



2018  
**Carson City**  
**Master Plan**  
Draft - 11/27/2018





## Acknowledgements

### Carson City Master Plan

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## Chapter One – The Planning Process

### What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a document created by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Council to guide the future growth, development, and redevelopment of Carson City. A Master Plan that is a thorough, well thought out, and consistent document helps ensure Carson City will continue to be a desirable community in which to live and work.

The Master Plan investigates and examines a variety of issues, both tangible and intangible. Some of the tangible measurements include a documentation of the way the City has changed. This includes a detailed discussion on items ranging from who lives in the City, and what they do for a living, to the type of housing and jobs available. Trends that have remained constant will be discussed, however, trends which have experienced significant changes will be examined more thoroughly. The discussion will also include an inventory of natural features, like water bodies and soil types, an analysis of the transportation network and city services, such as public utilities, and community assets like parks.

In addition to these tangible items, residents and other community stakeholders were asked their thoughts on the Carson City community and their vision of Carson City in five, ten, or twenty years. While the tangible items give City officials and staff a review of current conditions, the opinions and desires of residents create a roadmap for the change City officials should look to implement over the life of this Master Plan.

The Master Plan is intended to act as a guide for future decisions by the Planning Commission, the City Council, staff, residents, and developers. It is designed to provide a map to direct and encourage development, redevelopment, and capital improvements in Carson City.

## Master Plan vs. Zoning Ordinance

Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances are often thought of as the same document. A more accurate description would be that they are two different sets of tools, and when used together, they work toward the same purpose and goals. Even though the documents work toward the same goals, they are somewhat different.

The Master Plan is a policy document which should be used as a guide for future land use and new development in the City. In comparison, the Zoning Ordinance is the law. It regulates the use and development of land as it exists in the present. While the Master Plan outlines a community’s vision for the future, the Zoning Ordinance contains the rules that govern the path to that vision.

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires that a Zoning Ordinance be based on an adopted Master Plan. If zoning decisions are ever challenged in the courts, decisions that are consistent with the Master Plan are more likely presumed to be valid. Often, once a community has updated their Master Plan, they will also review the Zoning Ordinance to ensure it aligns with the goals of the Master Plan.

**Table 1 – Master Plans vs. Zoning Ordinances**

Master Plan	Zoning Ordinance
Provides general policies, <b>a guide.</b>	Provides specific regulations, <b>the law.</b>
<b>Describes what should happen in the future - recommended land use</b> for the next 20 years, not necessarily the recommended use for today.	Describes <b>what is and what is not allowed</b> today, based on existing conditions.
Includes <b>recommendations</b> that involve <b>other agencies</b> and groups.	Deals only with <b>development-related issues</b> under City control.
<b>Flexible</b> to respond to changing conditions.	Fairly rigid, <b>requires formal amendments</b> to change.

## Process

The process to update the Carson City Master Plan began in September of 2017. The City contracted with Spicer Group of Saginaw (consultants) to assist the Planning Commission in the preparation of this Master Plan. The Planning Commission met with the Planning Consultants between September of 2017 and \_\_\_\_ of 2018 to work on the Master Plan. As required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), the City followed the procedures for notifying neighboring communities and registered entities so that each interested party was made aware of the ongoing planning effort and was provided an opportunity to comment on the Master Plan.

This document is the outcome of a year-long effort by the Carson City Planning Commission to update their Master Plan and to steer the course of the City's future. It conveys a strong commitment to retain and strengthen local quality of life, also reflecting the wishes of the community in regards to future development in Carson City. The preferred future, or vision, for Carson City is outlined within this Master Plan.

The following steps were followed in the creation of the 2018 Carson City Master Plan:

- **Learning about Carson City** - A review and analysis of the current trends and demographic conditions in the City.
- **Listening to Carson City** - Community Input was sought out via an online survey. The feedback collected from the community and the pertinent background data is the basis of the goals and objectives for the Master Plan.
- **What do we want for Carson City** - All of the information gathered from the analysis and public outreach became the baseline for goals and objectives which are the guidelines for future policies and decisions.
- **How will Carson City look** - The development of the future land use map, which depicts how the City will grow, change, and develop over the next 10 to 20 years.
- **Checklist for Carson City's Future** – This is an action plan with a detailed list of specific action items.

## Implementation

A draft of this document was prepared in November 2018 and delivered to the Planning Commission. In **MONTH YEAR**, the City Council approved the distribution of the draft plan. Then, the Plan was distributed to neighboring communities, registered entities, and to Montcalm County for review. Next, the City held a public hearing on **DATE**, per requirements of MPEA. This provided an opportunity for public information and input. After the public hearing, the Planning Commission adopted the Master Plan on **DATE**, with City Council adoption occurring on **DATE**. The adoption documents can be found in Appendix A.

## Using a Master Plan

The Master Plan will be used primarily by the Planning Commission, the City Council, and the Zoning Board of Appeals as a guide in making land use decisions. Applicants seeking approval from any of these bodies will also find the Master Plan to be a valuable tool for understanding the long-term goals of the City. Likewise, the Master Plan can be used by other citizen committees to assist them in their review of land use related issues.

The Master Plan acts as the starting point for Zoning Ordinance updates and amendments. Michigan State Law requires that the Zoning Ordinance and zoning amendments be based on a Master Plan. The Master Plan gives a legal basis for zoning and identifies how the community is protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the population. In the event that the Zoning Ordinance, or a decision of either the Planning Commission or City Council, is challenged in court, the Master Plan will help provide the planning rationale to support land use regulation.

The Planning Commission, City Council, and the public should continuously reference the Master Plan in order to:

- [Review development proposals](#) – To confirm any given proposal meets all goals and objectives of the Master Plan.
- [Review rezoning requests](#) – To confirm the request is consistent with the City's criteria to consider rezonings including existing conditions, consistency with the goals and policies of the Master Plan, and potential impacts on the City.
- [Provide a basis for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and zoning map](#) - To help realize and enforce Plan goals.
- [Understand expectations for the future land use patterns and desired land use types in the community](#) – To inform potential residents and businesses about Carson City and its future.
- [Identify and recommend physical improvements](#) – To provide direction for provision of roadways, entryways, non-motorized paths, parks, and community facilities.
- [Provide specific design standards related to buildings, landscaping, and other site improvements](#) – To guide development and redevelopment throughout the community.



## Chapter Two – Learning About Carson City

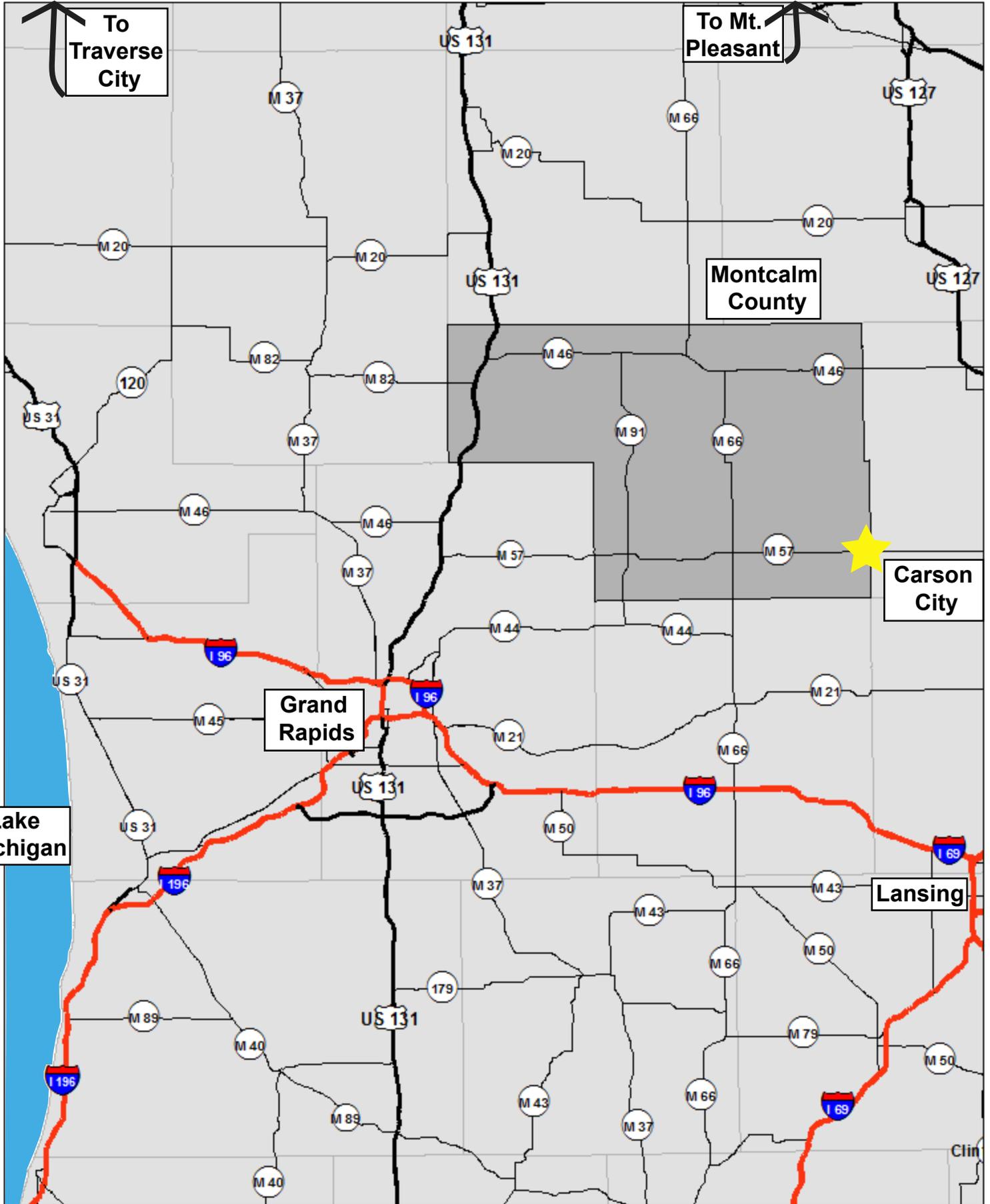
### Regional Context

Carson City is located in the southeast corner of Montcalm County. The eastern border of the City is along the Gratiot-Montcalm County line. The 0.71 square mile rural community occupies Sections 11 and 12 in the northeast corner of Bloomer Township. M-57, an east-west state route, bisects Carson City. This road provides residents with an easy connection to US-127 to the east or M-66 and US-131 to the west. Map 1, on the following page, depicts the location of the City.

Carson City was first platted in 1866 on land owned by R.M. Abbott, Delia Miner, and Hiram T. Sherman and recorded in 1871. A year later, the first lot was sold to Thomas Scott and John and Thomas LaDue, who built a saw mill and a grist mill in 1868 and 1870, respectively. The post office was transferred from North Shade in Gratiot County on August 3, 1868 and given the name Carson City by Scott, who had been in Carson City, Nevada during the gold and silver mining boom days; Sherman was appointed the first postmaster. Carson City was incorporated as a village in 1887 and as a city in 1960.

Land use/zoning within Carson City is predominately residential with a commercial corridor along Main Street and an industrial area on the north side of town; recreation land use, including the City's park system, which includes Grove Park, Haradine Park, and West Park, is also a significant land use. The Sparrow Carson Hospital which, in 2009, was honored as one of the best in the nation, and the Carson City Correctional Institutions, including the Correctional Facility, located southwest of the City in Bloomer Township, are the area's largest employers. The Carson City-Crystal Area School District includes one elementary school (K-3), and an upper elementary/middle school/high school campus in Carson City.

# City Location Map



## Community Profile

The following section includes an analysis of demographic data taken from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census, the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS), and other State or local sources. Census data provides a current profile of the City and its existing trends, both of which can affect Future Land Use. The demographic data discussed in the following section is also available for review in Appendix B of this Master Plan. This chart references five other communities which can be used as comparisons to the Carson City demographics.

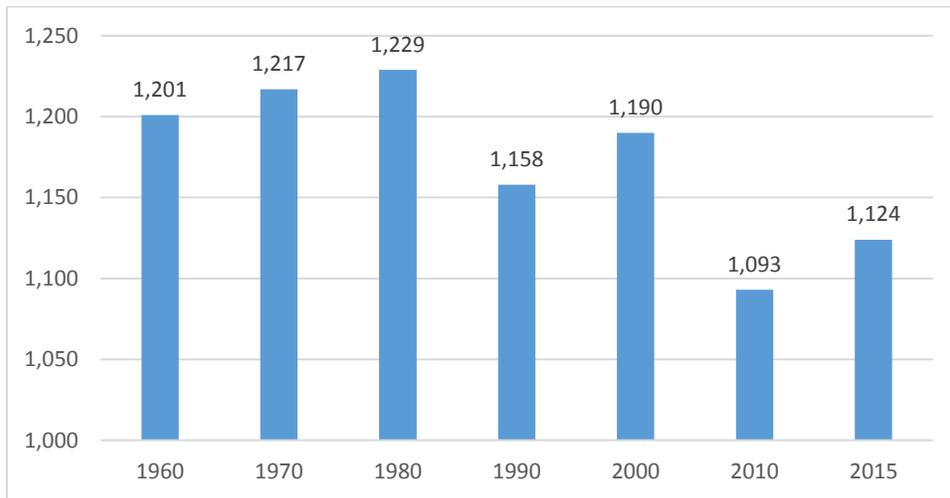
Please note, the chart in Appendix B includes data from Bloomer Township, however the following demographic data analysis will not include the Township. Bloomer Township is home to the Carson City Correctional Facility, which houses 2,492 inmates. The U.S. Census measures inmate population as a part of the municipality in which the facility is located. According to the Census data, 63% of Bloomer Township's population are inmates at the Carson City Correctional Facility. The Census is primarily a population count and residency is determined by a person's usual residence. Because of the large number of inmates, the data in Bloomer Township is skewed, and instead of comparing the City to data that is not relevant to their physical, social, and economic conditions, it has been excluded from the following analysis.

## Population

Population growth is the most important factor influencing land use decisions in any community. If a community is increasing in population, there will be an increased need for housing, commercial establishments, industry, parks and recreation, and roads. If a population is stable, there does not need to be a focus on increasing housing or roads, but rather maintaining the existing stock, working to provide better amenities for the residents, and fostering a friendly environment for potential businesses or industry.

Figure 1 and Table 2 below, show that the population in Carson City has undergone fluctuations over the past several decades. From 1960 to 1980, the population was on a steady climb. The following decade, from 1980 to 1990, the City experienced population loss; however, it climbed again from 1990 to 2000. The 2010 U.S. Census reported Carson City's lowest population in recent memory at 1,093 residents. In the past 5 years, the ACS estimates a population increase to 1,124 residents. However, ACS data is estimated data, and therefore has a margin of error. The next full population count will occur at the 2020 Census.

**Figure 1 – 1960 to 2015 Population Change**



**Table 2 – 1960 to 2015 Population Change**

Carson City Population		
	Population	% Change
<b>1960</b>	1,201	-
<b>1970</b>	1,217	1.3%
<b>1980</b>	1,229	1.0%
<b>1990</b>	1,158	-5.8%
<b>2000</b>	1,190	2.8%
<b>2010</b>	1,093	-8.2%
<b>2015</b>	1,124	2.8%

Table 3 compares the population growth of the City, County, and State from 2000 to 2010. Carson City has the largest population loss from 1,190 residents to 1,093 residents or (-8.2%). The State also had population loss (-0.6%), while Montcalm County had a gain of 3.4%.

**Table 3 – 2000 to 2010 Population Change**

Population			
	2000	2010	% Change
<b>Carson City</b>	1,190	1,093	-8.2%
<b>Montcalm County</b>	61,266	63,342	3.4%
<b>Michigan</b>	9,938,444	9,883,640	-0.6%

### Age Distribution

Analyzing the age of a community gives City officials a better understanding of the public services and special needs of residents. For example, if a community is full of young people, there may be a need for an increase in rental housing. In comparison, if there is a large senior population, assisted living facilities and medical care is important. These options give long-term residents the opportunity to age in place and stay close to their families and community. This analysis may also be useful for policy decisions about filling gaps in services and future projects in housing, education, recreation, and medical care. Following the trends and characteristics of large generations such as the baby boomers and millennials can help a community be prepared as their needs change.

For this analysis, age groups were separated by life stages. The first is the preschool age group (0-5 years old), followed by school aged children (6-19 years old). People between the ages of 20-24 are just entering the workforce, furthering their education, or beginning a family. The 25-44 age group is in the family formation years where children are born and living at home. The 45-64 age group are considered empty nesters and 65+ is the age group of retirees.

**Figure 2 – 2000 to 2010 Age Distribution**

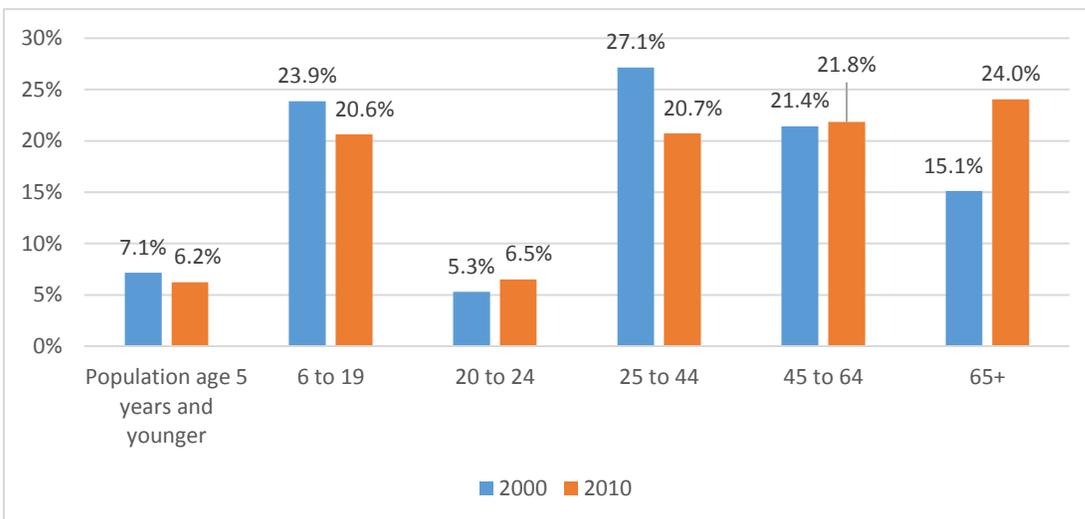


Figure 2 represents the changes in age distribution between 2000 to 2010. These figures are representative of an aging population because the number of young children and school aged children decreased, and the number of retirees increased. The only age group with an increase, aside from the retirees, were young adults entering the workforce (20-24), however it was very small. An aging population has differing needs that will affect land use planning, some examples include senior housing, public transportation, and passive recreation.

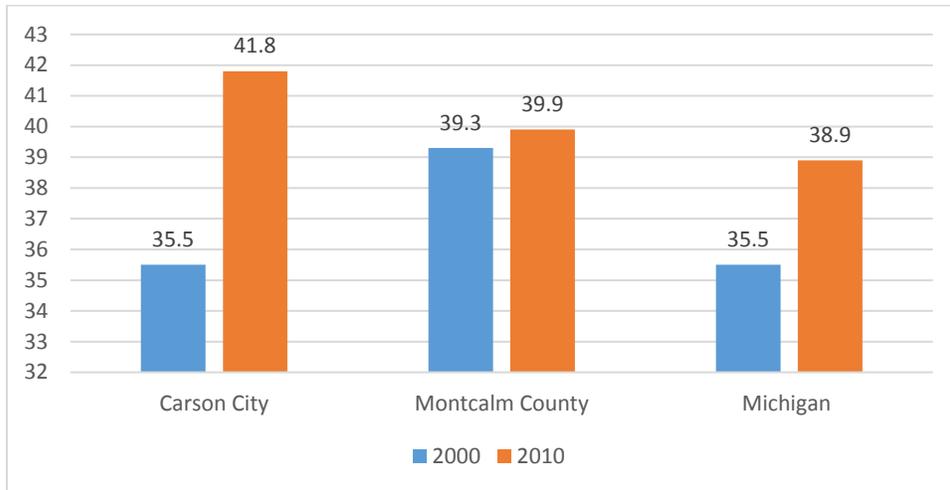
Table 4, below, highlights the age distribution of the City, County, and State. While all three geographies have similar populations of young children, school aged children, and young adults, Carson City has significantly less families and empty nesters. In comparison, the City has significantly more retirees than the County or State, with more than a 10% difference. While trends across the United States point to an aging population, and Carson City is no different in that regard, one reason for the larger population in the City is due to the residents living in the Laurels Skilled Nursing Facility.

**Table 4 – 2010 Age Distribution**

2010 Age Distribution						
	Carson City		Montcalm County		Michigan	
<b>Population age 5 years and younger</b>	68	6.2%	3,834	6.1%	596,286	6.0%
<b>6 to 19</b>	225	20.6%	13,150	20.8%	2,052,599	20.8%
<b>20 to 24</b>	71	6.5%	3,562	5.6%	669,072	6.8%
<b>25 to 44</b>	226	20.7%	16,216	25.6%	2,442,123	24.7%
<b>45 to 64</b>	238	21.8%	17,638	27.8%	2,762,030	27.9%
<b>65+</b>	262	24.0%	8,942	14.1%	1,361,530	13.8%

The data above shows that the population in Carson City is older than that of the County and State. This is further emphasized when comparing the median age of all three geographies, see Figure 3 on the following page. The median ages are as follows: Carson City 41.8, Montcalm County 39.9, and Michigan 38.9. It is also important to note how much the median age of Carson City increased over the past 10 years, as compared to the other geographies. While the median age of the County increased by less than one year, Carson City increased by more than six years. In 2000, Michigan and Carson City both had a median age of 35.5. In 2010, the median age of Michigan increased to 38.9, and Carson City’s median age increased to 41.8, almost 3 years older than Michigan.

**Figure 3 – 2000 to 2010 Median Age**

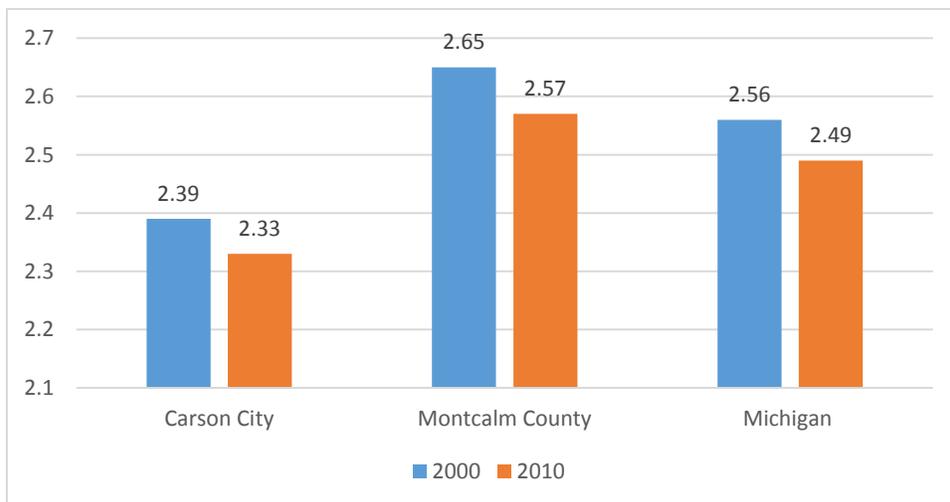


### Household Size

According to the U.S. Census, the average number of persons per household constitutes the average household size of a community. Since the 1970s, household size in the United States has been in decline. There are many factors that have contributed to this phenomenon, including increased lifespan, lower birth rate, higher divorce rates, and the growing number of non-traditional households.

The average household can be a useful measurement when planning future housing types. If the size of households is decreasing, it may mean that new housing types should accommodate smaller family sizes. Figure 4 below, shows all three geographies experienced a decrease in average household size between 2000 and 2010. Carson City has the smallest average household size at 2.33, which was a decrease from 2.39 in 2000. This was a smaller decrease than that of the household size at the County and State levels. Smaller household sizes are largely attributed to the increasing population of retirees and declining family populations.

**Figure 4 – 2010 Average Household Size**



## Household Characteristics

In addition to average household size, understanding of the type of families in a community can also give officials an idea of the types of housing which would best serve the population. According to the Census, there are two types of family categories, family households and non-family households. Families consist of people living in a single household who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Families also vary in types according to the parental presence (single or couple). Non-families consist of a single person living alone or multiple people who are not related living together.

Table 5 illustrates the household characteristics in Carson City from 2000 to 2010. Overall, the percentage of family households in the City has decreased, and therefore the percentage of nonfamily households has increased. Within family households, the number of married couple families has decreased, and within the nonfamily households the number of householders living alone has increased. The trends hold true to the other demographic trends we have analyzed thus far.

**Table 5 – 2000 – 2010 Household Characteristics**

Household Characteristics		
	2000	2010
<b>Family Households</b>	<b>63.1%</b>	<b>60.1%</b>
<i>Husband-Wife Family</i>	<i>44.6%</i>	<i>40.6%</i>
<i>Female Householder</i>	<i>13.1%</i>	<i>14.4%</i>
<i>Male Householder</i>	<i>5.4%</i>	<i>5.1%</i>
<b>Nonfamily Households</b>	<b>36.9%</b>	<b>39.9%</b>
<i>Householder Living Alone</i>	<i>32.3%</i>	<i>35.7%</i>
<i>Other Nonfamilies</i>	<i>4.6%</i>	<i>4.2%</i>

In addition to understanding how the households in the City are changing, it is also useful to compare household make-up to that of other jurisdictions. Table 6 compares the 2010 household characteristics of Carson City to the County and State. Carson City has a smaller percentage of family households than the County and State, and therefore has the largest percentage of nonfamily households. Of the family households, the City has the largest percentage of female householders.

**Table 6 – 2010 Household Characteristics**

Household Type			
	Carson City	Montcalm County	Michigan
<b>Family Households</b>	<b>60.1%</b>	<b>70.7%</b>	<b>66.0%</b>
<i>Husband-Wife Family</i>	40.6%	54.1%	48.0%
<i>Female Householder</i>	14.4%	11.4%	13.2%
<i>Male Householder</i>	5.1%	5.2%	4.8%
<b>Nonfamily Households</b>	<b>39.9%</b>	<b>29.3%</b>	<b>34.0%</b>
<i>Householder Living Alone</i>	35.7%	23.8%	27.9%
<i>Other Nonfamilies</i>	4.2%	5.5%	6.1%

## Housing

Housing is probably the most visible characteristic of any community. The following section analyzes the housing stock by unit type, age, value, and tenant. This data helps a community determine the quality of existing housing and the potential need for new housing.

### Housing Characteristics

There are multiple types of housing that make up the housing stock in any community. The U.S. Census separates housing into five different categories: 1 Unit, Detached (single-family homes), 1 Unit, Attached (granny flats, single apartment unit connected to a single-family home), 2-4 Units (duplex units), 5 or more Units (apartment complex), and Mobile Homes or Trailer Units.

As previously mentioned, many households in Carson City are made up of married couple families which generally demand single-family homes. This correlates with the large percentage of single-family homes found in the City (77.4%), as illustrated in Table 7. There is a much smaller, but more equally represented section of multi-family units in the City, and only 1% of the housing is made up by mobile homes.

**Table 7 – 2010 Housing by Type**

Housing Type	
<b>1 unit, detached</b>	77.4%
<b>1 unit, attached</b>	0.0%
<b>2 units</b>	5.1%
<b>3 or 4 units</b>	5.3%
<b>5 to 9 units</b>	3.6%
<b>10 or more units</b>	7.6%
<b>Mobile Home</b>	1.1%
<b>Boat, RV, Van, etc.</b>	0.0%

## Age of Housing

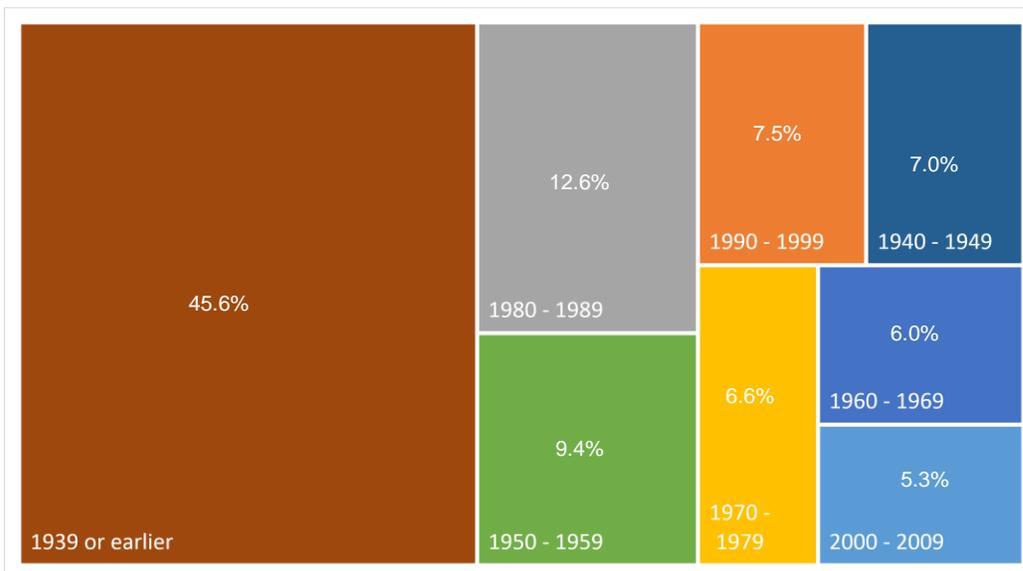
Generally speaking, the useful age of residential structures is approximately 50 years. Beyond that point, repairs can become costly, and if the structure has not been updated, it may be difficult to provide the type of amenities that are considered standard for today's lifestyle. Therefore, determining the age of the housing located within a community is an effective way of measuring the quality.

When a community's housing stock approaches the 50-year mark, it is possible that the need for rehabilitation and new construction will increase. However, exceptions to this rule include older housing that is very well built and desirable because of historical or architectural value.

It is important for a community to know if people are living in the existing housing stock or building new. If residents are filling up the available housing stock, and it is being repaired when necessary, these homes are in good repair. However, if residents are always building new, the older housing may become blighted and will need major repairs.

Figure 5 illustrates the percentage of the housing stock built in each decade. Overall, most of the housing stock in Carson City was built prior to 1939. Meaning it is much older and has the potential for historic value. The second largest era of housing growth in Carson City was between 1980 and 1990. From 2010 to the present day, the Census reports there have been no new homes built in Carson City. However, aside from the three decades mentioned above, every ten years Carson City has had a steady increase in housing stock.

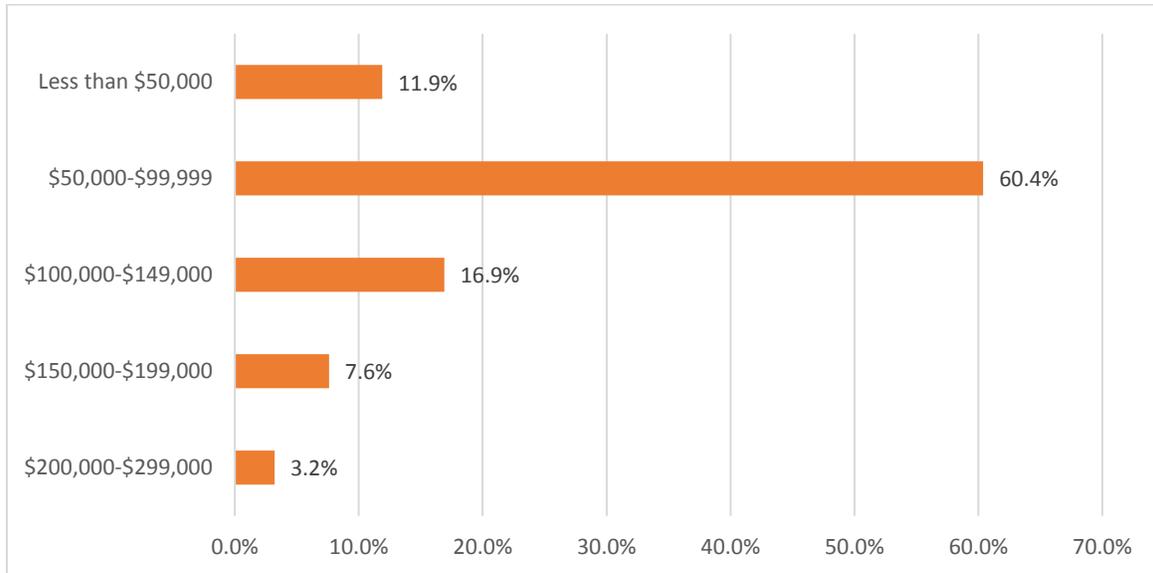
**Figure 5 – 2010 Age of Housing**



## Housing Value

Analyzing housing values is a way to determine both quality and affordability of housing in a City. Having an affordable housing market helps support a diverse community which will help attract new residents for future growth. Figure 6, below, shows the City has a good distribution of home values. The largest proportion of homes are valued between \$50,000 - \$99,999. Carson City's median housing value is \$79,200. This is less than the County (\$94,100), and the State (\$122,400).

**Figure 6 – 2010 Housing Value**



## Education, Employment, and Income

### Education

Educational attainment measures the educational level of a community and illustrates the skills and capabilities of the labor force. For example, if there is a high education level, the workforce could attract a larger diversity of industries which require a degree for employment. The U.S. Census Bureau reports five categories of education levels: those who did not complete high school, those who earned a high school diploma or an equivalent, those that attended some college or earned an associate's degree, and those who earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

Over the past decade, the population of Carson City has become more educated (Figure 7). Residents with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 1%, some college or associates degree increased by 6%, and residents who earned a high school diploma increased by 4%. The only group to decrease was individuals who have not earned a diploma, which indicates the residents of Carson City are choosing to attend college and raise their education levels.

**Figure 7 – 2010 Percent of Population with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher**

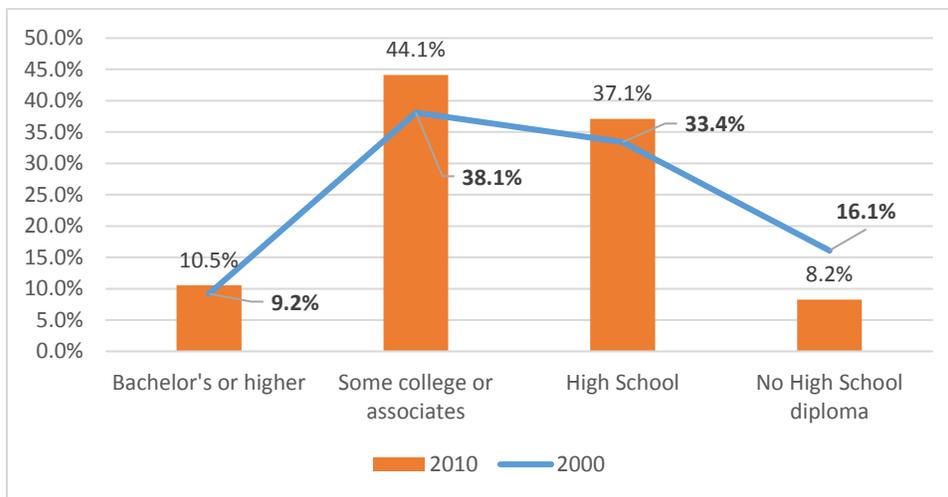


Table 8 illustrates how Carson City's education compares to that of Montcalm County and Michigan. Overall, the City has the largest percentage of residents with an associates degree, and the smallest percentage of residents who did not graduate from high school.

**Table 8 – 2010 Educational Attainment**

	Bachelor's or higher	Some college or associates	High School	No High School diploma
<b>Carson City</b>	10.5%	44.1%	37.1%	8.2%
<b>Montcalm County</b>	13.1%	35.2%	39.0%	12.7%
<b>Michigan</b>	26.9%	32.8%	29.9%	10.4%

## Employment by Industry

The distribution of employment throughout various industries shows the diversity of a local economy. If a large majority of the population is employed in one industry, the economy will be majorly affected if that industry falls. Whereas, if the distribution is more equally spread, the local economy would not take a large hit if one business or industry leaves. The distribution of employment by industry is shown in Table 9. Overall, there is a variety of industries that employ Carson City residents. Further, there weren't any significant industry changes over the past 10 years, indicating stable industries. However, there are three changes which do stand out. **Retail Trade** had a large decrease, and **Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services** and **Educational, health and social services** had a large increase. These are positive trends which show movement away from lower paying service industry jobs.

**Table 9 – 2010 Employment by Industry**

	2000	2010
<b>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining</b>	1.0%	6.0%
<b>Construction</b>	4.3%	4.4%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	21.6%	16.3%
<b>Wholesale trade</b>	2.7%	0.8%
<b>Retail trade</b>	12.3%	4.1%
<b>Transportation and warehousing, and utilities</b>	6.0%	0.5%
<b>Information</b>	1.2%	1.4%
<b>Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing</b>	2.5%	3.5%
<b>Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services</b>	0.6%	7.9%
<b>Educational, health and social services</b>	26.5%	34.1%
<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services</b>	8.0%	10.4%
<b>Other services (except public administration)</b>	4.1%	3.5%
<b>Public administration</b>	9.3%	7.1%

Overall, the top three employment industries in Carson City are **Educational, health, and social services** (34.1%); **Manufacturing** (16.3%); and **Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service** (10.4%). This makes sense considering the large industries located in the City, specifically the hospital and surrounding medical facilities. The top three industries in both the County and Michigan vary from Carson City. The County's top three industries are Manufacturing, Educational, health and social services, and Retail trade. While the State has the same three, educational, health and social services is first, manufacturing is second. Table 10 below lists the top three industries and their respective percentages.

**Table 10 – 2010 Top Three Employment Industries**

	1st	2nd	3rd
<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Educational, health and social services (34.1%)</b>	<b>Manufacturing (16.3%)</b>	<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (10.4%)</b>
Montcalm County	Manufacturing (22.2%)	Educational, health and social services (20.9%)	Retail trade (13.2%)
Michigan	Educational, health and social services (23.9%)	Manufacturing (17.8%)	Retail trade (11.4%)

### Unemployment

According to the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget, the 2015 unemployment rate in Montcalm County was 5.7%, this is a significant decrease from 14.1% in 2010. This trend is similar to Michigan with unemployment at 12.6% in 2010 and 5.7% in 2015.

## Income

Studying income and poverty levels is one way to measure the relative economic health of a community. Increases in income can show economic success, while increases in the percent of individuals below the poverty level can show economic failure. The Census measures income at three levels: median household, median family, and per capita. Table 11 illustrates these three levels and individuals below the poverty line.

Median household income is the measure of the total incomes of the persons living in a single household. The median household income in Carson City is \$24,609, which is less than the median household income in the County (\$50,054), and the State (\$49,576).

Median Family income is a measure of the total income of a family unit. Because families often have two incomes, and do not include single persons living alone, median family incomes are typically higher than median household income. The median family income in the City is \$40,000, this is less than the County (\$54,634), and the State at (\$62,247).

Per capita income is the measure of income all individuals within a jurisdiction, would receive if all income in the City was divided equally among all residents. This number is usually the lowest and is a good representation of the overall wealth of a community. Carson City's per capita income is \$17,465, this number is similar to that of the County (\$15,067), and lower than that of Michigan (\$26,607).

Finally, Table 11 also compares the percent of the population below the poverty line. Poverty is measured using 48 thresholds as defined by the Census. To determine whether a person lives in poverty, one compares the total income of that person's family with the threshold appropriate for that family size and characteristics. Carson City has the highest percentage of people living in poverty of the three compared jurisdictions. This information is reflective of the lower median and family household incomes in the City.

These factors must be analyzed by a community in order to identify any special needs of citizens and considerations to provide appropriate public services.

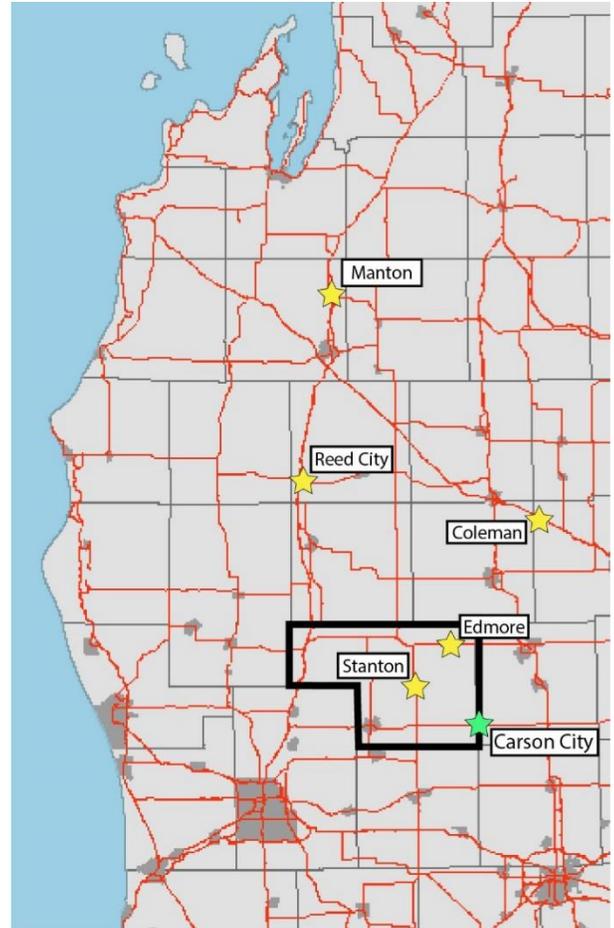
**Table 11 – 2010 Income and Poverty**

	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income	Individuals below Poverty Level
<b>Carson City</b>	\$24,609	\$40,000	\$17,465	35.1%
<b>Montcalm County</b>	\$50,054	\$54,634	\$15,067	15.0%
<b>Michigan</b>	\$49,576	\$62,247	\$26,607	16.7%

## Comparison Communities

To gain a better perspective on the specific characteristics of Carson City, the following section of the Master Plan compares Carson City to other cities of similar size in Michigan. While it is always worthwhile to analyze the demographic trends of other cities for comparison purposes, it is especially important in Carson City. This is because of the correctional facility in Bloomer Township. In the previous section, the only jurisdictions included in the comparison were the City, County, and the State. These are useful to understand how the City is changing compared to the larger regional trends, but these comparisons do not get to the nitty gritty details of how small rural cities in the center of Michigan are changing. Because the other local demographic data is skewed by inmate data, it is crucial to look elsewhere for patterns to determine how Carson City is changing. The following analysis aims to take communities similar to Carson City, in size and rural setting, and compare them to one another to determine any distinct patterns.

This analysis includes a comparative assessment of economic, social, and demographic conditions. Data was collected from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census, and the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS).



**Table 12 – Comparison Communities**

Community	County	Population
<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Montcalm</b>	<b>1,093</b>
Coleman	Midland	1,243
Edmore	Montcalm	1,201
Manton	Wexford	1,287
Reed City	Osceola	2,425
Stanton	Montcalm	1,417

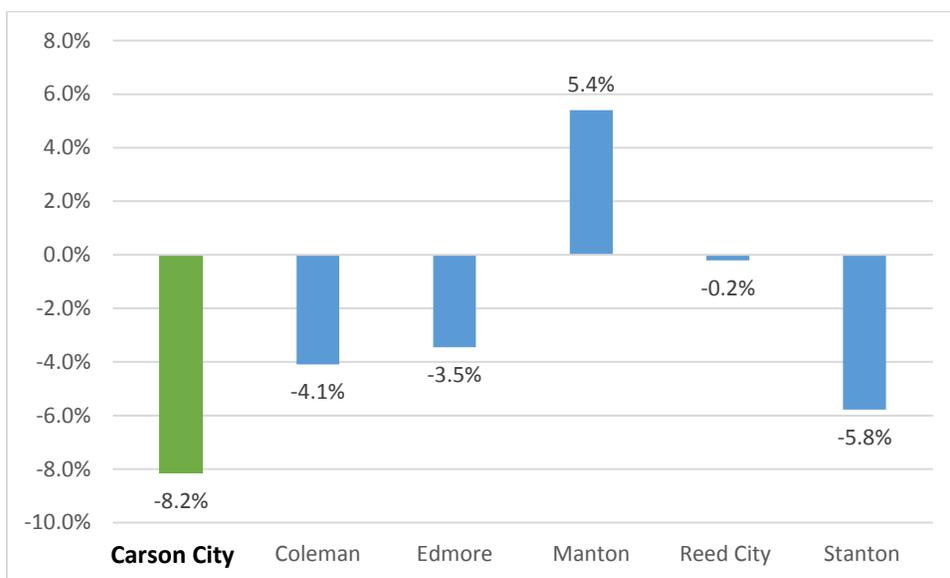
The six communities above have similar populations; however, Carson City is the smallest comparison community included in the analysis. Carson City is one of the smallest cities in Michigan, which is why Carson City is the smallest of the comparison communities. The following analysis is focused on cities in Michigan, with one exception being the Village of Edmore. The Village was included because of the proximity to Carson City. The one difference is Reed City, which has a population of more than 1,000 people greater than Carson City. This community was included because it is another

small city in Michigan that is home to a hospital and several other medical facilities. The Sparrow Hospital is a major driver of the Carson City community and economy, which is why it could be beneficial to study another city with similar characteristics.

## Population

Overall, the population of each comparison community ranges from 1,201 and 2,425 residents, as compared to Carson City's population of 1,093. The change in population of almost all the comparison communities varied widely from 2000 to 2010. Aside from Manton, all the other communities lost population between 2000 to 2010, shown in Figure 8 below. Carson City had the largest population loss of 8.2%, while Stanton, Coleman, and Edmore also had distinct population loss, ranging from 4% – 6%. Of all the communities, Reed City had the most stable population.

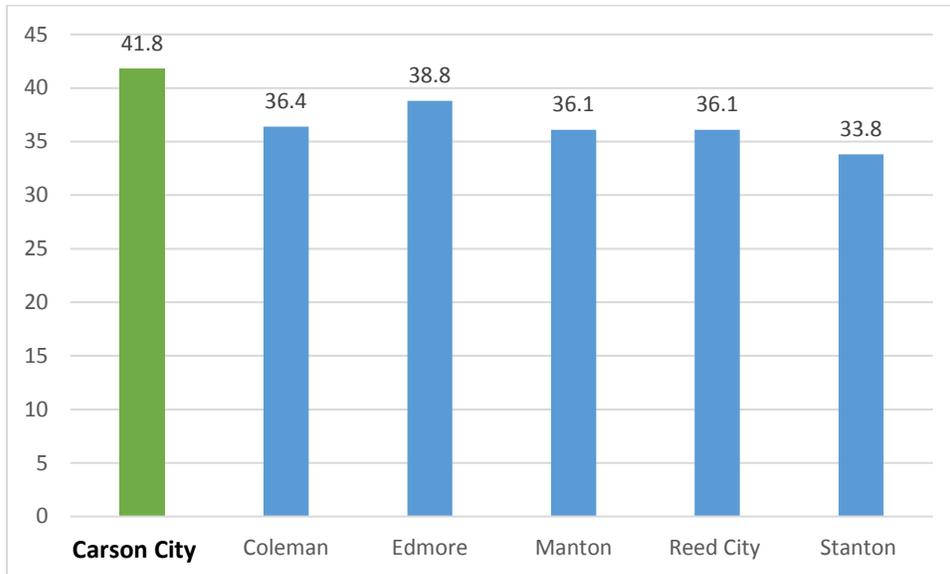
**Figure 8 – 2000 to 2010 Population Change**



## Median Age and Household Size

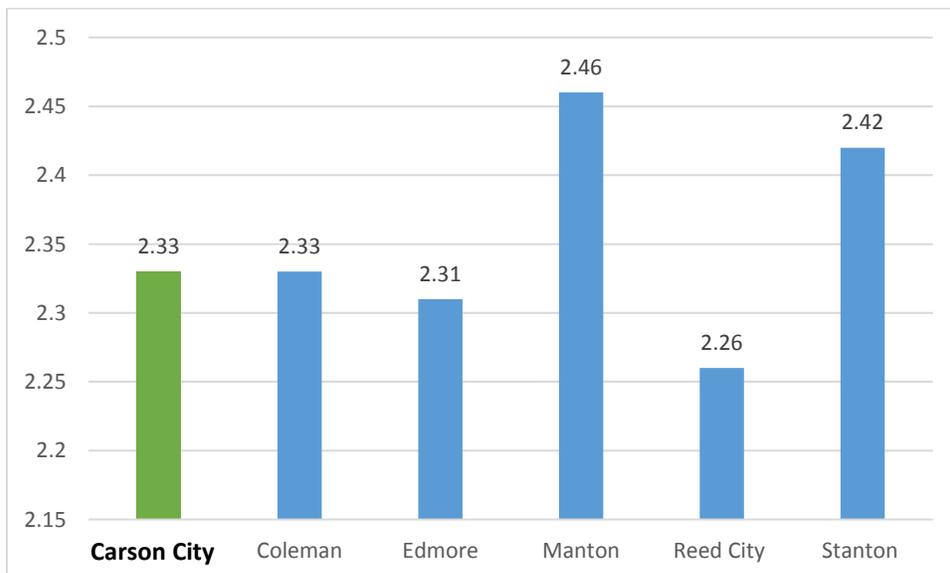
Carson City's median age is 41.8. This is higher than any other comparison community, see Figure 9 on the following page. At 38.1, Edmore is the only community which has a median age close to Carson City. Whereas Coleman, Manton, and Reed City all have median ages of 36 and Stanton has the lowest median age at 33.8.

**Figure 9 – 2010 Median Age**



Carson City has an average household size of 2.33 which is the same size as Coleman, and larger than both, Edmore (2.31) and Reed City (2.26). Often, when a community has a higher median age, they also have a low average household size because the population is older and their children have moved to their own homes. In this instance, that is also the case, the State has an average household size of 2.49. While the household size looks average between the comparison communities, in reality most of the comparison communities have a small average household size. Even though Carson City has a high median age it has the third highest average household size. Manton and Stanton are both larger at 2.46 and 2.42 respectively.

**Figure 10 – 2010 Average Household Size**

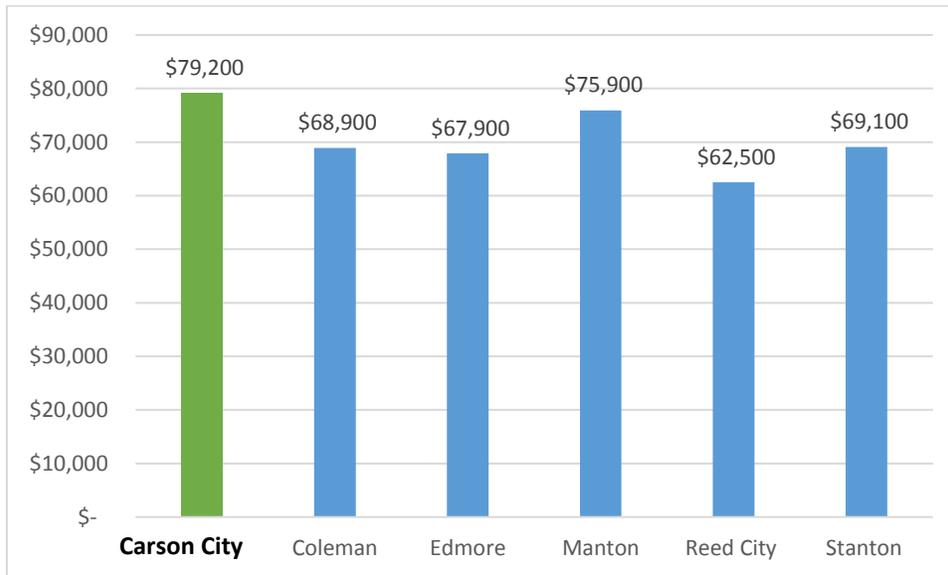


## Housing

Housing characteristics are very distinct and are often the most visible part of a community. The following analysis reviews the owner vs. renter occupied housing rates, the median housing value, and the percentage of the housing stock that was built before 1980.

Figure 11 shows the median housing value of all six comparison communities. Of the six, Carson City has the highest median housing value at \$79,200. Manton is the only other community with a median housing value in the \$70,000 range. The remaining four communities all have a median housing value in the \$60,000 range, in the following order from highest to lowest Stanton, Coleman, Edmore, and Reed City.

**Figure 11 – 2010 Median Housing Value**



Another defining characteristic of the housing stock is the age of houses. Figure 12 illustrates the percentage of the housing stock that was built before 1980 in each community. Carson City has the second highest percentage at 74.6%, only Stanton has a higher percentage at 75.6%. In comparison, Manton has the lowest percentage at 56%, and the remaining three communities are all very close at 69.7% (Coleman and Edmore) and 69.8% (Reed City).

**Figure 12 – 2010 Percentage of Homes Built Before 1980**

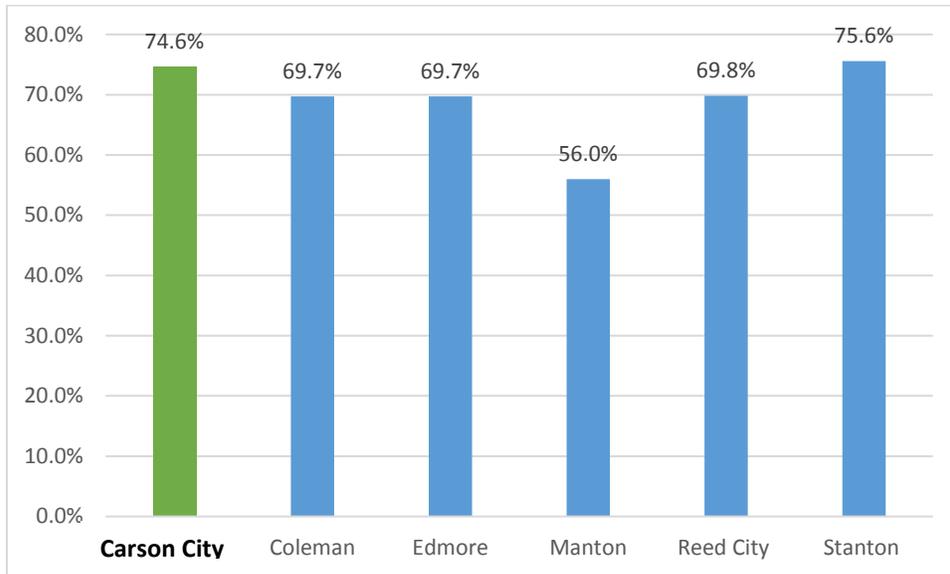
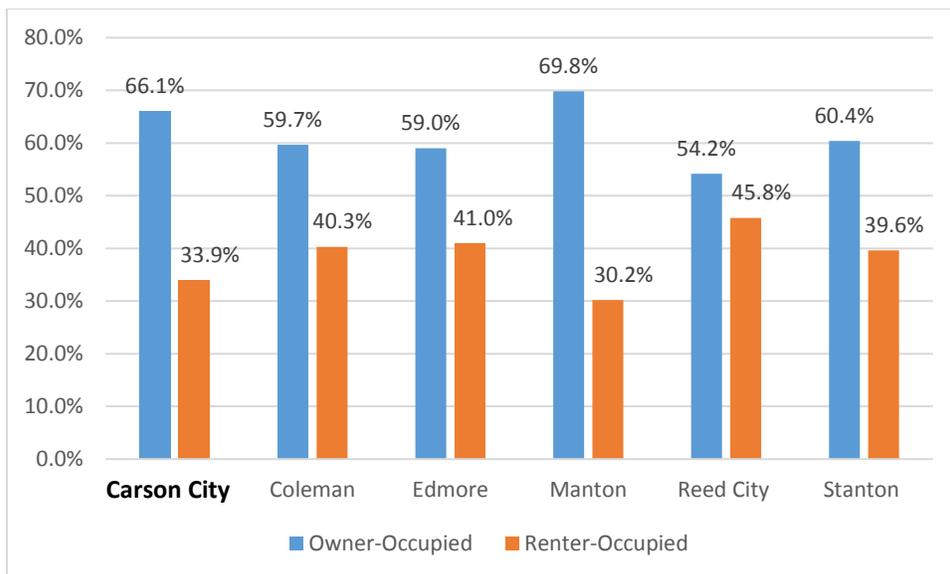


Figure 13 below illustrates the percentage of owner-occupied homes vs. renter-occupied homes in all six communities. Overall, Carson City has the second highest percentage of owner-occupied homes (66.1%), Manton has the highest at 69.8%. The remaining communities are all close to Carson City in percentage, however Reed City has the lowest percentage at 54.2%. Because Carson City has the second highest percentage of owner-occupied homes, it has the second lowest percentage of renter-occupied units.

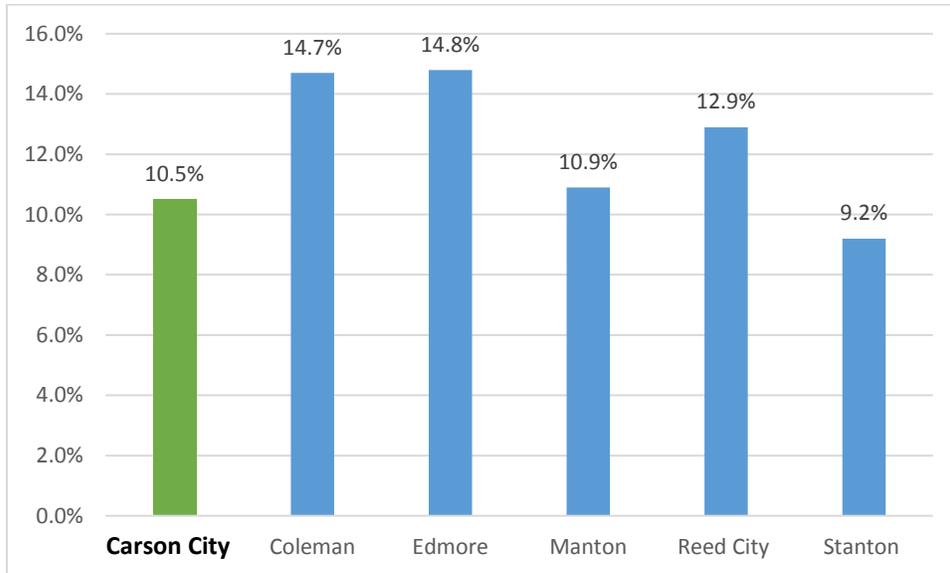
**Figure 13 – 2010 Owner-occupied vs. Renter-occupied**



## Education

Figure 14 depicts the percentage of each comparison community that has earned a bachelor's degree or higher. All six communities are similar. Edmore and Coleman have the highest percentage at 14.8% and 14.7%, respectively. Manton and Reed City are similar at 10.9% and 12.9% respectively. Carson City has a total of 10.5% of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher and Stanton has the smallest population at 9.2%.

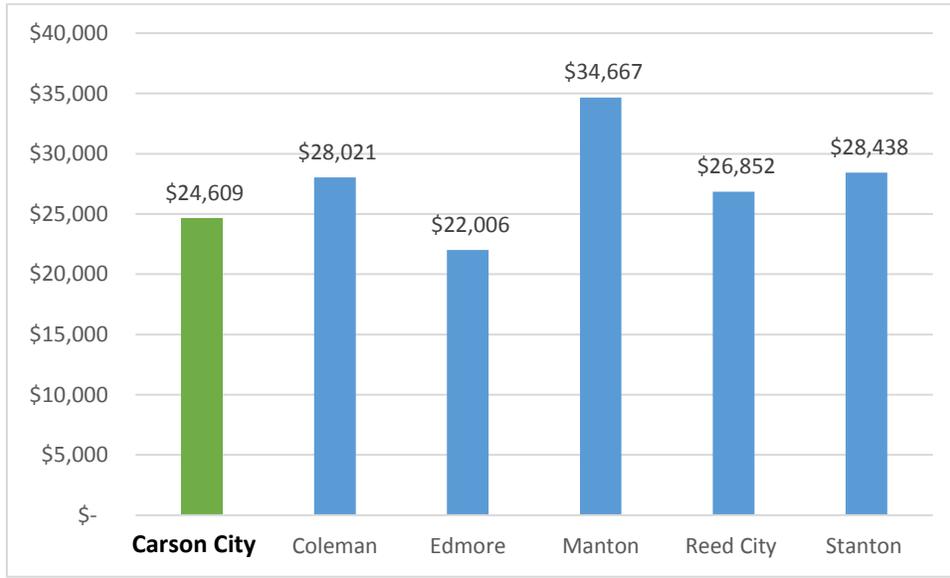
**Figure 14 – 2010 Percent of Population with a Bachelor's Degree**



## Employment and Income

Median Household Income is shown in Figure 15 below. Of all six communities, Carson City has the second lowest median household income at \$24,609, only Edmore has an income which is smaller at \$22,006. Aside from Manton, the other three communities have incomes that are relatively close to one another between \$26,800 and \$28,400. Manton's income is \$10,000 higher than Carson City at \$34,667.

**Figure 15 – 2010 Median Household Income**



The industries that employ the largest percentage of people vary slightly between the six communities. In Carson City the top employer is educational, health and social services. This makes sense because of the hospital and other medical facilities in the City. The second largest employer is the manufacturing industry, and the third is arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services. Manton has the same top three employers as Carson City, and Coleman and Stanton have the same top two employers, with the third in each community differing from Carson City. Edmore and Reed City both share some of the same industries as Carson City, but the rankings are different.

**Table 13 – 2010 Employment by Industry**

<b>Employment by Industry</b>			
	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>
<b>Carson City</b>	<b>Educational, health care and social services (34.1%)</b>	<b>Manufacturing (16.3%)</b>	<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (10.4%)</b>
Coleman	Educational, health care and social assistance (16.5%)	Manufacturing (13.2%)	Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (11.1%)
Edmore	Retail trade (19.7%)	Educational, health care and social assistance (19.4%)	Manufacturing (19.2%)
Manton	Educational, health care and social assistance (18.5%)	Manufacturing (15.9%)	Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (12.7%)
Reed City	Manufacturing (24.9%)	Educational, health care and social assistance (19.9%)	Retail trade (13.7%)
Stanton	Educational, health care and social assistance (26.1%)	Manufacturing (17.2%)	Retail trade (9.3%)





## Public Services and Community Facilities

### Roads

The transportation network in Carson City is depicted in Map 3, which defines the state roads, minor arterial roads, and local roads in and adjacent to the City, and Map 2 which depicts the location of the existing sidewalks in the City.

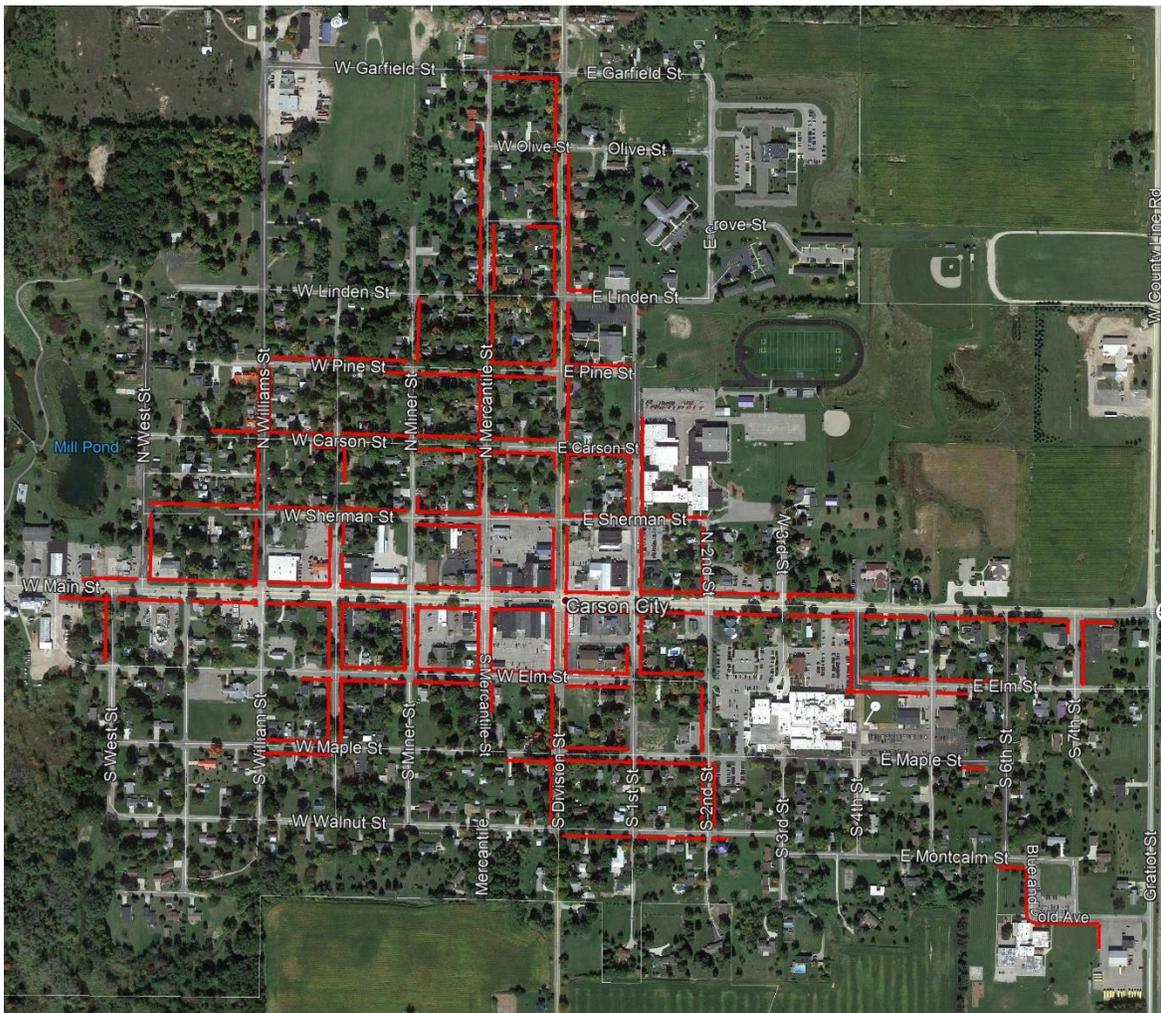
M-57 is the only state road, or principal arterial, in Carson City, it carries traffic east and west between US-131 to the west and US-127 and I-75 to the east. Principal arterials generally carry long distance travel movements. They also provide access to important traffic generators. M-57 travels through the heart of downtown Carson City.

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) does annual traffic counts on their state highways, these are called average daily traffic (ADT) counts. ADT measures the average volume of vehicle traffic on a road or highway for one day in a year. Map 3 highlights the ADT counts on M-57 at three locations, two are just outside the City limits, and the third is in the center of the City. There are significantly more trips in the City, which accounts for local drivers. There are also more trips east of the City, just inside of Gratiot County, instead of west in Bloomer Township. MDOT also measures the ADT on Mount Hope Road north and south of the City limits, that road has significantly less traffic than M-57 at 1,367 trips. The remaining roads in the City are all local roads under the City's jurisdiction, and therefore do not have MDOT traffic counts.

In addition to the road network in Carson City, the City also maintains a network of sidewalks for pedestrian and bicycle circulation. Map 2 highlights the locations of the existing sidewalk infrastructure. The City maintains sidewalks in the residential neighborhoods and the commercial core, and completes sidewalk projects according to their sidewalk improvement plan. Further, the City has instituted an easy and cost-effective program where residents can update the sidewalks out in front of their homes. The City encourages residents to use this program to update their sidewalks. The City sidewalk updates work to connect residents with key community spaces such as the schools, hospitals, and parks. These improvements are all in the hope of creating a connected and walkable sidewalk network in Carson City.

In the future, the City plans to expand the downtown commercial core area. This expansion includes new sidewalks, streetscaping, and lighting along M-57 throughout all of Carson City. Additionally, City officials would like to also expand this streetscaping one block north and one block south off M-57.

Map 2 -Sidewalks

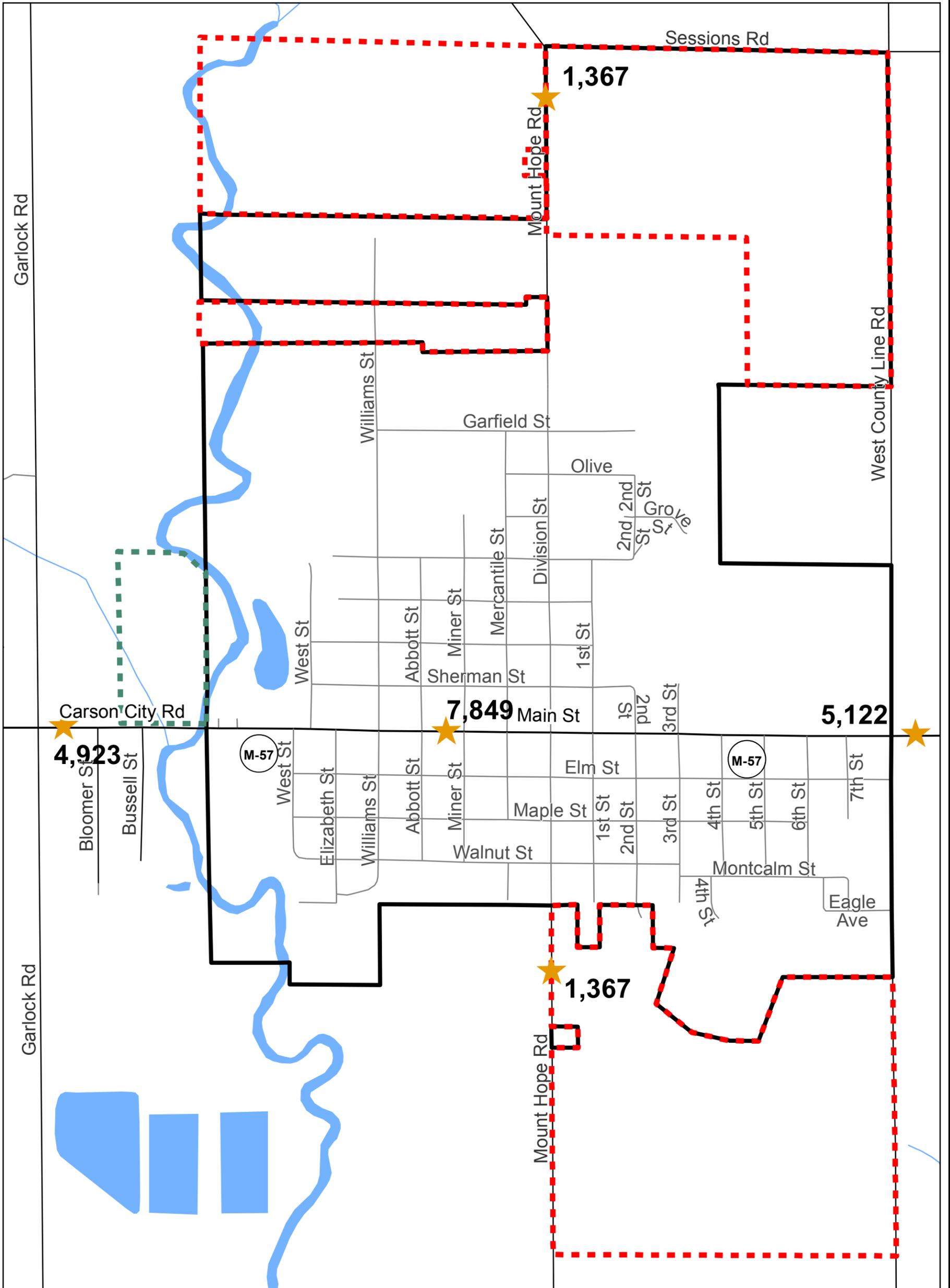


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# MAP 3 - TRANSPORTATION AND ADT\*

CARSON CITY - MICHIGAN



### LEGEND

- State Roads
- County Roads
- Local Roads
- ADT
- 425 Agreement
- City Park

\*Average Daily Traffic (ADT) is used to measure the total volume of vehicle traffic on road or a highway for a year.

Source: Michigan Department of Transportation



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## Public Utilities

The information in the following section provides an inventory of the existing utility system in Carson City. The information presents any developers or City officials with a complete map of utilities available in the City. In the future, these maps will guide developers on opportunities in Carson City. Further, any changes in the future could affect the maintenance and expansion of public utilities including sanitary sewers, water supply and storm water systems, for which the City's Department of Public Works is responsible. (Map 4, 5, and 6).

Carson City and Bloomer Township have entered into a Conditional Land Transfer Agreement, more commonly known as a 425 Agreement. The 425 Agreement allows for a contractual agreement between two jurisdictions that conditionally transfers jurisdiction of a property with a proposed development to the unit which will be providing utilities to that development. This permits both parties to share tax revenues in these designated areas. There are three 425 Agreement areas outside of Carson City, one is south of the City limits on the east half of the City, the second and third are north of the City boundaries. All three areas are highlighted on the future land use map. The 425 Agreement is an opportunity of great potential for the City, however it also means the City will be responsible for the utilities to any new development, and therefore careful planning of the municipal water, sanitary, and storm water services needs to be considered.

### Water system

The City of Carson City Department of Public Works operates, maintains, repairs, and improves the drinking water system in the City. The system is made up of a network of various sized water mains, and two municipal wells located north of the City, adjacent to the intersection of Condensary Road and West County Line Road. The City provides water to all Carson City residents, to residences and businesses along the water lines both north and south of the City, and to the Carson City Correctional Facility which is southwest of the City. Map 4 is a depiction of the existing water lines and wells. The extensions outside of the City limits are on the following roads: Mount Hope Road, West County Line, Carson City Road, Garlock Road, and Boyer Road. The City water tower is located near the DPW in the northwest corner of the City, off Garfield Street. There are approximately 19 miles of water lines in the Carson City system and they are made of ductile iron pipe. In recent years, Carson City has made improvements to the water system as needed.

If there were to be any future development that would engage the 425 Agreement conditions and require the City to provide water service, the existing lines are already in place, the development would just need to connect into the system. The City would need to prepare for appropriate expansion of pipes if any new development were to exceed capacity.

### Sanitary Sewer

The existing sanitary sewer is a gravity fed network of pipes which range from 8 to 15 inches in diameter, the only instances where the system is a force main are around the three lagoons located southwest of the City in Bloomer Township. There are approximately 12 miles of pipeline in the system which collects waste from the residents within the City limits and the Carson City Correctional Facility to the southwest. The sanitary sewer system appears to be adequate in terms of its capacity for the existing system, however if there were any new large developments, the City would have to evaluate the capacity of the lagoon system to handle the new load.

### Storm sewer

The responsibility for maintaining the storm drainage system within the City belongs to the Department of Public Works, the Montcalm County Drain Commission, and MDOT. The existing storm drainage system within the City includes storm sewer pipe ranging in size from 4 to 48 inches. The system has approximately 10 miles of pipelines, made up of ductile iron, PVC, HDPE, and reinforced concrete pipe. Recently, the City was awarded a Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater (SAW) grant from the State to study its storm water system.

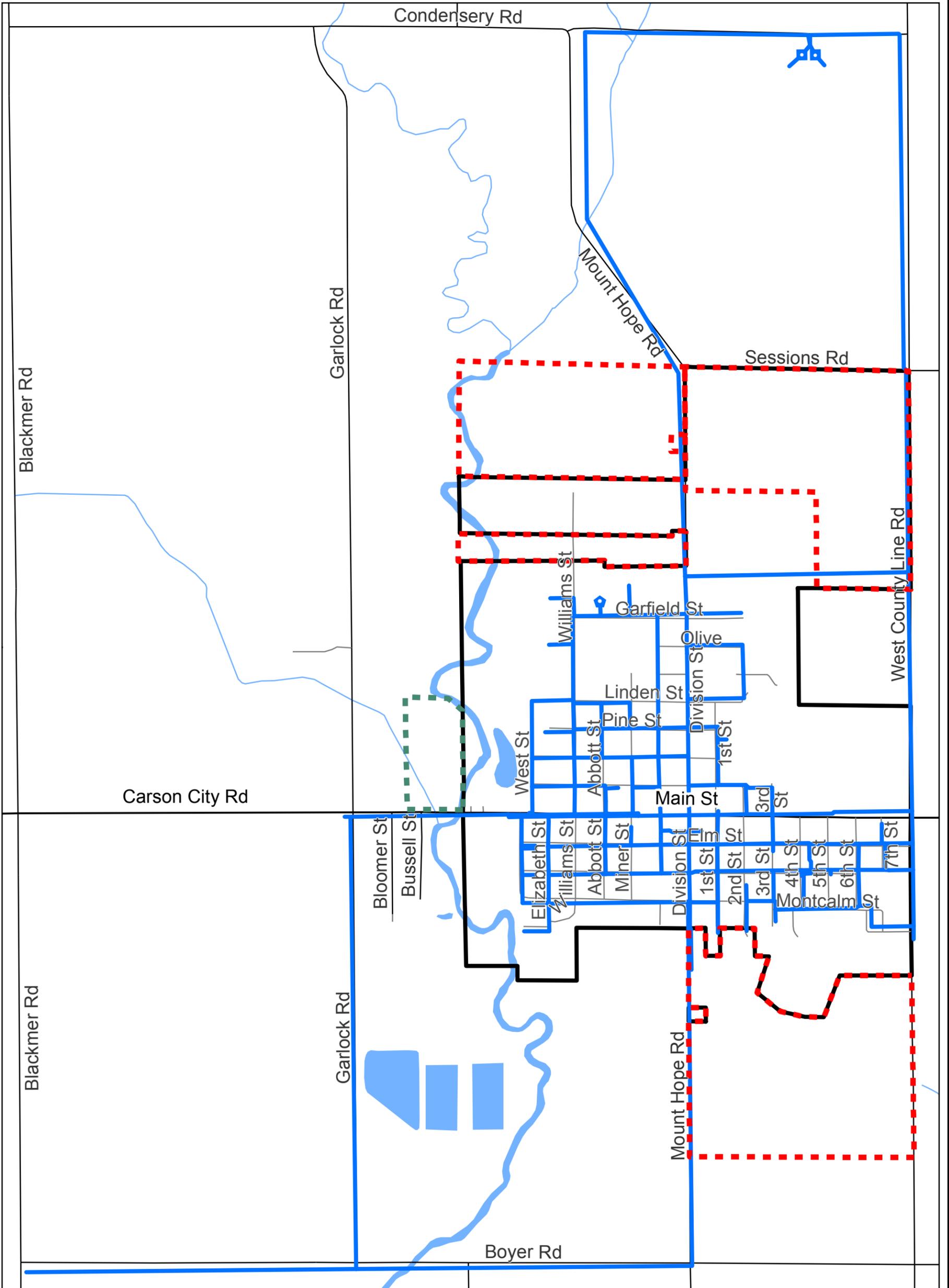
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# MAP 4 - WATER LINES

CARSON CITY - MICHIGAN

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### LEGEND

-  Water Line
-  water\_tank
-  water\_pump
-  Water Features
-  425 Agreement
-  City Park



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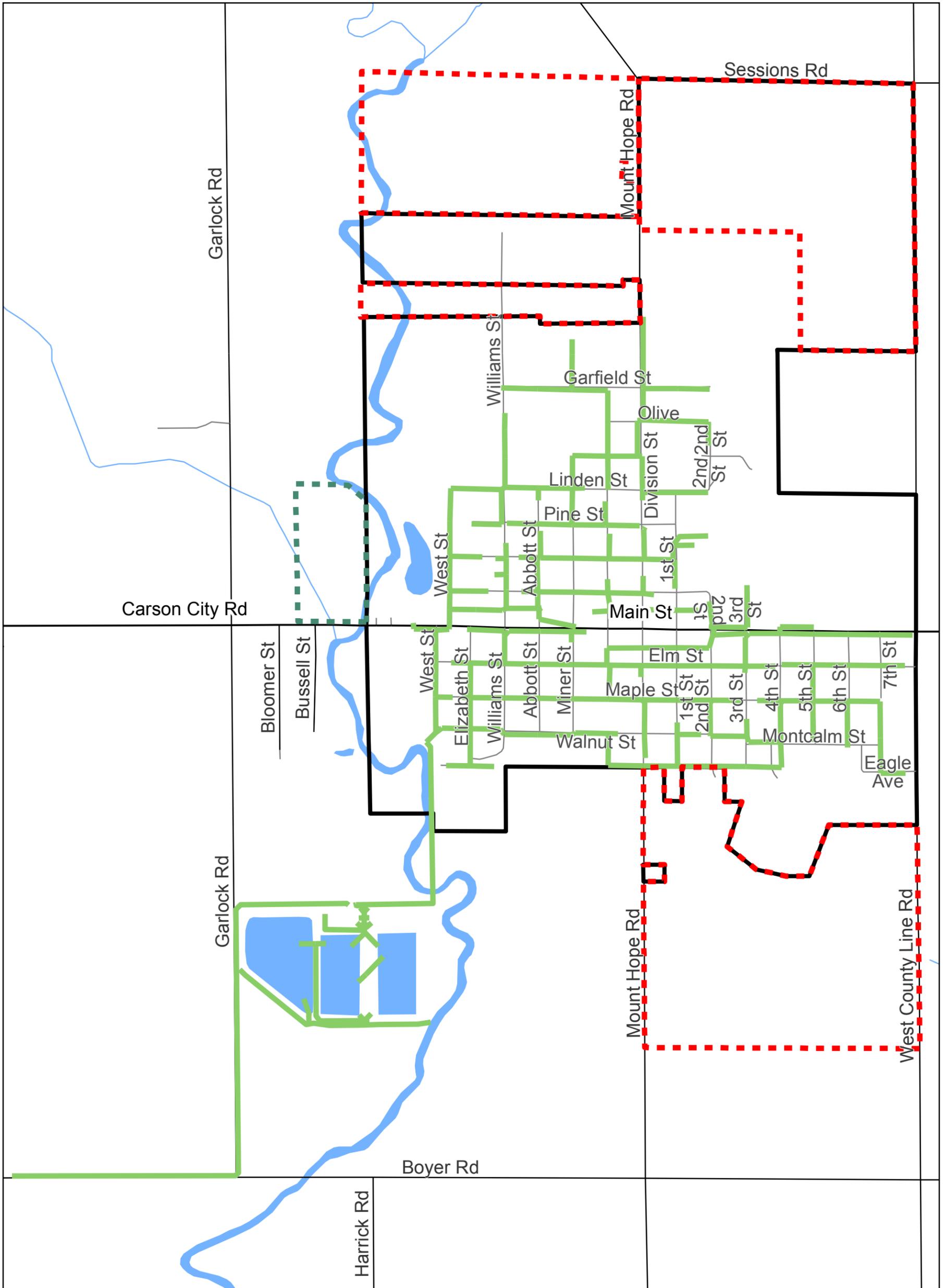
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# MAP 5 - SANITARY SEWER LINES

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## LEGEND

-  Sanitary Sewer
-  Water Features
-  425 Agreement
-  City Park



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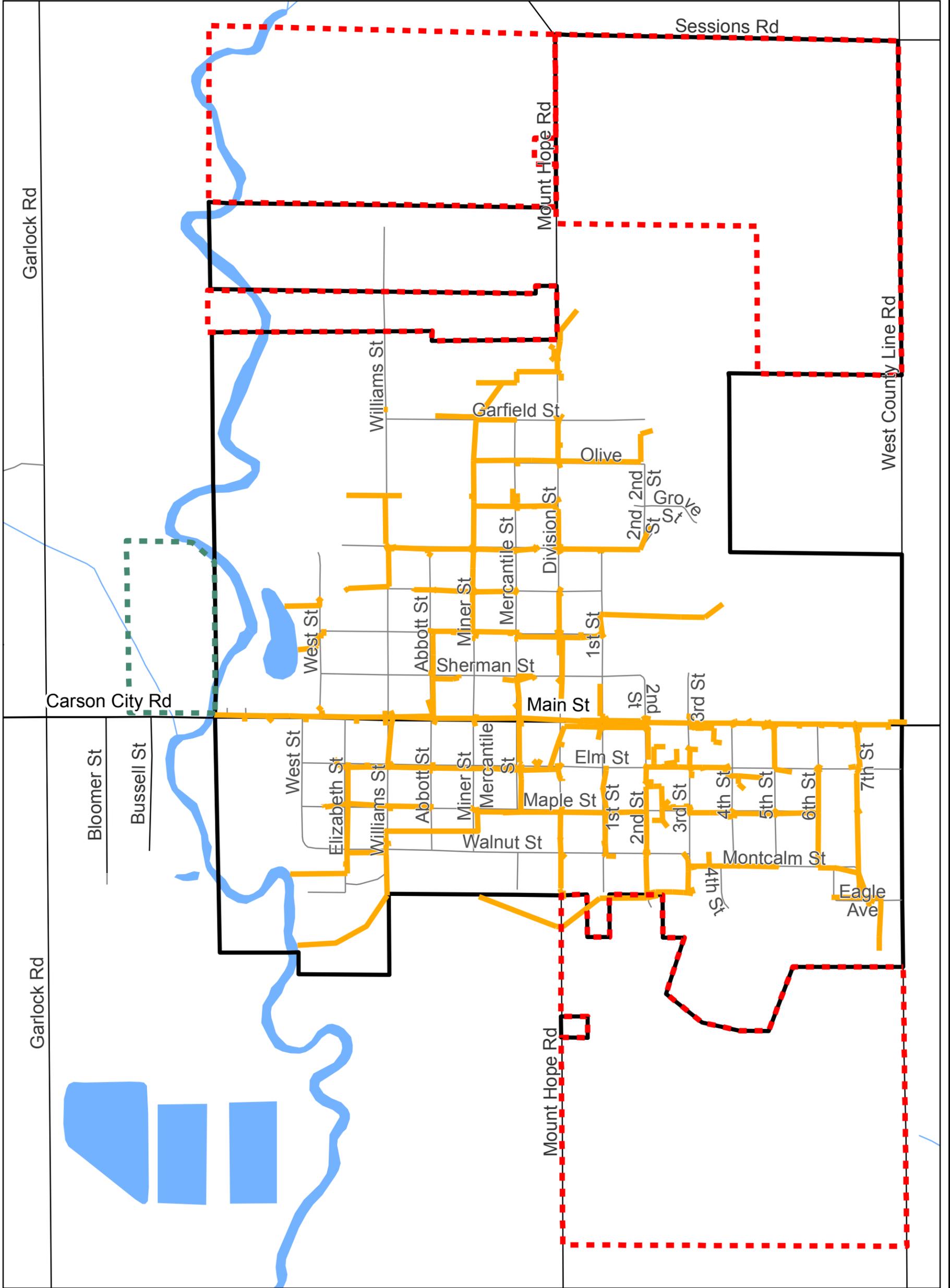
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# MAP 6 - STORM SEWER LINES

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### LEGEND

-  Storm Sewer
-  Water Features
-  425 Agreement
-  City Park

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## **Natural Features**

It is important to understand the natural features of a community when planning for future development or use. Some natural features such as steep slopes or wetlands are natural barriers to development, and it is helpful for both the community and developers to have easy access to an inventory of these features. While it is important to plan for development, special attention must be given to the preservation of natural and environmentally sensitive areas. Environmentally sensitive areas can be defined as land areas whose disturbance or destruction will affect a community by:

1. Creating hazards, such as floods.
2. Destroying important resources, such as wetlands or woodlands.
3. Wasting important productive lands and renewable resources.

## **Waterways and Wetlands**

The only major water features in Carson City are Fish Creek, which runs along the western border of the City, and Mill Pond located in Haradine Park. Butternut Creek feeds into Fish Creek just outside the City limits, reference Map 7.

Wetlands are lands defined by the existence of water, either on or near the surface, during a portion of the year. It is important for the City to consider wetlands when faced with development opportunities because these ecosystems are a vital part of the natural water cycle. When they are affected, without proper mitigation, problems such as water

filtration and flooding can occur in unexpected areas. Therefore, wetlands are limiting to development, and each type and extent must be carefully examined. According to the National Wetlands Inventory, Carson City has wetlands located along the western City limits, following Fish Creek. These wetlands are in largely undeveloped areas, except for along M-57 west of West Street. There are only two other locations with wetlands in the City, the first along the southern border, and the second up by the High School. The majority of these areas are already developed or are very small and isolated, meaning there will be little to no consequences regarding new development and wetlands in the City.

## Topography and Soils

Topography in and around Carson City is defined by the surrounding water resources. Most of the City is relatively flat, the only significant changes are near Fish Creek and low-lying areas along the western edge of the City limits where slopes are much more noticeable. Overall, the topography in the City slopes from highest to lowest in an east to west direction. The changes are so gradual, there are no topographic barriers to development. Where there is a significantly greater slope, along the banks of Fish Creek, the land is already a City park.

Map 8 depicts the different soil types within Carson City. In each of these different types there are various soil associations. For the purpose of this plan, the map illustrates the qualities of the soil, rather than the specific names. Regarding development, it is important to understand qualities such as drainage, runoff potential, and sand content. The information for this map was compiled using soil data from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

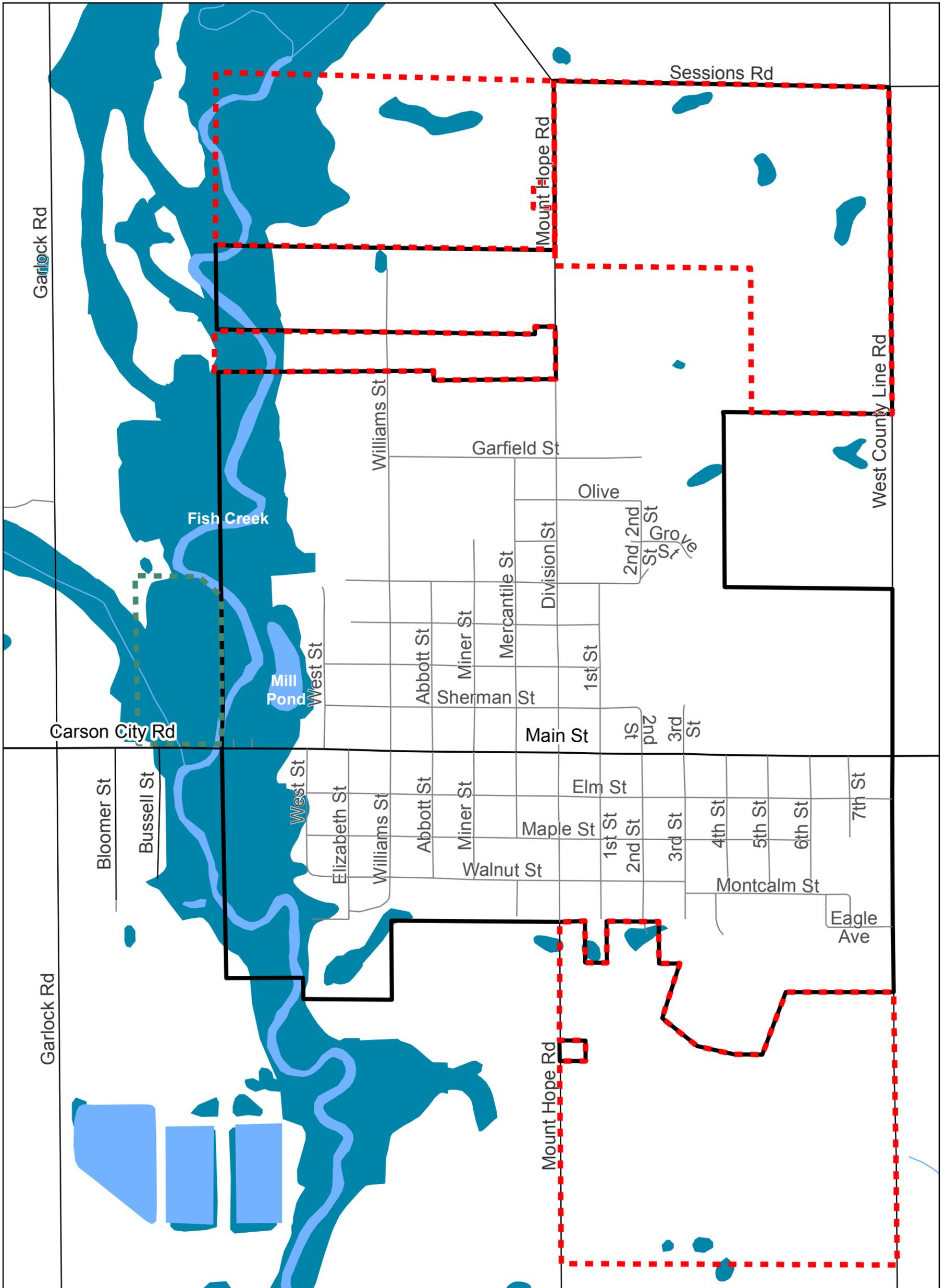
The majority of the soils in Carson City are fine and vary from moderately well-drained to well-drained. The second most common type of soil is the sand varieties. Both fine soils and sandy soils allow surface drainage to penetrate ground water tables, therefore the City should remain alert to the protection of ground water supplies in relation to proposed/existing development. Finally, loamy soils are the third most common variety in the City. These soils vary from somewhat poorly drained to very poorly drained. The loamy soils in Carson City correspond to the wetlands delineated by the National Wetlands Inventory, therefore it makes sense these would mostly be poorly drained. As mentioned earlier, these lands are already used as a park, therefore the possibility of development is small.

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# MAP 7 - WETLANDS AND WATERWAYS

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## LEGEND

-  Wetlands
-  Water Features
-  425 Agreement
-  City Park



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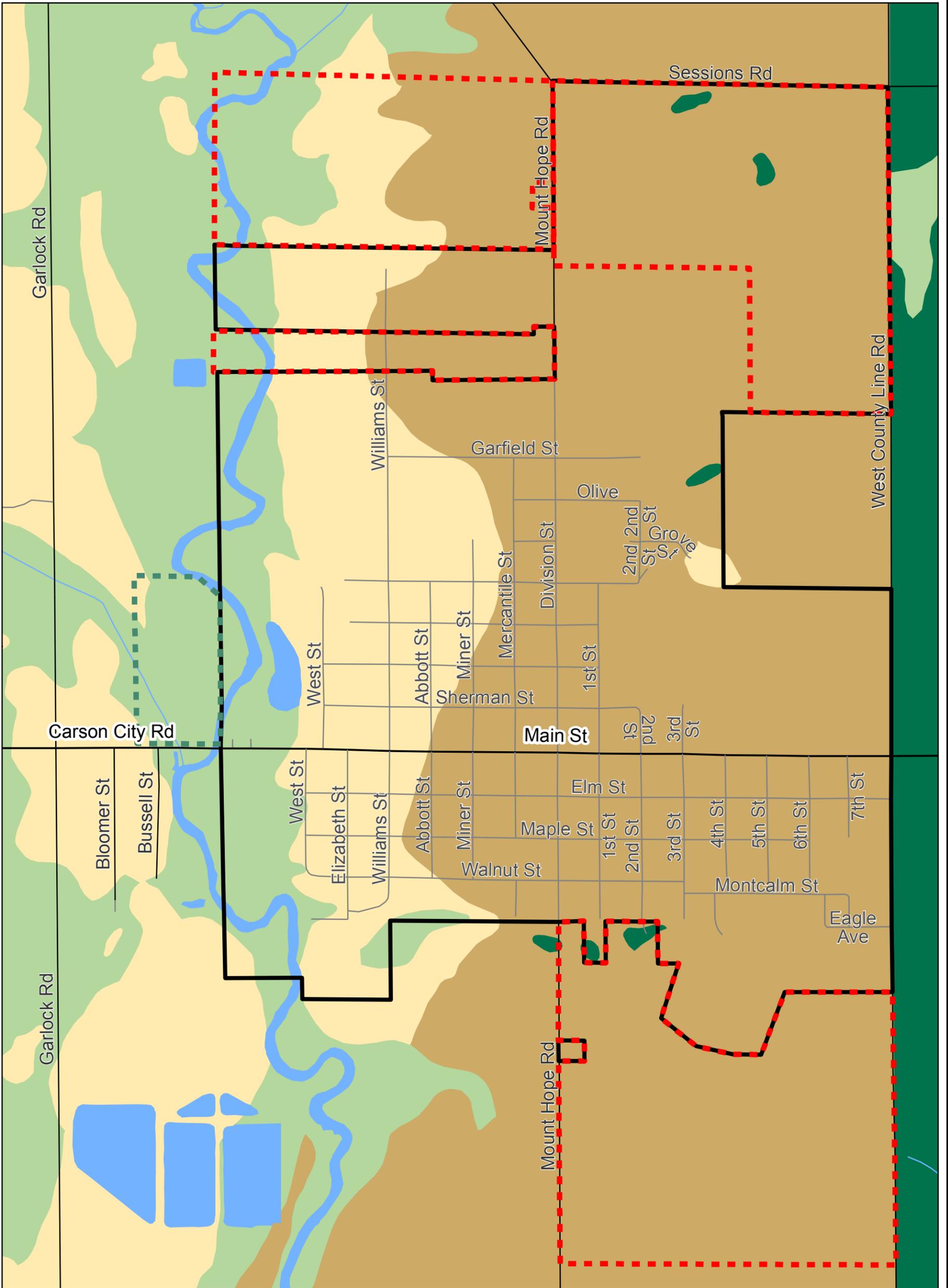
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# MAP 8 - SOILS

CARSON CITY - MICHIGAN

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## LEGEND

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  Loamy      |  Fine-silty |  Water Features |
|  Fine       |  Sandy      |  425 Agreement  |
|  Fine-loamy |  Clayey     |  City Park      |



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## **Chapter Three – Community Assets**

In terms of municipal planning, quality of life can be described as how satisfied an individual is with their community. Several national publications annually review and rate the best and worst places to live in the United States. Rankings are based on a range of factors, such as access to a clean and healthy environment, quality education, financial security, ample and accessible employment opportunities, a diversity of entertainment, cultural, and recreational amenities, and availability of quality health care. Communities perceived to have a good quality of life are typically safe, have available jobs and good schools, plenty of access to parks, a clean environment, and abundant cultural and entertainment options.

Those types of quality of life indicators are important to the future and stability of Carson City. A high quality of life in Carson City will help attract businesses and potential residents to sustain the economy. People who live or grew up in Carson City and view it as a great place to live are more likely to stay in the community throughout their lives, and give back to the community, further enriching it. Quality of life relates to nearly every aspect of a community's master plan. This chapter focuses on four topics: culture and entertainment, education and academic institutions, safety and health, and parks and natural systems. Each of those topics is featured on the following pages.

### **Culture and Entertainment**

In many cases across the United States, living in a small rural community is not what many Americans would consider a center of culture. Just because small towns are not always full of theaters or art galleries, it does not mean they don't possess their own

culture. In Carson City, it is clear the community is close-knit, there are strong family and civic values, and a very large community support system. In Carson City, people know each other well and because of that they are good neighbors. There are strong ties throughout the community as many members have lived there for well over 20 years. This type of community creates the culture of a caring and dedicated community.

## Community Events

In addition to this strong sense of community, Carson City also has its own festival called Frontier Days. The event happens the first weekend of June, and the days are packed with events, food, garage sales, entertainment, a market, kids and family activities, movies in the park, car show, a pageant, parade, fireworks, and a hot air balloon shoot out. The community really pulls together, each event is staffed and planned by volunteers. There are also numerous local sponsors which help with the events.

## Carson City Public Library

For each community across the country a library represents a home or repository for printed text and a place of community gatherings. Libraries can also be pillars of learning, spaces for community engagement, civic educators, and cultural centers. They represent a safe, respected, and highly desired element of a community.

The Carson City Public Library is located downtown on Main Street, there is also a community branch location located in Crystal. The library is a Michigan Class III public library serving a population of 10,857, with a service area of the City of Carson City and the following eight townships:

- [Montcalm County](#) - Bloomer, Bushnell, Crystal, and Ferris Townships
- [Gratiot County](#) - Fulton, New Haven, and North Shade Townships
- [Ionia County](#) - North Plains Township

The library is also a member of the Lakeland Library Cooperative and participates in interlibrary loan and reciprocal borrowing with the other Lakeland member libraries. The library is open Monday through Saturday and closed on Sunday. At the library, patrons enjoy access to educational and entertaining books including downloadable e-books, audio books, videos, magazines, newspapers, and Internet access including wireless. There is public access to PC workstations for data processing software and educational children's software, to search for jobs, submit resumes and job applications, study, research, take tests, and more.

People come to the Carson City library to read, study, discuss literature, research genealogy, and to attend educational and culturally oriented programs for children and adults. The library provides kids and teenagers a gathering place with free WiFi to do homework, there is a network where residents can research their family heritage, a book club, children Storytime, free lifestyle classes, and many more learning opportunities. The library website and staff are also a source of information on tax forms, healthcare, United Way, identity theft, and can provide resources for those individuals in need.

## Education and Academic Institutions

Quality of education has a strong bearing on a community's quality of life. A strong and successful education system is a significant consideration when attracting new residents and businesses. Often in small rural communities the only education options available to residents are the local public high schools. While children have the option of open enrollment, it is more difficult to send children to other schools which are further away in different districts. When families relocate to an area for job opportunities, they often consider education options for their children. Parents can easily compare schools and districts with online data regarding student achievement, class size, staff qualifications, extracurricular activities, college preparedness, and graduation rates.

Carson City is part of the Carson City Crystal Area School District. This school district covers the geographic area of Carson City, Bloomer Township, and parts of Crystal Township, Bushnell Township, and Ferris Township. Map 9 highlights the school district boundary.

According to the 2015 American Community Survey, the Carson City Crystal Area School District covers a population of approximately 9,780 people. As of the 2016 school year, there was a total of 922 students in the Carson City Crystal Area School District. The following is a breakdown by school:

- **Elementary School:** 440 students enrolled in grades K – 3
- **Upper Elementary/Middle High School:** 129 students enrolled in grades 4 – 8
- **High School:** 304 students enrolled in grades 9 – 12
- **Alternative High School:** 49 students enrolled in grades 9 – 12

All of the schools, aside from the alternative high school, are located in Carson City. The alternative school is located in Carson City. According to Michigan Department of Education, an alternative high school is a program operated as a subdivision of the regular K-12 program. It is designed for students who can be better served in an alternative schooling system. Students often include those who have specific needs and are at risk of not graduating. Alternative education programs seek to provide added flexibility and varied instructional models.

In the 2010 school year, the district had 1,051 students enrolled in the elementary, middle and high schools. Over the 5-year period from 2010 to 2016, school enrollment decreased by 178 children. These calculations do not include the alternative high school which opened in 2013.

In addition to the local public schools, the Montcalm Community College is located throughout Montcalm County, there are no locations in Carson City but there are facilities in Greenville, Howard City, Sidney, and Ionia. Additionally, Central Michigan University is 40 minutes away from Carson City providing an opportunity for a more traditional 4-year college education.

A well-educated public will help grow the economy by starting new businesses and entrepreneurial efforts. Similarly, a region's academic institutions provide a stable source of jobs, help attract research and technology businesses, and welcome visitors.

### Education Beyond the Classroom

With such a varied public education base in the Carson City area, including the local schools, community college, public university, and public library, it is important to build on that system for the future. Not only through traditional education means, but also through community learning. Strong educational programs go beyond classroom learning to creatively impact the community. In addition to expanding the high school's post-secondary learning opportunities, other programs such as apprenticeships with local business, vocational classes, and skills should also be taught. These programs will improve academic performance, and increase student options after high school, allowing for more life-long learning opportunities.

Often in small rural communities, the school system is the backbone of the community and community events. Pursuing opportunities to enhance school buildings and property for use to the public outside of school hours is a great way to increase the public open space in a community and bring in all residents for cultural or life-long learning opportunities.

Creating a culture of education is more than just supporting formal education. Incorporating interpretive signage or hands-on learning opportunities into the public realm can raise awareness or understanding of the community and encourage greater stewardship. Partnerships with local groups, non-profits, or other agencies should be sought to support educational programs and activities for all ages. These programs can have wide appeal across jurisdictional boundaries and increase a shared sense of community in the area.

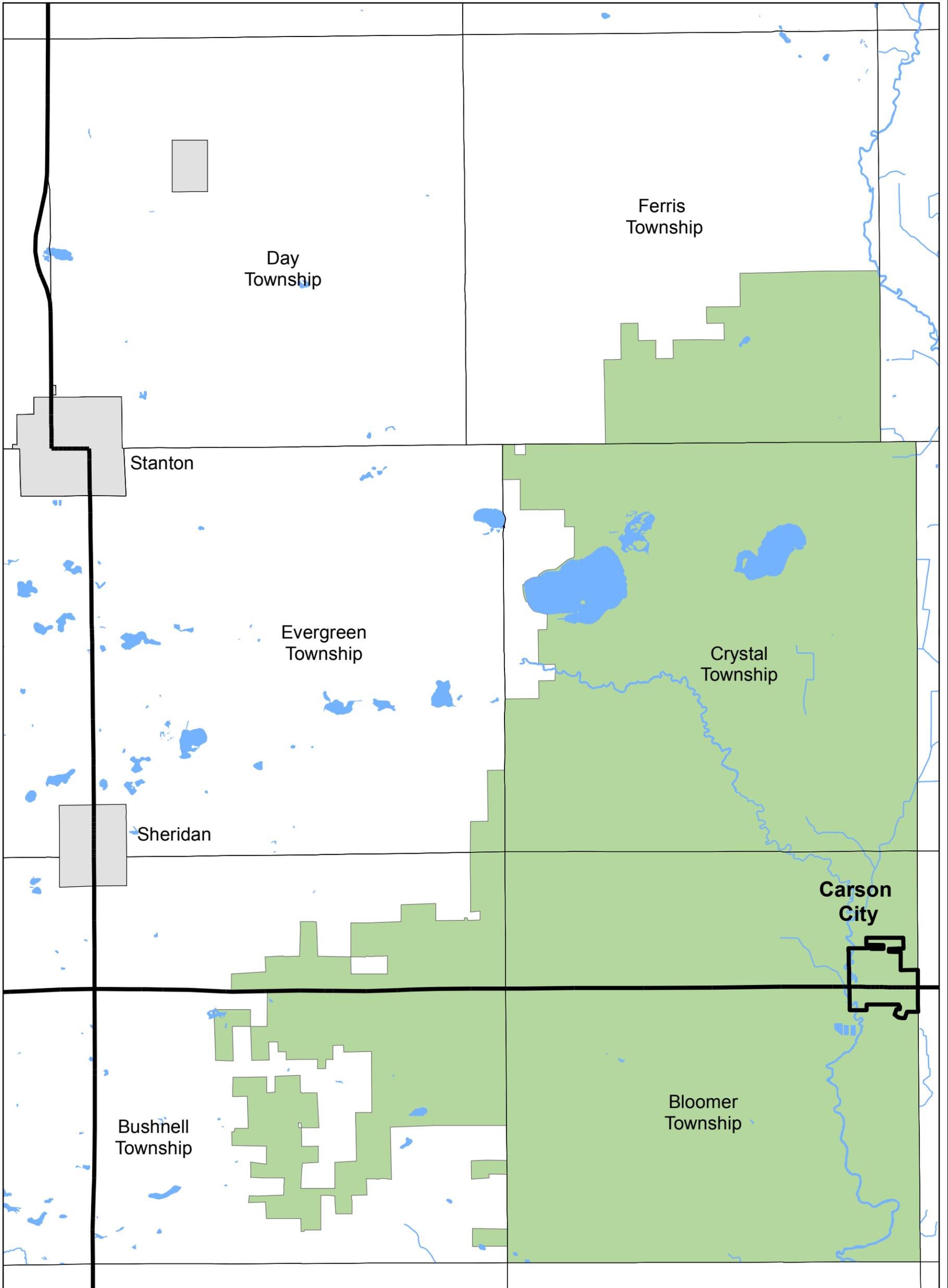
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# MAP 9 - SCHOOL DISTRICT

CARSON CITY - MICHIGAN

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### LEGEND

- Carson City Crystal Area School District
- State Roads
- Water Features



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## Safety and Health

Public safety and security are important for a vibrant future and high quality of life in Carson City. Public safety includes having adequate police and fire protection, minimizing the appearance and effects of blight, and ensuring that the physical design of the public realm does not pose unnecessary risk to residents.

## Healthy Lifestyles

Health and wellbeing are essential characteristics of a high quality of life. Health typically references the physical and mental health of a community and is influenced by access to sufficient levels of medical care and services, a clean environmental setting, and active lifestyles. Wellbeing includes additional factors such as access to the outdoors, opportunities to connect with other residents, and access to recreational amenities.

Often, access to quality healthcare is essential for the growth of a small town. A lack of healthcare facilities will often discourage new business from moving to the community and puts the elderly population in jeopardy. Carson City is very fortunate to have a large reputable medical institution in their community. The Sparrow Carson Hospital and supporting medical offices including specialist doctors, and senior living facilities all provide a strong access to healthcare in the Carson City community. In addition to providing the region with strong healthcare, the hospital also promotes healthy living by providing support groups and classes with topics on healthy living, fitness, senior health, weight management, and women's health. The hospital also contributes to the Carson Foundation which provides the community with financial and volunteer support.

## Police

The Carson City Police Department was established in 1960. The department is small, but progressive and strives for both proactive and reactive police work to the criminal element.

Currently, we have a full time Chief and 5 part-time officers. The department is looking to the future, and hopes to increase the number of full time positions. Officers are committed to the small-town atmosphere and use their knowledge of people, places, and innerworkings of the community to protect and preserve Carson City.

Upon arrival at this department in 2014, the current Chief advised the Council and people that this department would be a progressive department and not known as an aggressive one. He instituted a new patch design and brought back a dress uniform which the public knows to be police attire. He updated weapons with handguns, new rifles for the cars, and new tasers for the officers.

This department has two cars, a 2015 Ford Taurus and a 2016 Ford Explorer. The first car was purchased new with a grant for \$11,250 to help with the additional costs of \$37,000, to completely outfit this unit. The second was purchased from Gratiot County Sheriff's Office, this vehicle had two years of service time already. This vehicle has also been outfitted. Both cars currently sport the same police logo and designs that match.

The department is in touch with training needs such as firearms, defensive tactics, and law updates throughout the year. Officers are well liked in their community and well known. For the past several years, this department has also had a position with Carson Sparrow Hospital doing security on the night shift. The department also has a position with the Carson City-Crystal Schools, with an officer on premises one day per week. These positions are contract-based to assist with operating expenses of a police department.

In the Carson City area there is a MDOC prison and the Carson City Police Department has worked hand in hand with that facility on training incidents and special community projects, such as Special Olympics. The Carson City Correctional Facility has proven to be an excellent partner.

Other grants that have been helpful include "RAP" grants from MMRMA for things like in car video cameras, and body cameras, and special safety equipment for the police cars. The department is always looking for ways to improve officer safety and stay updated on equipment. This department is well embraced by the community and surrounding areas. In 2018, the department requested a grant from DTE Energy for enough money to purchase 5 new bullet proof vests for our officers. The police department has been involved with several community events and special projects for the past 4 years and will continue to strive for a safe and happy environment in the Carson City community.

## Fire

The Carson City Fire Department began around 1877, however not many facts are left pertaining to the early development of the department. By the 1890's, the department had two "Hose" Companies with hand-drawn hose carts that held 1,500 feet of hose and a "Ladder" Company with a hand-drawn hook and ladder wagon. There were approximately 15 personnel in the department, and the station was located in a two-story structure, where the current U.S. Post Office is located on Main Street. In the 1960's the fire station moved to its current location as a part of City Hall.

In 1917, a "Chemical" Company was added to the department and it was reported that the department had acquired a 1914 Ford Model A with a 40 gallon "Soda" pump. This was the first motorized pumper of the department. On July 29, 1929, the department ordered a 1929 Ford AA Pirsch pumper, which served on the department until August 1966, when it was retired. The next pumper was a 1942 Diamond Reo. It had a midship pump and two 1-inch hose reels mounted up top. In 1966 a new pumper was ordered which replaced the still then used 1929 apparatus. In 1978, a new International 1800 Loadstar 750 gallon per minute pumper, built by the American Fire Pump Company, in Battle Creek, Michigan was purchased. The apparatus is currently in use today.

A 1972 water tender on a Chevy C50 chassis was purchased and served until it was replaced in 2004. The department's newest pumper is a 1997 E-One 1,500 gallon per minute pump on a Freightliner ESQ Chassis. The newest Water Tender was ordered and purchased with assistance from a federal grant in 2004. It was made by E-One and hauls 2,500 gallons of water with a 3,000-gallon portable tank. Due to the cost of obtaining new vehicles, most serve for 40 years before they are retired from service.

Other vehicles currently in use are a 1985 Chevy pickup (obtained through a lease from the Michigan DNR as the vehicle was formally a Military Army pickup and now serves as the Grass Fire apparatus) and a 1995 Chevy 3500 box van that was an ambulance in the County prior to the City obtaining it. This is used as a Mobile Command Post/Equipment Van.

The Department is funded through the City and 3 contracted communities. These communities are Bloomer Township, and parts of North Shade and New Haven Townships.

While operating out of a single station, the department responds to a variety of responses, such as structure fires, vehicle fires, vehicle accident extrication, farm equipment extrication, grass/brush fires, hazardous material incidents at the operations level, down power lines, severe weather events, confined space incidents at the awareness level, active shooter incidents and medical lift assists to name a few. If the call is not handled by the Police or EMS, the Fire Department is responsible. On top of these responses, department members are required to train twice a month during the evenings to maintain their proficiency.

It is important for the Department to stay involved with the community by providing Public Safety Fire Prevention training at four local elementary schools and to any community members that request training. Other events the Department preforms includes the installation of smoke detectors in resident's houses, free of charge. The Department is also partnered with the local Hospital as part of their Safety and Emergency planning and participate with them annually on different drills.

The Carson City Fire Department is always looking towards the future to see what the needs and trends of the community will be and meet those needs with sound budgeting, equipment, and training to mitigate those risks. The Fire Department is here to support the Carson City community and represent the City slogan of "Community Pride".

## Parks and Natural Systems

Parks and natural systems such as river corridors, forests and wetlands, play a vital role in defining a community's identity and quality of life. In addition, parks provide economic, health, and environmental and social benefit to a community. They provide a natural connection to the environment. High quality and healthy natural systems also help protect public health through clean water, uncontaminated soils, clean air, and a strong and diverse wildlife and plant habitat. Parks also encourage healthy lifestyles and retain and attract both residents and businesses. They provide a sense of community and social connectivity and are often the gathering spaces for community events.

## Economic Importance

- Economically, parks improve the local tax base and increase property values at adjacent residences.
- Quality parks and recreation options are one of the top three reasons businesses choose any city in relocation decisions.

- Parks and recreation programs generate direct revenue from fees and indirect revenue from tournaments and special events.

### Health and Environmental Benefits

- Parks are where people go to get healthy and stay fit.
- Parks and recreation programs and services contribute to the health of children, youth, adults, and seniors.
- Parks and protected public lands are proven to improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve the quality of the air we breathe, provide vegetative buffers to development, produce habitat for wildlife, and provide a place for children and families to connect with nature and recreate outdoors together.

### Social Importance

- Parks are a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community. They provide identity for citizens and are a major factor in the perception of quality of life in a given community. Parks and recreation services are often cited as one of the most important factors in surveys of how livable communities are.
- Parks provide gathering places for families and social groups, as well as for individuals of all ages and economic status.
- Parks and recreation programs provide places for health and well-being that are accessible by persons of all ages and abilities, especially to those with disabilities.
- The value of parks to communities transcends the amount of dollars invested or the revenues gained from fees. Parks provide a sense of public pride and cohesion to every community.

The Carson City park system includes three parks, depicted on Map 10, Grove Park, Haradine Park, and West Park. These three parks are connected, through a series of trails, boardwalks, and a pedestrian bridge, which provides park users with an expansive, interconnected park system that offers many different amenities and recreation styles. These parks occupy approximately 82 acres on the west side of town and boast a variety of active and passive recreational opportunities for all ages. To review a complete description of the facilities available at Grove Park, Haradine Park, or West Park please reference the current Carson City Recreation Plan.

## Grove Park

Of the three parks, Grove Park is the northernmost park situated along the east bank of Fish Creek on approximately 22 acres of land. As the name indicates, this park is the most wooded and is also made up of wetlands. The park is full of old large trees, which provide unique opportunities to the users.

The site includes the following facilities:

- Picnic/pavilion area
- Playground equipment
- Basketball court, can be flooded for ice skating during the winter
- Sledding hill
- Paved parking lot
- Seasonal portable restrooms

Additionally, Grove Park is connected to Haradine Park through a trail system that extends south along Fish Creek. Recently, the City added lighting along this path for the safety of park users.

## Haradine Park

Haradine Park is situated on the east bank of Fish Creek and on the west bank of Mill Pond. Of the three parks, Haradine is the smallest, occupying 12 acres. The trail from Grove Park extends through Haradine and crosses Fish Creek at two locations. The first is a pedestrian walkway across the old mill dam in the northern section of the park, and the second is a wooden bridge on the southern end of the park. These two crossings allow the park system in Carson City to be one continuous recreation area.

The facilities at Haradine Park include:

- Picnic areas
- Pavilions (2)
- Restroom facilities
- Horseshoe pits
- Skate park
- Mill Pond
- Pond overlook/fishing pier
- Paved parking lot

## West Park

West Park is located on the west bank of Fish Creek, it is the largest of the three parks encompassing 48 acres. This park provides primarily passive recreation opportunities because of the large amount of open space. The trail which connects all three parks extends half of a mile to West Park and provides walking and jogging opportunities for users. The additional facilities in West Park include:

- Playground structure
- Basketball court
- Volleyball court
- Paved parking lot
- Pavilion
- Pergola overlooking Fish Creek

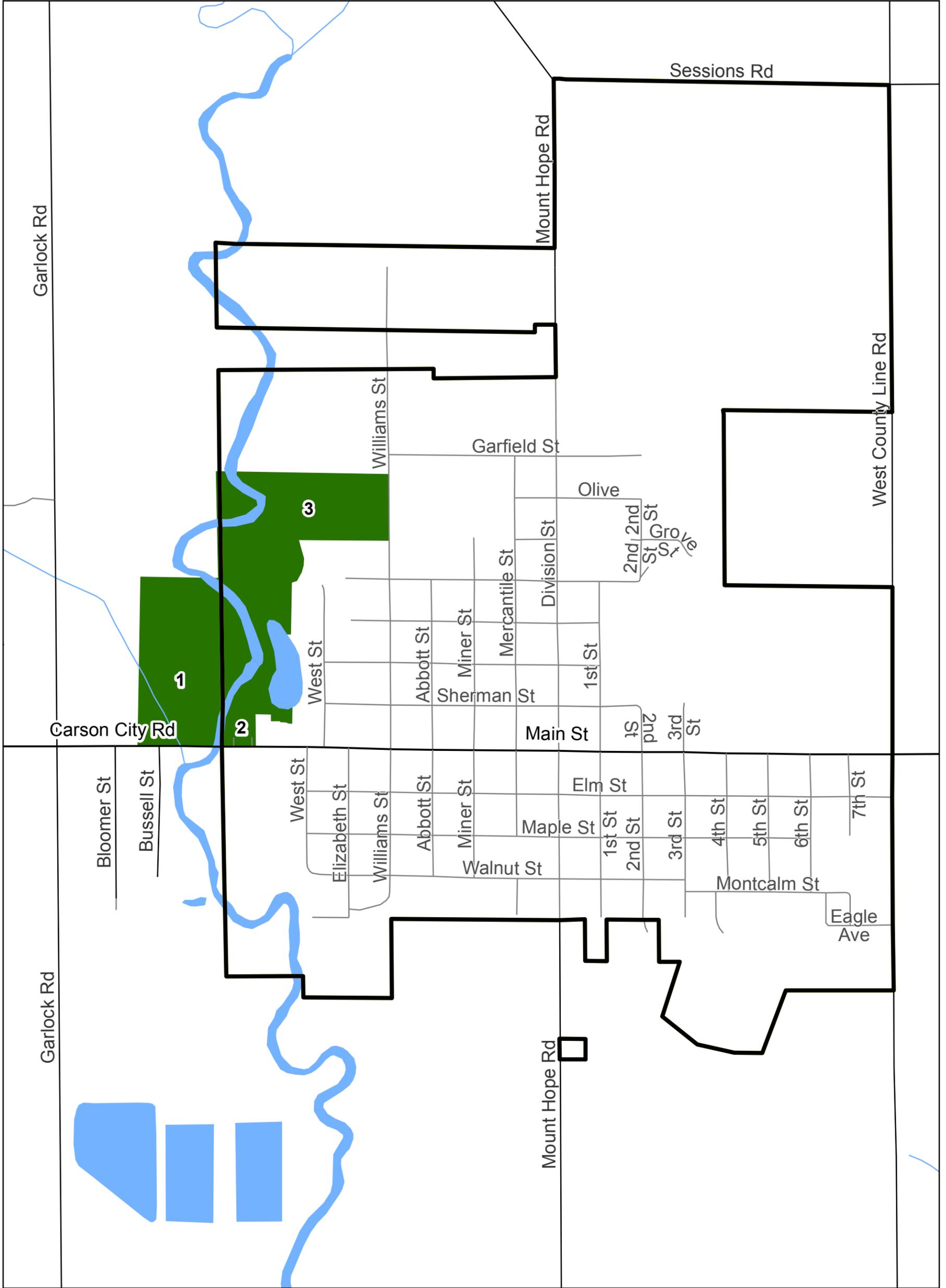
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# MAP 10 - CITY PARK MAP

CARSON CITY - MICHIGAN

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**LEGEND**

-  City Parks
-  Water Features

- 1. West Park**
- 2. Haradine Park**
- 3. Grove Park**



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## **Chapter Four - Existing Land Use**

One of the most important outcomes of a Community's Master Plan is creating a Future Land Use Plan. However, before a Future Land Use Plan can be created, the existing conditions and relations between land uses must be examined and understood. This knowledge aids in the decision-making process concerning future residential, commercial, industrial, and public land use activities.

Existing land use is not the same classification as zoning. In Carson City there are six zoning districts which allow different uses by right or by special use permit. Zoning regulations are law and define special design guidelines. An existing land use map aims to be more specific than a zoning map and illustrates what land use is actually at each parcel. There are many more land use categories than there are zoning districts, however each zoning district allows multiple uses within each district. This existing land use map aims to clarify each use in a more specific manner than zoning.

An existing land use map for the City was created in a two-step process. Initially, all parcels were classified via a desktop analysis of land use using satellite imagery and local zoning information. Then, the consultants drove the streets of Carson City to double check their original analysis and clarify any outstanding questions. After the first draft of the Existing Land Use map was presented to the City Planning Commission, they offered some insights, and parcels were reclassified on this basis for the final map. The existing land use map is located at the end of this chapter.

Table 14 is a breakdown of each existing land use category, the number of acres, and percentage of City land each use encompasses. This calculation also includes the City right-of-way corridors. The boundary lines of the 425 Agreements are depicted on the existing land use map.

**Table 14 - Existing Land Use**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>	195.73	32.40%
<b>Single - Family Residential</b>	134.17	22.21%
<b>Multiple - Family Residential</b>	11.2	1.85%
<b>Commercial</b>	13.93	2.31%
<b>Industrial</b>	74.41	12.32%
<b>Public/Semi-Public</b>	65.17	10.79%
<b>Recreation</b>	38.17	6.32%
<b>Municipal</b>	1.7	0.28%
<b>Medical Facility</b>	18.37	3.04%
<b>Parking</b>	6.3	1.04%
<b>Vacant</b>	44.89	7.43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>604.04</b>	

## **Agriculture**

Agricultural land includes land being utilized for agricultural purposes. This includes crop production, land lying fallow, pasture and grazing land, sod farming, and orchards. It also includes farmsteads and related agricultural buildings or single-family homes. This land use makes up approximately 195.7 acres or 32.4% of the land in Carson City. It is primarily found along the northern edge and southeast corner of the City. While most of this land is currently being used as Agriculture, it is part of a 425 Agreement and should any development opportunities arise, it would change land use.

## **Single-Family Residential**

The single-family residential land use category includes all parcels in the City occupied by a single-family home and the associated accessory structures. While the majority of the neighborhoods are of traditional design with grid streets and blocks, there are some areas of the City that offer larger lots. The majority of the housing stock in Carson City is relatively old with approximately 75% being built prior to 1980. On the whole, the City housing stock does not appear outdated or blighted, the residents take care of their properties. The single-family land use makes up approximately 134.1 acres or 22.2% of the land in Carson City. Single-family homes are located throughout the City.

## Multiple-Family Residential

The multiple-family residential category includes all lots in the City occupied by two-family dwellings, or duplexes, and all types of housing which offer three or more dwelling units per structure. The two-family homes appear in small pockets within single-family neighborhoods. These are valuable housing resources because they offer a more affordable, lower maintenance option, but are located within the context of a single-family neighborhood. The structures which include dwelling units of three or more include a variety of apartment buildings. However, the majority of these structures are for senior living. The multiple-family land use category makes up 11.2 acres of land in the City or 1.8%.

## Commercial

Retail commercial includes all commercial uses that meet the shopping, restaurant, entertainment, and service needs of the community and the region. Almost all the commercial land uses in the City are located along Main Street in the traditional downtown core. This area is relatively intact, and there are several storefronts which have recently or are currently undergoing revitalization, including the public library. Commercial land use makes up 13.9 acres in Carson City, or 2.3% of the land.

## Industrial

This land use is intended for primarily light industrial uses. Light industry uses are limited to operations which possess few, if any, nuisance characteristics. Examples include: large agricultural operations, storage facilities, distribution centers, and warehousing. While these uses generate truck traffic, the operations typically have lower impacts in terms of noise and odor. Comparably, some heavy industrial uses are allowed as a special use. In Carson City, the majority of the industrial land is in the northern portion of the City and is currently vacant. The parcels were an old agricultural property that has fallen into disrepair and has been mostly demolished. Once this land is clear and clean, it will have potential to grow into something new in the future. The industrial land use category makes up approximately 12.3% of the City land, or 74.4 acres. It is located in the northern edge of the City, with an additional location along M-57 on the western border.

## Public/Semi-Public

This category includes places of worship, schools, and other civic-related uses open to the public. Aside from the schools, these uses are located throughout the City and are often times integrated into the residential neighborhoods or the commercial core. In Carson City, the public/semi-public land use makes up 65.1 acres or 10.7% of the land.

## Recreation

Recreation land use includes Carson City parks which are located on the western border of the City. The calculations in Table 14 only include the acreage inside the City limits. However, the Existing Land Use Map shows a green dashed line which represents a City-owned park in Bloomer Township. The park acreage inside City limits represents 38.1 acres or 6.3% of the land in the City. For a more detailed description on the parks, reference current Carson City Recreation Plan.

## Municipal

The municipal land use category includes land owned by the City which is not used for recreation. It is a small percentage of the land in the City (1.7 acre or 0.2%), and consists of City Hall, the DPW, water tower, and some other municipal structures.

## Medical Facility

Sparrow Carson Hospital is an important business in the fabric of the Carson City community. It is a key medical provider, source of jobs, and economic backbone of the City. Because medical facilities are a very specialized use, and there is a large portion of land devoted to the hospital and other medical facilities in the City, it was given a separate land use category. The majority of the medical land use is located around the hospital in the southeast corner of the City, however there is one large assisted living facility in the northeast corner of the City and a couple other small offices scattered throughout Carson City. Overall, this land use makes up 18.3 acres or 3% of the land.

## Parking

Parking and vacant land represent two very different land uses, so for this discussion they are separated into two categories. While parking is technically vacant land, it does have a necessary use. In regards to future development in a City, where most parcels are already full, having an understanding of parking is key to utilizing a downtown to its full potential. Most of the parking in the City is located behind the downtown area along Main Street, there are also larger lots situated around the hospital. Parking makes up 6.3 acres or 1.0% of the land in Carson City.

## Vacant

Vacant land in the City are parcels which have the potential for new development or redevelopment. The vacant land is spread throughout the City with the majority of parcels located in residential areas. In addition to this land, there are several vacant parcels in the downtown area. Overall, the vacant land in the City makes up 44.8 acres or 7.4% of the City.

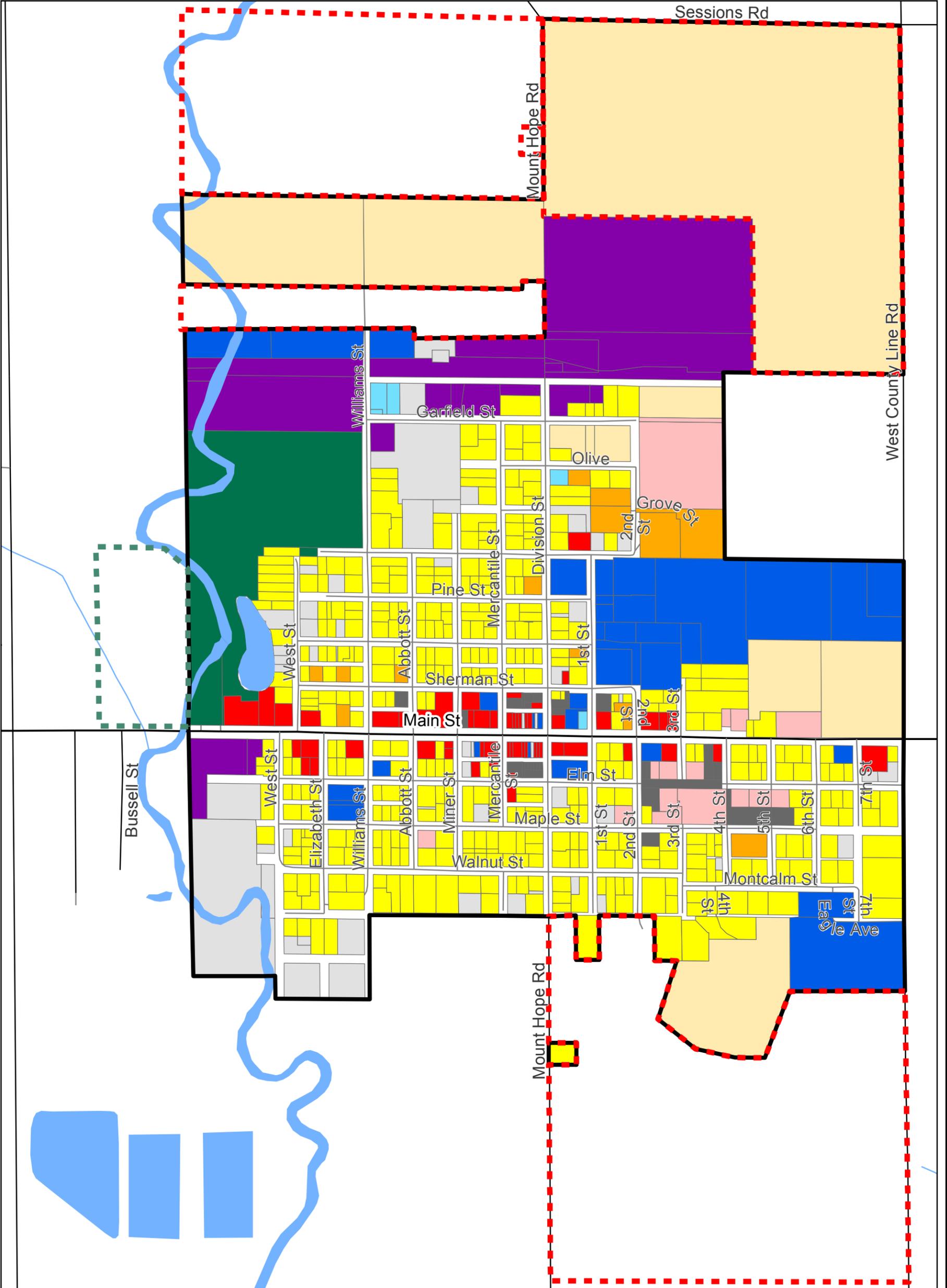
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# MAP 11 - EXISTING LAND USE

CARSON CITY - MICHIGAN

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## LEGEND

- |                           |                    |                  |           |
|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Agriculture               | Industrial         | Medical Facility | City Park |
| Single Family Residential | Public/Semi-Public | Parking          |           |
| Multiple Family Housing   | Recreation         | Vacant           |           |
| Commercial                | Municipal          | 425              |           |

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## **Chapter Five – Listening to Carson City**

### **Basis for Community Input**

To be effective, a Master Plan should incorporate the input and ideas of the local population. By basing the Master Plan goals and objectives on the opinions and desires of the residents, land use management decisions become politically feasible and represent the intents and vision of the community. In Carson City, one of the ways citizens were able to participate in the master planning process was through an online community input survey.

### **Online Survey**

The online survey was made available from December 2017 through February 2018. The intent of the survey was to establish an easy means of communication where residents and stakeholders of Carson City could provide input about existing community conditions and the need for future improvements. In November, the City released an announcement in their newsletter about the survey, a press release was sent to the local newspapers, and informational postcards were placed around town. The press release and announcements included the web domain of the survey, as well as information about the Master Plan update process. These flyers were printed in color and included QR codes, which enabled respondents to scan the leaflets and take the survey using mobile devices. Paper copies of the survey were also available at City Hall.

During the public input period, the City collected many insightful ideas and suggestions for land use, housing improvements, economic development, and the overall quality of life in the City. The following information is a summary of the major ideas the City received from the online survey. A complete set of survey data is included in Appendix C of this document. The full response document in the Appendix has the survey responses broken into two categories, all respondents and Carson City residents only.

### Survey Results

The survey had a total of 24 questions, 3 of which were general demographic questions to give City officials an understanding of the survey respondents. There was a total of 534 survey responses, with a completion rate of 80%.

### Demographic Questions

The survey was advertised with a targeted Facebook advertisement, focusing on the Carson City zip code. This zip code encompasses the City and several other surrounding jurisdictions. Because of the larger geographic area of the zip code, there were survey respondents from the surrounding jurisdictions as well. The following chart is a breakdown of the survey respondents. Overall, 41.5% of the respondents live in Carson City, 13% live in Bloomer Township, and 22.7% live in Montcalm County.

**Table 15 - Survey Respondents**

	Percent	Count
<b>Carson City</b>	41.5%	216
<b>Bloomer Township</b>	13.1%	68
<b>Montcalm County</b>	22.7%	118
<b>Gratiot County</b>	11.3%	59
<b>None of the above</b>	11.3%	59

Respondents were asked to indicate the length of time they had lived in the City, non-residents were able to select the choice “do not live in Carson City.” Of all the respondents, 30% of respondents who answered this question did not live in the City. The goal of this question was to understand how long residents had lived in the community, and to highlight how much history respondents have with Carson City. Thirty-six percent of respondents indicated they had lived in the City for more than 20 years, 17% had lived in the community for 11 - 20 years, and 13% have lived in the community between 2 – 10 years. Meaning the remaining 4% have lived in the City less than 2 years. This indicates a respondent group with a long history and understanding of their community.

There was a good representation of ages in the survey respondents, with the largest group between the ages of 35 and 44. The following list is a breakdown of the survey respondents by age:

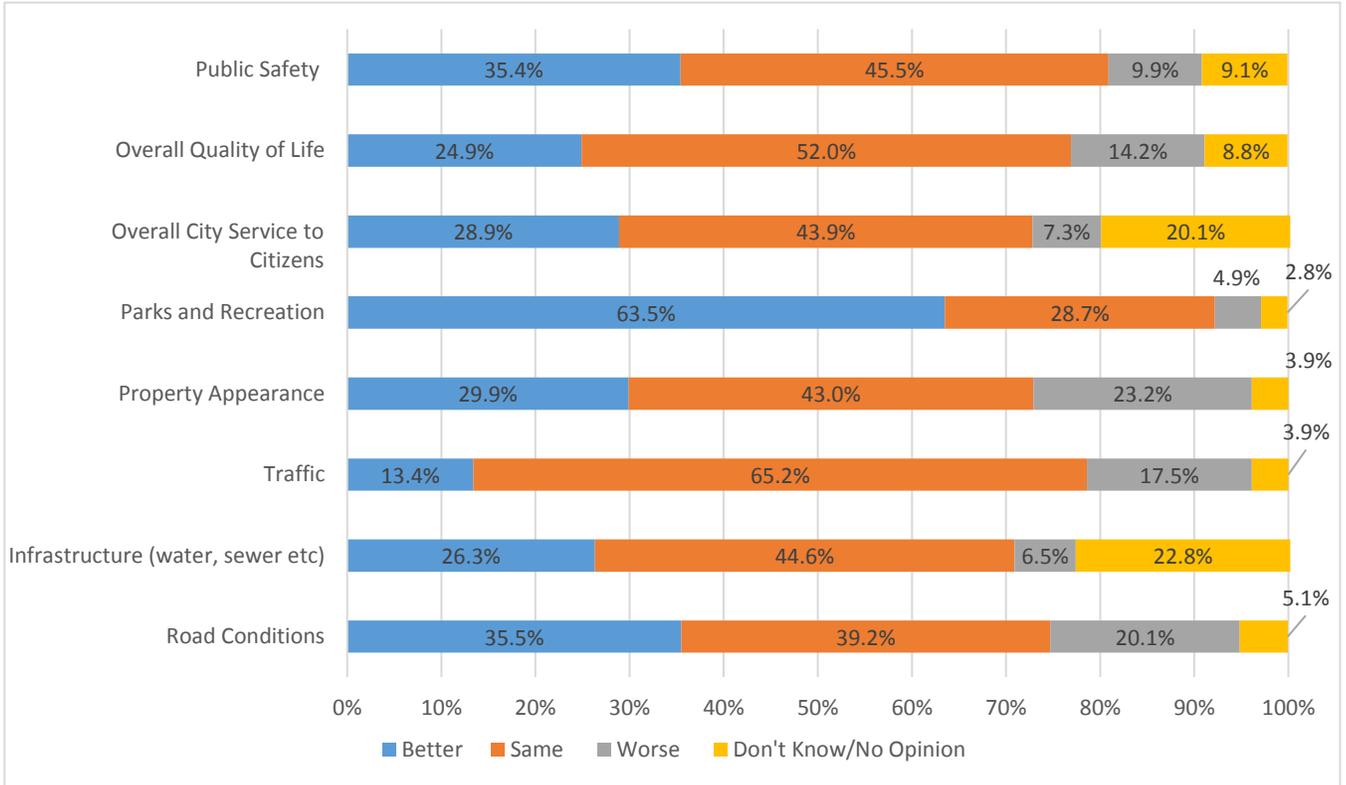
- **17 or Younger:** 2%
- **Ages 18 – 24:** 8%
- **Ages 25 – 34:** 19%
- **Ages 35 – 44:** 23%
- **Ages 45 – 54:** 17%
- **Ages 55 – 64:** 20%
- **Ages 65 – 74:** 9%
- **Ages 75 and older:** 2%

### Quality of Life

The survey included several general questions about the future of Carson City. In general, respondents agree that the City should encourage new development. Ninety-two percent of all the respondents indicated the City should encourage development. The 92% is further broken down in the following ways, with 59% strongly agreeing and 33% agreeing the City should encourage development. This trend was similar with the Carson City residents, where 91% thought the City should encourage development, a breakdown of 65% strongly agreeing, and 26% agreeing. Additionally, the majority (65%) of respondents strongly agree or agree that the City should grow in population. Similarly, 64% of City residents believe Carson City should grow in population.

The following chart represents how respondents believe Carson City has changed in the past 5 years. This question focused on several broad categories such as public safety, infrastructure, or parks and recreation. The general consensus among respondents was that many of the categories were the same as the past five years. Parks and Recreation was the category which improved the most, and property appearance had the largest percentage of respondents which indicated a decline. However, looking closely at the property appearance category shows that while 23% thought it was worse, 29% thought it was better.

**Figure 16 – Changes Over the Past Five Years**



Respondents were also asked to rank several factors in terms of importance to quality of life in the City. The top three responses were quality of schools, local employment opportunities, and a blight reduction program which reduces nuisances, eyesores, and health/safety hazards. Appendix C includes all the rankings specific to this question.

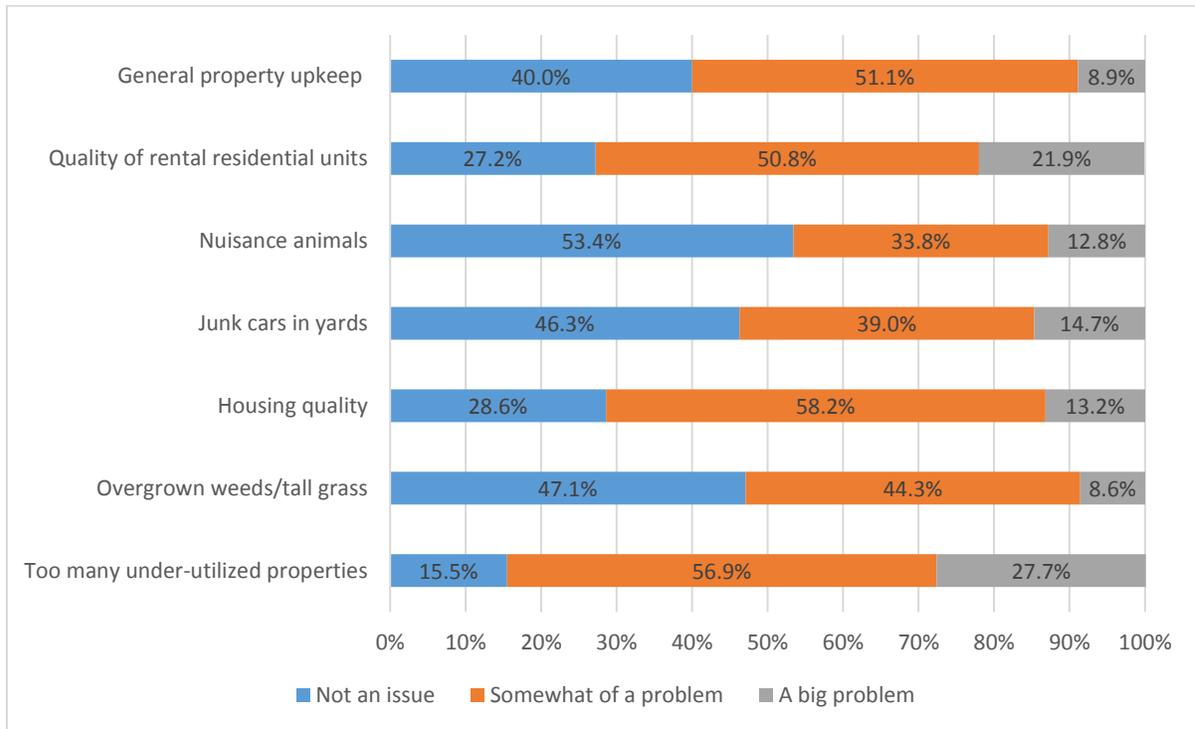
Next, respondents were also asked to rank several issues relating to the future of Carson City. Table 16 below, includes all the responses. Overall, respondents thought all the categories were important to the City, however good infrastructure, business retention, and economic development were the most important issues.

**Table 16 – Issues of Importance**

	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important/No Opinion
<b>Business retention and economic development</b>	91.9%	4.8%	3.1%
<b>Preservation of historic buildings</b>	79.6%	14.0%	6.4%
<b>A walkable, pedestrian, and bike friendly town</b>	84.4%	10.9%	4.8%
<b>Good infrastructure</b>	96.3%	2.6%	1.4%
<b>Additional recreation opportunities</b>	68.8%	23.2%	8.1%

Finally, City staff identified several key elements they thought were a problem in the City, and asked survey respondents their opinions on the extent of each issue. Overall, respondents did not indicate any of these issues as glaring problems in the City. The biggest problem indicated by respondents was too many under-utilized properties. In general, respondents thought the majority of these issues were not a problem in Carson City. Other examples of minor issues included: housing quality, quality of rental residential units, and general property upkeep.

**Figure 17 – Potential Issues in the City**



## Residential Questions

If any new residential development were to occur in the City, respondents would prefer it be single-family homes (55.2%), mixed-use development with a variety of housing types mixed with local business (54.7%), and retirement/senior housing (23.9%). Respondents also believe housing designed for senior citizens or a retirement village should be encouraged in the City.

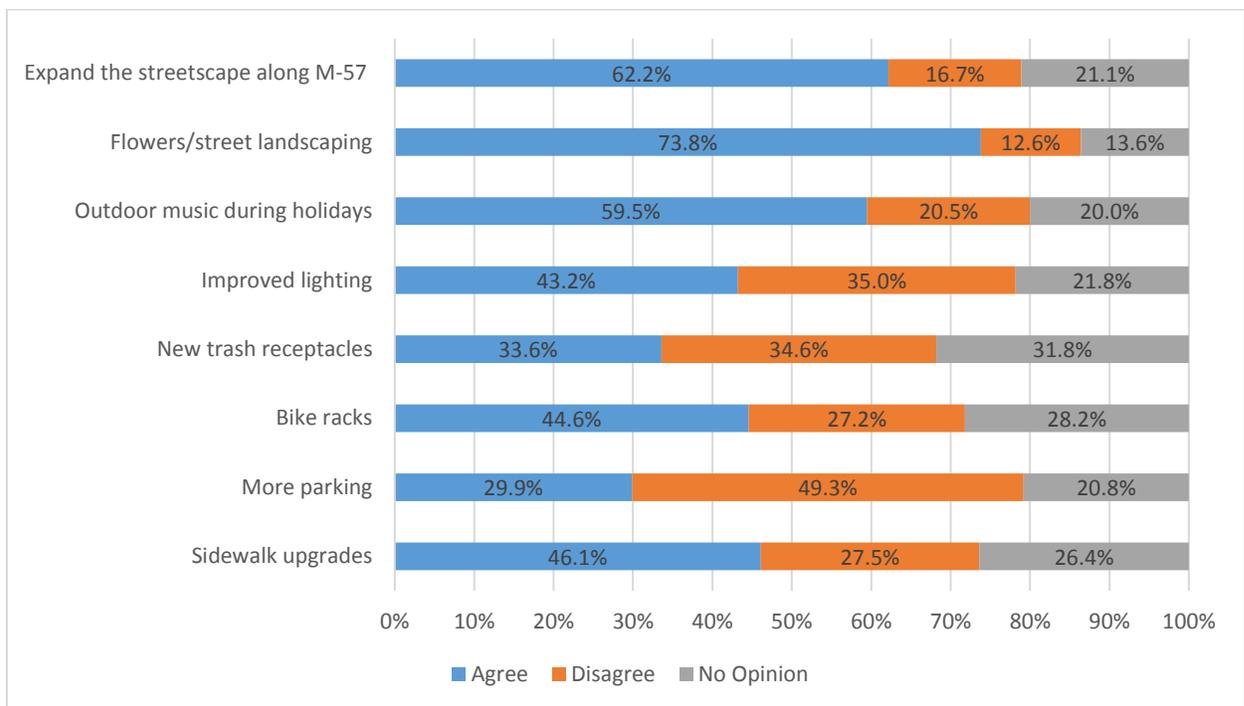
Respondents were asked an open-ended question concerning ways to improve their neighborhood. There were 29 responses to this question, with a variety of answers. A full list can be found in Appendix C. However, the most frequent answer was to clean up the quality of housing and yards. Two other popular answers were add sidewalks in the neighborhood for mobility, and increased street lighting.

## Commercial Questions

Next, respondents were asked several questions pertaining to the existing and future commercial development in the City. Three quarters of the respondents feel there is not enough retail and commercial services in Carson City, and almost 90% believe that commercial growth should be encouraged in the next 10 years. Respondents believe this new commercial development should be located in the downtown (72%), along M-57 on the west side of town (57%), or along M-57 on the east side of town (40%).

Respondents believe the best way to enhance the downtown is with flowers/street landscaping and expanding the streetscape along M-57. Other improvements are listed below. Respondents were also given the opportunity to write in specific ways to improve the downtown, to review these answers reference Appendix C.

**Figure 18 – New Development in the City**



## Open Ended Questions

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked what they like best about the City and what they would do to improve the City? The full list of answers can be found in Appendix C. The most frequent answers regarding improvements to the City are as follows:

- Better job opportunities
- New business in town
- Improve the schools
- Encourage property owners to clean up their homes/yards
- Update the downtown



## Chapter Six – What Do We Want for Carson City?

### Introduction

The purpose of this section is to describe the long-term vision for Carson City. The goals use enough detail to highlight likely outcomes for the City, but are also flexible enough to address and adapt to the changing conditions of its current and future residents, landowners, and other stakeholders.

It should go without saying that determining the direction for the Carson City community for the next five to twenty years is a challenge. Determining what needs to be improved, what should be preserved, and what should be substantially changed is only successful when the changes are based on sound public participation and detailed analysis. Setting the goals for Carson City was a process accomplished by the thorough review of existing characteristics in the City and the results of the community input survey. The following goals and objectives are a major component of this Master Plan, which is intended to be the primary policy document for City officials when considering matters related to land use, development proposals, and infrastructure improvements.

This chapter includes the goals and objectives that represent the overall vision for Carson City. They will serve as the foundation for preparing appropriate and well thought out community improvements for the life of this Master Plan. The goals will also be the guiding principles for future land use decisions by City officials and should guide all land use questions or rezoning decisions that arise. Implementation of these goals is a multi-faceted effort that will likely involve the zoning ordinance, other local ordinances, various City departments, and other plans such as the City's five-year capital improvement program.

The goals in this section are divided into broad categories and relate directly to these and other issues identified as priorities by the residents and the Planning Commission. These broad categories were devised to be clear and intentional, with a vision of bringing strength and vitality to the City in order to positively affect daily life in Carson City. The goal categories are meant to succinctly address issues related to downtown, economic development, neighborhoods, and quality of life. After the goals, several objectives are listed that support the implementation of Carson City's goals.

### **Goal 1: Strengthen Carson City's economic future by supporting business and investment in the community.**

**The following action steps, when implemented, will improve the business and investment climate within the City. While the City itself has limited capacity to create jobs and related opportunities, it can set policies in place to encourage desired activity.**

1. To the extent possible, the City Council, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and the other boards and commissions should work toward the common goal of promoting positive economic development and redevelopment in the City.
2. Collaborate with area stakeholders (such as the hospital and local business owners) to encourage a greater variety of high quality businesses in the downtown.
3. Promote the development/redevelopment of vacant commercial property. If redevelopment is not possible, new construction should be consistent with the surrounding character.
4. Review and revise the zoning ordinance to determine ways to simplify and streamline the permitting process and to make it more user-friendly.
5. Review and update the procedures manual (development review process) in the zoning ordinance.
6. Market the 425 Agreement by promoting economic development opportunities in Carson City.
7. Support the redevelopment of the Kellogg site.

## Goal 2: Protect and support Carson City's Neighborhoods

**When examining how to retain and attract residents, Carson City will need to work on ways to keep existing neighborhoods attractive. The following action steps are proposed to encourage new residents to move to Carson City while providing opportunities for the young, seniors, long-term and short-term residents, and families.**

1. Based on zoning regulations, encourage a mix of residential development that meets the varying needs of Carson City residents.
2. Using appropriate zoning tools and land use practices discourage commercial and industrial uses in existing residential districts.
3. Encourage infill development that is compatible with the surrounding uses.
4. Upgrade neighborhood infrastructure (lighting, signs, sidewalks, and streets) to enhance neighborhood integrity, visual appeal, and property values.
5. Update the zoning ordinance and development policies documents to encourage creative residential property development (i.e. PUD).
6. Review and update zoning ordinance regulations to promote senior housing opportunities in Carson City.
7. Strengthen zoning ordinance requirements for blight reduction and maintenance.
8. Using code compliance and property maintenance regulations, encourage the renewal and revitalization of residential areas in the City.
9. Work with Montcalm County Habitat for Humanity to create a neighborhood clean-up "Rock the Block" program in Carson City.

### Goal 3: Preserve the Carson City community while taking key steps to improve quality of life.

**When it comes to municipal planning, communities that are perceived to have a good quality of life are typically safe, have available jobs and good schools, plenty of access to parks, a clean environment, abundant cultural and entertainment opportunities, and quality health care. The following action steps are proposed in order to improve the quality of life for residents.**

1. Preserve the small-town character and pedestrian-scale services and facilities currently available in Carson City.
2. Pursue opportunities to improve parks and recreation in the City based on the recommendations described in Carson City's most current DNR-approved five-year Recreation Plan.
3. Seek grants from the DNR to help implement the City's Recreation Plan.
4. Continue community-wide support of facilities like the Public Library and parks.
5. Research the feasibility of a parks and recreation activity director (possible internship) for summer events in the park such as movies and music in the parks.

#### **Goal 4: Strengthen Downtown Carson City to encourage development of a cohesive and vital business district.**

**The following action steps, when implemented, will improve and enhance Carson City's downtown area, thereby making it more attractive to shoppers and future investment.**

1. Preserve the existing downtown, and work to create a strong sense of place. The City encourages preservation of the unique architectural character.
2. Host downtown community-wide events that showcase merchants, music, and food.
3. Work with schools on downtown events, look into an internship to assist the City.
4. Install speakers in the downtown.
5. Plan for non-motorized transportation improvements including sidewalk improvements, bike racks, pedestrian facilities.
6. Expand the downtown commercial district streetscape along M-57. Expansion could include: new street lighting, extended sidewalks, streetscaping, and landscaping.
7. Expand streetscape elements one block north and south off of Main Street. Expand lighting, sidewalks, streetscaping, and landscaping.
8. Encourage extended business hours.
9. Help facilitate the creation of a Downtown Development Authority.

## **Goal 5: Improve and expand City's public services and transportation network.**

**Adequate transportation and public utilities are primary responsibilities a municipal government is required to provide for their citizens. The following action items will guide the City's future planning efforts and investments in regard to appropriate service and utility upgrades. Striking a balance between annual maintenance and upgrades to encourage development.**

1. Provide the highest quality public facilities and services possible at an affordable rate for the residents of Carson City.
2. Develop guidelines which outline a balance between necessary services and anticipated growth and development.
3. Continue annual maintenance to the City's network of streets and utilities which meet the needs of City residents and businesses.
4. Collaborate with MDOT to maintain a supportive working relationship. Support construction improvements along M-57 and work to ensure any potential transportation enhancement projects coordinate with the City's desired future land use patterns.
5. Develop a sidewalk policy/plan which outlines annual goals and projects for non-motorized transportation improvements. Plan for linkages between residential neighborhoods and City facilities.
6. Consider implementing a Safe Routes to Schools planning initiative to provide safe walkways along City roads.
7. Annually update capital improvements program and use it as a tool for future projects.
8. Advertise the affordable improvements sidewalk program so residents understand the process to improve sidewalks. Use the affordable sidewalk program as a basis for a sidewalk plan.

## **Goal 6: Provide an atmosphere favorable to a strong education system which encourages area youth to have a stake in the community.**

**The following actions are geared towards encouraging youth to be involved and educated in the Carson City area. This, combined with the economic efforts described previously, should help translate to fewer young people moving from the area.**

1. Collaborate with school leaders to encourage community involvement in the schools. Encourage residents and parents to take a stake in local education.
2. Outreach to students in local governing, planning and collateral activities such as representation on various City and County committees and organizations.
3. Support community college and trade school collaboration on educational initiatives.
4. Work with schools and youth groups to encourage volunteerism in the community.
5. Work with local business to support shadowing programs and project-based learning systems.

## **Goal 7: Foster a municipal environment that is supportive and transparent.**

**The following action items are internal steps the City can take to improve public access to information and provide guidance for public figures.**

1. Provide for regular training of City staff and appointed officials to foster knowledge and expertise.
2. Assign roles and outline expectations for all committee or commission members at the beginning of their tenure.
3. Follow Michigan statutes for meetings, e.g. Open Meetings Act.
4. Update and streamline City website for interactive and friendly use.
5. Upload all public documents to the City website.





## Chapter Seven – How Will Carson City Look?

### Introduction

One of the purposes of a Master Plan is to outline a future land use plan which guides the next 10 to 20 years of development in the City. The land use plan outlined in this section of the Master Plan, serves to reflect the community's desire to promote growth in specific areas while maintaining, enhancing, and protecting the natural resources present in the community. The map depicting the future land uses for the City is shown at the end of this chapter. The proposed future land uses in the City are divided into seven categories, see Table 15.

The future land use map transforms the goals and objectives of the Master Plan into a graphic guide for development, management, and decision making. While the future land use map attempts to translate future land use categories to specific zoning districts, it does not specify how every lot, parcel, or site should be used or zoned. The map is intended to provide a framework for future site-specific land use or zoning decisions that are brought before the Planning Commission. For example, the future land use map may indicate a low-density single-family residential area, but that area may not be zoned for residential until a property owner requests a zoning change and the City adopts the rezoning request.

The future land use categories are slightly different from the existing land use categories. This difference is attributed to the fact that future land use is developed with an eye toward the zoning classification. These categories relate more closely to zoning districts because zoning is one of the ways a master plan is implemented. For example, while the existing land use map described parking and vacant areas, these uses are not described on the future land use map. The existing land uses are combined into various other future land use categories, which reflect how the land should be utilized in the future, and therefore how it should be zoned. Ultimately, the recommendations shown on the future land use map are intended to help City officials, property owners, and residents make zoning and development decisions that are in the best interest of Carson City. The future land use map seeks to guide residential, commercial, and industrial development into appropriate locations while maintaining the overall character and appearance of the City. Descriptions of the future land use categories begin below. The future land use map is at the end of this section.

**Table 15 – Future Land Use**

Land Use	Acreage in City	Percentage	Acreage outside of City	Acreage Total	Percentage
<b>Single-Family Residential</b>	360.8	59.7%	207.19	567.99	66.8%
<b>Multiple-Family Residential</b>	17.56	2.9%	-	17.56	2.1%
<b>Downtown Business</b>	16.45	2.7%	-	16.45	1.9%
<b>General Business</b>	29.19	4.8%	-	29.19	3.4%
<b>Industrial</b>	120.31	19.9%	12.28	132.59	15.6%
<b>Hospital</b>	11.54	1.9%	-	11.54	1.4%
<b>Public/Semi-Public</b>	48.19	8.0%	8.27	56.46	6.6%
	<b>604.04</b>		<b>227.74</b>	<b>831.78</b>	

Table 15 has three different acreage classifications, each based on the geographic location of the parcels included in the calculation. The areas include the acreage of all the parcels within the City limits, the acreage of the parcels within the 425 Boundary outside of the City limits, and the total acreage which includes all the parcels both in and outside of the City limits. The 425 Agreement area will not become part of the City until it is developed, therefore the category, “acreage in the City” is a clear picture of the future land use categories as they stand at the completion of this master plan, and the “acreage total” is the future land use categories if all of the 425 land was transferred into the City of Carson City. The addition of the 425 land skews the percentages, and so Table 15 is a clear demarcation of the City today, and what it stands to gain by transferring the 425 land. An explanation of the 425 Agreement is below.

## 425 Agreement

The future land use map outlines four distinct areas which are a part of the 425 Agreement between the City and Bloomer Township. As these areas will become part of the City if any new development were to occur on site, they have been included in the future land map. These large tracts of land are suited to be sites of development for the City and with appropriate marketing could become redevelopment sites in Carson City.

There are three distinct areas of the 425 Agreement that could be transferred into the City, they are the two large single-family residential areas northwest and southeast of the City, and the industrial and public land in the northwest quarter of the City, at the northern end of Williams Street. There is one other area highlighted outside of the City limits, it is a public/semi-public area along M-57 just west of the City limits in Bloomer Township. This is a City Park, and there are no plans to bring this land inside the City limits, but it is the City’s largest park and is an important land use to consider for the future.

## Land Use Categories

### Low Density Residential

The Low Density Residential category is intended for low density single-family dwellings in residential neighborhoods, and corresponds to the R-1 (Single Family Residential) zoning district. Two family dwellings are allowed as a special use. The character of these neighborhoods would be quiet and free of unrelated or excess traffic. Though limited, other low-impact land uses may be allowed such as schools, churches or parks. Residential streets are compatible with both pedestrian and automobile traffic. This category has a smaller minimum lot size than that of the multiple-family residential zoning district. The low density residential category makes up 360.8 acres or 59.7% of the land in the City and is the largest land use. The low density residential areas spread throughout the City, except for the business and industrial districts. In addition to the land inside the City, there are also 207 acres of low density residential land outside of the City limits in the 425 Agreement, this would total 567 acres or 66.8% of the total land.

## Multi-Family Residential

The Multi-Family Residential district is intended to provide housing opportunities in the form of both one and two-family dwelling units. Care facilities, elderly, adult foster care, and state licensed residential facilities are allowed as a special use. This type of dwelling is denser than the previous district, providing a variety of housing types, and often a common green area or open space for residents. Multi-family residential parcels provide good transition zones between the quiet single-family neighborhoods to a commercial area. Any multi-family housing should be integrated into the surrounding area and compatible to the size and form of neighboring buildings. It should not detract from the adjacent neighborhood, but provide less traditional housing options for all residents. Multi-family residential makes up 17.5 acres or 2.9% of the land in the City. There is one area of multi-family housing identified on the future land use map, it is just north of the school. This future land use corresponds to the R-2 zoning district.

## Downtown Business

The Downtown Business district corresponds to the B-1 zoning district and is intended for the traditional downtown core along M-57. This area is intended to be walkable, with a street life, sidewalks, shops and businesses, and connection to recreation amenities. The original traditional downtown buildings represent an opportunity for mixed uses with residential uses above existing stores. This category should have a continuous sense of character and sidewalks, pathways, and parking areas should pay attention to streetscape and landscape continuity with lighting. Uses allowed in this category include general retail, restaurants, professional offices, cultural or educational institutions, personal services, or theaters. The downtown business category is along Main Street between the east side of Third Street and the west side of Williams Street, both north and south of Main Street. It makes up 16.45 acres or 2.7% of the land in the City.

## General Business

The General Business category in Carson City is intended to serve as the regional community business and service needs of the Carson City area. This future land use category corresponds to the B-2 zoning district. The uses allowed in this district include drive-through establishments, equipment storage and sales, greenhouses, vehicle repair, sales, and wash, and all uses allowed in the B-1 district. The district should be able to accommodate vehicular traffic and associated commercial services. The general business category is on the north and south sides of Main Street outside of the boundaries defined for the downtown business district, and makes up 29 acres, or 4.8% of the land in the City.

## Industrial

The industrial category is intended to accommodate light industry which possesses few nuisances. The industrial future land use category corresponds to the industrial zoning district. Uses allowed in the district include agricultural and contractor storage, manufacturing facilities, warehousing, substations, machine shops, mini storage, and grain elevators. It is not intended for any type of heavy industrial uses. In addition to these uses, incinerators, incarceration institutions, junkyards, waste disposal sites, resource recovery, and sewage treatment facilities are allowed as a special use. These uses are restricted to the physical area of the district and should be well-matched or adjacent to similar uses. The intent of this district is to provide sufficient space for the current and future needs for manufacturing while preserving the character of the community. It is found on either side of the old railroad bed in the northern portion of the City. The Industrial land use category makes up 102 acres or approximately 17% of the land in the City, and there is an additional 12 acres of land outside of the City boundaries in the 425 Agreement. In total industrial land accounts for 15.6% of the land inside and outside the City limits.

## Hospital

Carson City is home to Sparrow Carson Hospital which is part of the Sparrow Health Network. The hospital is a strong economic engine of the City, and an asset for the community. There are few small cities in Michigan which have the benefit of a medical facility in their town, and Carson City recognizes the importance of the hospital in relation to the future of the City. The hospital has its own future land use category because it is such a specialized use, and can be found at the current location of the hospital in the southeast corner of the City. The hospital and other similar uses (rehabilitation and other medical offices) are not specific to one zoning district, but instead are allowed in the B-1, B-2, and I districts. This category makes up 11.5 acres, or 1.9% of the land in the City.

## Public/Semi-Public

This Public/Semi-Public category is intended for parks, cemeteries, and municipal buildings in the City of Carson City, both of these uses are similar in that they are open to the public for their benefit or use. This category includes land on the western border of the City, in the southwest corner of the City, and in the northwest corner at the north end of Williams Street. By design and use, the nature of this land is very difficult, if not impossible to change. The public parks in the City are public land that the City would be hard pressed to sell off, and the cemetery allows for very little other uses on site. Therefore, it is important to consider this land in future planning efforts because it is most likely a fixed element in the City. This category is allowed in several different zoning districts depending on the land use, but they include: AG, R-1, R-2, B-2, and I. Public/Semi-Public land makes up 48 acres (8%) of land in the City, and totals 74 acres of land, or 8.8% of the total land both inside and outside of the City limits.



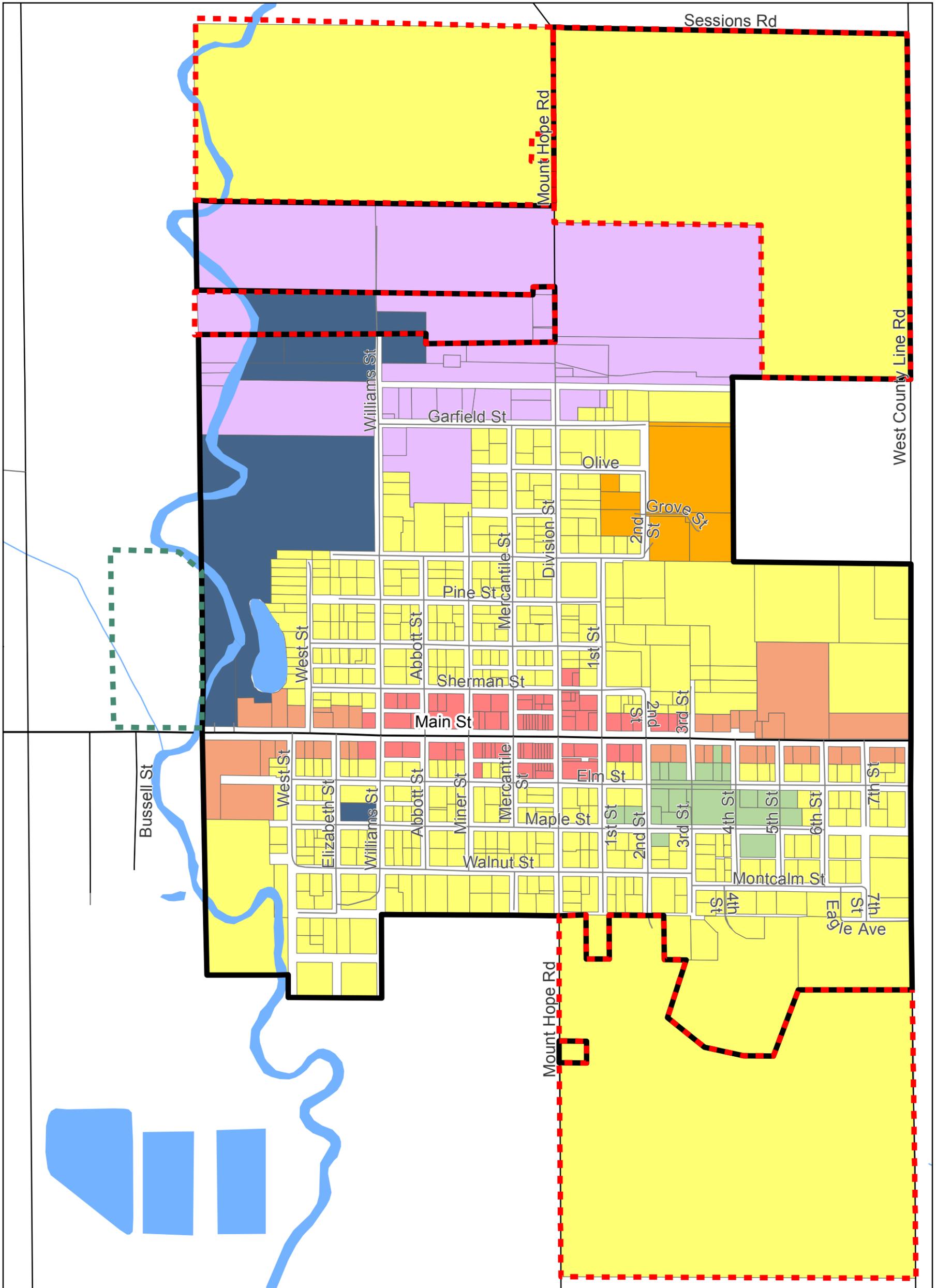
NOT TO SCALE



# MAP 13 - FUTURE LAND USE

CARSON CITY - MICHIGAN

N



## LEGEND

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  Single Family Residential   |  General Business |  Public/Semi-Public |
|  Multiple-Family Residential |  Industrial       |  425 Agreement      |
|  Downtown Business           |  Hospital         |  City Park          |



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DATE: NOVEMBER 2018



## Zoning Plan

The Planning Enabling Act requires that a Master Plan contain a zoning plan which outlines the development requirements for the various zoning districts and an explanation of how the future land use categories relate to the districts on the zoning map. The purpose of the zoning plan is to clarify the relationship between the zoning ordinance and future land use plan and implement the envisioned future depicted in the plan based on the realities of the zoning ordinance. Table 15 relates the future land use categories with the zoning districts and discusses features and factors to be considered in reviewing requests to rezone lands in the Township consistent with this plan.

**Table 15 - Zoning Plan**

Future Land Use	Zoning District	Description	Minimum Lot	Maximum Height	Coverage	Setbacks
<b>Single - Family Residential</b>	R-1 Single-Family Residential	Low density, single-family dwelling units	7,800 sq. ft.	2.5 stories or 35 ft.	40%	FY: 20 ft. SY: 20 ft. (5 ft.) RY: 10 ft. (3 ft.)
<b>Multiple - Family Residential</b>	R-2 Multiple-Family Residential	Variety of housing styles with a higher density	15,000 sq. ft.	2.5 stories or 35 ft.	40%	FY: 30 ft. SY: 24 ft. (10 ft.) RY: 35 ft. (5 ft.)
<b>Downtown Business</b>	B-1 Business – Downtown	Local/Regional shopping opportunities promoting convenient pedestrian access	None	3 stories or 40 ft.	None	FY: none SY: none RY: 20 ft. (10 ft.)
<b>General Business</b>	B-2 Business – General	Regional shopping areas accommodating larger volumes of vehicular traffic	10,800 sq. ft.	3 stories or 45 ft.	75%	FY: 25 ft. SY: 20 ft. RY: 25 ft.
<b>Industrial</b>	I – Industrial	Light manufacturing uses with possess few nuisances	12,000 sq. ft.	3.5 stories or 40 ft.	75%	FY: 40 ft. SY: 15 ft. RY: 10% of lot width, not more than 40 ft.
<b>Hospital</b>	B-1 Business – Downtown B-2 Business – General I – Industrial	Specific to the hospital and related medical facilities.	Reference above standards			
<b>Public/Semi-Public</b>	AG – Agricultural R-1 Single-Family Residential R-2 Multiple-Family Residential B-2 Business – General I – Industrial	Municipal property and recreation land.	Reference above standards (R-1, R-2, B-2, and I) AG – 1 acre	Reference above standards (R-1, R-2, B-2, and I) AG – 2.5 stories or 30 ft.	Reference above standards (R-1, R-2, B-2, and I) AG – 35%	Reference above standards (R-1, R-2, B-2, and I) AG – FY: 30 ft. SY: 15 ft. (15 ft.) RY: 15 ft. (15 ft.)

## Future Land Use Classifications Comparison to Zoning Districts

The zoning ordinance will implement the master plan's vision by limiting the location of uses that are appropriate for the future development of the community. The focus of the City is to work on developing the community to keep its small town feel by protecting single-family residential housing. In addition to protecting single-family residential housing, the City will focus on concentrated development in the downtown area along M-57. The downtown area will provide a variety of business opportunities and services for residents. However, the future land use plan and zoning plan do not influence changes in the City. Rezoning is possible when they are initiated by property owners, and on rare occasion, by the City.



## **Chapter Eight – Checklist for Carson City’s Future**

### **Introduction**

Master planning should be a continuous process. The objectives, policies, and recommended actions are based on the community’s understanding of today’s problems, technology and implementation procedures. A Plan Review and Update Procedure are necessary to address changes in community values, living patterns and perception. Therefore, the Plan will be monitored annually, updated periodically, and evaluated at a minimum of every five (5) years. The only way to make a plan truly work is to use the plan, to reference it, and to correct it or change it when it is not accurately reflecting current changes and conditions.

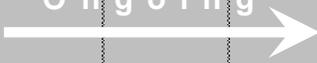
The stakeholders in the monitoring and update process should include the Planning Commission, City Council, staff, and a representative sample of interested citizens. Just as citizen involvement was an integral part of the process that culminated the Plan, it continues to be necessary if the Plan is to remain relevant to the aspirations and needs of the community. Representatives from the schools, business and development communities, and other public agencies and groups concerned with the City should also be included in the review process.

The monitoring process to be conducted annually, involves assessing factors such as socioeconomic data, development activity, changes in technology, and indicators of

public opinion. Next, an evaluation of the relevancy of the Plan in light of changing conditions is performed. Finally, the results of the monitoring are reported in the Planning Commission's Annual Report. When the monitoring process reveals changes in the community to a degree that seriously impacts the relevance of the Plan, the Planning Commission will suggest a Plan update. The update is intended to address only those aspects of the Plan found to be outdated and no longer relevant.

Updates will be performed as needed, indicated through the monitoring process. After a minimum of five years, and again at minimum five-year intervals, a thorough review of the Plan will be performed to evaluate its effectiveness. The main feature of this review would be a study of all the action recommendations. Each recommendation will be examined for continuing relevance and success in implementation. The evaluation will involve two considerations. First, the effectiveness of the technique by which the recommendations were implemented will be examined. Then, the action itself will be studied to determine whether the action achieved the desired objective. Those recommended actions not implemented will also be reviewed for continuing relevance and probability of implementation. This review will help the Planning Commission adjust the Plan to better achieve the goals and objectives, implement City policies, and maintain the credibility of the Plan.

With a solid understanding of the goals to move Carson City forward, a detailed and specific action plan follows. This action program provides a detailed checklist of action items by which progress can be measured. These action items are the next steps to be taken by the City in order to implement this Plan.

Goal 1: Strengthen the City's Economic Future	Timeframe			Leadership			
	Now	Near Future	Short Term	Approvals Required	Funding Source	Progress	
	2019 & 2020	Complete by 2022	Complete by 2025			Initial & Date Below	Started
To the extent possible, the City Council, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and the other boards and commissions should work toward the common goal of promoting positive economic development and redevelopment in the City.	Ongoing 			PC, Council, ZA, EDA	General Fund		
Collaborate with area stakeholders (such as the hospital and local business owners) to encourage a greater variety of high quality businesses in the downtown.	Ongoing 			PC, Council, EDA, Foundations	Grants		
Promote the development/redevelopment of vacant commercial property. If redevelopment is not possible, new construction should be consistent with the surrounding character.	Ongoing 			PC, Council, EDA	General Fund, Grants		
Review and revise the zoning ordinance to determine ways to simplify and streamline the permitting process and to make it more user-friendly.		X		PC, Council	General Fund		
Review and update the procedures manual (development review process) in the zoning ordinance.		X		PC, Council	Grants		
Market the 425 Agreement by promoting economic development opportunities in Carson City.			X	PC, Council, EDA	General Fund		
Support the redevelopment of the Kellogg site.			X	PC, Council, EDA	General Fund, Grants		
<b>Key:</b>							
PC - Planning Commission, <b>Council</b> - City Council, <b>ADM</b> - City Administrator, <b>ZA</b> - Zoning Administrator, <b>DPW</b> - Department of Public Works, <b>MDOT</b> - Michigan Department of Transportation, <b>EDA</b> - Montcalm County Economic Development Alliance, <b>Foundations</b> - Local Groups and Foundations, <b>Parks</b> - Parks and Recreation Committee							

Goal 2: Protect and Support City Neighborhoods	Timeframe			Leadership			
	Now	Near Future	Short Term	Approvals Required	Funding Source	Progress	
	2019 & 2020	Complete by 2022	Complete by 2025			Initial & Date Below	Started
Based on zoning regulations, encourage a mix of residential development that meets the varying needs of Carson City residents.	Ongoing 			PC, Council	General Fund, Grants		
Using appropriate zoning tools and land use practices, discourage commercial and industrial uses in existing residential districts.	Ongoing 			PC, Council	General Fund, Grants		
Encourage infill development that is compatible with the surrounding uses.	Ongoing 			PC, Council	General Fund, Grants		
Upgrade neighborhood infrastructure (lighting, signs, sidewalks, and streets) to enhance neighborhood integrity, visual appeal, and property values.	Ongoing 			PC, Council, DPW	General Fund		
Update the zoning ordinance and development policies documents to encourage creative residential property development (i.e. PUD).		X		PC, Council,	General Fund, Grants		
Review and update zoning ordinance regulations to promote senior housing opportunities in Carson City.		X		PC, Council,	General Fund, Grants		
Strengthen zoning ordinance requirements for light reduction and maintenance.		X		PC, Council,	General Fund, Grants		
Using code compliance and property maintenance regulations, encourage the renewal and revitalization of residential areas in the City.	Ongoing 			ADM, PC	General Fund		
Work with Montcalm County Habitat for Humanity to create a neighborhood clean-up "Rock the Block" program in Carson City.	X			ADM, PC, Foundations	Foundations		
<b>Key:</b>							
PC - Planning Commission, Council - City Council, ADM - City Administrator, ZA - Zoning Administrator, DPW - Department of Public Works, MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation, EDA - Montcalm County Economic Development Alliance, Foundations - Local Groups and Foundations, Parks - Parks and Recreation Committee							

Goal 3: Protect the Community and Improve the City's Quality of Life	Timeframe			Leadership			
	Now	Near Future	Short Term	Approvals Required	Funding Source	Progress	
	2019 & 2020	Complete by 2022	Complete by 2025			Initial & Date Below	Started
Preserve the small-town character and pedestrian-scale services and facilities currently available in Carson City.	Ongoing 			PC, Council, ADM	General Fund		
Pursue opportunities to improve parks and recreation in the City based on the recommendations described in Carson City's most current DNR-approved five-year Recreation Plan.			X	Parks, Council	General Fund, Grants		
Seek grants from the DNR to help implement the City's Recreation Plan.			X	Parks, Council	General Fund, Grants		
Continue community-wide support of facilities like the Public Library and parks.	Ongoing 			Council, Parks, Foundations	General Fund		
Research the feasibility of a parks and recreation activity director (possible internship) for summer events in the park such as movies and music in the parks.	X			Parks, Council, ADM	General Fund, Grants		
<b>Key:</b>							
PC - Planning Commission, Council - City Council, ADM - City Administrator, ZA - Zoning Administrator, DPW - Department of Public Works, MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation, EDA - Montcalm County Economic Development Alliance, Foundations - Local Groups and Foundations, Parks - Parks and Recreation Committee							

Goal 4: Strengthen the City's Downtown Business District	Timeframe			Leadership			
	Now	Near Future	Short Term	Approvals Required	Funding Source	Progress	
	2019 & 2020	Complete by 2022	Complete by 2025			Initial & Date Below	Started
Preserve the existing downtown, and work to create a strong sense of place. Encourage preservation of the unique architectural character.	Ongoing 			PC, Council	General Fund		
Host downtown community-wide events that showcase merchants, music, and food.		X		PC, Council, Foundations	Grants		
Work with schools on downtown events, look into an internship to assist the City.	X			Council, SD	General Fund, Grants		
Install speakers in the downtown.		X		PC, Council	General Fund		
Plan for non-motorized transportation improvements including sidewalk improvements, bike racks, pedestrian facilities.		X		PC, Council	General Fund, Grants		
Expand the downtown commercial district streetscape along M-57. Expansion could include: new street lighting, extended sidewalks, streetscaping, and landscaping.			X	PC, Council, MDOT, DPW	General Fund, Grants		
Expand streetscape elements one block north and south off of Main Street. Expand lighting, sidewalks, streetscaping, and landscaping.			X	PC, Council, MDOT, DPW	General Fund, Grants		
Encourage extended business hours.	X			Council, Foundations			
Help facilitate the creation of a Downtown Development Authority.		X		Council, ADM	General Fund		
<b>Key:</b>							
PC - Planning Commission, Council - City Council, ADM - City Administrator, ZA - Zoning Administrator, DPW - Department of Public Works, MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation, EDA - Montcalm County Economic Development Alliance, Foundations - Local Groups and Foundations, Parks - Parks and Recreation Committee							

Goal 5: Improve and Expand Public Services and Transportation	Timeframe			Leadership			
	Now	Near Future	Short Term	Approvals Required	Funding Source	Progress <i>Initial &amp; Date Below</i>	
	2019 & 2020	Complete by 2022	Complete by 2025			Started	Completed
Provide the highest quality public facilities and services possible at an affordable rate for the residents of Carson City.	Ongoing 			PC, Council	General Fund		
Develop guidelines which outline a balance between necessary services and anticipated growth and development.	X			PC, Council, DPW	General Fund		
Continue annual maintenance to the City's network of streets and utilities which meet the needs of City residents and businesses.	Ongoing 			PC, Council, DPW	General Fund, Grants		
Collaborate with MDOT to maintain a supportive working relationship. Support construction improvements along M-57 and work to ensure any potential transportation enhancement projects coordinate with the City's desired future land use patterns.	Ongoing 			PC, Council, DPW, ADM	General Fund, Grants		
Develop a sidewalk policy/plan which outlines annual goals and projects for non-motorized transportation improvements. Plan for linkages between residential neighborhoods and City facilities.		X		PC, Council, DPW, ADM	General Fund, Grants		
Consider implementing a safe routes to schools planning initiative to provide safe walkways along City roads.		X		PC, Council, MDOT	General Fund, Grants		
Annually update capital improvements program and use it as a tool for future projects.	Ongoing 			PC, Council	General Fund		
Advertise affordable improvements sidewalk program so residents understand the process to improve sidewalks. Use the affordable sidewalk program as a basis for a sidewalk plan.	X			Council, ADM	General Fund		
<b>Key:</b>							
PC - Planning Commission, Council - City Council, ADM - City Administrator, ZA - Zoning Administrator, DPW - Department of Public Works, MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation, EDA - Montcalm County Economic Development Alliance, Foundations - Local Groups and Foundations, Parks - Parks and Recreation Committee							

Goal 6: Encourage Youth Involvement and Strong Education Principles	Timeframe			Leadership			
	Now	Near Future	Short Term	Approvals Required	Funding Source	Progress	
	2019 & 2020	Complete by 2022	Complete by 2025			<i>Initial &amp; Date Below</i>	
					Started	Completed	
Collaborate with school leaders to encourage community involvement in the schools. Encourage residents and parents to take a stake in local education.	Ongoing 			Council, SD, ADM	General Fund, Grants		
Outreach to students in local governing, planning and collateral activities such as representation on various City and County committees and organizations.			X	Council, SD, ADM	General Fund, Grants		
Support community college and trade school collaboration on educational initiatives.			X	Council, SD, ADM	General Fund, Grants		
Work with schools and youth groups to encourage volunteerism in the community.			X	Council, SD, ADM	General Fund, Grants		
Work with local business to support shadowing programs and project-based learning systems.			X	Council, SD, ADM	General Fund, Grants		
<b>Key:</b>							
PC - Planning Commission, <b>Council</b> - City Council, <b>ADM</b> - City Administrator, <b>ZA</b> - Zoning Administrator, <b>DPW</b> - Department of Public Works, <b>MDOT</b> - Michigan Department of Transportation, <b>EDA</b> - Montcalm County Economic Development Alliance, <b>Foundations</b> - Local Groups and Foundations, <b>Parks</b> - Parks and Recreation Committee							

Goal 7: Foster a Supportive and Transparent Municipal System	Timeframe			Leadership			
	Now	Near Future	Short Term	Approvals Required	Funding Source	Progress	
	2019 & 2020	Complete by 2022	Complete by 2025			Initial & Date Below	Started
Provide for regular training of City staff and appointed officials to foster knowledge and expertise.	Ongoing →			PC, Council, ADM	General Fund		
Assign roles and outline expectations for all committee or commission members at the beginning of their tenure.		X		PC, Council, ADM	General Fund		
Follow Michigan statutes for meetings, e.g. Open Meetings Act.	Ongoing →			PC, Council, ADM	General Fund		
Update and streamline City website for interactive and friendly use.			X	Council, ADM	General Fund		
Upload all public documents to the City website.	X			Council, ADM	General Fund		
<b>Key:</b>							
PC - Planning Commission, Council - City Council, ADM - City Administrator, ZA - Zoning Administrator, DPW - Department of Public Works, MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation, EDA - Montcalm County Economic Development Alliance, Foundations - Local Groups and Foundations, Parks - Parks and Recreation Committee							

## Implementation: Additional Resources

The key to a well-planned community is the actual day-to-day use of planning documents, like this Master Plan. Because this Plan is to be the basis for future zoning and planning decisions, it is imperative that the Plan be available to Carson City staff, elected and appointed officials, as well as business owners, developers, stakeholders from Montcalm County and the region, and the general public.

The implementation of this Master Plan depends on its continual use by the Planning Commission and the City Council. In its best form, implementation of this Plan will result in the achievement of the goals. Implementation is often the most difficult portion of the planning process because, while the intentions of the City, its residents, and stakeholders are clear, the legal ways and available planning tools are often not. The following provides a review of additional tools available to Carson City and the ways in which they can be used to ensure that the goals of this Plan are met.

### Zoning Changes and Ordinance Updates

Zoning is integral to implementing the goals and actions of this Master Plan in part by providing the legal and spatial framework which promotes the orderly development of a community. With a new Master Plan in place, the City has an opportunity to update its current zoning ordinance to reflect the goals adopted in this Plan. Many of the changes may be minor but provide a substantial benefit. For example, the Planning Commission may examine how the zoning ordinance is actually used and then finding ways to make it a more user-friendly document through the use of graphics and images. Another step may be to review the cases that have come before the Planning Commission to determine if there are trends that may need to be addressed in the zoning ordinance itself.

### Code Enforcement

The administration and enforcement of the zoning ordinance by City officials is integral to its effectiveness, as with all City codes. Enforcement must be thorough and consistent. Procedures such as building inspections, site plan review, and other ordinance administration tasks should be assigned to responsible entities, whereas more discretionary review authority should be assigned to the Planning Commission and more nondiscretionary measures may be assigned to the Zoning Administrator. All ordinance enforcement should be done regularly and thoroughly, and resourced with the staff levels and/or consulting assistance necessary to fulfill day-to-day functions.

## Identifying and Pursuing Capital Improvements

Given the reality of limited available funding at any given time, Carson City should prioritize specific projects and create schedules for their initiation and completion. A Capital Improvements Program which serves as a schedule for implementing public capital improvements, which acknowledges current and anticipated demands, and which recognizes present and potential financial resources available to the community, should be regularly implemented by the City. Long-range programming of public improvements should prioritize projects on the basis of community need, be developed within the Carson City's financial constraints, be based upon a sound financial plan, and allow for program flexibility. In order to guide the Planning Commission in this process, they should continually evaluate community conditions and development factors, and should continually review proposed improvements and related expenditures. The Planning Commission should ultimately review project proposals to assure conformity with the Master Plan and make recommendations regarding prioritizing projects and methods of financing.

## Local Financing Mechanisms and Co-Development

Carson City has access to a number of possible local financing tools. The City should prioritize and schedule its improvements through a capital improvements program. Carson City may be able to use its general fund for some of the most important improvements. Revenue bonds and general obligation bonds may also be employed by the City. A special assessment can also be used for infrastructure projects. Carson City should seek ways to encourage joint public and private investments for a common purpose. This includes mechanisms where the City can involve itself in the process of private development such as site location selection, service agreements, and local tax incentives and abatements. The City should promote economic growth in the downtown area, halt property value deterioration, and increase property tax valuation partially by using Tax Increment Financing as a tool for generating revenue in a new DDA boundary area. Carson City may also reach out to local foundations and area individuals for support for various civic projects. Additionally, the City may seek to access a variety of government loan and grant programs available to local governments, as described below.

## Grant Opportunities to Support Proposed Capital Improvements

This Master Plan can be used to identify potential funding sources to support proposed capital improvement projects, such as grant and loan programs to help fund priorities. At the Federal level, there is the Housing and Community Facilities Programs, the Public Works and Economic Development Program, Rural Business Enterprise Grants, and the USDA Rural Development Water and Wastewater Program, to name a few. At the State level, a funding source may be the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, which offers grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF/DWRF). Finally, the Michigan Department of Transportation also administers Federal funds appropriated under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (Public Law 112–141, MAP-21).

## Regional Cooperation

Development, growth, and changes within Montcalm County will affect quality of life and growth within Carson City. The City and its neighboring communities are interrelated in that trends in overall population loss and declining housing value affect the entire area. The City has the opportunity to pursue cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships with all the surrounding communities and Montcalm County. Cooperative relationships between and among Carson City and neighboring communities can provide an opportunity for the full impact of new or expanding developments to be considered as well as provide an opportunity for communities to pool resources and skills to tackle similar challenges. At the least, Carson City should actively participate in reviewing and evaluating their neighboring communities' Master Plans. Further, the City should invite comment and suggestions from neighboring communities on major developments within Carson City.

## Local Planning Capacity

Good planning practice and State law requires the City to review its Plan every five years and update it if necessary. A cursory review of the Plan should take place annually by both the Planning Commission and the City Council. This provides an opportunity to consider the goals and intent of the Plan against pending capital improvements, budget requests, and other developments that may impact the community. The City provides important planning and development services with limited staff. When change confronts the community, it will be necessary to review the time and effort expended to address development proposals. Adjustments in fees and changes in the application processes may be necessary in order to cover the costs associated with new or expanding development.

## **Additional Implementation Tasks**

Many of the steps necessary to ensure the successful implementation of this Master Plan might not be obvious or are not part of an established City fund. The implementation efforts that have been described in this section focus on the residents, landowners, and other stakeholders in Carson City. To date, Carson City has taken steps to keep residents and others involved and informed regarding City issues. The successful implementation of this Plan depends greatly on City officials using the Plan and residents being aware of the Plan, knowing its purpose, and understanding how they might be able to use it. This can be accomplished by consistently referring to the document when making zoning decisions and even referencing the Plan, when appropriate, during site plan reviews and variance decisions. Further, the City should keep a copy of the Future Land Use map on display and provide a copy of the Plan for review at the City Hall at all times. Citizen participation should be strongly encouraged in a continuing planning process. The successful implementation of planning proposals will require citizen understanding and support.

## **Conclusion**

The Carson City Planning Commission has spent a year discussing and examining issues regarding the future of the City, in addition to receiving valuable input from City residents in the form of a public survey.

As a result, the Planning Commission has compiled a complete, carefully prepared document that represents the data, efforts, and collective thoughts of Carson City residents. This Master Plan is only the beginning of a program of action for the next 10 to 20 years. Because the future well-being of Carson City depends upon rational, coordinated action, the City stands ready to meet with any person or group interested in the future development of the area. The City will be available to help and guide those who need advice or wish to be part of the Master Plan acted upon.

Carrying out the Master Plan is a task which is led by City officials and the Planning Commission, but is also dependent upon every responsible citizen of the City. By working together, Carson City will continue to be a desirable, attractive, and convenient community in which to live and work.