

Oceana County Master Plan



2024 Update

Oceana County Master Plan

Prepared by the Oceana County Planning Commission, with assistance from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission.

Adopted by the Oceana County Board of Commissioners on March 28, 2024.

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West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC)

The WMSRDC 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 WMSRDC is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Oceana County Master Plan is set forth by the Oceana County Planning Commission to promote public health, safety, and welfare through coordinated planning for the appropriate use of land and water resources and the provision of adequate public facilities and services. The plan was developed with assistance from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC), which is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 127 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo and Oceana counties.

a. Purpose

The foremost purpose of the Oceana County Master Plan is to provide a vision for future land use and development decisions within Oceana County over the next twenty to twenty-five years. The conclusions contained within are based upon analyses of past trends, observations of current conditions, and input from the public. Although this is primarily a land use planning document, it also addresses areas of quality of life, environment, infrastructure, and economic development. This comprehensive view is intended to make the “plan” a coordinating tool for governments, agencies, businesses, and citizens within the county.

This plan is heavily influenced by the concept of sustainability; that decisions made today should meet current needs without undermining the prosperity of future generations. Although this plan includes land use and development recommendations, it has no regulatory power. It should be implemented incrementally through county and local government decisions, improvements to public infrastructure and services, and the actions of private property owners. In addition, this plan is intended to evolve with the times. It should be regularly revisited (at minimum every five years) to ensure forward thinking and to encourage the anticipation of challenges before they become problematic.

This plan was developed pursuant to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, M.C.L. 125.3801. The Oceana County Master Plan will be used by the Oceana County Planning Commission to guide its comments regarding local planning and zoning documents submitted to the Planning Commission for review. It will also guide recommendations made by the County Planning Commission to County and State authorities on roads, parks, public facilities, and other infrastructure. It is hoped that local city, village, and township planning and zoning documents will be made to be consistent with this plan.

b. Planning Process

In 1995, amid issues concerning development and farmland preservation in Oceana County, the Oceana County Planning Commission decided to develop a plan based on the prevailing uses and conditions of the time. In 1996, WMSRDC was hired to produce the first master plan and future land use map for Oceana County. In 2004, the Planning Commission rewrote the master plan to comply with new State legislation regarding municipal planning. In 2009-2010, the Planning Commission reviewed and performed the first 5-year update to the plan. In 2014, the Planning Commission hired WMSRDC to perform a substantial update. WMSRDC was hired again in 2022 to perform another plan update.

The planning process used for this edition of the Oceana County Master Plan included meetings of the County Planning Commission, public meetings, an online survey, data research and analyses, mapping, and consideration of alternative planning and development options. The Oceana County Planning

Commission kicked off the input-gathering process in November of 2022 with an online questionnaire, followed by a public meeting on December 1 and a facilitated discussion with the Youth Advisory Council of the Community Foundation for Oceana County on February 16, 2023. The survey and meetings aimed to identify the strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, and desired results for Oceana County. A summary of the comments received at the public meetings has been placed in the appendix section of this document. Input collected at the meetings were compiled and sorted into five recurring themes: Quality of Life, Environment, Infrastructure, Economic Development, and Community Development. Each has its own chapter within this plan containing topical information and statistics, as well as a vision for the future of the subject area in Oceana County.

c. Historical Overview

It is important to keep in mind that a master plan, while ostensibly designed for the future, must provide at least a cursory glance at the past. A historical summary can help a community realize how the present came to be, and how the future may be seized.

Since its inception, Oceana County has changed from a lumbering and small farming community into a land of vast orchards, large fertile farms, and wealthy resort areas. In 1831, seven years before Michigan became a state, the territorial legislature established an “Oceana County.” This included all of the present Oceana County along with parts of Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon and Newaygo counties. The first European settlement in Oceana County was on Lake Michigan near Whiskey Creek in present-day Claybanks Township. A sawmill was central to this first settlement of the area, as the lumber industry provided most of the employment opportunities to the residents of early Oceana County.

In 1855, the State of Michigan Legislature established Oceana County with its present boundaries and divided the county into three townships: Pentwater, stretched across the northern portion of the county; Stony Creek (later known as Benona), covered the middle portion of the county; and Claybanks across the southern portion. During this era, rapid growth characterized the area as roads and bridges were constructed and forests were cleared for farmland. Pentwater Village became the first incorporated community in Oceana County in 1867. By 1869, all sixteen present-day townships had been established. The struggle of deciding a county seat threatened to divide the county in the late 1800’s. Hart was eventually granted the county seat, though the election was filled with accusations of political back-biting and underhanded deal-making. Pentwater, which was more established as a village at the time, and Shelby both continued to fight for the county seat through the 1930’s.

As settlers of European descent gradually inhabited West Michigan, Native Americans played a vital role in the evolution of Oceana County’s development. In the late 1850’s, the Ottawa Indians relocated from the Grand Rapids/Kent County area to Oceana County. This was the result of an agreement between the tribes and lawmakers in Washington, D. C. The Ottawa Indians agreed to abandon their land on the Grand River in exchange for lands further north, which they were to select. The government built schools for the Native American and monies were appropriated for livestock and tools. The land chosen is now part of Elbridge and Crystal townships.

The Great Chief Cob-Moo-Sa was a respected orator, debater, and leader of people. Arguably the most famous Native American in Oceana County, he worked fervently to assure that the Ottawa tribe enjoyed the best quality of life possible. There is a lake in Elbridge Township named for him and a memorial in his honor at Taylor Road and 144th Avenue in Elbridge Township. Despite the efforts of Cob-Moo-Sa and others, insurmountable cultural differences existed between the Ottawa tribe and the European settlers

that caused conflicts. For example, the notion of individual land ownership was foreign to the Native American. This, along with the encroachment of white settlers, caused many to give up their land.

Early roads in the county were rough and undeveloped. "Two tracks" for wagon trains made it difficult to travel on the hilly terrain near Lake Michigan, especially in the cold, cruel winters of West Michigan. The advent of the automobile changed everything by requiring that hard surface roads be built to support this growing mode of transportation. The first mile of hard surface road in Oceana County was built through a grant from the State of Michigan in 1906-1907. The project was funded at a \$1,000 per mile, was nine feet wide, and ran from the corner of the Methodist church in Mears one-mile west to Beebe's Corners. The new road was so popular that the City of Hart and Golden Township soon constructed roads as well. Golden Township's road (presumably 56th Avenue) was one mile long as well and ran north from the Methodist church in Mears.

Development of the automobile and roads to support it brought about many positive changes to the lifestyle of county residents, including improved access to basic health care. Two hospitals in Oceana County have enjoyed lengthy tenures as quality health care facilities. Oceana Hospital started in the 1920's in a small house on the corner of Courtland and Lincoln streets in Hart. In 1954, it was moved to a larger facility on East Main Street. The other hospital in Oceana County, originally known as Shelby Hospital, was established in 1922 by two nurses. A state-of-the-art building was constructed in 1925. Funds were raised through public clubs and donations from private interests. In 1928, control of the hospital was turned over to three doctors, two from Shelby and one from Ludington. The village acquired the hospital in 1938 and managed it through many changes. Additions were completed in 1948 and 1964, and the facility was renamed Lakeshore Community Hospital in 1969. The village transferred ownership to a non-profit corporation in July of 1984 to better serve area residents. The hospital expanded again during 1997 to make room for ancillary hospital uses. Today the hospital is known as Trinity Health Shelby Hospital.

Sandy beaches, dunes, forests, and water bodies beckoned the earliest settlers of the area and continue to attract residents and tourists from far and near. Oceana County's rich recreation legacy goes back as far as 1919, when Carrie Mears, daughter of lumber baron Charles Mears, donated 25.19 acres of land in Golden Township to be designated as a state park. This land became known as Silver Lake State Park in December 1920. Its namesake lake was given by Charles Mears, who sometime in the 1880's threw a silver dollar into the lake and proclaimed "I christen thee Silver Lake." In 1923, Carrie Mears donated some of her father's former land in the Village of Pentwater that would become Charles Mears State Park. The development of cheaper automobile transportation, the proximity of the lake to the beautiful golden sand dunes, and an increase in the popularity of camping and outdoor recreation resulted in a boom of visitors to the area that started in the 1950's and continues to this day.

The worst flood in Oceana County's recorded history struck in September of 1986 and triggered the county's only declaration of major disaster by the President due to flooding. Oceana County received a record seven to ten inches of rainfall between September 9 and September 11. The extreme rain led to flooding across the county and caused the Hart Hydroelectric Dam to collapse. The dam failure caused the 250-acre Hart Lake to empty into the Pentwater River in a matter of hours. This led to downed trees, flooding of parking lots and backyards, erosion, and washed-out roads and bridges. The northbound US-31 highway bridge over the Pentwater River collapsed completely, while the southbound US-31 bridge over the Pentwater River and the State Street bridge over Hart Lake sustained damages. The dam was rebuilt soon after, and is currently owned and managed by the City of Hart.

Additional historical information can be obtained through the Oceana County Historical Society, whose purpose is to collect, preserve, and disseminate knowledge of the history of Oceana County.

Historic Sites in Oceana County

Federal Register of Historic Places

- Jared H. Gay House, Rt. 2, 128th Ave., Crystal Valley
- Little Sable Point Light Station, Little Sable Point, Golden Twp
- Green Quarry Site, Address Restricted, Mears
- Charles Mears, Silver Lake Boardinghouse, Lighthouse and Silver Lake Channel Rds., Mears
- Dumaw Creek Site, Address Restricted, Pentwater
- Navigation Structures at Pentwater Harbor, West End of Lowell St., Pentwater
- US 31-Pentwater River Bridge, US 31 over Pentwater R., Weare Twp
- Hart Downtown Historic District, Along S. State St., roughly bounded by Main, Dryden, Water, and Lincoln Sts.

State Register of Historic Places

- Hart Historic Industrial District, 215-216 Lincoln St. & 109 Union St. (Hart)
- Auto Tourist Camps/John Gurney Park, 300 Griswold St (Hart)
- US-31 (Old) Pentwater River Bridge, Oceana Dr. over Pentwater River (Hart)
- Benona Township Hall, 5400 W. Woodrow (Benona Twp)
- Little Point Sable Light Station, Little Sable Point (Benona Twp)
- Charles Mears, Silver Lake Boardinghouse, Lighthouse & Silver Lake Channel rds. (Golden Twp)
- Veterans Day Storm-Graveyard of Ships Informational Designation, 421 S. Hancock St. (Pentwater)
- Jared H. Gay House, Route 2, 128th Avenue (Crystal Valley)

d. Regional Context

Oceana County is located in west-central Lower Michigan and is surrounded by Lake Michigan to the west, Mason County to the north, Lake County to the northeast, Newaygo County to the east, and Muskegon County to the south. A significant number of Oceana County residents travel outside the county to access employment, goods, and services. Therefore, existing conditions and development trends of neighboring communities are important to consider within the context of Oceana County’s future. Demographic and economic projections for the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana are included in Appendix B to provide a regional comparison with Oceana’s neighbors.



CHAPTER 2: QUALITY OF LIFE

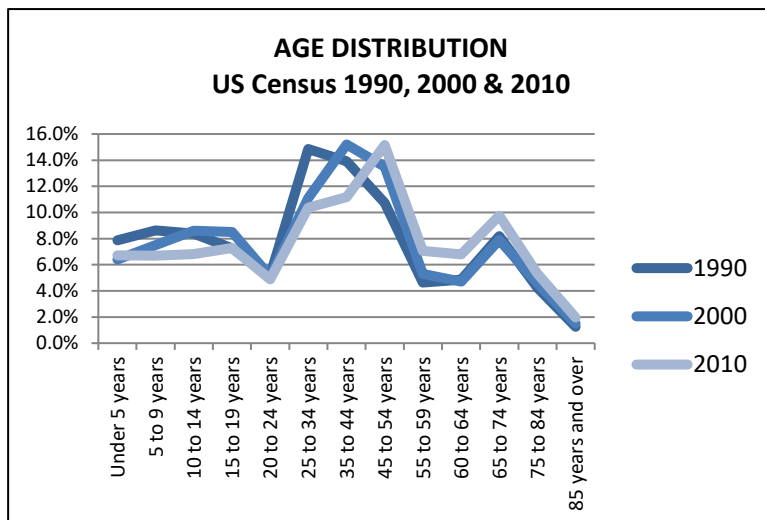
In this plan, “Quality of Life” is the general theme under which societal aspects of Oceana County are discussed. Good quality of life is present when characteristics such as nature, services, amenities, and community support are combined in proper proportions. Such aspects include good paying jobs, safe and sanitary housing, crime-free neighborhoods, excellent education facilities and programs, and readily accessible services. This chapter includes several indicators to help track development trends, as well as some key aspects of Oceana County that contribute to its overall desirability as a place to live, work, and play.

It is important to note that significant differences often exist between areas of Oceana County; primarily between the eastern half and the western half. As a result, countywide statistics rarely capture disparities that might exist between different areas within the county. For example, wealth in Oceana County is concentrated in the west near the Lake Michigan shoreline and US-31. Wealth generally tapers off towards the northeast where the area is typically rural and sparsely populated.

a. Population

When measured over time, population trends can be identified to help communities and service providers know where infrastructure and services are needed. It should be noted that methods of obtaining population figures have changed over time; thus certain populations may not have been tabulated in a consistent manner over the years. That said, U.S. Census figures from 1980 through 2010 indicate that Oceana County experienced a sustained period of population growth. However, from 2000 through 2020 population growth has generally leveled without significant increase or decline. One aspect of the population that constantly increased in recent years (a trend noted in the 2014 edition of this plan as well) was the Hispanic or Latino population and its increasing proportion of the county’s population.

OCEANA COUNTY POPULATION					
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Population	22,002	22,454	26,873	26,570	26,659
% Change	22.3%	2.1%	19.7%	-1.1%	.33%
<i>Source: United State Census Bureau</i>					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Hispanic or Latino Population	3,913	3,934	3,993	4,048	
% Of Total Population	14.8%	14.9%	15.0%	15.2%	
<i>Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates</i>					



As of the 2021 American Community Survey, the age distribution in Oceana County was generally spread across the population. Just over one-quarter of the population was 19 years or younger, and almost 30 percent of the population was aged 60 or more. It is notable that individuals aged 20-39 represented just 21.2% of the population; while 40.8% of the population was comprised of individuals aged 40-69.

Recent trends indicate that the county’s median age is rising at an alarming rate.

The median age has risen from 34 in 1990, to 36.9 in 2000, to 41.8 in 2010, to and estimated 43.8 in 2021. The age distribution chart on the previous page illustrates three trends that contribute to Oceana County’s increasing median age: the largest segment of the population is aging; the proportion of school-aged individuals has declined; and the proportion of retirement age individuals has increased.

Seasonal Population

Another important aspect of the Oceana County population are seasonal residents and visitors. Oceana County is blessed with opportunities for enjoying nature and recreating outdoors, especially in the warm seasons. The influx of seasonal visitors can be both beneficial and detrimental to communities. The tourism economy brings wealth into Oceana County, and provides local employment opportunities, albeit temporarily. However, the added population can strain public services and infrastructure that may have been designed for a much lesser permanent population. Even if public infrastructure and services are designed to accommodate seasonal increases, a community may have maintenance and upkeep burdens to manage in the “off” seasons.

The Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan (WMSRDC 2023) provides peak seasonal population estimates which are shown in the table to the right. The estimates are intended to demonstrate a community’s capacity to accommodate seasonal visitors and help communities plan for seasonal population increases. The estimate is based on a basic formula that assumes average occupancies of two for hotel rooms, four for RV/campground sites, and six per vacant house (potential vacation rental).

These estimates reveal potential for significant seasonal population increases, and yet they may be too low. Additional elements that are not captured in the estimate include:

- *Daytime visits.* Millions of visitors annually enjoy festivals, attractions, and parks. While some of these visits include overnight stays, the estimate does not account for daytime visits.
- *Migrant workers.* Thousands of workers seasonally reside in Oceana County to work in agriculture.
- *Electric Forest.* Tens of thousands arrive to attend the annual Electric Forest music festival in Rothbury and Grant Township.
- *Summer group camps.*

POTENTIAL PEAK SEASONAL POPULATION			
NAME	2021 Population	Seasonal Estimate	% Increase
Oceana County	26,884	76,744	185.5%
City of Hart	2,193	3,109	41.8%
Village of Hesperia	830	1,276	53.7%
Village of New Era	397	487	22.7%
Village of Pentwater	856	4,800	460.7%
Village of Rothbury	384	1,178	206.8%
Village of Shelby	2,627	3,029	15.3%
Village of Walkerville	243	291	19.8%
Benona Twp	1,432	6,224	334.6%
Claybanks Twp	882	2,842	222.2%
Colfax Twp	667	3,177	376.3%
Crystal Twp	700	1,360	94.3%
Elbridge Twp	857	1,703	98.7%
Ferry Twp	1,073	1,957	82.4%
Golden Twp	1,707	20,585	1105.9%
Grant Twp	3,000	5,234	74.5%
Greenwood Twp	1,410	2,336	65.7%
Hart Twp	1,633	2,675	63.8%
Leavitt Twp	1,039	1,807	73.9%
Newfield Twp	2,078	4,780	130.0%
Otto Twp	763	1,389	82.0%
Pentwater Twp	1,704	9,822	476.4%
Shelby Twp	4,086	5,484	34.2%
Weare Twp	1,311	1,911	45.8%

Source: Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2024 (WMSRDC)

b. Housing

Availability of good-quality housing is an important aspect of Quality of Life. Conditions of homelessness, housing quality, housing choice, and extra-housing factors (e.g., neighborhood qualities, social support) are related to individual well-being. Changes in housing data often reflect important changes in the character of an area. Aspects such as age, occupancy rates, and affordability are all important indicators which carry implications for the local economy and community development planning. To be considered affordable, many standards state that a family should spend no more than 30% of its income on housing and utilities.

Only about one-quarter of the Oceana County population resides within an incorporated city or village. Therefore, one can surmise that the county's housing stock is generally dispersed across the rural landscape or concentrated in desirable locations such as near a body of water. In addition, there is a wide range of ages within the housing stock. According to 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, about 20% of the housing stock was built in or before 1939; yet about 40% was built in or after 1980.

The 2017-21 ACS Estimates show that nearly two-thirds of all housing units were occupied. The total number of vacant housing units in the county has been on the rise since at least 1990. This can be partially attributed to the significant proportion of vacant housing units that are estimated to be used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. In 2021, those units made up over four out of five vacant units, and thirty percent of all housing units in the county.

HOUSING STOCK		
Year built	2009-13 ACS Estimate	
Total housing units	15,876	%
Built 2010 or later	101	0.6
Built 2000 to 2009	1,774	11.2
Built 1990 to 1999	2,822	17.8
Built 1980 to 1989	1,782	11.2
Built 1970 to 1979	2,741	17.3
Built 1960 to 1969	1,505	9.5
Built 1950 to 1959	1,078	6.8
Built 1940 to 1949	985	6.2
Built 1939 or earlier	3,088	19.5
Value	2017-21 ACS Estimate	
Owner-occupied units	8,433	%
Less than \$50,000	915	10.9
\$50,000 to \$99,999	2,125	25.2
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,684	20.0
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,247	14.8
\$200,000 to \$299,999	1,318	15.6
\$300,000 to \$499,999	736	8.7
\$500,000 to \$999,999	325	3.9
\$1,000,000 or more	83	1.0
Median value	\$131,800	

Source: United States Census Bureau

HOUSING OCCUPANCY	1990	%	2000	%	2010	%	2021 5-yr estimate	%
Total housing units	12,857		15,009		15,944		15,519	
Mobile Homes			3024	20.1			2,749	17.7
Occupied housing units	8,071	62.8	9,778	65.1	10,174	63.8	9,789	63.1
Owner-occupied	6,480	80.3	8,087	82.7	8,271	81.3	8,433	86.1
Renter-occupied	1,591	19.7	1,691	17.3	1,903	18.7	1,356	13.9
Vacant housing units	4,786	37.2	5,231	34.9	5,770	36.2	5,802	37.4
Vacant for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	3,504	73.5	4,155	79.4	4,381	75.9	4,768	82.2
Vacant for migratory workers	n/a	n/a	344	6.6	300	5.2	171	2.9

Source: United States Census Bureau

The number of new home permits issued in Oceana County between 2018 and 2022 are shown in the table below. The data suggests a steady trend in the total number of new home permits. Over the five-year period, 32% of the new home permits were for single-wide or double-wide mobile homes. This represents a disproportionate increase of mobile homes when compared to the existing housing stock. According to 2021 estimates, mobile homes comprised 17.7% of the county's housing. There are just four designated mobile home parks in the county, with an estimated total of 182 lots, or about 6% of the total number of mobile homes in the county. Therefore, a substantial portion of mobile homes in the county are scattered about the landscape.

Over the previous five years, just over half of all new home permits were given in communities along the Lake Michigan shoreline, where it is more desirable and perhaps more profitable to build new homes. A study on homelessness prepared by the Oceana Housing Council in 2006 posited that "few contractors in the area have had an interest in the development of affordable housing in recent years." This pattern of development may be contributing to the increasing need for quality, affordable housing in the county, especially inland away from Lake Michigan.

NEW HOME PERMITS	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		Total
	mobile	stick built	mobile	stick built	mobile	stick built	mobile	stick built	mobile	stick built	
Benona Twp	1	5	1	5	0	9	0	4	0	9	34
Claybanks Twp	1	5	0	2	1	1	0	4	0	3	17
Colfax Twp	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	8
Crystal Twp	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	6
Elbridge Twp	1	0	2	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	9
Ferry Twp	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	7
Golden Twp	4	9	4	11	5	10	2	8	1	10	64
Grant Twp*											
Greenwood Twp	1	1	2	1	0	3	0	0	1	1	10
Hart (City/Twp)	3	4	0	1	4	2	1	2	0	1	18
Hesperia Vil	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leavitt Twp	8	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	12
New Era Vil	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pentwater (Vil/Twp)	1	6	0	10	0	8	1	11	1	6	44
Rothbury Vil	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Shelby (Vil/Twp)	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	6
Walkerville Vil	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weare Twp	1	1	7	1	2	3	2	2	0	4	23
Newfield Twp*											
Otto Twp*											
Total	31	38	20	38	20	39	10	39	11	38	284

Sources: Oceana County Inspection Department;
 *Permitting Newfield and Otto townships is handled by North Country Inspection Services; Grant Township employs its own Building Inspector

Looking ahead, an increasingly aged population will almost certainly put additional strain on the availability of housing for senior citizens. An analysis of senior services conducted in 2014 cited assisted living as the second-most important “senior service gap” in Oceana County. Contributing factors included: lack of availability; limited number of beds; financial need; and need for continuum of care.

Oceana County Housing Needs Assessment

In 2022, Dogwood Community Development retained Bowen National Research to conduct a Housing Needs Assessment of Oceana County. The report was presented to the community in September 2023 and includes a wealth of demographic, economic, and housing market information. It also presents a summary of key strategies that should be considered to address housing issues and needs of the market. According to the report, “these strategies do not need to be done concurrently, nor do all strategies need to be implemented to create an impact. Instead, the... housing strategies should be used as a guide by the local government, stakeholders, developers and residents to help inform housing decisions.”

RECOMMENDED HOUSING STRATEGIES

Set realistic/attainable short-term housing goals, outline long-term objectives, and monitor progress.
Consider capacity building that will expand the base of participants and resources that can be utilized to address housing issues.
Develop strategies to attract people that currently commute into Oceana County to live in Oceana County.
Consider implementing/modifying policies to encourage or support the development of new residential units, particularly housing that is affordable to lower income households.
Support efforts to develop residential units within or near walkable communities to accommodate the housing needs of seniors and to appeal to younger households.
Preservation and renovation of existing housing should be an area of focus.
Educate the public on housing challenges and opportunities within the county.
Market Oceana County’s housing needs and opportunities to potential residential development partners and develop a centralized housing resource center.
Develop next-steps plans.

Source: Oceana County Housing Needs Assessment (Bowen National Research, 2023)

The Oceana County Housing Needs Assessment should be referenced to guide and support decisions regarding housing in Oceana County. The report is available to the public on the Oceana County website: <https://oceana.mi.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Housing-Needs-Assessment-Oceana-County-2023.pdf>

Zoning Reform Toolkit

In spring 2021, Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) secured funding from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) to develop a Zoning Reform Toolkit for Housing Choice and Supply. The purpose of the Toolkit was to provide municipal planners and community leaders with a set of regulatory solutions to open up local housing supply. Each of the 15 tools in the Toolkit includes an explanation of what it is, how it is used, and how it affects housing. Case studies and sample comprehensive plan language reinforce the tools. The resource is available at: <https://www.planningmi.org/zoning-reform-for-housing>

c. Income & Poverty

The economic recession from 2007-2009 took a toll on Oceana County. Between the 2000 Census and the 2009-2013 5-year ACS Estimates, poverty increased significantly in Oceana County. However, recent ACS Estimates show that median household income in Oceana County has consistently been on the rise. In addition, poverty levels have been in decline. Once exception is the age 65 and over group, for which poverty has gradually continued to increase.

In Michigan, the United Way produces data for households that earn more than the Federal poverty level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county known as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). While conditions have improved for some households in recent years, many continue to struggle as wages fail to keep pace with the rising cost of household essentials (housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and a basic smartphone plan). Households below the ALICE threshold (ALICE households plus those in poverty) can't afford the essentials. According to the 2021 Oceana County ALICE Report just 12% of households were in poverty, but 31% of households fell below the ALICE threshold.

OCEANA COUNTY INCOME & POVERTY			
INCOME	2017	2019	2021
Median household income	\$44,382	\$50,104	\$56,454
Per capita income	\$22,185	\$24,345	\$26,289
PERCENT BELOW POVERTY LEVEL	2017	2019	2021
All individuals in poverty	17.5%	15.0%	13.0%
Under 18 yrs	24.3%	20.3%	17.0%
18 to 64 yrs	17.8%	15.0%	12.8%
65 yrs or older	8.6%	8.9%	9.5%

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates

d. Education

Oceana County is served by nine school districts and three intermediate school districts. Hart Public School District and Shelby Public Schools cover the greatest area in the county. Both are within the West Shore Educational Service District (ESD). There are also two private schools: New Era Christian School (K-8) and Oceana Christian School (preK-8).

Residents of Oceana County must typically travel outside the county to access career technical education (CTE) programs and higher education institutions. This may be a contributing factor to the lower proportion of county residents aged 20-24,

PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS			
District Name	Intermediate School District	Student Count 2021-22	Coverage of Oceana Co. (SqMi)
Mason County Central Schools *	West Shore ESD	1,248	5.4
Shelby Public Schools •	West Shore ESD	1,155	150.0
Hart Public School District •	West Shore ESD	1,260	145.8
Walkerville Public Schools •	West Shore ESD	302	63.8
Pentwater Public School District •	West Shore ESD	230	36.9
Fremont Public School District *	Newaygo County RESA	2,035	6.5
Hesperia Community Schools *	Newaygo County RESA	839	72.4
Montague Area Public Schools •	Muskegon Area ISD	1,371	56.6
Holton Public Schools •	Muskegon Area ISD	810	8.4

* Schools located outside of Oceana County
 • Some students may commute in from outside Oceana County
 Source: National Center for Education Statistics

as younger residents leave the area in pursuit of education or training. The nearest higher education institutions are West Shore Community College to the north in Mason County and Muskegon Community College to the south in Muskegon County.

NEARBY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION	Approx. Driving Distance
West Shore Community College	30 mi
Muskegon Community College	40 mi
Baker College - Muskegon Campus	40 mi
Ferris State University	60 mi
Grand Valley State University	70 mi

A unique facility in the Village of Pentwater, called the Pentwater Artisan Learning Center, provides a forum for community members of all ages to teach and learn artisanal skills such as woodworking, metal working, painting, and weaving. Paid members may utilize the facility which has a wide variety of tools to use and some materials for purchase.

Despite challenges of accessing higher education in Oceana County, the overall educational attainment of the population has been consistently improving since at least 1990. The following table demonstrates that Oceana County population aged 25 or more are becoming increasingly educated over time.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT										
	Population 25 years and over	Less than 9th Grade	9th-12 th Grade	High School Diploma	Some College	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree	High School Graduate or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
1990	14,069	10.4%	16.3%	39.7%	16.8%	6.5%	6.5%	3.9%	73.3%	10.4%
2000	17,134	7.7%	12.6%	39.4%	20.6%	7.1%	8.0%	4.6%	79.8%	12.6%
2010 (est)	18,053	8.5%	8.8%	37.9%	22.6%	7.9%	8.7%	5.6%	78.2%	16.3%
2021	18,581	4.2%	7.5%	36.8%	21.2%	10.1%	13.4%	6.9%	88.4%	20.3%

Source: United States Census Bureau

e. Recreation

Recreation is any activity done for fun when one is not working. Hiking, biking, boating, fishing, hunting, and camping are just a few of the high-quality recreational experiences available in Oceana County. This is a point of pride for many residents and a major reason Oceana County is an attractive location to live and visit.

The West Michigan Blueways and Greenways Plan, Phase II is a study that was completed in 2012 to inventory public parklands and access to

OCEANA COUNTY GREENWAYS			
Park Type	Jurisdiction	Number of Sites	Total Size (acres)
Community Parks	State	4	91.35
	County	8	215.41
	Township	8	486.69
	City	6	44.78
	Village	19	36.41
	Other	1	2.25
	Total	47	876.89
Forest Land, Open Space, Natural Areas	Federal	Various Locations	51,210.97
	State	Various Locations	8,026.21
	Total	N/A	59,237.18
Linear Parks, Non-Motorized, ORV Trails	Federal	Various Locations	78.87 Miles
	State	Various Locations	27.87 Miles
	Total	N/A	106.74 Miles

Source: West Michigan Blueways and Greenways Plan: Phase II (WMSRDC, 2012)

surface water resources. It identified 47 community parks covering over 870 acres of land in Oceana County; nearly 60,000 acres of state or federally-owned land; and over 100 miles of trails. The report also identified public access to water bodies, demonstrating a wealth of opportunities for public access to surface water resources. The report is available to the public at <https://wmsrdc.org/publications/>.

The Oceana County Recreation plan was updated concurrently alongside the update of this master plan. As a result, the goals and objectives of the two plans are aligned, specifically as they relate to recreation, quality of life, and the environment. The recreation plan was prepared to continue present and future recreational resource development within the county, as well as satisfy Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) requirements for state and federal grant eligibility. According to the plan, Oceana County currently maintains 194 acres of parkland, which is considered an adequate amount of open space for the current population of the county. The Recreation Plan also notes that Oceana County is limited in free public access to land adjacent to or with access to Lake Michigan. Approximately 4.4 miles of the Oceana County shoreline is open to the public, which is equal to about 17% of the total Lake Michigan shoreline in Oceana County. Other highlights of the recreation plan include a complete inventory of recreation parks and facilities; recreation goals and objectives; and a 5-Year Capital Improvement Program.

f. Health Care & Human Services

Despite an abundance of natural resources and beauty in Oceana County, there are a number of obstacles standing in the way of long-term prosperity; such as an aging population, a high poverty rate, lack of good-paying year-round employment opportunities, and a lack of housing. This section highlights a few resources in Oceana County that provide essential services to the general population or provide additional support to those in need.

Trinity Health Shelby Hospital, located in Shelby Village, is the only full-service medical center in Oceana County. The Oceana County Medical Care Facility, located in Hart, is a 130-bed long-term care facility providing a comprehensive set of nursing home, rehabilitation, and Alzheimer's/dementia services. Hospitals in the neighboring communities of Fremont, Ludington, and Muskegon also serve Oceana County residents. The following excerpt regarding health care in Oceana County comes from a report by the MSU Community Assistance Team in 2002. It remains relevant now, more than 20 years later.

“Quality health care is one concern people have when locating a business or a family in a new community. Oceana is very fortunate to have a local hospital in Shelby... It is typical for health care systems to be the leader in economic development. No system has more at stake in the managed development of industry and its plentiful supply of benefit-based employees and families than a hospital system. They must be a leader in economic development.”

Many programs and organizations in Oceana County are actively working to fill the gap between low wages and high housing costs. For example, Oceana's Home Partnership offers new home construction and home rehabilitation to qualifying families with a variety of funds, including MSHDA, HUD, and USDA Rural Development. Other organizations providing housing services include Oceana County Habitat for Humanity, Oceana Housing Council, and Muskegon-Oceana Community Action Program. The county also receives housing rehabilitation funds through the Community Development Block Grant program.

Two organizations that are dedicated to providing services to seniors in Oceana County are Senior Resources West Michigan and the Oceana County Council on Aging. In November 2014, Senior

Resources conducted a gap analysis to identify deficiencies in services available to older adults in Oceana County. The top five gaps identified by the exercise, listed in order of importance, are as follows: 1) Transportation; 2) Assisted living; 3) Caregiver support; 4) Visiting physicians; and 5) Seniors not getting enough hours to meet needs (in-home).

Quality of Life Summary

- Population growth is essentially stagnant, and the median age continues to rise. If these trends continue, services for older residents will be stressed, especially those that are already identified as deficient.
- Vacation rentals and seasonal/recreational housing represent a notable segment of the county housing stock and have a significant influence on the local housing market.
- Additional housing units are needed to serve all income levels and household types.
- Lack of affordable housing may be caused, or perhaps enhanced, by economics of development that favor the Lake Michigan shoreline communities.
- Overall educational attainment has been improving, despite challenges in accessing career technical and higher education institutions.
- Recreation opportunities are abundant, year-round.

Public Comment Highlights

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outdoor recreation & access to nature - Rail trail & state parks - People & diversity - Strong sense of community, tight-knit - Rural, agricultural lifestyle - Health care and medical & social services - Good schools - County fair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing - Drug use - Retail & dining options - Poverty - Transit & mobility - Access to higher education & training - Year-round, well-paying jobs
ASPIRATIONS & RESULTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Available housing options - Higher wages - Regional retail business - Dining & entertainment options - Year-round recreation & community events - Less drug use and better social services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased beach access - Increased population - Non-motorized trail improvements - Local post-secondary education and training

Visions for Quality of Life

- The county is known for its rural character and strong sense of community, which are augmented with ample access to services.
- The population is characterized by a healthy age distribution.
- Housing stock meets the needs of the community and is sufficient to attract and retain residents.
- School systems and education programs are vibrant and nurturing.
- Numerous opportunities for year-round outdoor recreation exist for both residents and visitors.

CHAPTER 3: ENVIRONMENT

Physical attributes and natural features are essential to the future of Oceana County; a place where agriculture and tourism are pillars of the local economy and quality of life. Many of these natural assets may be damaged or lost if not managed properly. Likewise, poorly conceived developments could be damaged by natural forces. Therefore, a thoughtful assessment of the environment will aid in determining the land's suitability for a given development, and thus promote a sustainable way forward.

a. Physiography

Oceana County's generally rolling landscape is largely the result of glaciation. The bedrock beneath the county is covered by a thick layer of glacial deposits, which formed through the complex action of the Lake Michigan Lobe of the Wisconsin glacial ice sheet approximately 8 to 12 thousand years ago. Glacial action resulted in dominant features—moraines, till plains, lake plains, ash plains, and drainage ways. Specific information about the distribution of these features can be found in the Soil Survey of Oceana County, issued in 1996 by the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest Service.

b. Dunes

Sand dunes and beach ridges in the county are prominent and well-known features typically found along the Lake Michigan coast. According to the Great Lakes Information Network, the longest stretch of freshwater dunes in the world is found along Lake Michigan. Dune environments are ecologically fragile, yet highly desirable areas for recreation and residential uses. The shoreline ecosystem is subject to damage through clearing or trampling of vegetation that holds the sand in place. Nearly all of the shoreline is sandy, although not all of it is high dunes. The potential consequences of development or clearing of vegetation in this area are wind erosion, structural damage or loss, damage to drives and roads, loss of habitat for rare plants and animals, and loss of scenic character.

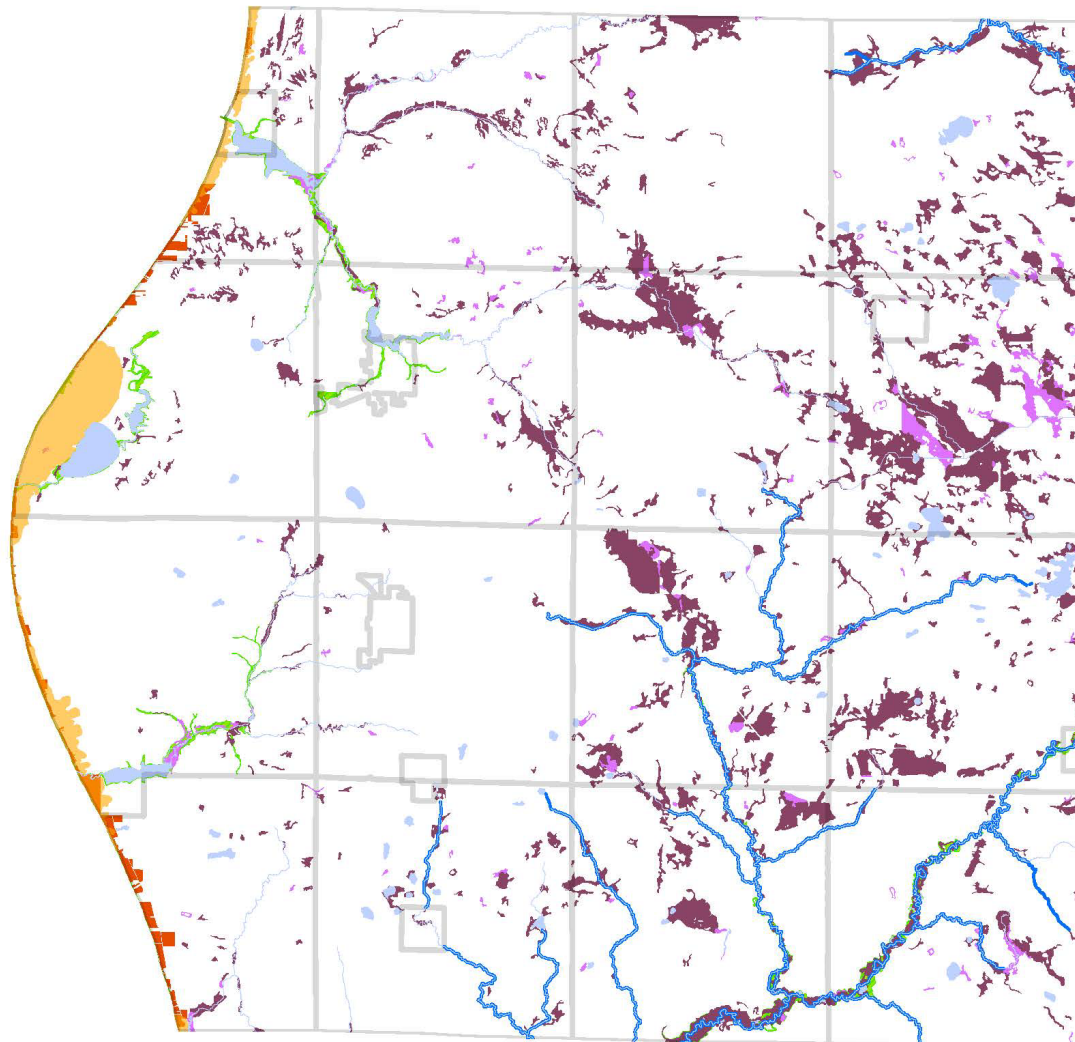
According to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), the most fragile areas of Michigan's dunes can be protected while balancing the benefits of economic development, multiple human uses, and benefits of public access through the protection of steep, erosive slopes, using alternative construction techniques to reduce the impacts of development on dunes, and protecting dune vegetation essential to dune preservation and stability.

Michigan's sand dune protection program began in 1976 in response to concern for the impacts of sand mining. In 1989, critical dune areas (CDA) were established to provide protections for those areas from all types of human uses. Presently those areas are regulated under Part 353, Sand Dunes Protection and Management, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451 as amended. The act requires a permit from the EGLE for those activities which significantly alter the physical characteristics of a CDA or for a contour change in a CDA. Oceana County has critical dune areas designated in each community along the Lake Michigan shoreline, as seen on the Sensitive Environments map on the following page.

The Sensitive Environments map also shows parcels that may be subject to the High Risk Erosion Areas program. The purpose of the High Risk Erosion Area program is to prevent structural property loss in an area of the shoreland that is determined by the EGLE, on the basis of studies and surveys, to be subject to erosion as required by Part 323 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451

as amended. High risk erosion areas are those shorelands of the Great Lakes where recession of the landward edge of active erosion has been occurring at a long-term average rate of one foot or more per year, over a minimum period of 15 years. Recession rates change over time as water levels fluctuate and coastal conditions change. The recession rate research is ongoing and often results in changes to the locations of high risk erosion areas along the shoreline. The areas identified on the following map were identified by WMSRDC using parcel information provided by the EGLE and Oceana County, and are considered to be accurate as of 2013.

Oceana County SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Natural Rivers 150ft Buffer |  Emergent Wetlands |
|  Critical Dunes |  Forested Wetlands |
|  High Risk Erosion Areas |  Flood Plain |

Map created November 2015 for general planning and informational purposes only.

Sources for GIS data and information on this map include: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Oceana County, National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), and FEMA.



c. Soils

Soils are a primary factor in determining suitability for a given development, and must be considered to ensure a sustainable balance between development and the natural environment. Soil surveys assist in determining the extent of flood prone areas, prime farmland potential, access to aquifers, erosion and sedimentation potential, ability to site septic tanks and absorption fields, and limitations for construction and foundations. In addition, soil surveys can give direct information regarding areas more or less suitable for such recreational uses as camping facilities and golf courses.

In general, Oceana County's soils were formed from the remains of the last glacial retreat. This means that in Oceana County, like much of western Michigan, sandy soils are predominant. The Soil Survey of Oceana County includes detailed soil maps with interpretation guides to help determine the suitability of particular sites for various kinds of development. It identifies 93 different soil types, which fall into 60 soil series. The Survey also includes a General Soils Map (shown on the following page), which enables a broad overview of the county's soils through identification of major soil associations based on attributes such as pattern of soils, relief, and drainage. The following descriptions summarize the prevailing characteristics of the soil associations shown on the map:

Associations 1 and 2 on the General Soils Map

Areas of Nearly Level to Very Steep, Moderately Well Drained to Excessively Drained Soils, and Areas of Dune Land.

This makes up about 6 percent of the County. According to the soil survey, "These areas are used as woodland. The erosion hazard, equipment limitation, and seedling mortality are the major management concerns. The major soils are generally unsuited to cropland and are poorly suited or unsuited to pasture. Doughtiness is the major management concern".

Associations 3 and 4 on the General Soils Map

Areas of Nearly Level to Very Steep, Excessively Drained, Moderately Well Drained, and Poorly Drained Soils.

These areas make up about 23 percent of the County. According to the soil survey, "These areas are used as woodland. The erosion hazard, equipment limitation, the hazard of windthrow, and seedling mortality are the major management concerns. Some of the soils are suitable as cropland. If cultivated crops are grown, the major management concerns are soil blowing, water erosion, seasonal doughtiness and seasonal wetness."

Associations 5, 6 and 7 on the General Soils Map

Areas of Nearly Level to Very Steep, Excessively Drained, and Well Drained Soils

These areas make up about 60 percent of the County. According to the soil survey, "These soils are suited to cropland and orchards. Water erosion, a low content of organic matter, a limited available water capacity, seasonal doughtiness, seasonal wetness, and the slope are major management concerns. If the soils are used as woodland, equipment limitation, and seedling mortality are the major management concerns. The erosion hazard is a management concern in the rolling to very steep areas."

Associations 8 and 9 on the General Soils Map

Areas of Nearly Level to Steep, Well Drained, Somewhat Poorly Drained, and Very Poorly Drained Soils.

These areas make up about 7 percent of the County. According to the soil survey, "These soils are used as cropland. Soil blowing, water erosion, seasonal wetness, tilth in the surface layer, compaction, and the slope are the major management concerns. If the soils are used as woodland, equipment limitation, the hazard of windthrow, and seedling mortality are the major management concerns."

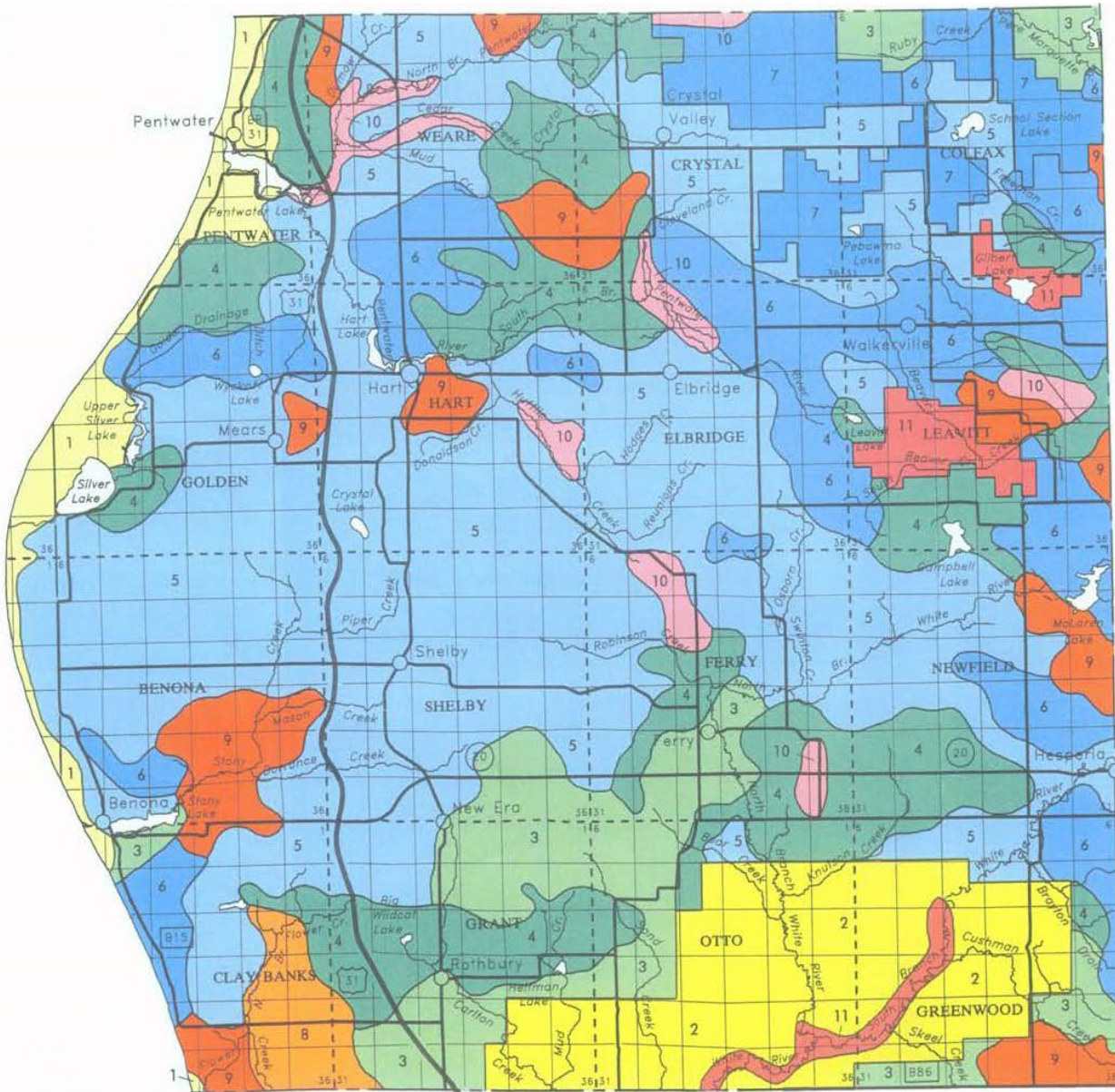
Associations 10 and 11 on the General Soils Map

Areas of Nearly Level, Poorly Drained, and Poorly Drained Soils

This combination accounts for about 4 percent of the County. According to the survey, "These soils are used as woodland. An equipment limitation, seedling mortality, and the hazard of windthrow are the major management concerns".

GENERAL SOILS MAP

Source: USDA/Mich.Dept.Agr.(compiled 1995)



SOIL LEGEND*

AREAS OF NEARLY LEVEL TO VERY STEEP, MODERATELY WELL DRAINED TO EXCESSIVELY DRAINED SOILS AND AREAS OF DUNE LAND

- 1 Epworth-Dune land-Nordhouse Association
- 2 Typic Udipsamments-Entic Haplorthods, sandy Association

AREAS OF NEARLY LEVEL TO VERY STEEP, EXCESSIVELY DRAINED, MODERATELY WELL DRAINED, AND POORLY DRAINED SOILS

- 3 Plainfield-Coloma-Grattan Association
- 4 Grattan-Covert-Granby Association

AREAS OF NEARLY LEVEL TO VERY STEEP, EXCESSIVELY DRAINED AND WELL DRAINED SOILS

- 5 Benona-Spinks-Grattan Association
- 6 Spinks-Remus-Fern Association
- 7 Entic Haplorthods, sandy-Afic Haplorthods, sandy Association

AREAS OF NEARLY LEVEL TO STEEP, WELL DRAINED, SOMEWHAT POORLY DRAINED, AND VERY POORLY DRAINED SOILS

- 8 Claybanks-Nappanee-Hoyville Association
- 9 Perrinton-Gowdy-Ithaca Association

AREAS OF NEARLY LEVEL, VERY POORLY DRAINED AND POORLY DRAINED SOIL

- 10 Houghton-Kerston-Carlsruhe Association
- 11 Medisaprists, eulc-Typic Haploquolls, sandy over loamy-Mollic Psammaquents Association

Prime Farmland

To identify the extent and location of important farmlands, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, in cooperation with other interested Federal, State, and local government organizations, has inventoried land that can be used for the production of the nation's food supply.

Prime farmland is of major importance in meeting the nation's short- and long-range needs for food and fiber. Because the supply of high-quality farmland is limited, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recognizes that responsible levels of government, as well as individuals, should encourage and facilitate the wise use of our nation's prime farmland.

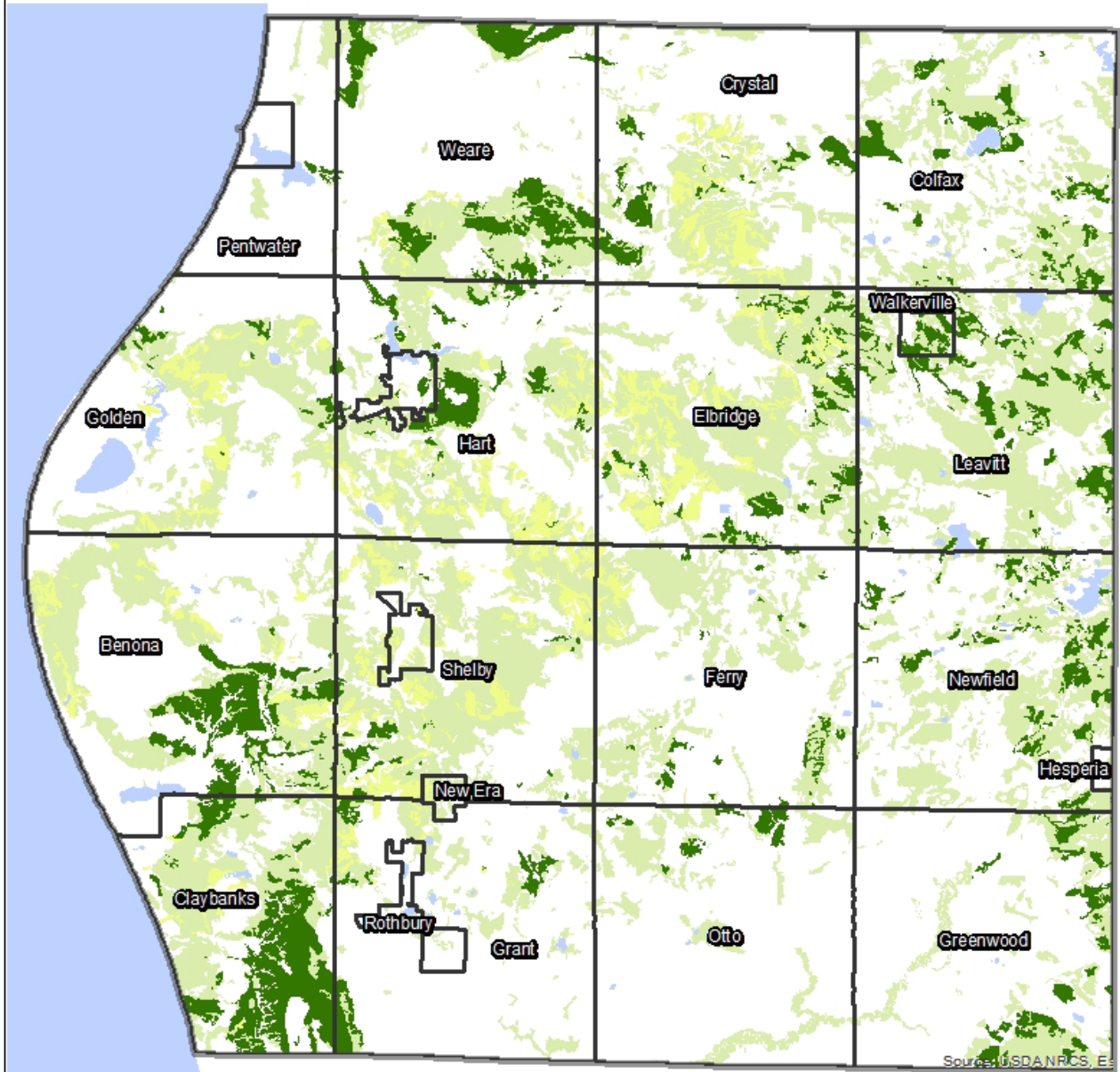
Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas. The soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for the soil to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when proper management, including water management, and acceptable farming methods are applied. In general, prime farmland has an adequate and dependable supply of moisture from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. The water supply is dependable and of adequate quality. Prime farmland is permeable to water and air. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods, and it either is not frequently flooded during the growing season or is protected from flooding. Slope ranges mainly from 0 to 6 percent. More detailed information about the criteria for prime farmland is available at the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Unique farmland is land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, such as citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, and other fruits and vegetables. It has the special combination of soil quality, growing season, moisture supply, temperature, humidity, air drainage, elevation, and aspect needed for the soil to economically produce sustainable high yields of these crops when properly managed. The water supply is dependable and of adequate quality. Nearness to markets is an additional consideration. Unique farmland is not based on national criteria. It commonly is in areas where there is a special microclimate, such as the wine country in California.

In some areas, land that does not meet the criteria for prime or unique farmland is considered *farmland of statewide importance* to produce food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. The criteria for defining and delineating farmland of statewide importance are determined by the appropriate State agencies. Generally, this land includes areas that nearly meet the requirements for prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some areas may produce as high a yield as prime farmland if conditions are favorable. Farmland of statewide importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by State law.

In some areas that are not identified as having national or statewide importance, land is considered to be farmland of local importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. This farmland is identified by the appropriate local agencies. Farmland of local importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinance.

Oceana County, Michigan Prime Farmland Soils



Soil Survey - Farmland

ClassName

- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Farmland of Unique Importance
- Not Prime Farmland

0 1.5 3 6 Miles



Map created 9/2023 by WMSRDC.
Data Source: USDA Soil Survey Geographic Databases e 10/2022

d. Surface Water

Abundant surface water features in Oceana County include about 26 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, over 60 lakes, five rivers, and numerous streams. The largest lakes are Silver Lake (690 acres), Pentwater Lake (485 acres), Stony Lake (278 acres), McLaren Lake (271 acres), and Hart Lake (240 acres). The major rivers are the North and South branches of the Pentwater River, and the North and South branches of the White River, and the Pere Marquette River.

Two river systems in Oceana County, the White and the Pere Marquette, have received the “Natural River” designation from the Department of Natural Resources under the Michigan Natural Rivers Act, PA 231 of 1970, (Part of 305 of PA 451 of 1994). The Pere Marquette is considered a “Wild and Scenic River” and the White is considered a “Country-Scenic River.” The designation is intended to identify rivers, streams, and creeks needing protection from unwise use, exploitation, and development. Each river system has a plan developed by the Natural Resources Commission which (1) provides a physical description of the river and watershed, (2) reviews values of the river and factors affecting its future nature and use, and (3) provides a plan for its management so as to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural qualities of the river area. Permits for properties within the Natural Rivers area are handled by the Department of Natural Resources.

Lakes and rivers in the county are significant assets and magnets for human activity. Primary uses of rivers are trout and salmon fishing and canoeing. Lakes are commonly graced with residential developments and frequently used for boating and fishing. These and other human activities present a slew of pollution and overuse threats, such as improperly fueled watercraft, lawn fertilizers, stormwater runoff, failed septic systems, and airborne particulate matter. Potential sources of pollution include increased erosion resulting from runoff from impervious surfaces, chemical pollution from fertilizer use, livestock, and temperature pollution from cleared lands and new roads. Polluted runoff containing toxic chemicals, phosphorus, or nitrates can lead to death of useful aquatic animals and insects. In addition, phosphorus accelerates the growth of aquatic plants and algae, and affects oxygen levels in deeper water.

One of the most important surface water protection tools is the greenbelt, or buffer strip. This is a strip of tall grasses, groundcover, shrubs, trees, and other plants adjacent to a water body. It helps to filter sediment and pollutants from surface runoff and provide shade which helps to mitigate temperature pollution. Mowed turf is not considered an effective filter or buffer strip. Greenbelts also allow space for floods to occur naturally.

e. Wetlands

Wetlands are another important aspect of the water resource discussion. They provide many important functions, such as storing and filtering stormwater runoff; helping to prevent pollution from entering rivers and lakes; recharging groundwater; and easing floods by slowing and storing floodwaters. They also provide natural scenery and necessary habitat for wildlife and are difficult to repair once damaged. Therefore, good stewardship and enforcement of regulations are needed to prevent their destruction. Wetlands can be found throughout Oceana County, with some of the largest wetland areas situated in the northeastern quadrant of the county.

According to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lake and Energy (EGLE), state wetland regulations are enabled by Part 303, Wetlands Protection, of the Natural Resources and Environmental

Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended. In accordance with Part 303, wetlands are regulated if they are any of the following:

- Connected to one of the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair.
- Located within 1,000 feet of one of the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair.
- Connected to an inland lake, pond, river, or stream.
- Located within 500 feet of an inland lake, pond, river or stream.
- Not connected to one of the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair, or an inland lake, pond, stream, or river, but are more than 5 acres in size.
- Not connected to one of the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair, or an inland lake, pond, stream, or river, and less than 5 acres in size, but the DEQ has determined that these wetlands are essential to the preservation of the state's natural resources and has notified the property owner.

The law requires that persons planning to conduct certain activities in regulated wetlands apply for and receive a permit from the state before beginning the activity. A permit is required from the state for the following:

- Deposit or permit the placing of fill material in a wetland.
- Dredge, remove, or permit the removal of soil or minerals from a wetland.
- Construct, operate, or maintain any use or development in a wetland.
- Drain surface water from a wetland.

The EGLE must determine the following before a permit can be issued:

- The permit would be in the public interest.
- The permit would be otherwise lawful.
- The permit is necessary to realize the benefits from the activity.
- No unacceptable disruption to aquatic resources would occur.
- The proposed activity is wetland dependent or no feasible and prudent alternatives exist.

There are also federal wetland regulations that may apply to areas of Oceana County. State and federal authorities overlap in coastal and certain other waters according to Section 10 of the federal Rivers and Harbors Act, and both federal and state permits are required. In accordance with the Clean Water Act, Section 404(g), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers retains federal jurisdiction over traditionally navigable waters including the Great Lakes, connecting channels, other waters connected to the Great Lakes where navigational conditions are maintained, and wetlands directly adjacent to these waters. Activities in these waters require a joint permit application which minimizes time and effort for applicants.

f. Watersheds

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, a watershed is the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off it goes into the same place. As such, watersheds can be defined on a variety of scales. For example, Oceana County lies completely within the Lake Michigan watershed; but on the county level, seven smaller watersheds drain the landscape. Those watersheds include Flower Creek, Lake Michigan, Pentwater River, Pere Marquette River, Silver Creek/Lake, Stony Creek/Lake, and White River.

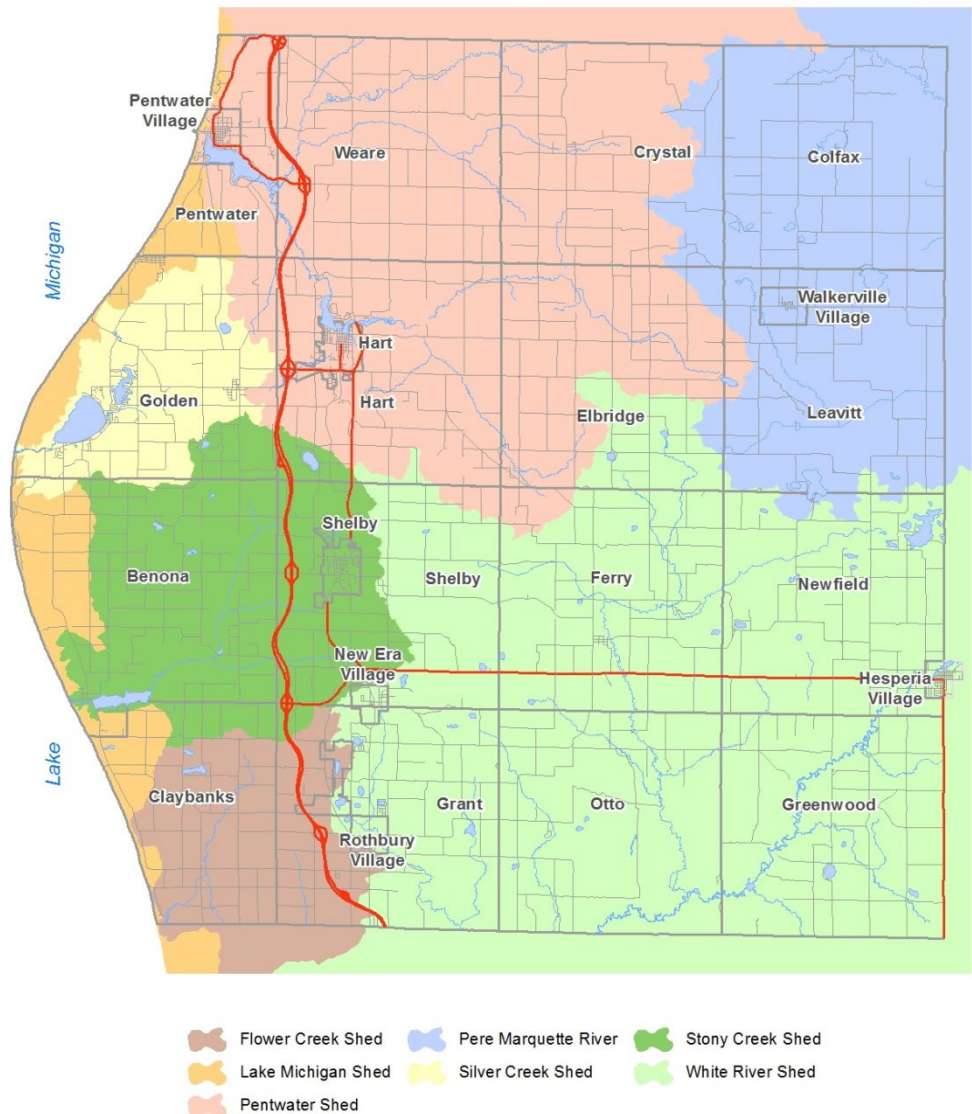
Proper resource protection and management throughout an entire watershed, rather than simply along or near certain water bodies, can help protect entire water systems from degradation. For example, consider the Stony Creek watershed, where proper practices in the Village of Shelby would help to ensure the quality of water resources “downstream” in Stony Lake. There are several ongoing efforts aimed at

managing watersheds in Oceana County, a few of which include: the White River Watershed Management Plan, adopted in 2009; the Pere Marquette River Watershed Management Plan, created in 2011; and the South Branch of the Pentwater River watershed plan, approved under the Clean Michigan Initiative.

g. Groundwater

The glacial drift in Oceana County ranges in depth from 350 to 400 feet. Wells in the area range from 30 to 70 feet, and from 150 to 180 feet. The Saginaw Bedrock Formation lies directly beneath the glacial drift in this area. This important aquifer for the central Lower Peninsula consists of sandstone with interbedded shale, limestone, coal, and gypsum. Under this lies the Michigan Formation, which could have an aquifer but it is not being used at this time.

OCEANA COUNTY Watersheds



Due to the sandiness of soils in Oceana County, and the absence of municipal water supplies in many areas, the community is very vulnerable to groundwater contamination through spillage or toxic material dumping. Thus, groundwater quality should be a major concern of citizens in Oceana County. According to the EGLE there were eight community public water supplies in 2023, all of which relied on groundwater. These supplies are listed in Chapter 4 under Section b.

In general, the potential for groundwater contamination depends on the type of soil present at a given location. For example, sand is very permeable and thus allows for a greater amount of infiltration of surface water into the groundwater supply, whereas a layer of clay is much more restrictive against contamination. Clay is very impermeable; and if near enough to the surface, it will cause water to puddle or runoff to more permeable soils. There are varying grades of permeability depending on the compaction and coarseness of the soil. Major sources of rural groundwater contamination include the following:

Waste: Land continues to be the primary medium for waste treatment in Michigan and the United States. As water passes through decomposing waste it can transmit organic and inorganic pollutants into the aquifer. Outflow from a conventional or land disposal system for municipal waste or even a home septic system can carry nitrates into the water supply. Indiscriminate dumping and junk storage also contribute to groundwater contamination.

Farms: Potential contaminants from farms include nutrients, pesticides, other toxic organics, and salinity. Phosphates and nitrates are residuals of fertilizers and have the potential to contribute to eutrophication. Nitrates can also be leached from concentrations of animal waste or decomposing plant material.

Fuel Storage: An increasingly bothersome source of groundwater contamination is the uncharted network of underground storage tanks found throughout the countryside. Some of these tanks are abandoned, no longer functional, but continue to leak water-soluble contaminants. Benzene, a suspected carcinogen, is the most damaging constituent of gasoline. By the sheer number of contamination sites, the gasoline storage system is the most troublesome contamination source in Michigan. A single drop of gasoline has the potential to contaminate an entire small aquifer.

There are few reported groundwater quality problems in Oceana County at this time. On its website, the Michigan Department Environmental Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) hosts an online application known as the Remediation Information Data Exchange (RIDE). This is used by the Remediation and Redevelopment Division (RRD) and allows for the exchange of data and information related to contaminated properties regulated under Part 201, Environmental Remediation, and Part 213, Leaking Underground Storage Tanks, of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended. In September 2023, there were listed 65 Part 201 Environmental Remediation sites and 34 Part 213 Leaking Underground Storage Tank sites in Oceana County.

The most promising methods of groundwater protection are proper land use management and zoning, pollution regulation, and acquisition. Land use management is the first step in the process of protecting groundwater resources. Defensive regulation or control must be built on the base of logic and foresight contained in a land use plan. By itself, planning does not sufficiently protect sensitive groundwater areas but does provide the basis for land development control which can assist groundwater protection.

Conventional zoning provides a mechanism by which to regulate new land development but does not apply to the existing non-conforming or potentially hazardous uses. Specialized zoning, which promotes conditional use of land only after strict assurance has been given that the groundwater resources will not be harmed, requires locating dangerous developments in a given area that provides greater protection of the groundwater. For instance, a landfill would have to be located on a thick layer of highly impermeable clay instead of a much less costly parcel composed of sandy loam. Pollution regulation is another alternative for protecting groundwater resources and recharge areas. This procedure also requires accurate and dependable data in order to be defensible.

Another alternative for prevention of groundwater contamination is the acquisition of land through the use of transfer and/or purchase of development rights. Transfer of development rights involves convincing landowners not to develop in sensitive areas through incentives such as allowing developers to increase the density of other previously developed areas, or to transfer the proposed construction to other less sensitive parcels which have similar characteristics and potential. Through an administered market, those who have the right to develop (or restrict development, most notably the government) must reimburse

those landowners whom they are attempting to restrict. The former grants private rights to use certain land attributes while leaving other rights in public lands. Purchase of development rights entails obtaining certain land rights from property owners such as erosion rights, which would then permit the restriction of any practice on the property that would contribute to erosion. This is a technique which might be applicable to forest areas and other sensitive regions. Some agricultural landowners have already successfully implemented this strategy in Oceana County.

PFAS

In recent years, Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have garnered increasing attention. According to the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART), these are a large group of manmade chemicals that are resistant to heat, water, and oil. PFAS have been classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an emerging contaminant on the national landscape. For decades, they have been used in many industrial applications and consumer products such as carpeting, waterproof clothing, upholstery, food paper wrappings, personal care products, fire-fighting foams, and metal plating. They are still used today. PFAS have been found at low levels both in the environment and in blood samples of the general U.S. population.

These chemicals are persistent, which means they do not break down in the environment. They also bioaccumulate, meaning the amount builds up over time in the blood and organs. Studies in animals who were exposed to PFAS found links between the chemicals and increased cholesterol, changes in the body's hormones and immune system, decreased fertility, and increased risk of certain cancers. Studies in which animals were given high levels of PFAS showed effects including low birth weight, delayed puberty onset, elevated cholesterol levels, and reduced immunologic responses to vaccination. Animal studies help scientists understand what could happen in people.

PFAS can get into drinking water when products or wastes containing them are disposed of, used or spilled onto the ground or into lakes and rivers. PFAS move easily through the ground, getting into groundwater that is used for some water supplies or for private drinking water wells. When released into lakes or rivers used as sources of drinking water, they can get into drinking water supplies. PFAS released by facilities into the air can also end up in rivers and lakes used for drinking water.

h. Forests

Forested natural areas provide numerous benefits associated with wildlife, recreation, water quality, clean air, wild foods, and scenic views. Tree canopies in urban settings can provide cooler temperatures. Trees provide creeks and streams with the shade necessary to protect water quality by keeping them cool as well. In general, communities that protect and maintain large trees in commercial corridors and town centers offer visitors and residents a unique and attractive sense of place.

Forests span more land area than any other type of land cover in Oceana County. According to 2011 land cover data created by the Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium (MRLC), nearly 50% of the landscape is covered by a combination of deciduous forests, evergreen forests, and woody wetlands. Deciduous forests are the most common type, covering 30.7% of the county. The largest contiguous area of deciduous forest spreads across Grant, Otto, and Greenwood townships.

Much of Oceana County's forestland is rather insulated from development due to ownership of those areas by state and federal entities. The West Michigan Blueways & Greenways Plan: Phase II (WMSRDC, 2012) estimates that over 51,000 acres of land is owned by federal agencies, and over 8,000 acres is

owned by the state. Federal land ownership is fairly common within the management boundaries of the Huron-Manistee National Forests, which are found in northern, eastern, and southern portions of the county. Large areas of state-owned lands are primarily located in Golden and Pentwater townships, including Silver Lake and Charles Mears state parks and the Pentwater River State Game Area.

i. Climate

Significant climatic variations occur within Oceana County as a result of differences in topography and proximity to Lake Michigan. On average, locations closer to Lake Michigan experience lower maximum temperatures in the summer, higher maximum temperatures in the winter, and greater amounts of annual snowfall. Data observed between 1981 and 2010 at the City of Hart (about 6 miles from Lake Michigan) and at the Village of Hesperia (about 25 miles from Lake Michigan) are presented throughout this section to illustrate this phenomenon.

Oceana County enjoys a relatively stable and comfortable climate year-round, thanks to the moderating influence of nearby Lake Michigan. The average winter (December through February) temperature is 25.1 degrees Fahrenheit at Hart and 24.4 degrees at Hesperia. The average daily minimum temperatures were 18.3 degrees at Hart and 16.3 degrees at Hesperia. In summer (June through August), the average temperatures are 67.0 degrees at Hart and 67.1 degrees at Hesperia, while the average daily maximum temperatures are 77.7 degrees at Hart and 79.7 degrees at Hesperia.

The Oceana County Soil Survey of 1996 states that record high temperatures in the county include 104 degrees at Hart and 100 degrees at Hesperia; while the record low is -35 degrees at both Hart and Hesperia. From 1981 to 2010, Hart averaged 2 days with a high temperature of 90 degrees or more and 6 days with a minimum temperature of 0 degrees or less. Hesperia averaged 6 days with a high temperature of 90 degrees or more and 11 days with a minimum temperature of 0 degrees or less.

Average annual and monthly precipitation figures for Hart and Hesperia are shown in the table below. Typically, over half of the total precipitation falls in April through September. The growing season for most crops falls within this period. The heaviest 1-day rainfalls during the 30-year period occurred on September 11, 1986: 5.43 inches at Hart and 6.56 inches at Hesperia. Thunderstorms occur between 30 and 34 days each year, mostly in June, July, or August. The greatest 1-day snowfalls during the period were 15.0 inches at Hart and 12.3 inches at Hesperia. The greatest monthly snowfalls were 88.7 inches at Hart in December 2008 and 78.9 inches at Hesperia in December 2008. The greatest annual snowfalls were 201.4 inches at Hart in 2008 and 144.4 inches at Hesperia in 2008. The least annual snowfalls were 27.6 inches at Hart in 1998 and 30.0 inches at Hesperia in 1993.

CLIMATE AVERAGES, 1981-2010													
HART	Annual	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Daily Max (°F)	55.4	29.4	32.4	41.6	54.8	66.1	75.3	80.0	77.8	70.5	57.7	45.2	33.8
Daily Min (°F)	37.1	16.3	17.2	23.5	34.3	43.6	53.5	58.3	57.4	49.7	38.9	30.6	21.5
Precip (in.)	36.75	2.48	1.88	2.24	2.91	3.62	3.50	3.08	3.48	3.80	3.61	3.45	2.71
Snow (in.)	81.6	26.9	18.3	6.7	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6	23.5
HESPERIA													
Daily Max (°F)	56.9	30.4	33.4	43.4	57.0	67.9	77.4	81.7	80.1	72.3	59.2	46.4	34.0
Daily Min (°F)	35.0	14.3	15.0	21.4	32.6	41.9	51.6	56.2	55.6	46.8	36.6	28.6	19.7
Precip (in.)	35.02	2.11	1.46	2.30	2.98	3.67	3.33	2.52	3.59	3.72	3.74	3.07	2.53
Snow (in.)	71.1	20.8	12.6	7.9	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	5.6	22.2

Source: Michigan State Climatologist's Office

In this space, it is relevant to mention changing climate and weather patterns. The changing climate presents complicated, intertwined, and evolving implications for numerous aspects of Oceana County. According to the Michigan Sea Grant website, Great Lakes residents must understand how climate change will affect their region. Specific projections vary, but scientists predict that the regional climate of the Great Lakes basin will be on average warmer, wetter, and less icy by the end of the century. According to the Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments (GLISA), some projections for the coming century include:

- Increases in average air temperatures by 3.6 to 11.2°F (2 to 6.2°C)
- More intense storms, leading to more damage from winds and flooding
- Less lake ice, leaving more water exposed to evaporate and become lake-effect rain or snow
- Larger and more severe algal blooms
- Fluctuating lake levels
- Greater displacement of native aquatic and terrestrial species by more adaptable or warmer-weather species
- More frequent and severe droughts
- Longer growing season for crops, tempered by crop damage from heat, drought, and pests
- Increased risk of illness and death from heat waves and pest-borne diseases
- Interruptions to local economies dependent on winter tourism

j. Natural Hazards

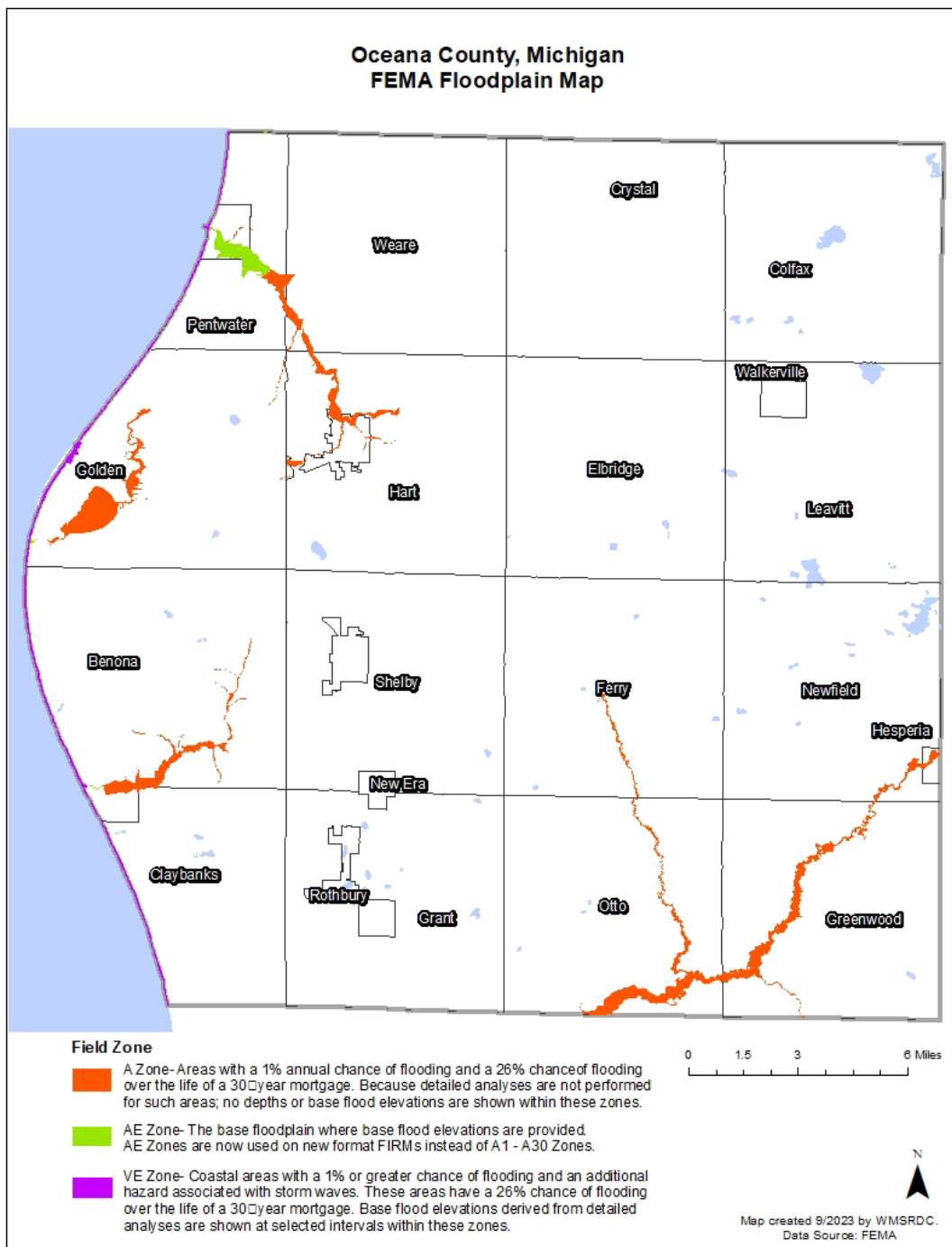
Natural hazards are weather-related events and natural earth processes that can impact lives, property, infrastructure, natural resources, and other significant assets. Common natural hazards in Oceana County include floods, thunderstorms, and severe winter weather. Recognition of, and planning for, such hazards will reduce long-term costs and enhance the community’s resilience long into the future. Land use planning practices such as zoning, regulatory programs, and building code requirements can mitigate the impacts from hazards by enabling local officials to reconcile new growth and development in areas that are subject to the impacts of natural hazards.

The Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan (WMSRDC, 2023) is an effort to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from natural, technological, and human-induced hazards. It includes detailed descriptions of 31 individual hazards; historical frequencies of occurrence; and mitigation tools and techniques. The plan is intended to guide local planning decisions to ensure that development does not occur in hazardous areas or is at least designed to withstand the impacts of hazards. The plan, which is maintained by the Oceana County Emergency Management office and overseen by the county’s Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), concludes that the county is most vulnerable to winter storms, severe winds, wildfires, and extreme temperatures. These and other significant natural hazard risks identified in the plan are listed in the table below.

SIGNIFICANT NATURAL HAZARDS in OCEANA COUNTY	
Drought	A water shortage caused by a deficiency of rainfall, generally lasting for an extended period of time.
Extreme Temperatures	Prolonged periods of very high or very low temperatures, often accompanied by other extreme meteorological conditions.
Flooding	The overflowing of rivers, streams, drains and lakes due to excessive rainfall, rapid snowmelt or ice.
Great Lakes Shoreline	High or low water levels that cause flooding or erosion, and other threatening shoreline conditions, including storm surges, rip currents, and shoreline recession.
Severe Winds	Non-tornadic winds of 58 miles per hour or greater.
Wildfire	An uncontrolled fire in grass lands, brush lands, or forested areas.
Winter Storms	Severe winter weather hazards include snowstorms, blizzards, and ice and sleet storms.

Source: Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2023

The following map shows floodplains identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Flood insurance would be required for a structure situated within an identified floodplain; however, flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) may only be obtained if the community where it is located participates in the NFIP. In addition, if a community is participating in the NFIP, any resident within that community is eligible to obtain flood insurance through the NFIP, regardless of whether or not it is located within a floodplain. As of September 2023, there were nine communities in Oceana County participating in the NFIP: City of Hart; villages of Hesperia and Pentwater; and townships of Benona, Claybanks, Ferry, Golden, Newfield, and Pentwater. The townships of Greenwood, Hart, Otto, and Weare have “special flood hazard areas” identified but were not participating in the program. In addition, there are developed areas along the Pere Marquette River in Colfax Township that are known to be flood prone.



Invasive Species

Invasive species is another category of natural hazard which can have wide ranging impacts, from nuisance to disruptive, to devastating. Invasive species are defined in the Michigan Hazard Analysis as, “A species that has been introduced by human action to a location where it did not previously occur naturally, becomes capable of establishing a breeding population in the new location without further intervention by humans, and becomes a pest by threatening the local biodiversity and causing human health impacts, significant economic costs, and/or ecological effects.”

According to the Oceana Conservation District, the West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area that consists of 7 West Michigan counties including Oceana County prioritizes work based on [Michigan's current watch list](#). In Oceana County, work in recent years has been focused on the following species:

Terrestrial Plants

Phragmites
Japanese knotweed
Oriental bittersweet
Garlic mustard
Beech bark disease
Oak wilt

Aquatic Plants

European frogbit

Forest Pests

Hemlock woolly adelgid

Future work is anticipated to target Tree of Heaven, the host plant of the Spotted Lanternfly that has now been detected in southern Michigan and would have devastating impacts on local agricultural land if and when it is observed in Oceana County.

Of note, although many other invasive species such as autumn olive, curly pondweed, European milfoil are well established and problematic in Oceana County, it is difficult to find grant funding to support management due to the extent of the problem. The State prioritizes funding for projects that are manageable and deemed eradicable if detected early enough. Lake associations and private landowners are still encouraged to manage invasives on their own properties.

The Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023) provides some perspective on how changing climate patterns will influence the spread of invasive species. According to the plan, different patterns of wildlife have already been a concern as a result of the lengthening average growing season in Michigan. Species that had previously been found only in warmer areas to the south have started to appear in Michigan. Although the definition of invasive species specifically refers to human species introduction, to distinguish these patterns from naturally occurring ones, species transported by human action can be more likely to survive (and thus to become invasive) as climatic changes occur.

The following example of how climate change can impact the spread of autumn olive, an invasive species found in Michigan, comes from the Nature Conservancy website, www.nature.org:

As the climate warms, resilient invasive species like Autumn olive can gain even more of a foothold over native plants. This plant takes advantage of changing seasons, leafing out early before native plants and keeping its foliage deep into the fall. By getting a head start, autumn olive can easily shade out other species. Autumn olive can also use fire to its advantage. In both woodland and grassland areas, autumn olive can gain a foothold by sprouting faster than native plants after natural and human-managed fires. As climate change dries out more regions and enhances the risk of fire, hardy invasive plants like autumn olive could benefit.

Environment Summary

- The county’s physical geography, highlighted by coastal sand dunes along Lake Michigan, is characterized by a rolling landscape created by past glaciation.
- About 70% of the county’s soils are suited to cropland or orchards.
- Water features provide attractive locations for residential development and outdoor recreation.
- Most of the county is dependent upon groundwater. Due to the sandiness of local soils, groundwater resources are potentially vulnerable to contamination.
- About half of the county is covered by forestland, much of which is owned by state and federal entities.
- Lake Michigan has a significant impact on the local climate.
- The county is exposed to many natural hazards, especially winter storms, severe winds, wildfires, invasive species, extreme temperatures, drought, and flooding. Climate change may impact the frequency and potentially increase the severity of these hazards.

Public Comment Highlights

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lake Michigan shoreline & beaches - Natural beauty & scenery - Waterways - Forests - Dunes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water quality, especially Silver Lake - PFAS - Environmental protection - Climate change
ASPIRATIONS & RESULTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preserve farmland, shoreline & forests - Protect natural resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable agriculture - Clean water

Visions for Environment

- Development and use of sand dunes is thoughtfully managed to ensure their protection.
- Lakes and rivers are attractive places to live and recreate.
- Groundwater is a prized and protected resource for both drinking and irrigation.
- Management of forestlands is coordinated between local, state, and federal entities.
- Consideration of natural hazards is incorporated into land use and zoning practices to ensure the development of resilient communities and public infrastructure.
- Mineral extraction and other human activities are practiced carefully to minimize the potential impacts on the environment and the population.

CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure includes the basic physical structures and facilities needed for the operation of a society or enterprise. This chapter provides an overview of infrastructure related to transportation, municipal water and sewer, telecommunications, power, and oil and gas in Oceana County. According to the Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan, “Infrastructure Failure” is the third ranked hazard facing the county, only behind “Winter Storms” and “Severe Winds.”

a. Transportation

The transportation system is the physical and operational infrastructure which accomplishes the movement of people and goods. Transportation systems are broken into subsystems known as modes, such as automobile, rail, air, waterborne, etc.

Automobile is the primary mode of transportation in Oceana County. There were 1,231 miles of public roads in the county and 101 bridges. Oceana County has one U.S. highway route, US-31, and two state trunkline highways, M-20 and M-120. There are also two US-31 business routes designed to facilitate travel into commercial and industrial areas. US-31 is the main north-south corridor, linking Oceana County with other areas along Lake Michigan. M-20 runs east-west through the southern part of the county and connects US-31 to a number of north-south routes east of the county. M-120 proceeds along the southeastern border of the county, connecting the Village of Hesperia with the Muskegon area. The aforementioned highways generally serve the southern and western areas of the county. There are no highways or straight routes north of M-20 and east of Oceana Drive.

COUNTY ROADWAYS - 2021 -	Roadway Miles	% of Total Miles	% of Traffic in 2021
State Trunkline	69.2	8.0%	52.0%
County Primary	286.0	22.3%	27.5%
County Local	809.0	52.1%	4.7%
City Major	23.4	5.3%	12.5%
City Local	43.2	12.3%	3.3%
Total Public Roads	1,230.8		

Source: Michigan Transportation Management Council Dashboard

Oceana County’s economy is dependent upon roadways. Industrial establishments, which typically require year-round access to major transportation routes, are generally aligned near US-31 and Oceana Drive (Business Route 31). Agricultural operations require roads in less populated and less traveled areas to transport goods to market. Those roads typically experience low average annual traffic volumes with increased use and tremendous stress from agricultural loads and equipment during certain times of the year. Lastly, commerce and tourism rely on well-maintained, safe vehicle routes to usher in patrons and visitors. These roads can easily become congested in summer months due to the typical influx of tourists to the area.

In 2021-2022 there were 360 miles of federal aid eligible roads in Oceana County. The condition of those roads is monitored by the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC). According to TAMC data, about a third of Oceana County’s roads are in poor condition. The proportion of

CONDITION of FEDERAL-AID PAVED ROADS			
Oceana County	2016-17	2018-19	2021-22
Good	19.7%	21.4%	25.8%
Fair	40.1%	40.1%	41.7%
Poor	40.3%	38.6%	32.5%

Source: Michigan Transportation Management Council Dashboard

“poor” roads has declined in recent years, while the proportion of “good” roads has increased. According to the rating scale used by TAMC to assess pavement conditions, a “poor” rating indicates that a road is failing and would require reconditioning or complete reconstruction.

Local roads are in a similar, if not worse, overall condition. The cost of needed repairs and maintenance often exceeds county and local government budgets. Simple capital preventative maintenance on a structurally sound roadway can be much less expensive over the long-term than rehabilitation or reconstruction of a structurally failed roadway. Still, many roads go unmaintained or under-maintained annually, leading to additional vulnerability to the impacts of traffic loads and natural forces.

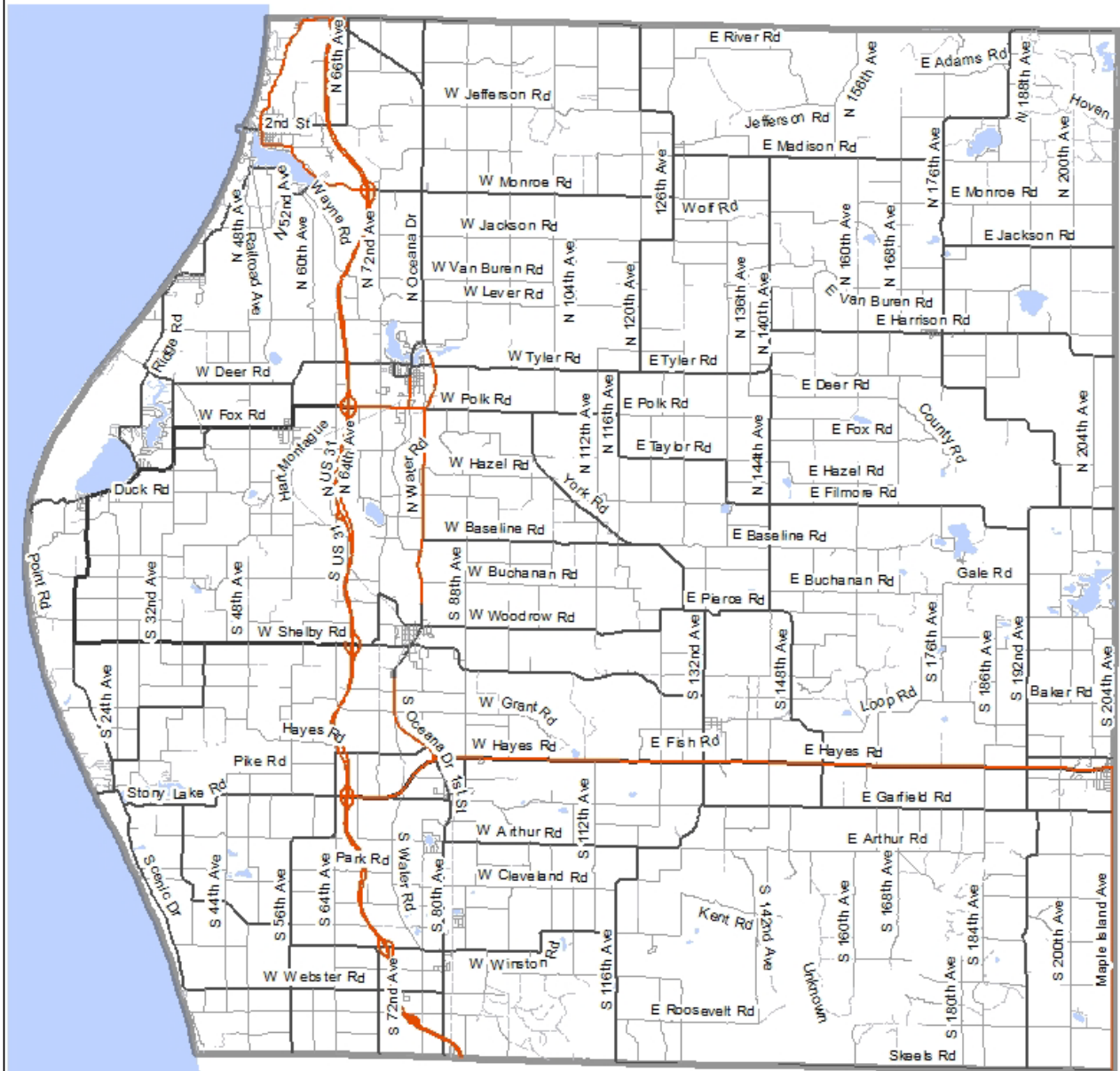
The Oceana County Council on Aging (OCCOA) provides transportation within Oceana County for all seniors through the bus transportation program. The program is available to all residents of the County, with seniors and the handicapped receiving first priority in order to receive support services, reduce isolation, and promote independent living. The OCCOA also provides volunteer driving transportation for seniors who need transportation to and from medical appointments to outside of Oceana County.

The Oceana County Airport has a 3,500 foot asphalt runway, self-serve fuel, hangars, parking, courtesy car, lobby, pilots lounge, and conference room. Commercial air transport is available at Muskegon County Airport in Muskegon and Mason County Airport in Ludington.

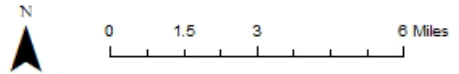
Recreational watercraft access to Lake Michigan is available through Pentwater Lake and Benona Township Park at Stony Lake. The nearest deep-water ports are in Muskegon and Ludington. These harbors both provide for commercial shipping, recreational boating access to Lake Michigan, and car ferry services to Wisconsin.

There are no longer any railroads in Oceana County. The nearest active rails include the Michigan Shore Railroad short line from Muskegon to Fremont, and the Marquette Rail freight line that runs between Grand Rapids (Kent County) and Manistee (Manistee County). The rail runs north and south between Grand Rapids and Baldwin (Lake County), and then east and west between Baldwin and Walhalla in Mason County. From there, separate spurs connect to Ludington and Manistee. The nearest passenger rail services are available through Amtrak stations in Holland and Grand Rapids.

Oceana County, Michigan Road Network



- State Road
- Minor Arterials
- Major & Minor Collectors
- Local Road
- Uncertified



Map created 9/2023 by WMSRDC.
Data Source: Michigan Geographic Framework and MDOT

b. Municipal Water and Sewer

The availability of municipal water and sewer plays a major role in the direction of development. Although development can occur in a rural area without benefit of these services, there are certain types of land use that cannot be put in place without them. Examples may include fast-food restaurants, large retail or industrial developments, and high-density residential complexes or hotels. In an age when economic well-being is unevenly distributed, municipal water and sewer becomes the kind of development that can either encourage or inhibit economic development.

Due to the presence of certain soil types and high-water tables in parts of Oceana County, the treatment of sewage, or lack thereof, can have serious human health implications on potable groundwater and surface water bodies. For example, the Silver Lake watershed is under increased scrutiny for excessive nutrient loading into Silver Lake which may come from homes, campgrounds, businesses, and/or farms. The Silver Lake area may need a municipal wastewater treatment facility in the future, to accommodate residential and commercial growth as well as significant seasonal population fluctuations. Unfortunately, public water and sewer systems provide service to relatively limited geographic areas and introducing service in new areas can be difficult and financially prohibitive. In areas that are experiencing growth but do not have public water and sewer infrastructure, it may be wise to recommend that lot sizes be large enough to permit both water wells and on-site septic systems; at least until it becomes financially and politically feasible to introduce a municipal infrastructure system.

Public wastewater treatment systems are available in the City of Hart and the villages of Hesperia, New Era, Pentwater, Shelby, and Walkerville. Public water systems are available in the City of Hart and the villages of Pentwater, Shelby, and Hesperia. In addition, there are four other “community public water supplies” in the county: Golden Pond Estates (Golden Township), Greenlawn Mobile Home Court (Village of Rothbury), Hylander Valley (Weare Township), and Oceana Acres (Hart Township).

The Michigan Wellhead Protection Program (WHPP) of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality assists local communities utilizing groundwater for their municipal drinking water supply systems in protecting their water source. A WHPP minimizes the potential for contamination by identifying and protecting the area that contributes water to municipal water supply wells and avoids costly groundwater clean-ups. In Michigan, wellhead protection is voluntary and implemented at the local level through the coordination of activities by local, county, regional, and state agencies. According to the Michigan GIS Open Data website, wellhead protection areas in Oceana County are found in the City of Hart; the villages of New Era, Pentwater, Rothbury, Shelby, and Walkerville; and the townships of Colfax, Elbridge, Leavitt, Grant, Hart, Pentwater, Shelby, and Weare. A wellhead protection area as exists in the Village of Hesperia, but on the Newaygo County side.

c. Telecommunications

Telecommunication is communication over a distance by cable, telegraph, telephone, or broadcasting. Oceana County is well equipped with telephone service and several cellular telephone services are available in the county. However, cellular service reception in certain areas, such as the Lake Michigan shoreline, is limited by terrain. The primary telephone service provider is Frontier Communications.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fact that internet service is not evenly distributed throughout Oceana County. Although progress has been made to expand availability in recent years, additional fiber optic lines are needed to enhance high-speed internet service to all areas of the county.

The MPSC has partnered with Connected Nation Michigan to develop an interactive statewide broadband availability map and to promote increased residential and business broadband access and adoption throughout Michigan. The map is open to the public and may be accessed at the following web address or by conducting an internet search for “Michigan broadband map.”

<https://gis.connectednation.org/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=98c4d702d00040c9be673787bfeb8162>

d. Power

Oceana County is well served with electric power. Most of the electric power in the county is provided by Great Lakes Energy or Consumers Energy. The City of Hart operates the Hart Hydroelectric Dam, which provides electricity to residents of that area. There are several electric transmission lines that traverse the county. According to the Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan, four transmission lines owned by ITC pass through Oceana County between the Ludington Pumped Storage Plant and the Midwest grid system. All four pass through the Walkerville Area Fire and Rescue protection area. In addition, the main Wolverine Power transmission line that powers the Oceana County Great Lakes Energy system comes to the Walkerville Substation from the northeast. This line connects to a substation north of Hart, a substation in Golden Township, and then passes into Muskegon County.

e. Oil and Gas

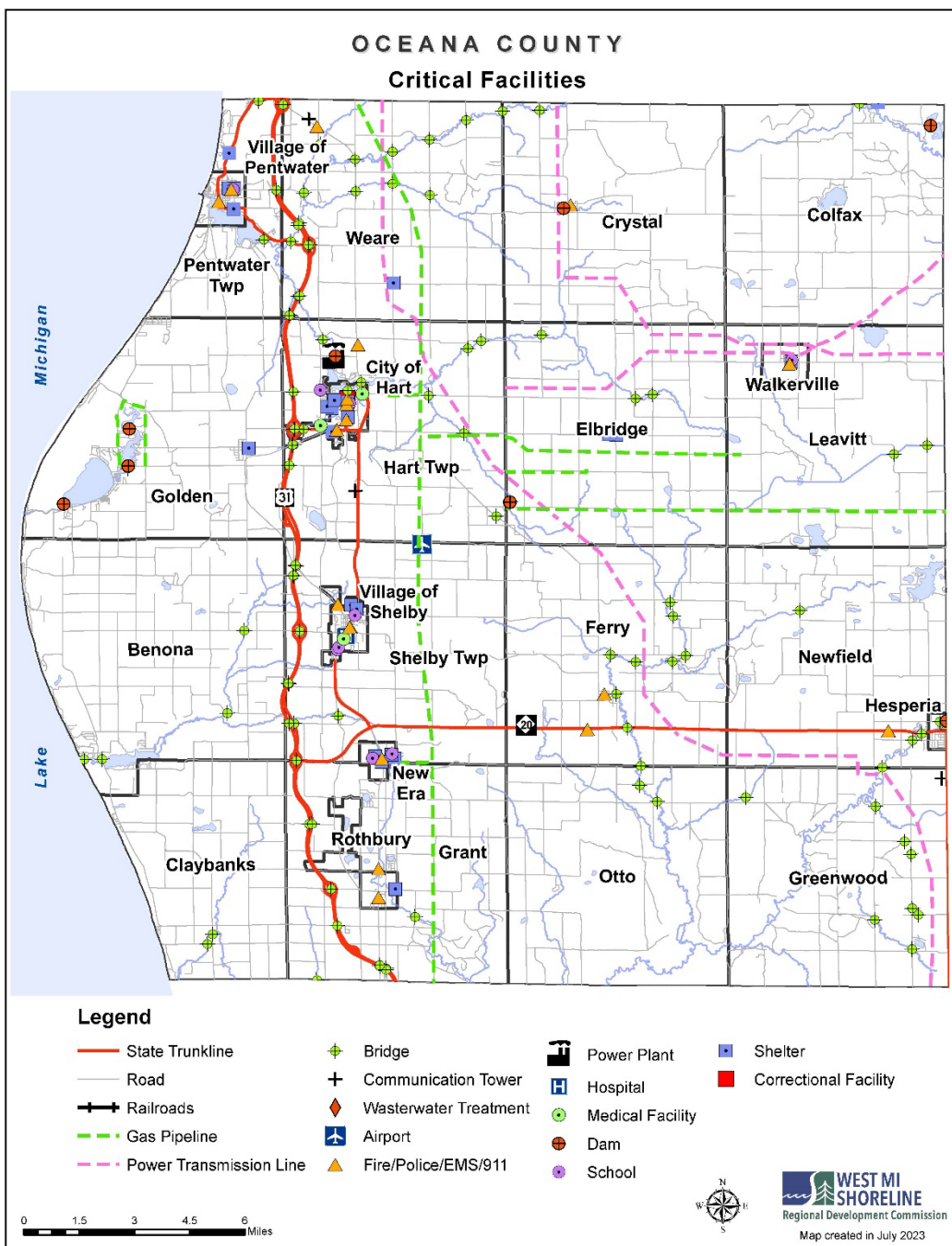
In Oceana County, there are two primary aspects of oil and gas infrastructure: provision of heating fuel, and extraction and transmission of natural resources. The most common source of heating fuel in the county is LP gas, followed by natural gas. A major DTE natural gas transmission line runs through Oceana County. According to the Michigan Public Service Commission, DTE is the gas utility for the following communities: City of Hart; villages of Hesperia, New Era, Pentwater, Rothbury, and Walkerville; and townships of Claybanks, Colfax, Crystal, Elbridge, Ferry, Grant, Greenwood, Leavitt, Newfield, Otto, Pentwater, Shelby, and Weare. There are also a few small-scale propane distribution systems throughout the county, such as the one that serves residences of the Silver Lake area in Golden Township. AmeriGas Eagle Propane is the only gas utility provider listed in Shelby and Golden townships.

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) Oil, Gas, and Minerals Division (OGMD) hosts an interactive online map called GeoWebFace. Users can view information about non-renewable geological resource activities regulated under: Part 615 "Oil and Gas Rules and Regulations", Part 625 "Mineral Wells", Part 631 "Mine Reclamation", Part 632 "Nonferrous Metallic Mining", Part 635 "Coal Mines", and Part 637 "Sand Dune Mining". Also available for download are oil and gas datasets such as Driller's Logs, Permit Well Files, and RasterLogs for selected wells or by the county. According to 2023 EGLE open data, there were 1,624 oil and gas test wells in Oceana County. While a vast majority of these wells were inactive or capped, just two of them were “active” or “producing.” In addition, 118 wells are known to have had detectable levels of hydrogen sulfide in the following townships: Benona (12), Claybanks (33), Colfax (1), Crystal (2), Elbridge (5), Ferry (6), Golden (3), Grant (2), Hart (3) Otto (1), Pentwater (14), Shelby (1), and Weare (36). It is important to note that any type of oil or gas well, even one that has been capped, is capable of leaking dangerous levels of hydrogen sulfide.

Sour gas is any gas that contains significant amounts of hydrogen sulfide. Some wells producing sour gas in the county are connected to a pipeline to processing facilities to the north in Manistee County. There

is a sour gas pipeline that runs north through Hart and Weare townships, with possible sour gas gathering lines in Elbridge and Leavitt townships. According to local knowledge of the system, there is a collector line from a well in Hart Township, and collector lines in the Claybanks Township area that go all the way to the compressor Facility in Elbridge Township. From Elbridge, a high-pressure line (1,200 psi) runs north into Manistee County. It is possible that other small sour gas pipelines exist within the county; however their location and current status are unknown.

It is also worth noting that there have been oil and gas wells involved in hydraulic fracturing operations in Oceana County. This method, also known as fracking, is used for the extraction of natural gas and petroleum products. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), hydraulic fracturing involves a five-step process which may have impacts on groundwater resources. In 2016, EPA released the final report, "Hydraulic Fracturing for Oil and Gas: Impacts from the Hydraulic Fracturing Water Cycle on Drinking Water Resources." More information is available at <https://www.epa.gov/hfstudy>.



Infrastructure Summary

- The movement of people and goods throughout the county is heavily dependent upon vehicular transportation and can be negatively impacted by the condition of the road network.
- Although road conditions in the county have been rated among the worst in the state, conditions have improved in recent years.
- Railroads, commercial air, and commercial sea modes of transportation must all be accessed beyond the borders of Oceana County.
- Fiberoptic high-speed Internet and cell phone are not available countywide.
- Utilities and municipal water and sewer services are commonly accessible in developed areas, primarily along Oceana Drive and in Hesperia.
- There is a small network of oil and gas wells and transmission pipelines in the county.

Public Comment Highlights

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recent road repairs - US 31 corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roads - Broadband and cell phone service - Funding
ASPIRATIONS & RESULTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Countywide broadband availability - Infrastructure to support growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dirt roads paved

Visions for Infrastructure

- Infrastructure improvements are designed to be sustainable and resilient to natural forces.
- Roadway conditions are no longer among the worst in the state.
- A direct route connects the northeast quadrant of the county to other areas of the county.
- A digital inventory of public infrastructure within the county.
- Established communities have dependable municipal water and sewer systems.
- High-speed Internet services are available and affordable countywide.
- Alternative energy regulations are standardized, and few barriers to development of alternative energy resources exist.
- Additional traffic controls to accommodate seasonal increases and enhance safety.

CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA), economic development creates the conditions for economic growth and improved quality of life by expanding the capacity of individuals, firms, and communities to maximize the use of their talents and skills to support innovation, lower transaction costs, and responsibly produce and trade valuable goods and services.

Economic development in Oceana County is supported by the Oceana County Economic Alliance (OCEA). Its mission is to create a diverse economic environment by strengthening talent, leveraging resources, and supporting the retention, expansion, attraction, and creation of Oceana County businesses.

a. Economy

Agriculture and tourism are the cornerstones of Oceana County's economy and identity. Even so, the Manufacturing sector provides more jobs in the county than any other industry. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Manufacturing accounted for nearly one out of every four jobs in Oceana County in 2022. Manufacturing aside, the next three top employment industries offer annual wages below the county average: Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting; Accommodation and Food Services; and Retail Trade. One explanation for this is the seasonal nature of those sectors. Wages from seasonal enterprises converted to annual wages will naturally be low. Even so, it is no coincidence that it is a top community priority to increase the number of well-paying employment opportunities in the county. It is believed that doing so will make the county more attractive to families and young professionals, help retain more of the county's youth, and provide an economy that is more resilient during adverse conditions, such as an economic recession or natural disaster.

Annual Industry Distribution of Jobs and Average Wage in 2022	% of Jobs in County	Annual Avg. Wage Per Job
Oceana County	100.0%	\$42,828
Agri., forestry, hunting	7.9%	\$39,158
Mining	0.7%	\$54,366
Construction	4.8%	\$45,036
Manufacturing	24.3%	\$52,832
Wholesale trade	3.8%	\$58,427
Retail trade	12.5%	\$30,060
Transportation, warehousing	2.3%	\$64,355
Utilities	N/A	N/A
Information	N/A	N/A
Finance and Insurance	1.6%	\$52,264
Real Estate, rental, leasing	0.8%	\$33,573
Professional, technical services	2.1%	\$64,382
Mgmt. of companies, enterprises	N/A	N/A
Administrative, waste services	0.8%	\$29,797
Educational services	6.8%	\$45,545
Health care, social assistance	N/A	N/A
Arts, entertainment, recreation	1.6%	\$28,649
Accommodation and food services	12.0%	\$20,672
Other services, exc. public admin.	2.1%	\$28,887
Public administration	7.9%	\$43,559

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics via StatsAmerica.org

LARGEST EMPLOYERS IN OCEANA COUNTY

Employer Name	Business Type	Total Employed
Peterson Farms	Food Services	800
Gray & Company (Seneca Farms)	Manufacturer	276
GHSP - Hart	Manufacturer	262
Hometown Pharmacy	Healthcare	200
Great Lakes Packing	Manufacturer	200
Arbre Farms	Food Services	140
Michigan Freeze Pack Company	Manufacturer	125
Trinity Health Shelby Hospital	Healthcare	100
Country Dairy, Incorporated	Manufacturer	100
Double JJ Resort	Entertainment	100
	Total	2,303

Source: Oceana County Economic Alliance; Date unknown

According to the Measuring Distress tool on statsamerica.org, the 24-month average unemployment rate in Oceana County for the period ending August 2023 was 6.34% compared to 9.75% in March 2015. As of August 2023, Oceana County had an unemployment rate of 4.9% according to the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, & Budget. While unemployment percentages appear to be improving, labor force statistics tell a slightly different story. According to US Bureau of Labor Statistics data shown in the accompanying table, the labor force and total number of employed individuals in 2022 both decreased significantly in the last five and ten years.

Total Labor Force	11,407
5-Year % Change	-6.7%
10-Year % Change	-11.4%
Employed	10,659
5-Year % Change	-6.2%
10-Year % Change	-5.3%
Unemployed	748
5-Year % Change	-12.4%
10-Year % Change	-53.6%
Unemployment Rate	6.6
5-Year % Change	-5.7%
10-Year % Change	-47.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, via StatsAmerica.org

Oceana County is a desirable place to live and might be considered a “bedroom community” because more people travel outside the county for work than those that travel in. According to 2020 U.S. Census Longitudinal Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), of the 9,733 employed residents of Oceana County, 6,673 (68.6%) are employed outside the county, while the remaining 3,060 (31.4%) are employed within Oceana County. In addition, 2,061 people commute into Oceana County from surrounding areas for employment. These 2,061 non-residents account for approximately two-fifths (40.2%) of the people employed in the county. In addition, the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey shows the average commute for Oceana County workers is about 23.4 minutes; which is slightly less than the statewide average of 24.5 minutes. Only 4.3% of Oceana County workers work from home, compared to 8% statewide.

The Starting Block

In 2006, The Starting Block opened its doors at the Hart Industrial Park, and has served as West Michigan's non-profit regional kitchen incubator and entrepreneurial center ever since. As a shared-use facility, it helps entrepreneurs start food-related businesses at reasonable rentals without the initial investment in costly facilities and equipment. The facility offers a fully-equipped licensed, commercial kitchen as well as two additional commercial, licensed kitchens for specialty and small-scale production, and a USDA-inspected meat processing facility. This was the first USDA-inspected meat processing incubator facility in the state, and one of few in the country. Certified food handling and equipment operation staff are available for assistance and training. Other services available at the facility include: low-cost kitchen rental; refrigerated, frozen, and dry storage; warehouse space; office rental; and assistance and support related to product development, marketing, and outreach. Additional information is available at <https://www.startingblock.biz/>.

b. Agriculture

Oceana County is one of Michigan's leading horticultural producers. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, the county accounted for 2% of the state’s agricultural sales. It was a Michigan top-10 in sales of “vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes” (4th), “fruits, tree nuts, berries” (6th), “cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops” (8th), “poultry and eggs” (8th), and “hogs and pigs” (7th).

Since at least 2007, the average farm size in Oceana County has increased, as has the total market value of products sold. All the while, the number of farms in the county has continued to

OCEANA COUNTY AGRICULTURE PROFILE				2012-2017 % Change
	2007	2012	2017	
Number of Farms	648	609	545	- 11
Land in Farms (acres)	123,284	127,779	127,077	- 1
Average Size of Farm	190	210	233	+ 11
Market Value of Products Sold	\$78,126,000	\$101,180,000	\$124,691,000	+ 30
Government Payments	1,083,000	2,529,000	699,000	- 72
Average Per Farm	7,963	13,313	8,627	- 35

Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture, 2017 Census of Agriculture (USDA)

decrease. The issue of whether or not these trends are economically or environmentally sustainable is uncertain and potentially divisive. According to the Community Assessment Team (CAT) report produced by the Michigan State University Extension in 2002, “the agricultural industry is impacted by foreign competition, low prices, continual higher cost of production, and tremendous demand on utility. These factors limit creation of wealth.” In essence, the margin of economic benefit to the community has limits. Sustainable farming practices must be upheld in the face of external challenges in order to maintain the integrity of the environment and the productivity of the land well into the future.

Another aspect related to the declining number of farms in the county is the steadily increasing average age of farm operators, a trend which has continued since at least the 1980’s. This suggests that the younger population is not considering farming. As of the 2017 Census of Agriculture just 10.5% of Oceana County farmers were under the age of 35. Almost 60% of farmers were aged 35 to 64, and 31.4% were 65 or older.

AVERAGE AGE OF FARM OPERATORS						
1978	1982	1987	1992	2007	2012	2017
49.7	49.6	50.5	51.8	54.5	56.3	57.5

Source: United States Department of Agriculture

Annual employment figures for the agricultural sector are difficult to pin down because of (1) its seasonal nature; (2) a large numbers of seasonal and migrant workers involved; and (3) some processes associated with agriculture may actually be tallied in other sectors such as the food manufacturing subsector. With that said, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics attributed 7.9% of all Oceana County jobs in 2022 to the Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting sector with an average annual wage of \$39,158. This underrepresents the actual employment of the industry which include elements of transportation, storage, and food processing operations. Many of the county’s largest employers are agricultural operations or are closely tied to the industry.

Migrant and seasonal labor is a significant aspect of agriculture in Oceana County. In 2013, an estimated 4,738 migrant farmworkers and their families came into the county. If all these people came at the same time, it would have increased the county’s population by 18%. This influx of population brings an increased need for social services encompassing

MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARMWORKERS (MSFW)
Oceana County
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Migrant-seasonal farmworkers: 3,625 (3rd in state behind Ottawa and Van Buren) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Migrant: 2,480 – Seasonal: 1,146 ▪ Non-farmworkers in migrant households: 2,258 ▪ Non-farmworkers in seasonal households: 1,077 ▪ Total MSFW workers and non-farmworkers: 6,960
<i>Source: Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study, 2013</i>

employment, education, healthcare, public benefits, legal services, and other assistance. In addition, a majority of migrant and seasonal farmworkers are Hispanic or Latino, which adds dimensions of language and cultural barriers to the mix.

A survey conducted for the 2013 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Report for the state of Michigan found “a general sense there may be more seasonal workers and fewer migrants.” The survey further identified that “this could be due to immigration issues which cause people to travel less and settle out of the migrant stream with their families around them.” This trend is likely contributing to the growing Hispanic and Latino population in Oceana County. Demographic information has shown a consistent increase in the Hispanic or Latino population, and proportion of the total population, even as the total county population has remained relatively stagnant in recent years.

c. Tourism

Tourism in Oceana County is typically centered around outdoor recreation opportunities during the warmer spring, summer, and fall months. Major tourist attractions in the county include state parks, camping, bike trails, golf courses, Double JJ Resort, water sports, festivals, dunes, and beaches along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Silver Lake State Park, which offers a slew of recreation opportunities, attracts approximately 850,000 visitors each year, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail State Park is a paved, 22-mile trail which offers biking, cross-country skiing, hiking, snowmobiling, and wildlife watching opportunities. A project to widen and repave the trail was undertaken in 2015 and 2016. Agri-tourism attractions such as Lewis Farms, Country Dairy, and various wineries are also gaining in popularity. During the snowy winter months, opportunities such as snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing draw a smaller number of visitors to the county.

Unfortunately, many of the activities mentioned above are seasonal and do not provide year-round economic benefits. This aspect of the tourism industry presents a certain burden on communities. The 2002 CAT report posited that tourism brings few dollars into the community yet demands large volumes of community and utility support.

Economy subsectors that depend upon tourism include Accommodation and Food Services; Arts, Entertainment Recreation; and Retail Trade. Altogether, these subsectors garnered 26.1% of all Oceana County jobs in 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Double JJ Ranch in Rothbury is one of the county’s largest employers and is generally open year-round.

d. Manufacturing

The Manufacturing sector comprises establishments engaged in the mechanical, physical, or chemical transformation of materials, substances, or components into new products. The assembling of component parts of manufactured products is considered manufacturing, except in cases where the activity is appropriately classified in the Construction sector.

Manufacturing establishments are often described as plants, factories, or mills and characteristically use power-driven machines and materials-handling equipment. However, establishments that transform materials or substances into new products by hand or in the worker's home and those engaged in selling to the general public products made on the same premises from which they are sold, such as bakeries, candy stores, and custom tailors, may also be included in this sector. Manufacturing establishments may

process materials or may contract with other establishments to process materials on their behalf. Both types of establishments are included in manufacturing.

According to the 2002 CAT report, industrial businesses historically produce the most tax revenues for the least amount of required services (police, fire, tec.). Industrial businesses typically produce higher hourly wages, health care, and other long-term benefits than other sectors. They attract support, commercial, and office businesses; produce the need for daily professional services, such as attorneys, human resources experts, and accountants; and generate new revenue for philanthropic needs of the community.

According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, Manufacturing held 24.3% of Oceana County jobs in 2022. In addition, Manufacturing provided the highest average annual wage per job among the county's top four employment sectors, and the fifth highest among all sectors. "Wholesale Trade," "Transportation, Warehousing," and "Professional, Technical Services" are the top three sectors by average wage, but combined account for only 8.2% of all jobs in the county.

There are two industrial parks in Oceana County: Hart Industrial Park and Shelby Industrial Park.

e. **White River Economic Impact**

In August 2023, Grand Valley State University (GVSU) completed the Economic Assessment of the White River. Commissioned by the White River Watershed Partnership, the study assessed the economic impact the White River recreation has on local communities and property values in Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties. This study quantified the number of river users, spending patterns by those users, and the indirect/induced values as a result of that spending. Listed below is a summary of findings. The study is available on the WMSRDC website <https://wmsrdc.org/project/white-river-impact/>.

- There were 69,543 visitors to the White River from summer 2022 through spring 2023, with 35,329 visitors coming from outside the local region.
- The local primary river users visited the river 49.3 times per year and nonlocal primary river users visited the river 14.7 times per year.
- The nonlocal primary river users averaged \$15.84 in spending per person, per day, resulting in \$9.0 million in total direct spending.
- The nonlocal primary river users generated \$8.3 million in economic output, adding \$4.2 million to the local GDP, and support for 80 jobs.
- There was \$75,539 in additional tax revenue generated by the nonlocal primary river users.
- Local businesses added \$538,000 in economic output, with support for 34 jobs.
- The total economic impact of the White River, including local users and businesses, is valued at \$20 million in economic output and support for 223 jobs.

Economic Development Summary

- Agriculture and Tourism are the foundations of Oceana County’s economy and identity.
- Agriculture and Tourism have seasonal impacts on the local economy.
- The Oceana County unemployment rate has decreased in recent years, but so has the available workforce.
- A significant portion of residents commute to work outside the county.
- Agriculture in Oceana County is reliant on labor provided by migrant and seasonal farmworkers.
- Nearly one in four jobs in Oceana County is in the Manufacturing sector.

Public Comment Highlights

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agriculture - Tourism - Local businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seasonal economics - Workforce retention - Low wages - Reduction of migrant labor - Increasing agriculture labor costs
ASPIRATIONS & RESULTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop tourism countywide & year-round - Support for local businesses - Business attraction and retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Year-round employment opportunities - Talent attraction and retention - Better wages

Visions for Economic Development

- Citizens live and work within the county.
- Oceana County’s workforce is trained, educated, and able to accommodate a variety of manufacturing operations.
- Oceana County is a year-round destination for tourism and recreation.
- Oceana County is a leader in agricultural production of a diversity of high-value crops.
- Oceana County businesses create value-added products utilizing agriculture and forestry products harvested locally.
- Affordable labor for agriculture.

CHAPTER 6: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development is a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Community development ranges from small initiatives within a small group to large initiatives that involve the broader community. Within the context of this plan, community development considers broad conditions under which Oceana County is developing.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE:

- a long-term endeavor,
- well-planned,
- inclusive and equitable,
- holistic and integrated into the bigger picture,
- initiated and supported by community members,
- of benefit to the community, and
- grounded in experience that leads to best practices.

Adapted from The Community Development Handbook: A Tool to Build Community Capacity, by Flo Frank and Anne Smith for Human Resources Development Canada.

a. Land Cover and Land Use

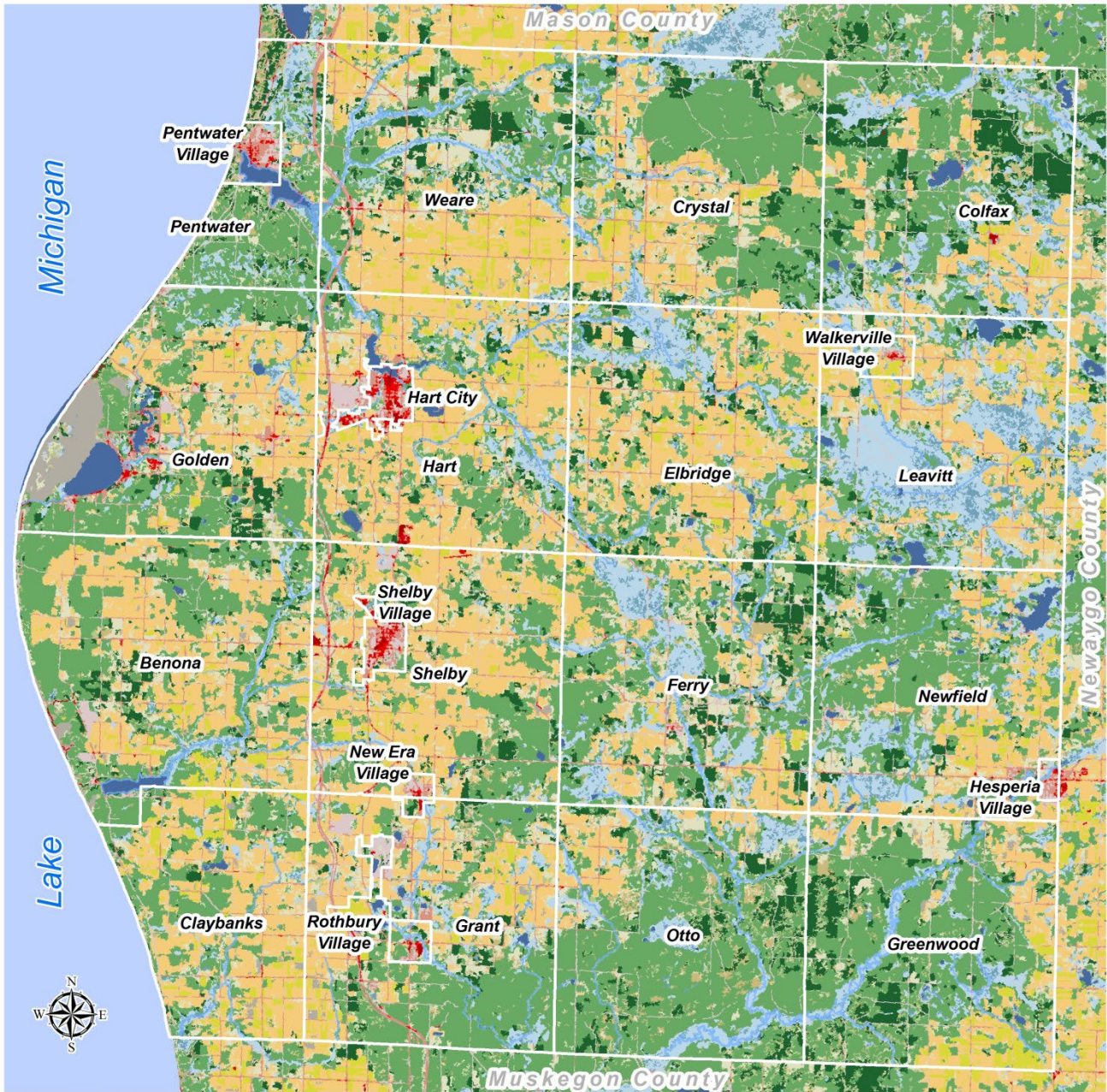
Land cover can be determined by analyzing satellite and aerial imagery. This is an important distinction from *land use*, which cannot be determined from satellite imagery. Land cover maps provide information to help understand the current landscape. Over time, land cover maps can be compared to evaluate past management decisions as well as gain insight into the possible effects of their current decisions before they are implemented. The following information is presented to establish a baseline for future land cover comparisons.

According to 2011 land cover data created by the Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium (MRLC), almost 31% of Oceana County is covered by deciduous forest with the largest portions in the southeastern and northeastern areas. Deciduous forest also covers significant portions of the mid- and north-western areas of the county. The second most prevalent land cover type is cultivated crops which make up about 24% of the total. This cover is generally interspersed through the county, and is most prevalent along the US-31 corridor and between Hart and Walkerville. Woody wetlands and herbaceous vegetation are the third and fourth most prevalent land cover types covering about 10% and 9% of the total land area respectively. These land covers exist mostly along rivers and streams. High, medium, and low intensity development only account for about 3.65% of the total land cover, and are most prevalent in the county's city and villages. However, notable densities do exist in the western part of the county and along the shores of Lake Michigan and some larger inland lakes.

In terms of land use, more land is used for agriculture than any other land use in Oceana County. In addition, the use of land for housing and shelter reflects a significant proportion of all land uses in most areas. While the western half of the county is close to Lake Michigan and easily accessible from US-31, the eastern half of the county is predominately rural and less developed. The western half has a great deal of tourism and tourism-based characteristics, while the eastern half is mainly agriculture and undeveloped forestland.

OCEANA COUNTY LAND COVER	%
Open Water	1.10
Developed, Open Space	3.85
Developed, Low Intensity	3.22
Developed, Med. Intensity	0.35
Developed, High Intensity	0.08
Barren Land	0.97
Deciduous Forest	30.69
Evergreen Forest	6.74
Mixed Forest	1.94
Shrub/Scrub	2.45
Herbaceous	9.01
Hay/Pasture	2.94
Cultivated Crops	24.30
Woody Wetlands	10.10
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	2.23
<i>Percentages calculated by WMSRDC. Source: MRLC NLCD Database, 2011</i>	

Oceana County 2011 Land Cover



NLCD Classifications

	Barren Land		Developed, Low Intensity		Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands		Mixed Forest
	Cultivated Crops		Developed, Medium Intensity		Evergreen Forest		Open Water
	Deciduous Forest		Developed, Open Space		Hay/Pasture		Shrub/Scrub
	Developed, High Intensity		Herbaceous		Woody Wetlands		

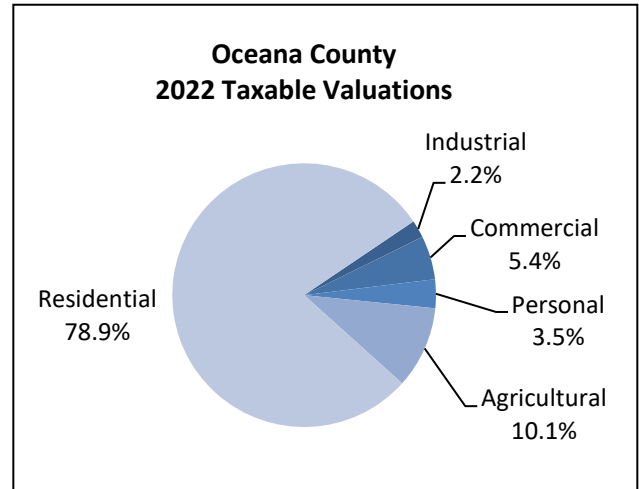
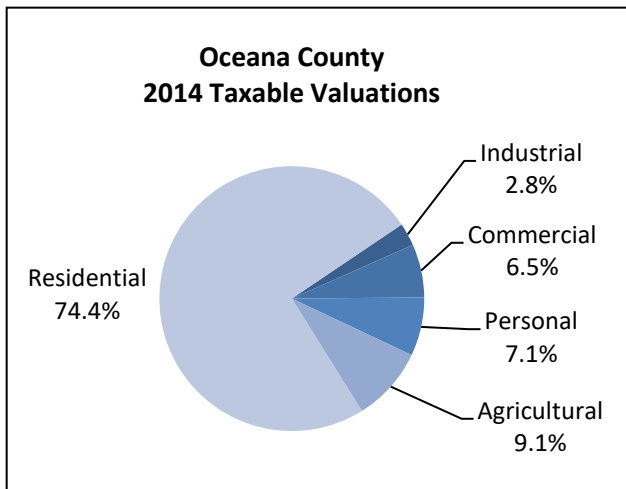
WMSRDC Map Created May 2014 Source: MRLC NLCD Database 2011, MI Geographic Framework V12
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

b. Property Values

From 2002 through 2009, Oceana County experienced dramatic property valuation increases. However between 2009 and 2012, most local jurisdictions experienced declines in excess of 10%. Valuations began to level off by 2014. In 2015, according to the Oceana County Equalization Department, Oceana County saw the first countywide taxable value increase in eight years. By 2022, valuations had increased almost 30% from 2014. It is notable that the shoreline townships of Benona, Claybanks, Golden, and Pentwater combined for 52.5% of the county's property valuations in 2022.

	TOTAL REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY VALUATIONS						% Change 2012-2014	% Change 2014-2022
	2012 (\$)		2014 (\$)		2022 (\$)			
Benona	215,077,100	13.85%	209,287,631	13.90%	258,570,000	13.36%	-2.69%	23.55%
Claybanks	84,833,862	5.46%	88,867,717	5.90%	106,894,700	5.52%	4.76%	20.29%
Colfax	46,724,800	3.01%	48,498,300	3.22%	49,240,900	2.54%	3.80%	1.53%
Crystal	30,221,560	1.95%	29,730,228	1.97%	34,894,308	1.80%	-1.63%	17.37%
Elbridge	38,956,878	2.51%	37,896,700	2.52%	50,323,320	2.60%	-2.72%	32.79%
Ferry	35,904,400	2.31%	33,267,500	2.21%	51,067,300	2.64%	-7.34%	53.51%
Golden	229,063,297	14.75%	228,448,779	15.17%	305,053,900	15.76%	-0.27%	33.53%
Grant	82,438,961	5.31%	81,461,266	5.41%	106,341,872	5.49%	-1.19%	30.54%
Greenwood	33,548,200	2.16%	32,243,900	2.14%	47,655,700	2.46%	-3.89%	47.80%
Hart	110,326,400	7.10%	112,613,400	7.48%	117,976,618	6.09%	2.07%	4.76%
Leavitt	30,647,200	1.97%	31,565,000	2.10%	38,481,700	1.99%	2.99%	21.91%
Newfield	73,329,025	4.72%	72,484,850	4.81%	101,180,200	5.23%	-1.15%	39.59%
Otto	22,979,900	1.48%	22,924,000	1.52%	36,140,900	1.87%	-0.24%	57.66%
Pentwater	292,410,000	18.83%	263,512,300	17.50%	345,994,300	17.87%	-9.88%	31.30%
Shelby	115,445,700	7.43%	104,941,300	6.97%	146,063,600	7.55%	-9.10%	39.19%
Weare	49,944,800	3.22%	52,101,800	3.46%	77,558,800	4.01%	4.32%	48.86%
Hart City	61,215,173	3.94%	56,341,308	3.74%	62,304,800	3.22%	-7.96%	10.58%
Oceana Co	1,553,067,256	100%	1,506,185,979	100%	1,935,742,918	100.00%	-3.02%	28.52%

Sources: Oceana County Equalization Department; Michigan Department of Treasury State Tax Commission



c. Local Planning

Local governments in Oceana County are facing a bevy of challenges: attraction and retention of residents and jobs; provision, maintenance, and expansion of services and infrastructure; protection of sensitive environmental and agricultural lands; and a polarized electorate. These are but a sample of the common issues facing communities in the county. Resolving problems such as these requires a cooperative, comprehensive, and flexible approach.

One obstacle to crafting effective solutions lies in the existing planning structure of local governments: typically future development is guided by land use plans which are prepared and adopted by local units of government. There are 23 units of government within Oceana County, all of which are legally authorized to engage in community planning. Only two local governments are known to lack a land use plan, zoning ordinance, or both.

It is widely known that community development issues, such as housing affordability, availability, access to utility services and aesthetics, can be exacerbated in areas where zoning is limited, non-existent, or unenforced. On the other hand, over-zoning may inhibit the potential to achieve planned, incremental growth by permitting scattered growth over large areas of a community. It is important to acknowledge that a zoned, residential development may eventually demand more services (roads, schools, and public safety) than it will pay for in taxes. Zoning density should reflect existing levels of land use and public services. Planned density can be higher in communities that are willing and able to provide a higher level of public services.

Future development in Oceana County should be tailored in a way that protects the assets which make Oceana County a desirable place to live. Land use planning policies in Oceana County should encourage new development or redevelopment to be located within existing communities and infrastructure as often as possible. Doing so will help protect rural and forested areas from sprawling development, which if left unchecked, can be detrimental to a community by destroying irreplaceable natural resources and increasing demands for services and infrastructure. To the extent practicable, new developments outside of established communities should be designed to minimize impacts on natural resources and avoid fragmentation of natural areas.

This master plan is but one aspect in the pursuit of long term-prosperity and sustainability in Oceana County. It is not legally enforceable, and the County of Oceana does not engage in zoning. Planning and zoning are conducted primarily at the city, village, and township level. Therefore, the onus is on local leaders to ensure that local decisions and development plans help move the county toward the visions maintained within this document. The ultimate utility of this plan hinges upon the ability and willingness of local leaders to take collective ownership in this plan. This includes: incorporating this plan's goals into local planning processes; maintaining a relationship with the Oceana County Planning Commission to ensure that needs and desires are effectively reflected within this plan; and coordinating with other communities to ensure that local plans are coordinated and do not conflict with one another.

Community Development Summary

- Forests are the most common land cover in Oceana County; followed by cultivated crops and wetlands. Altogether, those types of land cover make up about three-quarters of the landscape.
- The prevailing land use, in terms of acreage, in Oceana County is agriculture.
- Residential properties make up over three-quarters of the county’s taxable valuations.
- Property values have increased significantly in recent years.
- Over half of the county’s property value is held along the Lake Michigan shoreline communities.
- Planning and zoning at the city, village, and township level have the most authority to impact land use patterns in Oceana County.

Public Comment Highlights

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Foundation for Oceana County - Elected officials and leadership - Emergency and police services - Nature preservation - Historic preservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blight/appearance - Downtowns - Politics
ASPIRATIONS & RESULTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attractive places & downtowns - Enforcement of ordinances - Renewable energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consolidation of services - Continued nature preservation - Maintain farmland

Visions for Community Development

- The county and local communities engage in proactive planning, rather than reactive planning.
- New developments are encouraged to be planned in areas with access to utilities and services.
- Oceana County Planning Commission reviews and comments on proposed changes to local master plans and zoning ordinances to ensure consistency with countywide Goals and Objectives.
- Local communities and citizens support and contribute to countywide Goals and Objectives regarding the future of Oceana County.
- Youth and young adults are involved in community planning and involved in implementation.

CHAPTER 7: GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Chapters 2 through 6 provided an overview of existing conditions and public comments, which were then synthesized into optimistic “visions” for desired conditions 20-25 years in the future. Those visions are the foundation for the Goals contained within this chapter. The Goals are augmented by Objectives, which provide a greater level of detail and/or possible strategies for achieving the Goals.

The Goals and Objectives are intended to guide planning decisions throughout the county. They are not prescriptive, and they are not set in stone. The Oceana County Planning Commission will assess the relevance, effectiveness, and feasibility of the Goals & Objectives at least once every five years. However, the Planning Commission welcomes input and suggestions from citizens, local governments, and other community stakeholders at all times.

Quality of Life

- Preserve the community’s rural character and strong sense of community.
 - Encourage new development to occur near existing infrastructure and services.
 - Enhance access to and coordination of senior services.
 - Work with hospitals and health care providers to meet underserved health care needs.
 - Invite and incorporate all cultural perspectives of the Oceana County community with regards to implementation of this Master Plan.
- Maintain a balanced age distribution.
 - Achieve a median age less than 40 years of age.
 - Retain young adults.
 - Attract families and young adults to balance the increasing number of retirees.
- Improve the housing stock to meet the needs of current and prospective new residents.
 - Increase the availability of assisted living units, affordable housing, and middle-income housing.
 - Improve the quality and quantity of rental housing, especially near jobs and services.
 - Refer to the Oceana County Housing Needs Assessment to inform and guide housing strategies.
- Support K-12, Career Technical Education, and Adult Education programs.
 - Encourage career technical education (CTE) programming within Oceana County.
 - Establish relationships with nearby colleges and universities.
 - Meet the workforce needs of existing employers.
- Increase opportunities for year-round outdoor and indoor recreation for residents and visitors.
 - Increase public access to Lake Michigan.
 - Promote local shopping, arts, and cultural activities.

Environment

- Balance public and private uses of the Lake Michigan shoreline areas with preservation of sensitive dune environments.
 - Support activities that strike a balance between smart growth, public access, and the environment.
- Protect surface water features.

- Support preservation of wetlands and use of greenbelts.
- Improve Silver Lake water quality.
- Guard against potential sources of groundwater pollution.
 - Utilize and enforce wellhead protection areas around municipal wells.
 - Encourage and recognize sustainable agricultural practices and landowner stewardship.
- Coordinate forest management between local, state, and federal entities.
 - Encourage practices that allow large forest tracts to remain reasonably intact and connected.
 - Utilize the information and recommendations contained within the Oceana County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
 - Encourage development of forest management plans to responsibly harvest timber.
- Incorporate consideration of natural hazards into land use and zoning practices to ensure the development of resilient communities and public infrastructure.
 - Utilize the information and recommendations contained within the Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Infrastructure

- Design infrastructure improvements to be more resilient to natural forces.
- Improve roadway conditions.
 - Utilize asset management to assess conditions and prioritize road and bridge maintenance.
 - Consider strategic paving of gravel and dirt roads.
- Improve access to the northeast quadrant of the county.
 - Support designation of direct routes.
- Support creation of a digital inventory of public infrastructure within the county.
- Maintain dependable municipal water and sewer systems.
 - Help communities maintain water and sewer infrastructure to prevent costly failures.
 - Adhere to state regulations around wellhead protection areas.
- Countywide availability and access to high-speed internet and communication services.
 - Identify gaps in broadband infrastructure and service availability.
 - Work with service providers to reduce barriers to high-speed Internet and cell phone service improvements.
- Reduce barriers to development of energy resources other than fossil and nuclear fuels.
 - Standardize alternative energy regulations.
- Work to limit roadway accidents and fatalities.
 - Encourage the County Road Commission and local communities to explore speed-control measures, primarily in areas of increasing commercial development and seasonal usage.

Economic Development

- Increase opportunities for year-round employment.
 - Coordinate provision of Career Technical Education opportunities to prepare the workforce.
 - Encourage Starting Block patrons to locate permanent businesses in Oceana County.

- Identify possible locations for additional low-impact manufacturing operations with access or close proximity to municipal services.
- Market the Oceana County quality of life to entice businesses to locate in the county.
- Diversify Tourism opportunities.
 - Develop and market more “off-season” attractions, such as winter recreation opportunities.
 - Support Agri-tourism.
- Support a diversity of agricultural production.
 - Pursue value-added agricultural and forestry activities.
- Address barriers to workforce participation.
- Increase access to affordable agricultural labor.

Community Development

- Engage in proactive planning, rather than reactive planning.
 - Encourage new developments to locate in areas with access to utilities and services.
 - Encourage consistent enforcement of local zoning ordinances.
 - Foster working relationships with local communities and regularly share planning, land use, and infrastructure information.
 - Conduct a “build-out analysis” to provide insight into the current course of land use planning and zoning at the county scale.
 - Conduct an Agricultural Preservation Study to identify critical areas of county farmland and to justify their preservation at the local level.
 - Provide a neutral and cooperative forum for municipalities to:
 - jointly consider factual information,
 - explore mutual development opportunities, and
 - achieve a measure of continuity and efficiency by utilizing locally successful approaches (best practices) to future situations.
- Promote countywide visions for the future of Oceana County and coordination between communities along municipal boundaries.
 - Review and comment on proposed changes to local master plans and zoning ordinances to ensure consistency with countywide Goals and Objectives.
 - Coordinate planning, zoning, and infrastructure decisions with local, county, state, and federal agencies operating in Oceana County in a manner consistent with this plan.
- Involve youth and young adults in planning for the future and implementation of the master plan.
 - Consider establishing a Planning Commission subcommittee for youth in partnership with local school districts and/or the Youth Advisory Committee of the Community Foundation for Oceana County.
 - Identify the needs and desires of youth and young adults.
- Improve relationships and communication between local government, businesses, and residents.
 - Increase awareness of actions and services provided by county and local governments, including constraints and challenges to providing services.
 - Increase citizen engagement in decision-making processes.

CHAPTER 8: FUTURE LAND USE

Between 1990 and 2000, Oceana County experienced a large population increase of 19.7%. Growth has essentially stalled since that time; but concerns about uncontrolled growth in Oceana County have lingered. As a result, there is a strong desire for land use planning policies and practices that encourage new residential, commercial, and industrial development to occur within developed communities with access to municipal services. It is a major priority to preserve the rural character that typifies Oceana County by avoiding sprawling development and limiting fractured development of open spaces.

This chapter presents eight generalized land use categories, which are defined within this chapter and illustrated on the Future Land Use Map. These categories are intended to convey a mix of preferred possible uses, rather than specific uses. When all are shown together on the Future Land Use Map, a broad overview of the county's future land use can be gleaned.

Overall, the proposed land use pattern is compact. It encourages the most intense residential, commercial and industrial developments to be located in and around locations with access to municipal water and sewer services. Areas that are public land and recreation in 2022 are assumed to mainly remain as such in the next 20- 25 years. Agricultural areas are also intended to remain as agriculture land use with minimal fragmentation from low density residential land uses.

This Future Land Use chapter is intended to help community leaders and developers visualize the development of Oceana County 20-25 years into the future. Also keep in mind that this vision is expected to change with the times. The proposed future land use categories and accompanying map were developed based on a blending of:

- A strong respect for local control of land use planning and zoning decisions. The existing future land use maps and zoning maps of Oceana County municipalities played a prominent role in the delineation of the future land use categories on the map.
- The importance of agriculture and undeveloped lands to the community character and the economic identity of the county.
- The desires of residents and public officials as expressed through their participation in public forums and meetings, and Planning Commission meetings.
- The natural capability of the land to sustain certain types of land use.
- The tangible and intangible benefits provided by natural resources and fragile ecosystems.
- The anticipated need for various land uses, given the existing land use distribution.

The Future Land Use Map should be a general representation of the recommendations of this Master Plan. Together with the Goals and Objectives, these become the vision for the development of Oceana County 20-25 years into the future. They will be most effective when used in coordination with the Existing Land Use Map, community profile information, and other resources referenced within this plan.

Please note that the Future Land Use Map does not intend to impose or imply the application of a particular set of regulations to a particular property. The scale is not sufficient to depict use on a parcel basis. Please refer to local zoning ordinances for parcel-specific regulations. The map was first created for the 2016 edition of this plan. In 2023, all communities were invited to review and comment on the map. No comments or objections were received, indicating the map retains value as a general representation of future land use intentions within Oceana County.

Generalized Future Land Use Categories

a. Sensitive Environments Overlay

This category indicates the general location of certain sensitive environments in Oceana County so that appropriate measures are taken before the land is developed. This may require due diligence to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. These areas are valued for their natural functions, irreplaceable characteristics, and scenic benefits. On the Future Land Use Map, this category is represented by a transparent overlay to demonstrate its relationships and intersections with other land uses.

Environmentally sensitive features included in this category are wetlands, critical dunes, high-risk erosion parcels, and floodplains. Also included are setbacks for the two Michigan Natural Rivers systems within Oceana County: Pere Marquette River and White River. These features are described and shown within Chapter 3: Environment.

Notes:

- A 150 foot buffer on either side of the identified natural rivers and tributaries has been used to generally represent Natural River setbacks within this layer on the Future Land Use Map. The actual setback for a given river segment or tributary may be greater or lesser than 150 feet. Refer to the Natural River Plan for the Pere Marquette River and the White River for more information.
- National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) data was used to represent wetlands within this layer, and may not necessarily include all wetlands that are subject to state and federal regulations. In addition, only wetlands of 5 acres or more were included within this layer on the Future Land Use Map.

b. Public Lands & Recreation

This category includes existing public and private parks, nature preserves, youth camps, golf courses, lands owned by local, state and federal governments, and school properties.

Lands included within this category are generally assumed to maintain their current uses over the next 20-25 years. To the extent practicable, these areas should be connected by natural corridors in order to enhance natural wildlife and recreation opportunities.

c. Rural

This category is intended to include agricultural and rural residential land uses, as well as privately-owned forests. Public water and wastewater services are not anticipated to be extended into this area.

Areas within this category that are actively farmed or are capable of being farmed should primarily remain undeveloped to preserve farmland and prevent the premature conversion of farmland into other land uses. Critical areas could be delineated more carefully as a result of a separate Agriculture Preservation Plan.

Residential uses within this category should primarily be characterized by low density residential use in areas typically not well suited for long-term agricultural production. Residential land use within this category may serve as an effective transitional buffer between the agricultural land uses and other types of development. There should also be an allowance for seasonal population concentrations to meet the needs of local agriculture.

A low density of residential development is preferred to appropriately accommodate rural residences with on-site septic systems. Risks of greater development densities may include impacts on groundwater resources, and additional strains on county and local services and transportation infrastructure. However, it may be possible that dwellings could be clustered on smaller lots with individual septic systems or a common septic system to leave more open space.

d. Small Community

This category acknowledges unincorporated settlements that lack access to municipal water and wastewater infrastructure. The character of these locations is predominately residential neighborhoods; however there may also be local commercial establishments to serve local and seasonal populations.

e. Incorporated Community

This category identifies incorporated communities (one city and six villages) which typically feature a mix of land uses, including Residential, Commerce, and Industry. Wastewater treatment and public water services may also be available in these areas, which allow for higher densities of development such as apartment buildings, townhouses, mobile home parks, affordable housing, hotels, and industrial developments.

f. Residential

This residential land use category would most commonly include single family residential developments and subdivisions with a range of densities. Higher densities may be found in areas that are connected to, or are located near, public or shared water and wastewater infrastructure. These areas are typically situated near incorporated communities, the Lake Michigan shoreline, or inland water bodies. Affordable housing developments, such as low and medium rise apartments, townhouses, and mobile home parks should be located near incorporated communities with access to goods and services. For purposes of this map, planned unit developments (PUD) are included in this category as well.

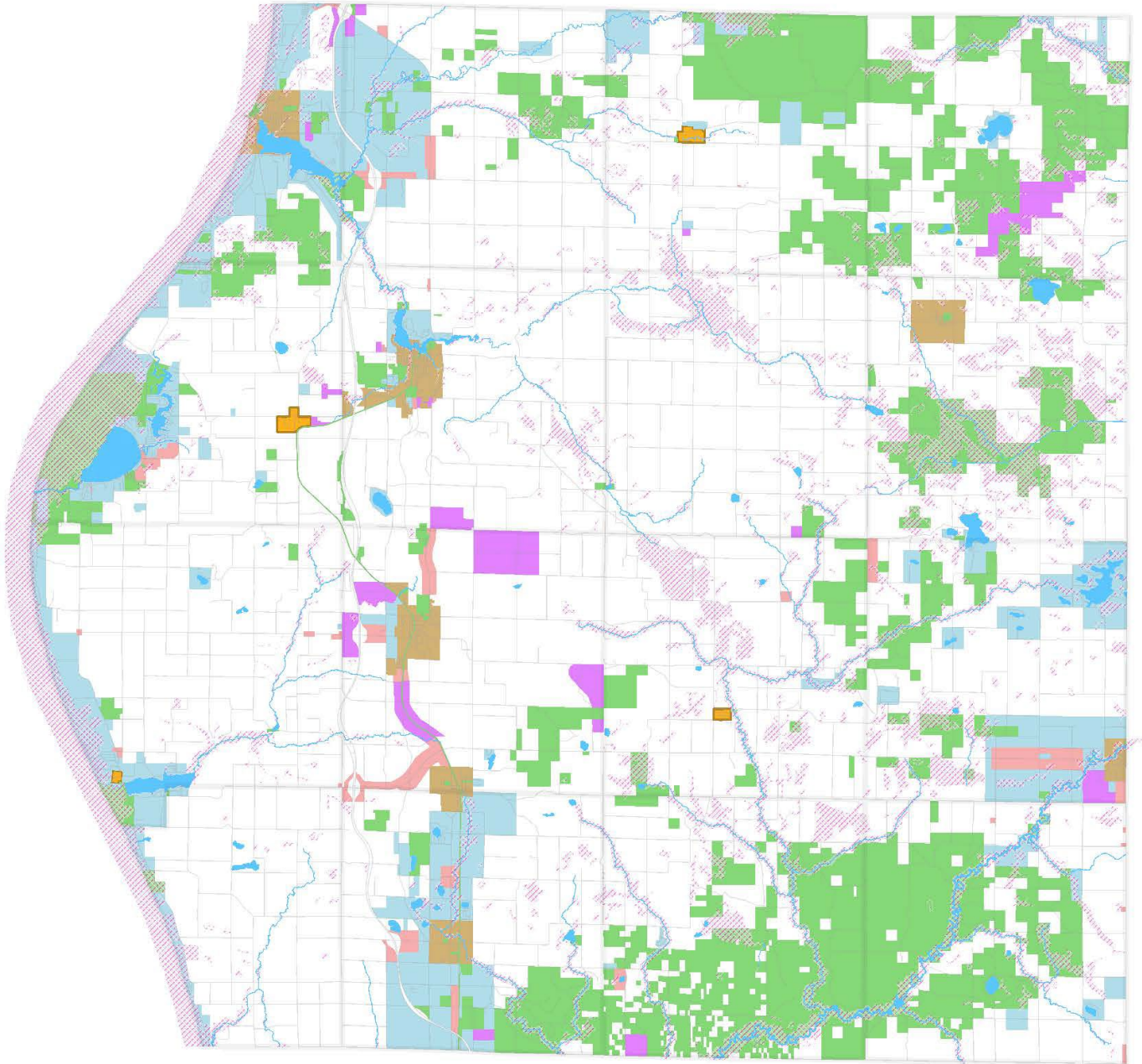
g. Commerce









This category includes commercial land uses that are beyond the boundaries of incorporated communities. The character of commercial activity would vary depending on its location: areas near highways may be geared towards serving the traveling population; areas near incorporated communities may be geared towards goods and services to serve local or regional populations; and isolated commercial areas in seasonal or rural locations may be geared towards serving the convenience needs of local residents and visitors.

h. Industry

New industrial development is intended to have minimal environmental impacts and would include a mix of operations such as light manufacturing, food processing, research, and vacant land in designated industrial parks. Other compatible activities within these areas might include warehousing, distributing, and office buildings. It is a preference that these areas have access to public water and sewer infrastructure and all-seasons roads. Existing industrial developments occur primarily within or near incorporated communities. Industrial sites associated with agricultural processes, such as processing plants, may also be found in rural areas where it is convenient to locate these facilities close to farms.

Oceana County GENERALIZED FUTURE LAND USE MAP



- | | |
|--|---|
|  Rural |  Commerce |
|  Small Community |  Industry |
|  Residential |  Public Lands & Recreation |
|  Incorporated Community |  Sensitive Enviroments Overlay |

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

This map is intended for general planning purposes only. Created in December 2015 for the Oceana County Master Plan.

WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

CHAPTER 9: IMPLEMENTATION

This plan presents a profile of Oceana County that is organized under the themes of Quality of Life, Environment, Infrastructure, Economic Development, and Community Development. Interestingly, many of the topics discussed within each theme could very well be discussed in another, demonstrating that Oceana County is an intricate ecosystem with an interconnected network of players and characteristics. To make matters more complex, the county ecosystem is constantly reacting to external forces that are often unforeseeable and unpredictable. Care must be taken to keep the bigger picture in mind when planning for the future.

The Oceana County Master Plan is designed to be flexible and change with the times. It should be used as a tool to stimulate dialogue between citizens, government officials, and other stakeholders regarding land use and community planning in Oceana County. A concerted effort from all community players to communicate and cooperate will help the county achieve the Goals & Objectives contained within this plan. It is the responsibility of the Oceana County Planning Commission to continuously seek input from community stakeholders and make the appropriate adjustments to this plan in order to maintain a relevant and realistic countywide vision for the future.

Chapter 7, Goals & Objectives, provides a mix of guiding principles and possible strategies for helping Oceana County achieve desired outcomes 20-25 years from now. This collection of statements and recommendations was developed through a planning process that included input from the public and research of data and demographics that were deemed relevant at the time. Implementation of the Goals & Objectives will primarily be in the hands of the Oceana County Planning Commission as it helps coordinate land use and community development throughout the county. It is also important that local governments consider the Goals & Objectives of this plan as they review their own plans for the future, and provide constructive feedback to the County Planning Commission so that it may stay in touch with local needs and desires.

APPENDIX A
Documentation

**Public Notice Published in the Oceana Herald-Journal
Published November 24, 2022**

**NOTICE OF
PUBLIC FORUM
REGARDING OCEANA COUNTY LAND USE**

The Oceana County Planning Commission has begun the process of updating the Oceana County Master Plan and invites Oceana County residents and stakeholders to a facilitated discussion about the future land use and development of Oceana County. The forum will take place at 6:00 PM on December 1, 2022 at the Oceana County Community Services Building, 844 S Griswold St, Hart, MI 49420. Individuals that are unavailable or uninterested in attending the forum are invited to complete an online form available at <https://srvy.pro/2AVLE9W>. Questions regarding the forum and online form may be directed to scarlson@wmsrdc.org. Your voice matters!

**Public Notice Published in the Oceana Herald-Journal
Published on 1/11/2024 and 2/29/2024**

**NOTICE REGARDING
OCEANA COUNTY MASTER PLAN REVIEW**

The proposed Oceana County Master Plan update will be available for public review from January 4 through March 6, 2024. The plan may be seen online at <https://oceana.mi.us> or in person at the Clerk's Office at 100 S. State St. M-1 Hart, MI 49420, during regular business hours. In addition, the Oceana County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing during its regular meeting at 1:00 PM on March 7, 2024 to receive comments regarding the content of the proposed plan. The meeting will be held in the boardroom of the Oceana County Building, 100 S. State Street in Hart. Written comments may also be sent to scarlson@wmsrdc.org no later than March 6, 2024.

Oceana County Planning Commission Minutes Draft Approval and Transmission to County Board

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OCEANA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE November 2, 2023, MEETING

OFFICIAL

The Oceana County Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Chairperson Greiner on Thursday, November 2, 2023, at 1:00 pm, in the Oceana County Board of Commissioners Room, 100 S. State Street, Hart, Michigan.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairperson Greiner led the members in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Vince Greiner, Vice Chair Gina Loera, Secretary John Stivers, Mr. Garry McKeen, Mr. Al Blohm, Mr. Scott Rumsey, Mr. Paul Cutter, Mr. John Foss and Mr. Phil Morse.

Absent: None

Also present: Mr. Stephen Carlson of West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Council (WMSRDC) who is working on the update of the Oceana County Master Plan, and Drain Commissioner Michelle Martin.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Moved by Ms. Loera and seconded by Mr. McKeen to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2023, as amended. Voice vote. All ayes. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA ITEMS OF THE REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Mr. Stivers and seconded by Mr. Foss to approve the November 2, 2023, agenda as presented. Voice vote. All ayes. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

No comments.

OLD BUSINESS

- Master Plan Update:
 - Based on a discussion with Suzy Knoll, Executive Director of the Oceana Conservation District, Mr. Carlson developed a page concerning invasive Species to be added to the Infrastructure chapter of the Master Plan. Commissioners offered additional species of concern.
 - The draft of the Master Plan was distributed in printed form at the last Planning Commission Meeting and again by email on October 10th, 2023, with a memo from Mr. Carlson reaffirming the approval schedule developed at our October 5th, 2023, meeting.
 - November 2nd meeting Planning Commission members to complete review of draft.
 - Planning Commission approval at November 2nd meeting, with recommendation to Oceana County Commissioners to begin the Public Review phase.
 - County Commissioners approve the start of the 63-day Public Review phase at their November 9th meeting.

OCEANA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE November 2, 2023, MEETING

OFFICIAL

- Public hearing during Planning Commission meeting on February 1st, 2024, with recommendation to Oceana County Commission.
- Oceana County Commission on February 8th, 2024, either adopts the Master Plan or rejects and returns with recommendations to the Planning Commission.
- Mr. Carlson took suggestions for text changes and answered questions from the Commissioners. He indicated that about half of the municipalities in the County have acknowledged receipt of the Master Plan, but non-have suggested changes.

Moved by Mr. Stivers with second by Ms. Loera to transmit from the Planning Commission to the County Board the Master Plan draft with the suggested modifications made at this meeting. This Board recommends the County Commission at its November 9th meeting approve the start of the 63-day public review period. Following a request for discussion, of which there was none, the motion was approved.

- Ms. Loera agreed to work with Mr. Carlson on the logistics of posting of the Master Plan draft on the County's website, its public display and notifications or the scheduled February 1st, 2024, public meeting. A copy of the draft plan will be sent to the County Commissioners as soon as possible.

NEW BUSINESS

- Stormwater Management:
 - Ms. Martin made a presentation on Stormwater Management that included its importance and the progress of implementation of requirements within the County. Currently eight townships and the City of Hart have passed resolutions giving authority to the County Drain Commission; the Village of Pentwater enforces its own ordinance. For projects within the covered jurisdictions that require a soil erosion permit-one acre- the Drain Commission requires a stormwater permit as well.
 - The Drain Commissioner indicated that the municipalities are being asked to go further than just a resolution by formally adopting stormwater ordinances. She also explained agreements for maintenance that cover structures such as detention ponds; these agreements run with the property, even after the initial parties have sold the property.
- Planning Commission seats expiring at the end of 2023:
 - The terms of four members expire at the end of 2023. After discussion on who wants to reappointment and the qualifications need to satisfy having a member from the public education sector, a motion followed:

Mr. Stivers moved, with second from Ms. Loera, to inform the County Commissioners that Mr. Blohm, Mr. Cutter and Mr. McKeen want to be reappointed to the Oceana County Planning Commission for terms starting in 2024, while Chair Greiner, the senior member of the commission, does not, and plans to leave the Commission. Public notification of the open position is to be made in order that interested candidates can be interviewed at the December 7th, 2023, meeting of the Planning Commission with a recommendation to the County Commission for their action at their December 14th, 2023, meeting. Hearing no further discussion, the vote was called and the motion passed.

OCEANA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE November 2, 2023, MEETING

OFFICIAL

CORRESPONDENCE

No Correspondence.

COMMISSIONERS REPORTS

- Mr. McKeen discussed the Pentwater Watershed Planning Survey that will be sent out to about 850 houses in the Pentwater River watershed later this month. Mr. McKeen presented the commission with a survey sample and information being sent out to residents. Mr. McKeen mentioned it would be a good idea to invite Mr. Rich Pugsley to the Planning Commission meeting in December to discuss the survey.
- Mr. McKeen reported that the walkway at Gale's Pond on the east side has been completed. The Conservation District and County Parks are sponsoring a winter walk on December 21st, 2023, which is open to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Greiner adjourned the meeting at 2:21 pm.

The next meeting will be December 7, 2023, at 1:00 pm in the Oceana County Board of Commissioners Room, 100 S. State Street, Hart, MI 49420.

Respectfully submitted,



Brittany M. Bostrom
On behalf of John Stivers, Secretary
Oceana County Planning Commission

**Oceana County Board Resolution
Draft Distribution and Right of Final Approval**



OFFICE OF THE OCEANA COUNTY CLERK

Amy L. Anderson, County Clerk

100 State Street, Suite 1 – Hart, MI 49420
Telephone: (231) 873-4328

Resolution to Approve the Oceana County Master Plan

Oceana County Board of Commissioners

**RESOLUTION #23-13
APPROVAL OF THE OCEANA COUNTY MASTER PLAN**

Moved by Mr. Morse and seconded by Mr. Beggs to approve distribution of the draft Master Plan for the 63-day review period.

The purpose of the Oceana County Master Plan, a land use document that attempts to address issues different from those of an ordinary land use plan to include infrastructure, population, economics, county and other governmental services and the general quality of life, is to provide policy and guide decision-making for future land and infrastructure development decisions within the entire area of Oceana County.

Further, after the appropriate review period and approval of the final document by the Oceana County Planning Commission, the Oceana County Master Plan will be presented to the Oceana County Board of Commissioners for its final approval.

Roll call vote: Mr. Morse – yes; Mr. Beggs – yes; Mr. Erickson – yes; and Mr. Walker – yes.
Absent: Mr. Hardy.

CERTIFICATION:

The undersigned, being the Clerk of Oceana County, does hereby certify that on the 7th day of December, 2023, the Oceana County Board of Commissioners did adopt the above Resolution at its Regular Meeting.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Anderson".

Amy Anderson, Clerk
Oceana County
Board of Commissioners

Oceana County Planning Commission Minutes Public Hearing and Transmission to County Board

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OCEANA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION (OCPC)

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MARCH 7, 2024 MEETING

The Oceana County Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Chairperson McKeen on Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 1:00 p.m., at the Board of Commissioners Room, 100 S. State St, Hart, Michigan 49420.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair McKeen led the members in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chairperson Garry McKeen, Vice-chairperson Gina Loera, Secretary John Stivers, Mr. Al Blohm, Mr. Bryan Broderick, Mr. Paul Cutter (arriving at 1:05 p.m.), Mr. John Foss, Mr. Phil Morse, and Mr. Scott Rumsey.

Members Absent: None

Guests: Mr. Lee Hyslop, Superintendent of Crystal Township; Stephen Carlson of West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Council (WMSRDC) who is working on the update of the Oceana County Master Plan; Michelle Martin, Oceana County Drain Commissioner.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Approval of the February 1, 2024 Minutes of the Oceana County Planning Commission meeting.

With minor modifications from draft to final format, and with Mr. Morse requesting his report reflect that MFR costs are trending high and the next ambulance millage may need to take that into consideration. Additionally, it was the first draft of the Hazardous Mitigation Plan that the County Commission approved.

Moved by Mr. Rumsey, and seconded by Mr. Blohm to approve the minutes as amended. Voice vote. All ayes. Motion carried.

SUSPENSION OF REGULAR MEETING FOR SPECIAL MEETING TO HEAR PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE 2023 OCEANA COUNTY FIVE YEAR MASTER PLAN.

At 1:05 p.m., moved by Mr. Broderick, and seconded by Mr. Morse to suspend the Regular Oceana County Planning Commission meeting in order to hold a Special Meeting to hear Public Comment on the 2023 Oceana County Five Year Master Plan. Motion carried unanimously.

SPECIAL MEETING TO HEAR PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE 2023 OCEANA COUNTY FIVE YEAR MASTER PLAN.

At 1:06 p.m., moved by Mr. Morse, and second by Mr. Broderick to enter into a Public Hearing regarding Public Comments on the 2023 Oceana County Five Year Master Plan. Motion carried unanimously.

INVITATION FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair McKeen called for public comments, stating that individuals must identify themselves and limit their comments to no more than 5 minutes. The Chair indicated that those making comments should keep in mind is that this plan is a guideline for the reader to gain a better understanding of the county's future goals for growth.

No public comments were made at the Special Meeting.

PUBLIC READING ALOUD OF CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED.

Chair McKeen indicated that two email correspondences were received. He then read the one from Richard Raffiella, Chief Operating Officer, Peterson Farms, Shelby, MI 49455, dated January 16, 2024.

Good Morning

I won't be able to join the meeting so here is my feedback

1. The housing study is fairly clear on where our gap is in housing and future years. I would have hoped in this category the planning commission would have more specific measurable actions to address
2. In the farming section. Migrant labor is reducing drastically and H2A labor is taking its place. The average rate of H2A is increasing approximately 18% a year which is a challenge for farmers. Essentially a plan to re-attract the migrant labor back to Oceana County
3. Section regarding Roadways....the information regarding the speed control is incorrect. The Road commission does not have the authority to reduce speeds nor does the local unit of government. A speed study must be completed by the State police for this to happen
4. I would also showing the rating by Township, village and city so the County can identify where the specific problem areas are
5. I would add specific data where city/ village water and sewage is available in the County to ensure longer term plans are in place for older infrastructure
6. Peterson data is incorrect 1040 employees
7. Under the building permits section. Shelby Township built 12 new apartments in two buildings in 2022. The reason your group didn't pick it up is because it was built under a MDARD permit versus an Oceana County permit. Agriculture based housing is regulated by the state Thanks and let me know if you have any questions

Chair McKeen next read the letter received from Mr. Lee Hyslop, Superintendent of Crystal Township.

(transcribed from Mr. McKeen's reading of the correspondence)

Interesting read, it wouldn't be me if I didn't have a comment or two.

Page 24. *(pg ref to pdf, not report pagination)* Prime Farm Map. While I agree with what is presented, I spent several days going through Crystal Township soil maps and highlighting three soil types as defined by Soils Conservation. My intent then was to work with solar, wind, battery issues. It's a nice map. Regardless, if you include with the important the solar-friendly portion, it gets quite small. We are on the right track, but unfortunately the engineer of the train is now in Lansing.

Page 34. Rivers and lakes are attractive. I agree, and that is but one reason that we have put so much energy into saving our historic Crystal Dam and Pond in the County Park.

Page 39. I would still like a definition of the location of hydrogen-sulfide well.

Page 41. The direct map from the Northeast Quadrant may be our Oceana County Road Commission – Crystal Valley Township revitalization may help. Maybe this report could be used as support of some sort.

Page 42. I've spend volumes of hours recently on data on the road project and can't help but notice that there are food processors listed as manufacturers. I don't know GHSP, but if you convert Arbre Farms, Peterson Farms, Gray & Company (Seneca Farms), and Great Lakes Packing to Ag, you now have 1,541 people working in Ag out of 2,303. I think investing in a stronger ag community might make good sense.

Nicely done. I see plenty of negatives in the response. Perhaps a water-down version of Pure Michigan style PR might help. Also, and more importantly, I've discovered that our (Crystal Township) Planning Commission knew nothing about this report. While attending as an observer, I mentioned the website and thought they would enjoy it.

We will announce a new chairperson next week, and the current chair will remain on the board. Another younger citizen stepping up. Hey. Our Board members are also not aware, but maybe you could give some feedback. In Grand Rapids I sat on the Affordable Housing Committee. There were some big shooters on the committee – Eastbrook Homes, Depree Homes, etc. -- The key I learned there was if you want to build many new homes you must be near and part of a very good school. The better the school, the greater the success in solving the blight issue. And we will set records with new home sales.

CALL TO CONCLUDE THE PUBLIC HEARING

Having read both letters received and receiving no additional public comments from the audience, the Chair called for a motion to conclude the Public Hearing on the 2023 Oceana County Five Year Master Plan. At 1:11 p.m., motion to close the Public Hearing was made by Mr. Cutter with second from Ms. Loera. All votes in the affirmative. The Public Hearing was closed.

CALL FOR MOTION TO REINSTATE THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OCEANA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

At 1:12 p.m., motion to reinstate the regular meeting of the Planning Commission was made by Mr. Stivers with second from Mr. Cutter. All votes in the affirmative.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA ITEMS OF THE REGULAR MEETING

To the proposed agenda was added under New Business a review of the template for County Municipalities to use in zoning ordinance adoption of common Stormwater regulations to be administered by the Oceana County Drain Commissioner.

Mr. Rumsey moved to approval the amended Agenda for the March 7, 2024 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Foss. By voice vote: All ayes. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

No public comments.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Prior to the meeting, the commissioners received the portion of the County revenue and expenditure report for the period ending 1/31/2024. There is a \$9,000 balance. Approximately \$200 to advertise the Master Plan Public Meeting is expected to appear in the next report.

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chair McKeen reported on meetings he had attended between the February and March Planning Commission Meetings:

- a. Attended two County Commissioner's meetings.
- b. Attended the Grant Township monthly meeting.
- c. Attended two Oceana Road Commission meetings.

- d. Zoom call from the Oceana Conservation District with Sen. Jon Bumstead, who is on the State Senate Appropriations Committee, regarding impacts of MDARD's proposed restructure of the MEAP program resulting in reductions in the Oceana Conservation District staff and funding.
- e. Met with the Stony Creek/Marshville Dam fifteen partners (engineers, contractors, funders) for a preconstruction walk thru. Construction is scheduled to start in early April.
- f. Set a time and date for the Township Planning Education class with Mary Reilly.
- g. Attended the 911 board meeting. Those attending discussed alternate ways for funding; currently the program is funded via a surcharge per phone line, but with the loss of land lines at most of the seasonal residences, an alternative property tax may be the solution for funding 911 Center in Oceana and Mason Counties.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion of Public Comments from the Five-Year Master Plan.

The objective of this portion of the meeting was for the Planning Commission to evaluate new input from Public Comments; with none provided during the Public Hearing, the discussion was limited to the communications from Mr. Raffielli and Mr. Hyslop. Mr. Carlson pointed out that both would be included in the final Plan document with all the other comments received.

Each commissioner was given the opportunity to comment on each point raised in the two. At the initiation of Chair McKeen, Mr. Hyslop, who was in the audience, was also called upon to respond to a few specific aspects of his. Point by point the Commission determined if any warranted a revision to the Five-Year Master Plan.

Many were found not to warrant a revision, but that decision was reached with the knowledge the comment would be recorded as part of the Plan.

Some would require minor edits to the Plan, to which Mr. Carlson felt could be made without delaying final adoption.

None were found to justify a major revision in either approach or text to the Plan. However, some commissioners suggested a few for potential future exploration by the Planning Commission.

Point-by-point discussion summary.

From Richard Raffielli:

- 1. ... housing study... Development of Master Plan update was done concurrently with the 2023 Oceana County Housing Needs Assessment. A link to that report is to be included in the Master Plan. Representation from the post housing study group who are also on the Planning Commission will relay this recommendation. Minor Edit.
- 2. ... Migrant labor is reducing drastically ... Several commissioners felt the Planning Commission might be a place for future discussion of this topic, but also agreed that without significant additional study could not be addressed knowledgeably. Mr. Carlson is to add to the Economic Development section of the Master Plan that there is a need to increase access to affordable labor. Minor Edit.
- 3. ... Roadways... and 4. ... rating by Township ... Commissioners accepted comments as current fact, but feel Master Plan reflects a bona fide concern and common approach to address the issue. No Revision.

- 5. ... city/ village water and sewage ... Commissioners agree that such a study would be beneficial, but beyond the scope of the Master Plan update. Mr. Carlson is to add to the Infrastructure section of the Master Plan support for conducting an inventory of the public infrastructure. Minor edit.
- 6. Peterson ... The employment level information (table on pg. 37 of Master Plan) is from an Oceana County Economic Alliance report but of unknown date. Mr. Carlson will see if the date is available. Because updating the entire table would be beyond the scope of the Master Plan, and in deference to the other employers included in the table, the level for Peterson Farms will remain unchanged. Minor Edit. This public comment will still appear in Master Plan Appendix: Public Comment.
- 7. ... 12 new apartments in two buildings in 2022... Representation from the post housing study group who are also on the Planning Commission will relay this information. No Revision.

From Lee Hylsop:

- Prime Farm Map. ... solar, wind, battery issues... Commissioners who commented agreed with input. No Revision.
- historic Crystal Valley Dam and Pond in the County Park... Planning Commission expressed appreciation for the input. No Revision.
- location of hydrogen-sulfide well. Mr. Hylsop and Mr. Carlson, both in attendance, reviewed the issue to their mutual satisfaction. No Revision.
- ...map from the Northeast Quadrant ... Mr. Hylsop explained that ag operations, including the processing operations, need better roads; Crystal Township is considering US DoT RAISE grant funding. Planning Commission expressed appreciation for the input. No Revision.
- ... stronger ag community ... This comment concerned the same table on Employment Levels also included in Mr. Raffielli's comments. The same explanation provided it applies to Mr. Hylsop's. No Revision.
- The better the school, the greater the success in solving the blight issue. Planning Commission expressed appreciation for the input. No Revision.

The Commission considered the need to develop a more formal reply to the input received from the two individuals, either to be included as part of Appendix B, or prepared and sent to the respected individuals. It was determined that these minutes would serve that purpose.

Mr. Blohm asked that his comments be consider as haven been given solely in the interest of the public good.

Mr. Hylsop offered that the County Master Plan is important and that he welcomes means of overcoming the disconnect between the County Planning Commission and the township boards and their planning and zoning boards. Chair McKeen acknowledged appreciation and looks forward to the two training sessions open to all.

- B. Motion of Approve the Five-Year Plan as presented or alter as discussed. A motion from Mr. Cutter with second from Mr. Rumsey to approve the Oceana County Five-Year Master Plan with discussed revisions. On a roll call vote, the motion was adopted unanimously.
- C. Motion to recommend adaption of the plan at the March 28th meeting of the Oceana County Commissioners. So moved by Mr. Foss with second from Ms. Loera. Motion approved.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- A. Michelle Martin, Oceana County Drain Commissioner, took the commissioners through the legal template that has been developed which allows the numerous municipalities to formally adopt their specific county stormwater ordinance that uses the common regulations which are to be administration by the Drain Commissioner's Office.

The Commissioners and the Drain Commissioner discussed the adoption procedure and provisions of the ordinance. While eight townships have recognized the underlying regulations, without the adoption steps outline in the new template, their enforcement could be subject to legal challenge. The common template will save each government unit duplicate legal fees.

Single-family residential building permits will not need to obtain stormwater approval. The Drain Commissioner can withhold soil erosion permits if the storm water design is not provided and approved.

Currently the attorney fee is yet to be paid, with the Drain Commissioner's hope that either the Planning Commission or County Commission could pay for it. Mr. McKeen offered to pay for it personally. Many of the commissioners expressed appreciation for the Drain Commissioner's work on this initiative, confirmed a willingness to help get more of the townships to adopt it.

With a motion from Mr. Morse with second from Mr. Broderick, the Oceana County Planning Commission endorsed the Site Development Rules – Stormwater Review Zoning Ordinance Template. All voted in support.

- B. Joint Planning and Zoning Training. Commissioners reviewed the flyer and email for the Thursday May 16th training session starting at 6:30 pm at the County Annex building 844 S. Griswold St., Hart. Township Clerks were identified as the best recipient; Mr. Morse proposed each planning commissioner adopt a township, reaching out to encourage participation.

COMMISSIONERS REPORTS

- A. Mr. Cutter reported on a planning retreat conducted for the City of Hart recently held at the West Central Michigan Research and Extension Center.
- B. Mr. Cutter provided an update on the electric grid connections of solar stations along Oceana Drive.
- C. ? Article ?

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. ?, with second from Mr. ?, moved for adjournment of the meeting at 2:50 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 4, 2024 at 1:00 p.m., in the Oceana County Board of Commissioners Room, 100 S State Street, Hart, Michigan.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Stivers, Secretary, Oceana County Planning Commission



OFFICE OF THE OCEANA COUNTY CLERK

Amy L. Anderson, County Clerk

100 State Street, Suite 1 – Hart, MI 49420
Office Phone: (231) 873-4328 Email: countyclerk@oceana.mi.us

OCEANA COUNTY RESOLUTION #24-06
RESOLUTION TO ADOPT MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the County; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a proposed updated Master Plan and submitted the plan to the County Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on December 7, 2023, the Oceana County Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

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

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on March 7, 2024 to consider public comment on the proposed updated Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed updated Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the County Board finds that the proposed updated Master Plan is (a) desirable, (b) provides factual information about Oceana County, and (c) promotes coordination of land use and development decisions within Oceana County;

WHEREAS, the MPEA authorizes the County Board to assert by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan;

THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. *Adoption of 2024 Master Plan.* The County Board hereby approves and adopts the proposed 2024 Oceana County Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein. Pursuant to MCL 125.3843 the County Board has asserted by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan and therefore the approval granted herein is the final step for adoption of the plan as provided in MCL 125.3843 and therefore the plan is effective as of March 28, 2024.

2. *Distribution to Notice Group.* The County Board approves distribution of the adopted plan to the Notice Group.

3. *Findings of Fact.* The County Board has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the County, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, input received from the Planning Commission and public hearing, and with the assistance of the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, and finds that the updated Master Plan will support and facilitate coordination of the use, preservation, and development of lands in Oceana County.

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

The foregoing resolution offered by Board Member, Phil Morse, District 2.
Second offered by Board Member, Craig A. Hardy, District 3.

Roll call vote: AYES: Mr. Morse, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Erickson, Mr. Beggs and Mr. Walker
NAYES: None
ABSENT: None

CERTIFICATION:

The undersigned, being the Chief Deputy Clerk of Oceana County, does hereby certify that on the 28th day of March 2024, the Oceana County Board of Commissioners did adopt the above Resolution at its Regular Meeting.

Melanie A. Coon, Chief Deputy Clerk
Oceana County
Board of Commissioners

APPENDIX B
Public Comments

Online Survey Comments * November 2022-March 2023

	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration	Result
Community Dev.	brush removal	bedroom communities	attractive place for retirees	better use of funds
Community Dev.	community foundation	blight	balance gentrification/growth with core	build up commercial properties on US-31 at
Community Dev.	community foundation	blight	balanced residential & commercial	climate change plans
Community Dev.	community foundation	blight	better rental management	create industrial area away from tourist areas
Community Dev.	county leadership	blight	Communication & engagement from	decrease cost for building permits vs tax break
Community Dev.	county master planning	blight	countywide fire/medical authority	develop clean/green industry
Community Dev.	elected officials	climate change education &	dense development in villages & city	development will increase tax revenue
Community Dev.	EMS & fire fighting	code enforcement	downtown neighborhoods cleaned up	Gentrify existing abandoned property
Community Dev.	farms	community participation in	downtown redevelopment	Hilltop St. property development
Community Dev.	farms	downtown appearance	drug crimes lottery	homeless shelter
Community Dev.	fiscally responsible	downtown appearance	electric vehicle charging stations	Improve emergency services
Community Dev.	historic preservation	downtowns	eliminate blight	improve online resources for access to land
Community Dev.	honest politicians	downtowns lack code	energy independence through	investors for new well built homes
Community Dev.	local officials	fiscal conservatism	enforced countywide junk ordinance	keep farm land; don't develop
Community Dev.	natural preservation	government-business	farmland & orchard preservation	keep nature
Community Dev.	philanthropy	inconsistent zoning	growth throughout the county	keep recreational
Community Dev.	planning to preserve	junk ordinance enforcement	improve facades in downtowns	land owners should decide development
Community Dev.	police	large-lot sprawl	maintain investments	Maintain land in agricultural uses
Community Dev.	policing	leadership slow to progress	measured growth to increase income,	more commercial land
Community Dev.	preservation of natural	limited resources	measured growth with preservation of	More flexible use of land
Community Dev.	progressive parks	loss of green space	mixed housing	neighborhood developments
Community Dev.	ready for development	much non-taxable public	more renewable energy	new housing development
Community Dev.	sheriff department	old guard holding back	new senior communities	new jail
Community Dev.	well maintained tourist	old guard leaders not	progress while maintaining small town	new law enforcement & correctional facility
Community Dev.		ordinance enforcement	property clean-up	no commercial buildings in farmland
Community Dev.		overlapping government &	public safety reform	no more Dollar Stores
Community Dev.		political extremism	raise tax base	No more industrial development
Community Dev.		political favoritism	redevelopment	preserve natural beauty in design of
Community Dev.		poor planning in the past	revitalized downtowns	preserve natural beauty in development
Community Dev.		property upkeep	school curriculum for land use planning	preserve natural beauty in signage by roads
Community Dev.		reliance on agriculture	sustainability	Promote and target for conservation
Community Dev.		resistance to and lack of	sustainable social & economic programs	protect from overdevelopment
Community Dev.		retirement community	work together	retail development on US-31
Community Dev.		road commission		Retain beautiful homes
Community Dev.		road commission		retain beautiful land
Community Dev.		too many laws		solar farm
Community Dev.		too many marijuana		support agriculture
Community Dev.		unattractive communities		support renewable energy
Community Dev.		unattractive communities		tax revenue by bigger business
Community Dev.		vague ordinances		Updates to ORV guidelines
Community Dev.				upkeep of public spaces
Community Dev.				village/city development
Community Dev.				village/city development
Community Dev.				vision to draw residents and Eco. Dev
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration	Result
Economic Dev.	agricultural business	agriculture low wages and	50,000 full-time residents	activities that bring people to Oceana county
Economic Dev.	agricultural expertise	brain drain	a plan to attract quality employment	attract more large businesses
Economic Dev.	agriculture	business incentives	advertise local history	build tourism
Economic Dev.	agriculture	business incentives	agriculture & tourism-based economy	designate areas for new business and
Economic Dev.	agriculture	downtown vacancies	attract & retain people	Economic opportunity for small business
Economic Dev.	agriculture	industries for job creation	attract business	encourage local company's to remain & grow
Economic Dev.	agriculture	lack industry	attract career-level jobs/employers	encourage tourism
Economic Dev.	agriculture	lack liquor licenses	attractive place for job creators	factories / facilities for new jobs
Economic Dev.	agriculture	lack new business &	boat & fishing gear rentals	grow more asparagus
Economic Dev.	agriculture	lack of year-round	business attraction & diversification	incentivize businesses that can pay higher
Economic Dev.	agriculture	lack sustainable agriculture	business recruitment	incentivize locally owned business
Economic Dev.	agriculture	lack tech workforce	capitalize on natural beauty	jobs that draw and retain people
Economic Dev.	agriculture processing	loss of small business	cooperatively market industrial parks	maximize waterways
Economic Dev.	business expansions	low salaries, unable to	destination tourism along Oceana Drive	more businesses
Economic Dev.	business growth &	new business turnover	develop tourism & recreation	more store fronts
Economic Dev.	campgrounds & tourism	silver lake tourists &	Develop winter economy	new clean energy business
Economic Dev.	family farms	small business support	eco-tourism	preserve woodlands, wetlands, farms
Economic Dev.	family farms & small	threats to farming like PFAs	flourishing small businesses	promote all types of agriculture
Economic Dev.	growing industry	too much agriculture	focus on education, employment, &	promote small business
Economic Dev.	hard working residents	tourism falling behind	grow agri-tourism	promote tourism

Economic Dev.	local restaurants	underutilized industrial	growth in business & tourism	provide ways to promote large business
Economic Dev.	local shops	winter tourism	incentives for businesses	tourism throughout all of Oceana
Economic Dev.	small businesses	worker motivation	increase economic activity & education	
Economic Dev.	summer tourism		increased manufacturing & ag	
Economic Dev.	summer tourism		Increased summer tourism	
Economic Dev.	summer tourism		leverage technology to improve	
Economic Dev.	summer tourism		marketing to manufacturing companies	
Economic Dev.	tourism		marketing to nearby metropolitan areas	
Economic Dev.	tourism		more attractions	
Economic Dev.	tourism		new employers/jobs	
Economic Dev.	tourism		opportunities for entrepreneurs	
Economic Dev.	tourism		Polk Rd corridor development &	
Economic Dev.	tourism		preserve & support agriculture	
Economic Dev.	tourism		promotion of locally grown products	
Economic Dev.	tourist appeal		regional business and tourism marketing	
Economic Dev.	western half for visitors		restore small businesses	
Economic Dev.	young entrepreneurs		stony lake tourism	
Economic Dev.			support businesses better	
Economic Dev.			tax incentives for new business	
Economic Dev.			tourist destination	
Economic Dev.			year-round destination	
Economic Dev.			year-round employment opportunities	
Economic Dev.			year-round tourism along lakeshore	
Economic Dev.			youth athletics tournaments	
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration	Result
Environment	beaches	climate change	Curb fossil fuel use	better waste water mngt near lakes/parks
Environment	beaches	environmental	environmental preservation	clean up Hart Lake
Environment	beaches	environmental protection	natural farmland controls	good stewardship of land and lake
Environment	beaches & dunes	health of Silver Lake	Natural resource protection	less herbicides on roadside weeds
Environment	beaches & waterfront	Silver Lake water quality	no more vehicles in dunes	plant trees
Environment	beaches, coastline,	Silver Lake water quality	policies to preserve woodlands	preserve and expand wildlife habitat
Environment	beautiful coastline	Silver Lake water quality	preserved farmland, shoreline, & forests	preserve natural spaces along lakeshore
Environment	beautiful landscape	Silver Lake water quality		promote organic farming
Environment	beautiful scenery			protect ag ground
Environment	beautiful scenery			Sustainable agriculture by clean water
Environment	beauty			
Environment	clean lakes & rivers			
Environment	conditions for food			
Environment	dunes & lakeshore			
Environment	forests & natural areas			
Environment	forests & natural areas			
Environment	healthy forests & lakes			
Environment	Lake Michigan & inland			
Environment	Lake Michigan & inland			
Environment	Lake MI, dunes, beaches			
Environment	lakes & natural			
Environment	lakes & streams			
Environment	lakes & waterfront			
Environment	lakes, forests & nature			
Environment	local businesses			
Environment	natural beauty			
Environment	natural beauty			
Environment	natural beauty			
Environment	natural beauty			
Environment	natural beauty			
Environment	natural beauty			
Environment	natural beauty			
Environment	natural beauty & sand			
Environment	natural features			
Environment	natural features			
Environment	natural resources			
Environment	natural resources			
Environment	natural resources			
Environment	natural resources			
Environment	natural resources			
Environment	natural scenery			
Environment	nature areas			
Environment	nature preserves			
Environment	renewable resources			

Environment	sand dunes			
Environment	scenery			
Environment	White & Pentwater			
Environment	wildlife			
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration	Result
Infrastructure	road repairs	cell phone & internet	all roads paved	better roads
Infrastructure	roads	cell phone service &	broadband internet service	good maintenance of existing infrastructure
Infrastructure	roads	condition of gravel roads &	county wide wifi	high communications network
Infrastructure	scenic drive, US31	eastern county roads and	countywide broadband availability	high speed internet
Infrastructure	US-31 corridor	erosion along gravel roads	dirt roads paved	Infrastructure improvements
Infrastructure		inconsistent improvement	improve roads & trails	pave all dirt roads
Infrastructure		lack infrastructure to attract	improve technology infrastructure	remote working for young techies
Infrastructure		no sidewalks & water/sewer	Improving technology infrastructure	repair roads
Infrastructure		road maintenance	modern county with cell & internet	repair roads
Infrastructure		roads	paved roads	road repair
Infrastructure		roads	sewer service around inland lakes	Sanitation & drinking water at Thoroughbred
Infrastructure		roads	widen paved roads	
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		roads		
Infrastructure		rural broadband		
Infrastructure		rural roads		
Infrastructure		too many dirt roads		
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration	Result
Quality of Life	access to nature	access to Hart Lake	a desirable place to live	accessible lakefront dev for public, i.e.
Quality of Life	access to public	affordable child care	additional connections to Hart-	affordable daycare facility
Quality of Life	affordable housing	affordable housing	affordable housing	Affordable housing
Quality of Life	agricultural community	affordable housing	amenities and market rate apartments in	affordable housing
Quality of Life	agricultural roots	affordable places for	better cross-cultural relationships	affordable housing
Quality of Life	caring people	attract & maintain young	better senior & medical services	affordable housing
Quality of Life	community events	blurred separation of church	better utilization of fairgrounds	affordable housing development
Quality of Life	community foundation	boating access in southern	clean nature & communities	affordable housing for low income
Quality of Life	community, ethics	child care	community cares for environment, land	affordable housing for low income residents
Quality of Life	cost of living	close-minded people	community center not senior or religion	beach access
Quality of Life	council on aging	close-minded people	connected hiking trails	better public access to lakes
Quality of Life	council on aging	community depression	crafts fair at fairgrounds	chain restaurants and grocery stores
Quality of Life	county fair	connectivity of parks & trails	cross country ski trails	community center
Quality of Life	county fair	cost of family homes	curb illegal drug use	community centers that don't use too much
Quality of Life	county fair	cost of health care	entertainment	Community garden / farmers market
Quality of Life	county fairgrounds	county fair declining	Expand ORV permissions	community park complex
Quality of Life	county parks & lands	crowding at Silver Lake	gentrify retail & restaurants	county park on the shore of Lake Michigan
Quality of Life	diversity	drug problems	great restaurants	develop affordable recreation
Quality of Life	diversity	drug use	high quality outdoor recreation	Develop and complete parks
Quality of Life	diversity	drug use & crime	higher wages	develop senior housing
Quality of Life	drivable sand dunes	drug use & crime increasing	income controlled affordable housing	Double JJ course maintenance
Quality of Life	easy to get around	drug use & poverty	increase Lake Michigan land for public	encourage youth to stay
Quality of Life	education buildings	drug use and associated	increased middle class housing to attract	Extend Rail Trail to Pentwater
Quality of Life	Electric Forest Festival	dune vehicles	increased winter sports	facilities for drug or mental health treatment
Quality of Life	Electric Forest Festival	dunes overcrowding	indoor community recreation facility	family center with activities for young people
Quality of Life	farming community	fire/medical protection	indoor community recreation facility	Group venue under one roof
Quality of Life	farming community	hard place for young	Lake Michigan boat launch	higher education near Shelby
Quality of Life	friendly people	housing	lower property taxes	higher paying jobs
Quality of Life	friendly people	housing & assisted care for	mentoring program for school-aged kids	housing on cul-de-sacs
Quality of Life	golf courses	housing stock	middle class housing	Improve rec and tourism facilities
Quality of Life	good schools	income inequality	more opportunity, better housing, great	Increase community access to green space
Quality of Life	great place to live	lack middle class housing	more public access to Lake Michigan	Increase housing for low income and elderly
Quality of Life	Lake Michigan access	lack cultural diversity	More restaurants & grocery stores	independent living housing for seniors
Quality of Life	Lake Michigan access	lack good restaurants	more retail opportunities	Integrate Hispanic community
Quality of Life	lakeshore hospital	lack housing	more retail, less dollar stores	larger county beach on Lake Michigan
Quality of Life	lakeshore hospital	lack middle class housing	nature areas & dog park	more affordable year round rentals
Quality of Life	lakeshore hospital	lack of destinations &	new middle-income neighborhoods near	more children's outdoor activities
Quality of Life	law enforcement	lack of housing	off-road park	more green spaces for trails/picnic area
Quality of Life	libraries	lack of housing	outdoor activities and connections	more indoor places for students
Quality of Life	local events	lack of opportunity for	outdoor education center	more open land for off road activity

Quality of Life	low crime	lack of recycling	planning for roads & transit	more outdoor recreation opportunity
Quality of Life	museums	lack of restaurants	public transportation	more parks and green spaces
Quality of Life	neighborly people	lack of senior housing	rental housing	more public beaches with parking
Quality of Life	new school buildings	lack of trails	safe bike lanes/shoulders	more restaurants
Quality of Life	not crowded	lack year-round	senior housing	more trails and beach access
Quality of Life	Oceana County Fair	lacking vision	small-town community	Mores supervision on the dunes
Quality of Life	Oceana herald journal	large retail & grocery store	stronger support for elderly &	new school and track
Quality of Life	outdoor recreation	Life EMS	track in Pentwater	no vehicles on dunes
Quality of Life	outdoor recreation	limited amenities to keep	utilize forests for recreation	outdoor concert venue
Quality of Life	outdoor recreation	limited beach public access	Walmart, Meijer, etc with food available	outdoor entertainment venues
Quality of Life	outdoors	limited public access to	winter community social events	parks and trails
Quality of Life	parks	limited shopping	year-round activities	public hiking trails
Quality of Life	parks	loss of local eateries	year-round community involvement and	quality hiking and parks
Quality of Life	parks & natural	loss of population	youth & community recreation	repair and maintenance of existing housing
Quality of Life	parks & preserves	low paying industry		Resident employment over migrant
Quality of Life	parks & trails	low wages & lack		Retain winter sports venues
Quality of Life	peaceful and	middle income housing		senior housing
Quality of Life	people	need health & exercise		Sr. housing options for those not qualified for
Quality of Life	people	no taxi or public transit		support affordable housing
Quality of Life	people	noise after 11:00 especially		tech school
Quality of Life	people	non-motorized boating		track at PHS
Quality of Life	people	political extremism		trail creation and access
Quality of Life	people	political extremism		trail improvements
Quality of Life	proximity to bigger	political ideologies		Trinity Hospital
Quality of Life	public access to lakes	poverty		variety in year round entertainment
Quality of Life	public recreation spaces	poverty		variety of trails
Quality of Life	quiet place to live	poverty		
Quality of Life	rail trail & public land	poverty		
Quality of Life	recreation	poverty		
Quality of Life	rural & open space	poverty & lack of		
Quality of Life	rural & small town feel	poverty & low wages		
Quality of Life	rural countryside	rivalry between		
Quality of Life	rural, laid-back	school facilities		
Quality of Life	safe & sense of	seasonal over population of		
Quality of Life	safe communities	seasonal population		
Quality of Life	safe community	seasonal rental homes		
Quality of Life	schools	seasonal sense of		
Quality of Life	senior services & care	shoreline/inland dichotomy		
Quality of Life	small knit diverse	single family housing		
Quality of Life	small town atmosphere	social services for		
Quality of Life	state parks	too many deer		
Quality of Life	state parks maintained	traditional values conflict		
Quality of Life	tight knit communities	well paying jobs		
Quality of Life	water access	well paying jobs		
Quality of Life	youth recreation	well paying jobs		

Public Meeting * December 1, 2022

	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Result
Community Development	emergency services	divide between communities	Centralize logical functions
Community Development	historical preservation	east side of the county	education to build acceptance of alternate energy production
Community Development	low density	funding	funding for infrastructure
Community Development		Jail space	light industrial tax base
Community Development		police funding	lower property taxes
Community Development			maintain rural identity
Community Development			more hobby farms with support structure
Community Development			renewable energy
Community Development			retain rural character
Community Development			state of the art waste removal with education
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Result
Economic Development	agriculture	lack diversification	Cultivate antique community
Economic Development	Agriculture industries	lack industry	expert advisers (like Right Place)
Economic Development	asparagus, cherries	lack of economic base	grow agri-tourism
Economic Development	MSU Ag research center	non-legal workforce	job placement
Economic Development	summer season	seasonal population	job training
Economic Development	tourism	skilled workforce retention	promote mom & pop businesses
Economic Development	tourism		
Economic Development	work ethic		
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Result
Environment	MAEAP certification	PFAS	
Environment	nature, scenery	PFAS	
Environment	sand dunes	sand soil erosion	
Environment	sandy soils	stormwater management	
Environment	soils for agriculture	water quality	
Environment	water, lakeshore	watershed protection	
Environment	waterways		
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Result
Infrastructure	decent roads & investments	Act 51 road funding	better infrastructure
Infrastructure	US31	funding for roads	countywide high-speed internet
Infrastructure		high-speed internet	high speed communications
Infrastructure		power supply	infrastructure to support growth
Infrastructure		road funding	
Infrastructure		road quality	
Infrastructure		roads	
Infrastructure		sewer capacity (Shelby)	
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Result
Quality of Life	4H program	affordable housing	affordable housing for families
Quality of Life	art community	aging population	affordable housing for handicap
Quality of Life	attractive for remote working	barrier to services	Atlantic salmon in White River
Quality of Life	bike, atv, snowmobile trails	child care	community college
Quality of Life	community history	community college	community rec center
Quality of Life	county fairgrounds	county center for training	entertainment
Quality of Life	diverse people	drugs	generation stays
Quality of Life	festivals	drugs	high income jobs
Quality of Life	fresh food	equitable funding for schools	housing
Quality of Life	golfing, hunting, fishing	healthcare access	increase population
Quality of Life	good schools	healthcare quality	integration of Latino population into community
Quality of Life	health care	Housing	intergenerational homes
Quality of Life	higher education	Housing	kids involved in community
Quality of Life	local restaurants	Lack of senior housing	laser tag house
Quality of Life	national forest	lack of skilled trades	more senior housing options
Quality of Life	national forest	no public transportation	post-secondary programs
Quality of Life	outdoor recreation	outflow of young people	retaining youth
Quality of Life	peaceful	poverty	skilled trades
Quality of Life	recreation opportunities	poverty	swimming lessons
Quality of Life	safe place to live	recycling	swimming pool
Quality of Life	schools, youth sports	restaurants	
Quality of Life	services organizations and groups	school of choice	
Quality of Life	state parks	shop class	
Quality of Life	volunteerism	shopping (clothes)	
Quality of Life	Walkinshaw wetlands	Students leaving	
Quality of Life		wages	
Quality of Life		waste disposal	
Quality of Life		youth opportunities	

Youth Advisory Council Meeting * February 16, 2023

	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Results
Community Dev.	community support for youth athletics	major decision made only by older people	cleaned blight to attract money to smaller towns
Community Dev.	farms, farming	underdevelopment	
Community Dev.	space for development	vacancies	
Community Dev.	youth advisory committee		
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Results
Economic Dev.	agriculture	hard locations for businesses (scattered)	hotels
Economic Dev.	agriculture		
Economic Dev.	summer seasonal jobs		
Economic Dev.	tourism		
Economic Dev.			
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Results
Environment	clean lakes & rivers		
Environment	natural resources		
Environment	White River		
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Results
Infrastructure		no advanced infrastructure	better technology
Infrastructure		roads	good roads
Infrastructure		roads	
Infrastructure		roads	
Infrastructure		roads	
	Strength	Weakness	Aspiration/Results
Quality of Life	churches	drug use	advanced classes
Quality of Life	competitive youth teams	everything hard to reach to have fun	better access to college
Quality of Life	common goals (people)	everything spaced out	better buildings
Quality of Life	community events	locations for businesses (difficult to access)	better housing options for everyone
Quality of Life	diversity	hard to find jobs	better teachers
Quality of Life	diversity	lack low income housing	better transportation
Quality of Life	feels safe	lack of activities in small towns	grocery stores
Quality of Life	hunting & fishing	lack of attractions in small towns	increased income
Quality of Life	nice parks & public areas	lack of entertainment in small towns	increased population
Quality of Life	Pentwater, Silver Lake	lack of privacy	increased wealth
Quality of Life	scenery	local grocery stores	increased year-round population
Quality of Life	schools, free preschool	local restaurants	joint-school classes
Quality of Life	shops, small businesses	low wages	less poverty
Quality of Life	successful people & role models	more poverty than wealth	more activities for kids
Quality of Life	tight knit communities	nearby college options	more after school activities
Quality of Life		need substitutes	more town activities
Quality of Life		need teachers	new job opportunities
Quality of Life		not many major retailers	new neighborhoods
Quality of Life		opportunities for seasonal work	safe communities
Quality of Life		poverty	support/rehab for addicts
Quality of Life		schools lacking advanced classes	support/rehab for mentally unstable
Quality of Life		schools lacking AP classes	Uber
Quality of Life		small communities rumors	
Quality of Life		transportation options	

Comments received during 63-day review period and public hearing

The proposed Oceana County Master Plan update was available for public review from January 4, 2024 through March 7, 2024. The document was available for public inspection on the Oceana County website and at the county clerk's office. A public hearing was also held on March 7 to receive public comments regarding the proposed draft. Two individuals submitted comments via email (shown on the following page) and no additional comments were received during the public hearing.

After the public hearing, the Planning Commission thoughtfully considered and discussed the two sets of email comments during its regular monthly meeting. As a result of this discourse, the Planning Commission agreed to add two goals to the plan. One goal was added under "Infrastructure" to support development of a countywide inventory of public infrastructure assets. The other goal was added under "Economic Development" to acknowledge the current expense of agricultural labor and generally support efforts to secure "affordable" agricultural labor.

Email comments received January 16, 2024, from Richard Raffaelli

1. The housing study is fairly clear on where our gap is in housing and future years. I would have hoped in this category the planning commission would have more specific measurable actions to address
2. In the farming section. Migrant labor is reducing drastically and H2A labor is taking its place. The average rate of H2A is increasing approximately 18% a year which is a challenge for farmers. Essentially a plan to re-attract the migrant labor back to Oceana County
3. Section regarding Roadways...the information regarding the speed control is incorrect. The Road commission does not have the authority to reduce speeds nor does the local unit of government. A speed study must be completed by the State police for this to happen
4. I would also showing the rating by Township, village and city so the County can identify where the specific problem areas are
5. I would add specific data where city/ village water and sewage is available in the County to ensure longer term plans are in place for older infrastructure
6. Peterson data is incorrect 1040 employees
7. Under the building permits section. Shelby Township built 12 new apartments in two buildings in 2022. The reason your group didn't pick it up is because it was built under a MDARD permit versus an Oceana County permit. Agriculture based housing is regulated by the state

Email comments received February 17, 2024, from Lee Hyslop

Page 24. Prime farm map. While I agree with what is presented, I spent several days going thru Crystal Townships soil maps and highlighting three soil types, as defined by the Soil Conservation.

My intention then was to work with the Solar/Wind/Battery issues. It's a nice map.

Regardless, if you include Important to the Prime category the "solar friendly" portion gets quite small. We are on the right track. Unfortunately the engineer of the train is now in Lansing.

Page 34. Lakes and rivers are attractive. I agree and that is but one reason that we put so much energy into saving our historic Crystal Dam and pond in the County Park.

Page 39. I would still like a definition on the location of the Hydrogen Sulfide Well.

Page 41. A direct route from the NE Quadrant. Maybe our OCRC/ Crystal Twp Road Revitalization will help. Maybe this report could be used as a support of some sort??

Page 42. I have spent volumes of hours recently on data for the Road Project. I can't help but notice we see our food processors listed as manufacturers. I don't know GHSP, but if you convert Arbre, Petersen, Seneca, Freeze pack and Great Lakes to Ag you now have 1541 people working in Ag out of 2303. I think investing in a stronger Ag community might make good sense.

Nicely done. I see plenty of negatives in the response. Perhaps a watered down version of Pure Michigan style PR might help. Also, and more importantly. I discovered that our Planning Commission knew nothing of this report. While attending, as an observer, I mentioned the web site and link and thought they would enjoy it. We will announce a new Chairperson next week, and the current chair will remain on the board. Another younger citizen stepping up. Yeah! Our board members are also now aware. Maybe you will see some feedback.

On housing. I sat on the affordable housing committee for the Grand Rapids Home Builders. There were some big shooters on the committee. Eastbrook Homes, Deppee Homes, etc. The key I learned there was this. If you want to build many new homes they must be near a very good school. The better the school the greater the success. Solve the school and blight issue and we will set records for new home sales.

APPENDIX C
Acknowledgements

United States Census Bureau

- US Census (2000, 2010, & 2020)
- American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics

StatsAmerica.org

Oceana County Soil Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, 1996

2007 Census of Agriculture – Oceana County Profile

2012 Census of Agriculture – Oceana County Profile

2017 Census of Agriculture – Oceana County Profile

EPA Hydraulic Fracturing study <https://www.epa.gov/hfstudy>

National Land Cover Dataset, Multi-Resolution Land Characteristic Consortium, 2011

Michigan Department of Great Lakes and Energy

Michigan Department of Treasury State Tax Commission

Michigan State Climatologist's Office

Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council Website and Dashboards

Teaming Up for Quality Drinking Water, The Michigan Wellhead Protection Program Guide, 2006 MDEQ

MI School Data, <https://www.mischooldata.org/>

Rural Groundwater Contamination: Impacts and Potential Benefits From Land Use Planning And Zoning;

Libby and Kovan; Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University

Michigan League for Public Policy, <http://www.mlpp.org/>

West Michigan Blueways and Greenways Plan Phase II, WMSRDC, 2012

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study, 2013, State of Michigan Interagency

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Michigan Broadband Map, Connected Nation Michigan

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, WMSRDC, 2018

White River Economic Impact Analysis, Grand Valley State University, 2023

Oceana County Community Assessment Team Report, MSU Extension, February 2002

Summary of Services Gap Meeting for Oceana County, Senior Resources, 2014

10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Oceana County, Oceana Housing Council, October 2006

Ocean County Housing Needs Assessment, Bowen National Research, 2023

Oceana County Recreation Plan, Oceana County Parks & Recreation Commission, 2023 (draft)

Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023)

Oceana County Inspection Department

Oceana County Equalization Department

Oceana County Economic Alliance

Community Foundation for Oceana County, Youth Advisory Council

Benona Township Zoning Districts Map (2015)

City of Hart Future Land Use Map, City of Hart Master Plan, 2013

Claybanks Township Future Land Use Map

Crystal Township Zoning Map

Elbridge Township Future Land Use Map, Elbridge Township Master Plan (2011)

Ferry Township Zoning Map (2013)

Golden Township Zoning Map

Grant Township Zoning Map

Greenwood Township Zoning Map

Hart Township Draft Zoning Map

Newfield Township Future Land Use Map, Newfield Township Master Plan (2014)

Otto Township Future Land Use Map, Otto Township Master Plan (2010)

Pentwater Community Future Land Use Map, Pentwater Master Plan Update (2009)

Shelby Community Zoning Map (2006)

Weare Township Zoning Map (2004)