

**VILLAGE OF EMPIRE
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2024, AT 7 PM
EMPIRE TOWNSHIP HALL
10088 W. FRONT STREET**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 10/01/2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

TREASURER’S REPORT

ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

CORRESPONDENCE

PUBLIC COMMENT

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Update of Redevelopment Ready Communities Program
2. Recreation Plan Update

NEW BUSINESS

1. Begin Review of Master Plan
2. Elect Planning Commission Secretary due to Vacancy
3. Role of Planning Commission in Development

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PUBLIC COMMENT

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Persons with questions or individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services to effectively participate in the meeting should contact the Village of Empire Office at (231) 326-5466, PO Box 253, Empire, MI 49630, or at deputyclerk@villageofempire.com.

**EMPIRE VILLAGE PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2024**

The Village of Empire Planning Commission held a regular meeting on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, in the Empire Township Hall.

ROLL CALL – Bacon, Collins, Ford, Deering and Schous were present. Zoning Administrator Hall was absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Motion by Chase, supported by Ford to approve the September 3, 2024, regular meeting minutes as presented. AYES: 6, NO: 0. MOTION PASSED.

TREASURERS REPORT – Chase reported that as of August 31, 2024, 32% of the planning commission budget has been.

ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO THE AGENDA – None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST – None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS & CORRESPONDENCE – None.

ZONING ADMINISTRATORS REPORT – Schous read a communication from Hall regarding the RRC Public Participation Plan.

APPOINTMENT TO MASTER PLAN UPDATE WORKING GROUP – Margaret Ellibee moved and left a vacancy on this committee. **Motion by Ford, supported by Bacon to appoint Bob Chase to the Master Plan Update Working Group. AYES: 6, NO: 0. MOTION PASSED.**

MASTER PLAN UPDATE REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS – Bacon summarized core discussions held by the working group regarding the development of the draft plan and outlined the general steps required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act to adopt the new plan.

- 1) Planning commission to review, update and finalize the draft plan originally prepared by the Master Plan Working Group.
- 2) The proposed plan must be forwarded to Village Council for review and comment. Council must also approve the distribution of the proposed master plan to the necessary entities.
- 3) The planning commission secretary distributes the proposed plan for comment for a period of 63 days.
- 4) The planning commission must hold at least one public hearing after the comment period.
- 5) Planning commission votes to forward the proposed plan to council for adoption.

Commissioners also discussed the process of the Recreation Plan update. Acton will provide a summary of necessary steps required by the MDNR.

REDEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES (RRC) TASKS

1.4 Public Participation Plan - Commissioners reviewed the letter from Zoning Administrator Hall on the draft Public Participation Plan. The draft plan was sent to the MEDC community planner for comment and was returned with feedback. The next step is to finalize and adopt to meet the RRC Essentials requirement.

2.3 Concentrated Development and 2.4 Housing Diversity

To align with best practice, reference where in the zoning ordinance mixed use development is allowed by right. Schous referenced two places where this exists. Section 4.05.3 and 4.09.4 (Allowable Building Types, Mixed use commercial buildings, i.e., possessing commercial and residential uses).

3.4 Internal Review Process

Clearly documenting the internal review process provides predictability and consistency in the development review process, especially in the event of staff turnover (SOPs). The ZA process should be documented.

3.8 Access to Information

A guide to development and forms shall be available online. Roger City was offered as a strong example.

4.1 Recruitment Process

Having clear and accessible recruitment and appointment procedures attracts candidates. Board and commission applications are available online. Current application should be evaluated and updated to meet RRC requirements.

4.2 Expectations and Interests

The community sets expectations for board and commission positions. City of Escanaba was offered as a recommended example.

4.4 Bylaws

The ZBA needs to hold a meet to adopt bylaws.

4.6 Training Plan

Create a training plan that identifies training goals and expectations, funding sources, how training participants share outcomes with other officials/staff, how the community consistently encourages training, and is reviewed every 2 years.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – Bacon relayed that Village Council adopted the Zoning Ordinance amendment for signs. Schous mentioned the possibility of having a moratorium on temporary signs during election years.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS – Ford commented on an article written by Nora Kenney titled The Uglification of Michigan Lake Towns, dated September 5, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT – There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:31 pm.

Alacia Acton, Recording Secretary

These draft minutes will be considered for approval at the November 7, 2024, Village of Empire Planning Commission meeting.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE REPORT FOR VILLAGE OF EMPIRE

10/16/2024 08:24 AM

User: DSMITH

DB: Empire

PERIOD ENDING 09/30/2024

GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	2024-25		ACTIVITY FOR MONTH	AVAILABLE BALANCE	% BDC
		AMENDED BUDGET	YTD BALANCE 09/30/2024			
Fund 101 - GENERAL FUND						
101-721-701	WAGES - PLANNING COMMISSION	4,300.00	1,925.00	275.00	2,375.00	44.77
101-721-702	WAGES - PLANNING SECY	1,100.00	500.00	100.00	600.00	45.45
101-721-715	PR TAX EXP - COMM PLANNING	400.00	185.53	28.70	214.47	46.38
101-721-726	SUPPLIES	200.00	84.00	40.00	116.00	42.00
101-721-730	POSTAGE	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
101-721-821	PROFESSIONAL	4,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	0.00	100.00
101-721-826	LEGAL FEES	1,500.00	1,541.00	0.00	(41.00)	102.73
101-721-900	PRINT & PUB	500.00	249.35	0.00	250.65	49.87
101-721-950	SEMINARS	500.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.00
Net - Dept 721 - PLANNING COMMISSION		(12,600.00)	(8,484.88)	(4,443.70)	(4,115.12)	



Village of Empire
P.O. Box 253 | 11518 S LaCore Street
Empire, Michigan 49630-0253

ZA@VillageofEmpire.com

231-326-5353

ZONING REPORT
October 2024

This report is presented for review by the Village Council as an update on recent activities related to Planning and Zoning. Recently the ZA presented several comments for consideration by the Planning Commission for the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) project being worked on concurrently with the Master Plan update. The comments focused on public engagement and participation and the importance of distinguishing the difference.

Public engagement is such a vital necessity, especially during the planning phase(s) of any community. The Master Planning and RRC projects will certainly allow the Village of Empire to better prepared for the future. Keeping the public informed of potential development projects can be a challenging task. Developers expect and should be afforded a certain degree of confidentiality up until the time a formal application is received to be reviewed. It's then that the public can play a vital role in providing essential concerns, facts, expectations or queries to the reviewing body such as the Planning Commission. Information provided by the public can genuinely assist the Planning Commission in their findings and conclusions to support decisions.

While there has been little Land Use activity (again), calls continue to be received regarding potential development projects related to certain sites in the Village of Empire. Anywhere that you may see a For-Sale sign in the Front Street / Gateway Corridor District, I've probably handled an inquiry asking about the possible uses permitted. Some calls have asked about commercial uses, residential uses, mixed uses, and density allowances (number of units per acre). IF and WHEN an application is received I will do my best to share as much information as possible that can be made available to the public. The Zoning Administrator often encourages pre-application conferences and neighborhood outreach by the developer when appropriate.

At your October work session you were presented an email from Mika Meyers dated September 20, 2024 that was in response to a general inquiry of mine related to the sign ordinance and enforcement --- brought about by a past experience that came dangerously close to ending up in federal court. This is sometimes where risk management are better asked on the front end. It is NOT my desire to put off any type of enforcement activity, but rather to ensure that we are consistent in our practices. *(see next page)*

Many of you are aware that I serve multiple municipalities. In Wexford County I have a joint Planning Commission, where I am the Planning and Zoning Director administering zoning for ten Townships. One might imagine that we receive our share of concerns / complaints about junk, blight, signs, zoning etc. After 9 years in existence, I was finally forced to recommend an Ordinance Enforcement and Compliance Policy. (http://www.wexfordjpc.org/uploads/9/7/9/9/97992734/wjpc_comp_policy.pdf) The need arose because everyone thought that their complaint was more deserving of attention than any other. There, just as with the Village, we must also manage our resources; *people, hours, money* ...

I have experienced this 'season' of signs (*trying to remain content neutral*) going on twenty-five years now. Elections, without fail, seem to bring out a mass quantity of signs in every zoning district that more often than not, do NOT comply with your sign ordinances in effect at the time. I will certainly follow the well thought out direction of the Council should they decide to pursue any type of enforcement.

Cherry Republic has been issued their Land Use permit contingent upon the combination of the subject properties, compliance with the required landscaping imposed by the Planning Commission, compliance with other various sections of the ZO related to lighting, signage etc.

For your review,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Robert (Bob) Hall
Zoning Administrator

RRC Essentials – Items that need attention

- 1.4 Public Participation Plan
- 2.3 Concentrated Development
- 2.4 Housing Diversity
- 3.4 Internal Review Process
- 3.8 Access to Information
- 4.1 Recruitment Process
- 4.2 Expectations & Interests
- 4.4 Bylaws
- 4.6 Training Plan

For best practices and examples of what is needed:

www.miplace.org/programs/redevelopment-ready-communities/rrc-library/

Village of Empire Deputy Clerk

From: Village of Empire Deputy Clerk <deputyclerk@villageofempire.com>
Sent: Friday, October 4, 2024 12:27 PM
To: Bob Chase; Carey Ford (careyford@1791.com); Deputy Clerk ; John Collins; Maggie Bacon (m.bacon@villageofempire.com); Peter Schous (pjschous@yahoo.com); Phil Deering
Subject: Recreation Plan Steps - Documentation and Organization Needed
Attachments: 1259_001.pdf; DNR Guidelines for Parks and Recreation Plans.pdf; Glen Arbor Rec Plan Survey.pdf

Planning Commission,

The first attachment is a printout of the state portal that includes boxes that need to be checked off for the DNR to approve our rec plan. This includes documentation of early input prior to working on the draft, 30-day comment period after draft is written, and public hearing.

Along with the public participation part, we should verify that the plan also checks the boxes for Plan Content. It may, but should be verified, because the DNR will. **The plan needs to be adopted by Village Council by February 1st to apply for grants in 2025.**

While the state does not require us to start from scratch, they do require that early input component. If there are any specific questions for the state regarding these steps or what does or does not qualify, our rep is very helpful: Charamy Cleary, 517-599-4565 or ClearyC1@Michigan.gov

From the DNR Guidelines document:

Early Public Input

During early public input, a typical public meeting format is discouraged. Methods such as surveys, questionnaires, workshops, stakeholder meetings, focus groups, or visioning sessions are encouraged because they facilitate more public participation from all segments of the population. Describe the early public input method(s) you used. Explain whether the responses received represented the whole community, groups that do not typically attend public meetings, the potential users for special-use areas (for example, skate parks) and those who may be greatly affected by the recreation and open-space opportunities considered. This is an ideal time to include input from other recreation providers, private and public partners and regional organizations.

30-Day Public Review Period

Once the draft plan has been completed, residents must be provided with a well-publicized opportunity of adequate length, at least 30 days, to review and comment on the plan before it is officially adopted. Select convenient locations for reviewing the draft plan, such as your public library, town hall and municipal website. Document and describe the methods you used to notify people of the opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan before it was officially adopted. The notification can be accomplished by a variety of means, including methods typically used to make announcements by the governing body, such as a published notice or posting at the government office or on the municipal website, etc. The announcement must include the date of posting and must be certified by the publisher. Physical postings must be date-certified by the clerk. The notice should provide instructions to the public on how to submit comments to the plan via email or other methods. In addition, provide a summary of any comments received and how they were used to modify the plan.

I hope this helps. The process is straightforward, as it is spelled out in the Guidelines document. While I think Maggie has an updated working copy of the rec plan from our work earlier this year, the early public input part needs to be addressed and documented. **Did any of the master plan input sessions have a recreational component?** I am also re-forwarding the survey that GA did for their plan in 2022. Much like our master plan process, they sent out a survey and had 2 input sessions.



Plan Information & Certification

- * Denotes required fields
- Fill out the required fields in each section of this form.
- Click **Save** to save change or **Next Form** to save change and move on to the next form.
- All forms in the recreation plan document must be complete without errors prior to submitting.
- Change the status of the Recreation Plan to submit for DNR review.
- After recreation plan approval, DNR recreation grant applications can be submitted by the organization.
- All organizations included in a recreation plan must submit the plan and supporting documentation individually in MiGrants and receive DNR approval in order to submit a DNR recreation grant application.

[New Note](#) | [Print](#) | [Save](#)

All recreation plans are required to meet the content and local approval standards as outlined in the Guidelines for the Development of Community Park and Recreation Plans by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Plans must be certified by the Authorized Official (AO) and be submitted to the DNR through MiGrants. Plans may be submitted any time of the year but no later than February 1 of the year the organization is applying for DNR recreation grants.

PLAN INFORMATION

Name of plan:

0 of 100

example: 2020-2025 Village of Carr Recreation Plan

Do you intend to apply in the upcoming recreation application cycle? *

Yes

No

List the communities and school districts covered under the plan

County

Month & Year Adopted

0 of 50

0 of 20

0 of 50

0 of 20



NOTE: For multi-jurisdictional plans, each local unit of government's highest governing body must pass a resolution adopting the plan, and each local unit of government must submit the plan and supporting documentation individually. School districts do not need to submit the plan for DNR approval unless they qualify and intend to apply for recreation grants.

Checklist

Please check each box to certify that the listed information is included in the final, adopted plan. If the DNR Approval box next to an item is not checked, see the DN Comments box below for details.

[Next Form >](#)

Plan Content

DNR Approval

Community Description

Administrative Structure

Includes: Roles of commission or advisory board, organization chart, budget, funding sources, roles of volunteers, relationship with school districts, public agencies, or private organizations



Recreation Authorities and Trailway Commissions Only:

Includes: Description of relationship between the authority and the recreation department for the participating communities and articles of incorporation

Recreation Inventory

Includes: Description of the methods used to conduct the inventory, an inventory of all community-owned parks & recreation facilities, location maps, accessibility assessment, grant assisted site status report, waterways inventory (if applicable)

Natural Resource Inventory (Optional)

Description of the Planning Process

Description of the Public Input Process

Goals & Objectives

Action Program

Supporting Documentation

Post-Completion Self Certification Report(s)

Early input before draft plan is written

Notice of draft plan for 30 days of public comment

Notice of the public hearing

Minutes from public hearing

Minutes from the meeting to pass a resolution of adoption

Certified Resolution

Transmittal Letters to the county and regional planning agencies

Navigate to the **Plan & Supporting Documentation** section to upload a copy of the plan and supporting documents.

Is this for Harbor? Yes No

OVERALL CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the recreation plan for Village of Empire includes the required content, as indicated above and set forth by the DNR.*

Authorized Official: _____ **Date:** _____

PLAN APPROVAL - DNR Only

Start Date:

End Date:



DRAFT



Village of Empire

2025 Master Plan Update

An Addendum to the
2019 Village of Empire Master Plan

Prepared By:

Renovare Development
Place Strategies, Inc.
Placecraft

Prepared For:

Village Council
Planning Commission



Acknowledgments

Village Council

- Sue Palmer, President
- Maggie Bacon, Trustee
- Linda Chase, Trustee
- March Dye, Trustee
- Tom Rademacher, Trustee
- Margaret Walton, Trustee
- Chris Webb, Trustee

Planning Commission

- Peter Schous, Chair
- John Collins, Vice Chair
- Bob Chase, Treasurer
- Phil Deering
- Margaret Ellibee
- Carey Ford
- Maggie Bacon, Ex-Officio

Master Plan Update Working Group

- Maggie Bacon
- Bob Chase
- Margaret Ellibee
- Carey Ford
- Margaret Walton
- Chris Webb

Village Staff

- Derith Smith, Clerk
- Alacia Acton, Deputy Clerk
- John Friend, DPW Superintendent

Special thanks to the following for providing refreshments and meeting space during the development of this plan.

Grocer's Daughter Chocolate

St. Philip Neri Church

Glen Lake Community Library

Empire Township

2025 Master Plan Update Team

Jill Ferrari

Renovare Development

Shannon Morgan

Renovare Development

Dan Jankowski

Renovare Development

Brad Lonberger, AIA, AICP, CNU-A

Place Strategies, Inc.

Elise Loud, AICP

Placecraft



Chapter 1 - Introduction

Purpose of this Master Plan Update

The lifespan of a standard master plan is 20-30 years, but as demographics change, it is recommended to update a master plan every five years. This allows the community to weigh in on several factors:

- Validity of the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles;
- Accomplishments of the previous five years in implementing the goals and outcomes previously set;
- Realign specific goals and outcomes to match any vision or direction changes; and
- Supporting continued updates and maintenance of short-term and medium-term goals and outcomes.

This 2025 Master Plan Update is intended to supplement the current 2019 Master Plan and its subsequent updates, including the:

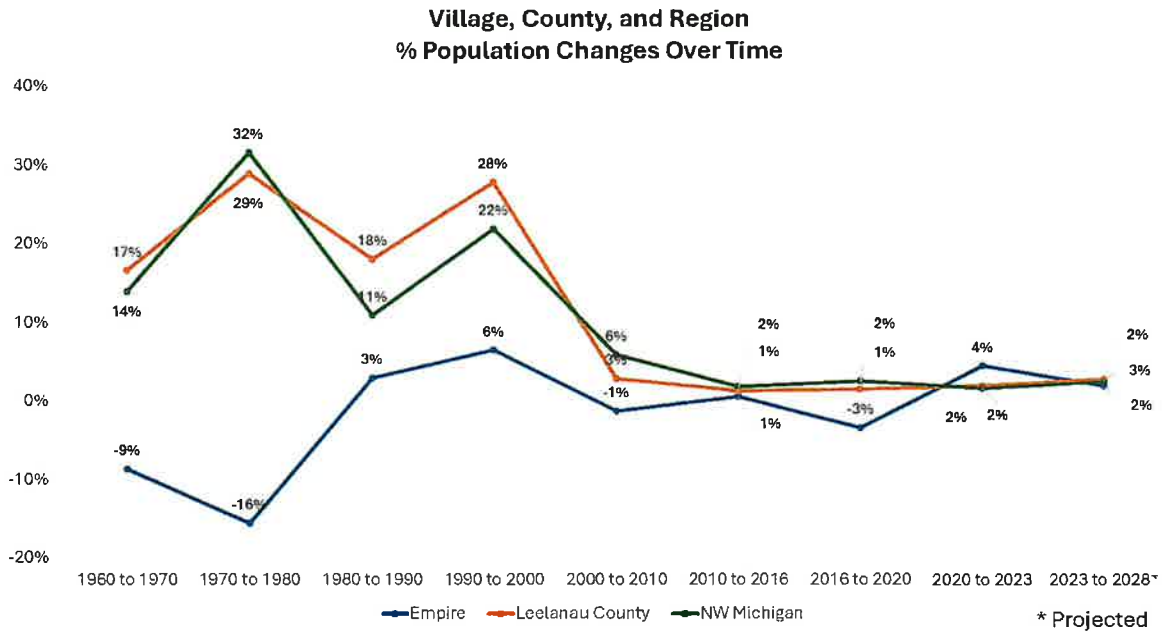
- 2019 Village of Empire Master Plan
- 2020 Master Plan Amendment – Addendum A (Coastal Community Resiliency)
- 2022 Empire Transportation Plan
- 2018 Village of Empire Recreation Plan

With these existing plans in consideration, the current master plan expands and adjusts the 2019 Master Plan while also validating various parts within the plan. It can be inferred that all sections of the 2019 Master Plan are accepted in this 2025 Master Plan Update, except where noted within. Where conflicts arise, the item in question should refer to the new guiding principles to assess whether the problem or consideration meets the threshold of the criteria set within this plan.

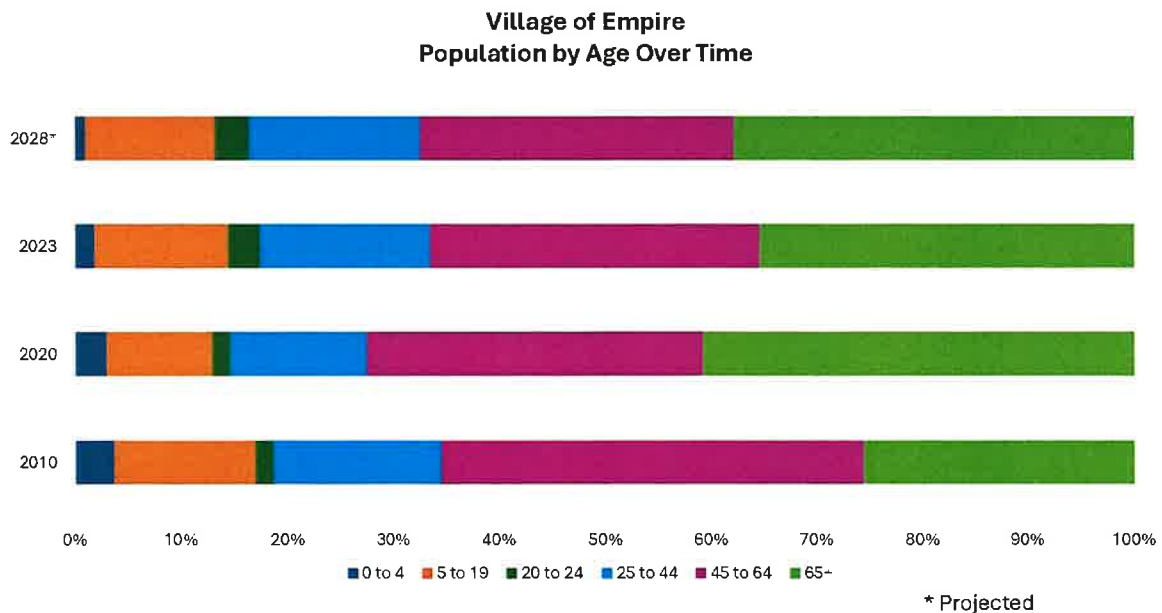


Village of Empire Overview

Current Demographics

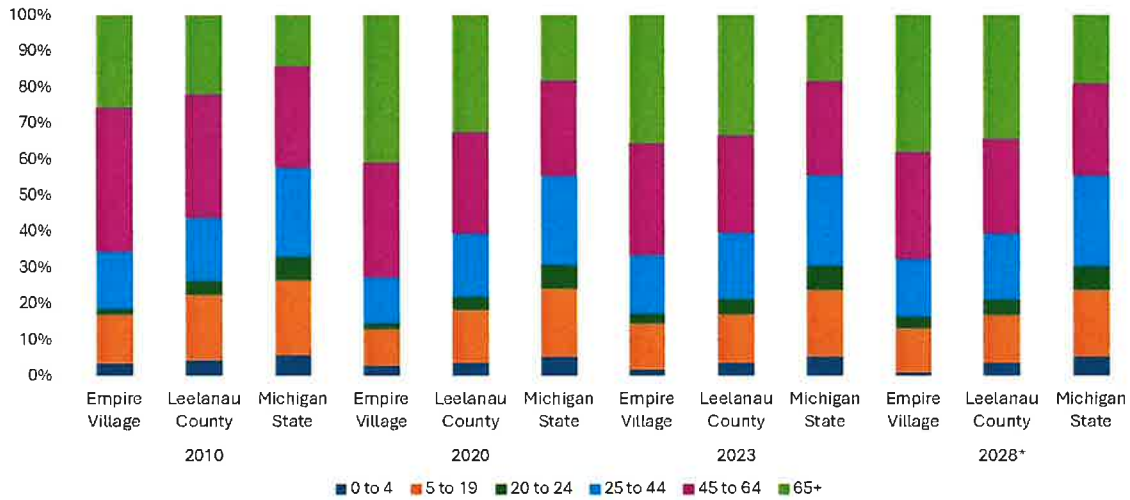


Population: The total population remained steady for the most part from 2016 to 2023 for Empire Village, increasing by 1%, while the population increased by 3% for Leelanau County and 4% for the NW Michigan Market. This is close to the percentage changes between 2000 and 2010 and from 2010 to 2020, although population change for Empire Village decreased slightly during those time periods.





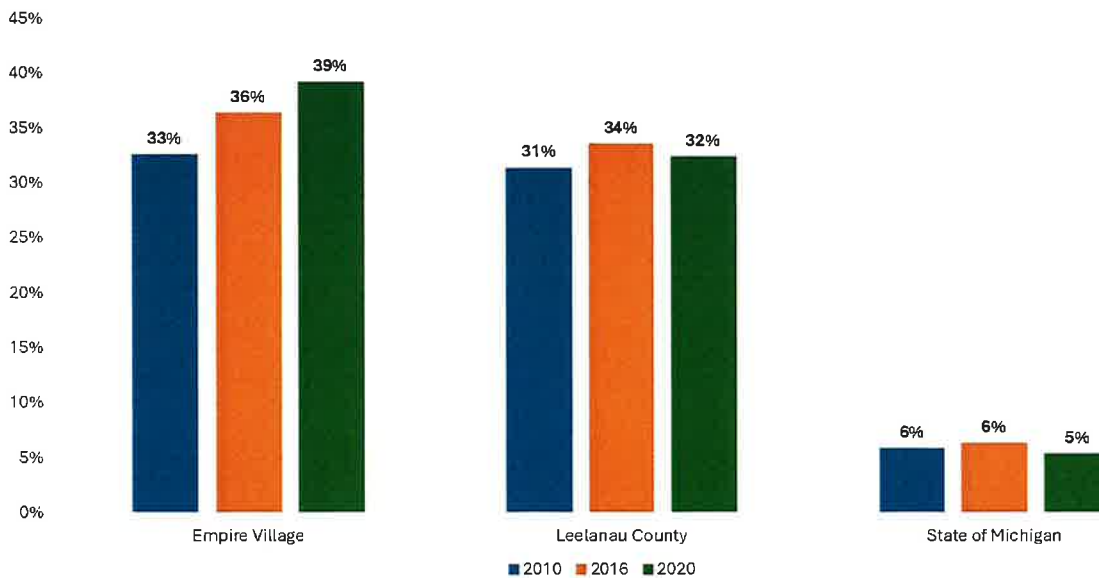
Village, County, and State Population By Age Over Time



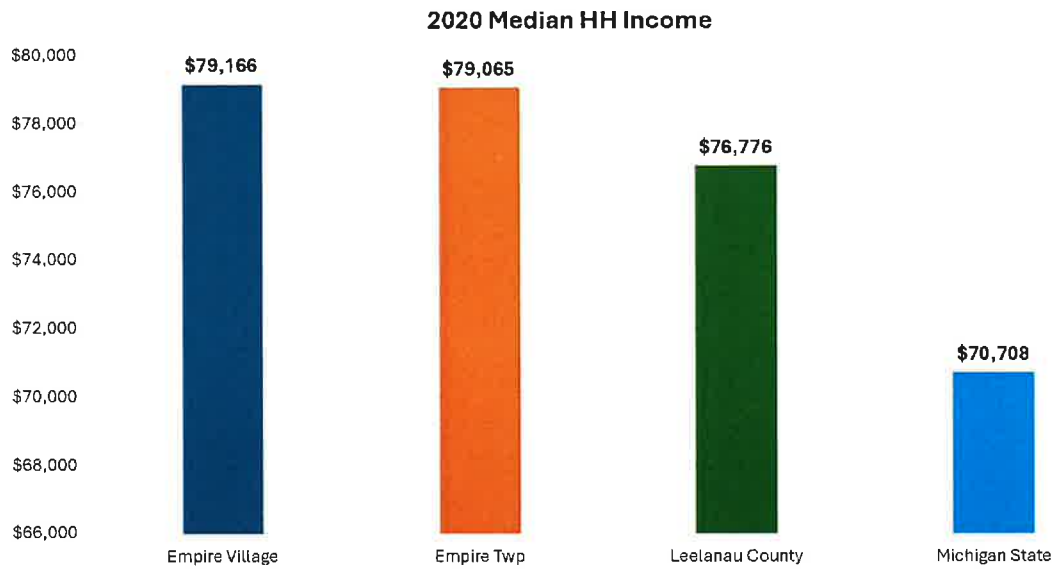
* Projected

Age Distribution: The age groups 45 to 64 and 65+ remained the top age groups in 2016 and 2023. In 2016, these combined age groups represented 72% of the total population, while in 2023, they represented 66%. So, younger age (younger than 45) groups did gain overall within that time at the expense of fewer people in the 45 to 64 age group, which decreased by 21%. Gaining was the 0 to 19 age group, increasing 72%, and the 25 to 44 age group, increasing 56%. The 20 to 24 age group decreased by 62%. The 65+ age group increased by 19%.

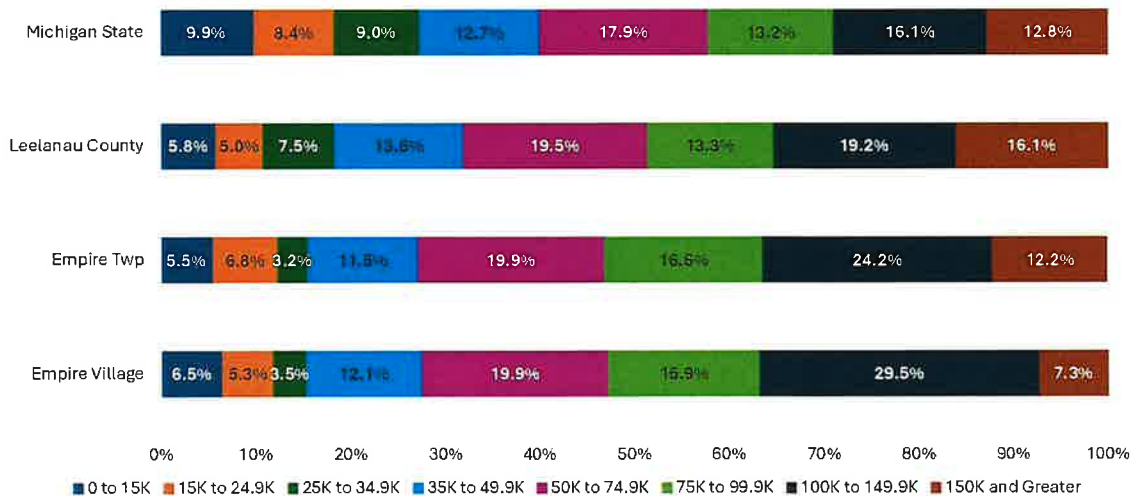
Seasonal Housing Percentage



Housing Units: The total number of housing units in Empire Village changed little from 2016 to 2020. Seasonal housing units increased 8%.



Village, Township, County, and State 2020 Household Income Comparison



Income Distribution: There have been significant changes in income distribution from 2016 to 2020. Those in the less than \$35,000 income range decreased 63%. The \$50,000 to \$99,999 income range increased significantly, up 117%, and the \$150,000 plus range increased 152%. Median household income increased 65% from \$48,125 to \$79,166.

Considerations

As properties and businesses transition to new owners, their ideas of making the Village a thriving place for their business or development will inspire them to create moments of change in the community. Coming together and embracing new things and ways of thinking is difficult for many communities, especially in small, rural communities like the Village of Empire. It will be essential



to use the vision and the guiding principles to weigh the questions and the conversations around allowing new uses, new businesses, and new residents to thrive in the Village of Empire.

Growth and change come to many communities; how these communities manage and guide the change is wholly within their grasp and can make a difference in achieving your long-term vision as a community. Holding to your core values and utilizing your assets will help others see the value and authentic character of the Village.

Vision Statement and Guiding Principles

Two strategic components form the foundation of the overall policy direction for the 2025 Master Plan Update. The **core values** are the key attributes that have built the unique Village of Empire we see today. Citizens and stakeholders expressed these values as the drivers that support their community and should be preserved as the Village grows. These values are summarized in the engagement section of this plan.

The **guiding principles** were developed as the overarching elements describing and categorizing the core values. These provide the structural support and guidance for the vision described in the plan. The core values and the guiding principles filter through the analysis, recommendations, and implementation strategies featured in this plan. Overall, the core values and guiding principles represent the traditional structure of this 2025 Master Plan Update.

Vision Statement (adapted from the 2019 Master Plan)

The Village of Empire provides and preserves a quality of life for its residents and businesses that reflects the Village’s unique natural environment and small village atmosphere while reflecting our history and small village values and creating a Village that is economically, environmentally, and culturally sustainable.

Guiding Principles



Manage Growth

Promote meaningful and authentic development that supports the Empire lifestyle and quality of life.

Make Connections

Provide safe, accessible, and welcoming connections between neighborhoods and attractions.

Support Natural Areas

Conserve, maintain, and create public open spaces and be good stewards of the land and water in Empire.



Chapter 2 - Community Engagement

Overview of the Engagement Process

The Village of Empire invited community feedback to inform the Master Plan update via one community questionnaire, two community open houses, and multiple working meetings between June and September 2024, the “high” season for Village residents and visitor traffic.

These activities are described in more detail below.

Public Meetings

The Master Plan update was overseen by a working group composed of Village Council and Planning Commission members. This team met biweekly, open to the public, to review and guide project deliverables, including the community questionnaire and draft plan content.

Economic Development Work Sessions

The Village Planning Commission and Village Council held three open-to-the-public work sessions to discuss economic development strategies in the Village of Empire.

Community Open Houses

The Village hosted two open houses on August 1 and 29 at St. Neri Phillip Church and Township Hall, respectively.

The first open house (August 1) focused on high-level aspects of the Master Plan, including feedback related to values and vision, experiences, existing land uses, and mobility and connectivity in the Village. Approximately 60 people attended. Local stakeholders, including Housing North, the Sleeping Bear Gateways Council, the National Park Service, local businesses, and community groups were encouraged to attend. Attendees enjoyed delicious chocolate chip cookies generously donated by local chocolatier Grocer’s Daughter.

The second open house (August 29) offered a deeper analysis of these topics, including a revised vision and guiding principles, specific development opportunities in the Village, missing land uses, and trail and street mobility improvements. Approximately 30 people attended.

Community Questionnaire

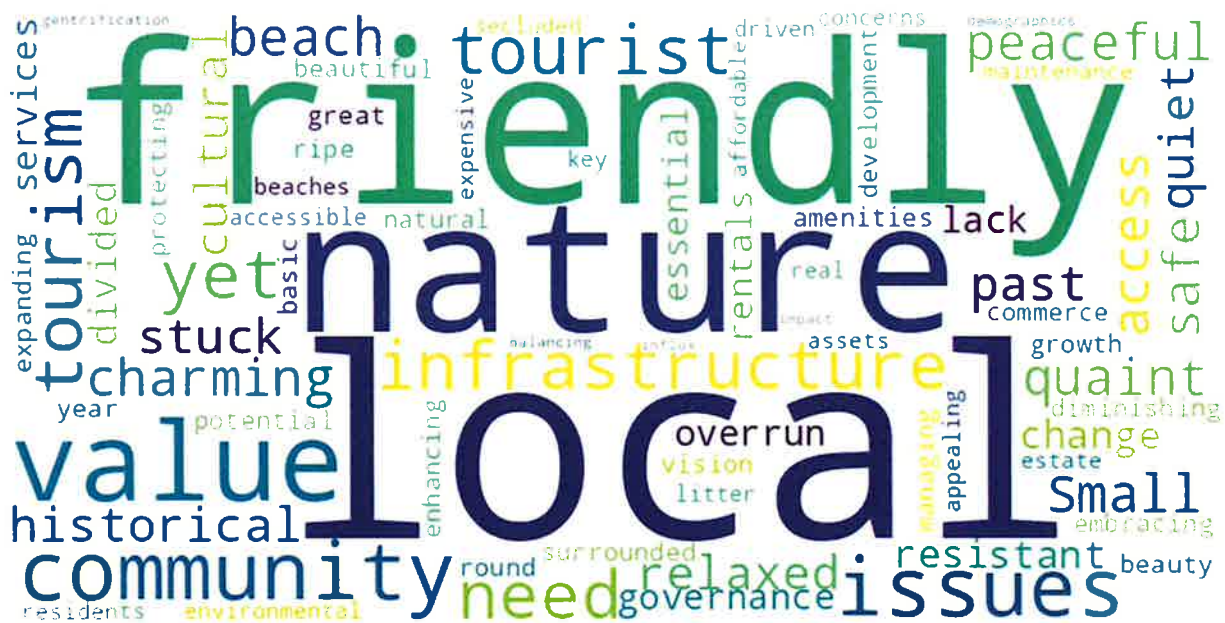
The Village facilitated a community questionnaire from July 15 to August 11. The questionnaire was available electronically (Survey Monkey), or printed copies were available at the Village offices and library. In total, 355 people participated in the questionnaire. 300 took it online, and 55 completed a paper survey.



Summary of Feedback

Throughout the engagement activities, participants shared their ideas about the Village of Empire today and its potential future. Below are word clouds that illustrate some of the shared sentiments from all engagement activities.

Core Values: What words/phrases come to mind when you think of the Village of Empire today?



Positive/Optimistic Sentiments:

- **Appreciation for Beauty and Charm:** Many responses express love for Empire's natural beauty, quaint charm, and peaceful environment. Phrases like "beautiful," "quaint," "charming," and "peaceful" are frequently used, reflecting a strong affection for the village's aesthetics and atmosphere.
- **Community Pride:** Several responses highlight the village's friendly and welcoming nature, with mentions of a strong sense of community and safety. Phrases like "friendly," "home," and "caring people" indicate positive feelings towards the local community.
- **Love for the Quiet Off-Season:** Residents enjoy the quieter, less busy times of the year, finding peace and tranquility in the village outside the tourist season.

Concerned/Apprehensive Sentiments:

- **Divisiveness and Resistance to Change:** Many responses mention divisions within the community, especially regarding growth and development. Terms like "divided," "resistant to change," and "stuck in the past" suggest concerns about the village's ability to adapt to new circumstances.
- **Worries About Governance and Management:** There is concern about the effectiveness of the village leadership, with terms like "mismanaged," "dysfunctional," and "lack of



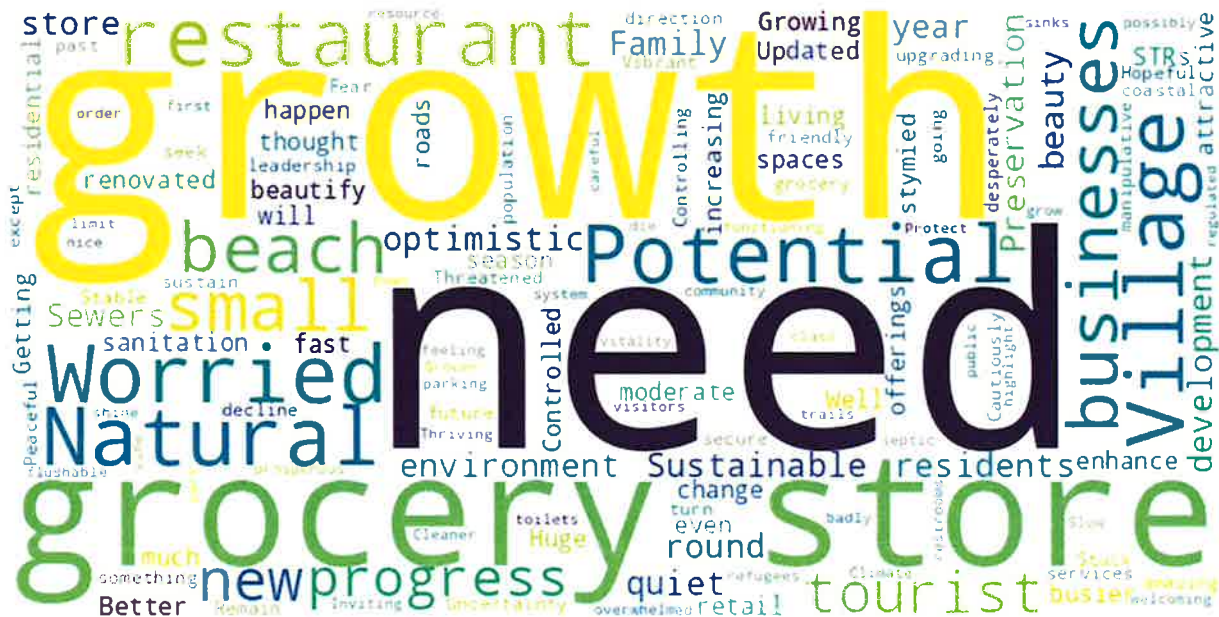
vision" appearing in several responses. This reflects a lack of confidence in the current direction of local governance.

- **Challenges with Infrastructure and Services:** Many responses point to issues with infrastructure, such as the need for better sanitation, a grocery store, and improved public spaces. There’s a sense that the village is struggling to meet the needs of both residents and tourists.

Mixed Sentiments:

- **Tourism Impact:** Tourism is seen as both a positive and a negative influence. While it brings economic benefits and vibrancy during the summer, it also creates challenges such as overcrowding and strain on local resources. This leads to a mix of appreciation and frustration.
- **Potential for Growth:** Some responses express cautious optimism about the village's potential for growth, but this is often tempered by concerns about maintaining the village's character and avoiding overdevelopment.

Vision: What words/phrases come to mind when you think of the Village of Empire in the Future?



Positive Sentiments:

- **Optimism for Growth:** Many responses express excitement about the potential for new businesses, especially restaurants and a grocery store, and see these developments as opportunities for the village to thrive.
- **Hope for Thoughtful Development:** Some residents hope that the village will grow in a way that maintains its charm while enhancing its infrastructure and amenities. They desire controlled, sustainable growth.



- **Community Spirit:** Several responses reflect a strong sense of community and a desire to keep the village friendly, welcoming, and vibrant.

Concerned and Apprehensive Sentiments:

- **Worries About Overdevelopment:** Many responses express concern that the village may grow too quickly or in ways that could harm its character. There is a fear that Empire might lose its quaint, peaceful nature due to commercialization and the influence of wealthier newcomers. There is worry about the impact of short-term rentals and increasing tourism.
- **Resistance to Change:** Some residents are apprehensive about changes, especially those that might alter the Village's traditional, small-town feel.
- **Uncertainty:** Many responses convey uncertainty about the Village's future, reflecting concerns about infrastructure, housing affordability, and leadership direction.

Community Priorities

Throughout both open houses and numerous public meetings, there was repeated discussion about the opportunity to attract families with children to Empire to ensure the Village continues to be a vibrant and thriving place and because the Village already provides such a safe, beautiful, and welcoming place to live. The lack of childcare and housing for all income levels were recognized as barriers to young people/families living in Empire year-round. Participating community members expressed a desire for managed and thoughtful growth to ensure Empire's vibrancy without sacrificing its small-town charm and natural setting.

No matter age or demographics, participants prioritized natural resources, wastewater infrastructure, economic development, and pedestrian safety/connectivity as the most important topics for the Master Plan. High levels of support were shared for maintaining existing capital assets, like streets, parks, sidewalks, and materials management. Low levels of support were shared for adding new roads and parking infrastructure.

Numerous community members noted the welcoming, friendly, and connected nature of the Empire community as a huge asset to the Village. They expressed frustration at how important topics, like short-term rentals and wastewater infrastructure, are perceived to have stalled due to divisive and non-productive discussions among village leadership. Participants expressed hope for a more collaborative, transparent, and productive deliberation process on these and future topics in the village.

Appendix A (Questionnaire Summary), Appendix B (Questionnaire Full Results), and Appendix C (Open House Summary and Results) contain full reports detailing the results from the open houses and questionnaire.

Integration of Community Input

Community engagement is an essential tool to gauge a community's population's attitudes, experiences, values, and goals. It offers an important vantage to the people who live, work, play, visit, and learn in a place. However, this perspective is only one tool in the Village of Empire's toolbox as it updates its Master Plan. The Village must also consider community data, previous and



current studies, planning best practices, Village capacity, and local and regional context as it charts a path forward for Empire via the Master Plan.

The community input collected during this process will inform the recommendations of the updated Master Plan. Based on engagement to date, below are key recommendations for the Village to consider.

- **Preserve Small-Town Character by Focusing on Thoughtful Growth:** Update zoning and land-use policies to control the scale and type of development, ensuring it aligns with the village's character. Secure land for critical infrastructure, like a future wastewater system.
- **Develop a Plan for Local Amenities:** Support the viability of food retail in Empire by exploring and implementing appropriate incentives under the village's purview.
- **Regulate Short-Term Rentals:** Implement or update regulations on short-term rentals, including possible caps, licensing, and enforcement measures.
- **Enhance Infrastructure and Public Safety:** Install or improve sidewalks and crosswalks, particularly in high-traffic areas, and reevaluate traffic patterns, especially near the post office.
- **Improve Communication and Transparency:** Regularly reference and utilize the Master Plan and other guiding documents in decision-making, and increase transparency by making council discussions and survey results more easily accessible online.
- **Address Environmental and Aesthetic Concerns:** Develop and enforce policies to manage blighted structures and promote environmentally friendly practices, such as dark-sky lighting and native plantings.
- **Foster Community Engagement:** Continue holding regular community meetings and events, and develop volunteer-driven initiatives that involve residents in beautification and community-building projects.



Chapter 3 - Recommendations

The following recommendations are guidance built from the community engagement, review of the current master plan, and within the new guiding principles outlined in this 2025 Master Plan Update. Though these recommendations are guidance, they lead the community towards realizing the ultimate vision of the community, derived from the community engagement in 2019 and 2025 plans.

Land Use

Residential Development

Housing was a strong element of the 2019 Master Plan. With the current statewide and regional efforts to promote housing availability and the general cost of maintaining, developing, and supporting housing in Michigan and Leelanau County, this topic must be addressed in this 2025 Master Plan Update. Though there is a small growth factor, based on demographic trends, there is a consensus that if housing is to be available for those who want to live in the Village of Empire full-time, then there needs to be housing options for those households. Opportunities for seniors to downsize, young families to settle affordably, and multi-generational housing options were all brought up through the engagement process.

A deeper dive into economic strategies is covered later in the economic development section. Still, within the land use section, some guiding elements can support housing for full-time residents and support the overall well-being of those who choose to live in the Village of Empire, either part-time or full-time, including:

- Housing should allow for multi-generational options, including “granny flats” or Accessory Dwelling Units compatible in design and scale with the primary home on the lot and within the allowance that septic systems permit.
- Allow developments that meet community needs, as defined by the Village of Empire's economic development policy, to access state, regional, and local economic incentives.
- Where appropriate infrastructure supports, allow for options of missing middle housing to increase efficiency in construction and provide more housing options.





- Review development standards (zoning and subdivision) to check for conflicts that cause higher home development costs to reduce the overall construction cost while maintaining quality.
- Develop a strategy for Short-Term Rentals, specifically focusing on a compromise that provides a path forward that allows oversight for a regulated program for homeowners wishing to use their property for this service to the community. Use a third-party service to facilitate the conversations and craft subsequent regulations.

Master Plan Update: Housing Options in Empire

Which housing types are appropriate for various families in Empire? Place a dot in the various squares

	Accessory Dwelling Unit (Granny Flat)	Large Single Family Home	Single-Family Detached (Small Lot Home)	Single-Family Attached (Townhome)	Multi-Unit Home (duplex, triplex, quadplex)	Cottage Court
Young Adults	●●●●●		●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●
Young Families		●●●●●	●●●●●		●●●●●	●●●●●
Established Families		●●●●●	●●●●●		●●●●●	●●●●●
Empty Nesters	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●
Multi-Gen Families	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●		●●●●●	
Seniors	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●



This is a board activity from a public open house event. It identifies the housing types selected during the first open house as potential housing types in Empire and then asks attendees to determine which household types would benefit from the housing type displayed.

Master Plan Update: Catalytic Area - Housing Development Study

Design Process: Explore an undeveloped site in the Village to depict the difference between standard lot development with individual wastewater systems and conservation development with community wastewater systems.



Catalytic Area 1: Housing study on a single lot. This analysis compares a standard lot subdivision, using similar housing types and lot sizes around the property, and a conservation subdivision, focusing on preserving public open space and allowing higher-density housing to achieve a variety of housing types and purchase prices.

(For illustrative purposes only to understand how the goals of this plan could be implemented at this location.)

Commercial and Mixed-Use Areas

Commercial and mixed-use developments are organized within the historic core along Front Street and the commercial corridor along M-22. These areas continue to be envisioned as walkable commercial corridors in the future but retain some infrastructure needs to support walkability, as explained further in the Mobility section of this plan update.

Key issues revolve around parking for attractions rather than businesses, walkability between uses and across highways, septic systems to support commercial growth, and noise conflicts between businesses and adjacent residences.

With any consolidated commercial area, whether a historic commercial district or a new development, conflicts are traditionally sorted out through nuisance rules; things like noise, traffic patterns, parking intrusion, and lighting are often on topic. As we look to resolve these conflicts, there's often a knee-jerk reaction to banning certain activities (e.g., evening music performances, parking on public streets, building large buffer walls, etc.), which inherently do a disservice to commercial establishments looking to grow business.

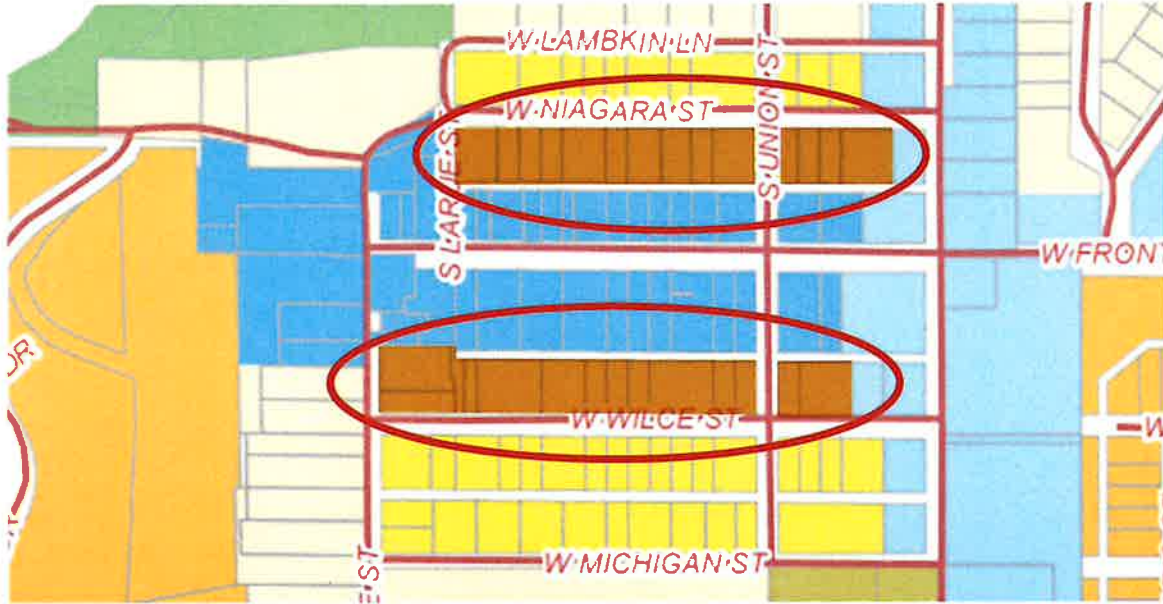
As the Village in Empire looks towards resolving conflicts, it will be better to search for means in the built environment that help alleviate these conflicts. Examples such as assembling transition areas for a natural activity transition between commercial and single-family could be permitted. This heavier residential or light neighborhood commercial activity type is often called missing middle development. This missing middle zone might include townhomes, small apartments, live-work, or



corner stores that serve the local neighborhoods but are natural intensity transitions from commercial activity. This would not prohibit single-family uses; instead, it would establish the half-block on either side of Front Street as a transition area between the quieter single-family neighborhoods and the activity of restaurants and commercials on Front Street.

Though there is no immediate resolution to problems right now, this would have some resolution as homeownership changes hands and new housing types fill the neighborhood. This is the natural evolution of old towns in the United States before zoning, and by promoting a transition of density from the core commercial areas to the neighborhoods, the Village would be using the built environment to control many nuisance issues.

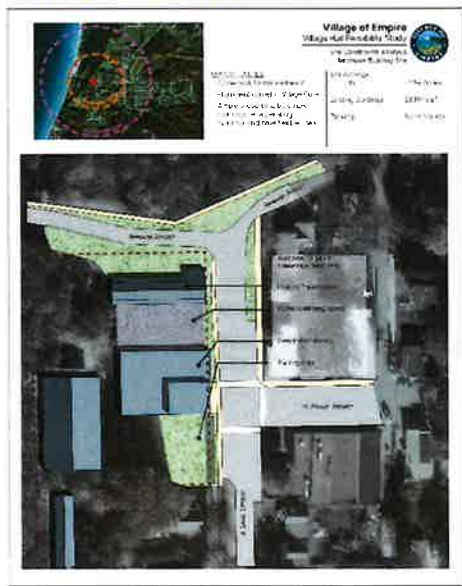
- Identify Front Street and M-22 as the commercial/mixed-use corridors in the Village of Empire, promoting walkable and context-sensitive streets, buildings, and infrastructure designs.
- By identifying the corridors as commercial/mixed-use, there is no prohibition on single-family dwellings as they exist today; however, new developments will not be able to be single-family dwellings unless they are mixed-use or live-work type buildings.
- Identify the half blocks on either side of Front Street and M-22 as residential transition areas that permit missing middle housing infill and light commercial options to help buffer the higher-intensity commercial on Front Street and M-22.
- Focus the parking policy on Front Street and M-22 to support commercial establishments and users of those commercial spaces rather than long-term visitor parking.
- Consider using incentives to support private or district wastewater systems to serve commercial establishments. To grow as a restaurant or to have food and beverage establishments settle into existing buildings, there will need to be some ability to have an expanded wastewater system (public or private). In an effort of caution, by not allowing these systems to exist or providing incentive support, many older and potentially historic buildings could get demolished to make way for larger private septic systems. Preventing this from happening will be a large part of maintaining the current character of the Village, especially along Front Street.



A zoning map with highlighted areas that could serve as a residential transition for missing middle development patterns, as explained in the commercial/mixed-use land use section.

Master Plan Update: Catalytic Area - Hardware Store and Livery Stable

Site Constraints



Design Process: Explore a way to preserve an historical asset and also provide public gather space, walkability, and a mix of uses to support activities close to the beach and along Front Street.



- A** Historic Preservation: Preserve historic barn and stable livery. Opportunity for entertainment and event center, ground floor retail to support beach events and summer programming.
- B** Placemaking: introduce places to "linger longer" and a comfortable atmosphere.
- C** Walkable Streets: Extension of Front Street into the development and inclusion of a linear park to enhance the view looking down Front Street from M 22.
- D** Mixed-Use: Options for introducing hospitality or housing (for-sale or rental) that are a part of the Front Street experience.
- E** Parking: Utilize on street parking to minimize the need for parking lots, creating a safe street environment for pedestrians, and fully accessible for emergency services.

Catalytic Area 2: Commercial, Mixed-Use study on a historic property site. This analysis looked at the opportunity to expand Front Street's built form with a mixed-use development. It supported the preservation of the stables' livery at the corner of Lake and Niagara. This incorporated many items the team received during the engagement: walkability, gathering space, opportunities for small businesses, event space, townhomes, and apartment housing. *(For illustrative purposes only to understand how the goals of this plan could be implemented at this location.)*



Public Facilities

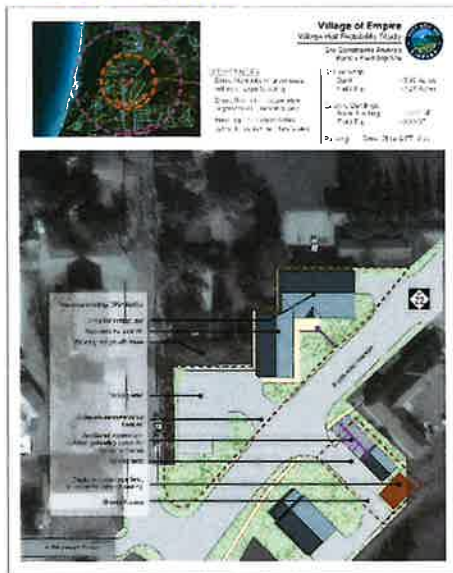
Recent investments in the property along M-22 for new Village offices have begun to establish a civic area with public facilities and amenities in the village. With the new offices near the Village's entry on M-22, there is an opportunity to develop a gateway area from the north that could also be done on M-72 and the south entrance to the Village on M-22. These improvements are heavily focused on placemaking and streetscaping to enhance community pride and establish the core of the Village as visitors enter the area.

The following elements will support the development of a civic center in this location and illustrate the streetscaping and wayfinding systems that will highlight the Village along these thoroughfares and distinguish it from areas outside of the Village. Additional details are provided in the Mobility Section of this master plan update.

- Support connectivity between neighborhoods and public facilities, specifically with improvements to walking and biking. Provide crossings along M-22 that allow walkable access to the new Village Offices building.
- Provide varying sizes of gathering spaces within Village properties that permit them. This provides event spaces for varying sizes of groups and can be rented out during the year for small events.
- Establish gateway moments along M-22 and M-72 that incorporate wayfinding, streetscaping, and placemaking initiatives as described in the Mobility Section of this plan.

Master Plan Update: Catalytic Area - Public Works + Village Office Area

Site Constraints



Design Process: Explore the options for connectivity between Public Works building, Village Office (Old Field Trip) and other public assets in the area. Promote walkability and additional parking.



- A** **Walkability:** Improve sidewalks while also providing priority to pedestrians by clearing up intersections and driveways that are too wide.
- B** **Walkability:** Provide crosswalks at key intersections to promote safe and pedestrian crossings.
- C** **Wayfinding:** Introduce a Downtown Gateway monument to signify entry into pedestrian realm.
- D** **Organize Parking and Public Space:** Prioritize the separation of pedestrian areas and vehicle areas. PROVIDE CROSS ACCESS BETWEEN LOTS to minimize vehicular conflicts on M-22.
- E** **Promote Active:** Promote mixed-use with parking and access to the side and rear of the buildings.
- F** **Placemaking:** Accentuate and create interest along the sidewalks by adding trees and street furniture.

Catalytic Area 3: Public Improvements concept for the various public facilities at M-22 and LaCore. This analysis focused on complete street and context-sensitive improvements for the intersection. The concept focuses on pedestrian and trail improvements along the roadway, wayfinding elements, and new development layouts to improve the area. (For illustrative purposes only to understand how the goals of this plan could be implemented at this location.)



Green Spaces and Environmental Considerations

Carrying over from the 2019 Master Plan, the community values the green spaces, natural areas, and amenities within the Village and nearby. To maintain clean water for residents and visitors, it is essential to continue the programs and partnerships regionally to support these efforts.

Engagement with conservation groups to support local efforts to promote education of proper conservation habits for locals and visitors and support the community's guiding principles. Since large conservation areas and parks surround the Village of Empire and the Village also contains many conservation areas within its limits, it is not recommended that conservation districts acquire new lands within it. This will decrease the overall value of revenue potential within the Village and stymie the already revenue-limited budget.

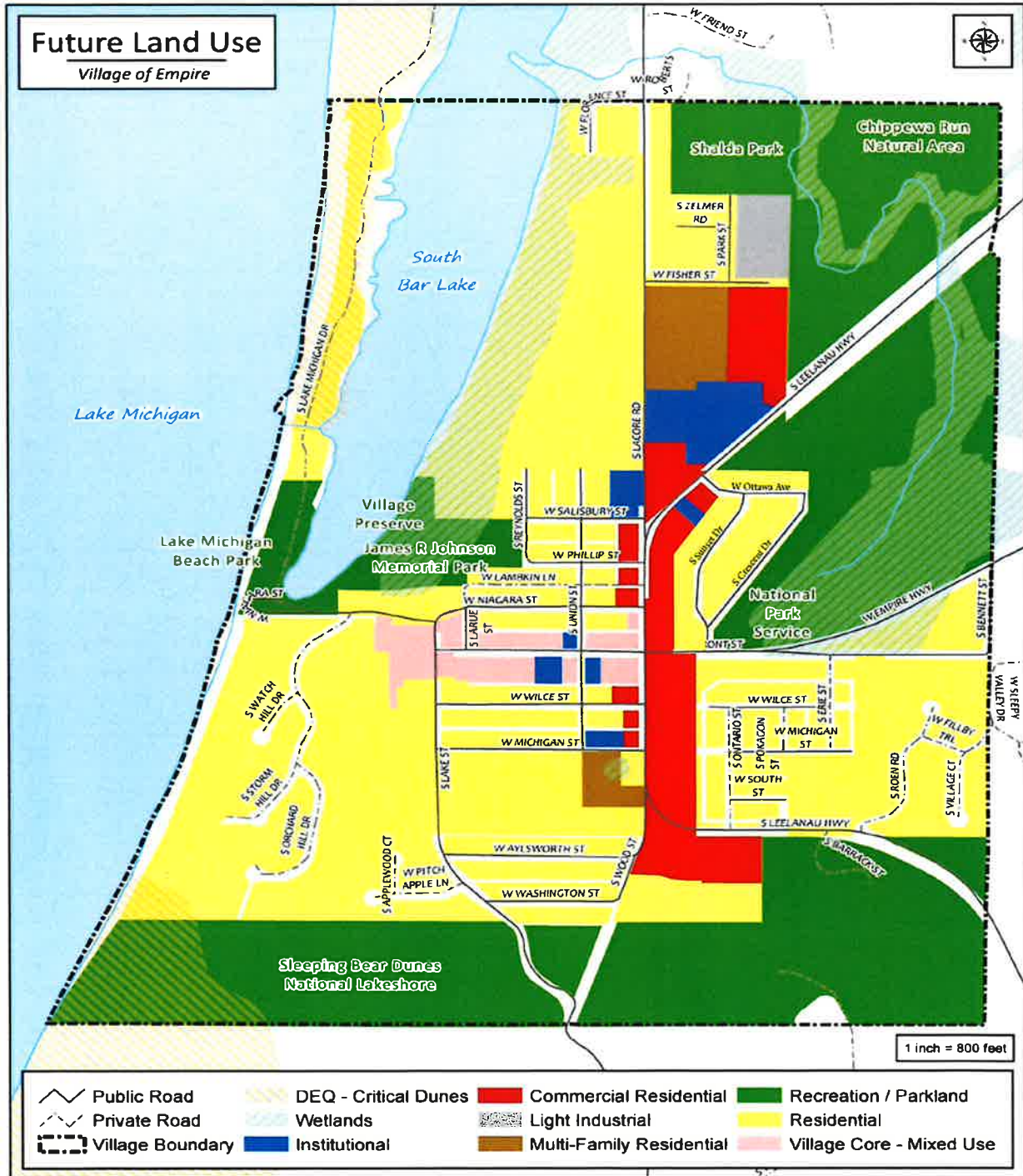
With this in mind, it will be necessary to:

- Support neighborhoods by preventing stormwater intrusion through creative infrastructure design, specifically rainwater capture systems, through Village-wide and regional stormwater planning strategies.
- Preserve existing conservation areas and maintain their edges to prevent pollution of the space or habitats.
- Support development projects that preserve existing trees in public or semi-public open spaces and parks.
- Require any PUD or master-planned development to design and program natural green spaces for private or semi-public use, such as trails, preserves, and other natural areas. *Those developments requesting and receiving incentives should be required to provide publicly accessible open spaces.*
- Consider zoning changes that allow density bonuses for preserving natural areas in a proposed development, including area or community wastewater systems and on-site, low-impact stormwater capture improvements.



Future Land Use Map Updates

- The future land use map has been updated to reflect the current development patterns of single-family neighborhoods.



Updated Future Land Use Map

Zoning Updates

With any master plan update, it is recommended that a zoning audit be performed to ensure that the zoning rules support the implementation of the vision of thoughtful and managed development in the master plan. With this in mind, it is recommended that any zoning audit review the following recommendations from this master plan:

- PUD standards are specifically related to minimum requirements for a mix of uses, housing type mix, infrastructure design (stormwater capture, community septic, open space trails, park allocation), roadway designs, walkability, bike trailheads, public open space, and other placemaking conditions.
- Mixed-use, Commercial, and Housing standards and density bonuses for community septic systems serving two or more properties.
- Parking requirements for existing buildings in the Front Street area.
- Density bonuses for developments that preserve natural areas, incorporate community wastewater systems, and on-site low-impact stormwater capture.
- Design standards for areas that incorporate placemaking and walkable areas, such as pocket parks, pocket plazas, areas for small outdoor gatherings, outdoor dining, and other public amenities.
- Consider Pedestrian-Priority streets that should bring buildings closer to the sidewalk, reduce parking in the front setback, and provide public amenities like outdoor seating. These improvements to new construction or building rehabs will support walkability in these areas.



Wayfinding monuments at key locations



Cottage courts for pocket neighborhoods



Trail oriented development



Accessory dwelling units and "granny flats"



Smaller single-family lots

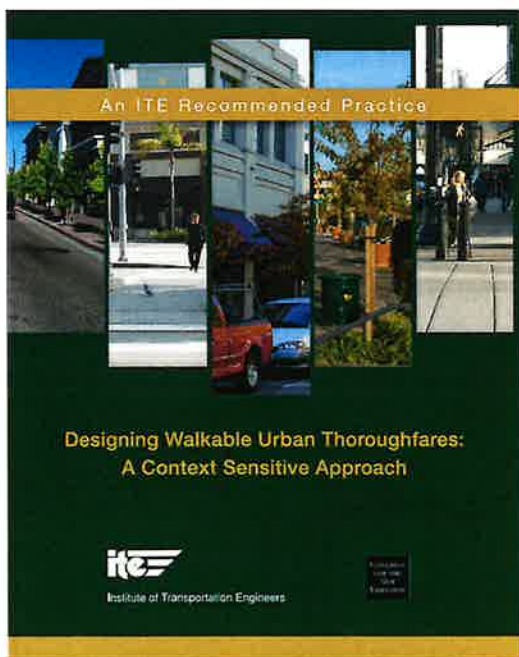


Mobility

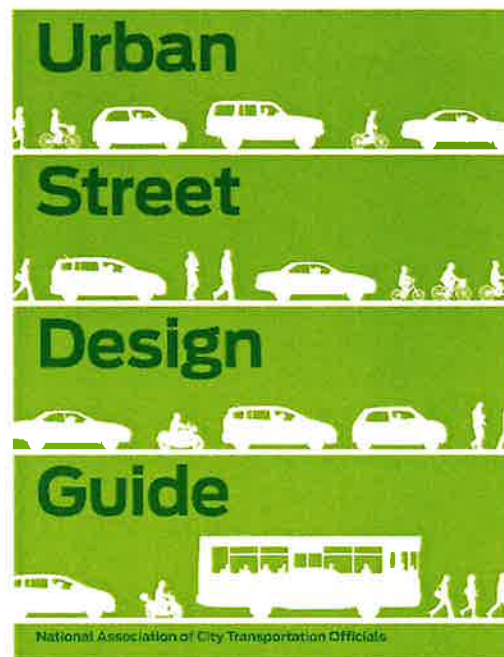
Many of the recommendations in the 2019 Master Plan and 2022 Transportation Plan still align with the community's desires during this 2025 Master Plan Update. The 2022 Transportation Plan includes many valuable additions, including focusing on complete streets to provide vehicular and active transportation options. The crucial goal is to ensure the roads' design matches and supports the development they serve. In the context of those desired improvements, the following stipulations are recommended:

Transportation Infrastructure

- As roadways are improved or utilities are replaced, enhance the roadways to support bike and pedestrian crossings or movements and to provide complete streets with context-sensitive design solutions, explicitly using the *National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide* for all streets and the *Institute for Transportation Engineers (ITE) Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach* for any MDOT facility in the Village of Empire.
- Utilize complete streets with context-sensitive design to distinguish between residential and commercial streets. Focus on narrowing travel lanes in neighborhoods and diverting on-street parking by non-residents. Improve roads, bike lanes, and pedestrian pathways to encourage more walking and biking when feasible.
- Sign lane and alley entrances for local use only and utilize best practices for lane and alley design to minimize cut-through traffic on residential lanes and alleys.



*Institute for Transportation Engineers (ITE)
Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A
Context Sensitive Approach*



*National Association of City Transportation
Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide*



Walkability and Connectivity

- Set policy and design rules for M-22, M-72, and Front Street within the Village of Empire to be context-sensitive thoroughfares, focused on walkability and specifically addressing: reduced travel lane widths, gateway monuments or arches, shallower curb radii at intersections, reduce driveways and promote cross-connections between parcels (alleys), install additional sidewalks, street trees, street lighting, wayfinding signage, bike lanes, on-street parking, and stormwater drainage systems.
- Support context-sensitive design by updating zoning rules to assign maximum setbacks along thoroughfares intended to have pedestrian priority, such as M-22 and Front Street. This includes minimizing new private parking in front of buildings, instead allowing them only on the sides or rear of buildings.
- Continue to connect and enhance walkability within the village and connections to nearby attractions by filling in missing sidewalk connections and providing ADA ramps at key roadway crossings. Target improvements near new construction or building rehabilitation projects so that they become a supportive value addition to the project.
- Continue to support tree replacement and trimming along Village streets while trimming back and down bushes and shrubs that block visibility at street crossings.
- Provide bicycle racks (utilitarian or artistic) in appropriate locations where you want people to bike more, such as the beach, Village parks, Village offices, and any new commercial or mixed-use development.
- Public amenities and furnishings should be provided at key locations and attractions, such as kayak, paddleboard storage at the beach, and benches along Front Street.



Kayak and Paddleboard storage
at a local beach



Creative and artistic bike racks that match the
character of a neighborhood

Parking Management

- Consider a parking management plan that supports the community with parking strategies at key attractions, along commercial streets, and within neighborhoods.



- Continue to provide premium parking at the beach, but organize a policy and strategy that allows the fees from premium parking to be used to acquire and maintain overflow parking areas and manage on-street parking in the Village.
- Use signs to restrict Front Street on-street parking spaces to 2-hour time limits between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., limiting the use of these spaces to commercial users and minimizing the use of Front Street for overflow parking.
- Consider alternative Front Street designs for additional on-street parking and pedestrian sidewalk areas.
- Utilize a series of signage and parking bollards to identify appropriate on-street parking locations within neighborhoods close to Front Street and walking distance of the beach. During summer months, work closely with law enforcement to support the enforcement of these rules.



2-hour time limit sign for specific time frames.



Local Traffic Only sign for lanes and alleys



Economic Development

General

- Complete the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) process quickly.
- Establish and fund an economic development organization (EDO) responsible for the village's economic development activities.
- Empower the EDO to carry forward the recommendations in the Master Plan.

Communications & Marketing

Successful and transparent government bodies will establish and maintain a website and one to two social media channels highlighting the latest news and public events and educating the community on master plan elements like the guiding principles. Your media presence should also include the following:

- Create a Small-Business-First Brand showing small businesses that Empire is a great place to start a new business or grow an existing one.
- Share stories of thriving local businesses to inspire and attract others, including video archives of existing and new business owners to help people understand who the business leaders in Empire are.
- Encourage new businesses to engage with the community through local events and initiatives.
- Highlight the Village's RRC status to attract developers.
- Target areas within Michigan that draw regular tourists to attract new full-time residents.

Business Retention and Attraction

With some staple businesses in Empire potentially changing hands, it is necessary to discuss the needs of Empire's business owners to retain employees, attract customers, provide experiences, and grow their business appropriately. These elements consider options for attracting new companies and retaining existing ones.

- Use communication channels like social media and the Village website to continue gathering data on local demand for commercial and retail businesses.
- Launch a "second location" campaign, targeting small businesses with existing locations in Northern Michigan in the categories identified through the Master Plan engagement (such as grocers, restaurants, and breweries).
- Prioritize incentives for resources like business incubators, co-working spaces, or affordable office locations. These could be on the ground floor of a live-work or mixed-use building or the development of flex commercial within a business park setting. In either



case, focusing on proximity to food and beverage and entertainment locations to support other local businesses with this new development.

- Create a central place (preferably part of the Economic Development Organization) where entrepreneurs can get all the necessary information and services.
- Host regular networking events for business owners and entrepreneurs to connect.

Tourism and Recreation

Today's tourists focus on experiences, which the Village of Empire has many. As a tourist, spending time in Empire often emulates what it would be like to live in the Village full-time: days at the beach, working from a home office, biking to local stores, and hiking the dunes. As tourism improvements are made, it is important to first focus on the residents of Empire. Ultimately, how you build around your residents attracts tourists, who may eventually become full-time residents. Preserving and protecting natural areas is a priority for area residents. Therefore, developing tourism programming with a strong foundation in conservation will attract tourists who share these ideals and, hopefully, convert them into residents in the future.

- Develop eco-tourism programs highlighting the area's natural beauty while educating visitors about local ecosystems and conservation efforts.
- Offer guided tours led by local experts who can share knowledge about the environment, wildlife, and conservation practices. Workshops on sustainable practices can also engage tourists.
- Invest in sustainable infrastructure, such as eco-friendly accommodations, waste management systems, and renewable energy sources, to minimize tourism's ecological footprint. This focus allows for a broader economic incentive requirement for various funding programs.
- Collaborate with local businesses and organizations that prioritize sustainability. This can create a support network for conservation efforts and promote local products.
- Run awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of conservation and responsible tourism. This can include signage, brochures, and social media outreach.
- Provide clear guidelines for tourists on how to enjoy natural areas responsibly. This can include rules about wildlife interaction, waste disposal, and staying on designated paths.
- Create opportunities for tourists to engage in conservation efforts through volunteer programs, such as tree planting or beach clean-ups, allowing them to contribute positively to the community.
- Promote local culture and traditions tied to the natural environment. This will help visitors connect with the area while fostering respect for local practices and conservation efforts.
- Establish channels for tourists to provide feedback on their experiences and suggestions for improvement, ensuring their input is valued in ongoing conservation efforts.



- Implement capacity limits in sensitive areas to prevent over-tourism and preserve the integrity of natural resources.

Development Support (Redevelopment Ready Community)

- Establish an Economic Development Incentive Policy that identifies the Village's criteria for determining the incentive level (if any) it should award on any new project. The policy should reflect the principles of the Master Plan, including promoting thoughtful and authentic growth that creates connections and supports the conservation of natural areas.
- Utilize the Marketing and Communications strategies above to promote Empire as a Redevelopment-Ready Community, always highlighting the key principles of the Master Plan.
- Maximize the administrative fees to the Village included in each incentive program to support economic development and redevelopment programs.
- Create promotional materials for key redevelopment sites following the RRC process. The following graphics are illustrative samples to be used when a viable tract is confirmed for the RRC program.
- Develop a Request for Qualifications with MEDC staff to highlight key redevelopment-ready sites on the MEDC website.



Proposed Redevelopment Site #1 S Wood Street/Parcel 041-824-015-30 Empire, MI



The Village of Empire is working with a private property owner to identify a developer for a 14 acre site designated for housing development. This site is centrally located, within walking distance to Main Street, our beautiful beach and the Central Business Corridor. This Redevelopment Ready site is perfect for a higher density “missing middle” residential development that meets the Village’s goals for economic development.

PROJECT GOALS

- Include smaller homes and lots
- Preserve at least 20% open space
- Include street, sidewalk, and trail infrastructure
- incorporate community septic
- Incorporate Accessory Dwelling Units as appropriate
- Preserve existing trees
- Offer a variety of housing types, price points, and sizes

INCENTIVES THROUGH THE VILLAGE

- Housing Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Payment in Lieu of Taxes (Rental)

OTHER RESOURCES

- Site Assessment Funds - Leelanau County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) - Missing Middle and MI Neighborhood Programs

Conservation Subdivision



- A** Natural Area: Conservation of existing trees as public space
- B** Central Parking Areas: Place parking in rear to promote walkability along the street
- C** Housing Options: Mix of housing types and sizes to meet market needs
- D** Walkability: Sidewalks and trails through public spaces
- E** Wastewater System: Community wastewater system

Housing Types



Model Density

Single Family Units-

- 8 units at 1,600 sq ft
- 11 units at 2,000 sq ft
- 1 unit at 1,200 sq ft

Duplexes

- 48 units at 1,200 sq ft

Triplexes

- 8 units at 1,200 sq ft

Accessory Dwelling Units

Throughout

Contact Us!

Village of Empire
(Contact TBD)
(231) 325-0072



Proposed Redevelopment Site #2 /Multiple Parcels Empire, MI



The Village of Empire is working with a private property owner to identify a developer for a 3.2 acre site designated for a mixed-use development. This site is centrally located, within walking distance to Main Street, our beautiful beach and our gateway corridor. This Redevelopment Ready site is perfect for a higher density “missing middle” residential development that meets the Village’s goals for economic development.

PROJECT GOALS

- Vibrant mixed-use development with dining/brewery options, small business space and mixed-income residential options
- Multi-story Live/work options
- Spaces that promote co-working or small business incubation and acceleration
- Common area for public events and programming

INCENTIVES THROUGH THE VILLAGE

- Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Local Tax Abatements

OTHER RESOURCES

- Site Assessment Funds – Leelanau County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation – Community Revitalization Program (CRP)



1 Livery Building

- 4,500 sq ft - Ground floor commercial space - ideally dining/brewery
- 4,500 sq ft - 2nd flr event space

2 Mixed-Use

- 6,800 sq ft - small office/retail use
- 6,800 sq ft - residential

3 Multifamily

- 18,800 sq ft 2 story building

4 Townhomes/Live Work

- Ground Floor - small business
- Upper Floors - residential

5 Open Space - Community commons

Contact Us!

Village of Empire
(Contact TBD)
(231) 325-0072



Partnerships and Funding

Collaborate with the following state and regional organizations on housing and economic development initiatives:

REGIONAL

- **Housing North** is the Region D Regional Housing Partnership Lead. This organization is active in driving policy changes that will affect housing in Empire and provides technical assistance and other resources.
- The **Leelanau County Land Bank (LCLB)** is a public authority created to efficiently acquire, hold, manage, and develop tax-foreclosed property and other vacant, blighted, obsolete, and abandoned properties. The LCLB has access to unique tools and funding sources to promote development.
- The **Leelanau County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA)** is a public body formed to revitalize blighted, contaminated, or functionally obsolete properties or develop housing properties, by implementing plans that use tax increment funds.

STATEWIDE

- **Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM) Fellow Program**—The Community Development Fellowship involves placing fellows in communities engaged or certified in [Redevelopment Ready Communities](#) (RRC) for fifteen months and working on a variety of projects to expand organizational capacity, increase local collaboration, and remove barriers to development.
- **Michigan Association of Planning (MAP)** MAP training is available year-round through their on-site workshop program. At an on-site workshop an instructor comes to your location, at a time and date convenient for your participants, and presents a comprehensive educational program, addressing the specific needs of your community. Topics include Accessory Dwelling Units, Housing Affordability and more.
- **Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)** is a public-private partnership agency and economic development corporation dedicated to job creation. The MEDC provides resources and incentive programs for existing businesses and new development. They manage the Michigan Business Development Program and the Michigan Community Revitalization Program, both of which could be accessible for economic development initiatives in Empire.
- **Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)** is the state agency that awards resources for low, moderate and middle-income housing development projects in Michigan and provides resources directly to homebuyers. MSHDA's mission is to create and maintain affordable housing, support community economic development, and build stronger communities.
- **Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD)** - Provides resources to entrepreneurs in food, agriculture or forest products industries that are



looking to expand, or are interested in starting or relocating to Michigan. Their regional representative can help develop strategies for targeting businesses growth and attraction efforts in this area.

FEDERAL

- **National Parks Service (NPS)** - Offers the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA), which supports locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the United States. NPS-RTCA assists communities and public land managers in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.



Chapter 4 - Implementation

Using the Master Plan to implement the vision of the community.

The following tables highlight the short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies for focusing limited Village time and funding toward tangible community outcomes. As these tasks are completed, marking them off and adjusting this section will be the way to continue progressing over the lifespan of this master plan.

General Overarching strategies will span the entire life of the master plan and focus on general procedures, such as regulation updates and research.	Short Term Items should be accomplished within two years to ensure the appropriate mechanisms to activate this master plan are met.
Medium Term Strategies that span the next five years focus on building from short-term strategies and looking many years ahead for budgeting purposes.	Long Term These strategies lead the community toward the future we envision. Short-term and medium-term decisions should consider these strategies to ensure the success of these future endeavors.

General Strategies

General Strategies represent overarching guidance for continued success through all short-term, medium-term, and long-term programs. As Village staff and elected officials shift over time, these strategies can help update the efforts and continue the vision. This can also be used to adjust tactics or realign a program if the appropriate funding, staffing, or implementation process has shifted. This can be due to the Village receiving a grant or not. It can also be used to adjust alignments with partner agencies if their goals and strategies have been adjusted. As the Village of Empire Master Plan is implemented, alignment adjustments and coordinated shifting will occur over time.



General Strategies			
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Time Requirement</i>	<i>Level of Cost</i>	<i>Partners</i>
Perform annual updates of Village maps, online and in this plan, to ensure the development of infrastructure and structures are aligned in this document.	Low	\$	Village Staff Leelanau County
Develop, align, and use a performance tracking system to highlight work performed, dollars spent, and quantifiable data to support funding programs and transparent operations of the Village.	Moderate	\$	Village Council Village Staff
Continue to perform demographic and master plan updates every five (5) years to understand changes in the Empire community. Update those findings in the Village of Empire Master Plan as addendums to the plan.	Moderate	\$	Planning Commission Village Staff
Establish and continue to evaluate incentive policies for Village participation in any incentives requested by developers or organizations.	Low	\$	Village Council
Work with the ABCD Committee to hold regular community meetings and events and develop volunteer-driven initiatives involving residents in beautification and community-building projects.	Moderate	\$\$	ABCD Committee Village Council Village Staff
Regularly reference and utilize the Master Plan and other guiding documents in decision-making, and increase transparency by making council discussions and survey results more easily accessible online.	Moderate	\$	Planning Commission Village Council Village Staff



Short-Term Actions (1-2 years)

Short-term strategies cover the next two (2) years but are not limited to just these strategies. Additional essential and emergency tasks develop daily, so often, these tasks take a side step to those endeavors. Keeping in mind that the gradual implementation of short-term strategies helps realize the long-term vision quicker, having a Village volunteer or staff advocate in charge of implementing the comprehensive plan and other special projects will support the continued implementation of these efforts.

Short-Term Strategies			
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Time Requirement</i>	<i>Level of Cost</i>	<i>Partners</i>
Assemble a two-year Village Council Strategic Plan with newly elected Village Council Members.	Low	\$	Village Council Village Staff
Assemble a two-year Capital Improvement Plan based on the goals and guiding principles of this Master Plan and the two-year Village Council Strategic Plan.	Low	\$	Village Council Planning Commission Village Staff
Establish a grants and funding committee to support research and applications for funding projects that improve the Village.	Moderate	\$	Village Council
Explore the creation of an Economic Development Organization (EDO) to support economic development initiatives and track success with the grants and funding committee.	Moderate	\$\$	Village Council Village Staff
Adopt and publish an incentive policy to establish baseline requirements for Village participation in any development project	Low	\$	Village Council
Perform a zoning audit to validate that the development standards meet the goal and guiding principles of the master plan.	Moderate	\$	Planning Commission Village Staff
Update development standards where appropriate, according to the recommendations of the zoning audit.	High	\$\$	Planning Commission Village Staff



Short-Term Strategies			
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Time Requirement</i>	<i>Level of Cost</i>	<i>Partners</i>
Work with developers to align their visions for developments to adhere to the goals and outcomes of this Master Plan.	Low	\$	Village Staff
Complete the Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) program	Moderate	\$	Village Council Planning Commission Village Staff
Coordinate a parking management plan and explore the feasibility of updates to the parking fee fund and the potential for using the fees to provide and upgrade parking throughout the Village.	Low	\$	Village Council Village Staff
Apply for the CEDAM Community Development Fellow Program - applications open October 14th	Low	0	Village Staff



Medium-Term Actions (2-5 years)

Medium-term strategies build off the efforts in the short term. These strategies allow for the implementation of more aggressive planning programs through the fulfillment of the construction of significant infrastructure plans, implementing ideas and concepts, and improving on those short-term strategies that still need to be completed. With a five-year update of the Village of Empire Master Plan, these medium-term strategies will be folded into short-term strategies and adjusted as needed.

Medium-Term Strategies			
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Time Requirement</i>	<i>Level of Cost</i>	<i>Partners</i>
Continue to perform demographic and master plan updates every five (5) years to understand changes in the Empire community. Update those findings in the Village of Empire Master Plan as addendums to the plan.	Moderate	\$	Planning Commission Village Staff
For any major alignment changes in goals and outcomes, update Village development codes and manuals to reflect substantial changes to align with the updated Master Plan.	Low	\$	Planning Commission Village Staff
Activate the Economic Development Organization (EDO) to lead economic development initiatives in the Village.	Moderate	\$\$	Village Council Village Staff
Support local and regional non-profits' advancement and/or growth by incentivizing the creation of local facilities for meetings and storage to build strong relationships with other public functions.	Low	\$	Local non-profits Village Council
Establish a parking plan that supports on-street and public parking management, time restrictions, and funding support to expand parking options.	Medium	\$\$	Village Council Planning Commission Village Staff Parking Consultant



Long-Term Actions (5+ years)

Long-term strategies are the progressive continuation of the Village of Empire Master Plan. With each update, the long-term strategies should be used to fill in the strategies for short-term and medium-term time frames. As direction changes or the village's build-out is realized, new long-term strategies can be introduced to guide the Village Council and Staff, the community, partner agencies, or decision-makers. These long-term strategies fulfill the three guiding principles of Manage Growth, Make Connections, and Support Natural Areas.

Long-Term Strategies			
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Time Requirement</i>	<i>Level of Cost</i>	<i>Partners</i>
Continue to perform demographic and master plan updates every five (5) years to understand changes in the Empire community. Update those findings in the Village of Empire Master Plan as addendums to the plan.	Moderate	\$	Planning Commission Village Staff
For major alignment changes in goals and outcomes, update Village development codes and manuals to reflect substantial changes to align with the updated Master Plan.	Low	\$	Planning Commission Village Staff
Continue coordination with MDOT, regularly confirm any potential street improvement projects on M-22 or M-72, and support the design process by providing Village policy for walkable streets.	Low	\$	Planning Commission Village Council Village Staff MDOT
Develop an evaluation method to analyze the ongoing fiscal impacts of the Economic Development Policy. Utilize the data gathered to reform the policy accordingly.	Moderate	\$\$	Village Staff Third-Party Consultants
Develop and implement a long-term housing strategy that aligns with the regional goals of the Statewide Housing Plan.	Moderate	\$\$	Village Staff Third-Party Consultants
Be an authentic, small community that supports its residents, businesses, and tourists in enjoying the Village of Empire	Moderate	\$	Everyone



Long-Term Strategies			
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Time Requirement</i>	<i>Level of Cost</i>	<i>Partners</i>
Provide exceptional natural areas and attractions for residents, businesses, and tourists.	Moderate	\$	Everyone
Communicate, negotiate, and coordinate for the betterment of the residents and businesses in the Village of Empire and its regional partners and neighbors.	Moderate	\$	Everyone

Monitoring and Evaluation

An Excel workbook file has been provided to the Village of Empire to track progress and provide definable data points when progress is reported to constituents, grant funds, and regional partners. Village staff is intended to manage the file, and the digital working copy should always remain in their possession.



Chapter 5 - Conclusion

Summary of Key Points

This plan's recommendations relate to land use, mobility, economic development, and implementation strategies that support the community's goals and guiding principles. This includes:

- **Land use:** Being flexible yet consistent with development opportunities, focusing on fairly solving real-time issues. Enlist regional partners and third-party consultants to support healthy conversations and determine the best course of action on land use topics.
- **Mobility:** Focus on safety for pedestrians and cyclists within the community; vehicular movement is secondary within the commercial core and corridors of the Village. Parking management can help as tourism growth continues.
- **Economic Development:** Establish and prioritize base policies for incentive requests. Ensure that any investment in a project is reciprocated with community benefits. Growth is not worth it if no public amenity is tied to it; incentives must be about more than a future return.
- **Implementation:** Start with the basics and rely on your assets to help achieve the goals and tasks laid out in the strategies. These strategies are not finite; other things may come up to prioritize, but continue to make progress towards the long-term goals in all of your decisions moving forward.

Call to Action

With any plan, a champion or torch bearer must guide the way and prioritize implementation. Typically, this works better as a committee with the support of a staff member who can keep decisions made by the Planning Commission and Village Council in check with the plan's guiding principles. Dialogue around all decisions should reflect the guiding principles, and the decisions should support advancing or aligning with them.

Existing committees, such as the ABCD Committee or the Master Plan Update Working Group, may be best suited to take up the mantle of champion as the implementation arm of the Master Plan.

**Master Plan Working Group Meeting
Minutes
October 16, 2024, 6:30 pm**

Members present:

Chris Webb, Bob Chase, Meg Walton, Carey Ford and Maggie Bacon

1. The draft of the 2025 Master Plan Update (addendum to the 2019 Village of Empire Master plan) was provided to committee members previously. It was posted with the committee meeting notice on the Village website. Members were asked to review the document and be prepared to answer the following questions:
 - What might be in the plan that concerns you?
 - a. Overarching Concern: Page 3 -5 (Demographic Data). Because of the low sample size, the percentage of increase or decrease looks significant. Can we obtain the “real numbers”?
 - b. Page 10 refers to two items that were low on the priority list: new roads and parking. Yet, a fair amount of space was devoted to parking on pages 15 (Commercial and Mixed-Use Areas), 20 (Zoning Updates), 23, and 34, and as a short-term strategy and again on page 35.
 - c. Overarching Concern: about “how” growth is controlled today and in the future. The concern was developers “buying up” property and not showing deference to the municipality as to character. Is our Zoning Ordinance what we want it to be? This may be why a zoning audit was recommended. Later, during public comment, it was mentioned that our current zoning ordinance has some guard rails, such as Special Use Permits. The conversation also included a brief set of questions about the ZA's development process which is something that the Redevelopment Ready Community Essentials is asking to be documented.
 - d. We could not find any questionnaire responses mentioning how a lack of daycare impacts young families. Empire did have a fantastic daycare center (home-based) for many years. Other, more significant factors may be a driving force.
 - What might be missing?
 - a. The only general comment of missing things is a lack of references to “solutions” that might occur in our surrounding area, i.e., housing development on Benzonia Trail and daycare options growing in Benzie County. A broader discussion of partnerships may have a place in the Master Plan update.

2. Review letter from resident and suggestion. A letter from Frank Clements along with an attachment was received and parts were read aloud. The topic of the letter was the future land use map. Both are attached.
 - a. Consensus was to forward that information to the Planning Commission as part of their deliberation on the draft.
3. Ready to move it forward?
 - a. The consensus was to:
 - i. Ask Brad for numbers versus percentages
 - ii. Ask for clarification about parking
 - iii. No need to have another meeting
4. Public comment
 - a. Concern was raised about the potential “premium paid parking beach revenue” that could be used to acquire and maintain overflow parking areas and manage on-street parking in the Village. The commenter strongly felt that the revenue should be used for park maintenance.
 - b. A reminder that a questionnaire is not a scientific survey. It gauges sentiment. When categorizing or prioritizing “options,” respondents were deciding their priorities in a vacuum without any specifics as to the feasibility of any items on the list. A suggestion for the future would be to offer two questionnaires. The first step is to gauge sentiment and, from those answers, determine the list of items to be prioritized. The phrase “just one tool” is not a strong enough reminder to the reader.
 - c. The images on pages 14, 16, and 17 need to be larger to be usable. As this is one document, readers should not have to go to another site to view them in a larger format.
 - d. Pages 27 and 28 need to be more clearly marked as examples or samples of one of the bullet points on page 26: ‘Create promotional materials for key redevelopment sites following the RRC process.’

Respectfully submitted

Maggie Bacon

Attachment:

Dear Empire Master Plan Update Working Group, I have reviewed the draft 2025 Master Plan. I like the direction the plan is taking and look forward to Wednesday night's meeting to learn more. The plan also appears to align and address most of the issues and concerns the residents expressed in the survey.

The two Catalytic Area studies will be an important step in bringing new development to the Village's vacant parcels, and to attract new developers and investors. These studies will provide the important first steps to our Redevelopment Ready Program.

The Economic Development and Partnerships and Funding chapters are notable for their ability to provide a roadmap to our Council and Village to begin in earnest how to attract new development to our community yet with an eye towards preserving our small town character and thoughtful growth.

However there is one thing I would like you to consider as part of your study and that is the future land-use status of the 13+- acre vacant site on Fisher Road, as depicted on page 45 of the Village of Empire 2019 Master Plan. It is currently designated as Commercial Residential, and Multi-family Residential.

I believe the Village already has enough commercially zoned property and that we need land uses which provide more diverse businesses and jobs than what our current tourist related economy allows.

I propose that your Work Group think about ways the existing land-use of the Fisher Road site can be changed to accommodate a broader range of uses not just commercial and residential, Perhaps it could become another catalyst for change site?

Please see my attached memo to the Working Group for more details on my proposal.

Thank you,

Frank Clements

October 15, 2024

To: Empire Master Plan Update Working Group

(M. Bacon, B.Chase, M. Ellibee, C. Ford, M.Walton, C.Webb)

From: Frank Clements

Re: Land Use/ Zoning Recommendations/ Fisher Road Site

Cc: Sue Palmer, Derith Smith, B. Lonberger, J. Ferrari, E Loud

Dear Master Plan Update Working Group

Background:

Currently Empire has no industrially zoned land available to accommodate any light industrial uses, or other types of non-commercial business uses. This is a concern because Empire needs more diverse businesses and jobs to provide alternatives to our tourist based, one dimension seasonal economy which is primarily retail and hospitality oriented.

Proposal:

I propose the MP Update Work Group think about additional ways the existing Land-Use and zoning of the 13+- acre vacant parcel on Fisher Road can be

changed to accommodate a broader range of uses not just commercial and residential.

The site's current zoning, (MR) or Mixed Residential and Commercial is not its highest and best use, nor is it in sync with meeting today's market needs and demands. I believe this site provides an opportunity to help create a more diversified business economy by designating the 13+- acre site on Fisher Road, to a Mixed-Use/Business/High Density Residential site. (MX/B/R)

What would this new land-use designation provide?

- Space for new entrepreneurial businesses, and start-ups
- Space for light manufacturing, research and development
- Land-uses which are compatible and attractive to a broad range of inventors and developers.
- New jobs with higher pay than commercial retail uses
- Higher land values
- New tax revenues to offset increased residential property taxes
- Increased Village revenues from water usage
- Land-Uses which provide a more rapid build out than the current land-uses
- New jobs which are less reliant on the seasonal economy
- A project which can be branded and marketed state-wide, not just locally.
- Allows space for expansion of current businesses
- Provides a place for a mix of higher density housing such as duplexes, townhomes triplexes, etc.
- Has adequate on-site room for a central waste water system.

Allowing a broad mix of land uses on the overall 14+- acre site will make the site more attractive to outside investor's and developers but may require more actions on behalf of the Village.

Developers prefer shovel ready sites, however if they are not available they at least expect as-of-right zoning in place which prevents them from engaging in expensive time consuming rezoning to a PUD. A new zoning classification will be necessary, and to be pre-approved.

Developers also look for incentives from the communities they work in, such as tax incentives, or tax abatements, density bonuses, or financial help with infrastructure improvements like street extensions, or water line extensions,

etc. These types of incentives are not unusual for municipalities to offer in today's competitive environment to attract investors and developers to one's community.

Last, this land use concept is compatible to the approach outlined in the Redevelopment Ready Community guidelines which helps communities attract new investors, businesses, and residents utilizing RRC initiatives to make Empire an attractive place that creates places where people want to live, work and invest,

Thanks for your consideration of this important matter to the Village of Empire.

Frank Clements

**Population Change
1970 to 2028**

	1970	% chg 1960 to 1970	1980	% chg 1970 to 1980	1990	% chg 1980 to 1990	2000	% chg 1990 to 2000	2010	% chg 2000 to 2010	2016	% chg 2010 to 2016	2020	% chg 2016 to 2020	2023	% chg 2020 to 2023	2028	% chg 2023 to 2028
Village of Empire	409	-8.7%	345	-15.6%	355	2.9%	378	6.5%	373	-1.3%	375	0.5%	362	-3.5%	378	4.4%	385	1.9%
Leelanau County	10,872	16.6%	14,007	28.8%	16,527	18.0%	21,119	27.8%	21,708	2.8%	21,981	1.3%	22,301	1.5%	22,716	1.9%	23,322	2.7%
NW Michigan *	158,333	13.9%	208,288	31.5%	230,962	10.9%	281,468	21.9%	297,912	5.8%	303,254	1.8%						

*Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Grand Traverse, Emmet, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Wexford

Master Plan Update: Catalytic Area - Housing Development Study

Design Process: Explore an undeveloped site in the Village to depict the difference between standard lot development with individual wastewater systems and conservation development with community wastewater systems.

Conservation Subdivision



- A** **Natural Area:** Conservation of existing trees as public space
- B** **Central Parking Areas:** Place parking in rear to promote walkability along the street
- C** **Housing Options:** Mix of housing types and sizes to meet market needs
- D** **Walkability:** Sidewalks and trails through public spaces
- E** **Wastewater System:** Community wastewater system

Housing Types



Cottage Court



Townhomes facing trails



Small Lot Homes

Standard Lot Subdivision



- A** **Natural Area:** all private, limited protection of existing trees
- B** **Parking:** front access driveways or parking
- C** **Housing Options:** Limited housing variations and similar price points
- D** **Walkability:** Sidewalks on street
- E** **Wastewater System:** Individual wastewater system

Housing Types



Single-Family Residential



Place Strategies
Building Community Together



PLACECRAFT

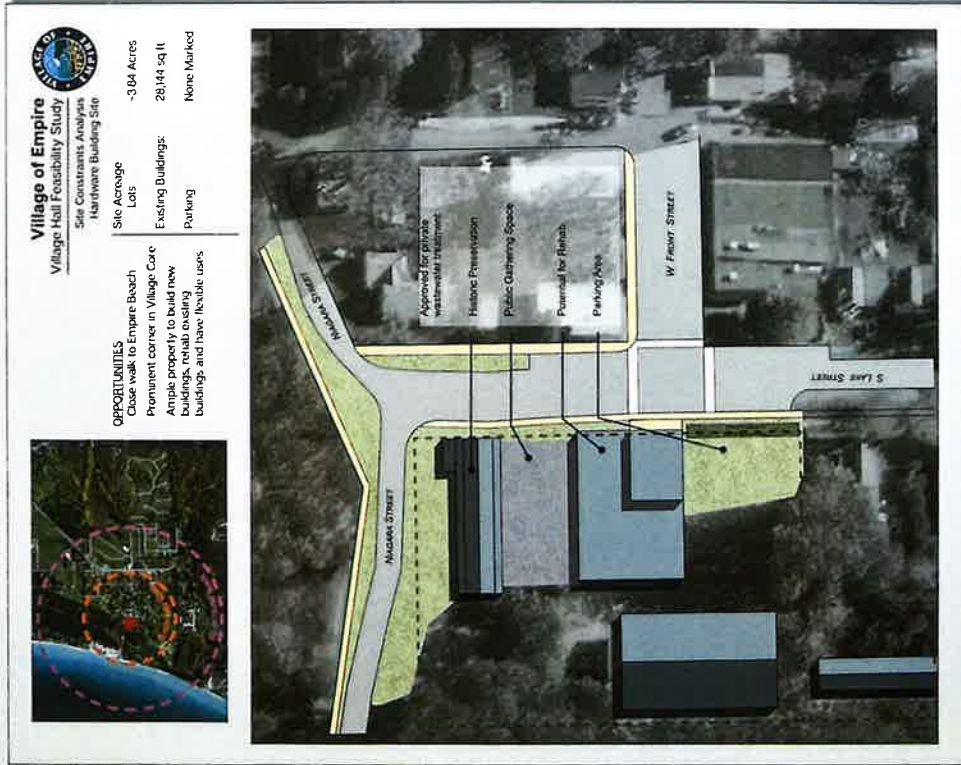


APPROVED



Master Plan Update: Catalytic Area - Hardware Store and Livery Stable

Site Constraints



Design Process: Explore a way to preserve an historical asset and also provide public gather space, walkability, and a mix of uses to support activities close to the beach and along Front Street.



A Historic Preservation: Preserve historic barn and stable livery. Opportunity for entertainment and event center, ground floor retail to support beach events and summer programming.

B Placemaking: Introduce places to "linger longer" and a comfortable atmosphere.



C Walkable Streets: Extension of Front Street into the development and inclusion of a linear park to terminate the view looking down Front Street from M-22



D Mixed-Use: Options for introducing hospitality or housing (for-sale or rental) that are a part of the Front Street experience

E Parking: Utilize on-street parking to minimize the need for parking lots, creating a safe street environment for pedestrians, and fully accessible for emergency services.



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Thank you,

Frank Clements

October 28, 2024

To: Planning Commission

From: Maggie Bacon, Planning Commissioner

Re: Role of Planning Commission in Development (Residential or Economic)

I had the opportunity to walk through one of the apartments in the new Frankfort workforce housing units. Homestretch builds and manages apartments and has for-purchase units.

Rentals:

HomeStretch has a variety of rentals in Traverse City at below-market rates. Individuals and families must be income-eligible and meet other requirements. They must be typically below 80% AMI per household, working or living in our five-county area (Grand Traverse, Benzie, Leelanau, Kalkaska, and Antrim), have an income of 3x the rental rate, or be voucher holders.

Home Purchase:

HomeStretch builds attractive, high-quality, energy-efficient homes with loans from project partners and grants from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Upon completion, the homes are sold to income-eligible families and individuals. Individuals and families – typically below 80% AMI per household, working or living in our 5-county area (Grand Traverse, Benzie, Leelanau, Kalkaska, and Antrim), have income of 3x mortgage payment.

Homestretch has been successful (in our rural area, at least) because the land has most often been donated. In talking with the Homestretch guru, Jon Stimson, I thought about such a project in Empire. Jon mentioned that someone he knew in the Village had suggested that Margaret Ellibee would bring him in for a presentation for the PC. Margaret didn't have time to do that.

Here is my "I know I should know the answer to this" question: The role of the PC is to designate land use, such as allowing for these apartments along with single-family homes (I think I have that right).

But Homestretch or other developers need to find the land and deal with the landowner, right? Would having Homestretch come to a PC meeting serve any purpose? What role would/could the Village Council have in this scenario? If neither of those entities has authority, is this why Empire needs to consider (as the Master Plan update suggests) facilitating a development entity (or some version of that)? We have some significant vacant land (none owned by the Village). Would that development entity spend time working with vacant landowners and determining interest in donating or selling land below market value for a project like this? Is this (sort of) how Cornerstone came to town (Carey might be able to help answer that question).

FYI

Village of Empire Deputy Clerk

From: Bob Price <empiremitreasurer@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 11, 2024 1:25 PM
To: Village of Empire Deputy Clerk
Subject: Re: Empire Township Hall

Hi Alacia,

Sorry that I didn't get back to you sooner. I did have you down for Oct. 8th and I do have you down for planning on Nov. 7th at 7:00 pm.

I have put you in the schedule for Dec. 3rd and Jan. 7th, both at 7:00 pm for Village Planning.

Bob

Bob Price
Empire Township Treasurer
Phone: 231-499-2008

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