

4

LAND USE

Providing for the efficient use of land is a major planning consideration. To assess the City's future land use needs, an analysis of historic growth patterns and present land use patterns is important. Growth and development occurring within Bloomington requires the conversion of vacant and agricultural land to more intensified urban uses. The process determines the community's future urban form, its infrastructure, attractiveness, and desirability, as well as its fiscal sustainability. This chapter will investigate the historic land use patterns, existing land use and zoning.

Physical Growth

2.5X
since
1970



KEY FINDINGS

Bloomington has experienced a tremendous amount of growth in the last 50 years. Since 1970, the City's population has increased by 91%, its physical boundary increased by 147% and street mileage has doubled. During this time, the population density decreased by 850 people per square mile. While growth is a positive sign for the City, it is important for the City to manage the growth efficiently so as not to put a burden on City services.

The City currently has a diverse mix of land uses and zoning. This diversity of land uses is healthy and balances costs generated by one with the revenues generated by others, contributing to the fiscal health of Bloomington.

The City of Bloomington currently has nearly 2,000 acres of vacant land with access to the City's infrastructure such as streets, water and sewer. Land designated for residential purposes alone is about 450 acres. Depending on the type of housing units, it can accommodate anywhere between 1,826 to 8,342 new residential units.

The City currently has over 900 acres of land developed as parking lots. As expected, the majority of these parking lots are along the main transportation corridor serving the commercial and office uses. The comprehensive plan should investigate whether or not that is the highest and best use of the prime real estate in Bloomington.

GROWTH PATTERNS

Bloomington has experienced substantial growth over the last 50 years with its growth rate peaking in the ‘90s at nearly 25%. As shown in Figure 4.1, most of the growth during that time frame occurred to the east and south. Bloomington’s growth is limited to the north by its twin city, the Town of Normal.

From 1970 to 2010, the City’s population nearly doubled. During this time frame, the City physically grew by 147% and the street mileage increased by 107.5%, resulting in decreased density. As shown in Figure 4.2, at the current density of 2,815 persons per square mile, Bloomington is denser than most comparable central Illinois communities except Champaign. However, it should also be noted that most of these communities experienced little to no growth, while some experienced a loss in population during this time frame.

While annexations bring in addition-

Figure 4.2 Central Illinois Communities
Population Per Square Mile

City	Persons per square mile
Champaign	3,613.2
Bloomington	2,814.8
Peoria	2,395.6
Springfield	1,954.4
Danville	1,846.3
Decatur	1,802.8

Source: U.S. Census

Figure 4.1 Corporate Boundary Changes, 1970-2010

91% Increase in Population
147% Increase in Corporate Area

107.5% Increase in Street Miles
850 Fewer People per Square Mile

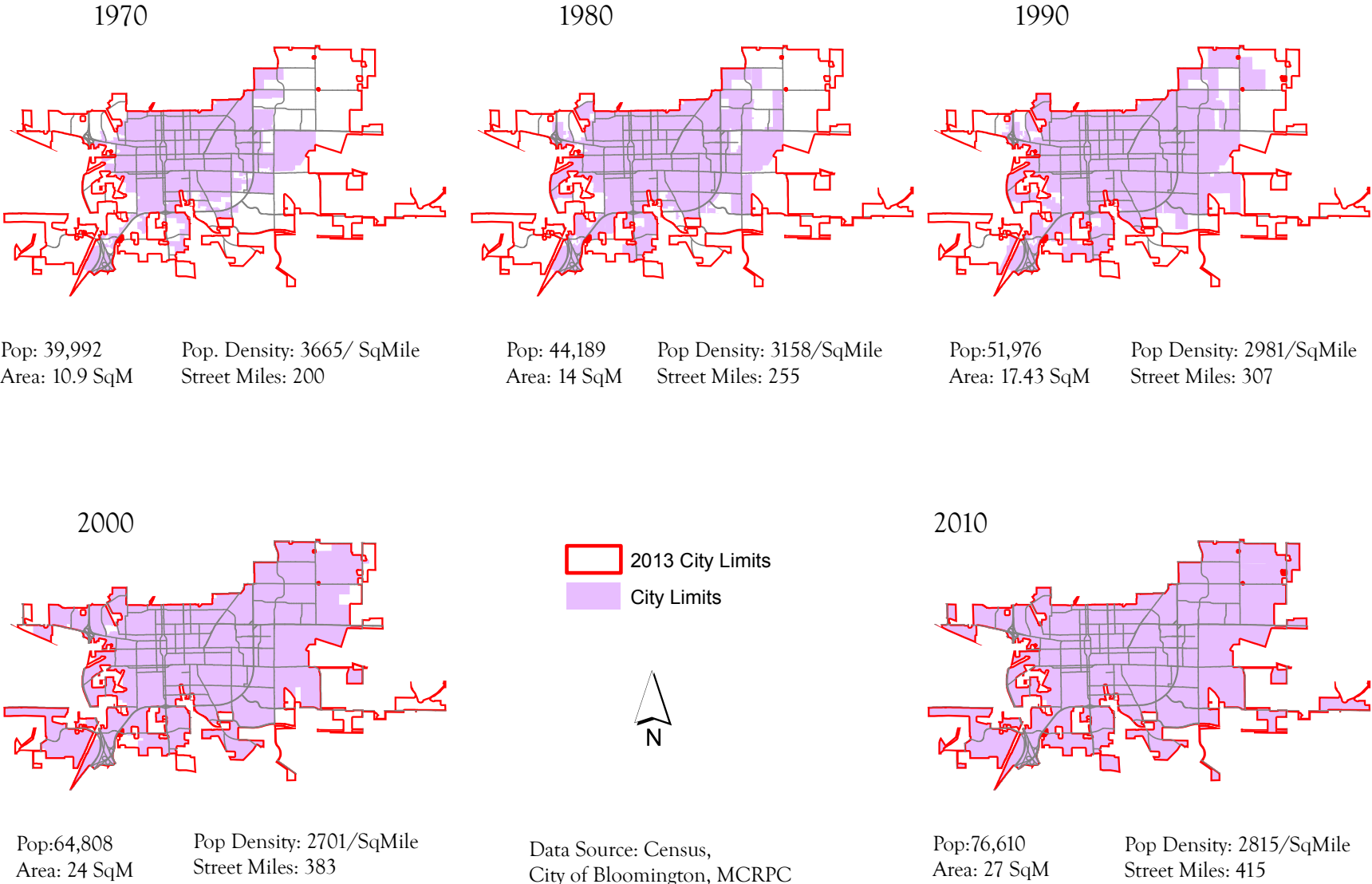
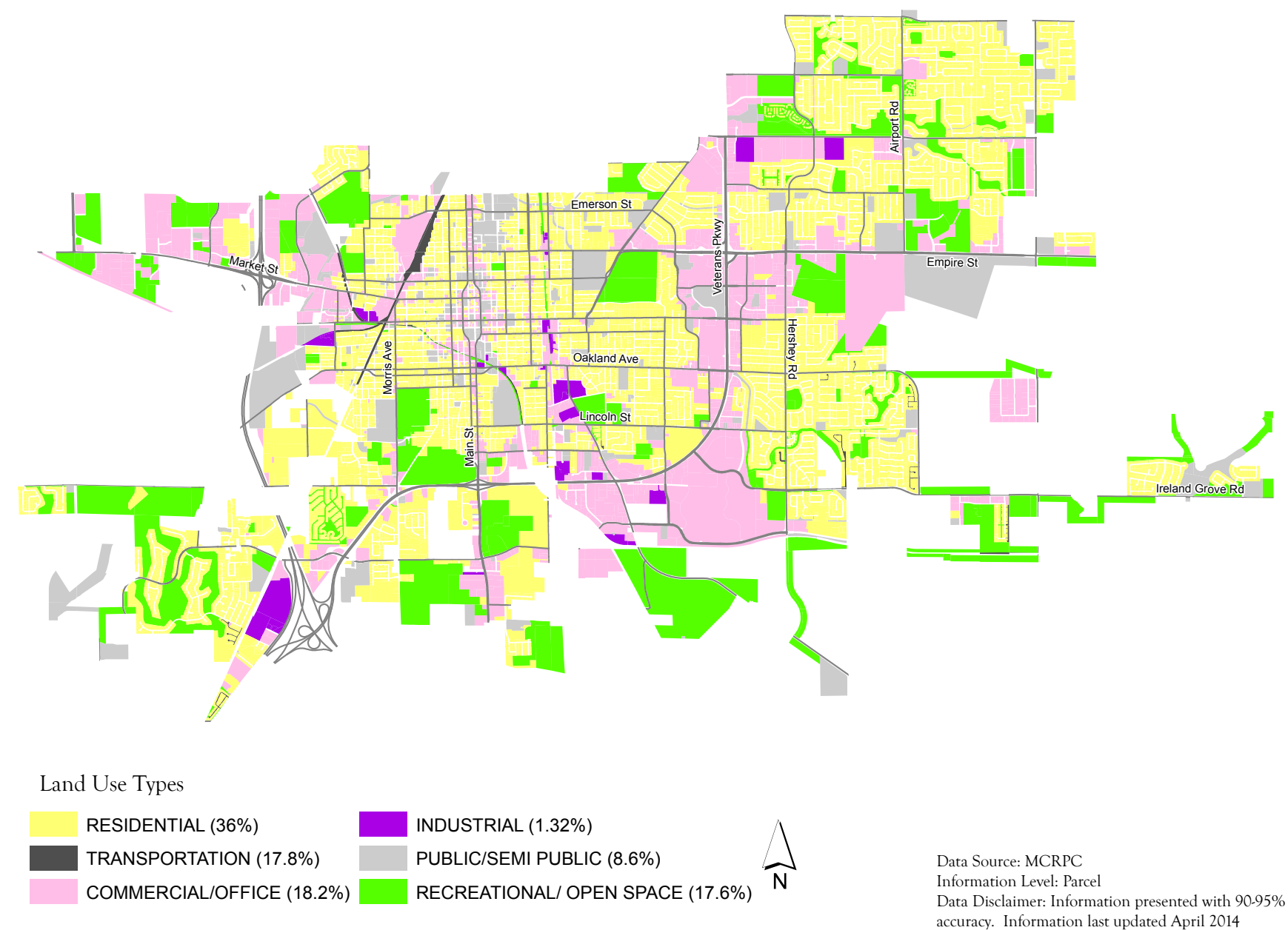


Figure 4.3 City of Bloomington Existing Land Use



al revenue, growth of urbanized land also puts pressure on City services and thus on the City budget. In the wake of the recent recession (2007-2009), understanding the fiscal impact of future developments should be a priority during this comprehensive planning process. A fiscal impact analysis of development should become an aspect of this comprehensive plan process.

EXISTING LAND USE

The existing land use map is a data-base graphical depiction of how land and the structures on the land are currently being used. The existing land use map is an important tool in identifying conflicting and inefficient land uses, as well as the parameters placed by the physical environment and community infrastructure on the evolving land use of the community. The existing land use analysis can also determine the use capabilities of vacant and open land, as these hold the greatest opportunities for accommodating anticipated growth.

Figure 4.3 is the City of Bloomington’s existing land use map, updated by MCRPC in April of 2014 for the purposes of the comprehensive plan. A variety of data sources were used to verify the land use by parcel. Appendix A contains the list and process applied. For the purpose of this analysis, land uses are categorized as:

- **Residential**, which includes single family, duplex, multi-family, group living quarters, mobile home parks, and vacant lots developed for residential use
- **Commercial/office**, which includes retail

- commercial, office space, and vacant lots developed for commercial or office use
- **Industrial**, which includes light and heavy industrial use structures
 - **Public/semipublic**, which includes government buildings, schools, churches, cemeteries, and other public places
 - **Recreational/Open Space**, which includes parks, playgrounds, undeveloped open space and detention ponds within the City limits
 - **Transportation**, which includes roads and railroads

Figure 4.5 Number and Acreages of Various Residential Uses in Bloomington

	Acres	Number of Units	Percent of units	Units/Acre
Total	6,259.1	36,053		
Single Family	4,723.7	20,697	57.41	4.4
Duplex	219.7	2,501	6.94	11.4
Mobile Homes	322.4	1,888	5.24	5.9
Multi Family	540.0	10,871	30.15	20.1
Group Living	2.3	96	0.27	NA
Vacant	451.0			

Source: U.S. Census

Figure 4.6 Potential Residential Units on Existing Residential Vacant Land

Vacant Acres	451
Single Family	1,826 :@4.4 Units/Acre
Duplex	4,731 :@11.4 Units/Acre
Multi Family	8,342 :@20.1 Units/Acre

Source: MCRPC

Figure 4.4 Available Vacant Land with Existing Infrastructure



RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

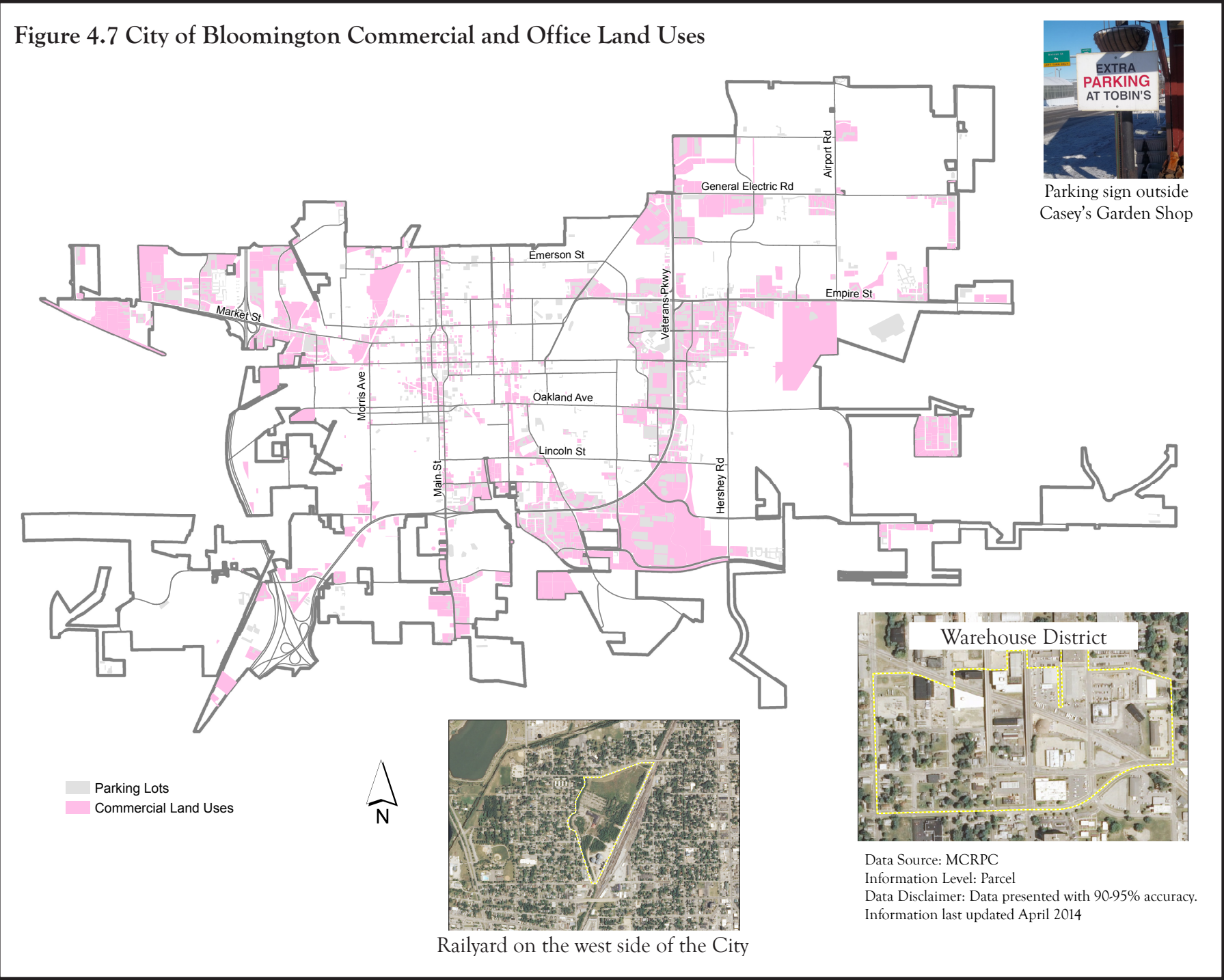
As shown in Figure 4.3, residential uses account for a major share of the City’s area. Of the City’s 6,259 residential acres, 5,808 acres, or 92.7%, are developed. A majority of this area is developed as single-family units. Currently, 451 acres of land improved for residential purposes is vacant. Figure 4.4 highlights a few areas of the City that hold the vacant improved land with access to City’s infrastructure.

These vacant lots could be the result of the recent recession (2007-2009). According to the Housing and Urban Development Authority (HUD), the National Housing Market Summary for the 4th Quarter of 2013⁶⁾ indicates strong growth in both single-family and multi-family units. As discussed in the housing chapter, the increasing number of housing permits in Bloomington is expected to continue. The City should give careful consideration to the existing vacant land prior to annexing additional land for residential purposes. As shown in Figure 4.6, based on the type of new residential development, the existing vacant land in the city can accommodate anywhere between 1,826 to 8,342 new housing units.

COMMERCIAL/OFFICE USES

Currently 3,164 acres or 18.23% of developed land in the City is commercial or office use. The commercial and office land uses in the City are primarily concentrated

Foot Note: 6) http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/ushmc/pdf/NationalSummary_4q13.pdf



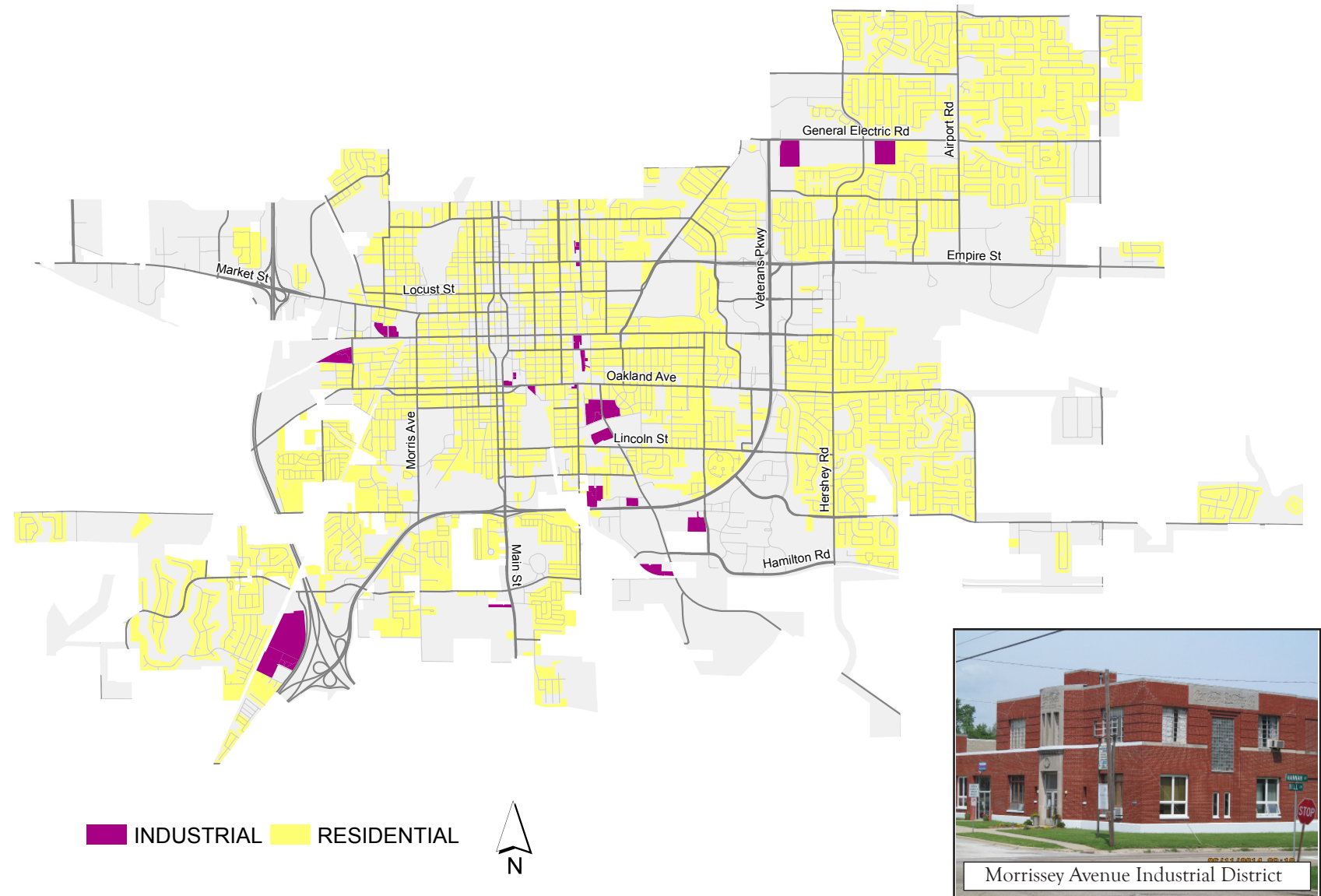
in the Downtown area and along the major transportation corridors, such as Veterans Parkway, U.S. Route 51, Empire Street (Route 9) and the intersections of Interstate 74 and Market Street, and U.S. Route 51 and Hamilton Road. With the exception of Downtown, the majority of these land uses are regional in nature and are typically auto-oriented. As illustrated in Figure 4.7, 725 of the 3,164 acres, or nearly 22% of it, is occupied by parking lots. There are several businesses within the City (see sign outside Casey's Garden Shop) currently sharing parking lots. Available parking, future parking needs, and related regulations should be carefully examined during this comprehensive plan to ensure the highest and best use of the prime commercial land available in Bloomington.

Bloomington also has a healthy dose of neighborhood-scale commercial land uses throughout the City. Examples of these include South Hill neighborhood commercial and near east side neighborhood commercial.

In the last few years, the City placed an increased emphasis on returning the Downtown to its past glory as a regional commercial center. The *Downtown Bloomington Strategy*, the *Main Street: A Call for Investment*, *Downtown Hotel Feasibility Study*, and the *Downtown Streetscape Master Plan* are planning activities undertaken since the last comprehensive plan update in 2005. Summaries of these plans are presented at the end of this chapter. The comprehensive plan should build on the existing plans rather than re-create them.

While a complete list of available

Figure 4.8 City of Bloomington Industrial Land Uses in Relation to the Residential Land Uses



Data Source: MCRPC
 Information Level: Parcel
 Data Disclaimer: Data presented with 90-95% accuracy.
 Information last updated April 2014

vacant properties developed for commercial purposes is not available, there are pockets of concentrated vacant lands such as the railyard on the west side and the warehouse district Downtown that should be carefully examined during this comprehensive planning process.

INDUSTRIAL USES

Currently, 230 acres of the City’s developed land is being used for industrial purposes. At 1.32%, this is the smallest land use category in the City. There is a lot of potential for expansion of these uses. As shown in Figure 4.8, the industrial land uses are now surrounded by residential uses. While they have co-existed for some time now, these two land uses have the potential for conflict. This comprehensive plan should examine these areas closely.

RECREATIONAL AND OPEN SPACE

The City currently has 3,057 acres or 17.62% of land used as recreational, developed as open space, or undeveloped. Currently 1,397 acres or 45.7% of this land is used for recreational purposes. Approximately 8.2% of this land is developed as detention ponds or other open spaces around residential developments. Currently, 1,410 acres of the land annexed to the City is used as farmland. Over 400 acres of that land is currently zoned for commercial purposes.

As illustrated in Figure 4.9, a majority of the annexed land currently being farmed is on the fringes of the City but surrounded by development and could easily gain access to the City’s infrastructure. The use and zoning

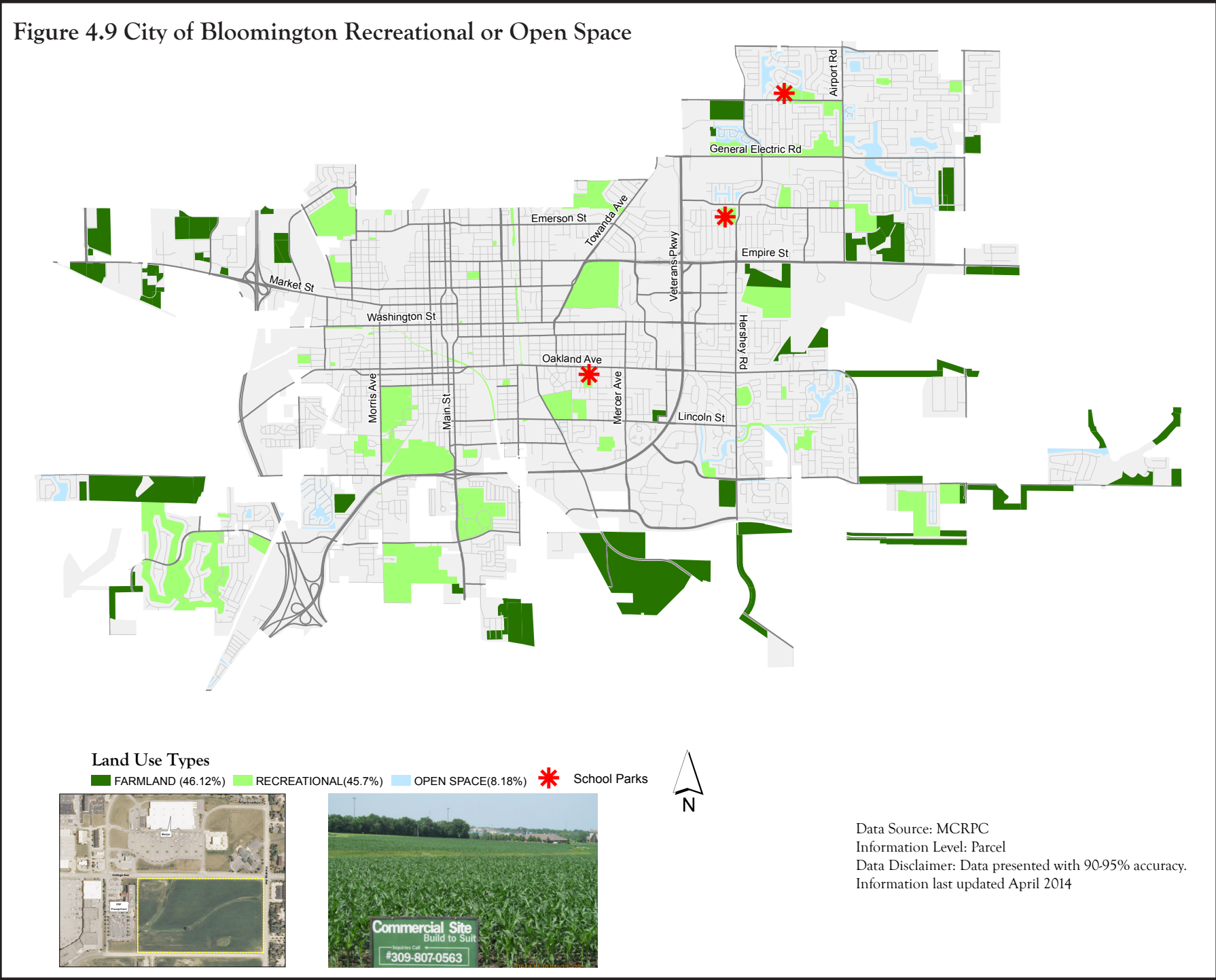
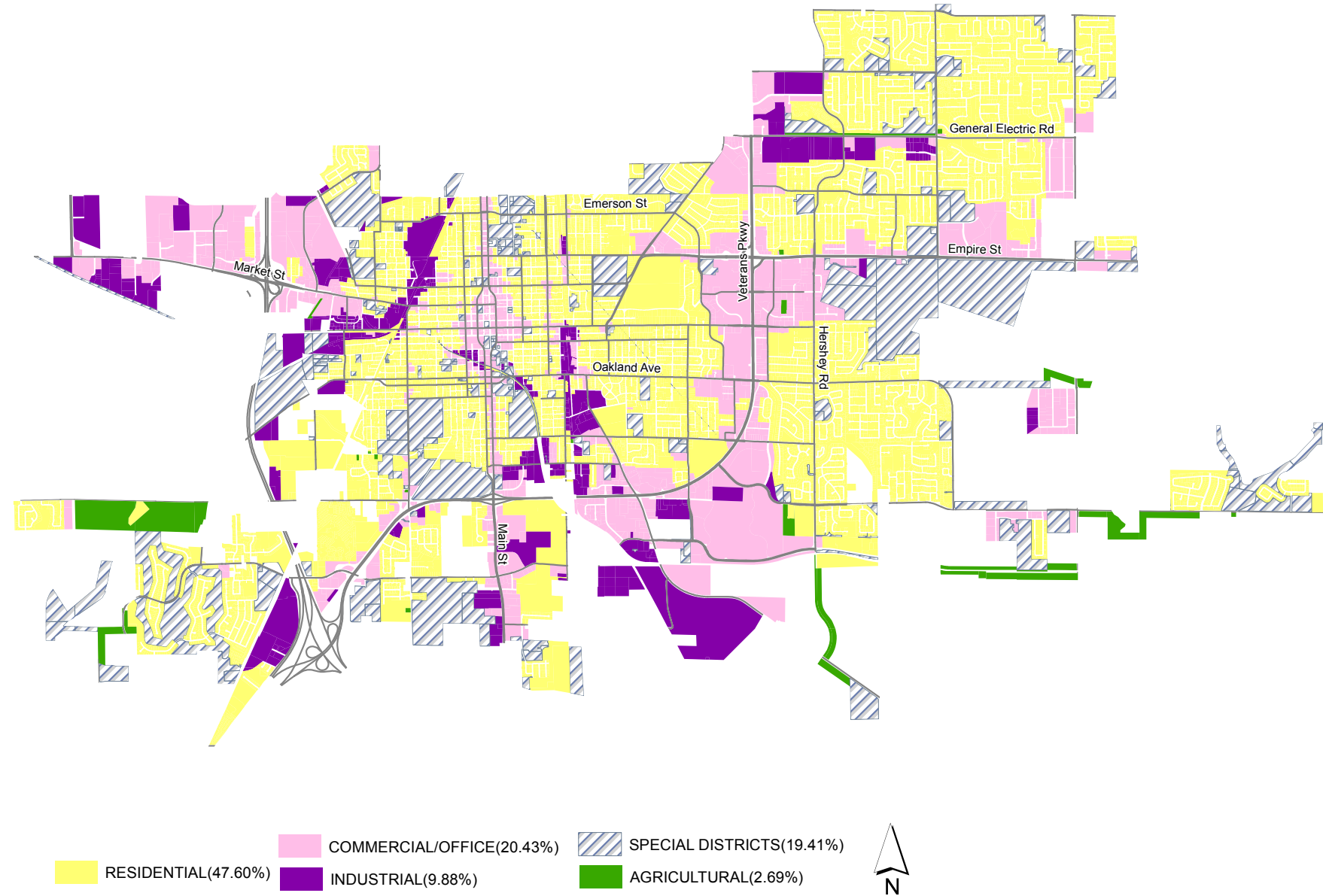


Figure 4.10 City of Bloomington Zoning Classification Map



Data Source: MCRPC
Information Level: Parcel
Data Disclaimer: Information last updated April 2014

**ZONING CLASSIFICATION
MAP**

RESIDENTIAL includes: R-1A Low density single family district, R-1B Medium density single family district, R-1C High density single family district, R2 Mixed residence district, R-3A medium density multiple family district, R-3B High density multiple family district, R4-Manufactured home park district, GAP-1, GAP-2, GAP-3 and GAP-4

COMMERCIAL/OFFICE includes: B-1 Highway business district, B-2 General business district, B-3 Central business district, C-1 office district, C-2 Neighborhood shopping district, C-3 Community regional shopping district, GAP -5 commercial, cottage commercial, Iconic apartment.

INDUSTRIAL includes: M-1 Restricted manufacturing, M-2 General Manufacturing, W1-Warehouse district and GAP-6 Warehouse.

AGRICULTURAL includes A-Agricultural district

SPECIAL DISTRICTS include: S-1 University District, S-2 Public Lands and Institution District, S-3 Aircraft noise impact district, S-4 Historic preservation district, S-5 Airport District

of this land should be carefully evaluated before annexing more land. This will ensure harmonious development and efficient use of City resources.

ZONING

The City regulates the use of land to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its people. Land use is regulated through a zoning ordinance and land development tools such as subdivision regulation and building codes. For the purposes of this study, the zones are classified into Residential, Commercial/Office, Industrial, Agricultural, and Special Districts.

As outlined in Figure 4.11, the City of Bloomington has a diverse mix of zoning and land uses. This diversity provides the City with a healthy tax base.

However, it should be noted that the current land uses and the current zoning did not always match. It is not uncommon for communities to have such discrepancies. Typically, these discrepancies occur in the older parts of the City, where some of the uses that may not be permitted by current regulations existed beforehand. These are typically allowed to function under the “grandfather” clause. This may sometimes lead to difficulties with revitalization efforts in the older parts of the city and must be examined carefully during this comprehensive plan. The Historic Preservation District and the Aircraft Noise District are both overlay zones. This means they add additional regulation to the underlying zones. The zoning ordinance allows for a Traditional Neighborhood

District Zone (TND) which was not yet used anywhere in the City.

Figure 4.11 Breakdown of the City’s Existing Zoning

Zone Type	Zone Acres	% Of Total Zoning	City's Current Zoning	Acres	% Within Each Zone
Residential	6,797.92	47.60%	R-1A Low Density Single Family Residential District	335.90	4.94%
			R-1B Medium Density Single Family Residential District	1,835.97	27.01%
			R-1C High Density Single Family Residential District	2,629.95	38.69%
			R-1 H Single Family Manufactured Home Residence District	36.22	0.53%
			R-2 Mixed Residence District	1076.80	15.84%
			R-3A Medium Density Multiple Family Residence District	248.62	3.66%
			R-3B High Density Multiple Family Residence District	265.30	3.90%
			R-4 Manufactured Home Park District	334.00	4.91%
			GAP 1 Estate House, Manor	1.66	0.02%
			GAP 2 House, Estate House, Manor	7.00	0.10%
			GAP 3 Iconic, House, Manor, Apt on corners	22.92	0.34%
Agricultural	384.26	2.69%	GAP 4 Iconic, House, Manor, Rowhouse, Apt on corners	2.47	0.04%
			A- Agricultural District	384.26	100%
Commercial/Office	2,917.43	20.43%	B-1 Highway Business District	2178.00	74.65%
			B-2 General Business District	191.36	6.56%
			B-3 Central Business District	72.83	2.50%
			C-1 Office District	321.50	11.02%
			C-2 Neighborhood Shopping District	21.17	0.73%
			C-3 Community Regional Shopping District	128.22	4.39%
			GAP 5 Commercial, Cottage Commercial, Iconic Apartment	3.55	0.12%
Industrial	1,410.42	9.88%	M-1 Restricted Manufacturing	1196.96	84.87%
			M-2 General Manufacturing	191.78	13.60%
			W-1 Warehouse District	20.20	1.43%
			GAP 6 Warehouse District	1.45	0.10%
Special	2,723.16	19.41%	S-1 University District	64.54	2.37%
			S-2 Public Lands and Institution District	2024.58	74.35%
			S-3 Air Craft Noise Impact District (overlay)	NA	
			S-4 Historic Preservation District (overlay)	NA	
			S-5 Airport District	634.00	23.28%

Source: MCRPC

RELEVANT PLANS, STUDIES & ONGOING EFFORTS

DOWNTOWN BLOOMINGTON STRATEGY

A *Downtown Bloomington Strategy* was prepared by Farr Associates in 2013 and a draft document was adopted by the Bloomington City Council in February 2014. The study area identified in Figure 4.12 was closely studied for this project. This plan has engaged the community to identify their vision for Downtown Bloomington and what they perceive to be the biggest threat to its existence. The following general themes and concerns emerged from the community input:

- A great desire for a vibrant, welcoming, beautiful, safe, clean, and fun Downtown
- A vision for Downtown as a tourist destination; emphasis on preserving and enhancing the historic assets of Downtown
- Demand for Downtown to embrace pedestrian orientation and alternative modes of transportation, especially bicyclists and pedestrians
- Concern over economic competition with auto-oriented commercial areas in the region and need for economic development and improved assistance for small or start-up businesses
- Concerns with safety, vagrancy, and cleanliness
- Frustrations with parking availability
- Worry over a lack of leadership, manage-

ment, and funding to carry out the goals of the plan

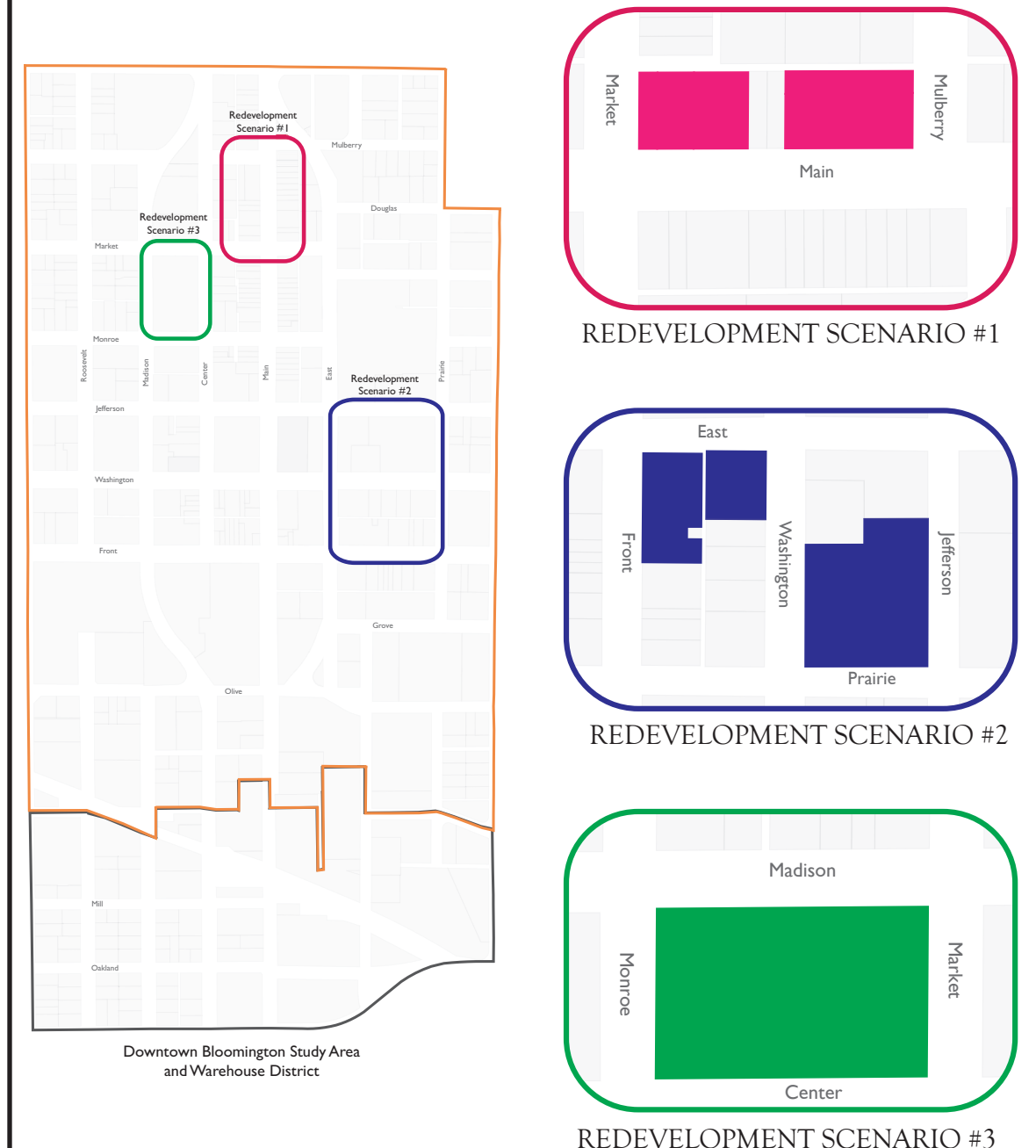
As outlined in Figure 4.12, three redevelopment scenarios were investigated. A further market analysis revealed unmet demand for retail, housing, office, and hotel space.

- There is current demand for an additional 500 households in Downtown and an additional 500-600 by 2030.
- There is current unmet demand for nearly 38,000 square feet of retail, with an additional 36,000 square feet by 2030.
- Market analysis identified the need to conduct a deeper study for the hotel feasibility (later conducted by the city)

Based on the community input and market analysis, the downtown strategy has developed short, mid-range, and long term goals and objectives in eight different areas.

- Leadership: Engage strong leadership and achieve consensus on how to maintain, regulate, manage, and redevelop Downtown.
- Historic preservation: Protect, preserve, and restore the historic resources in Downtown
- Economic development: Build a healthy Downtown economy that offers diverse employment, retail, cultural, and entertainment opportunities.
- Land use and development: Create a successful mix of land uses, including res-

Figure 4.12 Downtown Bloomington Study Area and Warehouse District



Source: *Downtown Bloomington Strategy Report*

idential, retail, office, service and institutional, in the appropriate locations in the Downtown area

- Urban design and aesthetics: Create a unified vision for the Downtown that will encourage investment from developers and business owners, and patronage from residents
- Clean and safe: Maintain a clean, attractive, orderly, and safe downtown
- Walkability: Develop an integrated transportation system that favors pedestrians and cyclists while also providing for safe movement of people and goods via motor vehicles and alternate transportation
- Parking: Provide and manage an appropriate amount of parking to realistically meet the needs of residents and businesses without negatively effecting land use, streetscape, and use of transit

MAIN STREET:
A CALL FOR INVESTMENT (2007)

Main Street: A Call for Investment was spearheaded by the City of Bloomington, the Town of Normal, Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, and Advocate BroMenn Regional Medical Center, as major stakeholders in the future of Main Street.

The Main Street plan was initiated to consider planning for Main Street along its entire path through Bloomington and Normal (from Interstate 55 on the north to Veterans Parkway on the south), considering changes to Main Street’s function resulting from the growth of the community. Acknowledging that the once primary north-south ar-

Figure 4.13 Downtown Bloomington Study Area



Source: *Downtown Bloomington Strategy Report*, 2013

terial and main commercial corridor has been supplanted in those roles by other facilities, it considers planning for the corridor in the context of the neighborhoods it connects and what functions it can fulfill. It also makes specific proposals regarding zoning and land use regulations, and improved mobility, including multimodal use, intersection improvements, parking, and transit availability in the Main Street corridor.

For each element of the plan, land use and transportation characteristics are identified for sections of the corridor within Bloomington. In examining the existing conditions on Main Street in Bloomington, the study defined zones of the corridor based on adjacent uses. Recommendations for land use regulation and development policy were based on the zones, which include the following as shown in Figure 4.14:

- Division Street south to Locust Street, largely influenced by IWU;
- Locust Street south to Taylor Street, encompassing Downtown Bloomington, and examined in greater detail in the Downtown Bloomington Strategy
- Taylor Street south to Veterans' Parkway, South Bloomington, and areas with residential and commercial uses.

The plan's recommendations for the Main Street Corridor in Bloomington fall in the categories noted above, and include:

- Development and proper location of new housing of various types

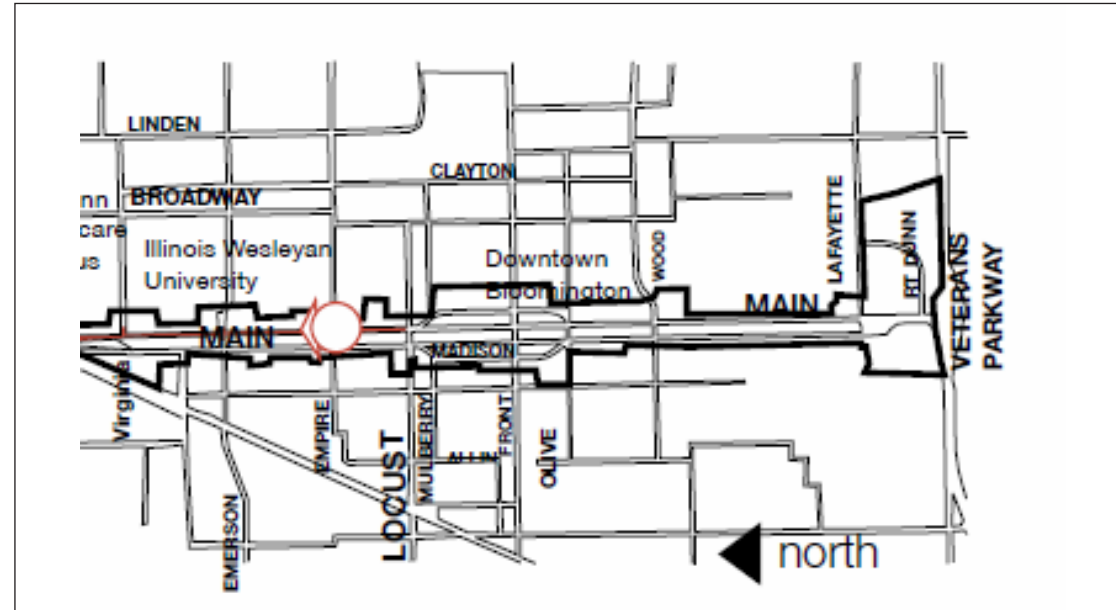


Figure 4.14 Division through Veterans Parkway Study Area
Source: Main Street: A Call for Investment



Intersection of Empire and Main Streets as it currently exists.

Figure 4.15 Existing Conditions at North Bound Empire Street & Main Street
Source: Main Street: A Call for Investment



Intersection of Empire and Main, if developed as part of a mixed-use commercial node along the Corridor.

Figure 4.16 Recommendations for Improvements at North Bound Empire Street & Main Street
Source: Main Street: A Call for Investment

- Mixed use development with retail and housing.
- Concentrated retail nodes to enhance walkability
- Better auto-oriented development.
- Improved community gateways
- Mobility improvement through multi-modal street design, including bicycles
- Parking improvements
- Improved access to transit, and promotion as an alternative
- Pedestrian access and circulation
- Street redesign

The City has implemented some of the recommendations for transportation-focused improvements, such as bicycle accommodations Downtown. The City plans further implementation through the bicycle plan under development and other initiatives.

The City and other participants conducted a study regarding the feasibility of recommended improvements to the transportation elements of the Main Street plan and the *Main Street Transportation Improvement Feasibility Study*.

HOTEL FEASIBILITY STUDY (2014)

The City hired the services of HVS Consulting to conduct the feasibility study for the hotel and the conference center in Downtown Bloomington. This study indicated:

- An unaccommodated demand, especially during the weekdays
- A \$14.2 million gap in funding that indicates this cannot be a profitable private-only venture.

- If moving forward, the City must find a way to fund the gap.
- A caution with changing market conditions was noted.

RECENT NEWS



Excerpt from The Pantagraph, March 16, 2014



Excerpt from The Pantagraph, December 16, 2013

