

BOOK 0

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MT. PLEASANT MASTER PLAN 2050



# MT. PLEASANT 2050



# Letter From the Manager

## Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master plan

**September 18, 2019**

Determining a shared vision for the future is critical to the success of any organization, including a city. The Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan captures the aspirations of our community for the next 30 years. It is an important document that not only addresses future land use, but also priorities and goals, and provides direction for the provision of city services. This will be regularly used to guide decisions and help determine the best allocation of scarce resources including time and money.

The City of Mt. Pleasant takes pride in our strong partnerships with other entities including Isabella County, Charter Township of Union, Central Michigan University, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, Mt. Pleasant Public Schools, Isabella County Road Commission, Michigan Department of Transportation and various non-profits. This plan furthers those partnerships by identifying priorities and creating opportunities for additional collaboration in the future.

The City's tradition of long-term planning dates back to our first master plan in 1946. Our community has been and continues to be committed to continuous improvement and change. We must adapt to a changing economy, both locally and globally; to changing demographics, and changing expectations from our residents, businesses and partners.

We are appreciative of the engaged residents and partners who participated during the development of this plan and provided feedback. We will continue to rely on that commitment and involvement as we implement the plan and continue to refine the vision as circumstances change over the next 30 years.

Nancy Ridley

*City Manager*

# Acknowledgments

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*The City of Mt. Pleasant offers a special thanks to all residents and participants who took time to provide feedback or attend the charrette or another public meeting for Mt. Pleasant 2050.*

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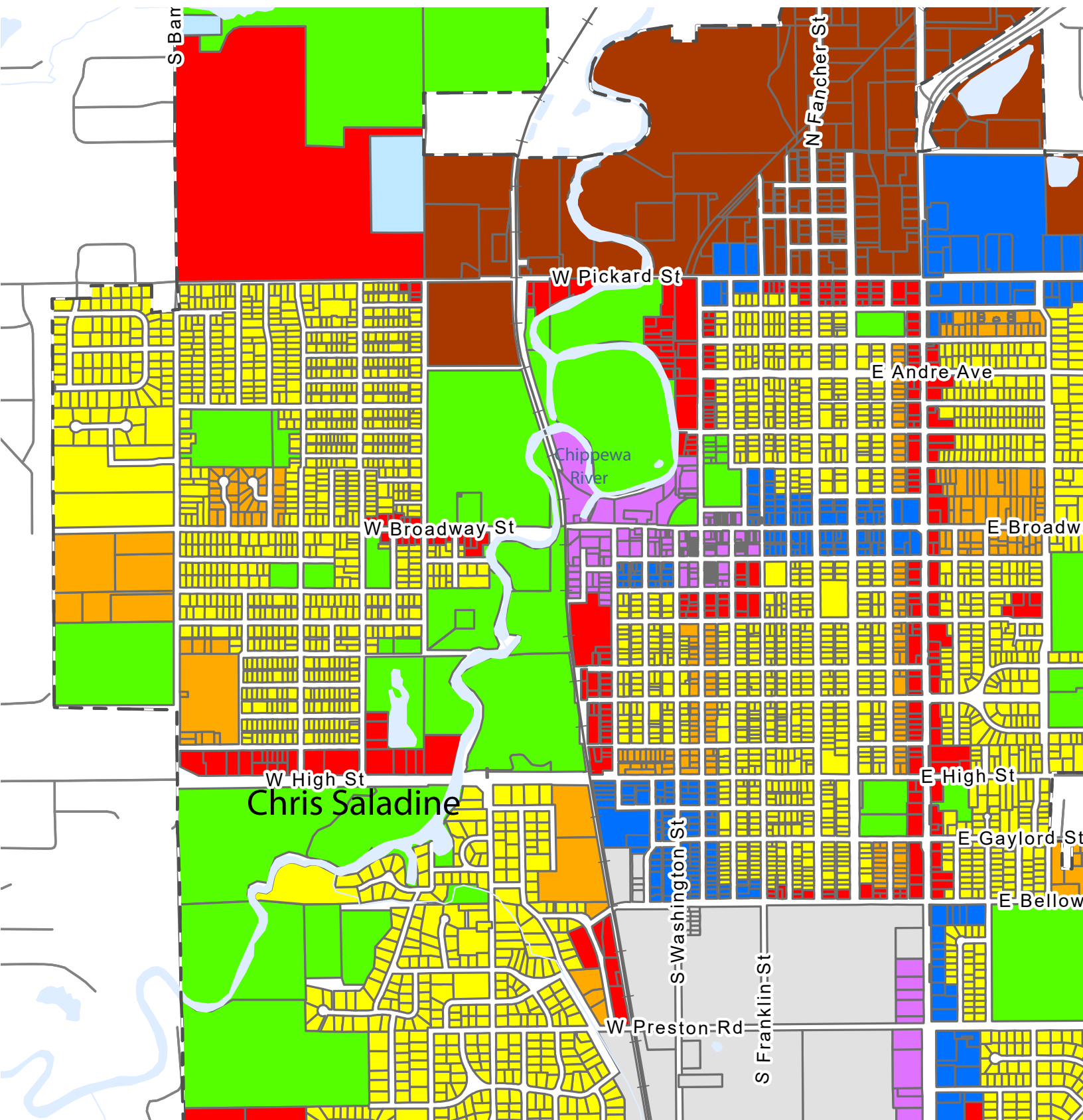
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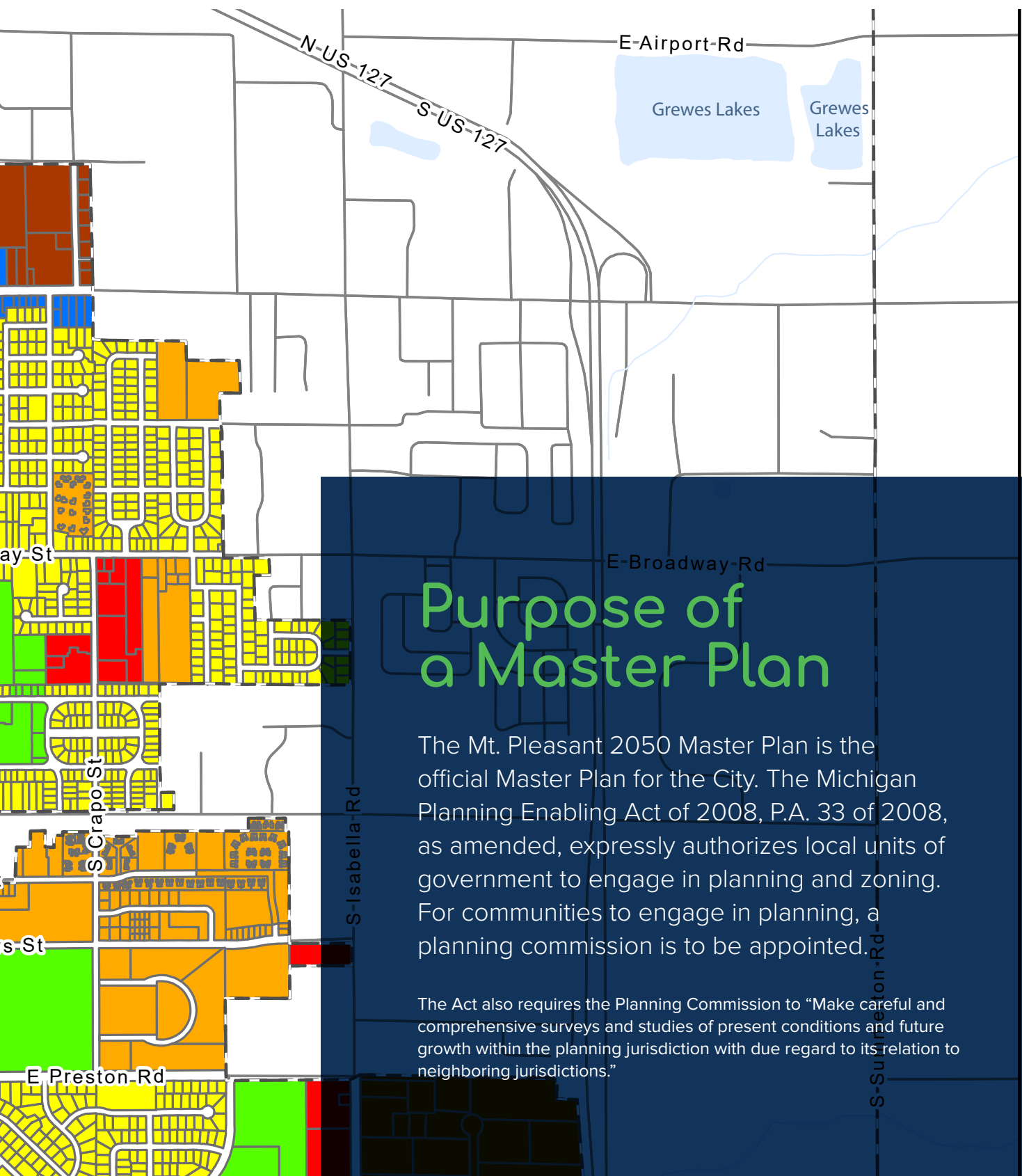
Action Plan  
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### **Fold-out Maps**

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# MT. PLEASANT 2050

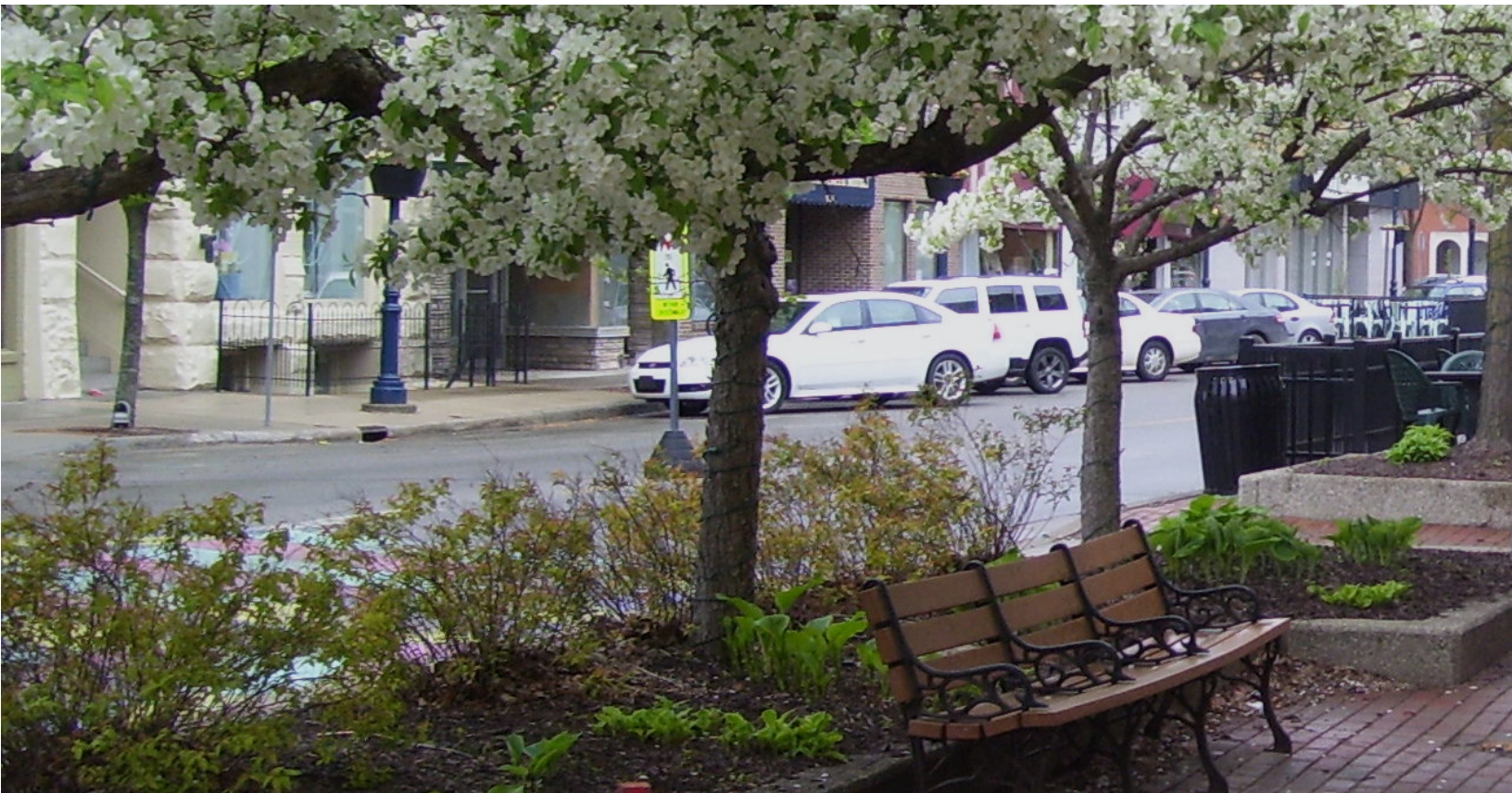




## Purpose of a Master Plan

The Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan is the official Master Plan for the City. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, expressly authorizes local units of government to engage in planning and zoning. For communities to engage in planning, a planning commission is to be appointed.

The Act also requires the Planning Commission to “Make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth within the planning jurisdiction with due regard to its relation to neighboring jurisdictions.”



## ADOPTION

The City of Mt. Pleasant Planning Commission makes a recommendation of adoption to the City Commission, and the City Commission is the official body that approves the Master Plan. Both the City Commission and the Planning Commission have been active participants in the City's Master Planning processes.

## VISION

The Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan the City's vision for the future. It serves as a policy guide for the community, and informs the decisions of City officials and administrators, governmental agencies, organizations, and private individuals. It is designed to provide a flexible roadmap for future development and to ensure that new growth is consistent with the City's goals and objectives.

## LONG-RANGE IN NATURE

The Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan is long range, in that it examines past trends and makes projections for the next 30 years. This allows the City to plan ahead and anticipate future needs. One of the most important functions of the plan is to provide a solid foundation for future land use decisions. The recommendations presented in the text and shown graphically in the maps provide a legal basis for zoning and other land use controls utilized by the City.





### **FREQUENT UPDATES WITH PUBLIC INPUT**

The State of Michigan requires the City to update its Master Plan every five years, as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended. The Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan was completed with significant public input. It will be updated and implemented through site development, infrastructure improvements, and other planning efforts as needed to continue the City's long history of quality development. The Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan positions Mt. Pleasant for continued success and confirms the aspirations of the community.

### **PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN**

The Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan includes the official Parks and Recreation Master plan, which was also completed to fulfill the State of Michigan requirements for park planning as administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The Mt. Pleasant Parks and Recreation Commission was the guiding body for this part of the process. The State of Michigan also requires Parks and Recreation plans to be updated every five years.

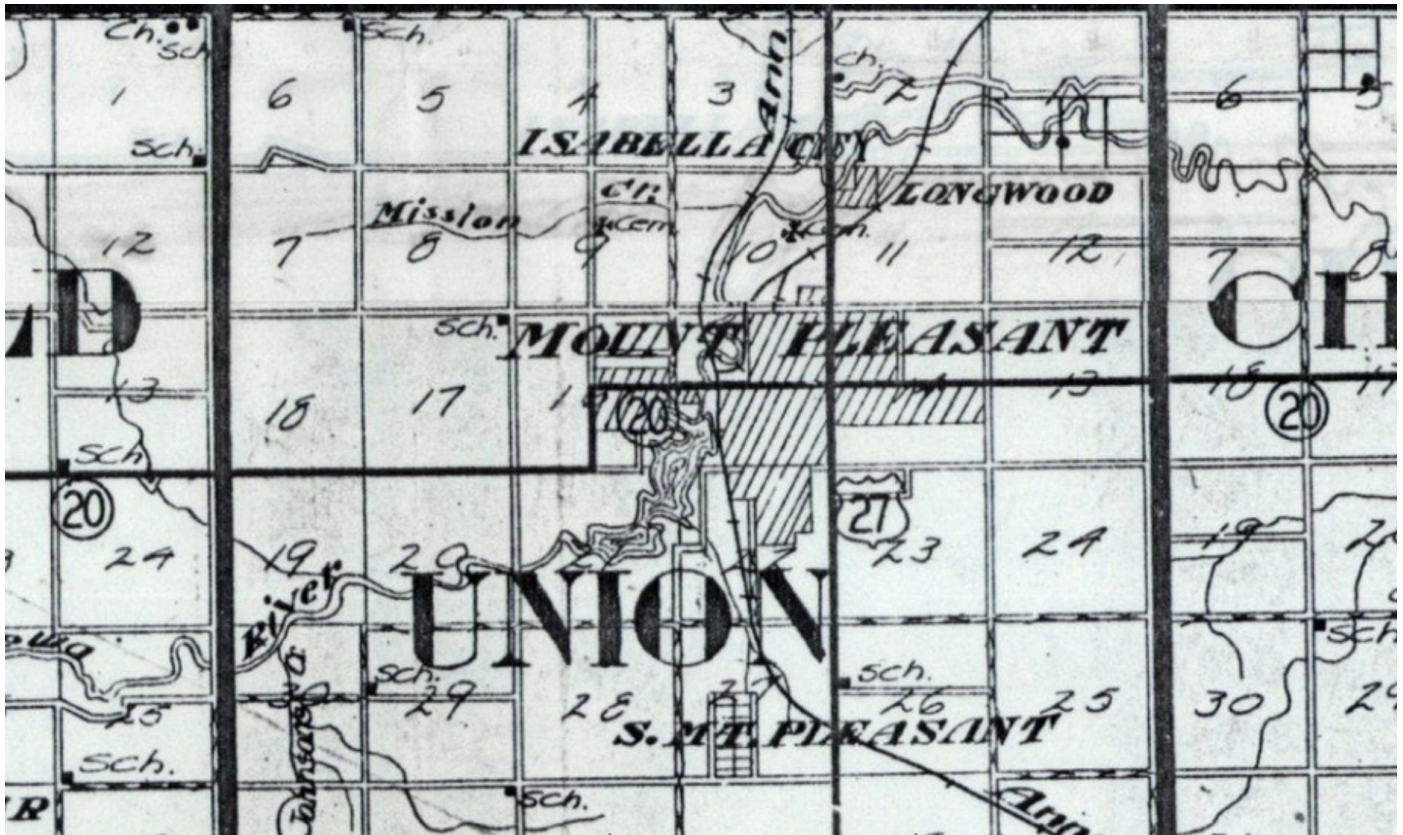
### **MISSION STREET CORRIDOR**

The Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan includes a special focus on the Mission Street corridor. The recommendations for the Mission Street corridor are primarily included in Book 2, Connected Mobility Systems, and Book 3, Focused Redevelopment.



## Summary of Past Planning Efforts

European settlers first inhabited the area known today as the City of Mt. Pleasant in the 1850s and early 1860s. The sites of the first lumber mills on the Chippewa River were in the area where Broadway today crosses the river. These sites became the center of a one square mile area in the grid that had been established by the Northwest Survey of 1837. Through roads running along “township” and “range” lines per this survey were not fully complete this far north in Michigan in the 1850s; the main transportation routes to access the growing lumber village were first via the river, and later the railroad line beginning in the 1880s. The accompanying 1879 map depicts Mt. Pleasant, contained within one square mile (the blue line on the eastern boundary of the then-village is Mission Street today).



## Downtown Mt. Pleasant in Relation to Major Highway Routes

As a developed road system reached further north into Michigan, the principal north-south road in the region became what is today known as Mission Street, which was the nearest range-line road to downtown Mt. Pleasant. After the advent of the automobile, Mission had become part of a route connecting Lansing to the communities of St. Johns, Ithaca, Alma, Shepherd, Mt. Pleasant, and Clare, which zigzagged along township-line and range-line roads. This route was assumed into the Michigan State Trunkline System in 1919 and numbered M-14. In 1926, as part of a program to create coordinated national highway numbers, this route was renumbered US-27. This is why, unlike many other small cities on the US Highway System, Downtown Mt. Pleasant was never served directly by the main north-south highway in the region.

Another State Trunkline, M-20, originally served Mt. Pleasant's downtown. From 1919 until 1933, M-20 entered the Mt. Pleasant area from the east on Pickard Road (as it does today), but before reaching the City limit, jogged south one-half mile on Shepherd Road, continuing west on Broadway. M-20 traffic traversed the heart of downtown Mt. Pleasant on Broadway, crossed the Chippewa River, turned south on Bradley Street, and continued west on Remus Road (as it does today). The accompanying 1929 map shows this route of M-20.

In 1933, a new bridge over the Chippewa River was completed on High Street, and the Michigan State Department of Highways (MSDH) re-routed M-20 due east across the City on High, north on Mission, and east toward Midland on Pickard Street, a routing which has since remained unchanged. The MSDH philosophy in the 1930s was to create a network of through-routes with as few jogs as possible, connecting population centers without necessarily serving downtown areas prone to traffic congestion.



## Boom Times in Mt. Pleasant and the Need to Plan

Mt. Pleasant was incorporated as a City in 1889, during a period of great economic and physical expansion. A revised City Charter was adopted in 1921, during an era of municipal reform that touched communities across the nation, large and small. This revised Charter established Mt. Pleasant's "Commission-Manager" form of governance, which continues to this day.

This movement toward municipal reform included a focus on land use planning and zoning, which was then taking hold throughout the United States. Mt. Pleasant's Planning Commission was established in the late 1920s, and the Michigan Legislature adopted the Municipal Planning Act (PA 285, 1931) several years later.

## Mt. Pleasant's First Master Plan

Mt. Pleasant's first Master Plan was adopted in 1946. A second plan was needed by the turn of the 1960s, when, amid a robust post-World War II economy, Mt. Pleasant's physical footprint was again rapidly expanding. The campus of the newly minted Central Michigan University was growing in size to accommodate degree-seeking veterans on the GI Bill, and in anticipation of increased enrollment, as the oldest members of the Baby Boomer generation would reach college-age in 1964. The robust oil industry in Mid-Michigan continued to grow as well, responding to growing demands throughout the United States in these postwar years. The City therefore began adopting Modernist-era planning principles—as did nearly all of its Michigan peers during this era—to provide for rapid physical growth, with the automobile as the predominant form of transportation, and the organizing factor around which land would be developed.

A first attempt at Modernist planning was made beginning in 1960, when a new Future Land Use Map was developed along with a unified Zoning Ordinance. By 1964, it was decided that these tools were inadequate by themselves, and that a new Master Plan should be developed. The City hired Scott Bagby and Associates of Grand Rapids to develop an entirely new Master Plan document.

Bagby was known nationally as an advocate of extensively retrofitting the grid-based street networks of existing residential neighborhoods. Bagby's solution to the perceived safety problem of "cut-through traffic" in such residential neighborhoods was termed the "Traffic Divertor." This cost-saving treatment involved reengineering four-way intersections such that automobile traffic would be forced to make a 90-degree turn at each intersection, and is illustrated in the accompanying image for Mt. Pleasant's 1965 Home Neighborhood Plan.

## The 1965 Master Plan

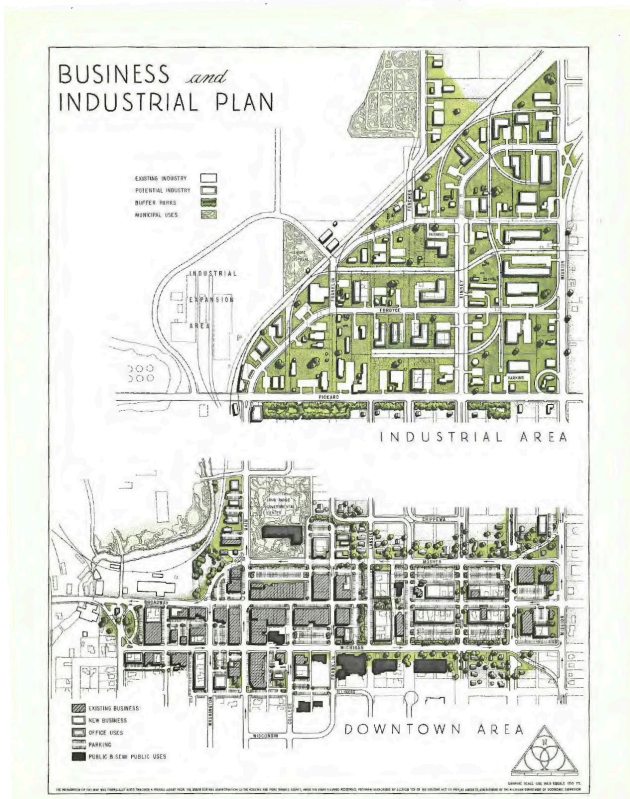
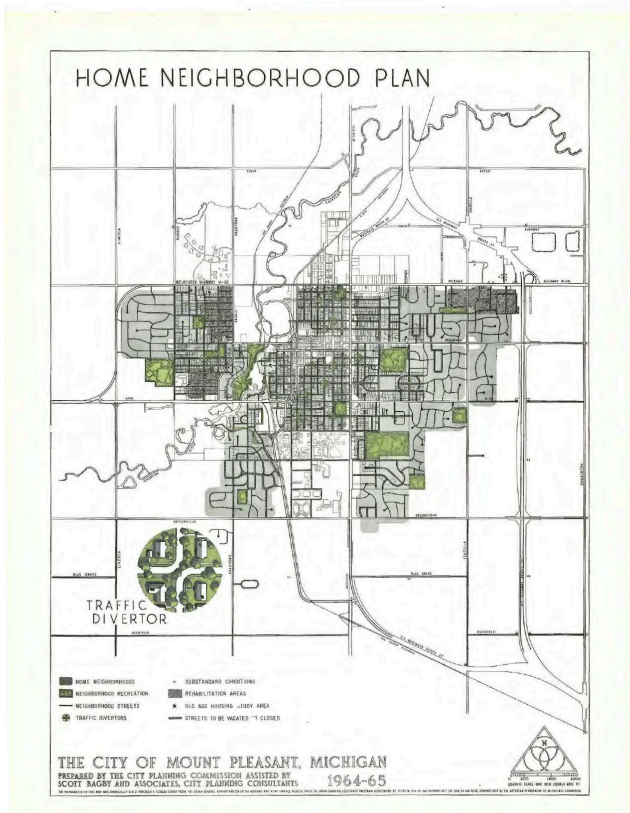
An eighteen-month process incorporating 35 formal meetings culminated with the approval of the 1965 Master Plan in November of that year. This plan had a 25-year window, and was fully representative of Modernist-era principles. It proposed a program of construction estimated at \$107 million over that period (roughly equivalent to \$868 million in 2019 dollars) which would accommodate a projected growth in population from 8,900 residents at the time of the 1960 Census to over 21,000 residents by 1985.

Major physical changes to Mt. Pleasant's traditional urban form were proposed in this plan, which was written in anticipation of Federal Urban Renewal funding for redevelopment. These changes included the removal of eight downtown blocks to be replaced with a campus of suburban-style office buildings and shopping plazas surrounded by parking; blocking off through movements at many street intersections within neighborhoods to eliminate "cut-through" traffic; and instituting one-way traffic on Washington, Main, Mosher, and Michigan streets to speed traffic around the traditional downtown area. Street intersections were to be heavily channelized, with slip ramps in some cases taking over entire blocks, to allow for free-flowing traffic. The north side industrial area was to have been similarly formalized, with a network of highly engineered paved streets and parking lots serving a campus of modern buildings.

While the majority of these physical changes were not implemented, those that were set a dramatic precedent whose legacy pervades the City to this day. The curved connecting road linking Mosher and South Washington Streets was the first and only piece of the channelized street network to be built, replacing an historic block and creating the parking lots and plaza known today as Town Center. One-way traffic on South Washington and South Main streets was established as well, though the pair was returned to two-way traffic in the 2010s.

The 1965 Plan, however, advocated for a re-routing of M-20 away from High Street, instead using Pickard Street via Lincoln Road, a never-implemented policy that was found to have merit during this planning process, and is discussed further herein.

Other policies established in the 1965 Master Plan directed the City's future growth in a way that determined much of the context of today's built environment outside of the downtown area. New residential areas would take a more suburban form, with a curvilinear street grid; new suburban commercial development would line Mission Street to the south, adjacent to the University. A system of parks was formalized, which became the basis for the strong system of facilities the City maintains today.





## The 1987 Master Plan

A replacement for the 1965 Plan was considered by the Planning Commission as early as 1981. A new Zoning Ordinance was pursued first, and a new plan to complement it was begun in 1984. This plan was formulated as a series of individual studies carried out by City staff and several consultants, and merged into a single document in 1986. Following a lengthy period of modifications, the Plan was finally adopted in April 1987.

The 1987 Plan, though representative of its era, recognized many deficiencies of the Modernist approach, and established a direction of conservation and preservation in the core areas of the City. It introduced policies to address student rental housing and establish historic districts; design concepts for expanded park facilities and downtown streetscaping; and re-stated the policy of relocating M-20 via Lincoln and Pickard as a “bypass route”. The topic of an additional highway interchange between US-27 (today’s US-127) and Broomfield Road was included.

A chapter of the 1987 Master Plan was devoted to the Mission Street and Pickard Avenue corridors. Safety issues stemming from the design of the corridors were noted, however, the proposed solutions were conventional. They included modifying lot size and setback requirements to ensure a consistent “suburban” scale of development along the corridors; formalizing driveways and instituting what would in later years be known as an access management program along the corridors; and formalizing alleys at the rear of buildings for commercial access.

Future land use recommendations in the 1987 Master Plan continued a philosophy of single-use zoning, with the recommendation of keeping commercial uses away from residential. A policy of promoting “family housing” in the older residential neighborhoods (through allowing duplexes and more flexibility in zoning) was established. An Urban Growth Area in cooperation with Union Township was recommended, which would be bounded by River, Summerton, Deerfield, and Lincoln established Roads.

## The 2006 Master Land Use Plan and 2014 Plan Update

A new Master Plan was adopted in September 2006, which incorporated many studies and reports commissioned in the six years prior. Public participation and visioning sessions were conducted in Fall 2003, with a draft Master Plan resulting in 2004. The 2006 Master Plan is notable for refocusing policy toward creating a livable community—likely an outcome of the strong public participation process upon which it was based, as well as the evolution in planning practice during the 1990s due to the influence of the New Urbanism and Smart Growth movements.

Notable goals from the 2006 Master Plan included a new emphasis on cultivating a walkable and vibrant downtown district; taking further steps to retain the city’s historical character, including through an historic district ordinance; and unifying the city through high aesthetic standards, such as with signage standards, tree installation, and streetscaping. Residential policies moved back to encouraging owner-occupied housing in residential neighborhoods, limiting multiple-family formats through conversions, zoning, and code enforcement.

The formalization of Lincoln and Pickard as a bypass for east-west through traffic was discussed in the 2006 Plan, this time as part of a larger “ring road” plan involving upgrades to the aforementioned roads plus Broomfield Road to the south and Isabella Road to the east.

The 2006 Master Plan was updated again in 2014 to incorporate further studies that had been undertaken after 2006. These included proposed plans for the Mt. Pleasant Center parcel, a Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, and the 2009 overlay zoning for the Mission Street corridor. The latter policy sought to finally focus on creating “an environment for more human-scaled, accessible, interesting and durable developments” along the corridor. Associated strategies in the 2014 Plan Update included reducing parking requirements, promoting a mix of land uses, and incentivizing design guidelines for new construction that would effectuate a sense of place through neo-traditional building design elements.



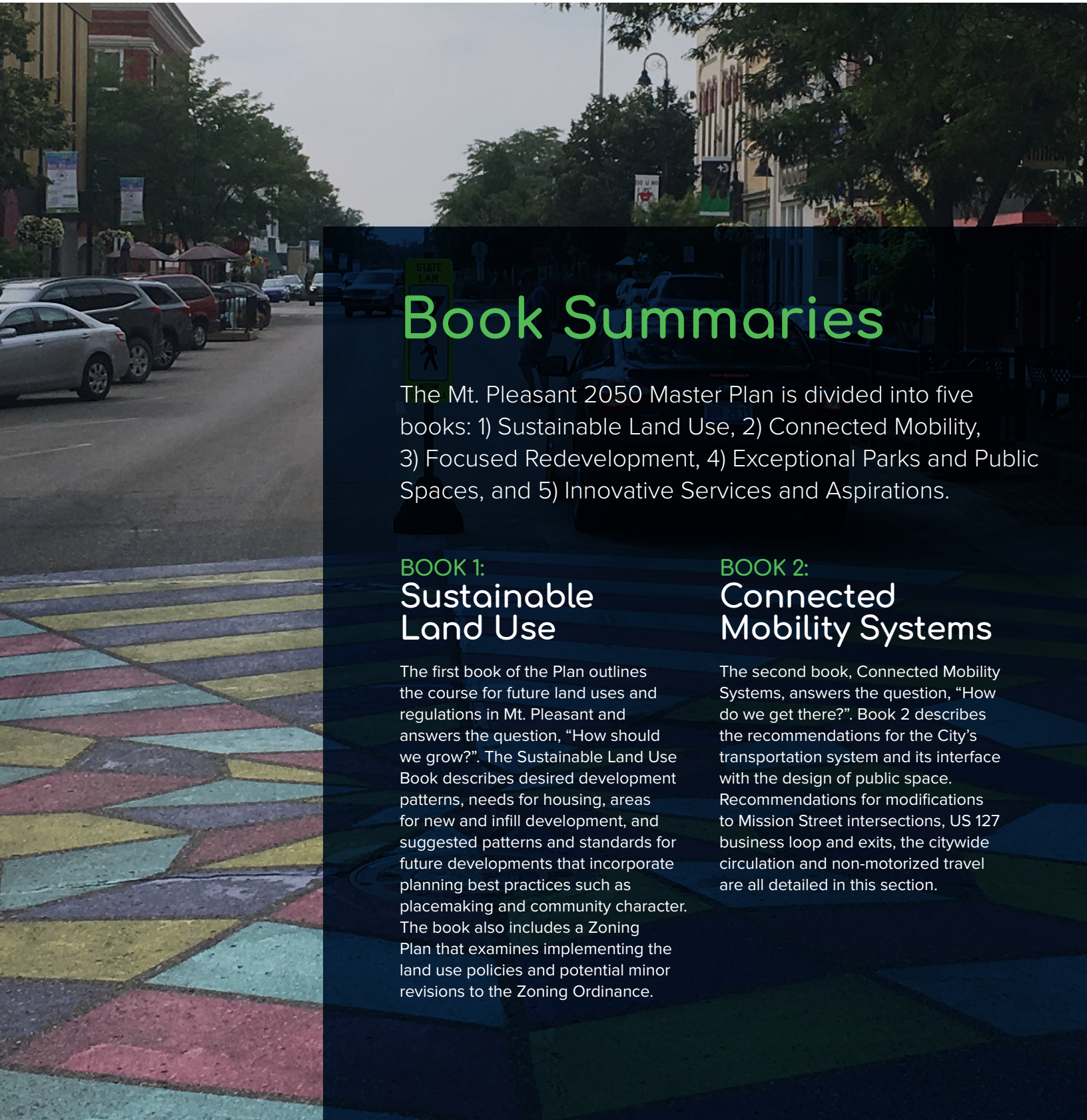
## Conclusion

As of 2019, the City of Mt. Pleasant has been guided by a Master Plan for 73 years. The dramatic changes that have occurred in the City's physical footprint and built form during those years were a consequence of historic, economic, and social factors, but were definitively shaped by the visions and policies expressed in these plans.

The first 60 years of Mt. Pleasant's planning history were shaped by well-meaning plans written by well-meaning residents, officials, and consultants. These plans were nevertheless a product of the Modernist era, which was an aberration in the settlement patterns that defined human civilization since its inception tens of thousands of years ago. The unrelenting charge to completely separate and isolate land uses; to subordinate the pedestrian to the private automobile; and to build buildings emphasizing function over form was instilled through planning, and heavily incentivized through state and federal government financing and assistance programs.

It is hoped that this Plan, building on its predecessor, will guide Mt. Pleasant to a future as a more livable community, with a vibrant downtown, neighborhoods, and corridors. The tenets of this guidance are spelled out in the Goals, Objectives, and Strategies. This Plan is ultimately a vision for Mt. Pleasant in 2050. With the commitment of those involved in its creation, those yet to reside in the City, and those future generations who will be coming of age in 2050, this vision can be realized in much the same way as those which came prior. The Mt. Pleasant of 2050 and beyond can indeed be that which we envision today!





## Book Summaries

The Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan is divided into five books: 1) Sustainable Land Use, 2) Connected Mobility, 3) Focused Redevelopment, 4) Exceptional Parks and Public Spaces, and 5) Innovative Services and Aspirations.

### BOOK 1: Sustainable Land Use

The first book of the Plan outlines the course for future land uses and regulations in Mt. Pleasant and answers the question, “How should we grow?”. The Sustainable Land Use Book describes desired development patterns, needs for housing, areas for new and infill development, and suggested patterns and standards for future developments that incorporate planning best practices such as placemaking and community character. The book also includes a Zoning Plan that examines implementing the land use policies and potential minor revisions to the Zoning Ordinance.

### BOOK 2: Connected Mobility Systems

The second book, Connected Mobility Systems, answers the question, “How do we get there?”. Book 2 describes the recommendations for the City’s transportation system and its interface with the design of public space. Recommendations for modifications to Mission Street intersections, US 127 business loop and exits, the citywide circulation and non-motorized travel are all detailed in this section.



### BOOK 3: Focused Redevelopment

The third book takes a closer look at site redevelopment and urban design in specific target areas within the city. This book answers the question “Where should we grow?” A special emphasis was given during the charrette to three key planning areas. These areas represent key redevelopment opportunities, each with its own cachet. These include the following three sub-areas:

1. Downtown and the Town Center Site
2. The Pickard and Main Intersection and the Industrial area to the north; and
3. Mission Street Corridor

### BOOK 4: Exceptional Parks and Public Spaces

The fourth book of the Master Plan is the Parks and Recreation Plan for the City of Mt. Pleasant. This book answers the question “Where should we play?” The Parks and Recreation plan provides details on the world class parks system and how the City will focus on maintaining and expanding that system over the next five years. This includes both the physical facilities and the recreation programs which take place there, serving youth and adult residents.

### BOOK 5: Innovative Services and Aspirations

Innovative Services, the fifth and final book of the Mt. Pleasant 2050 Master Plan is the inventory and analysis that answers the question, “What should we do now?”. Book 5 details all the tools necessary to move the City in the direction it strives to achieve. This book details the City’s long history in planning and existing conditions, including the socio-economic and demographic profile of the city.



*Goals, as related to community planning, are general statements of ideals toward which the City strives. They also express a consensus of community direction for public and private agencies, stakeholder groups and individuals, and are long-range considerations that guide development.*

*Objectives and actions are a means to achieve goals and identify the methods by which the goals of the Master Plan may be realized.*



# Goals and Objectives

This fundamental statement of community values, and of the community's vision for the year 2050, provides the foundation upon which subsequent policy decisions in this Plan rest.

To guide the formulation of specific policy decisions, the City and residents in the Charrette process, established the following set of Goals, which are derived from the statements of community values for five concentrated themes:

1. Sustainable Land Use
2. Connected Mobility Systems
3. Focused Redevelopment
4. Exceptional Parks and Public Spaces
5. Innovative Services

Each one of these Goals is detailed in a Book of this plan and has a specific action plan for objectives included in Book 5, Innovative Services.



GOAL

# SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

1

Strive to ensure viable land uses that secure neighborhoods, enhance parks, and encourage vital businesses through sensible infill, complementary services, and targeted preservation.

## OBJECTIVES

- 1.1** Encourage redevelopment that locates people within walkable and bikeable distances from essential services, jobs, and recreation.
- 1.2** Encourage a mix of uses and neighborhood-scale business development to serve residential areas and complement the Mission Street and Downtown areas.
- 1.3** Require new structures to harmonize with architectural precedents of highly-valued historical structures and landmarks.
- 1.4** Preserve neighborhood character through property maintenance requirements and code enforcement.
- 1.5** Improve landscape aesthetics and entryways within neighborhoods and business areas.
- 1.6** Incentivize investment that addresses non-conforming land uses and blighted properties consistent with City codes and the Zoning Ordinance.
- 1.7** Encourage a greater variety and mix of housing types within neighborhoods that provide opportunities for assisted living, downsizing families, students, and first-time homebuyers.
- 1.8** Enable adaptive reuse of structures to preserve historic buildings, particularly within the Downtown. Require new structures to be of similar quality to existing structures, and designed to be easily used for multiple purposes.

## GOAL

**CONNECTED  
MOBILITY SYSTEMS****2**

Encourage smart, inviting, and attractive streets through infrastructure and operational investments that link people to places by walking, biking, driving, and transit.

**OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1** Support neighborhood traffic calming measures to ensure safety and improve right-of way aesthetics.
- 2.2** Maintain the roadway network and consistently evaluate system operations to ensure service objectives are met for all modes.
- 2.3** Partner with MDOT and CMU to reimagine Mission Street as a vital business district and front door to the community and university.
- 2.4** Retrofit the roadway network to provide safe accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- 2.5** Improve wayfinding between neighborhoods, districts, and parks in and around the City.
- 2.6** Expand public transit opportunities in the City and implement innovative mobility policies to improve choice and access for system users.
- 2.7** Ensure that the Mt. Pleasant Municipal Airport continues to be utilized as a regional nexus and link to the local transportation system.
- 2.8** Continue to evaluate parking assets and requirements to make sure that current technologies and travel patterns are encouraging the highest and best use of land.

GOAL

# FOCUSED REDEVELOPMENT

3

Activate the City's most underutilized development sites to realize the value of nearby public and private assets through adaptable, durable, and future-facing structures and landscapes.

## OBJECTIVES

- 3.1** Promote economic vitality that is consistent with the City's form-based code and aesthetic values.
- 3.2** Improve multimodal accessibility along and across major corridors.
- 3.3** Promote a compatible relationship between commercial developments and adjacent land uses.
- 3.4** Continue to identify site development priorities and work to foster public-private partnerships to create new spaces of high quality in the City.
- 3.5** Promote culturally sensitive, responsive, sustainable, and accessible site design throughout the City.
- 3.6** Promote a vital mix of businesses and uses within the Downtown, including uses that have flexible hours of operation, provide entertainment and activity-based businesses, and events.
- 3.7** Improve pedestrian access and walkability within the Downtown through the design of the public realm, as well as connections between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods and parks.
- 3.8** Encourage incremental new development projects in outlying neighborhoods on the north, west, and east that are compatible with walkable neighborhood form.



## GOAL

**EXCEPTIONAL PARKS  
AND PUBLIC SPACES****4**

Build the value of the City’s expansive park system through maintenance and enhancement of natural environment and programmed spaces, while elevating awareness of the system to residents and visitors.

**OBJECTIVES**

- 4.1** Continue to develop facilities that serve Mt. Pleasant families and provide activities for all stages of life.
- 4.2** Develop a City-wide bike/hike/path system that connects parks to neighborhoods, CMU, Downtown, Mission Street, and regional pathways.
- 4.3** Improve pedestrian and bicycle access within the park system, and recreation opportunities that are oriented toward non-motorized park access.
- 4.4** Continue and enhance park development, improvements, and maintenance.
- 4.5** Continue, expand and improve recreation programs.
- 4.6** Develop parks and recreation-based partnerships with County, townships, CMU, schools, and the Tribe.
- 4.7** Improve and support river access and stewardship.
- 4.8** Provide expanded recreation opportunities to residents living east of Mission Street through development of new parkland, enhanced facility development, and/or partnerships.
- 4.9** Market City parks, public spaces, and recreation facilities to new and existing City residents to foster greater awareness.

GOAL

# **INNOVATIVE SERVICES AND ASPIRATIONS**

# 5

Foster collaboration in attaining a safe, healthy, fiscally solvent, and accessible City that is reflective of community culture, proactive to community preferences, and equitable in community resources.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- 5.1** Increase tourism through marketing of the City to draw more people to the Downtown.
- 5.2** Enhance and improve employment opportunities and training for higher paying/non-service sector jobs.
- 5.3** Encourage greater community involvement and coordination with public safety to help identify community issues, reduce crime and increase safety.
- 5.4** Increase cooperation and coordination between governments and other organizations.
- 5.5** Improve neighborhood services and encourage creation of neighborhood organizations, particularly to strengthen the relationship between the City, local neighborhoods, CMU, and its students.
- 5.6** Improve environmental services and regulations in the City, particularly recycling opportunities.
- 5.7** Continue to develop public facilities to serve the needs of City residents and visitors.

**MT. PLEASANT 2050**

[WWW.MT-PLEASANT.ORG](http://WWW.MT-PLEASANT.ORG)