

City of Belding
Ionia County, Michigan

Master Land Use Plan

Adopted: June 16, 2009



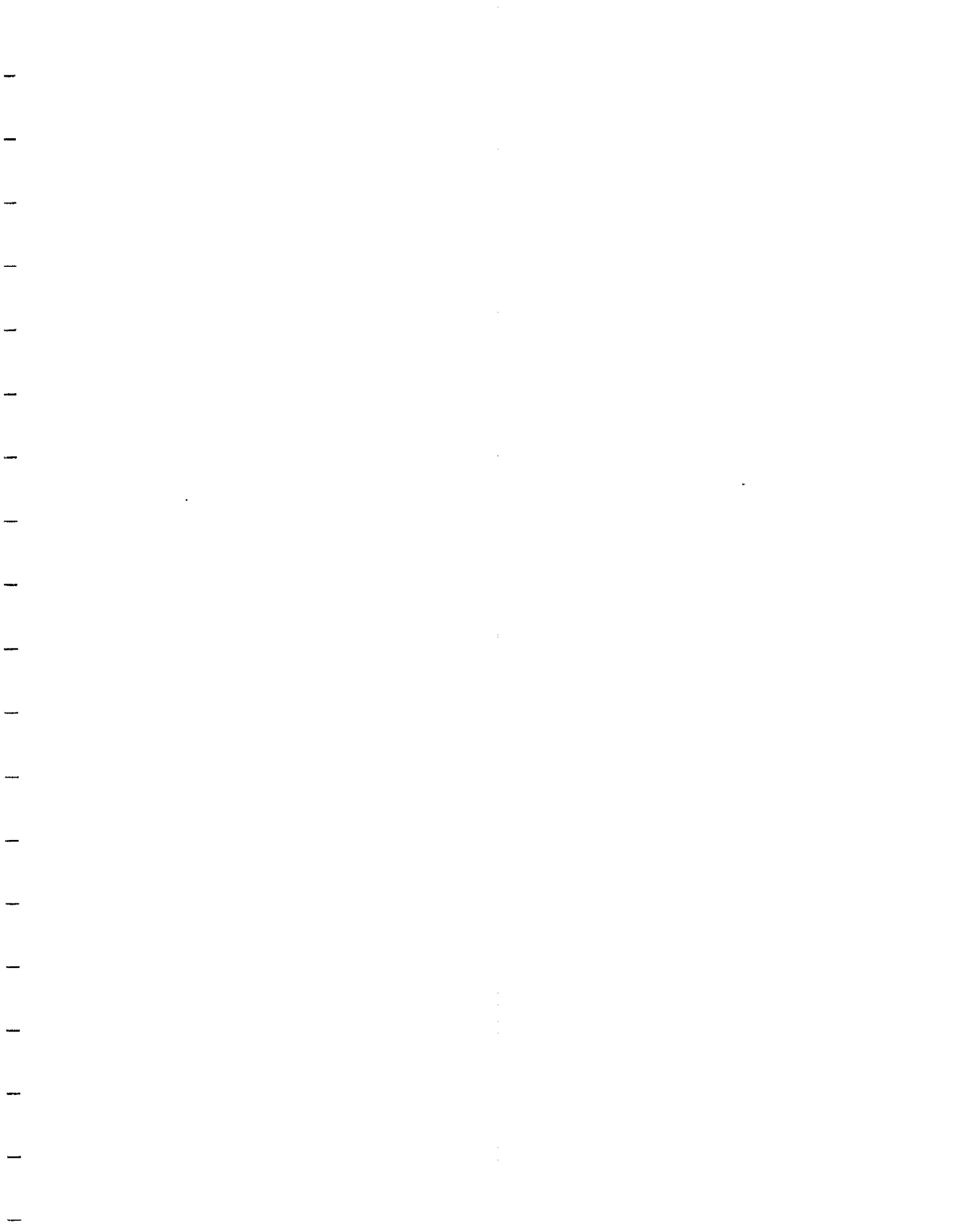


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Chapter 1

Introduction & Plan Purpose

This Master Plan is developed under the Authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008. The Plan represents a vision for how the City of Belding will develop and redevelop in the future. It was developed through an investigation of demographic and land use trends and the vision that local citizens have for the City. The basic purpose of the Plan is to manage the intensity and configuration of land use in a manner that supports economically viable, environmentally sound and visually pleasing growth, in addition to providing recreation services to current and future residents.

The Plan will help ensure that the City of Belding remains a highly desirable community by enabling residents, business owners and developers to make investments with a reasonable expectation of the future. In essence, the Plan is intended to balance the sometimes competing interests of individual land ownership and overall community interests.

Plan Elements

This Master Plan consists of several components, including:

- Public input, which is an essential part of the planning process. It is critical to have an understanding of what City stakeholders think of the issues.
- Background research regarding housing, population and other current conditions within the City.
- A survey of existing land use that summarizes the current land use trends within the City.
- Development of goals and strategies that define how the City will address identified concerns and trends.
- A Land Use section, that describes the types of development that would be most appropriate within the community and suitable locations for that development.
- The Future Land Use map, which is an illustration of the long-range land use pattern proposed for the City.
- Implementation strategies that should be evaluated on an annual basis.

When the above components are combined, a picture is created that will serve as a guide for the City as it faces important decisions, now and years from now. These decisions may include policy changes, budget allocations and the more day-to-day issues, such as site plan reviews, special land use approvals, and rezoning requests.

Planning Framework

Overall, the Master Plan is based upon a number of City characteristics, each of which must be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council as the Plan is implemented and updated. These characteristics include:

Community Character: The character desired by the community's residents determines the Plan's goals. A strong emphasis placed on maintaining small town character, for example, would be reflected in the Future Land Use goals and any subsequent design standards enacted in the zoning ordinance.

Capability of Land: Environmental constraints must also be considered. Is the land itself able to accommodate planned uses?

Community Needs: What types of land uses are needed in the community? For example, if a shortage of market rate housing were determined to be a community concern, the provision of suitable land uses in desirable locations would be an appropriate response. If a small industrial park seems appropriate for the community, a location should be selected and planned based on the ability of that location to accommodate such a use.

Available Services: Through issue and goal identification, as well as data collection, information is obtained about the status of community services. Are existing services capable of handling planned development? What kind of strain will new residential development place on the ability to provide adequate fire protection or public water and sewer service? What road improvements may be required?

Existing Development: How will the planned land uses affect existing uses? For example, are there some areas that are currently residential that the City would like to see become industrial in the future? How will planned uses affect nearby existing uses?

Regional Planning: The City does not exist in a vacuum. There are other regional issues such as transportation, watershed management, environmental protection, and utility plans that must be considered as well. Sharing copies of the Plan and communicating about it with neighboring township, county and regional planners as well as other appropriate entities will facilitate regional planning and coordination efforts.

Implementation

The Planning Commission and City Council should continuously strive to ensure effective use of this document. Although the tie between decision-making and land use policy is not always abundantly clear, most land use and design decisions can be guided by the vision, goals and strategies provided in this Plan. In the most general terms, if the City's vision drives all decisions, community leaders will be implementing the Plan. Following are additional practices that will ensure Plan implementation:

Refer To the Master Plan in All Zoning Decisions

One of the principal benefits of having an adopted Master Plan is the foundation it provides for sound zoning decisions. Just as the Plan is the policy guide for land use, zoning is the principal legal enforcement tool. The two should work together to provide adequate justification for land use decisions.

Encourage Other Decision Making Bodies to Use the Master Plan

The Master Plan should help guide everyday decisions, from the capacity of improved roads to new schools. The Ionia County Road Commission, school districts, and adjacent communities as well as other parties that can impact land use patterns within the City, can work together with the City of Belding in the implementation of the Master Plan.

Keep the Plan Current

The vision outlined in the Plan will not occur overnight. The Master Plan is an outline for the future that guides day-to-day decisions. However, even with this in mind, the Plan should not be applied or used rigidly. Changing conditions that can affect the original intentions of the Master Plan should be acknowledged and the Plan amended, if necessary.

City decisions can be weakened by an outdated Plan or one that is not in constant use as a reference. The Planning Commission should conduct an annual review of the Plan to ensure that the Plan is kept current. The State Planning Enabling Act requires that the Master Plan be reviewed every five years. While this does not mandate that the Plan be changed, it at least encourages a thorough review to determine if the directions set forward are still valid. Any amendments to the Plan can be done at that time to keep it up to date and consistent with City philosophies.

On the other hand, while the Plan needs to be a flexible instrument, its recommendations should not be taken lightly. Adjustments should be made only as necessary, and justified based upon changing conditions or shifts in community philosophy.

The Master Plan & the Zoning Ordinance

The relationship of the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance is often misunderstood. Stated concisely, the Master Plan is a *guide* for land use for the future; the Zoning Ordinance *regulates* the use of land in the present. The Master Plan is not a binding legal document; the Zoning Ordinance is a law that must be followed by the City and its residents. However, the Master Plan is the foundation upon which the regulations are built.

Adopting or changing a Master Plan does not directly affect the zoning for any property. However, future changes to the zoning map are intended to be reflective of the planned uses shown by the Master Plan.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires a Master Plan to include a “Zoning Plan” that describes how the land use designations on the Future Land Use Map correspond to the zoning district boundaries on the Zoning Map. The Zoning Plan is an important tool for implementation of the Master Plan. The Zoning Plan is found in Chapter 9.

Evaluation of Land Use Changes

Changing the land use or zoning designation for any property can have far-reaching consequences: physically, environmentally, financially, and legally. Therefore, a careful evaluation of proposed rezonings is essential. As with any land use decision, the use of standards is essential to reaching fair and consistent decisions. The following evaluation measures are included in the Plan to permit their use by the City when rezonings or Master Plan and Future Land Use Map changes are contemplated. The zoning district intents and rezoning criteria provided in the zoning ordinance must also be considered during the evaluation process.

Standard 1 - Consistency with the Community Vision and Plan Strategies

If conditions (such as economic factors, demographic shifts, new utility lines, changing traffic conditions, etc.) upon which the Master Plan was developed have changed significantly since the Plan was adopted, the Planning Commission and City Council should incorporate these conditions into their deliberations to ensure that the Plan is current. Particular attention should be paid to the vision and goals to ensure that they remain valid, and that the proposed rezoning or land use change does not impair their intent.

Standard 2 - Compatibility with adjacent uses and districts.

All of the uses allowed in a proposed district should be compatible with the conditions present on the site and in the immediate vicinity of the site, especially in terms of density, character, traffic, aesthetics, and property values. The Plan provides several guidelines, as

[REDACTED]

noted above, which should be considered when determining whether the proposed district is compatible with the neighborhood and the City as a whole.

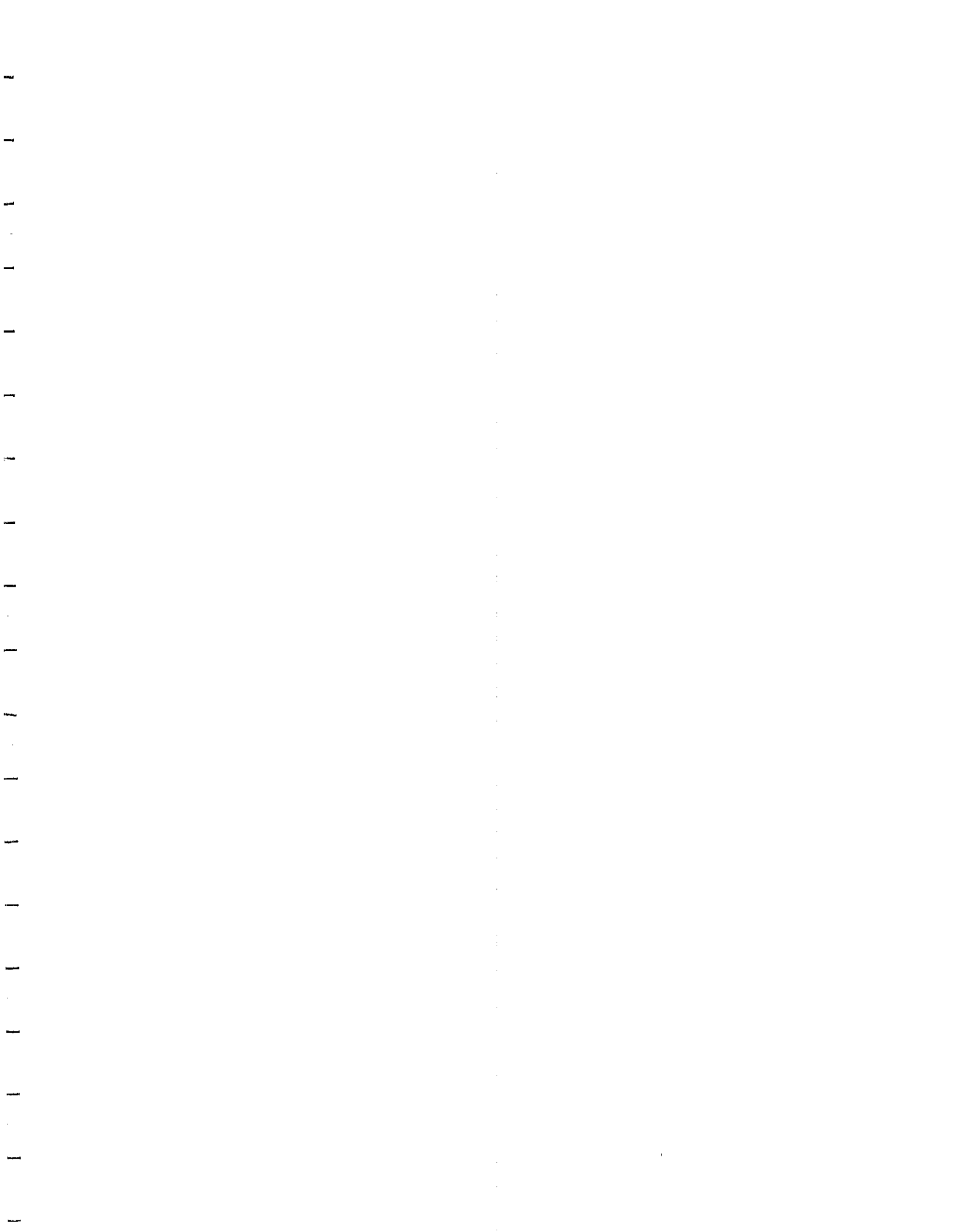
Standard 3 - Capability of being used as already zoned.

It is the right of every property owner to receive a reasonable return on the investment placed on property. This does not mean that zoning is a slave to the "highest and best use," (which is not a zoning term, but rather a real estate term). It does mean that there should be a reasonable use available within the zone district. But if the property is capable of being used as zoned, there should be a compelling reason to change the zoning. Such reasons may be related to the first two standards of consistency and compatibility.

Site plans will not be considered as part of a rezoning request. The Planning Commission and/or City Council should not be influenced by what is proposed by the petitioner. Instead, the City will make a specific finding that ALL of the uses permitted in the proposed district are appropriate for the site and area, not just the one shown on a proposed site plan.

Standard 4 - It is critical that the Master Plan be read in its entirety.

Rather than attempting to isolate individual statements that may appear to support one position or another regarding the Future Land Use for the City, the Planning Commission must consider the intent of the Plan as a whole. This requires a careful reading of the Plan to ensure that all of the Plan's considerations are included in the evaluation of any change.



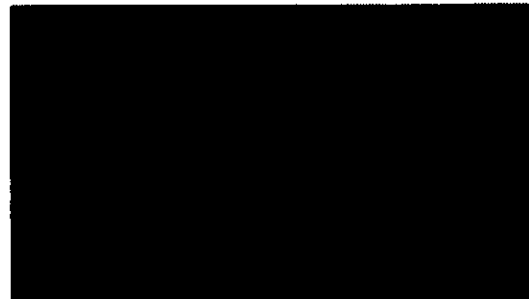
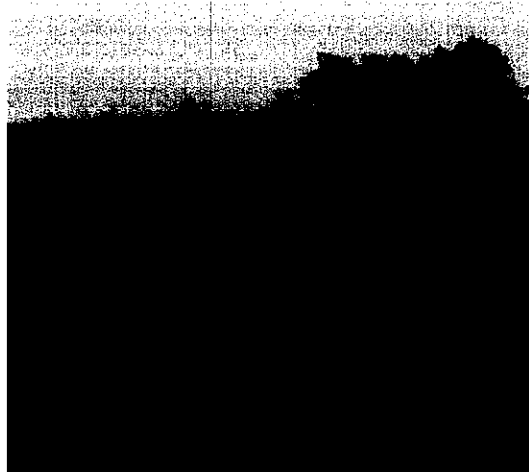
Chapter 2 Community Overview

History and Regional Context

The first settler, Levi Broas, arrived in Belding in 1838 and built a sawmill on the Flat River; the area was known as Broas Rapids. While logging played a significant part in the history of Belding, it is the silk factories that Belding is best known for. The Belding family built the first silk mill in 1884 and called it "Richardson Mill", fearing it might be a failure. But that was not the case and Belding Brothers and Company built another silk mill in town and three dormitories to house the female workers. Belding became the third largest silk producing city in the world and became known as the "Silk City of the World". The city was renamed Belding in 1871 in honor of the Belding family. The development of rayon fabric (or "artificial silk") and the fad for short skirts in the 1920s reduced the demand for silk. The Great Depression put many of the labor-intensive silk producers out of business and the Belding Brothers and Company closed their last Belding silk mill in 1932. However, it is this strong association with the silk mills that provides Belding with its unique character.

Belding encompasses 4.86 square miles. Much of the community has ready access to parklands, the river and the downtown on foot. In addition to a sidewalk system, residents have portions of waterfront trails to bring them to the waterfront. School facilities are nicely placed within the community so youth can find open space close to their neighborhoods. Proximity to city facilities is a prime benefit of living in an efficiently arranged community. People appreciate not having to routinely use a vehicle to access services, recreational facilities, shopping opportunities and family activities. The housing stock is diverse and affordable. Many historical homes grace the city and a variety of architectural character can be found in the community.

The city is located twenty-five miles northeast of Grand Rapids, in the northwest corner of Ionia County.



Relatively easy access to the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area is available via M-44 and M-91. Probably the element of greatest influence on the city is its proximity to Grand Rapids. With the growth of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area, Belding has gradually increased in population because of the appeal of small town living while being within easy access of services and employment that only metropolitan areas offer. Historic traffic counts on M-44 reflect an overall increase in traffic activity west of the city and a significant decrease of traffic east to the city:

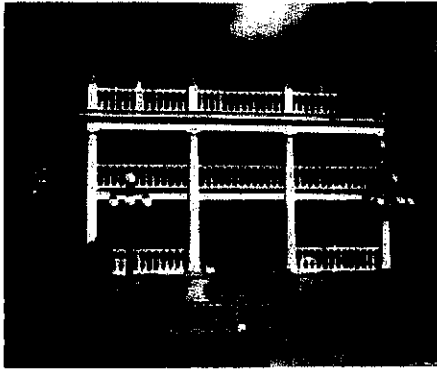
| Traffic counts (24 hr. period) | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Vehicles per day | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2002 | 2006 |
| M-44, east of Belding | 8,700 | 8,300 | 6,300 | 5,900 | 5,100 |
| M-44, west of Belding | 6,300 | 6,700 | 5,900 | 6,100 | 6,800 |

Source: MDOT Annual average traffic volumes map

Downtown Belding contains a number of elements that reflect a strong sense of history. These include the restored Library and Belrockton Museum, the last remaining of three remaining women's dormitories built by Belding Brothers and Company to house the silk mill workers, as well as the architecture of other historic structures that have marked the decades. Richardson Silk Mill is on the National Register as are the Pere Marquette Railway Belding Depot and the Alvah N. Belding Memorial Library. The Belrockton Dormitory is a State Historic Site and hosts a top-notch local museum. Historic buildings and the strong presence of the riverfront and associated parks nestled in the downtown are strong assets for the city's image.

Housing in Belding reflects a variety of styles

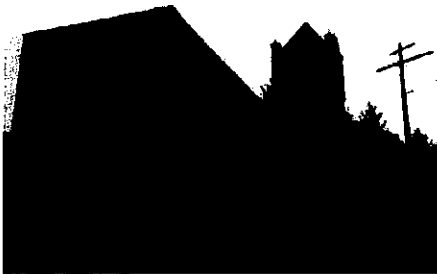




Belrockton Dormitory



Pere Marquette Depot



Former silk mill, now apartments

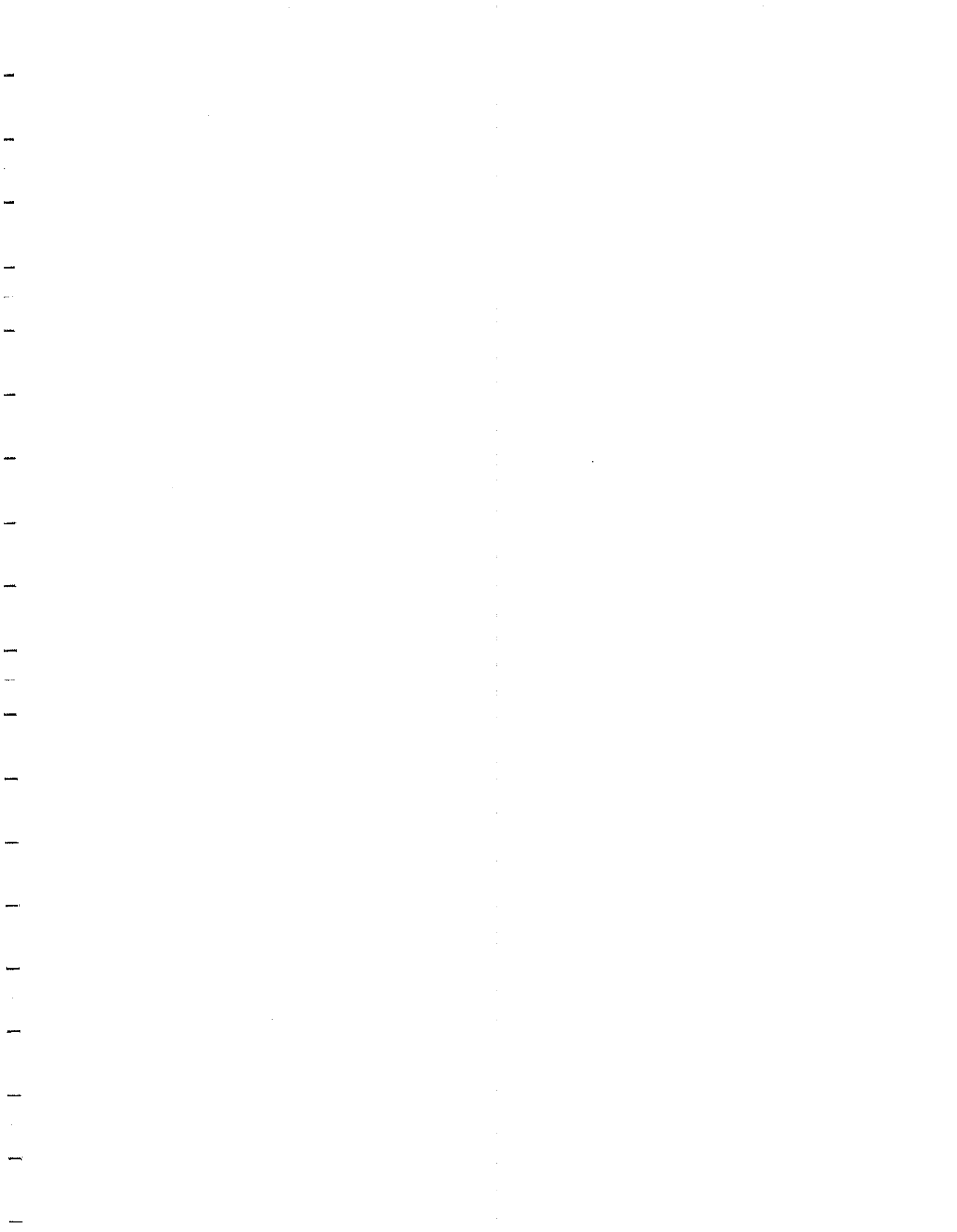


Alvah N. Belding Library

Some of Belding's historic buildings



Belding City Hall



Chapter 3 Administration & Public Services

The City operates under the council/manager form of government. Policy-making and legislative authority are vested in the City Council, which consists of the mayor and a four-member council. The City Council is responsible, among other things, for passing ordinances, adopting the budget, appointing committee members and hiring the City Manager. The City Manager is responsible for carrying out the policies and ordinances of the City Council, for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the City, and for appointing the heads of City departments. The Council is elected on a non-partisan basis. Council members are elected to four-year staggered terms. The Council members elect a mayor to a two year term.

Various committees, including the Planning Commission and Downtown Development Authority, are appointed by the mayor with approval from the City Council with liaisons from the Council on each body. General management and day to day operations rests with the Belding City Manager.

The City has a total of 38 full-time and 58 part-time staff persons. The City's full-time public works employees perform maintenance for public infrastructure, including the parks system. Other City staff members are involved in various aspects of the City programming on an assigned or as-needed basis. The Recreation Advisory Board is used to advise the Council on a variety of planning and recreation matters. They have primary responsibility for formulating the Recreation Master Plan.

The implementation of facility developments in the parks is the responsibility of the City Manager. Day to day maintenance is the responsibility of the Public Works Department with one full-time employee and additional staff for special projects and needs.

Funding

The City of Belding utilizes several sources of revenue: general fund revenues, fees for service, grants, and various financing tools. Specialized programs like downtown development can utilize tax capturing to focus redevelopment efforts. Programs like Recreation rely on general funds, user fees and donations of funds or services.

Public Safety

Police protection is provided by the Belding Police Department, staffed by full-time and part-time Police Officers and a Police Chief. Fire protection service is provided by a Fire Department consisting of 20 paid-on-call Firefighters, in addition to 3 full time Firefighters plus the Fire Chief. Emergency Medical Services are provided by Life EMS. The Police and

Fire Departments are centrally located in the City Hall building, serviced by the Belding Dispatch Center.

Public Institutions

City Hall is located downtown, as is the post office and library. These facilities are centrally located and generate activity for downtown merchants. The library boasts over 51,300 items in various formats and provides many programs for youth. While public and civic facilities contribute to downtown health, they should remain a secondary land use in the downtown. Healthy downtowns need the bulk of their uses to be retail and service (such as restaurants) with governmental and office uses as a backdrop for retail activity.

Schools

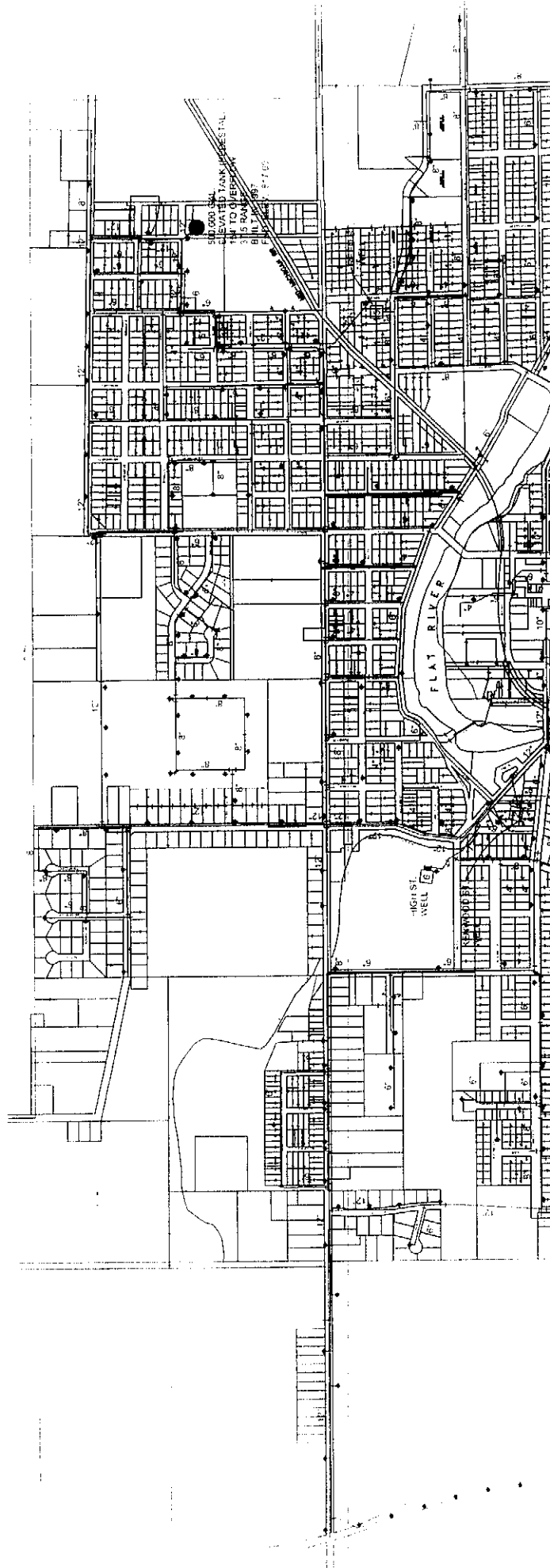
The City of Belding is served by the Belding Area Public School District. The Belding Area School District is comprised of approximately 2,250 students. The District's facilities are located within the City, providing recreational opportunities to residents. Athletic fields and open spaces of the schools are available and generally are within walking distance from neighborhoods. The High School is located in the southeast section of the City, and was originally constructed in the mid 1970's and has since been updated. The system has a high school, middle school, two elementary schools and a preschool. Special school sponsored programs such as concerts and plays, as well as sporting events, are often the focus of community entertainment and enjoyment.

Utilities

The City is served by municipal water, sewer and storm sewer systems (see maps following). City policy requires connection to the system if water main access is available. The public water supply comes from wells. Due to the reliance on groundwater, the City of Belding has instituted a wellhead protection program approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to protect the groundwater from contamination. An important aspect of this program is isolation of the well areas and avoidance of certain land uses at or near the well sites. Capital improvements programming helps the City stage improvements to public water and sewer systems.



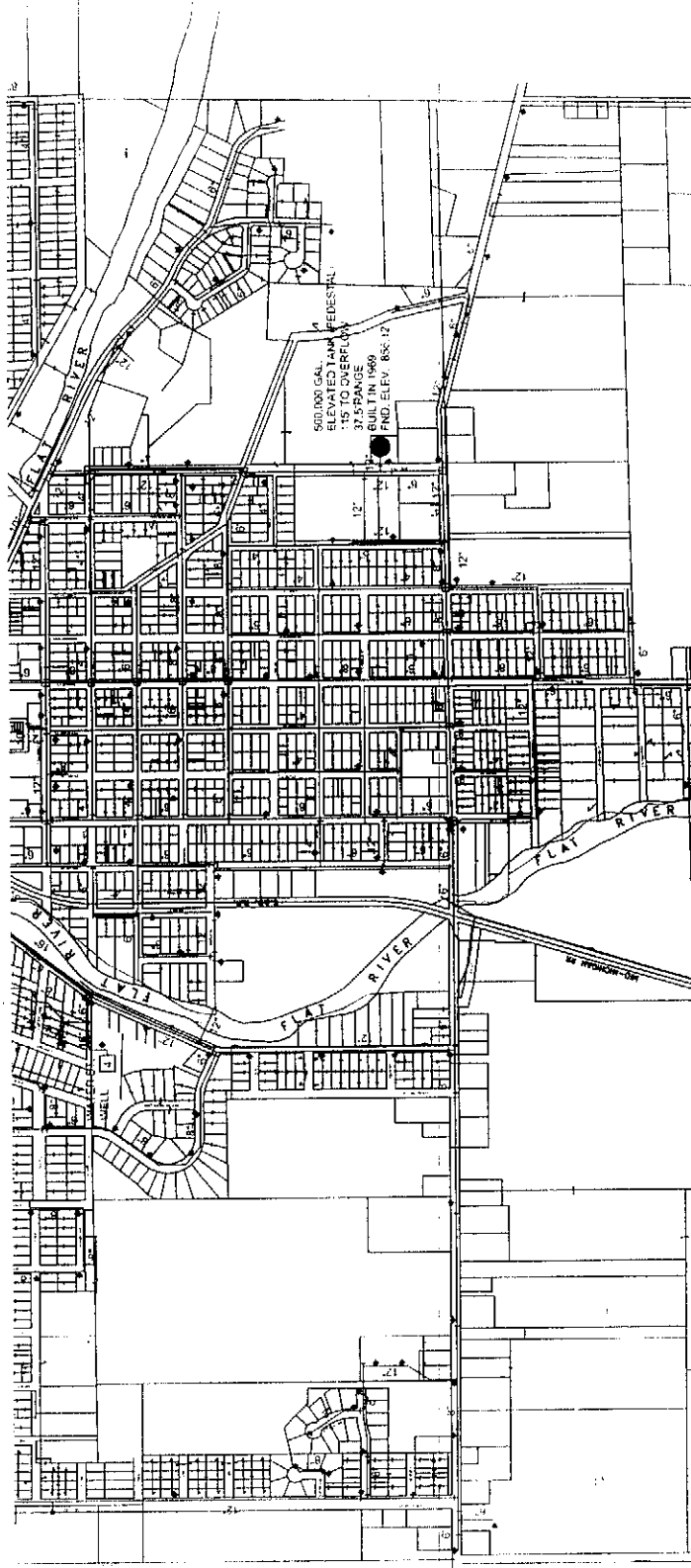
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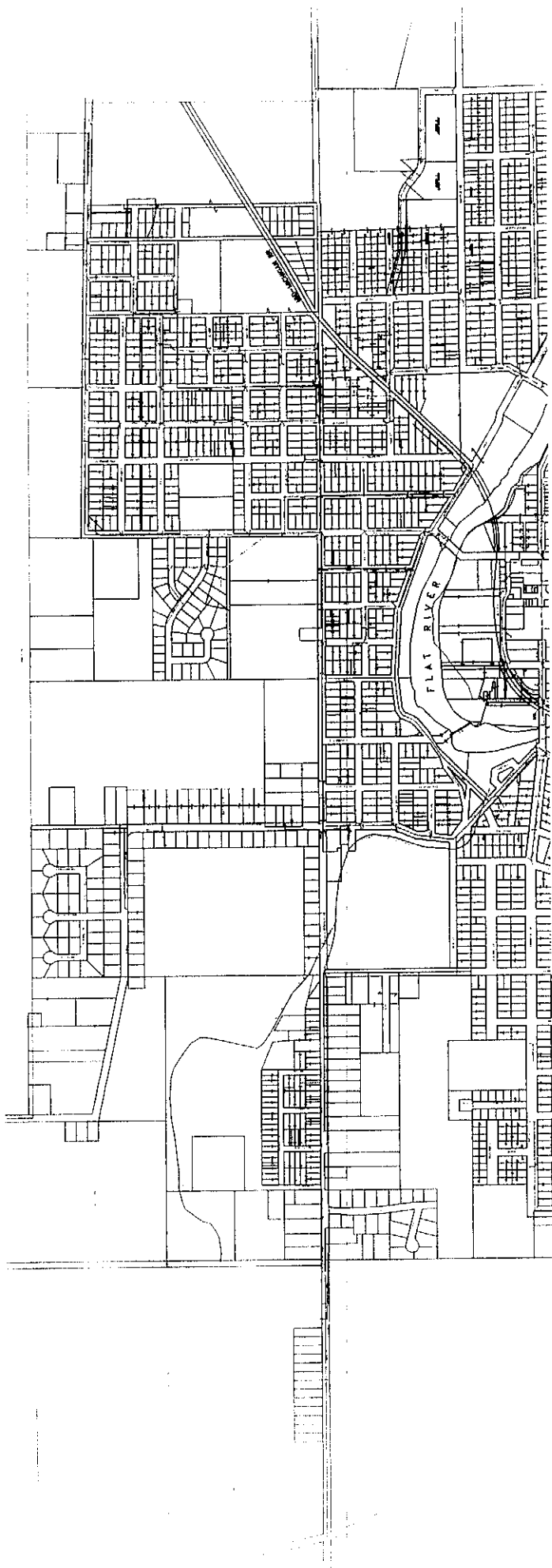
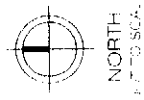
WATER SYSTEM MAP - NORTH CITY OF BELDING



NORTH
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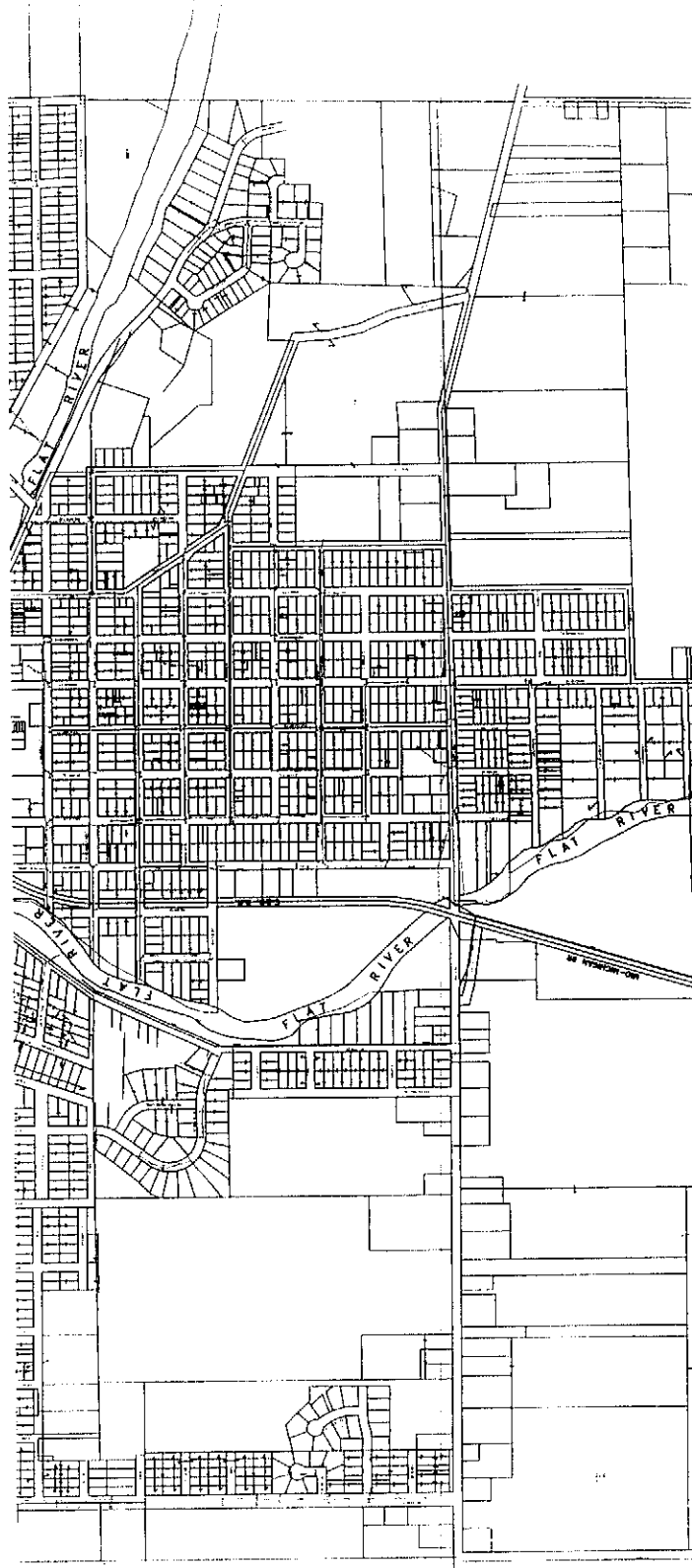
WATER SYSTEM MAP - SOUTH CITY OF BELDING



STORM SEWER MAP - NORTH CITY OF BELDING



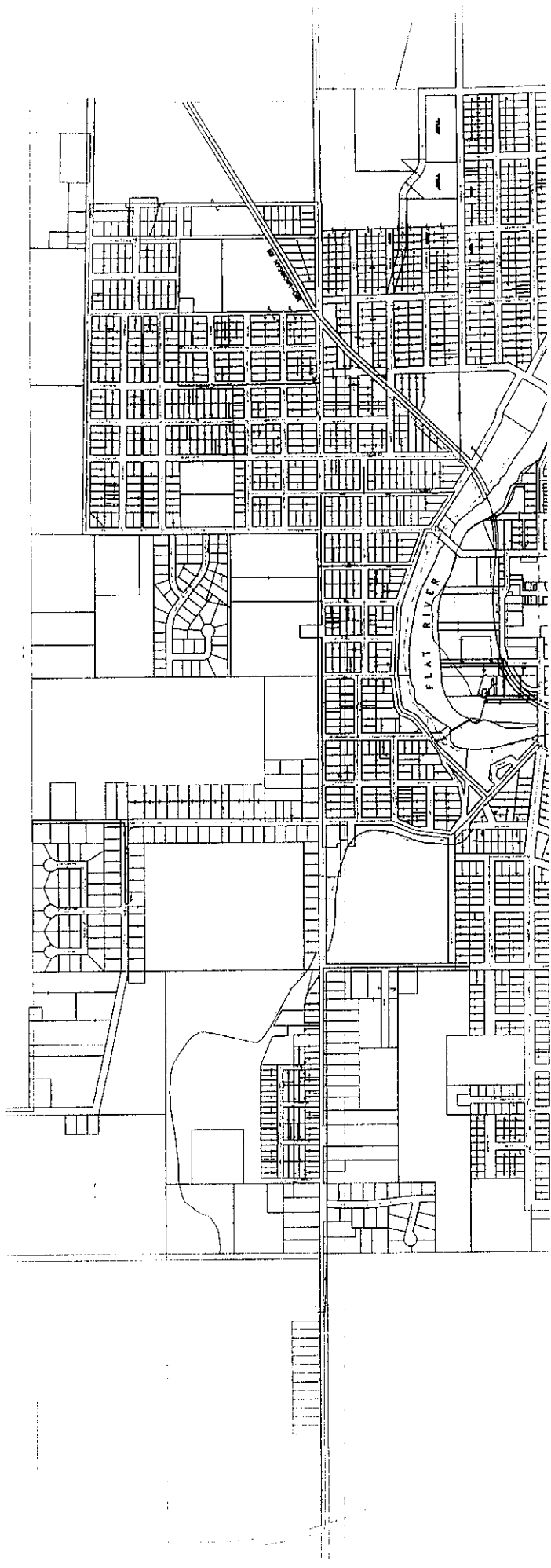
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STORM SEWER MAP - SOUTH CITY OF BELDING



NORTH
1/4" = 100'

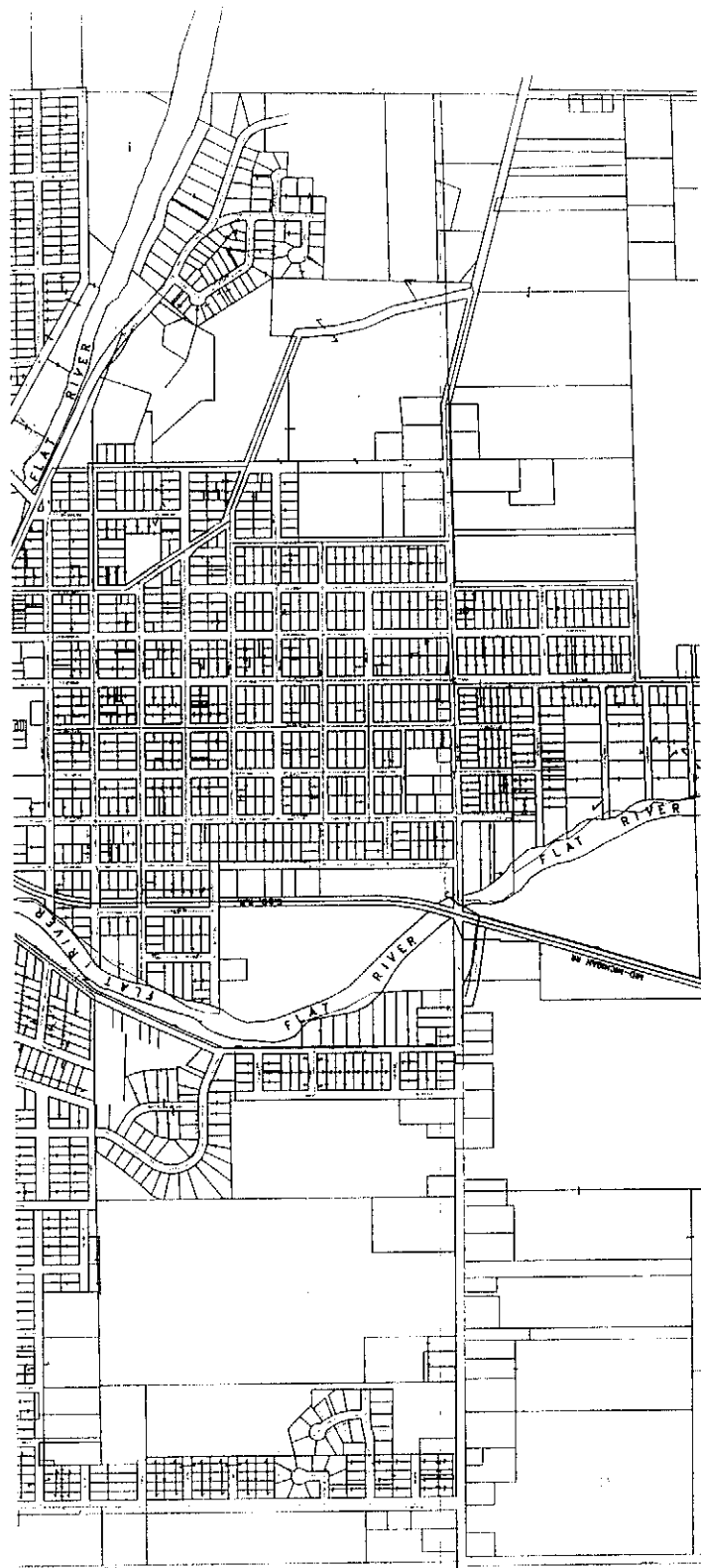


SANITARY SEWER MAP - NORTH

CITY OF BELDING

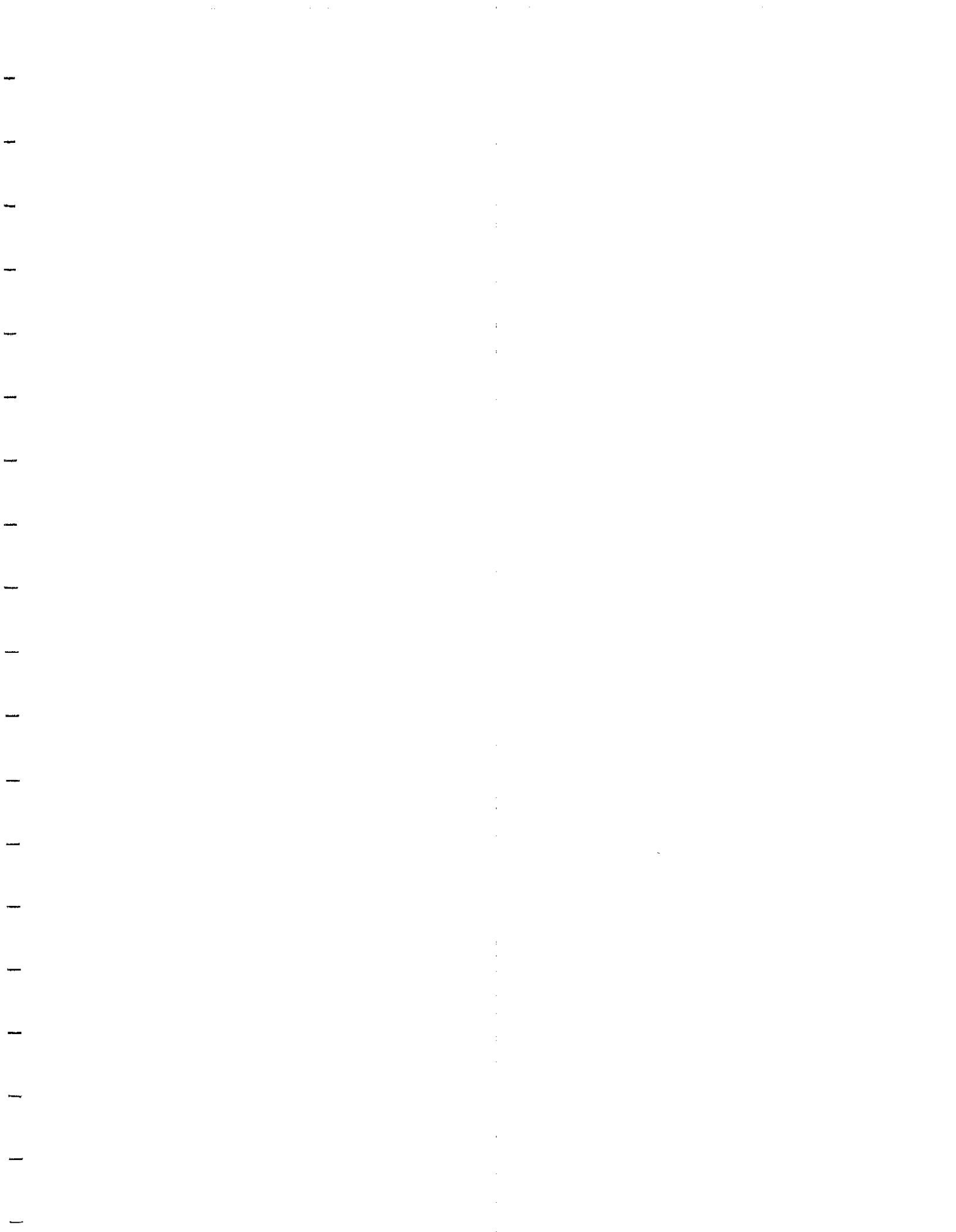


NORTH
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EAST TO SOUTH



SANITARY SEWER MAP - SOUTH

CITY OF BELDING



Chapter 4 Recreational and Cultural Facilities

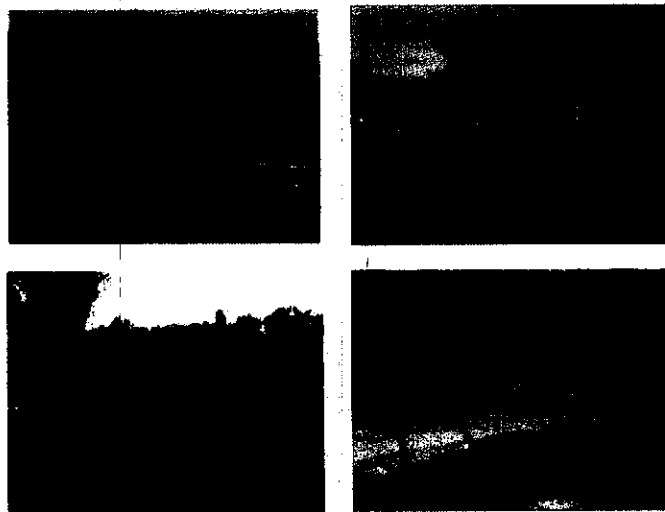
In addition to the facilities offered by the Belding School District, the City has five public park sites: Central Riverside Park, East Riverside Park, Lightning Bend Preserve, Water Street Park and Demorest Field. All but Demorest Field are adjacent to the Flat River. Parks provide walking, organized sport and play opportunities.

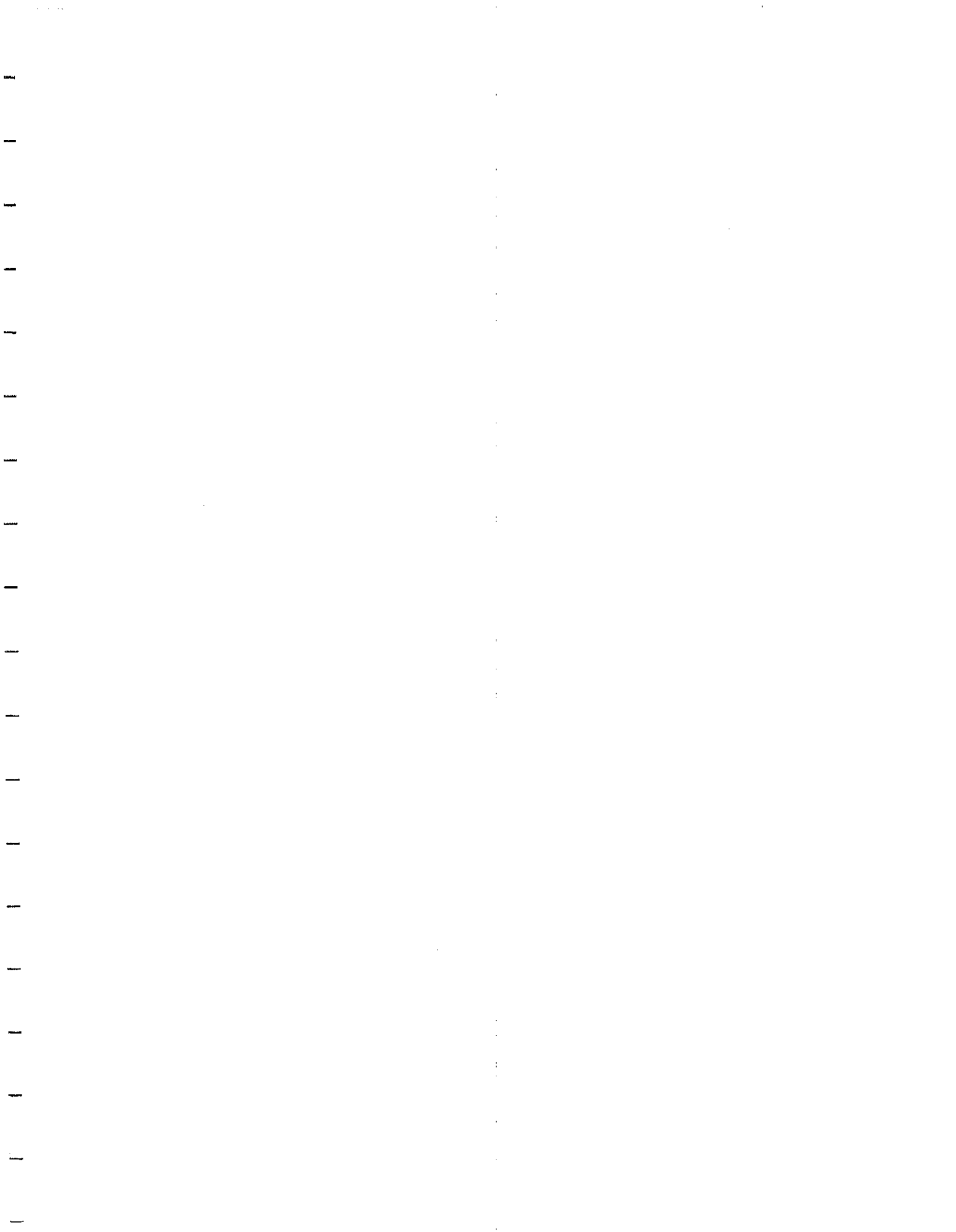
In addition to the Park system, the City boasts two significant historic structures with cultural facilities: the Belrockton Community Center and the Alvah N. Belding Memorial Library.

The Belrockton Community Center was constructed in 1906 as a dormitory by the Belding Brothers Silk Manufacturing Company to house 125 single women working in the Belding Silk Mills. The dormitory was closed in 1935, and in 1943 the National Youth Administration took over the building and converted it into a high school youth recreation center. In 1950, the Belrockton was purchased by the City and is now the home of the Belding Historical Museum and the Community Center. The building was placed on the State Register of Historic Sites in 1990. The Museum occupies portions of all three floors and is considered a first class small town museum. The Community Center occupies portions of the first floor and is used as a meeting space for Social Clubs.

The Library was recently expanded with a dramatic, modern addition that looks out over the Flat River. However, this was done without compromising the historic front façade of the building. The Library is a major community asset and brings people to the downtown area.

*Belding is justly proud of its
fine park system*





Chapter 5 Transportation

Belding has four roadway classifications, which function in a hierarchical fashion. These include major arterials, minor arterials, collectors, and local streets. The function of each roadway type is briefly described below. Note: depending on location, some systems may function in more than one capacity:

- 1) **Major Arterial** - A road/highway whose principal function is the movement of high traffic volumes into and through the city. M-44 and parts of M-91 are the city's major arterials.
- 2) **Minor Arterial** - A road/highway whose principal function is the movement of traffic received from the city's system of collector streets. Minor arterials often funnel traffic to major arterials. Minor arterials include Bridge, Ellis, High St. and North State.
- 3) **Collectors** - Collectors provide access to minor or major arterials by traffic originating from local streets. Collectors include Broas, Orchard and Water streets.
- 4) **Local Streets** - Local streets are the neighborhood (residential) streets on which homes are located.

Within the City, the major routes include M-44, (State Street), which is a major east and west route and the location of the newer commercial, office, and industrial areas within the City. Bridge Street runs north from M-44 into the downtown and to the industries located in the northern regions of the city. A major route from the downtown area west to M-91 is Ellis, which was extended to provide a more direct route to M-91. M-91 provides access to Greenville and is located just west of the city limits.

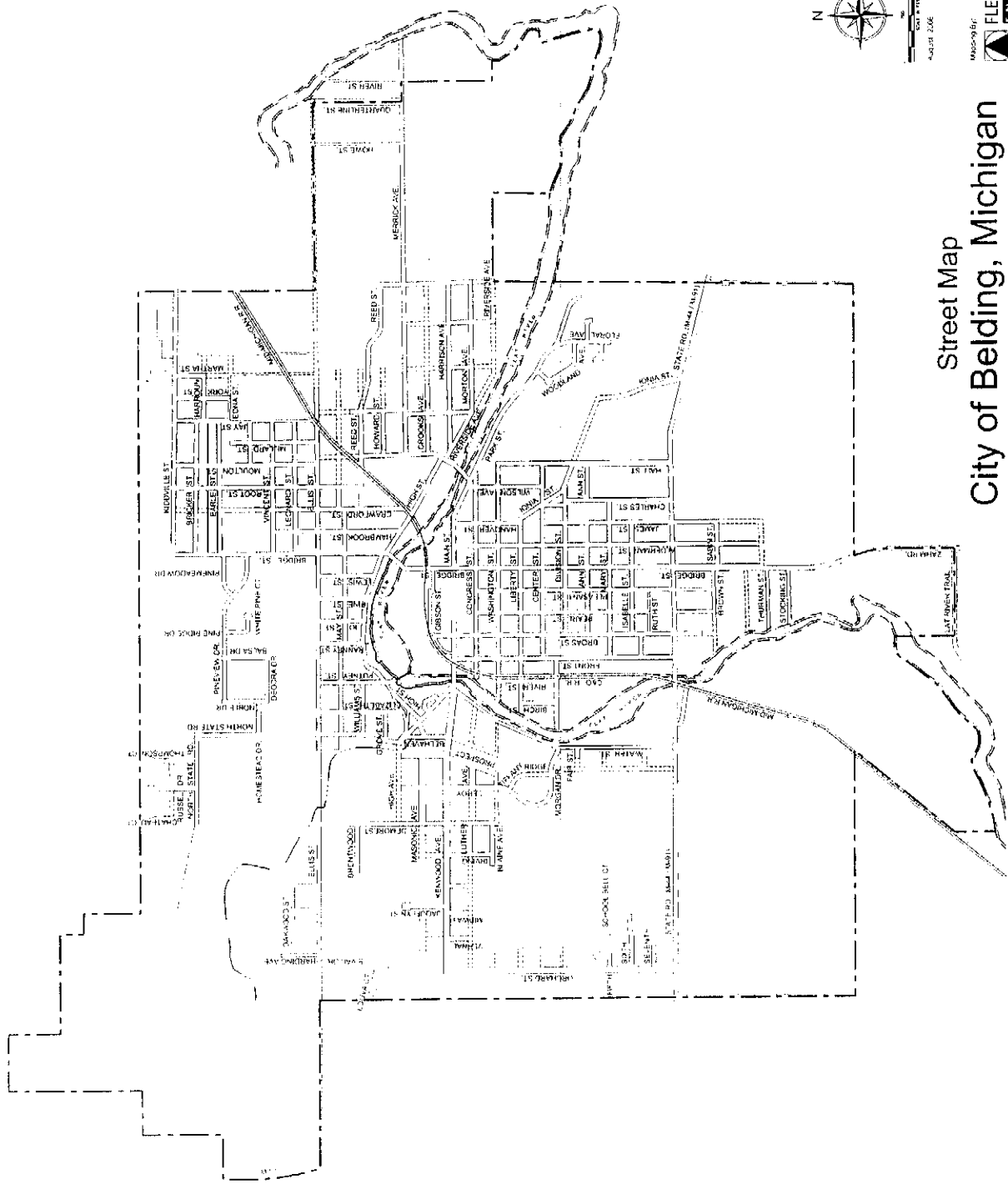
Sidewalks and Bike Paths

Sidewalks and bike paths are important contributors to the character of community and to the safety of its residents. Sidewalks link homes and neighborhoods and allow children and adults to move about freely and safely. Sidewalks also link residential areas with the city's downtown, parks, schools, and other facilities.

While much of the city contains sidewalks, a large share does not. Generally, existing sidewalks are concentrated in the mature neighborhoods. Large areas of the city are void of sidewalks or trails. The Master Plan recommends that all residential neighborhoods contain sidewalks or trail links to get to the downtown and schools. Lower density locations should, at a minimum, provide trails within the development with plans to connect with adjacent developments. Likewise, there are several opportunities for road

systems to make connections between neighborhoods. Where right-of-ways permit, bike paths should be incorporated along each of the city's major and minor arterials and collector streets (see trail map following). A trail on the former railroad right-of-way is also anticipated, and would provide connections to several neighborhoods.

Insert Street classification Act 51 map (from engineer)



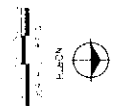
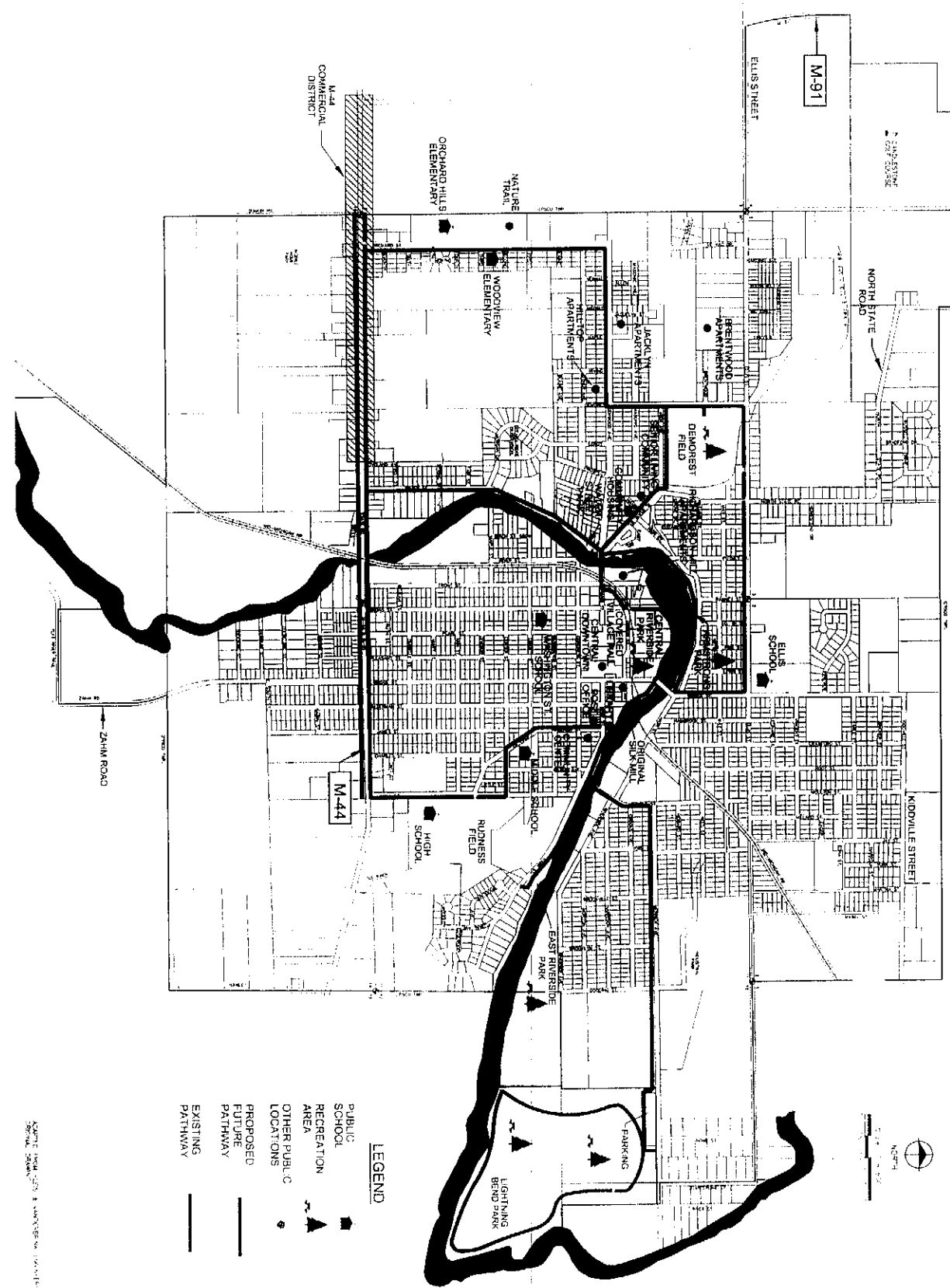
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 Feet
 August 2006

Map by
FLEIS & VANDENBRINK
ENGINEERING, INC.
 1000 S. State St., Belding, MI 49714
 Phone: 517.734.4111 Fax: 517.734.4112

Street Map

City of Belding, Michigan



Ionla County, Michigan



LEGEND

- PUBLIC SCHOOL
- RECREATION AREA
- OTHER PUBLIC LOCATIONS
- PROPOSED FUTURE PATHWAY
- EXISTING PATHWAY

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 CHECKED BY: J. BLOUGH

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Chapter 6 Population

In order to adequately plan for its future, a community needs to understand trends occurring in its population. Questions regarding the sources of development pressures, the types of households in the City, and the kinds of housing in demand are relevant to officials making community service decisions. For example, a young family in a single-family home has different needs than a single senior citizen in an apartment. This chapter provides an overview of basic descriptive statistics (including housing, employment and income levels) to provide City decision-makers with a frame of reference regarding area demographics. Note that most of the data in this section was derived from the 2000 Federal Census. While the data is older, it still provides a good relative snapshot of the community.

Population

Belding's population grew steadily between 1960 and 1990, and then declined slightly by the year 2000, (down 1.5%). This is not unusual for many cities due to a decrease in family sizes, some out-migration and an increase in single-person households. By comparison, Ionia County's population increased by about 8% in the decade of the 90's (see Table II).

Table I: Belding City Total Population & Recent Estimate

| 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2007 est. |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|
| 4,887 | 5,121 | 5,634 | 5,969 | 5,877 | 5,742 |

Source: 2000 U.S. Census; Population Estimates Program

Compared to its surrounding communities and the County, the City's population experienced a modest decline.

Table II: Area Population Changes

| Unit of Government | 1990 Population | 2000 Population | Percent Change |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Belding | 5,969 | 5,877 | -1.5% |
| Greenville | 8,101 | 7,935 | - 2.0% |
| Lowell | 3,983 | 4,013 | .8% |
| Otisco Twp. | 1,863 | 2,243 | 20.4% |
| Orleans Twp. | 2,548 | 2,736 | 7.4% |
| Eureka Twp. | 2,594 | 3,271 | 26.1% |
| Ionia County | 57,024 | 61,518 | 7.9% |

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Population projections suggest Belding will have a 2010 population of 5,979 individuals and a 2020 population of 6,084 individual, an increase of about 3.5% in 20 years. Again, trends

toward smaller families and more single person households account, in part, for smaller estimated population increases.

Community Character

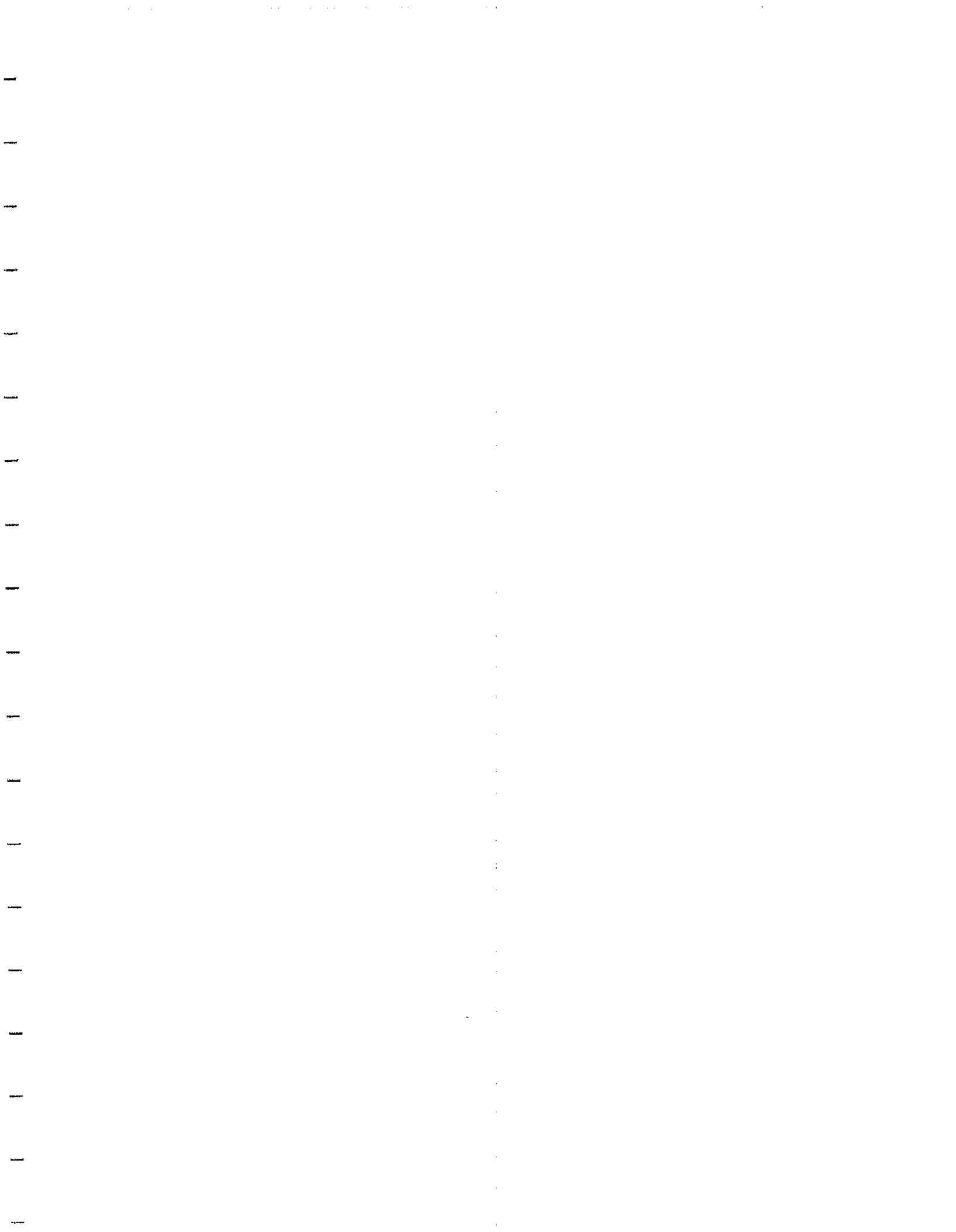
Overall, Belding is a modest community, as evidenced by basic 2000 Census variables, including:

- ✓ About one-third of the 2,289 housing units were renter occupied—a little higher than the state average. This suggests households of perhaps more modest means. Rental units provide various housing options for single adults and young families. However, rentals can also be of concern if the owners (landlords) are absentee and disinterested in keeping the units in good condition-- especially if the rental is within older housing stock that has not been updated.
- ✓ Belding's median household income was less than the national average. Median retirement income was about \$10,300.
- ✓ About 8.8% of the population had higher education degrees.
- ✓ The poverty rate was slightly higher than the national average.
- ✓ The city has both a strong family presence and a senior citizen presence.
- ✓ Overall, the city's population is aging and households are getting smaller, which is consistent with state and national trends.

Other noteworthy statistics to consider when making decisions about community services:

- ✓ The city has a higher incidence of senior citizens and children under 5 than the nation. About 14% of the population was over 65 years of age in 2000 and 8.4% of the population was under 5 years of age. Even with a higher senior population, median age was lower than the state average, which suggests a high percentage of young families.
- ✓ Average travel time to work is about 28 minutes. Given the significant increases in the cost of gasoline, this could have an impact on city residents.
- ✓ Top employment sectors for residents are manufacturing, education, health and social services, and retail trade.

- ✓ About one-third of all households are non-family. About one-third of those are single senior citizens.
- ✓ About 47% of all households are married couple families, about 27% of all householders are living alone (many of them seniors) and about 15% of all households are headed by single mothers.
- ✓ About 44% percent of the population had lived in a different home five years prior to the Census; over half of those people had moved from a different county. This may suggest a trend toward relocating from Kent and Montcalm counties.
- ✓ Housing is relatively affordable and diverse:
 - Median housing value was \$86,300, compared to a state average of \$115,600.
 - About one-third of all housing units were built before 1940. Many of these structures are fabulous historic homes, some structures are simply obsolete and in poor condition.
 - About one-third of all housing units were built between 1960 and 1990.
 - Just over 24% of all housing units are in multi-family units.
 - About 7% of the housing stock is mobile/manufactured homes.



Chapter 7 Natural Features

Belding, especially for its relatively small size, is absolutely rich with natural features. These features have shaped community character and continue to be critical components of the quality of life enjoyed by city residents.

Water Resources

The predominant water resource for residents is the Flat River. The Flat River serves both economic and recreational needs of the residents. Recreational activities such as fishing and boating are easily enjoyed with the close proximity of the river. Wildlife is found along the river corridor and within the Lightning Bend Nature Preserve located on the eastern edge of town. State lands bordering to the north are an unusual fixture in a city.

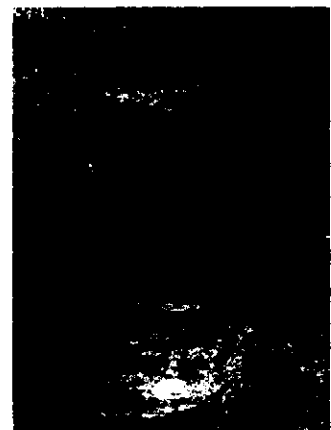
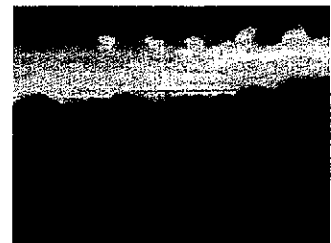
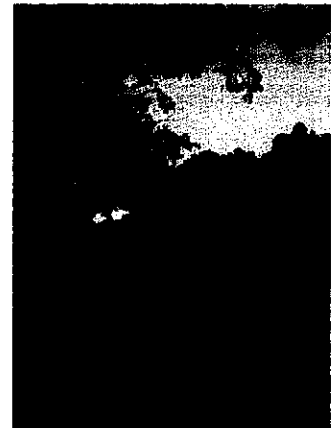
Woodlands and Vegetation

Mature trees abound throughout the City as a result of plantings associated with past development activities. A majority of the City's neighborhoods are characterized by tree-lined streets. Park lands and state lands are heavily wooded and wetlands and floodplains offer habitat for wildlife that is not normally seen in a city. Especially at Lightning Bend Preserve, the natural vegetation is quite varied and ranges from ash, willow, poplar and elm associations in the lowland to beech, maple, hemlock associations in the steep slope and seasonal wetland areas. This preserve has been set aside for the preservation, study, and recreational enjoyment of its natural resources.

The Plan encourages the preservation of wooded areas and mature trees wherever feasible. Woodlands and trees are buffers to the sights and sounds of civilization. Woodlands mute the noise from highways and other land uses. They provide valuable habitat for wildlife and reinforce the area's attractive, residential, character.

Wetlands

Wetlands in the City of Belding are located in areas along the Flat River. The wetlands are an extremely important natural resource to the city and regional area. They provide fish and wildlife habitat, serve as natural filtration systems for surface water entering the river, and offer an attractive, aesthetic amenity to the area's quality of life.





Topography (Slope)



The most significant factor affecting the topography of the City is the Flat River and the associated watersheds. The Flat River enters the corporate limits from the east and meanders close to the center of the City before turning south and exiting the City on its way to intersect the Grand River thirteen miles away.

Surface land features are generally characterized by gently rolling land and occasional low wetland areas. Steep riverbank slopes exist along portions of the Flat River, while the major portion of the City is between the elevations of 744 and 785 feet above sea level. Many of the steep slopes along the river valley create attractive views. Few topographic limitations for recreational development exist within the City.



Wildlife

The unique system of wetlands and the river in the City, in conjunction with the thick vegetative cover associated with them, provide important wildlife and fisheries habitats of regional significance.



Chapter 8 Community Fabric

When talking to Belding residents about their community, they will generally comment about the small town, historic character. People feel comfortable and safe in town and enjoy convenient community facilities. There are strong ties with schools and other institutions and neighbors generally look out for one another. If concerns are voiced, it is generally associated with the health and condition of various neighborhoods and the downtown. The city continues efforts to revitalize the downtown and has made significant changes to implement specific goals in the Downtown Economic Enhancement Strategy. Sometimes change seems slow to those anxious for a bustling community, but what took decades to deteriorate may well take decades to refurbish. In general, citizens feel that the city is on the right track and seem willing to work toward substantive change rather than "quick fixes."

The citizenry has recognized strong components of Belding's community fabric, not the least of which includes:

- A collection of significant historic structures, some of which enjoy National and State Register of Historic Places status;
- The Flat River as a community focal point;
- Key anchor businesses and institutions in the downtown;
- Historic neighborhoods and homes;
- A strong school system;
- Because of its compact design, City residents can travel without an automobile fairly easily to churches, schools and business areas. This closeness is an important part of community character;
- General surroundings which speak to a rich history, cozy neighborhoods and a strong sense of community.

Likewise, there are concerns with respect to community health and economic development including:

- Several large downtown properties which need to be redeveloped and fully utilized to maintain a healthy downtown. Redevelopment could be a great asset to the downtown, if properly designed.
- The City has some challenges with regard to the condition of properties and visual blight.

- Sidewalks and trail connections need to be utilized to better tie the community together. Likewise, dead-end roads and cul-de-sacs should not be utilized, so as to keep the community grid open.
- Single family housing stock is diverse and very affordable. However, higher quality market rate condos, lofts, townhouses and multi-family housing for families is lacking.
- Community design standards will be important tools to maintain community character and enhance small-town living.
- Several existing industrial facilities need beautification to reduce their impact on neighborhood development and redevelopment.

Subarea Analysis

For the purposes of a more in-depth analysis, the city was divided into three subareas:

- Subarea 1 includes the historic neighborhoods and the downtown, essentially southeast of the Flat River;
- Subarea 2 includes lands essentially north of the Flat River, and;
- Subarea 3 includes areas essentially west of the Flat River.

Subarea 1










This area contains the downtown and much of Belding's historic housing stock. Single family development is the dominant use with multi-family structures dispersed throughout the subarea (many of which are the result of single family home conversions). Commercial uses are located primarily along State Street (M-44) and in the downtown. However, on M-44 between the Flat River and Storey Road (M-91), there are many single family homes that are nonconforming as a result of commercial zoning. It is recommended that this area be considered for rezoning back to a residential designation where homes currently exist.

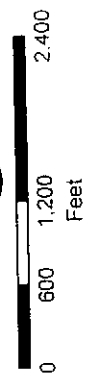
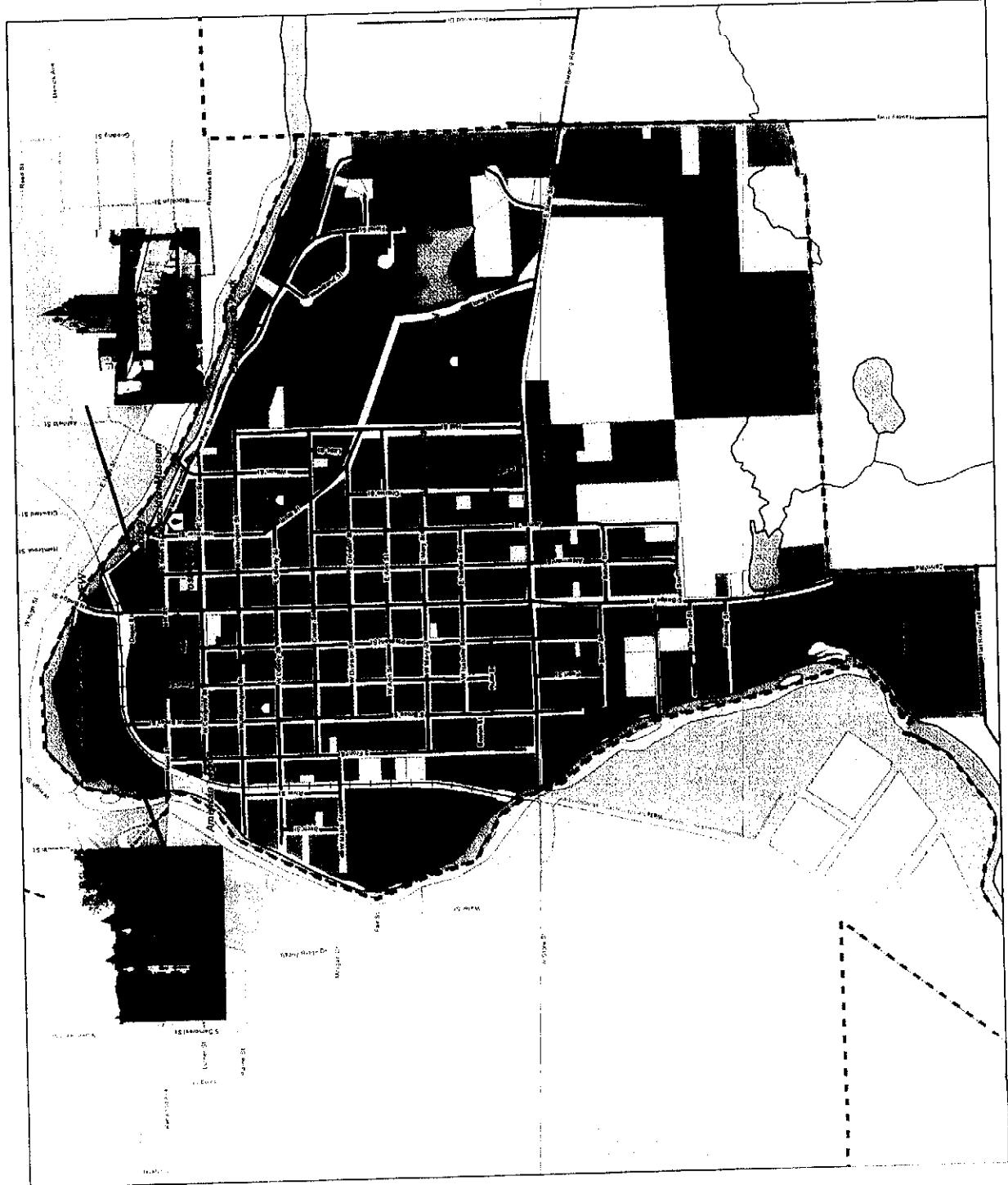


Some industrial uses are located in this subarea but, in general, they are not intrusive to the neighborhood. Still, the City should work closely with industrial facilities to screen operations from residential uses where opportunity permits.

Subarea 1 ELU map

City of Belding Subarea #1 Existing Conditions

-  Existing Streets
-  Vacant Right-of-Way
-  Single Family Residential
-  Multiple Family Residential
-  Public
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Parking
-  Vacant



Source: Ionia County Drain Commission, Michigan Center for Geographic Information
LST Planning, Inc.

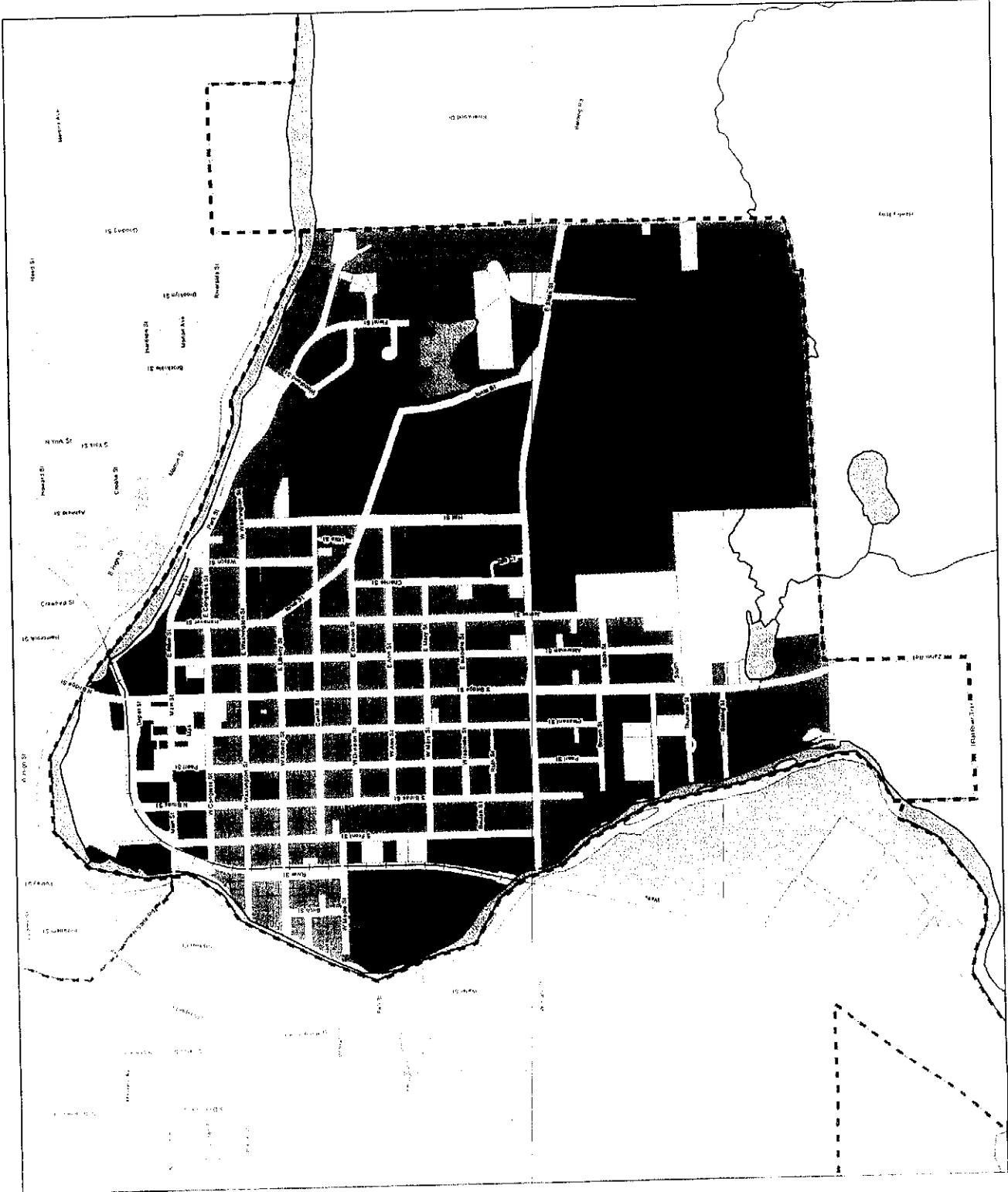
City of Belding

Existing Land Use Subarea 1

- Subarea Boundaries
- Vacant
- Commercial/Office
- Industrial
- Residential
- Public/Quasi-Public



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Community Planning Consultants



City of Belding

Existing Land Use

Subarea 1

Subarea Boundaries



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Community Planning Consultants



South of West Maple Street there may be an opportunity to work with riparian property owners to gain easements along the river to expand the city's trail system from Central Riverside Park.

The High School is a significant presence in this area as are Central Riverside Park, the Belrockton Museum, the Public Library, Post Office, City Hall and several historic churches. One of the two prominent historic silk mills within this subarea has been redeveloped as apartments. The old Gibson Silk Mill and Basket Factory remains to be redeveloped. Commercial redevelopment and enhancement is a key theme for the downtown, as emphasized in the Downtown Economic Enhancement Strategy. All redevelopment should be in context with the downtown's historic setting.

A large amount of vacant land is available in Subarea 1, south of M-44. It is conspicuous on aerial photos that large areas of land are much less developed than the downtown area. These areas should be evaluated for housing infill that connects with existing neighborhoods and the downtown as a means to support downtown merchants. Care should be taken to connect to the existing traditional street grid rather than permitting cul-de-sacs or dead-ends that are more suburban in character. Note that James Street could be continued to South Street and adjacent parcels to the east could fall in line with the existing street pattern if South Street continued along the southern boundary of each parcel currently fronting M-44. North/south street connections can easily be made along existing property lines and, from there, a thoughtful grid could be applied through the remainder of the area to facilitate traditional development patterns. The City could use its platting authority to predetermine where the street pattern should be placed before areas develop.

The primary focus for this area is:

- Keeping housing stock well maintained, protecting the historic character of homes.
- Preventing future conversion of single family homes into apartments.
- Thoughtfully redeveloping empty or underutilized historic structures.
- Developing a mixed-use, viable and attractive downtown.
- Adhere to design standards for the downtown.
- Assess expanses of vacant land for development, preferably single family infill.
- Connect outlying areas with the downtown.

Subarea 2

This area lies north of the Flat River. The mix of land uses and pattern of development is less consistent than what is found in Subarea 1. Industrial uses dispersed along the railroad

right-of-way account for large areas of land and have greater impacts on neighboring properties due to lack of property maintenance, screening and buffers.

The neighborhood area off of Morton Street appears to offer good opportunity for infill development. Other neighborhood areas are more blighted, with poorly kept apartment houses and inappropriate single family conversions.

For example, note the structure pictured (right), which once accommodated 8 gas meters/dwelling units, yet the yard has limited space for parking and outdoor living.










Lightning Bend Preserve could be a crown jewel for this area if thoughtful connections were made to the preserve from area neighborhoods.

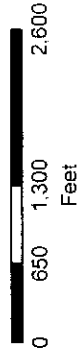
The primary focus of this area is:

- Beautification of industrial areas (screening, landscaping and property maintenance).
- Upgrading older homes (post WWII) that may not have the historical significance of downtown structures built in the 1800s.
- Reconsideration of stagnated developments (i.e., the nature of the development off Homestead Drive). It may be appropriate to reconsider this area for single family development and instead place condominiums and town homes in and near the downtown.
- Continuing a traditional street pattern west of North Bridge where feasible (e.g., continuation of Kiddville Street west of North Bridge with thoughtful placement of north/south routes).
- Infill development for single family housing.

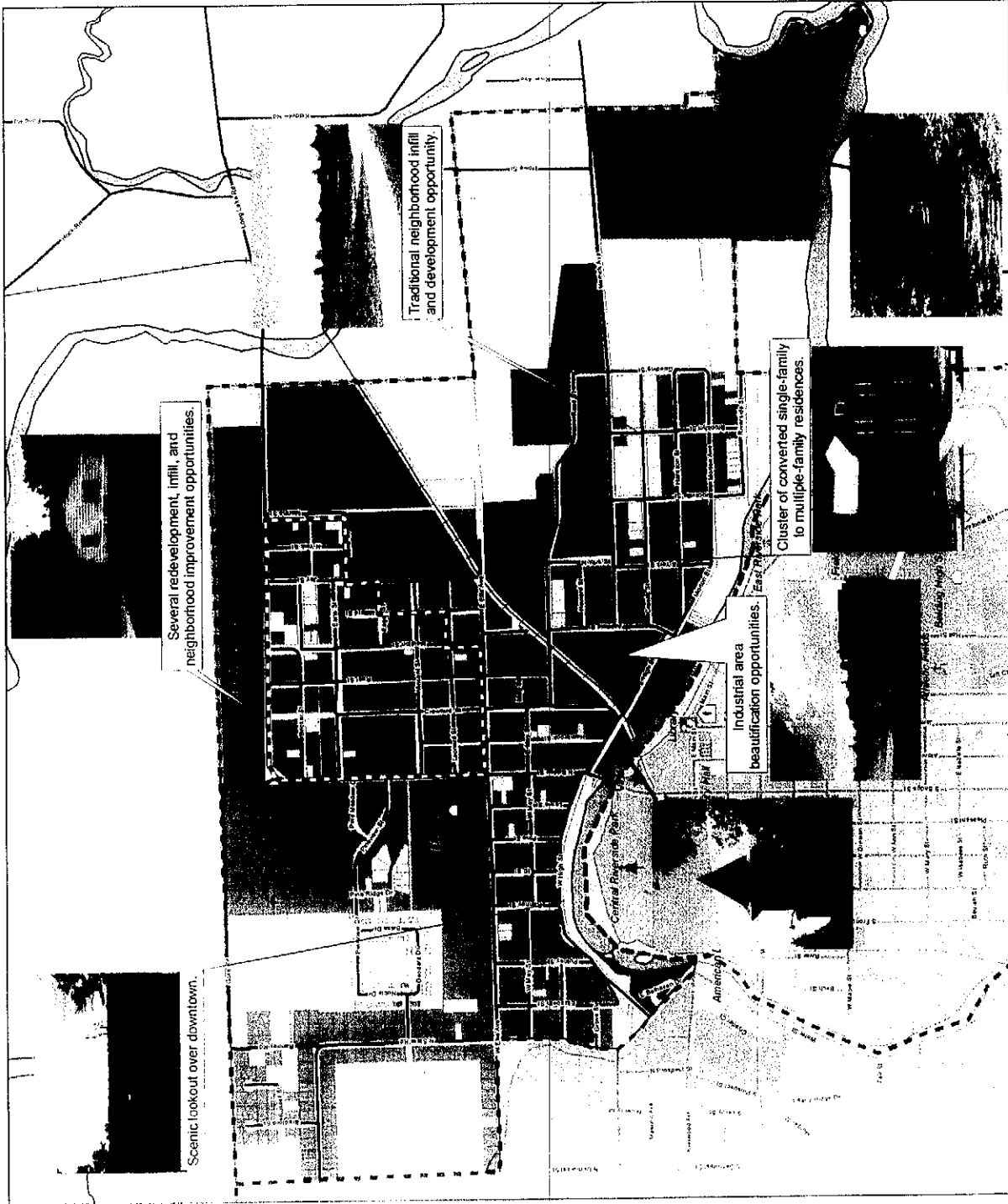


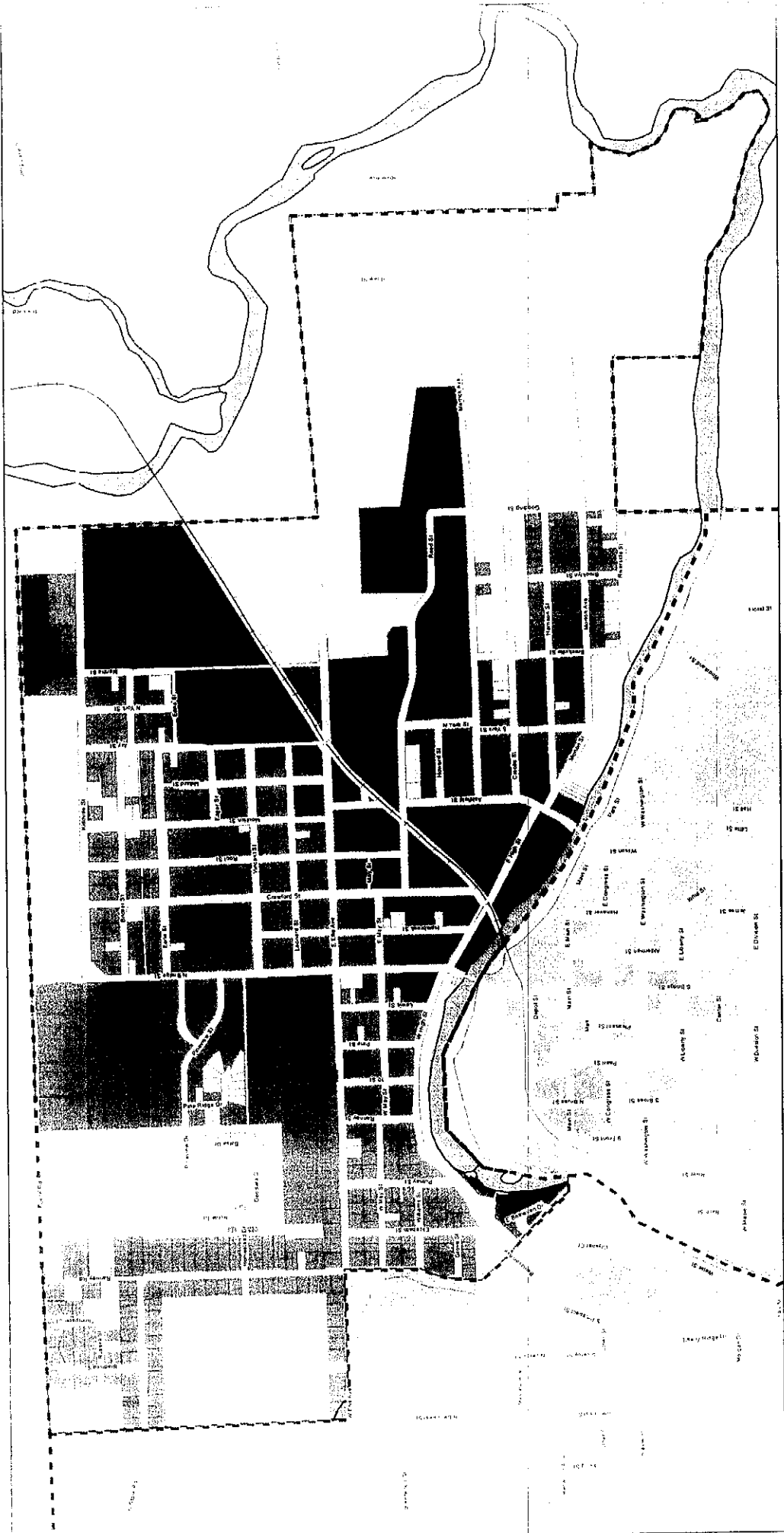
City of Belding Subarea #2 Existing Conditions

-  Existing Streets
-  Vacant Right-of-Way
-  Single Family Residential
-  Multiple Family Residential
-  Public
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Parking
-  Vacant



Source: Ionia County Drain
Commission, Michigan Center
for Geographic Information
LSL Planning, Inc.





City of Belding
Existing Land Use
Subarea 2

-  Subarea Boundaries
-  Vacant
-  Commercial/Office
-  Industrial
-  Residential
-  Public/Quasi-Public



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 Community Planning Group, LLC



City of Belding

Existing Land Use Subarea 2

Subarea Boundaries



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Community Planning Center, LLC



Subarea 3

The western area of the city, Subarea 3, exhibits a development pattern that least resembles traditional city patterns. Most residential development is lined along busier roadways rather than in traditional subdivisions. Residential lots on "side streets" do not tie into the standard city grid. Dead-ends and cul-de-sacs are more common in Subarea 3 than in other areas of the city. As with the other subareas, it is recommended that the city contemplate the extension of existing street grids where feasible and identify areas of future roads under their platting authority.



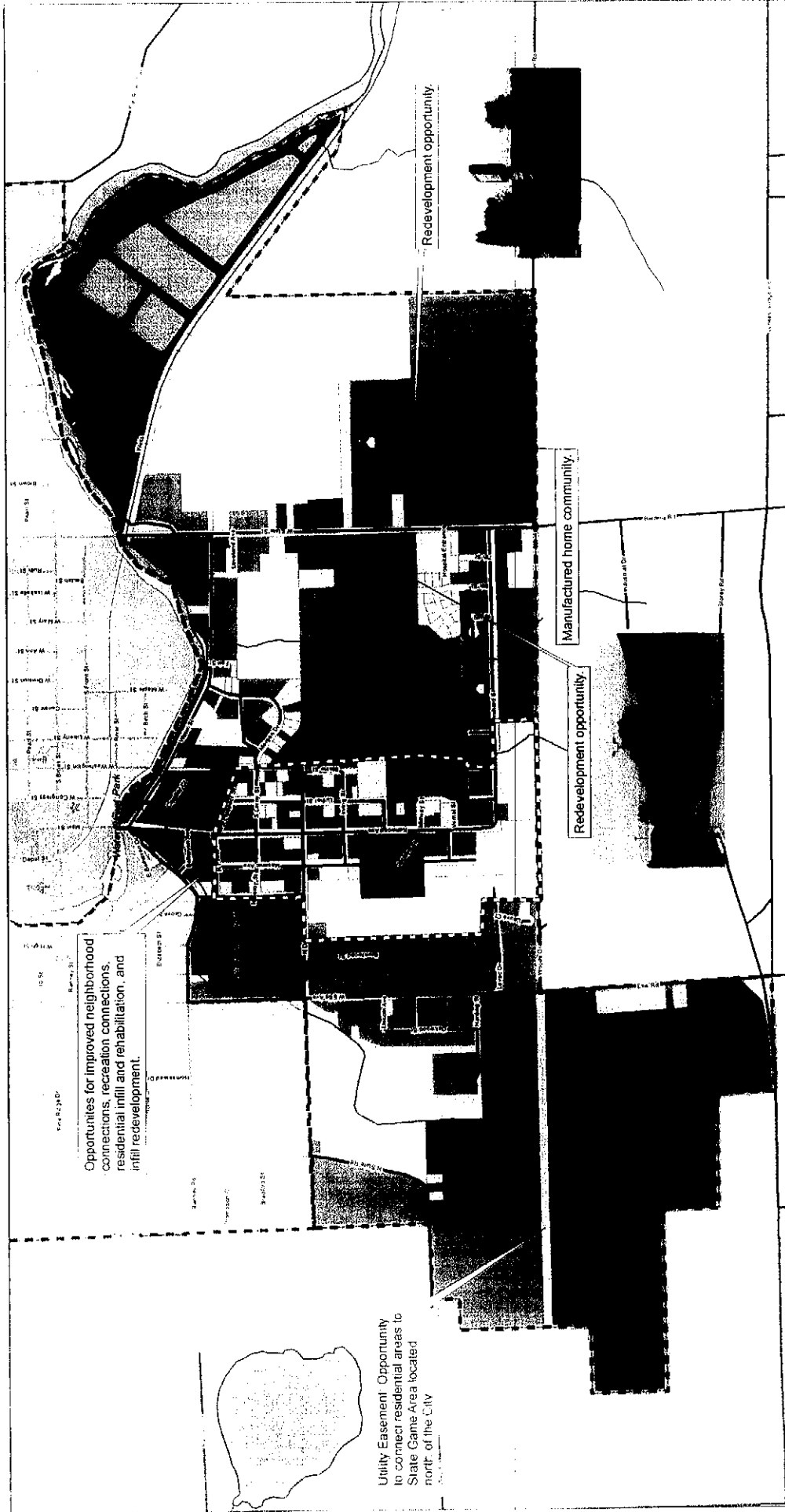
Large tracts of vacant land, some with development limitations, are found in Subarea 3. Commercial areas are generally limited to M-44 (State Street). A sizable manufactured home park is located off of M-44 and appears to have ample space to accommodate additional

manufactured homes (the park currently has high vacancy rates, and there is land available for expansion).

Subarea 3 offers the most opportunity for new development, particularly around the golf course and on properties adjacent to the golf course, which are generally coveted for high-end residential development. Areas needed for future city services should be considered for long term planning (e.g., utility easements, park lands, etc.)

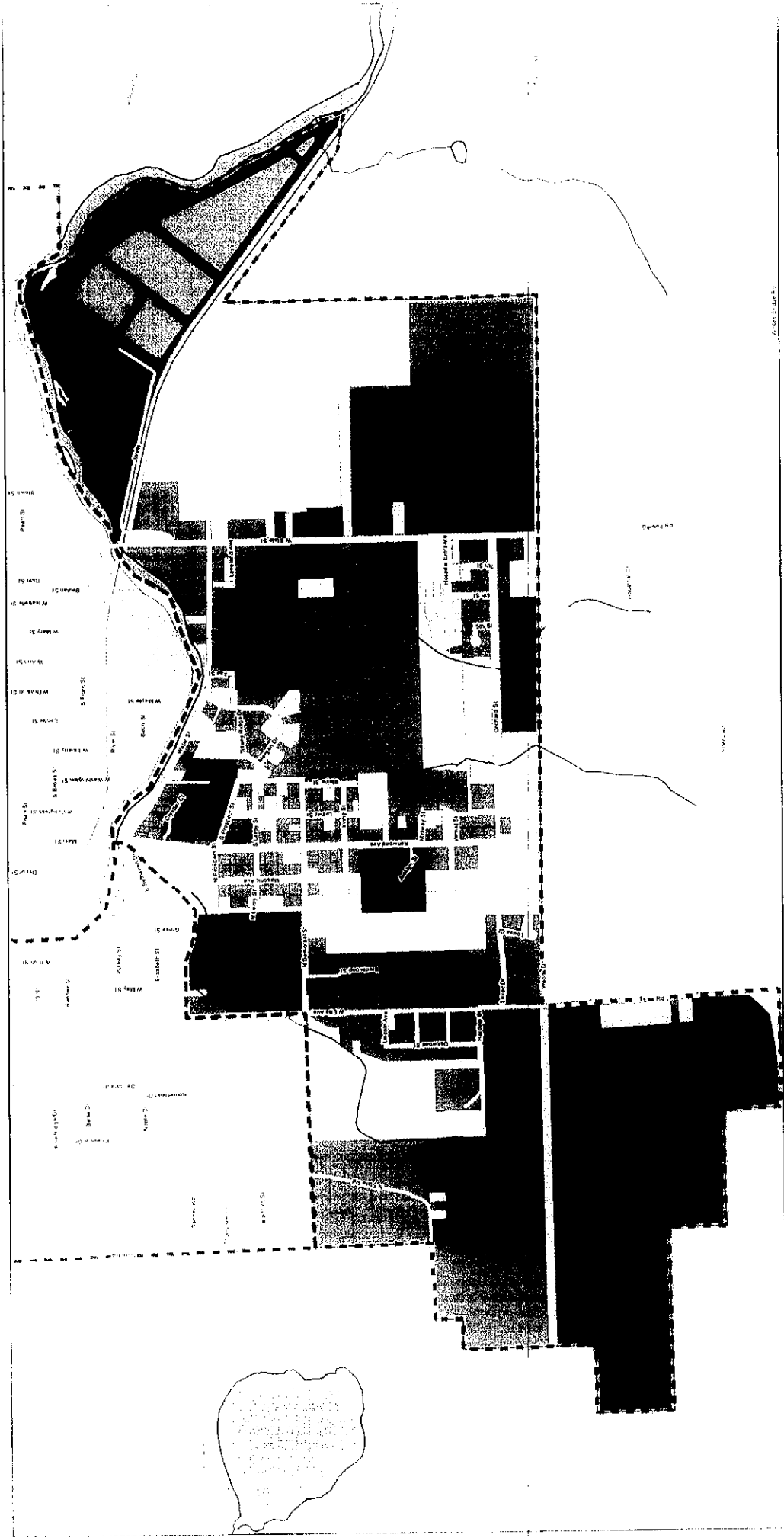
The primary focus for this subarea is:

- Extend street grids where feasible and avoid dead-ends and unnecessary cul-de-sacs.
- Provide connections, via pathways and sidewalks, other parts of the city.
- Maintain current residential uses along M-44.
- Access management for M-44 businesses.
- Provide transitions between single family and multiple family uses.









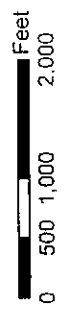
- Existing Streets
- Vacant Right-of-Way
- Single Family Residential
- Multiple Family Residential
- Public
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Parking
- Vacant

Source: Ionia County Drain Commission, Michigan Center for Geographic Information
LSI Planning, Inc.

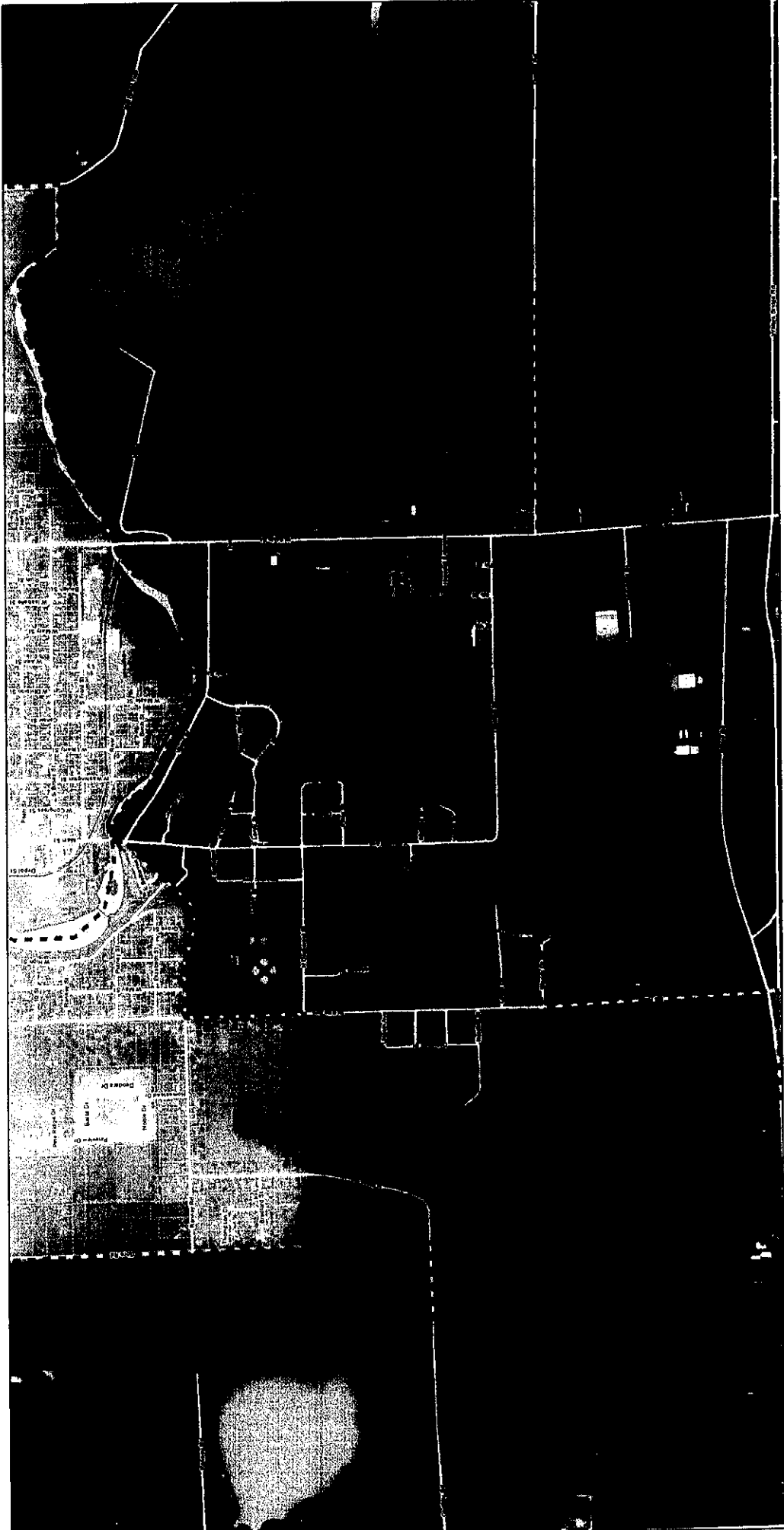


City of Belding
Existing Land Use
Subarea 3

-  Subarea Boundaries
-  Industrial
-  Residential
-  Public/Quasi-Public
-  Vacant
-  Commercial/Office



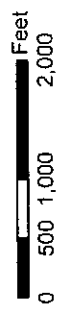
LSL Planning, Inc.
 Community Planning Consultants



City of Belding
 Existing Land Use
 Subarea 3



Subarea Boundaries



LSL Planning, Inc.
 Community Planning Division

Chapter 9

Vision, Goals, Strategies and Future Land Use

A Sense of Direction

In order to meaningfully plan for its future, a community must think strategically, and fully understand its strengths and weaknesses. First, key issues are identified so limited community resources can be devoted to those things of most concern to the citizenry. Second, key opportunities, or community strengths, must be built upon so positive aspects of the community can remain that way. It is always more difficult to change a negative situation than to carry on with a positive one. Fortunately, City residents and City leadership have demonstrated a strong sense of determination to maintain a focus on key issues while not losing sight of important values that are clearly rooted in Belding.

Community Vision

A clear community vision is an essential rally point for community residents. The vision can become a frame of reference for land use decisions, community investment decisions, and human resource decisions. If widely accepted, businesses and institutions can also invest themselves to fit into the community vision. In effect, it becomes a uniting mission for everyone within the city limits. Following is a vision developed from both observing the community and listening to a cross section of its citizens. This vision drives the goals and objectives of this section.

This vision was validated by the residents at a community workshop held in January, 2009. Participants evaluated each element of the vision and determined if it correctly reflected the desires of the community. The resulting vision statement reflects the future land use intentions of the city and provides a starting point for drafting goals and strategies.

Future Vision

In the years ahead, Belding continues to be successful in fostering a strong sense of community through maintaining its small town character. The historic fabric of existing structures is preserved. Historic buildings set a pattern for new construction. New development meshes well with the City's small town urban character, rather than inappropriately imposing suburban features on the Belding landscape. Because growth and redevelopment is thoughtfully considered and each development meets City site and building design standards, a level of quality emerges that keeps neighborhood and business areas attractive and healthy for decades to come.

Water resources and non-motorized trails are an important tie among neighborhoods and the downtown. City residents from across the community are able to safely travel from their homes on a sidewalk and trail system into the downtown by bicycle or on foot.

Community amenities like benches, lovely landscaping, and other design features are strategically set throughout the City regardless of the type of development (e.g., residential, institutional or commercial uses). This eye for attractive details promotes a high level of community interaction.

Strong single-family neighborhoods and proud institutions underpin the community's pride. Homes are affordable and local institutions are accessible. The housing stock is strong, and well-maintained. A healthy cross-section of young adults, senior citizens, and maturing families live in appreciation of one another. Community ties are strong and people work together to make and keep the City a special place.

Higher density residential development is located above main street shops or immediately adjacent to the downtown to promote easy access to community services and a hum of activity in the core.

Commercial development is limited to small portions of the M-44 corridor and the downtown, with the two districts having purposefully distinct characters. The general commercial district is generally restricted to areas west of the Flat River on M-44 and is earmarked for convenience and auto-related businesses (e.g., fast food, gas stations, and convenience shopping). The downtown district provides a niche for neighborhood businesses that support daily living and promote a leisurely and unique pedestrian shopping experience. A vibrant and attractive downtown becomes the backdrop for several local events, which foster neighborly interaction. A vibrant downtown and accessible water features regularly attract people from the region.

Belding has a distinct advantage as a small, closely knit community to make a significant impact when its citizens collectively put their minds to a task—its history demonstrates that. Because of this ability and desire to keep Belding a very special place to live, this section of the plan goes beyond land use, but also touches on community and economic development. The City already engages in many special events and programs that provide a strong sense of community—perhaps without even realizing the importance of “the small things.” However, it is a whole host of the “small things” that make a community special and strong; thus their inclusion in many of the following strategies.

This portion of the plan is designed to be action oriented. There is also a realization that, because of limited human and fiscal resources, strategies should be prioritized so those viewed as most important by the community get attention first. As a follow-up to adopting these strategies, a prioritized work strategy should be put forth as an annual work plan.

Goals and Strategies

While a vision is a broad statement of a desired state of existence, goals and strategies hone in on a more detailed plan for future action to attain the vision. Following are goals and strategic statements for the City. These statements come from:

- Interaction with the public;

- City leadership;
- Review of existing documents (e.g. facilities plan, Recreation Plan, Downtown Economic Enhancement Strategy, and market study);
- Observations by the planning consultants.

Goal 1: Create an attractive and pleasant living environment in the City, where people feel confident to live and invest.

Strategies:

1. Engage in a simple public “spruce-up campaign” throughout the City in public spaces, to set an example for citizens to improve their properties.
2. Identify several priority areas in the City that can be beautified, then work with civic, business, neighborhood and school groups to sponsor activities to upgrade these areas.
3. Provide annual beautification awards to residents and businesses and have winners ride in the Labor Day parade.
4. Continue to develop the annual capital improvements program.
5. As funds become available, install new sidewalks in the core community and along major roads.
6. Adhere to the Pathway Master Plan.
7. Protect and augment street trees. Maintain the public tree inventory and management plan and continue to carry out and closely administer the City tree ordinance.
8. Review and enhance landscaping and screening standards in the city. For example:



- a. Provide for low level walls or wrought iron fencing and piers as a screen between parking lots and sidewalks, (particularly in the downtown) rather than greenbelts in areas with limited space.
- b. Provide incentives or assist with screening between industrial areas in town and surrounding uses. Many facilities were developed prior to zoning standards so programs should be



- developed to retrofit landscaping and screening in critical areas
- c. Provide shade and seating areas on every public site in the city, (commercial, industrial and institutional).
- 9. Develop a streetscape program with the Downtown Development Authority. Irrigated window boxes, hanging baskets and planters, additional street trees, seating areas, sculpture, historic plaques, and pocket parks should all be considered as part of the effort.
- 10. Investigate the feasibility of public sculpture in a prominent place in the community.
- 11. Engage students in the community by putting the Master Plan, Zoning Ordinance and other public documents in school libraries. Encourage teachers to make learning about these documents part of the school curriculum.
- 12. Review and augment anti-blight regulations annually. Consider:
 - a. The prohibition of front yard parking (except on driveways);
 - b. Limiting pavement cover of a lawn;
 - c. Requiring brush and vegetation maintenance;
 - d. Requiring live groundcover on lawns;
 - e. Rental registration and inspections.
- 13. Continue active enforcement of the International Property Maintenance Code.
- 14. Update and review annually educational materials regarding City property maintenance standards. to send out with newsletters, violation notices, etc.

Goal 2: Maintain healthy and diverse neighborhoods that foster community interaction.

Strategies:

- 1. Empower neighborhood associations to take a more active role in neighborhood preservation. Use the associations as a rallying point for targeted neighborhood beautification efforts.
- 2. Promote collaborative efforts between the schools and area churches to identify potential leaders and a volunteer force to spearhead and think of neighborhood-based activities.

- 3. Have the Chamber of Commerce or DDA help organize the business community for community pride and make the downtown a meeting place for various interest groups to sponsor downtown events.
- 4. Continue to use public facilities like the Library, City Hall grounds, public parking and park areas, etc., to host art fairs, community garage sales, craft lessons, road rallies, scavenger hunts and various other events to generate downtown activity.

Goal 3: Showcase a park and trail system that is laced through the community and recognized as a gem of the City.

Strategies:

- 1. Develop way-finding signs to direct people to points of interest, including trails, parks and public institutions.
- 2. Continue developing a stronger trail and sidewalk system to connect schools and parks with neighborhoods and the downtown.
- 3. Mark "neighborhood walks" in designated areas to promote walking; have marked walking routes coincide with a "Safe Routes to School" program.
- 4. Provide interpretive plaques throughout the community to tell the story of Belding. Plaques could be placed throughout the business district, along river trails, and even in neighborhoods.
- 5. Actively plan for park maintenance and improvements as part of the Parks and Recreation Plan.
- 6. Consider a canoe trail between communities and parks that includes launch areas, fishing piers and docks.
- 7. Cross-promote activities in the city with tourist attractions like the Double 'R' Ranch.
- 8. Develop more facilities in existing parks to increase activity within them, and to the extent possible, tie the activities to downtown businesses promotions.



Example: Pedestrian wayfinding sign

Goal 4: Build a strong business community where residents and tourists want to linger.


Strategies:




1. Support the DDA to engage in an “ambassador program” for service business and City employees to train them regarding community events, city services and excellent customer service. The idea is that the people that most residents and tourists come in contact with can make their experience special by offering great service and telling them about the community. It also helps businesses cross-promote one another.
2. Enact site plan review standards that enable the Planning Commission to require certain site amenities of developers, including such things as trails, benches, and bike racks.
3. Continue to require street trees and sidewalks as part of any new development; including subdivisions, residential, commercial and industrial developments.
4. Investigate opportunities to extend, continue or expand the traditional street grid system, especially on the west side of the city.
5. Investigate the creation of a Principal Shopping District to capture more funds for downtown improvements.
6. Protect and rehabilitate existing historic buildings.
7. Develop a façade improvement program for existing structures and institute strong design standards for property owners receiving the assistance.
8. Engage in rear façade improvements for the downtown.
9. Develop informational kiosks and station them in strategic locations within the City (e.g., downtown, near the waterfront, etc.).
10. Recognize the market trade area and the fact that Belding has a limited amount of regional influence with respect to market shares, because large shopping centers already exist in Ionia and Greenville. Instead, foster local “specialty home grown” businesses for the immediate area.
11. Work with anchor downtown businesses to strengthen their position in the community to compete with “big box” businesses.
12. Promote infill that mimics classic Main Street design.



Example Information Kiosk

- 
2. Implement the National Trust Main Street philosophy and work to enhance associate level status.
 3. Aggressively rehabilitate existing downtown structures with enforcement actions, creative financing and other incentives.
 4. Actively clean up downtown, landscape the rear of businesses, define a path along the back entrances of buildings, and screen outdoor storage, parking areas and dumpsters throughout the community.
 5. Enact zoning regulations that promote and permit outdoor cafes in the downtown as a means of increasing community vibrancy.
 6. Develop “cottage industries” in the downtown whereby craftsmen or artists can share space to develop their small businesses.
 7. Promote the downtown for specialty businesses and promote M-44 for automotive dependent businesses (such as fast food and auto services).
 8. Actively recruit and develop small local businesses to infill downtown areas. “Grow” local businesses by promoting entrepreneurship in youth, homemakers, senior citizens and others.
 9. Investigate the development of a downtown historic district to enable property owners to take advantage of state and federal tax credits for historic preservation.
 10. Promote visually unifying measures in the downtown. Tactics could include unified sign designs (e.g., with similar materials and colors) for businesses, similar parking lot screening measures, and a streetscape theme.
 11. Consider designating the vacant silk mills as “planned unit developments” to predetermine basic design elements to facilitate their redevelopment.
 12. Consider establishing basic design criteria in the zoning ordinance (e.g. for certain building materials) for downtown commercial and multi-family developments to prevent wholly inappropriate design in this historic setting.
 13. Continue enforcing penalties for lack of building maintenance.
 14. Permit more mixed uses in the downtown.

- 
15. Permit wall signs and limited ground signs in the downtown, and allow limited ground signs through the remainder of the city (i.e. no pole signs within the community).
 16. Work to maintain the existing downtown businesses as anchors in the community that need to remain competitive.
 17. Continue Downtown Development Authority (DDA) initiatives throughout the downtown, as outlined in the design guidelines report.
 18. Consider expanding the planning and execution of community events to spark more volunteerism and interest in downtown activities and to discuss alternative means of funding for activities.
 19. Develop a “city hop” program where shoppers, festival goers, canoeists, cyclists, etc. can tour from one community to another.

Goal 6: Maintain strong community ties with the City’s residents.

Strategies:

1. Continue to coordinate with local schools and churches, promoting shared resources, to support diverse recreational, cultural, and youth and family activities.
2. Continue to utilize City recreational facilities for community activities and expand offerings to keep area youth involved in productive activities.
3. Establish contests to promote community pride, such as a holiday decorating competition, for both the business community and citizens.
4. Encourage the Museum Board to develop a self-guided walking history tour of the City, with permanent markers along the route.
5. Continue the city newsletter and website development to stay in contact with the citizenry.
6. Continue police and fire programs like the “Explorer” and car seat programs.

Goal 7: Maintain a strong and diverse housing stock.

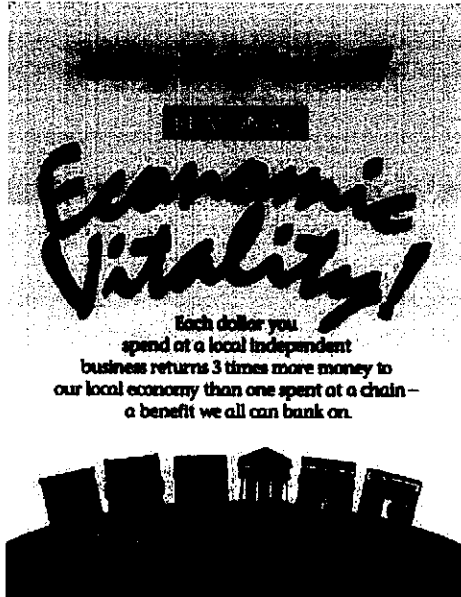
Strategies:



1. Promote the development of loft apartments over storefronts as a means to augment property owner income, increase downtown area security and activity, and to diversify housing choices. Rather than treating apartments as a special use in the central business district, consider permitting them by right.
2. Investigate using Michigan State Housing Development Authority rental rehabilitation programs for upper level apartments.
3. Develop market rate condominiums and townhouses in and near the downtown.
4. Actively promote multi-story buildings in the downtown.
5. Direct citizens to local banks to use low interest home improvement loans and home ownership programs offered through banks by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.
6. Develop and promote an information library regarding simple home maintenance and weatherization efforts. This may be as simple as collecting existing brochures on the topic from entities like the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service.
7. Continue anti-blight enforcement and consider enacting stronger regulations in problems areas.
8. Foster a housing infill program. Infill homes should match the character of homes in the neighborhood.
9. Discourage the demolition of housing stock in viable neighborhoods in order to expand parking areas for business and institutional uses.
10. Strictly enforce against the illegal conversion of single family homes to apartments.
11. Promote homes on the fringe of the golf course and thoughtfully develop areas adjacent to the river to promote "up-scale" single family homes. These areas could be zoned Planned Unit Development with basic design conditions already determined (e.g. driveway points and trail connections).

Goal 8: Economic Development

Strategies:



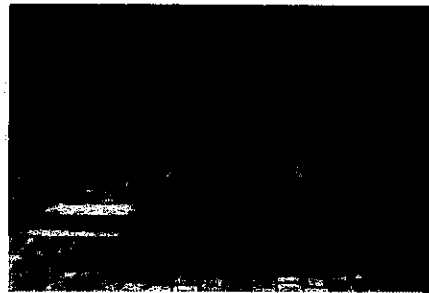
1. Explore, with state and county officials, opportunities to promote meaningful alternative energy.
2. Promote technology and life sciences business development as a means to create jobs.
3. Focus on the development of small industrial uses on 1-2 acre lots. Provide opportunities for expansion within the city.
4. Continue a business retention program that includes annual visits to local industries to discuss topics of mutual concern.
5. Identify key specialty businesses that can reasonably be recruited to the downtown.

6. Work with local businesses to help them broaden their offerings (e.g., a pharmacy with a soda counter or hardware with a strong outdoor garden display).
7. Work with the DDA to develop a "shop local" campaign.
8. Investigate fees and penalties for property owners who leave their buildings vacant.
9. Actively reuse the Gibson building by setting the stage for redevelopment, including but not limited to: historic designation, design standards, partial demolition; resolution of parking and utility issues and mixed use designation.

Goal 9: Protect natural resources within the City and enhance its natural setting.

Strategies:

1. Consider rezoning environmentally sensitive areas of the City to "planned unit development" to help ensure that development in unique areas works with the land, rather than being imposed upon it.



Typical detention basin; rain garden

2. Consider low impact storm water management techniques like rain gardens and sunken landscape islands rather than large, unattractive detention areas on site plans. (note: picture above left - traditional, stagnant detention pond; right, rain garden. Both manage storm water.)
3. Consider developing a storm water management ordinance.
4. Work with the Soil Conservation District to augment wildlife habitat areas with native species, e.g., in parks and along the river.
5. Consider prohibiting the clearing and grading of land without site plan approval.

Goal 10: Develop an accessible and diverse parks and recreation system.


Strategies:

1. Develop trails or formally marked walks through neighborhoods into the downtown and to the waterfront.
2. Continue to update the Community Recreation Plan every five years.
3. With the development of parcels along the river, require a setback buffer and greenbelt easement that can serve as part of the community trail system.
4. Work with landowners along both sides of the river to complete a trail loop through the city.

Goal 11: Maintain Belding's unique small-town character

Strategies:

1. Consider enacting requirements for a certain percentage of open space for every development.
2. Continue focus on downtown enhancement and redevelopment.

- 
3. Maintain strong neighborhoods and promote home ownership.
 4. Limit the scale of multi-family developments by limiting the number of units that can go into any one building or development.
 5. Permit limited, market rate multi-family developments earmarked for the downtown area.
 6. Update the City Zoning Ordinance to comply with the recommendations of the Master Plan.

Goal 12: Promote an efficient transportation system in the City.

Strategies:

1. Develop access management standards for the zoning ordinance, which are applied during site plan review.
2. Limit the development of dead-ends and, at a minimum, require easements at the end of cul-de-sacs for pedestrian access between developments.
3. Close additional curb cuts and consolidate driveways wherever possible along M-44 and on key streets in and near the downtown.
4. Consider traffic calming measures as opportunities arise, particularly in neighborhoods and downtown.

Goal 13: Develop a cost effective, consolidated infrastructure system.

Strategies:

1. Expand public water and sewer to un-served City locations.
2. Continue to prepare short and long term capital improvement programs covering major infrastructure and facility needs.
3. Reinstate the sidewalk improvement program.

Goal 14: Promote teambuilding within the City's leadership and a philosophy of intergovernmental cooperation in the area to maximize public resources.

Strategies:

1. Annually, conduct a combined workshop of the City Council, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Downtown Development Authority, and staff to review matters of planning and development and to assist in the prioritization of program activities.
2. Continue an ongoing program of intergovernmental coordination and planning among area communities and with the county.
3. Continue the process of interdepartmental comments during site plan review.

Goal 15: Encourage City Government and City residents to become a "green" community by participating in recycling and environmental programs.

Strategies:

1. Institute a city-wide recycling program, including curbside recycling, recycling of construction materials and recycling for multiple family and commercial/industrial development.
2. Promote use of alternative energy technologies in homes and businesses.
3. To serve as an example for private development, pursue LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for all new and expanded City facilities.
4. Encourage all new development, both public and private, to be constructed in a sustainable and environmentally-sensitive manner.

Future Land Use

This iteration of the Master Plan does not foresee a great deal of change in land use policy for the majority of the City. Existing single family neighborhoods with a strong institutional presence (schools and churches) are planned to remain as such. Although some multi-family is interspersed in existing single family neighborhoods, additional multi-family in these areas is not contemplated. Single family homes that have been converted to multi-family structures are nonconforming and planned for eventual conversion back to single family status. Future conversions of single family homes will not be permitted.

Single-family neighborhoods will be augmented with appropriate maintenance, infill redevelopment and adequate infrastructure. Additional multi-family development will be market-rate, preferably in the form of townhouses adjacent to the downtown and condominiums as an adaptive reuse of existing structures.

Economic and community redevelopment efforts will continue in the downtown. Commercial retail and entertainment development will be emphasized in the downtown. Remaining undeveloped areas near the downtown should be developed as mixed use. Commercial areas along M-44 will be evaluated for downzoning where viable single family residences already exist. High impact commercial and auto-dependent retail businesses will be targeted for the M-44 corridor.

Efforts will be made to minimize the impact of existing industrial development near neighborhoods with screening and extensive landscaping.

Zoning Plan

The following Zoning Plan shows how the land use designations on the Future Land Use Map correspond to the zoning districts on the City of Belding Zoning Map. The Zoning Plan, which is a required element of the Master Plan according to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, is a tool for implementing the Master Plan by evaluating the Zoning Ordinance. The following Zoning Plan contains recommendations for changes to the Ordinance where necessary to implement the recommendations of this Plan.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Low Density Residential</p> | <p>R-1, Single Family Residential, and R-1.5, Single Family Residential. Minimum lot sizes in these districts are 21,000 and 14,500 square feet, respectively. These districts are mostly located in the newer neighborhoods in the city, on the outer edges of the developed area.</p> |
| <p>Medium Density Residential and Traditional Single Family Residential</p> | <p>R-2, Single Family Residential, with a minimum lot area of 8,450 square feet, and R-3, Single and Two Family Residential, with a minimum lot area of 8,450 square feet per dwelling unit. These districts are intended to foster stable, high quality neighborhoods in the older parts of the city. The City should consider adopting specific requirements for development within the areas designated Traditional Single Family, to prevent further conversions of older homes to duplexes and apartments, and provide for incentives and/or stronger regulations to ensure preservation of the traditional neighborhood character.</p> |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| High Density Multiple Family | RM-1, Multi-Family Residential and RM-2, Manufactured Home Park. These districts are consistent with the High Density Multiple Family designation. The City should consider limiting the number of dwelling units in a building to ensure that new developments are at a scale that is appropriate to the small town character of the city. |
| Central Business District | B-1, Community Business District. This district is intended to provide for low-intensity businesses of appropriate scale and appearance. To promote mixed use and increase activity within the Downtown, the City should amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow upper-floor dwelling units by right. |
| General Commercial | OS-1, Office-Service District, B-2, General Business District, and P-1, Parking District. The OS-1 District is intended to accommodate low-intensity offices and personal service establishments. The intent of the B-2 District is to provide convenience and comparison commercial goods for visitors and residents, primarily on high traffic, arterial roads. The City should consider rezoning those portions of M-44 that have been established as residential; however, the Master Plan should still reflect the desired commercial development designation of this corridor. The P-1 District is intended to allow for parking areas to serve adjacent uses. This district is really not needed, as there are other means within the ordinance to allow for necessary parking other than rezoning to a specific district. |
| Planned Development | PUD (Planned Unit Development) District. Currently, there are no lands within the City in the PUD District. The City should consider "pre-zoning" appropriate areas to PUD as recommended on the Future Land Use Map. This will ensure that future development of those areas is consistent with the vision of the Master Plan. |
| Industrial | I-1 Industrial District. This district is intended to accommodate wholesale, warehousing, manufacturing, storage and other industrial-related uses. The City should consider adopting screening and buffering requirements when a new facility is built, or when an existing industry expands. This will make the industrial areas more attractive and will help to preserve residential property values in adjacent neighborhoods. |
| Public/Recreational | There is no corresponding zoning district. However, government, public, recreation and open space uses are permitted within the residential districts. |

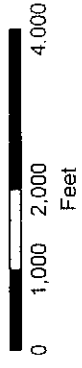
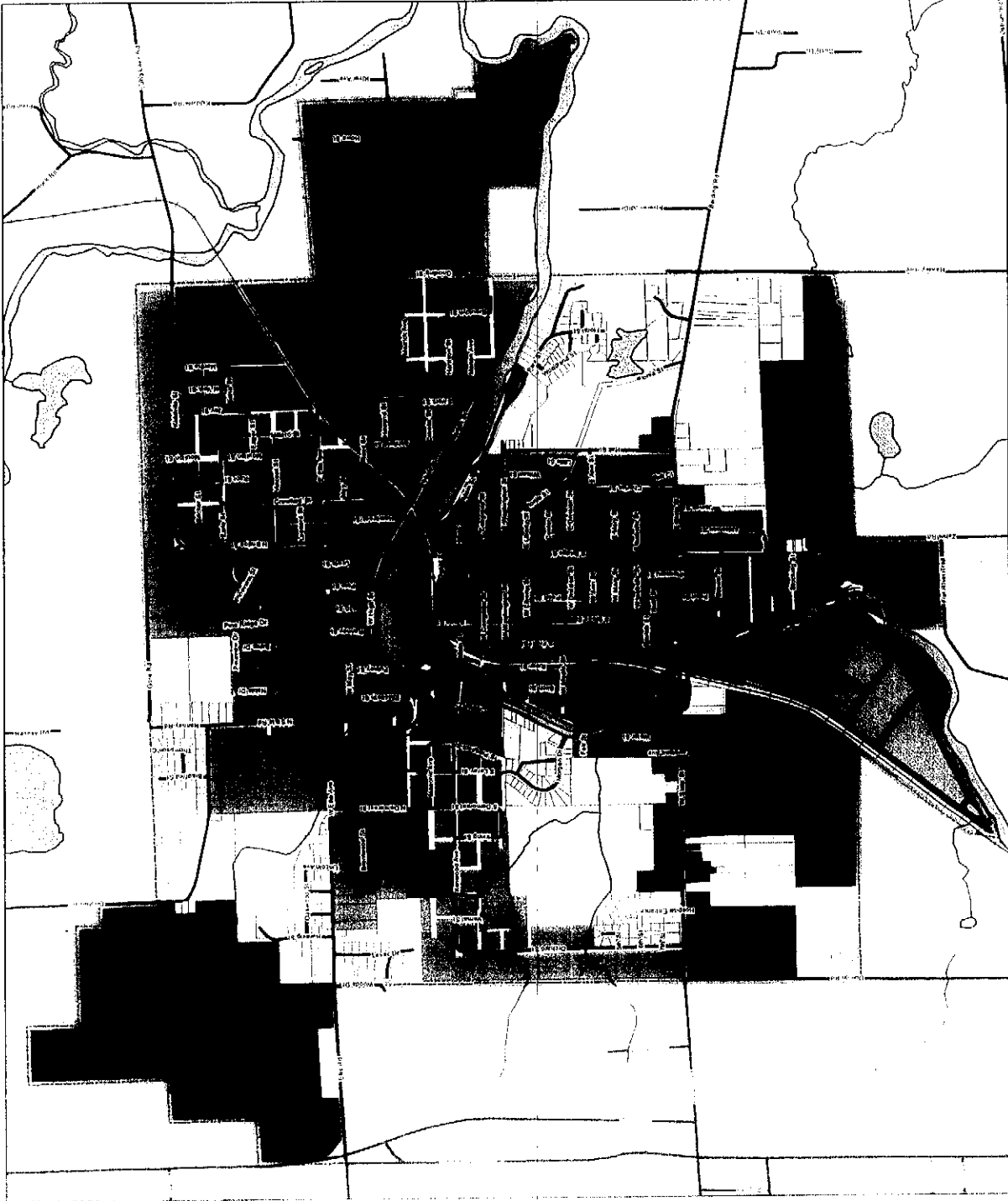
City of Belding

Future Land Use

DRAFT: November 4, 2008

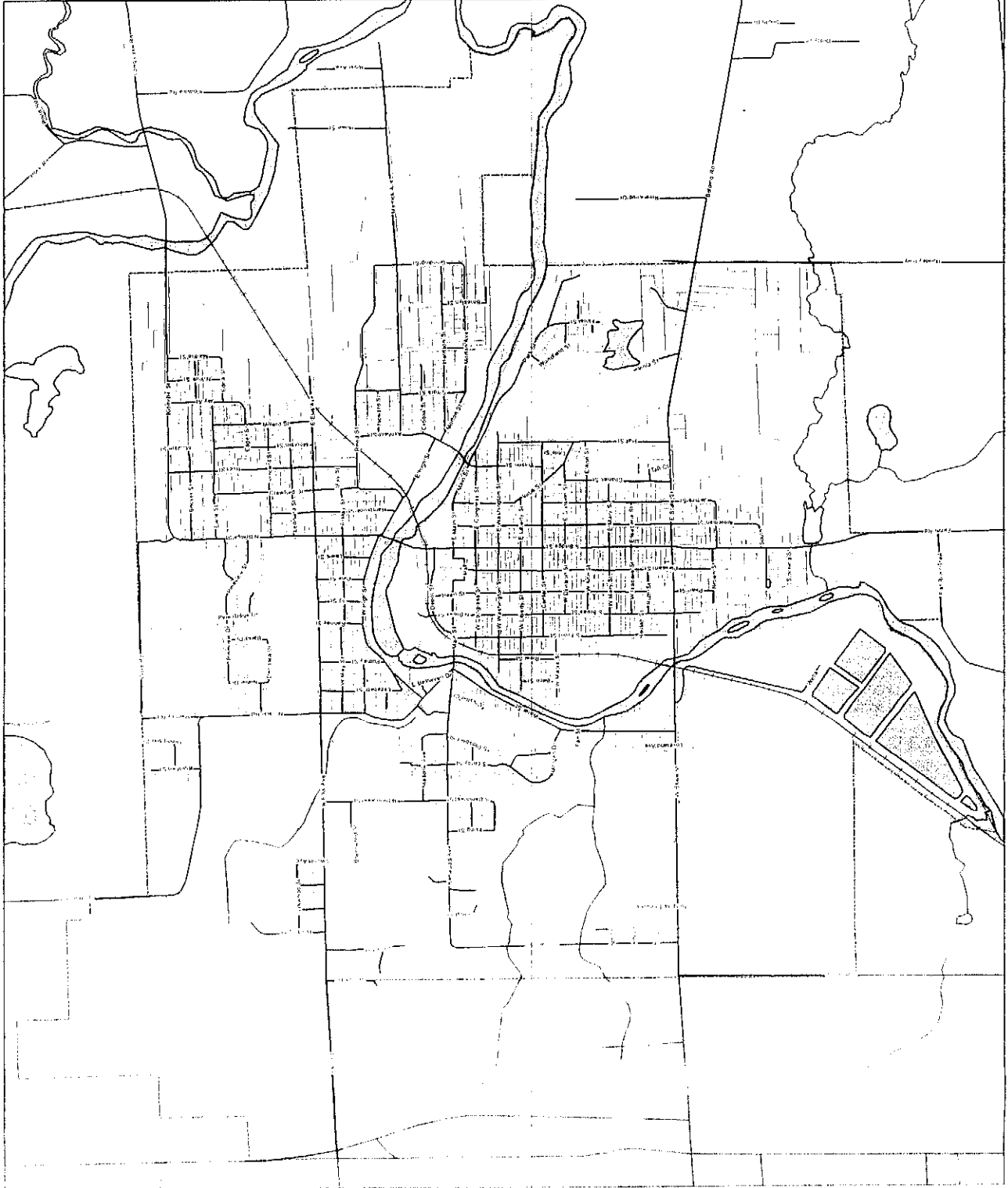
Legend

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Traditional Single Family Residential
- High Density Multiple Family Residential
- Central Business District
- General Commercial
- Planned Development
- Industrial
- Preserved



Source: Ionia County Drain
Commission, Michigan Center
for Geographic Information
LSI Planning, Inc.

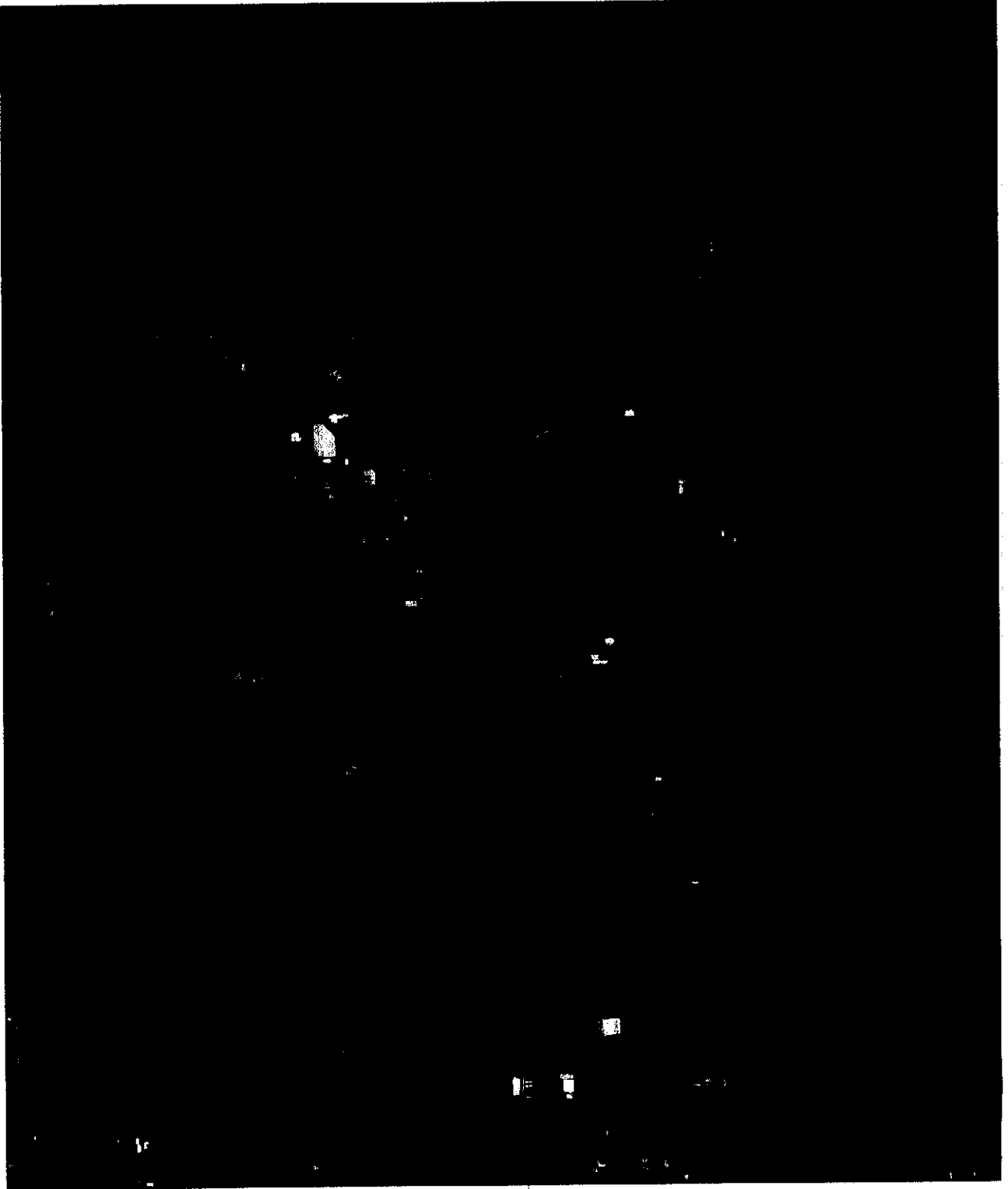
City of Belding Parcel Boundaries



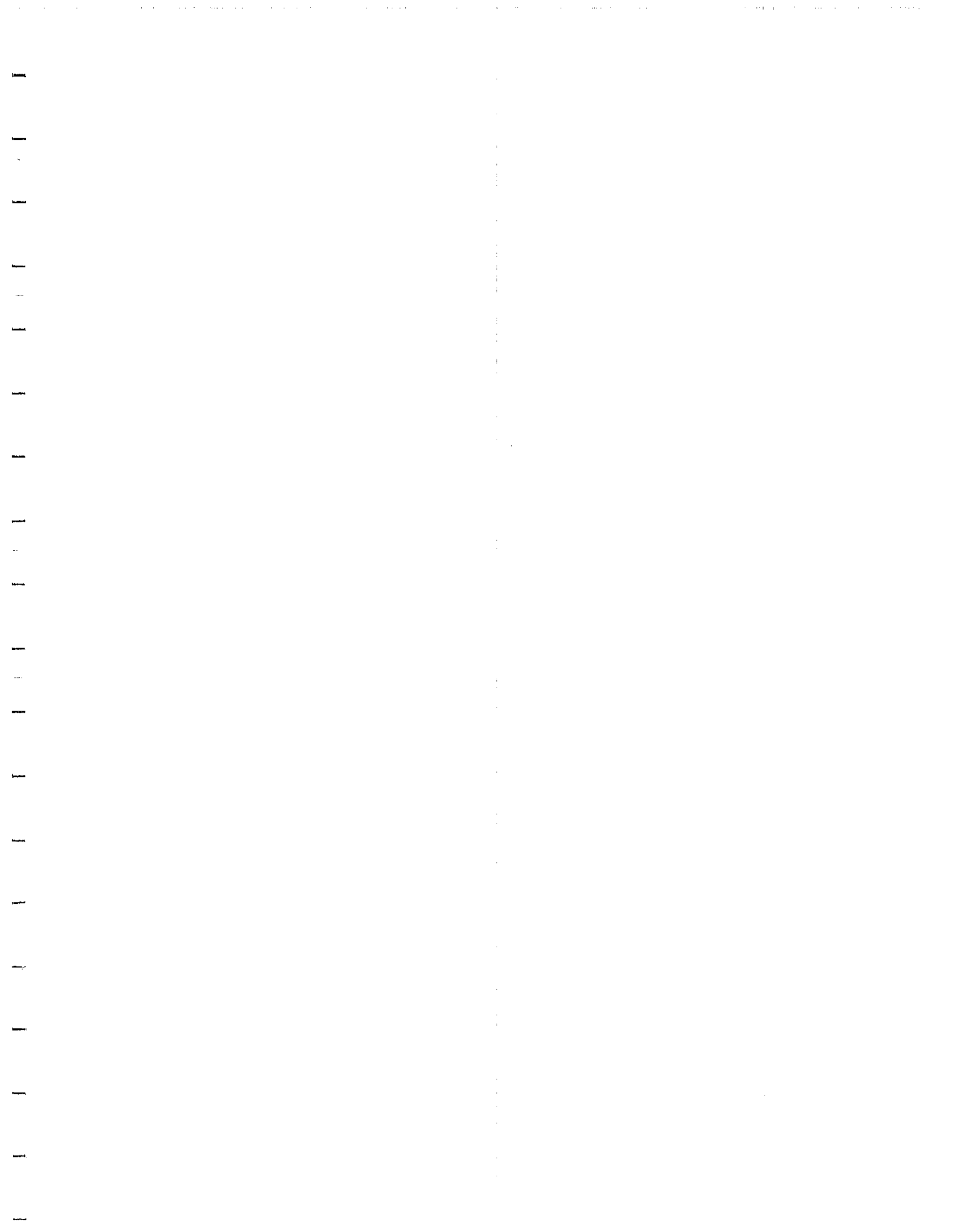
LSL Planning, Inc.
COMMUNITY PLANNING CORPORATION

City of Belding

Aerial



LSL Planning, Inc.
Community Planning Consultants



CITY OF BELDING
RESOLUTION NO. 2009-06-33

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELDING, MICHIGAN
ADOPTING A MASTER PLAN FOR THE CITY OF BELDING.

At a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Belding, County of Ionia,
Michigan, held in said City on the 16th day of June, 2009.

PRESENT: Council Members Bunce, Wills, Satterlee and Husted.

ABSENT: Council Member Stout.

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Council Member Satterlee and
seconded by Council Member Wills.

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 requires that a planning commission
make and approve a master plan as a guide for development within the planning
jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has developed and approved a Master Plan for the City
of Belding, and recommends it for adoption by the city council; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 states that the legislative body is the
final approving body of the Master Plan, after receiving the recommendation of
the Planning Commission.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Belding, Michigan
that the Master Plan, as recommended by the Planning Commission, be adopted
for the City of Belding.

Upon vote for the adoption of said resolution, the vote was:

YEAS: Council Members Bunce, Wills, Satterlee and Husted.

NAYS: None.

THIS RESOLUTION WAS THEREUPON DECLARED ADOPTED THIS 16TH DAY OF
JUNE, 2009.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the City Council of the City of Belding, County of Ionia, State of Michigan, at a meeting held on June 16, 2009, the original of which is on file in my office and available to the public. Public notice of said meeting was given pursuant to and in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Act No. 267 of the Public Acts of Michigan of 1976, including in the case of a special or rescheduled meeting, notice by posting at least eighteen (18) hours prior to the time set for said meeting.

Dated: June 16, 2009

Elizabeth A. Wilson
Acting Clerk