



# VILLAGE OF NEW ERA FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

September 2020



**WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
(WMSRDC)**

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties.

The mission of the Commission is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments and other regional partners.



Bonnie McGlothin, Chairperson  
Dale Nesbary, Vice-Chairperson  
Charles Lange, Secretary

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director

**Project Staff:**

Stephen Carlson, Program Manager  
Jamie Way, GIS Specialist

**New Era Village Council:**

Don Richards, Village President  
Sharon Pepple, Village Treasurer  
Natalie Kelly, Village Clerk  
Roger Fessenden, Trustee  
Lisa Fleury, Trustee  
Gary Grinwis, Trustee  
Mark Kelly, Trustee  
Tyler Sobers, Trustee  
Lynn VanSickle, Trustee

# Table of Contents

---

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	Purpose of the Plan	1
	Legal Basis of Planning	1
	The Planning Process	2
	How to Use This Plan	3
	Relationship with Zoning	3
<b>II.</b>	<b>COMMUNITY SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
	Geographic Context	4
	Brief History	5
<b>III.</b>	<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES</b>	<b>6</b>
	Village Government	6
	Transportation	6
	Placemaking	7
	Parks and Recreation	7
	Schools	9
	Fire and Police	9
<b>IV.</b>	<b>COMMUNITY PROFILE</b>	<b>10</b>
	Population Trends	10
	Age Distribution	11
	Median Age	11
	Housing	12
	Educational Attainment	13
<b>V.</b>	<b>NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
	Topography	14
	Soils	14
	Septic Suitability	15
	Erosion	16
	Climate	16
	Water Resources	19
	Flooding	20
<b>VI.</b>	<b>CURRENT LAND USE</b>	<b>21</b>
	Settlement Patterns	22
<b>VII.</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b>	<b>23</b>
	Community Opinions	23
	Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Strategies	24
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>ZONING PLAN</b>	<b>29</b>
	Evaluation Standards of Rezoning and Land Use Changes	29
	Zoning District Descriptions	30
<b>IX.</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>32</b>
	Future Land Use	32
	Recommended Future Land Uses	32
	Future Land Use Map	36
	General Implementation Tools and Techniques	37
<b>X.</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>43</b>
	<b>APPENDIX A – Public Notices and Plan Approval Process</b>	<b>44</b>
	<b>APPENDIX B – SWOT Analysis June 13, 2019</b>	<b>52</b>
	<b>APPENDIX C – Maps</b>	<b>54</b>

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This version of the New Era Future Land Use Plan is a fresh take on a document that had previously served the community for over 20 years. Notable adjustments to the plan include: updated demographics and tables, addition of the Zoning Plan chapter, and revisions to the goals & objectives and Future Land Use map. Another notable adjustment appears prominently on new maps created for this plan. It was discovered that numerous property parcels, information which is maintained by the Oceana County Equalization Department, were not consistent with the previously assumed jurisdictional boundary of New Era. As a result, the Village boundary has been adjusted to better align with parcel records. The adjustment is reflected on the Landscape and Future Land Use maps. The impact of this discovery is meaningful for the creation of community maps and, to some extent, the community's geographic identity.

### **Purpose of the Plan**

The decisions and actions of a community must be made with the knowledge that their effects will be felt beyond the community's immediate boundaries and current circumstances. When making land use decisions, it is not difficult to focus on individuals and current situations. However, it is imperative that decisions be based upon the community's vision for the future. This will ensure that decisions will consider impacts on the Village for years to come.

This plan is intended to be a policy document to guide future Village actions and decisions pertaining to land use. It is not intended to establish precise boundaries of land use areas or exact locations of future types of developments. Its function is to guide growth toward long-range, broad-based goals.

The goal of any future land use plan is to combine the needs and desires of the citizenry with the land's suitability and capability for sustaining those uses, according to the ability and desire of the municipality to provide public services throughout its jurisdiction. Such planning will minimize the potential for land use conflicts and inappropriate uses of land, for the betterment of all residents.

Every effort has been made to present information that is both current and accurate. The New Era Village Council and the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission shall not be held liable for any errors and/or omissions that are related to this plan. This plan is a general document; therefore, a thorough investigation with original research materials should be undertaken before proceeding with any specific implementation decisions. These materials might include site plans, legal reviews, etc. and would vary by situation.

### **Legal Basis of Planning**

The State of Michigan authorizes municipalities to develop community planning through the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008 (MPEA). Under

this act, communities have the responsibility to develop and adopt a plan for the future development of their community. The New Era Village Council followed the directives of this act in the preparation of this future land use plan.

Although enabled by Michigan law, this plan does not have the force of statutory law or ordinance. The MPEA provides the legal basis for this type of plan and outlines requirements for the preparation, content, public review, adoption, and regular review of the plan. Key objectives of a plan as outlined in the act include:

- Create a plan that guides development that is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical and that best promotes public health, safety and general welfare;
- Make careful and comprehensive studies of present conditions and future growth with due regard for its relation to neighboring jurisdictions;
- Consult and cooperate with representatives of adjacent local units of government, departments of state and federal governments;
- Address land use and infrastructure issues and make recommendations for physical development;
- At least every five years, review the plan to determine whether to amend or readopt the current plan or adopt a new future land use plan.

### **The Planning Process**

In 2019, the Village of New Era contracted with the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) to concurrently assist in the update of the Village of New Era Future Land Use Plan (1998) and the Village of New Era Recreation Plan (2014). As a result of this coordinated effort, the two plans are now better aligned.

Citizen input is paramount in identifying and discerning the issues facing Village residents as a whole. All citizens were invited and encouraged to take part in the planning process, as were bordering municipalities, Oceana County, and utility providers. Opportunities for public input were provided through Village Council meetings, a special public input meeting hosted by the Village Council, a public review period, and a public hearing. Notices of the public input meeting and the public hearing were published in the Oceana Herald-Journal newspaper.

A plan such as this should be consistent in maintaining the community's goals. The planning process strives to combine the needs and desires of the citizenry with the land's suitability and capability for sustaining those uses. It also balances the Village's ability and desire to provide public services throughout its jurisdiction. The goals and objectives set forth in this plan for the Village should be reviewed on a regular basis. When appropriate, this Future Land Use Plan should be modified to reflect changes of a physical nature or those of general public sentiment.

## **How to Use This Plan**

The Village of New Era Future Land Use Plan is intended to function as a guide for directing and managing development within the Village boundaries. This plan is not a zoning ordinance, which is a separate, legally-enforceable document. This plan is a policy-planning document that provides a legal rationale for zoning founded on input from the public and Village Council. It presents a written analysis of the Village's physical and social characteristics, as well as visions and goals for future development. In addition, implementation strategies are identified and are intended to guide policy makers towards accomplishing the established visions and goals of the Village of New Era Future Land Use Plan. Development decisions for the Village should be based on the data and information presented in this plan and should also be consistent with the established visions and goals.

## **Relationship with Zoning**

While most understand that there is a relationship between a future land use plan (which may also be called a “master plan” or “comprehensive development plan”) and a zoning ordinance, it is often misinterpreted and used inappropriately. The relationship is a very important one, *because you cannot utilize one without having the other*. Simply stated, a land use plan is a policy document, while the zoning ordinance is a regulatory tool used to implement the goals and objectives of the land use plan. *The land use plan and map are designed to provide the community with a glimpse of where they desire their community to head, and a zoning ordinance and map provides the means to arrive there.*

The primary difference between a future land use map and a zoning map is timing. The future land use map shows the intended use of land at the end of the planning period, which is generally 10 to 20 years in the future. The zoning map shows land as it is intended to be used today. Thus, the two maps may look similar, but will most likely not be identical.

Changes to a zoning ordinance or zoning map are the primary tools communities have at their disposal to regulate land use. The future land use plan and map are used to guide the process of changing land uses. In other words, the future land use plan and map will be utilized to regulate what zoning changes will occur and where they will occur. For example, rezoning requests are often required to be consistent with the future land use plan's designations as they identify the community's desires for their future.

New requirements of the 2008 Michigan Zoning Enabling Act require that a zoning ordinance “shall be based on a plan...” (MCL 125.3203(1)). Often, the plan zoning is based upon is referred to as a “zoning plan.” The zoning plan can be a chapter contained within the future land use plan, a separate document of the plan, or integrated throughout the plan. Chapter VII of this plan is intended to fulfill this requirement and strengthen the ties between the Village of New Era Future Land Use Plan and the Village of New Era Zoning Ordinance.

## II. COMMUNITY SUMMARY

### Small Town Charm

From thoughtful downtown streetscaping lined with local businesses, to quiet walkable neighborhoods, to public spaces and parks, New Era has a quaint and welcoming character which offers a unique and desirable sense of place.

### Geographic Context

New Era is a small rural village located in the southwestern portion of Oceana County. The Village contains approximately 600 acres and is surrounded by fields, orchards, and scattered homes. The northern half of the Village lies within Shelby Township and the southern half lies within Grant Township. The Village's most notable features are its historical and compact village center, the Hart-Montague Bicycle Trail State Park, and Oceana Drive (known as First Street within the village boundaries) which runs north and south through the village center and parallel to the bike trail.



## **Brief History**

The Village of New Era was officially incorporated in 1948. However, the town was established around 1870 by Gilbert B. Goble and Dr. Spaulding. Mr. Goble became the first postmaster in 1872. The post office was located in the depot of the Chicago & Western Michigan Railroad, which operated between 1881 and 1899. After that, Chicago & Western consolidated with two other rail companies to create the Pere Marquette Railway.

Years after the railroad through New Era was abandoned, the right-of-way was purchased by Bill Field and donated for trail use to the State of Michigan. The William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail State Park opened in 1991 and was officially adopted as a Rails to Trails park in 1996. Today, the Hart-Montague Trail remains a centerpiece of the Village. Depot Park, a Village-owned park and waypoint along the bike trail, now exists where the old train depot once stood.

Additional historical information may be available through the Oceana County Historical & Geneological Society, headquartered in the City of Hart.

<http://www.oceanahistory.org/>

*Historical New Era Depot*



*Present Day New Era Depot*

### **III. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

#### **Village Government**

The Village of New Era is governed by a Village Council consisting of a president, clerk, treasurer, and six trustees, all of which are elected by the public. The Council meets on the second Thursday of every month at 7:00 P.M. at the village hall located at 2589 Garfield Road. The Village Council acts as the Zoning Board of Appeals, which decides questions concerning the administration of the Village of New Era Zoning Ordinance and makes decisions on variance requests as allowed by the enabling legislation for village zoning. The Village has a police officer, who also serves as the zoning administrator.

New Era regularly practices a limited amount of capital improvements, primarily to maintain local roads. In addition, the Village provides municipal sewer services in certain areas, primarily to protect groundwater resources. Building, electrical, and plumbing/mechanical inspections and permitting are handled by Oceana County.

#### **Transportation**

The location of roads, non-motorized implements, and features of walkability (or lack thereof) are key factors in determining where future development of land will occur. There is an important link between transportation and development: land use and development affect the placement and utility of transportation facilities, and vice versa. Various land use characteristics have marked effects on transportation facilities, including the type, intensity, and location of development, as well as site design. These factors, among others, help determine the nature and amount of traffic generated in an area, which is the principle determinant of the adequacy of the surrounding transportation facilities. These facilities have a substantial impact on surrounding development and land use.

The Village of New Era is well served by the existing regional road network. U.S. Route 31 traverses north-south just west of the Village. Oceana Drive (old U.S. Route 31, and First Street within the Village limits) traverses north-south through the heart of town. M-20 traverses east-west just north of the village.

“Active transportation” is also encoded in the small-town DNA of New Era, highlighted by the Hart-Montague Trail, walkable neighborhoods with close access to schools, and a compact, walkable downtown featuring historic storefronts with numerous small businesses. Active transportation refers to any form of human-powered transportation including walking, cycling, using a wheelchair, in-line skating or skateboarding. There are many ways to engage in active transportation, whether it is walking to school or cycling to work. There are several benefits from active transportation:

- ✓ Health – Provides an opportunity to be physically active on a regular basis.
- ✓ Social – Increases opportunities for social interactions.

- ✓ Transportation – Reduces road congestion and parking demands.
- ✓ Environmental – Environmentally-friendly by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- ✓ Economic – Active transportation saves money on gas and parking.

### **Placemaking**

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being.

The Village of New Era takes pride in providing attractive and welcoming atmospheres for residents and visitors alike. Placemaking activities such as streetscape improvements along First Street, Depot Park improvements, and the new memorial park for veterans at the intersection of Garfield Road and First Street demonstrate the community's ongoing efforts and dedication to placemaking.



*First Street, New Era*

### **Parks and Recreation**

The Village of New Era has several outdoor recreation areas available for public use. There are also two schools which provide soccer fields, ball diamonds, and playground for community use.

#### ***Hart-Montague State Park Trail***

The star in New Era's recreational crown is the William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail State Park. The trail was the State of Michigan's first linear trail. New Era is located at approximately the halfway point of this 22-mile paved trail. Activities allowed along the trail include biking, hiking, wildlife viewing, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling. A local snowmobile group grooms the trail on a volunteer basis during the winter.



*Hart-Montague Trail*

### ***Depot Park***

Depot Park, also known as the Rail Trail Depot, is owned and maintained by the Village of New Era. The property is approximately one acre and is located adjacent to the Hart-Montague Trail and First Street. The park is widely used by community members and trail users for picnics and a place to rest. Amenities include a covered shelter with picnic tables, portable restrooms, and a wooden bridge over Carlton Creek. A small gravel parking lot with two to three parking spaces is located next to the shelter and trail. Improvements made to the park in 2018 include a small plaza with seating and ornamental lighting along First Street, and a paved sidewalk connecting the plaza to the depot shelter. Improvements were made possible through a cooperative effort between the Village of New Era and the New Era Chamber of Commerce, as well as a grant from the Community Foundation for Oceana County.



*Depot Park*

### ***New Era Ball Field***

The New Era Ball Field is located at the corner of James Street and Oak Avenue. The approximately 1.5-acres property is owned and maintained by the Village. Amenities on the property include a fenced in ball diamond with bleachers, pickle ball, four-square and basketball courts, and a storage shed and portable restrooms. The ball field is utilized throughout the year for outdoor recreation, and leagues and youth soccer during warm seasons.



*New Era Ball Field*

The Village applied for and received a Land & Water Conservation recreation grant through the Michigan DNR in 2015. Improvements to the park were completed in 2018.



*New Era Ball Field*

### ***New Era Village Hall Property***

The New Era Village Hall is located on Garfield Road in the southeast quadrant of the village. The hall sits along the roadside on approximately five acres. The property behind the village hall is wooded and undeveloped. The property has the potential to be developed for recreational use if the village determines there is a need for additional recreational opportunities within the village limits.



*Village Hall Property*

## **Schools**

The Village of New Era is located within the Shelby Public Schools district. There are two elementary schools within the village, New Era Elementary and New Era Christian School. The elementary is associated with Shelby Public Schools and includes 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. New Era Christian is a member of West Michigan Christian Schools and includes pre-school through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Both schools have ball fields and playground equipment that are generally available for public use.

## **Fire and Police**

Fire protection service in the Village is provided by neighboring townships. Grant Township Fire Department covers the south portion of the Village, while Shelby-Benona Fire Department covers the north portion.

The Village employs one police officer. Additional law enforcement is provided through the Oceana County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police Post in Hart.

The Village has one operational warning siren located at the Village Hall.



*New Era Police*

#### IV. COMMUNITY PROFILE

Population characteristics, such as growth trends, age distribution, educational level and housing characteristics, help planners make predictions based on historic patterns. A picture of the future can be painted by analyzing these factors. The following sections provide a community profile of the Village of New Era utilizing data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The two most commonly referenced datasets in this chapter are the 2010 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Characteristics and the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates.

##### Population Trends

According to the 2010 Census, New Era claimed 451 residents. The Village population has slightly decreased every ten years since the 1980 census. The most recent ACS estimates, show the population may have increased by 7.5% between 2010 and 2017 (Table 1).

**Table 1**

<b>VILLAGE OF NEW ERA DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS</b>			
	<b>Population</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>1970</b>	466	-	-
<b>1980</b>	534	68	14.6%
<b>1990</b>	520	-14	-2.6%
<b>2000</b>	461	-59	-11.3%
<b>2010</b>	451	-10	-2.2%
<b>2017*</b>	485	34	7.5%

*Source: U.S Bureau of the Census*

*\* 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimate*

In 2010, the population density of New Era was 537 persons per square mile. When looking at these figures, it should be recognized that portions of land in the Village are unsuitable for development due to any number of variables, such as steep slopes or seasonally high-water tables. Thus, the area of buildable land is reduced and the density where the population resides is higher than a straight calculation would indicate.

**Table 2**

<b>NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES POPULATION TRENDS</b>					
	<b>2000 Population</b>	<b>2010 Population</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>2017 Population*</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Shelby Twp</b>	3,951	4,069	3.0%	4,030	-1.0%
<b>Shelby Village</b>	1,914	2,065	7.9%	2,023	-2.0%
<b>Grant Twp</b>	2,932	2,976	-0.7%	2,936	-1.3%
<b>Rothbury Village</b>	416	432	3.8%	445	3.0%

*Source: U.S Bureau of the Census*

*\* 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimate*

The New Era area, including Grant Township, Shelby Township, and the villages of New Era, Rothbury and Shelby, made up over one quarter of the total Oceana County population, as of the 2010 U.S. Census. Table 2 shows the population trends for New Era's neighbors in recent years (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the Village's population projections in five-year increments from 2020 to 2040, according to WMSRDC Demographic Projections (Table 3). Contrary to the 2017 ACS estimate, which signals a modest population increase, the WMSRDC projection estimated a level to slightly declining population over the next two decades.

It is important to note that WMSRDC population projections are calculated on a county level (annual average growth for the previous ten years applied to current population) and then aggregated to the municipal level according to the municipality's most recent share of county population. Projections do not take into account variations in development trends between individual units.

Table 3

VILLAGE OF NEW ERA POPULATION PROJECTIONS				
2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
442	440	438	436	435

Source: WMSRDC Demographic Projections (October 2018)

### Age Distribution

It is useful to note an increase or decrease in certain population groups, specifically the school and retirement age populations. These population groups can indicate whether or not there may be an increased need for capital and service expenditures.

Table 4 shows the age distribution in New Era and Oceana County. The figures reveal a relatively healthy population distribution for both entities. Children and teenagers make up 26.2% of the population, ages 25-54 make up 34.0%, and ages 65 and above make up 19.4% (Table 4).

Table 4

AGE DISTRIBUTION				
	New Era		Oceana County	
	number of persons	percent of persons	number of persons	percent of persons
<b>0-4</b>	29	6.0%	1,534	5.8%
<b>5-9</b>	27	5.6%	1,693	6.4%
<b>10-14</b>	40	8.2%	1,805	6.9%
<b>15-19</b>	31	6.4%	1,709	6.5%
<b>20-24</b>	31	6.4%	1,574	6.0%
<b>25-34</b>	38	7.8%	2,603	9.9%
<b>35-44</b>	68	14.0%	2,760	10.5%
<b>45-54</b>	64	13.2%	3,552	13.5%
<b>55-59</b>	30	6.2%	1,869	7.1%
<b>60-64</b>	33	6.8%	2,011	7.6%
<b>65-74</b>	59	12.2%	3,102	11.8%
<b>75-84</b>	27	5.6%	1,504	5.7%
<b>85+</b>	8	1.6%	601	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	485	100.0%	26,317	100%

Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimate

### Median Age

While the Village appears to currently have a fairly distributed population, the median age statistics show a noticeable trend towards increasing age. Table 5 compares the estimated median population age for the Village, Oceana County, Michigan, and the United States (Table 5). All levels of population are aging, year over year. Over the five-year period shown, New Era's median age increased much more than the other populations.

Table 5

MEDIAN AGE				
	New Era	Oceana Co	Michigan	USA
<b>2013</b>	37.2	42.4	39.1	37.3
<b>2014</b>	38.4	42.3	39.3	37.4
<b>2015</b>	39.5	42.3	39.5	37.6
<b>2016</b>	39.2	42.6	39.5	37.7
<b>2017</b>	41.1	42.7	39.6	37.8
<b>5-year change</b>	3.9 years	0.3 years	0.5 years	0.5 years

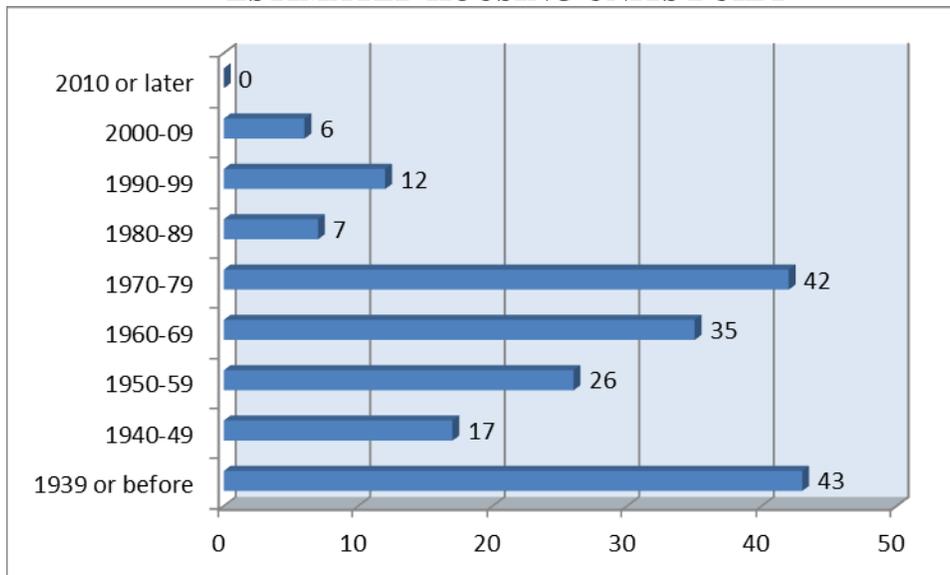
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, & 2017)

## **Housing**

Housing, as well as significant changes in an area’s housing stock, have a direct impact on planning decisions. It is important to note that changing trends related to housing stock are often indicators for important changes occurring with the population base and land use. A vital aspect of housing stock is the presence of a variety of house choices (i.e. traditional single-family homes, duplexes, and manufactured homes). Various housing types allow for affordable housing opportunities for all segments of the population.

Traditional, single-family homes dominate the New Era housing stock. Other words that can describe the New Era housing scene might include: historic, compact, walkable, tree-lined, and affordable. According to the 2017 ACS 5-year Estimates, over 95% of occupied housing units were one-unit, detached structures. This may be due to several factors. Among them might be a lack of appropriate building sites for other types of housing structures (i.e. those that require water and sewer utilities). Another reason might be the Village zoning ordinance which, reflecting the desires of the community, allows single-family dwellings in all residential districts and the agricultural district. Single-family units are also currently allowed in business and industrial districts as special land uses.

**GRAPH 1**  
**ESTIMATED HOUSING UNITS BUILT**



*Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

The graph above illustrates the approximate number of housing units in the Village in 2017, along with the estimated timeline for when units were built (Graph 1). This information is useful for gaining a general sense of the housing stock age, rather than for specific decade-to-decade comparisons. The dataset shows that more New Era housing units were constructed in the 1970’s than any other decade since 1940. Still,

nearly two out of every three units were constructed before 1970. It is notable that less than one in five housing units has been built since 1980, perhaps signaling a lack of buildable space within the Village.

As existing housing units continue to age, and if the recent downward trend in new home construction continues, the historic nature of the New Era’s housing stock will be a blessing and a curse. Older neighborhoods are typically denser and more walkable, which can be attractive to young families and retirees alike. In addition, “research suggests property values in designated historic districts generally rise 5 to 35 percent more per decade than homes in undesignated neighborhoods in the same areas.”<sup>1</sup> However, in order to leverage the older housing stock, the community will need to remain proactive in building inspection and code enforcement because older homes require more upkeep.

**Table 6**

<b>VILLAGE OF NEW ERA YEAR HOUSEHOLDER MOVED INTO UNIT</b>		
	<b>Units</b>	<b>%</b>
Occupied housing units	168	
Moved in 2010 or later	53	31.5%
Moved in 2000-09	41	24.4%
Moved in 1990-99	23	13.7%
Moved in 1980-89	20	11.9%
Moved in 1979 or earlier	31	18.5%

*Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimate*

Another notable housing trend can be identified in Table 6: more than half of household owners in New Era moved into their housing unit in 2000 or later. This trend is consistent with the estimated population increase for 2017 (Table 6). Considering the dearth of new housing units created in recent years, this may signal an increased interest in New Era neighborhoods (Graph 1).

### **Educational Attainment**

Table 7 details education attainment for the Village and county residents aged 18 to 24, as well as 25 years of age and over (Table 7). In general, the population of New Era has achieved higher levels of education than the Oceana County populace. Over seventy percent (70.5%) of the Village’s population aged 18 and over has had some college or obtained a higher education degree, while only about half of the county’s population (49.4%) has achieved the same threshold.

**Table 7**

<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>		
	<b>New Era</b>	<b>Oceana County</b>
<b>Population 18 to 24 years</b>	43	2,214
Less than high school graduate	4 (9.3%)	507 (22.9%)
High school graduate	7 (16.3%)	903 (40.8%)
Some college or associate’s degree	28 (65.1%)	735 (33.2%)
Bachelor’s degree or higher	6 (5.0%)	69 (3.1%)
<b>Population 25 years and over</b>	327	18,002
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	2 (0.6%)	835 (4.6%)
9 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	10 (3.1%)	1,610 (8.9%)
High School Diploma	88 (29.6%)	6,371 (35.4%)
Some College	83 (25.4%)	4,336 (24.1%)
Associate Degree	29 (8.9%)	1,584 (8.8%)
Bachelor’s Degree	78 (23.9%)	2,099 (11.7%)
Graduate or Professional Degree	37 (11.3%)	1,167 (6.5%)

*Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

<sup>1</sup> Maciag, Mike. *Implications of Older Housing Stock for Cities*. Governing, August 2014. <https://www.governing.com/topics/urban/gov-cities-old-housing-stock.html>. Accessed 2 February 2020.

## V. NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

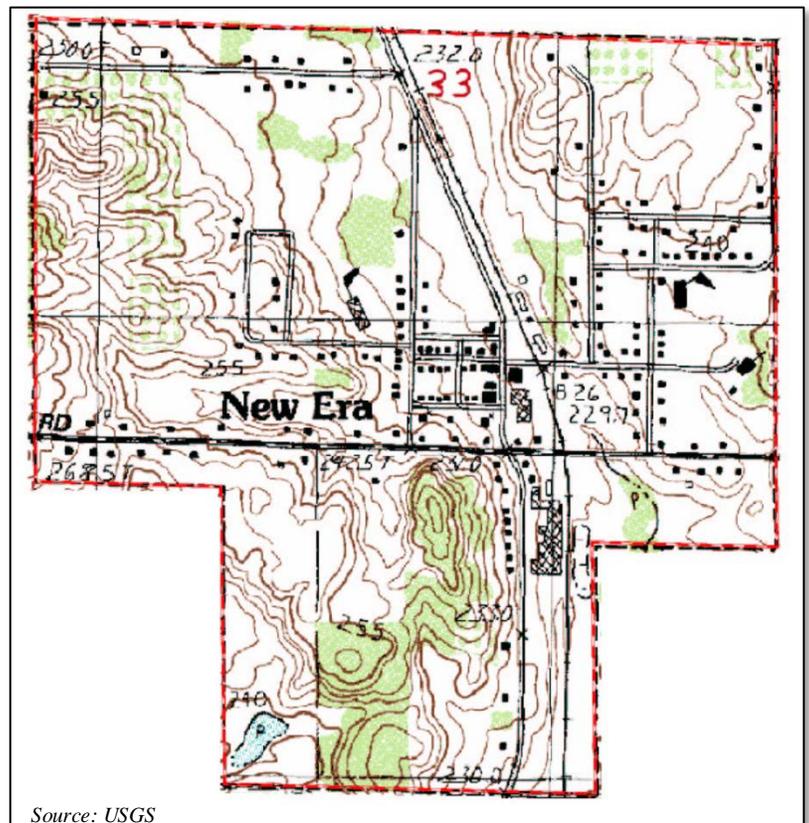
Natural features and natural resources are important to consider in planning and development processes. In many cases, natural features positively contribute to a community's long-term resilience, as well as residents' quality of life. Without careful consideration and site planning, natural attributes can be lost or severely impacted, along with the numerous benefits they may provide. This chapter outlines many of New Era's natural attributes to aid in determining the land's suitability for development. Also see "Landscape" map in Appendix C, which shows elevation contours and wetlands.

### Topography

In general, the Village topography is the result of glacial deposits from the Lake Michigan Lobe of the Wisconsin Glacier more than ten thousand years ago. Rolling, fairly steep hills characterize the western two-thirds of New Era, while the eastern third has a relatively lower, flatter profile. The lowest points in the village are found along the former railroad bed (now the Hart-Montague Trail).

Alterations to natural topography affect natural drainage. Therefore, all development in New Era is expected to consider and accommodate the natural topography to reduce impacts on the natural environment and limit construction of costly water management systems.

New Era Topography



### Soils

Soil, and the type of development it allows or restricts, is a primary factor in determining where future development should occur. The suitability of soils for roads, foundations, wells, and septic systems is critical in determining the location and intensity of development. Soil characteristics such as depth, permeability, wetness, shrink-swell potential, erosion potential, slope, and weight-bearing capacity all factor

into determining soil suitability for a given type of land use. Appropriate site design and management may be employed to overcome development limitations presented by soils at a given site. However, these measures may be costly to the developer, landowner, and to society at-large (via the natural environment).

Consideration of soil characteristics is especially important in areas where there are no public water and sewer services available. The Village of New Era maintains sewer utilities in some areas; however, these utilities service existing development. Future development is expected to adhere to the septic suitability of soil at the site.

Soil surveys assist in determining the extent of flood-prone areas, access to aquifers, erosion and sedimentation potential, ability to site septic tanks and absorption fields, and the limitations for construction. Soil maps are important to the planning process because they can geographically depict areas that have development limitations, based on the soil suitability.

According to the Soil Survey of Oceana County, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, there are four dominant soil series located in New Era: Benona, Coloma, Granby, and Spinks. Benona series soils are excessively drained sandy soils. Formed in sandy glacial drift, they are found on end moraines, ground moraines, outwash plains, and land plains. Benona series are mainly located west of First Street in New Era. Coloma series soils are found on either side of First Street along the southern edge of the Village and paralleling First Street in the eastern portion. They are excessively drained, rapidly permeable sandy soils and were formed in sandy glacial drift. Granby series soils are located immediately on either side of First Street, north of Garfield Road, and along Carlton Creek south of Garfield. Granby soils are poorly drained soils with rapid permeability throughout the soil profile, or with very rapid permeability in the lower part of the profile. Spinks series soils are well drained sandy soils with moderate permeability. These soils were formed in sandy and loamy glacial till. Spinks series soils are mainly located west of First Street.

### **Septic Suitability**

The location of soils suitable for septic systems to properly function is critical in determining the extent and location where development can occur without the availability of public utilities. Soil is not considered to be suitable for septic systems if it has excessively high or low permeability, if the slope is excessive, or if the water table is too close to the surface (Table 8). The permeability and coarseness of soil has a direct impact on its ability to properly filter toxins (i.e. septic material) as they pass through the soil.

In New Era, excessive percolation capability of the soil is the main cause for concern, rather than not enough percolation. The consequence is an increased potential for groundwater pollution. Table 8 highlights the general limitations for septic systems along with building site limitations for most common soil series in New Era. The

limitations for septic system absorption fields listed are almost all severe due to the rapid permeability of sandy soils found within the Village.

Table 8

VILLAGE OF NEW ERA GENERALIZED BUILDING SITE AND SEPTIC LIMITATIONS				
Soil Series	Soil Type	Building Site Limitations		Septic Limitations
		Local Roads	Dwellings with Basements	Septic Tank Absorption Fields
Coloma	Coloma sand 0-6% slopes	Slight	Slight	Severe (poor filter)
Granby	Granby sand	Severe (ponding)	Severe (ponding)	Severe (ponding, poor filter)
Spinks-Benona	Spinks-Benona complex (fine sand) 0-6% slopes	Slight	Slight	Spinks: Slight
	Benona: Severe (poor filter)			
	Spinks-Benona complex (fine sand) 6-12% slopes	Moderate (slope)	Moderate (slope)	Spinks: Slight
				Benona: Severe (poor filter)
	Spinks-Benona complex (fine sand) 12-18% slopes	Severe (slope)	Severe (slope)	Spinks: Severe (slope)
				Benona: Severe (poor filter, slope)

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Forest Service. Soil Survey of Oceana County, MI 1996.

**Slight-** soil properties and site features are generally favorable for the indicated use and limitations are minor and easily overcome.

**Moderate-** soil properties or site features are not favorable for the indicated use and special planning, design, or maintenance is needed to overcome or minimize limitations.

**Severe-** soil properties or site features are so unfavorable or so difficult to overcome that special design, significant increases in construction costs, and possible increased maintenance are required.

It is important to note that for any specific property, exact soil limitations need to be determined with an onsite soil investigation. Septic system limitations will vary according to local conditions. Septic tanks may operate safely and effectively during a dry period, but the same tanks may malfunction during a period prolonged wet weather or flood. Areas with a high flood frequency are generally not considered to be adequate locations for septic systems. As the ground becomes saturated and floods, the toxins may be removed from septic tanks and then flow into groundwater or surface water supplies. Waste deposited in septic systems is often more hazardous than only human waste. Septic systems may contain additional materials such as household cleaners, bacteria, and other toxic nuisances.

In order to reduce the amount of pollution released from septic tanks, citizens should refrain from the disposal of medicines and household chemicals into the septic system such as ammonia, bleach or other hazardous substances. Septic tank maintenance should also be addressed on a regular schedule by adding necessary chemicals,

cleaning, and using only to capacity. Additionally, a septic system should be emptied at a minimum of once every seven years but preferably every other year.

**Erosion**

Another indicator of soil suitability for development is the tendency for “sheet and rill” erosion caused by water. Sheet and rill erosion is characterized by trenches that form in the soil following a period of relatively intense precipitation. This type of erosion is considered the most damaging. One of the erosion factors in the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) that indicates soil susceptibility to sheet and rill erosion is known as K Factor. The USLE uses K Factor to measure the average annual rate of soil loss in tons per acre per year caused by sheet and rill erosion. The estimates are based primarily on percentage of silt, sand, and organic matter, and on soil structure and permeability. The higher the K Factor Value, the higher the potential for soil erosion. The type of soil also plays an important role in whether or not sheet and rill erosion will occur. New Era is dominated by low K Factor erosion potential.

Natural plant cover prevents widespread soil loss because roots hold the soil in place, even during heavy rainfall. Because the Village has some natural land cover, soil loss rates would most likely be low. However, a significant change in land use patterns may tip the balance between natural and impervious surfaces, leading to increased soil erosion potential. Table 9 highlights important considerations for development in light of corresponding erosion (Table 9).

**Table 9**

<b>SOIL EROSION CHARACTERISTICS</b>	
<b>1</b>	The amount of runoff generated is dependent upon the type of soil and the kind of land use prevalent in any given area.
<b>2</b>	Natural areas, where vegetation remains intact, are almost always better-equipped to absorb and retain water than are areas in either agricultural or urban use.
<b>3</b>	Those areas best able to absorb and retain rainfall include forests and other areas of dense vegetation.
<b>4</b>	Those areas which have the greatest impact on the amount of runoff created typically include urban lands with high percentages of impervious surfaces, and agricultural lands typically in row crops.

**Climate**

New Era is located in an area of the United States which experiences unique and diverse climatic conditions due to its proximity to the Lake Michigan shoreline. Oceana County is classified as having “quasi-marine” (when westerly winds pass over Lake Michigan) and “continental” climates (when the winds become easterly or southeasterly and pass over a large expanse of land).

As a result of the predominately western winds and “quasi-marine” climate, Oceana County often experiences moderated temperature extremes compared to communities

farther away from Lake Michigan. This translates into, on average, slightly cooler maximum summer temperatures and slightly warmer winter minimum temperatures. Winds sometimes approach from easterly directions creating a “continental” climate and conditions that are more characteristic of the United States’ Midwest. Table 10 shows notable climatic data from the period 1981-2010, including temperature and precipitation averages and records for the City of Hart, located about 10 miles to the north of New Era (Table 10).

The presence of Lake Michigan also causes a climatic phenomenon called lake effect snow. During the winter months, the relatively warm waters of the lake provide moisture for air masses that come onshore. When these features reach the cooler land of Michigan, the moisture condenses and falls as snow. Lake effect snows can be serious and hazardous weather events; however, their actual duration and severity can vary greatly. Although the area has been dealing with winter for a very long time and has many resources at its disposal, winter weather will annually affect communities through treacherous driving conditions, cost of snow removal, and possible infrastructure failures. Rural areas often experience the worst road conditions during the winter because roads there are often the last to be cleared and salted.

Table 10

<b>TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION SUMMARY FOR HART FOR THE 30-YEAR PERIOD BETWEEN 1981 AND 2010</b>								
<b>Month</b>	<b>Average Daily Temperatures (Fahrenheit)</b>			<b>Average Monthly Precipitation (Inches)</b>				
	<i>maximum</i>	<i>minimum</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>mean</i>	<b>Liquid Equivalent</b>			<b>Snowfall</b>
					<i>mean # of days with at least:</i>			
					.1”	.25”	.5”	<i>mean</i>
January	29.4	16.3	22.9	2.48	8	3	1	26.9
February	32.4	17.2	24.8	1.88	6	2	1	18.3
March	41.6	23.5	32.6	2.24	5	3	2	6.7
April	54.8	34.3	44.6	2.91	7	4	2	1.7
May	66.1	43.6	54.9	3.62	6	4	2	-
June	75.3	53.5	64.4	3.50	6	4	2	.
July	80.0	58.8	69.1	3.08	6	4	2	.
August	77.8	57.4	67.6	3.48	6	4	2	.
September	70.5	49.7	60.1	3.80	7	5	3	-
October	57.7	38.9	48.3	3.61	8	5	3	-
November	45.2	30.6	37.9	3.45	8	4	2	4.6
December	33.8	21.5	27.7	2.71	8	3	1	23.5
<b>Annual Averages</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>36.75</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>81.6</b>

Source: Michigan State Climatologist's Office. [https://climate.geo.msu.edu/climate\\_mi/stations/3632/](https://climate.geo.msu.edu/climate_mi/stations/3632/). Accessed 02/27/2020.

## **Water Resources**

Water resources, such as surface water features and groundwater, must be cared for and monitored frequently to prevent detrimental environmental repercussions. Eutrophication, erosion, and the discharge of pollutants from mechanisms, such as motorized water vehicles, are just some of the methods by which water resources can be degraded. Precautionary measures to prevent erosion, fertilizer/pesticide contamination, stream degradation, and other threats to the natural environment must constantly be taken to protect water resources.

Most of the Village of New Era is located within the White River watershed. A small area of the northwest portion of the Village lies within the Stony Creek watershed. The only surface water feature within the Village is a county drain that runs north to south along the bike trail and feeds into the Carlton Creek headwaters to the southeast of the Garfield Road and First Street intersection. The segment of Carlton Creek, from Arthur Road (a half-mile south of New Era) southward to the White River, is included within the White River Michigan Natural Rivers designation. The White River is one of sixteen designated Natural Rivers in the state.

### *Wetlands*

Wetlands provide needed habitat for many organisms and filters water as it seeps into the groundwater supply. The filtering process includes removal of many precipitation and surface water pollutants - a function that is vital to maintaining a healthy water supply. Pockets of wetlands are located on either side of First Street near the intersection with Third Street, and also in the wooded headwaters of Carlton Creek near the southeast corner of the Village. These areas are shown on the Landscapes map in Appendix C.

### *Groundwater*

Village residents depend upon groundwater as their only source of potable water. Therefore, the protection of groundwater and surface water features should be an environmental priority for New Era. The potential for groundwater contamination depends upon the type of soil present. For example, sand is very permeable and thus allows for a greater amount of infiltration of surface water into the groundwater supply, whereas clay is very impermeable and hinders contamination. However, if clay is near enough to the surface, it will cause water to pond or run off to more permeable soils. The presence of highly permeable sandy soils in New Era signals that there is a strong potential for groundwater contamination in the area.

New Era is a rural village surrounded by scattered residences and agricultural land, and has experienced relatively little development pressure. Should development pressure increase, groundwater contamination from residential septic systems would be a serious concern. There are several major sources of groundwater contamination. Waste products from a conventional system or land disposal system for municipal waste and private residential septic systems can transport harmful pollutants into the water supply.

Other contributors to groundwater contamination include indiscriminate dumping, junk storage, farm waste, and leaking underground storage tanks.

The most promising methods of groundwater protection are proper land use management, pollution regulations, and land acquisition. Land use management is the first step in the process of protecting groundwater resources. Planning provides the basis and rationale for land development controls such as zoning.

### **Flooding**

Floods are caused when the ground becomes saturated beyond its capacity to absorb any more water or when precipitation is so intense that the ground cannot absorb it quickly enough. The less permeable the soil and the higher the water table, the more susceptible an area is to flooding. Flood-susceptible locations should either not be developed, or be developed with extreme caution to avoid extensive and expensive property damage due to flood.

Flooding often transmits contaminants from streets, parking lots, soils, etc., into surface water sources. Precipitation runoff within the Village generally collects in low-lying areas along the Hart-Montague trail, which then flow southward to Carlton Creek. The potential for property damage (homes, crops, etc.) caused by flooding is relatively low, perhaps with the exception of underground structures such as basements located in the presence of high water tables. Overall, the potential for toxic substances to enter into the water supply through the process of surface flood appears low. The greater concern is for septic system failure which could be triggered or exacerbated by extreme precipitation or high water tables.

In general, flood frequency is low in New Era thanks to the excessive percolation capability of the soils. Preservation of open space in low-lying areas and utilization of natural vegetation adjacent to large areas of impermeable surface (parking lots, rooftops, etc.) are preferred policies to accommodate stormwater runoff, protect groundwater resources, and protect the White River watershed.

## VI. CURRENT LAND USE

The two primary land uses in the Village of New Era are residential and open land. The residential development in the Village is primarily located within Section 33 of Shelby Township concentrated around the village center and New Era Elementary, and also to the northeast of the village center. Commercial land uses are concentrated in the village center along First Street for approximately a quarter-mile to the north of Garfield Road. Two industrial uses within the Village, Tri-County Feed and Burnette Foods, essentially book-end the village center to the north and south along First Street. The vast majority of land cover within the Village is natural, whether it be forest or field. New Era is generally surrounded by a rural landscape with scattered residential, farmland, and segmented pockets of forest. However, there is a cemetery and compact residential neighborhood directly to the east of the Village in Shelby Township.

One trend in land use is the recent closure of some commercial businesses within the village center. This may open the door for a mixture of commercial and residential uses to support existing businesses while build upon the community's assets such as quality of life, walkability, access to the Hart-Montague trail, and proximity to nearby tourist attractions.



*Village of New Era, circa 2013*

## **Settlement Patterns**

The manner in which a community develops has a tremendous impact upon the community's character, quality of life, social and recreation opportunities. For the most part, land is a finite resource and must be used wisely. Once land is built-out, it is difficult to revert the land back to its original state. Therefore, conserving open spaces at the outset of development is imperative.

Local zoning and subdivision ordinances usually permit and sometimes dictate that an entire parcel of land be fully developed. This often results in large residential lots that are "too large to mow and too small to plow."<sup>2</sup> "Until now, the zoning regulations in most communities have established a 'one size fits all' approach to regulating lot sizes in each of their various districts, essentially creating a single standard size for new house lots, which frequently results in checkerboard layouts of nearly identical lots covering the entire parcel."<sup>3</sup> Caution needs to be taken when controlling patterns of development primarily by use of minimum lot sizes. The resultant patterns of development after completely developing land according to minimum lot size requirements will be checkerboard development with an excess of space between houses.

However, that is not the only method of development. By allowing flexible standards for lot size and frontage, full density can be achieved on a much smaller portion of land, leaving the balance in permanent conservation. This open-space subdivision design approach allows the conservation of sensitive landscapes such as floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes. It allows for the conservation of mature or healthy and diverse forest lands, meadows, wildlife habitats, historic buildings, scenic views, or whatever the community deems worth conserving in the name of preserving community character and natural resources. By reducing the amount of land consumed by homes, development and infrastructure costs will also be reduced; the open-space subdivision design technique can be accomplished in the Village of New Era within a planned unit development.

---

<sup>2</sup> Arendt, Randall. "Conservation Subdivision Design: A Four-Step Process." Natural Lands Trust. February 1995: 3.

<sup>3</sup> Arendt, Randall. "Creating Open Space Networks." Environment and Development. May/June 1996: 1-4.

## VII. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

One must obtain a thorough understanding of a community in order to envision an appropriate development strategy for the future. The previous chapters of this document describe the Village’s history, demographics, infrastructure and physical geography. Yet one critical component to the analysis has yet to be addressed: public opinion. It is described in the following “Community Opinions” section.

### Community Opinions

To help guide the formulation of goals and objectives included in this chapter, a “visioning session” was held at The Avenue on June 13, 2019. Participants were divided into groups and asked to work collaboratively on completing a SWOT Analysis. A SWOT Analysis can be a highly effective way of identifying Strengths and Weaknesses (existing conditions) and also Opportunities and Threats (future conditions). This exercise helps identify key community issues and helps leaders focus on the areas where a community is strong and where the greatest opportunities lie.

The compiled results of the SWOT Analysis are presented in the Appendix. To summarize the feedback received during the exercise, the greatest strength of the Village was identified as its quality of life, highlighted by an appealing community character (clean, quiet, and safe) and valued recreational amenities (Ball Field and Depot Park). The most common weaknesses that were identified revolved around the community’s downtown area: the issue of businesses closing with no new businesses coming is a big concern. Prominent opportunities envisioned in the SWOT largely involved the close proximity to nearby tourist attractions: Lewis Farms, Country Dairy, and the Electric Forest Festival. The most common threats to the community were identified as the changing demographics (aging and declining population) and the prospect of becoming a ghost town as brick-and-mortar retail continues to decline.



*Visioning Session at The Avenue, June 13, 2019*

## **Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies**

Goals are broad statements that are intended to reflect a desirable end-state or condition of the community, generally 20 to 25 years into the future. They are often visionary. Objectives specify the courses of action that should be taken to accomplish the goals, and are short-range and measurable. Implementation strategies are more specific courses of action to accomplish the goals and objectives.

The goals, objectives and implementation strategies were formulated through the synthesis of researched community information, public input, and discussions and deliberations of the Village Council. These goals and objectives should be implemented and monitored based on their feasibility, effectiveness, and context within the development plans for the Village of New Era. The status of these goals and objectives should be reviewed on a regular basis, and when appropriate, the plan should be modified to reflect changes of a physical nature or those of general public sentiment. This comprehensive process should be repeated at least every five years to ensure an accurate and timely reflection of the needs and desires of the citizens.

The following goals and objectives, listed in no particular order, are intentionally general but are all attainable through a collaborative community effort. Goals are given roman numerals and are shown in **bold**, objectives are listed as lower-case letters, and implementation steps are preceded with a check mark (✓).

### **Goal I. Promote orderly, planned, well-managed growth.**

- a. Encourage the proper balance between different land use types which will meet the needs of the current and future residents, minimize land use conflicts, and provide a balanced and diversified community.
- b. Future development should be directed towards specific locations which appropriately consider constraints of the natural environment, offer compatibility with surrounding land uses, and are best-suited to accommodate growth within the village.
- c. Manage the location, density pattern and type of future development so as to minimize unnecessary public expenditures for infrastructure and other public services.
  - ✓ Utilize information, such as that contained in the plan, to help establish future development locations consistent with the goals of the village. Technical information should be reviewed periodically as circumstances warrant.
  - ✓ Encourage the placement of higher density developments where public infrastructure and services are available. Compact development is easier and cheaper to provide public services to, is more energy efficient, helps preserve open space, and encourages a greater sense of community.

- ✓ Utilize a set of site plan review criteria to evaluate proposed development plans' alignment with the village's goals, objectives, and zoning ordinance provisions.
- ✓ Develop a general annexation policy should currently unforeseen circumstances warrant usage of such a policy.
- ✓ Establish a dialogue with surrounding communities to encourage them to set a maximum acreage for residential uses in their residential zoning districts adjacent to the village. This will sustain the village's character by providing compact development and be more cost effective if services are provided in the future.
- ✓ When appropriate, utilize open spaces for buffers between incompatible land uses or in transitional areas between residential areas with different lot sizes.

**Goal II. Preserve the community's character and appearance, both of which add to the quality of life for village residents.**

- a. Maintain the village's small-town character.
- b. Continue to promote the enhancement and preservation of the village's aesthetic features.
- c. Continue to improve and maintain the quality and appearance of existing recreational facilities.
  - ✓ Encourage the creation of village-style, walkable neighborhoods rather than housing developments to ensure continued interaction among residents.
  - ✓ As development occurs around the village center and where feasible, new streets should extend the pattern of existing streets (a grid-like pattern), thereby maintaining the village's character and its pedestrian orientation. Compact development is possible if the appropriate sewer and water utilities are available to protect groundwater quality.
  - ✓ When a development occurs and when appropriate, "stubbed" streets should be provided in all developable directions. This provides interconnecting streets and assists in the extension of the village's grid-like streets.
  - ✓ Encourage the maintenance of private property by consistently and strictly enforcing building and zoning codes.
  - ✓ Allocate the necessary resources and provide the proper legal remedies to accomplish enforcement.
  - ✓ Monitor all non-conforming uses and structures so that they are eliminated according to the zoning ordinance.
  - ✓ Continue to provide an annual village-wide cleanup day.
  - ✓ Consider setting a maximum size, in square footage, for accessory structures in residential zoning districts.
  - ✓ Continue to promote the usage of the Hart-Montague Bicycle Trail State Park.
  - ✓ As monies permit, improve the village's recreational facilities.
  - ✓ Support preservation of historic structures.

**Goal III. Provide and maintain adequate infrastructure.**

- a. Minimize unnecessary public expenditures for infrastructure and services by controlling the location, density, pattern, and type of future development.
- b. As necessary to protect groundwater quality and to supply new development if feasible, provide adequate sewer and water services to the village.
- c. Seek to supply adequate parking in the village for current and future needs.
- d. Continue to develop and maintain roadway priorities through a working relationship with the Oceana County Road Commission and other transportation agencies.
  - ✓ Explore funding sources for a sewer system upgrade and expansion, servicing existing needs first.
  - ✓ Explore funding sources for a municipal water system.
  - ✓ Minimize long-term infrastructure costs by providing routine maintenance.
  - ✓ If a subdivision ordinance is developed in the future, provisions for developers to bear the burdens of municipal infrastructure cost and installation should be included.
  - ✓ Assess the needs for additional sidewalks while maintaining existing ones.
  - ✓ Assess the need for (and location of) additional parking in the village center for both employees and customers of village businesses.
  - ✓ Establish parking requirements within the zoning ordinance.
  - ✓ Work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Department of Transportation on obtaining signage on U.S. 31 for the Hart-Montague Trail State Park.
  - ✓ Develop a standardized sign package to designate trail parking, etc.
  - ✓ Maintain a working relationship with area businesses that provide trail parking.
  - ✓ Explore establishing a capital project fund for the development of future municipal facilities.

**Goal IV. Protect the quality of natural resources in the village.**

- a. Direct development to locations where there are minimal environmental constraints, thereby avoiding areas that are prone to flooding, have soil limitations, have unfavorable topography, or other natural features likely to be harmful to the health, safety, or welfare of the community at-large.
- b. Preserve and protect existing open spaces within the village.
- c. Protect surface water and groundwater resources from contamination and degradation by minimizing the adverse impacts of development.
  - ✓ Encourage incorporation of open spaces, natural features, and green infrastructure in the design of developments and redevelopments.

- ✓ Encourage techniques that preserve open spaces such as conservation easements or private contributions of environmentally sensitive properties to appropriate public or quasi-public organizations.
- ✓ Provide homeowners and businesses with information on preventative actions that may be taken to assure environmental protections.
- ✓ Inform citizens of proper hazardous materials disposal methods.
- ✓ Investigate the need for and feasibility of expanding the municipal sewer services to protect groundwater resources.
- ✓ Continue to promote groundwater education for local officials and residents.
- ✓ Work with Oceana County on solid waste management issues.

**Goal V. Provide a variety of housing opportunities that meet the needs and desires of existing and future residents.**

- a. Investigate opportunities to provide housing for senior citizens.
- b. Investigate opportunities to provide quality, affordable housing.
- c. Maintain and strengthen the quality and cohesiveness of New Era’s residential neighborhoods.
  - ✓ Investigate funding for senior housing.
  - ✓ Support solutions that enable senior citizens to reside in their present residences longer.
  - ✓ Provide an area within the community that may accommodate multi-family housing.
  - ✓ Protect areas planned for future residential use from commercial and industrial development infringing upon it.

**Goal VI. Advocate cooperation and communication with neighboring units of government.**

- a. Promote responsible community leadership, both in and out of government, which is accessible and responsive to the public.
- b. Foster intergovernmental coordination between the Village of New Era and adjacent communities to coordinate land use decisions and planning projects.
- c. Foster sharing of essential services with other units of government.

**Goal VII. Exercise sound planning practices and establish the mechanisms to enforce them.**

- a. Foster a decision-making process that is long-range and regional in scope and works in the best interest of all village residents.
- b. Maintain the New Era Future Land Use Plan as a vision for the community’s future and foundation for planning and zoning processes.

- ✓ In addition to the Village Council of New Era, identify groups or persons to implement the various segments of this plan according to their interests and abilities.
- ✓ Revise the village's zoning ordinance to include specific regulations to carry out the goals and objectives presented within this plan.
- ✓ Base all zoning and other land use decisions upon the goals and objectives outlined within this plan.
- ✓ Consistently and justly enforce the zoning ordinance.
- ✓ Every five years, review the New Era Future Land Use Plan, and either renew or update the plan, as needed.
- ✓ Engage the public to help inform adjustments to the New Era Future Land Use Plan.

**Goal VIII. Promote a healthy, stable environment for commercial and industrial uses.**

- a. Provide for as much commercial and industrial land to which the village can feasibly provide the necessary services.
- b. The recreational and tourist industry should continue to be promoted on a year-round basis.
  - ✓ Commercial development should be limited to the area within and adjacent to the village center.
  - ✓ A marketing plan for the downtown retail area should be developed and ongoing marketing activities pursued.

**Community Recreation Goals:**

There are four broad goals identified in the 2020 New Era Recreation Plan, which are incorporated in this future land use plan as guiding principles of village decisions pertaining to recreation. Specific objectives for each of these goals are listed in the Goals and Objectives chapter of the Village of New Era Recreation Plan, which could be considered a companion document to this land use plan.

Recreation Plan Goal #1: Continually seek opportunities to partner with local, regional, and state recreation providers/organizations to enhance recreational advantages in the Village of New Era.

Recreation Plan Goal #2: Uphold the ongoing maintenance of existing recreational facilities and programs within the Village of New Era.

Recreation Plan Goal #3: Strive to improve and expand recreational facilities in the Village of New Era to foster and maintain a sense of place and community pride.

Recreation Plan Goal #4: Leverage recreation, parks, and community events to attract visitors to the downtown.

## VIII. ZONING PLAN

The New Era Village Zoning Ordinance is one of the most important tools available to implement the visions of the New Era Future Land Use Plan related to land use and the general character of the Village. The purpose of zoning is to assist in orderly development and growth, while protecting property values, investments, and the environment. Because of the impact zoning can have on the use of land and related services, local zoning regulations must be built upon the foundation of a master plan and “zoning plan.”

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires that a zoning ordinance “shall be based on a plan...” (MCL 125.3203(1)). Often, the plan zoning is based upon is referred to as a “zoning plan.” The zoning plan can be a chapter in the master plan, a separate document of the master plan, or integrated throughout the master plan. The zoning plan components contained within a master plan will typically include:

- Standards or criteria to be used to consider rezoning consistent with the master plan.
- A description of each zoning district, general purpose of each district, the general locations for those types of districts, and a proposed zoning map.
- A proposed schedule of regulation by district that includes at least building height, lot area, bulk and setbacks.
- An explanation of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map.

### **Evaluation Standards of Rezoning and Land Use Changes**

Changing the land use or zoning designation for any property can have far-reaching consequences: physically, environmentally, financially, and legally. The use of standards is essential to reaching fair and consistent land use decisions. The following evaluation measures are proposed to guide the contemplation of rezoning or changes to the future land use plan and future land use map.

#### ***Standard 1 - Consistency with the Community Vision and Plan Strategies***

If conditions (such as economic factors, demographic shifts, new utility lines, changing traffic conditions, etc.) upon which the master plan was developed have changed significantly since it was adopted, the Village should incorporate these conditions into their deliberations to ensure that the plan is current. Particular attention should be paid to the master plan Goals and Objectives to ensure that they remain valid, and that the proposed re-zoning or land use change does not impair their intent.

#### ***Standard 2 - Compatibility with adjacent uses and districts***

All of the uses allowed in a proposed district should be compatible with the conditions present on the site and in the immediate vicinity of the site, especially in terms of density, character, traffic, aesthetics, and property values. The master plan provides several goals and objectives, which should be considered when determining whether a proposed use is compatible with the locale and the Village as a whole.

***Standard 3 - Capability of being used as already zoned***

It is the right of every property owner to receive a reasonable return on the investment placed on property. This does not mean that zoning is a slave to the "highest and best use," (which is not a zoning term, but rather a real estate term). It does mean that there should be a reasonable use available within the zone district. But if the property is capable of being used as zoned, there should be a compelling reason to change the zoning. Such reasons may be related to the first two standards of consistency and compatibility. Site plans will not be considered as part of a rezoning request. The Village should not be influenced by what is proposed by the petitioner. Instead, the Village will make a specific finding that all of the uses permitted in the proposed district are appropriate for the site and area, not just the one shown on a proposed site plan.

***Standard 4 - It is critical that the Future Land Use Plan be read in its entirety***

Rather than attempting to isolate individual statements that may appear to support one position or another regarding the Village's future land use, the intent of the entire future land use plan must be considered. This requires a careful reading of the plan to ensure that all of the plan's considerations are included in the evaluation of any change.

In addition to these general standards, New Era's zoning ordinance offers a detailed process for the review of proposed site plans. These standards provide a frame of reference for the applicant in the preparation of site plans as well as for the reviewing authority in making judgment concerning them. The standards are to be regarded as flexible so as not to discourage creativity, invention, or innovation.

**Village of New Era Zoning Ordinance: Zoning District Descriptions**

**A-1 Agricultural District**

This district will provide and support the use of land for large lot residential and agriculture purposes. Regulations will be developed to provide for agricultural uses while not adversely impacting surrounding properties. All regulations shall take into account Public Act 94 of 1995, as amended, which is the Michigan Right to Farm Act.

**R-1 Single Family Residential District**

This district is intended to provide low-density, single family residential housing to foster stable, high quality neighborhoods. The regulations for this district recognize the need to preserve existing housing stock, allow for new development, and provide affordable and diverse housing for the present and future residents of New Era. Certain non-residential uses are allowed to further the creation of stable residential areas.

**R-2 Single Family and Two-Family Residential District**

This district is intended to provide low-density, single and two-family residential housing to foster stable, high-quality neighborhoods. The regulations for this district recognize the need to preserve existing housing stock, allow for new development, and provide affordable and diverse housing for the present and future residents of New Era. Certain non-residential uses are allowed to further the creation of stable residential areas.

**R-3 Single Family, Two-Family, and Multiple Family Residential District**

This district is intended to provide a variety of high-quality residential housing to foster stable neighborhoods. The regulations for this district recognize the need to provide affordable and diverse housing for the present and future residents of New Era. Certain non-residential uses are allowed to further the creation of stable residential areas.

**B-1 General Business District**

This district is intended to provide a wide range of goods and services to the residents of New Era in the central business district. The B-1 district is characterized by a compact shopping area with some on street and/or rear parking areas. Emphasis is on ease of access and safe and efficient movement of pedestrians and vehicles.

**I-1 Industrial District**

This district is intended to provide areas for industrial uses in areas served by adequate infrastructure. The I-1 district is designed to provide industrial and manufacturing uses, wholesale businesses, warehouses, and other similar uses compatible with one another. Emphasis is on minimizing or preventing any detrimental effects of industrial development on surrounding land uses. The regulations presented are designed to exclude those uses that would have a negative effect on the orderly development of the district.

**Table 11**

<b>SCHEDULE OF REGULATIONS BY ZONING DISTRICT</b>				
<b>Zoning Districts</b>	<b>Maximum Height</b>	<b>Lot Area</b>	<b>Floor Area</b>	<b>Setbacks</b>
A-1 Agricultural	35 ft.	Minimum lot area is 2 acres	Minimum floor area is 1,000 square ft.	Minimum width is 110 ft. Front yard setback is 100 ft. Rear yard setback is 25 ft. Side yard setback is 25 ft.
R-1 Single Family Residential	35 ft.	Minimum lot area is 12,000 square ft.	Minimum floor area is 1,000 square ft.	Minimum width is 60 ft. Front yard setback is 20 ft. Rear yard setback is 20 ft. Side yard setback is 10 ft.
R-2 Single Family and Two-Family Residential	35 ft.	Minimum lot area is 12,000 square ft.	Minimum floor area is 1,000 square ft.	Minimum width is 60 ft. Front yard setback is 20 ft. Rear yard setback is 20 ft. Side yard setback is 10 ft.
R-3 Single Family, Two-Family, and Multi-Family Residential	35 ft.	Minimum lot area is 12,000 square ft.	Minimum floor area is 1,000 square ft.	Minimum width is 60 ft. Front yard setback is 20 ft. Rear yard setback is 20 ft. Side yard setback is 10 ft.
B-1 General Business District	35 ft.	Minimum lot area is 12,000 square ft.	Minimum floor area is 1,000 square ft.	Minimum width is 150 ft. Front yard setback is 20 ft. Rear yard setback is 20 ft. Side yard setback is 10 ft.
I-1 Industrial District	35 ft.	Minimum lot area is 12,000 square ft.	Minimum floor area is 1,000 square ft.	Minimum width is 150 ft. Front yard setback is 20 ft. Rear yard setback is 20 ft. Side yard setback is 10 ft.

Source: Village of New Era Zoning Ordinance

## IX. IMPLEMENTATION

### **Future Land Use**

A plan for future land use requires a synthesis of all the information included in a comprehensive development plan, and results in a map that generally depicts various types of recommended land uses and their locations in the community. The map is accompanied by text explaining the “districts” or “categories” used on the map. These “districts” describe the character of the land use.

A future land use plan and a zoning ordinance are related. The future land use plan and map are designed to provide the community with a glimpse of where they desire the community to head, and a zoning ordinance and map provide the means to arrive at that point. *The future land use map should not be confused with the zoning map*, which is a current mechanism for shaping development. The future land use map is intended to serve as a guide for land use decisions over a longer period of time.

A zoning ordinance is the legal arm of a future land use plan. It is the most frequently used and effective regulatory tool to implement a future land use plan, as it regulates land use. Changing a zoning ordinance (or zoning map) is the primary tool available to modify regulations affecting land or the types of land uses. The future land use plan and map can be utilized to guide what zoning changes will occur and where they will occur. For example, rezoning requests may be required to be consistent with the future land use plan’s goals and objectives, which identify the community’s desires for the future.

The word “district” is often used in both kinds of documents; however, the term must be used carefully. On the one hand, using similar terms for the various land use designations is one way to demonstrate the relationship between the two documents, and it helps to avoid confusion and translation difficulties. On the other hand, it is important to realize that a future land use map and a zoning map are NOT necessarily the same thing.

The use of a term such as “high density residential” does not necessarily translate into specific numbers in terms of lot sizes and other elements of zoning. In some cases, a designated district on a future land use map might not “convert” into a particular zoning district at all, but rather should be utilized as a philosophical guide for the flexible interpretation of other zones. However, future land use plan categories may generally correspond to zoning districts with some overlap to allow for site conditions.

### **Recommended Future Land Uses**

The New Era Village Council developed the following general future land use districts to convey the desired character of New Era over the next 20 to 25 years. These districts were developed as a result of the analysis of current land uses, physical and environmental suitability, the existence of or ability to provide services, and compatibility with goals and objectives identified in the plan.

It is important to re-emphasize the purpose of the future land use map and categories: to paint a general vision for the future development and character of New Era. The future land use map is not intended to establish precise boundaries; that is the purpose of the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map.

### ***Agricultural***

The Agricultural district is intended to allow for large lot residential and agricultural uses within the Village. This area is low in density and rural in character, much like the surrounding areas in Grant and Shelby townships. Land within this district is not served by public water and sewer, nor is it expected to be in the near future. Therefore any development within this area must have suitable soil for private individual sewage disposal and water supply systems.

This district generally corresponds with the A-1 Agricultural zoning district. On the future land use map, the Agricultural district is located in the southern portion of the Village.

### ***Residential Single Family***

It is the intent of this district that residential development only occurs on land that is developable. Developable land is determined by subtracting those portions which possess floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, or other sensitive natural features which should be preserved. Traditional village-style development that is compact in nature with grid-like streets is preferred. Compact residential development should be served by public sewerage and water supply, or in locations that can be reasonably served by these public services in the near future.

Where topography and the protection of other natural features do not allow traditional village-style development, or where public sewer and water will not be reasonably available in the near future, open space subdivision design of residential development is strongly encouraged. These areas also need to have suitable soil for private sewage disposal and water supply systems. Open space subdivision design provides land for permanent conservation of open space and residential growth without overtaxing either current services, or the land's suitability to support human habitation. Grouping dwelling units together is less wasteful of land, reduces the amount of roadway needed, and often leaves the land which is least suitable for development, or most suitable for open space, available for conservation.

This district generally corresponds with the R-1 Single Family Residential zoning district. On the future land use map, the Residential Single Family district flanks either side development along the First Street corridor.

### ***Residential Two-Family***

The Residential Two-Family future land use district includes the same intents as the Residential Single Family district, with one addition. This residential district also includes areas that are appropriate for the development of two-family dwelling units.

This district generally corresponds with the R-2 Single Family and Two-Family Residential zoning district. On the future land use map, the Residential Two-Family future land use district is located in two areas: along western side of Elm Street, and along the western side of First Street from Garfield Road to the southern Village border at Yale Road.

### ***Residential Multi-Family***

It is the intent of this district to provide multi-family residential opportunities within the Village. This district is located near the village center to take advantage of the public sewer, schools, and commercial amenities nearby. Multi-family residential units should be served by public sewer to ensure protection of groundwater resources. It is also the intent of this district to include both single family and two-family dwellings, if desired. The pattern of development in this district should be traditional village-style development: compact in nature with grid-like streets.

This district generally corresponds with the R-3 Single Family, Two-Family, and Multi-Family Residential zoning district. On the future land use map, the Residential Multi-Family future land use district is located in the geographic center of the Village, between the Commercial district and Residential Single Family district.

### ***Commercial***

The Commercial district is primarily intended to service the public's daily general retail and other similar needs. This area is valued for its density of storefronts, walkability, ease of access from First Street (Oceana Drive), and overall small-town appeal. However, storefront vacancies have become a growing concern in recent years. To increase the viability of the commercial area, it may be beneficial to encourage mixed-use in this area to encourage street-level storefronts and upper-level residential units.

This district generally corresponds with the B-1 General Business zoning district, which does currently allow single family dwellings as a special land use. While residential uses are allowed as a special use in the B-1 zone, the Village Council should consider amending the zoning ordinance to emphasize mixed use within the General Business zoning district.

### ***Industrial***

The Industrial district is intended to provide adequate space to meet the needs of the Village's economy for industrial uses. Examples of appropriate uses include, but are not limited to industrial parks, wholesaling, warehousing, and certain light manufacturing as long as the use does not jeopardize the health, safety, or general welfare of residents.

Because industrial uses usually need extensive infrastructure, such as all-season roads and public water and sewer, industrial uses should be guided to areas that currently have or soon will have the appropriate infrastructure. However, if an industrial use does

not require infrastructure to operate, is appropriately designed, and does not jeopardize the health, safety, or general welfare of residents, consideration should be given for its location. All proposed industrial development should undergo strict environmental review and adhere to stringent design standards. Adaptive reuse of underutilized industrially used lands is encouraged.

This district generally corresponds with the I-1 Industrial zoning district. The Industrial future land use district is located in two areas: along the east side of First Street between Garfield Road and Yale Road, and along First Street to the east of the Commercial district.

### ***Open Space / Parkland***

The intent of this district is to promote preservation of land for open space and parkland within the village. The Open Space / Parkland district includes a diverse mixture of land uses, all of which provide or conserve to various extents, open space. It includes lands that are undeveloped such as forests, meadows, wetlands, or are minimally developed such as recreational areas, regardless of ownership. Most of these lands are environmentally sensitive and contain unique characteristics and/or perform important natural functions. Because of the critical nature of these areas and their sensitivity to development, extensive consideration must be given in the determination of development policies and land use. Open spaces provide the Village with scenic views, groundwater recharge, recreation, erosion protection with natural plant cover, and so on.

In New Era, the Hart-Montague Bicycle Trail State Park and the adjacent county drain are the spine of the Open Space / Parkland district. The trail provides numerous recreational opportunities and the county drain and adjacent wetlands provide necessary ecological functions. These open spaces, as designated on the Future Land Use map, should remain undeveloped or reserved for recreational use.

The Open Space / Parkland future land use district does not have a corresponding district within the zoning ordinance and zoning map.

### ***Public / Semi-Public***

The Public / Semi-Public district includes lands where existing or proposed public or semi-public activities are conducted. The district is intended to provide public and semi-public agencies adequate space for the necessary functions to serve Village residents.

There is currently no zoning district that corresponds with this future land use category. Locations designated for Public / Semi-Public use include Village-owned property (non-parkland), school property, and church-owned property.

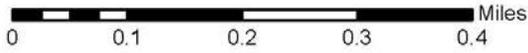
# Village of New Era Future Land Use



- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  Residential Single Family |  Commercial   |  Public/Semi-Public  |
|  Residential Two-Family    |  Industrial   |  Open Space/Parkland |
|  Residential Multi-Family  |  Agricultural |  Hart-Montague Trail |



**WMSRDC**  
West Michigan Shoreline  
Regional Development Commission



New Era Future Land Use Plan - March 2020

## **General Implementation Tools and Techniques**

The ultimate goal of planning is implementation. Implementing the ideas generated through the planning process is the culmination of the analysis, goal setting, and interaction activities which took place during the creation of this future land use plan. This portion of the Plan is designed to guide the community in taking the actions necessary to achieve its goals and objectives.

This plan is intended to be a working document that provides the Village's decision makers with information on the desires of the community. This plan should be consulted whenever policy issues arise, especially those related to land use.

Successful implementation requires a continuous effort on the part of the Village Council and the community at-large. It is essential that each member of the Council understand the plan, know their own role as it relates to the plan, and promote implementation of the plan by the Village Council and appropriate agencies, community groups, and citizens.

The goals and objectives of the New Era Future Land Use Plan can be implemented through the use of the following described tools and techniques, among others. The following list of tools and techniques is certainly not exhaustive and some are more applicable to the Village than others. Many of the tools and techniques can be used for multiple purposes by New Era to achieve its goals and objectives, even though they are listed under specific headings.

### ***Zoning Ordinance***

A zoning ordinance is the primary regulatory tool used to implement future land use plans. Following the adoption of the plan, the Village should complete an internal inventory and review its priorities. Following these actions, it should then amend the New Era Village Zoning Ordinance as appropriate. This will ensure that the zoning ordinance will be consistent with the current New Era Future Land Use Plan.

### ***Land Division Act***

Villages are authorized to regulate and control the subdivision of land within their jurisdictions pursuant to Public Act 591 of 1996, the Land Division Act (formerly known as P.A. 288 of 1967, the Subdivision Control Act). Last amended in March 2018, this act gave a village with a land division ordinance more control over how land could be divided and lessened state controls. The act governed the division of existing parcels, called "parent parcels", as identified by the state.

A village can have an important voice in the design and layout of subdivisions and can set uniform standards for streets and roads, utilities, and other improvements with the utilization of a local land division control ordinance. The land division ordinance can reference all other village ordinances and require conformance with them. Conformance with the zoning ordinance and the insertion of land division design standards while updating the ordinance offers control over density and character of development.

### ***Open Space Protection***

The conservation of open space must be well-integrated into the planning and zoning process. Several elements of this plan reflect that philosophy, including the goals and objectives and the recommended future land use sections. Open space conservation is important because open space needs to be planned and provided for prior to complete development occurring.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) maintains the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program, which consists of the following methods for preserving farmland and open space:

- **Farmland Development Rights Agreements:** A temporary restriction on the land between the State and a landowner, voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land for agriculture in exchange for certain tax benefits and exemptions for various special assessments (commonly known as PA 116).
- **Conservation Easement Donations:** A permanent restriction on the land between the State and a landowner, voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land for either open space or agriculture.
- **Agricultural Preservation Fund:** A fund established to assist local units of government in implementing a local purchase of development rights program.
- **Local Open Space Easement:** A temporary restriction on the land between the local government and a landowner, voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land as open space in exchange for certain tax benefits and exemptions for various special assessments.
- **Designated Open Space Easement:** A temporary restriction on specially designated lands between the State and a landowner, voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land as open space in exchange for certain tax benefits and exemptions for various special assessments.
- **Purchase of Development Rights:** A permanent restriction on the land between the State and a landowner, voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land for agriculture in exchange for a cash payment for those rights.

### ***Open Space Subdivision Design***

Open space subdivision design is the open space conservation technique with the broadest application and the most flexibility. It can be used anywhere regardless of the underlying zoning district, property ownership, etc. Open space subdivision design, sometimes referred to as conservation subdivision design, is described in this plan as being applicable for residential developments. However, the technique can be used for other types of developments as well. An open space subdivision design reduces infrastructure costs and creates a network of open space.

The following four steps describe the method of designing an open space subdivision:

1. Identify conservation areas: both buildable areas (as a result of features such as floodplains, wetlands, slopes, etc.) and unprotected areas that are locally significant features such as meadows, forests, wildlife habitat, scenic views or historic structures.
2. Locate house sites: close to the conservation open space areas both for quality of life and marketing reasons.
3. Align streets and trails: logically connecting the homes for both vehicular and non-motorized movement.
4. Draw lot lines: last, thereby conserving scenic views, wildlife habitats, open spaces, etc.<sup>4</sup>

The open space subdivision design approach is intended to preserve the area's natural character while still allowing development to occur. It attempts to strike a balance. After identifying unbuildable areas, locally significant features need to be identified and set aside. The unbuildable areas and areas of local significance, combined, should represent a significant amount of a given parcel of land. Locally significant features are often prized for their contributions to a location's character, and therefore need to be protected. It is important to note that the maximum density of dwelling units on a given parcel of land is only based on the buildable portions of land. House sites have to be small, thoughtfully arranged, and located in the areas remaining after locally significant features have been set aside for conservation. The close proximity of house sites greatly reduces the amount of infrastructure and associated costs. The resultant open spaces are permanently protected by a conservation easement, homeowner's association, land trust, or by some other means.

### ***Planned Unit Development (PUD)***

The planned unit development concept is utilized by many communities to encourage innovative and imaginative project design. As a development type, it permits flexibility in site design and usage. It allows buildings to be clustered by mixing types, or by combining housing with ancillary uses such as neighborhood shopping. It allows for better design and arrangement of open space and the retention of such natural features as forests, slope, and floodplains. As a regulatory tool, it allows variation in many of the traditional controls related to density, setback, use and open space. It is one potential way to implement the Open-Space Subdivision technique, if incorporated into the Village's zoning ordinance.

### ***Growth Management***

"Growth management refers to the systematic attempt, by a community, to guide the type, rate, location, timing, public cost of, and often the quality and character of land re-development" (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Coastal

---

<sup>4</sup> Arendt, Randall. "Conservation Subdivision Design: A Four-Step Process." [Natural Lands Trust](#). February 1995: 1-8.

Management Program). Growth management must be well integrated into the planning and zoning process. As an overview, there are several possible avenues to explore when considering a growth management strategy. Among them are:

- **Concurrency:** This is a situation in which the Village ties development ( i.e. density and type) to established bench marks regarding public service (i.e. water, sewer, roadway capacity, police, fire, educational and others) to control development. No development can occur in a given area until the benchmarks are met, either by the Village or the developer. This method also requires a carefully laid out capital improvements plan to be fully effective.
- **Development Agreements:** This would operate much like a contract/site plan review process combined. It would cover a fixed period in time, and would identify specific elements of development covered. It would offer assurances for both sides that planning could take place and there would be no changing of the rules in the middle of the game.

The State of Michigan has taken another step by making it mandatory that amendments to a community's land use plan be submitted for review and comment to all bordering jurisdictions, the acting regional planning commission, and the County. While presently these comments have no regulatory implications, this legislation is the first step in working towards a collaborative effort amongst bordering municipalities encouraging similar land uses on adjacent parcels.

### ***Capital Improvements Program***

A Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is a fiscal plan outlining the means for the Village to finance selected projects requiring capital, either on a short-term or long-range basis. The CIP thus guides priorities for future development through investment in public services. Projects typically included are public facilities such as town halls and parks, land improvements, roads, bridges, acquisitions, utilities, planning projects, etc.

### ***Dedicated Millage***

A dedicated millage can be used to generate revenues for a specific purpose and, in so doing, can implement objectives of a community's future land use plan. For example, a dedicated millage could be used to establish a land acquisition fund, a bike path fund, or a conservation easement program.

### ***Smart Growth***

The following content was retrieved from the EPA's "About Smart Growth" website <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/about-smart-growth> and Smart Growth Online <https://smartgrowth.org/>. These websites contain a trove of guides, tools, and resources for smart growth, much of which is targeted towards rural communities.

“Smart growth” covers a range of development and conservation strategies that help protect our health and natural environment and make our communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse.

Development decisions affect many of the things that touch people's everyday lives — their homes, their health, the schools their children attend, the taxes they pay, their daily commute, the natural environment around them, economic growth in their community, and opportunities to achieve their dreams and goals. What, where, and how communities build will affect their residents' lives for generations to come.

Communities of all sizes across the country are using creative strategies to develop in ways that preserve natural lands and critical environmental areas, protect water and air quality, and reuse already-developed land.

- They conserve resources by reinvesting in existing infrastructure and rehabilitating historic buildings.
- By designing neighborhoods that have homes near shops, offices, schools, houses of worship, parks, and other amenities, communities give residents and visitors the option of walking, bicycling, taking public transportation, or driving as they go about their business.
- A range of different housing types makes it possible for senior citizens to stay in their neighborhoods as they age, young people to afford their first home, and families at all stages in between to find a safe, attractive home they can afford.
- Through smart growth approaches that enhance neighborhoods and involve residents in development decisions, these communities are creating vibrant places to live, work, and play.
- The high quality of life makes these communities economically competitive, creates business opportunities, and strengthens the local tax base.

Based on the experience of communities around the nation that have used smart growth approaches to create and maintain great neighborhoods, the Smart Growth Network developed a set of 10 basic principles to guide smart growth strategies:

- **Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices**  
Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is an integral component in any smart growth strategy.
- **Create Walkable Neighborhoods**  
Walkable communities are desirable places to live, work, learn, worship and play, and therefore a key component of smart growth.
- **Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration**  
Growth can create great places to live, work and play -- if it responds to a community's own sense of how and where it wants to grow.

- **Foster Distinctive, Attractive Places with a Strong Sense of Place**  
Smart growth encourages communities to craft a vision and set standards for development and construction which respond to community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness, as well as expanded choices in housing and transportation.
- **Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective**  
For a community to be successful in implementing smart growth, it must be embraced by the private sector.
- **Mix Land Uses**  
Smart growth supports the integration of mixed land uses into communities as a critical component of achieving better places to live.
- **Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas**  
Open space preservation supports smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, improving our communities' quality of life, and guiding new growth into existing communities.
- **Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices**  
Providing people with more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation is a key aim of smart growth.
- **Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities**  
Smart growth directs development towards existing communities already served by infrastructure, seeking to utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer, and conserve open space and irreplaceable natural resources on the urban fringe.
- **Take Advantage of Compact Building Design**  
Smart growth provides a means for communities to incorporate more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.

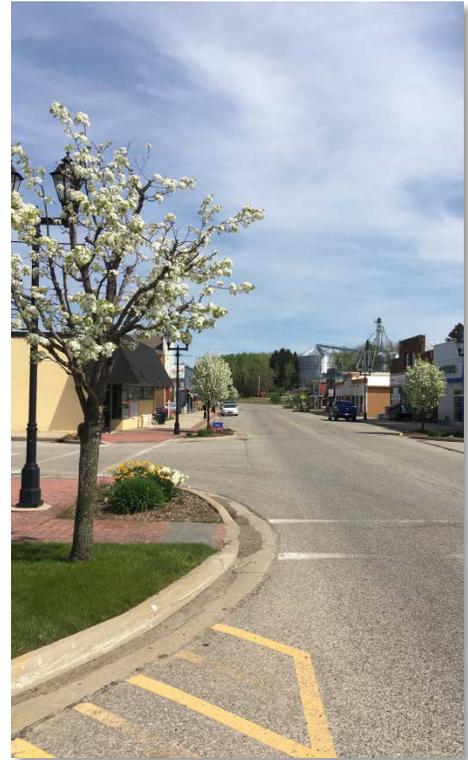
## X. SUMMARY

It is incumbent upon the New Era Village Council to leverage the community's assets (rural character, exceptional quality of life, Hart-Montague trail, traditional village layout, schools, etc.) to address known weaknesses and future threats (retail decline, aging population).

The Village of New Era Future Land Use Plan is one important tool for properly managing future development and redevelopment. The plan is a guide for land use decisions, rooted in the goals and objectives outlined in Chapter VII - Development Strategy. The plan should be consulted regularly, must be reviewed every five years, and should be updated as the local situation warrants.

Following the ratification of this plan, the Village of New Era should review the community's zoning ordinance to ensure consistency with the community's visions for the future, which include an active and healthy population, a vibrant business district, safe and welcoming neighborhoods, and a clean environment.

Change is inevitable. The community's willingness to adapt and ability to manage change will be the keys to New Era's success.



**APPENDIX A - PUBLIC NOTICES AND PLAN APPROVAL PROCESS**

**\*Village Council resolution adopting plan\***

**VILLAGE OF NEW ERA  
COUNTY OF OCEANA, MICHIGAN  
Resolution No. 2020-1  
VILLAGE COUNCIL RESOLUTION TO ADOPT FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) authorizes the Village Council to prepare a future land use plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Village; and

WHEREAS, the Village Council prepared a proposed future land use plan with assistance from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2020 the Village Council reviewed the proposed future land use plan and authorized distribution of the proposed future land use plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

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

WHEREAS, the Village Council held a public hearing on September 10, 2020 to consider public comment on the proposed future land use plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed future land use plan; and

WHEREAS, the Village Council finds that the proposed plan, the Village of New Era Future Land Use Plan, is desirable and proper and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Village;

THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. **Adoption of the Village of New Era Future Land Use Plan, 2020.** The Village Council hereby approves and adopts the proposed Village of New Era Future Land Use Plan, 2020, including all of the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein.

2. **Distribution to Notice Group.** The Village Council approves distribution of the adopted plan to the Notice Group.

3. **Findings of Fact.** The Village Council has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Village, a review of the future land use plan provisions and maps, input received from the public, and with the assistance of a professional planning group, and finds that the future land use plan will accurately reflect and implement the Village's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands in the Village of New Era.

4. **Effective Date.** The Future Land Use Plan shall be effective as of the date of adoption of this resolution.

The foregoing resolution offered by Council Member Lisa Fleury

Second offered by Council Member Mark Kelly

Upon roll call vote the following voted:

"Aye": Trustees Fessenden, Fleury, Grinwis, Kelly, Sobers, VanSickle and Pres. Richards

"Nay": NONE

The President declared the resolution adopted.

September 10, 2020

Natalie Kelly, Clerk

**\*Village council minutes showing public hearing following public review period\***

VILLAGE OF NEW ERA  
Minutes of Public Hearing  
September 10, 2020

Call to Order 7:08 pm.

Present: President Richards; Trustees Fessenden, Fleury, Grinwis, Kelly, Sobers and VanSickle; Treas. Pepple; Clerk Kelly; Chief Strait; Officer Furman; and Stephen Carlson-WMRSDC.

Pres. noted the hearing is for the Future Land Use Plan for the Village of New Era. The plan has been out for public viewing at the post office in New Era and Stephen Carlson said available at their website. Posted notice in paper in July for public to know they can contact clerk or see at these places.

No other individuals present to express comments. We can approve the plan in our meeting. The Rec Plan is for five years and that is the one used for funding. Master plan has no money issues/concern/availability attached to it. It does keep the community free of liability.

Stephen Carlson will present village council with a hard copy and loose leaf one. He will email a pdf file and word file.

End hearing 7:11 pm

**\*Village council minutes showing public hearing and plan approval, following public review period\***

VILLAGE OF NEW ERA  
Minutes of Meeting  
September 10, 2020

Meeting called to order by President Richards at 7:00 pm.

Lord's Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance was said by all those who cared to join in.

Roll: Pres Richards, Treas. Pepple, Clerk Kelly, Trustees Fessenden, Fleury, Grinwis, Kelly, Sobers and VanSickle present. Also present Chief Strait and Officer Furman.

Minutes: Motion by Fessenden to accept the August minutes as presented; Grinwis support; Carried

**FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Motion by Kelly to accept the financial report as presented. Fessenden support; Carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None – waiting for Stephen Carlson for hearing

**STREETS/LIGHTS COMMITTEE:**

-Grinwis and Fessenden met with Jim (Beckman) Spoke about Garfield water hole, tube from under the road has a fair amount of sand. It is still being flushed from down the hill. Swish it out in the main body. For the bank – silt fence from water up the bank and re-rod was suggested. Kelly pointed out the bank is not 45 degrees and would not be a good option. Grinwis said that Beckman said it would be the most economical answer. No price given.

-Lights are good.

-President stated he had a call from Wolting re: snowplowing. Extend contract 1 year? Motion by Grinwis to continue Wolting contract. VanSickle support; Carried.

(Stephen Carlson arrived) Open Public Hearing 7:08pm  
Return to Village Meeting 7:11pm

**POLICE:**

-Strait stated a new crossing guard is working for village. Cathy Burmeister, lives in apts at Third and Garfield. Did a background check. There were 6 kids crossing, Burmeister has a granddaughter going to the school. Chief purchased a "good" stop sign. Lighted and says STOP, very visible for vehicles coming upon cross walk.

-Had a gun turned in (Mulder), a 22 and it will be melted down.

-VanSickle asked about a 2 pm gunfire she had heard. Sounded like and automatic, unknown where it came from. When called 911 was told there had been several other calls.

-Fleury asked when the blight ordinance will start being enforced. Effective Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. President asked about house/garbage at the end of Meyers Ave (old Pranger house). Lots of garbage out by the road. Clerk relayed call from Lamblin and asking that village look at the old Robinson house back yard for trash/garbage.

**PARKS/RECREATION:** Nothing to report

**FINANCE /ORDINANCES:**

-Charter is requesting an extension to their franchise rights. Motion by Fleury to allow the Charter franchise in the village at 3% to continue. Kelly support; Carried.

-Regarding the house on Third Ray Ave up for tax sale. The village has to Waive the right for first claim. If we were to take on, would have to use for public purposes. Motion by Fleury to waive the right for claim of 2683 Ray Ave. Sobers Support; Carried 7-0.

-Clerk told of Kratos energy offering natural gas prices cheaper than DTE. VanSickle and President relayed bad experiences. Clerk told to cancel the change of natural gas provider.  
-Future Land Use Plan. Resolution by Fleury to Adopt Future Land Use Plan. Seconded by Kelly. Roll 7-0. See additional page. Stephen Carlson explained the notices they would make. He needs copy of minutes.  
-THANK YOU to Stephen Carlson for all his work on the Rec Plan and Land Use Plan. Started June 2019. Stephen congratulated the village.

**INSURANCE/PRINTING/PUBLISHING:** Nothing to report

**SEWER:** Nothing to report

**OTHER ITEMS:**

-Clerk read notice from Hart Township on hearing for ORV ordinance. October 13<sup>th</sup>.  
-Treas. Noted that Monday is the last day for property tax payments.

Bills presented. Clerk noted the Trace Analytical is the highest ever, almost double the normal. Perhaps ask Wolting. Motion Fessenden to pay bills as presented. Grinwis support; Carried.

Pres. Richards adjourned meeting 7:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

**\*Notice of public viewing and comment period/date of public meeting\***  
**(Published in the Oceana Herald Journal on July 9, 2020 and September 9, 2020)**

## **NOTICE REGARDING NEW ERA FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

The New Era Village Council will hold a public review period between July 9, 2020 and September 9, 2020 regarding the proposed New Era Future Land Use Plan update. Anyone with an interest is encouraged to review the document, which is available online at [https://wmsrdc.org/new-era-flu\\_proposed-draft/](https://wmsrdc.org/new-era-flu_proposed-draft/). A copy of the proposed plan will also be available for review at the New Era Post Office during normal business hours. A public hearing will be held on September 10, 2020 to receive comments regarding the proposed New Era Future Land Use Plan update. The public hearing will take place at 7:00 PM at the New Era Village Hall during the regular monthly meeting of the New Era Village Council. Written comments regarding the proposed plan may be submitted prior to September 10. Correspondence may be mailed to the West Michigan Shoreline Development Commission, 316 Morris Avenue, Suite 340, Muskegon, MI 49440; or emailed to [scarlson@wmsrdc.org](mailto:scarlson@wmsrdc.org).

If there are any questions, please call Stephen Carlson at (231) 722-7878, extension 11.

**\*Council minutes approving plan for public review\***

VILLAGE OF NEW ERA  
Minutes of Meeting  
March 12, 2020

Meeting called to order by President Richards at 7:00 pm.

Lord's Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance was said by all those who cared to join in.

Roll: Pres Richards, Treas. Pepple, Clerk Kelly, Trustees Fessenden, Grinwis and Kelly present. Trustees Fleury, Sobers and VanSickle absent. Also present Chief Strait and Stephen Carlson, Tom Malda arrived later.

Minutes: Motion by Kelly to accept the February minutes as presented; Fessenden support; Carried

**FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Motion by Fessenden to accept the financial report as presented. Kelly support; Carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

-Stephen Carlson

The Rec Plan has been accepted by DNR. A digital copy to go to the clerk.  
(Tom Malda arrived)

Stephen has a draft for the Future Use Plan, timeline is 63 days. Review once we are set with a draft (June 11 as thought). Have a public meeting April 9<sup>th</sup>-June 10<sup>th</sup>. Need council to make a motion to approve the draft for public review. Notice to Oceana Herald Journal March 23<sup>rd</sup>. One week to review for council. There is still time for minor changes. Have a Hearing June 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. Stephen is to email a copy to be taken to Post Office for viewing. Motion by Grinwis to go forward and approve plan for Public Comment. Fessenden support; Carried. (Stephen Carlson left)

-email from Scott Meyers

Wondering about ATV law, council discussed and decision to take no action (Jan 2). We do not want the ordinance for the village. Fessenden asked about our liability. Many places endorsed state law, but not Golden Township, nor Claybanks. Council would prefer not to change the way we are doing it presently. -Kelly asked about culvert along road, drain or ours. Fessenden said Hallack was to take care of it. Or Beckmans? Needed to be looked at last year.

**STREETS/LIGHTS COMMITTEE:**

-Strait reported all lights should be working, potholes on Elm and big one by Wesco. County allowed chief to get cold patch, and he took care of with help of Ben (VanSumeren).

-We are at limbo for First St. No concrete bids. 3800 feet. President asked what council wants to do. The chip & seal was to holdup for 6-8 years. Have bids in by March 25<sup>th</sup>. Think about what we want. Thought for doing it from the village limits to the north side of Wesco. Fessenden suggested putting heads together in a meeting to prepare.

**POLICE:**

-Chief gave data-22 complaints, 2 stops. Crossing guard usage is hit and miss because kids are not always there, crossing First St after/before school. Today they had 3 girls in afternoon and no kids in morning. They were riding bikes. Julia (Gowell) does it 3 afternoons a week.

**PARKS/RECREATION:** Nothing to report

**FINANCE /ORDINANCES:**

Grinwis asked about Near (Jamie-Garfield). He has bought property in Industrial Park, Shelby. So will not be moving forward with variance on Garfield for his building.

**INSURANCE/PRINTING/PUBLISHING:** Nothing to report

**SEWER:** Nothing to report

**OTHER ITEMS:**

-Treasurer asked about moving the money out of checking, what terms do we want? Found Family Financial Credit Union (FFCU) 3 year for 1.97%.

-President asked about dumpsters this year. Pepple noted that people put all sorts of stuff from their yards in there, should they? Branches mentioned. Take to Shelby Sewer Area, ½ mile west on 72<sup>nd</sup> Ave.

Bills presented. Motion by Grinwis to pay bills as presented. Fessenden support; Carried.

Pres. Richards adjourned meeting 7:52 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

**\*Notice of public meeting and comment period/date of public meeting\***  
**(Published in the Oceana Herald-Journal on Thursday, May 30, 2019)**

# **NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING NEW ERA FUTURE LAND USE PLAN AND RECREATION PLAN**

**The New Era Village Council, with assistance from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, has begun the process of updating Village's future land use plan and recreation plan. These documents will communicate the community's vision for the future of New Era over the next 5 to 20 years. The future land use plan is intended to guide and support decision making by village leaders. Successful completion of the recreation plan will qualify the village for recreation grants offered through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Both plans must be reviewed and updated as needed every five years.**

**All New Era citizens are invited to attend a public visioning session at 6:00 PM on June 13, 2019 at The Avenue Event Center, 4747 First St., New Era 49446. The meeting will feature a SWOT Analysis to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to New Era, as well as an opportunity to comment on recreation opportunities in the village. For additional information about the New Era Village future land use plan, recreation plan, or the public meeting, please contact Mr. Stephen Carlson, Program Manager, at (231) 722-7878, extension 11 or at [scarlson@wmsrdc.org](mailto:scarlson@wmsrdc.org).**

**APPENDIX B - SWOT ANALYSIS JUNE 13, 2019**

	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Harmful</b>
<b>Present-Day</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Strength</u></b></p> <p>Low crime            Accessible            Rail trail            Ball field            Clean            Low crime/safe            Country Dairy            Lewis Farms            Women’s league            Quiet streets/neighborhoods            Rail Trail            Growth potential            Safe            Attractive            Quick sale of home            Willing &amp; eager community members            Positive feelings about village            Creek            Rail trail            Depot            Streetscape            Ball field            Schools            Village hall</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Weakness</u></b></p> <p>No paid staff            Funding            Website            Business closing            No new business            Size            Limited funds            Business closings            Business closing/not coming in            Parking            Alleys</p>
<b>Future</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Opportunity</u></b></p> <p>Share paid staff with Rothbury            Vacancies downtown            Lewis Farms &amp; Country Dairy            Electric Forest            Restaurant/bar            Retail            School property (if closes)            Lots available for sale (growth)            New buildings            School closing to be acquired by village</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Threat</u></b></p> <p>Retail less            Declining &amp; aging population            Aging population            Low tax rate            Ghost town            No reasons for bikers to stop/visit            New Era Canning Co. odors</p>

**Other Comments:**

- Do not need more public land
- How to draw new business?

**SWOT Analysis – June 13, 2019  
Categorized Comments**

	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<b>Planning/ Land Use</b>			Lots available for sale School property (2) New buildings	
<b>Outdoors/ Recreation</b>	Rail trail (3) Ball field (2) Women’s league Depot Carlton Creek			No reason for bikers to stop/visit
<b>Community</b>	Low crime/safe (2) Accessible Clean Quiet streets/neighborhoods Attractive Quick sale of home Willing/eager community members Positive feelings about village Schools Streetscape Village hall	Size Parking Alleys		Aging population (2) Declining population
<b>Public Services/ Infrastructure</b>		Limited funds (2) No paid staff Website	Share paid staff with Rothbury	Low tax rate
<b>Economy/Commerce</b>	Lewis Farms Country Dairy Growth potential	Business closing (3) No business coming (2)	Vacancies downtown Lewis Farms/Country Dairy Electric Forest Restaurant/bar Retail	New Era Canning Co. odor Retail less Ghost town

*(parenthesis indicate the number of times a comment was observed)*

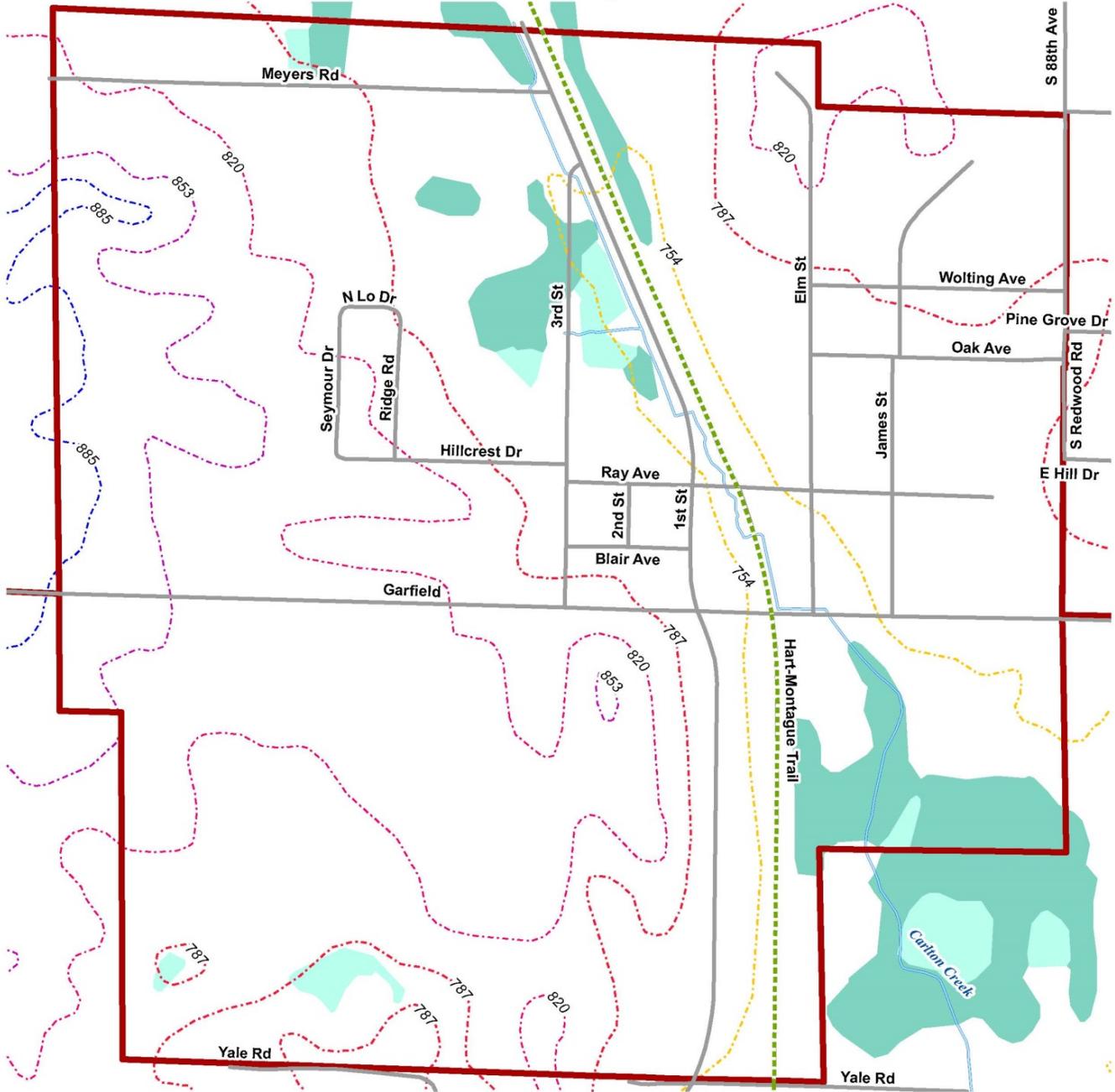
**APPENDIX C - MAPS**



# Village of New Era, circa 2013



# Village of New Era Landscape



**Elevation (feet)**

- 754
- 770
- 787
- 820
- 853
- 885

— Road

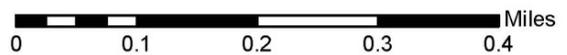
--- Hart-Montague Trail

**Wetland Type**

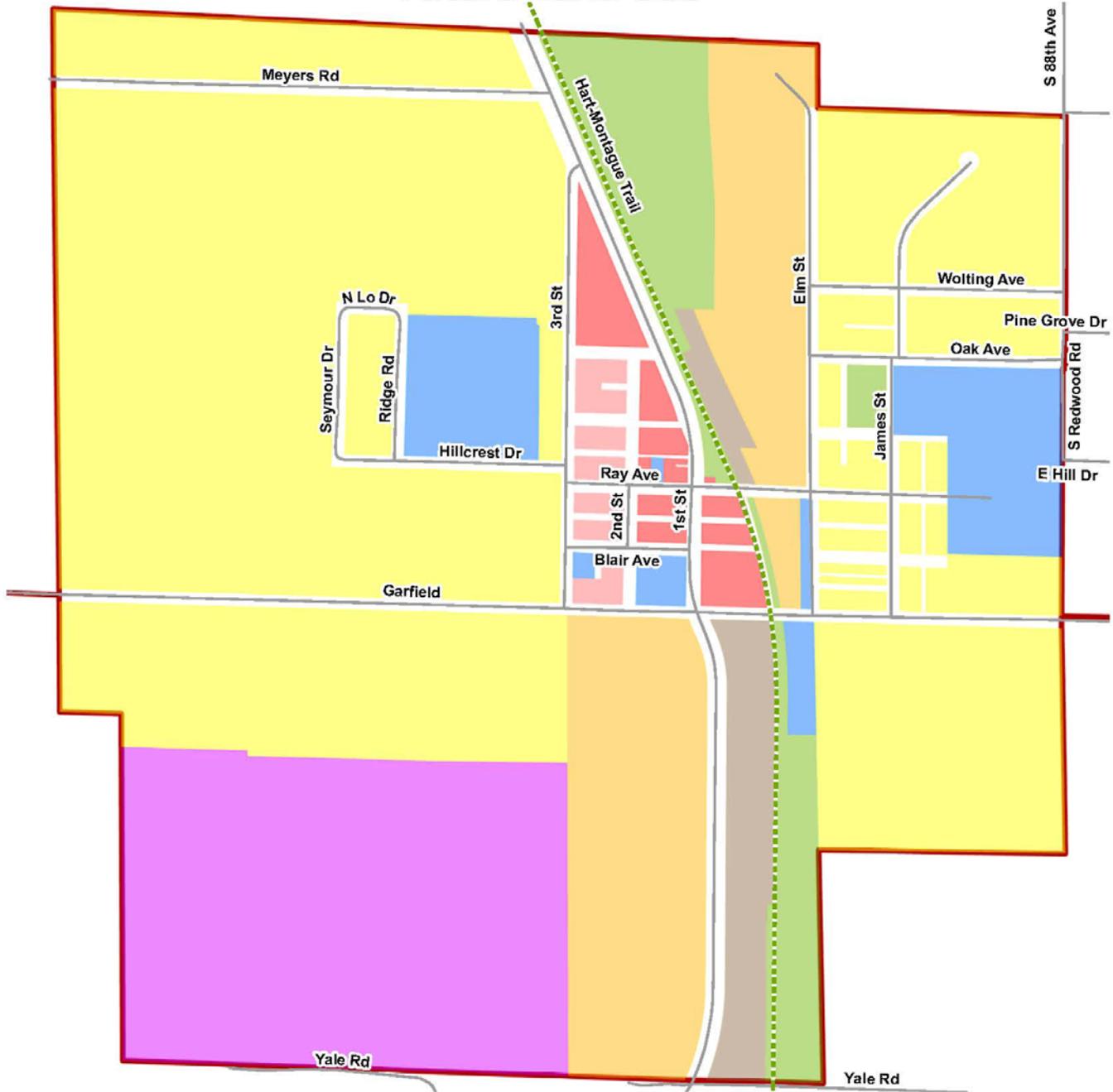
- Freshwater Emergent
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub



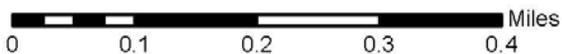
March 2020  
- For panning purposes only -



# Village of New Era Future Land Use



- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  Residential Single Family |  Commercial   |  Public/Semi-Public  |
|  Residential Two-Family    |  Industrial   |  Open Space/Parkland |
|  Residential Multi-Family  |  Agricultural |  Hart-Montague Trail |



New Era Future Land Use Plan - March 2020

