

CITY OF
PORTAGE
A Place for Opportunities to Grow

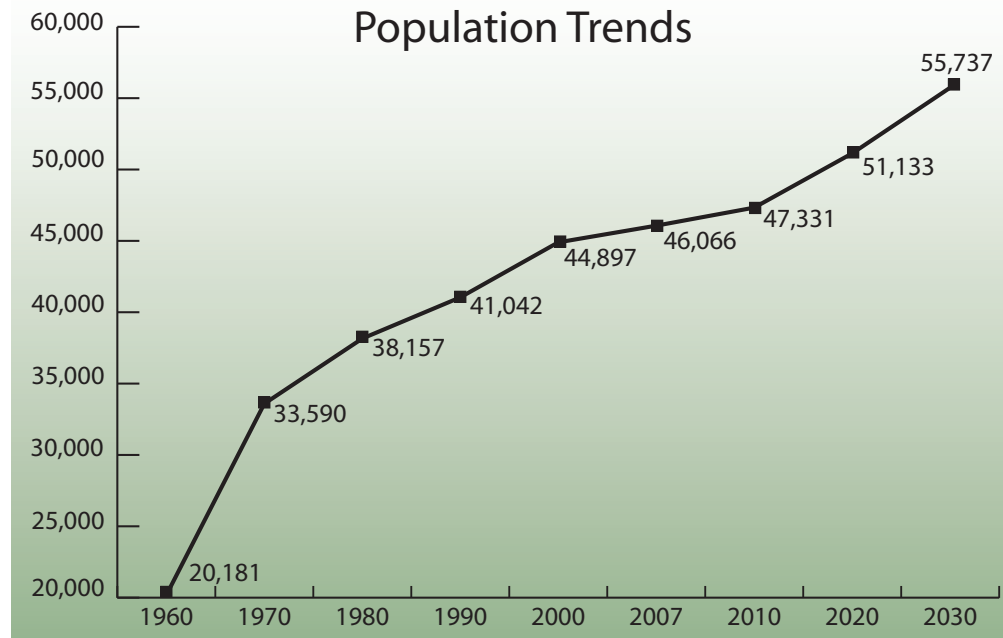
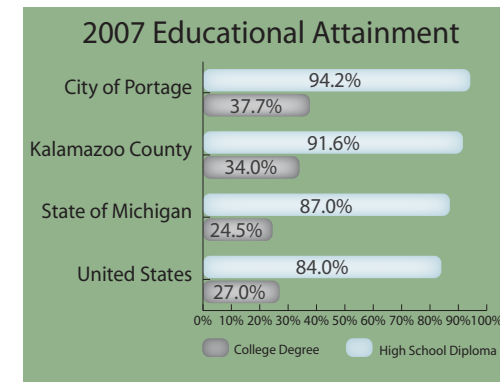
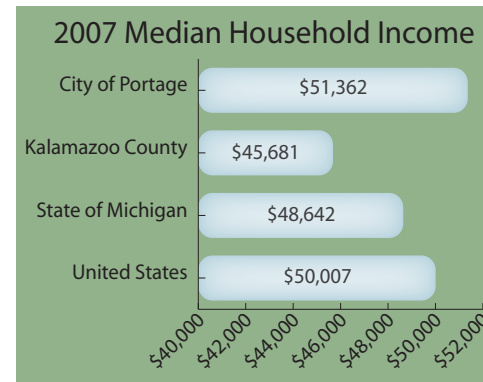
City of Portage, Michigan



2008 Comprehensive Plan Summary

Community Profile

Portage is located in Kalamazoo County in southwest Michigan, half-way between Chicago and Detroit along Interstate 94. Though originally known for its fertile farmland and agricultural production, Portage is now known as a community of fine neighborhoods, a regional retail center for southwest Michigan with an expanding industrial base anchored by Stryker Corporation and Pfizer, Inc. The community has a growing population, desirable housing, excellent schools, numerous shopping and recreation areas, proximity to a variety of post-secondary education opportunities and an educated workforce. Portage is geographically large with a land area of nearly 35 square miles and seven lakes.

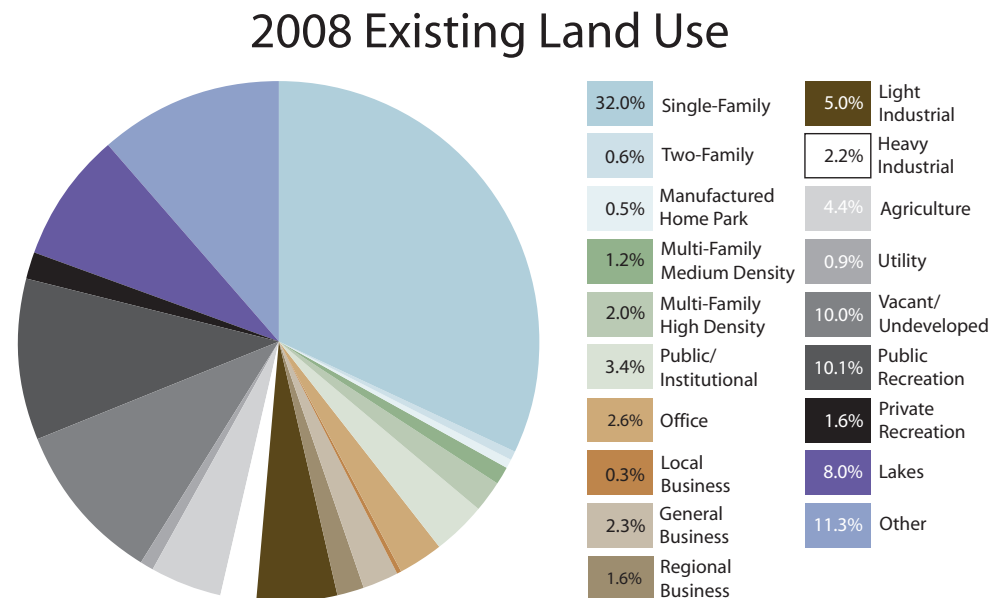


The population of Portage has been growing at steady rate during the 1980's and 1990's and has more than doubled since 1960. By 2000, Portage had a population of 44,897 and Census Bureau estimates published in July 2007 show a population of 46,066. The population is expected to increase to nearly 56,000 by 2030. Portage has maintained the largest share of population growth (in terms of absolute numbers) than any other jurisdiction in the county.

Median household income of Portage residents continues to exceed the county, state and national averages. This trend is also evident in the level of education attainment. Over Ninety-four percent of Portage residents have a

high school diploma or higher and nearly 38% have a bachelors degree or higher.

The analysis of land use information not only identifies the types of existing land use, but also provides insight as to where future development would best occur, as well as where conflicts may exist or can develop. The Comprehensive Plan process provides the basic framework upon which future land use proposals will be developed and guidance for future land use and development decisions. The pie chart below illustrates the percent of the existing 2008 land uses. Single-family residential land uses continue to occupy the greatest percent of land area (32%).



The makeup and general health of an urban economy are key considerations in gauging the rate and amount of land development that is likely to occur. An expanding economy creates new employment opportunities that attract people and results in an increased population, but a growing economy and population also place additional demands on community services in areas such as schools, transportation, public safety and community facilities. Consequently, a balanced or diversified economy is essential to ensure that Portage continues as “a place for opportunities to grow!” The chart below illustrates a balanced Portage economy and local tax base.

City of Portage Tax Base - 2008



Key Plan Recommendations

- Encourage commercial development in designated areas and corridors.
- Foster development activities that continue to promote the Portage Commerce Square and City Centre Area.
- Encourage business centers for industry, corporate offices and high technology uses.
- Continue to implement public programs, incentives, regulations and taxation policies consistent with policies for economic development

Taking advantage of the proximity to two major highways (I-94 and US-131) and the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport has led to the success of economic development activities in Portage. Portage has taken a progressive

Goal

Encourage sensible and sustainable, high-quality office, commercial and industrial uses in designated areas to:

- Provide for business expansion needs;
- Achieve compatibility with surrounding land uses and environmental features at a pace supportable by the community's existing and reasonably anticipated future infrastructure.

approach to stimulate commercial and industrial economic development activity by providing unique opportunities involving community-based public/private initiatives for businesses and industries to grow.

Commercial Development – The largest regional business center in southwest Michigan is located along the South Westnedge Avenue Commercial Corridor. The corridor includes nearly 5 million square feet of business space, with a low vacancy rate. The heart of the corridor is Portage Commerce Square, a major retail area that includes The Crossroads regional mall.

Industrial Development – Industrial development is concentrated in two primary locations: Sprinkle Road Industrial Corridor and Shaver Road Business Corridor. These two corridors include many significant manufacturing facilities, including the primary manufacturing facility for Pfizer, Incorporated, the world's largest pharmaceutical company.

Business Incentives – Maintaining a business-friendly environment is considered essential to the continued nurturing of commercial and industrial investment and job creation. Business is attracted to Portage because of its:

- Low tax rates
- Full-service capabilities and low water and sewer utility rates.
- Expanded public infrastructure systems.
- Quality of life including recreational and cultural attributes.
- Successful public-private ventures through:
 - Economic Development Corporation
 - Tax Increment Financing Authority
 - Downtown Development Authority
 - Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
 - Local Development Finance Authority

Public services have a direct impact on the development and redevelopment of land, protection of natural features, provision of recreational opportunities, ensuring public safety and enhancement of the quality of community life. Portage continues to make major investments in public infrastructure systems to meet current and future needs.

Public Utilities

The location and type of public sewer and water systems influence the location, type and intensity of development within a community. In an effort to accommodate new and expanding development in appropriately planned areas of the city, programming for sanitary sewer, water and storm drainage improvements is provided through the annual 10-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).



The city maintains more than 225 miles of sanitary sewer main and 240 miles of water main. During the next 10 years, the city has programmed millions of dollars in utility improvements to accommodate existing, expanding and new growth.

Key Plan Recommendations:

- Provide for the health, safety and welfare of Portage residents and maintain high quality community facilities to meet projected changing needs, demographics and life styles and enhance the quality of life.
- Ensure that water, sanitary and storm water systems accommodate the demands of existing and proposed development.
- Promote development of a high-technology utility infrastructure.
- Continue to enhance existing park and recreation resources and programs.
- Continue to annually update the CIP to reflect the current and future infrastructure needs of the community
- Create friendly, walkable business centers with ample lighting, pathways and benches.

Goal

Efficiently provide, maintain and improve public services necessary to support the needs of existing and future residents and businesses.

Recreational Opportunities

The city provides numerous and diverse recreational opportunities in high quality recreational facilities throughout the community. There are several different types of recreational areas/facilities including nearly seven miles of off-road trailways, five local, five community and two regional parks, three nature preserves and several event facilities. Private recreational opportunities are also available including a golf course, sports activity centers, among others.



Ice Rink at Millennium Park



Portage City Hall

Government Facilities

The City Centre Area (geographic center of the community) is the primary location for local government facilities including City Hall, Police Department, Fire Station No. 1, Senior Center and Public Services. The city is committed to providing efficient, quality municipal facilities to residents, business owners and visitors.

Library and Education Facilities

In addition to the excellent municipal services, the Portage District Library and Portage Public Schools also provide valuable services to area residents. The library, also located in the City Centre Area, is capable of accommodating 600,000 patron circulations per year and serves a population of 50,000. Portage Public Schools operates eight elementary schools, three middle schools and two high schools. In addition to public schools, there are several charter/private schools in the area. There are also several educational and secondary programs and facilities within Portage and the surrounding region.



Portage District Library

Housing Opportunities

Housing is an essential resource in any community and people looking for a place to live, or deciding whether to stay within a community, typically focus on a few key factors:

- Character of Neighborhoods
- Recent Trends on Home Value Appreciation
- Diversity of Housing Available to Meet Various Needs and Income Levels
- Quality of the Public School District.

Portage is a city with well-established and attractive neighborhoods. The creation, preservation and enhancement of neighborhoods are essential to the success of the community. Neighborhoods define and characterize the unique cultural and historical qualities of the city. Intrinsic to the success of Portage neighborhoods and to a stable and attractive quality of life for all citizens is an emphasis on preservation and rehabilitation of the housing stock, the availability of home ownership with housing options for all segments of the population and the proximity to community facilities and services.

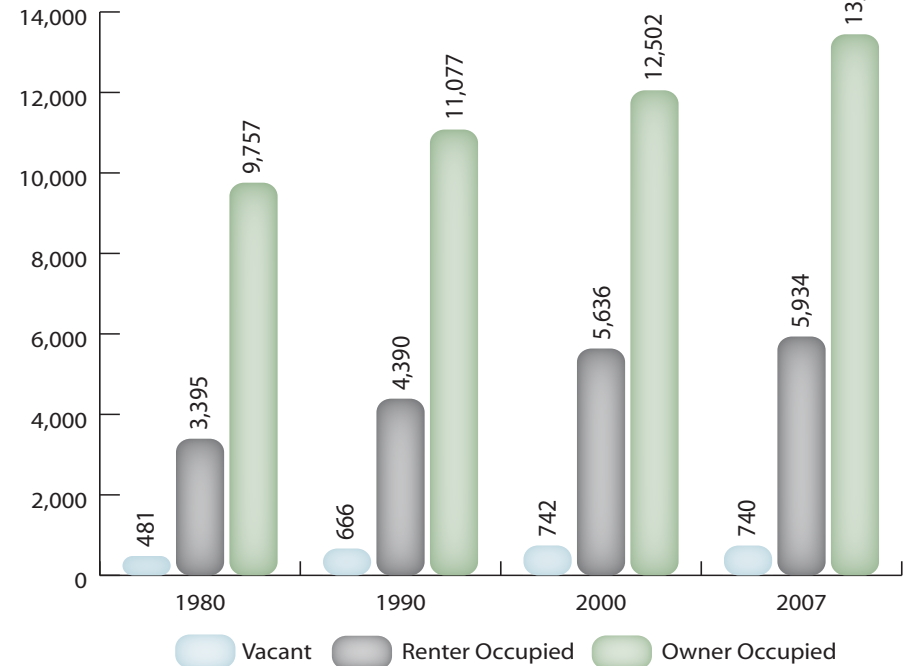
Key Plan Recommendations

- Encourage single family home and lot ownership for all income groups in an effort to maintain the single-family character of Portage.
- Protect stable neighborhoods from intrusive land uses and motor vehicle traffic.
- Provide or improve public facilities and services to support quality residential areas, such as street and walkway design, parks, recreation and municipal facilities.
- Provide assistance and incentives to local nonprofit housing organizations, housing providers and other groups to expand housing opportunities.
- Promote awareness of the needs for housing and services for special groups such as: low to moderate-income households, seniors, physically challenged, and families in need of child or adult day care.

Goal

Provide a diverse and stable housing stock providing for a range of housing opportunities for all income groups and a quality living environment for all persons.

Housing Units

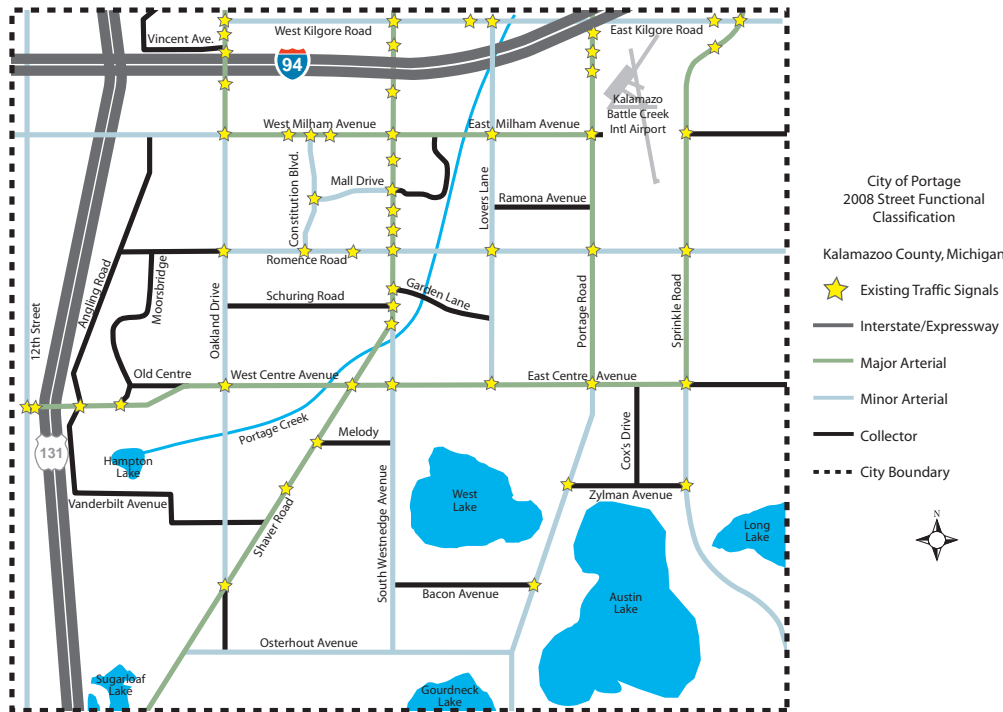


Household Information

	Number of Households	Average Household Size
1980	13,152	2.89
1990	15,467	2.64
2000	18,800	2.45
2007	19,378	2.40
1980-2007 % Change	47.30%	-17.00%

Transportation

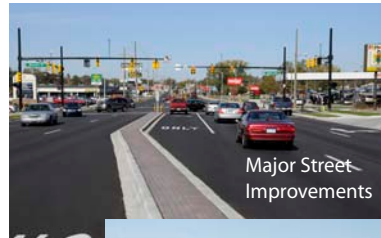
Investment in the transportation system (motorized and non-motorized) to accommodate various land use activities is a priority for the city. The safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the community requires continuous improvement. Roadway improvement projects initiated by the City of Portage have improved the capacity and traffic operations to and through the main commercial and employment areas. Significant progress has also been made toward a citywide system of bikeways and walkways. These transportation investments are intended to ensure a comprehensive transportation system, to preserve the quality of life for residents and retain a desirable business climate. A convenient, congestion free, safe and multi-modal transportation system continues to be an important goal for the community. Below is a map that shows the major street network. These streets carry higher amounts of vehicular traffic within and through the city.



Goal

Create a safe, balanced and coordinated multi-modal transportation system adequate to accommodate the ongoing growth and development of Portage

Motorized Improvements



Non-motorized Improvements



Key Plan Recommendations:

- Ensure adequate roadway facilities to accommodate new and expanded development.
- Promote alternative modes of transportation.
- Pursue local, state and federal funding for a multi-modal transportation system.
- Consider appearance and image, together with traffic and safety factors, in the design of all transportation projects.
- Continue to pursue alternatives for improved traffic flow and safety such as new signal technology, access management and traffic calming principles.
- Budget financial resources to maintain transportation facilities as a priority before funds are allocated for capacity expansion.
- Ensure transit friendly design in areas that are currently or have the potential to be served by transit.
- Coordinate transportation issues of regional significance with area communities and road agencies through the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) organization.

Natural & Historic Resources

Natural Resources

The natural environment is a critical element in the physical development and quality of life in the city. The various components of the natural environment function, change, and interact as part of an overall ecosystem. These natural elements need to be carefully considered and development should be directed to areas that best sustain the physical changes to the landscape while minimizing impacts to sensitive natural resources.

Portage has seven lakes that account for 1,732 acres or 8 percent of the geographic area of the city. These include Austin, West and Hampton, as well as portions of Long, Gourdneck, Sugarloaf and Little Sugarloaf. The lakes historically have been and continue to be a valuable natural feature in the city.

Other important natural areas include:

West Lake Nature Preserve

This 110-acre preserve along West Lake boasts a variety of upland, woodland and sensitive woodland areas with unique plant species and animal habitats.

Bishop's Bog Preserve

A 145-acre site north and northwest of Schrier Park. Bishop's Bog, the largest "relic" bog in southern Michigan, has been registered with the Nature Conservancy.

Mandigo Marsh

This historically well-known wetland area located near the southwest corner of Austin Lake. A large portion of Mandigo Marsh was purchased by the City of Portage to ensure its permanent protection.

Gourdneck State Game Area

The Gourdneck State Game area, owned and maintained by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, accounts for nearly 1,555 acres in Portage.

Goal

Preserve and provide natural, historic and cultural resources for the benefit, enjoyment and quality of life of existing and future residents.

Historic Resources

The Potawatomi Indians inhabited Portage prior to the first settlers. Portage was one of the favored areas of the Potawatomis because one of their larger villages, known as Indian Fields, was located in the vicinity of the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport. The village had the navigational advantage of falling on the basin divide of the Kalamazoo River and St. Joseph River.

As settlers populated Kalamazoo County, farmsteads and residences were constructed. The City of Portage contains 49 historic district homes/sites. The homes not only serve as monuments to the past, but enrich the aesthetic quality of the city today. They offer unique contributions to the architectural quality and diversity of the community. The non-renewable nature of these cultural resources, however, establishes the need to preserve these community assets.



Stuart Manor at Celery Flats Historical Area

Key Plan Recommendations:

- Use Planned Unit Development/Cluster zoning to preserve key natural features.
- Continue best management practices associated with site design to protect streams and public drinking water well-heads.
- Continue public awareness campaigns for homeowners and business owners to protect the quality of the lakes and other natural features.
- Expand public awareness efforts to inform homeowners and business owners of alternative energy technologies and benefits.
- Consider available options involving the State Game Area if the State ever declares the area as excess property, as the city could facilitate/determine the most appropriate uses.

The Portage City Centre Area is the geographic area that best serves as the “identifying” center and “heart” of the City of Portage. The vision to establish an “identity” and a “downtown” has extended from the early focus of centralizing “civic” activities in the geographic center of the community in the 1981 Comprehensive Plan and the subsequent 1982 City Centre Plan. Most recently, the citizen-based Portage 2025 visioning project established the organizing concept statement to create a “world class community” with a distinct and vibrant city center.

Two geographic areas delineate the City Centre Area and include the overall City Centre Study Area that encompasses approximately 700 and a smaller Detailed Plan Area that encompasses approximately 175 acres.

Elements that can serve as “building blocks” to establish and strengthen the City Centre as a “place” include the existing quality community facilities and distinctive public features, environmental elements including Portage Creek, municipal recreational amenities, the Portage Public Schools Central Campus and the diverse businesses, business centers and neighborhoods within and adjacent to the geographic center of the community. The City Centre Area Plan proposes future land use concepts and suggests placemaking concepts that can be considered as means to foster a multi-faceted, vibrant, walkable and identifiable center.

Key Plan Recommendations:

- Encourage an area in the geographic center of Portage that can be easily identified by residents and visitors as the “downtown” and which provides a core activity area for public facilities and a destination for the general public.
- Encourage (re)development activities which ensure the continued strength of the Portage Commerce Square, the central business area, and the City Centre Area, the geographic center of the city.
- Nurture a small town feel and sense of community while facilitating access to cultural and recreational amenities.
- Create mixed-use developments, including residential uses located within or adjacent to nonresidential uses, that will become community gathering areas.

Goal

Establish a distinct, identifiable and vibrant City Centre that connects entertainment, restaurants and retail venues and is connected to trailways and transportation.



Future Land Use

In order to ensure the City of Portage remains a community with quality residential neighborhoods, strong commercial and industrial areas to provide tax base and employment and excellent public services with an abundance of recreational opportunities, it is necessary to plan for future land use and development. These planning activities are undertaken to achieve community economic development consistent with the adopted goals and policies of the community. The **Future Land Use Plan Map** provides a long-range focus for the Portage community.

The Future Land Use Plan map is a representation of general physical features/land use activities in the city when fully developed. It does not imply that all of the changes will or should occur in the near term. Development and redevelopment will proceed in a manner consistent with policies on the environment, transportation and infrastructure capacity and other matters which help determine the appropriate time frame. A further goal is that zoning decisions should, over time, produce changes that gradually establish greater conformity between the Zoning Map and the Future Land Use Plan.

Future Land Use Classifications were developed to represent the vision of the Comprehensive Plan, as supported by the Goals, Policies, and Development Guidelines. The classifications are representative of the Existing Land Use classifications, but have been generalized in order to provide greater development flexibility for future growth. In addition, several classifications have been added which may lead to amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. The pie chart to the right depicts the approximate percent of land designated for each class. These percentages are estimates and include both the adjacent right-of-way as well as minor bodies of water and therefore cannot be directly compared to existing land use figures.

Goal

Establish a well organized, balanced and efficient use of land densities that:

- **Meet the current and future needs of the public.**
- **Ensure compatibility and harmony amongst land users.**
- **Protect key natural and historic resources.**
- **Complements the existing and planned capacity of streets and infrastructure.**
- **Sustain prosperity to support desired public facilities and services.**

Future Land Use Classifications

