

Village of St. Charles

Saginaw County, Michigan



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

2010-2020

November 2009
S & R Environmental
St. Charles, Michigan 48655

Future Land Use Plan

For the Years 2010 - 2020

**Village of
St. Charles**

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Reviewed

by the Village Planning Commission
Thursday, November 19, 2009.

Adopted

by the St. Charles Village Council
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Regional Context.....	1-2
History	2-3
Natural Features	3-4
Population Trends & Characteristics.....	4
Economic Conditions.....	4-5
Existing Land Use	5-6
Community Facilities/Services.....	6-8
Goals/Objectives Summary	8-12
Future Land Use Plan.....	13-17
Community Facilities	18-20
Riverfront Revitalization	20-21
Historical and Architectural Resources	21-22
Plan Implementation	22-24
Figure 1	
Figure 2	



INTRODUCTION

In May of 2009, the Village of St. Charles began studies and discussions directed toward updating its Future Land Use Plan. The original Plan had been completed in 1983 and was intended as a “vision for the year 2000.” The last update was finished in 2000 and was considered a plan for the year 2010.

Although the basic community structure and characteristics have remained relatively unchanged, several significant events and trends have occurred in the almost 10 years since the previous update including:

- Re-design of the downtown shopping area, streetscape improvements and other projects.
- Continued recognition of M-52, the Village’s central thoroughfare, as an important regional highway, and improvements to that roadway within the Village limits.
- Changes in occupancy of an industrial park on the northern edge of the Village.
- Implementation of key components of plans for increasing recreational opportunities and revitalizing the Village’s riverfront, including development of a County-operated rail/trail (rails-to-trails project).

This Plan Update addresses issues related to these and other trends and changes, re-examines the 2000 document’s statements of community goals and objectives, and incorporates the major components of the Village’s recently-approved Recreation Plan. The purpose of the Update is to provide a foundation for use of the Village Zoning Ordinance and determination of future capital improvement needs. This Future Land Use Plan does not “zone” land or order public works expenditures. Rather, it presents a general framework for decision-making through the year 2020.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Village of St. Charles is located about 15 miles southwest of the city limits of Saginaw, the county’s principal industrial and commercial center (Figure 1). The Village is approximately 25 miles north of Owosso and 60 miles northeast of Lansing, the state capitol. Over the past 30 years, M-52 has become a major connecting route between Saginaw and Lansing. Traffic through St. Charles has increased steadily and the Michigan Department of Transportation has responded with improvements to M-52, providing easy access for St. Charles residents to both cities.

The Village of St. Charles is an employment, retail, and service center for all or parts of several townships, especially St. Charles, Swan Creek, Fremont, and Brant. However, large-scale commercial developments in Thomas Township (Shields area) attract shoppers farther north, while the presence of larger Chesaning limits the importance of St. Charles' business activity to the south. The State of Michigan's 10,000-acre Shiawassee River State Game Area is close to the Village's east border, and areas to the west are characterized by large farms and the Gratiot-Saginaw State Game Area.

HISTORY

Located along two branches of the Bad River and on the western edge of the extensive "Shiawassee Flats," St. Charles has always been a unique waterfront community. In 1849, Hiram Davis, the first white man to permanently settle here, built a home on a plot which came to be known as "The Forks of Bad River," and later simply "The Forks." During the next 30 years, the economy and social character of the area revolved around boat transportation of people and materials to and from Saginaw. Several lumber mills thrived in St. Charles until the late 1880s, when the Village gradually shifted from a "lumberjack town" to a "coal mining town."

The peak of coal mining was from 1910 to 1930. The Swan Creek Mine was the last active coal mine in Southern Michigan, finally closing in 1949. Although rail service came to St. Charles in 1867 and coal did not need to be transported by boat, the local river system continued to be important to the growing community during the mining era. The mines used river water in their operations, and much residential construction, including many of the historic "miner's shacks," occurred as close to the river as floods allowed.

In the early years of the Village there was considerable commercial and industrial development along the railroad track and parallel roads south toward Chesaning. The first major hotel and the Village's power and water plant were located there and a central business area developed along what is now Saginaw Street. A locally important boat manufacturing business was established between Sharon and Carr Roads, the primary routes to Chesaning and areas to the southeast. The (former) St. Charles' Public High School was also located along Carr Road, while its football and baseball fields were located near the railroad tracks and/or the South Branch of the Bad River. After World War II, more businesses began to locate along M-52. In the 1980's boat manufacturing shifted to a site at the north edge of the Village and the formerly-used buildings between Sharon and Carr Roads lay idle for many years. The railroad was eventually abandoned, and many commercial buildings along the railroad tracks burned down or were demolished. St. Charles built a new high school complex in the western part of the Village in the 1950s and construction of new housing also shifted to the north and west parts of the Village. Thus, the Village now contains a mix of old and new residential, commercial, and industrial areas.

Also following World War II, the Bad River became increasingly important for fishing and other recreation, and as an access route to parts of the Shiawassee River State Game area which was developed in the 1950s and early 60s as part of a combined flood control-wildlife habitat project. Since then, the Village of St. Charles has made a number of attempts to promote and enhance its role as "Gateway to the Shiawassee Flats" by providing more opportunities for public use and enjoyment of the river area.

The Village acquired a number of waterfront properties following a major flood in September of 1986. The purchases were made consistent with a Flood Mitigation Plan developed to minimize damage from future floods. Some of the land was obtained to allow construction of a dike at the elevation (594 feet) of expected 100-year floods. More recently, the Village purchased the former municipal power and water building. It had been privately owned for the previous 50 years. More public land along the river was obtained when the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) took ownership of railroad bridges over the South Branch of the Bad River and Beaver Creek along with other abandoned railroad right-of-way. The Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission has since obtained that land.

NATURAL FEATURES

The topography in the Village is relatively flat. Typical ground surface elevations near the Village's northern limits are about six feet higher than near the southern limits, and the westernmost parts of the Village tend to be about 13 feet higher than lands along the eastern Village limits. Most of the topographic relief is associated with three major waterways, the South and North Branches of the Bad River and Beaver Creek (Figure 1). All three streams have little current velocity in summer, but are subject to flooding (Figure 2) owing to runoff and "back-water" from the Shiawassee, Tittabawassee, and Saginaw Rivers downstream. About one-third of the Village land is in a federal-designated flood hazard zone. Uses of the floodplains adjacent to the streams are limited by ice flows and shifting as well as periodic high water. Nuisance mosquitoes are also a problem in the warm weather months. Some of the floodplain is wooded swamp potentially subject to federal regulation under the Clean Water Act and state regulation under the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act (P.A. 203 of 1979) as well as state floodplain occupancy laws.

Most land in and around St. Charles is poorly drained and there are wetlands in and along the west and north edges of the Village. Soils in the Village include sands, sandy loams, clays, and clay loams, some with seasonally high water tables. Dominant trees include cottonwood, and silver maple in and along the floodplains, with some oaks and white pine in the better-drained areas.

Much of the area around St. Charles is underlain by coal deposits. Three abandoned mines (Robert Gage Company Mines 1, 3, and 8) once took coal from near the edges of the Village. These mines have since been capped and residences have been constructed nearby.

POPULATION TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The population of the Village has not changed significantly over the last 40 years (Table 1). The population in 2007, according to data released by the Census Bureau, was 2,075. That was a slight increase over the 1970 population of 2,046, but a decrease from the 2000 population of 2,215. Ten years ago, the East Central Planning and Development Region had projected a population of 2,379 in the Village in 2010.

The slower than projected population growth in St. Charles can be attributed, in part, to slow growth in Saginaw County as a whole. Some new housing construction has occurred within the Village; however, this has been offset by people moving out of the Village and a reduction in the average number of people occupying each household. This reflects a national trend toward smaller family sizes. There is now little vacant land in the Village for new residential development, so unless there is unexpected annexation, not much population growth should occur in the foreseeable future. Population growth is also expected to be slow in the surrounding Townships.

The median (typical) age of Village residents in 2007 was 35.9 years as compared with 32.7 years in 2000. About 14% of the population was older than 65 in 2007 (the figure for 2000 was 12%). These figures are about the same as for all Saginaw County residents which had a median age of 35.3 in 2007. The percentages of adults and senior citizens in the Village's population have increased in the past 35 years, and for senior citizens, the trend is expected to continue through the year 2020.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The median household income for the Village in 2007 was \$44,468. This was comparable to incomes reported for St. Charles Township (\$40,726), Brant Township (\$46,157), Fremont Township (\$47,841), and Saginaw County as a whole (\$38,637). Most Village residents commute to Saginaw to work in industrial plants, businesses, or service firms and organizations. The larger employers in the Village and the adjacent Townships include the St. Charles School District, Union Court Assisted Living, Michigan Pallet Incorporated, Community State Bank, and TPI Powder Metallurgy Inc.

The Village's retail-service businesses provide additional employment opportunities, but several commercial buildings in the downtown core were vacant in 2010. An increasing number of St. Charles residents are finding retail or service jobs in the faster-growing Shields area in Thomas Township.

Tourism or day visits to the Village have increased in the last 10 years owing to development of the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail and improvements to Area Park. A considerable number of out-of-town hunters come to the Village during waterfowl and deer hunting seasons in fall, but their contribution to the local economy has been minor.

EXISTING LAND USE

The Village includes 1,315 acres of which about 614 acres (47%) are developed (Figure 2, Table 2). The Village of St. Charles has a higher percentage of open space than most comparable-sized towns. This is because of the extensive floodplains along the South and North Branches of the Bad River, and inclusion of 78 acres of agricultural land within the Village. The developed area has a high percentage (29) of land occupied by streets and highway. The percentage of land occupied by streets and highway in the downtown core area is even higher, approaching 40%.

The developed area of the Village includes a mix of light industries, small retail businesses, and service centers. The downtown core has a variety of long-established stores and the Village's post office, and was solidified in the late 1990's by expansion of Community State Bank and establishment of a Secretary of State office.

The Village of St. Charles has designated a Downtown Development Area (DDA) that includes the downtown core and a commercial corridor along M-52 (Figure 2). A "Development And Tax Increment Finance Plan," approved in 1989, allows for use of tax revenues generated by improvements to the area. In 2009, the DDA had a state equalized value of \$6,713,149 up considerably from \$4,175,128 in 2000, and \$2,601,050 before various improvements to the DDA were initiated in the 1980s.

Industrial development within the Village is limited primarily to the 54.5-acre Beaver Creek Industrial Park off M-52 at the northern Village limit. There is a 14.3-acre former boat factory site south of Sanderson Street between Parsons and Chesaning Street in the southeastern part of the Village, but it is used primarily for storage. There are only a few other areas, such as land owned by Riverside Block Company along M-52, with industrial activity.

The Beaver Creek Industrial Park has 26.5 acres of usable land; the remainder is floodplain and wetlands. It has improved lots that average 2.5 acres and all have been sold and/or are in use. The Village's Department of Public Works moved to the Industrial Park in 2002. In 2010, five of the smaller lots (totaling about 6 acres) remained undeveloped (sold but unused).

COMMUNITY FACILITIES/SERVICES

Village Administration and Police Protection

The Village owns and maintains a municipal building near the corner of Spruce and Saginaw Streets (Figure 2). It houses the Village's administrative offices and Police Department.

The Village administrative staff in 2010 consisted of a village manager/Department of Public Works superintendent, and two full-time administrative assistants. The Police Department included a chief of police and two full-time and five part-time officers. The Department of Public Works had four full-time, and one seasonal employee (other than summer park workers).

Municipal Water System

The presence of high concentrations of salt in local aquifers long ago forced the Village of St. Charles to join with two townships as partners in a Water System formed to purchase water from the City of Saginaw. The James Township, Swan Creek Township, St. Charles Village Water System is operated by a board consisting of two representatives from each entity appointed by their respective boards and councils. The System's contract with the City of Saginaw was up for renewal in 2006, but the contract was not formally renewed.

Nevertheless, service to the Village is via a 12-inch diameter main line along M-52. The Village has a contingency plan for emergencies that calls for opening a valve in Thomas Township that would provide flow from a different direction. The Village's water tower provides a one or two-day reserve supply if problems with the main line occur closer to the Village.

Sanitary Sewer

The Village owns and maintains a network of sanitary sewer lines, which serves all areas of the Village except certain lands along Dempsey and Ithaca Roads. All commercial and industrial uses and all residential units where service is provided are connected to this system. Three oxidation ponds provide secondary treatment. They are currently being used at 65-75% of their capacity. Treated effluent discharges semi-annually into the Beaver Creek Drain.

Storm Drainage

The Village's storm drainage system has several areas with undersized or plugged drains. There is an ongoing program to upgrade storm sewers in conjunction with street improvements; however, problems remain in the south part of the Village. Most underground drains are 20 inches in diameter or smaller.

Solid Waste Disposal

The Village is part of the Saginaw Area Solid Waste Management Authority that negotiates contracts for solid waste pick-up/disposal service for all homes in the Village. Curbside pick-up of trash and items for recycling is on a weekly basis. The Village also provides space for composting of yard leaves and grass clippings at the Beaver Creek Industrial Park.

Fire and Ambulance Service

The Village is served by the Tri-Township Volunteer Fire Department, which has one of its three stations adjacent to the Municipal Building. Emergency ambulance service is available from Mobile Medical Response (MMR).

Schools

The St. Charles School District totals 75 square miles and includes the Village and all or parts of five Townships. The School System operates a central complex off Maple and Walnut Streets in the west part of the Village that includes a high school, middle school (grades 6 through 8), and an elementary school. Total school enrollment in 2009 was 1,129, down from 1,265 in February of 2000. The School System projects very little change in enrollment for the five-year period of 2010-2015, despite a previous long-term decline. The current and projected enrollments are significantly less than in 1975 (1,783 students) and 1982 (1,509 students).

Parks and Recreational Facilities

The Village of St. Charles owns two large parks, the 33-acre St. Charles Area Park and the 8-acre Lumberjack Park. Although the Village owns both parks, they are partially controlled by an ad hoc advisory committee consisting of appointees from five local governments and a school district representative. The individual government units each provide some funding but the Village of St. Charles is solely responsible for all financial liabilities and maintenance. However, the Village hires a full-time seasonal (May to September) pool supervisor and provides the staff for most basic park maintenance.

Area Park includes a walking trail, three ballfields, an ice-skating rink, a skating park, a disc golf course, a sledding hill, two basketball courts, two children's play areas, an outdoor swimming pool, an in-line skating rink, and a picnic area with two pavilions and a gazebo. Lumberjack Park includes only a parking lot, a small playground, a pavilion, and a water feature. It is presently largely undeveloped riverfront, but there is an adjacent Village-owned former power and light building that is sometimes used for recreation/entertainment by community groups. Lumberjack Park is traversed by the Saginaw Valley Rail-Trail which is operated by the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission.

St. Charles Public Schools has four ballfields, a track, three gymnasiums, a football field and a nature education site at its Maple-Walnut Street complex.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources owns nearly six acres along the South Branch of the Bad River. It maintains the headquarters for the Shiawassee River State Game Area at the site along with a small boat launch. The Village owns and operates, with the help of local volunteers, a Waterfowl Observatory on part of the land adjacent to M-52.

Several significant recreation/education facilities are located just outside the Village limits. These include the 18-hole Kimberly Oaks Golf Course in St. Charles Township, the 233-acre Hartley Outdoor Education Center in Swan Creek Township operated by the Saginaw Intermediate School District, and the 160-acre Ringwood Forest operated by the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES SUMMARY

In 1981, the Planning Commission circulated a questionnaire to solicit opinions of the Village's citizens regarding future development options, adequacy of public services, and the Village form of government. Ideas have also been expressed during more recent citizen participation in planning for improved recreational facilities and revitalization of the riverfront and Central Business District (CBD), and during Planning Commission meetings, especially during sessions to update the Future Land Use Plan in 2000 and 2009. Support has been expressed for the following general goals and objectives:

- Encourage and stimulate citizen interest in local planning for both capital improvements and social/recreational programs by periodically updating the Future Land Use Plan and making planning documents easy to obtain and read. That includes making the Future Land Use Plan accessible on the Village's web site.
- Coordinate with surrounding governmental units in long-term planning for growth in the St. Charles area.
- Give high priority to enhancing public use and enjoyment of the local river system by providing riverfront recreational facilities and walkways that link public-owned areas along both branches of the Bad River, and by encouraging efforts to improve water quality and aesthetics.
- Encourage the maintenance of an efficient thoroughfare system by regularly reviewing the traffic conditions and facilities needs of the community.
- Improve facilities and conditions for non-motorized travel throughout the Village, including all practical measures to make the Village "pedestrian friendly."
- Provide high quality municipal facilities and services to residents, businesses, and industries including efficient water service, and wastewater and solid waste disposal.
- Maintain quality recreational facilities for Village residents that exceed generally accepted minimum standards.
- Preserve, insofar as practical, those buildings that contribute to the historic and architectural character of the Village, and encourage incorporation of local history themes into landscaping and design schemes for both public and private facilities.

- Improve economic conditions by encouraging both industrial and commercial expansion in an effort to minimize unemployment, increase the local standard of living, and improve the local economy.
- Encourage the continued development of a strong CBD that can function as the commercial center of the Village and surrounding area.
- Explore methods for public funding of sidewalk construction and repairs along Walnut Street and other areas where there is need to improve safety for pedestrians.
- Investigate all federal and state programs which might assist the Village in improving facilities and services, and which could provide funds for prudent investments.
- Encourage and support efforts to preserve and improve the public library complex in the Village.
- Foster the periodic staging of community social/recreational events at multiple locations that might help develop a sense of community identity and pride.

Residential Goals/Objectives

Additional goals and objectives have been expressed for the Village's residential lands. The Village seeks to develop and maintain attractive neighborhoods which contain a suitable mix of housing types, conserve existing housing, and are compatible with adjacent land uses. While land for new residential development within the Village is limited, the Village aims to require that any new construction be logical extensions of existing residential areas so that streets, and sewer and water lines, can be extended in an efficient and economical manner.

The Village also desires to:

- Encourage designs for new residential developments that provide visual and physical buffers between residences and commercial or industrial developments, and exclude unsafe traffic patterns such as those related to frequent left-hand turns off M-52.
- Locate moderate density residential (multiple-family) uses where there is direct access to arterial or collector streets that can accommodate the increased levels of traffic.

- Provide for the use of the planned unit development (PUD) concept on one of the few remaining large parcels of vacant land in the Village. This concept can result in the harmonious mix of various types of residential uses, active recreational facilities, and open space on a single parcel through innovative design.
- Encourage the development of additional suitable multiple-unit housing for the elderly within walking distance of the CBD.

Commercial Goals/Objectives

Maintenance and enhancement of the CBD is vital to the Village's role as a major shopping area for both the Village and surrounding townships. While the potential for commercial growth is greatest along the M-52 corridor, maintenance of a "downtown core" is an important goal of the Village. The Village intends to:

- Periodically update the Economic Revitalization/Infrastructure Improvements Plan for downtown St. Charles to accurately assess current market trends and conditions as well as the desires of merchants and shoppers.
- Ensure that all planning done through the Downtown Development Authority is consistent with and incorporated into the Village's Future Land Use Plan.
- Improve parking and streetscape features in the CBD to strengthen its function as the Village's commercial center. This should include consideration of a major redesign of the traffic flow and parking configuration in the downtown area.
- Encourage commercial developments along M-52 on sites that provide access from side streets rather than direct access off M-52, thereby reducing the frequency of left-hand turns off M-52.
- Encourage regularly-scheduled social/recreational events in the downtown area.

Industrial Goals/Objectives

The diversification of industry is necessary for the stabilization and growth of the local economy. The Village desires to attract new industry to St. Charles in those locations that have support facilities and services including adequate roads, sanitary sewer, storm drainage, and municipal water service. Specific objectives are to:

- Complete an agreement with Thomas Township to obtain a secondary source of water for the Village to ensure an adequate Supply for industrial expansion.
- Continue to encourage full use of the Beaver Creek Industrial Park by offering tax incentives under Public Act 198.
- Seek means of assisting existing industries in expanding their operations through a combination of financial incentives and innovative job training partnerships.

Recreation and Open Space Goals/Objectives

The Village seeks to enhance its recreational opportunities through implementation of the St. Charles Area Recreation Plan. The Recreation Plan calls for significant expansion of the Village's recreation facilities involving public land acquisition, riverfront park development, and facility development. Priorities are to:

- Upgrade existing facilities at Area Park.
- Add amenities and enhance Lumberjack Park.
- Work with required groups to promote use and maintenance of the Saginaw Valley Rail-Trail and to improve facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and others using non-motorized transportation throughout the Village.
- Encourage and support the Village's Tree Board in utilizing the Village's Tree Survey while periodically evaluating tree planting, maintenance and removal work.
- Seek areas for potential future park development and access to both branches of the Bad River and link public-owned riverfront lands with walkways.
- Encourage and support river clean-up/improvement programs and projects.
- Review efforts to preserve local historical resources and maintain a local historical museum as part of recreational facilities planning.
- Promote social/recreational events that utilize local recreational facilities.
- Ensure that all recreation-related planning, including updating of the St. Charles Area Recreation Plan, is consistent with the Village's Future Land Use Plan.

Implementation Goals/Objectives

The Village's Future Land Use Plan is implemented mainly through the Village's Zoning Ordinance and capital improvements program. The ordinance must be periodically reviewed to insure it is consistent with planning and zoning legislation, court decisions, and current land use standards. The capital improvements program should reflect priorities of the Village for upgrading its facilities and services. The program should be one of intermediate (5-10 year) time frame, but be reviewed (and if necessary revised) annually.

All planning that potentially involves capital improvements in the Village should be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan. Specifically, the Economic Revitalization/Infrastructure Improvement Plan of the Downtown Development Authority and the St. Charles Area Recreation Plan should be subject to formal review by the Village Planning Commission. Every effort should be made to avoid fragmentation of local planning efforts.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan is intended to guide the Village of St. Charles' elected and appointed officials in making reasonable decisions regarding land use and community development issues. There is limited opportunity to "shape" development. St. Charles' basic land use pattern has been largely determined by existing development; main travel arteries and major commercial and industrial areas are already defined. The policy of the Village is to thoroughly evaluate all requests for annexation. However, in the past 20 years, landowners have expressed little desire for annexation of adjacent lands into the Village. There have also been no significant recent changes in land ownership patterns. The Plan utilizes six major categories--residential, commercial, transitional, industrial, agricultural, and public/semi-public--as a basis for evaluating and guiding future land use.

Residential

More than 35% of the total land area in the Village is intended to be used for development of various types of housing. About 90% of the housing units in the Village are single-family homes, and that figure has not changed much in the past 30 years. The Plan seeks a more balanced mix of single family, apartment/townhouse, and planned unit development (PUDs). Accordingly, about 15 acres of land is set aside for multiple-family housing and considerable acreage is designated for PUDs. All residential development should be served by both municipal sanitary sewer and water, unless specifically exempted.

The Plan designates nearly 400 acres (about 30% of the Village's total land area) as Single-Family Residential Districts. The types of uses envisioned include single-family homes on large parcels and smaller building sites, single-family subdivisions, and various public and semi-public uses. Thus, the Plan recognizes that single-family development may occur in more than one fashion.

Single-Family/Two-Family Residential Districts occupy nearly 125 acres (10%) of St. Charles' total area under the Plan. Uses to be encouraged in these Districts include single-family homes on previously platted or recorded lots, two-family homes or duplex units, conversions of single-family homes into apartments, and various public and semi-public uses. Two areas of the Village are designated as Single-Family/Two-Family Districts. Both are older neighborhoods that contain some homes that have been converted into living quarters for more than one household. The Village wishes to make it possible for additional conversions if adequate square footage per unit can be provided and if sufficient on-site parking space is available.

Two Family/ Multiple-Family Residential Districts are designated for about 45 acres (approximately 4% of the total land area). Structures and uses in these districts can include garden apartments, townhouses, condominiums, multiplex units, duplex units, single-family homes, and various public and semi-public uses. Permitted development densities may range from 4-5 units per acre (duplex) to 10-15 units per acre (garden apartments). These districts are to allow a diverse mix of housing types and densities. The Plan designates areas adjacent to existing apartment complexes for Two-Family/Multiple-Family use to allow future expansion, and also sets aside new areas for multiple-family development.

Land designated for Planned Unit Development (PUD) is provided in the west part of the Village. This type of district allows for large-scale development that could include single-family subdivisions, duplexes, multi-plex units, garden apartments, townhouses, condominiums, mobile homes, offices, convenience and local service stores, and various public uses. Thus, the PUD District is designed to accommodate a wide range of land uses on a site that is usually under single ownership. It allows development to be "clustered," placing more residential units on part of the site while keeping some land as undeveloped open space. Overall project densities should not exceed the maximum allowable density for single-family homes in the area in which the PUD is located. A percentage of the total number of allowable residential units (as defined in the Zoning Ordinance) may be of a multiple-family type. An area at least equivalent to that resulting from single-family lot reductions is then dedicated as permanent open space. The Plan uses the PUD District to accommodate any future mobile home parks in the Village.

Commercial

The Plan designates approximately 83 acres (6% of the Village's total land area) for various types of commercial development. Most of this land is currently developed and/or zoned as commercial. It includes the Central Business District (CBD) and a commercial corridor along M-52 north of the downtown core. Because all apartments and the majority of single-family homes in the Village are within reasonable walking distance from the commercial developments, no locations have been designated for neighborhood types of convenience stores. However, these could be provided as part of a PUD.

The CBD contains about 36 acres and is part of the Downtown Development Area that extends north along M-52 to near the northerly Village limit. It is intended to accommodate a wide range of business uses including retail stores, restaurants/taverns, banks, government offices, churches, apartments in upper stories of commercial buildings, and multiple-family dwellings. The Plan recognizes the need to discourage or prohibit ground-level and/or entire residential use of buildings in the CBD. This is necessary to protect the integrity of the CBD.

The viability of the CBD has long been hindered by inefficient traffic flow, and lack of parking and building space. Nearly 40% of the 36 acres in the CBD is street surface. This wastes space that could be used as building sites. Therefore, some streets should be closed if opportunities arise that might make such actions feasible and prudent. The Plan also recognizes need for improving traffic circulation and additional off-street parking in the CBD. During the last 20 years, streetscape improvements by the Downtown Development Authority have enhanced the aesthetics of the core shopping area. However, some of those changes have hindered both vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and there is still a visual clash of old and relatively new buildings constructed of a variety of materials. The Village should encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of existing vacant structures, as well as development of some architectural continuity in the CBD.

The Plan designates 47 acres (about 4% of the Village's total land area) as a General Commercial Corridor District. This District currently contains a varied mix of uses ranging from retail, restaurants, and offices to service stations, storage yards, and motels. There are also a considerable number of single-family homes within this District. It extends from the South Branch of the Bad River to Area Park near the northerly limit of the Village and is included in the Downtown Development Area.

The businesses intended to be accommodated in the General Commercial Corridor District are those that typically serve the needs of travelers on major highways. Stops at these businesses are generally for a single purpose. The space needed to provide adequate on-site parking and loading

varies greatly depending on the nature of the business. Existing businesses located along M-52 typically have parking areas fronting the highway.

Most of the northern part of the General Commercial Corridor is already zoned commercial. The Plan recognizes the need to minimize impacts of strip development but also acknowledges the high potential for commercial growth in this area. Therefore, the Plan encourages the zoning of all land in the General Commercial Corridor as commercial. The intent is to provide commercial zoning "two lots deep" to allow rear-of-building parking and maximize the amount of road frontage available for commercial buildings. The Plan aims to discourage construction of parking areas that are directly accessible from M-52, thereby reducing conflicts with fast-moving traffic. This is in contrast to the current situation. Requiring site plan approval for commercial developments within the General Commercial Corridor could lead to further measures to reduce traffic impacts and improve buffers between businesses and residences.

The Plan designates about 15 acres as a Transitional District. It is generally bounded by Water Street (on the north), Charles and Saginaw Streets (on the east), Jay and Clinton Streets (on the south), and Irving and Charles Streets (on the west). There is potential in this area for limited commercial development on relatively small parcels. However, the Plan's intent is to provide a buffer between the CBD and the residential neighborhood to the southwest. Appropriate types of uses for the Transitional District include various types of offices, medical clinics, branch banks or credit unions, government agency offices, and multiple-family residences. The Plan recognizes that there are single-family homes in this District and acknowledges their eventual conversion to offices or other appropriate uses. As in the General Commercial Corridor, site plan approval should be required for all new construction and/or major changes in use of properties in the Transitional District.

Industrial

The Village seeks to encourage industrial development to provide employment opportunities and augment its tax base. The Plan confirms a commitment to a wide range of light industries primarily on 14.3 acres in the southeast part of the Village and on 26.5 acres in the Beaver Creek Industrial Park near the north edge of the Village. The expectation is that St. Charles can continue to support industries that confine most activities to enclosed structures and have a moderate amount of screened outdoor storage. Types of activities encouraged by the Plan include manufacturing, compounding, processing and packaging, research and testing, tool making and grinding, warehousing and materials distribution, auto repair, and public utility operations.

The Plan recognizes that the proximity of residences to the industrial area south of Sanderson Street between Parsons and Chesaning Street raises serious issues. Manufacturing, including fabrication of fiberglass boat hulls, occurred on the site for many years, and there were numerous fires, chemical spills and other problems. Site plan approval and performance standards for all industrial use of properties (there and in other areas that are not in the Beaver Creek Industrial Park) should be required to protect the surrounding neighborhood from unreasonable levels of noise, vibration, smoke, truck traffic, and other industry-related nuisances. Part of the area is also in the 100-year floodplain of the Bad River, so there are some related limitations to future use of the site. The Plan recognizes that converting this site to residential use would be desirable if there is no demand for industrial use of the area.

At present, both industrial areas are under-utilized. Space and tax incentives under Public Act 198 are available to industries seeking sites. Enough water is projected to be available from Saginaw that few types of industries that might be expected to seek the available sites in the next 10 years would be seriously hindered by lack of water.

However, the Village's wastewater disposal system has limited capacity to handle any warm water discharges from industries. Improvements in both water supply and wastewater disposal systems would be required for the Village to maximize its attractiveness to light industry. The Plan recognizes the value of an agreement (currently being negotiated) with Thomas Township to provide a second water line to the Village.

Agricultural

Part of the Village south of the Bad River and east of the former railroad right-of-way is being farmed and is also subject to periodic flooding. This 78-acre area has long been considered inappropriate for intensive residential development. Construction of single-family homes on parcels of one acre or larger, and use as parks or other open space, if allowable under state floodplain occupancy restrictions, is appropriate for this area under the Plan. However, the most desirable use of most of the land in this District is agricultural production and related activities.

Public/Semi-Public Land Use

The Plan designates nearly 300 acres (approximately 23% of the Village's total land area) for both public and semi-public uses. These include (but are not limited to) property of the St. Charles Public Schools District (nearly 50 acres), a church-owned cemetery on Spruce Street, the Village's Area Park and Lumberjack Park, lands owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the municipal building site.

Certain flood-prone properties were acquired by the Village after the major flood in fall of 1986 and the Plan includes this land as public open space. No additional properties along the river are sought by the Village with the possible exception of up to 10 acres for use as mini-parks and neighborhood parks. This long-term objective is consistent with the St. Charles Area Recreation Plan which recognizes under-utilization of riverfront acreage and also calls for 10 additional acres for use as mini-parks and neighborhood parks. A related objective is obtaining easements as necessary to link the local Rail Trail with Area Park and Hartley Outdoor Education Center in Swan Creek Township.

The Plan calls for formulation of a detailed strategy for property acquisition as necessary for expansion of basic Village services and implementation of the Recreation Plan. Additional related recommendations are discussed in the next section.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Specific details for improvements to various Village facilities and properties should be provided as part of the capital improvements program. However, the Plan offers some general principles to guide related decision-making.

Government Administrative Offices

The Village's office complex, located at the northeast corner of Spruce and Cherry Streets, includes the Council Chambers, Village Manager's office, other administrative offices, and the St. Charles Police Department. Off-street parking is usually adequate although parking problems are increased by the presence of the Tri-Township Volunteer Fire Department station and the Hartley Memorial Library in the same block.

Streets and Sidewalks

General improvements to street surfaces are scheduled to occur at a rate of about one-half mile per year for at least the next 10 years. The improvements will generally be limited to resurfacing. The priority for such work will continue to gradually shift from the northern to the southern half of the Village.

The Plan recognizes significant advantages in abandoning sections of street in several areas of the Village. Street closings should be considered consistent with this Plan wherever studies indicate they can benefit public safety, provide for crucial commercial building space, allow for needed parking, and/or significantly improve aesthetics of an area.

The Plan calls for continued improvements to the Village's sidewalks, and seeks measures to help fund construction of new sidewalks on both sides of

Walnut Street from the St. Charles School's complex to M-52. New sidewalks on the east side of M-52 from the South Branch of the Bad River to the northerly limit of the Village should be another priority. Sidewalk construction has traditionally been funded by the owners of property fronting the walkway. However, the Village should explore means of financially assisting landowners in providing the above-mentioned sidewalks because of their significant benefits to the health and welfare of Village residents. If financial assistance is not found, new sidewalks should still be a priority using the traditional method of funding. Sidewalks were not constructed along Walnut Street, the designated school bus route, in the past because it was assumed that most students walking to and from school would use Maple Street. However, there has been a gradual increase in student use of Walnut Street despite lack of sidewalks. Pedestrian traffic on the east side of M-52 is also expected to increase because of the presence of fast food restaurants and other businesses on the east side of the General Commercial Corridor.

The Plan recognizes that despite fairly recent reconfiguration of parking and streetscape features in the CBD, traffic flow is not optimal. The Village should support investigations to determine if vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the CBD can be improved and consider all practical options to achieve that objective.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

The Village of St. Charles' Recreation Plan for 2008-2012 is an integral part of the Future Land Use Plan. The Recreation Plan calls for improvements to Area Park and new enhancements for Lumberjack Park. It also recognizes deficiencies in mini-parks and neighborhood parks, passive recreation facilities including picnic areas and trails, tennis courts, soccer fields, and riverfront recreation.

The Recreation Plan for improving Area Park includes extending paths from the Park to recently acquired parcels to the south and west, constructing a series of ponds and waterfalls, and improving ball diamonds and tennis and basketball courts. The proposed enhancements for Lumberjack Park include installing a barrier-free fishing platform cantilevering out over the Rail-Trail bridge over the Bad River, conversion of the former Water Tower to an observation tower/deck, and construction of a new historical museum building. The existing museum building is privately-owned and located in the CBD. The Future Land Use Plan recognizes that a new historical museum building would be desirable and that suitable sites, such as Lumberjack Park, are available in several parts of the Village.

Although the Recreation Plan notes that the Village has adequate acreage in parklands, there is need for mini-parks and/or neighborhood parks. The closure of Miller Elementary School and its playground in 2006 created need

for play areas in the south part of the Village in particular. Development of approximately 10 acres of mini-parks and/or neighborhood parks south or east of the CBD should be considered consistent with this Master Plan.

Municipal Water System

The James Township, Swan Creek Township and St. Charles Village Water Supply System has not had a written contract with the City of Saginaw for water since 2006. As a group, the City's water users have in recent years voluntarily conserved water during hot summer months. However, the City holds a large amount of water in reserve to cover what used to be high consumption periods. Therefore, the City could increase the allotment of water to its customers.

More than 10 years ago, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) recommended that the Village add a second water line for use in case of problems with the primary line. The Village has avoided the need for a second line by reaching an agreement with Thomas Township to open a valve that could feed the Village's water line from a different direction in case of emergency. The Village is negotiating a new agreement for a self-actuating valve to supply water from that line, and this Plan recognizes the need to finalize that agreement and investigate all additional options to better serve its current and potential water users.

Storm Drainage

The most serious storm drainage problems are associated with the Village's Chesaning Street Drain that services approximately half of the south part of the Village. The Drain has a 20-inch diameter outlet tube that has been recently cleaned-out and maintained. However, the area would be best served by an outlet 48 inches in diameter and feeder lines also should be greatly enlarged and upgraded.

Improvements should also be made to the Village's Cherry Street Drain. However, problems are not as severe as in the case of the Chesaning Street Drain.

Sanitary Sewage Disposal

At present, the only properties not served by sanitary sewer lines are along Dempsey and Ithaca Roads in the western part of the Village. The Plan recognizes the need to eventually extend sanitary sewer lines to these areas.

The Village's secondary wastewater treatment system is currently operating at 65-75% of its capacity. The long-term adequacy of the system will

depend in part on future industrial development. Some potential users of the Beaver Creek Industrial Park could produce more wastewater than the system can hold; therefore, the system should be re-evaluated as new industrial development is proposed.

RIVERFRONT REVITALIZATION

This Plan recognizes a long-standing community goal to enhance the river system and riverfront amenities in and near the Village. As of 2009, Village-owned properties along the South Branch of the Bad River included the 9-acre Lumberjack Park and 19 lots along Water Street southwest of the Saginaw Street (M-52) bridge. In 1992 the Village prepared a Riverfront Revitalization Plan that called for enhancing these and other properties by developing facilities and attractions that feature the Village's rich Indian, lumbering, and coal mining history as well as its location as "Gateway to the Shiawassee Flats." The Riverfront Revitalization Plan suggested, "These community focal points should be connected by a system of walkways and other access routes which provide attractive "gateways" to the facilities."

This Future Land Use Plan urges that some priority in capital improvement plans continue to be given to projects consistent with those outlined in the Riverfront Revitalization Plan, especially, proposed walkways that would link Lumberjack Park with the Waterfowl Observatory on the north bank of the River and provide access along the North Branch of the Bad River. Both walkways would connect with the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail. Other elements of the Riverfront Revitalization Plan which should be promoted and/or considered for funding include boat docks, at least one riverside mini-park, ornamental lighting on both bridges over the Bad River, and attractive landscaping. This Land Use Plan also recognizes that acquisition of additional properties along the river by the Village may be desirable, but is not a requisite to enhancement of the riverfront.

The Village should assist state officials and private-sector groups in efforts to improve water quality and recreational potential of the Bad River. It should explore various state and federal programs which could provide funds for implementation of the Village's Riverfront Revitalization Plan and river-related components of the Parks and Recreation Plan.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

Since 1983, the Village has had a goal to preserve buildings that contribute significantly to the historic and architectural heritage of St. Charles. However, there has been no comprehensive survey of architectural resources. Local residents have suggested the following Village sites/areas have historic value:

- Former Umstead Building which was the Village's first power plant.
- Lumberjack Park and the adjacent railroad bridge.

- The Village's former water tower which has a unique shape and is a highly visible landmark.
- Seventh Day Adventist Church on Marcy Street which has already been recognized as a historic site.
- Immaculate Conception (Catholic) School (original building).
- Style Trend Furniture Building at the corner of Bell Avenue and Saginaw Streets, which was formerly an "opera house."
- The house currently owned by Community State Bank that has been used as the St. Charles Area Museum.
- A "livery barn" on Water Street, built between 1850 and 1865, that is possibly the oldest remaining structure in St. Charles.

The Plan recognizes the need for a more formal study of the significance of these structures and encourages the Village to explore the possibility of obtaining technical and financial assistance through regional and state historic preservation programs. The Plan also recognizes that any proposed relocation, expansion, significant restoration, or change in use of historical resources within the Village should be reviewed for consistency with the Future Land Use Plan and the St. Charles Area Recreation Plan by a joint committee of the Planning Commission and the St. Charles Parks Committee.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

There has been considerable citizen participation in local planning over the years; however, the approach has been somewhat fragmented. There have been separate studies and planning processes directed at economic revitalization of the Village's downtown, utilization of the riverfront, enhancement of the Village's parks and recreation facilities, and improvement in sewer and water service. These separate plans have been prepared by different groups and for different time frames. For example, the revitalization of the downtown has been examined primarily by the Downtown Development Authority, while the Parks and Recreation Plan has been prepared largely with input from the ad hoc St. Charles Area Parks & Recreation Committee consisting of an appointee from each of five local governments and a school district representative. No capital improvements program document has been prepared since 2003. Some key planning efforts are ongoing, so there is immediate need to better coordinate this planning and promote sharing of information and ideas.

Formulation of a detailed capital improvements program for at least a five-year period should be an immediate priority. The Zoning Ordinance should also be reviewed and revised as necessary to maintain consistency with the Future Land Use Plan and implement some of its objectives. The Village's Planning Commission should also periodically review the Recreation Plan and help coordinate all public land acquisition strategies. While final responsibility for determining budgets rests with the Village Council, the

Planning Commission should review all recommendations for long-term investments, including those associated with the capital improvements program and the Economic Revitalization/infrastructure Improvements Plan for the Downtown Development Area, annually to ensure that priorities are consistent with those expressed in the Future Land Use Plan.

Table 1. Population history for the Village of St. Charles (primarily from U.S. Census data and the East Central Michigan Planning and Development Region).

YEAR	POPULATION
1940	1,300
1950	1,469
1960	1,959
1970	2,046
1980	2,276
1990	2,144
2000	2,215
2007	2,075

Table 2. Approximate numbers of acres in the Village of St. Charles in various land use categories in 2010.

LAND USE CATEGORY	ACRES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
DEVELOPED LANDS	614	47
Multiple Family Residential	10	less than 1
Single Family Residential	353	27
Business/Commercial	32	2
Commercial Services and Institutional	18	1
Industrial	41	3
Institutional	124	9
Schools	48	4
Village Offices	2	less than 1
Other	74	6
Outdoor Recreational	29	2
Cemetery	7	less than 1
UNDEVELOPED LANDS	701	53
Agricultural	78	6
Open Land	326	25
Forested	266	20
Water Bodies	31	2
Total	1,315	