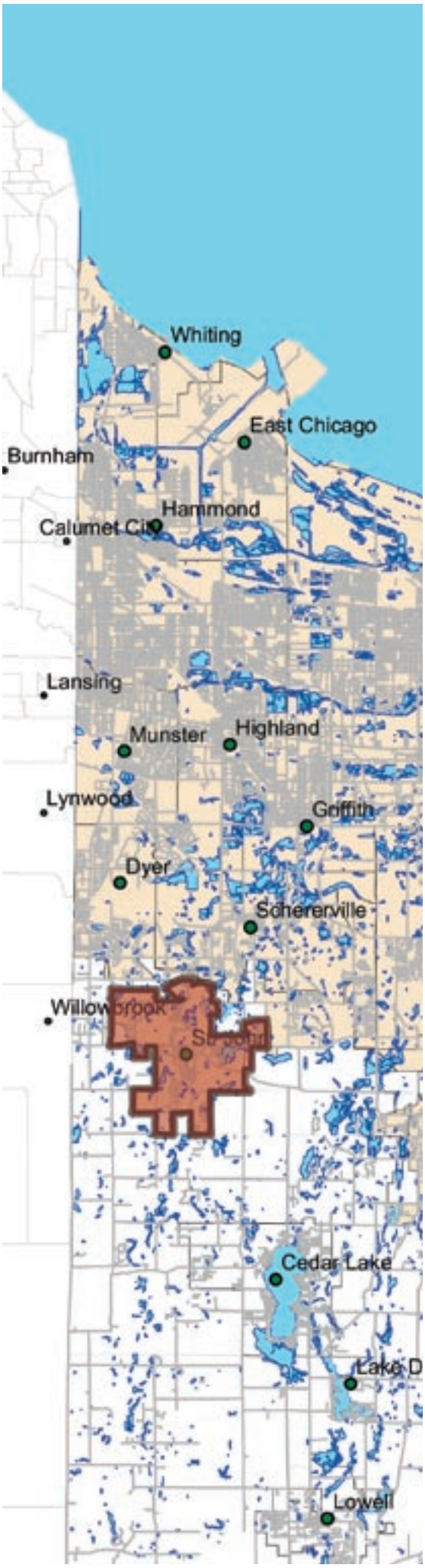

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TOWN OF ST. JOHN, INDIANA
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REPORT
St. John, Indiana

1.27.05

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I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Comprehensive Plan establishes long range development policies and guidelines for the Town of St. John. These polices are based on the current and future needs and expectations of the residents of the Town of St. John. A Comprehensive Plan helps the Town identify and plan for the physical, economic, cultural, environmental, aesthetic and related factors that affect community vitality, growth and change. Through a series of community meetings and a Town wide survey, the residents of St. John were encouraged to participate in the planning process by identifying the critical issues and offering opinions about the future development goals for St. John.

The Planning team offers special thanks to the following individuals who contributed their time to the development of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan for St. John Indiana:

Economic Development Committee
Ronald Estep
Robert Meinzer
George Bellamy

Plan Commission
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Timothy Foley
Michael Forbes
Michael Ryan
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Dennis Wilson

Utility Board
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Charles Pearson, *Member*
Gregory Volk, *Member*
Sherry P. Sury, *Clerk/Treasurer*

Other Town Officials and Staff
Stephen Kil, *Town Manager*
Fred Frego, *Police Chief*
Robert Pharazyn, *Public Works Director*
Fred Willman, *Fire Chief*

Planning Consultants
Solomon Cordwell Buenz & Associates Inc.
First Group Engineering
Laurie Marston Associates

ii. Why Plan now?

This is an optimal time to revisit and update the Comprehensive Plan for St. John. Many new development issues have emerged since the preparation of the 1990 Comprehensive Plan. St. John has experienced significant population growth, associated with a high demand for single family housing. St. John is recognized as a great place to live and raise a family. As new housing sites become scarce within the Town, many developers are building new residential subdivisions on farm land on the periphery, and obligating St. John to annex new land and expand Town boundaries. Significant increases in population and land area pose critical issues for a Town to keep pace with roads, water, sewer, schools and other municipal facilities. This comprehensive planning process is an opportunity to harness this growth and to coordinate with the broader community goal: to maintain and enhance the quality of life of St. John. PART 1 of this document (Page 7) provides a snap-shot of St. John today that will be used to reference the future goals for development of the Town.

iii. Comprehensive Planning Process

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan provides a town with policies and guidelines for desirable and appropriate long range development of the community. The Comprehensive Plan is a tool for local leaders to identify and plan for the physical, economic, social and aesthetic factors that shape the future growth and development of the town. The comprehensive planning process provides the opportunity to build consensus through public input about community values and then systematically plan ahead for achieving those values.

According to the Indiana Code 36-7-4-50, a Comprehensive Plan should include a statement of objectives for future development, policy for the land use and development of public spaces. It should also consider the survey and studies of current conditions and future growth with maps and other descriptive materials with basic information on locations, extent, demographics and infrastructure. Indiana statute requires that a Comprehensive Plan be adopted by the Plan Commission of the Town. Figure 0.04 outlines the comprehensive planning process

Figure 0.01: Planning Meeting

Figure 0.02: Community Meeting 1 at Lake Central H.S

Figure 0.03: Community Meeting 2 at Lake Central H.S

Planning Process

In developing this Comprehensive Plan for St. John public involvement was considered very important to establishing a shared vision for the Town. Ultimately an effective community involvement will result in consensus, better planning decisions and a public commitment to implementing the recommendations of the plan.

In order to engage the community with this planning process, all residents of St. John were invited to two community meetings where data, issues, and planning recommendations were described in depth, which were then followed by feedback sessions (figure 0.02 &0.03). The planning team and Town officials were present at these meetings to answer any questions about the Comprehensive Plan findings.

A community survey was mailed following the first community meeting to all residents of St. John. The survey covered questions on the major topics of the Comprehensive Plan including: land use, zoning, Town growth, transportation, a new Town Center and Municipal Complex. Survey responses were tabulated and presented to the community at the second community meeting.

In preparation for the community meetings, the planning team, Town officials and staff met to identify key issues, goals and direction of the Comprehensive Plan (figure 0.01). Throughout this planning process, the Town of St. John and its residents were involved in all the major decisions and recommendations of the plan.

iii. Comprehensive Planning process

- **Town Officials & Staff- Issue Identification Meetings**
- Document Existing Conditions
- Review Past Plans and Existing Regulations
- Analyze Town Components
- **Community Meeting 1 - Establish Vision for Future**
- Provide Plan Recommendations
- **Community Meeting 2 - Review Plan Recommendations**
- Present Draft Plan
- Draft Plan Feedback and Revisions
- **Public Hearing - Comprehensive Plan Adoption**

Figure 0.04: Planning Process

Part 1: ST. JOHN TODAY: A COMMUNITY SNAP SHOT

Introduction

St. John Demographics

Snap-shot of St. John Census Data (Census 2000)

Goals and Objectives

PART 1: ST. JOHN TODAY : A COMMUNITY SNAP-SHOT

Figure 1.01: Location map

Introduction

St. John, Indiana describes itself as a Town of quiet neighborhoods, quality schools, churches, local shops and parks. The Town is considered a great place to raise a family. It is close enough to urban areas for employment, shopping or an evening out but far enough away to be a refuge of quiet simplicity for family life.

Location and Transportation:

St. John is situated in the northwest corner of Indiana 40 miles southeast of downtown Chicago. There is easy highway access via I-80, I-94, I-65, and I-90, the Indiana Toll way.

Four principal railroads and the Amtrak system operate local freight and passenger trains along two active tracks within St. John. In addition to Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, Midway and Gary Municipal airports accommodate business and private passengers. A new airport in Peotone, 18 miles away, is under consideration by regional authorities

A recent survey revealed that most residents drove alone to work and only a small percentage used other means of transportation (figure 1.02). Of the 4000 residents polled over 500 had a commute over 60 minutes in each direction (figure 1.03). There currently is no rail service in St. John although many residents commute to rail stations along the Illinois Metra Line and the Indiana South Shore Line From an industrial and business perspective St. John is well positioned for transportation access through an excellent system of highways, railroads and airports.

Also, the Port of Indiana's newest harbor and public port is only 20 miles from St. John providing easy access to overseas markets.

The proximity of industrial and manufacturing plants along Lake Michigan makes St. John a good location for ancillary industrial services and related industries.

Retail:

The recent rapid growth in the St. John area has contributed to a greater demand for consumer products and increased the need for additional retail and service establishments. A significant number of people are moving to St. John from Illinois and the southwest suburbs of Chicago, bringing higher than average personal income and education into the community. These factors are creating a positive impact to the local economy and are drawing national retailers to the area. In 2004, two major retailers Strack & Van Til and the Target Corporation are building new stores in St. John.

The wide assortment of restaurants in St. John, both national franchise and local merchants, include many

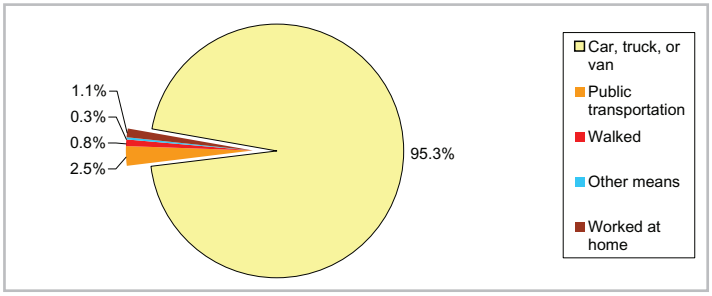

Figure 1.02: Means of Transportation to work

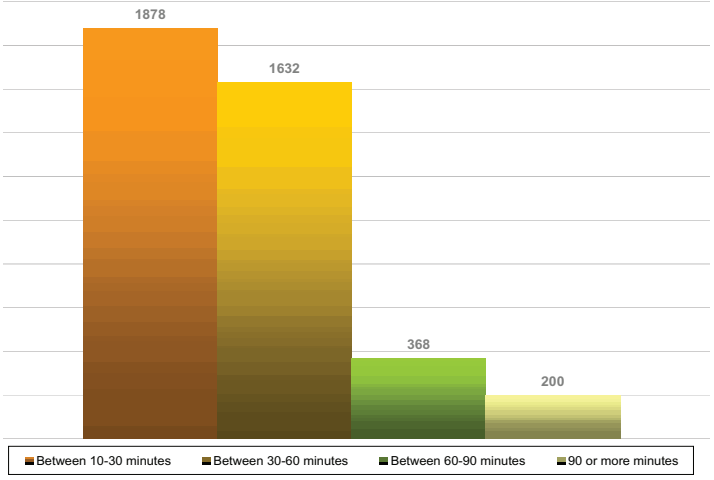

Figure 1.03: Journey to work

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sit-down restaurants, cafes and fast-food.

Most of the St. John retail shops are located along the US Route 41 corridor. In addition to the retail in St. John, many residents shop in adjacent municipalities: Schererville, Highland, Merrillville and Hammond. Thus neighboring communities benefit from the retail expenditures of St. John residents.

Housing:
In recent years St. John has experienced sharp increases in new single family housing to accommodate a growing population. Currently 80 percent of the land is zoned for residential and a vast majority of that is zoned single family. More than 85% of the homes constructed in St. John are owner-occupied. The Town is very concerned about maintaining its quality of life and quiet residential neighborhoods in the face of such explosive growth.

Municipal Facilities:
The municipal services of St. John include a centralized civic area with Town hall, police/ fire station and emergency medical services. At the current rate of growth the capacity of the municipal facilities to satisfy the needs of the public is not keeping pace with the population.

Utilities:
Water service is provided by the Town itself and is drawn from 3 wells. Waste water treatment is provided through an agreement with the Town of Schererville to use their plant facilities. Utilities are governed by the Water and Sanitary Districts. Electric service and natural gas are provided by Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO)

Parks and Recreation:
St. John has 18 public parks within Town boundaries. In the spring of 2002, St. John initiated the construction of the first phase of the Bicycle/ Pedestrian Trail.

The park and open space vision for St. John is to establish an inter-connected open space system. This resource is aimed at enhancing the quality of life and providing accessible recreation for residents.
The Lake Central School Corporation leases the East Park Sports complex to the St. John Park board to accommodate organized softball, baseball and soccer.

In 2006 Lake Central will construct a middle school on this site, which will require the Town to seek an alternate location for these recreational activities.

St. John is well served by regional parks including the LaSalle State Fish and Wildlife Area that offers fishing, hunting, boating, camping, general recreation and access to the Kankakee River and bayous. Lemon Lake County Park provides picnic shelters, food concessions, paddle boats, fishing, tennis and basketball courts, softball fields, soccer fields, hiking trails, an arboretum, outdoor ice skating rink, sledding hill, and cross-country ski trails. Stoney Run County Park has playgrounds, bridle trails, a tree nursery, a nature study area and a physical fitness trail. The Indiana Dunes State Park is 25 miles away. There are two privately owned golf courses located near the St. John area that are both open to the public.

Schools:
St. John is served by the Lake Central and Hanover school districts. Both include one high school and multiple elementary schools. In addition to the public school system, St. John is home to several private and parochial schools. There are also several colleges and universities within a short driving distance.

Medical:
St. John is served by a variety of hospitals including St. Margaret Mercy Health Care Centers, located in Dyer, St. Anthony Medical Center in Crown Point, Munster Community Hospital in Munster, and the new Community Hospital Outpatient Center in St. John. The Town is also well served by other medical professionals and specialists, physicians, orthodontists and dentists.

Figure 1.04: St. John Community Hospital outpatient center

Figure 1.05: Town of St. John: Town Hall

St. John Demographics

St John is one of the Towns in Northwest Indiana experiencing a major growth in population. Many new residents are moving from the southwest suburbs of Chicago and citing quality of life as their reason to relocate.

In 2000 the population of St. John was 8382 and continues to grow yearly. In the 10 years between 1990 and 2000, the population of St. John increased by 70% and number of households by 80%. The growth projections for the Town vary and range between 350 - 480 new residents per year.*

St. John is uniquely located at the edge of the urbanized area surrounding the rim of Lake Michigan, which encompasses the Chicago metropolitan area. In general, St. John is less populated than it's neighboring towns to the north. However the Town and surrounding area is a prime location for new construction of single family housing subdivisions, which is fueling the current population growth. For that reason, St John will continue to face a steady increase in population and expansion of its Town boundaries in the next decades.

A majority of households in St. John are families headed by people between the ages of 35 and 55. Most of these families are married couples with children under 18 years. Over the years the average household size in St. John has decreased to 3.03 people. The average household income is $71,378, which makes single family home ownership affordable and very attainable. Of the occupied housing units in St. John; 96.6% are owner-occupied and only 3.4% are renter occupied.

The median age increased slightly between 1990 and 2000 from 34 to 38 years. During that time the number of residents over 65 years old increased by 33% and the number of residents over 65 years old that were living alone increased by 156%. It is important that this comprehensive plan addresses the needs of an aging population.

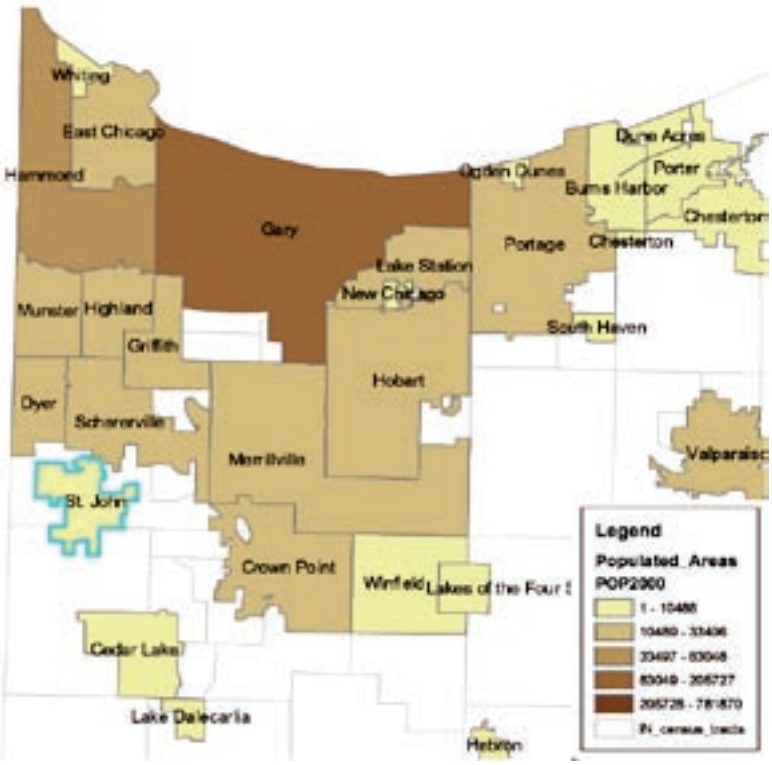

Figure 1.06: Populated places in North West Indiana

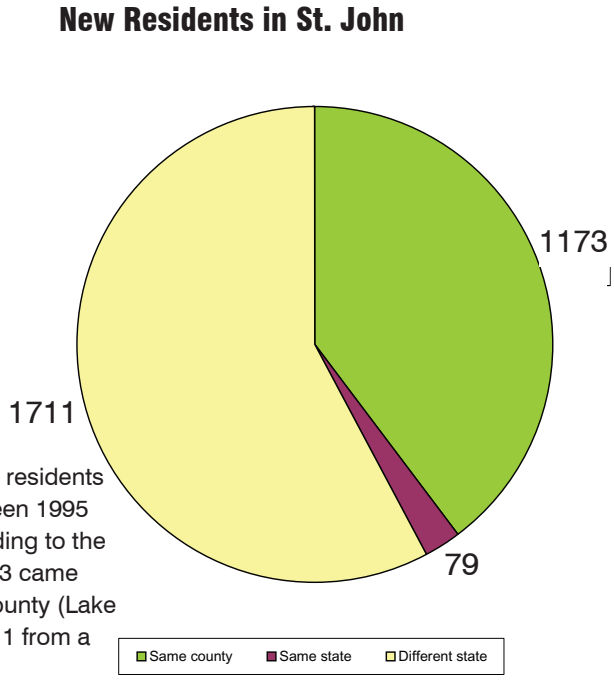

Figure 1.07: New residents in St. John between 1995 and 2000: according to the 2000 census 1173 came from the same county (Lake County) and 1711 from a different state

* 350 Population counts based on the 2001 Water Service Master Plan and 480 based on average of building permits in 2004

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Snap-shot of St. John Census Data (Census 2000)

Population

- Total population: **8,382**
- Male: **4,209**
- Female: **4,173**
- Median age (years): **38.6**

Households

- Total households: **2,800**
- Married-couple family: **2,234**
- Average household size of the owner occupied unit is **3.01**
- Households with individuals under 18 years: **1,250**
- Households with individuals 65 years and over: **536**
- Owner-occupied housing units: **2,702 (96.6%)**
- Renter-occupied housing units: **98 (3.4%)**

Employment and Income

- Employment status (Population 16 years and over): **6,147**
- Commuting to work (Workers 16 years and over): **4,124**
- Median income (dollars) **$71,378**

Education

- Population 3 years and over enrolled in school: **2,694**

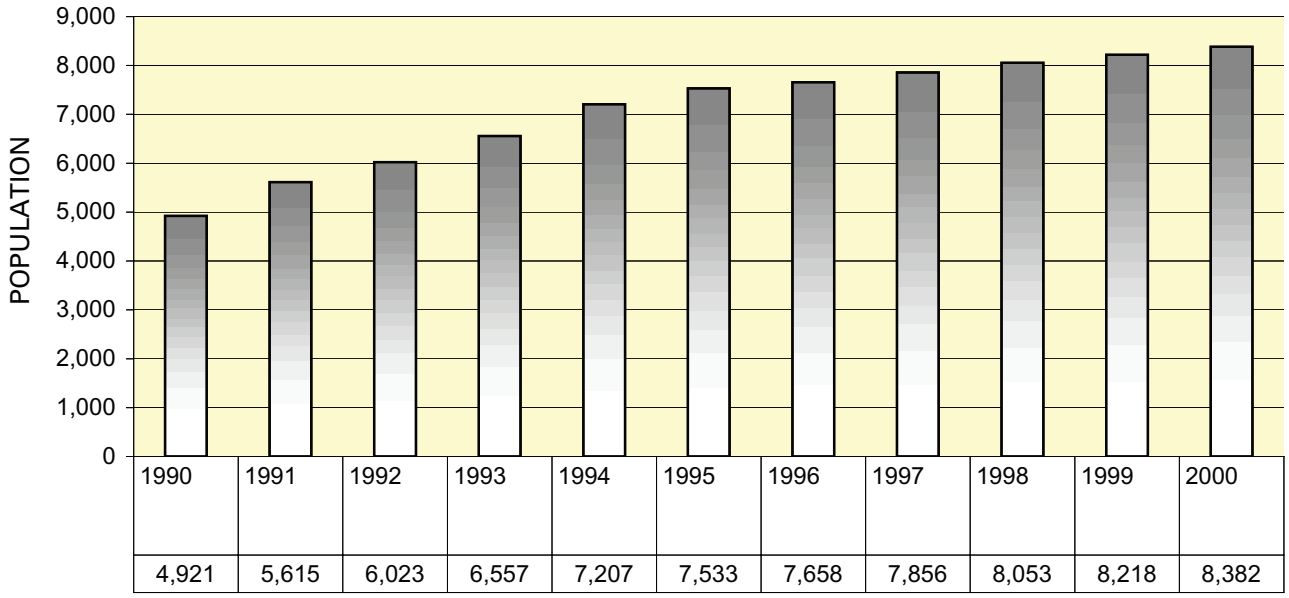

Figure 1.08: Population growth

Goals and Objectives

This comprehensive planning process is a great opportunity for St. John to balance the short-term development considerations with the long term growth potential of the Town. Some planning recommendations could require decades to be fully realized but it is important to establish the policy now so future generations will have the quality of life St. John residents enjoy today. This plan offers a 25 year horizon with a long term vision to 2030. The following Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives are the product of numerous public meetings.

Figure 1.09: Typical residential sub-division

Figure 1.10: Prairie West Park- located within the Candle-light Trails neighborhood

Figure 1.11: Big-box development along US Route 41

1. Preserve and Strengthen the Quality of Life in St. John:

The primary objective of the St. John Comprehensive Plan is the strengthening and preservation of the Town's quality of life through a thoughtful balance of land uses that optimize St. John's goals with county, state and regional objectives. Currently the Town consists of quiet residential neighborhoods with accessible park space. The Comprehensive Plan aims at preserving these attributes, while taking advantage of and enhancing the existing community assets.

2. Provide Guidelines for Accommodating Projected Growth:

The current regional growth trends are substantially impacting the expansion of St. John. The Comprehensive Plan acknowledges St. John's growth trajectory and has established land use policy for potential annexation areas. All development policy outside the current Town and utility service boundaries should be coordinated with neighboring townships and regional entities.

3. Improve Local and Regional Transportation Options:

As St. John and the region grow, a variety of transportation choices should be considered to reduce congestion and commuter travel time. Presently the county controlled road network, both east and west, is adequate. However, improvements to roadway capacities will better serve community growth. Further, local improvements to the transportation system in St. John should coordinate with any regional initiatives for new roads and rail. (Refer to the St. John Thoroughfare Plan for detail recommendations)

4. Support a New St. John Commuter Rail Station:

The Comprehensive Plan accommodates a potential for a new rail station in St. John. Currently the Northwest Indiana Transportation Commission is studying the extension of commuter rail in the West Lake County Corridor.

5. Design Residential Developments to Minimize Traffic Congestion:

New residential development should be encouraged only in areas where major thoroughfares serving the proposed development can effectively handle the additional traffic that will be generated. The roadways of new residential developments should provide multiple connections to existing roadways, therefore eliminating dead-ends and congestion points.

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6. Maintain Predominantly Single Family Housing:
Maintaining single family residences as the primary housing type in St. John is a fundamental community concern and value. However, having alternative housing types for young couples, empty nesters and seniors was also recognized as a need in St.John. As a result the current zoning and percentages of other housing types (including duplexes and townhomes) was acceptable for future development, provided that the new duplexes and townhomes conform with the design guidelines

7. Provide More Quality Retail:
Additional retail development would increase the tax base and help keep the money that is currently being spent in neighboring towns within St. John. The addition of retail businesses in the Town will also provide part time jobs for students and teenagers.

8. Provide Opportunities to Create Businesses and Jobs:
In the context of being a growing community, St. John has the opportunity to provide economic development and jobs for its residents. The Comprehensive Plan identifies a potential location for a business park within the Town boundaries that will be designed to be compatible with the residential character of the Town.

9. Provide for Quality Retail & Economic Development:
As the community grows it will continue to be more desirable to retail businesses. The US Route 41 corridor is zoned for retail and can accommodate growth of additional businesses. However, there is an opportunity to create guidelines for development that will control and improve the quality of the retail environment and minimize the traffic congestion that is associated with a major retail thoroughfare. The Comprehensive Plan and associated Thoroughfare Plan will address intersection improvements, frontage road design and signalization of US Route 41.

10. Protection of Environmental Resources:
Local wetland areas will be protected and coordinated with regional mitigation initiatives. Storm water run off and detention areas will be designed in compliance with the storm water management plans of the region.

11. Expand and Connect Park and Open Space:
The Comprehensive Plan supports the 2003 Park and Open Space Plan recommendations; to develop a connected system of parks, open space, trails and existing water courses. As the Town of St. John grows additional parks will be sited in strategic locations to serve the new residential neighborhoods.

Figure 1.12 : Retail along US Route 41

Figure 1.13: Railroad crossing at Hack Street

Figure 1.14: St. John mall - retail strip mall

12. Develop a New Town Center:
The community requested that the Comprehensive Plan define and identify the location of a new walkable retail and civic Town Center for St. John. The goal of the Town Center is to be a distinctive hub for St. John with a unique character and attractive sense of place.

13. Expand Existing Municipal Facilities:
The existing Municipal Facilities are under-sized to serve the current population. In providing for future growth and capacity of civic functions in St. John, the plan recommends expanding the Municipal Center with a New Town Hall, Police / Fire Complex and Public Works Facility.

14. Establish Policy for Predictable and Fair Development Decisions:
As a general public policy all development decisions should be predictable, fair and cost-effective while encouraging citizen and stakeholder participation in the decision making process.

Figure 1.15: Bike Trails

Figure 1.16: Prairie Wetland Areas

Figure 1.17: Existing Farmlands in St. John

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PART 2: PAST PLANS AND COORDINATION

PART 2: PAST PLANS AND COORDINATION

The Town of St. John commissioned a number of plans and studies that are relevant to the development of this current Comprehensive Plan. These studies were reviewed for similar planning issues and recommendations that require coordination. The intention of this 2004 St. John Comprehensive Plan is to build on the objectives of previous plans and provide guidance for current development issues.

St. John Indiana Comprehensive Plan 1990 (NIRPC)

The 1990 St. John Comprehensive Plan was prepared by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) to guide future development decisions. The plan outlines the physical characteristics, economic indicators and thoroughfare components of St. John. It also evaluates current land uses and zoning requirements for the Town. The following 1990 Comprehensive Plan recommendations are still very relevant today and will be reinforced in this plan.

Residential Recommendations

- Continue to encourage single family housing developments as they foster a stable community.
- Encourage new residential development only in areas where major thoroughfares serving the proposed development can effectively handle the additional traffic generated by the development.

Commercial Recommendations

- Limit the growth of commercial enterprises to those areas zoned for commercial land use (mainly along US Route 41)
- All planning for new commercial developments should be scrutinized in order to ensure that the projects address traffic and traffic maintenance needs.

Transportation Recommendations

- Develop a frontage road system that runs roughly parallel to US Route 41.

Lake County Comprehensive Plan 1996

The Lake County Comprehensive Plan (1996) provides guidance on County and regional development issues with an emphasis on local growth management for unincorporated areas. This plan addresses issues including land use, community character, housing, transportation, infrastructure, economic development and the natural environment. The 2004 St. John Comprehensive Plan co-ordinates with the following relevant Lake County Comprehensive Plan recommendations.

Transportation Recommendations

- Develop a new commuter rail station in St. John.
- Reduce congestion on major thoroughfares.

Environmental Recommendations

- Increase awareness of environmental issues.
- Guide future land uses in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- Reduce the impact on the environment by preserving wetlands.

Water Distribution Master Plan 2001

The St. John Water Distribution System Master Plan was completed in 2001 by NIES Engineering Inc., in coordination with the Utility Board of the Town. The Master Plan recommends and outlines improvements to the Town water distribution system through the year 2021.

According to current population growth projections, St. John will expand up to its current Water Utility boundary between the years 2020 and 2025. The update to the Water Distribution System and Sewer Master Plans will have to co-ordinate with the findings of this Comprehensive Plan and establish new water and sewer boundaries to accommodate the further growth of the Town beyond the year 2021.

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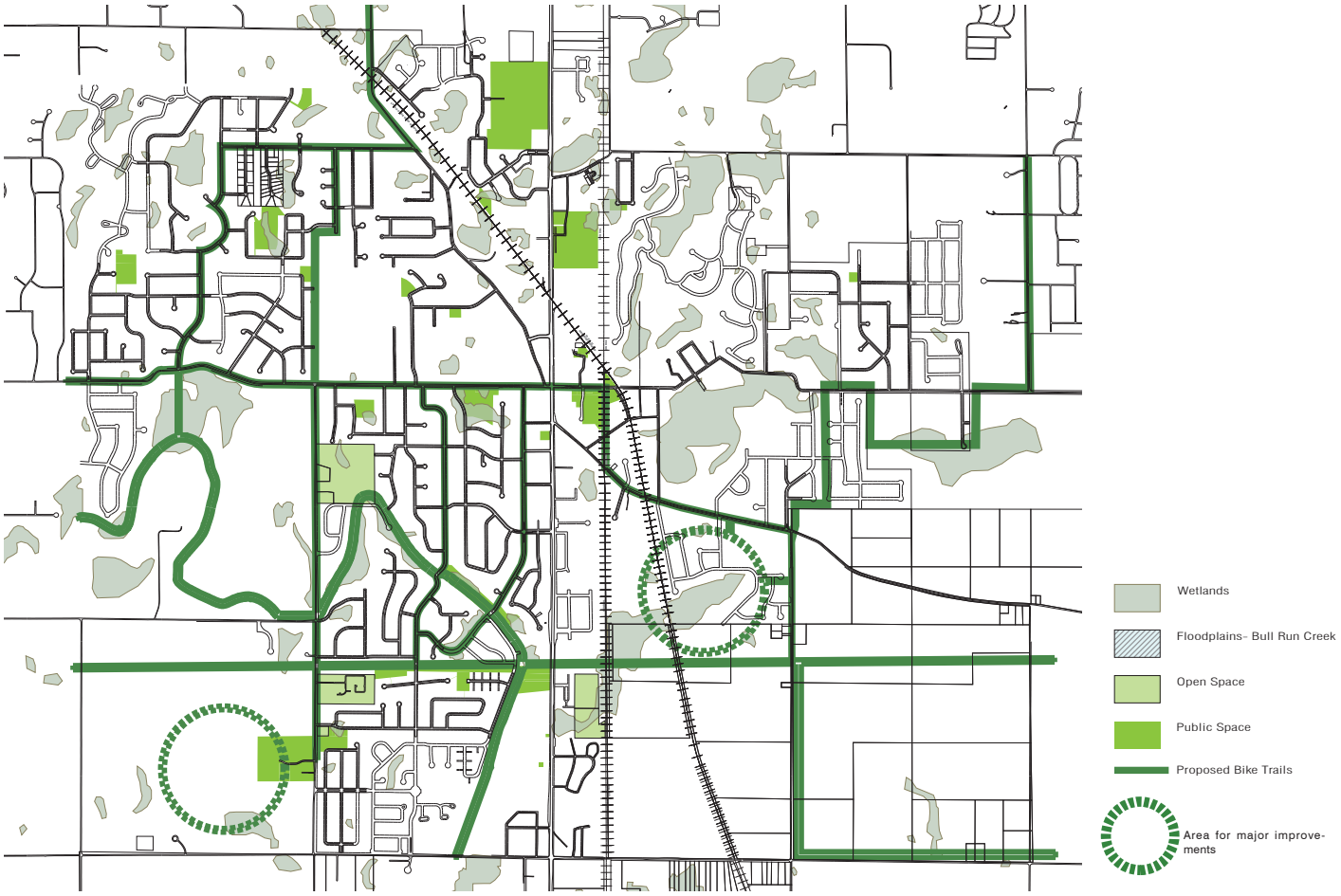

Figure 2.01: Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan 2003 - 2007

Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan 2003-2007

The 2003-2007 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan developed by Storrow Kinsella Associates Inc., outlines a town-wide system of parks, open space and cultural resources. A major emphasis of the plan is on the expansion of the park recreation facilities and open spaces in relation to the projected population growth. Establishing better connections between park spaces through bike trails would provide better access to park spaces for more residents. The first phase of construction of the Bicycle/ Pedestrian Trail is currently underway since the inception of the Plan.

The following recommendations were identified as key coordination issues between the 2003-2007 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan and the 2004 St. John Comprehensive Plan.

- Create a connected system of parks and open space.
- Integrate the water courses, Bull Run and West Creek into 14 mile natural open space and trail system.
- Use utility easements for pedestrian and bicycle greenway corridors.
- Coordinate the development and thoroughfare plan with the open space and recreation plans.
- Develop a new park on the east side of US Route 41 to serve the anticipated future growth in that area.

Part 3: ACCOMMODATING THE PROJECTED GROWTH OF ST. JOHN

St. John Growth Trends

Population Growth Projections

Land Area

Impacts on Utility Service

Annexation Planning Boundaries

Public Policy and Recommendations

PART 3: ACCOMMODATING THE PROJECTED GROWTH OF ST. JOHN

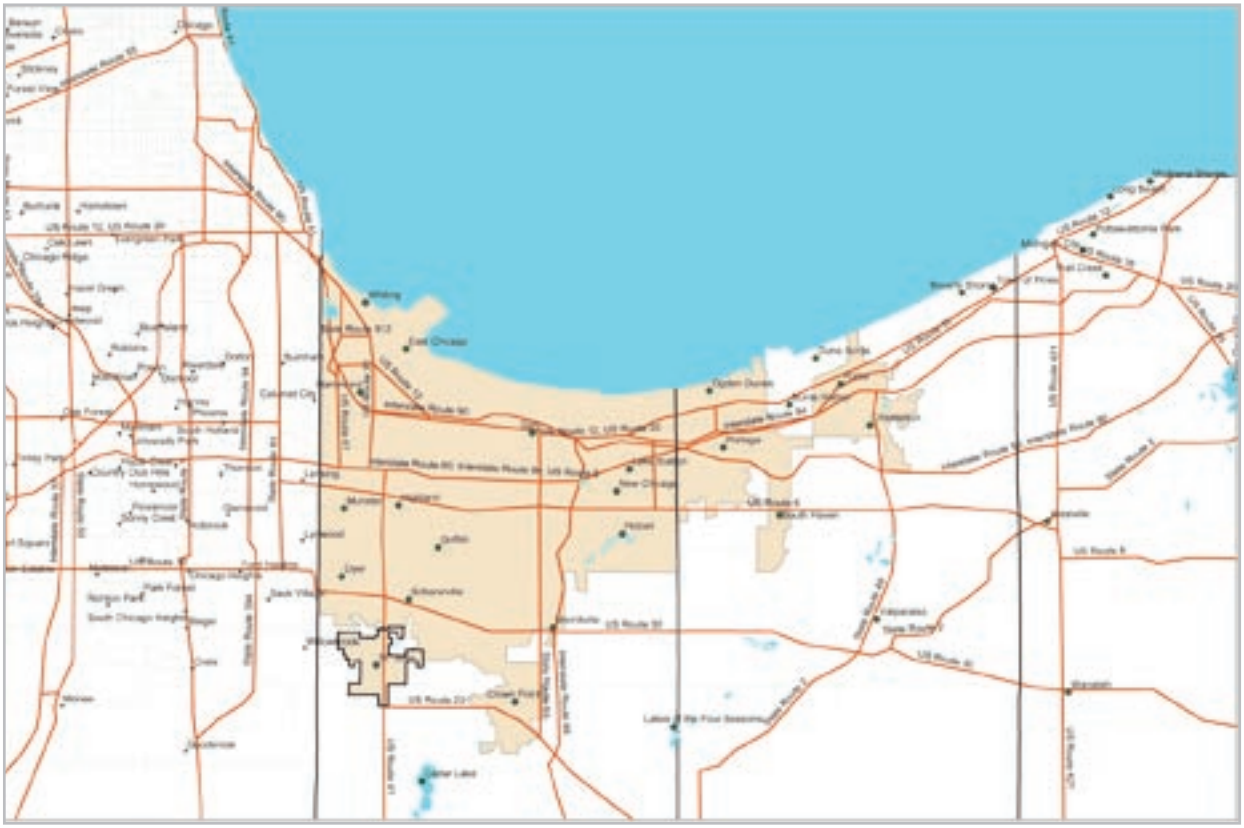

Figure 3.01: North West Indiana - Urbanized areas*

*The Census Bureau classifies an urbanized area being one that encompasses densely settled territory, with a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile.

St. John Growth Trends

Northwest Indiana is a fast growing region with a large number of people relocating to take advantage of housing costs, quality schools and proximity to employment in the Chicago metropolitan region. Located at the edge of the urbanized area* that surrounds the southern shoreline of Lake Michigan, St. John is in the path of development where farmland is being transformed into residential neighborhoods by market demand. With the rapid growth of the region and neighboring Towns quickly reaching their growth limits, there has been a sudden increase in demand for residential development in and around St. John.

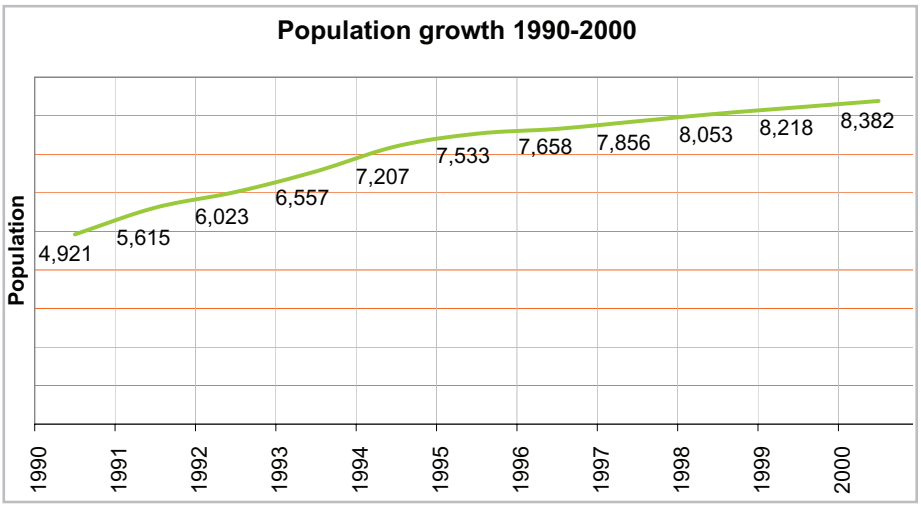

Figure 3.02: Population between 1990 and 2000 census

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Population Growth Projections

According to the 2000 census, St. John's population increase of 70% in the past decade significantly out paced Lake County growth of 2% and State of Indiana growth of 10%.

The Northwest Indiana Regional Plan Commission (NIRPC) is the entity charged with determining growth projections for the region for the purpose of understanding transportation, demand on roads, and regional infrastructure. NIRPC projects a rate of growth for St. John at 346 residents per year. Current residential building permits issued in St. John indicate a significant increase in population growth since the 2000 census(Figure 3.03). The tabulations of the residential permits reveal that from 2000 to 2003, there was an average of 126 new households/ year or 378 new residents (based on a 3.03 person/ household data). During 2004 several large Planned Development districts (PD) were under construction creating a significant increase in the population. The 2004 new housing permits translate into 737 new residents annually. The three lines on the Fiqure 3.03 chart represents three different scenarios for how fast the St. John population will grow to reach the an utimate projected population of approximately 31,000 residents and a total build out of the land area of the Town.

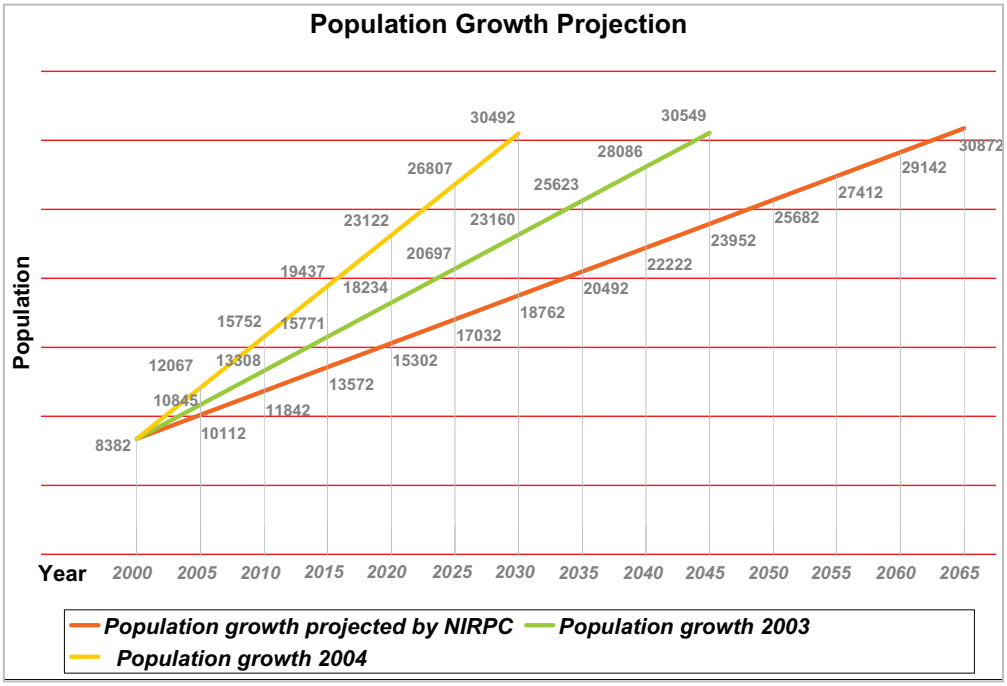

Figure 3.03: Population growth projection leading to total build out of St. John

Land Area

Since the 2000 census, the actual land area of the Town has grown considerably with 965 acres annexed into the Town boundary(Figure 3.04). With the current housing boom land is continuously being annexed and added to the Town in all directions.

Figure 3.04: Town growth since 2000

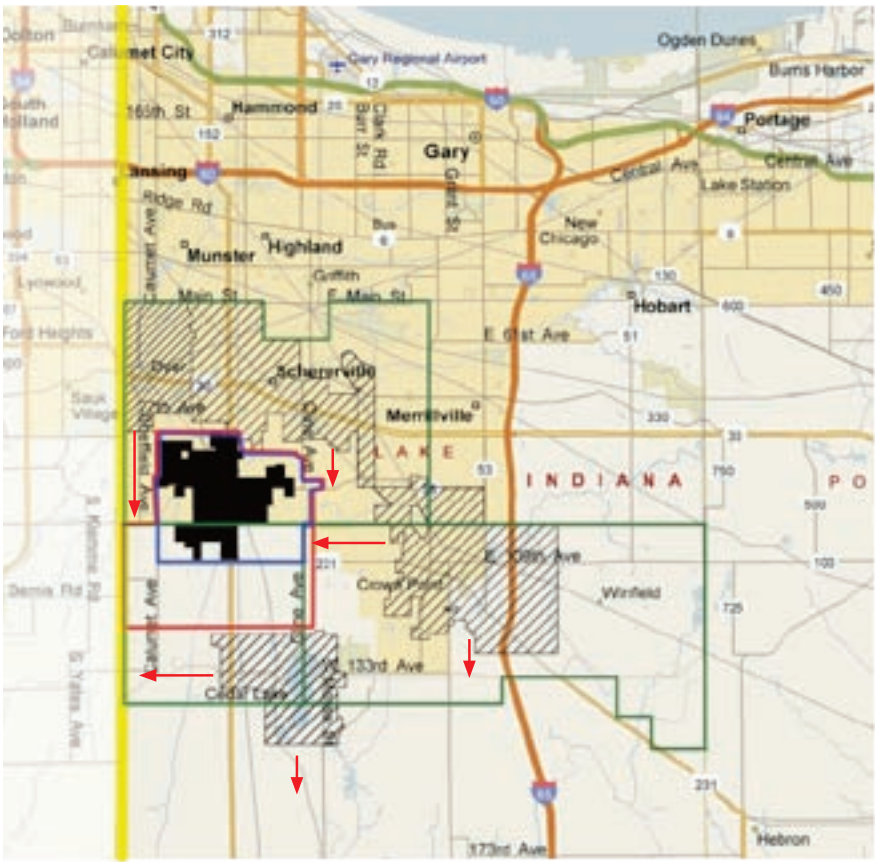

Figure 3.05: Regional boundaries and constraints.

Impacts to Utility Service

With the current growth trends in the region, St. John will experience more pressure to annex additional land area. By State law, St. John has the ability to annex areas that have 1/8 of their boundaries contiguous to the Town. In anticipation of future annexation of land, St. John needs to establish a policy on how adjacent areas should develop to ensure these areas are built to St. John infrastructure standards. For that reason, planning criteria for infrastructure, utilities, roads, land use, density, open space and environmental issues needs to be coordinated with adjacent municipalities and regional entities.

The potential development of Peotone Airport just 18 miles away, could accelerate these development trends.

Annexation Planning Boundaries

Considering the boundaries of the neighboring towns of Dyer, Schererville, Crown Point and Cedar Lake, there is a tremendous amount of unincorporated land, especially to the south adjacent to St. John (figure 3.05). The growth boundaries of St. John can be established only after considering all these factors and constraints.

Annexation requires coordination with several regional factors including:

- Current Town boundary
- Utility and Service (water and sewer) boundary
- Neighboring Town boundaries and unincorporated lands
- Environmental boundaries
- School district boundaries
- Illinois-Indiana State Line

The future western boundary is easily established along the state line. The future eastern boundary is established along Blaine Street, based on a previous agreement with the City of Crown Point. The future northern boundary is limited to the extent of the current utility boundary while the future southern boundary can be established along 125th Avenue and will require coordination with the Town of Cedar Lake.

According to the Lake County Comprehensive Plan, recent growth in some unincorporated areas of Lake County has resulted in stressed public services and infrastructure and threatens the natural environment.

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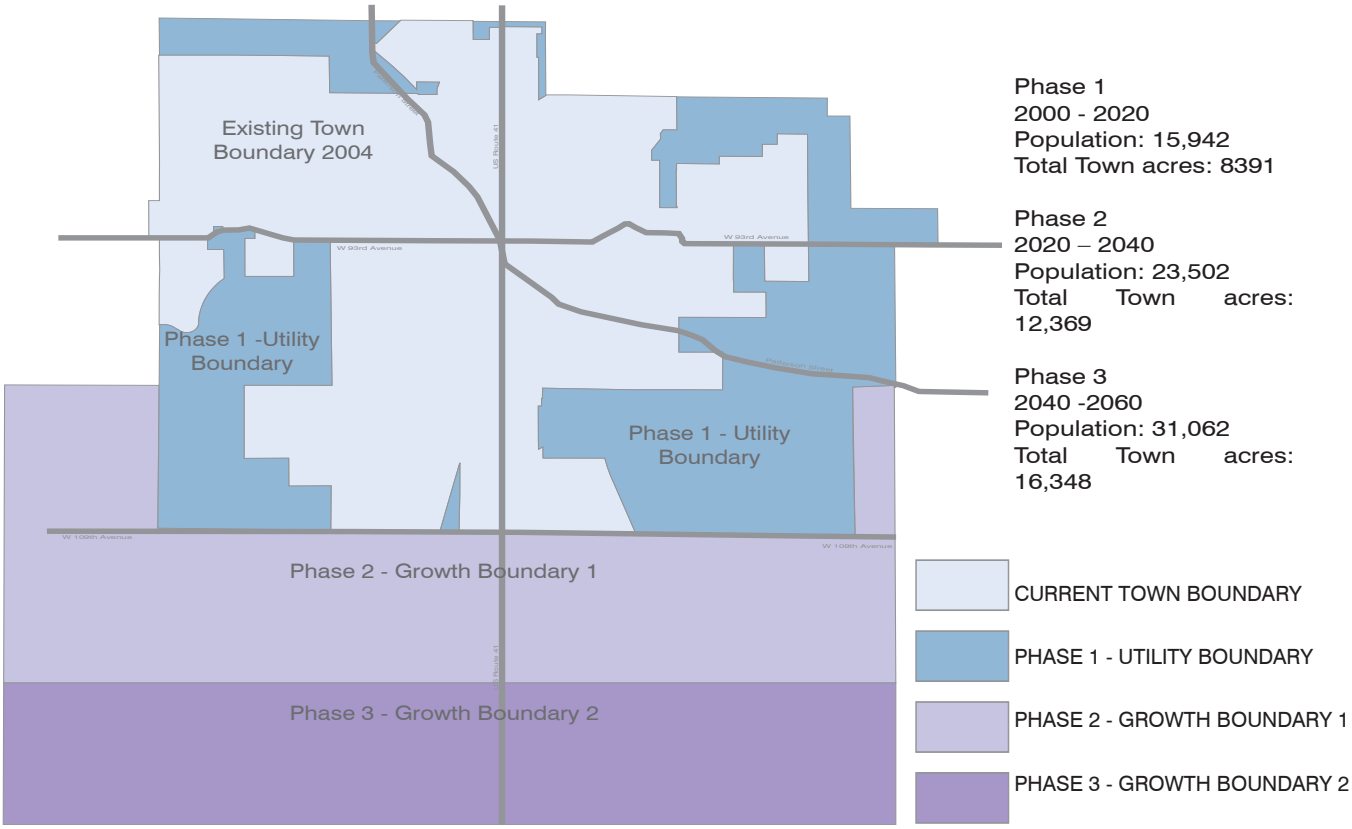


Figure 3.06: Establishing growth boundaries and phasing on a blended growth projection with NIRPC and Housing permit data

The ultimate population will be limited by the carrying capacity of the land, including environmental constraints, such as floodplains.

The rate of growth will also be limited by the ability of NIPSCO (Northern Indiana Public Service Company) to quickly extend gas and electric service to new subdivisions. In addition, the public schools must be able to provide both the physical plant and the program resources for the quality education that attracts new residents. To counter uncontrolled growth the County recommends that each municipality outline development target areas for guiding development to where it is most appropriate.

Through an analysis of the current zoning and land use conditions and extrapolating the population growth of St. John, it is possible to project possible growth scenarios for the Town. Consideration of environmental and infrastructure policies should be set to ensure proper growth and maintenance of St. John's current quality of life and infrastructure standards. Figure 3.06 shows three phases for expansion of the annexation planning areas that correspond to the population growth projections.

Public Policy and Recommendations

The followin list outlines planning policy goals for unincorporated land under consideration for future annexation by the Town of St. John.

- Review population increases for impacts on school age population, school locations and district boundaries.
- Outline development requirements for potential annexed areas to meet the objectives of the comprehensive plan and other Town policy, i.e., land use, zoning, water & sewer and roadway construction requirements.
- Make provisions to preserve wetland areas and other natural resources. Make park land and open space accessible to new residential areas.

PART 4: TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

The Role of Transportation

Existing Street Pattern

Roadways Within the Town Boundary

Roadways Outside the Town Boundary

Improvements to the Retail Corridor, US Route 41

Community Rail Station

Rail Station Location Options

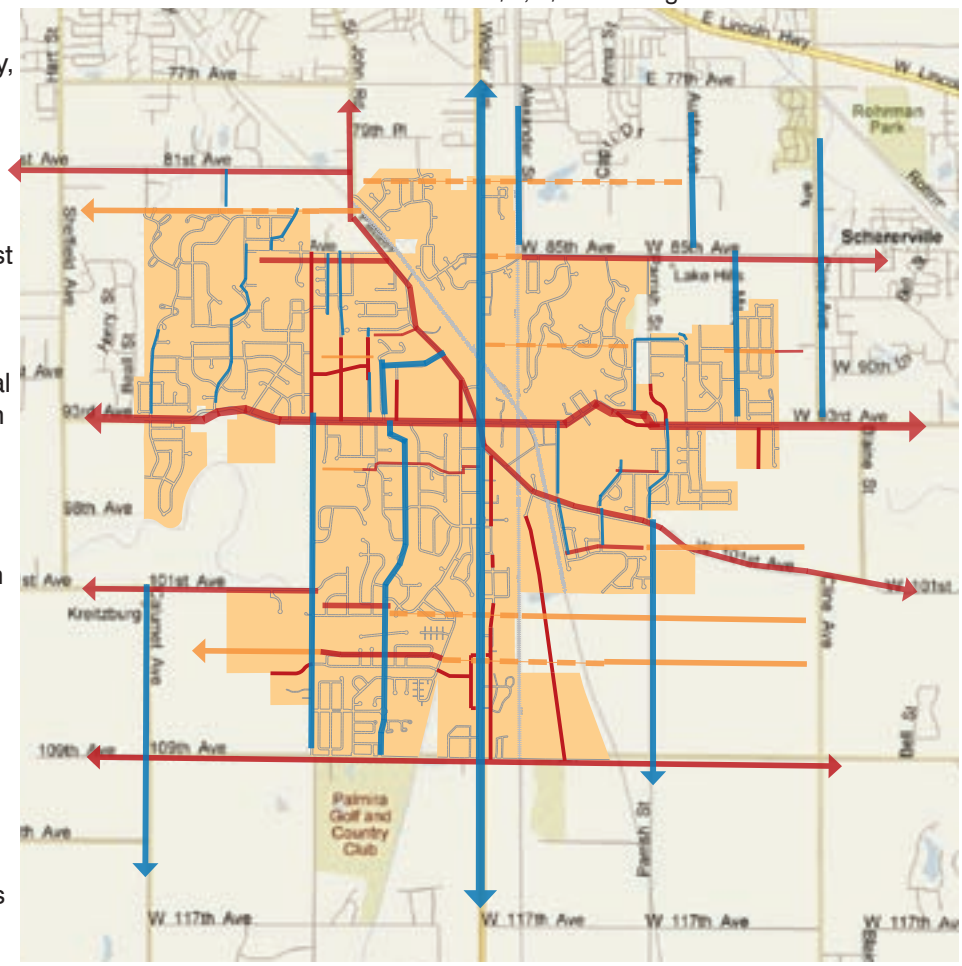
Conceptual Site Plan

PART 4: TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

The Role of Transportation

In planning for the development of any town or city, the role of transportation is extremely important and, in many cases, is the major factor in determining how well an urbanized area is poised for growth. It is vital to fully understand the potential ramifications of the accelerated expansion that St. John is currently experiencing and plan accordingly. Whether it is the improvement of an intersection or the planning for a commuter rail station, it is essential that these capital expenditures are identified as early as possible and strategies to address them are included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Figure 4.01: Existing Street Pattern - Major N/S, E/W Thoroughfares



Streets and Roadways:

In St. John, the automobile is the primary, if not the only, transportation option presently available to the residents. Therefore, the placement and design of streets and roadways, to a large extent, help determine the Town's development patterns. The local network of roads must not only allow efficient movement within the Town and its neighborhoods, but also provide connections to the regional transportation network. Due to the crucial role that streets play in the determination of St. John's future development, it is imperative to incorporate strategies for their expansion and improvement into the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, a separate Thoroughfare Plan, prepared in conjunction with this plan will expound on the automobile transportation issues presented.

The following major topics will be addressed as part of the Transportation and Access Section of this document:

- Streets connecting through existing and new neighborhoods
- Streets allowing cross-Town traffic
- Streets outside of the Town boundaries
- Improvements to the retail corridor, US Route 41

Existing Street Pattern

St. John is lacking of roadways that provide cross-town access. There are only three streets that allow movement through the Town - 93rd Street runs east-west, US Route 41 runs north-south, and Joliet/ Patterson runs diagonally from the northwest to the southeast. Figure 4.01 illustrates the existing street pattern and through-town roadways.

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Roadways Within the Town Boundary

Streets Connecting Existing and New Neighborhoods:

St. John has historically expanded one subdivision at a time, each with its own road network. These new developments rarely connect to the existing network of streets and in most cases, the new neighborhood has its own street system that connects to the existing streets at just one location. This approach forces the residents of these neighborhoods to travel from one subdivision to the next by relying on the Town's major arterials. This contributes to further congestion on these major roads. This issue requires developing a system of connected roadways to improve both the regional and local traffic congestion. Figure 4.04 illustrates potential new streets within the current Town boundaries of St. John. The Thoroughfare Plan should be consulted for detailed information on the specific connections.

Figure 4.02: Typical residential streets

Figure 4.03: Typical Collector Street

Streets Allowing Cross-Town Traffic:

In addition to the streets connecting the various neighborhoods and subdivisions, the Town needs cross-town through streets (collector streets). These street help minimize the traffic along the major arterials. Collector streets handle more traffic than the residential subdivision streets, therefore driveways that open on to them should be minimized. For safety reasons, housing should face onto internal local neighborhood streets. Collector streets, should be required every ½ mile if possible (figure 4.04). The Thoroughfare Plan provides specific information about these new roadways.

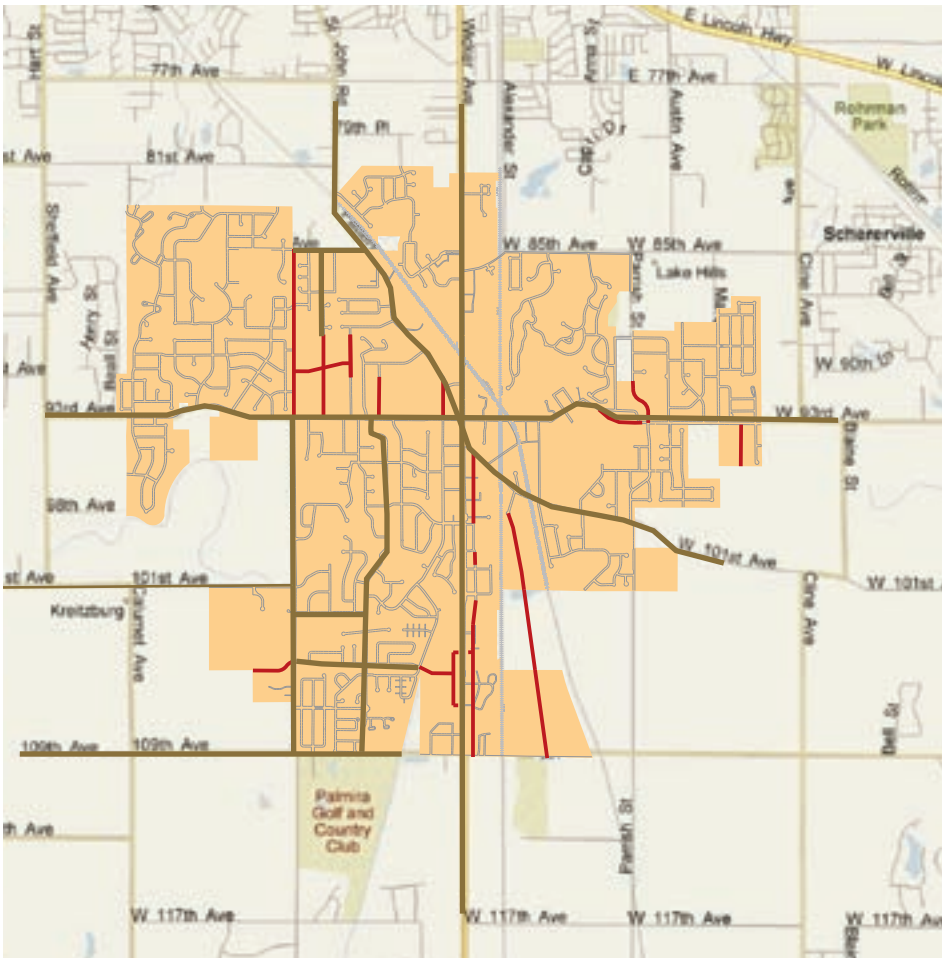

Figure 4.04: Possible connections within the Town Boundary

Roadways outside the Town Boundary

While St. John has no municipal control over development that occurs outside of its current boundaries, in most cases, the Town will be asked to provide sewer and water services to the developments. When a developer approaches the Town and requests utility service, discussions can begin addressing the future goals for the development and the potential location of future roadways. If the developer desires to become annexed into the Town in the future, the new development will need to comply with St. John development standards and location of future roadways. Figure 4.05 illustrates the location of new roadways as the Town reaches its growth milestones. These recommended roadways, though local, will have a regional impact. It is recommended that these connections be discussed regionally with neighboring towns and on a County level as they are also likely to be affected by the development of these new roadways.

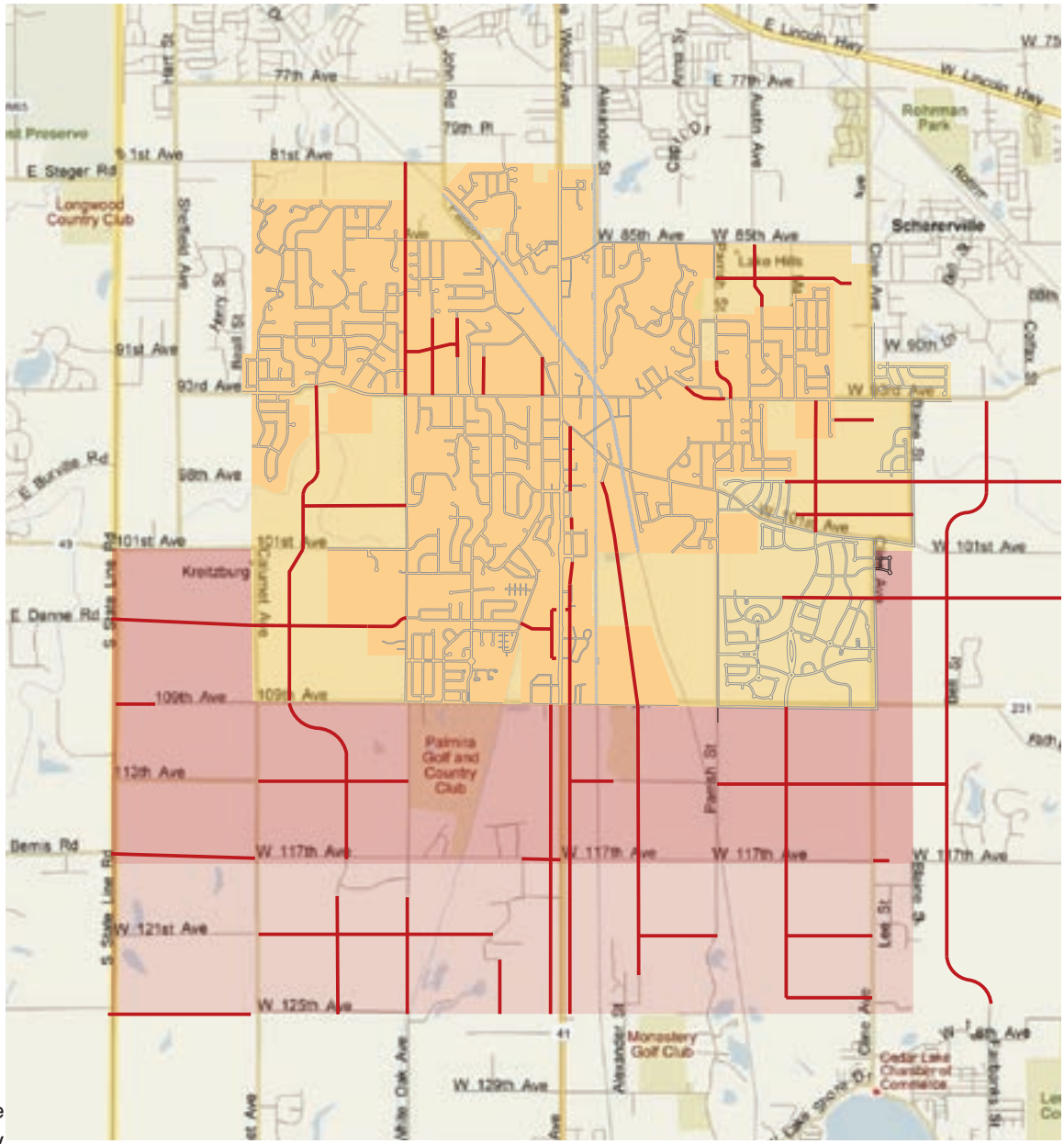

Figure 4.05:
Proposed streets outside the current Town boundary

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Improvements to the Retail Corridor, US Route 41

US Route 41 is both a major regional retail spine and a major through-traffic arterial. This causes inherent problems as drivers with two opposing sets of goals converge on the same roadway. Steps should be taken to alleviate congestion and allow the roadway to work more effectively for both groups.

Some improvements to traffic conditions can be made by strategic intersection improvements and the addition of dedicated turn lanes to the existing roadway. Specific recommendations in this regard are provided in the Thoroughfare Plan that was produced in coordination with this Comprehensive Plan.

The introduction of a frontage road would help to remove large amounts of retail traffic moving from one shopping center to another off of US Route 41. Entrances to individual parking lots would be located off of the frontage road allowing shoppers to move from one shopping area to another without returning back to US Route 41. Figure 4.06 illustrates the suggested location of a frontage road along US Route 41.

Recommendations

- Require all new residential developments contiguous to existing residential subdivisions to satisfactorily connect to the existing neighborhood street network.
- Require “stub outs” on all edges of new residential development not contiguous to existing residential development for future road connections.
- Plan for through-street connector roads to be located every ¼ to ½ mile for future streets. If a new development area includes the location of one of the through-streets, require the developer to provide the street as part of the development.
- Provide a copy of the Comprehensive Plan to developers that are planning development within and outside the Town’s present boundary. This will illustrate the development standards and goals of the Town to those desiring annexation into the Town’s boundaries.
- Create the requirement for a frontage road for new retail development along US Route 41.

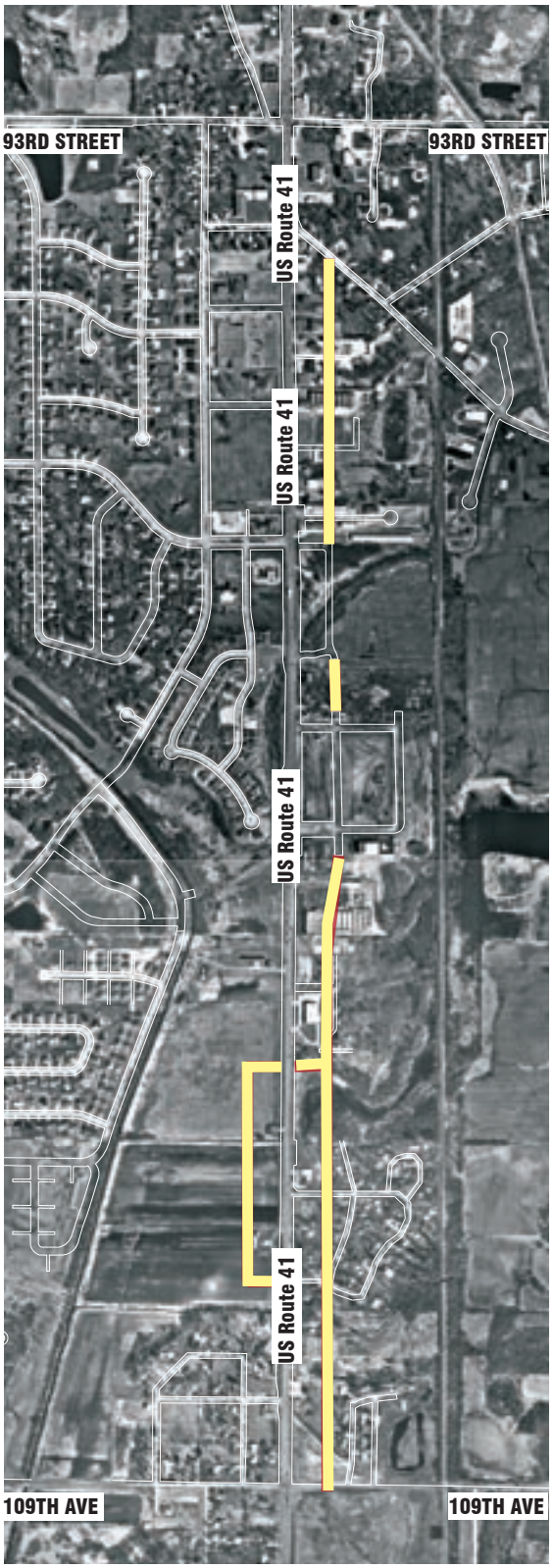

Figure 4.06: Schematic location of the US Route 41 frontage road

Commuter Rail Station

The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) is currently studying two potential alignments for a new commuter rail line into Chicago. One existing alignment is oriented east and terminates in Valparaiso. The other alignment runs south along the existing CSX line to Lowell and passes through the Town of St. John. Figure 4.07 shows a map with the two potential alignments. In the past, St. John did have a train station. If St. John established a new commuter rail station, there would be substantial development impacts to the Town as a whole and to the immediate area surrounding the station. For that reason it is very important to identify potential station locations and any development goals associated with the station area.

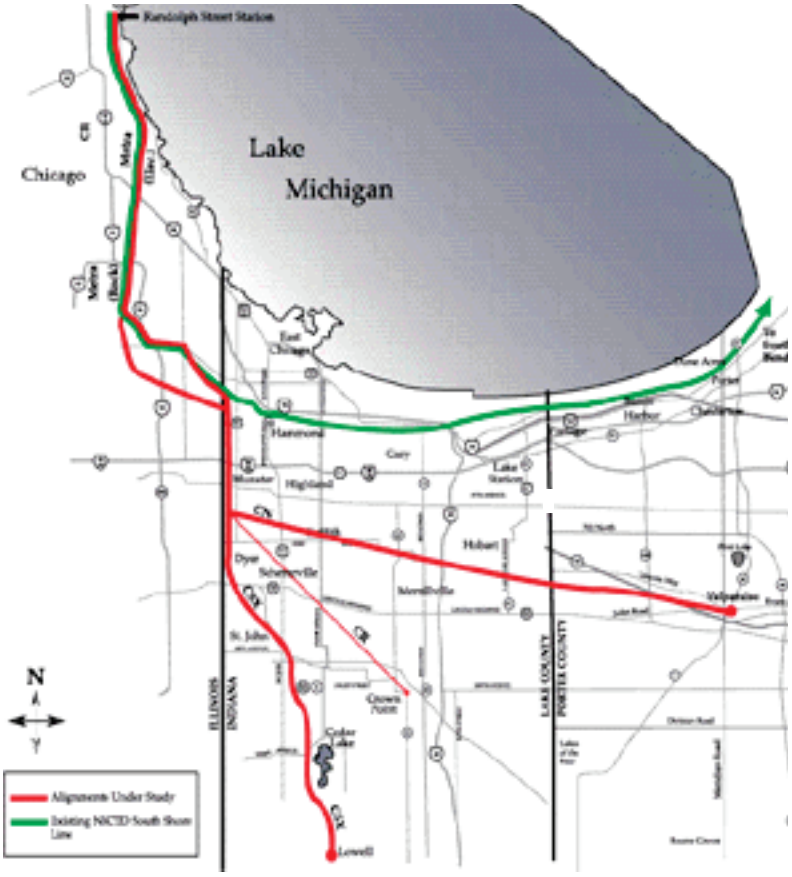

Figure 4.07:
NICTD Rail alignments study

Figure 4.08:
Possible Rail Station locations within St. John

Community Benefits:

The following are potential benefits of developing a train station in St. John:

- Reduce commute times and congestion generated by residents presently driving to Chicago.
- Increase economic development from the expanded market of transit riders from nearby communities.
- Incorporate the train station as a major component and catalyst for St John's new "Town Center".

Transit Oriented Development Goals:

A new train station is an opportunity for St. John to establish a Transit Oriented Development (TOD). The concept of a TOD is based on national trends for station area development and includes;

- Creating pedestrian scaled streets and a walkable environment.
- Shared parking for retail and commuters.
- Mix use district with residential, retail and business office uses.

Rail Station Location Options

The CSX alignment is elevated on an embankment throughout most of St. John. The alignment is only at grade near the intersection US Route 41 and 93rd Street. As a result, only three (3) potential station locations are possible (Figure 4.08). Each site was evaluated for vehicular accessibility, parking locations and TOD development opportunities. See the Design Guidelines section for illustrations of potential train design area concepts. (Figure 6.13)

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Conceptual Site Plan

While all of the locations are viable, location (A) is preferred due to the following reasons:

- There are open parcels needed for parking located near the station.
- The area has enough open land nearby to allow for expansion as a potential catalyst for a larger mixed-use development.
- It is possible to access the site from 93rd Street and US US Route 41.
- It is visible from US Route 41 making it more likely to be a successful retail location.

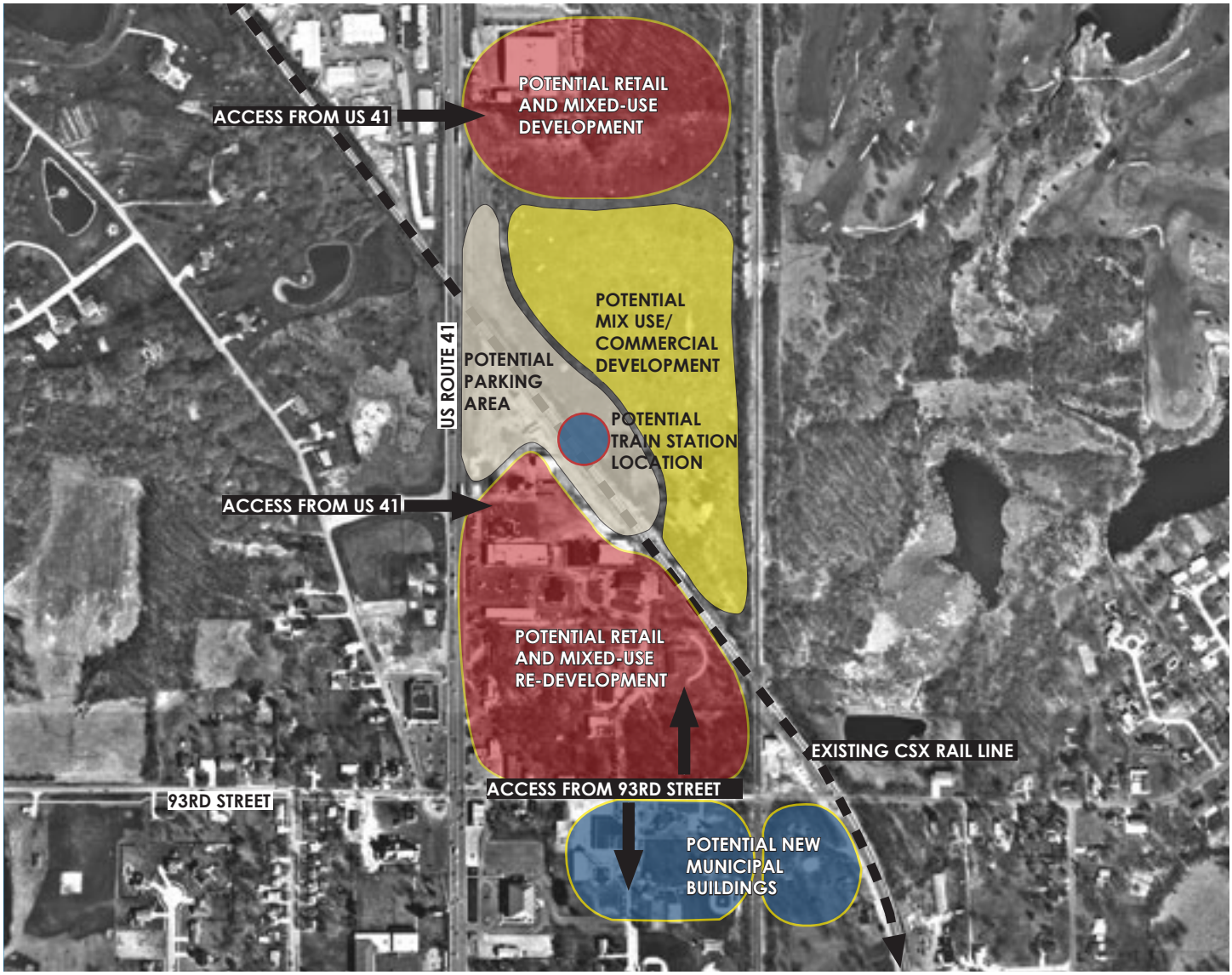

Figure 4.09: Conceptual Site plan showing proposed land uses around the train station in St. John

Recommendations

- Investigate further the potential for the development of a Transit Oriented Design in the location shown in Figure 4.09.
- Develop Design Guidelines to outline development and design goals for a TOD area.
- Participate in all applicable alignment studies and comply with local, state and federal requirements that would increase the potential of St. John becoming the location of a new commuter rail station.

PART 5: LAND USE AND ZONING

Review of Current Zoning

Residential Trends and Issues

Retail and Commercial Development

Industrial Land

Public Space, Open Spaces and Wetlands

Zoning of Annexation Areas

PART 5: LAND USE AND ZONING

Review of Current Zoning

Preparing a comprehensive plan provides an opportunity to globally review the town's zoning to determine whether the current land uses (figure 5.02) and zoning meet the Town's future development goals. Figure 5.03 shows the current zoning map for the Town. The St. John Zoning Ordinance supplements the map to define specific zoning classifications, allowable land uses, parcel densities, set backs and other development regulations. In 1990, the ordinance was substantially updated and adopted by the Town. The St John Plan Commission and Town Council are responsible for reviewing individual requests for changes to zoning and annexation on a parcel by parcel basis.

Residential:
St John is primarily a residential community where 80% of the land area is dedicated to residential development and only 20% to all other non-residential development. (Figure 5.02).

Commercial:
Most retail zoning is concentrated along US Route 41 with 9% commercial zoning (B-1, B-2 and B-3) distributed on both sides of the roadway.

Light Industrial:
St. John has limited industrial zoning at 6%. A few parcels between the rail lines are zoned Light Industrial (L-1).

Public Lands:
4% of the land area of the Town is zoned as public land (P-1, P-2), including both parks and municipal facilities.

As the Town grows through annexation of land, issues regarding appropriate land use will surface and require public policy to support planning and zoning decisions. The following pages outline St. John's current land use issues and goals for future development. All policy recommendations associated with land use were developed at Town meetings and reviewed at community meetings.

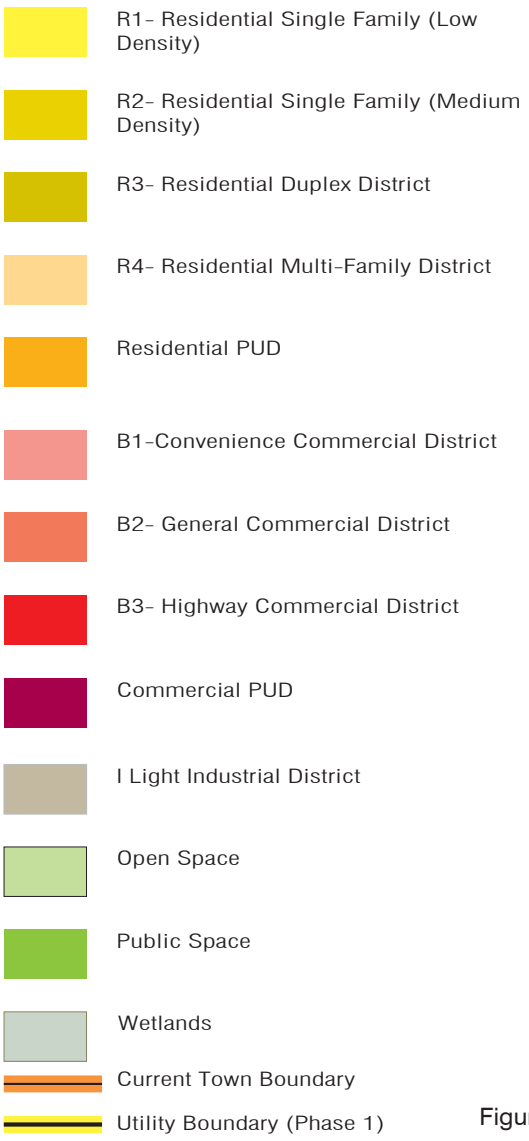

Figure 5.01: Zoning map legend

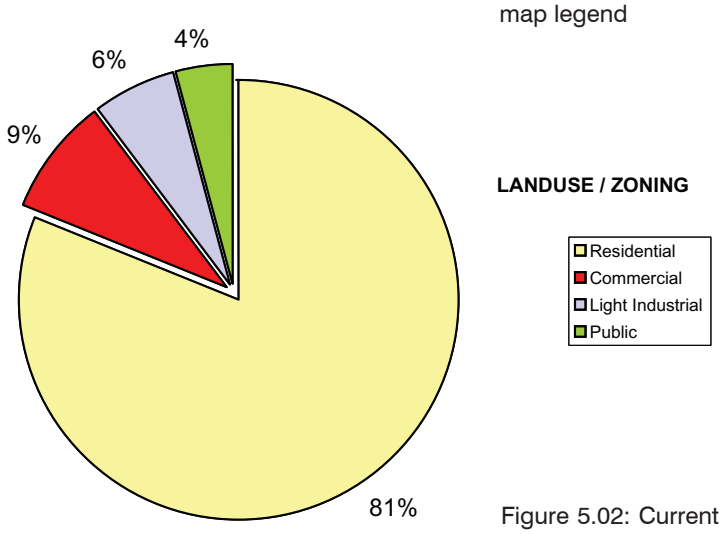

Figure 5.02: Current land use in St. John

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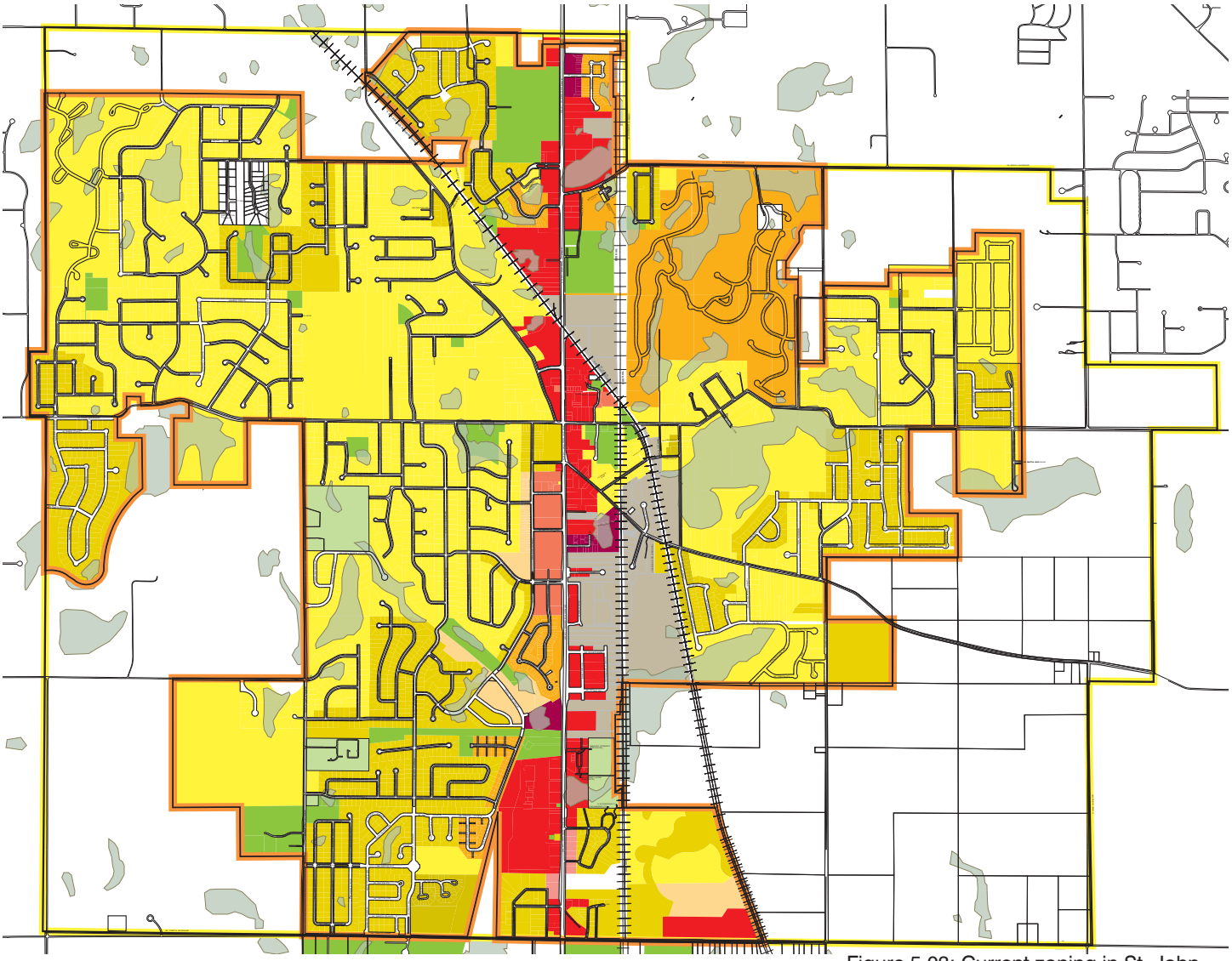


Figure 5.03: Current zoning in St. John

AREA WITHIN CURRENT TOWN BOUNDARY	: 5362 ACRES
AREA WITHIN UTILITY BOUNDARY	: 8622 ACRES

CURRENT ZONING AREAS*		% of Land Area
RESIDENTIAL ZONING	4343 ACRES	81%
COMMERCIAL ZONING	483 ACRES	9 %
INDUSTRIAL ZONING	322 ACRES	6 %
PUBLIC LAND	214 ACRES	4 %
WETLANDS**	504 ACRES	--

*Above acreages for zoning areas are inclusive of roadways, railways and pedestrian paths
** Included in Land Use Areas

Residential Trends and Issues

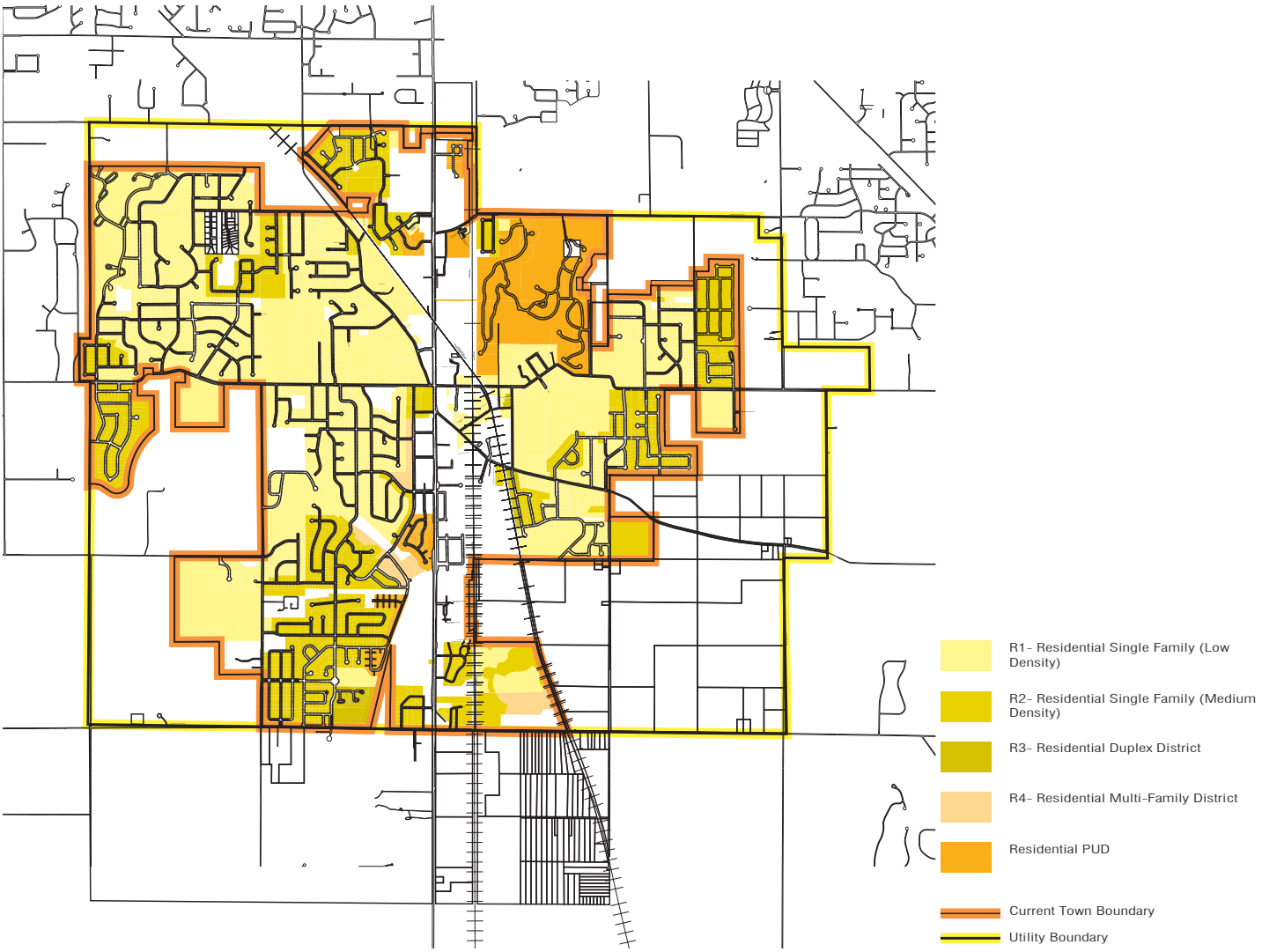
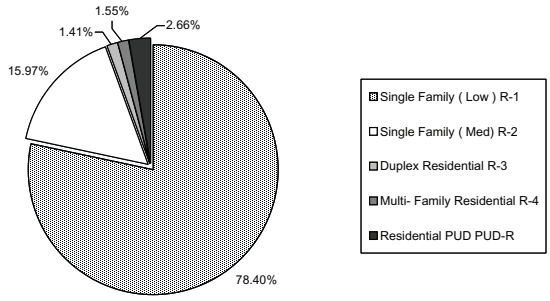


Figure 5.04: Current Residential zoning in St. John



Zoning	Designation	Acres	Sq. Miles
Single Family (Low)	R-1	2773	4.33
Single Family (Med)	R-2	565	0.88
Duplex Residential	R-3	50	0.07
Multi- Family Residential	R-4	55	0.09
Residential PUD	PUD-R	94	0.14

Figure 5.05: Current Residential zoning areas in St. John

Existing Residential Zoning:

Low density single family residential (R1 & R2) are the predominant housing zones in St. John which is consistent throughout the adjoining Townships. Very few areas in the Town have duplex housing or multi-family homes. These are found in isolated developments to the south, close to US Route 41 and the Residential PUD's found in both the southern and northern parts of St. John.

Of the residentially zoned land, 96% is zoned for low-density single-family homes.

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Figure 5.06: Site plan of Lake Hills PUD - showing cul-de-sac type roads and development

Figure 5.07: Typical Single family home

Figure 5.08: Typical Residential Sub-division

Residential Development Trends:

New trends in residential development are promoting planned unit development (PUD) districts with a variety of housing options, ranging from single family homes to a few townhomes/ duplexes. The districts are regulated and reviewed based on a site plan approval and allowable percentages of single family residential (R-1, R-2) and duplex, cluster home and townhouse (R-3) zoning. These PUD's are under construction in newly annexed areas of St. John and selling well in the market place.

Since these PUD's are planned as individual neighborhoods, they often form clusters of housing accessed through cul de sac roads and provide little local through traffic. This in turn increases the congestion on the main thoroughfares. (i.e., US Route 41, 93rd, Patterson and Joliet Streets).

A typical example of one such PUD is Lake Hills. Planned in the north-eastern section of St. John, Lake Hills (figure 5.06) is expected to have a total of 451 units selling at a median price of $450,000. The development consists of a mix of housing types. Though predominantly single-family residential, the development is also planned for a limited number of townhomes and duplex units.

Residential Recommendations

The following recommendations, keep pace with current residential trends and maintain St. John residential character.

- Maintain a primarily Single-Family district and housing type.
- Encourage a mix of housing types including high quality owner-occupied Townhouses.
- Limit multifamily housing to:
  - Quality construction
  - Masonry (partial)
  - For sale units
  - Minimum Square Foot
- Provide design guidelines for the development of multifamily housing.
- Maintain quiet residential streets with low traffic volumes / providing safe places for children.
- Where possible incorporate and build Bicycle/ Pedestrian trails in residential developments

For further recommendations based on traffic and roadways within Residential areas, please refer to the St John Thoroughfare Plan

Retail and Commercial Development

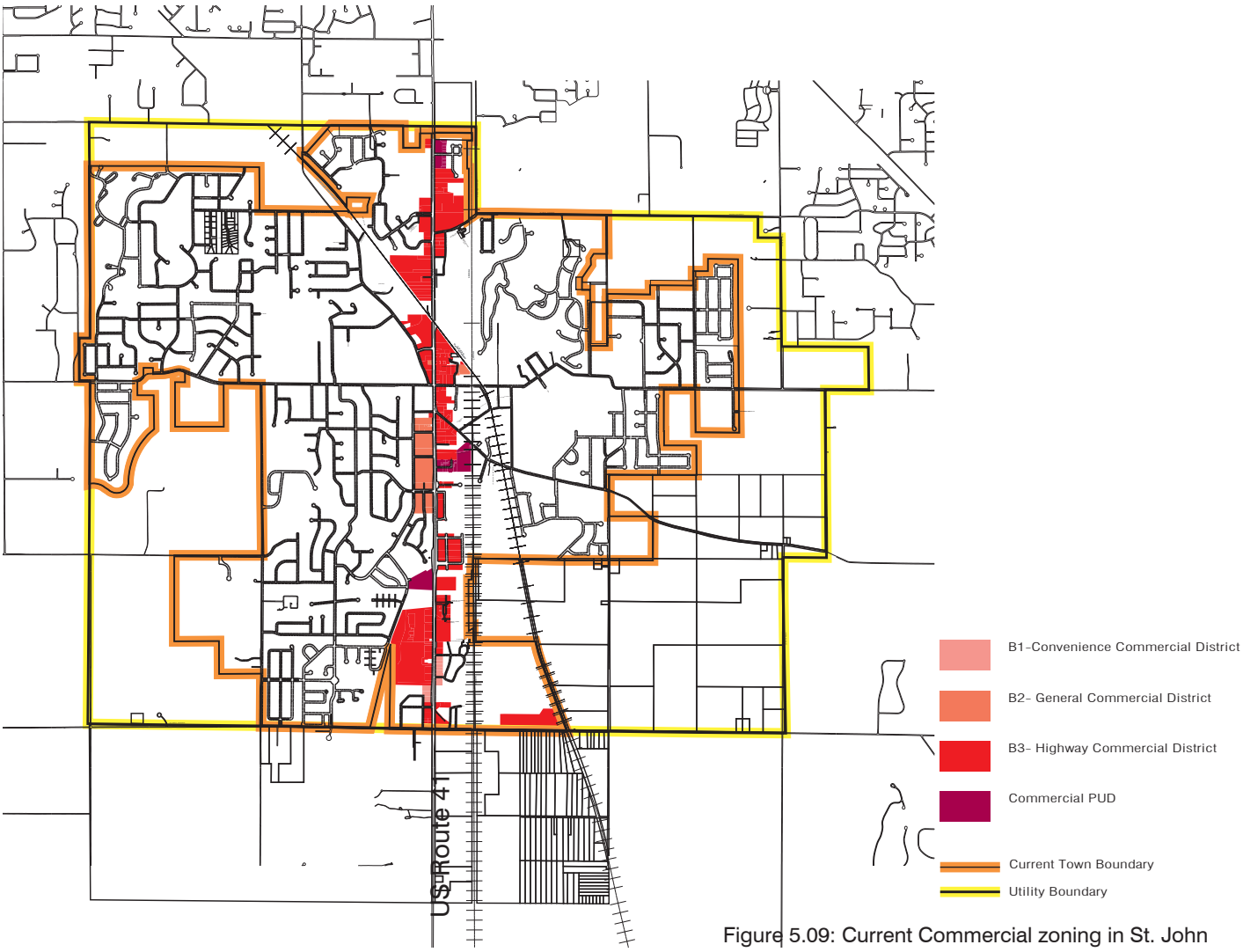

Figure 5.09: Current Commercial zoning in St. John

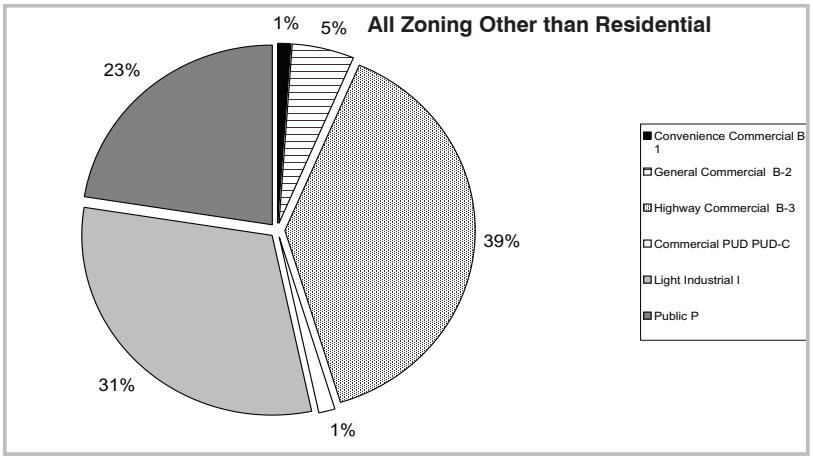

Figure 5.10: Percentages of all areas other than Residential - Includes the various types of Commercial

Zoning	Designation	Acres	Sq. Miles	%
Convenience Commercial	B-1	9	0.01	1%
General Commercial	B-2	45	0.07	5%
Highway Commercial	B-3	322	0.5	40%
Commercial Entertainment	B-4	0	0	0%
Commercial PUD	PUD-C	11	0.15	1%
Light Industrial	I	256	0.4	30%
Public	P	187	0.29	23%

Figure 5.11: All areas other than Residential- Includes the various types of Commercial

Existing Commercial Zoning:

Non residential zoning in St. John currently occupies only about 20% of the total Town land area. The majority of this land is commercially zoned. Since most of the commercial activity in St. John occurs along the US Route 41, it is zoned as highway commercial.

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Commercial Development Trends:

US Route 41 serves as the commercial corridor for St. John. All commercially zoned districts are located along this corridor and extend from the northern municipal boundary to 109th street on the south. Most vacant commercially zoned land for development is along both sides of US Route 41 south from 93rd Ave to 105th Street. Other existing commercial zoning areas is east on 109th Ave (Route 231).

Two major retailers, Target and Strack & Van Til have recently purchased land to develop new stores in St. John. The presence of these retailers represents a major change in the type and scale of retail development in St. John. Their stores have a regional draw for shoppers from the surrounding towns and require large scale development sites and easy access for high volumes of vehicles. Usually when these particular retail stores are developed they initiate a trend for other retailers to follow as seen in Schererville to the north.

In addition to the improvement of the traffic conditions, the introduction of a frontage road will also encourage a different pattern of design along US Route 41. By demarcating a strip of development parcels along US Route 41 that are shallower in depth than the existing parcels, smaller-scale "out-lot" development (parcels for small businesses located close to the road) is allowed to occur closer to US Route 41 with larger development occurring further away from the roadway. Fifty 50% of the area between US Route 41 and the frontage road should be dedicated to landscape and natural water features to improve the appearance and drainage of the commercial corridor. Also, there are two town well sites within the US Route 41 corridor and all new development will be required to adhere to the standards of the well head protection plan.

Figure 4.06 illustrates where a frontage road could be located and how development can be shaped by its presence. Site plans that break down the size of the parking lots into smaller parts and organize the buildings proximate to one another encouraging pedestrian movement should be supported. Along with a set of design guidelines, the retail development along US Route 41 can become a more pleasant addition to the Town.

Figure 5.12: Highway Commercial (B-3) as seen along US Route 41

Figure 5.13: Big-box Commercial along US Route 41

Figure 5.14: Target Retail Development

Commercial Recommendations

In preparation for future retail development the plan outlines the following recommendations

- Establish policy, changes to the zoning ordinance and retail design guidelines to assure quality retail development that is aesthetically attractive and pedestrian-oriented.
- Coordinate the retail and streetscape design guidelines with the design of a frontage road along US route 41.

Industrial Land

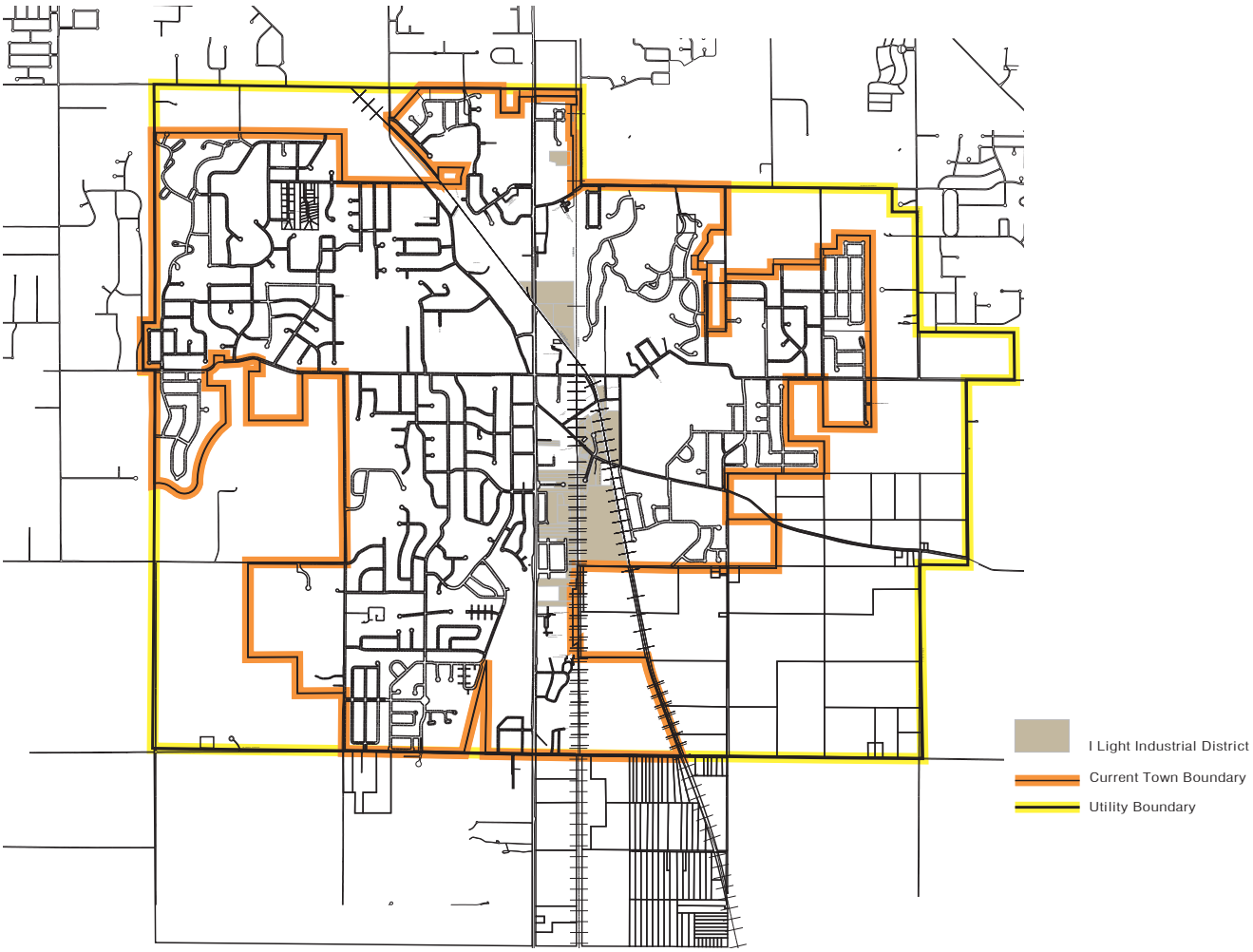

Figure 5.15: Current Industrial zoning in St. John

Existing Light Industrial Zoning:

A majority of the Light Industrial (L-1) zoned land is located adjacent to or in between the railroad embankments. This land is difficult to access and is not easily expanded. The rail embankments make natural barriers for residential development (figure 5.15).

Discussions with the Town identified that increasing industrial or business development would benefit the Town by offsetting residential property taxes and providing a source of jobs for the region.

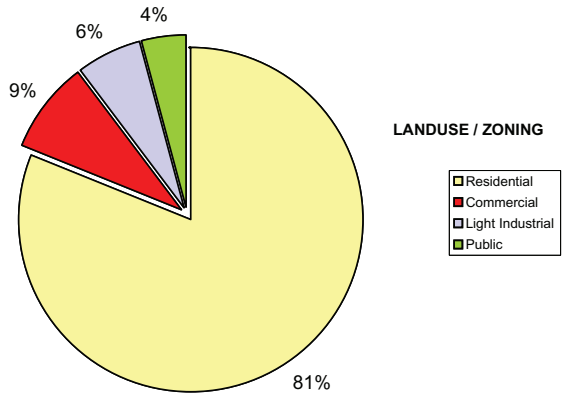

Figure 5.16: A total 6% of the land area in St. John is currently zoned as Light Industrial.

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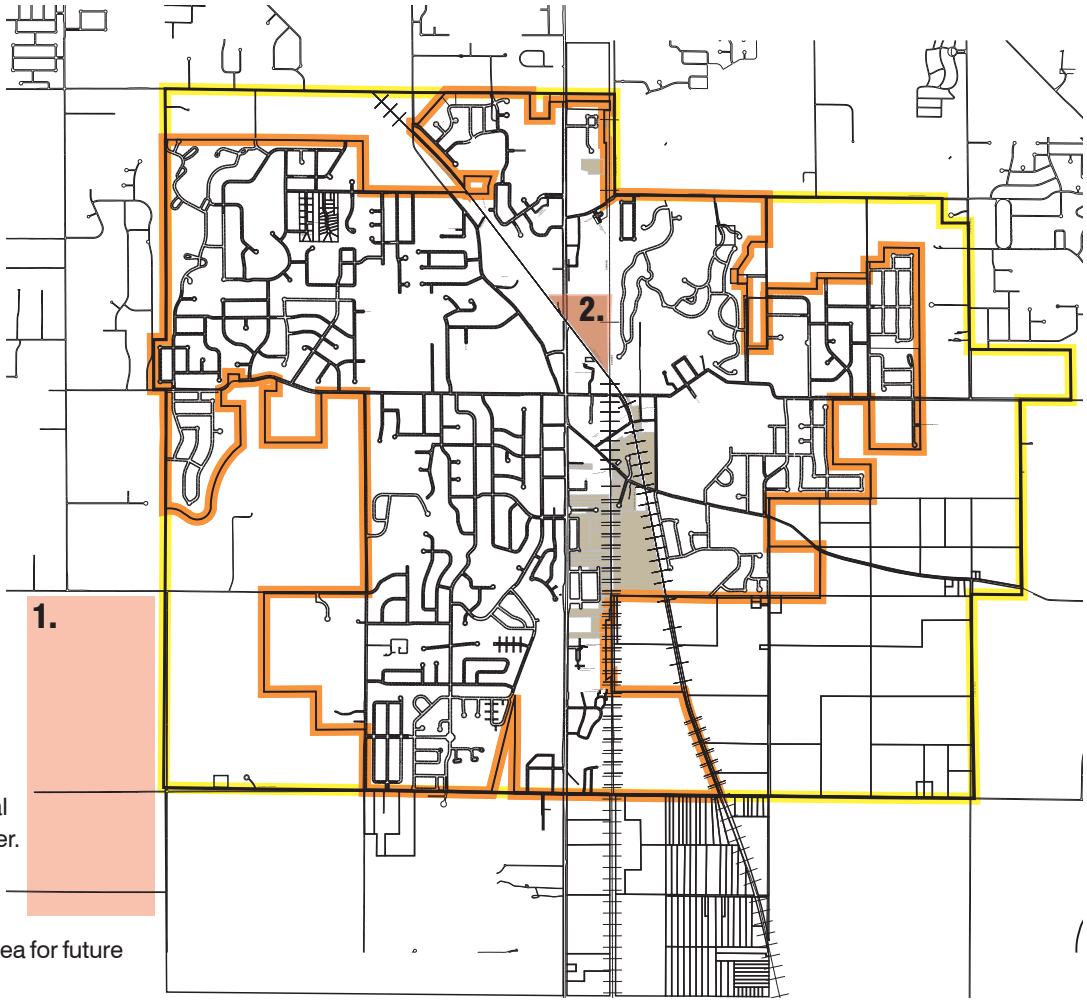

1. Proposed area for future Business/ Office zoning
2. Rezone for potential Station/ Town Center.

Figure 5.17: Proposed area for future Business/ Office zoning

Light Industrial Recommendations

The following are recommendations for future light industrial development:

- The demand for light industrial space in St. John is currently very low. If businesses are located on light industrial zoning it should remain.
- The land located along the CSX rail alignment north of 93rd Street is zoned L-1 but would be ideal for a potential rail station location. This land should be re-zoned for the train station and Town Center
- Light Industrial Land that is undeveloped in the center of the Town should be considered for other uses. A Town Center or new train station will require a central location and strategic access to rail.

Business Office Recommendations

The benefits of creating larger areas dedicated specifically to business and office uses are job creation, economic development and commercial tax base. As the Town grows there is an opportunity to identify new locations for business/office development (figure 5.17). For that reason the plan recommends the following:

- Create a new zoning designation for Business/ Office land uses.
- Establish a Business Office Park on the periphery of the Town in the southwest quadrant near the 109th corridor for easy vehicular access (Figure 5.17). Also, light industrial zoning in this area can be achieved through a variance, therefore ensuring compatibility with other uses.

Public Space: Municipal Facilities

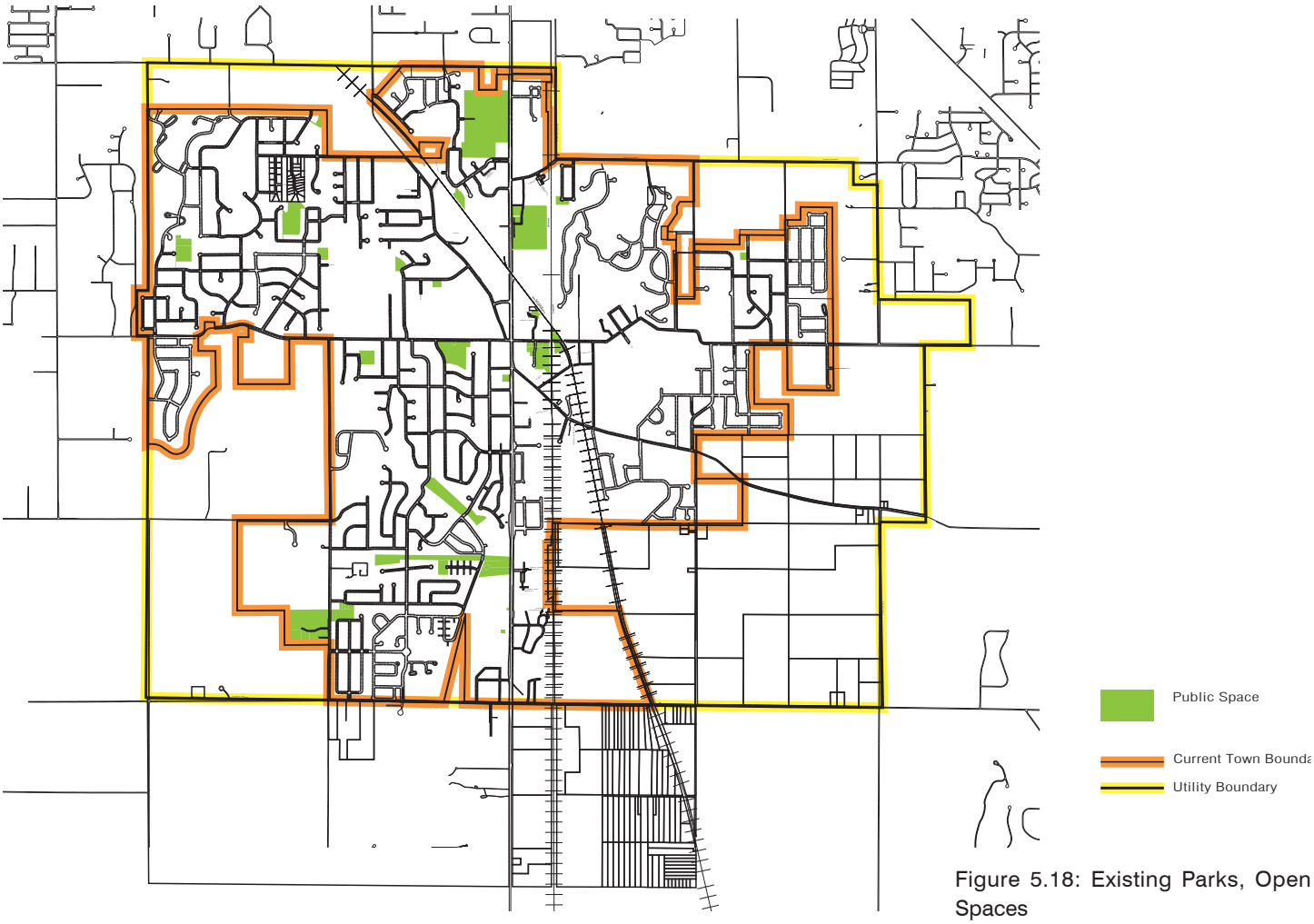

Figure 5.18: Existing Parks, Open Spaces

Publicly zoned land includes Municipal Facilities, open spaces and public parks. Together these categories account for 4% of the total area in St. John.

Existing Municipal Facilities:

St John's municipal complex is located off of 93rd Street and includes the Town Hall, Police and Fire Stations as well as the Public Works facility.

Proposed New Municipal Complex:

The Town of St. John is currently in the early stages of planning a substantial expansion of the Municipal Complex. The existing facilities for public works, police and fire building were built in 1917 and are both obsolete and severely undersized for today's municipal standards. A new modernized 28,000 square feet public works building is being considered for town-owned property along Hack Street which will provide ample outside storage space for town equipment. A new 25,000 square feet combined police and fire building is being considered for the existing public works building site. Also, the Town Hall needs additional meeting rooms and a 3,600 square foot addition is being planned. All these improvements are greatly needed and under consideration by the Town Officials. These new facilities will help St. John provide adequate public infrastructure to insure necessary public safety and quality services to the growing population of St. John.

Municipal Facilities Recommendations

- The current municipal facilities are under-sized to serve the existing community. As the Town grows, accommodations for an expanded civic center or new complex will be required.

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Additions and Renovations to St. John Municipal Complex:

The Town of St. John recently approved renovating and building a new addition to the current Town Hall; and new construction of a Police / Fire Station and new Public Works facility. Figure 5.19 and 5.20 represent the current architectural designs and site plan for the new Municipal Center facilities.

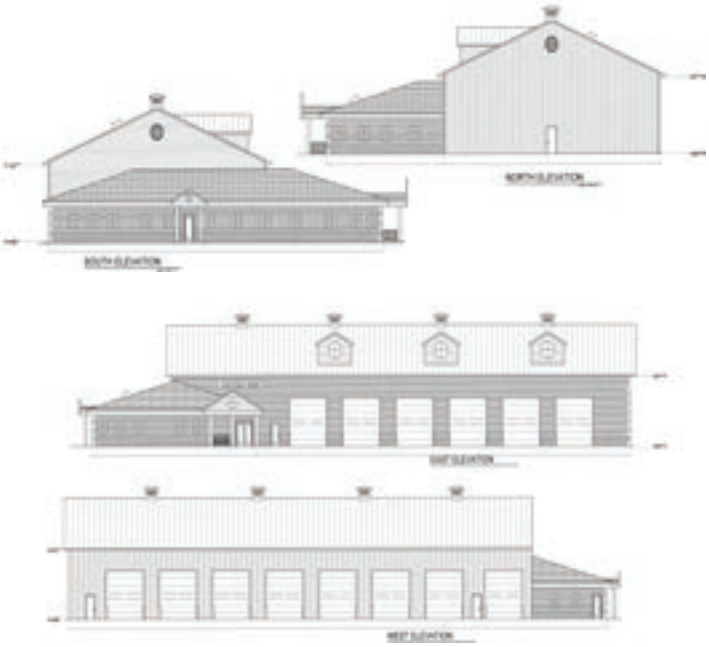

Figure 5.19: Proposed Elevations for New Municipal Center

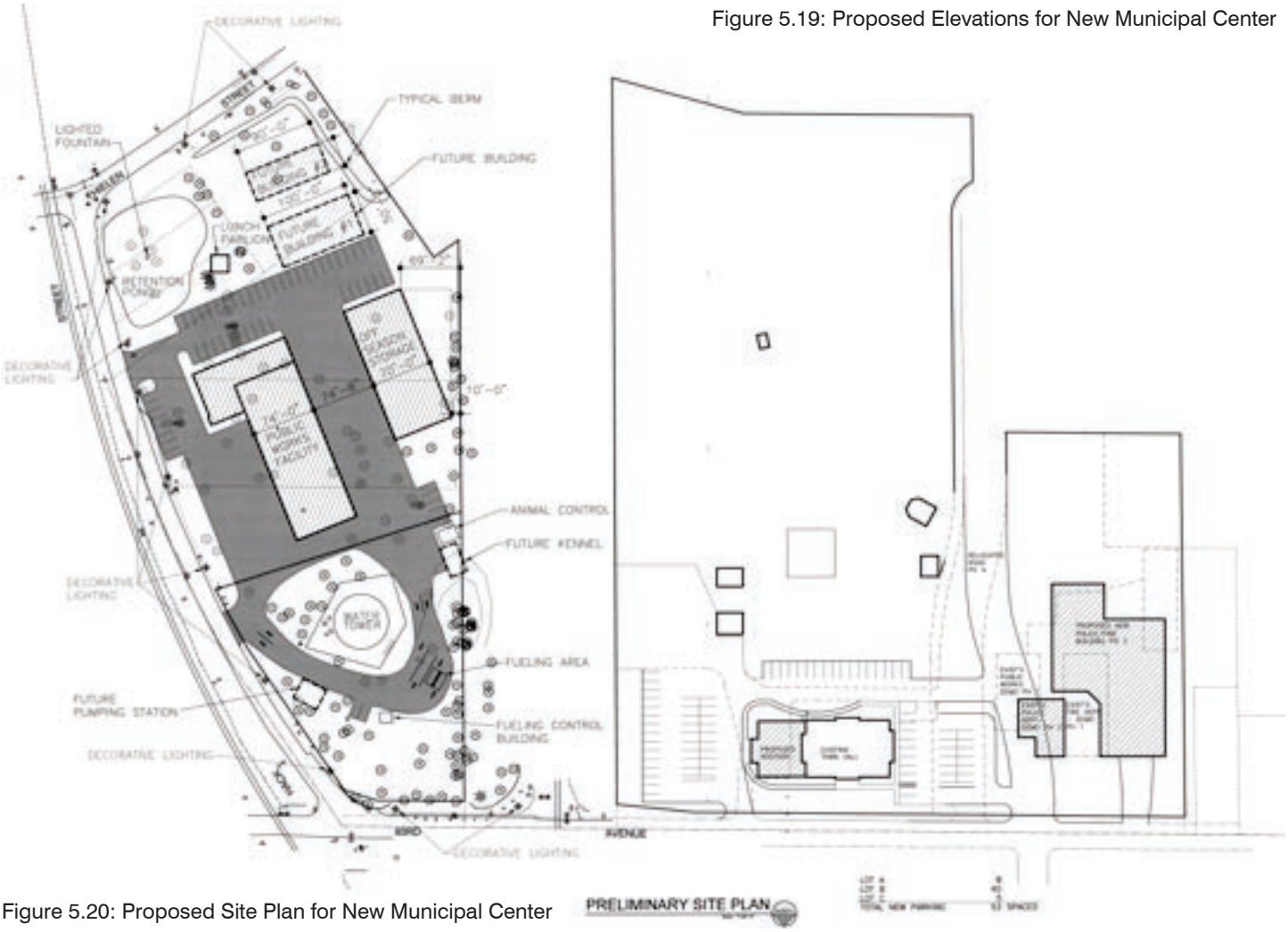

Figure 5.20: Proposed Site Plan for New Municipal Center

Public Space: Parks, Open Spaces and Wetlands

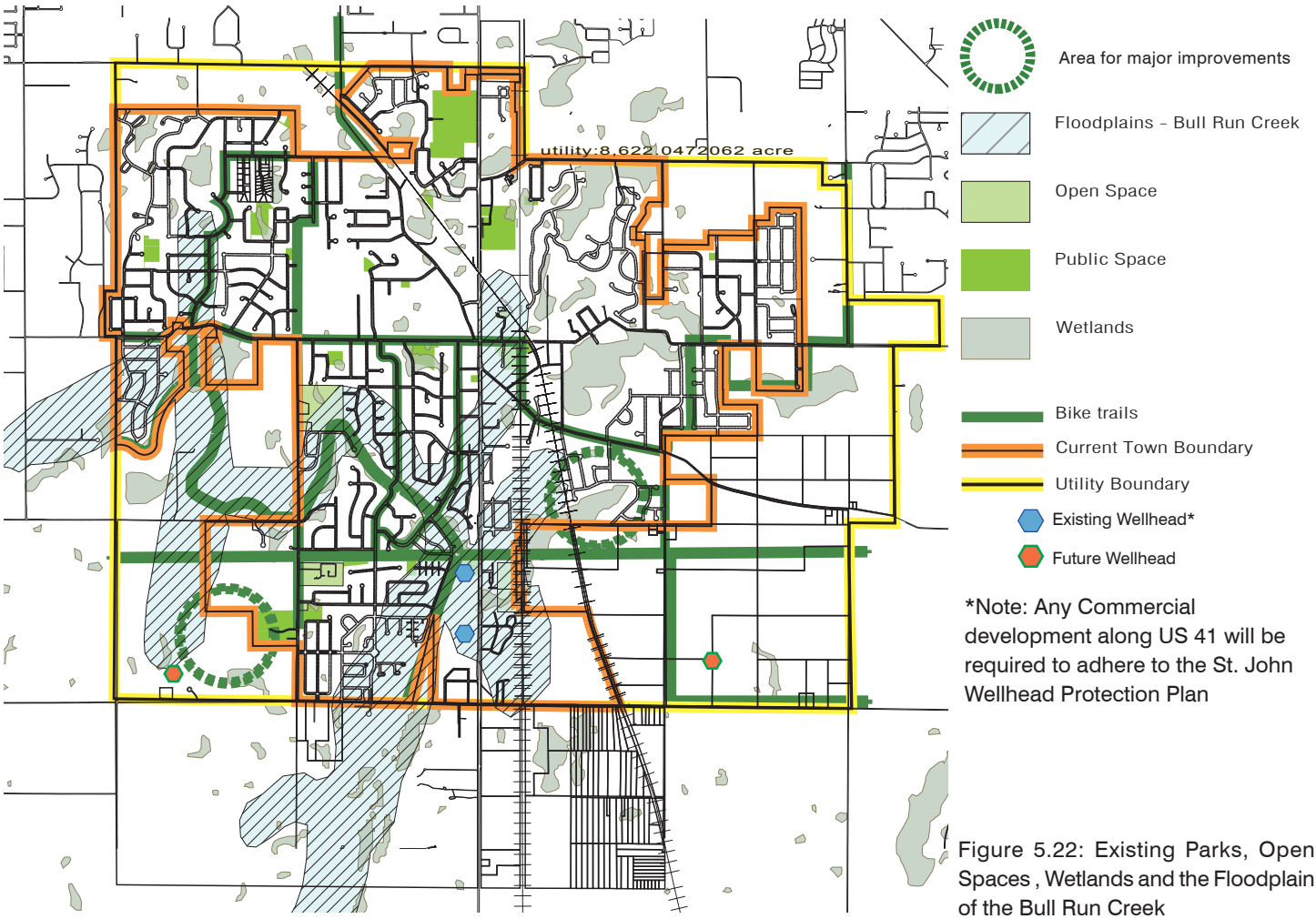

Figure 5.22: Existing Parks, Open Spaces , Wetlands and the Floodplain of the Bull Run Creek

Existing Public Park Land:

The Town of St. John has three community parks: Heartland Park, Civic Park and the East Park. These average between 25 and 30 acres in area and include playing fields and sports facilities. Fifteen facilities exist in St. John today as neighborhood parks and three exist as undeveloped park properties. These vary in size from a little over an acre to 14 acres.

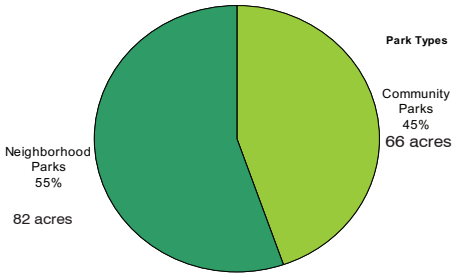

Figure 5.21: Percentages of the types of Parks

Currently 4% of the total land use in St. John falls under the categories of Open and Public spaces. While there are many small parks in the Town, a large majority of them are part of neighborhood developments and serve a small part of the population (figure 5.19). Very few can be classified as 'Community Parks'. Park Space is a 'Quality of Life' Measure. The amount of park space in St. John (totally 148 Acres) is rated above average by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

St. John currently has a network of smaller parks and recreational resources spread throughout the community. The 2003-2007 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan proposes that a network of corridors be developed to provide pedestrian and bicycle connections to neighborhoods and between parks. Figure 5.21 identifies the main path that the Bicycle/ Pedestrian trail will follow along St. John.

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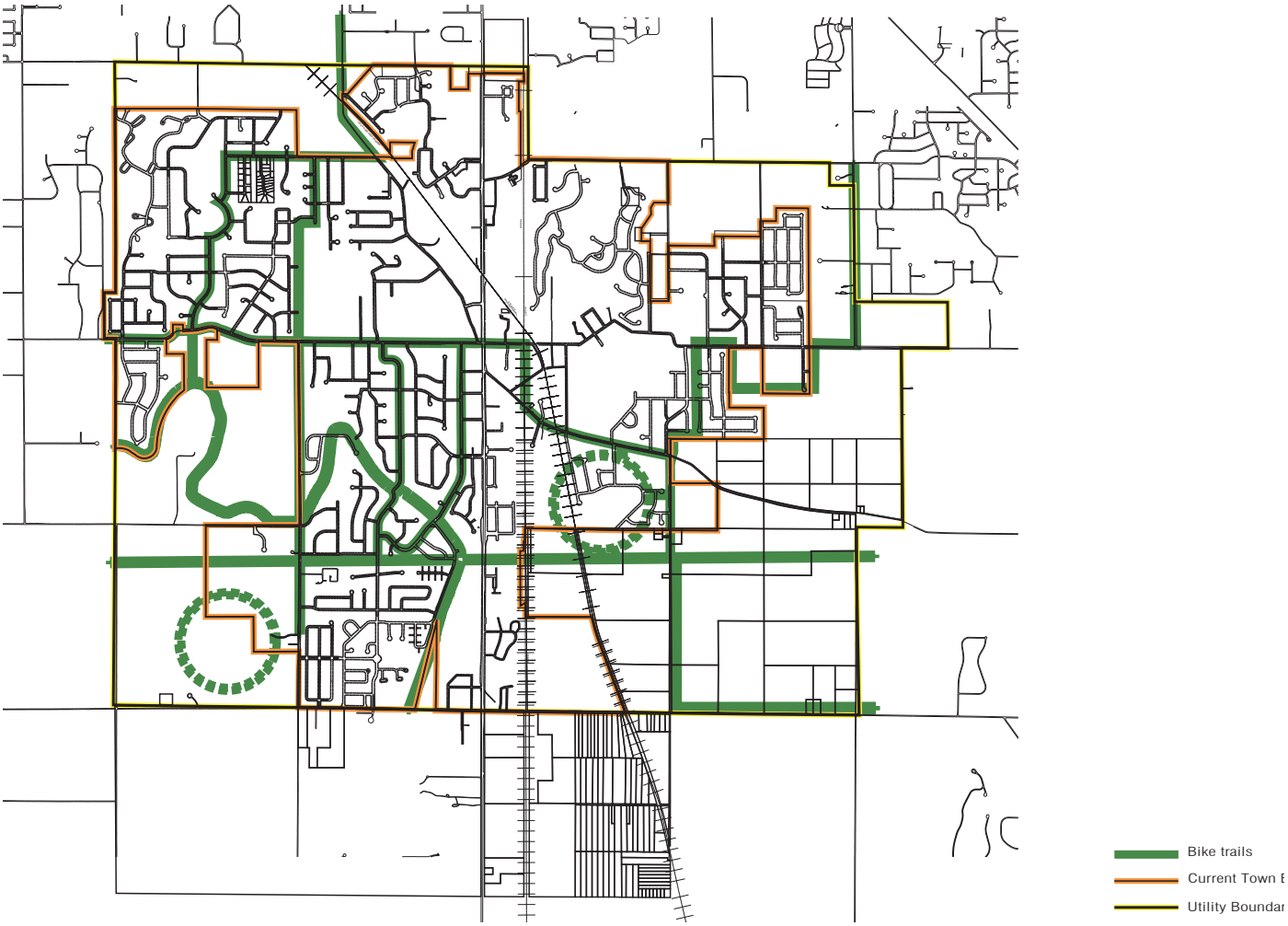

Figure 5.23: Planned Bicycle / Pedestrian Trails

Existing Open Space and Wetlands:

Prior to the settlement of St. John a large percentage of the land was wetlands and many small patches of wetland still exist. The Town is physically divided by the Continental Divide. Bull Run and the St. John creeks, which combine to form West Creek drain to the south into the Kankakee River watershed. The creeks to the east and north of the Town drain to the north into the Lake Michigan watershed. The Bull Run Creek is controlled by the Lake County Drainage Board, which has established a 60-foot protection zone from the center line of the creek. The floodplain of the Bull Run creek will account for a total of 2820 acres of St. John, when the Town grows to its ultimate boundary

Much of St. John's original natural features have been transformed by development. Prior to urbanization the area was primarily covered in grassland, with extensive marsh and wet prairie areas. Today, the wetlands are still very much a part of the Town.

Figure 5.24: Large corridors of open space along the electric line easements

The network of bicycle and pedestrian trails through St. John, use many existing systems of infrastructure. The watercourses of the Bull Run and West Creek are platted with easements, implying that these and other drainage courses become linked open space and corridor trail systems. A portion of the Bull Run Creek Greenway will soon be under construction linking Homestead Acres Park I to Heartland Park. (Figure 5.21).

The numerous utility corridors (Figure 5.22) that cross St. John are another major open space resource for integrating a trail network. The trail network should be coordinated with the thoroughfare plan, so that when a roadway is upgraded or a new sub-division developed, the greenways are included as part of the roadway improvements.

Eventually the trails within St. John will connect to neighboring town trails, establishing a regional trail and greenway system for Northwest Indiana.

As the Town of St. John continues to grow by annexing unincorporated lands and developing new residential neighborhoods, these new developments must conform to the requirements of the 2003-2007 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan. With many portions of the proposed bike trails going through new developments it is mandated that these neighborhoods install segments of the Town's Bicycle/ Pedestrian Trail.

Figure 5.25: Site Plan of the Kilkenny Estates - showing the preserved green spaces.

The Town is promoting these initiatives to preserve existing green spaces or wetlands and to incorporate natural areas into the design of the development. Figure 5.23 shows the site plan of the Kilkenny Estates. In this recent venture, the developer worked with the Town to strategically design the development to preserve a large grove of mature trees.

Open Space Recommendations

The following are recommendations to preserve the natural landscape and environment in St. John:

- Identify and protect wetlands from development
- Create portions of the Town's Bicycle/ Pedestrian Trail as part of new developments
- Encourage development techniques that minimize the percentage of impermeable surfaces.
- Participate in a local storm water management program that is compliant with the storm water management program instituted by the state, county and NIRPC.
- Work with developers to strategically locate and elicit cooperation in preserving substantial natural landscape features such as wetlands, mature trees, stream valley buffers and wildlife habitats.
- Create plan cluster subdivisions to conserve and even restore natural resources that can be a great neighborhood amenity, providing enjoyable vista for residents.
- Create opportunities to connect the natural resources of St. John through "greenways" and hike / bike trails.
- Encourage pedestrian activity and safety through sidewalks development.

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Zoning of Annexation Areas

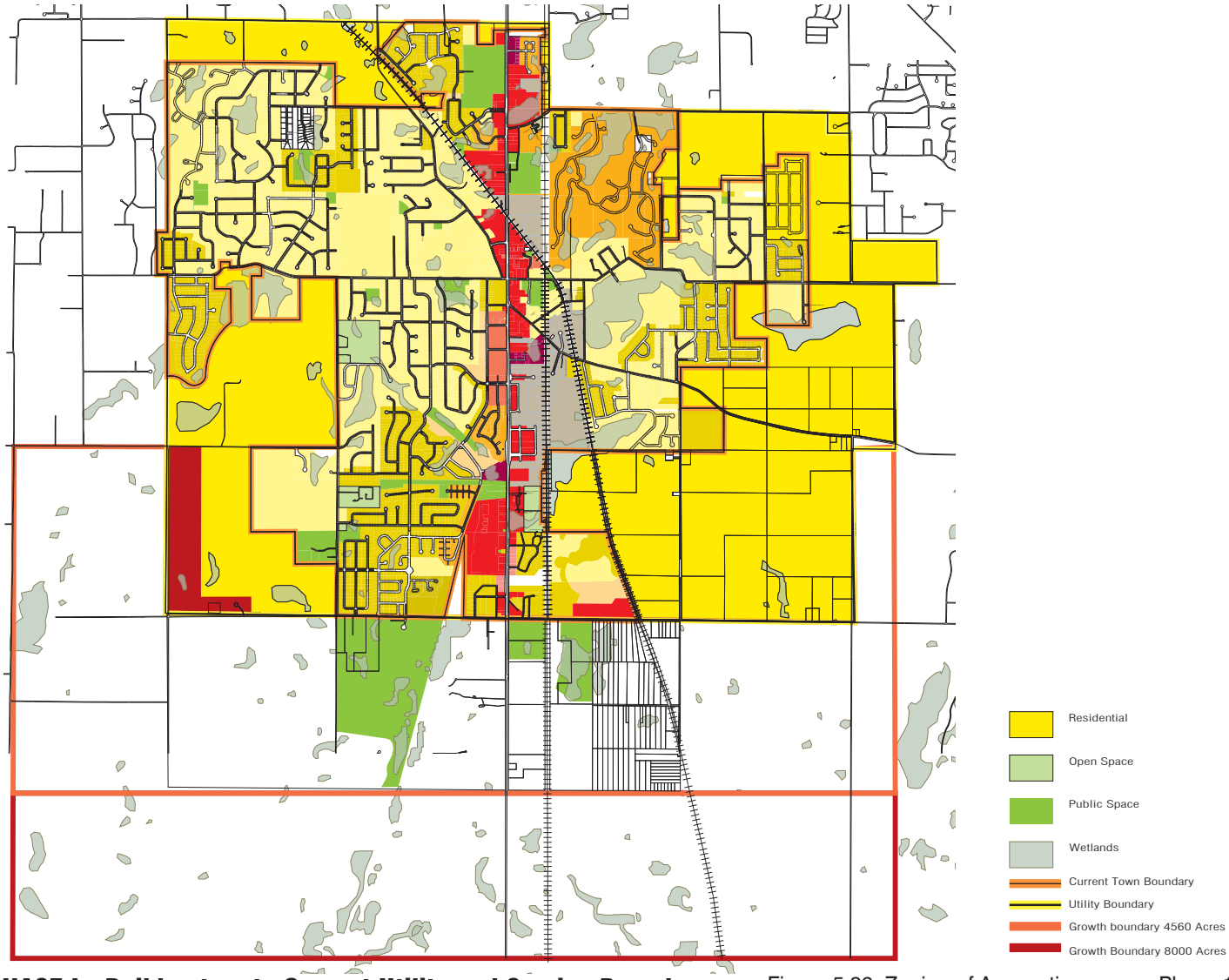

Figure 5.26: Zoning of Annexation areas - Phase 1

PHASE I - Build out up to Current Utility and Service Boundary

TOTAL AREA OF BUILD OUT	: 8622 ACRES
NEW LAND AREA	: 3260 ACRES
PHASE I RESIDENTIAL	: 3139 ACRES
PHASE I COMMERCIAL	: 147 ACRES
TOTAL WETLANDS IN PHASE I	: 180 ACRES

The build-out of St. John up to the current Utility Boundary involves the annexation of approximately 3,260 acres, which brings the total size of the Town up to 8622 acres (figure 5.21). Based on the population growth at the blended rate* of 378 per year, it is projected that this Phase of growth of St. John be achieved between the years 2020 and 2025. These numbers are based on population projections based on current growth rates. These values may change due to any increase or decrease in actual population counts.

*Based on 2003 data for population and housing permits

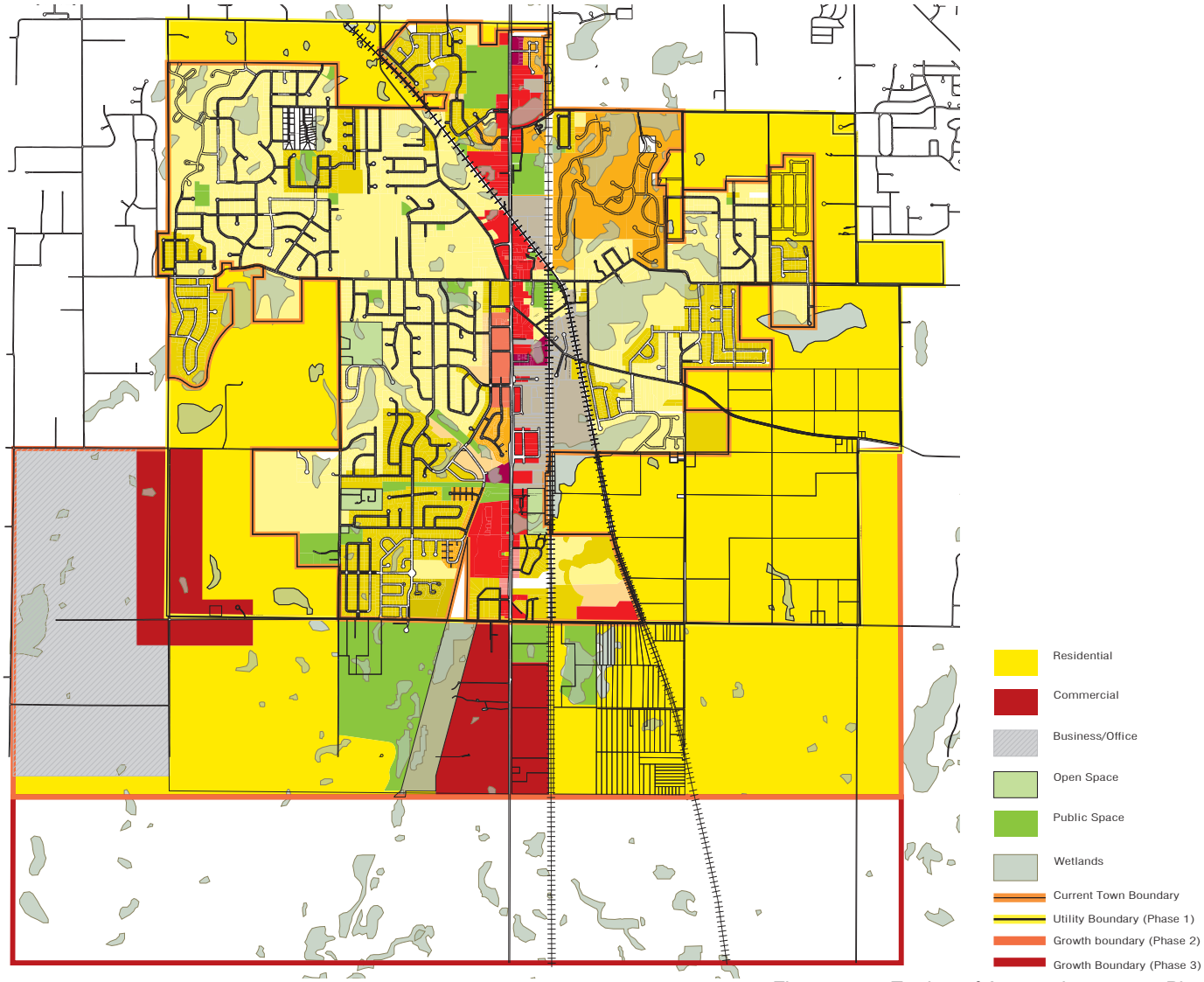

Figure 5.27: Zoning of Annexation areas - Phase 2

PHASE II - Build out up to Growth Boundary I

TOTAL AREA OF BUILD OUT	: 12745	ACRES
NEW LAND AREA	: 4123	ACRES
PHASE II RESIDENTIAL	: 2225	ACRES
PHASE II COMMERCIAL	: 426	ACRES
PHASE II BUSINESS OFFICE	: 968	ACRES
PHASE II PUBLIC SPACE	: 115	ACRES
TOTAL WETLANDS IN PHASE III	: 485	ACRES

The build-out of St. John up to Growth Boundary 1 involves the annexation of approximately 4123 acres, which brings the total size of the Town up to 12745 acres (figure 5.22). Based on the population growth at the current rate of 378 per year, it is projected that this Phase of growth of St. John be achieved between the years 2040 and 2045. These numbers are based on population projections based on current growth rates. These values may change due to any increase or decrease in actual population counts. The boundary is established along the State Line on the West, Blaine Street on the East and 117th Street on the South.

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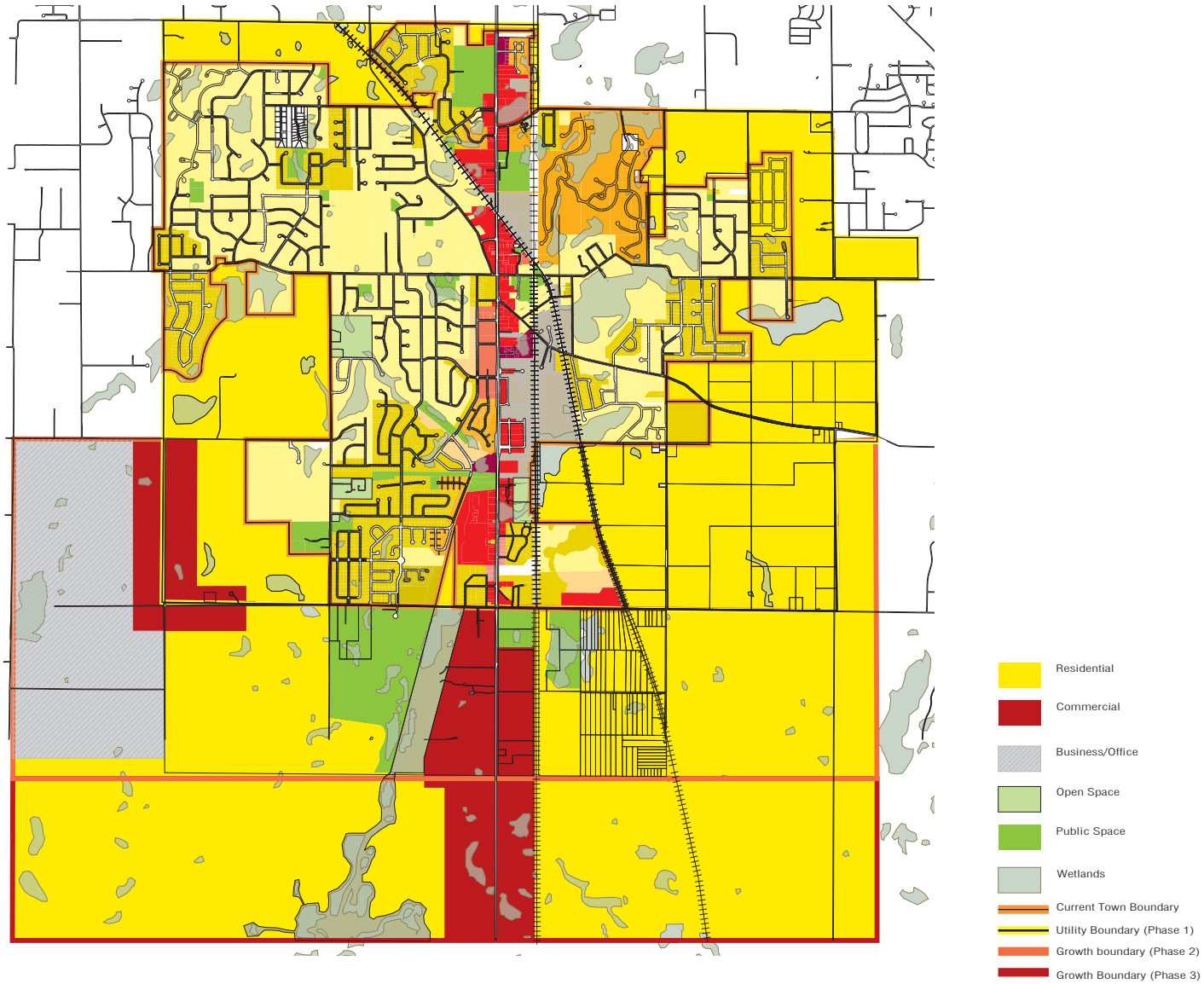

Figure 5.28: Zoning of Annexation areas - Phase 3

PHASE III - Build out up to Growth Boundary II

TOTAL AREA OF BUILD OUT	: 15954	ACRES
NEW LAND AREA	: 3209	ACRES
PHASE III RESIDENTIAL	: 2695	ACRES
PHASE III COMMERCIAL	: 332	ACRES
PHASE III PUBLIC SPACE	: 173	ACRES
TOTAL WETLANDS IN PHASE III	: 178	ACRES

The build-out of St. John up to Growth Boundary 2 involves the annexation of approximately 3,209 acres, which brings the total size of the Town up to 15954 acres (figure 5.23). Based on the population growth at the current rate of 378 per year, it is projected that this Phase of growth of St. John be achieved between the years 2055 and 2060. These numbers are based on population projections based on current growth rates. These values may change due to any increase or decrease in actual population counts.

Summary of Land Use Recommendations for Annexation Areas:
In keeping with the findings of the recent Town wide community survey, the residents and Town officials would like to maintain the same land use designations and percentages as present today. As the Town incrementally acquires additional land through annexation it will be important to track the land use percentages. Market forces will encourage the build-out of some areas faster than others so it is important to determine land uses goals for the entire annexation area and planning phases.

Should St. John's population grow and land area expand as predicted an additional 10,592 acres will be added to existing Town boundaries. The following are the equivalent acreages of individual land uses that correlate to the current zoning percentages.

- Residential: 8580 acres (81%);
- Commercial: 953 acres (9%);
- Business Office: 635 acres (9%) and
- Public and Park Lands: 423 acres (6%).

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PART 6: DEVELOPING URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Recommended Guideline Locations

US Route 41 Commercial Corridor Guidelines

Frontage Road

Town Center and Rail Station Area

Business Park Development Guidelines

Housing Design Guidelines

PART 6: DEVELOPING URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

As St. John grows and develops, the small Town community environment highly valued by residents can suffer from a loss of character or clear identity, especially in commercial areas where current big box retail development practices can overwhelm those values. Urban design guidelines can refocus the development process towards the Town's aesthetic goals and regulate the development by specifically defining desired design characteristics. Design guidelines and zoning criteria are very effective tools for Town officials and community residents to control the quality of future development. In most cases developers welcome and comply with design guidelines because they lend an element of predictability to the development process by communicating the community goals prior to the investment in land or design services. Design guidelines provide everyone involved in the development process with a clear set of parameters concerning design. The guidelines can accomplish the following:

- Define or clarify the district's unique setting, land uses and physical characteristics.
- Avoid inappropriate development detrimental to adjacent property owners.
- Promote aesthetically-appropriate design strategies for public space, buildings and landscape elements.

The intention of urban design guidelines is to shape a diverse group of buildings, land uses, and outdoor spaces into a visually coherent and functionally compatible environment. Therefore it is important to collectively establish criteria for both privately and publicly owned land. Design guidelines can require particular aesthetics and specify high-quality materials for architecture and landscape character and signage. Guidelines typically address many of the following issues:

District Design Elements:
Including development densities, roadway design and widths, parcel sizes, building orientation, open space, site access locations and view corridors.

Building Design:
Including square footage requirements, heights, materials, façade design, window locations and aesthetics.

Streetscape Design:
Including street design, dimensions, parkways, sidewalks, paving materials, lighting, signage, benches and other street furniture, street tree locations & species and other landscape planting.

Parking Design:
Including vehicular entrance locations, curb cuts, on-street parking locations and design; parking lot design, screening, tree planting locations, pedestrian amenities, lighting, paving materials and site drainage.

Recommended Guideline Locations
Through discussions with Town officials, community meeting feedback, and Town wide survey results, the following areas were identified as places where design guidelines would be a benefit for guiding development (figure 6.01):

(1) US Route 41 - Commercial Corridor

(2) "Town Center" and Rail Station

(3) Business Park

(4) Residential Districts

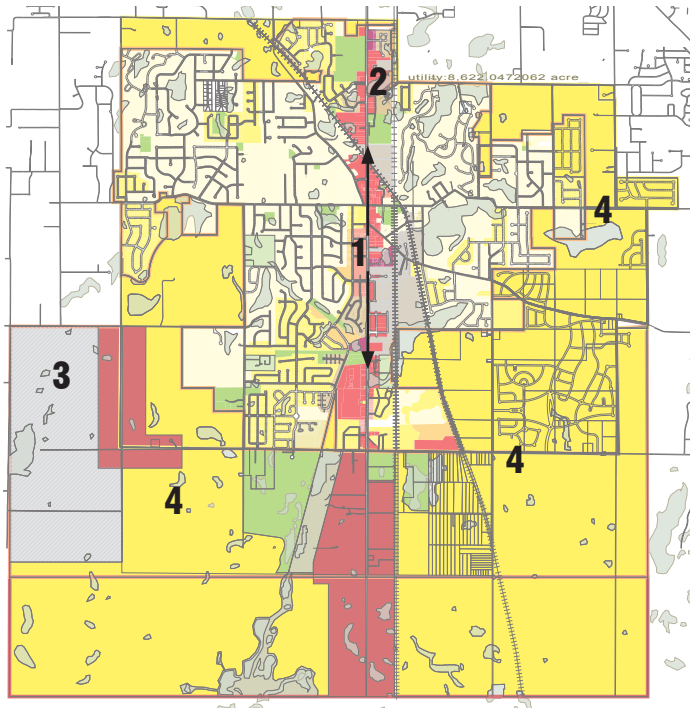

Figure 6.01: Recommended guideline locations

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US Route 41 Commercial Corridor Guidelines

The development of design guidelines that address the commercial retail corridor of US Route 41 will help St. John regulate the quality of retail projects along the roadway and define the image of the Town as presented along US Route 41.

As mentioned in the transportation section, creation of a frontage road along US Route 41 will improve traffic flow. There are also other advantages. Typical commercial development along major arterials include “big box” retail establishments that are set back hundreds of feet from the road to provide for enormous parking lots (figure 6.02). Each individual retailer requires a curb cut that increases traffic congestion. The implementation of a frontage road system eliminates the individual curb cuts and creates a different pattern of development. Further, the space between the frontage road and arterial creates “out-lot” parcels that can be used for smaller retail stores, landscaping, storm water retention and, in some case, small scale parking areas. The introduction of commercial out lots activates the edge along the highway, adding vibrancy to the thoroughfare (figure 6.04).

The frontage road also encourages pedestrian activity along the commercial edges by reducing the number of curb cuts onto US Route 41, thus allowing for a continuous network of bike paths and sidewalks that can also be addressed in the commercial corridor design guidelines. In addition, it allows the possibility of inter connectedness between developments so that people may, if they choose, park in one space and circulate between developments on foot without having to move their car. Pedestrian activity is encouraged both along the thoroughfare and within the retail developments. Design Guidelines that outline the requirements for sidewalks, bike paths, bike racks, benches, lighting, and similar items can help to achieve these objectives.

Figure 6.02: Large parking lots between primary roads and retail

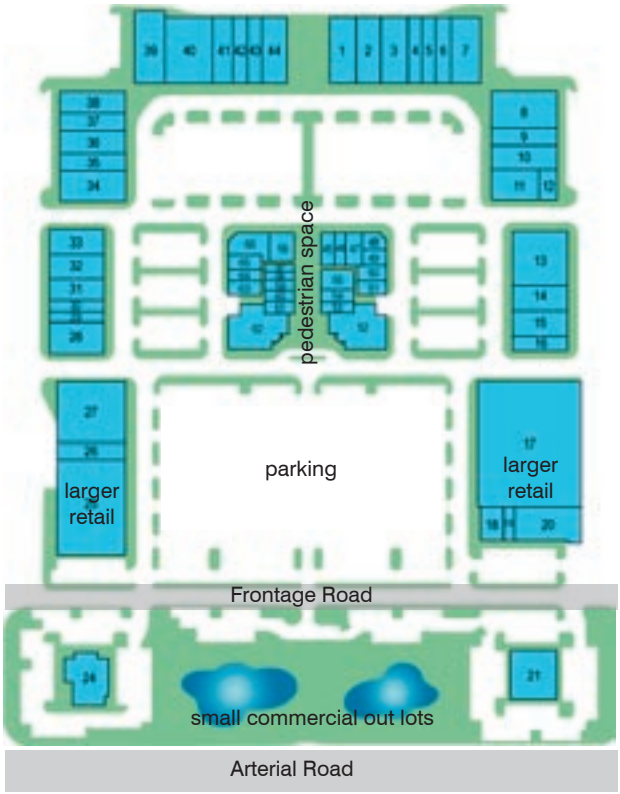


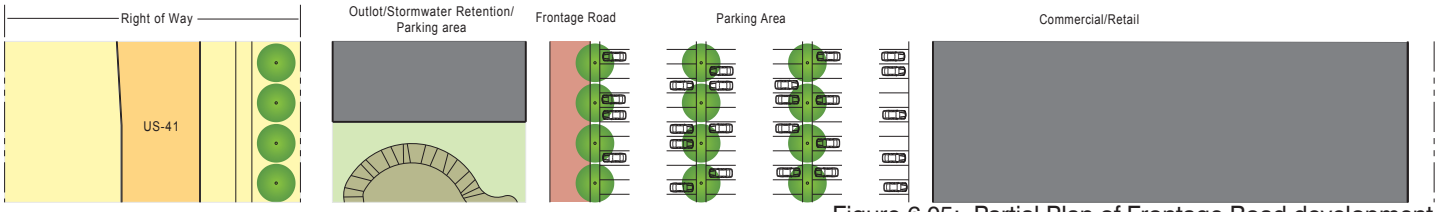
Figure 6.03: Commercial development: a combination of retail out lots as well as larger retail spaces

Figure 6.04: Smaller Commercial out-lots

Frontage Road

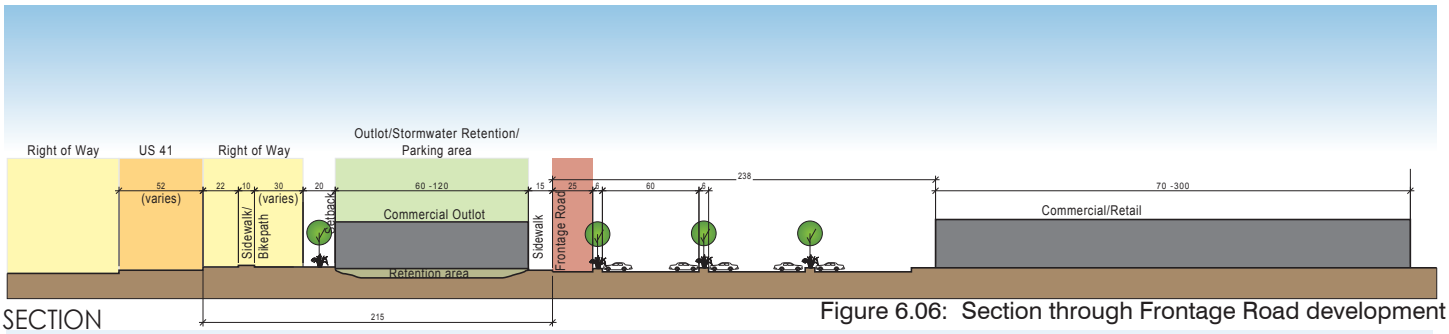
Figures 6.05 and 6.06 below show a conceptual plan and section through US Route 41 that illustrates the components of the frontage road system and how parcels along the roadway may develop. The guidelines for US route 41 should include the following design goals for the commercial corridor.

- Locate the Frontage Road at a minimum of 200 feet from US Route 41 allowing enough room for cars to stack at signalized intersections (figure 6.07).
- Allow for a potential road widening zone along US Route 41
- Establish a sidewalk, bike path and tree planting zone along the US Route 41 set back.
- Identify storm water run off requirements and coordinate the locations of landscape swales and water retention areas.
- Coordinate with the 2003 Signage Plan for sign locations, heights, materials and specifications.
- Create a zone for “outlot” parcels. Create building design requirements for heights, depths, façade designs, landscaping and materials. Throughout discussions with residents and Town officials, brick was stated as the preferred material for new commercial development.
- Develop parking lot standards that include pedestrian and landscape provisions as well as storm water requirements.
- Create design guidelines for the large scale “big box” buildings for heights, depths, façade designs, landscaping and materials. Brick was stated as the preferred material for new development.



PARTIAL PLAN

Figure 6.05: Partial Plan of Frontage Road development



SECTION

Figure 6.06: Section through Frontage Road development

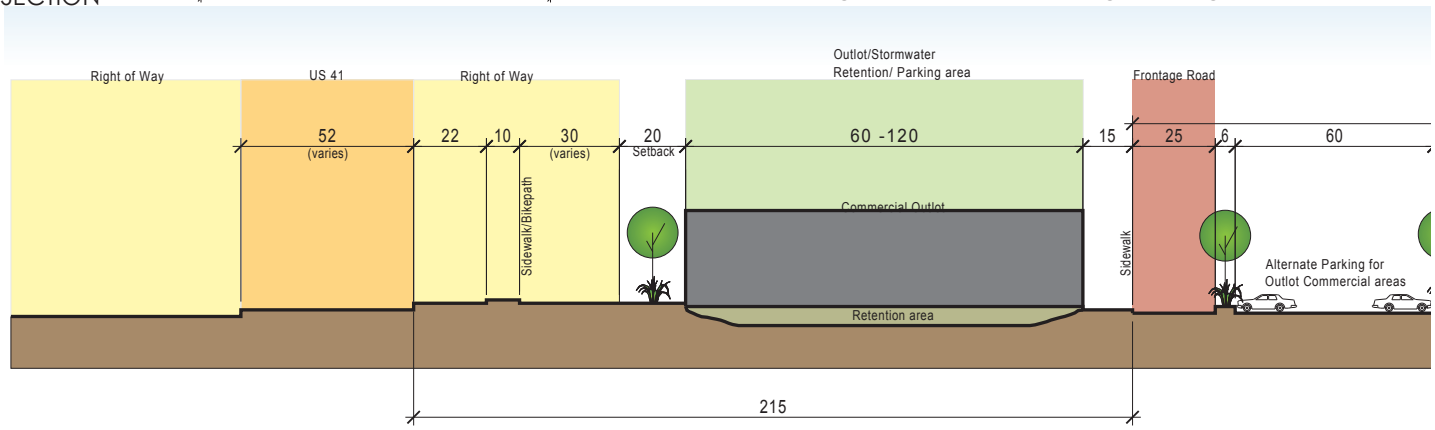


Figure 6.07: Section showing details and recommended dimensions

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Town Center and Rail Station Area

St. John's development from a small farming community to a larger Town has occurred in a patch-like pattern such that the Town is now comprised of many isolated districts without a discernible center or downtown area. One of the first issues identified in the planning meetings was the Town's desire to create an identifiable Town Center for St. John. A Town Center was perceived as enhancing the "quality of life" in St. John by providing an identifiable district that could be the symbolic heart of the community.

While the concept of the traditional Town Center is not new, the trend to construct "brand new" Town Centers in already established suburban communities has evolved over the last 25 years in response to the characterless retail corridors that have fractured many residential communities. While many new Town Centers are not located in Urban centers, they do offer many of the same urban characteristics such as, the creation of pedestrian-oriented destinations and the mixing of various uses including residential, retail, entertainment, office, and civic uses such as a Town hall, post office or library (figure 6.08). While a typical traditional downtown is developed over many decades, a new Town Center is developed quickly with larger tracts of land being developed at once.

In contrast to typical suburban mall or strip development, which is defined by "big-box" retail tenants and expansive parking lots, the Town Center offers a mix of use types and plazas or open spaces in which visitors can gather and linger. The goal of the development is to create a synergy of activities and mutually supportive uses. For example, office workers will use the retail, housing residents will use the restaurants, and visitors that see the center as a destination might decide to spend more time, thereby visiting more than one establishment. In addition, some of the most successful Town Centers also incorporate a public transit station, which provides a greater number of potential visitors and increases the likelihood of creating mixed-use synergy. Future transit-oriented development is a distinct advantage and may be a unique opportunity for St. John.

Another recent phenomenon in suburban mixed-use development, Lifestyle Centers (figure 6.10) aim to combine uses to meet the needs of a particular market demographic group; the group can range from teenagers and young families to senior citizens. Depending on market implications, the inclusion of lifestyle center principles may be successful in the Town Center of St. John.

Figure 6.08: Plan and View of City Park Town Center, Colorado

Figure 6.09: Short Pump Town Center, Richmond, VA

Figure 6.10: Summit Lou Lifestyle Center

Creating a Town Center Program:

Decisions regarding the mix of land uses and scale of development need to be carefully matched to the goals, needs and demographics of the community of St. John. A program of uses must be developed that balances the residents' wishes with the depth of the market for each Town Center component.

During the community meeting process, the residents were asked what they wanted in their Town Center. Figure 6.11 illustrates the responses received. While the highest number of residents requested Sit-down restaurants, other amenities that received a high number of responses included grocery stores, a train station, department stores and bookstores

Location:

While various locations in the Town were investigated, the site that was eventually selected by the Town is shown in Figure 6.12 designated as 'A'. This location was chosen for the following reasons:

- Adjacency to the potential rail station location
- Adequacy of land area for a mixed-use development
- Publicly owned land
- Visibility from US Route 41 – a major requirement for ensuring retail success
- Good vehicular access from US Route 41 and 93rd Street
- Much of the land area is either undeveloped or Town-owned

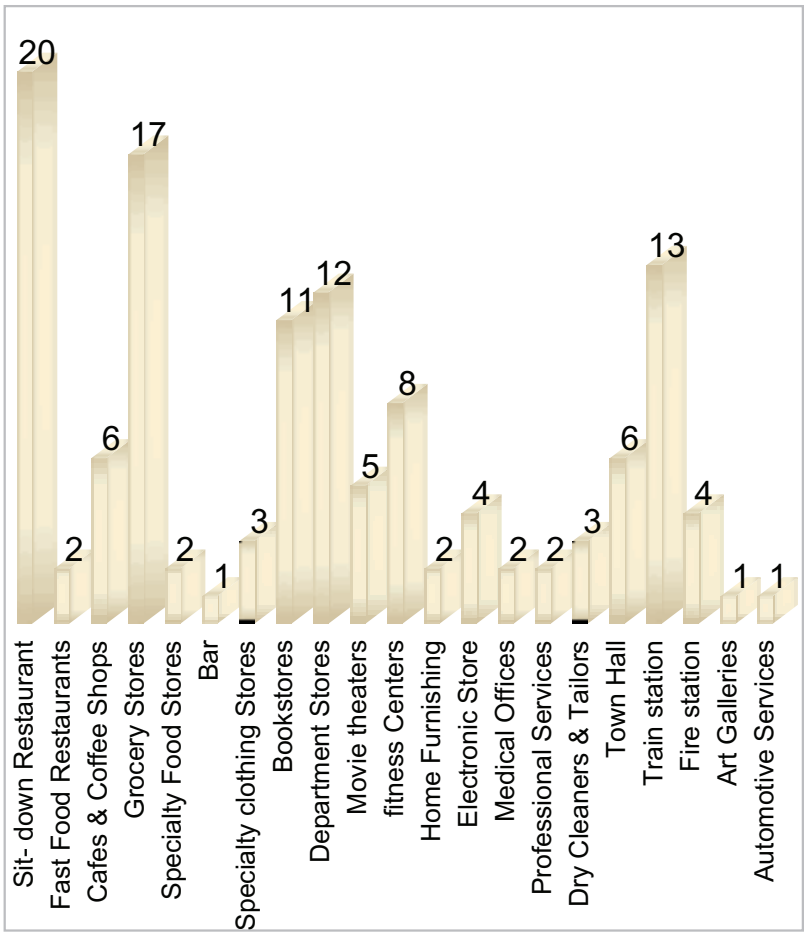

Figure 6.11: Community Survey: What would you like to see most in your Town Center?

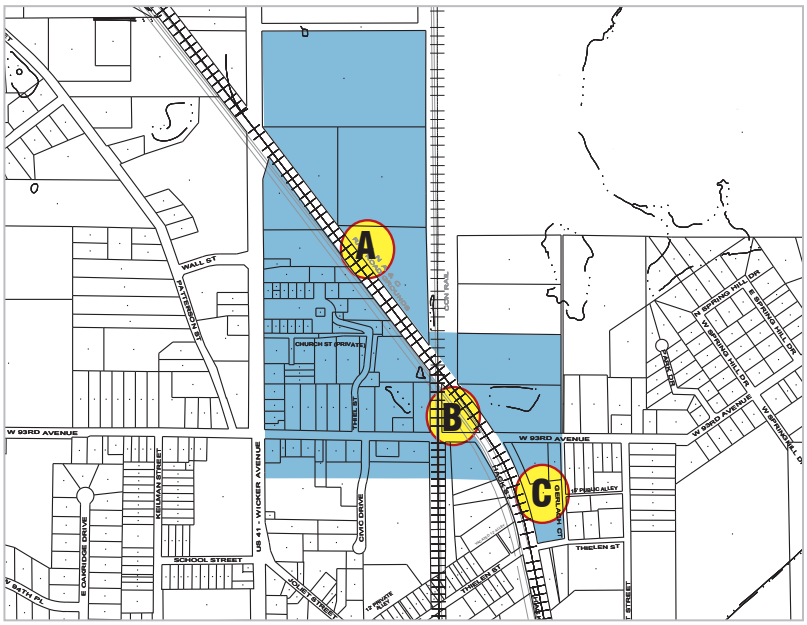

Figure 6.12: Locations under consideration for a new Town Center

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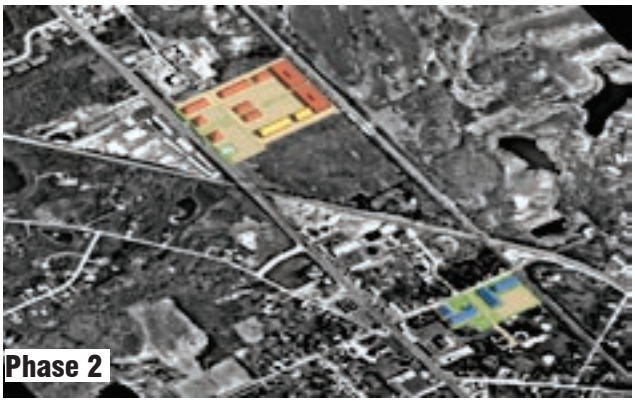
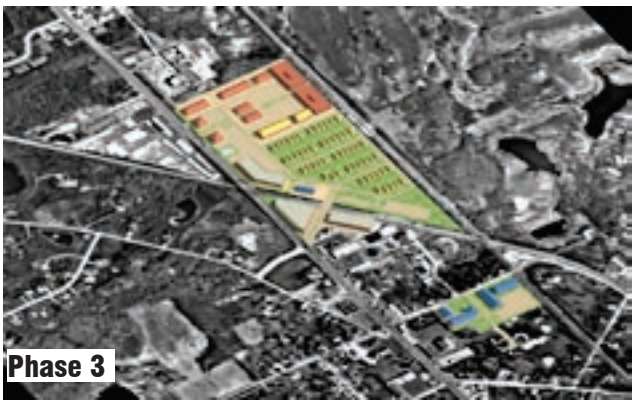
Phasing:

Figure 6.13 illustrates a potential build-out of a Town Center and not an actual development. This schematic view is intended to provide a vision of the future and realistic phasing of the new Town Center. The phasing diagrams show development of the northern parcels first, then develop the new municipal functions to the south and "fill in" the rest of the development (or re-development) over time as market forces or the advent of a rail station creates a viable economic environment.





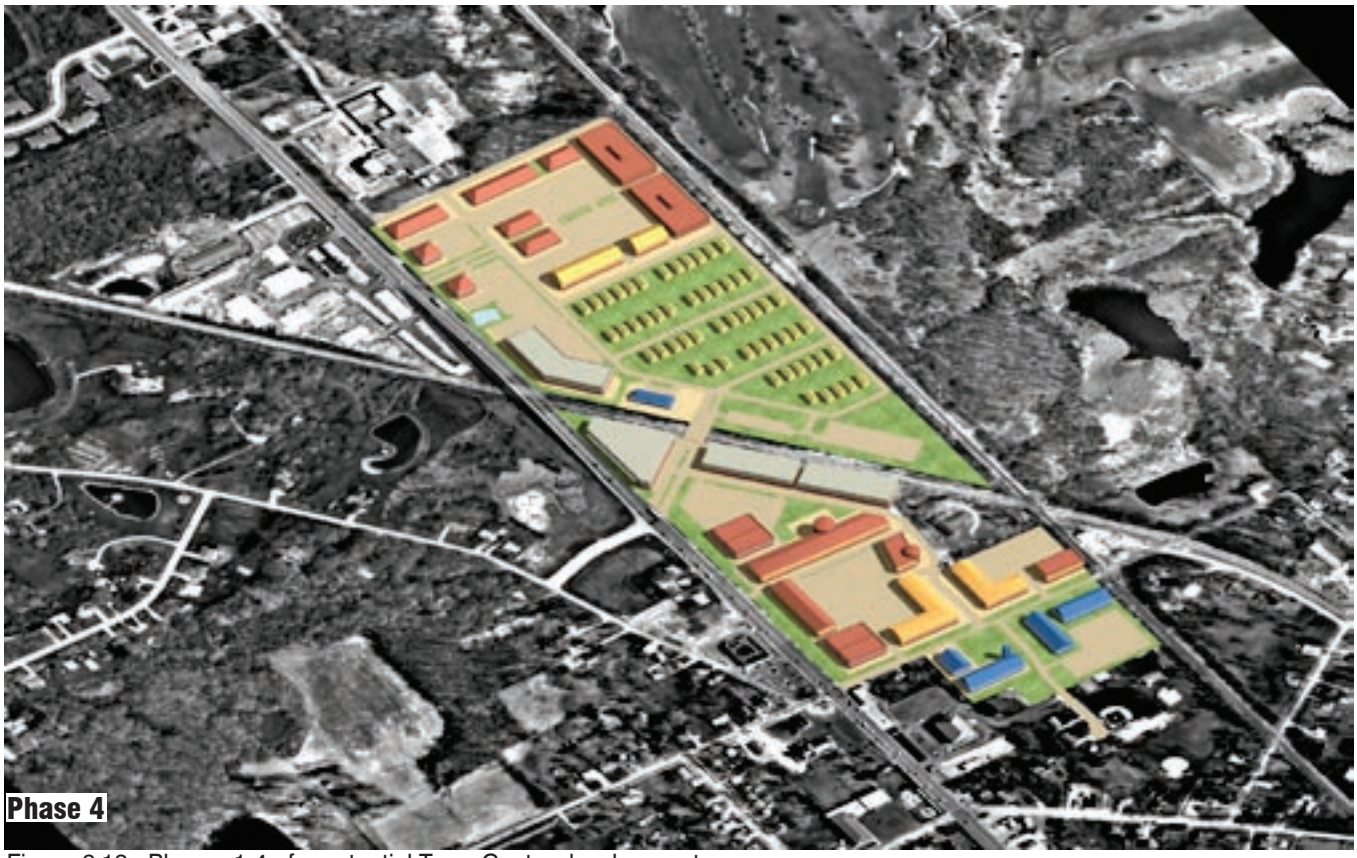


Figure 6.13: Phases 1-4 of a potential Town Center development

Business Park Development Guidelines

Guidelines in combination with a new zoning designation for a business/ office land use will encourage the future development of a business park on the periphery of St. John. As stated earlier in the plan, the intent is to encourage job creation for the region and to focus on office rather than industrial land uses. Because St. John is a residential community office uses are compatible with the community profile. Adequate road access is a major factor in determining a business park location. For that reason, the Town's southwest quadrant is better suited for a business park, due to access to major roads, Route 231 and Calumet Avenue. Should a new airport be developed in Peotone, that segment of Town would also be the best location for airport access. The proposed land area is approximately 920 acres for business development and 40 acres of lakes and wetlands. The land in this area currently is in the County's unincorporated areas and consists of farms and vacant tracts of rural land. As this area develops into an office location adequate infrastructure will be required to serve the new development. Most importantly,

Figure 6.14: Site Plan of the Cantera Business Park: Landscape as an integral part of the site

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a system of roads needs to be developed that will demarcate new development parcels.

Guidelines for the Business Park should initially address the overall vision for the district through the creation of a conceptual site plan that outlines the road layout, parcel sizes, protection of the existing natural areas and wetlands. The capacity of utilities to serve this district should be established in relation to the proposed land uses and estimated square footages of new construction.

Allowable uses could include general office, research and development facilities, conference center, accounting banking facilities, post office, mailing centers, training institutes, medical offices, laboratories, product development, technology companies, restaurants and retail to serve the office market. Businesses that are considered non compatible or nuisances due to emission of odors, loud noises, heavy manufacturing, excessive trucking requirements and storage of hazardous materials should not be permitted in the district.

Design guidelines in combination with the zoning criteria for the Business Park should address the following criteria to insure a quality office park is developed in St. John:

- Land plan with parcel sizes.
- Site access and traffic impacts.
- Roadway design specifications.
- Building set backs.
- Parking lot design requirements.
- Building Heights.
- Façade design and any special requirements.
- Building materials.
- Signage.
- Parking lot design requirements.
- Landscaping requirements.
- Storm water and drainage requirements.
- Sustainability and energy conservation.
- Exterior lighting requirements.
- Sidewalks.
- Parks and open space provisions.

The intention of these guidelines is to provide a framework for the implementation of a business park in St. John over many decades.

Figure 6.15: IBEW Local 701, Warrenville, Illinois

Figure 6.16: Tetra Pak, Vernon Hills, Illinois

Housing Design Guidelines

The current residential market in St. John tend towards high priced, large homes built with high quality construction. This trend is attracting affluent buyers to the community and St. John residents and officials would like to maintain this housing market trend for economic reasons. The Town as a whole benefits economically from both the higher property values and property taxes. However, the community recognizes the need to provide a variety of housing alternatives for seniors, empty nesters, young families and couples looking to purchase their first homes that do not want or can not afford such large homes. The current zoning ordinance permits smaller home sizes with Townhouses, duplexes and multifamily designations, but the Town is very concerned about maintaining high quality construction. Most of the new townhouses and duplexes are being built in cluster developments along larger single family parcels. This environment is call a Planned Unit Development (PUD) and is being well received by both new and old residents. As a result, establishing design guidelines for duplex and Town houses as well as goals for PUD's would help the Town to ensure that Townhouses and duplexes will be build to high quality standards.

Figure 6.17: Single family home in St. John today

Residential Guidelines

Guidelines for Townhouse, duplexes and PUD's should address criteria for the following neighborhood and building components;

- General neighborhood design objectives for roadways and subdivision layouts.
- Building set backs.
- Streetscape requirements for street trees and sidewalks.
- Landscaping.
- Street lighting.
- Material specifications including 50% brick facades.
- Access to park space and bike trails.
- Preservation of natural landscape features.
- Storm water and site drainage.
- Special building features bay windows, front porches and other elements promoting architectural character.
- Car garage locations and design.

Figure 6.18: Residential Street in Kentlands, Gaithersburg, Maryland

Figure 6.19: Residential Street in Park DuValle, Louisville, Kentucky

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APPENDICES: APPENDIX 1

Community Survey Highlights and Results

COMMUNITY SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

In developing this Comprehensive Plan for St. John, public participation and input was considered very important to establishing the shared vision for the Town. A community survey was mailed to all the households of St. John following the June Community meeting. Out of the 4010 surveys that were sent out to residents in their water bill, approximately 10% responded. The survey covered topics that were essential in establishing the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan and included issues of land use, transportation, Town growth, municipal facilities and establshing a Town Center. A brief highlight of the survey results is followed by the graphical representation of the responses.

PART 1: LAND USE

1. All new residential streets should have internal streets connecting to major through streets.
2. Retain the current residential zoning percentages with 92% single family and 8% Townhouse duplex.
3. Establish retail guidelines for creating quality development with specific criteria for building and site design, streetscape landscape and parking layout requirements.
4. Create a frontage along US Route 41 that will provide better vehicular access to retail and help alleviate congestion.
5. Create a new area for professional offices or business/ office zoning is on the periphery of the Town boundary, near the 231 corridor (109th street) that will provide good vehicular access.
6. Create new park/ open space in southeast quadrant of St. John to serve the anticipated future growth in that area.

PART 2: ST. JOHN GROWTH

7. Establish guidelines for potential annexation areas with standards for infrastructure; utilities, roads, land use, density, and open space.
8. Coordinate with adjacent municipalities, regional entities and future land development to ensure nearby development meets St. John standards.

PART 3: TRANSPORTATION

9. Strategically locate through streets (collector streets) in new residential subdivisions.
10. Connect streets in existing neighborhoods, where possible eleviate traffic congestion without diminishing the residential character of the street.

PART 4: TOWN CENTER

11. Develop a walkable Town Center with a distinctive and attractive sense of place in the Town of St. John.
12. The Town Center should be a mix of land uses that is primarily retail oriented with civic functions and open space
13. Establish design guidelines for the Town Center for building sizes, materials, heights, landscaping, and retail components.
14. A new Town Center should be visible from US Route 41.
15. Incorporate a station design in the Town Center district to accommodate the pending West Lake County Corridor Major Investment Study for commuter rail.

PART 5: MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

16. Future growth and capacity of the civic functions needs to be accommodated in a expanded or new Town Hall / Police Fire Complex.

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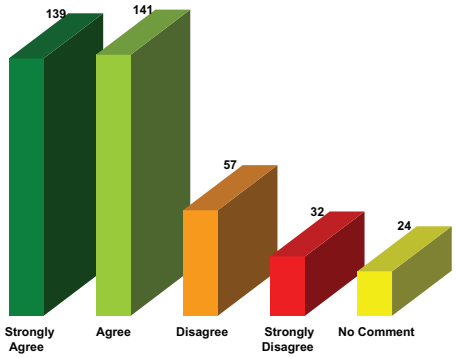
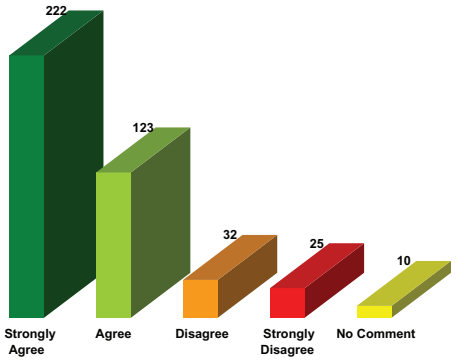
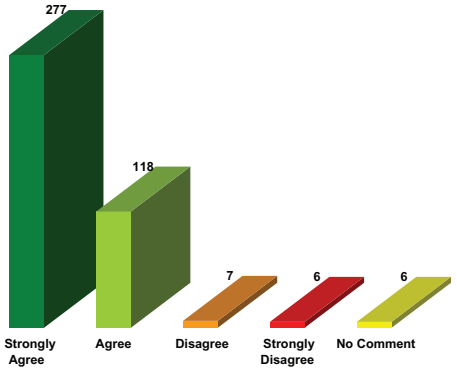
Community Survey Results



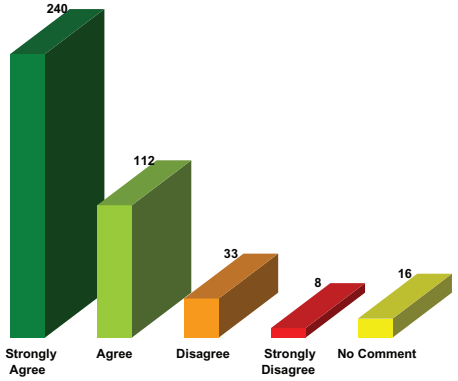
1. All new residential subdivisions should be required to have internal streets connecting to major through streets.



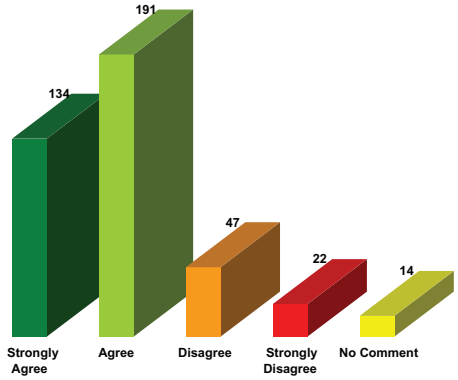
2. Presently St. John has 92% Single Family homes and 8% Townhouse/ Duplex homes. Are these percentages acceptable for St. John's future land development?



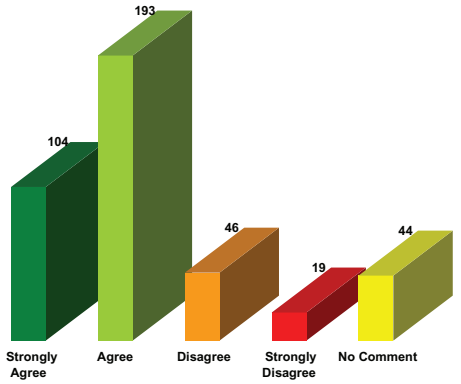
3. Guidelines should be established for creating quality retail development including design criteria, streetscape, landscape, and parking lot layout requirements.



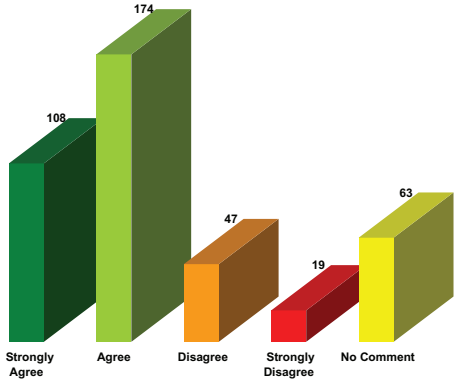
4. Where possible, a frontage road should be developed along US Route 41 for better vehicular access to retail and to alleviate congestion.



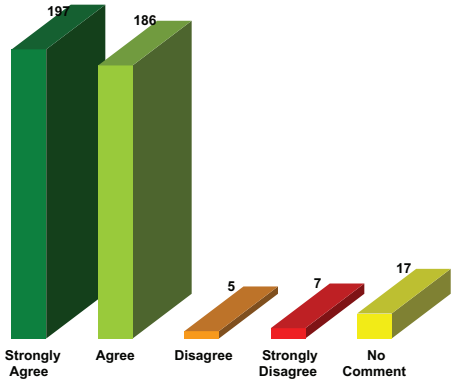
5. As the Town grows new areas should be established for retail and business / office uses.



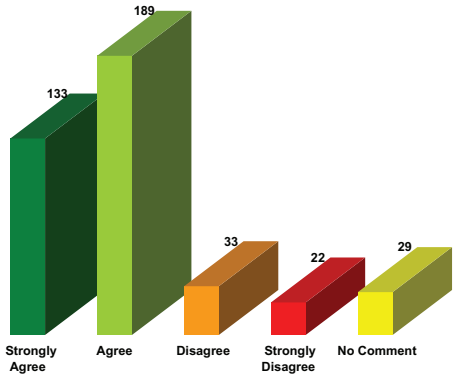
6. A good place for new professional offices or business / office zoning is on the periphery of the Town boundary, near the 231 corridor (109TH Street) providing good vehicular access.



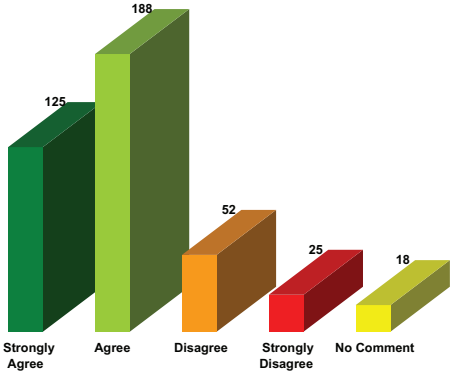
7. A new park should be developed on the southeast quadrant of St. John to serve the anticipated future growth in that area.



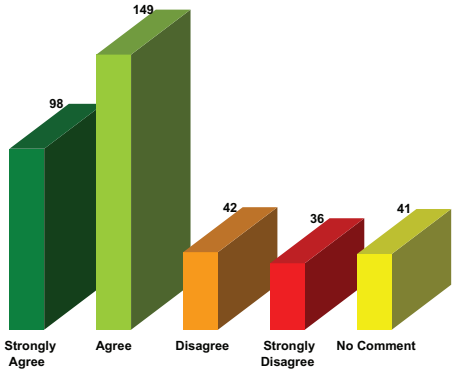
8. St. John guidelines for potential annexation areas should be developed that incorporates standards for infrastructure; utilities, roads, land use, density, and open space. This will be used to coordinate with adjacent municipalities, regional entities and future land development to ensure nearby development meets St. John standards.



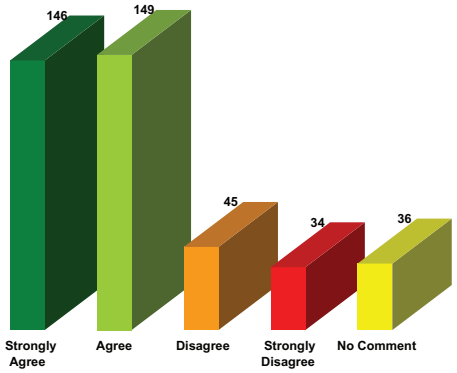
9. Strategically located through streets (collector streets) should be provided in new residential subdivisions.



10. Where possible, streets in existing neighborhoods should be strategically connected to improve the traffic impacts while maintaining a residential street environment.



11. Create a mix-use Town Center that is primarily retail oriented with civic functions and open space



12. A walkable Town Center with a distinctive and attractive sense of place should be developed in the Town of St. John

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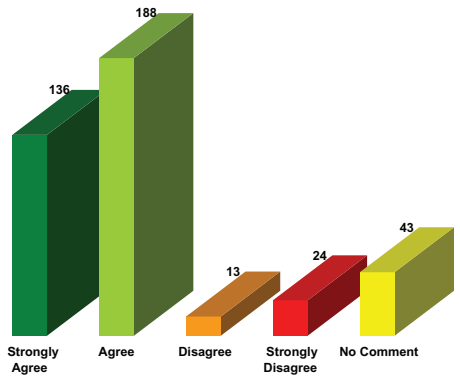
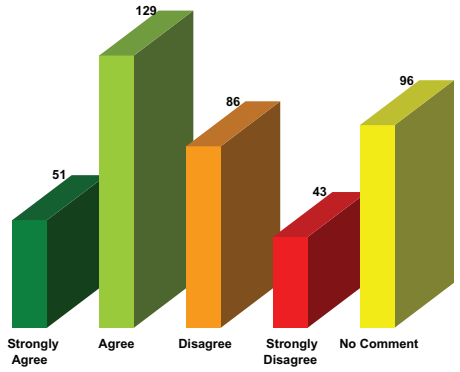
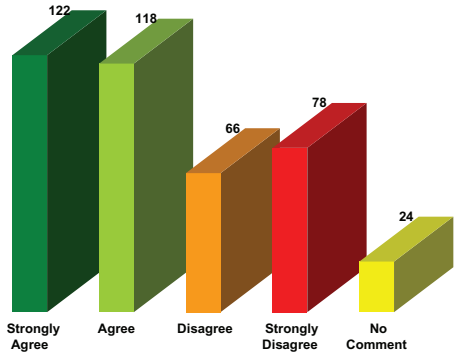


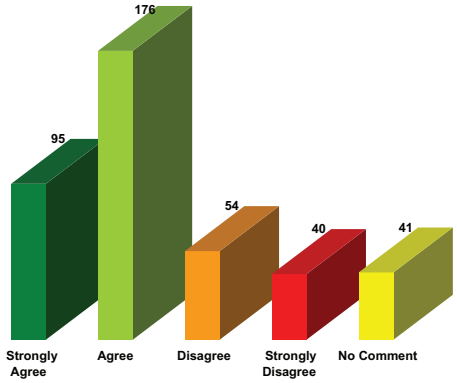
13. Design guidelines for the Town Center should be developed for building sizes, materials, heights, landscaping, and retail components.



14. A new Town Center should be visible from US Route 41.



15. A train station facility should be incorporated in the Town Center district if pending commuter rail studies identify St. John as a potential rail station location.



16. A new Town Center should provide for future growth and capacity of the civic functions, including an expanded or new Town Hall / Police Fire Complex.

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