BLENDON TOWNSHIP

Master Plan

Adopted: March 15, 2018

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BLENDON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
OTTAWA COUNTY, MICHIGAN

At a regular meeting of the Blendon Township Planning Commission held on March 6 2018, at the Blendon Township Hall, the following Resolution was offered for adoption by Planning Commission Member VanderVeen and was seconded by Planning Commission Member Huberts:

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF THE UPDATED BLENDON TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN TO THE TOWNSHIP BOARD AND CONSTITUTING PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVAL OF SUCH MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, MCL 125.3801 *et seq.* ("MPEA") authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared an amended Master Plan and submitted such plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on May 18, 2017 the Blendon Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 6, 2018 to consider public comment on the proposed amended Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed amended Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the proposed amended Master Plan is desirable, proper, and reasonable and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Township;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. ***Approval of 2018 Master Plan.*** The Planning Commission approves the proposed Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, descriptive matters, maps and tables contained therein.

2. ***Distribution to Township Board.*** The Planning Commission hereby approves distribution of the proposed amended Master Plan to the Township Board. The Planning Commission respectfully recommends to the Township Board that the Township Board give final approval and adoption of the proposed Master Plan.

3. ***Findings of Fact.*** The Planning Commission has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, and input received from the Township Board and at the public hearing, as well as the assistance of a professional planning group. The Planning Commission also finds that the amended Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands within Blendon Township.

4. ***Effective Date.*** The Master Plan will be effective upon the date that it is approved by the Blendon Township Board.

YEAS: Lamer, Wind, Huberts, Vanderveen, Leathead

NAYS: None

ABSENT: VanEck, DeWind

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 6, 2018

By _____
Terry Huberts
Planning Commission Secretary

BLENDON TOWNSHIP
OTTAWA COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Resolution No. 2018-03.10

At a regular meeting of the Blendon Township Board held on March 15, 2018 at the Blendon Township Hall, the following Resolution was offered for adoption by Bill Vander Berg and was seconded by Don Vander Kuyl:

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE PROPOSED BLENDON TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, MCL 125.3801 *et seq.* ("MPEA") authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared an updated Master Plan and submitted such plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on March 15, 2018 the Blendon Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 6, 2018 to consider public comment on the proposed amended Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed amended Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing was held, the Planning Commission voted to approve the updated Master Plan on March 6, 2018, and recommended adoption of the proposed Master Plan to the Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board finds that the proposed Master Plan is desirable, proper, reasonable, and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Township;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. ***Adoption of 2018 Master Plan.*** The Blendon Township Board hereby approves and adopts the proposed updated Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, descriptive matters, maps, and tables contained therein.

2. ***Distribution to Notice Group.*** Pursuant to MCL 125.3843, the Township Board approves distribution of the updated Master Plan to the Notice Group.

3. ***Findings of Fact.*** The Township Board has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, and input received from the Planning Commission and the public, as well as the assistance of a professional planning group. The Township Board also finds that the updated Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands within Blendon Township.

4. ***Effective Date.*** The amended Master Plan shall become effective on the adoption date of this resolution.

YEAS: Robin Overway, Don Vander Kuyl, Bill Vanden Berg, Jim Vander Veen

NAYS:

ABSENT/ABSTAIN: Phil DeLange

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Blendon Township Board of Trustees at the time, date, and place specified above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 15, 2018

By _____
Robin Overway
Blendon Township Clerk

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Blendon Township Master Plan involved significant effort of staff, consultants, and public participation including continuous feedback from Boards and Commissions, stakeholders, and citizens of the community. Without this support, completion of this plan would not have been possible.

TOWNSHIP BOARD

William VandenBerg, Township Supervisor
Robin Overway, Clerk
Donald VanderKuyl, Treasurer
Jim VanderVeen, Trustee
Phil DeLange, Trustee

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

Kurt Gernaat

PLANNING COMMISSION

Mark Leathead, Chairman
Rick Lamer, Vice Chairman
Paul Potter, Secretary
Jim VanderVeen
Jeff DeWind
Ron Wind
Terry Huberts

PLANNING CONSULTANT

williams&works
engineers | surveyors | planners

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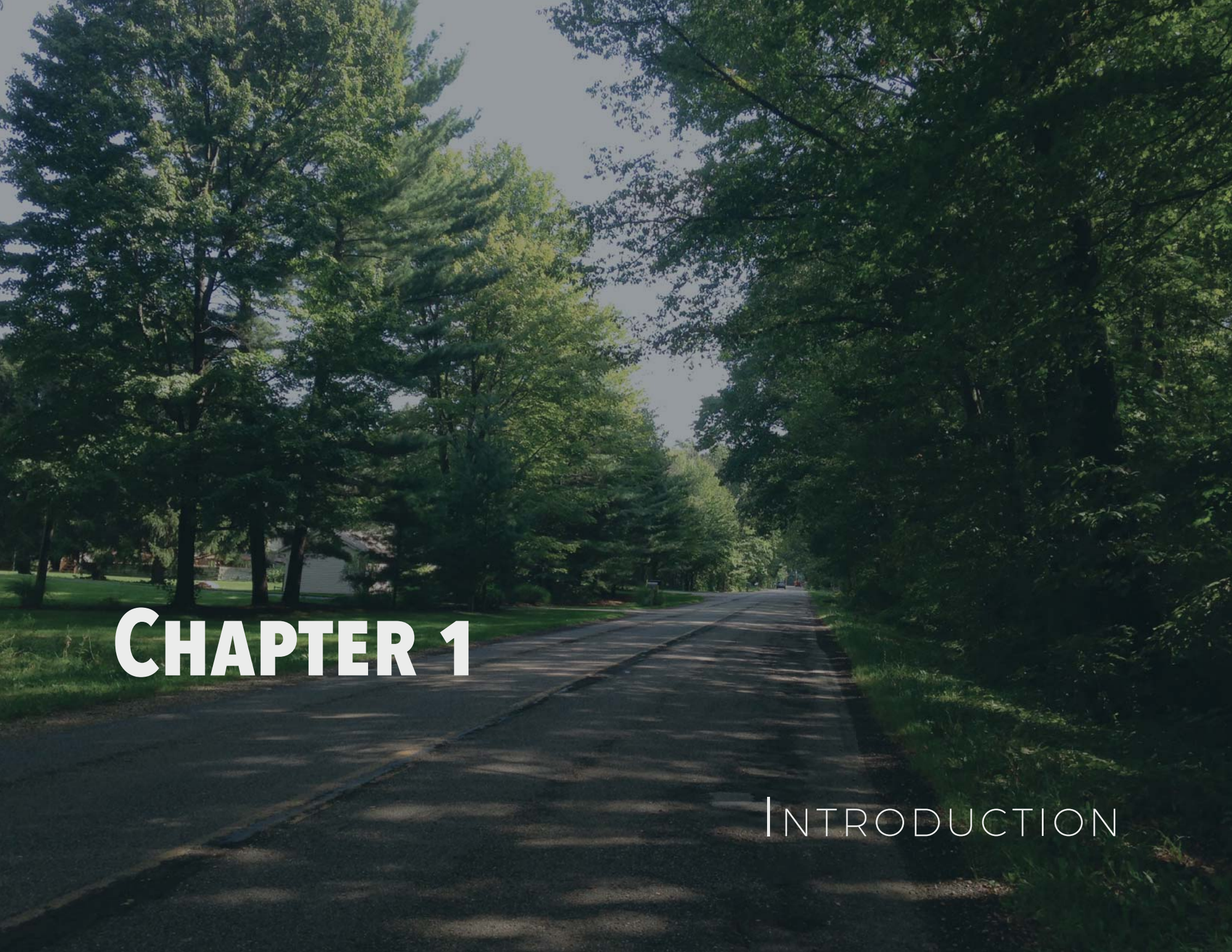

Chapter 1

Introduction

A Master Plan is one of the most important policy documents adopted by a community. It represents a statement about what a community is, what its residents value and what those residents hope the community will become. At its fundamental level, a Master Plan enables a community to establish a direction for physical development, capital investment, and growth. Once adopted, the Blendon Township Master Plan will serve as a guide, or blueprint, for the physical conservation of certain areas and the development of other areas.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) Act 33 of 2008, as amended, specifically gives Blendon Township the authority to prepare and adopt a plan. The Act also requires that the Master Plan be reviewed and updated as necessary every five years. The original Plan was adopted in 2002, and was amended in 2009.

In 2015, the Township elected to further explore some of the key challenges facing the Township and to review and revise policies expressed in the previous plan. The Township expressed a desire to maintain some of the growth and development goals and strategies that were present in the 2002 and 2009 Plans, so this Plan updates and analyzes many of the trends occurring in the Township and their implications as they relate to land use planning.

Even though previous work has enabled this 2018 Master Plan to focus on key issues and challenges, long-range planning should be carried out in general terms and recognize the potential for change and provide the ability to be flexible if conditions in the Township deviate from the anticipated course. This will result in a Master Plan that will be useful well into the future, instead of becoming obsolete if or when demographic, economic, or social trends stray from those identified in this document.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The process to create the Master Plan carefully followed the requirements outlined in the MPEA and contains all elements that the Act requires. The planning process consisted of the following four inter-related phases:

Community Profile - Understanding Current Challenges

During this initial phase, a variety of empirical data was reviewed pertaining to demographics, economics, land use, transportation, and other topics. The purpose of this effort was to develop a comprehensive impression of the patterns of change in the Township and the challenges that the community will likely face in the future. This phase occurred in fall 2014 and was completed in March 2015.

Goals & Objectives - Defining the Policies

In this phase, information gathered from the public in April 2015, as well as local elected and appointed officials, were formed into several broad goal statements which form the foundation of the Master Plan. Each goal is supported by several objectives that are to be seen as steps needed to accomplish each goal. The public input process and results are summarized in *Chapter 5*, while Goals and Objectives are outlined in *Chapter 6*.

Future Land Use - Making the Connection

The third phase involved drawing together the input from the previous two phases and preparing a Future Land Use Plan. The future land use designations and map were developed in a series of meetings of the Planning Commission. To support the desired development patterns envisioned in the Future Land Use Map, the Map is supported by text describing how specific areas of the Township should develop within the next thirty years or so.

Implementation - Taking Action

The final phase of the process involved the development of specific implementation strategies to carry out the Plan. At the conclusion of the fourth phase, a public hearing was held on the Plan. After making any final adjustments after the hearing, the Planning Commission and Township Board officially adopted the plan.

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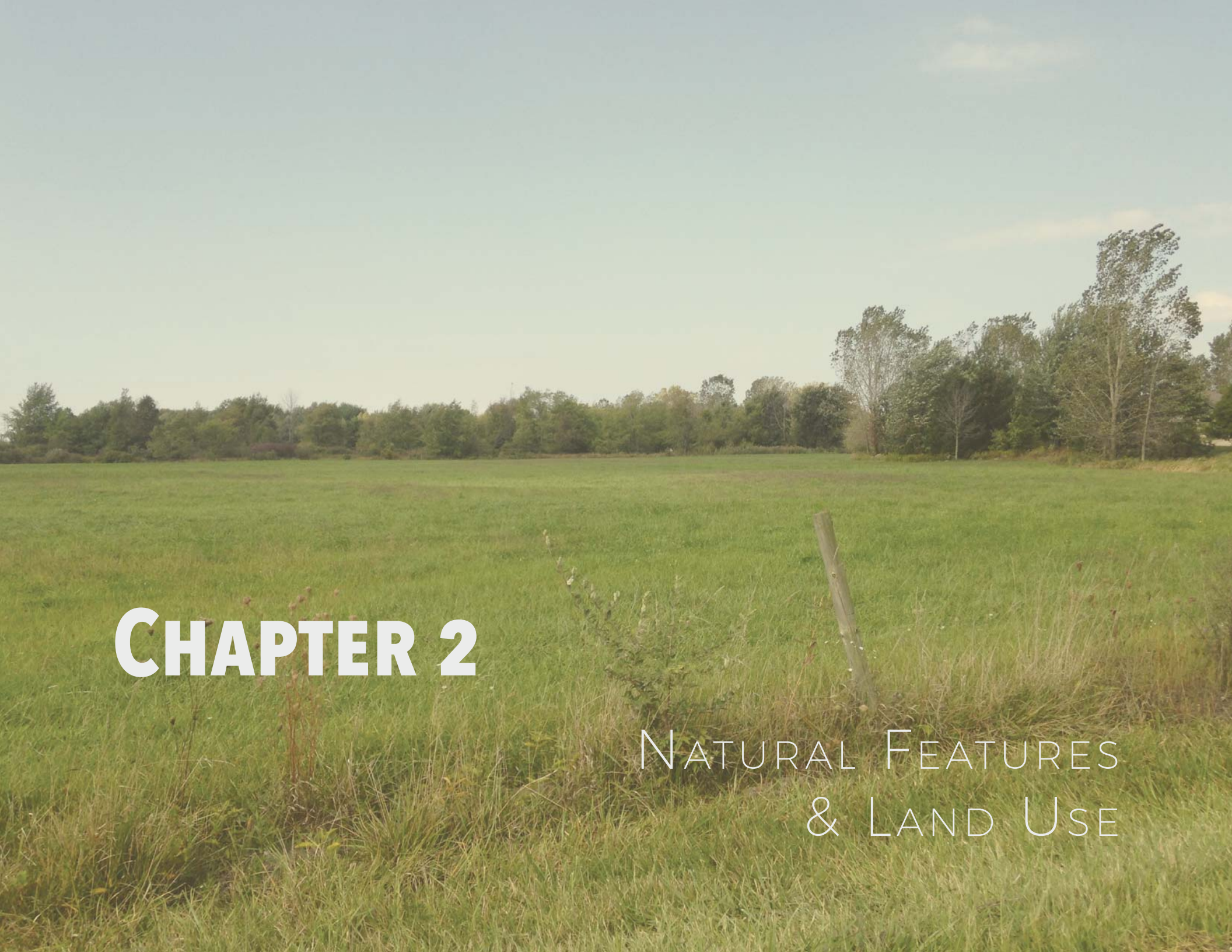


Chapter 2

Natural Features & Land Use

Situated about 15 miles from both the Grand Rapids metro area and Lake Michigan, Blendon Township benefits from a climate suitable for growing a diverse range of agricultural products; yet the Township is in close proximity to a variety of services and amenities not normally found near rural communities. Blendon Township has been able to preserve its rural character and natural features, providing an ideal community for residential development while maintaining its agricultural heritage.

The Township contains a variety of natural features that need to be considered in the planning process, such as streams/ drains, groundwater resources, wetlands, open fields, wildlife habitat, hedgerows, and woodlands. All of these features make an important contribution to the character and quality of life in the Township. This section of the plan will discuss many natural features of Blendon Township and begins to outline some of the planning challenges faced by the community.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

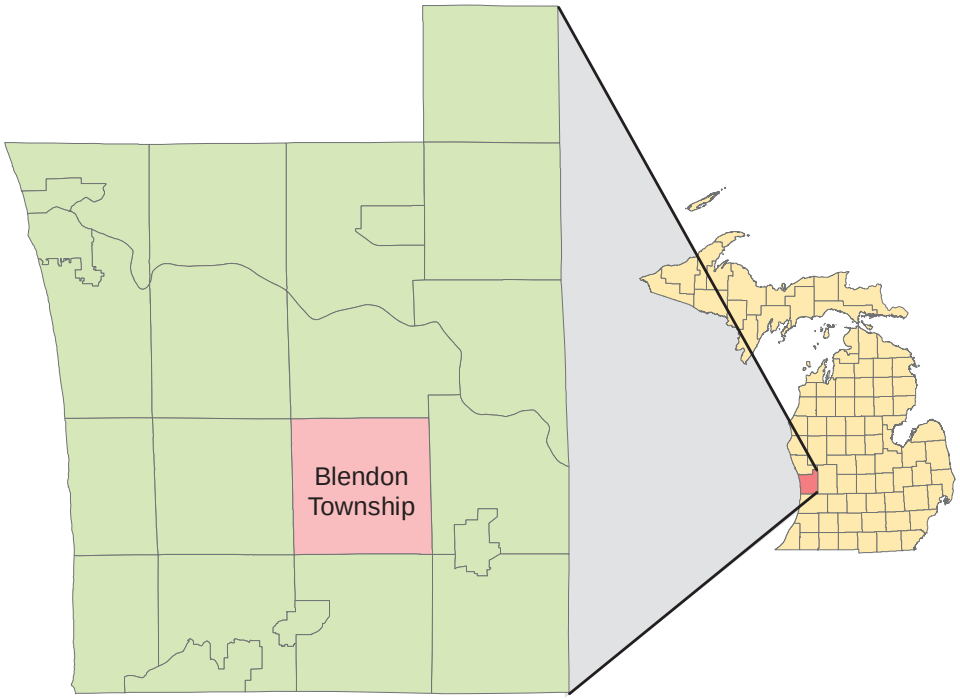
Understanding the composition of soils in Blendon Township is important for effective land use planning. Soil types have an effect on storm water run-off, the preservation water quality, soil erosion, and plan for sedimentation control.

The surface geology of the Township was formed thousands of years ago when glacial activity deposited rock, soil, and large blocks of ice. The glacial drift is a very thick layer of soil material that has been deposited by the advance and retreat of the Wisconsin glacier during the last ice age. The underlying bedrock and source of water for many wells is the Marshall Formation.

The majority of the Township is flat and consists of sandy soils. The Township's remarkably flat topography and high water table can pose several restrictions to development. Maps 2 and 3 illustrate the degree to which there are limitations in the soils to development and to the placement of septic tanks. Construction

Map 1.

Location of Blendon Township



Without wetlands, water quality decreases, areas are prone to flash flooding and habitat for specialized plants and animals is reduced.

costs and risks to the environment can be minimized by developing areas with suitable soils.

Building Suitability: Soil areas that do not provide stable foundations may lead to shifting building foundations, cracked walls, and cracked pavement and roadways. Poorly drained soils are a major limitation in Blendon Township due to the high water table. Development costs can be increased due to additional foundation, road, and septic preparation. Maintenance costs and potential problems can be associated with septic field failures, flooded basements, and impact to roads from frost action.

Septic Suitability: Most homes in Blendon Township rely on individual septic systems for wastewater disposal. Inspection and approval for use of a septic system is under Ottawa County's jurisdiction and the County is ultimately responsible for maintaining high standards of review to prevent system complications or failures. Septic field failures are often the result of poor soil permeability, high water table or excessive slope. Again, the primary contributor to the poor suitability of soil conditions is the high water table, which can be overcome, often at an increased cost.

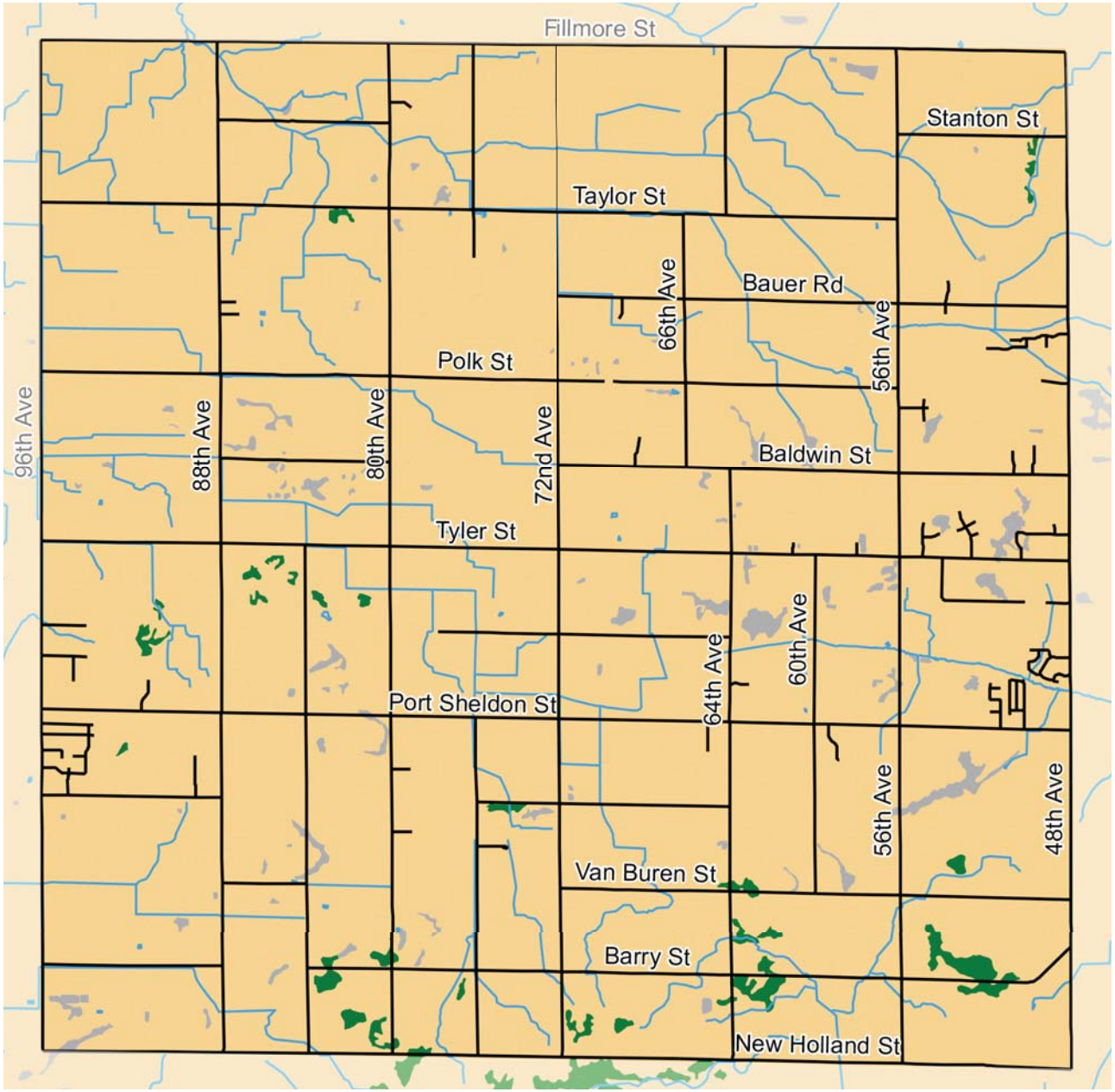
WETLANDS

Wetlands play a very important part in hydrological and ecological systems. Wetlands store precipitation and surface water and then slowly release the water in associated water resources, ground water, and the atmosphere. They help maintain the level of the water table and may serve as filters for sediments and organic matter. They may also serve as a sink to catch water, or transform nutrients, organic compounds, metals, and components of organic matter. Wetlands have the ability to impact levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, carbon, sulfur, and various metals. Without them, water quality decreases, areas are prone to flash flooding and habitat for specialized plants and animals is reduced.

Map 2.

Septic Limitations

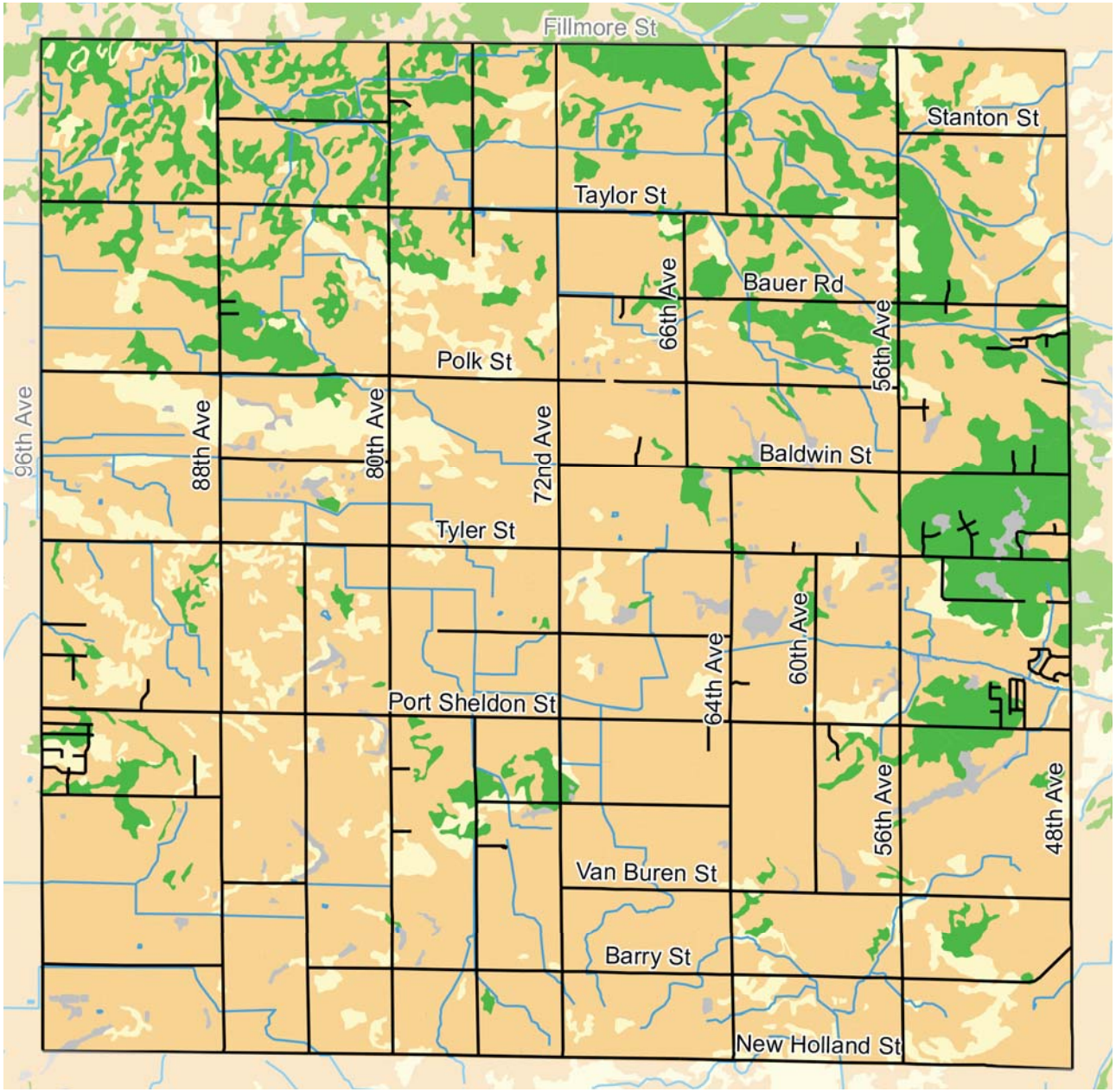
- Not rated
- Somewhat limited
- Very limited



Map 3.

Dwelling Construction Limitations

- Not rated
- Not limited
- Somewhat limited
- Very limited



As areas of the Township develop, the amount of surface runoff will further increase due to the clearing of vegetation, addition of impervious material to the land (buildings and pavement), and improvements to storm drainage. It is critical that these impacts be minimized by protecting native vegetation, providing on-site storm water retention and clustering development where feasible to minimize the area of impervious surfaces.

GROUNDWATER

Important factors in the evaluation of groundwater are the quantity and quality of the water. Because most of the residences in and around the Township rely on individual wells for drinking water, groundwater needs to be protected from contamination.

In 2012, Michigan State University and Ottawa County conducted a study that revealed that in much of the County, groundwater from the Marshall formation contained increasing chloride concentrations through time, and groundwater was becoming more saline. It is likely that a number of factors, including historically low lake levels, groundwater-intensive industrial and agricultural activities, and a slow recharge rate have combined to deplete the amount of potable water available in the aquifer at a rate greater than its ability to recharge.

The Township must continue to be proactive in working to reduce the demand on groundwater resources. For example, the Township could consider stronger growth control measures to ensure that future residential development is served by public water and sewer services. A second study, also conducted by Ottawa County and Michigan State University, is ongoing as of this writing. This study will outline recommendations to mitigate the issue, and as one of the most affected communities, Blendon Township will need to be among the leaders in protecting the groundwater supply of the region.

WOODLANDS

While a majority of the woodland areas in the Township were cleared many years ago as the community was settled for farming, there remain some significant areas of woodlands scattered throughout the Township. Woodlands and hedgerows along property lines and roads provide a variety of benefits and should be preserved as the Township experiences additional growth.

Woodlands enhance the peaceful rural character of the community, establish visual barriers between individual properties, and absorb sound. Preserving large patches of woodlands is critical to providing habitat for animal life, which contributes to the Township's rural nature that makes it a desirable place to live. Woodlands also influence the micro-climate by moderating ground-level temperatures, particularly during temperature extremes during winter and summer months.

Woodlands also aid in the reduction of pollution and soil erosion by absorbing the energy of falling rain and the web of roots of all plants help stabilize soil particles in place. Tree leaves can reduce the impact of raindrops on the soil surface and give soil a chance to absorb water. Fallen leaves minimize the loss of soil moisture, help prevent erosion and enrich the soil to support later plant growth.

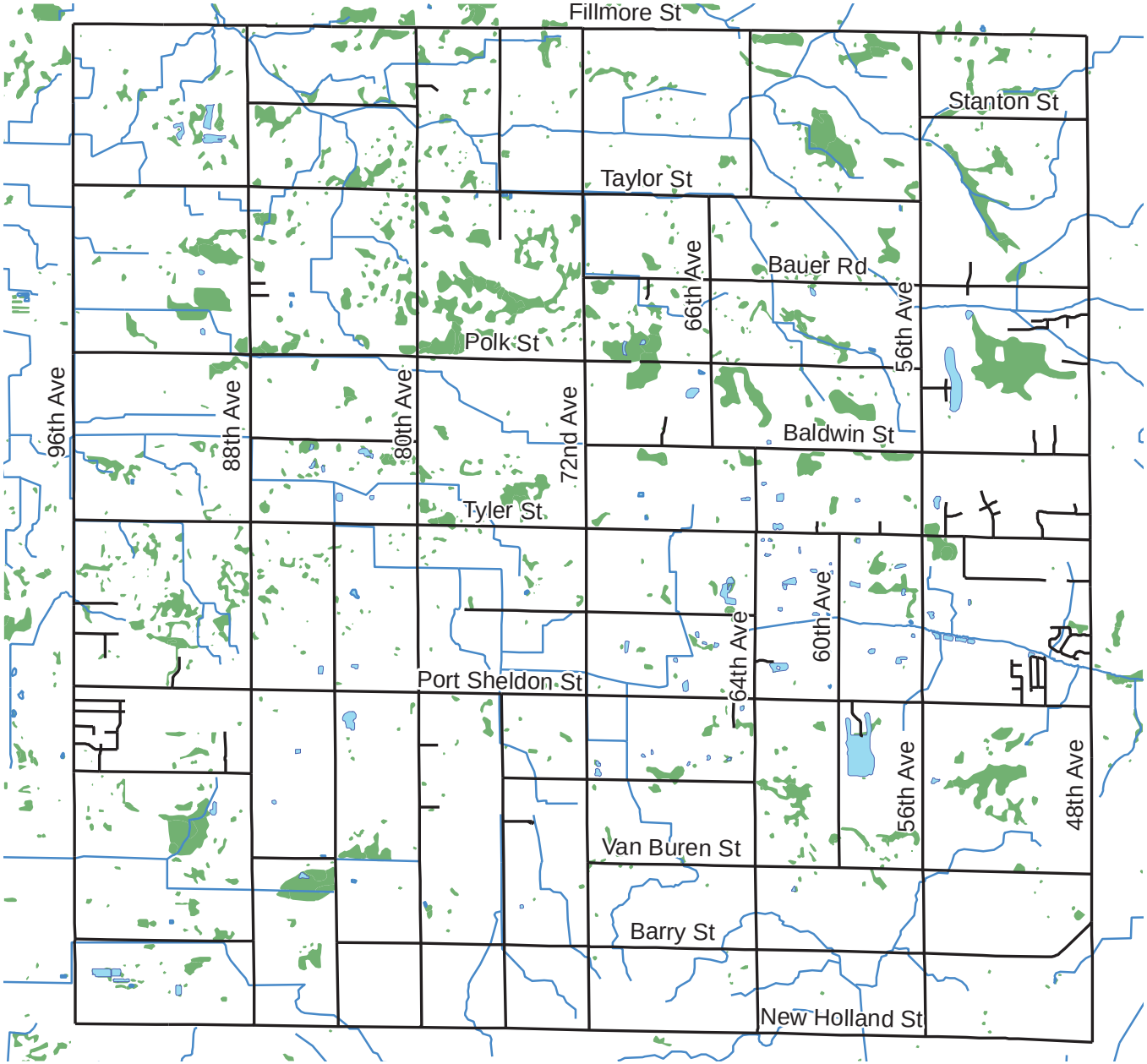
FARMLAND

Agriculture is an important part of the local economy and is the predominant land use within the Township. The suitability of land for farming is very dependent on the physical characteristics of the land, particularly soil conditions. Soil is perhaps the most significant influence on whether or not an area is capable of supporting agricultural activities

Map 4.

Wetlands

NWI Potential
Wetland Areas



Parcel size and shape have an important influence on the viability of a given area for long-term agricultural production. Large parcels with regular shapes lend themselves more readily to farming than smaller parcels that have been split up for non-agricultural purposes. Furthermore, agricultural support operations tend to be more viable when there is a number of large contiguous tracts of farmland in an area. The Township should continue to explore effective and feasible methods to preserve large contiguous tracts of viable farmland in Blendon Township.

Blendon Township contributes to the specialty crop production in Ottawa County, especially nurseries and greenhouses. There are also several other specialty agricultural operations in the Township that contribute to Ottawa County leading all other Michigan counties in the production of turkeys, ornamental nursery crops, blueberries and perennials. The Township is also a large row crop producer.

GROWTH AREAS

Land use patterns are affected and influenced by geographic location, land use, and zoning policies, along with environmental, economic, social, and cultural influences. The location of a building, the routing of a street or highway, construction of sanitary sewers, and many other factors affect the shape of existing and future land use patterns. Land uses in Blendon Township have not changed considerably since this last plan was adopted in 2003. Although some residential growth has occurred, the Township remains primarily an agricultural and rural residential community. The most intense development has occurred in areas where growth was anticipated, such as in Borculo and along Port Sheldon Street near 48th Avenue. These areas have a mix of residential, commercial, and limited institutional uses such as churches.

Borculo has the character of a village, with many older homes, mature trees, and a small grid pattern. Near 48th Avenue, development is more suburban in nature, with single-family homes arranged in conventional subdivisions. Similar development has occurred along Tyler and Baldwin Streets near 48th Avenue.

The remainder of residential development in the Township has occurred as open lands have been converted to residential homesites on large lots, many between two and five acres. Development in the community outside of the areas in Borculo and near 48th Avenue is served by residential well and septic systems.

Map 6 illustrates land use in the Township based on property classification. This map clearly illustrates that while there are still many large tracts of land in the Township, much of the Township is not actively farmed.

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Blendon Township has recognized its stewardship responsibilities of the important natural features in the community. The Township has taken proactive measures to ensure that residents were aware of the implications of the 2012 Groundwater Study conducted by Michigan State University of groundwater Ottawa County. The Township developed and distributed a groundwater resources guide for residents to address the issue. Blendon Township, as well as other communities in Ottawa County, have committed to further study to recommend a course of action.

Blendon Township continues to be an attractive place for single-family residential development due to its rural nature, excellent school districts, and proximity to the Grand Rapids metro area. The Township will have to carefully balance the desire to maintain its agricultural heritage and rural character with the likelihood that additional residents will be moving to the Township in the coming years.

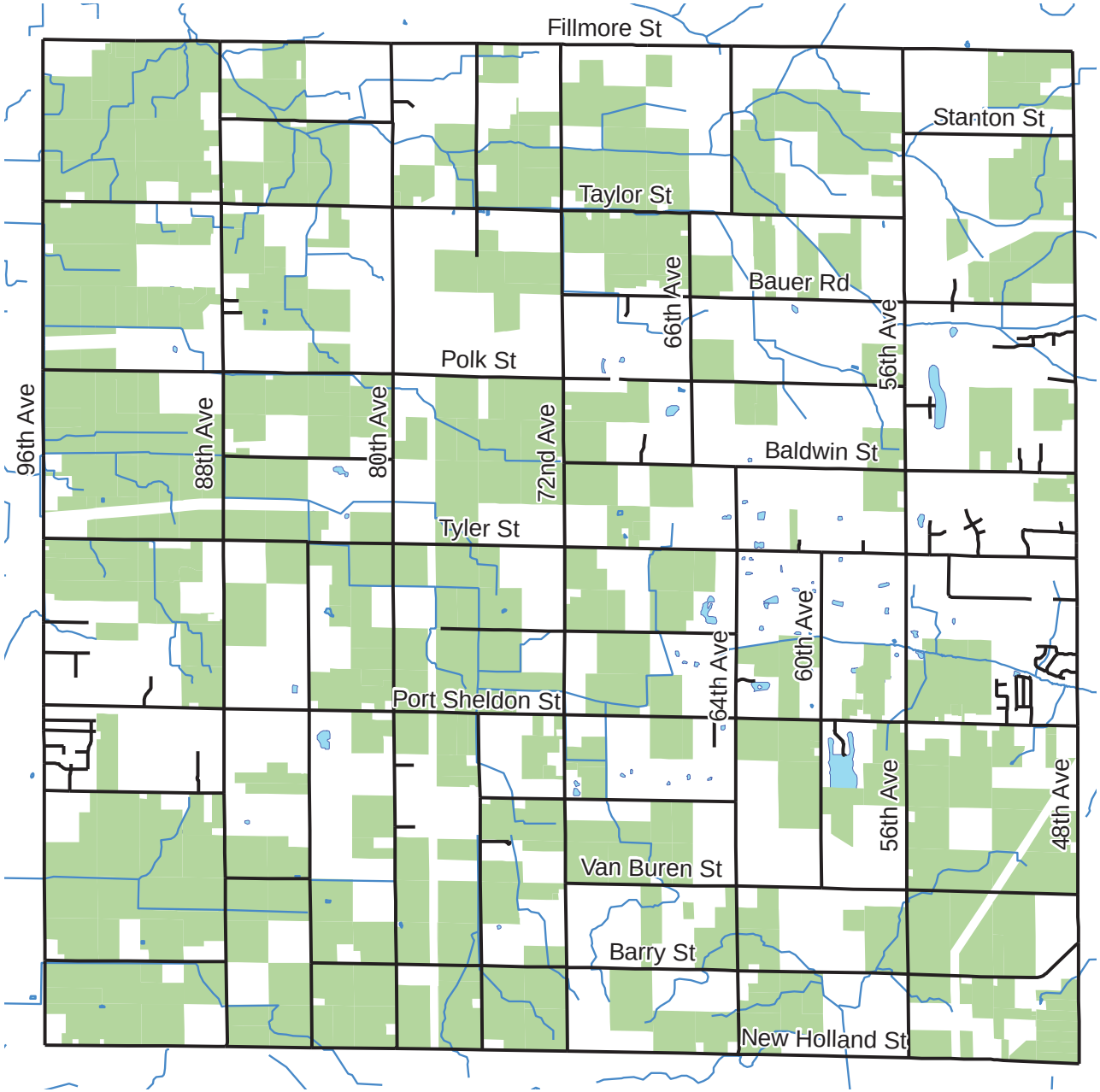
The community has continued to look for ways to address the difficult challenges of land use planning and protecting unique features that lend themselves to, and contribute to, the Township's agricultural character. Throughout this Master Plan, careful attention must be paid to the Township's ongoing commitment to the preservation of important natural features, farmland, and the environment through responsible land use and development practices and regulation.

Blendon Township must carefully balance the desire to maintain its agricultural heritage and rural character with impending residential development pressures.

Map 5.

Agricultural Properties

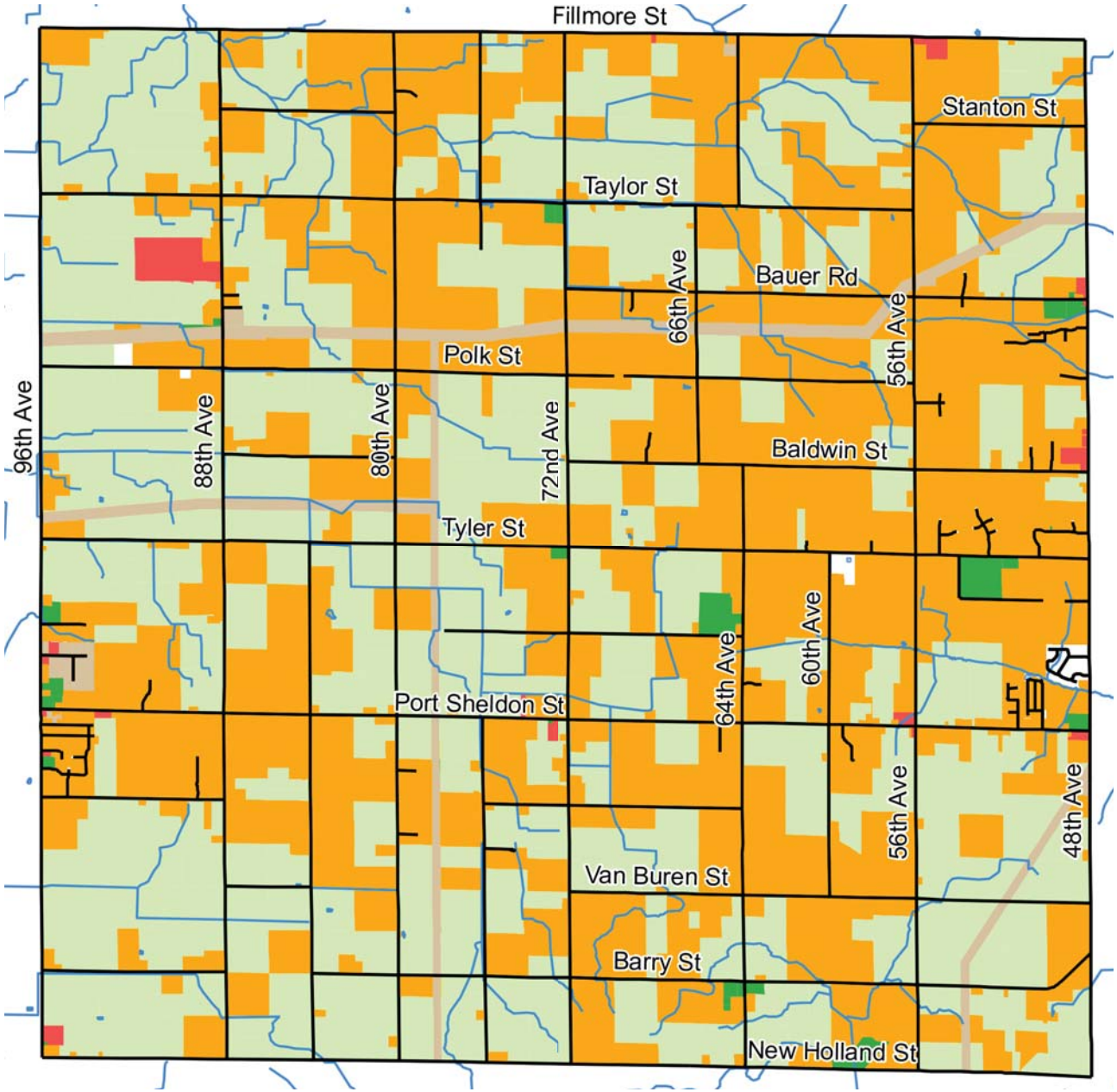
Land Classified Agricultural



Map 6.

Land Use

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Residential
- Exempt



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Chapter 3

People & Housing

The demographic makeup of a community and the demographic change experienced in a community over time are among the most important indices to measure growth and its likely impact on land use. Therefore, an understanding of past and present population characteristics is a key component of a realistic and meaningful Master Plan.

This chapter describes Blendon Township's demographic and housing characteristics, and serves as part of the foundation for drawing conclusions about the likely future of Blendon Township.

POPULATION

An overall look at the State of Michigan shows that Ottawa County and communities within Ottawa County are experiencing relatively high rates of growth. Between 1990 and 2010, Michigan's population increased by a much slower rate (6.3%) than Ottawa County (40.5%) or Blendon Township (21.8%).

Table 3-1. Historic Population Change, 1990- 2010

				Percent Change		
	1990	2000	2010	90-00	00-10	90-10
Blendon Twp	4,740	5,721	5,772	20.7%	0.9%	21.8%
Allendale Twp	8,022	13,042	20,708	62.6%	58.8%	158.1%
Georgetown Twp	32,672	41,658	46,985	27.5%	12.8%	43.8%
Olive Twp	2,8/66	4,691	4,735	63.7%	0.9%	65.2%
Zeeland Twp	4,472	7,613	9,971	70.2%	31.0%	123.0%
Ottawa County	187,768	238,314	263,801	26.9%	10.7%	40.5%
State of Michigan	9,295,297	9,938,444	9,883,649	6.9%	-0.6%	6.3%

Blendon Township's rate of growth slowed between 2000 and 2010 (0.9%) after a high rate of growth (20.7%) between 1990 and 2000. This slowing of growth is especially curious when the 2000 to 2010 Blendon Township growth rate is compared to neighboring townships such as Allendale Township (58.8%), Georgetown Township (12.8%), Zeeland Township (31.0%), and even Ottawa County (10.7%). The growth rate of Olive Township (0.9%) was identical to Blendon Township between 2000 and 2010 and also experienced a high rate of growth between 1990 and 2000 before leveling off somewhat.

Recent trends notwithstanding, population growth in Blendon Township is projected to continue at a modest pace between 2010 and 2030. Projections for the Township and County, based upon projections by the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, are outlined in Table 3-2.

The projections are based upon a growth rate for 1980-2010 population extrapolated to 2030. Actual population growth may deviate from this trend based upon changes in conditions that influence growth.

Table 3-2. Blendon Township Population Projections, 2010-2030

	Population Change			Percent Change		
	2010	2020	2030	2010-2020	2020-2030	2010-2030
Blendon Township	5,772	6,404	7,036	10.9%	9.9%	21.9%
Ottawa County	263,801	316,671	369,541	20.0%	16.7%	40.1%

AGE

Another opportunity to measure trends involves comparing the age distribution of a community over time. This assists in determining the type of housing and community facilities that may be needed or demanded in the Township. The median age varies between communities in Ottawa County. This is influenced by such factors as the presence of Grand Valley State University and Hope College, which lower the median age of the County. The median age in Blendon Township was 38.5 as of the 2010 Census, compared to the County's 34.5 years, and the State's 38.9 years. As with many communities in America, the median

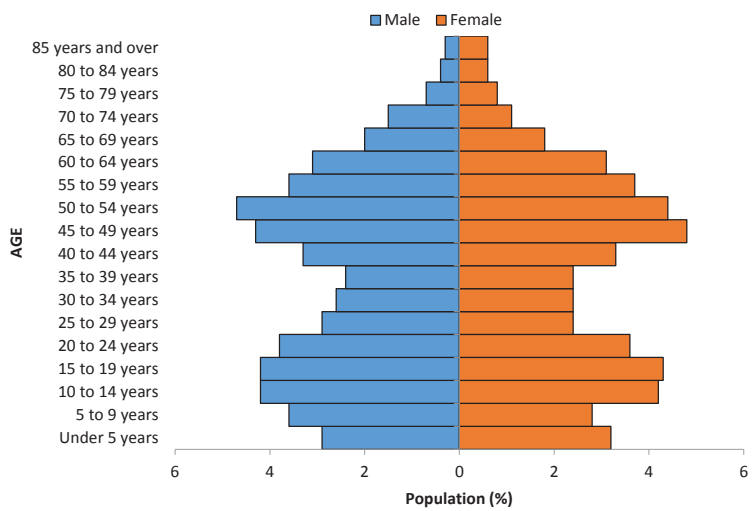
age is increasing and the population is aging as fewer young people are having children and those that do tend to have fewer children compared with previous generations. From 2000 to 2010, the median age in Blendon Township increased by 25%, which is faster than both Ottawa County and the State.

Table 3-3. Median Age, 1990-2010

	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1990-2010
Blendon Twp	**27.8**	**30.8**	**38.5**	**38.5%**
Ottawa County	**30.3**	**32.3**	**34.5**	**13.9%**
Michigan	**32.6**	**35.5**	**38.9**	**19.3%**

The population pyramid in Figure 3-4 displays the distribution of age groups within Blendon Township. Approximately 38.3% of the Township's population in 2010 fell between the ages of 40 and 64. Comparatively, approximately 36.8% of the Township's population in 2010 fell between the ages of newborn and 24. Together, these two large age groups make up 75.1% of the population of Blendon Township.

Figure 3-4 Blendon Township Population Pyramid, 2010



HOUSING

Blendon Township is predominately a bedroom and agricultural community with a large number of single-family, owner-occupied dwellings. There were 2,032 housing units in Blendon Township as of the 2010 Census representing a 14% increase from the year 2000 (1,783). The relatively sizeable increase in the number of housing units in the Township is peculiar given the very modest increase (0.9%) in population during the same time period. While 249 housing units were added to the Township, the Township only saw a net increase of 51 people.

Table 3-5 . Housing Units

Blendon Township	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1990-2010	% Change 2000-2010
Total Housing Units	**1,425**	**1,783**	**2,032**	**42.6%**	**14.0%**
Occupied	**1,396**	**1,743**	**1,975**	**41.5%**	**13.3%**
Percent Occupied	**98.0%**	**97.8%**	**97.2%**	**-0.8%**	**-0.6%**
Owner-Occupied	**1,216**	**1,543**	**1,737**	**42.8%**	**12.6%**
Percent Owner-Occupied	**87.1%**	**88.5%**	**87.9%**	**0.8%**	**-0.6%**

While families splitting large parcels into smaller lots for their children could be a cause, an 11% decrease in the average household size between 2000 and 2010 is likely the leading factor.

This change in household size (-11%) between 2000 and 2010 is substantial when compared to Ottawa County (-2.8%) and Michigan (-2.7%). As children in the Township age and graduate from high school, they are likely leaving for college or employment elsewhere, while others may be moving into homes of their own in the Township, resulting in more dwellings in the Township even though the population remains unchanged. Additionally, as of the 2010 Census, Blendon Township had a housing occupancy rate of 97.2%, similar to 1990 and 2000, eliminating vacancy as a potential cause for the difference.

The size of households in Blendon Township is decreasing similar to trends in Ottawa County, the State of Michigan and the United States. Despite the decrease in household size, the 2010 Census indicates that the Township has a larger average household size (2.92) than both Ottawa County (2.73) and the State of Michigan (2.49).

Table 3-6. Average Household Size 1990-2010

	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1990-2010	% Change 2000-2010
Blendon Township	3.39	3.28	2.92	-13.9%	-11.0%
Ottawa County	2.9	2.81	2.73	-5.9%	-2.8%
Michigan	2.66	2.56	2.49	-6.4%	-2.7%

The effect of the Great Recession on the housing market is evident in the number of new residential building permits issued by the Township between 2008 and 2014. A decline between 2008 and 2010 followed by an increase from 2011 to 2014 indicates the recession and recovery.

Table 3-7. Blendon Township Building Permits 2008-2014

Blendon Township	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Residential new construction	24	17	11	14	26	52	40

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Blendon Township can expect its relatively modest rate of growth to continue over the life of this plan; although it may speed up somewhat as the housing market and economy in general continue to recover. This will likely result in single-family homes being built in large acre lot splits and additional subdivisions. The Township should give substantial consideration to how strongly it wants to guide growth and development, and what form new development should take given the overall goals and objectives of this Master Plan.

Though the population did not change significantly from 2000 to 2010, there were still about 250 new houses built over that time. Thus, it is possible that the Township will see additional demand for housing even if the population does not change considerably.

The dispersed nature of Blendon Township's development pattern and lack of non-motorized transportation infrastructure means that in the near term there will likely be a continued demand for auto-oriented development and infrastructure. Given the region's growing network of trails and pathways, there could be an increased risk of conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. The Township should give serious consideration to recommendations and regulations that encourage or require development patterns and forms that serve all residents more equitably.

An aging population could create the demand for more diverse housing options including condominiums, senior living centers, and housing in close proximity to commercial services. While Georgetown Township, directly to the east of Blendon Township, contains a number of assisted-living and senior housing options, additional thought senior friendly- development that allows for "aging in place" and mixed land uses should also be considered.

Chapter 4

Utilities & Infrastructure

UTILITIES

A safe, secure, plentiful and reliable source of water is vital to a community's growth and development. Potable water for drinking, sanitation, fire suppression, and industrial uses are the hallmarks of modern society. Many residents in Blendon Township utilize household wells for their water supply. Generally, the glacial and bedrock aquifers are sufficient for the low-density development that characterizes the Township.

The location of water and sewer lines can aid in guiding growth and development because more intense land uses can be planned and developed in areas with those services.

Existing Water Systems

Blendon Township lies directly between two major water supply lines. To the north, along Fillmore Street, is the City of Grand Rapid's 60-inch water line. To the south, along the New Holland Street right-of-way is the City of Wyoming's 54-inch water line. These two city systems supply water to the adjacent communities including: Coopersville, Hudsonville, Jamestown, Allendale, and Zeeland.

There are currently two water systems in Blendon Township, Georgetown Township and the Olive-Blendon system. These water providers have defined service areas; no water can be supplied beyond these limits unless the service area is expanded. Map 7 illustrates the location of water mains in the Township (excluding the Grand Rapids and Wyoming water mains).

The water agreement with Georgetown Township covers sections 1, 13, 24, and 25 in Blendon Township. The agreement was originally signed in 1992 and amended in 2003 to add section 1.

The Olive-Blendon system is connected to the City of Wyoming water system. It operates at approximately 50 psi and has a defined service area. This system operates from line pressure on the 54 inch transmission line and includes an elevated tank. It was designed to serve a 2 million gallon per day (MGD) demand.

Ottawa County, through its Board of County Road Commissioners, established a utility department that public works services, relative to water (and wastewater), to the County's governmental units. The Olive-Blendon water system serving a portion of Borculo is one such system.

Existing Sanitary Sewer Systems

A sanitary sewer agreement was established with Georgetown Township in 2001 which makes it possible for the Georgetown Sanitary Sewer System to service portions of sections 12, 13, 24, and 25 in Blendon Township. The agreement was also amended in 2003 which added section 1. Sanitary sewer services currently are in place in Borculo and in areas near 48th Avenue.

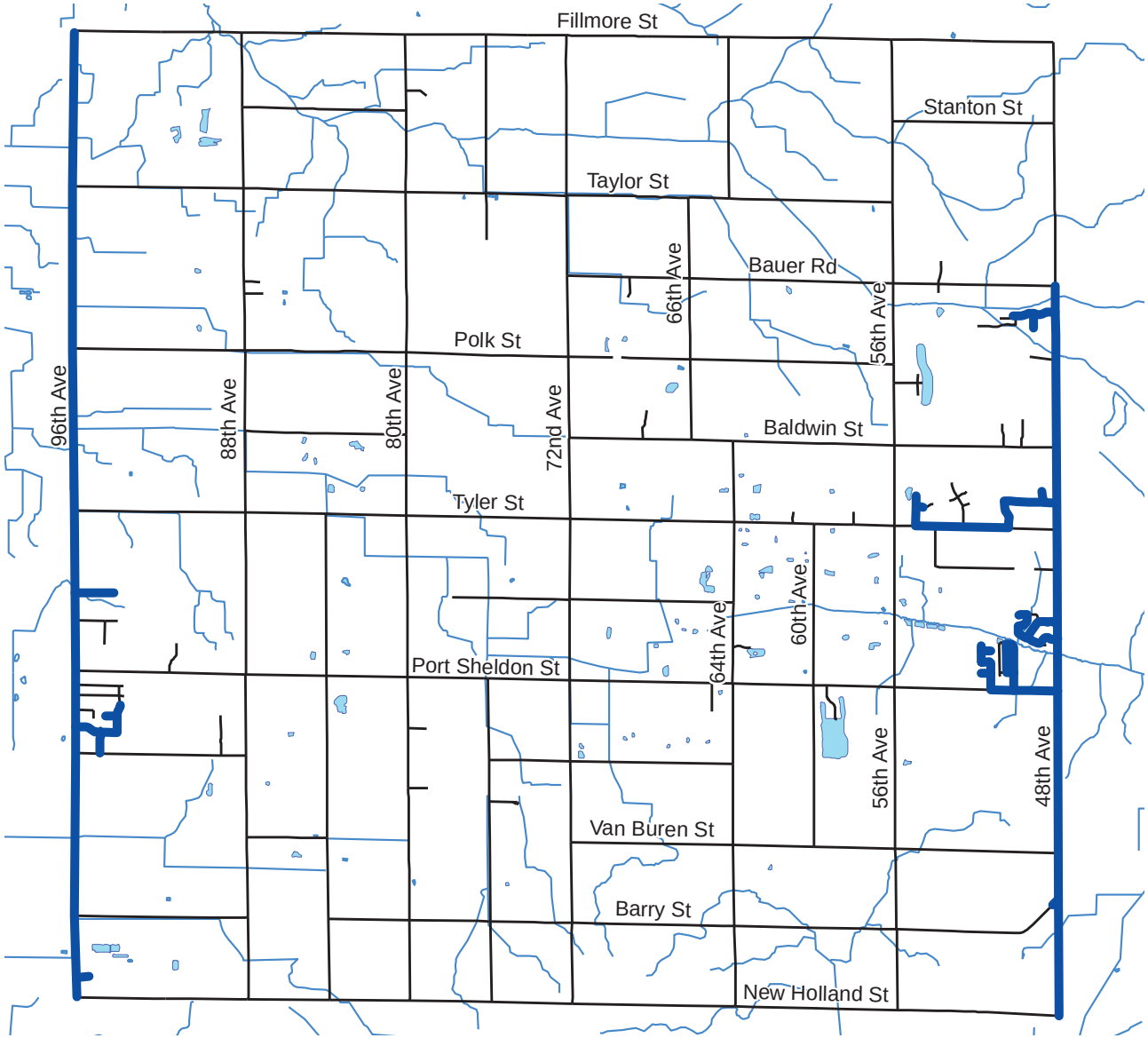
TRANSPORTATION

A safe and well-balanced transportation network is essential to the health of any jurisdiction, as it links activities and land uses within a community to those in the broader region. Transportation plays a critical role in determining the nature and intensity of land uses that occur throughout a community.

Blendon Township's land uses do not generate significant congestion on the level that many more populated communities experience; however, there is often congestion on some of the Township's primary roadways during peak travel times. Map 8 illustrates the Township's road network.

Map 7.

Watermains

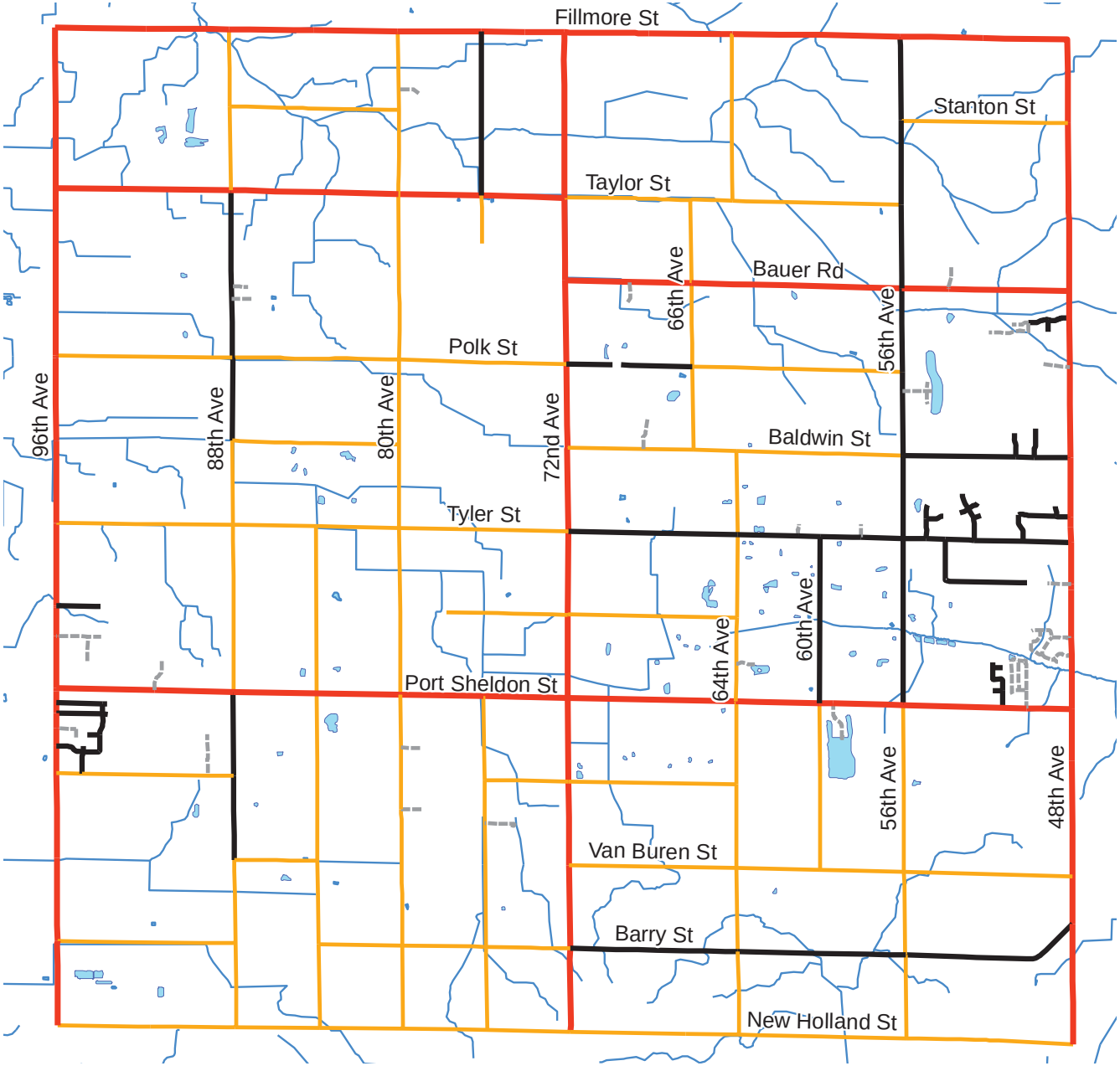


Note: the Grand Rapids and Wyoming watermains are not shown in this map

Map 8.

Transportation Network

- County Primary
- Paved Road
- Gravel Road
- Private Road

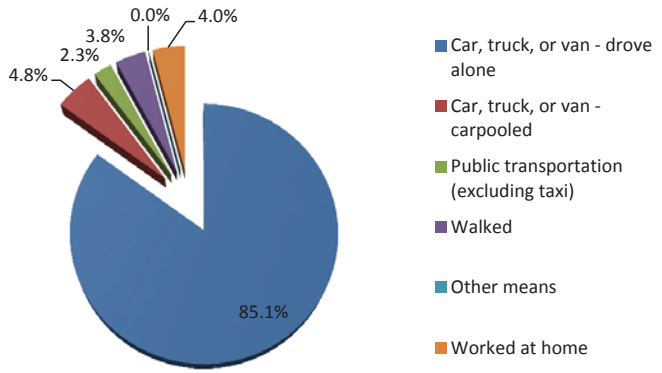


When addressing transportation issues, it is important to understand the characteristics of travel. The following provides a brief description of the characteristics of travel and traffic in Blendon Township.

COMMUTING TO WORK

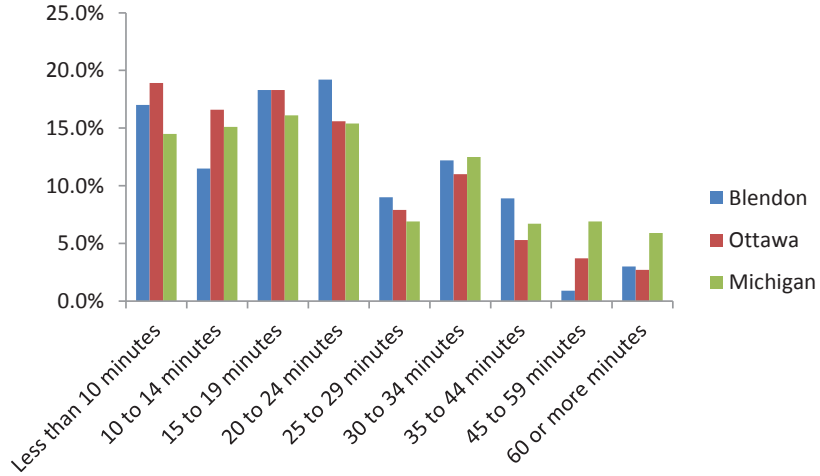
Blendon Township is predominantly a rural residential community with no identifiable urban core or center. While clusters of development in the Township do exist, none are at a notable density. Therefore, the mode of travel in the Township is generally by automobile to employment centers outside of the Township.

Figure 4-1. Modal Distribution - Commuting to Work



Modal distribution refers to the mode of travel, including automobile, public transportation, walking, or other means such as bicycling. Automobile travel is the most dominant form of transportation in Blendon Township as 90% of those commuting to work do so by car, truck or van. Broken down, 85% of automobile commuters drive alone while 5% carpool. The remaining 10% utilized public transportation, walked, used other means of transportation, or worked at home.

Figure 4-2. Travel Time to Work



Travel time to work is another important transportation factor. It is a key indicator of the relationship of land uses, principally the compactness of communities and the relationship between residences and places of employment or activity. According to the American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2009-2013), mean travel time to work for residents of Blendon Township is 20.8 minutes. This is comparable to the mean travel time to work for residents of Ottawa County as a whole (20.2).

Due to its rural nature, much of the traffic in the Township is generated during peak hours when residents are leaving for work and arriving home. When compared to Ottawa County and the State of Michigan, Blendon Township residents leave for work earlier in the morning, particularly between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 a.m.

Figure 4-3 . Time Leaving to go to Work

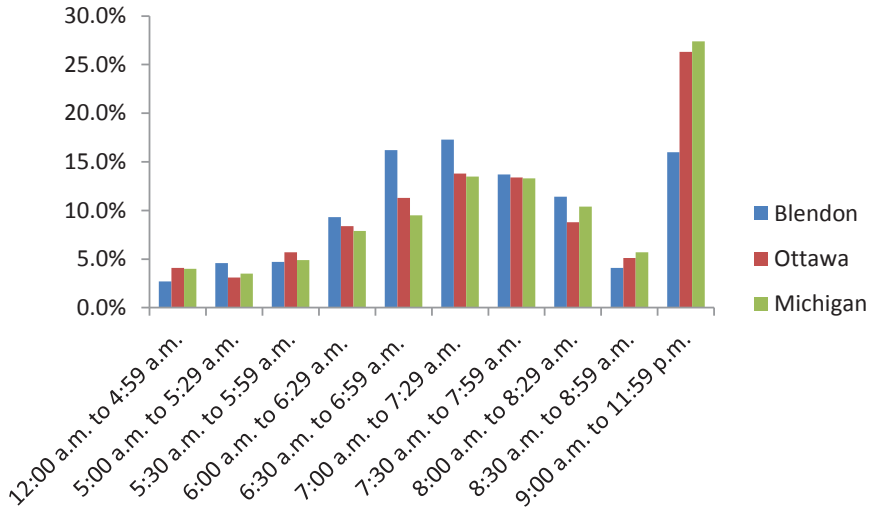


Table 4-1. Trip Generation by Land Use

	Trips in Peak Hour	Trips in Weekday
Residential (Per unit)		
Single Family	0.75 (AM)	9.57
Apartment	0.51 (AM)	6.72
Condominium	0.44 (AM)	5.86
Mobile Home	0.44 (AM)	4.99
Office (per 1,000 sq. ft. gross floor area)		
General Office Building	1.55 (AM)	11.01
Medical Office Building	2.48 (AM)	36.13
Commercial (per 1,000 sq. ft. gross floor area)		
Shopping Center	3.75 (PM)	42.92
Supermarket	10.45 (PM)	102.24
Quality Sit-down Restaurant	7.49 (PM)	89.95
Fast Food Restaurant (w/ drive through)	34.64 (PM)	496.12
Service Station (per pump)	13.86 (PM)	168.56
Convenience Store	52.41 (PM)	737.99
Drive-in Bank	45.74 (PM)	246.49
Industrial (per 1,000 sq. ft. gross floor area)		
Light Industrial	0.92 (AM)	6.97
Heavy Industrial	0.51 (AM)	1.50
Warehousing	0.45 (AM)	4.96

Note: A trip is a one-way movement, 10 trips = 5 in, 5 out

Source: Institute of Transportation Engineers, Trip Generation Manual, 7th Ed

ROADWAY CLASSIFICATIONS

Function, efficiency and safety of roadway movement in Blendon Township can be improved through the establishment of a classification of roads and planning and designing these facilities for their specific purpose. A functional system or hierarchy of roads provides for movement of traffic as well as access to specific sites. This hierarchy will range from major arterials such as Port Sheldon Street, which primarily provides for travel to areas outside of the Township, to local subdivision streets which serve to access individual homes.

This system defines the roles of each street, in terms of operational requirements; this is, in turn, translated into planning, management and physical design features. The relationship between functional classification and traffic mobility and land access is shown in Table 4-1, with the primary function of arterial roads being mobility and local roads primary function being access.

A majority of the Township's roads are currently unimproved, and Ottawa County is not able to fund the paving of these roads given its current obligations. In recent years, the Township has sought local funds to pave these roads due to their improved ride quality and reduced maintenance costs, but voters have declined a special assessment that would fund it. Despite the local reluctance to create an additional tax to fund streets, the Township leaders should continue to look for cost-effective methods to pave or otherwise improve these streets to improve access and promote safety.

TRAFFIC & VEHICLE TRIPS

Future traffic patterns within the road network will be closely related to specific land uses. Future traffic volumes will be dependent upon the amount, type, and intensity of development. The table below provides the estimated traffic generated by various land uses.

Twenty-four (24) hour two-way traffic counts help to draw a picture of traffic flows and trends within the Township.

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

The 2002 Ottawa County Non-motorized Pathways Study outlines several conceptual routes through the Township. While they are all connected, each has a separate segment. The first being along Taylor Street between 96th and 56th Avenues, 56th between Taylor and Bauer, Bauer between 56th and 48th, and 96th along the length of the Township. According to the Study, conceptual pathways are intended to connect Ottawa County's existing and planned pathways, as well as those under construction.

In recent years, accidents between vehicles and bicyclists and pedestrians have occurred in the Township and have underscored the need to consider all users of roads, aside from cars and trucks. While extensive improvements or the acquisition of property for non-motorized facilities may not be financially feasible, the Township should be very cognizant of these issues and work with the County or other regional planning agencies in non-motorized planning and development efforts.

Table 4-2. Selected Traffic Counts in Blendon Township

Road Name	Approach & Location	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
72nd Ave	S. of Fillmore		3385			3756		3663		3942		3686
72nd Ave	N. of Port Sheldon					4155						4344
72nd Ave	S. of Port Sheldon		4723			3570						3614
96th Ave	S. of Fillmore		4169			4534		4601		5362		
96th Ave	N. of Port Sheldon		5802				6534				9065	
96th Ave	S. of Port Sheldon		6537				7586				8430	
Bauer Rd	E. of 56th	1770					1921			2552		
Bauer Rd	E. of 72nd	1096					1303					
Port Sheldon	E. of 72nd		5796			5035		5336				
Port Sheldon	W. of 72nd		5800				5976				6106	
Port Sheldon	E. of 96th		5636				5949				6808	
Taylor St	W. of 72nd						1100				1155	
Taylor St	E. of 96th						1018				1133	

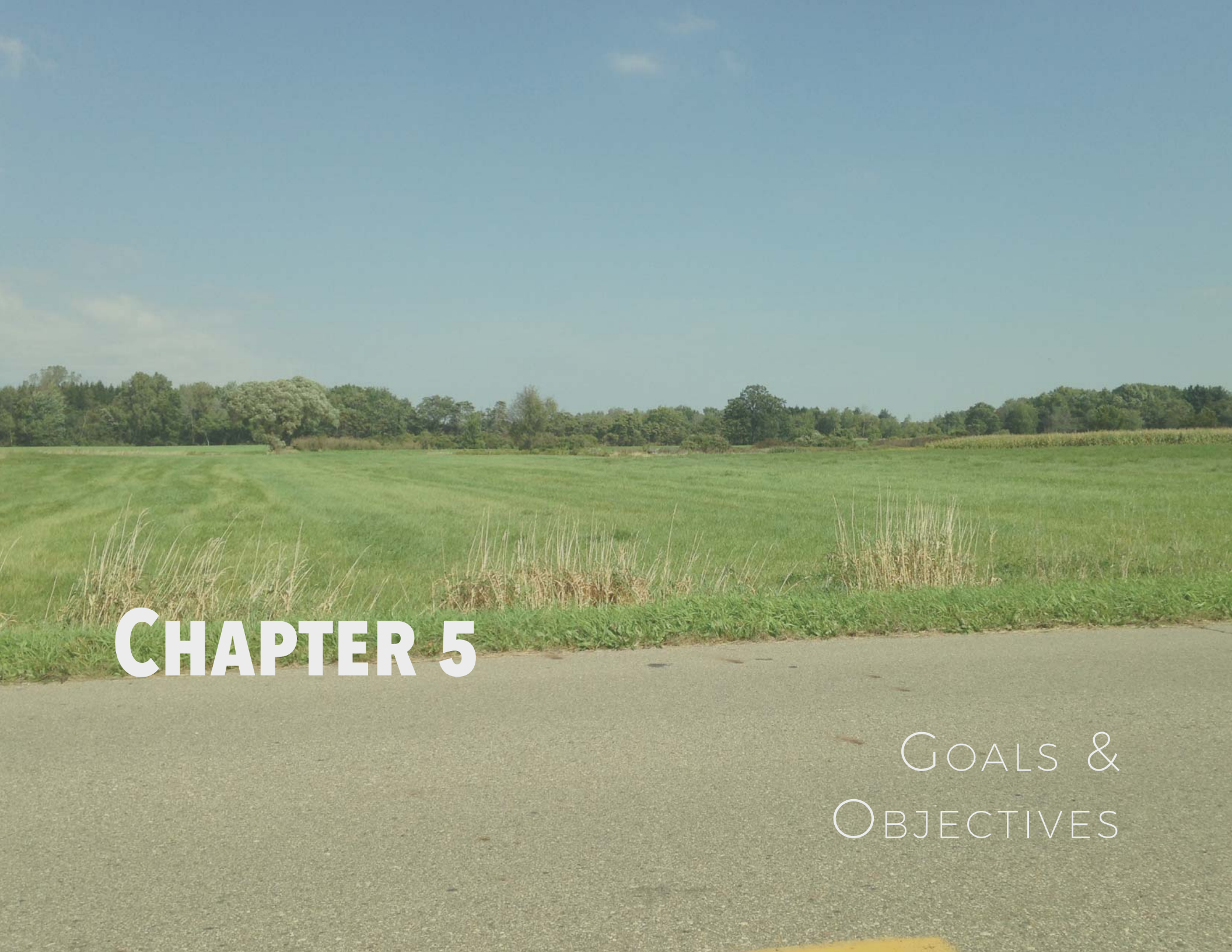
Source: Grand Valley Metropolitan Council

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Higher densities or additional subdivision type developments will eventually require water capacity increases as well as the expansion of sanitary sewer. The lack of a comprehensive sanitary sewer and water systems may slow the rate of growth in the Township. What growth does occur will likely be less intense when compared to what would be possible with utilities. While this can limit, to some degree, the intensity and amount of growth that occurs in areas without utilities, it can also result in inefficient uses of land that impact local finances. The Township should work to ensure that policies related to land use and utility extension are coordinated to ensure a predictable and logical pattens of growth.

The Township should also consider plans for land use in the context of transportation planning. When evaluating requests for new development, strong consideration should be given to the relationship to the suitability of the transportation system that will be affected by the development.

Blendon Township continues to be an attractive place for the construction of new single-family homes. While the majority of new development will most likely be low density single family residential accessed by roadways served by the automobile, it is important to plan for other modes of transportation as well. Bike traffic, particularly along paved collectors and arterials, may be better served with wide shoulders or separate bike paths.



Chapter 5

Goals & Objectives

Goals and Objective statements are the policy foundation for the Master Plan and they define the values and visions the Plan must support and achieve. They are founded on input from residents, business owners, and elected and appointed officials. As such, goals and objectives need to be reflective of that input, stated as clear as possible to provide the Township with the needed direction to inspire action.

GOAL 1

Blendon Township will protect and preserve large tracts of open space areas deemed to be vitally important to the community. These areas include active farmlands as well as greenhouses, open meadows and fields, amounting to at least 10,000 acres of mostly interconnected farmland and open spaces.

Objectives:

A. Revise and adjust the zoning ordinance to enhance flexibility and adaptation to traditional and modern agriculture and related activities, and remove related provisions that are deemed ineffective.

B. Participate in the Ottawa County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program (PDR) and actively assist landowners who wish to enroll in the program.

C. Explore the possibility for enacting a local transfer of development rights (TDR) program that would preserve farmland while encouraging higher development densities in specific, pre-determined areas where water and sewer utilities are available.

D. Conduct a detailed analysis of local farmland to identify agricultural properties in active use.

E. Educate agricultural landowners regarding the open space preservation opportunities currently available through the State Department of Agriculture, and actively assist landowners who decide to participate in these programs.

F. Encourage agricultural landowners to enroll in local open space easements.

G. Sponsor public outreach programs that would inform the public of the benefits of local farming and the methods available to preserve open spaces.

H. Consult with local farmers regularly in order to best meet the needs of those currently invested in agricultural property.

GOAL 2

Environmentally sensitive areas, such as large tracts of healthy and interconnected forestlands, wetlands, and stream corridors will be located throughout the community and carefully preserved for future generations.

Objectives:

A. Create an inventory of the key natural features in the Township to supplement similar work that has been done in the past. Such an inventory will become a critical regulatory and guidance resource in the protection of the Township's important natural features and character.

B. Develop and implement feasible approaches to acquire and/or protect important natural areas. Such approaches may include concerted efforts to raise funds from public and private sources, conservancies, and may include local sources as well.

C. Adjust the Zoning Ordinance to provide for open space development patterns as the preferred use by right with

traditional subdivision forms to be treated as special land uses.

D. Review and adjust zoning standards for all development to ensure that natural features are being protected and/or integrated into new development.

GOAL 3

Blendon Township will include a diverse range of housing densities, and high-quality styles, with an emphasis on greater density in those areas of the Township with the infrastructure to support it, specifically near 48th Avenue and in Borculo. The placement and extension of public water and sewer utilities will work in conjunction with zoning controls to guide and direct growth in the Township.

Objectives:

A. Review and adjust the Township's zoning and subdivision control ordinances to ensure that dense growth and development is being directed to areas with the infrastructure needed to support it.

B. Consider stronger land use controls to aid in the preservation of mature trees and wooded areas in new developments.

C. Review permitted and special land uses in all zoning districts to ensure that a range of housing options are being provided, ensuring to recognize current trends in housing needs. Regulations for other quasi-residential uses (home occupations, day care homes, foster care homes, etc) should also be reviewed to ensure consistency with Michigan statutes.

GOAL 4

Residential neighborhoods and open spaces or natural areas in the Township will be interconnected and contain provisions for all users. Pedestrian pathways, traffic calming measures, and recreational trails will be incorporated to promote walkability throughout the Township within a neighborhood setting. Specific focus will be placed on developing a non-motorized trail network within the Township that also connects to the larger regional context.

Objectives:

A. Develop and implement a Township-wide recreation plan to address both recreational needs and local non-motorized transportation needs.

B. Develop and implement standards to incorporate and maintain, where appropriate, pedestrian facilities and neighborhood gathering places such as sidewalks, community greens, or small-scale parks to foster social interaction among neighbors.

C. Work with the Ottawa County Road Commission to create bike lanes (via wide shoulders, sharrows or other means) along key road segments. Such lanes should coincide with road construction to maximize efficiency.

GOAL 5

In order to promote the character and identity of "place" in a relatively rural atmosphere, commercial development in will be attractively signed and well-landscaped, enabling viable businesses to flourish in unique and inviting settings.

Objectives:

A. Establish and implement standards for existing and new commercial and industrial developments to require and/or incentivize attractive development forms and architectural standards.

B. Encourage shared parking arrangements in adjacent developments, wherever feasible.

C. Consider adopting landscaping standards that encourage or require the preservation of mature trees to preserve natural character and tree cover.

GOAL 6

The Township will establish specific nodes for commercial development along Port Sheldon Street and 48th Avenue to encourage the clustering of development and preservation of a scenic corridor.

Objectives:

A. Review and amend zoning ordinance, if necessary, to ensure that desired commercial development is permitted in these commercial nodes, and ensure that any new development or redevelopment in these areas are consistent with the overall goals of the Plan.

B. Review criteria for deciding on zoning changes to ensure that commercial development does not spread beyond planned commercial development nodes.

C. Establish and implement standards reviewing commercial and industrial developments or redevelopment to require and/or incentivize attractive development forms. (duplicate)

GOAL 7

Planned industrial developments of modest size will be established in the areas where utilities and transportation infrastructure is available to support it.

Objectives:

A. Review and amend zoning ordinance, if necessary, to improve site plan and special land use review procedures and clarify zoning requirements.

B. Establish and implement standards for existing and new industrial developments to require and/or incentivize attractive development forms.

GOAL 8

The Township will institute measures to preserve the natural beauty of the community by requiring industrial uses to be screened from the road and adjacent properties with natural and designed landscape.

Objectives:

A. Amend zoning ordinance to clarify buffering requirements for commercial and industrial properties.

B. Consider adopting landscaping standards that encourage or require the preservation of mature trees to preserve natural character and tree cover. (duplicate)

GOAL 9

Extensions of sewer and water utilities within the Township will be planned to focus on the areas in and adjacent to Georgetown Township and Borculo, in order to promote greater density in these areas, and preserve the rural lifestyle in the remainder of the Township. Future expansions will be directed by a utilities policy that supports and compliments this plan, resulting in rational and sequential growth patterns.

Objectives:

A. Review zoning ordinance to ensure that the most intense uses of land are permitted where water and/or sanitary sewer service is available.

B. Review the Township's zoning and subdivision control ordinances to ensure that public water and sewer extensions are closely tied to and directed by land use policies in the Township.

C. Establish and periodically evaluate an urban growth boundary and prevent the expansion of utilities beyond the growth boundary until objective and pre-determined threshold requirements are met.

GOAL 10

The Township will remain sensitive to the growing concern regarding the groundwater supply in the Township and will ensure that all residents have a safe and plentiful potable water supply.

Objectives:

A. Continue working cooperatively with MSU and Ottawa County to evaluate the quality of groundwater in the Township and keep residents informed as to steps that can be taken to conserve and protect groundwater.

B. Evaluate local ordinances to ensure that intense development is served with public water and sanitary sewer facilities.

GOAL 11

Zoning standards and regulations in Blendon Township will be clear, fair, and broadly understood in the Township. All standards will be structured to support the goals of this plan while providing maximum flexibility to protect the property rights of landowners.

Objectives:

A. Prepare and adopt Zoning Ordinance revisions to implement the policies of the new Master Plan.

B. Develop programs to disseminate information on planning and zoning standards and procedures, including extensive use of the Township's website to expand and improve communication with citizens concerning land use and zoning issues.

C. Development easy-to-follow forms and procedures to ensure that zoning application processes are clear and easily understood.

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Chapter 6

Future Land Use

FUTURE LAND USE FRAMEWORK

Blendon Township has long been a predominately agricultural community. As the Grand Rapids metropolitan area has grown over the years, the Township has begun to transition to a more exurban and suburban community. Areas that were once productive farmlands near 48th Avenue have transitioned to low- and medium-density residential neighborhoods and throughout the Township, landowners have utilized land divisions to construct homes on large rural lots as agricultural operations have diminished or ceased.

Nevertheless, there still remains in the Township thousands of acres of productive, high quality farmlands. Blendon Township recognizes the importance of these farmlands, yet also realizes the need to accommodate a growing population. One of the central goals to this Master Plan is to accommodate and guide new growth in an orderly and sequential manner while preserving its scenic open spaces and farmlands over the long term.

In general terms, this Master Plan seeks to guide new development in a manner that minimizes many of the negative impacts of new development. This plan does not seek to encourage development that is insensitive to natural systems and open spaces. Further, the Township seeks to avoid situations where new development ultimately destroys the idyllic, peaceful setting that attracted the development in the first place.

In planned commercial areas, automobile-dominated "strip" commercial development is not desired; rather, small-scale, safe and inviting nodes of commercial and office development are preferred. The development of more intense residential and commercial nodes allows for more efficient uses of land and infrastructure. It can also lead to safer, walkable, more comfortable communities and neighborhoods.

This plan also recognizes some flexibility is appropriate between future land use designations. Where two designations share a common boundary, either designation may be appropriate; in these instances it will be critical for the Township to carefully evaluate the impacts of a development or proposed zoning change to ensure that any potential adverse impacts are mitigated.

The Future Land Use Map on page 48 has divided the Township into several future land use designations. Each designation on the map is described in supporting text under the corresponding heading in this Chapter.

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION AND RURAL RESIDENTIAL

The land designated as Open Space Preservation/Rural Residential contains the vast majority of the Township's land area. Generally speaking, areas within this designated are not intended for high-intensity development in the near future. Rather, it is anticipated that these lands will be used for large-lot (3 acres or more) residential uses and agricultural activities. While this plan certainly supports the continuation Township's existing farming operations, it recognizes that agricultural activities will cease on many properties and some degree of flexibility is desired.

For those agricultural property owners to wish to remain as such, this plan seeks to allow the flexibility for those landowners to participate in a County Purchase of Development Rights program to receive State and Federal funding, should such a program become available. This will allow the purchase of the development rights of private property owners via funds collected through grants, donations, bonds, special assessments, or general appropriations. Likewise, landowners will have the option to sell their development rights (calculated as the difference between the agricultural value of the land and the fair market value) to a public entity. Under part 362 of PA 451 (1994), this ensures the land will be preserved for agricultural use and open space in perpetuity, while, in exchange, landowners may continue to farm their own land, rent the land to another farmer, or sell the land for the remaining agricultural value.

In some instances, lands might not be conducive to farming activities due to topography, soil conditions, vegetation, and similar features. It is not the intent of this Plan to prohibit all residential development in these rural residential areas, as the Township may permit very low density single-family development in areas where farming is not a viable use. However, this plan generally discourages development of subdivisions and site condominiums in this designation unless these areas are very near public utilities (water and/or sewer) or other low- or medium density residential future land use designations. Scattered, disconnected "leap-frog" patterns of development are discouraged.

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

The Low Density Residential future land use designation has been established in recognition of the emerging suburban nature of the eastern portions of the Township. This district recognizes this characteristic and anticipates an orderly and sequential transition from a rural area to attractive and functional neighborhoods. This designation will normally be found where utilities are or may be available in the near term to enable densities of one to three units per acre. Similarly, this plan seeks to allow for a logical expansion of neighborhoods in Borculo.

While the primary land use within the Low Density Residential area will be single-family detached housing, some mix of uses may be appropriate to serve nearby population areas. Compatible uses may include institutional (e.g., schools and churches) or recreational uses. New developments are encouraged to utilize extensive landscaping and vegetation to create a visually appealing sense of entry and to preserve the rural character of the community. However, the bulk, scale and positioning of buildings must be carefully managed to preserve the aesthetics of a neighborhood create a comfortable atmosphere.

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

The Medium Density Residential designation is intended to accommodate residential options for people of varying ages and income levels formed in inviting communities. Development types will primarily consist of single-family detached homes, however duplexes may be expected as well, depending on the availability of utilities. Where public utilities are not available, the overall permitted density in this area should not exceed two units per acre, but density may be increased up to six units per acre if water and sanitary sewer utilities are available. These developments should be limited to locations within walking distance of commercial services and similar amenities, where the development would not significantly alter the character of the neighborhood. Planned developments that incorporate mixed uses, such as small-scale retail or services uses, are also contemplated in this designation.

Within this future land use designation, flexible conservation design mechanisms will be encouraged, as appropriate, to establish open space preserves and neighborhood recreational facilities. As in the low-density residential designation, institutional uses, churches, and recreational facilities may also be located in this designation, if carefully designed to be integrated into existing neighborhoods.

HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

This designation is intended primarily to accommodate single-family, two-family and multiple-family homes at a density of more than six units per acre. It also accommodates the mobile home park that is located within the township, which allows for traditional homes and mobile/manufactured homes within its boundaries. Development in this designation should be served by public water and sewer utilities and located near key transportation corridors. As with the medium-density designation, development should be located within walking distance of existing or planned commercial services and similar amenities, and development should be designed such that it would not significantly detract from the character of the neighborhood. Planned developments that incorporate mixed uses, such as small-scale retail or services uses, are also contemplated in this designation.

Within this designation, flexible conservation design mechanisms will be encouraged to establish open space preserves, recreational trails, and neighborhood recreational facilities.

LIMITED COMMERCIAL

The Limited Commercial future land use designation is intended to provide for employment, goods, and professional services that serve the broader community including and extending beyond Blendon Township. Currently, most commercial land uses are located along Port Sheldon Street near 48th and 96th Avenues, and along the 48th Avenue corridor. This plan seeks to strengthen these nodes of limited development by encouraging small-scale commercial and office uses. However, typical a typical suburban "strip" development is neither desired nor encouraged. Rather, commercial developments in this area should be safe, walkable, and easily accessible by both motorists and pedestrians.

When contemplating development in this designation, the Township should pay special attention to building architecture, form, and site design. Buildings should face the street, and parking should be located on the side or behind the building whenever feasible. Attractive landscaping and should be incorporated into new developments, and existing mature trees should be preserved whenever possible. Where appropriate, this plan encourages shared parking arrangements that reduce the overall number of parking spaces required. To reduce unnecessary automobile trips, new development should provide pathways to encourage non-motorized transportation and aid in developing a more complete non-motorized network throughout the community.

INDUSTRIAL

Industrial development provides employment opportunities for residents and investment in the community. While some industrial uses may generate objectionable off-site impacts, many existing industrial operations in the Township have not presented significant problems for neighboring uses and should be continued. This Master Plan does not envision new industrial areas, rather the existing industrial uses in the Township should be supported and strengthened.

If the Township's existing industrial park is to be expanded, special attention should be given to street connectivity, safety, and efficient designs. As new industrial development occurs in the Township, or as industrial uses are replaced or expanded, particular attention should be paid during the site plan review process to building frontages, front yard landscaping, traffic circulation and safety. Industrial buildings are expected to be attractive, well-maintained and landscaped in yards adjacent to the street and where a rear or side yard abuts a residential zoning district. Safety for workers and the public should also be strongly considered, and sites should be designed such that all areas are accessible to emergency services personnel, as well as vehicular and truck traffic.

MIXED USE AREAS

The Mixed Land Use designation is intended to permit and encourage a mixture of residential, office space, and commercial uses arranged in well-connected, walkable planned developments. In this Master Plan the Mixed Use designation seeks to create higher density activity areas in two specific locations, as opposed being to spread across the Township. Specifically, the areas where mixed uses are planned on the future Land use map are as follows:

Mixed Use #1 - Fillmore to Stanton Street along 48th Avenue

Mixed Use #1 looks to accommodate future development that will likely be experienced as growth from Grand Valley State University expands to the south and traffic on 48th Avenue continues to grow and intensify. This may increase demand for housing and recreational opportunities in northeast Blendon Township.

This mixed-use area #1 envisions low- to medium-density single-family residential development throughout most of the area, with possible small-scale nodes of low-intensity commercial uses and offices located along or near 48th Avenue near Fillmore. While this mixed use area is intended to accommodate a variety of low-density residential and commercial development types, high-density student housing is best developed in areas closer to GVSU's main campus and is not appropriate in this area.

Larger scale developments in this area should be comprehensively planned and well connected with roadways, bike paths, sidewalks and/or recreational trails. If water and sewer services are provided, development in this designation could reach net densities of four units per acre. Without water and sewer utilities, overall density should not exceed one or two units per acre.

Mixed Use #2 - Van Buren and Barry Streets along 48th Avenue

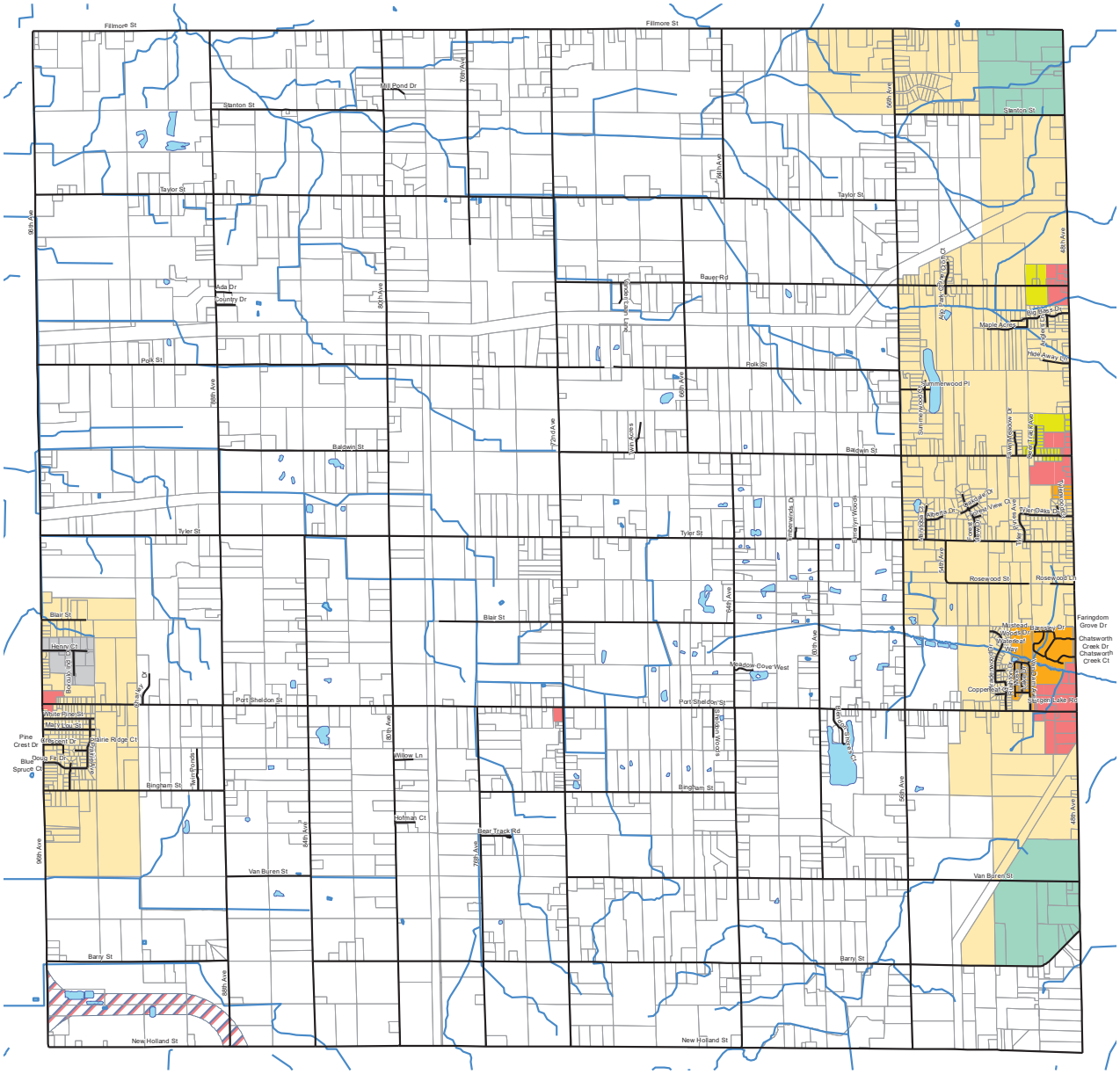
Mixed Use #2 is located across from Unity Christian High School, near 48th Avenue and Van Buren Street. The Township anticipates that as enrollment grows at the new school, there will be increased pressure for development close to it. As with mixed use area #1, it is anticipated that most of this mixed use area will consist of single-family residential homes, with possible low-intensity commercial uses located along 48th Avenue. Development in this area should be geared towards families and allow for residents to live, work, and play in a safe and walkable environment. Pedestrian connections should be located throughout developments with particular attention toward safe connections to Unity Christian, and bike lanes should be placed along key transportation corridors.

If water and sewer services are provided, development in this designation could reach about 4 units per acre. Without water and sewer utilities, overall density should not exceed one or two units per acre.

Map 9.

Future Land Use

- Open Space Preservation and Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Limited Commercial
- Mixed Use Areas
- Light Industrial
- Potential M-231 Bypass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Chatsworth Creek Dr
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Willow Ln
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Mill Pond Dr
Ada Dr
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White Pine St
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Lorraine Ridge Ct
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LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

As Ottawa County continues to grow, it is anticipated that several roadways in and around Blendon Township will be altered as well. The two key linkages that may have the most significant effect on the Township are 48th Avenue and the possible M-231 bypass.

48th Avenue comprises the Township's eastern boundary and terminates at Lake Michigan Drive, near Grand Valley State University, which is just two miles north of the Township's northern boundary. Residential development, particularly student housing, has grown rapidly along the 48th Avenue corridor in recent years, so there is potential for additional growth and traffic on 48th Avenue. It is likely, that an expansion of 48th Avenue will continue south into Blendon Township in the future. The Township should be mindful of this possibility and work cooperatively with the Road Commission to ensure that future projects are mindful of the Township Master Plan.

The M-231 bypass opened at the end of 2015 with a terminus at Lake Michigan Drive, so it has not yet extended in to Blendon Township. However, this new highway could increase traffic flow around the area of Borculo and affect traffic patterns in the Southwestern portion of the Township, to Holland and Zeeland. As with 48th Avenue growth, the Township should be mindful of future plans for M-231 and be proactive in guiding growth and development that could occur as a result of these changes.

UTILITIES

This Master Plan seeks to coordinate land use planning with planned extensions of its utilities in the area. New development should be connected to water and sewer facilities where feasible. As new developments are proposed, the developer should be required to bear the expense of new utility connections, and the Township should be mindful of the long-term financial impacts of such projects, such as operating and maintenance expenses.

Generally, utilities are likely to be kept relatively close the Township boundaries with Allendale an Georgetown Township. By concentrating growth to these areas in the east, it will help to maintain the quiet, rural setting of the Township as a whole by preserving the open spaces and farmland that comprises the geographic majority of the Township.

ZONING PLAN

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that Master Plans include a zoning plan to explain how the future land use categories in this Plan relate to the zoning districts incorporated in the Township's Zoning Ordinance. The following table relates the more general future land use categories with the zoning districts and discusses features and factors to be considered in reviewing requests to rezone lands in the Township consistent with this Plan.

In considering a request to rezone property in Blendon Township, it is critical that the Township consider the future land use map and the future land use descriptive narrative of this Plan. The succeeding table should be used to evaluate the degree to which the proposed rezoning is, or may be, consistent with this Plan together with an evaluation of the specific request. A rezoning decision should also consider whether the proposed site may be reasonably used as it is currently zoned, whether the proposed site is an appropriate location for any and all of the land uses that would be permitted within the requested zoning district, whether there may be other locations in the community that are better suited to accommodate such uses. Lastly, potential detrimental impact on the surrounding property that could result from the proposed rezoning should also be evaluated.

In all cases, this zoning plan shall be applied as a guideline for the Planning Commission, subject to the appropriate application of the discretionary authority permitted to the Planning Commission and Township Board by statute, case law, and good planning practice.

Nothing in this zoning plan should preclude the Planning Commission and Township Board from considering amendments to this Master Plan to better serve the public interests of the community.

Future Land Use Designation	Primary compatible zoning district	Potentially compatible zoning district	Remarks
Rural and Open Space Preservation	EAG and AG	R-1	Subdivisions and site condos should not be permitted in this designation.
Low Density Residential	R-1, R-2	R-3, C-1	R-3 zoning may be appropriate where infrastructure is available to support more intense development C-1 zoning may be appropriate for areas near other existing commercial establishments in the development of commercial nodes.
Medium Density Residential	R-2	R-3	R-3 zoning may be appropriate where infrastructure is available to support more intense development
High Density Residential	R-3	MHP	
Limited Commercial	C-1	OS	Uses should be sensitive to surrounding residential properties. Site design should accommodate all users, not just automobiles.
Industrial	LI	C-1	Commercial activities may also be appropriate, where feasible.

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Chapter 7

Implementation

For a Master Plan to truly impact growth and development, it must be followed and carried out. The Township must be proactive in order to accomplish the goals and objectives outlined in this Plan. Thus, the following strategies are established to bring this Master Plan to fruition. It is recognized that many strategies will be long-term in nature and that many entities in addition to Blendon Township will need to cooperate in order to fully implement the recommendations of this Plan.

The descriptions of strategies in this Plan are somewhat general to allow the Township the flexibility to prepare specific work assignments and prioritize each strategy as a part of its overall municipal operations. Therefore, it will be important for the Township Board, Planning Commission and staff to develop a detailed set of work assignments to set this plan in motion.

Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan rests with the Township Board, the Planning Commission, and Township staff. This is done through a number of methods that may include special studies or assignments, ordinances, programs and administrative procedures, which are described in this Chapter. Some of the implementation strategies will require significant investment. The strategies below are in no particular order; each strategy is important and contributes to achieving the overall vision expressed by the Plan.

ZONING ORDINANCE REVISIONS

The Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for this Plan, and a comprehensive evaluation of the Ordinance in light of the community's goals, objectives, and Future Land Use Plan is recommended. This will likely include a revision of the Zoning Map, as appropriate, to support the future land use map, and a revision of some zoning standards to better conform to the future land use designations in this Plan. In addition, the Ordinance should be evaluated for flexibility to address innovative development techniques and for its ability to control inefficient development patterns.

Specific examples include: evaluation of the zoning map designations when compared to the Future Land Use map, design standards in commercial and industrial districts, language to encourage open space preservation, walkability, landscaping standards, and others.

The bulk of the work in this strategy will be accomplished by the Planning Commission, although the Township Board will have final approving authority over any changes made to the Zoning Ordinance.

REVIEW SUBDIVISION AND SITE CONDOMINIUM REGULATIONS

Residential neighborhoods in Blendon Township have primarily been reviewed and considered as either subdivisions (plats) or site condominiums. Site condominium regulations are currently contained within the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 12A), while subdivision regulations are in a separate Subdivision Control Ordinance (Ordinance 96-48).

While much of the Subdivision Control Ordinance contains the review and approval process that is required by the State's Land Division Act, there are a number of design standards in Article VI that should be reviewed to ensure that requirements are consistent with policies and vision set forth by this Master Plan. Specific standards to be reviewed should include street design, utility extensions, pedestrian facilities and open space preservation, along with any others deemed appropriate.

The Site Condominium regulations within the Zoning Ordinance should similarly be reviewed to ensure that the plan's goals and policies are being accomplished, and are written clearly so that Township staff and developers and understand and administer the Ordinance.

COMMUNITY RECREATION PLAN

As the Township population continues to increase, demands for recreational opportunities will likely increase as well. At this time there appears to be little public support for the development of Township-owned parks and open spaces, but there seems to be strong support for the development of a non-motorized trail network throughout the Township connecting neighborhoods and connecting the Township to West Michigan's larger regional network of trails.

The development of a community recreation plan will make the Township eligible for funding assistance from the Michigan DNR Trust Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, and Passport Grants program. These grants are awarded each year and can help to offset the costs of developing park and recreational facilities in the Township.

Additionally, a number of bicycle-vehicle accidents have occurred in recent years and these types of conflicts may increase as the Township's population continues to grow. The development of a non-motorized trail network is also a public safety concern, so a non-motorized plan is suggested, either as a component of a Community Recreation Plan or as a separate planning effort.

A Non-Motorized Transportation Plan should evaluate potential routes for both bicycle and pedestrian uses, locations (i.e. widened shoulders or separated pathways) and include a robust public outreach effort to ensure that the plan is reflective of community needs and desires.

48TH AVENUE CORRIDOR PLAN

48th Avenue is a key corridor in Ottawa County and forms Blendon Township's eastern border. This corridor has been studied and is seen as an important connection in Ottawa County over the next twenty to thirty years. Ottawa County's North-South Corridor study of 2004 recommended, in the long term, the widening of this road to 5 lanes along most of Blendon Township, with a 4-lane boulevard north of Bauer Road to Lake Michigan Drive.

While the widening of 48th Avenue is not a near-term project, the Township should develop a land use plan for the 48th Avenue corridor to study and plan in greater detail future land uses, non-motorized connections, traffic management, utility extensions, and other topics as needed. Input from local property owners will be needed and cooperation with Georgetown Township should be sought.

NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY

A central theme this Master Plan is the idea of preserving natural beauty, open spaces and significant natural or cultural features within the community for the enjoyment of future generations. One key component for doing so is the preparation of an inventory of important natural features and the identification of the likely trends or conditions that may threaten them.

Significant natural features and valuable open spaces should be documented to help identify preservation priorities that may arise for private conservation and possible land acquisition.

Blendon Township is fortunate to have access to a significant amount of geographic information documented through Ottawa County GIS. Utilizing this data as a base, along with data from the previous Master Plan, the Township could develop a series of mapped exhibits to serve as a guide for future land use decisions or to encourage or incentivize private protection of natural features. Acquiring additional data will require support from an environmental consultant with expertise in Michigan wildlife and forestry systems and fresh water biology. The Township could partner with various environmental agencies, volunteers, and/or higher education institutions to assist in research, funding, and feature delineation.

The data that results from the inventory could be used by the Township Board and Planning Commission in making land use decisions that are sensitive to and preserve key areas identified in the inventory. In the interest of efficiency, inventory activity may also occur as private property owners submit site plans for review and consideration. Independent and professionally prepared natural features cataloging can be made a required component of site plan submittals for certain critical properties, such as those adjacent to lakes and streams, and the information provided could be considered for incorporation into this inventory.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND COMMUNICATION

The planning process is persistently changing with shifting social and economic concerns and unique land use challenges. Attitudes of residents toward growth, economic development, traffic, protection of natural resources, and other pertinent land use issues will likely differ from person to person depending on their personal circumstances. It is vitally important for Township officials to continue to seek educational opportunities for residents to inform them of the issues affecting their community.

An element of this strategy includes, first and foremost, the continued education of Township officials. In addition, the Township should endeavor to educate the public on current planning trends and the benefits of implementing the goals and objectives in this Plan. Every public meeting, including those hosted by the Planning Commission and Township Board, should be instructive for the public.

Further, Township officials should encourage the establishment of committees, to which some of the responsibilities for achieving the goals of this plan may be delegated. These committees could consist of elected or appointed officials, key community stakeholders or interested citizens and would focus on topics that are of great importance to the community, such as a 48th Avenue Committee or a Non-Motorized Pathways Committee.

The Township should also look for ways to provide residents with news and information regarding their Township government. Possibilities include enhancements to the Township's website, use of social media, improvements to the Township newsletter or developing a series of informational material that could be kept at the Township Hall.

COOPERATION WITH NEIGHBORING AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Some of the goals in this plan will not be achievable without the cooperation of the Township's neighboring municipalities. Georgetown Township and the County Road Commission should be engaged in discussions pertaining to the improvement 48th Avenue corridor. This corridor, along with local infrastructure, will likely serve as a primary catalyst for local economic development over the coming years, and the extent to which efforts to attract new business and residents can be coordinated may be helpful to the Township. Additionally, coordinating some site and design standards for zoning districts along this corridor will help to create a unified aesthetic, establishing a greater sense of place within the community.

Additionally, any utility extensions will have to be coordinated with the Georgetown Township, and possibly Allendale Township.

The Township should also work to form alliances with Ottawa County and other regional organizations to actively plan for the future of the community and to achieve the goals of this Plan. The County can be a valuable asset in developing policies to preserve farmland, open spaces and groundwater in the Township, and can be an important resource in educating the public about important issues in the community.

UTILITY STUDY

This task would involve conducting a study to inform future utility policies in Blendon Township. Currently, there are only a few areas of the Township served by water or sewer utilities, and this Master Plan recommends a study to determine how utilities will be extended, driven and guided by the Master Plan. Policies that direct the location of public water and sanitary sewer services are an important growth management mechanism, and are critical to the Township's goal of preserving valuable open spaces. A utility study could inform a new utility ordinance would outline standards with regards to wastewater and potable water, and may also include regulations concerning time of sale septic tank and drainfield inspections.