

ADVISORY REPORT

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Brandy Williams, Engineer and Zoning Administrator

DATE: June 1, 2026

SUBJECT: PC 26-03: Request a Special Use Permit on the subject property to, upon annexation, construct, operate, and maintain a Solar Farm on PIN 09-20-426-002 located east of Somonauk Road, generally bounded by East Meadow Lane on the north and East North Avenue on the south. Public Hearing scheduled for June 4, 2026, 6:30 PM

APPLICANT: Grand Parade Solar, LLC
Apex Clean Energy, LLC
120 Garrett Street Ste 700
Charlottesville, VA 22902

OWNER: Andra L. Olson, Trustee of the Andra L. Olson Declaration of Trust
164 N Somonauk Road
Cortland, IL 60112

PROPOSAL

Apex Clean Energy, LLC, as applicant, has filed with the Town of Cortland a request for a Special Use Permit in accordance with Title 9, Chapter 10, Section 6B of the Cortland Town Code regarding a property located at East North Avenue, DeKalb County, Illinois. The 77.54-acre site is located east of Somonauk Road, generally bounded by East Meadow Lane on the north and East North Avenue on the south and comprised of PIN 09-20-426-002. The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit on the subject property to, upon annexation, construct, operate, and maintain a Solar Farm as set forth in Title 9, Chapter 4, Section 34 of the Cortland Town Code. The petitioner's application is attached as Exhibit D.

The property is currently not annexed to the Town of Cortland. A joint petition for a Special Use Permit and Annexation was submitted. When a property is annexed to the Town of Cortland, the default zoning is AG, Agricultural. Because AG, Agricultural is the applicant's desired zoning, rezoning is not requested or required. The Town Board evaluates the annexation request.

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The subject property is located center of town proper, east of North Somonauk Road, between East Meadow Lane on the north and East North Avenue on the south. The subject property is comprised of PIN 09-20-426-002 for a total of 77.54 acres. The area to be utilized for the solar panels and equipment is approximately 30 acres.

The applicant intends to, upon annexation, construct, operate, and maintain a Solar Farm. Solar Farms may be operated under a Special Use Permit in AG Agriculture or I-1 Light Industrial zoning districts. Title 9, Chapter 2 Definitions includes

SOLAR FARM: A commercial facility that converts sunlight into electricity, whether by photovoltaics (PV), concentrating solar thermal devices (CST), or other conversion technology, for the primary purpose of wholesale sales of generated electricity. A solar farm is the principal land use for the parcel on which it is located.

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Existing and Surrounding Zoning: The subject parcel is zoned DeKalb County Agriculture A-1. The property to the east and west are also zoned DeKalb County Agriculture A-1. Properties to the north, in the NeuCort Subdivision, are annexed to the Town and zoned residential R-2. Southwest, properties in the Prairieview Subdivision, are annexed and zoned residential R-1. The property to the south, across East North Avenue, is annexed and zoned I-1 Light Industrial.

The zoning map has been included as Exhibit A.

The 2025 Official Zoning Map can be found on the Town of Cortland website and at:

https://www.cortlandil.org/uploads/dm/75168/CortlandZoningMap2025_OFFICIAL.pdf

Existing and Surrounding Land Uses: The subject parcel is listed by DeKalb County as farmland and used as row crop. Properties to the west and east are row crops. North and southwest are single family homes. Immediately south are row crops.

BACKGROUND

The subject property has been used as farmland for decades. The subject property is fronted with potable water and electric along East North Avenue. Sanitary sewer is adjacent on the north and south sides of the subject parcel. Storm sewer exists on the easterly limit of the subject site. Roadway access could be provided at multiple entrances.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Town adopted a Comprehensive Plan in September 2023, which guides development throughout the community. The Future Land Use Map within the Comprehensive Plan depicts the subject property as Agricultural use.

The default zoning does coincide with the Comprehensive Plan. There is no distinction in the Future Land Use Map for Special Use Permits or for Solar Energy Systems, specifically.

Note: An excerpt of the Comprehensive Plan is attached as Exhibit B. The full Comprehensive Plan can be found on the Town of Cortland's website and at:

https://www.cortlandil.org/vertical/sites/%7B869DC155-25BA-43FB-B05D-BD63FEA0657C%7D/uploads/Cortland_2023_Comprehensive_Plan_v05_Final.pdf

TECHNICAL REVIEW

Water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer utilities are not required for the project. Any electric infrastructure will be completed by the developer or ComEd as part of the interconnection agreements. This would likely consist of additional and/or larger poles along North Somonauk Road or East North Avenue. Once the facility is operational and the construction traffic ceases, vehicular access will be nominal.

Previous planning indicates the intent to connect Prairie Street from the Prairieview Subdivision on the south to NeuCort Subdivision on the north. Cardinal Street also currently dead ends at the northern property of the subject project.

Variations from Town Code have been requested as part of the application. These variations are summarized as

1. Maximum Height. Grand Parade Solar respectfully requests that the five-utility pole line-up proposed for interconnection to ComEd's electrical grid be exempted from the 15-foot maximum height restriction outlined in the Cortland Zoning Ordinance, Section 9-4-34(1)(e).

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2. Power and Communication Lines. Grand Parade Solar further requests that the same five-utility pole line-up described above and illustrated in Figure 1 be exempted from the underground power and communication line requirements that may otherwise apply under Cortland Zoning Ordinance, Section 9-4-34(4), for this section only.

3. Restoration Requirements. Grand Parade Solar requests that underground electrical cables installed at a depth greater than five (5) feet be exempted from the removal requirement specified in Cortland Zoning Ordinance, Section 9-4-34(16)(b). This request aligns with the State’s underground cabling depth provisions in the Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement (AIMA), Section 17(4), which states: “Transformers, inverters, energy storage facilities, or substations, including all components and foundations; however, underground cables at a depth of 5 feet or greater may be left in place.”

STANDARDS UPON WHICH REVIEW SHOULD BE TAKEN

In accordance with 9-10-6. – Procedures, C. Report of Hearing; Within thirty (30) days following the hearing, the plan commission shall transmit to the town board a written report giving its findings as to compliance of the proposed special use with the standards governing special uses and giving its recommendation for action to be taken by the town board. A copy of the standards to be used is included in Exhibit C. The Findings of Fact report shall consider all information presented.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS

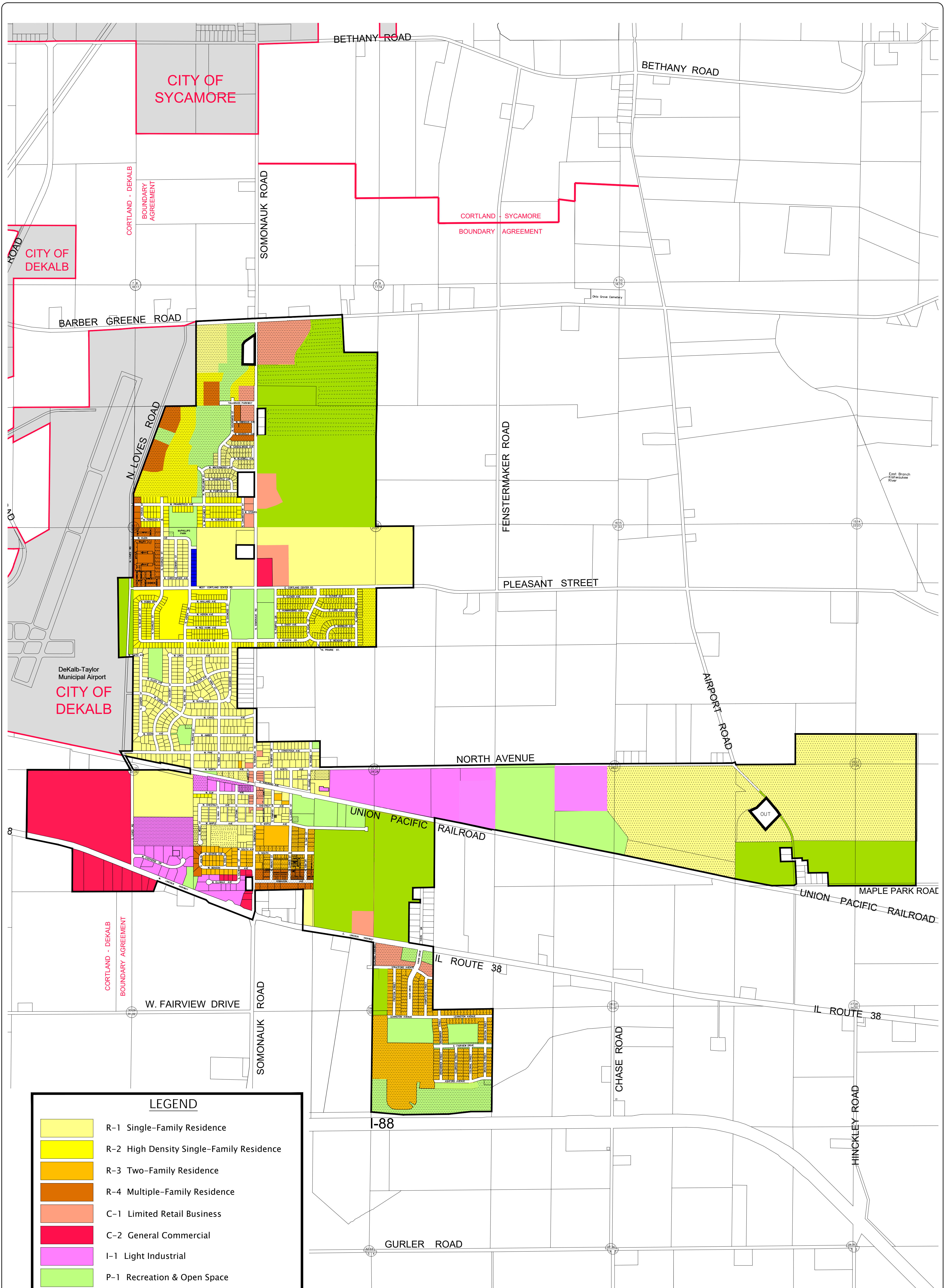
Open the Public Hearing and accept any and all testimony related to the proposal. Once all testimony has been presented the Commission may close the hearing. After closing the hearing, the Commission may discuss the merits of the presented information, establish the Findings of Fact upon which decisions may be made and render a recommendation to the Town Board.

The Planning Commission may recommend to either approve, deny or provide approval with conditions. It is important to note that any motion must be made as a positive statement. (I.E., “I make a motion to approve the request for Special Use Permit on the subject property comprised of PIN 09-20-426-002.”)

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandy Williams
Engineer and Zoning Administrator

- Exhibit A – Town of Cortland 2025 Official Zoning Map
- Exhibit B – Town of Cortland Comprehensive Map (Excerpt)
- Exhibit C – Standards and Conditions for Special Use Permit Compliance
- Exhibit D – Application for SUP and Annexation

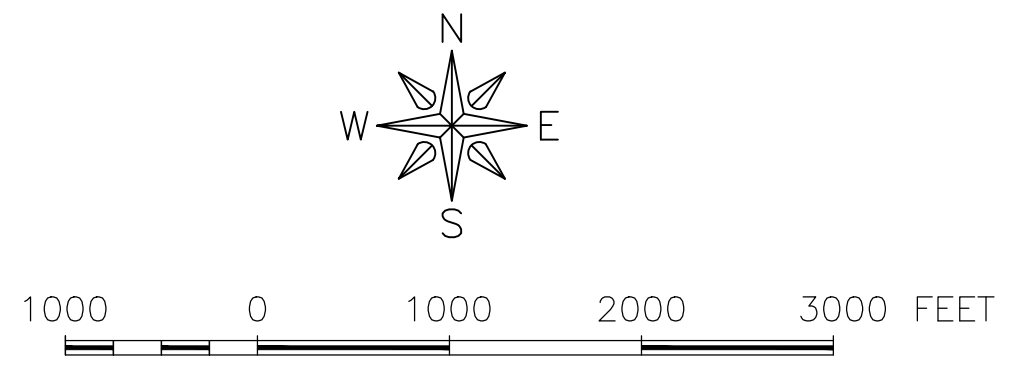


LEGEND	
	R-1 Single-Family Residence
	R-2 High Density Single-Family Residence
	R-3 Two-Family Residence
	R-4 Multiple-Family Residence
	C-1 Limited Retail Business
	C-2 General Commercial
	I-1 Light Industrial
	P-1 Recreation & Open Space
	AG Agricultural
	AO Aspen Drive Overlay
	Special Use

Official Zoning Map of Town of Cortland illustrating existing zoning districts, regulations, and classifications of the Town of Cortland in effect on and prior to December 31, 2025, is available for public inspection at the Town Hall, 59 S. Somonauk Road, Cortland, Illinois, during business hours. This is provided in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 65 ILCS 5/11-13-19 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

2025 Official Zoning Map

Town Of Cortland, Illinois



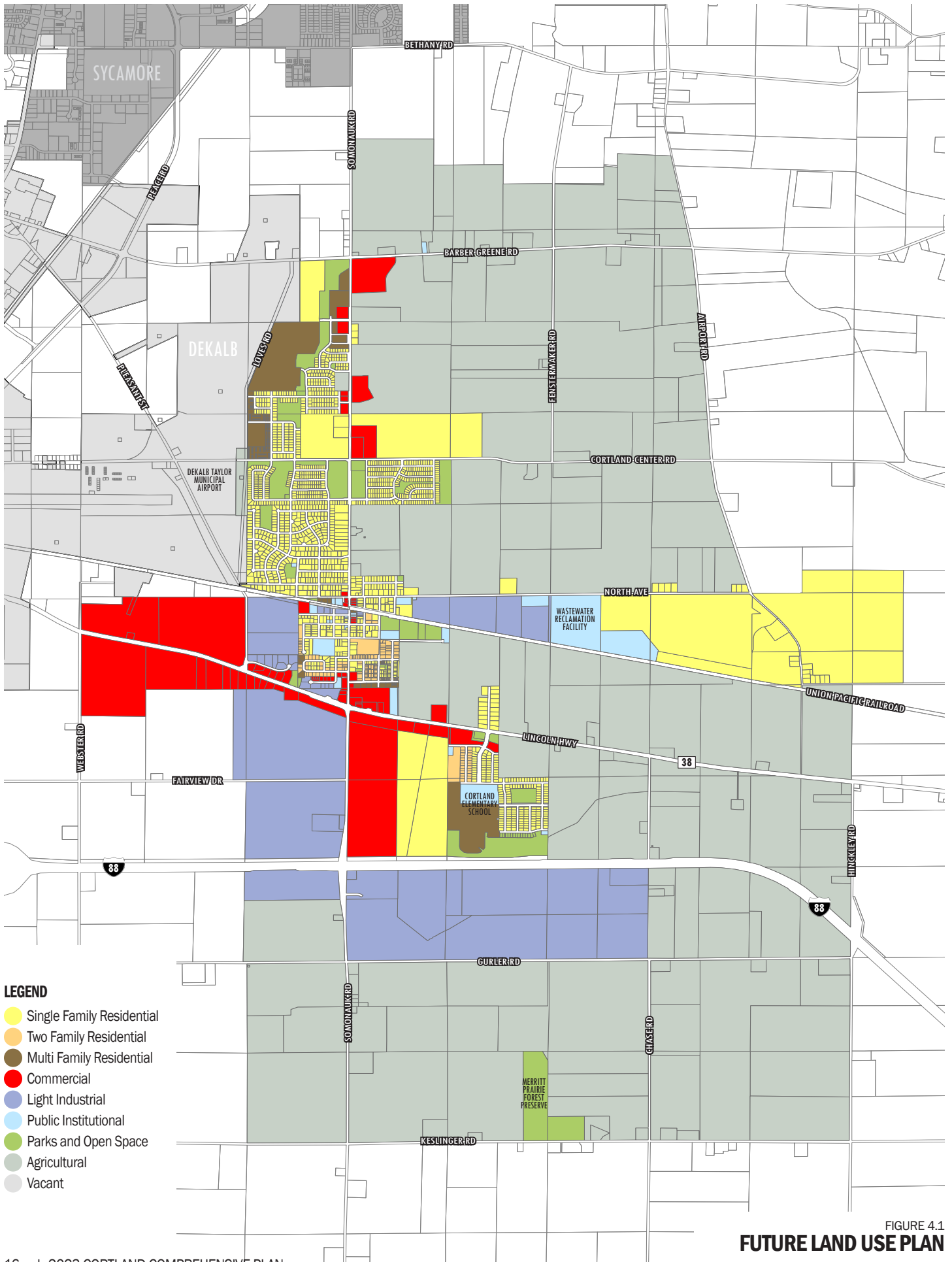


FIGURE 4.1
FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

In accordance with 9-10-6. – Procedures, C. Report of Hearing; Within thirty (30) days following the hearing, the plan commission shall transmit to the town board a written report giving its findings as to compliance of the proposed special use with the standards governing special uses and giving its recommendation for action to be taken by the town board.

9-10-3. – Standards

A special use permit shall be granted only if evidence is presented to establish that:

A. The proposed structure or use at the particular location requested is necessary or desirable to provide a service or a facility which is in the interest of the public and will contribute to the general welfare of the neighborhood or community;

B. The proposed structure or use will not have a substantial adverse effect upon the adjacent property, the character of the neighborhood, traffic conditions, utility facilities and other matters affecting the public health, safety and general welfare;

C. The proposed structure or use will be designed, arranged and operated so as to permit the development and use of neighboring property in accordance with the applicable district regulations.

D. Such other standards and criteria as are established by the ordinance for a particular special use as set forth in section 9-10-4 of this chapter and as applied to planned developments as set forth in chapter 7 of this title (Ord. 2008-03, 1-28-2008) – **NOT APPLICABLE**

9-10-5. – Conditions

The plan commission may recommend and the town board may impose such conditions or restrictions upon the location, construction, design and operation of a special use including, but not limited to, provisions for off street parking spaces and the duration of such permit, as they shall respectively find necessary or appropriate to secure compliance with the purpose an intent of this title and other standards set forth herein. (Ord. 2008-03, 1-28-2008)