

URBANDALE STUDY - Summary  
City of Lansing and Lansing Townships  
Prepared by: Lansing Planning Department  
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Flooding has been a recognized problem in the Urbandale Area, located in the City of Lansing and Lansing Township just northwest of the I-496 and U.S. 127 intersection, at least since the early 1900s when the first major flood in the area was recorded. Subsequent development of the area began despite the knowledge that the area was in a floodplain where severe flooding would inevitable occur. Since that time, two major floods have inundated the area, one in 1947 and another in 1975. But the houses remain and the people continue to occupy them, despite the threat of flood and the inevitable expenses incurred by the property owners and the governing municipalities.

Proposed solutions for the area have been evasive, complex and expensive, and for the most part have involved the displacement of a substantial number of households and/or major sewer reconstruction. For these reasons, no single municipality or governing body has been willing or financially able to address the Urbandale question.

The information presented in this report draws together the pertinent facts about the Urbandale Area in an attempt to provide a basis for a solution to the flooding problems. The acquisition recommendations made in the report have been drawn from this information and should be viewed as preliminary proposals on which the concerned governing bodies can build a final proposal. The scope of the recommendation will, of course, have to be expanded to include treatment of the sewer situation and proposed reuse of vacated land as well. But these solutions go beyond the scope of this preliminary study and should result from the combined efforts of the concerned municipalities and the area citizens.

#### SUMMARY FINDINGS

- The Urbandale study area is comprised of a portion of the City of Lansing with a land area of 90 acres and a portion of Lansing Township with land area of about 70 acres.
- The current estimated population in the Urbandale area is 1,145 persons, of which 830 are City of Lansing residents and 315 are from Lansing Township. Population in the area has declined by 23.3 percent (348 persons) since 1970.
- Elderly population in the Urbandale Area in 1970 was higher (13.9 percent city, 12.2 percent township) than the citywide ratio of 10 percent of total city population. Also in 1970, the township section of Urbandale had a higher percentage (12.2 percent) of elderly residents than that for the whole Lansing Township (6.5 percent).
- Residential development represents the primary land use in the Urbandale area. One-fourth of the land area (excluding highway and streets right-of-way) is vacant.

-Housing in the study area is predominantly single family (95.4 percent). Three hundred thirty-four (334) housing units or 72.4 percent are located in the City of Lansing while 127 (27.6 percent) of the housing units are found in the township section.

-Fifty-five (55%) percent of the housing units in the City of Lansing section are renter type units while in the township section, 90% of the units are renter type. The remainder are owner type units.\*

-More than half of the 461 housing units in the study area are in deteriorating, substandard and critical conditions, according to a recent exterior survey of housing conditions.

-An R.L. Polk survey made in April 1979 indicated 31 vacant units in the city section which showed an 8.9 Percent gross vacancy rate compared with the City of Lansing estimated gross vacancy rate of 5.3 percent. Vacancy rate for the township section was 7.8 percent.\*\*

-A detailed and comprehensive study is needed to formulate recommendations to solve the Urbandale problem. State is needed to formulate recommendations to solve the Urbandale problem. State and Federal funding should be sought by Lansing Township and the City of Lansing to support the study and provide funding for the proposed solutions. As a first step, a total of 174 housing units, one church and a structure currently used as light industrial located in the southern section of the Urbandale study area where flooding in April 1975 was five feet or more are recommended for priority acquisition activities. In addition, 92 vacant parcels would have to be acquired to complete land assemblage in the southern portion of the area. Total estimated acquisition cost equals \$5,404,060.

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\*Occupancy figures are based on assessor's mailing lists, and may not reflect actual occupancy. They were, however, used to estimate preliminary relocation costs.

\*\*Vacancy rate for Lansing Township is not available.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Urbandale problems are complex with evasive and costly solutions. Although studies have been conducted and partial solutions have been proposed, a comprehensive and detailed solution which deals with the entire area, both City and Township, including costs and proposed funding sources has not yet been formulated. The recommendation for acquisition proposed in this study is only a preliminary and partial solution to the problems. A complete development plan should be formulated and agreed upon by the City of Lansing and Lansing Township with assistance from the state and federal governments. The City and the Township should request funding at either the state or federal level to enable them to work together toward a definitive solution.

The heaviest damages and losses resulting from the 1975 flood in the Lansing area occurred in the "Urbandale" area where over 250 structures were inundated by

floodwaters. The structures were flooded up to various depths ranging from basement flooding to submersion of the entire first floor of the structures. This report recommends the acquisition and removal of all structures and parcels where flooding occurred to a depth of 5 (five) feet or more in the southern portion of the Urbandale area. This area, if cleared of housing, could then be sculptured and designed to act as a retention basin for potential floodwaters in the future. A detailed land use plan can be developed to determine an auxiliary use for the land during periods of normal rainfall and drainage.

This acquisition plan does not deal with all structures in the Urbandale area or other floodplain areas where the water level exceeded five feet, (elevation 827 feet or below) but deals only with the largest concentration of structures flooded to that depth. Other pockets of housing with experienced severe flooding should be programmed for future acquisition if funds are available and if the problems remain unsolved. The acquisition proposed here, the, should be viewed as a first step to solving the housing and flooding problems in Urbandale.

Recommended acquisition includes nearly the entire southern portion of Urbandale (see attached map) where the elevation is 827 feet or lower. The proposed acquisition area includes 171 residential structures, 1 light industrial structure and 92 vacant parcels. A total of 109 of the residential structures are rental properties and 62 are owner types. The table below details the breakdown between the City of Lansing and Lansing Township.

	City of Lansing	Lansing Township	Total
#Owner type units	71	3	74
#Rental type units	70	30	100
#Business/commercial Structures	1		
#Vacant parcels	58	34	92
#Government owned parcels	0	7	7
#Churches	1	0	1
Total	200	74	274

As evidenced in the preceding table, nearly 57.5% of the housing units proposed for acquisition are rental type and all except 3 are single family dwellings. Most of the structures are currently occupied. As a result, the acquisition strategy includes moving and relocation costs estimated for all structures based on current records of occupancy. An amount of \$500 is included for moving expenses for all households; an additional \$4,000 for all renter households and \$15,000 for all owner occupied households. Estimated closing costs of \$1,360 per parcel are also included as is a demolition cost of \$2,500 for each primary structure. Total costs are illustrated in the chart below.

	City of Lansing	Lansing Township	Total
Acquisition	2,256,450	604,250	2,860,700

Relocation (inc. moving expense)	1,521,000	154,500	1,675,500
Closing	282,880	92,480	375,360
Demolition	427,500	65,000	492,500
Total	\$4,487,830	\$916,230	\$5,404,060