



Ira Township

Master Plan Update 2025

Adopted by Township Board on August 4, 2025
Adopted by Planning Commission on July 14, 2025

Township Board

Jim Endres, Supervisor

Jean Corbat, Clerk

Tom Lauer, Treasurer

Tom Eder, Trustee

Stella Ruhlman, Trustee

Planning Commission

Michael Vigneron, Chairperson

James Inman, Vice Chairman

Charles Freese, Secretary

Tom Lauer, Township Board Representative

Eric Covert

Mike Sommers

Tom Sommers



Cassin Planning Group, LLC



**IRA TOWNSHIP, ST. CLAIR COUNTY, MI
RESOLUTION 25-08-02
ADOPTION OF MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, provides that the Ira Township Planning Commission may prepare a Master Plan for the use, development, and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission notified each municipality contiguous to the Township, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission, and each public utility company within the Township for purposes of notification of its intent to adopt a Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Master Plan was submitted to the Township Board, which authorized the distribution of the proposed Plan; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Master Plan was distributed to each municipality contiguous to Ira Township, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission, and each public utility company within the Township, for purposes of notification, review, and comment; and

WHEREAS, on May 12, 2025, after proper public notice, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed Master Plan, during which members of the public were allowed to comment on the proposed Plan, and written comments received were discussed; and

WHEREAS, on July 14, 2025, the Planning Commission adopted the Master Plan.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

Section 1. The Ira Township Board of Trustees also adopts the Master Plan.

Section 2. This resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval in the manner as provided by law.

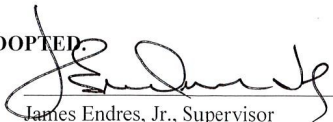
Passed and approved this 4th day of August, 2025.

Motion by: Member Lauer Supported by: Member Ruhlman

AYES: Endres, Eder, Lauer, Ruhlman and Corbat

NAYS: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.


James Endres, Jr., Supervisor


Jean Corbat, Clerk

**Ira Township
St. Clair County, Michigan
Resolution Adopting Master Plan**

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Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Ira Township Planning Commission hereby approves and adopts the Master Plan, as per the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008.

Adopted by the Ira Township Planning Commission on July 14, 2025

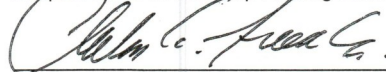
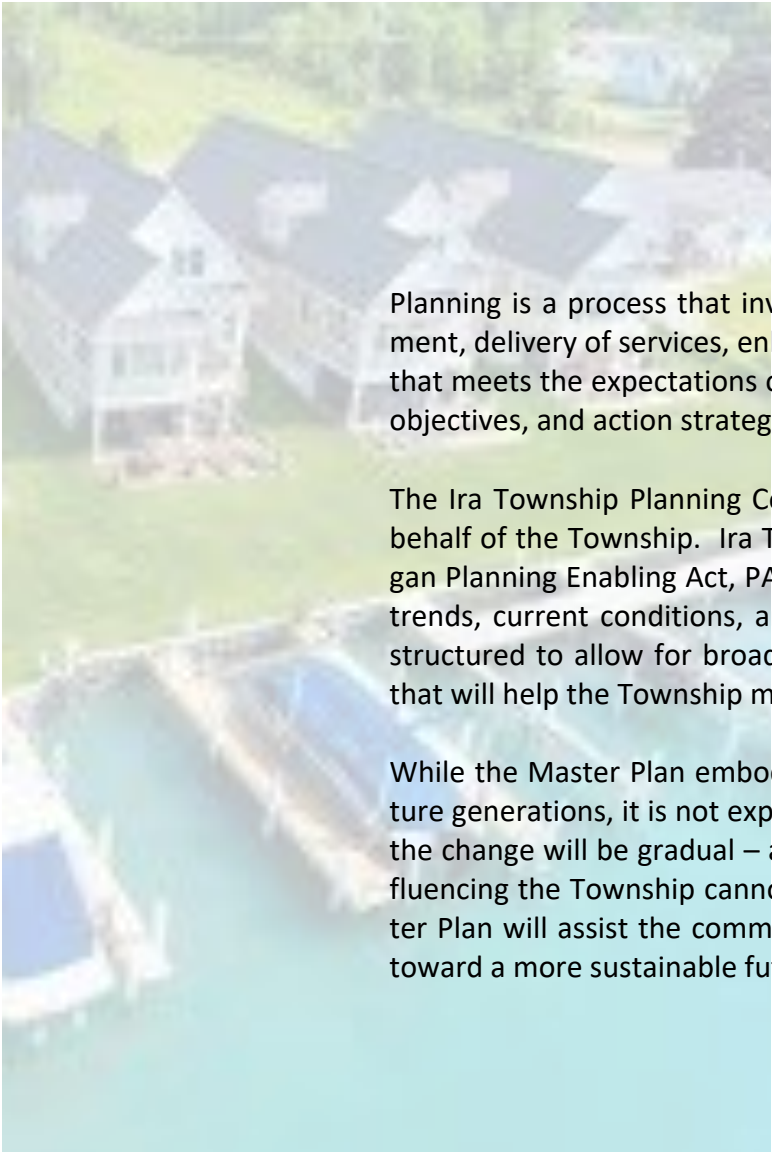

Secretary, Ira Township Planning Commission

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Chapter 1

Introduction



Planning is a process that involves the conscious selection of policies relating to land use, development, delivery of services, enhancement of community character, and maintenance of a quality of life that meets the expectations of our residents. The purpose of this Master Plan is to identify the goals, objectives, and action strategies that the Township and its residents wish to pursue.

The Ira Township Planning Commission is responsible for preparing and adopting a Master Plan on behalf of the Township. Ira Township derives its authority to prepare a Master Plan from the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008. The Master Plan process has thoroughly investigated past trends, current conditions, and alternative futures for the Township. The overall process has been structured to allow for broad participation, expression of new ideas, and creation of new concepts that will help the Township make the most of its opportunities.

While the Master Plan embodies Ira Township's vision of what the community should be like for future generations, it is not expected that change will be achieved all at once. Over the life of the plan, the change will be gradual – and probably in different ways than anticipated. Every circumstance influencing the Township cannot be accurately predicted. However, a well-crafted and executed Master Plan will assist the community in making the right decisions to move the Township forward and toward a more sustainable future!

HOW IS IT USED?

The Master Plan serves many functions, and is to be used in a variety of ways, including;

- A Basis for Regulatory Actions: It provides the statutory basis upon which zoning and land use decisions are made. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 2006 of 2008, as amended) requires that the zoning ordinance be in accordance with a plan designed to meet the residents' need for natural resources, places of residence, recreation, industry, trade, service, and other uses, and to ensure these uses are situated in appropriate locations.
- A Basis for Community Programs and Decision Making: The goals and policies outlined in the Master Plan will guide the Planning Commission and Township Board in their deliberations on zoning, subdivisions, capital improvements, and other matters relating to land use and development. This provides a stable, long-term basis for decision-making.
- A Source for Planning Studies: Few Master Plans can, and do, address every issue in sufficient detail. However, a Master Plan can identify specific needs and recommend further study to address these needs through specific actions.
- A Source of Information: The Master Plan is a valuable source of information for citizens, developers, businesses, prospective residents, the Planning Commission, the Township Board, and other local boards, commissions, and agencies. It gives a clear indication of the Township's direction for the future.
- A Long-term Guide: The plan will assist in evaluating public and private proposals that affect the community's physical, social, economic, and environmental characteristics. It is a long-range statement of goals and policies aimed at unified and coordinated development.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Community input is the core of any planning effort. For the goals of the plan to be achievable, a general consensus regarding the vital issues of the community must be reached.

An online community survey was conducted through Survey Planet. A total of 148 people participated, answering questions related to housing, neighborhoods, economic development, and transportation. The results of this survey were utilized in creating many of the strategies included in this plan.



Ira Township is in the process of updating its Master Plan.

The Plan is essential because it allows the Township to plan for future growth and development while protecting our valuable natural resources.

More importantly, by obtaining your input, we can better address the current and future needs of our residents, businesses, and visitors.

Please take a few minutes to complete this short survey!

Thank you very much for your time!

Begin

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Chapter 2

Community Snapshot

The review and analysis of current conditions, including population and housing trends, is done to help evaluate the Township's character and understand the past's directions. This information is needed as a basis for a community to plan for its long-term goals. The data evaluation helps understand the changing trends in population, housing, employment, and economics. The data found is then evaluated to help support the long-term decisions recommended in the Master Plan.



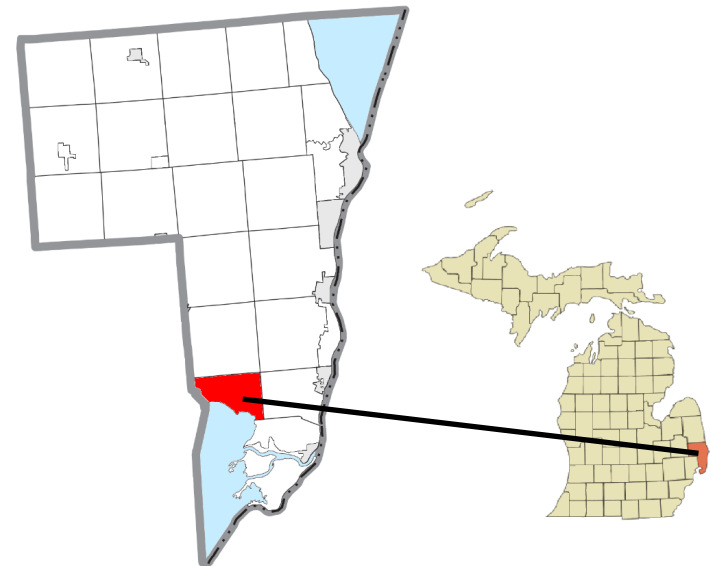
LOCATION

Ira Township is in southern St. Clair County and is approximately 17.1 square miles in size. The area has a lengthy stretch of shoreline along Lake St. Clair. The Township is accessible by M-29 and Marine City Highway, and I-94 runs within a mile of the Township's northwestern corner. The Township is bordered by Chesterfield Township and New Baltimore to the west, Lenox Township to the northwest, Casco Township to the north, China Township to the northeast, Cottrellville Township to the east, and Clay Township to the south/southeast.

HISTORY

Ira Township was originally established in 1837. The original expanse of the Township included portions of Clay, Cottrellville Township, and the City of New Baltimore. Development in the township was heavily influenced by the shipping industry established along Lake St. Clair. Recreation-oriented businesses also evolved in this area. Many of the early homes in the Township were built as seasonal cottages.

While the role of the Township and its surrounding area has changed over the last 200 years, Ira Township continues to provide a unique community for both residents and businesses and appreciates many of its natural features, including the importance of its waterways.



ADJACENT COMMUNITIES

Five communities share a common boundary with Ira Township. These include the City of New Baltimore, Chesterfield Township, Casco Township, Cottrellville Township and Clay Township. China Township and Lenox Township adjoin Ira across common intersections. Relevant planning policies of these communities are summarized as follows.

Casco Township

Casco and Ira Township share a six-mile long common boundary along Marine City Highway. In 2024 Casco adopted a new Master Plan which designated a portion of this common boundary between County Line Road and Church Road for industrial purposes. The remaining portion of the Marine City Highway corridor frontage is considered prime agricultural land. This planning designation also allows for residential development on large parcels. Last year, the Township amended their Master Plan to extend the industrial designation one mile west to Meldrum Road. The expansion accommodates the Township's long-term industrial land use needs. The Master Plan allocates more than 700 acres of land for industrial purposes. This Plan is currently being reviewed and amended by the Casco Township Planning Commission.

Cottrellville Township

Mayer Road forms the common boundary between Ira and Cottrellville Township to the east, extending from Marine City Highway on the north to Perch Road on the south, one-half mile short of the Township's southern boundary. The Township's 1970 Master Plan proposed low density residential development (one-acre lots) for the entire length of this common boundary, with one exception. Industrial development is proposed for the Marine City Highway and Mayer Road intersection. In 1978, this plan was amended to incorporate several changes along the Township's western boundary. The previously identified industrial development remains at the northwest corner of the Township, with another industrial designation added at Mayer and Shea Roads. The Master Plan identifies a floodplain where Cottrellville, Clay and Ira Townships converge. The remainder of this common boundary is designated for low density residential purposes, with 1 ¼-acre minimum lot sizes.

Clay Township

Clay and Ira Township share a relatively short boundary. Dixie Highway (M-29) crosses this boundary, accounting for the relatively intense land use pattern on the Clay Township side. Portions of this common boundary are designated for single-family residential waterfront development, waterfront tourism and recreation conservation purposes.

The single-family waterfront designation recognizes the environmental and aesthetic qualities of waterfront and canal properties. This district permits the construction of single-family homes on canal lots, with a minimum front yard setback and a larger rear yard setback which takes advantage of the canal setting. Public water and sanitary sewers are a minimum requirement for this district. Within those areas planned for waterfront tourism, the Master Plan encourages uses of a recreational, public, resort, commercial or waterfront nature which cannot be feasibly located elsewhere. Developed open spaces and municipal utilities are a prerequisite for this area.

The recreational conservation category includes that portion of the St. John's Marsh which abuts Ira Township. This planning designation encourages the preservation of natural resources and areas characterized by unique environmental features, which may include natural wildlife habitats, watersheds and reservoir areas, and public recreation sites.

Chesterfield Township

Ira Township shares an approximate one mile long boundary with Chesterfield Township along County Line Road, south of Marine City Highway. The Chesterfield Township Master Plan, adopted in 2021, provides for commercial uses along the frontage of Marine City Highway, and single family residential uses along the remainder of the common boundary.

City of New Baltimore

The City of New Baltimore's Master Plan was adopted in 2018. Unlike Ira Township's other neighbors, New Baltimore and Ira Township are not separated by an existing road. Several different residential planning designations occur along this boundary. Between the Anchor Bay shoreline and M-29, the Master Plan proposes Waterfront Residential. This translates into densities consistent with the R-65 or the R-70 District. North of the Crapeau Creek floodplain, the Master Plan proposes Moderate Density single family development with a planned density between three (3) and four (4) units per acre.

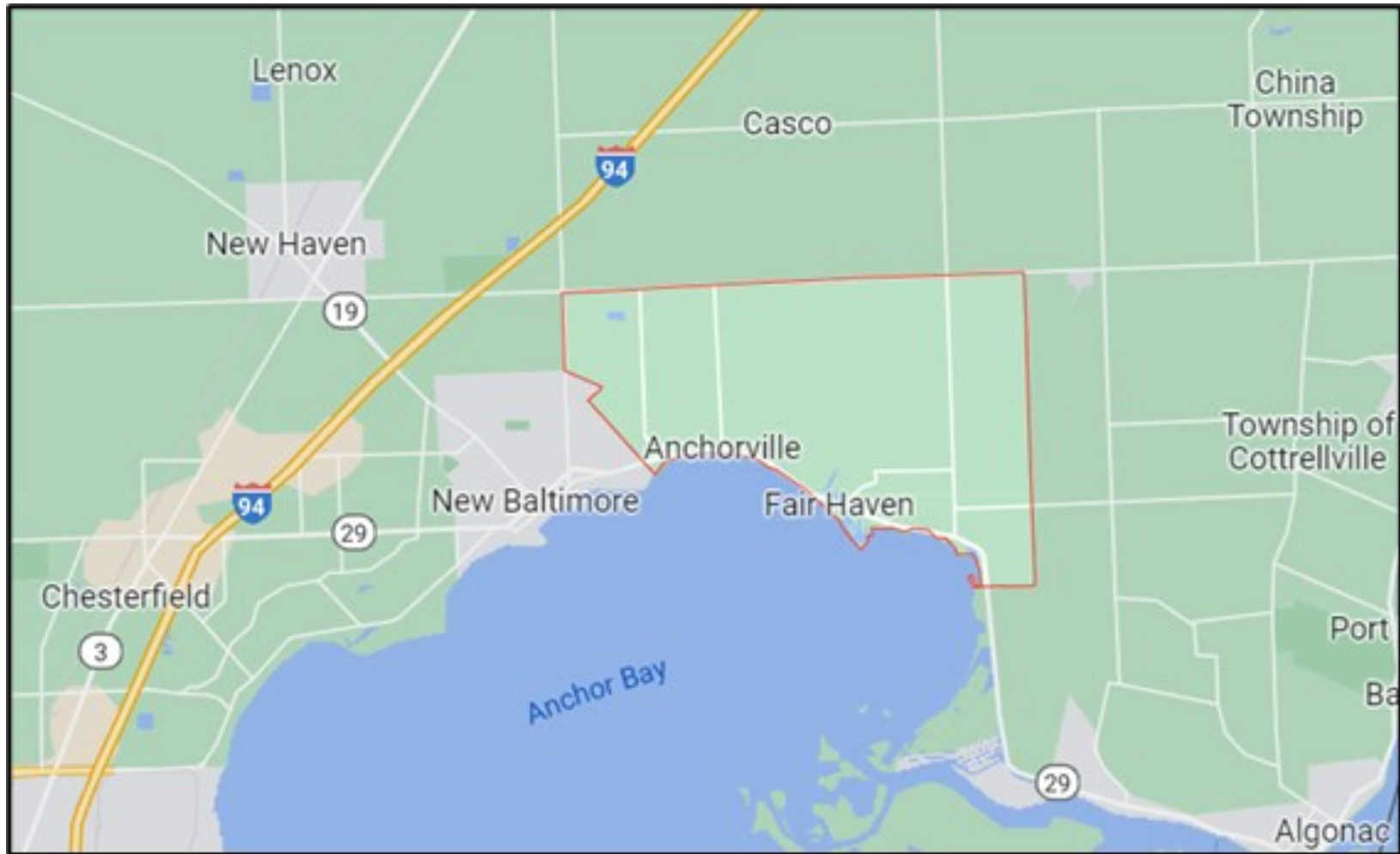
Lenox Township

The Lenox Township Master Plan proposes local commercial development for the northwest corner of County Line Road and Marine City Highway. An area designated for moderate density residential development surrounds the planned commercial corner. The moderate planning designation anticipates the development of single-family homes, with lot sizes under one (1) acre; mobile home parks, with up to four (4) units per acre; or multiple-family units at higher densities. This Plan is currently being reviewed and revised by the Lenox Township Planning Commission.

China Township

The future land use pattern for the southwest corner of China Township, near the intersection of Mayer Road and Marine City Highway, is planned for agricultural and low density rural residential purposes by the Township's Master Plan.

Map Showing Ira Township in Relation to Nearby Communities

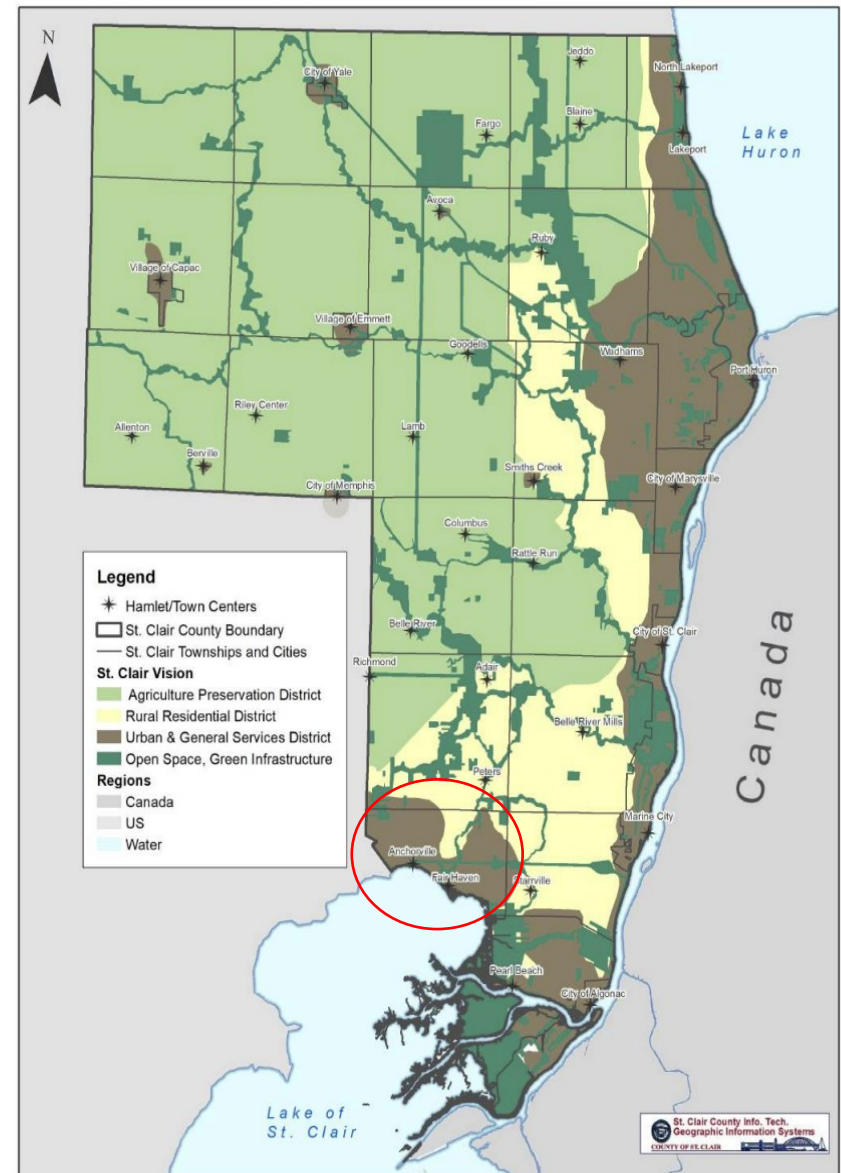


ST. CLAIR COUNTY MASTER PLAN

In 2023, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission and the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners adopted a comprehensive Master Plan.

The document's Future Land Use Chapter proposed a Master Plan Vision Map, which classified county lands into four categories: Agricultural Preservation, Rural Residential, Urban & General Services, and Open Space & Green Infrastructure.

As depicted on the adjoining map, each designation has a presence in Ira Township. Furthermore, the Ira Township Future Land Use Map generally follows the County's vision.



St. Clair County Master Plan Vision

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

According to the U.S. Census, the 2020 population of Ira Township was 4,967 persons. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) projects the Township's 2023 population at 5,192 persons.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Average household sizes have dropped across the country, from 2.62 to 2.53 from 2000 to 2015. Michigan has experienced a larger drop, from 2.75 to 2.52 during the same time period, with local communities following suit. In Ira, the average household size is even smaller than that of the country state. Ira's average household size from 2020 is 2.47, and in 2045 is forecasted to be 2.31.

Population Trends for Ira Twp. & Surrounding Communities

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2023
Ira Township	4,316	5,587	6,966	5,178	4,967	5,192
Chesterfield Township	18,276	25,905	37,405	43,381	45,376	45,860
New Baltimore	5,439	5,798	7,405	12,084	11,929	12,001
Lenox Township	3,028	3,069	5,362	5,828	6,022	5,984
Casco Township	4,331	4,552	4,748	4,107	4,158	3,954
China Township	2,466	2,644	3,340	3,551	3,625	3,537
Cottrellville Township	3,075	3,301	3,814	8,559	3,276	3,382
Clay Township	8,518	8,862	9,822	9,066	8,845	8,714
St. Clair County	138,802	145,607	164,235	163,040	160,383	160,081

Ira Township Population & Households

	2010	2020	2023	2045
Population	5,178	4,967	5,192	4,631
Households	2,068	2,010	2,110	2,002
Persons per Household	2.50	2.47	2.46	2.31

AGE CHARACTERISTICS

Information on age within a community can assist in matching public services to community characteristics and determine the unique needs of various age groups. For example, younger populations require more rental housing units and smaller homes, while older adults may need assisted living facilities.

The fastest-growing segment of the population is people 65+ years of age. The number of people between the ages of 65-84 increased by 21% between 2010 and 2020, and this segment is expected to increase an additional 22% by 2045, and those 85 years and older are expected to increase by 69% by 2045.

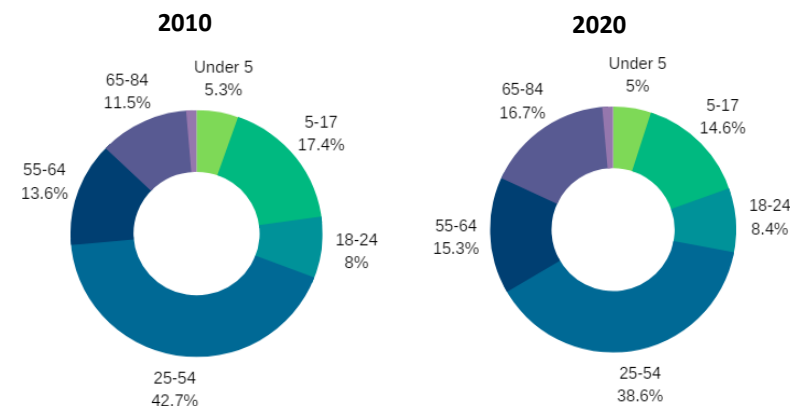
In 2020, the median age of Township residents was estimated to be 43.7 years.



Population Counts by Age Brackets

	2010 Census	2020 Census	2045 Forecast
Under 5	277	226	228
5-17	903	660	654
18-24	415	381	291
25-54	2,212	1,748	1,787
55-64	706	685	491
65-84	596	757	972
85+	69	64	208
Total	5,178	4,967	4,631

Age Distribution Comparison



RACIAL COMPOSITION

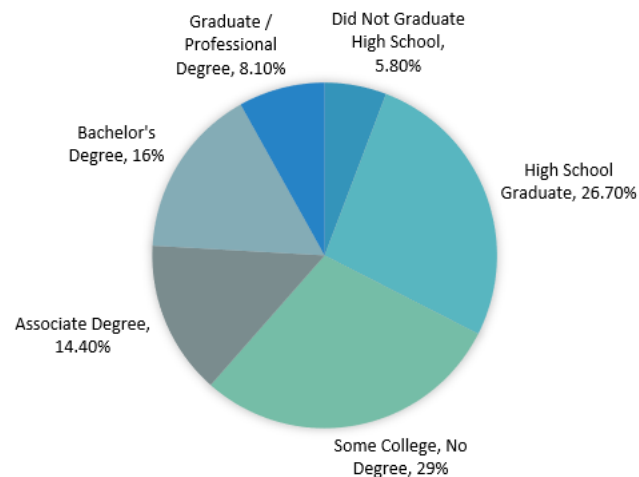
One crucial social characteristic of a community is its racial makeup. Understanding a community's racial composition helps identify its population's diverse needs. The U.S. Census Bureau categorizes the population into several racial categories.

The adjacent table illustrates a comparison of the racial composition of Ira Township in 2010 and 2020. The largest segment of the population in Ira is white. However, the township is beginning to grow in those who identify as multi-racial, black, Hispanic, and other.

Population by Race			
	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change
White	4,885	4,513	-372
Black	52	65	+13
Asian	20	10	-10
Hispanic	121	132	+11
Multi-Racial	88	219	+131
Other	12	28	+16

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The adjacent chart indicates Ira residents' highest educational attainment level based on the recent American Community Survey data. Over 38% of the residents have obtained a college degree. This is significantly higher than St. Clair County (31%).



HOUSING TYPE

In 2021, there were 1,350 housing units in Ira Township, of which 86% were single-family homes. Homes in Ira Township are generally well maintained, and although relatively homogeneous by neighborhood, there are a variety of ages, styles, and sizes. Single-family homes have traditionally been the backbone of the community and historically the preferred housing type for small towns.

HOUSING AGE

Housing is a vital characteristic of any community. Houses are highly visible and relatively permanent, and for these reasons serve as great indicators for the wellbeing of a community. The historic character of Ira's housing is reflected in the data regarding the year housing units were constructed.

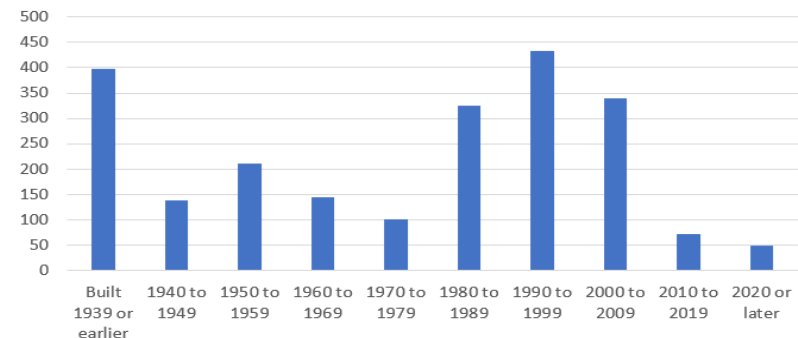
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Analyzing income and poverty levels is an excellent way to measure the relative economic health of the community. The 2020 median household income in Ira Township is \$80,781, significantly higher than that of St. Clair County and Michigan.

Occupancy

	2010	2021
Owner Occupied Units	1,380	1,350
Renter Occupied Unit	123	72
Vacant Units	92	25
Total	1,595	1,447

Number of Residential Homes Built by Time Period



Median Household Income

	2010	2020	Change
Ira Twp.	\$69,512	\$80,781	\$11,269
St. Clair County	\$61,040	\$62,847	\$1,807
Michigan	\$57,722	\$64,488	\$6,766

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

SEMCOG estimates there were 1,714 jobs in Ira Township in 2020, a drop of 186 jobs from 2019.

The chart below depicts the number of jobs by industry section where Ira Township residents are employed. In 2020, manufacturing, natural resources, and education services were the most significant jobs.

Employment in Community

	2019	2020	2025
Ira Township	1,900	1,714	1,983
Chesterfield Township	20,166	18,370	20,397
New Baltimore	4,006	3,619	3,956
Lenox Township	2,108	1,979	2,276
Casco Township	1,036	1,000	1,101
China Township	984	923	979
Cottrellville Township	571	532	630
Clay Township	2,365	2,178	2,341
St. Clair County	66,641	60,808	67,357

Ira Resident's Employment by Industry Sector

	2020	2030	2040
Natural Resources, Mining, & Construction	235	262	259
Manufacturing	346	433	426
Wholesale Trade	42	54	60
Retail Trade	87	86	81
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	92	109	110
Information & Financial Activities	122	123	125
Professional and Technical Services & Corporate HQ	73	81	81
Administrative, Support, & Waste Services	115	125	133
Education Services	212	236	239
Healthcare Services	84	85	90
Leisure & Hospitality	162	255	254
Other Services	88	103	101
Public Administration	56	63	63
Total Employment Numbers	1,714	2,015	2,022

TRAFFIC VOLUMES

Traffic volumes and safety are some of the primary measures of the performance of individual roads in the road system and how a road network interacts. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) publishes the most recent traffic count data for Ira Township.

Highest Traffic Volumes			
Year	Road	Segment	Avg. Daily Trips
2020	Dixie Highway	Green Street to Church Rd.	16,300
2020	Dixie Highway	Church Rd. to Palms Rd.	15,400
2015	Marine City Hwy.	County Line Rd. to Church Rd.	14,000
2020	Dyke Rd.	Palms Rd. to Willow Ct.	12,000
2018	Marine City Hwy.	Palms Rd. to Starville Rd.	7,900
2014	County Line Rd.	Marine City Hwy. to Arnold Rd.	7,000
2017	Palms Rd.	Shea Rd. to Dixie Hwy.	6,100



TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Roadway design, driver behavior, and weather conditions are contributing factors to the cause of an accident. However, the most frequent cause of traffic accidents is attributed to improper driving. Excessive speed, failure to yield the right-of-way, and following too closely are the principal types of improper driving behavior that lead to accidents. Alcohol and other drugs were reported to be a factor in over one-half of the fatal traffic accidents in the United States.

SEMCOG keeps track of accident reports by intersection. The following intersections have been identified as having the most accidents in the Township.

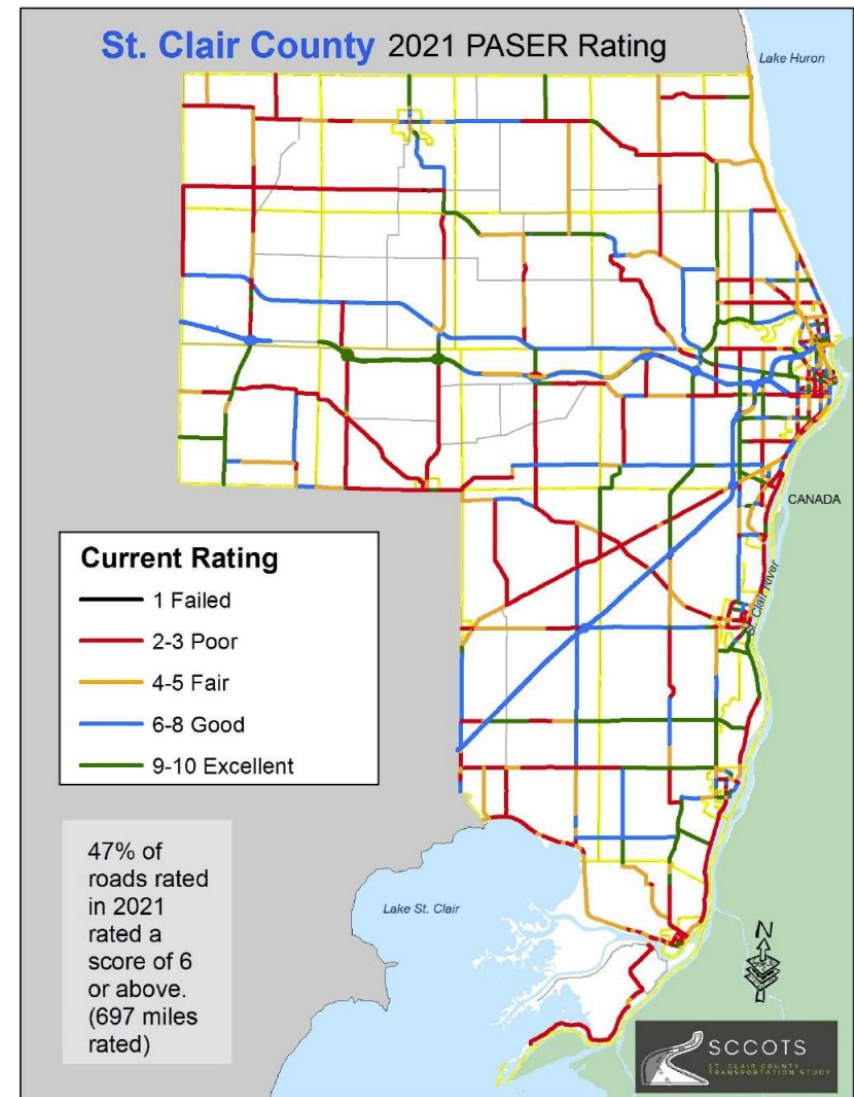


Ira Twp High Frequency Intersection Crash 2017-2021	
Intersection	Annual Average (2017-2021)
County Line Rd. & Marine City Hwy.	11.0
Dixie Hwy. & Palms Rd.	5.6
Marine City Hwy. & Palms Rd.	4.8
Dixie Hwy. & Bethuy Rd.	4.2
County Line Rd. & Hobarth Rd.	3.4
Marine City Hwy. & Church Rd.	2.6
County Line Rd. & 25 Mile Rd.	2.4
Dixie Rd. & Payea Ct.	2.0
Dixie Hwy. & Church Rd.	1.8
Dixie Hwy. & Shorkey Dr.	1.8

PASER SURVEY

Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating, or PASER, is a visual test of the surface condition of the road focused on pavement conditions. St. Clair County conducted a PASER Survey of its roads in 2021.

In Ira Township, Marine City Highway, Dixie Highway, and Church Rd. were identified as being in poor condition.



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Township Administrative Offices - The Township offices are located on Meldrum Road south of Short Cut Road.

Police— Ira Township Police service is contracted through Clay Township.

Fire—Ira Township's Fire Department is on call and located north of the Township Hall on Meldrum Road.

Library— The Ira Township Library is part of the St. Clair County Library System. Through voluntary efforts, the library was opened in 1965, and is located on the southeast corner of Meldrum and Short Cut Roads, adjacent to the Ira Township Park.



Cemetery— There are two cemeteries located in Ira: Sacred Heart Cemetery, and Immaculate Conception Cemetery (also known as Saint Mary Cemetery);

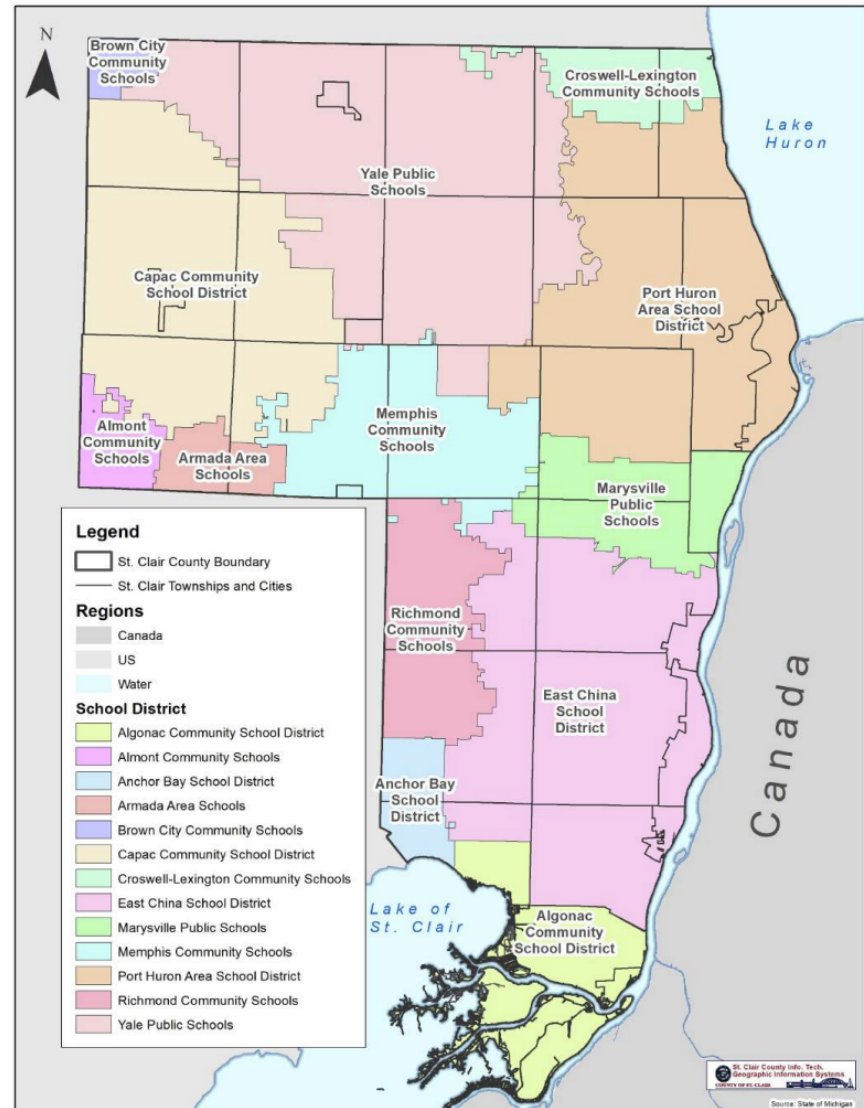
Water Distribution— The Township provides it's own water distribution system, which it has been operating independently for nearly 30 years.

Sanitary Sewer System — Ira is a part of a regional wastewater collection and treatment system, along with Clay Township and the City of Algonac.



Schools

While the Township has no control over school operations or functions, school needs, particularly the location of schools, impact the community's overall land use plan. Therefore, schools are considered part of this analysis for coordination purposes. Three school districts serve Ira Township: Anchor Bay School District, Algonac School District, and East China School District.



PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Ira Township Municipal Park

This park is located near the Township Hall and Public Library and encompasses over 33 acres and serves the Township and can also be accessed by the general public. It can accommodate small events and features a war memorial, playscapes, sports fields and courts, a picnic area with shelter and grills, and a disc golf course.



Water Works Park

This 2.5-acre waterfront park sits on a peninsula surrounded by canal views and serves the nearby community. The park includes sitting areas, fishing areas, and walking paths.

Anchor Bay Lions Club

Located at 9200 Shortcut Road in Ira Township, the Anchor Bay Lions Club is home to the Ira Township Baseball Little League. The facility has 7 fields for all age groups, parking located adjacent to each field, a concession stand, indoor restrooms, and an indoor practice facility.



NATURAL FEATURES

Natural features exert important influences in shaping development and character of a specific area. They are nature's contribution to the Township's environment. Collectively, these features can determine the overall physical character of the community.

When integrated thoughtfully into development proposals, physical features serve to enhance the character and appearance of the constructed environment. Conversely, ignoring physical features, or misusing them can have significant, long-term consequence.

Wetlands

Wetlands are an essential element of Michigan's landscape. Before experiencing settlement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Michigan was thought to contain over 11 million acres of wetlands. Like the extensive forests that once covered the State, the unique physical characteristics of many of these wetlands were permanently altered because of the settlement of the State. This change occurred as forests were logged and swamps drained for farming purposes. Between 25 and 50 percent of these original wetlands remain in Michigan today.

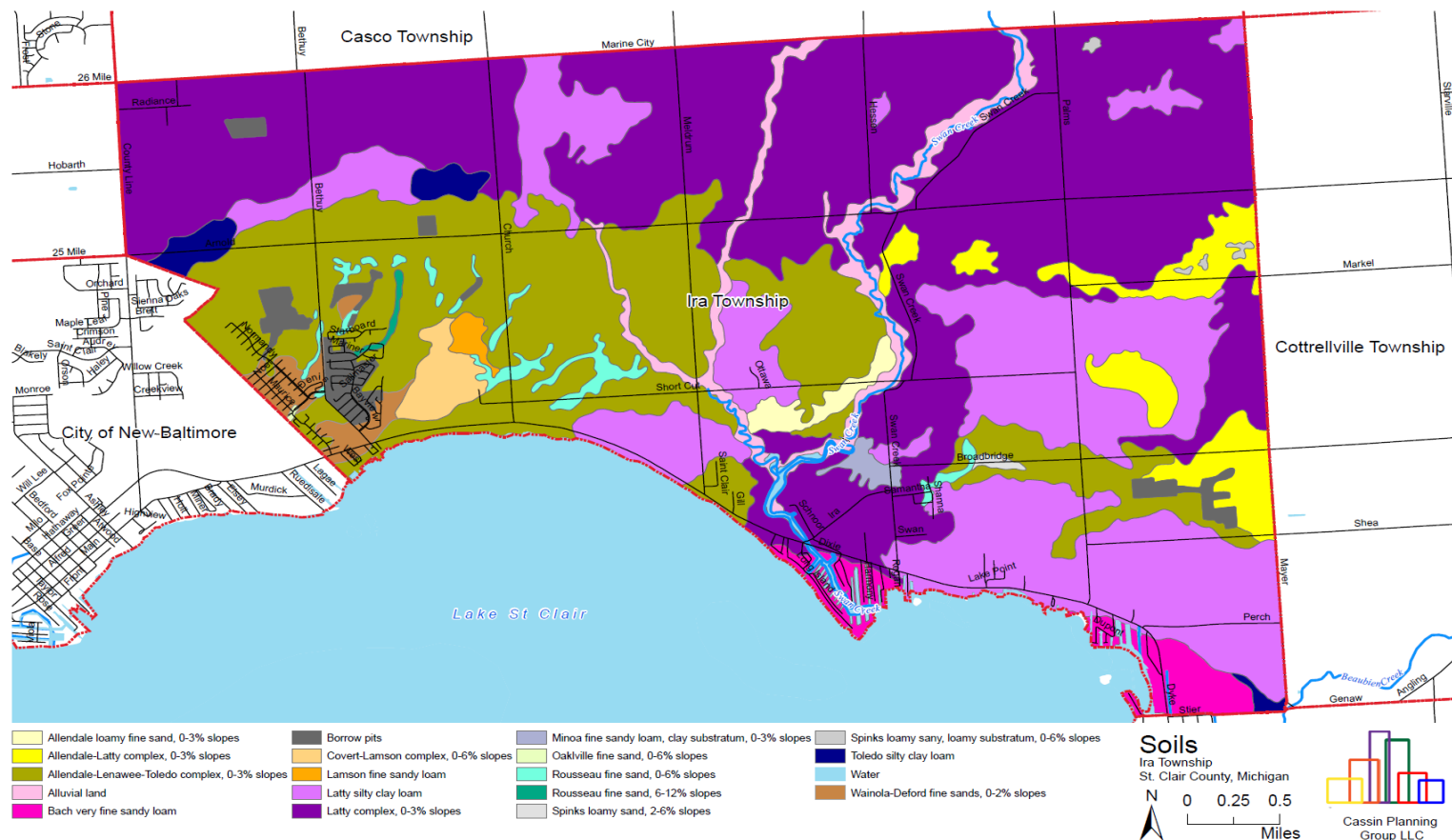
Wetlands are areas characterized by water that either saturates the soil or covers the land most of the year. Because of this characteristic, wetlands can support unique varieties of plants and animals. Not all wetlands are similar, however. Several categories of wetlands are found in Michigan. These varieties result from differences in climate, bedrock geology, soil characteristics, and landforms unique to different portions of Michigan. The attributes of wetland vegetation provide the basis for distinguishing between different types of wetlands.

The two basic types of wetlands are forested and unforested. The largest share of remaining State wetlands are of the former variety. Many of these forested wetlands have soils that are seasonally saturated with water. These wetlands are commonly referred to as swamps. Swamps differ from unforested wetlands, more widely known as marshes, wet prairies, wet meadows, fens, and bogs. Marshes are those areas that generally occur along the edges of lakes and streams. These areas are flooded for much of the year, with average depths of under five feet. Commonly occurring vegetation in marshes include emergent plants such as bulrushes, cat-tails, sedges, grasses and floating or underwater plants.

Soils

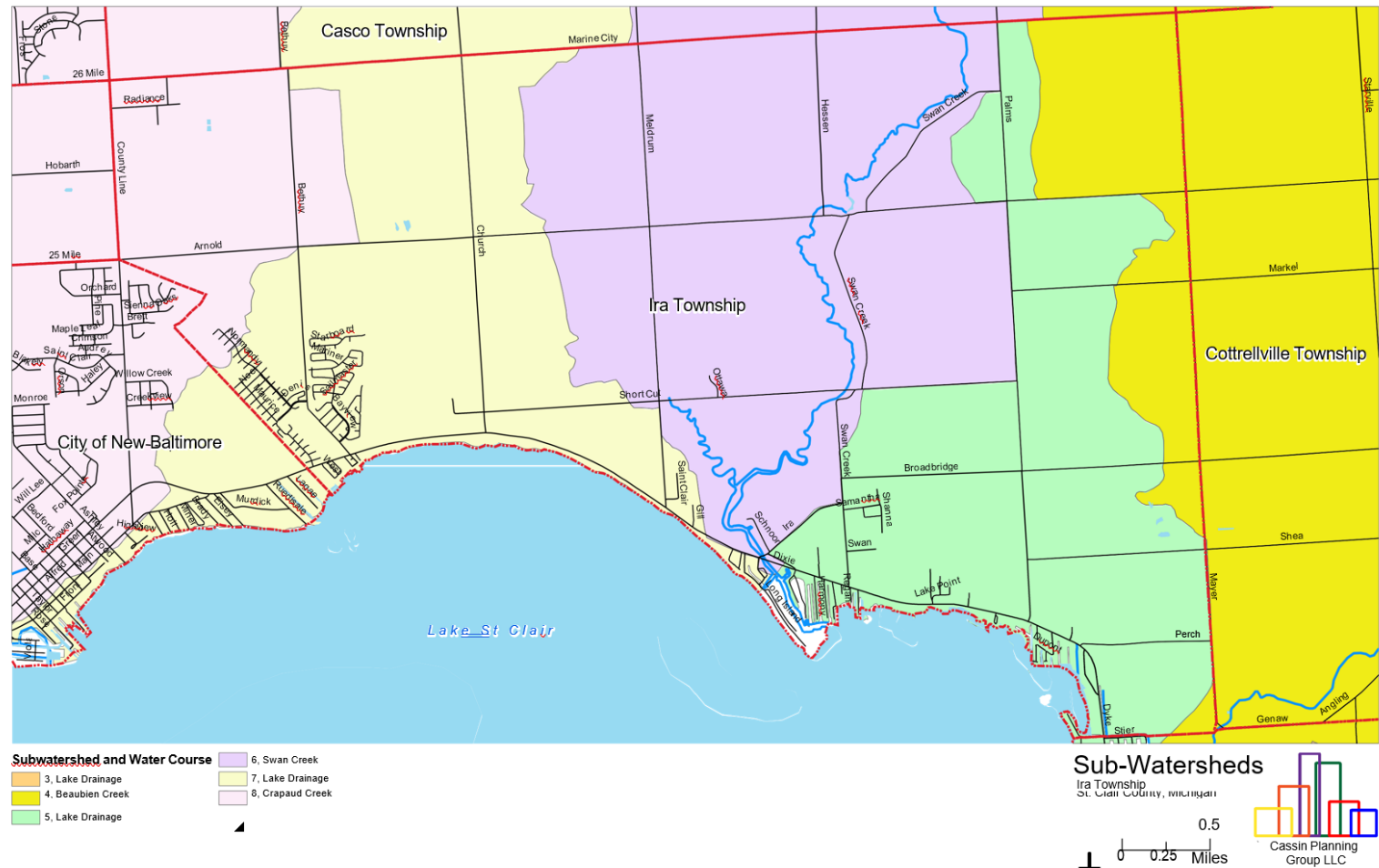
Soils play a major role in the long-term development of a community. With Casco Township still in its development phase, the soil patterns have a direct impact on the type and location of development, as well as an impact on watershed issues.

Soil types can be a significant help in addressing construction issues relating to infrastructure and the siting of buildings, and in addressing drainage problems in specific areas.



Watersheds

Ira Township is within the Lake St. Clair Watershed and contains many areas of lake drainage Beaubien Creek, Swan Creek, and Crapaud Creek



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Chapter 3

Transportation & Mobility

A transportation system provides a means to move people and goods among various geographical areas. Because transportation significantly impacts economic conditions, environmental quality, energy consumption, land development, and the overall quality of life in a community, it is critical that future transportation needs and problems be anticipated and reflected in the Master Plan process.

Transportation planning allows the community to coordinate local transportation planning activities with those occurring on a regional or State-wide basis. Roads are the physical improvements that link communities together. Coordinating the planning associated with the regional transportation system offers some opportunities to consider mutually compatible land use policies relating to these needs. Finally, roads significantly contribute to the community's image and identity.

Ira Township residents have expressed an interest in an increased ability to engage in active transportation. Active transportation refers to human-powered transportation, including walking, cycling, wheelchair use, in-line skating, or skateboarding. There are many ways to engage in active transportation, whether walking or cycling to a bus stop, school, work, or essential services.

Active transportation can cost-effectively address multiple societal challenges. Communities prioritizing active transit tend to be healthier by enabling residents to be more physically active in their daily routes and to have cleaner air to breathe. Active transportation systems also foster economic health by creating dynamic, connected communities with a high quality of life. This leads to small business development, increased property values, tourism, and corporate investment that attract a talented, highly educated workforce. Additionally, motorists can benefit from having fewer vehicles on the road. When there are transportation options, residents of all ages are more likely to be independent and better manage the costs related to transportation.

There exists a strong inter-relationship between the existing road system and land use patterns. The type of pattern of land use will strongly influence traffic volumes along any given road. Likewise, adequacy of a road may determine the type of adjacent land development that occurs. Therefore, the benefit of the Transportation Plan is to assist in establishing priorities for future road improvements based on the function of roadway services.

Roads are classified as follows:

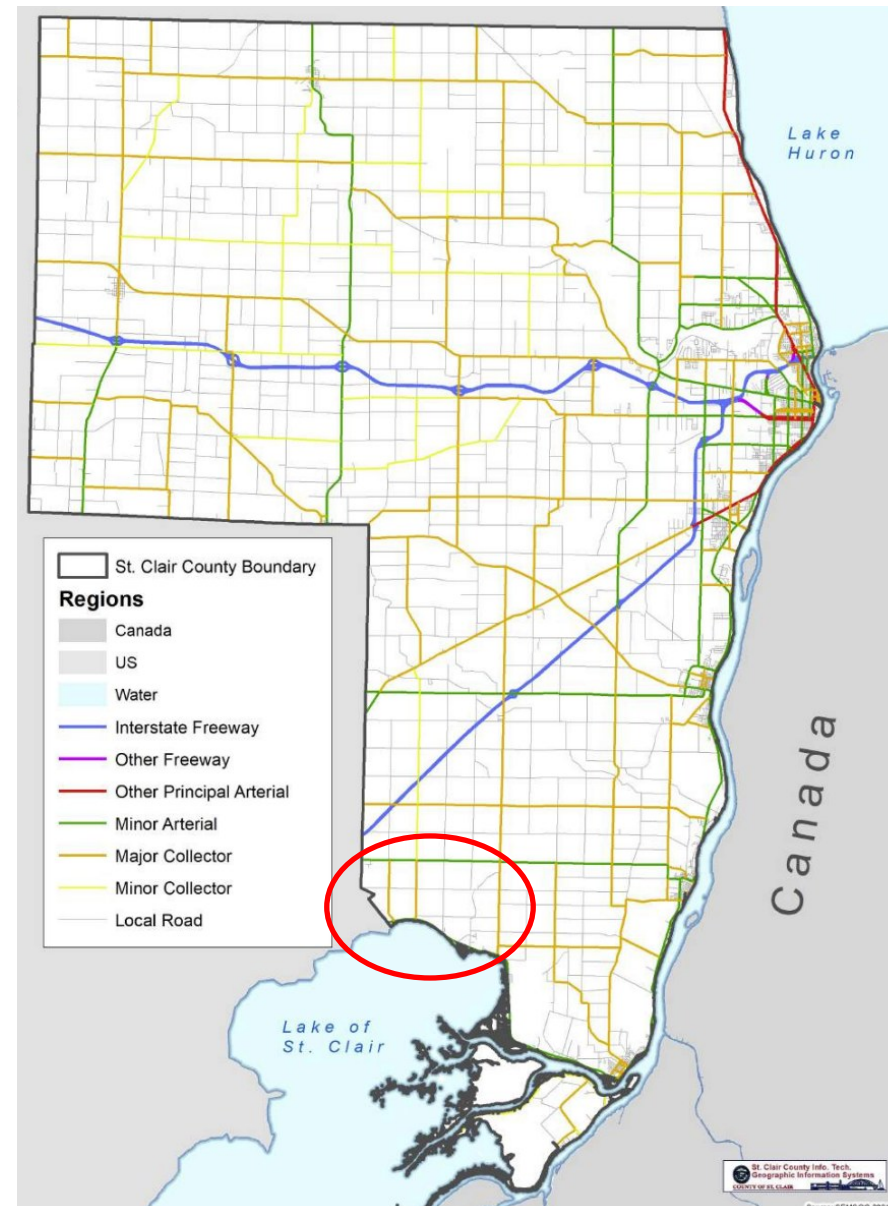
Interstate. Provides major “through traffic” between municipalities and states.

Principal Arterial Roads. Primary function is to carry relatively long distance through travel movements and/or to service important traffic generators, such as airports or regional shopping centers.

Minor Arterial Roads. Similar to Principal Arterial Roads with trips carried being shorter distances to lesser traffic generators.

Collector Roads. Funnel traffic from residential or rural areas to arterials. Collector Roads also provide some access to property.

Local Roads. Primary function is to provide access to property, i.e., residential neighborhoods or rural areas.

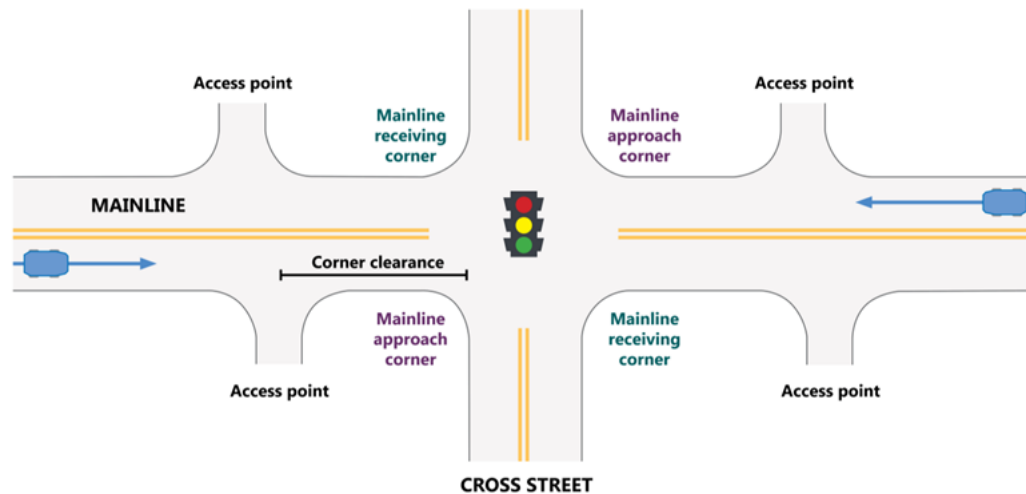


St. Clair County Road Classification Map

Access Management

Access management and internal circulation are critical elements in creating a safe and efficient roadway system. The capacity of a regional or major thoroughfare can be enhanced and its useful life extended by careful attention to access controls and circulation between adjacent sites. This coordination and review will also likely reduce the total number of access drives as well as the total number of conflict points. The Township has the ability at this point in time to implement access management standards which will allow for the property planning and placement of access drives in the Township. If not implemented, these standards will only become more difficult to implement as the Township continues to face growth pressures.

The concept of access management techniques is that the owners of property along a specified roadway, specifically those owning commercial, office or industrial property will be given access to their property, but not unlimited access. There are many access management standards which can be implemented within the Township. These include driveway spacing, limiting the number of access drives, shared drives and others.



Complete Streets

The Michigan Complete Streets legislation was signed into law in 2010 through two public acts, Public Act 134 and Public Act 135. The Michigan Planning Act was also amended to require the consideration of complete streets in the Master Plan. The legislation defines Complete Streets as "roadways planned, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users, whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot or bicycle." It gives local government, county, and state transportation agencies new responsibilities to address all legal users' transportation needs (including pedestrians and bicyclists) in their community Master Plans.

Communities with Complete Streets policies help ensure that roadway design accommodates all users, not just motorists. Facilities that make a street "complete" depend on existing conditions and the intended users. It's never a "one-size-fits-all" scenario. Examples include curb ramps, audible or tactile signals for blind pedestrians, longer crossing times, smooth sidewalks, and bike lanes free of obstacles.

Complete Streets Benefits

Complete Streets provide a number of benefits such as:

- ◆ *Improved safety for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers*
- ◆ *Improved human health by encouraging walking and bicycling*
- ◆ *Decreased car traffic, reducing the dependence on gasoline and petroleum products, and improved air quality*
- ◆ *More transportation options*



Trails

Blueway's of St. Clair

St. Clair County's Blueway's Trail is a water trail system implemented throughout the county's many waterways and lakeshore. Implemented in 2009, this 17-route system, including some ADA accessible launches, includes the Island Loop Route, which runs up the Black River and along the Lake Huron shoreline, and has been recognized as a National Water Trail by the US Department of the Interior, the first such trail in Michigan.

Bridge-To-Bay Trail

The Bridge-To-Bay Trail is a biking and walking path that follows the lakeshore the County from New Baltimore to Burtchville.

Wadhams to Avoca Trail

The Wadhams to Avoca Trail is a rails-to-trails pathway located on the former CSX rail line. The trail is open to hikers, bikers, and equestrians, and its scenic rural character also supports birding. The trail also contains the 60-foot Mill Creek Trestle, which provides four overlook areas into the Mill Creek Valley.



CONNECTED AND AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

Connected and autonomous vehicle technology will transform transportation systems over the coming decades, with major implications for the planning and design of communities. Autonomous vehicles, also known as driverless or self-driving cars, have been sharing streets and roads for years.

According to the American Planning Association,

“The widespread deployment of autonomous vehicles for cities and metropolitan regions will change the way we design our public rights-of-way. Sensors will allow autonomous vehicles to travel closer together than human-controlled vehicles, reducing the necessary pavement width and freeing up space for wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and other amenities. Local zoning codes will need to address requirements for passenger loading and unloading, and parking needs will change drastically if a shared use model is employed. As cities transition away from ordinances that now require large amounts of land to be used for parking and circulation, they will need to determine how best to make use of that “extra” land through new approaches to land use and zoning.”

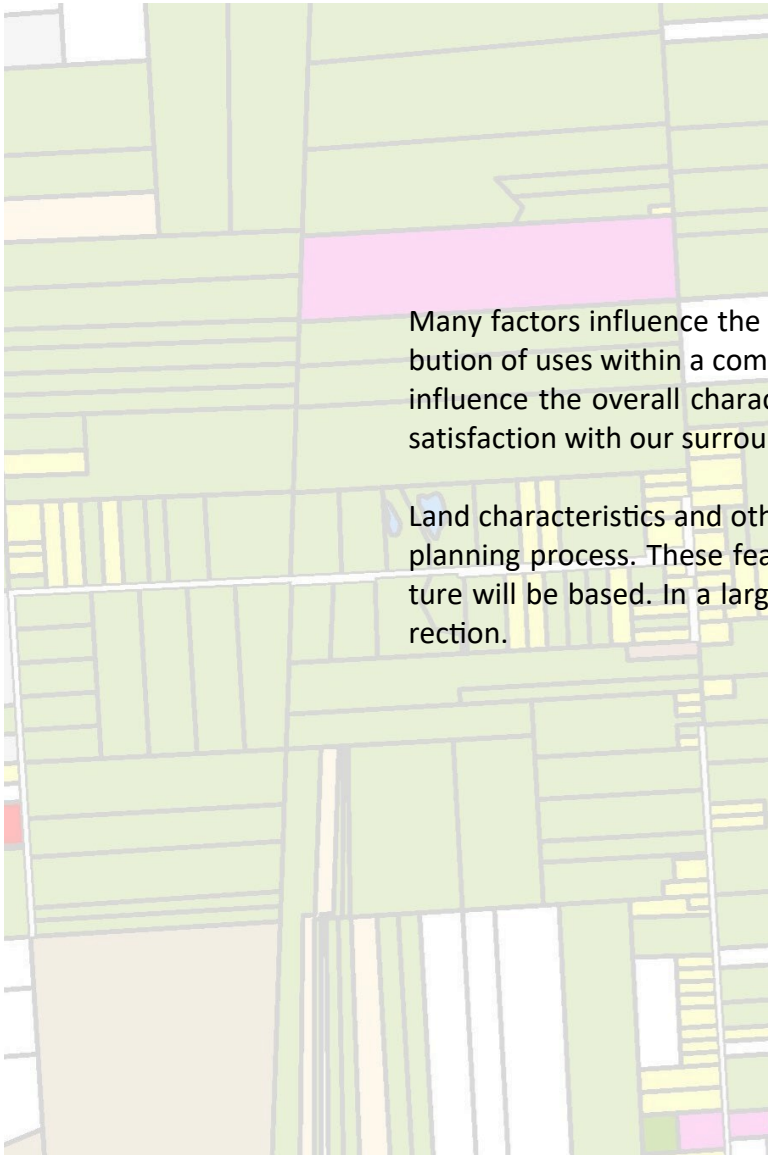
ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

As automobile manufacturers increase their offerings of electric vehicles (EVs), and public acceptance of electronic vehicles becomes more the norm, drivers may elect to shop where they can also refuel their EVs - so they can attend to two chores in one location. Longer dwell time at a retail location may even translate to an increase in sales. Businesses looking into the benefits of EV charging stations for their customers may build a competitive advantage over others.



Chapter 4

Existing Land Use



Many factors influence the character of our physical environment. Chief among these is land use, the distribution of uses within a community, and the relationship of these uses to one another. These factors strongly influence the overall character and image of the Township. They also affect the quality of life and relative satisfaction with our surroundings.

Land characteristics and other relevant physical features are among the most critical aspects of the land use planning process. These features establish the observable physical setting upon which the community's future will be based. In a largely undeveloped community, these features may influence the development direction.



Source: SEMCOG

Ira Township Existing Land Use Map



EXISTING LAND USE PLAN

Ira Township remains primarily a rural community. Agricultural/rural residential use accounts for nearly two-thirds of all land with in the township, followed by single family residential, typically on large lot areas, and institutional (public and semi-public).

2020 Existing Land Use Categories	Acres
Single Family Residential	621.7
Multiple Family Residential	1.6
Manufactured Housing	231.2
Agricultural/Rural Residential	7,723.6
Mixed Use	44.7
Retail	64.0
Office	13.8
Hospitality	14.1
Medical	5.5
Institutional	348.4
Industrial	167.5
Recreation/Open Space	81.5
Cemetery	4.2
Parking	0.3
Roads & Utilities	277.1
Vacant	1,156.9
Water	32.3
Not Parceled	101.1
Total	10,889.4



SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Single-family home sites occupy 621.7 acres of land, representing 42.3 percent of the Township's developed land area and 7.1 percent of the community's total area. Most of the Township's single-family homes have frontage on major section-line roads. Fewer homes are on subdivision streets. These subdivisions are predominantly along or proximate to the Lake St. Clair shoreline.

Existing single-family development forms two distinctive patterns. Residential neighborhoods near the shoreline are characteristically more densely developed than those in the Township's interior portions. Many platted lots along the coastline are less than fifty (50) feet in width. This pattern results in home sites with minimal side yard setbacks between units. Lot sizes of one acre or more are more common in the interior sections of the Township. These larger lot sizes contribute to a more rural residential character.

MULTIPLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The Township lacks any appreciable quantity of land developed for multiple-family purposes. Less than two acres of land is used for this form of housing. Existing multiple-family development consists of freestanding sites, each containing several apartments. These sites are located within the Dixie Highway (M-29) Corridor.

MOBILE HOME PARKS

Approximately 232 acres of land in the Township are currently developed for mobile home purposes. This accounts for 10.2 percent of the Township's developed land and 1.7 percent of the total area. The largest share of this land is located within the two developments at M-29 and Bethuy Road.

COMMERCIAL

The existing land use survey identified two categories of commercial uses: convenience and general. These two categories are distinguished from one another based on the types of goods and services offered and the likely trade area of the business. Conven-

ience commercial uses are intended to meet nearby residential neighborhoods' daily retail and service needs. General commercial uses customarily draw from a broader trade area that may extend beyond the boundaries of the community in which they are located. These commercial uses require freestanding locations along major thoroughfares and rely heavily on easy visibility and convenient access. Within Ira Township, commercial uses occupy 64 acres of land or less than one percent of the Township's land area.

INDUSTRIAL

As of 2020, industrial uses occupied 167.5 acres of land or less than 2 percent of the Township's total land area. The largest share of this industrially produced land lies along Marine City Highway between County Line Road and Meldrum Road. Several industrial sites were also noted along Bethuy Road and M-29.

INSTITUTIONAL (PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC)

This category includes cemeteries, schools, parks, Township sites, utilities, churches, and related uses. These uses collectively occupied approximately 348.4 acres of land in 2020. These uses are located throughout the Township.

Three school districts serve the Township: East China, Algonac, and Anchor Bay, with all three school districts operating an elementary school in the Township. The new Anchor Bay High School also provides recreational opportunities for sports activities.

VACANT

Approximately 1,156 acres of land, or 10.6 percent of the Township's total land area, is vacant. Minimal vacant, undeveloped land is available south of M-29 along the Township's Lake St. Clair shoreline. Tracts of vacant land are evident throughout the interior portions of the Township,

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Chapter 5

Township Goals and Policies

In the broadest sense, the Master Plan is a general policy. However, the Plan contains several individual policies, each supported by a group of objectives designed to guide consistent and rational public and private decisions in the use and development of land and general improvements.

Local community decisions on planning and zoning issues are frequently criticized as being arbitrary. Clear and concise policy statements can help minimize this perception by substantiating honest, intelligent decisions. Policy statements also offer the public an overview of the policies influencing Township decisions on planning or zoning issues.

To facilitate an understanding of the broad policy statements, the following statements explain the overall purpose of the Master Plan.

- * To improve the physical environment of the Township as a setting for human activities to promote general health, safety, and welfare by making the Township more functional, beautiful, decent, healthful, attractive, and efficient.
- * To promote the public interest and the interest of the Township at large rather than the parochial interests of individuals or groups within the Township.
- * To inject long-range considerations into the determination of short-range actions.



Agricultural / Natural Resources

Goal:

Maintain the rural character and preserve the local characteristics of Ira Township as a viable, stable agricultural industry by encouraging the retention and preservation of farmland and agricultural production as well as the preservation of general open space in the undeveloped areas of the Township.

Policies:

- * Guide development to foster the responsible use of land, preserve farmland and natural features, and make the best use of existing public services, utilities, and infrastructure.
- * Preserve those portions of the Township that are being used for agricultural purposes and which can support farming on a long-term basis.
- * Direct non-agricultural uses away from areas ideally situated and conditioned for agriculture.
- * Limit development in environmentally sensitive areas.
- * Maintain the Township's open, rural character.
- * Establish procedures and requirements to input environmental considerations into the land development process.
- * Strive to maintain a balance between development and environmental preservation.
- * Encourage the preservation of existing woodlands and the incorporation of wooded land into all new developments.
- * Provide an opportunity for agriculture to exist compatibly with single-family homes.
- * Minimize the premature conversion of productive farmland for urban uses.
- * Consider a range of appropriate alternative measures for preserving existing farmland.



Residential Development

Goal:

To guide residential development in a manner which will create, preserve, and enhance a quality living environment for existing and future Township residents and workers.

Policies:

- ◆ Provide diversity in housing stock while retaining an attractive rural character.
- ◆ Strongly encourage clustered development to preserve open space and retain the Township's rural character.
- ◆ Limit residential development in areas where conditions are least capable of supporting development. Evaluate each development based upon the suitability of soils, impact on woodlands, wetlands, floodplains, water bodies, and infrastructure capacity, such as roads and utilities.
- ◆ Provide a range of housing choice.



Commercial Development

Goal:

Guide commercial development in a manner that will create, preserve, and enhance a quality environment for existing and future residents

Policies:

- * Provide a good mix of retail businesses and services in the Township.
- * Encourage the development of specialty-oriented retail activities that take advantage of the Township's waterfront location and expanded tourist-oriented trade area.
- * Upgrade the visual character of commercial businesses in the Township.
- * Establish a unified theme or design to guide the redevelopment of the Fair Haven and Anchorville commercial centers.
- * Limit the quantity of strip or linear commercial development outside of the Fair Haven and Anchorville areas.
- * Encourage commercial development only where it can be demonstrated that a sufficient market area population exists or adequate draw from the region to support the growth.
- * Upgrade commercial development standards to improve the curb appeal of all new commercial developments in the Township related to signage, landscaping, building appearance, setbacks, and overall site design.
- * Ensure that future commercial development is appropriately located, with access to the Township's primary road system and in relationship to the trade area being served.
- * Combine commercial curb driveways and parking lots and discourage excessive curb cuts along major roads.
- * Restrict the placement of large or inappropriately lighted signs along major thoroughfares.
- * Limit outdoor storage in commercial areas, particularly where it detracts from the character of development in designated retail centers.



Industrial Development

Goal:

Promote and encourage industrial development are an essential land use element that provides the Township with a measure of autonomy and independence by providing a source of jobs and contributing to the community's tax base.

Policies:

- * Limit industrial development to locations along the Marine City Highway corridor.
- * Cooperate with neighboring communities and St. Clair County on developing an industrial corridor along Marine City Highway.
- * Support the development of non-nuisance light industries and high-tech/research facilities that do not have adverse environmental impacts or are offensive because of noise or visual characteristics.
- * Encourage the development of planned industrial subdivisions that provide necessary support facilities and encourage the development of interior acreage that lacks direct access to Marine City Highway.
- * Upgrade industrial development design standards to improve building and site appearance.



Recreation and Open Space

Goal:

Enhance the Township's quality of life by providing a full range of recreation facilities and programs meeting the community's needs.

Policies:

- * Utilize the Township's existing natural features, particularly the Lake St. Clair shoreline and Swan Creek, and other environmentally sensitive open space and recreation features.
- * Reserve or acquire additional land needed to meet the anticipated neighborhood recreation needs of existing and future Township residents.
- * Incorporate neighborhood recreation facilities into plans for residential development in the Township through innovative planning and zoning techniques, such as cluster development, open space zoning, and planned unit developments (PUDs).
- * Design future recreation facilities to minimize maintenance expenses.
- * Provide a complete range of both active and passive recreation facilities.
- * Provide for developing a non-vehicular circulation system linking major activity centers, recreational facilities, and the Bridge to Bay Trail.
- * Expand and upgrade recreation facilities within the Township.
- * Increase opportunities for access to the waterfront for public recreation purposes.
- * Provide more opportunities for open space along the Township's Lake St. Clair shoreline.



Transportation

Goal:

Recognizing its limited influence in directing improvements in the Township's major road system, the Township will work with the St. Clair County Road Commission to plan and implement a network of safe roads to ensure proper local access and movement in the community.

Policies:

- ◆ Maintain a transportation network that maximizes the capacity of existing roads while maintaining rural roadways, and facilitating the safe and efficient movement of vehicles and pedestrians throughout the township.
- ◆ Evaluate the impact of traffic generated by existing development, and work toward improvements concurrent with new development.
- ◆ Move through traffic away from the waterfront.
- ◆ Upgrade private streets in the Township to acceptable engineering standards and provide for regular maintenance of these roads.
- ◆ Coordinate with St. Clair County to provide non-motorized opportunities (Complete Streets) for pedestrian activity such as walking, jogging, and bicycling. Complete Streets are defined by Michigan legislation as “roadways planned, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users, whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot, or bicycle”.
- ◆ Improve and expand the Township's existing road system to handle the anticipated traffic created by increases in the community's population and businesses.
- ◆ Plan road improvements to coincide with development.
- ◆ Limit the number of driveways allowed for commercial development and consolidate access whenever possible.
- ◆ Correct hazardous areas by improving street alignments where possible.



Public Facilities

Goal:

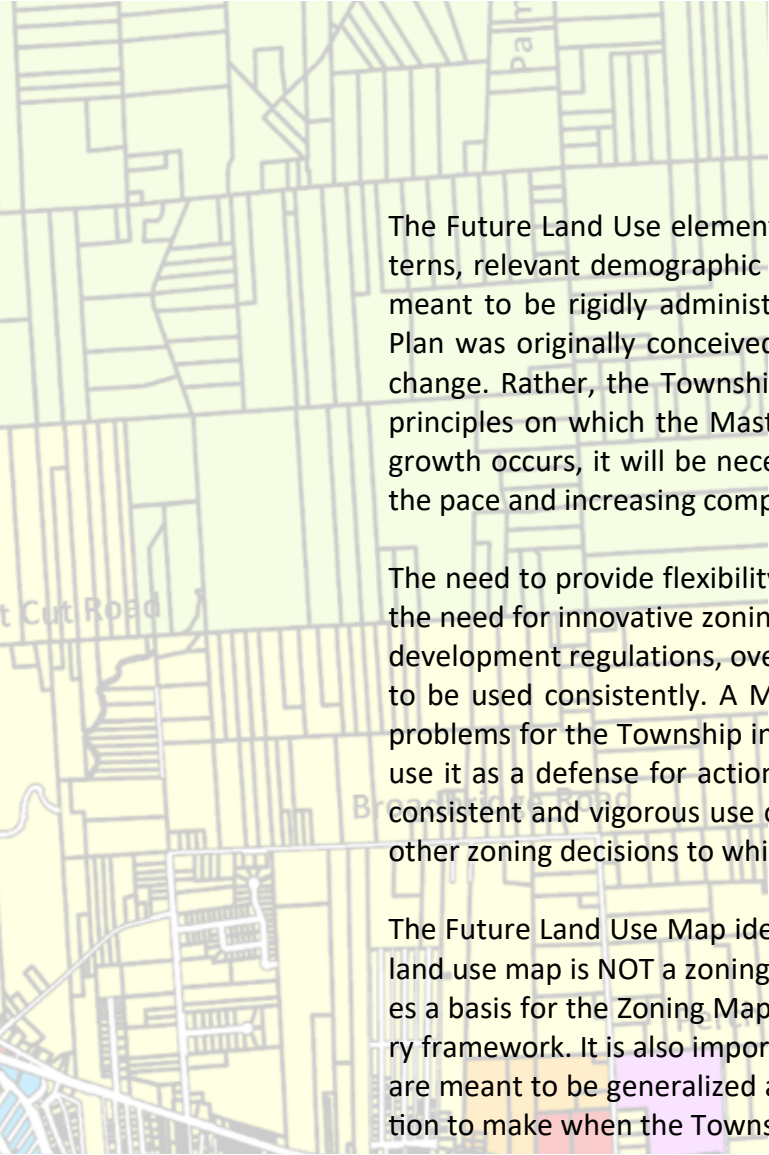
Carefully plan for the extension of public services to correspond to the increased development of the Township as cost-effectively and efficiently as possible.

Policies:

- * Stage sewer and water installations to provide efficient growth and revenues to pay for the system.
- * Extend sewer and water service orderly and timed to coincide with development.
- * Encourage large lots and on-site disposal systems where sewer extensions are not foreseeable within the planning period.
- * Continue to improve the Township municipal building site as a focal point for Township activities.
- * Promote the establishment of medical facilities to serve Township residents.
- * Encourage cooperative service agreements with neighboring communities, where appropriate.

Chapter 6

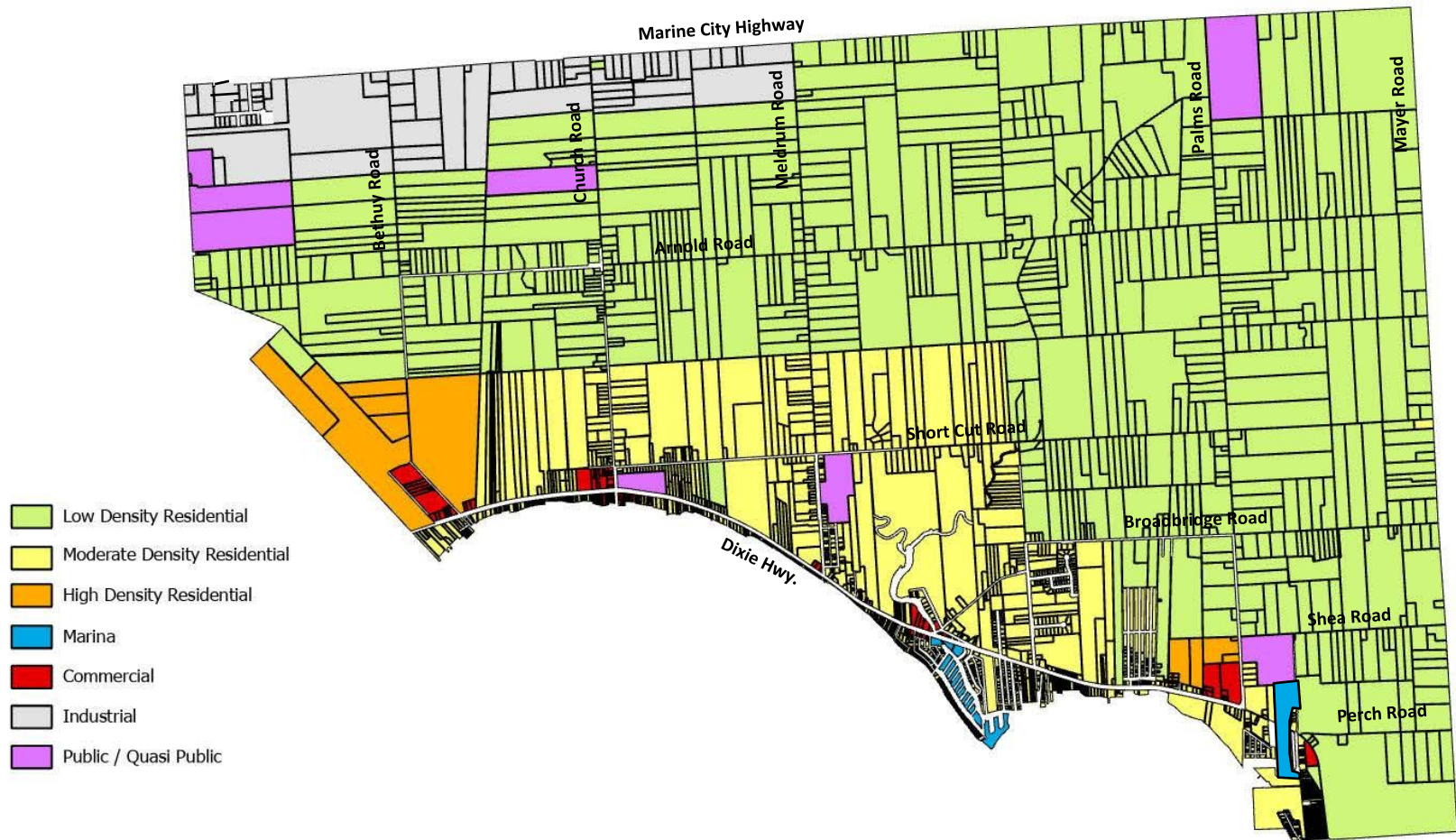
Future Land Use



The Future Land Use element of the Master Plan is designed to recognize existing development patterns, relevant demographic trends, and the Township's vision and goals. As a guide, the Plan is not meant to be rigidly administered; changing conditions may affect the assumptions used when the Plan was originally conceived. But changing conditions do not necessarily mean that the Plan must change. Rather, the Township Planning Commission must examine those changes and decide if the principles on which the Master Plan was based are still valid. If so, the Plan should be followed. As growth occurs, it will be necessary for the Township to address difficult zoning issues brought on by the pace and increasing complexity of development plans by residents and property owners.

The need to provide flexibility, coupled with the Township's desire to manage its growth, may create the need for innovative zoning solutions, such as farmland and open space preservation, planned unit development regulations, overlay districts, and other techniques. It will also be important for the Plan to be used consistently. A Master Plan that is not actively followed and implemented may lead to problems for the Township in the future. Failure to follow the Plan may help discredit any attempt to use it as a defense for actions that may be challenged by property owners or developers. Likewise, consistent and vigorous use of the Plan will lend credibility to the Township's actions on rezoning or other zoning decisions to which it is related.

The Future Land Use Map identifies areas of the Township that are planned for certain uses. A future land use map is NOT a zoning map, nor does it change the zoning of any property. Rather, it establishes a basis for the Zoning Map and the Zoning Ordinance, which translate planning into a full regulatory framework. It is also important to consider that the boundaries of future land use areas on the map are meant to be generalized and do not necessarily represent specific properties. This is a key distinction to make when the Township is asked to consider future requests for rezoning.



Ira Township Future Land Use Plan



Low Density Residential

Areas designated for Low Density Residential should primarily accommodate agricultural land uses, farms, and single-family homes on large lots. The Agricultural / Low-Density Residential area encompasses the largest portion of the Township, including the community's north, central, and eastern sections, and envisions lots of 3.5 acres or greater.

Most of the township's remaining farmland is confined to these areas. The Township recognizes the importance of farming and agriculture and is desirous of ensuring that such uses are not eliminated through future development demands.



Moderate Density Residential

Areas designated for Moderate Density Residential are intended to accommodate primarily residential development with densities up to four dwellings per acre. These areas would ideally be provided with public water and sewer service.



High Density Residential

This designation is intended to provide locations for manufactured housing developments, apartments, townhouses, and attached condominiums. It is intended for residential development with a density greater than six units per acre. Higher-density residential uses can generate a significant amount of traffic and, therefore, should be located adjacent to or near a major thoroughfare. Higher-density residential uses can serve as a transition between non-residential districts and lower-density residential areas.

The Future Land Use Map envisions two areas for high-density residential, one near the intersection of Dixie Highway and Palms Road and the other north of Dixie Highway at the western township boundary; The recommended density is between six (6) and ten (10) units per acre.



Commercial / Office

This land use designation consists of those uses intended to meet the retail, service, medical, and personal needs of nearby residents.

The Future Land Use Map proposes commercial/office land uses primarily along Dixie Highway near Church Road, Ira Road, and Palms Road.



Industrial

The Industrial Land Use category accommodates industrial operations whose external physical effects are not experienced beyond the property line. This category includes manufacturing, assembly, warehousing, storage, and other similar uses. The Township may allow commercial uses within the land use category in certain situations, provided such uses complement the industrial area. Industrial development provides significant economic benefits to a community. Not only does it offer a source of jobs, it also substantially contributes to the township's tax base.

Land allocated for industrial purposes on the Future Land Use Plan includes the township's Marine City Highway frontage from County Line Road to Meldrum Road. The industrial land use designation principally accommodates light assembly operations, warehousing, and similar activities. While more intense industrial uses may be appropriate within these areas, their locations should be more carefully regulated. For example, industrial activities with extensive outdoor storage or processing characteristics should be located on interior sites or sufficiently screened from Marine City Highway.



Waterfront Marina

Marinas are a unique and valuable land use. They increase economic development by attracting both local and regional consumers. Marinas provide a variety of services, including recreational vehicle sales and service, boat storage, docking, and eating & drinking facilities.

Marinas require zoning standards that differ from traditional commercial because of the unique features associated with the land and water.

The Future Land Use Map identifies several marina areas along Dixie Highway throughout the Township.



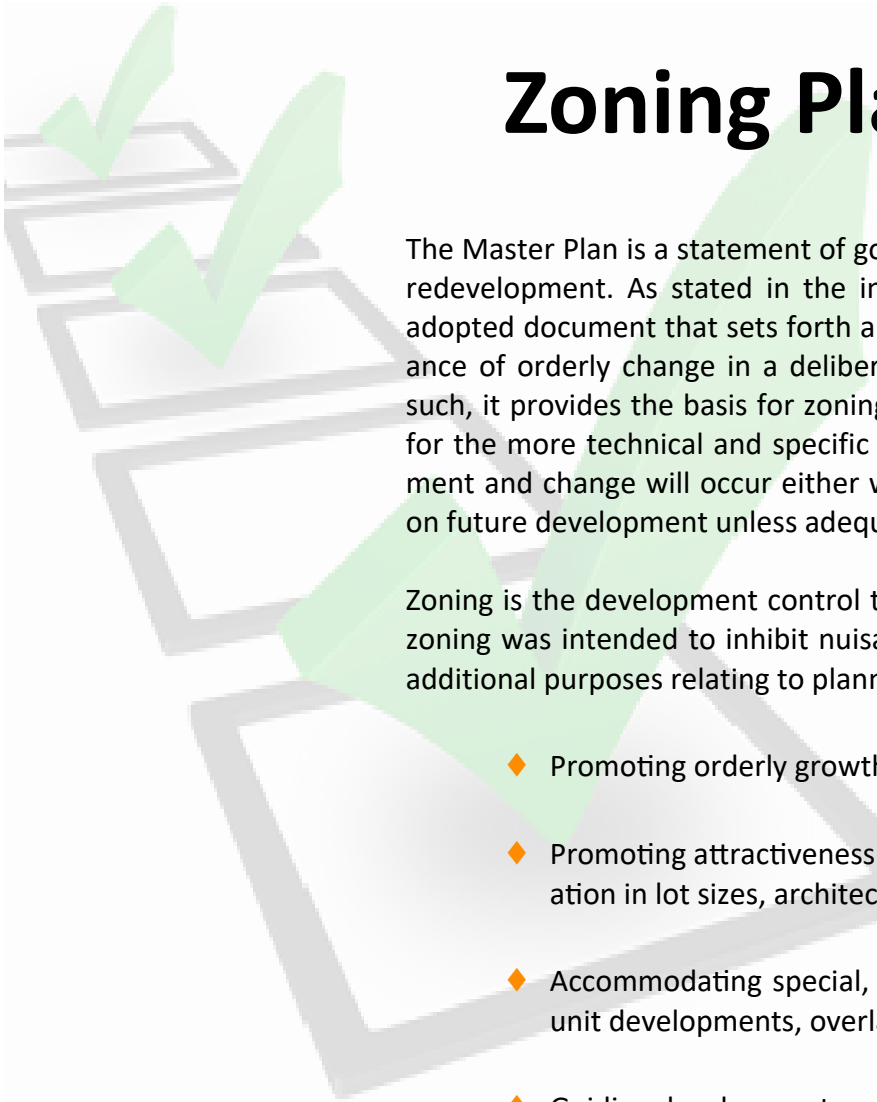
Public / Quasi Public

Land in this category includes government buildings, churches, schools, parks, cemeteries, and other public land uses. These uses are scattered throughout the Township, and are typically located on residentially zoned parcels.



Chapter 7

Zoning Plan & Implementation



The Master Plan is a statement of goals and objectives designed to accommodate future growth and redevelopment. As stated in the introduction of this document, the Master Plan is the officially adopted document that sets forth an agenda for achieving goals and policies. It helps develop a balance of orderly change in a deliberate and controlled manner that permits controlled growth. As such, it provides the basis for zoning and land use decisions. The Plan forms the philosophical basis for the more technical and specific implementation measures. It must be recognized that development and change will occur either with or without planning and that the Plan will have little effect on future development unless adequate implementation programs are established.

Zoning is the development control that has been most closely associated with planning. Originally, zoning was intended to inhibit nuisances and protect property values. However, zoning also serves additional purposes relating to planning, including:

- ◆ Promoting orderly growth in a manner consistent with land use policies.
- ◆ Promoting attractiveness in the Township's physical (built) environment by providing variation in lot sizes, architectural features, and appropriate land uses.
- ◆ Accommodating special, complex, or unique uses through mechanisms such as planned unit developments, overlay districts, or special land use permits.
- ◆ Guiding development away from conflicting land uses.

MASTER PLAN REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

The Ira Township Master Plan is a policy statement constructed of goals and actions intended to guide reasonable and realistic development decisions. The recommended actions are comprehensive and outlined in a manageable framework spread over five years.

The Township must commit to upholding the integrity of the goals and objectives of the document. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008) requires that the plan be reviewed and revised or reaffirmed every five years. The plan should be used consistently and discussed annually to determine if any amendments are necessary.

The master plan is an adaptable document. However, amendments should only be made after a thorough analysis of immediate needs and the long-range impacts of the plan's amendments. The Township Board and Planning Commission should consider each proposed amendment carefully to determine whether it is consistent with the plan's goals and policies and whether it will offer long-term benefits to the citizens of Ira.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MASTER PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE

Zoning is a regulatory mechanism for controlling the classification and regulation of land use. It has the force of law. The Zoning Ordinance regulates land uses based on today's conditions.

The Master Plan and its maps and policy statements are intended to guide land use decision-making over the long term. The Master Plan is a community's vision, while the Zoning Ordinance contains the rules that govern the path to that vision.

State law requires that the Zoning Ordinance be based on a plan. Therefore, the Master Plan forms the basis for zoning decisions. With a Master Plan in place, the courts presume zoning decisions consistent with the plan are valid. Without a Master Plan, the courts may find the community's argument weaker, leaving it more vulnerable to a ruling inconsistent with its vision.

Master Plan	Zoning Ordinance
Provides general policies, a guide.	Provides specific regulations, the law.
Describes what should happen over the next 10 - 20 years, not necessarily the recommended use for today, with updates required every 5 years.	Describes what is, and what is not, allowed today.
Adopted under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended).	Adopted under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended).
Flexibility to respond to changing conditions.	Fairly rigid, requires formal amendment to change.

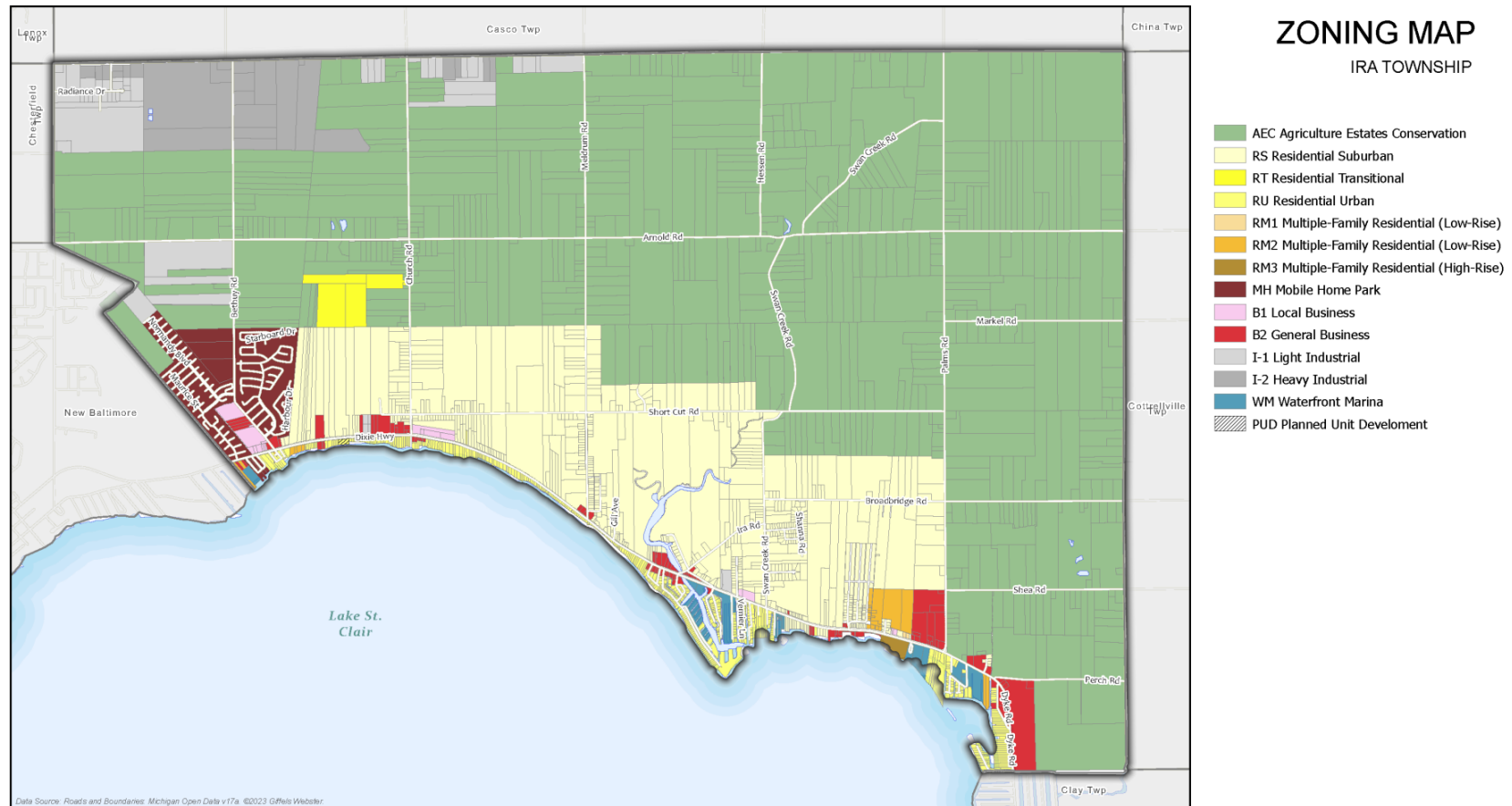
ZONING PLAN

A Zoning Plan is a required element in a Master Plan. The Zoning Plan describes the relationship between the future land use categories in the Master Plan and the comparable zoning ordinance districts. Not to be confused with the zoning ordinance, the zoning plan provides generalized recommendations for aligning the zoning ordinance with the future land use vision. The zoning plan compares the zoning districts and future land use designations. Specific standards in the zoning ordinance regulate these development features.

Future Land Use Designation	Corresponding Zoning Districts
Agricultural / Low Density Residential	AEC—Agriculture Estates Conservation
Moderate Density Residential	RS—Residential Suburban, RU—Residential Urban
High Density Residential	RM-1—Multiple Family Low Rise, RM-2—Multiple Family Low Rise, RM-3—Multiple Family High Rise, MH—Mobile Home Parks
Commercial / Office	B-1—Local Business, B-2—General Business
Waterfront Marina	WM—Waterfront Marina
Industrial	I-1—Light Industrial, I-2—Heavy Industrial
Public / Semi-Public	All Zoning Districts

IRA TOWNSHIP ZONING MAP

Upon adoption of the Master Plan, the Township should evaluate the current zoning map to determine if any changes should be made.



IMPLEMENTATION

The Planning Commission's thoughtful preparation and adoption of any plan would be for not without a program of implementation strategies to bring the Plan to life. The following section attempts to identifies specific plan recommendation with an appropriate implementation technique and the parties involved to facilitate that recommendation. These techniques should be referred to frequently and used systematically so that the outcome is a consistent program of implementation over the life-span of the Master Plan.

ACTION STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
Conduct a Zoning Ordinance Audit to identify areas for improvement.	1-3 years	Planning Commission Township Board
Work with appropriate St. Clair County departments and agencies to assess the Township's infrastructure and plan for updates and improvements, as necessary.	Ongoing	Township Administration
Collaborate with the St. Clair County Road Commission to accommodate increases in traffic volumes through road maintenance, intersection improvements, signalization improvements, and the upgrading of the road network.	Ongoing	Township Administration
Collaborate with the St. Clair County Road Commission to develop access management guidelines.	Ongoing	Township Administration Planning Commission

ACTION STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
Collaborate with the St. Clair County Road Commission to develop policies that promote “Complete Streets”	Ongoing	Township Administration Planning Commission Township Board
Maintain and enhance zoning provisions that accommodate agriculture as a principal use.	1-3 years	Planning Commission Township Board
Maintain large lot sizes in areas planned for agricultural use	Ongoing	Planning Commission Township Board
Review and revise Zoning Ordinance regulations to eliminate standards that result in unnecessary loss of open space.	Ongoing	Planning Commission Township Board
Monitor engineering and drainage issues for new residential development to ensure that they do not negatively impact existing development.	Ongoing	Planning Commission Township Board Township Engineer
Encourage the development of senior housing options which would allow residents to age-in-place.	Ongoing	Planning Commission Township Board

ACTION STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
Raise awareness with property owners and businesses to ensure the proper maintenance of their properties.	Ongoing	Township Administration
Enforce property maintenance through effective code enforcement.	Ongoing	Township Administration
Establish regulations and guidelines to ensure the preservation of the existing housing stock with the Township.	3-5 years	Planning Commission Township Board
Provide space for active and passive recreation.	Ongoing	Township Administration Parks and Recreation Commission
Continue to review and update the Master Plan to ensure its relevancy.	Ongoing	Planning Commission Township Board
Review Zoning Ordinance regulations to ensure affordable housing options are made available to both residents and prospective residents.	1-3 years	Planning Commission Township Board

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

This section identifies tools and programs that will be useful in implementing the Master Plan.

Zoning Ordinance Amendments

The Township's most effective tools to implement the land use arrangement of the Master Plan are zoning standards and zoning districts. A zoning ordinance is meant to be a fluid document, catering to the ideals and needs of the community. The experiences communities undergo in the application of their zoning rules, and the review of unusual new land uses constantly change the body of professional knowledge related to planning and zoning standards. Periodic review of the zoning ordinance will result in the application of the most up-to-date standards in the design of new uses and the maintenance of existing developments.

Form-Based Zoning Codes

Form-based regulations that relate to the context in which they are applied are based on three main factors: street type, site type, and building form. Site content is derived from existing and desired characteristics of the area where these regulations are applied. Areas are distinguished from one another by their size and configuration, street patterns, location, and intensity of use. Site context requires a customized approach to each project. Building form addresses how buildings and structures relate to their lots, to other buildings, and to the street. Building form standards control height, placement, building configuration, parking location, and other design factors. In conventional districts, building form and arrangement are dictated by setback and height requirements.

Overlay Zoning

Overlay zoning allows the Township to enforce an additional set of regulations on special areas within an existing zoning district. In an area where an overlay zone is established, the property is placed simultaneously in the two zones, and the property may be developed only under the applicable conditions and requirements of both zones.

Planned Unit Development

The Planned Unit Development (PUD) involves the use of special zoning requirements and review procedures that provide design and regulatory flexibility, so as to encourage innovation in land use planning and design. Planned developments typically achieve a higher quality of development than might otherwise be possible.

Conditional Rezoning

Conditional zoning allows the Township to approve a rezoning contingent upon the developer fulfilling conditions attached to the rezoning approval. Conditional rezoning allows flexibility in site design, and may also ensure that undesirable uses will not occur on a particular site if rezoned. This tool should not be used as the sole implementation method for flexible use areas, but it may be appropriate for difficult sites where a rezoning would be acceptable if properly designed. The use of conditional rezoning would assure the Township that certain design and use standards would be met in the new development if rezoned.

Brownfield Districts

The Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act, Public Act 381 of 1996 (Act 381, as amended) establishes finance methods to fund environmental response activities at contaminated properties. This program provides municipalities with the tools to develop and implement Brownfield redevelopment financing plans. Properties eligible for Brownfield Act financing include blighted or functionally obsolete structures. Eligible activities include infrastructure improvements, demolition, lead or asbestos abatement, and site preparation. The Township may establish one or more of its own Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities or utilize the St. Clair County Brownfield Authority.

Downtown Development Authorities

Downtown Development Authorities (DDA) are quasi-public development corporations that provide downtown management services. Allowed activities include funding infrastructure projects, conducting marketing activities, purchasing and developing property, underwriting enhanced maintenance and public safety services within the district, and conducting district management activities.

A variety of financing techniques are available to DDAs, including bond issues, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), operating millages, and public and private contributions. When a Tax Increment Finance district is established, the state-equalized value of all properties in the district is recorded. Every year thereafter, the property tax revenue generated by any increase in the taxable value is captured by the DDA to finance improvements set forth in the development plan.

MNRTF Grants

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) has grants available for park development and land acquisition, with a minimum 25% match by the community. Projects eligible for funding include the acquisition of land or rights in land for recreational uses or for protection of the land for environmental importance or scenic beauty and development proposals for public outdoor recreation or resource protection purposes (i.e., picnic areas, beaches, boating access, fishing and hunting facilities, winter sports areas, playgrounds, ball fields, tennis courts, and trails, etc.).

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

CDBG is an annual allocation of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to local governments for a wide range of community development activities, including housing rehabilitation, public and neighborhood improvements, and economic development activities that primarily benefit low and moderate-income persons or eliminate slums or blight within the community.



7085 Meldrum Road, Fair Haven, MI 48023

www.iratownship.org