Chapter 10

# LAND USE

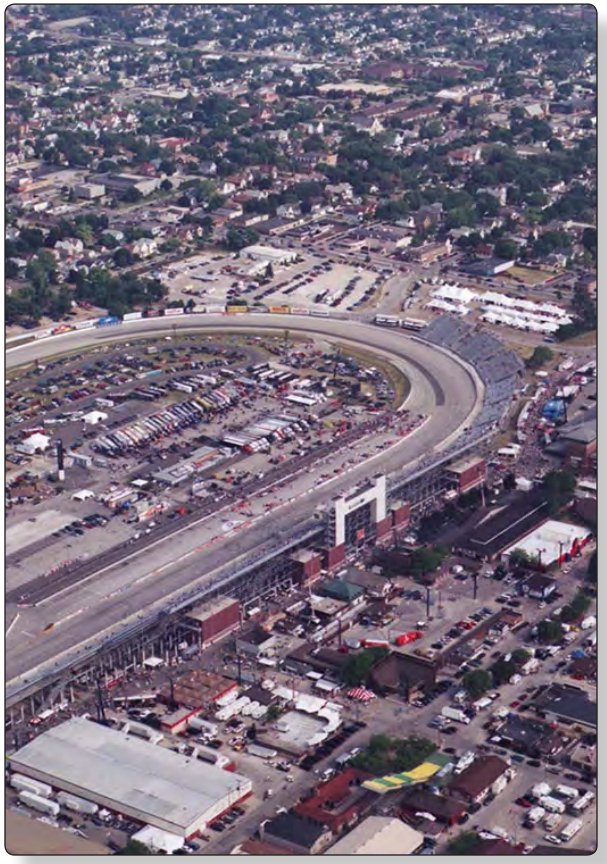
Land use planning efforts in the City of West Allis seek to outline the ideal form of the built environment and determine what types of activities and densities should be allowed. This chapter, along with the chapter on redevelopment opportunities, will serve as a primary tool for guiding future growth and development in the City.

The land use element is based on standards which reflect the desires of community residents, committee members and elected officials, and proven principles in community development, environmental preservation, and cultural renewal.

Several factors of growth are explored in this element, including social, economic, and physical factors. Social factors include those which provide or maintain community character such as gathering places or civic identity. Economic factors include job creation and retention, municipal expenses and revenue, and land value. Physical factors include the actual development of the land (how it appears and feels, what types of development are permitted, and where development is located) and natural characteristics such as soil and water quality, sensitive environmental features, and habitat areas.

Land use recommendations can be successfully implemented when looking at all three areas of growth. Diverse and healthy communities achieve a balance of these growth types to provide a quality environment for its residents. Together these factors influence current residents, business owners, and the community's marketability to new residents and businesses.

The land use element holds particular significance in comprehensive planning due to Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law. The law requires that the administration of zoning, subdivision, and official mapping ordinances be consistent with the comprehensive plan. The land uses identified in this element shall govern the zoning decisions made by the City for the duration of the plan.

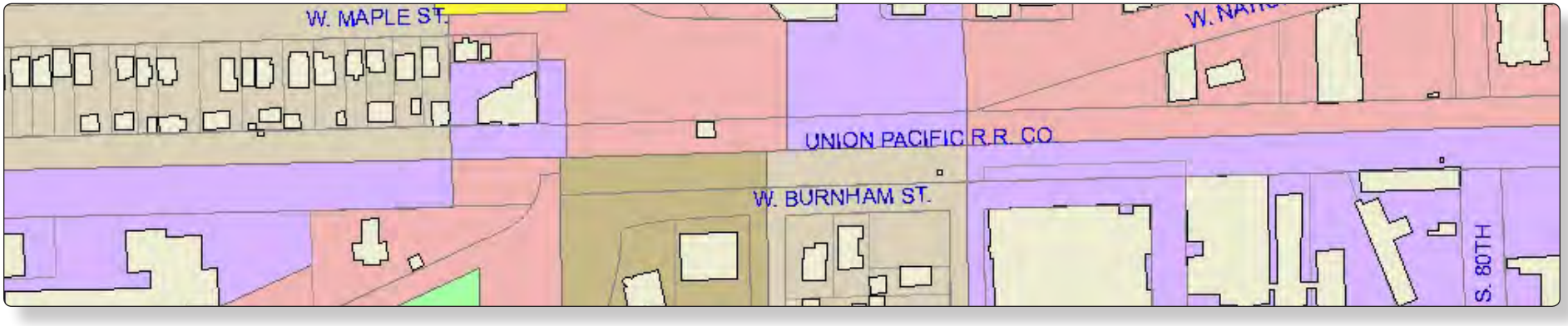


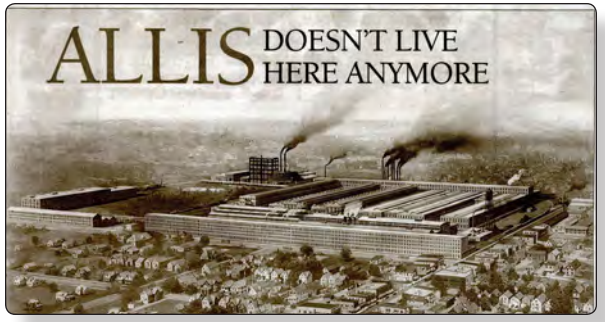
## GOALS, OBJECTIVES & POLICIES

West Allis includes a rich mix of uses that should be preserved and enhanced through preservation, redevelopment, and the implementation of sustainable practices.

### Goal: Encourage continuation and future development of compatible land uses within our urban community.

- Objective 1: Encourage Compatible **Infill Projects.** Encourage compatible and complementary design of all infill development.
  - **Recommendation 1.1:** Recommend all housing rehabilitation and new construction projects to be compatible with the historic character of the neighborhood.
  - **Recommendation 1.2:** Encourage mixed density and dwelling types as a means of diversifying the housing stock.
  - **Recommendation 1.3:** Encourage compatible scales of development when locating commercial next to housing.
  - **Recommendation 1.4:** Develop design guidelines for residential neighborhoods based on the period of construction and architectural style.
  - **Recommendation 1.5:** Explore opportunities for parcel consolidation to allow for greater flexibility to meet market demand.
- **Objective 2: Support a Mix of Uses in the** Community Continue to support the presence of a strong mix of uses.
  - **Recommendation 2.1:** Redevelop underutilized parcels throughout the City to integrate commercial uses with public amenities.
  - **Recommendation 2.2:** Continue to consider market demand for commercial, industrial and housing uses when planning future development projects.
- **Objective 3: Preserve Existing Residential Character** Preserve existing single family and multi-family housing character within residential neighborhoods and corridors, unless poor maintenance requires demolition.
  - **Recommendation 3.1:** Utilize the City's historic preservation and architectural review tools to help preserve the character of existing residential neighborhoods.
- **Objective 4: Support Sustainable Redevelopment Projects** Incorporate sustainable building and stormwater techniques into redevelopment projects.
  - **Recommendation 4.1:** Identify sites where stormwater best management practices, including rain barrels, rain gardens, bioswales, porous pavement, recessed parking islands, and native plantings can be implemented.
  - **Recommendation 4.2:** Encourage sustainable building practices for redevelopment throughout the City.
  - **Recommendation 4.3:** Consider the adoption of a Green Building Code, which might include aspects of water conservation, graywater reuse, energy production and pedestrian-oriented amenities, to promote sustainable development.
- **Objective 5: Establish Appropriate Buffers and Transitions** Create appropriate buffers and transitions between uses.
  - **Recommendation 5.1:** Implement the City's Zoning Ordinance site and landscaping requirements.






- **Recommendation 5.2:** Encourage appropriate transitions in building scale and character from commercial corridors to residential neighborhoods.
- **Recommendation 5.3:** Direct traffic to the major street system to prevent traffic from over-utilizing residential streets.
- **Recommendation 5.4:** Provide adequate off-street parking and loading facilities that are screened from public view.

- **Objective 6: Reinforce Public Spaces with Redevelopment Opportunities** Redevelop underutilized sites to provide outlot opportunities that reinforce the public space of the corridor.
  - **Recommendation 6.1:** Include public open spaces and landscape features to divide large parking lots and serve as transitional spaces.
- **Objective 7: Ensure Adequate Circulation throughout the City** Ensure adequate and accessible circulation and parking to and within future development projects.
  - **Recommendation 7.1:** Encourage shared parking between merchants where feasible.
  - **Recommendation 7.2:** Consolidate curb-cuts, where possible, to provide a safe and efficient traffic system.
  - **Recommendation 7.3:** Locate new buildings along the right-of-way with parking behind or between buildings, as parcels redevelop.
  - **Recommendation 7.4:** Provide linkages between employment centers and nearby housing to allow residents to walk and bike between uses.
  - **Recommendation 7.5:** Create wayfinding elements and establish bicycle and pedestrian linkages between housing areas, schools, and nearby parks.
- **Objective 8: Support Collaborative Downtown Improvement Efforts** Continue to foster the development of W. Greenfield Ave. as a main street destination.
  - **Recommendation 8.1:** Implement streetscape improvement projects which uniquely identify the downtown.
  - **Recommendation 8.2:** Support the Main Street program and the Downtown West Allis Business Improvement District.
  - **Recommendation 8.3:** Continue to work with property owners on façade improvements through façade grant and loan programs.
  - **Recommendation 8.4:** Create visible linkages, such as wayfinding signage, between downtown storefronts and parking lots.
- **Objective 9: Promote transit-oriented development** Support high-density mixed-use development in corridors and districts that have potential to utilize mass transit.
  - **Recommendation 9.1:** Support the existence of mass transit within the metro Milwaukee area.
  - **Recommendation 9.2:** Review the City's Zoning Ordinance for compatible land use and zoning to ensure that high density is permitted along a potential mass transit corridor.
- **Objective 10: Land Use Implementation** Use this plan as a basis for reviewing development applications and as the foundation for re-writing the City's Zoning Ordinance.
  - **Recommendation 10.1:** Re-evaluate the City's Zoning Ordinance and Site, Landscaping and Architectural Review Guidelines.

## SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES

Sustainable practices and techniques should be used in all neighborhoods and districts to reduce negative environmental impacts, reduce private and public costs, and improve the ecological and economic stability of the city. Land use decisions should consider how sustainable techniques can be integrated into building development, building rehabilitation, site development, open space preservation, infrastructure upgrades, and transportation linkages.

The City should encourage the inclusion of "green" building standards, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), Energy Star, and similar energy-saving practices, into the Zoning Code, developer agreements, and other regulatory programs.

### Natural Landscape and Environmental Features

Natural areas should be preserved and protected to create value for the area and provide linkages between natural features. When possible, utilize green infrastructure to connect open spaces, natural features, and park areas to provide an interconnected system of natural areas. Some of the linkages can provide pedestrian and bicycle routes as alternative modes of transportation.

*Figure 10-1. Example of Bioswales for Water Filtration.*

### Site Planning and Development

Sustainable strategies and techniques should be incorporated to break up large paved areas, provide amenities for residents and visitors, and reduce the amount of runoff in existing and future development. On-street parking and shared parking areas should be encouraged to reduce the amount of paved surfaces. Reuse existing structures when possible, or develop new buildings with sustainable materials and energy efficient building systems. Technical examples may include:

- Increasing the quantity of landscaping required within parking lots and incorporating techniques such as bioswale islands with curb cuts to allow water infiltration or clustering landscaping to ensure survival and increase infiltration capabilities. Figure 10-1 illustrates the concept of bioswale island in parking design.
- Identifying opportunities for shared parking and encouraging clustered development, as a means of improving traffic flow through reduced curb cuts, limiting short vehicular trips between businesses, and decreasing the amount of impervious surfaces.

### Sustainable Infrastructure

There are a number of infrastructure-based programs and upgrades that could have a significant impact on the economic, ecological, and social health of the community. Utility, water and sewer, and transportation systems are part of the underlying infrastructure upon which communities are built. Identifying ways to improve the efficiency of these systems is critical to ensuring more sustainable practices in the future. Potential opportunities for the City of West Allis include:

*Figure 10-2. Example of Solar Photovoltaic Panels.*

- Exploring opportunities for passive energy production with We Energies. Potential programs could include:
  - Solar photovoltaic (PV) partnerships with government, business owners, or residential property owners (Figure 10-2 provides an example of solar PV panels);
  - Expanding wind turbine programs within productive wind zones, including large scale turbines and smaller residential turbines (often referred to as "urban turbines")
- Assessing water usage within the community and identifying opportunities for reducing the reliance on the municipal water system. For example, implement a rain barrel program, provide an option for non-potable water to be

used for irrigation needs, or implement and educate others about xeriscaping - landscaping that utilizes native/adapted plants and requires little to no irrigation.

- Identify opportunities to educate commercial, industrial, institutional, and residential users about on-site water-saving practices, including the provision of resources and demonstration projects. The City can demonstrate the effectiveness of waterless and/or water-efficient features by installing fixtures in municipal bathroom or kitchen facilities.
- Consider new types of transportation infrastructure, including the type of material used on roadways (Figure 10-3) and the design of new or reconstructed roads. Potential efficiencies could be gained through minimizing stormwater runoff impacts, as well as ensuring roads can accommodate a variety of transportation methods beyond vehicles (bicyclists, pedestrians, and/or neighborhood electric vehicles).

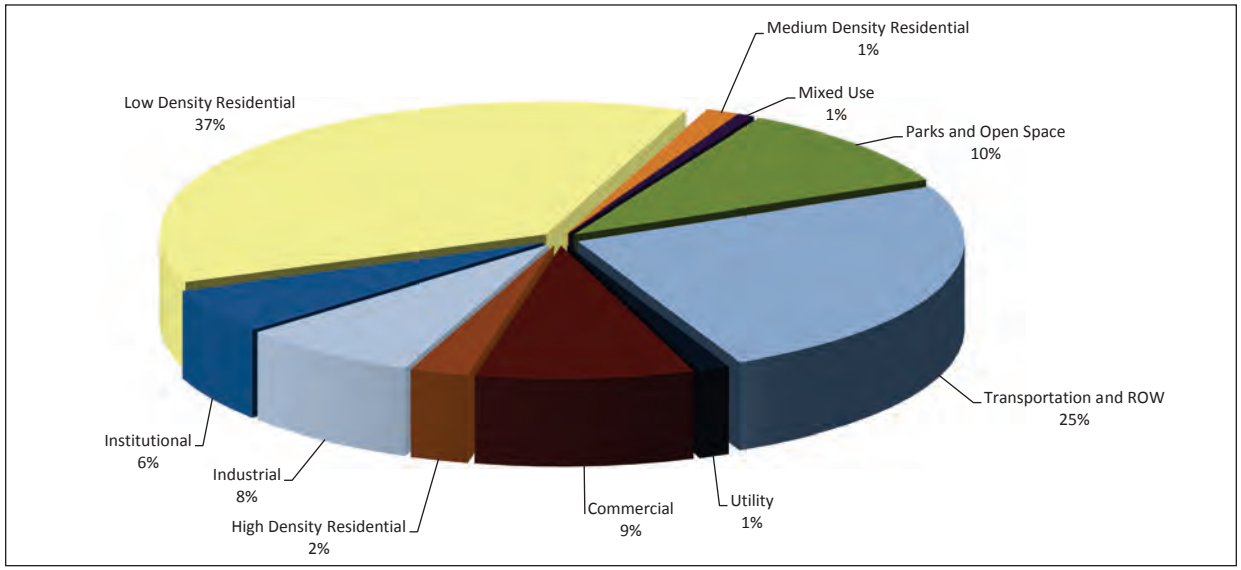
While the outlined approach to sustainability is diverse, it does provide the City with a variety of ways to improve its infrastructure through the public and private sectors, as well as in the short and long-term.

*Figure 10-3. Example of Porous Pavement*

## EXISTING LAND USE

Figures 10-4 and 10-5 illustrates the existing land uses found in the City of West Allis as of 2009. The City is characterized by a high quantity of residential properties, with supporting uses scattered throughout the community. Housing - including low density, medium density, and high density - accounts for 40% of land in the city. Commercial uses are located primarily along I-894 / Hwy 100 and in the northeastern portion of West Allis. These uses comprise approximately 9% of the land, while institutional lands comprise about 6%.

*Figure 10-4. Existing Land Uses in the City of West Allis (2009)*




Parks and open space lands comprise approximately 10%, with transportation (including streets and right-of-ways) and utility uses amounting to about 25%. Lands identified as mixed use totaled at about 1%. The City is fortunate to have a significant industrial base, with 8% of the City land uses being for industrial or manufacturing uses.

*Figure 10-5.*

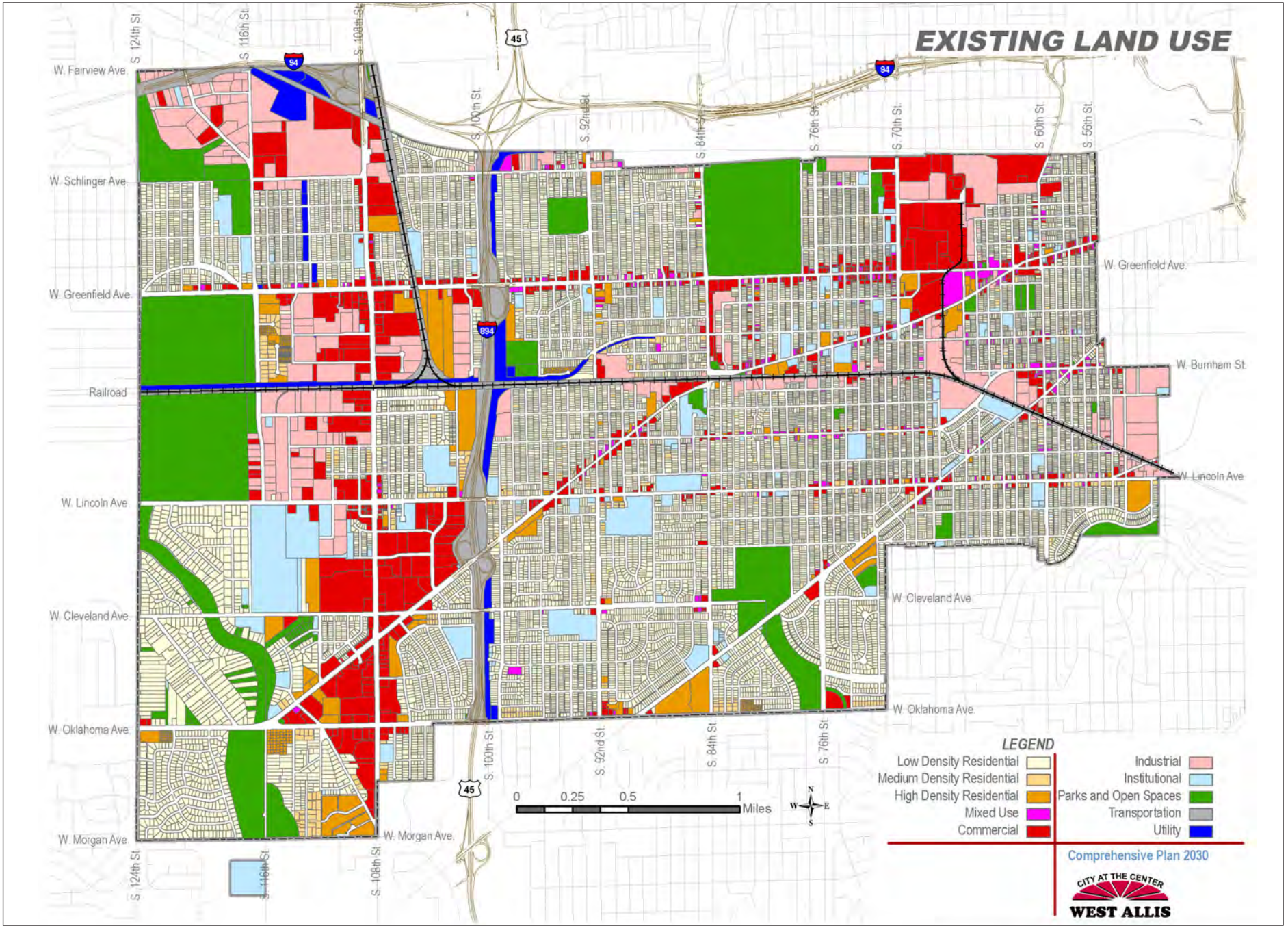

EXISTING LAND USE
W. Fairview Ave.
W. Schlinger Ave.
W. Greenfield Ave.
Railroad
W. Lincoln Ave.
W. Cleveland Ave.
W. Oklahoma Ave.
W. Morgan Ave.
W. Burnham St.
S. 124th St.
S. 116th St.
S. 108th St.
S. 100th St.
S. 92nd St.
S. 84th St.
S. 76th St.
S. 70th St.
S. 60th St.
S. 56th St.
94
45
894
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
N
W
E
S
LEGEND
Low Density Residential
Medium Density Residential
High Density Residential
Mixed Use
Commercial
Industrial
Institutional
Parks and Open Spaces
Transportation
Utility
Comprehensive Plan 2030
CITY AT THE CENTER
WEST ALLIS

*Figure 10-6.*

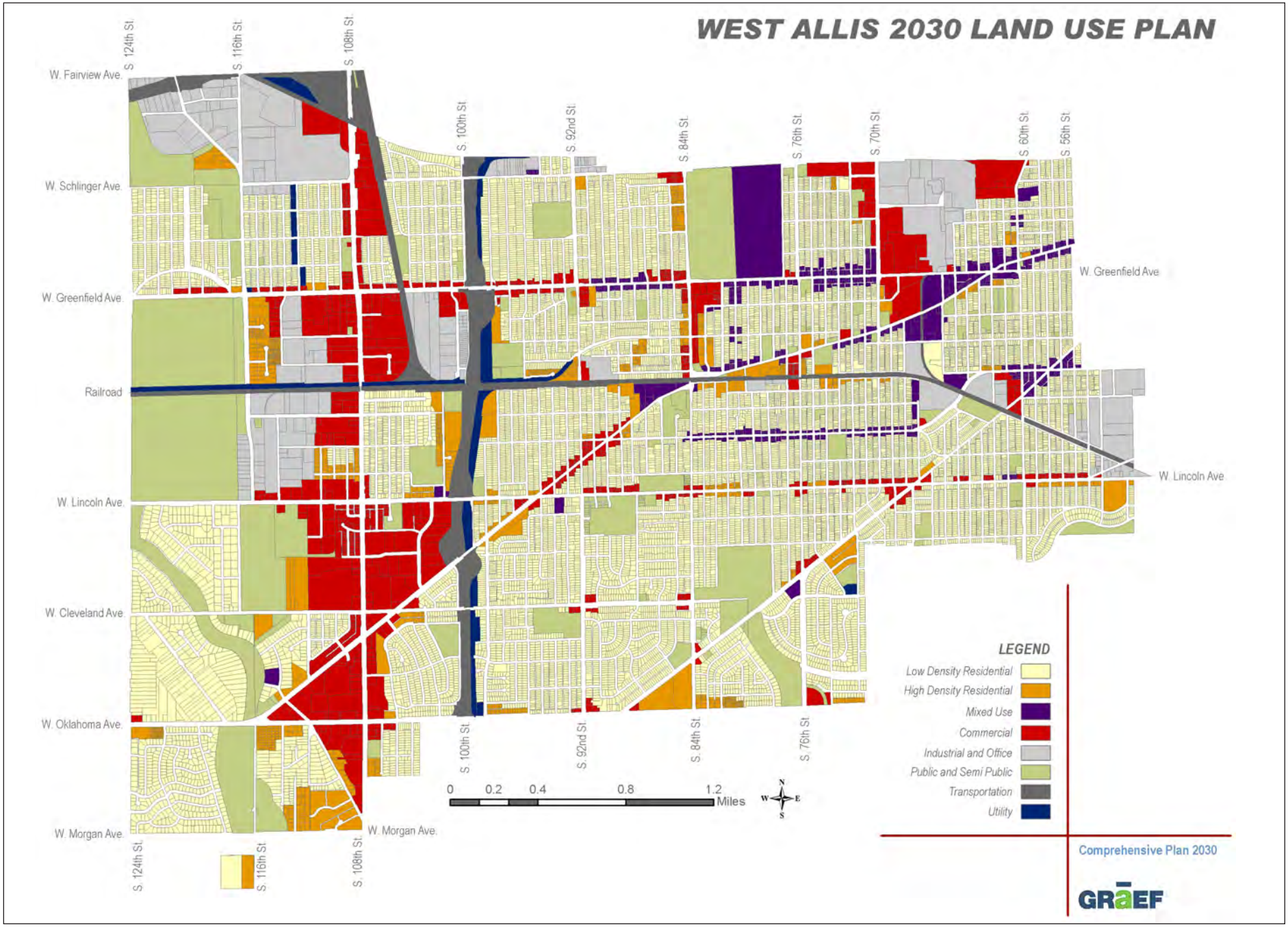
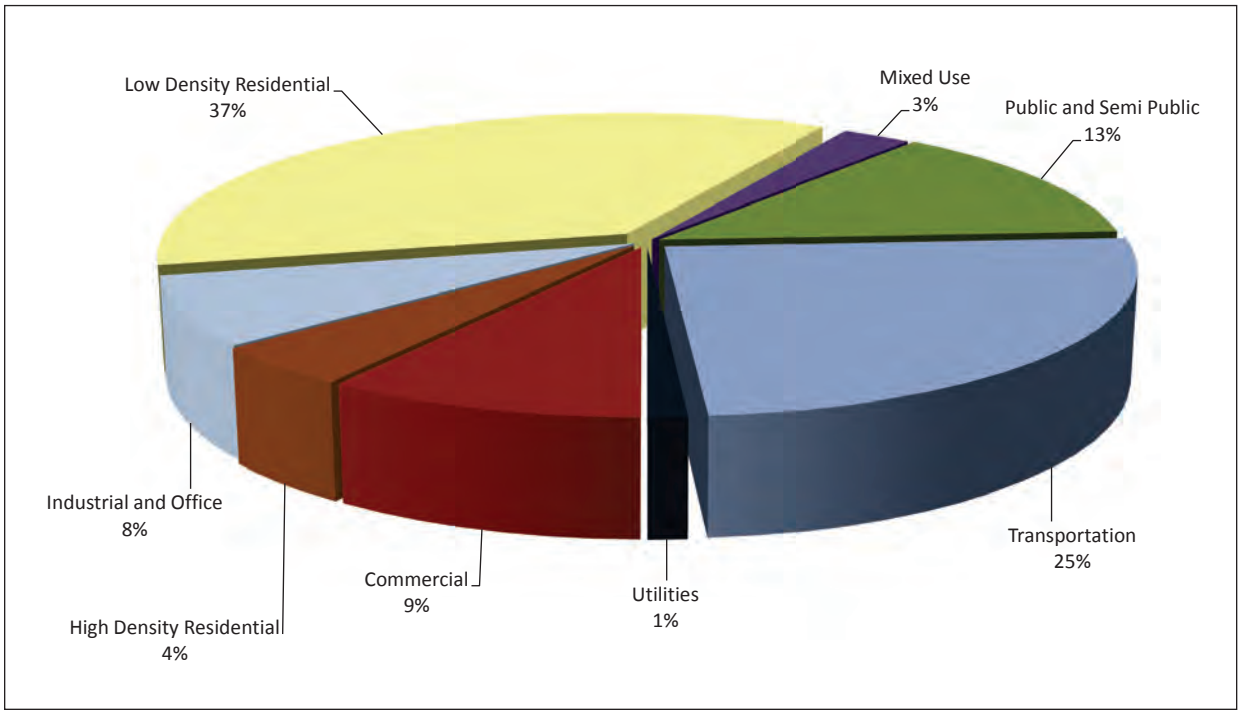

WEST ALLIS 2030 LAND USE PLAN
S. 124th St.
S. 116th St.
S. 108th St.
S. 100th St.
S. 92nd St.
S. 84th St.
S. 76th St.
S. 70th St.
S. 60th St.
S. 56th St.
W. Fairview Ave.
W. Schlinger Ave.
W. Greenfield Ave.
Railroad
W. Lincoln Ave.
W. Cleveland Ave.
W. Oklahoma Ave.
W. Morgan Ave.
0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles
N
W
E
S
LEGEND
Low Density Residential
High Density Residential
Mixed Use
Commercial
Industrial and Office
Public and Semi Public
Transportation
Utility
Comprehensive Plan 2030
GRAEF

*Figure 10-7. Land Use Category Percentages as Proposed in the 2030 Land Use Plan.*




## LAND USE PLAN: 2030

The 2030 Land Use Plan proposes some changes to the City's 2010 land use map. Figure 10-6 illustrates the 2030 Land Use Plan map, while Figure 10-7 shows future land uses by percentage. The modifications seek to enhance the City's existing mix of uses by shifting the designation of some industrial and institutional lands to commercial, high and low density residential, and mixed-use. The following sections provide general descriptions for each of the proposed categories.

### Commercial

Commercial uses dominate many of the major transportation corridors in the City. Redevelopment efforts have been implemented and continue to take form throughout this land use category. Commercial uses are planned to remain the same in the City at 9% of overall land uses (including a small increase from 667.4 acres to 688.1 acres).

### High Density Residential

The high-density residential land use category is one of two residential land use categories included in the land use plan (the other being low density residential). In addition, the mixed-use land use category seeks to provide opportunities for integrated housing units. Properties identified as high-density residential on the land use plan comprise a small percentage of the total land use acreage. These properties can be found in pockets throughout the City where multi-family developments and high-density single-family units can be accommodated. Several pockets of existing condominium and multifamily developments are located throughout the City.

Areas identified as high-density residential uses reflect a general density of 15 to 20 units per acre. The percentage of high density residential proposed in the 2030 land use plan represents 3% of overall land uses, compared to 2% of total existing land uses. This increase represents a shift from 179.2 acres to 324.1 acres, due to new housing projects that have been developed and conversion of underutilized industrial and institutional sites to housing.

### Industrial and Office

The City's industrial and office areas have a significant impact on the location of future development and expansion opportunities. Industrial uses follow major transportation routes, including rail corridors, which brings employees and clientele to these uses while limiting traffic from entering into residential areas. These major transportation routes provide access to area jobs and employment centers, both for area residents and the region.

Areas identified as industrial and office are planned to slightly increase in comparison with existing land uses, from 548.8 acres to 559.3 acres.

### Low-Density Residential

The low-density residential land use is the predominant land use in West Allis, and consists mostly of existing housing units varying in architectural style and age. Older low-density residential areas are found in the eastern portion of the City where traditional urban neighborhoods developed earlier in the City's history.

The majority of housing units in West Allis exist in the low-density residential land use designation. Areas identified as low density residential reflect a general density of nine (9) dwelling units per acre.

The percentage of low density residential proposed in the 2030 land use plan remains the same as existing land uses (37%), but includes a small decrease from 2,688.3 acres to 2,666.5 acres due to the conversion of a few areas from low density housing to high density housing. Opportunities exist for infill single-family housing throughout this land use category.

### Mixed-Use

Although the mixed-use category was not identified in the City's 2010 future land use map, it is considered a valuable existing land use in the community. Thus, the mixed-use category is included in the 2030 land use plan. Mixed-use is defined as a combination of residential, commercial office, and / or commercial retail either combined within a building (e.g. retail on the first floor with housing on the upper levels) or existing together on a development site.

The percentage of mixed-use proposed in the 2030 land use plan offers an increase from 1% of existing land uses to 3% of proposed total land uses, representing an increase from 49.8 acres to 201.4 acres. This is due primarily to the proposed development on the Milwaukee Mile site, as well as development in the Six Points area.

### Public and Semi Public

West Allis is fortunate to have parks and open space features which contribute to the natural character of the community. The City's parks, most of which are part of the Milwaukee County Parks System, are seen as a highly valuable resource that should be protected and enhanced where possible. Open spaces include neighborhood parks, recreational areas, and environmental corridors. All of these uses contribute to the value and quality of the community.

Additionally, the public and semi public land use category includes institutional uses, i.e. schools, churches, and government facilities. Thus, two existing land use types are included in this category: institutional and parks and open space. When comparing these existing land uses to the public and semi public land use category, the acreages are expected to decrease from 1,158.2 acres to 969.0 acres.

### Transportation

Although most of the City's transportation network is already in place, roadway improvements will continue throughout the life of this Plan. Coordination between transportation planning and land use planning will persist as a key effort. New roadway improvements should be made in conjunction with redevelopment.

Transportation uses are not planned to increase or decrease in acreage. Existing transportation uses, identified on the map as the railroad and I-894 corridor, comprise approximately 265.0 acres, which is expected to remain in the 2030 land use plan (approximately 259.7 acres). Local streets and right-of-ways are also included in the transportation "use" and consists of approximately 1,554.69 acres. Collectively, transportation uses include 25% of the land (1,814.41 total acres) within the City.

### Utility

The utility land use category serves as the designation for two key areas: 1) land adjacent to the rail corridor; and, 2) lands along the east side of I-894. The utility designation should continue to foster the appropriate regulations for utility lines and related infrastructure.

Utility land uses are not planned to increase or decrease in acreage through 2030. Existing utility uses comprise approximately 94.8 acres, which is expected to remain in the 2030 land use plan (approximately 85.2 acres).

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Property Rights

The comprehensive planning process respects private property rights by increasing opportunities for public participation, clarifying the scope of land use entitlements for property owners, holding local officials to a higher degree of accountability for plan content, and by allowing planning decisions to be made by the community. Input received at public meetings has been reviewed and incorporated into the land use plan.

### Road Improvements

Transportation and land use decisions should be made tangentially. Road expansions and projected traffic counts impact the types of land uses that are appropriate for both new development and redevelopment. The scale and density of land use also impact the need for new roads or expanded capacity. Thus, planning for transportation and land use should occur simultaneously. Complete streets should be considered as part of the Capital Improvement process.

### Land Use Conflicts and the 'Consistency' Requirement

According to the State's comprehensive planning legislation, a local government that engages in the

following actions must ensure actions are consistent with its comprehensive plan.

- Official mapping established or amended under s. 62.23 (6).
- Local subdivision regulation under s. 236.45 or 236.46.
- County zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 59.69.
- City or village zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 62.23 (7).
- Town zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 60.61 or 60.62.
- Zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands under s. 59.692, 61.351 or 62.231.

Land use plans are dynamic and can constantly change. It is reasonable to accept the idea that a land use plan with conflicting content may be amended.

## Limitations for Future Development

Existing development patterns and natural conditions are often the two (2) most limiting factors for future development. Compatibility between uses is critical for the sustained value of existing property values. Natural conditions, such as soil conditions, protected environmental features, or woodlands, may limit development due to City regulations or state permitting requirements. Figure 7-2 in Chapter 7: Parks, Open Space, Natural and Cultural Resources is an integral component to the City's land use plan. Figure 7-2 is provided for informational purposes only; however, it should be utilized in coordination with the land use plan when reviewing and approving changes in zoning, planned unit developments, conditional uses, land divisions, land stewardship plans, road alignments and circulation improvements, and related development matters.

Typical of first-tier inner-ring suburbs, the City of West Allis has more substantial growth limitations other than natural conditions. West Allis is unique, in that it is a landlocked community; fully developed; and faces the challenges of containing Brownfield sites, dilapidated properties, contaminated foundry sand, and geotechnical impediments that are scattered throughout the City. These obstacles are the City's true limitation in regards to future development, and they regularly challenge city staff and local officials on future development strategies.