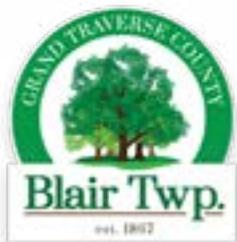


Blair Township Master Plan 2025



Public Hearing Held: 12/17/2025

Adopted by Resolution On: 12/17/2025

Resolution of Adoption

Resolution of Adoption

Formal approval of the Blair Township 2025 Master Plan

At a regularly scheduled meeting of the Blair Township Planning Commission held on December 17, 2025, the following resolution was adopted by the Blair Township Planning Commission, formally approving the 2025 Blair Township Master Plan.

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) authorizes Municipal Planning Commissions to prepare a "Master Plan" pertinent to the future development of the municipality; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, before preparing the Master Plan, all required written notices to required adjacent governments and other organizations stating the Planning Commission's intent to prepare a new Master Plan and requesting cooperation and comment were sent; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public input session and a community wide survey which was mailed to property owners and residents in the process of preparing the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission in accordance with P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, submitted the proposed Master Plan to the Township Board for its initial review and approval of distribution of the Master Plan for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission sent the proposed Master Plan to required adjacent governments and other organizations for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, comments on the proposed Master Plan made during the 63-day review period were received and considered by the Planning Commission for possible revision to the proposed Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Township Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed Master Plan, as provided by P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, and received public comment for consideration and possible revisions to the proposed Master Plan on December 17th, 2025 at 6:30pm at the Blair Township Hall; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds the proposed Master Plan as submitted for and revised pursuant to the public hearing and 63-day review period as desirable and proper, and furthers the land use and development goals and strategies of Blair Township; and

WHEREAS, final edits to the Master Plan will be incorporated as noted in the Blair Township Planning Commission's minutes for the public hearing that took place on December 17th, 2025 at 6:30pm.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Blair Township Planning Commission hereby resolves to approve the new Blair Township Master Plan as submitted and revised pursuant to the public hearing, including all of the text, charts/tables, maps, and descriptive, and other matter therein intended by the Planning Commission to form the complete Blair Township Master Plan, including the Blair Township Future Land Use Map.

Resolution of Adoption

BLAIR TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION:

Moved to adopt the resolution by Nickerson, seconded by Wagner,
PASSED and ADOPTED by the Blair Township Planning Commission on December 17, 2025
by the following vote:

AYES: Six

NAYS: One

ABSTAINING: None

ABSENT: None

MOTION: Carried

I, Susan Kase, Recording Secretary of the Blair Township Planning Commission
certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by a majority of the members of the Blair Township
Planning Commission by a roll call vote at a regular meeting of the Commission held on
December 17, 2025 in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Susan Kase (signature)



Photo Credit: Nicole Blonshine



Photo Credit: Nicole Blonshine

Acknowledgments

This process and plan was supported by the elected and appointed officials of Blair Township, and wouldn't have been possible without the many contributions of local citizens who answered the community survey, attended community engagement sessions and planning commission meetings. Additional support by Grand Traverse County through the sharing of parcel data, and other State, Federal and Private data sources which contributed to this planning document.

Blair Township Board

Nicole Blonshine - Supervisor
Lynette Wolfgang - Clerk
Tracie Campbell - Treasurer
Andy Nickerson - Trustee
Preston Taylor - Trustee
Roger Zeits - Trustee
Carl Kucera - Trustee

Blair Township Planning Commission

Travis Clous
Adam Wagner
Andy Nickerson
Cheryl Gore Follette
Dennis Fitzpatrick
Bob Boeve
Jerry Heim
Susan Kase - Recording Secretary

Process and Document Development Assistance Provided by:

Networks Northwest Community Development Department



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The on-ground current conditions as it pertains to land use, population, and economy.

Chapter 4: Community Engagement..... 46

Findings of the community engagement session and community survey.

Chapter 5: Best Management Practices 52

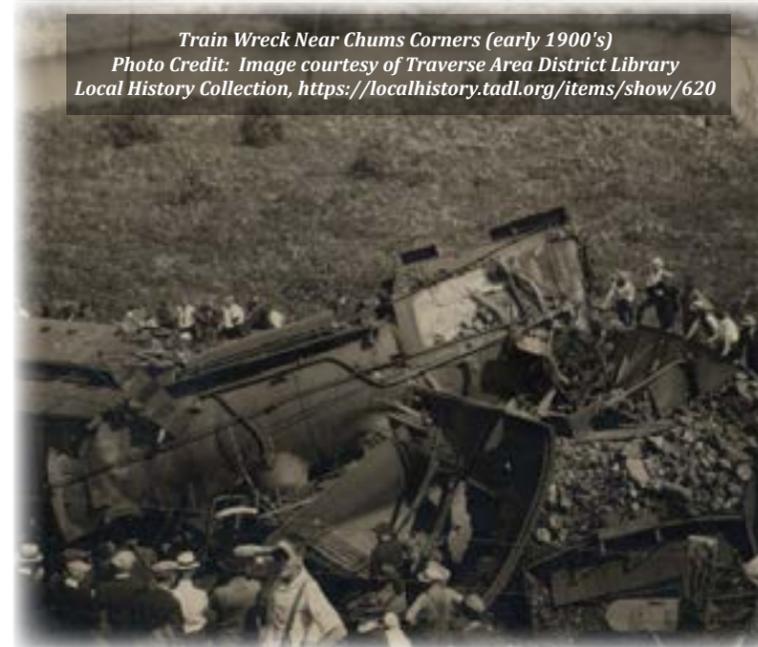
Common land use practices available for policy with several included in the regulatory directives for the community.

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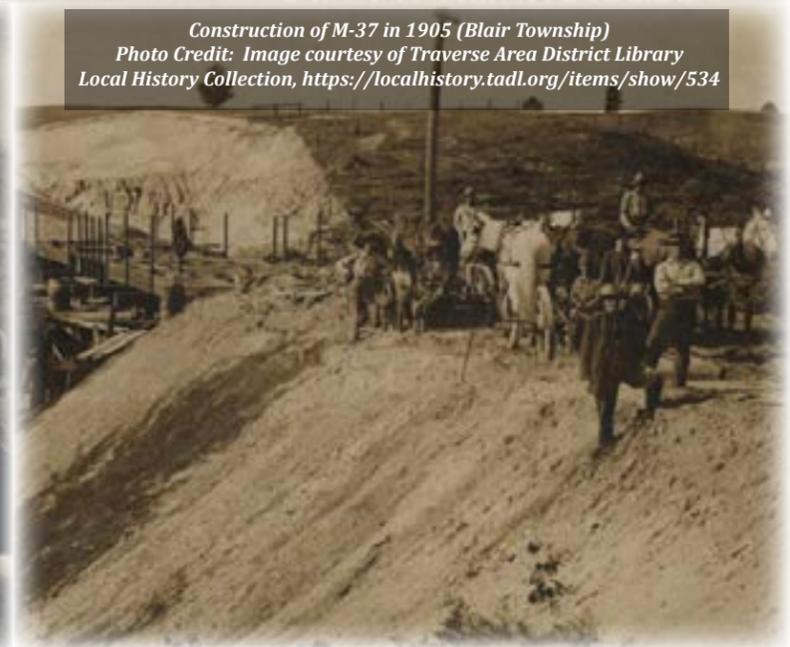
The policy direction for the community as supported by the community and leadership of the Township.



Silver Lake (early 1900's)
Photo Credit: "Image courtesy of Traverse Area District Library Local History Collection, <https://localhistory.tadl.org/items/show/1710>



Train Wreck Near Chums Corners (early 1900's)
Photo Credit: Image courtesy of Traverse Area District Library Local History Collection, <https://localhistory.tadl.org/items/show/620>



Construction of M-37 in 1905 (Blair Township)
Photo Credit: Image courtesy of Traverse Area District Library Local History Collection, <https://localhistory.tadl.org/items/show/534>



Grawn (early 1900's)
Photo Credit: "Image courtesy of Traverse Area District Library Local History Collection, <https://localhistory.tadl.org/items/show/1710>

Chapter 1 Introduction & Methodology

Blair Township is a general law Township located in central western Grand Traverse County. With proximity to Traverse City, the Township is both an employment center and location of residence, with large areas of commercial land uses along primary transportation corridors and neighborhoods of primarily single-family housing extending from adjacent neighborhoods in nearby Charter Townships of East Bay, Long Lake and Garfield. Significant growth has occurred over the course of the last 30 years, with a 73% increase in the population from 1990 to 2023.

The Township has deemed it important to appropriately establish plans to guide growth and land use in the community. This coupled with legislative requirements outlined by the State of Michigan, have led Blair Township Government to undertaken this planning process in accordance with Michigan Act 33 of 2008, being the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

The Planning Enabling Act sets a standardized approach to establishing land use policy in support of a community's regulatory zoning requirements. The Act includes provisions for studying socio-economic trends, land uses, infrastructure, transportation, civic services and host of other inputs and conditions that are used to support a strategic approach to guiding a community's future growth. Through the pages of this document the reader will become acquainted with the community of Blair Township, gaining an understanding of the directives for growth, as structured through community leadership.



Map 1: Location of Blair Township in NW Lower Michigan

Methodology

The structure of this plan is comprised of 6 Chapters which outline information and data that cumulates to an established land use policy and directive for zoning. Each of the chapters is summarized as follows. The reader may move ahead to the final chapter, Chapter 6, if one wishes to view the direction supported by the Township Elected and Appointed Officials.

Chapter 1: Introduction & Methodology

Introduction to the process, the components of the plan, and building upon past planning efforts that sets the stage for the chapters which follow.

Chapter 2: A Story of Growth

Reflection on growth patterns through examining existing land use policy and regulatory zoning, residential structure changes, and estimated residential build-out structure density.

Chapter 3: Present Conditions

An examination of the community socio-economic profile, land use, natural features, civic assets and services, infrastructure, transportation, and place-based conditions.

Chapter 4: Community Engagement

Summarization and findings of outreach efforts to ascertain public opinion on a host of questions from public services to land use and density.

Chapter 5: Best Management Practices

Identified Best Management Practices (BMP) for a range of topics within this planning document, including land use, environmental, transportation, infrastructure, and place-making.

Chapter 6: Future Land Use & Zoning Plan

The final directives of the Township for establishing land use policy and linkage of that policy to the regulatory zoning which is supported through the plan.

Existing & Past Planning Efforts

2019 Blair Township Master Plan

The 2019 plan set about a strategic direction for supporting and managing growth, establishing infrastructure, providing housing types, improving community appearance, protecting natural resources, expanding recreational assets, and



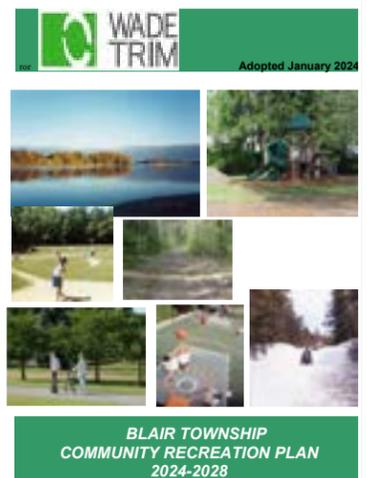
Blair Township Master Plan
2019

enhancing community facilities. These established goals permeate through the themes of this current planning process. By clicking the image to the left you may access the planning page on the Township's website to review the 2019 plan.

2024 Blair Township Recreation Plan

Recently completed, the recreation plan builds upon existing public recreation facilities and assets by establishing support for improvements and upgrades including a non-motorized transportation vision plan. This document meets

DNR Park and Rec Plan guidelines creating eligibility for State of Michigan funding sources. By clicking on the image to the right you may access the park & recreation page on the Township's website to review the 2024 plan.



BLAIR TOWNSHIP
COMMUNITY RECREATION PLAN
2024-2028

Chapter 2 A Story Of Growth

The Story of Growth in Blair Township is one of increasing density and structure siting over the course of the past 30+ years. Impacts have been positive and negative, with fluctuation on what constitutes positive vs. negative depending upon whom one is speaking with, and their perception of growth and change. Regardless of which side one views change, growth has given rise to increased site development, expansion of transportation corridors and options, pressures on the natural environment from stormwater runoff and increased amounts of impervious surface, expansion of community services and infrastructure, and coordination with neighboring entities to better organize and meet the greater communities' needs.

This Chapter will capture and present data on the growth that has occurred over the last 30 years, and will present information on current land uses, and ultimately the policy and zoning regulation which have been in place that have driven the current growth patterns. Additionally information on neighboring communities' zoning regulation and how it aligns with adjacent Blair Township Zoning Districts is provided to allow the community to ascertain how seamless or varied neighboring land uses are between the local units of government.

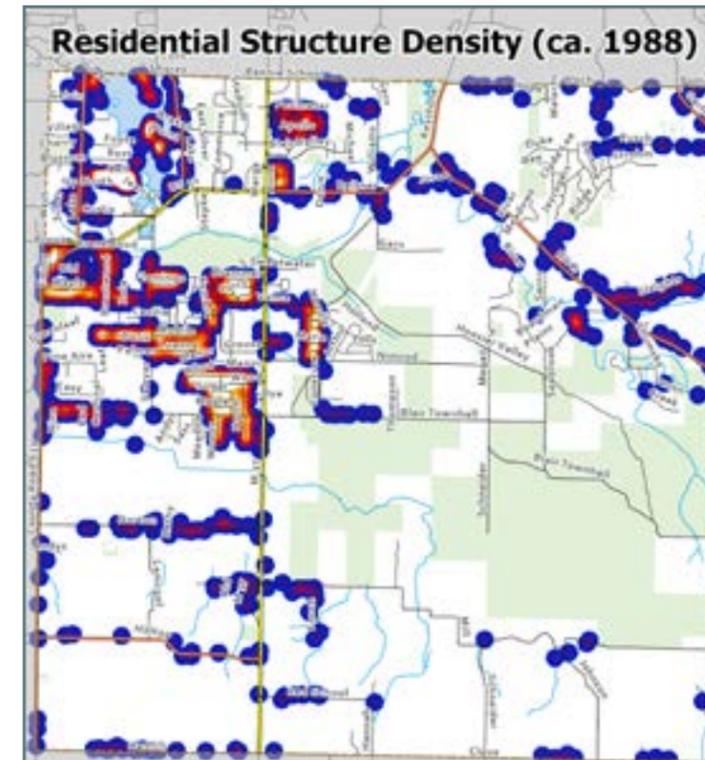
Growth Patterns

Growth patterns are displayed through analysis of past and present on ground conditions. The outlay of structures and land uses provides data driven evidence for the pattern of growth.

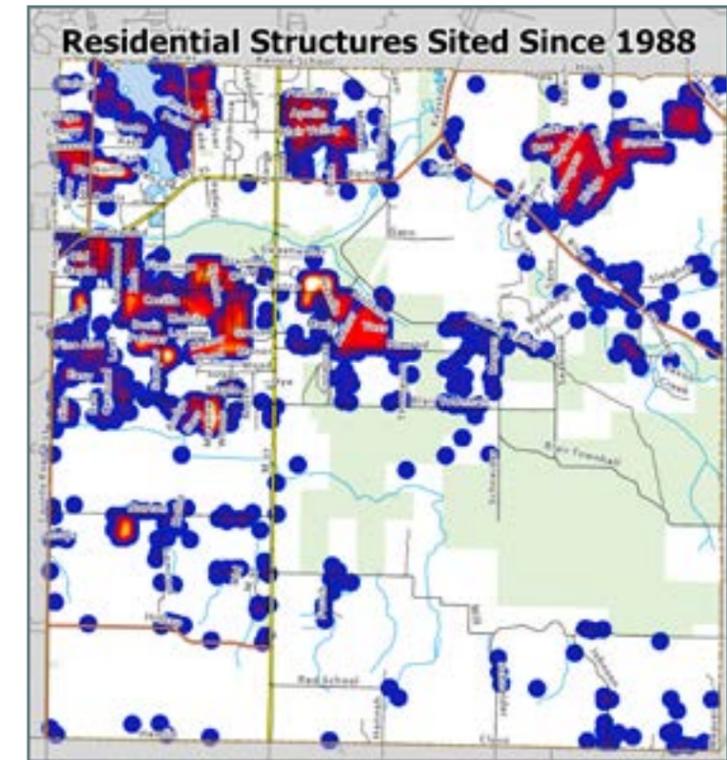
Structure Density Change

Residential structures were digitized for the Township through remote sensing of historic and recent aerial photos. Residential structures were identified from aerials for the years: 1988, 1997, 2010, 2017 & 2023. Map 2 located below and to the left, displays all residential structures by density (blue-red hue) which were present in 1988. Map 3 below and to the right, displays all residential structures by density (blue-red hue) sited since 1988.

**It is important to note that residential structures are not differentiated by structure type, a single point was assigned for any structure regardless if it is single-family, duplex or multi-family.*



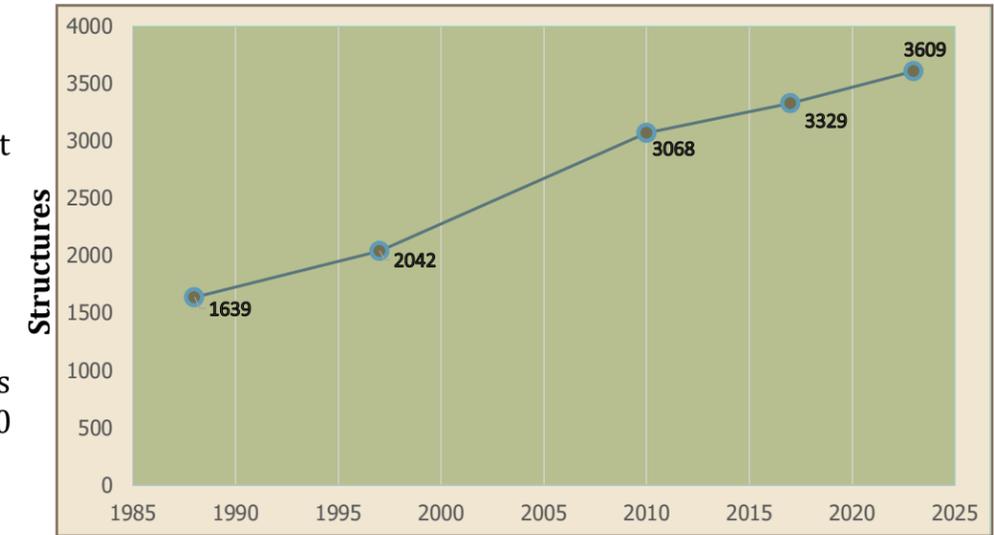
Map 2: Residential Structures (ca 1988)



Map 3: Residential Structures Sited Since 1988

Residential Structure Density

The growth through siting of residential structures is evident from the analysis by location and year. Graph 1 to the right displays residential structure growth from 1988 to 2023. Blair has witnessed 120% growth in residential structures since 1988, with a total of 1,970 structures gained since that time.



Graph 1: Residential Structure Change

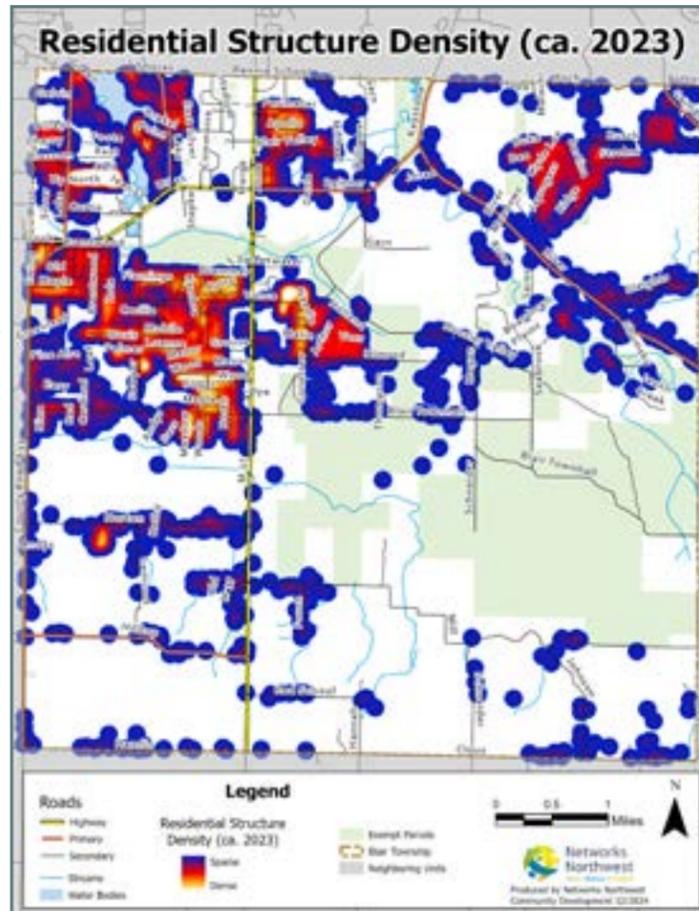


"Grawn, Mich." State Street in downtown Grawn, Blair Township, Michigan, about 1905.

Photo Credit: "Image courtesy of Traverse Area District Library Local History Collection, <https://localhistory.tadl.org/items/show/19872>

Residential Structure Density Findings

- Map 4 to the right displays density of all residential structures in the year 2023.
- There are a total of 3,609 residential structures as of 2023.
- The change denotes structures and does not denote “housing units”, according to American Community Survey data, the number of housing units in the Township is 3,667 (a single structure apartment/duplex has multiple units).
- Residential structure density is increasing in areas of existing residential development while also sprawling into undeveloped rural areas of the Township.
 - ◊ Significant infill has occurred in neighborhoods around Silver Lake, and in the area west of M-37, north of Blair Townhall Road to US 31.
 - ◊ Relatively new residential developments have occurred in the vicinity of Nimrod Rd. and M-37 and those found off the west end of S. Rusch Rd.
 - ◊ Residential sprawl has been initiated in the southern portion of the Township where small residential parcels can lead to land fragmentation.



Map 4: Residential Structures (ca 2023)



Map 5: Employer Density (ca 2024)

Employer Density

Employer density is displayed on map 5 as the brown-orange hue. Employers are defined as all locations of employment including business, industry, non-profit, public administration/civic, etc.

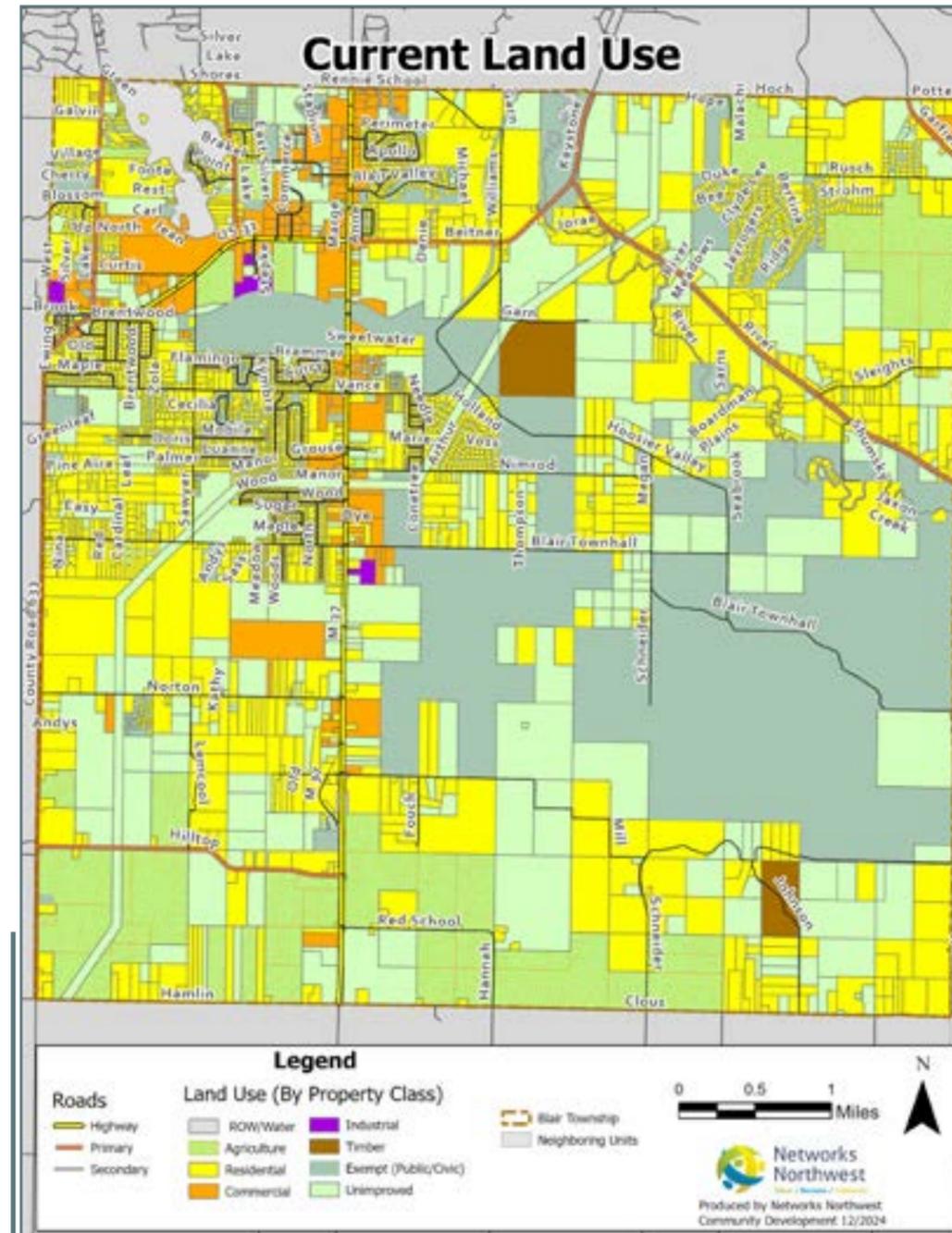
Employer Density Findings

- There are a total of 291 employers representing 199 different employment classifications.
- Density of employment is highest along the highway corridors of M-37 and US 31, particularly in the vicinity of ‘Chums Corners’.
- Higher density of employers aligns with locations of water and sewer infrastructure.
- There are locations of employers in areas of residential neighborhoods and rural areas. Some of these employers may be cottage industry and home occupations, while others may be non-conforming uses in residential settings.

Current Land Use

Parcel Property Classification is the assigned existing use as determined by the Township Assessor and County Equalization Department. Property Classifications can tell us a lot about existing land uses across the Township, as the classification system accounts for residential, commercial, industrial, agriculture and public lands (i.e. ‘exempt’). Classification also denotes whether a parcel is improved with a structure or is unimproved without a structure.

Map 6 displays current land use as defined by property classification. For purpose of this analysis only classifications for residential, commercial or industrial parcels which are improved (*meaning they have a structure or improvement*) are identified. For agricultural lands all areas classified as agriculture are included as they are actively farming. All parcels without an improvement are considered “unimproved” for the purposes of land use planning.



Map 6: Current Land Use

Current Land Use Findings

- Exempt public lands displayed in darker olive green, overlay vast areas of wetlands and riparian corridors.
- Agricultural lands displayed in green with infill of small orange dots show areas of agriculture production align with areas of prime or locally significant soils. This will be further demonstrated in Chapter 3.
- Residential classifications displayed in yellow, are assigned to an entire parcel when a single principle structure is present and no agricultural or other activity is occurring on the land. Therefore residential density is not displayed, only use which is shown extending far from the “urban core”.
- Land use classification details will be expanded upon in Chapter 3.

Existing Zoning and Land Use Directives

Zoning Districts are the geographical application of land use regulation, which follow the guidance structured through a community’s land use district policy. Zoning districts are structured with a ‘purpose and intent’ which outline what the district supports and how it is supported. The districts are then set with a schedule of regulations that outline the category of uses allowed and what are considered ‘bulk requirements’, which dictate density or minimum parcel size, setbacks, height limitations, and impervious surface coverage; to name a few of the regulatory factors. Patterns of existing development have been guided by existing land use policy and zoning, thus districts and their requirements must be analyzed for the patterns they create.

Zoning Districts & Purpose

Table : Zoning Districts & Purpose

Zoning District	District Purpose
Agricultural District	District is composed of those areas of the Township where the principal use is farming and related activities.
Boardman Valley District	Comply with the land use regulations established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)’s Boardman River Natural River Zoning ordinance.
Commercial / Manufacturing	Provide an area for people to shop, work, recreate, and provide services.
Residential Neighborhood	Focus of this district is to promote healthy family living by creating developments that are walk able, affordable, and desirable. Intent is to allow for variety of housing options, pedestrian scale, small retail, and small-scale commercial elements.
Recreation-Conservation District	Principal use is the conservation, management, and low-impact utilization of natural resources. District is to be used primarily for open space and/or recreation-oriented purposes, however does allow for single family dwellings and SLU.
Village of Blackwood	Form based code/design standards, with attention to small village development, pedestrian scale, and preservation of existing development patterns
Industrial Storage Overlay	Least impactful area of the community to place obtrusive land uses.
Manufactured Home District	To encourage a suitable environment for families and persons living in a manufactured home rather than a single-family structure.

Zoning District Bulk Standards

Table 2: Zoning District Bulk Standards

Standards	Agri-cultural District	Boardman Valley District	Commercial / Manufacturing	Residential Neighborhood	Recreation-Con-servation District	Village of Blackwood
Min Lot Area	2 ac	40,000 ft ²	***	N/A	5 acres	
Min Lot Width	330’	200’	***	N/A **	330’	50’
Max Height	35’	25’	55’	35’	25’	25’
Min. Dwelling Area	600 ft ²	800 ft ²	***	600 ft ²	800 ft ²	600 ft ²
Max Lot Coverage %	20%	10%	N/A	N/A	10%	
Set-backs	Front	50’	25’	50’	25’	20’
	Side	20’	15’	****	10’	50’
	Rear	30’	25’	25’	20’	50’
	Water Yard	*****	100’ *	*****	50’	*****

Table 2 Notes

* 200 feet on every new parcel that has river frontage on the Boardman River, Jaxon Creek, Beitner Creek, or the designated tributary as shown on the Official Zoning Map.

** 60 foot width requirement for metes and bounds lots.

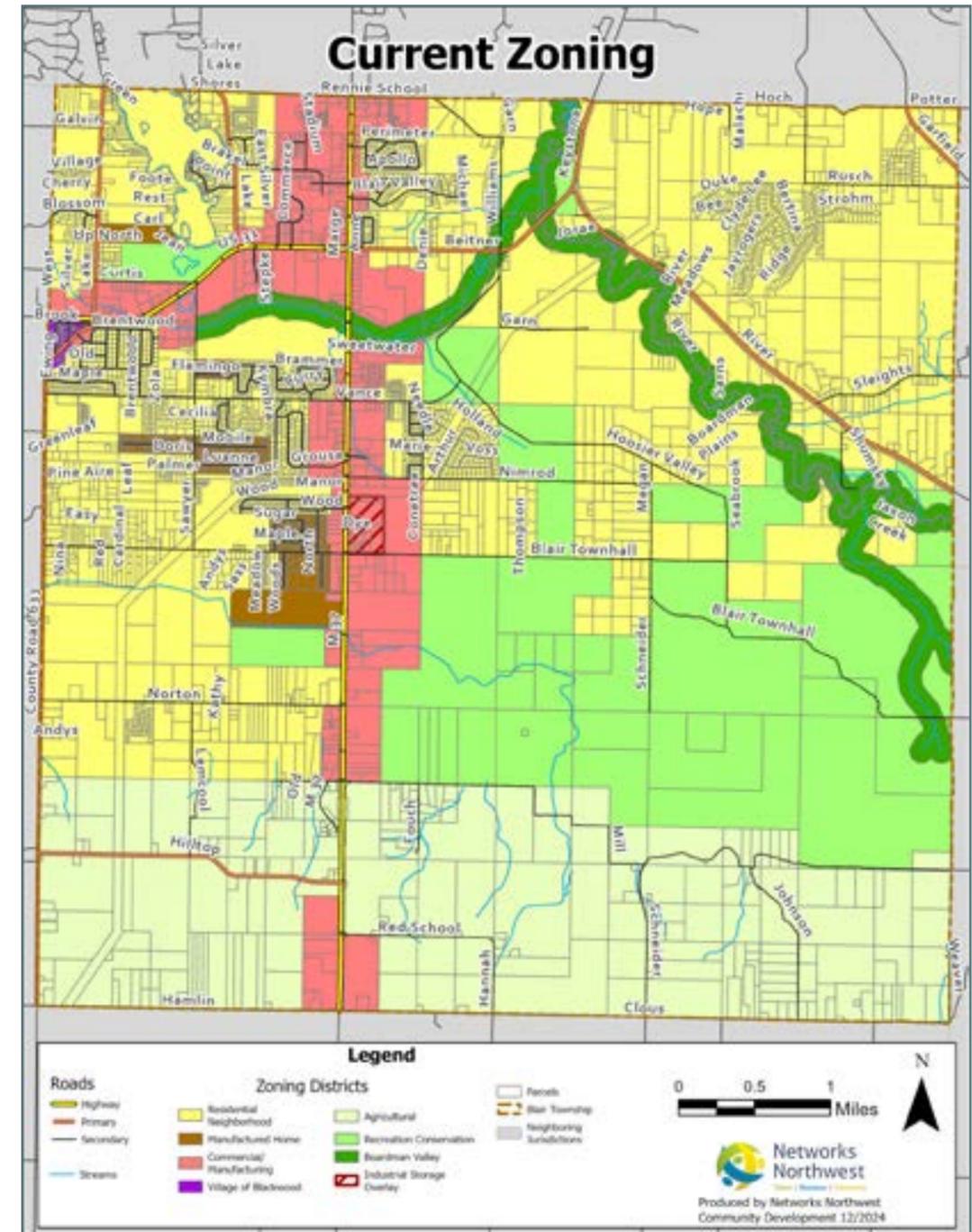
*** Determined by use.

**** No side setback requirement if both structures are zoned CM.

***** Setback from Silver Lake shall be 50 feet.

Characteristics of the Zoning District Standards

- There is only one residential district which doesn’t dictate a minimum lot size. This is sound practice in areas which promote high density, but can lead to land fragmentation and sprawl. Additional districts could support varied density.
- No minimum lot size in the Residential Neighborhood District should promote density with infrastructure. This provision should remain for desired high density residential districts.
- Commercial Manufacturing District lot size is determined by use which promotes flexibility.
- Agricultural District 2 acre min lots doesn’t promote agriculture or open space preservation.
- Recreation Conservation District minimum lot size that pertains to areas which are not held within public trust is 5 acres, this could lead to land fragmentation.
- Minimum structure size in several districts is 600 ft², and 800 ft² in others. Uniformity of applying a 600 ft² minimum residential structure size in all districts allows for greater flexibility.



Map 7: Current Zoning

Neighboring Zoning Alignment

Analysis of Neighboring Jurisdiction Zoning Alignment

Review and comparison of the Blair Township Zoning Districts along shared boundaries of neighboring local jurisdictions, allows analysis to identify commonalities and differences of the units of government in regard to land use regulations. Analysis is performed for those units of government which directly abut and share a boundary with Blair Township, those which sit diagonally from the Township corners are not included in the analysis. Map 8 displays the abutting zoning districts, with the neighboring local unit zoning districts having colors which match those represented on their individual zoning maps acquired from local government websites.

The following communities are included in this review with locations identified on Map 8.

- Garfield Charter Township borders Blair along the North jurisdictional line.
- Paradise Township and East Bay Charter Township both border Blair along the East jurisdictional line.
- Mayfield Township borders Blair along the South jurisdictional line.
- Green Lake Township borders Blair along the West jurisdictional line.

Findings:

Detailed district to district analysis is located within Appendix B. Summarized narratives are outlined within this section.

Charter Township of Garfield:

The zoning districts which abut along the boundary with Garfield Township should be considered compatible with the placement of required buffering and landscaping as outlined by the Blair Township Zoning Ordinance. Uses align rather well, with some variation in bulk requirements.

Charter Township of East Bay:

Despite variation in density regulations between the two communities zoning districts, the primary uses in both adjacent jurisdiction's zoning districts are residential and therefore the zoning districts alignment is considered compatible.

Paradise Township:

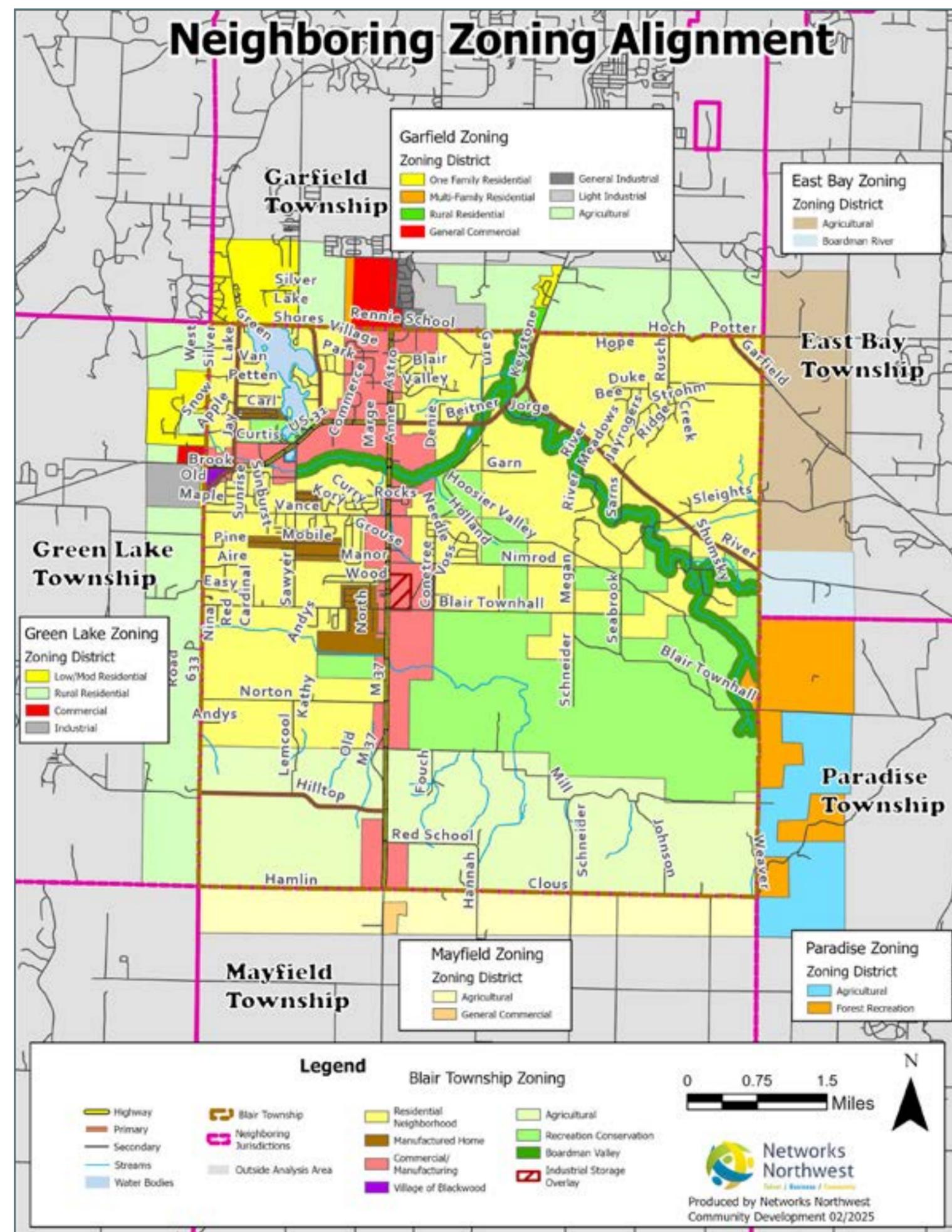
With little variation in uses and similar densities, the zoning districts should be considered compatible even in light of varied bulk regulations (referenced as setback and dwelling size minimums).

Mayfield Township:

Great variation between the Agricultural District within Mayfield Township and the Commercial/Manufacturing District of Blair Township should necessitate proactive approaches to screening and buffering of developments in Blair where they abut residential or agricultural areas in Mayfield Township. Alignment of the agricultural districts in both communities supports a seamless transition.

Green Lake Township:

There is little to no variation or conflicts of uses in neighboring zoning districts between the two communities. Regulatory measures which support landscaping and screening in areas of commercial uses compliment adjacent development, while residential uses at varied density provide a uniform land use across jurisdictional boundaries. The neighboring zoning districts of these communities should be considered compatible.



Map 8: Neighboring Zoning Alignment

Blair Township Current Build-Out Analysis

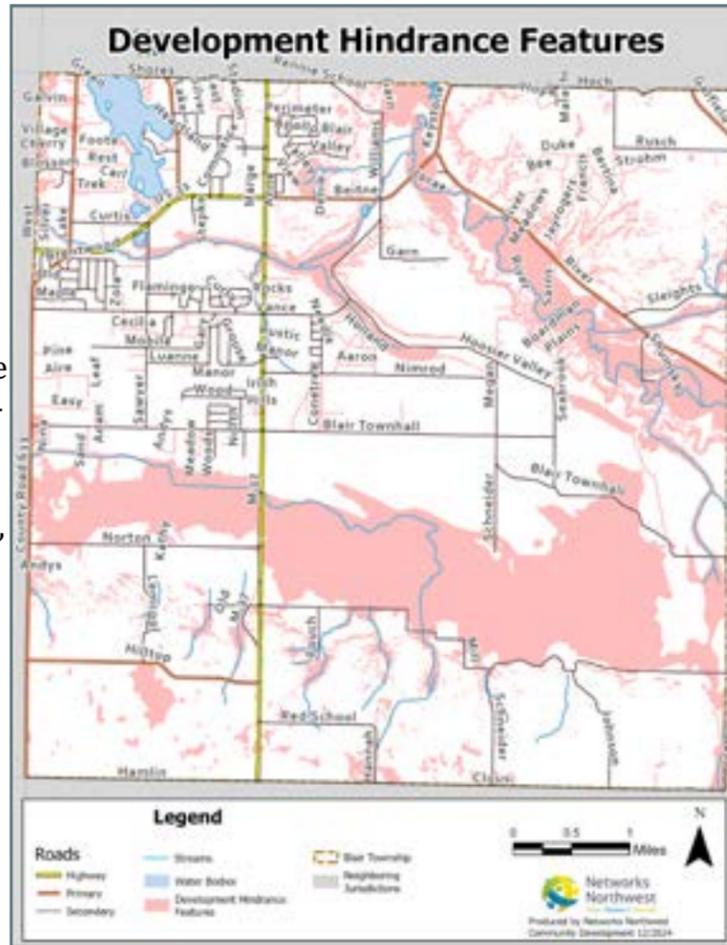
A build-out analysis is a method of reviewing available land for development, and coming to an estimate of the number of potential parcels or tracts of land that could be developed. This in turn can allow for an estimate of housing units, commercial sites or industrial properties under existing zoning regulation. This build out analysis for Blair Township is outlined for the current zoning regulations in this section.

Development Hindrance Features

Understanding where development can occur, should initiate with an understanding of where development *cannot*, or *should not* occur. Development Hindrance Features are the combination of on ground feature information that limit or greatly impact site design and development or are of environmental importance. Impacts can be realized through expenses that occur from building in areas of steep slopes, limitations on development such as in areas of State protected wetlands, limitations imposed by Right-Of-Way (ROW) protections along roadways, or due to local environmental concerns.

Hindrance Features are the 'rose hue' displayed on Map 9, and include:

- Roadway width and ROW setback
- Riparian corridors with a 50' setback
- Part 303 wetlands
- Steep Slopes (Greater than 25%)



Map 9: Development Hindrance Features

Land Use Vacancy Analysis

Utilizing property classifications from Grand Traverse County, Networks Northwest was able to identify potential parcels for development purposes according to the following queries:

- Property Assessed as Vacant Commercial (having no structure)
- Property Assessed as Vacant Industrial (having no structure)
- Property Assessed as Vacant Residential (having no structure)
- Property Assessed as Occupied Residential of 10 acres or Greater (having a single house on 10+ac)

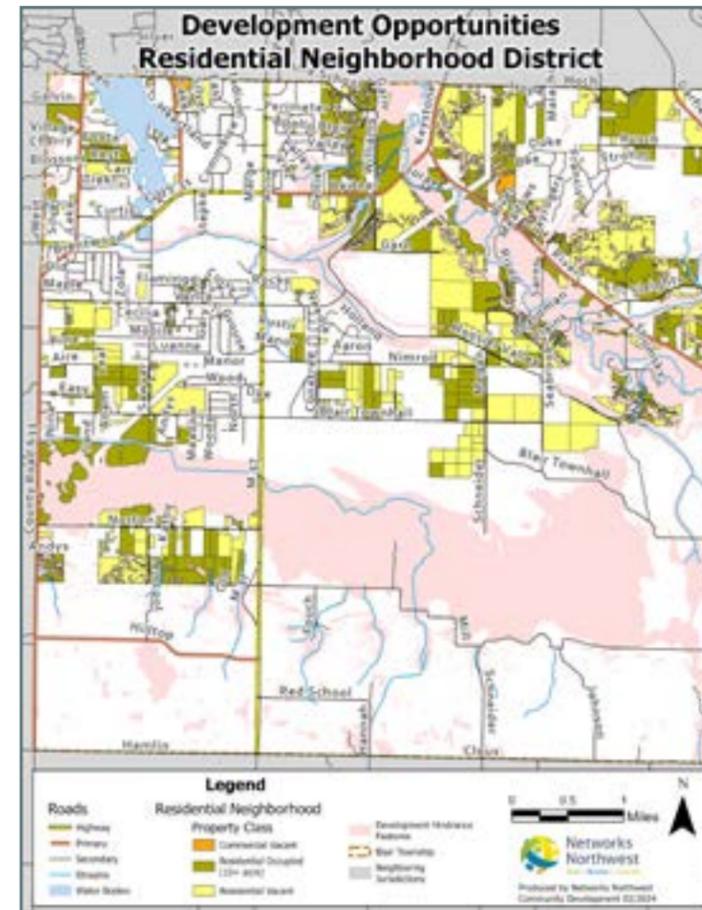
Once the parcels were identified the hindrance features were deleted from the selected parcels.

Alignment of Vacancy Analysis with Zoning Districts

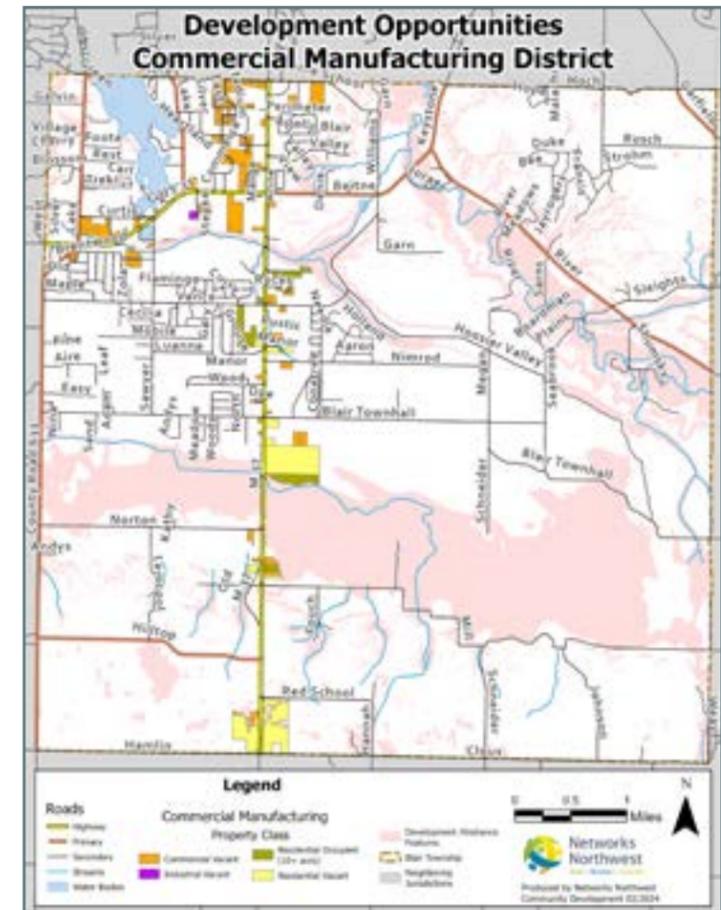
The next step was to identify where the parcels are located in reference to the underlying zoning districts. This step allows for determination of the regulatory measures that would be applied to the parcels in question, and the acreage that is available within each district. All parcels of .12 acres or less 'remnant parcels' were removed from all district files and parcels of less than 2 acres were removed from the Agricultural District.

Development Opportunities

The maps below display available unhindered parcels in two of the Township's existing zoning districts. All existing districts development opportunity maps are displayed in Appendix C.



Map 10: Development Opportunities Residential Neighborhood District



Map 11: Development Opportunities Commercial Manufacturing District

Development Opportunities by the Numbers

Table 3, below, displays the available unhindered acreage available for development per zoning district. This data provides the ability to determine potential development density. This is accomplished by removing a percentage of the area for setbacks, new roads, utility ROW and lot coverage. Then dividing the remaining acreage by the allowable density or minimum lot size. This is detailed in Chapter 3 > Section 'Land Use' > Sub-Section 'Housing'.

Parcel Class/ Zoning District	Commercial Vacant (ac)	Industrial Vacant (ac)	Residential Vacant (ac)	Residential Occupied (10+ acres) (ac)
Residential Neighborhood	30.20	No Parcels	2,041.83	1,763.43
Manufactured Home	No Parcels	No Parcels	52.30	9.24
Commercial Manufacturing	277.87	3.3	198.81	63.28
Boardman Valley	3.08	4.38	26.61	103.18
Agricultural	No Parcels	No Parcels	1,113.95	1,116.34
Area with Water Infrastructure	264.58	3.29	617.65	617.46

Table 3: Unhindered Acreage By Property Class Available Per Zoning District

Chapter 3 Present Conditions

The Present Conditions of Blair Township display a community that spans many societal roles that include residential neighborhoods which house families and workforce as a member of the 'Greater Traverse Area', commercial and industrial areas which promote employment and support commerce, significant natural features which sustain nature and ecology, vast public lands linking recreational opportunities and access to natural features, and rural large lot homesteads and farms that remain as a testament to the Township's roots having persevered through continued growth and development that continues to expand through the Township.

This Chapter brings together information and data to expand analysis of the population, land use, natural features, civic and services, infrastructure, transportation and place-based conditions. The information meets the guidance of State Legislative requirements, but more importantly is fundamental to gaining an understanding of the community and providing guidance for direction of leadership for establishing updated policies to meet their vision.

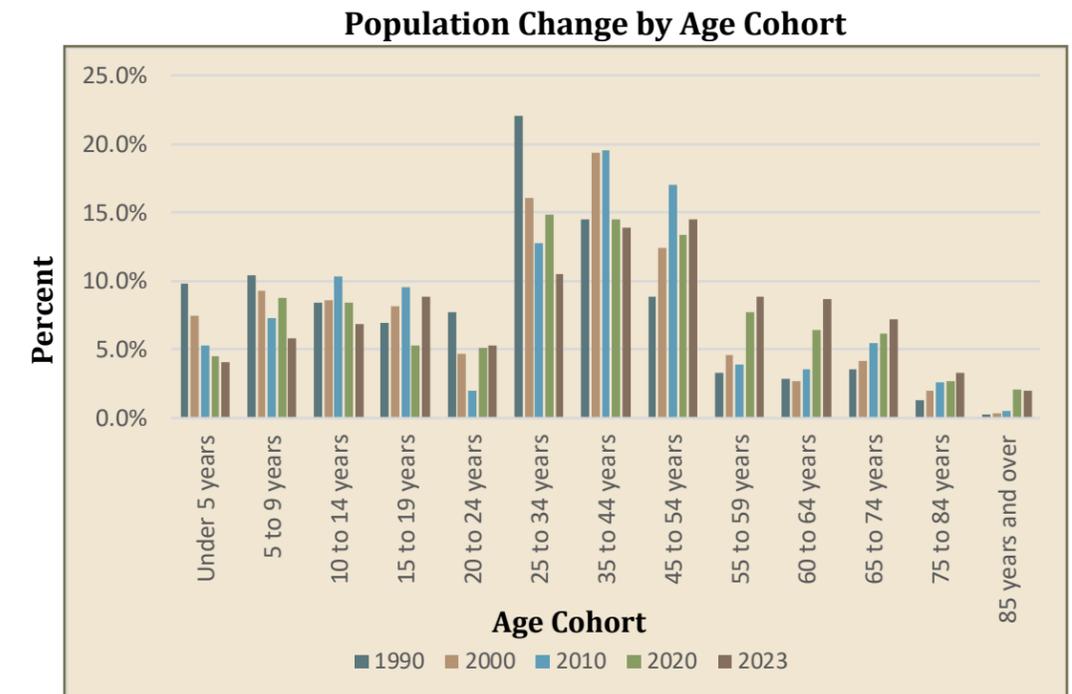
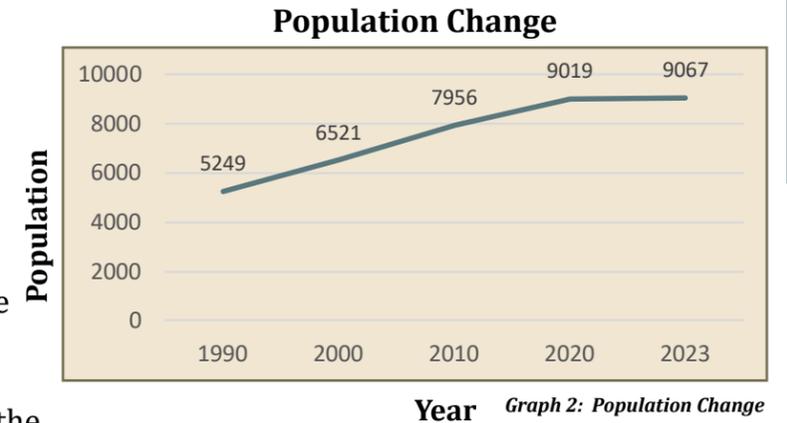
Aerial view of Turtle Creek Stadium and Surrounding Area
Photo Credit: Nicole Blonshine

Community Profile

The community profile utilizes available data from sources which include the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Census Bureau, and Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), to provide a data driven picture of the make-up of the communities' socio and economic trends.

Population and People

Blair Township has shown a steady growth in overall population with a 73% increase from 1990 to 2023 (see Graph 2). Change in population across age cohorts displays that the increase is accounted for in part by families with children as there has been an increase in the age group 15 to 19 years, but more so there is a larger proportion of older individuals of/ or near retirement age as the 55 to 84 years of age cohorts have seen significant growth over the past 13 years (see Graph 3).



Graph 3: Population Change by Age Cohort

Median Age by Year

Geography/Year	2010	2020	2024	2029
Blair Township	34.4	37.6	39.5	40.3
Grand Traverse County	41.3	43.4	43.8	44.9
Northwest Michigan	44	46.8	47	47.6
State of Michigan	38.8	40.1	40.5	41.6

Table 4: Median Age

Median Age provides additional evidence of an aging population as the median age has increased steadily since 2010 and is forecast to continue, although it lags behind, and will increase at a rate less so than that of the State, County and Region (see Table 4).

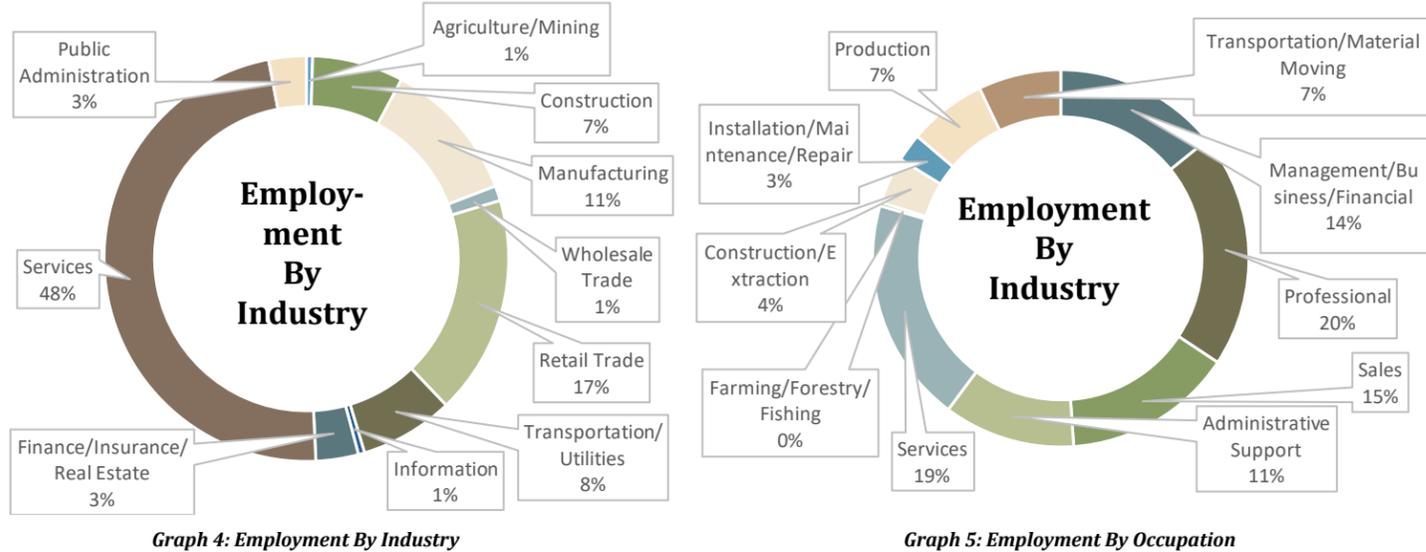
The population of Blair Township is well educated with only 6.5% of the population having less than a High School diploma, and 62.6% having an some college or greater degree.

Workforce and Local Economic Characteristics

The Blair Township labor force is strong with 97.2% of the civilian employable population of 16+ years of age having gainful employment. A median household income of \$69,033 in 2024 is 14% less than the County, and is forecast to increase to \$76,716 in 2029.

Services Industry Accounts for 48% of Employed Residents

Includes the following service industries: Warehousing and transportation, Information services, Securities and investment services, Professional services, Waste management, Health care and social assistance, and Arts, entertainment, and recreation



Graph 4: Employment By Industry

Graph 5: Employment By Occupation

Four Categories of Occupation Account for 68% of Employed Residents
Professional(20%), Services(19%), Sales (15%), Management/Business/Financial (14%)

Location Quotients

The measure of the local concentration of industry and occupation against the national average provides a location quotient (LQ) score, with scores of 1 or greater having a higher concentration of that industry and occupation. LQ measures employment (i.e. jobs) in an area, and is not a measure of people employment. The LQ scores for top industries and occupations with LQ scores greater than '1.0' are displayed in the tables below. (See Appendix D for additional LQ Data)

Table 5: Top Industries by LQ

Top Industries	Employed	Blair Percent	US Percent	Location Quotient
Accommodation/Food Services	608	12%	7%	1.75
Retail Trade	892	18%	11%	1.67
Transportation/Warehousing	350	7%	5%	1.35
Manufacturing	583	11%	10%	1.14
Health Care/Social Assistance	772	15%	14%	1.07
Construction	375	7%	7%	1.06

Table 6: Top Occupations by LQ

Top Occupations	Employed	Blair Percent	US Percent	Location Quotient
Office/Administrative Support	575	11%	10%	1.67
Food Preparation/Serving	399	8%	5%	1.35
Sales and Sales Related	744	15%	9%	1.14
Building Maintenance	174	3%	3%	1.07
Healthcare Practitioner	474	9%	6%	1.06

The LQ scores display that employment opportunity within the Township is not heavily reliant upon a single industry, with employment for all categories remaining below 20%. Employed population data displays that 60.2% of the employed population that live within the Township are classified as white collar with blue collar (20.5%) and Services (19.3%) making up the remainder. Five industries account for 55% of employment opportunities in the Township: Accommodation/Food Services, Retail Trade, Transportation/Warehousing, Manufacturing, Construction. These industries have high amounts of 'jobs' that are classified as 'blue collar or services', which import workforce from neighboring communities based upon the larger proportion of the 'white collar' classification of the employed resident population.

Top Employment Opportunities Import Blue Collar and Services Workforce into the Township
Continued coordination with neighboring local units of government with support for land use allowances, a variety of housing options, and expansion of water/sewer infrastructure can provide options for talent to site closer to employment, and allow for industry growth.

Shift Share

Shift-share analysis displays the share of employment and change of that employment for specific industries over a set period time. Shift-share analysis is provided for the time period of 2010 to 2022 for Grand Traverse County, with the full table of results provided in Appendix D. It is important to note that thorough review of individual industry growth and decline is required as an industry can drastically decline, but the share of employment may be so small that it doesn't create extreme hardships; alternatively an industry may grow immensely with employment share becoming so great that economic development efforts may be best utilized to support diversifying industry share.

Shift Share Analysis Displays

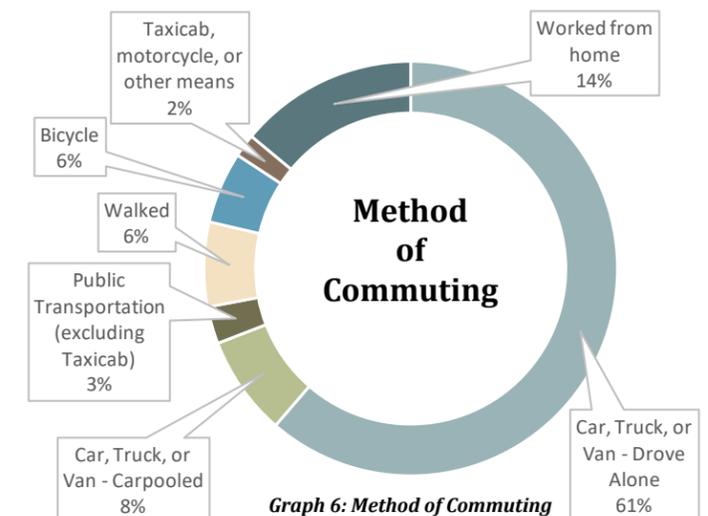
Largest '**share**' of industry employment is in Retail Trade, and Health Care and Social Assistance.
Largest '**growth**' of industry and employment occurred in Transportation and Warehousing, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing .

Largest '**decline**' of industry and employment occurred in Mining, and Military.

Place of Work & Commuting

The vast majority of employed residents of Blair Township work within Grand Traverse County at 85.2%. Most have a rather short commute to their location of work with the most common means of commuting occurring by use of one's own automobile. The Township exceeds the State in commuting via public transit use by 2.1%, commuting by bicycle by 5.6%, commuting through walking by 4% and also exceeds the State average for works from home by 1.8%.

Workforce Short Commute
52.9% of Blair's workforce commutes 14 minutes or less. 80.6% of Blair's workforce commutes 24 minutes or less.



Economic Dependency and Wealth

Economic Dependency Ratio (EDR) is the measure of ‘non-workers’ relative to the number of employed individuals in a geographic area. The ratio compares non-workers for every 100 workers, and includes all members of the population who are not employed, excluding prisoners and service members. A score less than 100 indicates that the ratio weighs towards the workforce being greater than the identified dependent. In reference to the Township’s analysis, having ratios that align or are less than the national average would be considered good. Blair Township has lower EDR in all categories, with the highest ratio for ‘Child’ which is supporting evidence of families within the community. The low EDR’s may represent economic growth, and less dependency placed on members of the workforce.

Dependency/Geography	Blair Township	United States
Total	81.3	103.4
Child (<16)	37.8	39.8
Working-Age (16-64)	19.9	36.6
Senior (65+)	23.6	27.9

Table 7: Economic Dependency Ratio

Wealth Index is the measure of the standard of living and financial stability of an areas households rather than one’s ‘worth’. Wealth is the accumulation of resources, physical possessions & property, or large amounts of money. Wealth is what remains once a householder’s earning power has faded. An index of 100 displays an areas wealth is on par with the national average, an index below 100 displays an areas lower than average wealth.

Blair’s Wealth Index

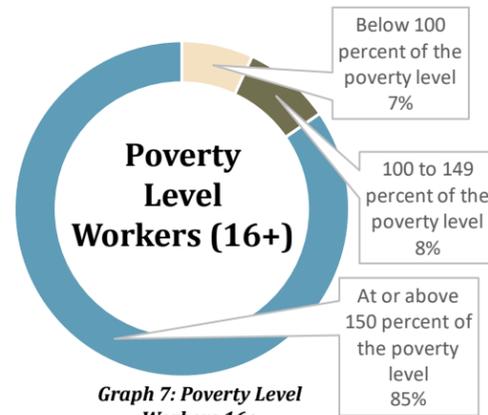
75

Blair’s index of 75 displays lower than average wealth, but may be indicative of younger families, and a stronger workforce of middle and late age workers with fewer wealthy retirees in the Township. This would coincide with several other data points including median age, population cohorts, workforce and the Economic Dependency Ratio.

Unemployment and Poverty

It is important to note that unemployment doesn’t directly correlate to poverty, as poverty is a measure of income against the federal poverty guideline for a household of a certain size. Other indices displayed here convey the message that gainful employment doesn’t equate to wealth.

Unemployment in Blair Township is extremely low at 2.8%, which is lower than that of Grand Traverse County at 4.4%. The County has the 7th lowest rate in the State as of December 2024.



Graph 7: Poverty Level Workers 16+

84.6% of Workers 16+ Years Make 1.5 Times the Federal Poverty Level

VS.

37% of Households are ALICE

Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE)

Financial stability is an equation that must take into account factors such as housing, transportation, childcare, health costs, food costs, etc. ALICE identifies the basic cost of living and displays that the Township has a much greater number of ALICE households than both the County and State. These are households of employed individuals (sometimes with 2 jobs or more) who struggle to meet the basic needs of their households.

Table 8: Percentage of ALICE Households by Geography

Geography	% of ALICE Households
Blair Township	37%
Grand Traverse County	19%
State of Michigan	28%

Households and Housing

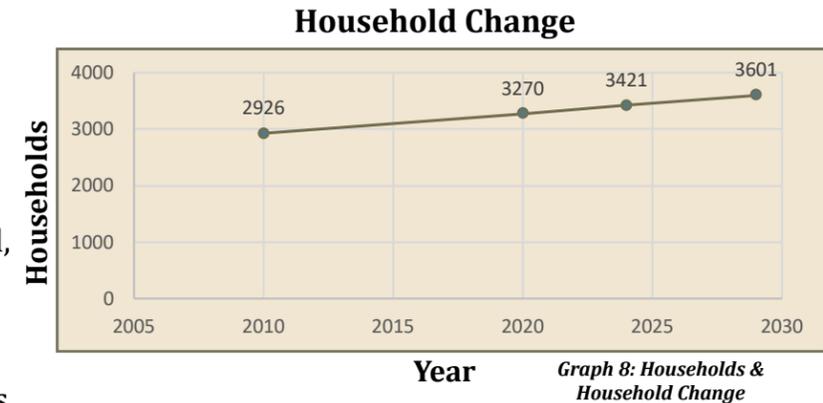
Monitoring structures and how they change along with who is occupying those structures provides insight into the quantity and type/size of housing that should be supported in the community. In most communities it is evident that a range of housing options is necessary for a wide range of household sizes and incomes.

Households are a measure of a population and are defined by the US Census as a group of people who share a residence, and may be related or unrelated.

Housing Units are a measure of living space and are defined by the US Census as a separate living space that is intended to be occupied (this can refer to a house, apartment, condo, or mobile home).

Household Summary

Households have slowly increased in Blair Township with 16.9% growth from 2010 through 2025. The average size of Blair Township households has slowly decreased, but is still greater in size than that of the County (See Table 9). Alignment with data points such as age cohorts and median age which display there are younger individuals in the Township in relation to the County, continue to support Blair is comprised in significant part by families. This is further supported by 44% of households having 3 or more people (See Graph 9).

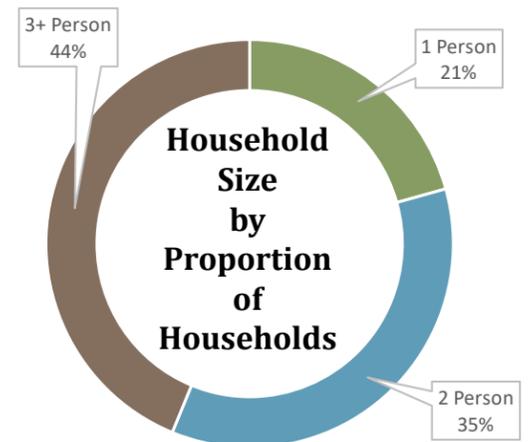


Graph 8: Households & Household Change

Average Household Size

Geography/Year	2010	2020	2024	2029
Blair Township	2.79	2.73	2.69	2.64
Grand Traverse County	2.38	2.33	2.31	2.27

Table 9: Average Household Size & Change



Graph 9: Household Size by Proportion of Households

Housing Units & Change

Blair Township has seen an increase of 155 housing units from 2020 to 2024, with a projected increase of an additional 175 units projected by 2029.

3,575
Blair Township
Housing Units in 2024



Graph 10: Housing Units & Change

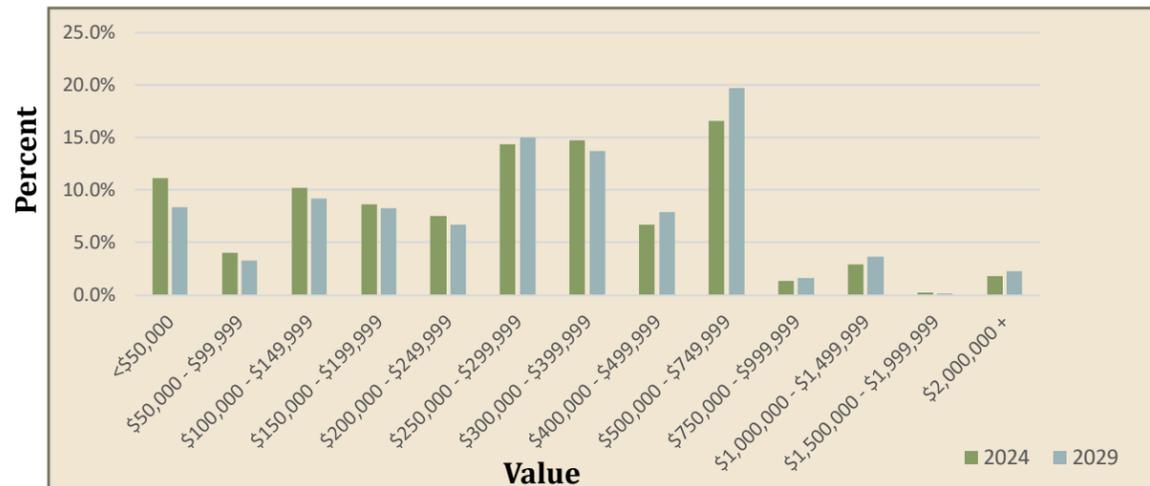
Housing Units by the Numbers

The majority of Blair Township’s housing stock is owner occupied, with a ratio of greater than 5 to 1, of owner units to rentals. Of the total allotment of 3,575 housing units in the year 2025, 154 of those units are vacant. The largest proportion of vacant housing units are considered ‘Seasonal/Recreational/Occasional Use’ at 36%, this is followed by ‘For Rent (18%)’ and ‘For Sale Only (18%)’.

27% of occupied housing units are owned ‘Free and Clear’ by the owner, with 73% of housing units having a mortgage or loan that is secured by the homeowner. The rate of percent of income for mortgage is calculated at 25.40%. This bodes well for homeowners and those pursuing homeownership, as the 28% rule states one should spend 28% or less of one’s monthly income on a mortgage payment.

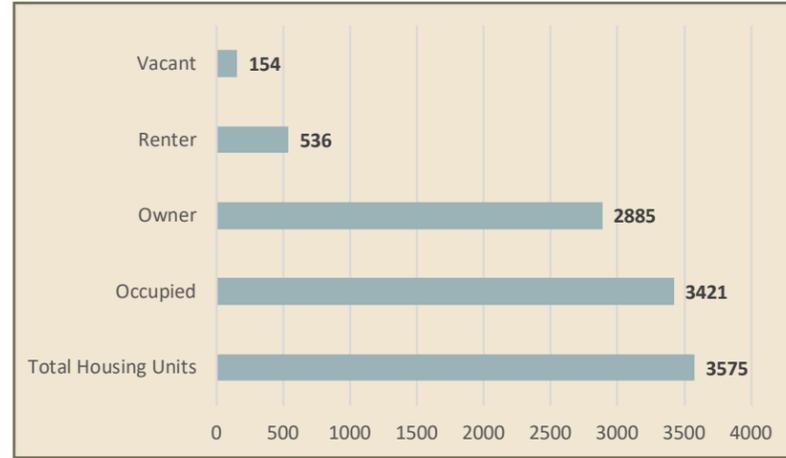
The Housing Affordability Index measures the financial ability of a typical household to purchase an existing home in an area. An index of 100 indicates that on average an area has sufficient household income to afford a home. Blair Township has an index of 95. This indicates that home ownership is slightly less affordable than the average.

Housing Units by Value (2024-2029)

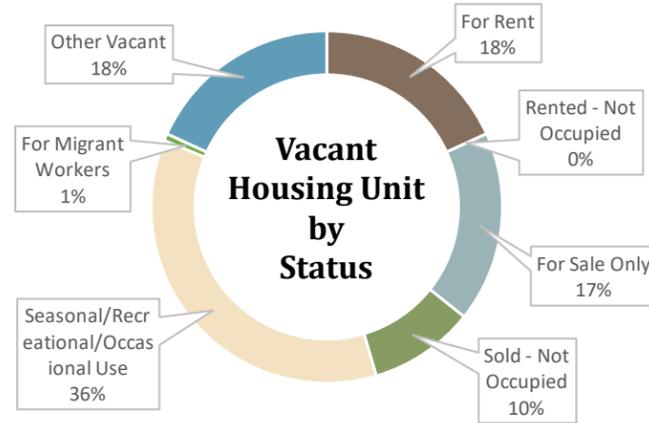


Graph 13: Housing Units by Value

Housing Units by Occupancy



Graph 11: Housing Units by Occupancy



Graph 12: Vacant Housing Unit by Status

Housing values across the nation and locally continue to increase. Graph 13 displays the percent of housing units by value. Units are projected to increase in value from 2024 to 2029 with units moving from a lower value category to a greater value category, and new units likely of single-family nature categorized into higher value categories after being erected.

Tapestries

ESRI’s Tapestry Segmentation is a tool that uses demographic and socioeconomic data to define and classify like groups of a community’s population into segments. The segments are summarized and provide an overview of the typical households that are included in that segment. The summaries display information such as socioeconomic traits, data related to who makes up the segment, and segment density throughout the United States. There are 5 defined segments that comprise 97.4% of the population of Blair Township. The segments and their proportion of the community members are provided in Table 10, with a sample of characteristics displayed in this section. The individual tapestries are color coordinated as established in the table, which carry over to the narratives and graphs. All detailed tapestry data is contained in Appendix E.

Tapestry Segment	Segment Percent of Household Population
Middleburg	46.50%
Down the Road	15.60%
Workday Drive	12.10%
The Great Outdoors	11.70%
Southern Satellites	11.50%

Middleburg neighborhoods transformed from the easy pace of country living to semi-rural subdivisions in the last decade, as the housing boom spread beyond large metropolitan cities. Residents are traditional, family-oriented consumers. Still more country than rock and roll, they are thrifty but willing to carry some debt and are already investing in their futures. They rely on their smartphones and mobile devices to stay in touch and pride themselves on their expertise. They prefer to buy American and travel in the US. This market is younger but growing in size and assets.

Down the Road is a mix of low-density, semi-rural neighborhoods in large metropolitan areas; half are located in the South, with the rest primarily in the West and Midwest. Almost half of householders live in mobile homes; more than two-fifths live in single-family homes. These are young, family-oriented consumers who value their traditions. Workers are in service, retail trade, manufacturing, and construction industries, with higher proportions in agriculture and mining, compared to the US.

Workday Drive is an affluent, family-oriented market with a country flavor. Residents are partial to new housing away from the bustle of the city but close enough to commute to professional job centers. Life in this suburban wilderness offsets the hectic pace of two working parents with growing children. They favor time-saving devices, like banking on-line or housekeeping services, and family-oriented pursuits.

The Great Outdoors neighborhoods are found in pastoral settings throughout the United States. Consumers are educated empty nester’s living an active but modest lifestyle. Their focus is land. They are more likely to invest in real estate or a vacation home than stocks. They are active gardeners and partial to homegrown and home-cooked meals. Although retirement beckons, most of these residents still work, with incomes slightly above the US level.

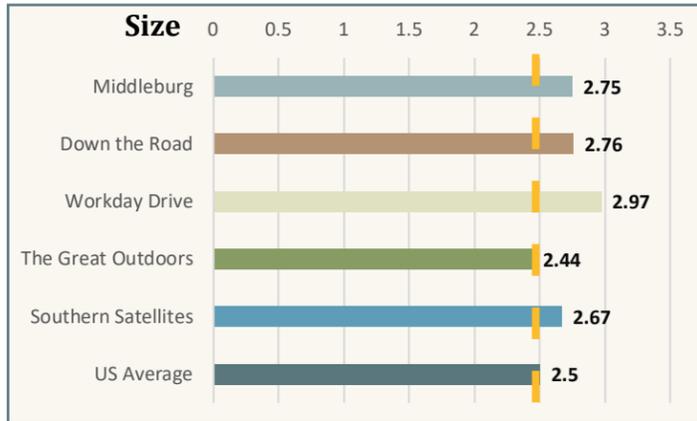
Southern Satellites is the second largest market found in rural settlements but mostly within metropolitan areas located primarily in the South. This market is typically slightly older, settled married-couple families, who own their homes. Two-thirds of the homes are single-family structures; almost a third are mobile homes. Median household income and home value are below average. Workers are employed in a variety of industries, such as manufacturing, health care, retail trade, and construction, with higher proportions in mining and agriculture than the US. Residents enjoy country living, preferring outdoor activities and DIY home projects.

Tapestry Segment	Segment Percent of Household Population
Middleburg	46.50%
Down the Road	15.60%
Workday Drive	12.10%
The Great Outdoors	11.70%
Southern Satellites	11.50%

Tapestry Segment Comparison Graphs

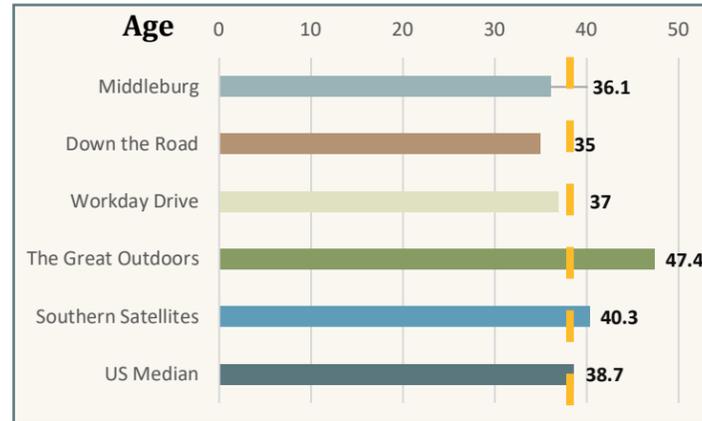
"Note orange dashed lines identify US median or average"

Average Household Size



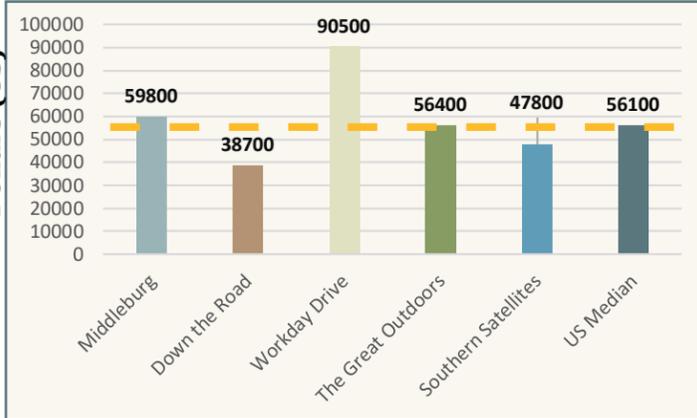
Graph 14: Tapestry Segments Average Household Size

Median Age



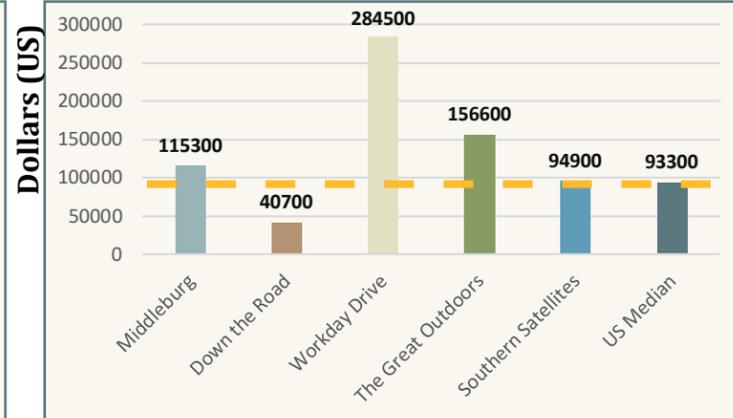
Graph 15: Tapestry Segments Median Age

Median Income



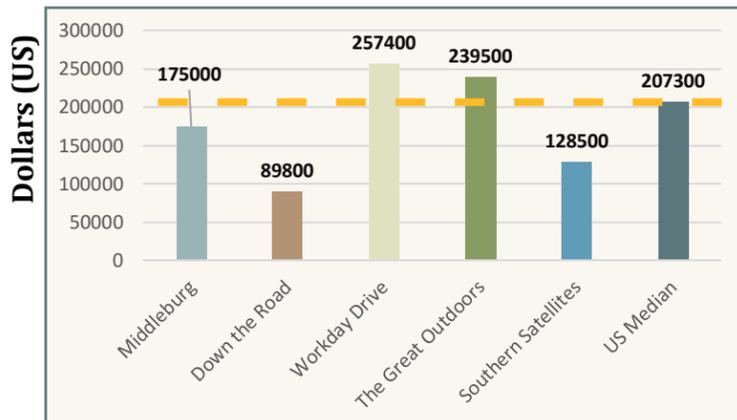
Graph 16: Tapestry Segments Median Income

Median Net Worth



Graph 17: Tapestry Segments Median Net Worth

Median Home Value



Graph 18: Tapestry Segments Median Home Value

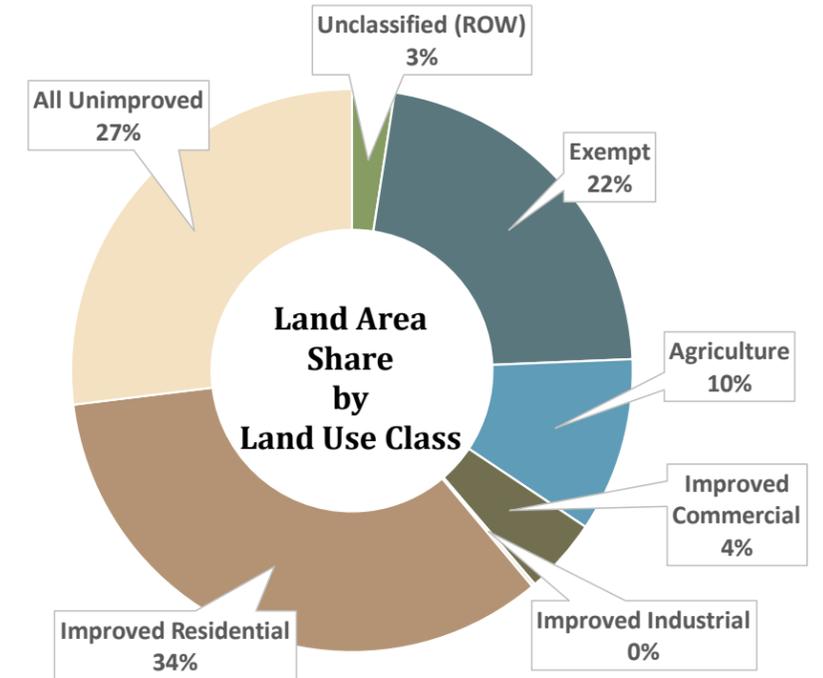
Land Use

Characteristics of Blair Township's land use was introduced in Chapter 2, with identification of growth patterns and the structure of land uses that arose from the policy and regulatory measures which led to those patterns. Additional detail and data follow which outline the proportions of land use and what can be expected from current trends as supported by policy and regulation. These findings will set the stage for the next chapter which will introduce Best Management Practices that can be undertaken, if desired, to adjust direction of growth, density, conservation, site design, and layout.

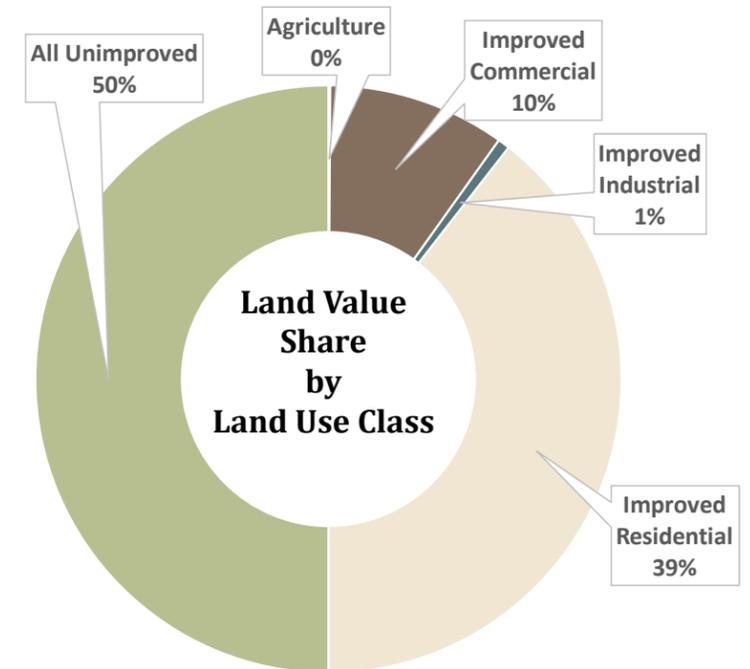
Land Use by Area & Value

The predominant land use of the Township by area is improved residential development. As previously noted a small parcel with a residential structure (<1 ac) is classified the same as a large parcel (>5 ac) with a residential structure. Thus large areas of residential are classified and assessed even when a structure may only occupy a small portion of a parcel. All unimproved land is second in area, followed by exempt (primarily public lands) and agricultural. Improved commercial and industrial occupy 4% and 0.2% respectively. In regard to land value, all unimproved land accounts for 50% of the total value. With the remaining categories in order of greater value being improved residential, commercial, and industrial followed last by agricultural lands.

The importance of land use, area, density patterns, and value; and their impacts on community services is outlined in "Cost of Community Services Studies".



Graph 20: Land Area Share by Land Use Class



Graph 21: Land Value Share by Land Use Class

Land Use	Assessed Value (x2)
Agriculture	\$3,152,200.00
Improved Commercial	\$311,598,000.00
Improved Industrial	\$21,121,600.00
Improved Residential	\$1,256,638,800.00
All Unimproved	\$1,592,510,600.00
TOTAL	\$3,185,021,200.00

Table 10: Assessed Land Value by Property Class

Cost of Community Services

Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies are a case study approach used to determine the fiscal contribution of existing local land uses. COCS studies are a snapshot in time of costs versus revenues for each type of land use. They do not predict future costs or revenue, or the impact of growth. They do provide a baseline of current information to help local officials and citizens to make informed land use and policy decisions.¹

COCS Studies Involve Three Basic Steps

1. Collect data on local revenues and expenditures.
2. Group revenues and expenditures and allocate them to the community's major land use categories.
3. Analyze the data and calculate revenue to expenditure ratios for each land use category.

Since the mid 1980's the American Farmland Trust began the development of COCS studies and since that time has completed at least 151 studies in communities across the United States. What the studies have displayed is that unencumbered urbanization, particularly that of residential 'sprawl' presents challenges to communities services. While it is true that an acre of land with a new house generates more total revenue than an acre of hay or corn, this tells little about a community's bottom line. In areas where agriculture and forestry are major industries, it is especially important to consider the real property tax contribution of privately owned working lands. Working and other open lands may generate less revenue than residential, commercial or industrial properties, but they require little public infrastructure and few services.¹

COCS studies conducted over the last 30 years show working lands generate more public revenues than they receive back in public services. Their impact on community coffers is similar to that of other commercial and industrial land uses. On average, because residential land uses do not cover their costs, they must be subsidized by other community land uses. Converting agricultural land to residential land use should not be seen as a way to balance local budgets.¹

What Does This Mean?

This isn't a call to stop development, on the contrary this is the call based upon evidence to develop wisely through land use policy which:

- Promotes density of residential units
- Build in an orderly fashion, develop in areas where infill is available, and immediately adjacent to existing residential uses.
- Develop infrastructure throughout a confined area, don't create lengthy extensions to new developments through greenfields away from the urban core.

Median COCS Results

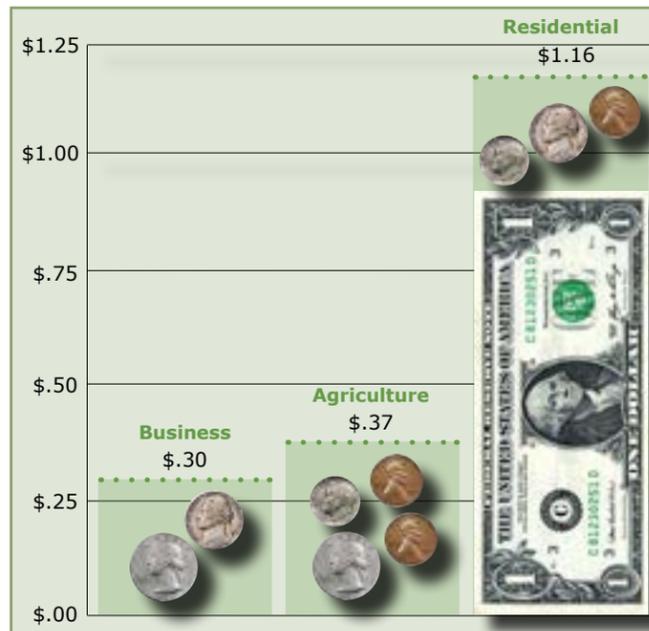


Image: American Farmland Trust

The image above displays the median cost to provide community services for the land use represented for every dollar collected.

- Business/Commercial (\$0.30 for every dollar)
- Agricultural (\$0.37 for every dollar)
- Residential (\$1.16 for every dollar)

Housing

Housing is intricately tied to the 'residential land use' category discussed elsewhere within this planning document. Critical to growth in the Township, Region and State; housing is the backbone of our communities and economy. Recent trends have greatly impacted the housing market, leading to a shortage of supply and increased cost. These trends include increased costs of land and building materials, limited skilled trades professionals, stock that is dilapidated beyond its useful life, and local policy and regulation which limits placement and density. The last trend of local policy and regulation is the one aspect that Blair Township can actively work to refine in support of housing.

The following analysis will look at the available data from several sources and provide evidence for why the siting of housing within Blair Township to serve the residents of Grand Traverse County makes sense.

Housing Data

Housing Needs Assessment Data

A **'Housing Needs Assessment'** (HNA) was completed in 2023 by Housing North, with support of Networks Northwest, for the 10 county region of Northwest Lower Michigan. Information for Grand Traverse County and a focus study on neighboring Kingsley Village and Paradise Township provide guidance of needed 'For Sale' and 'Rental' units.

Grand Traverse County Needs

- A total of 7,792 'For Sale' units are needed in the County through 2027
 - » The percent of units needed by price range is fairly evenly distributed as displayed in table 10.

Sale Range	Sale <= \$149,833	\$149,834 - \$239,733	\$239,734 - \$359,600	\$359,601+
Percent Need	23%	18%	33%	26%

Table 10: For sale housing unit need by price range

- A total of 3,569 'Rental' units are needed in the County through 2027
 - » The percent of units needed by price range is focused in the two lowest price points as displayed in table 11.

Rental Range	Rental <= \$1,123	\$1,124-\$1,797	\$1,798-\$2,697	\$2,698+
Percent Need	66%	21%	8%	5%

Table 11: Rental housing unit need by price range

Paradise Township/Village of Kingsley Needs

- A total of 398 'For Sale' units are needed for the Township/Village through 2027.
- A total of 78 'Rental' units are needed for the Township/Village through 2027.

US Census & ESRI Data Findings

- Housing is more affordable in Blair Township than the County
 - » Housing Affordability Index of 95 in the Township vs. 83 in the County
 - » Homeowners are paying on average 3.9% more for their mortgage in the County than Township
 - » Average home value is 23.8% greater or \$99,102.00 in the County than Township.
- Housing Occupation Variation
 - » Blair Township has 14.6% more owner occupied structures than the County
 - » Blair Township has much less Seasonal/Recreational units than the County, with 1.6% of the total housing units being seasonal as compared to 8.3% in the County

¹ American Farmland Trust

Housing Data Narrative

Direct identification of need of units for Grand Traverse County is overarching for the City, 2 Villages and 13 Townships contained within. The overall need of 7,792 'For Sale' units finds that 15% of that need is identified for Traverse City, while 5% of those units are identified for need in Paradise Township and the Village of Kingsley. The overall need of 3,569 'Rental' units finds that 28% of that need is identified for Traverse City, while 2% of those units are identified for need in Paradise Township and the Village of Kingsley.

The remaining need or **80% of 'For Sale' units and 30% of 'Rental' units** are to be met by siting in the remaining 13 local units of government within the County. Price range of affordability need of 'For Sale' and 'Rental' by percent of units is displayed in Tables 10 and 11 on the preceding page. The need 'For Sale' displays that it is rather evenly distributed with a little more need displayed towards the lower and upper end of housing cost, while the 'Rental' need is found primarily in the lower rent thresholds of \$1,123 or less per month.

Housing Data Findings and Direction

What the information in this section conveys is support for siting of housing in residential areas of Blair Township and specifically housing 'For Sale' in the price points of \$149,833 or less to \$359,600. 55.8% of housing units in the Township currently have a value of \$299,999 or less per unit, with 25.3% of housing units having a value of \$149,999 or less. This displays the make-up of neighborhoods have varied housing types and sizes across the residential areas of the Township. Additionally it is recommended to support 'Rental' units in high density groupings and of a size that meet the lower end rental threshold.

The Township is in position to make the best of the difficult trends posed to areas of NW Lower Michigan. Away from the lake-shore, near the urban core, with infrastructure availability, major transportation corridors, available land adjacent to existing neighborhoods, employment opportunities and recreational assets; potential to site units with less burden of land cost, and ability to build densely while being able to attract residents could be marketed to the development community. Rather than speaking to the need for units, we will convey available land area within areas of water infrastructure service and existing residential density for an estimate of available unhindered housing sites under current policy in the 'Build-Out Analysis' that follows.

Residential Build-Out in Area of Water Infrastructure

In Chapter 2 the idea of a build-out analysis was introduced, and is conducted here for areas within the 'Current and Future' water district boundary as defined from the 2019 plan. Note that the future boundary is expanded in the coming pages, but water service is planned to serve all 'future' areas displayed on Map 12 within the next few years. The yellow locations on Map 12 are estimated to be able to site 1,749 (@10,000 ft²) single family lots or 971 (@18,000 ft²) duplex lots.

Land Use Category	Unhindered Acreage	Corrected Acreage	*SF Density @ 10,000 ft ²	*Duplex Density @ 18,000 ft ²
Residential (Vacant)	617.7	401.5	1,749 (SF Lots)	971 (Duplex Lots)

Table 12: Existing Regulation Build Out of Vacant Residential with Water Service

Build-Out Formula:

1. Unhindered Acreage subtract 35% for utilities, roads, setbacks, lot coverage, screening = Corrected Acreage
2. Corrected Acreage converted to Total Square Feet = Total Square Feet
3. Total Square Feet divided by the established density (ft²) in the table = Available land by Lots/Parcels at Size

**Note the Twp. Ordinance doesn't have a minimum lot size, this defined density is for analysis purposes only.*



Agricultural Residential
Photo Credit: Networks Northwest

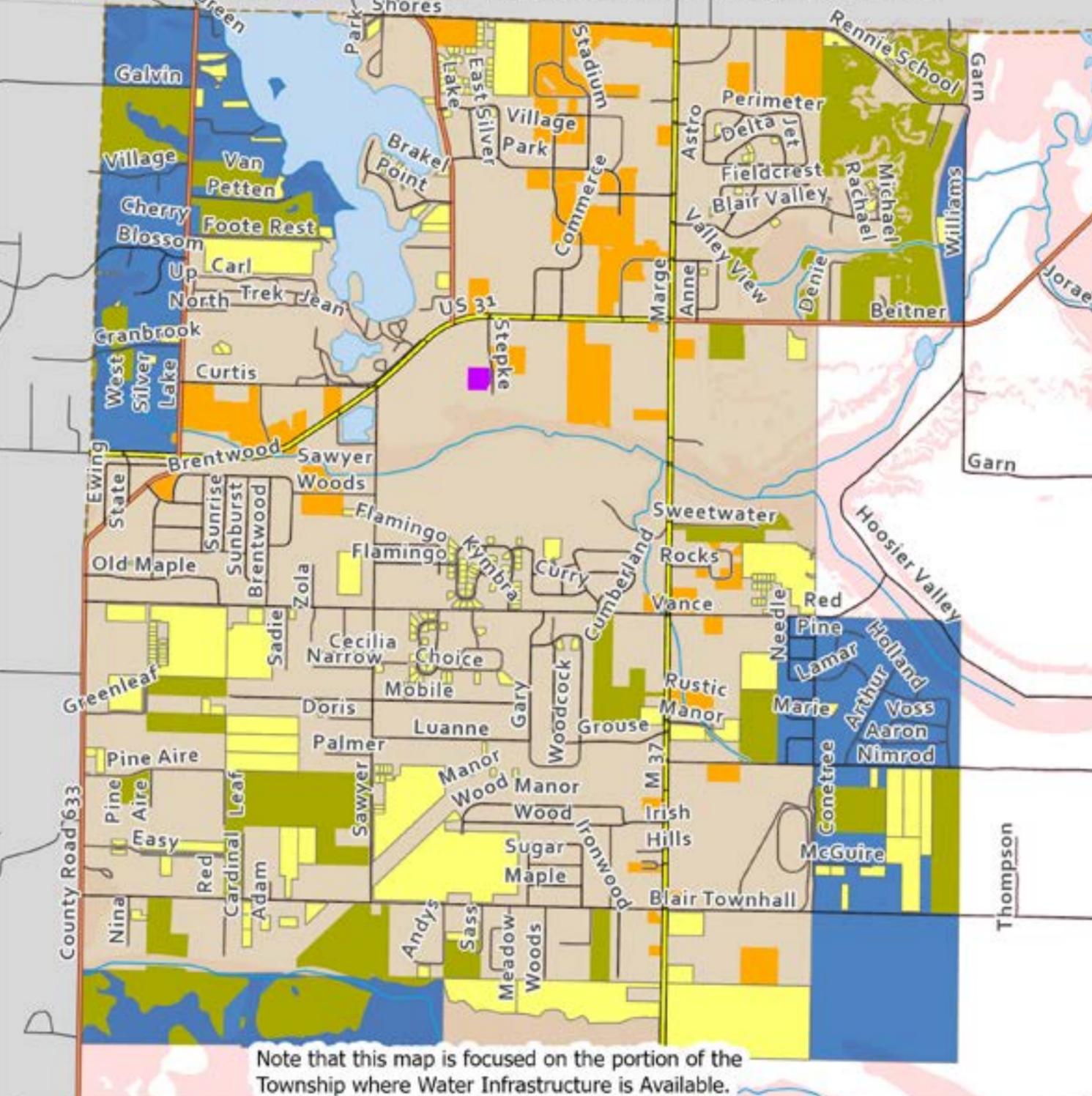


High Density Residential
Photo Credit: Networks Northwest



Single-Family 1/3 acre lots
Photo Credit: Networks Northwest

Development Opportunities Within Area of Water Infrastructure



Note that this map is focused on the portion of the Township where Water Infrastructure is Available.

Legend

Roads	Potential Developable Parcels within Water District	Water District Status	Development Hindrance Features
Highway	Commercial Vacant	Current Boundary	Blair Township
Primary	Industrial Vacant	Future Boundary	Neighboring Jurisdictions
Secondary	Residential Occupied (10+ acres)		
Streams	Residential Vacant		
Water Bodies			

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Networks Northwest
Talent / Business / Community

Produced by Networks Northwest
Community Development 02/2024

Map 12: Development Opportunities Build-Out Area of Water Infrastructure

Commercial & Industrial Land Use

Areas of commerce and employment are largely confined to the established boundaries of the Commercial Manufacturing Zoning District. There are some business locations outside of the zoning district with some likely operating as non-conforming uses. As presented previously in this document there are a total of 291 employers located within the Township, with workforce, industry and occupation data displaying that a significant amount of the workforce of those employers commuting into the Township for employment. At least 40% of Township residents in the workforce work outside of the Township, with most remaining within Grand Traverse County at 80% of Township resident workforce.

Commercial Manufacturing Unhindered Development Opportunities

Improved Commercial Property

- Accounts for 999.5 total acres
- Comprised of 284 parcels
- Is valued at \$311,598,000
- Accounts for 4.34% of Land Area

Improved Industrial Property

- Accounts for 44.7 total acres
- Comprised of 8 parcels
- Is valued at \$21,121,600
- Accounts for 0.19% of Land Area

Commercial Manufacturing District Unhindered Development Opportunities

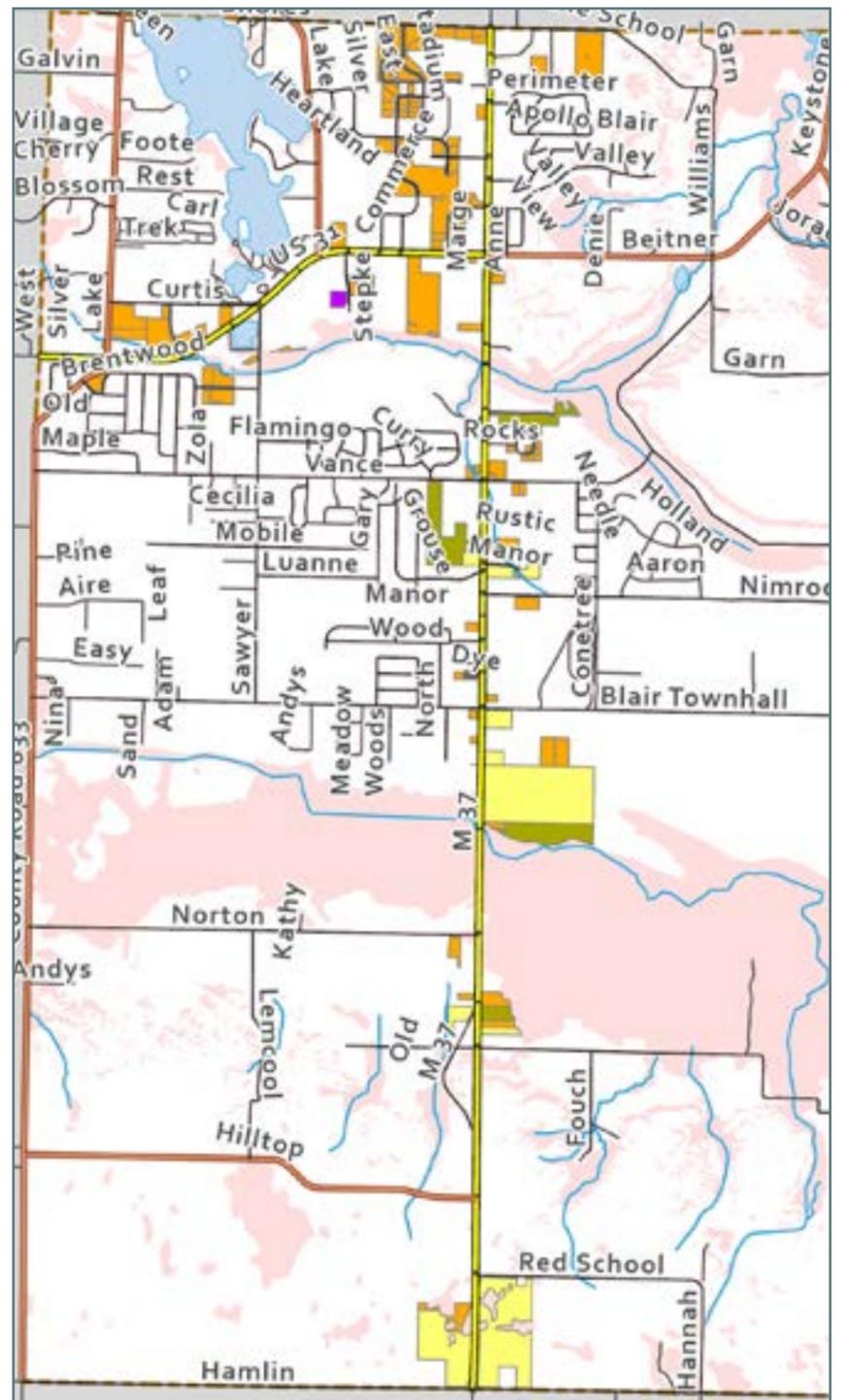
Map 13 displays unhindered parcels of the following acreage by assessed property classification located within this specific zoning district.

- Commercial Vacant (276.9 ac)
- Industrial Vacant (3.3 ac)
- Residential Occupied 10+ acres (63.3 ac)
- Residential Vacant (198.8 ac)

**Note that this displays unhindered parcel locations, but has not been modeled for a build-out analysis of estimated available use density.*

Legend

Commercial Manufacturing Property Class	Residential Occupied (10+ acre)
Commercial Vacant	Residential Occupied (10+ acre)
Industrial Vacant	Residential Vacant



Map 13: Development Opportunities Commercial Manufacturing District



Above: View of Amazon Distribution and Shipping Facility
Photo Credit: Networks Northwest



Below: View of Agricultural Area
Photo Credit: Nicole Blonshine

Agricultural

Agricultural presence within the Township consists of total of 51 parcels which account for 2,305 acres of agriculturally active land. Active agricultural land accounts for 10.02% of the total land area, while only accounting for 0.18% of the total land value, with a value of \$3,152,200. Agricultural activity has been on the decline within Grand Traverse County, with a 36% decrease in farm acreage from 1987 to 2022, which also saw a 48% decrease in farm size by acreage during the same period. (See Table 13). The data displays a movement toward smaller farms by land area at a greater quantity, which varies from national trends that display a decrease in farm number, and an increase in farm size by area.

USDA Agricultural Census Data Comparison Grand Traverse County 1987-2022

Data Point (GT County)	1987	2022	Change
Number of Farms	447	553	24%
Land in Farms (acres)	69,954	44,663	-36%
Average Size of Farms (acres)	156	81	-48%
Value of land & buildings			
Ave. Per Farm (\$)	\$197,706	\$742,783	275%
Ave. Per Acre (\$)	\$1,391	\$9,197	561%
Farm By Size			
1 to 9 acres	36	135	275%
10 to 49 acres	122	226	85%
50 to 179 acres	190	136	-28%
180 to 499 acres	71	36	-49%
500 to 999 acres	20	15	-25%
1,000 or more	8	5	-38%

Table 13: USDA Agricultural Census 1987 & 2022

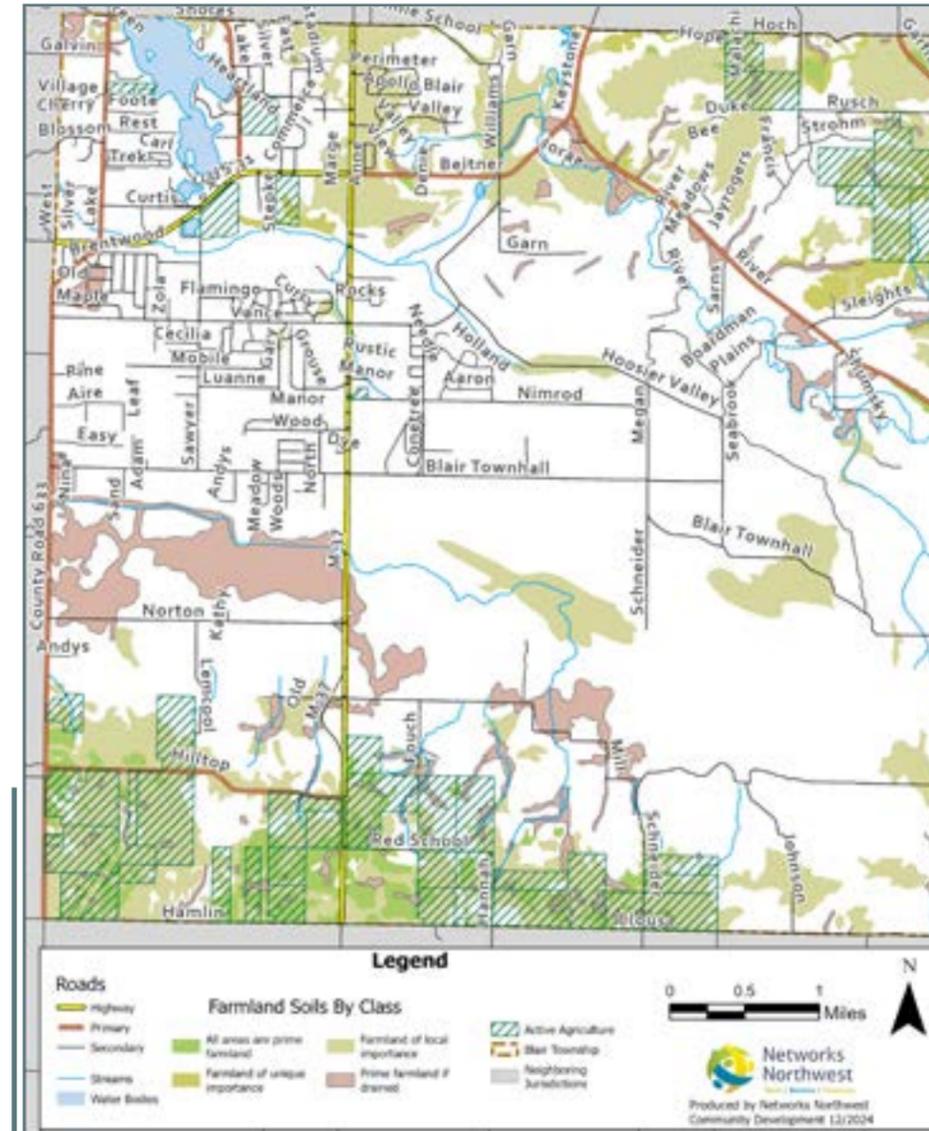
2,305
Active Agricultural Acres in Blair Township, 2024

Map 14 displays the location of Active Agricultural Parcels and the presence of Farmland Soils which are considered 'Prime', 'Of Local Importance', of 'Unique Importance', or 'Prime if Drained'.
**It is important to note that it is not recommended to drain wetland areas for development or other land use practices such as agriculture.*

Prime Farmland Soils Account for 22% of the Land Area, Primarily Underlying Active Farmland Parcels

Trends:

- Agricultural Lands Are Decreasing in Area
- Farms are increasing in number, but are decreasing in size.
- Value of agricultural lands continue to increase over time.



Map 14: Location of Farmland Soils & Active Agricultural Parcels

Natural Features

The Township is situated among topography which is defined as glacial moraines and out-wash plains. These landforms were shaped by the retreat of the last glacial period. The Boardman/Ottaway River Valley bisects the NE portion of the Township and has two major tributaries within the Township, Beitner and Jaxon Creeks. The Township has numerous wetlands connected to the Boardman/Ottaway River, and also has a large wetland complex which spans the Township East to West which drains to creeks which flow West to Duck Lake in Green Lake Township. Steep slopes denote the change between moraines and out-wash plains, and combined with wetlands, riparian corridors and adjacent hydric soils impact development options and configuration.

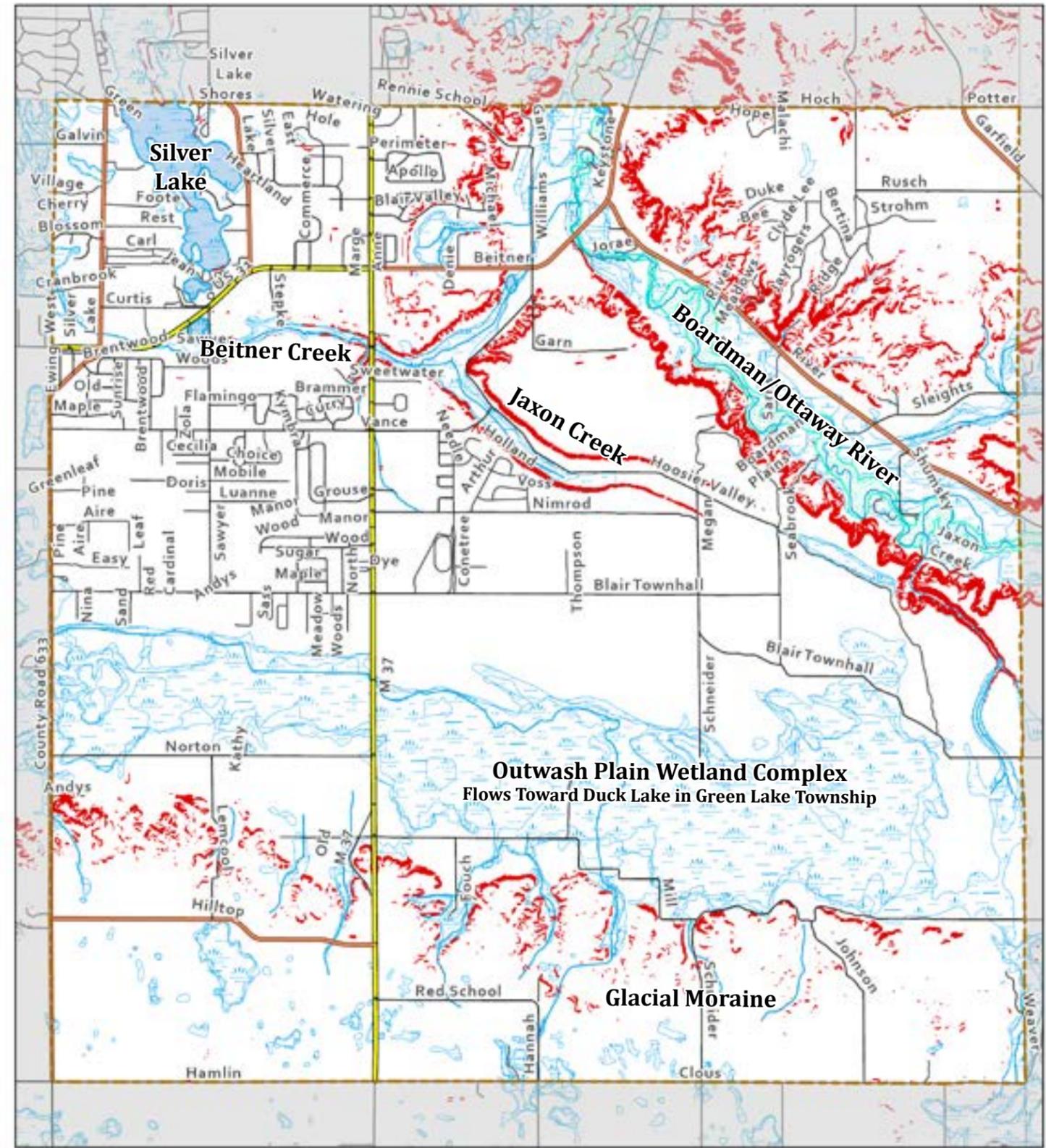
Natural Features Data

- Wetland Acreage: 5,310 acres
- Riparian Miles: 36.5 miles
- Elevation High 1,112 feet
- Elevation Low 650 feet

Conservation Techniques

- Vegetative buffers
- Stormwater Controls (i.e. Low Impact Design 'LID')
- Impervious Surface Limitations
- Lower Density of Structures

Water Body Blair Township
Photo Credit: Nicole Blonshine



Legend

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Highway | Slopes 25% + | Blair Township |
| Primary | Streams | Neighboring Units |
| Secondary | FEMA Flood Zone A | |
| Roads Outside Jurisdiction | Part 303 Wetlands | |
| | Water Bodies | |

Place-Based Conditions

A community's assets have a direct relation to the attraction and satisfaction of the populace. Many aspects of a community's geography and climate cannot be controlled. Place-based conditions which can be supported or controlled through a community's policy, regulatory control or through financial and personnel capacity are direct investments in a community. The conditions that are tailored to a community create a sense of place, what was recently coined as 'placemaking'.

Placemaking

Placemaking captures many facets of a community's profile. Much of what has been introduced within this chapter of the plan can constitute in part as placemaking, with additional evidence of placemaking support from the input gained through community engagement practices found in Chapter 4. The topics outlined below touch on some of the more basic principles of placemaking that create a draw through natural, site and community aesthetics and offerings.

Site Design & Layout

Design is often considered subjective, but numerous processes conducted throughout the Lower Northwest Region of Michigan have displayed that the public continues to focus on what would be considered sound design principles. These design principles most often include quality building design with materials of block, brick and glass, signage that is shorter in height with limited internal illumination, use of landscaping around buildings and parking areas, and placement of pedestrian scale amenities such as lighting, sidewalks, and benches.

Recreation

The Township has planned well for recreation through their "[Recreation Plan](#)", with parks and amenities which cater to a range of user groups, ages and abilities. Universal accessibility of trails and certain site amenities at parks allow for a host of abilities, with focused improvements of playgrounds, splash-pad and pavilions catering to families. The addition of pickle-ball courts and a disc golf course cater to older age demographics down to teenagers.

Recreation is a strong draw within our region for residents and visitors, and the development of active parks coupled with passive recreational sites found on state, federal, county and conservancy lands, lends to this draw. A study on the impacts of Outdoor Recreation on our economy was conducted in 2023 with the "[Outdoor Recreation Impact Study for Northwest Michigan](#)".



Blair Community Park Splash=Pad
Photo Credit: Nicole Blonshine

Childcare

Childcare is an essential need for families within our region. In the absence of childcare facilities families have to make ever increasing decisions on locations to establish themselves and the employment opportunities they pursue. The need for childcare is so great within our region and State that it should be classified as a place-based attraction for families when present, and a deterrent when absent. Networks Northwest supported and provided capacity for the "[Regional Childcare Plan](#)", which outlines need and identifies strategies.

Broadband and High-Speed Internet Access

Access to high-speed internet supports education, employment, communication, and enjoyment of leisure time. Reliable internet is a draw for residents, allowing the ability for flexibility with remote work options, ability for greater choice of educational opportunities, and allowance of access to music, TV, movies, games and other leisure time recreational options. Support of expansion of broadband for allow residents is a need and with current expansion efforts is likely to occur in a rather short timeframe.

Natural Features (Open Space)

Blair Township is fortunate to have a high quality cold water river with access, a clean mid-sized inland lake, abundant forested public lands, and extended views of open agricultural space. These natural features create a draw for those seeking solitude, relaxation and often times a tranquil scene that is missing when spending significant time in urbanized settings. These features should be protected and promoted as a draw for the Township.



Grand Traverse County Natural Education Preserve
Photo Credit: Networks Northwest

Civic

Blair Township is a General Law Township established under the [General Township Laws, Revised Statutes of 186, R.S. of 1846 \(Chapter 41 of Michigan Compiled Laws\)](#). It is governed by an elected 7 member board which consists of a Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and 4 trustees. This elected body is tasked with oversight and management of the Township responsibilities outlined by the Township establishing ordinance and policies and regulatory ordinances enacted by the governing board. These responsibilities include but are not limited to Elections & Voter Registration, Oversight of Township Facilities (Civic Buildings, Parks & Recreation Assets) Emergency Services, Water and Sewer Infrastructure, Property Assessment and Taxation, Ordinance Enforcement and Planning & Zoning. A limited summary of facilities and services of importance to land use planning follows.

Township Facilities & Services

Township Hall

The Township Hall contains the offices and working space for elected, appointed and professional staff. It is the location where official meetings are held and is the point source of information for residents and visitors.

Fire & EMS Services

The Township Fire Station which is located off of M-37 was recently constructed in 2024. It is centrally located within the Township off a primary corridor facilitating easy access to business, industry and residential developments. Full-time Fire and EMS services are provided from this location under the oversight of the Director of Emergency Services. Services cover the Township and provide support to neighboring communities.

Township Board

The elected body is responsible for appointment of the planning commission membership, providing direction for undertaking land use studies and planning processes, and has ultimate authority of adoption of zoning regulation and codified ordinances.

Planning Commission

This appointed body provides a separation of oversight from the Township Board for Master Plan Development and Adoption, and also fulfills the oversight and authority of issuance of special land uses and planned unit development permits.

Zoning Board of Appeals

This appointed body provides a separation of oversight from the Township Board and the Planning Commission for denials of permits, requests for variances, and clarification of regulatory language.

Community Police Officer

A cooperative agreement with the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Department provides for a Police Officer which is housed with office space at the Township Hall and who wholly serves the Blair Township Community.

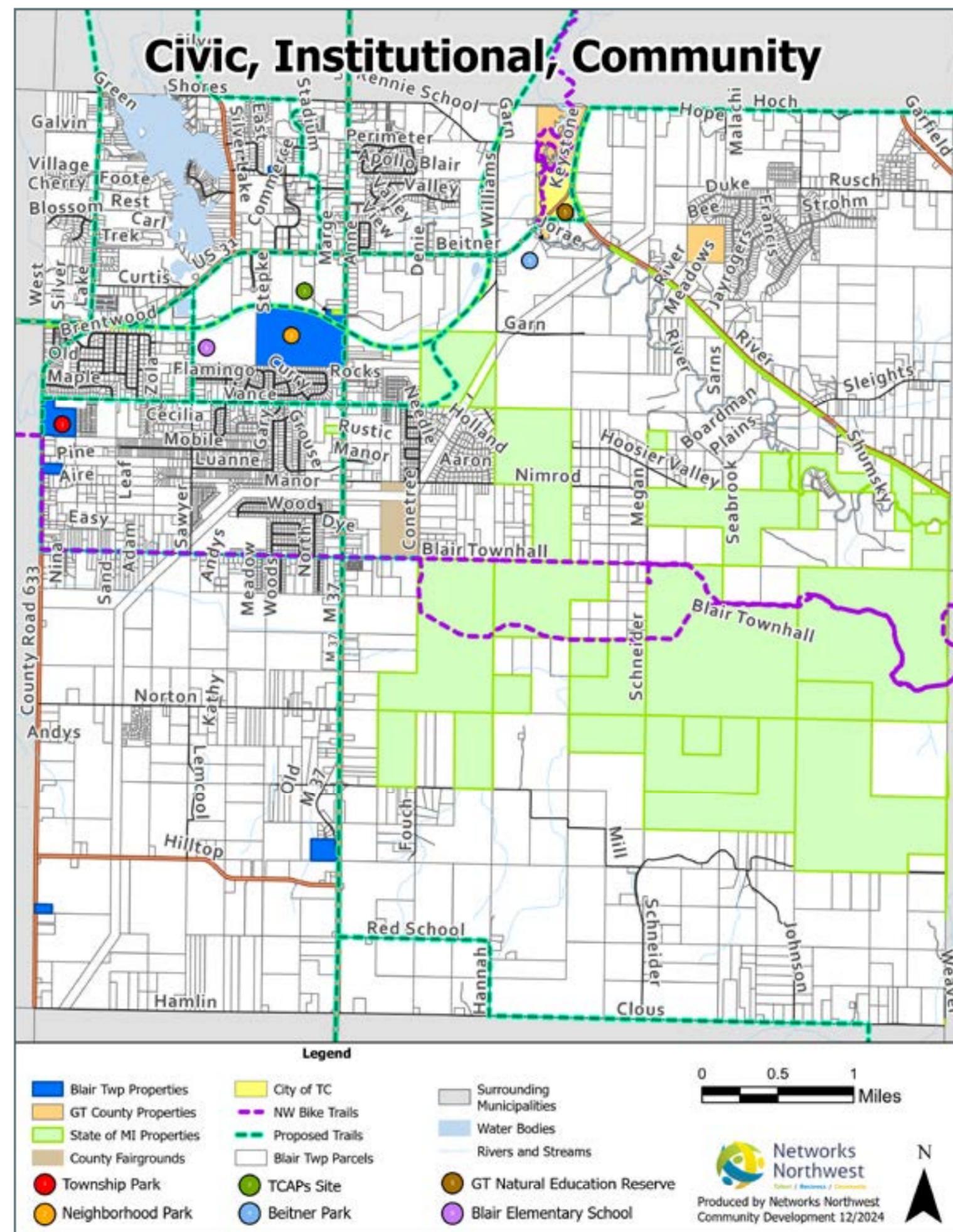
Planning, Zoning & Code Enforcement

The Township provides policy and ordinance regulatory structure for both zoning and codified ordinances. The administration of zoning ordinances is within the purview of the Zoning Administrator, with codified ordinance administration and enforcement occurring under the duties of the Code Enforcement Officer.

Recreation

The Township supports park and recreation assets planned for within the Township Park and Recreation Plan.

Governance



Map 16: Civic and Institutional Features



Forest Road Blair Township
Photo Credit: Nicole Blonshine



M-37 Roundabout
Photo Credit: Networks Northwest

Transportation

Transportation features and assets include all methods of transportation whether referring to vehicular, transit, railroad or non-motorized.

Roadways

The Michigan Department of Transportation oversees State Highway M-37 and US Highway 31. The Grand Traverse Road Commission has oversight of all other local and federal aid roadways. Blair Township is represented on the policy board of the [Traverse Transportation Coordinating Initiative](#) (TTCI) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The MPO formed in 2023, and is the collaborative organization for coordination and prioritization of transportation improvements in the TC Urban Boundary. Areas of the Township outside of the urbanized area are included in the oversight of the [Rural Task Force](#) (RTF).

Railroad

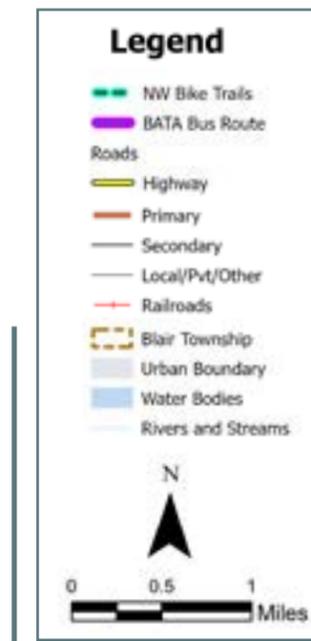
Blair Township has a section of rail within the northern portion of the Township which is owned by the [State of Michigan](#) and is part of the 'Great Lakes Central' rail line.

Transit

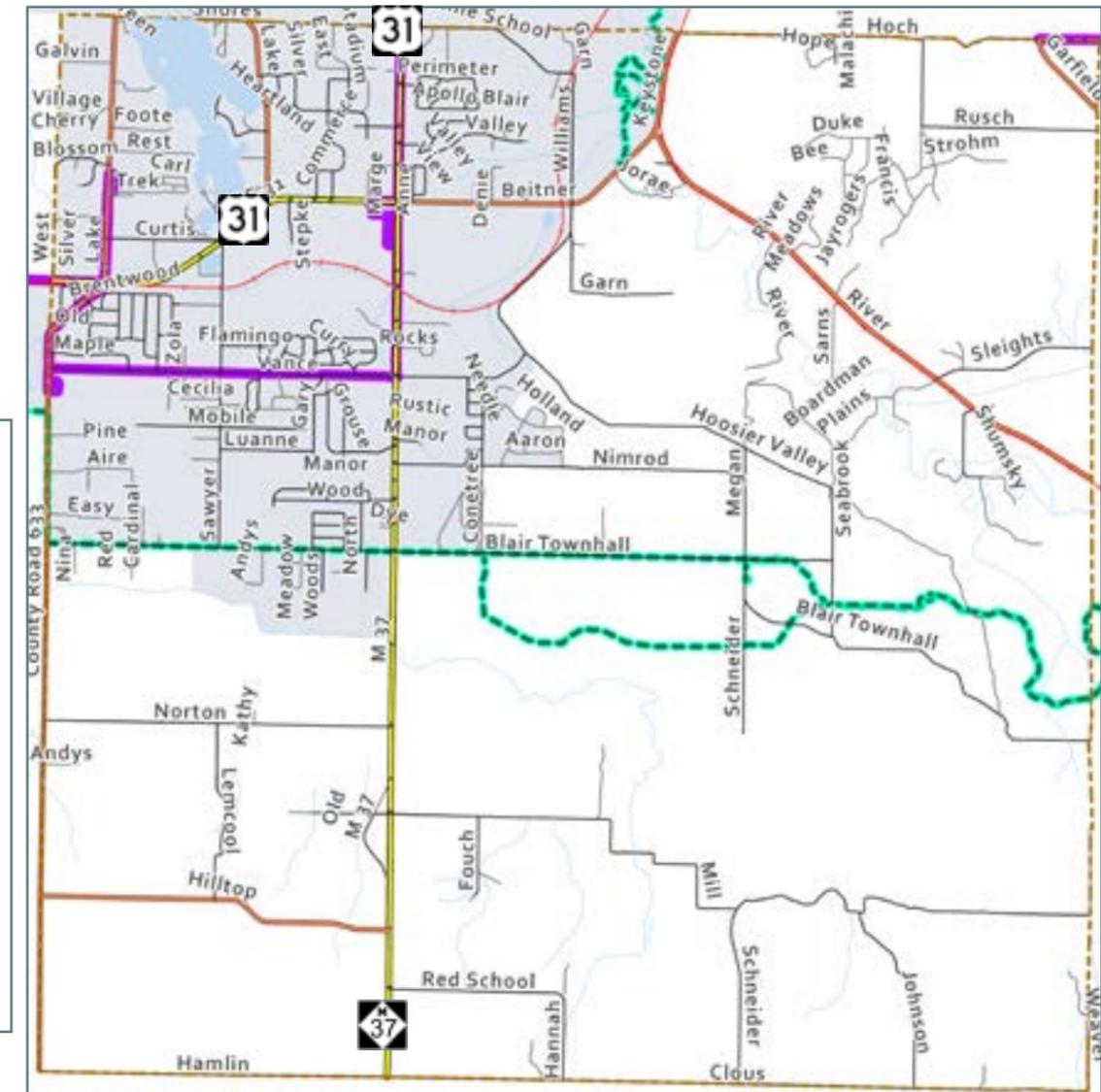
Transit is provided by the [Bay Area Transportation Authority](#) (BATA). BATA has regular service along a defined 'Village Loop' which serves businesses and neighborhoods in the NW portion of the Township. Additionally 'Link' service provides door to door service upon request.

Non-Motorized

The NW Bike Trail bisects the community and additional local trails are located in park areas and along the Boardman River. The Township has additional desired routes outlined within their [Park & Recreation Plan](#).



Map 17:
Transportation Assets



Infrastructure

Sewer

Sewer infrastructure is made available to the Township through a cooperative agreement with Grand Traverse County, which manages sewer infrastructure. The County maintains a lift station within the Township and the system has capacity currently. The sewer district currently services primarily commercial and industrial areas of the Township in the vicinity of the US 31 and M-37 corridors. (See Map 18) The Township desires to expand the sewer district which will necessitate an update to the agreement with Grand Traverse County.

Water

Water infrastructure is a Township owned and maintained system which services a larger area than the sewer district. Water service is provided to both areas of commercial and residential land uses within the Township according to the locations denoted on the infrastructure map 18. There have been two new wells sited within the Township in recent years with the water treatment plant undergoing upgrades. Expansion of the water system is planned to support commercial, industrial and residential uses as defined as 'Near Future' and 'Future' on the map.

Storm Sewer

Storm sewer infrastructure is only required at the discretion of the developer or through a requirement imposed by the Planning Commission for a development proposal which can be conditioned such as with a Planned Unit Development (PUD) or Special Use Permit process. There are no applicable stormwater guidelines at the County or Township level.

Drainage Districts

There are no drainage districts located within Blair Township, according to the County Drain Commission Office.

Natural Gas Utility Services

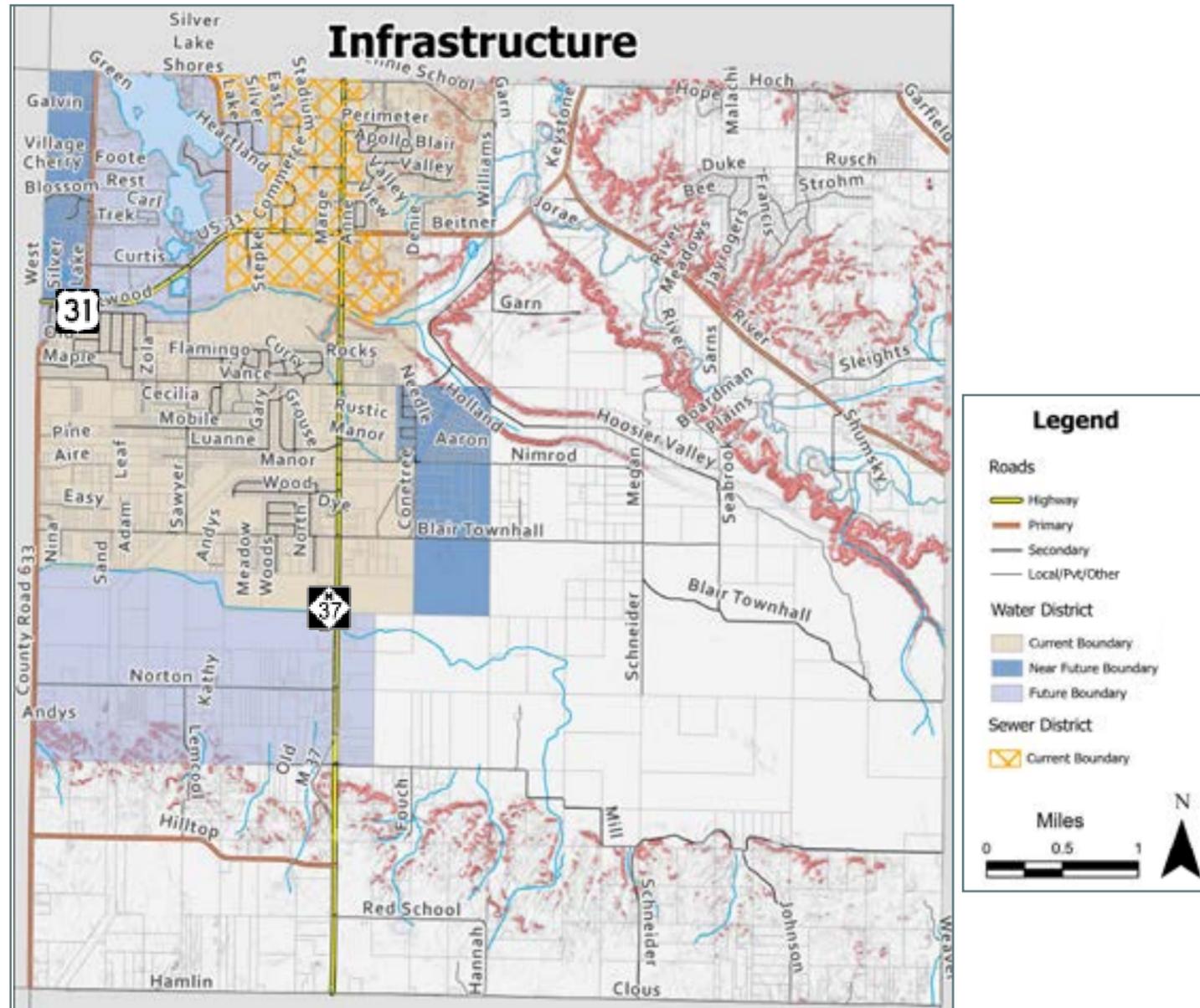
Natural Gas Service is available to all areas of the Township. The sole provider of natural gas service is through DTE Gas Company, which provides service to all areas of Grand Traverse County including Blair Township. Natural gas service areas can be viewed at the Michigan Public Service Commission's [Service Map](#).

Telecommunications and Broadband

Telecommunications and broadband are provided by several cellular and hard wire service providers. According to recent data by the State of Michigan, 88.44% of residents within the County are served with high speed internet. Expansion programs through the State of Michigan are working to make that number 100%. Specific information and data can be found on the [Michigan Broadband Map](#), a tool provided by the Michigan High Speed Internet Office.

Electric Utility Services

Electrical Utility Services cover all areas of the Township through three separate utility service providers dependent upon location of electric service connection within the Township. Service area boundaries overlap and can be viewed at the Michigan Public Service Commission's [Service Map](#). Providers include Traverse City Light and Power, Consumers Energy Company, and Cherryland Electric Cooperative, with Cherryland and Consumers having the greatest areas of coverage.



Map 18: Township Infrastructure

Blair Township Water Tower
Photo Credit: Blair Township



Chapter 4 Community Engagement

Community Engagement is fundamental to any planning process and Blair Township has taken extensive efforts in the past and present to ensure that the public has a voice in the direction of policy and regulatory measures being shaped for the community. Past efforts have included surveys and public input sessions that have been utilized during Master Plan and Recreation Plan processes. The focus of these efforts is to increase citizen participation and engagement to levels where community leadership can confidently state that they made every effort to allow the citizens of the community to be present in the process.

This current planning effort is no different in seeking public input. Methods of engagement have been similar to past efforts, with the use of both a community survey instrument and the holding of an in-person community engagement event. What has differed were the method by which efforts to notice and engage the community were utilized. These efforts included:

- Utilization of widespread marketing material notices, both in digital and print form.
- Distribution of printed marketing materials at established community events; such as with youth voter registration day, and solicitation of the survey by residents attending the Township Clean-Up day.

These efforts to spread the word of the process were supplemented by additional standard methods of sharing notices via social media, notices placed on community information boards, and the mailing of survey postcards to property owners within the community.

Engagement Techniques and Noticing

The Planning Commission and NN Staff agreed on an engagement process of extensive marketing of a Township Survey and the holding of a Public Input Drop-in Session. NN Staff provided the Clerk of Blair Township engagement notification materials to hand-out during early voting registration events held at local area high schools. These materials were also posted to the Township website and to social media platforms. On Sat., June 8th, 2024 Staff attended the Township Household Waste Clean-up and Drop-off day at the Township Hall, where business cards containing the QR code to the Township’s Master Plan survey, and an invitation to the June 26, 2024 public input session were handed out to attendees.

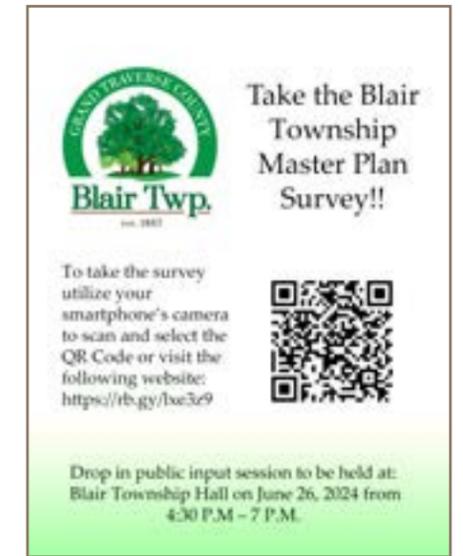


Image: Engagement Marketing Poster



Image: Engagement Marketing Business Card (front)

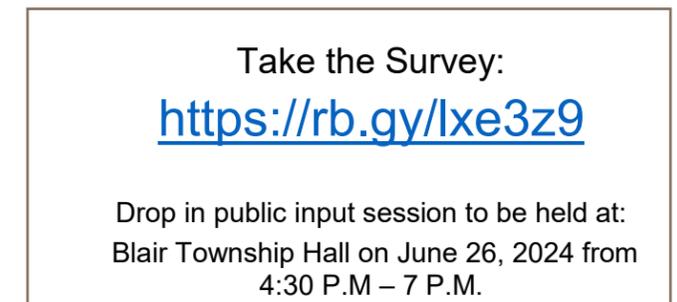


Image: Engagement Marketing Business Card (back)

Public Input Session

Staff held a community public input session on June 26, 2024 from 4:30 – 7:00 PM at the Blair Township Hall. The session was a drop-in format allowing anyone to attend at their convenience, and spend as much or as little time at the session as they desired; with Staff asking questions and guiding the public at individual input stations. The public input session consisted of five stations of best planning practices, supported by planning commission feedback, and aligning with survey questions.

Housing Gallery Station: The station provided a gallery of housing types and asked respondents to weigh in on their desired styles.

Commercial Business Gallery: The station provided a gallery of commercial business types, design and layout and asked respondents to provide their support of styles and types.

Transportation Gallery: The station provided a gallery of transportation assets and improvements and asked respondents to provide input on the assets/improvements.

Cluster Development Density Bonus: The station provided example build-out scenarios for residential development in rural areas to identify the preferred development pattern.

Existing Conditions and Growth Patterns: The informational station displayed existing growth patterns, residential expansion, natural features, transportation, land uses, and zoning.

Housing Gallery

The Housing Gallery sheet showed support for a variety of housing types and densities within the Township. This included a primary need and desire for smaller more affordable housing units within the Township, including small single-family housing, tiny homes, apartment complexes, duplex, triplex, and quad-plex style housing.



Image: Housing Gallery Sheet

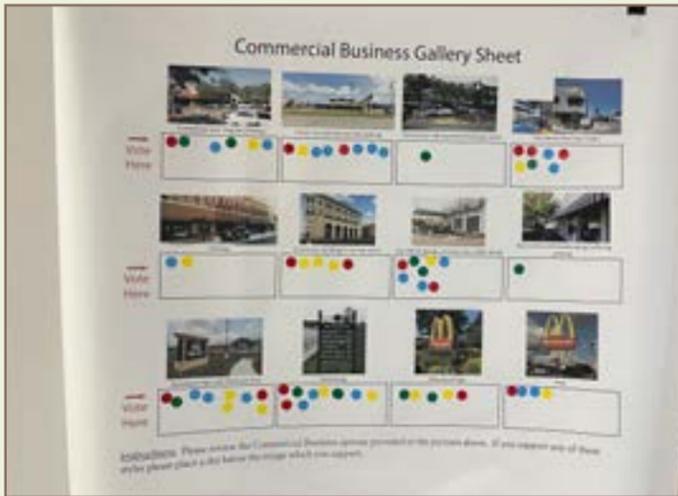


Image: Commercial Business Gallery Sheet

Transportation Gallery

The Transportation Gallery Sheet saw large support for, equitable access, covered bus stops, bike lanes with separation, landscape and vegetative buffering of parking areas and sidewalks/pathways, and general support for additional complete street designs.



Image: Transportation Gallery Sheet



Image: Cluster Development Build-Out Example

Cluster Development Build-Out Example

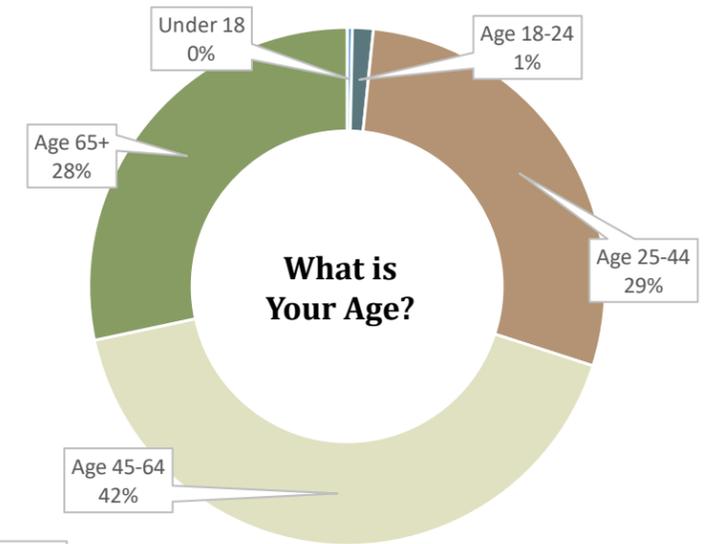
The Cluster Development Build-Out Analysis Example displayed support for cluster-based development over standard sub-division development. Preservation of land for agriculture, while allowing density bonuses for development, provides opportunities for large land owners to sell and/or develop areas of their land.

Community Survey

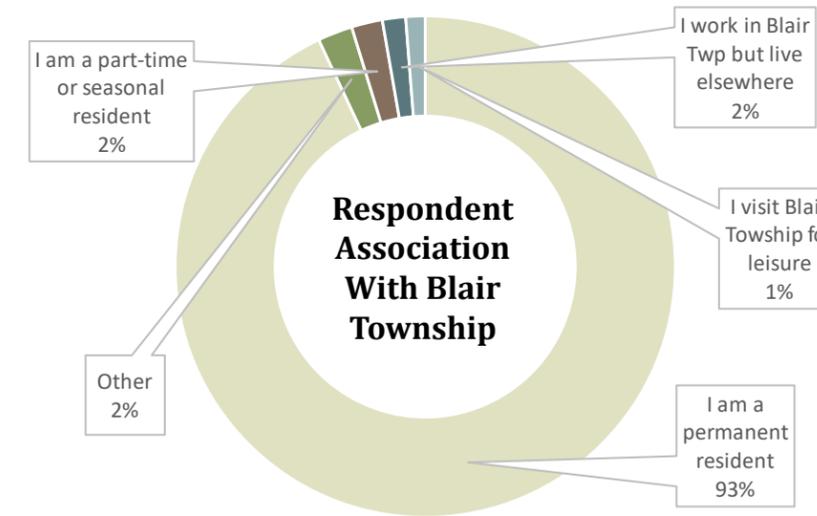
The community survey was taken by over four hundred (400) respondents. The population of Blair Township in the 2020 US Census was 8,994. With a population of this size and the proportion of survey responses collected in the community, it can be confidently stated the results represent the population of Blair Township with 95% confidence and a +/- 5% margin of error. It is important to note that respondents were not required to answer every question and that some questions allowed respondents to select more than one answer. This section of the plan displays findings and select graphs, all survey results are located in Appendix F.

Respondent Characteristics

- Most respondents were over the age of 18 at 99%, with 70% being 45 years of age or older.
- The majority of respondents were permanent residents at 93%.
- 46% of respondents have lived in Blair Township for 15 years or more.
- 27% of respondents had 1 or more children under 18 living at home.



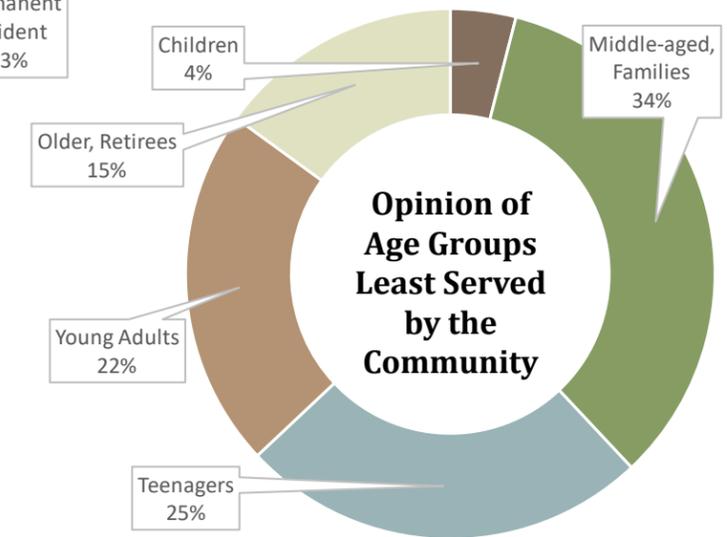
Graph 22: Respondent Age



Graph 23: Respondent Association with Blair Township

Community Opinions

- Most respondents felt that middle aged families were the least served group in the community.
- The community felt that sidewalks, trail connections, sections of roadways, and civic offerings were fair to poor
- The community felt that fire service, parks & open space, and township infrastructure were good to excellent

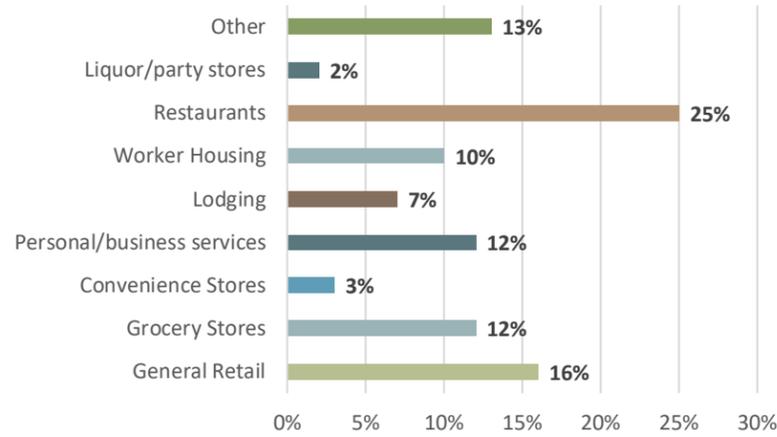


Graph 24: Opinion of Age Groups Least Served

Development Conditions & Business Support

- 55% of respondents feel development should be focused in areas of existing infrastructure, while only 7% disagree.
- 65% agree sidewalks should be required with new commercial and small lot residential developments, when neutral responses are included the percentage climbs to 91%.
- The most sought after business type is restaurants.

What Type of Business/Service Would You Like to See Expanded?



Graph 25: What Type of Business/Service Would You Like to See Expanded?

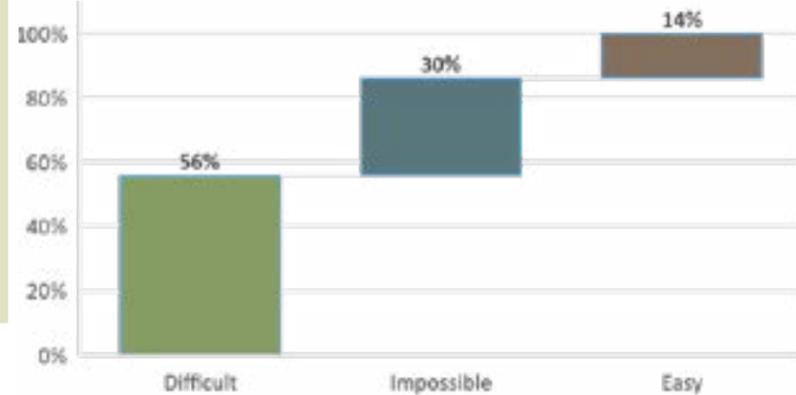
Top Reasons Respondents Make a Life in Blair Township

- Northern Michigan Location
- Friends and Family, Housing Costs
- Environment/Natural Features
- Residential Neighborhoods
- Taxes
- Safety & Security
- Parks & Recreation Facilities

Opinions of Community Conditions

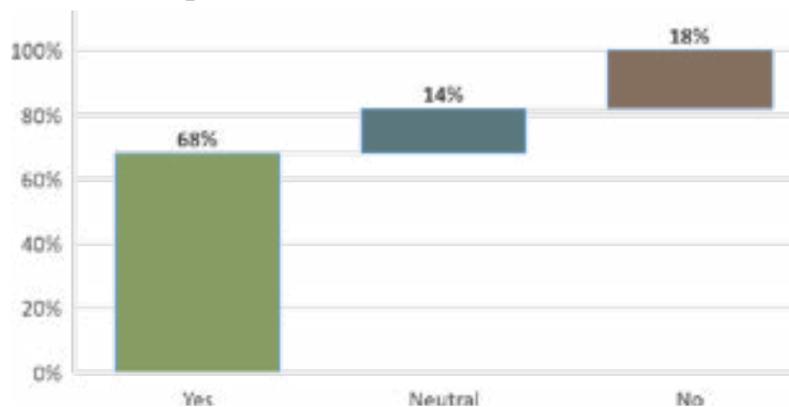
- The majority of survey respondents feel houses are well kept at 63%, and yards are maintained at 61%.
- 53% feel the community is safe, while 13% feel it is unsafe.
- 39% feel streets are in good condition.
- 56% of respondents find it difficult to get places without a personal vehicle.

How Easy is it to Get Places Without Use of a Personal Vehicle?



Graph 26: How Easy to Get Places Without Use of a Personal Vehicle

Support Policy Which Places a License and Cap on Short-Term Rentals?



Graph 27: Do You Support Short-Term Rental Policy

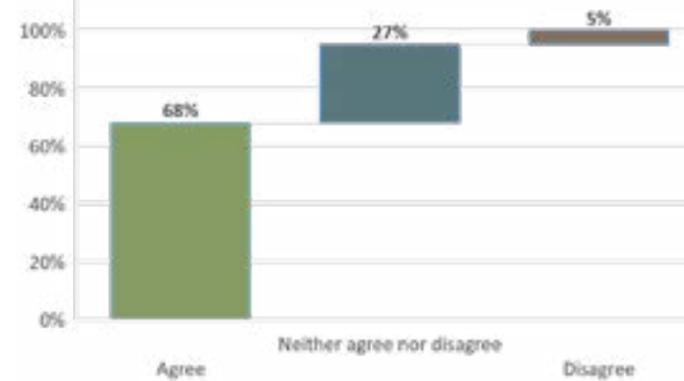
Neighborhood Character

- The majority of residents support policy for managing short term rentals.
- Residents desire a mix of housing options and rates for housing.

Community Character

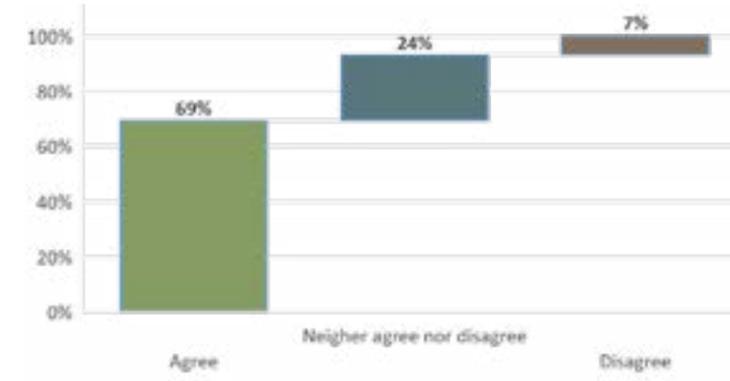
- 71% of respondents want to preserve historic sites
- 48% agree arts & culture should be promoted with only 14% disagreeing
- Maintaining rural character is overwhelming supported at 69%, and maintaining lower density in areas of agriculture is supported at 68%

The Township Should Promote Low Density In Areas of Agriculture



Graph 28: The Township Should Promote Low Density in Areas of Agriculture

The Community Should Strive to Maintain Rural Character



Graph 29: Community Should Strive to Maintain Rural Charter

Top 10 Areas of Desired Focus

1. Environment/Nature
2. Agriculture/Open Space
3. Community Beautification
4. Existing Neighborhood Character
5. Walkability
6. Attainable Housing/Density for Housing
7. Community Character
8. Development and Growth Potential
9. Mix of Housing Types
10. History/Cultural Identity

Input Discussion

The comments from the survey are too numerous to summarize concisely and it is recommended that Township leadership and readers of this plan refer to appendix F for the full range of comments. Respondents are passionate about their community and took advantage of the opportunity to provide feedback. Support of civic offerings such as emergency services, parks, transit, schools, libraries, indoor recreation, trails, and efforts towards beautification were mentioned by numerous individuals. Promotion of employment opportunities, development practices that include sound site design and focusing growth were mentioned in multiple statements. Protection of water and natural features, support for maintaining rural character and agricultural operations were present throughout the comments. Desire for residential lighting, sidewalks, multiple housing types and maintaining pride in one's neighborhood were included. Focus on areas such as Chums Corners, the Grawn Area and Vance Road were stated by several respondents. Ultimately the entirety of the survey provided more support for actionable items through positive positions, rather than weighing heavily on overtly negative stances. Several comments simply included two word phrases such as "Good Luck" and "Thank You".

Chapter 5 Best Management Practices

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are identified policy and regulatory strategies which have been utilized and proven successful and effective for other communities within and outside of Michigan. In reference to other communities' strategies, it is beneficial to review and borrow sound ideas that have been practiced elsewhere. Many strategies for land use, recreation asset development, land and water conservation, and economic development and support activities have been in practice in a range of community sizes and types, having sufficient if not abundant information on the structural deficiencies and benefits of the strategies. This chapter presents various themes and identified BMPs for each theme. These BMP strategies may not all be appropriate for Blair Township, but are offered as options for consideration by Township Leadership to meet present challenges while offering potential solutions for issues identified through interaction with residents and visitors of the Township.

Pro-Active Crosswalk/Sidewalk Implementation & Building Adaptive Reuse
Photo Credit: Networks Northwest

BMP Themes & Practices 'Housing and Residential Land Use'

Short-Term Rental (STR) Licensing and Inspection Program:

Many communities experiencing the influx of short-term rentals and seeing limitations occur to housing stock among other impacts, have instituted short-term rental licensing programs. These programs are often set to limit and condition STRs based upon the specific community needs. Sample regulatory ordinances can be found in communities throughout the State.

Duplexes by Right, Use Allowance:

The practice of allowance of duplexes by right in residential districts has been supported in many communities as identified through resident engagement and questionnaires. Concerns over design, orientation and site placement can be easily overcome through appropriate site design controls. The practice of allowance as a use by right in high density residential districts is a condition for communities seeking approval by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for their 'Redevelopment Ready Communities' certification, with the Township currently meeting this condition.

High Density Districts without Minimum Lot Size Requirements, and Limited Setbacks:

Lot density requirements, and excessive setbacks limit the ability to increase density of housing units while also hindering latitude for creative design. Rather, structure regulatory requirements which outline impervious surface and lot coverage limitations. These regulations should also include the ability to increase coverage of both lot and impervious surface if Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater controls are included for the managing of rainwater runoff. These types of regulatory requirements allow for ease of placing greater density and flexibility for design.

Allowance of Accessory Dwelling Units:

Allowing for additional dwelling units on a parcel with an existing or approved primary residential structure in all residential districts. This practice can help to provide additional housing units, and often at a price point which supports working class population with lower or moderate income levels.



Single-Family & Duplex Residential Mix
Photo Credit: Networks Northwest

BMP Themes & Practices 'Water Protection & Conservation'

Impervious Surface Coverage Standards:

The Township has lot coverage percent limitations, but additionally impervious coverage limitations can be used which promote materials which allow infiltration of stormwater during rain events. Limitations can also combat the 'heat island effect' that occurs during excessive heat spells. Impervious surface limitations coupled with Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater controls are one of the greatest methods for protecting water quality from overland stormwater runoff.

Low Impact Development Standards (stormwater controls):

These more modern stormwater controls utilize practices which promote infiltration of rainwater as close to the source as possible. These regulatory requirements are often utilized as a trade-off or negotiating tool for development

projects and the impervious lot coverage they include.

Shoreline Buffer Standards:

Shoreline buffer standards seek to keep established vegetation along shorelines with limited manicuring of the vegetation. Tree cover and lower growing shoreline grasses, forbes, and shrubs provide habitat, shade, and bank stabilization for terrestrial and aquatic organisms. Buffer standards can be stringent or flexible based upon a community's needs.

Limit 'Keyholing' Lake Access:

Keyholing access creates issues of concern which include increased traffic and use of riparian areas, impacts to the environment and may cause negative impacts to property values. Standards are currently in place and should be maintained and amended as necessary.



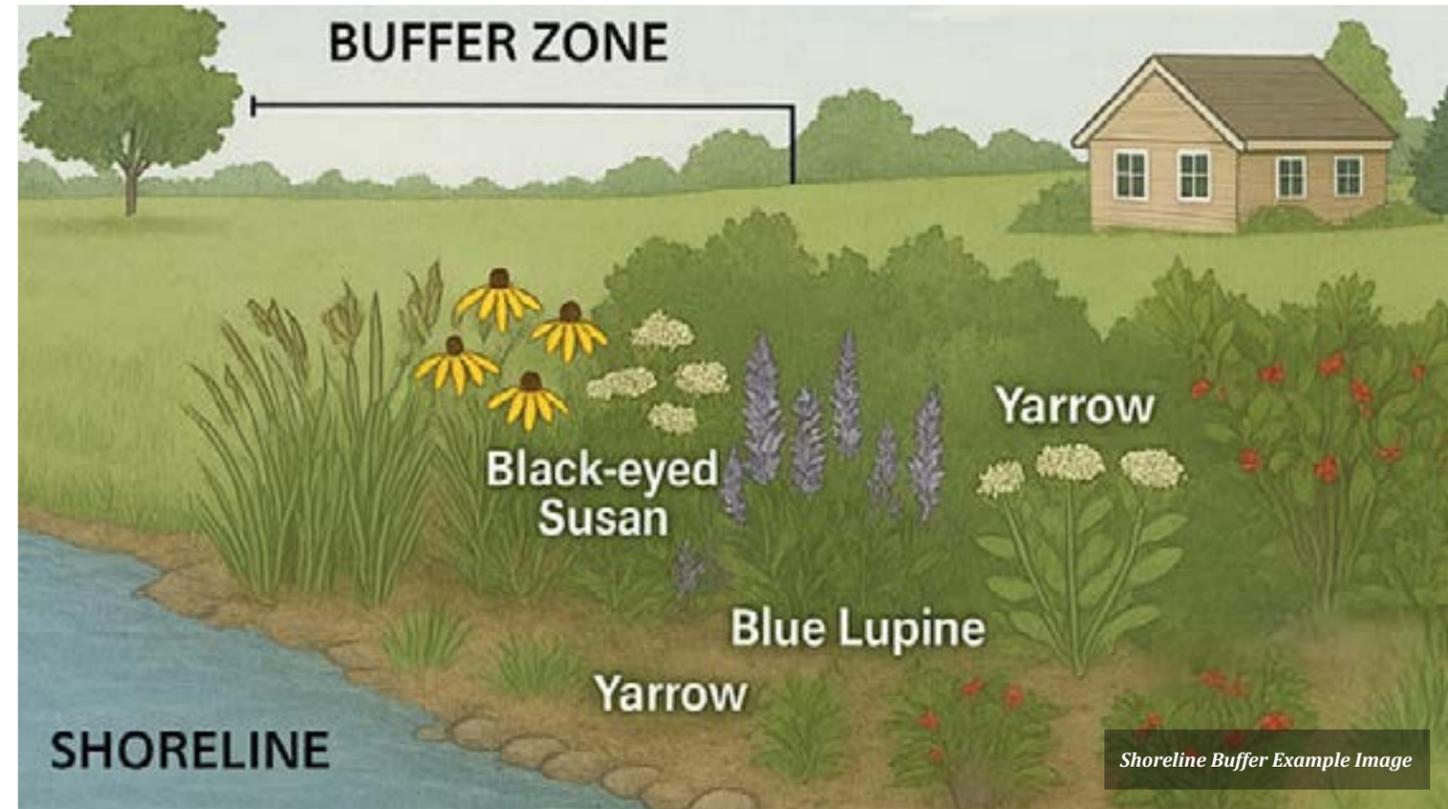
Rain Garden
Photo Credit: Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Riparian Overlay District:

An overlay district is a district that is placed over the top of 1 more underlying zoning districts. Overlay districts are most often utilized for a specific purpose such as with supporting housing options, promoting corridor aesthetics, or protecting natural features. A riparian overlay district could be established to promote water quality in the Township and could be applied to all areas adjacent to water bodies, streams or wetlands. Options for district standards could include a specified distance for the district boundary landward of surface water or wetland. The limitation of impervious surfaces within that boundary. Limitations on the types of use, and housing unit types and density of housing units. An established shoreline buffer to be set along water courses. Use of LID as a design requirement for within the district.

Wellhead Protection Programs (WHPP)

WHPP are structured to safeguard drinking water sources from contamination by managing land uses within wellhead protection areas (WHPAs). Many communities throughout Michigan have implemented WHPPs in coordination with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). These programs may be supported through local zoning overlay districts that limit or prohibit high-risk uses such as fuel storage, hazardous material handling, or certain industrial activities within mapped WHPAs. In addition to use restrictions, site plan review standards may require best practices for spill prevention, secondary containment, storage of hazardous materials, and stormwater management.



Shoreline Buffer Example Image

BMP Themes & Practices 'Recreational Lands and Assets'

Recreation Plans:

Continue to maintain and update the Township 5-Year Park and Recreation Plan to meet grant eligibility through the DNR programs.

Recreational Asset Care and Support:

Continued care of recreational assets and promotion of expansion in accordance with the Township Recreation Plan should remain a priority. Place based asset development which promotes activities for all age cohorts will create an inviting environment for young members of the workforce, families and retirees.

Recreation Committees & Commissions:

The establishment of a Recreation Committee (a subset of the Township Board or Planning Commission) or a Recreation Commission under Act 157 of 1905, can provide focus on recreational assets when other duties undertaken by the Township Board or Planning Commission leave little time for consideration of recreational assets. The Township doesn't appear to be at this point quite yet, but as the community grows and duties of both the Board and Planning Commission become more numerous this may be an option for consideration.

BMP Themes & Practices 'Business and Employment Support'

Business Use Allowances:

Commercial districts should allow for a large range of uses with those of a more noxious nature (i.e. negative impacts of site or sound) offering protections through the use of screening and buffering which can offer built environments and vegetation to protect view sheds and create sound barriers.

Clear Design and Site Standards:

Clear standards for site design (e.g. landscaping, building design, site layout, etc.) are preferred by the development community over Planning Commission 'discretionary' practices built into a zoning ordinance. Determination of what is necessary on a site plan to gain approval, without having to submit multiple site designs and/or attend multiple public meetings for input and revisionary direction creates efficiency and promotes cost savings.

Clear Permitting and Approval Consideration Processes:

Processes that are clear in direction and requirements are easy to navigate. Consideration of sound participation by commission and board members to meet each meeting with appropriate participation levels for the process ensures trust in said processes.

Infrastructure Availability:

Appropriate infrastructure with system capacity to support a range of uses is necessary for commercial, industrial and high density residential uses. Employment opportunities provided by commercial and industrial uses can site in areas when infrastructure is made available and housing for employees can be built with density in areas of infrastructure.

BMP Themes & Practices 'Infrastructure Support'

Capital Improvement Planning:

Maintaining a fiscally constrained Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which identifies needs, and sets about plans for asset improvement and expansion is a fundamental need for growing communities.

Focused Density and Infrastructure Connections:

Policy should be established for a cost effective approach for infrastructure expansion. Infrastructure systems should be designed to be circular which are confined to areas which promote density of development through supportive land use policy. Focused efforts for confining systems to areas of density, and restricting expansion efforts until all areas within the service boundary are developed will create more efficient cost effective systems.

Infrastructure Coordination and Cooperation:

Maintaining cooperative and coordinated approaches to infrastructure with partner local units of government will continue to be the most efficient and cost effective approach to providing this service.

Emergency Services Coordination:

Continuing mutual aid agreements with local units of government in support of coordinated cooperation for emergency services provides layers of supportive protection for residents and visitors.

BMP Themes & Practices 'Transportation'

Collaborative Coordinated Transportation Planning (MPO):

The MPO is the leading coordinating board for multi-modal transportation in the Greater Traverse Region. Continued participation with this board is in the best interest of planning and coordination with neighboring local units of government for transportation assets and improvements.

Access Management:

Access management includes several different design considerations for ease of traffic congestion and maintaining of flow and circular network patterns. Such as requirements for shared drives and adjacent parcel and development interconnectivity. Standards are included in the Township Ordinance and should be updated as necessary.

Transit Assets:

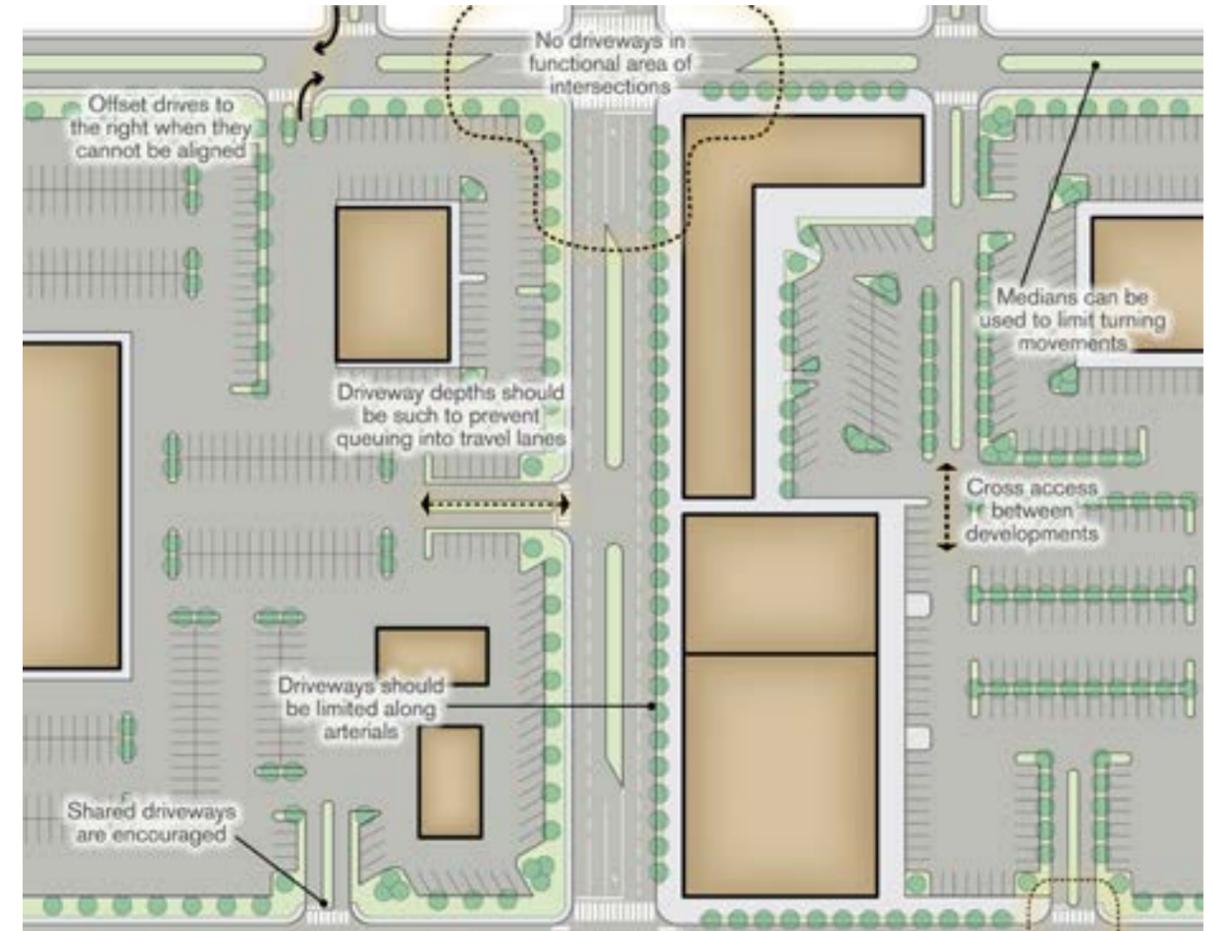
Support for inclusion of transit stops for development projects which serve commercial and employment areas as well as for higher density residential developments.

Non-Motorized Assets

Support for inclusion of provisions to include non-motorized assets in development projects in areas planned for non-motorized routes.

Complete Streets Ordinance and Policies:

Develop complete streets policies and ordinances which outline consideration of non-motorized and transit assets in vehicle roadway planning.



Access Management:
Interconnectivity and Shared Access Example

BMP Themes & Practices 'Site Design, Aesthetics, Building Conversion'

Commercial Building Setback & Parking:

Reducing front setbacks from roadways and bringing the structure closer to the road creates a stronger connection to the corridor, increases visibility of the building and mimics a downtown style. Limiting parking in front of the building to a row or two, with the remainder placed to the side and rear allows for the building to be brought forward while still accommodating desired parking spaces.

Commercial Building Façade Materials & Design:

Building design is subjective, but clear patterns achieved through community questionnaires display that the use of glass, brick and block building materials, along with design elements such as front wall recesses, canopies, and variation along roof lines are desirable when included in the design. Building and property value is directly connected to building aesthetics and material quality, as vacant buildings with more pleasing design and materials are occupied prior and more often to those with less pleasing design.

Commercial/Industrial Structure Landscaping & Screening:

Commercial and industrial uses often include aspects which can be considered noxious. These aspects include vehicular traffic noise and lights, outdoor storage, and waste collection and storage. The use of landscaping vegetation and building materials for walls and fences for separation of these uses from residential areas, park spaces, and for screening of storage, waste areas and loading areas is common practice and found within the current ordinance.

Adaptive Reuse of Existing Structures:

Communities with older or underutilized commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings can benefit from adaptive reuse policies that support conversion of these structures to new uses. This practice reduces demolition waste, retains architectural character, and often provides more affordable options for housing or business locations when compared with new construction. Regulations that support adaptive reuse may include flexible parking standards, modified dimensional/setback requirements, or ability to waive or modify other regulatory requirements by the Planning Commission. Communities that support adaptive reuse typically include clear regulations for what qualifies as an eligible property with a defined process for review and approval.

Residential Structure Design:

Community questionnaires have provided guidance that density of residential units is less of a concern when compared to the design of the residential structure. Simple regulatory measures in high density districts may direct structure design such as front doors facing roadways, incorporation of porches, pitched roofs, and landscaping. Support for design and incorporation of a residential structure so that it fits into the existing neighborhood design, will eliminate many concerns that are often directed at density of units.

Public Art and Mural Policies:

Public art, such as murals, sculptures, and creative installations, adds personality to public spaces and helps shape a community's identity. A strong public art and mural policy can guide where art is placed on building façades, in parks, along sidewalks, on barns, or even on utility boxes. A policy helps to outline how it is approved, who is involved, and how the art is maintained over time. Communities might also benefit from creating an Arts Advisory Committee (AAC) to help review proposals and ensure that new artwork fits in well with the surrounding area, especially in places with historic or distinctive architecture.

Dark Sky Standards:

Outdoor lighting, while necessary for safety and visibility, can contribute to light pollution that disrupts ecosystems, obscures night skies, and impacts residential quality of life. Lighting standards can be designed to reduce excessive or misdirected lighting through intelligent placement, fixture design, and light intensity. Communities that adopt dark sky ordinances typically require full cut-off fixtures, downward-directed lighting, and limits on lumens and color temperature. These standards may be applied to commercial, industrial, institutional, and even high-density residential developments. Implementing dark sky standards, enhances nighttime aesthetics, protects wildlife, and contributes to energy conservation.



Adaptive Reuse
Photo Credit: Networks Northwest

BMP Themes & Practices 'Open Space and Agricultural Conservation'

Low Residential Base Density, Cluster Development and Density Bonuses:

Communities which have elected to focus residential density away from agricultural areas, often follow a process of maintaining a low base density and offering density bonuses for additional residential units in areas of active agricultural uses. This process can create complexities for administration of the zoning ordinance, but many of these complexities will have existed in other forms if a community is seeing growth pressures extending into a communities' areas of rural character. Ultimately this practice directs development to a portion of a site, while leaving the remainder of the site as it exists under its current agricultural use.

Growth Boundaries, Infrastructure and Density:

Costs of community services as introduced in Chapter 4 of this document speaks to the cost burden of civic services and infrastructure as development expands beyond what constitutes the 'urban core'. Urban Core is defined as the location of high density of commercial, industry and residential development often tied directly to specific transportation corridors. A growth boundary is a way of defining an area for supporting and concentrating development, which can limit development outside of the boundary. A boundary doesn't have to be about limiting development, but rather can be about the offering of services to a restricted area only expanding beyond that area when development activities support expansion of services, or all areas within the growth boundary have undergone development.

Purchase of Development Rights Programs:

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs are a citizen incentivized agricultural and open space preservation program. The program is structured around the ability of a community to purchase a landowners development rights which then compensates the landowner for not turning a shovel in active agricultural properties or undeveloped areas of open space which are desired for preservation.

Agritourism:

Agritourism has become an increasingly important tool for supporting the economic viability of working farms while promoting community connection with agricultural heritage and the rural landscapes. Agritourism includes on-farm activities such as farm markets, farm stands, U-pick operations, educational tours, corn mazes, seasonal events, and farm-to-table dining experiences. Supporting agritourism through local policy can help preserve farmland by providing supplemental income to landowners and reinforcing the value of agriculture in the community. Regulatory approaches typically include clear definitions of agritourism, establishment of use allowances in agricultural zoning districts, and performance standards that balance farm operations with considerations such as traffic, parking, noise, and signage.

BMP Themes & Practices 'Household and Family Support'

Childcare Facility Support:

Maintaining the most up-to-date policies and regulatory allowances for childcare facility siting is an urgent need in many communities. Families and households with children are reliant upon opportunities for childcare, with most families and households having parents and guardians participating in the workforce.

Public Space, Libraries and Institutional Support:

Civic services for public spaces for civic and recreational opportunities, the maintaining and existence of libraries and connection to local schools should be prioritized. Many members of the community are reliant upon the services offered through these community assets. Connection to the school system places importance on the expansion of knowledge of the local government's support of the system, and also generates knowledge of the on-goings of the local government in the lives of everyday residents.

BMP Themes & Practices 'Civic Communication'

Communication Practices:

Maintaining communication channels established through use of the community newsletter, local unit website, and social media platforms should continue be regular practice. The conveying of information such as local unit efforts for infrastructure expansion, efforts for blight enforcement, land use policy and regulatory direction, and civic connections to the community should be priorities for inclusion in regular communications to the public.



Aerial of Urban Growth Boundary in Practice

Chapter 6

Action Plan, Future Land Use & Zoning Plan

This chapter presents the desired vision and direction for the community's land use policy as supported by the Township Planning Commission and Township Board. The information and data presented within this plan, with the input of the public through engagement activities and the property owner survey; provided guidance to Township Officials who shaped the policy directives of this chapter.

The Chapter is shaped around three primary inputs and policy directives:

1. **Action Plan:** The action plan outlines the direct strategies and accompanying actions which will guide decision making and stance towards various community development needs.
2. **Future Land Use Plan:** The future land use plan defines land use districts and the location of those districts as assigned on the Future Land Use Map.
3. **Zoning Plan:** The zoning plan links the future land use districts to the regulatory zoning districts, presents bulk requirements for parcels and developments, and offers supporting policy for general zoning provisions and recommended amendments.

Action Plan

1. Proactively Guide Growth

- Review Zoning Ordinance.
- Support Development to expand water and sewer infrastructure.
- Collaborate with MDOT and GTCRC on road capacity, safety and overall flow along major corridors.
- Continue the Township's effort to preserve farming and agricultural operations in the southern portion of the Township.

2. Provide for a Variety of Housing Types

- Support diverse housing that favors a mix of housing types.
- Encourage higher density housing development in the Township where utilities exist or may easily be extended to.

3. Improve the Appearance of the Township

- Research using a single haul company for Township wide garbage & recycling service. Create and promote two regular Township clean-up days per year.
- Encourage an Adopt-a-Road program within Grand Traverse County and MDOT.
- Create ad hoc groups to pick up garbage along Township roads.

4. Embrace Infrastructure

- Expand the Water and Sewer District.
- Monitor annually and update the five-year Capital Improvement Program.
- Maintain a positive and professional working relationship with investors and developers.
- Continually explore grant opportunities.

5. Encourage More Parks and Trails

- Connect Township assets with the regional non-motorized pathways and trails. Collaborate with TART to connect with existing TART trails.
- Include within the MDNR 5-Year Recreation Plan a non-motorized trail & shared pathway plan. Research and apply for potential grants to construct trails.

6. Protect Natural Resources

- Expand the Sewer District.
- Encourage educational opportunities with other governing agencies for education purposes. Include issues such as, Grand Traverse County Health Department for education on use and maintenance of septic systems. Department of Natural Resources, Illegal dump sites, burn bans, deer check stations, and keyholing.
- Encourage development in non-sensitive environmental areas.

7. Enhance Community Facilities

- Maintain current park and recreational areas in the Township.
- Support and promote the growth and enhancement of Blair Township's Emergency Services. Create and encourage use of the Blair Township's Community Garden.
- Research and source funding for construction for a new Township Hall and Community Center.
- Research and establish a Farmer's Market.

Future Land Use Districts

The future land use districts established by Blair Township are defined here. Each district title is accompanied by its district purpose statement, and the color with which each district is framed and matted matches the 'Future Land Use Map' - land use district color displayed on Map 19.

Recreation Conservation District

This district is designed to preserve and responsibly manage natural resources while allowing for low-impact use. The focus is on open space, recreation, and conservation. Most of the land within this district is publicly owned, and any residential development should include features such as parks or trails to enhance the area's natural character.

Boardman Valley District

The Boardman Valley District is established to uphold land use regulations set forth by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)'s Boardman River Natural River Zoning ordinance. Encompassing land areas within 400 feet of the Boardman River, Beitner Creek, Jaxon Creek, and designated tributaries as depicted on the Zoning Map, this district plays a vital role in preserving the environmental integrity of the Boardman watershed. The primary goal of this district is to protect and enhance water conservation values, maintain free-flowing conditions, and safeguard fish and wildlife habitats. Additionally, it seeks to preserve aesthetic qualities, floodplain functions, ecological balance, historical significance, and recreational opportunities. By carefully managing development and land use, this district ensures the long-term sustainability of these critical natural resources.

Commercial/Manufacturing

The Commercial and Light Manufacturing Mixed-Use District (CLM) is intended to support a balanced mix of commercial, office, and light industrial uses that contribute to a strong and diverse local economy. This district accommodates businesses such as retail, professional services, research and development, small- to medium-scale manufacturing, and technology-based industries, creating a dynamic environment where different uses can seamlessly blend together. Development in the CLM District should encourage high-quality site design, efficient infrastructure, and sustainable land use practices. To ensure compatibility with surrounding areas, projects should incorporate appropriate buffering, access management, signage, lighting, parking, and site planning that minimize conflicts between different uses. Uses that produce excessive noise, vibration, or hazardous emissions are not appropriate for this district. The CLM District also prioritizes multimodal accessibility, shared access, and shared parking where appropriate.

Industrial Storage Overlay

This district is meant for essential industrial storage facility uses that service the community, businesses, farms, and homes. Since these uses can sometimes be noisy, unattractive, or impact traffic and the environment, this district provides a dedicated space for them, helping to reduce their impact on surrounding areas, and placing them in areas immediately adjacent to the State Highway.

Village of Blackwood District

This district is designed to be a vibrant gathering place for Township residents, bringing together government offices, parks, homes, community spaces, and small businesses in one central location. The district aims to enhance the character of the Village of Blackwood through placement of pedestrian amenities.

Manufactured Home District

The purpose of the Manufactured Home (MH) District is to create a safe, attractive, and well-planned community for individuals and families who prefer living in a mobile or manufactured home rather than a traditional single-family house. This district is intended to provide attainable housing options while maintaining high standards for quality, infrastructure, and neighborhood compatibility. By establishing thoughtful guidelines for development, the MH District supports well-integrated, long-lasting communities where manufactured homes are a valued housing choice.

Residential High Density

The intent of this district is to support efficient, sustainable growth by allowing single and multi-family housing in areas with access to municipal sewer and water services. This district encourages a mix of housing options including apartments, condos, and town-homes which aim to make the best use of available land while maintaining a strong sense of community. Development in this district should focus on creating walkable, well-connected neighborhoods with easy access to parks, transit, and local businesses. New buildings should look to seamlessly blend with their surroundings, utilizing quality architecture, appropriate setbacks, and landscaping to enhance the area while respecting current neighborhood character. This district should prioritize appropriately scaled developments while also giving significant attention to environmental concerns such as stormwater and access management.

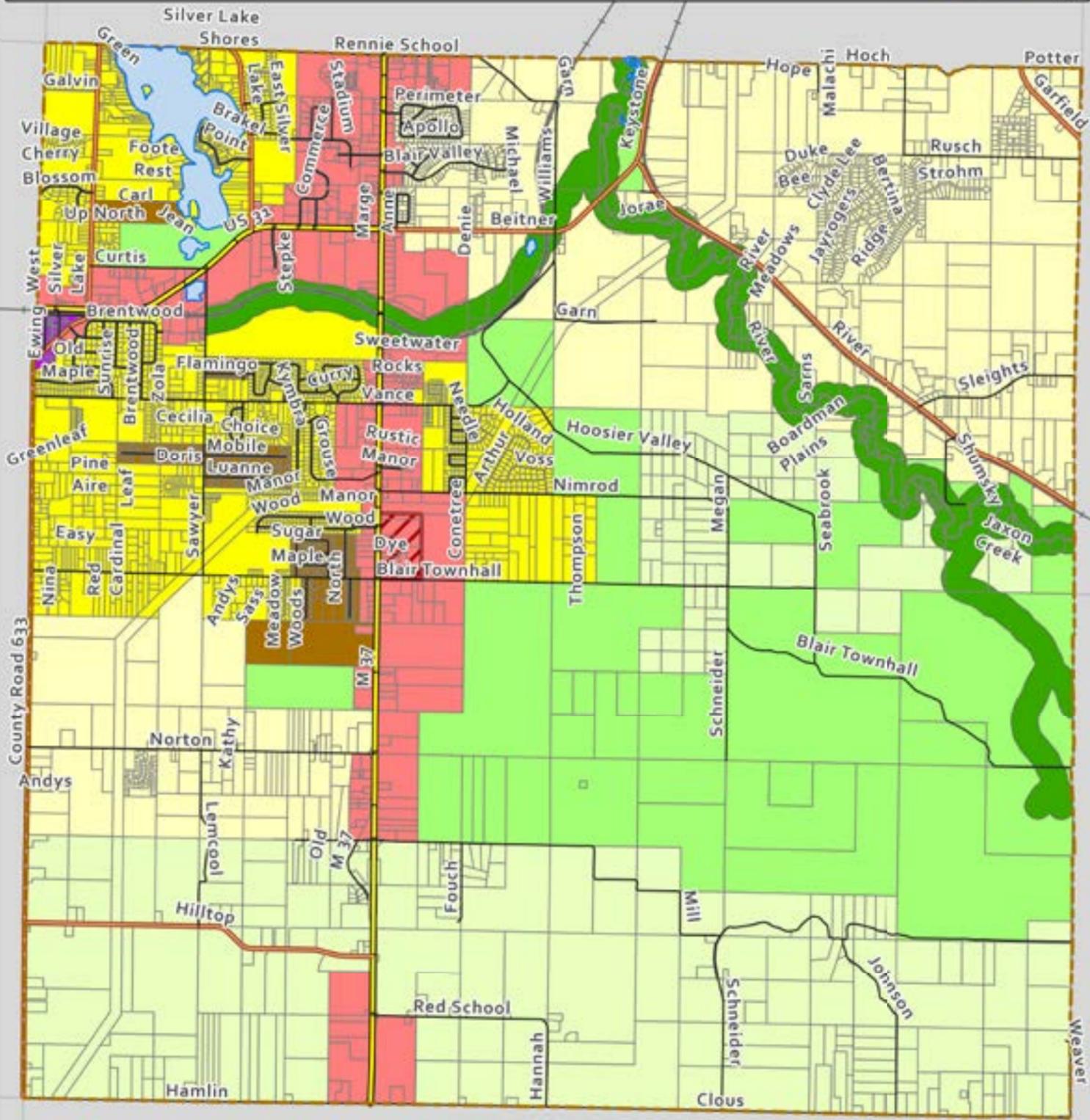
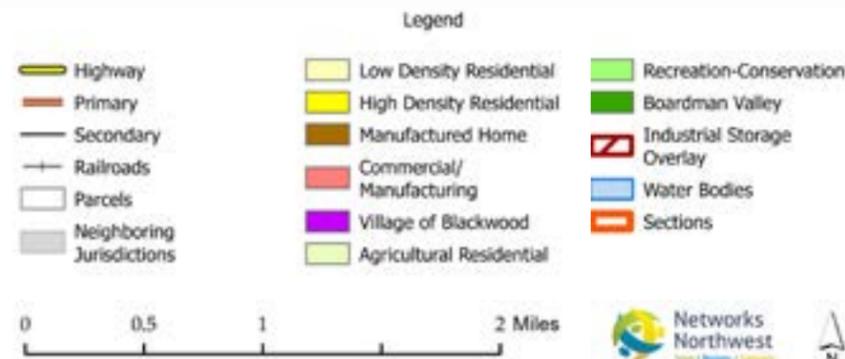
Residential Low Density

This district is designed to support thoughtful, sustainable growth while keeping a strong neighborhood feel. It allows a mix of single-family homes, duplexes, and small-scale multi-family housing as a special use. The goal is to create a variety of housing options that fit well within the community and respect the existing character of the area. Development in this district should focus on walkability, easy access to parks and schools, and a sense of connection between neighbors. New homes should look to preserve existing neighborhood character with thoughtful setbacks and landscaping that enhance and support existing neighborhoods. Without municipal water or sewer service, special attention should be given to protecting groundwater, managing stormwater, and access management.

Agricultural Residential District

The purpose of the Agricultural District is to preserve and protect agricultural lands for the cultivation of crops, livestock production, and other agricultural uses that contribute to the economic vitality and rural character of the community. This district is intended to promote agricultural activities, limit urban encroachment, encourage sustainable practices, support agricultural enterprises, protect rural character, provide for single-family residential use on prescribed minimum 2-acre lots, and allow compatible uses, while minimizing uses that could be detrimental to agricultural activities.

Blair Twp Future Land Use Map



Zoning Plan

The Zoning Plan is comprised of four components.

- 1. Future Land Use Districts linkage to Zoning Districts:** This provides a table that displays the matching of land use districts to their respective zoning districts, amendments to zoning district titles, and outlines the creation of a new additional zoning district.
- 2. Zoning District Bulk Requirements Table:** The table displays the recommended policy directives for the bulk requirements of specific zoning districts.
- 3. Existing Zoning Standards Supportive Policy:** A statement narrative which supports the continuation of existing standards found with the zoning ordinance.
- 4. Recommended Zoning Standards Amendments:** Policy statements which support the addition of new regulatory standards or the amendment of existing standards to meet supported regulatory policy.

Future Land Use Districts Linkage to Zoning Districts

Table 14 below displays the Future Land Use District title and matching Zoning District Title.

<i>Future Land Use District Title</i>	<i>Zoning District Title</i>
Recreation Conservation District	Recreation Conservation (RC) District
Boardman Valley District	Boardman Valley (BV) District
Commercial/Manufacturing District	*Commercial-Light Manufacturing (CLM) District
Industrial Storage Overlay District	Industrial Storage Overlay (ISO) District
Village of Blackwood District	Village of Blackwood (VB) District
Manufactured Home District	Manufactured Home (MH) District
Residential High Density District	**Residential High Density (R1) District
Residential Low Density District	***Residential Low Density (R2) District
Agricultural Residential District	****Agricultural Residential (AR) District

Table 14: Future Land Use District & Zoning District Linkage

- *Denotes a new zoning district title, the district boundary is the same as the current 'Commercial/Manufacturing' district
- **Denotes a new zoning district and zoning district title with a new defined boundary.
- ***Denotes a new zoning district and zoning district title with a new defined boundary.
- ****Denotes a new zoning district title, the district boundary is the same as the current 'Agricultural' district.

Zoning District Bulk Requirements

The standards outlining parcel and development bulk standard zoning requirements are provided in Table 15.

Blair Township	District Bulk Standards											
	Zoning Districts	Min Lot Area	Min Lot Width	Max Height	Min. Dwelling Area	Max Lot Coverage %	Max Gross Density in Units per ac	Setbacks				
								Front	Side	Rear	Street	Water Yard
Commercial / Manufacturing District (CLM)	***	***	55'	***	N/A	NA	50'	****	25'	50'	*****	
Agricultural Residential District (AR)	2 ac	330'	35'	600 ft ²	20%	0.5	50'	20'	30'	50'	*****	
High Density Residential District (R-1)	N/A	N/A**	35'	600 ft ²	N/A	N/A	25'	10'	20'	20'	50'	
Low Density Residential District (R-2)	1 ac	150'	35'	600 ft ²	60%	1	20'	10'	25'	20'	50'	
Boardman Valley District (BV)	40,000 ft ²	200'	25'	800 ft ²	10%	1	25'	15'	25'	25'	100'*	
Recreation-Consevation District (RC)	5 ac	330'	25'	800 ft ²	10%	0.2	20'	50'	50'	50'	50'	
Manufactured Home District (MH)	10 ac *****	100'	25'	N/A	N/A	N/A *****	25'	10'	20'	35'	*****	
Village of Blackwood District (VB)	N/A	50'	25'	800 ft ²	N/A	1	5'	5'	20'	5'	*****	
Industrial Storage Overlay District (ISO)	***	***	55'	***	50%	N/A	50'	50'	50'	50'	*****	

Table 15: Zoning District Bulk Requirements

*200 feet on every new parcel that has river frontage on the Boardman River, Jaxon Creek, Beitner Creek, or the designated tributary as shown on the Official Zoning Map.
 ** 60 foot width requirement for metes and bounds lots.
 *** Determined by use.
 **** No side setback requirement if both structures are zoned CM.
 ***** Setback from Silver Lake shall be 50 feet.
 ***** Manufactured Home - single lot size is .5 acres, allows a max gross density of 2 units per acre

Existing Zoning Standard Supportive Policy

The following general provisions for site design layout, site asset standards, and site management should be maintained in the current ordinance. As the community grows, continued development approvals may display a need for adjustment of these regulatory provisions based upon citizen or developer feedback. Policy to support existing standards extends but is not limited to the following:

- Lighting
- Fences
- Accessory Structure
- Accessory Dwellings
- Recreational Vehicle Storage
- Parking
- Streets (Public/Private)
- Signage
- Building Front Orientation
- Drive-Thru Lanes
- Access Management
- Outdoor Storage
- Landscaping/Screening
- Keeping of Animals
- Soil Extraction
- Trail Connections

Recommended Zoning Standards Amendments

The following general provisions for site design layout, site asset standards, and site management should be maintained in the current ordinance. As the community grows, continued development approvals may display a need for adjustment of these regulatory provisions based upon citizen or developer feedback. Policy to support existing standards extends but is not limited to the following:

- Amend the zoning district title of the 'Commercial Manufacturing District' to the 'Commercial and Light Manufacturing District', with boundaries which remain unchanged.
- Create a new zoning district 'Residential High Density (R-1)', with boundaries which align with the Future Land Use Map High Density Residential District.
- Create a new zoning district 'Residential Low Density (R-2)', with boundaries which align with the Future Land Use Map Low Density Residential District.
- Amend the zoning district title of the 'Agricultural District' to the 'Agricultural Residential District'.
- Expand commercial/industrial screening standards to include grease collectors and dumpsters.
- Review and determine if residential design standards should be included in the Zoning Ordinance to allow for the maintaining of existing residential design when siting structures of varied density within a residential neighborhood. Standards could include requirements for porches, peaked roofs, and garage placement.
- Review and potentially revise pedestrian trail standards. Existing standards call for pedestrian trail placement. This could be revised to support sidewalk developments in all commercial areas and in high density residential developments, with recommendation to include non-motorized 10' trail development where the Township or MPO pedestrian and trail plans display a trail location adjacent to a development site.
- Review and revise 'Site Condominium and Subdivision Standards' and their requirements as they pertain to required open space per the requirements of the underlying zoning district.
- Review Key-Hole standards and ensure they are meeting the intent and need of riparian owners.
- Work with the County on the development of stormwater regulations, and include provisions within the ordinance which outline their inclusion along with requirements for Low Impact Development stormwater controls.