



Chapter 1: Introduction

When the first white settlers arrived in the 1830s at a place called “The Forks,” they saw the flowing Tittabawassee and Chippewa rivers surrounded by a beautiful wilderness of unlimited hardwood and pine forests, along with conifer swamps. Attracted by reports of the area’s rich resources, settlers arrived in waves. Less than 20 years later, the City of Midland was incorporated.

It is often said that change is the only constant. At first, farming and lumber sustained the local economy. By the 1890s, the lumber barons had moved elsewhere. The agrarian economy shifted to manufacturing. The Dow Chemical Company formed—its success went hand-in-hand with the City’s for over a century.



Above: Main Street Midland in the first half of the 20th Century. (Source: Midland The Way We Were: Acadia, 2001.)

For decades, Midland’s Main Street hugged the curving banks of the Tittabawassee. The downtown teemed with residents, business people and visitors. However, recurring floods eventually forced relocation of the downtown and—not unlike many other Michigan communities—commercial opportunities moved to the City’s periphery and along major road corridors with the emergence of the automobile.

Change can be managed in cities. The best way begins with preparation of a comprehensive plan. In the plan, future land uses and redevelopment opportunities are considered, along with the infrastructure, service and cultural components that support and sustain them and the community.

In acknowledging its history and the desire to manage change through preparation of a comprehensive plan, Midland takes the next steps to a prosperous and sustainable future.



Above: Main Street Midland in 2006

The comprehensive plan process summarized in this document began in 2005. Approval of the comprehensive plan occurred nearly two years later, after a massive effort involving hundreds of residents and a committed group of city officials. Their future begins today.



Plan Organization

This document is organized in a logical progression that establishes current conditions, identifies a vision, denotes goals and objectives, and makes recommendations. Chapter 2: City Profile and Chapter 3: Natural Resource Inventory provides background base data of current conditions and trends in the Midland area. Based on that information and public input, the remainder of the document comprises the plan for the future of the City and the MUGA. Within these chapters, goals are identified that guide Plan recommendations and support the intent of the Plan.

