



Brown City

Master Plan 2026

February 18, 2026 Draft



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Chapter 1

Introduction

The City of Brown City Master Plan 2026 is a realistic assessment of current conditions and expressions of the future goals and vision of the City, defining the form and character the City seeks to achieve. The Master Plan is designed to provide guidance to both the public and private sectors regarding a range of topics including future land use, transportation, the natural environment, housing, economic development, community facilities, and quality of life.

Authority to Plan

The Brown City Planning Commission has prepared this Brown City Master Plan under the authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008. Article 3, Section 125.3831 of the Act states:

A planning commission shall make and approve a master plan as a guide for development within the planning jurisdiction:

a) In the preparation of a master plan, a planning commission shall do all of the following, as applicable:

- 1. Make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth within the planning jurisdiction with due regard to its relation to neighboring jurisdictions.*
- 2. Consult with representatives of adjacent local units of government in respect to their planning so that conflicts in master plans and zoning may be avoided.*



3. Cooperate with all departments of the state and federal governments, public transportation agencies, and other public agencies concerned with programs for economic, social, and physical development within the planning jurisdiction and seek maximum coordination of the local unit of government's programs with these agencies.

Purpose of the Plan

A master plan is a comprehensive policy guide which provides a framework for growth, development, and the community vision. Simply stated, a master plan describes:

- Where the community has been,
- Where the community wants to go, and
- How the community plans to get there.

Article I, Section 125.3807 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008 gives a summary of the purpose of a master plan:

The general purpose of a master plan is to guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that...is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical; considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development; and will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.

Additionally, the master plan should provide a general statement of the community's goals and a comprehensive vision of the future. It should also serve as the statutory basis for the Zoning Ordinance, and as the primary policy guide for local officials considering development proposals, land divisions, capital improvements, and other matters related to land use and

development, pursuant to section 203(1) of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Michigan Public Act 110 of 2006.

The master plan is not a zoning map, though it does reflect the planned land use and existing developments. It does not introduce new zoning districts but serves as a broader, long-term guide for community development. While zoning and the master plan are distinctly different, they are interconnected. The master plan provides overarching guidance for zoning decisions, ensuring that these decisions align with community goals and long-term strategies.

Master plans are long-range policy guides. With an approximately 20-year planning horizon, the Brown City 2026 Master Plan considers the future of Brown City through the year 2045. Flexibility is a key feature of the master plan, allowing it to adapt in unforeseen future conditions.

Every community's master plan is unique, tailored to address the specific issues and challenges of the community. By combining data and local knowledge, the master plan's purpose is to develop unique and informed decisions for positive development of the community.

Plan Organization

This plan consists of 8 chapters. This first chapter introduces the purpose of master planning, provides a background on Brown City and considers the City's context within the region. Chapter 2 Planning Influences and Drivers identifies and summarizes numerous factors, both internal and external, which may influence planning within Brown City.

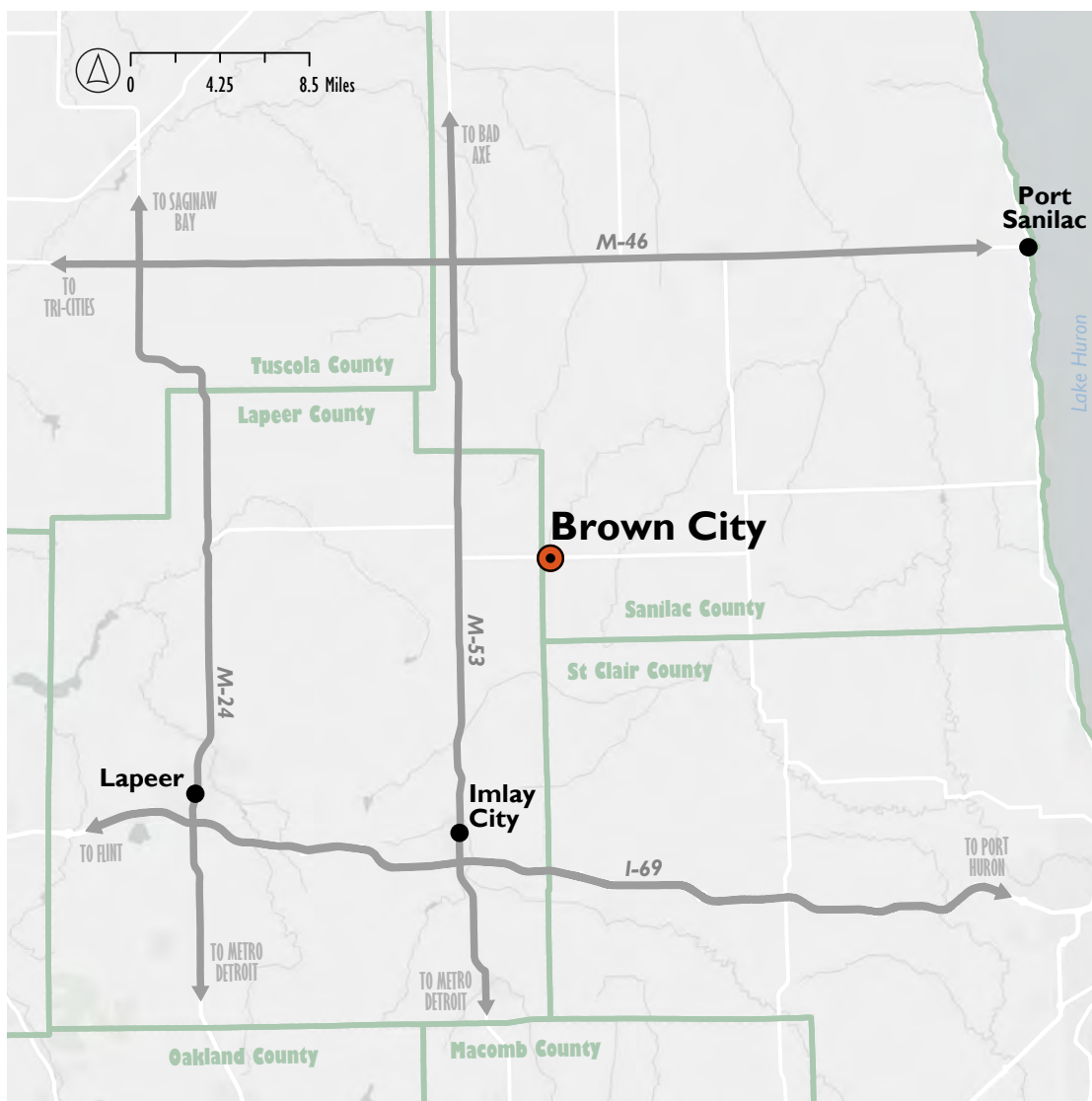
Chapters 3 through 5 document and describe existing and physical conditions within Brown City, including social, economic, housing, and physical characteristics.

Chapters 6 through 8 describe the direction of Brown City’s land use and development for the future. These chapters include the recommendations which are based on the findings from the community engagement, demographics, existing land use, natural features, and infrastructure. The major themes of the community goals are building the community’s character, desirable housing, economic and business vitality, natural feature preservation, and quality community services. Chapter 8 serves as a guide to the implementation of the recommendations of the plan.

Regional Context

Brown City is located in the Thumb Region of Michigan. Brown City is situated in southwest Sanilac County with a small portion of the City in Lapeer County. With a population of just under 1,300, Brown City is a rural community known for its agricultural heritage and small-town charm. Brown City has a historic downtown which brings visitors from surrounding areas for specialty shopping, personal services, and social and civic activities. With its proximity to Lake Huron, the Thumb Region offers natural beauty and outdoor activities while maintaining a relaxed pace of life.

Figure 1. Regional Location Map



Brown City is also within reach of larger cities like Port Huron and Flint, offering access to urban amenities.

Founded in 1876 by Robert and John Brown, the City was established on Robert's farm. The City grew rapidly after the development of the train station at the intersection of the Port Huron and Northwestern Railroad line, which is now M-90. Despite changes over the years, the city remains deeply connected to its agricultural roots.

Why is this Update Needed?

This 2026 Master Plan serves as an important update to the City's prior 2018 Master Plan. This Master Plan reflects on the changes of the past decade and addresses emerging opportunities and challenges that Brown City may encounter in the years to come. The following national, and in some cases, global shifts present new possibilities for growth and resilience:

- Slowing population growth driven by younger generations delaying marriage and having fewer children, alongside an aging population as the Boomer Generation enters retirement and life expectancy increases. This offers the chance to strengthen multigenerational connections and create a more inclusive and physically accessible community.
- Slow recovery from 2008 housing crisis, compounded by strong housing demand in 2020 amidst low supply. This highlights opportunities for well-planned housing development that meets an evolving need from the community.
- Ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including significant health, economic, and housing challenges. This showed the importance of community resilience, in which the lessons learned can create more adaptable and healthy systems moving forward.

- The rapid growth of social media and household technology, coupled with growing digital fatigue and loneliness. By embracing technology mindfully, Brown City can foster a more connected, informed, and empowered community.
- More frequent and severe weather events, such as tornadoes, wildfires, and flash floods. A community can plan for these challenges by protecting natural resources and residents at the same time, ensuring a healthy and safe community.

Given the significant changes since the last Master Plan, the Brown City Planning Commission has determined the need for a Master Plan update to address contemporary issues and community concerns. This planning effort goes beyond the previous 2018 plan by offering a comprehensive strategy that prioritizes housing, economic development, improved circulation and quality of life.





Chapter 2

Planning Influences and Drivers

This Master Plan has been developed by and for the citizens of Brown City. As such, the most important “driver” of the policies and recommendations outlined in this Master Plan is the needs and desires of the residents of Brown City. However, the City exists within the context of the greater Thumb Region, with the City’s success being directly tied to the region’s success. Therefore, this Master Plan also considers the planning efforts and initiatives that have been undertaken by Brown City’s neighbors and local and regional entities who are partnered with Brown City to strengthen the City and region. The key influences and drivers of this Master Plan are documented in this section.

Citizen Input

This Master Plan was developed with significant input received from members of the community, achieved through a variety of engagement methods. Dozens of community leaders including members of the elected and appointed bodies of the city contributed toward the development of the plan. Hundreds of citizens and stakeholders provided input during the course of the planning process.

Notably, a Steering Committee was formed and met on a regular basis to oversee the development of the Master Plan. They helped formulate the public engagement process and methods, worked to spread the word about the project, reviewed project drafts, and provided valuable feedback to the technical consultant team.

Public engagement methods included an online survey, booth at the Brown City Days Festival, public open house, and a public hearing. The following is a summary of the primary engagement methods employed during the development of this Master Plan.

Brown City Days Festival Feedback

As a major community event, the Brown City Days Festival offered a valuable opportunity to engage with residents and visitors. From June 5th to 8th, a public engagement booth promoted the City’s master planning process and invited attendees to share brief feedback. One activity included a large comment board where participants could express their visions for the City’s future, while more specific feedback was provided through an online survey.

Residents emphasized a strong desire to maintain the City’s small-town character while supporting thoughtful growth and greater self-sufficiency. Recurring themes included support for expanded economic development, particularly job expansion affordable dining options, useful local businesses, and reactivating vacant storefront in the downtown area. Many residents expressed the desire to expand agriculture, as well as allowing residents to keep chickens and supporting more-people centered farming activities.

Respondents also emphasized the importance of enhancing recreational opportunities. The park was widely praised, with suggestions to continue supporting amenities such as upgraded playground equipment, outdoor games, workout equipment, dog park, youth center, public pool, and disc golf,



particularly through improved maintenance and organized tournaments. Additional ideas focused on recreational opportunities to improve safety by having designated spaces for off-road vehicle use.

Some participants also highlighted broader public needs, including public safety, transparency in local government, and improved healthcare access including rural transportation options. Regarding community character, several respondents expressed a desire to maintain the City’s small-town feel and preserve its current identity.

Community Survey

Community engagement is a valuable part of the planning process in soliciting public input. An online survey was made available to the public between July and September 2025. The survey was advertised on the City’s website and social media outlets. Hard copies of the survey were also made available at the City offices during business hours. A total of 106 surveys were completed.

It is important to note that the community survey was not a statistically valid survey, in that it was not based on a random sampling of residents. Rather, the survey was made generally available to the public and therefore may reflect self-selection bias. The survey also did not offer specific details of the costs that may be associated with the various answer choices. These limitations will be taken

into consideration by Brown City. Nonetheless, the results of the survey do offer general insights into community values and perceptions about important issues within the community.

As summary of the responses from the 106 survey takers is included below. Filters were applied to the survey results to evaluate differences in opinion between various segments of respondents. For the purposes of this analysis, the following respondent segments were considered:

- City Residents: (Brown City residents only – 79 respondents)
- Young Adults: (29 years and younger – 22 respondents)
- Business Stakeholders: (Own or operate a business or employed in Brown City – 33 respondents)
- Families with Children: (58 respondents)

The below survey summary narrative identifies instances where differences in the responses across the respondent segments were especially notable.

Respondent Demographics

Most respondents were residents of Brown City (77%), while 23% were non-residents. Of the non-residents, many resided in nearby communities including Maple Valley Township, Imlay City, and North Branch.

Respondents were asked to indicate their relationship and/or association with the City. As aforementioned, most were residents of Brown City (70%), while 22% worked in the City and 11% own and/or operate a business within the City. 11% of respondents attend a school in Brown City or had children that attend a school in the City. Another 19% of respondents indicated they are regular visitors of the City.

When asked about their work location, the largest number of respondents indicated that they worked in Brown City (30%), while 14% indicated they work from home, 11% said they work elsewhere in Sanilac County, and 7% said they work in Lapeer County. 25% indicated “other”, with work locations frequently noted as being within the Detroit metropolitan area. 12% indicated they are not working or retired.

The age of the survey respondents was generally middle aged, with people aged 30 to 49 representing the largest group of respondents (51%), followed by respondents age 18 to 29 years (18%), 50 to 64 years (16%), and 65 years and older (11%). The least represented age group was younger than 18 years (4%).

The household composition of the respondents was varied. The largest percentage (52%) of respondents said their household included two parents with children. Two adults without children was the second most common household (24%), followed by single adult living alone (11%). Only 4% of respondents were in a household featuring a single parent with children. 8% of respondents indicated that their household was multigenerational, while 2% of respondents lived in households with extended family.

Positive and Negative Aspects

When asked what Brown City’s most positive aspects are, the 5 most common answers were:

1. Small-town atmosphere (79%)
2. Safe neighborhoods and community (44%)

3. Limited or no congestion (42%)
4. Proximity to friends or family (41%)
5. Quality of the school district (39%)

There was broad consensus across all respondent segments, as small-town atmosphere was the top choice for all respondent segments. Additionally, all respondent segments featured the same top 5 responses, although the order of responses #2 through #5 varied slightly:

- Business Stakeholders noted quality of the school district as their #2 response and at a much higher rate (50%) than the overall responses.

When asked what Brown City’s least favorable aspects are, the 5 most common answers were:

1. Lack of shopping, retail, and service options (61%)
2. Lack of entertainment options (51%)
3. Lack of dining options (45%)
4. Blighted or deteriorating businesses (35%)
5. Lack of youth activities (34%)

The various respondent segments were generally consistent in their responses, with “lack of shopping, retail, and service options” as the #1 choice and “lack of entertainment options” as the #2 choice for each segment. In reviewing the top 5 responses, some distinctions across the respondent segments were noted:

- The City Residents respondent segment indicated “lack of youth activities” as their #4 answer, while “blighted or deteriorating businesses” was their #5 answer.
- Young Adults indicated lack of youth activities as their #3 answer. Young Adults were less displeased with the lack of dining options (28%) and blighted or deteriorating businesses (17%) in comparison to the overall responses.

- The Families with Children respondent segment chose lack of youth activities as their #4 response, with blighted or deteriorating businesses as their #5 response.

Reasons to Visit Downtown

Respondents were asked the primary reasons they visit downtown and were given multiple answer choice options. The most noted reason was for work (33%), followed by dining (25%), personal services (nail/hair salon, etc.) (25%), and festivals and events (21%). Only 1 of the 106 respondents indicated entertainment. 26% of respondents indicated “other”, with open ended responses including the library, post office, and groceries. Several people indicated that they do not visit downtown at all.

Variations in the responses across the respondent segments included:

- Personal services was the Young Adults respondent segment’s #1 choice at a rate (47%) that was notably higher than the overall responses.

Improving Downtown Brown City

Respondents were asked to indicate what would make downtown Brown City better and were given a listing of possible answer choices. The top responses were:

- Attract businesses to vacant storefronts (75%)
- More dining options (49%)
- More activities downtown (46%)
- More store variety (40%)

Some respondents elaborated on their responses providing ideas for improvements including: activities such as farmers markets and flea markets during summer and fall months; vacant storefront visibility and covering windows; and, youth and family-oriented activities. The City Residents

respondent segment indicated the third most important way to improve the downtown areas was to have more store variety (46%), while having more activities downtown (44%) was their fourth choice. The Families with Children respondent segment noted public space improvements (33%) as their fourth choice.

Respondents were asked to rank their priorities for the future of downtown Brown City. They were given seven different priorities and asked to rank them from 1 to 7, with 1 being their top priority. Similar to the previous question, having more stores and shops was a high priority, with 63% indicating that as their #1 or #2 priority. Slightly less than half (45%) of respondents indicated that more entertainment options was their #1 or #2 priority. There was general agreement on this question, as every respondent segment had these same two as their top priorities in the same order. Aside from the top two priorities, improve landscaping and streetscaping was also noted by many respondents as being important (27% of all respondents indicated this as #1 or #2).

Reasons to Visit Other Brown City Locations

Respondents were asked the reason they visit other locations in Brown City outside of the downtown area. The top responses were for shopping (39%), dining (34%), recreation (21%), and work (21%). 21% indicated “other” and elaborated on their response indicating they visit friends and family, for the Brown City Park and sports, as well as specific stores and restaurants.

Variations in the responses across the respondent segments included:

- The Young Adults respondent segment had a notably higher percentage of responses for both shopping (53%) and dining (47%) as compared to the overall responses.

Land Use Priorities

Respondents were given a list of potential land use development strategies that Brown City could work toward in the next 5-20 years and were asked to indicate the level of importance of each strategy. The following responses were noted as having the highest level of importance:

- Attracting businesses to vacant storefronts (88% extremely important or very important)
- Improve/expand stormwater management (67%)
- Improve/expand water infrastructure (63%)
- Improve/expand recreational facilities and programs (61%)
- Expand events in the community (53%)
- Encourage additional industrial development and industrial-related jobs (51%)

On the other end, the lowest priority strategies included improve/expand bike infrastructure (39% slightly important or not at all important) and encourage additional housing development (33% slightly important or not at all important).

Variations in the responses across the respondent segments included:

- The Young Adults respondent segment indicated a higher level of importance for neighborhoods and housing in comparison to the overall responses. They ranked encourage additional housing development as 58% extremely important or very important, while improve the appearance of existing homes and neighborhoods was 53% extremely important or very important.

Appeal of Housing to Certain Population Segments

When asked whether service workers, like teachers or police officers, could secure quality and affordable housing in Brown City, respondents were divided between yes (36%), neutral/no opinion (35%), and no (30%). Many write-in answers indicated this was resulting from a combination of high housing values, limited quality and affordable housing options, and low wages for public service workers. The Business Stakeholders respondent segment more often (44%) indicated that housing was not affordable for a public service worker compared to the overall responses, indicating there was limited availability, cost, and lower wages.

When asked if housing in the City was appealing and affordable to young adults, the respondents generally leaned toward no. 49% indicated they thought it was not, 29% indicated they were neutral or had no opinion, and 21% indicated yes. Of the write-in answers, many described local housing as not having enough options, low quality housing, and high costs for mortgages and rent. The Business Stakeholders and the Families with Children respondent segments more strongly thought that housing was not appealing and affordable to young adults. They responded no at a rate of 63% and 54%, respectively. Interestingly, the Young Adults respondent segment had the highest percentage of yes votes (28%) of all the respondent segments, but still had more respondents indicating no.

When asked if Brown City offered sufficient housing, services, and amenities to support lifelong residency within the City, respondents were mixed. The largest number of respondents indicated neutral or no opinion (38%), but 36% answered no and 26% indicated yes. The most frequent concerns noted were the lack of services and amenities (healthcare, mental health, social services, transportation for non-drivers, retail, restaurants, and recreation), limited and unaffordable housing, and few local job opportunities. Both the

Business Stakeholders and Families with Children respondent segments leaned toward saying Brown City is not sufficient for lifelong residency, with 41% and 42% voting no, respectively.

Housing Types

Respondents were asked about the type of housing they currently live in. More respondents said they lived in large single-family homes (larger than 1,500 square feet) (55%) and 35% in small single-family homes (smaller than 1,500 square feet). A very small percentage of respondents indicated other housing types such as townhouses (4%), and multiple family apartments (3%). The Young Adults respondent segment had higher percentages living in townhouses (11%) and multiple family apartments (6%) compared to the overall responses.

Respondents were asked what type of housing would they prefer to live in, if it were available and they could afford it. Responses indicated a high preference for large single-family homes (70%) and small single-family homes (26%). Other than single family homes, townhouses (11%) and senior housing or independent living facilities (9%) received modest votes.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate what are the primary barriers to living in their preferred housing. 38% of respondents indicated that there were no barriers. Other responses commonly noted included: the housing type does not widely exist in Brown City (28%); the housing type exists in Brown City, but is not affordable (24%); the housing type exists in Brown City and is affordable, but is poor quality (23%); and, the housing type exists in Brown City, but is not available (22%). Distinct from the overall responses, the Young Adult and Business Stakeholder respondent segments less frequently cited no barriers, at 17% and 27% respectively. Both of these respondent segments noted that the top barrier is poor quality housing (housing type exists in Brown City and is affordable, but is poor quality).

Final Comments

As the survey concluded, respondents were invited to share final comments on land use and development. Those who provided answers emphasized the need for a cleaner, more vibrant, and family-oriented city. Priorities included downtown revitalization through storefront rehabilitation, blight removal, and beautification features such as public art, updated banners, welcome signage, and street trees. Several called for more businesses that meet everyday needs such as car mechanic shops, grocery stores, and restaurants.

Respondents also highlighted Brown City Park as a community asset with untapped potential, suggesting upgrades to the playground, installing water play features, repairs to ball field lighting, and opportunities for new sports such as pickleball and grass volleyball. Expanded amenities like open pavilions, picnic tables, and a possible recreation or event center were also suggested to provide safe gathering spaces for children, teens, seniors, and families.

Local and Regional Planning Initiatives

The following is a summary of local and regional planning initiatives with particular relevance to this Master Plan. These initiatives have been considered and evaluated by Brown City and inform many of the recommendations outlined in this Master Plan.

Lapeer County Master Plan (2006)

Adopted in 2006, the Lapeer County Master Plan helps to guide policies that influence land use, infrastructure, and public services in the County. It aims to maintain the small town character and to uplift local leaders and community voices. The plan includes goals which are focused on improving local government cooperation and services, preserving

farmland and natural features, expanding economic development, and improving transportation systems.

It is important to note that this master plan was created nearly 20 years ago, and was written before the full impact of the Great Recession and the Covid-19 pandemic, which had significant impacts to the region and national development.

Sanilac County Master Plan (2011)

Originally adopted in 2004 and updated in 2011, the Sanilac County Master Plan was created to support decisions around the local land use, environment, economy, transportation, and community facilities. The County's land use and economy is largely agricultural, however the population growth has created pressures on the existing land use. This plan provides guidance focused on strategic growth to create balance between the residential, environmental, and economic needs.

Though this plan was written slightly more recently than Lapeer County, it is important to remember that this plan is relatively dated, being nearly 15 years old.

Michigan Statewide Housing Plan (2023)

The Michigan Statewide Housing Plan addresses the complex barriers to attaining safe, healthy, affordable, and accessible housing. The plan creates five statewide housing targets and eight priority areas. There are eight priority areas that guide the statewide goals and strategies listed below.

- **Equity and Racial Justice:** Addresses long term disparities in housing access and generational wealth building by striving for equitable access to housing.

- **Housing Ecosystem:** Striving for a housing ecosystem that is diverse and interconnected with other priorities of the Statewide Housing Plan. This includes the construction of housing, data and research on housing, and internet accessibility for housing.
- **Preventing and Ending Homelessness:** Prioritizes stability for people that have experienced homelessness and need additional support, as well as those that experience chronic housing instability.
- **Housing Stock:** Increases the supply of affordable, accessible, and attainable housing. This is driven by a need to develop, rehabilitate, and preserve housing for all levels of incomes.
- **Older Adult Housing:** Expands supply of affordable, accessible housing units specifically for older adults (65 years or older). This is important because Michigan has a growing aging population.
- **Rental Housing:** Prioritizes rental housing and rental affordability as a housing option for those who cannot afford or do not want to own a home.
- **Homeownership:** Increases the homeownership equity, for low- and moderate-income households, overall, and helping vulnerable homeowners keep their homes. This is important for financial benefits, generational wealth building, and community stability.
- **Communication and Education:** Focuses on inclusive communication and education to support affordable and attainable housing, understanding of housing programs and services, and enhancing awareness of fair housing rights.

East Michigan Housing Partnership Action Plan (2024)

The eight priorities of the Michigan Statewide Housing Plan is accomplished through the action planning of the regional housing partnerships. Sanilac and Lapeer Counties are located within the East Michigan Housing Partnership, which also includes the counties of Huron, Tuscola, Shiawassee, Genesee, and St. Clair. The nine regional goals are described below:

- **Information and Collaboration:** Increases collaboration on housing with state agencies, philanthropy, local governments, tribal nations, education, and private sector organizations.
- **Construction Industry and Licensed Skilled Trades persons:** Expands housing availability through construction and trades person capacity. This is supported through workforce development in the construction and trade industry.
- **Stable and Affordable Housing:** Increases access to stable and affordable quality housing for households with extremely low incomes.
- **Full Spectrum Housing Development:** Increases the supply of the full spectrum of housing that is affordable and attainable to Michigan residents.
- **Rehabilitate and Preservation:** Increases the rehabilitation and/or preservation of housing stock.
- **Reduce Evictions:** Keep people housed by reducing the number of evictions.
- **Quality Rental Housing:** Increase the quality of rental housing.
- **Increase Homeownership:** Increase homeownership among households with low to moderate income levels.

- **Housing Stability:** Assist Michigan residents to increase housing stability through financial literacy and wealth building.

Planning in Adjacent Communities

Burnside Township Master Plan (2008)

Burnside Township is located west of Brown City in Lapeer County. Burnside Township's Master Plan was adopted in 2008. The goals within the plan are focused on flexible land uses; preserving attractive rural character, natural features, and agricultural industry; encouraging adequate housing and commercial development; and providing efficient public services.

The future land use map designates the the area immediately surrounding the City of Brown City as agricultural.

Maple Valley Township

[Placeholder for Maple Valley Township Master Plan, waiting to receive it from the Township.]



Chapter 3

Social and Economic Characteristics

An analysis of social and economic characteristics is an important component in the development of any master plan and a successful planning process. While evaluating the community's current situation reveals its immediate needs and shortcomings, forecasts and projections offer a foundation for identifying future land use needs, public facility demands, and essential services.

By examining community demographics such as population, income, and employment, a community can identify trends and opportunities that will influence future land use decisions and policy choices. Since certain socioeconomic analyses have an identifiable impact upon the future of a community, appropriate sections have been detailed to relate social trends to future economic considerations. Secondly, the socio-economy of a place does not function in a vacuum. Consequently, this analysis is contextualized, when appropriate, within larger socioeconomic environments and trends.

Methodology

This demographic analysis relies on several key data sources. Figures from the decennial U.S. Census reports, including the most recent 2020 Census are utilized, where available. Another key data source is Esri (a leader in GIS software, location intelligence and mapping), who produces independent demographic and socioeconomic estimates and forecasts for the United States

using a variety of data sources, beginning with the latest Census base and adding a mixture of administrative records and private sources to capture change. Esri data is available for 2024, with 5-year forecasts for the year 2029. Data on certain detailed demographic topics is only available through the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, made available by the U.S. Census Bureau. Finally, certain data for Sanilac County and Lapeer County, including future forecasts, is made available by the Michigan Statewide Population Projections through 2050 from the Michigan Center for Data Analytics.

Population

Population growth is an important factor influencing land use decisions in any community. Simply put, if the population of a community is growing, there will be a need for more commerce, jobs, parks and recreation, public services and facilities, or roads. If a population size is stagnant or shrinking, the community may have different priorities such as focusing on sustaining economic vitality or improving quality of life.

Table I shows the population trends from 1970 through the most current 2020 Census for Brown City, Sanilac County, Lapeer County, the State of Michigan, and surrounding communities. Between 1970 and 2000, Brown City's population increased by 16.8%, however since 2000 the population has leveled off and declined by more 2.4%. These population trends suggest that Brown City was impacted by the Great Recession, which was likely also negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the community can use this as an

opportunity to focus reinvestment and promoting new opportunities, attracting new residents, and encouraging entrepreneurship.

Similar historical population decline trends have occurred within Burnside Township and Sanilac County as a whole, while Maple Valley Township had fluctuating population and Lapeer County has had mostly positive growth.

Table 2 shows projected population numbers for 2024 and 2029 provided by Esri. The data estimates a modest decline, by 34 people, for Brown City. Esri estimated that Sanilac County’s population

would decline by 400 and Lapeer County would decline by 620 within the five year period. Michigan was also shown to have population loss.

In 2024, the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics created the Michigan Statewide Population Projections through 2050. This study includes a population forecasts for Michigan and its counties. **Table 3** displays the estimated population projections for Brown City, derived proportionally from the Sanilac County and Michigan projections. Like the surrounding areas, both are expected to decrease, reflected in the projections. This projection method is called the

Table 1. Population Trends, 1970-2020

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Brown City	1,142	1,163	1,244	1,334	1,323	1,302
Burnside Township	1,506	1,772	1,753	1,920	1,866	1,904
Maple Valley Township	895	1,009	1,022	1,114	1,221	1,178
Sanilac County	35,181	40,789	39,928	44,547	43,114	40,611
Lapeer County	52,361	70,038	74,768	87,904	88,318	88,619
Michigan	8,881,826	9,262,078	9,295,297	9,938,444	9,883,640	10,077,331

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Esri converted Census 2010 into 2020 geography and Census 2020 data.

Table 2. Population Estimates, 2024-2029

	2024	2029
Brown City	1,263	1,229
Maple Valley Township	1,837	1,787
Burnside Township	1,152	1,128
Sanilac County	40,102	39,702
Lapeer County	88,748	88,128
Michigan	10,070,141	10,025,714

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Esri estimate for 2024 and forecast for 2029.

Table 3. Population Projections, Brown City 2020-2045

2020 City of Brown City Population	2045 City Population Derived from Sanilac County Projection	2045 City Population Derived from State of Michigan Projection
1,302	1,195	1,299

Source: “Michigan Statewide Population Projections through 2050”, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics (2024). Derived projections for Brown City based on Wade Trim Analysis, 2025.

step-down method, typically used for smaller communities. This method is helpful, but limited in assuming Brown City’s population will follow the same trends as the larger areas. It also does not account for the unforeseen economic, social, or environmental changes that influence the City’s development.

- Empty Nest (45-64 year)
- Older Adults (65 years or older)

Table 4 shows population by age groups for the City, County, and State. The 2010 values are from the U.S. Census while 2024 and 2029 values are Esri estimates. Each geographic area highlighted in the table shows evidence of an aging population through the year 2029.

Age Distribution

An age distribution analysis is used by demographers and policy makers to anticipate future changes in age groups which may have an influence on health care, education, and recreation. In this analysis, five life cycle groups are defined:

In 2010, Brown City had a proportionally higher number in the school age (5-19) and family formation group (20-44). By 2024, many of the school children group (5-19) aged into the family formation group (20-44). Additionally, the older adult population (65 and older) saw significant growth between 2010 to 2024. By 2029, this trend is projected to continue, with the older adult population increasing further. The number of school age children and those in the family formation stage are projected to decline slightly.

- Preschool (0-4 years)
- School (5-19 years)
- Family Formation (20-44 years)

Table 4. Population Estimates by Age Groups

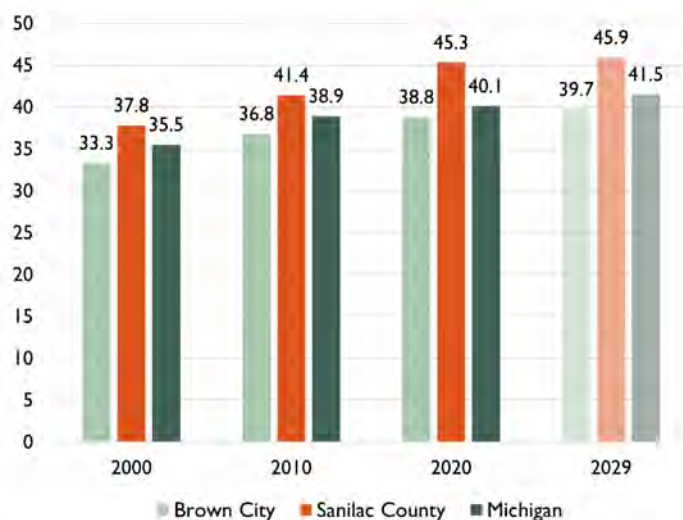
	Brown City			Sanilac County			Michigan		
	2010	2024	2029	2010	2024	2029	2010	2024	2029
0 to 4	95	87	81	2,513	2,007	2,010	596,286	540,800	532,063
4 to 9	95	91	85	2,749	2,328	2,083	637,784	585,003	532,985
10 to 14	112	74	85	2,944	2,377	2,242	675,216	593,013	576,871
15 to 19	99	77	63	3,008	2,426	2,158	739,599	627,016	589,282
20 to 24	77	86	68	2,169	2,143	1,965	669,072	678,713	628,963
25 to 29	77	69	88	2,112	2,050	2,328	589,583	630,729	661,461
30 to 34	75	77	69	2,178	2,141	2,156	574,566	678,887	627,668
35 to 39	78	91	81	2,372	2,227	2,280	612,493	634,680	666,454
40 to 44	95	77	82	2,749	2,188	2,232	665,481	617,001	632,331
45 to 49	78	77	77	3,277	2,226	2,317	744,581	571,891	614,809
50 to 54	114	56	76	3,550	2,401	2,232	765,452	623,864	565,658
55 to 59	73	70	47	3,179	2,740	2,249	683,186	633,361	596,890
60 to 64	60	86	64	2,735	3,171	2,730	568,811	686,174	605,693
65 to 69	46	91	77	2,285	3,176	3,067	418,625	638,584	638,383
70 to 74	56	59	80	1,848	2,446	2,765	306,084	509,028	572,114
75 to 79	41	41	49	1,415	1,858	2,135	244,085	377,125	437,991
80 to 84	36	25	29	1,063	1,171	1,413	200,855	228,260	297,615
85 and older	18	29	28	968	1,026	1,160	191,881	216,012	248,483

Source: 2024 Esri Demographic and Income Profiles, 2010 U.S. Decennial Census

Figure 2 shows the median age for the City, County, and State from 2000 to 2020 based on U.S. Census Bureau data, and an estimated 2029 median age from Esri estimates. All three geographic areas show a steady increase of approximately 2.5 years in median age in each decade. Overall, Brown City is projected to increase from a median age of 33.3 in 2000 to 39.7 in 2029. Sanilac County showed to be consistently older than Brown City and Michigan.

These figures indicate aging populations and inform the potential future and changing needs of the community, such as ADA improvements, smaller single-story homes, senior and assisted living facilities, infrastructure to promote aging in place, senior programming, and medical care facilities. The demand for education, recreation, and consumer goods from the younger age groups (0-19 years old) may not be as high as the need for aging-related amenities, though this need may evolve as the population grows.

Figure 2. Median Age, 2000-2029



Source: U.S. Decennial Census & 2024 Esri Demographic and Income Profiles

Race and Ethnicity

Knowing the racial make-up of a community helps to identify the diverse needs of its population. Even though the population of Brown City has become slightly more diverse since 2010, residents of the City are predominantly white (**Table 5**). The City has a less diverse population compared to the State, but has become relatively more diverse than Sanilac County.

A community with limited racial diversity may indicate that factors such as housing affordability, amenities, or other community characteristics are not equally accessible or appealing to people from a wide range of backgrounds. In a small city with growing diversity, it is important to maintain and enhance desirable housing options and spaces that are inclusive for all.

Table 5. Race and Ethnicity

	Brown City		Sanilac County		Michigan	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
White	1,269	1,157	40,852	37,209	7,569,939	7,295,651
Black or African American	1	4	142	151	1,383,756	1,358,458
American Indian and Alaska Native	2	5	157	112	54,665	47,406
Asian	1	1	125	84	236,490	332,288
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0	0	7	2	2,170	2,603
Some Other Race	0	1	19	98	9,866	37,183
Two or More Races	22	56	373	1,281	17,6993	439,320
Hispanic or Latino	30	78	1,439	1,674	436,358	564,422

Source: 2010 and 2020, U.S. Decennial Census

Households and Household Size

Table 6 shows forecasts for households in 2045 for Brown City and Sanilac County, based on U.S. Census statistics and Michigan Statewide Population Projections. Brown City’s households are projected to increase from 551 in 2020 to 595 in 2045. This is a household growth rate of 8%.

This growth in household numbers is influenced not only by population changes, but also by shifting household dynamics. Since the 1970s, average household sizes have steadily declined nationwide, driven by trends such as smaller family sizes, higher divorce rates, and more elderly individuals living alone. Assuming that the City will mirror projections for Sanilac County, the average household size for Brown City is projected to decrease from 2.36 in 2020 to 2.01 by 2045. Because Brown City’s projections are derived using the step-down method, its projected changes directly mirror the proportional population trends forecasted for Sanilac County.

Household Characteristics

This section examines households in terms of the relationships among the persons who share a housing unit. **Table 7** examines six different household types based on relationship:

- Family households
- Married-couple families
- Male householder, no female present
- Female householder, no male present
- Households with one or more people under 18
- Households with one or more people over 65

In 2023, about 71.7% of Brown City’s occupied households were families. Married couple households made up 47.8% of total occupied households. Brown City’s household characteristics have relatively similar proportion of married couple households compared to Sanilac County and Michigan, while there are more family households

Table 6. Household Size Forecasts, 2020-2045

	Brown City		Sanilac County	
	2020	2045	2020	2045
Households	551	595	16,781	18,267
Average Household Size	2.36	2.01	2.39	2.04

Source: 2020 U.S. Census; “Michigan Statewide Population Projections through 2050”, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics (2024). Derived projections for Brown City based on Wade Trim Analysis, 2025.

Table 7. Household Characteristics, 2023

	Total Occupied Households	% of Total Households					
		Family Households	Married-Couple Households	Male Householder, No Spouse/ Partner	Female Householder, No Spouse/ Partner	Households with One or More Children Under 18	Households with One or More People Over 65
Brown City	502	71.7%	47.8%	16.5%	26.5%	32.1%	33.1%
Sanilac County	17451	65.0%	51.7%	19.1%	21.4%	25.7%	37.6%
Michigan	4,040,168	62.70%	46.30%	4.90%	11.60%	27%	15.20%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

and more female householders without a partner. Additionally, Brown City has slightly more households with one or more people children (under 18) and older adults (over 65).

Income and Poverty

Income and poverty level data are a good way to measure the relative economic health of a community. **Table 8** shows median household income, average household income, and per capita income for Brown City, Sanilac County, and Michigan. Median household income is a measure of the midpoint income value of all household incomes within a community. The median household income in Brown City is \$51,925 in 2024, which was higher than the County and State. Brown City’s median household income is expected to increase to \$63,249 by 2029, an increase of 21.8% from 2024.

Figure 3 illustrates poverty rate trends of individuals and families living below the federal poverty line in Brown City for the years 2013, 2018, and 2023. In 2013, 17% of the City’s population lived in poverty, which rose to 19% in 2018, before returning to 17% in 2023.

Throughout this period, the poverty rate among families remained consistently lower than the overall individual rate. Notably, in 2018, while the individual poverty rate increased, the family poverty rate actually declined, a divergence from the broader trend. Overall, Brown City’s poverty rates exceeded those of both the state of Michigan (13.1%) and Sanilac County (14%).

Among those living in poverty within Brown City, 23% were under 18 years old, 11.5% were between 18 and 64, and 27.8% were 65 years and older.

Figure 3. Poverty Trends, Brown City 2013-2023



Source: 2009-2013, 2013-2018, 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 8. Income Estimates. 2024

	2024			2029		
	Median Household Income	Average Household Income	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Average Household Income	Per Capita Income
Brown City	\$51,925	\$74,147	\$32,290	\$63,249	\$85,763	\$38,521
Sanilac County	\$60,589	\$82,349	\$34,689	\$70,124	\$93,560	\$40,571
Michigan	\$71,476	\$99,903	\$40,752	\$82,229	\$114,987	\$47,744

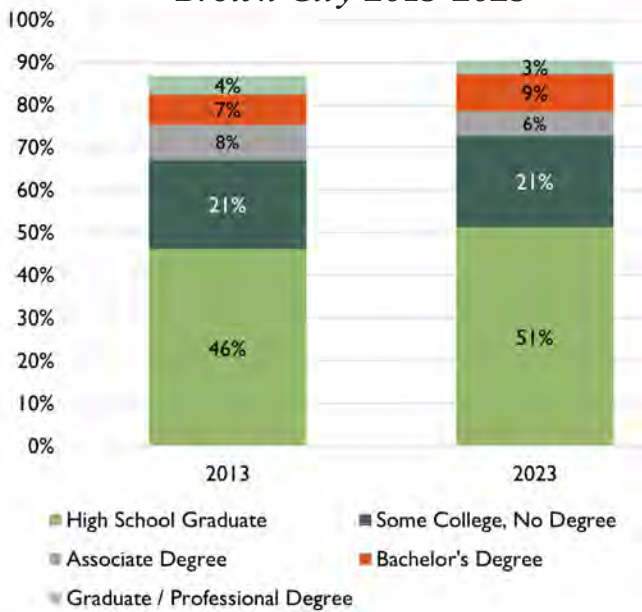
Source: 2024 Esri Demographic and Income Profiles

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is an important factor in analyzing the capabilities of the local work force and the economic vitality of the community. The educational attainment of a community strongly influences what types of industries are suitable or necessary. **Figure 4** illustrates the educational attainment levels for Brown City in 2013 and 2023 based on ACS estimates.

As of 2023, more than 90.4% of Brown City’s residents aged 25 and older had graduated from high school or earned a higher degree. Of this group, 12% had obtained a Bachelor’s Degree or higher. The percentage of adults with high school diplomas saw a significant increase, rising from 46% to 51%. However, the percentage of people with higher education degrees experienced a slight decrease.

Figure 4. Educational Attainment, Brown City 2013-2023



Source: 2009-2013, and 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

For higher education, Brown City is closest to the satellite locations of Mott Community College in Lapeer City and St. Clair County Community College in Peck. These locations are within a 30 minute drive of Brown City. It is important to encourage land uses that support educational opportunities, such as neighborhood schools and learning centers, to ensure that both adults and children have abundant opportunities for learning and growth.

Employment

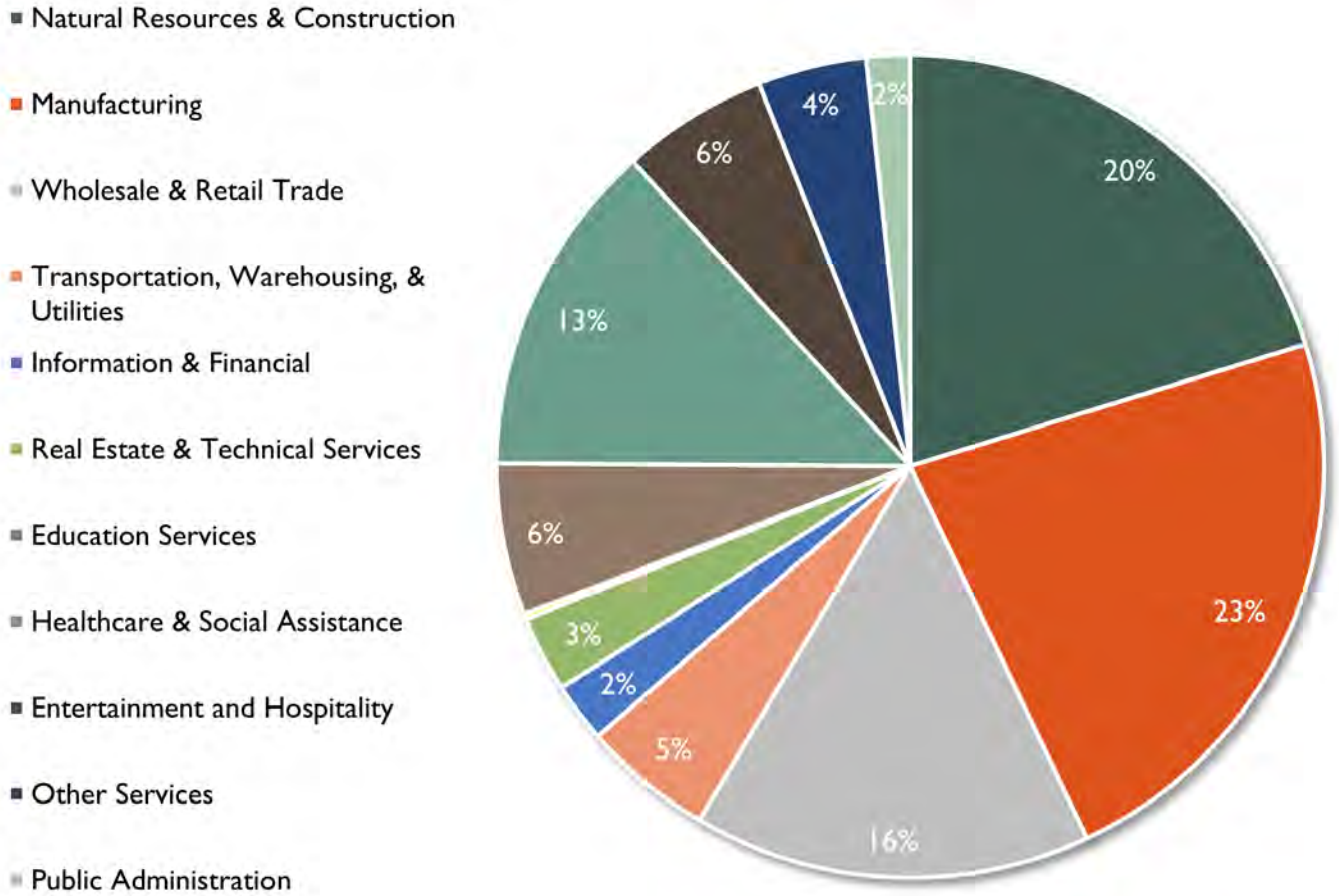
Table 9 shows that 54.3% of the total population in Brown City in 2024 was in the workforce, a value lower than both Sanilac County (56.8%) and Michigan (62.8%). Of the workforce population, a total of 69 were unemployed while 470 were employed. Brown City’s unemployment rate of 12.8% is higher than both Sanilac County (5.9%) and Michigan (4.4%).

Figure 5 displays the distribution of employment by industries. The largest employing industries in the City are manufacturing (107 employed), natural resources and construction (95 employed), and wholesale and retail trade (73 employed). About half of Brown City’s employees are in white collar jobs (49.4%), with 35.1% in blue collar jobs, and 15.5% in service jobs.

Commute

An estimated 87.9% of workers 16 and older drove alone to work, and 2.7% of workers carpooled. 1.9% of workers walked to work. 6% of workers worked from home. The average length of a commute is 33.4 minutes. Brown City’s commuting data is typical of a rural community. This makes it more reliant on personal vehicles for longer commute compared to Sanilac County and Michigan.

Figure 5. Employment by Industry, Brown City 2024



Source: 2024 Esri Civilian Labor Force Profile
 *Data refers to employed population 16 years and over.

Table 9. Labor Force, 2024

	Population	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate	Labor Force Participation Rate
Brown City	992	470	69	12.8%	54.3%
Sanilac County	32,897	17,584	1,104	5.9%	56.8%
Michigan	8,232,248	4,940,971	227,807	4.4%	62.8%

Source: 2024 Esri Civilian Labor Force Profile
 *Data refers to employed population 16 years and over.



Chapter 4

Housing Needs Analysis

Housing, or more broadly dwellings, refers to the construction and use of houses or buildings, either individually or collectively occupied, for the purpose of providing shelter. Housing is a basic human need, and it plays a critical role in shaping the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. It is incredibly important that communities maintain a stock of quality housing to serve the various needs of its residents.

Assessing a community's housing stock is an important aspect in seeing how a community is currently structured to provide for their residents, in addition to analyzing where they may need to provide more variation to accommodate diverse housing preferences. An evaluation of housing affordability helps to reveal whether certain residents are prevented from securing housing, even where there is a surplus in available housing.



Total Housing Units

Table 10 shows that both Brown City and Sanilac County experienced a decline in housing units between 2010 and 2024. However, modest growth is projected between 2024 and 2029, with new housing units expected to increase by 0.17% in Brown City and 0.87% in Sanilac County.

Esri data also provides household estimates, which can be used to approximate occupied housing units. In Brown City, the number of occupied housing units (households) is projected to grow by 8%, from 551 in 2020 to 595 by 2045 (Table 11). Similarly, Sanilac County was projected to increase by 8.9% from 16,781 in 2020 to 18,267 in 2045. These figures represent occupied housing units, excluding vacant or seasonally vacant housing units.

Housing Occupancy and Tenure

Housing occupancy measures the number of occupied housing units or vacant housing units. Tenure identifies whether those occupied units are inhabited by renters or homeowners. Occupancy and tenure data is shown in **Table 10**. According to Esri, 5.2% of Brown City's housing was vacant in 2024. Generally, a healthy housing market will feature a vacancy rate of approximately 5% to ensure there is sufficient available housing stock. Brown City's occupancy percentage falls very close to this standard. Both Sanilac County and Michigan have higher vacancy rates of 22.2% and 11.3% respectively.

Home ownership in the United States tends to remain around 60-65%, and as of 2023 the United States home ownership rate was 65.9%. Brown City is very similar with this trend. In 2024, the proportion of owner occupied housing was 62.8%.

Table 10. Total Housing and Occupancy Estimates, 2010-2029

	Year	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant Units	Total Housing Units	% Change Total Units (2010-2029)
Brown City	2010	353	169	63	585	-0.7%
	2024	364	186	30	580	
	2029	378	174	29	581	
Sanilac County	2010	13,739	3,393	5,593	22,725	-3.60%
	2024	13,603	3,279	4,829	21,711	
	2029	14,246	2,961	4,694	21,901	
Michigan	2010	2,793,342	1,079,166	659,725	4,532,233	3.00%
	2024	2,979,418	1,115,725	523,820	4,618,963	
	2029	3,083,723	1,067,966	516,678	4,668,367	

Source: 2024 Esri Housing Profiles

Table 11. Total Households Forecast, 2020-2045

	Households		% Change Households (2020-2045)
	2020	2045	
Brown City	551	595	8.0%
Sanilac County	16,781	18,267	8.9%

Source: U.S Census Bureau, Esri Demographic and Income Profile 2024; Derived projections for Brown City based on Wade Trim Analysis, 2025

Sanilac County had a similar owner occupancy rate of 62.7%. The estimated 2029 values do not show dramatic changes, but they do show consistently lowering proportions of renter occupied units and vacant units.

Housing Types and Distribution

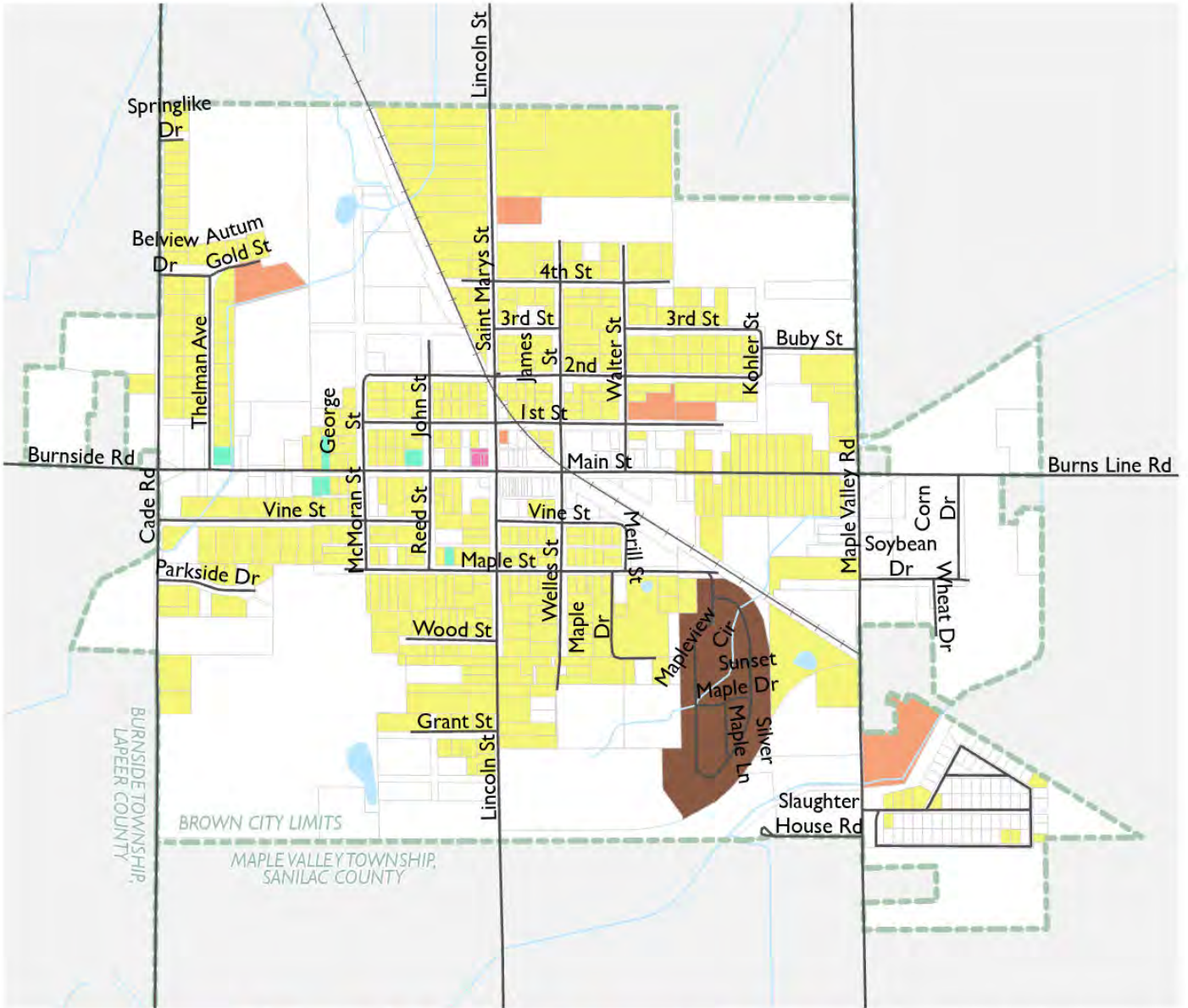
Understanding current housing distribution is essential for future planning. In Brown City, this begins with a detailed analysis of residential land use by parcel and 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) data on housing characteristics.

The **Residential Land Use by Housing Type Map** illustrates all residential parcels by housing type, using data from field work, County parcel and

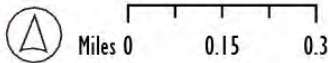
ownership data, interpretation of aerial imagery, and City-provided information. Housing types include:

1. Single-Family Residential, Detached
2. Attached Residential (2 units/Duplex)
3. Multi-Family Residential (3+ units)
4. Mobile/Manufactured Home Park
5. Mixed-Use (Residential and Non-Residential on same property)

Of the 451 residential parcels within the City, 96% (435 parcels) are single-family detached homes, found throughout Brown City. The remaining 4% include attached residential and duplexes (6 parcels / 1.3%), multi-family residential (5



Residential Land Use by Housing Type



Base Features:

- Roads
- Railroads
- Creeks and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Parcel Lines
- Municipal Boundaries

Residential Use Type:

- Single-Family Residential, Detached
- Attached Residential (2 units/Duplex)
- Multi-Family Residential (3+ units)
- Mobile/Manufactured Home Park
- Mixed-Use (Residential and Non-Residential on same property)
- Undeveloped or Non-Residential Property

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Source: Sanilac County GIS, 2025;
 Michigan Geographic Data Library;
 Wade Trim Analysis, 2025

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parcels / 1.1%), mixed use (4 parcels / 0.8%), and mobile/manufactured home park (1 parcel / 0.2%). While most of these housing types are scattered throughout the City, mixed use housing is concentrated downtown and duplexes cluster around Main Street towards the west side.

The only dedicated senior housing is the Cedar Trace Apartments, an age-restricted apartment building on Saint Marys Street. There are no assisted living or residential care facilities within the City, limiting residents’ ability to age in place.

While the map reflects physical parcel data, housing statistics from sources like the Census and Esri may differ due to reliance on self-reported or estimated data.

According to the American Community Survey 2023 estimates (**Table 12**), Brown City’s occupied housing stock includes:

- 73.9% single unit dwellings (371 units)
- 2.4% duplex or two-unit dwellings (12 units)
- 15.9% multifamily dwellings (80 units)
- 7.8% mobile homes (39 units)

As a benchmark, **Table 12** compares the City’s housing type distribution with the surrounding communities and counties. Brown City’s percentage of multifamily dwellings (15.9%) is the highest proportion of the compared jurisdictions,

except for Michigan. Conversely, Brown City’s percent of single family detached dwelling (73.9%) is the lowest of the compared jurisdictions, except for Michigan. Brown City and the surrounding communities and counties have similarly higher proportions of mobile homes compared to Michigan. These housing characteristics indicate there is a higher level of housing diversity in Brown City, which is more similar to the State level of housing diversity.

Lot Size Analysis

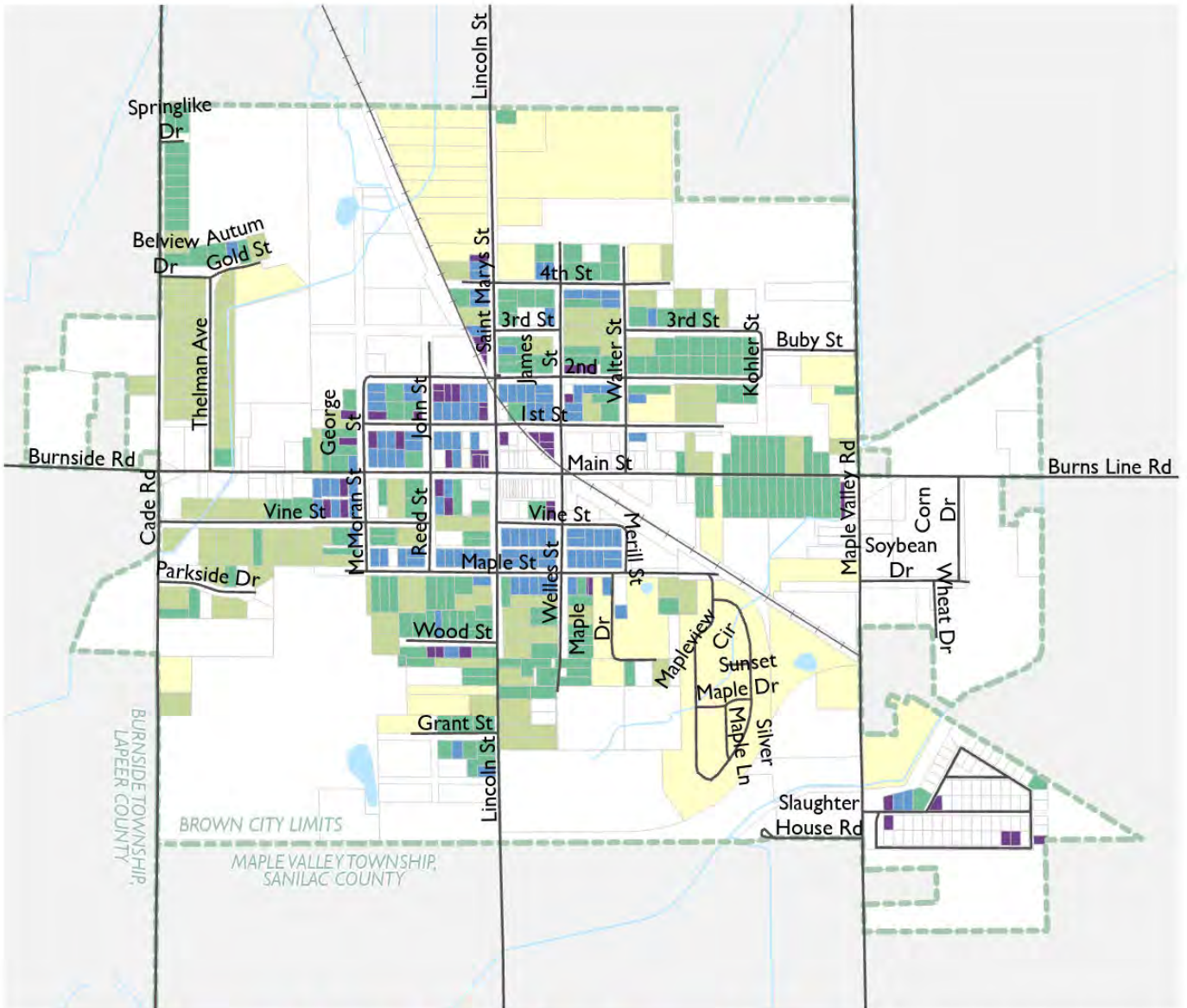
The **Residential Land Use by Parcel Size Map** shows all parcels of land that are actively being used in some sort of residential capacity, with each color-coded by lot size. This helps provide a general snapshot of housing density in the City. Property size also influences housing affordability, as a dwelling on a smaller lot is generally less expensive/more affordable in comparison to a dwelling on a larger lot.

Residential lot sizes in Brown City vary based on their location. Smaller lot sizes, typically under 8,712 square feet (about 1/5 acre), are most commonly found near the center of town surrounding the east side of Main Street and Brown City Elementary School. In contrast, many neighborhoods near the outer edges of town feature lots greater than 10,890 square feet (1/4 acre). The exception is the newly platted Maple Valley Estates (Hawthorn, Sycamore, and

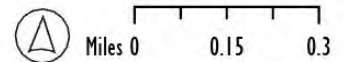
Table 12. Housing Units by Types, 2023

	Single Family (detached)		Duplex		Multifamily		Mobile Homes	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Brown City	371	73.9%	12	2.4%	80	15.9%	39	7.8%
Burnside Township	605	89.2%	0	0.0%	15	2.2%	58	8.6%
Maple Valley Township	402	94.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	23	5.4%
Sanilac County	14,417	82.6%	202	1.2%	1,295	7.4%	1,537	8.8%
Lapeer County	28,777	83.5%	401	1.2%	2,779	8.1%	2,522	7.3%
Michigan	2,928,240	72.5%	81,256	2.0%	840,841	20.8%	189,831	4.7%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates



Residential Land Use by Parcel Size



Base Features:

- Roads
- Railroads
- Creeks and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Parcel Lines
- Municipal Boundaries

Parcel Size:

- Less than 8,712 square feet (1/5 acre)
- 8,712 to 10,889 square feet (1/5 to 1/4 acre)
- 10,890 to 21,779 square feet (1/4 to 1/2 acre)
- 21,780 to 43,560 square feet (1/2 to 1 acre)
- 1 acre or more
- Undeveloped or Non-Residential Property



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February 2026

Source: Sanilac County GIS, 2025;
 Michigan Geographic Data Library;
 Wade Trim Analysis, 2025

Magnolia streets), which features lot sizes that are comparable to what is found in the center of Brown City.

Housing Values

Analyzing housing values helps to gain an understanding of the overall quality and affordability of housing within a community. It is very important that a community maintains quality and affordable housing for its existing and potential future residents.

As shown in **Table 13**, in 2023, the median value of owner-occupied housing units in Brown City was \$121,400, which was lower than both Sanilac County (\$162,200) and the State (\$217,149). Most of Brown City’s housing units are valued between \$50,000 and \$200,000, whereas a larger percentage of houses in Sanilac County and

Michigan are valued higher than \$200,000. Brown City’s lower housing values may be attributed to the type of housing within the community. As a small, historic city, Brown City has smaller lots compared to the surrounding townships that typically have larger acreage and farms.

Brown City’s median rent (\$805) is closer to Sanilac County (\$814), and less than the State (\$1,084). Most rental units in the City have a median rent of less than \$1,000. As aforementioned, Brown City has more housing diversity, particularly for multifamily unit housing.

Age of Structure

As a rule of thumb, typically the economically useful age of a housing unit is approximately 50 years. Beyond that age, major repairs and modernization may be required to include standard amenities. As indicated in the 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the age of Brown City’s housing stock is distributed as follows:

Table 13. Financial Characteristics, 2023

	Brown City		Sanilac County		Michigan	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Value of Owner Occupied Housing Units	347	100%	14,249	100%	2,946,157	100%
Under \$100,000	111	32%	3,668	26%	536,066	18%
\$100,000-\$199,999	161	46%	5,235	37%	796,290	27%
\$200,000-\$299,999	50	14%	2,897	20%	716,676	24%
\$300,000-\$499,999	23	7%	1,695	12%	617,976	21%
Over \$500,000	2	1%	754	5%	279,149	9%
Median value	\$121,400		\$162,200		\$217,149	
Rent Charged for Renter Occupied Housing Units	140	100%	2,582	100%	1,036,181	100%
<\$500	38	27%	329	13%	90,676	9%
\$500-\$999	75	54%	1,607	62%	346,671	33%
\$1,000-\$1,499	17	12%	598	23%	394,193	38%
>\$1,500	10	7%	48	2%	204,641	20%
No cash rent	15	11%	620	24%	57,830	6%
Median Rent	\$805		\$814		\$1,084	

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

- Pre-1960: 51.8% of housing units (at least 65 years old).
- 1960-1970: 24.5% of housing units.
- 1980-1990: 22.1% of housing units.
- 2000 and later: 1.6% of housing units.

Over half of Brown City’s housing is older than 50 years, indicating the need to be mindful of the community’s quality of housing and the indoor environmental health of the housing.

Housing Affordability

The housing stock in a community should be affordable to its residents. Even with a sufficient housing supply, prohibitive costs can leave a community’s housing needs unmet and lead to further economic and social challenges. For example, if a household is paying too much of their budget on housing, they will spend less on other needs or entertainment. Therefore, their spending in local businesses is decreased and the local economy is hindered.

One method to measure housing affordability is to determine monthly housing costs as a percentage of household income. Generally, if a household is paying more than 30% of household income for housing (mortgage or rent, plus utilities), they are considered “cost burdened” and those paying more than 50% are considered “severely cost burdened”.

For Brown City, **Figures 6 and 7** provide owner and renter occupied housing affordability with data from the 2023 ACS. Based on a sample of 347 housing units (with and without a mortgage), 11% of owners in Brown City paid more than 30% of their household income on housing costs. This percentage for Brown City was lower than the national average of 27.5% for the same period. Based on a sample of 155 units paying rent, 52% of renters in Brown City paid more than 30% of their household income on housing costs. Though there are more rental units within Brown City indicating

more housing choices, this percentage was slightly higher than the national average rental housing burden (50.4%) for the same period.

Although the percentage of owner occupied housing cost burdened households in Brown City may not be as high as the national average, housing affordability remains a local concern, particularly for renters. This is especially true as home values and rents have risen in recent years due to a competitive housing market.

Figure 6. Owner Occupied Housing Affordability, Brown City, 2023

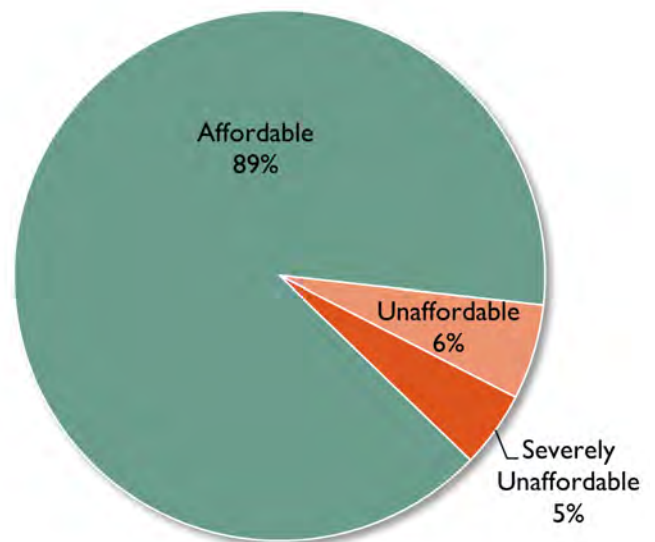
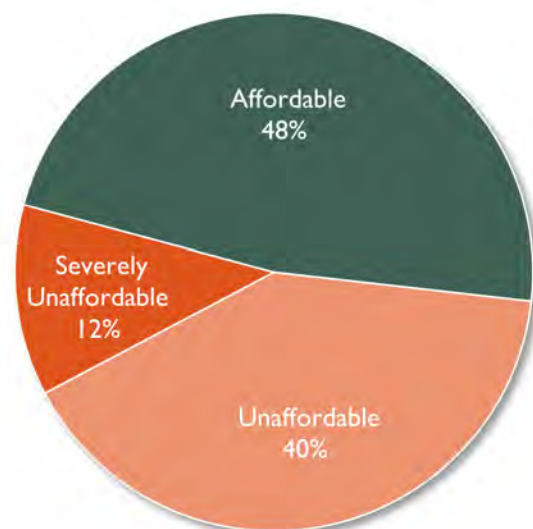


Figure 7. Renter Occupied Housing Affordability, Brown City, 2023



Figures 6 and 7 Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

According to Esri projections, Brown City’s median value of owner-occupied housing is expected to increase by 8% between 2024 and 2029. During this same period, the median household income within Brown City is expected to increase by 21.8%. This is a positive indicator suggesting that rising household income levels in the City will help with housing affordability.

National and Emerging Housing Demand Trends

Today’s housing market differs significantly from the past and has been significantly impacted by national events such as the 2007 Great Recession and, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and a subsequent housing affordability crisis. Today’s housing market is also heavily influenced by various demographic shifts in the United States. These changes include aging populations, increased racial and ethnic diversity, and a rise in multi-generational and childless households.

The evolving preferences and needs of different generations have substantially impacted housing supply and demand. Below is an analysis of the generations and their generalized impact on housing needs.

Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964)

This aging generation is expanding the senior population, driving demand for housing that accommodates their needs. Features such as single-level layouts, step-free entrances, and wider doorways are increasingly sought after. While many Baby Boomers prefer to age in place, a significant number are moving. Notably, when individuals aged 65 and older relocate, 80% leave single-family houses, but only 41% move back into such units, with the majority transitioning to multifamily housing, often in senior living communities or care facilities.

Gen X (1965-1980)

Currently, Generation X is the highest-earning homebuyer group, leading the market in terms of purchasing power and financial stability. According to the National Association of Realtors, approximately 75% of Gen Xers prefer detached single-family homes, which is the highest preference among any generation today. This preference for single-family homes reflects their desire for privacy, more space for their families, and the flexibility of a standalone property. Many Gen Xers, who are often in their prime earning years, prioritize long-term investments in real estate.

Millennials (born 1981-1996)

As a major force in today’s housing market, Millennials account for 75% to 80% of owner-occupied housing absorbed by those under 65. Their preferences differ from previous generations; many delay marriage and children, leading to a higher likelihood of living with parents longer. While some favor mixed-use urban environments and view renting as practical, the rise of remote work has enabled many to move to more affordable, less crowded areas like small towns and suburbs, seeking economic stability and lifestyle balance. However, Millennials face challenges such as high home prices and a shortage of available homes, partly due to slowed home building after the 2008 financial crisis.

Gen Z (born 1997-2013)

As Gen Z enters the housing market, their preferences align more with Millennials, favoring walkable communities with access to shopping, schools, recreation, and entertainment. The flexibility of remote work allows them to prioritize affordability. In-demand housing types for this generation include single-family homes (including rentals), townhouses, and garden-style apartments.

Opportunity to Capitalize on Emerging Housing Trends

Brown City should work to ensure there is attainable and attractive housing choices for individuals of all lifestyles and ages. Providing a more diverse and affordable housing stock is the first step in supporting a healthier future. This can help Brown City retain and attract community members, particularly those that tend to move such as young people, young families, or older adults.

Attracting and retaining young people and older adults is important for Brown City's growth and vitality. Young people, including new graduates or young families bring innovation, drive economic growth, and help sustain local schools. Meanwhile, older adults provide valuable experience, community stability, and support for recreation systems. A balance of age groups creates a dynamic, multi-generational community that supports local services and ensures long term success.

Local Preference and Potential Growth

The Esri Demographics Data includes Tapestry Segmentation data, which provides insights into the preferences of distinct demographic and socioeconomic data. This includes housing preferences models including the housing type, estimated cost, and tenure.

It is important to note that the Tapestry Segmentation information are model outcomes that generally describe trends. Like all models, they are simplified to describe an overall story without representing the many nuances of real life.

Brown City Housing Preferences

The primary Tapestry Group for Brown City is Heartland Communities, comprising 97.3% of residents. Secondary groups include Salt of the Earth (2.5%) and Southern Satellites (0.4%). These groups are most often middle-age to older adults with fewer children. They often have a preference for homeownership, usually living in single family homes.

Heartland Communities

This group is by far the most common group in Brown City. It includes mostly older and married homeowners, often with adult children that have moved away. The typical home is a single family dwelling with a median value of \$95,700.



Representative Image of the Heartland Community Tapestry Segment, Source: Esri

Salt of the Earth

This segment is described as “residents entrenched in their traditional, rural lifestyles”. They are older, and many have adult children that have moved away. The median household size is 2.59, median age is 44.1 years, and median household income is \$56,300. In terms of housing, the Salt of the Earth segment prefers a single-family home, primarily owner-occupied, with a median value of \$154,300.



Representative Image of the Salt of the Earth Tapestry Segment, Source: Esri

Southern Satellites

This tapestry segment enjoys country living and features slightly older, settled married-couple families. The average household size is 2.67, median age is 40.3 years, and median household income is \$47,800. In terms of housing, most of the Southern Satellite tapestry segment own their own homes. Two-thirds of the homes are single-family structures, while one-third are mobile homes. The median value of housing units for this tapestry segment is \$128,500.



Representative Image of the Southern Satellites Tapestry Segment, Source: Esri

Housing Preferences of Targeted Tapestry Segments

Esri Tapestry Segmentation data can serve as a helpful tool for municipalities aiming to attract specific demographic groups by better understanding their lifestyle preferences and community needs. For example, if a city wants to attract young entrepreneurs, it can analyze the housing, amenities, and community features that appeal to this group. With this insight, the City can develop plans and policies that foster an environment aligned with those preferences.

To help identify potential segments that Brown City may want to attract, we examined existing Tapestry segments in nearby communities. These segments reflect population groups that are either currently underrepresented in Brown City or represent likely future transitions in the City's demographic profile. The following summaries describe three segments that may be worth targeting.

Traditional Living

The “Traditional Living” segment represents 100% of the population in nearby Village of Capac (St. Clair County). This demographic consists of stable, younger households commonly found in small towns and rural areas. These households are often made up of married couples or individuals living alone, with a median age of 35.5. Employment is largely concentrated in the manufacturing, retail trade, and healthcare sectors.

Traditional Living residents value a sense of home, community, and routine. Their leisure activities often include outdoor pursuits such as fishing. They typically reside in older single-family homes or duplexes, many built before 1940, and the majority are homeowners.



Representative Image of the Traditional Living Tapestry Segment, Source: Esri

Front Porches

The “Front Porches” segment makes up 20.6% of the population of the Village of Oxford (Oakland County) and consists of younger households, including many young singles and single-parent families. Residents are highly active in the labor force, primarily working in blue-collar occupations. The median age is 34.9. With an average household size of 2.57, this group includes many young families with children or individuals living alone.

Although their income and net worth are below national averages, Front Porches residents are strongly community- and family-oriented. Their spending habits are influenced by relationships and lifestyle choices, favoring activities like sports,

board games, and local adventures. Housing includes a mix of older townhomes and duplexes, with a near-even split between renters (53%) and homeowners (47%).



Representative Image of the Front Porches Tapestry Segment, Source: Esri

Retirement Communities

Making up 12% of the City of Lapeer’s households, the “Retirement Communities” segment is an older population segment consisting largely of retirees with a median age of 53.9 years. The average household size is 1.88. Featuring a small household size, many residents have outlived their partners and live alone.

Although income and net worth are below national averages, residents enjoy going to the movies, fishing, and traveling. They are active in political and civic organizations.

In terms of housing, they live in a combination of single-family homes, independent living with apartments, assisted living, or continuous care nursing facilities. About 55% of this segment are renters, while 45% are owners.



Representative Image of the Retirement Communities Tapestry Segment, Source: Esri

Housing and Community Amenity Strategies to Attract and Serve Targeted Segments

Based on an analysis of lifestyle, housing, and community life characteristics desired by the targeted tapestry segments, Brown City should consider policies and strategies that provide and/or enhance the following amenities:

- Support and improve infrastructure and utilities to better community development, employment, and entrepreneurship
- Invest in social and community welfare, such as cultural programs, community events, and social organizations
- Improve and expand recreational facilities and programs
- Support housing rehabilitation and redevelopment, while accommodating a greater variety of housing types, including duplex, triplex, townhouses, and apartments
- Promote and embrace rental housing as an important option
- Celebrate small town character

Future Housing Needs

Projected Total Housing Units

There are no published housing unit projections for Brown City. Therefore, this Master Plan uses various estimates and assumptions to establish a benchmark for the number of housing units that are needed by the year 2045. **Table 14** outlines the methodology used to estimate the projected total housing units needed in Brown City by 2045.

The base data for this projection is the 2020 Census. Using estimates for population, average household size, households, and housing vacancy in 2045, a total housing count in 2045 can be

calculated. For Brown City, it is estimated that there is a need for 631 total housing units to accommodate a slightly decreasing population, but increasing number of separate households, creating by a declining average household size. This is an increase of 45 housing units from 2020.

Table 14. Housing Projections, Brown City, 2045

Characteristic/Year	Brown City
2020	
Total Population	1,302
Average Household Size	2.36
Total Households	551
Housing Vacancy Rate	6.00%
Total Housing Units	586
2045	
Total Population (Michigan Estimate, See Table 3)	1,299
Average Household Size (See Table 6)	2.18
Total Households (Estimate based on Total Population divided by Average Household Size)	595
Housing Vacancy Rate (Assumes 2020 rate)	6.00%
Total Housing Units (Assumes each household will occupy a housing unit, plus 6% vacant units)	631

Source: 2020 Census; Wade Trim Analysis

Future Housing Type Distribution

Table 12 highlighted the current distribution of housing types within Brown City, which consists of 73.9% single-family homes, 0.6% townhouses, 17.8% multi-family housing, and 7.8% mobile homes. If this current distribution were maintained for the additional 45 housing units needed between 2020 and 2045, this would result in 33 new single family detached homes, 1 townhouse/attached homes, 7 multi-family dwellings, and 4 mobile/manufactured home dwellings across Brown City (**Table 15**).

However, the data and analysis outlined in this chapter demonstrates a greater need for housing type diversity to accommodate the City’s changing demographics and an opportunity to attract younger and aging generations who have a preference for a greater diversity of housing types. For this reason, this Master Plan recommends that Brown City create a planning and regulatory environment that is more supportive of housing diversity. Although the specific distribution of new housing units by type will vary, **Table 15** outlines a recommended allocation of new housing unit types within the community.

Table 15. Future Housing Type Distribution Projections, Brown City, 2045

Housing Type	Current distribution (2023)	Future Units (Current Distribution, 2045)		Future Units (Targeted Housing Diversity; 2045)	
	%	%	Total	%	Total
Total Housing Units	100%	100%	45	100%	45
Single Family, Detached	73.9%	73.9%	33	30%	14
Townhouses / Attached	3.0%	3.0%	1	35%	16
Multi-Family Housing	15.9%	15.9%	7	35%	16
Mobile / Manufactured Homes	7.8%	7.8%	4	0%	0

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023; Wade Trim Analysis



Chapter 5

Physical Conditions Analysis

The establishment of a future vision for a community, including the development of a Future Land Use Plan, must consider the existing physical characteristics of a community. This includes an evaluation of natural features, existing land uses, transportation networks, infrastructure networks, and existing public services and facilities. This analysis of existing conditions serves as a starting point for discussions about future growth and development. This section summarizes the most important existing conditions within Brown City and its relevance to future land use planning.

Natural Features

The natural environment plays a major role in land use. It significantly impacts development; for example, a wetland may prohibit the construction of any structure. Conversely, the natural environment is affected by land development. An example of this is the increased erosion caused by clearing vegetation. Thus, when preparing a Future Land Use Plan, it is important to examine the natural environment to determine where development is best suited, and where it should be discouraged.

Development should be prevented in any environmentally sensitive area within a community. The destruction or disturbance of environmentally sensitive areas will affect the life of a community by either:

- Creating hazards such as flooding or slope erosion.
- Destroying important public resources such as groundwater supplies and surface water bodies.
- Wasting productive lands and non-renewable resources such as prime farmland and natural habitats like wetlands.

Each of these effects is detrimental to the general welfare of a community, resulting in high economic costs or public health and safety concerns.

Woodlands

Similar to most of Michigan, Brown City was once covered in dense forests, but was economically developed by logging and grain farming. This has left Brown City with more sparse woodlands. As shown on the **Natural Features Map**, the largest wooded areas in the City are found along the edges of town, often around watercourses. Although not indicated on the map, Brown City does feature a notable “urban forest” consisting of tree lined streets and mature trees spread throughout the City’s neighborhoods. Tree planting and preservation should be encouraged.

Wetlands

Often overlooked, wetlands are a vital natural resource that provide essential benefits including flood control, water filtration, habitat, and carbon storage. They also enhance the landscape’s beauty and support recreational activities.

Through the years, over 50% of Michigan’s original wetlands have been destroyed by development and agricultural activities. Therefore, the State of Michigan enacted Part 303, Wetlands Protection,

of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Public Act 451 of 1994 to protect the remaining wetlands. The wetland act authorizes the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), to preserve certain wetland areas. EGLE may require permits before altering regulated wetlands and may prohibit development in some locations.

EGLE defines and regulates wetlands as “land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life, and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp, or marsh.” EGLE reserves the right to regulate wetlands if they are any of the following:

- Connected to or is within 1,000 feet of one of the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair
- Connected to or is within 500 feet of an inland lake, pond, river, or stream
- Not connected to one of the Great Lakes, or an inland lake, pond, stream, or river, but are more than 5 acres in size
- A wetland not meeting the above criteria, but EGLE has determined that the wetland is essential to the preservation of the state’s natural resources and has notified the property owner.

Any wetlands in the City not meeting the criteria for wetlands as defined by EGLE can be protected by local control techniques. Such techniques include a local wetland ordinance, policies in this Master Plan directing incompatible land uses away from wetlands, and specific wetlands provisions in the Zoning Ordinance.

The **Natural Features Map** highlights major areas of wetlands within the City. Generally, these are concentrated in the same areas as the City’s woodlands.

Floodplains and Floodways

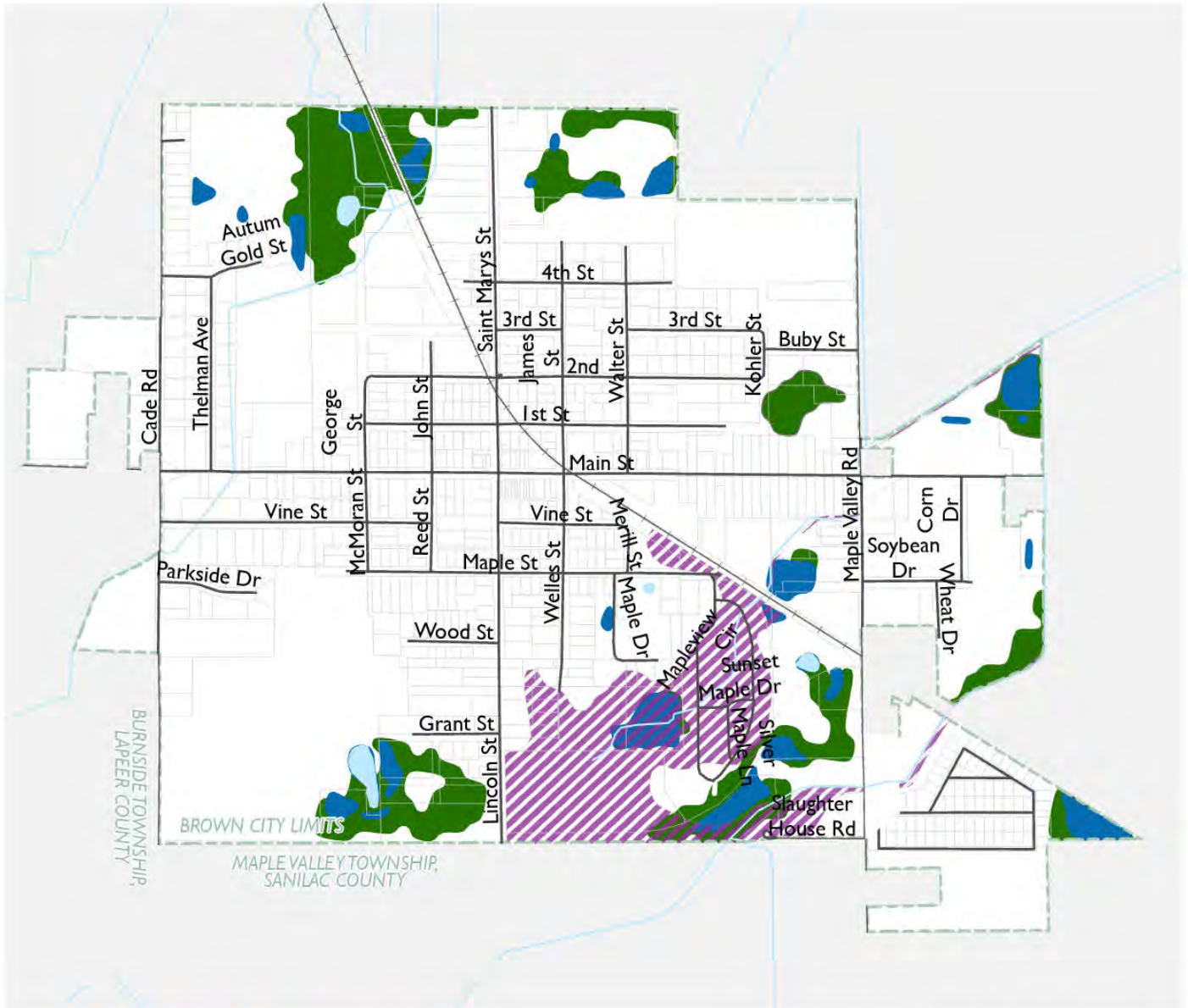
Floodplain information for this Master Plan is based on 2023 data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) for the National Flood Insurance Program. From a planning standpoint, this information is intended to promote floodplain management through implementation of “sound land use” with floodplain areas. As illustrated on the **Natural Features Map**, the 100-year floodplain is located in the south of the City following the railroad tracks, throughout the Mapleview Estates mobile home park, and southeast of Lincoln Street.

A 100-year floodplain is defined as the land adjacent to a river, lake or stream that will be inundated by water during a flood which has a 1% chance of occurring of being exceeded in any given year. Every river, lake, or stream has a floodplain associated with it.

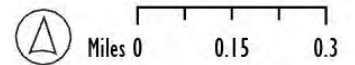
Efforts should be made to maintain floodplains in their natural state to assure preservation of natural features and to limit damage to personal property. Certain activities or development within a floodplain may be subject to permitting by EGLE.

Floodways are defined differently from floodplains. Floodways are the channel of a river or stream and those portions of the floodplain adjoining the channel which are reasonably required to carry and discharge the 100-year flood; these are areas of moving water during times of flood. New residential construction is specifically prohibited in the floodway. In general, construction and fill may be permitted in the portions of the floodplain that are not floodways, provided local ordinance and building standards are met. In addition, compensating excavation must be provided that is equal to the volume of fill placed in the floodplain.

As a baseline, the current building codes in Michigan requires that new construction or substantially improved buildings within the 100-year floodplain have the lowest floor, elevated at



Natural Features



Base Features:

- Roads
- Railroads
- Parcel Lines
- Municipal Boundaries

Environmental Features:

- Creeks and Streams
- Water Bodies
- 100-year Floodplain
- Wetlands
- Woodlands

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Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library;
 National Wetlands Inventory, 2009;
 Michigan Department of Natural Resources, 2009;
 FEMA Flood Data, 2008

least one-foot above the 100-year flood elevation. Basements that are below grade on all four sides must be 1 foot above the 100-year floodplain elevation.

Existing Land Use

Knowledge of existing land development furnishes the basic information by which decisions can be made concerning proposals for future residential, commercial, industrial, and public land use activities. The **Existing Land Use Map** and **Table 16**, included in this section of the report, will serve as a reference for the City in its consideration for land use management and public improvement proposals.

Methodology

A computer-generated base map for the City was first created using digital information from the Michigan GIS Open Data portal and other online data sources. The base features include the City boundary line, streets, and water bodies. Property boundary line data was acquired from Sanilac County. In 2025, Wade Trim staff conducted a parcel-by-parcel analysis of the City using satellite imagery. The existing land use data was subsequently reviewed and updated based on input from City officials.



Table 16. Existing Land Use, Brown City, 2025

Existing Land Use	Acres	Percentage
Single-Family Residential	186	29.7%
Multi-Family Residential	14	2.2%
Mobile Home Park	22	3.5%
Commercial/Office	28	4.4%
Industrial	84	13.4%
Recreation	70	11.1%
Public/Quasi-Public	77	12.3%
Vacant/Open Space	147	23.4%
Total	626	100.0%

Source: Wade Trim Analysis

Land Use Analysis

The following narrative describes each existing land use category found within the City.

Single-Family Residential

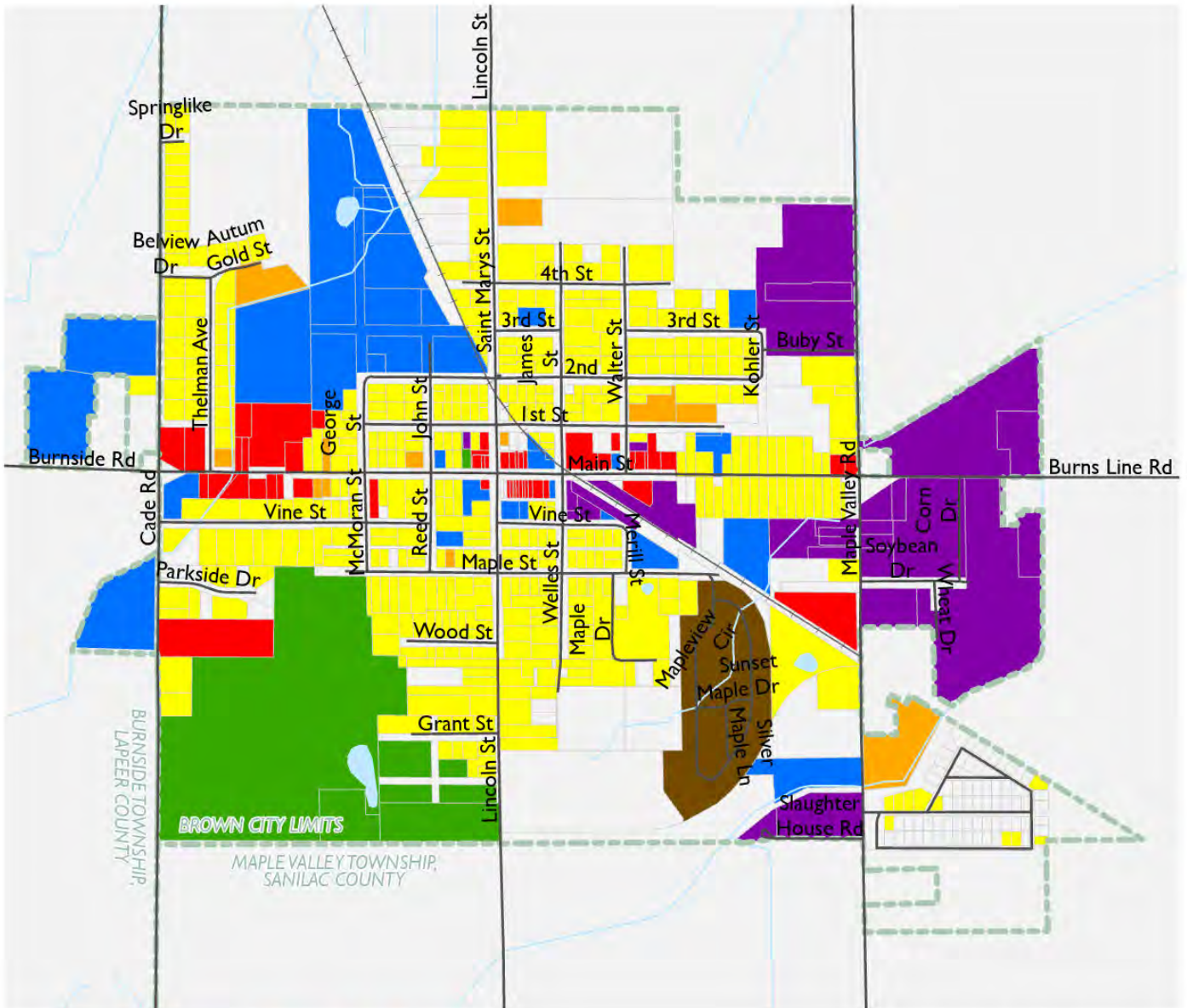
This land use category includes land occupied by single family detached dwelling units and their related accessory buildings such as garages and sheds.

In total, single-family residential lands comprise 186 acres or 29.7% of the City. Most existing single-family development consists of smaller single family homes scattered throughout the City.

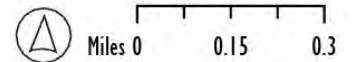
Multi-Family Residential

Multi-family residential use includes any residential properties that have two or more units. These include duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and traditional apartments, along with their related accessory buildings such as garages.

In Brown City, multiple family residential use occupies 14 acres or 2.2% of the City. There are several multi-family residential properties throughout the City. These developments include the Cedar Trace Apartments on Lincoln Street,



Existing Land Use



Base Features:

- Roads
- Railroads
- Creeks and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Parcel Lines
- Municipal Boundaries

Land Use:

- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Commercial/Office
- Industrial
- Recreation
- Public/Semi-Public
- Vacant/Undeveloped



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Source: Sanilac County GIS, 2025;
 Michigan Geographic Data Library;
 Wade Trim Analysis, 2025



Autumn Gold Apartments on Autumn Gold Street, and Kilpatrick Apartments on 1st Street.

Mobile Home Park

This land use includes land devoted to mobile or manufactured homes, and their related accessory buildings such as garages and sheds.

There is one parcel with an existing mobile home park occupying 22 acres or 3.5% of the City. This mobile home park is called Maplevue Estates located off of Maple Street.

Commercial/Office

This land use category includes land that is predominantly of a commercial character, including restaurants, retail sales establishments, grocery/convenience stores, service establishments (including personal, business and automotive services).

There are several primary pockets of commercial activity in Brown City, comprising 28 acres or 4.4% of land within the City. Downtown Brown City has the greatest density of commercial activity within the City, which is located along Main Street and mainly between Lincoln Street and Walter Street. The downtown strip is made up of quaint storefronts, public uses, and industrial spaces. The west side of Main Street has a cluster of commercial uses that include off street parking lots and larger stores. Though commercial is clustered along west and downtown Main Street, commercial and office land uses are located throughout the City.

Industrial

This land use category is comprised of land occupied by manufacturing industries, laboratories, warehouses, suppliers, and non-manufacturing uses which are primarily industrial in nature. Most of the industrial uses within the City are located on the east side of the City, but are scattered throughout. In total, industrial lands occupy 84 acres or 13.4% of the City.

Recreation

This category includes public and private parks. Within the City this includes two City parks that feature walking trails, tennis courts, baseball fields, a basketball court, and a playground. Brown City Park is the largest park in the southwest corner of the City, while Veterans Memorial Park is located just west of downtown Brown City. In total, the recreational land use category comprises of 70 acres of 11.1% of the City.

Public/Semi-Public

Public uses are land and facilities that are publicly operated and available for use by the public. Examples include schools, government facilities, and utilities. Semi-public uses are land and facilities which may be privately owned or operated but used by the community or the general public. Examples of semi-public places in Brown City include churches and the Country Venue for weddings. There are numerous public uses throughout the City, comprising 77 acres or 12.3% of the City.

Vacant/Undeveloped

This category includes undeveloped and open lands in the City such as woodlots, wetlands, open fields, and vacant buildings/sites. In total, the vacant/undeveloped category comprises 147 acres or 23.4% of the City.

Community Facilities

The **Community Facilities Map** serves as a reference for the locations of parks, public offices, schools, and other amenities, illustrating how these services connect to and support the broader community.

Brown City is home to a variety of public and community-oriented facilities, many of which are located along Main Street. City Hall (indicated as “K” on the map) sits across from the Brown City District Library (indicated as “H” on the map), with the Police and Fire Departments (indicated as “J”) located nearby, making key services easily accessible. The City also features other public and quasi-public institutions, including several large churches such as Faith Baptist Church (indicated as “D”) and Brown City Missionary Church (indicated as “E”).

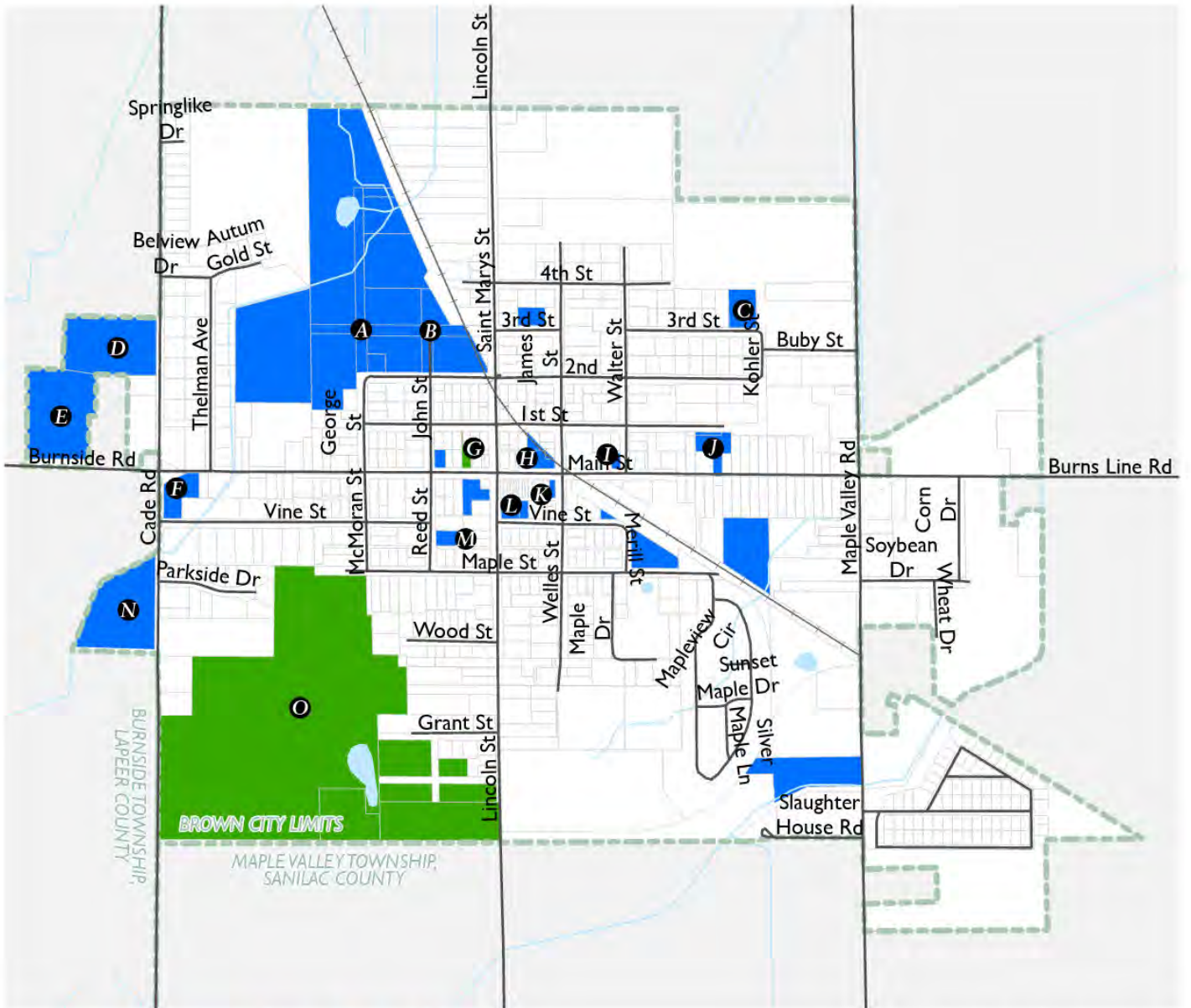


Emergency Services

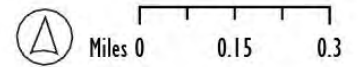
Emergency services in Brown City are centrally located for convenience and accessibility. The Police Department operates at 4205 Main Street, while the Fire Department is located at 4090 Main Street. Medical care is available through local family practitioners at Family HealthCare of Brown City (affiliated with Marlette Regional Hospital) and the Brown City Health Center. For emergency medical services, the nearest hospital is Marlette Regional Hospital, located approximately 18 minutes away by car. Police and fire services are available through the 911 emergency response system.

Educational Facilities

Brown City Community Schools serve local students from preschool through high school. The district enrolls approximately 750 students across Brown City Preschool, Brown City Elementary School (indicated as “B” on the map), and Brown City Junior/Senior High School (indicated as “A”), providing comprehensive education for children within the City and surrounding areas.



Community Facilities



Base Features:

- Roads
- Railroads
- Creeks and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Parcel Lines
- Municipal Boundaries

Community Facilities:

- Recreation
- Public/Quasi-Public

Location Key:

- A Brown City Jr/Sr High School
- B Brown City Elementary School
- C Water Tower
- D Faith Baptist Church
- E Missionary Church
- F Trinity Lutheran Church
- G Veterans Memorial Park
- H Brown City Public Library
- I Post Office
- J Brown City Fire Department
- K Brown City Hall
- L United Methodist Church
- M Sacred Heart Catholic Hall
- N Sacred Heart Catholic Parish
- O Brown City Park

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Source: Sanilac County GIS, 2025;
 Michigan Geographic Data Library;
 Wade Trim Analysis, 2025

Parks and Recreation Facilities

Residents of Brown City have access to several recreational spaces and amenities. Brown City Park, located at the west end of Maple Street (indicated as “O” on the map), offers a variety of amenities including ball fields, basketball and tennis courts, walking trails, and a playground. In addition, Veterans Memorial Park, a small green space situated on Main Street near the City center (indicated as “G”), provides a quiet area for reflection and community gathering. Together, these parks support active lifestyles and offer valuable green space within the City.

Infrastructure Systems

Public Water and Sewer

The City of Brown City maintains both public water and sanitary sewer systems. The City’s drinking water is drawn from public wells and is treated and distributed throughout the City via public water mains. While the school district lies within the public water service area, it operates on its own well. The City’s sewer system includes traditional sewer lines, a lagoon system, and an arsenic treatment plant. However, the current water and sewer infrastructure is not well equipped to accommodate new development, as it frequently reaches capacity during rainstorms.

To address these challenges, the City is in the process of installing a lift system designed to move sewage to the lagoons more efficiently. Additionally, the City was awarded funding for water improvement projects including water main looping, enhanced water quality and reliability, lead service line replacements, new residential water meters, and other restoration projects. Still, significant upgrades are needed to ensure the system can support existing demand and future growth. Without these improvements, the City’s capacity for development remains limited and vulnerable to environmental strain.

Transportation

Mobility and accessibility are vital components of the social and economic wellbeing of a community. The traffic circulation system is, in a large sense, the framework upon which a community is built. This system must support the collective mobility of citizens and visitors of Brown City. The system must also be fully coordinated with the other elements of the Master Plan, particularly future land use, so as to complement the collective goals, objectives, and policies of the plan, and to ensure that residents can access needed services and employment opportunities.

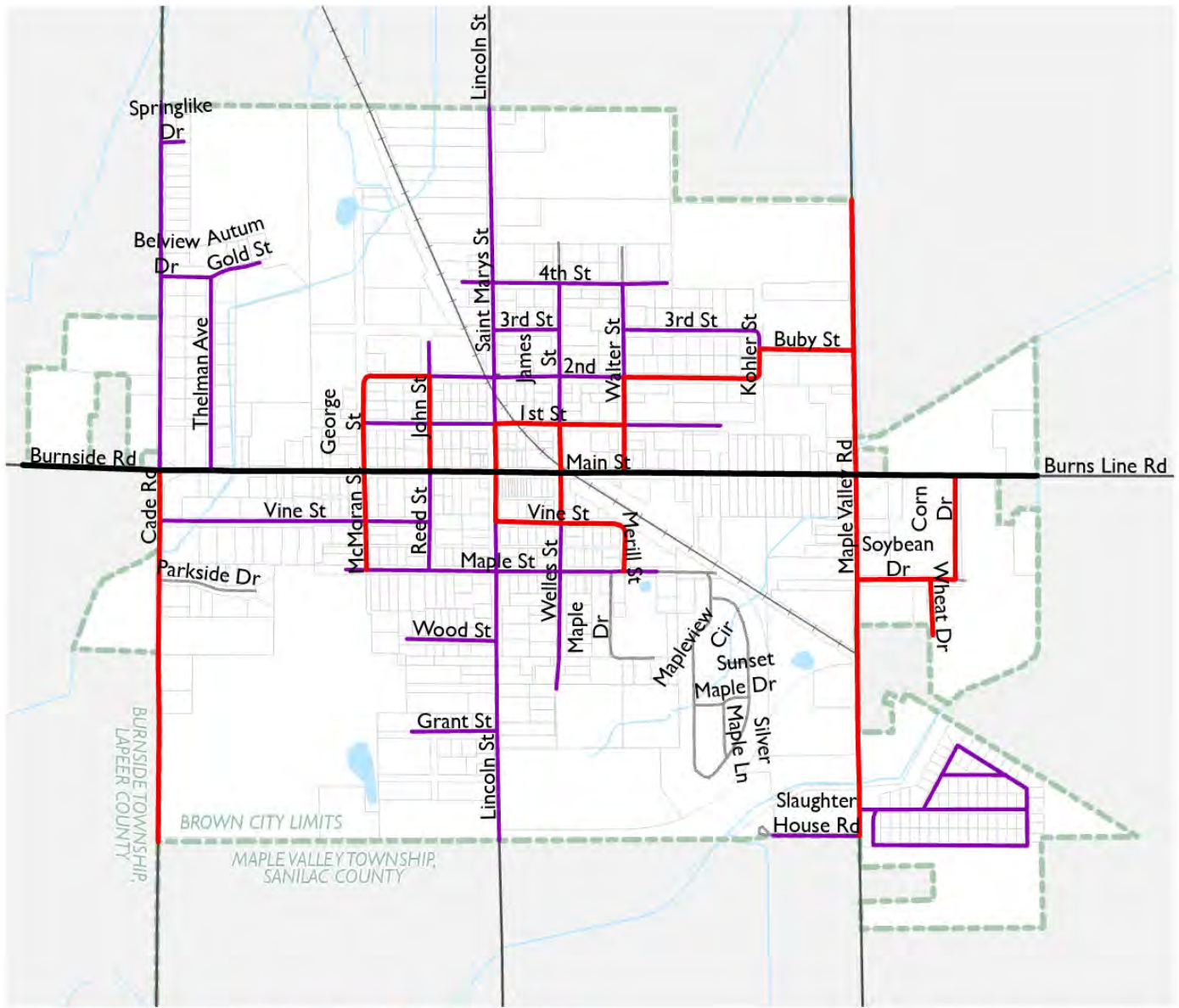
Regional Highway Network

The residents of Brown City access the region and the state through highways, major county roads, and local roads. Running through the center of the City (east/west) is M-90, named Main Street within the City limits, Burnside Road to the west, and Burns Line Road to the east. Local roads connect the City north and south.

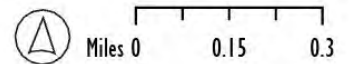
These roads and highways provide access to other communities in the region, including North Branch, Capac, Peck, Marlette, and Imlay City. These highways also provide access to the major metropolitan areas of the state as well as the larger region. Major cities located within a short driving distance from the City include:

- Bay City – 59 miles
- Flint – 52 miles
- Port Huron – 45 miles
- Detroit – 73 miles
- Ann Arbor – 106 miles

Responsible regionalism and coordination with other local and county-wide transportation plans are extremely important in order to ensure and enhance inter-regional connections. Additionally,



Transportation Network



Base Features:

- Railroads
- Creeks and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Parcel Lines
- Municipal Boundaries

Road Jurisdiction:

- State Highway
- City Major
- City Minor
- Other Local Roads

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Source: Sanilac County GIS, 2025;
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regional planning for transportation may be beneficial for future regional transportation investments.

Local Transportation Network

The **Transportation Network Map** shows the current transportation network of Brown City. All roads in the Township are divided into four categories:

- State Highway
- City Major
- City Minor
- Other Local Roads

Using this classification, the **Transportation Network Map** shows the transportation routes within the City and the primary links to outside the City.

State Highway M-90 runs east/west through the center of Brown City; connecting North Branch and Lexington on Lake Huron coast. Other

key roads that include Maple Valley Road which extends north/south on the edge of the City toward nearby cities such as Capac.

Non-Motorized Transportation

The majority of the roads in Brown City are low traffic and low speed, local roads. There are sidewalks particularly in the center of town and surrounding neighborhoods. However, the developments on the edges of town often do not have a sidewalk or space to safely ride a bike.

As a small, tight-knit city, Brown City has a prime opportunity to make most destinations easily accessible by walking or biking. Enhancing safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists can significantly improve the quality of life and well-being for its residents. Additionally, planning for alternative forms of non-motorized transportation, such as personal electric bikes and scooters, could also further support accessibility, especially for people with physical limitations or those that need to travel farther destinations.



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Chapter 6

Community Vision

The goals and objectives of the Brown City Master Plan serve as a framework for the community's values, preferences, and expectations regarding future land use and development. These goals outline the strategic direction for the City in areas including quality of life, economic growth, environmental management, and transportation systems. They also guide decisions related to land use regulations, administrative procedures, and programs designed to carry out the overall plan's intent.

Goals are broad statements that guide future discussions, while objectives are specific, measurable actions that support these goals.

The goals, and objectives for Brown City are organized by five major themes, which include

1. Unique Community Character
2. Desirable Housing For All
3. Vibrant Economy and Business Districts
4. Distinct Parks, Recreation, and Natural Features
5. High Quality Community Services

The goals collectively build upon each other to mutually support other goals. They are meant to be inspirational and accomplished together in order to balance the needs of the current and future residents.

Unique Community Character

Goal

Promote and maintain the distinct characteristics of Brown City, which are based on its history, relationship to the land, and focus on community health and wellbeing, to help attract and retain residents and visitors.

Objectives

1. Incorporate beautification strategies for new developments and within highly visible areas such downtown. Examples of beautification strategies may include landscaping and sidewalk cleanup, facade improvements, public art, and/or vacant lot revitalization.



2. Enforce existing blight, housing, rental, and maintenance codes to ensure neighborhoods and businesses remain strong and vital.
3. Encourage appropriate transitions between incompatible non-residential uses and residential neighborhoods.
4. Activate vacant buildings and spaces through short-term solutions such as temporary pop-up shops, creating visually interesting window displays, and repurposing spaces for community events and social gatherings.
5. Activate vacant buildings and spaces through long-term solutions such as building and infrastructure improvements, supported by public-private partnerships and governmental incentives.
6. Build upon community branding to increase visibility and strengthen the sense of place for Brown City, particularly downtown.
7. Encourage attractive streetscape improvements within the downtown in order to preserve the district's distinctive identity.

Desirable Housing For All

Goal

While protecting the small-town qualities of established neighborhoods, provide varied and high quality housing types needed by persons of all ages, incomes and household sizes.

Objectives

1. Apply and utilize grants and programs to encourage residential redevelopment and home maintenance.

2. Encourage the construction of new residential development that is consistent in scale and character with the existing residential neighborhoods in the City.
3. Enact zoning regulations that encourage mixed-use and a range of housing types.
4. Enact zoning regulations that encourage new lifestyle housing choices such as townhomes, small multi-units, condos, and senior housing.
5. Discourage uses that would increase traffic on residential streets beyond that which the street was designed or intended to carry.

Vibrant Economy and Business Districts

Goals

Encourage a conducive environment for commercial development that serves its residents as well as other users from beyond the City's boundaries. Commercial development will be channeled in ways that are consistent with the physical characteristics of a neighborhood based small town.

Enhance Brown City's position as a regional employment center by providing expansion opportunities and other incentives for high quality light industrial and distribution facilities.

Objectives

1. Maintain and leverage the opportunities of space, collaboration, and design in the downtown district by engaging businesses, residents, and community organizations.
2. Encourage the continuation of smaller, specialty type retail shops in the City's downtown.

3. Utilize state and federal grants for blight elimination programs and community development block grants that offer opportunity for stabilizing vacant land or support business development.
4. Utilize brownfield redevelopment funding to remediate underutilized brownfield sites.
5. Accommodate industrial and commercial business development for desirable job growth with adequately sized development ready sites.
6. Provide limited areas along Main Street for commercial development outside the downtown area for those types of commercial uses serving the regional market.
7. Encourage service type businesses to locate on the fringe of the downtown were such businesses currently exist.
8. Recognizing the importance of the agricultural industry, promote related industry that adds value within the County to products grown in the County.
9. Ensure that future commercial and industrial development does not emit excessive amounts of noise, fumes, smoke, or other pollutants and maintain responsible resource use.

Distinct Parks, Recreation, and Natural Features

Goal

Maintain existing parks and natural features to provide safe gathering spaces, enhance the City's natural beauty, and support a healthy and active quality of life.

Objectives

1. Protect wetlands, waterways, and floodplains with updated zoning and conservation efforts.
2. Take advantage of the Brown City Park by maintaining infrastructure and encouraging events and activities.
3. Maintain and develop parks and trails that connect residents to natural areas and outdoor activity.
4. Expand strategic locations for green infrastructure and landscaping to manage stormwater and enhance beautification efforts. This may include rain gardens, bioswales, tree planting, and landscaping maintenance along sidewalks and frequently flooded or muddy areas.
5. Provide for the development, utilization, and conservation of natural resources in the City including structures and land having historical, archaeological, architectural, scenic or similar significance.
6. Promote the development of recreational and/or tourist facilities that will attract tourists, taking advantage of the Thumb area's drawing power.

High Quality Community Services

Goal

Deliver high-quality public services that balance efficiency with the evolving needs of the community, while supporting growth and ensuring reliable, cost-effective operations into the future.

Objectives

1. Build on the strong, existing system of community facilities designed around education, recreation, health care, and police-fire protection, locating new facilities so as to balance convenience to users, cost efficiency, and compatibility with surrounding areas.
2. Maintain and improve the public infrastructure within the commercial and industrial areas of the City such as sidewalks, lighting, municipal parking, and other amenities.
3. Seek funding to increase the capacity and quality of the City's public sewer, water, and stormwater infrastructure.
4. Implement a long-term capital improvement plan for infrastructure and facilities to maintain modern health standards, improve and activate the Brown City Park, and allow for new development.
5. Continue to prioritize good governance and leadership by operating in an open and financially stable manner, focusing on maintaining high levels of citizen involvement and achieving measurable improvements as outlined within the Master Plan.



Chapter 7

Planning Recommendations

Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan is intended to serve as a guiding framework for the City's future growth and development. The formulation of the Future Land Use Plan requires a comprehensive understanding of the community's current characteristics to accurately anticipate future needs and conditions. The preceding sections of this Master Plan establish the foundation upon which the Future Land Use Plan was constructed. Specifically, the Future Land Use Plan and Map was developed based on:

- A review and analysis of existing land use conditions
- Infrastructure capabilities
- Analysis of demographic data
- Goals and objectives developed for the Master Plan
- Public participation gained through various opportunities during the planning process

Nine future land use classifications have been established and are shown on the **Future Land Use Map**. Below is a narrative to explain the proposed development patterns illustrated on the Future Land Use Map.

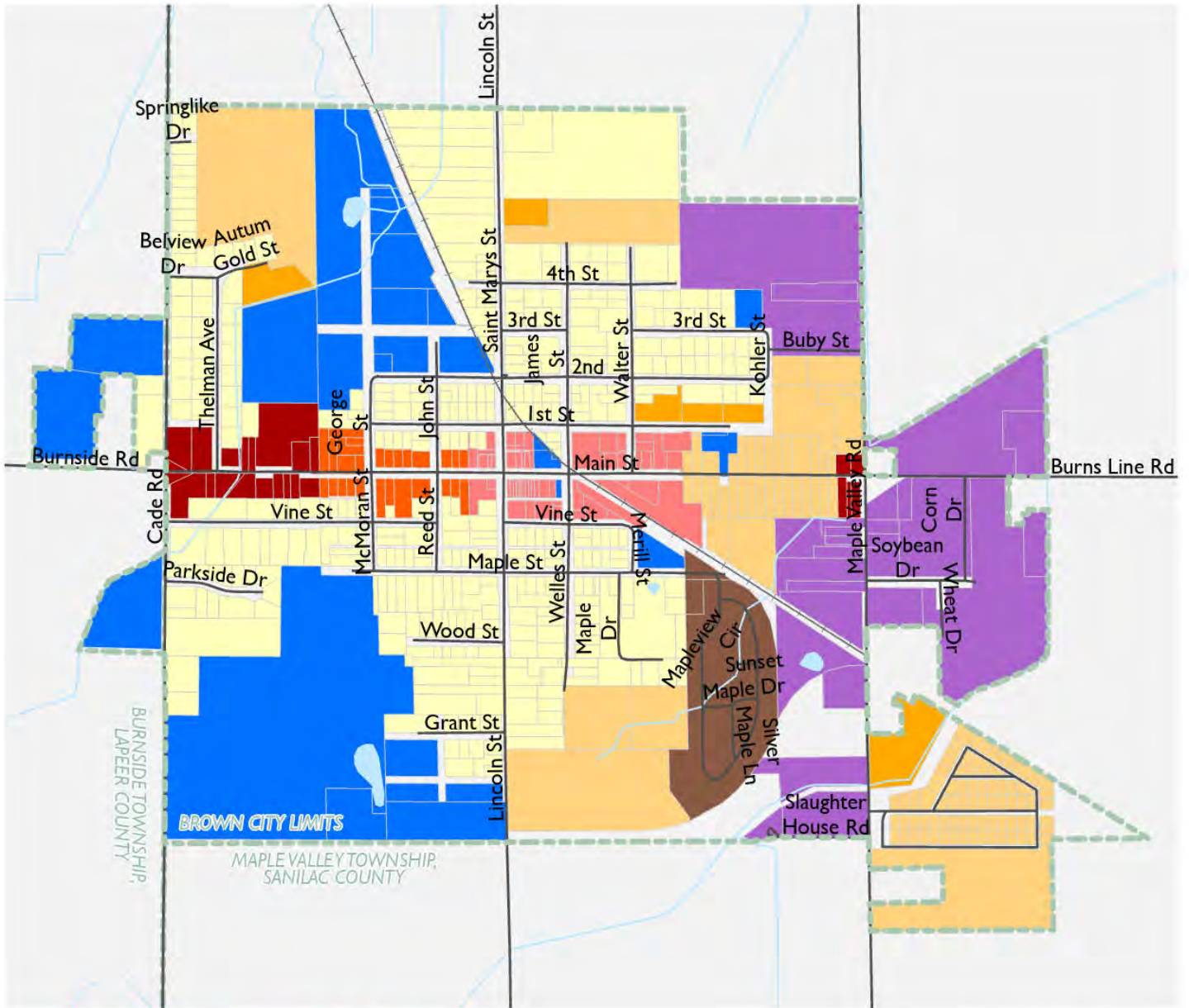
Neighborhood Residential

The Neighborhood Residential classification is consistently applied throughout the City to designate its most established and stable residential areas. These areas serve as the foundation of the community's residential landscape, distinguished by their smaller lot sizes, architectural diversity, and minimal vacant land. The majority of current and future zones intended for residential purposes are assigned the Neighborhood Residential classification due to its design flexibility, compact form, and sustainable characteristics, which help ensure cohesive development across residential neighborhoods.

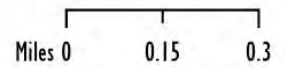
Neighborhood Residential describes the most stable and traditionally designed neighborhoods in Brown City. This designation is used to describe residential areas on local streets, which strive to be within walking distance of neighborhood commercial and community facilities. Homes in existing and future Neighborhood Residential areas should be compatible with adjacent residential uses. Such homes are typically located on lots 8,000 to 10,000 square feet in area. Other uses that may be permitted in this category include schools, churches, and other public facilities.

Neighborhood Residential site design should feature open setbacks, 15 to 25 feet on average from the road, curb and gutter, sidewalks and front porches should be included. New construction





Future Land Use



Base Features:

- Roads
- Railroads
- Creeks and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Parcel Lines
- Municipal Boundaries

Future Land Use:

- Neighborhood Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Commercial
- Public/Semi-Public
- Industrial
- Central Business District
- Mixed Use Transition Corridor

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should strive to address the street, have detached, rear or side yard garages, and be 1-2 stories in height.

Mixed Residential

The intent of this classification is to preserve and strengthen the traditional neighborhood character of Brown City, while allowing for a broader mix of housing types. This category has been planned as a transitional use between medium and low density single family detached areas and more intense commercial, high density single family, and industrial uses. This classification can accommodate detached single-family homes (on smaller lots), townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes. This land use classification is characterized by small lots, with lot sizes typically one-quarter of an acre or less.

Many of the existing homes within this classification are located near the historic downtown and within walking distance of shops and services. Many homes are older, with some historic character, although new developments such as small-single family homes have been built in areas like Hawthorne Drive.

Townhomes and similar structures may be 2 to 2.5 stories in height, preferably with garages loaded in rear through an alley. Other building forms may include duplexes one to two stories in height, which should be compatible with and complimentary to any adjacent single family detached areas. Site design should feature entrances facing the street and landscape buffers (lawn area) 10-15 feet in depth between home and street, curb and gutter, pedestrian amenities, and short decorative street fences. On-street parking is encouraged. Walkability is a priority, and all development should feature high internal and external pedestrian connectivity.

Multi-Family Residential

The Multi-Family Residential land use classification is intended to accommodate higher-density residential uses to meet housing needs at all stages of life, from young adults to seniors. New developments within this classification may include apartments, attached single family housing, townhomes, senior housing, and senior care facilities.



Multi-Family Residential areas are generally located along major streets, near community amenities, and/or adjacent to commercial areas. Multi-Family Residential areas should act as a transition between lower-density neighborhoods and more intensive uses. Developments must be served by public utilities, and designed with landscaping, and parking layouts that minimize impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. High-quality construction and energy efficiency are encouraged to support long-term affordability and livability.

Apartments may be 2 to 3 stories in height and should have pitched roofs, garages or carports not facing the public street. Townhomes and similar structures may be 2 to 2.5 stories in height, preferably with garages loaded in rear through an alley. Site design should feature entrances facing the street, street trees and landscape buffers, curb and gutter, and pedestrian and recreational amenities. Parking in rear of buildings is encouraged. Walkability is a priority, and all development should feature high internal and external pedestrian connectivity.

Mobile Home Park

The intent of the Mobile Home Park future land use classification is to maintain an additional form of affordable housing in Brown City by preserving and improving the City's existing manufactured home community. This classification only accommodates manufactured or mobile homes.

Currently, the only location in the city with this land use classification is the Maplevue Estates on Maple Street. The Master Plan does not anticipate nor plan for additional mobile home park development beyond this existing mobile home park location. Mobile home parks should provide adequate utility and stormwater infrastructure and open space for residents. Ongoing repairs, replacements, and upgrades are important to ensure resilience to weather events, maintain healthy living conditions, and support long term affordability.

Mixed Use Transition Corridor

The properties generally fronting both sides of Main Street (M-90), between the commercial uses in the western portion of the City and downtown Brown City, have been classified as Mixed Use Transition Corridor on the Future Land Use Map. This area is almost exclusively comprised of single-family dwellings, many of which are older and historic homes. However, because these properties front the City's busiest road corridor, there is pressure on some of these properties to convert to non-residential use. Therefore, the primary purpose of this classification is to preserve the historic single-family residential character of this area, while also providing flexibility for limited mixed-use and business development.

The existing non-residential uses within this area are former single-family dwellings whose main levels have been converted to small-scale personal service/office use, while the upper levels remain a residential use. Further conversions of single-family residential dwellings to mixed-use, where ground levels are occupied for office or personal service uses and upper floors remain residential use, may be allowed within this classification. In such cases, the commercial development must be designed to conform to the historic residential scale and architecture of the area.

Front yards should remain green, with off-street parking encouraged in the rear yard. A direct pedestrian connection from the front entrance to the sidewalk along Main Street should be required. Shared drives and/or rear entry drives should be explored to manage safe and efficient vehicular travel to and from Main Street.

The demolition of single-family dwellings to make way for non-residential new construction is strongly discouraged. The conversion of a single-family dwelling to entirely consist of non-residential use (all floors) is also discouraged. Allowable non-residential uses may include those which serve the needs of residents of the area and which do not generate large volumes of traffic congestion and parking.

Central Business District

The Central Business District future land use classification is a central, focal point of the community. It contains places of work, shopping, and commercial services, and provides space for ceremonies, fairs, civic functions, and casual meetings among neighbors. The Central Business District should permit multi-use buildings, including commercial, office, entertainment, institutional, and residential in a pedestrian-oriented and traditional downtown setting.

The Central Business District is located along M-90 and mainly between the crossroads of Lincoln Street and Walter Street. Most of the Central Business District is built out, but there are areas with infill and redevelopment potential. It is the heart of the City, with many public services located within the district. Further redevelopment should be designed to maintain or enhance the existing historic character, density, and pedestrian accessibility to businesses. The majority of the Central Business District is comprised of 1 to 2 story buildings, forming a pronounced streetscape along both the north and south side of Main Street. This classification is not intended for use outside of the traditional downtown of Brown City.

Buildings should be attached (no side setback) retail or commercial at grade, with a high percentage of front facade dominated by windows. The upper floors of buildings should primarily feature residential or office/commercial use. Recommended site design should feature buildings at the front property line, pedestrian scale lighting, benches, curb and gutter, trash receptacles, and street trees. On-street parallel parking is encouraged and should be consistent in appearance throughout the district. Canopy, projecting, or window signs are encouraged. Large, freestanding signs are discouraged.

Commercial

The Commercial future land use classification is intended to accommodate non-residential land uses (commercial, public, and semi-public) primarily along the M-90 corridor outside of the Central Business District. Commercial uses provide for the sale of convenience goods and personal/business services for the day-to-day needs of the City. In general, Commercial land uses are located in one or two-story structures that require land area not typically found in the Central Business District. Examples of these types of uses include restaurants, supermarkets, dry cleaners, beauty shops, book stores, clothing boutiques, convenience stores, and household goods-repair shops.

The Commercial land use classification is located on the edges of the City along M-90. Most of the land is occupied, but there is opportunity for infill and redevelopment.

Buildings typically feature pitched/gable end roofs, are 1 to 2 stories in height, and are compatible with adjacent residential uses. Buildings should be established with modest setbacks from the street, and sites should include sidewalks, pedestrian scale lighting, benches, curb and gutter, trash receptacles, and street trees. Off street parking should be located at side or rear of buildings. New development in these areas must provide adequate screening and buffering from surrounding uses. A minimal number of curb cuts or access points to these facilities should be encouraged.

Public/Semi-Public

This future land use classification includes public land and park lands, churches, schools, government buildings, utilities, and other public and semi-public land uses. They are intended to serve the community with necessary services and social opportunities. Parkland and open space are included within this classification to preserve the City's natural features and opportunities to access



outdoor recreation. The land uses are compatible with a range of land uses including residential and non-residential. Existing parkland, including the Brown City Park, should remain preserved or renovated according to the City’s most up-to-date Parks and Recreation Plan.

If Public/Semi-Public land within this classification are to be developed, it is important that it remain compatible with the surrounding existing land uses.

Industrial

This land use classification is intended to accommodate limited, small-scale industrial developments, such as research firms, processing, wholesale operations, industrial agriculture, warehouses, and light manufacturing, that have minimal external impacts and do not negatively affect the surrounding districts.

In Brown City, existing industrial development is located along the east side of M-90 and Maple Valley Road. Accordingly, future light industrial uses should be clustered in currently existing areas. Conventional, massive, “big box” buildings should be avoided, while new buildings should complement the character of traditional architecture characteristic of Brown City. High quality materials should be utilized. Site design should feature heavily landscaped buffer areas 50

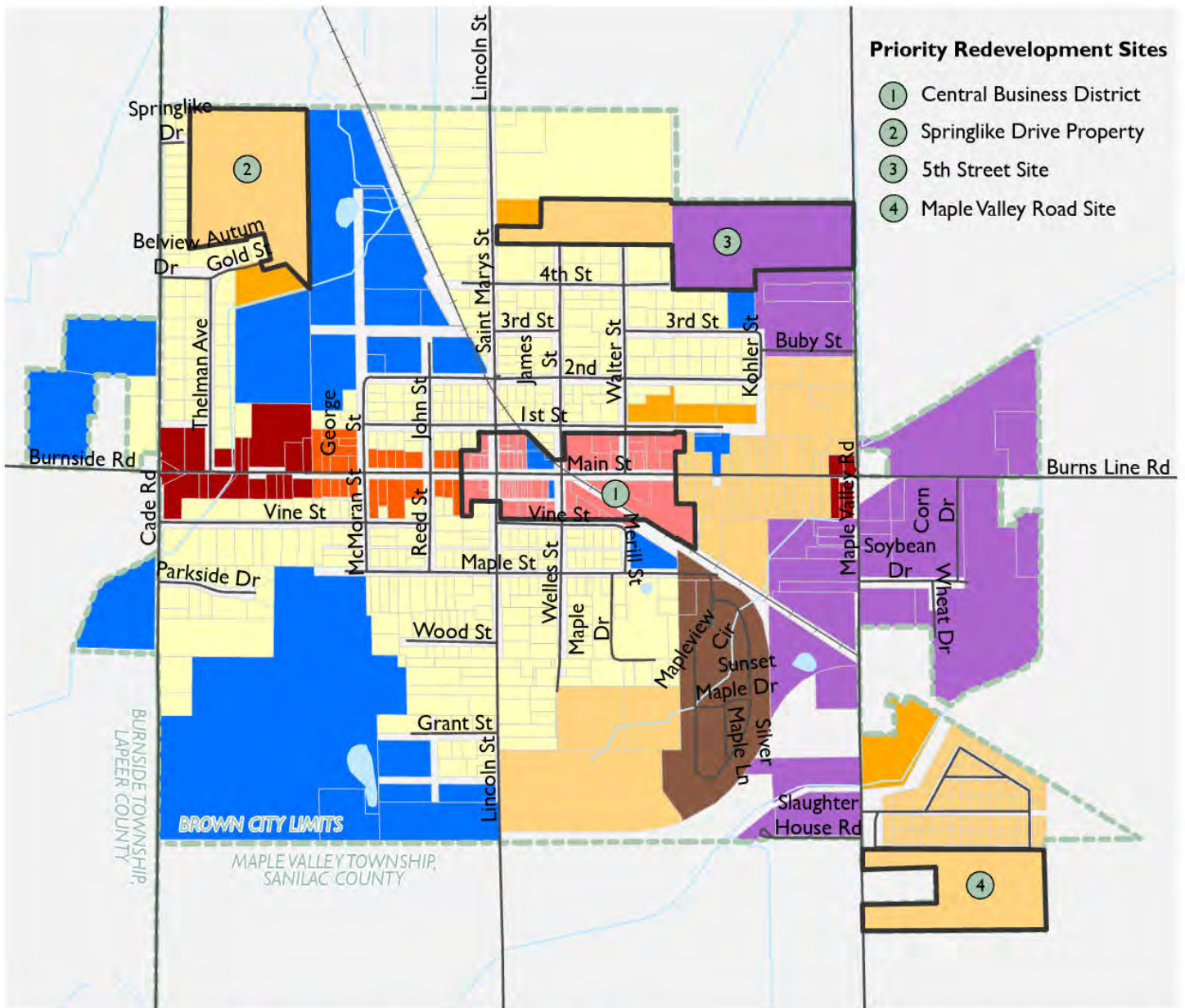
to 100 feet in depth for intense uses. Pedestrian amenities, mature trees, monument style signage at the street, are recommended. New development in these areas must provide adequate screening and buffering from surrounding uses. A minimal number of curb cuts or access points to these facilities is encouraged.

Priority Redevelopment Sites

Communities are encouraged to approach property redevelopment in a strategic manner. Investments may be directed toward areas with potential for future development. Redeveloping and reusing individual properties or specific nodes can contribute to additional development nearby. The following concepts outline a community-generated vision for “priority redevelopment sites” within Brown City. By involving the public and establishing a framework for desired outcomes at priority sites, the City aims to create a stable environment for redevelopment projects.

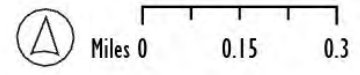
Site Identification

Listed below and shown on the **Priority Redevelopment Site Map**, four sites within the City have been identified and will be targeted as priority redevelopment sites.



- Priority Redevelopment Sites**
- ① Central Business District
 - ② Springlike Drive Property
 - ③ 5th Street Site
 - ④ Maple Valley Road Site

Priority Redevelopment Sites



Base Features:

- Roads
- +— Railroads
- ~~~ Creeks and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Parcel Lines
- Municipal Boundaries

Future Land Use:

- Neighborhood Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Mixed Use Transition Corridor

- Central Business District
- Commercial
- Public/Semi-Public
- Industrial

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1. Central Business District
2. Springlike Drive Property
3. 5th Street Site
4. Maple Valley Road Site

These four sites were highlighted by the Master Plan steering committee and existing land use analysis. They have a significant potential for redevelopment and, if developed, would greatly contribute to the improvement of the community in line with the vision and recommendations of this Master Plan. This section of the Master Plan provides detailed evaluation of challenges and opportunities for each of these sites, along with strategies to turn the redevelopment of these sites into reality.

However, these are not the only sites within the City with the potential for redevelopment. Conditions may change and new opportunities may arise that will result in the City focusing on different or new redevelopment sites. Over time, the City should continually identify priority redevelopment sites (in addition to those highlighted in this section) and package them for marketing and solicitation of developers.

Priority Redevelopment Site Recommendations

This section outlines recommendations for the redevelopment of each of the four redevelopment sites. The recommendations are not intended to be a prescription for what the City will allow or require at each site. Rather, they are intended to show potential redevelopment concepts that would be consistent with the overall goals of the Master Plan. The City recognizes that some, or portions of, these sites are privately owned. The intention is not to limit creative expression or alternative proposals, but rather to encourage ideas that align with and complement the City’s broader vision for the future.

1. *Central Business District*

The Central Business District is in the center of the City and is made up of about 22 acres. It includes the City Hall, library, post office, and local restaurants and businesses. The district accommodates on-street parking, has connective sidewalks, distinct street lighting, and street light banners.

Redevelopment Opportunities

The Central Business District already has high visibility being along the City’s busiest road, which also carries traffic through the City to other regions. Diversifying business and business opening times would increase foot traffic and liveliness in the area throughout the day.

The district features some small staple businesses including restaurants, hair salons, and a gym, yet it also faces challenges such as vacant storefronts and challenging pedestrian experiences (limited shade, lack of sitting locations, and limited pedestrian protection from traffic). Economic development efforts should be focused in the Central Business District including encouraging business development and occupying vacant properties. This could include allowing entrepreneurship hubs, hosting multiple businesses in a single business front, or temporary uses of spaces such as pop-ups. Revitalization efforts can also be focused on the physical atmosphere of the Central Business District including beautification efforts, shade trees, and improving inviting sitting spaces to encourage visitors to linger longer and engage more with local establishments.

Brown City is a small city with a relatively small population. A small population can be challenging for business development with limited workforce and customer base. To support local economic development, it is also important that the City focuses on residential development and quality-of-life improvements that help attract and retain residents while supporting local businesses, within and around the downtown area. Encouraging mixed-use development can enhance the Central

Business District’s vitality by combining commercial and residential uses in the same building. Most of the existing buildings are single story, but multiple story buildings have opportunities for ground floor commercial and residential above.

2. Springlike Drive Property

The Springlike Drive Property, located on the northwest side of the City, consists of approximately 21 acres. The site is a single parcel, owned by the Brown City School, and is currently farmed land. Potential access points include Springlike Drive and Belview Drive. To the north there are school athletic facilities, and to the east is undeveloped school property. South and west of the property are single family homes and a small multi-family apartment complex.

Redevelopment Opportunities

The site is recommended for residential use, with the flexibility to accommodate a variety of housing types such as single-family homes, townhouses, and duplexes. The appropriate density of development and extent of development should be guided by the accessibility and capacity of public sewer and water systems. New housing should be designed to complement and enhance the existing character of the surrounding neighborhood, while also providing attainable, high-quality alternative housing options.

Residential developments should respond to community needs, particularly considering shifting demographic trends and smaller household sizes. Housing options should be suitable for young adults, couples, small families, and older residents seeking to age in place. Key characteristics should include affordability, appropriately sized units, and universal design for those with disabilities. Additionally, new developments should prioritize high-quality construction and energy efficiency to ensure long-term affordability and residential retention.

3. 5th Street Site

The 5th Street Site is located on the north side of town and includes three parcels totaling approximately 25 acres. The site is currently agricultural with some industrial buildings. The site has five access points connecting to Maple Valley Road, 3rd Street, Buby Street, 4th Street, and Lincoln Street. Surrounding land uses include agricultural to the north and east; single family houses, the Brown City water tower, and industrial sites to the south; and the Cedar Trace Apartments to the west (senior and disability housing).

Redevelopment Opportunities

It is recommended that eastern portion of the site along Maple Valley Road remains industrial land, with adequate buffering to protect adjacent future residential areas. The industrial redevelopment must be compatible with nearby residential. Therefore, the industrial uses should be light industrial and low impact. This may include technology centers or research, but generally would not include outdoor storage nor heavy processing uses.

The remainder of the property is well suited for residential development, including senior housing, detached single family homes, and townhouses. Given its location next to Cedar Trace Apartments, the site has strong potential for senior living, which could be complemented by townhouses and single-family units that integrate visually with the existing neighborhood.

As the largest of the Priority Redevelopment Sites, the Maple Valley Drive site provides a unique opportunity to deliver a mix of land uses on the edge of the City. Development should be carefully scaled to balance residential growth with the preservation of neighborhood character and the continuation of light industrial uses.

4. *Maple Valley Road Site*

The Maple Valley Road Site is a 15-acre priority redevelopment site located near the southeast edge of the City. The property is currently utilized as cropland. The site is located immediately adjacent to the south of Maple Valley Estates, which is a partially developed single-family neighborhood; future development on this site could easily connect to Maple Valley Estates.

Redevelopment Opportunities

The site presents an opportunity for thoughtfully designed mixed-residential development. This site could support the development of clustered single family homes on small lots and senior independent- and assisted-living. The appropriate density of development and extent of development should be guided by the accessibility and capacity of public sewer and water systems. New housing should be designed to complement and enhance the existing character of the surrounding neighborhood, while also providing attainable, high-quality alternative housing options.

Overcoming Redevelopment Challenges

Site redevelopment involves several challenges that are not typically encountered in new construction on undeveloped land. The following is a list of issues often associated with site redevelopment projects, such as Brown City's four priority sites:

- Limited site size and/or lack of control over property ownership
- High costs related to rehabilitating existing buildings, especially if they are in poor condition
- Potential environmental contamination or incompatible previous uses, which may require remediation
- Zoning designations or requirements that can restrict alternative redevelopment concepts

- Public stormwater, water, and/or sewer capacity limitations
- Limitations of development for properties within floodplains

The City, with participation from both private and public partners, has resources available to address these challenges. The following strategies are proposed to help the City respond to common redevelopment concerns.

1. Market redevelopment sites and solicit developers

- Communicate the vision for each priority redevelopment site. The redevelopment opportunities outlined in this section serve as initial options, but further site investigation may be required, and the City might consider preparing concept sketches for marketing use.
- Post business information packets on the City's website, including demographics, available incentives, and testimonials from current business owners in the City.
- Collaborate with local partners (County, MEDC, etc.) to promote the vision.
- List sites on online databases such as Zoom Prospector, OppSites, and the MEDC Real Estate Database.

2. Reduce excessive zoning barriers

- Proactively rezone priority redevelopment sites to districts that support the intended projects.
- Amend the zoning ordinance to ensure that innovative mixed-use redevelopment proposals may be approved.
- Establish and promote clear incentives to position the City as an active partner in targeted redevelopment efforts. Incentives may include tax programs.

- Compile a comprehensive catalogue of available external funding sources and facilitate connections between property owners and funding agencies, such as the MEDC and EGLE.

3. *Incentivize redevelopment*

- Develop incentives to show the City’s participation in redevelopment for certain types of projects. Possible City incentives include tax abatements, downtown signage and facade improvement programs, and capital improvements.
- Evaluate the feasibility of establishing a DDA program to provide targeted development in the Central Business District. DDAs can also establish gap financing for investment projects using project-specific tax increment financing.
- Compile information on available external funding resources and facilitate connections between property owners and funding agencies, such as MEDC and EGLE.

Zoning Plan

According to section 2(d) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, the Master Plan shall include a “Zoning Plan” depicting the various zoning districts and their use, as well as standards for height, bulk, location, and use of building and premises. The zoning plan serves as the link between the master plan and the zoning ordinance, ensures consistency between the two documents, and guides the Planning Commission in what to consider updating in the zoning ordinance.

Relationship of FLU Classifications to Current Zoning Districts

This Master Plan has established a total of 9 future land use classifications (see the **Future Land Use Map**). The presently adopted City of Brown City Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 152 of the Code of Ordinances, has established a total of 9 zoning district designations, as follows:

- Neighborhood Residential (NR)
- Estate Residential (ER)
- Single-Family Attached Residential (SFAR)
- Multiple-Family Residential (MFR)
- Neighborhood Commercial (NC)
- Central Business District (CBD)
- Industrial (IND)
- Public/Semi-Public (P)
- Vehicular Parking (VP)

Table 17 highlights how each of the 9 future land use classifications is intended to be accomplished through zoning district designations. However, as noted, not all future land use classifications can be linked to an existing zoning district that would accomplish its intent.

Recommended Zoning Ordinance Amendments

Amendments to the Brown City Zoning Ordinance are needed in order to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan. Soon after adoption of this Master Plan, it is recommended that the City proceed with a detailed zoning review (“audit”) to outline detailed changes necessary. Below is a summary of major zoning ordinance amendments that the City should consider:

Table 17. Relationship between the Future Land Use Classifications and Zoning Districts

Future Land Use Classification	Zoning District(s) Intended to Accomplish the Future Land Use Classification
Neighborhood Residential	Neighborhood Residential (NR)
Mixed Residential	Single-Family Attached Residential (SFAR)
Multi-Family Residential	Multiple-Family Residential (MFR)
Mobile Home Park	n/a - Consider creating and adopting a new zoning district that allows and regulates mobile/manufactured home parks
Mixed Use Transition Corridor	n/a - Consider creating and adopting a new zoning district that accomplishes the intent of the Mixed Use Transition Corridor classification
Central Business District	Central Business District (CBD)
Commercial	Neighborhood Commercial (NC)
Public/Semi-Public	Public/Semi-Public (P)
Industrial	Industrial (IND)

Source: Wade Trim Analysis, 2025

1. Review and consider needed amendments to the CBD District pertaining to permitted uses and development standards to allow for a dynamic mix of uses within a traditional downtown context.
2. Review the zoning ordinance and consider amendments that incentivize or require buffers around important natural features, including woodlands, wetlands, ponds, streams and drains.
3. Consider zoning changes to allow for sustainable energy production.
4. Review the zoning ordinance and consider amendments that encourage the use of Low Impact Development strategies in new development and redevelopment projects.
5. Review and update the zoning ordinance’s design standards to ensure attractive and high-quality development throughout the city. Specific attention should be paid to development and redevelopment within mixed-use and commercial districts.
6. Review the zoning ordinance and seek to eliminate barriers and disincentives to non-residential and mixed-use development projects that contribute to the local economy and are supported by the community.

Finally, after adoption of the Master Plan, it is recommended that the Planning Commission examine the currently adopted City of Brown City Zoning Map in light of the new Future Land Use Map. The Planning Commission may consider proactive changes to the Zoning Map upon adoption of this Master Plan. However, the Planning Commission is not obligated to amend the Zoning Map and may instead choose to allow private property owners, over time, to petition the

City for zoning district changes which the Planning Commission may approve if such changes are consistent with the Master Plan.

Additionally, housing-specific zoning ordinance amendment recommendations are outlined in the Housing Action Plan section below.

Housing Action Plan

Ensuring a sufficient supply of high-quality, affordable housing is fundamental to building a thriving and healthy community. Drawing on an analysis of local housing needs, the objectives outlined in both the Michigan Statewide Housing Plan and the East Michigan Housing Partnership Action Plan, and feedback from the community, this Housing Action Plan presents strategies designed to expand housing options, improve access, and create more housing opportunities for all residents of Brown City.

Local Housing Strategies

Building upon state and regional housing strategies (refer to Chapter 2, Planning Influences and Drivers), a series of local housing strategies have been established for Brown City. These strategies are categorized and listed below.

New Housing Development Strategies:

- Encourage higher-density housing in designated areas with sufficient public utilities to limit urban sprawl and unplanned growth.
- Proactively promote prospective sites for new residential development, with an emphasis on addressing the need for missing middle housing types—such as small-lot single-family homes, duplexes, and townhomes—as well as senior-oriented options, including active lifestyle communities and residential care facilities.

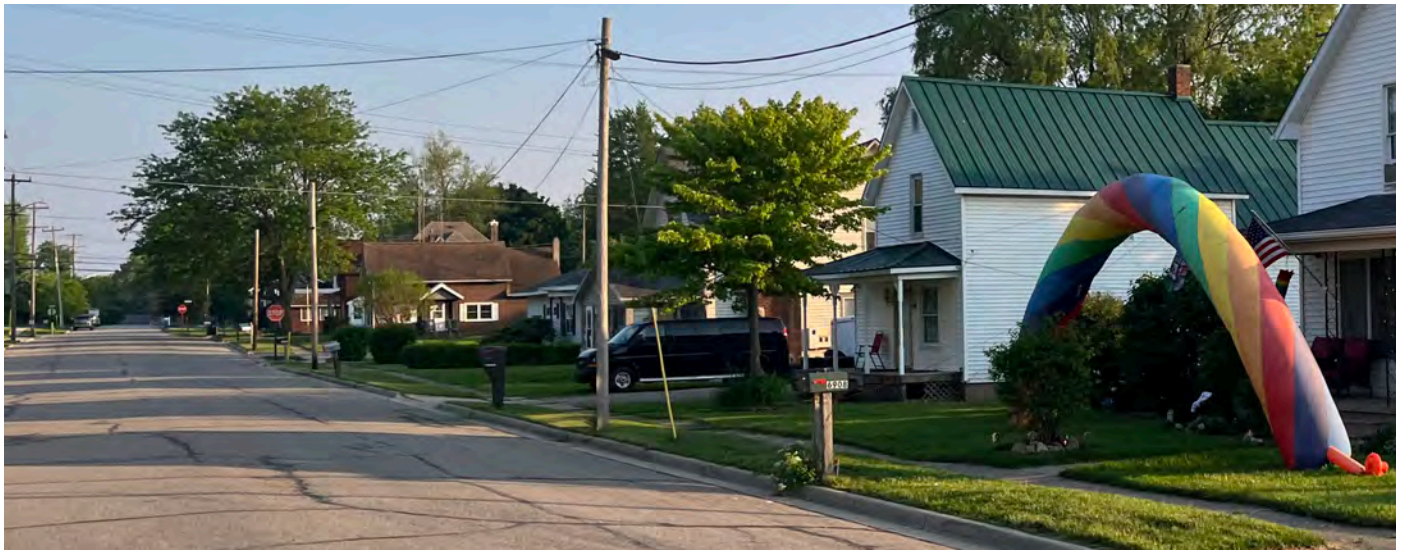
- Broaden the range of available housing unit types and sizes.
- Collaborate with regional and state agencies to support programs that make housing more affordable or lower barriers for those facing housing challenges.

Sustainable Housing Development Strategies:

- Promote compact, connected growth to balance housing, community needs, and environmental conservation.
- Minimize the fragmentation of habitat corridors, including those situated along watercourses, hedgerows, and fence lines.
- Enhance quality of life by designing developments that include or link to natural and recreational spaces.
- New residential developments should implement effective measures to properly manage both the volume and quality of stormwater.

Housing Rehabilitation and Preservation Strategies:

- Emphasize energy efficiency and effective weatherization measures in both construction projects and housing rehabilitation initiatives.
- Maintain and improve current housing while upholding fair standards for housing, rentals, and upkeep to keep properties durable and of excellent quality.
- Create modern design standards and review processes that motivate developers to use innovative techniques in their projects.
- Enhance the condition and safety of current rental properties by conducting routine inspections and performing necessary upgrades.



Housing-Focused Zoning Recommendations

Zoning ordinance amendments are necessary to support the recommendations outlined in this Master Plan and Housing Action Plan.

Table 18 highlights the residential housing types allowed within each of the City’s residential zoning districts. The table also lists one commercial zoning district (CBD) that allows residential use in conjunction with commercial use. As noted in the table, only single-family detached dwellings are allowed in the NR and ER Districts. Single-family attached dwellings may be allowed in the SFAR and MFR Districts, while multiple-family dwellings may be allowed within the MRF District.

As shown on the Brown City Zoning Map (dated August 3, 2023), the majority of the City’s properties are zoned NR District. Only a limited number of properties are zoned ER, SFAR, or MFR. The predominance of NR District zoning, where only single-family detached dwellings are permitted, effectively works against the City’s desire to ensure a more diversified housing stock.

Although the City’s currently adopted Zoning Districts Map lists a Manufactured Housing zoning district, there is no actual district outlined in the text of the zoning ordinance.

The following housing-focused zoning recommendations have been established based on a general review of the City’s Zoning Ordinance:

- Define and regulate additional housing types including two-family dwellings, townhouses, three-family dwellings, and four-family dwellings.
- Define and regulate additional senior housing and residential care facility types including adult foster care homes, adult foster care facilities, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and elderly housing.
- Consider allowing two-family dwellings within the NR Districts.
- Consider the establishment of a new zoning district, or make amendments to the existing SFAR District, to accomplish the intent of the Mixed Residential future land use classification.
- Consider restructuring the ER District to incorporate additional mixed-use (ground level non-residential with upper floor residential) in line with the intent of the Mixed Use Transition Corridor future land use classification.

Table 18. Brown City Allowed Residential Use by Zoning District, 2025

Residential Uses	Zoning Districts				
	Neighborhood Residential (NR)	Estate Residential (ER)	Single-Family Attached Residential (SFAR)	Multiple-Family Residential (MFR)	Central Business District (CBD)
One family detached dwellings	P	P	P	P	
Single-family attached dwellings (2 stories or less)			P	P	
Attached or clustered residential condominium units			P	P	
Multiple-family dwellings (2 stories or less)				P	
Congregate housing for the elderly			P	P	
Residences that are secondary to a business use in a commercial area					P

Source: Brown City Zoning Ordinance, Wade Trim Analysis, 2025

- Consider creating and adopting a new zoning district that allows and regulates mobile/manufactured home parks. (Although the City’s currently adopted Zoning Districts Map lists a Manufactured Housing zoning district, there is no actual district outlined in the text of the zoning ordinance.)
- Consider amendments allowing for upper floor residential use within the City’s commercial zoning districts.
- Review the city’s Planned Unit Development option (Section 152.181) to ensure that it allows for regulatory flexibility and incentivizes the development of varied housing types and mixed-use developments in line with the Master Plan.
- Review and seek opportunities to streamline the City’s development review procedures, eliminating unnecessary hurdles to housing development.



Housing Assistance Programs

The City of Brown City should support and build awareness of various housing assistance programs, connecting community members to appropriate resources. The following is a listing of currently available housing assistance programs, though it is not an exhaustive list. This Master Plan recommends that the City continue to seek additional assistance from a variety of federal, state, local and private programs.

- **Fair Housing Act.** Education around the Fair Housing Act promotes inclusivity and prevents housing discrimination. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s website provides a full overview of the Act.
- **Blue Water Community Action.** Although based in St. Clair County, the Blue Water Community Action offers housing-related services to Sanilac County residents. These services include homebuyer education, weatherization, homelessness, and utility assistance.
- **Weatherization Assistance Program.** This program is administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The program provides energy conservation and related health and safety services for eligible low-income households at no cost to the resident.
- **Home Energy Loan Program.** Operated by Michigan Saves, it provides loans for energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements. Homeowners, including those with secondary homes or 1-4 unit properties with at least one owner-occupied unit, may qualify for a list of approved improvements. These improvements include new windows and doors, air conditioners or furnaces, and even some appliances.
- **Home Preservation Program.** Michigan Habitat for Humanity offers home repairs for low-income homeowners who need help with home maintenance as a result of either physical or financial hardship. In some cases, an affordable loan is made to the homeowner, and their payments are then placed in a revolving fund used to fund other Home Preservation repairs.
- **Single Family Home Ownership Loan.** A USDA program to provide safe, well-built affordable homes for rural Americans. Families and individuals in rural areas and communities of 20,000 or less population with qualifying incomes are able to use this program to buy, build, improve, repair or rehabilitate rural homes as a permanent residence.
- **Predevelopment Loan Program.** The Michigan Historic Preservation Network (MHPN) sponsors the loan program to provide aid to projects rehabilitating historic buildings. It is meant to cover the third-party costs of starting a preservation project. This loan is not only reserved

for housing, and is eligible for non-profit organizations and for-profit groups.

- **Intervention Loan Program.** The MHPN also provides financial support to historic building repairs. This is meant to provide to support comprehensive efforts to rehabilitate the building. This loan is eligible for non-profits, municipalities, downtown development authorities, land banks, community development corporations, and religious groups.
- **Michigan Lead Safe Home Program.** The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services helps renters and homeowners find, fix, and reduce exposure to lead in paint, dust, soil, and drinking water. Additionally, the Lead Prevention Fund helps qualifying homeowners cover 50% of the cost of lead abatement project.
- **Property Improvement Program.** A Michigan State Housing Development Authority program to assist qualified homeowners make repairs and improvements to their primary residences.
- **Single Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants.** The U.S. Department of Agriculture sponsors the Section 504 Home Repair Program. This program provides loans to very-low-income homeowners to repair or improve their homes. Additionally, the program can provide grants to elderly very-low income homeowners to remove health and safety hazards.

Circulation Plan

The City of Brown City is committed to creating a fair and sustainable transportation network that meets the needs of residents now and well into the future. To achieve this goal, City leaders recognize the necessity of a long-term plan that ensures both vehicle and nonmotorized travel options are balanced and available to everyone.

Future Street Circulation

The **Future Circulation Plan Map** sets forth recommendations for the development of public rights-of-way in a manner consistent with and supportive of recommendations for future land use. The Future Circulation Plan Map does not anticipate any changes to the existing National Function Classification designations (i.e., State Highway, City Major, City Minor, etc.) of streets within the city as shown on the Transportation Network Map. The recommendations on the Future Circulation Plan Map focus on safety enhancements, improvements for more complete streets with pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and the development of non-motorized facilities. The future circulation network is designed to link Brown City's most important community facilities and establish easy to navigate connections for people to walk and bike in their neighborhoods and around the city.

Below is a description of the circulation system types and strategies outlined on the Future Circulation Plan Map.

Main Street

M-90 within downtown is Brown City's traditional "Main Street." Given the importance of Main Street, it is essential that Brown City coordinate with MDOT to ensure that the street is designed as a complete street within a downtown context to accomplish numerous goals, including:

What is a Complete Street?

Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all legal users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities can safely move along and across a complete street. The right-of-way is designed to enable safe access for all users as part of a complete street. There are no strict requirements to qualify as a complete street. The community context must be taken into consideration and therefore each complete street is unique. Some complete streets may include special bus lanes and accessible public transportation stops, while others may have wide paved shoulders with narrower travel lanes. The concept of complete streets is not to create the perfect street for every traveler, but rather to design a network of streets that emphasizes different modes of transportation and is accessible by everyone.

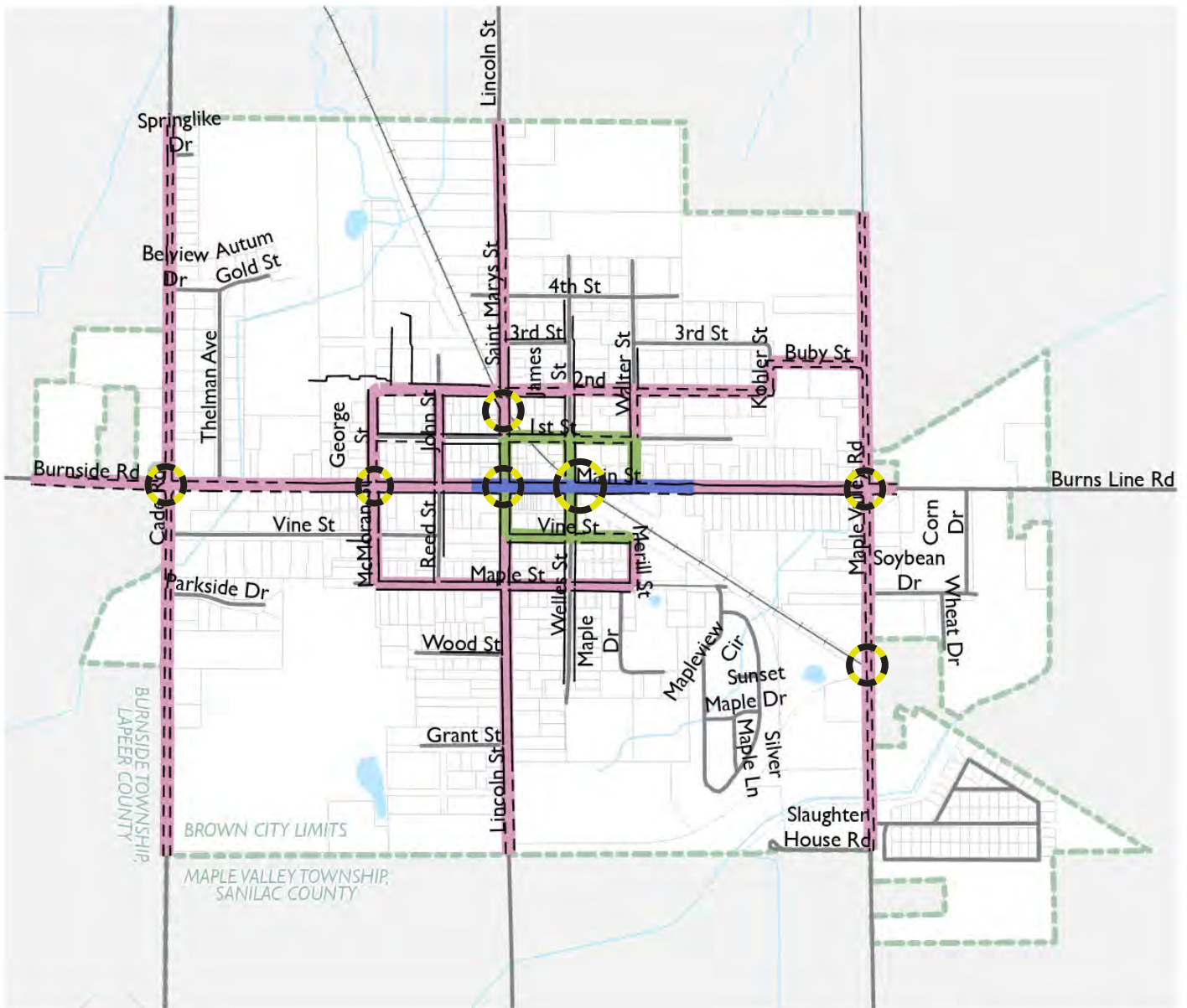


- Maintain a high quality aesthetic as they key viewpoint of the downtown area, contributing to the City’s small town character and appeal
- Support safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle crossings and travel
- Accommodate on-street parking
- Support local business and “street life,” creating safe and inviting spaces for social connections along the street
- Ensure safe and efficient vehicular travel of people and goods, but in a manner which does not compromise the other goals listed above

Downtown Street

“Downtown Streets” have a similar function as a Main Street, but in the context of Brown City, these streets feature much lower traffic volumes and are less likely to be the primary access to downtown businesses. As shown on the Circulation Plan Map, these streets include segments of First, Lincoln, Vine, James, Welles, and Walter Streets within the blocks immediately surrounding downtown. Downtown Streets must be designed as complete streets to accomplish numerous goals, including:

- Maintain a high quality aesthetic, contributing to the City’s small-town character and appeal
- Support safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle travel
- Accommodate on-street parking
- Serve as transition zones between adjacent residential neighborhoods and downtown, creating safe and comfortable spaces for social connections along the street
- Support local businesses by providing secondary accesses, including loading and unloading spaces



Future Circulation Plan



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Base Features:

- Railroads
- Creeks and Streams
- Water Bodies
- Parcel Lines
- Municipal Boundaries

Future Street Circulation:

- Main Street
- Downtown Streets
- Shared Streets
- Other Local Roads

Future Non-Motorized Circulation:

- Existing Sidewalks
- Proposed Sidewalks
- Pedestrian Safety Enhancements

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 500 Griswold St #2500
 Detroit, MI 48226
 800.482.2864
 February 2026

Source: Sanilac County GIS, 2025;
 Michigan Geographic Data Library;

- Ensure safe and efficient vehicular travel of people and goods, but in a manner which does not compromise the other goals listed above

Shared Streets

The Circulation Plan Map recommends for selected streets within the City to be designed with shared lane markings. These “Shared Streets” have significant potential to accommodate bicycle travel, in addition to vehicular and pedestrian travel. Shared Streets provide a bicycle priority route designed to offer convenient, low-stress access to local destinations and through neighborhoods. A combination of access management, traffic calming, and crossing treatments work in concert to enhance bicycling experience.

Marked shared lanes (“sharrow lanes” or “sharrows”) are a newer alternative that are often incorporated into bike routes today. Sharrows are pavement markings that provide positional guidance to bike riders as to where they belong within the roadway and to alert motorists that bicyclists should be anticipated in the roadway and where they may be riding. These sharrow markings are used in areas where it is too narrow for bike lanes, has high incidences of wrong-way riding, and/or high parking turnover. The markings, generally placed every 200 feet and within 100 feet of every intersection, should also be used with “share the

road” or “bike route” signs. Bicyclists should be positioning themselves to be crossing over the center of the sharrow’s chevron arrows.

In addition to bicycle markings and signs, Shared Streets should include traffic-calming measures and crossing improvements designed to enhance the comfort and priority of bicyclists traveling along the route.

As shown on the Circulation Plan Map, Shared Streets include segments of Cade Road, George Street, Second Street, Maple Street, Lincoln Street, Maple Valley Road, and Buby Street. None of these streets presently include marked bike lanes or bike route signage, but could easily be retrofitted to include such signage and/or markings.

Access Management

Access management and internal circulation are critical elements in creating a safe and efficient roadway system. The capacity of a regional or major road can be enhanced, and its useful life extended, by careful attention to access controls and circulation between adjacent sites. This coordination and review will also likely reduce the total number of access drives as well as the total number of conflict points. The City has the ability to implement access management standards which will allow for the proper planning and placement of access drives in the City. If not implemented as



Shared Street Design Considerations - Sharrows, traffic calming, and crossing improvements

Source: Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks, U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, December 2016

new development occurs, the City will be faced with the difficult task of eliminating access drives on a piecemeal basis.

During the life of this plan, the primary area of focus for access management will be Main Street (M-90) outside of downtown Brown City. The concept of access management is based on granting owners of property along a specified roadway, particularly those owning commercial, office or industrial, access to their property, but not unlimited access. There are various access management standards that can be implemented within the City. These include driveway spacing, limiting the number of access drives, and shared drives. When implementing access management policies, the City should utilize the Michigan Access Management Guidebook prepared by MDOT as a guide to assist in determining appropriate standards. As part of the Master Plan, the City has noted the following objectives for access management.

- **Joint Access Easement:** One method of reducing the need for access drives onto a major road is to provide joint or cross access easements between sites. During the site planning process, consideration should be given to the alignment of parking lot maneuvering lanes which would allow for continuous and safe travel between parking lots. Joint access easements allowing for such travel should be required prior to site plan approval. These documents will require review by the City Attorney, as well as the City Engineer.
- **Maximizing Corner Clearance:** Curb cuts for properties located on a corner parcel require special attention. Access drives and curb cuts should provide the maximum amount of spacing possible from the intersection to the curb cut. Further, in most cases, the access drive should be limited to the secondary roadway rather than the primary. This will help in channeling vehicles to a common

intersection rather than creating new turning areas. AASHTO standards for intersection and corner clearance should be utilized as a guide when implementing this access management technique.

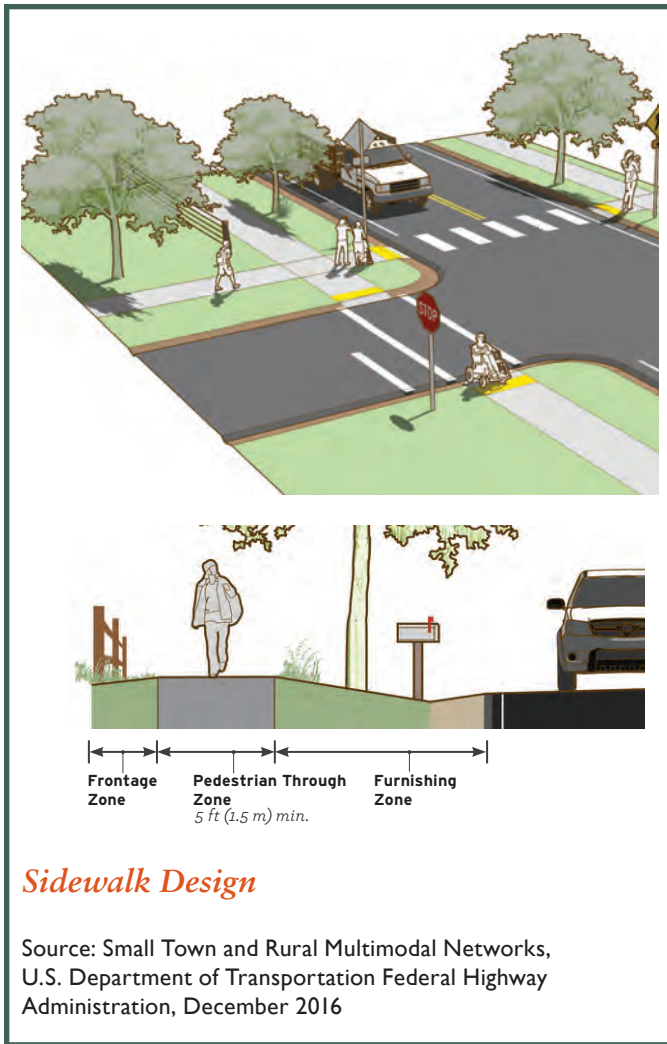
- **Maximize Clear Vision:** Particular attention should be given to the areas of the City where commercial access drives would be located on curves or portions of roadways with varying topographic height. Clear vision for motorists in this area should be reviewed carefully due to potential blind spots. If possible, access drives should be located in such a manner where clear vision in both directions is maximized.
- **Maximize Drive Offset:** The Planning Commission, in their review of site plans, needs to pay particular attention to driveway offsets. Driveways and roadways on opposite sides of the road can increase the potential for conflict. Therefore, if drives cannot be aligned across a street, the distance between driveway center lines should be maximized.

Future Non-Motorized Circulation

The **Future Circulation Plan Map** also sets forth recommendations for the development of non-motorized circulation routes within Brown City, as described below.

Sidewalks

The **Future Circulation Plan Map** highlights the location of existing sidewalks within the City. As shown, only a limited number of streets currently feature sidewalks, particularly those streets within and around downtown Brown City. To provide for a more a continuous, safe, and effective system of sidewalks, this Plan recommends new sidewalks along Main Street, all Downtown Streets, and all Shared Streets.



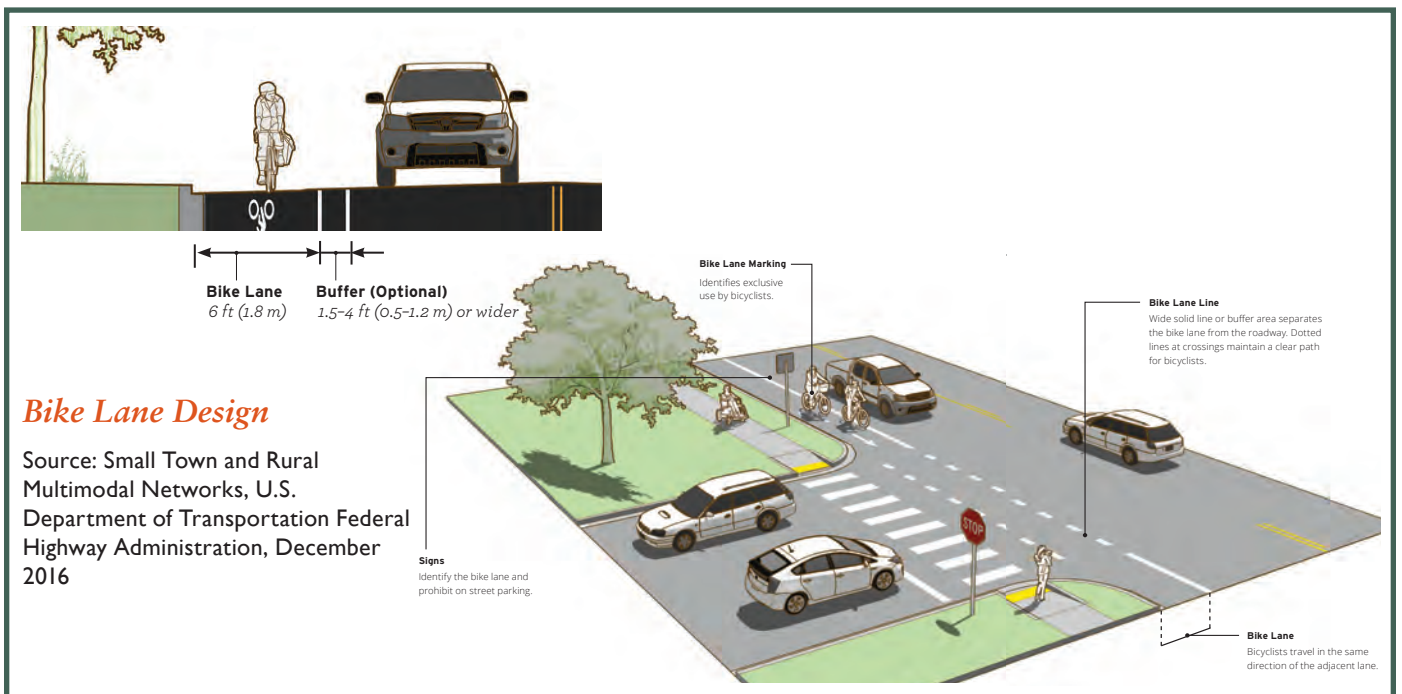
Sidewalks are the basis of any nonmotorized system. They are typically located adjacent to the road network and range between 48 to 60 inches wide. The American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) permits 48 inch-wide sidewalks while the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recommends a minimum width of 60 inches. The landscaped buffer strip between the sidewalk and the street (“parkway zone”) should be a minimum of five feet wide, while narrower strips are permitted.

Pedestrian Safety Crossings

Intersection and other pedestrian safety crossings improve the overall safety, walkability, and identity of Brown City. The following strategies are recommended. Locations for specific crossing and safety enhancements are identified on the **Future Circulation Plan Map**.

Intersection Crossings

The Future Circulation Plan Map shows pedestrian crossing improvements needed at key intersections. Although each intersection has unique needs with unique solutions, general intersection treatments



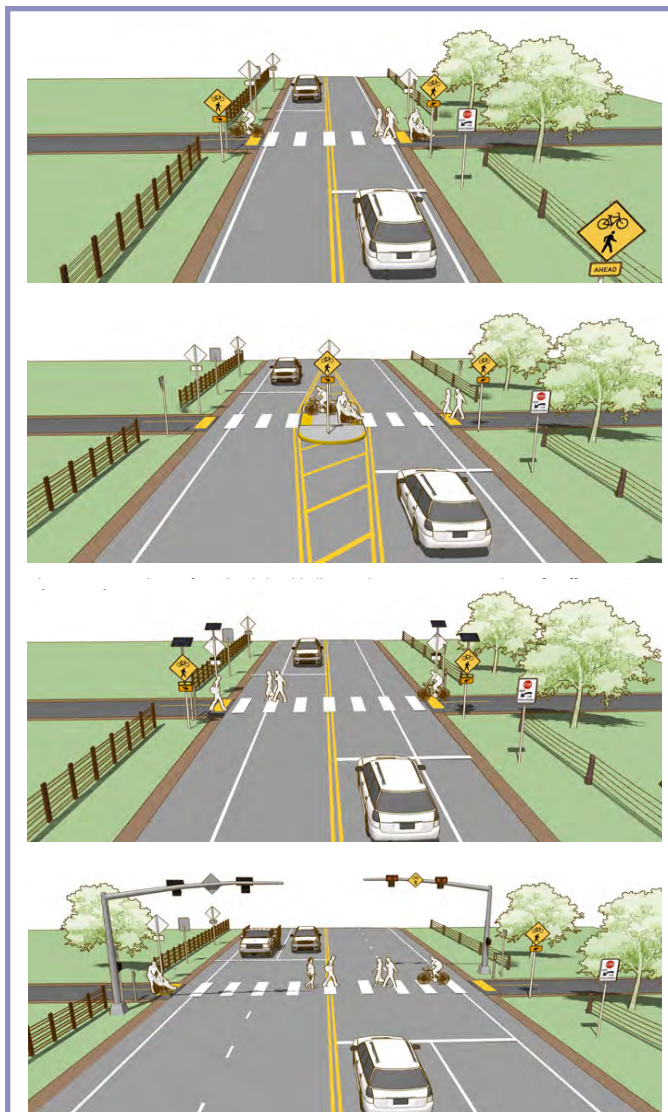
such as curb extensions, textures, pavement markings, crosswalks, tightening corner curb radii, and installing pedestrian refuge islands are recommended to improve traffic management and safety. At a minimum, countdown pedestrian signals are recommended at all signalized crossings.

Mid-Block Crossings

Mid-block crossings should be strategically located to provide safe crossing of a road at locations where there is no street intersection, but where higher volumes of pedestrian and bicycle users have a need to cross the road. Design features should include signage (ranging from a standard pedestrian crossing sign to a HAWK pedestrian beacon signal), pavement markings, and refuge islands for wider road segments.

Railroad Crossings

Railroad crossings can present safety issues for pedestrians, particularly those using wheeled devices such as wheelchairs and scooters. There are a number of ways pedestrian safety can be improved at railroad crossings. Passive devices include signage, fencing, swing gates, and pavement markings. Active devices include flashers and audible active warning devices. The Future Circulation Plan Map shows needed improvements where Saint Mary Street and Main Street cross the railroad. Neither of these railroad crossings presently have pedestrian safety devices. Enhanced pedestrian safety measures should be explored at both crossings.



*Mid-Block Crossing Design Options
(From Top to Bottom)*

- *Marked Crosswalk*
- *Median Safety Island*
- *Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB)*
- *Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB)*

Source: Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks, U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, December 2016

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Chapter 8

Implementation Strategy

The objective of the Master Plan is to provide the guidelines through which the City can improve and operate. A plan is only valuable to the community when it is used to guide decisions and operations.

Implementing the Master Plan starts with putting the right tools in place including up-to-date ordinances, practical planning techniques, and a strong public information program that helps residents understand the plan's goals and benefits. To ensure the plan remains responsive and effective, the City should regularly evaluate new data and revisit plan elements as conditions evolve.

Moving forward, the City can continue to strengthen zoning regulations, enhance code enforcement, and establish a capital improvements plan that aligns with the vision and strategies that shaped the Master Plan. Ultimately, the plan serves as a road map for action, offering clear strategies, priority projects, and targeted programs that will help the community reach its long-term goals. This section outlines the steps needed to turn the plan's vision into meaningful, on-the-ground results.



Tenants of Successful Implementation

The feedback gathered during this planning process helped shape the community’s vision for the future. To make that vision a reality, ongoing community involvement, support, and leadership are essential. The City should consider the following “tenants” to successfully implement the Master Plan.

Commitment

Strong, committed leadership is the foundation of successful plan implementation. While elected and appointed officials will guide the process, support from City staff, local organizations, and community leaders is also critical.

But commitment extends beyond City Hall. Residents, business owners, developers, and property owners all play a role in working toward a shared vision for Brown City’s future.

Using the Plan for Development Decisions

This Master Plan is meant to be a practical, everyday tool. It should be used consistently when making decisions that shape the City’s future, whether those decisions involve public investments or private development. Developers, businesses, and landowners should use the plan as a guide to ensure projects support the community’s long-term goals and stability.

Role of the Planning Commission

The Planning Commission advises City Council and City administration on planning and development matters. This role does not end once the Master Plan is adopted.

Planning is ongoing as conditions change, new opportunities arise, and challenges evolve. To stay current, the plan should be reviewed at least every five as required by the Planning Enabling Act. The Planning Commission or designated committees may also create more detailed sub-area or topic-specific plans when needed.

Each year, the Planning Commission should create or update an annual work plan based on the recommendations in the Master Plan.

Coordination Between Boards and Commissions

A number of City bodies play important roles in implementing the plan, including City Council, the Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Downtown Development Authority. To ensure everyone is working toward the same goals, these groups should meet periodically to discuss priorities, coordinate schedules, and avoid duplication of efforts.

Role of the Downtown Development Authority

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) functions as a key development partner for the City, not just a funding source. The DDA can encourage private investment through its ability to capture and reinvest tax increment revenue. In many cases, these investments make projects financially feasible, ultimately supporting reinvestment and long-term tax growth in the City.

Capital Improvement Program

The City should continue to maintain an up-to-date Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP helps evaluate, prioritize, and finance public improvements in a systematic way. It serves as an important tool for City Council as it reviews

proposed projects and coordinates their timing, location, and funding.

The Planning Commission's role in this process is to identify projects that support the Master Plan, review submitted materials, and work with financial staff to prepare information for Council decisions.

Public Understanding and Support

Community participation and public understanding are essential to any successful plan. Without broad support, long-range initiatives can stall, whether due to failed bond proposals, lack of political support, or public resistance to zoning or infrastructure decisions.

To build and maintain support, the City should clearly communicate the purpose of the plan and invite residents to take part in the planning process. Public education can take many forms, such as presentations, community meetings, local news articles, or easy-to-understand plan summaries.

Active participation in civic groups and community discussions also helps strengthen involvement and ensures the planning process reflects the community's priorities.

Programs and Funding

Successfully putting this plan into action will depend on the City's ability to secure the right funding at the right time. In addition to the general fund, millage proposals, and other traditional tools, the City can also pursue a variety of state, federal, and regional grant programs.

Many of these programs have supported Brown City in the past, and continuing to use them, along with exploring new opportunities, will help the City move projects forward, reduce the burden on local taxpayers, and make the most of available resources.



Implementation Matrix

Table 19 lists key actions that the City should take to implement the Master Plan. This matrix should be reviewed annually by the City and Planning Commission to guide its work program. In addition to the recommended action, the table outlines the relative priority, time frame, responsible party, and available funding resources for each activity.

Priority Key	
Most Important	A
Very Important	B
Important	C

Time Frame Key	
Now	Within 1-2 years
Next	Within 3-5 years
Ongoing	Actions that require continuous monitoring or effort
TBD	Actions where the timing is dependent on outside opportunities, resources, or other factors

Responsibility Key	
CA	City Administration/Staff
CC	City Council
PC	Planning Commission
DDA	Downtown Development Authority
BC	Business Community
CV	Citizens/Volunteers

Funding Key	
P	Public funds from the City of Brown City general operating budget.
TIF	Tax Increment Finance (TIF) revenues through the City's Downtown Development Authority as authorized by City Council
OUT	Outside funding largely from public sources, such as County and State programs
PVT	Outside funding from private sources, such as foundations, donations, and property owner/developer contributions

Table 19. Master Plan Implementation Matrix

Category/Action	Priority	Time Frame	Responsibility	Funding
Implementation Through Zoning				
Prepare and adopt zoning ordinance amendments to implement the recommendations of this Master Plan, particularly as outlined in the Priority Redevelopment Sites, Zoning Plan, and Housing Action Plan.	A	Now	PC, CC	P, OUT
Unique Community Character				
Engage with community groups that may be able to offer volunteer or low-cost assistance with beautification efforts.	B	Ongoing	CA, BC, CV	PVT
Install gateway and wayfinding signage to help create a sense of place and to let visitors know they are in Brown City.	C	Next	CA, CC	P, TIF, OUT
Petition and coordinate with MDOT to facilitate enhancements to Main Street to reduce speed and create a sense of place for downtown Brown City.	C	TBD	CA, CC	OUT
Desirable Housing For All				
Review the current residential neighborhood code compliance and enforcement program and consider options to increase its effectiveness.	B	Next	CA, CC	P
Work with private property owners, County, and State agencies (MEDC, etc.) to market available land for residential development in line with the Future Land Use Plan and Housing Action Plan.	B	Ongoing	CA, PC, BC	P, OUT
Collaborate with local, County, and State agencies to support programs that make housing more affordable or lower barriers for those facing housing challenges.	B	Next	CA, PC	OUT, PVT
Vibrant Economy and Business Districts				
Work with County, State and Federal agencies to identify programs and offer incentives to businesses looking to expand or locate within Brown City.	A	Ongoing	CA, CC, DDA	TIF, OUT
Partner with the Schools and Brown City Community Park to direct visitors to the downtown businesses after community events.	B	Now	CA, BC	OUT
Work with private property owners, County, and State agencies (MEDC, etc.) to market available land for development, focusing on the Priority Redevelopment Sites.	B	Ongoing	CA, PC, BC, DDA	P, TIF, OUT
Develop a “Guide to Doing Business” for the benefit of property owners, business owners and developers to navigate city development review requirements and procedures.	C	Next	CA, DDA	P, TIF

Master Plan Implementation Matrix (cont.)

Category/Action	Priority	Time Frame	Responsibility	Funding
Distinct Parks, Recreation, and Natural Features				
Adopt and maintain a 5-year Recreation Plan to guide community-wide park improvements and ensure that the City is eligible to secure MDNR grant funding.	A	Now	CA, CC	P
Protect property that provides exceptional habitats for plants, fish and wildlife species or can be reclaimed to provide for biodiversity or other environmental needs.	A	Ongoing	PC, CC, CV	P, OUT
Require or incentivize the provision of neighborhood scale amenities, such as parks, schools, recreational facilities, and open space, as part of new development.	C	Next	PC, CC	P, PVT
High Quality Community Services				
Identify and seek outside funding in support of infrastructure improvements.	A	Ongoing	CA	OUT
Create a Capital Improvements Plan to identify necessary capital projects, provide a planning schedule, and identify options for financing projects.	A	Now	CA, PC, CC	P
Confine future development to areas that have the appropriate infrastructure and access to public services.	A	Ongoing	PC, CC	P, PVT
Partner with Sanilac County to redevelop existing brownfields.	B	Ongoing	CA, CC	OUT
When road construction occurs, include sidewalks, bicycle lanes, wider shoulders, street trees, and other low-impact landscaping elements to complement the roadway.	B	Ongoing	CA, CC	P, OUT
Require or incentivize best management practices and low-impact development practices in new construction projects that minimizes/controls/diverts surface water runoff.	B	Ongoing	PC, CC	P, PVT
Conduct an inventory of community and non-profit groups who provide services to vulnerable population groups, like homeless youth, low-income seniors, and others, and make this information available to citizens.	C	Next	CA, PC, CV	P, PVT