

Chapter 1: Existing Area

Chapter 1: Existing Area Characteristics

1.A Existing Land Use

The Little Blue Valley is largely undeveloped, approximately 65 percent is agricultural, vacant, or set-aside as park and open space. The Little Blue Valley became part of the City of Independence through annexations in 1963 and 1975 but has remained very different from the older, more typically urban western half of the City. Although much of the plan area remains in active agriculture, low-density suburban development has begun to intrude. (See Figure 2)

Existing land uses include the City's municipal electric generating plant, which is surrounded by some industrial uses, and some residential development. Additional pockets of residential are scattered throughout the Valley. The Valley is also home to three City fire stations and the Blue River Community College.

The Lake City Army Ammunition plant occupies about 3,500 acres in the eastern portion of the study area. A large portion of Lake City land is vacant and undeveloped or used for test ranges of small arms ammunition. In addition to the built development, the Little Blue Valley is home to two major regional parks, the Little Blue Trace Park and the Burr Oak Woods Park and Nature Center.

1.B Property Ownership

Large landowners control much of the developable land in the Valley. (See Figure 3.) This should help enable the City to achieve a comprehensive development plan that coordinates growth initiatives and achieves an optimal balance of different land uses. The ownership pattern can also help achieve a rational phasing plan that specifies the desirable order in which different parts of the study area



Pink Hill Road through Burr Oak Woods State Park

should develop. Building consensus between the property owners and sustaining this coordination and cooperation is therefore crucial for the success of this planning strategy.

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) is the second largest landowner in the study area. (The largest is the Federal government, the owner of the Lake City site.) The RLDS church has expressed its desire to develop a planned community, open to general public marketing, on 3,500 acres. Such a venture opens new possibilities for the Valley and will have a profound impact on the image and marketability of the entire study area. Implementation of such a project, however, must be compatible with development of the Valley as a whole. Any such planned development also must conform to specific ordinances and guidelines adopted to ensure high quality development.

Vista from Bundschu Road



Figure 2
Existing Land Use
Little Blue Valley
Comprehensive Plan
Amendment

LEGEND

- Streets
- Parcels
- Existing Land Use
- Agricultural/Vacant
- Commercial
- High Density Residential
- Industrial
- Industrial/Underground
- Industrial/Underground-Park
- Land Fill
- Open Space/Parks
- Public Facilities
- Residential
- Vacant



Date: May, 1999



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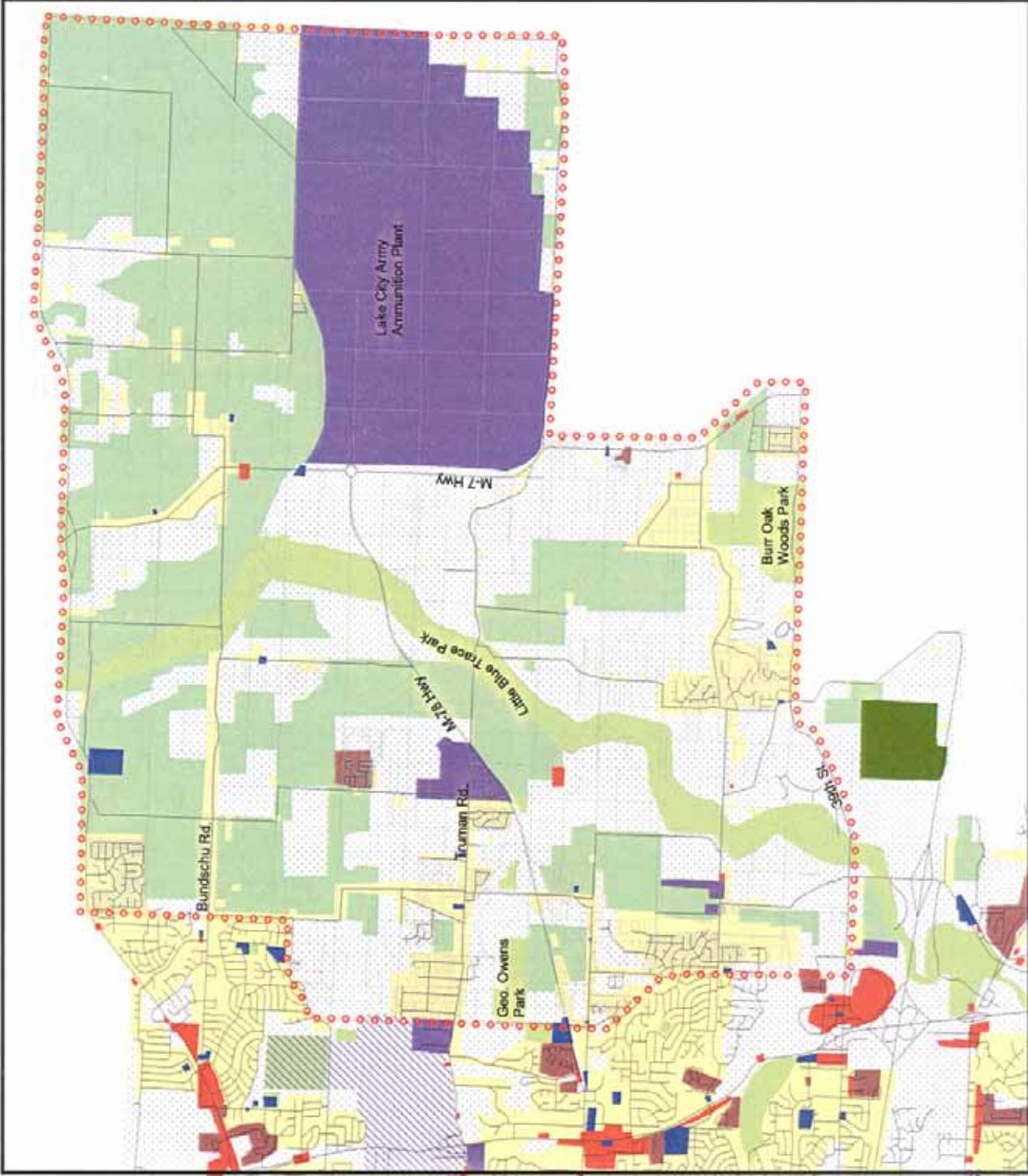


Figure 3
Existing Property Ownership
Little Blue Valley
Comprehensive Plan
Amendment

LEGEND

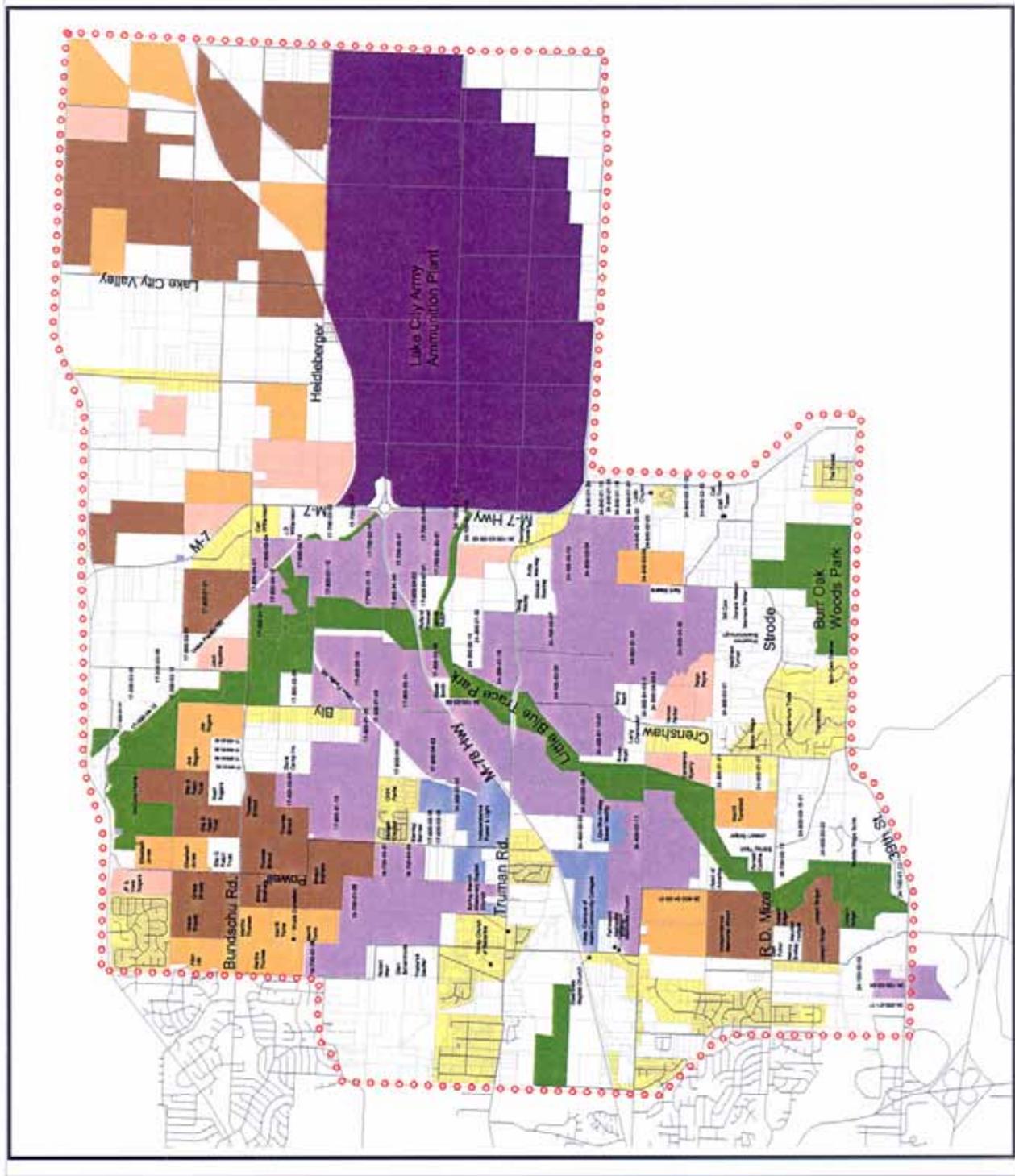
- Streets
- Parcels
- 50-100 Acre Parcels
- 100-200 Acre Parcels
- 200+ Acre Parcels
- RLDS Property
- Public/Quasi Public Property
- Somewhat Intensely Developed Areas
- Park Land
- Lake City Army Ammunition Plant
- Lake City



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1.C Existing Utilities

Although still sparsely settled, much of the infrastructure (except for adequate roads) necessary for urbanization is in place. Such infrastructure includes public water and sewer, natural gas and the municipal electric generating plant. (See Figure 4) The Little Blue Valley Sewer District has approximately 60 miles of sewer interceptor that serves 12 separate subdistricts including the City of Independence. The Little Blue Valley Sewer District does not have lateral lines. Individual service is provided by the subdistricts and then collected by the Little Blue Valley Sewer District for treatment.

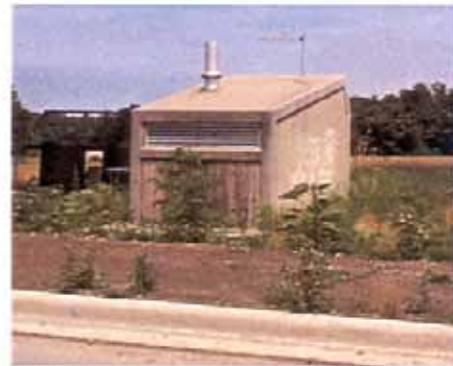
The Little Blue Valley Sewer District would serve the majority of the development proposed for the Little Blue Valley Study area. An interceptor roughly along the proposed alignment of the Little Blue Parkway is from 114 to 126 inches in diameter and has a design flow of 265 to 350 million gallons per day (MGD).

1.D Existing Zoning

Figure 5 depicts the current zoning in the study area. The 1993 Comprehensive Plan considered this area to be part of the "largest industrial reserve area available in the Kansas City Metropolitan Region" and current land use policies, including zoning, reflect this view. Much of the area consequently is zoned for agriculture or low-density residential and agricultural related uses are the preferred land use until future industrial development can occur. The demand for employment land will likely be modest until the proposed Little Blue Parkway is built. (See Technical Memorandum, Market and Economic Evaluation for the Little Blue Valley Planning Area prepared for the City of Independence by Development Strategies, December 1998.) Nevertheless there is already an extensive amount of industrial/manufacturing land that has been zoned in accord with the current Comprehensive Plan emphasis on employment growth.



Truman Road and 7 Highway Substation



Little Blue Valley Sewer District meter station south of 39th Street along the Little Blue Parkway

1.E School Districts

The Independence, Blue Springs and Fort Osage school districts each include sections of the Little Blue Valley. (See Figure 6) This part of the City has very few schools and only one elementary school is located within the boundaries of the study area. Several schools, however, including middle and high schools are located just outside the boundary of the study area.



The new Independence School District
Bingham 7th Grade Center

Figure 4
Existing Utilities
Little Blue Valley
Comprehensive Plan
Amendment

LEGEND:

- Water Mains
- Other Existing Water Main Lines
- Primary Existing Water Lines
- Sewers
- Existing Interceptor Lines
- Other Existing Sewer Lines
- Streets
- Refinedpar

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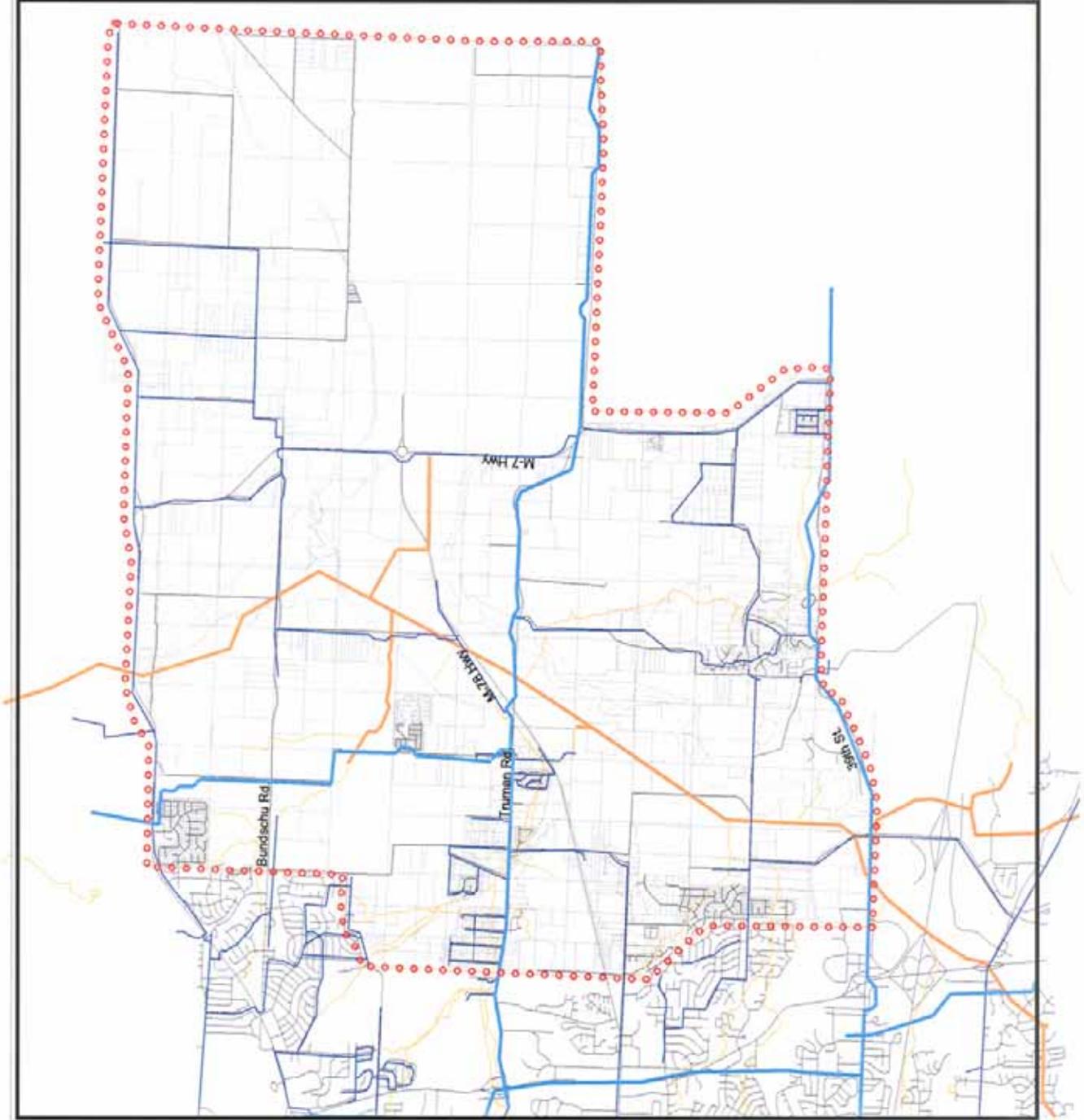


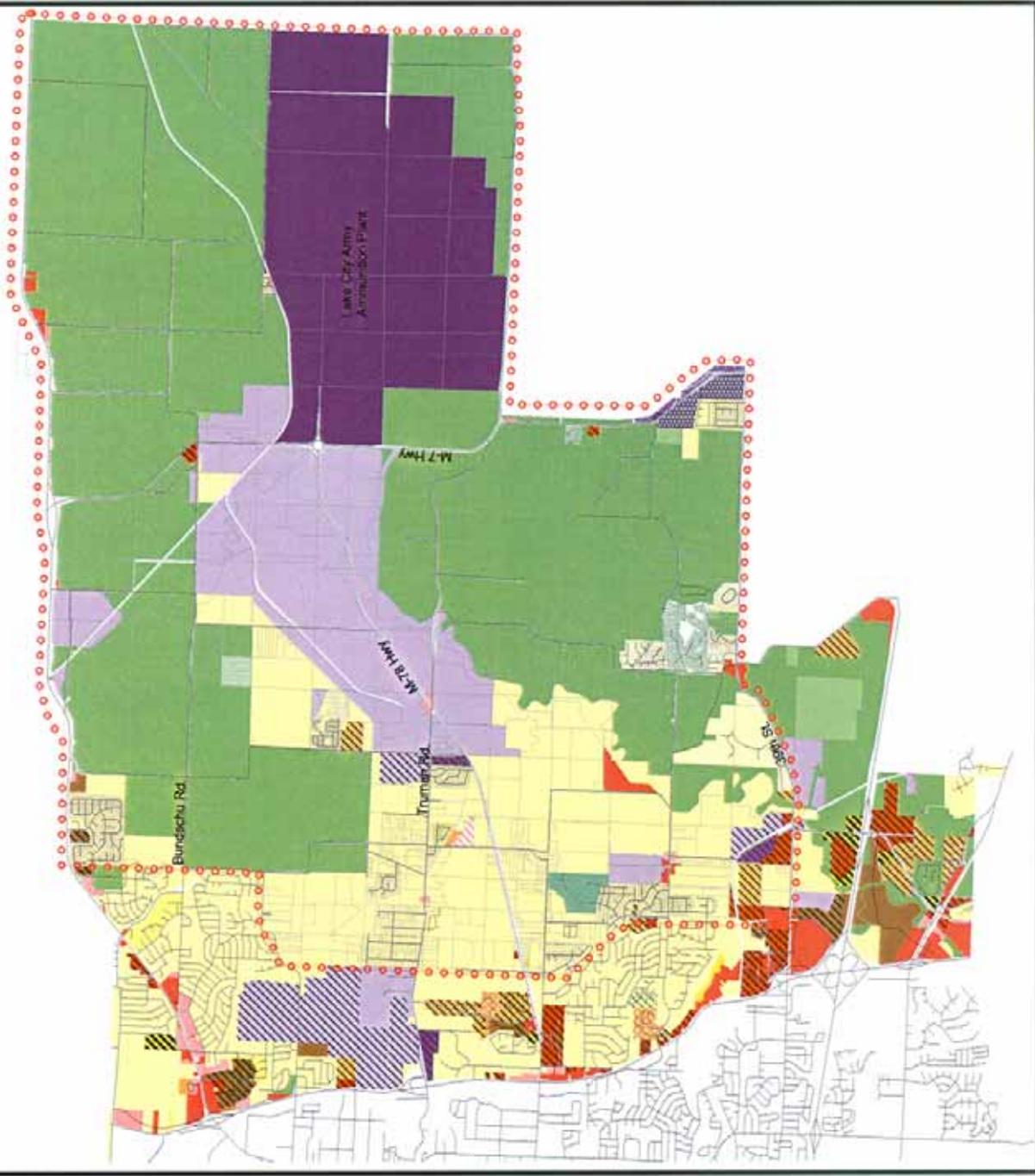
Figure 5 Existing Zoning Little Blue Valley Comprehensive Plan Amendment

LEGEND:

Streets
Parcels

Zoning:

- A-1 /Agricultural
- A-1-su /Agricultural-Spec. Use
- A-1-PUD /Agricultural, Planned Unit Development
- A-1 MM-2 /Agricultural & Industrial Park
- RE /Single Family, Estate
- R-1 /Single Family Residential
- R-1PUD /Single Family Res., Planned Unit Dev.
- R-1a /Single Family Residential
- R-1a PUD /Single Fam. Res., Planned Unit Develop.
- R-1b /Single Family Residential
- R-1b PUD /Single Family Res., Planned Unit Dev.
- R-1ba /Single Family Res., Planned Dist. Spec. Use
- R-1ba PUD /Single Family Res., Planned Dist. Spec. Use
- R-2 /Two Family Residential
- R-2 PUD /Two Family Residential, Planned District
- R-3 /Moderate Density Residential
- R-3 PUD /Moderate Density Residential, Planned Dist.
- R-3 PUD /Moderate Density Res. Planned Unit Development
- R-3-SU /Moderate Density Res. Special Use
- R-4 /High Density Residential
- R-4 PUD /High Density Residential, Planned Dist.
- R-4 PUD /High Density Residential
- C-1 /Limited Commercial/Residential
- C-1-1 /Neighborhood Comm.-Limited Res.-Planned, Spec. Use
- C-1-1 /Neighborhood Commercial/Limited Residential, Planned Dist.
- C-1 /Neighborhood Commercial
- C-1-1a /Light Commercial, Special Use
- C-1-1a /Neighborhood Commercial, Planned District
- C-2 /General Commercial
- C-2 PUD /General Commercial Planned Dist.
- C-2-1a /General Comm., Planned Dist., Spec. Use
- C-2-2a /General Comm., Planned Dist., Spec. Use
- C-3 /Wholesaling, Planned Dist.
- M-1 /Light Industrial
- M-1-1a /Light Industrial, Special Use
- M-1-1a /Light Industrial, Planned Dist. Spec. Use
- M-1-1 /Light Industrial, Planned District
- M-2 /Light Industrial Underground
- M-2-1a /Industrial Park, Planned District
- M-2-1a /Industrial Park, Planned District
- SSB-A-1AM2a /Agricultural/Industrial Underground
- ○ Boundary of Study Area



Date: May, 1999



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Figure 6
School District Boundaries /
School Locations
Little Blue Valley
Comprehensive Plan
Amendment

LEGEND

- 1. New Learning Community School (Private)
- 2. Randall Elementary
- 3. Cler-Mont Elementary
- 4. Blue Hills Elementary
- 5. McCune Home (State Home)
- 6. Fort Osage High School
- 7. James Lewis Elementary
- 8. Proposed Elementary School (1999)
- 9. Proposed Junior High School
- 10. Blackburn Elementary
- 11. Bridger Junior High School
- 12. Bingham Jr. High School
- 13. Proposed Sixth Grade Center
- 14. Spring Branch Elementary
- 15. Blue River Community College
- 16. Proposed Fire and Police Training Facility

School Districts

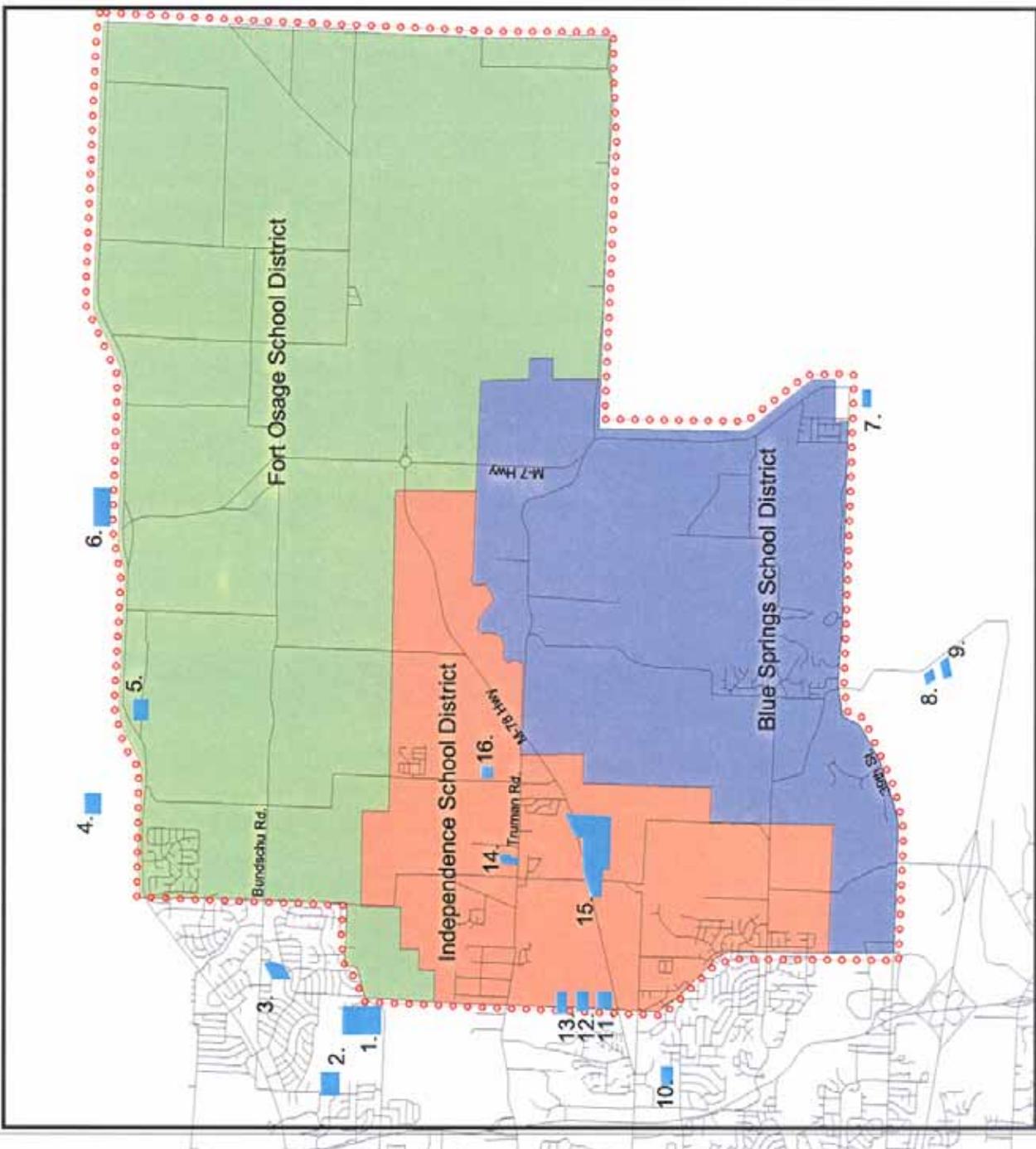
- Blue Springs
- Fort Osage
- Independence

Streets

Boundary of Study Area



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1.F Development Opportunities/ Constraints

The City's 1993 Comprehensive Plan proposes a considerable portion of the study area for industrial use. A special zoning category was created intending to preserve the Valley for future industrial development. The special zoning classification allows either agriculture or industrial uses. The concept was to provide an atmosphere favorable for agriculture while allowing the development of the Valley to take place over a period of time.

The Little Blue Valley possesses extraordinary beauty with many natural qualities that make it ideal for future development. The major factors driving the Little Blue Valley Comprehensive Plan Amendment at this time include:

- Highway infrastructure funded and currently under construction – The 1-70/Selsa Road interchange.
- Road proposals through the study area – The Little Blue Parkway or the Jackson County Roadway as it was identified in previous studies and reports. For purposes of this study, we will refer to it as the Little Blue Parkway (LBP).
- Utility extensions and development pressures at the edges of the planning area – Development pressure is occurring along 39th Street and Pink Hill Road.
- Major land owners interested in developing their properties – The most significant of these is the 3,500-acre private new community planning effort currently underway by the RLDS Church on land centrally located within the planning area.



Little Blue Parkway bridge over Interstate 70 under construction



Tapawingo Sewer Interceptor under construction



Day lilies lining a rural road



A developing corn crop

1.F.1 Assets

- Visual attractiveness
- For the most part, unspoiled, natural rural character
- Gently sloping topography
- Large property ownership patterns
- The Little Blue River
- The Little Blue Trace Park
- Availability of sewer, water and electric utilities
- Attraction of some higher end residential development
- Some industrial/employment uses
- Rail access potential

1.F.2 Liabilities

- Lack of quality roadway access
- Flood plains and possible problems with storm water runoff
- Certain existing land uses such as the City's Electric Generating Plant and the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant
- Groundwater contamination near the Lake City Plant
- Areas of alluvial soils may pose problems related to heavy load bearing
- Some areas of steep slopes
- Inadequately screened unattractive existing land uses

1.F.3 Logical Development Areas

The map which follows entitled Development Opportunities/Constraints - Figure 6, summarizes the site constraints and identifies the logical areas where future development is most likely to occur. The Logical Development Areas, which are identified alphabetically, are formed by natural features such as rivers, creeks, flood plains, and topographic relief and by manmade features such as roads, existing subdivisions, public facilities and dedicated parks.

The map identifies the following constraining factors:

<u>Approximate Acres</u>	
Steep slopes (25% and greater)	900
100-year flood plain (FEMA maps)	2,100
Parks	<u>1,600</u>
Total	4,600

Forty six-hundred acres represents approximately 18% of the total 25,000 acre Little Blue Valley study area.

Figure 7, locates institutional/public facilities and existing somewhat intensely developed areas. Existing trunk sanitary sewer and water main lines are superimposed on the map to illustrate the accessibility of these utilities to the various development areas.



Crenshaw Hill rising from the banks of the Little Blue River



Blue River Community College, Independence Campus

**Figure 7:
Development Opportunities/
Constraints
Little Blue Valley
Comprehensive Plan
Amendment**

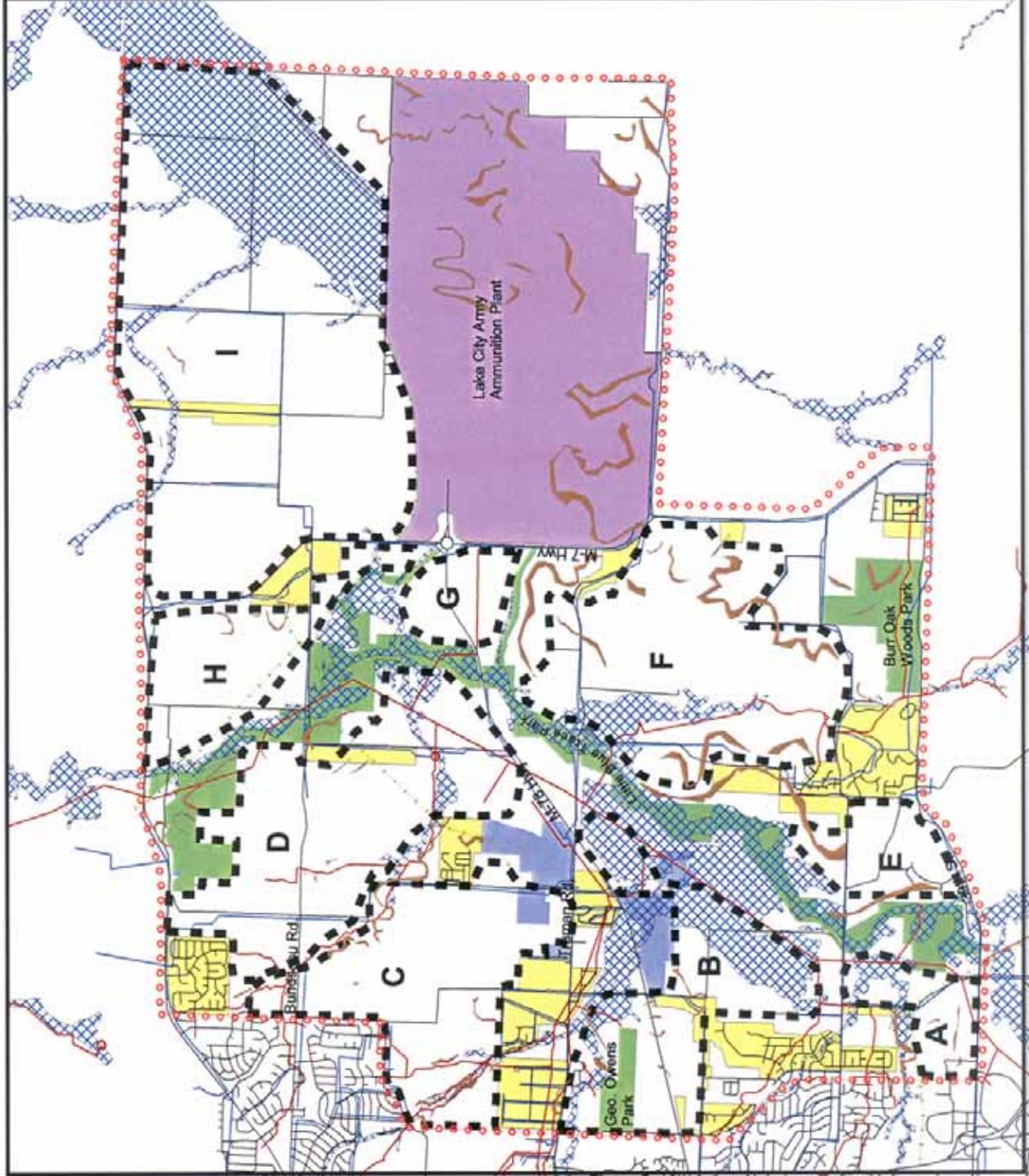
- LEGEND:**
- Steep Slopes
 - Logical Development Areas
 - Streets
 - Sewers
 - Water Mains
 - Rail
 - 100 Year Flood Plain
 - Park
 - Intense
 - Public
 - Lake City Army Ammunition Plant



Date: May, 1999



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1.G Market Potential

1.G.1 Overview

An overview of the market potential for the Little Blue Valley (LBV) was prepared for the City of Independence by Development Strategies, Inc. (see Technical Memorandum – Market and Economic Evaluation for the Little Blue Valley Planning Area, December, 1998). The following summarizes the main findings of that report:

- It is anticipated that Independence will capture increasingly higher percentages of the Jackson County market share for residential development.
- The 2020 population in the LBV Study Area is likely to be 20,000 people.
- The proximity of the LBV to I-70 and its northern links to I-435, position the area well for industrial development.
- The LBV, north of the 39th Street corridor and outside of area shown as Town Center, is not anticipated or encouraged to accommodate or support large-scale retail development.
- Well-conceived planning, quality design, capitalizing on technology, and preservation of the natural environment will be important to differentiate the LBV from other sub-markets in the metropolitan Kansas City region.
- The LBV can represent the future economic development “breadbasket” for Independence.



Independence Center regional shopping mall

1.G.2 Key Assumptions

Several key assumptions underlying the market evaluations are as follows:

- The City of Independence will pursue policies designed to promote economic development and well-planned growth within the LBV.
- Major property owners in the LBV will market their land for development.
- The new LBP will be completed from I-70 to 78 Highway by 2003. City and other funding source commitments will be in place for the remaining segments by 1999. The LBP will be completed to 24 Highway by 2005.
- Commitment to and completion of an LBV greenway system from I-70 to 24 Highway with green space and recreation facilities shall occur in conjunction with the planning and construction of the LBP.
- Water, sewer and other utilities will be phased in to accommodate LBV development as dictated by market demand and prudent economic development and growth policies.



24 Highway just west of Powell Road; the future terminus of the Little Blue Parkway