



Memorandum

TO: Northfield Planning Commission

FROM: Paul Lippens, AICP NCI, Director of Urban Design & Mobility
Vidya Krishnan, Zoning Administrator/Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Whitmore Lake Corridor Analysis**

DATE: February 14, 2019

Dear Planning Commissioners,

One of the main areas of consideration and focus in the Master Plan is the Whitmore Lake Road Corridor area extending south from North Territorial Road intersection. The area is characterized by businesses with open outdoor storage, large parking areas, industrial material and equipment storage etc. The area has 4 different zoning designations – GC (general Commercial), LI (Light Industrial), LC (Local Commercial -1 parcel) and AR (Agricultural). Each of the districts permits a different range of uses by right and as a conditional use. The area has an overlay – the Whitmore Lake North Territorial Overlay District (WLNT) which greatly expands the list of uses permitted in the district.

However, several of the properties have uses that have never formally received approval from the Township and that have a long history of violations that have not been pursued. Many of these owners contend that their use is “grandfathered” in, which is an incorrect use of terminology. Under state law legally established non-conforming uses are uses that are no longer permitted in the district but were lawfully established at the time of inception. The lack of enforcement action by a municipality on an unauthorized use does not grant it a protected status.

Many of the uses on these properties are more industrial in nature than commercial or agricultural. The existing pattern of development has continued and is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. The current Master Plan does not appear to take into account the existing land use pattern and the recommendation for Mixed Use district in this area not in character with the desired uses by property owners. For the Township to improve this corridor, which has several major businesses, having a future land use plan and map that acknowledges the existing land uses and provides the Township with tools to support investment and compliance with site design standards is consistent with the established goals of the Master Plan.

HEADQUARTERS

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The following table presents a summary of some of the code enforcement issues that exist along the Whitmore Lake Road Corridor.

Type of Business	Issues	Possible Solutions supported by a master plan amendment to Industrial
<p>A site that started off as a farm in 1960's pre-dating the ZO; then changed to a landscaping business with no approval in late 1990's; at this time is an industrial processing facility. Massive expansion of operations in last few years.</p>	<p>Use has recd. no approvals; even if applicant applies for approval of business as a landscape supply co. (which is what they contend they are), the site does not have the minimum required 10 acres. At this time the site has multiple pieces of heavy machinery, is predominantly a wood chipping 'factory' which brings tree logs from all over and converts them to chips. Applicant is completely unwilling to comply with any regulations. Satellite images from early 1990's to date clear indicate the progressing from a farm property to an industrial facility. Applicant contends they are a "grandfathered in" buss. which is incorrect because the use was illegally established in the first place. Concerns exist re: safety of operation due to no record of on-site layout of equipment, buildings or circulation patterns.</p>	<p>The AR Zoning district designation, the Whitmore Lake – North Territorial overlay or the existing MP mixed use designation will not permit the use as it currently exists. Based upon existing pattern of land use, conversion to an Industrial zoning designation with requirements for greenbelts, screening, proper circulation, outdoor storage and on-site safety is more likely to enable the Township to get the site into compliance with the code.</p>
<p>A site that is a junkyard and auto-scrap recycling yard. Has received site plan approval from PC several years ago.</p>	<p>Although the use recd. Approval from ZBA in 2012 as an existing legal non-conforming use and also recd. site plan approval in 2013 from Pc for an expansion, the final site plan was never implemented and engineering was not completed. The property owner is attempting to work with Township to complete the requirement improvements.</p>	<p>A junkyard is always a land use placed in an industrial district and never in an AR or overlay district. An Industrial designation would be more appropriate for the site which is likely to remain in operation for the foreseeable future.</p>
<p>A site that appears to be a landscape supply type of company/scope of use was dictated by a consent judgement several years ago (copy with Township Attorney; not aware of terms of agreement).</p>	<p>Per observations by the Code Enforcement officer the scope of activity on the site appears to exceed what was approved under the consent judgement.</p>	<p>Conversion of the site to Industrial designation would likely place the uses on the site more in line with the zoning.</p>



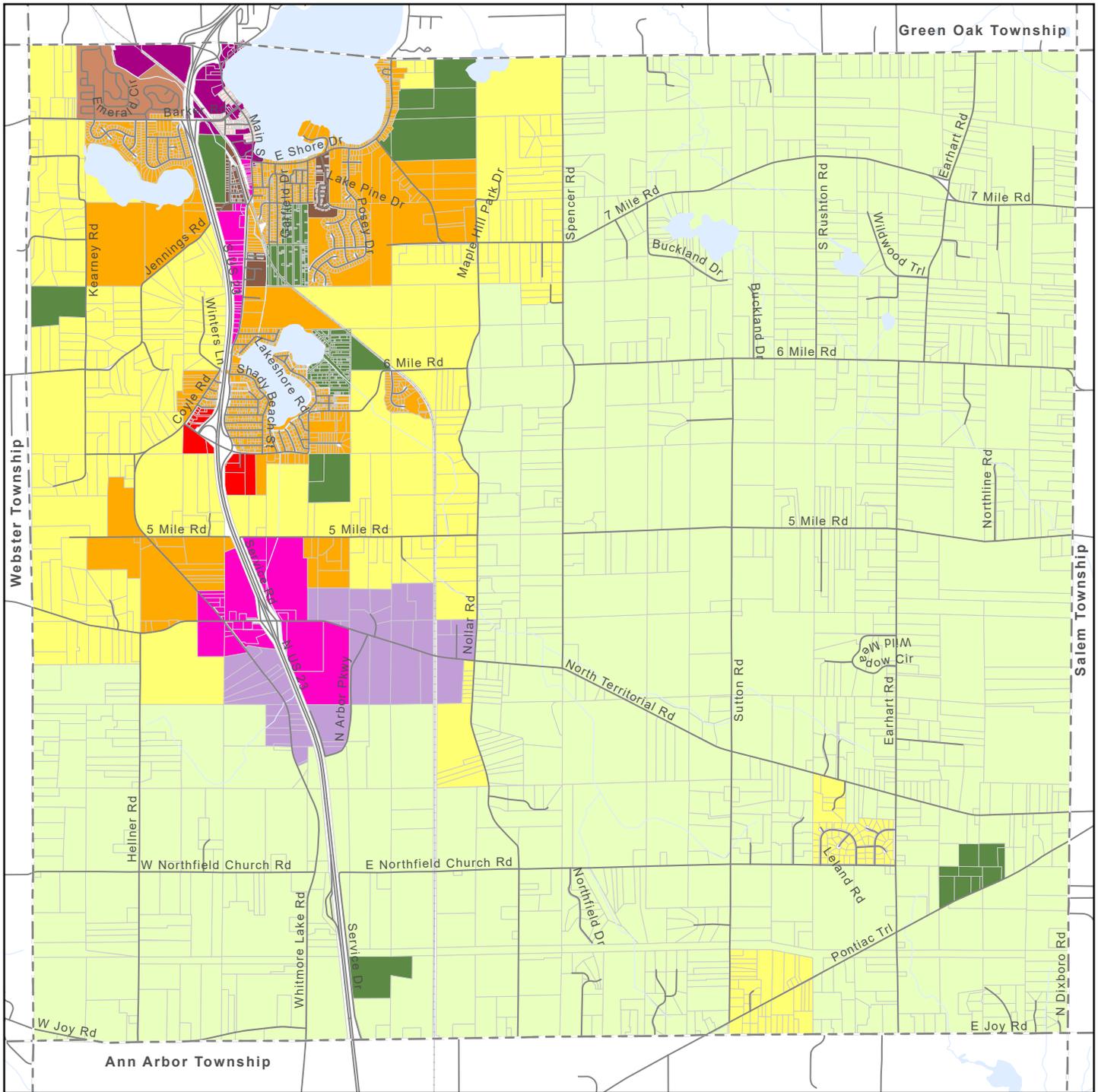


<p>A site that does not have a clear single use. It originally was approved as a truck stop and truck repair facility.</p>	<p>The site has multiple code violations per the Code Enforcement officer. A site visit is required to document the various uses on the site – most for which have recd. no approval including outdoor storage piles of asphalt millings, used and new car sale slot, storage of vehicles etc. Too many violations to list.</p>	<p>The site is zoned GC (General Commercial). But the existing uses appear to be more industrial in nature at this time.</p>
<p>A Vehicle Repair Facility</p>	<p>The owner operates a vehicle repair facility and would like to expand the businesses to allow for used car sales in a limited manner. Property is zoned LI and would not permit the use.</p>	<p>Possible expansion in scope of uses permitted within a new district might allow the business to operate more competitively and with site design requirements that would ensure the site is well maintained.</p>

The administrative staff has interacted with several of the property owners who have expressed their issues with the current varied zoning down the corridor. Some who are zoned LI believe they should be given GC status and vice versa.

Moving the southern border of the Mixed Use District to the north and modifying the land use designation to accommodate light industrial uses is a reasonable approach to encourage improvements in this area and contribute to the overall image of Northfield Township.

- Cc: Board of Trustees.
 Steven Aynes, Township Manager
 Mary Bird, Zoning Coordinator
 Paul Burns, Township Attorney
 Jim Turner, Code Enforcement Officer



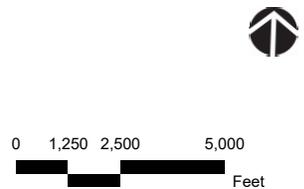
MAP 6
Future
Land Use

Northfield Township,
 Washtenaw County, MI

February 14, 2019

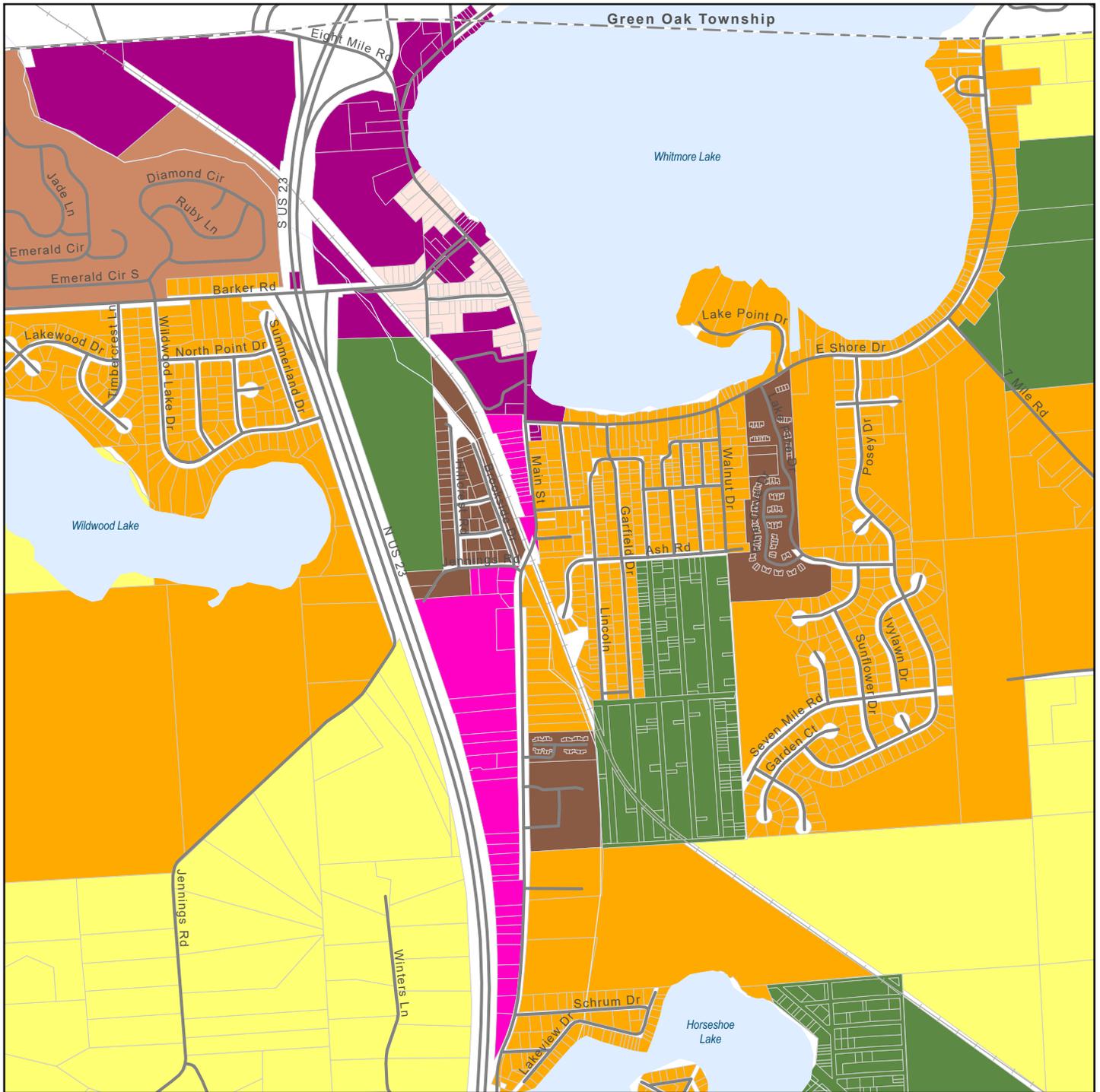
Legend

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Agricultural |  Mixed Use |
|  Commercial |  VC-Mixed Use |
|  High Density Residential |  VC-Cottage Retail |
|  Industrial |  City and Township boundaries |
|  Recreation/Conservation |  Roads |
|  Low Density Residential |  Railroads |
|  Medium Density Residential |  Rivers, streams, and lakes |
|  Manufactured Home | |



SOURCES
 Basemap Source: Michigan Geographic Framework 2019, SEMCOG 2019
 Data Source: McKenna 2019





MAP 7
Downtown
Future Land Use

Northfield Township,
 Washtenaw County, MI

February 14, 2019
 DRAFT

Legend

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Agricultural |  Mixed Use |
|  Commercial |  VC-Mixed Use |
|  High Density Residential |  VC-Cottage Retail |
|  Industrial |  City and Township boundaries |
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