

---

Master Plan

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 0 2 0

**City of  
River Rouge**

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>REGIONAL ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Regional Location .....	2
<b>EXISTING LAND USE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Introduction .....	4
Land Use Characteristics .....	4
Single and Two-Family Residential .....	5
Multiple Family Residential .....	5
Commercial Uses .....	5
Industrial Uses .....	6
Public/Quasi Public/Vacant .....	6
Existing Land Use Summary .....	6
<b>POPULATION ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Introduction .....	9
Population Change .....	9
Population Distribution .....	11
<b>AGE CHARACTERISTICS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Medium Age .....	13
Population by Age .....	13
Age by Life Cycle Category .....	14
Male/Female Ratio .....	16
Race and Ethnic Characteristics .....	16
<b>HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Household Growth Trends .....	17
Household Size .....	17
Household Characteristics .....	18
<b>ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Labor Force Participation .....	20
<b>EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>ISSUE IDENTIFICATION .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Issues .....	27
Residential .....	27
Commercial .....	27
Industrial .....	28
Public/Quasi Public .....	28

	<u>Page</u>
<b>VISION STATEMENT AND STRATEGIES .....</b>	<b>30</b>
Introduction .....	30
Purpose of the Master Plan.....	30
<b>COMMUNITY SCALE.....</b>	<b>31</b>
Vision Statement.....	31
Strategies.....	31
<b>PEDESTRIANISM .....</b>	<b>31</b>
Vision Statement.....	31
Strategies.....	31
<b>RESIDENTIAL .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Vision Statement.....	32
Strategies.....	32
<b>COMMERCIAL .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Vision Statement.....	33
Strategies.....	33
<b>DOWNTOWN.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Vision Statement.....	33
Strategies.....	33
<b>VITALITY .....</b>	<b>35</b>
Vision Statement.....	35
Strategies.....	35
<b>INDUSTRIAL .....</b>	<b>35</b>
Vision Statement.....	35
Strategies.....	35
<b>THOROUGHFARE AND PARKING .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Vision Statement.....	36
Strategies.....	36
<b>RECREATION .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Vision Statement.....	36
Strategies.....	36
<b>AESTHETICS .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Vision Statement.....	37
Strategies.....	37

	<u>Page</u>
<b>LAND USE PLAN</b> .....	<b>38</b>
Introduction .....	38
<b>RESIDENTIAL AREA PLAN</b> .....	<b>40</b>
Introduction .....	40
Neighborhood Unit Concept.....	40
Neighborhood Identification .....	40
Neighborhood #1: “The Circle” .....	41
Neighborhood #2: “The Backstreet” .....	41
Neighborhood #3: “Dunn Park Area” .....	41
Neighborhood #4: “Memorial Park Area” .....	42
Neighborhood #5: “Beechwood Center Area” .....	42
Neighborhood #6: “The Front Street” .....	42
Neighborhood #7: “Cicotte Park Area” .....	42
Neighborhood #8: “The Haltiner Park Triangle” .....	42
Neighborhood #9: “Pleasant Area” .....	42
Neighborhood #10: “The Stadium area” .....	43
General Residential Analysis .....	43
Incompatible Uses .....	43
Single-Family Home Conversions .....	44
Parking and Safety.....	44
Essential Policies for Residential Neighborhood Improvement .....	44
Other Ideas for Neighborhood Identification and Improvement.....	45
<b>COMMERCIAL</b> .....	<b>46</b>
Introduction .....	46
Existing Commercial Development .....	46
Commercial Demand Estimates.....	46
Downtown Area Plan .....	47
The Revitalization Program.....	48
Central Business District.....	48
Urban Design and Beautification.....	49
General Concept.....	49
Signs.....	49
Exterior Surfaces .....	50
Appurtenances.....	50
General Business.....	50
<b>INDUSTRIAL</b> .....	<b>51</b>
Conclusion-Upgrade/Redevelop Existing Industrial Sites and Uses .....	51
<b>IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES</b> .....	<b>53</b>
Overview .....	53
<b>PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION</b> .....	<b>53</b>
Public Information and Education .....	53
Continued Cooperation Between Local Units of Government .....	53

Performance Capacity .....	54
Ordinance Enforcement .....	54
Community Development.....	54
Planning .....	54
Economic Development .....	54
Inspection Programs .....	55
Continuous Planning.....	55
Fiscal Impact Analysis .....	55
Establishing Priorities.....	55
Design Standards .....	55
Land Use Controls .....	56
Subdivision Regulations.....	56
Condominium Regulations.....	56
Zoning Regulations .....	57
Rezoning to Reflect the Master Plan.....	57
Performance Standards .....	57
Incentive Zoning.....	57
Planned Development.....	57
Setback and Other Standards.....	58
Overlay Zoning.....	58
Capital Improvement Program .....	58
Land Acquisition.....	59
Fee Simple Acquisition by the City.....	59
Easements.....	59
Tax Reversion.....	60
Special Purpose Funding District/Authorities .....	60
Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) .....	60
Local Development Financing Authority (LDFA) .....	61
Downtown Development Authority (DDA) .....	61
Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA) .....	61
Neighborhood Area Improvements Act .....	61
<b>MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY .....</b>	<b>62</b>
Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP).....	62
Rehabilitation Act.....	62
Certified Local Governments (CLGs) / Historic Preservation Fund .....	62
Main Street National Trust for Historic Preservation .....	63
<b>FINANCING TOOLS.....</b>	<b>63</b>
Dedicated Millage .....	63
Special Assessments.....	63
Bond Programs .....	63
Municipal Bond Authority (MMBA) .....	64
Tax Increment Financing.....	64
<b>GRANTS.....</b>	<b>64</b>
Community Development Block Grant.....	64
Core Communities Fund (CCF) .....	65
Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF).....	65

Coastal Zone Management (CZM).....	65
The Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan .....	66
Cool Cities Initiative .....	66
Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA-21).....	66

<b>ADDITIONAL TOOLS .....</b>	<b>66</b>
HUD Section 202/8 .....	66
Neighborhood Enterprise Zone .....	67
Industrial Property Tax Abatement.....	67
Personal Property, Tax Abatement .....	67
Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act .....	67
Brownfield Redevelopment .....	67
Private Funding Sources.....	68

### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<u>Page</u>
<b>Map 1:</b> Regional Context Map.....	3
<b>Map 2:</b> Existing Land Use Map .....	7
<b>Map 3:</b> Future Land Use Map.....	8
<b>Map 4:</b> Census Tract Map.....	12
<b>Map 5:</b> Zoning Map .....	29
<b>Map 6:</b> Resources and Constraints Map .....	53

### LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
<b>Table 1:</b> Existing Land Use Summary – 1978.....	4
<b>Table 2:</b> Comparative Population Growth .....	9
<b>Table 3:</b> Population Change by Decade.....	10
<b>Table 4:</b> Census Tract and Block Group Data (2000 - River Rouge) .....	11
<b>Table 5:</b> Population by Age .....	13
<b>Table 6:</b> Median Age .....	14
<b>Table 7:</b> Age by Life Cycle Category.....	15
<b>Table 8:</b> Male-Female Distribution – 2000 .....	16
<b>Table 9:</b> Race and Hispanic Origin .....	16
<b>Table 10:</b> Household Change by Year .....	17
<b>Table 11:</b> Household Size .....	18
<b>Table 12:</b> Household Characteristics .....	19
<b>Table 13:</b> Labor Force Participation .....	20
<b>Table 14:</b> Industry of Employment .....	20
<b>Table 15:</b> Occupational Characteristics.....	21
<b>Table 16:</b> Median Income – 2000.....	21
<b>Table 17:</b> Income Type .....	22
<b>Table 18:</b> Poverty Status (% Below Poverty Line).....	22

<b>Table 19:</b>	Retail Trade – 1997 By Zip Code .....	23
<b>Table 20:</b>	Type of Business.....	23
<b>Table 21:</b>	School Enrollment – 2000 .....	24
<b>Table 22:</b>	Educational Attainment – 2000 .....	24
<b>Table 23:</b>	Change in Total Number of Dwelling Units .....	25
<b>Table 24:</b>	Owner/Renter – 2000.....	25
<b>Table 25:</b>	Median Housing Value – 2000 .....	26
<b>Table 26:</b>	Year Structure Built.....	26

## LIST OF CHARTS

<b>Chart 1</b>	2005 Land Use.....	5
----------------	--------------------	---

## INTRODUCTION

The City of River Rouge adopted its first Master Plan in 1960. The Plan was amended in 1972 and, finally, rewritten in 1978. The Plans, albeit different in various specific programs, all center on residential character and image. Forty years after the adoption of the first Master Plan, River Rouge is still facing many of the same issues addressed in the 1960, 1972 and 1978 plans.

In the 1972 Master Plan, the issues of character and aesthetics is addressed very directly with the following: "One of the prime goals of planning for the city should be to enhance its residential character and image. Although the city's motto is Heart of Industry and there is extensive industry in the community, it is important that River Rouge also be considered an attractive place in which to live." Creating an attractive place to live is a major focus of this plan. This involves much more than housing facelifts and residential yard improvements. A multi-faceted planning program is necessary for:

- Prohibiting the use of single-family home sites for multiple type housing;
- Creating an aesthetic and functional downtown environment;
- Separating incompatible uses, both by redistricting and/or buffering;
- Creating a circulation system that emphasizes pedestrianism, while recognizing the need for an efficient motor vehicle road system; and,
- Emphasizing site redevelopment needs within all land use designations for the City.

The issues outlined above are all addressed in previous Master Plans. Various programs were set forth to address the issues. Some of the programs still have potential for addressing the issues.

There are a couple of obvious lessons to be learned from this land use plan history. First and foremost, no plan, however well written and conceived, can succeed without strict policy and enforcement of the principles of the plan. Second, in order for a plan to succeed, the populous and business community must understand and embrace the principles of the plan and also needs to support the political process of administering the plan. Such decisions need to be focused on the larger picture and ignore the pressures and temptations for popular or seemingly harmless short-term fixes. However, the City must recognize the limitation of its built environment in undertaking reasonable redevelopment.

This plan is less of a "new" plan than it is a refresher and a refocus of the principles introduced in previous plans.



## REGIONAL ANALYSIS

### Regional Location

The City of River Rouge occupies approximately 1,770 acres of land or 2.8 square miles. It shares a common boundary with the City of Detroit to the east and north and a common boundary with the City of Ecorse to the south. The Detroit River forms the City's eastern boundary for a distance of approximately two (2) miles. The northern boundary is formed by the Rouge River.

Jefferson Avenue is the principal regional transportation route linking River Rouge to Detroit on the north and neighboring downriver communities on the south. The I-75 Freeway is approximately one (1) mile to the west of the City limits with an interchange at Schaefer Avenue. Roughly a few miles west of I-75 is an access to the I-94 Freeway giving the City convenient access to both a north-south and east-west interstate highway.

**Insert Map 1 Regional Context**

## EXISTING LAND USE

### Introduction

The character of our physical environment is influenced by many factors. Chief among these is the use of land, the distribution of uses within a community, and the relationship of these uses to one another. These factors strongly influence the overall character and image of the community. They also influence the quality of life and our relative degree of satisfaction with our surroundings.

Land use characteristics and other relevant physical features are among the most important aspects of the land use planning process. These features establish the observable physical setting upon which the future of the community will be based. They also influence the development potential of the community.

The primary feature of this chapter is an examination of the City's land use characteristics on a classification basis. Each of the City's individual land use categories are discussed, including the amount of land devoted to each category and the distribution of the uses throughout the community.

### Land Use Characteristics

In April of 1978, a comprehensive existing land use study was completed as part of the Comprehensive land Use Plan developed at that time. This study involved a lot-by-lot recorded inventory of each existing land use in the City. For the purposes of this Plan, this same information will provide an adequate breakdown of land uses since the composition of the City has remained relatively consistent.

Very little land remains vacant within the City. Of the total acreage in the City, 91.4% is developed, while the remaining acreage is accounted for by rivers and vacant land. Table 1, below, depicts land use categories based on the 1978 survey.

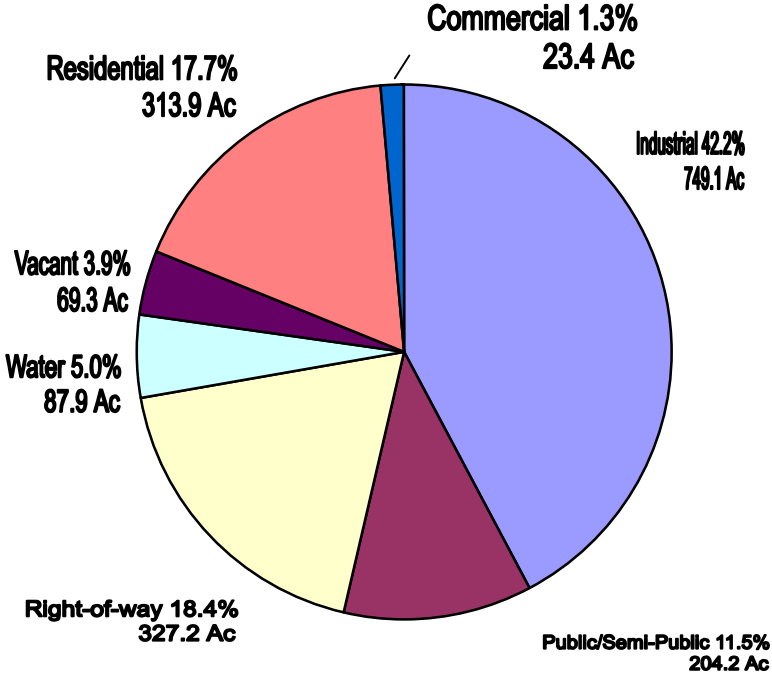
**Table 1**  
**EXISTING LAND USE SUMMARY - 1978**

<b>Land Use Category</b>	<b>% of Total Area</b>	<b>% of Developed Area</b>
Residential	17.7	19.4
Commercial	1.3	1.5
Industrial & Railroad R.O.W	49.0	53.6
Public and Quasi-Public	11.5	12.5
Special Purpose Uses	0.1	0.1
Street R.O.W.	11.8	12.9
Vacant & Water	8.6	*
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: City of River Rouge, 1978 Land Use Study

Although the City of River Rouge has not seen a dramatic change in how the land is used, there are differences worthy of mentioning. Table 2 shows the land use in 2005. Areas of notable change are residential.

**Chart 1:  
2005 LAND USE**



Source: U.S. Census, 2000

**Single and Two-Family Residential**

Single and two-family uses occupy roughly 18% of the City. All occupied lots and portions of lots were used to calculate this acreage. Vacant lots with the potential for accommodating a dwelling, including those owned and maintained by an adjacent landowner, were considered as vacant for the purposes of this survey.

**Multiple Family Residential**

This category includes all land occupied by structures containing three or more dwelling units. At the time of the survey study, approximately 26.8 acres or 1.5% of the City were occupied by multi-family uses.

**Commercial Uses**

Commercial uses occupy less than 1.5% of the City's developed area. These uses are principally concentrated in the Central Business District and located as strip development along Coolidge, Jefferson and Visger Avenue.

## **Industrial Uses**

The amount of land used for industrial purposes exceeds residentially developed land by a margin exceeding 2-to-1. This is a characteristic unique to River Rouge and not shared universally with other southeast Michigan communities. Industry is the dominant land use in the community with roughly 42% of the land utilized for this purpose. Industry blankets the community on the north and east boundaries and bisects the two residential areas of the City along the railroad right-of-way.

## **Public / Quasi-Public / Vacant**

This category includes all land used for governmental operations, schools, parks, utility easements and substations, churches and other religious gathering places, and vacant land. These types of uses occupy approximately 15.4% of the total land area of the City. The Detroit Edison Power Plant was included in this category rather than the industrial category. Vacant land has increased from 8.6 acres to 69.3 acres based upon various clearance activities.

## **Existing Land Use Summary**

Land use in the City has remained relatively consistent since the land use survey of 1978. While many businesses have changed both in ownership and use, for the most part, commercial areas have remained commercial. Industrial uses are still the predominate land use in the community. Residential acreage has also remained stable with the construction of few new homes and a limited number of demolitions.

It should further be noted that the continued encroachment of incompatible land uses on the single-family residential districts has contributed strongly to property value stagnation as well as a reduction in the quality of life for those residents.

The incompatible land uses, to include multiple family dwellings, need to provide heavy screening and buffering so as to prevent and/or diminish further deterioration of the single-family districts.

**Insert Map 2 Existing Land Use**

**Insert Map 3 Future Land Use**

## POPULATION ANALYSIS

### Introduction

The characteristics of a community's population are among the key ingredients given consideration in the long-range planning process. Historical and current population trends have several useful applications. They are especially relevant in identifying the need for various types of community facilities. Future land use and public utility demands are also related to population growth trends and demographic characteristics. Conclusions and the potential planning policy implications of this data are also noted.

The following items are important to provide a fuller understanding of the characteristics of River Rouge's total population. These individual topics include the following:

- Population change over time
- Age characteristics
- Household characteristics

The most current available population data for River Rouge is employed in the examination of each of the topics. Wherever possible, comparable data for Wayne County is also included. Information for the County is provided for the purpose of understanding the relationship of the City to the larger geographical area of which it is a part.

### Population Change

At the national level, the U.S. population exceeded the 200 million mark for the first time in 1970. An increase to 226 million was recorded in 1980. National population data for 1990 estimates just under 250 million persons. Michigan's share of the population has remained a stable four (4%) percent since 1930.

**Table 2:  
COMPARATIVE POPULATION GROWTH**

	<u>1940</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2030</u>
River Rouge	17,008	20,549	18,147	15,947	12,192	11,134	9,917	8,246	6,991	6,178
Ecorse	13,209	17,948	17,328	17,515	14,447	12,180	11,229	9,690	8,516	7,883
Lincoln Park	15,236	29,310	59,933	52,984	45,105	41,832	40,008	37,137	35,095	33,553
Wyandotte	30,618	36,846	43,519	41,061	34,006	30,938	28,006	25,541	23,402	22,461

Source: U.S. Census, 2000 and 2010-2030 Projections from SEMCOG

During the 50-year period between 1930 and 1980, Michigan's population nearly doubled from 4.8 million to 9.2 million. The State's greatest periods of population growth over these five decades occurred between 1940 and 1970. During this thirty-year period,



Michigan gained more than one million people for each ten-year census interval. Since 1970, however, population growth has slowed considerably. U.S. Census counts for Michigan show a population of slightly over 9.9 million persons for 2000.

River Rouge's population peaked in 1950 when the number of persons reached 20,549. Since then, the City's population declined steadily. This pattern of population growth is similar to the City's neighboring communities, all of which peaked in either 1950 or 1960 before beginning a downward trend. River Rouge and Ecorse share similar population growth trends.

All of the communities in Table 4 experienced the greatest population declines in the decade from 1970 to 1980. During this period, the City's population fell by 19 percent. This may be accounted for by the decline in labor demand in this area caused by the automotive recession. Many unemployed autoworkers and steelworkers had to move elsewhere to secure employment. Over the four decades from the peak in 1960 to 2000, the City's population decreased by approximately 51.7 percent. While some of the population decline experienced in the City can be attributed to migration, much of the decrease is due to smaller household sizes.

**Table 3:  
POPULATION CHANGE BY DECADE**

<b>City</b>	<b>1940-50</b>	<b>1950-60</b>	<b>1960-70</b>	<b>1970-80</b>	<b>1980-90</b>	<b>1990-00</b>
River Rouge	20.8	-11.7	-12.1	-19.0	-12.4	-12.3
Ecorse	35.9	-3.7	1.1	-17.5	-15.7	-7.8
Lincoln Park	92.4	84.0	-1.8	-14.9	-7.3	-4.4
Wyandotte	20.3	18.1	-5.7	-17.2	-9.0	-9.5

Source: U.S. Census - 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000

## Population Distribution

The City's population areas are located primarily in southwest and central portions of the City. As indicated in Table 5 below, population is distributed rather evenly among the three census tracts that contain housing units. Tract 5790 is the northern portion of the City that is developed almost exclusively with industrial uses. (See Map 4)

**Table 4:  
Census Tract and Block Group Data (2000 - River Rouge)**

<i>Tract and Block Group #</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Housing Units</i>
Tract 5790	0	0
BG 9	0	0
Tract 5791	2,777	1,217
BG 1	748	333
BG 2	1,012	415
BG 3	570	275
BG 4	447	194
Tract 5792 (pt.)	4,059	1,711
BG 1	1,023	409
BG 2 (pt.)	1,139	466
BG 3	782	320
BG 4	1,115	516
Tract 5793 (pt.)	3,081	1,152
BG 1 (pt.)	857	331
BG 2	748	236
BG 3	856	323
BG 4	620	262

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

**Insert Map 4 illustration census tracts and block groups**

## Age Characteristics

Age characteristics are among the more important demographic variables. They are useful as an indicator of anticipated demand for various types of municipal services and programs, including parks, employment needs, job training, day-care, schools, and services to various other age groups, including the elderly. The City's future land use needs are also related to its age configuration

### Median Age

The steady aging of the Nation's population was among the more important trends dimensioned by the 1980 and 1990 Census. After reaching a high of 30.2 years in 1950, the median age for the Nation declined the following two decades to 29.5 years in 1960, and 28.3 years in 1970. These declines were largely a response to the high birth rates that occurred during the baby boom years following World War II. The aging of the baby boom children, during the 1960's and 1970's, partially explains the rise in median age revealed in the 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census. Lower fertility rates and increasingly longer life spans have also contributed to the increase.

The aging trend is clearly reflected in the median age figures noted in Table 6. Each of the geographic areas included below experienced an increase in median age levels between 1970 and 1980. The Nation's population reached a level of 30.0 years in 1980, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Both Michigan and Wayne County reported median age levels approaching the National level in 1980. While River Rouge also reported an increase in median age in 2000 to 31.1 years, it remained below the levels reported by its larger parent geographical areas. Continued increases are reflected in 1990 and 2000 Census data. River Rouge's median age rose 2.3 years to 30.4 in 1990, and 0.7 years to 31.1 in 2000. The City's median age, however, remains lower than the County's 2000 figure of 34.0, as well as State and National levels.

**Table 5  
MEDIAN AGE**

	<b>River Rouge</b>	<b>Wayne County</b>	<b>Michigan</b>	<b>United States</b>
1970	26.6	28.1	26.3	28.3
1980	28.1	29.4	28.8	30.0
1990	30.4	32.5	32.6	32.9
2000	31.1	34.0	35.5	35.3

Source: U.S. Census – 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000

### Population by Age

By reviewing the various age categories that make up River Rouge's population, it is possible to determine how various segments of the City's population have changed over time and what impact these changes have had on the City's growth.

With one exception, each of the age groups shown in Table 7 declined over the past two decades. The one exception is the 25-44 age group, which grew by 306 persons between 1980 and 1990. Between 1970 and 1980, children under the age of 17 declined by 1,584 persons, accounting for more than one-half of the City's total population loss. At the other end of the age spectrum, residents over the age of 55 declined by only 348 persons, or 11.5 percent of the City's total loss.

The youngest age group (under 5) continued to lose population between 1990 and 2000. Young persons (5-44) declined by 719 persons. The 45-54 age group actually increased by 98 individuals. Overall, the City's population loss during the past decade was more evenly distributed among the age groups shown in Table 6.

**Table 6  
POPULATION BY AGE**

Age	1970	1980	1990	2000	Change 1970-2000
Under 5	1,492	1,042	1,029	820	- 672
5-24	6,139	4,4785	3,615	3,289	- 2,850
25-44	3,373	3,076	3,382	2,891	- 482
45-54	1,843	1,257	1,008	1,106	- 737
55-59	853	684	461	408	- 445
60-64	654	643	461	350	- 304
65-74	1,057	898	841	569	- 488
75+	536	527	517	484	- 52
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15,947</b>	<b>12,912</b>	<b>11,314</b>	<b>9,917</b>	<b>-6,030</b>

Source: U.S. Census – 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000

### Age by Life Cycle Category

A more meaningful picture of River Rouge's population age distribution is possible when the individual age categories shown on the previous table are combined into a smaller number of groups, which more closely resemble identifiable stages of a normal human life cycle. Selected categories and the age intervals they represent include: pre-school (0-4), school (5-17), family formation (18-44), middle-age (45-64), and seniors (65 +). The percent of the City's population that falls into each of these categories is shown in Table 8. Each of the life cycle stages reflected in this table has important meaning for planning.

The pre-school and school-age categories, for example, offer useful indicators of future school enrollment trends and the adequacy of existing facilities to meet these needs. In 1970, children under the age of five comprised 9.4 percent of the City's population. By 1980, this declined to 8.1 percent. In 1990, pre-school children accounted for 9.1 percent of the City's population. This reduced to 8.3 percent in 2000.

The percentage of school-aged residents has declined steadily since 1970. In 1970, children between the ages of 5 and 17 accounted for 25.2 percent of River Rouge's total

population. By 1980, this proportion declined to 22.3 percent. An additional decline to 20.5 percent is noted for 1990. However, in 2000, school-aged residents increased by about 5 percent to 25.9 percent of the population.

**Table 7  
AGE BY LIFE CYCLE CATEGORY**

<b>Category</b>	<b>City of River Rouge</b>			
	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
Pre-School (0-4)	9.4	8.1	9.1	8.3
School (5-17)	25.2	22.3	20.5	25.9
Family Formation (18-44)	34.4	38.6	41.3	36.4
Middle-Age (45-64)	21.0	20.0	17.1	18.8
Seniors (65+)	10.0	11.0	12.0	10.6

Source: U.S. Census – 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000

Collectively, the family formation and middle-age categories comprise the foundation of the community. They are the largest segment of property owners and taxpayers. They are also the largest consumers of goods and services and, therefore, provide a catalyst for economic growth and a sense of stability for the City.

These two categories comprised slightly more than one-half of the City's total population in 1970. By 1980, residents between 18 and 64 expanded their share of the City's population to 58.6 percent, and maintained this approximate percentage in 1990.

The remaining category includes all residents over the age of 65. The City's share of senior citizens increased from 10.0 percent in 1970 to 12.0 percent in 1990 and declined to 10.6 percent for 2000. Improved medical care and longer life expectancy are responsible for the increasing number of seniors nation-wide. Continued increases will generate demands for a variety of services targeted to this population category, including health care, transportation, housing and recreation, among others.

## Male/Female Ratio

Females outnumber male residents in River Rouge by 553 persons. Females comprise 52.8 percent of the City's population, compared to 47.2 percent for males (see Table 9).

**Table 8  
MALE – FEMALE DISTRIBUTION – 2000**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Males	4,682	47.2
Females	5,235	52.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,917</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

## Race and Ethnic Characteristics

Based on the results of the 2000 Census, approximately 53 percent of the City's residents were white. Blacks were the next largest racial group comprising slightly more than one-third of the City's population. The remaining three racial groups shown in Table 10 accounted for only 2.1 percent of the City's population. Persons of Hispanic origin, which may include persons from any racial group, total 378 persons, or 3.3 percent of the City's population. The 2000 Census saw an increase of 6.8 percent for Black residents, while the white population decreased by 10.1 percent.

**TABLE 9:  
RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN**

	<b>1990</b>		<b>2000</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>White</b>	7,101	62.7	5,214	52.6
<b>Black or African-American</b>	3,977	35.2	4,166	42.0
<b>American Indian</b>	75	0.7	77	0.8
<b>Asian</b>	32	0.3	16	0.2
<b>Other</b>	129	1.1	444	4.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,314</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9,917</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Hispanic or Latino Origin</b>	378	3.3	492	5.0

Source: U.S. Census – 1990, 2000

## HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

### Household Growth Trends

The U.S. Census Bureau has two categories that it uses to describe living arrangements: households and families. A household is one person or a group of persons occupying a housing unit. The number of households and occupied housing units are, therefore, identical. Families, on the other hand, consist of two or more persons, related to each other, living in a household.

Household characteristics, in general, and the rate of new household growth have become increasingly important indicators of demographic change within a community. Changes in the number of households and their composition are recognized as a more valid measure of community growth and vitality than absolute changes in the number of persons. Several reasons account for this view.

At the local level, households generate property tax revenues regardless of how many people are living within the household. Households also generate a demand for durable goods, including cars and appliances, as well as energy (electricity, gas and telephone services) which serve to stimulate local and regional economic growth. Local governmental services are impacted by household growth trends, especially the need for public utilities (water and sewage disposal), police and fire services, and solid waste disposal, among others. The number of households also influence traffic levels and the need for future transportation system improvements.

**TABLE 10:  
HOUSEHOLD CHANGE BY YEAR**

	1970	1980	Change 1970-80	% Change	1990	Change 1980-90	% Change	2000	Change 1990-00	% Change
City of River Rouge	5,090	4,673	-417	-8.2	4,268	-405	-8.7	3,949	-319	-7.5
Wayne County	830,441	824,169	-6,272	-0.8	780,535	-43,634	-5.3	774,652	-5,883	-0.8

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

The City of River Rouge experienced a decline in the number of households over the past 30 years. For example, between 1980 and 1990, the number of households declined by 405 for a decrease of 8.7 percent. According to SEMCOG estimates, this decline continued between 1990 and 2000 with a loss of 319 households. Similarly, there was a decline in the number of households for Wayne County, particularly between 1980 and 1990.

### HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Consistent with broader national and regional trends, average household size in the City of River Rouge has declined over the past two decades. At the National level, household size has declined steadily since 1950 when it stood at a level of 3.37 persons per household. By 1980, it had declined to 2.75 persons per household. The period from



1990 to 2000 showed a reversal of the trend for the City when the average household size increased to 2.72.

In 1970, the size of the average household in River Rouge was 3.11 persons. This declined to 2.76 persons in 1980 and again to 2.65 persons in 1990. The 2000 Census show a slight increase in household size between 1990 and 2000, and declines for Wayne County and Michigan.

**TABLE 11:  
HOUSEHOLD SIZE**

<b>Year</b>	<b>River Rouge</b>	<b>Wayne County</b>	<b>Michigan</b>
1970	3.11	3.17	3.27
1980	2.76	2.80	2.84
1990	2.65	2.67	2.63
2000	2.72	2.64	2.56

Source: U.S. Census – 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000

Several factors are responsible for the decline that includes birth rate patterns, the distribution of the population on the age spectrum, and life style changes. The first of these factors is referred to as the baby-boom echo. America experienced a well-documented population growth period following the Second World War, commonly known as the baby boom. Children born during this period have reached the childbearing years and are starting their own families, creating an echo of the earlier baby boom. This baby-boom echo is not producing the same number of persons that occurred earlier due to significant declines in the birthrate. Women today are having fewer children than their mothers did. Fewer children mean smaller families and reduced household sizes.

Population distribution patterns have also contributed to the decrease in size of the average household. The aging of the baby-boom generation has begun to increase the proportion of those persons that are no longer considered to be likely candidates for parenthood.

Finally, the increasing number of single-person households has contributed to this trend. Improved medical care has resulted in an increasing number of persons over the age of 65, many of whom are widows or widowers creating single-person households. Young persons have also shown a tendency to marry later and delay having children until later in their lives. Another consequence of this delay is a corresponding decision to have fewer children. Increases in the divorce rate has also increased the number of new households and contributed to the decline in their overall size.

### **Household Characteristics**

The data available for the decade 1980-1990 shows the continued decline in the "traditional family". This is so even though the number of married couples grew nationally by 6.5 percent and the number of births was higher in 1984 than any time since 1964.

In the United States, the traditional family dropped from 31 percent to 26 percent of all households. Families headed by unmarried men or women grew 32 percent, and persons living alone or with unrelated people grew more than twice as fast as families. Families make up 71 percent of all households, but are smaller and less traditional than ever before.

In the City of River Rouge in 2000, family households, consisting of household members related to each other, comprise approximately 68.8 percent of all City households. This is slightly higher than the County figure of 66.6 percent and the State-wide 68.0 percent. Married couple families, or the traditional family unit consisting of a husband and wife living together with their own children, represent 31.4 percent of the City's households. This is lower than the equivalent figures for both Wayne County and Michigan. The percentage of female-headed households is 30.4 percent, considerably higher than the County and nearly 2.5 times greater than the State.

**Table 12:  
HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS, 2000**

Household Type	River Rouge		Wayne County	Michigan
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<b>All Households</b>				
Family Households	2,503	68.8	66.6	68.0
Non-Family Households	1,137	31.2	33.4	32.0
<b>Family Households</b>				
Married Couple Families	1,142	31.4	40.7	51.4
Family, other	1,361	37.4	25.9	16.6
<b>Female-Headed Households</b>	1,107	30.4	20.6	12.5

Source: U.S. Census – 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000

## ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Labor Force Participation

Over the past four decades, the City of River Rouge has shown a consistent decrease in the civilian labor force. This can be explained by the decrease in the number of persons living in the City. Between 1980 and 1990, the civilian labor force decreased by 1,050 persons. The Michigan Department of Career Development year-to-date average for April 2000 suggests that the labor force has decreased by another 50 persons in the past ten years.

**Table 13:  
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION**

	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
Civilian Labor Force:	6,175	5,350	4,300	4,250
Employed	5,725	4,350	3,750	4,025
Unemployed	450	1,000	525	200

Source: Michigan Department of Career Development – Annual Average for 1970, 1980, 1990 and Year-to-Date Average for April 2000

**Table 14:  
INDUSTRY OF EMPLOYMENT**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>River Rouge</b>		<b>Wayne County</b>
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	13	0.4	0.1
Construction	171	4.9	4.6
Manufacturing	751	21.5	21.8
Wholesale Trade	134	3.8	3.2
Retail Trade	371	10.6	10.7
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	235	6.7	6.4
Information	71	2.0	2.5
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	195	5.6	5.9
Professional, scientific, management, admin, waste manage.	300	8.6	9.2
Educational, health, and social services	586	16.8	18.6
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food service	339	9.7	8.0
Other services	163	4.7	5.0
Public administration	156	4.5	4.0

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Nearly 22 percent of the City's resident labor force are employed in manufacturing-related industries. This is about the same employment pattern for Wayne County. In 1990, about 32 percent of the City's resident labor force was employed in this industry. This decrease may be attributed to the slight decline of the automobile industry in southeast Michigan and the reduction of manufacturing-related establishments in River Rouge and surrounding communities.

**Table 15:  
OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Category	River Rouge		Wayne County
	Number	%	%
Managers/Professionals	452	13	28.1
Sales and Office	914	26.2	26.8
Service	895	25.7	16.7
Farming, Forestry and Fishing	0	0	0.1
Blue Collar	1154	35.1	28.3
<b>Totals</b>	3,700	100.0	100.0

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Table 16 provides a breakdown of the number of people who work in the different sectors of the labor force. Blue collar: jobs account for 35.1 percent of jobs held by members of the City's resident labor force, compared to the Wayne County proportion of 28.3 percent. More than one-half of Wayne County's labor force holds white-collar positions. Approximately 40 percent of River Rouge residents have similar positions.

**Table 16:  
MEDIAN INCOME - 2000**

	2000
River Rouge	\$29,214
Ecorse	27,142
Lincoln Park	42,515
Wyandotte	43,740
Wayne County	40,776

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Income data is frequently used as a measure of a community's affluence. It can also be a valuable indicator of the types of housing that a community can afford, the levels of retail development that it can support, and that ability to support different types of community services. In 1990, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that River Rouge has a lower median income than all but two Wayne County communities. A higher percentage of households have incomes in the lower ranges than is true for Wayne County as a whole. The City's higher percentage of residents living below the poverty line and larger number of single parent households, in part, explain these lower incomes.

**Table 17:  
INCOME TYPE**

	River Rouge		Wayne County
	Number of Households	%	%
Wage and Salary Income	2,703	74.8	77.2
Social Security Income	1,080	29.9	27.5
Public Assistance Income	370	10.2	6.5
Retirement Income	774	21.4	19.8

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Table 18 is a break down of the different types of household incomes. Wages and salaries are the principal source of household income. Approximately 75 percent of all households in River Rouge have this as their source of income. This is largely consistent with Wayne County, which is only slightly higher. Average salary levels in River Rouge are significantly lower than that of the County. The percentage of households receiving income from retirement and social security are also similar. The greatest difference in sources of income between the City of River Rouge and the County is from public assistance.

**Table 18:  
POVERTY STATUS (% below poverty line)**

	River Rouge	Wayne County
<b>All Individuals</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16.4</b>
Persons 18 years and over	18.2	13.7
Persons 65 years and over	10.5	11.3
Related children under 18 years	30.6	23.0
Related children 5 to 17 years	30.5	22.4
Unrelated Individuals 15 years and over	31.9	25.4
<b>All Families</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>12.7</b>
With related children under 18 years	26	18.5
With related children under 5 years	27.8	22.9
<b>Female Householder Families</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>28.1</b>
With related children under 18 years	38.4	35.8
With related children under 5 years	44.7	46.3

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Households in poverty are those households with an income beneath the income threshold established by the Social Security Administration. River Rouge reports a higher incidence of persons below the poverty level than is the case for Wayne County. Twenty nine (29) percent of all families living in the City are living in poverty. Families with a female head of the household are more likely to be living in poverty than any other population group. Approximately 55.1 percent of all female-headed households in River Rouge live in poverty. Children living in families with a female head are also likely to live in poverty than other children. Table 19 compares the City's poverty status with that of Wayne County.

**Table 19:  
RETAIL TRADE – 1997 BY ZIP CODE**

\*The following figures do not account for sole-proprietorship and partnership based businesses

	<u>Number of Establishments</u>	<u>Sales (\$1,000)</u>	<u>Payroll (\$1,000)</u>	<u>Employees</u>
<b>River Rouge (48218)</b>	28	25,000	2,500	249
<b>Ecorse (48229)</b>	27	25,000	2,500	249
<b>Lincoln Park (48146)</b>	157	250,000	50,000	2500
<b>Wyandotte (48192)</b>	157	249,000	25,000	2499

Source: U.S. Economic Census, 1997

The range and choice of retail opportunities available within the City's boundaries are very limited. River Rouge boasts 42 retail establishments within the boundaries of the City. This figure is almost half of those found in Ecorse and less than a quarter of that found in Wyandotte. As a result of these limited opportunities, River Rouge residents must travel outside of the City's boundaries for comparative shopping and most major retail purchases.

**Table 20:  
TYPE OF BUSINESSES**

	<u>Number</u>
Building Materials/Garden Supplies	1
General Merchandise	1
Food	10
Automotive Dealers	1
Gasoline Service Stations	2
Apparel and Accessories	3
Furniture and Home Furnishings	-
Eating and Drinking	17
Drug Stores	2
Miscellaneous Retail	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>

Source: U.S. Economic Census, 1997

## EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Since 1990, school enrollment in River Rouge declined by 248 children. The greatest decline occurred in college enrollments, which declined by 364 students. Nursery school enrollment grew by 72 students, and kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment increased by 4 students. These enrollment changes reflect the City's changing age structure

**Table 21:  
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT - 2000**

	<u>Number</u>
Persons 3 Years and Over Enrolled in School	2,716
Pre-primary School Enrollment	189
Elementary or High School	2261
College	226

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Educational attainment is calculated on only persons 25 years old and older. There are five categories within this section: persons without a high school diploma or a GED, persons with a high school diploma or a GED, persons who have some college education but no degree, persons with an associates degree, as well as persons with a bachelors, graduate or professional degree. In River Rouge, persons with a high school degree contain the largest percentage of the population. 5.5 percent of the people hold a bachelors degree or higher. This figure is more than double for people in Wayne County, where 17.1 percent of the population holds a bachelor degree or higher.

**Table 22:  
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - 2000**

Attainment Level	<b>River Rouge</b>		<b>Wayne County</b>
	Number	%	%
Not a High School Graduate	1774	30.3	22.8
Graduated High School	2,162	37.1	30.6
Some College – No Degree	1282	22.0	23.3
Associates Degree	278	4.7	5.8
Bachelor's Degree or higher	324	5.5	17.1

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

## HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Since 1970, there have been many changes in the American family's composition. America has seen a decline in the "traditional" family household. Families headed by unmarried men and women grew twenty-five (25) percent, and persons living alone or with unrelated people grew more than twice as fast as families. Families make up sixty-eight (68) percent of all households, but they are smaller and less traditional than ever before.

From 1970 to 1990, River Rouge's housing supply increased by sixty-seven (67) housing units. Demolition of more than 600 units more than offset this gain, resulting in a net decline in the total number of dwellings. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of housing units decreased by another 586 units.

**Table 23:  
CHANGE IN TOTAL NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS – 1970 to 2000**

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>%</u>
<b>River Rouge</b>	5,316	5,045	4,666	4,080	- 1,236	- 23
<b>Ecorse</b>	5,481	5,394	4,999	4,861	- 620	- 11.3
<b>Lincoln Park</b>	16,221	16,854	16,763	16,821	600	3
<b>Wyandotte</b>	13,241	13,287	12,822	12,303	- 938	- 7.0

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Home ownership is generally a good indicator of community stability. Home purchases often represent the single largest investment that a family will make and, therefore usually signifies a long-term commitment to the community. The City has a higher percentage of rental units than is the case for neighboring communities or the southeast Michigan region. Non-owner occupied dwellings account for more than 42 percent of the City's total housing supply.

**Table 24:  
OWNER/RENTER – 2000**

	<b>Percentage</b>	
	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Renter</u>
River Rouge	57.9	42.1
Ecorse	61.8	38.2
Lincoln Park	79.1	20.9
Wyandotte	73.0	27.0
Wayne County	66.6	33.4
SEMCOG	68.0	27

Source: U.S. Census, 2000



The value of a housing unit is another useful measure of the quality of a community's housing supply. River Rouge's 1990 median housing value was \$22,700, and in 2000 it was \$45,500. This figure is more than half the median housing value for Wayne County, which is \$99,400. The City's housing values are also lower than most neighboring communities.

**Table 25:  
MEDIAN HOUSING VALUE – 2000**

	Percentage	
	<u>Owner-Occupied</u>	<u>Contract Rent</u>
River Rouge	\$ 45,500	\$ 358
Ecorse	\$ 44,300	\$ 368
Lincoln Park	\$ 84,100	\$ 452
Wyandotte	\$ 101,700	\$ 464
Wayne County	\$ 99,400	\$ 428
SEMCOG	\$ 136,500	\$ 515

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

To a significant degree, the median housing value is a good reflection of the advanced age of the City's housing supply. Household characteristics, in general, and the rate of new household growth have become increasingly important indicators of demographic change within a community. Nearly 40 percent of the homes in River Rouge were constructed before 1940. Only 20.2 percent of the housing stock of River Rouge, 831 units, has been constructed after the year 1960 and 1.7 percent, or 73 units constructed since 1980.

**Table 26:  
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT**

	Number	%
1990-2000	25	.6
1980-1989	48	1.1
1970-1979	172	4.2
1960-1969	586	14.3
1950-1959	729	17.8
1940-1949	938	22.9
1939 or Earlier	1592	39.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,080</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

## ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

### Issues

These issues have been compiled from City workshops in the years prior to the creation of this document, as well as the issues noted in the past Master Plan. Each issue mentioned below creates a challenge or opportunity that must be addressed by the City. The only way to truly address the issues is to develop **policies**, which over the long term will be adhered to stringently. The goals and objectives portion of this Master Plan will address the basis for all future policies regarding land use.

### Residential

- An abundance of renter-occupied single-family/multi-family converted homes exist in the City.
- Parking problems exist in residential areas with regard to accessory off-street parking for housing units and incompatible non-residential parking lots.
- Lack of large tracts for newer housing opportunities.
- Predominance of small lots.
- Mixed land uses in residential areas. Particularly the encroachment of industrial and commercial uses in residential areas.
- Absence of trees, shrubs, etc.
- Poor buffering and transitions between residential and more intense uses.

### Commercial

- Problems with commercial relocation. (Need to define more specifically).
- Jefferson Avenue parking is insufficient.
- Jefferson Avenue truck traffic is a problem.
- Area generally lacks a population base to create a market draw.
- Office uses are almost non-existent and should be encouraged.
- Commercial areas currently lack a desirable aesthetic character.
- In many cases, commercial uses are not properly buffered from residential uses.

- Trash receptacles go unscreened, leaving both an unsightly appearance and trash being distributed throughout the district.

### **Industrial**

- Most of the industrial uses in the City lack any type of screening. Outdoor storage and parking are all visible from roads.
- Buffering is absent in many cases. Such techniques as walls, landscaping, berms and combinations of the three should be required between industrial uses and any other type of use.
- A lot of industrial land demands in the City have been for junkyards, under the premise of a more acceptable name. i.e., metal recyclers, material handlers and storage yards.

### **Public / Quasi-Public**

- Churches have parking needs that must be carefully coordinated when located in residential areas. Screening should be required, with the understanding that the visual impact and noise associated with such lots will damage the long term housing values and limit the ability to sustain a successful residential' neighborhood.

**Insert Zoning Map 5**

## **VISION STATEMENT AND STRATEGIES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the broadest sense, the Master Plan is a general policy. The Master Plan contains vision statements, each supported by a group of strategies designed to serve as a guide to consistent and rational public and private decisions in the use and development of land and public improvements. The vision statements and planning strategies outlined in this section may differ from the Master Plan graphics and illustrations in function and in degree of specificity.

### **PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN**

The purpose of the Master Plan is:

1. To improve the physical environment of the City as a setting for human activities and to promote the general health, safety, and welfare by making the City more functional, beautiful, decent, healthful, interesting, and efficient.
2. To promote the public interest and the interest of the City at large, rather than the interest of individuals or special groups within the City.
3. To facilitate the democratic determination and implementation of City policies and physical development. The Plan is primarily a policy instrument. The Plan facilitates the democratic process by carrying out the responsibility for determining policies and providing an opportunity for citizens participation.
4. To affect political and technical coordination in community development.
5. To inject long-range considerations into the determination of short-range actions.
6. To bring professional and technical knowledge to bear on the making of political decisions concerning the physical development of the City.

This chapter attempts to reflect the City's aspirations and quality of community life which the City desires. The land use portrayed in this report and the resulting recommendations presented in the Master Plan reflect the City of River Rouge's key decisions in refining the City's development pattern.

This Plan puts into words and graphic presentations that seek to implement the vision statements and relate them to recommendations and ultimately to detailed regulations to be developed later.

## **COMMUNITY SCALE**

### **Vision Statement:**

Design to the human, pedestrian scale, to create a sense of community and neighborhood. Make the City a desirable place for people to live, work, shop, play, and interact.

### **Strategies:**

- Design to human scale, proportions and perceptions.
- Encourage walking and the pedestrian use of streets in ways that enhance the human experience, and secondarily accommodate vehicles.
- Facilitate human interaction by the design of the streets network and building uses and the linkage between them.
- Enhance neighborhood facilities to become places of community interaction.
- Continue to mix (the) range of housing types, household compositions, and people of all ages.
- Use and encourage more landscaping to enhance the City's character and preserve and replace trees.
- Use opportunities, where appropriate, in each development to improve aesthetic appearance.
- Work to improve zoning provisions to implement the Master Plan.

## **PEDESTRIANISM**

### **Vision Statement:**

Design for pedestrian accessibility through form, layout and streetscape characteristics.

### **Strategies:**

1. Locate the highest residential density of uses closest to Downtown.
2. Maintain and expand the network of pedestrian sidewalks.
3. Appropriately size and locate crosswalks and depressed curbs with large, flat curb radii.
4. Redesign Jefferson and Coolidge for a pedestrian friendly design.

5. Provide low level pedestrian lighting and strategically placed street furniture like benches and trash receptacles.
6. Promote pedestrian and bikeway circulation throughout and beyond the City.

## **RESIDENTIAL**

### **Vision Statement:**

Capitalize on the City of River Rouge's unique tradition and pedestrian scale by continuing to offer a choice of both modern and historic residential properties.

### **Strategies:**

1. Provide strong residential code enforcement, while discouraging nonconforming uses.
2. Encourage a high percentage of ownership and permanent housing types. The abundance of multi-family conversions and renter-occupied single-family homes that exist in the City should be converted back to single-family owner-occupied homes.
3. Separate single-family and multi-family residential areas from other uses and allow moderate density townhouse-type development to associate more closely with single family uses in traditional areas.
4. Promote new quality housing to replace dilapidated structures and vacant residential lots, while promoting the maintenance of existing facilities.
5. Encourage compact and pedestrian friendly housing development that incorporates nearby mixed uses and densities.
6. Promote higher density housing developments near the central City, using suggested Standards of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.
7. The encroachment of industrial uses in residential areas should be discouraged. Create buffers and transitional areas between residential and more intense uses. Also promote redevelopment and the adaptive reuse of underutilized industrial buildings and sites.
8. Allow quality new construction within existing parcel limits to stimulate appropriate redevelopment.
9. Promote the planting of street trees, shrubs, and greenery in non-industrial areas.

## **COMMERCIAL**

### **Vision Statement:**

Maintain retail and service facility locations sufficient to best serve the population in a convenient manner.

### **Strategies:**

1. Do not over-allocate property for retail and service.
2. Encourage retail and service uses to meet quality and reasonable development standards through ordinances.
3. Use landscaping to enhance the present environment.
4. Relate similar retail and service use to one another.
5. Encourage neighborhood convenience retail and services, and seek to eliminate unplanned spot or strip development.
6. Encourage adequate and safe parking in all retail and service uses with appropriate screening and buffering as feasible.
7. Preserve and restore historic structures.
8. Honor existing setbacks and street walls whenever possible.
9. Recognize existing parcel limitation on redevelopment.
10. Promote a particular character of commercial development to establish an identity for the City that will be unique and serve the residents of the City.

## **DOWNTOWN**

### **Vision Statement:**

Continue the effort to establish a unique mix of Downtown shops and services that will thrive and meet the needs of the City's residents, workers, and guests in a pleasant and friendly environment.

### **Strategies:**

1. Establish attractive and clearly defined street entrances to the City.
2. Develop thematic, visual gateways to the Downtown (Le., landscaping, lighting, residential and commercial areas).



3. Create boundaries of the Downtown area to permit proper transition between residential and commercial areas.
4. Continue to expand and improve on Downtown parking.
5. Encourage thematic ties with the Downtown and overall development ideas.
6. Plan "quick-use" retail areas with attention to parking availability for "in and out" customers.
7. Discourage commercial uses that require outside storage.
8. Encourage the development of a Downtown Entertainment District.
9. Encourage the development of a public area Downtown, a people-oriented focal point, for community functions (i.e. entertainment, assemblies, etc.).
10. Provide angle parking for access and convenience to shopping opportunities. Redesign Jefferson Avenue to bridge the west side with the east side of the Downtown and create a pedestrian friendly and inviting Downtown.
11. Honor and maintain existing street wall with zero lot lines for new developments.
12. Preserve classic Downtown buildings and ensure the integrity of the Downtown.
13. Improve sidewalks, coordinate walls, screening and landscaping of parking lots.
14. Improve the rear of buildings.
15. Increase access to rear entryways of buildings.
16. Restore and improve existing building facades.
17. Increase usage of building second floors.
18. Provide high maintenance level for existing public improvements.
19. Create additional awareness of the Downtown through increased sponsoring of special events within the Downtown, such as festivals, sidewalk sales, farmers' and craft markets, and other civic events.
20. Promote a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment.

## **VITALITY**

### **Vision Statement:**

Develop safe and festive environment for people within and outside the City.

### **Strategies:**

1. Encourage the development of family restaurant(s).
2. Develop an environment for restaurants and other food vendors that will blend with the desired character of the Downtown area.
3. Encourage development of Downtown family entertainment.
4. Encourage the identification and development of services for niche markets.

## **INDUSTRIAL**

### **Vision Statement:**

Work to upgrade existing industrial areas and attract quality development to vacant buildings and sites.

### **Strategies:**

1. Maximize the industrial potential without overdeveloping individual sites.
2. Carefully regulate the industrial use of nonconforming lots.
3. Concentrate on attracting high quality industries.
4. Closely monitor industry that might not meet performance standards.
5. Protect other uses from industrial intrusions, such as using buffer zones.
6. Require all industries to buffer from other uses.
7. Permit a limited intermix of compatible industrial and commercial use types.
8. Discourage existing industries from overextending or over intensifying the use of their site.
9. Encourage use of "Green Building" design on major industrial buildings.
10. Recognize limitations caused by existing parcel layout and adjacent uses in reviewing redevelopment.

## **THOROUGHFARE AND PARKING**

### **Vision Statement:**

Plan the improvement of major street systems in a manner that least impacts residential continuity.

### **Strategies:**

1. Increase traffic carrying capacity of the City's major streets where feasible through non-widening means.
2. Provide for safe pedestrian circulation with improvement on local sidewalks.
3. Encourage pedestrian and bike path development and support any connections to any County wide or regional systems.
4. Improve traffic circulation and movement to remove bottlenecks.
5. Discourage industrial traffic from using Downtown streets.
6. Obtain needed right-of-way dedications and reservations (Le. sidewalks, road width, etc.).
7. Correct high accident intersections.
8. Pave roads and improve surfacing, where needed.
9. Landscaping and other permanent coordinated screening techniques should be an integral part to new parking lot design (i.e. trees, shrubs, flowers, decorative walls, etc.).
10. Encourage proper buffers between parking lots and residential uses.

## **RECREATION**

### **Vision Statement:**

Maintain the City's Recreation Plan that addresses the need for added facilities and specialized additions.

### **Strategies:**

1. Provide easy pedestrian access to recreation areas.
2. Encourage recreation uses to be linked with an improved sidewalk and bike path network.

3. Encourage barrier-free access improvements that are complete in scope and execution and provide unified access.
4. Provide sidewalk extensions and infill throughout the City.
5. Provide adequate and proper facilities for programs on all City-owned recreation sites.
6. Encourage further cooperation with the School District in providing neighborhood recreation facilities and programs.
7. Expand the number of neighborhood sites to make up for the deficiencies in park land and to accommodate expanding demand.
8. Ensure that the recreation facilities are an integral part of planned land development schemes.
9. Encourage both physical and cultural activities.

## **AESTHETICS**

### **Vision Statement:**

Continue to maintain an attractive and clean environment for people within and outside the City.

### **Strategies:**

1. Ensure environmental features are an integral part of every development.
2. Use and encourage more landscaping to enhance the City's character and preserve and replace trees.
3. Input aesthetic refinements into development projects that preserve or enhance the natural environment.
4. Provide strong code enforcement, while discouraging nonconforming uses.
5. Ensure the proper screening and maintenance of trash dumpsters.
6. Ensure trash is properly contained within their appropriate receptacles.
7. Require walls and other screening techniques for all outside operations or storage areas.

## LAND USE PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

Many cities have been negatively transformed by the sometimes thoughtless and insensitive application of post World War II standards of land use, redevelopment and highway design. River Rouge has been impacted by some of these approaches. The following narrative generally describes the typical American small town development history of the past half-century.

The streetcar, an earlier form of mass transit, was the first to be removed. Main Street became a major highway. The widening of the State highway through cities removed sidewalks, street trees and the planted boulevards. New retail and commercial buildings were built along the highway outside of town, not in the traditional downtown core. Industrial parks, garden apartments and residential subdivisions replaced the small farms that once formed a greenbelt surrounding the town. The downtown was no longer within walking distance of the new development. This was all done in the name of progress. It was thought to be good and modern. Generally, people did not realize what was being lost. When the commercial strip began competing with the downtown stores, the town's department store closed; the grocery store closed and moved to the strip; the movie theater closed; several of the local gas stations closed; the railroad station was abandoned; and the grain elevator and lumberyard became inactive.

Modern zoning advocated a total separation of land uses. Unfortunately, the complete separation of uses contributed to the loss of nearby suburbs and the streetcar. Jobs, convenience stores, community centers and even schools became more separated from housing, thereby requiring new roads and vehicles to fuel the consumer economy. The resulting sprawl pattern caused an ever decreasing sense of community. The loss of identity and a desire to return to earlier values has recently become the catalyst for the rebirth of historic or traditional communities.

Considerable amounts of time are required to use the current pattern of sprawl. In daily life, time is at a premium. Time to spend with children, the family, with neighbors, and with the community is limited. Sometimes parents have little time for themselves. Often, both parents, in the shrinking number of nuclear families, must work long hours to make all of the payments to maintain the programmed consumer status; some hold two jobs to support a house and two cars.

Time is one of the central human measurements for evaluating the operational characteristics of place. Time is required in order to complete the daily tasks of life, commute to work, get to the grocery store, and take the children to school. In a world where time is a highly valued commodity, a typical suburban community, whose physical organization requires that large quantities of time be spent getting from place to place, squanders natural resources as well as human resources. This wastefulness, particularly the lost time, detracts from the quality of life. Conversely, a community that is structured so that multiple tasks may be performed without spending hours in an automobile, on a crowded highway, or in a traffic jam, will, as a result of its physical structure, add considerably to the quality of life.

Because of its history and size, communities such as River Rouge can be further enhanced with respect to the human scale, a scale which underscores a sense of community. Such cities are distinguished from township residential sprawl subdivisions and strip malls by their compact form, their sensitive mix of land uses, their street network, and their distinctive character.

A respect for what was good in the older town form is gaining credibility, finding those former patterns of development more acceptable. The reinforcement of this traditional form can be used to create a new sense of community, of extended families, which fulfill the fundamental social needs for kinship and a sense of community (social well-being).

A Master Plan, which fosters home ownership with a private yard at a reasonable price, and provides the ability for people to walk and interact with their neighborhood and the community, and requires shorter trips, recreates something of considerable value. Mutual respect and concern for neighbors and the community can be brought back from the past with positive pride in the sense of community, schools and neighborhood. It requires a land use pattern of development that respects time, is more affordable, and sustains the City as an interesting place in which to live, work and shop. The approach of this Plan seeks to find the means to fulfill these objectives through the following steps:

1. Review of the past.
2. Analyze the present.
3. Create visions for the future.
4. Analyze potentials and create plans.
5. Improve communication and interaction between the public and private sectors.
6. Develop codes that reflect the future vision and the potentials.

These steps should be used in the creation of the City's Master Plan and subsequent action and programs for residential housing, commercial and industrial land use, community facilities, thoroughfares, and parking and utilities.

# RESIDENTIAL AREA PLAN

## Introduction

Housing serves one of the most basic of all human needs - the need for shelter. It can be provided in a number of different forms, including detached single-family homes, multiple family buildings, and numerous variations on these basic types. Predominant housing types within a community are dependent upon a number of factors, including local preferences, the availability of land, and economic characteristics, among others. Different housing types have varying land use requirements that need to be considered as part of the long-term planning process. Since the amount of the land used for residential purposes frequently occupies large areas of the community, the characteristics of the housing type often influences the overall character of the community.

This section of River Rouge's Master Plan reviews the characteristics and the potential of the City's residential areas. The arrangement of the City's housing into neighborhood areas follows and includes a consideration of the relationship of these neighborhoods to adjoining non-residential uses.

## Neighborhood Unit Concept

The planning purpose of the neighborhood unit concept is to create self-contained residential areas, each served by an elementary school, playground and/or park area. These residential areas are typically bounded by man-made or physical boundaries, such as roads or rivers, and are sized to accommodate the development of an elementary school and a park, located near the center of the neighborhood. As originally conceived, these neighborhoods were intended to serve a population of between 3,000 and 5,000 persons.

Since the mid 1960's, demographic changes have taken place that affect the population density of neighborhoods. Declines in the size of the average household and changes in household composition are two demographic trends influencing the character of neighborhoods. Declines in average household size are a consequence of declining birth rates. As birth rates decline, there is usually an accompanying decline in school enrollments and the subsequent closing of neighborhood schools. Consolidated school facilities now often serve more than one neighborhood. In most instances, such circumstances have necessitated the readjustment of the original attendance areas to more accurately reflect individual elementary school capacities -or other educational objectives.

## Neighborhood Identification

An important element of this Plan is the identification of existing and historic residential neighborhoods. The identification of these areas is based on several factors, which include existing land use patterns, significant physical barriers, and neighborhoods established in previous planning studies.

Although some neighborhoods may not contain an elementary school, it is still important to maintain the integrity of these areas in terms of identity, land use patterns, and traffic circulation. Whenever possible, residential neighborhoods should be protected from the intrusion of incompatible land uses and through-traffic movements. There is a need to maintain circulation patterns that route traffic around, as opposed to through, these neighborhoods. Residential neighborhoods, as a geographic entity, can be used to estimate population and school enrollment levels, park and recreation needs, and the demand for a variety of public services.

The identification of individual neighborhoods is a two-step process; the first of which involves the identification of the City's major residential and non-residential areas. The basic residential development pattern of the City has been well established for a number of years. Residential development, including single-family homes and multiple-family structures, is a dominant land use category, only being surpassed by industrial development and railroad right-of-way. Residential development is predominantly located in the southwest half of the City, while industrial development has been concentrated in the northeast half of the City following along the banks of the Detroit River and River Rouge. The following neighborhood areas are identified below and mapped on Illustration 4.

### **Neighborhood #1: "The Circle"**

General Boundaries: Morrow to the north, Visger to the south, Holford to the west and Palmerston to the east.

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: Most of the homes were constructed in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The streets are lined with trees, setbacks are consistent and homes are predominately situated on concrete cul-de-sac streets. The homes and landscape are maintained in excellent condition.

### **Neighborhood #2: "The Backstreet"**

General Boundaries: Beechwood Street to the Railroad Tracks, excluding "the Circle".

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: Primarily established and recognized by its geographic location adjacent to the tracks in the back of the residential area. Houses are well kept for the most part. The area includes public housing, which is in need of repair and cleanup.

### **Neighborhood #3: "Dunn Park Area"**

General Boundaries: Coolidge to Anchor and Jefferson to Richter.

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: This area is characterized by quality housing stock.



#### **Neighborhood #4: "Memorial Park Area"**

General Boundaries: Jefferson to Ironton and Coolidge to Orchard.

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: Beautiful housing, large apartments and Memorial Park make this area a quality living environment.

#### **Neighborhood #5: "Beechwood Center Area"**

General Boundaries: General area located along Beechwood Street.

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: Mix of housing styles, sizes and conditions characterize this area. The area has many lots and homes with potential for rehabilitation. The area is also characterized by churches located at corners.

#### **Neighborhood #6: "The Front Street"**

General Boundaries: This is generally located at the Frazier/Campbell area.

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: This area is filled with nice homes and well kept landscaped yards.

#### **Neighborhood #7: "Cicotte Park Area"**

General Boundaries: Pleasant to Victoria and the railroad tracks to Jefferson.

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: The park use to identify this area. The park needs to be redeveloped. Many homes have been converted into multiplex units. Lack of buffering along the railroad and industrial areas have lowered the quality of living in the fringe areas of this neighborhood.

#### **Neighborhood #8: "The Haltiner Triangle"**

General Boundaries: Railroad tracks to the west and Jefferson to the east.

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: The area is negatively impacted by both heavy industrial uses and the railroad location. The residential uses are not buffered from the non-residential uses. Spreading of nonresidential uses is further deteriorating the quality of living in the fringe areas.

#### **Neighborhood #9: "Pleasant Area"**

General Boundaries: Pleasant to Coolidge and Jefferson to Division.

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: Characterized by High School on the southwest of the neighborhood and church on the southeast. Homes are quality for the most part; however, a number of multiplex units exist from single-family conversions.

## **Neighborhood #10: "The Stadium Area"**

General Boundaries: This is generally located north of Coolidge and west of the railroad tracks.

Characteristics that make this a Neighborhood: This area is predominately single-family residential homes. The newer football stadium and track highlight this area.

### **General Residential Analysis**

Since much of the City's residential development occurred during the 1920's and 1930's, neighborhoods were designed on more of a human, as opposed to automotive, scale. This was before the heavy reliance on the automobile, when lot sizes were smaller, and houses without garages were the norm. Residents were only a short stroll away from their place of employment, local shopping areas and places of worship.

Many of these characteristics are being embraced today in the neo-traditional/new urbanism style of development. This philosophy, however, recognizes the existence (and need) of the automobile, while focusing on pedestrianism and fostering neighborhood community. River Rouge currently has many of the components that suburban communities are attempting to foster through neo-traditional growth plans. The City also has many problems associated with the development styles of the past.

The following issues must be addressed to increase the quality of living in River Rouge's residential areas. Since many of the issues are faced in all or most of the "neighborhood areas", the policies will be introduced universally for the City.

### **Incompatible Uses**

Incompatible non-residential uses surround and encroach into River Rouge's residential areas. In most cases, the residential homes are not adequately buffered from the impacts associated with the incompatible use. Noise, light, traffic, dust, odor and general blight often negatively impact the quality of living and thus the housing values in the area. In many cases, these homes become rental properties and suffer from lack of maintenance and upkeep. As industrial and commercial uses further infiltrate the residential areas, the ring of negative influence becomes greater. The City recognizes the "domino effect" on quality of housing and quality of life.

The City also recognizes that in many cases public and quasi-public uses will have a negative impact on residential neighborhoods if not properly screened and buffered. Churches, schools, utility facilities and even recreation centers may impact the quality of living in an area. In most cases, the parking needs associated with the use has the detrimental impact. In other cases, the privacy of surrounding homes is impeded. Some uses just have a negative aesthetic impact on the neighborhood; for example, barbed wire fencing around school yards and parking lots without perimeter landscaping.

## **Single Family Home Conversions**

Many of the single-family homes in the City have been converted to multi-tenant units. The impacts from such conversions include the maintenance issues noted above and parking issues which are addressed in the following paragraph. Lot sizes, recreation opportunities, street capacity, parking, and schools have not been planned to accommodate multiple units in these areas.

## **Parking and Safety**

The values and norms of early neighborhood housing design and standards has led to many of its problems of today. A major problem is the lack of residential parking. Many homes built in the late 1800's and early 1900's were constructed without garages. With small lots ranging from 30 feet in width to 60 feet in width, the opportunities for driveways are limited. The lack of off-street parking requires that many residents park on the street. The on-street parking limits visibility for children crossing the street and presents a sense of blight. Travelers on the street focus on vehicular parking, rather than street trees and architecture. The parking situation is further enhanced by the conversion of some single-family housing units to multiple family housing units.

The parking problem is further exacerbated on weekends when churches have their services. Many churches have very limited parking, if any at all, forcing their parishioners to double park in neighborhood streets. Those churches with off-street parking lots are usually not properly buffered and cause a decrease in the quality of living in adjacent homes.

## **Essential Policies for Residential Neighborhood Improvement**

The following policies must be adopted in order to create quality neighborhoods. The City of River Rouge City -Council, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Department Directors must all agree to these policies and enforce these policies to promote quality living in River Rouge. These Master Plan policies should be reinforced by a resolution of each of the Boards stating that the following principles will be complied with on every decision. The principles should be published so that the public is aware of the policies.

Those of us entrusted by the residents of River Rouge agree that:

- We will **not** permit further infiltration of industrial and commercial uses in the pre-defined residential neighborhoods.
- We will require buffering, screening, and site clean-up for all commercial and industrial uses whenever the opportunity avails itself through expansion, rehabilitation, use change, or redevelopment requests.
- We will provide or require buffers on non-residential fringe properties that become City property through receivership or other means.

- We will require all non-conforming uses and structures to conform with current Zoning and Master Plan designations as a condition of sale for all properties owned by the City through receivership or other means.
- We will actively pursue the elimination of illegal and non-conforming uses from residential neighborhoods.
- We will provide strong residential code enforcement activities in residential areas.
- We will encourage a high percentage of ownership and permanent housing types by enforcing and upgrading the provisions of the non-conforming use and structure section of the Zoning Ordinance to eliminate multi-unit single-family homes. Multiple family registration and code compliance will be enforced to the extent possible to discourage slum-lord management practices.
- We will promote new quality housing to replace dilapidated structures and vacant residential lots, while promoting the maintenance of existing facilities. Larger lot sizes will be sought for all new single-family housing units and for existing housing when possible. Reasonable quality alternatives to small lot development will be considered. We will promote the planting of trees, shrubs, and other landscape features.
- We will improve, clean and preserve all City owned parks and open spaces as money becomes available.

#### **Other Ideas for Neighborhood Identification and Improvement**

The City cannot accomplish everything necessary to have successful neighborhoods. The residents must also be involved. Neighborhood associations should be established for each of the previously discussed areas. The associations can sponsor neighborhood clean-up days, fund raising activities, neighborhood safety patrols, and represent the entire neighborhood at City meetings on issues that may impact the community. Funds raised can be utilized for:

1. Attractive neighborhood entrance signs
2. Street signs of different shapes or colors for specific neighborhoods
3. Decorative lighting
4. Landscape themes
5. Flower planting programs
6. Neighborhood beautification contests
7. Other improvement ideas

## **COMMERCIAL**

### **Introduction**

This section of the Master Plan considers the characteristics of the City's commercial base and the extent to which new or redeveloped commercial development may be necessary to accommodate anticipated market demands. This analysis also considers the land use requirements of the two commercial designations shown on the land Use Plan Illustration and the relationship of these commercial areas to surrounding land uses.

### **Existing Commercial Development**

Previous land use surveys identified roughly 36 acres of commercially developed and/or commercially zoned land in the City. Less than fourteen (14) acres of this inventory is confined to the Downtown area; the remainder is distributed in a linear manner along Jefferson, Coolidge and Visger Avenue. The largest quantity of this linear commercial land is located along Jefferson Avenue, south of the Downtown.

### **Commercial Demand Estimates**

The retail demand estimates offered in previous Master Plans suggest that the City has a demand for approximately 22 acres of retail development based on certain assumptions regarding disposable income, spending patterns, and the number of households in the City's primary trade area. One major assumption used to formulate this demand was projected population. The plan saw an increase in population for the City reaching 16,600 persons in 1980. Since the 1960's, the City has actually seen a decline in population each decade through the present. The 2000 Census indicates a City population of 9,917 persons. The reduction in occupied housing units, along with the reduction in household size will typically result in less expenditures by the City population. For this reason, the land Use Plan does not propose an increase in the quantity of land allocated for commercial purposes. Rather, the plan encourages the displacement of some of the existing commercial with multiple-family residential uses where development patterns are appropriate, and encourages non-residential, traffic generating uses such as a new post office directly north of the Downtown Area.

The quantity and distribution of commercial uses are largely fixed by existing development patterns. Rather, the emphasis of the Plan is to encourage the reuse and redevelopment of existing commercial areas with the goal of improving their function, appearance and compatibility with neighboring uses. The land Use Plan makes a distinction between two categories of commercial uses: 1) the Downtown Area, and 2) General Commercial Uses. This distinction recognizes the specialized land use characteristics unique to these two categories. Specific recommendations are offered for each of these districts in the following narrative.

## **Downtown Area Plan**

The City of River Rouge's Downtown is a great asset to the Community. The key to this portion of the plan is to find ways to unlock and enhance the positive attributes associated with the Downtown.

River Rouge is also faced with some unique challenges for revitalizing the Downtown Area. The commercial market is limited by a largely industrialized waterfront on the north and east, while a series of major rail lines divide the City on the west. Many marginal commercial uses, such as convenience commercial and auto service related uses, have located in the Downtown Area and have provided little in drawing even the local market into the Downtown. Few entertainment activities take place and entertainment centers such as restaurants and recreation facilities are almost non-existent. In addition, the residential population of the City has been falling continuously since 1950. Such declines directly impact the needs for commercial floor space.

A number of assets and liabilities facing the Downtown are outlined in the "Issues Section" of this Master Plan. Many of the issues are related to design elements and the lack of entertainment activities of the Downtown. The City recognizes that its first challenge must be to recapture the market population found within its municipal boundaries. The commerce of the City of River Rouge is, however, more than retail sales; it is the dynamic interaction of office and service uses, the restaurants, and entertainment offered in the Downtown. Many of these facets and dynamics can be encouraged by a return to traditional town planning.

Elements of traditional town planning design include building form, density, a sense of enclosure, setback, scale, massing, spatial definition, architectural style, colors, textures, materials, landscaping, road types, streetscape, elements, types of land use, level of human activity and development density. Specific analysis of existing form can be used to formulate such specific positive design and planning features as:

- style and massing of the buildings eaves and porches
- setbacks
- streetscape elements
- colors
- windows
- roof pitches
- doors and entrances
- signage
- decorative elements
- landscaping
- treatment of parking

These elements can be interpreted by design professionals into typical building improvement designs that reflect the vision of the Plan and the best qualities of existing forms.

## **The Revitalization Program**

A Downtown Revitalization Program is needed in the City that outlines and describes tasks necessary to be undertaken for the betterment of the City. The program must include the following major divisions:

- Introduction and Mission
- Inventory
- Market Study
- Public/Private Cooperation
- Data Analysis
- Image, Identity and Direction
- Downtown Improvement Plan
- Implementation

The geographic area to be included within this program must be outlined on a plan drawing and project areas delineated relating to their principal use and priority of consideration.

### **Central Business District**

A program has to be directed at making the Central Business District and surroundings an attractive and interesting place to experience.

Jefferson Avenue carries the largest volumes of traffic to and through the Downtown area. The design of Jefferson, with its wide expanse of concrete, has a character that tends to move traffic through the Downtown rather than into the Downtown. Large amounts of industrial truck traffic also increase the traffic movement character of the road. The City created a truck by-pass route around the east side of the City. Enforcement may have to be intensified and another alternative route examined for the west side of the City.

The feasibility for increased on-street parking must be examined and implemented. Such parking areas, whether parallel or angle parking must be integrated into a streetscape and coordinated with storefronts. This will involve reconstruction of many portions of the road and adjacent walks to create traffic islands and landscaped plazas.

Streetscapes must be designed to provide an inviting character to the Downtown. Architectural benches (without advertising signs attached), lighting (durable, yet attractive and consistent throughout the Downtown area), canopy street trees (evenly spaced to provide a sense of order), planters (located to enhance storefronts) and the use of brick pavers and low rise brick walls can all be utilized for aesthetic purposes. They do, however, accomplish more than this goal. They provide areas for socialization; they provide a sense of separation between vehicular and pedestrian traffic; and, they provide a means of linking uses and activity nodes.

The City must also provide a focal point and public center in the Downtown. The focal point may include such things as an architectural feature, art piece, bandstand, and other similar interesting and crowd gathering designs and events. Such area can act as a focal point and directional landmark for visitors.

## **Urban Design and Beautification**

Recent rehabilitation of a few existing commercial buildings has been outstanding. General guidelines for further rehabilitation and improvement of additional buildings include the following standards. They are consistent with renovations that occurred on the Reno Building and the Lozon Ace Hardware.

**General Concept** - Where buildings of earlier architectural styles exist and are representative of good basic design, retention and enhancement of such earlier architectural style should be encouraged. Basic architectural features of such buildings should be enhanced by the removal of clutter and the addition of design refinements. Superficial exterior modernization of soundly designed older buildings is discouraged.

Some of the older buildings have a unique architectural style which can be enhanced through rehabilitation. While no single style predominates in these older buildings, there is a consistency of building materials. Any future additions to the Downtown should continue this consistency of brick.

Preservation of these earlier buildings is compatible in some cases with nearby new buildings of contemporary architecture done in good taste. The unifying theme should be more in the use of materials, sign style, colors and scale than in uniform architectural style per se.

Dramatic improvement in the appearance of Downtown facades can be achieved by a disciplined policy on signs, canopies, exterior treatment, and other building appurtenances. More often than not, expensive face lifts and cover-up jobs are not only unnecessary, but often unattractive. Like unrestricted signs, such facades tend to "outdo" each other and are self-defeating in the end.

In designing rehabilitation, consideration should be given to the effect on neighboring structures to remain and any new structures to be built nearby.

The rehabilitation of groups of shops and buildings in the same block or general area should be coordinated to achieve compatible building heights, facing materials, signs, canopies, etc. Intentional diversity and scale of buildings are not thereby precluded, provided that sound design principles are used.

**Signs** - Existing billboard-style signs and signs painted on buildings should be avoided and new signs should be designed to meet strict standards.

A design policy on signs, including letter style, symbols, approximate sign placement and sign size, should be established and carried out.



**Exterior Surfaces** - The use of primary or brilliant colors on exterior surfaces should generally be used only for incidental accent against an otherwise subdued color background.

Where necessary to bring the exterior walls up to a condition reasonably comparable to new construction, such walls should be cleaned and tuck-pointed.

All show window glass should be clear and not painted or otherwise made obscure, except for the placement of incidental lettering announcing the premises.

**Appurtenances** - No canopy, arcade, or other form of building extension into the street right of way should be installed, except as part of an overall plan for such treatment that is approved by the City.

Any exterior area used for the storage of garbage, rubbish or similar materials should be screened by a brick-faced masonry wall or similar treatment.

All unused exterior appurtenances, such as signs, sign supports, electrical wiring, awning hardware, pipes and vents should be removed.

All overhead wiring should be buried.

Air conditioners, heating units, exhaust fans and other such appurtenances should be screened from public view wherever feasible and not project beyond the wall.

Uses requiring outdoor storage should be prohibited or severely restricted from locating within the Downtown.

## **General Business**

The general business areas of the Community share many of the same redevelopment issues as does the Downtown.

- Separations and buffers from residential and industrial uses.
- A lack of defined access and parking for the businesses.
- Aesthetic and functional considerations such as landscaping, screening and parking design.
- Architectural continuity and quality must be addressed in many areas.

The City has addressed some of these concerns in the Zoning Ordinance; however, the provisions and enforcement of such provisions will have to be reviewed and enhanced.

## **INDUSTRIAL**

Since very little vacant industrial land exists in the City, River Rouge's opportunity to expand industrial acreage is limited. The City should continue efforts to maintain and improve the existing industrial base. These efforts should include such issues as; defining access drives, improving and defining outdoor storage areas, minimizing industrial impacts on residential areas, improving on-site landscaping and screening, and developing a western truck route to divert traffic from the main thoroughfares of the City.

Currently, a majority of the existing industrial sites in the City do not represent planning standards that encourage safety and aesthetic appeal, while limiting impacts on residential neighborhoods. Outdoor storage is an ongoing issue with industrial sites in the City. Efforts should be made to clean up these outdoor storage areas by defining where they will exist and screening them from residential neighborhoods.

Industrial infiltration into existing neighborhoods is an issue that requires immediate attention from the City. The City should plan for the removal of all existing industrial uses that have disrupted the continuous flow of residential housing in these neighborhoods. Expansion of these uses should not be permitted and the City should investigate all legal means of discouraging the long-term continuation of these uses.

The residential environment in the City has also been damaged with the expansion, as well as the creation, of junkyard-type facilities adjacent to and within residential areas. These junkyard expansions have negative impacts on adjacent neighborhood property values. Two of these facilities are City owned and should be an immediate priority for redesign and reuse. The design and use should minimize impacts on the residential neighborhood it is located in.

The impacts of industrial uses on the environment can be high. The City should consider waterfront improvements to the Rouge River and Shortcut Canal to mitigate the effect these uses may have on the City's waterways.

### **Conclusion - Upgrade/Redevelop Existing Industrial Sites and Uses**

Generally, industrial uses in the City are inadequately screened and buffered from adjacent residential neighborhoods, and often times have encroached into these residential neighborhoods. The City needs to modify and enforce its zoning regulations regarding industrial uses to include:

- 1) Upgraded screening and buffer requirements between residential and industrial uses with particular attention to the screening of outdoor storage.
- 2) Limited locations for loading and unloading, so as not to negatively impact residential neighborhoods.
- 3) Provisions to strengthen the aesthetic quality of industrial development, such as, but not limited to, additional landscaping requirements and signage regulations.
- 4) Industrial development should be such that adjacent residential property has a minimal impact from such things as traffic, noise, etc.

- 5) Environmental provisions to strengthen the health of the waterways impacted by adjacent industrial uses.
- 6) Provisions to require defined access drives for existing industrial uses.
- 7) Prevent existing industrial uses from expanding into residential neighborhoods.

**Insert Resources and Constraints map 6**

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

### **Overview**

An implementation strategy is an integral component of a community Master Plan. The strategies determine how the Plan's recommendations are to be put into practice and become reality. To implement the goals and objectives provided in this plan and to achieve the preferred development pattern, it will be necessary for leadership of River Rouge to be forward thinking and committed. The following strategies may be used as individual efforts or combined with others to achieve the desired results. The key is to define those strategies that will best implement the Master Plan at any given time, under specific circumstances and to then proceed with those strategies.

## **PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION**

### **Public Information and Education.**

A successful Master Plan must educate the citizens of the community on both the goals for the community and the individual regulatory and incentive measures that are needed to actually implement the plan and realize the stated goals. An informed and involved citizenry can then offer support and assistance in working toward the community they desire to have in the future.

An example of appropriate public information and education is in educating the public of the importance of continuing the traditional development pattern currently found in River Rouge. Through such efforts, the public is far more likely to initiate and support supporting regulations that promote traditional neighborhood characteristics. Offering information to the public, concerning the benefits of traditional neighborhood development and the ways that such development helps contribute to the city's character and property values, gives citizens the opportunity to make informed decisions regarding new incentives, regulations, or standards.

The following information outlines examples of programs that can be undertaken to help inform the public about important land use goals and implementation techniques:

- A condensed version of the future land use plan, highlighting the goals of the plan
- Informational brochures on various topics important to the city
- Programs in the school system concerning land use issues
- Regular informational sessions conducted by the Planning Commission and City Council
- Media, including newspaper and cable TV outreach on land use issues

### **Continued Cooperation Between Local Units of Government.**

The City should consider cooperating with adjacent communities to promote a proper system of development. The City and its neighboring communities should regularly communicate and share thoughts on matters that maximize benefits for their citizens.

The Downriver Community Conference is an example of an organization that has historically instituted mutual cooperation among its member communities in the areas of planning, grant assistance, job training and police and fire service assistance.

### **Performance Capacity**

To successfully implement the goals and objectives of this Master Plan, the City must develop an internal capacity to carry out the recommendations and the implementation strategies of the Master Plan. Because of its classification as a Core City by the State and its status as a mature community, River Rouge qualifies for assistance that most other communities do not. However, simple qualification is not enough. Projects must be packaged and applications must be submitted to appropriate external funding agencies. The City must develop, through qualified staff working with experienced consultants, the personnel capacity to implement planning objectives, and to seek and receive the financial assistance for which it qualifies. Most grants allow for administrative reimbursements most incentive programs do not. It is not legal to meet application and planning costs from funds received through most programs. The City must budget money to pay for required human resources. Specifically the following should be considered:

### **Ordinance Enforcement**

A commitment is required to enforce the ordinances of the City. Sections of the current Zoning Ordinance should be rewritten to become more practical for River Rouge and understandable to the general public or where they conflict with the goals of this Master Plan. The cooperation of the Mayor & Council, the court system and the City legal staff will be required to make regulations effective. Enforcement activities will not generate direct revenue for the City, but lack of it will lead to declines in property values and lost revenues.

### **Community Development**

The City should expand efforts to seek grants and implement redevelopment incentive programs from which the City can benefit. Successful redevelopment projects require significant time, talent and effort of many people to make happen. Investments in this area can reap significant returns.

### **Planning**

Impartial professional reviews of land use applications should continue on behalf of the Planning Commission to guarantee compliance with City ordinances. Procedures and standards in land use regulation should be coordinated with the Master Plan to ensure the desired results related to redevelopment. The cost of professional reviews should be passed along to the individual applicant.

### **Economic Development**

Many of the programs mentioned in this section allow for significant incentives to be provided to the private sector to develop and reinvest in the City. It is necessary that the City maintain the capacity to work with appropriate individuals in a professional manner in the best interests of the City.

## **Inspection Programs**

A major recommendation of this Plan is the creation of a rental property inspection program. Each property that is not owner occupied should be inspected on a regular basis to ensure safe, decent, and sanitary conditions and code compliance. Also, at the time of property transfer, inspections should be made of all properties to bring them to an acceptable minimum standard. This inspection program will require a significant resource commitment. It will provide lasting value to the quality of life in the City

## **Continuous Planning**

Community planning is a dynamic process that does not end with the completion of the Master Plan. Urban areas experience continual change. Planning involves identifying and responding to change by the City Council and Planning Commission. In order to sustain the planning process and generate positive results, maintain momentum, and respond to change, the Master Plan should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Public Act 265 of 2001 requires a City to review its Master Plan at least every five (5) years and coordinate the review with neighboring communities. In addition to the Master Plan, detailed plans for specific areas and issues such as Visger Avenue redevelopment, the downtown, neighborhood redevelopment, parks, and general urban design, would be excellent tools in achieving the community's goals.

## **Fiscal Impact Analysis**

Fiscal impact analysis provides a projection of direct, current, public costs and revenues associated with a proposed development. It describes and quantifies public costs (police, fire, public works, transportation, and educational facilities) that are incurred by the development, as well as the revenues generated from property taxes, user charges, intergovernmental transfers, and other fees. When significant projects are proposed, the City should review and study the implications of the action.

## **Establishing Priorities**

The Master Plan contains many recommendations. A process for establishing priorities must be established as soon as the Master Plan is adopted. Participants involved in setting priorities should include City staff, the Planning Commission, and other officials who should be involved in implementation of the Plan. As a matter of policy, Master Plan priorities should be reviewed on a periodic basis to evaluate progress and re-evaluate priorities.

## **Design Standards**

A specific information and education tool is a site and architectural design standards manual. Although not required, the manual can be used to communicate concepts and ideas that the City may not consider appropriate for the zoning ordinance. The manual should be distributed to developers and property owners to guide them in the preparation of site plans.

## **Land Use Controls**

One of the most influential strategies that can be used to implement a Master Plan is the system of regulatory measures established by the City to guide future development and land use. These regulations include the zoning ordinance, land division controls, and development standards. However, simply creating and using such regulations is not sufficient to actually implement the Master Plan. The ordinances must contain specific procedures and techniques that are created to achieve the objectives and eventually the goals of the future land use plan.

The future land use categories in the Master Plan provide the foundation for evaluating future zoning requests. Zoning actions that are inconsistent with the future land use map usually receive unfavorable review by the courts, if challenged. The Master Plan should always be the principal source of information in the evaluation of zoning change requests and new development proposals.

All ordinances currently in place should be critically evaluated by the City to determine if they effectively implement the objectives of the Master Plan in their related areas. The following sections in particular should be evaluated to ensure they achieve the desired objectives of the individual land use categories:

- The permitted land uses and uses permitted after special or conditional approval of the zoning ordinance
- Definitions of both land uses and regulated elements
- Bulk and dimension requirements that create non-conforming situations
- Site plan review procedures (to ensure adequate information is submitted)
- Regulations and requirements concerning landscaping, parking, and signage within the zoning ordinance

The following is a brief discussion of the regulations and standards that the City employs to guide future development and land use.

## **Subdivision Regulations**

The City's Subdivision Regulations outline the procedures and standards used in exercising the City's authority to review and approve proposed subdivisions, pursuant to the Land Division (Michigan Public Act 288 of 1967, as amended). Subdivision control ordinances typically require the appropriate design of lots and blocks, subdivision access, and such necessary internal improvements as streets, drainage, and water and sewer facilities. More importantly for the City of River Rouge, these regulations control the division and combination of individual land parcels.

## **Condominium Regulations**

During the recent past, condominium developments have become a popular alternative to subdivisions as a way of developing land, in part due to changes in the State's condominium regulation. The popularity of this type of ownership continues to grow. It represents a high commitment level to a dwelling unit. The City should be prepared for a



growing number of condominium proposals. The Condominium Act requires condominiums to comply with local ordinances.

## **Zoning Regulations**

Zoning is the primary regulatory tool used by the City to implement the Master Plan. According to Section 1(3) of the City and Village Zoning Act (Michigan Public Act 207 of 1921, as amended), "...the land development regulations and districts authorized by this act shall be made in accordance with a plan designed to promote and accomplish the objectives of this act." Strict enforcement of zoning regulations and standards will allow the City to redevelop itself one site at a time.

## **Rezoning to Reflect the Master Plan**

The land use classifications on the Future Land Use Map provide the basis for evaluating future rezoning requests. Zoning actions that are consistent with the Future Land Use Map usually receive favorable judicial review if challenged. The Master Plan should be the principal source of information in the evaluation of all rezoning requests and initiatives.

## **Performance Standards**

Rather than simply regulating development on the basis of dimensional standards, many communities are establishing performance standards to regulate development based on the permissible effects or impacts of a proposed use. Performance standards may be used to compliment conventional zoning standards for the purposes of regulating noise, dust, vibration, odor, glare and heat, safety hazards, and environmental impacts such as water pollution. Performance standards can be particularly useful in achieving environmental and resource protection goals.

## **Incentive Zoning**

Incentive zoning allows a developer to exceed the dimensional limitations in the zoning ordinance if the developer agrees to fulfill conditions in the ordinance. Incentive zoning should be considered to promote innovative land planning techniques identified in the Master Plan. For example, a possible increase in density can be used as an incentive for residential development that includes usable open space. Incentive zoning is often implemented through Planned Unit Developments (PUD).

## **Planned Development**

Planned development involves the use of special zoning requirements and review procedures that provide design and regulatory flexibility, so as to encourage innovation in land use planning and design. Planned developments generally achieve a higher quality of development than might otherwise be possible. Applied judiciously, they are an effective zoning technique to achieve development in accordance with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan and the vision of the community.

Planned development can be used to encourage innovative redevelopment in and around the Commercial areas. Planned development usually includes an incentive component and an ability to negotiate certain items in light of this incentive. Often

mixed-uses are allowed as an incentive for higher quality. Planned Development can help to make a community “redevelopment ready” by answering unique issues pertaining to a specific site.

### **Setback and Other Standards**

It is important for the City to review required Zoning Ordinance setbacks, lot area, and dimensional requirements and other zoning standards to be certain that they promote the desired type of development. For example, in order to strengthen the integrity of the commercial district, any new buildings in the commercial districts should maintain the same front and side setbacks as existing buildings.

### **Overlay Zoning**

Overlay zoning allows the City to impose a new set of regulations on a special area within an existing zoning district. In an area where an overlay zoning is established, the property is placed simultaneously in the two zones, and the property may be developed only under the applicable conditions and requirements of both zones. Thus, the overlay zoning has been used in other communities to address special conditions and features, such as historic areas, redevelopment areas, wetlands, and environmentally sensitive areas, without disrupting the underlying zoning plan. This would be particularly useful in River Rouge in permitting mixed-use developments.

### **Capital Improvement Program**

The City should draft and annually update a capital improvement program to evaluate, prioritize and structure financing of public improvement projects. Such a program provides a basis for systematic review of proposed improvements related to the Master Plan and creates an opportunity to coordinate timing, location and financing of those projects. To that end, three objectives can be achieved:

- Financial analysis can minimize the impact of improvement projects on the local revenue stream;
- Project scheduling can give continuity and an advanced picture of future need and development activities; and
- The Planning Commission can demonstrate its coordinating role in serving other elements of local government in formulating project recommendations.

Generally, the capital improvement process includes the following steps:

- Inventory of potential projects within the City, including preliminary cost estimation and initial prioritization.
- Evaluation of projects proposed and funding sources, by various sponsors and City departments.
- Financial analysis of the proposed projects in terms of costs and benefits.
- Realistic project scheduling for up to a six-year period.
- Recommendation of first-year projects to the City Council.
- Formal approval and funding of the capital improvement budget by Council.

Because capital improvement programming is a fundamental policy, the City Council must establish spending levels and designate projects for implementation during the budget process. The role of the Planning Commission is primarily to coordinate material submitted by others and to work with financial officials in assembling facts for budgeting decisions by the Council.

Capital programming should be viewed as more than just an administrative task and could be used throughout the City for many improvements. Without a forward view toward sound fiscal planning and project implementation, the City will not effectively coordinate its redevelopment. It is frustrating to attempt to match limited revenues with expanding expenditure requirements. But by creating and documenting a Capital “wish list”, funding opportunities can be explored and available funds matched strategically to the documented needs of the City.

Long-term redevelopment objectives of the Master Plan can be furthered through projects such as streetscape improvements, facility and infrastructure re-construction and renovation, revolving programs for acquisition and demolition of unsafe and obsolete structures. Proper coordination of all capital improvements will stimulate action and allow the City to control the direction of redevelopment

### **Land Acquisition**

Land acquisition is an important supplement to land use regulations and a means of community redevelopment. Land acquisition can be used to remove buildings that are unsafe or public nuisances; control the re-use of a specific acquired parcel, or it can be used to influence the general redevelopment of the City. Local land acquisition programs are generally funded either by local property taxes (such as a dedicated millage or general fund revenues) or by grant programs. For example, the City could use grant programs sponsored by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to acquire additional land along the Detroit River for additional public waterfront access.

There are several approaches to acquiring interest in land that advance the goals of the Master Plan. Generally, the City can take direct action to acquire a property interest. The City can rely on private voluntary land protection efforts. In some cases the City can become the owner of last resort. In all cases of acquisition that include a full or partial donation of land, individuals and businesses can receive an income tax deduction for amounts in excess of the fair market value received as a contribution.

### **Fee Simple Acquisition by the City**

If the City takes direct action, it can acquire property in fee simple or it can acquire a partial interest through acquisition of easements. Fee simple acquisition provides the greatest level of control over the use of the parcel, but it is also the most expensive method of acquisition. In addition to acquisition costs, fee simple acquisition removes property from tax rolls, resulting in a decrease in property tax revenue.

### **Easements**

Easements are distinct property rights that may be sold separately from other rights to the City. Easements are effective for providing public access along rivers or greenways,

and allowing property owners to obtain income, estate, and property tax benefits for land stewardship while they continue to use their land.

- Private Voluntary Land Protection Efforts. Instead of taking direct action, the City can encourage and rely on private voluntary land protection efforts. Other than acquisition at full market value, private tools available to preserve land and include:
- Donation of land or bargain sale (acquisition at below market value).
- Options to buy (often used to secure a parcel of land while funding is being obtained).
- Rights-of-first refusal (used to tie up a parcel without having to purchase it immediately).
- Leases (temporary control without the expense of acquisition).
- Pre-acquisition by a land trust (the land trust serves as the intermediary for the public agency, such as the City).
- Conservation investment (essentially a real estate syndication for the purpose of resource protection).

### **Tax Reversion**

When property taxes are not paid on property, it will eventually revert to public ownership through a bid process. The City is given the opportunity to acquire the land at a small fee from the State of Michigan.

### **Special Purpose Funding District/Authorities**

Certain recommendations in the Master Plan can be accomplished using a targeted approach through creation of special districts or authorities allowed under State of Michigan law. The following may be applicable in the City of River Rouge:

#### **Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA)**

Michigan Public Act 381 of 1996, as amended, allows for the creation of one or more Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities (BRA's) to identify, plan, and provide funding for reuse of brownfield properties, and in the case of River Rouge, obsolete properties. BRA's create and implement redevelopment financing plans, that can identify eligible environmental activities for the site, plan for tax increment financing capturing state and local property taxes, and/or assistance to the property owner for Single Business Tax Credits. Tax increment financing allows BRA's to capture property taxes from the increased value as a result of development to pay for the activities needed for the development, and to establish a local site remediation fund.

Captured taxes could include all additional state and local property taxes, (in some cases including taxes levied for school operating purposes,) that result from an increase in value of eligible property over a base year (the year the property was added to the brownfield plan). Captured property taxes can be used to cover the costs of a variety of eligible activities, including baseline environmental assessments, due care activities, additional cleanup activities, infrastructure improvements, site preparation, lead and asbestos abatement, and demolition.

The BRA may also issue revenue and tax increment financing bonds and notes or borrow from the MDEQ's Revitalization Loan Fund in order to finance eligible activities and then capture taxes from the eligible property to pay off the obligations. The authority may also establish local site remediation revolving fund and place excess captured taxes from properties at which eligible activities are conducted into the local fund.

At sites where there is no acute health or environmental problem, work is often still needed prior to reuse of the site. The City could use this funding tool to conduct the eligible work that is required prior to purchase and redevelopment of a site by a non-liable party. As a "Core City", River Rouge qualifies for enhanced incentives for "obsolete sites" within the City. The tool can be used for a local authority or, as the City has been operating, in conjunction with the authority established by Wayne County.

### **Local Development Financing Authority (LDFA)**

Michigan Public Act 281 of 1986, as amended, provides for the establishment of a local development finance authority (LDFA) to undertake economic development activities to promote manufacturing of goods or materials, agricultural processing, or high technology activity. A typical LDFA project might involve construction of roads and utilities deemed necessary for a specific manufacturing or high technology development project. LDFA activities are most frequently financed through tax increment financing or through issuance of revenue bonds that are retired using tax increment revenue.

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

Michigan Public Act 197 of 1975, as amended, allows for the creation of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA). A DDA is a non-profit development corporation within a defined business district of the City that exists for the purpose of promoting a desirable environment for businesses and residents and implementing economic revitalization projects. Projects can be implemented by the DDA through a variety of financing techniques, including bond issues, tax increment financing, and public and private contributions. The City has an active DDA operating under an adopted development plan. The official DDA plan can be updated to include new projects and/or expand current activities according to procedures in the Act.

### **Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA)**

Michigan PA 450 of 1980, as amended, allowed for the creation of a Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA). A TIFA has many of the same powers as a DDA, however, the district area is created under different regulations. The creation of a new TIFA is not allowed.

### **Neighborhood Area Improvements Act**

Michigan Public Act 208 of 1949, as amended, authorizes municipalities to designate neighborhood areas for the purpose of planning and carrying out local public improvements for the prevention of blight in such areas. The Act calls for preparation of neighborhood betterment plans by the Planning Commission. The Act also provides methods of financing improvements within the neighborhood, including special

assessment districts and issuance of neighborhood improvement bonds. This act might prove useful in revitalizing older neighborhoods.

## **MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) has a number of programs that can assist in redevelopment efforts.

### **Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP)**

The Neighborhood Preservation Program is a targeted strategy available throughout the state to communities and nonprofits that are working to strengthen their neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for residents. Communities and nonprofits may apply to designate a neighborhood of local strategic importance by showing how NPP funding will achieve results that address the housing and infrastructure needs of the target area. The NPP supports affordable housing efforts in the targeted neighborhood through:

- Low-interest rate mortgage loans through the MSHDA Single Family Program.
- Mortgage financing for rental developments of 12-30 units
- Public improvements.
- Demolition.
- Beautification.
- Marketing.

### **Rehabilitation Act**

Act 344 of the Public Acts of 1945 is the basic Michigan rehabilitation statute. It provides powers and procedures for local governments to acquire, assemble, and finance the redevelopment of blighted areas for general rehabilitation purposes.

### **Certified Local Governments (CLGs) / Historic Preservation Fund**

The Certified Local Government Program was established to enhance local government preservation efforts by increasing public interest and involvement in preservation activities. To become certified, a government must have a local historic district commission with design review control over established or planned locally designated historic districts. While certification does not guarantee funding, it may increase the likelihood of receiving a Historic Preservation Grant.

Participation in the CLG program permits local units of governments to apply for and employ a number of Historic Preservation Fund grants for education, research, restoration or nomination of historic resources eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic Preservation Fund is the source of a 60-40 matching grant-in-aid program. The federal funds provided through the grant must be matched by the grant recipient with private funds, local government funds, in-kind services, state funds, certain federal funds (limitations apply), donated services and/or donated equipment or material. To become certified, a municipality must have a local historic district ordinance, a historic district commission and a program to identify historic resources.

## **Main Street National Trust for Historic Preservation**

The National Main Street Center is part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It created the Main Street Approach to downtown revitalization, and promotes the use of the approach for communities to revitalize their traditional commercial areas. Main Street serves as the nation's clearinghouse for information, technical assistance, research and advocacy on preservation-based commercial district revitalization.

Participation in the Main Street Program would require the City to work with the National Main Street Center, participants currently within the program within the state (a number of communities are currently utilizing the Main Street Program. The program has a number of recommendations for participation in the program, including downtown festivals highlighting the program, completion of a business inventory, coverage within local media outlets, etc.

## **FINANCING TOOLS**

Successful implementation of the Master Plan will depend on the ability of the City to secure necessary financing. Grant and redevelopment incentive programs are available from time-to-time, vary in requirements and available funding, and often have eligibility requirements. The City of River Rouge qualifies as a "Core City" for Michigan programs that enable expanded incentives in some State of Michigan programs. Besides the general fund, the following sources of revenue are available to the City at the time of the writing of this Master Plan:

### **Dedicated Millage**

Special millage can be voted upon to be used to generate revenue for a specific purpose. The DDA Act allows for the levy of up to 2.0 mills on property within the development area for the implementation of an adopted development plan.

### **Special Assessments**

Special assessments are compulsory contributions collected from the owners of property benefited by specific public improvements, such as paving and drainage improvements, to defray the costs of such improvements. Special assessments are apportioned according to the assumed benefits to the property affected. It is an excellent way to allow for the payment of a wanted or required improvement over time by making annual bond repayments.

### **Bond Programs**

Bonds are one of the principal sources of financing used by communities to pay for capital improvements. General obligation bonds are issued for specific community projects and are paid off by the general public with property tax revenues. Revenue bonds are issued for construction of projects that generate revenue. The bonds are then retired using income generated by the project (for example, water and sewer service charges).

## **Municipal Bond Authority (MMBA)**

This program created under Act 227 of 1985, as amended, offers municipalities the opportunity to take advantage of the State's improved credit rating. Because the MMBA is authorized to issue bonds to make loans to Michigan municipalities through the purchase of municipal obligations, the Authority allows municipalities to borrow funds for their capital and operating needs without going to the expense or trouble of entering the bond market on their own. Many small communities are at a disadvantage when issuing debt in the bond market because they frequently have no bond ratings and potential investors know little about their finances or economy. In addition, some communities tend to borrow infrequently, in small amounts. Because such debt issues are not particularly attractive to the financial markets, borrowing costs for such communities can be high.

The Authority sells tax-exempt bonds in the national municipal bond market. Proceeds from the sale are used to make loans to eligible Michigan communities by purchasing their bonds. In essence, the MMBA "bundles" smaller local debt issues into a larger, more attractive bond issue and then offers it to the national market. By consolidating numerous local bond issues, local units will save on printing costs, rating agency fees, and credit enhancements. As participating communities make principal and interest payments to the Authority to repay their debt, the Authority uses these payments to repay the Authority's bond.

## **Tax Increment Financing**

Tax increment financing is authorized by the Brownfield Redevelopment Act, Downtown Development Authority Act and the Local Development Finance Authority Act. When a tax increment finance district is established, the state equalized value of all properties in the district is recorded. Every year thereafter, the property tax revenue generated by any increase in the total state equalized value is captured by the BRA, DDA, or LDFA. Often revenue bonds are issued to meet the large cost of the improvements, and the annual collection of tax increment revenues is used to repay the bonds. In the mid 1990's, the Michigan Legislation approved significant reductions in property taxes and added restrictions on the capture of school millage, thereby reducing the effectiveness of tax increment financing as a means of financing public infrastructure improvements. However, it is still a valuable funding tool.

## **GRANTS**

Public grants from various agencies are often available for specific municipal projects. The following is a brief description of grants opportunities currently available.

### **Community Development Block Grant**

Federal funds from HUD in the form of Wayne County administered Community Development Block Grants can be used for many community development projects including: planning activities, certain infrastructure improvements, land acquisition, blight removal and certain economic development activities. The amount of the grant is established by the County with a base amount provided to each community annually.



Special funding may be made available to communities based upon the County program procedures and Federal regulations. Housing rehabilitation funds are also provided through this program.

### **Core Communities Fund (CCF)**

The MEDC Core Communities Fund is designated to provide gap-financing assistance in the form of loans, grants, sales, or cash flow participation agreements, guarantees, or any combination thereof. The objective of this program is to revitalize traditional regional centers of commerce by assisting them to more effectively compete for development. In addition, the MEDC Core Communities Fund has six primary goals:

- promote private investment and job creation, particularly in advanced manufacturing, information technology, and life sciences
- encourage mixed-use development in central cities (defined as office, technical, commercial, service, cultural or entertainment facilities)
- redevelop or reuse obsolete buildings or non-marketable sites
- effectively compete for interstate or international projects
- development of Certified Business/Technology Parks
- enhance quality of life and strengthen the economic base while reducing sprawl

River Rouge is one of a limited number of eligible communities designated in Michigan Public Act No. 146 of 2000, the "obsolete property rehabilitation act." The CCF is designated to provide gap-financing assistance in the form of loans, grants, sales or cash flow participation agreements, guarantees, or any combination thereof. Funding decisions are made quarterly. Not more than \$12.5 million will be awarded per application period, and no community will be awarded more than \$10 million. Funding is available for projects in one of three categories:

- Economic Development: Projects that involve the creation of full-time jobs as a direct result of the infrastructure improvements; or
- Development of a Certified Business Park.
- Community Product Development: Projects that are indirectly associated with a private development project, but will help create the environment for successful projects and also contribute to the communities institutional capacity or quality of life.

### **Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)**

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grants are available for land acquisition and park development. Established criteria for the grant includes protection and use of significant natural resources, use of inland waters and project need.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants are available for the development of lands and facilities for outdoor recreation. Criteria for this fund include the need for proposal, the capability of the applicant and site and project quality.

### **Coastal Zone Management (CZM)**

The federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) passes through funds to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Approximately one third of the

annual grant is set aside for local communities and non-profit organizations located on the Great Lakes shoreline. River Rouge is one of approximately 300 Michigan shoreline communities that are eligible to participate in the program. Project selection is competitive and is based upon meeting program objectives. Grants require a local match component. Funds may be used for various planning activities, with a very low matching percentage, or for low-cost construction projects on a match basis.

### **The Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan**

The Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan is also a funding and educational source for a potential greenway/trail. The Green Ways Initiative was developed to create opportunities for collaboration and shared environmental awareness and appreciation by the residents of the seven counties of Southeast Michigan: including Monroe, Washtenaw, Wayne, Livingston, Oakland, Macomb and St. Clair counties. The Initiative is a five-year program that funds the creation of biking and hiking paths, conservation corridors and habitats among and between communities. The City has received a greenways grant for the initial design or a connector trail between the river and Jefferson Avenue. The program provides Public Education and Outreach, Capacity Building Programs and two types of grants. Predevelopment Grants and Land Grants. However, timing is essential because the program is currently scheduled to end in 2005.

### **Cool Cities Initiative**

The State of Michigan has undertaken a trial program of fostering neighborhood redevelopment through limited catalyst grants to selected communities geared toward making specific areas more attractive places to live and work. Designation as a "Cool City" allows enhanced participation in a State of Michigan funding programs.

### **Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA-21)**

Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA-21) grants are available for improvements to the City's transportation system, including motorized and non-motorized systems. This federal program provides funding for all types of transportation-related projects, and has been used throughout Michigan by communities to further a range of improvements.

## **ADDITIONAL TOOLS**

### **HUD Section 202/8**

This is a federally sponsored program that provides mortgage financing and rent subsidies for the construction and maintenance of elderly housing. Only non-profit, private organizations (such as churches, unions, fraternal and other non-profit organizations) are eligible sponsors, but local governments usually cooperate in the assembly of land, applications, public improvements and supportive actions. Such projects are tax-exempt, but the State rebates an equivalent amount to local tax jurisdictions.

## **Neighborhood Enterprise Zone**

Michigan Public Act 147 of 1992, as amended, allows for a locally initiated zone program that provides tax incentives for housing development and improvement. River Rouge is a qualified local unit of government under this Act and may designate one or more areas as Neighborhood Enterprise Zones (NEZs) for the purpose of extending property tax abatements for residential construction and rehabilitation consistent with the Act. A maximum of 15% of the total land area of the City can be included within NEZs. The City has established the maximum NEZ area through a series of districts.

## **Industrial Property Tax Abatement**

Property tax incentives are available through Michigan Public Act 381 of 1996, as amended, to eligible businesses to renovate or expand aging manufacturing plants or to build new plants. They can reduce property taxes (real and personal) for up to 12 years. For an obsolete plant or machinery that is being replaced or restored this results in a 100% exemption from the property tax on the value of the improvement. For a new plant, the local unit of government is able to reduce the local millage by half, and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is able to abate the 6-mill statewide education tax.

## **Personal Property, Tax Abatement**

A 1998 state law allows eligible distressed communities to abate all new personal property taxes in certain geographic areas to spur economic development. Abatements include all millage, state and local. Eligible projects include manufacturing, mining, research and development, wholesale and trade, and office operations, but not retail businesses.

## **Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act**

The Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act Michigan Public Act 381 of 1996 adds another avenue for property owners, buyers, developers, lenders and local units of government to promote redevelopment projects. This program is designed to complement brownfield redevelopment activities. The Act provides an exemption for ad valorem property taxes to commercial property and commercial housing property if an obsolete property rehabilitation district has been established and is located in a qualified local governmental unit or core community such as the City of River Rouge. These qualified local governmental units (QLGUs) may establish obsolete property rehabilitation districts. Buildings and improvements within these districts are eligible for exemption for ad valorem property taxes from 10 to 12 years. Personal property is not eligible. The sunset for granting exemption is December 31, 2010. To qualify, the property must be commercial property or commercial housing property that is a "facility" (contaminated), "blighted," or "functionally obsolete."

## **Brownfield Redevelopment**

Michigan Public Act 381 of 1996, as amended, the Brownfield law (also see Brownfield Redevelopment Authority above) is designed to encourage and assist developers who want to return property to productive use more quickly and at a lower cost than before,

while still protecting human health and natural resources. Owners and operators of contaminated sites are no longer required to pay for cleanup actions unless they caused the contamination. Flexible cleanup standards give developers the option of proposing a solution to contamination based on future use of the property.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Michigan Department of Treasury and Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) are working aggressively with property owners, buyers, developers, lenders and local government to help expedite redevelopment projects. Michigan allows qualified businesses to claim a credit against the SBT, provided the taxpayer has a pre-approval letter issued between December 31, 1999 and January 1, 2008 and the project is completed not more than five (5) years after the letter is issued.

If the total of all credits for the project is \$1 million or less, the credit is based on 10% of the eligible investment. If the total of all credits for the project is greater than \$1 million but not more than \$30 million, a credit is available for a percentage of eligible investment to be determined by the Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA), but not to exceed 10% of the eligible investment. Certain location restrictions apply to these credits. In addition to brownfield situations, projects in qualified core cities like River Rouge can receive credits for redevelopment of functionally obsolete and blighted property.

### **Private Funding Sources**

Private sources for grants also exist. Foundations and utility companies are a common source for private grants for municipal projects. These grants are usually for specially stated purposes and are limited to eligible applicants in specific geographic areas.