

Existing Land Use

The analysis of existing land use patterns is a fundamental step in preparing a community master plan. The analysis not only examines the positive and negative aspects of past land use decisions in order to help avoid past mistakes but also to help predict future development trends and where development may occur and where potential conflicts may exist.

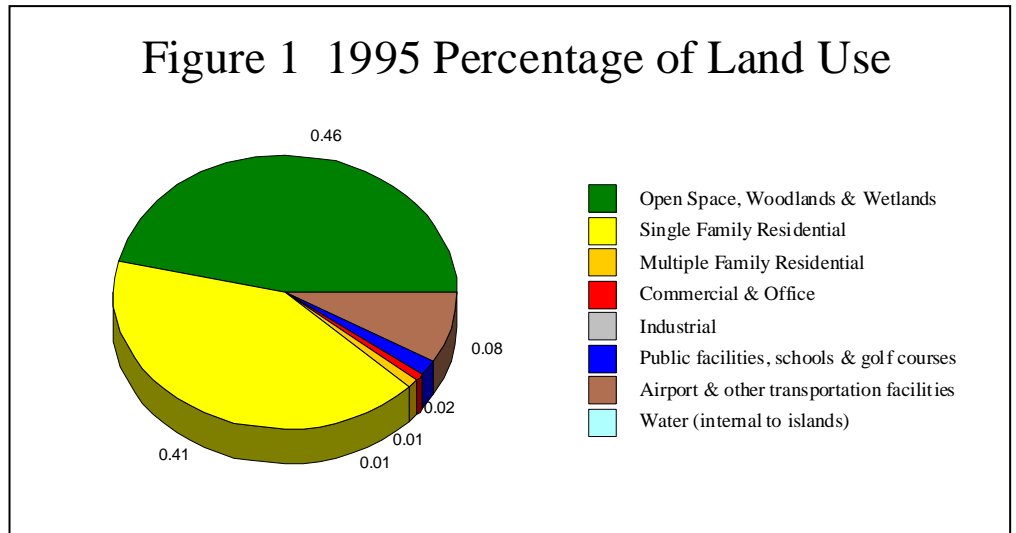
Land use patterns develop according to geographic location, land use and zoning policies, and environmental, economic, social and cultural influences. The location of a building, the routing of a street or highway, construction of sanitary sewers, and many other factors affect, and have an effect on, the shape of existing and future land use patterns.

Documenting existing land use and looking at how uses have changed over time in a community is an important part of the planning process. It helps to answer questions such as, “Is land devoted to residential use increasing? Where is development occurring?”

Open space, woodlands & wetlands account for nearly half of the township

This section discusses the types of current land uses that occupy Grosse Ile. Map 3, an existing land use map is located on the following page that directly corresponds with these categories. Figure 1

depicts the percentage of land use as of a 1995 SEMCOG study. A majority of the township is undeveloped and remains in its natural state. Of the developed land, single family residential accounts for nearly 80% of the uses, followed by airport uses which make up 15%. Multiple family residential, commercial & office, industrial and public uses combined represent 8% of the developed land.



Existing Land Use Categories

Single Family Residential: Single family residential uses are the most dominant in Grosse Ile, as is typical for most townships, occupying approximately 2,498 acres. Housing densities are moderately low compared to surrounding areas, even in the newer subdivisions. The oldest neighborhoods were built throughout the 1800’s and early 1900’s with relatively small lots along the shoreline and later along the Thoroughfare Canal, leaving a green open space spine the length of the island. There are also a number of subdivisions on the islands at the southern portion of the township including Swan Island, Hickory Island, Meso Island and Elba Island.



Residential development occurred in a relatively steady fashion from the 1950's to the late 1990's, with development peaking in the 1950's. Since then, development has slightly declined with each decade. This is due in part to the township's aggressive stance towards preservation of open space and its desire to develop in an orderly fashion. This development has connected across the island, concentrating in the central area of the township between the two bridges that give access from the mainland and in the southern half of the township.

The most recent single family residential developments have been two single family subdivisions, one located north of Grays Dr., just east of Meridian Rd. ,and one located south of Ferry Rd. west of Meridian Rd. These newer subdivisions are characterized by large homes with large garages on large lots along curvilinear and cul-de-sac streets.

Multiple Family Residential: This category includes buildings that contain more than two dwelling units including converted homes, apartment buildings, townhouses and senior housing. The township has roughly 82 acres of multiple family residential uses, a majority of which are clustered around Macomb St. A handful of attached condominium developments are also scattered along the western portion of the township.

Commercial and Office: Commercial development occurs primarily along Macomb Street. The Macomb Street District is the heart of the township's business community and is bounded by the Detroit River to the east, Grays Dr. to the north, Meridian Rd. to the west, and Grosse Ile Parkway to the south. Most of the buildings are one and two stories and are setback from the public sidewalk. A significant portion of the commercial structures are converted single family residences. A wide spectrum of commercial and office uses are found in this District including, banks, convenience and comparison-shopping, restaurants, specialty shops, offices, and other businesses.



Outside of the Macomb Street District, there are two other locations that are currently used for commercial or office purposes. The Airport Inn, a local pub, is located on Groh Rd. east of Meridian Rd., Westcroft Gardens Nursery is a family owned nursery located off of West River Rd. that has been in the township for a number of decades.

Industrial: Industrial uses provide important employment opportunities and tax base to support improvements to capital facilities and municipal services. Grosse Ile only has 17 acres devoted to industrial uses. A 106-acre industrial park, Commerce Park, is located in the south part of the township immediately north of the airport. This brownfield redevelopment seeks to draw development that will supplement airport uses and has proven very successful in attracting businesses to Grosse Ile.

Airport: Grosse Ile Municipal Airport, consisting of 663.6 acres, is bounded by Groh Rd. on the north, East River Rd. on the east, Frenchman Creek on the west and Gibraltar Bay on the south. The airport consists primarily of the two main hangers and Seaway Aviation, which houses three fixed based operators. A variety of airport related uses such as hangers, tie downs, and fuel farms are located here as well as five non-aviation



businesses such as township offices and Grosse Ile Health and Racquet Club. Because of surrounding residential land uses, an important planning issue is the need to maintain compatibility between the airport and the surrounding area.

Public: This category includes township, state and federal buildings, schools, churches and other public or quasi-public buildings. Police and fire departments, the library, the U.S. Post Office, schools and several churches make up the 137 acres of public uses within the township. The Township Hall is located within the airport. The Department of Public Safety is located on Meridian Road, just south of Macomb Street.



Schools are located throughout the township with the High School located just north of the Macomb Street business district. The Island Memorial Park Cemetery is located in the southern portion of the township, west of the Airport Industrial Park. These functions strengthen the focus of this district, both locally and regionally, and provide an important social need.

Recreation: The Township of Grosse Ile has a variety of sources for both private and public recreation. There are three golf courses located within the township West Shore Golf and Country Club, Grosse Ile Golf and Country Club and Water's Edge Country Club. In addition to these country clubs, Grosse Ile has a variety of private boat clubs scattered throughout the township such as the Grosse Ile Yacht Club, Ford Yacht Club, Elba-Mar Boat Club and the Gibraltar Bay Nature Area. There is a private park located on Hickory Island. The township operates the Centennial Farm, which provides a large number of community recreational opportunities on the 32-acre parcel. In addition, the township community playscape is located near Macomb Street behind the Post Office and a riverfront observation platform is located at the end of Macomb Street on the Detroit River.

Public Open Space: Over several years and through multiple millages, the Open Space Committee and township have purchased several hundred acres of land for the purpose of preservation and with the intention that they remain as natural woodlands and wetlands, habitats for both fauna and flora, and free from the impacts of intruding development. These sites were not acquired for recreational parkland except for the most passive uses. The township owns over 330 acres of dedicated open space.



Special Environmental: Stony Island is currently vacant and now contains significant wetland areas. Hennepin Island at the northern end of the township is owned by the BASF Corporation and was utilized for disposal of non-organic industrial wastes. This island is currently undergoing environmental remediation; however because of previous industrial activities future reuse of this island is highly unlikely.

Undeveloped: There are a number of vacant parcels of land throughout the township, but concentrated at the northern end of the township. There are a few large parcels that are available for further subdivision. Much land remains undeveloped at this time but is platted for single family residential uses and will likely become developed as such in future years.



GROSSE ILE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

There are a number of subdivisions within the township that were platted without road construction (commonly regarded to as “paper plats”). Within these paper plats there are numerous privately owned lots of record that do not have improved road frontage. As development of the township continues and un-subdivided land becomes scarce, demand for developing these old lots of record will become greater. Dealing with development in this situation is difficult because these lots are often developed on a lot by lot basis and what little road improvements that are constructed, are done so on a “piece-meal” basis.

A number of vacant islands are located around the main island of the township including Calf, Round, Mamajuda, Sugar, Dynamite, and Fox Islands. These islands all contain significant natural features, which are described in greater detail in the natural features section of this plan.

