

**City of Vassar  
Master Plan  
2000 - 2015**

City of Vassar, Michigan  
Mr. D. Joseph Hembling, Mayor

Prepared By:

City of Vassar Planning Commission  
Mr. Donald McCrumb, Chair

and

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ZZZ 2777.01B

Plan Adoption History:

City of Vassar Planning Commission held a  
Public Hearing on the Plan on August 28, 2000.

Adopted by the City of Vassar Planning Commission  
at a regular meeting on January 22, 2001.

# City of Vassar, Michigan

## Mayor

D. Joseph Hembling

## City Council

Mike Blossom  
Patricia Gawne, Mayor Pro Tem  
Shirley Seney  
Evert Stewart

## Planning Commission

Donald McCrumb, Chair  
Roger Bacon, Sr.  
Ronald Bauder, Sr.  
Connie Grimshaw  
Nancy Harpham  
Jeff Johnston  
Ted Kabat  
Gary Kasper

## City Manager/Zoning Administrator

Brian Kischnick



**A RESOLUTION FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE MASTER PLAN FOR THE CITY OF VASSAR**

Moved by Commissioner Ted Kabat and supported by Commissioner Roger Bacon, to adopt the following:

WHEREAS, the City of Vassar, State of Michigan formally wishes to adopt the Master Plan, which was produced by the City of Vassar Planning Commission with the assistance of Wade Trim, Inc., municipal planning consultants; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Vassar, State of Michigan envisions the Master Plan to be used as a guide to future development of the City of Vassar; and,

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on August 28, 2000, at 7:00 p.m. at the City of Vassar, City Hall.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the City of Vassar Planning Commission formally adopts the Master Plan to guide future development for the City of Vassar.

Moved by Commissioner Ted Kabat and supported by Commissioner Roger Bacon.  
Unanimously Approved.

Present: Ted Kabat, Don McCrumb, Roger Bacon, Ron Bauder, and Jeff Johnston

Voting yes: 5

Voting no: 0

Absent: 3

Dated: January 22, 2001

I declare this resolution approved.

ATTEST:

Don McCrumb  
Don McCrumb, Planning Commissioner Chair

Brian M. Kischnick  
Brian M. Kischnick, City Manager

Dated: January 22, 2001

Dated: January 22, 2001

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## 1.0 Introduction

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### 1.1 Authority to Plan

The City of Vassar Planning Commission has prepared this master land use plan under the authority of the Municipal Planning Act, Public Act 285 of 1931, as amended. Section 6 of the Act states, in part:

*The commission shall make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside of its boundaries, which, in the commission's judgement, bear relation to the planning of the municipality. The plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter shall show the commission's recommendations for the development of the territory, including, among other things, the general location, character, and extent of streets, viaducts, subways, bridges, waterways, flood plains, water fronts, boulevards, parkways, playgrounds and open spaces, the general location of public buildings and other public property, and the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned or operated, for water, light, sanitation, transportation, communication, power, and other purposes; also the removal, relocation, widening, narrowing, vacating, abandonment, change of use or extension of any of the foregoing ways, grounds, open spaces, buildings, property, utilities or terminals; the general location, character, layout and extent of community centers and neighborhood units; and the general character, extent and layout of the replanning and redevelopment of blighted districts and slum areas; as well as a zoning plan for the control of the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and premises.*

### 1.2 Purpose of the Plan

Planning is a process involving the selection of policies relating to land use and development in a community. The creation of a Master Plan is the first step of this process. A Master Plan is a statement of the

goals and objectives for the future physical development of a community.

Comprehensive and long term in nature, the Master Plan examines all aspects of the community, whether they are physical, social, or economic. A Master Plan performs three very important functions:

- Provides a general statement of the community's goals and a comprehensive vision of the future.
- Provides the statutory basis for the Zoning Ordinance, as required by the City and Village Zoning Act, Public Act 207 of 1921, as amended.
- Serves as the primary policy guide for local officials considering development proposals, land divisions, capital improvements, and other matters related to land use and development; thus, providing a stable and consistent basis for decision making.

Every community's Master Plan is unique, focusing on important issues and challenges specific to that community. One of the challenges facing the City of Vassar is to encourage development, while at the same time protect water and natural resources and maintain the small town character. This Master Plan is designed to achieve this and other important objectives.

### 1.3 Public Participation Process

This Master Plan was formulated through a process of active participation of the citizens of Vassar. The Planning Commission held six public meetings for the purpose of involving citizens and the Commission to review and comment on the Plan at its four strategic phases. Attended by the Planning Commission, City Council Members, and concerned citizens, the meetings were held in the City Hall on the following dates:

1. October 25, 1999
2. January 24, 2000
3. May 22, 2000
4. July 24, 2000
5. August 28, 2000
6. January 22, 2001

The October 25, 1999 meeting included a survey of all those present to fill out a questionnaire listing their top five likes and dislikes about the community, and top five suggestions for future improvement needs for the community. The survey provided a basis for initial formulation of goals and objectives for the City.

Pursuant to the public hearing notification requirements of Section 125.38, Municipal Planning Act 285 of 1931, as amended, the Planning Commission on August 28, 1999, conducted a public hearing on the Plan. The Planning Commission adopted the Plan at its meeting on January 22, 2001.

#### **1.4 Plan Organization**

The Master Plan is comprised of three primary components: background studies, goals and objectives, and Future Land Use Plan.

This Master Plan presents extensive background information for the City and surrounding area, including social and economic data, and description and mapping of existing land use and natural resources. This background information is analyzed to identify important characteristics and trends occurring in the City of Vassar.

Community goals and objectives are presented to guide future development based on these background studies, key land use trends, and community issues. The sources for the community goals and objectives are the leaders and citizens of the community. The community goals and objectives for the City of Vassar are identified based on Planning Commission comments and citizen participation in the planning process.

After the presentation of the goals and objectives and the creation of an Existing Land Use Map, a Future Land Use Plan can be created. The Future Land Use Section of the Master Plan specifies the extent and location of where various types of future development can be accommodated within the City. This section also provides suggestions for implementation of the identified goals and objectives.

#### **1.5 Location and Regional Context**

The City of Vassar is located in the southwestern portion of Tuscola County. The City resides within two townships: Tuscola Township to the west and Vassar Township to the east. The City encompasses 2.2 square miles or 1,416 acres. **(Map 1)**

The City is made up of land in the geographic townships T11N-R7E and T11N-R8E, including the majority of Section 12 in Tuscola Township and Sections 7 and 18 in Vassar Township. The City is bisected by the Cass River.

#### **1.6 History of the City**

The City of Vassar is a small community with a long history. In March of 1849, Townsend North claimed the uninhabited Vassar lands as payment for building a bridge over the Cass River. The land was rich in timber and soil, the perfect combination North was searching for. Vassar was named after North's uncle-in-law, Matthew Vassar of Poughkeepsie, New York. Mr. Vassar was the founder of Vassar Female College in Poughkeepsie (1861) and, later became the source of funding for the settlement of the town.

North and James M. Edmunds, Vassar's nephew, borrowed \$10,000 in 1851 upon the authorization by the Michigan State Legislature to organize the town of Vassar.

Within four years time, Townsend North had streets laid and the village surveyed and platted. In 1850 a school district was formed and the following year Miss Augusta held classes in the new schoolhouse on the corner of South Main and Spruce Street. Vassar continued to grow as a lumbering community with a rise in population from 74 in 1854 to 264 in just ten years, and to 1,500 people by 1875. This growth was largely contributed to the improvements made to State Road, currently M-15, which was campaigned for by North.

Timber was being floated down Cass River for sales as far as Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and St. Louis; railroads soon followed. By 1873, 12 industries and multiple services and stores were established within the City. In 1875, the First National Bank of Vassar opened, with Townsend North as president.

The first charter election was held at the Union Hall in Vassar on April 10, 1871. To no one's surprise Townsend North was elected president. The City's founding father continued to hold public offices throughout his lifetime from school boards, to Assessor of Internal Revenues of the Sixth District of Michigan (as appointed by President Abraham Lincoln) to Michigan State Senator (R) of the 24<sup>th</sup> District in 1874. While acting senator, he introduced numerous bills such as the incorporation of Vassar as a Village, mandatory school attendance, and regulations on practicing medicine and surgery.



## 2.0 Background Studies Summary

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The purpose of a Master Plan is to establish goals and objectives for the future growth of a community. But before any recommendations can be made, a thorough background study must be completed. The purpose of a background study is to provide vital information on the past and current conditions of a community.

With the knowledge of these past and current conditions and trends, appropriate and well thought-out recommendations for the future can be made. Included in the background study for the City of Vassar is a socioeconomic profile, existing land use analysis, and natural resources assessment.

### 2.1 Socioeconomic Profile

- According to census information, Vassar's population peaked in 1970 at 2,802. Since then, there has been a steady decline in population, reaching a 1990 population of 2,559, or a loss of 8.7% since 1970.
- The City's 1998 population is estimated as 2,609 persons.
- The family formation age group (25 to 44 years old) is the largest age group in the City, accounting for nearly one-third (30.7%) of the total population.
- The City has less per capita income than Tuscola and Vassar Townships, Tuscola County, and the State.
- The City's housing stock is comprised of 73.5% single family homes, 23.3% duplexes and apartments, and the remaining 3.2% mobile homes or trailers.
- Over one-third of the City's housing stock has exceeded the 50-year typical useful life for residences.

- The median housing value in the City is significantly lower than Tuscola and Vassar Townships, Tuscola County, and the State.

### 2.2 Existing Land Use

- The City encompasses a total area of 1,416 acres.
- Over one-third (42.8%) of the City is vacant or open space, while nearly one-quarter (23.5%) is used for residential purposes.

### 2.3 Natural Resources

- Woodlands are the City's most significant natural resource and cover just over 18% of the City's area.
- The City is primarily comprised of dry or non-hydric, soils, while ribbons of wet, or hydric, soils are located throughout. This good, dry soil accounts for nearly 75% of the City's area.

### 3.0 Socioeconomic Profile

An important component in the comprehensive planning process is understanding the community's social and economic characteristics. These characteristics influence many land use decisions in the community such as the number and type of new houses needed, the amount of affordable housing needed, what type of industries are desired, and whether to build more youth or elderly facilities. The socioeconomic profile for the City of Vassar explores current and historical population changes, age distribution, household make-up, income, education, employment, and housing characteristics. Where significant, City data is compared to Tuscola Township, Vassar Township, Tuscola County, the State of Michigan, and the United States. The purpose of this profile is to identify factors that could influence future land use decisions and to assist policy makers with these decisions.

#### 3.1 Population

At the time of the 1990 U.S. Census, the population of Vassar was 2,559 residents (1,200 male - 1,359 female). For the purpose of this report, the 1990 U.S.

Census information will be used when making comparisons to other governmental units.

Population trends for residents of Vassar from 1970 to 1990 are shown in **Table 1**. The City has shown a steady decline in population with each decade. City population went from 2,802 in 1970 to 2,559 in 1990 for a total decrease of 8.7%. During the same period, surrounding communities and the state as a whole showed population increases: Tuscola Township, 9.4%; Vassar Township, 60.7%; Tuscola County, 14.2%; and the State of Michigan, 4.7%. The U.S. Census estimates a growth in population for the City between 1990 and 1998 from 2,559 to 2,609.

The 1990 Census shows a population density of 1,156.6 Persons per square mile for the City's 2.2 square miles of land area. This population density can be compared with the 54.2 persons per square mile for Tuscola Township, 110.8 persons per square mile for Vassar Township, 68.3 persons per square mile for Tuscola County and 164.0 persons per square mile for the State of Michigan.

**Table 1**  
**Population Trends**  
**City, Townships, County and State, 1970 – 1990**

Place	1970 Population	1980 Population	Change 1970 to 1980		1990 Population	Change 1980 to 1990		Change 1970 to 1990	
			No.	%		No.	%	No.	%
City of Vassar	2,802	2,727	-75	-2.7	2,559	-168	-6.2	-243	-8.7
Tuscola Township	1,960	2,255	295	15.1	2,144	-111	-4.9	184	9.4
Vassar Township	2,406	3,709	1,303	54.2	3,866	157	4.2	1,460	60.7
Tuscola County	48,603	56,961	8,358	17.2	55,498	-1,463	-2.6	6,895	14.2
Michigan	8,875,068	9,262,078	387,010	4.4	9,295,297	33,219	0.3	420,229	4.7

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

### 3.2 Age Distribution, Racial Make Up and Disability Status

Information on age distribution within a population can assist the community in matching public services to community characteristics and in determining special needs of certain age groups. For example, the younger population tends to require more rental housing units and smaller homes, while the elderly population needs nursing home facilities. Analysis of age distribution can also be used by policy makers to identify current gaps in services and to project future service needs for housing, education, recreation and medical care.

Age distribution figures for the City, Townships, County, and State from the 1990 Census are compared in **Table 2**. Overall, age distributions for all units of government are comparable. Vassar's median age of 31.3 years is slightly higher than that of Vassar Township (29.5), but lower than Tuscola Township (34.9), Tuscola County (33.0), and the State (32.6). As with the Townships, County, and State, The City of Vassar's largest age group is the family formation age group (25-44 years), followed by the school age group (5-17 years).

Racial make up of Vassar's population is relatively homogeneous. Of the 2,559 persons in the community in 1990, 95.2% were White, 4.2% were Black, and the rest 0.6% were Native American, Eskimo or Aleut, or of Asian descent. **Table 3** compares the City's racial composition to that of the Townships, County, and State.

For tracking disability status, the U.S. Census breaks the population into two different age categories: working age and post-working age. Of the civilian non-institutionalized population in the age group 16-64 years in Vassar, 3.0% are listed as having a disability that prevents them from working. Additionally, 7.8% and 4.0%, respectively, of the same age group indicate they have mobility and self-care limitations.

In the 65 years and over age group, 33.4% and 17.9% are shown as having mobility and self-care limitations, respectively. The City of Vassar's percentages are comparable with County (22.6%) and State (20.2%) levels.

### 3.3 Households

Census data from 1990 shows that Vassar has an average household size of 2.65 persons, as compared to 2.87 persons for Tuscola Township, 2.98 persons for Vassar Township, 2.79 persons for Tuscola County, and 2.66 persons for the State. The average City household size is smaller than all other governmental units.

**Table 4** compares the household characteristics of the City with that of the County, the State, and the United States. The household make up of the City is very similar to the other three units of government compared.

**Table 2  
Age Distribution  
City, Townships, County and State, 1990**

Age Range	City of Vassar		Tuscola Twp.		Vassar Twp.		Tuscola Co.		State	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Under 5	234	9.1	148	6.9	324	8.4	3,954	7.1		7.6
5-17	528	20.6	412	19.2	930	24.1	11,872	21.4		18.9
18-20	118	4.6	98	4.6	173	4.5	2,401	4.3		4.8
21-24	154	6.0	105	4.9	208	5.4	2,686	4.8		6.0
25-44	786	30.7	661	30.8	1,276	33.0	17,126	30.9		32.1
45-54	203	7.9	292	13.6	425	11.0	6,186	11.1		10.2
55-59	90	3.5	106	4.9	139	3.6	2,392	4.3		4.2
60-64	105	4.1	95	4.4	118	3.1	2,185	3.9		4.3
65+	341	13.3	227	10.6	273	7.1	6,696	12.1		11.9
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,559</b>	<b>99.8</b>	<b>2,144</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>3,866</b>	<b>100.2</b>	<b>55,498</b>	<b>99.9</b>		<b>100.0</b>
Median Age	31.3		34.9		29.5		33.0			32.6

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

**Table 3  
Racial Make Up  
City, Townships, County and State, 1990**

	City of Vassar		Tuscola Twp.		Vassar Twp.		Tuscola Co.		State	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
White	2,435	95.2	2,119	98.8	3,783	97.9	54,051	97.4	7,756,086	83.4
Black	107	4.2	4	0.2	7	0.2	478	0.9	1,291,706	13.9
Native	6	0.2	10	0.5	27	0.7	345	0.6	55,638	0.6
Asian	2	0.1	8	0.4	3	0.1	206	0.4	104,983	1.1
Other	9	0.4	3	0.1	46	1.2	418	0.8	86,884	0.9
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,559</b>	<b>100.1</b>	<b>2,144</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,866</b>	<b>100.1</b>	<b>55,498</b>	<b>100.1</b>	<b>9,295,297</b>	<b>99.9</b>

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

**Table 4**  
**Household Characteristics**  
**City, County, State and U.S., 1990**

Household Type	City of Vassar		Tuscola Co.		Michigan		United States	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Married Couple Families	554	57.7	12,787	65.7	1,883,143	55.1	50,708,322	56.1
Single Male Families	24	2.5	548	2.8	113,789	3.3	3,143,582	3.1
Single Female Families	126	13.1	1,796	9.2	442,239	12.9	10,666,043	11.6
Single Person Non-Families	226	23.5	3,728	19.1	809,449	23.7	22,580,420	24.6
Other Non-Families	30	3.1	610	3.1	170,711	5.0	4,849,043	4.6
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>19,469</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>3,419,331</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>91,947,410</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Data compiled by Wade-Trim  
Source: 1990 U.S. Census

### 3.4 Income and Poverty

Three measures of income (median household, median family and per capita) are illustrated in **Table 5** for the City, Townships, County, and State. The income of City residents is less than that of the other governmental units, and reflects the 1989 calendar year.

The table also illustrates poverty statistics comparing Vassar to the other units of government. The poverty threshold for the 1990 Census was set at \$12,674 for a family of four. At 16.7%, the poverty rate for all persons in Vassar is greater than that of Tuscola Township (5.1%), Vassar Township (11.7%), Tuscola County (10.8%), and the State (10.2%).

### 3.5 Education

Education is an important factor in analyzing the capabilities of the local work force and the economic vitality of the community. Educational attainment is tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau and indicates that 80.3% of Vassar residents (25 years of age or older) are high school graduates or higher, as compared to 72.6% in Tuscola Township, 67.3% for Vassar Township, 73.0% for Tuscola County and 76.8% for the State as a whole. City residents with a bachelor's degree or higher amount to 14.4% of the population, while Townships, County and State have 7.7%, 3.1%, 8.1% and 17.4% college graduates, respectively. These statistics are illustrated in **Table 6**.

**Table 5**  
**Income and Poverty**  
**City, Townships, County and State, 1989**

Place	Family Income	Household Income	Per Capita Income	% of Families Below Poverty Level
Vassar	26,250	21,974	10,400	16.7
Tuscola Twp.	37,992	35,144	13,172	5.1
Vassar Twp.	30,477	26,406	10,874	11.7
Tuscola Co.	31,781	27,374	11,543	10.8
State	36,652	31,020	14,154	10.2

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

**Table 6**  
**Educational Attainment**  
**City, Townships, County and State, 1990**

Place	High School Graduate Or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Vassar	80.3%	14.4%
Tuscola Twp.	72.6%	7.7%
Vassar Twp.	67.3%	3.1%
Tuscola Co.	73.0%	8.1%
State	76.8%	17.4%

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

### 3.6 Employment

Data in **Table 7** documents employment by major industry groups for residents of Vassar City, Tuscola Township, Vassar Township, and Tuscola County. Over one-quarter (26.6%) of the City residents were employed in the professional, health, education, and related services, followed by manufacturing (24.1%), and wholesale and retail trade (23.2%). As compared to the Townships and County, the City of Vassar employs the largest proportion of professional, health, education, and related services. Other figures are comparable.

**Table 8** documents employment by occupation. The largest occupation category in the City was operators, fabricators, and laborers (24.6%), followed by managerial and professional specialty (19.9%), and precision production, crafts, and repair (17.3%). Like the City, Tuscola Township (20.5%), Vassar Township (31.2%), and Tuscola County (25.0%), also, hold the number one occupational category for operators, fabricators, and laborers.

**Table 7  
Employment by Selected Industry  
Employed Persons 16 Years and Over  
City, Townships and County, 1990**

Industry	City of Vassar		Tuscola Twp.		Vassar Twp.		Tuscola County	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries	25	2.2	113	10.7	11	0.7	1,119	4.9
Mining	5	0.4	0	0.0	5	0.3	50	0.2
Construction	66	5.9	53	5.0	108	6.8	1,298	5.7
Manufacturing	271	24.1	292	27.6	543	34.3	6,426	28.4
Transportation, Utilities, Comm.	16	1.4	35	3.3	45	2.8	1,031	4.6
Wholesale & Retail Trade	261	23.2	249	23.5	408	25.8	4,758	21.0
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	31	2.8	26	2.5	29	1.8	908	4.0
Business & Repair Services	60	5.3	54	5.1	40	2.5	724	3.2
Personal, Entertainment, Recreation Services	64	5.7	45	4.3	90	5.7	873	3.9
Professional, Health, Education, Related Services	299	26.6	177	16.7	268	16.9	4,799	21.2
Public Administration	26	2.3	14	1.3	37	2.3	646	2.9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,124</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>1,058</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,584</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>22,632</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

**Table 8  
Employment by Selected Occupation  
Employed Persons 16 Years and Over  
City, Townships and County, 1990**

Occupation	City of Vassar		Tuscola Twp.		Vassar Twp.		Tuscola County	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Managerial & Professional Specialty	224	19.9	163	15.4	213	13.5	3,642	16.1
Technical & Administrative Support	110	9.8	158	14.9	165	10.4	3,266	14.4
Private Household Occupation	9	0.8	9	0.9	6	0.4	118	0.5
Sales Workers	110	9.8	104	9.8	172	10.9	2,088	9.2
Service Workers	185	16.5	118	11.2	294	18.6	3,520	15.6
Farming, Forestry, Fishing	15	1.3	107	10.1	15	1.0	990	4.4
Precision Production, Crafts, Repair	194	17.3	182	17.2	225	14.2	3,357	14.8
Operators, Fabricators, Laborers	277	24.6	217	20.5	494	31.2	5,651	25.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,124</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,058</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,584</b>	<b>100.2</b>	<b>22,632</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

### 3.7 State Equalized Value

State Equalized Value (SEV) provides an important overview of the community's wealth. By law the SEV, which constitutes a community's tax base, is equal to approximately one-half of the true market value of real property and certain taxable

personal properties. The City's 1998 SEV was \$37,354,313.00; the 1999 SEV is \$38,266,531.00. This figure does not include Industrial Facilities Taxes (IFT) for manufacturers and companies that qualify for tax abatements.

### 3.8 Recent Building Activity

Another way to analyze the economic health of a community is to evaluate building activity. The following is a general summary of Vassar building permits issued during the 1990s.

Approximately 242 total building permits were issued from 1992 through 1998. Over one-third (93 or 38.4%) of the permits were for new construction, including residential, commercial and industrial. The remainder of the permits was additions, expansions or improvements to existing structures.

### 3.9 Total Housing Stock

An evaluation of the housing stock and property values can be very beneficial in determining community housing needs. Data from the 1990 U.S. Census show a

total of 1,047 housing units in the City of Vassar: 769 single-family (73.5%), 244 multiple-family (23.3%), and 34 mobile homes (3.2%). Table 9 illustrates the types of housing units at the time of the 1990 Census, comparing the City to Tuscola Township, Vassar Township, and Tuscola County. The types of structures for all units of government are comparable.

### 3.10 Housing Tenure

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the national rate of home ownership has grown from 55.0% in 1950 to 64.2% in 1990. In 1990, Vassar's home ownership rate was 60.8% for occupied homes. The ratio of owner occupied to renter occupied is higher for Tuscola Township (84.5%), Vassar Township (82.3%), and Tuscola County (74.5%) (Table 10).

Table 9  
Type of Housing Units  
City, Townships and County, 1990

Unit Type	City of Vassar		Tuscola Twp.		Vassar Twp.		Tuscola Co.	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1 unit structures detached or attached	769	73.5	708	91.5	844	63.0	16,617	78.3
Units in 2-4 unit structures	150	14.3	23	3.0	28	2.1	917	4.3
Units in 5-9 unit structures	50	4.8	6	0.8	0	0.0	367	1.7
Units in 10 or more unit structures	44	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	247	1.2
Mobile home or trailer units	34	3.2	37	4.8	467	34.9	3,083	14.5
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,047</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>100.1</b>	<b>1,339</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>21,231</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

**Table 10**  
**Housing Occupancy Characteristics**  
**City, Townships and County, 1990**

Category	City of Vassar		Tuscola Twp.		Vassar Twp.		Tuscola Co.	
	#	% of Total Units	#	% of Total Units	#	% of Total Units	#	% of Total Units
<b>Occupied Housing</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>91.7</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>96.4</b>	<b>1,296</b>	<b>96.8</b>	<b>19,469</b>	<b>91.7</b>
Owner-Occupied	636	60.8	654	84.5	1,102	82.3	15,817	74.5
Renter-Occupied	324	31.0	92	11.9	194	14.5	3,652	17.2
<b>Vacant Units</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>1,762</b>	<b>8.3</b>
Vacant Seasonal	0	0.0	3	0.4	9	0.7	743	3.5
Vacant Other	87	8.3	25	3.2	34	2.5	1,019	4.8
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>1,047</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,339</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>21,231</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

### 3.11 Age of Structures

Generally, the economical useful age of residential structures is approximately 50 years. Beyond that age, repairs become expensive and the ability to modernize the structure to include amenities considered standard for today's life-styles is diminished. When a community's housing stock approaches that age, the need for housing rehabilitation, demolition and new construction will begin to increase.

**Table 11** compares residential structure age for the City, Townships, County and State. At the time of the 1990 Census, 37.2% of the City's housing stock had exceeded the 50 year age limit. Proportionally, the City has more older homes than Tuscola Township (26.0%), Vassar Township (7.8%), Tuscola County (28.0%), and the State of Michigan (20.8%).

**Table 11**  
**Age of Structures**  
**City, Townships and County, 1990**

Year Structure Built	City of Vassar	Tuscola Twp.	Vassar Twp.	Tuscola Co.	State
	%	%	%	%	%
1980 – March 1990	10.9	9.1	20.4	12.1	13.6
1979 – 1940	51.9	64.9	71.9	59.9	65.6
1939 or earlier	37.2	26.0	7.8	28.0	20.8
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Data compiled by Wade-Trim  
Source: 1990 U.S. Census

### 3.12 Housing Values and Rent

One comparative measure of the local housing stock is housing value. The median value of owner-occupied year-round housing units for Vassar in 1990 was \$40,900. This is substantially less than median housing value of \$53,200 for Tuscola Township, \$47,800 for Vassar Township, \$46,000 for Tuscola County and \$60,600 for the State, as indicated in Table 12.

Table 12 also illustrates comparative rental rates, showing that median rent for the City, Tuscola Township, Vassar Township, and Tuscola County are nearly identical.

**Table 12**  
**Distribution of Housing Values and Rent**  
**City, Townships, County and State, 1990**

Financial Characteristics	City of Vassar		Tuscola Twp.		Vassar Twp.		Tuscola Co.		State	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	%	#	%	
<b>VALUE: Specified Owner-Occupied Housing Units<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>570</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9,532</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,916,142</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Less than \$50,000	392	68.8	212	44.4	268	55.3	5,468	57.4	737,217	38.5
\$50,000 to \$99,999	164	28.7	243	50.8	215	44.3	3,809	40.0	814,496	42.5
\$100,000 to \$149,999	13	2.3	20	4.2	2	0.4	215	2.2	219,194	11.5
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1	0.2	2	0.4	0	0.0	32	0.3	79,313	4.1
\$200,000 or more	0	0.0	1	0.2	0	0.0	8	0.1	65,922	3.4
Median Value	\$40,900		\$53,200		\$47,800		\$46,000		\$60,600	
<b>CONTRACT RENT: Specified Renter-Occupied Housing Units<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>308</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>100.1</b>	<b>2,923</b>	<b>100.1</b>	<b>925,304</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Less than \$250	98	31.8	14	22.6	60	39.0	1,171	40.1	232,954	25.2
\$250 to \$499	209	67.9	47	75.8	92	59.8	1,721	58.9	536,905	58.0
\$500 to \$749	1	0.3	1	1.6	2	1.3	29	1.0	128,873	13.9
\$750 to \$999	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.1	17,827	1.9
\$1,000 or more	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	8,745	1.0
Median Rent	\$274		\$292		\$271		\$268		\$348	

<sup>a</sup> Specified housing units include only one-family houses on less than ten acres without a commercial establishment or medical office on the property.

<sup>b</sup> Contract rent is the monthly rent agreed to, or contracted for, regardless of any furnishing, utilities, or services that may be included.

Data compiled by Wade-Trim

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

## 4.0 Existing Land Use Analysis

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The rational application of the planning process for the Future Land Use Plan is possible only when there is a clear understanding of existing conditions and relationships between land uses. Knowledge of existing land development furnishes the basic information by which decisions can be made concerning proposals for future residential, commercial, industrial, and public land use activities. The Existing Land Use Map and Table, which are included in this section of the report, will serve as a ready reference for the City of Vassar in its consideration of land use management and public improvement proposals.

### 4.1 Survey Methodology

A computer-generated basemap for the City was first created using the digital information from the Tuscola County Assessor's Office and the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS). The map was further updated and checked for accuracy by the City Manager. The base map includes the City boundary line, streets with names, water bodies, railroads, and property lines.

A parcel-by-parcel field survey of the entire City was conducted by Wade-Trim in May 1999. Each land use was recorded on the base map according to a predetermined land use classification system. The information was later digitized and, thus, the Existing Land Use Map was created (Map 2). The map was reviewed with the Planning Commission and the City Manager for accuracy. Land use acreages were then derived directly from the digital information (Table 13).

### 4.2 Land Use Analysis

The City of Vassar encompasses a total area of 1,416 acres, or 2.2 square miles. Cass River splits the City into southeastern one-half and northwestern one-half. Vacant and residential land uses make up two-thirds (66.3%) of the City and are located throughout. A description of each land use classification follows:

#### Single-Family Residential

This category includes one family, detached dwelling units, and manufactured homes. The bulk of these residences exist southwest of the MDOT/Huron Eastern Railroad. As the second largest land use in the City, this category accounts for 317 acres, or 22.4% of the City's total area.

#### Multi-Family Residential

This category (15 acres or 1.0%) includes duplexes, townhouses, and apartments. Included among these are the Tall Oaks Manor, Walnut Grove and Popular Point apartment complexes located in the southwestern section of the City and the Ridgewalk duplex complex along the northern City line.

#### Agricultural

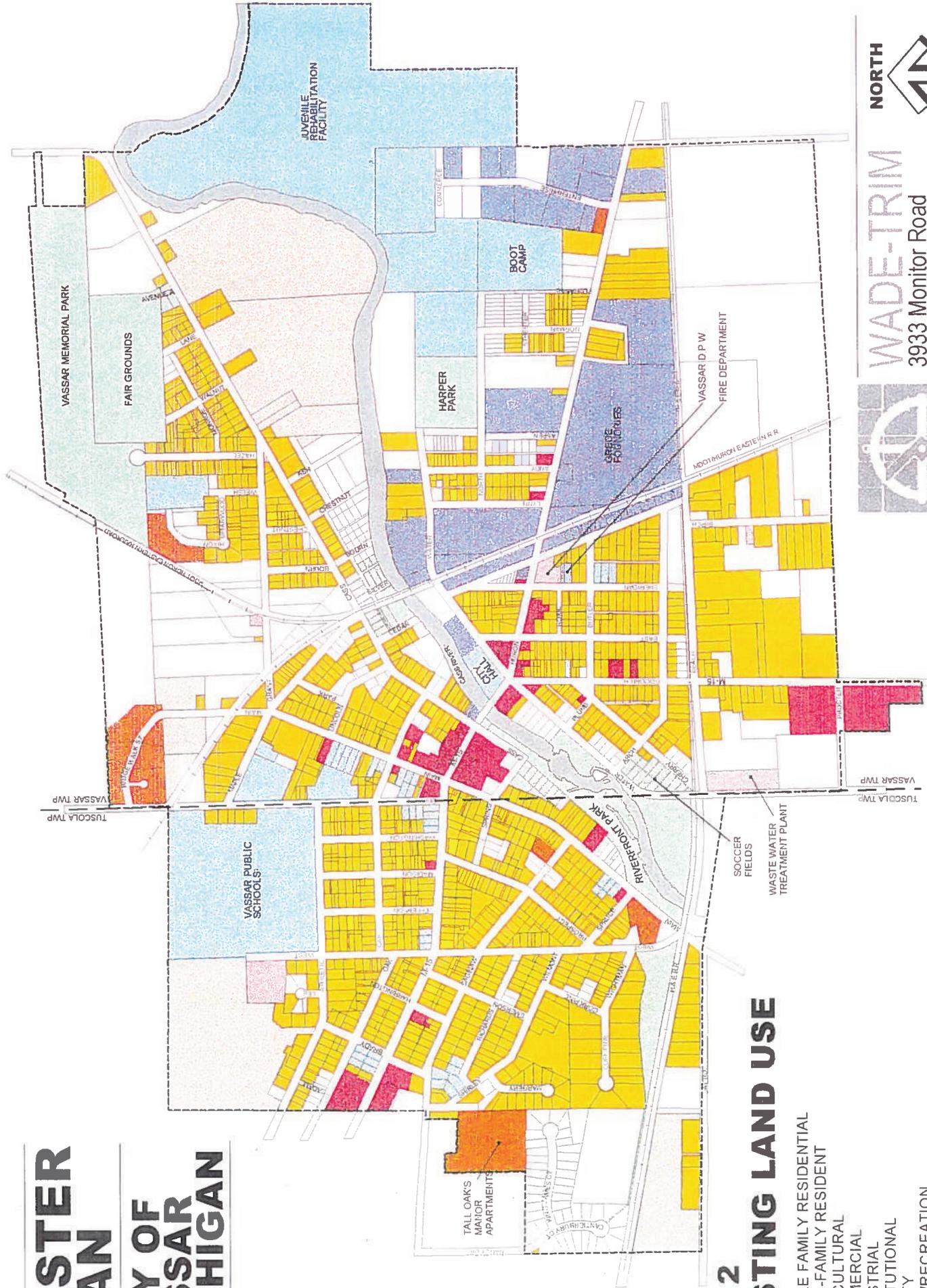
The fourth largest land use in Vassar is farmland at 131 acres or 9.2%. Most of the agricultural lands are located north of the river.

#### Commercial

Commercial land use (25 acres or 1.8%) includes retail sales and services, offices, and businesses other than industrial uses. Commercial establishments are located almost exclusively southwest of the MDOT/Huron Eastern Railroad and along M-15.

# MASTER PLAN

## CITY OF VASSAR MICHIGAN



**MAP 2**  
**EXISTING LAND USE**

- LEGEND**
- SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
  - MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENT
  - AGRICULTURAL
  - COMMERCIAL
  - INDUSTRIAL
  - INSTITUTIONAL
  - UTILITY
  - PARK/RECREATION
  - VACANT/R.O.W.
  - CLOSED ROAD

SOURCE: WADE-TRIM SURVEY MAY 1999



**WADE-TRIM**  
3933 Monitor Road  
Bay City, Michigan 48707  
517-686-3100

**NORTH**

01/26/01

**Table 13  
Existing Land Use Acreage  
City of Vassar  
2000**

Land Use Category	Acres	Percent of Total
Single-Family Residential	317	22.4
Multi-Family Residential	15	1.0
Agricultural	131	9.2
Commercial	25	1.8
Industrial	90	6.3
Institutional	86	6.1
Park/Recreation	141	10.0
Vacant/ROW	606	42.8
Utility	5	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,416</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: May 1999 Survey by Wade-Trim and Subsequent Amendments

Industrial

Industrial land uses (90 acres or 6.3%) can be found primarily southeast of the Cass River, along M-15 and MDOT/Huron Eastern Railroad.

Institutional

This category (86 acres or 6.1%) includes the largest institutional parcel juvenile rehabilitation facility, located at the eastern boundary, and elementary and high schools and numerous smaller properties used for governmental offices, schools, churches, fire stations, and related uses.

Utility

The waste water treatment plant, south of the CSX Railroad, accounts for the sole 5 acres or 0.4% of land devoted to the utility classification.

Park/Recreation

The majority of the Park/Recreation lands (141 acre or 10.0%) exist at the northern and eastern City limits and are scattered along the Cass River. Included among these are the annexed parkland, Memorial Park, Riverfront Park, Lion's Park, and various other small parklands.

Vacant/ROW

Almost one-half (606 acres or 42.8%) of the City is classified as vacant land, or land for which no specific use is evident. Most of the land in this category is vacant due to natural or environmental constraints, such as woodland, wetland, and water bodies. Street and railroad rights-of-way are also included in this category.

## 5.0 Natural Resources Assessment

---

The natural environment plays a major role in land development. The natural environment can significantly impact development such as a steep slope prohibiting the building of any structure. Conversely, the natural environment can be effected by land development. An example would be the increased erosion potential caused by clearing vegetation. Thus, when preparing a Future Land Use Plan, it is important to examine the natural environment in order to determine where development is best suited, and where it should be discouraged.

In any environmentally sensitive area within a community, development should be prevented. Environmentally sensitive areas are lands whose destruction or disturbance will effect the life of a community by either:

1. Creating hazards such as flooding or slope erosion.
2. Destroying important public resources such as groundwater supplies and surface water bodies.
3. Wasting productive lands and non-renewable resources such as prime farmland.

Each of these effects is detrimental to the general welfare of a community, resulting in social and economic losses.

The purpose of this section is twofold. First, the goal is to identify areas in the City that are most suited for development. The focus is on areas that will minimize development costs and provide amenities without adversely impacting the existing natural systems. The second goal is to identify land that should be conserved in its natural state and is most suitable for open space or recreation purposes.

Topography, woodlands, soil, water resources, and geology are among the most important natural features impacting land

use in the City of Vassar. Descriptions of these features follow.

### 5.1 Topography

The topography of Vassar, unlike most of Mid-Michigan, is quite hilly. With the combination of the natural valley created by the Cass River and steep slopes, the topography lends itself to frequent flooding. The elevation at the western City limits is 700 feet above sea level, but falls sharply to 650 feet just before the downtown area. The elevation then continues to drop to 620 feet above sea level at the northeastern bank of the Cass River. The southeastern section of the City is gradually sloped towards the river with elevations dropping from 650 feet above sea level to 640 feet. However, there is a steeper drop in elevation from 640 feet above sea level to 620 feet along the southeastern bank of the Cass River. The frequent flooding within this natural valley along the Cass River poses major limitations to development.

### 5.2 Woodlands

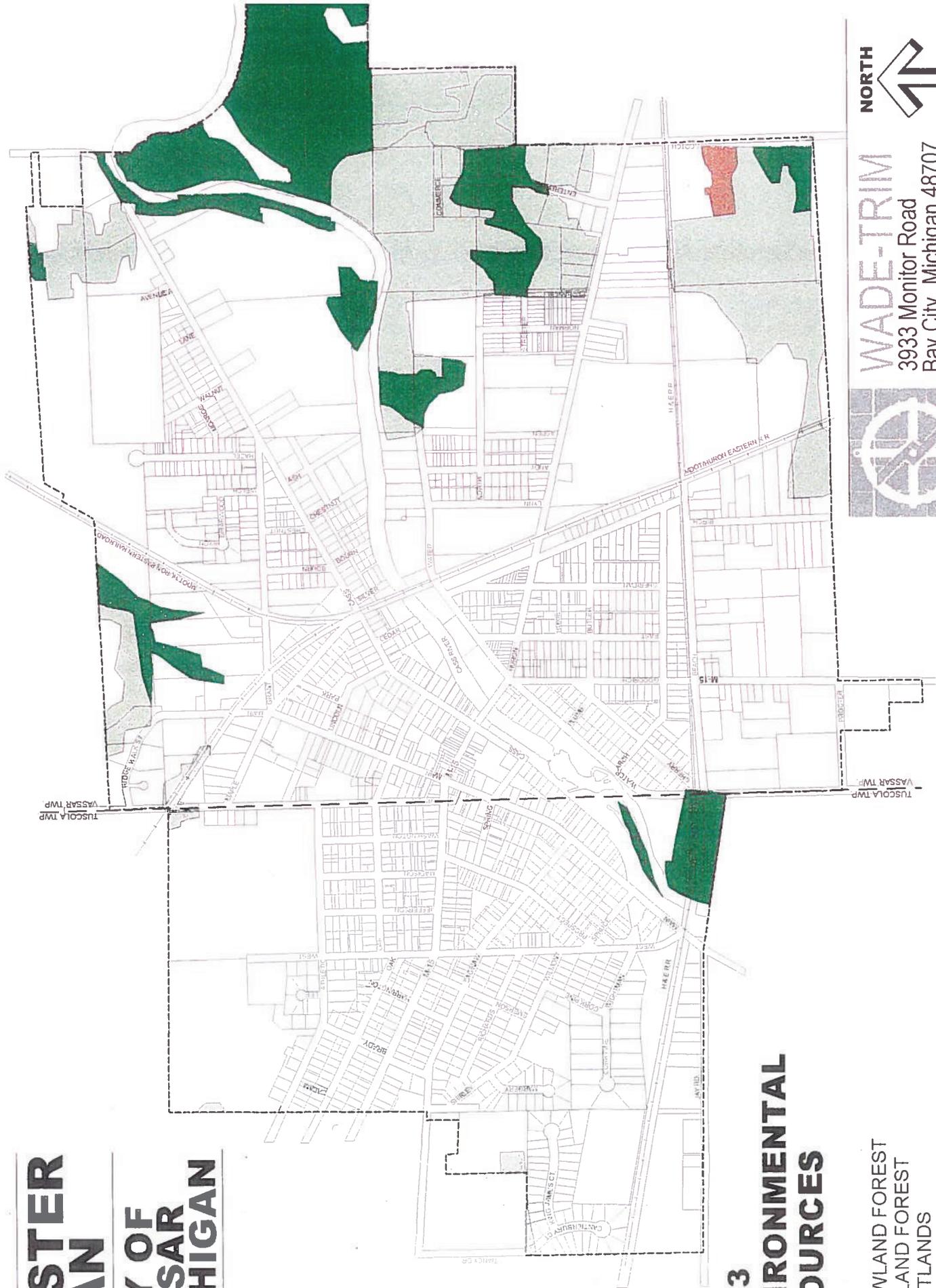
Woodlands information for Vassar is derived from the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS) land cover/use data provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. **Map 3** depicts the location of woodlands.

Over eighteen percent of the City is covered by woodlands, with slightly more land devoted to upland forest (150 acres or 10.6%) than lowland forest (106 acres or 7.5%).

Upland forests include mostly central hardwood (oak) trees. Tree species in the oak forest include red oak, white oak, sugar maple, red maple, black cherry, beech, basswood, and ash.

Tree species in the lowland forest include red maple, silver maple, green ash, aspen, cottonwood, elm, and basswood.

# MASTER PLAN CITY OF VASSAR MICHIGAN



**MAP 3  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
RESOURCES**

- LEGEND**
-  LOWLAND FOREST
  -  UPLAND FOREST
  -  WETLANDS

SOURCE: WADE-TRIM SURVEY MAY 1999



**WADE-TRIM**  
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Bay City, Michigan 48707  
517-686-3100



01/26/01

Woodlands are complex ecological systems and, consequently, provide multiple benefits to the environment and its wildlife and human inhabitants. Woodlands play a role in flood protection by slowing the flow of surface runoff to allow for greater water filtration. Woodlands also reduce air pollutants through absorption. In addition to providing wildlife habitat, forest vegetation moderates the effects of wind and temperature, while stabilizing and enriching the soil.

For human inhabitants, forested areas offer scenic contrasts within the landscape and with the changing of seasons. Forest lands act as buffers from noise on heavily traveled roads.

The primary uses of woodlands are recreation such as hiking and nature enjoyment. Woodland resources contribute greatly to the City's environmental quality. The conservation of woodlands plays a positive role in maintaining and enhancing the future environmental character of the City.

### 5.3 Soil Conditions

Soil characteristics help define the land's capacity to support certain types of land uses. Soils most suitable for development purposes are well-drained and are not subject to a high water table. Adequate drainage is important for minimizing stormwater impacts and the efficient operation of septic drain fields. Adequate depth to the water table is necessary to prevent groundwater contamination from septic systems. A high water table also limits the construction of basements. Though civil engineering techniques can be employed to improve drainage and maintain adequate separation from the water table, such techniques are expensive to construct and maintain.

**Map 4** shows the classification of soils according to their potential for urban development. The information was obtained from the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Survey Book. Development

criteria include bearing capacity, volume change, compressibility, shear strength and depth to water table of the soil type. Soils in areas with good potential tend to have good to fair bearing capacity, low volume change, and very low compressibility. These soils are classified as non-hydric soils and cover nearly 75% of the City.

Soils in areas with poor potential are hydric soils, with high water table and are generally located within the floodplain. Areas that have soils with fair to poor potential have a wide range of limiting conditions such as seasonal high water table, fair to poor bearing capacity, medium compressibility and shear strength.

As can be seen in **Map 4**, poor soils are located within the floodplain, good soils fall in the western one-half of the City, while more hydric (wet) soils cover the eastern one-half of the City.

### 5.4 Geology

The geology of Vassar, as well as the entire Lower Peninsula of Michigan, is described in terms of surface geology or quaternary geology (materials deposited by continental glaciers) and bedrock geology (sedimentary rocks underlying the glacial deposits).

The quaternary geology of the City developed 10,000 to 12,000 years ago through continental glacial activity. As the glaciers melted and retreated from the landscape, large amounts of sand, gravel, clay, and loam were deposited. Massive glacial lakes formed at the front of the retreating glaciers. Tuscola County was among those submerged in glacial water.

The melting glacial water was laden with fine soil particles, which eventually settled to the bottom, creating clay and loam soils. The glacial melt water streams also deposited fine sands into the shallow glacial lakes. The sand channels are several miles wide in places, but the sand in them is generally only five to ten feet thick.

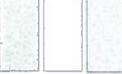
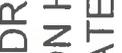
The sand deposits were further altered by wave action from these glacial "Great Lakes," creating small sand dunes and low beaches across the landscape as the water levels declined and the lakes retreated to their current area of coverage. These low sandy ridges can be found in the countryside surrounding the City of Vassar.

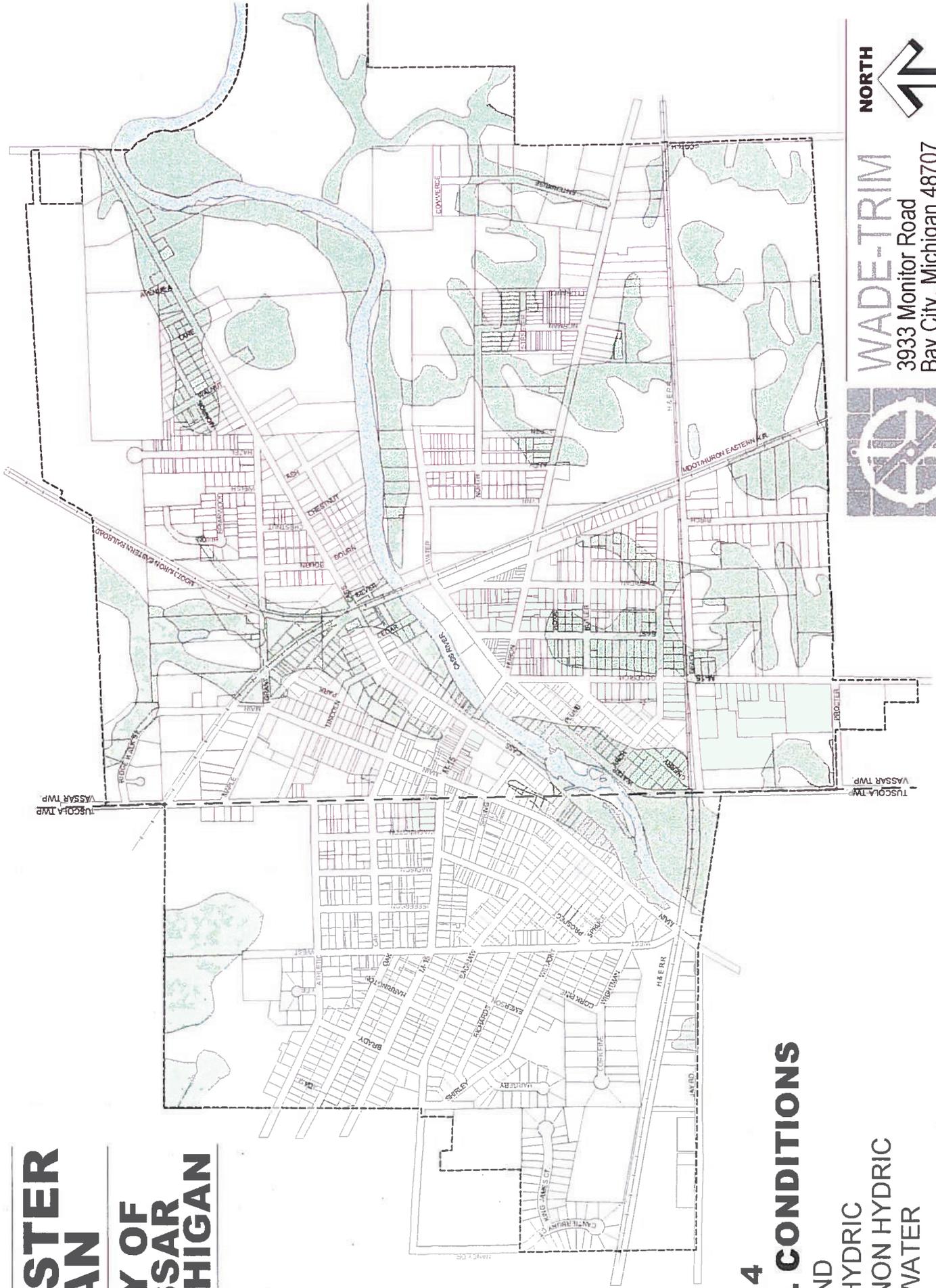
The sub-surface geology of Vassar is sedimentary bedrock that was laid down during the Pennsylvanian ages of the Paleozoic Era. Bedrock is covered by glacial deposits and, generally, depending upon the thickness of the glacial deposits, are located at depths from 40 to 300 feet below the surface. The bedrock was formed from ancient seas, which covered the area some 250 to 600 million years ago. The shallow marine seas deposited layers of silt, clay, sediments, marine animals, plants, coral, and other calcareous materials. These deposits formed sandstone, shale, coal, and limestone bedrock.

# MASTER PLAN CITY OF VASSAR MICHIGAN

## MAP 4 SOIL CONDITIONS

### LEGEND

-  HYDRIC
-  NON HYDRIC
-  WATER



**WADE-TRIM**  
3933 Monitor Road  
Bay City, Michigan 48707  
517-686-3100

**NORTH**

900 0 900 Feet

900

## 6.0 Community Goals and Objectives

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### 6.1 Introduction

Before a community can actively Plan for its future growth and development, it must first develop a set of goals and objectives that define the boundaries of its needs and aspirations. The goals and objectives must reflect the type of community desired and the kind of lifestyle its citizens wish to follow, given realistic economic and social constraints.

The goals and objectives for the City of Vassar are based upon input from three different sources: local citizenry, the City of Vassar Planning Commission, and the social, economic, and natural resource information gathered in earlier chapters of this Plan. These community goals and objectives will serve as the foundation for the Future Land Use Plan.

### 6.2 Community-Wide Goals

1. To create an optimum human environment for the present and future residents of the City of Vassar, an environment that will meet their physical, social, and economic needs, while preserving the friendly character of the community.
2. Work with property owners and governmental agencies to enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the community.
3. To relate land use primarily to the long-term needs and quality of life of the community.
4. To alleviate the flooding problem in the City.
5. To encourage intergovernmental cooperation with other surrounding communities in the coordination and provision of the area-wide facilities.

### 6.3 Residential Goal and Objectives

#### Goal

To promote the enhancement of residential areas with attractive and affordable housing choices.

#### Objectives

1. Maintain and rehabilitate historical homes in the community to preserve and enhance the City's unique character.
2. Protect the identity and stability of residential neighborhoods.
3. Encourage appropriate land use in residential areas through long-term planning and local ordinance adoption.
4. Remove unsanitary or unsafe housing through code enforcement or other means.
5. Remove blight through code enforcement or other means.
6. Promote the improvement and beautification of neighborhoods.

### 6.4 Commercial Goal and Objectives

#### Goal

To provide for a wide range of commercial facilities to serve the needs of the local population and visitors.

#### Objectives

1. Redevelop, expand, beautify, and promote the central business district around a unique theme to promote commerce in the community.

2. Encourage the development of commercial establishments to serve the unique needs of the community.
3. Establish a compatible relationship between commercial and adjacent residential uses through long-term planning and local ordinance adoption.
4. Encourage mixed use development where appropriate.
5. Eliminate spot zoning where appropriate.
6. Identify historic buildings and promote their restoration and/or preservation.

### **6.5 Industrial Goal and Objectives**

#### Goal

To encourage a variety of industrial developments with attractive sites to strengthen the tax base and provide employment opportunities for area residents.

#### Objectives

1. Help strengthen the existing industrial developments through promotion, site improvements, and infrastructure improvements.
2. Encourage the development of new industries that are economically associated with the existing industrial base in the region.
3. Locate industrial areas within reasonable boundaries that are easily accessible from existing transportation networks and that are not subject to encroachment by incompatible uses.

### **6.6 Transportation Goal and Objectives**

#### Goal

To develop and maintain a network of streets that meets the needs of all City residents and businesses in a safe and convenient manner.

#### Objectives

1. Utilize federal/state road and highway classification system for classifying existing and future streets in the City of Vassar.
2. Cooperate with the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Tuscola County Road Commission, and surrounding communities in the planning and design of street improvements.
3. Limit points of ingress/egress on major streets.
4. Segregate truck and automobile traffic as much as possible.
5. Seek and evaluate traffic calming devices to improve the flow of traffic.
6. Develop and implement a plan for improvements of local and major streets through a public participation process.
7. Develop a plan to provide additional vehicular access across the Cass River to alleviate dependency on the City's sole bridge (on M-15) across the Cass River.
8. Develop a bike/hiking trail network to connect all parts of the City to encourage non-motorized transportation.

## 6.7 Park and Recreation Goal and Objectives

### Goal

To preserve the natural resources of the City of Vassar and provide for the recreational needs of all residents.

### Objectives

1. Encourage public participation and utilize professional expertise to determine needed and desired recreation facilities.
2. Cooperate with intergovernmental, not for profit and community groups in the development of regional trails and other recreational facilities.
3. Locate desirable sites to meet the future recreational needs of the residents.

## 6.8 Natural Environment Goal and Objectives

### Goal

To preserve and enhance the natural and environmental resources of the City for all present and future City residents.

### Objectives

1. Implement land use patterns, which will direct new growth away from environmentally sensitive areas, such as woodlands, wetlands, steep slopes, and areas subject to flooding.
2. Implement development controls, which will maximize the protection of land-based natural resources while preserving the quality of air and water.

## 6.9 Infrastructure Goal and Objectives

### Goal

To improve and enhance the infrastructure of the City for all present and future City residents.

### Objectives

1. Cooperate with the surrounding communities in meeting infrastructure needs of the community.
2. Use underground utilities where appropriate.

## 7.0 Future Land Use Plan

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### 7.1 Introduction

Acting as a guide for future development in the community, the Future Land Use Plan is one of the most important aspects of the Master Plan. A Master Plan can prescribe all kinds of development policies in order to improve the quality of life of a community, but without a Future Land Use Plan, none of these recommendations will be put into action. Because it is based on the background studies and analysis and the community goals and objectives, the Future Land Use Plan is sure to prescribe the development scenarios which will benefit the City of Vassar most.

### 7.2 Characteristics of the Plan

If a Future Land Use Plan is to serve the needs of the community and function effectively, it must incorporate several important characteristics.

1. The Plan must be general.

The Future Land Use Plan is not meant to be specific, recommending land uses property by property. It only provides land use recommendations for generalized locations in the community. This is one of the strengths of the Future Land Use Plan, allowing for the community to determine exact locations and boundaries for the proper land use classifications.

2. The Plan should embrace an extended but foreseeable time period.

Predicting the future is very complicated, especially given our rapidly changing society. Therefore, it is wisest to limit the Future Land Use Plan to a reasonable time period. This Plan depicts land uses and community development strategies through the year 2015.

3. The Plan should be comprehensive.

The Plan should cover the entire City geographically, not merely one or more of its sections. It should also encompass the different aspects of the City that play a vital role in development such as transportation, housing, current land use, utility systems, and recreation. Moreover, the Plan should consider the interrelationships of these aspects.

4. The Plan should be a living document, updated periodically.

The Plan may require periodic revisions to reflect significant changes in local, state, or national conditions, which cannot be foreseen at this time. For example, within the past 30 years, several major innovations in land development have occurred. Included among these are the expansion of the freeway system; modifications in shopping facilities; relocation of employment centers from the cities to the suburbs; changes in housing preferences from the traditional single-family home to apartments, townhouses, condominiums; and declining family size.

It is, of course, impossible to predict the type of changes that may occur over the next decade or two. Therefore, a comprehensive review of the Future Land Use Plan should be undertaken approximately every five years to provide for an adequate analysis of new conditions and trends.

Should major rezonings, which are in conflict with the Plan recommendations be accomplished, the Plan should be reviewed and amended accordingly.

### 7.3 Factors Affecting Future Land Use

In the process of creating a Future Land Use Plan, many factors that affect future land use must be examined. These factors are discussed below.

#### 1. Existing Land Use

The existing land use of a community certainly plays a major role in the consideration of future land uses.

#### 2. Market Conditions

Growth and development is not something that just happens to a community, it is influenced by market conditions. A Future Land Use Plan must take this into account when determining the best Plan for development in a community. For this reason, a Future Land Use Plan should not expect more development than the market allows. If the market is favorable for development, the Future Land Use Plan will act proactively by prescribing what type of growth should occur, and where.

#### 3. Regional Forces

Vassar does not exist independently, without feeling the effects of outside forces. Therefore, Vassar must be examined in its regional context. Events that occur in Mid-Michigan, Tuscola County, and surrounding municipalities will impact the future growth of the City.

#### 4. Public Utilities

Sanitary sewer and public water supply systems are important not only from a public health and safety standpoint, but are necessary to accommodate high intensity development. Access to public utilities and potential expansion of utility services should be taken into consideration when determining future land use in the City.

### 5. Changing Lifestyles

The increased utilization of new technology and communication improvements has effected our lifestyles. Through the help of these technologies, new growth patterns may be emerging. The widespread use of computers and the internet allows for some citizens to work at home, instead of commuting to work. With the increasing use of the internet to fulfill shopping and other daily needs, some people are finding that the need to be located next to shopping centers, for example, is not as important. It is now becoming possible for some people to live well outside the City, while still having access to the conveniences of the City. Certainly, we need to be aware of this new trend when examining the future land use of a community.

### 7.4 Plan Recommendations

Nine land use classifications are proposed for the City of Vassar. The various future land uses are portrayed on **Map 5** and in **Table 14**. A description of each land use is presented below.

#### 1. Single-Family Residential

Single-family residential, 477 acres, or 33.7% of the City, is intended as the main residential district in the City. This district includes predominantly single-family homes spread throughout the City. Most existing homes and potential areas for new single-family subdivisions are included in this district.

#### 2. Multi-Family Residential

This district, 31 acres, or 2.2%, includes all of the present multi-family structures in the City, as well as potential sites in strategic locations for new multi-family developments. Multi-Family developments include duplexes, townhouses, apartments, and group homes.

3. Commercial

Commercial district, 70 acres, or 4.9%, includes all of the existing commercial uses outside the designated central business district, and a new area for future commercial development at the southern edge of the city along M-15.

4. Commercial Business District

The City of Vassar has a large concentration of businesses along M-15, on both sides of the Cass River. This is Vassar's downtown, comprised of numerous commercial establishments that have been a part of the city's history for many years. In order to strengthen this area as a retail center for the community residents and to promote tourism in the City, the plan recommends the establishment of a well-defined central business district. The 23-acre district should be developed around a theme unique to Vassar and promoted as a regional destination for shopping, services, and recreation.

A detailed development plan for the district should be developed to capitalize on the district's historic character and location on the Cass River. The plan should encourage, among others, compatible mixed uses, amenities for bike and pedestrian traffic, and unique design controls for redevelopment of existing and development of new buildings. A beautification plan for the district should also be prepared, which may include planting trees and flower beds, creating a unique image with street furniture, such as light poles, banners, benches, street signs, waste receptacles, open spaces, and information booths.

5. Industrial

Virtually all of the existing industry is located in the southeast quadrant of the City, including an industrial park along Enterprise Street. Some of the industrial sites are intermixed with residential and

other uses. Several vacant lots also characterize the industrial area in this part of the City. In order to strengthen the local tax base and provide employment opportunities for area residents, the plan recommends more than doubling of the industrial use from the existing 90 acres to 211 acres.

All of the expanded industrial use is proposed in the southeast quadrant of the city. This would allow for an orderly expansion of existing industrial sites, while protecting the rest of the City from the potential negative influences from industries.

6. Institutional

Institutional district, 185 acres, or 13.1%, includes all existing schools, churches, governmental offices, fire stations, and other public uses outside the central business district. Juvenile Rehabilitation Facility, located at the eastern edge of the City, is the largest institutional use.

7. Utility

Utility district, 11 acres, or 0.8%, includes all utility uses in the City, including the wastewater treatment plant and other Department of Public Works facilities.

8. Recreation

Recreation district, 67 acres, or 4.7%, includes existing recreational facilities in the City, outside of the central business district, such as the fairgrounds, the Harper Park, and the Riverfront Park.

## 9. Future Growth Area

The aforementioned future land use districts are expected to provide more than enough land for the future growth of the City during the planning period. Therefore, in order to encourage compact and orderly growth, the plan has designated 98 acres, or 6.9%, as future growth area. The City should discourage any new development in this area until the currently designated areas are developed.

The Cass River and the street and railroad right-of-ways account for the remaining 243 acres, or 17.2% of the City.

The plan has classified all streets in the City as major thoroughfares or local roads. The major thoroughfares in Vassar are:

- Cass Street
- Division Street
- Goodrich Street (M-15)
- Huron Avenue (M-15)
- Main Street portion south of M-15

The plan also recommends the following:

### City Entryway

The City of Vassar is located in close proximity to the population centers of Bay City, Flint and Saginaw, and along a major regional thoroughfare, M-15. In order to establish a positive identity for people driving into or passing through the City, a series of two City entryways in strategic locations are proposed in the plan. The two locations are:

1. Huron Avenue (M-15) at the City's western boundary.
2. Goodrich Street (M-15) at the City's southern boundary.

An entryway is not intended to be a particular land use classification. It is meant to serve as an area where the City would encourage attractive developments, alleviate blight, if it exists, and install special

identity features such as signs, banners, lighting and landscaping. Most of these features can be installed on the street right-of-way, or on private property easements. The City will be required to receive permission from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to make any improvements along the state highway.

### Bike Trail Network

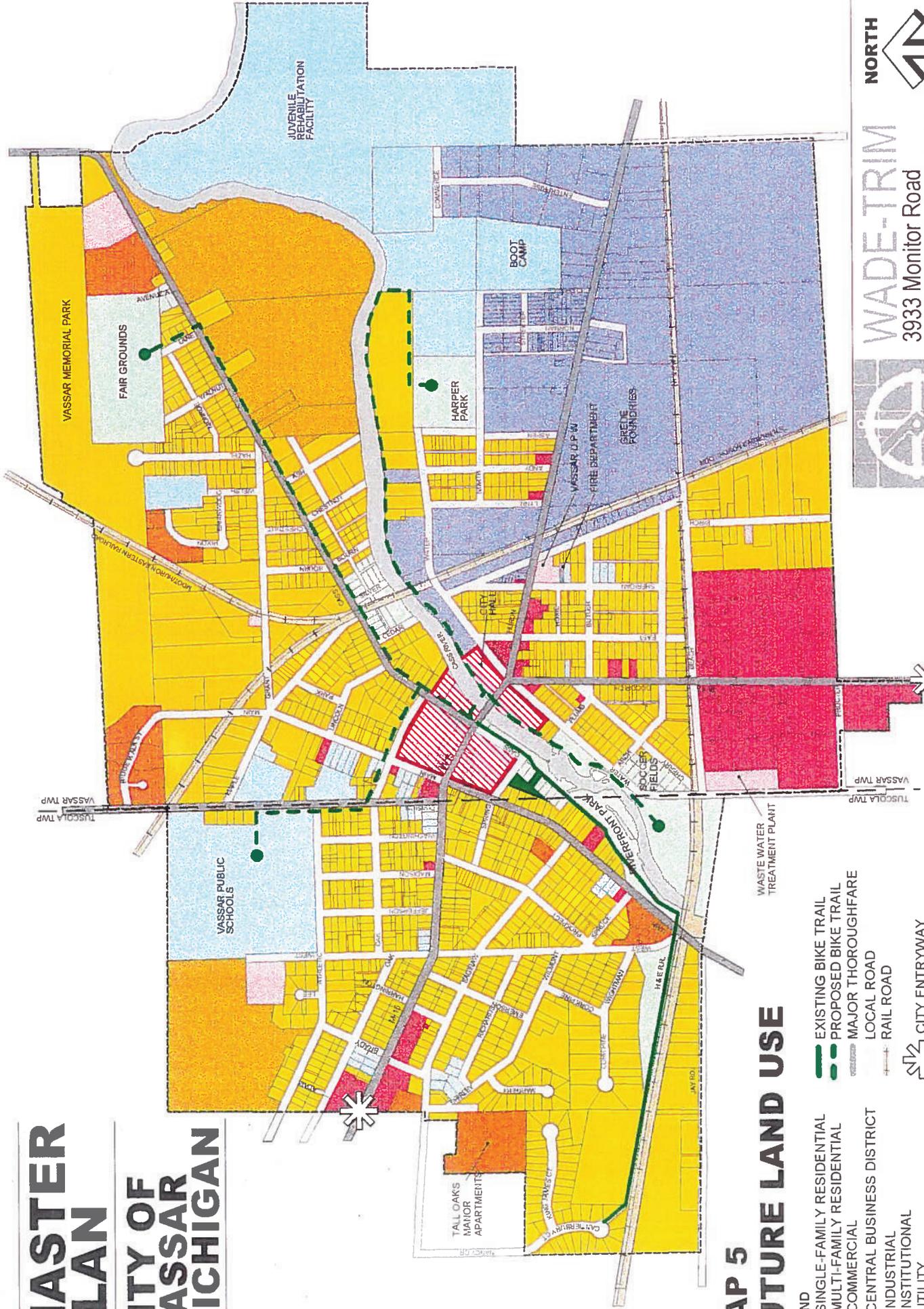
Vassar currently has a bike trail that runs along the Cass River and the H & E Railroad between and the central business district and Canterbury Court. The plan recommends an expansion of this trail into a citywide network. The bike trail network is proposed to connect all major recreational and educational facilities in the City, including the Fairgrounds, Harper Park, Riverfront Park, and the Vassar Public Schools.

**Table 14  
Future Land Use Acreage  
City of Vassar**

<b>Land Use Category</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Single-Family Residential	477	33.7
Multi-Family Residential	31	2.2
Commercial	70	4.9
Central Business District	23	1.6
Industrial	211	14.9
Institutional	185	13.1
Utility	11	0.8
Recreation	67	4.7
Future Growth	98	6.9
Vacant/Right-of-Way/River	243	17.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,416</b>	<b>100.0</b>

# MASTER PLAN

## CITY OF VASSAR MICHIGAN



### MAP 5 FUTURE LAND USE

- LEGEND**
- SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
  - MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
  - COMMERCIAL
  - CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
  - INDUSTRIAL
  - UTILITY
  - RECREATION
  - FUTURE GROWTH AREA
  - EXISTING BIKE TRAIL
  - PROPOSED BIKE TRAIL
  - MAJOR THOROUGHFARE
  - LOCAL ROAD
  - RAIL ROAD
  - CITY ENTRYWAY



**WADE-TRIM**  
 3933 Monitor Road  
 Bay City, Michigan 48707  
 517-686-3100



01/26/01

## 8.0 Plan Implementation Resources

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The City of Vassar's Master Plan is a long-range community policy statement comprised of a variety of both graphic and narrative recommendations intended to provide guidelines for making reasonable and realistic community development decisions. The Plan is intended to be employed by City officials, by those making private sector investments, and by all citizens interested in the future development of the City.

The completion of the Plan is but one part of the community planning process. Realization, or implementation of the goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Master Plan, can only be achieved over an extended period of time and only through the cooperative efforts of both the public and private sectors. There are a number of suggestions we introduce that are vitally important for the effective implementation of the Master Plan. Descriptions of these suggestions follow.

### 8.1 Knowledgeable Local Officials

Ultimately, the responsibility for implementing the Master Plan falls into the hands of the local officials of the City of Vassar. This is why it is very important that the City Council, Planning Commission, and the various municipal departments be knowledgeable and focused on achieving the implementation of the Master Plan. The local officials have to be the catalysts for action, leading the community in the right direction.

### 8.2 Promote Public Support

It is critical that the citizens of Vassar acknowledge, understand, support, and approve of the Master Plan. In order to organize public support most effectively, the City of Vassar must emphasize the necessity of instituting the Planning Program and encourage citizen participation in the planning process.

Lack of citizen understanding and support could have serious implications for the eventual implementation of planning proposals. Failure of the public to support needed bond issues and continuing dissatisfaction concerning taxation, special assessments, zoning decisions, and development proposals are some of the results of public misunderstanding and rejection of long-range plans.

### 8.3 Land Development Codes

#### 8.3.1 Zoning Ordinance

Zoning Ordinances are essential in implementing the goals and objectives of the Master Plan. The authority to create a Zoning Ordinance is given to a community by the State for the purpose of promoting community health, safety, and general welfare. Zoning regulations have been strongly supported by the Michigan courts, as well as by the United States Supreme Court.

The intent of zoning is to assure the orderly development of the community. Zoning does this by dividing the community into districts in order to establish a density of population, and regulate the use of land and buildings. Zoning also promotes the general welfare of a community by protecting homes and investments against the potential harmful intrusion of business and industry into residential neighborhoods, requiring the spacing of buildings far enough apart to assure adequate light and air, preventing the overcrowding of land, facilitating the economical provision of essential public facilities, and aiding in the conservation of essential natural resources. This, in turn, helps to protect the property values of the community. Because of the importance of zoning, and the great impact which zoning can have on the use of land and related services, it should be based on a comprehensive long-range community Plan.

There are a variety of zoning approaches and techniques, which may be employed to help assure that Vassar remains an attractive community. These techniques acknowledge the critical role of both City officials and staff in enforcing the provisions of the local Zoning Ordinance. Two key tools available to City officials seeking to assure quality development are special approval use procedures, and performance guarantee provisions.

Some land uses are of such a nature that permission to locate them in a given district should not be granted outright, but should only be approved after assurances that the use will meet certain specified conditions. These types of land uses are called special approval, conditional, or special exception uses. The City may use this flexible zoning process to permit uses of land by following special procedures, including a public hearing and site plan review, to ensure the compatibility of the use within the vicinity in which it is to be located. This technique is based upon discretionary review and approval of special land uses. The site development requirements and standards upon which these decisions are made must be specified in the Ordinance. However, additional reasonable conditions may be attached in conjunction with the approval of a special land use including provisions to conserve natural resources and measures designed to promote the use of land in an environmentally, socially, and economically desirable manner.

To ensure compliance with a Zoning Ordinance and any conditions imposed under the ordinance, a community may require that a performance guarantee, cash deposit, certified check, irrevocable bank letter of credit, or surety bond be deposited with the Clerk in order to cover the estimated cost of improvements on a parcel for which site plan approval is sought. This performance guarantee protects the City by assuring the faithful completion of the improvements. The community must establish procedures under which rebate of cash deposits will be made, in reasonable proportion to the ration of work completed

on the required improvements, as work progresses.

A stable, knowledgeable Planning Commission is critical to the success of the zoning process. The Commission's responsibilities include long-range Plan formulation and the drafting of appropriate, reasonable Zoning Ordinance regulations designed to implement Plan goals and objectives. Adoption of the Zoning Ordinance by the legislative body then provides the legal basis for enforcement of Zoning Ordinance provisions.

### 8.3.2 Subdivision Regulations

When a developer proposes to subdivide land, he or she is in effect, planning a portion of the City. To assure that such a development is in harmony with Master Plan objectives, a subdivision regulation ordinance may be created in accordance with the Michigan Subdivision Control Act 288 of 1967, as amended, and the Michigan Land Division Act 591 of 1996.

Several direct benefits accrue from the regulation of subdivisions by a local unit of government. By requiring the subdivider to install adequate utilities and improved streets, purchasers of the lots are not later burdened with unexpected expenses. A subdivision without adequate physical improvements is detrimental not only to itself, but it also reduces the opportunity for reasonable development of adjacent parcels. In addition, long-range economy in government can be realized only when the subdivider provides adequate improvements.

As a part of its review of proposed subdivisions, the Planning Commission focuses on such features as the arrangement and width of streets, the grading and surfacing of streets; the width and depth of lots; the adequate provision of open space; and the location of easements for utility installations. The subdivision review process is one of the methods of implementing the goals and objectives of the community's long-range Plan.

### 8.3.3 Code Enforcement

The ultimate effectiveness of the zoning code depends on the administration and enforcement of the code by City officials. If administrative procedures are lax, or if enforcement of regulations is handled in an inconsistent, sporadic manner, the result will be unsatisfactory at best.

The building department is often responsible for carrying out zoning/development related functions, including building inspections, ordinance administration, and community/developer liaison. Each of these functions requires a substantial investment of staff time. If sufficient time is not made available to carry out these critical functions, they may only be accomplished in a cursory manner. Therefore, the City should provide for adequate staff levels and/or consulting assistance to assure that these essential day-to-day functions will receive the professional attention required assuring quality development through conformity with the zoning codes.

### 8.4 Capital Improvements Program

The term "capital improvements" is generally intended to embrace large-scale projects of a fixed nature, the implementation of which results in new or expanded public facilities and services. Such items as public building construction, park development, sewer installation, waterworks improvements, street construction, land acquisition, and the acquisition of certain large-scale pieces of equipment (graders, sweepers, trucks, etc.) are included in the Capital Improvements Budget.

Few communities are fortunate enough to have sufficient revenues available at any given time to satisfy all demands for new or improved public facilities and services. Consequently, most are faced with the necessity of determining the relative priority of specific projects and establishing a program schedule for their initiation and completion. The orderly programming of

public improvements is to be accomplished in conjunction with a long-range plan.

In essence, the Capital Improvements Program is simply 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. The Capital Improvements Program is a major planning tool for assuring that they proceed to completion in an efficient manner. The Capital Improvements Program is not intended to encourage the spending of additional public monies, but is simply a means by which an impartial evaluation of needs may be made. The program is a schedule established to expedite the implementation of authorized or contemplated projects.

Long-range programming of public improvements is based upon three fundamental considerations. First, the proposed projects must be selected on the basis of community need. Second, the program must be developed within the community's financial constraints and must be based upon a sound financial Plan. Finally, program flexibility must be maintained through the annual review and approval of the capital budget. The strict observance of these conditions requires periodic analysis of various community development factors, as well as a thorough and continuing evaluation of all proposed improvements and related expenditures.

It is essential that in the process of preparing and developing the program, the Planning Commission be assigned a role in reviewing project proposals to assure conformity with the Master Plan and to make recommendations regarding prioritizing projects, and appropriate methods of financing.

## **8.5 Promote Co-Development**

Implementing the goals and objectives of the Master Plan requires that the private and public sector work together on development projects. Co-development is simply the joint public and private investment for a common purpose. Working in a partnership allows for the City of Vassar to become involved in such things as site location selection, planning, site design, utilities and other service agreements, and tax incentives and abatements. These partnerships help to foster development friendly environments, where the City benefits from increased tax revenue, and the private developers can benefit from decreased cost of improvements.

## **8.6 Seek Outside Funding and Information**

Implementing public improvement and other development projects that adhere to the Master Plan is a challenging task. The time spent and money required to complete these projects can be very hard to come by. However, there are many sources of outside funding, as well as information that should be very helpful in the process of completing these community projects. Some good funding resources are the many government loan and grant programs available to local governments. Provided by different government agencies, these programs are quite diverse, covering all types of community needs. **Section 9.0** lists a number of funding and informational resources available to communities.

## 9.0 Sources of Funding and Information

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### 9.1 Federal

#### 9.1.1 Community Facilities Program

##### Agency

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Rural Housing Service

##### Description

This program is designed to provide loan guarantees, loans, and grants to construct, enlarge, or improve essential community facilities in rural areas. Examples of these facilities are fire and rescue facilities, jails, health clinics, nursing homes, airports, city halls, libraries, community centers, and schools.

##### Michigan Examples

Albee Township  
Township Hall  
Direct Loan, \$500,000

Tawas City  
Fire Hall  
Direct Loan, \$750,000

Deckerville  
Deckerville Community Hospital, Equipment  
Guaranteed Loan, \$350,000

Bay City  
Health Delivery Inc, Medical Facility  
Direct Loans, \$1,390,000

##### Contact

Rural Development Field Office  
1075 Cleaver Road  
Caro, Michigan 48723  
Phone: (517) 673-7588  
Fax: (517) 673-1848

##### Eligibility

Municipalities, counties, special purpose districts, and nonprofit corporations.

##### Funding Available Nation Wide

FY 1999: \$210,000,000 for loan guarantees  
FY 1999: \$169,475,983 for direct loans  
FY 1999: \$6,500,000 for grants

#### 9.1.2 Public Works and Economic Development Program

##### Agency

Economic Development Administration  
United States Department of Commerce

##### Description

This program empowers communities in economic decline to revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term, private sector jobs and investment.

##### Michigan Examples

Kalkaska  
Infrastructure Development for Industrial  
Park  
\$312,000

Reed City  
Water System Improvements  
\$815,000

Boyne City  
Water and Sanitary Sewer System for  
Industrial Park  
\$835,000

Farwell  
Infrastructure Development for Industrial  
Park  
\$665,000

Michigan Contact

John Peck  
State Office of the Economic Development  
Administration  
Traverse City, Michigan  
Phone: (231) 938-1712

Eligibility

Municipalities, economic development  
districts, higher learning institutions, and  
public and private nonprofit organizations.

Funding Available Nation Wide

FY 1999: \$205,748,000  
Average FY 1999 grant: \$829,000

**9.1.3 Rural Business Enterprise  
Grants**

Agency

United States Department of Agriculture  
Rural Business Services

Description

The Rural Business Enterprise Grants help  
to finance and facilitate the development of  
small and emerging private business  
enterprises. Costs that may be paid from  
grant funds include the acquisition of land,  
construction, utility extensions, professional  
services, and training fees, among others.

Michigan Project Examples

Iron County  
Creation of a Revolving Loan Fund for  
Small Businesses

Ontonagon County  
Technical Assistance for Businesses

Created for Caring, Bay City  
Technical Training

Dowagiac  
Water and Sewer Connections for Small  
Businesses

Contact

Rural Business and Cooperative  
Development Services Office  
Lansing, Michigan  
Phone: (517) 324-5220

Eligibility

Eligibility is limited to public bodies and  
private nonprofit corporations in rural areas  
with a population of less than 50,000.

**9.4.1 Water and Wastewater Disposal  
Loan and Grant Program**

Agency

United States Department of Agriculture

Description

This program provides loans, guaranteed  
loans, and grants for water, sewer, storm  
water, and solid waste disposal facilities in  
rural areas and towns of up to 10,000  
people. Loan and grant funds may be used  
to: a) construct, repair, modify, expand, and  
improve water and waste facilities, b)  
acquire needed land, water sources, and  
water rights, and c) pay development costs  
for these facilities.

Michigan Examples

Pinconning  
New Sewer Treatment Plant

Elsie  
Sewer System Improvements

Bancroft  
Water System Improvements

Contact

Rural Development Field Office  
Caro, Michigan  
1075 Cleaver Road  
Caro, Michigan 48723  
Phone: (517) 673-7588  
Fax (517) 673-1848

Eligibility

All public entities – municipalities, counties, and special purpose districts in rural areas of up to 10,000 people.

Funding Available Statewide

FY 2000: Loan - \$26,259,000  
FY 2000: Grant - \$13,008,000

**9.2 State**

**9.2.1 Clean Michigan Initiative**

Agency

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Description

This program's objective is to provide grants to local units of government for the development and renovation of public outdoor and indoor recreation facilities.

Michigan Examples

Mills Township, Midland County  
Construction of Jogging Track at Mills Township Park  
\$79,500

Tittabawassee Township, Saginaw County  
Construction of Overlook Pier at Memorial Park  
\$22,688

Huron County  
Facilities Improvements to Caseville County Park  
\$372,400

Contact

Linda Hegstrom  
Regional Operations Office  
Lansing, Michigan  
Phone: (517) 241-4128

Eligibility

Any local government with a Department of Natural Resources-approved community recreation plan. No school districts.

Funding Available

Minimum Grant: \$15,000;  
Maximum Grant: \$750,000

**9.2.2 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

Agency

Michigan Department of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation

Description

The CDBG program promotes community and economic revitalization through programs that support a wide variety of housing rehabilitation, public facilities and infrastructure, public services, and economic development projects, including Brownfields redevelopment.

Michigan Examples

Hope Township, Midland County  
Infrastructure Improvements for Business Expansion Project  
\$250,350

Village of Mayville, Tuscola County  
Utilities and Street Improvements for  
Manufacturing Expansion Project  
\$121,500

City of Lapeer  
Infrastructure Improvements for  
Manufacturing Company  
\$270,766

City of Yale, St. Clair County  
Infrastructure Improvements for Industrial  
Expansion Project  
\$86,000

Contact

Valerie Hoag  
Business Finance Office  
Economic Development Corporation  
201 North Washington Square  
3rd Floor  
Lansing, MI 48913  
Phone: (517) 335-1951  
Email: hoagv@michigan.org

Eligibility

The non-entitlement community portion of the CDBG can apply to all local government units. The entitlement community portion of the CDBG applies to local government units with 50,000 or more residents.

Funding Available Nation Wide  
FY 2000: \$4.23 billion

**9.2.3 Michigan Certified Community  
Recreation Plan**

Description

Any community may create a community recreation plan. This plan helps to determine a community's future recreation needs, and proposes solutions to meet such needs. In addition to this, a certified community recreation plan allows the local government body to apply for grant funds through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) such as Clean Michigan Initiative, and Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

**9.2.4 Michigan Natural Resources Trust  
Fund**

Agency

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Description

Provides grants for local units of government for the acquisition and development of lands and facilities for outdoor recreation or the protection of Michigan's significant natural resources.

Michigan Examples

Bad Axe  
Buschlen Park Expansion  
\$136,500

Bay County  
Boat Launch Expansion  
\$228,000

Meridian Township  
Ferguson Park Extension  
\$103,875

Midland County  
Pere Marquette Rail-Trail  
\$117,040

Contact

Linda Hegstrom  
Regional Operations Office  
Lansing, Michigan  
Phone: (517) 241-4128

Eligibility

Any unit of government including school districts. Local units of government must have a Department of Natural Resources-approved recreation plan.

Funding Available State Wide

FY 2000: \$20-25 million  
Individual Grant: \$15,000-\$500,000 – no limits on land acquisition

## 9.2.5 Transportation Economic Development Fund

### Agency

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)

### Description

The Transportation Economic Development Fund is a program that makes available funds for street improvements that are directly tied to economic expansion. Street construction within an industrial park is a common type of project funded with the help of the Transportation Economic Development Fund. There are six different project categories (A-F) within this fund, each relating to different project situations and municipality types.

### Michigan Examples

Isabella County  
Coldwater Road Reconstruction  
\$300,000

Oscoda County  
Abbe Road Reconstruction  
\$146,000

Lapeer County  
Graham Road Reconstruction  
\$248,741

### Contact

Office of Economic Development  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
Phone: (517) 335-1069

### Eligibility

The different project categories (A-F) have different eligibility requirements.

### Funding Available Statewide

FY 1996: \$23,424,351

## 9.3 Local

### 9.3.1 Bonds

#### Revenue Bonds

##### Description

Revenue Bonds are those issued for various public improvement projects that are backed by the future revenues generated from the improvements. For example, water systems are improved by the sale of bonds, which are then repaid by water rates charged to the customers of the system. Sewer systems, airports, marinas, and other public facilities are often constructed by means of revenue bonds.

#### General Obligation Bonds

##### Description

General Obligation Bonds are those that are issued by a municipality or other public body that are backed by the "full faith and credit" of that body. The municipality usually pledges its taxing ability, and therefore future tax revenues, to make the payments on the bonds. Because of the "full faith and credit" issue, and therefore a low amount of risk of default by the City, these types of bonds usually attract the lowest interest rate.

### 9.3.2 Capital Improvements Program

##### Description

A Capital Improvements Program is a schedule for implementing needed capital improvements for a community. Such improvements could be construction utility improvements, road improvements, land acquisition, equipment acquisition, and park development. Because most communities have limited funds, not all the needs of a community can be met. A Capital Improvements Program helps to take into account the improvements most important, by setting up a schedule of which improvements should be met first.

In essence, it is a tool for making sure that the most important needs of the community will be taken care of before any lesser need.

#### Eligibility

Any municipality may create and implement a Capital Improvements Program.

### **9.3.3 Downtown Development Authority (DDA)**

#### Description

A local unit of government may create a Downtown Development Authority in order to halt property value deterioration, increase property tax valuation, and promote economic growth in a central business district. A DDA has the authority to create development plans, encourage historic preservation, authorize acquisition of property, and promote economic growth. A DDA may utilize Tax Increment Financing as a tool for generating revenue.

#### Eligibility

Any city, village, or township.

### **9.3.4 General Revenue Funds**

#### Description

In order to receive financial assistance from grant and loan programs, a community must also contribute a matching amount of funding for any project. It would be nearly impossible to receive funds from other sources without contributing some amount of general revenue funds as well. In general, the more a community contributes to a project, the more likely that community will receive grants and loans. Also, the more money a community contributes means that they might receive a greater amount of grant and loan funding.

### **9.3.5 Internet**

The Internet can be an invaluable resource for local communities. Some informative websites are:

Michigan Government Home Page – <http://www.state.mi.us>

Michigan Economic Development Corporation – <http://medc.michigan.org>

Michigan Department of Environmental Equality – <http://www.deq.state.mi.us>

Michigan Department of Natural Resources – <http://www.dnr.state.mi.us>

Michigan Department of Transportation – <http://www.mdot.state.mi.us>

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – <http://www.hud.gov>

U.S. Census Bureau – <http://www.census.gov>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – <http://www.epa.gov>

U.S. Department of Agriculture – <http://www.usda.gov>

### **9.3.6 Libraries**

Your local library is always a good starting point as a source of information for a community. Historical records, historical business listings, and maps can all be utilized in local government research.

### **9.3.7 Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA)**

#### Description

A city, village, or urban township may create a Local Development Finance Authority to finance public facility improvements, using Tax Increment Financing. Eligible property consists of property of which the primary purpose is manufacturing, processing of goods and materials by physical or chemical change, agricultural processing, or high technology activity.

A community may develop an industrial park and use captured revenues from eligible property within the park for public facilities improvements within the park.

### Eligibility

Any city, village, or urban township. An Urban Township is one with a population over 20,000, or a population over 10,000 in a county over 400,000.

### **9.3.8 Regional Planning Agency**

#### Description

Regional Planning Agencies were created in Michigan to act as coordinating agencies for the local governmental units they serve. These agencies create development plans, and conduct all types of research and studies for their planning region. Regional Planning Agencies also work to promote cooperation between the many different governmental units within their region. A local government may find its Regional Planning Agency to be a valuable resource for information and guidance.

The Regional Planning Agency for Vassar is:

East Central Michigan Planning and Development  
3535 State Street  
Saginaw, Michigan 48602-3261  
Phone (517) 797-0800  
Fax (517) 797-0896

### **9.3.9 Special Assessments**

#### Description

Special assessments are a fee levied by the community for the financing of local improvements that are of primarily benefit to the landowners that must pay the assessment. Taxes levied for public improvements within a Special Assessment District can be applied to such things as utilities systems, public roads, rubbish collection, bicycle paths, parks, sidewalks, lighting, and tree maintenance.

#### Eligibility

Cities, villages, and townships may utilize special assessments.

### **9.3.10 Tax Increment Financing**

#### Description

Tax Increment Financing is widely used as a means of project financing by using the taxes generated as a result of new development to finance the public infrastructure that is constructed to serve the new development.

#### Eligibility

Tax Increment Financing is a tool that can only be used by Downtown Development Authorities (DDA's), Tax Increment Finance Authorities (TIFA's), or Local Development Finance Authorities (LDFA's).

### **9.4 Private**

#### **9.4.1 Local Businesses**

Seeking the help of your local businesses may result in much needed support for various public projects. Some examples are:

- cash donations
- material donations
- advertising and promotion

#### **9.4.2 Local Foundations**

Similar to the local businesses, local foundations might be able to provide support for civic projects.

#### **9.4.3 Local Residents**

The residents of any community provide support to local government bodies in various ways:

- cash donations
- material donations
- voluntary labor
- schools participation