhood.

Determining appropriate home-based business regulations goes hand in hand with specifically understanding the overall size and scope of a particular use in relation to the particular area in which it is proposed. There also needs to be appropriate zoning regulations to ensure the business is relocated if it outgrows its location. Finally, it is important to recognize that different home-based businesses can be appropriately accommodated in different dwelling types, including rural residences. It is therefore appropriate to permit a wider variety of uses as home-based businesses, while at the same time identifying suitable regulations to minimize any impacts to surrounding neighbours.

What We Heard

Key Themes Heard on: Land Use Compatibility

- Make it easier for homeowners to operate small, hobby-style businesses or activities on their property.
- The City should promote the development of affordable art studio spaces in neighbourhoods, as well as reuse of vacant spaces for arts and culture opportunities.
- Make it easier to transition residentially zoned properties to mixed-use, for example to support social entrepreneurship.
- General feeling that there is considerable underutilized land in Sault Ste. Marie with potential for many opportunities. Examples include land along the waterfront and near the Sault Ste. Marie Airport.
- General support for the idea of community hubs. Some particular recommendations from Saultites for community hubs include:
 - Repurposing closed schools as community hubs, providing various services, recreational uses and housing for specific groups like seniors.
 - Creating hubs specifically for youth, with support services, housing and classes.
 - Creating hubs for cultural groups.
 - Adding more hubs where residents can access mental health resources.
 - Supporting libraries for children and seniors.

What We Propose

Proposed Official Plan Policies on: Land Use Compatibility

Proposed Land Use Designations

1. **Residential** — Applies to all lands within the Urban Settlement Area that are intended primarily for residential uses. The overall vision is to facilitate complete neighbourhoods with a variety of housing types and tenure forms. Residential intensification is encouraged. Uses that provide neighbourhood amenities will also be permitted, including neighbourhood parks, neighbourhood commercial businesses such as corner stores and pharmacies, as well as suitable neighbourhood-scale institutional uses such as elementary schools, supportive housing, public service facilities and community hubs. Home-based businesses will also be permitted including small-scale artisan manufacturing and artists' studios as a secondary use to the dwelling.
2. **Commercial** — Applies to lands outside of the Downtown that are intended for a wide variety of commercial uses. The overall goal is to protect and enhance existing commercial areas by facilitating the continued use and reuse of existing commercial space. For new development and redevelopment, a greater emphasis will be placed upon achieving higher development standards than before, especially as it relates to landscaping, pedestrian amenities, off-site connectivity and accessibility. Large scale commercial uses should be located upon lands designated Commercial, Downtown or Mixed Employment.
3. **Downtown** — A new Downtown land use designation will be applied to the majority of lands located within the City's defined Downtown. A wide variety of commercial, institutional and residential uses will be permitted in the Downtown, with the overall goal of developing the Downtown as a complete, mixed neighbourhood.
4. **Mixed Employment** — Applied to smaller Industrially designated lots that can be utilized for a wider range of commercial uses. This new 'industrial/commercial' designation allows the City to use the current industrial land surplus to make up for the projected commercial land deficit. Specifically, the areas that are proposed to have this new designation are:
 - a. White Oak Drive East.
 - b. The west side of Black Road between Trunk Road and McNabb Street.
 - c. Cathcart Street and West Street in the James Street area.
 - d. Second Line East between Sackville Road and Old Garden River Road, excluding the commercial node at Great Northern Road and Second Line.
 - e. Just north of Downtown beside the CP Rail corridor (between North Street and Bruce Street).
5. **Industrial** — Applies to lands intended for a wide variety of industrial uses of varying size, scale and off-site impacts, and differing service and infrastructure requirements. The availability of industrial land is important to the overall economic development of the community. Therefore, industrial lands will generally be protected from the encroachment of sensitive uses. Where industrial lands are located in Gateway Areas or major arterial roads, design standards will be applied to ensure aesthetically pleasing development. In other areas, appropriate measures will

be required to ensure impacts to nearby sensitive uses such as residential, are mitigated through appropriate setbacks and buffering.

6. **Institutional** — Applies to lands outside of the Downtown that are occupied by large public and quasi-public services, including large health care facilities, secondary and post-secondary schools, certain large “super” elementary schools and other major government or non-profit uses. Institutional development shall adhere to a high standard of site design, resulting in a ‘campus-like’ environment with ample landscaped areas.
7. **Community Parks** — Applies to urban and rural lands occupied by major public parks and recreational areas that warrant long-term protection for public use. Community Parks act as destinations for Sault Ste. Marie residents at a city-wide scale. These include sports and recreation facilities, community centres and conservation areas. Compared to the current Parks and Recreation designation, this reformatted designation is only applied to lands owned by government or non-profit organizations, including conservation lands located in the Rural Area.
8. **Open Space** — Applies to urban and rural lands consisting of open, green or undeveloped space that are either:
 - a. Golf courses, or
 - b. Open space not traditionally purposed as park space, such as environmentally sensitive lands, natural hazard lands and lands that act as buffers.

Open Space lands warrant a good level of protection for their existing functions, but it is understood that some of these lands may not necessarily remain as open space indefinitely.

9. **Rural Area** — Applies to rural lands outside of the Urban Settlement Area as well as a number of areas identified to be included into the Urban Settlement Area. The overall goal is to maintain the existing rural character, maintain a large parcel fabric and protect the long-term viability of agricultural uses.
10. **Precambrian Uplands** — Applies to all lands located above the Precambrian Shield Line to the north City limit. This is an area with unique environmental functions and sensitivity, as well as significant access and terrain challenges. A strong protective approach that limits development is recommended. The only permitted uses will be conservation uses and other limited uses that have no negative environmental impacts, and can achieve legal access, such as maple syrup harvesting and production.
11. **Aggregate Extraction** — Applies to lands that contain aggregate resources (sand and gravel), generally located between the Shield Line and the Rural Area. The overall goal is to protect the long-term viability of the aggregate deposits which are considered a Provincially Significant Resource. The main permitted use is aggregate extraction and associated uses. Existing residential development is recognized. However, new residential development (i.e. residential lot creation or second units) is discouraged, unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts to existing or future aggregate operations. The aggregate extraction area corresponds with the groundwater recharge area which supplies the city’s potable drinking water wells. New pits and quarries shall adhere to the groundwater recharge area protection policies.

12. **Waste Management** — Applies to all City-owned properties that encompass the Municipal Landfill site. Permitted uses include the landfill and associated uses. The overall goal is to support the rigorous Provincial regulatory framework currently in place. The development of sensitive uses, such as residential, within 500 metres of the landfill footprint is discouraged.
13. **Airport Employment Lands** — Applies to all lands owned by the Sault Ste. Marie Airport Development Corporation. The overall goal is to support the long-term operation of the Airport, an essential transportation facility, by limiting the encroachment of sensitive uses and supporting the development of commercial and industrial uses that require proximity to the Airport. Other compatible uses, such as the existing Runway Park racetrack, are also permitted.

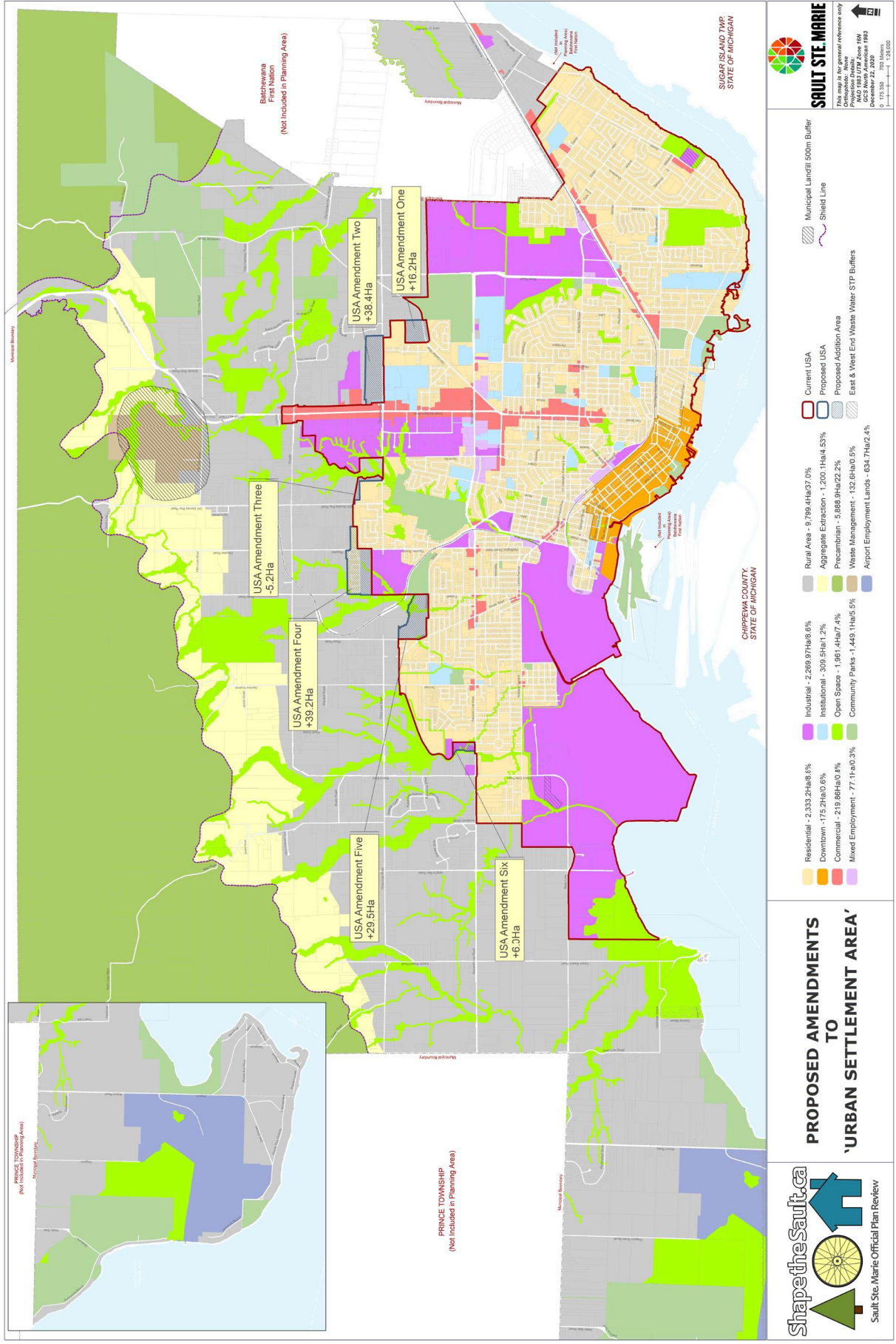
The following table and map illustrate the proposed application of the new land use designations.

Table 5.3: Area and Proportion of Proposed Official Plan Land Use Designations.

Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.

Land use designation	Total area		Proportion of total designated land within city
	Hectares	Acres	
Residential	2,333	5,765	8.8%
Commercial	220	544	0.8%
Downtown	175	432	0.6%
Mixed Employment	77	190	0.3%
Industrial	2,270	5,609	8.6%
Institutional	310	766	1.2%
Community Parks	1,449	3,581	5.5%
Open Space	1,961	4,846	7.4%
Rural Area	9,800	24,216	37%
Precambrian Uplands	5,889	14,552	22.2%
Aggregate Extraction	1,200	2,965	4.53%
Waste Management	133	329	0.5%
Airport Employment Lands	635	1,569	2.4%

Figure 5.2: Map of Proposed Land Use Designations (with Urban Settlement Area Amendments).
 Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.



Land Use Compatibility — Minimum Distance Separation

The following policies are aimed at separating incompatible land uses. Sensitive land uses are those where routine or normal activities are reasonably expected to be negatively impacted by a nearby use that emits noxious discharges such as noise, dust, odour and vibrations, as part of its routine or normal activities. Examples of sensitive land uses include residential uses, day care centres, parks, educational and healthcare facilities. Uses that can produce noxious discharges include industrial uses, major transportation and public infrastructure facilities, as well as agricultural uses where livestock are kept.

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) **D-Series Minimum Distance Separation Guidelines** will be utilized to review any land use applications proposing a sensitive use within the influence area of an industrial/noxious use, or vice versa.

The following minimum specific separation distances are required between sensitive uses and the following major facilities:

- Rail Yards: 300 metres.
- Rail Lines: 70 metres.
- Airport Runway Approaches: Noise Exposure Forecast 30 (NEF 30) regulations.
- Landfill: 500 metres from the landfill footprint.
- West End and East End Wastewater Treatment Plants: 150 metres from the existing footprint of the treatment plants, including allowances for future expansions.

Figure 5.3: 500-metre Separation Distance from the Municipal Landfill.

Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.



Figure 5.4: 150-metre Separation Distance from the West End Wastewater Treatment Plant.
Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.



Figure 5.5: 150-metre Separation Distance from the East End Wastewater Treatment Plant.
Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.



An **Impact Assessment** prepared by a qualified professional must be submitted as part of a complete application to locate a non-compatible use, including new lot creation, where a lot or part thereof is within the influence area of a sensitive or noxious use.

- Reductions to established minimum distance separations may be permitted where mitigation measures such as berms and vegetated buffers will sufficiently reduce potential impacts.
- Existing topography, vegetated areas and intervening development will be considered when assessing the need for an impact assessment as part of a complete application.
- Where new sensitive uses or lots that have the potential to house a sensitive use are proposed and a portion of the new lot or use is within the influence area of a noxious use, the need for an impact assessment may be waived, and conditions imposed to ensure the sensitive use is located upon the portion of the lot that is beyond the influence area.
- The City may utilize Site Plan Control upon existing vacant lots within the influence area of a noxious use to implement such measures. Site plan control may be waived where existing buildings housing a sensitive use are proposed to be expanded or new accessory structures are proposed in association with an existing sensitive use. Existing vacant lots will be required to enter into a site plan agreement to ensure among other things, that new sensitive uses and amenity areas are constructed beyond the influence area of a noxious use.

There are also minimum distance regulations related to the keeping of livestock (barns) and nearby rural residential uses. These setbacks are based upon the size of the barn and are discussed in greater detail in the [Rural Area and Agriculture Chapter](#).

Public Service Facilities and Community Hubs

The Official Plan supports permitting a wide variety of public service facilities and community hubs throughout the community. 🏠❤️🚲

- Community hubs are generally defined as a grouping of public service facilities, frequently operated on a non-profit basis with a focus on providing public services and supports, often to vulnerable populations. The general intent for these facilities is to make it easier for local residents to access health, social, cultural, recreational and other resources together in one place. Community hubs facilitate greater service integration and cost effectiveness and may include a wide variety of complementary and compatible uses.
- Public service facilities and community hubs shall be appropriately located and scaled to the area and site upon which they are proposed, with special regard for integrated mobility and accessibility.
- The Zoning By-law shall be amended to specifically define and regulate 'Community Hubs'.

Recognizing the Size and Scope of Certain Land Uses ↗️

It is a general policy of the Official Plan to recognize the size and scope of land uses when assessing applications to permit new development. It is acknowledged that some small-scale uses, which may be traditionally viewed as industrial or commercial in nature, may actually be appropriately located in commercial areas or as a home-based business, without the need for an Official Plan Amendment.

- The Zoning By-law should be reviewed and amended as appropriate, to further define and permit certain uses based upon their size and scope of operations, with regulations to ensure that such small-scale businesses do not negatively impact neighbouring areas.

Home-Based Businesses ↗

The Official Plan recognizes that a wide variety of small-scale businesses, including start-ups, can be viably operated as a home-based business. The Official Plan supports a wide variety of uses that can be appropriately accommodated as home-based businesses with appropriate regulations to ensure home-based businesses do not negatively impact surrounding residential uses, with special regard for noise, parking, traffic and aesthetics.

- The Zoning By-law shall be reviewed and amended where appropriate to permit additional home-based business uses, based upon the overall size and scope of particular uses.

Council may consider allowing home-based businesses that are not expressly permitted within the Zoning By-law, on a case-by-case basis through a rezoning application, subject to the following guiding principles:

- The proposed use should not negatively impact surrounding residential uses, with special regard for noise, parking, traffic and aesthetics.
- The use does not involve any significant changes to the external character of the dwelling unit or property.
- Outdoor storage and display is generally not permitted or required to support the proposed home-based business.
- Micro-scale manufacturing, 'maker spaces' and 'artisan workshops' may be permitted subject to relevant Official Plan and Zoning By-law provisions. Such uses are generally characterized as producing custom, individually unique, made-to-order products.